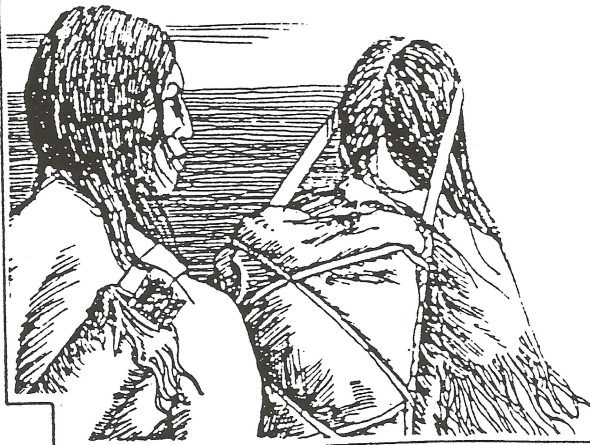




CHILCOTIN  
STUDIES:

FISHING.



# CHILCOTIN STUDIES: FISHING.

In the past, in the days before the arrival of the European fur-traders and settlers, the Chilcotin peoples' diet depended greatly upon the fish they could catch (followed by hunting and then gathering, in that order; according to R.B. Lane, 1953, page 43). Although some fishing was done practically year around, there were times when fishing was critical to survival. One of these times was in mid-winter, when, "...weather was severe and game was scarce;..." (Lane, 1953, page 42). Another time of the year when fishing was very important was during the Spring thaws, "...when people were weak from the winter, game was poor, and travel was difficult." (Lane, 1953, page 42). A little later, during May and June, "...spawning rainbow trout were available in the local rivers and streams." (Alexander and Tyhurst, 1985, page 45). During this same time (May and June), Dolly Varden were sometimes caught in some of the larger lakes in the mountains. By mid-August, most families would be beginning to gather at their favorite salmon-fishing locations. At these locations, they would both gather and dry the various species of spawning salmon. Spawning salmon were caught along Chilco, Chilcotin, upper Dean, upper Bella Coola, upper Homathco, upper Southgate, and other rivers and streams in Chilcotin territory.

Both the lakes and the rivers were of importance to the Chilcotin people, as sources of fish. Apart from the different species of salmon, the Chilcotin people depended a lot on trout, whitefish, and suckers.

These patterns of fishing continue into the present time, although the success or failure of their fishing efforts isn't nearly as important today, as it was in the olden days. In the olden days, it was possible for the people to go hungry for days at a time, if the fishing (and hunting) was poor! Today, the spawning salmon are likely the most important fish to the Chilcotin people, even though the other types of fish are caught as well.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Why was fishing of more importance to the Chilcotin people in the olden days, than it is today? (...in terms of survival, anyway.)
2. During which two times of the year was fishing of great importance to the survival of the Chilcotin people, in the olden days?
3. In which months were (are) spawning rainbow trout caught?
4. When and where were (are) Dolly Varden sometimes caught?
5. List 5 types of fish important to the Chilcotin people.

FISHING

# CHILCOTIN STUDIES: FISHING.

## Chilcotin Studies: Fishing Methods

Before the arrival of the European fur-traders, and their steel fishing hooks and gaffs, the Chilcotin people used several different methods for catching fish. Two of the best methods were by using TRAPS and by using WEIRS. As well, DIP-NETS, GAFFS, COMPOUND-HOOKS and GORGES were also used.

## CHILCOTIN FISHING EQUIPMENT

### MEANING OF TERMS (or names).

**WEIR:** a weir is a fence through which water flows.

**TRAP:** a device, often in the shape of a box or a cylinder, that is used to catch fish.

**DIP-NET:** any sort of net that is attached to the end of a fairly long pole.

**GAFF:** a sharp hook that is attached to the end of a pole.

**COMPOUND-HOOK:** a type of fish hook made by lashing or tying a sharp barb ( or point), onto a curved piece of wood or other material.

**GORGE:** a barb ( usually made of bone or wood), sharpened at both ends, and tied to a length of fishing line mid-way between the two sharp ends. Fish would swallow a baited gorge, and the gorge would lodge sideways in the throat of the fish.

The following sketches are taken from an excellent book that is likely in most school libraries: INDIAN FISHING: Early Methods on the Northwest Coast, Hilary Stewart (Vancouver: J.J.Douglas Ltd., 1977). Although these sketches are NOT of Chilcotin fishing devices, they are likely quite similar.

TRAP FOR USE IN SMALL STREAM. 82.CS



LONG SLENDER CEDAR BOUGHS ARE SPLIT INTO LENGTHS; SAME MATERIAL, MORE FINELY SPLIT, IS TWINED SPIRALLY TO FORM CYLINDER. FLARED MOUTH IS BOUND ON TO CEDAR BOUGH HOOP, END IS CLOSED IN.

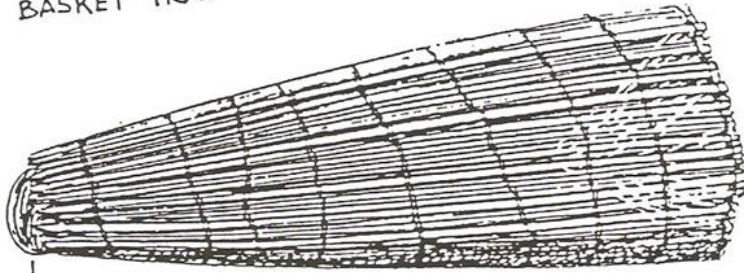


TRAP IS USED WITH SLIDE WEIRS - PEOPLE DOWNSTREAM BEAT WATER TO FRIGHTEN FISH UPSTREAM INTO TRAP. WHEN FULL, IT IS LIFTED OUT AND EMPTIED.

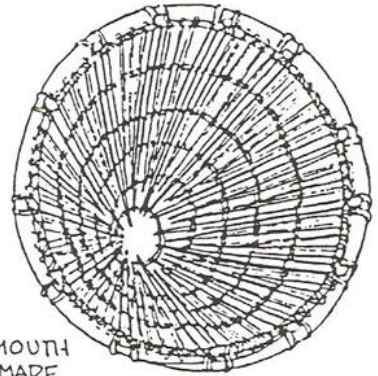
# CHILCOTIN FISHING EQUIPMENT

\*SKETCHES FROM: "INDIAN FISHING", HILARY STEWART, 1977.

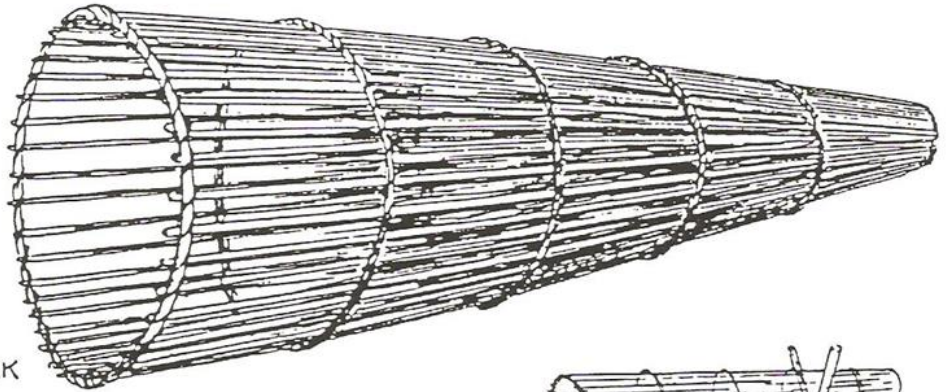
BASKET TRAP



REMOVABLE CAP FOR  
TAKING OUT FISH  
1.37 m.

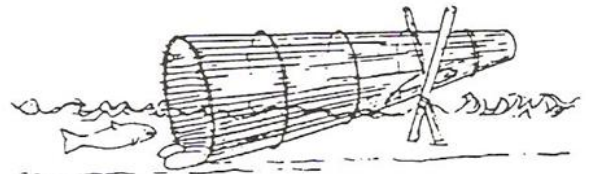


CONICAL MOUTH  
OF TRAP MADE  
WITH SPLIT STICKS



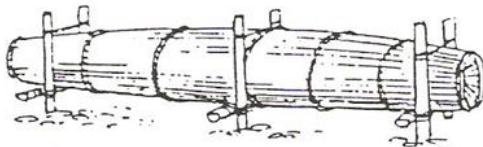
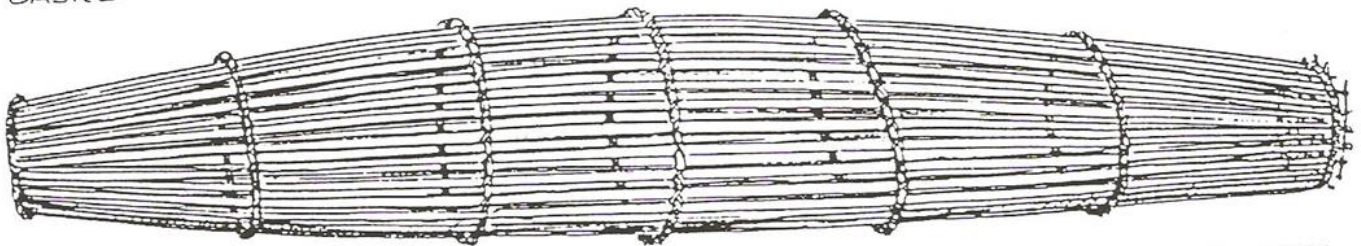
RIVER TRAP. 29-NK

TRAP USED IN SHALLOW, FAST FLOWING  
STREAM. WHEN SALMON ARE MIGRATING,  
MEN UPSTREAM FRIGHTEN FISH BACK  
DOWN RIVER - STRONG CURRENT  
DRIVES FISH UP INTO TRAP WHERE THEY  
ARE SPEARED.



MOUTH OF TRAP WEIGHTED WITH ROCKS.  
END RAISED UP ON SHEARS.

BASKET TRAP



POSSIBLY USED THUS, WITH  
FENCE WEIRS. 32-65

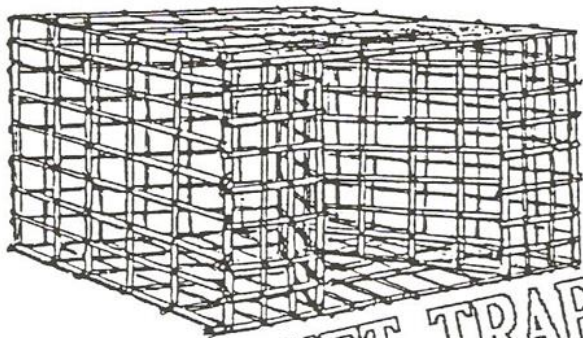
TYPE OF TRAP USED WITH FENCE  
WEIRS, OR PART OF LARGER TRAP  
COMPLEX - DRAWN FROM EARLY  
PHOTO, LOCALE UNKNOWN. 27x  
APPROX. LENGTH 3m

## BASKET TRAPS.

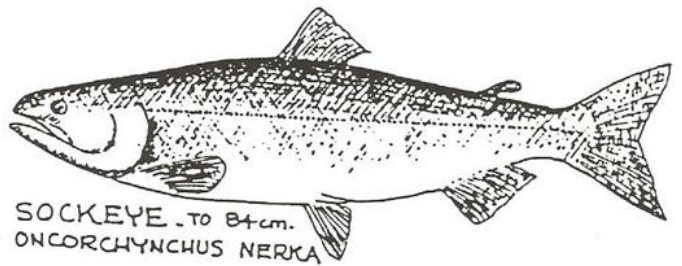
\*SKETCHES FROM: "INDIAN FISHING", HILARY STEWART, 1977.

# CHILCOTIN STUDIES: FISHING.

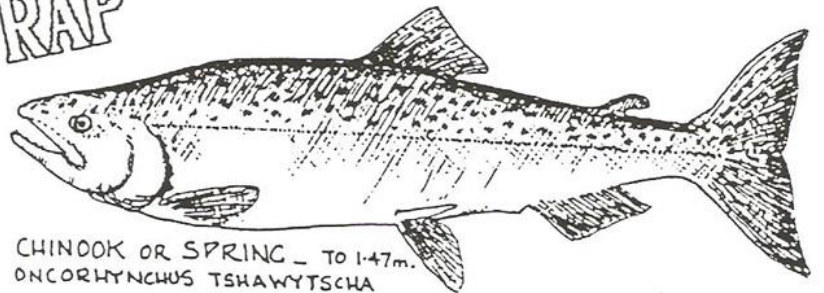
RIVER TRAP FOR SALMON



BASKET TRAP

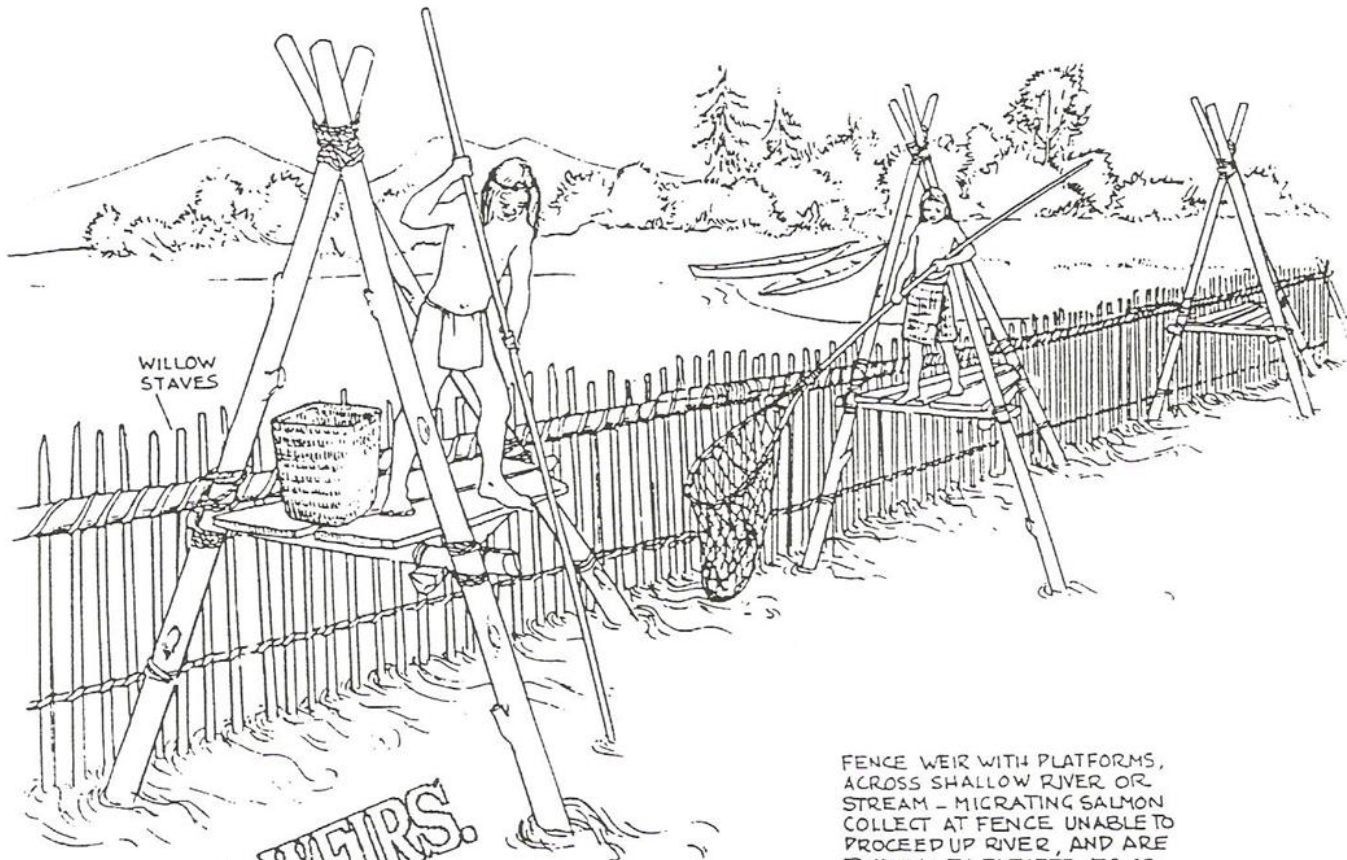


SOCKEYE - TO 84cm.  
ONCORCHYNCHUS NERKA



CHINOOK OR SPRING - TO 1.47m.  
ONCORCHYNCHUS TSHAWYTSCHA

FENCE WEIR WITH TRIPODS

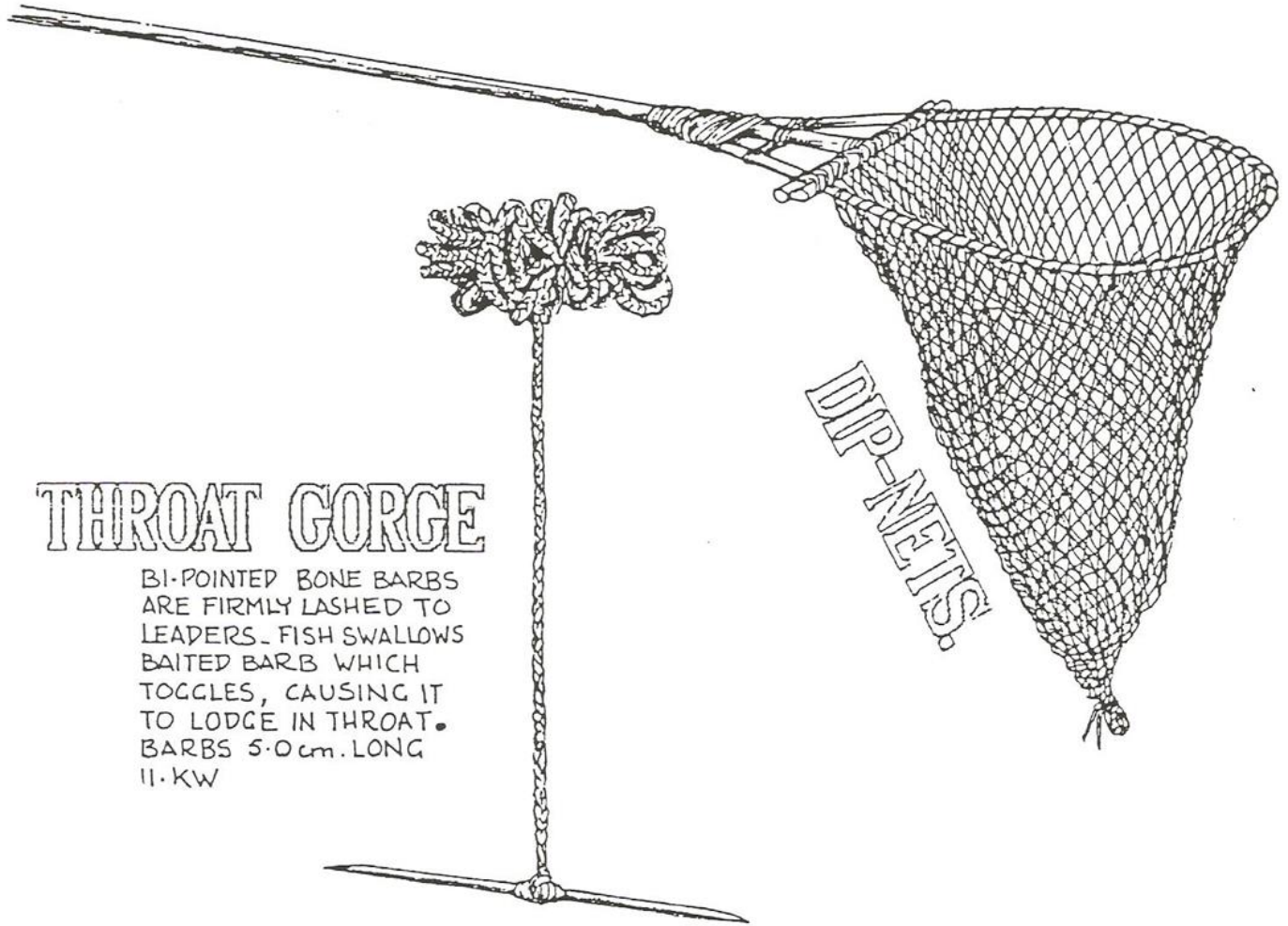


WILLOW  
STAVES

FISHING WEIRS.

FENCE WEIR WITH PLATFORMS,  
ACROSS SHALLOW RIVER OR  
STREAM - MIGRATING SALMON  
COLLECT AT FENCE UNABLE TO  
PROCEED UP RIVER, AND ARE  
TAKEN WITH DIPNETS. 32.CS

# CHILCOTIN FISHING EQUIPMENT



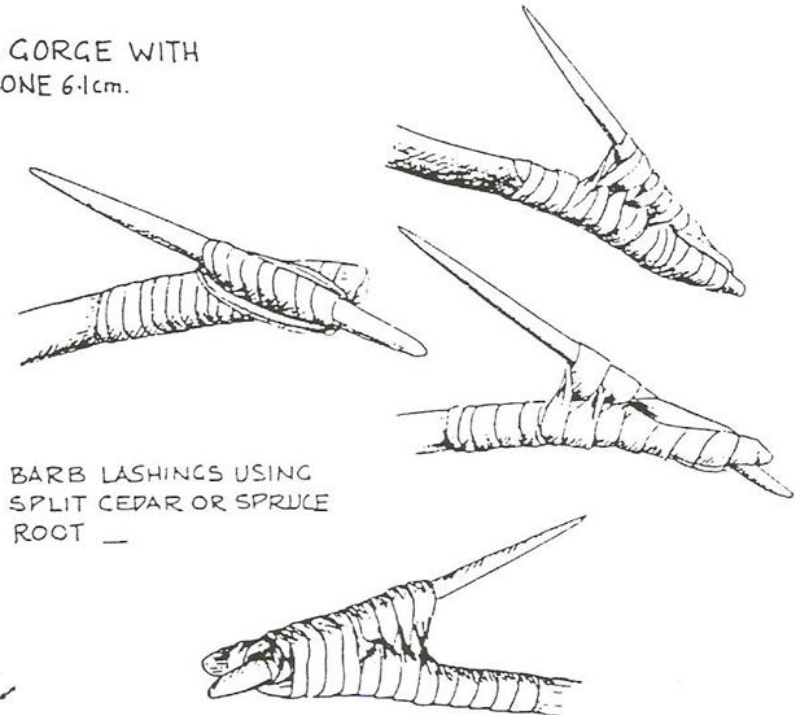
## THROAT GORGE

BI-POINTED BONE BARBS  
ARE FIRMLY LASHED TO  
LEADERS. FISH SWALLOWS  
BAITED BARB WHICH  
TOGGLES, CAUSING IT  
TO LODGE IN THROAT.  
BARBS 5.0 cm. LONG  
11. KW

DIP-NETS

SLENDER BONE GORGE WITH  
BRAIDED LINE. BONE 6.1 cm.

## COMPOUND HOOKS.



BARB LASHINGS USING  
SPLIT CEDAR OR SPRUCE  
ROOT

\*SKETCHES FROM: "INDIAN FISHING", HILARY STEWART, 1977.

# CHILCOTIN STUDIES: FISHING.

## Chilcotin Studies: Questions.

1. List seven ( 7 ) methods used by the Chilcotin people to catch fish.
2. Draw a half page colored picture of a fish weir. Include at least one person in your drawing.
3. Draw a simple sketch of a gaff. Make the gaff in your drawing at least 12 cm. long.
4. In 3 or 4 good sentences, explain why fish traps and fish weirs are not used nearly as much today as they were in the olden days.
5. In 2 or 3 of your own sentences, explain how a gorge is used to catch fish.
6. List at least 3 different materials used to make a compound hook.
7. Using whatever materials you can find, try to make a compound hook.
8. How did the introduction of steel (by the early fur-traders) help the 19th Century Chilcotin people catch fish more efficiently, and more quickly?

