



# SALMON PEOPLE AND LONG-TERM CULTURAL SUCCESS ON THE NORTHWEST COAST

CONCEPTUAL INNOVATION AND MAJOR  
TRANSITIONS IN HUMAN SOCIETIES  
SANTA FE INSTITUTE – JAN. 6-9, 2014

STEVE J. LANGDON, PH.D.

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

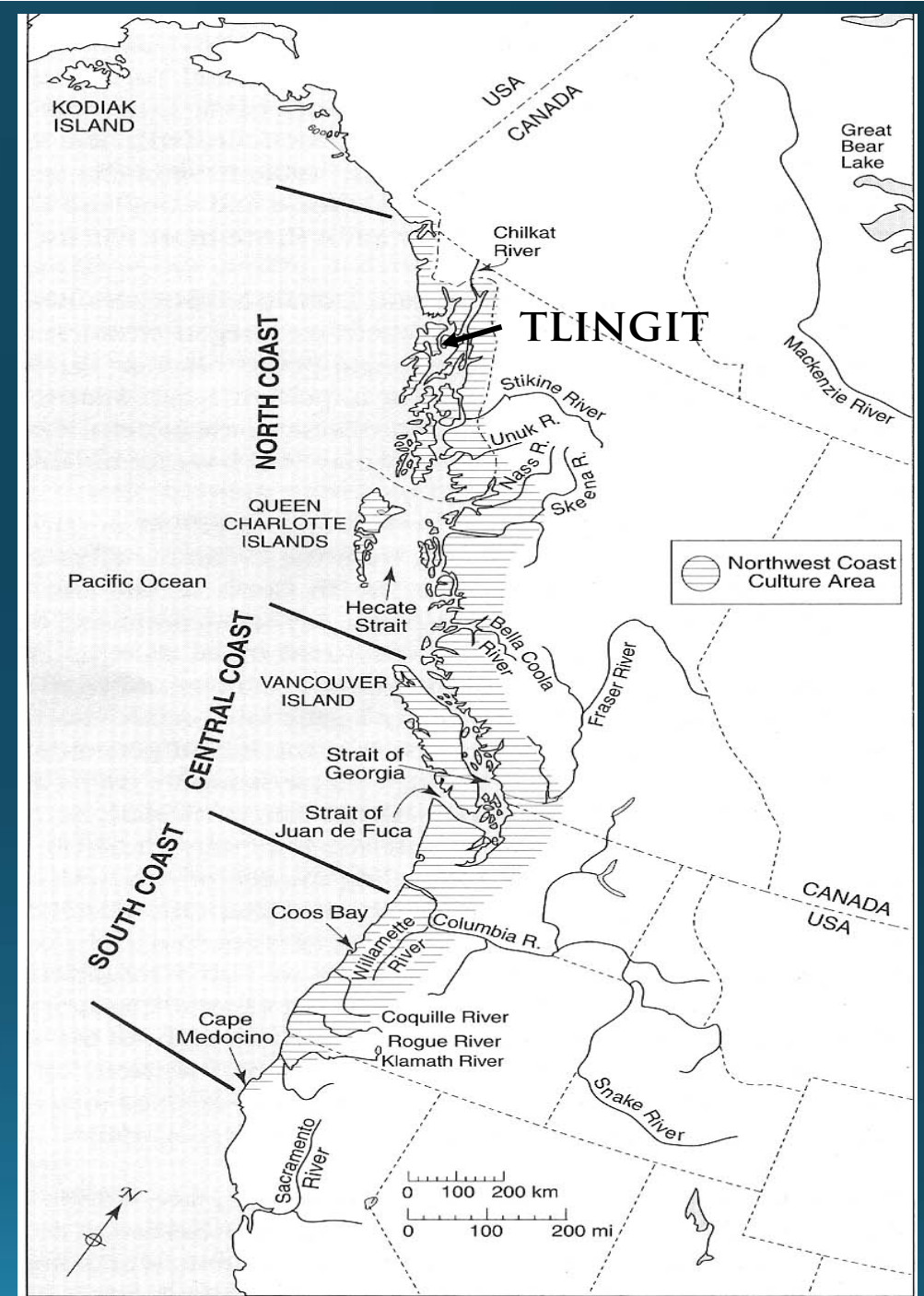
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE

# EXISTENCE SCAPES: WHAT IS IT POSSIBLE TO THINK AND DO?

- HUMANS RECEIVE A STREAM OF SENSATIONS
- SENSATIONS ARE INTERPRETED THROUGH BOTH PHYSIOLOGICAL AND COGNITIVE PROCESSES
- CONSTRUCTIONS OF MEANING – AND THE BASIS OF MUCH BEHAVIOR – ARISE THROUGH MEDIATED PROCESSES THAT RELY ON CONCEPTS AND UNDERSTANDINGS THAT ARE LEARNED AND ARE THE BASIS FOR CREATIVE ENGAGEMENTS – BOTH SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL
- EXISTENCE SCAPES COMPRISE THE REALM OF POSSIBLE UNDERSTANDINGS, BEHAVIORS AND CREATIVE RESPONSES GIVEN A SET OF CORE COSMOLOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES
- EXISTENCE SCAPES BECOME EMBODIED HABITUS SHARED WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF A CULTURAL GROUP

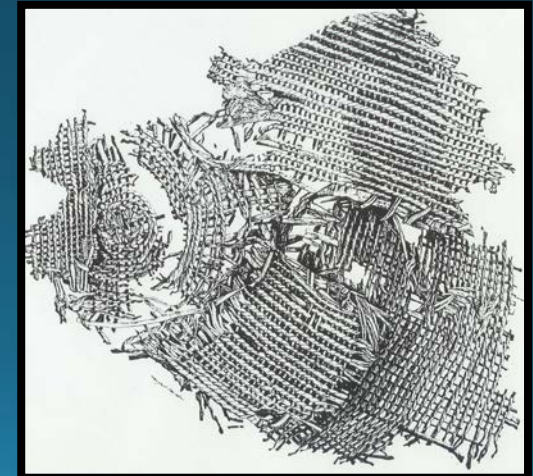
# NORTHWEST COAST CULTURE AREA

- DEFINING CULTURAL TRAITS
- MARITIME/RIVERINE ORIENTATION
- SALMON – MAJOR SUBSISTENCE RESOURCE
- WOODWORKING – COMMUNAL HOUSES
- UNILINEAL DESCENT GROUPS
- STRATIFICATION
- HIGHLY DEVELOPED PROPERTY RIGHTS
- POTLATCH CEREMONIALISM
- DISTINCTIVE ART
- SALMON AS PEOPLE ASSOCIATED WITH RITUAL BEHAVIOR



# NORTHWEST COAST CULTURAL STAGES: A BASIC SYSTEM OF PERIODS

- EARLY: 12,000 TO 6,000 – OCCUPATION AND LIMITED DEVELOPMENT, FLUCTUATING LAND/SEA INTERFACE, NO PERMANENT VILLAGES BUT MARITIME ADAPTATION WITH LONG-DISTANCE TRADE IS FOUND
- MIDDLE/TRANSITIONAL/DEVELOPMENTAL: 6,000 TO 4,000 – STABILIZATION OF LAND/SEA INTERFACE, EMERGENCE OF CULTURAL TRAITS AND PATTERNS ASSOCIATED WITH WOOD WORKING
- PACIFIC/DEVELOPED/LATE: 4,000 TO CONTACT - DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL COMPLEXITY – MASS SALMON HARVESTING IN ESTUARIES 4,000 BCE, LARGE WOOD HOUSES, 2500 BCE, FORT SITES , 1500 BCE; TIDAL PULSE FISHING, 1000 BCE
- TLINGIT PRESENCE:  
LANGUAGE – 6,000 YEARS, SEPARATION FROM PROTO-DENE  
THORNE BAY SPRUCE ROOT BASKET – 5,600 BCE





# SALMON AS PEOPLE: NORTHWEST COAST WIDE

SALMON AS PEOPLE COMPLEX:

BASIC MYTHIC CHARTER

FIRST SALMON CEREMONY

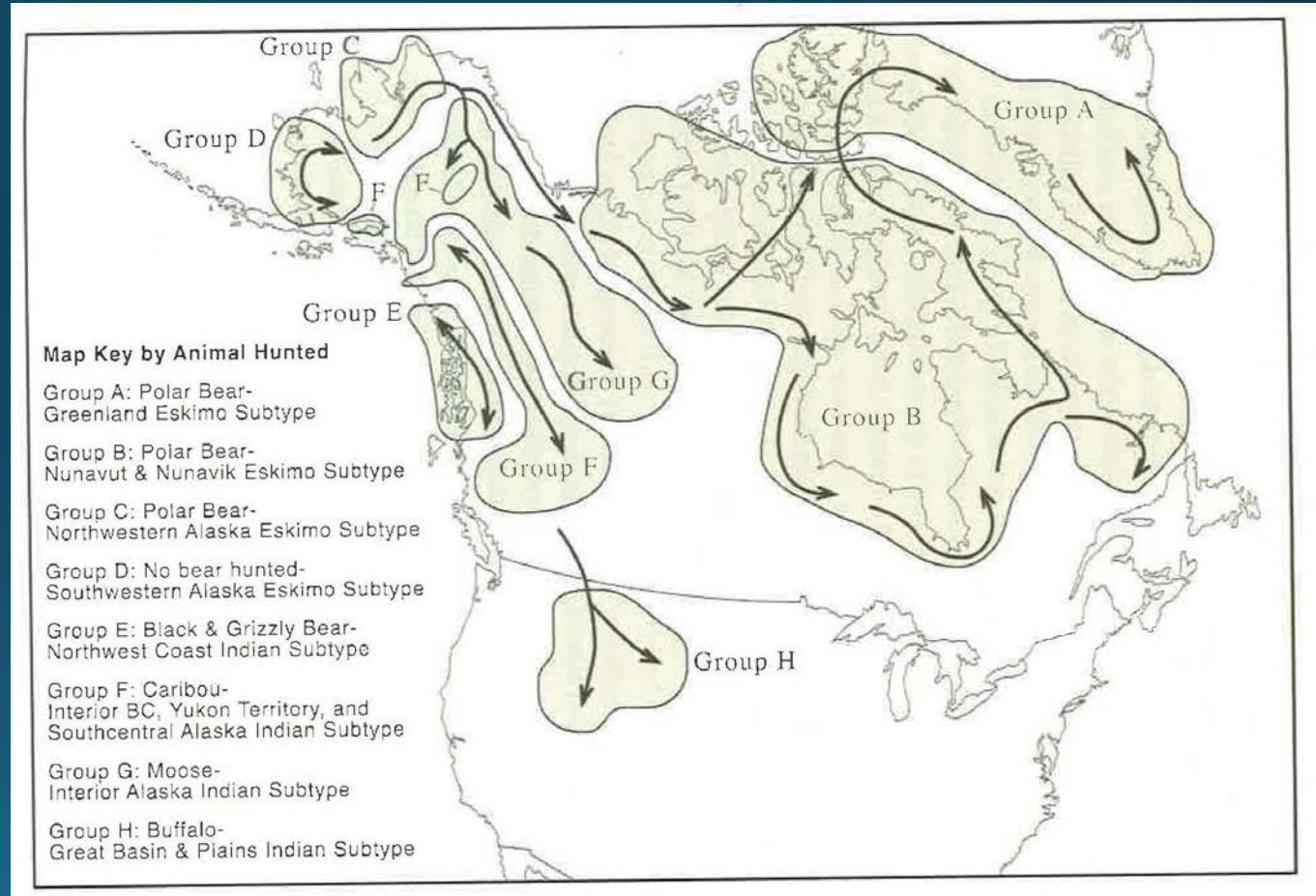
WELCOMING

RITUAL HANDLING

RITUAL PROCESSING AND  
CONSUMPTION

RETURN OF BONES TO WATER

SOURCE: GUNTHER 1925, 1928



Map 1. Regional oicotypes of "The Blind Man and the Loon" with hypothetical diffusion routes.

# AN EXISTENCE SCAPE OF WILLFUL INTERDEPENDENT BEINGS

- RELATIONAL COSMOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY  
RAVEN STORIES – TRANSFORMATION
- RELATIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY  
ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE FROM INTERACTION – CAREFUL ATTENTIVENESS
- RELATIONAL PHENOMENOLOGY  
INTERACTIVE ENGAGEMENT – EXPERIENTIAL ACUITY – REFLECTION AND REFLEXIVITY
- RELATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY  
INTERDEPENDENT NECESSITY – APPROPRIATE ACTION BY ALL REQUIRED

# KEY THEMES AND CONCEPTS OF THE TLINGIT EXISTENCE SCAPE

- COSMOLOGY – TLINGIT UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE NATURE OF EXISTENCE: ENTITIES, PROCESSES, INTERACTIONS, TIME AND SPACE
- COSMOLOGICAL CYCLING – LIVING SPIRITS (ENTITIES) CYCLE BETWEEN DOMAINS OF LIFE AND DEATH SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATE TREATMENT
- CONNECTIONS – BETWEEN DOMAINS OF EXISTENCE AND SPIRITUAL FORMS IN DOMAIN OF LIFE AND NOT LIFE (DEATH – BUT SPIRITUAL CONTINUITY)
- INTERDEPENDENCE – NOT ONLY CONNECTED BUT MUTUALLY DEPENDENT FOR EXISTENCE ON BEHAVIOR OF OTHER ENTITIES
- RELATIONS – INTERACTION IS FOUNDATIONAL AND UNAVOIDABLE, RESPECTFUL ENGAGEMENT IS ESSENTIAL FOR EXISTENCE - BALANCE
- OBLIGATIONS – WHAT ENTITIES MUST DO TO ALLOW EXISTENCE TO CONTINUE; HOW RESPECT IS DEMONSTRATED AND RITUALS CONDUCTED
- TLINGIT BELIEFS, BEHAVIORS AND RITUAL PRACTICES ARE BUILT ON THESE BASIC PRINCIPLES – RELATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

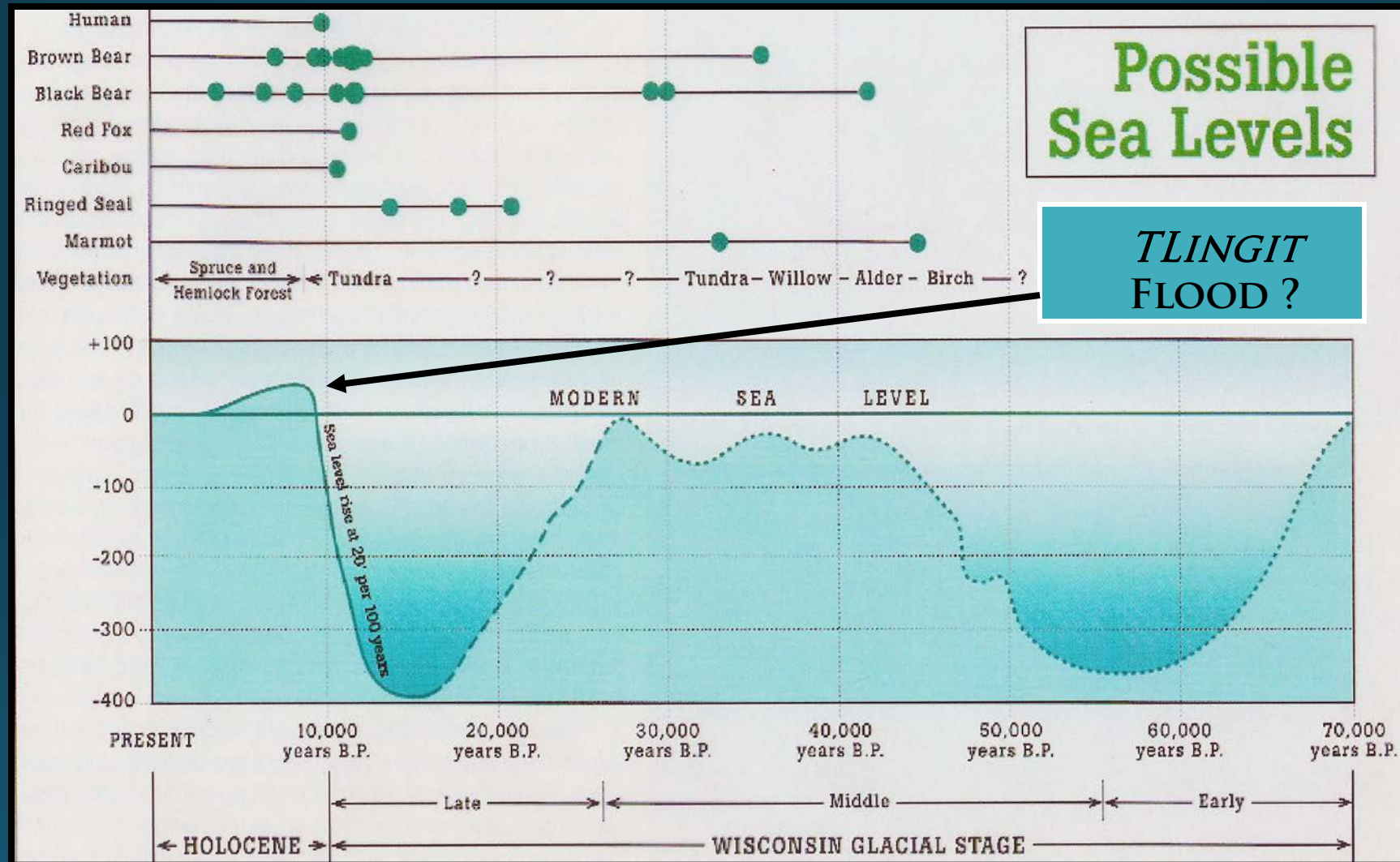


# *YEIL'S* TRANSFORMATIONS





# HAA AANI: TLINGIT DEEP TIME



# *HAA AANI:* *YEIL'S (RAVEN) CREATION*

## RAVEN – TRICKSTER/TRANSFORMER

- OBTAINED AND RELEASED SUN, MOON AND STARS – RESULTED IN INABILITY FOR ANIMALS, FISH TO REMOVE SKINS AND APPEAR AS PERSONS
- OBTAINED FRESHWATER FOR ALL BEINGS FROM *DEIKEENOOOW* (FAR OUT FORT)
- HAULED IN TANK FROM OCEAN WHICH HELD FISH AND RELEASED THEM ALL SO BECAME AVAILABLE
- TRICKED KING SALMON INTO JUMPING ONTO BEACH NEAR *L'TUA* (LITUYA) BAY
- CONVINCED OWL TO GET FIRE FROM THE “FIREBALL” IN THE OCEAN
- TRICKED OLD WOMAN INTO CREATING TIDE

*SHAANDA* (FISH EGG ISLAND):  
ORIGINAL LOCATION OF PETROGLYPH





# *YEIL'S* LESSONS

- MOVEMENT BETWEEN DOMAINS OF EXISTENCE OCCURS
- MOVEMENT BETWEEN FORMS OF EXISTENCE OCCURS
- IMPLICIT MESSAGE – THINGS MAY NOT BE AS THEY APPEAR
- IMPLICIT MESSAGE – THERE MAYBE DEEPER MEANINGS THAN ARE APPARENT
- IMPLICIT MESSAGE – BE OBSERVANT, ATTENTIVE, OPEN TO NEW KNOWLEDGE
- IMPLICIT MESSAGE – UNBRIDLED EXPRESSION OF DESIRE CAN BE A PROBLEM
- IMPLICIT MESSAGES MADE EXPLICIT BY TLINGIT IN STORIES AND FORMAL INSTRUCTION

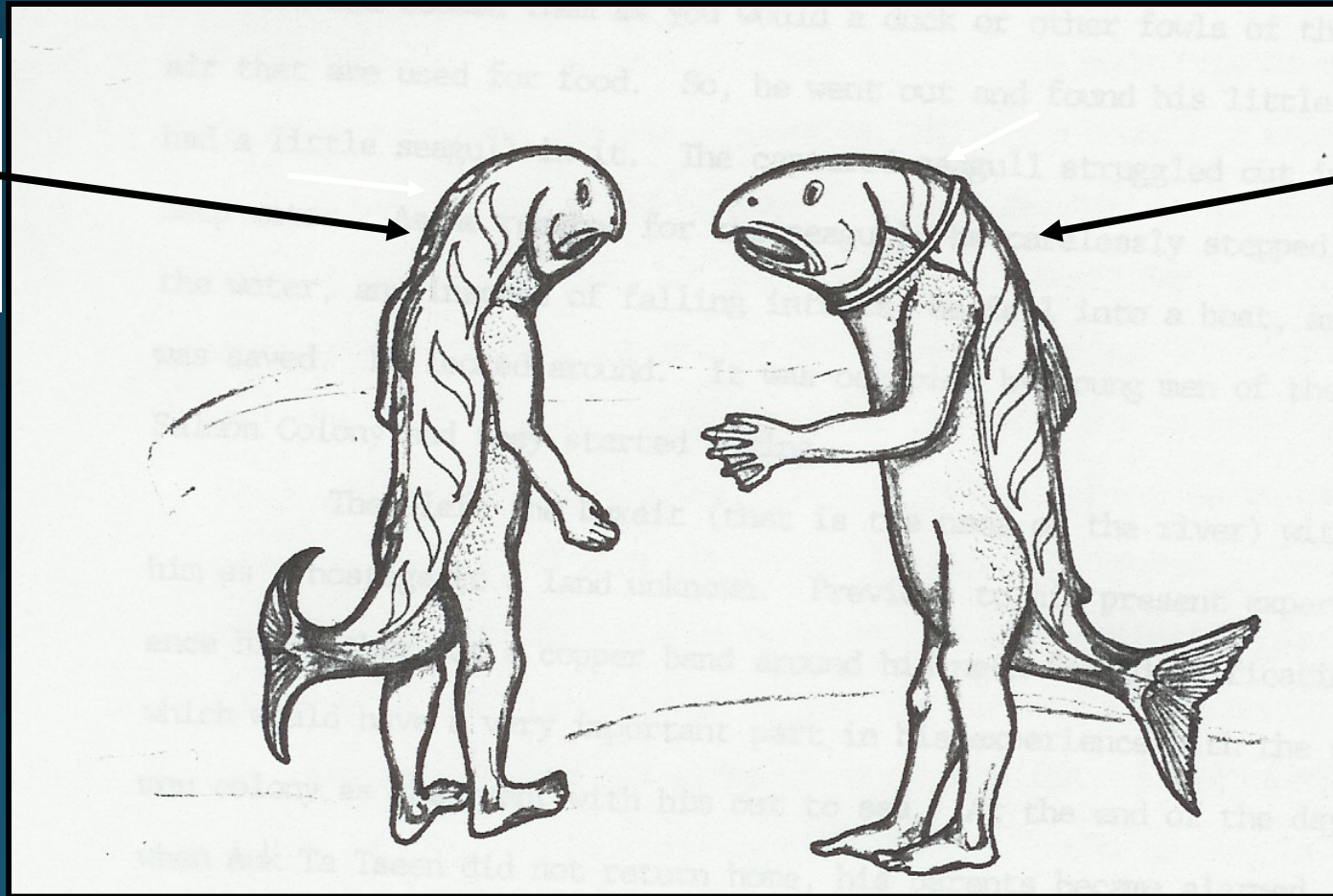


# SALMON BOY – TLINGIT MYTHIC CHARTER

- *AAKWATATSEN* – “ALIVE IN THE EDDY”
- ESTABLISHES SPECIFICS OF RELATIONSHIP WITH SALMON
- BOY DISRESPECTS “MOLDY” DRIED SALMON STRIP
- RUNS FROM HOUSE AND FALLS IN WATER WHILE WEARING COPPER NECKLACE – SAVED BY SALMON PEOPLE
- TAKEN BY THEM TO THEIR HOME OFFSHORE
- HERE HE SEES THEY ARE PEOPLE WHEN TAKE OFF SKINS (AS ESTABLISHED BY YEIL’S TRANSFORMATIONS)
- TAUGHT HOW TO TREAT THEM RESPECTFULLY BY SALMON CHIEF
- AFTER A YEAR TRAVEL BACK TO HOME STREAM IN CANOE – BOY TOLD TO STAND UP/JUMPS OUT OF WATER AND SEES MOTHER AND FATHER
- GIVES SELF TO FATHER – MOTHER CUTS GILLS AND DISCOVERS COPPER NECKLACE
- ASK SHAMAN WHAT TO DO – SALMON PUT UP OVER NIGHT AND TRANSFORMS BACK TO BOY
- TEACHES PEOPLE WHAT HE HAS LEARNED FROM SALMON PEOPLE
- TLINGIT ELDERS OVER 60 ALL PROVIDED THIS STORY IN RESPONSE TO THE QUERY – WHAT WERE YOU TAUGHT ABOUT SALMON AS A CHILD?

# *LINGIT* RELATIONAL COSMOLOGY: *AAKW'TAATSEEN* MYTHIC CHARTER

TLINGIT YOUTH  
SAVED FROM  
DROWNING BY  
SALMON PEOPLE



HEAD OF  
SALMON PEOPLE  
TEACHES TLINGIT  
YOUTH CORRECT  
BEHAVIOR

SOURCE: PECK,  
TIDES PEOPLE,  
1975

RELATIONAL COSMOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY IN *TLINGIT*  
EXISTENCE SCAPE:  
*AAKW'TAATSEEN* MYTHIC CHARTER

- THREE CORE PRINCIPLES
- COSMOLOGICAL CYCLING - RETURN
- NON-HUMAN BEING HAS AN ESSENTIAL SPIRIT OR "PERSON" THAT IS THE SAME AS HUMAN
- *AY WUNEI* (*RESPECT*) – EXISTENCE DEPENDS ON RECIPROCAL RESPECTFUL RELATIONS
- RITUAL RELATIONS – INCLUDING RETURN OF SALMON BONES TO WATER ARE CRITICAL

# RESPECT:

## TLINGIT CONCEPT AND PRACTICES DERIVED FROM MYTHIC CHARTER

- MYTHIC CHARTER – “RESPECT” IS CRUCIAL, DISRESPECT IS PRECIPITATING EVENT IN MYTH
- SALMON – ARE PEOPLE AND ARE TO BE UNDERSTOOD AS PEOPLE
- SENTIENT
- ATTENTIVE
- DIGNITY
- VOLITIONAL
- POWER





# RESPECT:

## DEMONSTRATING RESPECT

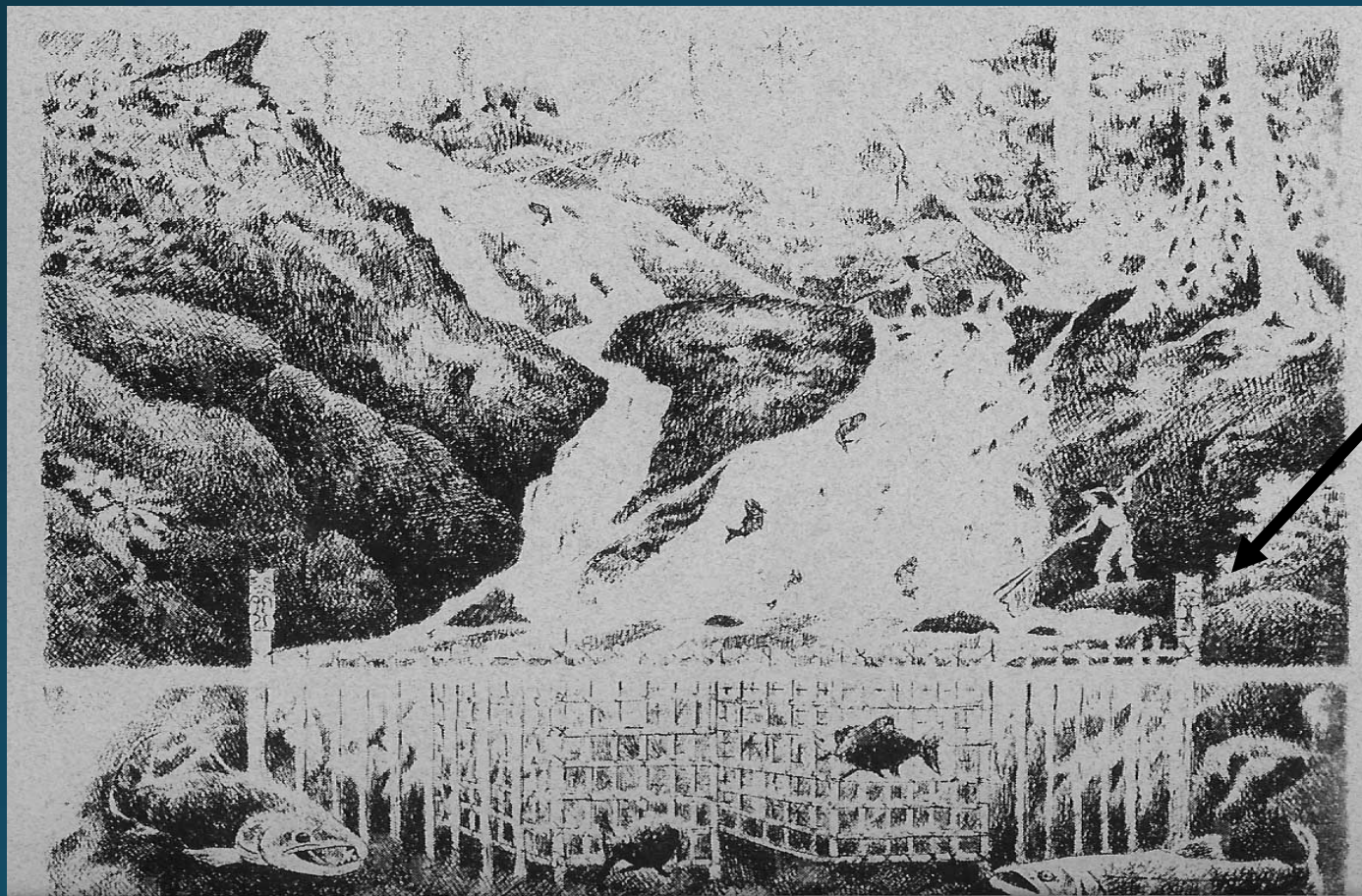
- ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AFFIRMATION – JOE HOTCH, TLINGIT ELDER: “... WHEN THEY’RE JUMPING, WE ARE SUPPOSED TO SAY ‘EY HO’; YOU SEE A FISH JUMP, ‘EY HO’ [THEN] THEY KNOW THEY’RE BEING APPRECIATED SO THEY KEEP JUMPING. AND I GUESS OUR PEOPLE SAY IT SO THEY CAN KNOW WHICH WAY IT’S GOING. JUST KEEP SAYING ‘EY HO’, AND THAT’S THE WAY THEY WANT TO BE TALKED TO; THE FISH WANT TO BE APPRECIATED.”
- SOURCE – THORNTON 2012:50

SALMON  
PEOPLE  
ARRIVING!





GIFT OF BEAUTY:  
CARVED STAKE LOCATED ON INTERTIDAL  
SALMON WEIR – ABOVE WATER,  
SEE BELOW FOR POSITIONING







# *AAKW'TAATSEEN* MYTHIC CHARTER: BASIS FOR ENGAGEMENT

## › CONCEPTS

- › SALMON AS PERSONS
- › SENTIENT, VOLITIONAL
- › ATTENTIVE TO HUMAN ACTS
- › DIGNIFIED - REQUIRE RESPECT
- › RETURN DEPENDS ON RESPECT AND RITUAL

## › BEHAVIORS

- › HANDLE WITH CARE
- › KILL SO SPIRIT CAN TRAVEL TO SPAWNING GROUNDS
- › TAKE ONLY WHAT IS NEEDED
- › UTILIZE ALL – NO WASTE
- › NEVER SPEAK BADLY
- › DO NOT PLAY WITH FISH
- › SHARE WITH OTHERS



# *AAKW'TAATSEEN* MYTHIC CHARTER: RITUAL ACTION FOR RETURN

- HEINYA TLINGIT REPORTED GOING TO STREAM MOUTH IN REGALIA TO SING AND GREET SALMON WHEN THEY FIRST ARRIVED – JUST AS THEY MET INVITED GUESTS TO POTLATCH
- IN KLAWOCK, A FIRST SALMON FEAST AND RITUAL WERE HELD UPON THE ARRIVAL OF THE SOCKEYE
- ENTIRE COMMUNITY INVITED AND THE HOST CLAN HARVESTED FISH, ROASTED THEM IN PIT AND FED EVERYBODY
- CLAN LEADER COLLECTED SALMON BONES AFTER CONSUMPTION AND RETURNED THEM TO THE ESTUARY WHERE THE STREAM FLOWED OUT
- HE SANG TO THEM TO TRAVEL SAFELY TO THEIR HOMES AND RETURN AS THE BONES DRIFTED DOWN
- THESE ARE THE RITUALLY PRESCRIBED ACTIONS TO INSURE THE REBIRTH OF THE SALMON AND HOPEFULLY THEIR RETURN

# ABDUCTIVE REASONING: CREATING THE TLINGIT EXISTENCE SCAPE

- DIFFERS FROM DEDUCTION AND INDUCTION
- IS THE FORM OF EVERYDAY EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE CREATION
- MAKES COMPARISONS OF ELEMENTS AND WHEN DETERMINES SIMILAR, MAKES FURTHER INFERENCES FOR ACTION.
- THUS IF SALMON ARE PEOPLE – WE TREAT THEM AS WE TREAT PEOPLE WE VALUE SO THAT THEY WILL RETURN AS OUR RELATIVES RETURN
- TREATMENT OF VALUED HUMAN OTHERS BECOMES INFERENTIAL BASIS FOR TREATMENT TOWARD SALMON

# ABDUCTIVE REASONING: CREATING THE TLINGIT EXISTENCE SCAPE

- “IT IS THE ONLY LOGICAL OPERATION WHICH INTRODUCES ANY NEW IDEA; FOR INDUCTION DOES NOTHING BUT DETERMINE A VALUE, AND DEDUCTION MERELY EVOLVES THE NECESSARY CONSEQUENCES OF A PURE HYPOTHESIS. DEDUCTION PROVES THAT SOMETHING MUST BE; INDUCTION SHOWS THAT SOMETHING ACTUALLY IS OPERATIVE; ABDUCTION MERELY SUGGESTS THAT SOMETHING MAY BE.” CHARLES PEIRCE
- TLINGIT BELIEF IS MORE THAN SUGGESTION – FOUNDATION OF CERTAINTY IS MYTHIC CHARTER PRODUCES CONTINUOUS EXAMINATION IN LIGHT OF EMBODIED EMOTIONS AND EXTENSION OF THOSE TO SALMON.
- “ABDUCTION MAY THUS BE CONCEIVED OF AS A PRINCIPLE THAT ALLOWS US TO RECONSTRUCT HOW CONCEPTUAL ORDER IS ACHIEVED THROUGH THE IMPOSITION OF A HYPOTHESIS (IN THE FORM OF A MINIMAL THEORY, AN IDEA, A RULE OR A ... HYPOTHESIS) – WHICH INAUGURATES CONSTRUCTIVIST THINKING. HERE I CAN ONLY HINT AT THE GREAT VARIABILITY OF THIS SCHEMA; IT ENABLES US TO BRIDGE THE TRADITIONAL GAP BETWEEN THE ARTS AND THE SCIENCES BECAUSE IT CAN BE USED AS A MODEL BOTH OF EXPLANATION AND OF UNDERSTANDING.” RUDOLF FISCHER



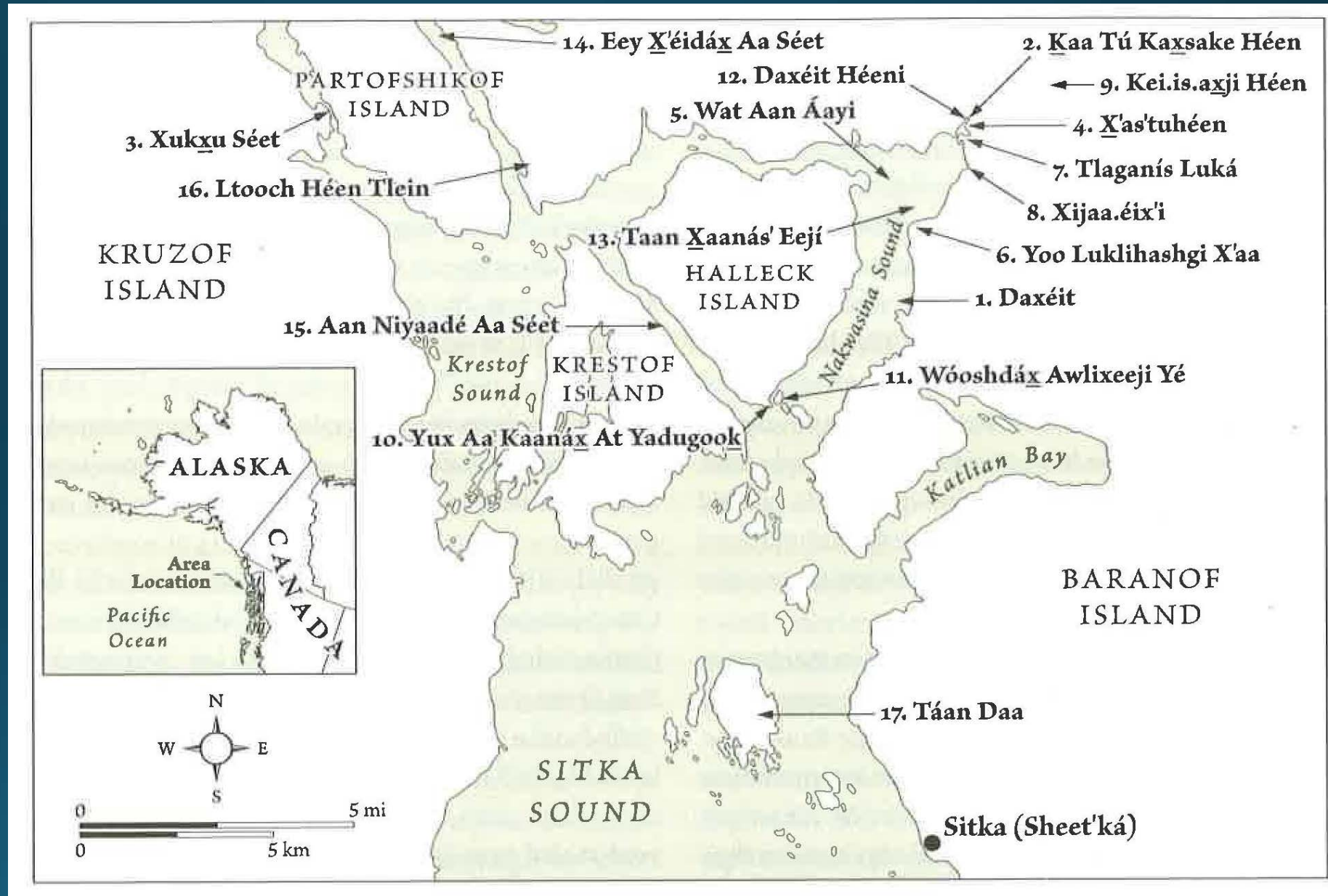
# ABDUCTIVE REASONING: CREATING THE TLINGIT EXISTENCE SCAPE

- ENGAGEMENTS WITH SALMON ARE BASED ON VARIOUS EXPLORATIONS OF WHAT RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR AND THOUGHT CONSISTS OF:
- 1) KNOWLEDGE AND EMOTION OF HOW OTHER VALUED HUMANS ARE TREATED – THE KOO'EX
- 2) CONSIDERATION OF OWN EMOTION AND PROJECTION
- 3) ATTENTION TO *IXT* (SHAMAN) TEACHING
- 4) ATTENDING TO BEHAVIOR OF SALMON AND INTERPRETATION OF IT
- 5) REFLEXIVITY – EXAMINING OWN BEHAVIOR IN REGARD TO SALMON
- CONTINUOUS ITERATION ITERATION AND ADJUSTMENT BASED ON VARIATIONS ON THESE PRINCIPLES

SALMON BOY  
STORY SUPPLIES  
ADDITIONAL  
INFORMATION  
BEYOND  
CHARTER –

SITKA VERSION  
DEPICTED HERE  
PROVIDES  
INFORMATION  
ON LOCAL  
ENVIORNMENT  
I.E.  
EMBEDDED  
KNOWLEDGE  
REDUNDANCY

SOURCE: THORNTON 2012

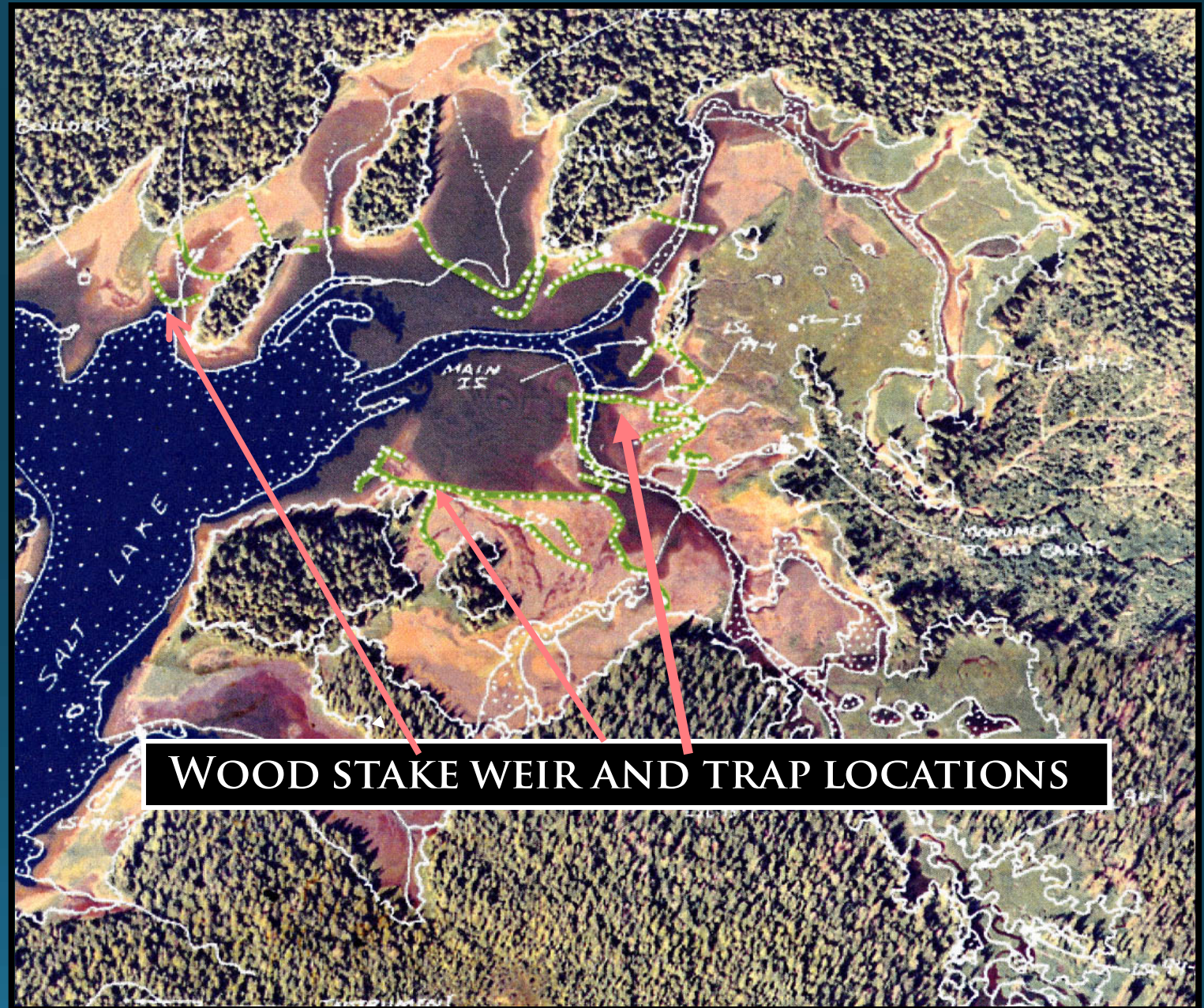


# INTERTIDAL WEIRS AND TRAPS FOR HARVESTING SALMON

- ARCHEOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON PRE-CONTACT INTERTIDAL FISHING STRUCTURES – WEST COAST OF PRINCE OF WALES ARCHIPELAGO
- FOUND IN ESTUARINE AREAS OF MOST STREAMS AND ALONG SHORELINE AT CERTAIN LOCATIONS
- STONE STRUCTURES ON OUTER ISLANDS - ROCKY INTERTIDAL AREAS
- WOOD STRUCTURES ON PRINCE OF WALES STREAMS – MUDDY INTERTIDAL ZONES
- DATE TO 3500 BCE – INNOVATIONS EVIDENT OVERTIME
- EXAMPLES: LITTLE SALT LAKE, KLAWOCK RIVER



*TUXH'A AAH'W*  
(LITTLE SALT  
LAKE):  
AERIAL  
PHOTO WITH  
WOOD FISH  
WEIR AND  
TRAP SITE  
LOCATIONS





# *TUXH'A AAH'W* (LITTLE SALT LAKE): KLAWOCK ELDERS AT SITE

TLINGIT ELDERS POINT  
TO WOOD STAKES  
ALIGNED IN LITTLE SALT  
LAKE ESTUARY





LITTLE SALT  
LAKE:  
WOOD STAKE  
REMNANTS  
FLUSH WITH  
SURFACE  
BURIED  
SECTION  
CARVED INTO  
POINT FOR  
INSERTION





# *TUXH'A AAH'W* (LITTLE SALT LAKE): ARCHEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

WOOD STAKES BURIED IN  
THE INTERTIDAL ESTUARY  
MUD FORM A METER WIDE  
WALL TERMED A PAVEMENT

“PAVEMENT” CONSISTS OF  
OVER 1500 CARVED WOODEN  
STAKES





# LITTLE SALT LAKE – MAIN FEATURE SHOWING LOCATION OF ALL THREE COMPONENTS

SEGMENT  
SHOWN IN  
PREVIOUS  
SLIDE





# KLAWOCK – COMMUNITY, LAGOON, ESTUARY - 1929

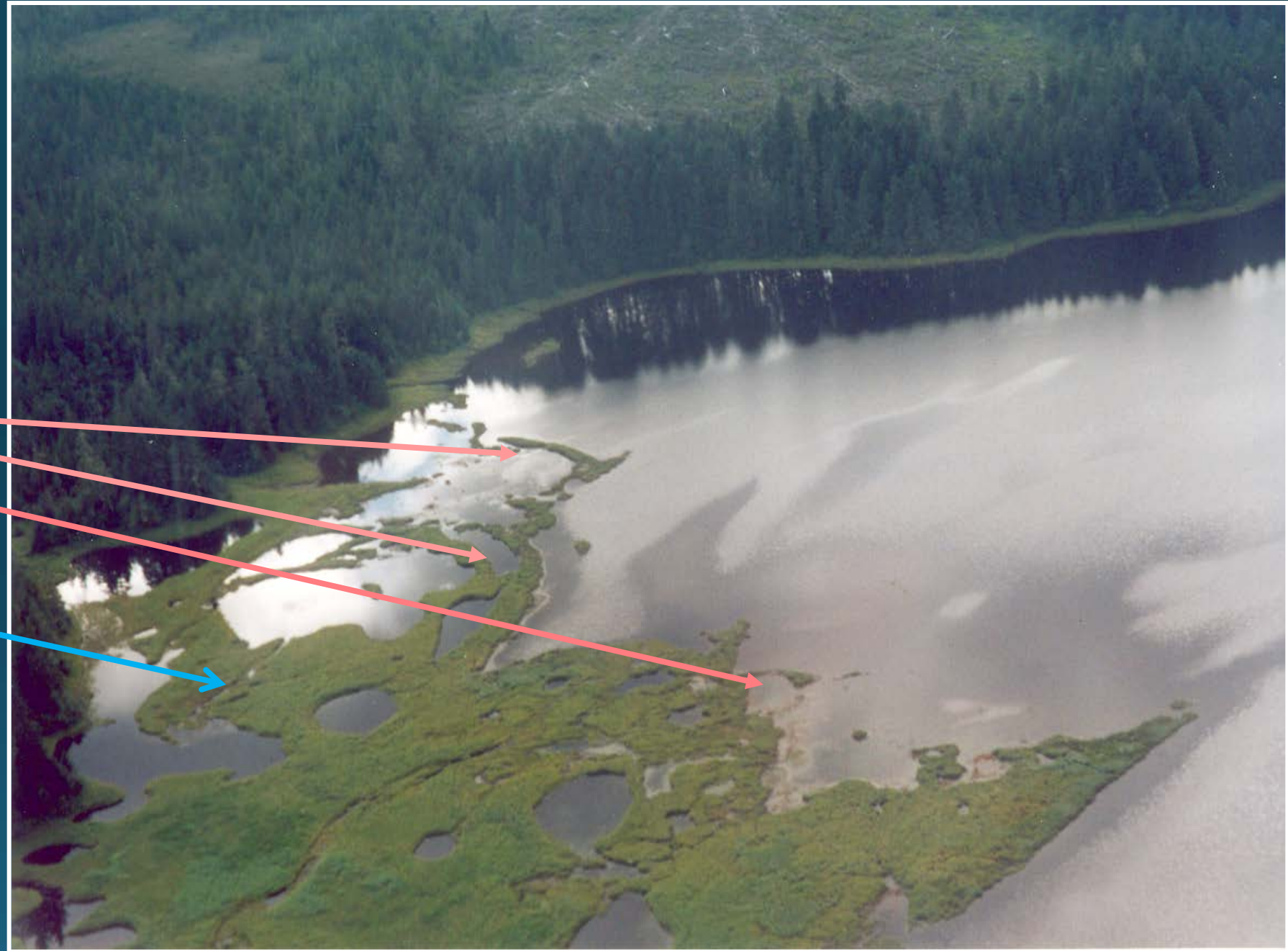




# KLAWOCK LAGOON:

ANCIENT  
SEMI-  
CIRCULAR  
WOOD STAKE  
FISH TRAPS

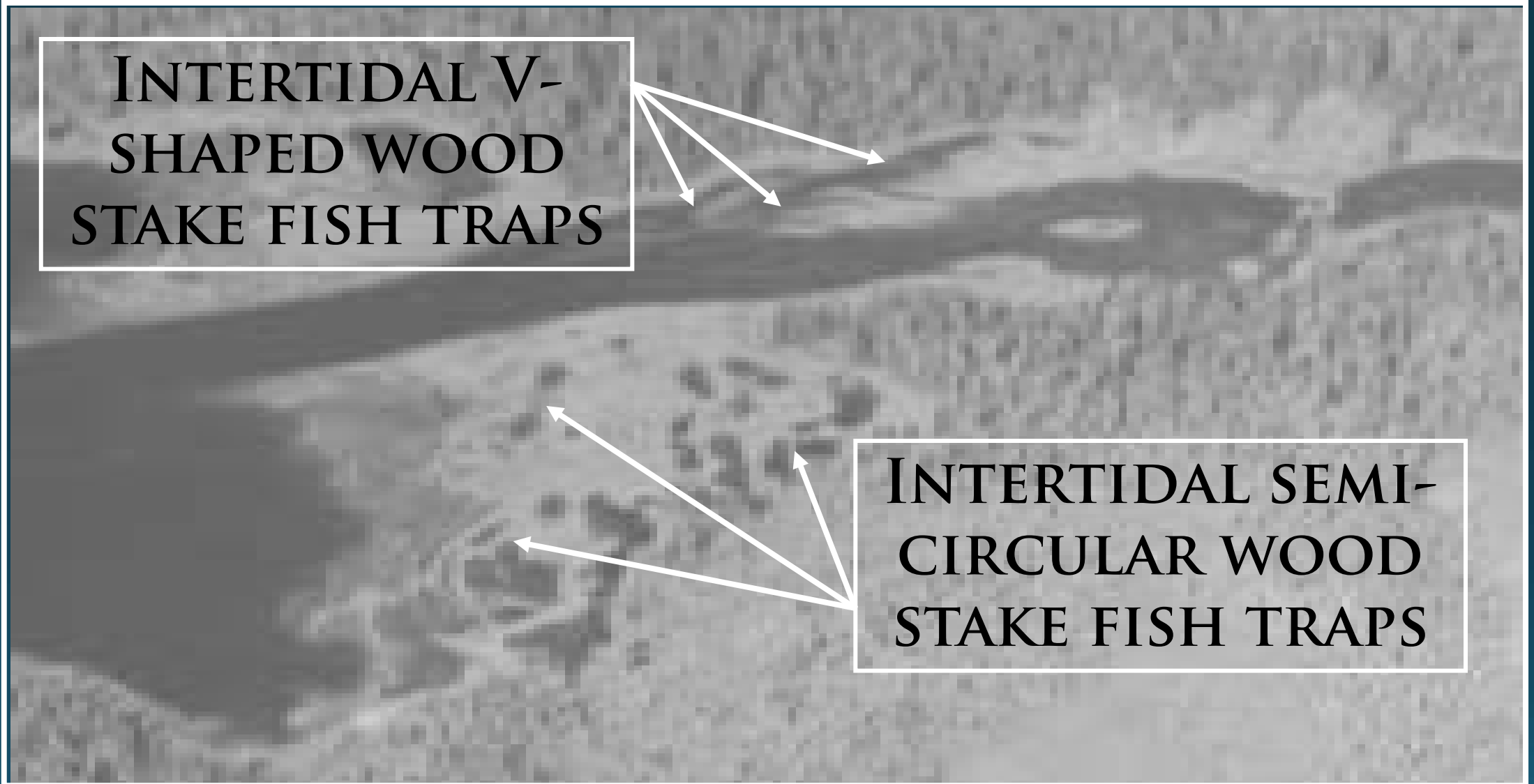
CANAL  
CONNECTING  
INTERTIDAL  
POOLS



# KLAWOCK LAGOON/ESTUARY: INTERTIDAL FISH TRAP LOCATIONS

INTERTIDAL V-  
SHAPED WOOD  
STAKE FISH TRAPS

INTERTIDAL SEMI-  
CIRCULAR WOOD  
STAKE FISH TRAPS





# KLAWOCK ESTUARY: V-SHAPED TRAPS





# PORTILLO CHANNEL:

BI-LOBED  
SEMI-  
CIRCULAR  
INTERTIDAL  
STONE FISH  
TRAPS  
LOCATED AT  
HALF TIDE

## SAN CLEMENTE INTERTIDAL STONE TRAPS





# SAN CLEMENTE INTERTIDAL STONE FISH TRAPS – ON BEACH



# *Hinyaa Tlingit*

San Clemente Stone Fish Traps

Theodore Roberts



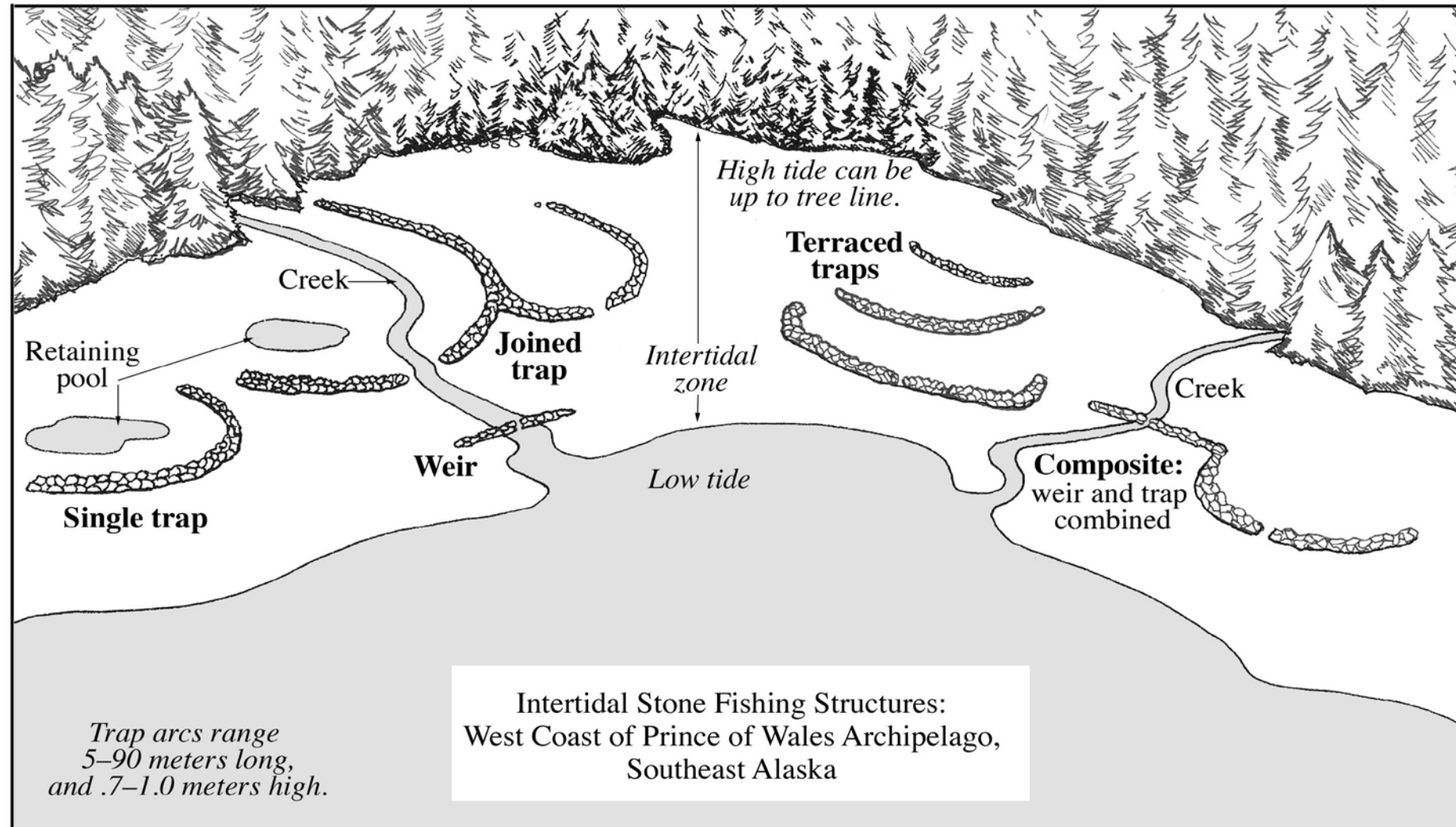
# LULU ISLAND:

SEMI-  
CIRCULAR  
INTERTIDAL  
STONE FISH  
TRAP AT  
HALF TIDE  
WITH GAP  
AT LOW  
POINT



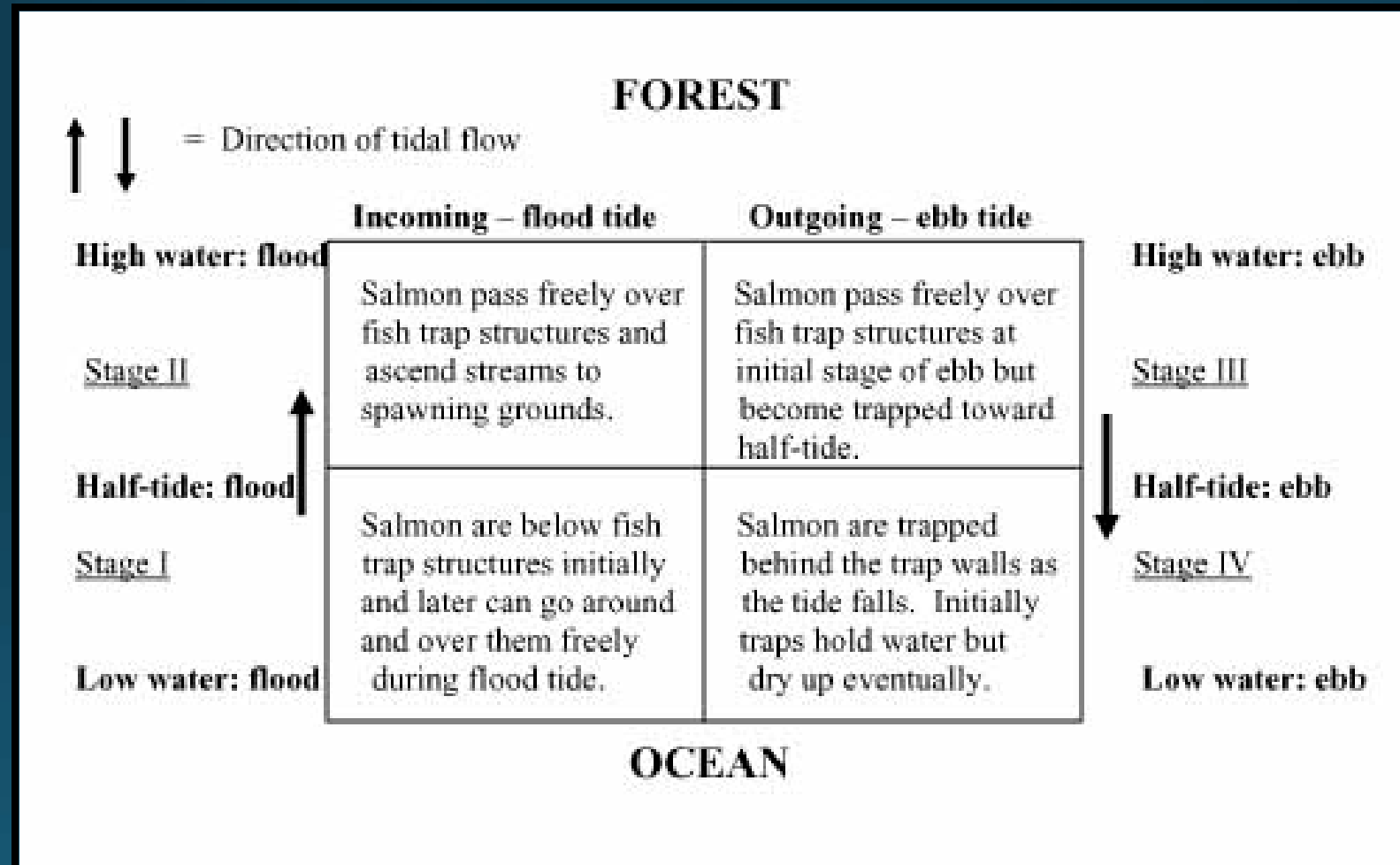
GAP IN  
STONE  
WALL

# EXAMPLES OF INTERTIDAL STONE FISHING STRUCTURES





# TIDAL PULSE FISHING: TIDAL STAGE OPERATION





# TIDAL PULSE FISHING: BASIC PRINCIPLES

- › SEMI-CIRCULAR STONE WALLS BUILT AT MID-TIDAL STAGE LEVEL – V STAKE TRAPS USE SAME PRINCIPLE
- › STRUCTURES COMPLETELY COVERED AT HIGH TIDE ALLOWING ASCENDING SALMON TO TRAVEL UPSTREAM
- › WHERE STONE WEIRS CROSS ESTUARY, THEY DO NOT OBSTRUCT SALMON MOVEMENT AT HIGH TIDE
- › FISH CAPTURED BEHIND WALLS ONLY ON FALLING TIDE
- › CATCH FISH FOR APPROXIMATELY 25% OF TIDAL RANGE



**LITTLE SALT LAKE:**  
ESTUARINE SITE OF  
INTERTIDAL WOOD STAKE  
WEIRS AND TRAPS

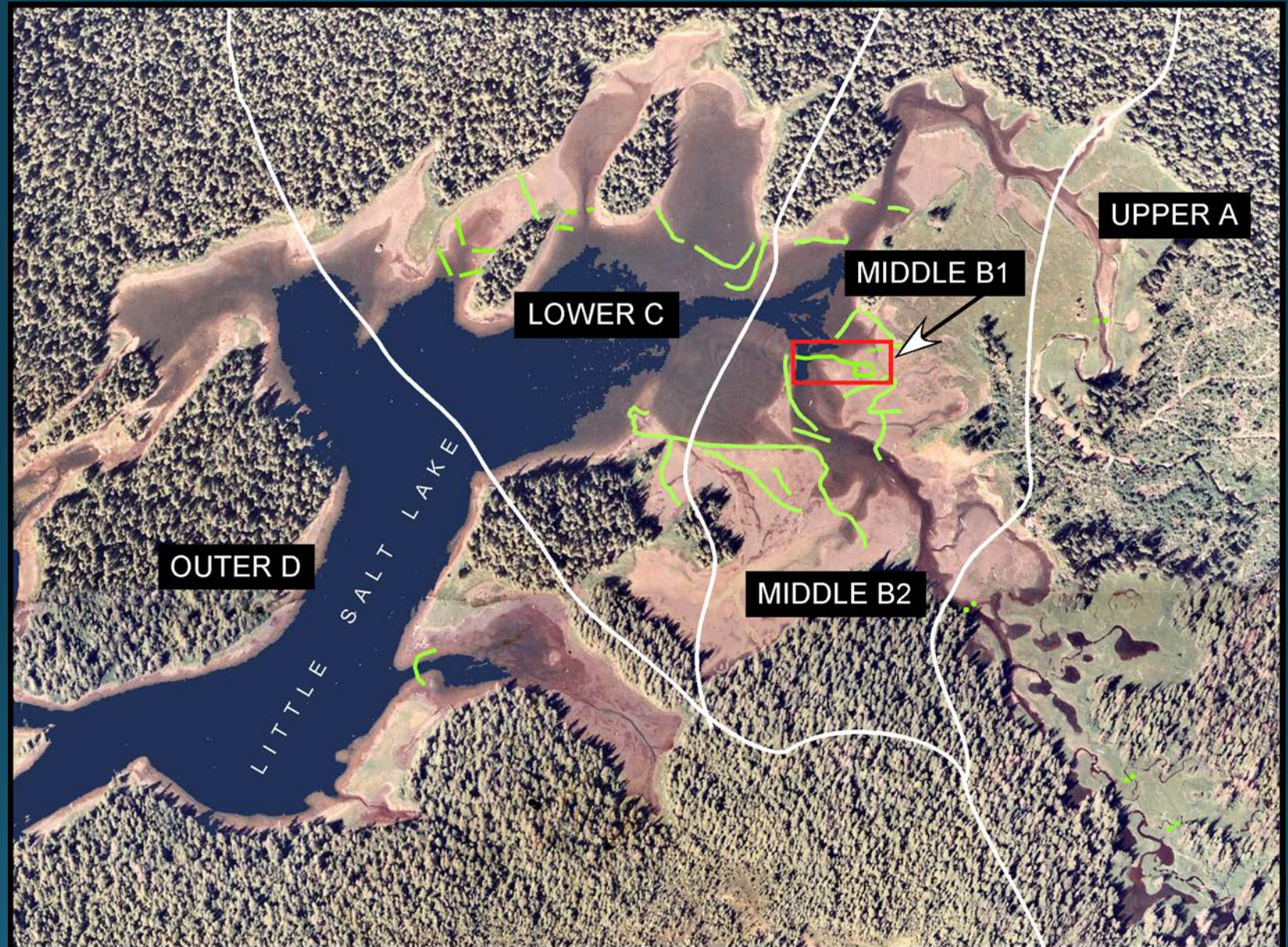
TLINGIT R&D CENTER

ZONE A – 2100BCE, SMALL  
INVESTMENTS FOR  
INSTREAM HARVEST, TIDE  
NOT A FACTOR

ZONE B1 – 1450BCE, HUGE  
INVESTMENT FIXED, FLOOD  
TIDE HARVESTING

ZONE C – 900BCE, HUGE  
INVESTMENT FIXED, EBB  
TIDE TIDAL PULSE HARVEST

ZONE B2 AND D – 500BCE,  
REDUCED INVESTMENT  
MOBILE, EBB TIDE, TIDAL  
PULSE







# SUMMARY

- PRIOR TO 1000BCE – INTERTIDAL WOOD STAKE WEIRS FUNNELED SALMON TO HOLDING AREAS AND TRAPS IN THE UPPER TIDAL RANGE
- MASS HARVESTING WAS PRIMARILY DONE ON INCOMING TIDE
- BETWEEN 1500 AND 1000BCE A SHIFT OCCURRED TO TIDAL PULSE FISHING
- MASS HARVESTING WAS DONE ON THE EBB IN THE MID TIDAL RANGE AFTER 1000BCE



# IMPLICATIONS

- WHAT CAUSED THE SHIFT?
- TIMING OF OCCURRENCE
- RISE IN HUMAN POPULATION NEED TO INCORPORATE SMALLER LESS PRODUCTIVE SYSTEMS
- SEA MAMMAL COLLAPSE
- SALMON DROP IN PRIMARY STREAMS DUE TO OVERHARVEST OR CLIMATE
- ACCUMULATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND APPLICATION OF MYTHIC CHARTER – RECOGNITION OF NEED FOR ESCAPEMENT OR FOR SALMON TO REACH THEIR HOMES

# *ISH:*

## A MULTIDIMENSIONAL RELATIONAL CONCEPT WOVEN THROUGH TLINGIT CULTURAL PRACTICE

- A DEEP POOL WHERE SALMON CONGREGATE
- A SITE INDEX FOR DETERMINING WHEN TO HARVEST
- DURING RETURN – A PLACE OF REST AND RECOVERY FOR SALMON
- A HARVESTING LOCATION
- A SPAWNING LOCATION
- A SITE OF MODIFICATION
- A LOCATION IN THE EXISTENCE SCAPE OF PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEMPLATION AND REFLEXIVE ENCOUNTER – FOR SALMON PEOPLE, FOR HUMAN PEOPLE
- “ALIVE IN THE EDDY”



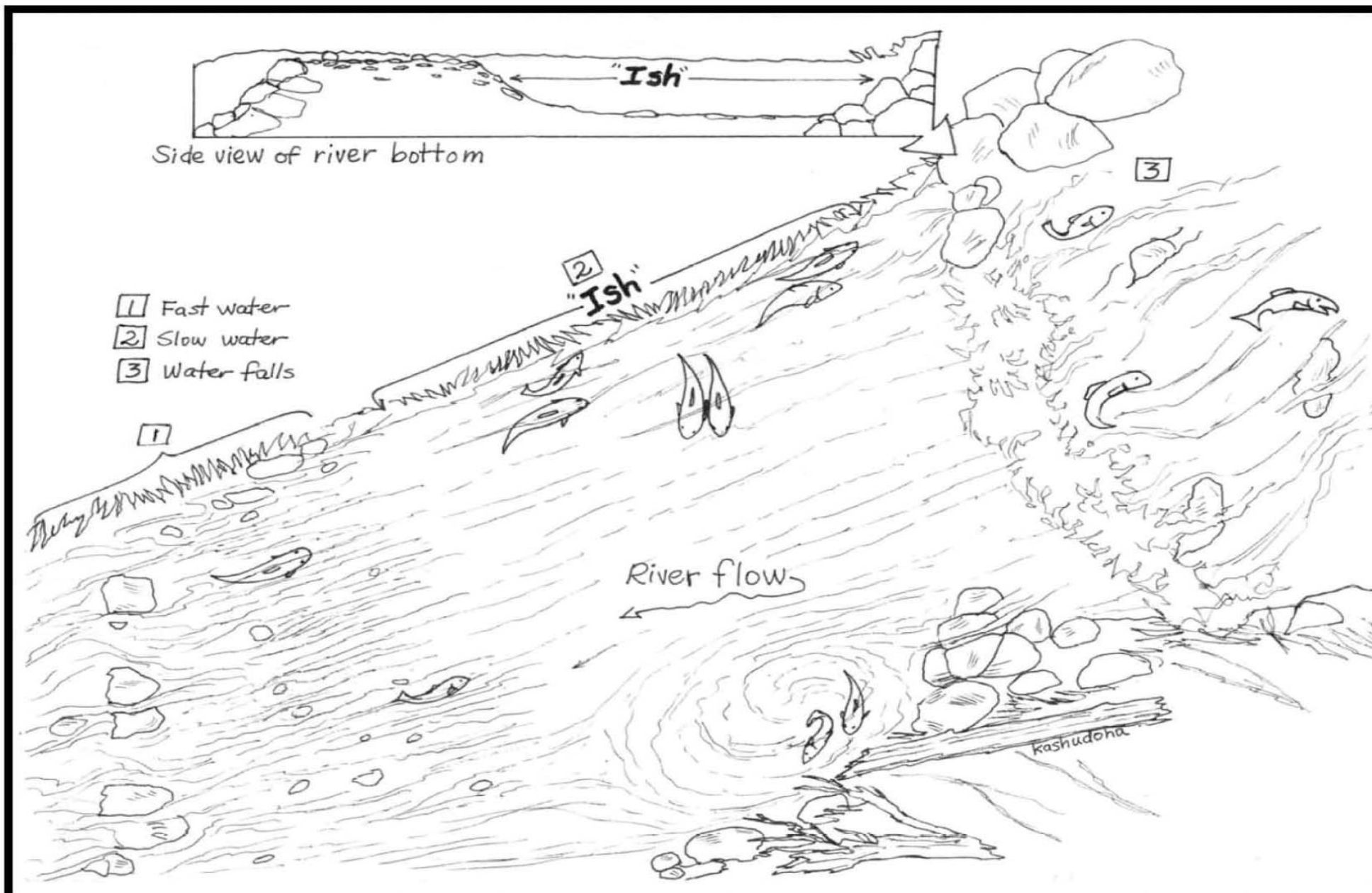


Figure 38 *Ish* – A Tlingit Relational Concept

*HUNA* TLINGIT  
GAFF HOOK IN  
ACTION  
CATCHING  
SALMON

AN *ISH* IN NEVA  
RIVER WHERE  
COHO AND  
SCKEYE SALMON  
CONGREGATE





# NEVA RIVER:

“STREAMSCAPING”

INSTREAM POOL  
AND FALLS – MADE  
BY MOVING STONES

“*ISH*” – SALMON  
POOL CREATED BY  
HUMAN ACTION



# IMAGISTIC REDUNDANCY

- *ISH* IMAGES ARE FOUND IN VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN TLINGIT OBJECTS KNOWN AS ART
- AESTHETIC QUALITY (BEAUTY) IS VALUED – DEMONSTRATING IT TO OTHERS IS A GIFT
- GIFTS ARE TO BE RECIPROCATED – IMPLICIT OBLIGATION
- EXAMPLES – APPEARS ON STAFF IN U PENN MUSEUM AS THREE NESTED OVOIDS
- TOTEM POLE – CLAIM TO SARKAR STREAM AS CLAN CREST
- BLANKET – CLAIM TO CHILKOOT LAKE AREA
- HOUSE FRONT – CLAIM TO BASKET BAY AS IMAGE
- FINALLY – *ISH*'S HAVE NAMES, LIKE PEOPLE!



*ISH* IMAGE ON  
KOOTEYA IN  
KLAWOCK  
TOTEM PARK:

POLE INDICATES  
OWNERSHIP OF  
MAJOR SOCKEYE  
SALMON SYSTEM

BEAR IS A MAJOR  
CREST OF THE CLAN

*ISH* DEPICTED AS  
DISH WITH THREE  
SALMON, 1939





*LUK'AK'ADI  
NAXEIN:*

SOCKEYE  
CREST BLANKET

DEPICTION OF  
*ISH*, CIRCLE  
WITH SALMON  
IN CENTER





*LUK'AK'ADI NAXEIN:*

SOCKEYE CREST  
BLANKET WORN BY  
CLAN LEADER

DANCES WITH IT ON  
CEREMONIAL  
OCCASIONS

BROUGHT OUT AND  
STORY ASSOCIATED WITH  
BLANKET TOLD ONLY AT  
*KOO'EX* (POTLATCH)



ARCH HOUSE OF  
BASKET BAY  
DECITAN IN  
ANGOON –

*ISH* AT CENTER  
OF IMAGE  
SURROUNDED BY  
SOCKEYE  
SALMON  
HEADING TO IT





# RELATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF *ISH*

COMMENTARY BY REVERED ELDER WALTER SOBOLEFF ON *ISH*  
DURING TLINGIT TRADITIONAL SCHOLARS DISCUSSION:

*There were those who were knowledgeable about all kinds of subjects. This thing named ish - it was almost as if it were human and it was spoken to in that way, this ish. This is how they valued this resource. It was as if their life depended on it so they treated it with respect. Because they got their food from this place is why they would speak to it. There was pride, there was honor (given to the ish) so no one was to say anything foolish about it or to it. If it was said that we could laugh at it, it was not so. We were told not to talk to it in a foolish way but to respect it. This is what the white man calls taboo. When you do this there is a discipline, a law that will correct you. It will be like it falls on you; this is the way this is. All that is seen around us is said to be alive around us is what it is called. The Lingit people have known this to be true from time immemorial."*

# RELATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY: THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS FOR THE LOGIC OF ENGAGEMENT PRACTICED BY TLINGIT

*“...the true method of philosophical construction  
is to frame a scheme of ideas, the best that one  
can, and unflinchingly explore the interpretation  
of experience in terms of that scheme.”*

Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality:  
An Essay in Cosmology, p. xiv, 1978

ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD



*“You have to understand that we treat salmon  
like we would like to be treated.”*

Response by 82-year old Huna Tlingit elder  
James Samuel Osborne to my query, “What  
were you taught as a boy about salmon?”  
August 2003

JAMES SAMUEL OSBORNE

