Belinda C,

Saltwater People

as told by Dave Elliott Sr.

Native Education

School District 63 (Saanich)

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A
Resource Book
for the
Saanich
Native Studies Program

Edited by
Janet Poth

Native Education
School District 63 (Saanich)

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Elliott, Dave.
Saltwater people

1. Coast Salish Indians--History. 2. Indians of North America--British Columbia--History. I. Poth, Janet, 1948- II. School District No. 63 (Saanich, B.C.). III. Title.
E99.S21E44 1990 971.1'004979 C90-091467-X

Acknowledgements

A number of people have contributed to the publication of **Saltwater People** and each contribution is deeply appreciated.

Thanks to Earl Claxton Sr., John Elliott and Linda Underwood who consulted on the Saanich Placenames. Earl, John and Linda work at the Saanich Indian School Board on language research, preservation and teaching.

The Split Salmon design at the beginning of each chapter was designed especially for this book by Charles Elliott, Dave's eldest son.

Thanks also to John Wenman for his help with corrections and revisions for the second edition and to Daryl Drew for providing the biography of Dave Elliott for this edition. John and Daryl are both teachers at Stelly's School in Saanich School District.

The second edition was funded by the Board of School Trustees, Saanich School District.

Janet Poth

Cover photo: This photograph of Dave Elliott Sr. was taken on his seventy-third birthday, May 17, 1983 by Janet Poth.
PENÁC is Dave's Indian name. It means "Fair Wind".

First printed: 1983
Revised, reprinted: 1990

Introduction

Over the ten years of knowing and working with Dave Elliott, I was always inspired by his concern for his People as well as for the future of us all. His teachings go beyond a simple historical account and were always offered, in the tradition of an historian and teacher, as the universal lessons history can teach.

During the eight years that Dave worked with us at Stelly's School hundreds of students had the privilege of hearing him speak on the topics covered in this book. This book is one of our resources for the Saanich Native Studies Program, now available throughout Saanich School District.

Words in the Saanich dialect, a Straits Salish language, are represented in the unique writing system developed by Dave Elliott. Writing his language in order to preserve it was Dave's deepest concern in his later years. Those wishing to study Dave's writing system should contact Dave's nephew Earl Claxton Sr., Dave's son John Elliott, or daughter Linda Underwood.

The words in this book are all Dave's. Over twenty hours of oral history on audio-tape have been transcribed then edited for the written word.

Janet Poth
Coordinator, Native Education
Saanich School District
May 1990

A Teacher Named "Fair Wind"

By his own admission, Dave Elliott lived his life with his feet in two worlds. He was born May 17, 1910 on the Tsartlip Indian reserve in Saanich, at a time when his people were in the midst of a transition in their lifestyle, which began with Captain Cook and continued with the fur traders and the gold rush. In Elliott's lifetime, the Saanich people were catapulted from the age of the canoe into the age of the spaceship. He was not bitter about the changes that were forced upon him, he was not bitter toward the people who implemented them, but he was sad at the pattern of North American Indian history since European contact and sad that humankind allowed what Elliott called "our beautiful way of life" to all but disappear.

Elliott could remember from his childhood the reef-net fishing from cedar canoes, the smell of wood smoke from cooking fires, and the traditional names for the geographic features of Saanich. The Saanich Indians of those days were people of the sea. Elliott spent most of his life in that tradition, fishing on trollers and skippering his own boat until the damp and cold made the arthritis in his hands too severe to continue the work.

When it was time to give up going to sea, Elliott found a talent in a completely different occupation. Since he remembered or had been told many things about the past, Elliott decided to share that history with the young people of Saanich by teaching Indian history to secondary school students. Elliott was an elder of the Saanich people. Along with his English name, he had the Indian name PENÁĆ which in the Saanich language means "Fair Wind." The special status of elder helped him make the transition from fisherman to teacher. An elder is not just one who lived a long time; roughly translated, elder describes a person who had knowledge worth learning.

Dave Elliott died August 5, 1985, but not before he took steps to ensure that his people's history would be recorded.

Dave Elliott began to teach about the things he remembered, the way things used to be, and the reasons they were that way. His students listened attentively, as did their classroom teachers. What he said carried meaning not only for natives but also for people of all cultures.

He taught important values, including the need to respect a person's heritage.

In the eight years before his death, Elliott worked as a resource person and guest speaker in the Saanich Native Studies Program at Stelly's School.

Dave Elliott was a softspoken man with silver hair and a pencil-line moustache. In the classroom, his voice would change from quiet tones to the style of an orator. In the traditional way, he wove the message into a story. He told his students, "These are the things that I can remember, and I am telling them to you so that you will understand how many of the important things were lost to us."

Now, because of his efforts, at least some of the stories have been written down. Elliott cared about the future and the young people growing up, Indian and non-Indian alike. He wanted young people to understand one another better, and he wanted to prevent the harsh changes that occurred to the Saanich people from ever happening again, to any Canadians.

Daryl Drew
April 1987

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Saanich Grave Figure at Pat Bay

Royal British Columbia Museum

Ancestors

The mother of my Great, Great Grandfather on my Mother's side was the founder of W̱JOŁEŁP, which is the place called Tsartlip today. She established the village there after a great tragedy. It was here that she raised her son to be a warrior and leader of our People because of this tragedy. His name was ĆELOW̱ENŦET, his mother's name was SEX̱SOX̱ELWET.

One day when ĆELOW̱ENŦET was only twelve years old, his mother, father and mother's brother were out in the islands here, part of our territory, when the northern raiders came upon them. At that time, people from the north, Haidas and Kwagulths were always coming on raids down here. SEX̱SOX̱ELWET hid in the woods but her husband and brother were both killed and their heads were taken. These raiders took heads away as prizes. She came back to SŦÁUTW̱, which is now called Tsawout.

She was really in a state of shock and she began walking around. She would have been in such grief as her

husband had just been killed and his head taken away; her brother, the same. She walked and walked and finally she came out into this beautiful place.

In her grief she thought what a beautiful place she had come to. It was like a large meadow, divided by four streams. Each has a name in our language. In the bay she could see all the kinds of salmon jumping, their bodies shining and flashing in and out of the water. It was very beautiful and in her grief she thought, "This is where I'll raise my son to be a man."

When SEXSOXELWET got home she told her people of the place she found and she wanted to move there and raise her son to be a man. Some people decided to go with her and they established the village there, now known as Tsartlip.

ȻELOWENŦET became a leader. She raised him to be a strong, tough man. She raised him to be a brave warrior. He became a leader in this whole territory.

At seventeen years of age he said, "I am ready for revenge." He headed a war party to revenge the killing of his father and uncle.

XIÁȻEĆTEN was his younger brother. One morning XIÁȻEĆTEN came to his brother ȻELOWENŦET and said, "I want to use some of your slaves, I have a canoe up in the woods, it's just about light enough to bring down to the shore and work on it. I want to use your slaves to help me bring it down." ȻELOWENŦET said, "Go ahead take them, if they can help you." He took the slaves and he went to where this canoe was partly dug-out.

Royal British Columbia Museum

Three Saanich Chiefs
Tommy Paul, David LaTasse and Edward Jim

Instead of getting the slaves to help him bring it down, he made them lay down on the ground, and he pulled the canoe over the top of them. He used them for skids, which was what other tribes had done to their enemies, to show their hatred for them. This is what XIÁ¢EĆTEN did. These slaves were captives from warfare. He dragged this unfinished canoe over the top of them. He never intended to use them for help, he just wanted to show his contempt for them.

Later on in the day ¢ELOW̲ENŦET heard about what his brother had done to the slaves, so he confronted his brother. They got into a quarrel and ¢ELOW̲ENŦET killed XIÁ¢EĆTEN. He killed him right there. He took his knife and stabbed him. He killed his own brother, because of what he had done to his slaves.

XIÁ¢EĆTEN's remains should be still on Samuel Island, because that's where he was laid to rest. The name of Samuel Island is TEL,LAY. This is part of our history.

Many, many years later, ¢ELOW̲ENŦET died an old man, but it was in battle with our ancient enemies from the north. It was during the time when they were using guns. He had many wives, and many sons. When the attack came his sons said, "You go up the mountains with the women and children, old honourable man."

He said, "No, I will stay here and fight." He was killed that night. The northern raiders always attacked at night. In the morning they found him on the beach with his head cut off.

¢ELOW̲ENŦET had many sons, because he had several wives. He is my ancestor. My ancestors came from Mayne Island and that is part of Saanich territory.

The real name of the Tsartlip People is JESESI̲NSET meaning "the people that are growing themselves up."

Album of Vela French

Three Sisters

Mary-Ann Olsen, Cecelia Elliott and Mary French (seated in centre of photo, left to right). Standing: Esther Cooper and Johnny French and Stella Cooper (front).

This photo was taken at the home of Mary French on San Juan Island. At the time, the Saanich People still lived throughout their traditional lands on the Gulf Islands as well as on the Saanich Peninsula. Mary-Ann, Cecelia and Mary were sisters. Their mother was originally from Tsartlip.

Mary-Ann's first husband was Willie Harry. Their children were Richard and Agnes. Mary-Ann's second husband was Chris Olsen. They had three sons: Herman, Howard and Ernie. They were all raised on San Juan Island.

Cecelia had two sons, one from each of her marriages: Martin Cooper and Dave Elliott.

Mary had seven children: Addy, Oran, Llewelan, Vela, John, Charlie and Carney. They grew up on the San Juan Islands.

Edward Curtis / Royal British Columbia Museum

Coast Salish Woman, 1912

The Saanich People

The Saanich are part of the Salish Peoples. We are the westernmost Salish people. There are still Salish south of us in Washington, Seattle, Port Townsend, across the straits from Port Angeles and out towards Cape Flattery. They speak a language very close to our own.

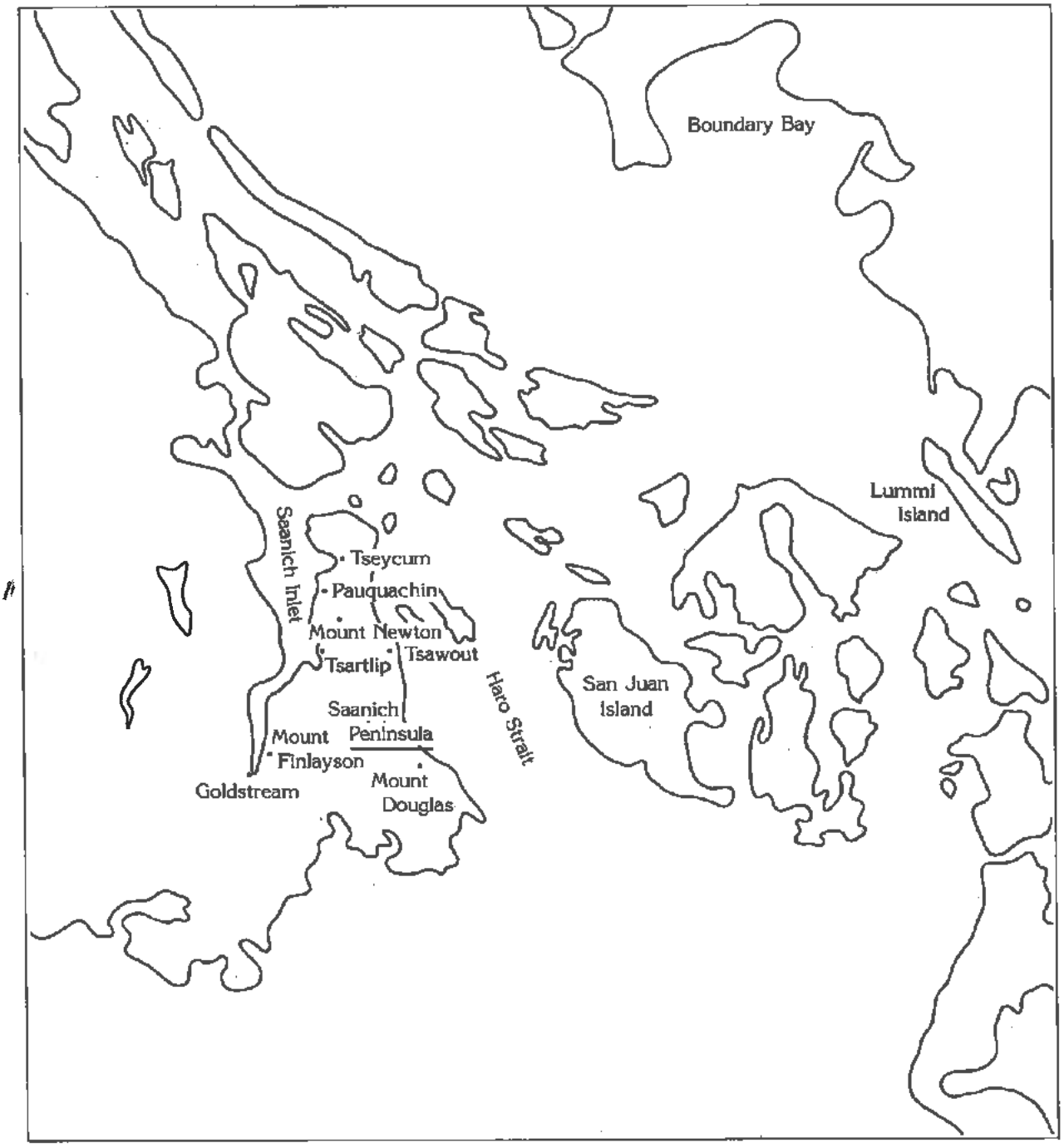
The Salish group is the biggest of its kind in B.C. We extend all the way down from the southern border of the Chilcotin country in the north, to the Alberta border in the east.

As you come further west and across onto the Island, as far north as Courtenay and halfway across, these are Salish people. The West Coast people are different from us. Their language is not similar to ours. Their culture changes from ours.

The home, the headquarters, of the Saanich people is the Saanich Peninsula. We populated the Saanich Peninsula from one end to the other and right around all the shores and all the bays. Saanich people lived on many of the Gulf Islands and most of the San Juan Islands.

It has been that way for probably centuries. Who knows how long? There is evidence that we have been in this country for 10,000 years, 20,000, 30,000 years. Maybe we have been here longer than that. We've been here an awfully long time, I know that.

Our word W̱SÁNEĆ in Saanich means "raised up". If you go off shore to the east and out into our territory and look west, you will see why. You'll see what it looks like in the distance compared to the surrounding land. It is "raised up".



Saanich Territory

We, the Saanich People, were salt water people. By that we mean the sea was very important to our way of life. Before the Europeans came, we had homes throughout the San Juan Islands and on the east and north coasts of the Saanich Peninsula.

We can call the Saanich Peninsula our headquarters because this is where we built permanent winter homes. This is where we stayed in large villages.

Our land went east through the San Juan Islands and northeast across Georgia Strait to Boundary Bay.

Our territory included the Saanich Inlet and deep into the forest lands on its west side. On the Saanich Peninsula itself, our land went south as far as Mount Douglas. You could imagine a line going right across from Mount Douglas to Mount Finlayson and Goldstream.

In the summer our families travelled all through our territory to fish and gather food. When we travelled we made temporary homes near to the places where we were

fishing and gathering food.

Many people lived in the lands close by. Some, like the Lummis, the Songhees, and Klallams spoke a different language from ours. But their language is related to ours and their ways were very similar. We considered them our brothers.

We did not know strict boundaries between our brothers and our friends. Each of us did have our own hunting and fishing territories. We respected our traditional territories. We never fought with our friends and brothers over land.

The lands and seas we called our territory were the lands and seas that we traditionally used. We gave names to all the places that we knew. Every bay, every stream, every village, every island, every mountain, every lake had a name in our language.

We had a large sea area in which to fish and hunt sea mammals.

There are no rivers in our traditional territory and so, we went to the sea to get our salmon. That is why we are salt water people.

We fished salmon throughout the San Juan Islands and up around Boundary Bay with our reef-net (SX̱OLE). Our fishing territories were on the main route of the sockeye salmon.

Of course beaches provided foods too. Sandy beaches made it easy to find clams and crabs. Rocky beaches offered mussels, sea urchins and seaweed. Huge flights of ducks, geese and swans could be found on the mud flats and marshy beaches. These waterfowl followed the Pacific route in their seasonal migrations to and from their arctic and sub-arctic nesting grounds. There are many distinct features in the lands of our territories. Each has special qualities that made them important to our ancestors.

High rocky shores on our islands were the best places for camas to grow. We would dig the bulbs of these flowers for food during the summer.

Rocky shores were also good places for us to collect seabird eggs in the spring. This was the only time of the year we ate eggs.

Bogs are ideal places to find foods like cranberries, huckleberries and Labrador tea.

Inland marshes are the places where cattails, tule, and other grasses grow. These materials were used to weave mats and baskets. We would also hunt ducks in these marshes. Today on the Saanich Peninsula these marshlands have been drained and the land used for farming. In fact, Stelly's School stands on the edge of where a large marsh used to be. On the day that the marsh was drained my mother shook her head and said, "This place will be no more good to us."

Our abundant forests provided many food plants like berries, fern roots, and nettle leaves. Many of our important medicines were made from plants like Oregon grape, Indian Consumption plant and yarrow.

Many of the raw materials we used

Royal British Columbia Museum

Indian Camp, Saanich
Marshall Harry, his wife and his brother's wife

to make things were gathered from the forests, like nettle fibre, roots and hardwoods.

Of course many animals lived in the forests. Our ancestors hunted elk, deer and some smaller mammals for their meat and fur hides.

Our villages went all up the east coast of the Peninsula facing Haro Strait and around the northern tip. The area around STÁUTW̱ was a major permanent village.

Our ancestors settled on the west side of the Peninsula facing Saanich Inlet only about 200 years ago. W̱JOŁEŁP is not an ancient village site.

Many of the people living at BOḰEĆEN have ancestors who were from MÁLEXEŁ across the Inlet.

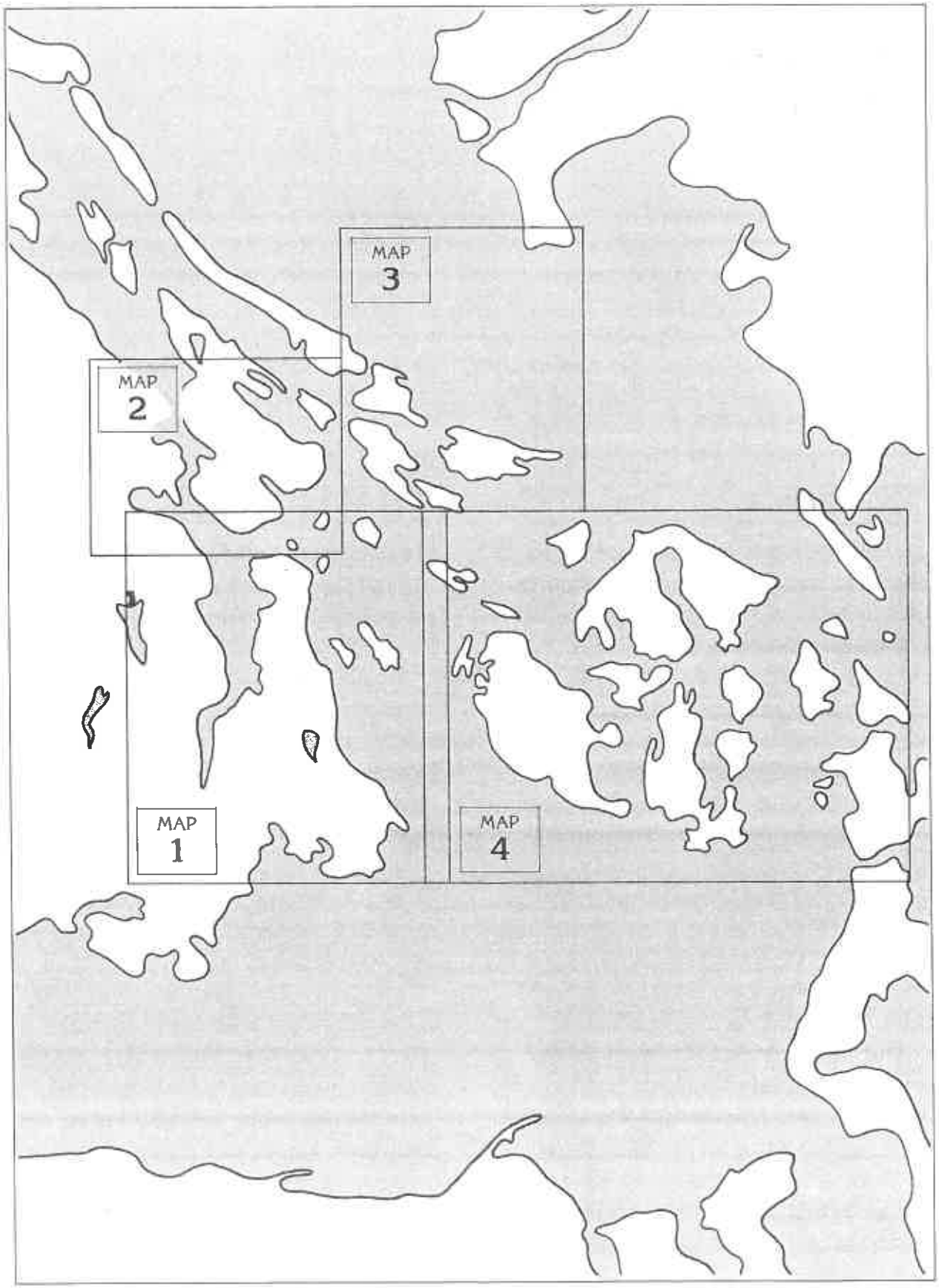
The people at WSÍKEM originally lived on the eastern side of our Peninsula where Resthaven Hospital was.

We have always been one People. We are W̱SÁNEĆ. Our separate community sites did not separate us as a People.

If you take a look at the land, the kind of country it is, you can see what kind of people we would have to be. We didn't have all that much land. It was broken up into Islands, into water. We had to be sea-going people: Fishermen, Sailors, Navigators, Canoe builders.

We saw our territories as places to be used. We lost the right to use our traditional territories in 1852 because of a so-called "Treaty" with the Hudson Bay Company and before that, in 1846, when the International Boundary was established by the Treaty of Washington. We lost almost all of our territories at that time. Only our reserve lands are left.

We have a rich heritage. With our knowledge of it we have much to offer. It is still beautiful on our Saanich Peninsula, but we must all learn to follow the ways of our ancestors. If we bring back a deep respect for nature we can be an example to everyone and prevent our beautiful land from being destroyed.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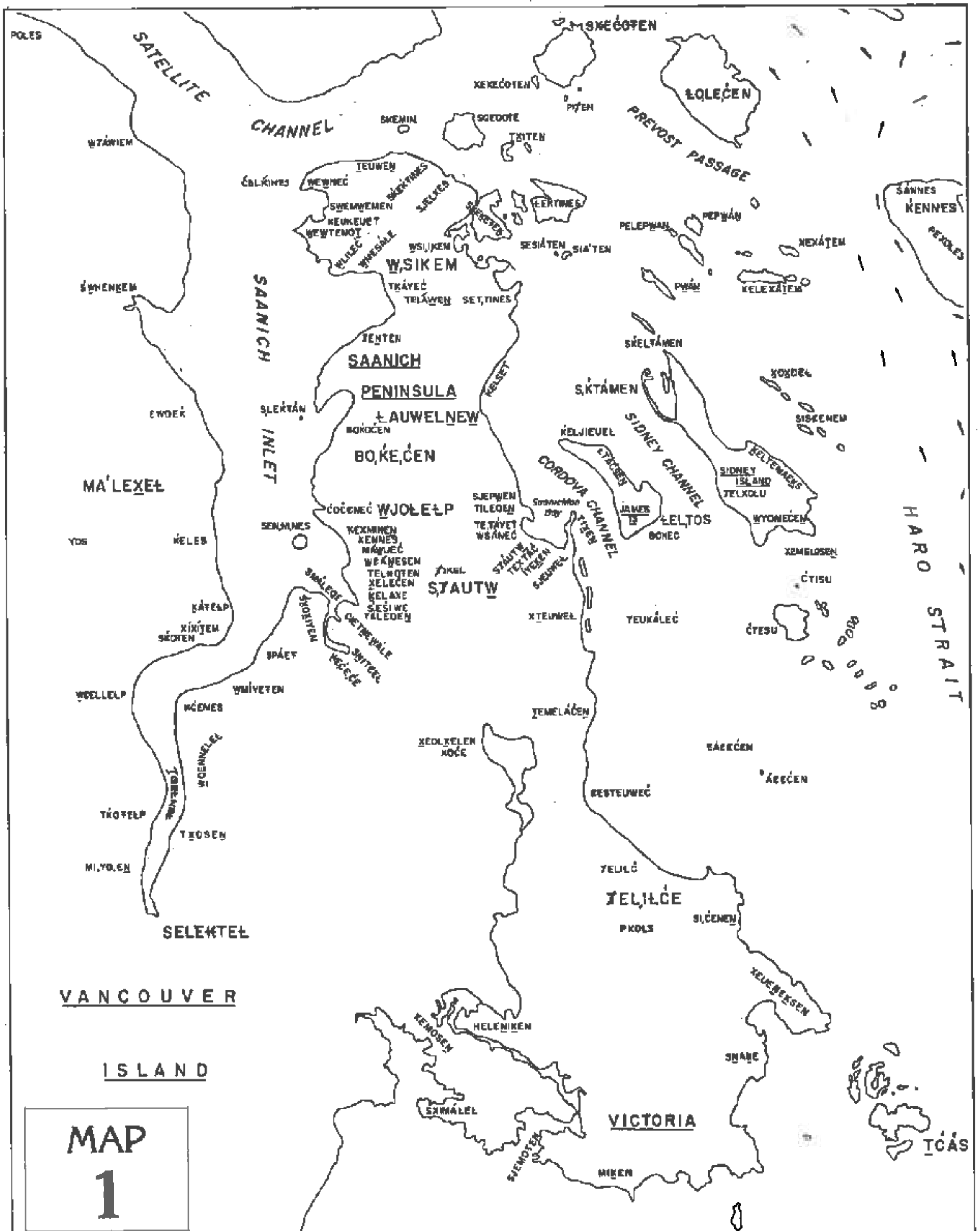
Saanich Placenames

When our first edition of Saltwater People was published in 1983, Dave remarked that there was still a lot of research to do on the Saanich Placenames. There were many more names to add, and many translations to determine. Translations from the Saanich language to English present some difficulties because a language is a way of thinking, or viewing the human experience in the world, as much as it is a way of communicating. All the names have a meaning. They either describe the physical geography, refer to the use or to a story.

Since the Saanich People named the places they knew and used, the placenames represent the extent of traditional territory. The placenames are evidence of occupation and use. Dave continued to research and translate Saanich placenames up to his death. His nephew Earl Claxton Sr. worked closely with him as did Dave's son John and daughter Linda. Earl, John and Linda have continued the work, often consulting with Elders from other families as well as with Earl's mother Elsie Claxton (nee Pelkey) of Tsawout.

In the historic Saanichton Bay Marina case in the Supreme Court of British Columbia 1987, Earl presented a map detailing placenames and uses of sites in Saanich traditional territory.

All of the placenames on the maps and lists in this chapter represent an updated version of the original list and have been verified by Earl Claxton Sr.


SATELLITE
CHANNEL
SAANICH
INLET
SAANICH
PENINSULA
PREVOST PASSAGE
SIDNEY CHANNEL
CORDOVA CHANNEL
HARO STRAIT
W̱SIKEM
ŁAUWELNEW̱
BOḴEĆEN
MA'LEX̱EŁ
W̱JOŁEŁP
S,TAUTW̱
ŁOLEĆEN
S,ḴTÁMEN
ŁELTOS
ȾEL,IŁĆE
SELEKTEŁ
SIDNEY ISLAND
JAMES IS
ḴENNES
VANCOUVER
ISLAND
VICTORIA
TĆÁS

MAP 1

MAP 1

Saanich Peninsula
North (East to West)

SEN̓CO̱TEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
KEL̓SET	"bailing"	Reay creek at Bazan Bay
SET,TINES	"chest sticking out"	Sidney
WSI,I,KEM	"small place of clay"	Shoal Harbour
SKEKE̱TEK	"little pass"	Canoe Cove
S,JELKES	"hand sling"	Swartz Bay
SKE̱K̓TINES	"chest in the water", a clam digging area	beach across from Piers Island
TEUWEN	"howling", refers to a story	big rock at Lands End
WEWNE̱C̓	"no back end", a clamming campsite	beach at northwest end of peninsula
C̓EL̓KINES	"up, back from the shore"	Moses Point
SMEWEMEN	"the place of emptiness",	Deep Cove
KEUKEUET	"drumming", from KEUÁTEN,	Cove south of Coal Point
WEWTENOT	"jump across", refers to a story	Coal Point
WLILE̱C̓	WLILE̱C̓ gives an image of a tide that goes away out	Towner Bay
WME̱SALE	MESET means "to gather in"	Towner Beach
WSIKEM	"place of clay"	Tseycum
TKÁYEC̓	"small closed off area"	spring at Pay Bay slough
TELÁWEN	"season for all"	Pat Bay slough

MAP
1

Saanich Inlet

Saanich Inlet to Todd Inlet

SENĆOTEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
T̓ENTEN	"bailer" in Cowichan, has Saanich name on opposite side	Creek at Research Institute
S,LEḰTÁN	late Norm William's father's name, from Vi Williams	Dyer Rock off Cole Bay
BOḰOĆEN	"earth bluff"	Cole Bay
ĆOĆ₵NEĆ	"little far away head of the bay"	Henderson Point
ŁÁU,WEL,NEW	"place of escape"	Mt. Newton
WJOŁEŁP	"place of maple leaves"	Saanich Bay (Tsartlip)
SEN,NI,NES	"chest out of the water"	Senanus Island
TIT̓E₵EN	from TIT̓EŁ "highly valued" and ₵EN "belonging to, to receive" refers to something of spiritual significance	Hagen Beach
KEXMINEN	"place of Consumption plant", seeds used ritually as incense	Hagen Bight
ḰENNES	"whale" - a whale beached itself here once	Mouth of Hagen Creek
MÁWUEĆ	"honoured grandfather"	meadow behind Manny Cooper's
W₵ANESEN	"of clam shells", referring to shells left over after eating	Saanich Point (NW corner of West Saanich reserve)
TELḰOT̓EN	"bumped your mouth all over"	Spring west of Verna Henry's
XELEĆEN	from SXELISEN "to back out of water", ("lost earth") older women collected bullheads here in the spring	reef south of KENNES

SENĆOŦEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
KELAXE	"dogs"	Creek by Theresa Smith's
Ś,EŚIWE	"urinating" - refers to sound of creek	creek below Gabe Bartleman's
TÁLEQEN	"water was seeping up"	creek by canoe shed
SMÁLEQE	"the burial ground"	rocky end of Sluggett point
ĆIETNEWÁLE	"owl place", used to be a site where corpses were placed on a platform above the ground	Sluggett Point
ȾIKEL	"bog" - used to be a bountiful area for collecting foods and materials. When it was drained, Dave Eliott's mother said, "This place will be no more good to us."	fields along Wallace & Stelly's X Road area
SNITĆEŁ	"place of blue grouse"	Todd Inlet
WĆEĆEĆE	word imitates the sound of dripping water; believed to have been fenced after white settlement from here to other side of Willis Point to isolate cattle in summer	Todd Creek from Hartland Road dump

MAP
1

Saanich Inlet

Willis Point to Saanich Inlet (East)

SENĆOŦEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
SX̱OX̱IYEM	"still waters", come from SX̱ELISEN "to back out of the water", referring to its appearance at low tide;	Willis Point
SPÁEŦ	"bear"	boulder at Mackenzie Bight
WMÍYEŦEN	"place of deer"	MacKenzie Bight
ḴĆEMES	comes from Cowichan word for "sore", means "sore face", probably refers to a rock there	Elbow Point
WQENNELEŁ	"looking up"	Finlayson Mt. west face
TX̱OSEN	"stare into nowhere", refers to a story	southeast end of deep water at Finlayson Arm
TQEŁNEŁ	"to expire", refers to a story about an "Indian Match" that once went out	area at the mouth of Goldstream including the island
SELEḴTEŁ	"the people downstream", refers to the Saanich People	Goldstream
MI,YO,EN	"becoming less", referring to the changing route at the mouth of Goldstream	south west side of end of Finlayson Arm
TḴOŦEŁP	"bow and arrow plant", Yew tree in Cowichan language indicating their campsite	mid south west side of Finlayson Arm-near Christmas Pt.
WȻELLEŁP	ELP refers to a tree "Cottonwood tree" in Cowichan language	west side of Finlayson Arm across from Elbow Point

SENĆOŦEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
SḰOŦEN	"streams coming together in one mouth", name for bear grass	waterfalls and stream south of McCurdy Point
XÍXÍTEM	"place of cod-fish eggs"	McCurdy Point
KÁŦEŁP	a place where sea lions got out of the water, EŁP refers to a plant in Cowichan-Spirrea	Sheppard Point
ḰELES	"cooking", clam digging area	sandy beach between Bamberton and Mill Bay
MÁLEXEŁ	from MEMEXÁŁ, caterpillar referring to a previous infestation	Mill Bay ferry dock
YOS	"caution"	peak of Malahat
EWOEḰ	"no head", from EWO, "no"; many ancestors of people from Pauquachin came from here	Mill Bay reserve
ṠWHENKEM	"for diving" in Cowichan, from Ernie Rice	river in Mill Bay
WṮÁWIEM	"of shell waters"	Hatch Point

MAP 1

Saanich Peninsula
East Saanich/South Saanich to Victoria

SENĆOŦEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
SJEPWEN	"wart"	Turgoose Point
TILEQEN	"seeping", like water off the bank	location of James Island dock
TE,TÁYET	"little bay"	Shady Creek
WSÁNEĆ	"emerging people", where the name Saanich comes from and the name of the Saanich People	Saanich Peninsula
STÁUTW	"houses on top"	Tsawout
ŦEXTÁĆ	"bight of stinging nettle"	in the lagoon at Tsawout
ÍYEKEN	"nice lagoon", KEN describes a protected harbour or lagoon when talking about placenames	little bay at Tsawout on west side of spit
SJEUWEŁ	"canoes in the bush"	head of the lagoon
ŦIXEN	"spit", some call it PENAK	Cordova Spit
ŦWÁEN	"cook in a pit"	site of sewage plant
XTEUWEŁ	"cross ways", refers to drift	Mitchell Flat
TEMELAĆEN	"earth that has become enough",	Cowichan Head
XEOLXELEK	"drifting along", refers to the small island in the lake	Elk Lake
ĆESTEUWEĆ	"a beach exposed to the weather"	Cordova Bay beach
ŦELIŁĆ	"growing defeat"	Cordova Bay where the creek is
ŦEL,IŁĆE	"place of the defeated"	Cordova Bay sand bar

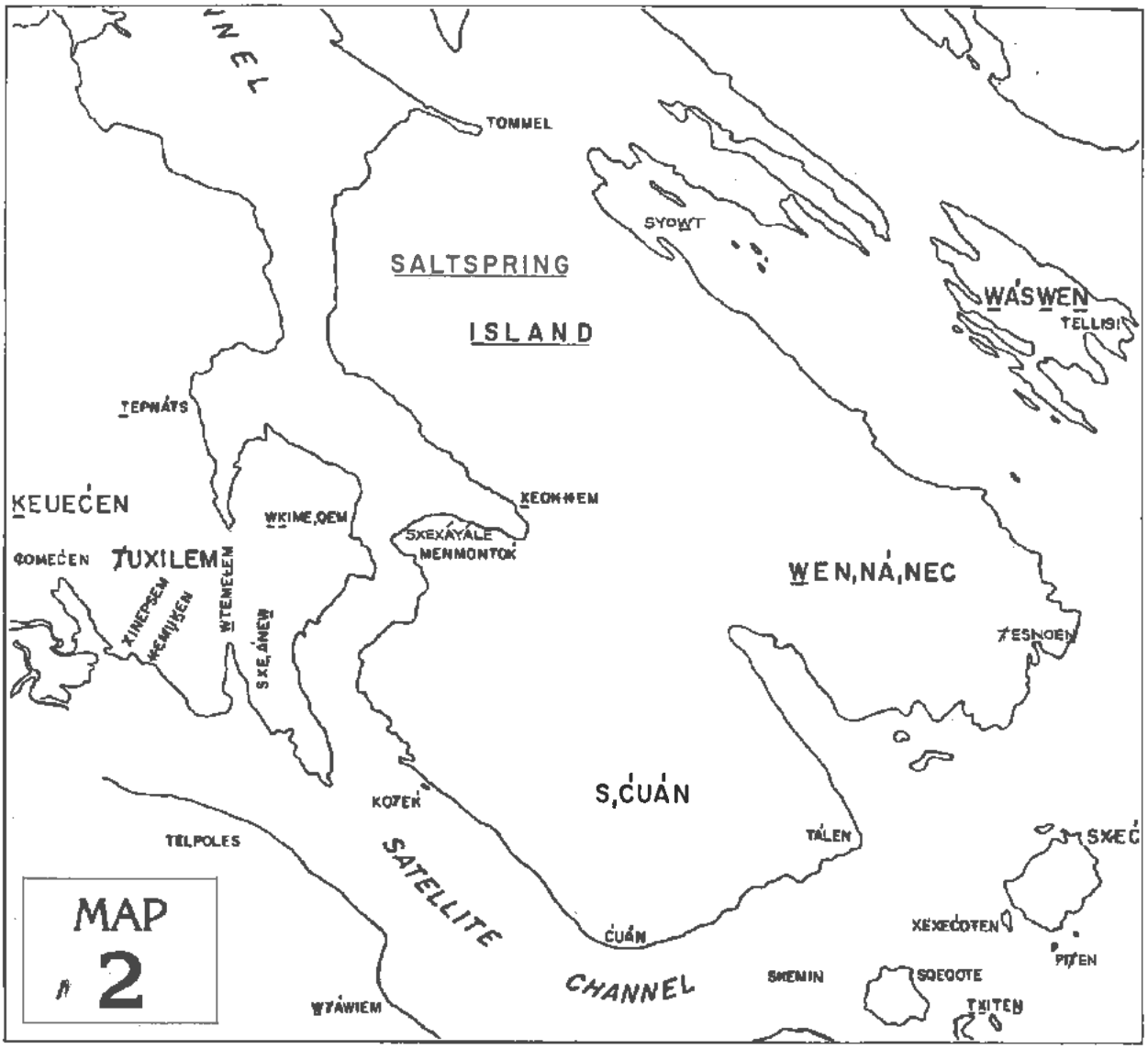
SENĆOŦEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
PKOLS	"white head"	Mount Douglas
SI,ĆENEN	"becoming Saanich"	Gordon Head
XEUENEKSEN	"the point of cracking sea urchins"	Ten Mile Point
SNAKE	"of snow", refers to a story	Cadboro Bay/Oak Bay
MIKEN	"slope covered with moss"	Beacon Hill bluff
SJEMOŦEN	"...open mouth" (pouting), language of SWTONES, Songhees	Mouth of Victoria Harbour
HELENIKEN	"a stream tumbling down"	Colquitz Creek
KEMOSEN	"short cut" - portage	View Royal
SXIMAŁEŁ	refers to Esquimalt	Esquimalt Harbour
TÁNEL	"close", in Klallam language	Albert Head
MEḰ,KS	"fat nose"	sand bluff at William Head
XEL,LEN	"very fast", referring to tides	Race Rocks
WĆIÁNEW	"land of the salmon people", "W" means homeland	Beecher Bay

MAP 1

Gulf Islands
Saanich Peninsula/Haro Strait

SENĆOŦEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
SḴEMIN	name of a little black duck you see there	Arbutus Island
SQEQOTE	"crow"	Piers Island
XEXEĆOŦEN	"little dry mouth"	Brackman Island
SXEĆOŦEN	"you can see where your mouth is", ("dry mouth")	Portland Island
PIṮEN	describes the idea of slippage, like a knot slipping down a rope	little island south of Portland Island
ŁO,LE,ĆEN	"place to leave behind", ("abandoned earth")	Moresby Island
TXITEN	"hard rocks" from TEX - "hard" & TEN - "becoming"; at low tide completely surrounded by reef rocks	Knapp Island
ŁEKTINES	"wide chest"	Coal Island
SEṮIÁTEN	"little hair", refers to a story about XAELS	Little Shell Island
SIÁTEN	"hair", refers to story noted above	Shell Island
PELEPWÁN	"more than one blown"	Domville & Forrest Islands
PEPWÁN	"a little one blown"	Brethour Island
PWÁN	"blown by a breeze"	little island south of Domville
XELEXÁTEM	"crossways", this island lies in a different direction than all the others	Gooch Island group
XEXÁTEM	"little crossways"	Comet Island
ŁEL,TOS	"splashed in the face"	James Island

SENĆOŦEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
BOḰEĆ	"sand bluff"	South end bluff
ŁTÁĆSEN	"splashed on the neck"	NE spit of James Island
ḰELJIEUEŁ	"sheltered canoes", from the word for shelter	spit on centre east side of James Island
SḰTÁMEN	"submerged by the waves"	Sidney Island Spit
WYOMEĆEN	"the land of caution", the beach faces the south wind so it is difficult to land here	SW point on Sidney Island
T́ELXOLU	"place of defeat"; halibut fishing area	west side, beach across from James Island
SḰELŦÁMEN	plural for SḰTÁMEN, (see above)	north end of Sidney Island
KELTEMÁEKS	"bad light"	east mid side bay of Sidney Island
XEMELOSEN	"souvenir"	Sallas Rock
XOXDEŁ	an Indian name, Mother of XODEŁ (Spiden Island)	Mandarte Island
SISȻENEM	idea of sitting out for pleasure of the weather	Halibut Island
T́EUXÁLEĆ	"giant" - refers to a story	James Spit sandbar
ĆTESU	"just arrived"	D'Arcy Island
ĆTISU	"little just arrived"	Little D'Arcy Island
EÁȻEĆEN	"goodbye earth", refers to the high tide concealing the reef	Zero Rock
ÁȻEĆEN	"little goodbye earth"	Little Zero Rock


TOMMEL
SYOWT
SALTSPRING
ISLAND
WÁSWEN
TELLISI
TEPWÁYS
KEUEĆEN
WKIME,OEM
XEOHHEM
SXEXÁYALE
MENMONTOK
ȻOMEĆEN
TUXILEM
XINEPSEM
WEMIYSEN
WTEMEĆEM
SXE,ÁNEW
WEN,NÁ,NEC
TESNOEN
KOTEN
S,ĆUÁN
TELPOLES
SATELLITE
CHANNEL
TÁLEN
SXEĆ
XEXEĆOTEN
PITEN
ĆUÁN
SMEMIN
SQEQOTE
TXITEN
WTÁWIEM
MAP
2

MAP 2

Satellite Channel (Cowichan Territory)

SENĆOTEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
T̲ELPOLES	"deep eyes", in Cowichan language referring to potholes	Cowichan Bay village
K̲EUEĆEN	"valley of sunshine", name of the Cowichan nation	Duncan area
T̓UXILEM	name of a great warrior	Tzuhalim Mountain area
ȻOMEĆEN	"earth mound"	Cowichan River
XINEPSEM	"closed neck"	village site south of KEMI,IK̲EN on Cowichan Bay
KEMI,IK̲EN	"uprooted earth edge"	village site on north side of Cowichan Bay
W̲TEMEŁEM	"land of the red earth", refers to ochre	Genoa Bay
ʔSXE,ÁNEW̲	"a frog"	east side of Genoa Bay
W̲K̲IME,QEM	"land of the octopus"	North of Sansum Point
T̲EPNATS	"deep nights"	Maple Bay

Saltspring Island

ĆUÁN	"each end", refers to mountains at each end of the island	Saltspring Island
W̲EN,NÁ,NEĆ	"facing towards Saanich"	Fulford Harbour
TÁŁEN	"salt"	Isabella Point
S,ĆUÁN	"one on each end", refers specifically to this place	Cape Keppel area including Tuam Mountain

SENĆOTEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
KOṮEḰ	"bird mess head"	Musgrave Rock
MENMONTOḰ	"stone heads", refers to a story	Bold Bluff Point
ŚXEXÁYÁLE	"the crying place for everyone", refers to story of stone heads	waterfalls close to Bold Bluff Point
XOEKKEM	"land of the Sawbill"	Burgoyne Bay
TOMMEL	"warm water"	Booth Bay
SYOW̱T	"make it cautious", this is the first place the herring come in spring	Ganges Harbour
ṮESNOEN	"to be struck right on"	Beaver Point

Prevost Island

W̱ÁSW̱EN	"place of seal hunting"	Prevost Island reefs
TELLISI	name of a woman who lived there	third bay from Port Lock Point on Swanson Channel

MAP 3

Gulf Islands
Swanson Channel/Boundary Pass

SENĆOŦEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
	Pender Islands	
S,DÁYES	"wind drying", referring to drying salmon	North Pender Island
KELAKE	"crow"	Razor Point
TELOSEN	"taking a mate"	Hope Bay
ȻAK,SEN	"seal call point"	Stanley Point
~~KE,KIN~~,ES	"chest out of the water"	James Point
SKÁETEM	"place of otters"	Otter Bay
XEXÍÁĆSEN	"narrow neck"	bluffs on bay south of Otter Bay
S,ḰEḰ,ŦINES	"place to get chest out of the water"	Pender Bluffs
XIXĆÁNEM	"little running trail"	area along Swanson Channel, NW of Wallace Point
SXIXŦE	XIXEXI means "narrow", SWÁLET of Pelkey family	west enterance of Bedwell Harbour
E,HO,	"did you hear?", burial ground at one time	beach at park on north side of Bedwell Harbour
ILEĆEN	"earth edge"	Port Browning
SMONEĆ	"pitch", referring to pitch for fire-starting	eastern point of South Pender
XELISEN	"lost middle", it used to be an isthmus joining North, South Pender Island	NW point Camp Bay
QENENIW	"watching the slack tide"	SE point of South Pender Island


MAP
3
SMOKEĆ
ONEWEȽ
ÁLELEN
YÁYEMNEĆ
XIXNEŚETEN
S,KȾAK
TELLAY
TÁWEN
XEMYÁĆ
ŚAK,SEN
ȽE,ȽIN,ES
TELOSEN
SKÁFEM
S,DÁ,YES
XEXIÁĆSEN
ILEĆEN
ȽELAKE
SWANSON CHANNEL
E,H,O
ȽELISEN
S,KEK,TINES
SXIXTE
XIXĆÁNEM
SOUTH
PENDER
ISLAND
SXTIS
QENENIW
SMONEĆ
TEUWE
XIXYES
WTEKȽIEM
WTITKIEM
TEKTEKSEN
TIWILES
SNEUES
ÁM,MEĆEN
ŚAKETSES
TEMOSEN
TȽES

SENĆOŦEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
YEUWE	"fortune teller", from a story	Tilly Point
SX̱TIS	"candle neck duck"	NE point

Mayne Island

S,ḴŦAK	"pass" or "narrows"	Mayne Island/Active Pass
XIXNEŚETEN	"sacred track", said to be XAELS' footprint	spring on Helen Pt.
YÁIYEMNEĆ	"rising waters", (fresh water)	spring on Indian Bay
ŦÁWEN	"coho"	St. John Point
ONEWEŁ	"middle", from late Louie Pelkey	the bight west of point Miners Bay
ÁLELEN̲	"houses", refers to Dance Houses XIÁĆEĆTEN's home	the head of Miner's Bay

Samuel Island

T̲EL, LÁY	"looking far away", XIÁĆEĆTEN's burial island	Samuel Island, North end
X̱EMYÁĆ	"swift bay", refers to the tide	Campbell Bay to Anniversary Island includes Belle Chain Islets

Saturna Island

T̲EK̲TEK̲SEN	"long nose"	East Point on Saturna Island
XIX̱YES	"narrow caution", telling people to take caution of the narrows	Boat Passage area
W̲TEK,KIEM	"land of the far away waters"	Lyall Harbour

SENĆOŦEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
WTITKIEM	"land of the little far away waters"	Boot Cove
ŚAKETSES	"to dig in the pocket"	Saturna bluffs SW side facing South Pender Island
ÁM,MEĆEN	"to wade for crabs"	Taylor Point
SNEUES	"in the bay"	southside of Narvaez Bay
ŦIŁES	"cliffs"	northside of Narvaez Bay
TIWILES	"take a look"	bay across from Tumbo Island
ŚKEUWEWEĆ	"warming your back"; from Manson Pelkey as he remembers it from his father	on Tumbo Channel
TEMOSEN	"becoming a good fishing tide", tide runs in the same direction (NE) all the time	Tumbo Island

Mainland

SĆW̱OŦEN	idea of river mouth; TELX̱ILEM, Dave Elliott's Grandfather was from here	Tsawassen
SMOKEĆ	"bluff"	Point Roberts
SEMYOME	name of the people at White Rock /Blaine	Semiahmoo Bay
ĆEL,ŁTENEM	"place to turn around", reef-net site, refers to the movement of salmon in any reef-net location	Blaine

MAP
4

San Juan Islands

SENĆOŦEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
	Stuart Island	
KENNES	"whale"	Stuart Island
SÁNNES	"sacred beginnings" young men would prepare themselves for manhood by diving off the sheer sides into deep water	Turn Point
HIHUKS	"front nose"	east portion of Reid Harbour
PEXOLES	"big eyes"	point on the east mid section of Stuart Island
WELEKIEM	"serpent waters", refers to story	Satellite Island
WTÁEMEN	"the sound of barnacles at low tide" in Lummi dialect	John's Island
XODEŁ	"child of XOXDEL", said to be the daughter of Mandarte Island	Spiden Island
WEMQIOŦEN	"a plant that clings to your mouth"	Cactus Island
ĆITNEW	"big owl", horned owl	Gull Rock
WKIMEQEN	"place of devil fish"	Flat top Island
PWEN	"blown"	Jones Island
ŁEŁINĆEŁ	reef-net site, "paddling"	Open Bay
NENÁNET	"rocky place"	Kleett Point
MÁLEQE	"burial"; biggest burial ground shared by Saanich, Songhees & Lummi	Pearl Island
XI,LEM	"rope"	little Island north next to Pearl Island


PENÁWEN
WLAUKENEN
WSENEN
TXENNI
WMESMESILEN
SJOS,S
MIMÍEK
DAMMIKSEN
WELEKIEM
SANNEP
KENNES
PEXOLES
WTÁEMEN
WEMOQOFEN
ČITNEW
WKIMEQEN
XODEŁ
ŁEŁINĈEŁ
ORCAS ISLAND
SWALEX
SEPELIK
ÁLELEN
WLEMNI
TKAYEĆ
PWEN
ĆKOLEKS
PKÁYELWEŁ
SAN JUAN ISLAND
WTAĆEĆEN
ŦIENEŁNEŁ
ŦXINES
XEMXEMIŁĆ
HARO STRAIT
S,TOLĆEŁ
STOLĆEŁ
WTBĆ
WNONES
LOPEZ ISLAND
WTISEĆEN
MAP
4

SENĆOŦEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
T̓XENNI	"grimmaced," recognizes Lummi's occupation	Waldon Island
TOL,LOS	"way out, off-shore"	Three Tree Island

San Juan Island

S,TOLĆEŁ	"place way out"	Friday Harbour San Juan Island
T̓KOLEKS	"fresh water point"	point between Rocky Bay & Point Caution
ĆḰÁLETEN	from ĆEḰ, "torch"	Rocky Bay
XENEKSEN	"fast running nose", refers to tide	Limestone Point
WELÁLKŁ	comes from word for singing SLEHÁL games	west of Limestone Point
ḰI,ḰEL	"lime", refers to lime deposits	Roche Harbour
SMOÍYE	"lesser" duck-net location	Wescott Bay
PḰÁYELWEŁ	"place of ancient wood"	Mitchell Bay
SX̱ÁSEM	"soap berry"	south side of Mitchell Bay
SĆEHENE	"driven", refers to tides	Andrew's Bay
ŦIŦEK	"big head", Lummi reef-net site	Bay between Andrews Bay & Smugglers Cove
W,ÁYETEN	"place of ling cod"	Smuggler's Cove
WTEĆ	"deep place"	Deadman's Bay
I,OLENEW	"place of the weather becoming nice"	Pile Point
SḰE,ÁNEW	"calling for bad weather"	Kanaka Bay
TIQENEN	"place of peas", Songhees reef-net site	Cattle Point

SENĆOŦEN	"Translation" and/or Significance	English
	Orcas Island	
TKÍYEĆ	"closed off"	Deer Harbour
SWÁLEX	Lummi dialect for reef-net site	East Sound
ŚEPELIḰ	"pointed head"	Mt. Constitution
SJOS,S	"hit on the face" from Phillip Pelkey's tapes	east side Doughty Pt.
ÁLELEN	"houses"	West Sound
WMESMESILEN	"opening and closing your legs continuously", refers to the tide coming in and out, from Phillip Pelkey's tapes	lagoon at Territ Beach
PENÁWEN	"harvest", referring to camas	Patos Island
WŁAUKEMEN	"place of mussels"	Sucia Island
WSENEN	"swift salmon fishing tide", Lummi dialect	Matia Island
MIMIEK	"small heads", from Phillip Pelkey's tapes	Barnes & Clarke Islands
WLEMMI	"land of the Lummi"	Lummi Island
DÁMWIKSEN	"gooseberry place"	Gooseberry Point
ȾXINES	"bear your teeth", belongs to Laconner people of Whidbey Island	Anacortes ferry dock on Fidalgo Island
WTÁȾEĆEN	"earth of fresh water"	Shaw Island
SȾENÁW	"bullhead"	Bay on Point George
WȾISEĆEN	"land of the pegged earth"	Lopez Island
XEMXEMIŁĆ	"place of cattail growth"	Blakely Island
ȾIENEŁNEŁ	"bleeding neck"	Cypress Island
NE,ENTEN	"our Mother", seal hunting place	Smith Island
WĆONES	"to push away", Samish dialect	Deception Pass

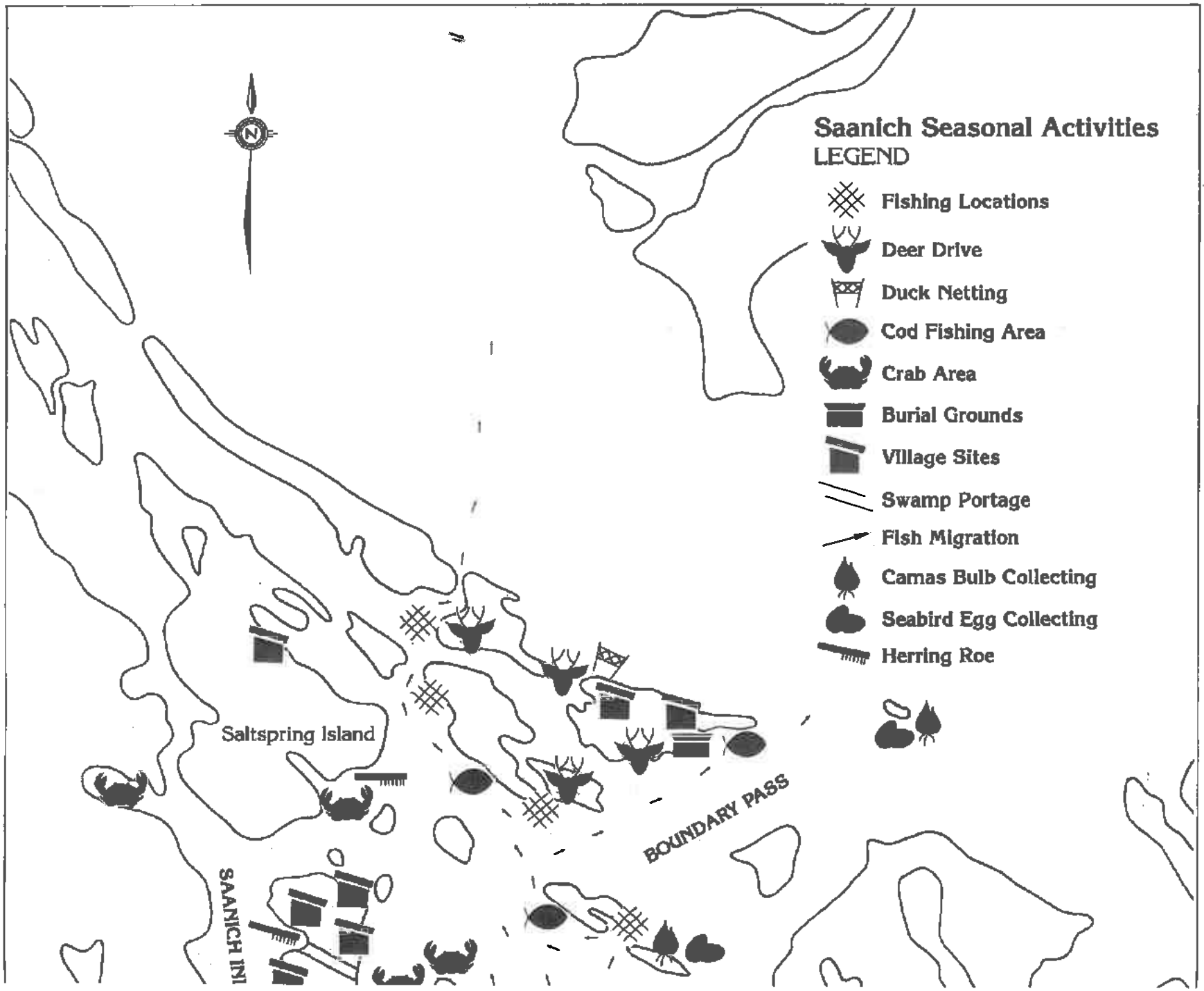
Saanich Seasonal Cycle

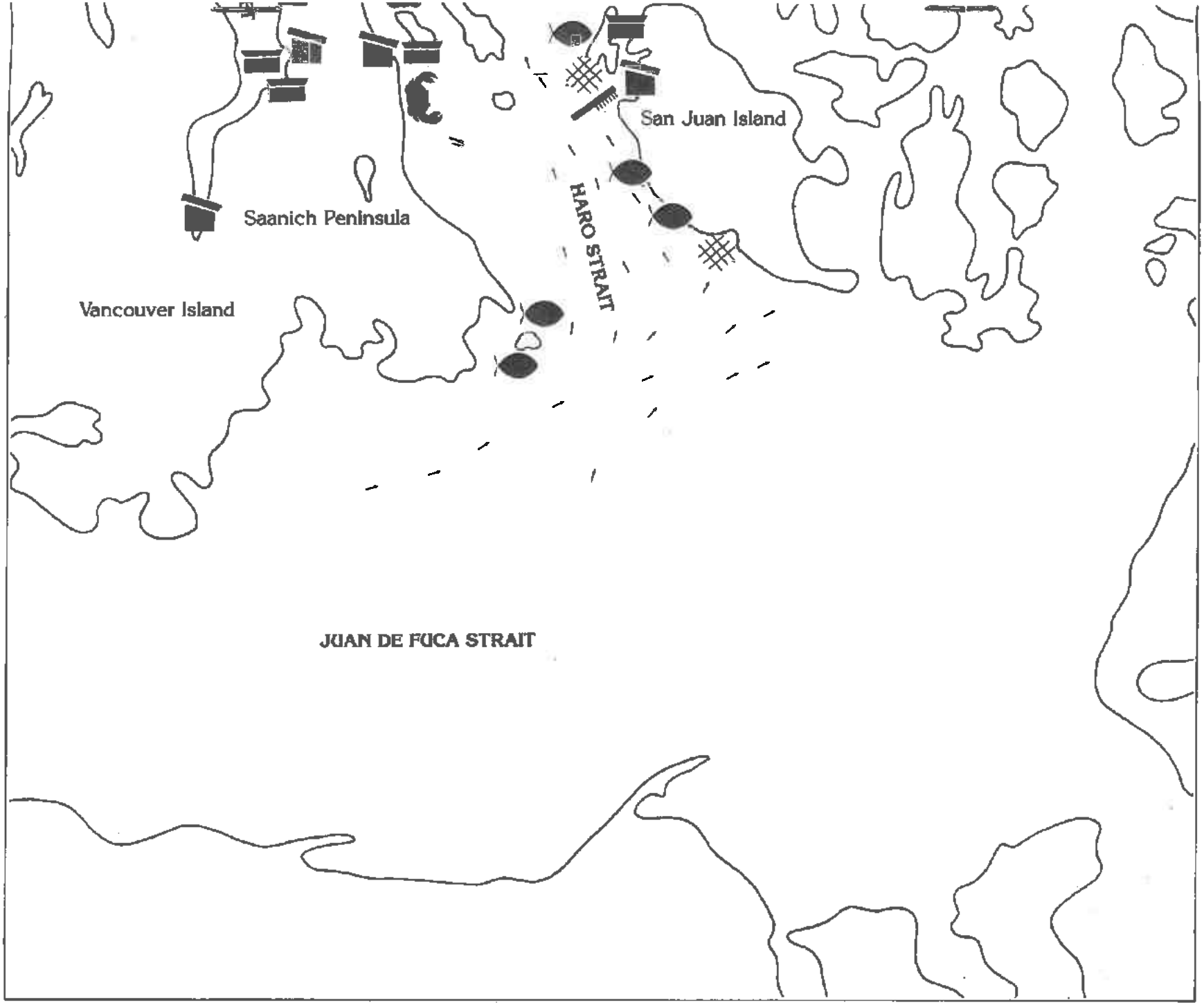
When the frogs come to life again, when they come out of hibernation you would hear them croaking. That is the reason the first moon of the Spring was called WEXES or "frog".

My people had been home all winter. From December and through January our people did not travel. Our people came home in the fall as the bad weather began to set in. They came in from their territory to the Saanich Peninsula. The Saanich Peninsula was their home. They went out to work in their territory to hunt, gather, to fish and do whatever they had to do to get things ready again.

WEXES was the month that the herring came, sometimes in the middle of that moon. The herring were the only fish that came to us automatically so our people took good advantage of it.

Our people knew exactly when those herring were going to arrive. The old people would say, "They are not going to arrive on this tide." Our people didn't always tell the time by the day, or the moon or the sun. They knew the tide so well they


Saanich Seasonal Activities
LEGEND
Fishing Locations
Deer Drive
Duck Netting
Cod Fishing Area
Crab Area
Burial Grounds
Village Sites
Swamp Portage
Fish Migration
Camas Bulb Collecting
Seabird Egg Collecting
Herring Roe
Saltspring Island
BOUNDARY PASS
SAANICH INL


San Juan Island
Saanich Peninsula
HARO STRAIT
Vancouver Island
JUAN DE FUCA STRAIT

would tell the time, exactly what time of year it was, by the tide that was coming and they would say those herring are going to arrive.

The first herring that come in are not the real spawners. They're smaller fish and not as big as the mature herring. The spawners themselves are mature herring, females and males. The old people would tell us that first the small ones arrive, they're the scouts, they come in to look the ground over. Our people didn't take them because they weren't of the same quality as the ones that come later.

For two or three evenings these herring would arrive just at sundown in the shallow water. In the morning they'd be gone again. The next day the same thing would happen again, finally about the third day the real spawners would come in and then they would stay until the spawning cycle was finished.

In the old days spawning would last for as long as a month. That's how long they would stay, five weeks sometimes. Our people would take enough for their own use, not more, just enough that's all.

They would put out cedar and balsam branches so the herring would spawn on the branches. They would then hang the branches up in the sun and the wind to dry. That's how they were preserved. When it was completely dry they would put it away for the next winter.

Herring weren't the only things that they harvested at that time, because with the herring other things came also. Spring salmon came along with the herring, because spring salmon feed on herring.

While our people were busy harvesting the herring and herring spawn they were also living well on spring salmon. They lived well on the salmon that come with the herring. Also ducks came at the same time. Thousands of ducks came in those days, so many would come that they would darken the sky. They would blot out the sun like a big, dark cloud.

Our people would use duck nets, they didn't shoot them. These duck nets were spread on top of the water and held up by floats. As the ducks were diving down for the herring spawn they would stick their head through a mesh and get caught. That's how our people took ducks at that time.

The ducks were taken and plucked and singed and opened out. They were cut open and spread out flat and hung up in the wind to dry. Our people dried the herring eggs and the ducks.

At the same time they took the choicest feathers for insulation, for padding, for bedding, for mattresses and also for ceremonial purposes. They put away the feathers for future use. The next winter they would have lots of time when they could work on the materials that had been put away, when they had time to be at home, when the weather was bad again.

It was the beginning of a busy season. They also took the herring themselves and they made three different kinds of smoked herring. They made kippers, which is the gutted herring smoked. They preserved them boneless where the back bone and other bones were removed from the herring. There was another kind where the whole fish was put away, hung up to smoke. They smoked the herring in three different ways.

That's WEXES or March when things are beginning to grow. Everything is sprouting again, the leaves are coming, the grass is starting to grow, the weather's starting to warm up, the sun is starting to shine and our people are beginning to feel like moving. They began to make short journeys away from home out into the islands and back again.

The next moon is SX̱ÁNEŁ, April. It refers to the bullhead. Now Spring is really here by that time. Flowers are out, everything is blooming, the birds have arrived, and everything has taken on a nicer atmosphere. The sun is shining and everything becomes more pleasant. The winter storms have passed. The swallows are here and the hummingbirds are here. Our people are starting to get anxious to be on their way out into their other homes, what is now the State of Washington. All those islands – San Juan Island, Orcas Island, Stewart Island are Saanich islands.

By this time our people were beginning to eat the first things that started to grow. Daylight tides have arrived. Instead of having to go dig clams in the night, now you can dig in the day time. You could gather foods that come out of the water, such as clams, oysters, cockels, mussels.

Harlan I. Smith / Royal British Columbia Museum

Canoe Scene, early 1920s
One type of canoe used by the Saanich People

For some different kinds of fish you don't even need a boat. Old women used to go out and get bullheads with a basket. When the tide was out they would go to where these boulders are, where these reefs are, and they probed under the boulders and when they touched a bullhead he would say "skwa, skwa, skwa", that's where it gets its name. They would dig it out, put it in their basket and go on to the next boulder and feel around until they got a basket full. Then they'd go home.

When a little group of stars disappeared beyond the horizon, that was when the "bullhead" appeared, there were no bullheads before that. All winter long there had been no bullheads, because they disappeared at the beginning of winter and they did not appear again until this group of stars passed over the horizon.

That's where the month or moon gets its name SX̱ÁNEŁ. When this disappeared our people used to say it went into the water then the bullheads appeared. That's true, you will not find bullheads in the water before that.

During SX̱ÁNEŁ – April, and PEXSISEN̲ – May, men would be going out to hunt deer and elk. They were also beginning to get porpoises. They wouldn't be going out seriously because the weather wasn't all that good yet. A number of shoots that sprouted out in the springtime were eaten. They were the first green vegetable, salmonberry, thimbleberry, blackberry, black caps. The young children over the long winter hadn't had many greens and were beginning to feel a need for them. I remember as a boy how I used to go out anxiously and pick those shoots and eat them. They're delicious, they have a nice taste and each shoot has a different taste from the other.

Then by the end of PEXSISEN̲, end of May, our people were beginning to venture further out into the islands and to stay longer.

Our people would be out in the islands harvesting all the different things that they needed. They were beginning to hunt seals and porpoises. They would be fishing codfish and halibut. Now we are getting into the time called PENAW̲EN̲ the "harvest time".

This was the time of the year when they ate eggs. The people would be out digging camas bulbs and getting eggs. The camas bulb looks like a daffodil bulb, or like an onion.

Now the reason our people went out to these islands to harvest camas is because those bulbs grew to a beautiful size there. Those islands are mostly rock and it's very shallow top soil so you wouldn't have to dig very deep and you would be hitting rock. You wouldn't have to dig deep and you'd come to the bulb, which would be sitting on the bed rock, at the bottom of the top soil, naturally fertilized by the birds every year. Can you imagine how wonderful, how good that soil would be, how fertile it would be?

Harlan I. Smith / American Museum of Natural History 12134

Mat Weaver

Rush mats were made by passing a long needle, with braided stinging nettle twine, through a row of dried rush reeds. The mat creaser would be pressed over the rushes before the needle was pulled through, creating the distinctive line pattern.

This was one time our people ate eggs, the only time they ate seagull eggs. They are much bigger than a chicken egg, and a little different colour, the yolk is a bright orange colour. They're huge eggs, sort of bluish grey with brown spots on them which is the same colour the young seagull's going to be when he hatches.

// They would go to the nests that had less than four eggs, because a seagull only lays four eggs. If there's one egg they wouldn't take it, because the mother would abandon her nest. If there were two, they would take one. If there were three, they would take two. They wouldn't take the only egg and they wouldn't take from the nest of four in it because the mother could already be sitting on it.

Most of the other ducks are the same, they don't lay more than four. They would take eggs from a nest of two or three. While they were harvesting camas and putting them together to bring home they would be living part of the time on seagull eggs. They boiled them.

The women and children were there and the men too. The men would be hunting seal, porpoises, catching halibut, codfish, rockcod and other bottom fish. They would be living well on seafood and ducks. So while they were busy, happily harvesting what they needed to put away for the next winter, they were also living well, and happy, having a good time with each other.

During that time they would be digging clams, roasting clams, drying clams. They took seaweed or ŁEKES at that time. It grows on rock between high tide and low tide. When the tide is partly out it comes out of the water, and in some places it grows very thick, and of course our people harvested it. They would pick

ŦEKES and spread it out in the sun to dry.

They had to be very careful it didn't get rained on, because fresh water would spoil it. It would turn bad. If it looked like it was going to rain they would have to run out and cover it or pick it up and get it out of the rain. That was another nourishing food. After it was dry, it was pressed into blocks; pressed and compacted and put away for the winter. In the winter time it would be taken out and used in cooking or just eaten the way it was.

There was no way you could starve in this country. We had so much of everything. It would be impossible to starve. There was so much food, it was everywhere. This is why I say our people were so rich, not to mention the great salmon runs, the deer, the elk and so on.

By the end of the harvesting moon or PENAWEN – June, you would be getting into long days, hot days. Our people were starting to think of salmon by that time. This would say be late June when our people would be beginning to think of the salmon.

The great salmon runs were going to come into the straits, out of the ocean, through Juan de Fuca Strait up into Haro Strait and through the islands. The men were beginning to get their nets ready, get their buoys ready, get their ropes ready. Out in San Juan Island, Orcas Island, Stewart Island, all those islands out there is where we used to fish. They were wonderful, beautiful islands. They were our salmon grounds.

The first salmon to arrive was the sockeye, or ŦEKI. The name of that moon or month would be ĆENŦEKI which is for the "time of the sockeye". It's a beautiful salmon, very expensive fish today. Beautiful, just as pretty as can be. Prime sockeye. When they come in out of the ocean, when our people caught them, they were a pretty fish, with their beautiful green back, silver sides, plump shaped beautiful meat, bright red colour. They were the first ones that came, the ŦEKI. That is what the non-Indian is trying to say when he says "sockeye".

Royal British Columbia Museum

Basket Weaver, 1912

R. Maynard / Royal British Columbia Museum

Clam Bake, Cordova Bay
Clams were baked in pits under a fire. The open weave baskets on the beach used for holding the clams allowed the water to drain out.

The sockeye arrive in the early summer. Our people would have their camps out there in the islands – San Juan Island, Henry Island, Orcas Island and Stewart Island. Those islands are now American islands, but we never gave them away, and we didn't sell them.

When we caught those salmon they were taken ashore, taken to the nice bays where we had our camps. Then they were prepared. The fish would be cut from the back and were opened out. Same as they would with a duck. They would have small cedar sticks that they would use to hold the fish open so it would stay spread. They were hung up in the sun to dry, or sometimes just smoked and sometimes a combination of both sun and smoke. This is the way our people cured salmon to put it away for the winter.

During the summer, fishing isn't the only thing that was taking place. Women were busy, children were busy, our people were busy all through the good weather. They would be out picking berries. Those islands were abundant with berries and the different kinds of fruit our people used to harvest.

Also, in the marshes they would be gathering bull rushes to make mats. They are great long plants that grow seven or eight feet tall. The mats were about seven feet tall and ten feet long. They would be used like a tent. These mats were carried along when they travelled and they would erect a temporary shelter or camp out of them. They also sat on them and slept on them, and used them for house linings. Wide mats lined the house right around the walls of the inside of the house.

This made the house very warm and attractive. They gave a finished look to the house. That plant is porous which makes it very insulating. That is why they used it. They also used mats for putting in bottoms of canoes so that they could kneel down on them. If they were travelling their children sat on them.

Also at that time of year they would be gathering cedar bark for making baskets and rope. They would take the bark off the cedar in great long pieces as long as the tree. They would also take the bark from the willow tree, which was made into the finest twine for nets and fishing lines.

They collected cedar roots from the swamplands where the soil would be peat soil and very loose and easy to pull. Some of these roots would be as long as twenty to thirty feet. These roots were taken, coiled and stored away for making baskets and other things. Then they would be split. The finest quality roots would be split real straight. This was for basket making and hats. They collected a round - stemmed grass that grows in bunches for making table spreads. These activities were all going on at the same time.

They were working and enjoying themselves at the same time. The Lummi people would be out there as well. They speak the same language as us. They originate from Shoal Harbour. We would meet our friends and our relatives out there and we would visit them, have a good time with them and work with them. This is what was going on at that time of the year. Our people had a wonderful, beautiful way of life.

The name for the whole summer was ĆENQÁLES – time of heat.

Towards mid-summer was the time of the year called ĆENHENEN. The humpback arrived. They were the most plentiful of all salmon, they came by the thousands. I remember as a young boy watching those salmon jump, all over the place, everywhere, all at the same time. You'd look across the bay or across the straits and there were so many jumping at the same time it looked like they were suspended in mid-air. If you stopped in your boat or canoe and you looked down over the side just for a short few minutes you would see the great schools passing under you. Thousands upon thousands of fish in one school. You wouldn't believe it today. Today there are no salmon compared to the way it used to be. I saw that as a boy.

Also during this time of the year they would go out hunting seals. They would go out hunting seals to vary their diet. They had many ways of catching seals. There's one way they would call the seal, they would make the same noises the seal makes to attract them so they could harpoon them.

Another way they caught seals was when they would be out on a reef at low tide. The men would come from one side of the reef upwind. They wouldn't go downwind because the seal would smell them coming. They would come upwind and harpoon them, or club them. Seals climb out onto the reef and you can sneak up on a seal because they are slow on land. It takes them a little time to get into the water.

A sealion is a big, powerful animal weighing up to a ton. The sealion and the blackfish, or killer whale, are deadly enemies. Whenever they meet they fight. Usually the blackfish will kill a sealion or drive it ashore. Driven ashore it was like a free gift to our people.

Our people also ate whales. In the old days these inlets were great places for whales. All inlets like the

Saanich Inlet were great for whales. They were like a nursery where the female whale would come in to have her young. They would stay in these inlets because there was lots of feed and shelter and quiet waters. Sometimes a whale would stay for several weeks before it left. Before it left you would see a small whale trailing behind the big whale. That's the young one and its mother. Once in a while a blackfish would kill a whale because they are, these blackfish, very aggressive and strong. So sometimes a killer whale would go after a whale but just drive it ashore. Our people used to get them that way, when they were driven ashore.

During the moon ĆENHENEN – "time of the humpback", was when our people fished the humpback salmon or HENEN. They were also harvested the same way as the sockeye. We caught them in our reef-nets, our SX̱OLE. My mother used to go along and take part in the fishery when they were short a man. They would take a woman if there was somebody away.

Royal British Columbia Museum

Cleaning Salmon

It would take six men to fish with a reef-net for salmon. My mother used to tell me that they would be out a few minutes and fill both canoes, forty-feet long and about six feet wide. They would be filled right up and then they'd go in to shore. Mother used to tell me, "we hardly disappeared around the point and we were coming back in," and the women were coming down with their knives all sharpened and ready to go to work as they landed.

The fish were put ashore on the beach and the women went to work cleaning, opening them out and hanging them up to smoke over the fire or dry in the sun and the wind. When those fish were completely dry they were put into bales packed tightly and ready to be transported home. That's how the fish were caught, processed and put away for the winter. This is only part of the season. There was still another salmon that hadn't arrived yet. That was the coho, or TÁWEN. This moon was CENTÁWEN – "time of the coho", around September.

We were beginning to get up into the fall by that time. The sun was on its way back again, going south. Then the coho arrive and we would harvest them with our reef-net. They were brought in and cut and cleaned and hung up to dry and put away.

There was still one more salmon that hadn't come yet, the QOLEW, dog or chum. When it comes, you are getting into PEKELÁNEW. Our people gaffed the dog salmon at Goldstream. By that time our people would be in their winter homes in the Saanich area.

After fishing the coho our people were ready to come home. They had caught the last run of fish that were going to come to them for the year. They were getting ready to come across the straits before the weather gets too bad. They know the weather is going to turn bad any day now. The strong southeasters during the summer are nothing like the ones that come in the fall. They're different kinds of winds, they're stronger. It can get very rough out in the straits. That is why our people would be hurrying to get home.

The next month was called WESELÁNEW – shaker of the leaves. The month before was the one that changes the colour of the leaves, PEKELÁNEW. WESELÁNEW is the shaker of the leaves; this is the one that shakes the leaves down onto the ground. This was a good time of year to go out and hunt deer and elk around the peninsula and get ducks.

They used to catch ducks with nets. They used an aerial net – a net way up in the air. The net was suspended between fir trees over a bay or inlet. When the ducks came in they would hit this net and fall down and men would be down there picking them up. You could lower the net to wherever you wanted it, wherever the ducks were flying.

They had another kind of net that was spread on top of the water to entangle ducks. This net had float

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Saanich Canoe

Photographed in 1923 at Tsawout showing seal skin float, harpoon shafts and rush mats - used to sit on or as a sail.

lines and would be floating on top of the water so the ducks would dive under it and they would come up and stick their heads through the mesh.

Where the land is low, or in marshland, the ducks would shortcut across to take off into the wind, our people would hide there and catch them from the air.

Our people would be home by this time and have all their winter food supplies and materials put away. They would be stored in an orderly way, where they would be dry and sheltered. They were ready to stay home to spend the winter at home. This is when they would come back to Saanich which was our main home. We could go in any direction from the Saanich Peninsula. We populated this whole peninsula from south to north, east to the west. We lived all over this peninsula. In Cordova Bay our houses were still standing in 1911 - 1912. If you went there you would still find the remains of house posts in the ground today.

The next month is ṮJEL₵ÁSEN̲. Our people were well settled down and ready to live their life at home. This was the time our Winter Dances took place. We still carry on our Winter Dances. This is the time of year when storms blow hard, winter gales and snow comes. It's a good time to be home. To be in your good houses and be nice, warm and comfortable, with family and friends. This is when visiting would take place. There would be story telling and so on. You cannot travel anymore because this is a bad month. The next two months will be bad, rough, cold weather and this is when our people stayed home. This is when women would make baskets, mats, and blankets, and the men would work with their canoes, make lumber, carve and make tools and utensils.

SISET is the long winter moon. It's a very dark time of the year. SISET means "old one" and it is the time when the Elders relate our stories, legends, family histories. At this time the Winter Dances are still going on, the visiting and the feasting are still going on in our homes. Telling the stories is all a part of this tradition.

The last moon is N̲IN̲ENE – "offspring" or "young ones". Sometimes this can be a very nice time of the year, almost like a beginning. There might be some duck hunting beginning close to home. All through the winter season the people continued their indoor activities, like basket weaving, blanket weaving and carving.

During N̲IN̲ENE the tides are changing from night time to day time. There are beginning to be signs of the nice weather ahead. Our people know the herring would soon arrive and another busy season would begin.

The Reef-Net Fishery

We were salt water people. We lived on islands and water so that made us fishermen, sailors, navigators, boatbuilders, travellers and workers of the sea.

Our people built big sea-going canoes. Our people built other kinds of canoes, small hunting canoes, trolling canoes, the huge canoes used for deep sea travelling and carrying big loads of lumber or their families, huge war canoes and our reef-net canoes.

There was one thing different about our people. Our headquarters was the Saanich Peninsula. There is no river here. There is no river in our territory, that's why Saanich people are different.

The Sooke people have a river, the salmon comes home to them every year. They don't have to go anywhere for fish. The fish came to them.

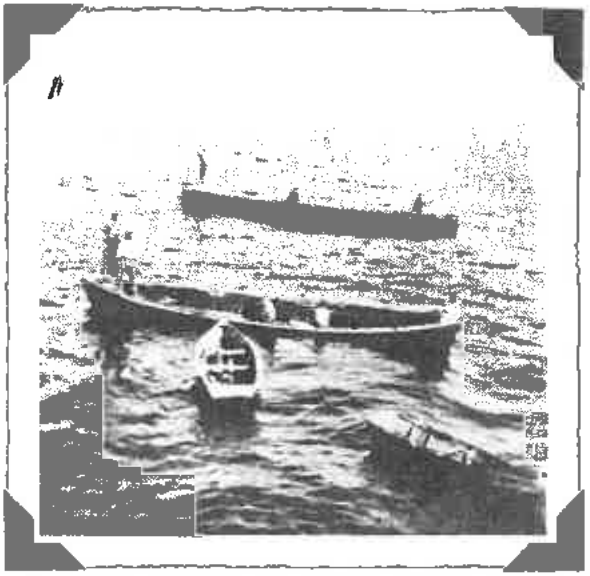
Our brothers the Cowichans have a beautiful river where all kinds of salmon return to them each year. They didn't have to go anywhere for fish, the fish came to them.

Further north the Qualicum People have a big, beautiful river where all the salmon come.

The Saanich people had no river. We had to catch our fish in the salt water, out in the rough water, the fast-running tide of the straits. Many salmon came heading for the rivers of our brothers.

Rather than go up and interfere with those people who had rivers our people had learned to fish out in the straits. They developed a fishery to catch fish out in the straits. Our reef-nets were a wonderful way to catch fish.

Our name for it is SX̲OLE. That word comes from the word for willow tree. The inner bark of the willow tree is where our twine came from to make that net. That is where the finest twine came from, our strongest fishing lines.



Album of Vele French

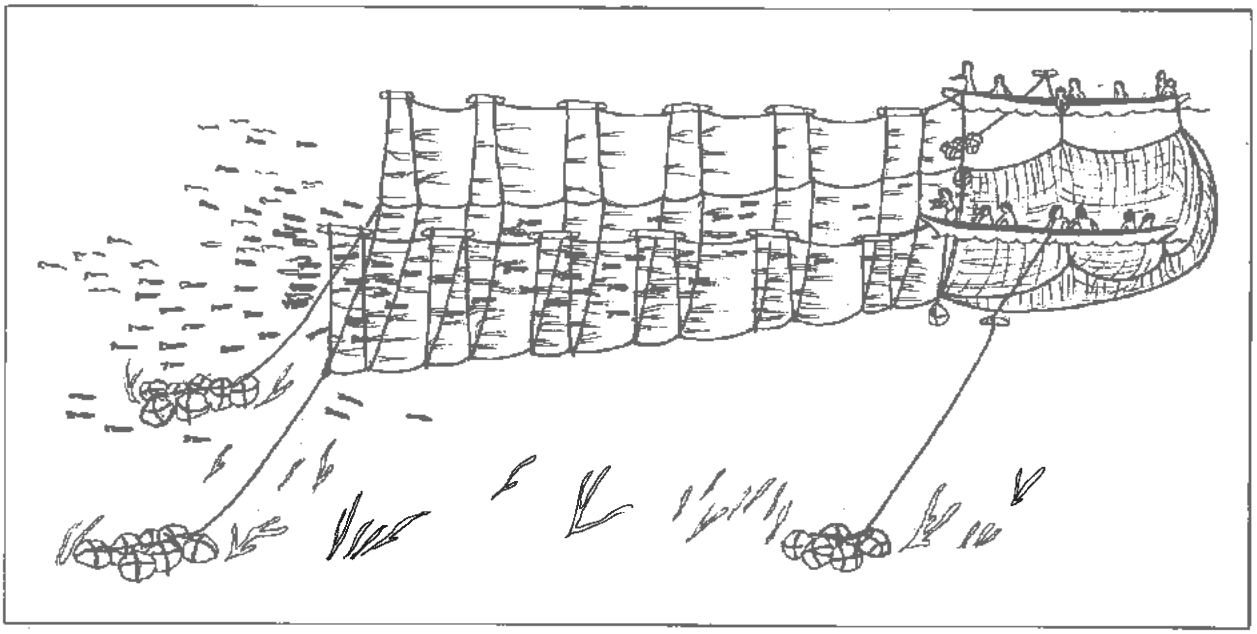
Reef-Net Fishing off Henry Island, 1923
Dave Elliott is in the centre foreground. He was thirteen when this photo was taken. Other fisherman include: Herman Olsen, Johnny Williams and Howard Olsen.

I had experience fishing with these nets as a young man. I admired how beautifully they worked and how efficient they were. I realized the people who installed those nets and developed that way of fishing must have been awfully smart people.

Those people were equivalent to today's engineers, because they understood the tide, the wind, stress strength of ropes. How much material would stand in that strong tide, that strong wind? It didn't matter how hard it blew, how hard the tide ran that gear would never move.

I helped to install this fishery when I was a boy. Making buoys and tying ropes, working on the net. I remember when we used to go out, we'd have all these rocks lashed so they could tie them to the ropes and send them down to the bottom as permanent anchors for that season. I remember one anchor especially. When they'd push this big anchor overboard, it was tied to a big pile of rope, four feet high, it would go down until that big pile of rope was almost gone. I used to think to myself, "It must be awfully deep here."

When I grew up I looked it up on a chart and where that anchor went down it is sixty fathoms of water. That's about three hundred and sixty feet deep. A location where a reef-net is fished is called SWÁLET. All those locations out in those islands are very special, the tide has to be just right before they will work.



Fren Ertle

Reef-Net Set-up

These locations called SWÁLET are all through the Gulf Islands. They belong to different families. Each year the families would return to those locations when fishing season comes and would put in their anchor and their buoy to get ready for the coming season. The first sockeye come in June. The men would be there the last part of May working on their nets, fixing anchors and so on, so they were ready to fish when the first sockeye came.

That would be going on all through those islands, right on up to Point Roberts, Boundary Bay all through the islands to Lummi. The Lummi people fished right in Bellingham Bay. The Lummis, the Saanich, the Malahats and the Songhees were the reef-net fishermen. None of us had a river.

First they would put down a single anchor, called LKENATEN. That anchor was put down exactly where they wanted it because they had bearing marks from the shore. They lined up the bearing marks and when they were in line, down went that anchor. It would be within inches of where it was last year. That's how exact they were. This way of fishing was more or less a way to intercept the fish that were on their way to the rivers. There are four anchors, two at the front of the lead and two from each side of the back of the net.

You have to picture six to twelve log floats going out behind each canoe, there are lines attached to these. This first line is set just roughly below where the salmon travel, at about eighteen feet or a little deeper. For different fish they would change the depth: humpbacks swim shallow, sockeye swim shallow but for spring salmon they have to put the line deeper because spring salmon swim deeper, so do cohoes.

This line goes down every twelve feet, tied to the log floats, there's another line that joins that at the bottom and goes across and is tied to ropes going up the other side to the log floats there. The rope at the bottom is called a floor line or XEṮ₵IŁEN. These ropes were the size of your finger around. There are beach-grass bunches threaded through the strands of this rope about six or eight feet apart all through. They opened the rope up and pushed this stock of grass through.

You have ropes going down each side and a floor line all with bunches of beach-grass through them. This grass waves in the tide. The tide is running about three or four knots an hour and the fish are travelling with it, all of a sudden these fish are in-between these two sides and here's all this grass waving on the bottom and on the sides, those fish are going fast because they're going with the tide, the fish behind them can't see it, and they're pushing the ones ahead, so before they know it they're in the lead. They fooled the fish, that's what they did. All of a sudden they're in the lead like being over shallow water. These lines come shallower and shallower as it gets towards the net. The reason for that is to bring the fish high enough so they can be seen.

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Reef-Net Fishing, San Juan Island, 1950s
The United States did not outlaw the reef-net.

As the fish come, they can't turn around because the tide is pushing them. Besides, the fish behind them are pushing them and they just keep going. All of a sudden they come to the end of the lead and the water is clear green. It looks like all this danger is passed and you can actually see them speed up when they see this. Then they go into the net because the net is at the end of the lead in-between the two canoes. You can't see it, it's hanging down deep and it's bagged out at the back. It bags way out in the tide. That's called the bunt or ŦESTENÁĆ. They come to the end of this danger, or what looks like shallow water, and they tip or dive down.

You can see bubbles coming off their tails. They're going into the net. The watchmen at the front of the canoes tell the men to get ready. They tell them how fast to haul the net up depending on the size of the school.

When they fill up the net they slacken the breast rope on each side and the two canoes come together. As the two canoes come together the men in one canoe will jump into the other and they take the whole works in all at once. If it's a big catch they may have to split it and take it in two or three rolls. The crew gets back in their canoe and they pull the breast lines – WQENETEN – again and pull the canoes apart ready to fish again.

When they finish fishing for the day they pull the canoes together, they throw the net on one canoe and they tie the lead lines to the breast line on each side and leave it. They could leave it for a day, a week, a month and nothing will happen to it, because it is so strong. No tide will break it or take it away, these anchors would be tons of rocks.

The canoes were thirty-five or forty feet long, the reef-net was the same length and about forty feet wide too. We used to fish out in what is now the San Juan Islands. That was Saanich territory and our names, Saanich names, are still on all those islands. That's where our reef-net locations were.

It was 1846 when they divided up the country and made the United States and Canada. We lost our land and our fishing grounds. It very nearly destroyed us, all of a sudden we become poor people. Our people were rich once because we had everything. We had all those runs of salmon and that beautiful way of fishing. When they divided up the country we lost most of our territory. It is now in the State of Washington. They said we would be able to go back and forth when they laid down the boundary, they said it wouldn't make any difference to the Indians. They said that it wouldn't affect us Indians.

They didn't keep that promise very long; Washington made laws over our Federal laws, British Columbia made laws over those Federal laws too, and pretty soon we weren't able to go there and fish. Some of our people were arrested for going over there.

That's what happened to our fishery. That's why we're not fishing right now today. The Indians are fishing in Washington using our way of fishing. We lost our fishery, and our fishing grounds.

The Canadian government, Department of Indian Affairs outlawed our reef-nets, called it a trap, in 1916. They made it illegal to fish with our SX̱OLE.

At the same time they allowed J.H. Todd and Sons to continue fishing with their traps, and those were real traps. They were made out of great long piles driven into the sea bottom with wire from ten feet above the water, right down to the ocean bottom and set right in front where the salmon travel. They allowed J.H. Todd and Sons from 1916 right up to the middle 1940's before they finally stopped. B.C. Packers bought them out and discontinued it. Now this is why I say, "This has to be answered – Why did they do that to our People?"

This was all a part of a beautiful way of life.

Early Contact with the Europeans

Explorers

Columbus first touched on the shores of this continent in 1492. You all know that. One hundred years later, in 1592, Juan de Fuca, a Greek employee of the Spanish at that time, came this way.

He sailed up the coast and somehow he blundered into this strait, which later became named after him – Juan de Fuca. Juan de Fuca wasn't his real name, his name was Apostolos Valerianos. He was a Greek, he wasn't a Spaniard.

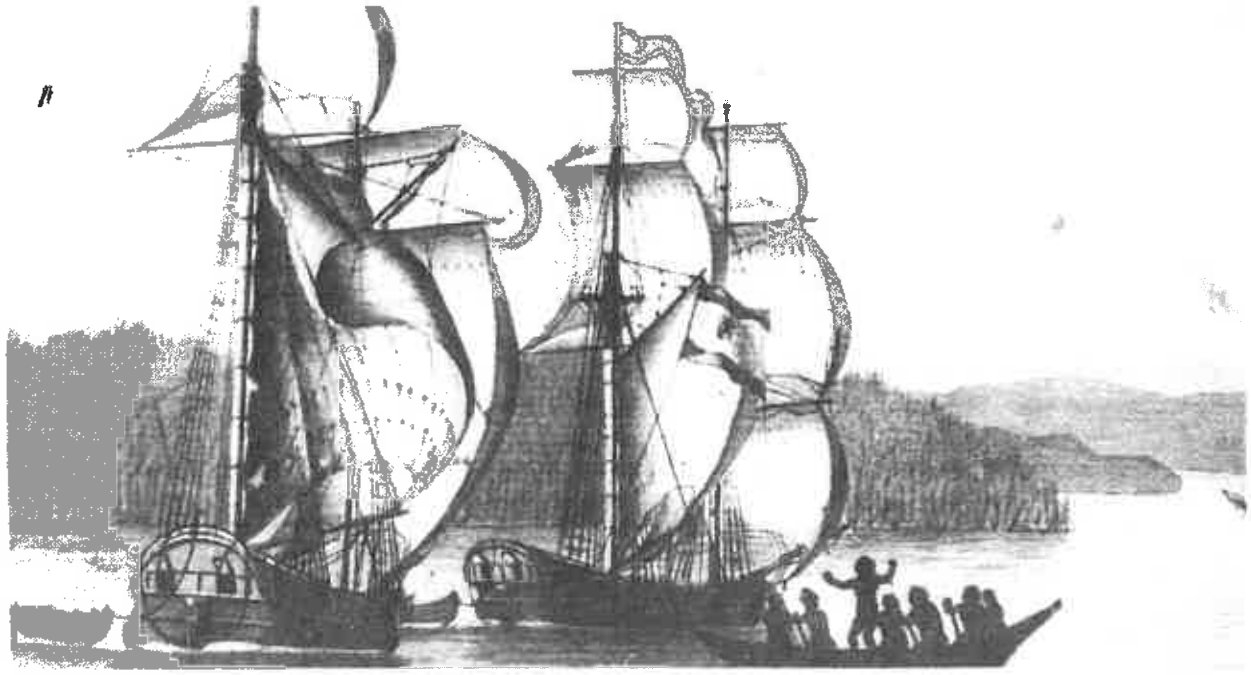
I often try to get a picture of what Juan de Fuca must have seen when he first came into the straits – those beautiful Cascade Mountains, and all the virgin forests, right down to the shoreline, this beautiful country in here. He came in here, and he stayed about two or three weeks. He went back down to California and he told his employers that he discovered a beautiful inland sea populated by brown people wearing animal skins for clothing. Those were our ancestors.

His employers didn't pay much attention to him, so he sailed back to Spain. He went to the Queen and he told her about his discovery and she also didn't pay much attention to him. They didn't seem to give any importance to it. I don't think they believed him.

It was a hundred and eighty-four years later – 1778 when Captain Cook sailed up the coast and was right in the mouth of the straits when a southeast storm began to blow up. In those days it wasn't good to be near shore with a sailing ship. You had to have what they call "sea room" so you could manoeuvre in a storm. He was right in the mouth of the straits and he didn't know it. He took a sextant reading on the sun and he said to his crew, "this is where Juan de Fuca's 'supposed strait' is."

Looking from out in the ocean the mouth of the straits looks just like a dent in the shoreline. You can't see beyond, it looks like a bay or the mouth of an inlet. He sailed out into the ocean so he could have sea room in this storm, he didn't make landfall again until he landed in Nootka. Nootka was the first place that the explorers landed.

For years and years later, explorers and traders sailed up and down the Coast, they didn't know we were in here. The Haidas and the Kwagulths, our enemies, had guns. The traders and explorers sailed up and down the coast, they never came in because they didn't believe that there was a country in here. We were at a disadvantage for a long time, because we still didn't have guns and our enemies were able to get guns from the traders that came up and traded for furs and so on.



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Galiano and Valdez, off Point Roberts
From an etching, circa 1792

We used to fight with the northerners. They used to come down and attack our homes, our villages. Many serious wars were fought with the Haidas and the Kwagulths. They used to take slaves when they would raid our villages. We also took slaves, if we took prisoners. This is the way it was before.

The Lummis now in the mouth of the Nooksack River in Bellingham Bay are the brothers of the Saanich people. They originated right here in what is now Shoal Harbour. That is the home of the Lummis and the reason they moved away is because they were right on the path of the Haidas and the Kwagulths as they made their way up and down the Coast making war on other people. The Haidas travelled as far south as California warring and plundering.

The Lummis got so tired of being attacked all the time, they got tired of being on guard, they got tired of having to have a trained army always on the alert, and just expecting to be raided at any time, especially at night, especially during the summer weather when the Haidas and the Kwagulths came down.

They said, "Let's move away from here, we're just too handy, we're never going to have any rest, all we're going to be doing is fighting and preparing to fight, preparing to defend ourselves." That's why they moved away. They moved away to the mouth of the Nooksack River another beautiful place and this is where they are still today. The Lummi people are our brothers.

Gold and Guns

When gold ran out in California, the miners moved up the coast. They moved everybody up, lock stock and barrel, even the undertakers came along! All the riffraff who lived off the miners – whiskey sellers, pimps, and prostitutes – moved up with them. Almost overnight Victoria became a very busy centre of trade. When the gold in California ran out, somebody found gold in the Fraser River sandbars. The miners began to work the bars of the Fraser River panning for gold and moving further and further in all the time and finding more and more gold. First of all gold was just panned. People made a lot of money panning gold on the Fraser River. This is how that gold rush started in the Fraser and it went on up into the interior, Cariboo, into Klondike.

Victoria was the only town, the only trading centre, the only place where they could cash in their gold and get supplies. There was a great traffic between Victoria and the mouth of the Fraser River. You have to remember in those days sailing boats or rowing was the only way you could travel. There were no power boats!

Often when these miners were coming back from wherever they were prospecting, digging or mining they would have a lot of gold. Since it's too far from the mouth of the Fraser to Victoria and they could not make it in one day, they would camp

out in the islands. They would have to camp somewhere in those islands out there because the distance was too great to make in one day. When those miners were camped there with their gold that they were bringing to Victoria, very often they were killed, murdered and their gold stolen.

Very often our people got the blame for it. They said "The Indians did it." I'm not saying the Indians were entirely innocent, maybe they did learn too. Most of the time our people were blamed. I believe it was likely the people that had preyed off them all the time when they were drunk. Those were the people that were murdering the miners out on those islands, and our people got the blame for it. This is what brought on the next thing I'm going to tell you about.

There was an Indian village at the south end of Kuper Island, W̱LEMÁŁĆE. Something happened out on those islands, some people were murdered, some people were killed and robbed and somebody in the village of W̱LEMÁŁĆE got blamed for it. The authorities at the time decided to teach the Indians a lesson. They sent up a Man-of-War from Victoria. They brought this ship up, cannons sticking out all over it. This ship was ordered up there to teach those Indians a lesson. This Man-of-War naval ship with its big cannons stood off-shore on the south end of Kuper Island.

They sent a man ashore and they told him to tell those Indians they have to give this man up who was blamed for the murders out on the island. His name was TIOȻ. They went ashore and they spoke to the Indians and they told them, "We're here to get this man, this man was responsible for those murders out on those islands." They said to this naval officer, "We can't give him up because he's not here, he hasn't been here for a long time and we don't know where he is." But the officer insisted anyway, "You either give that man up or we're going to blow your village all to pieces. There will be nothing left of it." They still said, "How can we give this man up if he's not here?"

The naval officer returned to the ship with its guns already trained on the village. They fired volley after volley, after volley on that defenceless village. These people had never done a thing to them. When they were finished shelling that village it was flattened to the ground. There was nothing left, there wasn't a house left standing.

During the time of the shelling one old man had just returned to the village. He'd been out getting wood and he had returned with a canoe-load of wood. Just as he was starting to pack up his wood, the shelling started. That old man never stopped packing his wood up. But there was no village left, and since then there's never been a village. There's still no village there today.

Those people moved away, they moved to PENÁLEXET and they're still there. This is something you

don't hear about, nobody will tell you about it, but it's in your history books if you look for it, you'll find it. This was told to me by Eddy Edwards of Kuper Island.

We've become really poor, pitifully poor. We don't have to be ashamed, we have nothing to be ashamed of. There are many things that have brought us to where we are today.

The same things happened in the mouth of the straits in Klahoose, they also shelled a defenceless village there. They almost did the same thing in Cowichan Bay. They were going to shell the village there if they did not give up somebody that they were looking for because he committed some kind of crime. TELPOLES is the name of the people in Cowichan Bay. They quickly got together and they had a conference and they pushed a man out. They pushed a man out and the authorities took that man, they took him to the head of the Cowichan Bay. I believe that maple tree is standing where they hung that man. They say what the Cowichans actually did was send out a slave. They hung that man there.

They did the same thing in the Queen Charlotte Islands. They stood off the village of Fort Rupert and shelled it. They stood off the village there and they began to shell that village. Only in the Queen Charlotte Islands when they started shelling that village those people started shelling then too, because they already had cannons. These Haida had cannons because they had salvaged a ship that had come ashore, they salvaged the guns and the cannon. They had them all in place.

Diseases

The miners who came up from California and the people who followed them also brought smallpox and other diseases with them. We didn't know of diseases like the ones brought to us by the Europeans. It wasn't the settlers who brought them, it was the explorers who brought V.D. and measles. Influenza and smallpox came up with the miners. Smallpox cut our population down to almost nothing.

Our people lived in a disease-free environment. There were no diseases here. There were no diseases of any kind. Our people didn't live in crowded conditions, and there was no pollution of any kind. Often what causes diseases is crowded conditions and not caring for the land, not respecting the land. This is where diseases come from. Our people didn't have any diseases here. Smallpox was the first disease our people had.

The Indians came down to Victoria because they could buy guns and ammunition, the foods that they were getting used to and so on. While they were here smallpox broke out in 1862. There were 10,000 Indians camped around Ogden Point, along Dallas Road. They were from all over

F. Dally / Royal British Columbia Museum

Indian Tent Camp, 1890s
On Store Street, Victoria, near Sproatt's Wharf

– Tlingits from Alaska, Haidas from the Queen Charlotte Islands, Tsimshians from the Skeena, Kwagulths, and Bella Coolas.

When smallpox broke out in the Indian camp the city authorities gave orders to set fire to the camps. Can you imagine that? People already sick and dying and somebody comes and sets fire to your shelter. They ordered the Indian camps burned down. They set fire to the camps. This is not something I'm making up, this is the history of B.C. Those people had to leave. They spread out into those islands some of them and headed for home, wherever they came from and they died all along the way. Wherever they stopped they spread the disease.

They died by the thousands. That is what happened to the great Haida Nation who were so powerful, strong, advanced. What a beautiful culture they had. Smallpox almost wiped them out.

I'm telling you this because I want you to know what we lived through. This is why we've become so poor, so disorganized, so pitiful.

When I was a young man, about seventeen or eighteen years old, I was fishing on a seine boat on Johnson Strait, north of Campbell River. We were coming from the mainland, we had been fishing over on the mainland that day and we were coming through the islands back to Vancouver Island. It was getting on towards evening. The Captain of the boat was an Indian from Fort Rupert by the name of Bob Wilson. As we were coming to the south, Bob turned the boat into the bay. It looked like he was making all preparations to anchor for the night. As this bay opened up I could see there were houses right around the bay. Those houses were all empty, there was no sign of life. They were old, some of them were falling down but many were still standing. They were old and grey and you could see that nobody had lived there for a long time.

I was standing beside Bob, and I said, "What happened here?" He said, "They all died of smallpox."

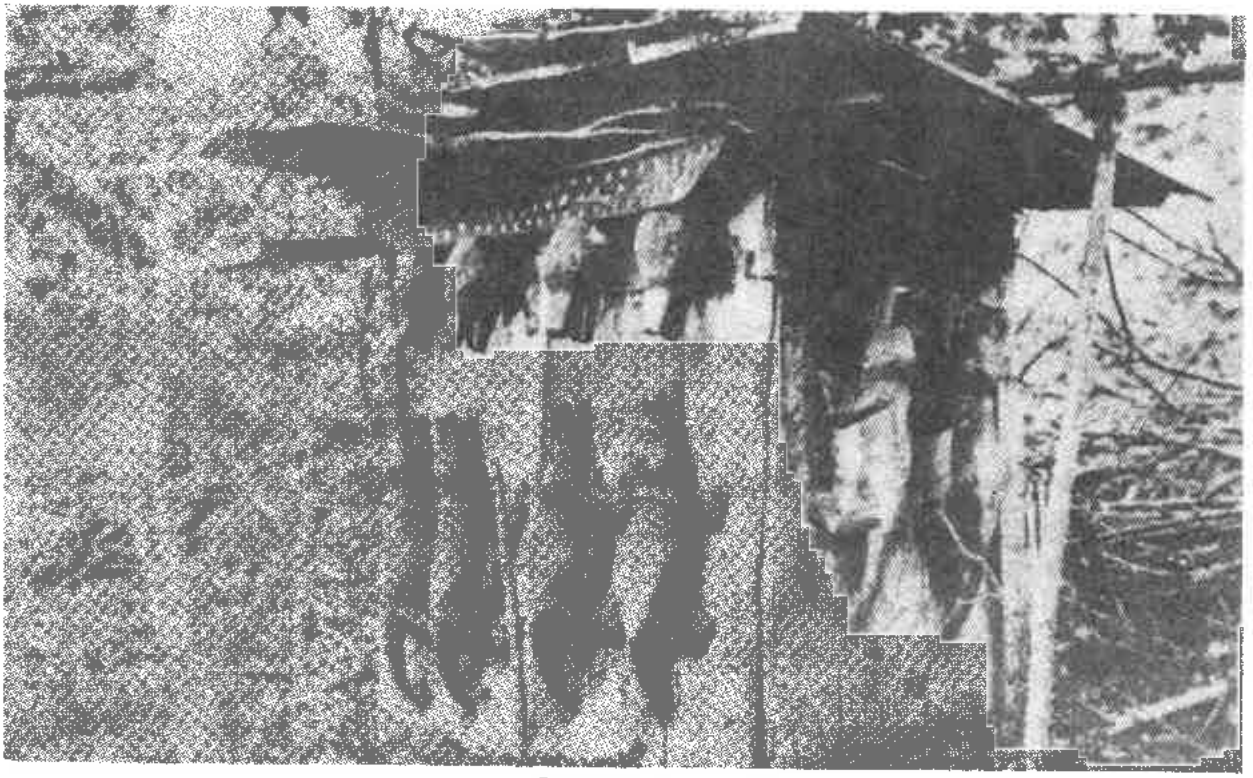
Smallpox ran through our people like wild fire everywhere. I saw people with the scars, the survivors of smallpox. I saw them, scars on their faces, scars on their bodies. They had smallpox but it didn't kill them. Then other diseases came. We had no immunity to disease because we had never had diseases before.

We had no immunity within us to fight the disease off, so we got whatever came along. Measles came

along next. Measles, a childhood disease, killed our people, even our children. In those days our people didn't know what to do about it. They'd never had disease before, so our people died by the thousands from measles. When an adult got measles it was really serious, because it quickly turned to pneumonia, and the pneumonia killed them. I think the worst of all, the last one to come along, was tuberculosis.

Tuberculosis came when I came to the age of understanding, the age of thinking. When I was a small boy my people were already sick with tuberculosis. You could see them looking thin, coughing, very frail looking. You knew those people had tuberculosis.

They used to call it "consumption" in those days. I guess because it ate you up. Walking along the trails you could see sputum lying by the trail with blood in it, and you knew that person wouldn't have much longer to live because he or she was already bleeding from the lungs. TB was the last one to come along and the worst of all because it lasted so long. Our people were dying like flies right up into the fifties before they were finally able to stop TB. I remember the drug that stopped it was streptomycin. It was not until streptomycin came along that TB was arrested from our people. These are the times we lived through. This is what I want you to remember.



Royal British Columbia Museum

Saanich Graves Boxes

Bodies were placed in a fetal position in grave boxes. Cemeteries were often on small islands close to the shore, as on Daphne Island in Saanich.

When I was a young man and TB was still running like wildfire, our people were dying so often it seemed like every week we were taking somebody up to the cemetery to bury them. Maybe it wasn't that often, but to me it seemed like that because pretty near all the time somebody was dying.

You could go outside any time of the day and you could hear crying, you could hear mourning. You would know that somebody else had just died. In the morning when you'd get up the first thing when you opened the door you would hear somebody crying or wailing away. Amid this crying and mourning you would hear saws and hammers going. We used to make our own caskets.

They would get up early in the morning and start making the coffin. This is the sound I would wake up to, this is the first sound I would hear in the morning when I opened the door. This is what we lived through. It lasted up into the fifties.

If you can understand this and feel a little better about us maybe we won't just look like lazy people. We won't look like people that don't know or don't care what we are doing or where we're going. We lived through hell and we survived it. I believe we're over the hill.

Of course we went through the alcohol thing just like so many of the other people did. When people have nothing to do, when they have no hope and everything is wrong and nothing is right, many people turn to alcohol. Alcohol killed many of our people. Car accidents, drownings, and other sicknesses caused by alcohol. This is what happened to our people. I believe we have also come through that one too.

We're looking to the future with hope now.

James Douglas Treaties with the Saanich People

Signing the Document

There are many, many things that have brought us to where we are – broken promises, discrimination, legislation.

Just take the Saanich Peninsula, the Saanich Peninsula was the homeland of the Saanich People for who knows how long. When James Douglas moved himself and his people into Victoria Harbour he moved right in with the Songhees people, the LEQEN̲EN̲. He made that the headquarters of the Hudson Bay Company. Then after some time they began to claim the land, they began to exploit the land.

One of the things they were doing was logging this beautiful stand of timber in the Cadboro Bay area. This timber was tall and slim going straight up, no limbs 'til almost way up to the top, maybe sixty, seventy, eighty, one hundred feet up. A beautiful stand of timber in great demand for ships' masts. This is why they were there. Of course you know all shipping those days was by sail.

F. Dally / Royal British Columbia Museum

Beached Canoes, Old Songhees, 1867
These were the daily travelling type of canoe used by the Saanich People. The rush mats were used to protect the canoes from the sun and rain.

This is why masts were in such demand. They were taking them away by the shipload for the purpose of using them for masts.

I don't know how long they had been cutting this timber when our people became aware of it. Actually it wasn't in our territory, it was Songhees territory but the Songhees weren't doing anything about it.

Our people got together and they said "What are we going to do about these people falling those beautiful trees? Are we just going to sit here and just let them do it?" So they talked back and forth and said, "No, we can't just let it go, we have to say something." So they decided to do something about it.

At that time they always had fighting men, warriors ready to go out at any time. It was still part of the way of life, because we had to be on guard for the northern raiders. We had an army ready all the time.

They loaded up four big canoes with warriors, with their fighting equipment and battle dress, painted faces and they paddled around the Peninsula and right to where those people were working. When they reached the place, they went in and stood offshore and lined up side by side. There was somebody walking around there, close to the beach and they hailed him to come down.

This man came down and they said, "Tell your boss to take his men and his tools and go back to Victoria and cut no more trees." This man took a look at these four canoes facing the beach, warriors, ready to fight, battle dress on and faces painted for war. He quickly hurried back up into the woods and told his boss to come down. When he took a look and saw what they were faced with, he told his men to gather up their tools and they went back to Victoria.

There was another incident besides that, that already made things not exactly in a state of peace. An Indian boy crossing Douglas' property had been shot and killed. Douglas' property was in the area of Mount Douglas. He had a farm there, and this boy was crossing through. For what reason they shot the boy, I don't know.

We weren't in a state of war, but almost. After these loggers left Cadboro Bay and went back to Victoria, our people just turned around and came home. That's the way things stood when they got the message, or invitation to come into Victoria. Douglas invited all the head people into Victoria.

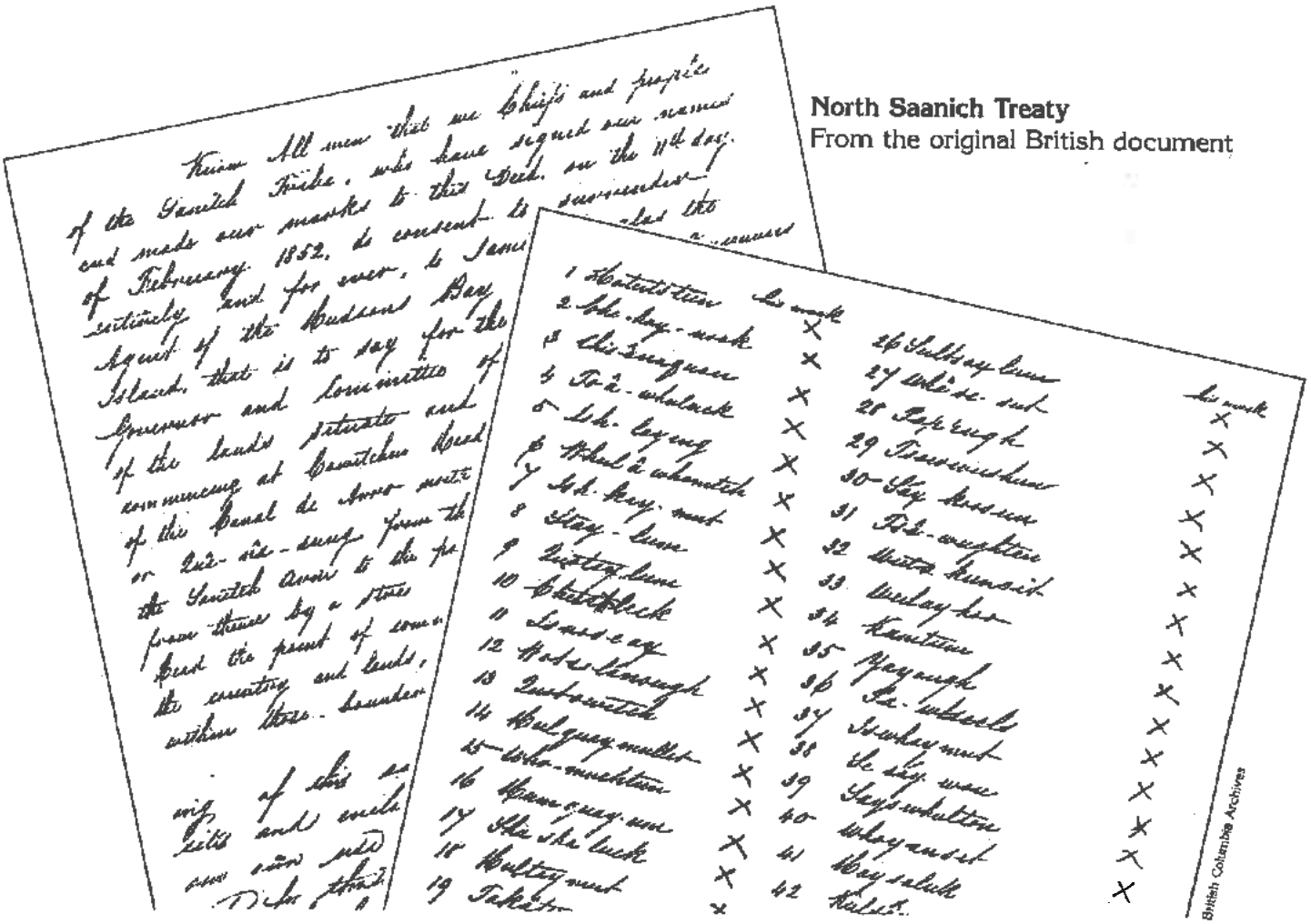
When they got there, all these piles of blankets plus other goods were on the ground. They told them these bundles of blankets were for them plus about $200 but it was in pounds and shillings.

They saw these bundles of blankets and goods and they were asked to put X's on this paper. They asked each head man to put an X on the paper. Our people didn't know what the X's were for. Actually they didn't call them X's they called them crosses. So they talked back and forth from one to the other and wondered why they were being asked to put these crosses on these papers. One after another, they were asked to put crosses on the paper and they didn't know what the paper said. What I imagined from looking at the document was that they must have gone to each man and asked them

Royal British Columbia Museum

McKenna-McBride Commission Visits Saanich

In 1913 the provincial government appointed a Royal Commission called the *McKenna-McBride Commission* to look into the issue of Indian reserve lands in B.C. The Commission visited Indian villages in order to establish reserve lands. What was left of "Indian land" was transferred to the federal government and called Reserves. Dave Elliot's mother travelled with the Commission to point out the extent of traditional Saanich territory.



North Saanich Treaty
From the original British document

their name and then they transcribed it in a very poor fashion and then asked them to make an X.

One man spoke up after they discussed it, and said, "I think James Douglas wants to keep the peace."

They were after all almost in a state of war, a boy had been shot. Also we stopped them from cutting timber and sent them back to Victoria and told them to cut no more timber.

"I think these are peace offerings. I think Douglas means to keep the peace. I think these are the sign of the cross."

He made the sign of the cross. The missionaries must have already been around by then, because they knew about the 'sign of the cross'! "This means Douglas is sincere."

They thought it was just a sign of sincerity and honesty. This was the sign of their God. It was the highest order of honesty. It wasn't much later they found out actually they were signing their land away by putting those crosses out there. They didn't know what it said on that paper.

I think if you take a look at the document yourself, you will find out, you can judge for yourself. Look at the X's yourself and you'll see they're all alike, probably written by the same hand. They actually didn't know those were their names and many of those names are not even accurate. They are not even known to Saanich People. Our people were

hardly able to talk English at that time and who could understand our language?

After the Treaty

The James Douglas Treaty was not the most honest treaty and they did not even live up to their own document. We were to keep our "enclosed fields and village sites". The old people used to tell me that our real boundary went up to that long smoke stack in Brentwood Bay. We had a fence over Willis Point from there. That land was fenced. The fence is still probably there, at least parts of it are probably still there. I hunted along that fence many times.

The reason that point was fenced off was because Willis Point had beautiful springs in there all year round and when people used to go away fishing in the summer they would drive the horses and cattle up to the mouth of Tod Inlet and swim the animals across. The land was fenced, and once the animals were inside that fence, they only needed the one fence from east to west right over the point. It's not that many years ago.

Willis Point was where we used to keep our stock while we were away fishing. The animals could look after themselves, there was plenty of feed there and lots of water, and that's why that place was fenced.

We knew it was our land, we never had any other thought but that it was our land. We used to go out into the islands that were in our territory and fish for sockeye, humpbacks and spring salmon. Our livestock could take care of themselves on Willis Point.

Well like so many things the way of life became gradually changed. We lost the land somehow.

One after the other – land, fishing rights, hunting rights were legislated away. Our fishing grounds in the San Juan Islands were lost to the State of Washington when the International Boundary was set up.

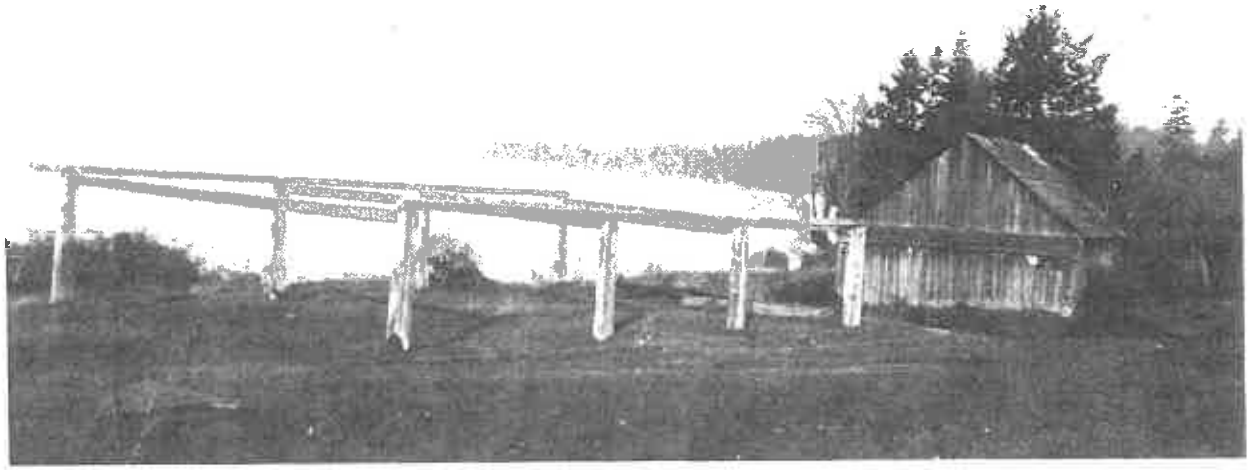
The treaty with James Douglas said we could hunt and fish as formerly. We can't. It doesn't live up to its promises.

Since Dave Elliott's death, the Supreme Court of British Columbia, in October, 1987, Mr. Justice Meredith, ruled that Douglas "implemented a policy to protect the Indians in their right to pursue their traditional economy of hunting and fishing," and so concluded that they had "the right to resist ... the proposed marina (at Saanichton Bay) as it would diminish in extent the fishery contractually reserved to predecessors" of the original signators to the Douglas Treaty.

W.A. Newcombe / Royal British Columbia Museum

Tsartlip Village, 1929

The house (front left) was shared by three families: Philip Tom, Etienne Smith and Johnny Sam. Chief David LaTasse's family lived in the Bighouse (centre). Beside the Bighouse is a small white house with windows, built by Tommy Paul. Behind the Bighouse was the house of Marshall Harry's family. To the right was the Bighouse belonging to the Morris'.



Royal British Columbia Museum

Tsartlip House Frame, 1935

This house frame represented an attempt to rebuild a traditional Longhouse after it was burned. The families who would have lived here were those of Jimmy Jim, Peter Henry, Mrs. Louie Pelkey, Isaac and Joe Barthleman, Martin Cooper and Dave Elliott. The house (at left) belonged to Philip Tom and Johnny Sam.

Teachings

Our people lived as part of everything. We were so much a part of nature, we were just like the birds, the animals, the fish. We were like the mountains. Our people lived that way.

We knew there was an intelligence, a strength, a power, far beyond ourselves. We knew that everything here didn't just happen by accident. We believed there was a reason for it being here. There was a force, a strength, a power somewhere that was responsible for it. That is the way our people lived. They lived according to that belief, according to that knowledge. The universe lies before you, we don't know anything about it.

Very few people know anything about the universe. We know it's big, we know it's vast, we know it's full of everything, planets and suns and other bodies of different kinds. That is the universe and we're part of that universe and our people knew that. They knew that and they respected that.

Our people lived for each other. They believe that everybody had the

same right as the other one. Everybody had the right to comfort, to security, the right to food, a home, the use of the land. This is because we believed that everything was put here by a great and wonderful intelligence.

Other people have different names, some of you call him God, and some, other names. We believed that power, that strength, that great intelligence was so far beyond us that we were comparable to the insects that crawl on the ground, or even the pebbles that lie on the beach. This was how far lesser we were than that great intelligence that was responsible for everything that was here and responsible for that vast universe out there.

Nobody knows where the end is, nobody knows where the beginning is. This is knowledge our people had.

They knew that, and this is why we lived such a beautiful way of life. This is why they respected each other, this is why they were so honest. They did not say anything to hurt the character of their neighbour. They believed whatever was here had a right to live even to the insects that walk on the ground. The trees, birds, animals, rivers, lakes, our people respected everything.

They would not waste. If they took something, they used every bit of it. If they killed a fish, they ate the whole thing: the head, the tail, the gills, the liver, the milt, the row. They ate it all, every bit of it. When they returned the bare bones to the water, they gave thanks to the Creator, for having provided for them.

They would not cut down a living tree unless they had to. When they had to cut a living tree down, they would go to the tree and address it by its sacred name. They would tell the tree how sorry they were to have to take its life, but their need was so great that they had to take it. When you cut a tree down you kill it, you take its life.

They used every bit, every scrap of an animal – the hide, the bones, the hoofs, every scrap of that animal was usable. If it was a deer or a moose, there was nothing left but the bare head. Then they would take it and burn the head. They would burn it so it would not lie around disrespectfully. Far different from seeing the head fastened to the wall so that the dead animals stares down at you!

I remember as a little boy I would want to play with a duck somebody would have brought home from hunting. I guess I thought it was pretty and I'd want to play with it. My mother would raise her voice to me and say, "Leave it alone, it's dead." She was telling me to show respect for that creature whose life we had taken for food.

Our people now have lost a lot of this. We had a good way of life, a beautiful way of life. I guess because it came from an understanding of the very basis of this life we live.

They respected everything that was here, they kept everything clean, they did not spoil anything. They did not over-exploit anything.

They saw to it that unfortunate people had their share as well. When a young hunter or a young fisherman returned from hunting or fishing, the old ladies would be already sitting on the beach waiting for his return. When he landed they walked down with their baskets and they picked out the choicest fish, the choicest ducks, or whatever he had and the young man sat in the stern of his canoe and was very pleased with his old people. He thanked them, and they blessed him. This was the kind of people we were. This is the way we lived.

We believe it was wrong to be greedy. Greed was unknown amongst our people, we have no word for it in our language. I believe our people walked hand in hand with the Creator. Some people call him the Creator, the Great Spirit. We believed that everything that was here was put here for our use. That's why our people respected everything and believed everything had a right to live, just like we did.

Our people were the richest people on earth. That's quite a statement to make. There's a lot of people in this world. I say, here lived the richest people on earth. Why do I say that?

The forests that were here had great huge trees, eight, ten, some twelve feet in diameter. I once stood beside a windfall on Mayne Island, part of our territory. This huge cedar was lying on the ground and actually I was looking up and it was at least twelve feet high. In some places you can still see the stumps today. This whole country that we live in was just covered with trees like that. The forests were like a beautiful park, because there was no underbrush. You could see a long ways in the forest. When you walked, it was on a great big mat of moss like a beautiful carpet. It was completely untouched but everything else was the same. There were great herds of deer, great herds of fur-bearing animals.

There were so many ducks that when the ducks rose up to fly they actually blocked out the sun, the day became dark, because they covered the sunlight. That was all our food.

Our people lived on whales, seals, porpoises, and all the different kinds of fish, clams, oysters, crab. This was all the food of our people. This is how much we had. We were well nourished from that great food supply that was put here by the Creator, the Great Spirit.

We lived in huge houses made from cedar planks attached to a pole houseframe. Those houses were sometimes fifty feet wide and a hundred feet long. Several families would live in this huge house.

The construction was very sensible. They didn't just throw up a bunch of boards, that they could shelter under. This is where our way of life started, right in those big houses with two, three, four fires burning at one time. You might think a house like that would be smokey, but they weren't. Way up in the peak of the house you might see blue

smoke. This is where our way of life began.

Can you imagine so many families living together? Children, grandchildren, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, relatives, cousins, all living together in harmony, happiness and respect. This where it all began, right in that Bighouse. Your Elders were your teachers. The Elders had lived a long life and so had much experience and much wisdom.

Those people were the teachers. From the time of understanding when a child began to think, the teaching had already started. Your mother, father, your uncles, your aunts, your older brothers, sisters, your grandparents, were all your teachers. They were the ones that explained to you the way of that life should be lived. Besides that, they would very often call in another Elder, from somewhere else, to come and talk to you and discipline you. The teaching started at a very early age.

The Past and The Future

There is more to this life than the sun coming up and going across the sky and the daily activities that take place during that time. People today don't seem to live with the realization that there is more to this life than what you see.

Indian people lived with this realization up until not too long ago. Our people realized this very basic truth. We completely understood and accepted it. This realization was the very basis of our life. This is where the goodness and the kindness came from. This is where the concern for each other and everybody else came from.

I'm not saying our people were the only ones like that. There were many people throughout the world who were like that. Our people knew it and lived that way. It was the realization and understanding of things beyond everyday life that made them what they were.

When you come right down to it, this is what is wrong with today's society. There is not this realization

Album of Vela French

Ed Underwood and Baptise Paul washing dishes at the French home on San Juan Island. In those days, all the washing up was done outdoors. Baptiste Paul was known as Chief Thunderbird, a professional boxer.

Album of Vela French

Martin Cooper, Oran French and Philip Pelkey (left to right) and Stella Cooper (front). These people were all cousins. Martin's mother,Cecelia Elliott, was the sister of Oran's mother, Mary French. Philip's mother was the cousin of sisters Cecelia, Mary and Mary-Ann (original surname was Dick).

and people have gone completely the other way.

What's the matter with everyone having a good life? Why do we continue to allow a poor way of life for so many people? Why do we have poverty? Why do some go without, while others have so much? What could be wrong with everyone having enough, being comfortable, secure and having dignity?

Now this is what has been destroyed. Our people believed that this was how it should be.

I think that given half a chance our people could influence the way of life here today for everybody. I think of how it is today and know that some people don't have a chance and don't have a hope of having a house or home. There is nobody who shouldn't have a home! Yet there are some people who have the power and the money to own ten thousand homes and people pay rents, high rents, to them! This is wrong. Why should people want to perpetuate a system that is like that?

What I'm saying is that our way of life was so completely different, we shared so completely with each other. We gave away our wealth. We shared it because we had abundance. We weren't greedy.

Now this way of thinking was so foreign to the people who came here and formed the government that they even passed a law forbidding us to give anything away. They didn't

understand it. We weren't making ourselves poor! We didn't take anything from anyone to make them poverty stricken! You gained great prestige and respect, you became honourable, you were SIEM. We shared our wealth and the non-Indians just couldn't understand that. What is wrong with everyone having enough?

I believe our people were willing to share their land. They often said, "The white people are poor, they must have no land, that's why they're here." Some said, "Why quarrel over the land, there's enough for everybody."

They found out that only a few got the land, only a few got the wealth.

I often think of what a wonderful and powerful nation we could all have if our Indian way could influence it. Nobody would go without and nobody would have so much wealth that they couldn't spend it in their lifetime.

It's all a part of Land Claims. People think we are just claiming land. What I am saying is that people have a right to a good life; not just Indian people, but all people. Our people have been terribly affected by this new way of life that has been forced on them. We were forced out of a good way of life, and we don't want this new way, we don't like it.

It's not just a matter of getting land back, but of getting a whole system back that we can all share. Had we been able to share in some of the wealth that was taken out of our land

Album of Vela French

Cecelia Elliott and March French (centre, seated). Martin Cooper, Vela French, Philip Pelkey and Esther Cooper (back, left to right). Dave Elliott and Stella Cooper (front). Martin and Dave were Cecelia's sons. Martin married Esther (Underwood); Stella was their first daughter. Philip's mother was Cecelia's cousin. Her other children were Elliott, Sandy, Marshall, Albert and Elsie. Elsie is Earl Claxton's mother.

Christine (Irvin) Hillaire, Vela French and Martha (Irvin) Bartleman in Sidney about 1921.

– and God knows the wealth was vast – I believe we could have evolved a new way of life with the non-Indians here. There was no need for us to get as poor as we are, except for the greed of a few people.

We are not the only ones. Many non-Indians live in poverty too. In a rich society like this, what happened to all that wealth? Where did it go?

I think our people have to realize that they've become lost somewhere. We have come through a great disaster and we are like people in shock. We were almost destroyed. We are living in the wreckage of what was once our way of life. We have to look at this and try to do something about it. Now we are very much like the people who we say brought this upon us. This is a state of shock . really – our memories have left us. Many of the young people don't know where they're coming from and where they are going. It's their future. We need to give them their past by telling them our history and we need to give them a future.

Album of Vela French

Richard Harry and Carney French cutting wood on San Juan Island in the 1920s.

Dave Elliott Sr.

Gene Black at Steveston with a boat load of sockeye salmon from the Adam's River run, after 1920. He was the father of Jimmy Black.