Carrier Sekani Self-Government in Context: Land and Resources

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Since the mid-19th century Carrier Sekani nations have been undergoing changes that have weakened, but not destroyed, the basis for self-government. This paper examines the historical origins of traditional Carrier Sekani self-government and the events through which traditional self-government was undermined. It also examines landscape changes that have occurred in Carrier Sekani territory since the arrival of non-aboriginal settlers, and the impacts of these changes on Carrier Sekani communities. It is asserted that the roots of traditional self-government have remained intact, though on an informal level. The basis for re-asserting control by Carrier Sekani nations over their lands and resources is a shared concern over traditional territories and resources. This is reflected in the priorities of Carrier Sekani communities in the treaty-making process.

Introduction

Self-government and Traditional Resources

A 1991 commentary in the *Native Studies Review* stressed the need for an economic base to support aboriginal self-government, using the following analogy: "…without a solid economic base, self-government is akin to a tree that can bear no fruit" (Isaac, 1991: 73). The Carrier and Sekani people of central British Columbia base their case for self-government on this premise. When their leaders speak of self-government, their concerns over their lands and resources are at the forefront.

The self-reliance of Carrier and Sekani communities depends on access to and use of their traditional lands and resources. This is the economic base that has supported their way of life over the past

12,000 years since the last ice age. The bond between the Carrier Sekani and their wilderness landscapes is cultural and spiritual, as well as economic. They define their origin in terms of the mythological values imbued in their natural surroundings. Their customs and cultural traditions are infused with references to a kinship between themselves and the natural world, and their economic security has always depended on the ecological integrity of the surrounding physical environment.

The purpose of this paper is to trace the evolution of Carrier Sekani self-government since contact with Europeans, the impacts on community life this evolution has brought, and the continuing importance of the land and its resources to Carrier Sekani communities. The intimate connection between community life, political jurisdiction, and reliance on natural resources is an important fact that underpins the changing human landscapes in Carrier Sekani territory from pre-contact times to the contemporary period. Self-government is strong when Carrier Sekani communities have a strong relationship with their traditional resources, and weakened when they do not.

The Carrier Sekani Physical Landscape

The Carrier and Sekani people of central British Columbia inhabit the northern part of the Interior Plateau region, bounded on the west by the Coast Mountains, on the north by the Omineca Mountains, and on the east by the Rocky Mountains. This region is dominated by the Sub-boreal Spruce biogeoclimatic zone, combined with parts of the Mountain Hemlock and Englemann Spruce-Subalpine Fir zones (Cannings and Cannings, 1996: 86,88). The regional geomorphology was formed mainly through volcanism, glaciation, fluvial erosion, and deposition of the glacial and post-glacial periods. The Nechako-Fraser basin in the south and the Finlay, Parsnip and Peace Rivers in the north drain the region. The watersheds of the Nass and Skeena rivers lie along its western edge. To the south, the homeland of the Southern Carrier comprises the basins of the Dean, Blackwater, and Quesnel rivers. The Carrier Sekani region contains a number of large lakes, both natural (Babine, Stuart, and Takla lakes) and man-made (Cheslatta/Murray and Williston) reservoirs. The climate of the region is a continental one, with long, cold winters; summers are short with relatively long, warm days (Tuller, 1987: 82). Overall, the region has relatively low precipitation, except for occasional inflows of moist marine air masses from the Pacific.

The dominant forest types in the Carrier Sekani region are the white and Englemann spruce and sub-alpine fir, with large stands of black spruce, aspen and lodge pole pine in some areas. The region also hosts a wide variety of shrubs, flowers, berries, mushrooms, ferns, lichens, and mosses (Cannings and Cannings, 1996: 182-196).

Due to the widespread presence of water on the landscape, biting flies such as the mosquito, the black fly, and the horse fly are common in summer. The forests of the region also provide a rich habitat for ungulates (moose, deer, caribou, and mountain sheep), fur bearing animals (bear, wolf, lynx, beaver, mink. marten, etc.), as well as rodents (rabbit, mice, vole, marmot, porcupine, and squirrel). Bird life is abundant, including birds of prey (eagle, hawk, owl), songbirds, grouse, and ptarmigan, as well as waterfowl. Only the hardiest birds are able to withstand the long, cold winters; thus the majority of bird species in the region are migratory.

The many streams and lakes in the Carrier Sekani territory are rich in fish. These include resident freshwater species (trout, char, suckers, sturgeon, whitefish) and anadromous Pacific salmon that spawn in the headwaters of the Fraser and Skeena watersheds. Salmon runs in the Fraser, Nechako, and Babine watersheds have traditionally provided an important food source for the Carrier communities on these waterways.

Traditional Livelihood and Values

The traditional way of life of the Carrier and Sekani peoples has been described in detail by anthropologists (Duff, 1951; Goldman, 1953; Jenness, 1937; Jenness, 1943; Morice, 1893). A contemporary overview of the traditional livelihood and worldview of the Carrier is found in Furniss (Furniss, 1995: 520-532). A summary of traditional Sekani society, beliefs and livelihood, based on the observations of early non-aboriginal explorers and anthropologists, is found in Clare (2000). Though there are important regional variations, many of the general traits of the Carrier and Sekani material culture and value system are similar to some extent. The main variation is the higher level of social stratification and more structured landholding system in the central and northern Carrier, as opposed to the southern Carrier and Sekani.

Anthropologists have described the principal traditional livelihood pattern of both the Carrier and Sekani as the annual round, sometimes referred to as the seasonal round. This pattern consisted in small extended family groups harvesting specific animals, food plants, medicine plants, and fish at different seasons throughout

the year in particular locations within their respective hunting and gathering territories. Mobility of the hunting–gathering group was systematic and purposeful, not random and haphazard. Certain well-known (to the family) resource harvesting sites and areas were targeted at times and locations that offered opportunities for obtaining resources. Methods and technologies used in this process were specially adapted to the particular resource being collected. Success depended on an intimate understanding, of the local ecosystem, extensive and detailed geographic knowledge of the local terrain, and disciplined cooperation both within and between hunter-gatherer groups.

Given that the distribution of traditional resources was uneven, an extensive network of trails and waterways was used for trading surplus goods between neighbouring hunter–gatherer groups. Because the northern and central Carrier had access to relatively large, stable salmon runs, their lifestyle was somewhat more sedentary and their villages larger and more permanent, as compared to the southern Carrier and Sekani. Economic cooperation among neighbouring nations was secured through trade, intermarriage, and sometimes through borrowing of cultural practices (e.g. clan systems, feasting, traditions). The combination of a rich natural resource base, well-adapted technology, trade, and social cooperation normally provided the people of the Carrier and Sekani territories all the basic necessities of life: food, clothing, shelter, medicine, social support and spiritual sustenance.

The benefits of the traditional way of life depended on the individual members of Carrier and Sekani communities learning all they could about the plant and animal communities surrounding them, and about the practical application of indigenous technology to resource harvesting. Good social conduct also fostered economic success through cooperative group effort and sharing. Many of the traditional stories (e.g., Rossetti, 1991), used to educate children as they grew up, stressed kinship with, and respect for, other living creatures as well as ethical social conduct based on mutual respect, good humour, generosity, and patience. It was common for adolescent boys and girls to access personal guidance from the spirit world through communicating with the spirits of animals who were perceived in dreams as guardian spirits. In the traditional worldview people, animals, plants, fish, and other aspects of nature were part of one large interdependent family, each member having a rightful and respected place in a shared reality. Even today it is still common for Elders to remind their people that the earth is like everyone's mother, and all living things are her children.

Origins of Carrier and Sekani Self-Government

Territories and Peoples

The Carrier and Sekani peoples have occupied a vast territory in north central British Columbia from time immemorial (See Figure 1). The traditional territories of the Carrier people include lands that drain westward and southward into the Pacific Ocean, while the Sekani territories drain east and north into the Arctic Ocean. The Carrier and Sekanis are Athapaskan speaking peoples. In most Athapaskan languages the word for people is "dene", sometimes pronounced as "ne", "t'en, or "jan". European explorers gave the name "Carrier" to these people, observing that widows carried the ashes of their deceased husbands during the period of mourning. In their own language the Carrier refer to themselves as Dakelh-ne or Yinka Dene. The word "Sekani" means "people of the rocks". There are three branches of the Carrier (Furniss, 1995: 516):

- The Southern Carrier, whose traditional territory stretches from the Bowron Lakes in the east to the western Chilcotin Valley;
- The Central Carrier, traditionally occupying an area from the upper Fraser valley near Jasper in the east to Cheslatta Lake in the west;
- The Northern Carrier, occupying the area from Burns Lake west to Moricetown and north to Babine Lake.

The northern and central Carrier have historically had economic, social and political links to the Sekani, hence the term Carrier Sekani.

The Carrier Sekani people identify themselves as a number of small nations allied with each other, but with each nation having its own distinct territory, usually corresponding to a lake system or watershed. Within the Carrier Sekani territory, all features of the natural landscape are identified by Aboriginal names. The word for river, often written as "ko", "quo" or "ka", is prominent in Carrier Sekani place names. For example, Omineca, Ingenika, Ospika, Nechako, Stellaquo, and Endako are well-known Carrier Sekani place names. Table 1 identifies Carrier Sekani nations and their traditional territories.

Before the arrival of Europeans, the Carrier Sekani nations had established governments within geographic boundaries that were well known to themselves and their neighbours. Territorial boundaries were marked with reference to natural landmarks (e.g., mountains, rivers, creeks, lakes, rocks, etc.) and the knowledge of

these boundaries was reinforced through oral histories passed down by Elders and Chiefs to the younger generations. Although the institutions of traditional Carrier Sekani governments were unlike those of Europeans, these governments were real, their jurisdictions were recognized, and their territorial boundaries were enforced through alliances, diplomacy and war.

Figure 1   Carrier Sekani Region of British Columbia

Table 1 Carrier and Sekani Nations and Territories

Nation	Language	Territory
Sustut'enne	Sekani	Takla, Bear, and Thutade Lakes
Saschojan	Sekani	Ingenika, Finlay, and Ospika Rivers
Tl'azt'en	Carrier	Stuart, Cunningham, Trembleur Lakes
Nadot'en	Carrier	Babine Lake, Babine River
Wetsewe T'enne	Carrier	Burns, Broman, and Francois Lakes, Bulkley River
K'oo Dene	Carrier	Stuart Lake, Fort St. James
Lheidli T'enne	Carrier	Fraser River and Nechako River, near Prince George
Sai K'uz whet'en	Carrier	Nechako River, Vanderhoof
Na dle t'en	Carrier	Fraser Lake
Stellat'en	Carrier	Fraser Lake, Francois Lake
Tsu yaz to t'en	Carrier	Ootsa, Tatsa, Cheslatta Lakes
Yekoocht'en	Carrier	Stuart Lake

Note 1: The above list is based on information compiled by the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council. It does not include a detailed list of the Southern Carrier and Sekani communities, which is as follows:

Southern Carrier

Lhoosk'uz Dene	Carrier	upper Blackwater River valley
Lhtako Dene	Carrier	Blackwater. Fraser and Quesnel Rivers, near Quesnel
Nazko Dene	Carrier	Nazko River
Ulkatcho	Carrier	Dean River, Anahim Lake, upper Bella Coola River

Sekani

Tsay Keh Dene	Sekani	Ingenika, Finlay and Omineca Rivers, Williston Reservoir
McLeod Lake Dene	Sekani	McLeod Lake, Parsnip River, Carp Lake, lower Williston Reservoir
Fort Ware (Kwada Hi)	Sekani	upper Finlay River, Bear Lake, Takla Lake, upper Williston Reservoir

Note 2: The territories mentioned above are not meant to be exact definitions, but rather general locations of traditional areas.

Carrier Traditional Government

The most important political unit for the southern Carrier was the extended family, or sadeku (Furniss, 1995: 526, 527), made up of all those individuals related to a common grandfather. The size and composition of individual households varied according to changing ecological and social conditions. The most influential political figures were the detsa (headman) and the duyunne (shaman).

Each extended family had its own hunting and gathering territory. Though control of this territory was not exclusive as regards other southern Carrier, fishing stations were considered family property. The role of the detsa was to coordinate hunting and fishing on an informal level, i.e., through persuasion and family support rather than direct control or coercion. Marriages outside the extended family lineage, and sometimes with non-Carrier neighbouring First Nations, provided a social security network of trade, mutual assistance, and shared access to hunting and fishing territories. Food scarcities in one's own territory could be overcome by accessing surpluses in the territories of relatives.

The traditional territories of the central and northern Carrier were based on the concept of "keyoh" which means the resource area (i.e., hinterland) that belongs to a particular settlement or clan, and that serves as the material, cultural, and spiritual basis for sustaining human life. The central institution through which the Carriers owned, managed, and protected the "keyoh" was the potlatch system, or "Bahlats". Under the Bahlats system, Carrier society was divided into matrilineal clans, called "Di Do Ne". Each of the clans was identified by an animal symbol that served as its coat of arms. The four clans were beaver, bear, frog, and caribou. Each of these clans was, in turn, divided into sub-clans whose symbol was usually (though not always) an animal. Animal symbols underscored the sense of kinship and respect Carrier people felt for all living things within their territories. Each clan owned and controlled its traditional territory, or keyoh, that sustained the families belonging to that clan and its sub-clans (see Figure 2). The boundaries of the traditional "keyoh" are still known today by the Carrier Elders.

Anthropological studies of the Bahlats have stressed its importance as a community event (i.e., traditional feasting) designed to reinforce social structure, settle disputes, re-distribute wealth, and express/celebrate cultural values (Barnett, 1968; Kobrinsky, 1973; Seguin, 1991). In the context of self-government, however, it is especially important to stress than the Bahlats was a system of land

tenure and resource management. Because the four clans were exogamous (i.e., marriages allowed only with members of other clans) the Bahlats fostered stable alliances and reciprocal assistance between different clans owning and controlling adjacent keyoh. Hereditary Chiefs, or Dene Za (male) and Tseke Za (female), were key land owners and natural resource managers on behalf of their respective clans, and they used the Bahlats as a forum for settling disputes over trespass and/or use of resources (Quaw, 1988: 1-4). Protocol and seating arrangements at a Bahlats feast were very strictly controlled (see Figure 3); hereditary chiefs (known collectively as Uza) were seated according to the particular keyoh they owned, and there were penalties for taking the wrong seat. In effect, one's position in the Bahlats seating plan reflected not only social status, but also a particular role in the ownership and control of traditional clan territory.
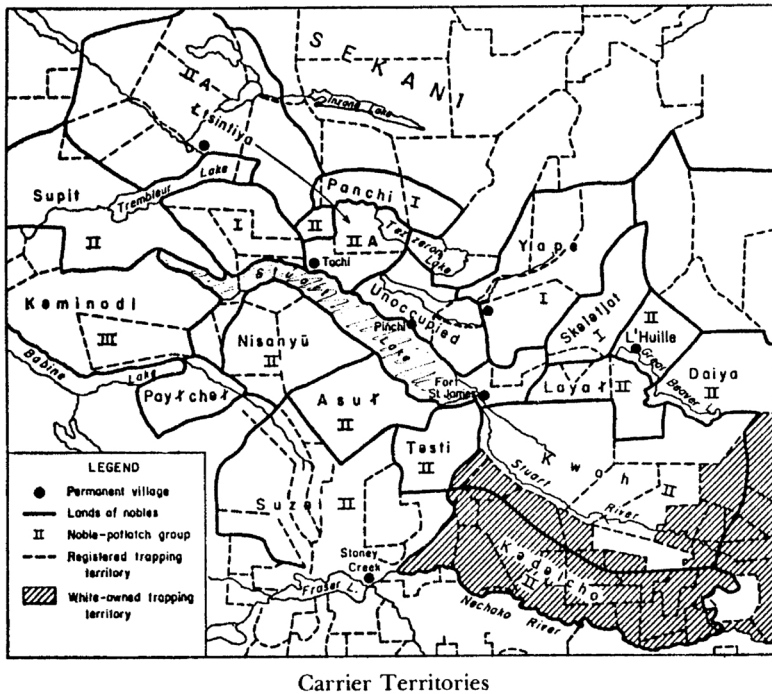

Carrier Territories

Figure 2   The Keyoh Landscape

Figure 3   Example of a Bahlats Seating Plan

The wealth of a clan depended on maintaining its control of key resource gathering sites (hunting, fishing, trapping berry-picking). For example, salmon was a staple of the Carrier economy, both for food and for trade. It was an important function of the clan leaders to maintain fish weirs (sometimes called barricades or fish fences) at prime locations for intercepting the salmon run (Hackler, 1958: 11). Figure 4 shows a traditional fish fence of the Likh tsa mis yu clan. Clan leaders were also responsible to ensure that enough salmon got past the barricade to spawn and replenish the salmon stock into the future.

Figure 4   Fish Fence at Fort Babine 1906

Clan Elders and Hereditary Chiefs played an important role through the Bahlats in maintaining the information base that allowed a clan to validate the boundaries of the keyoh and resource ownership within the keyoh. Oral histories, genealogy, regalia, crests, unique songs and dances were essentially property markers that defined and upheld the clan's jurisdiction over its keyoh. When the host clan distributed gifts to members of other clans at a Bahlats feast, their acceptance of these gifts indicated their recognition of the legitimate authority of the host clan within its keyoh. Collective decisions, negotiations, or acts of recognition done before witnesses at a Bahlats strengthened the legitimacy of the

participating clans and bound them to respect each other's jurisdiction. Inter-clan sharing of resources was arranged through the Bahlats Hereditary Chiefs.

Sekani Traditional Government

The Sekani people traditionally occupied lands in the Rocky Mountain trench north of the Arctic-Pacific divide, including Summit Lake, McLeod Lake, Bear Lake, the Finlay and Parsnip River valleys, and the headwaters of the Peace River. Because this land drains northward, the Sekani did not have direct access to the salmon runs of the Pacific drainage region. The Sekani depended on hunting big game animals (e.g., moose, deer, etc.), on local fish species, trapping, berries, and wild plants for food. The food-gathering economy of the Sekani required them to organize in mobile hunting groups and to secure their territory through inter-marriage with adjacent First Nations (e.g., Carrier), trade, and occasionally through wars (Lanoue, 1983: 211-213, 224-226).

Traditional Sekani social structure was based on three types of organization (Lanoue, 1983: 241, 242, 277, 278):

- Small hunting groups (i.e., bands) of 8 to 16 people;
- Regional bands (i.e., aggregates of small hunting groups);
- Matrilineal clans, or phratries.

Exogamy (i.e., marriage outside one's own group) was characteristic of both the small hunting groups and the matrilineal clans; this promoted cooperation and the sharing of resources. The band was the primary social unit internal to the Sekani while the phratry was most often associated with inter-marriage to non-Sekanis who were part of a Bahlats system (e.g., Carrier, Gitksan). Although the Sekani recognized the phratry as a form of social organization useful in dealing with neighbouring nations, they did not have an entrenched Bahlats system like the central and northern Carrier.

Because the Sekanis, unlike the Carriers, did not control fixed sites of high-intensity resource gathering (e.g., salmon spawning areas) the Sekani pattern of settlement was both more dispersed and less stable than that of the Carriers. Nevertheless, the Sekani hunting bands had a strong sense of territorial ownership, which they exercised in three ways (Lanoue, 1983: 318, 319):

1. Dispersion of Sekani people over wide areas at low and constant population densities;

2. Movement of Sekani people over their territories in response to resource-gathering and/or trading opportunities;

3.   Aggressive conflicts with neighbouring First Nations over lands on the periphery of Sekani territory.

In essence, the Sekanis asserted their land ownership through practical use and occupation of their territories, mobility throughout the several different ecological zones within their territories, and through the forceful exclusion of intruders, rather than through a formalized ideology of land ownership (Lanoue, 1983: 318-324). Sekani jurisdiction over Sekani territory was rooted in a pragmatic land-use strategy. Traditional Sekani control of land was based, to a large extent, on the concept of brotherhood, in the form of a partnership between males within the local band or hunting group. Alliances between bands were maintained through exogamous marriage practices and matrilineal clans (Lanoue, 1983: 343-352).

The Undermining and Persistence of Traditional Self-Government

Political Change

Between the late 1800s and the mid-twentieth century, Carrier and Sekani communities underwent a series of changes and catastrophes that seriously impaired the ability of their traditional governments to exercise effective jurisdiction over their lands and resources. The socio-political structure, economic base, and cultural stability of Carrier and Sekani society were profoundly shaken by these events. Nevertheless, Carrier Sekani traditional processes of self-government have persisted, though in modified form.

The closing decades of the 19th century brought a new era of political and legal domination of white governments over aboriginal people in British Columbia. Some of the elements of this consolidation of power by non-native Governments include the following:

- the Land Ordinance of 1866, which prevented Indians from pre-empting land for settlement as white farmers were allowed to do (Fisher, 1976: 262);
- the Terms of Union of 1871, under which Indians in BC were made wards of the Federal Government (Cumming and Mickenberg, 1981: 193, 194);
- the Indian Act of 1876, which gave wide-ranging powers to the Minister of Indian Affairs over Indians and Indian reserves, including the power to superimpose Indian agents

and elected Band Councils on traditional forms of community leadership;

- the so-called Potlatch Law of 1885 under which potlatch feasts were illegal, until this law was repealed in 1951 (Ridington, 1992: 15);

- the exclusion in 1872 and 1875 (Fisher, 1977) of Indians from voting in provincial elections until 1949 (Ormsby, 1958: 492) and in federal elections until 1960 (Ridington, 1992: 15);

- restriction of Indian reserves by the 1865 Land Ordinance to 10 acres per family, while white settlers were allowed a 160 acre per family pre-emption plus the option to purchase 480 acres (Fisher, 1976: 265);

- expropriation without compensation of Indian reserve lands for railway construction (Fisher, 1977: 202);

- imposition, beginning around 1905, of provincial Fish and Wildlife regulations on Indian use of Crown Lands (Hudson, 1983: 172);

- the 1913 McKenna–McBride Commission which removed 47,000 acres of valuable land from Indian reserves, replacing these removals with 87,000 acres of poor land (Cumming and Mickenberg, 1981: 197-198);

- the 1926 hearings of a special joint Senate-House committee of Parliament, which rejected all grievances of the Allied Tribes of BC (Cassidy, 1992: 14);

- the 1927 amendment to the Indian Act which, until 1951, made it illegal to raise funds, provide money, or work with any Indian organization for the Indian land question in B.C. (Cassidy, 1992: 14, 15).

These political and legal actions were made easier to execute by dramatic declines in the Native population. Population decline was due to the introduction of diseases resulting from contact with non-natives, such as venereal disease, smallpox, alcoholism, and suicidal depression (Fisher, 1977: 21-23, 44-45, 101, 115-116, 118, 131). This was accompanied by increasing non-native immigration. By the 1880s, the Indian population of BC fell to 25,000, or one-third of the total population (Fisher, 1977: 201-202).

Economic Change

The fur trade was the first major economic change to affect traditional Carrier Sekani government. It has been argued that the fur

trade increased the productivity of Carrier technology for harvesting natural resources, thereby enhancing the quantity and value of goods distributed at Bahlats feasts (Hackler, 1958: 152-153). It could also be argued that the Carrier received benefits from the sale of dried salmon to the Hudson's Bay Company (Hackler, 1958: 15-18. Hudson, 1983: 88-90). On the other hand, the authority of traditional clan leaders was undermined by the competitive nature of the fur trade that rewarded individual trappers regardless of their rank in the Bahlats system (Hudson. 1983: 85). The fur traders also disrupted traditional Carrier government by offering, and sometimes imposing, an enforceable alternative (non-native) community leadership and a system of European frontier justice foreign to Carrier society (Hackler, 1958: 143-145).

In the Sekani region, the impact of the fur trade was felt in a growing dependency on the Hudson's Bay Company through accumulated debt and a tendency toward spatial concentration of Sekani settlement at trading posts. This led, in turn, to periodic food shortages due to over-hunting and over-trapping in those fixed locations and the need to revert to Sekani traditions of migratory hunting (Lanoue, 1983: 316-318).

Another impact of the fur trade on traditionally collective and matrilineal systems of Carrier Sekani Government was the registration of trap lines to individual males in the 1920s and 1930s. This undermined the authority of collective clan leadership within the clan's traditional territory and placed exclusive property rights directly in the hands of individual male trap line owners and their male heirs (Hudson, 1983: 103, 214-218). Missionaries and Indian agents of the federal government reinforced the change toward exclusive, individual male dominance of property rights. They tried to impose inheritance rules based on the European system of the patriarchal nuclear family (Hudson, 1983: 152, 245).

Additional economic change that disrupted traditional Carrier government was the destruction of the fish weirs that had been the property of Bahlats clans. In 1906 and 1911 the federal government, reacting to pressure from white-owned coastal salmon canneries, negotiated the so-called Barricade Treaties with the Carrier people of Lake Babine, Stuart Lake and Fraser Lake. Under the terms of these treaties, the Carriers were forced to allow the destruction of their fish fences and the distribution of fishnets to individual families by the federal government. This weakened the power of the hereditary chiefs, loosened Carrier control over management and use of the inland fishery, and shifted fishing rights from the collective, matrilineal clan system to the individual nuclear family

(Hudson, 1983: 246; Hackler, 1958: 150, 152). It is important to note that the Carriers resisted efforts of Fisheries Department officials to remove the barricades, and that removal was achieved through intimidation, threats, and imprisonment of some Carrier people (Hackler, 1958: 148-150).

The creation of an industrial resource frontier in the northern interior of BC in the first half of the twentieth century brought railway-building, logging, saw-milling, mining, and farming. Along with these developments came the widespread introduction of wage labour as an alternative to hunting, trapping, fishing and food gathering. The result was a further destabilizing of traditional self-government through the following factors (Hackler, 1958: 209-219; Hudson, 1983: 139-145, 210-213):

- migration of families from traditional settlements to frontier sawmills (e.g., Pendleton Bay) or mining towns (e.g., Pinchi Lake) where non-native industrial managers, Indian agents and priests replaced the authority of hereditary chiefs;

- increasing dependency of Carrier workers on cash, goods, housing, and alcohol derived from participating in the cash economy;

- reliance of individuals on competitive wage labour, as opposed to the cooperative, collective production units of traditional clans, to sustain their families;

- social isolation of individuals who, through participating in the wage economy, could purchase social status or consumer goods that set them apart from traditional clans and the influence of hereditary chiefs;

- dramatic reduction in the reliability of salmon runs in the Fraser-Nechako drainage system (including Fraser Lake and Stuart-Trembleur Lake) after the 1913 destruction of the sockeye run, due to the debris from CNR construction at Hell's Gate blocking the Fraser River (Hudson, 1983: 108-112);

- increased reliance on moose hunting by individuals (versus collective salmon fishing) to supplement wage income, as moose became more plentiful in the early 1900s with the creation of browsing areas due to logging (Hudson, 1983: 111, 165-167);

- alienation of traditional aboriginal lands through surveys of Indian reserve lands, and allocations of so-called Crown lands to non-native farmers, trappers, settlements, railways, logging operations, etc. (Hudson, 1983: ch. 5).

Commercial development of natural resources in Carrier Sekani territory tended to break down the affiliation between ordinary individual families and their traditional collectively owned resources. This further weakened the Bahlats system. From the mid-1960s onward, expansion and mechanization of the industrial resource frontier outgrew the need for Indian labour. The switch at this time from small-scale, selective logging to massive clear-cutting of the forest by large integrated saw-milling / pulp-and-paper companies resulted in devastation of native trapping and hunting areas and opened access by non-native fishermen and hunters to traditional Carrier Sekani resource harvesting areas (Hudson, 1983: 145-151). In more recent times, industrial pollution by pulp and paper mills and mining operations has become a threat to traditional native food sources. In addition, destructive logging and road building practices have threatened salmon spawning grounds with siltation due to slumping of stream banks.

Traumatic Events

Besides structural change in the regional economy, Carrier Sekani communities suffered a number of catastrophes resulting directly from the influx of white settlers into their territories. These shocks had a profoundly dislocating effect on traditional aboriginal society, the family, and inherited forms of government. The events in this category can be divided into four types: epidemics, forced relocations, floods, and forced acculturation.

Although the Sekanis occasionally experienced famine due to shortages of game, their mobile, dispersed and geographically remote pattern of settlements spared them from epidemics (Lanoue, 1983: 174-183). The Carriers, however, suffered terribly from periodic epidemics that drastically reduced their numbers (Hudson, 1983: 99-101). Throughout the latter half of the 19th century, measles, smallpox, whooping cough and influenza took a terrible toll. In one instance, an entire southern Carrier band in the Bowron Lakes area was wiped out (Furniss, 1995: 534). In 1918, there was a devastating outbreak of influenza that decimated villages throughout the Carrier region. The notebook of Father Coccola, for example, recorded that one-third of the village of Stoney Creek (Saikuz) perished from influenza (Coccola, 1919: 27). In some cases, entire villages disappeared (Morice, 1978: 307-308).

The impact of epidemics on Carrier society was traumatic. Families disappeared; other families adopted orphaned children; many clan leaders, Elders, skillful hunters and spiritual leaders

died. The matrilineal pattern of the central and northern Carrier, through which the clan system perpetuated itself, was blurred as families were fractured and re-organized to accommodate the disaster. The loss of clan leaders and Elders, the custodians of Carrier oral traditions, was especially destabilizing as regards the maintenance of traditional Bahlats government.

Forced relocation also put Carrier Sekani communities under extreme stress, uprooting families and destroying established Carrier communities. Two examples are the Lheidli Nation (in Prince George) and the Nat'oot'en of the Lake Babine. The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (later CNR) was built between 1907 and 1914. When land was needed in 1912 to develop the city of Prince George as a regional railway centre, reserve land of the Fort George Band (Lheidli T'enne Nation), located on the site of what is now downtown Prince George, was sold cheap by the Department of Indian Affairs to the Grand Trunk Development Company (Lheidli T'enne Nation, 1992). This same land was almost immediately re-sold at much higher prices to enable the development of Prince George. The Fort George Band was relocated on fragmented reserve lands of low value at some distance from the city. The Lheidli T'enne Nation land surrender occurred under duress and entailed uncompensated economic losses for the Band. In the eyes of Lheidli community leaders this transaction amounted to the unauthorized confiscation of Lheidli land by a non-native government.

A similar event occurred in 1962-63 when Babine Carriers (Nat'oot'en) were moved off their traditional land at Pendleton Bay onto an inadequate, over-crowded reserve at Burns Lake. This was because the provincial government sold their land at Pendleton Bay to a non-native logging company. Not until 1992 were the Nat'oot'en able to negotiate financial and land adjustments to their Burns Lake reserve to allow for more suitable housing, infrastructure and reserve size. For 30 years they were denied access to municipal services in Burns Lake, and even today are stranded outside their traditional territory without the financial means to re-establish themselves on their own lands. Meanwhile, clear cutting by non-native forest companies continues on Nat'oot'en lands.

Flooding due to hydroelectric projects caused another type of forced relocation. This occurred in 1952 for the Cheslatta Band, due to the Kemano Power Project which flooded the traditional Cheslatta homeland in the Cheslatta and Murray Lakes area and the headwaters of the Nechako River. For the Sekani of Fort Ware, Ingenika, and McLeod Lake a similar catastrophe occurred in 1964

when completion of the W.A.C. Bennet Dam created Williston Reservoir through the flooding of the Peace, Finlay, and Parsnip Valleys in the Rocky Mountain Trench. In the case of both the Cheslatta and the Sekani at Ingenika, the flooding of their homelands occurred on short notice, without proper consultation, and with no compensation. Homes and personal property; hunting, food gathering and fishing areas, as well as trap lines, were all destroyed (Robertson, 1991). Families were forced to relocate on marginal lands near non-native communities. Previously self-sustaining Native families were thrown brutally into a state of abject poverty, unemployment and welfare dependency. Close-knit communities were torn apart by the dispersal of their population. Alcoholism, suicide and family violence resulted (Lanoue, 1983: 52-61).

Not until the late 1980s (Ingenika) and early 1990s (Cheslatta) did the provincial and federal government acknowledge these tragedies and take steps toward compensation. In the case of Cheslatta, a second phase of the Kemano project is a potential threat of further environmental destruction of salmon runs in the Nechako-Fraser systems, and of wildlife habitat in the Cheslatta area. To date, the provincial government has not allowed the project to go ahead.

The flooding and relocation of Carrier Sekani communities without consultation, consent, or timely compensation is the worst example of non-recognition of traditional Carrier Sekani government. Neither the provincial and federal governments, nor the large corporations involved (BC Hydro, Alcan) initially recognized any significant obligation to negotiate with Carrier Sekani community leaders, other than to coerce and/or manipulate Band Councils, whose authority is delegated from the Minister of Indian Affairs under the Indian Act.

Carrier Sekani communities were also weakened by the rural-urban migration of individual families reacting to the destruction of their traditional resource base and the lack of housing, educational opportunities, and social services on Indian reserves. Throughout the Carrier Sekani region, the incursion of non-native industrial resource use into traditional lands made it impossible to sustain Native families at a decent standard of living. Aboriginal people lacked the education, skills and experience to participate in the development of industrial resource projects, and transfer payments from the federal Government were inadequate to provide for Carrier Sekani community residents. Individuals and their families quietly chose to take their chances on living in urban poverty rather than stay on reserves without any hope for the future. This

process of gradual attrition continues in many Carrier Sekani communities to the present day.

Forced acculturation is another example of the undermining of traditional Carrier Sekani society, its values, and its forms of government. This process has had three branches:

1. European missionaries, who sought to obliterate indigenous spirituality and the Bahlats system (Fisher, 1977: 92-93, 124-125, 127-128, 142-145; Furniss, 1995: 535);

2. Indian residential schools (e.g., Lejac School, Prince George College), which broke down family ties between the generations, obstructed the learning of the Carrier and Sekani languages, imposed European cultural values, and enforced punitive child-rearing styles (Haig-Brown, 1988: ch. 1, 3);

3. The non-native justice system, which banned the Bahlats, disrupted traditional resource use through non-native property law and fish and wildlife regulations, and disrupted aboriginal families through the arbitrary apprehension and non-native adoption of Indian children by the intervention of white social workers.

All of these forces converged on Carrier Sekani communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to profoundly shake the confidence of Carrier Sekani people in themselves, their families, their cultural heritage and their own forms of government.

Persistence of Traditional Self-Government

Despite the assault on the Carrier Sekani way of life that began in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Carrier Sekani economic and political institutions have survived. In the economic sphere, the Carrier Sekani still practice what has been called the "bush mode of production" (Hudson, 1983: ch. 6, 9), an economic system derived from traditional kinships ties and clan affiliations. In this mode of production, hunting, trapping, fishing, and the gathering of wild edible plants (e.g., berries, medicines) still contribute very substantially to the subsistence of Carrier Sekani families, making them less dependent on wage labour than they would otherwise be.

The traditional Bahlats system, for the central and southern Carrier, and the local band or extended family, for the Sekani and southern Carrier, still provide a framework through which the traditional products of the land base are exchanged and redistributed.

Although individual nuclear families now play a more prominent role as compared to traditional clans in the production of subsistence goods, the traditional collective kinship and ownership structures are still considered important in allocating resources and redistributing surplus goods.

The evolution of Carrier Sekani government structures has been a complex process. Both the fur trade and the missionaries established alternative positions of community leadership (i.e., Factor, Priest) that competed with the influence of traditional Carrier Sekani leaders. In the case of the missionaries, they appointed so-called "Church Chiefs" whose role was to assure that members of the Native community conformed to standards of conduct sanctioned by the local missionary (Hackler, 1958: 198-199). In addition, local representatives of the Department of Indian Affairs (Indian agents) often made more-or-less arbitrary administrative decisions on behalf of Carrier Sekani communities.

The Indian agents also insisted on the election of Band Councils and Chiefs modelled on non-native municipal government. Often elected Chiefs, sometimes called "Government Chiefs", were not part of the traditional system of leadership (Hackler, 1958: 199-200). In education and culture, non-native school principals, teachers, and social workers also rivalled the influence of traditional leaders. Thus, the original power structure of Hereditary Chiefs, Elders, and clan/extended family heads was diluted over time as traders, missionaries, Indian agents, teachers, social workers, and elected Chiefs asserted their control over various aspects of community life in Carrier Sekani villages. Individual Carriers often came to see the purchase of consumer goods as a preferred alternative to the investment of personal income in Bahlats activities required to take possession of a Hereditary Chief's title (Hackler, 1958: 210, 215, 216).

In spite of the de-stabilization of traditional forms of governments, the Carrier Sekani have developed contemporary self-government structures in which the recognition of traditional leaders is still important. In the member Bands of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council (CSTC), and the independent Bands within Carrier Sekani traditional territory, Elders and clan leaders are consulted by elected Chiefs. Both the Yinka Dene Language Institute and Northern Native Family Services (offshoots of the CSTC) involve Elder Advisors in their policy discussions, as does the CSTC itself.

Retention of traditional Carrier Sekani attitudes toward self-government persists to various degrees. In some Carrier communities, the Bahlats is still a very strong form of social organization and

Hereditary Chiefs are recognized as the natural custodians of lands and resources. In other Carrier communities, the Bahlats is practised less frequently or not at all, although all communities show respect for the advice of Elders in managing community affairs. Similarly, contemporary Sekani communities recognize traditional collective values as the basis for their pursuit of aboriginal rights and unity (Lanoue, 1983: 335-336, 342, 364-366). In all Carrier Sekani communities, the issue of involving traditional leaders in the political power structure is important.

In those Carrier communities where the Bahlats system is still strong, the Bahlats is a major source of income redistribution. A large Bahlats feast can last more than twelve hours, involving redistribution of cash and goods valued at tens of thousands of dollars. For this reason, hereditary names (i.e., titles of Hereditary Chiefs) are still very prestigious, and the acquisition of name is a major investment for both the individual candidate and his/her clan. In this context, some communities still regard the Hereditary Chiefs as the true source of authority on matters of land ownership, resource management, and the distribution of community wealth.

Another aspect of traditional self-government that persists is the ongoing interest of Carrier and Sekani communities in protecting their territorial integrity. An example of this is the political struggle by the Nazko and Lhoosk'uz (Kluskus) Dene of the southern Carrier to maintain control of the Grease Trail (Furniss, 1995: 540-543). For thousands of years this ancient trade route was the basis for commercial exchange between the coastal First Nations and those of the Central Interior region. The trail runs from Bella Coola through the Coast Mountains and along the Blackwater Valley to the Fraser River near Quesnel (Carrier-Chilcotin Tribal Council, 2000). Called the Grease Trail because of the importance of oolichan fish oil as an aboriginal trade commodity, the route was used by Alexander McKenzie in his famous overland trek to the Pacific Ocean in 1793.

In 1982, the federal and provincial governments, without appropriate consultation with the southern Carrier, signed an agreement to promote the trail as a wilderness tourism route under the name Alexander McKenzie Heritage Trail. The Southern Carrier Chiefs objected strongly to this, seeing it as an improper revision of history as well as an unfair appropriation by mainstream society of aboriginal economic and cultural values along the Grease Trail.

Despite attempts to negotiate a joint management agreement between the southern Carrier and the federal and provincial gov-

ernments, the so-called Alexander McKenzie Heritage Trail has been re-routed around southern Carrier reserves and is being developed over the objections of the southern Carrier leaders. The southern Carrier Chiefs do not see themselves as a mere "public interest group", but as the aboriginal custodians of an ancient trade and travel route that lies within their traditional territory.

The Transition to Modern Self-Government

Political Structures and Affiliations

During the first half of the 20th century, the system of locally elected Chiefs and Councils operating under the authority of the federal Indian Act became entrenched in Carrier and Sekani communities, despite the unofficial continuance of traditional forms of self-government. During the 1970s and 1980s, various Carrier and Sekani bands organized regional tribal councils to serve as political vehicles for articulating common policies and goals in dealing with non-aboriginal government agencies. Tribal councils also were conceived as a means of providing technical support to local bands.

By the 1980s, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) phased out its regional offices at Prince George and Williams Lake and delegated some of its technical and advisory functions to tribal councils, which then became conduits for dealing with the INAC Pacific Region office in Vancouver. The Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, based in Prince George, represented the northern and central Carrier, along with the Sekani of Ingenika and McLeod Lake. The Carrier Chilcotin Tribal Council, based in Williams Lake, represented the four southern Carrier bands and the Chilcotin band at Toosey, near Williams Lake.

Since its formation in 1979, the number of member bands in the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council (CSTC) has diminished. Individual bands either chose to operate as independent bands or, in some cases, affiliated with other neighbouring tribal councils. In the year 2002 the CSTC represents eight central and northern Carrier bands, one of which (Takla) has some Sekani members. The McLeod Lake Band and Tsay Keh Dene (formerly Ingenika Band) are independent Sekani bands, and the Sekani of Fort Ware are part of the Kaska Dene Tribal Council, based in Watson Lake, Yukon. The Carrier Chilcotin Tribal Council retains its original membership of four southern Carrier bands and one Chilcotin band. Despite political divisions, there are still informal associations between Carrier and

Sekani communities based on kinship, friendship and common interests.

Relations with Non-Aboriginal Governments

Movement toward First Nations self-government focuses on five main areas of jurisdiction:

- language and culture;
- education and training;
- social policy, including health, justice, and family support services;
- technical support for community planning, infrastructure and housing;
- lands and resources.

In some cases, individual communities, acting as independent Indian bands, can develop their own local policies and structures for increased self-government. Often, however, pursuing self-government requires regional First Nations support structures along with funding, technical support, and defeated authority from non-aboriginal government agencies (usually as a precondition of funding). As First Nations self-government currently lacks a comprehensive funding base and legal framework, development toward self-government usually entails agreements with non-aboriginal agencies for financial support, parallel management, cooperation and accountability.

Increasing Carrier Sekani self-determination in language and culture is served to some extent by greater local control of education, including local education agreements with non-aboriginal school boards. This greater local control of schooling may provide opportunities to develop indigenous language and culture curricula and instruction if non-aboriginal school boards are willing to adopt First Nations priorities. The CSTC also has also explored the possible development of a regional Carrier Sekani school district that would give formal recognition and resources to Carrier Sekani-controlled schools. The Yinka Dene Language Institute, created by the CSTC, provides a regional autonomous institution for implementing Carrier Sekani language and culture objectives. Similarly, Carrier Sekani Family Services provides a decentralized, community-based system for delivering social services to Carrier Sekani communities. In addition, Carrier Sekani Technical Services delivers assistance to member bands in community planning, infrastructure and housing projects. The aim of these regional service

delivery systems is to provide flexible, community-oriented services that achieve significant economics of scale.

Self-government of Carrier Sekani lands and resources is a more problematic goal, as it involves a fundamental realignment of ownership and jurisdiction over economic resources. As such, it challenges the entrenched interests of both government and the private sector in mainstream society. The federal Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy has enabled both the Carrier Sekani Fisheries Commission and some independent Carrier bands to become directly involved in fisheries management on the basis of multi-year funding agreements. Forestry management, however, poses a bigger challenge. The provincial Government holds exclusive jurisdiction under the constitution of Canada and is reluctant to share its control of forest resources. To date, only one Carrier band, Tlazt'en Nation, has obtained a tree farm licence. Other bands have tried joint ventures with non-aboriginal companies to access commercial logging tenures, with mixed results. The partnership of Burns Lake Native Development Corporation and Weldwood of Canada in Babine Forest Products has produced some local employment for aboriginal forest workers in the Burns Lake area. The Ulkatcho Band has also obtained access to commercial logging rights through a local joint venture. Commercial joint ventures, however, provide limited economic advantages and do not confer legal jurisdiction and substantive forest management rights on First Nations communities.

In the highly competitive business environment of small business timber sales and small lumber mills, it has been difficult for individual bands to make inroads. This is due to their limited access to investment capital for the modem cost-efficient equipment they need to compete successfully. When First Nations request timber tenure from the provincial government, either through direct awards of short-term cutting rights or long term timber management rights, the stock answer of the province is that First Nations business must compete for timber awards against non-native (usually more capitalized) forest companies, or that there is no excess timber tenure available, i.e., all timber has been previously awarded to non-native companies.

Treaty-Making Objectives and Risks

In 1992, British Columbia, Canada and the BC First Nations Summit agreed to establish the BC Treaty Commission. Treaty-making, is expected to serve the following purposes:

- provide compensation to First Nations for lands and resources taken from them in the past by non-aboriginal governments;
- define lands and resources owned by First Nations (i.e., settlement lands), and those owned by the Crown and non-aboriginal private interests;
- create modem First Nations self-government structures and powers within the framework of the Canadian legal system;
- establish a modern-day working relationship between First Nations governments and non-aboriginal governments, including any shared jurisdiction or co-management arrangements, and fiscal transfers between governments;
- define and protect ongoing aboriginal rights held by First Nations, both outside and within their accepted settlement areas.

The overall aim of treaty making is to provide economic self-sufficiency and a degree of political autonomy to First Nations, as well as economic and political stability for the province as a whole.

In 1993, the member bands of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council jointly entered the BC Treaty Commission process. As of 2002, all Carrier and Sekani bands, except for the three southern Carrier bands of Ulkatcho, Kluskus and Lhtako, are in this process. In moving toward self-government through treaty making, the Carrier Sekani face a number of challenging issues common to other First Nations. These are summarized in Table 2.

The treaty-making process, although a chance to resolve First Nations land claims, carries with it some potential risks; for example:

- unwillingness of non-aboriginal governments to recognize aboriginal title over more than a small percentage of First Nation traditional territories;
- extinguishment of aboriginal title over the vast majority of traditional territories;
- restrictions on the jurisdiction of First Nations governments;
- loss of the tax-exempt status of First Nations;
- insufficient compensation for First Nation losses of land and resources;
- high indebtedness of First Nations to the Crown due to the cost of treaty making being financed by government loans.

Table 2   Issues in Aboriginal Self-Government (Source: Cassidy, 1992: 16-26)

1. First Nations seek a prominent role in the management of lands and resources.

2. Settlement of land claims will provide the economic base to sustain self-government.

3. Settlement of land claims will require transfers and/or sharing of wealth and access to natural resources between non-aboriginal interest groups (taxpayers, companies, governments) and aboriginal governments.

4. The economic cost of not settling land claims is high due to an uncertain investment climate.

5. Business interests are concerned that land claims settlements and aboriginal self-governments will impose restrictions on economic development, e.g., requirements for environmental and social impact studies, land use regulations.

6. Aboriginal governments want recognized and independent jurisdiction over land and resources within their traditional territories.

7. Aboriginal governments are opposed to involving third parties (e.g., private corporations) in negotiations on land claims and self-governments, as the provincial and federal governments already represent these interest groups.

8. In the absence of a negotiated land claims settlement, incursions of non-native resource extraction into First Nations traditional territories make litigation unavoidable.

9. The pursuit of court action on land claims is costly, time-consuming, and produces judgements that are unacceptable in the long run to all parties because they prolong political conflict over land and resources.

Despite these potential drawbacks, the treaty-making process has provided an opportunity for the Carrier Sekani to document traditional territories, resources, and concerns about their land and their place in society.

The Need for Interim Measures

In 1991, both the federal and provincial governments formally agreed to a process for negotiating the settlement of BC aboriginal land claims as proposed by the BC Claims Task Force. Interim measures are actions that need to be taken to protect the traditional territories of the Indian bands involved with the treaty process until a land claims settlement can be negotiated. Carrier Sekani Bands need to maintain both the quality and quantity of natural resources in their traditional territories (see Figure 1), so that a settlement of land claims will result in a permanent economic base for Carrier Sekani communities. Without a viable economic base the authority and rights attached to aboriginal self-government cannot be realized (Isaac, 1991: 69-73). The traditional territories of Carrier Sekani people also have spiritual value that is vital to maintaining Carrier Sekani culture for the benefit of future generations.

In 1991, the Supreme Court of British Columbia determined that the federal and provincial governments have a fiduciary duty to protect the traditional land use of aboriginal people and to consult with First Nations on any policies, laws, or regulations that may affect the use of Crown land and resources by First Nations within their traditional territories (McEachern, 1991: 245-254). With respect to land use conflicts arising from forestry, the court ruled that "these competing interests must be reconciled," (McEachern, 1991: 253). The B.C. Supreme Court did not, however, define clearly a process for reconciling land use conflicts between First Nations and other interest groups. The case subsequently was appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada.

In 1997, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in *Delgamuukw* that aboriginal title is an exclusive form of land ownership that entitles First Nations to a variety of natural resource uses, including both traditional and contemporary ones. The court also ruled that the Crown cannot extinguish aboriginal title simply through laws and regulations. The intent to infringe on aboriginal title places an obligation on the Crown to first reconcile aboriginal title with Crown title and other forms of land title. To do this the Crown must meet the following requirements:

- Make clear its intent to infringe on aboriginal title and its reasons for doing so.

- Engage in meaningful consultations with the First Nation(s) whose title is to be infringed.

- Conduct good faith negotiations with the First Nation(s) to seek an agreement on whether/how to carry out proposed land uses that may infringe on aboriginal title.
- Provide fair compensation for infringement on aboriginal title.

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court provided no practical steps for interested parties to follow. This leaves the Crown and First Nations as protagonists with potentially very different ways of interpreting how to reconcile their differences. Thus, interim measures are needed in the process of resolving land use and aboriginal title issues. Otherwise, the Crown and First Nations are left to challenge each other's interpretations of words such as "clear intent", "meaningful consultations", "good faith negotiations", "fair compensation" and "justifiable infringement".

The 1991 report of the BC Claims Task Force identified five options for interim measures, as follows (BC Claims Task Force, 1991: 64):

1. Notification to affected parties before action is taken, concerning matters that are or may be the subject of negotiations;

2. Consultation with parties affected by any proposed action;

3. Consent of one of the parties before action is taken:

4. Joint management processes requiring consensus of all the parties;

5. Restriction or a moratorium on the alienation of land or resources.

The report of the BC Claims Task Force recommended that agreements on interim measures be negotiated between First Nations, provincial, and federal governments. This recommendation was accepted by Canada and British Columbia, and by the majority of Indian Bands in BC. The purpose of interim measures is to protect, maintain, and enhance the value of Carrier Sekani traditional territories, and to ensure that the livelihood of Carrier Sekani people is not damaged by economic activities before a treaty on land claims and self-government can be negotiated. Given that the primary role of senior provincial civil servants is to defend provincial jurisdiction, and that these same civil servants are under pressure to reassure non-native groups that their economic interests are protected, items 4 and 5 in the list above have not been achievable.

An interim measures policy is needed that will promote a climate of mutual trust, stability, and security among all interested parties while land claims negotiations proceed. This policy must

ensure First Nations' consent, consultation, and co-management regarding land use practices on traditional Carrier Sekani territory. It must also restrict further alienation of Carrier Sekani lands. Furthermore, "Settlement of an interim measures agreement shall not limit the scope of negotiations, nor preclude any party from advancing propositions in the negotiations which are different from the agreement" (BC Claims Task Force 1991: 64).

Reconstructing a Carrier Sekani Landscape

Post-Contact Landscape Transformations

When the explorer and fur trader Alexander McKenzie first met the Carrier and Sekani in 1793 their territory was a pristine wilderness. The forests and waterways provided an environment within which a variety of animals, plants, and fish formed the resources base that sustained the people. A network of trails and water routes for trade and travel connected the Carrier and Sekani village sites. Within their traditional territories Carrier and Sekani hunter-gatherers accessed their resource harvesting areas by canoe and ancient trails. Their traditional way of life left a soft footprint on the land.

The arrival of the European fur traders in Carrier Sekani territory led to few landscape changes. The fur traders established fortified trading posts, but used the same transportation methods and routes as the aboriginal people. Like the aboriginal people, their interest lay in harvesting fish and game for food and fur-bearing animals for economic gain. Thus, apart from a more intensive use of fur-bearing animals for commerce, the fur trade had a limited impact on the customary natural resource base of First Nations people.

The actual numbers of non-natives engaged in the fur trade were very limited (Morice, 1978: 275, 276) so the geography of human population was little affected by their presence. Apart from the construction of the fur trading forts, landscape changes in the early fur trade era were limited to the cultivation of vegetable gardens for trading post workers and hay for pack horses near the forts (Morice, 1978: 279, 289). In addition, the fur trade posts attracted a small resident population of both aboriginal and non-aboriginal workers. On occasion, also, fur traders initiated the cutting of new trails to facilitate movement of packhorses between trading posts (Morice, 1978: 278).

Beginning in the 1850s, the discovery of gold in the Cariboo region brought widespread changes to the landscape. Instant mining towns sprang up, wagon roads were built from the southwest coast into the Cariboo, and river steamboats emerged as a new transportation system for moving people and goods on the Fraser River and its tributaries. Provision of food and supplies to the gold fields using horses, oxen and mules on wagon roads stimulated the development of ranching. Placer mining itself severely disrupted the habitat of fish and aquatic animals in the streams where miners displaced large quantities of gravel in search of gold. The quiet landscape of the fur trade era was over-run with thousands of prospectors, miners and other gold rush workers. The activity of gold-seekers spilled over from the southern Cariboo into the territory of the Carrier Sekani (Morice, 1978: 291-323).

Even more disruptive than the actual influx of the gold rush into the Carrier Sekani lands was the disastrous effect of smallpox and other epidemics that struck First Nations communities as a result of contact with non-natives. From the 1860s onward, Carrier villages were ravaged by epidemics, especially in the Southern Carrier areas (Morice, 1978: 307, 317). This was followed, in the early 1900s, by outbreaks of typhoid and influenza among the central Carrier (Coccola: 22, 32 27).

The latter half of the 19th century and the early 20th century was a period of decline for native societies all over British Columbia (Woodcock, 1994: 125-141). The combined effects of the gold rush, the widespread introduction of alcohol and non-indigenous diseases, and the imposition of provincial and federal jurisdiction over First Nations communities, lands, and resources progressively weakened the ability of the Carrier Sekani to control, manage, and use their traditional territories. The traditional hunting and gathering areas, the keyoh, became subject to provincial hunting and fishing regulations and were dissected by newly constituted trap lines run under provincial permits and regulations. Many of the newly formed trap lines were allocated to non-natives.

The building of the Canadian National Railway in 1914 connected Prince George to the rail network in western Canada and to the Port of Prince Rupert. This brought a wave of frontier farming and logging along the CNR right of way. Later, the construction in stages of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway (now BC Rail) beginning in 1921 had, by the 1960s, made Prince George a railway hub for northern BC with links to the Lower Mainland (McGillvray, 2000: 16). Railway construction, combined with an expanded network of roads and highways, had, by the 1950s and 1960s, made

the natural resources of the Carrier and Sekani territories much more accessible. Agricultural settlement, mining, lumbering, and pulp and paper were part of a developing industrial resource frontier in the first part of the 20th century that transformed the Carrier Sekani landscape forever.

In 1952, the Cheslatta-Murray Lakes area was flooded by the Kemano 2 project to provide hydroelectricity for the Alcan aluminium smelter at Kitimat. This was followed by the flooding of the Peace, Parsnip, and Finlay valleys by BC Hydro in 1964 with the construction of the Bennett Dam at Hudson Hope. Not only were Carrier Sekani landscapes transformed, but they were also drowned by the growing industrial economy of post-World War II British Columbia.

In a little more than a century, starting in the 1850s, Carrier Sekani territory was transformed from a wilderness landscape to a modem industrial resource frontier. The most ecologically productive valley bottoms were cleared, allocated to non-aboriginal farmers and ranchers, and fenced off as private farmlands. Outside of privately owned farms, Crown grazing leases, trap lines, logging tenures and guide-outfitting territories were allocated to non-natives. Mines, lumber mills, and pulp and paper plants became the focus for new towns and cities. In the 1960s and 1970s, the burgeoning pulp and paper industry of British Columbia expanded from the coast into the interior with widespread clear-cutting of the forest and the application of modern silviculture practices, such as scarification, replanting of commercial species and the use of herbicides against "weed" species. This was accompanied by the release of chlorine-based dioxins and furans into the waterways near pulp mills as by-products of the pulp bleaching process (McGillvray, 2000: 159, 160). Those Carrier and Sekani people who continued with hunting, trapping, and gathering activities to sustain their families often found their access to traditional resources blocked, regulated, or restricted. A modem transportation network, power grid, and a plethora of non-aboriginal ownership and resource use rights and regulations were superimposed on traditional Carrier Sekani lands and resources.

The Consequences of Landscape Change

In view of the massive transformation the landscape has undergone in their traditional territories over the last 150 years, Carrier Sekani people have specific concerns regarding the protec-

tion of their territories, including the following (Brown, D. and Thomas, N. 1993):

- destruction of burial grounds, sacred places, and traditional settlements or campsites;
- destruction of wildlife habitat in trap line areas;
- destruction of wildlife habitat in hunting areas;
- destruction of food and medicine plants;
- poisoning of the food chain by chemical pesticides, herbicides, and industrial effluents;
- destruction, or alteration of spawning grounds, and other fish habitat;
- reduced access to traditional hunting, fishing, food gathering, or sacred sites by roads, fences, gates, railways, and no trespassing signs;
- exclusion of Carrier Sekani people from land use decisions affecting traditional Carrier Sekani lands;
- lack of economic benefits (e.g., employment) to Carrier Sekani communities from the exploitation of natural resources in traditional Carrier Sekani lands;
- inadequate technical support, training, and educational opportunities to enable Carrier Sekani people to play a role in managing and developing their lands and resources.

The Carrier Sekani face a double problem in dealing with the post-contact era: massive resource exploitation by mainstream economic enterprises, and disempowerment of Carrier Sekani self-government through the imposition of federal and provincial jurisdiction over lands and resources.

A concrete example of a Carrier Sekani environmental concern is the Ootsa Lake reservoir (see Figure 1), which was created in 1952 to provide power for the Alcan refinery at Kitimat. This reservoir drains into the Cheslatta River, which is part of the Nechako River drainage basin that connects to the Fraser River at Prince George. The impacts of the reservoir on fish habitat, and on aboriginal settlements have been devastating. These include (see Figures 5 and 6):

- flooding of several villages of the Cheslatta Indian Band;
- drastic reductions and fluctuations in the volume of water flowing through the Nechako;
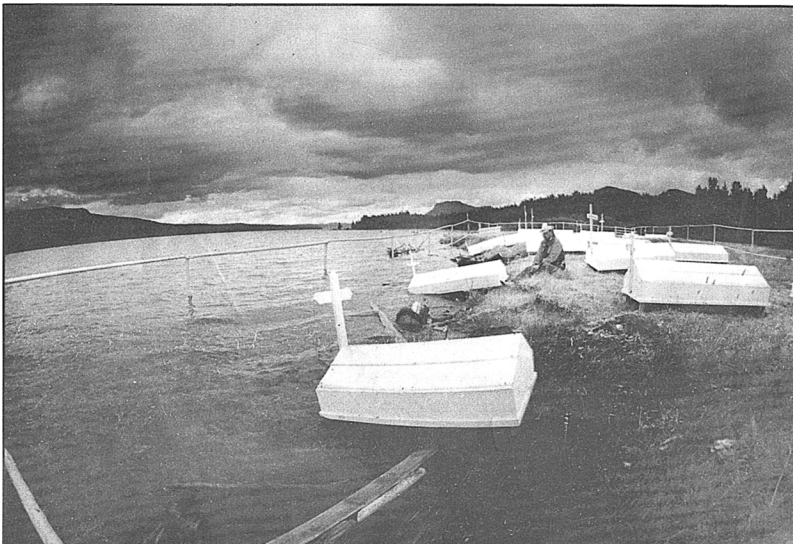
Figure 5 Cheslatta Cemetery Before and After the Kemano 1 Flood

Figure 6 Damage to Riparian Zone From Kemano 1 Flooding: Cheslatta Lake

- destruction of spawning habitat for both freshwater fish and salmon;
- desecration of Indian Graveyards by flooding;
- destruction of habitat for fur-bearing animals and other animals along the Nechako (e.g. freezing of beaver lodges in winter due to low water levels).

The Cheslatta people were not consulted on the flooding of their villages, hunting and trapping grounds, and fishing sites; nor were they properly compensated for their losses. The impact of these changes on family, economic and community life have been extremely destructive.

The overall consequence of post-contact landscape change for the Carrier Sekani has been the replacement of the keyoh, or clan territories, by Indian reserves. This has resulted in a drastic reduction of the land base available to support Carrier Sekani Territories (see Figure 7). In the pre-contact and early contact eras, Carrier Sekani communities had an ample land and resource base organized in clan hunting/gathering territories that provided their members with a secure livelihood. Today, access to traditional lands and resources is restricted or blocked beyond the limits of the Indian

reserves. The reserves themselves are totally inadequate to provide for the sustenance of their residents.

Figure 7 Carrier Sekani Reserves in Relation to Traditional Territory

The Carrier Sekani Perspective on
Self-Government, Land, and Resources

In his 1993 book *Indigenous Peoples of the World,* B. Goehring identifies three main aspirations of contemporary indigenous peoples (Goehring, 1993: 59, 60):

- "…a secure and tenured land base…"
- "…a viable and culturally relevant economy"
- "…a measure of political self-determination as distinct peoples…"

The political positions put forward by the Carrier Sekani in their dealings with non-native governments reflect these aspirations.

Examples of the Carrier Sekani perspective on self-government, land, and resources are found in the 1998 Statement of Intent submitted by the CSTC as part of its treaty negotiations with the provincial and federal Crown. The Carrier Sekani leaders know they cannot reverse the occupation of their lands by the non-aboriginal settler population. They nevertheless address the defence of aboriginal title and rights with four potential strategies in mind (Brown, et.al., 1998: 1):

- litigation;
- direct action;
- asserting jurisdiction based on aboriginal title and rights;
- negotiating reconciliation of Aboriginal title and Crown title.

It is the fourth option they have chosen, for the present, by participating in treaty negotiations.

The Carrier Sekani base their assertion of Sovereignty and land ownership on the evidence handed down to them by their ancestors in their oral traditions (Brown et.al., 1998: 2-3). The oral histories document the Carrier Sekani way of life, their ownership and use of the land, their way of governing themselves and their relationship with other First Nations. The oral histories confirm that the Carrier Sekani have unceded and undiminished sovereignty within their homeland. Sovereignty is not something that can be given or taken away by the Crown, but it is a legacy handed down by the ancestors.

The Carrier Sekani assert that their sovereignty derives from the inherent right of self-governance that every distinct people has within its own homeland, and that this right is protected under Section 35 of the Constitution of Canada. The Carrier Sekani view of their sovereignty is that it encompasses the full range of powers

normally exercised by sovereign nations (Brown et. al., 1998: 23). They perceive the incursions of the British Crown and subsequent provincial and federal governments into matters of Carrier Sekani jurisdiction as an unlawful interference in the Carrier Sekani right to self-government. The Carrier Sekani, in pursuing treaty negotiations, seek to restore recognition of their sovereignty and establish peaceful co-existence between their governments and non-indigenous governments. The path to co-existence has four branches (Brown et. al., 1998: 4-5).

- Healing the negative effects of past Crown policies on families and communities;
- Revival of the traditions of community self-government;
- Reconciliation with non-native governments, institutions, and corporations;
- Capacity building, using both traditional and modern knowledge.

Carrier Sekani sovereignty is intimately bound to their spiritual connections with the land and their traditional stewardship of natural resources. The Carrier Sekani expect to play an active ongoing role in the management and use of the fisheries, the waterways, and the wildlife in their traditional territory. In doing so, they place a heavy emphasis on the sacred interconnectedness of all life forms, on the need to pass on their traditional environmental values to future generations, and on the principles of sharing and coexistence in resource use (Brown, et.al., 1998: 6). Some of their concerns about the management of natural resources include the following:

- The need to rebuild wild salmon stocks and enhance natural fisheries habitat;
- The need to curb the impact of sports fishing and hunting on fish stocks and wildlife;
- A shift to selective inland harvesting of distinct local salmon stocks to avoid the negative impacts of ocean fishing on weak stocks;
- Better protection of watersheds, shorelines, and riparian zones from agriculture, recreation, and forestry uses;
- Joint management of hydroelectric facilities to ensure the protection of aquatic species;
- Restraint of forestry practices (e.g., chemical herbicides/pesticides, large clear cuts, improper/excessive road building) that negatively impact plants, animals, fish and wildlife;

- Protection of fur-bearing animals and support for a sustainable, humane aboriginal trapping;
- Identification and protection of especially sensitive and productive wildlife habitat areas;
- Enhanced technical capacity for Carrier Sekani communities to research, manage, and enhance the fishery, wildlife, water, and forest resources within their territories.
- Identification of ecologically stressed areas and strategies for rest and recovery of those areas.

The interest of the Carrier Sekani in land and resource management goes beyond conservation for its own sake. They continue to see their land and resources as a source of sustenance for families and communities, through both traditional livelihood activities and through the judicious, sustainable adaptation of modern commercial resource harvesting methods. Their aim is to find a healthy balance between traditional resource uses and modern industrial resource uses in the context of a "blended" economy. In this blended economy, traditional Carrier Sekani values of respect for all living things are fundamental.

Future Carrier Sekani Landscapes

The settlement of non-indigenous immigrants within Carrier Sekani traditional territory has brought sweeping landscape changes, most of which are irreversible. The process of landscape change has been initiated, facilitated, and enforced by the institutional, legal, and corporate superstructure of mainstream society. The displacement of traditional Carrier Sekani self-government institutions and resource management practices, along with the epidemics, the attacks on indigenous spirituality and the confinement of Carrier Sekani people to Indian reserves has marginalized Carrier Sekani communities within their own homeland. The close spiritual bond between Carrier Sekani people and the plants, animals, fish, and forces of nature in their territory has been threatened by non-native recreational hunting and fishing and by the systematic commercial exploitation of forestry, fishery, and wildlife resources. Much of what the Carrier Sekani cherish within their traditional landscapes, including the land itself, has been transformed into commercial/industrial commodities that are managed for profit in the private sector or taxed to generate revenues for the public sector.

Contemporary Carrier Sekani leaders face the challenge of reconstructing a political landscape of self-government and a physical landscape of viable lands and natural resources for their communities. The end objective of this reconstruction is to restore a balance between the people and their surroundings in which they can enjoy a decent standard of living while maintaining their unique cultural identity. To achieve this the Carrier Sekani must negotiate peaceful coexistence with the Nehdo (non-native people) without surrendering aboriginal title and sovereignty.

The Supreme Court judgement in *Delgamuukw* provides some principles for resolving the divide between Crown title and aboriginal title. Practical steps to implement the judgement are needed. The Delgamuukw process to re-ordering the political landscape could take the following forms:

Meaningful consultation

The Crown and the First Nation must establish a mutually agreeable referral process and timelines for addressing land uses that may negatively impact aboriginal title. In this process, the Crown states a clear intent to infringe on aboriginal title and justifies this infringement in ways acceptable under the terms identified by the Supreme Court. Each side states its reasons to consult and the parties jointly identify the potential impacts of infringement on aboriginal title and rights.

For consultation to be meaningful, the parties need to decide what type of consultation is triggered by a given proposed land use. Aspects of consultation may include notification of a proposed land use, information exchange, research, and joint consideration of mitigation measures. Both the Crown and the First Nation need to agree on the types of information relevant to consultation, how this information is generated and what technical resources the First Nation needs to participate in consultation. They also need to agree on what consultative structures and procedures are used.

Good faith negotiations

What does "good faith negotiations" mean? It implies the parties have good reasons to negotiate (e.g., substantial impacts on aboriginal title) and valid objectives (e.g., to reconcile Crown title with aboriginal title or to determine compensation for infringement on title). Also, the parties must have workable structures and a mutually acceptable negotiating process. Good faith negotiations also require that the First Nation side has adequate funding and technical resources, and that the parties agree on what kind of information is necessary and relevant to the issues under discus-

sion. Good faith negotiations may result in an interim settlement, pending the conclusion of a comprehensive treaty. The importance of the negotiations rests on the goal of creating certainty for the parties as to how economic decisions are made and how economic benefits are shared. A mutually respectful, constructive and conciliatory attitude is essential to the success of the negotiators.

Fair compensation

The point of departure for negotiations on aboriginal title is that, as a form of land ownership at least 10,000 years old, aboriginal title has economic, cultural, and spiritual value. Infringement on this form of title must be recognized and compensation provided, proportional to the loss incurred by the First Nation and the benefits gained by the non-native interest group(s). If the parties come to agree that the gains from a proposed land use activity are insignificant compared to the losses to the First Nation, this would dictate the imposition of substantive remedial action, postponement of the activity, or even abandonment of the activity.

In most cases, negotiators on an aboriginal title issue should consider a wide range of options for delivering fair compensation. The most straightforward option, based on a government-to-government relationship, is either resource sharing (through the allocation of resource use tenures to both aboriginal and non-aboriginal users) or resource revenue sharing between the Crown and the First Nation. Due to the desire of the provincial government to assert and defend its constitutionally based exclusive jurisdiction over lands and resources, the options of resource and revenue sharing are treated with much caution by provincial negotiators.

The non-native government may prefer cash compensation because it can be allocated and managed without undermining the constitutional rights of the provincial government. Cash can be used as compensation in four ways:

- Cash compensation for infringement or aboriginal title i.e., for the permanent loss of access to traditional First nations resources on a portion of the traditional territory
- Funds for a First Nations land purchase;
- First Nations economic development funding;
- Funding for the development of First Nations technical capacity, e.g., technical staff, training, research, planning, etc.

Other measures that could be part of a fair compensation package include initiatives to accommodate first nations interests and to

include First Nations representatives in the decision-making process. These measures could include the following:

- Joint stewardship arrangement, either through a joint technical working group on resource management, or through a joint venture business enterprise;

- Wildlife habitat studies;

- Mitigation projects to learn the impacts of new economic activities on First Nations traditional resources;

- Protected areas and resource protection guidelines to avert negative impacts of development on particular sensitive First Nations resources (e.g., Sacred Sites, hunting and gathering areas, archaeological sites);

- Ongoing research and monitoring activities to identify sustainable methods of natural resource management.

Assuming the principles and actions outlined above were successfully applied, a new human and natural landscape could emerge over time in Carrier Sekani territory. Although the worst effects of past industrial impacts on the environment cannot be reversed, it may be possible to avoid past mistakes and to develop new approaches to resource harvesting that are less destructive and more sustainable. A sustainable pattern of resource development would be more in tune with Carrier Sekani traditional values.

To bring about a more sustainable approach to creating, managing, and adjusting the economic landscape, Carrier Sekani communities seek to re-assert their decision-making role as stewards of their traditional lands. The particular focus of the Carrier Sekani in this context is on ecologically sound management of fishery, wildlife, water, and forest resources. An economic strategy based on fair compensation as described earlier would invest a portion of the economic surplus from resource extraction in providing the Carrier Sekani with employment, technical capacity and policy tools in managing the key resources that are vital to their collective interests.

What could a future Carrier Sekani landscape look like if aboriginal title were resolved? Here are some examples:

- Carrier Sekani communities would have a larger land base sufficient to support present and future generations;

- More Carrier Sekani businesses would be involved, either on their own or as joint ventures with non-native companies, in the development and harvesting of natural resources in their region. There are already a number of examples of this, e.g.,

Burns Lake Native Development Corporation and Tanizul Timber;

- Carrier Sekani enterprises would have secure long-term tenure to an equitable portion of the forest resources in their traditional territories;

- Carrier Sekani community resource agencies (e.g., Carrier Sekani Fisheries Commission) would play a more prominent role in the management, regulation and sustainable harvesting of local fish and wildlife stock;

- Carrier Sekani communities would be actively engaged as partners in researching and developing sustainable resource harvesting methods. The John Prince Research Forest, a partnership of Tl'az'ten nation and the University of Northern British Columbia is an example of this, as is the McGreger Model Forest (in partnership with L'heitli T'enne);

- Carrier Sekani forestry enterprises would have access to forest tenures that stress innovative, and sustainable forestry methods (e.g., Community Forest Pilot Agreement, Innovative Forestry Pilot Agreement), and that allow for extensive management of non-timber forest products;

- Carrier Sekani forest enterprises would have a niche role to play in the industry related to their cultural priorities, e.g., selective logging; road de-activation; silviculture; horse logging; eco-tourism; management of riparian areas, leave patches, and wildlife corridors; and production of value-added products for specialized domestic and export markets;

- Fiscal transfers, based on sharing revenues from natural resources, would provide Carrier Sekani governments with stable revenues sufficient to fund autonomous social, education, health and training agencies based in Carrier Sekani communities. Services of these agencies would be available in urban areas occupied by Carrier Sekani families;

- Special protected areas would be set aside for the pursuit of traditional livelihood activities e.g., hunting, fishing trapping, and gathering. Income support, technical management and training would be provided for Carrier Sekani families wishing to maintain these activities within their respective clan territories;

- Special efforts would be made by Carrier Sekani resource management agencies to rehabilitate areas damaged by

industrial resource use, with the emphasis on restoring bio-diversity wherever possible.

The positive evolution of future Carrier Sekani landscape depends on effective, respectful problem solving in the areas of self-government, revenue sharing, resource sharing and co-management. Provincial and federal governments, as well as corporations, need to accept political diversity and make room for Carrier Sekani self-government on the land and in the decision-making superstructure that allocates, manages, and profits from natural resources.

Acknowledgements

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