

Appendix 11.0-B Fishing Sites, tok'k'et. Map 22 in Skoda 1987

The Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en have complex legal systems which delineate, among other things, the foundation, perpetuation and regulation of territorial ownership in their socio-political systems, in which people hold membership in Houses, groups of Houses (Wlnat'ahl) and Clans, the land-holding unit per se is the House or Housegroup. The fishing sites shown here are part of the territorial holdings of these Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Houses.

A Housegroup's fishing sites are often located on rivers and lakes within the large tracts of land which constitute their most extensive territorial holdings. However, their sites can also be found, quite frequently, along a stretch of river in the vicinity of their village, or in canyon areas nearby, where there are fish and sites in sufficient numbers to provide for several Housegroups. In such cases, the territory adjacent to that stretch of river, which otherwise would have extended to the river, stops short of the river bank to allow for the fishing stations, smokehouses and, in more recent times, the gardens of a number or all of the Houses in the village. Along this stretch of river each House may own one or more sites, often adjacent to each other and to those of related Houses, either Houses of the same Wlnat'ahl, or Houses linked to them by long-standing marriage ties. In this way the sites of a House and its closest relatives will often form a cluster, and new sites, should

they be needed, for themselves, or their relatives, are most likely to be created within this general area.

Among the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en all fishing sites are named,



Cwin'oop fishing site on the Skeena River near Kispiox Village, July 1986

sometimes after the creek or river on which they are located, sometimes after the character of the site itself, and sometimes after the nature of the Houses's activities on the site. The names are passed unchanged from generation to generation and, in a



Cleaning fish at the fishing site, Antk'is Fish Camp, July 1986

number of instances, they describe physical characteristics of the river, which have been modified over the years, but are still remembered in their original form. It is the responsibility of the Chief of the House to ensure the perpetuation of the name of the site, and in the case of a new site, it is he who must come to know its character and name it accordingly. The memory of the name of a fishing site, and any history related to the site, is perpetuated by the Chiefs over the years and constitutes a formal and legal validation of the House's ownership of that site.

The Chief is also responsible for the management of all the fishing sites of the House. Each year he must ensure the just allocation of sites and their harvest to the members of his House and their relatives while, at the same time, keeping in mind their future needs and those of the generations to come. He is also responsible for ensuring that the members of his House do not harvest the rivers and lakes to the detriment of the fish species. To this end he draws on the complex system of fishing technology, habitat enhancement and conservation techniques which the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en have developed over the centuries.

In the last century non-Indians and their governmental agencies have tried to claim the right to restrict access to fishing sites and

their harvest and to determine fishing technology and methods of conservation. The Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en have resisted these attempts from the beginning and continue to do so, vigorously asserting their long-standing ownership of their fishing sites, as well as that of their other territorial holdings.



Gitksan Chiefs confront federal government fisheries officers, Antk'is Fish Camp, July 1986

Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en chiefs



Map 22

Fishing sites, an san honhl (Gitksan) tok'k'et (Wet'suwet'en)

MAP SYMBOLS

salmon sites

Anyam - Meluuleg

fishing site

fishing site name

name of the House that owns the site (if more than one name shown - more than one House claims ownership)

name not yet recorded

- Wiig'axx - fishing location probably containing multiple sites

trout or lake sites

Tamsabalya - Nilst

fishing site

fishing site name

name of the House that owns the site

fishing location probably containing multiple sites

note: not all northern Gitksan trout fishing sites are shown on this map

* cache pits or other archaeological evidence of nearby fishing activity

Source: This map represents the work of many Chiefs, elders and researchers who together documented the names, locations and ownership of the fishing sites. Several other people were also instrumental in compiling the research and arranging it in its present form.

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