



[First Peoples Menu](#)
[The Canada Site.com](#)
[Boer War Museum](#)
[Coming Back Alive](#)
[Goldi Productions Ltd](#)
[The Store](#)
[Email Us](#)

[First Peoples](#)
[Contact & Conflict](#)
[Treaties & Change](#)
[The Metis & Rebellion](#)
[Production Credits](#)

Northwest Coastal People

**Groups in
this Region**

**Environment /
Housing**

**Transportation /
Migration**

**Religion / Ceremonies /
Art / Clothing**

**Family / Social
Structure / Leadership**

**Tribal
Relations / War**

The Northwest Coastal People lived on the west coast of Canada, occupying the western shore and the islands of British Columbia, and reaching up into the Yukon.

Food / Hunting

- The people of the Northwest Coast were hunter-gatherers, so they relied on hunting, fishing, and gathering edible plants as their main sources of food.
- Since there was plenty of food available to them, they never needed to develop a system of agriculture to sustain their people.



Nuxalk fishing in canoes

Fishing

- The people of the Northwest Coast learned to exploit the natural waterways in the area, and became very skilled fishermen.
- The Pacific Ocean was the main source of food for the people, and, therefore, the men spent a lot of time fishing along the coast.
- Pacific Salmon
 - Pacific Salmon was abundant in the waters, and became the most important food resource of the people.
 - In the fall, the salmon would travel up the rivers to spawn, making them easy to catch with nets, harpoons, and traps.
 - They would literally catch thousands of fish in a small area- more than enough to feed a family for a year.



Nuu-chah-nulth man fishing with a net



Pacific Salmon



Pacific Salmon spawning grounds



Pacific Smelt

The Ocean also provided them with...

- Other fish (Halibut, Smelt)
- Crab and other Shellfish
- Seaweed
- Whales
 - It sometimes took men days to kill a whale. It was dangerous to hunt whale, because they were able to overturn a canoe.
- Clams, Oysters, Mussels
 - It was the women and slaves who collected the clams, oysters, and mussels from the ocean.
- Other animals (sea otters, seals, turtles)
- Oils
 - The people of the Northwest used a lot of fish oil to add flavour to their food.
 - They typically used the oil from whales, seals, and eulachon, a type of smelt.
 - Eulachon was full of oil, and the women had a special process of squeezing all of the oil out of



Crab

- the fish.
- The oil was valued trade good, so the majority of pressed oil was saved for trading.



Humpback Whale



Oysters



Sea Otter



Turtle



Seals



Eulachon Fish



Woman pressing Eulachon for oil



Drying Eulachon

Hunting / Gathering

- For the most part, summers were spent hunting and gathering in nearby forests.
- They hunted for:
 - Black-tailed deer
 - Elk
 - Mountain goat
 - Bear



Black-tailed deer



Elk



Mountain Goat



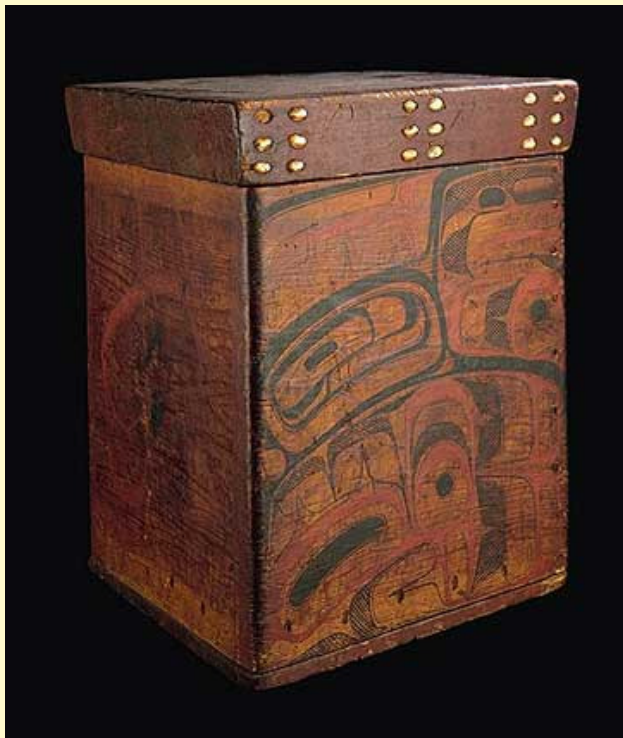
Bear



Salmon smokehouse

Preparing the Food

- Food, including meats and vegetables, were baked, steamed, or boiled without the use of pots or pans. Instead, they heated rocks in the fire then put the hot rocks into a cedar box or basket full of water, which would boil the water and cook the food.
- The women prepared fish in two ways: some fish was eaten fresh, but most of it was dried and saved for the winter months.



Cedar bentwood box for cooking



Fish cooking over the fire

Tools

Most tools that the Northwest Coast people used were made out of cedar wood, stone, and shells.

Sledgehammer

Sledgehammers for splitting wood were made out of stone.



Haida sledgehammer

Hunting

For hunting they used bows and arrows, snares, deadfalls, and harpoons.



Seal Clubs



Nuu-chah-nulth man hunts sea otter with bow and arrow

Fishing

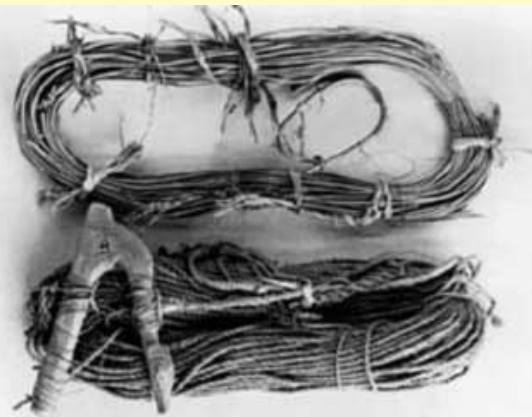
For fishing they used nets, underwater traps, bone and wood hooks, and harpoons. They also used fishlines, which were made out of cedar.



Basket for clams



Haida halibut hook (bone)



Haida fishlines

Serving Bowls

Food was served on wooden platters and trays that the women made.



Bentwood food dish

[Groups in this Region](#)

[Environment / Housing](#)

[Transportation / Migration](#)

[Religion / Ceremonies / Art / Clothing](#)

[Family / Social Structure / Leadership](#)

[Tribal Relations / War](#)

[Back to the top](#)

[Back to Canada's First Peoples Menu](#)

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