

**The Allied Tribes Tsimshian
of North Coastal British Columbia:
Social Organization, Economy and Trade**

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June 2006

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1. Introduction

This report sets out my opinion regarding the social organization, economy, and trade of the Allied Tsimshian Tribes, and provides representative examples of the evidence on which my conclusions are based. A set of topical Primary Source Compilations is provided with and comprises part of this report; these provide fuller evidence relevant to the topics covered in this report.

1.1. Overview

The Coast Tsimshian tribes ancestral to the contemporary Allied Tsimshian Tribes have a highly distinctive social organization and culture emphasizing ownership of land and resources, trade within and among communities, the accumulation of wealth, and the deployment of that wealth to advance social and political objectives. Prolific salmon runs were the economic foundation on which Tsimshian society depended, and extensive trade of preserved fish and other products was a prominent activity of critical significance to their economy and social organization, and was the major source of wealth. These patterns were established centuries before contact with Europeans, and can still be observed in contemporary forms.

The Allied Tribes, comprising the descendants of the Giluts'aaw, Ginadoyks, Ginaxangiik, Gispaxlots, Gitandaw, Gitlaan, Gitsiis, Gitwilgyots and Gitzak'aa, are now primarily members of the Lax Kw'alaams (Port Simpson) and Metlakatla Indian Bands. Their territories consist of the lower Skeena River watershed and offshore islands to the north and south of the river mouth.

Each of the original Tsimshian tribes consisted of a number of housegroups (groups of matrilineal relatives). Each housegroup owned under Tsimshian law distinct bounded territories, and the livelihood of resident housegroup members and their dependents was drawn from the resources that they controlled and harvested from those territories, and which they processed, stored, and consumed or traded. Tribes occupied permanent

winter villages, comprised of the large cedar plank houses of a number of housegroups whose territories were in the vicinity. Each housegroup also had seasonal villages and camps at various locations in their territories, in which they resided when harvesting seasonal resources. Each tribe also had camping places on travel routes used regularly during their annual round, such as the route to the oolachen fishery at the mouth of the Nass River, and territories shared by the entire village, such as shellfish beds. The winter villages of the Allied Tribes were originally located along the lower Skeena River, then were relocated to the coast in the area around Metlakatla Pass before the time of contact, the former winter villages becoming seasonal villages for fishing, hunting and berrying. After the Hudson's Bay post was built at Fort Simpson (1834), the camping places of each tribe near the fort became their new winter village sites, and the villages at Metlakatla Pass became seasonal sites for harvesting saltwater foods, while the villages along the Skeena continued to be used seasonally as before.

The several housegroups of a Tsimshian winter village each functioned as independent economic units. They harvested and processed resources from their territories, produced goods, stored necessary supplies for the winter, collaborated in village-wide initiatives, and traded their surplus production with other housegroups, with neighbouring tribes, and throughout a network of more distant trade routes. The safety and security of a housegroup was determined by its social standing, and the paramount goal for a housegroup was to accumulate wealth and elevate the social standing of its highest ranked members (and thus that of the entire group), and to avoid the loss of such prominence once it was attained. Enhanced social status was achieved by hosting public ceremonies at which guests from other groups were feasted and wealth goods were distributed lavishly; failure to make adequate distributions, on the other hand, could result in a loss of status. Thus the rank of a housegroup, and the ranks of individuals within each housegroup, could be elevated (or lowered) depending on success in accumulating wealth and deploying it strategically. Governance of each village and relations with other villages and nations was effected through the feast system, which functioned as the equivalent of

parliament, courthouse, land title office, banking and insurance systems, and social register.

The Tsimshian were heavily dependent on salmon as a staple storage food, and salmon was the core economic resource for their opulent culture. Unique among world societies, the hunting-gathering peoples of the Northwest Coast region did not practice agriculture, but nonetheless owned bounded territories, built sizeable houses in permanent villages, developed elaborate material culture and artistic traditions, governed themselves and coordinated the management of their territories and resources with other communities in the area, and accumulated considerable wealth -- all of this depended on the economy founded on salmon. Well defined property rights and the ability to exercise monopoly control over resources were crucial requisites for the effective functioning of all the complex societies of the Northwest Coast and were highly developed among the Tsimshian tribes.

Salmon runs in the rivers of the region are hugely prolific, but fluctuate widely due to local stream conditions, regular cyclic patterns for each species, and occasional catastrophic disruptions due to floods, landslides or disease. This is especially true for those groups that rely on a single salmon run, particularly on the upper reaches of a river system since terminal fisheries could be bountiful in good years, but could also drop to almost nothing in poor years. Furthermore, each migrating run of salmon presents only a brief window of opportunity at any given place, and it was essential that large quantities be harvested and processed efficiently when they were available.

Within the region, the Tsimshian enjoyed the most reliable access to salmon runs because they could harvest any of the large number of stocks that moved along the coast as well as those bound up the Skeena. Furthermore, with territories in the lower river course and estuary/islands, salmon were abundant in Tsimshian waters for relatively extended periods of the year, while communities at the headwaters had only a few weeks to harvest

and process their catch. The variety of habitats in Tsimshian territories allowed them to employ the widest array of fishing technologies of any group on the entire coast. They also had access to a wide range of other highly valued marine resources that were not available to many of their neighbours, including oolachen, halibut, cod, octopus, crabs, shellfish, seaweed, herring and herring roe, seals and sealions. Every other nation in the area had less reliable access to salmon, shorter periods of salmon abundance, a lesser array of harvest technologies, and fewer alternate food sources. Some foods and resources were very unevenly distributed on the territories of Tsimshian housegroups and villages, or were scarce or entirely unavailable in Tsimshian territories, such as sea otter, marmot, mountain goat, soapberries, spruce gum, dentalium, obsidian, amber and jade.

Extensive trade, including trade in seafoods, was essential to ensure reliable food supplies for the dense populations that characterized the entire region along the coast and the adjacent interior; to sustain the elaborate cultural practices that were distinctive of the Tsimshian and their neighbours; to reduce the frequency of raiding by neighbouring groups experiencing scarcity; and to ensure the very survival of the communities, especially of the interior peoples in the trade network, whose local supplies of salmon were most vulnerable to fluctuations and failures and who had fewer alternate sources of food while living in a harsh climate that necessitated a diet rich in calories and fats. The survival and stability of communities throughout the region depended on trade for food, especially during times of scarcity, and the Tsimshian were the most reliable suppliers. The long-established trade networks along the Northwest Coast and penetrating the adjacent sub-arctic interior sustained dense settled populations with elaborate cultural paraphernalia and performances, far beyond the ceiling of the carrying capacity that would have limited the region if each community had relied only on its own local production. Within their own region the interior Athabaskan peoples had highly developed long-standing networks of trade, and these were linked with the coastal networks, ensuring food security during years of scarcity. Trade networks also

dampened intergroup tensions, lessening the incidence of raiding and warfare in favour of alliances and trade relationships.

Within this rich region the Tsimshian were particularly renowned for their wealth. Wealth is a central theme of Tsimshian culture and many oral histories recount key episodes in which a housegroup accumulated wealth by trading foods from its territory, and the subsequent deployment of that wealth to establish the prestige of the housegroup. Trade was the vital foundation of the culture of wealth that characterized the coastal nations, and was integral to Tsimshian culture. Drucker's classic study of the Northwest Coast characterized them as "The Opulent Tsimshian" and this is apt. The Tsimshian system of ranked social organization, territorial ownership, and governance through public ceremonies requiring the distribution of wealth, all rested on the foundation of extensive trade.

Tsimshian trade networks were extensive, directly reaching the Nisga'a, Southern Tsimshian, Gitksan, Haida, Haisla, Heiltsuk, Tlingit and several Athabaskan tribes of the adjacent southern sub-arctic interior. Goods that were traded included basic foodstuffs, raw materials, craft products, and luxury goods. Their trade networks linked the Tsimshian tribes directly and indirectly with other groups for hundreds of kilometers along the coast and offshore islands, and throughout the watersheds of the great northern salmon rivers reaching thousands of kilometers into the interior: the Stikine, the Nass, the Skeena and the upper reaches of the Fraser. During the fur trade era Tsimshian traders regularly made canoe voyages to Victoria and even Puget Sound for trade, despite the presence of the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Simpson in their own territories; for example, in 1853 then Governor James Douglas reported that there were 3,000 northern Indians (Tsimshian, Haida, etc.) camped near Fort Victoria (HBCA London Correspondence Inward, Victoria (LCIVT), Douglas to Barclay 21 October 1853, A II/74).

Each Tsimshian tribe had established trading partnerships, some of which were exclusive monopolies; others paid tribute to join a trading party. Access to some trade routes was controlled by limiting those who could pass narrow river canyons or move along the ancient grease trails that linked the communities of the region.

The Tsimshian world was impacted by the entrance of European and North American traders during the late eighteenth century, and they quickly exploited this potential source of additional wealth. Chiefs vied for exclusive trading rights, and sought to control access to their interior trading partners, with very considerable success. The Hudson's Bay Company established a trading post at Fort Simpson in 1834, and the Tsimshian economy absorbed huge quantities of trade goods. In 1857 the first missionary, William Duncan, entered the area, and many members of the Tsimshian tribes sought to acquire knowledge and skills by accepting his presence. Various enterprises were set up, including freighting, trading, a fish saltery and a cannery. In the 1860s the Skeena became a route to the interior during the Cariboo gold rush, and Tsimshian canoes freighted parties up the river for hundreds of kilometers. Until the 1870s there were rarely more than a few dozen non-native people in Tsimshian territories at a time, including the personnel of the HBC post, crews on trading vessels, prospectors, and military personnel. When canneries were established in the area on the Nass and Skeena and northern coast beginning in the early 1870s the fishermen and cannery workers were largely Tsimshian, though canners also brought some Chinese and whites from the south for the season each year. There was considerable tension between the Tsimshian and the canners, and within the decade the process of establishing reserves for the Tsimshian began – with the intention of opening up the non-reserved land for settlement. The right to pre-empt land was restricted to white British citizens. The reserves that were established were miniscule, but included traditional fishing sites identified by the Tsimshian. Within a decade however, the government invented the concept of “food fishery” and prohibited the Tsimshian from selling the fish that they took at their traditional sites or using their traditional productive technologies such as traps and weirs.

This gave the white-owned canneries a legalized monopoly on the commercial fisheries and forced Tsimshian fishermen within that system. There were numerous incidents of resistance, including successful demands for royalties paid by canneries to chiefs, but gradually the cash economy became an integral part of Tsimshian lives. Since that time, most Tsimshian people have earned their livelihoods by working in various commercial industries on their lands, such as fishing, trapping and forestry, or by operating small businesses such as stores and freighting, as well as trades and various other occupations. Individuals often combined several economic activities through the course of a year, such as trapping and commercial fishing, and continued to harvest the resources of their territories and often to sell “food fish” on a black market to other natives and settlers alike.

In 1887, after a period of strife with the government and the church, the missionary William Duncan removed to Alaska with hundreds of Tsimshian converts, to establish a new Tsimshian community on Annette Island, which had been reserved for them by the United States government. There they had an exclusive fishing zone and established a number of industries, including a cannery. Most Tsimshian people, however, remained on their territories.

The Tsimshian have never relinquished their territorial or resource rights, which continue to be held by housegroups in the names of their chiefs. Over the past century Tsimshian people established and joined a number of organizations and initiatives to seek redress of the infringement of their territories and resources: the Allied Tribes, the Native Brotherhood, and the Tsimshian Tribal Council all worked for land and resource rights. Petitions, letters and delegations were dispatched, and on several occasions the Tsimshian thought that they had received commitments from government officials to deal with their rights, but there has never been a treaty or reconciliation of Tsimshian ownership with Crown sovereignty.

Despite prohibitions, the sale of fish caught by Tsimshian fishermen outside the commercial license system continued on a large scale. According to one government estimate at least 60,000 salmon per year were sold from the Skeena food fishery alone during the early part of the 20th century, despite the threat of prosecution by fisheries inspectors. (NACRG10 vol. 3908, file 107297-2, Minutes of a Royal Commission at Victoria involving Fishing Privileges of Indians in British Columbia, 1915.) In addition to sales to non-natives, extensive trade in fisheries products continues within and among native communities, especially of delicacies such as smoked and dried fish, grease, abalone, clams and cockles, and herring roe on kelp or hemlock branches, or as dried spawn on kelp. In Tsimshian communities, opinion is generally positive towards those who engage in such sales, though the threat of sanctions against individuals and communities deters many who nonetheless firmly believe that the territories and resources belong to the Tsimshian.

My opinion is based on archaeological reports, linguistic evidence, archival documents from early traders and government officials, ethnographic information from the 19th and 20th centuries, oral histories collected from 1915-1957 that are also now in archives, and my own research on Tsimshian language and culture over the past twenty-eight years.

Sources reviewed in preparing this report comprise the bulk of the primary source / archival material dealing with the Tsimshian, and the most widely cited and respected published works on the topic.

Tab 1: Source Documents: List of Major Sources on Tsimshian Social Organization, Economy and Trade Reviewed for this report.

2. Structure of this Report

The body of this report treats five topics.

Section 3 sets out my opinion regarding Tsimshian social organization, identifying the communities (3.1), the quality of the primary source documentation available for researching these question (3.1.1) and the locations of the tribal villages and territories (3.2), the patterns of group formation (3.3), the interplay of the web of social relationships through the life cycle (3.4), the impact of rank on groups and individuals (3.5) and the pattern of governance (3.6). The description of social organization provided in this report is primarily focussed on Tsimshian society at the prior to and at the point of contact and through the 1850s. Where appropriate, information is provided on changes to those patterns in more recent times, since the imposition of the Indian Act and reserves. The description here is based on data from oral histories, first-hand accounts from from ships' logs and the journals from Fort Simpson, and from the observations of early ethnographers who interviewed the oldest members of the community between the 1880s and 1930s (Niblack, Garfield n.d.), and hence represents the state of Tsimshian social organization and economy in its traditional pre-contact and early contact era.

Section 4 introduces important contextual information for understanding Tsimshian economic organization. Section 4.1 provides evidence that there were substantial variations and fluctuations in the abundance and reliability of resources available to individuals, housegroups, and communities within the Tsimshian trade network, particularly the interior Athabascan groups. Section 4.2 will lay out the evidence that individuals and communities engaged in specialized economic activities.

In Section 5, I will present further evidence on the economic base of Tsimshian society (5.1) and the centrality of salmon fisheries (5.2); the system of ownership and management of territories and resources under Tsimshian law (5.3); the economic function of the elaborate system of crest prerogatives (5.4); economic patterns and practices at the

level of the housegroup (5.5); management of resources (5.6); village-wide economic activities (5.7); and boundaries and hinterlands (5.8). In Section 5.9, I discuss wealth and rank in Tsimshian society, with evidence that the accumulation and tactical deployment of wealth were highly valued cultural objectives and that the survival and success of many Tsimshian housegroups were founded on and sustained through the trade of foodstuffs for wealth.

Section 6 focusses on trade, and will elaborate on the evidence that for hundreds - quite probably thousands - of years the Tsimshian engaged in extensive and far-flung trade of seafoods and other goods, and that trade continued well after the establishment of settler society in Tsimshian territories. Section 6.1 identifies goods that were traded by the Tsimshian. Section 6.2 provides evidence that there was a recognized system of exchange values for various categories of goods. In 6.3 there is evidence on the scope and scale of Tsimshian trade, while 6.4 discusses the persistence of Tsimshian trade well after “contact”.

In Section 7, evidence will be presented that Tsimshian territorial and resource ownership and economic rights were acknowledged by other aboriginal groups and, after the time of contact, by officials of the colonial regime, notably in the process of reserve allocation, in which 'fishing sites' and other significant economic assets were reserved, though subsequent government actions deprived the Tsimshian of the opportunity to earn their livelihoods from them. This section is based on research in both primary sources (Hudson's Bay archives) and secondary sources such as books by authoritative scholars of the period such as Wilson Duff and Robin Fisher.

Section 8 is a brief concluding statement.

Examples of the type of evidence on which my findings are based are included in each section of this report. Selected primary source documents and summaries are tabbed and

cited in my report. Additionally, in the research for this report, key source materials were scanned as image files, and clips of relevant sections from these scans were assembled into a number of topical compilations which are archived on a set of CDs.¹ These compilations were developed and organized in the light of my twenty-eight years of research on Tsimshian language and culture, based on a thorough review of all major sources. The data assembled in these Primary Source Document Compilations thus represents the current state of knowledge about Tsimshian social organization, economy, and trade, and forms the larger evidentiary basis for this report.

Tab 2: List of Primary Source Document Compilations for the Study of Tsimshian Social Organization, Economy and Trade

¹ Anderson, Margaret n.d. Primary Source Document Compilations for the Study of Tsimshian Social Organization, Economy and Trade, on CDs submitted with this report.

Opinion

3. Tsimshian Social Organization

3.1 Identification and Location

Tsimshian communities have been located for millenia on the mainland watersheds and coastal islands from the mouth of the Nass River in the north, to Milbanke Sound in the south, as well as along the lower Skeena. This report specifically discusses the Tsimshian people now known as the Allied Tribes, who may also be referred to as the “Tsimshian proper” or “Coast Tsimshian proper” to distinguish them from the larger grouping that includes the Southern Tsimshian and the Canyon Tsimshian. The Allied Tribes comprise the descendants under Tsimshian law of the Giluts'aaw, Ginadoyks, Ginaxangiik, Gitando, Gitlaan, Gitsiis, Gixpaxloots, Gitwilgyots, and Gitzak² tribes. Their traditional territories are the watershed of the lower Skeena and its tributaries, and the islands between the Skeena and the Nass Rivers. Primary Source Document Compilations 15.F provide detailed information on the territories of each of the Allied Tribes. Tab 3 is the chapter on the Tsimshian in Volume 7 of the Smithsonian Handbook of North American Indians (Suttles 1990), which is an authoritative source, includes a discussion of the Identification and Location of the Tsimshian. Map 1 below from that chapter of the Smithsonian Handbook locates Tsimshian territories and settlements in the nineteenth century.

Tab 3: Halpin, Marjorie and Margaret Seguin [Anderson], *Tsimshian Peoples: Southern Tsimshian, Coast Tsimshian, Nishga, and Gitksan*, pp. 267-285 in *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 7, Northwest Coast*, Wayne Suttles, ed., Volume editor, Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1990.

Map 1: Tsimshian territories and settlements in the mid-nineteenth century, (Halpin and Seguin [Anderson], 1990:268 Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 7, edited by Wayne Suttles, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.).

² There were originally ten Tsimshian tribes in the Lower Skeena region; one tribe, the Gitwilkseba, became so small that the remnants were absorbed by other tribes. The territories of the Gitwilkseba were absorbed by the groups that took in the people. Based on evidence in several *adaawx*, this appears to have taken place during the early contact period, and the depopulation may have been due to an epidemic.

Note that following the usage then current, the term “Tsimshian” as used in the preceding map encompassed the Coast Tsimshian (including the Southern Tsimshian and the Canyon Tsimshian) as well as the Nisga’a and Gitksan. Map 2 provides a more recent summary of the tribes’ original village locations:

Map 2: Martindale in Matson et al 2002:16

Before the time of contact each of the tribes of the Coast Tsimshian proper had a village in the vicinity of Metlakatla Pass, as well as a fishing village and hunting/berrying camps on their upriver territories; Map 3 below shows the villages around Metlakatla. Some areas of the coast were common shared territory used by all the Tsimshian tribes; areas that were exclusive to a single tribe are identified in the tribal territory lists in Primary Source Compilations 15.F.

Map 3: Villages at Metlakatla, Duff Files 044-02-02

The numbers on this map correspond to archaeological sites identified at the time this map was drawn (ca. 1959); since that time, many more archaeological sites have been identified in this area.

After Fort Simpson was built on Tsimshian territory by the Hudson’s Bay Company (1834) each tribe built a new winter village on their former camping site close to the fort; the boundaries between the villages at Port Simpson were lost due to the imposition of rules of patrilineal inheritance, but were still discernable as recently as the 1930s; Map 4 shows Port Simpson with the original village locations.

Map 4: Beynon n.d., Locations of the Tribes at Port Simpson (MS – Ethnical Geography, American Museum of Natural History)

As noted, in addition to their villages at Metlakatla and at Fort Simpson and oolachan fishing camps at the mouth of the Nass River, each tribe had villages along the lower Skeena which were the principal sites for hunting, fishing, berrying, etc. The upriver village sites appeared on Maps 1 and 2 above. Each of these villages was surrounded by tribal territories belonging to the housegroups of the village. The territories of a village often covered the entire watershed of one of the tributaries of the Skeena. The following excerpts are from a manuscript in the Duff Files written by a Tsimshian *sm'ooygyet* (housegroup leader or chief) before 1960. The Chief Kelly³ Manuscript is important because it is one of very few examples of the expanded form of an *adaawx*, including details on territories, resources and economic activities. It is unfortunate that it is extant only in Chief Kelly's English version, but stylistic features of the text even in translation mark it as authentic; its vitality and the exuberance of the language are typical of Tsimshian oral performance. In the following excerpt from his narrative Chief Kelly discusses the movement of his tribe to the coast, coastal and upriver territories, and their uses through the course of each year (see typed text below each scanned image).

Tab 4: Chief Kelly Manuscript from Duff's Tsimshian File

Duff Files 092-05-08 (Chief Kelly Manuscript)

Typed text:...their tribe as member had reported that the neighbouring villages had their locations from the mouth of this river, and farther downstream and up. All these tribes mentioned also had villages along the passages at Metlakatla (Saltwater Passage) and also the countries had been subdivided among them. The sea coast has a different climate than this place in winter time. This place is much colder than that of the coast. The chiefs of Giluts'aaw call a meeting of the tribe. In this gathering the chief stood up and said: "My people, you all know that we are the third generations from our fathers who had first lighted upon this land, whom the unseen guider guided them to this land where to get a full supply of food and lack nothing; now I have decided to firm hold this place and all

³ The Chief Kelly who produced the manuscript has been identified as Victor Kelly, who was trained within the House of Legaic, Gixpaxlo'ots. The copy in Duff's files, annotated "Chief Kelly MS borrowed 1960 W.D." is the only copy of this manuscript located to date.

territories that had been subdivided all around the lake which we had been inherit from our fathers. I had decided to leave this village just as it is, houses and all things; we shall move down towards the mouth of this river, and we shall build another village for winter residence, and in summer we shall return to our former village. We shall have an additional territory.

And when they in company with their neighbouring tribes they knew more about the salt water or coast. This people keep asking their neighbors from the salt water where they get their...

Duff Files 084-04-06-01(Chief Kelly Manuscript)

Typed text: The End of the Fishing Season at Nass Bay

When the fishing season is over, the grease so obtained, the Tsimshian now return to their homes at Metlakatla, from where, during the early summer months, the halibut banks lure the fishermen to obtain a further supply from the ocean's storehouse. They caught halibut of from seventy-five to two hundred and fifty pounds; greedily snap at their rudely constructed wooden hooks, usually baited with a herring, and with oolachan and table fish. They curing the halibut they caught by smoking and sun-drying it for winter use and trading purpose. The seaweed was gathered and dried by the sun, and when gets dry, they made into a square form, and press together; they pile the stones on the top of the box to make it hard; it hard as a plug of tobacco. The herring eggs also gathered, and also dried by sun. All kinds of saltwater food were gathered and well cured both by smoking and sun dried. Here, in a few weeks, not only all necessary for immediate use, but a full supply for the remainder of the year, as well as for trading purposes, is secured. When July comes, it is off again, this time to the old fishing villages on the Skeena River, where their ancestors for centuries have exercised the privilege of catching the red salmon as it is wriggling its way up to its breeding grounds to deposit spawn.

Duff Files 084-04-07-01 (Chief Kelly Manuscript)

Typed text: The Gixpaxlo'ots Tribe's Fishing Villages in Skeena River

There are four fishing villages of the Gixpaxlo'ots people in Skeena River. One name Jolthwaalt, Enamaxlthaqualy, Nescut, and Kitoush. These four fishing stations are very busy all through the summer season, because the red salmon or sockeye comes up here on the middle of July.

So the people of this tribe are busy of catching salmon by using dip net. During the long summer season. These people make all they wanted. They cure by the same old way of smoking them. The salmon heads were smoked, and also their tails too. These red salmon was not only necessary for immediate use, but a full supply for the remainder of

the year, as well as for trading purposes is secured, and the whole family now turns its attentions towards picking and drying the wild berries growing in abundance along the banks of the river.

3.1.1 Quality of the Primary Source Data

The huge quantity and high quality of the data available in archival sources allows for clear answers to the questions posed in this report. The data permit the territories of each tribe to be well delineated, and even the specific territories of each housegroup within the tribes can be mapped from the data in oral histories and archival collections. As an example of the type of material available, the scanned page that appears immediately below is from William Beynon's *Ethnical Geography* manuscript that illustrates the type of evidence available, one of hundreds of such pages of detailed data (see typed text below the image); numerous other examples of primary source data appear throughout this report.

Beynon n.d., *Ethnical Geography* Volume IV:47

Typescript: (original page # 26 of the notebook). The territories on the Skeena at Ginadoyks. Plan III

- A. this was the territory of the Laxgibu house of Saedzen, the name of the territory being Laxpsaa. lax = on; psaa = clay. Owing to the great quantity of clay, hence the name.
- B. The territory of the Ganhada house Niskimae. The name being Wii□gudiin. wii = large, □gudiin = valley
- C. The territory of Nisqaelax, Laxgibu chiefly house.
- D. The territory of Saedzen, which had been given him by the woman the wife of Gamts'up. The name Saedzaen to this house was not rightfully a Laxgibu name, but belonged to the Ganhada house of Moksgamben, Ganhada of the Gitwilgiyots tribe and this was why it was used in this Laxgibu house of the Gitwilgiyots. After the Tsimsiyaen winter villages

were made at Metlakatla Passage, the various tribes would leave at different times in a body to go there for the winter. Formerly they lived in their Skeena villages almost the whole year through. This the Ginadoiks tribe had done and the Laxgibu headman...

Wilson Duff characterized the archival materials for the study of Tsimshian social organization as perhaps the best that exist for any North American group (Duff n.d.). The massive Barbeau Collection at the Centre for Folk Culture Studies is the largest repository, including thousands of pages of primary source documents. An inventory of the materials in this collection, which were deposited by Barbeau and include his own original field notes and those of William Beynon, was published by John Cove in 1982. That inventory, comprising hundreds of pages, identifies the titles of each of the files with information on the contents, source and length. Here is a sample of Cove's list, illustrating the type of information collected by Barbeau and Beynon on Housegroup territories:

B-F-418 Territories

- .1 Description of Tsimshian, Gitsemkalem, Kitselasu and Gitksan boundaries, W. Beynon orig fn, 1927, pp. 6-7.
Informant: Charles Abbott
- .2 list of villages with discussion of territories (ref maps #1, 2, 3), M. Barbeau orig fn, nd, pp. 12-33, typed copy 15 p.
Informant: H. Wallace
- .3 list of trails and communication between Skeena and the coast (ref map 278A Prince Rupert sheet), W. Beynon orig fn, nd, pp. 24-25.
Informant: Unknown
- .4 notes re resource use, W. Beynon orig fn, 1915, pp. 2-4, typed copy 4 p.
Informant: Mrs. Dudoward
- .5 list of Ganhada Houses with personal names and crests, W. Beynon orig fn, 1915, pp. 5-10.
Informant: Mrs. Dudoward
- .6 list of Gitxaxtet territories (ref. map Port Simpson AA), M. Barbeau orig fn, 1926, pp. 12-18 + 2 p.,
Informant: H. Wallace

- .7 list of hunting grounds of the Gitwilgawts, M. Barbeau orig fn, nd, pp. 29-34, typed copy 7 p.
 Informant: Unknown
- .8 list of Tsimshian territories, M. Barbeau orig fn, 1926, 1 p.
 Informant: H. Wallace
- .9 list of Tsimshian Houses with comments, W. Beynon orig fn, 1915, pp. 23-26, typed copy 2 p.
 Informant: Mrs. Dudoward
- .10 list of Gitwilgawts territories, W. Beynon orig fn, vol. VIII, 1926, 13 p.
 Informant: H. Wallace
- .11 list of Port Simpson Houses by lot, W. Beynon orig fn, 1915, pp. 10-25 (ref. map B-8).
 Informant: Unknown
- .12 note re Port Simpson house locations, unknown source, typed note, nd, 1 p. (ref. map B-8).
- .13 note re Wiget crest, W. Beynon orig fn, 1915, 1 p., typed copy 1 p.
 Informant: H. Wallace
- .14 "Hunting territories of the Gitando Tsimshyan" by W. Beynon from orig fn, 1927, typed copy 5 p.
 Informant: Joseph Morrison
- .15 Narrative of the Man taken by Salmon. Complete narrative, W. Beynon orig fn, vol. IV and V, 1927, pp. 44-50, 3-7.
 Informants: J. Morrison and Mrs. J. McKay
- .16 "Strife between the Niskas and Gitlaen against the Gitselas" ms by W. Beynon from orig fn, 1929-30, typed copy 6 p.
 Informant: Mathew Johnson, Gispaxloats
- .17 "Why Sqawaet has no Hunting Territory" ms by W. Beynon from orig fn, nd, typed copy 2 p.
 Informants: Joseph Morrison and Mrs. J. McKay
- .18 "The Origin of Legaix" by A.W. Clark (?), unpublished ms, nd, 2 p.
- .19 "Regarding the Anniversary of the Stone Eagle Crest of the Laxskik House Legyerh, Tsimshyan" ms by W. Beynon from orig fn, nd, typed copy 2 p.
 Informants: Henry Pierce and Mathew Johnson
- .20 note re Native pun, W. Beynon orig fn, nd, p. 52.
 Informant: Unknown

During 1959 Wilson Duff spent a year in Ottawa reviewing the entire contents of this major repository; Duff's notes from that exhaustive research comprise his *Tsimshian File*, a well-organized and thorough summary of these primary data on Tsimshian social

organization and territories. Duff's *Tsimshian File* (n.d.) includes lists of territories for each housegroup of each tribe, as well as maps based on those data for the four Tsimshian tribes closest to the coast. Duff's files do not now include such maps for the remaining tribal territories; if these existed they have now been lost, but there is sufficient information in the lists of territories that he did compile so that the outlines of the territories of the other tribes can be similarly mapped, and so that many of the individual housegroup territories can be identified within those boundaries. Despite his efforts to compile a comprehensive array of data, some of Duff's lists are incomplete, and additional information is available from sources which were not available to Duff, such as Beynon's *Ethnical Geography* manuscript or the thousands of pages of oral histories that Beynon sent to Franz Boas during the late 1930s, as well as from interviews with knowledgeable community members. In a remarkably small number of cases there are conflicting statements in different sources about ownership of specific locations; these may represent unsettled controversies or instances of changes in territories over time by such regular mechanisms as transfers for compensation.

As is evident from the preceding, much of the primary source data for the study of Tsimshian culture is in the form of oral histories and transcriptions of elders recorded by Marius Barbeau and William Beynon. Barbeau was an Oxford-trained anthropologist and folklorist. From 1911 to 1948 he worked at the, then, Museum Branch of the Geological Survey of Canada (which in 1927 became the National Museum, then the National Museum of Man, eventually becoming the Canadian Museum of Civilization). In 1915 he began fieldwork among the Tsimshian, and during that first field season he hired William Beynon as an interpreter, later having Beynon pursue interviews himself. Their collaboration continued for decades, and produced a massive quantity of primary source material which has been reviewed for this report. Barbeau published a number of books and papers on the Tsimshian and their neighbours, but it is the massive archive of fieldnotes produced by his collaboration with Beynon that is his major contribution to the

study of Tsimshian culture. As noted above, Duff spent a year systematically organizing the data in these materials.

Beynon also worked with three other prominent researchers whose work has been reviewed for this report: Viola Garfield, Philip Drucker, and Franz Boas. Garfield relied heavily on Beynon during her fieldwork in Port Simpson during the early 1930s, collecting information on social organization and economy by interviewing the oldest members of the community to elicit information on the pre-contact society. Garfield's publications on Tsimshian ethnography and her fieldnotes are a mix of her own observations, carefully recorded notes on firsthand accounts of the lives of the oldest generation of Tsimshian people alive during the 1930s (some of whom had been initiated prior to the advent of missionization), and oral histories recounted by trained knowledge-holders fluent in Sm'algyax; her fieldnotes are in the archives of the University of Washington and have been reviewed for this report. Drucker was ably assisted by Beynon during a short period of fieldwork in Tsimshian territory, and published a book on the development of the Native Brotherhood of BC as well as a summary of archaeological sites in the area. Later in his career he included a chapter on "The Opulent Tsimshian" in his book on northwest coast cultures, and facilitated a contract for Beynon to develop his own manuscript on Tsimshian geography for the Smithsonian Institution; all of these sources have been reviewed for this report.

Franz Boas had done a brief period of field research in Tsimshian territory in 1888, and later commissioned Henry Tate to send him texts of Tsimshian stories. These were eventually published as *Tsimshian Mythology* (1916). This publication is of less significance however than the series of texts collected by Beynon during the late 1930s at Boas' request. The texts in this collection are largely interlinear, with Sm'algyax and English glosses, and they include many of the Tsimshian *adaawx* or family histories which were not included in Boas' earlier collection from Tate or from Barbeau's fieldwork and these are a research resource of great value. These texts were deposited at Columbia

University Library and unfortunately misplaced for over forty years due to a cataloguing error, but since 1982 have been available on microfilm.⁴ This collection has been reviewed thoroughly for this report.

Tsimshian *adaawx* are key to understanding Tsimshian culture and law (*ayaawx*). Each of the matrilineal housegroups has an *adaawx*, recounting the epic of the family's quest for its own territories, their acquisition of their own land, and their defense of it. These histories are recounted in abbreviated form in the feasts, signifying for the witnesses that the family holds its territories rightfully. A much longer and more complex version is taught to members of the housegroup who are in line for important roles; these longer versions include details of their territories and resources, and the knowledge that they need to know to care for them. The histories also carry information on what other housegroups are related, and as well as the privileges, crests and names that belong to the family. The public recounting of an *adaawx* is a statement of rights and these are affirmed by the guests, and in that public use lies their efficacy under Tsimshian law. When told in a feast, the guests acknowledge the right of the hosts to their *adaawx* and their claims at the feast, rather than the literary merit or literal factuality of all events recounted in an *adaawx*.

A group that could not tell their *adaawx* would be ridiculed with the remark "What is your *adaawx*?" And if you could not give it you were laughed at. "What is your grandmother'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 not ancestral home. You are like a wild animal, you have no abode. *Niye'e* and *adaawx*, grandfather and history, are practically the same thing. (Brown, John, The Tradition of Kwiyaihl of Kispayaks, 1920, in Marius Barbeau and William Beynon, Temlarham: The Land of Plenty on the North Pacific Coast, Barbeau Northwest Coast Files, Ottawa: Folk Culture Centre, Canadian Museum of Civilization, No. 95)

⁴ Beynon's name was misspelled as Benyon in the library's catalogue; the files were stored under poor conditions, and when eventually located by tracing correspondence, the original documents were sacrificed

In telling an *adaawx* it was acceptable to vary the style and, in some contexts, embellish with mythic material to enhance the memorability of the narrative, and there are a large number of the extant versions of the same histories with such minor differences. The story of how the housegroup acquired its rights and territories and passed them down to the present generation remains firm at the core however, and from my own knowledge I can affirm that for fluent speakers of the language who are trained in their culture that history is true. Details about various events in *adaawx* may or may not be confirmable by archaeological or geological research, but under Tsimshian law such external verifiability is not the issue. What matters in Tsimshian law is that the host group's rights are acknowledged and affirmed by its guests when they acknowledge the *adaawx*. For contemporary researchers studying Tsimshian culture, the decision by many of the knowledge holders of previous generations to have Beynon write down their histories is a great benefit. Though a naive reading of English translations of a few *adaawx* may be virtually useless, patient analysis of the entire corpus, reading the information in each document against the ground of the others, allows a reader with knowledge of the Sm'algyax language and Tsimshian culture to recognize intrusive mythic episodes and provides a high degree of confidence in the data that can be extracted.

It is important to bear in mind that the *adaawx* are not focussed on economic activities or trade, but such information is frequently included in narratives incidental to accounts of the acquisition of a privilege or a territory or a migration to a new area, etc. Details of activities and practices included in the *adaawx* are consistent with observations by early explorers, traders and ethnographers and as often shed light on those accounts as vice versa. It should also be noted that *adaawx* are not widely known in communities now, and there are few occasions for them to be publicly recounted. There are now very few Tsimshian people who are able to recount the *adaawx* of their housegroup. The reasons for this include: the loss of the language (there are few speakers under 60), the influence of

in the process of microfilming them.

missionaries and teachers (who preached against Tsimshian culture and promoted patrilineal affiliations over matrilineal, separating people from their matrilineal housegroup's influence); government regulations that forced inheritance of property to pass to widows and children rather than to members of the matrilineal housegroup; residential schools that exacerbated the loss of language and culture; the suppression of the feast system of governance through federal anti-potlatch legislation; and the dislocation of the economy through regulations prohibiting sale of fish and game so that territories and resources could not produce revenue needed to sustain the hereditary system. The generation that provided *adaawx* and other knowledge for Beynon to record foresaw these losses and wanted their histories and knowledge recorded so that they would be kept for future generations. I have personally recorded narratives from fluent speakers who alluded to their desire that their words would be available for future generations, and have heard tape recordings made by Dunn expressing the same attitude. The generations that provided these written and recorded documents have provided an invaluable legacy to researchers as well as to the Tsimshian nation

While the sources described above are the most voluminous primary sources, there are several other significant additional primary materials. Most of these are written observations by explorers, traders or government functionaries, or the descriptive fieldnotes written by ethnographers. These materials must also be read in context and considered in the light of other data, if only because the writers lacked knowledge of the Sm'alg̱yax language and had only a superficial understanding of Tsimshian culture. These handicaps easily lead to misunderstandings and misplaced emphases, but despite these issues these sources are valuable when read against the entire body of available data. One major source is the journals from the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Simpson, now in the company's archives; and another significant archive is the federal government's documents relating to the process of reserve allocation and Indian administration – the "RG10" files.

A few other scholars have produced fieldnotes and/or publications that include primary data: fieldnotes by anthropologist Homer Barnett and linguist John Dunn have both been reviewed for this report, as have publications by Kalervo Oberg (orig. 1939), Aurel Krause, Stephen McNear, Ivan A. Lopatin, and Kenneth Tollefson. The records of several explorers and maritime traders who visited the region have been reviewed. The report to the United States Government by U.S. Naval Ensign Albert P. Niblack on his observations of Southeast Alaska and northern British Columbia over the years 1885-1887 is a notably rich source, and gives substantial information regarding trade between the Tlingit and Tsimshian, as does Emmons.

It should be noted here that the emphasis in most ethnographic studies of the northwest coast in general, and the Tsimshian in particular, has been on social organization, ritual, and the conspicuous consumption displayed in the potlatch complex; there has been little systematic study of the more mundane aspects of the economy of production and trade. However relevant details are frequently included as matter-of-fact statements, albeit often incidental to the point of the publication, and these are reliable. In researching this topic it has been necessary to locate hundreds of single strands of data and weave together a fabric that represents as much as possible the patterns of Tsimshian economy and trade. The *Primary Source Compilations* submitted on CD with this report include information from primary source documents on the key topics in this report; these are the data on which my opinion is based, and will be referenced at appropriate points in my discussion.

In addition to the primary source documents consulted, a number of secondary sources have been reviewed and a list of these is provided with this report. These secondary sources have been invaluable in helping to locate obscure sources and in confirming that my interpretations of the data reviewed are consistent with contemporary scholarship. These include a number of well-researched doctoral dissertations, and several publications by scholars which have been particularly valuable to me for locating sources relevant to the fur trade period and the later period during which canneries were established, reserves

were allocated, and disputes over resources were contested: Berringer, Clayton, Cooper, Dean, Fisher, Halpin, Harris, McDonald, McNeary, Pinkerton, and Tollefson. Each of these adduces substantial primary source material.

3.2 Villages and Territories of Each of the Allied Tribes

In spite of their incompleteness and occasional lack of complete certainty about specific sites, the Barbeau Files and Duff's notes on territories and the maps he compiled provide reliable evidence for the locations and territories of the Tsimshian tribes and the boundaries of each tribe's territories can be accepted with substantial confidence. During the treaty process the Allied Tribes have drawn on the data in the Barbeau Northwest Coast Files to map their traditional territories, but those maps have not been reproduced here. Below are the maps that Duff completed for the Gitwilgyots, Gitzak^{aa}, Gitsiis and Ginadoyks:

Gitwilgyots: "people where kelp" (*gyots* = kelp of the type used for herring spawn); an alternate etymology in one source suggests this name is based on *gyoo*, pl. of *loo*, "to go about trading by canoe". The Gitwilgyots territories were largely on saltwater and the mouth of the Skeena at the Khtada River and the Kwinitza River. Several of the islands in the Skeena mouth were originally owned by Gitwilgyots housegroups, but had become common property used by all the Tsimshian tribes (the Allied Tribes groups):

Laxk'aswaan (Kennedy Island), Kpex[□] (Smith Island) and Ndaalaks (DeHorsey Island), and there is some uncertainty about the precise boundary between Gitwilgyots territory and common territory to the north, but it is apparent that the Gitwilgyots were the original owners of this part of the coast. The shift to common property use evidently occurred after the winter villages of all the tribes had been located in the area of Prince Rupert Harbour and may have pertained to resources that were not easily depleted or didn't require extensive capital to exploit, such as timber and shellfish beds; specific sites such as fish traps may have remained exclusive. Map 5 shows the territories owned by Gitwilgyots housegroups, with Roman numerals as listed in Primary Source Compilation

15F, from the Duff Files (057-02). The Gitwilgyots had several winter and seasonal villages and camps used in common by all the housegroups, numbered on Map 5 from 1 to 17.

Map 5: Gitwilgyots Territories, Duff Files 057-03-01

Gitzak^{aa}: “people of the shrubs (?)”. The Gitzak^{aa} owned the valley of the Ecstall River and several islands as well. Map 6 shows the territories owned by individual housegroups, listed by housegroup in Primary Source Compilation 15F, from the Duff Files. The Gitzak^{aa} had several winter and seasonal villages which were used in common by all the housegroups.

Map 6: Duff Files 062-01-01, Gitzax^{aa} Territories

Gitsiis: “people of the seal traps” (tsiis = seal trap made of wood tied with spruce roots and yellow cedar bark). The Gitsiis owned two tributaries of the lower Skeena, the Kasiks and the Khyex, as well as sections of the main river itself; Wark Channel; Khutzymateen Inlet; and Ts’mkwuun. The separate housegroup territories are identified on Map 7 by Roman numerals corresponding to the rank of the houses as listed in Primary Source Compilation 15F, from Duff’s Tsimshian File 066-02. The Gitsiis had several winter and seasonal villages and camps, numbered on Map 7 from 1-14 corresponding to Duff’s list.

Map 7: Gitsiis Territories, Duff Files 066-01-01

Ginadoyks: “people of the swift water” (doyks = swift water). The Ginadoyks owned the Ginadoyks River valley. Map 8 shows the territories owned by individual Ginadoyks housegroups, listed by housegroup in Primary Source Compilation 15F, from the Duff Files.

The Ginadoyks had several winter and seasonal villages which were used in common by all the housegroups, numbered to correspond to village numbers on Map 8.

Map 8: Duff Files 073-01-01, Ginadoyks Territories

Ginaxangiik: “people of the hemlock” (giik = hemlock). The Ginaxangiik had several winter and seasonal villages which were used in common by all the housegroups; their villages up the Skeena were the village called Ginaxangiik at the mouth of the Shames, with territories along the length of the river reaching almost to the north arm of Wark’s Canal, and another village called Xaydzaks; their village on the Nass was called A□k’usoxs, though another source lists this as Gitando. A territory at the Exchamsiks River had been transferred from the Ginaxangiik by the Gitsiis in compensation for a death but most of their territories were upriver from the Gitsiis on both sides of the river at Tsagayap; the boundary between their territories and the Ginadoyks was a mountain and on the other side to the Ktsmgoot (Zymacord). At Metlakatla the Ginaxangiik village is right at the site of Lax Spa’aws, “Sand Point”, now Pike Island. Duff’s files do not now include a map of the territories of the Ginaxangiik, but see Map 10 below, prepared by William Beynon.

Gitando: “people of the other side” (doo = across). The Gitando owned territories between the Shames and Exstew rivers and a small area opposite the Exstew; they had a village at the mouth of the Shames. The Gitando had winter and seasonal villages used in common by all the housegroups. Duff’s files do not now include a map of the territories of the Gitando, but see Map 10 below, prepared by William Beynon.

Gixpaxlo’ots: “people among the elderberries” (*lo’ots* = elderberries). The Gixpaxlo’ots owned several winter and seasonal villages which were used in common by all the housegroups. Their upriver village was at the mouth of the Zymacord river; they had territories across the Skeena, which increased when the Gitwilksabe became so reduced in

number that the remaining people and their territories were absorbed by their neighbours. Duff's files do not now include a map of the territories of the Gixpaxlo'ots, but see Map 10 below, prepared by William Beynon.

Giluts'aaw: "people of the inside" (ts'aaw = inside). The Giluts'aaw owned the Lakelse River, Lakelse Lake, and most of the streams that empty into the lake. The Giluts'aaw territories were expanded when the Gitwilksabe became so reduced in numbers that they were absorbed by their relatives and their territories were split between the Giluts'aaw and the Gixpaxlo'ots. The Giluts'aaw had several winter and seasonal villages which were used in common by all the housegroups. Duff's files do not now include a map of the territories of the Giluts'aaw, but see Map 10 below, prepared by William Beynon. Maps 9a and 9b here are rough outlines of Giluts'aaw territories from Duff's files and a schematic diagram of the territories of Giluts'aaw clans.

Map 9a: Duff files 093-02-01 Giluts'aaw Territories (circled with dotted line; see below for a schematic map identifying territories by housegroup)

Map 9b: Giluts'aaw Territories, Duff Files 093-02-03

Gitlaan: "people of the canoe stern" (laan = stern). They owned the lower Zymacord river. The Gitlaan had several winter and seasonal villages which were used in common by all the housegroups. Duff's files do not now include a map of the territories of the Gitlaan, but see Map 10 below, prepared by William Beynon.

Map 10 is a representation of Tsimshian territories on the Skeena River, from an unpublished manuscript by William Beynon, Ethnical and Geographical Study of the Ts'msyen; it is useful to compare this to the maps above to identify locations.

Map 10: colour coded territorial map, Beynon n.d., Plan 3 from Beynon's *Ethnical Geography* MS, American Museum of Natural History; key to housegroups appears in that MS; not all territories are included.

The members of the Allied Tribes now reside primarily in Lax Kw'alaams (Port Simpson) and Metlakatla, with a fairly large number of members residing in other villages and in urban communities such as Prince Rupert, Terrace, and Vancouver. Some descendants of these tribes also reside in New Metlakatla, Alaska. Further details on Tsimshian economic organization, outlining the system of ownership and management of territories and resources under Tsimshian law, and economic patterns and practices will be provided in section 4 below.

Readers will have noted that many of the placenames on the maps above have several variant spellings. Tab 5 provides a Synonymy of the various spellings of Tsimshian tribal designations, which is an expansion of the Synonymy in the 1990 Handbook of North American Indians. In this report, the spellings used follow the current orthography used by the Ts'msyen⁵ Sm'algyax Authority, though original spellings are retained in quotations.

Tab 5: A Synonymy of Tsimshian Tribal Designations

3.3 Social Organization: Group Formation

The discussion that follows describes Tsimshian social organization prior to and through the early contact period, prior to the imposition of the Indian Act and reserves, etc. that have distorted the original patterns by imposing patrilineal residence and inheritance.

⁵ The spelling *Tsimshian* has been standard since at least the time that Franz Boas published his series of Tsimshian texts; the language authority has recently opted for the spelling *Ts'msyen* in the current orthography, reflecting the actual pronunciation more accurately. Since most sources use the older spelling it is retained throughout this document except for variants found in quotes.

Under Tsimshian law the original categories are still in force, despite their imperfect realization in everyday life, and these are manifested in such contexts as feasts.

Tsimshian social organization is complex and flexible, and its actual functioning often involves balancing several principles. For example, on the one hand, succession to inherited name-titles is hereditary in principle, while on the other hand, the leadership of each housegroup is responsible for identifying and training the most talented of the young people to succeed to positions of leadership. The principles underlying the system are espoused by all members, but as in any society they may be implemented imperfectly. While matriarchs and councillors in the housegroup have an obligation to select the best qualified successor from several candidates of the appropriate hereditary line, sometimes an ambitious family may attempt to push its children up by seeking big names for them. An inept individual of impeccable lineage should not garner the support needed to claim an important title, but this is no more likely to exclude incompetence than the leadership-selection methods of any other society. For a second example, in principle the boundaries of a housegroup's territories are inviolate, but in practice there are several mechanisms such as compensation payments that facilitate alienation of territory, most often to a more powerful group when it is politically judicious. Understanding the system requires a grasp of a number of distinctive concepts and their interpretations and interactions. The discussion below presents key points in sufficient detail to explicate the basic system; Tabs 3, 6, 7, and 8 are authoritative treatments of Tsimshian social organization, and Tab 4 provides an oral history that treats many of the core topics of Tsimshian social organization and the Tsimshian economy. Additionally, Primary Source Document Compilations 5-8 include a large number of cases that illustrate the operation of the Tsimshian system of social organization.

Tab 6: Marsden, Susan, Margaret Seguin Anderson and Deanna Nyce, "Aboriginals: Tsimshian" in Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples, edited by Paul Robert Magocsi, published for the Multicultural History Society of Ontario by University of Toronto Press, Toronto.

Tab 6: Garfield, Viola E, 1956, *The Tsimshian and Their Neighbours, Part 1 in The Tsimshian: Their Arts and Music, Publications of the American Ethnological Society, XVIII, J.J. Augustin Publisher, New York.*

Tab 7: Garfield, Viola E., 1939, *Tsimshian Clan and Society, University of Washington Publications in Anthropology, Volume 7, no. 3, pp. 167-340: Seattle.*

3.3.1 Housegroups

A Tsimshian individual is by birth a member of his/her mother's matrilineal family group, called a *waap* or House (pl. *wuwaap*); for clarity when referring to the *waap* as a social group in this report it will be called a *housegroup* to distinguish it from the house as a physical structure. Individuals also had a close relationship and lifelong obligations for mutual services with their father's housegroup, their *ksi'waatk* (where you come out from). The housegroup is the primary social and economic unit in Tsimshian society. In earlier times each housegroup maintained a large cedar plank residence in its winter village and the physical building is also called a *waap*. The housegroup owned specific territories and intellectual property such as trading prerogatives, exclusive public performances, crests, dirges and lullabies, and it managed the resources on its territories, implemented various initiatives for the individual and collective well-being and prestige of its members, accumulated wealth and allocated its economic assets to maintain its security and further its ends. The housegroup is lead by a *Sm'ooygyet* (pl. *Sm'gyigyet*) who consulted with councillors (*lekagyet*, pl. *lekagyigyet*) and matriarchs (*sigidmna'ax*, pl. *sigidmnaanax*) in making decisions; the chief did not personally own the territories and resources of his group, but they were held and administered in his name, and his actions could increase their value or put them at risk. The chief received revenue from the territories and from payments for various services such as initiations, and was responsible for the welfare of the housegroup members. All the housegroups of a village/tribe⁶ collaborated on large

⁶ The terms *village* and *tribe* roughly designate the same groupings of people, but in different contexts. A *tribe* is a unit of social organization, comprised of the members of the housegroups of that tribe, while a *village* is the residential unit. Individuals who are members of a tribe may reside outside the tribal village (e.g. in the village of a spouse), while individuals who are not members of a tribe may reside in the tribe's village (e.g. as in-married spouses). In contemporary English some people also use the word *tribe* in

scale projects and village defense, and some economic resources were shared by the entire village.

In a carefully transmitted oral tradition called an *adaawx*, each housegroup traced its origin, the history of its migrations, the acquisition of its present territories, and its relationships with other houses. Episodes in the *adaawx* are commemorated in hereditary names passed on to housegroup members, and in the crest prerogatives that are represented as tatoos, regalia, headdresses, feast dishes, performances, privileges, paraphernalia, housefront paintings and totem poles. The *adaawx* is recounted at feasts before witnesses from other housegroups to establish the validity of the prerogatives of the hosts, and these events reinforce the housegroup's political power and its hold on its territories and resources.

Members of houses that shared ancient origins (and hence much of their *adaawx*) consider each other as "brothers and sisters," whether or not a known direct shared matrilineal ancestor could be identified, and this group could be referred to as *wilnat'aa*. If a housegroup found itself without a fitting successor to a *Sm'ooygyet*, a suitable highborn 'nephew' from a *waap* with the same origin would be sought; this was preferred to taking a lower ranked person even though such a 'nephew' might be genealogically quite distant and/or from a different village entirely. In recent times the links among related houses have weakened, and the emphasis on high rank has been dampened; some housegroups have sanctioned adoption of individuals as members, including adoption by men of their own children (who are always from other clans by birth), and adoptees have been given names in some housegroups, including chiefly names, though this is frowned on by most.

3.3.2 Crestgroups

another sense, to refer to their matrilineal crest group (e.g. the Blackfish tribe) but that usage is avoided in this report.

Each housegroup is a local segment of one of four matrilineal crest groups, (*pdeex*, *pl. bupdeex*), identified by their major crest animals: *Gisbutwada* (Blackfish), *Laxskiik* (Eagle), *Laxkibu* (Wolf) or *Ganhada* (Raven). Housegroups that did not share any common episodes of their *adaawx* might nonetheless be recognized as "brothers and sisters" in the same *pdeex* because the two houses shared crests. For example, *Gisbutwada wuwaap*, whose *adaawx* recounts their migration from *Temlaxam* in the interior to the coast, were recognized as *pdeex*-mates by the *Gisbutwada* already living on the coast, whose *Lax Nagunaks adaawx* describes their coastal origins, because both groups shared crests such as the blackfish and grizzly bear. Because those who were of the same *pdeex* were "brothers and sisters," it was prohibited to marry within this group, even if no actual kinship connection could be traced.⁷ Breach of this prohibition was termed *k'aats*, and such a relationship was a disgrace to the entire housegroup of both the man and woman, but had longer term consequences for the *waap* of the woman as any children of such a liaison would belong to her housegroup. Despite the ignominy attached to *k'aats* marriages, oral histories indicate that in several cases housegroups that had been banished for this offense managed to restore their social position, for example through prowess during a time of warfare, and lavish feasting.

A village might have several housegroups from each crest group, and these were often closely related, having branched off over time from a single original housegroup that had grown too large. There might also be housegroups of a single crest group that did not share their origin, but which nevertheless acknowledged the bond of shared crests. The housegroups were ranked in importance, and supported those of their crest at feasts; each housegroup was free to govern itself, within the context of rank and relationships.

⁷ Conversely, because one's "cross-cousins" (the children of either a person's mother's brothers or father's sisters) were always from a different *pdeex*, marriage to a cross-cousin was legal, and in fact marriage to his mother's brother's daughter was the preferred choice for a chiefly successor; since the young man would eventually succeed his wife's father (and own maternal uncle) as *Sm'oogyet*, such a marriage ensured that the chief's wife was knowledgeable about the House and its members and resources, in the management of which she took an active role.

Because bonds of crest group loyalty cross-cut the bonds of local village origin and residence, the *pdeex* system facilitated inter-community relations by providing a local connection for those who married in to a village, and for travellers, and traders, recognized by their *pdeex* relatives by the crests that they shared. The closely related Nisga'a and Gitksan had the same type of matrilineal crest group system, as did the unrelated neighbouring Haida and Tlingit nations, though each of these groups had only two crest groups rather than four as did the Tsimshian.⁸ The same *pdeex* relationships applied in dealing with people from those groups. The interior Athabascan tribes such as the Tahltan, Tsetsaut and Wetsuwet'en, were also matrilineal, and were integrated into the *pdeex* system, though their crest groups were somewhat differently organized from those of the Tsimshian, as do the Haisla and Heiltsuk people. These relationships were key to Tsimshian trade networks. Intertribal bonds were further cemented by generations of marriages among trading families, which ensured that a family would have reliable speakers of foreign languages as well as hospitality in distant communities. The interlinked system of crest groups, and numerous cultural⁹ and linguistic¹⁰ similarities found throughout the region, indicate that there have been extensive contacts among the nations of the north Pacific coast for hundreds – probably thousands – of years.

3.3.3 Tribes and Villages

A *tribe* is a unit of social organization. Each Tsimshian tribe (*ts'ap*, pl. *ts'ipts'ap*) was comprised of a number of housegroups, from at least two different crestgroups. A village is the residential unit, generally occupied by the members of a *tribe*, plus in-married spouses and their children. Some villages had housegroups from three, or even all four of

⁸ Since the Tlingit and Haida each had two crest groups rather than four, two of the Tsimshian crest groups were aligned with each of the Haida and Tlingit moieties.

⁹ Cultural patterns that are found throughout this region include the system of matrilineal clans, material culture such as fishnets, tools and storage technology, carved poles and masks, dances and secret society performances, ritual paraphernalia, and oral traditions.

¹⁰ While the neighbours of the Tsimshian are from three distinct language families (Haida and Tlingit are Na-Dene, Haisla is a Wakashan language, and the interior groups are Athabascan speakers), the languages of the entire region share numerous features, including similar phonological inventories, morphological characteristics and syntactic patterns, as well as considerable borrowed vocabulary.

the crestgroups. Within each tribe, the *pdeex* that had first settled the area tends to hold the largest territories and have the largest number of housegroups.

Tribes occupied permanent winter villages (*galts'ap*, pl. *galts'ipts'ap*), comprised of the large cedar plank houses of a number of *waap* whose territories were adjacent or nearby. Unlike the related Nisga'a and Gitksan, the Tsimshian had leaders whose authority encompassed the entire village rather than every *sm'oogyet* leading an autonomous housegroup. The village chief or *sm'oogyedm galts'ap* was the chief of the highest ranked housegroup in the tribe. The *sm'gyiyet* and other high-ranking men of the other housegroups in the village served as a councillor class (*lekagyet*, pl. *lekagyiyet*), and were consulted in decision-making, as were the ranking women.

3.4 Life Cycle

Individuals were born into a web of relationships – as a member of their own *pdeex* and *waap*, as a child “coming out of” their father’s *waap*, and eventually as an affine of the *waap* into which s/he marries. Services and payments flowed to and from individuals and their groups and those in specific relationships with them, and these were most highly elaborated for those who were in line for positions of leadership. An individual’s birth was attended by his/her father’s sisters (either actual sisters or other women of his *pdeex*), and ceremonies such as baby name announcement and ear-piercing were performed by the father’s side as well, compensated by generous payments that elevated the prestige of the child. Training, puberty rituals, first presentation in the feasthall, and other elevation ceremonies such as initiation into secret societies also involved reciprocal services and payments. Marriage entails several exchanges of gifts between the housegroups of the couple. This web of relationships and gifts is deepened throughout a lifetime – the adult name of a *sm'oogyet* was announced by representatives from his father’s side, and when a person dies the body is prepared by the father’s side, and funeral contributions are made by those of one’s own *waap*, by the father’s side, and by the family of one’s spouse. While the basic types of relationships and payments apply

to all individuals, those whose families are of high standing take every opportunity to maximize them, thus elevating the status of their children.¹¹ Leaders were expected to have undergone all possible elevations attended by lavish expenditures, and if they were injured or embarrassed their shame was wiped out by distribution of wealth to “shut the mouths” of those who might comment adversely. All told, there were well over a hundred types of economic transactions - contributions, payments and gifts - in addition to sale/purchase and exchange/barter. (see Primary Source Compilation 2-Economy-3a and 3b: Economy Transactions-Payments and Gifts). Lineage, ceremony and wealth were all essential for a high-ranked Tsimshian, and these were woven into a dense fabric with a pattern as complex as that depicted on a dance robe, signified and ratified by expenditures and events witnessed by the entire group.

3.5 Rank

Housegroups and *Sm'gyigyeyt* were ranked in their standings relative to one another; rankings were evident in the order of precedence at public events such as feasts. Higher ranked *Sm'gyigyeyt* were recognized before those of lower rank, received larger payments for services such as initiations and naming, were given larger gifts at feasts, had greater political influence, and had advantages and exclusive prerogatives in trade. High rank was a significant political and economic asset and considerable resources were invested in its acquisition and maintenance. Rank can not be directly correlated to the raw economic value of the territories and resources of a housegroup since wealth could be accumulated by other activities, especially successful trading, as well as through direct resource harvest. For example, all the tribes harvested oolachan, which was the most valued trading commodity, as well as other marine resources; some chiefs spent much of their time engaged in trading these and other products, and in further trades of the goods so obtained. Rank standing could be elevated by effective political activity, especially

¹¹ Tsimshian society included two classes of people who were beneath the system of social ranking: *wah'ayin* are free people whose social status was very low due to a failure to maintain proper standards, or descent from such people; the other category is slaves, who generally came from groups that did not have crest groups.

feasting, which depended on accumulating wealth to distribute. Standing could also fall if a housegroup were not able to host appropriate feasts, or if disreputable behaviour stained the family's reputation and the disgrace were not removed by payment of compensation and/or a 'washing' feast.

3.6 Governance

As indicated above, each housegroup was governed by its own chief, with advice from the *lekagyigyet* councillor class and matriarchs. Each housegroup maintained its own relationships with the other housegroups in its own village, and with its relatives and trading partners in other villages. Important decisions were made after meetings of the housegroup, at which only individuals who had received a name at a feast could speak, though lower-ranked members were not expected to have much influence over the outcome. Unlike the Gitksan and Nisga'a, the Tsimshian acknowledged the authority of a single chief over the entire village; this may reflect the greater need for coordination of activities in the coastal and downriver environment. Each of the housegroups was ranked in order of importance, and the village chief was the chief of the highest ranked housegroup; the chiefs of the other housegroups were ranked in order of their importance below him. The village chief represented the entire group in dealing with other villages, with the advice and support of the other housegroup chiefs. The village chief did not have ownership or authority over the territories or resources of the other housegroups, but the other housegroups from all *pdeex* were obligated to support him in feasting other village chiefs as his success and prestige affected the entire community. The actual power of any tribal chief depended on the wealth and influence that he could amass, and his skills in diplomacy, trade, politics and governance. For further information see Primary Source Compilations 03-Social Organization: 03: Chieftainship.

4. Economy

In Section 4, I will present particulars on the economy of the Tsimshian. Section 4.1 provides evidence that there were substantial variations and fluctuations in the abundance

and reliability of resources available to individuals, housegroups, and communities within the Tsimshian trade network, particularly the interior Athabaskan groups. Section 4.2 will lay out my findings that individuals and communities engaged in specialized economic activities, including trading.

4.1 Economic Context: Resource Variability

On average, the resources on Tsimshian territories were available in abundance, but they were not evenly distributed on the territories of the various tribes and housegroups, and were subject to annual and species-specific cycles, and frequent fluctuations due to weather and occasional diseases or disasters such as landslides. There were also significant differences in the reliability of resource harvests on Tsimshian territories compared to their neighbours.

Despite the wealth of resources in the region, access to these was not evenly distributed among communities or even among the housegroups within a single community, and even in the areas with most plentiful resources there were sometimes periods of scarcity. Each of the Tsimshian villages and neighbouring tribes had specific territorial bases with access to a range of resources. Salmon for storage was generally procured at the mouths of small rivers, and each *waap* either owned or shared ownership of salmon-bearing streams (often tributaries of the Skeena). There were large differences in the available stocks, and in the productivity of the technologies employed at each location. Some Tsimshian communities may have been net "importers" of salmon, while others had large surpluses, and overall the Tsimshian tribes exported large quantities of food in return for furs, hides, horns, interior foods such as soapberries, and other goods.

The Skeena has more abundant runs of salmon than the rivers to the north of it. Additionally, further north there tend to be fewer species of plants and animals, and while these are abundant in their seasons, they are available for shorter periods of time, and are more subject to fluctuations and failures. Furthermore, oolachan was much scarcer north

of the Nass, where the Tsimshian had seasonal camps to harvest oolachan and render grease. Hence, the Tsimshian were advantaged relative to their Tlingit neighbours to the north and had highly valued food products to trade with them.¹²

Groups on the lower courses of large rivers such as the Skeena are insulated from stock failures by their ability to access several stocks from various tributaries as they pass, while groups further up the rivers are liable to suffer total stock failures, at least occasionally; hence, the Tsimshian were advantaged relative to their upriver neighbours and had reliable provisions to trade with them in times of scarcity in the interior.

Similarly, groups on larger river systems with multiple tributaries have more reliable access to stocks than groups relying on smaller rivers with fewer tributaries; hence, the Tsimshian were advantaged relative to their Wakashan-speaking neighbours at Kitamaat and Bella Bella, and had valued provisions to exchange with them.

Finally, salmon runs on shorter island streams tend to be smaller than those of the large mainland watersheds such as the Skeena. Furthermore, there were no oolachan on Haida Gwaii, hence, the Tsimshian were advantaged relative to their Haida neighbours and had valuable foods to trade with them. The Haida on the other hand utilized the larger red cedar that grew on Haida Gwaii for the massive canoes that were their special stock in trade with the Tsimshian and Tlingit.

The Tsimshian were surrounded by trading partners whose resource bases were less productive, or less diverse, or less reliable than those of the Tsimshian. The disparity with the interior is the most notable, since all the other coastal groups were able to fall

¹² [in a discussion of the matrilineal/avunculocal northern social organization shared by the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian] "Suttles (1968:103) reports that "the more northern tribes rely on fewer kinds of plants and animals and get them at fewer places and for shorter times during the year, but in greater concentration, and with consequently greater chance for failure." The environmental difference would tend to favor Hammond's interpretation concerning the avunculocal rule and the concentration of wealth as an aid to survival." (Tollefson 1976:79)

back on shellfish, sea mammals, halibut and other marine resources when salmon were scarce. The interior groups had none of these. The Coast Tsimshian enjoyed a more reliably productive ecosystem than their neighbours in the interior (where the salmon runs were frequently hugely productive, but were much more vulnerable to catastrophic failures). Abundance of game animals in the interior was also subject to fluctuation; rabbits for example tend to achieve a peak population every seven years, followed by a crash in numbers caused by epidemic disease. Those groups that exploited the lower sections of large river systems such as the Skeena in Tsimshian territory generally had reliable resource bases, while those exploiting island or interior riverine resources only were vulnerable to occasional stock failures, even before the onset of commercial logging and fishing which have so damaged some stocks. Furthermore, the Athabascans who inhabited the upper Skeena watershed to the interior of the Tsimshian were involved in an interior trade network with their neighbours who occupied the upper Fraser watershed, and the upper Fraser runs were even more vulnerable to catastrophic failure than those of the upper Skeena.

For primary source information on this topic see [Anderson, n.d., Primary Source Compilations 02: Economy 01: Resources-Variability](#)

4.1.1 Fluctuations in Resources

While the Coast Tsimshian had the richest and most reliable ecosystem in the region and were advantaged relative to all of their neighbours, even their salmon runs sometimes failed. Since each run has its own cycle and its own spawning area, local stock failures impacted villages and housegroups unevenly. This was one of the bases of inter-group trade within and among Tsimshian villages. In Tsimshian territories salmon were usually abundant, but for any given housegroup or tribe the supply from their own fishing sites might be inadequate during one of the years in which their stocks were in a low point of their cycle. They then could also draw on other resources, such as halibut, sea mammals and shellfish, and these could be traded to augment the winter supply of dried salmon. Tribes in the interior had fewer options as they had no direct access to alternate species

from marine environments, and sometimes experienced famines. A complex network of food sharing and trade in the interior buffered the impacts of local shortages.

An additional factor that sometimes exacerbated food shortages was conflict – feuds and raiding. It is generally agreed that the trade system that had developed over several millenia in the region served to minimize armed hostilities, as did the complex web of intergroup relationships and the feast system, which facilitated settlement of feuds through compensation rather than feuds. But despite this, the *adaawx* record incidents of both feuds and raids, and sometimes these precipitated famines and this is acknowledged in both scholarly and non-specialist accounts of the region, as is apparent in the following quotations from two non-specialists (Pearse and Meggs), a well-researched Phd dissertation (Dean), and one academic specialist on Tsimshian economy (McDonald):

Salmon were usually abundant, but in low-cycle years they were sometimes insufficient for winter food supplies. At such times coastal tribes could turn to groundfish and shellfish to meet their needs, but interior tribes occasionally suffered hunger and starvation. And even in years of abundance tribal wars sometimes prevented harvests of available stocks. (Pearse 1982:173)

Another popular account by Meggs also notes that settlers soon took advantage of the trade system to access supplies of salmon, and he also draws on the records of the interior posts of the Hudson's Bay Company in noting that the interior groups (and white traders) often had to trade with groups on the Skeena to obtain a supply of salmon:

The cycles of dearth and plenty were not obvious to the first Europeans on the coast, who witnessed the salmon return to the region's rivers in staggering abundance. To the earliest explorers and fur traders, salmon seemed as commonplace and as easy to obtain as fresh water or clean air. Finding their fishing skills inadequate, they relied on the native indians for ample supplies of cheap salmon, sometimes simply taking what provident communities had stored. Often even this was not enough. Hudson's Bay Company traders seeking to establish permanent posts in the interior found to their dismay that the Fraser's northernmost runs often failed. Sockeye available in barter from native people fishing on the Skeena was essential to the traders' survival. (Meggs 1991:11)

A dissertation by J. Dean draws on data from the post records of the Hudson's Bay Company for 1857, including a comment on salmon scarcity upriver:

[1857] In addition to Legaic and his daughter, nobleman Niswamenk also traveled inland, and reported to McNeill that salmon were scarce upriver this summer. The Kitselas and Gispaxlots were now trading briskly, and moving 'to and fro' between the fort and the Skeena, indicating that both of these villages were important factors in the trade of the Fort Simpson hinterland. (Dean 1993: 531)

McDonald notes only one year of absolute salmon scarcity on the Skeena, but local scarcities occurred more frequently and are well attested in oral histories cited below. As he notes here, in years of local scarcity, trade averted starvation as it did during the widespread shortage in 1863.

Originally, fish seem to have been plentiful on the Skeena. Not only were the salmon runs large (to judge from early escapement figures) but their four year cycles are not synchronized across species so that cyclical patterns of scarcity did not occur. These are points noted by the early fishery officers who remarked in 1889 (Canada, Department of Fisheries, Annual Reports 1889:257) that there had not been a salmon shortage on the Skeena since 1863, and that then scarcity had been avoided through trade." (McDonald 1985:132)

For a compilation of primary source information relevant to this topic see Anderson, n.d. Primary Source Compilations 3.1: Economy: Resources: variability of access by village & house; scarcity, famine.

4.2 Specialization

Variability in resource distribution and fluctuations in abundance provided strong incentives for trade as a fallback when local stocks failed, and also for the development of local specializations and trade in provisions. While a Tsimshian village could have managed a subsistence lifestyle on the resources from their own territories, the population density and distinctive patterns of Tsimshian culture, including the use of wealth distributions for political and judicial purposes, required access to a wide array of trade goods, and especially to the large amounts of wealth that could be accumulated by trading coastal foods to interior tribes. As discussed above, wealth was essential for distributions at feasts which were required to 'notarize' the inheritance of territories, and for proper

resource management. Wealth was also strategically deployed to bind allies and to defend territories and resources from rivals.

Within communities, many individuals specialized in providing services and in the production of various commodities, either full-time or part-time. Some communities exported specialty products, and in these the proportion of specialist labour might be high.

Chiefs supported a wide range of specialists. These individuals carved and painted the symbols of chiefly authority, composed songs and dances for their ceremonies, healed kinfolk, brought spiritual blessings from the other world, filled the ranks of war parties and hunting and fishing expeditions, processed foodstuffs, and wove blankets, hats, and other emblems of power. Followers of powerful chiefs enjoyed an exciting cosmopolitan life punctuated with feasts, travel, trade, adventure, and remarkable aesthetic achievement. (Grumet 1982:30)

While accurate economic statistics about inter-community trade in aboriginal products are not available, specialist activity probably comprised over half of the overall economic activity in every community, varying in intensity over the course of the annual cycle. This level of specialization is indicative of a trade economy rather than a subsistence one. The following specializations are known:

- Chiefs were virtually full-time specialists, and their advisors and associates were full-time or part-time specialists, in governance, territorial and resource management, economic planning, community administration, and management of inter-group relations (including through trade and the feast system). Every housegroup and every community had such specialists.

For numerous examples, see Anderson, n.d., [Primary Source Compilations: 3.2 - Social Organization, Chieftainship](#)

- Some chiefs had particularly extensive trade activities and exclusive trade prerogatives, and, with their supporters, engaged in intra-group trade on an intensive and specialized basis, including as middlemen for other groups.

Beynon n.d., Ethnical Geography Volume 1:6

Typed text: Trading privileges to other tribes were controlled by the tribal chiefs who exacted tribute from any excepting his own immediate family for trading privileges to areas which were under his control. These rights were taken by giving a feast and distributing wealth, thus proclaiming the rights assumed at the feast. For instance, Legex, the eagle clan head chief of the Gispaxlo'ots had proclaimed to all the tribes that he had exclusive trading privileges to the upper Skeena or Gitkcan and the Hagwilget tribes. This was adopted at a feast given by Legex. When anyone was caught trading they were severely dealt with (see trade wars). Nearly every tribe had trade privileges. These trading privileges were one of the economic revenue of each tribal chief. Other sources of ...

Beynon n.d., Ethnical Geography Volume IV:10

Typed text: "Niis'e□nets and Gemk (1 & 2 above) had as their origin the same common origin as the royal group from Temlax'am. Their foreign relatives being Gaimtkwa, lekaget, gispawudwada of Gitxaa□a. Their exclusive trading privilege being the Chilkat people, where they traded canoes for chilkat blankets.

For additional examples see Anderson, n.d., Primary Source Compilations: 2.5 - Economy, Trading Privileges and Monopolies

- High-prestige types of hunting, such as sea mammal or mountain goat hunting, were also specializations of the highest ranked men and/or those who owned such territories.
- Defense and offensive raiding were pursued by war leaders, quite intensively at some points in history; during such periods those individuals would have been virtually full-time specialists, and their supporters part-time specialists.
- Various types of *halayt* or shamans specialized part-time in such activities as astrological observation and forecasting of harvests, diagnosis and healing, and ceremonial activities.

- The *gitsontk* were part-time specialist producers of ceremonial paraphernalia for secret societies and various *halayt* performances. Well-known shamans might provide services for a number of communities and their specialization might be full-time during that part of their careers.
- Carvers of several types specialized in the production of canoes, totem poles, paddles, kerfed boxes and bowls, ceremonial serving containers, masks, rattles, drums, horn spoons, etc.; none of these was necessarily a full-time occupation, but in many cases they apparently occupied the bulk of the artist's time; many such specialists travelled to provide services in other communities (e.g. totem pole carvers). Some carved objects were reputed to be specialty products of particular communities, such as the Nass River carvers who were known as producers of the raven rattles used by chiefs.
- Weavers produced utilitarian and ceremonial goods from the inner bark of cedars and/or spruce roots: baskets, packstraps, mats, hats, cloaks, and dancing blankets (these were woven on cedar bark warps with mountain goat wool wefts). Ropes were produced from cedarbark and several other materials and fishing nets were woven from fireweed and nettle fibers. Weaving was generally done by women, and older women particularly might spend a large proportion of their time in obtaining and processing raw materials and producing woven objects. Some objects required a large labour investment – woven cedarbark/goat wool Chilkat blankets for example are said to require a year of full-time work by a skilled weaver. While there were weavers in every community, variations in local styles encouraged trade in such items as baskets, blankets and nets.

For further information on specialization see Anderson, n.d., Primary Source Compilations: 2.2 - Economy, Specialization (cited above)

The special products traded by various communities were well known. In the list of names of the Gitksan House of *Hood*, one of the *naxnox* names alludes to the trade of herring spawn by *Gitzakʔaaʔi* people. *Naxnox* names are a special set of names that are

dramatized in ‘skits’ during ceremonial events. They are owned privileges, and are used for entertainment and a demonstration of power and wealth. They often involve an element of a guessing game, in which the guests must identify the *naxnox* that is presented; there are three types: those that dramatize visual images in chiefly names (e.g. ‘threatening’, ‘throwing stones’); those that represent negative characteristics that are overcome by the power of the chiefs during the dramatization (e.g. ‘poor slave woman’, ‘always crying’); and those that epitomize characteristics of a group (e.g. Haida, whiteman). The latter type is seen in the role of the *GitzakNaaN* in the trade of herring spawn in the following performance:

GitzaxNeN, a *naxnoq* name. The performer, wearing a mask and an old type conical hat, impersonated a woman of the *gitzaxNeN* tribe and tried to sell herring spawn to the assembled chiefs. (Duff, Tsimshian File:118-03-07-01)

Thus, the Gitksan represented the *GitzakNaaN*, one of the Allied Tsimshian tribes, by allusion to their ubiquitous trade.

5. Economic Organization

Section 5 is a review of Tsimshian economic organization, outlining the system of ownership and management of territories and resources, and economic patterns and practices. Section 5.1 discusses the economic base. In 5.2, I provide additional information on Tsimshian fisheries. Section 5.3 focusses on the ownership of territories by housegroups, the status of hinterlands, and the economic rights of non-owners. In section 5.4, I discuss the economic function of crests, and section 5.5 addresses *waap* economic activity. Management of resources is discussed in section 5.6, and village-level economic activities and shared economic assets are covered in section 5.7. Section 5.8 addresses territorial boundaries. Finally, in Section 5.9, I will provide evidence that the accumulation and tactical deployment of wealth were highly valued cultural objectives and that the survival and success of many Tsimshian housegroups were founded on and sustained through the trade of foodstuffs for wealth.

5.1. The Economic Base

The economy of the Tsimshian was based on fishing, hunting, and the harvest of plant products from the territories of each *waap* and shared village use areas; careful processing and storage of the preserved products; and strategic deployment of surplus production in feasting and trade. Housegroup members also engaged in the production of tools, utensils, weapons, ropes, nets, storage containers, serving dishes, woven mats, baskets and clothing from raw materials such as the inner bark of cedar and from roots, hides, furs, horns, etc.; building fish traps, carving small and large canoes, building large permanent cedar plank houses, carving ceremonial objects such as masks and rattles, and trading excursions, among other activities.

Management of the resources to ensure both conservation and surplus for trade was only feasible because the territories were owned and actively managed. Each group followed practices that had been established over generations to ensure that the fisheries would be sustainable and that groups farther up the river systems would also be able to fish without endangering the critical escapement for spawning. Intertribal trade was only feasible with an established land tenure system, and this had been in place for centuries before Europeans entered the area.

5.2. Salmon and Other Fisheries

The most important resource, and the foundation of the distinctive culture of the Tsimshian, was salmon. The development of the technology to harvest, dry, store and transport salmon (and its essential condiment, oil from fish or sea mammals) was the necessary prerequisite to the emergence of the complex cultures of the northern coast of what is now British Columbia. This technology provided the economic base on which the Tsimshian established a rich culture based on wealth accrued through the harvest and trade of food and other materials from the productive territories that were owned by each matrilineal House. The people of this entire region have been dubbed “salmon people” and this characterization is apt. Preserved fish products were the staple storage foods

consumed when fresh game and fish was unavailable, and were also necessary for both feasting and trade.

In appendices to her 1982 study of pre-contact salmon technologies, Berringer identifies sources for information about which technology complexes were utilized by various language groups. Eleven salmon technology complexes were used by the Tsimshian-speaking peoples: trolling, seining with nettle fibre nets, trawling, gaffing, gill nets, several types of river mouth traps, tidal traps, weirs, and dip nets. The Tsimshian had the most diverse technology inventory of all the salmon-harvesting groups in her study.

There are major ranking rivers, the Nass, Skeena, Fraser and Columbia systems... The advantage that obtained to riverine communities with access to the most productive Northwest Coast resource areas have already been elaborated. People who lived in the lower courses of major rivers could intercept runs bound for streams at higher levels, thereby tapping the abundance of the entire watershed system. The occurrence of coincident runs of various species and stocks provided lower river people with an extended period of time to exploit the resource; from June to November serial and concurrent runs of salmon migrated through their fisheries. In the Nass and Skeena Rivers the season ends in late September - early October. Because of the nature of salmon populations, including the dependant and compensatory characteristics that affect the size of spawning stocks, major river systems in their lower concourse are less susceptible to resource variation (note 9). In addition to the abundant salmon resources available in the main part of the river, user-groups also had access to the resources in tributary streams and rivers. There is a correlation between high resource availability and the number of salmon technology complexes used: thus, Halkomelem people - 10; Tsimshian people - 11; and the Chinook, who had no access to a maritime fishery in the open Pacific, used 6 out of a possible 9. (Berringer 1982:203)

Of course not every technology was useful at every fishing site, so that each site was exploited with the most appropriate specialized gear. This amplified the differences in the timing of harvests and the type of processed product available from the different Tsimshian tribes. In addition to all species of salmon, a wide array of fauna was harvested for consumption as food or raw materials for manufactures, as well as for storage and/or trade. For an account of the harvest of several types of resources see

excerpt from Chief Kelly's Manuscript in section 3 above. Resources harvested included at least the following:

- salmon, halibut, flounder, cod (black cod, grey cod), red snapper, shark/dogfish, sturgeon, herring, oolachan, trout, and freshwater eels;
- cockles, several varieties of clams, mussels, abalone, sea cucumber, crabs, octopus, sea urchins, and chitons (several types, usually called *sea prunes* or *china slippers* in English by Tsimshian people);
- several species of sea mammals: seals, sea otters, sea lions; whale were not hunted, but beached whales were rendered for oil and whalebone was used for some purposes;
- several species of land animals: black bear, kermode bear, grizzly bear, beaver, marten, mink, wolf, fox, land otter, groundhog, mountain goat, deer, moose, porcupine;
- several species of ducks, geese, and swans and the eggs of seagull and other birds; birds taken for down, feathers, and beaks, etc.: eagle, kingfisher, puffin;
- cedar wood, withes and bark, spruce wood and roots, alder wood and bark, yew wood; the cambium of several species harvested in large quantities as a sweet food for storage and trade: balsam, fir, hemlock;
- all species of berries: salmonberries, several types of 'blueberries,' salal, thimbleberries, highbush cranberries, elderberries; wild crabapples; and a variety of shoots: cow parsnip, salmonberry and other berry shoots; several species of roots: licorice fern, other ferns, clover, chocolate lily bulblets now known as 'Indian rice';
- kelp and several varieties of seaweed; and various plants and plant parts such as nettles and fireweed (used for fibre); lichens, and medicinal plants such as devilsclub, water lily, and poisonroot

Note that this list is not exhaustive; in many sources specific plants and animals are not identified, subsumed instead as “seafoods” or “foods”.

Linguist John Dunn taped a knowledgeable elder, Kathleen Vickers, in Kitkatla in 1968, describing the harvest, processing and trade in foods when she was young.¹³ An audio clip of this recording is included in the primary source documents submitted with this report. Vickers describes the harvest of many of the species in the summary lists above:

Wati, dm ma□du txa'nii goo wil su wikwantga di gabm da txax k'üülda k'oo□. Ksgooga wineeya gabm da □a wil goyt'iksa 'wäh 'wäh □a wil goyt'iksa su 'wäh.	Well, I am going to tell you everything that we would harvest over the entire year. The first food we would eat was when the oolichans come oolichans, when the new oolichans come.
Ada dip wil gyiikt, 'wagayt 'waatgida da Kluusms, 'nii wil 'waatgit. Ada dip wil gyiikt ada dip sigüüngit ada dip simoondit.	And we would buy them that come from the Nass River, that's where they come from. And we would buy them and dry them and we would salt them.
La 'nii'nii taym gwa'a si waata k'amksiwah gwaay□ spring, ada dip siwaadida gooym, ada wil goyt'iksa xs'waanx. Ada dip sigüünaga xs'waanx ada dip simoondit.	Then it is at this time what the white people call spring, and we call it <i>gooym</i> , then the herring eggs would come. And we would dry the herring eggs and we would salt them.
Adayk wil di goyt'iksa □a'ask a dawil dip g□□□ □a'ask, ada dip sig□□nagit.	And then seaweed would come and we would pick seaweed, and we would dry it.
La sabaa gooym gwa'a da wil g'oyt'iksa suunt, siwaata k'amksiwah da□ summer, wayi suunt dip siwaadit. Ada wil goyt'iksa hoon. Ada dip g□□□ hoon. Ada dip sig□□nat, si ksits'altm hoon ada dip dzardit 'nii waalm da su hoon, dzartm.	When it was the end of spring and then comes summer, what the white people call summer, that is what we call <i>suunt</i> . And then the fish would come. And we would catch fish. And we would dry them, and we would half smoke the fish and we would jar the fish This is what we did with fresh fish, we jarred them.
Ada dip g□□□ maaym suunt ada dip lu dadoodida dzars. Ada dip gyik g□□□ bilhaam suunt ada dm gyik sig□□nit, ada dip gyik lu dadoodida dzars, □a wil sabaan suunt.	And we would pick summer berries and we would put them into jars. And we would also pick summer abalone and we would dry them, and we would also put them into jars when the summer ended.
Ada goyt'iksa siwaata k'amksiwah da□ fall ksuut dip di siwaadit.	And then came what the white man calls fall and we call it <i>ksuut</i> .

¹³ Dunn transcribed this text in his field notebooks, and the transcription and translation were checked and confirmed during 2005 by a team of researchers and fluent speakers. This latter work was completed with funding awarded to Margaret Seguin Anderson, Principal Investigator as a 3-year grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, *The Spoken Land: Understanding Tsimshian Adawx (oral traditions)*, grant number 410-2003-0237, in the amount of \$194,700; fluent speakers who confirmed this text include: Marjorie Brown, Sampson Collinson, Theresa Lowther, Velna Nelson and Fred Ridley, working with John Dunn and Margaret Anderson.

<p>Ła wil goyt'iksa <i>autumn</i> daya k'amksiwah, ksuut ada wil dip gūül txa'nii goo, luwaalm ts'm aks, ts'a'ax, sigüünatm tsa'ax. Ada dip sagüünaga gaboox, ada dip gūül gyels. Txa'nii luwaalm ts'm aks, 'nii gūülm.</p>	<p>Then cam autumn what the white people call fall and we would harvest everything, things in the ocean, clams, we dried the clams. And we would dry cockles, and we would pick mussels. Everything that lives in the ocean, that's what we would harvest.</p>
<p>Ła sabaa suunt ada wil goyt'iksa siwattm da□ ksuut siwaata k'amksiwahya□ <i>fall</i>, gwa'a ada dip wil gūül gaboox, ts'a'a, txa'nii goo gūülm gwa'a. Ła sabaa gwii ada dip wil gūül.</p>	<p>When summer is over and then what we called fall would arrive this is what the white people called fall and we would gather cockles, clams, everything we would harvest here. When that's finished then we harvest.□</p>
<p>Goyt'iksa goomsm □a wil yaa maadm. A dawil dip gabbit, txa'nii goo nah gūülm a galksa k'oo□ gwa'a.</p>	<p>Then came winter when the snow falls. And then we would eat it, everything we harvested through the year.</p>
<p>Ada txa'nii goo smgyit man wineeya, gabm: 'wäh, xs'waanx, hoon, ada txa'nii goo lu waaldida ts'm aks sm gyit man wineeya da k'am.</p>	<p>And everything was precious food to us, that we ate: oolichans, herring eggs, fish, and everything that was in the sea was highly valued food to us.</p>
<p>Ada a□gadi di ksa lip gaba gwa'a Ksi lisityaawtm di□ wineeyam Gitksan ada wineeyam k'ala Nisga'a. 'Nii dip wil ksi lisityaawda wineeya goo gūülm da lax moon. Ada dip wilt, □awil sabaa txa'nii goo.</p>	<p>And we would not only eat these ourselves. We would trade them for Gitksan foods and foods from the Nass. These are who we traded food with the things that we harvested from the sea. And we would do so after everything was gone.</p>
<p>Ada wil txa'nii sm man wineeya gwa'a nah □a me□du. Txa'niis dip 'nüüsm in 'nax'nuu amhawyu, Da sm k'oomtga goodu ada dm di xbagaatga wineeya gway'ya k'am Dm k'ap gabm. 'Nii sgabuu hawyu gwii.</p>	<p>And all these are precious foods I have explained to you. All of you who hear my voice, my dearest wish is that these foods never get taken away from us. We will eat them. This is all I have to say.</p>

Harvest of all of the species listed above is evident in the archaeological record and/or oral traditions, and with only a few exceptions (e.g. rendering of drift whales), continues to be practiced to the present day by at least a few community members. Note that in the Vickers' text the speaker is describing the practices in her own youth (the early decades of the twentieth century), and that she refers to fish and berries being preserved by jarring as well as by drying and salting, and that she also refers to trade of Tsimshian foods for those of the Nisga'a and Gitksan. In the present day, harvest of seaweed, fish and shellfish - salmon, halibut, cod, oolachan to eat fresh or smoked or to make grease, herring

roe, clams and cockles - is widespread and these products are often sold or traded. On the other end of the spectrum, only a few artists take cedar bark for weaving, and such vegetation as *kšiiw* (scraped balsam or hemlock cambium), cow parsnip, roots, and shoots is a rare treat. I have observed harvest, preparation and trade or sale of almost all of these items within the past twenty-eight years.

For additional examples and documentation regarding species harvested see Anderson n.d. Primary Source Compilations 2.7: Economy: Production, Storage, Transport; Species Harvested.

5.3 Housegroup Ownership of Territories

Each *waap* / housegroup owned under Tsimshian law distinct bounded territories, and the livelihood of the housegroup members and their dependents was drawn from the resources that they harvested from those territories and which they processed, stored, and consumed or traded. The general locations of the territories of each of the Allied Tsimshian villages is provided above in section 3.3.

In the 1890s the ethnographer A.P. Niblack summarized the patterns of family ownership of territory among Northwest Coast Indians, based on three seasons of survey work in northwestern British Columbia and southeastern Alaska with the US Navy (in which he was an ensign):

The whole of the territory on the northwest coast adjacent to the Indian villages is proportioned out amongst the different families or households as hunting, fishing, and berrying grounds, and handed down from generation to generation and recognized as personal property. Privilege for an Indian other than the owner, to hunt, fish, or gather berries can only be secured by payment. Each stream has its owners, whose summercamp, often of a permanent nature, can be seen where the salmon run in greatest abundance. Often such streams are held in severalty by two or more families with equal privilege of fishing. (Niblack 1890:298)

Aboriginal ownership systems gave clear rights to resources, and were especially clear on property rights to fish. Pinkerton summarizes the patterns for the coast:

Although aboriginal social organization varied from group to group, property rights over fish were generally vested in the kin-based corporate group or extended family. For example, among central and northern coastal tribes, the corporate group owned advantageous fishing sites such as river mouths and the weirs or fences constructed there. Among upriver and southern groups, smaller units owned fishing sites from which traps or nets were projected (Suttles, 1960; Maud, 1978; Cove 1982). The more or less hierarchically differentiated head of the group had first rights of access and regulated other members' access to the site, ideally ensuring equity as well as conservation. [note 1 here: In some cases, weirs or traps were built by the whole community, with no distinction in access. However, in these cases, the houses standing at the weir sites, which were necessary for smoking the catch, were owned by individuals or extended families (Suttles, 1960). Thus these individuals indirectly regulated access. There is also variation in whether ownership of fishing sites is vested in the group as a collectivity or in the highest ranked member of the group (Riches, 1979). In either case, access of group members is regulated. Descriptions of California Indians' regulation of access to salmon weirs strongly suggests that the ritual specialists who directed the timing of fishing were practising conscious conservation (Swezey and Heizer, 1977). Tlingits in southeast Alaska refused to continue fishing for a cannery in 1907 "for conservation reasons" at a time when their systems of property rights to the fish was still intact (Rogers, 1979).] Thus, an entirely open-access "common property" situation never prevailed in the Indian fishery, nor does it today in the Indian "food" fishery, in which Indian groups continue to fish for subsistence according to traditional rights. Communal property (as defined in Chapter 1) might be a more appropriate description.

(Pinkerton 1987:250)

The concept of ownership under Tsimshian law (*ayaawx*) had characteristics tantamount to those that I understand define fee simple title in our contemporary legal system, but corporately held by matrilineal groups in the name of the group leader. Under Tsimshian law the concept of territorial ownership had the following characteristics: the right to exclude others, the right to use and allocate resources, and, if they chose to do so, the right to alienate their own title, which was generally done only as compensation to avoid war, or to incorporate a related group into their village. There were established mechanisms for sharing resources in return for payment. Tsimshian ownership patterns are thoroughly documented in voluminous archival records, and have been described by ethnographers for over a century (Niblack, Boas, Barbeau, Garfield). The following excerpts from primary source materials include examples of each of these characteristics.

The Chief Kelly Manuscript includes this statement regarding the nature of Tsimshian ownership:

Duff Files 094-10-01-01 (Chief Kelly Manuscript)

Typed text: The territory of Wals and Neyaswagsanalthga where the Gitlaan tribe established their village known as Laxlickstamgaldjap. The whole people of Kitlan lived in this village. Within the said boundary, each family had their own piece of land or territory in which they pick berries at fall time. From time immemorial this tribe have in the undisputed possession of the land within their boundary. They have lived and hunted upon it, fished in the streams that run on it, harvested the berries and all kind of different berries, and build their houses and made their fire wood from its timber, and their fathers are buried underneath its soil. It has been handed down from uncle to nephew from time immemorial to this present time. The two chiefs mention above were governed within the boundary of his tribe's

Duff Files 094-10-01-02 (Chief Kelly Manuscript)

Typed text: territory as well as other tribes does. In those early days, every tribe had an oral law which governed the people of all the tribes all along the Skeena River long time before the white man advent among them. The law is as follows: No one or family from the other tribes shall work within the boundary of the other tribe without the consent of the chief or with the ownership of the said territory. shall be exterminated. So if any one have found from the other tribes working with the permission of the chief that governed within the boundary shall not be in trouble. So all the people from the other tribes had enjoyment to work with the people of the other tribe as long as they have the permission of the Chief or the man who owns the land. There are many a good laws which governed the Tsimshian people in the early history of their races which they accepted very strickly in those early days. So there is no confusion existed among them. All the Tsimshians tribes which situated along the banks of the Skeena River are far in advance than any other Indians of the Coast. They have not the roving disposition, nor the nomadic habits; as, the nomadic tribes of Asia. They are, as a rule, industrious, frugal, and self-supporting and never been ask any highest, with the Haidas a close second. They love not to fight with others even the distant tribe unless something wrong existed between them.

William Beynon, an interpreter and field researcher for several anthropologists and himself an ethnographer in his later career, discussed the nature of Tsimshian territories in a manuscript that was under preparation for publication before his death.¹⁴

Beynon n.d., *Ethnical Geography* Volume 1:5

Typed text: “Each tribe have their own village sites and each individual group in the tribe, housegroups, have their own individual hunting, berry, sea lion rocks and salmon rights. For other food gathering such as oolachan, herring spawn, dulse (seaweed), clams, all other shellfish, halibut fishing, there were many tribal camps used in common by each tribe. (Beynon, *Ethnical and Geographical Study of the Tsimshian Tribes*, Volume I:5)

This is a clear statement that all of these food resource locations were owned property under Tsimshian law, either owned by individual housegroups or by a tribe. Ownership was proclaimed and reaffirmed through the feast system. Guest chiefs received food from the territories, which were enumerated as food was served. Accepting the food and the gifts of wealth at a feast signalled acceptance of the fact of ownership. Here is an example of that process, recorded by Beynon:

Beynon MSS Columbia:Reel 1-39-05

Typed text: ...one of the Gitsiis head headman stood up saying “Eat slowly and peacefully chiefs. Eat quietly and peacefully, this is as your grandfathers done, what you are doing and the meat you eat is the flesh of mountain goat from the Valley of Kiyaks.” Then another stood up and he said “Eat peacefully you chiefs, some [= the rest] of the meat you eat was caught by the chief

¹⁴ Beynon was raised in Victoria by his Tsimshian mother (whose own mother was a Nisga’a woman who had married into Lax Kw’alaams) and Welsh father; he was taught Sm’algyax by his mother, and in 1913 came to the North Coast for the funeral of his uncle, and remained in the area, eventually taking the name of his uncle. He began work as an interpreter for Marius Barbeau and was quickly given a role in collecting oral histories, names, lists of territories, etc., as well as continuing to work as an interpreter. Beynon worked for Barbeau, Viola Garfield, Amelia Sussman, Franz Boas, and Philip Drucker over the next four decades. Funding for Beynon's unpublished manuscript, *Ethnical and Geographical Study of the Tsimshian Tribes*, was provided by the Smithsonian, through Philip Drucker.

Beynon MSS Columbia:Reel 1-39-06

Typed text: in his seal traps at the head of Ktsam'at'in, his own territory.. And another one headman, stood up and said "Eat peacefully chiefs, the highbush cranberry and crabapples which you eat were gathered by this chief on his own berry grounds on the North Arm of Wark's Canal." And all the rivers of the Gitsiis were announced. to the Tsimshian tribes to show the ownership, this was why it was done.

Territories were rarely ceded, but there were mechanisms to do so, as recorded in the following oral history:

Beynon MSS Columbia:110-36

Typed text: We will redeem our chief woman, that you have there" and then the Tlinkits started to pile up coppershields to Haimas, until he was pleased with the quantity of wealth gathered by the Tlinkits, and then Haimas gave the great chief woman to the Tlinkits. And one thing which the Tlinkit chief included in the wealth, he gave one of his rivers to Haimas and this was the Ktsamadin River and this is why the Gitsiis possess this river now.

The Tsimshian also had accepted laws regarding payments for use rights to owned resources. Garfield (1945) focussed on economic patterns of Alaskan Haida and Tlingit in response to a request for a report by the United States Department of the Interior. She includes the following information on Tsimshian customs:

The Tsimshian had well-defined customs whereby permission to collect food was granted with the understanding that repayment in goods or a return of the courtesy should be made. The permission was usually asked and granted when a group was preparing for a potlatch. (Garfield 1945:627)

The Tsimshian attempted to maintain their rights against the incursion of settler society. They sought to exclude canneries from harvesting their resources, and demanded payment for allowing fishing in their streams:

From the inception of canning operations on the Skeena, Tsimshian groups contested the alienation and impoverishment of their fishing grounds, and

interfered with cannery operations. In 1878, the manager of the Windsor cannery, W.H. Dempster, had to pay a Kitkatla chief \$100 for the right to fish in a small stream in Petrel Channel (near Kitkatla village) without interference, and the fishermen were then prevented from fishing if their catch exceeded what the Kitkatla thought a fair return. In 1879, Dempster, J.W. McKay (manager of Inverness cannery) and Henry Croasdaile (from a Nass cannery) wrote to the Attorney General: 'We are too weak to hold our own [against the Tsimshian] and unless we are protected we will be obliged to abandon our enterprizes [sic] as under present disabilities they are not remunerative. [note 113 here cites PABC GR 858 Box 3, fo 27, 81/79] (Clayton 1989:56).

The territories of the Tsimshian villages and Houses can be mapped with considerable precision. Extensive detailed information on the territories of Tsimshian housegroups was collected by Marius Barbeau and William Beynon through field research in Tsimshian communities between 1915 and 1954. Duff comments on the quality of the data as follows:

While in a few instances, therefore, the maps are not accurate enough for the needs of future archaeologists, they, and the information on the usage of resource areas on which they are based, are more than adequate for the study of their application to the social organization. The patterns of occupation, of land usage and ownership, of the transfer of territories, are fully revealed. (082-02-01 to 02).

The aggregate main territories of one of these tribes frequently comprised an entire watershed of one of the tributaries of the Skeena where the original winter village was located, and a winter village in the vicinity of Metlakatla Pass, along with sites on the coast for seasonal villages for the harvest of marine resources, and on the lower Nass for oolachan season. Prior to European contact the Tsimshian had relocated their primary winter villages to the coast around Metlakatla, retaining their territories along the Skeena for seasonal fishing, hunting and berrying. The villages around Metlakala were formerly seasonal camping places, to which status the former upriver winter villages were now relegated. During their fieldwork beginning in 1915, Marius Barbeau and William Beynon collected detailed accounts of the territories of each of the Tsimshian *waap*. The location of the territories of each of the Tsimshian tribes is described in section 3.1 above.

5.3.1 Hinterlands

Most references to ownership of territories refer to the hunting, fishing and berrying grounds belonging to specific housegroups and the shared territories used by specific villages. However some parts of the landscape are so rugged or remote that they were rarely entered, and they are not clearly within either of these categories. Nonetheless, under Tsimshian law these are considered to be Tsimshian territories. There are numerous *adaawx* that allude to the conversion of such unclaimed territories into specific housegroup territories when an economically valuable resource was recognized and the discoverer claimed the territory by giving a feast and announcing the prerogative. Early ethnographic materials indicate that the entire area was owned, and it may be that the process of conversion of hinterlands to territories had run its full course by this point. Here is an example of how a large territory was claimed by the Ginadoyks Wolf and Raven phratries after it was discovered by the sister of Sedzaan in the distant past:

Beynon MSS Columbia: Reel 1-71-01

Typed text: The Discovery of the Gin'adoiks River, Informant Mark Green, Sedzaan, Laxgibu. Ages ago the people always lived at the mouths of the rivers along the Skeena River. And it was the same with the Gin'adoiks River, these two phratreys lived, the Raven and Wolf phratreys. This Gin'adoiks River was a swift and difficult river to go up and the people never went up, as it was impassable the water being so swift, so what lay beyond the headwaters of the swift rapids no one knew and the people were really only able to come to the rapids beyond that it was impassable. Well, G.amdzuup had married the sister of Sedzaan

Beynon MSS Columbia: Reel 1-071-02

Typed text: And G.amdzuup was a headman of the Gitsax'e tribe and and a Raven man and Sedzaan was a Wolf man. After these were married and G.amdzuup took his wife to his own territory on the Oxtall River and here they lived hunting and catching and curing salmon. The sister of Sedzaan always accompanied her husband when he went into the mountains, and she really knew the territory very well and she recognized the top

of one of the mountains as a mountain of the Gin'adoiks River. And every year they went to this territory. Well once while they were here they quarrelled, G.amdzuup and his wife. And the woman arose in anger and went out up into the hills.

Beynon MSS Columbia:071-03

Typed text: While the woman was in the hills, she planned to go over the mountains to go to the village of her brother at Gin'adoiks. She had now travelled three nights and she came to a large lake, which was filled with salmon and there was plenty of all different kinds of animals in the vicinity. Every night (while travelling) the woman would sleep at the foot of the big trees. When it was again day, the woman walked around the edge of the lake until she came to the outlet of the lake, and she followed down this river. She recognized the tops of the mountains as being the mountains of the Skeena, nearby to the village of her brother. The woman then followed down the river and she discovered

Beynon MSS Columbia:Reel 1-071-04

Typed text: colonies of beaver in which there were really a great many beaver. The all along down the river there were many beaver dams and many small streams were closed by beaver dams. And there was plenty of berries and wild crabapple and there were many berry territories. She kept on going down until she came to a great rapids, and here she camped. Well, next morning the woman set out going down the river. And when she came to the foot of the rapids she recognized the territory as the territory of her own brother. And she kept on travelling down until she came to where the Gin'adoiks people lived and went into her brother's house, whose name was Sedzaan. The relatives and tribesmen started when they saw her. "Well" said the woman, "I have angered against my

Beynon MSS Columbia:Reel 1-071-05

Typed text: my husband and have come from his territory from the headwaters of the Oxtall, and I have been three days walking and I discovered a big lake at the headwaters of this river. And there I saw that there was plenty of all different animals. And I followed down the river which is not swift, as it is just nearby here. And I came upon a great many colonies of beavers. The lake was filled with all different kinds of salmon. And when I saw this I marked off that, that shall be your hunting grounds. We will go up this river and you will see for yourself. After telling this to her brother Sedzaan he then gathered together all his own relatives and he called his father, who was 'Wati-manloik, a Raven of the Gin'adoiks

Beynon MSS Columbia:Reel 1-071-06

Typed text: And they went up the Gin'adoiks River and when they got over the rapids, which they now called "Place of Calm Waters" they saw a great many beaver colonies and then Sedzaan started to divide the territories to the two phratreys, the Wolf and the Raven. And he had done the same about the berry grounds. And also with the salmon fishing stations. There was not any Gispawudwada people, originally among the Gin'adoiks, as they have only recently come down from the headwaters of the Skeena River. Now this was how the (upper) river of Gin'adoiks was discovered and that is why these two phratreys govern this river.

Primary Source Compilations 15 includes extracts from information on territories collected by Barbeau and Beynon. Primary Source Compilations 6 present a selection of evidence on the nature of ownership, including evidence that *waap* territorial owners had the right to exclude others, use and allocate resources, and, if they chose to do so, alienate their own title.

5.3.2 Access for non-owners

Individual members of a housegroup might choose to exercise the option to live with relatives from other houses, particularly affines, but their economic rights on the territories of another housegroup were circumscribed. For example the economic rights of

a married-in man on his wife's brother's territories were based on the fact that he was feeding the successors to his brother-in-law; such a 'guest' did not control the territory and could not accumulate wealth from its resources. Specific delimited economic rights of this sort were terminated by the death of an individual's host *waap* connection unless appropriate contributions were made at the feast after the death, in which case their extension for the lifetime of the individual could be proclaimed at the feast if the *waap* agreed. Such rights did not pass to the heirs of the 'guest'.

Ties of paternity are prominent in Tsimshian ideas about access to resources. Naturally, a man has full rights to the resources of his uncle's House, since he possesses one of the ancestral names of the House and usually resides there as an adult. He also has rights to the resources of his father's House, where he was raised and where he received his early instruction in subsistence techniques. These rights are active as long as his father is alive and may continue longer if he makes the proper contributions to his father's funeral. A man also has rights to the resources of a third House, that of his wife's brother. This is not phrased as a purely affinal relationship. Rather, he holds these rights because he uses the wealth obtained from his brother-in-law's lands to support his own children, who are the ultimate heirs to his brother-in-law's position." (McNeary Tsimshian Matriliney as an Instrument of Alliance, paper presented at the Northwest Coast Studies Conference, Simon Fraser University, 1976)

The presentation of rights to a territory or a trade prerogative at a feast is similar to the general use of crests in Tsimshian culture. Every significant social or economic fact had to be validated by presentation at a feast, the distribution of property, and the acknowledgement of other chiefs. In an oral society, this provided a public record that safeguarded the rights of owners.

5.4 The Economic Function of Crests

See below for information on territorial boundaries and shared village territories. Halpin's 1973 dissertation (pp. 123-125) discusses the relationship between ownership of territories and the Tsimshian system of crests and feasts. This is significant as it illuminates the link between the culture of wealth and the system of territorial ownership.

The myth-crest relationship also has an important, though normally latent, economic aspect, which helps to account for the functional significance of the

public crest validation. The same myth (adaox) through which a crest is validated also expresses a house's claims to its territories. Territorial claims may not be expressed in the version of the myth recited at the crest validation, since the necessary elements for this version of the myth have to do with the ancestor's acquisition of the crest. But the full myth contains, or can be expanded to contain, an account of the ancestor's, or the ancestral group's, migration to and/or possession of the territories owned by the house, as well as an enumeration of their territories. Not many such full territorial extensions of Tsimshian myths have been recorded. None have been published, although even published versions of most Tsimshian myths contain hints of territorial preoccupations.

The clearest, and most redundant, territorial expressions are to be found in the myths of the migrations of the Laxkibu from the headwaters of the Stikine, their settling here and there with other Laxkibu, who permitted the newcomers to exploit their territories for a time before expelling them, and their final settlement on territories of their own on the Nass. The events dealing with crest acquisition during these migrations seem incidental in comparison to the search for land.

...

Therefore in the shorthand of ritual action, the crest becomes a visual symbol of the economic resources of the house that is displaying it. This must be what the people of Kitwancool meant when they wrote in their history "when a clan raises a totem-pole and puts their rightful crests on the pole, it means a great deal to them, as every pole has a hunting-ground." (in Duff, 1959:37). I think that they were referring to this territory-symbolling function of crests, one that I do not believe has been adequately recognized in the anthropological literature on the Northwest Coast.

...

Nor are crest emblems worn in everyday social interaction. Sapir (1915:6) reports that "one cannot even pay a neighbour a visit and wear a garment decorated with a minor crest without justifying the use of such regalia by the expenditure of property at the house visited." Barbeau's Tsimshian teachers were quite specific that crest-bearing costume items were worn at potlatches. (Halpin 1973:123-126)

Garfield also discusses the relationship between feasts and territorial rights among the Tlingit, in which each succeeding chief had to give a feast and to tell their oral history in order "to keep the memory of the property rights alive"; the Tsimshian also presented their *adaawx* at feasts to affirm their territories in the same way:

One of the very long tales of the Tlingit explains how a certain house group acquired territory at the mouth of the Copper River with valuable rights to the copper there. This acquisition brought wealth to the house group through trade in raw copper and manufactured articles. They built a house on the site, named it,

and decorated it with symbolic paintings and carvings to commemorate the acquisition. After songs and dances were composed for the celebration a huge potlatch was given at which the whole story was dramatized for the benefit of the guests. Each succeeding house-group chief repeated the drama, or enough of it to keep the memory of the property rights alive. The house group thus established their legal title through the public recognition given at the potlatch. (Garfield 1945:629)

Garfield called for further research on the aboriginal economy as she discussed the way in which totem poles among the Tlingit directly signify territorial possession. This is also true among the Tsimshian, though it has not been well described in the ethnographic literature and the poles represent crests that are indirectly linked to the territories as Halpin described above rather than directly as among the Tlingit:

[following a description of a grave post at Klawak which depicts a record of ownership of a salmon stream symbolized by a face at the lower end of the pole, with three sockeye salmon entering the mouth of the stream, and a basket trap full of fish, a bear clan emblem and a man symbolizing the house head holding a wolf by the tail representing the house and his people who are from the Wolf phratry] It is certain that further research will disclose many more carvings that specifically refer to economic resources belonging to house groups and individuals, and will help to establish the historical and legal functions of the carvings and of the potlatches at which they were dedicated... Adequate descriptions of the formal potlatches are available. What is needed is detailed information on ownership of resources and on the organization of production from such resources in preparation for a potlatch." (Garfield 1945:630)

5.5 Housegroup Economic Activity

The housegroup was the primary unit of production and consumption. Each housegroup owned territories, including sites for economic activities such as salmon fishing and processing. Housegroup-owned economic resources included fishing sites, berry patches, and hunting grounds; logging for houses posts, planks, firewood and for materials for boxes, bowls, utensils, and the harvest of roots, shoots, and bark for food, medicine, and weaving materials took place on any of the housegroup territories where suitable growth occurred. All sites that were suitable for these purposes were owned, and outsiders were excluded except when specific permission for temporary use was granted.

If a housegroup had surplus labour, some members might find it advantageous to visit or live with relatives from other housegroups; in such a case the visitor had limited economic opportunities because the host housegroup owned and controlled the territories and resources.

Conversely, if a housegroup required extra labour it was possible under the Tsimshian legal system to accept longterm resident guests such as affines or adult children of male housegroup members (who were members of their mother's *waap* and who would as adults normally be resident in their uncle's house). Another alternative was to invite people whose housegroups had surplus labour to join a labour-short housegroup on their territory for a specific activity. The first (and most bountiful) several days of production from fishing or berry picking by such guests would then belong to the owner, after which the invited participants could harvest for their own use. Until the 1860s most housegroups also had slaves whose labour contributed to its economic productivity.

Much economic activity took place at scattered camps on housegroup territories, to which a *waap* moved in an annual round to harvest and process seasonal resources. Seasonally occupied houses were maintained at these sites; sometimes large planks from the permanent winter village housegroup were taken along and used as siding on the frames of camp houses. At times there might be members of the *waap* at several of the seasonal camps harvesting and processing different types of resources, while others remained at the winter village or made a trading excursion.

5.6 Management and Harvest of Resources

Resources on *waap* territories were actively managed. Berry patches were sometimes fired; wild crabapple trees were cut down to stimulate new growth (H. Ridley, W. Clifton and C. Anderson, pers. comm.); root patches were cleaned of invasive plants (L. Anderson, pers. comm.); and hunting grounds were sometimes left to rest and regenerate (A. Anderson, pers. comm.)

Salmon management was complex and involved many different houses and communities on the migration route of the fish. Limiting quantities taken at a site, timing of harvests, and in-season 'closures' for ceremonial activities are all documented activities that resulted in stock conservation. Clearing obstructions from creeks to allow the salmon to pass is attested, and there are some records of even more active practices, such as moving fertilized eggs to a stream that had small runs. The main fisheries took place at the upriver fishing villages, at the mouths of tributary streams of the Skeena, which was the most effective technique and allowed for complete selectivity in the harvest and direct measures to ensure sufficient breeding stock for sustainable fishing.

In aboriginal times, interception was usually not a problem. With the exception of reef nets at Sook on the southwestern coast of Vancouver Island and in Puget Sound, salmon were usually captured in weirs or nets only after they had entered their spawning territories or the major river systems. Ceremonial life and conscious management by Indian groups dictated periods of abstention from fishing so that adequate escapement of salmon to their spawning grounds up the rivers and to other upriver groups was ensured (Rogers 1979; Cove 1982; Swezey and Heizer 1977). (Pinkerton 1987b:347)

Tollefson's research on Tlingit was done in the 1970s under the aegis of the well-known scholar of the Tsimshian, Viola Garfield; he is now professor emeritus. Tollefson provided detailed information on the Tlingit economy, including resource management practices:

[among the Tlingit] Specific measures were also utilized in an attempt to wisely conserve their food resources. Hunting grounds were only used every two or three years to permit the growth of the young and avoid depletion (Goldschmidt:1946:19). Clam beds, shellfish, and seaweed sections of the beach were given similar care. An informant from Sitka described how their ancestors habitually collected the eggs and sperm when they cleaned the salmon taken from the Indian River, mixed the substances together, and then deposited the material in advantageous locations along the stream. (Tollefson 1976:45-46)

Sm'gyigyet managed the diverse resources available from housegroup territories to provide food throughout the year, surplus for trade, and the liberal quantities of special delicacies

served at feasts. The food that were most valued were those that were scarce, available only seasonally, required intensive labor which entailed organization by the *Sm'ooogyet*, “imported” items (including European foods such as tea and sugar as they became available), grease, and anything preserved in grease. In general, prestige foods were foods that required skill or some evidence of supernatural efficacy to obtain them, such as luck in hunting or propitious weather.

The traditional fisheries and resource management regime practiced by the Tsimshian and their trading partners incorporated trade as a key management strategy. Specifically, aboriginal management systems, which have been documented and analyzed by Morrell for some groups in the region (Gitksan and Nuuchanuulth, though not in detail for the Tsimshian), depended on “managing for abundance” so that a resource that was expensive per unit of effort was left to rest in favour of other possible economic activities.¹⁵ This meant that e.g. groups that might have been able to harvest salmon even when it was scarcer than usual by ‘fishing harder’, would instead shift to activities such as fishing halibut, land hunting, or production of carved items or other trade goods, using these products to trade for salmon to supply their shortfall. Thus, having extensive trade networks with salmon available was important even when they were not fully activated. Understanding the importance of a commodity trade in foodstuffs in the aboriginal management resource regime, and the consequent significance of trade for salmon even between groups that both had direct access, seems to provide an answer to one of the questions that has puzzled anthropologists for a long time - the numerous reports that sound like economic ‘specialization’ by village among the Tsimshian though all the villages had access to salmon. Furthermore, there is incontrovertible evidence of some food commodity specialization -- in oolachan oil, dried herring roe, seaweed, and dried halibut and shellfish, for example, and the groups that had these scarce and valuable

¹⁵ Scientific management regimes are based on a different fundamental principle: maximization of sustainable harvest. Under a scientific management regime, harvesters ‘fish harder’ when their catch is low; under a ‘managing for abundance’ regime, fishers shift their attention to other economic opportunities that provide a better return per unit of effort.

commodities needed trading partners with goods to exchange (see section 4.2 above for a discussion of specialization).

Typed text: There was some specialization in production, both village and individual. The Nisqa and Coast Tsimshian from Metlakatla produced most of the olachen oil. The Nisqa bartered their surpluses across the Grease Trail to the interior as far as the upper Skeena, and the Coast Tsimshian traded theirs to Kitkatla and to the Haida. Both groups bartered to the Tlingit who came to the Nass estuary. The Haida traded canoes and after about 1830, potatoes, for olachen. The Tsimshian who had hereditary mountain-goat pastures traded wool, fat and horn for halibut, seal oil, and seaweed. Though there are myth references to Coast Tsimshian village specialization in manufactures, there is no evidence of such specialization in recent generations.

Many men supplemented the supplies collected by themselves and their families by specializing in woodcraft. Canoe builders, box makers, mask and pole carvers and men clever in the making of mechanical devices for dramatizations received food, clothing and other supplies for their manufactures. A pole carver and his family were often housed and fed by the chief for whom he worked until the pole was finished. Many shamans did no food collecting, depending on their fees in goods and food to satisfy the needs of themselves and their dependents.

Tsimshian women had much less opportunity than men to produce goods or services that were marketable. They could become shamans or compose songs for festivals. They could barter woven goods and preserved or fresh foods collected by themselves. Skilled blanket weavers could always command high prices for their wares. Adolescent daughters of wealthy families were not required to do any useful work. At puberty they were isolated for from several months to a year and spent their time in bored idleness. Information on the actual work done by members of wealthy families is contradictory. Lineage and tribal heads were organizers and adminis-

[See Primary Source Compilations 2.4: Economy: Management for further information on aboriginal management practices.](#)

Salmon were the main winter storage food and every *waap* had to be able to acquire a sufficient supply. Salmon were taken when they entered the mouths of small coastal rivers or tributaries of the lower Skeena. Every salmon-bearing creek was owned and used during its season. The several species of salmon return at different times, and the fishery

had to be intensive during the runs. Technology at each location varied according to site configuration and habits of the species that returned there. Fish traps, weirs, nets and fish spears were all employed. The Coast Tsimshian used a more diverse array of technologies than any of the other groups in the region (Berringer), which was one of the keys to the reliability of their supplies, along with their coastal location, which offered much more diverse array of stocks. Having reliable surpluses during periods of scarcity among their neighbours was the foundation of Tsimshian affluence.

There were other reasons for trade as well – a desire for variety and a taste for the exotic were marked features of Tsimshian attitudes towards foods, especially those served at events intended to demonstrate or enhance the prestige of a housegroup. Even now it is quite common for people to purchase foods for such reasons – for example toasted seaweed from Kitkatla and chopped seaweed from Hartley Bay might be traded for squares of seaweed from Lax Kw'alaams; and of course all of these are great delicacies for people who live away from the ocean. Similarly, there are many variations in smoking and drying salmon or halibut or cockles, and it is a treat to be able to taste and serve these to guests.

There were enormous differences in the productivity of various sites. The *Sm'ooogyet* determined when the fishery would begin and end, as well as how intensively it was prosecuted. A first salmon ceremony and other practices ensured some breaks in fishing activity, and these were among the techniques that ensured the sustainability of the fisheries. Salmon intended for winter storage had to be taken in the rivers so that some of the fat content of the fish was depleted and the stored product could be properly dried so that it would not spoil rapidly in storage. There was a short opportunity window when the fish were plentiful and of appropriate quality, and it was essential that a housegroup be able take full advantage of this.

A *waap* required a sufficient supply of food for the winter, as well as enough to host feasts to maintain social standing (and, if possible, to elevate it) and to commemorate significant life-cycle events such as births, initiations, marriages, and deaths, as was necessary to maintain the ranks of housegroup members. These occasions required the *waap* to have elaborate serving paraphernalia, to serve large quantities of food and to provide gifts of food for high ranked individuals to take home to distribute to their own *waap*, and to make gifts and payments of items other than foods (such as coppers, canoes, slaves, hides, horn spoons, furs, woven blankets, and other wealth objects). Higher prestige was attained by serving exotic foods and distributing rare items obtained through trade. Generous distributions were essential for prestige maintenance and the succession of heirs, and were key to validating ownership of territories, especially following the death of a *Sm'ooogyet*. The feasts given on such occasions served as both "land registry" and "probate court" for the Tsimshian. Hence, a portion of the production of the *waap* was allocated to trade for goods that would sustain and enhance the standing of the housegroup and ensure that the events were successful. A large proportion of the economic output of high-standing houses was allocated to trade rather than direct consumption.

Decisions on *waap* resource management and trade were made by the *Sm'ooogyet* of each housegroup, in consultation with councillors. *Sigidm'naanax* (matriarchs) were responsible for stored provisions, and were actively involved in making decisions about resource allocation, harvest, trade and warfare.

5.7 Village-Wide Economic Activities

Some economic activities involved joint activity by all the housegroups of a village. Fishing streams located at winter villages, weirs on larger streams and intertidal stone fish traps apparently sometimes belonged to this class of village assets, but fishing sites that could be harvested by a single housegroup did not. Within these joint territories there were sometimes privileged locations that were exclusive to one housegroup. Village

resources were jointly owned and were administered by the village Chief, (*Mansm'ooogyet* or *Sm'ooogyedm galts'ap*) who was the *Sm'ooogyet* of the highest-ranked housegroup in the village, and who consulted with *Sm'gyigyet* of other housegroups in managing these shared resources. The institution of village chief was unique to the Coast Tsimshian, whereas among the Nisga'a and Gitksan each chief was autonomous and no chief had authority over other Houses. This may reflect the greater need for coordination of activities by various houses in coastal and lower-rivercourse villages.

Some economic activities were prosecuted at a distance from the winter village. Sea mammals such as sea otter, seal and sea lion are only available offshore, while pursuit of marmot and mountain goat took hunters to their upland hunting territories. Oolachan were harvested and processed at the mouth of the Nass River. Each tribe of Tsimshian had specific areas for this purpose, as well as camping locations along the route to their grease camp. Dried oolachan and grease were among the most prized foods, and were especially highly valued trade commodities. Trade is discussed below in a separate section.

5.7.1 Other Shared Economic Assets

Some resources did not require such continuous close management, and may have been available to anyone from the village who had the appropriate resources to exploit them (e.g. a canoe to access the site and transport the resources). Clam and cockle beds, rocks and cliffs where seabird eggs were harvested, intertidal rocks where seaweed, abalone, mussels, chitons (several types, called in English either sea prunes or china slippers by Tsimshian people) and other shellfish were harvested, and halibut banks may have been in this class, though there is some evidence that specific sites were owned exclusively, and if such a site was located on an owned territory it was definitely exclusive. So for instance a clam bed at the site of a tidal fishing site would be exclusive to the owner of the fishing site. Some sources indicate that cod and halibut banks, seabird rookeries, shellfish beds and stretches of beach were also owned by individual houses.

For example, halibut and cod banks were held as property and Garfield (1966:16) mentions that only some men engaged in the off-shore fishery. (McDonald 1985:84)

Control over the use of these assets was based on access to houses at camping places, which were owned by housegroups, and also by access to canoes, which were necessary for exploiting these resources and transporting them to the winter village, and which were owned by highly ranked individuals. There is some evidence that sea mammal hunting shifted from general access towards being managed by village chiefs. Ts'ibasa is known to have given a feast proclaiming his right to the first sea otter taken by hunters from his village; while it is not clear how long this prerogative had been in place, it was established at a feast under traditional Tsimshian laws and protocol.

T'sibasa was the very powerful head chief of the Git'xaa□a and as one of the privileges obtained from his tribesmen he had proclaimed that all sea otter hunters owed him as tribute the first sea otter killed by each group of hunters. This was done. Ts'ibasa accompanied the hunters, but he stayed at the camp and took no active part in the hunt, but only remained there to claim his tribute. T'sibasa had proclaimed this privilege at a special feast, and his claim went unchallenged. In return Tsibasa always gave food and feasts to his tribesmen.” (DF 024-11-01)

Evidence from oral histories indicates that harvest of housegroup or shared village resources by 'guests' such as in-married men from other villages may have been restricted or limited. Surplus accumulation from all economic activities was generally controlled by the Sm'gyigyet, either through direct resource ownership and management or through levies for their services in initiations, naming and secret society elevations, for which they were paid.

5.8 Territorial Boundaries

The aggregate of a village's main territories was often coterminous with a natural unit such as a valley or the watershed of a tributary of the Skeena. Housegroup territories within this aggregate tended to focus on specific resource sites, such as a productive berry ground, a patch of edible roots, a section of forest with useful cedar, spruce, yew and

other trees, or a fishing site where a seasonal dwelling was maintained. See the extract from the Duff Files 84-04-07-01, from the "Chief Kelly MS" in section 2 above for information on the use of various territories through the course of a year. Hunting grounds were larger areas, but still had focal productive areas, and seasonal dwellings were maintained on these grounds as well. There were portions of territories that were seldom visited because there were fewer resources available there, but these were not open for others to move into. Garfield has stated that "there were no unclaimed land or sea food resources of a kind important to the Indian's economy" (1966:14), and Tollefson summarizes several sources on this point:

Several writers mention that aboriginal settlements were numerous and that available land and sea resources were [fully] claimed and exploited (Swanton 1908:397; Davidson 1928:35; Oberg 1937:7; Goldschmidt and Haas 1946). Such claims on all available aboriginal resources were not unique to the Tlingit since Garfield and Wingert (1966:14) reported a similar situation among the Tsimshian. (Tollefson 1976:113).

Areas that were not directly hunted might still be valued as productive wintering or browsing habitat for game that was hunted elsewhere at appropriate seasons. Deer, for example, were often hunted by canoe at the shoreline, but foraged over a larger area.

Given that salmon and berries were irreplaceable as winter storage foods, it would have been impossible for interlopers to establish themselves on the less productive parts of large territories without eventually trespassing on the most productive parts of the territories, and this was strictly prohibited and vigilantly policed. The penalty for trespass was severe, and might include a housegroup taking the name of an offender as compensation and proclaiming this fact at a feast (a deeply shameful situation for the housegroup of the person whose name was taken as compensation), or even death. Dean provides details on the activities at Fort Simpson and the punishment for territorial trespass, based on the post journal:

Kitselas traders arrived in June [1841], followed by Stikines coming for slaves from the Ginaxangiiks, and Haida traders arrived in July with whale oil and bone, and forty men's hats. As was to be expected, disputes continued as well,

including the news that three Tsimshians trespassing on Kitkatla lands had been shot (Dean 1993:306-307).

See also Beynon's Ethnical and Geographical Study of the Tsimshian Nation, n.d. volume IV, pages 47-50 for further information regarding exclusive ownership, trespass and compensation, including an example of a housegroup taking the name of an offender when compensation was not paid.

At feasts the *waap* territories from which foods had been harvested could be indicated as foods were served. Acceptance of food from a territory was one of the mechanisms that served to publicly validate the ownership of the territory by the host *waap*. Once a prerogative had been acknowledged in a feast hall, guests who had witnessed it and accepted gifts were bound under Tsimshian law. Breaking such a bond was *ha'wa* (violation of Tsimshian law/taboo).

The non-Tsimshian population of the north coast during the fur trade period was very small. Indeed Indians comprised the majority of the population of the entire province of British Columbia up until the 1880s. In 1881 there were reported to be 25,661 Indians in British Columbia, out of a total population of 49,459 (Fisher 1977:202). The non-Indian population was concentrated in Victoria, the lower mainland and interior. The north coast region was much less impacted by settlement; the 1881 census listed 2,983 Tsimshian and Nisga'a, 101 Chinese and 101 whites in the area (Census of Canada, 1881, nominal rolls, district 1876, subdistrict D, divisions 1,2,3,6, 8, 10, and 12). In 1891 it was estimated that there were 35,202 Indians out of a total population in the province of 98,173, and in 1901 25,488 Indians out of a total provincial population of 178,657 (ibid). Throughout the fur trade period the Hudson's Bay Company had maintained a *laissez faire* attitude towards Indians:

Like those who had come by sea, the land-based fur traders made limited demands on the Indians and did not attempt to initiate major cultural change. On the contrary, the company had a considerable investment and interest in keeping much

of the Indian way of life intact. Obviously it did not want to see the kind of radical change that would prevent the Indians from being efficient fur hunters. For this reason there was little intrusion on Indian land during the fur-trading period. The Indians retained their village sites, and their hunting and fishing grounds were unmolested. (Fisher 1977:42)

Though there were few conflicts about territories or resources during the fur trade period, once prospectors and salmon canners entered the north coast area there were frequent problems.

The Methodist missionary Reverend William Pollard who first visited Port Simpson in 1874 related that the Coast Tsimshian were: "...greatly excited and much dissatisfied, as white men were going in and taking up the land and the Indians claimed the land and looked upon men who took up the land as trespassers. (Cooper 1993:356).

When canneries were established in Tsimshian territories there was a period of considerable strife as the Tsimshian sought to protect their territories and resources.

The contempt of the cannery owners for the established local tenure system was an early source for troubles. Immediately after the establishment of the first cannery, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs was reporting on the concern of coastal Tsimshians that their hereditary rights to fisheries were being encroached upon by the capitalist fishery (1878:68). Some of the complaints were over interference with fishing grounds by cannery directed gill netters, others over the establishment of cannery plants on top of shore stations or villages (such plants were protected under S.C. 31V C60 s.3). For example, the troubles at Kitkatla in 1878, which lead to policing actions by an imperial gunboat, stemmed from the invasion of some fishing grounds belonging to the Kitkatla people (Canada, Department of Indian Affairs 1879:114), Canada, Department of Fisheries, Annual Narratives 1878:296). Such encroachments were most frequent on the Skeena River itself, where the capitalist fishery was both concentrated and intensive (e.g. Canada, Department of Indian Affairs 1881:154; 1884:277-78; 1886; 1890)." (McDonald 1985:150-151).

The lower Nass residents were directly concerned about their land. A portion of their territory had been pre-empted by Euro-Canadian industrialists in 1878 who soon commenced fish salting operations and intended to open a cannery in the future. The Nisga'a regarded the pre-emption of their lands as a usurpation of their rights. For several years they forced the cannery owners to pay them tribute or rent for the use of their territory.[note 34 cites 2 sources] ... Violence was narrowly avoided between the Nisga'a and the owners of the saltery in 1880 when

several hundred Nisga'a joined to protest the erection of a large fish trap on the lower river. [note 35 cites 2 sources] The Nisga'a and Coast Tsimshian had also communicated their need for greater protection of lands and fisheries when Powell visited their territory in 1879. In addition, a group of Christian and traditionalist chiefs from the villages of Aiyansh and Gitwilsilth had written Powell with their concerns in the summer of 1881. Thus, even before the land protest commenced, the Department of Indian Affairs was cognizant of the depth of sentiment which existed among Native Peoples respecting their lands and resources." (Cooper 1993:357) [note 36: According to O'Reilly, Native concerns about fisheries related to him by Duncan prompted him to travel to the Nass and Skeena region in 1881. The process of reserve allocation was slated to extend into the northern sectors of the province during the 1880s, but O'Reilly argued that it proceeded more quickly than intended because of the necessity of protecting Native fishing sites from pre-emption by canneries. However, recent studies have suggested that the creation of reserves was actually undertaken in response to the needs of cannery and commercial fishing industries. In evaluating this charge it should be noted that O'Reilly and the Department of Indian Affairs came into conflict with the cannery owners and the Department of Marine and Fisheries, who were generally sympathetic to the latter interests, for their practice of reserving fishing sites for the Natives' exclusive use. Still, though the reserve process may not have been specifically geared to the needs of the canners, it is true that throughout British Columbia, including the Nass and Skeena regions, the allocation of reserves generally anticipated economic development and settlement by Euro-Canadians. NAC RG10, vol. 3739, file 28,368 Powell to the Commissioner of Lands and Works, 4 December 1879; vol. 3766, file 32876 Sebassa et al to Powell, August, 1881; NAC RG10, vol. 3766, file 32876, Powell to SGIA 21 September 1881; Raunet, Without Surrender, Without Consent, 113; NAC RG10, vol. 3766, file 32,876, Lawrence VanKoughnet, Memorandum to Sir John A. MacDonald, 27 February 1882. (Cooper 1993:404)]

5.9 Wealth and Rank in Tsimshian Society

The economic system of the Tsimshian was based on ownership of territories from which they harvested resources and accumulated storage foods for winter survival and trade. Warfare, raiding and territorial encroachment did occur, but actual changes in ownership could only be legitimated at feasts attended by *Sm'gyigyet*. Rank was a form of social capital that translated into gifts and payments to highly ranked *sm'gyigyet*, who manipulated wealth to increase the the prestige, political standing and future economic and social prospects of their house.

Surplus can be converted within Northwest Coast exchange systems into slaves and capital goods, and advantageous marriage alliances -- all means of further economic power. Moreover, enhanced status positions reinforce the dominant lineage groups as 'those who have much to give'. And, in Northwest Coast terms, that is the criteria of status confirmation. (Berringer 1982:197)

Food itself was not wealth, but could be converted into wealth through sale. This was recognized by the anthropologist Franz Boas in his discussion of pre-contact Tsimshian cultural patterns:

While the possession of what is called rich food (see p. 406) was essential for maintaining the dignity of the family, the provisions themselves were not counted as constituting wealth. Wealth is obtained by selling provisions for other kinds of goods... In a great many cases we are told that the successful hunter who has accumulated a great deal of food sells it for property... Following is a list of objects offered in exchange for food: elk skins, marten garments, sea-otter garments, canoes, raccoon skins, and all kinds of property (211); elk skins, spoons made of elk antler, slaves, large coppers, houses full of elk skins, thousands of raccoon skins, and horn spoons (243); elk skins and all kinds of goods (212); elk skins, slaves, canoes, abalone shells, many hundred scores of raccoon skins, sea-otter garments, marten garments, dancing blankets, and all kinds of goods (231, 232); elks [skins] and slaves and other goods (N164); elk skins, canoes and slaves and all kinds of goods (N186) (Boas 1916:345)

There are numerous instances in the oral histories of housegroups documenting the process by which the group survived a period of shortage and accumulated surplus food or other goods, traded that surplus to their neighbours, and accrued the wealth that established the security and prestige of the housegroup. Following are scans of a few selected and abbreviated examples from various housegroups, including typed text of the content of each scan; primary source compilation 08-06 provides numerous additional examples:

Beynon n.d., *Ethnical Geography* Volume 1:49

Typed text: [When the people went up they always got many carcasses of deer, moose] and bear. The Wolf clan group of Gamlugides now had plenty of food which they shared with all his people, yet he had plenty to trade with the other tribes. Thus did the wolves make their human brother wealthy in gratitude for having helped him. Thus Gamlugidas

became very wealthy. (Beynon, *Ethnical and Geographical Study of the Tsimshian Nation*, n.d. Volume I:49)

Beynon MS Columbia:148-68

Typed text: ...all the people were starving and he distributed a great quantity of spring salmon to them and the woman then became famous everywhere. And many strange people [foreigners] came to buy her salmon. The woman had not told how she caught all this great quantity of salmon. And she became more wealthy

Beynon MSS Columbia:128-97

Typed text: Well all of the people settled down and all of the villages surrounding “the place of sand bar” were short of food. And they all came to the Prince’s house to purchase food. And then in a short while the prince became much wealthier than all of the people. And as he had great wealth, he then wanted to assume a name

Beynon MSS Columbia:175-43

Typed text: and then they heard of the plentiful supply of food of the prince and all his tribe. So that was why they came who purchased food from the prince and that was really how the chief became wealthier than all his fellow chiefs.

Beynon MSS Columbia:131-63

Typed text: ...And then the wealthy young chief went to all of the Tsimshian villages and bought food, which each tribe made. And also goods he purchased from those that were clever in making things. And all of this was gathered together into the house of the young chief

Beynon MSS Columbia:Reel 1-073-03

Typed text:...snare eagles, as the olden people wanted the feathers of the eagle. As they used it in their "Eagle Down" dances and the olden people valued eagle feathers very highly. And every day the young man with his four companions got eagles, and they now had much eagle down and the chief sold the eagle down and he became very wealthy.

Duff Files 084-04-21-05 (Chief Kelly Manuscript)

Typed text: As the winter passed slowly and before the hard ice became soft. They plan to to return to their home. The preparation was made by tying the smoked meat in a bundles; and also skins or furs were made in a bundles ready for moving; two big sleighs being prepared. The next early morning they loaded the sleighs with all kinds of meats which was cured by smoked, sleds were much used among the Indians in those early days of their history for conveying heavy weights in winter as to sled wood on the snow and on ice.

They began moving the sleds downward the river. In a period of three days since they left the camp they sighted their villages and villagers have seen them too. Here they landed in their own village. All the villages come out welcome them. The famine which came upon them during this winter were sorely afflicted still. So every one came to the newcomers and asked to sell to them smoked meat. Here the newcomers began to sell meat to the people of their own villagers, but strangers from other villages had liberty to buy also. Who sold the smoked meat to them, being become confessedly a savior to the who settlement of Kitjalous people, now (Canyon). After a few days they set

Duff Files 042-04-01

Typed text: ... A huge snow storm buried the village, and he got rich selling his firewood.
...

Duff Files 142-04-03-02 (Chief Kelly Manuscript)

Typed text: ... Then the woman and her daughter sold the meat to the other people, receiving in payment furs – marten, mink, and beaver.

Duff Files 094-10-02-04 (Chief Kelly Manuscript)

Typed text: Here his wife began selling good smoked salmon, dried berries, crabapples which was cured by oolachan grease. All these boxes of food never emptied, they keep

refilled themselves. This young man became reach [rich] among his tribe. This place was known as Mayanlthkue. Here he gave a huge feast to all the Tsimshian Chiefs and people and became recognized as chief among all the Tsimshians...

There were a number of types of revenue that contributed to the wealth of chiefs. Legaic was a well-known trader during the nineteenth century, but he also had several other sources of wealth as seen in this passage:

Duff Files: 013-16-01

Typed text: "Legex's sources of wealth, M. Johnson to Beynon.

1. Trade with Gitksan

- (a) he proclaimed exclusive trading privileges to himself and the Gixpaxlo'ots. There were usually 3 trips a year. The first, in spring, they took dried oolachens, grease, fish eggs, and traded for furs (groundhog, marten, ʔiyoon). The second, fish eggs, seaweed and all saltwater foods, traded for berries (soapberries, dried blueberries, etc.). The last trip would also get berries and ʔiyon (moose skin, for mocassins, gloves, winter cloaks).

In trading, Legex's goods were always the first sold, then the others were privileged to trade.

- (b) he exacted a tribute from all who went on these trips for the first time (e.g. married - affinal - relatives of other tribes). They paid him a xkeʔ gift 'a non-returnable gift given as compensation for some definite action.'"

2. Secret Society - as wihalait of the nuʔim group in the Gispaxlots, he would receive compensation from every initiate into the nuʔim (and it was compulsory to join). The wihalait of the miʔta was Nispalaas, who exacted tribute for each initiate into that group.

3. when any of his tribe assumed a name, he as chief would be called upon to announce the name, for which he would receive the xkeʔ gift.

5.9.1 Wealth Required for Territorial Title

To avoid constant strife, it was of mutual interest to all the *wuwaap* of the various Tsimshian tribes that the ownership rights of each housegroup be respected, but such mutual recognition was contingent on a *waap* demonstrating that it was able to harvest and manage its territories successfully. This was done through feasts, at which the wealth that was distributed was evidence of the house's efficacy. A *waap* that could not muster the necessary resources to feast risked being seen as spiritually and militarily impotent,

and could expect challenges to its territorial ownership from stronger neighbours or upstarts. Constant vigilance and adroit political activity were essential in making and maintaining alliances. Houses can and did rise and fall in rank; sometimes houses were dispossessed, and from time to time new houses were founded. It was the responsibility of the *Sm'ooygyet* of a housegroup to ensure that the necessary economic resources were available to deal with any contingency. Aggressive pursuit of wealth by Tsimshian *Sm'gyigyetyet* was not about mere self-aggrandizement; it was about the survival, security, and future success of the house.

In the traditional aboriginal system, concepts of ownership and methods of resolving competing claims over resources were highly developed. Elaborate feasts, ceremonies, naming procedures, and dances accompanied transfers of title to fishing spots. A major focus of political activity, indeed of all social activity from religious celebrations to war, was managing conflicts between owners, or between owners and non-owners, and forming coalitions of people with differing claims over resources. There were grounds for almost any individual to come into conflict with almost any other individual. There were also grounds for coalition. The traditional chief, [note 7 here: The literature on British Columbia coastal Indian groups is so enormous that only a token citation is made here. A classic general overview is found in Drucker (1951). Chiefs' accounts of their world as they see it are particularly revealing, see Ford (1941) and Spradley (1969). A graphic, popular account of Indian-white conflicts over ownership of fish resources in premodern times and destruction thereof in modern times is given by Raunet (1984). See also Cove (1982).] a hereditary owner of considerable property and title, was expected to be a master at forming coalitions and resolving or preventing conflicts. (Pinkerton 1987:262)

The Tlingit, neighbours of the Tsimshian to the north, have similar processes for converting surplus food into wealth through trade, and then converting wealth into social capital:

Tollefson presents a synthesis of the traditional Tlingit economy, which he sees as multilevel, building on the concepts of such theorists in economic anthropology as Polanyi, Dalton and Bohannan.

Tlingit society displayed three discrete levels of economic activities. First there was the basic subsistence level in which food was produced and exchanged by

reciprocity. Second, subsistence items were invested in wealth goods acquired through specialized production or trade. Third, wealth goods were invested in social prestige and a future return from guest communities -- a form of economic securities like stocks and bonds. A Tlingit elder explained that the subsistence level related to industry and productivity, the wealth level to skill, and the potlatch level like the American banking system to the investment of wealth in the expectation of increasing it. (Tollefson 1976:65)

“The goal of amassing wealth goods was not an end in itself; it was a means to greater economic and political security. The Tlingit invested subsistence goods in wealth goods for the purpose of using them in fostering and reaffirming their ties with other localized clans (Oberg 1937:84). The fact that wealth goods were sought in order to increase the economic and political welfare of a localized clan or household is based upon the expectation of the potlatch host would be returned in kind and often with interest at a future date.” (Tollefson 1976:72)

“Wealth goods then were used as a special purpose money ultimately derived from subsistence but considered to be superior to the subsistence level of exchange. The goal of owning wealth consisted in expending wealth goods at ceremonial occasions to acquire status, prestige, political alliances, and economic investments among other autonomous groups. In essence, potlatches were a social institution in which wealth goods became transformed through a process of economic conversion into the prestige sphere that resulted in economic, social, and political advantages for the investing host group.” (Tollefson 1976:73-74)

The environment, social organization and economy of the Tsimshian is in general terms very similar to that of the Tlingit as described by Tollefson, as confirmed by specialists such as Garfield, Niblack and Emmons. The Tsimshian economy also had a subsistence component, in which foods were harvested, stored for the winter and consumed by the housegroup that had produced them. The Tsimshian also converted foods into wealth through trade, and invested the wealth so accumulated in social and political advantages.

6. Tsimshian Trade

Section 6 will elaborate on the evidence that for hundreds - quite probably thousands - of years the Tsimshian engaged in extensive and far-flung trade of seafoods and other goods, and that trade continued well after the establishment of settler society in Tsimshian territories.

There is archaeological evidence of trade in the region dating back thousands of years. Most of what can be identified in archaeological sites is stone, bone, shell and wood, while softer materials are not as well preserved except in wet sites. The presence in archaeological sites that can be dated, of obsidian (which can be traced to specific sites and dated), jade, quartz, amber, copper, shell, and ochre, indicates trade has occurred in the area for millenia on an extensive basis. The existence of trade in provisions and other organic goods is not as easily confirmed by archaeology because most such products leave few identifiable remains in archaeological sites, and those that do remain cannot be traced to specific sites of origin as can objects such as obsidian or jade. Nonetheless, based on the clear archaeological evidence of an extensive trade economy and the oral history evidence that provisions were the stock in trade of the Tsimshian, it is my opinion that for hundreds of years the Tsimshian had engaged in extensive and far-flung trade of seafoods and other goods, that this trade was integral to distinctive features of Tsimshian culture, that it continued well after contact, and that in altered form it can be observed in the present day. This is widely known, and is accepted throughout the scholarly literature. In fact, it has become a basic tenet of the secondary and popular literature on the Tsimshian as well; for example, the ubiquity of Tsimshian trade is the focus of a website from the Canadian Museum of Civilization, one of Canada's premier cultural institutions.

Trade between Native groups across North America and Asia has existed for thousands of years. Dozens of overland trails linked Native villages with navigable waterways, forming a network between the villages and the resource areas used for fishing, hunting, plant- and food-gathering. Trade on the north coast of British Columbia has been traced back more than 10,000 years through the dating of archaeological finds. Trade items included rare stones, such as obsidian, jade and quartz crystal, as well as earth pigments, medicinal substances, rare woods, furs, preserved meats, shellfish and berries... Eulachon oil from the Nass River was the Tsimshian's main trade commodity. Used as a condiment and medicine, it was in great demand among the peoples of the interior... Their woven goat-hair blankets and beautifully carved raven rattles were highly prized by their trading partners.

(Tsimshian Society and Culture, Canadian Museum of Civilization (website) downloaded August 2001)

The primary sources consulted for this report include numerous examples documenting ancient and widespread Tsimshian trade networks:

Niblack 1888:338

Typed text: ... The Tsimshian were the middle men, and were, and are still, the great traders in oil and grease, of which they prepare large quantities from the eulachon, seal blubber, deer and goat flesh. Computed in blankets, the eulachon grease or oil now brings one blanket for from 10 to 15 pounds.

The ancient migrations by which this region was populated created a network of communities whose common heritage is commemorated in *adaawx* and the related crests depicted on totem poles and housefronts. It was this network that facilitated the development of a complex system of commodity exchange, a trading system that became one of the most important factors in the sophisticated and thriving cultures of the northwest coast. Section 5.9 above provided a number of examples of trade from primary source documents in the context of describing the significance of wealth in Tsimshian culture, and those examples should be reviewed in this context as evidence of the fact of trade. My opinion is that trade was widely practiced, that both men and women engaged in trade, and that some Tsimshian houses specialized in trade. Here is an example of trade by women:

The Haida women used to trade in their foods for Tsimshian products, such as eulachon grease. These trades were given over to the women. Among those that were trading was a daughter-in-law of Legaix, the wife of Nispelas, who was a nephew of Legaix, and who would be his successor. This young woman went down to the Haida camp, and along with her as her attendant, a young woman of her husband's tribe. She began to trade, as she wanted dried halibut which was the stock carried mostly by the Haida, for which she poured grease. She was not satisfied at the exchange of halibut given her by the Haida woman and asked for more halibut, which angered the Haida woman, who took up a quantity of halibut and threw it into the Tsimshian woman's face. This woman immediately went away and entered her father-in-law's house, which was their home. She was

crying. “What ails you, my daughter?” Legaix asked. The woman did not answer, but went to her sleeping place. Legaix sent one of his women to his daughter-in-law, to inquire as to why she was crying. “She has been insulted by one of the Haida women, who threw dried halibut at her face. She felt humiliated, as this was done in full view of the many people who also were trading beside her. She was called humiliating names.” (The War of the Gispaxloats and the Haida, John Tate (Salaban), Gixpaxloats, recorded by William Beynon, 1954, in MacDonald and Cove, 1982:232)

This episode along with several others is discussed in a doctoral dissertation by Cooper in a comment on women and trade:

Native women were not unaccustomed to trading in the pre-contact period. Females of neighbouring tribes regularly exchanged goods. Nisga’a and Coast Tsimshian women traded valuable commodities such as eulachon along with items of their own production such as dried salmon, with women of Haida and other tribes. (note 112 here cites “The War of the Gispaxloats and Haida” from Cove & MacDonald Tsimshian Narratives 2, 232)... Still, oral traditions reveal that women did accompany men on these interior trading trips. (note 113 here cites both Arctander, The Apostle of Alaska 66, and Cove and MacDonald Tsimshian Narratives 2, “The Gispaxloats Raid on Kispiox”, 123)” (Cooper 1993:85)

Records from trading vessels and the HBC journals from Fort Simpson indicate that the Tsimshian were experienced and shrewd traders. During the fur trade era they sometimes purchased furs and other goods from interior tribes but did not sell them to the HBC post, instead holding them in anticipation of higher prices from coasting American vessels, and sometimes played one buyer off against another.

An extensive network of trails connected communities in the region, supplementing travel by canoe along the coast and up and down the rivers. Ocean travel was open to anyone, but travel on the rivers was controlled by the groups that lived alongside critical canyons, and sections of trails were sometimes owned and restricted. Using tumplines over their foreheads, adult men packed over a hundred pounds¹⁶ of grease on their backs in wooden

¹⁶ Some sources indicate that men packed up to two hundred pounds using a tumpline; at some times of year sleds were also used to transport heavy goods along trails.

boxes along the trails. Women carried lighter loads, and even children and dogs packed loads along the trails. In winter, sleds pulled by men or dogs were used to pack goods along the trails to the interior.

The early spring oolachan season at the mouth of the Nass River has been described as a great trade fair where 14,000 Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Nisga'a and other people converged to trade (this figure, from the journal of HBC trader Work in 1841, is notable in part because it was after a smallpox epidemic in 1836 that reduced the population, which had also been affected by earlier epidemics). In the late summer, Tsimshian traders made a trading trip to a gathering of the interior Hagwilget, and in the late fall traders from other nations gathered at the mouth of the Skeena. A wide array of goods were traded, as summarized in this public education website from the Canadian Museum of Civilization:

In pre-contact times, the Tsimshian exchanged their goods for items such as jade, obsidian, amber, pigments, copper, furs, and shells... Revered among the high cultures of the Americas (particularly the Maya) as well as in China, jade was an important trade item on the Northwest Coast. Major sources of jade were found on the Fraser River and in the interior of northern British Columbia... Jade is a hard stone used to make war clubs and adze blades... Obsidian, a black volcanic glass, was used to make spear-points and knives. Trade in this choice material can be traced by modern scientific "finger printing" techniques to more than 10,000 years ago in British Columbia. Prince Rupert Harbour benefited from obsidian sources in the central and northern interior of British Columbia... Amber beads and pendants have been recovered in cemeteries in the Prince Rupert Harbour area dating to the first millennium B.C. The source of amber seems to be the coal deposit in the vicinity of Prince George, about 400 km from the Harbour... Red and black are the dominant pigments in North Coast art. They are derived from iron oxide and charcoal, then mixed with fish oils to produce a durable paint. The iron oxide for red pigment was imported from the interior. Copper oxide from the Queen Charlotte Islands was used for green pigment... Copper metallurgy, which evolved during the Bronze Age of China, spread to the Northwest Coast about 1000 B.C. (via Siberia and Alaska) through intertribal trade. At first the exclusive prerogative of shamans who traded magical techniques among themselves, metallurgy became important for weapons and markers of chiefly wealth... In prehistoric times, cold hammering of copper was commonly practised, and smelting and annealing were unknown. The major source of copper was on the Eyak River, just below the Aleutian Peninsula in Alaska... Dentalium was the

prince of shells among coastal peoples, favoured as the basis of wealth in prehistoric times. It was present in the Prince Rupert Harbour sites in the first millennium B.C... Pecten shells appeared in the Prince Rupert area in the period after contact with Europeans. In other areas, they are associated with Secret Society dances that spread along the coast immediately after contact... Dentalia and abalone shells were used for clothing and ceremonial objects, as well as for earrings, necklaces and pendants... The strategic advantage of steel created long-distance trade from Siberia to the Northwest Coast, via Alaska, even before contact with Europeans. Throughout the eighteenth century, knives and guns were eagerly sought from European fur traders. The trade in weapons increased warfare on the coast at the end of the century, until British gunboats imposed peace and encouraged trade to prevail. Steel "strike-a-lights" for fire making as well as chisels and adze blades were popular trade items in the 1800s... Iron was probably traded with tribes from Siberia within the past 2,000 years. Double-bladed iron war daggers were identical on both sides of the Bering Strait well before the 1700s. Cast iron was also traded from an early date in the form of kettles and pots... Since iron and steel corrode quickly in the damp conditions of the area, little trace of them has been found in the archaeological sites." (Trade Goods Received, Tsimshian Society and Culture, Canadian Museum of Civilization (website), downloaded August 2001.)

The preceding is a public education website from the Canadian Museum of Civilization that summarizes the data from a number of primary sources regarding the items that the Tsimshian received in trade. It should be noted that the data on trade items received reflects the results of archaeological research, and therefore emphasizes the type of items that are preserved well in archaeological sites, such as stone, bone, shell and pigments. What is not so obvious in the preceding summary is the fact that the Tsimshian obtained most of these goods by a trade in foodstuffs, including fish, dried meats and shellfish, and oils from fish and sea mammals. Maps in the Historical Atlas of British Columbia also summarize a number of primary sources, and also reflect the results of archaeological research (maps not reproduced here; refer to primary sources).

Oral histories include information on the significance and extent of trade to the Tsimshian. Here is an oral history account of a trading from the "Chief Kelly MS":

Typed text: The Kispaxloots tribe had for years been the traders of the coast since the upper Skeena was explored by “Gundamaxlth”, the princess of the house of Neyaswamak. The furs of the interior, or Kitcashean people which they used to cover their nakedness with, they bartered from the Kitacshean, to whom they, in turn, furnished food, dried halibut, sun dried herring eggs, seaweed, sun dried oolakan fish, and oolakan grease. The Kitcashean people bought large enough quantities from them to last them all winter. When Kispaxloot people had enough furs, elk skins and some other softest furs which is suitable to wear or cover their body. They turn to food stuff, they exchange food for food. Dried halibut bartered with dried berries, seaweed, herring eggs and sun dried oolakan fish and all kinds of cured salt water food were bartered into all kinds of cured berries that grows in abundance in upper Skeena River. A box grease bartered into four or five elk skins, martens, beaver skins, fishers, foxes; all the costly furs were exchange to Grease. When the Kispaxloots people knows that their canoes were very well full loaded. They stop the buying. No time to waste. Early in the next morning. They loaded their canoes with all kinds of different sorts of berries and several bails of furs of elk skins. All the canoes are very well packet. They set out at once. These canoes were many, from twenty five to thirty of them. They paddle down the river, and so strong is the current that helps the heavy loaded canoes to increase their speed. It takes ten to twelve days to make the trip up stream, the return is made in one quarter of the time. (Chief Kelly Ms., Duff, Tsimshian File 084-04-13-01 & 02)

The primary sources consulted for this report, especially the oral histories, provide abundant evidence of the fact of Tsimshian trade, including trade in fish and seafoods. The following section will expand on this. For further general information on Tsimshian trade see Primary Source Compilations 08: Trade.

6.1 Tsimshian Trade Goods

Trade in food was the backbone of Tsimshian wealth and this is widely recognized by those who study the history of these fisheries and/or Tsimshian culture. The extensive trade in fish throughout the northwest coast has become commonly accepted knowledge, as is evident in secondary sources such as the following regarding the impact of government fishing regulations on native communities:

The present Indian fishery, or the Indian food fishery as it is commonly called, is a continuation of traditional native fishing practices. [note 2 here: The term “Indian food fishery” is criticized by many Indians on the grounds that it implies a traditional dependence on fish for direct consumption only. Fish have historically been important commodities of trade and barter as well.] The

traditional importance of fish extended well beyond its food value, however. Fish were also a major commodity of trade among Indian bands and tribal groups. (Pearse 1982:173)

There are numerous examples from oral histories of Tsimshian housegroups that became wealthy and established through the sale of food. Numerous examples appeared above in section 4.6, and are not reproduced here.

In addition to provisions, Tsimshian traders also offered other goods, including manufactured items such as boxes, rattles and canoes:

Gemk a gispawudwada clan trade to the Chilkats from the Ginaxangiik, dealing mostly in long canoes which the Chilkats used to hunt away out to sea. In turn he brought back many woven Chilkat blankets, held in high value by the Tsemisiyan. (Beynon, *Ethnical and Geographical Study of the Tsimshian Nation*, n.d. volume IV, page 17-18)

Ethnographers of neighbouring groups such as the Tlingit and Haisla are also aware of the extent of intertribal trade. Aurel Krause provides further corroboration of aboriginal intertribal trade in his 1885 work on the Tlingit Indians. He writes:

Besides hunting and fishing, the Thlingit devotes the greatest part of his energy to trade. Long before the coming of the Europeans this was carried on; not only the neighbouring tribes exchanged different products of hunting and fishing, but there is evidence that more distant coastal territory and remote interior tribes carried on an active tribe to tribe trade through to the Thlingit... That this trade is not a new custom and that it moves along ancient trails and probably was only intensified by the interference of the Europeans can be seen from the reports of the fur traders who found the natives endowed with all the tricks of trading, and we can see it even today in the household possessions of the Thlingit, which are the products of many different places. The caribou skin which the Chilkat use for their clothing, the sinew with which they sew, the lichen with which they dye their dancing blankets are all secured through trade with the Athapaskan-speaking Indians of the interior. [note “a” here: “Aurel Krause, 1885, *The Thlingit Indians: Results of a Trip to the Northwest Coast of America and the Bering Straits*, trans. Erna Gunther from original edition, *Die Tlinkit-Indianer*... Jena: Hermann Costenoble, 1885, English edition]

Early fur traders also commented on Tsimshian trade:

The Chimseeans on their route from Pearl Harbour, Skeena and other places south of there, to Nass River, reach the Fort early in February, and generally stay there until the beginning of March, when the oolaghans enter the river. After the fishing is over they return to the river with the fish and oil they have procured, which forms a part of the ensuing winter's provision, about the latter part of May and make another sojourn at the Fort until July when they disperse, some for the Skeena; others go as far south as Gardiner's Canal, where they are constantly employed about their salmon fisheries during the summer. They likewise hunt and trade with the natives in the interior canals, and procure quantities of herring spawn from the people of Millbank Sound, and do not visit the Fort in a body until the following February; so that June & February are the only months when there are large assemblages of Indians at the Fort. (Douglas 1840, Bancroft 1884:635)

The Tsimshian had participated in a farflung trade network for millenia, and had well-established practices. There were standard sizes and established exchange rates for the main commodities, and the routes were well-established.

Prior to contact, all of these Native peoples were traders. As groups exchanged goods with near neighbors, chains of trade were formed up and down the coast and most coastal people, especially those who lived at the mouths of the major rivers, bartered with clients in the interior. Scarce and specialized items were particularly valued in trade. Dentalium, a shiny, tusk-shaped shell that was found on the northern coast, was greatly prized by the Yuroks in the far south of the region. The Nootkas gathered the shells, and they were traded to the Yuroks who used them as a standard measurement of value. Less well known is the precontact trade in obsidian. A volcanic glass valued for its cutting qualities, obsidian could be found in only a limited number of locations in the region. Yet it was widely distributed through trade. Obsidian from eastern Oregon, for example, has been found as far north as Namu on the central British Columbia coast, while that from Mt. Edziza on the Stikine River was scattered north to the headwaters of the Yukon and south to Burke channel. A host of other trade goods, from eulachon oil to elk hides, and from horses to human beings, were exchanged. Along with this trade in material goods and wealth items, cultural traits were also transferred from one group to another." (Fisher 1996:122-123)

In his doctoral dissertation, J. Dean provides a map based on an analysis of the records of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Russian American Company. He identifies some of the goods traded in the regional trade networks during the fur trade period, including

Euroamerican goods (land furs, firewood, turnips, bricks, white clay, gold, timber) Native goods (copper, kayaks, walrus ivory, copper, moose skins, caribou skins, wool and horn; prepared clothing from the interior; baskets; Chilkat blankets; salmon; dentalia and slaves; mats, canoes and potatoes; oolachens, martens and potatoes; herring spawn); and joint goods (sheet copper, blankets, potatoes, whiskey). That map appears here:

For further information on the goods traded by and to the Tsimshian see Primary Source Compilations 08: Trade

6.2 Exchange Value of Goods

The fact that there were goods that were widely traded and for which there was a recognized exchange value facilitated trade, and is yet another indication that this was a mature trade economy. Salmon was one commodity with a recognized exchange value; groundhog skins was another. Dried salmon was a widely traded commodity with an accepted exchange value that could be consumed as food or traded in a second exchange. The Tsimshian packaged dried salmon for trade in bundles of 40 pieces. Several sources provide tables of exchange values of commodities, including bundles of dried salmon, elk skins, coppers, slaves, etc. Thus, it was possible to turn food into wealth, and this is widely mentioned in Tsimshian *adaawx*, as seen in the section of this report on Wealth and Rank. The extensive trade economy was obvious to observers, who readily recognized the features of the system essential to the social organization of the region:

Niblack 1888:338

Typed text: “Rank and social standing amongst these Indians being based largely upon the possession and distribution of wealth, it is not surprising to find a uniform currency amongst the different tribes, and a regular system of exchange of goods based on considerations both of supply and demand, and of the adaptability of certain tribes or regions to the production of certain things needed in other parts of the coast.”

As Niblack noted, there was a “uniform currency” among the different tribes. Garfield summarized the information from her sources regarding the exchange value of various goods.

Garfield 1939:329

Garfield 1939:330

Typed text: Appendix I EXCHANGE VALUES OF GOODS

Before white contact, which introduced manufactured articles and day labor, most of the goods which changed hands in trade or as potlatch gifts were made by the natives or acquired from neighboring tribes. Woodcraft was the only specialized occupation. Everyone in the community was able to make or prepare most articles. Even chiefs helped with the fishing and hunting which furnished the raw materials for the various food products and also the horn for spoons, the mountain goat wool for weaving and furs and skins for clothing and trade. The small number of slaves and the lack of intensive exploitation of slave labor made their contribution to the supply of surplus goods of negligible value. In an economy where everyone had to produce the larger part of what he consumed and what he accumulated for distribution, vast stores of wealth in the hands of any one man were certainly rare. A chief could, through tributes and gifts from his tribesmen which did not incur return responsibility, accumulate much more than others of lesser rank.

Trade values of various commodities are very difficult to obtain. Few of the natives know even the approximate exchange values of goods previous to the introduction of white trade articles. All insisted that values depended upon the relative status and ability of the traders. A chief expected to pay more for his purchases than commoners and also expected to receive more for what he sold. Naturally, scarcity was a factor. Olachen grease has always brought a higher price from the Haida than from the Tsimshian tribes because they can get it only by trade. The fine canoes of the Haida were in demand among the Tsimshian, who admit they had no canoe makers to compare with the Haida.

Before blankets were introduced caribou and groundhog skins were the standards by which the values of other articles were compared. Bundles of forty caribou skins, and later blankets, were used for the larger potlatch gifts. Copper shields, slaves and canoes were used by chiefs as potlatch gifts. They were too valuable for most commoners to

own. Horn spoons, carved boxes and food dishes and tanned skins or furs were mentioned as common gifts. Dried fish, olachen grease, seaweed cakes and berries in grease are food products often mentioned as potlatch gifts. Cloth, soap, household utensils and dishes were favorite trade and potlatch goods after these came into common use.

The following list of exchange values was given by three informants. The list is not complete and includes articles of both native and white manufacture.

One caribou skin (□iyon) exchanged for forty groundhog skins (gwik).

One small caribou skin for thirty groundhog skins.

One caribou skin for one large box olachen grease. [note 1 here indicates "Boxes for olachen grease and seaweed storage were three middle finger spans high and two first finger spans wide on each side. A finger span is measured from the tip of the outspread thumb to the tip of the finger."'] Ten groundhog skins for one hemlock bark cake, two to three finger widths in thickness.

Ten groundhog skins for one box of pressed seaweed cakes, each cake two to three finger widths in thickness.

Forty groundhog skins for one large box of olachen grease.

One groundhog skin for one dried fish, herring or salmon.

One crab for one tobacco leaf at the trading post.

Twelve tobacco leaves in a bundle for one martin [sic] or beaver skin.

One seaweed cake for one martin [sic: marten] or beaver skin.

Four seaweed cakes for one large martin or beaver skin.

Hudson's Bay blankets had the following monetary values:

White, one dollar and a half each and black or navy blue two dollars and a half each.

One white blanket equaled in value a box of olachen grease or one of crabapples in grease. Though the blankets became the standard of value in trade none of the natives could give their equivalents in other trade goods. One said that he remembered a relative of his who exchanged sixty blankets and four boxes of grease for a twelve-fathom Haida canoe. Another had bought a seven-fathom canoe for twenty white blankets and two boxes of grease. One informant who had been a canoe maker said that he received ninety dollars for a seven-fathom canoe, made in the last ten years.

Olachen grease is now stored in gallon tin cans instead of boxes and sells for from one to four dollars a gallon.

One informant said he had recently taken a grease box full of herring eggs up to the Skeena with him where he disposed of it for one dollar per straw hat full. If he had sold it on the coast where herring eggs are more plentiful he could have exchanged it for four gallons of grease or about four dollars.

Mr. Arctander [Garfield notes here the following is taken from Arctander's, *The Apostle of Alaska*, p. 67. and that the list provided by Arctander is fragmentary and of doubtful accuracy."] reports that soap was sold in the Hudson's Bay post for four martin skins or fifty minks when mink skins were worth two cents each.

The soap was cut in strips of a finger's thickness. One of the informants recalled that the Haida's visits meant the usual play and fights among the boys. One of their favorite pastimes was gambling (laha'l) games with the Haida boys and their favorite stakes were sea lion skins and cakes of soap pilfered from the stores of their elders. In his uncle's house, where he lived, were piles of soap which were not used, except for potlatch distribution.

Notice that in the preceding list Garfield refers to a number of standard units – boxes for grease and seaweed, squares of dried seaweed, bundles of groundhog and caribou skins, etc. The development of standard size boxes and units of exchange indicates a mature trade system, facilitating exchanges without the need for each item to be examined. Museum collections include sufficient numbers of grease or seaweed boxes so that it should be feasible to confirm the standard size(s), though this has not, to my knowledge, been done. The Tsimshian also had a standard measurement unit for dried fish:

Beynon MSS Columbia:148-57-note

Typed text: liiks = bundle. In putting salmon in bundles the Tsimshians put 40 salmon to the bundle.

There is no reason for a “standardized” size of bundles of salmon other than for trade purposes; dried salmon for home use are not stored in 40-piece bundles.

As is evident in the list of exchange values included in Garfield (above), groundhog skins were a unit of exchange that converted to a variety of goods: caribou skins, hemlock bark cakes, pressed seaweed cakes, olachen grease, dried fish, herring or salmon. In addition to their use as an exchange currency in trade, groundhog skins were distributed to announce the death of a chief, linking the barter system to the feast system that converted wealth to social capital.

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Typed text: Well there was one fur that the people killed in great numbers, as it was with it that the ancient people based the value of everything and this was the fur of the groundhog. And anybody who had much groundhog was a wealthy person

Groundhogs are not available on most of the territories of the Coast Tsimshian, and were obtained in large numbers through trade with interior groups.

Trade was pursued aggressively by many Tsimshian housegroups. Most traders had established trading partnerships with traders in other communities, including Haida, Tlingit, Bella Bella, Haisla and interior Athabaskan groups. There were exclusive trading prerogatives on some routes such as the upper Skeena, to which a Gispaxloats *Sm'ooogyet* named Legex proclaimed an exclusive prerogative:

While this reputed monopoly [the Legaic / Gispaxlots trading privileges] certainly played an important part in trade following the arrival of those Euroamerican traders concerned with beaver and other land furs, it did not regulate the movement of prestige goods along the coast. According to Matthew Johnson, the trade downriver involved marmot pelts, berries and soap berries, moose skins, and dried berries, while the Gispaxlots carried inland seafoods such as herring eggs, seaweed, grease and dried halibut in addition to other foods; while marmot pelts and oolachen oil were used in feasting, these did not entail the entire range of prestige or ceremonial goods. Thus the Gispaxlots concentrated on a specialized regional trade within the broader coastal trade complex, which did not comprise the whole range of secular or sacred goods, and which alone could not have enabled the Gispaxlots to feast competitively with better situated villages. Most ethnographic material is mute on the nature of pre-contact coasting trade, which had already been shaken by the maritime traders followed by the Hudson's Bay Company and the Russian American Company well before the arrival of Franz Boas on the coast; furthermore, the academic preoccupation with the Gispaxlots monopoly mirrored the Canadian interest in promoting river-based means of communication to bind the coast to the interior, and away from coastal connections with adjacent American territories in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. (Dean 1993:47)

In the preceding quotation Dean notes that the ethnographic literature is mute on the nature of pre-contact coasting trade. In fact, the ethnographic literature is heavily focussed on social organization, ritual and the prestige economy, including feasts or “potlatches”, and almost silent on more mundane aspects of economic production and trade. It should be noted that Dean did not have access to the extensive set of oral histories that Beynon had sent to Boas in the 1930s, which do include considerable information on trade. The lack of coverage of the economy of production and trade was noted in Garfield’s 1945 article:

The dramatization of history and legend, the glorification of ancestors, and the taking of a new name have received much attention from writers. None of them, however, even intimates the very important point that the successor inherited both the custodianship of the major food-producing resources of his group and certain individual productive holdings from which he received all of the produce as his personal wealth. These prerogatives were and are economically profitable. No matter how spectacular the dramatization of his personal names, of his exclusive supernatural powers, and of other privileges assumed by him as chief of the group, the economic resources are basic, and study of their ownership has been sadly neglected. (Garfield 1945:629)

Oral histories and traders' records document that there was extensive trade among Tsimshian people as well as between Tsimshian and other ethnic groups. Sale of food was one of several mechanisms to circulate wealth and goods within the tribe. Loans and providing temporary access to harvest resources on a territory in return for payment were also options. Sale of food was clearly distinguished from the other options, and intergroup sale of food is frequently attested as a route to wealth as seen in the excerpts included in the section on wealth above.

6.3 Scope and Scale of Trade

Tsimshian traders exported their wares throughout the region. The trade built on the distinctive ecologies of each of the groups in the region, and the products that they could produce in abundance, as well as those that they had to obtain by trade. For example interior groups had no direct access to seaweed, shellfish, halibut, grease, or other marine

resources, and these commodities were always obtained by them in trade. In turn, the coastal groups obtained berries, furs, hides, horn and dried meats, some of types not available on the coast (caribou skins and soapberries) and others that were simply less plentiful there. This trade was not occasional or small-scale. Large quantities were traded, and the trade was well-organized and some traders devoted a substantial part of their annual round to trading and claimed monopoly rights on certain trade routes:

Typed text: Legax and his tribe claim to trade with the Kitcashean people alone with exclusion of the other tribes of Tsimshians. No one who belong to other tribes were allowed on this possession, and the only way a man not a Kispaxloots could go on this place was to married the Kispaxloots woman, and then could accompany his wife to this possession of the Kispaxloots, and he could enjoy her privilege upon these lands where lots of fur bearing animals, and all kinds of wild berries which was cured by boiling and tried [dried].

This was known by all the Tsimshian Chiefs, and this was respected and even the Kitajalam who live farther up the river had to get Legax's permission to go with them up the river. This trip is their last in fall time. They arrived at Maxlthxaltha. By this time, they trade with the nine tribes which situated on the coast. Every day, many canoe came in with many elk skins and other costly things, to barter the dry berries, raspberries, cranberries, blue berries, and soap berries. The last mentioned are very nice, and generally like by all the natives. When stirred in a pocket they froth like soapy water, hence the name. After trading with these neighboring tribes, Legax and his tribe set out for Watsda now (Bella Bella) and trade with them. They gain more elk skins there, and some other garments which made there. These people invented how to make blankets and other garments which was made out of yellow cedar bark mixed with wool of the mountain sheep. Here they also bought salt water food such as seaweed, and dried herring eggs, and many other good food that was found there. Their knowledge of trade was greatly increase by the Kispaxloots tribe since Legax became Chief among them. There are three sources of wealth flows into the tribe, one from Skeena River, one from neighboring tribes at Maxlthgaxltha and one at Watsda now (Bella Bella) such colossal fortunes, such hoarding of treasures was stored in the houses of the tribe, such combinations of wealthy were stored in the house of Chief Legax. This accumulated wealth was instored for both feasts or war with other tribes.” (Duff, Tsimshian File, 084-04-13-01 to 03 (Chief Kelly MS)

Boas wrote that “the products of the different parts of the country and of different tribes were so varied, that a lively trade existed all along the coast.” Among the goods traded to the Haidas were oolachen oil, carved spoons of mountain-goat horn and bighorn horn, and woolen goods; also traded were dentalia, abalone shells, copper, and “the curious coppers... used only at potlatches” and slaves, as well as food staples [emphasis added]. Boas claimed that marmot skins sewn into blankets were a standard of value, although he does not suggest how these actually functioned as a medium of exchange. [note 2: Boas, *Tsimshian Mythology*, p. 57.] As in the case of his student Garfield, Boas seems more concerned with “investment” or expenditure, instead of the commerce that underlay the society in question. (Dean 1993:51)

There is a substantial ethnographic literature on the groups that lived in the same region as the the Tsimshian – the Tlingit, Tahltan, Tsetsaut, Haida, Nisga’a, Haisla, and Bella Bella. This literature complements the ethnographic literature on the Tsimshian and indicates clearly that there was an extensive network of trade. The following excerpt from Lopatin’s study of the Haisla (Kitimat) in the 1930s describes trade with other groups, including the Tsimshian.

Typed text: Intertribal trade was well developed along the coastal region of British Columbia. Various territories had such different products that they might be exchanged to mutual advantage. The Kitimat offered for sale oolachan grease, dried oolachan, smoked spring salmon, hemlock bark, crab-apple berries cooked in oolachan grease, other berries preserved in oolachan grease, dried berries, dried salmon caviar, and powdered salmon spawn.

Oolachan grease was prepared in the following manner. Large wooden boxes were almost filled with water, and into this heated stones were thrown to make the water boil. Then the fish were put into the water. The grease from the fish came to the surface in large quantities. When this grease had been taken out, it was placed in special boxes, about twenty-five gallons to the box, and was ready for sale.

The Kitimat have been known for the manufacture of this grease. Each April they catch a great quantity of oolachan in the lower part of the Kitimat River. Oolachan grease was bartered for goods which the Kitimat needed. One box of grease was equivalent in trade to four blankets, two beaver skins, two boxes of dried halibut, or twenty-eight bricks of seaweed; two boxes of grease had the value of one canoe.

Another important merchandise was hemlock bark. Every spring the bark was stripped from the tree, and its new annual rings were separated in the form of long straps, which were dried and powdered. This powder was used with other food, or a kind of porridge was made of it. Salmon caviar, either dried or in powder form, was also an important product in intertribal trade.

Merchants came from different parts of British Columbia, and even from Alaska, to buy or trade for Kitimat products. The Indians of Hartley Bay brought clothing; those of Bella Bella, seaweed, caviar, and dried halibut; those of Klemptoo, seaweed and herring caviar; those of Kitkatla, seaweed, herring caviar, dried halibut, and dried clams. The Kitchelas of the Skeena River territory came overland through the divide between the Kitimat River and Skeena tributaries. They brought dried berries, hides and robes of the moose, caribou hides, moccasins, snowshoes, and blankets made of weasel fur (kva'kvuy-gutl). These weasel-fur blankets were soft, light, and waterproof, and were highly valued by the Kitimat. The Haida Indians alone took no part in trading with the Kitimat. These warlike people came for hostile purposes only.

No money was in use among the Indians before the arrival of the whites; even later money did not play any important part in trading. Barter has predominated until recent years. Chilcat blankets and robes of skin have become standards of value in recent years, and boxes of oolachan grease were in olden days. Copper plates were also considered as money. The favorite time for trading was during April and May, when the people had finished their trapping and before they had commenced their fishing. Traders from other tribes made camps on the beaches and sent their messengers to invite the Kitimat to come for barter. These messengers went from house to house, chanting their invitation in a loud voice. Intercourse with neighbouring tribes: There were trade routes both by sea and by land. The coast Indians came by canoe, but the Atlasimkh (atla'simx) of the Skeena River district brought their goods overland. They ascended the Zymoetz River, crossed Lakelse Lake, and came down the Kitimat River. The favorite season for the traders of the Skeena was in winter when there was much snow. (Lopatin, Ivan, 1945:90-91)

George Emmons began his study of the Tlingit while stationed with the American Navy in Alaska in the 1880s, and continued his research for several decades, become a noted ethnologist and collector. His encyclopedic notes on the Tlingit were being organized as a book when he died in 1945, and that task was eventually completed by Frederica de Laguna; *The Tlingit Indians*, by George Thornton Emmons, edited with additions by Frederica de Laguna was eventually published in 1991. Here are several relevant excerpts:

Before the advent of Europeans, native food products and worked objects had certain relative values for trade purposes, although it is difficult to learn that there were any absolute fixed standards. (54)

In very early days, the Tlingit procured copper, moose and caribou skins, and smaller furs from the interior, which he traded to the Haida for great red cedar canoes and to the Tsimshian for carved wooden dishes, boxes and woven fabrics. (54-55)

Domestic barter was carried on in such products as might be in excess of the needs of the particular tribes involved.... The Tongass and Sanya traded on the Nass for eulachon grease which they exchanged with the more northern people. (55)

If a surplus of any kind of food were found in the spring, the period of food shortage, the wife selected it and placed it on the outer platform [front porch] in front of the owner, for the attention of passers-by [and traded it]. (56)

While the Chilkat, like all other Tlingit, looked to the water for their staple food supply, their wealth was derived from the land in their trade with the interior peoples, the products of which they both used and exchanged with more southern coast tribes.

...information obtained by Simon Fraser in 1806, to the effect that the Indians of the Finlay, a northwestern tributary of the Peach River, received iron from the Tsimshian-speakers of the upper Skeena, who in turn had secured it from their coastal kinsmen. (188)

Oberg did fieldwork among the Tlingit in Klukwan in 1931-32 and commented on the importance of trade in the Tlingit economy in his book, which was not published until 1973:

Oberg 1973: 108-109

Typed text: ...the trade with the Tsimshian and Haida consisted chiefly of hides, Chilcat blankets, and copper, which were exchanged for large cedar canoes, slaves, and shell ornaments. (108)

...It is difficult to measure the degree of interdependence between the various house-groups and villages and the neighboring tribes. Such articles as copper shields, Chilcat blankets, and abalone shell ornaments were of the highest value in potlatch proceedings, yet these articles were produced in special regions. Wearing

apparel, such as moose and caribou hide shirts, trousers with stockings attached, and moccasins were universally used by the Tlingit, yet there were no moose on the islands and certainly the greater part of the people lived on the islands. Deer were plentiful on the islands, but deer hide was inferior to that of the moose and caribou. Eulachon oil was universally used and preferred to seal oil, yet it was produced only on the mainland. The Tsimshian on the Nass and the Skeena rivers specialized in making this oil and produced a quality that was demanded by all. From both the south and the north, Indians came to trade for this oil, and the so-called grease trails into the interior were really highways of early trade. The large cedar canoes used by the Tlingit were almost invariably made by the Haida and Tsimshian, for the large red cedar (*Thuja gigantea*) used in their construction grows to the required size only south of latitude 54°40'.

Against the integrating forces of trade there existed the political unity of the clans, their rivalries and open conflicts, and monopolies of certain villages over spheres of trade. At present there is no way to measure the degree of economic interdependence of the Tlingit among themselves and with their neighbors. All that we can say is that they were a trading people, wealth was of great importance to them, and all that remains of material culture and ethnographic reports of early travelers shows that material objects of wealth were spread far from their place of origin.

Tsimshian people had participated in a farflung trade network for at least two millenia. Archaeological evidence indicates that goods, including dentalia, obsidian, amber, jade and other products, were obtained in trade. There were established standards of value, and key trade products.

A great many groundhog skins were accumulated as these were necessary for the ceremonies and were always in great demand as trade articles among the other tribes. They were used in announcing death and puberty, as smaller gifts at a potlatch or secret society ceremony, and formed the common small currency of trade" (Garfield *Tsimshian Clan*, p. 199). (Dean 1993: 39-40)

The chain of trade reached many hundreds of miles all along the coast and to the interior.

The vigorous trade between coastal settlements and inland tribes apparently existed for a considerable period of time. When Nagaiev described the activities of a group of Natives who lived some distance upstream from the mouth of the Copper River in 1783-1784 he stated that they "traded copper and land-furs with the coast people for seal-skins, dried fish, and oil" (Bancroft 1836:191)... The

custom of riverine trading routes with interior peoples was widely practiced on the Northwest Coast as shown by the Nass River, the Skeena River, the Fraser River, and the Columbia River. (Tollefson 1976:53)

In the early stages of the inland-coastal exchange, basically food from the coast was exchanged for furs from the interior. Primarily, dried salmon and candlefish oil were exchanged for caribou or other skins for making clothing and copper for fashioning into points for hunting implements and weapons...Caribou hides seemed to have been the most suitable and durable material for making skin clothing. Due to the cold damp winters along the coast, the more suitable materials for clothing were highly sought. Thus, all Tlingit villages were eager to obtain caribou hides. The interior Athapascans were also noted for their processing of sinew for sewing, for ropes, or for bow strings. Musk ox skins or perhaps buffalo skins were shaped into leather breast armor (Krause 1956:127). Native copper, collected by interior Athapascans along the Copper and White River valleys, found a ready market among the Tlingit. The copper was obtained from placer nuggets or from veins of pure metal near the earth's surface (Emmons 1908:545). Lichen, a native dye used in the construction of dance blankets, birchwood bows, moccasins, and conifer gum were also obtained from the interior. (Tollefson 1976:55-56)

Tollefson (57ff) describes the organization of coastal-island exchange networks, beginning with the ecological differences between the locales:

Coastal villages produced olachen products (oil, dried fish, and dried berries in olachen oil) and mountain goat and sheep products (carved horn spoons and Chilkat blankets). The coastal villages traded their leather products, copper, olachen products, and sheep products derived from the interior groups to the island villages for tidal products (seaweed, clams, mussels, and sea urchins), deep sea products (halibut, king salmon [spring salmon], herring, and herring spawn), forest products (dried venison, cedar bark, cedar, and yew wood)." (Tollefson 1976:58)

Here is a comment on northern routes:

An equally, if not more likely, route by which European goods entered Nisga'a and Coast Tsimshian territory was through northern Tlingit connections. The Tlingit were but one link in another extensive intertribal network stretching as far as the Chuckchi region of Siberia. The Indigenous inhabitants of the Chuckchi area obtained goods of Russian origin through their own Siberian trade networks and then exchanged these items with the Aleut and other cultures across the Bering

Strait in what is now Alaska. In turn, the Aleut traded with the Tlingit. The flow of European goods to the Tlingit probably intensified once the Russians crossed the Bering Strait in 1741 and began to systematically exploit the fur resources of the Aleut. Extensive Russo-Tlingit contact occurred only in the latter two decades of the century, but even before that time the Tlingit had surplus European goods which they traded to other coastal groups such as the Nisga'a and Coast Tsimshian. (Cooper 1993:78)

There were a number of well-established trading partnerships, including some that were exclusive prerogatives which had been proclaimed at feasts and were therefore sanctioned by the guests who had received gifts. Trading partners were often related, or arranged marriages among their relatives to ensure continued good relations. Those with trade prerogatives would take others on their trading expeditions in return for payments before and after the trip.

Other trade relationships existed between the Coast Tsimshian and the Gitksan, the Niska and the Tsetsaut, the Niska and Carrier, and the Gitksan and the Carrier, in which foods from the Coast were traded for furs from the interior. After the fur trade began, two chiefs, LegEx of the Gispaxlo'ts and Sagau'wEn (Chief Mountain) of the lower Nass, seized monopolies over two of these trading patterns. (Halpin 1973:110)

The following description of the annual round of the Gitksan reported by Isaac Tens of Gitanmaks demonstrates that the interior groups had different resource use patterns than the coastal Tsimshian; it also highlights aboriginal trade goods:

Seasonal Activities, Gitanmaks, Isaac Tens: The fall months until the cold weather set in were given over to festivities. When the cold weather came they went to their winter houses so as to be closer to wood. They hunted and got skins to trade with the Tsimshian, and during this season made fur garments which they also traded to the Tsimshian.

“In the spring they moved to their salmon fishing villages and dry salmon. After that, the berries would be ripe and they went to other mountains to get berries. They would split up in units, the men going after matix [mountain goats] and groundhogs, the women after berries. They they would return to Git'anmaks.

Trade with Tsimshian:

Skins and fur garments for:

- grease
 - seaweeds
 - herring roe, and other foods
 - the hide of the reindeer which the Tsimshian got from the Tsiŋget (Chilcat)
- (Duff Tsimshian File: 125-04-01)

For further information on the scope and scale of Tsimshian trade see Primary Source Compilations 08: Trade.

6.4 Post-Contact History and the Persistence of Tsimshian Trade

The evidence of both *adaawx* and archaeology indicate that the Tsimshian had lived in their present location for thousands of years. After the Tsimshian had re-taken the coast from the Tlingit (about 2000 years before the present time), inter-group conflict diminished substantially. While the oral histories record a number of raids and retaliations, the evidence is that these were sufficiently rare as to be noteworthy, and were generally eventually settled through compensation. The feast system facilitated intergroup relations and included mechanisms for dispute settlement and compensation to end conflicts. By the time Europeans first entered the area the Allied Tribes Tsimshian had for many generations lived in proximity to their neighbours - the Haida, Tlingit, Nisga'a, Gitksan, Haisla, and the Southern Tsimshian - for millenia, and had long-established relationships with them, including marriages, trade partnerships, and frequent contact. The wealth available from intergroup trade was a strong incentive to avoid hostilities, and trade was a more efficient way to access and distribute surplus than raiding. Archaeologists have documented the rise in trade goods in sites parallel with lowered incidence of evidence of warfare such as skull and defensive forearm fractures (MacDonald, Archer). In the late eighteenth century the equilibrium among these groups was shaken by the entrance of explorers, traders, and eventually a permanent fort within Tsimshian territories. There are journals and logs from several of the maritime vessels that traded in Tsimshian waters during the maritime fur trade era, but these provide few details on anything but the trade in pelts that was the primary goal of these voyages.

When the Hudson's Bay Company built Fort Simpson at the present site of Port Simpson / Lax Kw'alaams in 1834¹⁷ the written documentary record becomes somewhat more extensive, though information on trade among natives is still very sparse. Duff estimates that in 1835 the population of the Tsimshian (including the Nisga'a and Gitksan) was about 8,500; this is roughly 12% of the 70,000 population of Indians he estimated for the area now covered by British Columbia at that time. Duff cites several sources that attempted to estimate the population of the province ca. 1770 (pre-contact) at 80,000 to 125,000; more recent sources have suggested that it may well have been over 300,000. If the figure was that high and the Tsimshian did comprise 12% of the aboriginal population, then there may have been as many as 36,000 Tsimshian, Nisga'a and Gitksan, of whom over 1/3 would have been Coast Tsimshian proper. Epidemic diseases such as smallpox may well have reached the Tsimshian prior to the first direct contact from a number of directions – the Russians were in Alaska by the 1740s, and since there was an unbroken chain of trade from east of the Rocky Mountains to the coast it is possible that disease also moved with this trade. It is known that there was a smallpox epidemic among the Tlingit some years prior to 1787 when Captain Portlock visited them (Dixon 1789:271), and in 1794 Bishop found smallpox actively raging among the Kitkatla, just south of the Allied Tribes group. (Bishop 1795:105, 116). There was a severe smallpox epidemic on the northern coast in 1836:

The small Pox disappeared in the month of August; the effects of this visitation will not soon wear out of remembrance with the Natives of Fort Simpson and their northern neighbours, among whom the mortality is computed at one third of the whole population. (Douglas in Rich 1941:270)

The 1862 smallpox epidemic took a similar toll.

¹⁷ This fort was originally built at the mouth of the Nass in 1831 to take advantage of the large number of people who congregated there for trade during the oolachan harvest, but was moved four years later; there were several reasons for the move – the Nass site was a poor one for both weather and navigation, and one of traders, Kennedy, had married the daughter of Legaic, and his father-in-law encouraged the move to Tsimshian territory.

In a few places doctors or priests vaccinated the Indians and checked the disease, but in most areas, as the *Colonist* put it, it raged unchecked until it exhausted itself for want of material to work on. When the epidemic started there were about 60,000 Indians in British Columbia. When it had burned itself out two or three years later, there were about 40,000. (Duff 1965:42-43)

At the same time there were other new diseases rampant: influenza, measles, tuberculosis, venereal diseases; as well as the impact of alcohol, which was often sold in dangerously adulterated form. There was also an increase in violence, partly due to access to guns and alcohol, and partly due to the disruption of society caused by the traders and the huge mortality from disease, which engendered accusations of witchcraft. Despite population losses from disease and violence, Tsimshian people remained well over 95% of the population of the north coast area until the 20th century, when the coming of the railroad led to the building of Prince Rupert; even now the local school district reports 54% aboriginal students.

The maritime trade expanded rapidly between 1778 when the crew of Cook's expedition sold sea otter obtained at Nootka in China for a huge profit. Maritime explorers were rapidly followed by trading vessels keen to purchase sea otter and other furs; by 1825 the Hudson's Bay Company had become active on the coast and quickly displaced the British and American vessels that visited the coast in search of riches (Fisher 1973:3). Sea otter were depleted rapidly, both by the local hunters and by crews of Aleut hunters that were brought into Tsimshian territory by Russian traders. In 1831 Fort Simpson was built at the mouth of the Nass, and in 1834 it was moved to the present location of Lax Kw'alaams. "The area around the mouth of the Nass was the "grand mart" for both land and sea furs, so Fort Simpson was the company's most important coastal station." (Fisher 1973:26) There was still competition from American trading vessels and Russian traders from Alaska during the 1830s, and the Tsimshian did well by pitting them against one another while controlling trade with the interior and reaping good profits as middlemen on furs from their trade partners. The trade in furs augmented profits from

provisions traded to interior groups under the old Tsimshian trade system, and was not a new phenomenon. With the added profits from furs, trade to the interior was even more lucrative. The struggles to create and control monopolies on these routes intensified, leading to a series of conflicts between chiefs such as Legaic from the Allied Tribes Tsimshian and chiefs from Kitselas and the Nass. The Allied Tribes groups also established their winter villages around Fort Simpson:

The Tsimshian who established themselves at Fort Simpson, like the home guards at the other coastal forts, made every effort to control the trade of the fort. These Indians were agents and dealers more than hunters and trappers. They set themselves up as middlemen between other Indians and the company traders. (Fisher 1973:30)

From the onset of contact the traders on vessels and at coastal trading forts were largely dependent on aboriginal peoples for provisions. Sale of food and other goods to these newcomers was added to the long-established trade in provisions with other aboriginal communities, and the aboriginal system remained vigorous:

During the early years of contact with Europeans, the aboriginal system remained intact, and fish purchased from Indians were an important food source for Hudson's Bay posts. The aboriginal system of fish exchange among groups was simply extended to include sales to Europeans. (Pinkerton 1987:251)

At Fort Simpson there was substantial reliance on trade for local foods, and the Tsimshian traded salmon and herring to the HBC as well as seeking tributes from other groups trading foodstuffs to the fort:

Of all the HBC posts along the coast, Fort Simpson was the least self-sufficient, and the one most geared to the fur trade network. [note 23 here cites Hammond cited in Mackie] Simpson's appeal to HBC factors to develop gardens to produce potatoes, fruit, and vegetables was never a practical possibility at Fort Simpson... from its inception factors relied heavily on produce traded by aboriginal groups. The regular supply of food was a major concern of all Fort Simpson factors and appears prominently in the Fort Simpson Journals from the 1830s to the 1860s. (note 24 here cites Meilleur)... the Coast Tsimshian permitted non-Tsimshian groups to trade foodstuffs with the HBC, although tribute payments were still

sought... and Coast Tsimshian groups supplied a variety of sea produce, including salmon and herring. (Clayton 1989:15-16)

The coastal forts increased the market for aboriginal products as well as furs.

Dependent upon local Indians for provisions and trade, they [coastal forts] only existed at the forbearance of their Indian neighbors. (Grumet 1982:31)

Occupants at the fort also worked to free themselves from complete dependence upon local Indians for provisions. Although content to trade with Tlingits, Nishgas and Coast Tsimshians for meat and fish, the Whites were less willing to pay for potatoes and other crops grown by Haidas and other Indians. (Grumet 1982:34-35)

During much of the era of the land-based fur trade it was actually the Hudson's Bay Company traders who depended upon the Coast Tsimshian, Nisga'a and other Native groups for provisions, rather than the converse. Native provisions were not merely items to be used when supply ships were late or on other occasions of shortage. Rather they became a regular part of the diet of the fort residents. Even in the 1850s, by which time the Company kept livestock such as goats and pigs on site, it still depended upon fish and deer supplied by the Native Peoples as their major source of protein. [note 53 here cites Fisher, Contact and Conflict:34; and Meilleur:83] (Cooper 1993:123-124)

The trade involved large quantities of fish, and some sources estimate that it was more than was directly consumed by the natives. James McDonald reviewed archival documents to examine the process by which the Kitsumkalum Tsimshian became enmeshed in the capitalist or market economy of the region by the mid-twentieth century. As part of his research he looked specifically at the way in which the Allied Tribes Tsimshian traded provisions to Fort Simpson and to other foreigners as soon as these markets were available. Evidence from the *adaawx* such as was provided above makes it clear that these transactions were a continuation of the traditional Tsimshian trade in provisions:

The fish market on the Skeena (production for exchange to the Hudson Bay Company and other foreigners) became an important source of revenue for the Indians, who were the main suppliers if not the only suppliers for many years.

This traffic began immediately upon the establishment of Fort (Port) Simpson. As at other Company posts throughout the continent, the European traders relied upon native production for a significant portion of their diet. Information on the extent of this trade can be found in the journals kept by the factors at the fort. Although this source is an inconsistent record, it shows that the trade was important and, compared to later figures on consumption, of relatively large volume for the Indians involved. Table 2 lists the tabulated trade at the fort during the years the traders made regular mention of food items. Additional information comes from the early Confederation period. In 1878, the Fishery Narratives estimated that from 20,000 to 30,000 fish were annually being sold to Fort Babine by Indians (Canada, Department of Fisheries, Annual Reports 1878:296), compared to an estimated 20,000 caught for consumption by Skeena River Indians in 1889 (Canada, Department of Fisheries, Annual Reports 1889:257). (McDonald 1985:163)

The native peoples exploited the rich fisheries resources long before a commercial fishery was established. They developed a number of techniques to preserve various species of fish, and thus maintained a winter food supply as well as trade with inland tribes. These trade patterns were altered to accommodate the entry of the fur-trading companies. When posts were established in the early nineteenth century, salmon became a staple for personnel stationed in the two colonies of what later became British Columbia, and was also exported salted in barrels to company crews in the Sandwich Islands and Australia. Along with fur, native peoples supplied salmon, using traditional capture methods. Demand for salmon in this processed state was insufficient, however, to allow the Hudson's Bay Company to market it commercially on an extensive scale. (Muszynski 1987:47)

While the market to traders and other foreigners became quite substantial, for the Tsimshian, there is no evidence to indicate that they made any distinction between their "traditional" trade and the new "market" economy. It is important to reiterate here that the foreigners were hugely outnumbered by the Tsimshian on the north coast until the turn of the twentieth century.

Standard units and exchange values became known among the new traders, just as there had long been standard units and exchange values in the Tsimshian economy:

Salmon were used as an article of commerce and formed a sort of legal tender, ten salmon being equivalent to a dollar. Dried salmon were sold to miners, merchants,

and packers operating dog sleighs. It has been estimated that the average consumption of fish by Indians in British Columbia amounted to about twenty million pounds per year: about seventeen and one-half million pounds of salmon, three million pounds of halibut, and one-quarter million pounds of sturgeon, herring, trout and other fish as well as eighty thousand gallons of fish oil valued at \$4,885,000 in 1879, and at \$3,257,000 in 1885. (Carrothers 1941:5-6 note 2.)

Here is a description based on a missionary account from the late 1850s, indicating the scale of the trade:¹⁸

Coast Tsimshians returned to Rose Harbour during the early fall. There they prepared to receive the enormous number of Northwest Coast Indians who converged upon Fort Simpson by the thousands during the autumn months. Anglican missionary William Duncan estimated that as many as 20,000 Indians congregated at the Coast Tsimshian village during the 1850s. Though this figure was probably inflated to attract evangelical attention, many thousands of Indian people did travel annually to this great fall fair to trade with their Coast Tsimshian partners and Hudson's Bay Company employees until the first days of winter. (Grumet 1982:36)

The Tsimshian participated actively in the expansion of all types of trade as settlement grew in British Columbia. Their initiatives were often organized through missionaries, but the Tsimshian were also active entrepreneurs on their own account.^{19,20} Note here that the missionary William Duncan is credited with the development of a number of enterprises, all of which depended on Tsimshian labour and resources. These initiatives included a salmon cannery:

¹⁸ Missionary William Duncan first came to Fort Simpson in 1857.

¹⁹ "The Coast Tsimshian traded furs at Fort Simpson, Port Essington and Metlakatla. They, along with other aboriginal groups, also traded foodstuffs at these places, and from the late 1860s operated canoes taking goods and people up the Skeena. At the same time, the Coast Tsimshian traded with Europeans and other aboriginal groups along the mainland coast as far south as Washington, and therefore were not wholly dependent on trade in these northern settlements." (Clayton 1989:86-87)

²⁰ "In addition to these small retail operations, the Nisga'a and Coast Tsimshian undertook larger commercial and industrial ventures on a cooperative basis at the mission centres... Port Simpson and Kincolith residents also contemplated establishing their own cannery. Still in spite of their enthusiasm for larger projects such as canneries the Nisga'a and Coast Tsimshian were seldom able to proceed beyond the planning stage of development. Capitalization was the principal difficulty particularly after the imposition of the Indian Act during the 1880s... Moreover, the Metlakatlan operation became successful and expanded only after their removal to Alaska where they were not bound by the provisions of the Indian Act." (Cooper 1993:304)

In 1864 the [Missionary William Duncan] bought a trading schooner, the Carolina. In 1867 he established a sawmill, and in the following few years established a sash factory, and coopering, carpentry, and blacksmith shops. A salmon cannery, built in 1882, packed salmon for four seasons... His sawmill and canning companies were capitalised by the sale of shares to Metlakatians, some of which were bought with the cash that they had earned working on various projects in the settlement. (Clayton 1989:33-34)

Duncan had earlier organized the shipping of salted salmon and oolachan, as well as oolachan grease, from Metlakatla:

Increasingly in the 1860s and 70s, commodities (including furs) from aboriginal groups on the Nass and the Queen Charlotte Islands were brought to Metlakatla rather than Fort Simpson. With much Tsimshian fur trading expertise on board, the Carolina made many successful fur collecting trips to the Nass, enhancing Metlakatla's commercial autonomy. The furs traded were pressed and polished at Metlakatla and were shipped to Victoria along with barrels of eulachon oil, salted salmon and eulachon, dried berries, cedar timber and shingles, and Metlakatlan handicrafts. (Clayton 1989:34)

Through most of the 1850s the non-aboriginal population of the north coast was miniscule – under a hundred, almost all Hudson's Bay employees; the non-aboriginal population of Victoria, then the main settlement in British Columbia, had fewer than 300 people. As late as the 1870s (and well after) the Tsimshian remained the primary provisioners of coastal enterprises:

Cunningham pursued his pre-emption claim in partnership with Thomas Hankin (another former HBC employee), and was permitted to occupy a site adjacent to "Woodcock's Landing" in December of 1870. Cunningham and Hankin bought goods from Victoria on the Otter, bought four canoes from the Coast Tsimshian, and established an outfitting store on the site. In the winter of 1870-1 they supplied 20 or so prospectors with mining equipment and clothes, and in April took them up the Skeena in their canoes. The canoes carried two tons of freight each and were operated by Tsimshian guides who charged \$1 a day plus food for their services. Much like Fort Simpson - although on a much smaller scale - Cunningham and Hankin's "Skeenamouth" site depended on the supply of fresh food from Coast Tsimshian groups. (Clayton 1989:73)

As the economy of the north coast was transformed by the advent of salmon canneries, the Tsimshian participated by selling fish to the canners, but also resisted the appropriation of their resources and maintained their practice of selling to others.

From the inception of canning operations on the Skeena, Tsimshian groups contested the alienation and impoverishment of their fishing grounds, and interfered with cannery operations. In 1878, the manager of the Windsor cannery, W.H. Dempster, had to pay a Kitkatla chief \$100 for the right to fish in a small stream in Petrel Channel (near Kitkatla village) without interference, and the fishermen were then prevented from fishing if their catch exceeded what the Kitkatla thought a fair return. In 1879, Dempster, J.W. McKay (manager of Inverness cannery) and Henry Croasdaile (from a Nass cannery) wrote to the Attorney General: 'We are too weak to hold our own [against the Tsimshian] and unless we are protected we will be obliged to abandon our enterprizes [sic] as under present disabilities they are not remunerative. [note 113 here cites PABC GR 858 Box 3, fo 27, 81/79] (Clayton 1989:56).

In keeping with the independent demeanour they had always displayed when dealing with Euro-Canadians, the Nisga'a and Coast Tsimshian resisted the canners' attempts to control their economic activities. They sold some of their catch to other canneries in spite of existing contracts. Further they engaged in the illegal sale of salmon to Euro-Canadian settlers and commercial fishing interests. According to one estimate at least 60,000 salmon per year were sold from the Skeena food fishery alone, despite the threat of prosecution by fisheries inspectors." (ref. here to NACRG10 vol. 3908, file 107297-2, Minutes of a Royal Commission at Victoria involving Fishing Privileges of Indians in British Columbia, 1915.) (Cooper 1993:299)

While many Tsimshian went to work for the canneries as fishermen, there was considerable discrimination against Indians in the industry; they were prohibited from obtaining licenses that were not attached to a cannery, were unable to get seine licenses for decades, and because of the provisions of the Indian Act they couldn't raise capital to start their own enterprises, and at the same time many canneries infringed on traditional fishing sites and Indians were prohibited from selling their own catch or using their traditional technologies. In the 1880s the process of allocating reserves began, and many of the fishing sites belonging to Tsimshian housegroups and tribes were requested and granted as reserves, while at the same time Tsimshian fishers were discriminated against in

the commercial fishery and their own fisheries were outlawed or grossly restricted. The next section will address that period.

For further information on Post-Contact History and the Persistence of Trade see Primary Source Compilations 08: Trade. For additional information on the history of the fur trade era refer to the following two publications: Fisher, Robin, 1977, *Contact and Conflict: Indian European Relations in British Columbia 1774-1890*, UBC Press, Vancouver; and Duff, Wilson, 1965, *The Indian History of British Columbia, volume 1, The Impact of the White Man*, Anthropology in British Columbia Memoir Number 5, British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria.

7. Tsimshian territorial and fishing rights acknowledged

In Section 7, evidence will be presented indicating that Tsimshian territorial and resource ownership and economic rights were acknowledged by other groups and by officials of the colonial regime, notably in the process of reserve allocation, in which 'fishing sites' and other significant economic assets were reserved, though subsequent government actions deprived the Tsimshian of the opportunity to earn their livelihoods from them.

In the early days of commercial canneries the rights of the Tsimshian were acknowledged by the canners:

The Native sense of ownership did not diminish with the arrival of a settler society, and on some parts of the coast Natives demanded recognition and payment for the use of prominent resource sites. Methodist Missionary A.E. Green, who arrived at Port Simpson at the mouth of the Nass in 1877, remarked on the Coast Tsimshian claims to the land and sea, and on the arrangements made with white immigrants: 'Every mountain, every valley, every stream was named, and every piece belong to some particular family. This claim was recognized by all the white men, viz. Harvey Snow, James Grey, J.J. Robinson, who rented small sites from the Indians for fishing purposes, and paid the Indians regular rent

for the same. (note 203 here: Statement of Rev. A.E. Green, 27 November 1888, Letters from the Methodist Missionary Society to the Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs respecting British Columbia Troubles: with affidavits, declarations, etc. (Toronto 1889) appendix p. 14.) This arrangement appears to have ended when the immigrants applied for and received land grants from the province in 1880. It only marked the beginning, however, of the struggle between Natives and a settler society for control of the fishery. (Harris 2001:61)

In the 1870s canneries quickly began to encroach on the territorial and resource rights of the Tsimshian. Reserves were set aside in various parts of British Columbia in the 1870s and 1880s, and reviewed in 1913-1916. While the reserve allocation process recognized Tsimshian “fishing grounds, these were rendered economically irrelevant by other government actions. Both federal and provincial officials acknowledged Indian fishing rights, and the province put forward the argument that the reserves allocated in the area should be small as the economy of the Indians was centred on the fisheries rather than agriculture. Early on, Indian fisheries were encouraged, and sales to white settlers were seen as a useful economic contribution by Indians.

When British Columbia joined the confederation in 1871 to become part of the Dominion of Canada, there was no commercial fishery of any value. In that era, the colonial administration encouraged this aboriginal fishery in order to supply the food needs of the white settlers, whose time could then be devoted to agriculture. In addition, native peoples were encouraged to fish to avoid becoming a charge on the public purse (Jack v. The Queen 1980:309) (Sharma 1998:34)

When reserves were set out, many of the fishing stations that had belonged to the Tsimshian were identified and reserved. In the process of reserve allocation, over 30 reserves were set aside for the communities now comprising the Allied Tsimshian Tribes the documentation for which indicates that they were primarily sites for fishing; this doesn't include village sites, which often include fish streams, fish traps, clam or cockle beds, etc. The question of exclusive or special Indian fishing rights was actively discussed, and it was clearly the assumption of those allocating the reserves that Indians would continue to earn their livelihoods from their traditional fisheries, at their traditional fishing sites.

Great care should be taken that the Indians, especially those inhabiting the Coast, should not be disturbed in the enjoyment of their customary fishing grounds, which should be reserved for them previous to white settlement in the immediate vicinity of such localities. (D. Laird, memorandum, in Papers Connected with the Indian Land Question 130-131, adopted by Order in Council of the Dominion Government 24 April 1874)

A resource geographer summarizes the period thusly:

With the exception of several groups on Vancouver Island, most British Columbia Indian nations never signed treaties or in any other form relinquished their aboriginal rights. On the other hand agreements made with Indians prior to the establishment of canneries, subsequent negotiations with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), and the commissions that set up Indian reserve lands all recognized Indian rights to capture and sell fish (Pinkerton 1987a:249). Direct competition for fish between commercial canners and Indian domestic fisheries first made itself felt around the turn of the century. Ironically, this was a time period when Indian fishing rights were officially recognized and confirmed by both federal and provincial governments, mostly because of disagreements over the size of Indian reserves. Acreage and location of reserve lands were determined by joint Indian Reserve Commissions operating from 1876 to 1877, 1879 to 1880, 1880 to 1898 and by the joint Royal Commission operating from 1913 to 1916. The province succeeded in persuading federal officials that Indians in British Columbia did not require reserves as large as those set aside in other provinces, as long as native fisheries were protected. Indians, for their part, agreed to the small reserves allocated them on the understanding that their rights to the fishery were guaranteed (Lane and Lane 1978, quoted in Pinkerton 1987a:251). It did not take long, however, for the Fisheries Department to be sensitive to pressure from the canneries, as a result of which it insisted that native people's aboriginal rights did not exempt them from regulation under the Fisheries Act. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans maintains that the Fisheries Act supersedes any obligations incurred under treaties or commissions, whereas the Department of Indian Affairs upholds the right of Indians to pass their own band by-laws for "the preservation, protection and management of fur-bearing animals, fish and other game on the reserve." (Indian Act 1985, c.I-5, s81 [o]). Both the courts and the federal Department of Justice have taken the position that where there is an inconsistency between band by-laws and the federal Fisheries Act, the former will prevail. (Notzke 1994:45)

Like other BC First Nations, the Tsimshian received very small reserves compared to those under treaties further east. The rationale given for this was specifically because

Indians in British Columbia relied on fisheries and that these were to be guaranteed for them:

But as commercial canning operations expanded from nine canneries in 1880 to sixty-four in 1900, the canners increasingly sought the fish stocks on which Indians depended, as well as the actual fishing sites (Fisher, 1977). Ironically, the Indian fishing rights were officially recognized and confirmed during this period by both federal and provincial governments, largely because of disagreements over the size of Indian reserves. These were set out by Joint Indian Reserve Commissions operating from 1876 to 1877, 1879 to 1880, 1880 to 1898 and by the joint Royal Commission operating from 1913 to 1916. The province persuaded federal officials that Indians in British Columbia did not require reserves as large as those set aside in other provinces, as long as Indian fisheries were protected. For their part, Indians agreed to the small reserves allotted them on the understanding that their rights in the fishery were guaranteed. (Lane and Lane, 1978).

However as “fishing stations” were being reserved for Indians on the one hand, regulations and policies were being promulgated that prohibited them from selling the catch from their fisheries. Even though the first inspector of fisheries appointed by the federal government argued that it was illegal to interfere with the fishing rights of Indians, the canneries demanded, and eventually got, various regulations that made it illegal for Indians to exercise their rights:

These rights were at least partially recognized by the first inspector of fisheries, Alex C. Anderson, also an Indian agent, appointed in 1876. Denying allegations that the Indians destroyed the salmon, he recommended that “any interference with the natives, therefore, under hastily formed or frivolous pretext, would be imprudent as well as unjust” (Sessional Papers 1878). In Anderson’s opinion, “the exercise of aboriginal fishing rights cannot be legally interfered with” (Sessional Papers, 1879). Under subsequent inspectors, however, the Fisheries Department appeared more sensitive to pressure from the canners, and insisted that Indians’ aboriginal rights did not exempt them from regulation under the Fisheries Act. (Pinkerton 1987:251)

Pinkerton continues with quotations from the Department of Fisheries, Annual Report 1929-30:105, wherein commercial canners propose discontinuing Indian “interference with the salmon” and substituting canned pilchard that the canners would supply to Indians in lieu of allowing them their own fisheries; this section also notes objections by

sports fishers to aboriginal catches in Stuart Lake. (Pinkerton 1987:252-253). Pinkerton goes on to point out the large number of local Indians who fished in the early cannery period:

Canneries, especially in the north, were, in the beginning, almost completely dependent on Indians as a source of labour in both fishing and shorework. Canneries would locate near Indian communities for the explicit purpose of using Indian labour if the communities were near a particularly large salmon run (Gillis and McKay, 1980). In 1887, for example, the Nass and Skeena salmon were caught almost exclusively by Indians, many fishing as contract wage workers for the cannery on cannery-owned boats (Sessional Papers 1888). During this time, out of one hundred fishing licenses on the Skeena, only forty were held by fishers, the balance being held by canners (Sessional Papers, 1892). However, "about one thousand Indians live by fishing alone in this district" (Sessional Papers, 1890), because many Indians without licences sold fish to those on license vessels.

"Many of those who did fish with licences refused to pay for them, arguing that fishing was their right. The canners paid for the licences under the Indians' names, and were thus apparently able to control the licences." (Pinkerton 1987:255)

As noted, the government's own experts were well aware of the significance of fishing and the sale and trade of fish, and advised against interfering with their rights. A. C.

Anderson, the first federal overseer of fisheries in British Columbia wrote to the federal minister:

The exercise of these rights, unfettered by wanton or ignorant interference, is to many of the tribes an object of prime importance; and as a matter of expediency alone, omitting entirely the higher consideration of the moral claim, their protection demands the earnest care of the Government.

Anderson was also a member of the Indian Claims Commission, and attempted to reserve fishing spots when they were identified. He urged Ottawa to pass legislation declaring that the Fisheries Act "as modified to suit the exigencies of this province, shall not be deemed to apply to the Indians working to supply their own wants in the accustomed way..." Anderson also warned that the expansion of the canning industry was causing

trouble with Indians because canneries were displacing aboriginal fishers from their traditional sites.

...excites much talk among the Indians of white people monopolizing their favourite fishing grounds... Stringent regulations to prevent the destruction of spawning grounds, and to provide for the property protection of Indians in the possession of certain fishing places -- considering themselves as they do, the sole owners of all such localities -- should be made...

In a letter from Anderson to fisheries minister James Pope early in 1879 he wrote:

In my opinion, the exercise of the aboriginal fishing rights cannot legally be interfered with. ...the Indians of this Province be formally exempted, by Order in Council, from the application of the general fishery law. In this way their position will be publicly understood; and the risk will be avoided that, in some remote part of this wide region, some over-zealous official may be tempted to misapply the intention of the law as it present authorized, and thus originate troubles it will be more easy to excite than to allay.

The Tsimshian protested the allocation of reserves on the grounds that they already owned their territories. They contested the outlawing of their traditional fishing technologies, and continued to practice their own customs as much as possible.

Nevertheless, the Nisga'a and Coast Tsimshian resented the government's intrusions upon their subsistence activities. Nisga'a informants expressed their extreme regret at having to abandon aspects of their traditional technology such as weirs and nets. They also found it difficult to understand how fishing rights could exist independently of ownership of the land... According to Nisga'a and Coast Tsimshian concepts of land tenure, the right to fish was inextricably bound with ownership of the land and should not be interfered with by outsiders. [note 75 here cites Barbeau-Beynon Files B.F. 108.1] Though reserves were allocated on the basis of the village or band, lineage control of fishing, gathering and hunting sites was informally recognized by tribal members and notions of trespass were strongly upheld. (Cooper 1993:311-312)

In the early days of the canning industry on the Skeena and Nass rivers the Tsimshian were the fishermen, and did not concern themselves with licenses:

In 1887, John McNab, a guardian on the Skeena and Nass rivers, reported that the existing licensing scheme was not working in the northern region. Canner salmon

were caught 'almost exclusively' by the Natives, he reported, and although some of their boats were licenses, a good portion of the catch was transferred to these boats from unlicensed boats, and then delivered to the canneries as though caught under license (note 204 here: Canada Sessional Papers, 1888, Fisheries Annual Report 1887, p. 253) Inspector of Fisheries Mowat believed that some of the canneries wilfully ignored this practice, and suggested that this fostered discontent among Natives when the guardians attempted to enforce the law. By circumventing the law, he argued, the canneries encouraged Natives to think they had a right to sell fish without a license. Although the 1879 regulations requiring a license to fish for salmon had been adopted by Anderson on the Fraser in 1882, there had been little enforcement on the Northwest Coast. When the guardians attempted to enforce the license requirement in 1888, they met strong resistance from Native fishers. Informed that the Tsimshians and Gitksan on the Skeena were refusing to purchase licenses, Mowat went to investigate at the end of the 1888 fishing season. (Harris 2001:61-62)

When Inspector of Fisheries Mowat went to the north he received a clear and strong statement from the Gitksan as did McNab from the Nisga'a:

One of the strict laws is that no hunting-ground can ever be cut in half and given to anyone. No one is allowed to make any such hunting-ground smaller or larger, even if they own or have power over it. This also applies to all fishing-grounds and all natural resources in and under the ground. This law is so severe and powerful that no one from another clan or without clan rights can come to hunt, fish, mine, cut timber, or do any other thing on these lands without the consent of the head chief and his council. These laws go back thousands of years and have been handed down from one generation to another, and they must be held and protected at all costs by the people owning these lands. These laws are the constitutional laws, going back many thousands of years and are in full force today and forever. (Note 205 here: Wilson Duff, ed., *Histories, Territories, and Laws of the Kitwancool*, Anthropology in British Columbia, Memoir No. 4, Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum 1959, 1989:36) (Harris 2001:62)

They asked me many questions about the law in regard to catching salmon of the Nass River; wanted to know exactly how much money I had collected this year, and what I had done with it. After being satisfied on these points, the chief very gravely informed me that I had done very wrong in collecting money for fishing on the Nass, without having asked permission from him, that the river belonged to him and to his people, that it was right that white men should buy licenses, but that he and his people should receive the money, that they were entitled to it all; but that as I had been sent to collect it, they were willing that I should retain half for my trouble. After consultation amongst themselves, I was told that they had intended to demand half the money collected this year, but would let it pass until

next year, and charge me to inform the Government to that effect (note 207 here: Ibid. [Canada Sessional Papers, 1889, Fisheries Annual Report 1888], pp. 249-50)

The laws adduced by the Gitksan and the Nisga'a are in the same tradition as those of the Tsimshian, who also refused to pay licenses, and demanded payment for use of their fishing sites and the harvest of their resources; as noted above, the Southern Tsimshian Kitkatla had done the same. By the 1890s, following several more years of disputes and the seizure of several boats on the Nass by a Fisheries Guardian, the Tsimshian had begun to conform to the requirement to purchase licenses.

Once the commercial fishery was entrenched, there was discrimination against Indians in getting licenses. Harris (2004:238-248) adduces evidence from the 1915 Royal Commission on Fisheries; since his discussion covers the topic of discrimination against Indians in the fisheries quite thoroughly I quote at length here:

After eliciting the Department's [Fisheries] preferential treatment of white fishers, Commissioner McKenna asked:

Q. And you discriminate against the Indians who were the first settlers on the Coast, who built the first boats and knew the harbours and knew the places where the fish ran, and these Indians cannot have the same privileges as these white men because they are bronze skinned?

MR. BABCOCK: The fishing grounds on the Skeena River are not what they were ten years ago.

MR. COMMISSIONER McKENNA: You would not expect them to be.

MR. COMMISSIONER MacDOWALL: You say that you give these independent licenses to assist the white men who go in to settle up that part of the country – that is a very good thing; but in your treatment of the Indians you are depriving him of his means of making a livelihood. He has been fishing up there from time immemorial. By what means of justice or right or right-dealing towards these aborigines – by what law are you working under that you are authorized to deprive him of his only means of making a living – by what law do you do that?

MR. McINTYRE: We would challenge your first statement: that is the Indians who have made their livelihood on the Skeena River. The Indians on the Skeena River were very scarce even before the white men ever went there – even the Indians who fish on Rivers Inlet are not natives of that District. ... If the canneries were not there the Indians would reap no benefit at all ... (note 20 here: NAC, DIA, RG 10, vol. 3908, file 107297-2 (reel T-10160). Transcript of Royal Commission Meeting with Representatives of the Dominion and Provincial Fisheries Officials in Regard to Fishing Privileges on Indians in B.C., 23 December 1915, pp. 5-6.)

A few exchanges later, the following question and response:

MR. COMMISSIONER McKENNA: Suppose I am an Indian – I am on the Skeena River, and I am cultivating a piece of land on the Skeena River in the North; I have a boat and a little money. I can go and get credit; I can go and get a whole outfit, and I am doing the best I can and remember I am a British subject, and I might say that these Indians in the year 1885 produce the most revenue for the Province of British Columbia. Now remember that I am an Indian and I go and I ask for an independent license; I am refused but Tom Jones comes along and clears his piece of land, and the first application that he makes for an independent license it is granted to him without any question at all. Now can anyone tell me why I am discriminated against when I have the boat and everything to fish with?

MR. CUNNINGHAM: Is it not a fact Doctor that the Indian is a ward of the Government?

MR. COMMISSIONER McKENNA: Not at all.

MR. CUNNINGHAM: If he is not taken care of why do they have Indian Agents to look after them; why do they give them farming implements and cattle and in fact everything they want? (note 21 here: *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.)

Following this meeting the commissioners produced a report on the fisheries. It included a short memorandum on the “Fishing Rights and Privileges of Indians in B.C.” accompanied by numerous appendices of commission transcripts, Native petitions, government letters, and other documents dealing with the fisheries. Presaging the commissioners’ final views, in the memo they denounced the whites-only policy for independent licences on the north coast and Fisheries’ failure to secure Native access to cannery licences. They also thought that the validity of earlier fishing rights granted by reserve commissioners should be investigated and that canneries should only be allowed to use reserve foreshores with consent the consent of and compensation to the Native inhabitants. Finally, they advocated for a system of ‘peddlers’ licences’ to allow the local sale of fresh fish. (note 22 here: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Minutes and Report of the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, ‘Memorandum Re Fishing Rights and Privileges of Indians in B.C.’ N.W. White, Commission Chair, 12 January 1916)

Almost half of the reserves in British Columbia were described as “fishing stations,” and the same proportion applies to Tsimshian reserves. The detailed notes kept during the process of reserve allocation in Tsimshian territories make it quite clear that these “fishing stations” were requested so that they could be used to make a living. Despite this, Indians were being pushed out of the fisheries. Indians could not obtain independent

fishing licenses on the north or central coast since these were limited to whites until 1919. Many of the licenses were “attached” to canneries and the owners had begun bringing in Japanese fishermen rather than hiring Tsimshian fishermen. Seine fishing licenses were found at most of the suitable fishing sites on the north coast, and these were allocated only to canneries and processors until 1924; provisions of the Indian Act made it impossible for Indians to obtain capital to start up canneries or other businesses on their reserves so they were unable to access these opportunities.

There were few significant changes resulting from the Report of the 1915 Royal Commission, and natives continued to protest the infringement of their territorial and resource rights. The federal government attempted to stop the protests and land claims struggles by making it illegal to accept money to pursue a land claim. Only one new Tsimshian reserve was established as a result of this Royal Commission, recognized as a fishing station.

In the past century the economic situation of the Coast Tsimshian has deteriorated considerably. The federal and provincial governments have failed to implement policies that respect Tsimshian ownership of their territories and resources, and there has been continued frustration among the leadership and communities. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries Tsimshian people have continued to assert that they own their territories and resources, and to try to resist their appropriation. Not until the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Calder case did the tide begin to turn, eventually leading to the process of negotiating through the BC Treaty Commission and to a number of other court cases and negotiations.

Appendix A of Douglas Harris’ doctoral dissertation provides a list of Tsimshian reserves that were “fishing sites”. For further evidence on the recognition of Tsimshian territorial and resource rights and the history of their communities in the 19th and 20th centuries, see Primary Source Compilations 02-06.

Tab 9: Harris, Douglas C. 2004, Land, Fish and Law: The Legal Geography of Indian Reserves and Native Fisheries in British Columbia, including Appendix A, British Columbia Indian Reserves Allocated for Fishing Purposes – Tsimshian, 1850 – 1927, phd dissertation, Osgoode Hall Law School, York University. Available online at: <http://faculty.law.ubc.ca/harris/thesis.htm>

8. Conclusions

This report has focussed on three topics, Tsimshian social organization, economy (especially territorial ownership) and trade. After extensive research in all the primary sources relevant to the topic, I have concluded that an abundance of evidence indicates that the Tsimshian had a strong system of laws and governance based on the hereditary system in which credible leaders were trained as chiefs of each housegroup and transacted their political affairs through the feast system with the distribution of wealth; that the Tsimshian housegroups and tribes owned their territories and resources; that they traded foods from their territories widely and on a large scale; and that core institutions of their affluent culture were founded on wealth from the trade of foods and other products from their territories. Only a small sample of the evidence has been included in my report, but much more extensive documentation has been compiled on CD for reference as required. It is most striking that during the lengthy course of research for this report, no counter-evidence to my conclusions has been identified. The only unexpected finding in my research was the great magnitude of the documentation of widespread and large scale trade in the primary sources. I diligently searched for all material germane to the topics discussed in this report, and included every snippet of evidence in the primary source compilations prepared on the various topics. Nothing was excluded on the grounds that it was not supportive of my thesis, and I searched my materials carefully for any information that might be taken as counter-evidence to any of my conclusions. Simply stated, there is a dearth of counter-evidence in the sources; instead, the evidence in support of my conclusions is overwhelming and I believe that the findings summarized in this report are incontrovertible.