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Note:
The material in brackets, [ ], has been inserted by the editor for clarification or as a correction. The insert [sic] means that "this is the way it is in the original" and is used when the author of the original document misspelled a word or made a grammatical error. The insert [?] indicates a word that was illegible.

The Taku River (Canada) Salmon Fisheries: A History Based on Written Records

Introduction

This report has two main objectives: to present written historical information about the salmon and salmon fisheries in Canadian waters of the Taku River watershed, and to highlight historical descriptions of the First Nations' use of the salmon resource in the area. In the author's view, this report would be a useful supplement to traditional knowledge of the river and its salmon resource.

The author conducted research at: the National Archives of Canada and the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa; the Pacific regional branch of the National Archives in Vancouver; the Atlin Historical Society in Atlin; the British Columbia Archives and the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria; the Alaska State Library and Historical Collections, and the Alaska State Archives in Juneau; and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans office, the Yukon Archives, and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development library in Whitehorse.

The report is divided into two sections. The first provides background information about the non-native people who travelled in the Taku River region in the 1800s and early 1900s, about the First Nations people who lived in the area, and about the historical records left by these people. Non-natives who visited the Taku watershed all came with specific objectives — mining, trade, exploration and so on — and rarely documented their observations of salmon and salmon fisheries. First Nations people in the 1800s and early 1900s followed the oral tradition, and unless they shared their knowledge with people who then wrote it down, it is not documented in written historical sources. The provincial and federal governments' interest in the Taku River salmon is not evident in government records until the 1950s.

The second section focuses on the salmon and the salmon fisheries. It includes general observations made at the turn of the century about the salmon, and references to First Nations fisheries and to their fish camps and villages. This section also includes information about the Alaska commercial fishery collected by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and some background on the development of a Canadian Taku River commercial fishery.

The focus of this report is on records created prior to the 1960s.

Background

Non-native activities on the river

Explorers, surveyors, traders and prospectors

By 1800, sea otters had been almost exterminated along the north Pacific coast, forcing Russian and British fur traders to look for other profitable skins and furs. The traders soon found themselves in an enviable position on the coast. They found places where the coastal Tlingit gathered that were also starting points for Tlingit trading expeditions inland — for example, at the mouths of the Stikine and Taku rivers. The Russian American Company and the Hudson's Bay Company sought trading relationships with aboriginal people at both locations, and the coastal Tlingit traders took on the role of middlemen between the white traders and inland trappers.

The Hudson's Bay Company made two attempts to establish posts in the Taku River area. James Douglas opened a Hudson's Bay Company post at the mouth of the river in June 1840. Fort Durham, also known as Fort Taku, soon proved to be unsuccessful and was replaced in 1843 by the steamer *Beaver*, a mobile trading vessel. The Hudson's Bay Company opened Egnell Post in 1891 on the Sheslay River, but it closed in the following year because of the lack of trade.[1] In contrast to the approach taken in the Stikine River region, the Company made no real effort to reach the interior lands via the Taku River. According to Roderick Finlayson, the Chief Trader at Fort Durham, people did not travel far from the fort because they feared the First Nations people.[2]

Travel by prospectors on the Taku River prior to the 1880s is not well-documented. Records suggest that the first white man to actually see Atlin Lake was a miner named Michael Byrnes. Byrnes was hired to scout a path for the Western Union Telegraph Company in the mid 1860s, but he left no journals or records of his travels.[3] According to E. Rumanah Scidmore in 1885, other prospectors attempted to travel inland from the coast, but the Tlingit monopoly on the area held them at bay: "Prospectors have had their camps at the mouth of the river at the head of the basin, and have searched the bars and shores of Taku River for miles across the mountain wall... All of this Taku region is rich in the indications of precious minerals, and prospectors have explored miles of the most rugged mountain country in their own search for float and gravel. The presence of gold along the shores of Taku River was long known, but the Taku Indians, who guarded the mouth of the river and kept the monopoly of the fur trade with the interior Indians, were known to be hostile and kept prospectors aloof."[4]

Several surveyors travelled into the Taku River area in the late 1800s:

- George Dawson, leader of the 1887 Yukon expedition, learned some general information about the area and its inhabitants from his various informants, but no member of his party actually travelled within watershed.
- Juneau residents, anxious to bring more business to their town in the 1890s, managed to persuade explorer Frederick Schwatka to travel up the Taku River in May 1891 on his way to Yukon and Alaska. Following this route provided Schwatka with the opportunity to explore and survey the unmapped region of the Taku River. Schwatka's party, consisting of C. W. Hayes, another white man, a Tahltan packer and six guides/packers from various coastal Tlingit tribes, followed the Nakina River for some distance before travelling overland to Teslin Lake.

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[1] Information found in post descriptions was provided by the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

[2] Andrews, Clarence L. Wrangell and the Gold of the Cassiar. Seattle: 1937. Andrews obtained this information from the Roderick Finlayson manuscripts at the Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

[3] Dickinson, Christine Frances and Diane Solie Smith. Atlin: The Story of British Columbia's Last Gold Rush, 1995.

[4] Scidmore, E. Rumanah. Alaska Its Southern Coast and the Sitkan Archipelago, 1885, pp. 79-81.

- In 1892, the British Columbia government made its first investigation of the northwest corner of the province. Narcisse Gauvreau and three colleagues explored and reported on the territory between the Stikine River and the Yukon border, and west to the Alaska boundary. The party proceeded from Telegraph Creek to the south end of Teslin Lake. Part of the route followed a rough trail made by the Hudson's Bay Company to Egnell Post on the Sheslay River . Gauvreau reported that it was not a well-travelled route. From Teslin, his party went southwest as far as the Inklin River and explored a route to Sloko Lake.
- William Ogilvie investigated the "Taku Trail" from the coast in 1895, but heavy snow limited his explorations. He met, however, Taku River Tlingit people and saw their gravehouses at the confluence of the Sloko and Nakina rivers.
- Canada's Department of the Interior sent Arthur St. Cyr, W. T. Jennings and E. J. Duchesnay to the Stikine River in 1897 to examine the country and try to find a suitable road or railway route between the Stikine River and Teslin Lake.

With the gold discovery in the Klondike enticing people to the Yukon in 1897, governments and private businesses initiated projects to improve access to the Yukon River. William Pratt and his party travelled up the Taku River in August 1897 to locate and determine the feasibility of a railway route connecting Juneau and the Yukon. Meanwhile, Canada's Department of the Interior sent Arthur St. Cyr and his party to the area.

Fritz Miller, leader of a party of prospectors from Juneau, was the first discoverer of gold in the Atlin district in 1898. The subsequent stampede consisted largely of Klondike-bound individuals who reached Atlin via Bennett. Juneau businessmen continued to encourage people to use the Taku River route to reach their inland destinations, but the Stikine River route remained the most popular during the height of the rush in 1898.

Although the Stikine River and Cassiar areas received the most attention for big game hunting, guides based in the Telegraph Creek area led a number of people up the Tahltan River to Level Mountain and over to the Sheslay River drainage.

What do their records say about the fishery?

Hudson's Bay Company records provide minimal information about the fisheries in the Taku River. James Douglas' diary describes the establishment of Fort Durham in 1840 and a three-day survey undertaken by an armed party of 20 men for approximately 35 miles up the Taku River in mid-June. He mentioned seeing two First Nations villages on the river, one of which was abandoned. This appears to be the first and only expedition of any distance up the Taku River by the traders at Fort Durham.[5] Douglas described people fishing near the fort using a weir, and he also wrote that the native people had all gone to their fisheries in July. In August, he mentioned that many salmon were jumping in the bay but were not entering the fresh water.

No post journals from Egnell Post on the Sheslay River were found at the Hudson's Bay Company Archives or National Archives.

The government surveyors and explorers usually kept diaries or submitted reports about their travels but few mentioned the salmon. William Ogilvie travelled in the winter and saw no fishing activity. He noted, however, that he saw camps and villages, but did not specify or did not know if these sites were fishing stations. Schwatka's party travelled up the Taku River area in June and July. Schwatka's letters and Hayes' journal and photographs of the journey are descriptive, informative and provide valuable information about fishing sites at Canoe Landing and the Nakina-Inklin area [see pp. 20 and 23]. George Dawson did not reach the Taku River watershed itself but acquired some information second-hand about the people and resources. In his report on the Taku River region in 1892, Narcisse Gauvreau included substantially more information about the local inhabitants, including fish camps [see pp. 11, 16, 21, 23 and 27]. Although other government surveyors stopped at points within the Taku River system in the 1890s, only Arthur St. Cyr, W. L.

[5] Olson, Wallace. A History of Fort Durham, pp. 13-14.

Jennings and E. J. Duchesnay included specific information about the salmon runs and aboriginal fisheries in their reports to the federal government [see pp. 14, 18]. As St. Cyr wrote in his final report, George Dawson had described the area so minutely, he was not going to duplicate that work. J. C. Gwillim also described the aboriginal fisheries in 1901 [see p. 21].

William Pratt, whose party investigated the feasibility of a railway line up the Taku River in August 1897, referred to a First Nations village at Nakina in his report [see p. 24]. The Alaska Historical Library has a number of photographs from Pratt's expedition, but none document the fisheries.

A number of journals during the Klondike gold rush describe attempts to reach the Yukon via the Stikine-Teslin route, but only a few mention salmon where the trail reached salmon-spawning streams. For example, John McDougal and Edward Lester mentioned an aboriginal fish camp and good salmon fishing at Hackett River [see p. 20, 28], and Alfred Pearce Dennis described reaching the Sheslay River in May 1899 and meeting First Nations people waiting for the salmon run [see p. 26].

In looking for references to the salmon or salmon fisheries in these early journals, it is important to keep in mind that only a person keen on writing about everything he/she learned about a particular area would write about something they did not see. Many of the surveyors and prospectors passed through the Taku River region during the winter or spring months when travel was very difficult, and their descriptions often focus on the hardships they experienced. Furthermore, few people had an interest in the activities of the native people. In fact, the diary of Edward Lester of the Field Force illustrates a fear of — or perhaps a suspicion toward — those he saw in the area [see p. 28].

In 1900 and 1901, government surveyors completed surveys of the British Columbia/Yukon border, but no mention is made of salmon. As with other government reports about places that have already been explored or mapped, few descriptions provide details of the natural resources.

Several big game hunters wrote books about their experiences and travels in the Yukon and northwest British Columbia — for example, Warburton Pike and Charles Sheldon. These men were clearly interested in the game, but they also tended to observe the fish. Many of them were avid fishermen as well as hunters. One hunter, Frantz Rosenberg, wrote a detailed account of his experiences in the Stikine and Sheslay areas in 1910 and described the salmon in the Sheslay River drainage [see pp. 19, 27].

Missionaries

Rev. John Pringle of the Presbyterian Church of Canada arrived in Atlin on March 25, 1899, and was the first resident clergyman in the community. He left in the following year, and a series of ministers filled the position over the years. Rev. Frederick L. Stephenson from the Church of England arrived in Atlin in the spring of 1899 and left sometime after 1906. These ministers focused their attention on the miners of the area.

Three Oblate Catholic priests held occasional services in the summer months, but it wasn't until 1907 with the arrival of Father Joseph Allard that any significant effort was made to minister to the native people of the Atlin area. Father Allard learned that most of the 80 people whom he saw belonged to the Russian church.[6] He opened a boarding school to teach the First Nations children in Atlin while their parents hunted and trapped, but he left in 1910, leaving the community without a resident Catholic priest for 19 years.[7] Father Allard returned in 1929 and stayed until 1936.[8]

Father Marcel Bobillier, also a Catholic priest, described his life in the Atlin area in the 1940s in his journal. Unlike the other missionaries, Father Bobillier travelled down the Taku River to visit the miners at the Tulsequah mine, and his journal provides brief descriptions of native people and winter camps along the way. Although Jesuit priests from Juneau reportedly visited the Tulsequah

[6] Bobillier, Marcel. "Klinket's School," in Oblate Missions, March-June 1953, p. 12.
[7] Dickinson, Christine Frances and Diane Solie Smith. Atlin: The Story of British Columbia's Last Gold Rush, 1995.
[8] Bobillier, Marcel. Journal d'un Missionnaire, p. 236.

mine, Father Bobillier said he was the first minister from the Whitehorse diocese to visit the site in 1942.[9]

What do church-related records say about the fishery?

Many of the priests working in the Yukon and northwest B.C. contributed articles to local newsletters or broader publications by the Catholic Church. References to church activities in Atlin are made in some of these articles, but they make no mention of the Taku River fisheries. Father Bobillier's journal, written in French, is a good source of information about the Atlin and Taku region, including a reference to the early aboriginal salmon fishery [see page 21].

Although Bishop Ridley of the Church of England wrote articles about his diocese, none were found that mention the aboriginal people (other than expressing general concern about their welfare) or about the Taku River. Similarly, an article written by Rev. F. L. Stephenson in The Mission Field in 1901 does not mention the Taku River or the salmon fisheries.

Telegraph line

During the Klondike gold rush, a telegraph line was constructed from Dawson to Whitehorse, and in 1901 it was linked to a line extending south through Atlin, Telegraph Creek and down to Quesnel. Telegraph operators, including Guy Lawrence at the Nahlin station in 1904, lived at posts along the route and maintained the line.

What do these records say about the fishery?

The only source found in private or government records referring to salmon are Guy Lawrence's memoirs [see p. 18].

Policemen and game wardens

North-West Mounted Police officers first arrived in Atlin in August 1898 and established the Atlin Lake detachment at Pine Creek. In September 1898, the NWMP headquarters in Ottawa ordered Superintendent Zachary Wood, stationed at the Tagish post, to recall the NWMP officers from Pine Creek.[10]

In November, Wood learned that American miners were coming to Atlin via the Taku, a route which had no customs station. In January, four policemen arrived and settled in Atlin. The B.C. Attorney General quickly complained to the Prime Minister that the NWMP should not be there and that it was the jurisdiction of the provincial police. Early in 1899, the provincial police sent a chief constable and three men to take up their duties in Atlin and Discovery. By that spring, the contingent had increased to eight men.

Between 1916 and 1919, there were no policemen in Atlin. In 1919, when the newly-named Royal Canadian Mounted Police force became responsible for the enforcement of federal statutes throughout western Canada, it reopened the detachment, but closed it again two years later.

Between 1905 and 1918, provincial game wardens based at Telegraph Creek were responsible for enforcing game regulations in the Stikine and Taku River areas. In 1908, a man in Telegraph Creek was hired as a deputy warden. He often travelled to the Taku River area to ensure that American hunters and prospectors were not poaching in Canada. [11] The *Game Act* was revised in 1918, resulting in the amalgamation of the Game Department's administration with the duties of

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[9] Bobillier, Marcel. Journal d'un Missionnaire, p. 1386.
[10] Dickinson, Christine Frances and Diane Solie Smith. Atlin: The Story of British Columbia's Last Gold Rush, 1995.
[11] The Provincial Game Warden Records (1905-1922) at the B.C. Archives were restricted. Permission was granted to look at them, but without special permission, no names can be used in this report.

the provincial police. The provincial police superintendent assumed the responsibilities of the provincial game warden, and provincial police officers became wardens.[12]

The provincial police reopened their Atlin office in 1920 and reinstated a constable. Equipped with a dogteam and a small boat, the constable was responsible for a sparsely populated but vast territory. With the decline in mining activity, the population in the Atlin area numbered only 375 in 1921 and only grew in the summer with the arrival of the *M.V. Tarahne* and its tourists. During the 1930s, mining activity increased near Atlin, and a number of large mining camps opened on Spruce Creek and elsewhere. Nevertheless, a lone provincial policeman handled both the police and game department laws.[13]

Until the establishment of a community at Tulsequah in 1929, no government presence was required down the Taku River for customs or policing purposes.

What do police and game warden records say about the fishery?

Several articles published in the provincial police force's own magazine, The Shoulder Strap, refer to policing in the Atlin area. Unfortunately no mention was found of the police fishing for salmon themselves, seeing people salmon fishing, or receiving fish that came from the Taku River. Published annual reports by the B.C. police force from this time were very brief and lacked detail.

RCMP records reviewed at the National Archives provide information about establishing the Atlin detachment at the turn of the century but do not describe subsequent activities or patrols in the area. Only passing mention about the detachment was made by the superintendent of the Tagish district in the early 1900s. Weekly reports for the police detachment at the border on the Stikine River are in the RCMP files for 1899-1901, but no similar types of records or patrol reports were found describing the Taku River area.

The game warden records at the B.C. Archives were disappointingly uninformative. No trip reports or details of investigations conducted in the summer months to the Taku River area were found.

Indian Agents

The Indian Affairs Branch of the federal government established the Stikine Agency, headquartered in Telegraph Creek, in 1906. The Agency was active until 1954. The Indian Agent dealt with many issues, ranging from providing government assistance to dealing with concerns about traplines and mining activities. Beginning in 1912, he was instrumental in the effort to have First Nations within the agency select land that the government could then set aside as reserves. W. Scott Simpson found that his attempts to persuade people to make these selections were fruitless because, as he explained to the his superiors in Ottawa, "They reply that they do not want lands, and have an idea that if they are [allotted] Lands that [sic] they will be compelled to live on these lands and not allowed to hunt."[14] He blames the First Nations' refusal to select lands on James Teit (an anthropologist who spent time with the Tahltan people in the early 1900s) and the "Indian rights association," who have put these ideas in their heads. Ottawa told Simpson to try again, and if that attempt failed, he should make the selection for them.

When the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs visited Atlin and other communities in B.C. in 1915 and 1916 to discuss the designation and allocation of Indian reserves, the commissioners held a series of interviews with selected officials and First Nations. In Atlin, the commission spoke to the Atlin Board of Trade and the Atlin Band, represented by Chief Taku Jack. It interviewed W. Scott Simpson, the Indian Agent, in Atlin and in Victoria [see pp. 21, 24, 25, 29, 29]

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[12] British Columbia. Game Department. Annual Report of the Provincial Game Warden of the Province of British Columbia, 1918. Victoria: 1919.

[13] Kelly, Const. T. J. "North to the Sixtieth Parallel," in The Shoulder Strap, December 1949, p. 32.

[14] Letter from W. Scott Simpson, Telegraph Creek, to the Assistant Deputy and Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, October 1, 1914. [National Archives of Canada: Indian Affairs records, RG 10, vol. 7789, f. 27158-1, reel C-12067]

Beginning in about 1928, government surveyors arrived in the summer months to survey the proposed reserves within the Stikine Agency. During the 1928 season, they worked in the Telegraph Creek area, Dease Lake and Liard, and then moved over to the Atlin area [see p. 29].

B.C. government departments

The B.C. Department of Lands issued a number of bulletins on the mining activities in the Taku and Stikine district, but these only give passing mention to the inhabitants of the area. For example, in the 1922 bulletin, the department simply says that: "Except for a few Indians, the region is uninhabited." [see p. 5 for Game Department information]

Tulsequah mines

According to the B.C. Lands Service in 1966, the most important lode mines in the Atlin Land Recording District were those located near the Tulsequah River. Ore discoveries in 1929 attracted attention to the Tulsequah area, and the Whitewater (Polaris Taku) mine, primarily extracting gold, operated between 1937 and 1951. The Big Bull and Tulsequah Chief mines opened nearby in 1951 and continued to extract ores containing gold, silver, copper, lead and zinc until 1957 when low metal prices forced their closure.

In his 1948 Geological Survey of Canada report[15], F. A. Kerr summarized the Taku River District mining history:

> "In 1875 the annual report of the Minister of Mines for British Columbia mentions discoveries of gold on 'Tacoo' River. In 1882 the gold commissioner of the Cassiar district 'guessed' that a small production of placer gold was made in the 'Takoo' district. Dawson mentions Taku River in his report of 1888."
>
> Between the Klondike gold rush and about 1912, prospecting was intermittent in the Taku River district. Although knowledge of deposits at Tulsequah Chief were reported to date back to 1910 or 1912, more active prospecting and staking only began after 1923. Tulsequah, the first permanent settlement, was established by 1929.
>
> "Prospectors continued to increase in numbers during 1929 and 1930, but with the advent of government officials and customs duties the free and easy passage from Alaska to British Columbia ended, and this caused a considerable lessening of activity." Interest also declined because activity on the Tulsequah Chief property stopped in 1930 and other claims were dropped. Despite this, the fairly regular service between Tulsequah and Juneau continued.
>
> Mining activity soon increased again. In 1932, the population was approximately 15 to 25 permanent inhabitants: "A store and post office were operated during the summers, and mail, freight, and passenger services were maintained from about May 1 to October 15. During the winters connections with Juneau were irregular. A government official was in residence for customs, immigration, clearance of boats and aeroplanes, registration of mining claims, and so on. Above Tulsequah one farm was permanently occupied in 1932, and several widely scattered cabins were used intermittently by prospectors and trappers. At the junction of the Nakina and Inklin several families of Indians were usually to be found, and three cabins in fairly good condition were formerly used as a trading post. Substantial buildings had been erected at the Big Bull, Tulsequah Chief, and Whitewater prospects. Until recent years the only industry of the district was some trapping by the natives, but of late the chief activity has been prospecting and development work. During 1932 the use of Tulsequah as an aeroplane base has added considerably to the income of the inhabitants."

In the 1930s and 1940s, mine representatives and the B.C. and federal governments discussed several options for road access to the mining area. Developing a road up the Taku River to Atlin was certainly not a new idea. In fact, people in Atlin had been lobbying for access to the coast for

[15] Kerr. F.A. Taku River Map-Area, British Columbia, 1948, p. 7.

many years. A 1913 survey had identified possible routes but did not result in the construction of a road. Despite continued pressure from companies operating in the Tulsequah area, the only road constructed was a six-mile long branch road from the Taku River to the Polaris-Taku Mine site in 1937.[16] The Polaris Taku Mining Company also installed 600 horse-power power development on the Tulsequah River in 1937.[17]

The Taku River Trading and Transportation Company provided regular communication during the summer months between Juneau and Tulsequah.[18] When Father Bobillier visited Tulsequah in 1942, he noted that boats from the coast supplied the mine in the summer, and planes arrived from the coast in the winter.[19] The mines at Tulsequah supported a population of approximately 400 in 1956, but when the mines suspended operations in the following year, the community was almost completely abandoned.[20]

What do records on the Tulsequah mines say about the fishery?

Early Taku River district reports by the Department of Mines present detailed observations about the geology and some natural resources of the area. These reports provide only general information about the fish and only make passing references to inhabitants along the Taku River.

A file entitled the "Taku River Road - B.C." in the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development records includes correspondence between government departments and reports prepared by engineers mostly in the 1940s and 1950s.[21] Investigations were made to choose a route for the road, but the impacts of such a development are not mentioned in these letters or reports, nor is there any new information about the First Nations people in the area.

In an interview in May 1984, William Hugh (Bill) Nelson described some environmental concerns at the Polaris-Taku Mine[22]:

> "The original mine, the Polaris-Taku Mine had an awful lot of arsenic in it — arsenic pyrites... The gold was in the arsenic-pyrites. Then they built a big roaster building and apparently, if it gets burning it will burn itself — it will keep itself alive — and it will burn off and that's where you get all this arsenic in the smoke, you know. It killed every goddam thing around here... It didn't bother the people... cats and dogs though... they would lick the snow in the winter time... they would succumb to it." Nelson explained that the fumes dispersed but the ash came down and leached into the water. "I never even knew it until... there was an old... he'd been in charge of all the power houses and garage... Fred Boyson, he was in the power house and the mine and he came down a couple of years after I was there. He said when he first came there there was hardly a dam thing growing — killed everything off. He was so surprised when he came back after..." The tailings went into the creek.
> D: "They never had any problem with it filling? It would wash down?"
> B: "Not too much. They had one branch of the Tulsequah that used to come fairly close to camp and they used to feed into there. And that was all poison too. George [Bacon] said when the mine was running you couldn't catch a salmon on the Tulsequah side of the Taku."

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[16] [National Archives: Indian Affairs and Northern Development records, RG 22, vol. 266, f. 71-12-7]
[17] Camsell, Charles. Canada's New Northwest..., 1947, p. 70.
[18] British Columbia. Department of Lands and Forests. Telegraph Creek and Atlin: Land Recording Districts, 1949.
[19] Bobillier, Marcel. "Steps for Eternity: Memoirs of Missionary in the Yukon," n.d., p. 107.
[20] British Columbia. Lands Service. Department of Lands, Forests and Water Services. The Atlin Bulletin Area, 1966, p. 19.
[21] National Archives of Canada: Indian Affairs and Northern Development records, RG 22, vol. 266, 71-12-7.
[22] "Interview with William Hugh (Bill) Nelson by Diane S. Smith, May 1, 1984." [Transcript]. [Atlin Historical Society]

D: “Is that right? So they really did pollute badly?”
B: “Yes, they (the salmon) were all on the other side.”

Proposed hydro developments

Beginning in the late 1940s, governments and corporations took an avid interest in the possible development of large-scale hydro projects in the Yukon, southeast Alaska and northwest B.C.

In 1953, Ventures Limited and its subsidiary companies (Frobisher Limited and Quebec Metallurgical Industries Ltd.) devised one of these elaborate plans, the Yukon-Taku hydro proposal. The original plan consisted of several stages of development, including several dams on the Yukon River, a dam on the Inklin River, and power tunnels connecting Atlin Lake to Sloko Lake.

In a letter to the Deputy Minister of Fisheries in November 1953, J. M. Wardle, the consulting engineer for Quebec Metallurgical Industries Ltd., described the project. He explained that the dam at the Inklin River had been deferred but there would be a dam at Miles Canyon and at the mouth of the Big Salmon River. Water from Aishihik Canyon and Dezadeash would later be diverted into Takhini River and held in the lower reservoir at Big Salmon, which would include Lake Laberge. This water would pass through power tunnels south of Atlin Lake. The final stage of the project would include a tunnel from the Nakonake River across the bend of the Taku River. Although there would be no dams on the Taku River itself, there would be a tunnel driven between Atlin Lake and Sloko Lake, and a tunnel between Sloko Lake and the new level down the Sloko River.

The power plant on the Sloko River would be used to operate an electric smelter and metallurgical plant on the Taku River at Tulsequah. The water for this project would at first be taken from Atlin Lake. Wardle explained that: “Our officers feel that the Taku River itself, carries so much silt in the salmon run period, and is so turbulent, that most of the fish will spawn in its tributaries. These will not be affected by the developments as there will be no dam on the Taku River. In addition, the flow from Atlin Lake through the tunnels will be regulated and the diversion of a large body of fairly clear water into the Taku river at the end of the second large tunnel will, it is thought, be beneficial.”[23]

The Taku-Yukon project was officially abandoned in 1958.

What do government records responding to the hydro proposals say about the fishery?

In a letter to the Minister of Fisheries in 1953, Homer Stevens of the United Fishermen & Allied Workers’ Union in Vancouver explained that he had read about the proposed project and was concerned about possible harm to salmon runs in rivers flowing through B.C. and the Yukon. He also wrote that according to the press, the federal government was fully supportive of the project, and he wondered if the government had considered potential dangers to the salmon run [see p. 46, 47].[24] In his reply, the Deputy Minister of Fisheries explained that the government had considered potential dangers to the salmon and was looking further into the matter, “...although we recognize that the development may not actually start for one or two years more.”[25]

When the Provincial Fisheries Department in Victoria wrote to its federal counterpart in January 1954 saying that it knew nothing about the salmon runs in the affected rivers, the Chief Supervisor

[23] Letter from J. M. Wardle, Consulting Engineer, Quebec Metallurgical Industries Ltd., to Dr. Stewart Bates, Deputy Minister of Fisheries, Ottawa, November 24, 1953. [National Archives of Canada: DFO records, RG 23, vol. 1226, f. 726-11-7, Part 1 (1953-1956)]
[24] Letter from Homer Stevens, United Fishermen & Allied Workers’ Union, Vancouver, to James Sinclair, Minister of Fisheries, Ottawa, December 30, 1953, vol. 1226, f. 726-11-7, Part 1. (1953-1956)]
[25] Letter from Stewart Bates, Deputy Minister of Fisheries, Ottawa, to Homer Stevens, United Fishermen & Allied Workers’ Union, Vancouver, January 5, 1954. [National Archives of Canada: DFO records, RG 23, vol. 1226, f. 726-11-7, Part 1 (1953-1956)]

of Fisheries in Vancouver replied that his department did not know the extent of the salmon runs to the Taku, Alsek or Yukon rivers. His department had recently asked the Alaskans for data and was awaiting their response.[26]

The Alaskan government was researching the salmon-spawning areas in the Taku River basin at this time, and the Canadian Department of Fisheries relied on their reports for information about the fish. The Acting Regional Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service responded to the Canadian request for data with a description of the commercial fishery, personal use fishery and spawning grounds in the Yukon River, Alsek River and Taku River systems [see page 40].

Although the Canadian Department of Fisheries' fieldwork was focusing on the proposed hydro projects affecting the Yukon River basin, it reported on the impact of the Taku-Yukon proposal on the Taku River in July 1954: "Effects of diverting the Yukon headwaters would be indirect and would include changes in the physico-chemical characteristics of the water in the river as well as physical changes in the river due to increased flow. Any dams proposed on the Taku watershed, e.g. on the Nakonake or Inklin, might impede migration and flood spawning grounds."[27]

Anthropologists and archaeologists

In comparison to the amount of anthropological work done in the early 1900s within the traditional territory of the Tahltan, little was done on the Taku River Tlingit. Catharine McClellan compiled information from Inland Tlingit people about their culture in the 1940s and 1950s. In the 1970s, Diana French worked with the Taku River Tlingit in Atlin and gathered information about historic and archaeological sites in their territory. To learn about work that has more recently been done within the Taku River Tlingit territory, one should contact the First Nation.

The Taku River Tlingit

Early inhabitants and traditional territory

The traditional territory and early settlement patterns of the Taku River Tlingit before the gold rush shifted over the years. A number of factors contributed to the changes: the movement of various clans to and from the coast, and to and from other inland areas; intermarriage with coastal Tlingit and Tahltan peoples; the establishment and abandonment of various camps and villages; the use and availability of the natural resources; and conflicts with other peoples. Some confusion in clearly identifying the Taku River Tlingit as a group results from the general usage of the name "Tlingit" to apply to the coastal inhabitants and those who lived inland. The term "Inland Tlingit" generally refers to the people from the Teslin and Atlin areas.

Explorers and others attempted to determine the extent of the territory of the Inland Tlingit people. The following examples reflect some of the difficulties they faced in doing so:

- George Dawson described the Taku people in 1887 as being "a somewhat distinct branch of the Tahl-tan, though they speak the same dialect... They claim the whole drainage-basin of the Taku River, together with the upper portions of the streams which flow northward to the Lewes; while on the east their hunting-grounds extend to the Upper Liard River, and include the valleys of the tributary streams which join that river from the westward. They are thus

[26] Letter from A.J. Whitmore, Chief Supervisor of Fisheries, to Geo. J. Alexander, Deputy Minister, Provincial Fisheries Dept., Victoria, Jan. 26, 1954. [National Archives of Canada: DFO records, RG 23, vol. 1226, f. 726-11-7, Part 1 (1953-1956)]

[27] Department of Fisheries, Vancouver: "Additional Comments on Effect of Yukon-Taku Development on Fisheries, prepared as a result of Inspection of Area by Fisheries Personnel, July, 1954," September 1, 1954. [National Archives of Canada: DFO records, RG 23, vol. 1226, f. 726-11-7 (1)]

bounded to the south by the Tahl-tan, to the west by the coast Taku (Thlinkit), to the north-west by the Tagish and to the east by the Kaska."[28]

- In his 1892 report, N. B. Gauvreau described the Tlingit people in the Taku River area as follows: "The Taku Indians of the coast belong to the Thlinkit family, and claim for their territory the Taku River as far east as the Inklin and Sheslay Rivers, and northward to Na-kina, 8 miles above the Taku Junction. They are great traders and every summer they go to the interior to meet the Na-kina Indians and barter goods with them for furs. The Taku Indians of the interior belong to the Tinné family and speak nearly the same dialect as the Tahltans, with whom they intermarry. They claim for hunting-grounds the Upper Liard River and its tributaries, which fall westward, and north as far as the outlet of Teslin Lake, and also Atlin Lake. This tribe may amount to about forty-five families. They gather in summer at the mouth of the Na-kina River to catch and cure salmon. Here they are met by the Coast Indians, who trade with them. They hold the best hunting-grounds in the north of the Province, where beaver, bears, and silver foxes are common, and caribou, moose, and mountain-goats are also abundant."[29]

- Describing the Teslin Lake and Hootalinqua River (Teslin River) district, W. T. Jennings reported in 1898 that: "There are very few Indians living in the district which is apparently hunted over by, and under the control of a tribe whose headquarters are on the Nakinah River at head of canoe navigation on the Taku River and distant about 70 miles from the Teslin Lake. The result of the chase is thus lost to Canada as these Indians trade exclusively in Juneau, now an American town."[30]

- James Teit wrote in 1909 that: "The Taku are a branch of the Tlingit. The term is applied by the whites to the Tlingit of Taku River and the interior generally, although those of Atlin are usually called Tagish. Tlingit-speaking people occupy the whole northeastern interior of British Columbia, south to and including the valley of the Taku and its tributary the Nakina... They depend on hunting and trapping as much as the Tahltan whom they resemble very much in culture. Some families from the interior make periodic trips to the coast, following the Nakina River to its mouth, and then take canoes down the Taku River to Juneau."[31]

  Three years later, Teit wrote: "... the Tlingit... also occupied from time immemorial a considerable part of the interior north of the Tahltans, including most of the drainage basin of the Taku, and nearly all the northeastern headwaters of the Yukon almost to latitude 62º and east to the Pelly mountains and the height of land dividing Teslin waters from the upper Liard."[32]

- George Emmons, who worked with the coastal Tlingit and Tahltan peoples in the early 1900s, believed that the Inland Tlingit originally lived in the upper Taku River basin. He also viewed the coastal Taku Tlingits as being relatively recent arrivals comprised of Athabascans from the Taku and Stikine rivers and coastal Tlingit who had maintained their relations with the interior through extended visits and intermarriage.[33]

- In her anthropological research, Catharine McClellan concluded that the Inland Tlingit were originally from the coast. The growing fur trade on the coast beginning at the end of the 18th century prompted certain families to move inland where fine furs were available.

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[28] Dawson, Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District, N.W.T. and Adjacent Northern Portion of British Columbia 1887, p. 193B.
[29] Gauvreau, N. B. "Extract from the Report of N.B. Gauvreau," 1892, pp. 113-114.
[30] Jennings, W.T. Report of Mr. Jennings, C.E. on Routes to the Yukon. Prepared for the Minister of the Interior, Ottawa: 1898, p. 13.
[31] Teit, James. "Two Tahltan Traditions," p. 3.
[32] Teit, James. "On Tahltan (Athabaskan) work, 1912," in Summary Report, Geological Survey of Canada, p. 484.
[33] Emmons, G.T. The Tlingit Indians, edited with additions by Frederica de Laguna, 1991, p. 7.

By 1900, many Taku River Tlingit had settled in Atlin but still controlled most of the upper Taku drainage above the Tulsequah River. The coastal Tlingit dominated the Taku River basin below the Tulsequah River. In his annual report for the NWMP in 1898, Superintendent Z. T. Wood wrote: “Taku Jack is the head of a small band of ten who live at the head of Taku Arm. All these Indians [at Lake Laberge, Tagish and Marsh Lake, etc.] live by hunting and occasionally do a little fishing. Once in a while they make a little money as packers, and guides, or by selling furs, moccasins or buckskin shirts, etc.”[34]

[34] Annual report of Superintendent Z. T. Wood, NWMP, Tagish, Upper Yukon, Nov. 1, 1898, in Annual Report of the North-west Mounted Police, 1898. Ottawa: 1899, p. 41.

This map includes both the Teslin and Taku River Tlingit traditional territories. [35]

[35] McClellan, Catharine. “Inland Tlingit,” in Handbook of North American Indians: Subarctic, 1981, p. 471.

Population

J. R. Swanton, in 1912, defined the "Taku Indians" as a Tlingit tribe of the Taku River, its mouth and adjoining parts of the coast. In 1869, he reported that their population was 2,000 in 1869; but by 1890, it had been reduced to 223.[36]

The Taku River Tlingit were seriously afflicted with diseases to which they had no immunity. Arthur St. Cyr described reaching the abandoned Hudson's Bay Post (Egnell Post) on the Sheslay in 1897: "In the fall of 1891 the Indian tribe which used to trade with the company was decimated by some contagious disease; the post having lost its usefulness had to be abandoned shortly after. Some roofless huts indicate to-day the place where the post stood; it is still frequented for a short time during the fishing season by a few Indians from Taku."[37] In 1915, the Indian Agent estimated that there were 150 people in the Atlin Band, but the Atlin Board of Trade observed that: "It is a well known fact that the major part of the Indians are dying much more rapidly than the whites and the cause of their dying off so rapidly is attributable to tubercolosis [sic]."[38]

Catharine McClellan reported that the Taku plateau had been unoccupied since the late 1920s, with the exception of one or two Atlin families who lived near Tulsequah until 1956 and trapped along the Nakina River. There was a man at this time who maintained a cabin near the junction of the Nakina and Sloko rivers. A larger colony once flourished near the trading post at Tulsequah Landing.[39]

In November 1941, Father Bobillier estimated that there were approximately 800 people in the Atlin area, of which 400 lived in the town of Atlin. He noted that in addition to the white people, about 60 native people lived in the region, 20 of whom were on the Taku River.[40]

Relationship with the coastal Tlingit

The Taku River was one of five trade routes — Stikine River, Chilkoot Pass, Chilkat Pass and Alsek River — between the coastal Tlingit and the interior tribes.[41] The Inland Tlingit traded with certain coastal Tlingit clans who in turn traded with the Russian and British fur traders on the coast in the early 1800s. The coastal Tlingit also travelled up the Taku River to cure salmon in the drier climate, a situation similar to that on the Stikine River.

Despite the close relationship between the coastal and inland Taku River Tlingit, the coastal people effectively excluded their upriver neighbours from trading or visiting on the coast. After the establishment of Juneau in 1880 however, a number of upriver Tlingit were observed going downriver with their furs in the early summer and living as guests with their coast relatives. At each trading store however, the ever-present coastal Tlingit supervised and benefited from all transactions.[42] Frederick Schwatka noted a number of inland native people carrying furs and travelling to Juneau when he travelled up the Taku River in May 1891.[43]

According to Aurel Krause, who studied the coastal Tlingit tribes in the 1880s, 269 coastal Taku Tlingits lived in four settlements on the lower Taku River and its mouth in 1880. Frederick Schwatka also saw a number of Tlingit camps in the lower part of the river when he travelled upriver in 1891.

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[36] McClellan, Catharine. My Old People Say, vol. 1, 1975, p. 51. [includes a reference to: J. R. Swanton, "Taku; Takwanedi," in Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico, 1912]
[37] "Report of A. St. Cyr, D.L.S.: Exploration of the Country Between the Stikine River and the mouth of the Teslin River," Feb. 1, 1898, p. 105.
[38] "Meeting with the Atlin Board of Trade at Atlin, B.C. on Wednesday, June 16, 1915," Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, p. 2.
[39] McClellan, Catharine. My Old People Say, vol. 1, 1975, p. 52.
[40] Bobillier, Marcel. Journal d'un Missionnaire, p. 235.
[41] de Laguna, Frederica (editor's note) in: George Emmons. The Tlingit Indians, 1991, p. 55.
[42] McClellan, Catharine. My Old People Say, vol. 1, 1975, p. 50.
[43] Harris, Arland S. Schwatka's Last Search, 1996, pp. 61, 63.

In the summer of 1946, Alaska native people made the following statements about the Douglas (Taku) Territory:

"The original home of the Taku people was on the Taku River. After the establishment of the international boundary the Taku Tlingits split into two groups, one living up stream on the shores of Lake Atlin, and the other remaining on the coast. The two groups still recognize their unity and maintained contacts.

"There were a number of settlements on the Taku River which have now been given up. These settlements were described as follows:

'Before the boundary was established the Taku village was on the Canadian side, but later it was moved to the mouth of the river. Taku Village was called *gagukik*. There was another village above this one on the river was called *tleuqa*. There was a third village still further up called *tsiq'nu*. This was a place where there were a lot of bears. There was no fort here in my time. This was as far up as the native people went so far as I know. I do not believe they went on up to Atlin Lake. I went with my mother up the river to get muskrat, mink, beaver, wolverine, and fox. I remember we went a long way up and I had a hard time getting there. There were smokehouses up the river, and the Indians caught fish there. When I was at the village called *tsiq'nu* there were four smokehouses but no tribal houses. At the mouth of the Taku River they used to have community houses, but these are all rotted away. There were three houses which belonged to the *ganaxadi* clan and two houses that belonged to the yannedi. The former of these are Ravens and the latter are Eagles. The *yennedi* people claim the river, and the others just came in there because they were married in or related. They could get all the fish they wanted so they lived right there.' [Statement of Mrs. Jennie Klaney]

"Another native indicated that the Taku people went up the river as far as the confluence of the Nakina River, and that they had fish camps on this river and the Sloko. They have also had a camp on Canyon Island on the Taku River about three miles below the Canadian boundary. The witness who describes this use of the river said:

'I used to have a fish camp on Canyon Island and used it regularly until I got a larger boat with which I could not get up the river.' [Statement of Thomas Bowman. Alexander Stevens, in his statement, corroborates this and indicates that the camp was called *anXectinya.*]

"The major village of the Taku people on the river was formerly at the tidewater mark [Statement of Alexander Stevens]. There used to be a cemetery at the mouth of the Taku River, but this has been washed away [Statement of Mrs. Jennie Klaney]. In recent years commercial fishing has been prohibited from the flats in front of the Taku River. As a result, the natives have established the present camp at Taku Point further down the inlet. One witness states:

'Now I smoke all my fish at Taku Point where I have my cabin. I have a two-room cabin at Taku Point where I live during the summer while I fish. I have owned this cabin at Taku Point for over 25 years.'"[44]

[44] Goldschmidt, Dr. Walter R. and Theodore H. Haas. Possessory Rights of the Natives of Southeastern Alaska..., October 3, 1946, pp. 66-67. The specific statements are on file at the Office of Indian Affairs in Chicago.

Relationship with the Tahltan

The Taku River Tlingit and the Tahltan peoples also had a trading relationship and established camps for trade. In 1892, N. B. Gauvreau reported that: “Five or six families of Tahltans were met at the headwaters of the Taku river. Formerly they lived at the junction of the Sheslay and Inklin Rivers, where the Taku Indians used to come trade with them, but of late they have left their old grounds and now live at the headwaters of the Sheslay River.”[45]

The relationship between the Taku River Tlingit and the Tahltan people was highly competitive and has been described as “merely a contest for fishing sites, hunting ranges, trap lines, and rights as middlemen in trade along the coast-to-interior axis.”[46] Based on information given to him by Frank Callbreath on the Stikine River, Andrew Jackson Stone, who was in the area in the late 1800s and early 1900s, described these conflicts but said that “...all is settled between the Tahltans and Tahkoos and a portion of the Tahkoo tribe has since amalgamated with the Tahltans.” [47] Catharine McClellan explained that much of the feuding between the Tahltan and the Inland Tlingit was the result of efforts to monopolize sources of fine fur or trade goods. She also noted that marriage alliances arranged for trading purposes were often disputed, and sudden raids for revenge were common.[48]

Oral history accounts describe a war lasting 10 to 20 years between the Tahltan and the Taku River Tlingit in the early 1800s. Georgiana Ball wrote an account of this war based on stories told to her by Eva Carlick (Tlingit) and Emma Brown (Tahltan). The following is a summary of Ball’s article in The Alaska Journal:

Two Tlingit men went to the Tahltan fishing camp of Sheslay with the sad news of the death of a young Tahltan woman who was accidentally killed by her Tlingit husband near Tatsemini Lake. The Tahltans did not believe it was an accident and threatened to kill half of the Tlingits. A war started, and the Tahltan killed many Tlingit. In retaliation, the Tlingits attacked the sleeping Tahltan village at Sheslay at night. It was a brutal fight, and the Tlingits took four prisoners. Eva Carlick said: “*They can’t do nothing. Make ‘em walk ahead. They take ‘em right to Taku River — right to old home...They take them across the river. The slave tipped the boat while they were crossing the river. She said, ‘I’m not going to slave for no Tlingit.’ Everyone got saved but her — she got drowned. The others swim right to shore. So the Tlingit got nothing. The others ran away, come back to Tahltan.”* The Tahltans attacked the Tlingits on the Taku after the Sheslay massacre but were again defeated. It was only when the Tahltans acquired muskets about a year later that they evened the score. The war continued for 10 years.

The Tlingit war chief Ston’quat’ finally decided to end the war. “Fifteen Tlingits accompanied Ston’quat’ on the peace mission. They traveled to Tahltan territory in the winter, ‘about Christmas month,’ when the Tahltan families were scattered ‘out in the bushes’ trapping fur. The cautious peace missionaries wanted to encounter only a few Tahltans at a time. When the Tlingits arrived at Sheslay they found it deserted. No one had re-established a home there since the massacre. Ten miles farther on, at Salmon Creek, they found Nah’zay’ta and his crippled wife.” He told them the war should end, and the others agreed and would spread the word and gather up Tahltan people.

“Although Nah’zay’ta explained that many Tahltans had to come great distances, Ston’quat’ waited for them impatiently... Finally the Tahltan soldiers, who far outnumbered the fifteen Tlingits, arrived at the Salmon Creek fishing camp. The situation was tense... Nah’zay’ta called the Tlingits out of the bush. All of the Tlingits and about ten Tahltan head men went into Nah’zay’ta’s fish house. The rest of the Tahltans stayed outside.” One man from each side counted up the dead

[45] Gauvreau, N. B. “Extract from the Report of N.B. Gauvreau,” 1892, p. 113.
[46] MacLachlan, Bruce. “Tahltan,” in Handbook of North American Indians: Subarctic, vol. 6., 1981, p. 458.
[47] Stone, Andrew Jackson. Diaries — vol. 1-4, [1896] 1897-1899.
[48] McClellan, Catharine. “Inland Tlingit,” in Handbook of North American Indians: Subarctic, 1981, p. 478.

and squared the account." To ensure that the peace would last, each side gave a beloved son of the most important head man of each tribe to the other group, and the following year they met again on the Taku for a celebration.

Traditional seasonal activities

First-hand observations of nineteenth-century Taku River Tlingit culture are rare. The following description is based on the work of Catharine McClellan, who in this case depended almost entirely on the memories of twentieth-century native people:

> In the Taku basin, people relied heavily on the summer salmon catch, part of which they stored. Some coastal Tlingit people travelled upriver to dry salmon in the drier climate and trade with the Inland Tlingit (from Teslin and the Taku River) for furs. The Inland Tlingit gathered berries and hunted beginning in the early fall and gathered in settlements near the salmon storage areas. The fur trade likely intensified the pattern of dispersal to hunt and trap. Units of two or three nuclear families crossed more and more frequently to the Yukon River basin to hunt and trap and did not return to the Taku River basin until after the spring beaver hunt. Some families then continued downstream to trade on the coast, while others remained to prepare again for summer fishing and the upriver trade.[49]

[49] McClellan, Catharine. "Inland Tlingit," in Handbook of North American Indians: Subarctic, 1981, p. 471-472.

Salmon

A compilation of historical material describing Taku River salmon and the salmon fisheries is presented in this section. The information has been divided into five parts: observations of early salmon runs, descriptions of the First Nations salmon fisheries, references to the First Nations fish camps or villages, reports on Alaskan investigations, and information collected by the Canadian Department of Fisheries.

Observations of salmon runs

1897	After travelling via Ketchum Lake and along Hackett River, E. J. Duchesnay noted on October 5, 1897 that: "Elevation camp #3 1825' which is 175' lower than last night. 13.30k, along Hacket River, 50'x3', 5 mile current and full of sockeye salmon... At the junction of Hacket and Sheslay, a stream from the South-west, also a stream from North-east [Egnell Creek], there is an extensive flat, where Mr. Bowler located a 320 acre claim. This flat on which the H.B. Co. had their post [Egnell Post], is gravelly and covered with poplars and pitch-pines.. The stream from the south-east must come close to the head of the Clearwater [Chutine River]... I understand there is a canyon (not bad) about 30 miles below H.B. Co. post. Sheslay River about 100'x4' and about 4 feet more at high water. This river is full of salmon while none are to be found in the Dudidontu, which shows the former has no bad rapids or falls."	Duchesnay, E. J. Field Notes of E. J. Duchesnay on survey trip to Telegraph Creek, Stikine River, September 1897, [1897].
1897	May or early June: "At its western extremity [the trail to the Sheslay] the Hudson's Bay Company established in 1889 a trading post which was called Egnelle [sic], after one of their agents. In the fall of 1891 the Indian tribe which used to trade with the company was decimated by some contagious disease; the post having lost its usefulness had to be abandoned shortly after. Some roofless huts indicate to-day the place where the post stood; it is still frequented for a short time during the fishing season by a few Indians from Taku."	"Report of A. St. Cyr, D.L.S.: Exploration of the Country Between the Stikine River and the mouth of the Teslin River," Feb. 1, 1898, p. 105.
1898	In his description of routes to Teslin Lake via the Taku and Nakina rivers in 1898, which was partly based on information provided by William Ogilvie and C. W. Hayes, W. L. Jennings noted that: "The Inklin, Sheslay and Koketsi form a continuous salmon run to Koketsi Lake. The Nahlin being broken and steep beyond the confluence of the Sheslay, is impassable to salmon to where the Teslin-Stikine route crosses it."	Jennings, W. T. Report of Mr. Jennings, C.E. on Routes to the Yukon, 1898, p. 20.
1904	In his June 24, 1904 journal entry, telegraph station operator Guy Lawrence reported: "We have two dogs at the [Nahlin telegraph] station, but use neither of them for pulling sleighs... These days I am doing quite a bit of fly fishing with fairly good results, and I have just received sufficient string to make a twelve foot net to catch salmon. The Nahlin is full of fish, the salmon entering from the Taku River. Some of the salmon run to forty pounds and so far we have been gaffing them with hooks on long poles. The hooks are old files we heated and sharpened up. Catching a large salmon this way is quite exciting as we roll up our pants and wade into the river. If the salmon is hooked near the tail it puts up a tremendous fight, enough to make us lose our slippery foothold and take a dunking. We dry most of the salmon for winter dog feed and mix what is left with cornmeal for the dogs in summer." They caught about 400 trout from a small creek that is extremely narrow and quite deep when they went on a trip to Tedadiche Lake. "Very sweet with a delicious flavor, a great change from salmon which we soon tire of."	Lawrence, Guy. 40 Years on the Yukon Telegraph, 1990, pp. 60-61, 73.

1910	Rosenberg travelled with his Tahltan Indian guides in the Sheslay-Nahlin area in late August to September 1910. He crossed the Tahltan River and travelled through birch and alder woods, passed several lakes, and probably reached Hackett River. “After covering only nine miles we again pitched camp in a beautiful little clearing surrounded by spruce and birch forest. A small stream flowed close by and our Indians soon had speared a couple of salmon. The salmon was nearly scarlet in colour and looked anything but appetizing, so the Colonel and I took our rods and made a couple of casts with fly in order to try for trout. I caught two nice fish [dolly varden] on the fly... There were quite a number of salmon running in the river, and I made a couple of attempts at spearing them with a sharpened pole, but without luck. In one place I came on the fresh tracks of a bear, probably one which had been down to the river to catch salmon, and he seemed to have been successful as a lot of roe and other remains were scattered about.” The next day (August 31), they continued north and reached Sheslay Post, the abandoned Hudson’s Bay Company Post, now a telegraph station. “After lunch the Colonel and I went down to the river to try our luck. I was not very successful, but the Colonel caught no less than thirteen Dolly Vardens. The river was now full of salmon (humpback), and our Indians speared several of them. This little river is a tributary to the Chesley River which flows westward towards the sea...” [pp. 33-37] He reached Nahlin Post on Sept. 4. “The Nahlin Post is situated in a narrow gorge formed by the Nahlin River, which comes from the east and flows westwards round the foothills of the Nahlin Mountains... Pilling [telegraph station operator] told me that there was very fine moose hunting all around the Post, and that every autumn he and Hughes used to lay in a great store of meat for the winter. There was also good salmon fishing in the river, and the fish would run as big as fifty pounds or more.” [p. 41]	Rosenberg, Frantz. Big Game Shooting in British Columbia and Norway. London: 1928.

First Nations fishery

The Inland Tlingit used to take a good supply of salmon from the Nakina River, but during the nineteenth century most people moved to the upper Yukon River basin across the coastal divide.[50] Some Tahltan people also fished in tributaries of the Taku River — the Sheslay, Nahlin and Hackett rivers — and coastal Taku Tlingit also came upriver to fish where the drier climate provided better conditions for drying the salmon.

Catharine McClellan described the appeal of the Taku River region as follows:

> "The real attraction of the Taku basin in aboriginal times was, of course, the salmon. King salmon, silver (coho), humpies, and dogs all ascend the main stream and many of its tributaries. Furthermore upstream of the King Salmon River the prevailing sunny weather makes drying the fish very much easier than on the foggy and rainy coast. It is no wonder that in summer the coastal Taku, Auk, and Sumdum [near Sumdum Glacier] Tlingit liked to visit their relatives at the head of the river where they could not only dry fish with greater ease than on the coast but also pick quantities of mountain berries. To the Inland Tlingit the great salmon runs meant that while they were living on the Taku they exploited an ecological niche quite different from the one they exploit today. However, historically speaking, it looks as though a ready supply of salmon could not compete with the wealth to be derived from trading Nisutlin River beaver pelts or the exceptional fox and marten skins of the Teslin and Atlin area."[51]

A number of archival sources refer to First Nations fisheries in the Taku River watershed:

- Frederick Schwatka described one of his coastal Tlingit guide's attempts at fishing and a number of fishing camps shortly after passing Wright Glacier in May 1891: "During our short stay Robert prospected for salmon with the Indian spear or hook of this region, but he was not rewarded. This implement of these Indians is a very simple and effective affair. It is nothing more than a huge barbless hook of iron or steel fastened into the end of a slim ten or twelve-foot pole, of some tough elastic wood. Standing on the bank of a swift stream, generally where the curving current is cutting into the shore, the native fisherman reaches far out into the muddy water with his hook, point downward, and slowly drags it along the bottom toward him. If a fish is felt by this prospecting, a sudden jerk is given to impale it upon the hook, which, if successful, the fisherman must display all the activity of a small boy with a pin-hook who has also fastened to a fish, for there is no barb on it to retain the salmon. In this way these natives, so they told me, catch all their salmon — a not inconsiderable share of their diet; while hand-nets, native seines, fish weirs and other Indian fish-traps are comparatively seldom used. During that afternoon we passed several deserted Indian villages of more or less permanence, from a roofless house of huge logs to the temporary abode of bark slabs. All were fishing 'ranches,' the occupants being farther up the river, hunting bears and mountain goats. Later in the year they return, repair the ranches, and go to fishing. At every village or house one will see a well-worn path of a few hundred yards at least, on each side, closely hugging the river-bank. It is made by the fishermen of the village prospecting for salmon."[52] They soon reached Canyon Island.
- In 1898, John McDougal travelled up the Stikine River and Tahltan River en route to Teslin Lake. At the old Hudson's Bay post (Egnell Post) on July 2, McDougal observed that: "Chesley river 3 miles from here runs in Taku Lake. The little Salmon River [Hackett River?] runs to [junction?]. Can or able down Indians from coast walk up here catch and dry them fish

[50] McClellan, Catharine and Glenda Denniston. "Environment and Culture in the Cordillera," in Handbook of North American Indians: Subarctic, 1981, p. 374.
[51] McClellan, Catharine. My Old People Say: an Ethnographic Survey of Southern Yukon Territory, 1975, pp. 47-48.
[52] Harris, Arland S. Schwatka's Last Search, 1996, p. 48.

then return to the Coast by canoe." On July 8, he arrived at Nahlin and noted: "Quite a few tents here. Got some trout. Indian camp here."[53]

- In 1901, J. C. Gwillim reported on the travel routes to and from the Atlin area: "Sail and row boats can be brought up the Taku river and the Indians appear to have long used it as a highway into the Teslin-Atlin country. It is also a fishing place for salmon as far up as the junction of the Silver Salmon river with the Nakina river and possibly further. An old Indian trail exists from this place to the southern end of Teslin Lake. This trail has been replaced by the Taku trail of the miners, which is a rough and mountainous route."[54]
- In Atlin in 1915, Chief Taku Jack told the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs that the government did not interfere with his people's fishing activities.[55] The interview continued with Jack describing the fish and fisheries:

  > "Chief Taku Jack: [We catch] whitefish and trout. Roundfish, greyling [sic], pike, ringfish, suckers and king salmon on the Taku river. We used to have lots of salmon on the river, but the people are putting up nets and very few come down here.
  >
  > "Commission: That is on the American side is it where they put the nets up?
  >
  > "Chief: Yes — There are a few on the Taku river and we used to stay down there to dry the fish, but they are not so plentiful now so we catch our fish down here (Atlin lake) and dry them down here."

- In 1929, F. A. Kerr, with the Geological Survey of Canada, reported that: "The [Taku] river is reported to be a good salmon stream and has been frequented by Indians for fishing purposes since before the white men came to the country."[56]
- When he was travelling down the Taku River in 1942, Father Bobillier visited Stephen and Elizabeth Williams at the confluence of the Inklin and Nakina, the site of a former trading post. "Beautiful country. The country of those Thlingit [sic] Indians as it was 100 years ago. Most of the natives of Atlin used to live along those rivers. Thousands of Indians, the old people told me, used to fish salmon in summer along the Nakina, the Inklin and the Taku Rivers, rivers that flow directly into the Pacific."[57]

First Nations fish camps

The Taku River drainage has traditionally been used by the Taku River Tlingit, the coastal Tlingit and the Tahltan peoples. In his 1911 publication, George Emmons wrote: "The villages on the Narlin [sic] and the Shesley were more Taku than otherwise in early days, but in 1840 the Taku Tlingit of the coast came up the river and destroyed Kahgitzah near the head of the Shesley, when the remaining inhabitants crossed the stream and joined the Tahltan."[58]

This corresponds to N. B. Gauvreau's report in 1892, which states: "Five or six families of Tahltans were met at the headwaters of the Taku River. Formerly they lived at the junction of the Sheslay and Inklin Rivers, where the Taku Indians used to come to trade with them, but of late they have left their old grounds and now live at the headwaters of the Sheslay River."[59]

Catharine McClellan's site-identification work is, by her own admission, a shaky structure because she never visited the areas between the Silver Salmon River and Atlin, or between the Silver

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[53] McDougal, John. "Diary of trip to the Yukon in 1898."
[54] Gwillim, J. C. Report on the Atlin Mining District British Columbia. 1901, p. 9B.
[55] Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia. "Meeting with the Atlin Band or Tribe of Indians at Atlin, B.C. on Tuesday, June 17, 1915," p. 9.
[56] Kerr, F.A. "Taku River District," in Summary Report, 1929, Part A, Geological Survey of Canada, 1930, p. 20A.
[57] Bobillier, Marcel. "Steps for Eternity: Memoirs of Missionary in the Yukon," n.d.
[58] Emmons, George. The Tahltan Indians, 1911, p. 34.
[59] Gauvreau, N. B. "Extract from the Report of N. B. Gauvreau," 1892, p. 113.

Salmon River and Galbraith. She reported that most of the camps seem to have been on the Nakina River above its junction with the Sloko River: “King salmon reached all these places, but humpies (pink) were stopped by a falls below the Nakina Canyon. ‘Silver Salmon’ creek...was actually the main sockeye stream in the area. People also used to hook large trout during the winter in the pool below the Nakina Canyon falls since this had open water all winter.”[60]

[60] McClellan, Catharine. My Old People Say, vol. 1, 1975, p. 35, 197.

Taku River Tlingit camps

The following tables are excerpts from reports identifying fishing sites and villages in the Taku River watershed used by First Nations people. Although the sources do not always specify which First Nation occupied these sites, most — if not all — listed below are Taku River Tlingit camps.

Nakina River	In 1892, Gauvreau's native guides gave him their names of a number of creeks and rivers during their journey in the upper Taku River watershed. In describing the Nakina River, he wrote: "The current of the river is swifter in the lower part than it is farther up. At the 17th and 20th miles two small canyons are reached, where the Indians have salmon fisheries."	Gauvreau, N.B. "Extract from the Report of N.B. Gauvreau," 1892, p. 109.
confluence of Nakina and Inklin rivers	In late May 1891, Schwatka wrote: "Late in the afternoon of that day we came to a well-built but incomplete house, with several ramshackle shanties around it that the Indians named *Ka-ko-quick*. There is a misty story that the main edifice had been built by an old French-Canadian voyageur and trapper, Budreaux by name, who intended to make this a trading station, probably. There was some misunderstanding with the natives, and the partnership was dissolved, since which time Budreauxville has not prospered... Just beyond is the only cañon on the river so far, and it is hardly deserving the title.... A few hundred yards beyond this contraction the river forks into its two main branches, the more important being the South Fork [Inklin River], according to prospectors and Indians both. It was up the North Fork [Nakina River,] however, that we turned... At the confluence of the two main forks was a deserted Indian house, surrounded by a picturesque semicircle of graves, themselves diminutive houses. The whole river, however, bristles with picturesque graveyards and deserted or half-destroyed buildings, until one is forced to acknowledge that it is a solemn and melancholy old stream." [pp. 52-53]	Harris, Arland S. Schwatka's Last Search, 1996.
confluence of Sloko and Nakina rivers (Canoe Landing)	Schwatka wrote: "June 1st broke as a beautiful day on the Indian village of *Nahk-ah-náhn*, as the natives called this picturesquely situated place at the head of navigation on the Takou." At this camp, Schwatka notes that a "strange Takou Indian" visited their camp, whom Schwatka later described as belonging to a "Takou family from the interior." [p. 57] In his journal, C. W. Hayes described seeing at this site "two deserted, partly ruined houses, three caches and three burial houses, the latter neatly painted, with glass windows. Inside are brass-bound painted chests (Chinese make), and a great assortment of ornaments and household goods, mostly cheap 'Boston' make. Prussian glass dishes, colored wash bowls, looking glasses, china dolls, etc." [p. 212]	
Nakina River below Silver Salmon River	On June 3, Hayes mentioned having bought "fresh salmon ($.50)" from some native people near the deserted village of *Ah-kah-tée*. The next day, he described the village named *Klik-noo*: "At 10 mi.+275 are two houses of upright posts, five caches and one grave house. The houses have recently been inhabited but no one is here now. The houses are just below heavy rapids. The river makes a sharp turn and breaks through a barrier formed of big rocks, twenty to forty-feet in diameter, which have tumbled down the cliff on the west side. The fall at the rapids, within 150 yards, is probably eight feet. I saw Robert on the rocks with a salmon hook trying to catch a fish in the eddies below the falls. This is where the salmon we had yesterday was caught." [p. 215] Schwatka also described these two villages. Approximately 8 miles up the Nakina River, they camped at "the deserted Indian village of *Ah-kah-tée*, near which there is a native graveyard overlooking the river." [p. 64] The next day, they continued along their route from where they could see the occasional	

	"deserted Indian house" in the valley: "Lunch time saw us two miles on the trail, coming up to the first packs at the village of *Klick-noó* (deserted), just above which there is a beautiful waterfall on the river." [p. 65] That night they camped at "a place the Indian call the 'pole-bridge' where a number of pine poles had been thrown from either shore to meet a high rock in the center of a foaming cataract." [across the Silver Salmon River near its junction with the Nakina River] [p. 65]	
confluence of Nakina and Inklin rivers	Based on his fieldwork in 1926-1929, Kerr wrote that: "At the junction of the Nakina and Inklin several families of Indians were usually to be found, and three cabins in fairly good condition were formerly used as a trading post."	Kerr. F. A. Taku River Map-Area, British Columbia, Geological Survey Memoir 248, 1948, p. 7.
confluence of Sloko and Nakina rivers	In August 1897, William Pratt was guided up the Taku River by a coastal Tlingit "sub-chief of the Taku's." According to Pratt, eight miles above the Inklin-Taku confluence, the "Clo-clo-heen" and "Na-ka-na" rivers join to form the Taku. Pratt reported that: "The Clo-clo-heen, the largest of these is wide, shallow and muddy, and would have to be crossed on a bridge about 1000 feet long... The Na-ka-na is a narrow, rapid and beautifully clear stream. There is an old village of the Taku Indians called Na-ka-na at the junction occupied part of the year, its elevation being 600 feet above the sea, giving easy grades up to this point." [probably referring to the Sloko-Nakina confluence]	Pratt, Wm. A. The Taku Teslin Railway. [From Juneau via Taku River and Teslin Lake to the Yukon Gold Fields. Report (condensed) of Prof. Wm. A. Pratt to the Yukon Mining, Trading and Transportation Co., of his Survey in 1897].
Nakina River near Sloko River	In 1967, a group from Juneau was guided by Leo Taku Jack, who had not been way down the Taku since 1934, from Atlin to the coast. Part of their journey followed the Silver Salmon River until the canyon became too narrow, and then they turned up onto the "Indian Trail" heading to the Nakina. From a ridge overlooking the Nakina River where it begins its descent to the Sloko River, they saw the long-abandoned Indian camp site on the west side of the Nakina. "The village site was well chosen, by a wide and deep section of the river immediately below turbulent rapids." From this point, they travelled nine miles to Canoe Landing, but the Indian trail was almost obliterated by bush. They stopped at a place to camp where: "In retrieving the lures across the pond strikes were obtained from several king salmon. Cliff landed one of about ten pounds, but the larger ones broke free." On the next day, they came to a talus slide, and a clear trail climbed rapidly to a high plateau and continued along for several miles. "As it descended I recognized a pool that is opposite a cabin formerly used by the Alaska Fish & Game Department in salmon studies, and knew that we were a mile above Canoe Landing."	Boochever, Bob. "Atlin to Tidewater the Hard Way," in The Alaska Sportsman, April 1968, pp. 9-10.
confluence of Silver Salmon and Nakina rivers	Commissioner: Application No. 5, at the junction of the Silver Salmon Creek and Taku River, 80 acres (examining application sheet) - I see that there is a note that there is a village there? Scott Simpson: Yes, an old village. C: How many houses are there? SS: About half a dozen of very old buildings there. C: Do they use those houses now? SS: This is the head of navigation of the Taku and it has always been an old camping-ground and village. Before Atlin was established they used to do their trading at Juno [sic]. C: Both application No. 4 [Silver Salmon Lake] and 5 would be on the road of the proposed railway into Atlin from Juneau? SS: Yes.	Quote from: "Meeting with W. Scott Simpson, Indian Agent for the Stikine Agency at the Board Room, Victoria, B.C. on Tuesday, January 18th, 1916 as to the reserves in his agency," Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, p. 40.

Silver Salmon River Nakina River Silver Salmon River confluence of Sloko and Nakina rivers confluence of Inklin and Nakina rivers	The name for Silver Salmon River in Tlingit is *gàt' hin* or sockeye salmon/river: Kings, sockeyes, and silvers (cohos) all ascend this river to the head, but humpies (pink) are stopped by falls at the village, probably [at *s'ik nuwu* (black bear/fort) just above the confluence of the Silver Salmon and Nakina rivers on the west bank of the Nakina. According to Emmons in his manuscripts in New York, "black bear/fort" was the name of a fortified village 40 miles up the Taku River that had already disappeared by 1900; another informant identified the site known as "black bear/fort" as being between the Inklin and King Salmon River. [p. 61] *t'E tlEn glxo* (rocks/big/around): "A large village at an excellent place for gaffing salmon. The river was too wide for a fish trap. It may be near Paddy (Ruth) Lake, but more probably is the place marked Nakina on the topographic map at the junction of the Nakina River and the one draining Paddy (Ruth) Lake. It is reported to be full of graveyards. Some Atlin people are said to fish there still in summer. The coastal Taku Tlingit used to trade there with the upper Taku and Yukon people. A third possibility is that it is near the junction of the Nakina and Silver Salmon rivers, where houses, caches, and gravehouses are reported, although [black bear fort] seems more likely to be this place." Nearby is *nExln t'E* (green/rock): A king salmon fish camp near a source of green flint. [p. 61] *tloxga hin* (coloured/water): Canoe Landing, also known as Sloko, at the confluence of the Sloko and Nakina rivers. The former is a milky glacial stream and the latter a clear salmon stream. The marked difference in the colour of the waters gives the place its name. Canoe Landing is now considered the head of navigation. There were evidently two villages; one was on the point of land north of the confluence, and the other was probably on the east bank of the Taku." Teslin people usually refer to this place as Nakina. [p. 62] *hin tlEn* (water/big) at the confluence of the Inklin and Taku (Nakina): It is usually marked as Inklin on maps. Several buildings and gravehouses are seen there now. Another settlement of houses and cache pits are behind the cabins at Inklin on the ridge to the NE-SW that have been burned. "According to tradition, the Telegraph Creek Tahltan burnt up the settlement, including the entire winter's supply of dried fish, while the inhabitants were out berry picking." [p. 62] Below Inklin, just above the canyon, on the Taku is said to be the original home of the one of the clans.	McClellan, Catharine. <u>My Old People Say</u>, vol. 1, 1975.
Silver Salmon Lake	Commissioner: Application No. 4, Silver Salmon Lake 160 acres? Scott Simpson: Yes, that is an old fishing ground of the Atlin Indians. C: Do they go there every year? SS: There are only two or three of them there just now. C: How many of them go there at other times? SS: There have been twenty or thirty going there annually to put up dried salmon for their winter supply of food. C: Is it safe to say that twenty or thirty Indians will make use of that reserve? SS: I think it is. C: Are there any buildings there? SS: Nothing but salmon drying houses made out of poles. [...] C: And you recommend this as a fishing-station? SS: Yes, they asked me to put that in. C: Do you think 160 acres is too much or is it enough?	Quotes from: "Meeting with W. Scott Simpson, Indian Agent for the Stikine Agency at the Board Room, Victoria, B.C. on Tuesday, January 18th, 1916 as to the reserves in his agency," <u>Royal Commission on Indian Affairs...</u>, p. 39.

	SS: I don't think that less would be adequate."	
Near Sheslay River	Dennis reached Big Tahltan in early May, 1899: "We ascended this valley to the source of the stream in the second divide. Here at an altitude of about 2,600 feet, we crossed the frozen surface of two beautiful lakes - Upper and Lower Coketsie. Crossing the summit, the general direction of the watercourses lay to the northwest. Launching on the Doo-de-don-Tooya one might float to the Inklin, and thence down the Taku to its mouth near Juneau, Alaska." The following quote may be referring to Taku River Tlingit: "Indians who professed to be familiar with the voyage down the Taku to the coast lived in forlorn hovels near the Shesley river. They were not of the Tahltan tribe and had no dealings with them. All the young bucks of the settlement were off on a caribou chase. A withered old man, who was crouching over some dying embers in his wickiup with some grimy Klooches, gave us to understand that the winter had been a hard one, and that salmon were expected soon in the Shesley."	Dennis, Alfred Pearce. "Life on a Yukon Trail," in The National Geographic Magazine, vol. 10, no. 10 and 11, October and November 1899, p. 458.

Tahltan camps — Sheslay-Nahlin-Hackett River

In his 1911 publication, George Emmons wrote: "The villages on the Narlin and the Shesley were more Taku than otherwise in early days, but in 1840 the Taku Tlingit of the coast came up the river and destroyed Kahgitzah near the head of the Shesley, when the remaining inhabitants crossed the stream and joined the Tahltan."[61]

This corresponds to N. B. Gauvreau's report in 1892: "Five or six families of Tahltans were met at the headwaters of the Taku River. Formerly they lived at the junction of the Sheslay and Inklin Rivers, where the Taku Indians used to come to trade with them, but of late they have left their old grounds and now live at the headwaters of the Sheslay River."[62]

The following tables are excerpts from reports that identified various fishing sites and villages in the Taku River watershed used by Tahltan people. [see also The Stikine River (Canada) and Tahltan Salmon Fisheries: a history based on written records, also prepared for the Department of Fisheries and Ocenas, December 1998]

unidentified site	*e.tca* (from *ke.tca*: "many not far below"). "On a salmon creek a little below New York Lake. It belonged to Nalotin clan. There were no big salmon houses here, and it was not an important place, merely a fishing camp." Because the Nahlotin people's traditional area was centred in the Sheslay-Nahlin area, it was most likely in this river system.	Teit, James. "Clan Villages of Tahltan," ca. 1906-1915.
Sheslay River	Rev. Thorman referred to Nahl O'deen fishing camps along the "Sheslair river to confluence of the Nahlin" that existed when the smallpox epidemics of the mid-1800s decimated the Tahltan population.	Thorman, T. P. W.. "Eske Ka I'Klid, Eyaa Icho(hi). The Small Pox." [B.C. Archives: Thorman, T. P. W. (Miscellaneous materials related...)]
	kakitze or *kakEtza*: "on S. side of Shesley R. between mouth of Salmon Creek and Egnell Creek, a little west of the old H.B.Co. post and the present Shesley Telegraph post. From *kitza*: 'a lake abounding in fish,' because salmon were plentiful there. Belonged to the Nalotin."	Teit, James. "Clan Villages of Tahltan," ca. 1906-1915.

[61] Emmons, George T. The Tahltan Indians, 1911, p. 34.
[62] Gauvreau, N. B. "Extract from the Report of N. B. Gauvreau," 1892, p. 113.

Sheslay River	In his notes about the Tahltan, Teit wrote: "June: Tahltans left the mountains and went to salmon fishing-places. "August: most people left off fishing and went to mts. to hunt groundhogs, etc. Only on the Shesley the salmon run until nearly Christmas, and many Indians remained there fishing."	Teit, James. "Routine of Life During the Year." [Report on the Tahltan — typescript]. [Museum of Civilization: J. A. Teit collection. (VI-0-8M; 121F3].
confluence of Sheslay & Nahlin rivers	At the time the *Nahlotin* met the *Tichanotin*: "[The *Nahlotin*] operated fishing sites at several points along both the Sheslair and Nahlin rivers, the most important of which was SAIR'LA at the confluence of the two streams..."	Thorman, T. P. W. "Notes on the Tahl-Tan Tribe of Athapascans Prior to the Thlinghet Contact." [B.C. Archives: Thorman, T. P. W. (Miscellaneous materials related...)]
Nahlin River	*naalin*: "about two miles above mouth of Shesley R. on the south side of Nahlin R. Belonged to Nalotin clan of Ravens. Big Raven is said to have made many transformation around this place to make it a suitable abode for the Raven people. Means 'water-fall' or 'swift water'." *moEyan*: "'grows larger', because the salmon spawned there. About 6 miles below L. luelanitan at the head of Nahlin R. The fishing place and houses here were little used. It belonged to Nalotin clan."	Teit, James. "Clan Villages of Tahltan," ca. 1906-1915.
	"Tahltan fishing village of "Naliin." Near the Naliin was the Tahltan village of *Tsel* in a canyon that the Indians bridged. Other villages were located at hunting and fishing sites on salmon streams and fish lakes like the *Tstalue*, 'Flat Rock Fish Lake.' In the spring the people fished for rainbow trout in that lake. Another village, *Tediititc*, 'Hand in the Water All the Time for Fish,' lay inland from Naliin and was frequented by Indians fishing for grayling with a hand net."	Honigmann, John J. The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction, 1954, p. 21-22.
Hackett River & Nahlin River	Travelling back to Telegraph Creek from the Taku River area in 1910: "On the [5th] of October we passed Salmon Creek [Hackett River] and found a piece of board nailed to a tree, where Mr. Sargent had written down for us a short report of his hunting... By the creek some Indians [Tahltan?] were camped, and they were busily occupied spearing and curing salmon for the winter... Next day, on the 'Second Tahltan River,' we passed another and larger Indian encampment, and here we met Willy's father. [p. 98]	Rosenberg, Frantz. Big Game Shooting in British Columbia and Norway. London: 1928.
near Inklin-Sheslay confluence	"The river which flows westward from the junction of the Sheslay and Nah-lin Rivers is called by the Indians the Inklin River... An old Indian village (now abandoned) called Tagoun is situated 1 mile below the junction of these rivers, near a small canyon of 120 yards long and 25 yards wide, which is spanned by an old suspension bridge built by the Indians."	Gauvreau, N. B. "Extract from the Report of N.B. Gauvreau," 1892, p. 107.
near Inklin-Sheslay confluence Hackett River	Tagoon, a Tahltan village on the Nahlin River, is mentioned in Teit's account of the war between the Tahltan and the Taku Tlingit. The war between the two groups continued for several years. The Taku Tlingit almost exterminated a large camp of Tahltan at the mouth of Salmon Creek (or Hackett River). The closest Taku Tlingit village was at the mouth of the Nakina River. Teit's story is about the establishment of peace between the two groups.	Teit, James. "Two Tahltan Traditions," 1909.
	In describing the *Nahlotin* people at the time they met the *Tichanotin* based at Tahltan, Rev. Thorman wrote: "The settlement TAGOON arose after the Tlingit contact, but it is an Athapascan term. This site was chosen as a suitable mooring haven for the coastal canoes and the ceremonies attendant upon trading transactions."	Thorman, T. P. W. "Notes on the Tahl-Tan Tribe of Athapascans Prior to the Thlinghet Contact." [B.C. Archives: Thorman, T. P. W. (Miscellaneous...)]

Hackett River	Edward Lester travelled from the Stikine River to Hackett River in 1898. Although he did not specify whether or not it was a Tahltan camp, the location suggests that it was: July 22: “The river on the bank of which the camp is situated is a branch of the Sheslay. It is no more than a mountain torrent, hardly worthy of the name of a river, but nevertheless abounds in salmon and trout.” July 23: “There is an Indian encampment near our lines but we cannot visit it as it has been put out of bounds. There is one old chap there who they claim to be over 100 years old. I have seen him & I believe it.”	Lester, Edward. “Diary of Edward Lester, R.C.R.I., with the Yukon Field Force, 1898-9.”
Possibly Hackett River	“Formerly the tribe had an important permanent village on the Upper Taku River, where they traded with the Tlingit of Juneau, but it has been abandoned many years.”	Teit, James. “Notes on Tahltan Indians,” p. 339.
Hackett River	Photo of “Tahltan Lodge for Drying and Smoking Salmon, Salmon Creek, Near Shesley River, Cassiar, B.C.”	Teit, James. “Notes on Tahltan Indians,” p. 340.
	“At some of the principal salmon-fishing places large houses are erected for drying and smoking the fish. Last fall [1905] I saw two of these in use at Salmon Creek [Hackett River] on the Upper Shesley River. They were made of poles and roofed with bark... At this place salmon were being caught by means of large hooks attached to the end of light and moderately long poles, and also by means of traps, which were of slightly different construction from those used by Indians farther south. The trap... consists of two boxes made of light rods fastened with withes. The fish enters by pressing on the finely balanced twigs attached to the entrance of the upstream box, and cannot return, as the twigs resume their natural position as soon as the fish has passed. The fish pass on to the second box, where they congregate and pack one another.” Photo of “Tahltan Fish Dam and Salmon -Traps on Salmon Creek, Near Upper Shesley River, Cassiar, B.C.” and diagrams of fish dams and fishing tools.	Teit, James. “Notes on Tahltan Indians,” p. 344-345.

	Question: Is [Hackett River fishing camp] a reserve? G. D. Cox (speaking at request of Chief Quash): No, the old people go there to fish and they fish there very late there in the fall. In regard to this fishery, it would be a good thing to make a reserve there for them. They also put nets in the river here [Telegraph Creek] but they don't depend on that very much, and with the exception of the two places [Tahltan River and Hackett River] that I have just named, I don't know of any other places that would be suitable for them.	Quote from: "Meeting with the Tahltan Band or Tribe of Indians at Telegraph Creek, June 7th, 1915." Royal Commission on Indian Affairs...
	Question: The first [Tahltan] application is at Hackett's Creek (Salmon Creek)? Simpson: That is known locally as Salmon Creek. Q: 320 acres is applied for? S: Yes, that is an old fishing ground, and they fish in a narrow creek not wider than this room, and they fish along there for one and a half and two miles, and each family has his own little camp, and they cut their firewood along the valley. Q: And the Fishery officers don't interfere with them in their fishing at all? S: No. Q: You say this has been used regularly by the indians [sic]? S: Yes, for ages. [...] Q: And they smoke and dry their fish there? S: Yes, in the Fall of the year they will hook them right out and freeze them, and they make caches and store the fish which they use for dog food during the winter. Q: And of course they travel around the country with dogs? S: Yes. Q: What kind of fish do they catch there? S: They catch salmon, cohoe [sic] and humpbacks.	Quotes from: "Meeting with W. Scott Simpson, Indian Agent for the Stikine Agency at the Board Room, Victoria, B.C. on Tuesday, January 18th, 1916 as to the reserves in his agency." Royal Commission on Indian Affairs..., pp. 15-17.
	Report of survey operations in the Stikine Agency during the season of 1928. On September 27th he went to Telegraph Creek and followed Telegraph Creek-Atlin trail "about forty-four miles to the valley of Salmon Creek, where we arrived on September 29th and commenced the survey of Application No. 1 Reserve No. 3 which was completed by noon on October 3rd ... The area surveyed as the Reserve together with the parcel posted in Lot 82 takes in most of the land which has been used by the Indians for many years as a camping and fishing place. The stream was abundantly stocked with salmon at the time I was there and the Indians were just arriving to put up their winters supply of fish."	Letter from H. McN. Fraser, to A. F. Mackenzie, Department of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, December 24, 1928. [National Archives of Canada: Indian Affairs records, RG 10, vol. 7789, f. 27158-1, reel C-12067]

Alaska commercial fishery and investigations

At least two canneries operated near the mouth of the Taku River at the turn of the century. In 1897, a saltery was built on Taku Point, near the head of Taku Inlet. In 1907, the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries described the situation: "The Taku River and inlet and the Stikine River were the scene of very important fishing operations [king salmon] in May and June, over 100 boats being engaged directly in fishing with gill nets on the Taku alone about the middle of May, and this number was increased later on."[63]

In the following year, the bureau reported that king salmon were never found in Taku Inlet except on their way to the spawning beds on the upper reaches of the river. It went on to say that: "This year the first fish wheel to be erected and operated in the coastal waters of Alaska was put in the Taku River, about 10 miles above its mouth. The wheel was located between two 4-foot scows, set parallel to each other, and each 40 feet in length. The wheel had two dips, each 22 feet in width and hung with netting. It was operated throughout the king and red salmon runs, but was far from successful. The few salmon caught were taken mainly between Monday and Tuesday mornings, the first twenty-four hours after the weekly closed season had passed. Large numbers of trout and some eulachons were caught, but these were not salable."[64] The government did not continue the Taku River fishwheel project in the following years.[65]

The United States government continued to regulate the commercial fishery on the coast, but did not research the salmon runs or spawning areas in the Taku River until the 1950s. The Alaska Department of Fisheries expanded its activities to include the enforcement of fishery laws and regulations in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1951, and it initiated research on the king salmon troll fishery and king salmon runs to the Taku River. The department reported that: "Although the Taku River gill net fishery is one of the oldest fisheries in Southeast Alaska, little is available in the way of published information concerning its history and development. All five species of salmon of the eastern North Pacific are present in the Taku as spawning runs. Reliable catch records are unavailable for the period before 1945. [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service data] serves only as an index to the magnitude of the fishery. It does not extend far enough to indicate either trend or possible limits of productive capacity. The fishery operates entirely within the muddy waters of Taku Inlet, rarely extending itself as far as Jaw Point. It is limited by regulation to the area outside the actual river, the line being moved almost annually to accommodate the shifting bar at the river's mouth. Gill nets of single wall, floater type are used exclusively... A closed season from June 1 to 25 had been in effect since 1945, presumably to provide escapement to the spawning grounds."[66]

The Alaska Department of Fisheries chose the Taku River for an initial investigation of the king salmon run in 1951. "Other major rivers of Southeast Alaska containing king runs are the Unuk, Stikine, Chilkat and Alsek. All are characterized by having their headwaters in Canada, i.e. originating in the interior, being to a large degree glacier fed, and by having a spring run of kings."[67] Results of the 1951 ground and aerial surveys are found in the department's annual report. An excerpt from this report, summaries of the Taku River reports for 1952-1957 and related material follow:

[63] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Fisheries. The Fisheries of Alaska in 1907. Washington: 1908, p. 22.
[64] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Fisheries. The Fisheries of Alaska in 1908. Washington: 1909, pp. 31-32.
[65] Cobb, John N. Pacific Salmon Fisheries. 1917, p. 86.
[66] Alaska Department of Fisheries. Annual Report for 1951. Juneau: [1952], pp. 29-30.
[67] Alaska Department of Fisheries. Annual Report for 1951. Juneau: [1952], p. 27.

[insert pp. 36-42 of report and the map in 1954 report]

Alaska Department of Fisheries. Annual Report for 1952. Juneau: [1953].

The department expanded the 1951 program on the Taku to include all four salmon species (reds, pinks, silvers and chums). “The fish wheel was used to establish a catch index useful for measuring the comparative escapement of these fish on a yearly basis.”

Ground surveys: “Spawning ground surveys of the two main clearwater tributaries, the Nahlin and Nakina Rivers, were carried on in late July and the first half of August to recover tags, estimate numbers of fish on the spawning grounds, and to sample the escapement for length frequency and sex ratio.

“On the Nahlin River and its tributaries, the Dudidontu and ‘Z’ Rivers, only scattered groups of spawning king salmon were observed. The seeding appeared to be very sparse on this system in 1952. A total of 36 of the color coded tags from Canyon Island were observed on the Nakina River.

“The Nakina River had an even larger escapement than in 1951 and the spawning grounds appeared to be adequately seeded. A total of 89 color coded tags were observed on the Nakina River.

“The tag observations on the Nahlin and Nakina Rivers showed no difference in the time of arrival of fish of these two tributaries into the lower river. In fact, a complete overlap of timing was shown.” [p. 27]

“Spawning red salmon have been observed in Silver Salmon Lake on the Nakina River drainage and ‘X’ and ‘Y’ Lakes on the Inklin River drainage. Smaller populations have been seen on the Nakina, Nahlin, and Dudidontu Rivers. These are evidently river races for neither the adults or young enter any lake system. There is also a small spawning population in a lake tributary to the main Taku River a few miles above the Canadian border.” [p. 32]

“That there is a different time of arrival in the lower river for pinks bound to different spawning areas is apparent as the Nakina River run which spawn from 65 to 80 miles from the mouth of the river are on the spawning grounds actively spawning by the first of August, while the gill net fishery is still taking pinks in fair numbers. The differential escapement during the open and closed weekly periods would hardly cause such large fluctuations, as the total catch is usually small compared to the escapement. In one tributary alone, the Nakina River, the escapement in both 1951 and 1952 was about ten times as large as the total catch. The gill net fishery is not designed to take pink salmon, but reds.” [p. 32]

“Silver salmon spawn in nearly all of the available clear water tributaries from the mouth of the Taku River to the headwaters of the Nahlin, Dudidontu, and Sheslay Rivers. In the first part of September, silvers can be seen moving up into the high plateau country of the upper Nahlin and Dudidontu Rivers above where the kings spawn. Here the streams are sluggish and wind in and out through the tundra country. The upper Nakina River is blocked by a falls in the canyon to all salmon as reported for king salmon in the 1951 annual bulletin.” [p. 35]

Conclusion: based on sampling at Canyon Island, upriver movement of all the species of salmon is held up to some degree by sudden rises in water levels, the pink salmon to a high degree and the other species somewhat less. Whether this is due to changes in current velocities or to a rise in turbidity (which accompanies the rise in water levels) or both, is unknown. [p. 34].

Alaska Department of Fisheries. Annual Report for 1953. Juneau: [1954].

This report was intended to present a description of the life history of the Taku River king salmon and effects of the fisheries that have exploited the populations. It states that the Tulsequah flood in the summer months has profound effects on the main Taku. “Above the mining town of Tulsequah, situated approximately ten miles northeast of the Canadian border, the area is entirely uninhabited except for an occasional trapper or prospector.” The Tulsequah Trail, bisecting the Nahlin and Nakina watersheds, has received little use in recent years each summer. Observations of the spawning grounds are unavoidably limited to the clear water streams, although successful

spawning is not necessarily limited to such areas. The Nakina River is the most productive of king salmon of the entire river system, with lesser spawning populations using the Nahlin and its tributaries, the Dudidontu and 'Z' Rivers, and the small King Salmon River, tributary to the main Taku. Between 80 and 90 percent of the entire king salmon escapement is estimated to use the Nakina spawning grounds." [p. 26]

Alaska Department of Fisheries. Annual Report for 1954. Juneau: [1955].
"Adult Taku River king salmon make their appearance as early as April in the waters adjacent to Taku Inlet and their entrance into fresh water is from late April to early July. While passing through the channels of Southeastern Alaska, they are subject to a troll fishery which operates up to the entrance of Taku Inlet, being barred at that point by muddy water. In Taku Inlet, gill nets are employed as far as the mouth of the river at Taku Point."

Estimated numbers (total run) of mature Taku River king salmon , 1951-53:

1951	23,390
1952	26,420
1953	38,110
1954	31,257

Estimated Escapement of Taku River king salmon, 1951-53:

1951	7,860
1952	13,490
1953	12,310
1954	9,419

Letter from C. Howard Baltzo, Acting Regional Director, U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, to A. J. Whitmore, Department of Fisheries, Vancouver, Jan. 21, 1954. [National Archives of Canada: DFO records, RG 23, vol. 1226, f. 726-11-7, Part 1 (1953-1956)]

In 1954, the Canadian government requested information from the Fish and Wildlife Service about the Taku River fisheries. The descriptions of the commercial and personal use fisheries in the Taku river pertain only to the Alaska side of the border. The following excerpt is the Taku River section of the response:

Commercial fishery. "Because this river discharges into salt water closely adjacent to the city of Juneau and supports a gillnet fleet averaging thirty boats per day and peaking at sixty, it is relatively well known. Besides the commercial surveillance exercised by this Service, a research program including stream surveys has been carried on by the Territorial Department of Fisheries. The annual average production from drift gillnets over the past five years is as follows:

Kings	— 3,673 cases of 48 lbs. each comprised of 11,018 fish.
Sockeyes	— 3,579 cases of 48 lbs. each comprised of 45,525 fish.
Cohoes	— 2,670 cases of 48 lbs. each comprised of 26,699 fish.
Pinks	— 1,615 cases of 48 lbs. each comprised of 11,018 fish.
Chums	— 1,796 cases of 48 lbs. each comprised of 16,161 fish.

"In addition, the various races destined for the Taku run a long gamut of trap, seine and troll gear as they come in from the Pacific Ocean thru Icy Strait and Stephens Passage. It is impossible to know the extent of interception by this more distant gear but it is not unreasonable to suppose that it varies greatly with the changing circumstances so characteristic of recent years and that it may be at least as great as the localized gillnet catch. Production of chums is potentially greater than the figures indicate as the [sizable] late fall runs have been only partially utilized.

"Kings enter the river in May and June; sockeyes and pinks in late June, July and early August; cohoes in August and September; and chums from July well into October. The gillnet season is continuous from the first of May to the end of September with a 72-hour weekly closed period.

Personal use fishery: "Salmon fishing as a sport is developing in spectacular fashion near many Alaskan towns and nowhere has it become more popular than Juneau. Management of recreational fishing has not yet been attempted so data on intensity and catch are not readily available. Nevertheless, tagging study by the Alaska Department of Fisheries lead them to believe that 75% of the local sport take in May and June are kings of Taku origin.

Spawning grounds: "Stream surveys by ADF to date reveal that about 80% of the Taku king run spawns in the Nakina River, principally in a five mile stretch centering at the confluence of the Silver Salmon River.

"Knowledge of other species is quite limited, being confined to observations incidental to research on the king salmon. The largest concentration of sockeyes noted was in Silver Salmon Lake and its outlet, and river-spawning populations occur in both the Nahlin and Nakina. Cohoes [sic] seem widely distributed over much of the Taku system from tributaries near the mouth of the entire Nahlin watershed. Pinks have been observed primarily in the Nakina and in several small side streams of the lower Taku. Additional details on spawning ground distribution are available if desired."

Weberg, C. A. and Paul M. L. Garceau. "Progress Report on the Taku River Investigations," in Alaska Department of Fisheries. Annual Report for 1955. Juneau: [1956]

This report summarizes the king salmon fishery: "The adult run is first fished primarily in northern Chatham Strait, lower Lynn Canal, and Stephens Passage by the trolling fleet. When the run enters Taku Inlet, it is beyond the effective use of troll gear as the water becomes turbid from the discharge of the Taku River. The gill net fishery, which is concentrated in the Inlet below the mouth of the River, then takes its share of the run.

"The king salmon proceed up-river to their spawning grounds, arriving during June and July with a few stragglers in August. After deposition of the sex products, the mature fish die and the cycle is complete." [pp. 71-72]

July 1951 general survey found that the Nahlin and Nakina were the main spawning areas, the Nakina being the most important. "Observations during 1955 indicate that a certain amount of spawning occurs in some of the turbid streams, such as the Sloko. The extent of this spawning population, while not known, is thought to be small." [p. 78]

Table with the estimated escapement of king salmon:

year	est. numbers on the Nakina of females	Est. escapement	Estimated number
1951	5,000	7,860	
1952	9,000	13,490	3,480
1953	7,500	12,310	5,720
1954	6,000	9,380	5,290
1955	5,000	4,690	2,400

Weberg, C.A. and Paul Garceau. "Taku River Investigations," in: Alaska Department of Fisheries. Annual Report for 1956. Juneau: [1957].

"A gill net fishery was operating in Taku Inlet as early as 1897 and probably at least a dozen years prior to this date. Moser (1898) states that 'as soon as the ice breaks up in the river (usually about May 25) the fishing for king salmon commences, and all that are packed at Pyramid Harbor are taken in the Taku, except for a few stragglers that appear around the Chilkat very early in the

season, which can hardly be called a run... These fish are all taken with drifting gill nets by white fishing crews.

“As the cannery at Pyramid Harbor was built in 1883 by the Northwest Trading Company which depended on Taku River fish, it is likely that a commercial fishery was started shortly after completion of the cannery.” [p. 22] All taken from the inlet.

They also set up a carcass collecting weir about one-quarter of a mile above the confluence of the Nakina and Silver Salmon River prior to the 1956 spawning season to estimate the numbers of salmon spawning in the Nakina. Estimate that less than 50 carcasses were taken by bears in the study area (two miles above the weir). There is a total block just past the upper end of the study area is impassable to salmon. “While the number of fish utilizing the area between the upper end of the study area and the block is not known, it is thought that it would not exceed 100 fish.” August 5, 1956 visual survey - study area estimated to contain 550 king salmon. Actual carcass count of kings in this section was 2,777. [p. 31]

Conclude that from the data on estimated numbers of king salmon on the Nakina River between 1951-1956, it would seem that there is a definite downward trend during the past five years, with the estimations ranging from a high of 9,000 in 1952 to 1,380 in 1956.

Letter from C. L. Anderson, Alaska Department of Fisheries, to A. L. Pritchard, Conservation and Development Service, Department of Fisheries, Ottawa, June 4, 1956. [National Archives of Canada: DFO records, RG 23, vol. 144, f. 731-39-4, vol. 1]

In 1956, the Alaska Department of Fisheries mentioned that there was a “sporadic and small personal use fishery by the use of set nets at Tulsequah on the Taku River.”

Alaska Department of Fisheries. Annual Report for 1957. Juneau: [1958].

Taku River Investigations: Nakina spawning ground studies continued. 1957 counts similar to 1956. In 1956 it was observed that a falls on Silver Salmon Creek, flowing into the Nakina just below the carcass weir, obstructed the sockeye and forcing them to collect in the Nakina above the weir. Many died unspawned. Improvements made at the falls. [p. 29]

“Canadian Stream Surveys, 1968,” attached to letter from Augie Reetz, Commissioner, Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game, March 4, 1969, to W.R. Hourston, Canadian Dept. of Fisheries, Vancouver, March 4, 1969. [Alaska State Archives: Department of Fish and Game records, Commercial Fisheries Division, RG 11, box 7290, series 567, f. “Stream Surveys (F&G in Canada)”] [1966-1972]

Information about salmon spawning activities collected during two aerial surveys of the upper Taku River system:

August 9 —

1. Trapper Lake: “Nothing was observed in upper Trapper Lake. There appears to be a total block in the stream connecting the upper and lower lakes. A good showing of red salmon was in the head stream below the barrier falls and also at the mouth of the stream where it flows into the lower lake also known as ‘Rainbow Lake’. Seven hundred and fifty to 1,000 reds were estimated in the stream, actively spawning, and 2,000 reds were schooled at the stream mouth. [Pilot] Loken thought he saw some kings but positive identity could not be made. There was a tent camp located at the upper lake outlet and two fishermen were sportfishing at the head of the lower lake. It appeared that they were catching or snagging reds.

“The Kowatua River which flows out of lower Trapper Lake or ‘Rainbow Lake’ was surveyed for a distance of nearly ten miles. The water was relatively clear in this usually milky river and king salmon could easily be seen on all the riffles. A total of 1,100 kings were counted, mostly in the

first five miles. This compares to 250 kings in the first five miles surveyed during 1967. Only 14 kings were counted in seven miles surveyed in 1966."

2. Tatsamenie Lake: "No salmon were seen in the head stream or in the upper half of the lake. One small school of reds were seen in the lower half of the lake near the outlet, approximately 20 fish. The head stream and lake was quite murky. One hundred and fifty kings were observed spawning in the connecting stream between big Tatsamenie Lake and little Tatsamenie Lake. In the little lake, a school of approximately 50 kings were observed. From the little lake to the confluence of the glacial Tatsatua River, 600 kings were seen actively spawning.

"This system was not surveyed in 1967. In 1966 only 150 kings were estimated spawning in the lower Tatsamenie River above Tatsatua River."

3. Dudidontu River: "Surveyed from head lake (Ketchum Lake) to the canyon. Counted 590 kings, well spread out and spawning. Water medium level and clear. The Matsatu River which flows into the Dudidontu River for a distance of ¼ mile was also surveyed and 150 kings counted. The Matsatu was very low. A few carcasses were observed.

"In 1967 the count was 600 spawners for this system. In 1966, 252 kings were counted plus 15 in the Matsatu."

4. Nahlin River: "The Nahlin was surveyed from the head to Nahlin crossing. The water appeared to be at medium level and very few fish were being held up by any of the numerous beaver dams. Four hundred and fifty kings were observed, spread out and spawning. One school of between 80 and 100 reds were seen behind one of the beaver dams in the upper part of the river.

"In 1967 and 1966 only 300 fish were counted."

5. Tseta River: "The Tseta was flown from its confluence with the Nahlin to its very head. Two hundred and thirty kings were counted, mostly in the very upper reaches. They were spawning and some carcasses were noted.

"In 1967 there were 350 kings counted, and in 1966 only 150."

6. Kuthai Lake: "From the head of Tseta Creek the plane flew directly to Kuthai Lake. Two jumpers were seen in the lake. Nothing was observed at the head or outlet streams near the lake. The water levels appeared normal and no concentrations of fish were seen behind the numerous beaver dams in the Silver Salmon River flowing from Kuthai Lake. A few scattered sockeyes were noted but due to deteriorating weather and turbulence, it was impossible to make any count. A cat road and tent camp were located at Kuthai Lake, but no people were seen."

7. Nakina River: "Again, late afternoon turbulence hindered the survey of this system. The gorge was surveyed all the way downstream to the Taku River and 3,000 unidentified (pinks?) and 300 definite kings were observed. This is a minimal estimate due to poor visibility.

"In 1967 approximately 700 kings and 1,000 pinks were seen. In 1966, 3,700 kings were counted although species identification here could be questionable.

August 26 (primarily to see if beaver dams were affecting the run to Kuthai Lake) —

1. Kuthai Lake: "Looked at beaver dams in Silver Salmon River below the lake outlet. Water was spilling over all dams and no fish were seen below any of the dams or in the river. Surveyed beaches around the lake and saw red salmon spawning on two beaches on the east shore. I estimated over 400 salmon observed. Both Loken and myself remarked that this was the largest concentration of reds we had ever observed in the lake. The late timing of the survey (August 26) probably coincided with the movement of the fish into the beaches for spawning and, therefore, were seen in greater abundance than normally observed on earlier surveys."

2. Nakina River: "Air was smooth and visibility good so we flew more of the canyon than usual. We flew downstream to the confluence of Nakina and Sloko Rivers (canoe crossing). Survey was too late to enumerate king salmon abundance. Saw only a few kings (less than 50 fish and very

few carcasses). Observed a few live pinks below ‘Humpy block’ and a few hundred carcasses in deep pools.”

3. King Salmon River: “No red salmon seen on the beaches of the lake and no fish (kings) were seen in a survey of the river.”

From the aerial surveys conducted on Kuthai Lake this season plus correspondence received from Mr. Tom Connolly, a local guide who lives in Atlin and maintains a hunting and sport fishing camp at the lake, it appears that the beaver dams did not impede red salmon escapement this year. It was decided, therefore, that a temporary stream clearance program was not necessary.”

Letter from David Cantillon, Commercial Fisheries Division, to Ed Huizer, Commercial Fisheries Division, December 3, 1969. [Alaska State Archives: Department of Fish and Game records, Commercial Fisheries Division, RG 11, box 7290, series 567, f. “Stream Surveys (F&G in Canada)”] [1966-1972]

1969 Taku River Surveys:

August 5 Nakina River drainage — Kuthai Lake: 600 red salmon observed along the shores of the lake, with scattered jumps indicating more fish present than observed.

Silver Salmon River: No salmon observed. All beaver dams appeared passible to fish.

Nakina River: A total of 3,500 king salmon and 6,500 pink salmon were counted. A strong wind blowing upriver made counting difficult.

King Salmon River: Partially glacial water prevented a count. Three king salmon were identified and signs of other fish present were seen.

August 27 survey of parts of the Inklin drainage and King Salmon River —

“Trapper Lake: No salmon were observed above the falls separating the two lakes. An estimated 4,000 red salmon were observed in the lower lake inlet stream and around its mouth, compared to 3,000 estimated in 1968.

“Kowatua River: This system was unusually low and clear. An estimated 3,300 spawning kings were counted, and a number of redds from earlier spawning fish were observed. This is the highest known count of king salmon ever observed in this river.

“Tatsamenie Lake: 500 spawning king salmon were counted below the lower lake outlet. Several jumps were seen in the lower lake, but individual fish were not discernible. Between the lower lake and Talsamenie [sic] Lake proper 300 additional kings and 600 red were spawning.

“King Salmon River: No salmon seen from King Salmon Lake to the Taku River.”

“1970 Taku River Surveys — Canadian Section,” submitted to Mr. W.R. Hourston, Canadian Department of Fisheries, Vancouver, by Wallace H. Noerenberg, State of Alaska, Department of Fish and Game, January 22, 1971. [DFO, Whitehorse: FISS Support Files]

“Two aerial surveys were flown on Taku River king salmon and red salmon spawning area. The Nakina drainage was surveyed on August 25 and the Inklin drainage on August 26. The timing varies for king salmon spawning from river to river and these surveys were late for the Nakina, Dudidontu and Nahlin Rivers.”

Nakina River — 2,000 kings and 4,000 pinks
Silver Salmon River — no red salmon observed and no impossible beaver dams
Kathai Lake — 3,600 red salmon beach [spawning]
Trapper Lake Inlet — 4,500 red salmon
Kowatua River — 1,200 king salmon and 1,000 red salmon
Tatsamenie Outlet — 530 king salmon and 800 red salmon
Dudidontu River — 10 king salmon — very late survey for this river
Tseta River — 25 king salmon — still bright
Nahlin River — 26 king salmon — late survey

“Both king salmon and red salmon escapement appeared fairly good despite the lateness of these surveys for some rivers.”

Developing a Canadian commercial fishery

While the Canadian government received detailed information from the Alaska Department of Fisheries investigations in the early 1950s, it was also considering the development of a commercial fishery on the Canadian side of the border. Until the Canadians conducted their own investigations, the American research provided the only details about the salmon in the Taku River.

In 1953, Homer Stevens of the United Fishermen & Allied Workers' Union in Vancouver expressed an interest in establishing a Taku River commercial fishery. He explained to the Minister of Fisheries that having read about the proposed hydro projects affecting the Taku, Yukon and Alsek rivers, he was concerned that the projects would harm the salmon runs: "While at the present time practically all of the salmon which spawn in these rivers are caught by American fishermen who operate off the panhandle of Alaska, we feel there is the possibility at some future date of Canadian fishermen harvesting a share of the salmon. For example, the Taku River is reported to be navigable 32 miles above the B.C.-Alaska boundary. We assume that if it is navigable for that distance it would also be possible to establish a Canadian gillnet fishery in that section of the area. Even if Canadian fishermen were never to actually share in the salmon that spawn in these streams, it is our feeling that nothing should be done which would destroy these spawning grounds or which would make it impossible for salmon to reach the spawning areas." Stevens also wrote that according to the press, the federal government fully supported the projects, and he wondered if the government had considered potential dangers to the salmon run.[68]

In 1956, the Canadian Department of Fisheries expressed its concern about the Alaska salmon fishery and about the fact that the Department of Fisheries knew relatively little about the salmon in Canadian waters. In May, the department requested additional information about Taku River salmon from its Alaskan counterparts: "As you are aware we, in our Department, have long recognized that in these systems [Taku and Stikine] the main spawning areas are in Canada while the fishery is exclusively in American waters."[69] In its response, the Alaska Department of Fisheries explained that almost all information about the Stikine and Taku rivers was published in the department's annual reports.[70]

Although the Canadian government approved and cooperated with the U.S. investigations at this time, it told the Alaskans that they would have to go through formal bureaucratic channels to get approval for their projects. For example, in August 1956, the Alaska Department of Fisheries requested permission to dynamite and remove fishway obstructions: "During the course of our work on the Taku and Stikine Rivers we have discovered two falls which are, at times, partial blocks and, at various water levels, total blocks to the main sockeye salmon runs in these systems. The falls on the Taku River system are on the Silver Salmon River just at its juncture with the Nakina River. The block on the Stikine system is on the Tahltan River about 2½ miles below the bridge on the Telegraph Trail. Both of these falls are about seven feet high and the effectiveness of the block evidently changes with the water level of the rivers."[71]

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[68] Letter from Homer Stevens, United Fishermen & Allied Workers' Union, Vancouver, to James Sinclair, Minister of Fisheries, Ottawa, December 30, 1953. [National Archives of Canada: DFO records, RG 23, vol. 1226, f. 726-11-7, Part 1 (1953-1956)]

[69] Letter from A.L. Pritchard, Conservation and Development Service, to C.L. Anderson, Director, Alaska Department of Fisheries, May 18, 1956. [National Archives of Canada: DFO records, RG 23, vol. 144, f. 731-39-4, vol. 1]

[70] Letter from C.L. Anderson, Alaska Department of Fisheries, to A.L. Pritchard, Director, Conservation and Development Service, Department of Fisheries, Ottawa, June 4, 1956. [National Archives of Canada: DFO records, RG 23, vol. 144, f. 731-39-4, vol. 1]

[71] Letter from C.L. Anderson, Alaska Department of Fisheries, to A.L. Pritchard, Conservation and Development Service, Ottawa, August 27, 1956. [National Archives of Canada: DFO records, RG 23, vol. 144, f. 731-39-4, vol. 1]

The Canadian government responded early in 1957 that such a request would have to go through the U.S. State Department to Canada's Department of External Affairs, and that the British Columbia government would undoubtedly be interested. In his letter to the Department of State in Washington, C. L. Anderson explained that the sockeye salmon fisheries on the Stikine and Taku rivers had shown some decline as well as great fluctuations, and that the blockages in the rivers were held partially responsible.[72]

As the Department of Fisheries was trying to define its position vis-à-vis the Taku River salmon fishery and research, A. L. Pritchard of the department summarized the situation to his minister: "On April 20th, while visiting in Ottawa, Mr. Homer Stevens of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union, raised the question as to whether it would be possible to establish a commercial salmon fishery in the Canadian sections of the Stikine and Taku Rivers."

Pritchard summarized what was known about the Taku River salmon and fishery, including: "In general, it can be stated that the salmon spawning areas are in Canada. The best fishing grounds - the channels off the mouths of the streams and the tidal sections of the rivers themselves - are in Alaska... While the above figures [Alaska fishery statistics] do not extend accurately to the final total, it is astounding that they are so close to arithmetic perfection. They do indicate the heavy exploitation on the run." Pritchard also described the Taku River and the potential for a commercial fishery: "Only the most limited information is available on the conditions in the Canadian section of the Taku...The meagre description of the Taku indicates that fishing would be limited in the Canadian section. In addition, the figures submitted previously for spring salmon show that for this species at least and perhaps for others, exploitation is now relatively heavy. At present we cannot control the American catches so we would only be further reducing the runs. It would appear that neither the physical conditions nor the supply of fish would warrant a commercial effort in the Canadian waters of the river." He outlines issues that would need to be addressed: "Of more importance from our viewpoint than the legal problems, are those of conservation. We actually do not know whether the runs to the rivers can stand more exploitation. All available information indicates that more fish should not be taken. The Alaskan Department has already experienced depletion and has implemented restriction in the forms of limited seasons and closed periods. We know that the spawning areas on the Taku are not large. We are advised that a large portion of the Stikine is blocked to spawning fish ... It is admitted that it is frustrating not to be able freely to use fish reared in Canadian territory. We must, however, face the fact that we cannot, without agreement, control American fishermen fishing in their own territory. To obtain such an agreement will be difficult because such fishing has gone on for such a long time without objection. We are introducing the new fishery which will be of doubtful value. We have established a precedent by continuing to fish the Columbia river runs off Vancouver Island when the American states suggested restrictions to conserve the stocks." Pritchard explained that the Canadian government would have to fully accept its responsibility for surveying and improving the spawning areas. "Eventually we would foresee the necessity for a new international agreement because we know the Alaskan fishermen will fish harder after we enter the fishery and thus reduce the stocks. We wonder whether we should face such a prospect at this time in view of the relatively little economic advantage to be gained."

[72] Letter from C.L. Anderson, Alaska Department of Fisheries, Juneau, to William C. Herrington, Department of State, Washington, March 20, 1957. [National Archives of Canada: DFO records, RG 23, vol. 144, f. 731-39-4, vol. 1]

In regards to involving the local native people in a commercial fishery, he suggested that the subject should be discussed with the Indian Affairs Branch: “They might have pertinent comments on a plan which appears to benefit a few of their best fishermen yet might cut down food supplies for the Indian Bands at Tulsequah on the Taku and Telegraph Creek on the Stikine.” Pritchard mentioned, however, that there could be problems because of the Frobisher hydro development negotiations: “It is rumoured that a reference to the International Joint Commission on the use of Canadian rivers draining through Alaska is imminent. Lack of settlement in this connection is already having its affect on other fisheries.” Pritchard was concerned that the establishment of a Canadian fishery on the Taku and Stikine might create a climate that would lead to further delay.[73] The project was not pursued on either river.

[73] “Memorandum for the Minister re: Possibility of Establishing a Canadian Commercial Salmon Fishery in the Stikine and Taku Rivers,” from A. L. Pritchard, ca. July 1956. [National Archives of Canada: DFO records, RG 23, vol. 144, f. 731-39-4, vol. 1]

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