

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Sechelt, Sechlet, Salishan

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): SEC

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): 49°28'27"N 123°45'15"W

1.4 Brief history: The Sechelt area was originally occupied by natives of the Coast Salish nation, specifically the *shishalh* tribe, from which the town of Sechelt took its name. Much of their settlement was concentrated in the protected inland areas along the Sechelt Inlet where natural food and fresh water were abundant. The *shishalh* enjoyed a thriving community, rich in culture and family tradition. Their first contact with white settlers, likely the Catholic missionary Father Paul Durieu, was not an agreeable one. One of the first European innovations to alter the *shishalh's* traditional way of life was smallpox. In 1862, a severe epidemic took the lives of over 90% of the Coast's Native population. Many of the survivors considered this plague a punishment from the spirit world, in some way connected to the powerful medicine of the black-robed missionaries. One of the largest mass conversions in history took place right after this epidemic, perhaps as a desperate attempt to placate the hostile forces that had brought on the illness. Father Durieu "successfully" confirmed into the Catholic faith every surviving member of the *shishalh* tribe. Shortly afterwards, he began the controversial residential school system, choosing the area known to the Natives as *Chateleech* as the site for the first school. By *shishalh* standards, it was a generally inhospitable spot for year-round living due to its open exposure to both weather and attack, and the lack of fresh water. Despite this, St. Augustine's Residential School was officially opened on June 29, 1904, on the present day site of the House of Chiefs in Sechelt. Rigid discipline was enforced. Children were not allowed to speak their native language, even to their parents, who were forced to learn English to communicate with their own children. Students could not live at home even if they lived within sight of the school. Parental visits were limited to one or two hours a week and were supervised by hovering nuns. The School burned to the ground in 1917, and classes were held in temporary quarters until it was rebuilt in 1922. It continued to play a major role in *shishalh* history until the 1960's. Native culture was strictly suppressed by the theocratic regime of Durieu and his priests. His converts were forced to burn centuries-old totem poles and other "paraphernalia of the medicine men" and to abandon their potlatches, dancing and winter festivities. Durieu instead began an all-Native brass band and travelling theatre troupe and encouraged such non-traditional economic pursuits as logging and commercial-scale hunting and fishing. The population (and the morale) of the *shishalh* continued to decline under the influences of the church. An official 1881 census showed only 167 band members left of the original body of 5000. Only a sad remnant remained of what was once referred to as "one big smoke" extending from Gower Point to Saltery Bay. Most of the repertoire of songs, dances, stories and art have been lost. Only in the recent past has this trend begun to be reversed with the push by present-day Band members to reclaim their lost heritage and a measure of the pride they once had in their unique culture. (1)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: Their first contact with white settlers, likely the Catholic missionary Father Paul Durieu, was not an agreeable one. One of the first European innovations to alter the *shishalh's* traditional way of life was smallpox. In 1862, a severe epidemic took the lives of over 90% of the Coast's Native population. (1)

1.6 Ecology: The Sechelt land is on the lower sunshine coast of British Columbia, Canada. Large access to rivers and ocean for the early hunter gatherers. territory is located in the southwest corner of what is now referred to as British Columbia, it extends from *xwésám* (Roberts Creek) in the southeast to the height of land located north of *xénichen* (head of Queen's Reach) in the north, *kwékwenis* (Lang Bay) to the west and *spíłksen* (Texada Island) to the south.

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: The population vastly declined after contact with white settlers. An 1881 census showed that only 167 members were left of the group of around 5000

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Wild Crab Apple, several varieties of Blueberry and Huckleberry, Blacktops, Blackberry, Bunchberry, Elderberry, Gooseberry, Thimbleberry, Snowberry, Salmonberry, Soapberry, Saskatoon Berry, Salt Grass, Wild Onions, various ferns. (2)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: *s-chélchálilhten* (Salmon) are the most important resource for the *shíshálh*, (2)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Weirs, Basket Traps, Drift Nets, Tidal Traps, Harpoons, Leisters, Gaff Hooks, Spears, Dip Nets (2)

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production: No evidence of sexual division of production. Male and females both contribute to harvest.

2.6 Land tenure: Land is not owned by one person, but by the tribe as a whole. Many management factors are in place to make the most efficient use of the natural resources. (2)

2.7 Ceramics: Recently 350,000 beads were excavated in Sechelt territory from a burial site which indicates they may have played a large role in the tribe's trade with the European settlers.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: Harvest is gathered and shared as a whole tribe.

2.9 Food taboos: Some individuals are said to have acquired mountain power, allowing them to excel as climbers and hunters, and the mountains speak to them in their dreams as they sleep upon them. *húpit* (Deer) is by far the most significant of the land animals for both their meat and skins, and in earlier times dogs were used extensively to herd them into selected areas for harvest. (2)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? The Sechelt Inlet area supported active railway logging camps, a brick factory at Storm Bay, fishing resorts up Salmon Inlet and settlements at Doriston and Clowhom. (1) The Coast Salish peoples inhabit coastal and adjacent areas of British Columbia and Washington State. Here, great rivers, calm estuaries, diverse topographies and climate provide bountiful resources. Their canoes demonstrate their needs, ranging from small clam boats to great ocean-going war canoes. Southern Coast Salish relied primarily on seafood while more northern and interior groups supplemented with land fare (goat, bear, deer and elk). All depended greatly upon salmon. Distributing goods from both sea and interior, they traded smoked fish and fish oil, shells, canoes, metals, goat products, and medicines. (2)

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

The life style of the Sechlet is very similar to how we live today since a small variety of them still exist they were Europeanized so quickly that it was difficult to find any information on their mating history. When the Europeans settled the natives quickly adapted to their style of living and was basically forced into their religion destroying the history of their culture adapting to a new life style. They continued to remain hunter-gatherers however. The majority of the conceptions about the mating and marriage practices come from the catholic influence. The mass conversion drastically changed the Sechlet tribe.

4.1 Age at menarche (f): Marriage is a strong part of the Sechlet's spiritual culture. Women are considered ready for marriage at first signs of puberty.

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? Females are married soon after puberty and are committed to their husband as a sexual partner.

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

4.22 Evidence for couvades

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

4.24 Joking relationships?

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? I was unable to find any information about the marriage ritual other than they were ready for marriage at puberty. It did say however that the European influence changed the culture of the Sechlet indicating that they practiced the marriage style of the Catholic.

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: Sechlet avoided war at all cost very low deaths from warfare majority came from influence of small pox from European settlers. 90% of the population was expected to be wiped out after their intro to the area. (1)

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): They are not warlike people and have no tradition of conquest. However they were subject to raids by northern groups and on occasion retaliated. (2)

4.18 Cannibalism? Cannibalism is non existant in

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Late December to Early March

During this period, families usually returned to their winter settlements. Settlements were typically situated in sheltered bays, with a beach and easy access to fresh water. Settlements generally consisted of one or more large houses measuring up to two hundred feet in length, which were typically shed-roofed or gabled structures with a permanent framework of posts and beams with removable wall and roof planks.4 The winter months were generally spent indoors. People lived off stored foods, primarily *yúm-ach*, *syánxw*, *stsékay*, or *hénun* (Chinook, Dog or Chum, Sockeye or Pink Salmon respectively)5, which was supplemented with *húpit* (Deer), *s-chétxwen* (Bear) and other animals that were hunted.

From April to mid-August families dispersed throughout their territory traveling in *s-néxwnexwílh* (canoes), typically made of *téxém-ay* (Red Cedar).⁶ Subsistence activities during this time included digging for *s-?úlh-kwu* (Clams), fishing for *s-chélchálilhten* (Salmon), *s-lháwat'* (Herring), *s-ts'éxwu* (Lingcod), *s-ts'ák-shel-ikw* (Rock Cod), *xél-láxan* (Flounder), *s-wách-ay* (Perch), Sole, Greenling, and *s-chutx* (or *s-pét-ál-ana*, Halibut). As well, they hunted *tenks* or *s-kw'élkw'álash* (Ducks), *xa* (Geese), *húmhum* (Grouse), *?asxw* (Seals), *kw'únut'* (Porpoise) and *kwéxnis* (Sea lions), which were typically hunted from a *s-nínexwílh* (small canoe) with a *shélil-ten* (harpoon).⁷ Plants were also gathered at this time of year and eaten fresh; however, berries were usually preserved for the winter.⁸

Mid-August to Early December

In August, people began to gather on the rivers to catch *s-chélchálilhten* (Salmon), including *syánxw* (Dog or Chum), *hénun* (Pink), *yúm-ach* (Chinook or Spring) and *kwémáyits'a* (Coho), which continued until January, though the peak was in October and November. (2)

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): From the structure of the Sechlet land management plan source number 2 in my bibliography it appears that

5.4 Post marital residence: Married couples and families live in the same hut or area.

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Now the boundaries for the Sechlet are defined by the Canadian government but at the time of pure hunting and gathering boundaries didn't really exist except for the conflict with the northern tribes.

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): Elders are the only age that is socially above others they tend to rarely do any gathering and never hunt most focus on preparing gathered meals or provide medicine for the ill.

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization: The majority of the structure of the early natives was based on age. Elders are the go-to people on issues older the wiser was the basic understanding of the social structure.

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): Manly groups of houses in a small village.

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

5.12 Trade: "For the mainland populations, and particularly the *shishálh*, trade with inland peoples was a major feature of our commerce and provided access to exotic goods in exchange for surplus smoke dried fish, dentalium shells, fish oil and *húpit* (Deer) hides." (2)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Elder women are the specialist when it comes to medicine they used mushrooms and other berries, ect to cure a vast amount of illnesses (2)

6.2 Stimulants:

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): upon puberty women are expected to marry.

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation):

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Art is a huge part of the Sechelt culture most of the materials from the

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect: Their first contact with white settlers, likely the Catholic missionary Father Paul Durieu, was not an agreeable one. One of the first European innovations to alter the *shishalh's* traditional way of life was smallpox. In 1862, a severe epidemic took the lives of over 90% of the Coast's Native population. Many of the survivors considered this plague a punishment from the spirit world, in some way connected to the powerful medicine of the black-robed missionaries. One of the largest mass conversions in history took place right after this epidemic, perhaps as a desperate attempt to placate the hostile forces that had brought on the illness. Father Durieu "successfully" confirmed into the Catholic faith every surviving member of the *shishalh* tribe. Shortly afterwards, he began the controversial residential school system, choosing the area known to the Natives as *Chateleech* as the site for the first school. By *shishalh* standards, it was a generally inhospitable spot for year-round living due to its open exposure to both weather and attack, and the lack of fresh water. Despite this, St. Augustine's Residential School was officially opened on June 29, 1904, on the present day site of the House of Chiefs in Sechelt. Rigid discipline was enforced. Children were not allowed to speak their native language, even to their parents, who were forced to learn English to communicate with their own children. Students could not live at home even if they lived within sight of the school. Parental visits were limited to one or two hours a week and were supervised by hovering nuns. The School burned to the ground in 1917, and classes were held in temporary quarters until it was rebuilt in 1922. It continued to play a major role in *shishalh* history until the 1960's.(1)

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): The Sechlet people's beliefs often hang strain from the spirits of animals or regions. Much of the history of the Sechlet culture was lost with the European influence. Century old totems and other evidence of their social structure and culture were forced to be burned by some of the early missionaries. However the use of totems can indicate that there was a structure or order to there social structure in politics and or religious figures. (1)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut: From the few pictures that exist of the early Sechlet hunter-gatherers they generally all have shoulder length hair men and women both.

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Women typically wear headbands made with beads this was evident from the few pictures of the early natives.

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect: Native culture was strictly suppressed by the theocratic regime of Durieu and his priests. His converts were forced to burn centuries-old totem poles and other "paraphernalia of the medicine men" and to abandon their potlatches, dancing and winter festivities. Durieu instead began an all-Native brass band and travelling theatre troupe and encouraged such non-traditional economic pursuits as logging and commercial-scale hunting and fishing. (1)

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

The Sechlet still have a self governing culture today however their practices are drastically different from what they were years ago before the European introduction.

Numbered references

1. Till, Heather. "Sechelt History." [www.bigpacific.com](http://www.bigpacific.com/sechelt/history.html), Web. 19 Sep. 2012. <<http://www.bigpacific.com/sechelt/history.html>>.
2. Dixon, Stan, Garry Feschuck, Marita Paul-Frita, Thomas Paul, and Warren Paull. Sechelt Indian Band. Sechelt Indian Band Council. *Strategic Land Use*