

# TLOWITSIS 2020 COMMUNITY REPORT

TLOWITSIS GUARDIANS  
ARCHAEOLOGY PROGRAM



**Tlowitsis  
Nation**



**Inlailawatash**





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Cover Figure: Digitized imagery from a pictograph panel site.



**Andy Stadnyk and Gina Thomas on Bowers Island looking East (June 12, 2019)**

“We know that our ancestors lived on our traditional lands for more than a thousand years. When we look at the evidence that is left behind by our ancestors, it gives us a better understanding of how they lived, and it also helps us fill in the missing pieces of the picture of how we got to where we are now.” Gina Thomas on her role as a Guardian Watchmen (Summer 2018).

## INTRODUCTION

There are 370 recorded archaeological sites within Tlowitsis First Nation territory, many of them known through Tlowitsis knowledge holders. Between 2016 and 2019, Tlowitsis Guardians visited 130 recorded and newly identified sites to assess their locations and overall site condition. Archaeologists first began recording basic information about these sites in the late 1960s and submitting records to the Archaeology Branch in Victoria within the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. This Ministry oversees the management and inventory of archaeological sites through the *Heritage Conservation Act (HCA RSBC 1996)*. However, given the thousands of sites located in British Columbia, the Archaeology Branch cannot record and protect all sites from human or natural disturbances. Tlowitsis Guardians led by Gina Thomas have spent hundreds of hours across the territory filling this gap, taking care of Tlowitsis heritage and deepening understanding through archaeological surveys and mapping.

## WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Ancient heritage sites matter because they are a physical and spiritual link to the ancestors. Through the Guardian program, Tlowitsis can exercise a right to control, own, and protect cultural heritage of their territory. First Nations have long argued for equity, sovereignty, and rights in which heritage management is a key component.

The Guardian program strives to accomplish the following ideals:

- provide archaeological and cultural protection to ancient sites in the territory.
- improve archaeological site knowledge.
- provide timely response to destructive impacts on sites.
- improve community, public, and industry awareness of cultural heritage.

## THE GUARDIAN PROJECT

The latest season of archaeological survey by Tlowitsis Guardians was conducted in 2019. The objectives of the field program were to:

- (1) ensure that registered archaeological sites are accurately located, and that their size and significance are adequately reported.
- (2) identify and record new archaeological sites and finds.
- (3) build community technical capacity with the Guardians to identify, document, and assess sites within the territory.

To build technical capacity, Tlowitsis Guardians worked side-by-side with Inlailawatash archaeologists<sup>1</sup> to enhance cultural heritage fieldwork activities. These activities focused on site data collection, evaluating vulnerability and site sensitivity (based on previous reports produced by Inlailawatash), and identifying site-specific management recommendations for vulnerable sites.

It was important to have Guardians visit previously recorded archaeological sites because the site inventory forms currently located in the Archaeology Branch on RAAD<sup>2</sup> are not up to date. This is due to the lack of archaeological work

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<sup>1</sup>Inlailawatash is a Tsleil-Waututh Nation-owned archaeology firm located in North Vancouver.

<sup>2</sup>Remote Access to Archaeological Resources located in the Provincial Archaeological Inventory Database regulated by the Archaeology Branch.

conducted within the North Vancouver Island (NVI) area.

This community report provides a summary of the notes and information recorded between 2018 and 2020 by the Tlowitsis Guardians and Inlailawatash. Additional information, maps, and photos are provided in Appendices A – B.

## SUMMARY OF FIELD RESULTS

The field program revealed that most previously registered archaeological sites are only partially documented, which may result in the under-representation of their size and significance. Both recorded and unrecorded archaeological sites were discovered to be highly vulnerable to both natural and human caused disturbances. In some instances, damage to important sites was considerable.

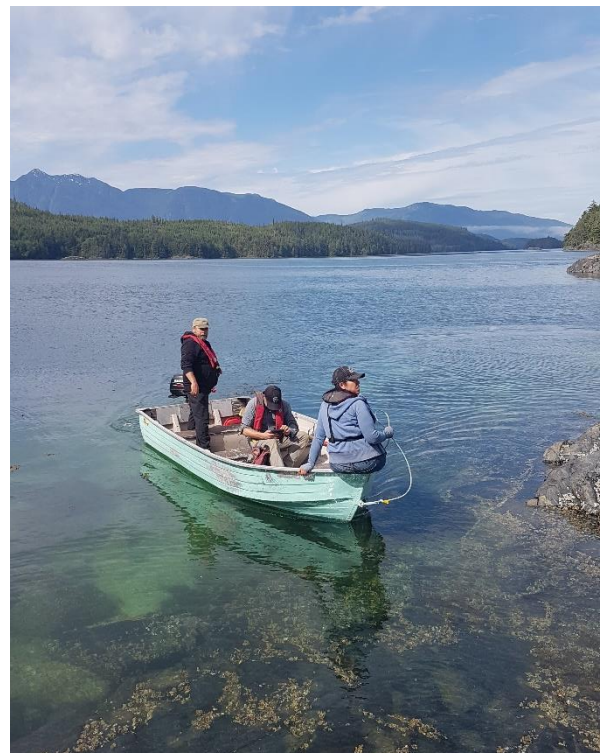
In 2018 and 2019 Tlowitsis Guardians assessed 63 previously recorded archaeological sites within their territory (Appendix A). They also identified 29 new archaeological sites. Some of these new sites are unique, including burial-box sites with grave goods, pictographs, village, and/or defensive sites. Of the 63 previously recorded sites, all require site inventory updates. Archaeological surveys demonstrated that most sites within the territory are larger and have more features (for example, house depressions and shell middens, and fish traps) than previously known. Destruction of village and burial sites is a critical concern. Vulnerability and previous site classifications were updated sites when their condition has deteriorated.

Ten archaeological sites were identified as possessing immediate vulnerability and/or cultural significance to the Tlowitsis Guardians (Table 1). The most significant and threatened site is a burial site. This site holds a burial box and ancestral remains within a rockshelter. The rock wall covering the remains was disturbed and the box destroyed. Although this site is only one

### What is a Borden Number?

Archaeological sites are numbered according to the *Borden Site Designation Scheme*. The four-alternating upper and lower-case letters in a site number (EeSk-) designate a unique block called a “Borden block.” Sites are then numbered sequentially within blocks across Canada. The Archaeology Branch is responsible for assigning new Borden numbers, and for maintaining all archaeological site inventory records and reports.

example of the type of impacts observed during the field program, it provides an opportunity to explore what we know about such sites, and what the practical solutions are to avoid further site destruction.



**Figure 1. Andy Stadnyk, Dr. Sean Connaughton, and Gina Thomas conducting shoreline survey.**



**Table 1. Sites Identified by Tlowitsis Guardians with Highest Rank for Vulnerability and/or Cultural Significance.**

<b>Site Location</b>	<b>Site Type</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Caution Cove</b>	Rockshelter with ancestral remains	Ancestral remains within small rockshelter; rock wall covering entrance to rockshelter pulled apart and burial box destroyed with ancestral remains possibly wrapped.
<b>Port Neville</b>	Rockshelter with ancestral remains	Small rock shelter (W=1.47 m, Height = 0.62 m, Depth = 3 m) with ancestral remains identified with one fragment of an abalone shell and a burial box board. Site is heavily disturbed.
<b>Port Neville</b>	Shell midden, defensive site with fortification, clam garden, petroglyph	Associated with another site; lower terrace bench with a 2 m deep shell midden deposit with a large clam garden along the foreshore. Behind the midden bench is a knoll-like structure where it has been terraformed with midden and accentuated with a trench to serve as a fortification. This is an exceptionally large site and requires LiDAR mapping with a drone. It is unique and in need of protection; FREP was conducted. Possible petroglyph (small circular pecking) on a boulder on the beach.
<b>Small Islet near Klaoitsis Island</b>	Cultivated Meadow	Large meadow with chocolate lily, silverweed, clover, and carrot plants growing on site. It is situated in front of a newly identified shell midden village; should be protected given its uniqueness.
<b>Lagoon Cove</b>	Shell midden	This site is now known to be much larger than first reported in 1967. The site boundary is extended to encapsulate the point, and the midden appears deeper than 2 m. The site is now a commercial fuel dock and moorage (fuel spill in this bay a few years ago), and there are many float houses in the vicinity. A house is situated atop the midden on the point.
<b>Craycroft Inlet</b>	Shell Midden	Gina would like a professional assessment on this one. The site boundary was extended but needs further assessment. The site is much larger than indicated in previous mapping (1967). The site has been severely impacted by logging activities.
<b>Lagoon Cove</b>	Shell Midden	This site encapsulates the entire islet, the site boundary was extended, midden is everywhere across the islet. Possible house depressions exist which would be new archaeological features. There is currently a shed built on the midden.
<b>Port Harvey</b>	Pictograph	Pictograph location was re-mapped but there is concern for it being damaged due to boom ties that are too close to the rock face. Guardians to report the boom tie to the Ministry.
<b>Potts Lagoon</b>	Shell Midden	Site location was re-mapped, but a logging road has impacted the midden (going right through the midden). Major damage has occurred to the midden.
<b>Caution Cove</b>	Fish weir	Site boundary was extended. Depressions were previously identified but a logging road was cut through these features and they could not be re-identified. Possible wooden fish stakes (i.e., weir) identified on the western portion of the foreshore but needs further assessment at low tide.

Burial sites have unique considerations. For example, should disturbed burial sites be reburied? That is, should burial boxes be constructed for those ancestral remains that are scattered and displaced from their box? Should ancestors be re-interred to a new burial box within the rock shelter and covered by a rock cairn? Elders could be consulted on these questions prior to any work to provide the cultural protocols regarding ancestral remains. Elders may also give recommendations for the protection of burial sites not yet considered.

Site protection and conservation are important to the Tlowitsis Guardians, as well as exploring ways for an improved understanding of their heritage. Research by Gina Thomas and her team has opened new and exciting opportunities to expand knowledge of Tlowitsis past using drone photography and detailed site mapping. Bowers Island in Chatham Channel contains dozens of stacked fish weirs, over 30 cleared canoe runs, shell midden, house depressions, and cultivated meadows of silverweed, chocolate lily, and other harvestable plants. This site represents something unique and on a larger scale than more common shell midden village sites, and Guardian research is ongoing here.

## NEXT STEPS

The next steps for the Tlowitsis Guardians future archaeological surveys will involve:

- Continuing the up-dating of the records of the numerous archaeological sites within the territory.
- Devising plans for the protection of the most vulnerable sites within the territory.
- Discussing opportunities to use archaeological methods to learn more about their ancient sites within their territory (for example, systematic excavation).

In addition, a pilot project focused on an area-based management plan, as opposed to a site-by-site approach, is being developed with various partners. The goal is for Tlowitsis to protect and manage their cultural heritage more effectively. An area-based approach recognizes the importance of integrated networks of cultural and spiritual sites, providing a more holistic framework for protecting sites.



**Figure 2. Bowers Island Site Complex being drone photographed by Gina Thomas (2019).**

## CONCLUSION

The heritage site assessments conducted by the Tlowitsis Guardians portray a richness, diversity, and density of site types located throughout the territory. It cannot be overstated that this region is home to unique and important cultural places with limited understanding of the nature and characteristics of these sites. Detailed field surveys targeting sites with insufficient data will provide a more robust account of archaeological and cultural heritage within the territory.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*The results presented in this report could not have been accomplished without the hospitality, guidance, encouragement, and insights provided by Tlowitsis Guardians. From the Guardians we are indebted to Gina Thomas, Alex Thomas, Irvin Speck, and Andy Stadnyk who showed us their ancestral home, and guided us to places of importance so we could collectively determine how to help protect and manage Tlowitsis history and culture.*

*Finally, we acknowledge the Nanwakolas Council. They have remained a thoughtful and encouraging partner, and we thank Scott Harris who has continually supported us throughout this project. We also thank Diana Brown for technical and GIS support as well as her passion, comments, and feedback throughout this project.*

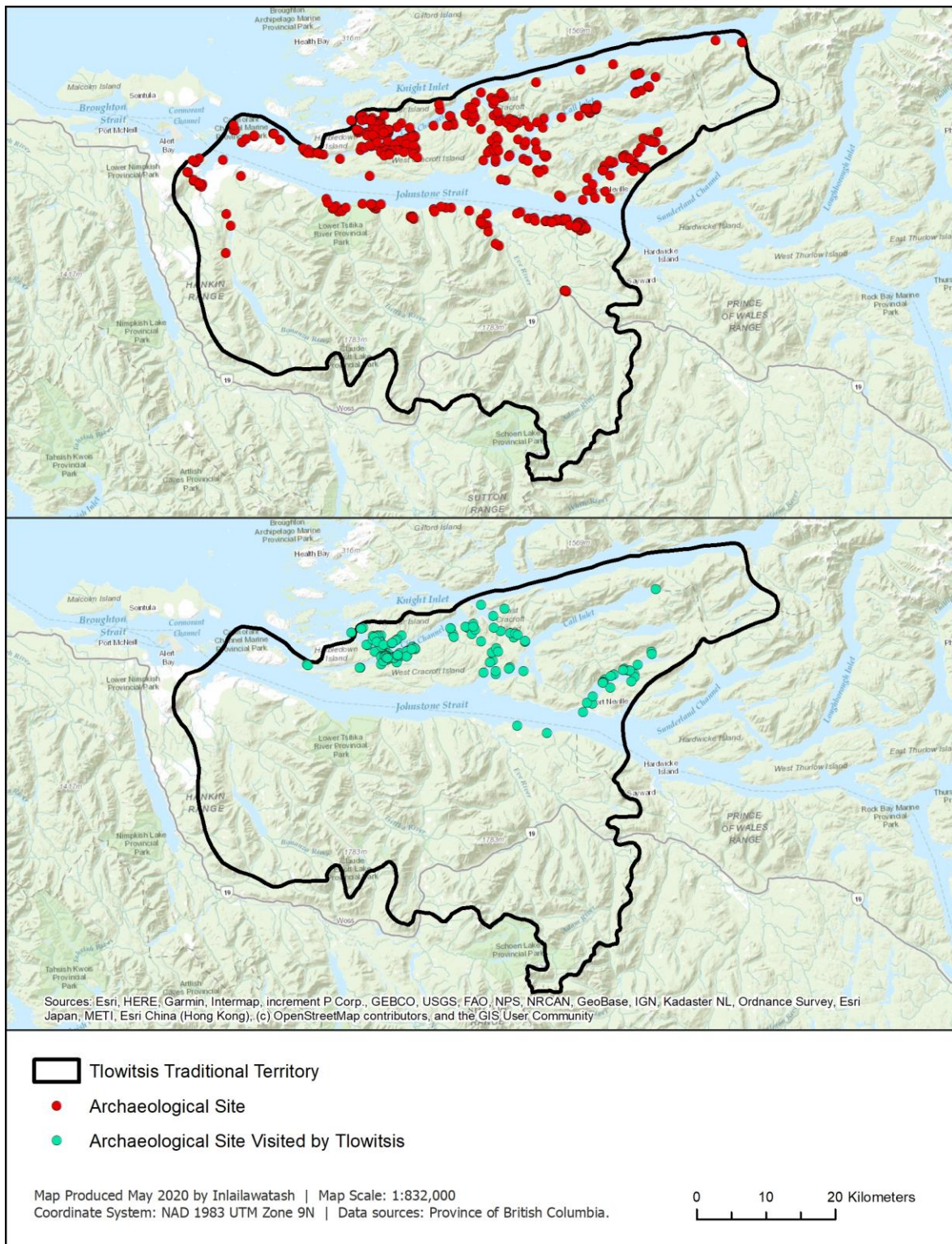


**Figure 3. Kalogwis Village from the Guardian Vessel.**

**“Doing what we can as Guardians to protect and document our past from natural and human impacts is important to us because our people have suffered many injustices since the time of contact. By working with non-Indigenous people that share our passions of the past can help bridge some of that ill will. I believe we can help each other gain knowledge that is more robust and encompassing by sharing our different views.”** Gina Thomas discussing her work as a Tlowitsis Guardian (Spring 2019).



## APPENDIX A – MAP OF TOTAL SITES IN TERRITORY AND SITES VISITED





## APPENDIX B – PHOTOGRAPHS



Figure 4. Gina Thomas standing within fish trap complex at Bowers Island.



Figure 5. Gina Thomas and Andy Stadnyk inspecting eroding shell midden exposure.





**Figure 6. Irvin Speck on survey 2019.**



**Figure 7. Gina Thomas and Dr. Sean P. Connaughton inspecting a rockshelter site.**

**TLOWITSIS 2019 Survey  
EdSn-52**



**Figure 8. Bowers Island Map showing Fish Traps, Canoe Runs, Cleared Beaches, and Cultivated Meadows.**





Figure 9. Pictograph panel near Kalogwis showing unmodified (above) and enhanced (below) imagery.





Figure 10. Feature in pictograph panel near Kalogwis.



Figure 11. Feature in pictograph panel near Kalogwis.





**Figure 12. Feature in petroglyph panel in Port Neville.**



**Figure 13. Feature in petroglyph panel in Port Neville.**





Figure 14. Feature in petroglyph panel in Port Neville.



Figure 15. Pictograph features south of Littleton Point on Chatham Channel.





Figure 16. Pictograph features south of Littleton Point on Chatham Channel.



Figure 17. Pictograph panel on Turnour Island in Beware Passage.





**Figure 18. Alex and Gina Thomas onboard Tlowitsis Guardian vessel.**



**Figure 19. Ian Sellers inspecting unrecorded clam garden identified by Tlowitsis Guardians.**





**Figure 20. Ian, Andy, Gina inspecting house depressions on small unnamed islet near Klaoitsis Island.**

# **Welcome to the Traditional Territory of the Tlowitsis Nation**

## **Qaloḡ<sup>w</sup>is Village**

**These lands have been home to the Tlowitsis for thousands of years. We lived at Qaloḡ<sup>w</sup>is Village until the 1960's.**

**The white beach is a legacy to the richness and bounty of marine life that sustained us.**

**Help us protect these resources so we can enjoy them for generations to come.**

**Please be respectful of our ancestral home!**

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Figure 21. Guardian conservation signage at Kalogwis Village.