Sarita Bay Traditional Use and Occupancy Study Final Report: Summary of Research and Results for Huu-ay-aht Citizens

August 18, 2016

Project Overview

The Sarita Bay Traditional Use and Occupancy Study (TUOS) was conducted to gather information that will assist Huu-ay-aht leadership and community members in considering the proposed Steelhead LNG project and/or any other proposed developments, in the Sarita Bay area. This information will also inform the proponent, Steelhead LNG.

The Sarita Bay TUOS project was managed by Huu-ay-aht, for Huu-ay-aht citizens. The project was conducted under Huu-ay-aht cultural protocols, and overall direction from the Huu-ay-aht Executive Council, the Council of Hāwiih, and the Huu-ay-aht Peoples’ Assembly Conditions from 2014. The project was conducted by a team from Traditions Consulting Services, Inc. Huu-ay-aht citizen Irene Peters was the project team’s community coordinator and a project researcher. Project research began in February 2016 and was completed in July 2016.

Figure 1: Painting of 50 Huu-ay-aht warriors who descended the Sarita River to reclaim their territory. Painting by Trevor Little, photograph by Munro Thompson.
This report provides Huu-ay-aht citizens an overview summary of the Sarita Bay TUOS research and results. A more detailed report has been submitted to Huu-ay-aht leadership.

**Study Areas**

Three study areas were considered for the project, all located in Huu-ay-aht territory and shown in Figure 2.
TUOS Research

For the Sarita Bay TUOS project, a “Traditional Use and Occupancy Site” (TUOS), is defined as:

A Traditional Use [and Occupancy] Site is any geographically defined site (on land or water) used traditionally by [Huu-ay-aht] people for some type of activity. These sites may lack the physical evidence of human-made artifacts or structures; yet maintain cultural significance to a living community of people.

Information about the existence and nature of Traditional Use [and Occupancy] Sites is usually obtained through interviews with community Elders, as well as archival and literature searches.¹

TUOS sites include locations used by Huu-ay-aht people in the past and today. For example:

- Settlement sites such as villages and camps;
- History and sacred sites associated with origins, oral history, burial, ceremony, or Huu-ay-aht names;
- Resource gathering sites such as fishing grounds, seafood, or berry gathering sites;
- Trails and travel routes;
- Archaeological sites.

Interviews with Huu-ay-aht Elders and other citizens with strong ancestral and personal connections to the Sarita Bay area were the main source of information for the TUOS project. The project also used information from previous Huu-ay-aht research projects and from archival and archaeological sources.

Huu-ay-aht leadership prepared a list of Huu-ay-aht citizens selected for interview. The list was later circulated to the Executive Council and the Council of Ḫaw̓iiḥ for additional input.

In total, 43 interview sessions and one groundtruthing (fieldtrip) session were conducted with the following 33 Huu-ay-aht citizens:

ƛiishin, Derek Peters; Irene Williams; Bill Frank; Nellie (Mary) Dennis; Leslie Cook; Benson Nookemis; Angeline Joe; Robert Dennis Sr.; Oscar Nookemus; Jeff Cook; Robert Todd Dennis; Ed Johnson Sr.; Barb Cook; Ben Clappis; Jack Cook; W. Tommy Joe; Richard Nookmus; Yvonne Williams; Clifford Nookemus; Barbara Johnson; Stephen Williams; Ed Johnson Jr.; Irene Peters; (Ralph) Douglas Johnson; Darlene Nookemus; Jane Peters; Roxsanna Nookemus; Wish-Key, Robert Dennis Jr.; Susan Sport; Pat Lecoy; Stella Peters; Cultural Advisor (asked to remain anonymous); Pat Nookemus (Dennis).

During interviews, these people shared information about TUOS sites in the study areas. They were also asked to share their views on the proposed Steelhead LNG project. Comments on these questions are summarized in a separate report submitted to Huu-ay-aht leadership.

The locations of TUOS sites pointed out during interviews were recorded on project maps, then added to a computer TUOS Database and a computerized mapping system (GIS). The TUOS database includes details such as the location, history, and Huu-ay-aht name for each site.

The Database also organizes sites according to the following TUOS categories: aquatic resource; archaeology; culture history; land resource; settlement activity; and travel. As TUOS sites are often used for several purposes, they frequently fall into more than one category.

**TUOS Results**

A total of 1,914 TUOS sites are currently recorded in the Huu-ay-aht TUOS database and GIS. This very large number of sites, which are part of the interconnected Huu-ay-aht cultural landscape, illustrates the depth and intensity of Huu-ay-aht occupation and use of Huu-ay-aht territory.
The Sarita Bay TUOS Final Report, submitted to Huu-ay-aht leadership, includes 21 maps that illustrate the locations of TUOS sites located in the three project Study Areas. For each Study Area, there is an “All Sites” overview map and maps depicting sites associated with each TUOS category.

Figure 4, for example, is an excerpt from the Regional Study Area All Sites map. This map includes sites associated with the following TUOS activities: anchorage, animal husbandry, archaeology site, berry/plant gathering, burial, ceremonial/sacred site, canoe route, conflict, dwelling, education, environmental feature (e.g. salmon spawning stream), fishing, forestry, gardening, government, hunting, Indian reserve, legendary being, manufacture (e.g. boat building), marine hunting, marker site, medicinal/therapeutic site, named place, other resource (e.g. seaweed), preparation (e.g. smokehouse), recreation, seafood gathering, trading/employment, traditional history, trail, trapping, and water supply.

Sites are shown on the map as points (specific locations), lines (e.g. trails), or polygons (for areas such as fishing or hunting grounds).
Regional Study Area
The Regional Study Area for the Sarita Bay project contains 864 sites, 45% of the total 1,914 TUOS sites currently recorded in the Huu-ay-aht TUOS database. This includes sites associated with aquatic resources (356 sites), land resources (344 sites), culture history (277 sites), archaeology (181 sites), settlement activity (135 sites), and travel (46 sites).

Sarita Bay Local Study Area
The Sarita Bay Local Study Area contains 712 sites, or 37.2% of the total 1,914 TUOS sites currently recorded in the Huu-ay-aht TUOS database and GIS. This includes sites associated with aquatic resources (313 sites), land resources (268 sites), culture history (239 sites), archaeology (131 sites), settlement activity (124 sites), and travel (38 sites).

The Sarita Bay Local Study Area is a region of intense Huu-ay-aht use and occupation, in the past and today. The Sarita River watershed, specifically, is an area of tremendous sacred, historical, and economic significance to Huu-ay-aht. This is the “Heart of the People,” a region of rich history and abundant resources, despite damage resulting from intensive industrial forestry and fishing activity.

Figure 5: Selected dwelling sites and named places in Sarita area
The Sarita River itself has been the prized treasure for Huu-ay-aht over centuries, a major salmon river that provided annual returns, providing secure sustenance for generations of Huu-ay-aht. Huu-ay-aht Elders from Nuumaqamis recalled the days when they could hear sounds like thunder coming from the river mouth, caused by massive numbers of salmon swimming in unison, waiting to enter the river to spawn.

The river was lined with Huu-ay-aht camps, fish traps, and smokehouses. Along with salmon, trout, and steelhead are also harvested from this waterway, which Huu-ay-aht people and leadership have actively worked to protect and restore. The river is also an important travel corridor, leading from the ocean to rich resources inland that include deer, elk, and other mammals, and prime cedar bark and wood.

The Sarita River also plays a key role in Huu-ay-aht history as a secure area of refuge with abundant resources, where ancestors fled to live during times of trouble. Following an attack by the Clallam at Kiix̣, Kikiix̣inkuk, a rocky bluff on the bank of the South Sarita that resembles the fortress rock at Kiix̣, was a main place of refuge as the Huu-ay-aht rebuilt their strength and numbers. Based on oral history from Chief Louie, the precise location of Kikiix̣inkuk was confirmed during archaeological investigation in 2006. Many Huu-ay-aht people interviewed for the TUOS project spoke about this key historical account, and made reference to the paddle song sung by Huu-ay-aht ancestors as they returned down the river to reclaim their territory. The painting by Trevor Little in Figure 1 depicts the 50 warriors who led this journey.

Figure 6 (right): Huu-ay-aht houses at the north end of Santa Maria Island, 1902. Royal BC Museum and Archives PN5119.
Interviewees for the TUOS project also stressed the sacred significance of Čačingis, an island located at the mouth of the Sarita River that is closely associated with the Łukwaana. Čačingis, Santa Maria Island, which is located just south of the Sarita River mouth, and the surrounding intertidal area were all described as key areas of teaching and cultural strength.

The village of Nuumaqamis (“taboo beach”) also has strong sacred associations. When Huu-ay-aht people gathered over the winter in their bighouses at Nuumaqamis, it was the season for feasts, potlatches, Łukwaana, and other gatherings that are at the heart of Huu-ay-aht culture and law. Huu-ay-aht ancestors are buried in the graveyard to the north of Nuumaqamis. Berries and medicinal plants have been harvested in the village and fruit is still gathered from trees there.

Families with houses at Nuumaqamis include the Joe, Dennis, Clappis, Williams, Frank, Johnson, Cook, Ginger, Tuuttiismis, Sport, Dick, Jackson, Peters, Nookemus, Happynook, Jack, Billy, and Clamahouse families. Many boats were built at a boatshed belonging to Dan Williams at Hiitukliis, located in front of a creek a short distance up from the mouth of the Sarita River. Dan Williams, Jackson Jack, Harry Billy, Ken Joe, Bill Happynook, and Mike Williams have all been identified as boat builders.

In the mid-twentieth-century, when industrial logging in the Sarita Valley brought sediment and gravel downriver, the Sarita River delta filled in and its channels changed course. Huu-ay-aht people living at Nuumaqamis could no long anchor their fishing boats near the village and moved their homes to the south side of the river at Kuhs wiis, where their boats were safe. Families who lived at Kuhs wiis include the Clappis, Williams, Dennis, Cook, Moses, Sport, Billy, Nookemus, Tatoosh, Joe, and Johnson families.

Figure 7 (right): Huu-ay-aht man standing next to a carved housepost at Nuumaqamis, ca. 1910. This housepost is now on display at the Royal BC Museum in Victoria. Royal BC Museum and Archives photograph.
Interviewees for the TUOS project, who spent time living at Kuḥswiis, recalled with great warmth and clarity details such as favoured swimming, fishing, clamming, and berry harvesting areas. Many identified detailed locations of resource harvesting sites in the Sarita area. Fish species harvested at sites in Nuumaqamis Bay, for example, include salmon (sockeye, spring, chum, coho, pink), halibut, cod, cod eggs, herring, herring spawn, perch, steelhead, groundfish, rockfish, lingcod, red snapper, bass, sole, flounder, and mud shark. Seals are still hunted here, and whales (orca, humpback, and especially grey) have recently been seen in increasing numbers in Trevor Channel and up Alberni Canal. Duck and deer have been hunted near the shores of Nuumaqamis Bay and otter, weasel, marten, raccoon, and beaver have been trapped. Intertidal resources harvested off Nuumaqamis and Kuḥswiis and in Nuumaqamis Bay include crab, oyster, clam, prawn, mussel, abalone, shrimp, prawn, chiton, and urchin.
A small number of HUU-aht citizens still reside at Nuumaqamis and Kuḥswiis and others continue to return to the area. Some expressed the desire to eventually move there. HUU-aht ancestors are buried in the graveyard located behind Kuḥswiis, and the ashes of several community members, including late Tayii Ḥaw̓i?i ƛ̓išiʔin (Spencer Peters), have been laid to rest at the mouth of the Sarita River. The Sarita area continues to be used for ceremonial activity, including practices related to marriage.

For many of those interviewed, including citizens now living outside HUU-aht territory, Sarita is still home.

**Diana Island Local Study Area**
The Diana Island Local Study Area contains 150 TUOS sites, 7.8% of the total 1,914 sites. The Diana Island Local Study Area is much smaller in size than the other two project study areas. Despite this, a wide range of TUOS sites are recorded for all categories, including aquatic resources (78 sites), culture history (66 sites), settlement activity (38 sites), land resources (31 sites), archaeology (29 sites), and travel (7 sites).

Diana Island was, and remains, an area of key cultural, historical, and economic significance for HUU-aht. The village of Huuʔii, from which the name HUU-aht is taken, is located on the northern side of the island. Recent archaeological investigation at this site revealed occupation stretching back close to 5,000 years. Other archaeological sites on the island include middens, fish traps, culturally modified trees, and burials.

There are many named places on Diana Island, including ʔaaʔatsuwis. This village, together with nearby ʔapʔis on Haines Island, came to be known as Dodgers Cove. From the late 1800s up to the 1960s, many HUU-aht people spent their summers on Diana Island, home to the “mosquito fleet” of fishermen who sold their catch to fish buyers anchored in Dodgers Cove. Families who had houses at Dodgers Cove include the Joe, Dick, Nookemus, Clappis, Dennis, Frank, Williams, Johnson, Peters, Cook, Jack, Ginger, Sport, and Cootes families. Some HUU-aht people continue to spend time on Diana Island, especially in the summertime.
Many interviewees for the TUOS project recalled spending the summers of their youth playing on the beaches at Dodgers Cove, gathering seafood when the tides were low, catching salmon from small boats at nearby fishing holes, and gathering berries when ripe. Huu-ay-aht craftsmen built and repaired many canoes and boats at Dodgers Cove. Cedar bark, basketry grasses, and berries have all been harvested on Diana Island. Huu-ay-aht hunters found duck and deer nearby, while trappers targeted mink, otter, and other small mammals. Diana Island has also served as an important base for sea mammal hunting, especially seals, and offshore fishing.

The Diana Island Local Study Area plays a key role in Huu-ay-aht history and culture and remains an area of rich and abundant resources.

Figure 10: Dodgers Cove, ca. 1940s. Huu-ay-aht photograph.
Summary

The Sarita Bay Traditional Use and Occupancy Study (TUOS) was conducted to gather information that will assist Huu-ay-aht leadership and community members in considering the proposed Steelhead LNG project, and/or any other proposed developments, in the Sarita Bay area. The TUOS project was managed by Huu-ay-aht, for Huu-ay-aht citizens. Based on interviews with selected Huu-ay-aht elders and citizens with close connections to the Sarita area, combined with previous research and other sources, the TUOS project has recorded a large number and diverse range of TUOS sites in three Study Areas. The Regional Study Area contains 864 sites, the Sarita Bay Local Study Area contains 712 sites, and the Diana Island Local Study Area contains 150 sites. These sites, which are part of the interconnected Huu-ay-aht cultural landscape, illustrate the depth and intensity of Huu-ay-aht occupation and use of Huu-ay-aht territory.

The Sarita River area, specifically, is “the Heart of the People.” It is the place where Huu-ay-aht ancestors sought refuge in times of trouble and includes the prized river that produced annual runs of salmon that sustained people for generations. It remains a source of abundant resources that include fish, seafood, berries, plants, trees, birds, and animals, and is the place, where for centuries, ancestors lived and are buried. There are many important cultural sites in the Sarita Bay Local Study Area, including villages, camps, resource gathering sites, sacred and ceremonial sites, and Huu-ay-aht history sites.