

## Chapter Four: HUUZH HOUSE 1 AND NUU-CHAH-NULTH HOUSEHOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

### The Archaeology of Plank Houses

The household was the fundamental economic, social, and political unit on the Northwest Coast (Ames 2005:15), essential to understanding the dynamics of past societies. Although households of the past were social units that cannot be studied directly, they left physical traces through the remains of the dwellings they occupied and the residues of their daily activities that survive within such structures. In a broad comparative study of houses and households, Blanton (1994) states that houses communicated rank and power, as well as other aspects of social and personal identity, and that they served as mnemonic devices that guided behaviour within the society. Living in the house structured daily life as the occupants were constantly provided with cues regarding appropriate behaviour. Blanton (1994:10) describes the house as “a material frame that structures not only day-to-day interactions, but also the more infrequent formal household rituals.” More specifically for the Northwest Coast, Ames and Maschner (1999:147) provide a similar view:

Houses ... were the physical manifestation of the household and its social rank; they were theatre and stage for social and spiritual rituals, but they were also shelter in the Northwest's dank climate; they were food-processing factories, in which food resources were butchered, roasted, smoked, rendered, dried, boiled, stored, and consumed; and they were the objects of enormous effort and great skill. Their interior arrangements were often a map of the relative status of the household's members.

Although distinct regional styles are clearly evident, Northwest Coast houses shared a basic pattern. All along the coast, split cedar planks served as wall and roof boards that covered a framework of wooden posts, beams, and rafters. Among the Salishan and Wakashan groups (including the Nuu-chah-nulth) described historically, these planks were designed to be removable. Such an architectural scheme allowed the transport of planks between seasonal villages, leaving only the

framework standing during times of residence elsewhere. Plank houses could be very large, sheltering a household group that consisted of a number of related families. Villages generally consisted of a row of houses along the beach, all facing the sea; however, in locations where space was limited, several house rows might exist. Status was reflected in house size, as the largest house in the village usually belonged to the most highly ranked chief, and also in house position, as the large chiefly homes were generally located toward the centre of the house row (Ames and Maschner 1999:152).

These large plank houses present considerable challenges to archaeological research. All the structural components of these dwellings—the posts, beams, rafters, and planks—decay over time in the damp ground of the west coast, leaving little for study but features such as post moulds and the bounded traces of interior activities. In addition, the huge size of many houses requires excavation on a very large scale to reveal an adequate picture of construction details and activities. As remains of past houses often exist within extensive deep shell midden deposits, often with no surface indications, traditional excavation approaches tend to slice through house floors in the quest to obtain a representative sample of artifacts and faunal elements, as well as to understand the site stratigraphy and chronology. The development of household archaeology on the Northwest Coast required a shift in strategy, one involving large-scale horizontal clearance across a house floor.

Despite the difficulties involved, household archaeology has become a prominent aspect of research on the Northwest Coast over the past few decades (Ames 2005:15, 2006:16; Gahr et al. 2006; Matson 2003a:7–9). Recent archaeological studies based on extensive exposure of house floors include R.G. Matson's work at Shingle Point, which involved a Coast Salish shed-roof house (Matson 2003b), and the long-term studies of Ken Ames and his colleagues on several Chinookan houses along the Columbia River (Ames 1996; Ames et al. 1992; Smith 2006; Sobel 2006). Such studies have yielded detailed information on house construction, maintenance, and repair, as well as insights into the everyday life of the people who lived in these structures. Perhaps the

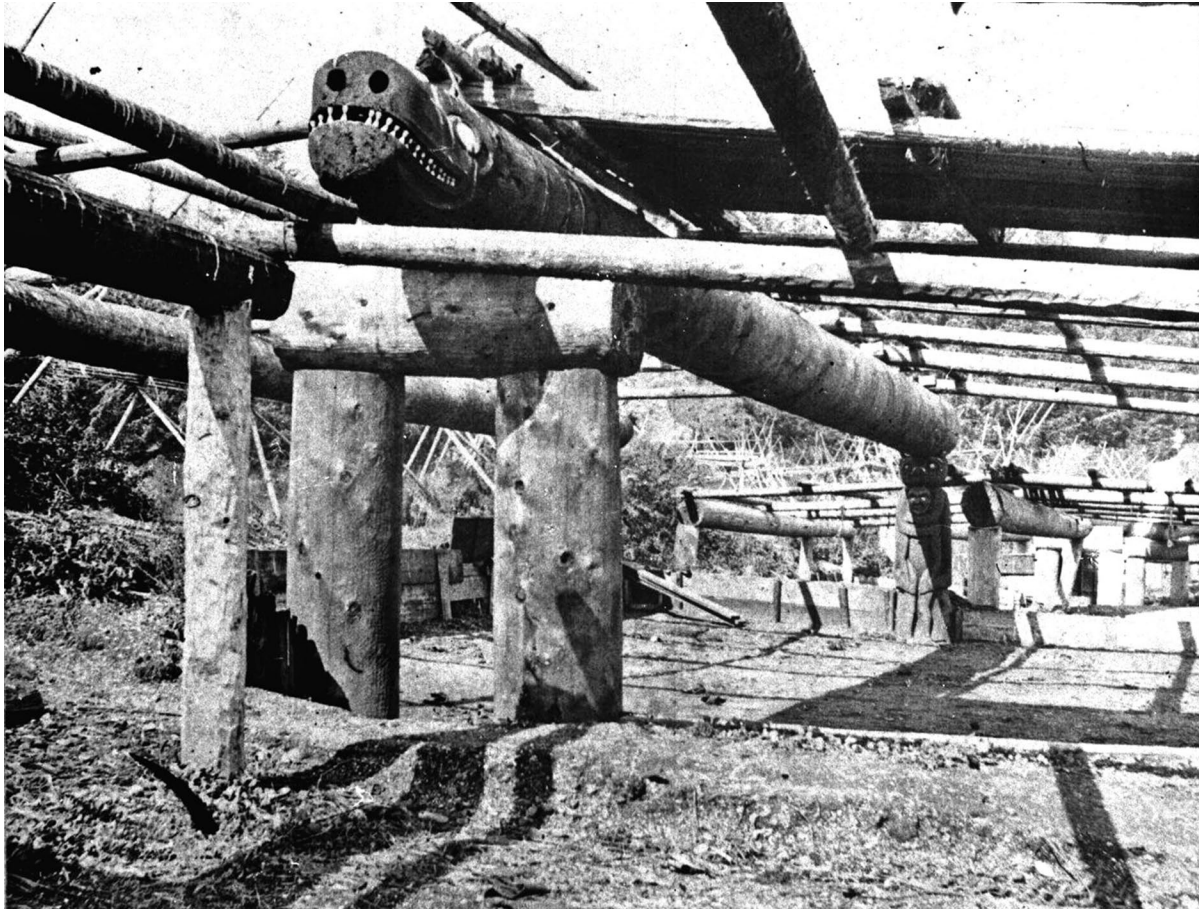
most important demonstration of the insights to be gained from a household approach to archaeology, however, comes from the uniquely preserved dwellings at Ozette.

Ozette, on the outer coast of the Olympic Peninsula, was one of the major traditional villages of the Makah people. The Makah are closely related to the Nuu-chah-nulth and Ozette is only about 90 km from HuuZii by canoe, so the Ozette research is particularly relevant to the present study. Ozette's unique context stems from an ancient disaster: a mudslide that rushed down the steep slope behind the village, destroying the houses at its southern end. The slide, perhaps triggered by a seismic event, occurred not long prior to European arrival on the coast, perhaps at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Although the force of the slide flattened the houses, the thick wet mud also kept the remains water-saturated, preserving the structural elements and most of the house contents. Excavation, using hydraulic techniques to expose the delicate wood and bark objects, continued for over a decade, ultimately exposing the complete floors of three houses, plus portions of several others (Samuels and Daugherty 1991:23; Samuels 1989:143; Huelsbeck and Wessen 1994:3). Ozette provides an unprecedented opportunity to study the nearly complete material culture of a pre-European Northwest Coast household at a single moment in time. The house architecture can be reconstructed (Maugher 1991) and activities and social distinctions within the house interpreted through spatial patterns in the floor middens (Samuels 1989, 1991, 2006). Insights into the social realm also emerged from detailed studies of faunal remains, which suggested differential access to resource areas between houses and status-related differences in the distribution of preferred resources within houses (Huelsbeck 1989, 1994a; Wessen 1988, 1994). Ozette provides many important lessons for other projects involving household archaeology on the Northwest Coast. However, the large-scale multi-year excavation at Ozette is unparalleled on the Northwest Coast, and the wealth of preserved architectural elements and house contents allowed studies that would be not be possible in areas without such exceptional preservation.

Although research at HuuZii was on a more modest level, this site also presented an opportunity to investigate past households. The village consisted of a row of houses extending parallel to the beach. Fairly distinct flat platforms, originally mapped by Al Mackie and Laurie Williamson

(2003) in 1984, indicate the position and approximate dimensions of each house (Fig. 1-3). At least 10, and perhaps 12, houses once stood in this area. A substantial back midden ridge, ranging up to two meters in height, marks the rear position of the houses along the length of the site. At several of the house locations, narrow side midden ridges extend out at right angles from the back ridge, gradually tapering off toward the front. The fronts of the houses are more difficult to discern, although some have a slight edge where the floor had been built up. The level spaces mark the locations of house interiors, while the ridges indicate where refuse accumulated outside the house, against the rear and side planks. This process can be seen in an 1874 photograph of a house at Nootka Sound (Fig. 4-1); the planks have been removed, leaving only the frame, so the flat interior living and activity space is evident, as is the ridge that has built up around the outer edge.

The largest house at HuuZii, labelled House 1 by Mackie and Williamson (2003), was located near the middle of the house row. It extended for a length of about 35 m parallel to the beach and was about 17 m wide, based on surface indications and subsurface auger testing. Such a large house is assumed to correlate with high status, as ethnographically it was the *taayii hawilb* (head chief) who occupied the largest and most impressive dwelling in a Nuu-chah-nulth village (Barrett-Lennard 1862:128; Colnett in Galois 2004:115; Jewitt 1967:52; McMillan and St. Claire 2005:9; Walker 1982:61). More generally for the Northwest Coast, Coupland and Banning (1996:3) note that "big houses often provide a material correlate of wealth and complexity," and that such structures "can also be a symbol of affluence that may signal to others the relative success of its owner, a person who can regularly hold feasts and ceremonies within his house." Similarly, Sobel (2006:171) makes three points regarding highest-status households occupying the largest houses: (1) as house construction was costly, large houses reflected great wealth, thus conferring prestige on the household that occupied such a structure; (2) large dwellings could hold large households, which could be more productive and influential than smaller households and achieve greater prestige; and (3) households that could construct large residences could hold major social and ritual gatherings, thus maintaining or enhancing their prestige in the society (see also Coupland 2006:80-82). House 1, therefore, offered an opportunity to investigate past life within a large residential structure that was presumably



**Figure 4-1. House frames at Yuquot, Nootka Sound, 1874. The wall planks have been removed, exposing details of the house form. Note the low gabled style of the framework, the decorated end of the gable beam (and carved rear support post), the flat house floor inside, and the midden ridges that have accumulated along the rear and sides of the house. (Richard Maynard photo, courtesy of Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, PN 10508)**

home to the most highly ranked social unit in the community.

Except for two units on a higher terrace behind the main village, all excavation at HuuZii took place within the outline of House 1 as visible on the site surface. In all, the units excavated over two field-seasons covered 101 m<sup>2</sup> or about 17% of the house floor (McMillan 2008). The recovered information relevant to household archaeology is presented in this chapter. To interpret these incomplete remains, various lines of analogy are useful. The preserved protohistoric houses at Ozette provide one source of analogy. Another is the extensive ethnohistoric and ethnographic documentation regarding Nuu-chah-nulth houses and households in the early contact period, beginning in the 1770s. Kiix7in, an early historic Huu-ay-aht village with still-standing wooden architectural remains, offers additional insights into village layout and architec-

tural form. The last two sources of information are discussed in the next two sections.

### **Ethnohistoric and Ethnographic Information on Nuu-chah-nulth Houses**

Ethnohistoric and ethnographic accounts, although collected several centuries after the final occupation of HuuZii, provide information on the nature of Nuu-chah-nulth houses. The European and Euro-American explorers and fur traders who arrived off the coast in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century provided the earliest written descriptions of Nuu-chah-nulth villages. More minor accounts come from later travellers and settlers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most major ethnographic sources date to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and were based on recording the extensive knowledge of elderly community members. Although the personal experiences of

these consultants could extend back only to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, such “memory culture” reconstructions (e.g., Drucker 1951) incorporate knowledge that reflects much earlier beliefs and practices.

Early accounts indicate that houses in Nuuchah-nulth villages varied considerably in size, with some being very large. The earliest detailed description is by Captain James Cook, at Nootka Sound in 1778. He states that houses ranged up to 150 feet (45.7 m) in length, 24 to 30 feet (7.3 to 9.1 m) in width, and 7 to 8 feet (2.1 to 2.4 m) in height (Beaglehole 1967:317). Charles Clerke, one of Cook’s officers, gives slightly different size estimates: “Their Houses are very large, some of them 100 feet [30.5 m] in length, and 12 or 14 [3.7 or 4.3 m] in height” (Beaglehole 1967:1327). Alexander Walker (1982:116), who was at Nootka Sound only seven years after Cook, gives a slightly lower estimate for the length of the largest house at 70 feet (21.3 m), with a width of 30 feet (9.1 m) and a height of 12 to 14 feet (3.7 to 4.3 m). James Colnett, at the same location in 1787, states that the largest house, which was occupied by the chief, was located near the centre of the village (Galois 2004:115), although he gives no specific size estimate. Robert Haswell, with the American trading ship *Columbia* in 1789, states that “the houses are in general about 30 feet [9.1 m] wide but of various lengths,” the latter extending up to 100 feet (30.5 m) (Howay 1990:61). Slightly later, John Jewitt (1967), who was at Nootka Sound from 1803 to 1805, described the same village, noting that it was a row of houses that varied in size according to status, with the head chief occupying the largest (Jewitt 1967:52). Jewitt’s description indicates that these structures did not vary greatly in width, being around 36 to 40 feet (11 to 12.2 m), but were markedly different in length, with that of the head chief extending for about 150 feet (45.7 m). Although the specific figures for house dimensions differ between these early observers, it is clear that some houses were very large and that these were the residences of the highest status individuals.

Although the most detailed early historic descriptions refer to Nootka Sound, Clayoquot Sound to the south was also a centre of culture contact during the maritime fur trade. In 1788, Captain John Meares was invited to feast with Wickaninish, the head chief of that area. Although Meares gives no size estimate for Wickaninish’s dwelling, he expressed astonishment when he entered the house “at the vast area it enclosed” (Meares 1790:138). His astonishment also ex-

tended to the “enormous beams” that supported the roof (Meares 1790:138). The American trader John Boit, at Clayoquot in the winter of 1791–1792, visited a house he described as “large and commodious” (Howay 1990:384). A few days later he visited Wickaninish at his home, estimating that structure’s dimensions at about 80 feet (24.4 m) long, 40 feet (12.2 m) wide, and 12 feet (3.7 m) high (Howay 1990:385). The Spanish were also in Clayoquot Sound, with a 1791 journal description indicating that the largest houses were about 35 yards (32 m) long and 12 yards (11 m) wide (Wagner 1933:159). In the previous year, during the Quimper expedition, Wickaninish’s house was described as being 90 feet (27.4 m) long and having more than 100 inhabitants (Wagner 1933:85).

For Barkley Sound, unfortunately, we lack such detailed descriptions of houses dating to the early contact period. However, we do have the later observations of Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, who provides an eyewitness account of life in Barkley Sound in the early 1860s. At one village, Sproat (1987:31) described a long row of houses, which he considered “large and strongly constructed.” Although he does not give the lengths, he estimates the widths at 25 to 40 feet (7.6 to 12.2 m) and heights at 10 to 12 feet (3 to 3.7 m). Elsewhere, however, he indicates the approximate length of the house by stating that the ridgepole could be 80 or 90 feet (24.4 to 27.4 m) long (Sproat 1987:32).

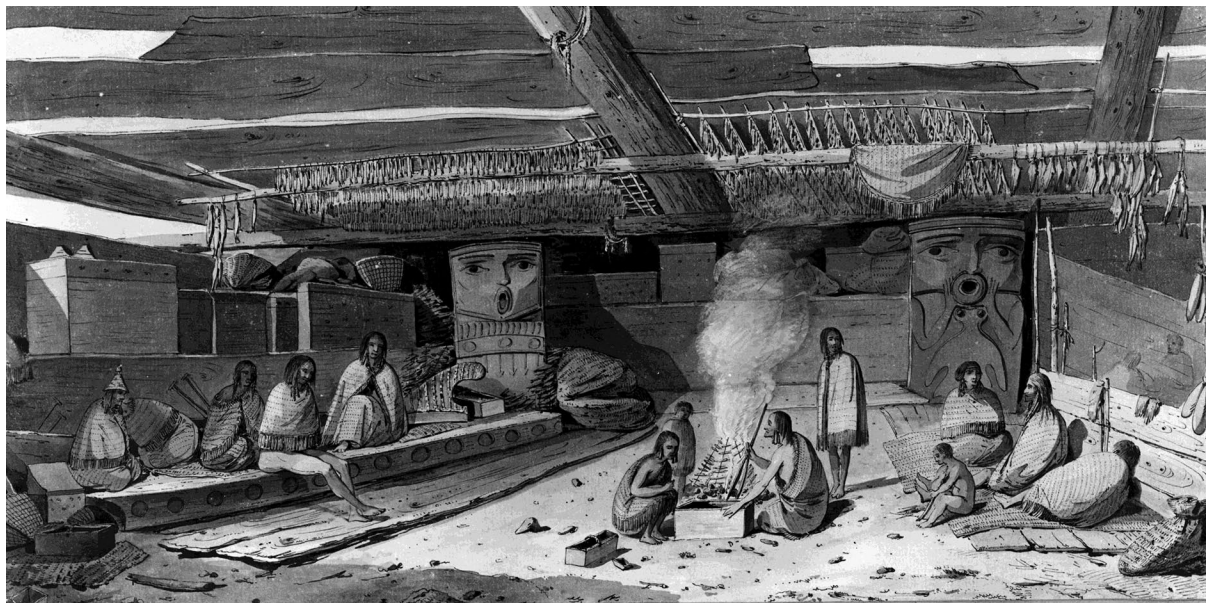
According to Philip Drucker (1951:69), the primary ethnographic source, the long axis of Nuuchah-nulth houses was parallel to the beach. However, he acknowledged that some, which he considered more recent, were constructed end-on to the water. He states that houses were between 30 and 48 feet (9.1 and 14.6 m) in width, with the larger ones ranging up to 100 feet (30.5 m) in length (Drucker 1951:69). Similarly, a Sapir consultant, Dick Thlamaahuus, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century judged the large traditional Huu-ay-aht houses to have been about 100 feet (30.5 m) long (Sapir et al. 2009:255). For the Tla-o-qui-aht (“Clayoquot”), Koppert (1930:9) maintains that the largest houses could shelter 20 families, although he does not provide a specific size estimate. Swan (1870:5), writing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century about the Makah, the close relatives of the Nuuchah-nulth to the south, states that houses among that group were variable in size, with some being 60 feet (18.3 m) long and 30 feet (9.1 m) wide.

Many ethnohistoric and ethnographic sources note the role of houses as visual displays of status differences. Not only were the houses of chiefs

larger than others in the village, but they also frequently had highly evident embellishments such as carved support posts or beams, or painted designs on the outer or inner surfaces. John Webber, the artist on the Cook expedition, sketched the large carved posts inside Chief Maquinna's house at Nootka Sound in 1778 (Fig. 4-2; Cook, in Beaglehole 1967:319). Colnett also describes large carved and painted house posts in the chief's house at Nootka Sound in 1787 (Galois 2004:115), as does Haswell in 1789 (Howay 1990:62). Meares, visiting Wickaninish in Clayoquot Sound in 1788, described entering the house through the mouth of a huge carved figure. Once inside, he noted that the support posts were carved with "gigantic images" and the rafters were carved and painted (Meares 1790:138). Spanish visitors to Clayoquot Sound in 1790 and 1791 also describe entering the house through the mouth of a huge figure (Wagner 1933:85, 166). Sproat (1987:32) describes carved house posts for large houses in Barkley Sound in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In describing the ethnographic Nuu-chah-nulth house, Drucker (1951:69) also notes the presence of carved human figures on the support posts, stating that these

images were inherited chiefly rights. Furthermore, he states that some chiefs had the additional hereditary privilege of having the projecting ends of the ridgepoles, which extended out the front of the dwelling, carved as animal heads, most commonly sea lions. Koppert (1930:17) also describes houses in Clayoquot Sound with carved upright posts in human form, and notes that such privileges were restricted to the most highly ranked chiefs. Such prominent symbolism allowed chiefs to proclaim and entrench existing status distinctions (Grier 2006a:148).

A detailed specific account of chiefly prerogatives in house display was recounted by the knowledgeable Tseshah elder Tom Sayach'apis to the anthropologist Edward Sapir in 1913 (Sapir 1910–1914, notebook XV:39, 39a, 40a; McMillan and St. Claire 2005:9–10, 12). This description refers to a house that once stood at the Tseshah origin site of Ts'ishaa, on an outer island of the Broken Group in central Barkley Sound (Fig. 1-1). Thunderbirds and Lightning Serpents were painted on the outer wall facing the beach, while the same images, with the Thunderbirds grasping whales, appeared on the chief's rear wall screen. Carved interior support



**Figure 4-2.** This 1778 painting shows the interior of a Nuu-chah-nulth house at Yuquot, Nootka Sound, at the beginning of the contact period. The people at centre are boiling food in a wooden box, using tongs to add heated rocks, as well as roasting small fish directly over the fire. The dirt floor is strewn with the debris of everyday activities. To the left, people are sitting on a low bench, with large wooden boxes and baskets for storage behind them and along the rear wall. To the right, people are reclining on planks covered with matting against a low plank partition. Note also the fish drying on poles below the roof planks and the two large carved figures at the back wall. (Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 41-72-10/499)

posts depicted specific figures from the Tseshaht origin story, while the central beam that ran the length of the house was embellished with painted geese in flight and circles representing the stars of the Milky Way. Additional embellishments, both inside and out, visibly proclaimed the inherited status of the community's head chief.

Sapir consultant Dick Thlamaahuus in 1922 described a variety of decorative embellishments on Huu-ay-aht houses he recalled from his childhood. In one case, drilled holes on the outer planks allowed light from the fires to stream through, from the outside resembling the Milky Way (Sapir et al. 2009:255). Another house featured star designs along the centre beam and human face depictions on all four posts at the corners. The post at the head of another dwelling was embellished with the carving of a human figure holding a humpback whale (Sapir et al. 2009:257). Although these descriptions are of houses that date to a later period than those that stood at HuuZii, they indicate the importance of visual markers of status distinctions and inherited privileges in important Huu-ay-aht dwellings.

The ethnographic descriptions, including diagrams in Drucker (1951:68) and Koppert (1930:13), clearly refer to houses with gabled roofs. Such structures featured three roof beams, supported on posts, which extended for the length of the house. The central beam was somewhat elevated above the side beams, giving the roof a two-pitch or gabled form. Ethnohistoric sources, however, often refer to the roof as "flat," suggesting the shed-roof architectural style that had a single-pitch roof and a series of beams spanning two posts across the width of the house. Cook, for example, mentions flat roofs on the houses he observed at Nootka Sound (Beaglehole 1967:317). In addition, Clerke states that, "the Roof is a flat Surface, tho' somewhat shelving" (Beaglehole 1967:1327). In contrast, José Moziño's account of Nootka Sound in 1792 clearly refers to a structure with a gabled roof; after commenting on the huge beams, he states that: "The supports in the middle are higher so that the roof is pitched toward the sides" (Moziño 1970:17). Jewitt (1967:52) also describes a house in Nootka Sound that is clearly gabled. At Clayoquot Sound, the American traders Haswell in 1789 (Howay 1990:61) and Boit in 1792 (Howay 1990:385) both describe the houses as having flat roofs, although Haswell's description of an enormous ridge pole and smaller "side poles which are on a small decent [sic] from the ridge" indicates that these were gabled houses. The typically low

pitch of the gabled roofs may have led to the confusion, as early observers may have perceived such roofs as essentially flat (Mauger 1991:134).

Arima and Dewhirst (1990:397) distinguish between the low gable roofs of the "Northern and Central Nootkans" and the shed-roof houses of the "Southern Nootkans" (the latter beginning just southeast of Barkley Sound, with the immediate neighbours of the Huu-ay-aht, the Ditidaht). Barkley Sound may have been an overlap area between the two architectural styles (Mauger 1991:136; Mackie and Williamson 2003:150). Sproat's description of a Barkley Sound house in the 1860s seems to contain elements of both styles, although the details are not entirely clear. He describes "strong cross-pieces" connecting the upright posts, presumably spanning the width of the house, with the large ridgepole resting lengthwise on these (Sproat 1987:32). Such a structure would have a very low gabled roof, although the beams across the width of the house are characteristic of the shed roof form. The coexistence of the two architectural styles in Barkley Sound is demonstrated in a sketch by the artist Frederick Whympier, who accompanied an 1864 expedition across Vancouver Island, of a Uchucklesaht village, just north of Huu-ay-aht territory, that clearly shows buildings of both types (Hayman 1989:192). Similarly, the standing 19<sup>th</sup>-century structural elements at Kiix7in, discussed in the next section, include remains of both gabled and shed-roof houses, along with one house that is a composite of the two styles (Mackie and Williamson 2003).

Cook (1784:315) noted that doors were simply gaps left where the unequal lengths of the planks provided an opening. Similarly, Moziño (1970:17) in 1792 observed that doorways were "left open at the place where the planks of the wall best permit." Koppert (1930:16) also reports that the "opening for a doorway is left at random" where gaps occur in the planks. Drucker (1951:70) describes Nuuchah-nulth houses as aligned lengthwise with the beach, with the doorway in one of the narrow ends (i.e., not facing the beach). Jewitt (1967:54) similarly places the doorway at an "end" of the house, although he allows that Maquinna's was "in the middle." However, Cook noted that the entrance to the house generally faced the water (Beaglehole 1967:317). King, one of Cook's officers, gives an intermediate view that the doorways were at the house corners (Beaglehole 1967:1395). Some variability is evident, as Koppert (1930:16) states that the doorway "is commonly found toward the center of the side of the house, or to one side of

the front facing the beach.” As is discussed below, the position of the doorway is of considerable archaeological interest, as status residential areas within the house were defined by their relationship to the entrance.

Inside the house, the packed earthen floor was on a single level (Drucker 1951:71). Along the inside of the walls, the wooden benches that provided sitting and sleeping space consisted of mat-covered planks supported on short posts. Early descriptions agree that these benches were very low, between six inches and two feet off the floor (Boit in Howay 1990:384; Cook 1784:315; Drucker 1951:71; Haswell in Howay 1990:62; Meares 1788:139; Sproat 1987:33). Low plank dividers or mat screens provided some privacy in the individual family compartments along each side of the house, as did stacks of wooden boxes containing household goods (Arima and Dewhirst 1990:397; Carmichael 1922:21; Cook 1784:315; Drucker 1951:72; Haswell in Howay 1990:61; Moziño 1970:19). Most activities within the house, particularly during the dark winter months, took place around the fires (Fig. 4-2). Each family had its own hearth for daily cooking (Clerke in Beaglehole 1967:1328; Drucker 1951:71; Haswell in Howay 1990:61; Jewitt 1967:54; Sproat 1987:33), which Koppert (1930:17) describes as “nothing more than a circle of stones loosely placed together.” However, Drucker (1951:71, 1965:149) also notes that for ceremonial occasions there was a larger fireplace in a shallow circular depression at the centre of the house. Walker (1982:116) also observed that the fireplace was in the centre of a dwelling in Nootka Sound in 1785.

Many early observers commented on what they perceived as a low level of housekeeping, and noted that considerable quantities of domestic debris were strewn across the floor. Cook (1784:316), for example, noted at Nootka Sound in 1778 that, “as they dry their fish within doors, they also gut them there, which, with their bones and fragments thrown down at meals, and the addition of other sorts of filth, lie every where in heaps.” The sketch of the inside of that house by Cook’s artist John Webber shows debris such as animal bones and stones from the cooking fires lying on the floor (Fig. 4-2). Similarly, Moziño (1970:19) commented in 1792 that inside the houses “they make large fires, clean their fish, and remove shellfish and snails from their shells, leaving a large part of the remains thrown on the floor.” When housekeeping took place, much of this refuse was tossed immediately outside the dwelling. Colnett in 1787 referred

to the accumulation of “fish scales Guts Bones & surrounding all their Habitations ... rising above the Platform of their Houses” (Galois 2004:115). Similarly, Sproat (1987:33) noted the dumping of domestic refuse (consisting particularly of “putrid fish and castaway molluscs”) outside the houses in Barkley Sound. Such practices led to the creation of the back and side ridges around the house platforms at Huu7ii and attest to the dynamic complexity of shell midden formation.

Status differences were reflected in the location of residential areas within the house. Ethnographic sources state that the house chief and his family lived in the right rear corner, from the perspective of someone inside the dwelling facing the door (Arima 1983:69; Drucker 1951:71, 1965:148; Marshall 1989:19). However, Koppert (1930:19) places the most highly ranked area at the left rear corner (again, from the perspective of someone in the house facing the door). Haswell, at Nootka Sound in 1789, noted that the chiefly family lived on the right hand side at “the further end of the house” (Howay 1990:61–62). Sproat (1987:33–34), describing Barkley Sound dwellings in the 1860s, stated that the “principal occupant lives at the extreme end, on the left of the building as you walk up from the main door.” The person of second rank, often a brother of the chief, occupied the other rear corner with his family. The corners closer to the door were also places of honour, occupied by the third and fourth ranking families (Arima 1983:69; Drucker 1951:71, 1965:148; Marshall 1989:19). Those of lower rank took up residence along the side walls. Although using this information to determine the most highly ranked area within a house requires knowing where the door was located, all corners, particularly those at the rear of the house, were associated with high-status residents and were more prestigious than intermediate areas.

Ozette provides one of the few archaeological cases where excavation has been on a scale sufficient to assess such social differences across a house floor. Its excellent preservation of organic materials has also greatly aided such studies. Ozette House 1, the largest and apparently the most highly ranked of the excavated houses, contained perhaps ten family living areas (Samuels 1989:146, 2006:206). One of the rear corners, furthest from the beach and the doorway, featured a large carved wooden panel depicting a whale and a bench plank inlaid with operculum shells (Mauger 1991:110, 112). Valuable dentalium shells, perhaps strung as a necklace, were far more abundant in this corner than anywhere else in the house (Huelsbeck

1989:160; Kirk and Daugherty 2007:108; Wessen 1994:178–179). A concentration of food remains in this living area also suggested the hosting of feasts (Huelsbeck 1989:166; 1994a:80). As is consistent with the ethnographic data, this corner appears to have been the living area of the chiefly family.

Ethnographic studies tend to present a normative and rather static picture of past cultures. Drucker's (1951) ethnographic reconstruction, with his "ethnographic horizon" set in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, provides a somewhat idealized treatment of "traditional" culture traits (McMillan 2009). Ethnohistoric sources, on the other hand, make it clear that there was considerable variability in architectural features and social practices related to households. The Huu-ay-aht site of Kiix7in, with its still-standing structural remains, provides additional valuable insights on the variability that existed within Nuu-chah-nulth villages.

### The Houses at Kiix7in

The Huu-ay-aht village of Kiix7in (DeSh-1) is located on the eastern shore of Barkley Sound, south of the entrance to Bamfield Inlet. It is only a short distance from Huu7ii, about 4 km to the southeast across Trevor Channel. Prior to the amalgamations that formed the modern Huu-ay-aht, this was the major village of the *Kiix7in7ath*, whose territory likely included Bamfield and Grappler Inlets, as well as the eastern shoreline of the sound south almost to Cape Beale (Fig. 2-1; St. Claire 1991:65). Following amalgamations, Kiix7in, with its formidable hilltop fortification adjacent to the village, became the principal Huu-ay-aht centre or "capital" (Huu-ay-aht First Nations 2000). In 1874, federal Indian agent George Blenkinsop described Kiix7in as one of two major Huu-ay-aht villages, referring to it as their "headquarters" and summer home (Blenkinsop 1874). The Kiix7in houses were occupied until near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Huu-ay-aht moved across Trevor Channel to the southern end of Diana Island (Huu-ay-aht First Nations 2000:37). As the village was not inhabited into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the large plank houses were never demolished to construct smaller European-style homes, as happened elsewhere. The impressive wooden structural elements that remain at this site, providing the most complete evidence of a traditional village in Nuu-chah-nulth territory, led to a cooperative initiative of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation and the Government of Canada that resulted in the designation of

this important location as a National Historic Site (Huu-ay-aht First Nations 2000).

Radiocarbon dates on the archaeological deposits at Kiix7in show that this site was occupied long prior to contact with Europeans (Sumpter 2003). The wooden architectural remains standing on the surface, however, date to a later, historic, occupation. Dendroarchaeological analysis of one house ("Quaksweaqwul"), based on cores taken from intact posts and beams, suggests that it was constructed after the growth year of 1835 (Smith et al. 2005). The other structures visible at Kiix7in also appear to date to the early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, with some constructed as late as 1850 (Smith et al. 2005:200). Although they are several centuries later than the houses that stood at Huu7ii, they provide important information on the nature of Nuu-chah-nulth architecture and village layout.

Mackie and Williamson (2003) present a detailed study of the standing wooden structures at Kiix7in. Eight large traditional houses are represented by surviving elements of their frames, including standing posts that in some cases still support beams. Flat platforms with low back midden ridges and occasional small side ridges also define house locations. House sizes, as mapped and measured by Mackie and Williamson (2003:109), vary considerably, with the largest estimated at 22 m by 17 m. Houses were generally aligned with their narrow ends to the beach, presumably because of limited space, although a few had their longest dimension parallel to the beach. Architectural style also varied, with evidence of three gable-roof houses, four shed-roof houses, and one house of composite form, the latter having a gable roof for its rear two-thirds and a shed roof at its front (Mackie and Williamson 2003:113).

The Kiix7in houses contribute numerous insights and cautions to the study of household archaeology on the Northwest Coast. Mackie and Williamson (2003:143) note that the differing architectural styles, evident through surviving posts and beams, would not be discernible through normal archaeological evidence such as post moulds, as gable beams often rest on other beams, unsupported by posts. The presence of two houses on a single platform and other houses without discernible surface platforms or midden ridges also show the difficulty in reconstructing house size and form without standing remains. Perhaps the greatest knowledge to be gained from Kiix7in concerns the architectural variability evident at this one location. Reconstruction drawings of the village (Huu-ay-aht First Nations 2000:35; Mackie and William-



son 2003:114) illustrate this variability: in house size, in gabled vs. shed-roof forms, in orientation to the water, and in the position of the doorways. Such information serves as a necessary corrective to the normative and idealized reconstructions presented in most ethnographic sources (e.g., Drucker 1951; Koppert 1930).

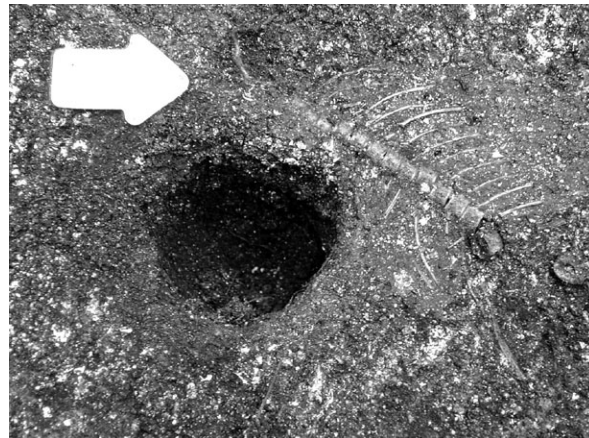
### Depositional and Taphonomic Factors

Plank houses provided the physical setting for a wide range of domestic and social activities (e.g., Suttles 1991). These ranged from daily mundane practices such as food preparation and consumption to periodic communal gatherings for feasts and ceremonies. The physical layout of the house constrained and structured the activities carried out within (Grier 2006b:104), imposing a spatial pattern on the residues of daily life. Such ordinary household activities over generations formed the archaeological house floor deposits. House floors, however, contain a palimpsest of materials deposited over a considerable period of time (Allison 1999:12; LaMotta and Schiffer 1999:20). The archaeological record contained in house floor deposits is not a direct reflection of past activities; a host of additional factors altered and reshaped the record throughout the time the house was occupied, at abandonment, and in the years following abandonment (LaMotta and Schiffer 1999). Such factors confound any attempt to read social behaviour directly from material remains.

Over two decades ago, Schiffer (1985, 1987) warned of the now-discredited “Pompeii premise,” the idea that the recovered pattern of material remains primarily reflects the human activities that took place there. In fact, relatively few items used in a house are likely to be found in their use location (LaMotta and Schiffer 1999). Among the various cultural and natural processes that transform the archaeological record within houses, one of the major factors is housekeeping. Periodic cleaning of house floors removed accumulated debris, redepositing items in secondary locations that were primarily outside the house. Such activities might have been particularly directed at removing sharp objects such as broken shells and angular fire-cracked rocks that were nuisances to bare-footed house occupants, and clearing the floor may have been standard practice prior to ceremonies that featured dancing (Samuels 2006:211). Larger items in the central area would have been most affected, whereas small objects in out-of-the-way locations on the house periphery would have been

most likely to escape housekeeping activities. This is particularly true for such difficult-to-reach locations as under the low benches along the walls. This point has been made for Ozette, where Samuels (1991, 2006) distinguishes between the “traffic zone” (the open central area) and the “bench zone” (the out-of-the-way periphery), with artifact density being considerably greater in the bench zone. Ozette House 1, thought to be the most highly ranked of the excavated houses, showed a slower rate of midden development with fewer objects incorporated into the floor deposit than the others, possibly reflecting more frequent housecleaning in preparation for social and ceremonial gatherings in this elite house (Samuels 2006:226).

Such housekeeping activities also shaped the archaeological record at Huu7ii. As is discussed below, the artifacts in House 1 were strongly concentrated along the back and side walls, presumably in the general location of the benches. Another example involves a row of articulated salmon vertebrae found directly beside a small stake mould, 8 cm in diameter, near the southwest corner of the house (Fig. 4-3). If the mould marks the location of a support post for a bench, the remains of this salmon may have been hidden under the bench and protected by proximity to the post, thus eluding any housekeeping efforts. In addition, the apparent conflation of radiocarbon dates on the house floor, as discussed in Chapter 3, may be a result of housekeeping activities, as older hearth materials (including charcoal as well as fire-broken rock)



**Figure 4-3. This small post hole (F4) near the southeast corner of the house may mark a bench support. A row of articulated salmon vertebrae is immediately adjacent, possibly as food refuse that became trapped under the bench and eluded housekeeping activities.**

would have been removed and more recent fires lit on the same floor surface.

Curation also would have played a role in shaping artifact presence and distribution. Objects requiring considerable labour to manufacture, and those made from material that was difficult to obtain, would have been valued and were removed from activity areas after use and stored. They might only enter the archaeological record after being broken beyond the possibility of repair or reworking, at which point the fragments were discarded. Loss, particularly around the bench areas, might also account for their presence in the floor deposit. Simple, easily manufactured tools, on the other hand, might have been discarded after use. Small items such as bone points, particularly those that had been broken, were less likely to be curated and were trampled into the floor deposit, either accidentally or after breakage and discard. The biasing effect of curation was particularly marked upon abandonment, as at that time most objects that were still of use were removed from the structure, leaving only discarded debris and larger objects that were too heavy to move to a new location. Such practices may remove all evidence of particular activities that had been carried out within the house. The Ozette houses are particularly important in this regard as their accidental burial in a mudslide means that they were not subject to the biasing effects that occur at abandonment.

Other factors affect the archaeological record throughout the time following abandonment. A major biasing effect is the decay of most organic materials. The loss of all objects of wood, bark, root, hide, and similar materials robs the archaeological record of almost all architectural elements and most items of material culture. The remarkable preservation at Ozette, a result of its water-saturated context, meant that most of the posts, beams, planks, benches and other elements of the houses could be studied (Mauger 1991), as could a vast array of artifacts, the great majority of which are of normally perishable materials (Daugherty 1988:20–22; Samuels 1989:148). Such preservation is lacking at HuuZii, as is the case at most midden sites, removing much of the record of past activities in the house.

Another post-abandonment process is bioturbation, the impact of animals and plants on the site deposits (Schiffer 1987). Little evidence of disturbance by animals was noted at HuuZii, and the fact that large trees are today restricted to the western edge of the House 1 platform limited most root damage to that area. However, large trees in areas adjacent to the house occasionally fell and

crashed across the platform. Thick columns of rotted wood that mark such events extend deep into the archaeological deposits, greatly compressing and convoluting the upper portion of the house floor. Furthermore, when these forest giants hit the ground their branches punched deep holes into the house floor. Fortunately, such destruction was restricted to relatively small areas. The thick upper layer of roots, rotted wood, and forest duff that covered the house floor deposits protected them from later disturbance by animals and humans, such as through recent camping on the site.

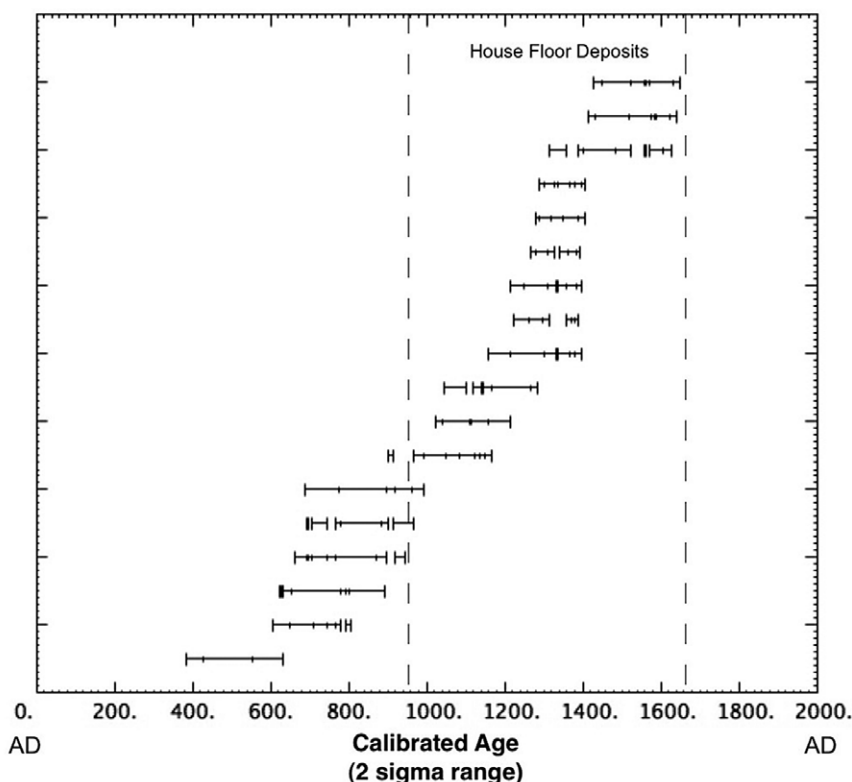
### Examining the House 1 Floor

Excavations at other locations on the Northwest Coast indicate that houses were occupied for generations and might stand or be rebuilt in the same place for several centuries. The Meier and Cathlapotle sites on the lower Columbia show evidence of use for perhaps 400 years (Ames 2006:24; Ames et al. 1991:286). Houses at Dionisio Point in the Strait of Georgia were occupied for roughly 200 years (Grier 2006b:101). House 1 at Ozette has generally been interpreted as showing about 100 years of use (Huelsenbeck 1989:157; Samuels 1991:186), although Samuels (2006:210) has recently revised this estimate downwards. However, that house had not been abandoned and was still in active use at the time it was demolished by a mudslide.

House 1 at HuuZii demonstrates similar lengthy use. Radiocarbon dates and other chronological evidence are discussed in Chapter 3. Twelve dates come from the house floor deposits and are essentially non-overlapping with those from the underlying midden (Fig. 4-4). Calibrated dates, at 2-sigma deviation, span the period from roughly AD 1000 to 1600. Examination of the age ranges suggests that a conservative estimate of the occupation period is between AD 1200 and 1500. A slightly greater occupation span (ca. AD 1150 to 1550) seems more likely, although the house may have been rebuilt or remodelled during this time, as is discussed below. By AD 1600, however, large trees had begun to grow on the site (Sookocheff 2004), presumably indicating that it had fallen into disuse. The House 1 occupation is thus estimated at 300 to 400 years. In human terms this is 12 to 16 generations, assuming a generation is about 25 years, and constitutes a lengthy record of an enduring social unit in one place.

As mentioned, excavation units covered 101 m<sup>2</sup>, representing 17% of the total floor surface of House 1 as indicated by the surface platform. The

### Huu7ii House 1



**Figure 4-4. Calibrated radiocarbon dates for excavation units on the House 1 platform. Twelve results are from the house floor deposits.**

units were concentrated in the southern half of the structure (furthest from the beach), with the largest block (8 x 4.5 m) along the centre of the southern wall. In this central block, the largely shell-free black floor deposit is about 50 to 70 cm thick, although shell becomes more abundant and the house floor more difficult to discern around the two rear corners. Little information is available for the northern half of the structure or along the eastern wall. Even in areas with the most extensive coverage, specific architectural details and dimensions remained elusive. Units placed in the southwestern corner specifically to expose the transition from back and side ridge middens to interior floor deposits revealed only a gradual change. It seems likely that the wall planks had been removed repeatedly and that keeping midden debris from the ridges out of the house was a constant problem. As a result, no sharp distinction marked the exact house position. Furthermore, some house features had been buried as the back midden ridge accumulated, suggesting that the house location had shifted somewhat over time. This is discussed further below.

As social relations should be manifest spatially

within houses, a distributional study of artifacts may be revealing. As discussed, however, a variety of cultural and natural factors shaped the distribution of objects within the house, both during and after its occupation. In an attempt to understand such factors, Hayden and Cannon (1983) conducted an ethnoarchaeological investigation of Maya houses with dirt floors, where debris from food preparation and other household activities was dropped onto the floor, which was regularly swept clean. They note that in such circumstances the best indicators of past activities would be relatively immobile features, as well as very small items such as bits of bone or shell that become fixed in the floor matrix. They specifically note that: "Artifact distributions in sedentary contexts provide the least reliable, most ambiguous indicators of specific activity areas, but are nevertheless the indicators most widely used" (Hayden and Cannon 1983:138).

The distribution of artifacts found within the house floor deposit at Huu7ii shows a concentration near the back wall and at the middle of the west wall, both in the hypothetical "bench zone" (Fig. 4-5). This distribution likely reflects periodic

housekeeping activities, during which the central area of the house was swept clean. The artifact distribution reveals no evidence for status distinctions associated with the rear corners of the house.

Particular artifact types, however, might provide more specific indicators of status. In Nuu-chah-nulth society, whaling was associated with chiefly prerogative; only a high-ranking chief held the right to first thrust the harpoon into the whale (Arima 1983:38; Arima and Dewhirst 1990:395; Jewitt 1967:69; Koppert 1930:56; McMillan 1999:18). We might therefore assume that whaling equipment would be associated with high-status residential areas. At Ozette, the abundance of whaling gear in House 1 relative to the other excavated houses was used to argue for the higher status of the group occupying that structure (Wessen 1988:195). Although there is no particular association with the house corners, Huelsbeck (1989:161) argues that most would have originated

from such locations prior to their disturbance by the mudslide. At HuuZii, however, although the large slotted valves of the whaling harpoon heads tend to occur along the back and west walls, only one was found in a corner unit (Fig. 4-6).

Other artifacts that may be status-related include decorative items such as tooth and bone pendants and shell beads. Their distribution also fails to show any correlation to the presumed high-status corners (Fig. 4-7). In fact, many were found well out onto the central house floor. These include impressive and presumably important ornaments such as a pendant made from the large drilled tooth of a great white shark (Fig. 3-40), which was found near the southern edge of the large hearth in a shallow depression near the centre of the house. An extensively ground sea lion tooth pendant that has been ringed for suspension (Fig. 3-41) came from the same general area, although at a higher level. These intact and presumably valued objects

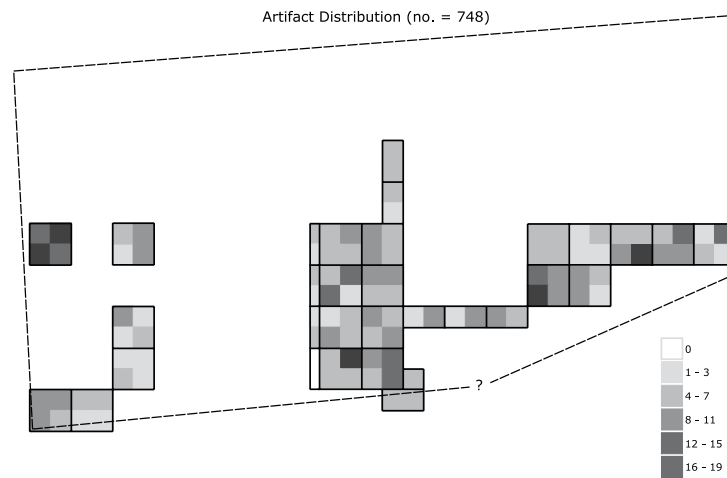


Figure 4-5. Distribution of artifacts across the House 1 floor deposits.

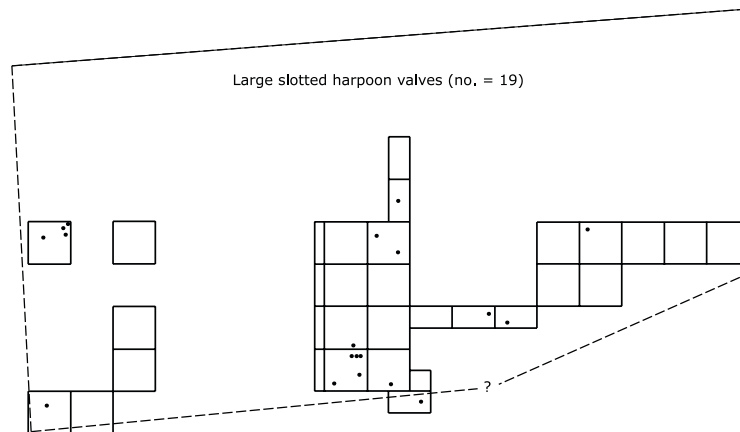


Figure 4-6. Distribution of large slotted harpoon valves across the House 1 floor deposits.

would not have been discarded; perhaps they were lost during social or ceremonial events in the dark winter months, when the house was lit only by the central fire, and were trampled into the house floor.

Plank houses were centres of production, where both men and women worked at a variety of manufactures, particularly during inclement weather (Suttles 1991:217). However, direct evidence of such activities, such as workshop areas, would not be expected to remain on the house floor due to periodic cleaning. One exception may be a cache

of ten whalebone blanks (F51), stacked in a pile on the house floor, which was found in one of the eastern units (Figs. 4-8, 4-9). Each blank was similar in size (averaging just under 14 cm) and shows evidence of adzing or cutting to shape (see artifact descriptions in Chapter 3; Fig. 3-37). Such blanks would be a preliminary step in artifact manufacture. Many of the artifacts recovered from Huu7ii were of whalebone or other sea mammal bone; these blanks would be about the right size for the manufacture of such implements as the large

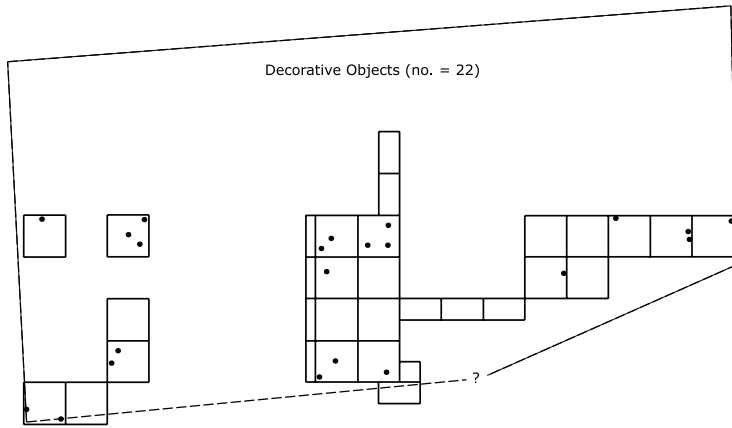


Figure 4-7. Distribution of decorative objects across the House 1 floor deposits.



Figure 4-8. Cluster of ten whalebone blanks (F51) in situ on the house floor.

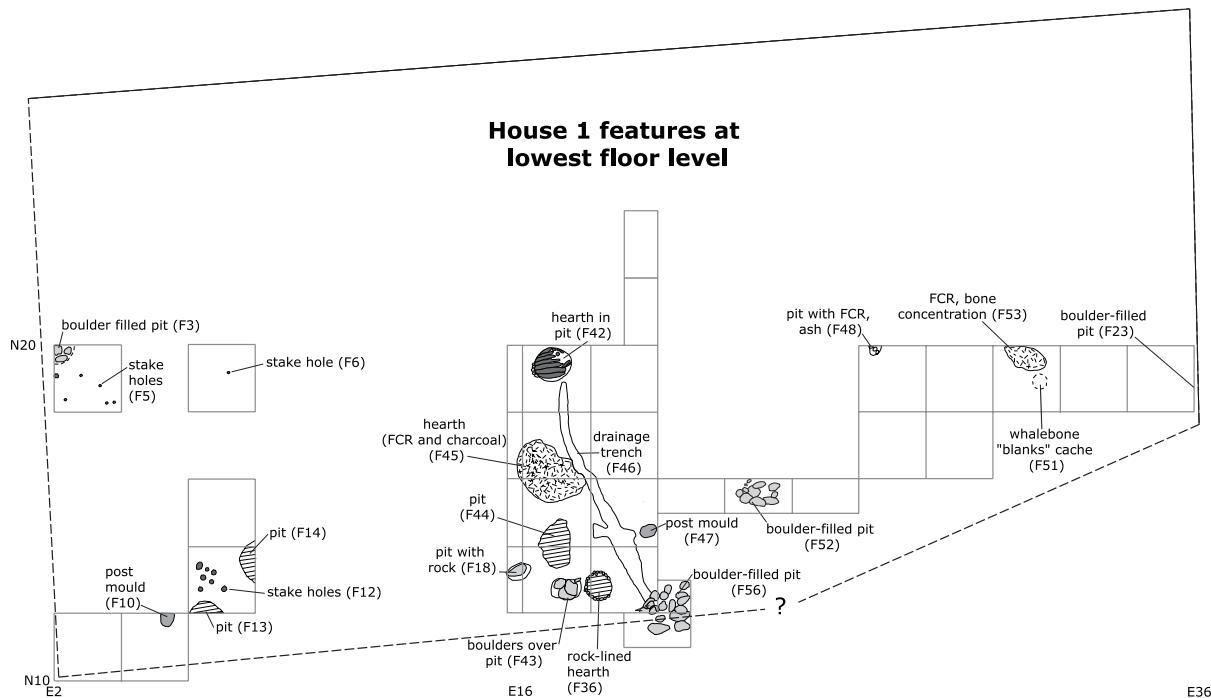
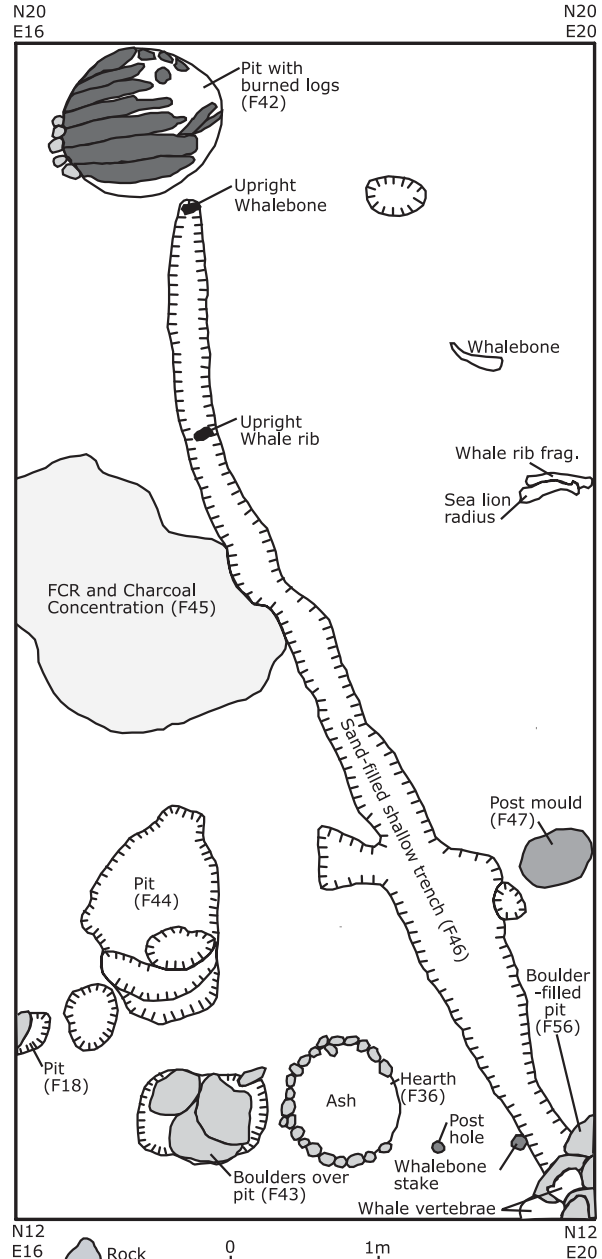


Figure 4-9. Distribution of features across the lowest floor level of House 1.

harpoon valves used in whaling. Other sea mammal bones sitting on the house floor, such as a sea lion radius and a partial whale rib placed together in the same alignment at the base of the central excavation block, may represent potential raw material for artifact manufacture, rather than simply dietary discards. They may reflect what LaMotta and Schiffer (1999) term “provisional discard,” where objects were set aside for possible later use.

Like artifacts, the numerous faunal elements found on the house floor tend to be concentrated in peripheral areas, such as along the south wall, where this may be a result of midden build-up along the wall entering the house. Examination of the distribution of faunal remains across the house floor did not reveal distinct patterns that could be interpreted as reflecting status differences (Frederick, Appendix A). Although whaling was ethnographically associated with status, cetacean remains were not concentrated in any particular area. Like other faunal elements, bones of large sea mammals were most common at the house periphery but also appeared in considerable numbers in the central area of the house adjacent to a large hearth and other features, where they may mark activity areas associated with tool production. The remains of sea otters, whose pelts served as chiefly robes ethnographically, also failed to reveal any spatial patterning, being found out into the central portion of the house as well as around the periphery (Frederick, Appendix A). Uncommon land mammal species such as elk, bear, marten, and mink, also potentially status-related, similarly lack any convincing pattern. Although valued types of fish, such as salmon and bluefin tuna, may also be associated with status, no obvious pattern emerges from their distribution; units with the greatest concentrations are located both along the house periphery and the central area near the large hearth.

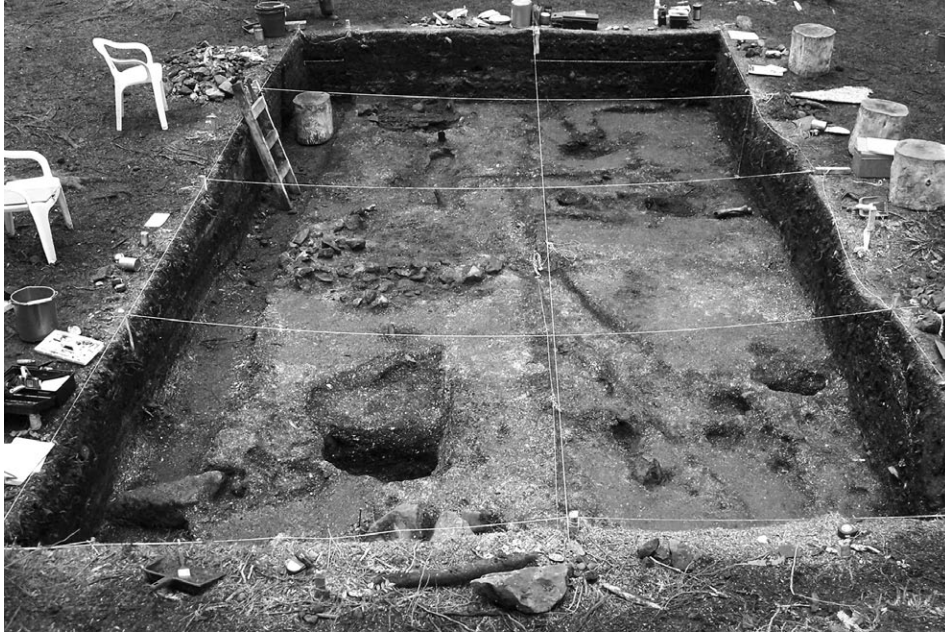
Features are far more likely than artifacts to be intact and in their original position on the house floor. Various types of features occurred throughout the house floor deposit, but were particularly abundant across the lowest level of the floor. Figure 4-9 shows the distribution of features across that surface, whereas Figures 4-10 and 4-11 provide a more detailed view of the central 8 x 4 m excavation block, where features were most concentrated. Feature types include hearths of varying size and form, small pits, stake holes, post moulds, large rock-filled pits that presumably were the locations of major support posts, and a long shallow drainage trench extending into the house from the back wall. Features are discussed in Chapter 3; only



**Figure 4-10. Features exposed at the lowest floor level in the central excavation block.**

those that were exposed on the lowest house floor level are discussed in detail here.

Hearths, often simply patches of ash or concentrations of FCR and charcoal, were scattered throughout the floor deposit. Large patches of tan-coloured ash were particularly evident in the deposits of the central excavation block. One large ash patch, about 80 cm across, was surrounded by 11 small stake holes; another had nine small stake holes in or beside the ash, while a third ash



**Figure 4-11. House 1 central excavation block at the base of the house floor (photo taken from the back midden ridge looking north toward the beach). The initial 50 cm test trench runs along the left side of the eight 2 x 2 m units excavated as a single block. Note the shallow sand-filled drainage feature (F46) running diagonally across the base of the house floor, as well as the hearths at upper left (F42) and centre left (F45) and the pit (F44) at lower left.**

patch was associated with 17 stake holes. One of the patches was at least 20 cm thick, showing prolonged use of a hearth in this location. Five designated hearth features sit on the lowest level of the house floor (Fig. 4-9). In the eastern portion of the house, a pit with FCR and ash (F48) extends from the house floor into the underlying midden. Although it was only partially within the excavation unit, it was about 30 cm across at the wall. In the same general area, a large concentration of FCR (F53) also contained quantities of bone, particularly whalebone. Both features could represent redeposited materials from hearths.

Three more formal and intact hearths were uncovered in the central block (Fig. 4-10). Perhaps the best example of a formal hearth is F36, a thick circular patch of ash, about 70 cm in diameter, with rounded cobbles around the outside edge of the ash (Fig. 4-12). Another (F45) is a large oval concentration of FCR and charcoal, extending at least 1.8 m in its maximum dimension. The third (F42), in approximately the centre of the house, is unique in being in a large shallow pit. The depression is oval in shape, measuring roughly 1 m by 90 cm across. The concentrated charcoal that sits at the top of the pit retains the recognizable form of burned logs, and some of the reddish wood is still



**Figure 4-12. Circular rock-lined hearth (F36) being excavated in central block.**

intact (Fig. 4-13). Sand and ash are visible in the pit under the burned wood. A sample of the charcoal from this feature provided the radiocarbon age estimate of  $990 \pm 50$  BP (970 to 780 cal BP at 2 sigma; Table 3-1), the oldest date from the house floor.

Various ethnohistoric sources note that each family within the house had its own hearth for daily cooking (Clerke in Beaglehole 1967:1328; Haswell in Howay 1990:61; Jewitt 1967:54; Sproat 1987:33). Koppert's (1930:17) description of this as "nothing more than a circle of stones loosely placed together" fits several of the excavated examples. More common, however, are simply patches of ash without any defining stone circle. The numerous ash patches, shifting position somewhat over time through the floor deposits, provide evidence of everyday activities such as cooking and of warming the inhabitants on rainy winter days. The stake holes associated with some ash patches may reflect techniques of cooking directly over the fire. In addition to these everyday hearths, Drucker (1951:71) notes that there was a larger fireplace in a shallow circular depression at the centre of the house that was used for ceremonial occasions. This description closely fits the large hearth (F42) with abundant charred wood in a shallow depression

near the centre of House 1, suggesting that this was the focal point for household or community events. Ozette House 1 had a large central hearth, in addition to the hearth complexes that were widespread just outside the bench zone, which was interpreted as a "feasting hearth" used for house-wide gatherings (Samuels 2006:208). This formed part of the evidence that this was the highest status dwelling among the excavated Ozette houses (Samuels 1989:153, 1991:266).

At the base of the central excavated block, a shallow trench filled with dark brown sand (10YR 4/2) has been interpreted as a drainage feature (F46). The sand in this shallow depression, dug about 10 cm into the underlying shell matrix, clearly distinguishes this feature from the black house floor deposit. The trench runs diagonally across the excavated block, extending northwest from a large rock-filled pit that may mark the location of a large support post into the central portion of the house, where it tapers out in the vicinity of the large central hearth (Figs. 4-10, 4-11). It can be traced for about seven metres in the excavated block; whether it also occurs in the northern half of the house is unknown. Its width varies, from about 40 cm near its centre, where it is most clearly de-



Figure 4-13. Large central hearth (F42) in shallow sand-lined pit, with charred logs still partially intact.



ined, to about 70 cm at its widest and about 20 cm where it tapers out at its northern end. Two whale ribs protrude upright from within the trench, one near its northern end and the other about 1.5 m to the south (Fig. 4-10). One possibility is that these ribs served to secure planks that were part of the drainage feature. The Ozette houses had drainage systems consisting of ditches dug into the floor midden that were lined with planks, and some were associated with whalebones (Huelsbeck 1994b:288–289; Mauger 1991:120–122; Samuels 1991:187, 190).

Several pits with sloping sides were dug from the house floor into underlying strata. Near the southwestern corner, a basin-shaped pit (F13) has been only partially exposed; it is a metre across where it extends into the unit wall and slopes to 27 cm depth, although it clearly would have been deeper if completely excavated. Nearby, another partially excavated large depression (F14) is about 1.2 m across and 15 cm deep at the unit wall, although this is clearly only a portion of a larger feature. The base of this pit is lined with sand and pebbles, which contain large pieces of charcoal. In the central excavation block, three pits in close proximity have been completely exposed. The largest (F44) is an oval shaped pit with sloping sides, which measures about 1.5 m by 90 cm at its surface (Fig. 4-10). Its bottom is irregular; much is only about 20 cm in depth but there are deeper pits within, extending up to 60 cm depth. Nearby is a smaller pit (F18), about 60 cm across and 55 cm deep, containing a large rock slab. Also nearby, and directly beside the large rock-lined hearth (F36), is a larger pit (F43), about 80 cm in diameter, with four large boulders and some smaller rocks on its upper surface (Fig. 4-10).

Stake and post holes or moulds occurred throughout the floor deposits. On the base of the house floor, three stake features occurred in the western units (Fig. 4-9). Near the western wall, F5 is a loose cluster of six stake holes, ranging from 4 to 13 cm in diameter, associated with ash patches. Further into the house, F6 is a single stake hole, 4 cm in diameter. Closer to the southwest corner, F12 is a cluster of seven stake holes, ranging between 5 and 12 cm diameter. In the central block, along the southern edge of the house, are four stake holes (F49), each about 7 cm in diameter. These relatively small stakes were concentrated near the walls of the house, suggesting that most served such purposes as bench supports. Two larger circular features are classified as post moulds, marking the location of more substantial wooden uprights.

F10, near the southwest corner, is about 35 cm in diameter and is associated with two large boulders. F47, in the central block beside the presumed drainage trench, is an oval-shaped straight-sided pit, measuring about 45 by 30 cm at its surface and at least 40 cm in depth (Fig. 4-10).

Much larger boulder-filled pits are interpreted as marking the locations of major house support posts. The rocks and whalebones placed in the holes not only helped to hold the post in place but also reduced the contact between the wood and the wet ground, thus slowing the rate of decay. At Ozette, a preserved wooden upright support post was located intact in a substantial pit lined with very large rocks (Mauger 1991:96). Similarly, excavation around the bases of several 19<sup>th</sup> century totem poles at the Haida site of Ninstints revealed that the carved wooden posts had been placed in large pits and braced with large rocks (Abbott and Keen 1993). The Ninstints excavation was not of sufficient scale to reveal the size of the original pits, but they appear to have been over two meters in diameter (Abbott and Keen 1993:17). These two examples of known use support the interpretation of similar large rock-filled pits at HuuZii as the locations of major house support posts.

Four large boulder-filled pits were exposed in House 1. The largest (F56) was at the middle of the back wall (Fig. 4-9). It was first encountered as a large concentration of boulders and whalebone, the latter including a considerable number of complete vertebrae. As this feature extended into the corner of the central excavation block and partially under the back midden ridge, the excavation area had to be expanded to expose it. The large rocks, some greater than 50 cm in maximum dimension, sat in a very loose soft matrix, so that excavation under the rocks was by texture, removing the loose matrix to reveal a very large pit. Traces of highly degraded wood remained in the pit, strengthening its identification as a major house post location. The excavation exposed a depth of about 1.6 m before being halted without reaching bottom, as large loose rocks and the overhanging back midden ridge made it too difficult and dangerous to continue. The feature is about 1.7 m across from north to south, and more than 1.5 m east to west, as large rocks and whale vertebrae continue into the wall. This massive feature is considerably larger than its Ozette counterpart.

Two other large, boulder-filled pits, visible only in the wall profiles, occurred at opposite ends of the house (Fig. 4-9). One (F3) is approximately mid-way along the west wall of the house. Three large

boulders filled the upper portion of the pit, with the largest (about 70 cm in maximum dimension) standing vertically. Below these rocks was a concentration of large whalebones. The pit containing these is about 1.4 m deep. On the opposite wall, near the southeast corner of the house, F23 is a smaller boulder-filled pit, measuring about 70 cm across at its upper surface and at least 60 cm in depth (Fig. 3-8). It occurs somewhat higher than the two larger post features just described and the house floor is thinner and less evident in this area, suggesting that this might represent a later expansion of the house, as is discussed below. The final such feature (F52) is just east of the central excavated block, near the back wall of the house (Fig. 4-9). It was encountered as an oval concentration of very large rocks, covering an area of about 1.2 m by 70 cm (Fig. 4-14). Removal of the boulders revealed a pit underneath, giving a total depth to the feature of about 1.2 m. It occurred at an equivalent depth to F23 near the southeast corner.

Several lines of evidence suggest that the house had at least one major episode of rebuilding, when the back wall was moved slightly closer to the beach and shifted somewhat in its orientation.

The house may well have been enlarged with an extension to the east at that time. The largest of the boulder-filled post locations (F56) would appear to mark the original position of the back wall. When the house structure moved northward, this feature became largely buried under the back midden ridge that accumulated behind the new house location. The large rock-lined hearth (F36) and another boulder concentration with pit (F43) were also partially covered by the back midden ridge, suggesting that they belong to the first house location. The second back wall orientation may be marked by a line that extends from where the back and side ridges meet at the southwest corner through the later post locations of F52 just east of the centre and F23 at the eastern edge. A smaller post mould (F47) is also along this line near its centre and may also mark the location of a post along the realigned back wall. The slightly higher elevation of the posts along this line indicates their later date. Extension of the house to the eastward at that time is somewhat conjectural, but the thinner floor deposit and the somewhat elevated position of the post on the east wall offer support for this argument. The pit for the east wall post intrudes into a stratum with



**Figure 4-14. Gabe Williams washes the exposed rocks of a large feature (F52) that continues into the unit wall. A large pit extended well below the rocks of this feature.**

a calibrated date of AD 1290 to 1420 from its upper portion, indicating that the house rebuilding occurred somewhere around two centuries prior to the final use of this house location (or about the mid-point in a postulated 400 year occupation).

### Discussion of Household Archaeology at Huu7ii

If the surface indications accurately reflect house size, House 1 at Huu7ii was a very large structure, enclosing approximately 595 m<sup>2</sup>. Such a massive dwelling presumably sheltered a large and powerful kin group. This house was substantially larger than those described by early European observers and those recorded ethnographically. Of the various late-18<sup>th</sup> century estimates of size, only Cook (Beaglehole 1967:317) gives a length greater than the Huu7ii house, at 150 feet (45.7 m). His width estimate of 30 feet (9.1 m), however, is substantially less than the apparent width for House 1, resulting in an estimate of about 418.1 m<sup>2</sup> for the large Nootka Sound house he was observing. Only a few decades after Cook, Jewitt (1967:52) also gave an estimate for the maximum house length at Nootka Sound of 150 feet (45.7 m), although his estimate for maximum width is somewhat greater at 40 feet (12.2 m). These figures suggest an inside area of 557.4 m<sup>2</sup>, the only such estimate approaching the size of House 1 at Huu7ii. Sproat's mid-19<sup>th</sup> century estimates for the largest houses in Barkley Sound yield an area of only about 334.5 m<sup>2</sup> (Sproat 1987:31–32). Taking the maximum length and width figures from Drucker's (1951:69) classic ethnographic description of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Nuuchah-nulth house yields an interior size estimate of about 445.9 m<sup>2</sup>. At Ozette, House 1, the most highly ranked of the excavated houses, was only about 246 m<sup>2</sup>, far below the size of House 1 at Huu7ii.

Some caution should be exercised in interpreting house size from the evidence on the surface. A lesson from Kiiix7in is that two closely spaced structures can stand on the same platform. However, although our aerial coverage is perhaps too limited to be certain, there is no excavated evidence for more than one dwelling. In addition, the surface "footprint" of the house, consisting of the flat platform and the back and side ridges, reflects only the placement of the last structure to stand at that location. The excavated features near the back wall of the house that became partially buried by the back midden ridge belonged to an earlier stage that was not necessarily as large as the final form the house took. However, the pattern of closely spaced

dwellings across the entire house row at Huu7ii (Fig. 1-3) suggests that it is unlikely that any house standing there had been markedly smaller.

These substantial dwellings may have been viewed as essentially "permanent," symbolizing continuity of the household over time. Archaeological evidence from a growing number of sites suggests that houses could stand or be rebuilt in the same location over lengthy periods of time. A lower Columbia River example is the Meier site, which features a plank house that was occupied for as much as 400 years (Ames 2006:24; Ames et al. 1991:286). Internal house features also tend to remain in the same location throughout the house occupation, suggesting continuity in social relations and behaviour within the house. At Meier, support posts were periodically replaced in exactly the same locations (Ames 2006:24). At Dionisio Point in the Strait of Georgia, the distribution of hearths and major support post locations remained stable over the two centuries or so the house was in use (Grier 2006b:105). At Yuquot in Nootka Sound, two excavated clusters of superimposed firepits were interpreted as indicating that they were within a house, where the hearths were maintained in specific areas over long periods of time (Dewhurst 1980:50; Marshall 2000:77). Ozette also provides excellent examples of houses being exactly superimposed over earlier houses, with floors and support posts in the same locations, despite being separated by sand or mudslide deposits (Marshall 2000:77). In his ethnographic study of the Nuuchah-nulth, Drucker (1951:72) states that the "old houses are said to have lasted almost indefinitely." Planks for the roofs and sides and various poles and rafters were continually being replaced, but the framework could stand for a very long period, although major posts and beams were occasionally replaced as needed. As Drucker (1951:73) phrases it: "Thus, over a long period, the entire roof and siding of a house might be renewed, and one by one the posts and beams would be replaced, but it would still be the same old house that had stood in that place since the lineage who owned it had been given the right to build their house there in the dim epochs of traditional times."

Excavation at Huu7ii House 1 suggests a slightly more dynamic situation than what is described above. Specific house locations, represented archaeologically by the surface platforms, were owned prerogatives of individual chiefs. A house of this size, located near the centre of the house row that made up the village, was almost certainly the dwelling of the *taayii harwilh*, or head chief. A

substantial plank house stood in this location for about 300 to 400 years. Yet HūūZii also provides evidence that such structures could shift somewhat over time. House 1 appears to have had at least one major remodelling, where the back wall of the house was moved forward and its orientation altered, possibly while the house was being expanded. The idea that house rebuilding would always replicate the previous form and location is too restrictive for actual human behaviour. In addition, like the initial house construction, any substantial expansion of a house or building a new structure on the same location served to conspicuously signal the status of the chiefly occupant (Coupland 2006:81). As chiefs owned the house locations, however, the general position of the house relative to other houses in the village likely remained the same over long periods of time.

Large houses made imposing statements regarding chiefly wealth and power. In their size, form, and embellishments, houses sent political messages that served to legitimate and entrench hierarchies (Coupland 2006; Grier 2006a). Large, seemingly permanent houses also symbolized stability and long-term continuity of the social group that resided within. Nuu-chah-nulth society featured considerable flexibility in tracing descent, so individuals had options in choosing group membership that resulted in commoners having considerable residential mobility between houses (Drucker 1951:279). This constant flux in household membership was balanced by the seeming permanence of the house. Chiefly status and power were enhanced by ownership and control of these major structures. As Ames (1996:147) has phrased it: “If one lives in a house that has stood several centuries, at the cost of continual work, then whoever controls that dwelling will be able to exert considerable control over other aspects of life, particularly on the coast where the house itself was the major instrument of production.”

Within the houses, status differences were also made visible and affirmed. Family sleeping areas were allocated by rank, with the chiefly rear corners being visible reminders of status differences or “materialization of hierarchy” (Coupland et al. 2009; Grier 2006a). At ceremonial events within the house, the specific rank order of chiefs and other elite was publicly expressed through a seating pattern governed by rigid rules (Drucker 1951:260). The presence of a formal central hearth may also have relevance to status differences. In their study of hierarchy and communalism along the Northwest Coast, Coupland et al. (2009) note

that only the Wakashan area of the central coast has houses characterized by both a large central hearth and family hearths dispersed near the sleeping areas. Drucker (1951:71) describes Nuu-chah-nulth houses as having both small family hearths for daily cooking along the sides and corners and a “large shallow circular depression that served as the fireplace on ceremonial occasions.” Thus, according to Coupland et al. (2009), Nuu-chah-nulth houses struck a balance between hierarchy, represented by separate status-determined living areas, and communalism, in the form of the central fire used by all occupants during special events. At Ozette, only House 1 had a central (or “feasting”) hearth, supporting arguments that this was the highest ranked of the excavated houses (Samuels 1989:153, 1991:266, 2006:208). The Ozette hearth, however, is not truly central as it is located well to one end of the structure (Coupland 2009:95; Samuels 2006:207). The large hearth at HūūZii much more closely matches Drucker’s description as it located in a circular depression in roughly the centre of the house. Such a feature may have enhanced household cohesion as all members of the group gathered around this fire during social and ritual events, including feasting.

One limitation to household archaeology is the requirement for broad horizontal exposures across large portions of the house and its internal features. This requires large-scale, long-term, excavation projects. Ozette provides an excellent example of the scale of work necessary to understand the architecture and investigate past social behaviour associated with houses, but that work continued year-round for over a decade (Samuels and Daugherty 1991:13). As Ames (2005:12) points out, such large-scale research is not only prohibitively expensive but also conflicts with modern concerns to preserve as much of the site as possible for future generations. Despite two seasons of fieldwork at HūūZii, involving substantial crews, there are many features of the architecture and internal organization that we do not understand. Many features on the house floor have been only partially exposed and large portions of the house remain unexamined. The sheer size of the house, the fact that it stood as the centre of the household’s activities for several centuries, and the evidence for remodelling and shifting of the house position, impose major challenges to archaeological interpretation. Yet the various analyses reported here provide significant glimpses into life within this high-ranking house at HūūZii.