

# The Nicola Valley

## Booklet #1

# SUMMER

The Okanagan and the Nle?kepmx peoples of the Nicola Valley lived in Summer lodges during the summer months. These lodges were a framework of wood covered with bark or mats. Women would make tule mats to cover the summer lodge. The summer lodges were **portable** dwellings. These dwellings were lightweight and could be taken down and moved new a new location. The summer time was when the Nicola Valley people were most **mobile**, moving from place to place to live.



Early Nicola Valley residents (NVAA)

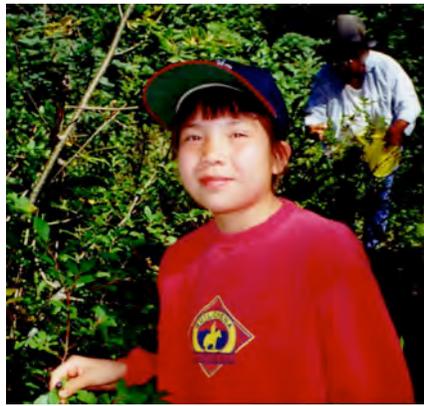
## **GATHERING**

The women would be very busy during the summer. Their activities included: gathering a large variety of plant foods: Roots, stems, berries, leaves and bulbs. Roots were gathered by using a digging stick. Berries such as huckleberries, saskatoons, and chokecherries were picked. The women would dry the berries on tule mats and make ‘fruit leather’ out of them. This would be stored away for the winter. The women also dried the berries for beverages and flavorings to be used on other foods.



Leteesh Archachan picking huckleberries

Today many Okanagan and Nle/kepmx families still go to the mountains during the summer to pick huckleberries and other berries. Today the women freeze the berries, can the berries, and make jams and jellies out of the berries.



**Cheryl McLeod and Grandma Sarah McLeod  
picking Soapberries and Huckleberries**



## FISHING



Lois Archachan & James Blankenship  
salmon fishing at Tilton, B.C.



Archie Blankenship Gill net fishing  
at Tilton, B.C.

During the summer months the men would fish. Fishing was not only done in the summer, it was done all year around. Fish were caught in rivers, lakes and streams. Sometimes the whole family would travel to the fishing spots. The people of the Nicola Valley also traveled to the Fraser River and the Thompson River to fish.

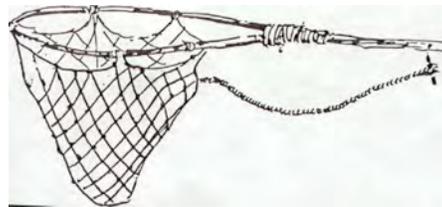


Fish trap (weir) in the Nicola River (NVAA)

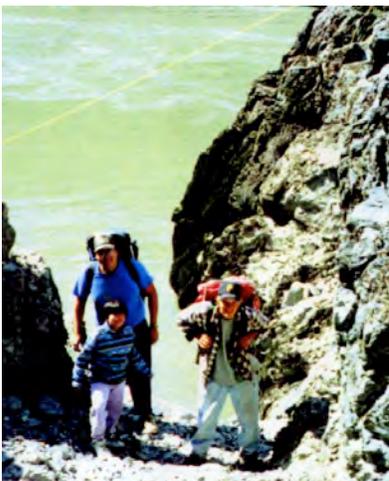
The types of fish that can be caught in the Nicola Valley are: salmon, lake fish such as trout, kokanee suckers and squawfish. In deep water, salmon were caught with **dip nets**. The fish were also speared from the shore, and sometimes the Nle/kepmx men would fish at night by torchlight. In shallow water the fish were netted or speared behind **weirs**.



**Louis Elkins Dip Net fishing**



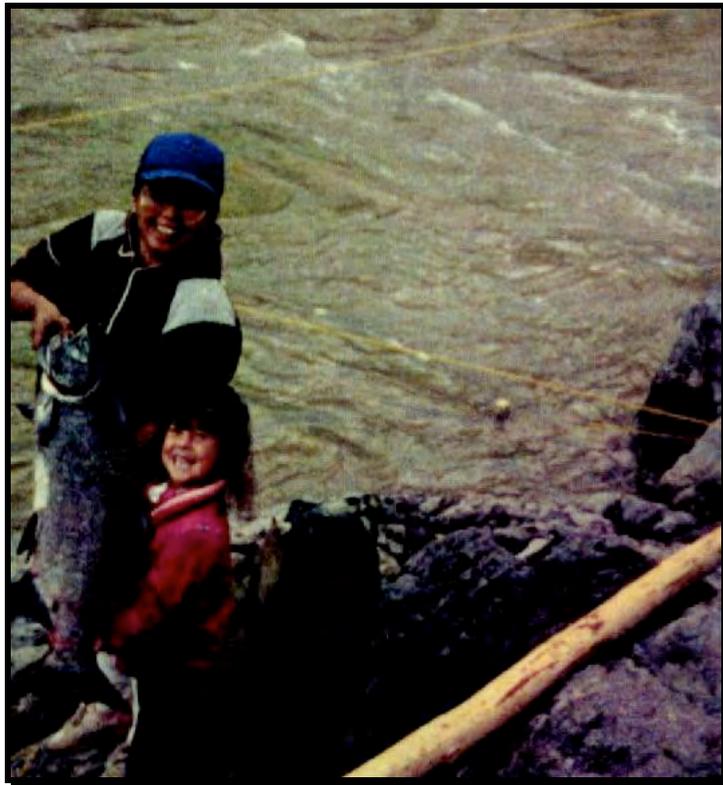
**Dip Net**



**James Blankenship, Candace & Bryce Archachan climbing up the steep embankment**

Each family fished in their own special areas. If a family wanted to fish in another's fishing spot permission had to be granted.

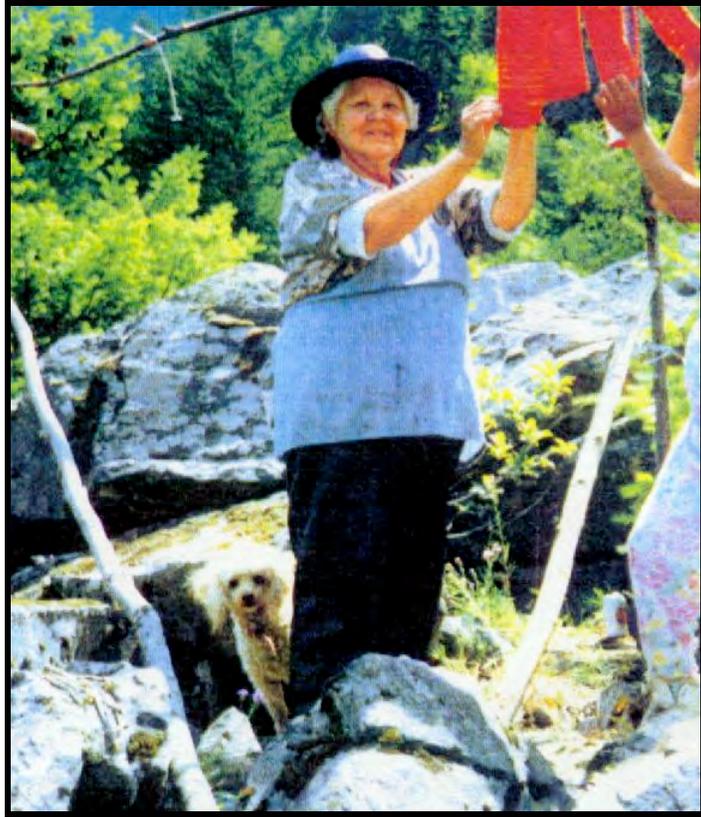
As long as the fishing spot was not being used it was okay for a visiting family to fish there. The people had **respect** for each other and would not **intrude** on one another. Several members of a band would meet at the station and fish together. The fish was shared equally amongst the families.



**Lois Archachan and Leteesh Archachan holding a big salmon**

The salmon was prepared by splitting the backbone of the salmon and then removing the backbone. The salmon was then split

and held open by sticks. The salmon was then placed on drying racks. This is called wind-dried salmon. The people also smoked the salmon and ate the salmon fresh.



**Dolly Voght hanging split salmon to the drying rack**

Today many of the First Nations people of the Nicola Valley fish in the lakes, streams and rivers that their ancestors fished in. Most fishermen today still make their own dip nets, but they buy their bait and hooks

from sport shops. Today, salmon is still dried the traditional way. Dried salmon is very popular; most First Nations people consider this a **delicacy**. Today, some of the salmon can be canned, smoked, and frozen.

In late August and early September the Okanagan people fished for Kokanee fish in Nicola Lake and Douglas Lake. They called this “Muk Muk”. When Muk Muk fishing, families would join together at the lake.

Two or three men would fish for Kokanee with a net and the fish would be placed in a big box. Once the box was full of Kokanee someone would yell “Muk Muk”. Once Muk Muk was hollered all of the families would dig into the box and take their share of the Kokanee. This way of fishing made sure that every family got their fair share of the Kokanee. No one would be left out.

This style of fishing is rarely done anymore because the fish population has decreased.

Lake fishing is still an important part of Okanagan life today.

### Questions

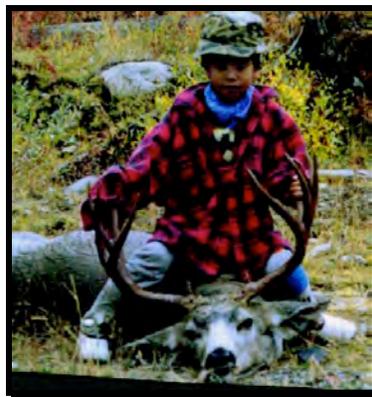
1. Can you name three methods of fishing?
2. How was the salmon preserved?
3. Can you name three kinds of berries that are gathered?
4. Would you like to go fishing in the Fraser River or berry picking in the mountains with your family?



# Hunting

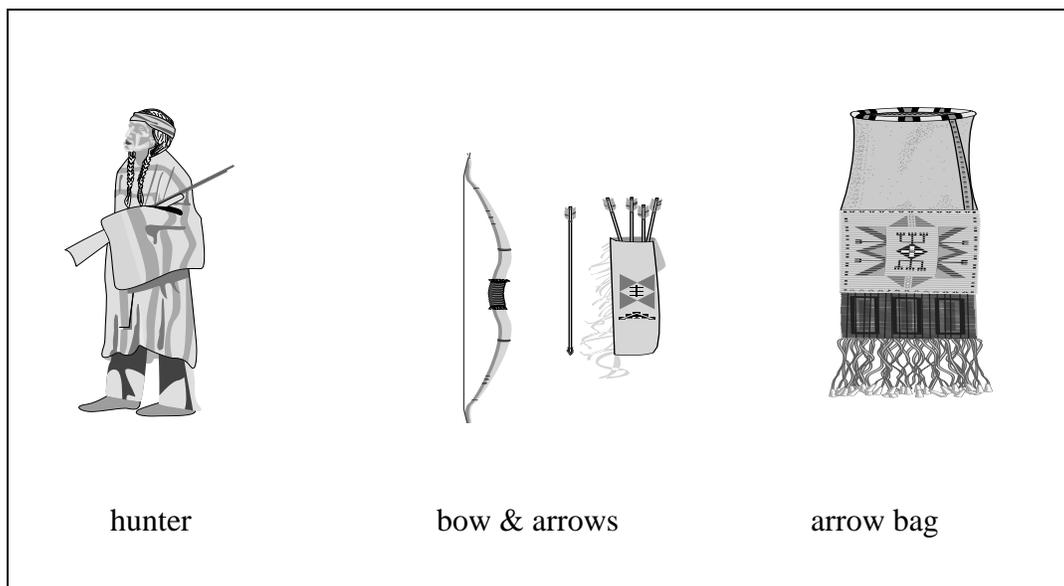


The Okanagan and Nle?kepmx peoples considered hunting to be one of the most **honorable occupations**. The First Nations of the Nicola Valley hunted and trapped many animals. Large animals such as deer, elk, bear, and moose were hunted. Smaller animals such as beaver, rabbits, grouse, and ground hogs were also hunted. Each man was responsible for making his own hunting tools. The hunters had the following tools: Bows and arrows, knives, scrapers, deer fences, snares, traps and nets.



Jeremy Tom deer hunting in the Penask area

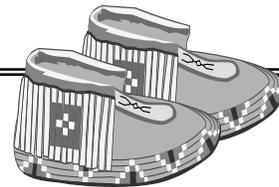
The bows were made out of different types of wood. The bows were strengthened with **sinew**. Sinew is string made out of deer bone. Arrows were made from rose wood, or saskatoon bush. The arrowheads were usually made from stone. The men carried the arrows in a bag or pouch made from buckskin or a woven plant fiber material.



The chief of the hunters knew the best place to find animals and the best method of catching the animals. For

example, in the early mornings and the late afternoons the deer would be by lakes or streams drinking. This was a good time for the men to hide until the deer came. Smaller animals such as rabbits and grouse were often snared. When skinning the meat the men made sure that none of the meat would be wasted. All parts of the animal were used. Take, for example, the deer:

### SOME USES OF DEER



**Hide**—used for clothing, pouches, moccasins, hair ties, blankets

**Brains**—used to soften the hide

**Sinew**—used for string, thread for sewing clothes, securing bows and other things

**Hoofs**—could be used to decorate baskets, made into rattles

**Antlers**—used for handles (e.g. on knives), whistles, pipes

**Hind leg bones**—sewing and weaving needles or awls

**Meat**—was used for food, dried, smoked boiled and pit cooking

**Ribs**—used for scrapers

**Intestines (tripe)**—food

**Stomach**—used for water carrying bags

It was believed that an animal would be **dishonored** if any part of it was wasted. The hunters had great respect for the animals because they depended on the animals for their own survival. When a young man caught his first deer he would give all of the meat away to the community.

Other hunting **ceremonies** included praying and **sweat-bathing** before a hunt. Sweat-bathing was done in a sweat lodge. Hot rocks would be placed inside the sweat lodge. Water is then poured over the rocks to create steam. The people inside the sweat lodge would pray while sitting in the sweat lodge. These ceremonies were ways to show respect, ask for protection and success and to ensure that there be more animals for the future generations.

Today the in the Nicola Valley the First Nations people still hunt. Many of the traditional hunting grounds are lost now because of highways, ranchlands, and development. Most families today still share the wild game, and ensure that the elders receive a share in the meat. The meat today is preserved by freezing, making it into a jerky, smoking and sometimes canning it.

Many people today still avoid wasting any part of the animal and use the various animal parts for traditional clothing and moccasins. There are also many crafts-persons and artists who use traditional techniques, such as tanning hides, to make **contemporary** arts and crafts. For example, in the Nicola Valley we have fashion designers, many people who make Native crafts (beading, earrings, dream catchers), people who still make moccasins and medicine

pouches. Hunting is still a part of First Nations life today.

### ANIMAL SKINS

During the fall months the men are busy hunting and the women are busy preparing the hides. The deer, moose and elk hides were important hides. These hides were used for making clothing. The hair of the animals could be either scraped off of the animal or left on the animal for clothing. Furs from smaller animals such as squirrels often became decorations on the clothing.



One of the most common ways of preparing hides is called “tanning hides.” The following steps were taken when tanning hides:

## TANNING HIDES

1. The hide of the animal is removed in a specific way and in one piece.
2. The excess fur is scraped off of this hide with a scraper made from the rib bone.
3. The scraped skin is placed in a soaking solution: A mixture of brains and water. (Today's tanners add fabric softeners, bleach, and/or oils to the mixture)
4. The hide is then laces and stretched on a frame.
5. The women push the hide with a poking stick. This helps to stretch and soften the hide. When the hide becomes loose on the frame, some people tighten the laces.
6. If the hide does not soften, the tanner will repeat steps 2-4.
7. The hide is colored by smoking it with decayed wood such as fir and cottonwood. The hide is then placed on a framework of sticks and smoked until the desired color is achieved.

The women and men would make blankets, clothing, leggings, gloves, bags and moccasins out of the tanned hides. Today there are many people, both young and old who know how to tan hides. Some of the traditional garments

are still made by the men and women of the Nicola Valley.



## Activities Enjoyed by the People of the Nicola Valley



Shanny McIvor: NVFSC



Cheryl & Allison McLeod: riding



Ivan Holmes: Dancer



Naomi Jackson: Drama

## Glossary



abundance	a quantity that is more than enough, great plenty; full supply.
adapted	change one's behavior so as to fit in with a new situation.
appoint	name to an office or position. <i>This man was appointed chief.</i>
attract	draw to oneself: <i>The light attracts the fish.</i>
authority	the power to enforce obedience; right to command or act. <i>Chiefs have the authority to make decisions.</i>
boundary	a limiting line; something that functions as a dividing line, especially between properties.

ceremonies	a special form or set of acts to be done on special occasions.
contact	the meeting or coming together of two or more people.
contemporary	having to do with the present time; current.
delicacy	a choice kind of food.
dip net	a fishing net with a long wooden handle. Dip nets were used in fast moving, deep water.
dishonored	a loss of honor or reputation; shame; disgrace.
European	a person whose recent ancestors came from Europe.
extended	extensive; widespread.
honorable	having or showing a sense of what is right and proper; honest and upright.
insulate	keep from losing or

	transferring heat.
insulator	something that insulates.
intrude	thrust oneself in; come unasked and unwanted.
location	a position or place.
mobile	capable of being moved easily; moveable.
occupation	one's business or employment; trade.
pitch	a sticky substance obtained from trees. Pitch was used when torchlight fishing.
portable	capable of being carried; easily carried: <i>The summer lodge was a portable dwelling.</i>
resources	any supply that will meet a need: The Nicola Valley's resources include plants, trees, animals, rivers, and
fish.respect	honor, esteem: <i>children</i>

*should respect their elders.*  
Feel or show honor or esteem  
for.

responsible

obliged or expected to  
account for: *Each family was  
responsible for moving their  
own goods.*

scarce

hard to get; rare: *food often  
became scarce during a long  
winter.*

sinew

a tough, strong band or cord  
that joins muscle to bone;  
tendon: First Nations people  
made a strong thread out of  
sinew.

sweat-bathing

a ceremony that takes place  
in a sweat lodge. The people  
pray when they are  
inside the sweat lodge.

torchlight fishing

the act of fishing at night. A  
torch was lit and held above

the water. The fish would see the light and swim towards it. The fishermen would then spear the fish.

weirs

a fence of stakes or broken branches put in a stream or channel to catch fish.

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