

**THE RESILIENCE OF THE BABINE:  
THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RELATIONS OF THE BABINE TO 1830**

by

**Blake Emile Bouchard**

B.A., UNBC, 2008

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS  
IN  
HISTORY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 2012

© Blake Bouchard, 2012



Library and Archives  
Canada

Published Heritage  
Branch

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

Bibliothèque et  
Archives Canada

Direction du  
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file Votre référence*

*ISBN: 978-0-494-87591-9*

*Our file Notre référence*

*ISBN: 978-0-494-87591-9*

#### NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

#### AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

---

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Canada

## **ABSTRACT**

“The Resilience of the Babine” argues that the arrival of the fur trade did not alter fundamentally the economic and social networks of the Babine before 1830. These conclusions are drawn through examining the relevant Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) archival materials which serve as the foundation for this research. Literature from anthropology, the cultural material found in the Delgamuukw court case, linguistics, and environmental science corroborate and provide context for the evidence found in the HBC journals. The conclusions reached run counter to the general scholarly trends regarding the impact of the fur trade on aboriginal networks and suggest the need for a significant re-evaluation of not only the history around Babine Lake, but of all interior regions where the indigenous inhabitants had access to coastal markets through trade networks.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to extend thanks to the many people who made this thesis possible. First I would like to thank Dr. Ted Binnema for his constant support and advice in supervising this work. I would also like to thank John Masich for his assistance in creating the attached regional map. The ongoing support of my family and friends throughout this process was invaluable. Finally, I would like to extend special thanks to Tamara for her patience and support, which made this possible. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, UNBC, the Baldwin family and the Lake Babine Nation Treaty Office funded this project. Thank you all for your support.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables .....	v
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: A Longstanding Cultural Connection .....	22
Chapter 2: A Resilient Economy .....	48
Chapter 3: The Lament of a Chief Trader.....	71
Conclusion .....	86
Appendix A: Regional Map.....	88
Appendix B: The Sockeye Salmon Fisheries of the Fraser and Skeena Rivers.....	89
Bibliography .....	96

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table One: Affiliation Among Babine, Wet'suwet'en, and Gitksan Clans.....26

## **Introduction**

It is remarkable how little scholars know about the history of trade and diplomacy amongst aboriginal people in the northern interior of British Columbia during the early fur trade era, despite the fact that the fur trade's arrival is generally viewed as having significantly influenced aboriginal economic, social, and cultural systems. Scholars have examined this aspect of the aboriginal history of the northwest coast of North America and of regions east of the Rocky Mountains, but that only makes the gap in the literature with regards to the interior of northern British Columbia all the more remarkable. Babine Lake is an area where the maritime and overland fur traders arrived from two directions, and were in direct competition for the fur resources of the local aboriginal populations, making it likely that the aboriginal villages at Babine Lake had a very different experience of contact than aboriginal people further east. "The Resilience of the Babine" explores how the arrival of European commerce and the establishment of trading posts affected the relations between aboriginal groups in the interior before 1830.

While much of the scholarship on the fur trade examines the bilateral relations between aboriginal groups and the European fur traders, this study will also reconstruct and examine the multilateral relations amongst aboriginal communities. It centres on the relations of the aboriginal communities around Babine Lake, how these groups related to the surrounding populations, including the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan to the west, the Carrier to the east, and the newly arrived European traders. Thus, its central purpose is to explain what the documentary record reveals about the political and economic relations amongst the aboriginal communities, and between those communities and the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), around Babine Lake prior to 1830.

Events and relationships outside of the study area are discussed to the extent that they affected the HBC and aboriginal groups around Babine Lake, but this project is largely restricted to the temporal, thematic, and geographic boundaries noted above. The decades under study were years of profound change and development in the fur trade west of the Rocky Mountains. The arrival of the maritime fur traders operating near the mouth of the Skeena River and the overland fur traders, working for the North West Company (NWC) and the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), roughly coincided in bringing European influence to the Babine from both the west and east. Still, the available documentary evidence suggests that neither the maritime nor the overland fur trade caused significant, immediate changes in the relations of the Babine groups with their neighbours before 1830. Notwithstanding the arrival of European traders at Lake Babine, it appears that the Babine continued to value their established relations with surrounding groups and pre-existing trade connections, predominantly to the west, more highly than their developing relations with the HBC.

Scholarship specifically examining Babine Lake is limited. Most broad surveys of British Columbia history ignore Babine Lake and the interior in general, until the arrival of the overland fur trade at the earliest, and more often until the Fraser River gold rush. The tendency of early historians and anthropologists to lump the Babine with their Carrier neighbours to the east further complicates our understanding of the history, making it unclear what effects the arrival of the fur trade had on the Babine specifically. Only two works deal exclusively with the Babine: *Cis dideen Kat (When the Plumes Rise)* by Jo-Anne Fiske and Betty Patrick and Anna Aguayo's conference paper "Breaking the Competition."<sup>1</sup> Fiske and Patrick's book examines Babine law

---

<sup>1</sup> Jo-Anne Fiske and Betty Patrick, *Cis dideen Kat (When the Plumes Rise): The Way of the Lake Babine Nation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000); De Aguayo's conference paper was subsequently published in the non-refereed conference proceedings. See Anna de Aguayo, "Breaking the Competition: Early Nineteenth-Century Fur Trade and



contained within the *balhats* (traditional feasts) as it pertains to contemporary situations. Their stated intent was to seek “evidence that customary legal principles were continuous throughout the period of colonization and that colonial observers recognized the integrity of the Babine legal order.”<sup>2</sup> While this work contains interesting explanations of a specific element of the feasting system among the Babine, it does so in a focused context that does not engage with larger issues of politics, trade, or social exchange with neighbouring groups. Although Fiske and Patrick made some use of the HBC records, they drew on what the records reveal about lawmaking and Babine culture. Their discussion of the economic realities is limited to a single paragraph in which they note that the hereditary chiefs refused to surrender control of the trade to HBC trader William Brown.<sup>3</sup> In short, *Cis dideen Kat* addresses only a small part of the larger history of the Babine reactions to the arrival of early European influences, leaving other aspects of this arrival completely unexamined.

A. G. Morice’s work, published in 1903, remains the only major history touching on political, social, and economic developments in the region during this period. Morice was an Oblate missionary who arrived in the central interior of British Columbia in 1885. His own experiences, conversations with aboriginal people and fur traders, and consultation of now-lost fur trade documents at Fort St. James served as the basis of *The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia*.<sup>4</sup> Although Morice discussed interactions amongst various aboriginal groups in the region, and examined the relationship between aboriginal people and the HBC, his work centres on the accomplishments of European explorers such as Mackenzie and Fraser.<sup>5</sup> The

---

Fort Kilmaurs,” in *Papers of the 1994 Rupert’s Land Colloquium*, (Winnipeg: Rupert’s Land Research Centre, 1994). Both of these works are discussed later in the introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Fiske and Patrick, *Cis dideen Kat*, 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>4</sup> A. G. Morice, *The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia: Formerly New Caledonia, 1660-1880*. (Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1971).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 33, 53.

early parts of his book discuss the traditions and history of the Carrier in particular while portraying these groups and their relations to each other as static and simple.

Because the purpose of *The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia* is to trace the process by which Europeans came to settle the region and Christianize and civilize the indigenous inhabitants, the aboriginal people are depicted as passive victims of fur traders rather than as active defenders of their own interests.<sup>6</sup> Aboriginal people are portrayed as “savage” in both their dealings with one another, and with the fur traders. According to Morice, aboriginal people were slowly adopting civilization thanks to the efforts of the missionaries who fought an ongoing battle against the primitive tendencies of the local indigenous populations, of which the Babine were one of the more resistant groups.<sup>7</sup> Though Morice’s work contains some useful detail, he knew little about events prior to and during the 1820s around Babine Lake. He used early fur trade records, including Daniel William Harmon’s published journal, to trace the initial contact between the Babine and the NWC and HBC fur traders, but there is little discussion of the repercussions on aboriginal economies, the assumption apparently being that aboriginal systems would inevitably give way to a European system. Morice’s emphasis on the Carrier to the east of the Babine also ensures that his work sheds little light on the effects of the maritime and overland fur trades on the Babine.

Wilson Duff, Robin Fisher, and Richard Mackie all discuss the fur trade era west of the Rocky Mountains, though not with the specificity of Morice. Duff’s anthropological study *The Indian History of British Columbia* is a survey work that discusses linguistic categorization as a

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., iii.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 331.

method of distinguishing among larger aboriginal groups.<sup>8</sup> At the same time however, Duff noted that village and kinship groups were much more important historically than were linguistic families.<sup>9</sup> His argument that close ties with coastal groups were influential in Carrier social organization and deeply embedded by the early fur trade era is important.<sup>10</sup> The implication that economic and political ties between Babine Lake and the coast were deeply rooted by the early fur trade era demands further examination. Fisher's *Contact and Conflict* is another survey relying on broad generalizations.<sup>11</sup> Despite Fisher's subtitle, his discussion of the fur trade centers almost exclusively on the coast. He touches on the interior only when events there affected coastal commerce. However, Fisher's argument that the coastal trade precluded an HBC monopoly in the interior, and that the fur trade created power shifts among aboriginal groups bears directly on this project.<sup>12</sup>

Richard Mackie's *Trading Beyond the Mountains* explores the economic success of the NWC and HBC in the Columbia leading up to the Oregon Boundary Treaty in 1846. Mackie argued that the policies of the European traders, which conformed to global economics and politics, allowed them to profit. Because it examines Europeans and their eventual dominance of the Columbia region, aboriginal people and the New Caledonia District are peripheral to this study. However, like Duff and Fisher, Mackie identified "extensive Native trade networks and ready maritime access" and noted the HBC's difficulties with interior furs moving through aboriginal trade networks to American traders on the coast during the early history of New

---

<sup>8</sup> Wilson Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia: The Impact of the White Man*. Anthropology in British Columbia, Ministry of the Provincial Secretary and Travel Industry (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1964), 16.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 17, 58.

<sup>11</sup> Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian- European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890*. 2nd ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), xi.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 32, 47.

Caledonia.<sup>13</sup> Combined with Duff's assertion that the Carrier were especially affected by coastal associations, Fisher's and Mackie's arguments suggest that the establishment of an HBC post at Babine Lake created a novel situation with a competitive coastal commerce and a dynamic political atmosphere. However, they fail to explore the possibilities any further.

Perhaps the richest area of scholarship on the region around Babine Lake centres on the absorption of the Tsimshianic clan, house, and feast system by the Athapaskan Wet'suwet'en, Babine, and Carrier. This scholarship is also the most problematic, partly because most of it was published before land claims litigation in the 1980s stimulated new research. While Morice wrote about his observations of Carrier cultural and social practices, which he observed during his tenure in the late nineteenth century, his writings were largely descriptive of these systems, rather than analytical regarding their longevity or origin. As a result, Diamond Jenness' 1943 publication, *The Carrier Indians of the Bulkley River Their Social and Religious Life*, served as a baseline of a scholarly discussion regarding the origins and longevity of the clan and feast system among the various aboriginal groups throughout the region.<sup>14</sup> While the body of literature that developed from Jenness' work has been largely debunked with regards to the Wet'suwet'en, its applicability to the Babine has yet to be refuted.

An anthropologist rather than a historian, Jenness relied on fieldwork conducted among the Wet'suwet'en in the 1920s, with few references to then published accounts and none to HBC records. His work strongly influenced the literature dealing with the social and cultural landscape and development in the region. Jenness detailed the clan and feast system that served as the political and social fabric of the region at the time. While his work centred on the Wet'suwet'en

---

<sup>13</sup> Richard Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996), xxii, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Diamond Jenness, *The Carrier Indians of the Bulkley River: Their Social and Religious Life*, Anthropological Papers, No. 25 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943).

of the Bulkley Valley, Jenness nevertheless noted that there were significant similarities between the Wet'suwet'en and the Babine, a correlation confirmed by later research and interviews. Jenness carefully catalogued the various clans, houses, use of crests, relations with surrounding groups, the role of chiefs, and the function of the feasts.<sup>15</sup> Most important to the later literature were his assertions that the culture and social structure found among the Wet'suwet'en was largely absorbed or borrowed from the coastal groups as is reflected in the use of Tsimshianic origin chief names, intermarriage between the two groups, and mutual attendance of feasts.<sup>16</sup> Although he argued that it seemed impossible to reconstruct the history of the Wet'suwet'en prior to 1800, Jenness also postulated that, based on the common feature of five clans, the Kitimat may have had a greater influence on Wet'suwet'en culture several centuries before the "Gitksan lodged between them like a wedge."<sup>17</sup> Ultimately, after noting that the Wet'suwet'en absorbed large portions of coastal structures within their own system without "slavishly" copying their neighbours, Jenness concluded that this social system "far from being a recent growth among the Bulkley Indians, has a history extending back over several generations."<sup>18</sup> Importantly, he did not correlate any cultural or social shifts from the coast inland with the arrival of the European fur trade, although he did not draw any conclusions earlier than 1800.

The fact that Jenness did not suggest that the maritime fur trade was the catalyst for the interior groups to align their social and cultural practices with those of the coast makes his work unique within the literature of the time. Jenness's argument that the clan and house system was the result of contact with and absorption of coastal cultures remains a common theme until the present; however, other scholars in the 1940s began to postulate the timing and reasons for this

---

<sup>15</sup> Jenness referred to the clans as phratries and the houses as clans.

<sup>16</sup> Jenness, *Carrier Indians*, 475, 478, 517.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 475, 480.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 495.

adoption, often basing their arguments at least partially on Jenness' work. Irving Goldman and Julian Steward wrote several pieces in the 1940s dealing with the cultural exchange between the coast and the Athapaskan groups in the interior.<sup>19</sup> Although Goldman's work deals with Carrier groups to the south of the Wet'suwet'en, and Steward's fieldwork was largely conducted to the east of the Babine and Wet'suwet'en, both mention the Wet'suwet'en and both theories about cultural absorption reflect the trend that scholarship surrounding western British Columbia aboriginal cultures was taking at the time.

Goldman's main works on the Carrier, "The Alkatcho Carrier of British Columbia" and "The Alkatcho Carrier: Historical Background of Crest Prerogatives" propose a timeline for cultural evolution among Athapaskan groups bordering on coastal societies. Based on his own fieldwork among the Alkatcho and an examination of other anthropological accounts of surrounding groups, he argued that the Alkatcho Carrier culture came from two coastal influences, indirectly from the Gitksan through the Wet'suwet'en, and directly from the Bella Coola.<sup>20</sup> Goldman asserted that interior groups were not able to absorb the coastal system completely until an influx of goods provided a surplus to allow them to hold potlatches.<sup>21</sup> This, according to Goldman, began about "150 years ago, a century before direct contact with the Whites" and allowed the "Carrier [to adopt] the social forms of their West Coast neighbours."<sup>22</sup> Ultimately, Goldman concluded that "effective social contact between the Alkatcho Carrier, and

---

<sup>19</sup> Irving Goldman, "The Alkatcho Carrier of British Columbia," in *Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes*, ed. Ralph Linton (New York: D. Appleton – Century Company, 1940); Irving Goldman, "The Alkatcho Carrier: Historical Background of Crest Prerogatives," *American Anthropologist* 43.3 (1941); Julian Steward, "Recording Culture Changes Among the Carrier Indians of British Columbia," in *Explorations and Field Work of the Smithsonian Institution* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1941); Julian Steward, *Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press Urbana, 1955).

<sup>20</sup> Goldman, "Crest Prerogatives," 396.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 417.

<sup>22</sup> Goldman "The Alkatcho Carrier," 333.

apparently the region as a whole, was conditioned primarily by the expansion of the white fur trade.”<sup>23</sup>

Goldman’s work is complemented by Julian Steward’s studies, which examined the region east of Babine Lake but remains important to the cultural scholarship because of his assertions regarding stimulus for cultural shifts among interior groups, and his implicit inclusion of the Babine in some of his conclusions. Like Goldman and Jenness, Steward argued that the clan and house system arrived among the interior groups through interactions with their coastal neighbours.<sup>24</sup> Steward based his conclusions on a combination of his own fieldwork and on the published works of other anthropologists, including Jenness and Goldman, but did not conduct archival research as part of his projects. In his 1955 book *Theory of Culture Change*, Steward used the Carrier as one of his examples and sets the timeline for the arrival of coastal influence as “late pre-white times among the Stuart Lake Carrier,” noting that it was still spreading among the southern groups when Europeans arrived in the region.<sup>25</sup> It was not until five years later that Steward, drawing on Goldman’s work, argued that increased exchange and wealth that accompanied the arrival of the maritime fur trade facilitated the diffusion of coastal cultural influence up the Skeena, through Babine Lake and eventually to Stuart Lake.<sup>26</sup> This general agreement between Goldman and Steward, who studied different Carrier groups, established the influential theory that the fur trade was the stimulus for the diffusion of aspects of coastal cultures inland. The theory was not based on evidence but on the assumption that, prior to this

---

<sup>23</sup> Goldman, “Crest Prerogatives,” 418.

<sup>24</sup> Steward, “Recording Culture Changes,” 83.

<sup>25</sup> Steward, *Theory of Culture Change*, 176-177.

<sup>26</sup> Steward, “Carrier Acculturation”, 735-737.

increased exchange, the interior groups did not have a great enough surplus of material wealth to facilitate potlatching.<sup>27</sup>

Charles Bishop published two articles in the 1980s about the development of social stratification in the region. In the first, he built on the ideas laid down by Jenness, Goldman, and Steward, arguing that economic exchange from the coast to the interior influenced the interior cultures, specifically, “hereditary rank first developed through inter- and intra-societal exchanges in luxury commodities and/or ritual objects.”<sup>28</sup> He further noted that this trade was of “non-essential but not necessarily non-utilitarian” items and had to be a regular, not sporadic, occurrence.<sup>29</sup> Bishop also claimed that HBC archival evidence indicated that, while the rank system was in place when traders arrived it was “of recent origin.”<sup>30</sup> Though Bishop acknowledged that there had always been some trade between the coast and interior groups, he argued that the arrival of the maritime fur trade led to an increase in volume and consistency that inspired the Carrier to absorb coastal social structures.<sup>31</sup> He asserted that this absorption occurred among the Babine “during the last half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>32</sup> While contending that social stratification along the coast may have resulted from resources being exchanged between areas that had surpluses of certain goods, Bishop believed that the interior groups “lacked or had an insufficient quantity of certain resources desired by coastal peoples” and so were not part of the original development of stratification along the Northwest Coast.<sup>33</sup> This assertion may have arisen from Bishop giving stronger weight to the earlier scholarship that emphasized the

---

<sup>27</sup> Goldman, “Crest Prerogatives,” 416-417.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Bishop, “Limiting Access to Limited Goods: The Origins of Stratification in Interior British Columbia,” in *Development of Political Organization in Native North America: 1979 Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society* (Washington: American Ethnological Society, 1983), 150-151, 149.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 156-157.



importance of the maritime fur trade in cultural absorption, than to the HBC records which, as “The Resilience of the Babine” argues, strongly imply that there was a longstanding bilateral exchange network between the Babine and their western neighbours.

In 1987, Bishop published a second article in which he elaborated on some of the exchange networks and Carrier potlatch structures. Bishop acknowledged that his work “assumed that the prehistoric Carrier were egalitarian,” largely based on the arguments of Steward and Goldman.<sup>34</sup> Still, he acknowledged that the “evidence from the Bulkley River and Babine Lake region indicates *possible* prehistoric ranking.”<sup>35</sup> Bishop followed this acknowledgement with a series of questions regarding this possibility, concluding that a “more intensive evaluation of the evidence should help determine the degree and type of ranking, if it did exist.”<sup>36</sup> Although Bishop suggested that the Babine and Bulkley areas might have been an exception to the generally accepted argument that coastal social structures arrived in the interior as a result of the European maritime fur trade, he did not actually make this argument, focusing instead on demonstrating the proto-historic arrival of ranking systems among the Carrier.<sup>37</sup> His conclusion may be the result of a reluctance to fly in the face of a body of literature that, in 1987, had not seen any significant challenges in academia or the courts. Nevertheless, Bishop was the first to question the academic consensus that the coastal cultural systems moved inland because of the maritime fur trade.

In 1994 Anna De Aguayo presented a conference paper that examined the “impact of the late maritime and early land-based fur trade on the social organization of the Wet’suwet’en and

---

<sup>34</sup> Charles Bishop, “Coast Interior Exchange: The Origins of Stratification in Northwestern North America,” *Arctic Anthropology* 24.1 (1987), 80.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. Italics are Bishop’s.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that the literature referenced here is only a sample of the larger body and was selected because it best represents the general trend of the scholarship, is most relevant to the Bulkley/Babine region, or was written by scholars considered experts in the field.

Babine.”<sup>38</sup> Based exclusively on the evidence contained in the HBC journals, Aguayo argued that these documents, though sparse, are “sufficient to cast shadows on older scholarly conclusions about the impact of early contact era upon these [aboriginal] societies.”<sup>39</sup> Ultimately, Aguayo concluded that the documents indicate earlier scholarship emphasising the role of the fur trade in the diffusion of coastal culture among the neighbouring Athapaskan groups is formulaic. She postulated that a hierarchal society was just as likely to have resulted from an intricate trade network that predated the arrival of Europeans.<sup>40</sup> She also suggested that the Gitksan monopoly on furs from these interior groups was not broken until after 1870.<sup>41</sup> Throughout her essay, Aguayo presented much of the same HBC evidence as will be examined in this work; however, she did so without testing it, where possible, against other evidence that, in several cases, led to an incomplete or erroneous analysis. For example, she noted that William Brown “lacked familiarity with the Native communities of the area and their existing trade patterns,” but then went on to use Brown’s journals uncritically. Moreover, Aguayo’s publication does not draw any concrete conclusions beyond the fact that the existing networks were very complex. Despite being the only work that deals explicitly with the same topic as this study, Aguayo’s superficial research and her failure to draw strong conclusions leaves significant room for expansion and analysis.

The next major contributions to the literature addressing aboriginal groups near Babine Lake were Antonia Mills’ *Eagle Down is Our Law*, and Richard Daly’s *Our Box was Full*. Although these two works were published over a decade apart, both authors were anthropological expert witnesses on behalf of the plaintiff Wet’suwet’en and Gitksan in the

---

<sup>38</sup> de Aguayo, “Breaking the Competition,” 81.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 81

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

Delgamuukw court case, and it was their research among these groups in preparation for the case that gave rise to their publications. While these two scholars take quite different approaches to the issue, both discuss the role of the feast and kinship system of the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan in depth and assert that it was adopted from their western neighbours well before the arrival of any European influence in the area or off the coast.<sup>42</sup> Mills made extensive use of Wet'suwet'en oral traditions that highlight the historic connections between the Wet'suwet'en and their neighbours and combines this evidence with the historic record to demonstrate that the common feast system was in place as far east as Stuart Lake at least by 1810.<sup>43</sup> Centered on the Wet'suwet'en and mentioning the Babine only in passing, Mills' argument for the longevity of the feast system is not extended to Babine Lake. Ultimately, Mills was interested in culture as it pertained to the Wet'suwet'en court case rather than on the broader effects of the European fur trade. While her work certainly provides a close examination of one element that has important bearing on this study, it does not address the broader issue of changes in the social, political, and economic arenas.

Daly's *Our Box Was Full* also examines the feast and clan system of the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan but does so with greater reference to trade between these interior groups and the coast, stating that these interactions were in place long before Europeans or European influences arrived on the scene.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Daly was much more interested in the effects of the arrival of Europeans than was Mills. He concluded that the "economic pursuits of the Gitksan and Witsuwit'en prior to the contact and protocontact periods appear to have been contiguous with

---

<sup>42</sup> Antonia Mills, *Eagle Down is Our Law: The Witsuwit'en Law, Feasts, and Land Claims*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994), 37-38; Richard Daly, *Our Box Was Full: An Ethnography for the Delgamuukw Plaintiffs* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 1.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 37, 39, 91.

<sup>44</sup> Daly, *Our Box was Full*, 1.

the economic life of the two peoples in the contact period.”<sup>45</sup> However, Daly later stated that the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en “did not engage in modern commodity trade of items procured from the land before the establishment of trading posts,” demonstrating that he considered the arrival of the overland fur trade to have created an important shift in the regional economy.<sup>46</sup> Beyond these slightly contradictory statements, *Our Box Was Full* alternately treats the Babine and Wet’suwet’en as an economic block, the Wet’suwet’en and Gitksan as an economic block, and the Babine, Wet’suwet’en, and Gitksan as an economic block for the purposes of trade among themselves or with the coast. While it seems apparent that there were close ties between these three groups, there was enough distinction in the resources available on the respective territories that Daly’s conclusions may be overly simple. Further, Daly provides little explanation of how the Babine fit into this relationship beyond their close association with the Wet’suwet’en, including them in certain aspects of regional relations as part of the Wet’suwet’en but not in others. Like Mills, Daly’s work provides insights into the regional social, cultural, and economic network of the people to the west of Babine Lake. However, despite the occasional reference to the Babine in both of these analyses, the inclusion or exclusion of this group often occurs with little or no explanation. Thus, these networks require further investigation, particularly with reference to the effects that the arrival, first of the maritime, and then the overland fur trade, had on the pre-existing systems.

Scholarly attention has circled around and near Babine Lake, but no work has specifically addressed the effect of the maritime and overland fur trade on the Babine political, social, and economic networks prior to 1830. While much of the literature surrounding the adoption of the clan and feast system by interior groups asserts that cultural absorption was a result of the

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 205.

maritime fur trade, an issue for examination herein, no academic work specifically addresses the Babine with regard to these issues. Anthropological studies arising out of the Delgamuukw case argued that the feast and clan system predated the arrival of European influence by centuries, but these works are oriented to the west of the Babine and need to be evaluated for applicability to the aboriginal people who lived on Babine Lake. Although many scholars have contributed to the regional understanding, the scholarship remains incomplete because it has failed to address the affect that the arrival of the fur trade had on the Babine.

While “The Resilience of the Babine” is a British Columbian history, the literature pertaining to regions east of the Rocky Mountains provides much of the methodology and models. Arthur J. Ray’s *Indians in the Fur Trade*, published three years before Fisher’s study, was the beginning of a shift overturning the traditional trope of First Nations as passive victims, recasting them instead as actively pursuing their own interests through the fur trade. Though Fisher debunked the myth of the passive victim in a British Columbia context, Ray’s analysis of the fur trade’s influence on migrations, social changes, and shifting political and economic alliances in a specific region has not been widely applied across the province.<sup>47</sup>

Theodore Binnema took in-depth analysis of a specific region further in *Common and Contested Ground*. Binnema’s emphasis on multilateral human interaction and consideration of the environment as a major factor is certainly applicable to Babine Lake.<sup>48</sup> The reliance of New Caledonia’s population on salmon runs is comparable to the importance of the bison cycles detailed by Binnema and some of his technique is transferable.<sup>49</sup> Binnema’s method of

---

<sup>47</sup> Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, xi; Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay* revised ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), xxxiii.

<sup>48</sup> Theodore Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-54.

discussing aboriginal people, Europeans, and the environment as interdependent, permits a more nuanced understanding of the events around Babine Lake prior to 1830.

The documentary sources available on the Babine Lake region prior to 1830 are limited. Because this is primarily an examination of revelations from the documentary record about the changes brought about by the fur trade, the HBC records play an important role in this study. While the Fort Kilmaurs journals, reports, and correspondence are the central record set from the HBC archives, these records exist only from 1822 to 1826 with a gap in 1824. To compensate for these limitations, the Fort St. James, Fraser Lake, and administrative records of the HBC were consulted to examine the interaction between the aboriginal people and traders of those posts with the Babine. Use of these records requires an awareness of the issues that accompany the portrayals of aboriginal life by HBC officers, particularly in the early years of the HBC takeover of New Caledonia. Trader William Brown, the man whose writings and opinions dominate the Fort Kilmaurs journals for this period, had only about a year of experience on the west side of the Rocky Mountains when he was sent to establish the post at Babine Lake.<sup>50</sup> Aboriginal social and political organisation in the Pacific drainage was very different from what was found east of the Rockies and it would have taken a newcomer who did not speak the local language some time to grasp the complexities of these salmon-dependant societies. Moreover, HBC journals were first and foremost commercial documents designed to inform distant governors about occurrences as they pertained to the company's business in a given region. While this certainly affected the content of the journals, it also ensured that aboriginal trade networks in the region were relatively well documented, at least as Brown and his workers understood them. The inherent problems with using the HBC archival material as a major source cannot be completely

---

<sup>50</sup> George Simpson, *Journal of Occurrences in the Athabaskan Department By George Simpson, 1820 and 1821, and Report*, ed. E. E. Rich (London: The Champlain Society, 1938), 431.

overcome but can be mitigated by careful consideration of each piece of evidence to ascertain how circumstances may have affected what was written. The paucity of documentary evidence also necessitates a multi-disciplinary approach.

Beyond the above issues of perspective, the local HBC documents have several other problems requiring consideration. The traders' classification of the Babine does not always indicate a person from Babine Lake, an issue particularly relevant for the Fort Fraser documents. The term "Babine" in the journals includes the groups along the Bulkley (Simpson's) River and around Francois (Francis) Lake. Consequently, the Fraser Lake post journal records frequent contact with "Babines" who were generally from Francois Lake and occasionally from the Bulkley Valley. In one instance John McDonell stated that there are several "Babines from Lac des Francais who have not yet been at Fort Kilmaurs nor, if they tell the truth do they intend to go there" indicating that the continued mention of Babine by McDonell refers to people from the south of the Babine-Wet'suwet'en language area.<sup>51</sup> Fort Fraser documents from this period contain no instance in which Babine were identified as actually coming from Babine Lake.

While Fraser Lake is certainly a relevant reference point, the Fort Kilmaurs and Fort St. James documents are most pertinent to this project. Unfortunately, these two posts were located at the opposite ends of their respective lakes from the portage linking the Kilmaurs with the St. James trading areas and the Babine to the Carrier. This means that there is a very real possibility that the majority of the interactions between the village of Tachy on Babine Lake and the various villages on the western end of the Stuart Lake escaped the notice of the European traders. Conversely, the traders, William Brown in particular, appear to have been frustrated by the resistance of the aboriginal people to the HBC-imposed trade boundary along the height of land

---

<sup>51</sup> Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Public Archives of Manitoba (HBCA) B.74/a/1, Fraser Lake Post Journal 1822-1824: 18 May, 1823.

between Fort St. James and Fort Kilmaurs trading regions, so Brown's accounts of the incidents that were recorded are often very detailed. Fort Kilmaurs was located adjacent to the village of Nah tell cuss, but the village of Nass chick was located to the north of the post. This meant that Brown was often reliant on second-hand information regarding the comings and goings at Nass chick, which was near at least one major trail linking it to the Bulkley River. Fortunately for Brown, Babine people appear to have moved frequently between these two villages providing him with a fairly constant flow of information on the activities at the north end of the lake. Despite the large region that lay outside the daily scope of the HBC traders, the bulk of the population on Babine Lake lay to the north and west of Fort Kilmaurs, which meant groups travelling to or from Stuart Lake would pass within Brown's observation. In addition, major fishing sites of both the Carrier and Babine were nearer the respective forts and involved much coming and going between villages, meaning that during the season of diplomacy and trade, the Europeans were better able to collect information on the movements of the aboriginal people.

In order to reconstruct relationships and patterns for the Babine shortly before the arrival of Europeans, and to confirm and flesh out the evidence in the HBC records, linguistic, anthropological, and environmental scholarship on Babine Lake, the Babine, and the surrounding region have been extensively consulted. Many of the records on this region, such as Mills' and Daly's works, have arisen from the landmark Delgamuukw case, and testimonies given by Wet'suwet'en Elders have played an important role in reconstructing the relationship between the Babine and Wet'suwet'en groups. All of these sources allow researchers to reach back past the beginning of the written record for the region and begin to reconstruct patterns that predated the arrival of Europeans. Even with the addition of this literature, evidence for pre-contact networks remains fragmentary. Archaeological studies on Babine Lake are essentially non-



existent. Future archaeological work may reveal pre-contact networks, or alterations to networks, that the sources consulted here do not identify.

Evidence prepared for the courtroom comes with its own set of complications. The object of the Delgamuukw plaintiffs was to establish the longevity of their claims to an explicitly defined tract of land over which they had their own system of governance and maintained the integrity of the boundaries across which they engaged in economic, political, and social relationships with their neighbours; the object of the defence was to disprove these assertions. Arthur J. Ray notes that, as a result of a lack of clarity surrounding the exact date of the British Crown asserting sovereignty over the area, evidence gathered for Delgamuukw on behalf of the plaintiffs had to demonstrate that the social, political, and cultural system remained intact from pre-contact throughout the fur trade period, while the defendants relied heavily on pre-existing reports that argue the social and cultural system moved inland as a result of the maritime fur trade.<sup>52</sup> Researchers must examine evidence from the Delgamuukw testimonies and case critically. However, these resources contain valuable insights, including evidence pertaining to regional economy, social system, and politics that cannot be ignored. Therefore, these records are used extensively, especially with reference to the period predating the arrival of written documentation. Cautious and critical use of this wide array of evidence offers the best chance of accurately reconstructing events and economic networks around Babine Lake prior to 1830.

This thesis is divided into three chronological and thematic chapters examining the social and economic networks of the Babine. Chapter one uses anthropological, linguistic, oral, and documentary evidence to argue that the social system of the Babine, centred on the clan and house system, existed long before the first inkling of European influence arrived in the region.

---

<sup>52</sup> Arthur J. Ray, "From the US Indian Claims Commission Cases to Delgamuukw: Facts, Theories, and Evidence in North American Land Claims," in *Aboriginal Title and Indigenous Peoples: Canada, Australia, and New Zealand*, ed. Louis A. Knafla and Haijo Westra (Toronto and Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010): 37-38, 44.

The maritime fur trade was not in fact responsible for this system spreading inland to the Babine and other interior groups. Instead, it arrived along well-established trade routes well before Europeans began to enter the regional economy.

The second and third chapters explore the effects of the maritime and overland fur trade on the Babine. Chapter two begins with a discussion of environmental, anthropological, and oral evidence to postulate what the east-west regional economy looked like prior to the arrival of Europeans off the mouth of the Skeena River. Babine communities engaged in trade with their neighbours in both directions although the trade connections to the west drew most of their attention. When trading vessels arrived off the coast, European goods were injected into the traditional networks and by Mackenzie's 1793 journey, these goods had been transported as far inland as the headwaters of the Parsnip River. However, they did so alongside traditional items and do not appear to have caused significant alterations to the underlying networks. The evidence available in the HBC records suggests that the trade networks in place in 1822 were focussed predominantly to the west, with less intimate connections to the east. As this is similar to the economic orientation that appears to have existed before contact, the available evidence does not indicate that the maritime fur trade resulted in any major shifts in the underlying networks.

Chapter three examines the period after the establishment of Fort Kilmaurs, which marked the true arrival of the overland fur trade at Babine Lake and the beginning of a very frustrating four years for Chief Trader William Brown. He continuously attempted to compete with the traditional trade connections to the west and failed in nearly every sense. Brown's final report indicates his realization that, despite European goods originating from American trading vessels, aboriginal traders provided the direct competition to the HBC. He had also accepted

defeat at the hands of these traders and proposed that the only way to sever these trade connections was to impose a physical presence between the Babine and the Pacific Ocean. None of his recommendations were carried out and the problem of furs being lost to coastal traders persisted in the region around Babine Lake right up to 1830. The efforts of the overland fur traders to alter traditional economic networks to their advantage did not succeed in these early years.

This multidisciplinary reconstruction of the Babine's external relations from the pre-contact period to the establishment of Fort Simpson by the HBC reveals the resilience of the pre-existing networks. While both manifestations of the European fur trade arriving from the west and east certainly had important influences on the Babine people, neither of these events appear to have significantly altered the relationships that had been in place since well before the 1780s. Instead, the Babine, like many other aboriginal groups, grafted the newly arrived trade items onto their already existing relationships and networks. They were able to take advantage of the existence of two markets for their furs by trading where they would gain the greatest advantage. The arrival of the fur trade may have changed some aspects of the Babine people's lives, but their external relations, whether political, social, or economic, exhibited remarkable continuity until at least 1830.

## Chapter One: A Longstanding Cultural Connection

Scholarship on the cultural and social system of the Athapaskan groups bordering the coastal aboriginal groups argues that the clan system and associated feasting was initially a coastal practice that was absorbed by the Wet'suwet'en, Babine, and Carrier groups further east as a result of increased economic exchange accompanying the arrival of the maritime fur trade.<sup>1</sup> Charles Bishop's acknowledgement that it was possible that prehistoric ranking existed among the Babine and Wet'suwet'en is the only shift away from this consensus and it occurs as a side-note in the conclusion of an article arguing that the opposite was true among the Carrier generally.<sup>2</sup> Evidence presented at the Delgamuukw trial by anthropologists and the Wet'suwet'en elders has either remained unpublished or does not pertain directly to the Babine Lake groups. Fiske and Patrick's *When the Plumes Rise* examines the balhats (feast) system only as it serves as a forum of traditional lawmaking and governance in a modern context without delving into the timing of its arrival or the importance of the system to a larger regional political and economic network. While both Daly's *Our Box Was Full* and Mills' *Eagle Down is Our Law* touch on economic and social ties between the coast and interior and state that the feast system was in place among the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en well before the arrival of the maritime fur trade, neither of them addresses the Babine region specifically. This gap in the most recent literature with regards to Babine Lake allows the earlier scholarship, attributing the inland absorption of the feast system to the maritime fur trade, to remain the only explanation. Extending the argument for the longevity of the feast system from the Bulkley Valley to Babine Lake will provide a much more complete picture of the regional political, economic, and social

---

<sup>1</sup> This is discussed in the introduction pages 6-15.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop, "Coast-Interior Exchange," 80.

networks and a solid basis for the evaluation of the effects that the arrival of the fur trade had on these relationships.

Central to this discussion is the timing of the actual arrival of the maritime trade at the mouth of the Skeena. While the publication of James Cook's journal that started the stream of ships searching for wealth on the Northwest coast took place in 1781, the initial focus remained on Nootka Sound, the location of an altercation between Spanish and British interests in 1789.<sup>3</sup> This certainly suggests that it would have been some time before the maritime traders expanded north to the mouth of the Skeena River. Established in present day Alaska, Russian traders largely confined themselves to trading with the Tlingit groups in the areas immediately adjacent to their trading posts. These facts, and the known tendency of the initial maritime fur traders to remain on the outer coast and islands, makes it likely that the Tsimshian around the mouth of the Skeena did not start receiving regular visits from European traders until the mid to late 1780s. Given this date, if the previous claims that the cultural system spread inland as a result of European stimulated trade are correct, the Wet'suwet'en, Babine, and Carrier had between twenty and forty years before direct contact with Europeans, and the associated record keeping, to absorb a new, complex cultural system; a timeline that seems abrupt given the thoroughness of absorption recorded in early nineteenth century written accounts.

Because the Babine are the central group in this study, the following discussion will examine the cultural, social, and linguistic ties running from the Gitksan, who speak a Tsimshianic language, through to the Carrier groups at Stuart and Fraser Lakes. Despite the fact that the Babine have some kinship ties and trade relations with the Sekani, this group will not occupy a significant place in this examination for several reasons. The location of the Sekani north of the continental divide meant that they did not have access to salmon, the central food

---

<sup>3</sup> Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 5.

source among the Gitksan, Wet'suwet'en, Babine, and Carrier. The result was that the Sekani were nomadic hunter-gatherers whose way of life could not support the higher population density and rigidly structured clan and feast system of their southern neighbours. Additionally, European influence arrived at Babine Lake predominately from the west, through the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en, and east, through the Carrier territories. This is not to say that the Babine did not trade with the Sekani, (there was likely some exchange based on moose hides) but the cultural influence among aboriginal groups and the influence of Europeans ran predominantly east-west from Babine Lake. Ultimately, the highly structured and intricate nature of their cultural and social systems and ties between the Babine and their neighbours indicate that this system originated on the coast and spread inland along traditional trade connections well before the arrival of the European maritime fur trade off the Northwest Coast. Anthropological studies, oral testimonies, and linguistic reports from the Delgamuukw case all indicate that, contrary to most of the earlier scholarly literature on cultural absorption in the area, the clan, house, and feast system was in place well before the 1780s.

### **A Complex Culture**

The people at Babine Lake were connected to their neighbours by a complex clan and house system based on kinship ties built up over generations of contact through trade. This was integrated with the equally important feast system through which relations were maintained and changes were communicated. The feast also provided the forum for diplomacy among the various aboriginal groups in the region. The constraints of time and space limit the possibility of describing completely the complexities and nuance of this system, but an understanding of the basic elements is essential to establishing the early origin of the intergroup relations around Babine Lake. This was a dynamic system with variations between the different groups, most

significantly among the groups east of the Babine where there appears to have been greater flexibility with the basic foundation and structure that was almost universally that absorbed from the coastal groups through longstanding trade relations.

The clan system was central to the feast and was common, with minor differences, to the Babine, Wet'suwet'en, Gitksan, and, with greater variations, the Carrier. Each Babine clan had a direct counterpart among the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan, the members of which were considered kin.<sup>4</sup> The clans were matrilineal and all clan members were considered related, often even considered to have been descended from a common ancestor, though the members may be unable to trace the actual genealogical ties.<sup>5</sup> Several houses comprised each clan, and each house consisted of a single family related through the mother's side and possessed specific territories and fishing sites.<sup>6</sup> Unlike members of the same clan, house members were able to trace their genealogical ties to one another.<sup>7</sup> These traditions meant that no one could marry within their house or clan as such relationships would have been incestuous. Overseeing the entire system was a series of hereditary chiefs whose names were passed through the maternal family groups. The head chiefs of each house, with support from the lesser chiefs, were collectively responsible for decisions at feasts or in any other business that involved the entire clan. The house territories were associated with a specific chiefly name, the holder of which oversaw the territory with assistance from chiefs with lesser feast names.<sup>8</sup>

Today, the Babine have four clans: *Likhc'ibu* (Bear), *Jilhtsehyu* (Frog), *Gilantin* (Caribou), and *Likhtsemisyu* (Beaver).<sup>9</sup> However, based on fieldwork conducted in the 1950s,

---

<sup>4</sup> Mills, *Eagle Down is Our Law*, 104, 106.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>9</sup> Fiske and Patrick, *When the Plumes Rise*, 48.

James Hackler notes that sometime after 1865, following the Wet'suwet'en example, the *Laksamasyu* and *Tsayu* clans began to act as one, the clan Fiske and Patrick labelled *Likhtsemisyu*.<sup>10</sup> Each of these five clans corresponded with a clan in the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan through shared crests, though the names were often the same as well. The affiliations of each clan are illustrated in Table One.

**Table 1: Affiliations among Babine, Wet'suwet'en, and Gitksan Clans**

Babine	Wet'suwet'en	Gitksan
Laxibu (Bear)	Gitdumden (Wolf/Bear)	Laxgibu (Wolf)
Jilhtshyu (Frog)	Gliserhyu (Big Frog)	Ganada (Frog)
Gilantin or Granton (Caribou)	Laksilyu (Small Frog)	Laxsel (Small Frog)
Laksamasyu (Fireweed)	Laksamashu (Fireweed)	Gisra'ast (Fireweed)
Tsayu (Beaver)	Tsayu (Beaver)	Laxski'k (Eagle)

Source: compiled from Mills, *Eagle Down is Our Law*, 103-104; Jenness, *Carrier Indians of the Bulkley River*, 482; Hackler, *Social Disorganization*, 54.

These affiliations meant that each Babine clan had a group they considered family among both of their western trading partners which almost certainly developed because of a long tradition of social and commercial exchange. These links through clan membership provided immediate common ground for negotiations around trade, resource access, marriages, and other inter-group relations.<sup>11</sup> Though these relations were strictly between specific clans, the cumulative effect was something akin to a broader trade and diplomatic alliance.

The feast system connected these clan and house affiliations, along with territorial, diplomatic, and trade systems. Representatives from other clans among the Babine and surrounding groups witnessed decisions made regarding these topics at the feast, and thus gave the business legitimacy beyond Babine territory.<sup>12</sup> When the Wet'suwet'en, Gitksan, and Babine attended each other's feasts they were seated with their corresponding clan according to the rank

<sup>10</sup> James Hackler, "Factors Leading to Social Disorganization among the Carrier Indians at Lake Babine," (M.A. thesis, San Jose State College, 1958), 54, 56-57.

<sup>11</sup> Fiske and Patrick, *When the Plumes Rise*, 48.

<sup>12</sup> Gisdaywa (Alfred Joseph), Foreword to *Eagle Down is Our Law: The Witsuwit'en Law, Feasts, and Land Claims*, by Antonia Mills (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994), ix.



of their hereditary titles. These guests would be fed and provided gifts acknowledging their participation at the feast, and then would carry news of the developments to their own villages.<sup>13</sup> Traditionally in recognition of attendance, hosts distributed moose skins, both whole and cut into sections, to every person at the feast.<sup>14</sup> Chiefly names, and responsibility for the associated territories, were passed down through the feasts. Attending a neighbouring group's feasts facilitated consensus about which individuals were responsible for specific houses, clans, and territories while providing an opportunity for these leaders to discuss pertinent issues including trade and diplomacy. Smoke feasts acknowledged a chief's death, but groups from far away did not necessarily travel to the chief's village for these gatherings. Instead, the clan of the deceased chief held a smoke feast at their village. This meant that when a chief died in Moricetown, there likely were smoke feasts in Hagwilget, Babine, and Moricetown; a testament to the intimacy as well as the frequency of the interactions between these groups.<sup>15</sup> Because the feast system involved all of these groups, this acknowledgement of the death of a chief was the first step in the shift of the name and associated rights and responsibilities to a new person, a process that took place through several more feasts which representatives from the different areas attended as witnesses. The feast was also the forum for the practice of traditional law, a facet examined by Fiske and Patrick as it pertains to modern political issues.<sup>16</sup> A feast dealt with conflict resolution only when the dispute was between members of two different clans and potentially threatened inter-clan relations.<sup>17</sup> Because warfare tended to centre on specific clans, rather than the larger groups such as the Babine or Wet'suwet'en, feasting also served to limit hostilities by providing

---

<sup>13</sup> Mills, *Eagle Down is Our Law*, 43.

<sup>14</sup> *Delgamuukw v British Columbia* (1991) "Gisdaywa, Testimony," 1772.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 1787.

<sup>16</sup> Fiske and Patrick, *When the Plumes Rise*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> Mills, *Eagle Down is Our Law*, 71; Fiske and Patrick, *When the Plumes Rise*, 138.

an alternative avenue of compensation beyond revenge killing.<sup>18</sup> The diverse functions of the feast allowed it to serve as the underlying structure for almost all interactions between the Babine, Wet'suwet'en, and Gitksan.

Testimonies given during the Delgamuukw case indicate that the ties between the Babine and the Wet'suwet'en were probably the tightest in the region. These testimonies also reveal the complexity of the relationship between these groups which appears to be something closer than that which exists between most distinct aboriginal groupings. Though considered distinct from the Wet'suwet'en, several of the Wet'suwet'en chiefs clearly stated that the Babine are viewed as very closely linked to themselves, if not part of a larger single group. During his testimony, Chief Maxlalex, Johnny David, was asked about the relationship with the people from Babine to which he responded, "we are all one group known as Wet'suwet'en but we live in different villages."<sup>19</sup> Alfred Joseph, Chief Gisdaywa, also stated in the course of his testimony that the "Babine are part of the Wet'suwet'en," however, there is obviously some distinction made as he also stated, "Babine, we refer to them as *Wuu'an wetie*, people that live at Babine."<sup>20</sup> These statements hint at the complexity of the relations between the Babine and Wet'suwet'en which are difficult to express. Intricate connections between the Babine and Wet'suwet'en point to them being one ethnic group, yet several slight but important differences separate them into two distinct groups.

The Delgamuukw testimonies also demonstrate the complexity of territorial rights and how intermarriage played an important role in the intimate connection between the Babine and the Wet'suwet'en. When asked about possible territorial rights of the Babine in the Bulkley

---

<sup>18</sup> Fiske and Patrick, *When the Plumes Rise*, 138-140.

<sup>19</sup> Antonia Mills, ed. *Hang onto These Words: Johnny David's Delgamuukw Testimony*. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005), 116.

<sup>20</sup> "Gisdaywa Testimony," vol. 37, 2428-2429.

Valley, Chief Gisdaywa stated “I can’t say that all of them would have no rights” because intermarriage could result in complex territorial rights, “the wife would be from Babine and the husband would be from Hagwilget or Moricetown, and they still use the territory back and forth.”<sup>21</sup> Gisdaywa illustrated this point further by explaining that where the Wet’suwet’en and Babine territories met it was often the same clan that controlled the territory on either side of the line.<sup>22</sup> He noted that Smogelgem had nephews from Babine that would often come into Wet’suwet’en territory and trap with their uncle on his territory.<sup>23</sup> This combination of clearly delineated territorial boundaries and exceptionally intricate familial ties was part of a larger push-pull between the Babine and Wet’suwet’en. Both groups clearly understood where the territories lay, but clan membership and familial ties determined territorial usage. Those related to a house chief but were from, for example, his wife’s clan, could easily gain permission to use their uncle’s territory. Increasingly complex familial connections resulted in an equally complicated system surrounding usage rights to certain territories. What is clear is that the Babine and Wet’suwet’en were closely interrelated and were linked through a convoluted series of familial ties and carefully delineated, but often shared, territorial rights.

The situation surrounding the chiefly name Wah Tah K’eght is an excellent example of the intimacy and intricacy of this relationship. Henry Alfred, a Wet’suwet’en man, holding the name Wah Tah K’eght testified during the Delgamuukw trial and discussed the fact that there were two Wah Tah K’eghts, one for Babine and one for the Bulkley River. He explained that there were two Wah Tah K’eghts because “We all come from one house, but with Wah Tah K’eght and Babine would speak on our behalf if we are not present there and the same goes for our area. If they are not present I speak on their behalf. We more or less help and work together”

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 2428.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., vol. 38, 2484.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 2484.

[sic].<sup>24</sup> This highlights the exceptionally close relationship between these two specific groups as, in the absence of one, the other effectively wields the political influence of both at the feast. Henry Alfred noted that his predecessor brought the regalia of Wah Tah K'eght back from Babine, indicating that the two positions are so closely linked that they share a significant symbol of authority.<sup>25</sup> Regalia represents the origins of the names of each clan and house and denotes authority to speak on behalf of a given house or clan. Chiefs can be authorized to wear the regalia of another when speaking on behalf of a chief that could not attend, but the regalia are still the property of a single house or clan in each region.<sup>26</sup> The shared regalia of the Wah Tah K'eghts not only highlights the close ties in crests and names between the two houses, but effectively indicates shared political power in the feast where the regalia has such significance.

The issue of territorial rights between the two Wah Tah K'eghts further complicates the relationship. When Henry Alfred was asked about the rights of the Babine Wah Tah K'eght with regards to the Bulkley Valley territory he stated that "if they wanted to come into use Wah Tah K'eght territory, the one which I am looking after, they should come and consult with me and let me know. And then I would give them permission to go on the territory."<sup>27</sup> However, when his mother, Madeline Alfred, Dzee, was asked if Babine Wah Tah K'eght had territorial rights in the Bulkley Valley she responded "Yes. If they belong to Tsee K'al K'e yex, then they would have rights to our territory."<sup>28</sup> The slight discrepancy between permission and open access complicates the relationship and demonstrates that these two groups are very close but nonetheless retain distinct identities. Underlying this relationship are the familial ties between the two groups. Both Wah Tah K'eghts come from the Tsee K'al K'e yex house of the

---

<sup>24</sup> *Delgamuukw v British Columbia* (1991) "Wah Tah K'eght Testimony," vol. 51, 3148.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 3146.

<sup>26</sup> Mills, *Eagle Down is Our Law*, 47-51.

<sup>27</sup> "Wah Tah K'eght Testimony," 3148.

<sup>28</sup> *Delgamuukw v British Columbia* (1991), "Dzee Testimony," vol. 43, 2780.

Laksilyu/Gilantin clan and the previous Babine Wah Tah K'eght was Madeline Alfred's uncle.<sup>29</sup>

Though the nuances of this relationship are difficult to grasp, it is clear that, in this instance, the Babine and Wet'suwet'en were linked by more than clan ties, which existed throughout the region, but remained two carefully delineated groups.

The cultural system among the Carrier-speaking groups around Stuart and Fraser Lakes was, like the Babine and Wet'suwet'en, based on the feast. The Carrier were matrilineal, had hereditary chiefly titles, carefully delineated territories and fishing sites, and specific crests with which they were associated. However, there is significant confusion in the written sources surrounding the specifics of the clans and their affiliations with one another. This dearth of documentation is due partially to the fact that there has been no major court action to stimulate research on this system as Delgamuukw provided for Bulkley-Skeena region. Because of this, it is necessary to rely on secondary sources compiled towards the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Many of these sources were written well before it was established that the Babine were a distinct group, although they were generally considered somewhat different. This means that discussions of Carrier social systems most likely include the Babine, making it difficult to draw concrete distinctions between the groups at Babine Lake, the Bulkley River, Fraser Lake, and Stuart Lake. Beyond these issues, the sources contain many different descriptions of the number and status of the clans on Stuart and Fraser Lake. An examination of these theories suggests a less formalised system than that embraced by the Babine, which may be a reflection of a comparatively recent advent of the system among these more eastern groups, or, the relative strength and frequency of interactions between the Carrier and their western neighbours or both.

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 2780.

While a full reconstruction of the clan system of the Carrier is unnecessary for this study, it is important to understand that the clan and house system of the Babine-Wet'suwet'en was much more rigidly structured than that of the Carrier.<sup>30</sup> Anthropological sources confirm that the land tenure and hereditary system found around Babine Lake was in place, at least to some degree, in the regions to the east. The feast system was also in place and served similar purposes as the feasts of the Babine, Wet'suwet'en, and Gitksan. What the various studies do not agree on is the number, structure, and affiliations of the clans among the Carrier. According to several authors, there were anywhere from two to six clans at Fraser and Stuart Lakes. Some claim they acted as two or three groups for feasting purposes; others attempt to align them directly with the four Babine clans in the twentieth century. There appears to be no consensus regarding this central social structure and many of the accounts suggest that the alignments were actually quite fluid, lacking the rigid house and clan affiliations that existed among the Babine, Wet'suwet'en, and Gitksan.

There are two implications of this difference between the social systems of the Babine and the groups to the east. Because of the important role that clan and house affiliation played in the social, economic, and political relations among the Babine, Wet'suwet'en, and Gitksan, the differences between the Babine and Carrier probably indicates that traditional trade volumes, and the associated cultural and social exchanges, were less intense than those between the Babine and their western neighbours. As the political and diplomatic forum of the feast system depended on coherent clan and house affiliations to lend legitimacy and clarity to the issues that were

---

<sup>30</sup> The authors consulted for this section include A.G. Morice, Wilson Duff, James Hackler as well as, Lizette Hall, *The Carrier, My People* (Cloverdale: Friesen Printers, 1992); Douglas R. Hudson, "The Historical Determinants of Carrier Social Organization: A Study of Athabascan Matriliney." (M.A. Thesis, McMaster University, 1972); Douglas R. Hudson, "Traplins and Timber: Social and Economic Change Among the Carrier Indians of Northern British Columbia." (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 1983); John W. Ives, *A Theory of Northern Athapaskan Prehistory* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990).

addressed, the apparent fluidity of this aspect of the system among the Carrier would have made clarity difficult to achieve. In addition, rigid clan and house connections facilitated trade between the Babine, Wet'suwet'en, and Gitksan, and the lack of equivalents between the Babine and Carrier likely hindered trade and social relations between these two groups.

Though the lack of rigid, clearly defined clan and house connections between the Babine and the Carrier would have hindered relations between the two groups, it may also indicate less interest in creating ties between the two regions. Because the clan, house, and feast system was a product of coastal influence, the less rigid structure of these institutions among the Carrier suggests that contact between the Babine and Carrier was less intense than that between the Babine and their western neighbours. Anthropological studies discussing the dissemination of the coastal culture to the interior groups emphasise the central role that constant contact through trade plays in creating opportunities for cultural exchange, but scholars simply argue that this did not occur until the advent of the maritime fur trade. This suggests that, regardless of when the system arrived, the stimulus to develop a rigidly aligned clan and house system originated as a result of intimate and ongoing contact with a group that already had this system well established. Because the Babine had a highly structured, rigid social system in place while the Carrier, just across a relatively short portage, had a much less structured system, it is probable that the interactions between these groups were traditionally neither as longstanding, nor as intimate as those between the Babine and their western neighbours. However, the existence of significant elements of a shared cultural and social system certainly indicates that there were trade and kinship ties between the Babine and Carrier, just not as strong as those between the Babine, Wet'suwet'en, and Gitksan. While it seems likely that the shared cultural and social system arrived later east of the Babine, it does not necessarily follow that this was the result of the

maritime fur trade. Rather, this indicates that there was a well-established culture to the west at Babine Lake, which was likely the source of this influence.

The cultural and social fabric of the region surrounding Babine Lake was extremely complex with nuanced layers that are not easily understood. This complexity highlights the improbability of such a complicated system having been fully absorbed in the less than forty years between the arrival of the maritime fur trade and the establishment of Fort Kilmaurs in 1822. While this information certainly indicates the complexity of the system, particularly the situation around the name Wah Tah K'eght, it was gathered well after the time frame being discussed. This evidence is somewhat complicated by the forum of its initial presentation. Skeptics will no doubt argue that the needs of the case shaped the testimony and, therefore, overemphasises the importance and all-encompassing nature of the cultural system that tied the plaintiffs to the land. Additionally, this information is not time specific. To test the evidence for both veracity and temporal applicability, the earliest HBC records for the Babine region are useful. Fortunately, the records kept by the HBC trader William Brown, the man in charge of Fort Kilmaurs when it was first established, provide some insight into the social system among the Babine at that time.

### **Culture in the Fort Kilmaurs Journal**

The complexity and dynamism of culture suggests the problematic nature of directly applying cultural and social information gathered over 150 years after the time period under examination as a framework for historical assessment. However, in this instance the documents from much nearer to the period contain enough corroborating evidence to indicate that the system, or at least the essential structure of it, was entrenched before Europeans arrived in the area. The details of the system are less evident, likely because the men who were keeping the



journals did not really understand the nuance of the structure. However, HBC documents clearly refer to the smoke feast and a conflict resolution feast between clans. Significant discussion of high quality leather as a trade item also corroborates cultural testimonies given during Delgamuukw. The territorial land tenure system was in place and the traders understood, at least on a basic level, that there was a ranking system among the chiefs. Cumulatively, all of these indications demonstrate that the cultural and social systems of the Babine captured in the HBC documents from the 1820s were very similar to those detailed in the Delgamuukw testimonies.

Feasts are apparent from the first arrival of the HBC at the site of Fort Kilmaurs. When Brown arrived he was upset to discover that the chief of the village, Casepin,<sup>31</sup> “and most of his people were below at a feast,” a reference which indicates he was at one of the Wet’suwet’en villages on the Bulkley River.<sup>32</sup> Another feast took place “below” in February of 1823 and several of the Wet’suwet’en accompanied Casepin when he returned to his own village.<sup>33</sup> The only year in this period for which the Kilmaurs journal is complete through the summer months when most of the feasting took place is 1825. Through the summer there were feasts at Nass chick, Hotsett, and a proposed feast at Nah tell cuss indicating that there was a very active feast exchange between Babine Lake and the Bulkley Valley at this time.<sup>34</sup>

Brown rapidly came to understand the basics of the land tenure system and perceived it as an obstacle to the HBC fully exploiting the region’s fur resources. When Brown was negotiating with the heads of families in an attempt to alter the land tenure system to better suit the HBC, one of his recommendations was that those who killed beaver would keep the skins but “the Meat [was] to be given to who ever—was to make the first feast for their deceased

---

<sup>31</sup> Throughout the Journals the name “Casepin” and “Caupin” are used interchangeable. For consistency the former will be used here unless “Caupin” appears in a direct quote.

<sup>32</sup> HBCA B.11/a/1, Babine Post Journal 1822-23, Oct. 24, 1822.

<sup>33</sup> HBCA B.11/a/2, Babine Post Journal 1823, February, 19-23, 1823.

<sup>34</sup> HBCA B.11/a/3, Babine Post Journal 1825, June 24, October 11, October 25, 1825.

Relations.”<sup>35</sup> This suggests Brown was at least aware that certain feasts were associated with funeral rites, though it is unlikely he grasped the larger implications for inheritance and chiefly names. The context of this recommendation indicates that the feasts he was referring to were probably smoke feasts, those that occurred immediately after a death.

The second identifiable type of feast is a dispute resolution between two clans. The Kilmaurs journal of August and September of 1825 notes that a member of Ack Koo shaw’s house or clan (it is unclear which) accidentally killed one of Casepin’s nephews and wounded another.<sup>36</sup> Casepin’s immediate reaction was to attempt to kill Ack Koo shaw, but he was prevented from doing so by Ack Koo shaw’s followers.<sup>37</sup> Over the weeks that followed the journal notes the growing tension in the villages at the outlet of the lake. However, the September 12<sup>th</sup> entry notes that “Ackooshaw’s Band made a feast lately and made considerable Presents to the Principal Chief of Casepin’s people which has in some measure restored tranquility amongst them.”<sup>38</sup> This feast settled a dispute when issues between members of two different clans verged on violence.

While the journals contain frequent references to Babine attending feasts on the Bulkley, there is only one recorded instance of a Babine man suggesting he would attend a feast at Stuart Lake. As the first entry around this incident provides some interesting insights into the perspective of an aboriginal man on travelling to Fort St. James, it warrants being quoted in full:

Echelle gave me two Large Beaver in payment of his St. James Debt—  
And requested me to write Mr Stuart “That he expects he will forward by  
return of the Men the steel trap that he promised him, and if he does so,  
and is not satisfied at his remaining here he will go to St. James at the time  
of Qua’s feast in the summer”—Said all I could to him to go there now but

---

<sup>35</sup> HBCA B.11/a/2, Babine Post Journal 1823, March 28, 1823.

<sup>36</sup> HBCA B.11/a/3, Babine Post Journal 1825, August 30, 1825.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., September 12, 1825.

he does not seem inclined to do so—Alledging [sic] that he is an Indian of this place and ought to get his supplies here.<sup>39</sup>

This passage implies that Echelle would not attend the feast if he was not required to go to St. James to deal with his debt. Whether Echelle actually went is not noted, but in March Brown “spoke to Echelle to proceed to St. James but he positively refused to go” indicating a strong disinclination to travel to Stuart Lake for either a feast or at the behest of the HBC.<sup>40</sup> However, there were some ties between Babine and Stuart Lakes based on kinship and clan systems. Two brief mentions of Casepin’s son-in-law indicate that there was some intermarriage between the two groups. When travelling to Fort St. James in November of 1822, Brown stopped at the village of “Tah Koo Kete” on Stuart Lake where he spoke to “Caupin’s son in Law and Daughter” passing on Casepin’s request that they “return to their Own country,” which they initially declined.<sup>41</sup> However, in January they arrived back at Babine from Stuart Lake owing to “the want of Salmon in that Quarter.”<sup>42</sup> Though this is a clear instance of intergroup kinship links, the willingness of the couple to return to Babine in times of need, combined with Echelle’s resistance to returning to Fort St. James at all, suggest that there was little to draw the Babine to Stuart Lake.

The trade in leather was a major point of contention and therefore the HBC journals contain many references to the difficulty of conducting business when there was no leather in the Fort. The dearth of large game animals in Babine territory, at least in comparison to the regions to the north and east, meant that a considerable demand for leather for feasting, among other uses, had to be met through trade as much as through hunting. This fact is particularly obvious in the 1825 post journal where reference to confrontations abound. At one point Brown noted that

---

<sup>39</sup> HBCA B.11/a/1, Babine Post Journal 1822-23, February 13, 1823.

<sup>40</sup> HBCA B.11/a/2, Babine Post Journal 1823, March 6, 1823.

<sup>41</sup> HBCA B.11/a/1, Babine Post Journal 1822-23, November 22, 1822.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., January 25, 1823.

the “Indians grumble hard at the scarcity of Leather and we find it a very difficult task to satisfy them without it.”<sup>43</sup> The 1826 District Report indicates that quality was as important as quantity when trading leather with the Babine. Brown explains that “the Leather they buy is not for present use, but to be put carefully past until the Death of a Relation when each skin is cut into three or four Pieces and given away as presents” making it particularly important to have “fine Large white skins.”<sup>44</sup> This description seems to refer to the use of moose skins as acknowledgement of witnesses attending feasts (discussed by Mills) and highlights the importance of making a good showing of high-quality skins at a feast.

The close ties between Babine Lake and the Bulkley Valley were readily apparent to the traders, though it is unlikely that they fully grasped the nuance of the relationship. When Brown travelled to Nass on a trading voyage, he noted that because of poor fishing in the Bulkley Valley many of the residents of those villages had come to Babine Lake to live for the winter.<sup>45</sup> Based on the social structure, it is likely these people were staying with the corresponding house or clan and using these ties to facilitate trading for the salmon necessary to survive. The journals also frequently mention feasting between the two groups. The most explicit case is in October 1825 when Quiltno, one of the Chiefs from the Bulkley Valley, specifically invited Casepin to a feast.<sup>46</sup> Despite entreaties by HBC clerk P.C. Pambrun, then in charge of Kilmaurs, for Casepin to go hunting, he insisted on attending, absenting himself from the village for more than two weeks.<sup>47</sup> The invitation and Casepin’s insistence on attending may indicate a feast of special importance such as the taking of a chiefly name, but both men obviously felt his attendance was

---

<sup>43</sup> HBCA B.11/a/3, Babine Post Journal 1825, June 19, 1825.

<sup>44</sup> HBCA B.11/e/2, Babine District Report 1826, folio 20d.

<sup>45</sup> HBCA B.11/a/1, Babine Post Journal 1822-23, January 1, 1823.

<sup>46</sup> HBCA B.11/a/3, Babine Post Journal 1825, October 11, 1825.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., October 11- November 11, 1825

important. It is possible that this indicates that Casepin and Quiltno were of the same house or clan, but certainly confirms the close social ties between the two groups.

Brown took a particular interest in the Babine land tenure system because he believed that it was interfering with the returns of the HBC by preventing many of the aboriginal men from hunting freely. On the 28 March 1823 he explained that “The Indians of this place, like the other Carriers of New Caledonia, have certain tracks of country which they claim an exclusive right to—And will not allow any other person to hunt upon them.”<sup>48</sup> When attempting to convince the Babine to alter this system to allow anyone to hunt, Brown “sent for the Heads of families” to discuss the issue, indicating that even an outsider who had been in New Caledonia only a few years was able to identify the house heads and recognize their authority over the territories.<sup>49</sup> His proposition to ease the hunting restrictions on beaver was not well received. In addition, there are several instances throughout the journals when traders noted that certain men identified as heads of household were leaving for their hunting grounds.<sup>50</sup> Clearly, the land tenure system existed at this time and in much the same form as the latter period with specific tracts of territory associated with a given chiefly name.

The ranking of chiefs within house and clan is also evident from the early records, though the specifics are unclear. The first reference to ranking follows a dispute between some Babine and HBC employees. Several aboriginal men went below to request Ack Koo shaw to come, “he being the Chief of those who received Chastisement last Night.”<sup>51</sup> Brown’s understanding of this system and of the specific ranks evolved throughout his tenure at Fort Kilmaurs. In his 1822-1823 District report Brown wrote “Casepin is the principle [sic] chief of these two villages,”

---

<sup>48</sup> HBCA B.11/a/2, Babine Post Journal 1823, March 28, 1823.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> HBCA B.11/a/3, Babine Post Journal 1825, October 16, October 30, 1825.

<sup>51</sup> HBCA B.11/a/1, Babine Post Journal 1822-23, February 2, 1823.

referring to Tachy and Nah tell cuss, and at Nass chick the “principle Chief is Ack Koo shaw and after him Hon-chete-Kee—Nandelt-Kaa—Cab-ah—and several others who are possessed of Lands and heads of families.”<sup>52</sup> By 1826 he came to understand that Cabbah of Nass chick “belongs to the same tribe as Casepin of which he is the Principal Chief” but that “Ack Koo shaw is the principle [sic] Chief of the Indians of the Lake.”<sup>53</sup> Though the idea of a principal chief of Babine Lake does not fit well with a social structure involving distinct ranking systems for each clan, it is probable that Ack Koo shaw was the principal chief of his clan and held the most influence at Babine Lake through his eloquence, hunting, war, or peacemaking skills. Despite these minor inconsistencies in the details, it is clear that there was a ranking system amongst the chiefs at the time closely approximates that detailed in recent scholarship and oral testimonies.

Fort Kilmaurs records written by both Brown and Pambrun contain sufficient references and descriptions to confirm the existence of key elements of the clan, house, and feast system around Babine Lake between 1822 and 1826. Combined with the anthropological and oral testimonies, the HBC records confirm the existence and strength of a very complex social system that derived from their western neighbours. Given the implausibility of a rapid absorption of such a complex system, the weight of evidence suggests the system pre-dated the European arrival.

### **Linguistics**

Linguistic studies add further weight to the evidence from HBC records, indicating that the cultural systems diffused from the west well in advance of the maritime fur trade. The Babine language forms part of the western edge of the territories occupied by Athapaskan-speaking

---

<sup>52</sup> HBCA B.11/e/1, Babine District Report 1822, folio 2-2d.

<sup>53</sup> HBCA B.11/e/2, Babine District Report 1826, folio 4, folio 2d.

peoples. Although there are isolated pockets of Athapaskan-speakers, as far away as the southern United States, there is a large, contiguous collection of Athapaskan speaking groups stretching from the Coast Mountains, east across what is now northern British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba to Hudson Bay, and reaching well into the northern Canadian territories and Alaska. Though there are many distinct languages within the Athapaskan language family, there are many shared characteristics. These shared characteristics and similarities made it difficult for early linguistic scholars to differentiate among some of the languages, particularly the Babine and the Carrier.

Some of the earliest linguistic observations that touch on the Athapaskan-speaking groups appear in the nineteenth-century work of John Scouler who used linguistic information, gathered from informants or through his own observations, to attempt a survey of the various ethnographic groups of the Northwest Coastal region.<sup>54</sup> Although he mentions the presence of Athapaskan words in the language of some coastal groups, notably the Tsimshian, that is largely the extent of his discussion of Athapaskan-speakers.<sup>55</sup> Linguistic scholarship dealing specifically with the Babine began with Father A. G. Morice who conducted most of his field research at Fort St. James on Stuart Lake. Discussing the Babine language, Morice stated that “its grammatical, terminological, and morphological peculiarities are perhaps marked enough to make it a really distinct Dene dialect,” but he eventually concluded that Babine was not different enough to warrant a separate classification and categorized it as a dialect of Carrier.<sup>56</sup> This categorization remained in place until the 1970s when Gillian Story examined the vowel systems of the Babine

---

<sup>54</sup> John Scouler, “Observations on the Indigenous Tribes of the N. W. Coast of America,” *Journal of the Royal Geographic Society of London* 11 (1841): 215-251; John Scouler, “On the Indian Tribes Inhabiting the North-West Coast of America,” *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London* 1 (1848): 228-252.

<sup>55</sup> Scouler, “Indian Tribes,” 231-232.

<sup>56</sup> A. G. Morice, *The Carrier Language (Dene Family) A Grammar and Dictionary Combined*, vol. 2 (Vienna: St. Gabriel-Modling, 1932): 506, 509.

and Carrier and found Babine to be unique, concluding that the languages had been distinct from one another for over 300 years.<sup>57</sup> The eventual classification of Babine-Wet'suwet'en as a distinct language is confirmed in Marianne Mithun's 1999 publication *The Languages of Native North America*, and Sharon Hargus' *Witsuwit'en Grammar*, the latter of which stemmed from research associated with the Delgamuukw case.<sup>58</sup> The research and testimony of James Kari and his collaborator Bruce Rigsby reinforces the theory of a long-standing relationship between the Babine and Wet'suwet'en, and sheds further light on the ties of both the Babine and the Wet'suwet'en with the Gitksan. Kari's research and testimony delineates the boundaries of the Babine-Wet'suwet'en language area and provides ample evidence to support this new classification.

Kari's very distinct borders for the Babine-Wet'suwet'en language grouping straddles the Skeena and Fraser River drainages and includes the Bulkley River, Babine Lake, the upper Babine River, most of Francois Lake and Ootsa Lake, the west side of Takla Lake north of the Narrows, and the lower portion of the Driftwood drainage system at the head of Takla Lake.<sup>59</sup> He notes that these boundaries overlap with five other aboriginal languages, Sekani, Carrier, Haisla, Kitselal, and Gitksan.<sup>60</sup> Babine-Wet'suwet'en includes four distinct dialects identified by the region in which they are spoken: Babine Lake, Bulkley Valley, Francois Lake, and Takla Lake.<sup>61</sup> Yet, despite the existence of four distinct dialects, Kari stated that overall, the language is very homogenous compared to other Athapaskan languages, a fact he attributed to "stability in

---

<sup>57</sup> Gillian Story, *A Historically Oriented Study of Carrier and Babine Phonology*. (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1975): 4-5, 13-14.

<sup>58</sup> Marianne Mithun, *The Languages of Native North America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 353; Sharon Hargus, *Witsuwit'en Grammar: Phonetics, Grammar, Morphology*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).

<sup>59</sup> *Delgamuukw v British Columbia* (1991), Exhibit 880, James Kari, "Dialectology, Ethnonymy, and Prehistory in the Northwest Portion of the Carrier Language Area," 3.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 11.



the language area [and] close communication throughout the area.”<sup>62</sup> This corroborates the documentary and oral evidence of the frequency of interactions between the Babine and Wet’suwet’en and reinforces the close ties among the groups in this region.

The uniqueness of the Babine-Wet’suwet’en language is largely due to the influence of Gitksan, a Tsimshianic language.<sup>63</sup> Kari noted that many Babine-Wet’suwet’en speakers from the Bulkley Valley, Babine Lake, and Takla Lake demonstrated detailed knowledge of the Gitksan language and are able to pronounce and etymologize Gitksan names and potlatch terms.<sup>64</sup> Much of the Babine-Wet’suwet’en vocabulary surrounding the shared cultural system is drawn from Gitksan. With three of the five clan names, many crest names, and material cultural terms borrowed directly from Gitksan, it seems clear that much of the social terminology for the region originated from prolonged contact with coastal traditions.<sup>65</sup> Despite Gitksan influences along the western boundary of the Babine-Wet’suwet’en language groups, the two languages remained mutually unintelligible. However, linguistic evidence indicates there was a long history of bilingualism along the linguistic boundary, although Babine-Wet’suwet’en-speakers, rather than Gitksan-speakers, tended to be fluent in both languages.<sup>66</sup> This would have allowed the Babine-Wet’suwet’en speakers to understand and absorb the cultural system of the Gitksan and with it much of the cultural terminology. Linguistic influences such as these suggest a long-term, friendly relationship which facilitated the sharing of a cultural system far enough back that the

---

<sup>62</sup> *Delgamuukw v British Columbia* (1991), “James Kari Testimony,” vol. 180, 11543. This homogeneity likely accounts for Hargus identifying only two dialects in her *Witsuwit’en Grammar*. Kari’s four will be used here because Hargus’ maintenance of hyphenated regional names correlate with Kari’s classifications, suggesting there are at least slight distinctions within her two dialects. Additionally, four divisions allows for greater exploration of the influences of neighboring groups.

<sup>63</sup> *Delgamuukw v British Columbia*, (1991), Exhibit 881, James Kari, “Babine, A New Athabaskan Linguistic Grouping,” 5.

<sup>64</sup> Kari, “Dialectology, Ethnonymy, and Prehistory,” 24.

<sup>65</sup> Kari, “Babine, A New Athabaskan Linguistic Grouping,” 20.

<sup>66</sup> “James Kari Testimony,” vol. 179, 11507.

slow process of linguistic influence and absorption could occur, especially with reference to the shared cultural terminology.

Distinctions between Babine-Wet'suwet'en and Carrier are not entirely based on simple phonetics and vocabulary. Kari argues that the influence the Gitksan language had on Babine-Wet'suwet'en, combined with the bilingualism of many Babine-Wet'suwet'en-speakers, is central to defining the Babine-Wet'suwet'en language area and distinguishing the boundary between the Babine and Carrier languages.<sup>67</sup> Kari also claims that Central Carrier had a stronger influence on the Sekani language than did Babine-Wet'suwet'en, which borders on the northern Sekani dialects.<sup>68</sup>

Rigsby and Kari suggest that one of the root causes of the distinction between Babine-Wet'suwet'en and Carrier is that, although both groups are Athapaskan-speakers, their ancestors arrived in the region at different times and from different directions so that a basic divergence in the languages existed prior to their initial contact along the Babine's eastern boundary.<sup>69</sup> According to Rigsby and Kari's research, the conservative Babine-Wet'suwet'en speech patterns, links between Babine-Wet'suwet'en and other older coastal Athapaskan languages, and the diffusion of Gitksan vocabulary into the language, all indicate that the ancestors of Babine-Wet'suwet'en speakers arrived in the region from the north over 1500- 2000 years ago, while the Carrier arrived separately and later, from the east.<sup>70</sup> Kari explains that dialects, such as Central and Southern Carrier, are the result of a separation within a single language but the distinctions between Babine-Wet'suwet'en and Carrier predate the division of these dialects and are definite

---

<sup>67</sup> Kari, "Dialectology, Ethnonymy, and Prehistory," 24.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 23-24.

<sup>69</sup> *Delgamuukw v British Columbia* (1991), Exhibit 877, Bruce Rigsby and James Kari, "Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Linguistic Relations," 57-58.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

enough that they must have had a period of independent development.<sup>71</sup> Thus, it seems likely that the Babine groups developed an intimate relationship with the Gitksan and their western neighbours prior to the arrival of the Carrier speakers along their eastern border. In another work, Kari notes that only about half of a sample set of kinship terms between Carrier and Babine-Wet'suwet'en have a common etymological origin, far fewer than are shared between the Gitksan and the Babine-Wet'suwet'en.<sup>72</sup> The relative proportions of shared kinship terms and vocabulary also suggest earlier and closer ties between the Babine-Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan than between the Babine-Wet'suwet'en and Carrier. This evidence not only reinforces the differences in the social systems of the Carrier and Babine, but also highlights the comparative intimacy between the Babine-Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan.

Classification as distinct Athapaskan languages does not preclude significant similarities between Babine-Wet'suwet'en and Carrier. Kari notes that the two languages are actually more similar than Carrier and Sekani, which likely fostered some of the confusion around the early classification.<sup>73</sup> He claims that interactions, such as intermarriage and trade, between Babine-Wet'suwet'en speakers and Carrier speakers led to significant influences in specific instances, particularly in the Francois and Takla Lake dialects along the language border.<sup>74</sup> According to Kari, the effects of these blurred edges ran both ways, and the Carrier at Fraser Lake could understand quite a bit of Babine-Wet'suwet'en, certainly more than Carrier groups further east.<sup>75</sup> While linguists make it clear that Babine-Wet'suwet'en and Carrier are mutually unintelligible without some sort of language training, Kari notes there was extensive bilingualism along the

---

<sup>71</sup> Kari, "Babine, A New Athabaskan Linguistic Grouping," 5.

<sup>72</sup> Kari, "Dialectology, Ethnonymy, and Prehistory," 20.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>74</sup> Kari, "Babine, A New Athabaskan Linguistic Grouping," 5.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

border area particularly on the part of the Babine-Wet'suwet'en speakers.<sup>76</sup> Kari and Rigsby refer to this as "asymmetrical bilingualism:" the Babine-Wet'suwet'en speakers tended to understand either Gitksan or Carrier, depending on the locale, more intimately than the adjacent Carrier or Gitksan speakers understood Babine-Wet'suwet'en.<sup>77</sup> This indicates that there were interactions between the Carrier and Babine groups and the asymmetrical bilingualism suggests that the Babine may have valued these connections, probably as a result of their middleman position in the trade with coastal aboriginal groups. Still, the relative strength of the linguistic influences certainly indicates a hierarchy of importance in the Babine political, social, and economic networks that places their westward ties well above those to the east. The apparently greater influence that Carrier had on Sekani also suggests that there was more contact between these two groups than either may have had with the Babine-Wet'suwet'en speakers.

## **Conclusion**

Contrary to earlier scholarly arguments, the social and cultural systems evident at Babine Lake to this day were absorbed from the coastal groups well before the advent of the European maritime fur trade. HBC records confirm that the system existed in a very similar if not identical form at Babine Lake in the early 1820s, less than forty years after fur traders probably arrived off the mouth of the Skeena. Given the complex and nuanced nature of this cultural system, it is very unlikely that the high level of integration evident in the records could have been achieved in the less than forty years since the maritime fur trade reached the mouth of the Skeena River. Beyond this, linguistic studies have demonstrated a very high level of absorption of cultural and kinship terminology between the Babine and their Gitksan neighbours. Given the very slow nature of both cultural and linguistic exchanges and evolution, this certainly indicates that the cultural and

---

<sup>76</sup> Kari, "Dialectology, Ethnonymy, and Prehistory," 10; "Kari Testimony," vol. 179, 11507.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

social system which is dealt with by both types of evidence was in place before the 1780s, likely long before. Cultural and linguistic evidence also provide some clues about the relative strength and importance of the various relationships that the Babine had with their various neighbours.

An examination of the foundation for the economic ties upon which these cultural and kinship connections were built will provide a fuller picture of the regional diplomatic and trade networks in the prehistoric period and the affect that the arrival of the maritime fur trade had on these.

## Chapter Two: A Resilient Economy

Scholarly studies of the fur trade in British Columbia have emphasised the importance of the arrival of maritime commerce off the coast and the impact of this trade well into the interior of British Columbia. For example, the literature has argued that the maritime fur trade was the driving force behind the absorption of the coastal cultural system into the interior. Although chapter one demonstrated that this was not the case for the Babine, it is still possible, and indeed many scholars have argued, that the arrival of the maritime fur trade had a profound economic impact on the Babine.<sup>1</sup> Recently, Richard Daly's *Our Box Was Full* presented an argument that, prior to the arrival of the maritime fur trade, there was a healthy coast-interior trade network transporting a wide variety of goods between the various groups. However, Daly's argument was centred on the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan and only mentions the Babine tangentially. This uncertainty over the significance of the maritime fur trade remains unresolved, and in some cases unapplied, for the region around Babine Lake.

Addressing this question is an exercise in evaluating what networks existed pre-contact and what changes took place between the mid-1780s and 1822. Towards this end environmental and anthropological literature, oral testimonies drawn from the Delgamuukw proceedings, and the earliest histories of European explorers and traders are combined to reconstruct pre-contact networks so as to evaluate what changes had taken place as a result of the maritime fur trade. Two conclusions emerge from this comparison. First, the Babine were a part of a pre-contact economic network that stretched to the east and west, but the westward ties were by far the strongest. Second, the available evidence does not indicate that the maritime fur trade caused any

---

<sup>1</sup> Julian Steward and Charles Bishop both connect the absorption of the coastal social systems by the Athabaskan groups with the sudden impetus for intergroup exchange that occurred as a result of the maritime fur trade, while Robin Fisher, Richard Mackie, and Wilson Duff all argue that the maritime fur trade had significant economic impacts on the interior groups.

major alterations in the underlying economic networks prior to the establishment of Fort Kilmaurs in 1822.

### **A Steep Environmental Gradient**

Differential access to limited resources was the foundation of traditional aboriginal trade relationships. These imbalances could be extreme when one group had a surplus of a given resource and another nearby group had none. However, differences in availability often took the form of a sliding scale partially influenced by ease of access to certain resources. Along the Northwest Coast the environmental gradient between coastal and interior groups is relatively steep, especially compared to other regions in North America, meaning that aboriginal groups living in relatively close proximity to each other had access to significantly different resources. The British Columbia Ministry of Forest's publication *Ecosystems of British Columbia* confirms that resource availability differed significantly between the Babine and their neighbours creating a basis for trade.

The region between Stuart Lake and the Pacific coast (roughly 450 kilometers) contains six of the fourteen environmental subzones present in British Columbia.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the coastal Tsimshian also had exclusive access to marine resources. This meant there was differential access through a whole range of resources. The Babine, Wet'suwet'en and Carrier had access to a greater variety and quantity of berries, including black huckleberries, bunchberries, high bush cranberries, and thimbleberries, than were available to the Gitksan and Tsimshian.<sup>3</sup> Other plant products in which there was a major difference in availability included cedar bark, available on the coast, and birch bark, available in the interior, which were used for weaving, as well as box

---

<sup>2</sup> Del Meidinger and Jim Pojar, eds. *Ecosystems of British Columbia* (Victoria: Research Branch, Ministry of Forests, 1991), 52.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 101, 118, 172, 214, 228.

and basket-making in styles unique to each group.<sup>4</sup> Fur harvests in the areas occupied by the Babine, Carrier, and Wet'suwet'en are listed as some of the highest in the province and although large game is found throughout the region, large ungulates were far more common in the interior than the coastal areas.<sup>5</sup> Exclusive access to maritime resources provided the Tsimshian with shellfish, oolichan, seaweed, and herring roe inaccessible by any of the interior groups. Importantly, this comparison reveals that, contrary to some portrayals, the interior zones provided goods that were unavailable but desired on the coast as well as the reverse.

However, by deconstructing the coast-interior classifications it becomes obvious that there was not an even progression of variable access between all groups from Stuart Lake to the Pacific Coast. From Babine Lake west there is a steep gradient of resource availability between groups. While the Wet'suwet'en have access to many of the same resources as the Babine, the Babine have far greater access to certain sources of berries.<sup>6</sup> Beyond this, as discussed in chapter one, the Babine and Wet'suwet'en often had access to one another's resources through clan and family ties, suggesting that resource access was likely more balanced than the maps indicate. Along the eastern edge of this region the resource bases become increasingly similar and there are few resources that the Carrier access that are not readily available to the Babine.<sup>7</sup> While this did not preclude trade between the Babine and Carrier, it may explain why other evidence indicates less economic exchange from the Babine Lake east than occurred from Babine Lake west. The steepest part of the resource gradient occurred from Babine Lake west to the Pacific Ocean and provided a solid basis for east-west exchange between these groups of berries, game, fish, and plant products.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 101, 118, 172, 214, 228.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 105, 122, 178, 217-220, 232-235.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 52, 214.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 52, 214.



In addition to the different resources available in the interior compared to the coast, available climate data indicates that a drier interior climate would make preserving these resources much easier in the areas around Babine Lake, the Bulkley River, and Stuart Lake.<sup>8</sup> Starting near the confluence of the Skeena and Bulkley Rivers and moving north and east, the climate becomes increasingly dry which would facilitate the usual preservation methods of sun-drying or smoking.<sup>9</sup> This is especially true of preserving salmon, which would have been much easier, and likely resulted in a product with a longer shelf life, for the Wet'suwet'en, Babine, and Carrier compared with the damp climates inhabited by the Tsimshian and the lower Gitksan. It is possible that this meant that products available near the coast were also traded from interior groups due to the fact that preservation was less labour intensive and more effective.

An important aspect of this relationship that bears further examination is the fact that all of these societies were largely dependent on salmon for day-to-day subsistence, yet the Carrier depended on an entirely different watershed than the groups to their west, suggesting the potential existed for differential access to this essential resource to provide further basis for trade. Although the very different environments detailed above were certainly important to trade networks, salmon was less dependent on the climate and vegetation of the various territories. Sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*) were the major food source in New Caledonia for both the aboriginal people and European fur traders. Sockeye migrated up the rivers in late summer and early fall, where they were caught in huge numbers and eaten fresh or dried for winter consumption.<sup>10</sup> The central role of this resource in the aboriginal diet meant that the availability

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>10</sup> Margaret L. Tobey, "Carrier," *The Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant and June Helm (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1981), 417.

and quality of these fish had the potential to be an important factor in determining the economic relations of the Babine groups.

Underlying any discussion of salmon as a trade item has to be an analysis of the access each group had to this resource. The root of this discussion is the fact that the Gitksan, Wet'suwet'en, and Babine were reliant on the Skeena River system, while the Carrier to the east and south depended on the Fraser River system for their salmon catch. The Skeena River sockeye stock has an important distinction from the Fraser River stock; the Fraser River sockeye return on a fixed four year cycle but the Skeena stock does not. Most important among the possible variations between the two watersheds is the abundance and nutritional value of the salmon available to each group. In both of these categories the Babine are at a distinct advantage because of the relative scarcity of salmon during two low years within a four year cycle in the Fraser sockeye, and the sheer distance that Fraser River sockeye must travel to reach Fraser and Stuart Lakes.<sup>11</sup>

The four year salmon cycle meant that while the Carrier groups had one year of great abundance followed by a year of moderate abundance, two years of scarcity followed. Skeena River sockeye show no signs of historic cyclic dominance which meant that, although the Carrier probably had greater access to salmon every fourth year, the Babine had a consistently prolific salmon run and correspondingly stable food supply. In addition, the number of tributaries that diverted fish before they reached Carrier territory was much larger on the Fraser River that, when coupled with the fact that the Fraser River runs were much more prone to failure, meant an even less dependable source of sustenance.<sup>12</sup> Salmon stop feeding when they enter freshwater,

---

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed discussion of the differences between the Skeena and Fraser River sockeye stocks centred on the Fraser sockeye's four year cycle see Appendix B.

<sup>12</sup> Geoff Meggs, *Salmon: The Decline of the British Columbia Fishery*, (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1991), 11.

meaning that the nutrient content decreases the farther the fish are from the mouth of the river.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the proximity of an aboriginal group to the coast determined not only the availability, but also the food value of the salmon upon which they were so dependent. Thus, the Babine's position on the shorter Skeena-Babine system resulted in a more consistent and nutritious food supply compared to that available to the Carrier groups.

The majority of the Babine salmon harvest occurred at the north end of Babine Lake which served as a huge sockeye salmon nursery and, in 1904, was still producing an aboriginal harvest of over seven hundred and fifty thousand fish.<sup>14</sup> The HBC journals illustrate the comparative regularity and abundance of the Skeena River salmon. Writing at Fort Fraser on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 1823, John McDonell noted that the salmon had already arrived in Simpson's River but the "Natives take no salmon here as yet and I am much afraid that but a few will be taken here this Fall, and as I am now destitute of dry provisions if we do not get salmon in a few days the Dogs will die."<sup>15</sup> In this instance, the longer fishing season at Babine Lake, due partially to the shorter distance to the ocean, becomes evident. The extent to which the HBC came to depend on Fort Kilmaurs to supply other New Caledonia posts further demonstrates the comparative abundance from which the Babine villages benefitted.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Brown complained that the "trading of so many Salmon for the General use of the District, as has been done for these last three years has proved prejudicial to the returns" as the local aboriginal traders were able to gain many trade goods without having to part with their furs.<sup>17</sup> In this way, for this period

---

<sup>13</sup> M. Gende, T.P. Quinn, and M.F. Wilson, "Consumption Choice by Bears Feeding on Salmon," *Oecologia*, 127.3 (2001): 373, 380.

<sup>14</sup> Meggs, *Salmon*, 74, 76.

<sup>15</sup> B.74/a/1, Fraser Lake Post Journal 1822-1824, August 22, 1823, September 11, 1823.

<sup>16</sup> Catherine McClellan, "Intercultural Relations and Cultural Change in the Cordillera," *The Handbook of North American Indians* ed. William C. Sturtevant and June Helm (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1981), 390.

<sup>17</sup> HBCA B.11/e/2, Babine District Report 1826, folio 20.

the HBC records corroborate the scientific literature's applicability and highlight the variation in salmon availability between the Fraser and Skeena watersheds.

### **Pre-contact Economics**

The significant difference in resource access from Babine Lake west and the smaller difference to the east meant that there were grounds for an exchange of goods in both directions. In addition to the preconditions for pre-contact exchange, there is significant anthropological evidence that the Babine were part of an extensive exchange network, especially with the groups to their west, since well before the arrival of the European maritime fur trade. Although there is a large body of scholarship discussing aboriginal trade throughout British Columbia, the majority deals with general patterns rather than specific networks. Only a very few works discuss the Babine. While the Babine trade network to the west was a strong, longstanding relationship, trade with the Carrier at Stuart Lake to the east tended to be less frequent and less intense.

Exchange westward through the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan to the coastal groups was a longstanding trade relationship that developed around the different resource bases of the groups involved. Anthropologist Richard Daly noted that early spring trade between the Wet'suwet'en and the Gitksan must have consisted of the Wet'suwet'en receiving smoked eels and early salmon in exchange for tanned hides and garments for which he claims the Athapaskan groups are particularly well known.<sup>18</sup> Daly also listed some of the basic items of exchange such as soapberries, birch bark, and Saskatoon wood arrows from the Wet'suwet'en and Babine and salmon strips, hemlock soap cakes, and cedar bark from the Gitksan.<sup>19</sup> The mountainous territories of the Babine and Wet'suwet'en provided greater access to large ungulates and berry patches to supply the prized tanned hides and Saskatoon arrows while the Gitksan position lower

---

<sup>18</sup> Daly, *Our Box Was Full*, 225.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

down the river gave them access to salmon that had not lost as much of their fat content from an arduous upstream journey.

This link through the Gitksan provided the Babine with access to the coastal trade goods and trade networks long before European items began to flow along them. Daly argues that the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en were well situated for trade because they were not only located between the coastal and interior groups but also covered three major climatic zones, the coast, interior plateau, and boreal forest.<sup>20</sup> According to Daly, the interior trade items were the "reliable, easily preserved salmon and sweet easily preserved berries; ungulate hides, thongs, and sinew; and furs and dried game."<sup>21</sup> Daly's mention of salmon is significant because the coastal groups also had access to this resource. The difference, as he later clarified, is that when the fish arrived around the Bulkley River, they had enough fat remaining for good flavour but not enough to hinder the drying process, for which the interior climate is much better suited than the damp coastal regions.<sup>22</sup> This ease of preservation would also have applied to the storage of berries by the Babine and Wet'suwet'en to be traded in the spring for oolichan grease from the coastal groups where the climate would make long-term berry preservation more difficult. The inland groups would receive "oolichan grease and dry oolichan ... seaweed, herring eggs and abalone shells, dried clams."<sup>23</sup> The items exchanged between the coast and the interior groups clearly reflect the influence of the different environments creating impetus for trade between the two regions.

Importantly, many of the items exchanged were not merely luxury goods, but had assumed a central position in the subsistence or culture of the importing group. The best example

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 217. It should be noted that for the purposes of the Delgamuukw case, and therefore Daly's research, the Wet'suwet'en were regarded as distinct from the Babine groups despite shared language and kinship ties.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> "Gisdaywa Testimony," 1557.

of this is likely the spring oolichan-for-berry exchange that Daly describes. Spring trade for oolichan was important enough to the interior groups that they would save and exchange highly prized preserved berries, even in years when the crop had been less successful, to obtain the grease from the coast.<sup>24</sup> In this case, the exchange provided interior groups with an important source of high energy fat and coastal groups with well-preserved fruit at a time when the larders of both were likely at their most depleted. Subsistence barter, combined with the role of interior furs and leather in the making of coastal clothing, indicates the importance of the ties between the coastal groups and those in the interior around Babine Lake; ties that had existed as part of these groups' subsistence round long before the arrival of European goods and people.

Regional trade flows were generally east-west and the initial connection for the Babine in this network was the Wet'suwet'en of the Bulkley Valley directly to their west.<sup>25</sup> The existence of two apparently well-known trade trails between the two locations demonstrates the frequent intercourse between Babine Lake and the Bulkley Valley. One ran from the northern tip of the lake, near Nass Chick, to the Wet'suwet'en village of Hagwilget, near the confluence of the Bulkley and Skeena Rivers; the second ran from just north of Fort Kilmaurs to modern day Moricetown where the Wet'suwet'en had a fishing village.<sup>26</sup> Peter Skene Ogden traversed the northern of these two routes from Nass Chick in the 1830s. Ogden had some difficulty following the trail until he encountered two hunters from the region who were very familiar with the route and in less than three days after departing Fort Babine, Ogden arrived at Hagwilget.<sup>27</sup> Given the close relations between Babine Lake and the Bulkley Valley, clearly these trails were the major

---

<sup>24</sup> Daly, *Our Box Was Full*, 114.

<sup>25</sup> Throughout his book Daly frequently includes the Babine groups within his references to the Wet'suwet'en although it is never clear whether he actually considers them a single economic and cultural group or as partners in the specific endeavors in which he mentions them together.

<sup>26</sup> George F. Macdonald, "The Epic of Nekt," in *The Tsimshian: Images of the Past, Views for the Present*, ed. Margaret Seguin (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1984), 75.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Skene Ogden, *Traits of American-Indian Life and Character* (London: Smith Elder and Co., 1853), 76-90.

arteries of trade, and the means of visiting and feasting between the two groups, rather than the water route that would take them through Gitksan territory on the Skeena before connecting them at the junction of the Bulkley and Skeena Rivers.

Compared to the close relations with their western neighbours, the Babine trade relations with the Carrier to the east appear to have been much less frequent or intense. This may be rooted in the fact that the Babine did not gather with other Carrier groups during salmon season. Major congregations formed at the north end of Babine Lake and at the fisheries on the Stuart and Fraser Rivers but these two groups remained distinct.<sup>28</sup> Ultimately, the movement during fishing season was one in which the Stuart Lake populations moved east and north towards the Stuart and other rivers, such as the Pinche River, entering the northern side of Stuart Lake while the Babine groups moved west and north to the clan fishing weirs along the Babine River. Most of the feasting, visiting, and trading occurred during fishing season and the location of fishing sites meant that during this time the groups from Babine Lake were much farther from those on Stuart and Fraser Lakes and much closer, often even sharing fishing sites, with the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan. The result was that people from Babine were more likely to attend a feast among their westerly neighbours, or make the short trip to a trade fair at the forks of the Bulkley and Skeena to trade, than to travel long distances to attend a feast or trade with the Carrier on Stuart or Fraser Lakes.

The cyclical shortage of salmon resources at Stuart Lake did not seem to result in any sort of regular or high volume trade. The idea that a dearth of resources in one area would fail to encourage trade is somewhat counterintuitive. One might expect that a shortfall would be adjusted through trade with other regions that had access to the scarce resource. In this way, salmon should have served as a basis of exchange between the groups on Babine Lake and those

---

<sup>28</sup> Meggs, *Salmon*, 74.

at Stuart Lake and Fraser Lake. This did occur on several occasions but evidently infrequently. It appears that the Stuart Lake runs failed more often than those at Fraser Lake, making the latter a closer location to secure salmon when local resources failed.<sup>29</sup> Although the Stuart Lake journal occasionally notes that shortages forced the Carrier “to have recourse to Babine Lake to trade what they can get there,” these occurrences are much less common than the cyclic nature of the salmon supply should have dictated.<sup>30</sup> While these instances indicate that salmon occasionally served as the basis of exchange between these groups, it seems that the intermittent nature of the demand for salmon, as determined by the four year cycle of the Fraser River sockeye stocks, hampered the establishment of a regular salmon trade from Babine Lake east.

One possible explanation is that the aboriginal population at Stuart Lake was limited to as many people as the off-year runs could support, and therefore it was only when years of shortage were beyond the norm that they were forced to seek access to the produce of the Babine fishery. Although food shortages were a reality in New Caledonia, the term “starvation” did not always mean that groups were actually on the edge of death. Mary Black-Rogers argued that in fur trade journals starvation could have several meanings, one of which was a “...condition in which primary attention must be directed to the food quest, allowing little leeway for other activities.”<sup>31</sup> Though this suggests that starvation (the strict definition) was not as common as it appears in the HBC journals, the differences in the number of accounts of “starvation” in the journals still reflect the effect of the cyclical Fraser River sockeye runs compared to those at Babine Lake. Regardless of this distinction, frequent references to hunters returning empty-handed due to starvation or cold indicate that the shortages of food were having some effect. While this was a

---

<sup>29</sup> Hudson, “Traplines and Timber,” 66.

<sup>30</sup> HBCA B.188/a/17, Fort St. James Post Journal 1832, September 21, 1832.

<sup>31</sup> Mary Black-Rogers, “Varieties of “Starving”: Semantics and Survival in the Subarctic Fur Trade, 1750-1850,” *Ethnohistory* 33.4 (1986): 361.



common occurrence at any fort, a survey of the New Caledonia records for this period suggests that a consistent food supply reduced the occurrences at Fort Kilmaurs compared to other posts. Another possibility is that traders simply missed or failed to note instances of salmon trading between Stuart and Babine Lakes. This seems unlikely given Brown's obsession with any trade between these locales once Fort Kilmaurs was established. Had there been a consistent salmon trade, Brown would probably have commented on it in the Fort Kilmaurs journal.

With trade in salmon providing only an occasional basis for trade, the similarity in the territories around Stuart and Babine Lakes meant that there was little else to serve as a basis for significant exchange. According to Daly "from the Carrier and Sekani they [the Wet'suwet'en] received babiche bags, birchbark containers, dried soapberry flakes, and red ochre (found near Bear Lake)," a relatively short list compared to what was being received from coastal groups.<sup>32</sup> In addition, "Carrier" included the Babine and he later noted that the Babine and Wet'suwet'en supplied the Gitksan with "soapberries, birchbark, and Saskatoon wood arrows" further reducing the amount of goods that would be imported from east of Babine Lake.<sup>33</sup> Moose hides, an important article in Babine and Wet'suwet'en funeral ceremonies, were most likely obtained through the northward connection with the Sekani at Takla Lake. Indeed, the Fort Kilmaurs journals contain an instance of Chief Casepin giving his shirt to a Sekani chief in an effort to convince him to visit and trade at Babine Lake the following winter.<sup>34</sup> Though the articles of trade are unspecified, the distinctness of the ecological zones of the Sekani and Babine suggests that trade would likely involve an exchange of salmon and oolichan for large game hides and dressed leather, the article most demanded from the HBC once they arrived.

---

<sup>32</sup> Daly, *Our Box Was Full*, 223.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>34</sup> B.11/a/2, Babine Post Journal 1823, March 13, 1823.

Pre-contact trade relations clearly extended from Babine Lake east and west but there were important differences in the exchange patterns in these two directions. The steep environmental gradient that runs from the coast inland, providing a wide variation in resources over a short distance, begins to level out from Babine Lake east and a corresponding falling off of trade appears to have occurred as a result. Like the pre-contact cultural relations, the Babine looked westward for their most intimate economic ties, and while this by no means meant there was not trade to the east, the Babine's eastward economic ties appear less frequent or intense, and perhaps correspondingly not as highly valued by the Babine.

### **The Maritime Fur Trade at Babine Lake and Beyond**

The maritime fur trade began on the western coast of Vancouver Island with James Cook's voyage and trade in Nootka Sound in 1778, and intensified following the publication of his journal three years later. The height of the competition along the Northwest Coast occurred in the last fifteen years of the eighteenth century when British, American, Russian, and for a time Spanish, merchants competed to trade sea otter pelts from the various aboriginal groups along the outer coast.<sup>35</sup> In the early stages of the maritime fur trade sea otter skins were plentiful and relatively cheaply obtained; however, by the turn of the century overhunting was beginning to take its toll and, combined with the international competition aboriginal traders were quick to take advantage of, prices rose and protracted voyages were necessary to turn a profit.<sup>36</sup> British monopoly laws of the period effectively forced their traders out of the market. Because the Northwest Coast and Canton were technically the separate monopolies of the East India and South Sea Companies, ships registered in Britain were forced to get permission to trade on the coast from the South Sea Company and either use an East India Company agent or give the

---

<sup>35</sup> James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods: The Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785-1841* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1992), 204.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 205-209.

company a percentage of their sales when trading at Canton.<sup>37</sup> These restrictions cut heavily into the profits of the British Northwest Coast traders and provided a huge advantage to American traders who were free of similar restrictions. Combined with the efficiency of the Americans, this tangle of regulations rapidly discouraged British traders who left the coastal trade mostly to the Americans from the 1790s to the mid-1820s.<sup>38</sup> However, the maritime fur trade declined during the 1810s because of new American trade restrictions, the War of 1812, and decreasing sea otter populations. While the trade had been carried out since the early 1780s, its origin on the southern areas of the British Columbia Coast, and the emphasis on sea otter pelts rather than land furs suggests that the effects of the trade were not seen on the lower Skeena until the mid-1780s.

Arriving at the Skeena in the mid-1780s, the maritime fur trade operated for nearly thirty-five years before the establishment of Fort Kilmaurs in 1822, during which a significant amount of European goods moved inland. The first evidence of the maritime fur trade reaching inland comes with the arrival of the earliest recorded observations of what became New Caledonia by Alexander Mackenzie during his transcontinental trek in 1793. While ascending the Parsnip River, Mackenzie encountered a group of Sekani and learned that:

Their iron-work they obtained from the people who inhabit the bank of that river [the Fraser], and an adjacent lake, in exchange for beaver skins, and dressed moose skins. They represented the latter as travelling, during a moon, to get to the country of other tribes, who live in houses, with whom they traffic for the same commodities; and that these also extend their journies [sic] in the same manner to the sea coast, or, to use their expression, the Stinking Lake, where they trade with people like us, that come there in vessels as big as islands.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>39</sup> Alexander Mackenzie, *The Journals of Alexander Mackenzie: Voyages From Montreal, On the River St. Laurence, Through the Continent of North America, to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans; In the Years, 1789 and 1793; With a Preliminary Account of the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Fur Trade of That Country* (1801; repr., California: The Narrative Press, 2001), 258.

While this is clear evidence that by the 1790s European goods from the maritime fur trade had travelled well inland, Mackenzie also noted that the same groups had a “few white beads, which they get where they procure their iron: they are from a line to an inch in length, and are worn in their ears, but are not of European manufacture” indicating that traditional goods were still retaining their place in the indigenous economic networks.<sup>40</sup> Mackenzie’s subsequent journey never entered the region of the Babine or their eastern neighbours and it is impossible to ascertain the path the iron goods he observed among the Sekani, or among the other groups he encountered, took from the coast to the those groups. The presence of European goods observed by Mackenzie suggests that he was witnessing a well-established trade in European items rather than the leading tendrils of European commerce making their way slowly inland. No matter the route travelled, Mackenzie’s account demonstrates that European goods were flowing inland alongside traditional items well before the establishment of trading posts in New Caledonia.

Regardless of the origin of the items that Mackenzie noted in his journal, it is clear that the products of the maritime fur trade had reached Stuart Lake, almost certainly through the Babine, by the time Fraser established Fort St. James. In a letter to John Stuart in September 1806, Fraser noted that the “greatest curiosity I saw on my voyage to the other end of the Lake [Stuart Lake] was spoons and metal pots, there are difference[s] between them and those of this place.”<sup>41</sup> Although Fraser did not identify the origin of the goods observed at the western end of Stuart Lake, the location and observations by later traders suggests that the most likely source was up the Skeena through Babine Lake to the Carrier on Stuart Lake. Daniel Williams Harmon’s 1811 encounter with two men who arrived at Fort St. James in June and identified themselves as “Nate-ote-tains” suggests that Babine people had likely served as middlemen

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>41</sup> Simon Fraser, *The Letters and Journals of Simon Fraser, 1806-1808*, ed. W. Kaye Lamb (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2007), 260.

trading the goods they received from the Skeena groups into Stuart Lake.<sup>42</sup> The Nate-ote-tains described their territory as being nearly directly west of Stuart Lake and having a large river that passes through it (probably the Bulkley or Skeena) and that Europeans come up this river to trade.<sup>43</sup> Harmon made a trading journey to the Babine country in January of 1812. While in one of the villages on a long lake (probably Babine Lake) he was told that Europeans came up the river to trade every year and “to convince us that what they had said was true they showed us many articles, which they barter from their Neighbours the *Atenas* who purchase them directly from the white people which were Guns, Cloth, Blankets, Axes and cast Iron Pots &c.”<sup>44</sup> This is an early confirmation of the ongoing role of the traditional trade networks in carrying goods inland from the coast in exchange for interior produce.

Though the NWC and later the HBC were clearly aware of the westward trade network of the Babine, it was not until the establishment of Fort Kilmaurs that the importance and strength of this westward connection became apparent. Initial confusion over the geography of the region between Stuart Lake and the coast led the HBC to believe that the major competition was originating from established Russian outposts. In 1821 George Simpson wrote to John Stuart instructing him to attempt to extend the trade in New Caledonia as the “Russians are endeavouring to set up claims on the North West Coast as low as Latt 57 and it is considered desirable to extend the Trading Posts in the North West of Frazers River; It is probable the British Government would support us in possession of the Country which may be occupied by Trading Posts and it is desirable to keep the Russians at a distance.”<sup>45</sup> This set of instructions led Brown to make an exploratory journey to Babine Lake in the winter of 1821/1822 and then to

---

<sup>42</sup> Daniel Williams Harmon, *Harmon's Journal, 1800-1819*, ed. W. Kaye Lamb (Victoria: Touchwood Editions, 2006), 125.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 133-134. Italics in the original.

<sup>45</sup> HBCA D.4/1, George Simpson's Outward Correspondence 1821-1822, Simpson to Stuart 12 July 1822, folio 113.

return to establish Fort Kilmaurs in the fall of 1822.<sup>46</sup> Once the post was established and Brown began to grasp the realities of the local economic and socio-political networks, it became apparent that the major source of European goods was actually from the transient, predominantly American, trading ships that plied the Northwest Coast. What is increasingly apparent in Brown's records is that while the American ships provided the goods, traditional aboriginal trade partners of the Babine provided the direct competition to HBC traders.

The records of the period following the establishment of Fort Kilmaurs allow an assessment of the changes that may have taken place to the pre-contact trade networks. Earlier written records do not permit scholars to quantify the relative intensity of the eastward or westward trade relations of the Babine. Instead, these earlier records demonstrate that some trade occurred from Babine Lake east and that the maritime fur trade supplied goods through pre-existing trade networks alongside traditional trade items. The establishment of Fort Kilmaurs was the first opportunity to gauge the comparative intensity to the east and west.

Brown's journey to establish Fort Kilmaurs in October 1822 provides some initial insight into the frequency and intimacy of the economic relationship between the Babine and their Carrier neighbours to the east. His previous journey to Babine Lake had taken place in the winter of 1821-22, during which he was unable to accurately gauge the state of the trail between Babine and Stuart Lakes. In the autumn of 1822, he observed "...there was a great deal more wood to cut than what I was to suppose from the view that I had of it last winter. The most of what is lying down was then covered with snow," an observation that reflected the difficulties of the entire endeavour of opening a path from Stuart Lake to Babine Lake.<sup>47</sup> Struggling up a small river, Brown and his party were forced to cut a portage, with assistance from several local

---

<sup>46</sup> HBCA B.11/a/1, Babine Post Journal 1822-23, October 16, 1822.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

aboriginal men, for seven days.<sup>48</sup> The impassability of the portage suggests that in 1822 trade was infrequent across the narrow stretch of land separating Babine and Stuart Lakes. The state of the trail then, supports the conclusion that the volume of trade along that trail was modest before 1822.

However, the presence of European goods at Stuart Lake, as noted by Fraser, indicates that there was some traffic between the Babine and the Carrier. This is borne out by Brown's intermittent encounter with an aboriginal man named Nose ess throughout the fall and spring of 1822 and 1823. Nose ess was from the "Little Lake" between Babine and Stuart Lakes that was situated in the Fort St. James trading region.<sup>49</sup> The establishment of Fort Kilmaurs encroached on Nose ess's trading activities, breaking his monopoly on trading goods from Stuart Lake and the HBC into Babine Lake and the Bulkley Valley. When Brown passed through Tachy (Babine) to establish Kilmaurs, he noted that the village was nearly deserted, "Nose ess having prevailed upon all the other [sic] to accompany him below to a feast—I understand this fellow has traded furs from them for two or three Moose skins—To carry on which traffic I believe is the object of his journey."<sup>50</sup> A few days after this Nose ess met Brown at Nah tell cuss where a disagreement took place regarding the future relationship between Nose ess and the HBC. Nose ess proposed to settle his debt at St. James and trade with Kilmaurs but Brown asked him to remain at the portage claiming he could do very well "[p]rocuring provisions to supply the people passing and repassing—and to carry all his furs to St. James, which was the Fort which had the right to receive them."<sup>51</sup> Brown insisted that Nose ess stop trading with other aboriginal groups and that

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., October 14-21, 1822.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., November 20, 1822.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., October 23, 1822.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., October 24, 1822.

he and those with whom he traded conduct all of their business directly with the HBC.<sup>52</sup> Nose ess did not comply with this initial demand. Six months later, Brown learned that Nose ess was preparing to trade with the Wet'suwet'en with "whom it would seem he has an arrangement from the manner he speaks of being sure of what they have," and Brown threatened that if the trade continued he would "take every skin from them which they might procure in that manner."<sup>53</sup>

This initial series of encounters indicates that there was some commerce between Babine and Stuart Lakes. Nose ess's location between Stuart and Babine Lakes positioned him as a natural intermediary between the Carrier and the Babine, and later the NWC/HBC and the Babine. While Nose ess had a well-established trading network amidst both the Babine and the Wet'suwet'en, the trade volume mentioned is not large, suggesting that this network was not of major significance to the Babine. Combined with the condition of the portage connecting Babine and Stuart Lakes a picture of a somewhat uncertain relationship emerges. Nose ess's enterprise confirms that there was trade between the Babine and Carrier, but it does not seem to have been of enough significance to justify either group putting in the effort to clear the blow-down from the major connecting route.

A strong, economic connection between the Babine, Wet'suwet'en, and Gitksan underlies Brown's observations of, and his increasing frustration with the trade connections between the Babine and their western neighbours. Babine traders were well aware of the value of European goods and the worth of their hides in the coastal market and this fact, probably combined with loyalty to longstanding personal and economic relationships, kept the majority of the Babine's business with their western neighbours. Brown's records read like a lament of beaver hides passing beyond his reach. In one early instance, he was informed that "there is an Indian named

---

<sup>52</sup> B.11/a/1, Babine Post Journal 1822-23, October 23, 1822; B.11/a/2, Babine Post Journal 1823, April 21, 1823.

<sup>53</sup> B.11/a/2, Babine Post Journal 1823, April 21, 1823.



Cli Kiss at present fishing in the Bay which stretches toward Tachy who had a few furs but say he will not trade them here as we sell our goods too high.”<sup>54</sup> Cli kiss continued to decline trading at Kilmaurs, insisting that the “Goods are too Dear and he therefore meant to carry them [his furs] below and trade them with the Atnahs.”<sup>55</sup> This steadfast resistance to trading with the HBC as a consistent policy rather than a tactic to procure a better price was unusual and highlights the strength of the ties between the Babine their western neighbours.

A more common type of interaction between Brown and a Babine trader involved the Babine traders attempting to leverage the presence of an alternative coastal market to procure a better price from Brown. An encounter with Ack Koo shaw, who Brown portrays as an influential chief, is an example of a much more common exchange. In 1822, Brown explained that Ack Koo shaw:

brought thirteen skins to my Encampment, one of which he gave me to pay what he owed—And of the other twelve he wished me to give him a Gun with the balance on Debt—This I refused to do on account of him not having delivered the Furs to me on arrival—and paying his Debt—When he learned this he began to Collect his Furs saying he would get a Gun for them below.<sup>56</sup>

Following this initial statement, Brown provided a long and detailed account of the exchange between himself and Ack Koo shaw which eventually resulted in Brown taking partial payment for the gun and giving the remainder to Ack Koo shaw on credit because Brown was “anxious to avoid any misunderstandings with him further than is necessary to cause him to behave better in the future.”<sup>57</sup> While Brown did not portray his actions as a capitulation, it is evident that the pressure being applied by Ack Koo shaw’s threats to take his business back downriver had the desired effect. Effective competition from western aboriginal traders was not limited to the trade

---

<sup>54</sup> HBCA B.11/a/1, Babine Post Journal 1822-23, November 14, 1822.

<sup>55</sup> HBCA B.11/a/2, Babine Post Journal 1823, February 25, 1823.

<sup>56</sup> HBCA B.11/a/1, Babine Post Journal 1822-23, January 3, 1823.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

in European goods. When Brown made a trading voyage to the northern tip of the lake in January of 1823 he lamented that “There being a great many of the Indians of Simpsons [Bulkley] River here which is much against us as they have no Furs and have traded all or most of the Salmon from the Residents of this place.”<sup>58</sup> While the Wet’suwet’en were likely depending partially on their kinship connections to the Babine, they were also underselling the HBC as Brown noted they “pay much higher for Salmon than we can afford to do.”<sup>59</sup> Throughout the first six months of his residence on Babine Lake Brown was being defeated or forced to give concessions outside his preferred trading model, in both the provisioning and fur trade, by the strong competition provided by the Wet’suwet’en and Gitksan traders from the west.

Brown’s ongoing concern with the trade between the Babine and their western neighbours indicates how detrimental it was to HBC business. Despite his statement that the “goods these people bring as far as I have seen or could learn are of the coarsest Kind” Brown noted that “their Leather is what the People here speak most highly of as being good and cheap” and concluded that the Babine were so attached to this trade that if it was not stopped “in a short time I would not be the least surprised to see them share the trade of not only this Lake but of Stuarts Lake and Frasers Lake also.”<sup>60</sup> Clearly, Brown was struggling to understand and compete with an entrenched trade relationship between the Babine and their western neighbours that provided the Babine with a preferred market in which they could obtain the goods they desired from the west rather than the east, with no apparent changes from the pre-contact economic system.

## **Conclusion**

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., January 1, 1823.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> HBCA B.11/e/1, Babine District Report 1822, folio 3d-4.

Differences in resource availability evident in the environmental zones and the nature of the salmon runs in the Skeena and Fraser Rivers gave rise to an indigenous trading network that stretched east and west from Babine Lake. For the Babine, the most important commerce took place along the rivers and over the trails with the groups to the west. The closest economic ties were with the Wet'suwet'en of the Bulkley Valley and the Gitksan of the Skeena River with whom the Babine were closely connected through a common social and political system. The Gitksan also served as a link to the coastal groups that had an even larger disparity in the types of resources available, creating a strong impetus for east-west trade between the coast and the interior. Leaving out the effect of the cyclical salmon runs on the Fraser (which do not appear to have created a consistent trade), the grade of differential access to resources was very steep from the coast to Babine Lake and then levelled off towards the east. Quite simply this meant there was greater incentive for the Babine to trade with their western neighbours. This is borne out by the anthropological accounts and earliest written records for the region that reflect an intricate exchange network carrying coastal produce up the Skeena and Bulkley or Babine Rivers to Babine Lake and beyond in return for the furs and berries produced inland.

With the advent of the maritime fur trade, the aboriginal trade network also connected the Babine to the European goods. While these goods would have initially remained largely among the coastal groups or those immediately adjacent to them, by the time of the first written record European goods were relatively common in areas hundreds of kilometers from the coast. Although Fraser and Harmon also noted the presence of European goods near or at Babine Lake, the evidence recorded in the Fort Kilmaurs journals suggests that the maritime fur trade did not significantly alter the underlying trade networks. The type and volume of goods moving inland likely changed, but the same basic relationships that had existed prior to European influence

appear to have remained intact. The earliest Fort Kilmuars journals highlight the strong economic attachment of the Babine to their western neighbours while also suggesting that commerce from Babine Lake east was much less significant. Ultimately, the arrival of the maritime fur trade off the mouth of the Skeena does not appear to have significantly altered the trade network of the Babine; they remained strongly attached to the westward trade with weaker economic links to their eastern neighbours.

### Chapter Three: The Lament of a Chief Trader

In fur trade historiography, the establishment of a trading post is often assumed to have been a significant catalyst for change among aboriginal groups. Scholarly expectation suggests that the arrival of European goods within an economic network necessarily resulted in alterations to this network to accommodate this trade. According to arguments, such as those posed by Robin Fisher, the arrival of the fur trade should have created power shifts among aboriginal groups including social changes and the rise of new leaders.<sup>1</sup> Arthur J. Ray and Theodore Binnema make similar arguments with regard to the region east of the Rocky Mountains.<sup>2</sup> However, the pattern and effects of the arrival and dispersal of European goods around Babine Lake was very different from that seen elsewhere. Following the maritime fur trade, the next major application of external forces through the fur trade was the establishment of Fort Kilmaurs near the north end of Babine Lake in 1822.

Prior to the establishment of Fort Kilmaurs, trade with the Babine was conducted through voyages, like the one undertaken by Brown and Stuart in 1821. However, these trips were infrequent and their long-term effect on traditional networks was likely minimal. While the proximity of Fort St. James had the potential to exert some pull at Babine Lake, the establishment of Fort Kilmaurs in 1822 constituted the first consistent influence among the Babine.<sup>3</sup> The Fort Kilmaurs records from the 1820s contain no evidence that the establishment of an HBC post in the midst of the Babine resulted in major alterations in the trading networks. It

---

<sup>1</sup> Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 46-47.

<sup>2</sup> Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, xxxiii- xxxiv; Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground*, 6.

<sup>3</sup> It is clear from some of the HBC records that the establishment of Fort St. James likely had some slight effect on the Babine. However, it was not until 1811 that any people from that lake visited the post and trading excursions to Babine Lake were sporadically undertaken after that date. The irregularity of these trips after 1811 suggests that they would have had little lasting impact on the Babine trade patterns or networks.

appears that, between 1822 and 1830, ties to the west remained the Babine's dominant economic link, and eastward connections continued to play a secondary role.

### **Trade to the East**

When Brown first established Fort Kilmaurs in 1822, the state of the trail between Stuart and Babine Lakes suggested there was not a large volume of traffic flowing along that route.<sup>4</sup> His subsequent encounters with the aboriginal trader Nose ess, who was serving as an intermediary between Stuart Lake and the Babine-Wet'suwet'en, demonstrated that trade volumes were minimal and were probably not playing a significant role in the overall economic network.<sup>5</sup> Subsequent journal entries in the Babine records tend to focus on the westward trade relations, suggesting that less exchange occurred between Babine and Stuart Lakes. However, Brown did make several entries that shed some light on relations between the Babine and the Carrier.

William Brown recorded several instances of gambling, which served as an alternative exchange pattern to traditional barter, between Stuart Lake Carrier and Babine people. During the winter of 1823, Brown noted that Noo cock gained a shirt which had been stolen from Fort St. James "at play but lost it soon after."<sup>6</sup> The HBC made several efforts to curtail this type of exchange. In the summer of 1825, Brown sent several men to "visit the Indians along the North side of the Lake towards the Portage and see that none of the St. James are there to engage them at play ... as they did last fall."<sup>7</sup> While this indicates some interaction and exchange took place, open commerce is seldom mentioned and the scarcity of references in the journals suggests that even gambling was relatively uncommon and circulated only a small volume of goods.

---

<sup>4</sup> Brown's description of this portage can be found on page 66.

<sup>5</sup> These encounters are discussed on pages 66 and 67.

<sup>6</sup> HBCA B.11/a/1, Babine Post Journal 1822-23, February 14, 1823.

<sup>7</sup> HBCA B.11/a/3, Babine Post Journal 1825, June 6, 1825.

Furthermore, underlying tensions between the Carrier and Babine are apparent in a series of exchanges between Brown and several Babine men regarding a sequence of thefts from Fort St. James. Casepin, a chief from Nah tell cuss, approached Brown stating he had “something of confidence to inform him of,” and explained that “six of the St. James Indians cut out one of the Store windows in the Night” and stole several items.<sup>8</sup> However, several fellow Babine interrupted Casepin who then refused to finish the story.<sup>9</sup> A week later Brown learned from Noo cock the details of a summer’s burglary from Fort St. James including most of the people involved, the articles that were taken, and how they were disposed of afterwards.<sup>10</sup> Significantly, Noo cock knew of three additional men who had participated in the robbery, but did not provide their names as the “Indians of St. James having threatened to Kill the first Indian who informs upon them.”<sup>11</sup> This apprehension probably explains Casepin’s refusal to discuss the issue after the other Babine interrupted. Brown also noted that the villagers at Tachy (Stuart) feared that the theft was known, and the HBC would “pay the Babines to accompany the people of this Establishment to St. James to make war upon the Indians there.”<sup>12</sup> His Babine informant was very nervous “in case it should be known they gave the information.”<sup>13</sup>

The account of the Fort St. James burglary reveals a considerable amount of fear and tension in the relationship between the Babine and Carrier. The Babine informants were terrified of retribution to the point that a chief refused to speak of it in front of his people. The Carrier were afraid that not only would the HBC hire the Babine for an attack, but that the Babine would be amenable to such an arrangement. Further, it seems that while the Babine had some qualms

---

<sup>8</sup> HBCA B.11/a/1, Babine Post Journal 1822-23, February 7, 1823.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., February 14, 1823.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

about bringing this issue forward, their concerns were based in a fear of retribution rather than any inherent sense of unity with the groups around Fort St. James. This account highlights the apprehensions and mistrust between the Carrier and Babine.

The tension between the Babine and Carrier is further demonstrated in an encounter that Charles Ross recorded in the 1825 Fort Kilmaurs journal, noting “arrived Dinnawee, a St. James Indian from the vicinity of Tatlah—The purpose of his visit was to procure medicines for Tassy whom he reports very sick. Tassy’s indisposition is attributed to the Saint Jms [sic] Indians for it would appear they had threatened him with their medicines.”<sup>14</sup> While the thefts from the St. James store were reported in 1823, this entry occurs two years later, indicating that these tensions were a recurring theme. The presence, or perception, of this animosity does not preclude interaction, as the gambling at Babine Lake clearly demonstrates. In fact, these exchanges and the account of the Fort St. James burglary suggest that a significant amount of information was flowing between Babine and Stuart Lakes. However, the evident tensions between the Carrier and the Babine do not correspond with the type of longstanding intimacy that would likely result from extended trade.

With the exception of Brown’s discussions with Nose ess, the HBC records contain very limited evidence regarding interaction between the Carrier and Babine. HBC record keepers were commercially focused and would have been keenly interested in any trade among the local aboriginal groups. Given this interest, it is significant that there are so few recorded instances of commercial exchange from Babine Lake east, and it is plausible that this is indicative of a low trade volume. Brown’s detailed writings on Nose ess’s rather limited trading enterprise and the extensive analysis he provides of the westward trade in both of his District Reports clearly demonstrate this. Brown’s awareness of the minutia of local commercial activities suggests that

---

<sup>14</sup> HBCA B.11/a/3, Babine Post Journal 1825, June 23, 1825.



his journals would have noted any significant exchange between Babine and Stuart Lakes.

Cumulatively, the HBC records indicate that relations between the Carrier and Babine were relatively tense and the intercourse that did occur did not appear to involve a significant exchange of goods.

### **Ties to the West**

Compared to the relatively few accounts of exchange to the east, references to an ongoing trade between the Babine aboriginal groups to the west fill early Fort Kilmaurs records. Brown was particularly concerned about western exchange because these traditional networks were effectively competing with the HBC by siphoning off a significant portion of the potential fur returns to American vessels on the coast. Concerns over this competition became a district-wide, and to some extent company-wide, consideration in strategic planning, and remained a central issue throughout the HBC records. The constant frustration westward trade caused HBC managers highlights the pervasiveness and ongoing longevity of the traditional network in the face of European attempts to impose a new overland monopoly and alter the traditional networks to their advantage.

The economic pattern that existed when Fort Kilmaurs was established was oriented largely to the west. The complex political and social connections between the Babine and their western neighbours were gradually puzzled out by Brown throughout his stay at Fort Kilmaurs, but it did not take him long to grasp that the predominant economic ties of the Babine, and correspondingly his main source of competition, arose from traditional networks to the coast. Brown attributed much of this competition to the activities of European vessels and Russian forts, but he did acknowledge the importance of the aboriginal traders' role as middlemen and understood that the aboriginal populations between his post and the ocean were key to gaining

greater control of the trade. After he had spent just over a month at Babine Lake, Brown proposed a plan for addressing these concerns to John Stuart and the two exchanged a series of letters on the topic. Unfortunately, only Brown's side of the exchange has survived. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of November, 1822 Brown wrote:

I beg leave to submit to your consideration, whether it would not be proper to leave six men including an interpreter Inland during the summer for the purpose of descending the Babine River to the sea or as far as may be deemed prudent for the safety of the Party or lend to the Interest of the concern—on returning to Ascend the River which [?] as far as the Babine Villages to ascertain the number of Indians who reside there—The state of the Country in regard to Fur bearing animals—And if any advantage could be derived to the concern, by either establishing there or at the junction of that River with the Babine River.<sup>15</sup>

This initial letter indicates that, in 1822, Brown was already considering ways to increase the fur returns of the Babine District through expansion into new territories. A secondary benefit of his proposed establishment would be the severing of the Babine's connection with their westward trading partners and the capture of furs that would otherwise flow out to the coast.

Stuart appears to have objected to the idea based on the cost. Brown's next letter details several other benefits that would be derived from the voyage and concludes by noting "we will at all events gain a Knowledge of these countries, And know what can be procured in them, which is a circumstance we are at present unacquainted with—And no one will expect this knowledge without some expense."<sup>16</sup> Rebutted again, Brown appeared to accept Stuart's decision but listed the problems that he had hoped to confront with his proposal. He argued that:

From the accounts of the Indians, and from what is still more to be depended upon, the number of European utensils the Babines are possessed of, there are Russians or other Traders on the seacoast who supply them.—To ascertain the number of these people, their means of furnishing the Articles of trade & c &c I would suppose to be an Object of some importance to the concern, As these points being Known[,] measures might be adopted to oppose their [views?], wither by forming establishments in their Vicinity or by drawing the Indians to

---

<sup>15</sup> HBCA B.11/a/1, Babine Post Journal 1822-23, Letter to John Stuart, November 27, 1822.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

the Interior with their Furs. It being reasonable to conclude that if they are allowed quietly to collect the Furs along the seacoast, they will ere long extend their Views to the Interior, and if we do not go to meet them they will come to meet us.—The consequence of which will be the Ruin of the whole trade of this quarter—In fact if any reliance is to be placed in the Indian Reports, they have already establishments in the Interior, And every year ascend the Babine or McDougall's River [Babine River was originally called McDougall's River] to a considerable distance for the purpose of trade.<sup>17</sup>

The dominant theme of much of this exchange, as indicated by Brown's initial emphasis on determining the fur bearing potential of the country to the west, is to expand into new fur bearing regions and gain a greater knowledge of the surrounding area. This argument was not enough to sway Stuart.

A secondary thread in the letters is Brown's concern about the effects of the trade coming inland from the coast. This is apparent in Brown's later and comparatively brief mention of the aboriginal trading networks. This reflects Brown's perception that the European traders on the coast, rather than aboriginal traders and trade networks, were the primary agents of the competition at Babine Lake. Thus, the content of these letters suggests that Brown had not entirely grasped the intricacies of the network bringing goods inland. Further, it is apparent that the HBC's cumulative knowledge of the terrain and aboriginal groups between Babine Lake and the Pacific Ocean was extremely limited. Essentially, this exchange indicates that the HBC had identified the issue of furs moving westward out of the Babine Lake area, but lack of knowledge of the terrain and aboriginal groups to the west caused them to attribute the greatest portion of the agency in this exodus to the European traders along the coast. Although he had supposedly accepted Stuart's veto, Brown immediately penned a letter to Governor George Simpson advocating for his proposed exploration and stating that he "could not reconcile [himself] to the Idea, that no advantage would be derived from it equivalent to the Expense, or that such a step

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., November, 30, 1822.

was contrary to the Views of the Committee and Council.”<sup>18</sup> He also asked Simpson to examine the correspondence between himself and Stuart and form his own opinion of the proposal.<sup>19</sup>

Brown’s persistence on this issue demonstrates that he had some idea the region to the west was essential to the trade of Babine Lake.

Brown’s struggles with the westward trade network of the Babine become increasingly evident through the 1822-1823 Fort Kilmaurs records. Despite the purported restrictions on distributing gifts and debt arising from Simpson’s austerity program, Brown persisted in making extensive use of gift giving to garner support and trade among the local aboriginal populations. He sent gifts to the chiefs on the Bulkley River and initial reports suggested these gifts were having the desired effect. Following one instance of gift giving, Brown received a report that the chief “has gone below to the Atnah Village to collect his young men and go off a Hunting [sic] with the intention of coming here in the summer with the whole of their hunts.[sic]”<sup>20</sup> However, in the same entry Brown conceded that “They have the old story of the advantageous trade they made below last summer—Being particularly anxious to draw these Indians here—I gave the Chief a similar present to the one I sent to the other.”<sup>21</sup> A few weeks later he “gave Quilt no a present the same as the other Chiefs—This by some may be considered extravagant—But it is done with the View of drawing the Trade of Simpsons River to this place and stirring up a spirit of Rivalship [sic] amongst the Chiefs, and it is impossible to do either without giving away property.”<sup>22</sup> Since his voyage to the coast was not authorized, this relatively liberal behaviour was one of the few tools at Brown’s disposal to attempt to curb the outflow of furs to the coast. As it became increasingly apparent that the traders to the west, be they aboriginal or European,

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Letter to George Simpson, December 3, 1822.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> HBCA B.11/a/2, Babine Post Journal 1823, February 23, 1823.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., March 8, 1823.

had largely captured the market, Brown was forced into liberality beyond what he felt would be acceptable, prompting him to incorporate his justifications into the official business records of the post.

The 1822 Babine District Report demonstrates that Brown was well aware that the HBC was losing a significant portion of the furs from the Babine region to coastal traders. Brown noted that “[t]hree fourths of the Furs procured by the Indians of Simpsons River were carried below and traded with the Indians of the Sea Coast—Last summer they made a more advantageous trade than usual so that when I was at Ack Koo Shaws Village in the beginning of January the most of the Indians of that quarter were talking of carrying their Furs below ensuing season.”<sup>23</sup> While this passage pertains to the Wet’suwet’en, and although Brown’s estimate that three quarters of the furs were travelling out to the coast is likely exaggerated, the journal entries throughout 1822 and 1823 indicate that there was certainly a significant trade from Babine Lake to the west. Furthermore, the following section clearly reveals Brown’s perception of the threat:

This traffic might without great danger or difficulty be in a great measure put to a stop if it is checked in the bud—But if the Natives of the seacoast are allowed to quietly for any length of time collect the Furs of the Indians of Simpsons River and those between that and the sea they will ere long extend their [views?] and make their excursions longer—So that in a short time I would not be the least surprised to see them share the trade of not only this Lake but of Stuarts Lake and Frasers Lake also—The distance from the Forks to the sea being so short they make three trips in the course of the summer—This with the spirit of traffic which exists amongst all the Carrier tribes would render the thing perfectly easy were they not to come no higher than the entrance of this Lake or even the Forks where they now come to.<sup>24</sup>

This passage is revealing in several ways. Brown identified the aboriginal traders from the coast, either Gitksan or Tsimshian, as the all-important link between the coastal European traders and the interior aboriginal groups. Further, his observation that there was a “spirit of traffic” among

---

<sup>23</sup> HBCA B.11/e/1, Babine District Report 1822, folio 3.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., folio 4.

the local aboriginal groups indicates that he was aware of some intergroup trading. Given the location of the fort and Brown's constant complaints about competition from the coast, he was almost certainly referring to exchange between the Babine and groups to their west. Finally, Brown was concerned about traditional trade networks beginning to transport larger number of furs from further afield to the coast, diminishing the trade of other posts beyond the Babine country. It is possible that this threat was an exaggeration in an attempt to gain permission to pursue his proposed exploration towards the coast, but it is important that he noted the possibility of the operations of aboriginal traders and networks posing such a significant, competitive threat to the entire region.

Fort Kilmaurs' 1825 post journal is relatively brief and contains few mentions of problems with direct trade between the Babine and their westward neighbours. The HBC employees do note that there was unrest in the region owing to some murders committed among the various groups and this may have temporarily hobbled the local economy.<sup>25</sup> However, there are still several mentions of feasts, and one of these entries notes that "the few that went from this place have [?] tolerable quantity of Beaver & other furs—Casepin that [sic] between him & the Indians below they have 250 Beaver besides other furs—He also says that the Atnahs from the Main River have had as many in Trade for Fish Oil & Dress'd Skins."<sup>26</sup> Clearly, the exchange between the coast and interior continued despite these setbacks, though much of it was taking place beyond sight of Fort Kilmaurs. This account notes that trade items were of both traditional and European manufacture. Fish oil is almost certainly rendered oolichan fat, while dressed skins were traditionally a trade item from the interior to the coast suggesting they arrived on European ships.

---

<sup>25</sup> HBCA B.11/a/3, Babine Post Journal 1825, June 9, 1825.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., November 11, 1825.

Mention of dressed skins or leather is a major theme running through the Fort Kilmaurs records and Brown's correspondence. Trade in leather looms large in the competition between the HBC and the aboriginal traders from to the west. Brown was well aware of the importance of leather in the local economy, and constantly expressed concern with the amount and quality of dressed skins that could be supplied to Fort Kilmaurs. Early in 1823, Brown received his first shipment of leather. He wrote to Stuart that he was "sorry that the leather sent is of such a bad quality as it will be impossible to sell it to any advantage here."<sup>27</sup> He argued that high quality leather was of greater importance at Kilmaurs "[f]or a Babine will much more readily give eight or nine Beavers for a Large Moose skin then for an inferior one" and therefore "a greater proportion of prime skins might be brought here without any injustice to the other Establishments."<sup>28</sup> In this passage, Brown identified an issue that would be at the crux of the competitive trade with the groups to the west. In his model, which is in many ways borne out through subsequent events, the party with the best and cheapest leather would garner the greatest trade.

The first leather shipment was only the initial step in an ongoing see-saw battle around leather. Discussing the coastal traders in his 1822 report, Brown noted "their Leather is what the People here speak most highly of as being good and cheap."<sup>29</sup> After a shipment in March of 1823 Brown wrote "[t]his is a very fine assortment of Leather—Which I am particularly glad of as it will enable me to shew [sic] the Indians that we can furnish them with as good leather as they can procure from the seacoast—Which may be a means of drawing the trade from that Quarter."<sup>30</sup> He subsequently wrote to Stuart that the shipment would "enable me to make good

---

<sup>27</sup> HBCA B.11/a/1, Babine Post Journal 1822-23, Letter to John Stuart, February 10, 1823.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> HBCA B.11/e/1, Babine District Report 1822, folio 4.

<sup>30</sup> HBCA B.11/a/2, Babine Post Journal 1823, March 23, 1823.

my promises to the Indians, they have been frequently annoying me with an account of the fine Leather they receive from the Sea.”<sup>31</sup> In 1825 “a falling off may be expected in the Trade of this Spring—For the want of Leather has dampened the Spirits of the Indians” and, after an altercation during a trade negotiation, “our poverty of Leather which is the invariable demand of the Hotsett Indians contributed not a little to make these fellows saucy.”<sup>32</sup>

Brown’s problems with leather peaked in 1825. In that year the journal is replete with references to the issues created by the lack of this important trade item. Statements such as “Indians grumble hard at the scarcity of Leather and we find it a very difficult task to satisfy them without it” or, in some cases, an aboriginal trader arriving at the post with a “Quantity of Beaver which he wished to barter for Leather but finding he could obtain none he bundled up his Furs and marched off in high dudgeon” are common.<sup>33</sup> There was at least one instance of an aboriginal trader who would not come to the post until “they get information of Leather being arrived.”<sup>34</sup> In 1825, the coastal trade networks were winning the battle to supply high quality leather to the Babine at a reasonable price.

Brown’s 1826 report provides a succinct overview of the advantages enjoyed by the Tsimshian and Gitksan traders bringing European and traditional goods from the coast to the interior. In a section titled “Of the Traders from the Seacoast” he wrote:

we do not meet on an equal footing, as they receive goods at a low rate from the Vessels which frequent the coast—and though these articles generally speaking are old and little worth (particularly the arms) still when compared with any thing we can give at the same price, they appear great in the eyes of Indians who have no Knowledge of the intrinsic value of property—To which may be added they work their own Crafts coming up the River—Understand the Language—and are at no expences [sic] for provisions nor any thing else—Consequently can afford to

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., Letter to John Stuart, March 27, 1823.

<sup>32</sup> HBCA B.11/a/3, Babine Post Journal 1825, June 2, 1825; HBCA B.11/a/3, Babine Post Journal 1825, June 9, 1825.

<sup>33</sup> HBCA B.11/a/3, Babine Post Journal 1825, June 19, July 12, 1825.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., November 11, 1825.



give a high price for what Furs they receive, and then have what will appear to them handsome profits.<sup>35</sup>

Combined with these strictly economic advantages, Brown understood that the shared culture was an additional advantage to the coastal traders, one with which the HBC could not hope to contend:

Besides they have recourse to means which would not do with us—For instance on their arrival at a Village they ascertain (if they do not know previously) who have Furs and the amount of them—On which they go to the persons Lodge, blow a parcel of Swans down upon his head (which is reckoned a mark of great honor, but amongst the Carriers and Atnahs) and then commence dancing and singing a song in his praise—After which they make him a present, and treat him with something to eat—When he according to the Custom of his country, makes them in return a present of his Furs, which if not equal to what he has received, he adds sifflue [marmot] Robes, and dressed skins to make up the value.<sup>36</sup>

These two passages provide a glimpse into the various factors facilitating the continuance of the traditional networks dominance despite HBC attempts at redirecting the trade for its own benefit. Although one important advantage, the low initial cost of the goods, stemmed from the trading practices of the coastal vessels, the rest were the result of longstanding trade networks, social ties, and simple geography. The Tsimshian and Gitksan traders enjoyed a significant advantage, as their source of goods was much closer to the Babine market. Aboriginal traders were hosted by their clan members among the Wet'suwet'en or Babine, reducing transport and provisioning costs and allowing aboriginal traders to offer better deals than the HBC. Add to this a thorough command of the local language and a shared cultural system providing aboriginal traders with a broad network of connections, and it is little wonder that the older trade networks persisted, and even flourished, in the face of HBC competition in the interior.

After four years of attempting to compete with traditional networks from his position on Babine Lake, Brown concluded that the only solution was to “form an Establishment at the Forks

---

<sup>35</sup> HBCA B.11/e/2, Babine District Report 1826, folio 11-11d.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., folio 11d.

of the Babine and Simpson's River, by which such Furs as are not procured there, will be got at either Kilmaurs or Francis Lake."<sup>37</sup> This was not the first time he had floated this proposal in his correspondence, journals, and reports, but by 1826 he was touting it as the only effective way to compete with westward trade networks. His proposal for a post at the forks of the Skeena and Bulkley Rivers contained a number of new detailed measures including linking Fort Kilmaurs to the new post, possibly supplying both posts up the Skeena River, and moving Fort Kilmaurs to the "small Lake, where the Indians work the salmon" (modern Nikilkwat Lake) to facilitate provisioning and encourage that larger group of Babine in hunting.<sup>38</sup> Brown's emphasis on this being the only solution to the exodus of furs from New Caledonia suggests he had concluded it was impossible to sever the traditional networks without a physical presence between Babine Lake and the Pacific Ocean. According to Brown, the Tsimshian traders were coming as high as the upper Gitksan villages and the structure of the traditional network meant "they either procured [the furs] by these Indians meeting them at the Forks, or by the means of the Atnahs (who act as agents for them) going there and trading them."<sup>39</sup> This further supports the idea that it was the traditional aboriginal trading networks, partially supplied from coastal traders, which provided such effective competition to the HBC around Babine Lake. While this is the last local reference that survives for the period, there is an excerpt in the Minutes of Council for the Northern Department in 1829 stating that "large quantities of Furs are conveyed annually to the Coast from the unsettled parts of New Caledonia to the Westward and Northward of Babine and Simpson's River, which fall into the hands of the American and Russian traders."<sup>40</sup> Although not

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., folio 12d.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., folio 13d-15.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., folio 12d.

<sup>40</sup> HBCA B.239/k/6, Minutes of Council Northern Department, June 2, 1829.

referring specifically to the Babine, this certainly indicates that the traditional trade patterns and networks continued to be viable well after the journals from Kilmaurs ended.

### **Conclusion**

Ultimately, the details of Brown's 1826 district report highlight the ineffectiveness of the HBC in competing with the longstanding local aboriginal trade networks. Brown's detailed plan for establishing a post at the forks and relocating Fort Kilmaurs indicates he was unable to alter the regional economic fabric of the region enough to benefit the HBC. Instead, he was forced to propose an overhaul of the company's regional strategy to attack the problem from a different angle. This plan suggests his capitulation to the superior trading enterprise of the aboriginal networks. Although there are few surviving records that touch on Babine Lake between 1827 and 1830, the spattering of references in other HBC records suggests that little changed in those four years, and the traditional networks continued to dominate trade in the Babine region. In short, the Fort Kilmaurs records suggest that the arrival of the overland fur trade at Babine Lake had little effect on the Babine's traditional economic network.

## **Conclusion**

Ultimately, the documentary record suggests that the arrival of the maritime and overland fur trade at Babine Lake had little effect on the social or economic networks of the Babine. The implications of this conclusion are far reaching. It suggests that historians must reconsider the effect that the fur trade may have had on aboriginal groups on the Pacific Slope. The standard interpretations that the fur trade, while not a complete upheaval of traditional life, altered the aboriginal economic patterns to incorporate the European posts must be reassessed with regard to their applicability to groups with coastal connections. This thesis is centered specifically on the social and economic networks of the Babine and does not attempt to assess any of impacts the fur trade may have had on the day-to-day life of the Babine. Indeed, the existing evidence sheds very little light on the details. This thesis is only the beginning of the scholarship specifically regarding the economics around Babine Lake and may be complicated by what future work, especially archaeological digs, may reveal about pre and proto-contact networks. In addition, while not captured in the existing written record, it is certain that metal replaced some indigenous technologies and may have correspondingly altered the exchange networks.

These conclusions have created more questions than answers, the first of these being: if the arrival of the maritime and overland fur trade were not the catalyst for significant changes in the social and economic networks then what was? This thesis ends in 1830, when the first HBC post was built on the north coast at the mouth of the Nass River. This date had been chosen because it corresponds with the establishment of the HBC as the Tsimshian's source of European goods, which may have altered the balance of trade in the region. What the actual effect of these coastal posts was on the interior trade is a topic that requires another study altogether, but the establishment of these posts marks the next point when the HBC might have begun to seriously

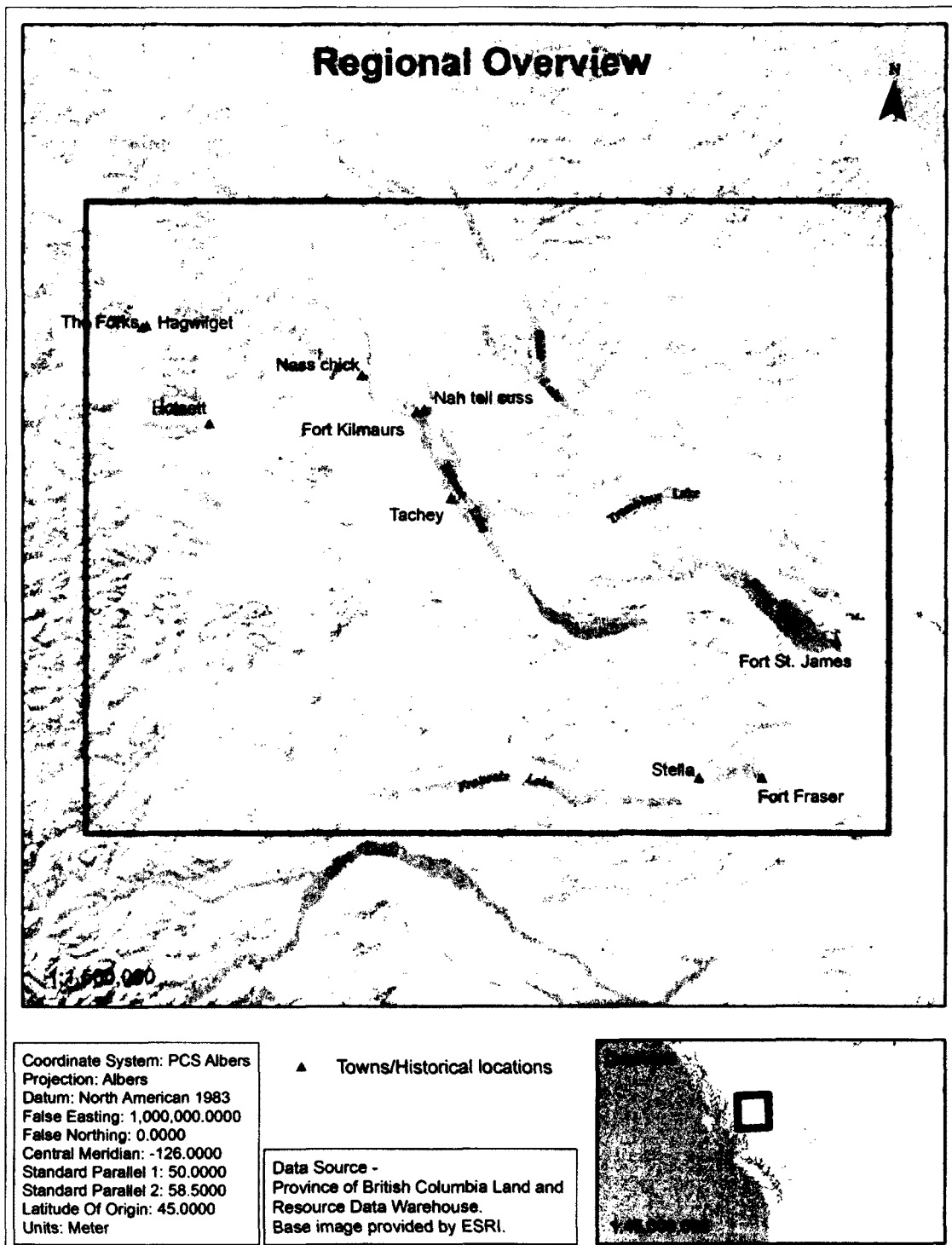
undermine the traditional networks. If this occurred, what was the response of the intermediary traders to HBC encroachment on their enterprise?

Unfortunately, it was impossible to explore the north-south trade connections of the Babine here. Given that the Sekani to the north of Babine Lake were in an area known for large game but without access to salmon, it seems very likely that there was an ancient trade connection between the two groups. What form did this take? What was the status of relations between these groups? How did the arrival of the fur trade, and an alternative source for extra leather, affect this trade relationship? The answers to these questions would be essential to providing a detailed account of the regional economic picture.

The fact that the feast system arose from aboriginal trade connections well before the arrival of Europeans and persisted through the arrival of both the maritime and overland fur trade, has important implications for Aboriginal Rights and Title issues in a modern context. Given that the feast system with the associated territories was not the result of the maritime fur trade and was not destroyed by the arrival of the overland fur trade, how long did it persist in a traditional form? The epidemic diseases in the middle of the nineteenth century certainly took their toll on the system, but it appears to have adapted and survived. What evidence exists for the persistence of the house territories after 1830? If it persisted, as seems likely, until at least the 1860s, what implications does this have for issues of Aboriginal Title in a modern context, given that 1846 is the test date for such cases? How did colonial authorities deal with the existence of this system when allocating land during the Omineca Gold Rush? If trade in certain materials was ongoing before Europeans arrived, what implications does that have for modern Aboriginal Rights?

The dearth of scholarship around Babine Lake needs to be addressed. “The Resilience of the Babine” is one step towards that project. The conclusion that the arrival of the fur trade had little initial effect on the Babine demonstrates the dangers of generalizing about aboriginal experiences of the fur trade and calls for further examination of these processes among the aboriginal groups of British Columbia generally, and a reassessment of the history of the Babine following 1830.

## Appendix A



## Appendix B

### The Sockeye Salmon Fisheries of the Fraser and Skeena Rivers

Scholars have studied the Fraser River sockeye stocks' four year cycles extensively as they are unique in the region. One of the earliest articles was "Cycles of Abundance Among Fraser River Sockeye Salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*)" written by William E. Ricker in 1950. Ricker claimed that the Fraser had three "off" years and one "big" year which would typically have seven or eight times as many fish as the other three years.<sup>1</sup> The cause that Ricker identified for this was that the majority of sockeye salmon live only four years, with a small percentage of each stock living five.<sup>2</sup> Thus one large stock begets another large stock four years later.<sup>3</sup> Further, he noted that the stocks that spawn in areas above the Fraser Canyon, rather than the tributaries below, are the source of this cycle.<sup>4</sup> This trend continues due to the tendency of the vast majority of sockeye to return to spawn in their natal streams.<sup>5</sup> These two trends mean that the Upper Fraser continuously suffered the most from a consistent four year cycle. Ricker postulated that the origin of the dominant cycle may have resulted from the original sockeye colonisation of the Fraser River following the last ice age. He argued that because the colonisers would have been strays, possibly from the Columbia drainage, an initial stock would have established itself as dominant by virtue of being the first to arrive in an upstream lake and colonisation of other lakes would be much more likely to occur from this local stock than from stocks further afield.<sup>6</sup> According to Ricker, this combination of events would have resulted in a dominant run and assured that the dominant run was synchronized in a given year in the majority of the lakes in the

---

<sup>1</sup> William E. Ricker, "Cycle Dominance among the Fraser Sockeye," *Ecology* 31.2 (1950): 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.



upper watershed.<sup>7</sup> Ricker acknowledged that this is only one possible explanation for the cyclical nature of the salmon runs in the Fraser River drainage. He also raised the possibilities that predation by larger sockeye or other fish or competition between sockeye from two different stocks over food in the nursery lakes might have been responsible for creating and maintaining dominant stocks in a given lake.<sup>8</sup>

An understanding of the origin of the four year cycle can be used to determine whether the cyclic nature of the Fraser River salmon runs existed in the pre-contact era. Ricker made several observations in his early article that bear on this question. Besides placing the possible origin as being immediately after de-glaciation, he noted early in his article that the cycle existed “as far back as aboriginal memories extended.”<sup>9</sup>

Ward and Larkin’s work *Cyclic Dominance in Adams River Sockeye Salmon* attempts to explain what factors helped create and maintain the cyclic dominance of a run in Adams River following the destruction of the dominant runs in 1913. They emphasised predation as a major factor in creating and maintaining a dominant cycle.<sup>10</sup> This is accompanied by the suggestion that the sub-dominant run may be maintained by the pressures of a commercial fishery, although fisheries in general are not the main agent for the maintenance of cyclic dominance.<sup>11</sup> The importance they placed on natural predation in maintaining the cyclic dominance among the Adams River stock indicates a high probability that cyclic dominance was present and naturally occurring well before the arrival of Europeans in the region.<sup>12</sup> Ward and Larkin acknowledged

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 14-16.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>10</sup> Frederick James Ward and P. A. Larkin, *Cyclic Dominance in Adams River Sockeye Salmon* (New Westminster: International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission, 1964), 110-111.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 3.

that their study was based exclusively on information from the Adams River sockeye stock, and therefore does not necessarily apply to all other stocks.

Pre-contact cycles are confirmed by the Ward and Larkin's reconstruction of salmon runs from the early nineteenth century using historic documentary records. Based on the Fort Langley records they concluded that the 1901 dominant cycle was in existence as far back as 1827 on the Fraser River.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, based on the Fort Alexandria journals and Alexander Mackenzie's observations in 1793 (also a 1901 dominant year), Ward and Larkin argued that many of these fish were bound for Fraser and Stuart Lakes.<sup>14</sup> Ward and Larkin used the Fort St. James and Fort Fraser records to reinforce this conclusion, although they noted that the Fraser Lake runs were more stable than those at Stuart Lake.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, Ward and Larkin also noted that the Babine district in the Skeena watershed almost never suffered a shortage and so supplied the other posts in years of failure.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, Ward and Larkin concluded that there was a historic dominance pattern in the Upper Fraser watershed, and that this pattern was stable over time.<sup>17</sup>

Another theory on the maintenance of cyclic dominance was put forward by Carl Walters and Michael Staley in 1987. They argued that predation was not a likely cause for cycle dominance, suggesting instead a re-examination of historical factors.<sup>18</sup> They argued that the aboriginal fishery prior to the late 1800s "may have exerted strong compensatory effects on smaller runs of the various stocks" because exploitation rates appear to have remained consistent

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 5-7.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>18</sup> Carl J. Walters and Michael J. Staley. "Evidence Against the Existence of Cyclic Dominance in Fraser River Sockeye (*Oncorhynchus nerka*)" in *Sockeye Salmon (Oncorhynchus nerka): Population Biology and Future Management*, ed. H. D. Smith, L. Margolis, and C. C. Wood (Ottawa: Department of Fisheries and Oceans, 1987), 376.

despite the size of the run.<sup>19</sup> This would have maintained the dominance of one run over the other three but it does not explain the origin of the four year cycle. Ricker's theory that colonisation patterns following the last ice age created the initial discrepancy remains the most plausible scenario for the origin of the cycles. A re-evaluation of many of the theories around the reason for Fraser River cyclic dominance was conducted by David Levy and Chris Wood in their 1992 article "Review of Proposed Mechanisms for Sockeye Salmon Population Cycles in the Fraser River." Levy and Wood evaluated several hypotheses around cyclic dominance and concluded only that some, notably the theory that a genetic resistance to parasites in dominant stocks gives them a distinct advantage, are more plausible than others.<sup>20</sup> However, they do suggest that traditional fisheries were probably not responsible for the creation or maintenance of these cycles.<sup>21</sup>

Ricker re-entered the debate in 1997 with his article "Cycles of Abundance among Fraser River Sockeye Salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*)."

This article is largely a review and evaluation of the research and hypotheses put forward since Ricker's 1950 work. He argued that a dominant line is maintained based on interactions in the nursery lakes, and points to the effect a dominant run would have on the predator population in a lake, which would in turn have a greater effect on subsequent populations of sockeye from the non-dominant years.<sup>22</sup> Despite his obvious preference for this theory, Ricker warned against assuming this is the only explanation for cycle dominance. With regard to the old 1901 cycle of dominance, Ricker reiterated the possibility that it was due to the colonisation pattern of sockeye following the last ice age, but also suggested

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 383.

<sup>20</sup> David A. Levy and Chris C. Wood, "Review of Proposed Mechanisms for Sockeye Salmon Population Cycles in the Fraser River," *Bulletin of Mathematical Biology* 54.2 (1992): 256.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 249, 257.

<sup>22</sup> William E. Ricker, "Cycles of Abundance among Fraser River Sockeye Salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*)," *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* 54.4 (1997): 957-958.

that it may have been related to upstream aboriginal fishing or natural predation from large lamprey populations at the mouth of the Fraser.<sup>23</sup> His reference to the aboriginal fishery creates a discrepancy with his earlier statement that the larger catch of the commercial fishery may explain the maintenance of a dominant cycle.<sup>24</sup> This argument likely originated due to his earlier findings that the cycles were confined to the Upper Fraser and aboriginal fisheries target these stocks specifically while commercial fishers draw from the entire spectrum. Ultimately, the research on the cause and origin of the four year cycle appears to remain as of yet inconclusive, although there is agreement that the cause is to be found in the freshwater part of the life-cycle. What is clear is that the dominance of the 1901 cycle prior to 1913 stretched back well into the prehistoric period and was therefore in full effect for the Carrier groups prior to 1830.

Another result of the increasing amount of research being conducted on the Fraser River sockeye stocks was a re-evaluation of the various years within a cycle. In 1950, Ricker only differentiated between the big year and the three following; later scholars began to compare stocks between those other three years. Robert Burgner explains this distinction in his 1991 “Life History of Sockeye Salmon.” In this chapter Burgner noted that the Fraser River Sockeye stocks were subject to four year cycles which would include one high year, one middling year, and two low years with no influx of older or younger fish to provide an opportunity to balance the runs.<sup>25</sup> According to Michael Kew’s 1976 publication, high years in the cycle would often have five times more fish than the middling year with another drop of more than 50% between a middling year and the low years.<sup>26</sup> Ricker states that “line 2 usually contains 10-25% as many fish as line

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 963.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 955.

<sup>25</sup> Robert L. Burgner, “Life History of Sockeye Salmon,” in *Pacific Salmon Life Histories*, ed. C. Groot and L. Margolis (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991), 95-96.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Kew, “Salmon Abundance, Technology and Human Populations on the Fraser River Watershed,” in *Papers of the Northwest Coast Studies Conference* (Vancouver: Simon Fraser University Press, 1976), 15.

1, but lines 3 and 4 may be less than 1% as numerous.”<sup>27</sup> This distinction among these lower-yield years would likely have been even more important to the upstream aboriginal populations than the existence of the abundant year initially identified by Ricker in 1950. Unfortunately, a rock blockage at Hell’s Gate in 1913 and 1914 resulted in the destruction of the existing dominant and off dominant Fraser River runs. While the data projected back suggests that high year runs would have been hundreds of millions of fish, there is no data or re-constructions to suggest how many of those fish would have arrived at Fraser and Stuart Lakes.

Compared to the fluctuations of the Fraser River stocks, the Skeena River stocks were relatively consistent. The Skeena-Babine sockeye returned in a mix of four and five year old fish so each run was drawn from two stocks, cushioning a low year in any given stock.<sup>28</sup> This is not to say that there was no flux between Skeena River runs, only that these fluctuations would have been smaller than those on the Fraser. Beyond this, and directly relevant to the Babine, is the fact that Babine Lake provides 90% of the Skeena sockeye spawning stocks. Although it only reached this proportion recently, the trend of Babine Lake receiving a very large proportion of the Skeena stock (perhaps as much as 70%) stretches back considerably further.<sup>29</sup>

Although the 1913 destruction of the Fraser runs makes it impossible to evaluate how many sockeye were actually reaching Stuart and Fraser Lakes in the nineteenth century, extrapolating from modern numbers and historic reconstructions, it seems very likely that on high years the numbers dwarfed the harvest at Babine Lake and low years were well below the number available at Babine. An interesting note regarding the runs to Fraser and Stuart Lakes in

---

<sup>27</sup> Ricker, “Cycles of Abundance,” 963. In this reference line 1 refers to the dominant year of 1901, line 2 is 1902 and so on.

<sup>28</sup> Burgner, “Life History of Sockeye Salmon,” 97.

<sup>29</sup> P. A. Larkin and J. G. McDonald, “Factors in the Population Biology of the Sockeye Salmon of the Skeena River,” *Journal of Animal Ecology* 37.1 (1968): 229, 234.

the latter half of the twentieth century is that the dominant years are offset.<sup>30</sup> Obviously this may well be the result of the reshaping of the dominance cycles in 1913, but it raises the intriguing possibility that historically these runs could have occurred in different years as well.

While the number of salmon consistently available was the most obvious and important difference, the nutrient value in the fish also varied between the two watersheds. Salmon stop feeding when they enter freshwater, depending instead on stored body fats for the energy to ascend the river.<sup>31</sup> This means that the size and nutrient value of each fish decreases in proportion to the distance it has travelled upstream. Sockeye travel over 960 kilometres to both Stuart and Fraser Lakes while Babine Lake is only 380 kilometres from the sea.<sup>32</sup> The development of secondary sexual characteristics also depletes nutrient values meaning a delayed salmon run has a much greater effect on upstream populations than those near the coast.<sup>33</sup> Salmon caught at Stuart Lake have only about half the caloric value of the same fish caught at the mouth of the Fraser.<sup>34</sup> In a comparison between the Skeena and Fraser sockeye runs it becomes clear that the Skeena River would provide a more consistent and nutritious food supply than the Fraser River stocks.

---

<sup>30</sup> Ricker, "Cycles of Abundance," 954.

<sup>31</sup> Gende, Quinn, and Wilson, "Consumption Choice," 373, 380.

<sup>32</sup> Burgner, "Life History of Sockeye Salmon," 7.

<sup>33</sup> Scott M. Gende, Richard T. Edwards, Mary F. Willson, and Mark S. Wipfli, "Pacific Salmon in Aquatic and Terrestrial Ecosystems," *BioScience* 52.10 (October 2002): 918.

<sup>34</sup> Kew, "Salmon Abundance," 6.

## Bibliography

### Archival Sources:

Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba (HBCA)

B.11/a/1-4 (Microfilm Reel 1M15) Fort Babine Post Journal.

B.11/e/1-3 (Microfilm Reel 1M776) Fort Babine District Reports.

B.74/a/1 (Microfilm Reel 1M54) Fort Fraser Post Journals.

B.188/a/1-17 (Microfilm Reel 1M128) Fort St. James Post Journals.

B.188/e/1-5 (Microfilm Reel 1M782) Fort St. James District Reports.

B.239/k/1-6 (Microfilm Reel 1M814) Minutes of Council Northern Department.

D.4/1-11 George Simpson's Outward Correspondence.

### Published Sources:

Aasen, Wendy. "Should the Clans Decide?: The Problems of Modelling Self-Government among the Carrier-Sekani Indians of British Columbia." M.A. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1992.

Ames, Kenneth M. "The Evolution of Social Ranking on the Northwest Coast of North America." *American Antiquity* 46.4 (1981): 789-805.

---. "The Northwest Coast: Complex Hunter-Gatherers, Ecology, and Social Evolution." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23 (1994): 209-29.

Binnema, Theodore. *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwest Plains*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004.

Binnema, Ted and Susan Neylan, eds. *New Histories for Old: Changing Perspectives on Canada's Native Pasts*. Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2007.

Bishop, Charles A. "Coast-Interior Exchange: The Origins of Stratification in Northwestern North America." *Arctic Anthropology* 24 (1987): 72-83.

---. "Limiting Access to Limited Goods: The Origins of Stratification in Interior British Columbia." In *The Development of Political Organization in Native North America: 1979 Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society*, edited by Elizabeth Tooker, 148-61. Washington, D.C.: American Ethnological Society, 1983.

- Black-Rogers, Mary. "Varieties of 'Starving': Semantics and Survival in the Subarctic Fur Trade, 1750-1850." *Ethnohistory* 33.4 (1986): 353-83.
- Brown, Jennifer S. H. "The Métis: Genesis and Rebirth." In *Native People, Native Lands: Canadian Indians, Inuit and Métis*, edited by Bruce Alden Cox, 136-147. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1992.
- . *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*. Vancouver and London: University of British Columbia Press, 1980.
- Burgner, Robert L. "Life History of Sockeye Salmon." In *Pacific Salmon Life Histories*, edited by C. Groot and L. Margolis, 1-117. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991.
- Cooper, Carol. "Native Women of the Northern Pacific Coast: An Historical Perspective 1830-1900." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27.4 (1992): 44-75.
- Cox, Bruce Alden, ed. *Native People, Native Lands: Canadian Indians, Inuit and Métis*. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1992.
- Daly, Richard. *Our Box Was Full: An Ethnography for the Delgamuukw Plaintiffs*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001.
- de Aguayo, Anna. "Breaking the Competition: Early Nineteenth-Century Fur Trade and Fort Kilmaurs." In *Papers of the 1994 Rupert's Land Colloquium*, edited by Ian MacLaren, Michael Payne, and Heather Rollason, 81-102. Winnipeg: Rupert's Land Research Centre, 1994.
- Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*. 1991. Supreme Court of British Columbia.
- Duff, Wilson. "The Indian History of British Columbia: The Impact of the White Man." *Anthropology in British Columbia*. Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1964.
- . "Notes on Carrier Social Organization." *Anthropology in British Columbia* 2 (1951): 28-34.
- Elliot, Marie. *Fort St. James and New Caledonia: Where British Columbia Began*. Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2009.
- Fisher, Robin. *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992.
- Fiske, Jo-Anne and Betty Patrick. *Cis Dideen Kat: When the Plumes Rise: The Way of the Lake Babine Nation*. Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2000.
- Fraser, Simon. *The Letters and Journals of Simon Fraser, 1806-1808*. Edited by W. Kaye Lamb. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2007.



- Furniss, Elizabeth. *Changing Ways: Southern Carrier History, 1793-1940*. Quesnel: Quesnel School District, 1993.
- Gende, Scott M., Richard T. Edwards, Mary F. Willson, and Mark S. Wipfli. "Pacific Salmon in Aquatic and Terrestrial Ecosystems." *Bioscience* 52.10 (2002): 917-28.
- Gende, S.M., T.P. Quinn, and M.F. Wilson. "Consumption Choice by Bears Feeding on Salmon." *Oecologia* 127.3 (2001): 372-82.
- Gibson, James R. *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods: The Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785-1841*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1992.
- Gisdaywa (Alfred Joseph). "Foreward." *To Eagle Down is Our Law: The Witsuwit'en Law, Feasts, and Land Claims*, by Antonia Mills, ix-x. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994.
- Goldman, Irving. "The Alkatcho Carrier of British Columbia." In *Acculturation in Seven North American Tribes*, edited by Ralph Linton, 333-86. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1940.
- . "The Alkatcho Carrier: Historical Background of Crest Prerogatives." *American Anthropologist* 43.3 (1941): 396-418.
- Grossman, Daniel. "The Nature of Descent Groups of Some Tribes in the Interior of Northwestern North America." *Anthropologica* 7.2 (1965): 249-62.
- Hackler, James. "Factors Leading to Social Disorganization among the Carrier Indians at Lake Babine." M.A. thesis, San Jose State College, 1958.
- Hall, Lizette. *The Carrier, My People*. Cloverdale: Friesen Printers, 1992.
- Hargus, Sharon. "The Disjunct Boundary in Babine-Witsu Wit'en." *The International Journal of American Linguistics* 57.4 (1991): 87-513.
- . *Witsuwit'en Grammar: Phonetics, Grammar, Morphology*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007.
- Harmon, Daniel Williams. *Harmon's Journal 1800-1819*. Edited by W. Kaye Lamb. Victoria, Vancouver, and Calgary: Touch Wood Editions, 2006.
- Harris, Douglas C. *Fish, Law and Colonialism: The Legal Capture of Salmon in British Columbia*. Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- Hudson, Douglas R. "The Historical Determinants of Carrier Social Organization: A Study of Athabaskan Matriliney." M.A. Thesis, McMaster University, 1972.

- . "Traplines and Timber: Social and Economic Change among the Carrier Indians of Northern British Columbia." PhD diss., University of Alberta, 1983.
- Innis, Harold A. *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*. Rev. ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.
- Ives, John W. *A Theory of Northern Athapaskan Prehistory*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990.
- Jenness, Diamond. *The Carrier Indians of the Bulkley River: Their Social and Religious Life*. Anthropological Papers, 25. 469-586. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943.
- Karamanski, Theodore J. *Fur Trade and Exploration: Opening the Far Northwest 1821-1852*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983.
- Kew, Michael. "Salmon Abundance, Technology and Human Populations on the Fraser River Watershed." In *Papers of the Northwest Coast Studies Conference*, 1-18. Simon Fraser University, 1976.
- Klippenstein, Frieda. "The Role of the Carrier Indians in the Fur Trade at Fort St. James, 1806-1915." *Historical Services, Canadian Parks Service, Western Regional Office*. 1992.
- Kobriniski, Vernon. "The Tshimshianization of the Carrier Indians." In *Problems in the Prehistory of the North American Subarctic: The Athabaskan Question*, edited by J. W. Helmer, S. Van Dyke, and F. J. Kense, 201-10. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1977.
- Larkin, P. A. and J. G. McDonald. "Factors in the Population Biology of the Sockeye Salmon of the Skeena River." *Journal of Animal Ecology* 37.1 (1968): 229-258.
- Levy, David A. and Chris C. Wood. "Review of Proposed Mechanisms for Sockeye Salmon Population Cycles in the Fraser River." *Bulletin of Mathematical Biology* 54.2 (1992): 241-261.
- Macdonald, George F. "The Epic of Nekt." In *The Tsimshian: Images of the Past, Views for the Present*, edited by Margaret Seguin, 65-81. Vancouver, UBC Press, 1984.
- Mackenzie, Alexander. *The Journals of Alexander Mackenzie: Voyages From Montreal, On the River St. Laurence, Through the Continent of North America, to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans; In the Years, 1789 and 1793; With a Preliminary Account of the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Fur Trade of That Country*. 1801. Reprint, California: The Narrative Press, 2001.
- Mackie, Richard. *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996.

- Marsden, Susan, and Robert Galois. "The Tsimshian, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Geopolitics of the Northwest Coast Fur Trade, 1787-1840." *Canadian Geographer* 39 (1995): 169-83.
- McClellan, Catherine. "Intercultural Relations and Cultural Change in the Cordillera." In *The Handbook of North American Indians*, edited by William C. Sturtevant and June Helm, 387-401. Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1981.
- McLeod, Malcom, ed. *Peace River a Canoe Voyage from Hudson's Bay to Pacific by the Late George Simpson in 1828: Journal of the Late Chief Factor, Archibald McDonald, (Hon. Hudson's Bay Company), who Accompanied Him*. Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto: J. Durie & Son, Dawson Bros, and Adam Stevinson & Co, 1872.
- Meggs, Geoff. *Salmon: The Decline of the British Columbia Fishery*. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1991.
- Meidinger, Del and Jim Pojar, eds. *Ecosystems of British Columbia*. Victoria: Research Branch, Ministry of Forests, 1991.
- Mills, Antonia. *Eagle Down is Our Law: The Witsuwit'en Law, Feasts, and Land Claims*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994.
- Mills, Antonia, ed. *Hang onto These Words: Johnny David's Delgamuukw Testimony*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.
- Mithun, Marianne. *The Languages of Native North America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Morice, A. G. *The Carrier Language (Dene Family), A Grammar and Dictionary Combined*. Vol. 2. Vienna: St. Gabriel-Modling, 1932.
- . *The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia: Formerly New Caledonia, 1660-1880*. Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1971.
- . *The Western Denes, Their Manners and Customs*. 109-173. *Proceedings, the Canadian Institute, Toronto*. Third series, Vol. 7. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Company Limited, 1889.
- Ogden, Peter Skene. *Traits of American Indian Life and Character*. London: Smith Elder and Co., 1853.
- Palmer, Rod N. "Feast & Famine: Salmon and the Fur Trade in New Caledonia." *BC Historical News* 37.4 (2004): 12-16.
- Ray, Arthur. "From the US Indian Claims Commission Cases to Delgamuukw: Facts, Theories, and Evidence in North American Land Claims." In *Aboriginal Title and Indigenous*

*Peoples: Canada, Australia, and New Zealand*, edited by Knafla, Louis A. and Haijo Westra, 37-52. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010.

---. *Indians in Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870*. Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2005.

Ricker, William E. "Cycles of Abundance among Fraser River Sockeye Salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*)." *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* 54.4 (1997): 950-968.

---. "Cycle Dominance among the Fraser Sockeye." *Ecology* 31.2 (1950): 6-26.

Rubel, Paula G, and Abraham Rosman. "The Evolution of Exchange Structures and Ranking: Some Northwest Coast and Athapaskan Examples." *Journal of Anthropological Research* 39.1 (1983): 1-25.

Scouler, John. "Observations on the Indigenous Tribes of the N. W. Coast of America." *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 11 (1841): 215-251.

---. "On the Indian Tribes Inhabiting the North-West Coast of America." *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London* 1 (1848): 228-252.

Simpson, George. *Journal of Occurrences in the Athabaskan Department By George Simpson, 1820 and 1821, and Report*. Edited by E. E. Rich. London: The Champlain Society, 1938.

Steward, Julian H. "Carrier Acculturation: The Direct Historical Approach." In *Culture in History: Essays in Honor of Paul Rabin*, edited by Stanley Diamond, 732-44. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961.

---. "Recording Culture Changes Among the Carrier Indians of British Columbia." In *Explorations and Field Work of the Smithsonian Institution in 1940*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution (1941): 83-90.

---. *Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1955. See esp. chap. 10, "Variation in Ecological Adaptation: The Carrier Indians."

Story, Gillian. *A Historically Oriented Study of Carrier and Babine Phonology*. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1975.

Tobey, Margaret L. "Carrier." *The Handbook of North American Indians*. Edited by William C. Sturtevant and June Helm, 413-32. Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981.

Van Kirk, Sylvia. *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*. Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishers, 1980.

Vibert, Elizabeth. "Real Men Hunt Buffalo: Masculinity, Race and Class in British Fur Traders' Narratives." In *Gender and History in Canada*, edited by Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld, 50-67. Toronto: Copp Clark, 1996.

Walters, Carl J. and M. J. Staley. "Evidence Against the Existence of Cyclic Dominance in Fraser River Sockeye (*Onchorhynchus nerka*)." In *Sockeye Salmon (Onchorhynchus nerka): Population Biology and Future Management*, edited by H. D. Smith, L. Margolis, and C. C. Wood, 375-384. Ottawa: Department of Fisheries and Oceans, 1987.

Ward, Frederick James, and P. A. Larkin. *Cyclic Dominance in Adams River Sockeye Salmon*. New Westminster: International Pacific Fisheries Commission, 1964.