

The first is that of Why-yum-gya-lis. An event that occurred many times throughout history. It lasted up to twenty years at times. This is one of the reasons that my people developed the ancient clam gardens, to sustain them during the harsh winter months when the salmon didn't return to spawn. My people watched the stars and planets to determine when the runs should materialize, and when they didn't, they would rush to a back-up stream to try to gather the winter food. This happened many times, enough to have a legend and a name for it. My grand father told me that the runs were never perfect. I asked him about logging and in particular, clear cuts. He told me that clear cutting definitely had major impacts on the fish runs and the conditions of the streams.

On the other hand, this also happened long before logging, when a lightening strike would hit an tree and totally burn a mountain of it's forests. There was flooding and land slides that also occurred before first contact which also affected the fish runs. This is why he told me that everything was in a "big circle", or cyclical. My dream season came this year after twelve very tough seasons. Many of my fellow fisherman have given up and sold out of the commercial fishing industry. The fishery is also political. That is one of the many reasons that we don't fish like we used to anymore. There are user groups that traditionally didn't know how to catch sockeye that do know how to now. Like the trollers and the sport fishing groups. I believe the sockeye is there for all users, and if the quota system that was started this year is tweaked. I believe that we can all make a living again. We would have to change the way we harvest the fish some more to adapt, but, it is do-able. For an example, this past season, I stunned and bled some sockeye to test the market. Some of these fish that I stunned and bled will be smoked to add more value. If this works that way I believe it will. In the future, I will need to catch less fish to make the same money that I used to in the big seasons.

In about the mid 1960's a poor run on the pinks was predicted by the DFO. The commercial seine fleet was told to build dip nets to dip the pinks out of the net before loading out catch on board. We did this for about ten days. The pinks returned with a vengeance. The canneries were flooded. The fisherman were put on daily catch quotas because of this. This happened again last summer. The pink runs for all the creeks and river in BC were very strong. Just when the DFO tries to predict what mother nature has in store she sends a reminder that we will always be just guessing.

Last, the First Nations peoples up river should be consulted. When the 2005 season was over I was attend an Assembly of First Nations and got to talk to some of the chiefs from up river. I told them of the fish that I saw coming through the Jonhntone Straights. Not unlike this past season. They told me that NO FISH RETURNED to the spawning channels up river. We know the sockeye made it into the river, they died on route to the spawning channels. Too many fish were allowed into the system, especially for this day and age. With the high water temperatures and the pollution levels in the system today.

As I said the other night, the Commission has a unique opportunity to make the necessary changes to bring back the balance to the whole system. I wish Justice Cohen and the commission well. It is a very tough job with so little time to do it.
Respectfully

Chief Harold James Sewid