

**SMOKE ON THE WATER: UNCOVERING A SOCIALLY COMPLEX PRE-CONTACT
BABINE FISHING VILLAGE AT NASS GLEE (GISQ-4)**

by

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ABSTRACT

For the last century there has been very little modification to the geographic boundaries for the Northwest coast culture area, as defined by anthropologists. Moreover, complex hunter-gatherer models, which identify the hallmarks for social complexity of coastal First Nations, tend to exclude inland and up-river societies. Although academics recognize a post-contact complexity at Babine Lake, they have relied primarily on ethnographic sources which implied that ranked and socially stratified societies emerged only in response to the social and economic influences of the fur trade. However, recent research indicates that Babine society possessed complex trade networks, ranked houses, inherited lineages, individual wealth, and status inequality long before the fur trade era. Excavations at the salmon fishing village GiSq-4, on the Babine River, indicate that these social attributes have a much greater antiquity than the proto-historic era. Using archaeological and documentary evidence, which was unavailable for much of the last century, this thesis argues that a socially stratified and complex society at Babine Lake pre-dated the fur trade by at least several hundred years. This coastal style social complexity and stratification warrants a re-examination of current archaeological models on the Northwest Coast culture group area.

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Introduction

Due to fragmentary evidence, narrow research parameters, and a reliance on out-dated twentieth century anthropological models, scholars have assumed that the pre fur-trade Babine people lived in small, nomadic, egalitarian bands that were subjected to forced mobility in order to sustain themselves (Kobrinisky 1977, Steward 1961, Bishop 1983). These same scholars argue that the influences of the European fur trade precipitated the emergence of social complexity in Babine society. While archaeological studies on the Babine have been limited, especially compared to the coast and to similar village sites further south, data from recent excavations supplement oral accounts and historical documentation help to provide a more complete understanding of a complex hunter-gatherer society. These sources and recent archaeological data from the excavated house pit depression (HD1) at GiSq-4 all support that people living at Babine Lake existed in a socially stratified society of complex hunter-gatherers specializing in fishing. More importantly, and in contradiction to previous conclusions, these data demonstrate that northwest coast-style social complexity was present at Babine Lake *prior to* direct contact with Europeans and the fur trade. This conclusion also warrants a future re-examination of the Northwest coast culture area and its boundaries.

Thesis Outline

The first half of chapter one summarizes twentieth century scholarship of the Babine. Scholars relied heavily on ethnographic data and on Father Morice's personal observations to arrive at their conclusions. Overall, the research correctly observed that the post-contact Babine society had adopted many of the elements of coastal-style complexity from the coastal Gitksan and Tsimshian. However it mistakenly concludes that this emergence of complexity occurred

only during and after the proto-historic period primarily as a result of expanding European fur trade activities.

The second half of this chapter identifies the social characteristics that form the hallmarks of the northwest coast culture area, as defined by anthropologists and archaeologists. The boundaries of the northwest coast culture area are reputedly defined by specific social attributes. However, they are more often defined by geography rather than shared social traits. A summary of the boundary areas for the northwest coast culture group indicates a thematic absence of interior riverine First Nations from this “complex hunter-gatherer model”.

Chapter two identifies the Babine region and the archaeological site GiSq-4 (Nass Glee) specifically. Research from two University of Northern British Columbia field seasons at this salmon fishing village is summarized and, in particular, the excavation of house depression one (HD1) is analyzed. Overall, the site’s location, the house features, and the artifact assemblage and its distribution indicate a socially complex society who relied heavily upon salmon. In addition, radiocarbon analysis indicates that this complexity pre-dates the fur trade by several hundred years.

Chapter three summarizes the documentary evidence for complexity at Babine Lake. Hudson’s Bay Company fur trade journals and letters identify a Babine society that incorporated all of the hallmarks of northwest coast culture. Social complexity at Babine Lake is shown to be stratified and culturally entrenched. Rather than being a consequence of the European fur trade, the complex and well established trade economy in Babine society actually impeded the commercial interests of the fur traders.

Chapter One: Babine Scholarship

The residents at the fishing village site, GiSq-4, were identified as members of the Lake Babine Nation by fur traders, missionaries, and government agents during the first half century of European contact. These people inhabited the region around the north-westernmost point of the Babine Lake at the outflow of the lake into the Babine River. They referred to themselves as Nedut'en (Natoot'en) but were given their current name of Babine, or "Lippy People" (Morice 1905:6-7), by early French Canadian (Métis) fur trade employees who observed that some women in this society wore a labret inserted in their lower lip to signify status. The Babine people speak a sister language to the Carrier known as Babine-Wet'suwet'en, which is made up of two dialects known, in their own languages as Nedut'en (those from Babine Lake) and Wet'suwet'en (those from the Bulkley Valley). These two dialects, sub-groups of the Athapaskan language family, are so similar however, that the early fur traders did not observe any distinction between either and referred to both groups simply as *The Babines*. Today linguists agree that both languages are similar enough to classify them together as Northern or Western Carrier, with only small differences in regional dialect between each other much the way Canadian and British English are vocalized (Kari and Hargus 1989).

Correspondingly the fur traders in the Babine region did not distinguish the people on the lake from the people on the Bulkley because to them, it appeared that both in their customs and in their language they were the same society (Morice 1905:4). In the later 1800s the Jesuit priest, Father Adrien Gabriel Morice, also identified the people from the river and those on the lake as one Babine society due to their social and linguistic similarities. The Carrier people (a sub-group of Dene or Athapaskan peoples) of central British Columbia are referred to throughout

this thesis as 'Carrier' when speaking of the entire group of First Nations people in the region of New Caledonia and as 'Babine' when speaking only of those indigenous residents of Babine Lake and the Bulkley River. It should also be recognized that the Carrier name was assigned by early French fur traders who first called them "les Porteurs" (Morice 1905).

Adoption of Coastal Social Complexity

Most scholars of Carrier society and history (Morice 1905, Jenness 1943, Steward 1961, Hudson 1972, Kobrinsky 1977, Bishop 1983; 1987) have agreed that the status inequality and the land-tenure system in place during the latter half of the 1800s at Babine Lake was adopted from the Gitksan. This twentieth century scholarship also clearly illustrates that the house-clan system present at Babine Lake was adopted from the coastal Tsimshian through their intermediate trade partners the Gitksan. Cultural appropriation was recognized by Franz Boas upon his visit to the region in the early 1900s (Boas 1924). He recorded that that the First Nations of the North Pacific Coast (including the inland Carrier) shared a similar house-clan system to the Tsimshian and "the sameness of the clan names can only be due to historical connection" (Boas 1924:328).

Father Morice also commented on the Babines' "wonderful power of observation and propensity for assimilation" of Gitksan society, ceremonial traditions and, although to a lesser extent, their mythology (Morice 1892:120). He noted with regards to status and rank that "as to the tribal division into noble and common people, beyond the possibility of a doubt, it owes its existence to the intercourse of the Carriers with the Tsimshian tribes, especially the [Gitksan]" (Morice 1892:117). To clarify his position Morice later wrote that the Babine had "adopted all of their [Tsimshian] customs, including not only the [clans] and petty chiefs, cremation and potlatching, but even the wearing of labrets by the women, the ear pendants of the chiefs," a

matrilineal form of government, a custom for cremating the dead, and for the Babine on the river, the erection of totem poles (Morice 1928:75-76).

Goldman (1941) later summarized the tendency of Carrier speaking peoples, in particular the Babine and Bulkley River societies, to adopt the customs and traditions of their neighbours. In his argument, the Carrier had adopted the social characteristics of the Gitksan who, in turn, had adopted such traits from the coastal Tsimshian. Rosman and Rubel later reinforced this conclusion and pointed to evidence of this intermixing of cultures, specifically the potlatch, which had emerged from the intermixing of social activities between the interior Indians. They argued that the complex social "characteristics are found among interior Athapaskan peoples...represent a transition from the simpler model of dual organization to the Tsimshian, and Adams' Gitksan, located adjacent to the Bulkley River Carrier, are themselves a kind of transition to the more elaborated Coastal Tsimshian" (Rosman and Rubel 1971:xii).

Kobrinisky (1977) believed that Babine clan control of fish weir sites, bride service obligations, potlatch ceremonies, and ranked chiefs was evidence for inequality. He claimed that the presence of these social traits were "expressions of a coast/interior interface" which "emerged as a practical response to problems arising with the burgeoning white-oriented fur trade" (Kobrinisky 1977:206). Steward also claimed that the social status of Babine chiefs and the strategic purpose of the potlatch ceremonies were an adoption of "coastal patterns through intermarriage or other direct contact with the Tsimshian" as a result of increased social and economic fur trade contact (Steward 1961:736). Bishop argued that the hereditary rank system at Babine Lake developed during the proto-historic era through exchanges in prestige goods with coastal First Nations. This trade and exchange became intensified by the European fur trade, and was the "prime mover generating the rank system" (Bishop 1983:157). Later, Bishop reinforced

this position by stating that the pre-contact Carrier (Babine) natives were a simple egalitarian society and that the subsequent “ranking emerged as a result of proto-historic trade dynamics between coastal and Carrier peoples” (Bishop 1987:80).

The Timing for the Emergence of Complexity

While there is a clear consensus that complex social traits exhibited by the Babine were adopted from coastal groups, the timing of this adoption has been historically misunderstood. These same scholars have argued, on thin evidence, that the social stratification at Babine Lake was a post-contact phenomenon. They claim that the adoption of Tsimshian societal traits by the Carrier in general and the Babine specifically was the result of increased trade relationships with coastal societies brought on by an intensified economic push from the European fur trade (Bishop 1983; Kobrinsky 1977; Steward 1961).

While there is agreement that many aspects of Babine social life, such as the house-clan structure and land-tenure system were adopted from their down river trading partners, the argument that it occurred during the proto-historic (from the 1780s to the 1820s) and the post contact era has not been well established. The assumption that it was a recent development greatly overstates the impact of the European fur trade on the economic and social way of life of the indigenous peoples of British Columbia, not to mention their own social vulnerability to a “superior” colonial way of life. The idea that the burgeoning fur trade was responsible for social complexity relies on a compressed timeframe to just a generation or two. This was hardly enough time for the diffusion of coastal social traits inland to bring about a fundamental change in the Babine way of life (Bouchard 2012, Ray 1991).

Goldman's primary interest was on how the social organization of the Ulkatcho Carrier at Anahim Lake had been adopted from both the Gitxsan and the coastal Bella Coola groups. Using the Upper Carrier tribes (the Bulkley and Babine River Indians) as examples for his argument, Goldman postulated that the Carrier adopted the social and cultural traditions of other groups through increased trade and inter-tribal marriage during recently adopted potlatch ceremonies (Goldman 1941:396). His argument centered on the similarity of the Carrier house names to Gitxsan society in which each house was subsequently subdivided by a two-clan system containing the three social classes of nobles, commoners, and slaves. This social organization is similar to the Carrier who were a matrilineal exogamous unit, identical to the Gitxsan and Tsimshian, who had a land tenure system in which each clan chief "had exclusive rights over a hunting and fishing territory under the jurisdiction of its [clan]" (Goldman 1941:407). He also noted that house crests were bestowed upon Carrier chiefs in the same manner that was practiced by the down-river First Nations. He too concludes that this was all possible due to an increase in trade goods brought on by the European fur trade (Goldman 1941:418).

Following Goldman, Steward further argued that the Carrier clan system and a nobility-potlatch system was first adopted from coastal First Nations through increased economic and social exchange brought on by the emergence of the European fur trade (Steward 1961). He correctly identified that the titles and crests of nobility, inherited through the matrilineal line, were expressions of the more socially complex Tsimshian natives further down the Skeena River. Like Goldman and Hackler before him, he assumed that prior to the expansion of the European fur trade, "the Carrier were hunters and fishers who lived in some kind of simple bands and lacked any nobility or potlatching" (Steward 1961:732). It was Steward's position that the

adoption of the potlatch and nobility system in Carrier culture emerged during the proto-historic, a couple decades prior to the direct presence of European fur traders in New Caledonia when the fur trade had already made an impact on the coastal Tsimshian. He claimed that it was Carrier intermarriage, trade and other direct contacts with the Gitksan and Tsimshian societies, facilitated by fur trade economics, which were responsible for the transmission of the coastal social patterns up-river to the Babine area (Steward 1961:736). Steward concluded that the new wealth created by the fur trade created a surplus of goods that culminated in a Tsimshian type “nobility-potlatch pattern” even among the more distant Stuart Lake Carrier (Steward 1961:743). However, Ray (1991:301) pointed out that Steward’s research relied solely upon informant-based information, which he had conducted 20 years earlier at Stuart Lake. Furthermore, his work was handicapped in that he did not have access to the HBC journals, archaeological evidence, or other archival records which were only made available to the public in the late 1960s.

Later, Kobrinsky expanded upon Steward’s work and argued that Carrier society was ranked and socially stratified after the arrival of the European fur trade, however, the clan system only “arose among the northwest Carrier, along with classes, ranks, crests and potlatches, during the proto-historic period in the context of the growing white-oriented fur trade” (Kobrinsky 1977:201). His conclusion that social complexity was the result of expanding fur trade interests was based on the similarity of Carrier clan nomenclature with the westward matrilineal groups of the Gitksan and Tsimshian. Kobrinsky further argued that the post-contact rank and clan system found in Carrier groups was adopted specifically “as a practical response to problems arising with the burgeoning white-oriented fur trade” (Kobrinsky 1977:209). His claim was based on the idea that the land-tenure system of the Carrier was specific to regions of desirable fur-bearing

animals, which were of interest to European fur traders rather than being traditional resource intensive sustenance areas. However, his evidence for the land-tenure system was based solely upon the practices observed by informants in the twentieth century as well as through oral histories spanning only the last half century, well past the emergence of the fur trade.

Kobrinsky had interviewed a Babine informant who incorrectly claimed that “the first Babine potlatch was given in his grandfather’s lifetime by Nuw ae,” an incipient Babine chief who would have participated in this ceremony in the mid to late 1800s (Kobrinsky 1977:206). Unfortunately, as with Steward before him, Kobrinsky did not use archival evidence or HBC records to validate his research despite their having been available to him by this time. These documents record elaborate Babine potlatches, attended by premier and secondary chiefs, and would have pre-dated Kobrinsky’s informant’s grandfather’s lifetime by over 80 years. As well, these historical documents describe a complex land-tenure system in place for the Babine in the nascent stages of European contact (Ogden 1933:72, HBCA B.11/a/1).

Despite the foregoing arguments that Babine society was inexorably altered by the arrival of the European fur trade, there are some scholars who contend that many First Nations societies were socially complex and resilient enough to absorb any social influences brought by the fur trade into their own social norms.

Limited change in Babine Society due to Fur Trade

The earliest proponent of Babine resilience to social disruption was Hackler who, in 1956 visited the Lake Babine Nation to conduct research on an “Indian culture which is slowly deteriorating at Babine Lake” (Hackler 1958:iv). Not having the HBC archives at his disposal, his evidence was drawn from interviews with Babine informants and Morice’s ethnographic

publications. Hackler concluded that the fundamental nature of Babine society was initially unchanged by the European fur trade, arguing that even 100 years after the fur trade began that Babine society was still very traditional. He argued that at contact the Babine:

...economic or social organization was probably not directly altered by the pursuit of the fur bearing animals. The social organization of the Babine Carriers revolved around the phratric chiefs who were responsible for the use of fishing and trapping areas, and for the performance of certain ceremonies. Although the efforts of the Indians shifted from hunting and other activities to trapping, these activities were still carried on within the territorial limits established by the phratries...[fishing] was still carried on under the same conditions that existed prior to the entry of the whites (Hackler 1958:98-99).

Hackler surmised that the well established clan system in place at Babine Lake at contact absorbed the newly introduced demands of the fur trade. He also noted that the arrival of a new economic system only served to enhance the traditional economic authority already held by clan chiefs. Ultimately he agreed that the fur trade was likely the first disrupting factor in Babine society. However, he maintained that its social and economic impact was not as significant as those which came later.

Hackler's research recognized that fundamental social changes in daily Babine life did not occur in earnest until the arrival of the church in the mid 1800s, the gold rush of the late 1800s, the removal of the fish barricades at the turn of the century, and finally and *most significantly*, the arrival of the lumber industry and a cash economy in the mid 1900s. Hackler argued that it was these more recent influences, and not the appearance of the European fur trade, which initiated the breakdown of a longstanding ranked and stratified Babine clan system. While the arrival of the Jesuit priest, Father Nobili at Babine in 1846, and subsequent priests had the expected impact on Babine morality and spirituality, economically, removing the fish weirs prevented chiefs and nobles from amassing wealth through clan-owned salmon weirs. When the

Department of Fisheries and Oceans replaced the salmon barricades with fishing nets, the chief's control over this valuable resource was undermined:

the political and social power that was held by the person or groups of persons who controlled the barricades is obvious. In this manner the Babines had a certain amount of central leadership and political organization...thus the removal of the barricades had a catastrophic effect on the authority and prestige of the Babine chiefs and contributed to the social disorganization which exists among the Babine today (Hackler 1958:14).

It was Hackler's position that prior to these economic and social influences, Babine "traditional society" included potlatches for prestige, nobility with individual titles, personal and clan crests, prestige items, polygamy, and chiefly controlled hunting territories. He felt these social traits were all aspects of a pre-contact Babine society and were unchanged by the fur trade. It was only once the morality of the church, the loss of the salmon harvest, and the emergence of the lumber industry arrived at Babine Lake, that these aspects of a Babine ranked society were irrevocably lost. Fiske and Patrick (2000) studied Babine traditions, oral histories and documentary evidence and arrived at this same conclusion. They argue that prior to the disruptions of the church, the interruption of their fishing economy, and the prohibition against potlatch ceremonies, the Babine possessed complex legal traditions, identifiable fishing and territorial rights, clan hereditary traditions, and a stratified and complex society. However they support that these social attributes would have been present at Babine Lake not only after the emergence of the fur trade but prior to it as well (Fiske and Patrick 2000:107).

In 1991, Ray challenged the conclusions of scholars like Jenness, Steward, and Kobrinsky who claimed that Babine society was fundamentally altered by the fur trade. At the *Delgamuukw v. the Queen* trial native groups argued that their modern land claims were historically based upon the complex and traditional house territorial systems where chiefs controlled the rights, resources, and use of house territories. Ray supported this position and

presented documentary evidence from HBC journals, which demonstrated that the First Nations had a complex system of governance and land titles and pre-dated the arrival of Europeans. He explained that the adoption of a matrilineal society and the hallmarks of a socially complex society, which included the potlatch, warfare, and a house territory system, would have required more than one or two generations to complete:

it is highly doubtful that the maritime [proto-historic] trade led the Wet'suwet'en to adopt the house territory/feast complex from their Tsimshian neighbours considering that the institution already was fully developed by the time of [HBC fur trader William] Brown's entrance on the scene. (Ray 1991:311)

Unfortunately for the Wet'suwet'en, Justice Allen McEachern weighed Ray's testimony inferior to the crown's evidence, which was heavily based on the scholarship of Steward and Jenness, and he judged that the natives had adopted a simple and stratified society with house territories only after the emergence of the fur trade. McEachern went so far as to call the pre-contact Carrier a primitive egalitarian society with only a rudimentary organization for whom "slavery and starvation was not uncommon, and there is no doubt, to quote Hobbs [sic] that aboriginal life was, at best, 'nasty, brutish and short'" (*Delgamuukw* 1991:13). In his judgement McEachern blatantly ignored Ray's critical testimony that the period of the proto-historic era (1780-1820) was so short that social changes on the scale proposed by Steward, Jenness, and Kobrinsky could not yet have created any significant or lasting social changes (Ray 1991:311).

Also overlooked at this trial was the argument presented by Fisher (1977), who claimed that the fur trade had a negligible effect on First Nations society in British Columbia, and that existing native trade and commercial activities simply absorbed this new European element into their already well established social and economic practices. In fact, Fisher argued that the First Nations were actually taking advantage of the Europeans by accommodating the fur trader's interests into their own. He claimed that "the Indians accepted the existence of trading posts out

of self-interest rather than fear” (Fisher 1977:40). Correspondingly, he argued that the fur traders made an effort to minimize their impact on native society for fear of upsetting their ability to hunt or motivation to produce furs for the Company:

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

Recently Bouchard convincingly argued that the fur trade existed upon the pre-existing commercial pathways of the First Nations people (2012). He used the available documentary evidence to demonstrate that the trade networks of the Babine were not significantly or immediately altered by the emergence of the fur trade. In fact, he clearly pointed out how much difficulty William Brown had trying to convince the Babine to trade for anything other than that item they sought most dearly: moose hide. The HBC records illustrate that for the first half of the 1800s the Babine were more interested in their own culturally specific prestige items than in any new, exotic European trade goods offered by the HBC.

Archaeological evidence also reveals a remarkable continuity in the pre and post contact eras in other non-coastal First Nations fishing societies. Smith interpreted the results from excavated plank houses from the Meier and Cathlapotle sites, which are located approximately 100 kilometers inland on the lower Columbia River in Oregon (2004). He discovered that the introduction of new raw materials such as metal, glass, and ceramic did not “substantially alter the use of lithics for the range of 17 general activities carried out at Meier and Cathlapotle...[these] folk continued to use stone for most of their mundane production activities, well into the Historic period and indeed up to the point of abandonment of their dwellings” (Smith 2008:131). As far as his analysis was concerned, the native inhabitants continued to

maintain their traditional way of life despite the introduction of western materials and commerce. Additionally, further south Poulson came to the conclusion that European goods and ideas, introduced by the fur trade, were integrated into Musqueam culture without interrupting their traditional values, beliefs and social practices (2005). It seems unlikely that a society would completely abandon their cultural and historic activities upon the introduction of a new raw material. Rather, the material would likely be absorbed into already long-standing social traditions.

Other archaeologists have continued to explore the diffusion of pre-contact social complexity inland towards the headwaters of the Skeena River (Martindale 1999; Prince 1998). However they restricted their conclusions to the Tsimshian and the Gitksan and did not investigate whether or not Northwest coast style society extended inland any further. In his dissertation on Gitksan social complexity, Prince observed that the Babine house structures and fishing methods were distinctly less coast-like, but he did acknowledge that their “record on social organization, however, is more ambiguous” (Prince 1998:144).

History of Northwest Coast Culture Area

Archaeologists studying Northwest coast culture groups have often over-looked the inland expression of complex hunter-gatherers. The first to describe the coast as a unique culture area was Wissler, who referred to these societies as the Pacific Coast group, which he delineated with the coastal mountains. Wissler based his categorization on their elaborate material culture, their dependence on salmon as a food source, and on their social organization, which included ascribed social status (Wissler 1914). However, Wissler’s Pacific Coast group included only those societies found immediately adjacent to the coast.

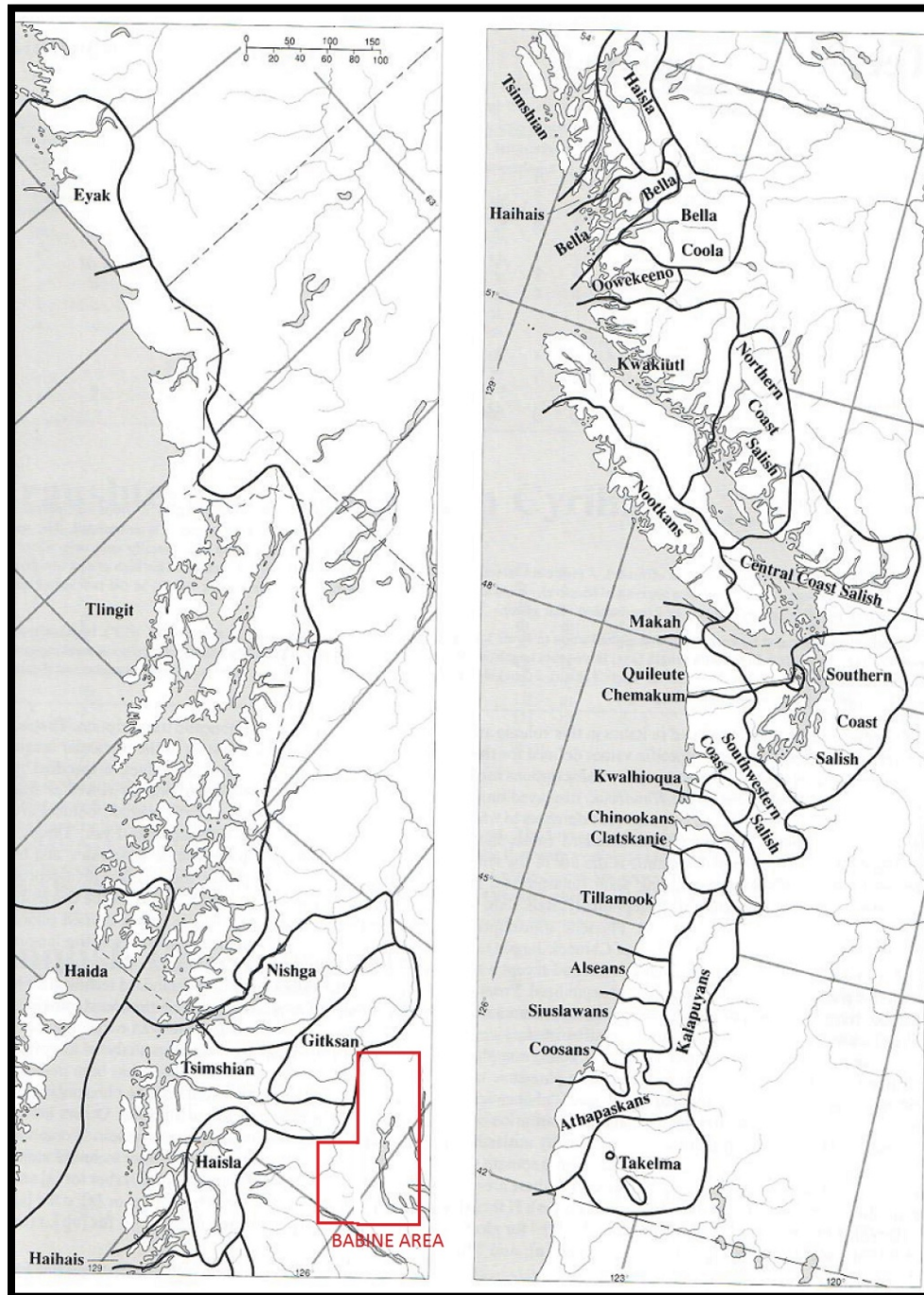
Later, in 1939, Kroeber adopted, refined, and renamed Wissler's classification of the Pacific Coast groups. He gave the group its current designation, the Northwest Coast culture. In his scheme, which included the recognition of higher population densities, Kroeber directly separated the coastal cultures from inland cultures referring to the latter as a "primitive river phase" of the former (Kroeber 1939:30). However, he did not intend to draw firm boundaries, and he warned his readers against using his template as the definitive pronouncement of Northwest Coastal boundaries. He cautioned that "the weakest feature of any mapping of culture is also the most conspicuous, the boundaries" (Kroeber 1939:5). Nonetheless, subsequent archaeologists and anthropologists studying the Northwest Coast societies have continued to use these boundaries with little or no modification.

More modern archaeologists continue refer to the Northwest Coast culture area as located coastally or marine adapted societies, ranging from southern Alaska to northern California. They agree that these people typically express clusters of culture traits such as increased sedentism and population densities, hierarchy and social stratification, warfare, craft specialists, storage, complex trade networks, households, and prestige items. However these same archaeologists have continued to overlook the complexity of the interior pre-historic societies, such as the Babine, by limiting the scope of their geographic region to coastal societies only.

The influential *Handbook of North American Indians* identifies the Northwest Coast culture area based on the social hallmarks of its societies, not on geography or climate, but also notes that some "of these features are also found outside the culture area however defined, and some are not found everywhere within the culture area, but collectively they give it a distinctive character" (Suttles 1990:4). Within the *Handbook* series, the Babine are subsumed into Carrier

society and incorrectly placed within the Sub-Arctic volume even though the authors did recognize that Babine society primarily engaged in trade with coastal groups (Tobey 1990:415).

Figure 1: Typical Northwest Coast Culture Area Map.



Reproduced from *Handbook of North American Indians Volume 7: Northwest Coast*. (1990)
 “Babine Area” indicated for reference.

In 1995, Matson and Coupland defined the Northwest Coast culture area as a region on a north-south axis with very clear distinction. They acknowledged that this “aboriginal way of life associated with the coast extends inland along the major salmon streams, the Columbia, the Fraser, the Skeena, and the Nass rivers,” (1995:2) but their regional map reveals only the north-south extent of the Northwest Coast culture area and only identifies coastal groups in broad vertical categories. Along the same line, in 1999, Ames and Maschner sought to address “the issue of regional similarity and local variation or, in its environmental version, regional richness and local variability” (199:30). However they too excluded inland or up-river societies such as the Babine, which expressed the same variation and cultural characteristics as the Coastal peoples. Their map of the region is very similar to Matson and Coupland’s in that it primarily identifies coastal societies. However, they also included the Gitksan and some inland groups in northern California. Still, they did not explain why their boundary is limited in its extent (1999:18-19).

In an edited volume, Mason sought to investigate not only “the archaeology of the Northwest Coast and its implication for cultural evolution but also on aspects of our current understanding and the extent of the Northwest Coast ethnographic pattern” (Matson 2003:2). However, by adopting Wissler’s outdated outline for coastal societies, the editors undermined chances of understanding the emergence of cultural complexity on the geographic fringes of the Northwest Coast. In the chapter on the Northwest Coast study area, Donald acknowledged that culture areas are “zones of relatively intensive contact and sharing, and that have meaningful common and historical developmental background” (Donald 2003:291). Still, he adopted Kroeber’s original outline for Northwest Coast culture, which ends at the Gitksan-Babine frontier. And he ignored any complexity which may extend outside of Wissler and Kroeber’s

original model. In her book, Moss specifically defined the Northwest Coast culture area as a region extending along 16,000 kilometres of *shoreline* consisting of multiple “inside waterways” that bordered terrestrially on its eastern side by the coastal mountains of British Columbia (2011: 8). She omits archaeological evidence for complexity from up-river societies and instead adopts the traditional identification of regional coastal societies

In all of the above publications, archaeologists and anthropologists identified complex hunter-gatherers through a collection of cultural traits located within a specific geography. By limiting their analysis to language families who resided on the coast they overlooked similarly complex societies inland. In these studies, whose titles even optimistically hint at a comprehensive analysis of the Northwest Coast culture area, the authors exclude interior Athapaskan peoples, such as the Babine, from sharing in the expression of the Northwest Coast cultural characteristics. These geographical limits of the “culture area” to a specific ecological region is precisely what Wobst was warning against when he criticized a parochial focus on “site-centered archaeology, two-hour-walk territories [which] are all that is in the archaeologist's field of vision” (Wobst 1978:304). He argued that when researchers focus on a particular location they risk focussing on circumstances that are unique to that location and overlook wider regional themes. In this case, archaeologists’ definitions of a “coastal” cultural group overlooked the possibility that up-river, inland groups like the Babine, shared the same social complexity and stratified society.

Despite these observations, current archaeologists continue to use the general *Northwest Coast culture group* as a classification scheme and typically identified only coastal groups as being socially diverse enough to be classified as complex hunter-gatherers. Neglected or understudied upriver and interior societies have generally been considered less complex. Typical

investigations of complex hunter-gatherers in British Columbia have been predominantly limited to the immediate coastal societies where First Nations groups shared the commonalities of “hereditary status differences, multifamily households, and complex exchange systems [arguing that] Northwest Coast societies were much more complex than most other ethnographic hunting-and-gathering societies” including inland foragers (Matson and Coupland 1995:36).

At the end of the last century Kelly explored foraging based societies globally and identified that hunter-gatherer life-ways exhibited significant variability in the complexity of attributes within their social structures (Kelly 1995). His comprehensive study revealed how all societies of “foragers differ in terms of subsistence, mobility, demography, sharing, territoriality, and social and political organization” (Kelly 1995:xiii). He correctly pointed out that hunter-gatherer societies are similar only in that they are each unique and identifiable by attributes adapted for their specific environments, mobility strategies, means of sustenance, trade relationships, group size, gender roles, reproduction rates, degree of egalitarianism, and foraging strategies. This was a purposeful paradigm shift away from earlier broad categories that argued that all hunter-gatherers lived in small egalitarian groups who moved around constantly to find food and resources (Lee and DeVore 1968). Kelly asserted that early anthropologists erred in attempting “to reduce the variation among living hunter-gatherers in order to reconstruct an ‘original’ human society” which conforms nicely to their models of social development (1995:6).

Vast complexity and diversity are increasingly found within both past and present forager groups necessitating that traditional classification models be modified in order to encompass these differences. Archaeological evidence helps to challenge broadly defined classification schemes, compelling their refinement, and redefine them into more useful and applicable tools. Archaeologists Matson and Coupland correctly pointed out that the Northwest Coast culture

pattern overall cannot reconcile a group's high social complexity with low political complexity (1995:29). Hayden argued that rigid traditional models do not encompass the variability and complexity of real world hunter-gatherers. He stated that “inequality and socioeconomic complexity [is] more of a continuum” (2001:105). Therefore it would be short-sighted to use rigid boundaries and firm definitions for complexity in Pacific Northwest coast cultures.

In fact, pre contact Northwest coast societies do not fit early models of foraging societies at all. Archaeologists have found that, unlike egalitarian and nomadic hunter-gatherers, Northwest coast societies exhibited varying degrees of sedentism, food storage, advanced technology, higher population densities, and even social hierarchies, all qualities that were incompatible with traditional definitions of foragers. Ames and Maschner referred to Northwest coastal societies interchangeably as “complex” hunter gatherers or as “affluent” foragers, distinguishing them from simpler notions of hunter-gatherers (1999). They identified the shortcomings of older models on social complexity that posited farming or agriculture must be present before societies developed higher population densities, sedentism, monumental architecture, villages, and social complexity. Ames and Maschner demonstrated that these traits were all present in marine adapted Northwest coast complex hunter gatherers at least 2500 years ago (1999:14). In the North-coast area specifically, Ames’ analysis of complex societies extended inland only as far as the Tsimshian and the Gitksan people just up-river from the Prince Rupert harbour. This delineation presupposes either that inland societies were definitively less socially complex or that the authors felt not enough research had been conducted to judiciously conclude otherwise. However, they narrowly defined these complex groups to those living directly on the coast. In fact, when defining the Northwest coast culture area, Ames

acknowledged that he was referring primarily to those coastal native societies who survived on a marine adapted subsistence, due to a lack of archaeological data elsewhere (Ames 1994:209).

Anthropologists recognized that Northwest coast political and subsistence strategies were rare among typical hunter-gatherers, so they reclassified them as “complex” hunter-gatherers. While there is only tacit agreement on the specific social and economic characteristics that define complex hunter-gatherers, they do typically include greater sedentism, relatively large population sizes, the development of long-term storage strategies, increased exploitation of stable marine food sources such as salmon and molluscs, the appearance of rank and stratification, complex regional trade, lineage based house-holds, and often large-scale warfare. Archaeologists and anthropologists have generally agreed that the Northwest coast culture area stretches from Alaska’s panhandle to northern California (Wissler 1914, Kroeber 1939, Matson and Coupland 1995, Donald 2003, Moss 2011). However these scholars have avoided studying how far inland this culture area may extend along the Skeena River watershed. While there are recent investigations on salmon bearing rivers further south (Hayden *et al* 1996, Prentiss *et al* 2012), the omission in northern British Columbia is mostly attributable to a lack of significant archaeological and documentary data on inland and upriver societies in this area.

However, new archaeological data are beginning to identify non-coastal river village sites whose inhabitants expressed all of the hallmarks of pre-contact social complexity. The Cathlapotle site near Portland on the Columbia River is a large plank-house style village which was occupied prior to and during the fur trade (Smith 2004). And on the Fraser River watershed approximately 25 kilometers north of Lillooet are the locations of the large pit-house village sites of Keatley Creek and Bridge River who, like the Babine, were reliant upon massive salmon runs for their subsistence (Hayden *et al* 1996; Prentiss *et al* 2012). Research indicates that these two

villages were abandoned by their residents after a massive slide devastated the salmon runs.

Archaeological research on the remaining village locations clearly indicates the emergence of large, ranked, and socially complex societies.

Other interior groups have also relied heavily upon salmon and may have possessed similar social complexity to the Babine; however, a lack of significant archaeological data makes this conclusion premature. The Carrier people at Stuart Lake did have very close economic and social ties with the Babine and their society can be viewed as the natural extension of coastal complexity travelling inland from the Tsimshian, to the Gitksan, and then the Babine. However, the salmon they relied upon is from the Fraser River watershed and was less reliable and less abundant than the Skeena River sockeye. Also, by the time the salmon reached their spawning grounds on Stuart Lake, a journey of over 800 kilometers from the ocean, they were fewer in number and not of optimal fat content relative to the healthier salmon at Babine Lake whose river journey is less than 300 kilometers long. Fur traders quickly learned to imitate the Carrier methods and trade for the more nutritious and savoury sockeye salmon captured at Babine Lake (HBCA B/11.b.1). It is also possible that other northern First Nations who relied upon salmon, such as the Tahltan on the Stikine River and the Tlingit on the Nass River, possessed coastal style complex societies. However there has been an absence of any significant archaeological research to allow this hypothesis to be examined in any depth.

Consequently, the absence of significant Babine archaeological research has marginalized them to a “simply egalitarian” society who adopted rank and complexity through proto-historic trade, which spread inland from the Tsimshian and Gitksan societies. The primary argument in this thesis is that the timeframe for this diffusion of social complexity occurred prior to the fur trade and not a consequence of it. Recent research indicates that organized trade networks,

ranked houses, and the appearance of individual status inequality may have a much greater antiquity for the Babine First Nations than the proto-historic era (Bouchard 2012; Rahemtulla 2012). In 2010 and 2012, Rahemtulla excavated an abandoned village site (GiSq-4) at the north end of Babine Lake on the outlet of the Babine River where cultural material was dated no later than AD 700. The documentary evidence also indicates that this site was a complex salmon oriented village situated at the confluence of a lake at the outflow of river and was a popular trade route during the fur trade. This strategic location facilitated interaction with downriver societies allowing the Babine to intermix and adopt social customs from their coastal cousins.

This suggests that Babine people have presumably been exploiting the yearly salmon migration for their sustenance for over 1300 years (Rahemtulla 2012). Early investigation of the archaeological site GiSq-4, identified a massive fishing village with over 1100 cultural depressions (Mohs and Mohs 1976) and at least ten long-house depressions along the eastern side of the river bank (Rahemtulla 2012). Using historical documentation, Bouchard argued that the established trade networks of the Babine First Nations pre-dated the arrival of the fur trade and that subsequent European commercial interests relied upon these pre-existing trade pathways to move resources and materials (Bouchard 2012:21). If sophisticated trade networks and surplus foods were available at Babine Lake prior to European contact, then they certainly existed in a more complex social system prior to the influence of the fur trade.

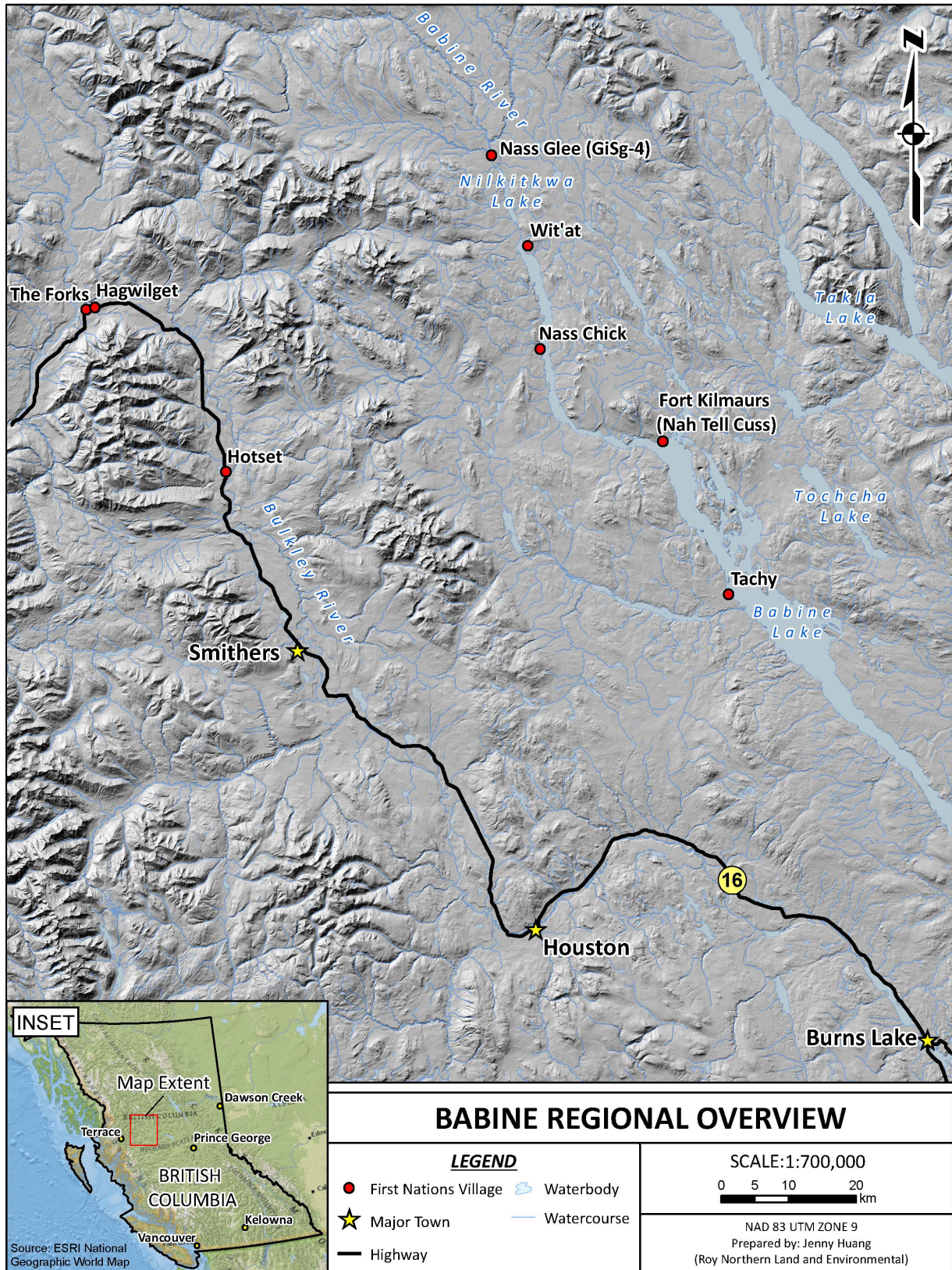
Chapter Two: Archaeology

Babine Lake

Babine Lake is the longest natural lake in British Columbia at approximately 177 kilometers long and almost 9.7 kilometers across at its widest point. This natural reservoir empties into the Babine River at its northern-most end and later enters the Skeena River, which then empties into the Pacific Ocean over 360 kilometers downstream from Babine Lake. The north end of the lake is quite shallow and narrows for approximately 11 kilometers and is today referred to by its own name, Nilkitkwa Lake, however in the past it was essentially considered only a widening of the Babine River or a narrowing of Babine Lake itself. Babine Lake's feeder streams are important also as a spawning ground for all five species of Pacific Coast salmon: Pink (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*), Sockeye (*Oncorhynchus nerka*), Coho (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), Chinook (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), and Chum (*Oncorhynchus keta*) in addition to the indigenous Lake trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*), Rainbow trout including the ocean bound Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), and Burbot (*Lota lota*) (Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada 2017). Today the Lake Babine Nation is the third largest aboriginal group in British Columbia with a membership of almost 2,500 people living in three separate communities year round and two more part-time communities (Lake Babine Nation website 2017).

From 1974-1976 Mohs conducted a comprehensive survey of over 800 kilometers of Babine Lake shoreline, staying within 100 meters of the lake. He recorded 225 new archaeological sites, which dramatically increased the previous total bringing it up to 231. During his lakeshore survey he recorded pictographs, quarries, rock shelters, signal stations,

Figure 2: Babine Regional Overview Map



surface features, habitation sites, and six village sites.

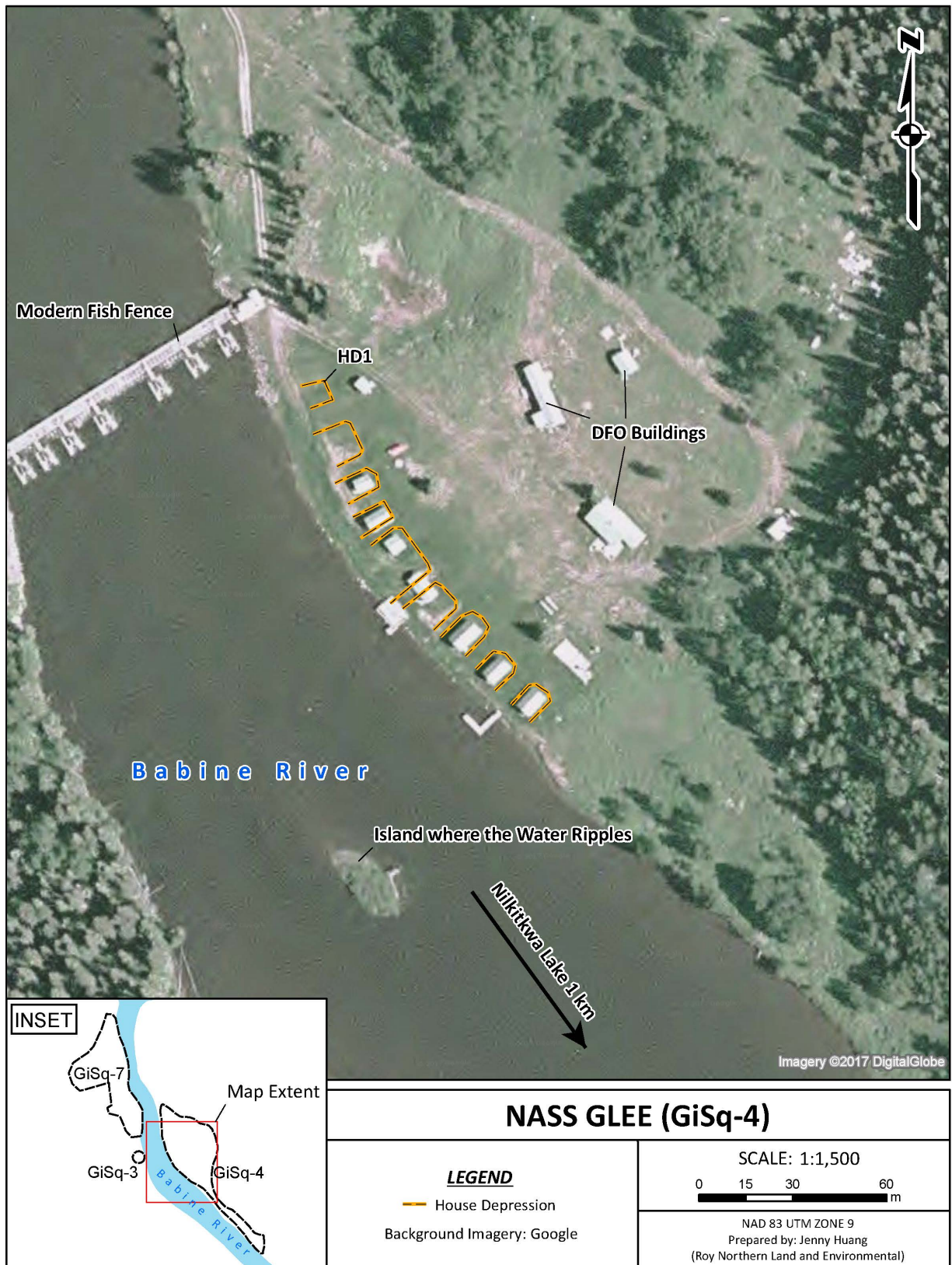
The largest site he documented, and the one he felt contained high potential for the greatest antiquity (Mohs and Mohs 1976:3), was GiSq-4, a village site located about a kilometer down river from the north end of Nilkitkwa Lake on its eastern bank. In 1833 Simon McGillivray and his men reported spending the night at this village where they slept in Chief Casepine's lodge. Here they obtained supplies and repaired their canoe, which they had just impaled on a portion of the underwater fish weir in the Babine River (HBCA D.4/125). Although the lodge was deserted at this time, it capably provided shelter overnight for the fur traders while they conducted repairs.

At this village site Mohs recorded over 1100 surface features, which he noted were predominantly cache pits. However he also mentioned that at least nine of them were over three meters in size possibly being house depressions. The separate archaeological sites GiSq-3 and GiSq-7 are located directly across Babine River on its western shore and should be recognized as an extension of the GiSq-4 village site. Mohs also noted that there were at least eight rectangular house depressions along the eastern shore of Babine River (as cited in Rahemtulla 2012). These are currently located under Department of Fisheries and Oceans cabins and other out-buildings.

House Structures

Father Morice recorded five distinct traditional dwelling types for the Carrier in general (Morice 1893:184-193). With a span of almost 30 feet or nine meters across, the largest was the ceremonial lodge, which he remarked were located "in such spots as seem to promise the greatest fishing facilities (Morice 1893:184). These ceremonial lodges were spruce plank houses modelled after the coastal cedar longhouse, which contained two entrances and an opening in the

Figure 3: Nass Glee (GiSq-4)



ceiling to allow smoke from the fires to escape. These lodges were permanent structures and were lived in throughout the summer and fall and re-visited for special ceremonies during the winter (Fiske and Patrick 2000:42). Oral histories inform that Babine lodges contained a central fireplace and housed a family unit in each corner (Fiske and Patrick 2000:42). Morice reported that when one ceremonial lodge became overcrowded the clan would then build a smaller summer lodge to accommodate the overflow rather than share a residence with another clan (Morice 1893). He also detailed the smaller fishing lodges (smoke-houses) and winter huts. The fifth Carrier dwelling type was a subterranean lodge specifically used by the southern Carrier and is not likely to be found at Babine Lake.

At the invitation of the Lake Babine Nation (LBN), Dr Rahemtulla and the University of Northern British Columbia formed a partnership with the LBN to investigate the archaeology site, GiSq-4. In the summer of 2010 Rahemtulla conducted an archaeological field school where several cache pits and a couple of trenches were excavated (Rahemtulla 2012). Expanding on this initial investigation, Rahemtulla (2013) returned with a group of graduate students and consulting professionals in 2012 to excavate a house-pit depression. This rectangular depression, designated HD1, is located on the shoreline of Babine River at GiSq-4 and measured at eight meters across and 12 meters long, placing it within Morice's dimensions of a ceremonial lodge. More excavations in the adjacent house-pit depressions would help to determine with more certainty that this was a ceremonial lodge and not simply a larger summer home. A comparison of the artifact assemblage and distribution within HD1 to smaller house depressions would help to confirm its function as a ceremonial lodge. There were 39 contiguous excavation units opened in the southeast corner of the house and ten of these crossed under the house wall into the

midden. This excavation opened approximately 30% of the entire house floor. In larger traditional lodges, such as this one, First Nations often used multiple hearth features to provide sufficient heat for the dwelling and to allow more fire circumference around which families could sleep. According to Morice, the Babine inhabitants typically lived directly on their house floors and slept on spruce branches or undressed skins along the exterior of the structure (Morice 1893:187).

Radiocarbon Dating

During the 2012 excavation at GiSq-4, several samples of charcoal, wood, and other organic materials, such as berry seeds and calcined bone, were carefully recorded and recovered for possible radiocarbon dating. After a preliminary laboratory analysis of the Babine Archaeological Project (Rahemtulla 2013) ten charcoal samples were submitted to the Radiocarbon Laboratory at the University of Laval, working in partnership with the Keck Carbon Cycle AMS Facility at the University of California, Irvine (UCIAMS). All ten samples were dated and later calibrated on one sigma (68%) by CalPal2007-Online (Cologne Radiocarbon Calibration & Palaeoclimate Research Package) (Rahemtulla 2013).

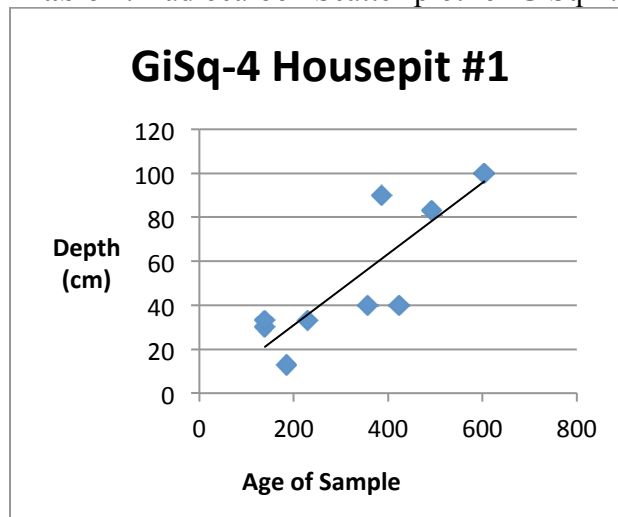
Table 1 : Radiocarbon Samples (Rahemtulla 2013)

Era	Sample #	Sample DBS	Calibrated Range	Calibrated Date B.P.	Unit #	Association
Pre-Contact Period	1	100 cm	AD 1309-1383	604 ± 37	27	Berry Cluster
	2	100 cm	AD 1309-1383	604 ± 37	2	Post-Hole
	3	83 cm	AD 1438-1476	493 ± 19	27	Calcined Bones
	4	40 cm	AD 1458-1596	423 ± 69	24	Basalt Flakes
	5	90 cm	AD 1510-1616	387 ± 53	37	Calcined Bones
	6	40 cm	AD 1535-1651	357 ± 58	1	Charcoal Lens
Proto-Historic	7	33 cm	AD 1651-1791	229 ± 70	21	Charcoal Lens
Historic Period	8	13 cm	AD 1666-1864	185 ± 99	2	Calcined Bones
	9	30 cm	AD 1710-1912	139 ± 101	29	Post-Hole
	10	33 cm	AD 1706-1916	139 ± 105	33	Anvil Stone

As shown in Table 1, seven of the ten calibrated dates indicate that the assayed samples are sourced prior to European Contact, and that only three of the recovered samples were deposited during historic times. The high correlation between depth and age of the 10 samples also suggest that the site was likely not significantly disturbed by construction activities from the existing fish fence and its associated buildings built by Fisheries and Oceans Canada in 1946 (Canada DFO website 2017). The basal date from within the house pit was taken from a sample of charcoal recovered at 100 cm DBS at the rear of the house on a patch of berry seeds. A second charcoal sample was recovered over a meter away from this one at the base of a posthole and also provided the same date at that depth.

Correspondingly, those samples taken at the shallowest depths tend to represent the most recent dates of occupation and the correlation between dates and depths of samples is graphed on the scatter plot below in Table 2. Care was also taken to select a variety of samples in order to obtain a sufficient distribution from within the house-pit. See Appendix (Plate 1) for the radiocarbon sample locations and depths within HD1.

Table 2: Radiocarbon Scatter-plot for GiSq-4.



The analysed radiocarbon samples show that the earliest house occupants predated the European fur trade by at least several hundred years and that this same location was continually occupied both during and after contact. Additional radiocarbon testing was conducted on materials recovered from this same village site (although not at this house-pit depression) in a UNBC 2010 Field School, and provided calibrated dates as far back as 1300 years B.P. (Rahemtulla 2012). Current research by Rahemtulla (personal communication) has also produced more radiocarbon dates of at least 1,000 years before present from a nearby island site, GiSp-1, located on Nilkitkwa Lake.

Overall, the radiocarbon samples indicate that the house was occupied prior, during and after contact with Europeans. Additionally, the samples indicate that the house pit has not undergone any significant sediment disturbance, as the correlation between depth and age of the samples is very high. However, the effect that trampling has on the site formation process and on the distribution of an assemblage in general must not be under-estimated, particularly in a house-floor environment, which is subject to repeated cleanings and trampling effects of its inhabitants (Gifford-Gonzales *et al* 1985). Given that the expanse of time in this house is relatively brief archaeologically, limited to several hundred years, the interpretation of the age of artifacts is limited in this thesis to pre-contact and historic periods only. The excavation and interpretation of this house depression would benefit from an examination of soil micromorphology to better understand the layers of sedimentation and illuminate the details of the temporal occupation, not to mention assist with understanding the association of artifacts. Therefore, for purpose of this thesis, the house floor is being considered in palimpsest as a horizontal distribution of house occupation and activity rather than vertically through time.

Fauna

The fauna recovered from the house-pit at GiSq-4 suggest a summer occupation in terms of the representative faunal remains. Despite an expectation for low survivability of fish skeletons, due to their fragile skeletons, over 200 of these elements were recovered. Most of these were vertebrae, although a few cranial elements also survived. The majority of the fish remains were located within a meter of unit number 13 and accounted for almost 75% of the total fish remains in the excavated area of the house (Appendix - Plate 2). The location of this cluster of elements in the rear center of the house depression suggests a heavier concentration of processing activity at this location. This is presumably the location of a hearth and would account for the high numbers of these fish in this location. If this was a fishing lodge, it would stand to reason that as salmon were hung to dry in the rafters, their remains would be found more evenly distributed throughout the house floor.

Table 3: Fauna Recovered at HD1

Type		Element	#
Fauna (266)	Terrestrial	Femur Fragment	1
		Mammal Phalanx	1
		Rodent Cranium	1
		Canid Mandible	1
		Marmot Cranium	1
		Beaver Femur	1
		Unknown Fur	2
	Avian	Feathers	6
		Bird Vertebrae	2
		Tibiotarsus (duck?)	1
	Marine	Fish Elements	202
		Shell Fragments	46
		Sea Urchin Spine	1
	Calcined	Bone Fragments	12,366
		Total bone weight	1653 g

However, if this was a summer or a ceremonial lodge, cooking would be confined to a central hearth or to several hearths each central to a specific family group. Given the large size of this house depression and its central hearth feature it is more likely to be one of the latter, as the fishing lodges, according to Morice, were much smaller.

In addition to the salmon remains, there were 12,366 individual calcined bone fragments recovered from the excavated area of the house. Together these weighed 1,653 grams. These fragments were predominantly less than a centimeter long and were too burnt and too fragmented in most cases to be identified (Figure 4); however, there were a considerable number of small long bones likely belonging to smaller rodents (Figure 5).

Figure 4: Some Calcined Bone Fragments

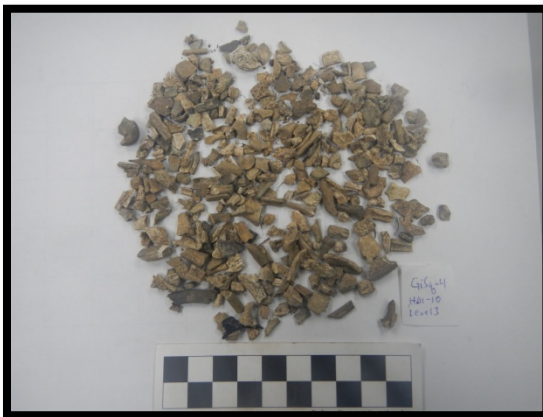


Figure 5: Five intact Long Bones.



The largest cluster of calcined fragments (over 43% of the total) was located within a meter of unit 13 providing more evidence that this was a location for a hearth and that a considerable amount of food was prepared here. A number of fragments were found throughout the remainder of the house, as would be expected, as ethnographic accounts state that these house floors were often swept out and the remains dumped in the midden to the sides and rear of

the house. This regular sweeping of the house floors would have disturbed the sediments with the calcined fragments causing them to intermingle with the rest of the house.

In a few cases, faunal remains could be identified by species. A mandible from a medium sized canid, a beaver femur, and a marmot skull, all indicate that much more than fish was being consumed in this house. These also confirm this structure as a larger summer lodge or even a ceremonial lodge. The beaver (*Castor canadensis*) was widely regarded by the Babine as a special ceremonial food and was frequently shared at potlatches. Marmot (*Marmota*) or groundhog were valued for their fur and also eaten. They are hibernators however, so these animals were probably not hunted in the wintertime.

There were also two samples of fur discovered in the excavation. One of these was over 30 centimeters in area and was covered in a concentration of Elderberry seeds. Rahemtulla (n.d.) points out that Elderberry bushes are not common in the Babine area and that their presence in this house suggests downriver trade with the Gitksan. In addition to these terrestrial foods, there were six feathers, two vertebrae (duck sized) and possibly a duck tibiotarsus. During the summer months, Babine Lake is visited by abundant waterfowl including ducks, geese, and swans. These birds were eaten and also their feathers were used as tools, or on people as decoration, on arrows for fletching, and in important ceremonies (Mills 1994).

Interestingly a single sea-urchin spine was also recovered, which suggests an exotic food source that would certainly belong to a noble or wealthy individual. This imported prestige item was possibly used as personal adornment to indicate high status. Shell fragments were also found throughout the house pit but they were too degraded to identify by species. However the Western Pearlshell mussel (*Margaritifera falcata*) inhabits the lakes and rivers of this region, and these fragmented remains may belong to that bivalve. It is possible that some of these shells may

be the remains of oysters imported from the coast and used as status items. It has been well documented that Babine women wore oyster shell labrets to indicate their high status (Harmon 1820, Morice 1905). Overall, the excavated portion of the house pit depression revealed a central hearth area that would have served the family members living in the rear of the house. There are remains of fish, ceremonial fauna, birds, and exotic items suggesting that this was not simply a fishing lodge but more likely it was a larger ceremonial lodge.

In traditional Northwest Coast style longhouses the highest status families occupied the rear of a house directly opposite the front entrance (Ames and Maschner 1999:152) and Morice also observed this to be true for the Carrier (1893:184). Subsequently, this is where one would expect to find any prestige items. Larger structures could house more families or clans, which are sometimes referred to as corporate groups of organized labour (Hayden 2005, Ames and Maschner 1999:152). Each corporate group worked together to process salmon and protect access to their clan's resources. Specific fishing or hunting locations were governed by clan chief who regulated the construction and rebuild of fish fences and weirs (Fiske and Patrick 2000). In addition, there was a massive amount of salmon being processed in a very short period, requiring the careful management of people, resources and space to maximize food production. Finally, the dried salmon had to be distributed amongst the individual families and then adequately stored for consumption until the next year's salmon run.

The entire process required careful planning, organization, and an impressive understanding of engineering. The fish weirs were designed to withstand the heavy currents of the Babine River, to cross the entire river itself, and to carry the weight of several people while they actively harvested thousands of salmon. Another location where the Babine-Wet'suwet'en were recorded as having constructed impressive bridges include the First Bridge at Hagwilget

(Appendix - Plate 3). Simon McGillivray encountered this famous bridge in 1833 where he recorded that “about 5pm we reached a wooden bridge which crossed the river, it is not wider than 60 yards. Some of my men had already crossed whilst myself, Regnier, Waccan and Vandal dared not attempt it without imminent peril to our lives” (Folio 41, June 20, 1833).

Later, in 1859 gold prospector Robert Downie crossed this same bridge, and in 1866 the Western Union Telegraph employees recorded their amazement at such a well engineered design. Feats of impressive engineering and design, as well as the organization of the huge numbers of people and resources necessary on this scale of work required a well established hierarchy not practiced by simple, egalitarian hunter-gatherers. Donald (1997) consolidated evidence indicating that ranked societies along the Northwest coast maintained trade in slaves in part to use their labour in dangerous and massive undertakings.

Traditional Artifacts

The high number of traditional First Nations artifacts (Table 4) recovered in the excavated portion of HD1 indicates that it was occupied long prior to any influence of an emerging European fur trade. Later, as more and more of Babine life-ways were being altered by colonial and commercial systems there is a noticeable shift in the assemblage from traditional to modern tools. If Babine social activities were significantly altered by the initial arrival of Europeans, then there should be a corresponding change in the household activities, and this should be observable in the artifact distribution. However, the spread of artifacts, the palimpsest of the house floor, remains the same. In this case, the assemblage and use of cultural artifacts corresponds to a domestic use of the house possibly including a high status family. The variation of artifacts indicates that this household was inhabited by families who were occupied with

domestic life and fishing activities. In addition, there were also those higher ranked individuals who possessed both prestige and exotic status items such as imported marine resources, ground stone adzes, and obsidian materials.

Table 4: Traditional Artifacts from HD1

Era	Type	Item	#
Traditional Artifacts* (398)	Chipped Stone (Basalt)	Re-worked Flakes	46
		Unifacial Tools	26
		Scrapers	18
		Bifacial Tools	24
		Projectile Points	23
		Retouched FCR	18
		Cores	5
		Cobble Choppers	3
	Chipped Stone (Obsidian)	Flakes	41
		Retouched	6
		Microblades	4
		Microblade Core	1
		Projectile Point	1
	Ground Stone	Abrader stones	10
		Misc/Unknown	7
		Adze	3
	Organic	Birch Bark Rolls	114
		Worked Bone	7
		Unidentified	6
		Worked Antler	4
		Textiles	3
		Worked Wood	3
	Misc.	Red Ochre	8
		Pecked stone	5
		Hammer Stones	4
		Net Weights	4
		Anvils	4
		FCR Total	5130kg

*The above list does not include the hundreds of unworked basalt flakes and debitage.

The most significant status artifacts recovered at Nass Glee were polished stone adzes and obsidian tools. Father Morice claimed that the interior Carrier societies traded for polished stone adzes and axes from the coastal First Nations whose larger settlements contained more skilled workmen, and he wrote that these implements “were possessed by the notable and a few wealthy heads of families only” (Morice 1893:47). He also reported that arrowheads were most commonly made of bone, stone, or wood but that obsidian was a “less common and more valued material” and was the rarest and most beautifully chipped point available (Morice 1893:54).

There were two rough fragments of polished stone adzes recovered within the midden at the rear of the house, and one additional fragment discovered inside the house at the rear (Appendix - Plate 4). Polished and ground-stone tools at Babine Lake are considered prestige or exotic items considering that there are so few recovered compared to flaked and chipped stone tools. Also, when considering the hundreds of hours of labour it takes to grind and polish a stone by hand it is probable that slaves were central to their manufacture.

Figure 6: Three Adze Fragments from HD1.



Obsidian is commonly considered a prestige item for First Nations and for aboriginal groups worldwide both for its ebony beauty and its easily obtained sharp edge. The primary reason for its prestige status at Babine Lake is the great distance it travelled, by hand and on foot, in order to end up in the houses of the Babine. Rahemtulla (n.d.) had the recovered obsidian analyzed with X-Ray Fluorescence and sourced almost 99% of the obsidian from Mount Edziza, a journey by foot over 400 kilometers north, in Tahltan traditional territory. There was also a single sample from over 1100 kilometers further north at Wiki Peak in Alaska. Interestingly there was only a single flake which originated from the Anahim complex, in traditionally Chilcotin territory, approximately 250 kilometers south. This is the closest obsidian source to Babine Lake. However, the pre-contact relationship between the Carrier and the Chilcotin is commonly described as slight and antagonistic (Laine 1953 as cited in Hudson 1972, Morice 1905).

This obsidian distribution is interesting as the obsidian source at Mount Anahim is almost 100 kilometers closer to Babine Lake than Mount Edziza at approximately 340 kilometers to the north, and the path to get there is much less mountainous. However, it is likely that a well established Tahltan regional trade network interfaced with the Babine more frequently. The Tahltan obtained marine resources such as eulachon grease and dentalium shell from the coastal Tlingit in exchange for furs and obsidian (Albright 1982). It is likely that the Babine obtained their obsidian from down-the-line trade where obsidian moved from the Tahltan to the coastal Tlingit, to the Tsimshian, and into the hands of the Gitksan who brought it back inland to the Babine. However, it is also possible that the Babine also traded directly with the Tahltan as there are recorded trails heading north from Babine Lake (RAAD 2017). The Tsimshian dominated the pre-contact trade network along the coast and inland and this increases the likelihood that

they were the distributors of this prestige item into the interior. Their well established monopoly on trade in the region (Martindale 2003) was the same monopoly that frustrated William Brown and the HBC when they tried to penetrate the region with their own commercial interests.

The traditional artifact that most dominated the GiSq-4 assemblage was the retouched flake. Given the vast quantities of salmon being harvested and worked at this site this is not unexpected. However, there were also an abundance of unifacial and bifacial tools and scrapers however their distribution appears random (Appendix - Plate 5).

Figure 7: Some of the Bifacial tools



Figure 8: Scrapers



While these tools are ubiquitous and are found in First Nations households throughout British Columbia, their great numbers at a village on a salmon bearing river has been argued as evidence for a salmon focussed economy (Prince 2011). Rousseau also argued that many rough tools traditionally thought of as hide or wood working tools may have also been used to decapitate salmon as they could produce the force required to cut their spine (2004:27). Rahemtulla (personal communication) has suggested that the large number of fractured cobbles and Fire-Cracked Rock (FCR) recovered at HD1 and found at other salmon harvest locations, such as at Smokehouse Island on Nilkitkwa Lake only 8 kilometers away, may have been used as fish

processing tools. Nonetheless the retouched FCR, bifacial and unifacial tools, scrapers and cobble choppers recovered at GiSq-4 are consistent in morphology and in number with the assemblages of other salmon harvesting sites along the Skeena watershed (as summarized by Prince 2011). In addition, four net weights were recovered from HD1 supporting a fishing economy at GiSq-4.

Figure 9: A net weight recovered from HD1.



Tahltan and Gitxsan are both known to have used rolls of birch bark, lit on fire, to attract salmon at night (Albright 1986:33, Matson and Coupland 1995:129). In the excavated portion of HD1 there were at least 114 separate rolls of birch bark. Prince (2011:96) suggested that torch materials were commonly used in First Nations salmon economies on the Skeena River to assist in the night-time harvest of salmon and other fish.

Figure 10: Three of the 114 Birch bark rolls from HD1.



Projectile points may also have been used for fishing; however the great success of fish weirs and traps for capturing massive quantities of salmon suggests that at GiSq-4 this tool was more likely used as a weapon for war or for hunting game. There were three different morphologies of projectile points recovered at GiSq-4 (Figure 11). These are Kavik points, side notched points, and lanceolate points and conform to typical Athapaskan style points recovered in the region (Magne and Matson 2008). While the distribution of these points throughout the house pit appears random, the significant number of recovered intact points suggests that activities other than salmon harvesting were being conducted (Appendix – Plate 6).

Figure 11: Some Side-Notched (left), Kavik (middle), and Lanceolate (right) points from HD1.



Finally there were several anvils and other “house furniture” found in HD1 as would be expected in a permanent structure (Binford 1978:339). These included large stones with obvious flat work areas. In addition, there were several bark-lined cache pits excavated within the floor of HD1 used for storage. And finally, several large post-holes indicated house structures, while

the remains of smaller post-holes were consistent with the Carrier method of placing roasting sticks around the hearth feature to hold food, as shown in Rahemtulla (2012).

Historic Artifacts

Nass Glee was occupied prior to, during, and after contact with European fur traders. Each of the first Europeans to travel to or near the Babine region, from Alexander Mackenzie in 1794, to William Brown in 1822, noted that some of the natives they encountered possessed guns and other metal implements, and that they were familiar with their use and value (Mackenzie 1801, Fraser 2007, Harmon 1802:219, Brown B.11.a).

Table 5: Historic Artifacts recovered from HD1

Era	Type	Item	#
Historic Artifacts (270)	Projectiles	Gun Shells	18
		Pellets	7
		Musket Balls	3
		Gun Flints	2
		Bullet	1
	Metal	Metal Fragments	17
		Fishing Items	3
		Metal Files	2
		Metal Knife	1
	Decorative	Trade Beads	91
		Ceramic Shards	45
		Metal Buttons	38
		Ceramic Buttons	11
		Jewelry	3
	Misc.	Pipe Fragments	7
		Cordage	7
		Wooden Handles	5
		Fabric	5
		Worked Glass	2
		Harmonica	2

The above list does not include the hundreds of recovered round and square metal nails. Note that square nails were in use at Babine Lake since the arrival of the HBC in 1822 until the late 1890s.

Inside the excavated portion of the house-pit at Nass Glee the historic implements recovered indicate that the occupants relied heavily on firearms and in decorative items. Gun trade with the natives at Babine Lake was originally in flintlock muskets obtained from the North West Company and subsequently from the Hudson's Bay Company. However William Brown observed on his arrival to the area in 1822 that the guns he saw were foreign to him and probably obtained from men on the coast (HBCA B.11/b/1). Father Morice reported that flintlock muskets were a luxury which only a few could afford to purchase and that even so "late as the autumn of 1845 no other kind of fire-arm was known to them...Nay in 1851 (and much later) the Hudson's Bay Company were still selling gunflints to the Indians" (Morice 1905:191).

There were two gunflints and three lead musket-balls recovered in the excavated portion of the house pit, and subsequent to the 24 arrowheads, were the oldest projectile weapons recovered. More recently, 18 gun shells were recovered but they were so degraded that they could not be identified to calibre. However, if Morice was correct, they must date to after 1850. There were also two small clusters of pellets which could have been shot from a shotgun or pellets used as bird shot, and finally a single spent bullet of unknown calibre. The distribution of historic projectiles (Appendix - Plate 7) shows the majority of the artifacts to be along the southern wall of the house-pit. This would be where the inhabitants lived in this portion of the house. As discussed earlier in the faunal section, the hearth would have been located around unit number 13 and as expected, this area contains fewer historic projectiles.

Trade beads supplied by the HBC were prized, and traded for in large quantities by First Nations women. In the excavated portion of the house-pit depression there were 110 glass beads recovered, of which six were cobalt blue Russian faceted trade beads. These blue beads were presumably supplied by the Russians as early as the late 1700s to the Alaskan Natives in

Figure 12: Gun flints.



Figure 13: One Musket-ball



Figure 14: Three Bullet casings.



exchange for sea otter pelts; however there is much controversy over the source and emergence of these renowned beads in British Columbia (Sprague 1985). The Babine would have obtained these Russian beads either from the Tahltan First Nations, who had encountered the early Russian traders in their northern territories, or through coastal exchange with the Tsimshian, who would have obtained these beads from the northern Tlingit.

The majority of the trade beads recovered were the typical three millimeter blue or white round drawn pony beads most commonly found in British Columbia villages and fur-trade forts (Figure 15). There were also a few multi-colored beads, and even two micro-beads at less than

one millimeter in size. Considering their variability, and an absence of a clear understanding of the historic trade in beads, for this analysis they are simply understood as personally decorative historic artifacts.

Figure 15: Trade Beads recovered at GiSq-4

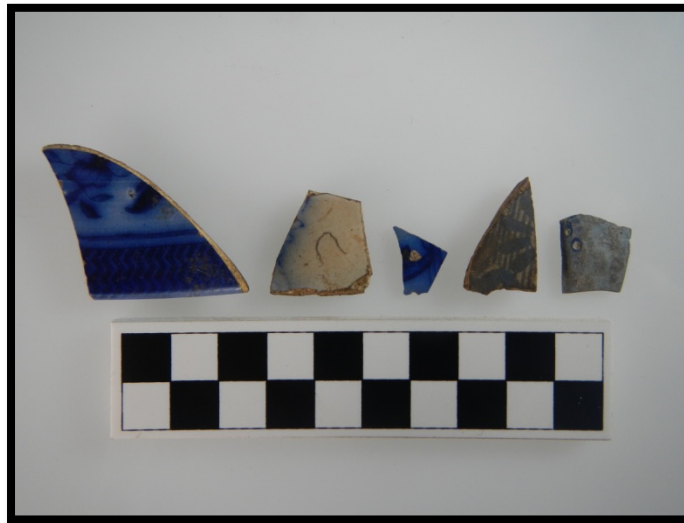


Five uni-colored Drawn-Pony beads, one multicoloured and two faceted Russian Cobalt Blue.

The large quantity and the ubiquity of trade beads throughout British Columbia during the 1800s make applying any significant sense of status to them difficult. As would be expected with such small and abundant items, the distribution of the beads is quite random throughout the excavated house floor and within the midden itself. The tiny beads could easily have been lost and distributed throughout the house during typical household activities, and discarded into the midden whenever the area was swept clean (Appendix – Plate 8).

Ceramic and glass fragments were also found throughout the excavated area and within the midden (Figure 16). Interestingly two broken harmonicas were uncovered outside the house within the midden along two separate walls on the house. Unfortunately any identifying features of these musical instruments have already eroded into obscurity.

Figure 16: Typical Ceramic Fragments found in GiSq-4.



Five decorative wooden handle shards were also recovered along the southern wall of this house. All of these historic items are common in native houses and indicate that this house depression was inhabited by families after the arrival of the fur trade. Square nails were widely replaced with round nails in the 1920s and both of these items were also recovered in abundance in HD1. A number of metal and ceramic buttons from clothing were also recovered. Along with pipe fragments, these indicate the house was most likely inhabited by families rather than simply used as a salmon processing facility.

Overall the artifact assemblage recovered from GiSq-4 indicates a ceremonial lodge occupied by several families who engaged in trade for exotic and prestigious goods. It also verifies HBC fur trade records, which indicate this village was inhabited at least during the summer and fall at the mouth of the Babine River (HBCA B.11/a/1). Babine oral histories confirm that these villages were located at the river mouths and were productive enough to supply their own sustenance needs while trading their salmon surplus for exotic and coastal resources (Fiske and Patrick 2000). Unfortunately, the Barricade Treaty of 1906 abolished the

fish weirs along with the fishing rights of the Babine people. However, the village continued to be inhabited by some members of the Lake Babine Nation well into the mid-1900s.

Chapter Three: The Historic Record

First Contact

The first recorded European contact occurred in January of 1812 when fur trader, Daniel Williams Harmon, arrived unannounced at Babine Lake (Harmon 1812:133). Although the Babine were aware that white fur traders had recently arrived at Stuart Lake, and they knew the Gitksan and Tsimshian traded downriver with European sailors, they had never before been visited by white men in their own territory. They were not entirely surprised by this visit however. The previous summer, two Babine men had encountered Harmon at Stuart Lake while on a visit to their neighbours. At this meeting they shared their knowledge about trade with white men on barges that sailed up the Skeena River. Harmon promised to visit the Babine during the coming winter to learn more of this trade route to the Pacific, and indeed he reunited with these men at the second Babine village he visited.

Ten years later HBC fur trader William Brown arrived at Babine Lake. His mission was to establish a trading post, Fort Kilmaurs, on the lake in order to obtain more furs from the local First Nations and to evaluate the possibility of a commercially viable river or overland route for transporting furs to HBC ships waiting on the Pacific Ocean. Once he settled in at the new trading post, he began a more thorough review of the Babine Lake villages in order to evaluate the commercial possibilities for the Company, and he documented his efforts in journals that provide valuable insight into the daily lives of the Babine people.

Complex hunter-gatherer societies in British Columbia are commonly defined as those groups who exhibited a stratified society maintained via the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and class. These societies carried the hallmarks of large populations, which were sustained by abundant food sources and they were governed by chiefs who controlled trade

through personal authority and even warfare. William Brown's journals provide first hand documentation of these explicit traits present within the first generation of European contact at Babine Lake.

Population

It is difficult to estimate the pre-contact population numbers of the Babine. The Babine, like the Wet'suwet'en were ravaged by smallpox in 1862 and may have been affected by the measles epidemic in 1848 (Galois 1996). Therefore any population estimates made after this time should be carefully considered. According to their band websites, however, today almost 2,500 people living on the lake identify themselves as Babine, and another 2,500 identify as Wet'suwet'en.

Arriving at accurate estimates for inhabitants at Babine Lake appears to have been challenging for early European visitors to the region. A mixed social interaction sphere of Babine society included the Wet'suwet'en, Gitxsan, Stelako, Tsimshian, and various other Carrier peoples. The constant blending and visitation of relatives, intermarriage, and inter-societal events such as the potlatch, and gathering of clans and families for the salmon run, must have increased the *de facto* population on the lake substantially, which would have obscured the actual number of resident Babine. Despite this fluid population problem, the HBC fur traders faithfully attempted to record the numbers and activities of the Babine in order to evaluate their capacity to obtain fur.

In 1812 Daniel William Harmon, the earliest recorded European to have visited Babine Lake, estimated that Babine society was at that time at least "two thousand souls" living in five separate villages on the lake (Harmon 1820:134). This may have been an underestimate, however, as the Babine inhabitants informed him that he had seen only a small portion of their

people, and they assured him that they were “a numerous tribe” (Harmon 1820:134). A decade later the first HBC trader to operate out of Fort Kilmaurs, William Brown, gave a much more conservative account. He estimated that there were approximately two hundred married men on Babine Lake totalling approximately 700 individuals when the women, children and the elderly were included (HBCA B.11/e/1 folio 2). He soon revised this estimate even lower, citing the impermanence and mobility of native residence as well as visitation by other bands. Brown guessed that there were only 250 Babine Lake people of which only 70 were adult males “capable of hunting” (HBCA B.11/e/2 folio 2).

In 1823, the HBC chief trader William Brown attempted a second detailed description of each of the villages on the lake, and carefully recorded their populations in order to predict fur returns based on the numbers of able hunters living in each village. However he also recognized that populations from other villages frequently came and went. At the village of Nass Chick (today called Sunnyside) he observed that there were only thirty four married men (hunters) but “a great number of Strangers who resort there, on account of the Salmon being commonly plentiful” and there being “no salmon in their own country this year – They have come here [from Hagwilget to Lake Babine] to live” (HBCA B.11/a/1). On January 1, 1823, upon a visit to Nass Chick, Brown documented that he encountered 250-300 Indians “fit for the chase” as well as many more who would have consisted of the children, wives, elderly, and slaves to these men.

It is likely that populations also varied depending on the season or social events (potlatches) in the region. Father Morice argued that early estimates of Babine village populations were wildly inaccurate due to the fur trader’s incomplete understanding of indigenous interactions with other villages and tribes. In 1839 fur trader Alexander Caulfield

Anderson attempted the first comprehensive population census for the entire New Caledonia region, and arrived at the minor number of 181 Babine inhabitants. Father Morice, however, felt that Anderson's understanding of native life-ways, the vast territories of travel, and seasonal movements of the Babine was sorely limited and that his numbers were ludicrously inaccurate:

To A.C. Anderson is due the first detailed – we dare not say correct- statement of the native population within New Caledonia...As to the Babines, Anderson was evidently vastly in error, since we have seen that the population of one of the four villages on Babine Lake amounted to 150 souls. Nay, when the present writer first came in contact with them, they still being numbered considerably over 300 souls, without counting those of Rocher Deboule [Hagwilget] and Moricetown (not enumerated by Anderson), whose numbers, added to those of Lake Babine, must have formed a total of upwards of 600 persons (Morice 1905:195-196).

Morice arrived in New Caledonia in 1885, after the smallpox and measles epidemics, and he conducted a more accurate census of the population. The Oblate priest lamented how melancholy it was “to think that those numbers, since the advent of the whites, should have dwindled to scarcely 250!” (Morice 1905:92). If Morice's census is correct, the Babine Lake population prior to the viral devastation of the nineteenth century was significantly more than 250 people and probably closer to Harmon's estimate at over 2000 people.

Chiefs

For the Babine region, historic documentation cites numerous examples of chiefs using their influence to stop quarrels, exact revenge, initiate commerce, or even make life and death decisions on behalf of their people. In addition, chiefs controlled the resource rights and hunting activities on their clans' hunting grounds. These areas were very precisely defined in order to prevent hostilities from accidental or intentional appropriation. HBC documents report that in the early 1820s there were many minor chiefs in the Babine region dominated by a primary chief, Ack Koo Shaw. Brown wrote that these chiefs were “considered the most respectable

being heads of families and possessors of particular tracks of country, which they claim a specific right” (HBCA B.11/e/2).

Based on his research and personal observations Father Morice argued that the Babines “possessed what they called toeneza, [or] hereditary “noblemen,” who owned the hunting grounds and were the honorary heads of various clans” and these people were considered chiefs (Morice 1905:5). He further described the authority this chief possessed over their traditional hunting territories:

For to the rank of Toenezio [chief] or notable are attached hunting grounds, the limits of which are very clearly defined. These are, by right, held in proprietorship by the titular only; but by a sort of tacit concession, other heads of families of the same clan as the legitimate proprietor share the usufruct, thereof during his good pleasure. In fact, they may be said to be, though of inferior rank, his co-associates, hunting with and for him and receiving of the spoils only what he is pleased to let them retain (Morice 1889:125).

These Babine chiefs were able to accumulate wealth and prestige through their control of the animal and material resources available in their territories. This wealth was displayed at feasts in order to support or to purchase a name of standing in Babine society. Daniel Harmon indicated that anyone who had achieved enough power and wealth to be able and willing to throw a feast was then named a chief (Harmon 1820:254). Harmon also wrote that a chief had the power to protect criminals, and even murderers, from punishment by keeping them as a guest in their lodge. However, he also noticed that there were limits to this protection, as it did not extend outside of their chiefly residence. Harmon noted that chiefs had the authority to exact revenge, up to and including retaliatory murder, for insults or crimes committed between the inhabitants of their village (1820:254).

Early fur traders noted that chiefs used their authority to enforce laws, control resources, and negotiate trade with other First Nations groups. At Babine Lake William Brown observed

that chiefs were influential only *to a degree* over their followers and that ultimately each person “considers himself his own master” (HBCA B.11/e/2). It appears that in Babine society everyone who was not a slave was considered free; however, this did not mean ungoverned. There are many examples in the historical records of Babine chiefs exerting their authority over others. Early fur-traders recorded that Quilt No, an Indian chief from Hotset, used his authority to command one Indian to kill another at the Upper Forks out of revenge for a recent murder (HBCA B.11/b/1). In 1825 a frustrated William Brown wrote that the chief of Tachy “is very sick which will probably prevent his followers from doing much during the summer” (HBCA B.11/b/1). Upon a plea by Brown to “stir up his people to hunt” for more furs, Ack Koo Shaw used “his influence to induce his younger men” to hunt, much to Brown’s satisfaction (HBCA B.11/a/1). In another instance a minor chief was ordered by the “principal chief” of Lake Babine (Ack Koo Shaw) to travel to Fort Kilmaurs to trade his furs (HBCA B.11/e/2). The Europeans at Babine Lake quickly identified that Ack Koo Shaw was recognized as the paramount chief on Babine Lake and was “possessed of the most influence which he in general uses to his own advantage, still he is of great Service to his Country Men by preventing them from carrying their disputes (which are not unfrequent [sic]) to a length that might prove fatal to those concerned” (HBCA B.11/e/2). In 1823 Brown wrote in his journal his appreciation for this authority when a scuffle broke out at Fort Kilmaurs. He recorded that the displeased Indians who “had the temerity to attack us with arms, [would have succeeded] had it not been for the interference of the Chief.” (HBCA B.11/e/2) The authority of the premier chief, Ack Koo Shaw, appears to have been well understood and obeyed by both the Babine and the HBC fur traders.

The chiefs and noblemen at Babine Lake also visibly portrayed their high social status through their attire, particularly at feasts where they donned their traditional family clothing

attesting to their rank, status, and noble family name. Brown wrote that chiefs were the “heads of families, and proprietors of the Lands in the neighbourhood” (B.11/e/2). Morice’s ethnographical research also concluded that the Babine possessed inherited rank. He noted that succession to both rank and property followed matrilineal lines, which endowed “hereditary ‘noblemen’ who owned the hunting grounds and were the honorary heads of the various clans” (Morice 1905:5). At a potlatch in Hagwilget, Brown recorded, via messenger, that Babine chiefs were placed according to their socially recognized rank at feasts (B.11/e/1). Father Morice wrote of his admiration for the splendor of Carrier chiefs who, when adorned in their traditional ancestral ceremonial attire, must have been resplendent:

standing in the midst of an admiring assemblage, crowned with the weird head-dress of his ancestors, resplendent in the glory of his moon-like breast-plate, clothed in the folds of his sonorously fringed robe, with his shining fire-bag hanging on the left and his jewelled quiver on the right, and bedecked from head to foot with snow white shells, must have been a sight worth beholding (Morice 1893:180).

Warfare

Although egalitarian and small nomadic groups of First Nations sometimes engaged in warfare of varying scales, the presence of armed and organized military reaction is considered an important hallmark of socially complex Northwest coast cultures in British Columbia. In his book on hunter-gatherer chiefdoms, Earle argued that warfare is a characteristic of chiefdoms where strong established leaders “defend a group’s resources against hostile neighbours” and regulate the balance of power in the region (Earle 1997:108-109). The historic record indicates that the Babine were prepared for this nature of social aggression and completely understood the realities of war. Although warfare on a large scale was not witnessed in the Babine Lake region, there were many reasons for the early explorers and fur-traders to believe it had occurred. Father

Morice presented an account of a pre-contact raid conducted on the Carrier Indians of the village of Chinlac by the Chilcotin Indians from Anahim Lake (Morice 1905). He also wrote about an event in 1820 where a rocky cliff in Hagwilget, having fallen into the river blocked the annual run of salmon. Suspecting mischief and “threatened with starvation, the Western Babines went in a body, armed cap-a-pie, and forcibly took” this region from the Tsimshian (Morice 1905:8).

In 1815 Harmon witnessed a dispute at Stuart Lake between the Carrier and the Babine, which ended in the death of one of the Babine. The outcomes of this event are unexplained but the documents conclude with the Babine leaving and “threatening that they would soon return with a large Band of their Relations to revenge the death of their Companion” (Harmon 1820:159). In another instance, an unsolved theft at Fort St James worried the local natives because they anticipated that the HBC would urge the Babine “to make war upon the Indians there” out of revenge (HBCA B.11/a/1). At Fort Kilmaurs William Brown observed that upon their return from a feast with the Indians of Nah Tell Cuss (a Gitksan village) the Babine anticipated a large scale attack for an insult they had apparently made to another tribe. Brown also wrote that they were “taking up their quarter within Gunshot of the Fort in order to have an asylum at hand in case of being attacked by enemies” (HBCA B.11/a/3). A few years later Simon MacGillivray was almost killed at Hagwilget by a well armed group of over twenty Babine Indians “armed with lances and muskets” until they realized that the fur trader was not the Indian war-party they had been expecting (HBCA D.4/125).

In the summer of 1825 the principal Babine Lake chief, Ack Koo Shaw, led “a party of his young men” to Hotset (today Moricetown) to determine whether the Indians there had blockaded the river, preventing the salmon from passing. (HBCA B.11/a/3) At the village it was determined that this was not the case, however, an unfortunate incident transpired ending with

the accidental killing of two Indians related to another Babine chief, Casepin. Upon their return to Nass Chick, Ack Koo Shaw and his village fully expected “a visit of no friendly nature” from the angered Casepin. A subsequent expected attempt made on Ack Koo Shaw’s life was thwarted by his men through their military preparations for the attack (HBCA B.11/b/1). With all of Babine Lake nervously awaiting an anticipated war between the two chiefs, no one was fishing or hunting to the great dismay of the HBC men. Eventually the standoff ended with the gift of “considerable presents to the principal [sic] of Casepin’s people which has in some measure restored tranquility” (HBCA B.11/a/3).

In another instance Sawbuck, a chief from Nah Tell Cuss, arrived at Fort Kilmaurs armed with weapons and “with his war-coat on and seemingly in a great passion” to exact revenge for the accidental killing of his dog. (HBCA B.11/a/1) While seeking revenge for the killing of a dog, and may not strictly be considered an act of war, the identified war armor he adorned suggests that the Babine were equipped and prepared for warfare. In fact, as Father Morice observed, while “there were formerly no fortified villages among the Western Denes [Babine], one should not however infer from this that there was no warring among them, on the contrary” warfare on the scale of entire villages “are recorded in the traditions of the tribes” (Morice 1893:195). Father Morice sketched a traditional Babine war club as well as an:

innocent looking piece of partly polished stone designed was, in the hands of a Babine Indian, a rather treacherous weapon. It is the temple-lancer or skull-cracker. After it had been securely hafted to a wooden handle three or four feet long...when connected, a scythe-like implement, the warrior – or indeed the assassin, as the case may have been – struck therewith his victim on the temple oftentimes thus causing instant death (Morice 1893:65).

The general preponderance of muskets, bows, spears, war-clubs and guns at Babine Lake documented throughout the journals of the early fur traders argue that they were utilized as weapons of war, not only for hunting game animals.

More recently archaeologist Paul Prince analyzed the distribution of cache pits, villages, and look-outs along ridge-tops and valleys along the Skeena River, which was occupied by the Gitksan. He concluded that their placement was strategic in that they were located in order to minimize the threat and loss to theft and raiding, which mirrored a broader regional theme of hostility and warfare (Prince 2004:51). He argued that these site locations were a response to “conflict that may have involved people of the Northwest Coast and Interior cultural traditions” such as the Babine (Prince 2004:36). Whether or not the Gitksan were defending themselves from the Babine or their northern neighbours, Prince’s analysis demonstrates that warfare was an endemic pre-historic concern for the region’s First Nations societies. He postulated that this was due to their surplus of salmon as a food source. Prince’s conclusions are supported by Schaepe who identified that pre-contact sites along the Fraser River watershed were also erected to provide the salmon rich Sto:lo First Nations a defensive system against plundering coastal warriors (Schaepe 2006).

Potlatch

Rosman and Rubel argued that the Potlatch (referred to as a “feast” by the Babine fur traders) is “the embodiment of the rich ceremonial and religious life of the societies of the Northwest coast [whereby] people enhance their rank” (1971:1). According to Rosman and Rubel, feasts served as the vehicle for establishing and maintaining the title of a chief. Potlatches facilitated the redistribution of wealth, acted as rites of passage, as marriage ceremonies, and finally they created relationships with and recognized the external importance of neighbouring tribes. Fur trader Peter Skene Ogden wrote that he attended a lavish feast of over 200 guests at Stellah (Stellako on Fraser Lake), where “huge piles of dried meats, with vessels of bear’s

grease and fish-oil, besides quantities of berry-cakes, were stowed up in vacant places, so as to leave barely room to pass and re-pass” (Ogden 1853:75). At this feast every guest received gifts according to their importance with “great men exceeding their inferiors in the proportion of six or eight to one” (Ogden 1853:78). At this potlatch Ogden claims to have been honored with a prestigious gift of a “necklace of shells valued among the Indians at the rate of a large blanket” (1853:78).

It is evident that great wealth was accumulated and distributed at these events to promote or affirm the status of the chief who provided the feast. So much wealth was given away at some potlatches that Rosman and Rubel observed that after a feast the chief was left with “nothing but his great prestige and renown to clothe him” (1971:180). Adams argued that the potlatch was an event where chiefly identity is confirmed and the “status of every person on the reserve is effectually articulated” (Adams 1973:12). The degree of each chief’s authority was mirrored in their degree of participation in the ceremonies and seating arrangement at the feasts. At potlatches they sat according to their rank or degree of importance in order that all the guests would recognize and appreciate their status. This seating arrangement was also recognized by William Brown, who observed this very occurrence at a potlatch ceremony in 1823. Writing a report to his superiors, Brown itemized a list of 20 Chiefs who were placed according to their rank at a feast at the largest Babine village of Hotset. He also indicated that the chiefs, while dominating the other men in the village, did regard those individuals identified as heads of families with respect.

Scholars point out that feasts were held to solidify trade relationships with neighbouring tribes as well as to distribute food surpluses (Ames and Maschner 1999:122). Diamond Jenness also argued that the potlatch re-affirmed the political, economic and social fabric of the Babine.

It was also evident that feasts were ceremonies which established and enhanced the perceptions of rank and status of individuals, kin groups, and societies. In 1823 William Brown reported on another great feast at Babine Lake, which was attended by the various chiefs of the region as well as those from other societies (the Gitxsan, Tsimshian, Stellako and Wet'suwet'en) to discuss regional issues such as warfare, trade and economics. He observed that "there is to be a great feast, and besides the Babine Tribe, all the principal Indians who inhabit the country between these and the Sea Coast to be assembled on purpose to make a general Peace, at which they want us to be present. Those Indians who are in the habit of trading with them will be there also" (HBCA B.11/e/2). Within the practice of war and trade the Babine Indians were not an isolated group but were part of a larger interaction sphere, comprised of at least five native nations, with whom feasting served as a primary mechanism for establishing regional diplomacy, marriage, trade, and rank.

The Babine also had blood relatives in most of their surrounding villages and intermarriage is known to have commonly occurred at these inter-regional feasts (Jenness 1943; Rubel and Rosman 1983:10; Morice 1893:27). Each of the five Babine clan names have counterparts in both Wet'suwet'en and Gitxsan societies. Feasts connected these families' together and reinforced pathways for diplomatic, economic, and territorial disputes to be resolved. Common family names also facilitated safe travel to a neighbouring society and they identified specific clan territories useable for hunting and fishing (Fiske and Patrick 2000:48). The magnitude of the political and economic influence of this clan interaction sphere required the Babine to adopt similar titles of status and rank from coastal communities. The potlatch was the venue where this clan name or rank was expressed, gifted, or purchased (Fiske and Patrick 2000).

Trade Networks

Scholars who study the emergence of rank and status in “egalitarian” cultures recognize that these societies do not exist in isolation, but that trade and the diffusion of ideas from neighbouring groups have the potential to facilitate the development of rank (Wobst 1987). It is a misrepresentation to study the Babine as though they were not intimately and inherently affected by the economic and social lives of their nearest more coastal neighbours, the Gitksan and Tsimshian. Interactions between these groups were ceremoniously involved and reciprocal and were likely established through generations of intermarriage.

In 1823 when there was catastrophic collapse of salmon returns on the Bulkley River the displaced Wet’suwet’en travelled to Babine Lake to live and share the local salmon with their kinsmen (HBCA B.11/a/1fo. 50). Additionally, Father Morice recorded that visitation and travelling between villages was so prevalent that it prevented accurate estimates of the numbers of inhabitants. He wrote that in “the first place, the present writer’s experience in enumerating natives, who are always more or less nomadic, has taught him that a good many omissions can hardly be avoided” (Morice 1905:195).

Ames argued that control of key resources such as food within a regional interaction sphere leads to the formation of ranked and elite individuals while Earle maintains that control of the flow of prestige goods and staple products (such as salmon) into and out of their society allows chiefs to exert control over their people (Ames 2007:493; Earle 1997:74).

The earliest European explorers in New Caledonia also recognized that there was significant and extensive pre-contact trade reaching as far as the Indian societies on the Pacific coast. In the summer of 1793 Alexander Mackenzie discovered a group of Sekani Indians who possessed “iron-work they obtained from the people who inhabit the bank of that river [Skeena],

and an adjacent lake, in exchange for beaver skins, and dressed moose skins” (Mackenzie 1801:258). Simon Fraser also witnessed iron instruments at Stuart Lake in 1806 and remarked in his journal that the “greatest curiosity I saw on my voyage to the other end of the Lake was spoons and a metal pots [sic]” (Lamb 1960:260). Visiting Stuart Lake five years later, Daniel Harmon met with some Babine natives there in 1811 and noticed that both the men and women wore ornamentation of brass, copper, or shell beads which “they obtain from their neighbours, the At-e-nas [Gitxsan], who purchase them from another tribe, that is said to take them on the sea shore” (Harmon 1820:245). Harmon suspected that trade with Americans on the coast was the source of this non-native material and he recorded that “every Autumn a number of White People come up the River in Barges to traffic with the Indians” (Harmon 1820:25). A year later Harmon visited Lake Babine directly where to his astonishment he witnessed natives using “Guns, Cloth, Blankets, Axes and cast Iron Pots &c” (Harmon 1820:134). He was informed by these Babine people that they bartered for these materials directly from their neighbours the Gitxsan who in turn bartered for them from the Tsimshian.

Morice also documented an oral history told to him by an elder who recalled the use of a “prehistoric iron pointed spear” by his grandfather as well as an iron or steel dagger “which came into the possession of the Carriers some 110 or 120 years ago” which Morice estimated to be in the 1770s based on the age of the story teller (Morice 1893:142). Given the physical presence of iron in the region, and its appearance in their histories, it appears that the Carrier and Babine had trade ties extending to coastal natives long before the fur traders visited them from the East.

Bouchard argued that these iron instruments most likely arrived at Babine from the coast along traditional trade routes established long before the influence of the European fur trade in

the 1780s (Bouchard 2012:21). These trade routes supported the flow of iron and foreign materials in one direction and moose leather and beaver furs in the other, and imply a high degree of mobility, and an organized and established system of exchange. This productive trade relationship facilitated the creation of wealth while at the same time established power and prestige for those chiefs who controlled the commerce. Established through warfare, kinship ties, and marriage alliances, these traditional routes were carefully controlled by Babine, Gitksan and Tsimshian native chiefs and were maintained even after the arrival of the fur trade. In some cases trade alliances were painted on clan lodges, in the same manner as a totem, to indicate a specific trade relationship. As early as 1833 Simon McGillivray visited a chief's house in Hagwilget, and he recorded that painted "on the sides [of a lodge] a 3 masted ship under full sail with 2 tiers of cannon, there were also two armed brigs. These vessels were very well depicted" (D.4/125 Folio 42, see Appendix – Figure 5 for Map).

The maritime fur trade began in earnest off the coast of British Columbia with the arrival of the Russians who were trading for sea otter furs in the late 1700s. Once these pelts dwindled in number they sought fur inland and obtained beaver, marten and marmots. The trade for these furs was controlled by a powerful coastal native chieftain named Ligeex. This clan head was the paramount Chief of the Tsimshian people at this time. Using ethnographic and oral histories, Marsden and Galois (1995) argued that Ligeex employed a complex system of trade that long pre-dated the arrival of the fur trade. The thrust of their argument was that any economic or geopolitical influence introduced to native society by these traders was subsumed by the existing trade dynamics rather than establishing a new economic order. They claimed that dominant Tsimshian trade networks and the economic prominence of chief Ligeex defined:

the strict laws concerning the ownership of territory and access to trade prerogative, and the sharing of these in clan and marriage relations. Entry into

territory and access to trade partners other than one's own are acknowledged by obligatory gifts to the owners, in a prescribed protocol based on the specific nature of the exchange. House territories thus move across a vast network of multifaceted relationships that cross tribal, regional, and national boundaries (Marsden and Galois 1995:170).

Elaborate ceremonies and mutual understanding for the value of furs between the Babine and their Tsimshian trade partners indicate the degree of entrenchment this trade relationship held. Concerned with the continued loss of furs downstream to the Tsimshian, William Brown embarked on a voyage of discovery to the forks of the Babine and Skeena Rivers in 1826 and observed firsthand the trading practices between the Tsimshian and the Wet'suwet'en:

on their [Tsimshian] 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 [Gitxsan]) 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 (HBCA B.11/e/2 fo. 11).

Realizing that the Babine were engaging in trade with their downriver neighbours, Brown made several attempts to alter the trade preferences of the Babine in his favour. First he attempted to bribe influential chiefs with gifts and promises of special trading status with the Company. This incentive failed when Fort Kilmaurs' lack of moose leather became apparent to the local natives who valued that commodity over all others. With nothing else of value to tempt the Babine the HBC had no way to interfere with the longstanding trade relationship between the Babine and the coastal Tsimshian. The Company's lack of moose hide, the single most important trade item to the Babine, limited the desire of the natives to trade at Kilmaurs and Brown complained that "they will not part with their Furs for anything but [moose] Leather—And when they saw us in

their Country without the article they were in want of—There is not a doubt but they would be dissatisfied, and give us as much trouble as possible” (HBCA B.11/e/2 fo 17). Next Brown suggested forming a trading post at the forks of the Babine and Skeena River to intercept the trade of furs downriver. He desperately considered various strategies to mitigate the continued loss of fur to the coast which was occurring at the alarming rate of three trade excursions a year (HBCA B.11/e/1).

It was evident that the economic influence exerted by Ligeex extended across trade networks far inland and included those residents at Babine Lake who traded interior foods, marmot skins, and hides through the Gitxsan intermediaries to the coast. Tsimshian oral records, known as an *adawx*, are powerful oral traditions where time periods can be identified by correlating events to chronologically observable moments in history (Martindale 2006). In one *adawx* from the 1930s, re-told by Tsimshian elder Matthew Johnson of the Killerwhale clan, the paramount authority of a chief’s power to control these trade routes prior to 1787 is identified.

Ligeex had supremacy on the Skeena River. No one could go up the upper Skeena without first asking the consent of Ligeex...and they had to pay tribute to the chief...when he returned, he also had to give tribute for anything he was able to get on the Skeena River...Although there were many tribes living on the lower Skeena below the canyon, they never went above the canyon and no one was privileged to trade with the Gitxsan, only Ligeex (Beynon nd)

The paramount Tsimshian chief Ligeex obviously exerted significant economic control along the Skeena River to the inland tribes of the Gitxsan and the Wet’suwet’en prior to the arrival of the Europeans. In fact, their arrival was regarded as simply a new group with whom to conduct trade and who had to follow the same established rules and protocols. After the sea-otter trade declined and the focus shifted to land mammals such as beaver and marten, these inland trade routes became more important and Ligeex established alliances up-river through kinship ties, marriages and even used warfare to ensure his continued control of the trade economy.

With the maritime fur trade waning and the trade in terrestrial mammals growing, Ligeex's major competitor for fur became the HBC who had just merged with North West Company in 1821. Soon after his arrival, William Brown noticed that "three fourths of the furs procured by the Indians of Simpson's River [Wet'suwet'en] were carried below and traded to the Indians of the sea coast" (HBCA B.11/e/1). Brown attempted to entice the Babine to trade their furs with the Company rather than with their downriver partners. He unsuccessfully endeavored to bribe the chief:

who was at Ack Koo shaw's village...[with] one pair Indian stockings, a Garrah Shirt, and some other small articles, in a present to the principle chief, to induce him to use his influence to prevent his people from carrying their furs below, at the same time intimating that I would visit him next fall, when I hoped all his people would have their furs collected to trade with me (HBCA B.11/e/1).

Ligeex recognized this interior challenge to his monopoly on the fur trade and became more aggressive in his attempts to control regional trade activities. He ordered an attack on a Gitxsan village that he had assumed traded their furs with his European rival, "burning it to the ground and taking a number of women and children slaves" in restitution (Marsden and Galois 1995:173). Later in 1823, a war-party of over 30 armed Gitxsan men arrived at Babine Lake and demanded that the locals continue trading with them rather than the HBC. This threat had its desired effect, and the following summer furs were hard to come by for William Brown and the HBC (HBCA B.11/e/2 fo.12). This and other failed efforts to convince the Babine to trade with the company rather than their coastal brethren led Brown to concede that Fort Kilmaurs was a failure and that the only way to:

put a stop to this traffic – to protect Western Caledonia from the inroads of these [Tsimshian] people and to secure the trade of both rivers to the concern is to form an establishment at the forks of the Babine and Simpson's River, by which such furs as are not procured there will be got at either Kilmaurs or Fraser's Lake. If some measure is not adopted to check them, the evil will ere long become of serious nature for they are yearly extending their voyages and

there is not a doubt but that they will continue to do so, while they can procure furs and are not opposed (HBCA B.11/e/2 fo 12).

Brown's knowledge of the political and economic control of the native fur trade was limited to understanding only that the Hudson's Bay Company was losing revenue downstream. He believed that the economic power and authority downriver was exerted by these other white men over the Tsimshian and he continued to overlook the dominance and complexity of the local trade economy by the Indians. It was also the HBC's mistaken understanding that Russian posts were established on the river just below the Forks at Hagwilget. In an 1825 letter to his superiors, fur trader William Conolly advised that the Company should assert their presence down river "in order to lay a claim to that country, which the Russians are inclined to dispute. The Russian settlements can be no great distance from when he [Brown on his Voyage of Discovery] went last year" (HBCA B.11/b/1 fo. 13b).

In order to prevent the loss of furs to their eastern competition, the HBC decided to sail more traders up the Pacific Coast from Fort Vancouver to the mouth of the Nass River in order to establish a local trading post and cut off the Russians directly. In 1831 chief trader Peter Skeene Ogden successfully built a trading post, just downriver from the Tsimshian settlements despite a brief consideration for a location directly beside the village itself. In their analysis of this event Marsden and Galois recognized that "the Company had wanted to establish its post at a point farther up the river. But this happened to be in Ginaxangiik [prime eulachon fishing] territory, and this tribe drove them off" (Marsden and Galois 1995:182). Despite identifying the most strategically appropriate location for the post, Ogden was pressured by a local chief, T'xagaxs, who was a subordinate of Ligeex, to place it elsewhere. Ligeex's paramount control of the fur trade and his dominance in the region was powerful enough to alter the plans of the HBC itself. Tsimshian elders record this event in an *adawx* which records that "T'xagaxs, who at this

time lived at this place, ordered his tribesmen to drive these people off who had come to settle among them. The HBC in obedience to the Chief's order moved from that place" (Beynon and Barbeau nd).

However, once Fort Nass had become established, the economic reality of this competitor's presence manifested. Faced with competition to his monopoly on the fur trade Ligeex did as he had always done when faced with a strong economic threat; he established marriage ties to the Company itself. In 1831 Ligeex strategically married his daughter, Sudaahl, to the HBC Fort clerk and surgeon, Dr. Kennedy (Marsden and Galois 1995:175). This union ensured Ligeex's status as the preferred trading partner with the Company and eliminated the threat of a hostile trade competitor at his doorstep. With this union Ligeex once more enjoyed complete authority in the regional control of Babine furs along trade routes that had been established prior to the arrival of Europeans.

Food Surplus (Salmon)

If failure and success were to be measured for the Company at the establishment of Fort Kilmaurs it would be considered a failure in furs, but an overwhelming success in appropriating salmon. The vast majority of the local furs obtained by the Babines were being traded down river to the Tsimshian despite the efforts of Brown to convince them otherwise. The true benefit to Fort Kilmaurs was for salmon, which was procured in vast abundance. Father Morice concluded that the Company benefitted more from the acquisition of salmon than from furs:

Fort Babine was famous for the quantity of salmon it yielded. From the point of view of a trader it was a place of but secondary importance, many of the Indians there taking their pelts to the Skeena River for barter with the native adventurers from the coast (Morice 1905:176).

In fact, the Company relied upon salmon from Babine Lake to sustain its operations throughout New Caledonia and, in 1826 alone, Fort Kilmaurs supplied over 44,000 salmon to sustain the dietary needs of the Company's fur trade operations throughout the region (HBCA B.11/b/1 fo. 37d).

The massive salmon runs on the Babine River reliably supplied the locals with all of their sustenance needs for the year within only a few weeks of labour. Babine oral histories record that each "fishing site along the fishing barricades was assigned to a clan and placed under the management of the hereditary chiefs" (Fiske and Patrick 2000:42). In the early summer, families returned from their winter encampments to the permanent fishing villages to rebuild their weirs, prepare their homes, and organize labour for the approaching salmon. During Harmon's visit to Babine Lake in 1812, he recorded that the Babine subsist "primarily on salmon and other small fish" (Harmon 1820:134). It has been observed that dried salmon carefully stored in cache pits, even on the dry interior plateau of British Columbia, could remain safe and edible for up to a year (Fladmark 1986:129). Even more astonishingly, Father Morice suggested that once the salmon were gutted and dried appropriately, they were cached away carefully underground where they remained edible for up to three years (Morice 1905). The longevity of the dried salmon and the vast quantities that could be processed each year assured the caloric needs and continued existence of Babine society and supported their trade economy.

William Brown recorded that with the partial failure of the salmon run on the Bulkley River, the Wet'suwet'en moved an entire settlement to stay at Ack Koo Shaw's village which evidently had enough of a surplus of salmon to sustain both villages. However, this redistribution of inhabitants interfered with Brown's efforts to purchase salmon for the Company at a reasonable price:

There being a great many of the Indians of Simpson's [Bulkley] River here and have traded all or most of the salmon from the residents of this place. There being no salmon in their own country this year. They have come here to live and pay much higher for salmon than we can afford to do (HBCA B.11/a/1fo. 50)

Father Morice, who lived with the Carrier for almost 20 years (from 1885 to 1904) wrote an article to the *Victoria Daily Colonist* in 1906 (Sunday September 9th) in response to the hostilities between the Babine and the coastal canneries who wanted all fish weirs removed from rivers along the Babine estuary. His personal experiences and collection of ethnographic data convinced him that the Babine "have practically no other alimentary resource than dried salmon. Without salmon they must starve, since that single article of diet is to them considerably more than are to us bread and meat combined" (Victoria Daily Colonist 1906). Just as their Coastal trade partners subsisted on a predominantly marine diet, the Babine relied solely on this abundant annual resource for their own survival.

Prestige Items

Status items were often traded and gifted at potlatches according to the wealth and prestige of the chiefs and participants. However, the most desired sumptuary item in Babine society was white moose leather (Brown 1823). Historical records, as well as oral accounts, indicate that moose were not commonly found in the Babine Lake region at the time of contact with Europeans (Binnema 2012). This item, which was used at feasts, and in traditional 'ceremonies for the dead', was acquired from the Sekani first nations and other native groups who had access to moose hunting areas. William Harmon recorded that at Babine Potlatches "in remembrance of their deceased relatives...at such festivals they cut up as many dressed moose and red deer [elk] skins as they can well procure...and distribute them among their friends and relatives" (Harmon 1820:253). The relative scarcity of this item at Babine Lake likely enhanced

its value as a trade item particularly as it was the most prized prestige item at Babine potlatch and mortuary ceremonies. Babine oral history observes that complete “hides were distributed only to those chiefs whom the host held in highest regard, and they represented the capacity of the host chief and clan to accumulate rare wealth” (Fiske and Patrick 2000:66). The preference for white moose leather dismayed the HBC fur-traders who were in short supply of this item. Trader George McDougall warned that Fort Kilmaurs was becoming short of trade goods, particularly tobacco, which “for want of leather is the only thing I now sell and if but little Leather comes the Summer Trade here will inevitably suffer greatly” (HBCA B.11/b/1). And with the situation worsening, a few days later he wrote “Several of the Indians have put their furs en cache and will not bring them to the Fort until we receive Leather...I cannot succeed while I have not the article they are in want of” (HBCA B.11/b/1). The letters and journals of the early Company traders at Fort Kilmaurs record countless regrets of lost fur trading opportunities for their lack of moose leather. The Babine were equally upset at the Company’s inability to supply the prestige item they most desired. While it initially appeared that their failures to trade for furs was due solely to their lack of this one prestige item, the fur traders soon discovered that their greatest impediment to trade was not their lack of moose, but the coastal native competition in trade.

Other prestige items are documented in the historical records for the Babine Lake area. For instance, the nickname “Babine” was first applied to the residents at Babine Lake by early French (probably Métis) explorers who observed that the lower lip of the local women was pierced with a labret. Daniel Harmon, the first European to visit this region described the activity as a Babine woman’s custom, borrowed from the coast, wherein the parents:

pierce a hole through the under lips of their daughters, into which they insert a piece of wood, in the shape of the wheel of a pulley; and as the girl grows up, this wheel is

enlarged, so that a woman of thirty years of age, will have one nearly as large as a dollar. This they consider, adds much to their beauty. (Harmon 1820:266)

Scholarship on labrets on the Northwest coast consistently indicates that its practice was a sign of status and rank in First Nation's societies. Keddie explained that on the Northwest coast "the labret is directly related to status [where] it serves as a stable indicator of the existence of sets of reciprocal relationships" within a culture group (1981:76). He observed specifically that the Babine likely adopted this status symbol "in the not too distant past as a result of Tsimshian influence" (Keddie 1981:65). While it is safe to conclude that the Babine acquired this expression of status, along with others, from their coastal trading partners, Keddie provided no evidence for his assertion that the practice was recent other than relying upon citations from Morice (1905:6-7) who credited "the ackwilgates [Western Babines] and their neighbours, the Kitksons, a Tsimpsian tribe which has the same tradition" as the source for this custom. Morice described this Babine custom in careful detail relaying that "their women wear, from the time of puberty, a labret or plug of bone or hardwood, perhaps an inch and more in diameter, between the teeth and the lower lip, which thus distended out of all reasonable proportions" (Morice 1905:6).

Moss also pointed out that while labret use was prevalent in some Pacific coastal societies where all "non-slave" women wear them, she noted that only the highest ranked individuals would wear the rarest materials or have the largest labret (Moss 1999:32). Moss investigated ethnographic accounts of labret use along the Northwest coast and discovered that in some cases, and for unknown reasons, some men also participated in the practice of labret use. However, at Babine lake only females were recorded as having worn labrets placing this tradition within the majority of societies for whom labrets implied status. Moss concluded that

for “women of the northern Northwest Coast, labrets were an important symbol of their social identity, signaling their ethnicity, marriage-ability, and social status” (Moss 1999:58).

La Salle observed that the “labret communicated distinction both within and between groups, and this distinction may in some contexts relate to accessing wealth of some form, be it economic, spiritual or other” (La Salle 2008:40). Her analysis of labret use on the Northwest Coast relied heavily upon social theory to tease out meanings of status unrelated to power or rank. She observed that “status” could simply be a badge of identity representing a girl arriving at the age of puberty, a woman who is married, or a sign of one’s beauty, or a spiritual meaning. However, after deliberating upon labret use in an incomplete archaeological record, she concluded that “the concept that labret[s] unequivocally delineate high-status, while not wrong, is not supported over the entire history of labret use” (La Salle 2008:49). She concludes that labrets were used as markers for social identity which may also, but not necessarily, include social status.

While labrets certainly functioned as a beauty marker for the Babine it was also apparent to Father Morice that the insertion of a lip plug also enhanced a woman’s social status and noted that to “attain the *plus ultra* of feminine beauty and be reputed something in society circles, women added to the tattooing, ear-rings, nasal pendants, and bracelets, a blunt wooden peg or labret passed through their lower lip (Morice 1889:115). He also recorded this ornamentation was exclusive to women of status only and “as a rule, the higher the rank of the wearer the larger the labret was to be” (Morice 1893:170).

Interestingly, Morice also recorded the use of an elongated shell (*Dentalium Indianorum*) by the same high status women. He wrote that this item “was highly prized among the natives, and which they obtained from the coast Indians” (Morice 1889:115). In his notes Morice

sketched an image of a Babine woman wearing a dentalium shell pierced through her septum and he claimed that “it was the privilege of women of rank to wear” (Morice 1893:168). Dentalium shell is known to have been used as a labret material in many Northwest coast societies (Keddie 2007). Grier, observed that as “marine shells generally were non-utilitarian materials, their widespread distribution suggests that trade had come to include prestige or wealth materials that may have been used a means to mark some form of social differentiation” (Grier 2003:176). Its presence at Babine Lake reinforces its relevance as a prestige or status item in a similar fashion to the well documented coastal Tsimshian.

The widespread use of labrets in the Babine region also suggests that this custom, among others, may have been borrowed from the coast in order to solidify trade alliances. Discernible indications of status, trade relationships, or family identification, would have facilitated the Babine chiefs when entering commerce with neighbouring societies. Keddie argued this point when he asserted that people who “initially wear labrets within a region are involved in some kind of close exchange relationship – usually one that involves marriage ties” (Keddie 2007:1).

Morice also noticed that the Babine intermarried with their trading partners. He recorded that they “are undoubtedly of a mixed origin...and had, in their early history, commerce, perhaps through intermarriage, with peoples of Jewish persuasion or origin” (Morice 1905:7). Despite the prejudiced nature of his remarks, Morice conveys his appreciation of the mercantilist and thrifty nature of the Babine people who he also recorded “intermarried freely” with the Gitksan.

In the same manner that chiefs maintained their authority through expensive feasts and potlatches, prestige items such as moose leather and labrets required wealth to obtain. Only the skilled, powerful, or fortunate would be able to acquire them. Morice observed that the interior Carrier societies traded for polished stone adzes, axes, and obsidian from the coastal Indians

whose larger settlements contained more skilled workmen, and he wrote that these implements “were possessed by the notable and a few wealthy heads of families only” (Morice 1893:47).

Polygamy

Another symbol of status and wealth in Northwest Coast societies was the practice of polygamy and also occurred at Babine Lake. Morice observed that the higher the social status a chief commanded, the greater the number of wives he had. “Polygamy flourished to a great extent among all of the tribes. The more exalted the man’s rank, the more numerous would be his wives” (Morice 1889:123). Studying social stratification on the Northwest Coast, Eugene Ruyle argued that the “practice of polygamy was largely restricted to the upper class, since only they could afford the ceremonies and bride wealth payments involved” (Ruyle 1973:612). Fur trader Daniel Harmon witnessed polygamous relationships throughout the region of New Caledonia and remarked that in general the men typically were “fond of their wives, and a few of them have three or four; but polygamy is not general among them” (Harmon 1820:249). In fact, the historical documentation in New Caledonia at this time only identified polygamy as a practice for the wealthy chiefs. William Brown observed that the Babine chiefs commonly had multiple wives and on several occasions he even traded with these women recognizing that in a matriarchal society the wives of powerful men also participated in barter and commerce (HBCA B.11/a/3). Although some of the wives in these polygamous relationships may have possessed a degree of economic autonomy it is not likely that this was shared equally amongst all of them. Ruyle observed that the wives of chiefs would often have recognizable rank distinctions among each other with the primary wife wielding the most authority (Ruyle 1973:612). Father Morice recorded this scenario as well when writing about the local practice of polygamy he mentioned “there was always one, not necessarily the first in priority of co-habitation who was always

regarded as superior to the other who she then called her younger sisters, receiving in return the title of elder sister from them” (Morice 1889:123). Polygamy was often a strategic marriage practiced among kinship groups at Babine in order to keep powerful names and hunting territories within a chief’s family. As hunting territories became more valuable or extensive the familial and social position of the associated wife would increase accordingly. In this matriarchal society a woman’s high birth rank was based on the status of her father and it increased her standing in Babine society. Father Morice wrote that oftentimes “the woman did exercise much influence [over their husbands], but then it was not owing to her position as wife or mother, but generally on account of her birth and her father’s rank” (Morice 1889:124). Polygamous relationships also helped to control the wealth which belonged to a specific kin group or house and strengthened the position of power and authority for their chief and reinforced the social hierarchy.

Slavery

The most compelling evidence for the existence of social stratification at Babine Lake was the presence of slavery which was present even during the fur trade era. Donald (1997) divided complex hunter-gatherer societies on the Northwest coast into a three tiered hierarchy of nobles, commoners, and slaves. He argued that on the Northwest coast, slaves were initially a consequence of war that actually became an integral part of the labour force as well as an integral component of the potlatch where they were awarded to chiefs as gifts. Daly’s collection of Wet’suwet’en oral traditions recorded that sometimes “slaves and coppers were uncommon luxury goods occasionally used in feast-giving” (Daly 2005:39). Not only were slaves used as a

prestige items but their mere existence at Babine Lake is *prima facie* evidence of a socially stratified society.

Ames claimed that slavery initially developed in Northwest coast societies as early as 1500 BC and he argued specifically that “Northwest Coast societies were stratified rather than ranking societies...because of the existence of slaves” (Ames 2001:2). This suggests that the mere presence of slaves in Babine society would indicate that there were people with differential access to personal freedoms and resources, and that the society as a whole must be considered a stratified hierarchy. Ownership of slaves in a socially stratified society would be restricted to the wealthy or high status individuals, and would not be typically available to common or non-noble people. These slaves were owned and used for their labour, taken as wives, displayed as status symbols, and employed as personal protection or expendable body guards. Carrier oral histories indicate that war captives were often taken out of revenge in order to punish the individual or their family for previous offenses (Hall 1992:56). Ames also indicated that slaves were typically taken in war as captives but that in some cases they were simply individuals selling themselves in payment for a debt (Ames 2001:3). In these instances the slaves were considered more a prestige item than as a non-kin source of labour. Whether they were born into slavery or taken as a captive in war, or if they sold themselves to discharge a debt, slaves in Northwest coast societies had lost their personal freedoms and lived under the command and authority of their owner. Thus, they were placed at the lowest level of status in a stratified society.

The Babine historical documentation contains only a few references to slavery. The restrictions on a slave's freedoms prevented their liberty to leave the village, to hunt, or to possess and trade items of value such as fur or leather. Daly (2005:207-208) wrote that captives were often seized by the Wet'suwet'en during raids and feuds with their neighbours, but that

these “slaves were items of wealth and were not particularly effective as forces of production.” Mills wrote that in Wet’suwet’en tradition slaves were “outcasts, captives, or peace bonds from neighbouring people” who survived on the sufferance of the chiefs who owned land (Mills 1994:116). A slave’s restriction from active engagement in economic pursuits such as trapping or hunting would have made them valueless in the eyes of the HBC. The Slave Trade Act of 1807 and a growing British sentiment discouraging this practice in the Colonies made dealing with or trading in slaves disreputable for the fur traders and they would not have purposefully sought them out as a source of labour. Therefore, the presence of slavery was probably significantly under-documented by the fur traders and explorers at Babine Lake and in New Caledonia in the early part of the 1800s.

There were a couple notable instances however when the fur traders mentioned slavery. Simon McGillivray visited the village of Hotset (Moricetown) in 1833 (Appendix – Plate 9). He recorded that at this village he attempted to hire an Atnah (Gitxsan) interpreter whom he noticed spoke broken English however:

He had been taken prisoner when a child by Indians of the Coast who had come to war on the Atnahs in Babine River. He last year came up the river with the Indians of the Coast, and on seeing his countrymen deserted to them...I asked this fellow to come with me to Babine Lake, he readily agreed, but his friends dissuaded him, particularly as he was considered still a slave prisoner and must be redeemed.
(HBCA D.4/125)

The man’s slave ransom still outstanding, McGillivray was left to find his way through the territory without the advantages of a local guide. It is apparent from this failed attempt to hire the slave that the nature of slavery and the implications surrounding its practice were well understood by the Babine people, and afterwards by the HBC fur traders themselves. Ames reported that on the Northwest coast, the children of slaves were considered slaves themselves and they would be for their lifetimes unless a ransom was paid buying their emancipation

(2001:3). In an 1825 journal entry, another fur trader stationed at Fort Kilmaurs wrote a letter to the absent William Brown informing him that upon his return to the portage there would be a group of Babine women waiting for him. Circumstances having changed, a day later the fur trader added a post script saying “since writing the forgoing, [Chequul’s?] mother suddenly changed her mind and would not allow her daughter to accompany the other ladies alledging [sic] that she was still a slave and consequently answerable to others for her conduct (HBCA B.11/b/1). While it was not made apparent in the journal why the woman’s daughter was considered a slave, the restrictions placed on her freedom were significant enough that the fur trader identified her as a slave. Also, being “answerable to others for her conduct” (emphasis present in the original) implied that she was not merely being secluded from the males in her village due to the onset of her menstruation, as is recorded in several Babine and Carrier oral histories as a common traditional practice (Fiske and Patrick 2000:94; Hall 1992:32). It is clear that in this instance her slavery was understood by the fur traders to include not only seclusion from certain people but also servitude to another’s will.

Subjugation to the husband’s family was possibly a less prejudicial form of slavery which was practiced by the Carrier upon the death of the husband (Hall 1992:36). Oral histories also indicate that this bondage applied to both husbands and wives and that if the widowed individual had been a good spouse they would be treated somewhat kinder by their in-laws (Hall 1992:36-37). Babine oral traditions specifically mention the banishment of a widow to her husband’s village where, in her servitude, she would have to perform tasks for the deceased’s family (Fiske and Patrick 2000:73-74). Carrier mortuary rites which were first recorded by Daniel Harmon and were later verified by Father Morice, who claimed that Harmon’s “account of the event...corroborates in every way what the present author has written on the same subject after

modern informants” (Morice 1905:91). Ogden recorded in detail another account of a Carrier funeral ceremony ostensibly witnessed by the author. He wrote that:

By the laws of the Carriers, the widow is made to carry the ashes of her husband until the final inuring, and during this interval, sometimes of two or three years, she remains a slave to his nearest of kin. At her emancipation, when the ashes are disposed of, a grand feast is given (Ogden 1853:66).

McLaren (2006) argues that the Carrier mortuary accounts described by Harmon, Morice, and Ogden, which included burning of the body and near immolation of the widow, may have been embellished to generate a greater religious outrage to their readership. While the cremation may be fiction, Carrier oral tradition confirms that upon the death of her husband, the widow would become “subject to her in-laws” after the funeral (Hall 1992:36-37). Documentary evidence and Carrier oral histories clearly agree that slavery to their in-laws was imposed on the widow after their spouse’s death.

(Semi)-Sedentism

Another hallmark of the Northwest Coast culture was sedentism or permanent year round house and village locations. At Babine Lake however, the First Nations differed from this pattern and were forced to move from summer to winter homes for a very specific reason. In order to keep a house warm enough in a climate where they endured freezing temperatures for up to four months every winter, they required fires to be constantly burning. For a large village site, this would quickly deplete the available local timber and force a frequent relocation of an entire village. Father Morice wrote that in order to manage their known limits on a timber supply, the Babine learned to exist in a semi-sedentary society. He observed that “a large fire is kept in the lodge day and night, and so the amount of dry wood available in one place is soon exhausted” and therefore they had to change their winter residence every year (1892:184). Morice even

recognized that the advantage the coastal Indians enjoyed, living in a more temperate winter climate, afforded them the luxury of remaining in one place year round. This he compared to Babine Lake where they were “inhabited only during the fair season, that is from the first week in May, when the grebes arrive, until the second week of September” when the necessary salmon had been harvested, dried and cached for their winter subsistence (1892:184). From this point in the season the village would break apart and families would travel to their separate clan territories and prepare for the winter. However, the journals of fur trader William Brown record that some people remained in the villages throughout the winter, suggesting that the Babine were only ‘partially’ semi-sedentary.

Nass Glee (GiSq-4)

The village area, given the archaeological designation GiSq-4, is known historically and through oral records as Nass Glee, or Nez Klee, a Carrier language name meaning “where the water ripples past an island” (Marvin Williams personal communication). Immediately in front of the house depression at GiSq-4 in the flowing waters of the Babine River is a small island.

Documentary evidence which reports an encounter at the pre-contact village location, archaeological site designated GiSq-4, is recorded in the publications of Major William Downie, the first known European to have journeyed from the Pacific Ocean up the Skeena River to Babine Lake. In 1859, gold prospector Downie ascended the Skeena River by boat and then overland on a journey to discover a direct route to the interior of British Columbia in order to facilitate the movement of resources and materials to support the emerging gold rush in the interior of the province (Victoria Daily Colonist December 19, 1860). Upon arriving at the forks of the Bulkley and the Skeena rivers, Downie encountered two natives from Babine Lake who

had just travelled there on snowshoes to trade for eulachon grease from the coast (Victoria Daily Colonist May 29, 1859). Presumably these natives provided him with some information on how to travel to their homeland, because Downie subsequently embarked on an overland Indian trail which took him through Hagwilget, over a suspension bridge, and traversed the mountains “through the only pass from Agullgath [Hagwilget]... suitable for a road.” (Downie 1893:225)

In September of 1859 Downie emerged at the village of Naas Glee (spelling is Downie’s) which he mistakenly claimed was situated on the Skeena River. He recorded that “Naas Glee is a center, where all the upcountry Indians meet at certain seasons” and that it was a well populated and vibrant village (Downie 1893:225). William Downie had arrived at the location of the traditional fishing village site of GiSq-4 which is today located at the terminus of this same overland trail. This becomes more apparent when Downie’s narrative later records that as they continued their journey “ten miles up the river we passed the village Whatatt, and above this we came to Babine Lake” (Downie 1893:228). The modern town of Fort Babine, whose traditional name is Wit’at, is actually located just over nine miles along the Nilkitkwa watercourse from GiSq-4 (Nass Glee) at the north end of Babine Lake. Overall, except for the mistaken identification of the Skeena River as the Babine River (which was the general consensus at the time) Downie’s notes quite accurately represent both the regional geography and the location of the important Babine villages of Nass Glee and Wit’at.

At the time of his journey however there were a few public challenges to Downie’s often self-congratulatory recollection of his journey to British Columbia’s interior. Even as early as the winter of 1859, provincial cartographer, Alfred Waddington, wrote a letter to the *British Colonist* newspaper to clarify some of the details of Major Downie’s trip. At the time, Waddington was drawing a map of British Columbia in order to facilitate the construction of a

cross-Canada railway. For this map he relied heavily upon Downie's description of his journey through the Skeena watershed for geographic information. It was clear to Waddington that Downie had made some mistakes in the recording of his journey, so to clarify some of the more egregious mistakes Waddington spoke to Downie in person. In a subsequent letter to the *Victoria Daily Colonist* he announced that "a considerable error existed at its [Skeena] point of junction with the sea, which Major Downie has had the kindness to correct, as well as furnish me with several other useful notes." (Victoria Daily Colonist 1860, December 19) Alfred Waddington had become satisfied that the errors in Downie's recollection had been corrected, and he proceeded with his map of the region. These useful notes allowed him to create a map, which included Downie's overland trail from Hagwilget to Nass Glee (GiSq-4). Ten miles further up the river from this village he correctly placed the village of "Whattat" and this name is still in use for this settlement today. Waddington took these village names from Downie's notes and they match the current locations of Nass Glee (GiSq-4) and Wit'at (Fort Babine) suggesting that Downie's recollection of these villages was accurate. (Appendix - Plate 10)

It is actually William Downie's recollection of specific place names and people whom he encountered on this journey that give so much strength to the conclusion that GiSq-4 is named Nass Glee. He named the abandoned HBC post 'Fort Killman' when he passed by the remains of the abandoned Fort Kilmaurs. Downie also recorded meeting a Babine Chief at Nass Glee named Tal-tow-tow (Downie 1893:226). Correspondingly, seven years later in 1866 Western Union Telegraph surveyors recorded the same Babine village chief's title very similarly as Til-tow-tah (National Anthropological Archives 1866: Part 4, folio 5). In addition, Downie correctly recorded the names of Peter Ogden (Chief trader at Fort St James) and HBC employee Gavin Hamilton correctly when he wrote of meeting them along this expedition (Downie 1893:230).

The documentary evidence clearly demonstrates that Nass Glee was a thriving salmon village situated at the confluence of a Nilkitkwa Lake, Babine River, and popular native trade route during the fur trade. This strategic location supplied the Babine with abundant food resources and also facilitated Babine interaction with downriver societies such as the Gitxsan and Tsimshian. Using the abundant salmon as currency facilitated a Babine trade economy where they intermixed with and adopt non-Carrier customs from their coastal neighbours. Scholars agree that the intermixing of Babine society with coastal cultures allowed them to adopt the social ceremonies and practices of the coastal First Nations. The documentary confirms a Babine society where all of the hallmarks for coastal style complexity were in full practice at Babine Lake including large potlatch ceremonies, a coastal style clan system, powerful chiefs, individual status, slavery, polygamy, complex trade networks, trade in prestige items, abundant and reliable salmon, storage, and permanent coastal style longhouses. The degree of this social expression at Babine Lake was far too well established to have occurred within a generation or two and indicates a pre fur trade social complexity.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

The location of the Lake Babine Nation at the interface between the coastal adapted Gitxsan and the other interior Carrier speaking peoples put them in a fortuitous position. They were on a reliable and abundant salmon run, which allowed them to live in a semi-sedentary village while keeping them close enough to the coastal First Nations from whom they adopted the customs and social norms of their marine adapted neighbours. At the northern tip of Babine Lake, where the water flows out of the lake and into Babine River, a summer salmon harvest village named Nass Glee was occupied for at least 1,200 years. The single house pit depression excavated predates the fur trade by over 400 years. This location, on a productive spawning river, allowed the Babine to collect tens of thousands of salmon every year using weirs, nets, gaffs, and even bare hands. After processing this salmon, they cached it away and were able to sustain themselves upon this food surplus over the winter. The Babine relied almost exclusively upon this annual salmon run for their sustenance.

The Babine also profited from a longstanding and complex trade network with their coastal neighbours from whom they received status items such as dentalium shells, obsidian, eulachon grease, polished stone tools, slaves, wives, and in some cases exotic foods. Along with the material benefits from this trade, they engaged in intermarriage, potlatches, warfare, and social exchange from the Gitxsan to facilitate the adoption of a clan house system and a matriarchal society. In addition, coastal style social customs such as labret wearing, slavery, polygamy, and the acquisition and display of prestige items became mainstream characteristics for the higher status Babine people prior to the arrival of the European fur trade.

Once fur traders arrived at Babine Lake in 1822, HBC employees encountered a society with a well established clan system led by powerful chiefs. This stratified and complex society was so significantly entrenched in Babine way of life that it could not have been a recent fur trade manifestation as some early scholars have suggested. At contact, HBC traders repeatedly described their futile efforts to break into well defined Babine trade networks. Fur trader, William Brown, also recorded several hereditary family names, complex ceremonial practices at potlatches, and he identified the authorities held by the paramount chiefs on the lake. These chiefs were the heads of families. They controlled access to lands and its resources, and they were respected by lesser nobles, commoners, and obeyed by slaves. Although commoners continued to enjoy personal freedoms, they also had to respect the authority and position of these chiefs and their laws.

Individual high status was designated through prestige items such as obsidian, labrets, polished stone adzes, war regalia, fine moose hides, and recognized family names. In addition to these visible expressions of status, some of the wealthy were in polygamous relationships and possessed trade relationships with neighbouring societies. All of these social attributes are consistent with the well documented Complex Hunter-Gatherers of the Northwest Coast. In addition, the Babine also had a similarly abundant and reliable food source in salmon, which supported the growth and size of their population. In fact, the primary difference between the Babine and typical coastal First Nations groups was that the Babine lived in a much colder climate than their coastal neighbours. Paradoxically it was their large population size that decreased their supply of timber and forced them into semi-sedentism. In the winter they were forced into leaving their summer villages to live in smaller family groups. This allowed them suitable access to firewood to keep them warm during their long harsh winters. However this

semi-sedentism is different from a typical hunter-gatherer seasonal round where First Nations had to follow food sources over the landscape throughout the seasons. Instead, their cached salmon was stored in sufficient quantities to sustain their sizeable population until the following seasons salmon runs began.

The village of Nass Glee, known archaeologically as GiSq-4, contains over eleven hundred cache pits and at least eight house pit depressions. HD1 was excavated to determine a basal date, identified at over 600 years B.P., and to identify its artifact assemblage. A hearth and surrounding living areas on the house floor indicated that it was occupied in the same manner from its pre-contact beginning through the proto-historic and into historic times. This suggests that the main features of pre-contact social structure and social norms persisted, even after the arrival of the fur trade. Only the nature of the material goods changed, as traditional technologies such as projectile points were replaced with European weapons. This conclusion is validated in Babine oral histories, the documentary record and in archaeological practice and theory.

For future consideration further archaeological examination at GiSq-4 would help to illuminate the pre-contact socially complex life-ways of the Babine. Specifically, the excavation of another house depression would allow for a thorough comparison of the two clan houses and may uncover artifacts which specifically indicate differences in status. Currently, the Babine Archaeological Project at Smokehouse Island, GiSp-1, may also provide data that supports the argument for Babine social complexity. In addition this may generate new understandings for their capacity to manage their environment and actively engage in building a sustainable food source.

On a broader scale, identifying more interior First Nations societies whose social complexity mirrors those found directly on the Northwest Coast will help to establish the recognized hallmarks of complex hunter-gatherers. These will help shape current models to help archaeologists understand the emergence of social complexity in the Pacific Northwest Coast.

Finally, archaeologists should consider revising their definitions of culture areas for complex hunter-gatherers in British Columbia. Specifically, those inland societies whose social complexity reflects that of the coast and whose subsistence is similarly salmon-based should be examined in more detail. Further areas of study would be village locations along major salmon bearing rivers at locations where salmon could easily be harvested and prepared for storage. This would include the Columbia River at the Meier site, the Bridge River site, Keatley Creek on the Fraser River, and at yet unidentified village sites along the Nass and Stikine rivers. It might also be interesting to examine each village site in terms of distance from the coast and weather patterns to determine whether this correlates to a workable salmon fat content. Having a correct ratio of fat and drier climate would maximize the available harvest given time constraints on drying and preservation. It may prove to be that salmon villages are situated more for salmon harvesting constraints such as climate and fat content rather than simply at locations which provide the most access.

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APPENDICES

Plate 1: House Floor and Radiocarbon Sample Locations. (p30)

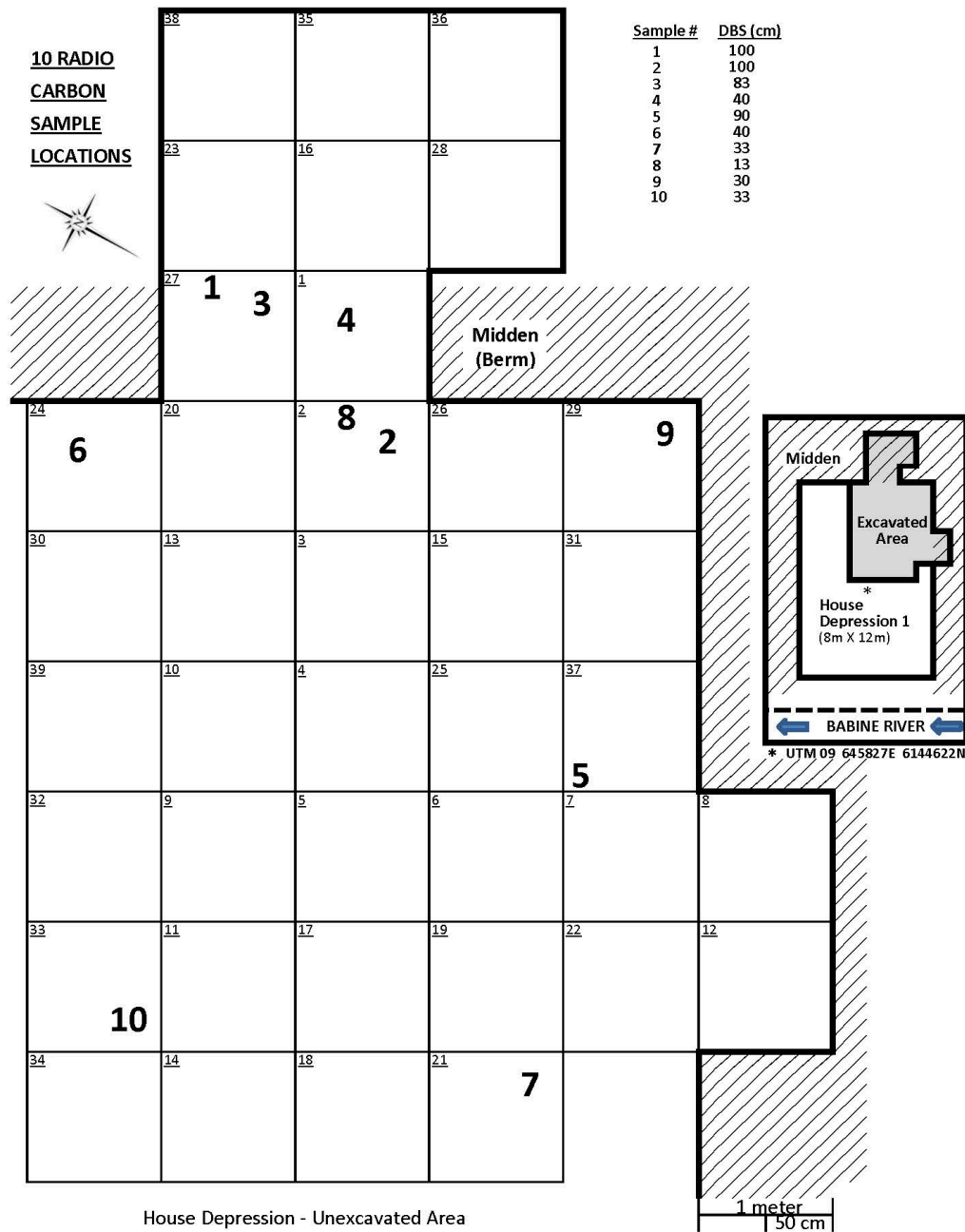


Plate 2: Fauna, Shell, and Salmon Remains in HD1. (p32)

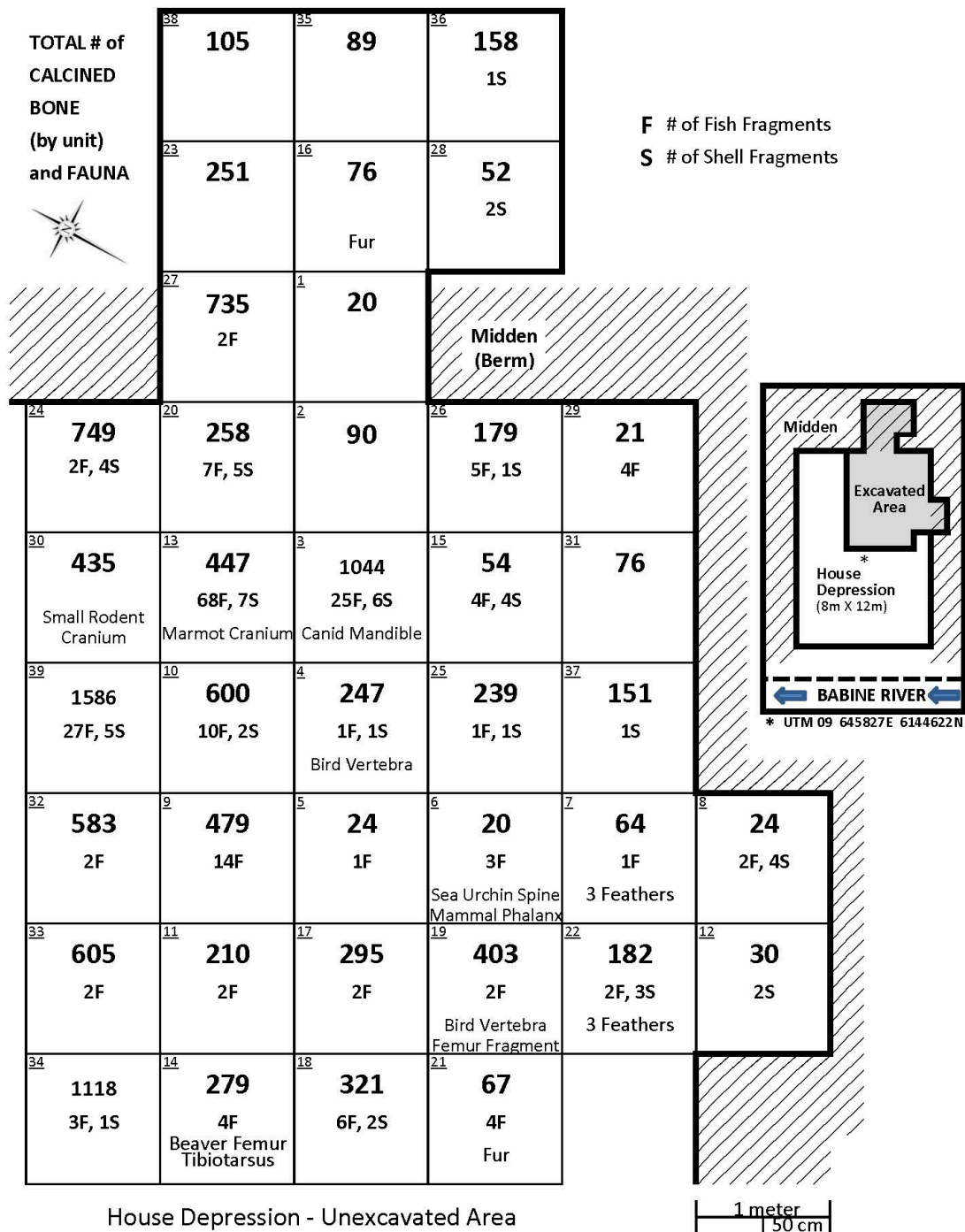


Plate 3: Babine Area Engineering of Bridge at Hagwilget. (p36)



Photo credited to Charles George Haretsky in 1872 entitled “First Bridge at Hagwilget in Winter” (Courtesy of the British Columbia Archives.)

In 1866 Captain James L. Butler wrote the following about this bridge while surveying for the Western Union Telegraph line:

on this river we passed an Indian suspension bridge/ summer trail/ that showed great ingenuity in its construction; a point had been chosen where the rocks on each side formed a good abutment. Spans then being launched to a safe overhang and well secured. Another series of spans connecting the two sides formed the bridge, the whole being well secured by bark ropes passing over upright spans or (piers)?; a light handrail giving additional security to the passenger. The river at this point was about 40 feet between the rocks over a placid field of ice and snow. The affair seemed safe and convenient, but in the early summer when the waters are swollen with snow from the mountainsides, and (mud?) through the rocky canyon, it must try a man's sang froid on his first attempt to cross.

Plate 4: Obsidian and Ground Stone Tools. (p38)

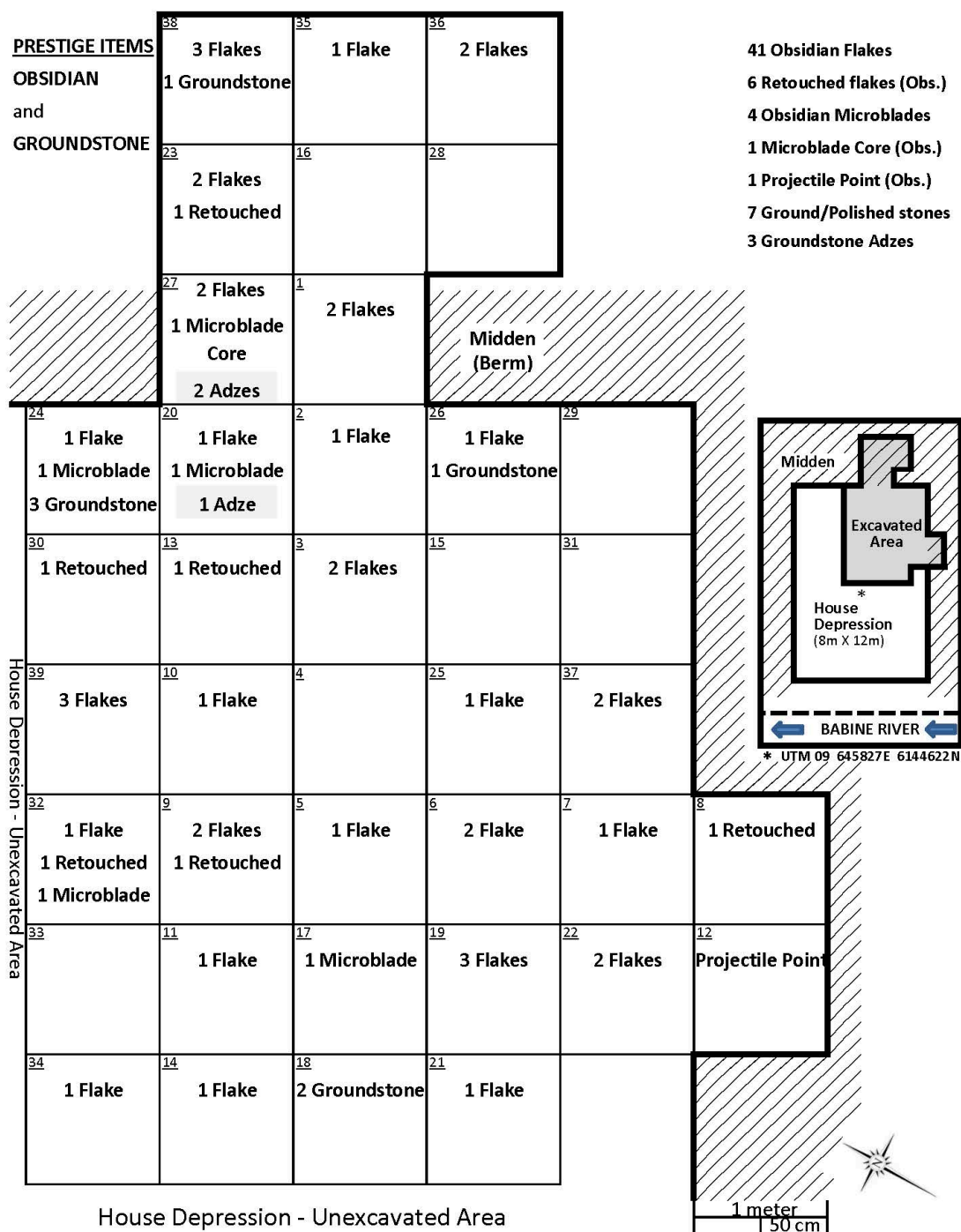


Plate 5: Bi-faces, Uni-faces and Scrapers (p40)

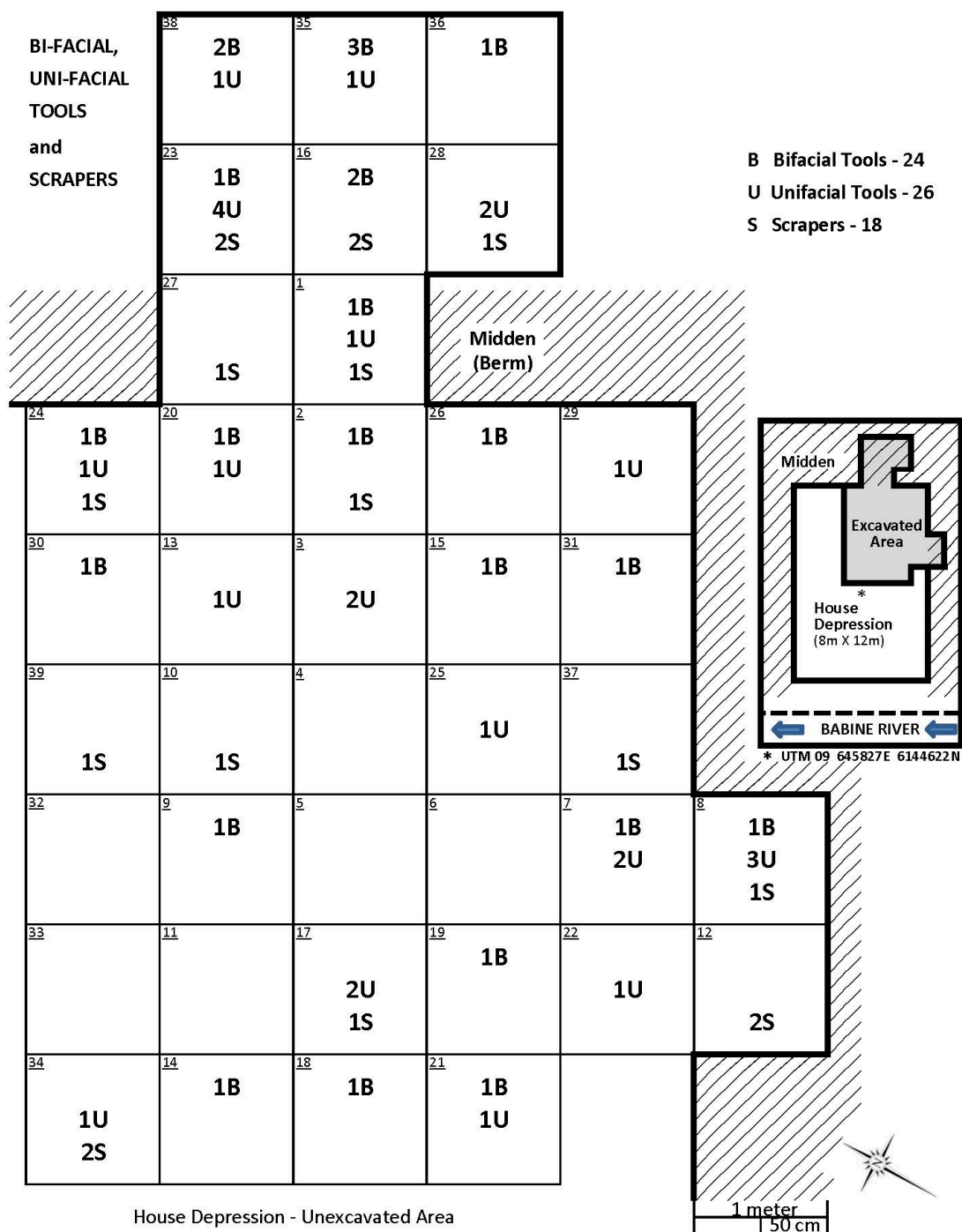


Plate 6: Projectile Points. (p42)

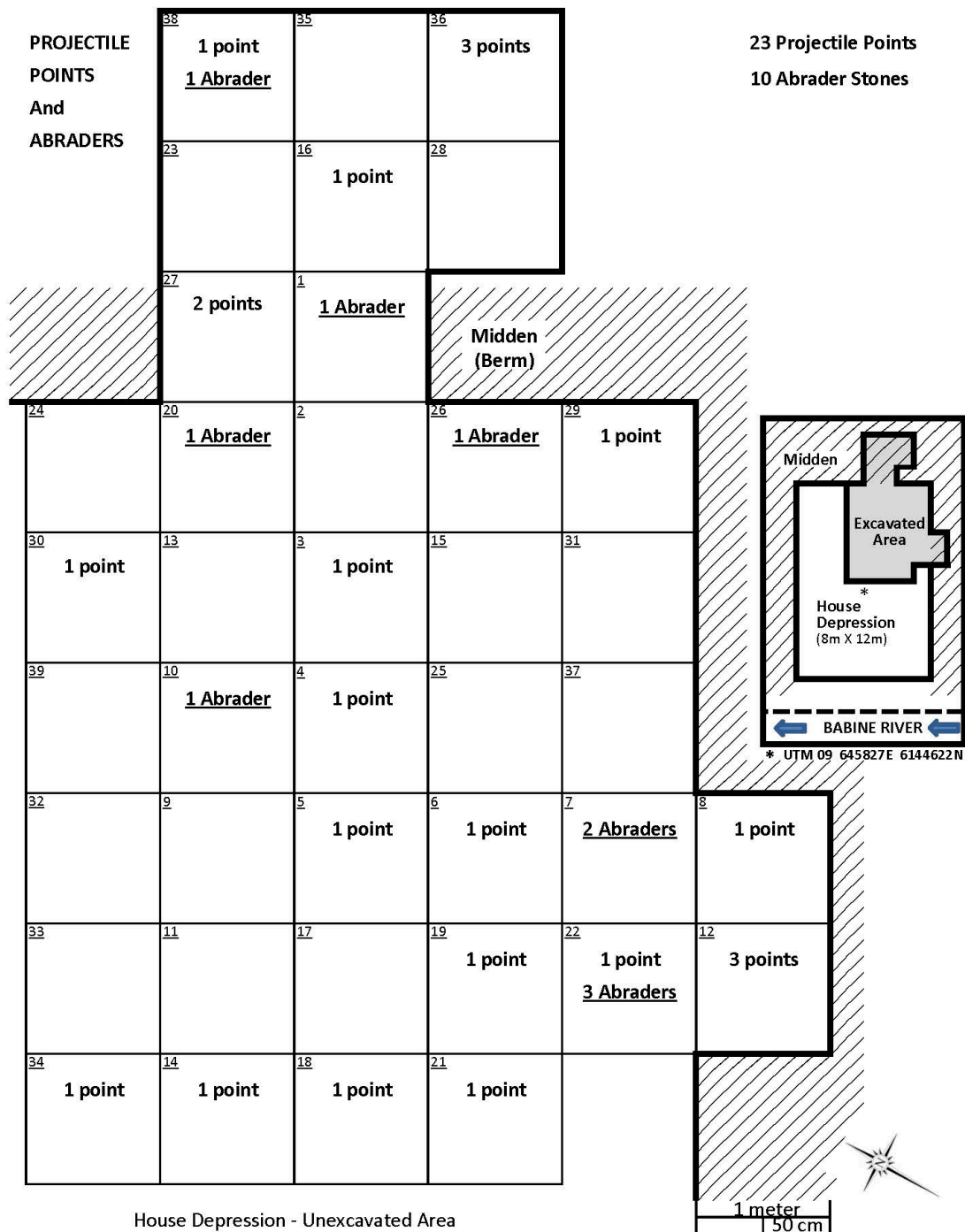


Plate 7: Historic Projectiles. (p44)

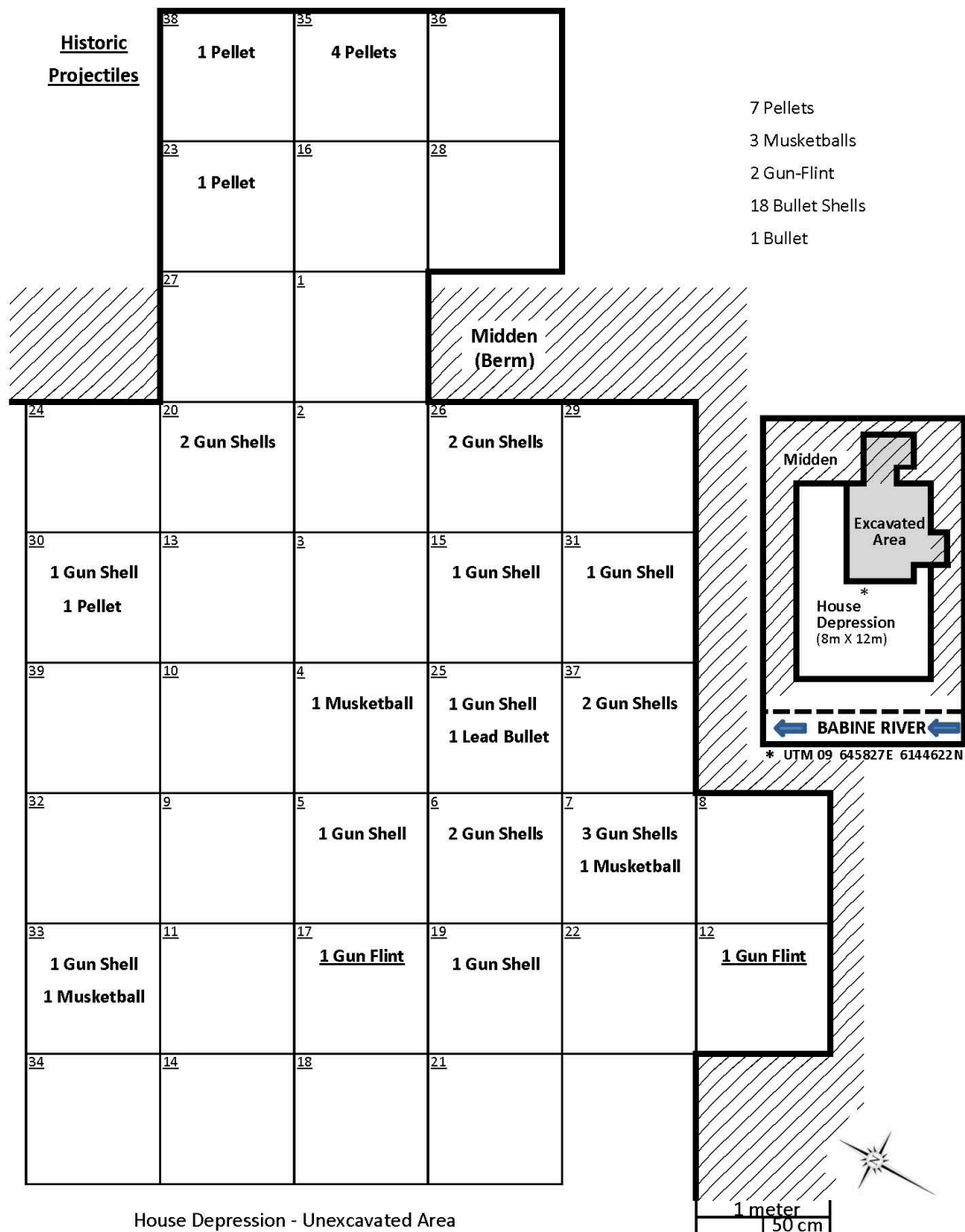
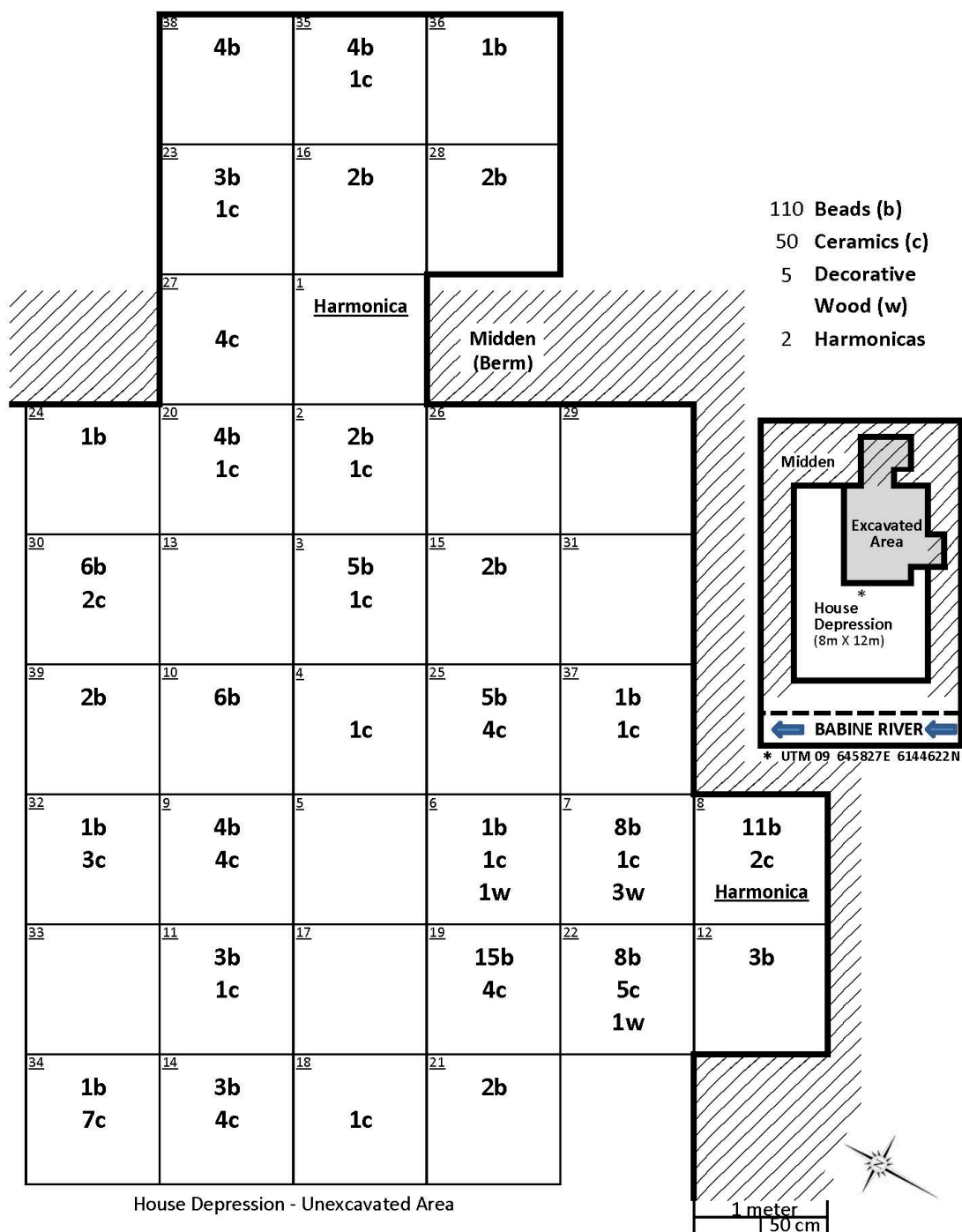


Plate 8: Historic Beads and Decorative Items. (p46)



A hand-drawn map on lined paper depicting a region in British Columbia, Canada. The central feature is the **Babine River**, which flows from the top right towards the bottom right, where it meets **Babine Lake**. The river is bordered by mountains, with the northern range labeled **Mountains covered with Snow** and the western range labeled **Mountains covered with Snow**. The central area is labeled **Woody Country**. Several tributaries are shown: the **Connelly's River** joins the main river from the north; the **Simpsons River** joins from the west, with a note **Yellow Bank** near its mouth; the **Deane's River** joins from the south; and the **Prosser** is a small stream flowing into the main river. Other geographical features include **Yellow Bank**, **cedars**, **Bill's prairie**, and **Deane's prairie**. A note near the bottom right mentions **10 June** and **11 June**, and another note near the bottom left mentions **10 June** and **11 June**. A small note near the top left mentions **Reach 2 1/2 m. long**. The map is drawn with simple lines and includes some decorative elements like small trees and a compass rose indicating North.

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Plate 10: Waddington's Map indicating Downie's Journey (p 83)



An excerpt of Alfred Waddington's 1868 map of British Columbia indicating where he has sketched in 'Major Downies Track' which leaves Hagwilget at the confluence of the modern Skeena and Bulkley (Hanoitoos) Rivers then crosses overland to Nass Glee. A further "10 miles" further east up the river is the village of Whattat on the north end of Babine Lake.