

Traditional Knowledge (Haida Gwaii) 7:45 min

Trevor Russ, Vice President, Council of the Haida Nation

This is the area where the first harvest happens for some of the people at home.

So, we got a couple hours before low water so the area here should dry off a little bit more and we'll be able to get down inside the tideline to look for some seafood there.

Might get lucky.

All of the kids that grew up in the coastal communities hear from their parents and grandparents, that is "when the tide is out, the table is set," meaning that once the tide recedes and the shoreline is exposed there's opportunity to get out and harvest clams, chitons, mussels, our seaweeds, abalone, if you're lucky enough, sea scallops. There's so many different little creatures out there that you can harvest and have good meal from.

My oldest great uncle he owned a little mosquito vessel, so as young as I can remember to be old enough to hold a knife, so whenever he went out anywhere, he took me along with him and showed me the areas, and where I needed to go to harvest, and what times. And that's where it started.

Some chitons, in Haida language we call it T'aa You use the juices to season your seaweed and as well what I like to do with them is, I clean them when I get home and then I'll pickle them and we eat them as a snack. Some people use them in different dishes as well.

The harvesting is what I base my timing around a lot of the year. A lot of it works around the seasons of the year. The moon. The different moons. The different tides. That all effects on what we're harvesting, and the time of year we're harvesting it.

The newer moons, and the full moons are the bigger tides. So those are the times to get out onto the beaches and try to harvest what you can.

I just found this purple urchin in this tide pool here. I caught him eating the same thing I've just been harvesting this morning, some chitons.

Based on the upbringing that we all have, that everything is interconnected to each other, and we have to understand the balance. We all learn that growing up. If you happen to go to an area, and you see it's been harvested quite frequently, try to move to a different area. Or otherwise, you know, we're gonna deplete the stock that's in the area. Then it all depends on what you're harvesting, right. For me it makes a lot easier to get a little further away from town. The stuff's that closer to town, is more accessible, so a lot more people get out to harvest that stuff.

Traditional knowledge is knowledge that's been passed on through the generations, so from our ancestors on down to our grandparents, to our own parents, our aunts and uncles, and now, my generation, we're passing on to our children, and on to our nieces and nephews. That's what I consider to be our traditional knowledge.

I truly take pride in is preserving our foods, and sharing it with my friends, and neighbors, and other family members, and I try to pass it on to my kids to let them know as young people that's kind of the role is to get out and to harvest, and share it with the Elders. And make sure that people in your family have an opportunity to have a taste of what we have around us.

Typically in the prime harvest time you get nice long strands of it. Here you see some of it is quite long actually but it's just starting so. This stuff is the first batch of the season, and it's the closest to town so the majority of the members of the community won't venture very far , most guys are just running little skiffs. This is the area they come harvesting in the next couple of weeks.

The marine plans have identified specific areas that are of frequent harvesting areas for ourselves that are set aside with certain protections that only allow uses for Haidas to get in there and harvest specific species. So that's gonna be key for our future generations to have the opportunity to get out and harvest what's there, set aside for us.

Right in behind the village there is where the kids are going tomorrow to harvest.

„Where did you guys go with the boat yesterday?“

„We went just over to just past Yan, to the point just before the sandy beach there. We just went to grab some mussels and chitons and check on the seaweed.“

„How is the seaweed?“

„Most is about that long. I managed to get a bundle that big of some nice long stuff. Probably next weekend it should be ready over there.“

Traditional knowledge was a huge component to the Haida Gwaii marine plan process. When we first engaged in back in the mid-2000s, community consultation happened through door-to-door visits, individuals were identified that were frequent harvesters of all species, and we did a lot of one-on-one interviews with a lot of the older Haidas, middle-aged Haidas, and young Haidas that were experienced in harvesting. That identified the key areas for ourselves to set aside for our own uses. So that played a big role, and then once the community consultation process ended, we developed a work group that provided input into the technical planning piece to help us develop a solid plan.

Collaborative Science 8:20 min

PERCY STARR Hereditary Chief, Kitsoo/Xais'Xais Nation

We struggle now with aquatic resources, we really struggle....

ART STERRITT Executive Director, Coastal First Nations

30 years ago we had about 100% employment – very wealthy people - had all of the food they needed, all of the economy they needed, all of the jobs they needed. They had lots of boats. They fished all species. But over a period of about 30 years that all started to get mismanaged by government to the point where the salmon industry is down, the different cod fisheries are down. First Nations through legislation began to get marginalized and pushed out of different fisheries so that right now in our communities we'd be hard-pressed to have even one community that had less than 80 or 85% unemployment.

CHARLIE MASON Hereditary Chief, Kitsoo/Xais'Xais Nation

Sort of goes back to the things that we now stand up to fight for. Say like sea cucumber that was the last one, last year. And this year it's herring. These are resources. These are our resources. These are very important to us. They're very important to us," I said, "because once they clean it out there'll be nothing left for us." They're basically just taking your food away, with a care in the world.-They say oh yeah it will come back and it does come back but it is 10,15 years before it comes to a level it becomes satisfactory for us to even harvest it.

We've been hurt a lot by the decisions of the government.

DOUGLAS NEASLOSS Kitsoo Band Council & Kitsoo/Xai'Xais Integrated Resource Authority Stewardship Director

By developing these marine spatial zones, like we have on the land side that will help us protect multiple species and make sure that those species continue to be there, and not just for First Nations, but for everyone.

We wanted to make sure that there was a place for commercial fishermen, recreational fishermen, for food fishermen.

All of us have stewardship responsibilities. It doesn't matter whether you're First nations or non-First nation. So it's really important that we set a good balance.

Narrator

The marine plans initiate that balance by protecting marine ecosystems and supporting economic opportunities that can restore nature and communities. They are a starting point for a different kind of economic prosperity, one that can endure generation after generation.

DOUGLAS NEASLOSS Kitsoo Band Council & Kitsoo/Xai'Xais Integrated Resource Authority Stewardship Director

So it was important that we start doing our own science, and we start partnering up, whether that's with the province, whether that's with the different academic institutions to start gathering the proper data so we can make proper decisions.

Just this year alone we're doing salmon work, we're doing rockfish, we're doing Dungeness crab, we're doing bears, we're doing birds. And we're investing hundreds of thousands of dollars in some of this work, and it's not cheap but it's gonna help us make sustainable decisions, and I think that's really what's important to the community.

Narrator

With the understanding that we depend on a healthy ocean to sustain us now and into the future, the Heiltsuk nation is working with researchers from Simon Fraser University to determine if a commercial harvest of kelp can be done sustainably.

KIRA KRUMHANSL Postdoctoral Researcher & Hakai Scholar, Simon Fraser University

So the kelps are an important form of structure in the ocean, so they provide habitat for a lot of different species, like commercially important fish species, other invertebrates, like sea urchins, abalone, cucumbers, those kinds of things. And so essentially if you remove that habitat structure of the kelp, there's concern that there's impact on these other species that inhabit the kelp, and feed on the kelp.

So we're looking to determine how much can be, of the kelp, can be taken from these ecosystems without impacting negatively the other fishery species in the ecosystem and also the carbon storage and flux value of these ecosystems.

Dr. ANNE SALOMON Marine Ecologist, Simon Fraser University

MaPP Marine Advisory Committee

First Nations had been investing a lot of time, intellectual capacity, knowledge, both traditional knowledge and scientific data, to make marine use plans that the communities were comfortable with and were really community driven.

There was a collection of scientific data that included bathymetry data, current data and also biological data like the occurrence or presence of sea ducks, herring, kelp forest, all kind of mapped spatially – and that was made available to anyone who wanted it to identify areas that were ecologically important, important to commercial fisheries, important to the tourism and recreation sector, and areas that were culturally important.

DOUGLAS NEASLOSS Kitasoo Band Council & Kitasoo/Xai'Xais Integrated Resource Authority Stewardship Director

We're looking at science in a new way. We were able to take traditional ecological knowledge and local knowledge and merge that with the best available western science and I think as stewards I think we have to look at the best way of gathering all information before decisions are made so.

CHRISTINA SERVICE PhD Student, University of Victoria & Spirit Bear Research Foundation

We're working on a bear monitoring project in the Kitasoo First nation territory, in partnership with Raincoast Conservation and Spirit Bear Research Foundation. We're basically looking to monitor these animals non-invasively, so we use non-invasive methods, such as barbed-wire, hair corrals and remote cameras to get hair samples from these individuals and be able to see which unique bears are around, how they're moving across the territory and also how much salmon these bears have been eating this past year.

ROSIE CHILD *Field Technician, University of Victoria & Spirit Bear Research Foundation*

So to find out how much salmon they're eating, we grab their hair from these barbed-wire corrals. And they're especially valuable in the spring because they've just woken up and they're shedding their hair from the previous fall, where they eat a lot of salmon. And then we use something called stable isotope analysis, which enables us to see what proportion of their diet is salmon or marine mammals or plant-based.

CHRISTINA SERVICE *PhD Student, University of Victoria & Spirit Bear Research Foundation*

So in KITASOO territory we've been monitoring bears this way since 2012, but this project's a piece of a larger monitoring project at the landscape scale, which includes partners from Bella Bella, the Heiltsuk Nation, the Nuxalk Nation out of Bella Coola, and also the Wuikinuxv Nation out of Rivers Inlet.

Narrator

This collaborative science paired with traditional and local knowledge is central to the marine plans and will inform decisions on sustainable economic development and stewardship of British Columbia's coastal marine environment.

Bear Research 5:00 min

DOUGLAS NEASLOSS Kitasoo Band Council & Kitasoo/Xai'Xais Integrated Resource

Authority Stewardship Director

The Province came up with these Grizzly Bear Habitat maps, and I looked at their maps, and none of these maps had areas where there was Grizzly Bear habitat on the islands. So, we said, "Well, um, we know there's bears on those islands. I've been watching those bears for, ah, the last 5-6 years." So I phoned the Province and I told them there's Grizzly Bears there, and they said I'm not a scientist, I'm a biologist, and that I had no credibility in the scientific community.

That one walks this way, so that's a totally different bear. It's just the cub.

That's the mother right there, sniffing the camera. So, I knew that I had to develop a relationship with economic institutions, and try and find the resources to get out there and fund some projects, so that we can get out there and ground truth it.

My name's Christina Service. I'm a graduate student at the University of Victoria, the Rain Coast Hakai Lab.

I am Margaret, and I'm a field technician with the Spirit Bear Research Foundation as well as a research assistant with the Hakai Rain Coast Lab at the University of Victoria.

Christina Service, Graduate student at the University of Victoria

So when we first come out here in the spring, early May. We set up these barbed wire corrals, so we basically build a barbed wire fence, and then build a pile with sticks and moss and lots of woody debris. Meant to mimic a kill, then we use a non-reward bait, and create a really nasty, nasty smell on that pile to attract those bears in. And it's non-reward in the sense there's no calories involved, so the bears aren't getting habituated, but it does draw them in.

WILLIAM HOUSTY Chair, Heiltsuk Integrated Resource Management Department

Either they go underneath the wire, or they go over top of the wire and leave hair from their legs or their belly, and we can go and collect that hair, and in that hair possesses the genetic code that's unique to every individual bear.

Christina Service, Graduate student at the University of Victoria

We can run different hormone techniques to see what sort of nutritional stress these bears are under. For males, how much testosterone they had in last year of hair growth. And for females, whether or not they're pregnant, sort of the same hormones that are in us in humans as mammals. We can also look to see how much salmon they ate the previous year. And what proportion of their diet that was, and also, just, we know that this is an individual bear now, and if we detect an individual here in Watson Bay, we can also see if it's moving around the territory and how it's moving across seasons and across years.

Jennifer Walkus, Wuikinuxv Nation

What we wanted to do, is we wanted to make sure that we're collecting our data in the same way, because if we're collecting our data in the same way, then we can look for patterns between territories. So that everybody has access to a lot more information than we would if we only did our own project.

Megan Moody, Stewardship Director, Nuxalk Nation

Science is basically adding to those arguments that we already have as aboriginal people.

WILLIAM HOUSTY Chair, Heiltsuk Integrated Resource Management Department

We've all had an understanding of bears and had a feel for what it's like to live with them. But to have that whole science side of it, the whole genetics piece to it really adds a lot of weight to it, and gives us a lot of, what some people might call "sound science."

Jennifer Walkus, Wuikinuxv Nation

They base their "how many bears they're allowed to kill in a year" on what they believe are the current population dynamics. But if they've changed sufficiently to change the bear's behavior, then there's something out of balance out there. And considering how dependent they are on the fish and the fish stocks are falling all over the place, then I can't see how those population estimates can be correct.

Megan Moody, Stewardship Director, Nuxalk Nation The scary part for me about the hunting and killing of bears is that we really don't know how many are there. I mean, generally, we know deforestation, climate change, declining salmon runs are all impacting the bear. I would rather protect them and have them here for thousands of years to come, rather than pretend we know, what, what is going on and allow the needless killing of them.

First Nations History Overview 14:00 min

Doug Neasloss, Chief Councillor, Kitasoo/Xai'Xais Nation

I think there's been a bit of a rough past when it comes to First Nations, I mean, I think just not long ago, whether it's 150 years to 200 years there was nobody else here, it was just First Nations communities, you know, in my area here we have two different Nations from Klemtu. We have the Kitasoo, who are Tsimshian and they're the southernmost Tsimshian group and lived on the islands and then we have the Xai'Xais people who lived on the mainland and both Nations moved to Klemtu in the 1850's, but prior to that, you know, people lived, you know, quite nomadic lifestyles, and they followed the food resources in all of these different areas. At the time you know in our cultures were very complex. It wasn't just, you know, as simple as following food. It was people had a very complex governance structures, they had very complex relationships with different families. We had clan systems that distinguished different family groups and who had access to different areas based on different seasons. So it was a really complex relationship.

Around 1884 the government at the time decided to ban the Potlatch, which was the Potlatch in our community, our culture was the glue that held everything together. The singing, the dancing, the storytelling, the governance, becoming-of-age ceremonies, passing of sheaf themes, passing of copper shields. All those things were really important in our culture and in our community. And people used to prepare years in advance for Potlatch. So if I was going to host a Potlatch, some people would prepare 4 or 5 years in advance. But the Canadian government wanted to assimilate First Nations people into the mainstream society so at the time they banned the Potlatch in 1884 to 1951. And the same thing happened in other regions. In the U.S. it happened in 1884 to 1936. But 1884-1951 during the banning of the Potlatch, it was illegal to Potlatch. And if you were caught potlatching, you were arrested for doing that.

So at the time the government sent what they called the "Indian Agent," and it was a person up here to monitor the activities of the local communities. And so everyone was paranoid about potlatching. People didn't want to potlatch. But it was such an integral part of our culture and our community, people decided to take it underground in a way and potlatch in secret. So what people used to do is used to take the regalia and put it in the cedar bentwood boxes to make it look like it was a burial box, but it was actually their storage area for all of their regalia. And they used to paddle out to this one place we call it Dis'ju and it's a gathering place for people. And this Big House is hidden in the forest, you can't tell it's there going by in the boat, and people used to paddle out there in the roughest times of the year to go and Potlatch, so the Indian Agent wouldn't follow them out there.

Unfortunately around the early 1900s, there were so many families that did not make it back. A lot of families died trying to go out and potlatch in secret. So by the early 1900s Klemtu stopped potlatching altogether. And that was a huge loss for the culture. Again, because that was the glue that held everything together. And that was just, you know, one of the reasons why we during that time we lost a lot.

I've sat down and had a lot of discussion with our Elders about life, and even, you know, we live in a pretty isolated area, so we didn't have actually a lot of contact until quite late. The first contact we had was actually Captain Vancouver. I believe that was in 1793, when he came up and it was, you know,

what people, the Elders always talk about how nomadic the lifestyles were. They talked about the seasonal camps, and the permanent camps. They said the food harvest would start in the wintertime. It would start with the clams and cockles in the winter. And then early spring, around March, the halibut would start to come in and they would start harvesting halibut. And then once the halibut was finished, they would start to move over to the herring and the herring eggs. And that was huge. That was probably one of the most important foods in our community, because it wasn't just used for food consumption, but it was also used for trade. And there were huge trade routes along the coast amongst different families up and down the coast. So Klemtu used to harvest the herring eggs and trade it with the Bella Coola people and also the Kitimat people, and they used to trade for eulachon grease, and that was huge because we didn't have eulachons in Klemtu area, and then once that was finished, we'd move over to seaweed in May, and right after seaweed was finished then you would go on to salmon, in particular sockeye salmon, and then later on in the summer, late summer, you would start to get all the salmon, so the coho, pink, and chum would start to come in.

So people were very dependent on all of these resources, and especially because it was such an isolated community, those aquatic resources are extremely important because food costs here in the community are so expensive. People, you know, depended on those, and we had different camps based on different things. Like Marvin Island is a herring camp. People just went there to go and harvest herring eggs. And while they were there, they would dry the herring eggs, they would dry the halibut, because a long time ago there were no refrigerators or freezers, so they would dry everything. Everything was sun dried. Or they would smoke it. And that's how they'd preserve things.

We've watched a lot of those resources dwindle over the last number of years. Partly because of mismanagement, and people coming in and harvesting too much. And, you know, in my lifetime, we've witnessed huge declines. Everything from abalone. Abalone used to be a once abundant shellfish in our territories. And the Elders talk about it ... that is was some areas they said you couldn't even touch the ground there was so many abalone. They were all over the place. Today, you probably will never see an abalone. In my lifetime I've never actually tried an abalone in the last probably 20-something years now because they've all just been wiped out. You know, the commercial fishery came in and harvested way too many and they just haven't been able to come back in numbers. With things like abalone you need large numbers because they're broadcast spawners and so the population just hasn't been able to come back and do that.

Same thing with salmon. I listen to the historical numbers of salmon. Some the Elders will say some of the rivers and the estuaries would be full of salmon. They said some rivers were just plugged wall to wall with salmon. And I looked at the historical numbers of them, and there were about 80,000 fish in some of those systems. Today, we are down to about 5 or 6 thousand in some of those same rivers.

So, you know, I think there's been way too much over harvesting. I think with things like global warming, there's a number of different impacts that are effecting salmon. So, I think we have a long way to go.

I think the loss of culture during the ban of the Potlatch. I mean that was huge. I mean we had, you know, very strict ceremonies for different seasons. The return of salmon. The return of eulachons. The return of herring. The return of all these separate things were celebrated in a way, but also it was a ceremony to let the community know what time of the year it was, and food harvesting, I think there

was traditional stories that were lost during that time and traditional stories that taught lessons of respect for certain resources and you know I think the governance structure, I think there was a lot that was lost, you know, songs and dances, and songs in our culture was a way of documenting an event, you know, that was going on so it wasn't just a simple song it had some meaning to it, and it came from a certain area, and it belonged to a certain family.

The passing of Chieftanship. You know we have a very complex hereditary chief system in our community. So hereditary chiefs, you weren't just born a hereditary chief, you were groomed to be a chief, and you know the rule of the hereditary chief is you're there to steward, you had a responsibility to take care of a certain area, and so if you were a chief you would carry title to a certain inlet, or a certain estuary, and it was your responsibility to make sure that what was going on there was sustainable and "schief" in our language means "to serve." It means that you're there to maintain order of a house. So we had chiefs that had ... they're responsible for a Raven House. And that house, they had to make sure people were keeping the songs alive, keeping the stories alive. You know, harvesting the different berries, or harvesting deer, and salmon, and things that hunters and gatherers.

But they would also grant permissions to certain people to access certain areas, and that was all based on sustainability. So you had to make sure that the stocks were there, and if they weren't there, they would deny access to certain areas.

And we also had very complex arranged marriages as well, so if you wanted to access an area, today people just go on there and fish in an area. A long time ago it wasn't like that. You had to get very strict permission or it was often done through arranged marriage. So, if I was a chief and I wanted to access someone else's area, you'd do an arranged marriage, and I would have access to their salmon, they would have access to my berries. And it was So it wasn't just anybody that could do in. And that could get you in big trouble, I think, a long time ago if you just waltzed in there today and go and access certain areas. So I think that system, the hereditary system they used, a lot of that was lost during that time. Luckily we do have some Elders that still have some of that knowledge.

I think at the time there was this huge movement to assimilate First Nations people into the mainstream society, so by banning the Potlatch was a huge step in terms of trying to assimilate and get First Nations people to forget their culture, but prior to the banning of the Potlatch came disease. So disease ran rampant in all of our communities and we estimated we had a population of about 3500 to 4000 people out in Kitasoo Bay alone and disease swept through there around the 1860s and there was a smallpox epidemic that killed off quite a bit of the communities. In some cases it was like 99% of the communities. So we have some stories where one or two people survived the smallpox epidemic. Also around 1913, there was also the flu epidemic as well, and that decimated, again, quite large populations. I heard stories from our Elders where so many people died that they didn't really have time to give them a proper burial. It was just dig a big hole, put them in the ground, and hopefully you don't get sick. So I think those introduction of diseases played a huge role and a lot was lost.

So not only to have to deal with smallpox and the flu epidemic, and the banning of the Potlatch. Communities were still around in the early 1900s so the government started to introduce Reserve systems. They started to take First Nations nomadic people and started to push them all to these small parcels of Reserve and basically said "You're not going to live in these areas any more." And they sort of pushed these people into small little blocks. So, my community was settled here in Klemtu and this is

about 100 acres here in the community. It's not very big, but our community, our territory is massive because we followed all the foods and that's what our territory is based on today.

You know, unfortunately, now if you look at our system now, we only have about, we have less than 1% of our land base, if you were to go by their reserve system today. Although my people have always said they never signed a treaty. They've never surrendered rights and titles, so they've always said "this is theirs" and it's based on the chieftainship that's there.

Another major event was residential schools. In the 1930s the government created these residential schools and basically, you know, we have some of the literature from the churches that said the banning of the Potlatch wasn't working – people were still speaking the language, people were still practicing their culture, whether that was doing it in secret. So they needed some ways to really try and get people to forget their culture, forget their language, and become, to be assimilated into mainstream society, so the idea of residential schools was created.

There were boats that came into the community in the early 1930s and basically scooped up all the kids in the community and people had no choice, and they had to go and they were taken on the boats and they were taken out to schools, and they were spread out all over. A lot of people from Klemtu went down to Vancouver Island. And around Alert Bay area. Some people went down to Port Alberni. Some people from Klemtu went as far over as Edmonton in the 1930s. Some people went to Vancouver, to the mission school that was there. And the idea was to separate young people from their parents so that oral tradition wasn't passed on. And people, if you listen to the Elders who have gone through these residential schools, they were strapped for speaking their language. They had to cut their hair a certain way. The food quality wasn't good and there was a lot of other things that went on in the background that were not the best things to happen to young kids. And that really changed a whole generation of kids, because now you take a bunch of kids, you put them in these residential schools so that that love you get from your parents was not passed on throughout families and that had a trickle down generation, we still feel the effects today of that generation because some parents grew up without the parenting skills that you would learn from your parents.

Some people grew up with no love and that really effected households and families, communities and so I think it's my generation's kind of the first generation that are fortunate and hasn't had to deal with all of that stuff now, and I think things are a bit different today than they were back then. So I think you're going to start to see a bit of a resurgence of stewardship and I think you're going to get this new generation that's going to come up and start to reassert their stewardship responsibilities, reassert their authority as hereditary chiefs, as owners, or stewards of the land. And I think that's something that we want to be able to work with provincial and federal governments. And we want to stop the mismanagement of these resources and we want to work together and somehow come out with some sort of strategy to best take care of these areas.