

## 1. Description

### 1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

- The Haisla speak the Haisla language, from the Wakashan family
- (ethnologue.com)

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

- HAS

### 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

- “Currently the primary residence of the Haisla people is Kitamaat Village, which is located at the head of the Douglas Channel on British Columbia’s North Coast. For hundreds of years, however, the Haisla people have occupied many village sites throughout their Territory”
- 53°58'30"N, 128°39'00"W
- (haisla.ca)

### 1.4 Brief history:

- The Haisla people lived in relative cooperation with the surround nations, occasionally fighting would break out but wars were not a common occurrence. With the arrival of Europeans, new wealth was brought to the people, but the new resources brought disease. In 1862 a smallpox epidemic decimated the Haisla nation, leaving only an approximate 200 remaining out of a population believed to be near 700. The banning of the potlatch in 1884 was devastating to the trade of the Haisla and surrounding cultures, isolating them from each other and effectively forcing the tribes to trade with the white settlers. The Haisla have since undergone struggles for their land, and their symbolic totem poles, but continue to exist today.
- ([www.multiculturalcanada.ca](http://www.multiculturalcanada.ca))
- ([www.fourdir.com/haisla.htm](http://www.fourdir.com/haisla.htm))

### 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

### 1.6 Ecology:

- The municipality of Kitiwat, where the Haisla lands are located, is a very wet oceanic climate with a mean of 81.035 inches of precipitation annually.
- “On the coast, the natural vegetation is needle-leaf forests of Douglas-fir, western redcedar, western hemlock, Sitka spruce, amabilis fir and yellow-cedar. These are some of the densest of all coniferous forests and hold some of the world's largest trees.”
- The area abounds in wildlife, including a wide variety of land-bound animals and a substantial population of fish.
- (<http://ibis.geog.ubc.ca/>)
- (<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/ecology/ecoregions/>)

### 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

- When Olson visited the Haisla, they numbered around 400. Today the Haisla Nation is approximately 1500
- The winter is the time when the Haisla gathered in their village, so the mean village size would be pretty near to the total population size. During the warmer times of the year, the people scattered in family or clan groups throughout the Douglas Channel region.
- (Olson, 169)
- (haisla.ca)
- ([www.fourdir.com/haisla.htm](http://www.fourdir.com/haisla.htm))

## 2. Economy

### 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

### 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

- The Haisla depended upon the salmon coming up the river, taking full advantage of the aquatic harvest at every opportunity.

### 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

- The Haisla seemed to be fond of clubs, fashioning them from wood when in need of a weapon. Clubs were used on land or when attacking from the water.
- (Olson 188)

### 2.4 Food storage:

### 2.5 Sexual division of production:

### 2.6 Land tenure:

- Land “ownership” is scarce, but possession of land rights is significant in ceremony. The family or clan is said to “own” the land, but the right is mainly fictional. People are expected to ask before trespassing, and are rarely if never refused passage through owned lands. Rights can be passed from father to son, at which point it would change hands to that of the son’s clan. “The attitude toward them is more like that shown regarding crests or legends—things to be claimed because of a certain prestige within the clan.”
- Certain lands are seemingly property of the clan as a whole, usable as commoners for hunting or fishing grounds.
- (Olson, 180)

### 2.7 Ceramics:

### 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

- The tanish, or cannibals, of the group always eat first of any food or crop. If they do not eat first, their hunger grows too powerful and they enter a seizure, craving flesh. They have to be placated by their helpers, and host a feast in apology.

- At potlatches and feasts, the Haisla had strict ways in which every clan must be seated. The seating arrangement changes based on who is hosting, with contingencies at every turn. Potlatches were vital meetings for trading between the Haisla and their neighboring tribes. Nobles and clan chiefs ate first (Olson did not specify whether the nobles ate before even the nobles) followed by the rest of the commoners at the feast.
- (Olson, 172-173, 177)

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

- The Haisla were a heavily water-dependent nation, relying on canoes for transportation.

### 3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

### 4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

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:

- “In a divorce the husband keeps the property given him. In theory, nobles are expected never to divorce a mate. For commoners, divorce is easy, usually mutual consent being all that is necessary.”
- (Olson, 189)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

- There appears to be no evidence for polygyny, with 100% monogamy in a strict social system like the clans of the Haisla.

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

- Before a marriage the groom’s clan goes to the house of the wife and bestows gifts, mainly on the wife’s parents.
- “No marriage is considered actually complete until the bride’s parents and clansmen have given back to the groom’s kin a certain amount of property, usually double the value they received from the groom’s clan on the wedding day.”
- (Olson, 186-187)

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

- Much of the deceased’s belongings are burned at death, to ward off evil spirits, so most of what remains of a Haisla’s possessions is intangible. The crests, names, and land rights accumulated by a Haisla are passed to his sons or his clan.

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

- “Berdaches of both sexes are fairly common. Males do women’s work, females, man’s work. Some marry (person of opposite sex). Homosexuality is unknown”
- (Olson, 200)

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

- “Caste endogamy is rigid. A noble youth marrying a commoner deprives his children of their nobility. He should marry within his caste, ‘for nobility’s sake.’ Violations, of course, occur, for romantic love is not always to be denied”
- (Olson 186)

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)

- “Cross-cousin marriage is known as ‘marrying-for-power,’ that is, it strengthens the family alliances and the right to crests, legends, titles, and other things. Also ‘good’ is marriage with a second cross cousin”
- (Olson, 185)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

- Neither females nor males tend to have sexual freedoms, rather they are aware of who they can marry nearly from birth. The arranged marriages and strict enforcement would leave little room for promiscuity.
- (Olson 185-186)

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?

- There were no joking relationships

- (Olson, 185)
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations
- Clan association is matrilineal, deriving from the mother of a child's home clan.
  - (Olson 170-172)
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
- Marriages among the Haisla nobility are extremely formal, a true spectacle. The exchanging of gifts, carefully chosen marriages, and complex rituals all are indicative of a highly rigid social system.
  - "Among commoners 'without pride' the couple may simply bed together at her house. An exchange of gifts between the families the next day binds the contract."
  - (Olson, 185-186)
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?
- Names are bestowed at birth, and also an official name is given when the child reaches a certain age. Names are also bestowed as positions of honor, or inherited from others as titles.
  - (Olson, 177-178)
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
- Marriage is strictly within community, but outside of *clan*.
  - "The primary consideration concerning marriage is that one must not marry within his clan. This is considered equivalent to marrying a sister...clanmates of the same generation call each other by the brother-sister terms and regard each other as such. Even marriages between linked clans are rare, though not specifically prohibited."
  - "The Haisla equate the clans of neighboring tribes with their own and observe the same restrictions in intratribal marriages."
  - (Olson, 185)
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
- "Young people have little to say about the choice of a mate, especially among the nobility. Children are told early by their parents about their eligible mates and they grow up taking things for granted...In a society where rank and title count for so much, few deviations are expected; socially disapproved matings are as rare as among the European nobility."
  - (Olson, 186)
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

### **Warfare/homicide**

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

- "One informant stated he knew of only one murder. The guilty man went unpunished because there was no method of dealing with intratribal violence"
- (Olson, 183)

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

- Outgroup killing mainly derives from trade disputes, especially after the arrival of the European settlers.
- (<http://www.multiculturalcanada.ca/>)

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

4.18 Cannibalism?

- The Tanish Dance of the Haisla is dedicated to cannibalism. A novice is inducted as tanish through a dance, where his frenzy is tamed and he becomes a true tanish.
- "Whenever anyone dies the tanish dancers pretend to have seizures, thus signifying their desire to devour the corpse. This is called xwaio'soh ("to start again"). Throughout their lives tanish must be given the first food whenever food is served, otherwise they go into a frenzy. They must be given the first salmon caught and the first berries picked."
- (Olson, 176-177)

### **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

- When the clans and families would gather for the winter in their permanent village, their numbers would likely have been in the 600-700 range, before the smallpox epidemic.
- (<http://www.fourdir.com/haisla.htm>)

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

- The Haisla were migratory throughout most of the year, scattering throughout the region. During the winter all the families and clans would return to a permanent village location.
- (Haisla 169)

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

- The Haisla were governed by a strict clan system, as well as having distinct social classes. Each clan was led by a chief, who held authority but extensive control was not necessary. Classes are strict, determining marriages and social conduct in nearly every aspect of society.
- "On the Northwest Coast, society is stratified. In general the distinction made is nobles, (hai'mas), commoners (a'ngwah), and slaves(kla'kin. There are no intermediate classes, though in practice certain commoners of good family, such as the younger

siblings with those of titles, are shown a measure of respect not accorded other commoners. In addition to the foregoing, two chiefs, Tsasih (Beaver) and Sanaxet (Eagle) are ranked above all others and are accorded with the special title or rank of a'mats!wah...the rich are called k'aiya't. but a commoner though rich is still classed as a commoner"

- "Those with titles (i.e., chiefs or nobility) are the only ones with authority, but their control is purely nominal and it is only exercised over clansmen. It is said that a chief gives orders only in matters directly concerned with feasts and potlaches. In other things his authority is nill. However, social prestige and rank count for something and most are willing to listen to advice or opinions of the nobility. A chief cannot even force a clansman to give or lend him property for a potlatch; but clan pride and the fear of scorn would practically force a person's hand in the matter. A chief has no real authority in matters such as quarrels, theft, or even murder."

- (Olson, 182)

#### 5.4 Post marital residence:

- Following marriage, the bride and groom go to the home of the wife's parents. After a period of time, the wife's parents "redeem" her and give gifts to the groom and his family, usually twice the value of the gifts given before the wedding. After this ritual the couple returns to the home of the husband or his family.

- (Olson, 186)

#### 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

#### 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

#### 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

- "There are neither parent-in-law nor brother-sister taboos. But a small boy found playing sexually with his sister would be told 'Stop playing with your sister or you'll get a hump on your back' ...there were no joking relationships"

- (Olson, 185)

#### 5.8 Village and house organization:

- Reportedly, there is a difference of opinion on if the village was grouped by clan. Olson says "At any rate, both naming of houses and grouping them by clans have disappeared from the culture."

- (Olson, 180)

#### 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

#### 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

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

- Clans are integral to Haisla society. The clans, along with the classes, determine nearly everything about a person's social status. The matrilineal clan system relies heavily on marriage to form bonds between clans
- "there is no trace of a formal moiety organization among the Haisla except for a curious institution among the boys." The institution is that of a line through the center of camp, dividing the young boys of each side into teams, regardless of clan. A boy caught crossing the line can be attacked and humiliated by the boys of the other side.

- (Olson, 170)

#### 5.12 Trade:

#### 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

- Social hierarchies are prevalent in the Haisla, determining many areas of daily life. The caste system as well as the clans serve to create a stratified society which is highly based on social standing. The social clout of a Haisla is dependent upon his nobility as well as titles in his clan. Commoners wield little power in social ceremonies or decisions, above only the slaves in standing.

## 6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

### 6 Time allocation to RCR:

#### 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

- Shamans were very important in Haisla culture, serving as both healers and as sorcerers/magicians. They practiced magic to heal, as well as to harm others.
- "It is believed that no one, not even the aged, die of natural causes. All disease and death are due to magic or witchcraft. Falling from a cliff, drowning in a stream might seem due to natural causes, but somewhere someone is working magic"
- "Shamans (he'likilah or ha'sa) are nearly always males. They work as curers of disease but also know the intricacies of magic and witchcraft."
- Apart from shamanism, little medicine was used. "A plant called o'xsulih is used variously: as a poultice; to make an infusion which is drunk; to make a powder which is snuffed to cure colds; or the core is swallowed green. Merely its presence or use keeps away illness and evil, and scares ghosts"
- "Magicians often have dealings with the dead (especially newly dead) and with ghosts. Accordingly, kinsmen usually watch graves for some nights following the funeral."
- (Olson, 197-198, 200)

#### 6.2 Stimulants:

#### 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

- The first salmon caught in a conical trap for the year is prepared in a special way, and hung in the village. When the first salmon run of the year begins, a net is placed. As soon as the net is full of fish, the signal is given and teams of men race to preferred fishing spots. That night a feast is held, and everyone must *crawl*, not walk, to their homes. No water can be drunk, in case a freshet comes and washes the fish back downstream.

- “From the moment of death the clansmen of the father of the deceased take charge and carry out the entire funeral... Two methods of burial are practiced. The body may be cremated at once and the remaining bones put into
- a box which is placed in a tree... The second method is to wrap the body in dressed skins (for chiefs) or mats (for commoners), place it in a box and lay the box on a platform in a tree. It remains there a year or more and often desiccates rather than decays. It is often these corpses which are used in the tanish dances.”
- “The near kin of the deceased cut their hair in mourning and paint their faces with pitch which is allowed to remain until it wears off. Soon after the funeral the heir gives a potlatch. Even a commoner gives a small feast.”
- (Olson, 182, 199)

#### 6.4 Other rituals:

#### 6.5 Myths (Creation):

- A great emphasis is placed on myths in Haisla culture, but not on creation myths. The majority of the legends are tales of the origins of the various clans, or stories told to teach lessons.

#### 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

#### 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

#### 6.8 Missionary effect:

#### 6.9 RCR revival:

#### 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

- “There is little idea of the afterworld; no idea that the dead live in a world like ours”
- “Persons who die are believed to be reborn, sooner or later, invariably into the same clan... if a man dreams several times of a certain dead person, a child born to his wife subsequently is believed to be that person and often is given the name of the dead. Expectant mothers often dream of a dead person, who is of course the unborn child. If several persons dream of a dead person and a child is born within a few days he is considered to be a reincarnation of the person dreamed of and is given the same name.”
- “If a person is drowning all the animals race toward him. At death he becomes the actual animal which reached him first, regardless of his clan affiliation and regardless of whether the body is found”
- (Olson, 181,200)

#### 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

- As children believed to be reincarnated are given the names of the dead, one could deduce that the naming of the dead is not taboo or forbidden. However, at the mention of the word “corpse” a tanish (cannibal) will go into a seizure or a frenzy of hunger, at which point people will rush to placate him.
- (Olson, 177, 181)

#### 6.12 Is there teknonymy?

#### 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

- Both magic and totems play integral roles in Haisla culture, as part of the spiritual heritage of the people
- Totems are very important to clan identification, as each clan has a totem animal. These spirits are not supernatural in nature, merely symbolic of the clan. “There is a partial taboo on killing the eponym, evidently based on needless killing.”
- “It is believed that no one, not even the aged, die of natural causes. All disease (?) and death are due to magic or witchcraft.”
- “Magic seems to be wholly of the “contagious” type, that is, it is worded with the hair, nail parings, food or cigarette stubs of the victim... magicians never work their magic alone but in pairs, with a compact that if one is caught he takes the blame without involving the other”
- (Olson, 180, 197)

## 7. Adornment

#### 7.1 Body paint:

#### 7.2 Piercings:

- “The ears are pierced. Commoners usually have one hole in each, but for nobles three or four holes in each is common; for the highest nobles, five in each ear. The paternal uncle pierces a boy’s ears, the paternal aunt a girl’s ears. Women wear labrets. Sometimes women have the nose pierced for a ring.”
- (Olson, 199)

#### 7.3 Haircut:

#### 7.4 Scarification:

- During the Tanish dance, the cannibals take bites of flesh from men. “This biting is really severe, large chunks of flesh being removed. I have seen old men show scars of half-dollar size which were received fifty years ago.”
- (Olson, 177)

#### 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

#### 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

- “The costumes worn during the dances are essentially like those of the neighboring tribes. The faces of the performers are painted with five vertical red streaks on both sides of the face and no according to crest or clan”
- (Olson, 175)

#### 7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

- Both sexes have ear piercings, but women are known to pierce their noses or labrets
- (Olson, 199)

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

## **8. Kinship systems**

8.1 Sibling classification system:

- Clanmates of the same generation are considered brothers and sisters, regardless of parents

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

- “A widow or widower is expected to marry a sibling of the deceased mate, if one is eligible, that is, not already married. In any event the surviving mate is expected to remarry into the same clan as before, to do otherwise shows disrespect”
- (Olson 189)

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

**9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):**

1. Olson, Ronald L. *The Social Organization of the Haisla of British Columbia*. Berkeley: U of California, 1940. Print.
2. "Name Details:." The Province of British Columbia. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Dec. 2014. <<http://apps.gov.bc.ca/pub/bcgnws/names/38016.html>>.
3. McMillan, Alan D., Eldon Yellowhorn, and Alan D. McMillan. *First Peoples in Canada*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2004. Print.
4. Demarchi, Dennis A. "The British Columbia Ecoregion Classification." *Ecology*. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Dec. 2014. <<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/ecology/ecoregions/>>.
5. "Introduction." *British Columbia's Coast Region Species and Ecosystems of Conservation Concern*. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Dec. 2014. <<http://ibis.geog.ubc.ca/biodiversity/factsheets/>>.
6. Pedersen, Anne-Marie, and John Pritchard. "Haisla (Kitamaat)." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. N.p., 16/ Oct. 2011. Web. 10 Dec. 2014. <<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/en/article/haisla-kitamaat/>>.
7. History." *Multicultural Canada*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2014. <<http://www.multiculturalcanada.ca/Encyclopedia/A-Z/a13/2>>.
8. "FDI - Haisla." *Four Directions Institute*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2014. <<http://www.fourdir.com/haisla.htm>>.