

NUU-CHAH-NULTH SEASONAL ROUND



NOV - MAR

Potlatching
Herring & spawn
Cod
Deer
Elk

MAR - AUG

Cod
Herring & spawn
Spring salmon
Halibut
Shellfish
Whales
Seals

Salmonberries
Elderberries
Blackberries
Geese
Swans
Ducks
Sea otters

SEPT - NOV

Spawning salmon
Winter huckleberries
Salal berries
Roots
Cod
Clams



Source: TRADITIONAL NUU-CHAH-NULTH FOOD HARVESTING AND PREPARATION,
Native Studies Programme School District No. 70 (Alberni)



OVERVIEW

Prior to the arrival of European explorers and traders, the Nuu-chah-nulth people -- hunters and gatherers of the West coast of Vancouver Island -- were among some of the most developed Indigenous cultures, in part due to the area's abundant food resources and their skillful obtaining of raw materials.

By seasonally inhabiting either the rugged outer seacoast or the more sheltered inlets and river mouths, the Nuu-chah-nulth people were able to take advantage of the peak food gathering periods staggered throughout the seasons. Food was more than a basic necessity of life; it held a cultural significance that was vital to the social, economic, political and spiritual aspects of Nuu-chah-nulth existence.



Man with spear (d_08321), BC Archives

TRADITIONAL DIET

The People of the Prairies knew the coast dwellers as 'Fish-Eaters'. Actually, the Nuu-chah-nulth people could have been more specifically named the 'Salmon-Eaters' because of the five species of salmon that appeared regularly up the river and streams of their territory. The Nuu-chah-nulth people's diet also included various land animals, edible plants, waterfowl, seafood, and other species of fish including halibut, herring and cod.



Fish weir (g_03234), BC Archives

HARVESTING AND PREPARATION

Traditionally, Nuu-chah-nulth men were the main providers of primary foods, and the women gathered secondary foods and were responsible for the cooking and storage of all foods. The Nuu-chah-nulth people developed impressive technologies for obtaining foods which reflected their ingenuity and adaptability. Food was typically cooked via boiling, barbecuing, or steaming. Salmon was also dried or smoked to preserve it for eating during the winter months.



Fish drying racks, PN 03144, Alberni Valley Museum



Content adapted with thanks from "Traditional Nuu-chah-nulth Food Harvesting and Preparation", Native Studies Programme, School District No. 70 (Alberni)

