

BEFORE 1880

Lulu Island and Sea Island separate the Fraser River into three channels, called the North Arm, the Middle Arm and the much larger South Arm. Before settlers came, numerous sloughs emptied into these channels, supporting runs of coho, pink and chum salmon.

Before 1880 a crabapple ridge containing wild Pacific crabapple trees, wild roses, bitter cherry and Indian plum formed a natural sea berm across the west end of Lulu Island. A tall spruce tree at Garry Point on the south west corner of the island served as a landmark for seafarers. For two miles east of Garry Point the south side of Lulu Island was mainly low, flat treeless prairie except for one patch of spruce trees. Further east, about a quarter of a mile inland, a mixed forest of spruce, cedar, hemlock, alder and yew, bordered by cottonwood, crabapple and elderberry, covered the upstream half of the island except for a central peat bog of shore pine.

Native Settlements

There were two Native settlements at the southwest corner of Lulu Island. "Kwayo7xw" (KWAY-ah-wh), meaning "bubbling water", was a village located at the end of the crabapple ridge at Garry Point. "Kwihayam" (Kwi-THAY-um), meaning "place having driftwood logs on the beach", was located near the mouth of the "Little Slough" in the vicinity of the Imperial Cannery. An 1885 chart showed a steep clay bank there, and 1893 maps placed the mouth of the little slough between the Brunswick and Imperial Canneries.

Ida Steves, who arrived in 1878, recalled Garry Point as "the place where the Indians lived". She also remembered that the Steves family once tied up their boat "at the Indian Ranch" near the mouth of the Little Slough and moved it up the slough when a

wind was coming up.

Ida Steves said that the Indians told them that "the Indian houses broke away from Garry Point" when a large chunk of land had fallen into the river and been swept away. An 1871 map of the Imperial Cannery site showed 48 more acres of foreshore land than the 1893 maps. This foreshore land may have been eroded away by a changing river channel, or split off by an earthquake registering 7.4 on the Richter Scale in 1872. While the exact village locations have not been found, a few Native artifacts have been unearthed along the river shore.

The Natives built wood houses by covering pole frames with cedar planks on mainland sites. These houses were frequently built in long rows to accommodate extended families, but sometimes as single buildings. The Natives also covered pole lean-to frames with woven bulrush mats. They used these mat shelters on short excursions for sturgeon and eulachon in spring, sockeye salmon and berries in summer and coho and chum salmon and bulrushes in fall. In spring the men also

An old Native couple in front of their summer bulrush mat shelter. (ca. 1900) (HS)



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Schedule 2 to the Minutes of the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Committee meeting of Richmond City Council held on Tuesday, January 30, 2018.

hunted deer and beaver, as well as the large herds of seals and sea lions attracted to the eulachon runs.

While the Native men were catching fish and hunting game, the women cleaned, dried, smoked and stored the fish. They rendered eulachons into oil, a staple in their diet, and continually checked the stored fish to prevent spoilage. The Native women and children dug clams and cockles, gathered salmonberries and gooseberries, and dug young horsetail shoots and roots of silverweed and clover.

Native Fishing

For sturgeon fishing in winter, the Native men crewed a canoe about twenty feet long. One man probed the river bottom with a forked harpoon on a pole up to fifty feet long. When he located a fish, he quickly plunged the harpoon points, with a strong cord attached, into the sturgeon. A sturgeon could be ten feet long and weigh over 600 pounds. A large sturgeon would drag the canoe behind it at a rapid pace. Sometimes the men used a heavy stone on a cedar bark rope as an anchor to help slow the canoe down. When the fish eventually tired, they brought it close to the canoe, and struck it on the head. The fish dove, the first man slowly retrieved it on the line, and another man dealt another blow. This continued until the completely exhausted fish lay beside the canoe. They leaned over until the gunwale was at the water level, and flipped the fish into the canoe. Then they stepped back to right the canoe. Before the sturgeon began to thrash about, one man stabbed a sharp knife into the nape of its head to sever the spinal cord. They brought the fish to land, cut it up and distributed part among the tribe to be eaten fresh. Then they smoked and stored the rest of the fish. In summer sturgeon could be caught in sloughs with nets and weirs and shorter harpoons usually used for spearing seals.

The Natives fished for eulachons with dipnets, bagnets and herring rakes. A herring rake was a narrow cedar pole about ten feet long, flattened to make one end about two inches wide and a half inch thick. Originally, it was fitted along one edge with sharp teeth

made from bone splinters. Later nails were driven with their heads filed to sharp points. One Native stood or knelt near the bow with the rake, and another sat at the stern, paddling to keep the canoe on a steady course. The fisherman swished the rake up through the water, and shook the impaled fish into the canoe behind him with a sharp knock on the gunwale.

The Natives also used weirs and traps to harvest salmon from the summer freshet until late autumn. They built weirs along the riverbanks of main channels and across many sloughs on the island. To build the weirs they drove pilings into the river bed at regular intervals and lashed latticeworks of branches to the pilings. These weirs were especially effective in diverting coho, pink and chum salmon into latticework traps, where the men impaled the salmon with spears and gaffs.

In the fall more Coast Salish Natives arrived to catch, smoke and dry pink and chum salmon, their principal winter food. At the end of November they loaded their dugout canoes, and returned to their winter residences.



2007 Old Indian site and traditional gear etc.