

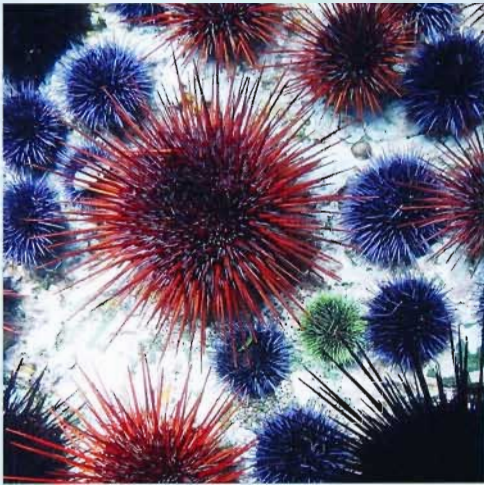
TANG.GWAN AD HUU TLGUU XAAYNANG.NGAAY GIIDANG SKIDEGATE

SIIGEE ISGYAN HUU TLAGU XIINANG.GEE GIIDANG MASSETT

OCEAN & WAY OF LIFE

*Some things we know about Haida culture
and the ocean and rivers of Haida Gwaii*





Lynn Lee



Lynn Lee

Our knowledge about the ocean and Haida culture is handed down from generation to generation. Inherited teachings – the collective experience of fishing and harvesting areas and learning methods and times for gathering and preparing seafoods – are passed on by each generation to nieces, nephews, children and grandchildren. This further connects us to the land, sea and culture. In passing on this knowledge we also pass on cultural values, ethics and laws.

From an early age, Haida children learn to dig clams, spear octopus and gather seaweed and mussels. We learn to catch and preserve seafood with smoke, salt and sugar, and to can, dry and freeze food for eating through the winter. We prepare seafood for the table in soups — *jam* — and we cook it by steaming, frying, baking, campfire and barbecue.

Haida place names hold the stories of a place and a people and how they have grown together in time. Haida names exist for every inlet, bay, river, and lake, every point of land, stretch of coast, rock formation and mountain. Many are story names that reflect our ocean origins and connections to the places of Haida Gwaii.

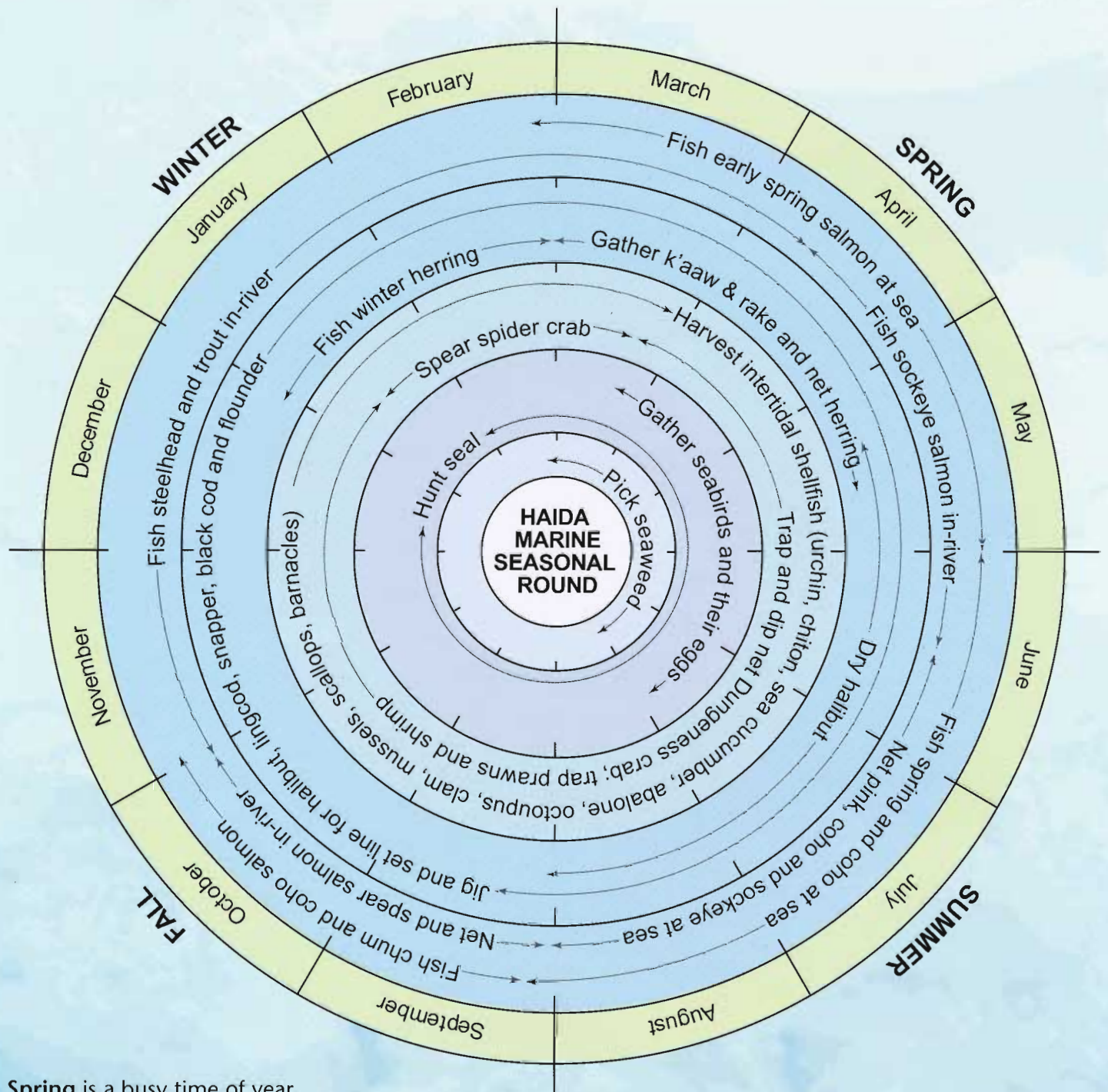
The map that accompanies this brochure contains information from a variety of sources:

- the base map shows the depth of the ocean around Haida Gwaii and the shading of hillsides and mountains at mid-day. The largest salmon streams are shown with thicker blue lines.
- the icons of fish, shellfish and marine mammals are a simplified summary of species and locations recorded by participants in the Haida Marine Traditional Knowledge Study and other reports.
- Haida place names are a small sample from works-in-progress in Skidegate and Massett to compile traditional names for places on land and in the ocean.



Species icons by Kosiain Lagace

"If you start marking everything we tell you on the map you're going to have a fancy-coloured map by the time we get through! It will cover every bit of the shoreline. We live in this land and on the ocean; we gather all the foods." - Captain Gold s



Spring is a busy time of year. In the old days, people moved to outlying areas in February and March to fish for spring salmon and halibut, gather shellfish and pick seaweed while they waited for the herring to spawn. Sockeye salmon return to local rivers from April to June, and we look forward to in-river fishing, smoking fish, and preserving food for later use.

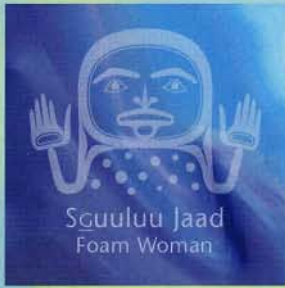
Summer brings even more salmon fishing as pinks and cohos begin arriving. Halibut are available year-round, but are fished mostly in the Summer in nearshore waters and when the weather is best for drying fish. There is a lot of drying, smoking and jarring salmon at this time.

Fall salmon fisheries focus on chum and coho. Most salmon runs are finished by late Fall, when river fishing turns to cut-throat trout, Dolly Varden char, and steelhead.

Winter is the time when people would traditionally return to the major villages or set themselves up at winter camps. Despite strong winds and storms, there are year-round fisheries for halibut and black cod, Dungeness crab, clams and cockles, winter spring salmon, and rockfish.

Ocean & Way of Life

Our world, our food



Tyson Brown

"Scaana cids uu caayuwaay ciisda chii'akaatl'ixa gan

Supernatural Beings came out of the ocean."

- James Young (shared by Diane Brown S)

Our connection to the land and ocean is timeless and intimate. Traditional foods are vital to the well-being of our people and communities. Many of them are medicinal, and they nourish and sustain us today as ever.

"Siigee.sdu can tl'a daguu xiinangaa gaa.angang

They survived from the ocean."

- Stephen Brown M

Salmon – Chiina S Tsiin M



As salmon return to their birth streams to spawn, people come together to catch and feast on them, to share them fresh with the birds and bears, to preserve them to keep for later use at home and larger community events. We harvest all species of salmon and use and enjoy every part of the fish. They play an important role in the local economy through trade and employment.

The numbers of pink and chum salmon in streams on Haida Gwaii have declined over time. Several sockeye, coho and spring salmon runs have collapsed. Habitat destruction by logging and over-fishing by commercial interests are all contributing to fewer fish in Haida Gwaii waters.

The Haida system of managing marine resources is very complex because it involves detailed societal laws that determine who can access specific areas. Many places also have spiritual connections, such as salmon streams – where a supernatural Creek Woman resides in every creek and provides for the needs of returning fish.



Dolly Garza



Dolly Garza

"Aayan was always a popular place to go for sockeye, from the first falls. We used to gaff the fish and after we got 15 or 20 we'd hang them off the stern of the skiff, take it down to the camp and people would start working on the fish, slicing it and preparing to put it into the smokehouse. When the fish came down everybody would be happy and singing, happy to be sharing."

- Reynold Russ M

Quotations are from Massett (M) and Skidegate (S) Haida who participated in the Haida Marine Traditional Knowledge Study. Some have been edited for brevity.

Herring – *linang* M, S



The arrival of herring into the bays and inlets each spring signals the beginning of another seasonal cycle of gathering food from the ocean. Whales and porpoises, seals and sea lions, cormorants, eagles, halibut, salmon and people – all come to feast on the returning herring and the billions of eggs they lay in the kelp and eelgrass beds of Haida Gwaii.

Herring return to spawn in many of the same locations from year to year.

Herring spawn-on-kelp, called *k'aaw*, is a staple Haida food and is eaten fresh or dried or salted for storage or trade. Whole *iinang* are harvested for eating, smoking, freezing or salting. They are commonly used as bait for catching other fish, and in the past were rendered into oil.

Declines in herring populations have affected many species that depend on them. Traditional activities have also been impacted, such as harvesting, feasting and sharing food, trade, and the passing of knowledge on to the following generations. Herring numbers were seen to decline dramatically following the reduction fisheries in the 1950s and 60s, and declined again in the 1990s after fisheries targeted herring roe for export to Japan. Herring populations have struggled to recover since then, but there is hope that with time and careful Haida management of the commercial fisheries, Haida Gwaii herring will recover.



*"Tliisdloy gudang kilagangs isdaa.
Just take what you need."*

- Mary Swanson M

Abalone – *Galcahlyan* S *Gahlyaan* M



"We used to get quite a few abalone. Granny used to cook it and string it up to bring to Skeena to sell. Lot of times they traded for soapberries — 'as — and oolichan grease — taw. Used to do alright from it, yeah."

- Ernie Wilson S

Abalone was once a common food but has now declined to the extent that many of the younger generations have never tasted it. Traditional methods of finding, harvesting and preparing abalone are not being learned, and there is a deep sadness over the loss of

such an important and favoured food. People blame it on mismanagement of the former commercial fishery and are concerned about ongoing poaching, which many believe is the reason why abalone populations have not recovered, despite a full harvesting closure.

Clams & Cockles – *K'yuu s K'yuu ad Sgaal M*



Dolly Garza

K'iid, we call it, Burnaby Narrows. K'iid. Just about everything there — mussels, abalone, sea urchins, clams — millions of clams. If you wanted cod, you just paddled offshore a little ways. Food in abundance, lots.”
- Percy Williams s

Ancient middens show that shellfish were a large and vital part of the Haida diet in the past, and they continue to be a very important food source today. Haida winter village sites are usually close to places where people can collect a variety of different types of shellfish. There's another cultural connection to shellfish: one of our most well-known origin stories tells of the first Haida being coaxed from a clamshell by Raven.

Clams and cockles are harvested with a shovel or digging stick, often in large enough quantities that a surplus can be given away or traded. Shellfish are usually consumed fresh, but butter clams, cockles and purple-hinged rock scallops are also dried for winter use. All species of clams and cockles can be smoked and dried, canned or frozen. Traditionally, smoked clams are dried and stored in cedar bentwood boxes.

Seabirds & Shorebirds



Debbie Gardiner

“Early on in April and March you could see millions of those Ancient Murrelets — scidaana — moving this way. As far as you can see, you could see them in the water. I see a few around here this year, but not that many.”
- Francis Ingram M

Seabird behaviour can indicate changing weather and seasons, and the movements of forage fish such as herring and needlefish. They even provide navigational clues to experienced mariners. Many fishermen watch for bird activity to tell them where the salmon are probably feeding on forage fish.

Haidas traditionally ate Ancient Murrelets and their eggs. Adult birds were harvested at night when they return to their nesting burrows on land after feeding at sea. Fires lit on the beach attract the birds which can be clubbed out of the sky or caught as they dive at the fire. Haidas also ate adult sandpipers, and collected seagull, oystercatcher, and puffin eggs – eaten boiled or used in baking.

Overall, the number of some seabirds and shorebirds around Haida Gwaii is declining, possibly due to lack of feed. Some people believe that there used to be more seabirds before herring populations were over-fished, and others are concerned about the impacts of localized development and pollution. Introduced rats and raccoons have badly impacted seabird breeding colonies.



Dolly Garza

Rockfish – *S_{gan}* *M, S*

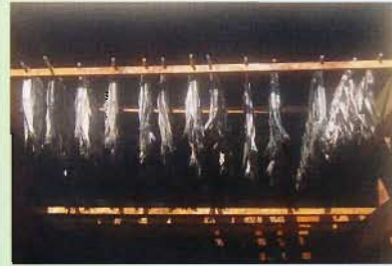


"If you wanted a fresh fish, just go a little ways and jig up a halibut or a cod. You know, we lived real good."
- Harvey Williams *S*

Rockfish and lingcod may be caught year-round in the waters of Haida Gwaii and are often taken at the same time as halibut. People have observed that some kinds of rockfish are declining in abundance and size. There are several reasons for this, but many people understand that commercial fisheries and fishing lodges are having a major impact on rockfish.

"We eat practically everything out of the ocean. That food is the healthiest and the safest in the world. The food out here is still fantastic. So we have to protect it, that's all there is to it."

- Paul Pearson *S*



Seaweed – *S_{gyuu}* *S* *S_{giw}* *M*



*"Now if you want good seaweed — *s_{giw}* — you've got to get it around the twentieth of April. The first ones that grow are the best. It's slow-picking but it's sure dandy though. We call that *sank s_{giwee kusgat laa' cuusdlang}* — the early seaweed is good to get, it tastes the best."*

- Stephen Brown *M*

Seaweed is dried and may be eaten as a snack, used as an ingredient in soups and stews, or ground and sprinkled on foods like fish, rice, potatoes and salmon eggs. Sometimes elders like to toast dried seaweed over a fire and eat it with eulachon grease. Cakes of seaweed from Haida Gwaii were traded for eulachon grease with mainland nations. It is a highly nutritious food and still a valuable trade commodity. People with good taste say that seaweed from different places has different flavours.

Seaweed is best harvested by hand only – tools such as metal blades are known to harm the seaweed plant. Seaweed is dried in the sun on rocks on the beach and in ovens and dehydrators, and then compressed into cakes or squares.

*"That's all we were raised on for snacks — *ts'iljii, k'aaw, s_{gyuu}*, dried clams — not junk food ... so I try to have it out on my counter whenever the kids are around because I don't believe in sugar and junk like that."*

- Roberta Olson *S*

Haida culture is intertwined with all of creation in the land, sea, air and spirit worlds. Life in the ocean around us is essential to our well-being and it nourishes all of the communities of Haida Gwaii.

In 2006, the Haida Nation and the Massett and Skidegate Councils began working together to do **marine use planning** for Haida Gwaii. Similar to the **land use plan** which now protects the well-being of the land, a marine use plan will help safeguard the ocean around Haida Gwaii and all of the life it supports.

The **Haida Marine Traditional Knowledge (HMTK) Study** was launched in 2007 to research and document Haida culture, traditions and knowledge about the ocean. Fifty-six Haida (listed at left) shared their knowledge and experience of marine foods, fishing and gathering areas, seasonal harvest patterns, sites of cultural and historical importance, and observations about species abundance and population trends. Information about more than 4,000 locations and 150 marine species were recorded, with some firsthand observations dating back to the 1920s.

This brochure and a separate large format poster with the same title — *Ocean & Way of Life* — present a brief summary of that work. The poster also presents over 500 hundred Haida names for ocean and freshwater bodies, settlements and supernaturals.

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haawa ga xaaydaça kihlgula caay.yas 'waadluxan s

haaw'a xaad kihlgaa ga guusuus leegaa aa uu kil 'laaga M

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