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Trail of Story

GITKSAN UNDERSTANDING OF LAND AND PLACE

The Gitksan¹ relationship to land differs from that of most Western peoples. For the Gitksan, people are part of the land, in an inextricable and social relationship with it. The health of the land and of the people are intertwined, and there is a spiritual value to land and the relationship to other species. Gitksan ecology therefore has a holistic sense that includes spiritual aspects of land, morality, history, and health of both land and people.

Art Wilson (Sim'oogit 'Wii Muk'ilxw from Ansbayaxw) told me a funny story from his childhood:

When I was a little squirt I went out with Jonathan Johnson. He used to stop and talk to trees. He made me think before he answered my questions. At first I thought he was nuts. Then he chuckled and said, "I can tell you've been thinking. What do you want to ask me?" I asked why he talked to the trees. He said, "You have to respect everything. Everything has a spirit like you and me. If you use a tree you have to talk to it and explain why you need it," he said. "But that's not why I was talking to the trees. I was practicing flawless speech [for the Feasthall]."

It was a good teaching thing. He was always careful not to tell too much at once. (L.M. Johnson notes May 29, 1998)

Dinim Gyet,² a Gitksan Lax̱ Gibuu Chief from Gitwingax̱, explained the interlinking of ownership, history and sacredness of land to me:

You say you own this, your land, most of the place names are all in our language, hey, cause they say that the Creator gave it to us and he give us the names to go with it. Not by accident, but most of them, place names, are almost like totem poles to us. It might be an event that happened—in that certain area, so they just name the whole area. It's like a oral history. . . .Place names are events that happen, that really happen to them. So that's why they really believe that their whole territory is sacred. You know, like I say, place name might have been a war or famine or whatever, and it's a constant reminder. All that the whole territory is like that. (L.M. Johnson transcript September 1996)

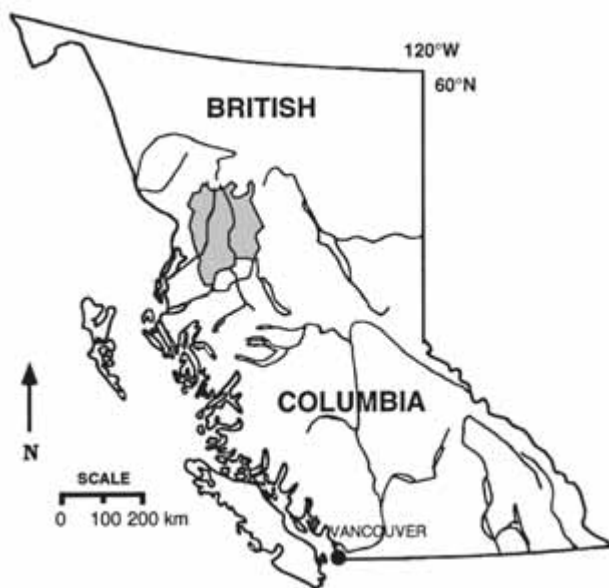


Figure 3.1 Gitksan territory map

The Gitksan ('people of the Skeena River') are Northwest Coast people who speak a Tsimshianic language. Their homeland is along the drainage of Ksan, the Skeena River, in the Coast Mountains, and the upstream portions of the Skeena River drainage (Figure 3.1). The Skeena flows through glaciated mountains with relatively steep slopes. The swift creeks and rivers are ascended by five species of salmon, and steelhead. Like most of British Columbia, the landscape is dominated by coniferous forest with alpine tundra on the mountaintops. The central portion of Gitksan Territory, where all of the historic village sites are located, is in the Interior Cedar hemlock zone (Houseknecht et al. 1986), where the broad valley bottoms and lower slopes are dominated by mixed forests and stands of hemlock and pine, with mountain hemlock or subalpine fir at timberline (Figure 3.2).



Figure 3.2 Gitksan land: Gitwingak from across the Skeena River This photo gives a sense of the historic approach to Gitksan communities, from the water with the row of totem poles visible. Photographed March 1991, by Allen S. Gottesfeld.

The Gitksan traditionally depended on salmon fishing, hunting, and gathering of plant foods, of which berries were the most important. Plants also provided important medicines. This subsistence economy persists today alongside the national and global economic systems. Gitksan society is organized into exogamous Clans (*Pdeek*), usually called Phratries in the anthro-

pological literature. The Gitksan have four Clans; Gisk'aast (Fireweed), Ganeda or Lax Seel (Frog), Lax Gibuu (Wolf), and Lax Skiik (Eagle). Within these Clan groups, people belong to a series of **Wilp**, or Houses, which are matrilineal lineage groups from specific traditional villages and headed by a single Chief.³ The Houses own bounded Territories, administered by the Head Chief and his or her sub-chiefs. The territories consist of tracts of land to which access is restricted for others not of the owning House. Delimiting of boundaries was and is important; tree carvings sometimes served that purpose (Blackstock 1996). Owned sites included extensive hunting territories or 'traplines' that might encompass a variety of other resource site types, and also specific sites or tracts of major rivers such as the Skeena for salmon fishing (Figure 3.3). These latter might occur in areas where the uplands away from the river were owned by another Chief.



Figure 3.3 A traditional fishing site on the Skeena River above the village of Ansbayawx (Kispiox), along the Tenas Hill trail This site is adjacent to the remains of an elevated cache house and cabin or smokehouse, and was figured on a map of fishing sites on the Skeena River above Kispiox compiled in the early twentieth century. Photographed May 1995, by L.M. Johnson.

Named places form a kind of grid, which, like a relational database, links knowledge from many different domains; the sacred and moral, the historical, traditional ecological knowledge about subsistence, and about routes of travel and trade. Places also serve as landmarks and reference points in travelling over the land. Gitksan place names may evoke historical events, indicate resources or activities carried out in that place, be metaphoric or actual descriptions, or may indicate a spatial relationship.

Kinds of place

Kinds of place (ecotopes) recognized in the landscape ethnoecologies of the Gitksan and other indigenous peoples of northwest North America reflect topography, hydrology, vegetation, and animal habitats, and, I think, a geography of powerful or sacred places. A great deal of ecological knowledge is tied to these types of places, including potential areas of fish habitat and fishability, habitat of various game animals, ease or risks of travel through different types of vegetation or terrain, potential camp sites or dwelling places, and berry availability. Place kinds reflect the regional geography of each group, and also their ecological relations.

There are terms for many different types of landscape features in Gitksan (Figure 3.4). These vary in scale from very large (e.g. mountain) to very local (e.g. spring, muddy place, sand, rocky area). Kinds of places include terms that describe resource sites, topographic features, vegetation types, water terms, special river terms, snow and ice terms, and sites of history, occupation and trails. These features are described by generic terms, and some types may also be specified as named sites. Topographic sites, bodies of water, and sites of history, occupation and trails are particularly rich in named places. Some resource areas such as berry patches or goat (*Oreamnos americanus*) hunting areas may also be named, and owned, sites. General orientation is by drainage and topography. Basic orienting terms include *gew*, which has the sense of relatively open area near the river, that is, 'bottomland'; *gililix* 'upland', slopes away from the river; *gyeets'*, downstream area or region; and *gigeenix*, upstream area.

For purposes of presentation and analysis, I have broken landscape terms into several groups: terms for topographic features, water bodies and wet places, snow and ice, "slides" vegetation with forest, meadow, and berry patch types, terms pertaining to animal ecology, hunting areas and traplines, and spiritual places (see Table 3.1 at the end of this chapter). Topographic features include: mountain *sga'nist* (Figure 3.5), cliff *bii yaakhl*, scree slope



Figure 3.5 Seven Sisters with hill in foreground from Sedan Creek The tallest peak is called ‘Wii Sg’anist, or ‘Big Mountain’. Xsui Lax̣ Loobit, Boulder Creek, enters the Skeena in mid-frame, and the rounded hill before the snow capped peaks is the hill around which a Gisk’aast ancestor walked singing his mourning song, Limx̣’Ooy (Vincent Jackson, pers. comm.)

ksiip, hilly land *lax̣ ḳelt*, gully *ts’imts’uu’lixs*, valley *ts’imt’in*, peak *ts’i winbl sga’nist*, ridgeline *ḳelt*, island *laxlikst’aa*, and so on. Terms for bodies of water and wet places include river or stream *xsi-*, *aks*, while *k’aliaks* is a term that describes large rivers such as the Skeena, lake *t’ax̣* (Figure 3.6), ‘spring’ *gwanks*, and *ant’look*, a muddy place where moose go (also a salt lick). “Swamp,” a wet or poorly drained area, could be seen as belonging here, although I group it with vegetation terms in this discussion. There are also various terms that describe types of river bank (cf. ‘cutoff’, a tall, steep, eroded river bank or bluff- *’wiinamḳ*’ Figure 3.7), and creeks flowing into or out of lakes.

Another set of terms denotes types of snow and ice. I would argue that, in areas with long winters, snow and ice characters do describe kinds of places. Glaciers and snowfields *xsiunummaaxws*, and hanging cornices *speekx*, represent significant travel hazards in the mountains. A class of terms for kinds of “slides” includes snowslides: *yagablo’o* when they are happening, or *en blo’o* for a place that slides every year, and older avalanche tracks *laxensuuḳs* (Figure 3.8), which slide with much lesser frequency. (The ‘*suuḳs*’ are the logs that mantle the surface of such sites.) A rockslide would be called *blo’om*



Figure 3.6 *Taxa* lake: Upper Watson Lake with Mt. Sir Robert in the background

sga'nist. Slide types grade into one another, because anyplace that experiences rockslides is also likely to experience snowslides in the winter season.

Reflecting the importance of the rivers for fish and travel, there are many terms that describe different parts of drainage systems and features of rivers. These include rock canyon *ts'ilaasxw*, bay *k'aldixgaks* or *wil luulamjax*, sandbar? *wisax /wisex*,⁴ waterfall *ts'itxs*, whirlpool *ts'a'lixs*, dangerous, unnavigable whirlpool *antk'ulilbisxw*, back eddy *luuguuksbax*, back channel *ts'ooblixs*, slow side channel *t'aamiks*, rapids *laxk'elt aks* (lit. 'hilly or ridged water') (Figure 3.9), and confluence *wilnawaadihl aks* 'where the waters get to know each other' (Figure 3.10). A word with particular significance for navigation is *ts'iliks*, a place where the water goes over a rock that's just inches under the surface with no large visible standing wave. Reading the water is essential for safe travel and productive fishing (Figure 3.11).

Some landscape terms refer to vegetation types, notably swamp *lalax'oo*, forest *sbagaytgan* or *galdo'o*, small mountain hemlock *hlkuugan*, scrubby conifer growth *sba ts'ex* (which includes both low elevation juniper scrub and timberline krumholz), open areas or clearings *lax 'aamit* and *lax 'aamaaxs*, the thickets occurring in old avalanche tracks *luulaxsuuks*, berry patches *ansim'aay*, shrubby re-growth on berry patches *maaxsgan*, and 'burn' *lax an miihl*. Timberline (the upper edge of erect forest trees) is called *gakslax sga'nist*. Although forest is generally lumped as undifferentiated "bush", forest types can be differentiated by referring to a dominant species if need be. For example, in a discussion of the health-promoting properties of pine stands, I learned that a pine stand can be called *sbaayt sginist*, 'place where there are pines'.

Another set of terms encodes kinds of places significant in animal ecology such as goat hunting area *ensimetx*, goat trail *gena metx*, beaver dam *endelgan*, or a beaver lodge *goot* ('heart'). A site of refuge for hoary marmots (*Marmota calligata*) was described as *an liixw* 'where they hide', although I'm not sure if this was the name of a place, a kind of place, or just a description. Other terms pertaining to hunting denote hunting camp, trapline trail, hunting trail, and so on. Also belonging here as much as under topography is *en tl'ook* 'muddy place', in its sense as an animal mineral lick.

Considerable ecological knowledge may be uncovered in discussions of the land, whether or not kinds of places are linguistically coded. For example, people explained to me that spiny wood fern (*Dryopteris expansa*) rootstock, *ax*, a formerly important carbohydrate food, was associated with *giist* (*Alnus crispa*) and that one should look for it in a "ravine" (by which my consultant



Figure 3.7 “High banks” are a type of feature named by both Gitksan and Athapaskan speakers, and constitute conspicuous features with implications for river travel. This high bank is adjacent to Dinim Gyet’s fish camp by Wilson Creek, Xso Gwingoohl. The term in the Gigeenix or upriver dialect is given first, followed by the Gyeets or downriver dialect term for the same feature.



Figure 3.8 Avalanche track on Seven Sisters viewed from Coyote Creek moraine, July 1995 This slide area is good habitat for grizzly bears, according to Dinim Gyet.



Figure 3.9 Skeena River in flood: rough rapids where the river flows over a bedrock obstruction, described by Dinim Gyet as ***laxkelt aks*** 'hilly water'



Figure 3.10 Confluence of Kispiox and Skeena rivers from Gwin 'Oop fish camp: *wilnawaadihl aks* 'where the waters get to know each other'



Figure 3.11 Detailed river terms, of importance to those who navigate on rivers and net fish: “boil” and “flat water” identified on photographs from 4 Mile Canyon, Skeena River, by Dinim Gyet

meant the Gitksan term *lax'aamit*). People also listed specific traditional gathering areas for spiny wood fern rootstock. In another instance, Art Mathews also explained, while identifying a scouring rush species *Equisetum hiemale* as *maawn* in Gitksan, that spring salmon rest in the places along the river where the *maawn* grows. The sandy places in relatively sheltered spots where the rush grows are covered by water with moderate current during high water—the hydrologic conditions that favour the deposition of the sand substrate are also the right kinds of places for the salmon to rest.

A couple of place terms also exist which are not, in the usual sense, ecological or topographic. One term deals with a class of places of supernatural risk and power, called *sbi laxnok*, and the other is the word for village or settlement, *laxgaltsap*. *Sbi laxnok* are places of risk where the unwary and unprotected passerby can be ‘pulled in’ by the action of a malevolent spirit, sort of like a spiritual vortex or whirlpool. If the spirit of the person is not recovered, he or she will die. The locations of several such around the present village of Kispiox were mentioned by an Elder and Chief from that village. Other such localities are known, but are rarely spoken about.⁵

Villages are in some sense contrasted with 'out on the land', and are foci of the human and social environment. Such locations are not spiritually 'clean' (because of dog and human wastes, as well as the possible malevolent intentions of other human beings) and hence are unsuitable for, as an example, the gathering of medicinal plants. Gravesites may be another distinctive site type for the Gitksan, as they are for most human groups.

Discussion of kinds of place

Types of places are understood as animal habitat for significant species. Avalanche tracks, for example, were discussed as a hazard to travel in the mountains. Dinim Gyet also mentioned the association of grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) with the lush herbaceous and shrubby growth found in avalanche areas *luulaxsuuks* (Figure 3.8). The corollary of this association is avoidance of avalanche tracks late in the day—unless you are looking for grizzlies, in which case, you would go there at that time for that purpose.

Berry patches are an important kind of place for the Gitksan, and discussion of berry picking evokes mention of specific berry patches, and of maintenance of berry patches by burning (Johnson 1999). As I mentioned above, the Gitksan also have a special word for brush that has regrown on a berry patch. This term does not apply to seral growth after a forest fire or land clearing.

"Swamp" or "meadow" environments are also significant. Two economically important plant products were gathered in moss-dominated wetlands: sphagnum moss for babies' diapers and women's menstrual supplies, and "meadow" (bog) cranberries. Beavers (*Castor canadensis*), cutthroat trout, or moose may also be associated with various types of swamp, depending on season, as may a type of grass or sedge formerly used for basketry. Swamps may also be obstacles to travel, offering difficulties for both summer and winter seasons.

Examination of Gitksan landscape terms reveals several things. First, neither vegetation typologies nor indications of soil types are particularly prominent. (Both are fundamental to Western plant ecology, and vegetation typologies are also in Western animal ecology.) What one might think of as more strictly geographic features are salient and constitute most of the terms reported. A careful analysis reveals that these terms are linked to considerable knowledge about kinds of places, their resource potentialities, and their relative ease or risk for human travellers.

Place names as indicators of perspective of Land

Place names serve as a reflection of the vision of landscape, and can reveal the kinds of places conceived by a given culture. There is an extensive literature on place names, or toponyms (including the papers of Basso 1990a, 1990b, 1996; Cruikshank 1990a, 1990b; Hunn 1996; Tom 1987; Kari 1989; others). As Cruikshank (1990a, 1990b), Thornton (2008), and Rosaldo (1980) have emphasized, history is written on the land, and is recounted and revisited by mentally travelling over the land, with place as the key to the past. Moral narratives too, are given force by their connection with the land: “in this place—it happened here.” (cf. Basso 1990a, 1990b, 1997)

For the Gitksan the names and histories of their territories form the ‘deed’ to the property, demonstrating ownership in the feathall, and are thus proprietary (Johnson 1997). Although the specific names are proprietary, general classes of Gitksan toponyms can be recognized. Names may commemorate or indicate the specific adventures of ancestors or of ‘Wii Gyet, the “Big Man” who is the Gitksan trickster/creator. Names may also indicate resources present on the land, as Hunn (1996), Hunn with Selam and family (1990), Tom (1987), Kari (1989), Kari and Fall with Pete (1987), Fowler (1992) and others have documented for various other North American native groups. The Shegunia River, locally known as ‘Salmon River’, is such a name; the Gitksan name is Xsigunya’a (stream#point#spring salmon). Names may also describe a physical feature. The name of a small creek near Kitwanga, called Shandilla in English, is descriptive; it means the water coming down from a beaver dam, Ksa’endilgan (stream#from#beaver dam). Another such name is Gwax̣ ts’alix̣ (“where there’s always whirlpools”), a canyon and fishing site on the main Skeena River by the place called Ritchie. Names can describe actions appropriate to a place. Two examples from unpublished material provided by the Gitksan Treaty Office translate as “place where you make wedges,” and “place where you set the fish trap” (Johnson 1997). Other names contain references to animals, such as Gwin watsx̣, ‘otter point’. (Anonymous 1992).

Trail of stories, the Gitksan perspective of the Land

Gitksan elders talk of specific resources and places, mixing personal history with oral narratives, *adaawk* (histories) and *antimablasxw* (stories or folklore), often with reference to their own travels of the past. Each place has its names, stories, and histories, and serves as a reminder and tangible evidence

of the verity of the events recounted by Chiefs and elders, as suggested by the statement of Dinim Gyet at the beginning of this chapter.

The Gitksan conception of the land involves a cyclical reciprocity and social relationship with other entities on the land. One Gitksan friend told me a short story. She was talking with a white woman, looking at Stekyood-enwhl, a prominent local mountain. The woman asked Sadie, “Do you really believe everything has a spirit? Even that mountain?” and Sadie answered yes, she did. She said that the mountain talks to her. She said you can tell the weather by the clouds on the peak, a certain kind of clouds that hang on the peak. Then she talked about the river. “You can tell what is going to happen if you listen to the river. If you go down there and listen and it’s really silent, the river is not going to rise and you can leave your net in. If you hear a whooshing sound when you listen, the river’s going to come up, and you pull your net.” Mike Morrell, a fisheries biologist who worked with the Gitksan, questioned Sadie about it when she said, “You listen to the river.” He asked, “What does the river say to you?” Sadie found that a foolish question (S. Howard interview notes October 1997).

Gitksan understanding of land encompasses a mesh of various generic topographic, vegetation, and substrate types (including snow and ice), situated in the context of an overarching perspective of land as owned territories and sites. One can envision the understanding of territory as a series of ‘overlay maps’ that unite diverse knowledge of the land from the perspective of travelling over the land, with named sites serving as the reference points that focus recall. History, spirituality, resource harvesting, and travel through the seasons are all united by a web of trails that traverse or connect named sites. I envision these trails as “trails of story” as well as physical trails, that take one on a journey through territory, where named places serve as markers for resource sites, areas of travel hazard, reminders of history, loci of danger or supernatural potency, and of ancestral experience, which teach moral behaviour as well as serving to locate territory boundaries.

Dinim Gyet (Art Mathews) reminisced with me about his own territory, and how he had learned its stories as a child. He said:

Yeah, well,—you could picture it as you’re saying it, if you’ve been there? Like a lot of our territory, they describe, and it’s just words until you go there and you appreciate what you see, why the names are given—to a certain spot.

... at a very young age, and they tell you all these. And then—when Granny’s telling us a story, she goes over, and now that I think back, I think [s]he deliberately stops and then—“Oh, I forgot the name of that place.” And then somebody volunteers, “Granny, hey . . .” so. And I think that’s just her way of seeing if we remember and there’s *all* the remembering of all she was telling us. I think that’s a little test, when I think back, she just goes a little ways, and then she stops—“Well what do we call that?” . . .

Then somebody voluntarily says “Granny, it’s . . .” “Oh, yeah, OK, OK” and then she gives you a hug. “You remember that,” and then she goes on. While she describes things. So she pauses in between. Almost like Jeopardy.”

I asked: So, then when would you go out? I assume you were like four or five years old when your Granny was telling you stories?

Art answered: Oh, yeah, right through, even when you’ve been already there they still- Cause they don’t write it and they want to make *sure* that it’s burnt in your mind. . . .

Yeah they just keep—and then, like I say, when you *go* there, it really captures your whole imagination of, you’re just sitting there listening, and wondering what it is when you *get* there. You really, let’s say, appreciate *why* certain place is called. . .

and there’s a little place where they cross—like this and it’s an *en tl’ook’* and where it’s deliberately, I mean, it’s year after year after year there’s a slide area. So when they come through there in March, they have their own markers across. They’re old dry, I’ve seen we have some, we called *gwulaxhon*, where they’re old burn, and they’re really dry and they’re strong, you can’t knock them down. . . .

Yeah. And there’s certain place in our terri[tory]—it’s like this and they just, right at the foot of the mountain, and they go, I mean right at the cliff, and they cross it. And they got markers and we call *en sgazel ts’el* and I used to wonder, why would the trees have faces, eyes?

Until I really went with Dad and—that’s the snow melts during the day, these little eyes where they carve the faces, of these trees, *sga ts’el gan*, and once they stick out, they go across. Cause of the—avalanche danger. . .

Art describes many types of places on his territory; groundhog and goat hunting areas, with names and associated stories of how they were hunted, an array of named berry patches which used to be maintained by burning, areas where sacred medicine plants were gathered, hazardous avalanche tracks, the peak where the ancestor's raft grounded after the Flood. The recollection of the ancestors prompted him to talk of where they had lived before the Flood, and named sites and resource areas on that associated Territory. One of those sites commemorates an old caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*) snaring site, and also an ancient murder.

For the Gitksan, trails are traversed first by listening to teachings by Elders, and continue to be travelled in story as well as by actual travel on the land. The stories of the land and its named places are thus deeply enmeshed in traditional training of the young, and continue to serve adults as mnemonics and repositories of history, moral behaviour, and traditional ecological knowledge as they guide the uniquely Gitksan perception of their land.

In contrast to Gitksan perspectives, Western ecology is generalized rather than rooted in particular place. Human history, culture, geography, and biology are seen as separate, although they all occur on the same landscape. The sacred is not incorporated into ecology, with the possible exception of the "Deep Ecology" movement. Kinds of places in the ecological sense, or ecotopes, are typically defined by a combination of vegetation and soil characters, which are rooted in our own agricultural culture. Scientific ecology tends to differentiate more among plant communities of potential economic use. For example, biogeoclimatic zonation of alpine tundra in BC is far less differentiated than is zonation of forest or grassland types. Early travellers to northwestern BC such as George Dawson in the 1870s described the vegetation and ecology of the landscape in terms of agricultural potential.

Indigenous understanding of landscape as revealed by the Gitksan is, in contrast, multilayered and based on the specific, rooted in particular places, deep knowledge, and personal experience. Ecological knowledge can also be based on 'intuition' or 'dreaming', perhaps based in recovered knowledge from ancestors through reincarnation. Kinds of places significant in local ethnoecology include a mixture of topography, hydrology, vegetation, animal/fish habitats, substrates, sites of human use or travel, sites of history, and sacred or powerful places. Ease or hazards of travel and resource potentiality are integral to kind of place. The deep and reciprocal relationship with land is fundamental to social structure, and is seen as fundamental to identity and culture. It encompasses history and territory and cosmology and morality, as well as the business of living on the land.

Table 3.1

**Gitksan Landscape Terms
Topographic Terms**

Gitksan terms	Approximate English Equivalents	Translation
<i>laxk'elt</i>	hilly land	
<i>k'elt</i> E, <i>k'ilt</i> W	top of hill, hill crest, ridge line, summit	
<i>sga'nist</i>	mountain	
<i>ts'i'winhl sga'nist</i>	mountain peak, summit	
<i>gililix</i>	upland	
<i>ts'ilasxw</i>	rock canyon (as in Kitselas, people of the rock canyon)	
<i>biiyaakhl</i>	sheer cliffs	
<i>bahumxsim lo'op</i>	rock wall, sheer cliff (as the headwall of a glacier)	'wall of stone'
<i>ts'imts'ilaasxw</i>	a newer way to say cliff	'in the canyon'
<i>kslo'op</i>	rock face	
<i>sdaats'isda</i>	big square boulders on the side of mountains, blocks which have fallen from a cliff	
<i>ksiip</i>	'black shale that slides' talus accumulation under cliffs; also unstable scree or inside of moraine	
<i>xsiip</i>	sand	
<i>laxxiip</i>	sand area, beach	
<i>tsaldem lo'op</i>	where there's lots of thin shale piled up	'thin rock'
<i>lo'op</i>	rock, stone, small rock hill	
<i>ts'imts'uu'lixs</i>	'gully', ravine	'in the gully'
<i>ts'imt'in</i>	'valley'; basin	'in the valley'
<i>usim ges</i>	a narrow place on the mountain	

(Table 3.1, continued)

Water Terms, Including River Terms

<i>aks; xsi-, [xsan, xsu-]</i>	river, stream	a form of the term for water
<i>baam'aks</i>	running water, stream	
<i>golim'aks</i>	running waters or streams	
<i>k'ali'aks</i>	large river	a form of the term for the upstream direction
<i>wilnaawadibh'aks</i>	confluence, where rivers come together	'where the waters get to know each other'
<i>t'aamiks</i>	pond; slow side channel	
<i>ts'ooblixs</i>	back channel, deep embayment, doesn't have current	
<i>luuguuksbax,</i> <i>luuguuksbax' aks</i>	a real back eddy, with current, where you set net	
<i>laxk'elt aks</i>	standing waves, rapids	
<i>gitxw, gitwblaks</i>	a boil	'swelling'
<i>lemksimks</i>	flat water, a quiet place	
<i>ts'itxs</i>	waterfall	
<i>k'aldirgaks</i>	bay	
<i>wil luulamjax</i>	bay	
<i>ts'a'lixs</i>	whirlpool	
<i>antk'ulilbisxw</i>	impassable whirlpool as at Kitselas Canyon; 'maelstrom'	
<i>laxlikst'aa</i>	island	
<i>wisax /wisex</i>	sandbar	
<i>ts'iliks</i>	where the water barely covers a rock, but there is no wave	
<i>'niilok</i>	when sticks and leaves snag on a rock that's just at surface	
<i>gwildim aks</i>	high, dry river bank	
<i>namk</i> E	steep bank of a river	
<i>nemkap</i> W	steep river bank, steep eroded river bank	
<i>'wiinamk</i> E	cutoff, steeper river bank, cf. bluff	
<i>pteliks</i>	rising water, keeps coming up, or "swelling"	
<i>disleks</i>	high water, flood stage	
<i>t'ax; t'am-</i> <i>sagalaan t'ax</i>	lake where a creek flows in from the back of the lake	
<i>xsi t'ax</i>	a creek that flows out of a lake	
<i>gwanks</i> E; <i>gwenks</i> W	a spring (not a swamp)	
<i>antl'ook</i> E <i>en tlook</i> [W]	where moose go, a muddy place; salt lick, black mud	'place of mud?'
<i>t'ook</i>	mud	

(Table 3.1, continued)

Snow and Ice Terms

<i>sbeek</i>	cornice	
<i>bunksim maaxws</i>	powdery snow like sugar	
<i>bunks</i>	powder, powder [snow]	
<i>yeesims</i>	powder snow that blows all around; even snowshoes don't hold you up	
<i>'moos</i>	sticky wet snow	'it sticks'
<i>'muuxws</i>	snowdrifts, powdery blowing snow, any kind of blowing snow	
<i>s'yunim maaxws</i>	snowfields, snow on glacier	
<i>s'yun</i>	glacier	
<i>blo'omks</i>	wet snow in early spring; cohesionless 'slide snow'	from the verb to slide
<i>'wiluks</i>	wet snow that doesn't stick together (from calendar)	"the sun hits your trail in snow and it gets wider"
<i>g'ipx</i>	"frozen over"; river ice that a person can walk on	
<i>pdaalast</i>	water on ice	(either in cold weather or in March)
<i>lulitx</i>	candling ice "the sun hits the ice in March and it becomes like icicles"	

Slide Terms

<i>blo'o</i>	"slides"	'it slides'
<i>enblo'</i> [W] <i>anblo'o</i> [E]	avalanche track, place where it slides every year	'place-slides?'
<i>blo'om sga'nist</i>	rockslide or landslide	'slide-mountain'
<i>'yagablo'o</i>	snowslide, avalanche	
<i>blo'om gan</i>	"blowdown"? or a landslide involving trees?	'timber avalanche'
<i>laxensuukx</i>	landslide or snowslide scar; has slide alder	

(Table 3.1, continued)

Vegetation Types: Meadow, Swamp

<i>lax'amaamit</i>	'meadow' (snowbed areas and other treeless places)	'place that's good, that has no trees'; 'prairie'
<i>lax'amaaxws</i>	'meadow' (alpine and other treeless flats)	'prairie'
<i>laalax'u</i>	swamp, wet meadow, muskeg	

Vegetation Types: Forest and Scrub

<i>sbaaytgan</i>	forest	
<i>sbagaytgan</i>	forest	'among the trees'
<i>sbagaytangan</i>	mixed forest	
<i>sbagayt-am'mel</i>	cottonwood forest [may be a neologism]	'among the trees, cottonwoods'
<i>sbaayt sginist</i>	pine grove, pine stand	'place where there's pines'
<i>sbaa ts'ex</i>	scrubby coniferous growth (juniper), krumholz (timberline)	juniper place'
<i>sbagadegantx</i>	forest	'out in the bush, in the forest'
<i>laxsga'nist</i>	forest area if it is up a mountain	
<i>am 'melmgaliaks</i>	floodplain cottonwood, cottonwood-along-the-river	
<i>luulaxsuuks</i>	dense scrub regrowth in old slide area	

Vegetation: Burns and Berry Patches

<i>ts'i'naast</i>	burnt over patch (for berries or deer browse); clearing	
<i>lax'anmihl</i>	burnt over area	'place that is burnt or charred?'
<i>lumks tsee gantx</i>	"all the timber coming up again" after the burn	
<i>ansimaa'y</i>	'berry grounds'	
<i>maaxsgan</i>	too much brush or undergrowth on the berry patch	
<i>genimsimaa'y</i> E	berry patch trail	
<i>ginimsamaa'y</i> W	berry patch trail	

(Table 3.1, continued)

Hunting and Trapping Area Words, Trails and Campsites

<i>ensimetx</i>	traditional hunting areas [for goats]	
<i>gena metx</i>	goat trail	
<i>ginimxsga'nist</i>	goat hunting trail	
<i>genimsitlinasxw</i>	hunting trail	
<i>genim jap</i>	trap trail	
<i>genx</i>	trail	
<i>ksdaamoos</i>	hand or foothold on cliff	
<i>endilgan</i>	beaver dam	
<i>goot</i>	beaver lodge, from the shape when the pond is dry	'heart'
<i>ensinhun</i> W <i>ansinhun</i> E	place away from the village where you do fish	
<i>anjok</i> E, <i>enjok</i> W	campsite, dwelling place (eg berry camp, fish camp)	
<i>antl'ook'</i> E	a muddy place, used by animals as	
<i>en il'ook</i> [W]	a mineral lick	

Spiritual Places

<i>sbilaxnok</i>	a place of spiritual power and danger
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Sources of Information

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