

At low tide Margaret Siwallace (left) and Alice Tallio gather clover on the Bella Coola flats, April 1978.



Indian Spaghetti

by Grant Thomas Edwards

THE SNOWY AND RAINY Bella Coola mountains submerge steeply into the fjords which skirt them. This penetration of Pacific water is seldom eased by beaches. Here, hospitable land is afforded by the valley floors of short mountain rivers. The Bella Coola Indians once had their largest settlements located near the coastal mouths of rivers, at sites now called Kimsquit, Kwatna, South Bentick, and Bella Coola.

At the confluences of the Bella Coola rivers and the

The author is the first pharmacist in Bella Coola, and a history correspondent for 'The Thunderbird' newspaper. This article is based upon a lecture given at Hamburgisches Museum Für Völkerkunde in Hamburg, and Amerika-Haus in Frankfurt-Am-Main, Germany, July 1979. Bella Coola linguistics by Henk F. Nater, University of Leiden, Holland. With special gratitude to the Bella Coola elders.

Photographs are by the author, unless otherwise noted.

sea are vast acreages which are subject to the fluctuations of tidewater. The lower tidal flats, which are submerged most often and deeply, are muddy and generally devoid of plants; the higher reaches of the tide flats harbour an intriguing array of botanical life. One of several tidal plant foods collected by the Bella Coola food gatherers was the clover 'root'.

The clover 'root' is actually a rhizome, a horizontal underground stem from which the foliage and true roots grow vertically. The inhabitants of Bella Coola fondly call the roots 'Indian Spaghetti' but within scientific circles the native clover is referred to as Perennial clover or *Trifolium wormsijoldii*. This species is distributed along the north-west coast of North America. In Alaska and most of British Columbia Perennial clover restricts its habitat to the coast's tidal soils, but in the south of the province and in the northern states it ranges up to alpine meadows.

The Bella Coola people enjoyed a diet rich in protein. Their waters' salmon, seal, and oolachen, and



Clover roots are coated with oolachen grease and sometimes sprinkled with sugar before they are eaten.



Mary Siwallace holds the harvest of five hours of clover-root gathering — enough for three servings.

their mountains' deer and goat were tribal staples. Frustration with the monotony of local fresh or smoked fish and meat led to bartering for clams, abalone, herring, and seaweed from the Bella Bella islanders to the west, and moose and trout from the Anahim people to the east. Plant foods were strictly subordinate to the flesh foods in the Bella Coola diet. At least 43 types of berries, greens, cambiums, roots, rhizomes, and bulbs were eaten. Not one was a staple, but collectively plant foods provided an essential balance and welcome variety to the protein staples.

Nitrogen is the clover root's key to nutritional value. Like other vegetables, clover roots are also a good source of carbohydrates. The bulk and roughage of these fibrous roots make them an effective dietary laxative. Elders who once ate Indian spaghetti regularly recognized a feeling of well-being associated with its cathartic quality, but did not consider it a medicine.

Although clover roots can be harvested in any season, autumn is preferred. Summer roots are tough and woody to the palate, and are attached to their viable foliage and true roots. Winter offers brutal disadvantages to any soil worker, and spring roots will mature in their summer growth. Once the year's first frosts have levelled the plant's foliage, and the true roots are deadened, conditions are ideal for digging clover roots.

The Bella Coola tree with the hardest wood is the wild crabapple. Such a tree, with a crooked trunk, was traditionally of much value to root harvesters, as it could be fashioned into a durable digging stick. This tool was a hand-hold in width and about a yard long. The upper two-thirds served as a handle, while the lesser end served as a blade, and the two met as a 'heel' at an obvious angle. The blade was half-round, with its

upper edge being flat, and its 'toe' sharpened.

Digging was facile. The blade was pushed into the top soil at an angle and then the handle was lowered. With the stick's heel serving as a fulcrum, a sod could be raised with ease. In more recent times metal-toothed garden hoes replaced the digging sticks. Bladed hoes and shovels proved impracticable, for their blades sliced the roots.

A single sod can house a complex community of roots. Several cues must be learnt and subconsciously recognized before a beginner becomes adept at discriminating and picking the proper roots. A mature clover root is light yellow. Unlike the true anchoring root, it is not tapered, or branched, and does not grow vertically. It is a single, generally unbranching strand, five to thirty inches long, and it grows horizontally within the first few inches of top soil. The most distinctive features are the nodes. These thickenings occur regularly along the root's length, and may bear a few short fibers (remnants of summer foliage and true roots). The nodes may introduce slight kinks to the root, so as to give it a slightly zig-zag appearance. Lady elders of the village call the nodes 'little sections' and liken them to the rings on earthworms. Indeed, if one closes one's eyes after a day's picking, long, light strings with 'little sections' can be 'seen'.

Sods were shaken to loosen roots and soil. In consideration of the next year's clover and harvest, immature white roots were returned to the earth. Older yellowish roots were picked and laid across the palm. Roots of several inches in length were cinched about the middle and tied with grass blades (and later string) once a handful was accumulated, but foot-long roots were bound at a six-inch girth. Such bundling eased handling and storage, and in the months to follow would serve in cooking measures.

Unlike showy berries and blossoms, clover roots are not easily sighted. At harvest time clover foliage is frost-bitten and obscured by autumn ground cover, and in the spring it is absent. A certain amount of sod turning and inspection is required before the roots are located, and a greater measure before one site proves more productive than others. The surface feeding of wild ducks and geese is also considered by village elders to be a good marker of roots.

The slowness of locating roots and nature's modest yield of them were surely questioned by earlier food gatherers. Speed and yield of gathering this foodstuff were important for harvest time was short and other gatherings needed tending. By collective observation and reflection gatherers realized that repeated harvests at one site produced more roots than isolated diggings. It is unknown when the harvest of clover roots became agricultural, but the practice was with the people well before contact.

Felicity Walkus of Bella Coola recalls the latest period of clover root agriculture. 'The late Mrs Joshua Moody, she used to do that in 1920s, in that little island here at Bella Coola where the tide comes in. She used to chose a place, you know, where there's soft sand. I hear she's got quite a bit of it because she was looking after it. The more you soften it, the more they grow in there. She picked the roots and she planted them, early in the spring, like April, as soon as the ground gets soft. She used that wooden digging stick, *NANITKW*, the Indians used to use. They have to have it where the tide comes in. It's got no flavour when you try to do it inland. Must be the little bit of salt that comes with the tide that makes it have the flavour. It wasn't very big what she used to have [25' x 30']. They used to have it fenced up so the people knew that it belonged to somebody. She just had a wooden fence [four top rails and posts, about four feet high]. Nobody would touch it.'

Loosening garden soil and transplanting clover roots from elsewhere in the spring, harvesting in autumn, and irrigating by tide and precipitation the year round — such was the farming of Indian spaghetti in Bella Coola.

Originally and during early contact, when Kimsquit, Kwatna, South Bentick, and Bella Coola were all inhabited, the tidal flats were always within walking of the villages. Later the proximity of the tide flats changed. White settlement near Bella Coola started in earnest with the 1894 Norwegian colonization there. By World War I Christianity, education, and commerce were instituted, and a hospital was being built at Bella Coola. Since the 1860s the villages' numbers had dwindled by consumption and smallpox. The bells of church and school, the security of an amalgamated population and the hospital, and the settlers' stores attracted the people to Bella Coola. In the late 1920s the Indian agent, the minister, and Chief

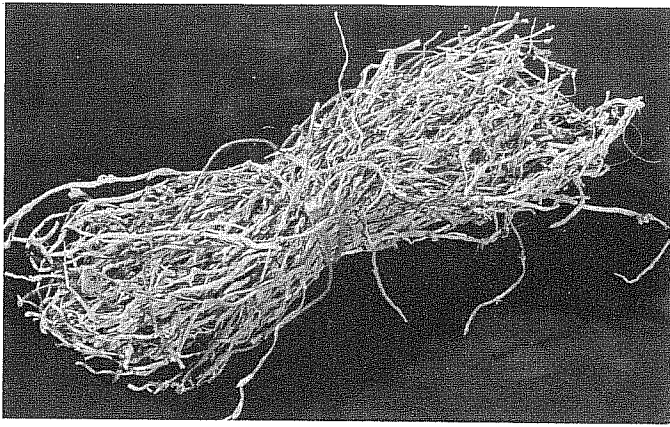
Sam King, of Bella Coola travelled between the villages on the agency's boat *Charles Todd* to propose centralization. Acceptance by all the chiefs led to abandonment of all the villages but Bella Coola. By then Indian fishermen and hunters had become commercial hand-loggers, fishermen, and trappers. In their new occupations the men travelled by gas boat to seasonal work camps at their old villages. Wives and children accompanied them. Included in the women's camp duties was the harvesting of clover roots. Upon returning to Bella Coola the roots were stowed aboard with fish and furs. Eventually even these contacts with the old villages passed, and after World War II, for fear of sewage contamination, the hospital staff discouraged the picking of roots at the tidal flats closest to Bella Coola. Most of today's lady elders had stopped picking clover roots altogether by 1960.

Once roots were picked their swift transfer to winter storage was a priority. Exposed roots would dry and become inedible. Although minor drying could be compensated by overnight soaking, need for this measure was avoided. Originally cedar baskets, and later cotton sugar and flour sacks, potato burlaps, and hardtack-biscuit wooden crates were used to carry the bundles of roots home.

Hazel Hans Sr recalls root transport in the 1930s. 'We went with my Dad to trap at South Bentick. Just before we went home we pick some clover roots so they wouldn't get dry. When they come home to Bella Coola they drive the boat when it's high tide, up the river to the village. First thing they worry about is to pack those roots home, and stack them away. My brother and my father would pack. Most people used wheelbarrows, and they used to have wagons and horses. Then they put the roots in the cellar.'

The Bella Coola root cellar, *NUKUSYALS*, was walled and topped with split cedar, and buried with earth. Its floor was bare soil. The clover roots were quickly removed from their baskets, sacks, and burlaps and laid on the floor neatly, bundle aside bundle. Soil carried in from the tidal flats was used to bury them. The hardtack crates were not emptied of their bundles. Rather they were lined along the wall. Their open tops were covered with tide-flat soil and then with thick coal gunnysacks discarded by the cannery blacksmiths. Buried roots required no further attention, but to keep the boxed roots moist the coal sacks were sprinkled throughout the winter.

The cellar also housed an array of old and adopted preserves. Earthen crocks, barrels, and original cedar boxes of salmon eggs, oolachen grease, and salted salmon, oolachen, cod, halibut, venison, goose, and duck filled the cellar. Sugary jams and jellies of wild and introduced fruits, and all of the fish and meats were put up in glass jars. Fresh fruit and garden vegetables were stored there also, especially apples, plums, and cherries, and potatoes and carrots.



British Columbia Provincial Museum

A bundle of Bella Coola clover roots. Photograph by Dr. C. F. Newcombe, 1913.

MATS'YAAX

Clover Root and Dog Salmon Stink Egg Stew

Adapted from original stone steaming and stone boiling techniques to stove cooking.

INGREDIENTS (Basic)	AMOUNT
(1) Clover roots (TXWSUS: <i>Trifolium wormsijoldii</i>)	6 small bundles (3" girth x 6" long) OR 1 large bundle (6" girth x 12" long)
(2) Dog salmon stink eggs	½ (half) gallon
(3) Oolachen OR seal grease	1 to 2 tablespoonsful or to taste
(4) Sugar	3 tablespoonsful or to taste
 (Optional)	
(5) Silverweed roots (UQ'AL: <i>Potentilla pacifica</i>)	Variable albeit usually a minor proportion
(6) Kinnikinnik berries (MILICW: <i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>)	Varies from minor to major proportions
(7) Male fern rhizome 'fingers' (SQW'ALM: <i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>)	Varies from minor to major proportions
(8) Flour	2 to 3 cups

INSTRUCTIONS

- (A) *Clover roots*: Untie bundle string(s). Wash in cold water several times to remove sand and soil. Boil in 2 cups water for 20 to 30 minutes. Keep pot tightly covered to allow steaming. Strain and allow to cool. Align roots and cut cross-wise into 1" to 2" lengths. Set sliced roots aside.
- (B) *Dog salmon stink eggs*: Transfer stink eggs to a gallon pot. Add 4 to 5 cups (or to level of eggs)

cold fresh water. Heat to simmering. Without stirring scrape bottom gently. Skim and discard surface foam as it forms. Continue simmering until eggs attain a medium 'chewy' hardness (10 to 15 minutes). Test hardness by chewing. (Hardness increases and colour fades with prolonged cooking.) Set pot aside. Do not strain.

- (C) *Kinnikinnik berries*: Soak stored dried berries overnight in cold fresh water. Transfer soaked and/or fresh berries to pot. Add equal volume of water. Heat to boiling. Boil for 5 minutes. Strain and set aside.

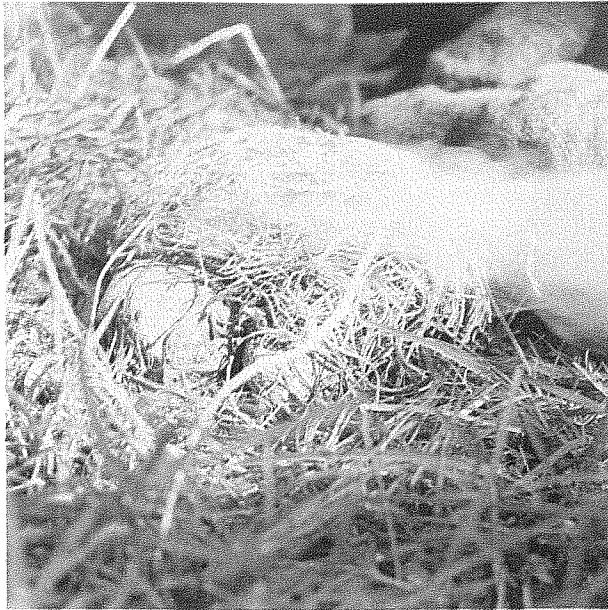
- (D) *Silverweed roots*: Wash in cold water several times to remove sand and soil. Transfer pot. Add equal volume of water. Heat to boiling. Continue boiling for 10 to 15 minutes. Keep pot tightly covered to allow steaming. Strain and set aside.

- (E) *Male fern rhizome 'fingers'*: Break 'fingers' from rhizomes. Wash in cold water several times to remove sand and soil. Transfer to pressure cooker. Pressure cook at 15 p.s.i. for 4-5 minutes. Allow to cool. Peel and discard skin from 'fingers'. Set 'fingers' aside.

- (F) *Flour*: Place flour in bowl. Add small amounts of water and knead until a dough is formed. Roll dough into ½" strands. Cut strands to 5" lengths. Add to ½ gallon boiling water. Boil for 15 minutes or until contents float. Do not strain. (This version of the stew will be more watery than others and will require a larger serving pot.)

- (G) Add cooked sliced clover roots and/or all of prepared optional ingredients to the pot of cooked dog salmon stink eggs. Add oolachen or seal grease and sugar. Thin with water as desired. Stir. Heat and serve.

SERVES 9



Fresh clover roots are steamed over a bed of fire-heated stones for half an hour. Burlap sacks replace the original cedar-bark mats as covers.

The root-cellar food most commonly eaten with clover roots was *MATS'I*, the eggs of the autumn's dog salmon. Four days of soaking skeins of *MATS'I* in fresh water loosened the ochre eggs from their connective tissue. The filigree was separated from the eggs and discarded. The latter were soaked and rinsed four or five times, and then, with fresh water, tightly lidded in cedar boxes, crocks, or barrels. This preserve was stored all winter and was known as 'stink eggs'. Clover roots and stink eggs were cooked together as a stew called *MATS'YAAX*.

When the time arrived to cook clover roots the women would number the people eating at their smokehouse, and dig a bundle of roots for each person out of the root cellar.

Clover roots were originally cooked on beds of hot rocks, either on the ground or in pits. For pit cooking, stones were aligned on the pit's floor. A fire was built over the cooking stones and allowed to burn down. Four-foot wooden tongs, pre-dipped in water, were used to pinch coals off the rock bed. Stones for ground cooking were heated in a surface fire and then removed with the tongs to form a rock bed on the ground. Roots were thrown over the hot beds and covered with woven cedar mats. Water was then splashed over the cover. The stones hissed and steam swirled off the mat and among the roots, repeatedly, as more water was poured on. A pleasant sweet smell, akin to that of corn, rose from the heat, and the roots were cooked in half an hour.

Margaret Siwallace recalls, 'I saw what my Granny was cooking one time, in 1913. She was cooking for a feast in Kimsquit, for around seventy to a

hundred people. The grass from the tide flats, they washed it and put it on top of the hot rocks. Then they put those clover roots on top of it. Then she covered it with something else, and then she covered it with the sail. Now these are the sails from the sail boats. Then they throw on the water. It was quite a distance of rocks [80 square feet].

'She cooked the other stuff, what the white people call caviar, what we now today call stink eggs, with hot rocks into a cooking box.

'Now, there was another root, that was cooked overnight the night before, again on the hot rocks. And that's the one we call *SQW'ALM* (Male fern: *Dryopteris felix-mas*). Those greenish-brown little fingers, just as if it's little bananas on the root, I've heard it's supposed to be the foliage of the fern the next year. And that's eatable to the Indians. And that's the other stuff they mixed with the clover roots business. She gave a feast that night.'

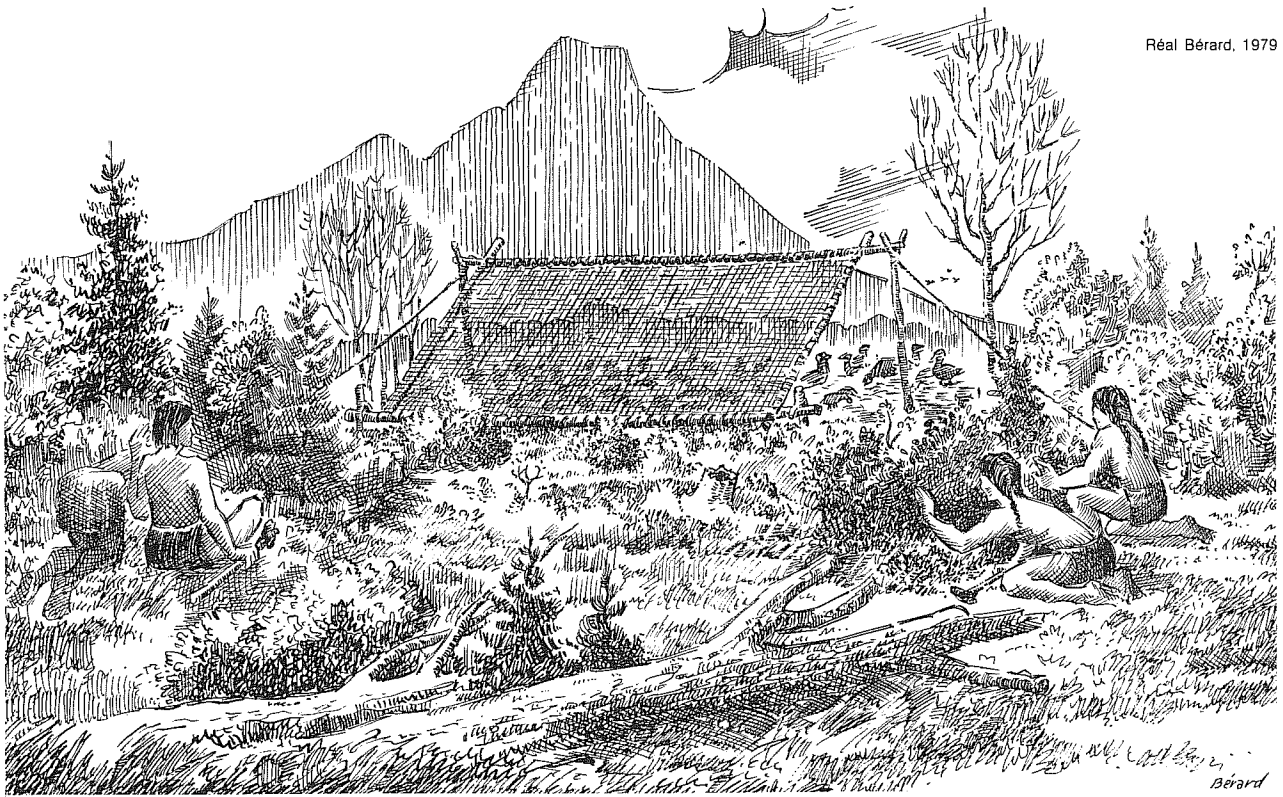
Through the years the old style of cooking has suffered many sentimental fascimiles. Stones heated in outdoor fires and on stove tops have been placed into enamel roasters and canners. Some women laid a grate of cedar sticks over the stones. Sugar and flour sacks were used in lieu of cedar mats, and have been added to with metal lids. To watch such a pot steaming on Margaret Siwallace's electric stove in 1978 was truly moving.

Clover roots have been eaten in two ways. Most simply, a pinch of whole roots was rolled between the finger tips, dipped in oolachen grease, optionally sprinkled with sugar, and eaten without utensils. The stew of dog salmon stink eggs and diced clover roots was the more exotic recipe. The simpler habit has been preferred in recent times. Elders' memories of some versions of the stew go back more than 65 years. Willie Hans Sr recalls eating the stew at several potlatches. 'Nobody used the plate you know. It was about five persons to one big bowl, and all eat and talk together inside the hall. No table, you just put them on the floor and then you sit and bend down when you eat. The people had a wooden spoon, carved and painted.'

Generally the cultivation of clover roots for home use was a feminine prerogative. This agrarian occupation enjoyed its counterpart within the masculine pursuit of hunting wild fowl. The hunters maintained clover plots as permanent hunting grounds.

No villager alive today has witnessed the original technique of garden hunting. However, *SNUXYALTWA*, a South Bentick gentleman (Born c. 1855), did hunt birds in the old way. *SNUXYALTWA* taught his sons, Dick and Timothy Snow, the original method, and in succession the Snow brothers demonstrated it to nine-year-old Willie Hans in 1926. Willie Hans Sr recalls his lesson:

'We were waiting to see our trap line you know . . .



Before contact with Europeans the Bella Coola hunters used screen traps to capture ducks in cultivated clover gardens. The traps measured 10' x 20' and were webbed to a 4" mesh with 1/4" cedar-bark rope.

Bérard

because that's the living for the people before the white people come. There was no rifle when they used that in South Bentick. This is before the Hudson's Bay Company came out, because that was the only way to get those ducks. As soon as the rifle came out they never use it again. They make a trap, a screen trap. It's on the ground. They call it *SCWT'UNT'UUS* [dead fall]. Those old men show it to me, a small one, how they made it. It's only about twelve inch. They use those twine, and put hiding places there, Timothy on one side and Dick on one side. Lots of fun you know. When they got those ducks they get really excited. I really liked that, that time they told me story about it. It was really a good day.'

The old men's miniature model and their dramatization of its use were supplemented with an explanation of the actual screen trap and garden hunting. In the spring the hunters would break up and loosen a plot of earth on the tide flats, and clover roots would be transplanted from elsewhere. Foliage grew, blossoms bloomed, and roots proliferated. In autumn frost would freeze the foliage and migratory birds would settle in the garden, remembering their last season's feed there.

The actual size of the screen trap was 10' x 20'. Four poles of cedar formed the frame of the trap. The screening consisted of light (1/4") cedar-bark ropes strung top to bottom and end to end. Over and under weaving of the perpendicular ropes, and tying of their ends to the frame's edges with fisherman's knots, produced an effective screen with a four-inch mesh.

Once erected to its 'set' position in the garden, the screen trap resembled an open lean-to. Both ends of the long top edge were cradled in the 'Y's of two vertical support sticks. These support sticks were not bound to the soil or screen. Their bottoms rested freely upon the ground while the weight of the screen in their forks prevented the sticks from toppling.

Hemlock hiding hedges were situated to either side of the screen, and slightly behind it. These hedges were crescent-shaped, with their middles pointing toward the garden. Branches of the hemlock tree, with their ends sharpened and driven into the soil, formed the main structure of the hedges. However, hemlock greens were alien to the already frost-bitten and autumn-coloured tidal flora, so the bows were dressed with profuse quantities of dead tide-flat grass.

Concealed in this manner, the hunters at one hedge could see their partners at the second hedge. The line of sight between the hunter's eye and the feeding birds in the garden was spanned by a cedar-bark rope. With one end tied just below the fork of the support stick, and the other wrapped around the rope man's wrist, the cedar line was the screen trap's trigger.

The hunters waited patiently and silently, sometimes for hours. Eventually ducks, usually mallards, settled in the garden and upon finding the bountiful clover roots they would call out. Loud and declining 'quack, quack-quack, quack, quack-quack(s)' (feminine) and not so loud 'yeeb(s)' and low 'kwek(s)' (masculine) filled the air.

With the operation of two triggers by two rope men,

synchronization was essential. Once enough ducks were sighted feeding under the screen, a mute downward motion of a hand was given and the rope men pulled their sticks away. The screen fell. The ducks were trapped. Their necks poked through the mesh but their wings were immobilized by hand-made strands of cedar. The hunters ran out and clubbed their heads.

In 1864 Bella Coola waters were visited by the Hudson's Bay Company steamer *Labouchere*. This vessel and its Captain, Herbert G. Lewis, introduced the Company's maritime fur trade to this area, and three years later their overtures were followed by the establishment of an independent outstation at Bella Coola.

The original material culture and technique of garden hunting was adapted to the new guns and metal equipment. Maintenance of clover plots remained the same but the screen trap suffered swift disuse. Modernized garden hunters no longer required two hiding hedges. One was sufficient.

The new hedge incorporated a large uprooted tree into its structure. Supine dead trunks were plentiful on the tide flats but not all were suitably located. An appropriate hedge trunk would lie within firing range of the garden, in its foreground, and within a cleared sneaking distance from bushes which grew behind it.

Sharpened spruce branches were driven into the ground, upright and along the garden side of the trunk. Dead tide-flat grass was laid over the spruce bows as camouflage.

Precautions were taken to prevent high tides from dislodging the hedge. The bulky root base of the trunk secured itself to the ground, but the slim end of the dead fall could float and move about in high water. A

spruce wedge was pounded into the top of the trunk's lesser end, and ten feet away a spurred spruce pole was pounded into the ground. A taut cedar rope, tied from the wedge to the pole, would securely anchor the trunk.

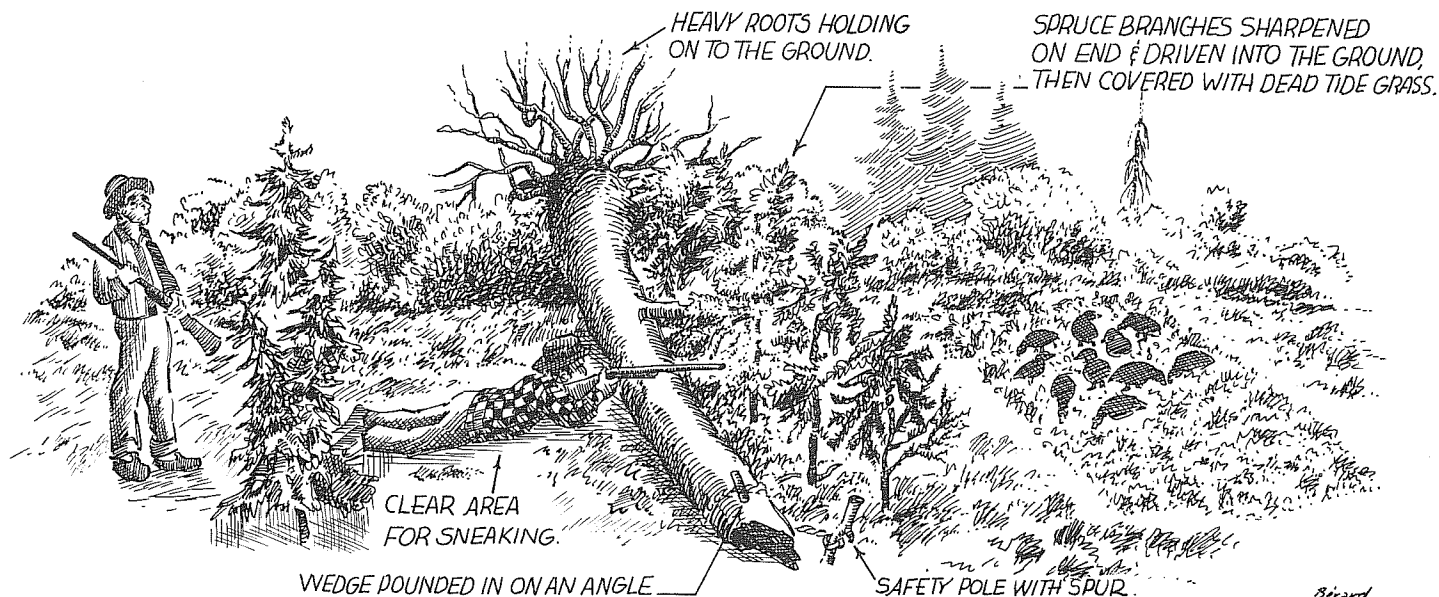
Willie Hans Sr remembers four such hunting gardens and hedges which were kept up at South Bentick in the early 1920s.

'Well, in the spring they get together, like my dad and Dick Snow's father and Willie Tallio's father, and they'd shovel the ground for those ducks and geese to have a feed . . . I used to go with my dad, Tallio Hans, and watch him. He don't allow me to go with him [to the hedge], because if I want to look around maybe they see my forehead, then I scare those ducks and they fly away. He told me "You just watch me what I'm going to do." I used to see him pack that rifle on his back and crawl on his hands and knees. He doesn't walk straight. The bullet's already on the shot-gun, double barrel. And once he reach the log, he just put the rifle up first, between the spruces. When he get the rifle up then he stretch up. He aim, and when he see where the most ducks are he puts his rifle there, whistles, and all the heads go up like . . . Bang! One shell, kills more than six, you know.'

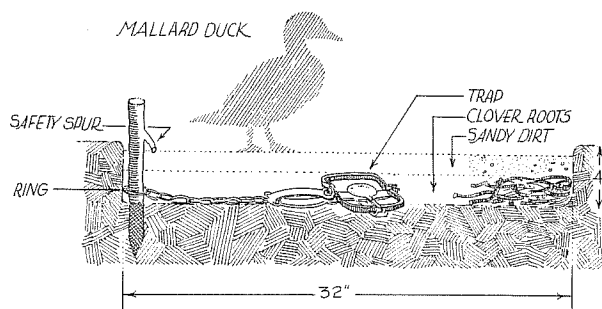
It is indisputable that the steel leg-hold trap which was introduced by the fur trade was intended for the capture of small fur-bearing mammals. With absolute disregard for such protocol, the Bella Coola hunters employed this device to trap ducks in their hunting gardens.

The riflemen's tree-trunk hedge and garden were used by these new-style trappers. During any one session a dozen traps would be set in the garden, never less than eight feet apart.

When Bella Coola hunters adopted the rifle, they continued to maintain clover gardens to attract the autumn fowl.



Beard
Real Beard, 1979



From 1864 until the late 1920s, Bella Coola hunters used steel leg-hold traps to catch ducks in their hunting gardens at South Bentick.

To prepare the ground for a metal trap, a circular hole, four inches deep and thirty-two inches across, was dug. The leg-hold trap was laid in the middle of the hole. The trap's anchoring chain was stretched outward along the bottom of the hole. A wooden safety pole was placed through a ring at the end of the chain and then pounded into the ground at the edge of the circle. A declined spur on the pole ensured that the chain's ring could not slip upwards. Having been anchored, the trap was set and then baited. Eight ounces of clover roots were scattered over the floor of the hole. Care was taken not to place roots over the pressure plate and jaws of the trap. The entire hole was then refilled with its soil so as to cover the chain, the trap, and the bait.

At South Bentick, in 1926, Willie Hans Sr trapped ducks in this new way, with his aunt *ALHKM'NTAM* [The Creator]. In 1979 Mr Hans tells us, 'My Auntie, she did that you know. She had no rifle.

'That trap, that's white made, the one they use for trapping martin and mink. Metal, the one that closed up. We call the traps *K'MAALHTA*. They bought them in the Brynildsen store and then Andy Christensen's store.

'We were sitting down and waiting in the bush. And when those ducks came and they find all those roots, that's where the trap is, and you can hear them, talking, when they find lots of *T'XWSUS*. It's just ducks, mallard ducks, and we call those *NAXNX* in our language. But those Canada Geese, the name for those *XAXAQ'*, they are pretty wild though.

'She put the roots right around outside, but not on the middle of the trap, because if she put them in the middle then they stick in their heads and then only the nose gets trapped, and they get away with it. And then they walk around, and then they step on the plate. Those jaws close up, and then you've caught them. The trap doesn't jump up you know, when the animal steps on it. It stays right on the ground. Then he flies up with the trap, and the ring comes up to the limb [spur] so he wouldn't get away with it you know.

'They really fight. You got to be right there and

watch them. You don't just set the trap and go home. If you leave them alone too much and they break a leg, and then they get away. As soon as we see them, maybe three, in the traps, I used to see my Auntie running and I'd be running behind her, when I was a little boy. I was maybe nine years old at that time. She used a little stick to club them on the head.'

Hazel Hans Sr remembers watching her mother dress ducks in South Bentick in 1931. 'We little kids watched what they did. And then we see them take that little gut out in the bird. It opens up and then we see sand with these roots. And we asked them questions, "What's that?" And they tell us, "It's the roots." "Oh, we didn't know that they eat this stuff." we'd say. "You're not lying to us?" They said, "Don't be silly! That's what they eat when they're down there." We didn't believe them. My brother and I, we'd go down to the flats when the ducks went away and sure enough, there's some clover roots there. It's really something you know, when you first start to learn these things from your parents.'

Silverweed (*Potentilla pacifica*) and clover grow together as major species on the tide flats. Their roots were both harvested and cooked, sometimes together. The observations of Bella Coola hunters may reflect a difference between the roots in fowl diets in the environs of local tide flats. Elder Edward Tallio recalls, 'When we would go to hunt geese we found *UQ'AL* [Silverweed] in the stomach you know. These wild geese, Canada Geese, really go for these *UQ'AL*, with dark roots you know. But the ducks [Mallards], they really go for *T'XWSUS* [clover roots].'

There appears to be but one clover roots story in the village now. Margaret Siwallace passes it down:

'Skookum Mary, that's my grandad's aunt on my father's side, she used to tell stories every day, and I used to like sleeping with her, as a child in Kimsquit. She used to tell me quite a few stories about the famine. It was the time when they had a famine and they didn't have anything to eat, in the winter. There was no white people at that time. They had — like a raft — a float that you can put a house on top of. Yes — *AWANAAXKW* — that's the way she said it. They were living on the sides and it was a house on top, and they moved it around. See, when the tide goes down, in the winter, then they stay there about two days. They had a fire on the sides, on rocks, you know, like a pit on the logs. There was a hole in the middle. From the heat of that house it sort of melts that spot, and that's when they dig the clover roots. And the women would go dig in that hole. When there's no more in that place, they'd move that huge float and it would stop again, and keep doing that. From the little they dig from there, that's what kept them alive — the clover roots. I tell you, Indians knew what to do, whenever they get into a tight fix. Indians share with one another whatever little food they have.'