

Fishy Business: The N'angis and the BC Salmon Industry.

by

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Abstract

In 1996 the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada (DFO), initiated a fundamental restructuring of the British Columbia (BC) commercial salmon fishery through a program commonly known as the "Mifflin Plan".

The introduction of the Mifflin Plan was the heuristic probe for a collection of narratives from N'angis First Nation fishers. The basis of this thesis is this collection of narratives. What emerges from these narratives is a critical history of the DFO and their management of the BC commercial salmon fishery from its inception to 1996. The N'angis First Nation fishers initial reactions to and analyses of the Mifflin Plan are also integral to this thesis.

This thesis is anthropological and ethnographic, and is influenced by the theory of political ecology and the methodology of analytical narrative.

The N'angis First Nation fishers provide a keen insight and analysis of their ecological sphere. They also reveal an analytical, critical history of the mismanagement and decline of the BC commercial salmon fishery. An industry in which the N'angis First Nation fishers were integral for its establishment, and in which many can no longer participate.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

June 1996, The Bighouse, Namgis First Nation Reserve, Alert Bay.

Within the Big House, the annual Salmon Prince and Princess Pageant is being held. The winners will reign as the royal couple for the celebrated June Sports weekend, a popular, well attended soccer tournament. Unlike other pageants, these participants are not judged on their physical appearance. Rather, the contestants are judged for their ability to communicate in Kwakwaka'wakw, their execution of Kwakwaka'wakw song or dance, and their moral character. A teenage girl of eighteen, dressed in a magnificent button blanket, matching apron, and cedar headdress steps shyly towards the microphone and quietly responds to the questions posed to her by the judges. The final question -

"What are your future goals for your self?" Her response -

"I will continue school at the University of Victoria...I will take courses that will enable me to become a marine biologist. It is very important to me to become a marine biologist so that I can help my people with such things as the Mifflin Plan. I could investigate things like - what causes a decrease in fish population. With the information I collect, it will help me to...encourage people to avoid doing the things that decrease the fish population, so that the fishing industry can continue." (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, 1996)

When the judging is completed, she is declared 1996 Salmon Princess.

1.1 The Problem or the End?: the Mifflin Plan and the N'amgis

On March 29, 1996, Fred Mifflin, who was then Minister responsible for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Canada, announced a program that sent salmon fishers and British Columbia communities that are dependent on the salmon industry reeling in shock. This program, officially titled Reforming The

Salmon Fishery (Fisheries and Oceans: B-PR-96-07E), has come to be known popularly as the "Mifflin Plan". It is an aggressive restructuring strategy designed to eliminate 50% of the BC commercial salmon fleet over a three year period. Its scope is comprehensive in that it seeks to address the well-worn adage of - "too many boats, chasing too few fish".

To achieve the Mifflin Plan's target of a 50% reduction in the number of boats licensed to fish salmon, the DFO introduced two strategies: single gear - area licensing; and, a \$80,000,000.00 buy-back fund to buy out and retire salmon licenses. A "buy-back" initiative is a program whereby the federal government, the DFO, offers to buy and retire licenses from fishers who previously purchased the licenses from the DFO. Hence the term "buy-back". To understand the changes introduced by the Mifflin Plan in 1996, a basic understanding of the salmon fleet is necessary. Salmon are caught commercially by three different methods in British Columbia (BC): gillnetting, trolling and seining. Gillnetters are the smallest boats, 28-36 feet in length, that play out a net from their boats into which salmon swim, and are caught by their gills. Trollers are mid size boats, 35-45 feet in length, that drag many fishing lures through the water that simulate food which salmon feed upon, subsequently catching them on a hook. Seiners are the largest salmon boats, 50-80 feet in length, that catch salmon in a purse seine. A purse seine is a very large net that a boat encircles a school of fish with, which is then closed off, capturing the fish inside.

The first component of the Mifflin Plan was the introduction of area licensing. The DFO, through the Mifflin Plan, divided the westcoast of BC into three areas for gillnetting and trolling, and two areas for seining. Prior to the Mifflin Plan, any non-seine salmon licensed boat could gillnet or troll anywhere along the BC coast that was open for salmon harvesting at a given time. A seine-licensed boat could seine, gillnet or troll; though most were content to seine. With the introduction of area licensing, a license holder was compelled to choose one area and one gear type for their existing license. After the introduction of the Mifflin Plan, a license holder desiring to fish more than one area would be required to purchase one or more, license(s) from another boat or boats.

The second part of the Mifflin Plan was a federally funded voluntary buy-back program. Those vessel owners who wished to leave the commercial fishery were encouraged to submit a bid to the DFO for the retirement of their salmon license. There was to be no compensation for boats or equipment. No retraining programs were to be established for displaced westcoast salmon fishers, such as those that were introduced in Newfoundland in concert with the moratorium on fishing cod. Eighteen week, make-work programs were promised for fishers displaced by the Mifflin Plan and collecting Unemployment Insurance. The looming consequences of the Mifflin Plan were immediately apparent to members of the fishery-dependent community of the N'angis First Nation. The wife of one long-time seine skipper described with dismay one of the

initial responses of the fishers to the DFO's restructuring program:

Shortly after the Mifflin Plan was announced a meeting was held to discuss the changes to licensing. In a community where everyone has an opinion, especially about fishing, the fishermen were stunned and overwhelmed. Many could not speak because they were so choked up. It almost looked as if some of those big guys were going to cry.

One fisherman who is quite well off got up and said "Does this mean I'm going to have to put out \$90,000.00 every year to rent another license?" The others sat there in silence because they could not conceive of having that much money anyway. Eventually the meeting had to be called because nobody was saying anything; the magnitude of the changes had stunned them. We're going to be back at square one again. One of the saving graces for us as Native people is we are used to being on welfare. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 3, 1996)

My research documents the initial responses of the N'angis First Nation fishers' to the implementation of a fundamental restructuring of the BC salmon fishery. It does not attempt to exhaustively predict the complete consequences of the Mifflin Plan restructuring. The intent of the Mifflin Plan emphasizes *conservation, economic viability, and resource development through shared responsibility* (Fisheries and Oceans: B-PR-96-07E). The DFO's 'visionary' goals should be noted, as they are the probes used for this study.

Originally I intended to focus on the initial responses of both the N'angis First Nation and non-Aboriginal communities of Y'alis, otherwise known as Alert Bay, Cormorant Island, British Columbia (BC), to the Mifflin Plan. The goal of my study was altered by two factors. First, it is apparent that historically the non-aboriginal presence on Y'alis is dependent on the prior presence of the N'angis in the fishery and other commerce. Many members of the non-Aboriginal community remain economically

dependent on the N'angis population that constitutes the consumers and customers for their businesses, and/or the services they provide to them. Second, I had previously been a research assistant on another study that focused on the history of the N'angis First Nation school, the Tlisalagi'lakw School. This provided me with N'angis acquaintances, a starting point. Third, it was impressed on me by many N'angis' fishers that I could not understand the immediate responses to the Mifflin Plan without a critical examination of the history of the salmon fishery. The history of N'angis' participation in the BC salmon industry was interwoven into all discussions of the Mifflin Plan. I believe it is incumbent upon me to present their historical perspective, a history in which the Mifflin Plan is the final chapter for many N'angis fishers.

It is important for the reader to appreciate that my research was conducted during a specific political moment, just a few months after the Mifflin Plan had been announced. During the months between the announcement and the commencement of my research, the N'angis fishers had analyzed the Mifflin Plan and projected the possible consequences for themselves and the community. As a result the narratives that were collected in this study present a unified story that forwards the best interests of the community. I believe individual fishers set aside individual differences and contradictions for the well being of all. Anthropological research cannot be conducted outside of the contexts - political, social, cultural, and social practices in which they are embedded. To the contrary they are informed by

these contexts (Rabinow, 1986: 234-261). I do not believe that the N'angis fishers unified story detracts or diminishes this study but reflects the degree to which a community can unite in when confronted with adversity.

This history is informed by the N'angis fishers' narratives that establish their presence in the BC commercial fishery from its beginnings into the present. The N'angis' fishers that I interviewed asserted that the appropriate place to begin looking at the commercial fishery was its earliest beginnings. However, the N'angis' relationship with salmon and salmon fishing predates European contact; several of the narratives reference this lengthy history. Therefore, after a short discussion of anthropological theory and method, I will go on to locate Y'alis and its inhabitants geographically and historically prior to European contact. This will be followed by a critical history of the BC salmon industry from its inception in the late 19th Century to 1996. Guided by the fishers' narratives, I briefly reconstruct from secondary, published sources the historical, political, and economic context in which the industry developed and the N'angis fishers' participation since its inception. The remainder of the history is constructed from the narratives of the N'angis fishers.

The implementation of the Mifflin Plan created economic and mental hardship for many N'angis fishers', their families, and the community. Only a few of these people were able to secure a public forum in which to air their critiques and grievances. Most of these people will never be extended the respect of an adequate public forum. I hope that through this thesis these critiques

will gain some proper public exposure, however minimal it may be. It would be appropriate for these repudiations to be presented in a broader forum to express, and perhaps offset, some of the frustration, fear, and perception of abandonment caused by the Mifflin Plan.

1.2 Theory as a Heuristic Resource

It is commonly recognized in the field of contemporary anthropology that an ethnographer brings all of his or her experiences and biases to a study, and this influences all aspects of the research process. I am therefore compelled to situate myself within this topic. As a child I spent my formative years in the fishing village of Steveston, BC. Most of my friends were members of fishing families. It seemed only natural that one day I would work the deck of a fish boat. In time I acquired my own boat, and over the years became politically active within the industry. During my last years of fishing it was apparent to me that the salmon stocks were in trouble. Much to my dismay, I found that very few within the industry were inclined to work towards a pragmatic, inclusive approach for fisheries management.

The prejudice and racism that impairs the possibility of respect and cooperation within the industry especially distressed me. The Federal government's vacillating history of inclusion and exclusion of First Nations and Japanese Canadians, as well as the influx of highly motivated refugees and immigrants, factored into an economically and ecologically unstable fishery has made for a volatile socio-cultural exchange within the fishing industry. These circumstances did not encourage cooperation among the

different groups in the fishing industry that was urgently needed to resolve the mounting problems confronting the health of the resource and those who were dependent on it.

In frustration I sold my boat at the end of the season in 1990. I decided to return to school in an attempt to understand the ways of the world from a different perspective. I have maintained a keen interest in fishery issues, and I maintain a hope that someday a peaceful compromise will be arrived at that will ensure a future for this resource and those that depend on it.

I am deeply committed to living in a just society. I do not believe that there can be any semblance of peace within the salmon fishery, or throughout Canada for that matter, until First Nations land and sea claims are settled. Furthermore, I am highly critical of coercive extra-local management, and the machinations perpetrated by corporate capitalists. I used my personal background as a foundation of knowledge from which to enter into experiential dialogues with the N'angis fishers who participated in this study.

Having come to academia after many years of blue-collar work, theory must be, for me, a practical tool. It should assist in the practical construction of knowledge for application and usage. The primary use of theory in academia has traditionally been the concentration of analyses for use in dissemination and comparison within the academic community. In this capacity, theory should be a source of revealed efficacious insight. But, theory should not be, simply, a good looking model on paper that never realizes any

practical use. For example, in theory the Fisheries Act of Canada is one of the most stringent, national environmental protection acts globally. Yet, there has been little application of this act to enforce environmental protection and prevent habitat degradation, as can be witnessed in the continued decline and loss of salmon spawning grounds. The question thus becomes, how does one select the appropriate model from the plethora that exists?

As anthropology's uniqueness within the social sciences is in part distinguished by its developed use of ethnographic methods, it is appropriate that the researcher employ a theory that reflects the ethnographic encounter. It should not simply be a matter of slotting the ethnographic data into a framework that does not follow observations made in the field. This does not mean one cannot engage in theoretical exploration and extrapolation. But to avoid sophistry, one should yield to the theoretical influence of the ethnographic experience. For there to be any grounded utility, theory should exemplify the content and nature of the ethnographic study. Accordingly, I have chosen political ecology as the theoretical guide for the dissemination of this study. I believe this to be a suitable selection as the fundamentals of political ecology are complementary to the discourse of the participants that emerged through the study.

Political ecology melds the conceptual utilities of cultural ecology and political economy into an efficacious framework for the study and analysis of resource based-communities embedded in the context of global relations (Anderson: 1994; Caufield: 1997; Sheridan: 1988; Stonich: 1993). Political ecology is ethically

orientated towards social justice for those assailed by extra-local hegemony and regulatory control exacted by self-distanced, government bureaucracies and corporate entities (McGuire: 1996).

My vision of social justice, which I believe is broadly consistent with that of the N'angis fishers I interviewed, is threefold. First, those who have been displaced from employment and who desire to be employed in the commercial fishery, or elsewhere, should be extended the opportunity to do so. Second, the authority of the N'angis fishers' experience and knowledge should be recognized and validated through meaningful consultation and through practical application for the maintenance and appropriate harvest of marine resources. Finally, the N'angis First Nation as a whole must be extended the courtesy and respect to self-determine their own future.

The 'ecology' in political ecology does not correlate to a typical understanding of the natural environment as is characteristically promoted by environmentalists. It is an expansive, inclusive apprehension that recognizes the socio-cultural world as a profound, interdependent interaction with the environment. Political ecology realistically views resource-based communities as embedded within the complexities of the multi-variant, socio-political world, including the intricacies of dynamic global economics. Indeed, many environmentalists may be disappointed that political ecology is not a science that studies flora and fauna. Political ecology's focus is the social world, its interaction with the 'natural' environment, and the social

construction and understanding of the environment (Atkinson, 1991:3-4).

Political ecology is not dependent upon erroneous assumptions of explicit or implicit evolutionary models and epistemologies that have no basis in indigenous knowledge systems (Deloria, 1992). To the contrary, it is imperative that political ecology scrutinize locally conceptualized cultural ecology and ethno-methodology, so as to facilitate discussions that can illuminate the schisms that contribute to competition and oppression, which all too frequently contribute to ecological destruction (Atkinson, 1991: 105-107).

Political ecology is also distinguished from cultural ecology. Cultural ecology embraces bio-scientific modeling that vivisects resource-based communities in an attempt to isolate their constituent elements. This reductionist process erroneously disregards the intricacy of these communities, and portrays them as simplistic, often romanticized, "folk" societies (McGoodwin, 1990; Moran, 1990). Whether one's focus of study is artisanal fishers or industrial fishers, it is inaccurate to analytically diminish the complexity of their ecological sphere. To do so, one wrongly delineates these people as naive, isolated cultural oddities.

It is appropriate and sensible to examine local uniqueness, but through these observations one should not segregate and encapsulate these communities in analytical cultural vacuums. Local actualities should be viewed as firmly established in complex relationships that are vast in experience and scope, with

attentive scrutiny to local epistemologies that does not supersede or invalidate local experiences. To do otherwise would be to contribute to extra-local hegemonic discourses, or as Ulf Hannerz explains as "unfree flow" -- the intervention and over-arching influence of the: media communications, culture dominance, economics, politics, and power (Hannerz, 1992: 100-125). Commenting on this characteristic anthropological propensity, Hannerz succinctly states: "Anthropologists habitually see people as restricted to places, their thinking mirroring peculiarities of local ecology, the science of the concrete can thus be written as the poetry of confinement" (Hannerz, 1992: 216).

Yet, there remains a compassionate import for anthropology to study small and oft times marginalized communities, if for no other reason than that anthropology is one of the few disciplines that attempts to eliminate the debilitating effects of marginalization by celebrating the richness of cultural complexity of smaller communities. To accurately establish how and why communities become marginalized, the communities must not be abstracted from the complex global ecology that they live within. Political ecology is the study of society written large, with issues, ideas, and problems that flow across physical, cultural, and social boundaries. (Atkinson, 1991: 59-89)

Concurrently, political ecology interrogates the veracity of "folk management". There is a tendency in anthropology to valorize small scale, 'folk' societies that are not 'tainted' by the influences of market capitalism (McGuire, 1996). Many anthropological studies of environment and society have been

conducted under the influences of cultural ecology and its descendants: the ecosystems approach and systems ecology (Moran, 1990). These essentially structural-functionalist frameworks still remain important for an initial examination of the contingent relations of smaller social groups to their physical environments. They are, however, limiting in that the focus remains on smaller groups and does not attempt to grapple with the social confluence between smaller communities and nation states that are integral and essential to environmental studies. Environmental studies that aspire to claim comprehensive insight can no longer restrict themselves to microanalyses extracted from macro contexts.

The influential insights produced from chaos analyses (Gilbertson 1993; Smith 1990; and Wilson and Kleban 1992) have tended to promote folk management as a means of ameliorating poor management and rapacious competition. Unfortunately, the success of folk management has been mixed. The collection of case studies Folk Management in the World's Fisheries: Lessons for Modern Fisheries Management (Dyer and McGoodwin 1994) argues that globally there has been a tendency towards failure of folk management systems. Despite this, political ecology theorists argue that the promotion of local management should not be discounted irresponsibly. The theoretical intent of political ecology is the promotion of a broader understanding, not the fortification of claims asserted by extra-local agencies. Promoting expansive understanding will hopefully lead to the reintegration of appropriate local management for a cooperative,

balanced approach to ecological management in a variety of ecological applications.

Fittingly, political ecology theorists also employ the efficacy of political economy that often illuminates exploitative relationships between small communities and corporate capital. Even so, political ecologists avoid reductionist quantitative analyses through studies of both internal and external perspectives. External ascription is common in environmental debates and studies. This necessitates greater attention be heeded to internal perceptions, to avoid reification of class structures that local communities do not envisage. Political ecologists consequently avoid overly determined discourses that reflect sociological divisions of class and geography, the preexisting "structuring structures" (Bourdieu, 1977), ideological structures and the resulting hegemonic ascriptions that too often bound and predetermine political debates.

The predominance of hegemonic ascription creates static binary oppositions wherein rural, resource-dependent communities are often forced to fight the narrow debate of jobs versus the environment with their urban opposition. This common focus in the environmental debates is too narrow to reveal the complexity of attitudes and beliefs of rural communities towards the ecology (Dunk, 1994). It does not promote, nor often permit, the exploration of alternative possibilities that fall outside the parameters of predetermined, bounded debates. Consequently, political ecology theorists must attempt to erode overly determined discourse and provoke, if not facilitate, an insightful

dialogue between rural communities, urban-based environmentalists and governmental overseers: a dialogue that can illuminate the fallacy of simplistic reductionism.

I believe there is a congenial alignment between political ecology and maritime anthropology, the anthropological study of fishing and maritime communities.¹ In my experience, the principles of political ecology closely associate with the method through which fishers, N'angis included, study their ecology.

Generally, fishers are notably observant and introspective. Fishers are deeply attuned to the environment by necessity, for this is how they derive and maintain their subsistence. They know the different sea conditions, the tides, and the weather. Fishers have an intimate knowledge of the oceanic biological spectrum. They have an informed understanding, and appreciation of the different fish runs. With meticulous detail, fishers have charted the oceanic migrations of the salmon. They carry in their mind's eye detailed maps of numerous salmon spawning grounds. Fishers are able to predict relative strength of salmon runs. They have a full appreciation of the effects that predators, human and non-human, have upon the aquatic system. They are also fully conversant with the effects of environmental degradation on aquatic systems. Fishers are meticulous marine scientists who are preoccupied with observation and deduction. Yet, they do not rely solely on their own deductions. Much like the academic scientific community, fishers formulate hypotheses, build arguments for and against them, corroborate them with their cohorts, and juxtapose

these against the publications of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Fishers seldom have academic accreditation. Instead, they establish their credentials by proudly disclosing their fishing experience. A conversation between a fisher and a non-fisher will often begin with the recitation of their connection to the industry, their kinship, and their genealogy. One of the fishers I interviewed began an introduction of him in this way:

I would have been seining for forty years if I was going out this year. I started fishing with my father when I was a little kid. I can't remember a time when I was not on a boat. I got my first half share when I was twelve years old. My wife fished with me and so did her brother. My sons fished with me too. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 11, 1996)

In this manner fishers' proclaim that they are learned people. They maintain an accumulative knowledge, refined and augmented over time.

With the introduction of every new development into the salmon fishery, N'angis fishers have carefully observed and noted the corresponding results. They have thoughtfully observed the accumulative impact of technological innovations on the fishery resource. They are also fully aware of the gradual concentration of capital within the industry, and have observed global markets keenly. N'angis fishers would probably not be aware of the theory of political ecology, but I do not believe they would dispute its intent.

Ecology is a complex web of natural and social systems. The problems of the natural environment have often been caused by the failure to perceive the harm stemming from static systems of

usage. Likewise, solutions to these problems cannot be properly formulated without dispelling naive assumptions that inform 'understandings' of resource-dependent communities. Political ecology strives to challenge erroneous descriptions of social-cultural-class that compartmentalize communities, promote alienation, and prevent cooperative ecological management.

I sincerely believe that all knowledge is an offering of abundant utility. I hope that through the accomplishment of this study, I am able to reciprocate the gift of knowledge that was extended to me by those that participated in this study.

1.3 A Summer in the Bay: Methodology

I conducted this study over a five-month period during 1996, in Alert Bay. I was able to confirm my fieldnotes where necessary during a short follow-up visit in the spring of 1997. I was granted formal permission from the N'angis First Nation Chief and Council to conduct this study. I am extremely grateful for their assistance, and that of the N'angis First Nation administrative staff. I collected the primary source of information for this study, the individual narratives, in a variety of locales: my rented apartment, individual's homes, and the various places where fishers congregate. The secondary source of information came through my attendance, though not participation, in a variety of private and public meetings that were convened because of the crisis created by the Mifflin Plan. Once the subject of this study became known, through word of mouth, I had little trouble finding participants. Likewise, there was little need of prompting to arouse in-depth discussions.

Many fishers are accomplished observers. What may be a surprise to many non-fishers, who view fishers as closed mouthed - reticent individuals, is that fishers have an inclination towards conversation, especially with their peers about fishing. They spend many of their non-fishing hours in coffee shops, boat galleys, on wharves, in bars and at meetings discussing and analyzing the fishery past and present. All new developments in the fishery are carefully considered and exhaustively examined using one's historical knowledge and the insight of fishing partners and friends. In this manner hypotheses are tested, inaccuracies are corrected, and consensus is oft times reached. The dynamics of the fishery are analyzed and the history of the industry is compiled and preserved through these processes.

It is probably partially due to these analytical processes that I found no appreciable deviation in the N'angis fishers' historical accounts and critiques of the DFO. The differences in individual's narratives were essentially personal reminiscences about boats, catches, family and crewmembers, not fundamental departures in opinion. Also, the economic dependency of the N'angis First Nation on the salmon fishery, prior to the Mifflin Plan, fosters community solidarity in their assessment of their ecology. Similar, communal, narrative cohesion in resource-dependent communities in crisis is common in political ecology studies; theorists believe individuals forward the communal well-being at the expense of their differing opinion (Anderson, 1994; Caufield, 1997; Sheridan, 1988; Stonich, 1993).

The context, the influence of the political moment, in which the N'angis fishers participated in this study should be not forgotten. This context remained the overarching influence on the participation in this study. N'angis fishers participated in this study with the understanding that the study would become an academic thesis. They were also aware that the study could be used by the N'angis First Nation for whatever purposes they deemed appropriate. The N'angis fishers had undergone a dialogic process of consensus building prior to the beginning of this study. They had set aside differences and contradictions to construct a narrative that forwarded a unified voice in whatever forum presented itself.

As I noted in the introduction, the narratives I collected during this study, from the N'angis fishers, are an exceptional history of the BC commercial fishery. This history is a complex, somewhat tangled story that must, as I was repeatedly told, be fully appreciated to gain an understanding of the present and the response to the Mifflin Plan. I cannot relate herein the entirety of the richness of the accumulated narratives, complete with anecdotes, exacting details, and numeric data recalled with amazing accuracy sometimes decades later.

Most of the narratives were collected from male Seine boat skippers, also referred to as captains, between the ages of forty and sixty. In my experience, it is the skippers who are often the most vocal members of boat crews. I was able to interview some crewmembers, but not as many as I would have liked to. The

perspectives of the crewmembers I did record did not deviate from the general opinions expressed by the skippers.

There are only a small number of women working directly as crew on fish boats. Women, however, are an integral part of a family fishing business. Women often provide an onshore support system for the boats out fishing - ordering supplies, maintaining accounts and balance sheets, and keeping up-to-date on fishery related news through land based communications. I had the opportunity to discuss this study with only two women, and once again, they did not contradict the skippers' accounts on any of the fundamental issues. I encountered only one dissenting opinion in favour of the Mifflin Plan from a non-N'angis fisher, but this individual did not desire to discuss his perspective.

I believe there are three main concerns that influence the collection of narratives or oral histories as a research methodology -- translation, context, and analysis.² Translation concerns are focused on the translation of other languages into English and the translation of non-Western forms of story telling or orality into Western anthropological forms. All the narratives collected by me were transmitted in English. I did not discern any narratives related in a non-Western format.

Context in oral history is word of depth and meaning. In this study I am concerned with the political-ecological context of the N'angis fishers. Within this context, I would like to bring to the attention of the reader that the N'angis are well versed in anthropology and anthropological methods. There have been scores of anthropologists, linguists, ethnobotanists and variety of other

scholars study and work in Alert Bay since the arrival of Franz Boas to Kwakwaka'wakw territory a century ago. For example, during the time that I conducted this study there was an anthropologist, staying in the apartment next door to me, working for the N'amqis on family lineages. I also met three other anthropologists, two linguists, and an ethnobotanist at the U'Mista Cultural Centre during the summer of 1996. Indeed, an anthropology student working on an honors thesis had warmed up many of the participants in this study with her study of fishing in Alert Bay. The overriding political context of influence for the narratives collected was the crisis brought on by the Mifflin Plan.

Analysis of oral narratives is a source of great debate amongst academics. I will not engage this debate herein other than to promote Renato Rosaldo's conception of "analytical narrative" as a form and method (1980: 89-99). Analytical narrative facilitates "double vision" that lends definition to the historian's, or anthropologist's, composition with reference to the collaborators' conception of the past. Rosaldo argues that analytical narrative "...can make connections, both temporal and societal, more ramified and densely woven than usual in other analytical modes" (1980: 90). Analytical narrative, moreover, accesses many narratives, rather than a single source to create "convergent lines of evidence", thereby a greater understanding (Rosaldo, 1980: 97).

The people who collaborated with me in this study were thoughtful and articulate. I hope that this is accurately

reflected in my composition. In this study I have utilized analytical narrative and the principles of political ecology as a means of associating the many narratives into an account that reflects the recurring, congruent concerns of those who were gracious enough to enlighten me. I have attempted to reflect the confluence of issues that emerged from their narratives. Hopefully this study, assembled from these conversations, reveals the depth of the N'angis' understanding of their complex ecology.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 First Impressions

May 8, 1996

I am returning to Alert Bay for my second, consecutive summer. As has become my habit when first arriving I take a quick tour.

Arriving by ferry at Cormorant Island, I am directly confronted by Alert Bay past and present. Adjacent to the ferry slip is a government wharf where a variety of commercial vessels are moored. The wharf is idle even though the salmon season is approaching; it should be bustling with the preparatory activities of scraping, painting, and general repairs. I must immediately decide whether to turn left on to Reserve lands or right to the municipality of Alert Bay, the "Indian end" or the "White end" a cleavage, a border, created during the colonial settlement of Cormorant Island.

I head left onto the Reserve. Across the main street from the wharf is the cafe/pool hall. Children run in and out with ice-creams and soft drinks in their hands. Sitting in the booths that line the windows are fishers sipping coffee looking across to the

wharf, discussing sports, politics, and fishing. Waiting for something to give them impetus to shake off their inactivity.

Traveling north along the road, following the arch of the shoreline that is broken by the skeletons of rotting docks, is a row of houses facing out onto the water. In the yards are the flotsam and jetsam of maritime culture - rope, nets, row boats, fish totes, floats, spars, crab traps, smoke houses, et cetera. Small groups of young mothers slowly saunter past these houses pushing their babies in strollers. Here and there young men sit on the sea wall, smoking cigarettes, throwing stones into the water. Taxi cabs scurry back and forth displaying the universal impatience of their drivers. Where are they hurrying to? Along this road is a bingo hall that fills up regularly, disgorging great plumes of smoke as the players hang over cards, daubers at ready to stab the numbers. There is also the small, aged Anglican Church, dignified and defiant. Farther down the road is a service station; hidden amongst its shadows there is some activity.

Across from it on the waterfront are the two large, lonely buildings that at one time housed the now defunct oyster farm project. Even farther along yet is the large, shambling, plywood meeting hall that houses the born-again mission. At the end of the road is the N'angis First Nation's wharf with only a handful of boats tied to it, doleful, seemingly abandoned. Immediately inland from the wharf is a hulking, brick building, with paint chips hanging off it like the scales on a spawned out salmon, the former St. Michael's Residential school. Despite its external appearance, the interior is an animated, multi-use centre of

activity. It houses: the N'angis First Nation administrative offices, the Kwakwaka'wakw Territories Fisheries Office, an extension of the North Island College, the Musgamagw Tsawataineuk Tribal Council offices, and in the basement there is a carving school. Next door to "St. Mikes" is the extraordinary U'Mista Cultural Centre: a museum, a cultural research centre, a gift shop selling the products of local artists, and a tourist attraction. The road now turns north past the N'angis Health Centre, past more houses and the ever active soccer field. Next to the soccer field is the Big House, the traditional, spiritual centre for the Y'alis' Kwakwaka'wakw³. The road continues to wind around the residents of the Reserve, dead ending at the Tlisalagi'lakw School that nurtures the future.

Returning to the colonial divide and turning south along the main road, one enters the business section of Alert Bay. The buildings zigzag back and forth along the road. Immediately along the waterfront is the BC Packers buildings, windows broken by rocks thrown in the night, decrepit, only minimally used as a net loft and storage. Next door to it is a bed and breakfast, fast food outlet and beauty parlor. Down below is the marine fuel dock, where the Mayor of Alert Bay holds court. Across the street is a bar and hotel complex. A man stumbles out into the sunlight blinking, and then heads right back in. Then comes a supermarket and hardware store. Across the street is a newly opened fitness centre, whose neighbour is a pharmacy. Adjoining this is an extravagant promenade that stretches along to the municipal office - tourist centre and beyond to the pleasure boat wharf. On the

other side of the street is a small apartment complex. Next door is the government building that houses: the RCMP detachment, the post office and the liquor store. Across from the wharf is the newly opened Italian restaurant, the owner sitting on the deck waiting for a customer. The hospital and library adjoin each other, their institutional white a stark contrast to their neighbour, the Nimpkish cemetery; its respectful memorial vigilantly guarded by family totem poles. Kitty corner to the cemetery is the shipyard and chandlery, now idle. Beside it is the electronics repair shop and video rental outlet. Another series of fish wharves in various stages of decay proceed south from the shipyard. Back on the other side of the street is a smaller grocery store, the proprietor out front promoting a bar-b-que lunch fare, though there appears to be no one to take up the offer. The newest hotel and bar is a quick walk from the store. Next door to it is the fire hall. Then comes the decrepit movie theater that only shows a film if more than four people turn up for a screening. Back over to the waterfront is the last hotel and bar, the only place that seems to have any amount of activity this afternoon. Half of the businesses are up for sale, the other half rumoured to be on the verge of bankruptcy, with the exception of the liquor outlets. Stretching along the remainder of the road is residential housing.

2.2 Before European Contact

The N'angis' ancestral home is *Gwa'ni*, or the Nimpkish River on Vancouver Island, and the origins of their first home is related in this following creation story of the N'angis, which can

be found next to a photograph of the original village in the U'Mista Cultural Centre.

'Namois

When the Transformer (or Creator), 'Kaniki'lakw, traveled around the world, he eventually returned to the place where Gwa'nalalis lived. In an earlier encounter, the Transformer had beaten Gwa'nalalis, who was ready for his return.

'Kaniki'lakw asked, "Would you like to become a cedar tree?" Gwa'nalalis replied, "No, cedar trees, when struck by lightning, split and fall. Then they rot away for as long as the days dawn in the world."

'Kaniki'lakw asked again, "Would you like to become a mountain?" "No," Gwa'nalalis answered, "For mountains have slides and crumble away for as long as the days dawn in the world."

The Transformer asked a third question. "Would you like to become a big boulder?" Again Gwa'nalalis answered, "No. Do not let me become a boulder, for I may crack in half and crumble away for as long as the days dawn in the world."

Finally, 'Kaniki'lakw asked, "Would you like to become a river?" "Yes let me become a river that I may flow as long as the days shall dawn in the world," Gwa'nalalis replied. Putting his hand on Gwa'nalalis' fore head and pushing him down prone, 'Kaniki'lakw said, "There, friend, you will be a river and many kinds of salmon will come to you to provide food to your descendants for as long as the days shall dawn in the world." And so, the man Gwa'nalalis became a river, Gwa'ni.

Pal'nakwala Wa'kas (Dan Cramner) 1930

Historically all the First Nations communities along the BC coast were established adjacent to salmon bearing river systems so that the communities could easily access this rich food source. Salmon was an important commodity traded with those people inland that did not have access to this resource. Depending on the geographic locations, and different preferences, a variety of methods were used to harvest salmon. Those inhabiting coastal villages and islands would troll for fish from canoes using wooden lures, or baited wooden hooks. At other times gillnets and reef nets would be employed. Various First Nations would also migrate seasonally to intercept spawning salmon entering river systems. Gillnets, weirs and beach trawls were utilized within river deltas. Further up the river systems, where turbulent water was a

factor, fish traps, dip nets, gaff hooks and spears were the preferred methods for salmon harvesting. (Provincial Archives: Vol.4: 14-15, 46; Vol.5: 13-18, 59-60; Vol.6: 14-16; Vol.7: 13-16, 43)

Salmon were consumed fresh when available. They were also sun and wind dried, and/or smoked for storage. In colder regions away from the coast, fish were frozen for storage when colder weather coincided with returning fish. Along with the consumption of the flesh, various parts of the body were processed and utilized. Other by-products were: dried or salted roe, the skin was made into containers and clothing, and the oil was used as a condiment and utility oil (Hayden, 1992: 177-201). Salmon was the primary source of protein subsistence and it formed the basis of economic activity. Other important marine sources also augmented salmon. In coastal communities the full spectrum of aquatic resources were utilized: cods, sablefish, herring, herring roe on kelp, halibut, shellfish, marine mammals, anything that is edible, were supplemental food sources. Some river systems provided harvestable quantities of spawning eulachons that were dried or rendered for their oil; this product is a condiment, a fuel source, and was an important trade good that formed the basis of a market economy for many groups (Provincial Archives: Vol.4: 14-15, 46; Vol.5: 13-18, 59-60; Vol.6: 14-16; Vol.7: 13-16, 43; Newell, 1993: 30-42).

Though this is only a brief overview of the First Nations' traditional fisheries, the point that I wish to emphasize is that First Nations had a developed, complex fishery economy. Salmon

and other marine resources provided subsistence and formed the basis for trade amongst different First Nations. This was not a market economy defined by the cash nexus, but it was a recognizable inter-nation economic system. Many non-Aboriginal parties within the present commercial fishery refuse to recognize this pre-existing system, and accordingly call for the elimination of any commercial development for First Nations that is not already present in the commercial fishery.

2.3 Geography and Demography - After European Contact

I had to remind those guys, we were here first. We were the ones that taught them how to fish. Where the reefs and snags are. How the tide runs. Where to fish, and when. This industry was built on the back of the fishery that existed before the whitemen came. They should not forget that this was a gift to share. Now look where we are.

(Clark, D, unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 19, 1996)

Alert Bay is one of many small communities along the BC coast whose economic base was derived from and dependent on the commercial fishery. Alert Bay, Cormorant Island is centrally located in the Kwakwaka'wakw territories at the northern most entrance to Johnstone Strait, at the north-east of Vancouver Island; a long narrow waterway through which many migratory salmon stocks pass on their return to their spawning grounds. It is a geographically isolated island, accessible by airplane, BC Ferries via Port McNeil on Vancouver Island, or private boats. It is a small island approximately 4 kilometers long and 0.8 kilometers wide, 320 hectares in all. (Gillis, 1993:18)

Cormorant Island is home to two locally defined communities: the "White end", and the "Indian end". These two communities in actuality include three geographically distinct communities: the

N'angis First Nation, the largest group; the non-Aboriginal community members of the Municipality Alert Bay; and a composite of Kwakwaka'wakw that reside on the Whe-La-La-U reserve. Whe-La-La-U, which translates variously as - gathered together or All Nations Reserve, is now home to some of the former residents of: Gilford Island, Kingcome Inlet, New Vancouver, Village Island, and Turnour Island. Alert Bay is the common identity used by most, one that will be used herein except where specificity is required.

The total population of the island is approximately 900 - 1,550 Aboriginal and 650 non-Aboriginal (Municipality of Alert Bay, 1996). The N'angis First Nation has 1,324 registered members. The Whe-La-La-U has 179 members. The number of people that actually reside on reserve lands ebbs and flows as people explore alternatives to reserve life in urban centres. Even so, Alert Bay remains home even to those that have chosen to establish long-term residency elsewhere. The following statement from one fisher exemplifies the deep attachment held and expressed by many for their home, Alert Bay:

My parents sent me to school in Vancouver in the late 50's. They wanted me to have the best education possible. Well, I got an education, but not the one they hoped for. Before going there, I only had a vague idea about what it meant to be an Indian. I was a happy, friendly person when I first went there. I would get on the bus and try to talk to everyone around me. It didn't take long for me to realize that people weren't talking to me because I looked and talked different. School became a hostile place for me. So it wasn't long before I would get on the bus in the morning and instead of going to school, I would head downtown. Well the drinking and the drugs came fast and heavy. This only furthered the prejudice against me. It wasn't until I came home to the Bay that I was able to start recovering. I never did get a school education, but I have the education of life. The most important lesson I have learned is wherever I go, and I have traveled all over the world, is that Alert Bay is my home and the N'angis are my family (Clark, D., unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 12, 1996)

Prior to the 1850's, Y'alis was not permanently occupied and "...was used by the Kwakwaka'wakw people as a summer fish camp, berry picking ground and a stop-over when they were traveling between villages" (Speck, 1987:7). The N'angis' adopted Y'alis as their home and it affords them a view of their ancestral home Gwa'ni. There is a fundamental attachment to Y'alis, Gwa'ni, and the surrounding environs for the N'angis. These areas and the resources found therein are an essential part of how they identify themselves as a culture and as a people. They have entered into the comprehensive land and sea claims process, and Cormorant Island is the subject of a specific claims application.

2.4 Fishy Business: Racial Economics and the BC Commercial Fishery

You see the Nimpkish river. My people fished there for years and got loads and loads of fish out of it. Some how later on, at the mouth of the river, let's say this is the Nimpkish (drawing a map on the table) and my people fished all along here, and BC Packers (BCP) eventually moved in there. And because they were not paying, for fish, my people were delivering to Americans that were out there fishing. So what could BCP do, and other big companies do, was to push for legislation that banned selling fish without a permit from BCP. BCP bought the leases and so the Indian people were not allowed to own boats and sell fish without permits. Then they go to Ottawa and pass a law, Ottawa says we cannot sell our fish. The same thing happened with the fur trade, because the Indians use to pack all the stuff to Victoria and the Americans would come and buy it. Hudson Bay pushed through a law. Corporations, big corporations, have been trying to gain control forever. (Clark, D, unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 4, 1996)

The memory of disenfranchisement remains current for the N'angis, as is illustrated by the preceding quote from an angry, displaced fisher with forty years of fishing experience. Like the development of all the resource industries in BC, the commercial fishery was advanced at the expense of the First Nations. The aggressive creation of land reserves through land alienation came

with the increased number of European emigrants and facilitated the growth of the commercial fishery. It was generally thought that First Nations populations were in decline. This was deduced from the horrid fact that foreign diseases between 1774 and 1874 had devastated 80% of this population. (Galois, 1994:39-46) This factor had a great influence on the designation of small tracts of lands as reserves. Also, it was believed that the creation of larger reserves would redirect First Nation's labour away from fishing into other economic activities. The process of reserve creation was ad hoc, sometimes including important fishing sites, oft times not. The process of estrangement led to the founding of many canneries on First Nations' hereditary fishing sites, a situation that was exceedingly problematic for the traditional users, often leading to volatile exchanges. (Ware, 1983)

The following quotation is from a displaced fisher who would like to be able to harvest the Nimpkish River salmon commercially. His statement illustrates the contempt and resentment that many N'angis' maintain for the processes of land and resource alienation even though these processes were accomplished several generations ago. The tradition of hereditary ownership is still understood, appreciated and respected by many N'angis today.

I think Indians have always understood that rights have to come from somewhere. That rights come from hundreds of years ago. If I did not want to anger N'angis people, I would have had to go get permission from the hereditary chief of that tribe, the chief of that river. I just could not go over there and cast a net without being in big trouble. Because the river belongs to somebody. It is not my Aboriginal right to just dip my net there any old place. I have to go the people who own it. So that is the same as anywhere. The same as if a guy goes out here and throws his net in the water. I would have to ask the chief first, did you allow him to go in your territory? Protocol. I think that we have to have a look at that.

(Clark, D, unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 5, 1996)

2.5 Securing "Indian" labour: the creation of Alert Bay

The Kwakwaka'wakw first entered into the post-contact, commercial fishery through trading with European and American ships that plied the coast in the wake of Captain George Vancouver's voyage in 1792. Following the establishment of a Hudson's Bay outpost, Fort Rupert, in 1849 at Hardy Bay on northern Vancouver Island, economic settlers arrived on Cormorant Island, eager to secure land and resources. A salmon saltry and sawmill was established on Cormorant Island sometime between 1860 and 1870. The entrepreneurs of the first saltry were Spencer and Earle.⁴ Their business plan was to harvest and process the Nimpkish River salmon, at that time the exclusive property of the N'angis, utilizing Kwakwaka'wakw labourers. Cormorant Island was chosen as the site to establish this facility because of the deep bay that would accommodate cargo ships. (Gillis, 1983:7)

Spencer and Earle required an exploitable labour force for this saltry to be a profitable enterprise. The N'angis, many of whom were eager to participate in the new economic ventures, were persuaded to relocate from the Nimpkish Valley on Vancouver Island to Cormorant Island. (Galios, 1994:305-319) As a means of securing their labour force, ergo their economic fortunes, Spencer and Earle successfully encouraged the Anglican Church Mission Society to establish a mission. The Society's mission was twofold - to spiritually 'enlighten' the N'angis, and to instill the Protestant work ethic in them. Following the establishment of the mission came: a school, an office for the Department of Indian Affairs, and a provincial police station. All that remained for

full entrenchment of colonial authority was territorial alienation of the N'angis from their ancestral lands. In 1881, the first Indian Agent arrived on Cormorant Island armed with the full force of the Indian Act 1876 bringing about complete colonial entrapment (Culhane Speck, 1987:79-80). Alert Bay became an active outpost to those employed in fishing and forestry from this time forward because of its central location on the maritime transportation routes.

Economically motivated colonizers, like Spencer and Earle, recognized that the demonstrated maritime skills of the First Nations would be required to advance the development of the BC commercial fishery, yet their presence as commercial partners or as competitors was not desired (McKervill, 1992:26-27). First Nation fishers were encouraged to continue fishing to supply the colonizers with fish for food and commerce, and to feed themselves. First Nations labour was aggressively sought after. Men were employed as fishers; women, children and older people were hired as processors and net menders. It was not uncommon for whole villages to migrate during the salmon season to processing facilities. The tactic of extending credit and cash advances was deployed to establish economic dependencies - a system of deficit reciprocity. Thereby the processors, with the assistance of Indian Agents and missionaries, ensured the return of their indentured labour force the following season (Native Brotherhood of BC, 1982).

The earliest analyses of salmon stocks drew the conclusion that they were inexhaustible. First Nations fisheries, apart from

the officially sanctioned commercial fishery, were increasingly considered a competitive threat as the number of canneries increased in the fledgling industry. False accusations that First Nations' fisheries were destroying the runs at the source were propagated (Clark, D, unpublished interview, 1992).

Responding to the perceived competition from First Nations Fisheries, the Department of Fisheries, the DFO's predecessor, began its legacy of direct intervention into the socio-economic management of the salmon fishery. Due to the practice of harvesting salmon as they entered the spawning grounds -- a practical method that could easily be monitored and regulated -- First Nations food fisheries were perceived as a threat to the conservation of spawning stocks. Initially, in 1884 regulations were enacted forbidding the harvest of salmon in and about spawning grounds. The Fisheries Act of 1887 stipulated "...where fishing with white men and with modern appliances, the Indians so fishing should be considered as coming in all respects under the general law." (Department of Fisheries qtd. in Newell, 1993: 63) The role delineated for First Nations' peoples within the fishery was further defined in 1888 with the enactment of the regulation that decreed: "Indians shall, at all times, have liberty to fish for the purposes of providing food for themselves but not for sale, barter or traffic...." (Order in Council, 26 November, 1888 qtd. in, 1993: 62). From this time onward First Nations' fishers were subjected to the colonizers' laws governing the commercial fishery and the "Indian food fishery". Legislation that enforced land and resource alienation denied them the ability to partake

competitively in the developing, lucrative commercial fishery and generally consigned them to the position of labourers.

During the years 1889-1918 the commercial fishery grew rapidly in concert with the worldwide economic upturn. Canneries were established along the whole of the BC coast. First Nations populations decreased proportionately to the over-all population with the influx of non-natives. As canneries spread along the coast, so did non-natives impacting the economic opportunities for First Nations. The increasing number of immigrants to BC after 1900 created a competitive pool of labourers. Fish catch prices also became competitive and contentious. The N'angis seine fishers first attempted to strike for higher fish prices in 1902. Their efforts were thwarted, however, by other fishers in the region that were willing to fish for the lower remuneration offered by the canneries (Knight, 1978: 100). First Nations' fishers and cannery workers found it increasingly difficult to acquire secure employment. This was especially true in the Fraser River delta and southern Vancouver Island areas. White fishers increased significantly. Japanese women displaced many First Nations' workers in the processing plants along the Fraser River as cannery managers exercised a preference for hiring Japanese labour rather than First Nations workers. Elsewhere, due to the influence of Indian agents and missionaries who sought to assimilate First Nations into the market economy, and because of a high demand for labourers in isolated areas, First Nations workers remained a large part of the industry (Knight, 1978:179-196).

In the Nass and Skeena River fisheries, First Nations labour continued to be predominant in the fishing and processing sectors. This was probably due to two factors: the remote location of many of the canneries near First Nation's villages, and the restriction prohibiting the use of gas engines in fish boats in northern waters. The latter was a stipulation that many white fishers did not wish to fish under, though it did not discourage First Nation or Japanese fishers. This acceptance stemmed mainly from the inability of First Nations and Japanese fishers to secure title to fishing licenses and boats in southern waters. A three way ethnic division was thus created within the industry that the processing companies manipulated to their advantage during seasons when fish prices and labour remuneration became an issue of contention. (Hawthorn et al, 1958: 106-110; Newell, 1993: 66-87; Wolcott, 1967: 39-43)

In 1906, further restrictions were placed upon First Nations food fishery. The expedient, selective methods of harvesting salmon with traps and weirs were forbidden.⁵

Beginning in 1910, in response to increasing numbers of people locating to BC, and the continued decline of First Nations populations, the federal government began to reassess its reserve land allocations. Some First Nations that had experienced marked population declines saw their already minimal, reserve lands reduced. In a few cases, partially due to the success of First Nations petitions and tenacious agitation directed at Indian Agents, the reserve lands were increased minimally. Generally though, losses outstripped gains. Many First Nations experienced

further alienation from traditional fishing sites through this process. (Newell, 1993: 86-88) The anger and sense of loss from alienation has not diminished with time as can be seen in this comment from a N'angis fisher regarding the food fishery:

In the past we use to fish where ever we wanted to. Providing we had the permission of the Chief. Now we have to go to the Fisheries like beggars to fish our own waters. (Clark, D, unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 5, 1996)

Accompanying the continued loss of ownership and access to traditional fishing areas were further strictures on First Nations food fishing. In 1917 a regulation was introduced requiring First Nations to obtain a permit from the DFO prior to engaging in fishing. The sale of fish and transport of fish to or from the coast was already forbidden outside of the sanctioned commercial fishery. The provisions were further strengthened by making it unlawful for one to purchase fish from a First Nation person. These regulations established the governance of the First Nations' food fishery, and have remained fundamentally intact to the present.

As the value of the fishery grew, so did the demands upon the resource. All aspects of the fishery became highly regulated. The Federal government, in an attempt to ensure 'maximum sustainable yields'⁵, initiated restrictions on time periods for fish harvesting, limitations on the size and types of gear that could be used to harvest fish, and issued licenses to restrict non-British subjects from fishing in BC waters. Despite the strictures enacted, the market demand for BC salmon, coupled with large runs of salmon prompted further construction of new canneries, and the creation of more efficient means of harvesting

fish in the designated time periods. In the southern part of the province licenses were issued to some individuals, but mainly to canneries. In the north, the Federal government restricted the issuance of licenses to canneries only as an attempt to contain the expansion of the fishery that had eluded them in the south. Despite these policies, the demands for food created by World War I caused the cannery owners to exert compelling pressure upon the Federal government, who issued more licenses each year.

The creation of restricted access licensing impacted First Nations fishers in several ways. When licenses were first issued, many First Nations fishers failed to appreciate the implications of not applying for them. Others simply refused to pay the attendant fee, as they considered it an offense to have to pay for their traditional right to harvest fish. For many First Nations fishers living outside the lower mainland of BC, it was difficult and unreasonable to travel to New Westminster to apply for licenses. This situation was exacerbated when the licensing restrictions were not initially enforced. Many canneries continued to purchase fish from non-licensed First Nations fishers, and some licensed non-Native fishers would purchase fish from First Nations fishers, reselling the fish to the canneries. One retiring fisher explained:

What did a license mean to an Indian living in one of the villages or even in the (Alert) Bay? If you had a boat, you could catch fish. You would find somebody who buy them off of you. A license was a costly nuisance. And you had to go quite far every year to renew the damn thing. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 19, 1996)

Most First Nations workers preferred to work in areas close to their homes, but if necessary, they were willing to relocate

seasonally, or temporarily. It was not unusual for entire communities to relocate for the salmon season. First Nations labour recruiters of traditional, high rank were often employed by canneries to secure labour forces and negotiate prices. Cannery managers also relied upon Indian Agents to provide extra workers, and to collect debts owed to them by First Nations fishers (Knight, 1978: 89-91). Special arrangements were secured by government agencies with canneries not to entice workers away from each other. In many ways this amounted to a paternalistic, semi-feudal arrangement that diminished First Nations workers' mobility and their ability to seek out more lucrative employment.

Many First Nations fishers loathed their ensnarement in maritime, peasant relations, economically dependent on specific canneries, and attempted to extricate themselves from this arrangement by attaining independent licenses. Significant numbers of First Nations fishers applied for private licenses, but the government agency consistently rejected most of these applications. Those that were able to acquire personal licenses were able to negotiate fish prices with canneries on a seasonal basis. (Clark, D, unpublished fieldnotes, 1996)

2.6 1918-1946: The Inter-war Years

There use to be a number of Japanese here. My family and a couple of their families use to be in business together. There use to be a boat yard and net loft over there (on the waterfront) that the Japanese ran very well. They would service the boats and handle the fish. Who knows how prosperous it could have been, if those racists in Ottawa had not interfered? (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 38, 1996)

The external conflicts of the inter-war years prompted a number of changes within the commercial fishery. These included:

changes in the racial composition in the fishery, the creation of new labour forces, and the modernization and mechanization of the commercial fleet.

In an effort to combat Japanese economic domination domestically and internationally, the federal government initiated open access policies for white and First Nations fishers in 1922; essentially this amounted to the issuance of many new commercial fishing licenses. Also, the previous restriction forbidding gas motors in northern fishing vessels was rescinded. The open licensing policy mainly benefited white fishers. First Nations fishers were able to acquire relatively few seine licenses, but they did obtain reasonable numbers of troll licenses along the west coast of Vancouver Island (Newell, 1993: 107).

The principal factor that influenced First Nations fishers' limited ability to acquire licenses and vessels was financing. As a First Nations person living on reserve cannot use their home or land as capital security, those who did receive assistance most often received it from processing companies, and commonly found themselves entangled in a constant cycle of debt owed to the companies that restricted their ability to seek out the highest prices for their fish. (Hawthorn, 1958: 110-11; Newell, 1993: 106-110) A few fortunate First Nation fishers were able to garner the assistance of clerics or others as co-signers of loans so that they were able to acquire boats and licenses (Spradley, 1969: 117-119).

The increase in absolute numbers of vessels coupled with innovations in navigation, and mechanization increased the

catching capacity of the commercial fleet exponentially. Despite the worldwide economic down turn of the Depression during the 1930's, there was a continued rise in the number of canneries. As in the past, canneries continued to seek out First Nations women's labour for processing when needed. But this would be the end of an era for First Nations shoreworkers, as the processing sector began to centralize and adopt mechanization (U'Mista Cultural Centre Archives, 1996; Newell, 1993: 111-113).

During the 1930's, the N'angis fishers recognized that their best interests were not and would not be represented by the United Fisherman and Allied Workers Union (UFAWU), the largest labour union for fishers and shoreworkers in BC. Accordingly the N'angis' fishers established the Pacific Coast Native Fishermen's Association (PCNFA) in 1936 to forward their own interests and well being within the industry. Another First Nations fishers association, the Native Brotherhood of BC, had been created earlier in 1932 by north coast fishers. To forge a strong united front for First Nation fishers, the PCNFA joined the Native Brotherhood of BC (NBBC) in 1942. The NBBC has become the dominant labour representative for First Nations fishers in BC (Knight, 1978: 198-199).

Japanese Canadian fishers were interned during WW II because of the perceived threat to national defense. Consequently, First Nations fishers and processors found their labour once again in demand by the canneries along the Fraser River. Some First Nations fishers acquired fishing vessels that had been confiscated from Japanese fishers. Others were exempted from military service

to contribute to the war effort through fishing. This was a short-lived period of prosperity for First Nations at the expense of relocated Japanese. Following the war, when Japanese were permitted to return to the coast, and European immigration increased, First Nations workers in the processing sector found themselves once again displaced from Fraser River processing plants and this trend proceeded up the coast. (Hawthorn, 1958: 112; Newell, 1993: 115-116)

2.7 1946-1968: Modernization

When I was a kid, I remember my Dad working all the time. He was out on the boat seven to eight months of the year. Fishing herring, halibut and salmon. And when he wasn't out on the boat, he was working in the reduction plant. He worked all the time. But that all changed shortly after the Second World War. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 14, 1996)

After WW II and into the 1960's, the technological transformation of the commercial fishery that began during the inter-war years accelerated rapidly. Local and extra-local markets underwent transformation leading to the concentration of fish processing facilities. Also, the affects of habitat degradation on salmon became a reality.

By 1951 First Nations fishers comprised one-third of the overall number of fishers, but the titles to fishing licenses were mainly held by non-natives (Newell, 1993: 132). The exceptions were First Nations fishers that held title to the licenses, but often rented old and inferior boats and nets from the processors. Some First Nation fishers did manage to maintain licenses and boats, yet they were generally unable to compete with non-Natives on an equal basis. (Hawthorn, 1958: 111; Newell, 1993: 131-133)

Navigation and communication technologies developed by the

military became readily available to the public. Depth sounders, radar, long range radios, refrigeration, and powerful, efficient diesel engines radically transformed the capacity and productivity of the fishing vessels. The cost of these innovations was prohibitive for the majority of First Nations fishers whose primary source of credit remained the processing companies. Many First Nations fishers lost their licenses and vessels to processors when they were not able to maintain their debt repayments (Kavanagh, 1992: 45). Also, when a fisher died who had an outstanding debt to a processor, the processor would simply seize the boat and licenses of the deceased fisher as a means of settling the debt, depriving the family of valuable assets and the source of an income. These are losses that are rarely recouped.

The processing sector also underwent rapid changes during the 1950's - 60's. Marketing forces shifted in both the domestic and international domains; greater emphasis was placed on freezing than previously. The canneries that remained increased their mechanization as innovative, efficient technologies became available. The processing companies began a progressive closure of canneries along the coast, replacing the canneries with buying stations that required less labour and capital maintenance. Over the next twenty years processing operations would become concentrated in Prince Rupert and the Greater Vancouver area, with the exception of years with exceptional run sizes. (Hawthorn, 1958: 115-116; Newell, 1993: 126-128)

These fundamental changes within the commercial fishery were devastating to First Nations economies; whole communities found themselves without the seasonal employment they had come to rely upon. Dependence upon the food fishery became essential, and this

made the food fishery a necessity in the mixed economies of many First Nations. Yet, the government held fast to the established status quo.

The impact of habitat degradation from logging and industrial development on salmon rearing streams was becoming apparent. Also, it was evident that the technologies adapted by the fishing fleet had facilitated their ability to over-exploit the resource. Reacting to these problems, the DFO sought to combat salmon declines by: curtailing First Nations' food fisheries, stepping up enforcement of closures, and to a lesser extent, rehabilitating and enhancing spawning grounds.

The Nimpkish River watershed and the surrounding valley were aggressively logged from the 1960's into the 1990's. Clear-cut logging diminished the salmon rearing capacity of the watershed. A clear-cut of salmon spawning habitats drastically diminishes the ability of an area to nurture roe and fry, especially where there is a loss of riparian coverage along the spawning beds. The problems created by logging for salmon were compounded when the Nimpkish Valley was sprayed with DDT to restrict weed growth, thereby making many areas a toxic hazard for fragile juvenile salmon stocks. I was stopped by an Elder one day who told me of this tragedy. Trembling with anger, he said:

You see the Nimpkish Valley over there. (Pointing across from Alert Bay to Vancouver Island) That use to be one of the biggest salmon producers. Not any more. They logged it and then they sprayed it with DDT.⁷ Bloody idiots. They have no respect. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, 1996)

CHAPTER 3

3.1 1968-1970: The Introduction of Bio-Economic Administration, the future of fisheries management

The Fisheries have put us into this mess. The Davis plan ended up with a fleet that grew from 400 seine boats to over a thousand. And gillnetters, from 700 to close to 3000. And it forced the fishermen to become overly competitive. They started putting on heavier and heavier lead lines so [the net] would sink fast. Bigger drums. More pistons on their drums so it didn't matter what the state of the tide was. Just get out there and plop it into the water and fish until it was closed down. You couldn't blame a fisherman for doing that, but you can blame the Fisheries for allowing that to happen. So now, we have this problem. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 7, 1996)

In 1968 a complex licensing scheme titled the "Salmon Vessel License Control Plan", commonly known as the "Davis Plan" (after the then Minister of Fisheries and Oceans - economist, Jack Davis), was introduced to rationalize the fishing fleet for the goal of maximum profitability. The Davis Plan restricted the commercial fishery through ceasing to issue new salmon licenses, and by gradually reducing the number of fishing vessels. Salmon - A licenses were issued to vessel owners who had recorded salmon landings in the years 1967 or 1968 of over 10,000 pounds. Salmon B licenses, with a reduced annual renewal fee, were issued to boats that had not reached the 10,000 pound cut off, or to substandard vessels that would be out of the fishery soon. B licenses were required to have a ten-year usage limitation. Fish processors were to be required to reduce their rental fleets in direct proportion to the over all fleet. A buy out scheme was introduced to further reduce the fleet size. And expensive yearly licensing fees for A licenses were initiated to partially recover the costs of the buy out program.

The Davis Plan introduced dramatic capital restructuring within the commercial fleet. A central component of the plan was the schema that required a ton for ton replacement when an existing salmon license was to be attached to a new vessel.⁴ Yet, license tonnage was allowed to increase by simply adding the tonnage of several licenses together to create a larger tonnage license. The processing companies began to amass vessel tonnage to bolster the size and capacity of their fleets. One retiring fisher I interviewed reflected wryly:

When the Davis Plan came, BC Packers (BCP) and the others, and their lawyers were going night and day working the loop holes. BCP put licenses on everything they had floating, even scows. And then they would just build a boat out of it (the licensed tonnage). (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 23, 1996)

As a result, the over-all seine fleet increased enormously at the expense of the Native gillnet fleet. Another fisher recalled how fish company representatives traveled to remote villages buying licenses from First Nations fishers:

The Davis Plan...what happened was that guys went into the little villages and bought all these old, used up gillnetters. Because in Indian village if an old gillnetter was up on the beach, its no good to anybody now, but the piece of paper it had on it is worth money. So they said - "I'll give you \$500.00 for it." So out of ten of those old gillnetters they made the big steel hull [seiner], the Big Blue fleet (Ocean Fish Corporation), with a maximum catching capacity, most modern. Instead of leveling off, or decreasing the fishing capacity of, they increased it. (Interview 12, 1996)

The limits on available salmon licenses, combined with high herring and salmon prices in the 1970s, caused the prices of vessels and licenses to soar in the market place. By the end of the 1970's some of the smaller gillnetters and trollers were being sold for prices exceeding \$100,000.00 for boat and license.

The overall effect of the Davis Plan was economically injurious for many First Nations fishers. The reduction of the processors' rental fleet left many without boats from which to fish. Even though the processors had increased the number of licenses they held title to, they were not renting them. The licenses were sold or contracted out through ninety-nine year leases. Many First Nations fishers were unable to pay the annual licensing fees, and consequently lost their licenses. The processors withdrew the established lines of credit from those fishers that did hold title to licenses, yet both First Nation and non-Native fishers remained indebted to processors. Many First Nations fishers could not pay down their debts or secure other lines of credit to do so, and were forced to relinquish their boats and licenses to the processors or sell them in the buy-back program. Lastly, the older, less efficient boats that had been assigned a B license, many owned by First Nations fishers, could not profit from the rise in market resale prices because of the 10 year expiration limitation on these licenses.⁹

3.2 Maintaining an "Indian" Presence in the Fishery: 1970-1980

The first boat that I got was through the Indian Fisherman's Assistance Program, IFAP. I took out a company boat. I wanted to have a (net) drum, but they wouldn't put a drum on. So I bought my uncle out and put on a drum. I had a loan from IFAP of \$38,000. It worked out to be a million dollar loan for me in the end. It raised my family and a lot of other people. (Clark, D, unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 12, 1996)

The restructuring of the fishing industry by Davis Plan eliminated many First Nations fishers from the industry. In recognition of this, the federal government, through the Department of Indian Affairs and DFO, sought to increase First

Nations fishers participation in the industry in three ways: the creation of special licensing, the introduction of the Indian Fisherman's Assistance Program, and the formation of the Northern Native Fishing Corporation.

In recognition of the hardships inflicted upon First Nations fishers by the new licensing restrictions- the government created an "Indian only" license category -- the A-I license -- to assist the economically disadvantaged and maintain a First Nations presence within the industry. The creation of A-I licenses made salmon licenses more affordable for young First Nations fishers. The DFO also created the option of converting their A licenses to A-I licenses; a category that required only a nominal renewal fee yearly. First Nations fishers were also given the option of converting B licenses to A-I licenses after which the time limitations attached to these licenses was dropped. The drawback though was that an A-I license would not be eligible for any future buy out programs¹⁹, and they could not be sold to other First Nations fishers, only transferred. This did assist many to retain their fishing licenses, but unlike non-Native fishers, the sale of their licenses would not allow them to accrue retirement funds.

Other government initiatives were undertaken to facilitate First Nations participation in the commercial salmon fishery. In part due to the efforts of James Sewid, a Kwakwaka'wakw Chief and then vice-president of the Native Brotherhood of BC, the Department of Indian Affairs created the Indian Fishermen's Assistance Program (IFAP) in 1968 (Spradley, 1969: 221-223).

Initially through the IFAP, the government purchased and distributed a small number of salmon licenses. IFAP also administered temporary government financial assistance programs in 1968-73, 1974-78, and 1980-82 to facilitate First Nations ownership in the commercial fishery, to accommodate vessel improvement and upgrade, and to assist in the purchase of new fishing technologies.

Despite the best intentions of these programs, they tended to benefit those who already enjoyed a relatively high level of economic success, or those that had lucrative familial ties to the industry. Also, many First Nations fishers had only nominal levels of education. Consequently, many failed to understand the terms of the assistance being offered. Unfortunately, many shied away from the assistance extended, feeling that it was another way to become enmeshed in deficit reciprocity.

The Development Board, a subsidiary of the IFAP created to assist First Nations fishers' entry into the commercial fishery, would not provide down payments for boats or licenses; thereby making the purchase of licenses impossible for most (Kavanaugh, 1992: 54-56; Newell, 1993: 148-62). As there is no intrinsic value in a commercial fishing license, the purchase of fish licenses cannot be financed through banks or other loan institutions.¹¹ The most common method of obtaining a license is amassing sufficient cash savings or using property assets as security. This is a difficult task for any aspiring fisher, let alone for those living under the economic constraints of the reserve system.

IFAP did assist some First Nations fishers to achieve an ownership presence in the industry, despite these shortcomings. But, the IFAP assistance extended to First Nations fishers was sharply criticized as a "gift to the Indians" by many non-Native fishers. One fisher I interviewed recalled this critique and rebutted it, adding how IFAP transformed several N'angis fishers from company employees to independent business people:

It was quite a thing in those days when they talked about the Indians getting all these different grants. The Native fishermen were right down at the bottom of the pile and they only had a small part of it. All the new boats went to non-Natives. And this is just how it was. We got all the junkers. I got my boat and others got their boats. A lot of the now successful boat owners got their boats that way.

But they (non-Natives) thought we were getting something for nothing, we paid everything back with interest. We had a lot of kicking from the non-Natives at the time, but nobody said anything about building grants and subsidies many non-Natives got at the time to build big boats. There was some imbalance in that. But we could not borrow money from the banks. We could have a \$100,000.00 home on the reserve, but we could not get a loan.

Through IFAP, which I believe was one of the most successful programs, we became businessmen. Before this, we would fish for the company, go down and get our statement and that was the extent of it. IFAP helped a lot of people become their own bosses. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 15, 1996)

Another attempt to maintain an "Indian" presence in the commercial fishery was initiated in 1980, when the Nisga'a, Gitksan, Wet'suwet'en, Coast Tsimshian and Southern Tsimshian tribal councils formed the Northern Native Fishing Corporation (NNFC), with financial backing from the Department of Indian Affairs, to purchase the BC Packers (BCP) gillnet fleet. The mandate of the NNFC was to facilitate the purchase of these licenses and boats, so that they could be leased to First Nations fishers who had previously rented them from BCP. It was hoped that through the assistance of the NNFC a level of financial

independence could be realized by these First Nations fishers over a period of time and that they would be able to garner the finances necessary to become private entrepreneurs. At the outset, many of the NNFC members could not afford the pre-season outlay of \$1000.00 for the yearly license rental. Many secured loans from BCP and the other large fish processors, thereby re-establishing the old deficit reciprocity system. Yet despite this set back, after a few years, most of the NNFC members were able to sever the greater extent of their economic ties with the processors. (Newell, 1993: 169)

3.3 The Pearse Report: determining the limits of bio-economic administration -- 1981-1996

In 1981 an economist, Dr. Peter Pearse, was appointed to oversee the Commission on Pacific Fisheries Policy by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The mandate for this commission was to conduct an in-depth study and devise a comprehensive policy for the management of the Pacific fishery addressing the continuing decline of fish stocks. Pearse was already well known to those that were employed, or were previously employed, in other resource-based industries for his report Timber Rights and Forest Policy in British Columbia. (Pearse, 1976) This policy initiated a radical restructuring of the forest industry - the introduction of the tree farm system - that effectively eradicated small logging businesses. The restructuring of forestry in BC consequently placed greater economic importance on the salmon industry for small, resource dependent communities. One fisher angrily recalls better economic times:

Alert Bay's economy has only recently been based almost exclusively on fishing. In the past, in the early '60s, '50s and the '40s a good percentage of the economy, probably 30% of Alert Bay's economy was based in the forest industry. And then they decided that the big forest companies could make this more economically viable; getting more profit out of the forest resource harvesting in a more efficient manner. So that eliminated the small operators that were donkey logging, cat logging, and hand logging in various places. And making good money at it by the way. Just as we were in the salmon industry until recently. They decided - there is too much effort. Get rid of all those guys. Put it into big farms like in the Midwest. Get the big machines. Get the hundreds of square miles instead of the one hundred and sixty acres. And that is what they did to the logging industry and that is now what they are basically doing to the salmon industry. There is so many things that have happened over the years that are absolutely crazy. Look at the value of timber now. Everybody on this island could be making a living off the smallest amount of timber properly harvested, with properly maintained farms. All these things are sort of happening to the fishing industry. All these strange things. Biologists getting things screwed up. Economists as fish managers. Bureaucracy getting so large. And the concentration of power in the Fisheries Department itself. And fifteen years ago now, Peter Pearse stuck his nose into to the whole thing and decided what was going to be economically best for the industry. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 32, 1996)

In 1982, after a year's study: 200 consultative meetings, hundreds of submissions from the full spectrum of fishery user groups, concerned citizens, associations, and fisheries scientists, Dr. Pearse published his final report - Turning The Tide: A New Policy For Canada's Pacific Fisheries Policy (Pearse, 1982). A fisher who feels he is being forced out of the industry bitterly recalls:

(Peter) Pearse said - "communities that depend on fishing will not be effected". Here we are in 1996 the most effected. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 24, 1996)

"The Pearse report", as it came to be commonly known on the westcoast, was the first, and maybe the last time, the DFO sought to commission policy recommendations as comprehensive as those contained in this text. This report also marked the first time in

which economic rationalization of the fishery was publicly delineated. The Pearse Report was met with raucous rejection from the majority of the fishery participants. It generated a myriad of detailed objectives and management alternatives. Despite this, the Pearse Report was implemented piece-meal over the following fourteen years. It was not revised fundamentally, only minimally adjusted where necessary.

The primary objective of the Pearse Report was the economic rationalization of common property for the ecological well being of the resource. Secondly, through economic rationalization of common property there could be realized, for some, a profitable future. Pearse evoked the logic of privatization for the welfare of the fishers engaged in the industry, without explaining how this could be realized by those dependent on the fishery, yet not possessing substantial economic security. The key recommendations that established the base of this policy were: area licensing, gear limitations within fisheries, individual quotas in some fisheries, the creation of specie specific licensing and a corresponding recruitment of licensing fees and landing taxes, a limited Aboriginal commercial fishery, and the further implementation of the Salmon Enhancement Program.

An explanation of these recommendations is necessary, as they fundamentally altered the management of the fishery. The Pacific Coast had been divided up into management sub-areas for a long time. From Pearse's recommendation, the sub-areas were clustered into groupings that created larger areas for the creation of area licensing, targeting specific fisheries. This placed serious

limitations on fishers that would previously range the whole coast to maximize their seasons.

For example, the initial creation of area licensing was for salmon trollers. Two license categories were created - inside trollers and outside trollers. The Inside trollers were permitted to fish the waters east, inside of the borders of the northern tip of Vancouver Island across to the mainland in the north, and to the entrance of the Strait of Juan De Fuca in the south. The Outside trollers could fish the rest of the coast. This curtailed the trollers' ability to follow the migratory routes of salmon.

Pearse also recommended that individual quotas be created for license holders. Over all quotas, or total allowable catches (TAC) for specific sub-areas, had been in place as a management tool for some time. Essentially within the broader TAC limits, fishers could compete on a "catch as you can" basis.

Fishers are highly competitive when it comes to catching ability. They create highly secretive, groups of reciprocal partnerships that share catch information. Also, the pursuit of being recognized as a "highliner", a person that out fishes his peers, is a goal that some have achieved and many strive for. Moreover, the hope that next year one will have a "big season" is the psychological impetus that assists many fishers in remaining optimistic. The creation of individual quotas would eliminate competition amongst the fishers, something that some favoured. Yet, at the same time one's opportunity to have that "big season", or become a more accomplished fisher would be eliminated. Naturally those that were consistent highliners did not approve of

the TAC being apportioned on an equitable basis throughout the fleet. Perhaps because of the shrill outcry against this measure, oft times being likened to end of freedom in enterprise, this was not implemented in the salmon fishery. Initially the only fisheries that had individual quotas (IQ) established were: halibut, black cod, abalone, and goeduck, fisheries that have very few licensed fishers compared to salmon fishery. Yet, the DFO intends to IQ as many fisheries as possible.

A proliferation of specie specific licenses quickly followed the Pearse Report. All species of fish were placed in separate licensing categories, requiring yearly renewal and the payment of licensing fees. Restricted access to fisheries began with the proliferation of licenses. Initially anyone who possessed an A, A-I, or B salmon license could apply for and obtain any license category they required, with the exceptions of a few species that already required special licenses. But if one did not actively fish the licenses and record landings that met DFO established quotas, they could not renew this license.

Prior to the creation of the specie specific, licensing complex, many salmon fishers would augment poor salmon seasons by fishing various species, and/or remain gainfully employed, rather than collecting unemployment insurance. The part-time, non-salmon fisheries that N'angis fishers participated in were fisheries that generally allowed people to "get by" during lean economic times.

The Indian people years ago never went fishing to make thousands of dollars. They just fished enough for the week, the month, whatever. They would go out fishing again later. So what happens is, they sent out these regulations saying if you don't catch X amount of pounds you won't be able to renew your license. Well the Indians don't read these stupid

things because it is our lives; we don't have to read them. And then when they try to get a license, they cannot get one. They did not produce enough. And yet today we are crying about mass production. There is too much fish being caught. My people would not catch them like that. With those same licenses, today, people are becoming rich. And the people that lost them don't own a thing. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 14, 1996)

These fisheries were pursued close to home to keep operating costs low when there was sufficient amounts of fish stocks to harvest economically, without endangering the future health of the stocks. These fish were not hunted voraciously. Consequently, many fishers did not acquire the landing records that would allow them to retain the rights to harvest these species. Pearse's recommendation eliminated a relatively benign means of maintaining a possible income. One frustrated fisher opting out of the commercial fishery recalls:

Our friends that are not fishermen cannot understand it. They say - "can the government do that to you?" Oh sure I say. They did it taking our cod licenses. Yeah, \$180,000 dollars worth of licenses they took off of us in 1992 without any compensation what so ever. There were four members of the N'angis Band that were actively involved Rock (Cod) fishing. All four of us lost our licenses. Only one got it back after a long appeal process. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 8, 1996)

The elimination of possible alternatives placed a greater dependence on salmon and a corresponding increased effort, a greater reliance on unemployment insurance, and far greater pressure on other fisheries by those that had to now pay additional licensing fees.

A consultative process was promoted as a means of ameliorating the inevitable exclusions that would result from the Pearse Report, whereby fishers could be party to the divisive scheme. Many believe that the consultative process was also a means by which the DFO co-opted dissent, and managed anger and fear. A

former participant in the consultative process related his experience:

I was a member of the South Coast Advisory Board¹². In the end it was mainly a waste of time. The board, like most others, was mainly window dressing. It's the Boards that rubber-stamp the designs of the DFO. For a long time I felt proud to be a part of the Board. I felt like I was keeping the Fisheries Department honest. There were several times that false statistics were being used. There was either under reported catches, or over reported catches. The Fisheries didn't change them even though many of the different representatives there disputed the numbers. These were cooked, paper fish used to cover up DFO's mistakes. Then I found myself up against the majority of the Board over the issue of accounting. It was obvious to me that the statistics had been fabricated by the Fisheries. But, the other people at the table were backing the Fisheries because it looked good to the US. But the problem is, it was not going to help the enhancement of the streams in this area, or the guys that fish here. That is when I decided that was enough. I didn't mind fighting the Fisheries, but I gave up when I had to fight the rest. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 42, 1996)

In the five to seven years that followed this report, the consultative process was vigorously pursued by the DFO until such time as the input from fishers on allocation decisions was no longer required. Presently consultative processes are simply a matter of choosing between a number of very similar options that are determined by biological predictions and recent historical patterns.

One of the failures of the Pearse Report was the lack of a practical framework within which fishers could enjoy a viable livelihood, without the heavy subsidization of the federal government. As a result, a feasible future for the small economic participants in the fishery was, and remains, precarious at best.

Secondly, this document made recommendations to the DFO concerning redress to the many First Nations fishers that had been excluded from the commercial fishery when the DFO did not have the

political will to do so.¹³ Moreover, Pearse's recommendations were blatantly paternalistic, dictating what was best for "Indians". The inception of the Aboriginal Fishery Strategy, through which limited First Nations-only, 'new' commercial fisheries are directed, would not have been pursued if it were not for the persistent legal challenges initiated by the First Nations. The creation of commercial Aboriginal fisheries have been awkward and volatile as there were no mechanisms suggested on how a balance could be struck between the First Nation fishers and the previously established commercial fishers.

Lastly, as Pearse recognized, the report as a whole was based upon a poor assessment of the biomass of the fish stocks (bad in-season estimates, poor in-season catch reporting, and the unknown productivity of 50 % of the salmon bearing habitat of the province) and for any policy to be effective this needed to be amended (Pearse, 1982: 9-17). One can see from the past few years that the much needed, accurate data base and appropriate tools for predicting and monitoring run sizes is still sadly lacking.

Despite the breadth of the recommendations put forth by Pearse, many of BC's fisheries continued to decline biologically and economically as the status quo in the industry was primarily maintained. The more radical suggestions for fleet restructuring, elimination of licenses and further area licensing in the salmon sector were set aside for a later time. Over the following years, elements of the Pearse Report were enacted cautiously, and somewhat surreptitiously, by the DFO because of the significant critique and resistance to them from the commercial fishery. Even

so, the Pearse Report provided the context through which the Westcoast fisheries would be assessed and managed during the mid 1980's into the 1990's. It also delineated the options for further restructuring of the fishing industry; it is the source from which the Mifflin Plan was derived.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 The Mifflin Plan: the future or the end?

Everybody else got swept along by the whole works of it. And instead of being concerned about what was happening to the fish and the fishermen, everybody became interested in what their position of power was going to be. I was down there and could not believe it. The whole thing was crazy. The whole thing was a mess. It was the most gross thing I ever saw in a meeting, how people were groveling for power. It was just pathetic. It all came down to seats on the committee. It was all political positioning. When people cannot concentrate on what the real issue is, it starts to become a power thing rather than what is reality. This is a fish, this is a dead fish, this is lack of escapement, and this is our life. They forgot about that and started at looking at their position of power in the whole thing. That is when I said to myself, we are finished here. (Clark, D. unpublished field notes, Interview 32, 1996)

During the fall of 1995, the BC salmon season drew to a close and was declared, for the second consecutive year, a failure by all assessment criteria: poor in-season forecasting and stock assessment; dismal stock returns of sexually mature fish; and low financial remuneration to commercial fishers. The DFO reviewed the history of the past few years, decided that the salmon resource and the industry were in peril, and that the previous methods of management had been inadequate (Fisheries and Oceans, 1996).

On March 29, 1996 the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Fred Mifflin publicly presented the policy, Reforming The Salmon Fishery, that came to be known as the Mifflin Plan. The goal of

Mifflin's 'revitalization' policy is to reduce the commercial fleet by 50% over a three-year period (Government of Canada, March 29, 1996). The first part of the program was the introduction of area licensing for all salmon vessels, whereby the coast was divided into three fishing areas, each with separate gear licensing specifications. In the past, a boat with a salmon license was entitled to fish all areas, with any gear configuration. Now a boat owner must choose one area and one gear type for their existing license. If a boat owner desires to fish more areas, they must purchase additional licenses from other boats. The second part of the program was a voluntary buy-back, through which those who wish to leave the commercial salmon fishery could submit a bid to the DFO for the retirement of their salmon license. There was no compensation for boats or equipment.

The outcry from Alert Bay and other coastal communities was immediate and loud.¹⁴ The foremost concern was that the Mifflin Plan would devastate the coastal economy and thereby the general health of the communities. This assessment was not altered during this study. There are a variety of critiques from N'amiis fishers that speak directly to the stated 'visionary goals' of the Mifflin Plan. Prior to examining these critiques, it is important to note the objections raised to the process that preceded the release of the Mifflin Plan.

In the fall of 1995, Brian Tobin, Fred Mifflin's predecessor, selected a 'representative' body from the commercial fishery and issued them an ultimatum: the salmon fishing effort must be reduced and they had two months to devise a mutually agreed upon

solution for the commercial fishery or one would be unilaterally imposed by Tobin. This 'representative' body and the process they were engaged in was titled "The Pacific Roundtable". The members of the "Roundtable" failed to achieve consensus (Pacific Policy Roundtable, Dec. 1995). The failure of the Roundtable is attributed to the disparate grouping of individuals who were concerned with personal position within the fishery, rather than the fishery as a whole. Fred Mifflin and his advisors examined the different proposals, most of which relied heavily upon the economic rationale established by the Pearse Report, and created a hybrid of their own.

The representational make-up of the Roundtable, and the motivations of the individuals in this group, have been sharply critiqued by many N'angis fishers. Many N'angis fishers identified the majority of the Roundtable participants as affluent individuals that have manipulated the DFO in the past and present, to forward exclusionary agendas that profit their minority position at the expense of the majority.¹⁵ One N'angis fisher mused:

I think if you had got up at the Roundtable when they were all sitting around there and asked - would every millionaire please stand up and leave the room - there would not have been hardly anyone left. It was the big corporations and those [individuals] that think like the big corporations. They are only trying to look after number one. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 15, 1996)

One of the more salient critiques reproaches the absence of participants in the Roundtable discussions who captain or crew vessels that are owned by others, and yet are economically dependent upon fishing. Others charged there was racial bias in

the make-up of the Roundtable; many of the participants are active members and spokespeople for the Fishermen's Survival Coalition¹⁶. The Fishermen's Survival Coalition is an umbrella group whose members advocate the elimination of any First Nations-only fisheries. One of the fishers that I interviewed believes that:

As long as at these meetings in Vancouver, there is a white over here, and an Indian over there, and the (Survival) Coalition wearing their white hoods. Stay away from that. We will never win. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes Interview 5, 1996)

Along with the mistrust of the membership of the Roundtable, there is additional wariness of the DFO under the direction of a Liberal federal government. One N'angis fisher, who had been actively engaged in politics for many years, recalled:

Don't forget that Chretien was part of the 1969 White Paper policy. That he was going to wipe out the Indians with it. Don't forget that he was a big part of that, and here he is now. Why do you think that 95% of all Indians won't be fishing. This is a better way to try and eliminate us. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 25, 1996)

These perceptions coupled with the perception that the DFO and the Fisheries Association of BC have conspired for many years to forward a corporate agenda that views individuals and groups as expendable labour, leaves most fishers with a healthy inclination towards suspicion. The general judgment expressed by most was that the Roundtable was created by the undemocratic appointment of individuals with dubious intentions, and the membership of this consultative body predetermined the outcome, the "corporate gift," that is the Mifflin Plan. As the interviewees discuss and analyze below, the Mifflin Plan will allow the Fisheries Association of BC (FABC) to consolidate their position within the salmon fishery.

The 'vision' of the Mifflin Plan states:

The fishery of the future envisaged by the federal government is environmentally sustainable, economically viable and co-operatively managed.

The fundamental objective is *conservation*. Harvests are set to meet or exceed baseline spawning escapement targets, fishing effort is regulated to meet these targets and to reduce the risk of over-harvesting, and timely and accurate information is obtained on catch, species composition and fishing effort.

To ensure the best use of the resource, *the fishery must be economically viable* and organized around sound business principles. The fishery must be capable of providing a decent living for its participants and a self-reliant contribution to the Canadian economy.

Building on consensus supporting conservation and viability, *the government and stake holders share responsibility for the resource development and fisheries management*. All players co-operate in addressing collective issues such as resource stewardship, habitat management and harvest sharing.

The realization of this objective is predicated on achieving a 50% reduction of the fleet over the long term. The overall plan, including licensing measures and the buy-back results, will be reviewed, with industry, after the 1997 season and further measures, such as smaller areas and fractional licensing, will be considered if fleet reduction targets have not been met.

(all emphases in original, Fisheries and Ocean B-PR-96-07E:
3)

As I stated in the introduction, this policy statement is the guide utilized for the exploration of this study. This statement also contains the elements by which the Mifflin Plan was analyzed and critiqued by N'angis fishers. The 'vision' of the Mifflin Plan is only one small piece of the larger document and a large number of supporting documents that followed. The majority of these documents were carefully scrutinized by the N'angis fishers. Realizing that the 'vision' is the essence of DFO's policy and future plans for the salmon industry, the N'angis fishers studied it, pulled it apart and reconstructed it numerous times.

Unfortunately, only a few of their critiques would be heard after the Mifflin Plan was implemented, and probably the majority

will never be extended the respect of an adequate public forum. The remainder of the thesis is organized by the N'angis fishers response to, and analysis of the Mifflin Plan's 'vision' and 'goals' -- "conservation", "economic viability", "resource development" and "shared responsibility".

4.2 'Conservation'

Conservation means accurate management. Being able to manage effectively and accurately. That is what all these things are supposed to be in aid of, and they are not. The two problems we have are the concentration of (fishing) gear on top of the concentrations of fish, mixed stock fisheries. What their (the DFO) mandate is, is to effectively manage those fish. And that means to be able to put those spawners on the spawning grounds in order to maintain the run or build the run if it needs to be built. Neither of those things are being addressed. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 7, 1996)

The stated "fundamental objective" of the Mifflin Plan is conservation of the salmon resource. Contrary to popular beliefs promoted by inflammatory media, conservation is an issue of paramount concern to most fishers. Fishers bristle at the popular depiction of them as rapacious predators who do not care what happens to the resource. They are acutely aware that their well being as fishers is entirely dependent upon a healthy resource. The conception that commercial fishers are constantly seeking superior methods of exploitation, with a total disregard for the resource, is an inaccurate portrayal.

The N'angis fishers active, unyielding protection of the Nimpkish River salmon stocks is an excellent example of fishers' concern for conservation. One long time, seine skipper explained the need for constant vigilance:

You see area 27 is the westcoast [Vancouver Island].
(drawing a chart on the table top) The fish they go round
and round here until they come around and in. Okay now, in

1972 the rest of the fleet came here with big westcoast seines, and almost killed off the Nimpkish [River]; 7000 returned that year. So the council here lobbied to Ottawa, we closed it. And then we brought the stocks back. The year before, the first fish caught (off the north end of Vancouver Island) in week one were Nimpkish. In other words if we opened up one week early, say out of a 1,000,000 fish that is 100,000 sockeye that could have spawned. It was prematurely opened. In 1972 we were successful at keeping that shut down. Now some want this open again. But we should be having electro-forensic sampling¹⁷. To sample the salmon when they come back, so we know what percentage is what. We would know whether it was 5% or 10% are Nimpkish sockeye, and we could open up a week later. In this case, we have everything shut down now. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 5, 1996)¹⁸

Among fishers, conservation is an issue of thoughtful reflection that is debated in-depth, and is highly charged with emotion. Fishers' primary concern is the maintenance of a healthy fishery. The declines in fish stocks are apparent to all fishers. The reasons for these declines are numerous and intertwined. Though none deny that improper fishing practices are one of the causes of declines, very few would accept this as the principal cause. Habitat degradation is most often pointed to as the more damaging factor. Poor logging methods and inadequate rehabilitation of damaged watersheds are believed to be the biggest contribution to the decline in salmon populations. One fisher I interviewed lamented the habitat degradation caused by logging:

DDT was sprayed in the valley there. (To facilitate regrowth) It used to be a big (salmon) producer. The whole mainland back there. We never had to go anywhere (to fish in the past). That stuff is all gone. And then, the logging practices, there is no doubt they are part of it. And that is what I was wondering, is that what happened to the Central Coast? From, I guess you could say Smith's Inlet upwards. Because there is just a blank area between there and Prince Rupert. So we are either fishing the Skeena and the Nass, or we are fishing the Fraser River fish. And that is why we are in the position we are in. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 31, 1996)

Population encroachment on fragile fish rearing habitats is also pointed to as a major contributor to the decrease in salmon stocks. One retiring fisher reflected upon the impact of progressive migration onto coastal BC:

The new people that are coming up to the northern part of the province don't know how good it was. It has been a gradual change. There is no longer any spring salmon and hardly any coho. I will tell you what happened to the coho, people came to BC and that was the end of the coho. They killed the little creeks. Every little creek has a house sitting on top of it now. It just poisoned all the creeks. All the stuff put on lawns, all the stuff from factories; it all leaches into the creeks and kills them. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 23, 1996)

And yet, when harmful fishing practices have been identified, N'angis fishers have been proactive in their attempts to halt damaging practices, even when it was a detriment to their personal economy. A frustrated fisher called me into a coffee shop one day to relate his experience to me:

What happened two years ago, there was a good run through here and they got over-fished. They all came in through the inside (Johnstone Straights). They were like a big freight train, some of the cars were empty and some of them were full. But, they all traveled down the track because of the ocean currents, the ocean temperatures, whatever. I mean it was a migration pattern that I have never seen before in forty years of fishing here. All you had to do to really nail them (catch a lot) was to find out where the fat spot in the ribbon was, instead of the space, and go there.

We really nailed them. And because we were catching a large number of fish at one time, the Fisheries Department said the run is really big. And we were telling them that this run may not be as big as it looks just because they are out there so easy to catch. Me and my partners were talking on the radio and decided this was wrong. We phoned them (the DFO) up, so at least we could be on record. And after that, in the middle of winter, they (the DFO) were wondering where the hell did the fish go. And this is what the bloody Fisheries Department was saying to the news media (reading from a newspaper article) - the seine boats in area 12 were poaching and fishing during closed times, during the weekend and at night. Bull shit! (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 7, 1996)

No one disputes that conservation is essential. There is a unanimous call for the restoration of salmon stocks. The N'angis

fishers projected a variety of hypotheses about how these goals could be achieved: restrictions on commercial and sports fisheries, innovations in commercial harvesting, habitat rehabilitation, and salmon enhancement programs. But, the assessment of the Mifflin Plan by the N'amiis fishers is that it does little to manage salmon conservation, despite this being touted as its "fundamental objective".

The predominant critique of the salmon fishery by the fishers is directed at the DFO's methods of opening and closing fisheries, which fishers do not foresee being altered by the Mifflin Plan. Openings, a period of time during which fisheries are conducted in a specified area, usually coincide with the "peak" of a returning run of fish. Peak return periods for sockeye, the most highly valued salmon, last approximately three to four weeks. During these peak periods fishers will be permitted short openings - gillnetters two to three days a week, and seiners twelve to twenty four hours a week.

The diminished amount of exploitable salmon stocks on many river systems has led to a concentration of boats at available openings. Prior to stock declines, simultaneous openings would be conducted in many areas along the coast, thereby dispersing the fleet somewhat. The economic pressure upon individual boats to be at all available openings is enormous. This decrease in fishing opportunity has created a condition in the collective psyche of salmon fishers that is referred to as a "gold rush mentality". One fisher who no longer wished to fish under these conditions, and had opted to sell his license in the buy-back, explained:

It remains a gold rush mentality. Where the more efficient my gear is, the faster I can catch fish compared to the guy on the next boat to me, the more money I will make. So we constantly pour things back into it. Like the stern ramp, bigger drums, more electronics, everything like this. In order that nobody can catch fish faster than I can. It has just gotten out of control. Years ago the Fisheries (DFO) decided that the only way they could control it was by reducing the area you could fish in and the time that you were allowed to fish. That is the only tool they have ever used. That is, to this day, the only tool they have used to control harvest rates. It is the most ridiculous thing. It does not work. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 43, 1996)

One of the associated problems with this method of harvesting salmon is the danger of over fishing depressed or smaller runs of salmon while fishing the more robust runs. There are often a variety of species of salmon and a number of different runs intermingled with the dominant runs. Consequently, if harvests of non-target species, those that are in need of protection, are too great, openings on the runs that can permit exploitable harvest will be restricted. There are usually hundreds of boats concentrated in a small area during an opening, and these fisheries are often best characterized as frenzied and chaotic. This makes it difficult to accurately assess the impact on the various stocks during an opening. Most times the catches of the non-targeted runs cannot be assessed by the DFO until after the openings have been conducted. The lack of appropriate conservation in fisheries management is a major source of frustration for most N'angis fishers.

Many fishers do not believe that the Mifflin Plan will improve these harvesting problems. There will be a dramatic reduction in the number of boats. Generally though, these will be the older, less efficient boats. The introduction of area licensing will restrict access for some boats, to some areas. Once again though,

the more efficient boats that have been able to accrue economic gains, despite the declines in salmon, and the majority of seiners which are owned by the processors, will be able to "double up" licenses, buy or transfer a second license that will permit them to fish all areas. One fisher interviewed predicted:

How can you possibly decrease the catching power by simply cutting the fleet? It's a fact that a half a dozen seiners could catch the whole quota. Just because you cut the fleet in half, does not mean to say that you are going to catch half the fish. You know, last year you had six boats lined up (to take their turn fishing the beach) in Robson Bight. You take away three of those guys, it means that three are going to be able to go around, around and around. It does not slow down the fishery, it just means that you have a shorter line up and more catching capacity for these boats. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 14, 1996)

The prospect that the Mifflin Plan will rectify the salmon conservation problems of the salmon resource is dismissed by the N'angis fishers.

4.3 'Economic Viability'

This Mifflin Plan all ends up being an economic deal. What they want to do is reduce the fleet enough so that those left in the fleet are making enough money so that they will not have to rely on UI to make a living. They can cut them off the UI and they won't suffer because they have reduced the fleet enough. But what they don't realize is that the costs, the real long-term costs, of all the retraining programs, the make-work programs, and all the studies, the cost to taxpayers is going to be enormous compared to the cost to the taxpayer right now. You are going to be looking ten, twenty years down the road and they are still going to be pouring money into make-work projects. There will also be more health costs in trying to keep a depressed population alive. Its dollars and cents; that's what this whole move is about. The federal government is trying to off load the stigma as well as the dollar costs to the fishermen. And they are trying to do that by trying to make the fishing industry prosperous, by reducing by half the number of people involved. In their logic, doubling the amount of money that each one makes. That won't happen. That will never happen. The dollars and cents don't add up. Over the next fifteen years it is going to cost them ten times what it would cost to maintain an industry here. Even having to supply a certain amount of UI. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 32, 1996)

The second stated objective of the Mifflin Plan is "the fishery must be economically viable". Initial discussions of economic viability with N'angis fishers most frequently began with a series of questions posed by the interviewees, to which they immediately provided answers. A typical example is:

For who is it economically viable, the individual fisher? Not bloody likely. For the companies? Of course. As usual the rich get richer and the little guy gets nothing. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 31, 1996)

Most people I interviewed found economic viability to be a dubious proposition. Generally they expressed the opinion that economic viability in a resource-based industry is a questionable measure. Economic viability is an expression of subjective opinion, influenced by the context within which it is raised. Most N'angis fishers believe that economic viability is measured in two ways by the DFO: reported profits from the FABC, and by looking at the seasonal statistics of unemployment insurance claims and social assistance.

Most of the fishers I spoke with expressed their belief that the FABC's reported profits are something that can be easily manipulated by corporations. They repeatedly stated that the FABC had been "crying the blues for years" so that they could centralize production facilities and slash prices paid to fishers. They accused the processors of playing a "shell game" wherein the actual profitability of the companies was being concealed. Some also maintained that the FABC were either allowing themselves to be manipulated in the international market place, or were promoting the image of international victimization as a matter of positioning and posturing to gain sympathy and assistance from the

Federal government. Consequently, they generally asserted that this form of measurement should not be given any serious consideration.

As to social assistance, most expressed the opinion that they would rather not have to rely upon unemployment insurance and/or welfare. They would rather be employed. One fisher who was anxious to be out fishing stated:

You know, people think we like sitting around all winter, waiting for a pogeys cheque. They're wrong. Nobody likes living hand to mouth, from cheque to cheque. Knowing that the UI is going to run out and it could be quite a while before we go fishing. In the past we used to fish a longer season, and then we would go logging, or do something else if we weren't fishing. But that is gone. Nothing feels better than to be on the boat heading out to the fishing grounds. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 18, 1996)

Even more pointedly, most N'angis fishers predicted that their elimination from the industry will create a greater dependence on social programs. There are very few options for those that have lost their jobs. In general, the N'angis fishers do not have a high degree of formal education. One fisher who was exploring his future career path options explained to me:

For a lot of the guys I know, my age, going on 37-40, some of them 40 to 50, it is really going to be difficult without the proper education. We only went to grade 10 or eleven at best when we were kids, then we went fishing. It was good back then, but we know we are going to have to upgrade. Takes a lot of training! It is going to take a lot of money to get back on track to where you are involved in an industry. Its going to take training dollars. And for older guys, nobody likes to hire older guys. They would rather hire a younger person. So it is going to be difficult. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 22, 1996)

Those that have been displaced from fishing are willing to do just about anything to be employed, but most feel that they are facing the prospect of being on social assistance for the rest of their

lives. One retiring fisher expressed this concern for his community:

The depression it will cause in people will ruin their outlook. You have people that will just give up. This the real sad situation in a community where the whole society has been slapped down a hundred years ago. Things were starting to straighten out; we were starting to regain our sense of pride and confidence. We had never stepped over the edge into economic prosperity, but these other things are happening all of a sudden. We are going to be slapped right back down again. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 7, 1996)

Many predict this will cause debilitating despair in some that will immobilize them in the prime years of their working lives. The fellow that provided the following statement was obviously dangerously depressed, and certainly not alone in his desperation. Meeting him walking along the road one day, eyes downcast, kicking at the dirt, he told me:

I lost the only job I've ever had. I don't think I'll work again. Who's going to hire me? I don't have any education. I don't have any money to get education. I'm just on my way to the Band office to see if I can get some money to buy a few groceries, milk, bread, eggs, not much. What the hell am I going to do? I've been going to the church, first time in years. Trying to find some hope. But sometimes I just don't think I'm going to make it. Sometimes it just doesn't seem worth it. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 41, 1996)

Others foresee that despair will lead to self-destructive behavior that will be damaging to the social well being of community. One fisher who believed he would be able to continue fishing, despite the Mifflin Plan, offered a bleak prediction:

The drinking and drugging here was already bad enough and well known. We are like any other Indian reserve. But in the past we have always been able to go to sea to earn our living. We were relatively rich. Not like some of those dusty, poor reserves out in the prairies. But the problems that people have with the booze and the drugs has only just begun. This is my home. I love the people here. But, I don't think I am going to want to be around here in a few years. It's going to be horrible - the drinking, drugging,

fighting, abuse, and suicides. We haven't seen nothing yet.
(Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 13, 1996)

There are some individuals who are optimistic about their own, personal futures, but optimism for the community as a whole was rarely expressed to me. The second objective of the Mifflin Plan was summarily dismissed by the N'angis fishers.

The few fishers that will remain in the industry are those who own their boats and licenses, or those that are held by a family member, and/or those who are lucky enough to secure crew jobs. This is the minority of the N'angis fishers. The vessel owners are under an enormous amount of pressure for two reasons. First, all feel they will have a difficult time remaining economically viable without being able to buy a second license to stack on their boats. The prices for licenses rose dramatically as a result of the buy-back and created a speculator's market. This places the cost of a license beyond the economic means of all the fishers I discussed this possibility with. Some assistance has been offered by the companies to vessel owners, but most are loath to accept it. There is a fear that if they accept this assistance they will re-establish the old system of deficit reciprocity, and if they have an economic set back, the company will foreclose on their assets. Second, they are overwrought with anxiety that they are able to remain in the fishery while their extended family and friends suffer.

The other day the BC Packers people flew up here for lunch. One guy said -"You are fairly well set up. You are going to survive this. How is it going to be living in Alert Bay?" I said- " It's going to be tough. I mean half the people are related. I grew up with most of them. And we have all been in the fishing business. Its going to be hard. Me and my wife have been talking about it, knowing that we are going to be fishing and the rest of them are going to get nothing." And the BC Packers manager sitting beside me says

- "Well what is the big problem? You were born here." I looked at him and said - "Well I guess I have some morals, I don't know what you have." So this is the kind of people you have to deal with. This guy is part of management and its been handed down for generations in his family. I said to him - "How would you feel if you flew to Vancouver this afternoon and there was an envelop on your desk saying that BC Packers no longer required your services? You tell me how you would feel. How do you think these people felt here?" They let one guy go this afternoon, that had to go and tell four of his crewmen, that had to go tell their wives and kids that they no longer had a job. And another manager said to me - " We can all pack our bags and move to the Lower Mainland. We can all go down there and get work." He didn't think there was any problem! These guys don't even know what life is about. They are wound up in something else. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 15, 1996)

Most of the fishers that are remaining in the fishery consider themselves very lucky, even though they have worked hard to be there. As to predicting their own future, they alternate between the possibility of economic prosperity and gradual decline that sees them forced to sell their boats and licenses. One cannot fault anyone for having a hopeful outlook on financial solvency. After all, this is what the Mifflin Plan propounds to deliver for those that remain. Even so, one could easily associate this with the "next season" supposition, wherein the present fishers dismiss their current circumstances for the possibility of a big season the following year. In confidence most will tell you that they are insecure about their futures. They believe that the FABC have consolidated its economic control of the industry - "They all but own the salmon". The fishers assume their tenuous position of promotion for a better future has been eroded by the loss of associates in the salmon industry. They fear that they will not be able to negotiate for better prices. To the contrary, they believe that prices paid to fishers will decline because of the near monopoly of the FABC. There is also the belief that smaller

companies in the industry will not be able to compete and will eventually be compelled to sell their assets to the larger ones. This analysis was provided by a fisher who was opting out of the fishery rather than participating in what he perceived to be a spiral of competition:

They know they are going to be getting the fish anyway. So they are doubling up the licenses on their own boats. And that is that. They have complete and total control. They know exactly where they are going. It is going to be BC Packers and one other. There is BC packers, Macmillan Fish, Ocean Fish, and Canadian Fish here right now. But out of these four guys, there is going to be two. Whether it is going to be Ocean and BC Packers or Canadian Fish and BC Packers? But they will eventually be gone, and there will be two big companies. They are going to control everything from prices to the whole works. The days of big salmon prices are gone. When I first started thinking about how this is going to work, I thought I must be paranoid. It cannot be that Machiavellian. The more it unfolds, the more you realize. The Fisheries Department is doing all the wrong things, but they certainly know what they are doing. They are certainly doing them in a way that they set out for themselves and the fishing companies. The fishing companies have been in the Fisheries Department. The Fisheries Department has been in the fishing companies' offices. They go back and forth. The same people for years. (Clark, D, unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 32, 1996)

The elimination of the individual-owner operators, with the gradual disappearance of all but a few large fishing corporations, will create a virtual monopoly for the FABC. A future for individual-owner operators that fish for salmon exclusively is tentative. They will probably be able to continue fishing, but whether it will be lucrative remains to be seen. Where there is an opportunity, there is room for optimism. There is, however, little reason for optimism for those that have been discarded by the industry.

4.4 'Resource Development'

I can't see how the Mifflin Plan does anything for the resource. I doesn't create anymore (salmon) hatcheries. The fishing power will still be out there, despite the reduction

in boats. Unless, more salmon enhancement programs are introduced, the (salmon) stocks will continue to decline. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 32, 1996)

The preceding statement from a frustrated fisher exemplifies the N'angis fishers' response to 'resource development' under the Mifflin Plan. The N'angis are tenacious guardians of their river. They are deeply concerned with its health and will do what is necessary to protect and rehabilitate it. They have been proactive in the revitalization of the salmon stocks in the Nimpkish River, and have not been content to await the intervention of the DFO. In 1976, with the vision to restore the Nimpkish river salmon stocks to historical levels, once the third largest salmon producing river in BC, they recommitted themselves to the stewardship of their river. One retiring fisher, who was instrumental in these initial efforts, reflected upon the early days of N'angis salmon enhancement:

We started with four small (spawning) boxes near the mouth of the river. We fought with the Fisheries (DFO). We fought with everybody trying to make this a reality. When the N'angis council decided to find out what is wrong with the Nimpkish Valley we went to Vancouver and were able to get \$500,000.00 to try and correct the things that had happened. We did not know what we were doing, but something had to be done. It was hard work. 12 to 18 hour days up to our chests in water collecting (salmon) eggs. Those were hard times for us. And I feel good about seeing the results of that. We really had to work to convince people we could do it. But we still have a long way to go. There are people trying to bring in Atlantic salmon and things like that to our shores. We have to be vigilant. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 23, 1996)

There is now a multi-million dollar salmon hatchery, the Gwa'ni Hatchery, on the Nimpkish River that is managed and operated by N'angis.

4.5 Shared Responsibility'

Pat Chamut (the past Director of Pacific Fisheries) promised me, he wrote the statement to me before he went to Ottawa, he said - "I promise you this, if some assistance comes through, you will be the first ones to get it." And the bugger goes back east and I haven't heard from him since. I don't understand it. I know this, when Tom Siddon and John Fraser were the Ministers of Fisheries, we use to write to them, and Pat Chamut himself told me this, the letters never get to the Minister of Fisheries. They would get sent back. And when they did (get to the Minister), they would read them and say, " Goddamn, he's really bugging me. Get rid of him. Answer his letter, but don't let this letter come back to me." He would not deal with it. It would go to Louis Tousignault (current Director of Pacific Fisheries) or Pat Chamut. It comes from there and the minister himself does not know what is wrong. If only he took time to listen to people. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 36, 1996)

As to the third objective of the Mifflin Plan's 'vision' - shared responsibility for the resource development and fisheries management - this is viewed as a paraphrasing of the DFO's 1980's co-management program. For N'angis fishers', the point is moot. First, if most of the N'angis fishers are displaced from the fishery by the Mifflin Plan, they will no longer be considered participants in the fishery and will not even be granted minimal discussion with the DFO. Second, the appointed membership of the Roundtable predetermined who was a 'stakeholder' in the fishery. Those that have a financial investment in the salmon fishery, not those who rely upon the fishery, but have not been able to secure an investment in the fishery. Consequently, many -- if not most -- of the N'angis fishers have been eliminated from the possibility of shared responsibility.

Finally, shared responsibility implies mutual respect and meaningful dialogue through which the fishery can be directed in common. Though many N'angis fishers have been participants in

fishery discussions with the DFO over the years, they feel that very seldom has their input been given thorough consideration and thereby incorporated by the DFO. To the contrary, most believe that their contributions in the past have been accorded only perfunctory recognition. Simply stated, the N'angis fishers consider that they have been lied to and treated shabbily by the various federal governments and the DFO through consultation processes.

The communities of Alert Bay sincerely desired to have their concerns heard by Mifflin and the DFO, but this did not come to pass. When the consequences of the restructuring of the salmon fleet became apparent, Alert Bay fishers and neighbouring communities made an attempt to garner some sympathy and assistance for their predicament by creating a media event. On the morning of June 4, 1996, 300 people gathered outside the Village of Alert Bay municipal office to publicly express their despair created by the Mifflin Plan. The N'angis First Nation and the Municipality of Alert Bay had declared a day of mourning. The day of mourning opened with a N'angis song of mourning. This was followed by two-and-a-half hours of speeches delivered by community members and sympathetic politicians. The following two statements are short excerpts that exemplify the messages delivered:

We are here to mourn not only the people that have gone before us that suffered from the policies of previous governments, but also the effect this policy (the Mifflin Plan) will have on our people. It will kill our community. With all the misery and despair, it will kill some of our people. And, Mr. Mifflin has to take the responsibility for that. (Bill Cramner, Chief Councilor N'angis First Nation)

We have survived smallpox. We have survived residential schools. I don't think we can survive this. Fish is the very heart of our people. It is not just today and tomorrow. I am

talking about 20 years from now. What about our children? Where is there future? They will have to leave the community. (Pat Alfred, N'amqis First Nation Councilor)

The community's passionate plea garnered support from other coastal communities in similar circumstances, and from provincial politicians who never miss an attempt to rail against federalist policies. The day of mourning did not however evoke any sympathy or assistance from Fred Mifflin and the DFO. The realities of the restructuring of the salmon industry settled hard on the N'amqis fishers and their families.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Past, Present, Future: The Final Chapter of the N'amqis and the Commercial Fishery?

In early times, the N'amqis were a very wealthy tribe because of the wealth of our river (Nimpkish). But we have seen repeated attempts to be stripped of our wealth. And this Mifflin Plan looks like just one more attempt to impoverish us. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 44, 1996)

So what are we supposed to do now? Are we all going to be able to go into tourism? Not likely, this is an isolated island. Are we going to get six-month training programs like they did in Newfoundland to become hairdressers and computer operators? Nobody is offering it, and what would we do with it here anyway. So what do we do? Try our luck in the big city and end up in the soup kitchen line-ups in Vancouver. I don't know. But I do know we got screwed. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 15, 1996)

This study took place at the beginning of a fundamental change in the salmon fishery. The complete consequences of the Mifflin Plan could not be appreciated fully in the short term. Indeed, as one fisher who reviewed this study for me commented: "It seems incomplete." I agree, it is an incomplete history. Another N'amqis fisher's wry critique provides a short, though incomplete, synopsis of what has occurred since this study:

You forgot the punch line. What does a fisherman do when he sells his license? Buy a house, collect welfare, and watch t.v.

Despite this, I do not want this study to be considered an ethnographic obituary. The N'angis could have been considered socially and culturally devastated many times in the past, but they have demonstrated their strength and tenacity to endure when faced with the seemingly insurmountable. Though it will not be an easy task, I have no doubt they will overcome their misfortunes in the present and prosper in the future.

Reflecting back upon the ambitions of this study, I feel I have provided an accurate, historical summation of N'angis fishers' participation in the commercial salmon fishery. The initial responses of the N'angis fishers to the Mifflin Plan are herein recorded. Analytical narrative, as a form and method, I believe is an excellent way to record the historical narrative or oral history of a community. It does not provide an in-depth appreciation of individual, life histories, but it does provide a breadth of experience that cannot be realized with the selection of one or a few narratives.

I believe political-ecology to be a useful source of heuristic insight for maritime anthropological studies. My use of political-ecology for theoretical analysis was subsumed within, and subservient to, the analyses provided by the N'angis fisher participants in this study. I believe the analyses of these participants to be a source of revealed efficacious insight into their ecology and the history of the BC commercial salmon fishery.

The N'angis fishers believe they have enjoyed a relative amount of prosperity from the salmon resource. In the past there have been highliners of historic distinction who have sailed from

Alert Bay: James Sewid and the skippers of the Cook Fleet are but two examples. The majority of N'angis fishers, past and present, have been skilled, hard working mariners who, because of colonial machinations, were unable to establish economic security in the industry. This is a situation the fish processors of BC have exploited for their own profits. It would however be false to conclude that the N'angis fishers have been easily manipulated dupes. As evidenced by this thesis, they have been proactive, conscientious participants in the post-contact salmon industry since its inception.

When the salmon saltry on Y'alis was founded by Spencer and Earle sometime between 1860-1870¹⁹, the N'angis concluded that it would be beneficial for themselves, and a natural progression from their own established fishery, to engage with the developing salmon industry. They provided the maritime skills and the labour necessary for the establishment and operation of the commercial fishery in the northern Johnstone Strait. Fishing the company boats, setting aside savings when possible, and sometimes gaining assistance, some succeeded in escaping the entanglement of deficit reciprocity and established an economic presence in the industry. This however has been the experience of a minority of N'angis fishers. The majority provided the skilled labour for profitable operation of the FABC company boats. They worked within the strictures of corporate monopoly and colonial penalty, endeavoring to make the best of difficult circumstances.

Are fishers rapacious rogues or anomalous ecologists? Has the N'angis worked themselves out of a job through total disregard of

the salmon resource? Certainly fishers like anybody else are self-maximizing individuals working within the constraints of their ecology. Contrary to popular characterizations though, this is generally not the reckless pursuit of opportunism. The N'angis fishers have been proactive in conservation and salmon enhancement in their local waters and watersheds. They have actively sought to shut down fisheries that they discerned detrimental to the resource, even when this has sometimes meant a loss of economic opportunity for them in the short term.

One could simply conclude that fishers are victims of the advancement of capitalism as it has proceeded through the phases of colonial expansion to industrialization into the present consolidation-capitalism. But this would be an oversimplification, and insulting to the N'angis. The N'angis were instrumental in the creation of the commercial fishery. They have been active participants and innovators in its development.

So what happened? How can a community that is so profoundly enmeshed with the salmon resource find themselves without the means to benefit from it economically? As a means of appreciating an understanding of the consequences of the Mifflin Plan for N'angis fishers, it is useful to compare the vision of this plan as it applies to this community and compare it to the DFO's mission statement in its Annual Report 1994. Its management objective was stated as:

...to undertake policies and programs in support of Canada's economic, ecological and scientific interests in the oceans and inland waters; to provide for the conservation, development and sustained economic utilization of Canada's

fisheries resources in marine and inland waters for those who derive their livelihood or benefit from these resources; and to coordinate the policies and programs of the government of Canada respecting oceans. (emphases added; DFO, 1994: 10)

In this statement there is a certain degree of similarity with the emphases of the "Vision" of the Mifflin Plan, to reiterate: *conservation, economic viability, and resource development through shared responsibility.* Though in the Mifflin Plan, there is a noticeable shift specifically related to fishery economics. It is no longer the DFO's objective to manage for the benefit of those that derive their livelihood from fishing. The DFO has shifted the emphasis towards managing for economic viability. The DFO has now taken on the role of economic adjudicator setting in motion a schema whereby the well-off within the industry can consolidate their holdings at the expense of those who in the past may have simply derived a livelihood. Perhaps the DFO's promotion of anthropophagous, Darwinian economics in the commercial fishery is how shared responsibility is enacted in this plan. This is certainly how many of the N'amiq fishers feel.

The direct consequences of the Mifflin Plan's 50% reduction of the salmon fleet have been immediate job losses for approximately 100 N'amiq fishers. The majority of these people are men with families who depend on them economically. These figures could easily rise over the following years if those that remain in the fishery are unable to maintain a viable presence. This does not include any indirect job losses elsewhere in the community as a result of the erosion of the economic base.

The majority of the jobs that were lost are a result of license consolidation, or the stacking of licenses on Fisheries

Association of BC vessels. Most of the boats that fished out of Alert Bay were older, less efficient boats that were owned by FABC companies and were fished on a rental and percentage basis. The licenses on these boats were removed and placed on newer boats that are fished by fishers from elsewhere, mainly from the Greater Vancouver area. People who had been fishing for many years, in some cases decades, for the companies were simply told that their services were no longer required. They did not receive any compensation packages or company pensions. In many cases, not even a thank-you. These fishers were also left with a large amount of fishing gear, a significant personal investment, that they will have a difficult time selling. One fisher who had been dismissed by a fishing company lamented:

What happens to all the seine nets we have? The gear that we have bought? I have my radios, my own nets, outboard motors, a refrigerator, all these different things. I can probably sell them. Maybe I can sell them? But I will have to sell them for one tenth the price I paid for them. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 14, 1996)

The companies that have profited from their labour for generations have simply cast these fishers and their families' aside.

Some licenses that were locally owned were either sold to the buy-back or to other vessel owners who were stacking licenses on their boats. Most of those that did sell their licenses were of retirement age. Of those that are retiring, after paying off any associated debts and attending to their own needs, most will attempt to assist their extended families. In most cases there will be only enough remaining for a frugal retirement. One retiring fisher speculated:

I put my license into the buy-back and it was accepted. I can pay down my debts, and have a little for retirement. But what am I going to do with my boat and gear. Nobody wants them. I guess I am going to have a fire sale. Haul it up on the beach and burn it. (Clark, D. unpublished fieldnotes, Interview 29, 1996)

Those who were not retiring, but are selling their seine licenses in the buy-back, are utilizing their payment to reinvest in the salmon industry; selling a seine license to purchase two gillnet licenses. Some are using the capital to establish other non-fishing businesses. There is a great deal of optimism about employment opportunities in tourism, though I believe there is very little evidence to support this optimism. Alert Bay is not on a main highway and therefore not easily accessible to tourists. Despite the redistribution of investments around the community, there is no indication that this will offset the significant job losses.

The federal government, through the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, has abdicated its responsibility to manage the common property resource, salmon, for the benefit of all. The DFO has displayed reticence and taciturnity in enforcing protection of the resource even though they are armed with one of the world's most capable environmental protection documents, the Fisheries Act of Canada. They have facilitated, if not colluded in, the concentration of capital in the industry to the detriment of the communities that were instrumental to the growth of the industry. Ultimately, the DFO have consistently mismanaged the resource while witnessing the demise of the fish stocks and the communities that rely upon them. The DFO has imperiled the health of the N'angis First Nation. The DFO may have doubly disadvantaged the

N'angis as they like all other First Nations have suffered debilitation under colonialism. A condition that is identified, though not named by the BC Provincial Health Officer in 1996:

Within the province...there continue to be large inequalities in health status among regions and population groups. On average, Aboriginal men and women have twelve years less life expectancy than the overall population...There is good scientific evidence to show that large differences in health status of different population groups are mostly explained by differences in living and working conditions...While lifestyle choices, such as smoking and exercise, do explain some of these differences, it is the combined inter-related effects of incomes, jobs, education, housing, social supports, and related factors that are the most powerful in influencing people's health. (British Columbia, Provincial Health Officer, 1996: iii)

The N'angis fishers and their families should not have to suffer unduly because of the inhumane policies of the DFO. A government that governs for the benefit of a few at the expense of many, is one that is fallacious and abusive. It is the federal government's moral, and perhaps legal, obligation to provide substantive, meaningful assistance to those that have been adversely affected by their inappropriate management of the salmon fishery. I wish the N'angis fishers and their families well in the future.

Notes

1 For an appreciation of the studies conducted by maritime anthropologists see the journal MAST: Maritime Anthropological Studies published by the University of Amsterdam.

2 For an example of the recurrence of these concerns see Talking on Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts., Papers given at the Thirty-Second Annual Conference on Editorial Problems University of a Toronto, 14-16 November 1996, Eds. Murray, Laura J. and Keren Rice, University of Toronto Press, 1999.

3 Kwakwaka'wakw literally means speakers of Kwakwala. They were formally referred to as Kwakiutl in the ethnographic literature, a misnomer that refers to Kwakiutl First Nation located at Fort Rupert.

4 I have been unable to find the specific date when this saltery was originally established, as well as the first names of Spencer and Earle.

5 In 1996 the DFO realized the error of this early prohibition, as they allow for the live release of endangered, or non-targeted species, and permitted limited reintroduction the use of weirs and traps for some First Nations.

6 Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) is a bioeconomic model designed to correlate the relation between fishing effort, actual catch and the average maximum yield the fish stocks can sustain. MSY differs from maximum economic yield (MEY) which attempts to correlate fishing effort, catch, annual yields of fish stocks, and market fluctuations and/or demand for higher quality fish. It has been the DFO's historic preference, heavily influenced by the lobbying of the fish processors, to manage to MSY rather than MEY to allow for "free and open" competition in the commercial fishery.

7 The spray that was used was 2-4-D, which is a herbicide, not DDT.

8 For example, the license off of an older boat of 10 tons gross weight, that perhaps was being replaced with a more efficient boat, could not be attached to another boat that exceeded 10 tons.

9 Many of the older, run down boats were also eliminated during the 1973 vessel inspection program.

10 The buy-back of licenses under the Mifflin Plan included A-I licenses. Yet one more example of the DFO's reversal of policy.

11 In the early 1980's the Royal Bank of BC did finance loans for fishing licenses. But sufficient collateral, or a co-signer with sufficient collateral, was required to secure

these loans. This did not benefit many fishers, especially those living on reserve.

12 The South Coast Advisory Board was an advisory board, composed of various fishery interests. It was created to review catch statistics and escapement figures for salmon stocks in southern BC. They also made recommendations as to salmon harvest levels between different fishing groups, and the catch levels to be allocated between Canada and the United States.

13 Pearse also made recommendations regarding sales of First Nations' food fish and fleet investment.

14 Generally there was strong resistance and protest from coastal communities, but there were a minority of individual supporters in these communities.

15 It should be noted that many of the members of the Roundtable were individuals that have been working with the DFO for many years in different forums and capacities to shape fishery management. There is a degree of reciprocity between these individuals and the DFO, so that both parties realize some measure of benefit.

16 The fishers that participated in this study identify the Fishermen's Survival Coalition as a racially prejudice group that will oppose any initiatives that support or assist First Nations, or First Nations fishers, in the commercial fishery.

17 Electro-forensic sampling is a method used by marine biologists to determine from what river system a given fish originates.

18 See "The Fishing-Dependent Community" by Evelyn Pinkerton in Marchak et al, 1987.

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