

## Chapter Six: EXCAVATION AT HIMAYIS (DfSi-17)

### Site Description

Himayis (DfSi-17; 205T in the Parks Canada system) lies immediately adjacent to Ts'ishaa, over a trail between two rocky bluffs to the next beach (Fig. 19). Although physically separate, and thus given a separate site designation, it is clearly part of one large village complex. Shallow midden deposits fill the entire space available along the sandy beach, from the large rock outcrop that separates this site from Ts'ishaa to the rocks at the far end of the beach, a distance of about 180 metres. Midden deposits are most substantial in the southern half of the site, while only a thin trace of shell marks the site's northern portion, much of which is quite low-lying. This suggests that the initial settlement was in the higher southern section and that the village expanded over time as the population grew, eventually nearly closing the gap between it and the main community of Ts'ishaa.

In ethnographic tradition, this area was occupied as a result of population pressure at Ts'ishaa.

As that village became overcrowded, chiefs sent their slaves to live along the nearby beach. Eventually the people who lived at Himayis, the *Himayisath*, became one of the four *ushtakimilh* on the island, although they were the most lowly ranked (see Chapter Two). According to this tradition, the archaeological remains along this beach should be more recent than those of the main site.

Two small intermittent creeks in the southern half of the site flow from a permanent spring a short distance inland, the only source of fresh water on the island. In the creation story told by Tseshaht elder Tom Saayach'apis to Edward Sapir (Chapter Two), when the original land and river were scattered to form the islands and channels of the Broken Group, the former lake "went into the ground" and is now inside Benson Island, ensuring that the water supply "never dries up" (Sapir and Swadesh 1955:52).

When John Webb Benson acquired the island at the end of the nineteenth century, he built a large wooden structure that served as his home and hotel

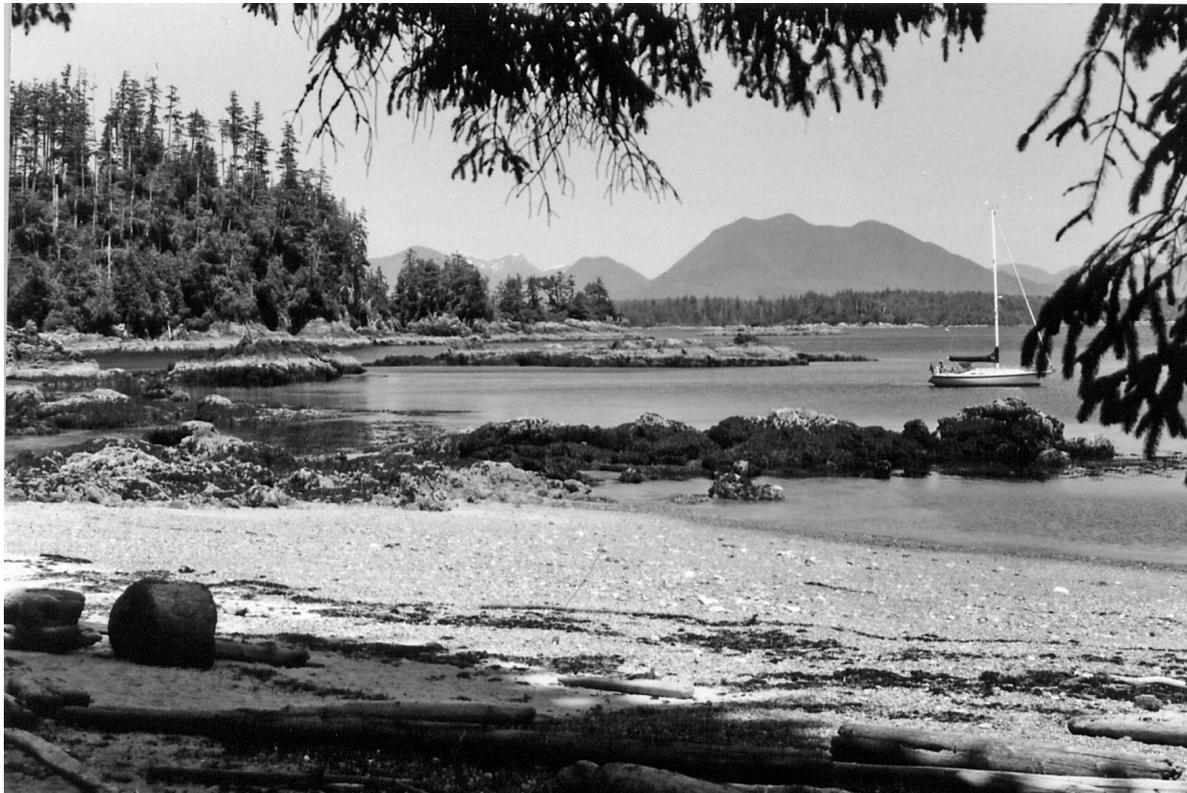


Figure 63. View into Barkley Sound from the front of Himayis.

on the flat land just north of the creek near the centre of the site (Fig. 18). Several exotic trees, including a large old nearly-collapsed chestnut, mark the location today. Parts of an iron stove, various large metal pieces, and broken crockery on the surface today are remnants of this period in the site's history.

### **Excavation Extent and Methodology**

One 2 m x 2 m excavation unit was opened at this site in 1999. It was placed near the site's south-eastern edge, near where a large bedrock ridge runs inland from the beach. A relatively open and flat area was selected among the large trees on the highest terrace, at the top of a marked midden slope down to a low-lying area and the beach. This is the highest area of the site, with the deepest midden deposits. A 0-0 point for the horizontal grid was established as a spike driven into the trunk of a large tree on the low-lying area below, at the edge of the site near the beach and the bedrock ridge (see Figure 19). From there, a unit with grid coordinates of S 5-7 W 11-13 was established on the higher terrace. The vertical datum is a flagged spike driven into a prominent large tree on the ridge that rises up behind the site. From this, a unit datum, the top of a stake beside the pit, was surveyed in.

Himayis was further tested during the 2001 season. A 1 x 2 m unit was established near the centre of the site, just south of the creek that runs through this area. Its coordinates are N 43-44 W 53-55, using the same horizontal grid and vertical datum as was established in 1999. This unit is toward the back of the site, on a small terrace above a low-lying, rather boggy area just above the high tide line. The few traces of where Benson's hotel once stood are immediately adjacent, on the other side of the creek.

Excavation methodology was the same as that employed at Ts'ishaa. All cultural deposits were removed by trowelling in ten centimetre levels, taking care to separate materials from differing natural layers. Levels were numbered while layers were given alphabetical designations; both were recorded on all bags and forms. Artifacts were recorded in three dimensional provenience, while faunal remains were bagged by level and layer. Shell and bone fauna were bagged separately. All trowelled matrix was screened through 1/4" mesh. A column sample of matrix for microfaunal analysis was taken from one wall after completion of the 1999 unit. In both units, profile drawings were made of the stratigraphy on all four walls.

The 1999 unit was excavated to a depth of about 2.3 metres but had not reached the base of cultural deposits by the end of the field season. About 8.3 cubic metres of deposit were removed. The 2001 unit, by contrast, extended into the basal sand but had an average depth of only 1.35 metres. About 2.7 cubic metres were removed. The total amount of excavated deposit at Himayis, therefore, is about 11 cubic metres.

### **Stratigraphy and Chronology**

Three major stratigraphic layers were exposed in the 1999 unit (Fig. 64). Below the humus was a thick deposit of crushed clam and mussel shell with black silt (Layer A). Layer B was black silt and clay with a small amount of shell. Layer C consisted of concentrated crushed shell in sand and silt. The bottom of this layer was not reached. A small hole dug in one corner at the end of the field-work indicated that as much as 50 cm of deposit still remained above the original beach sands.

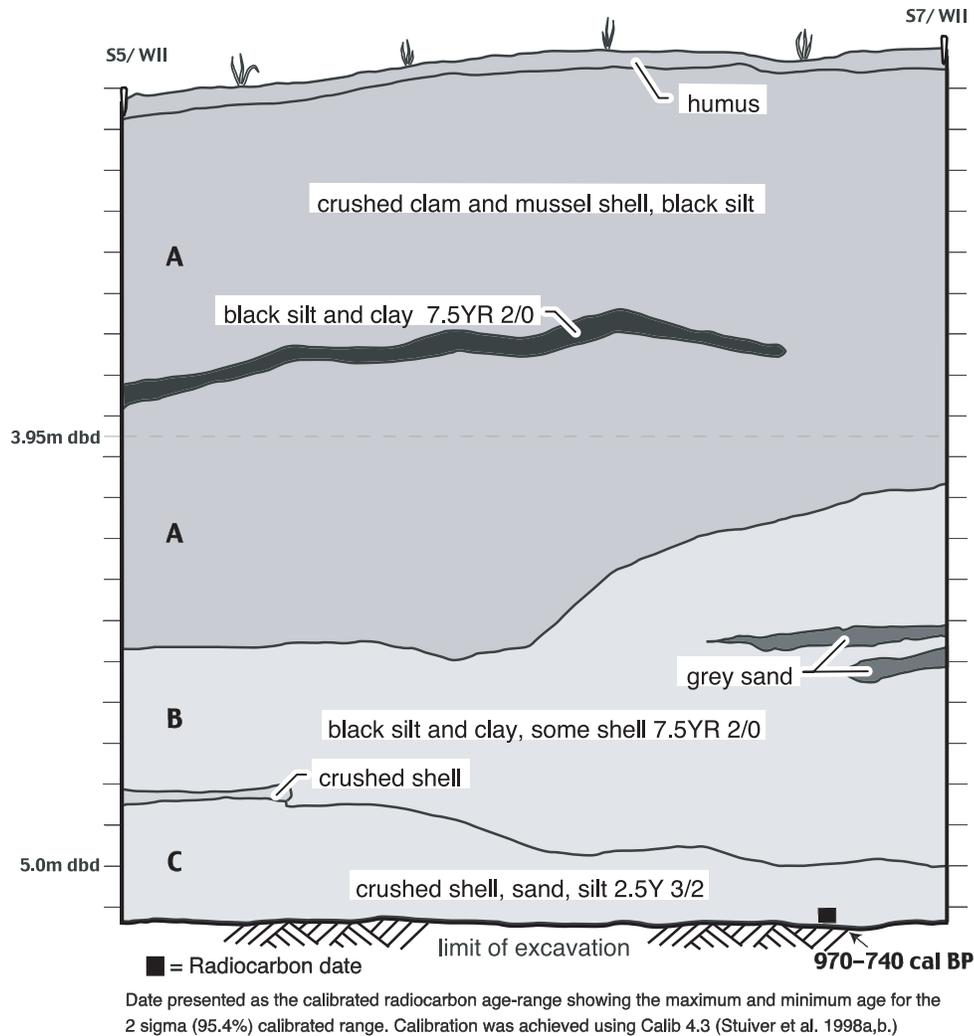
Black silt (Munsell 7.5YR 2/0) comprised the upper stratum (Layer A) of the 2001 unit. This was underlain by a thick deposit of burnt crushed shell. Layer C is black silt with crushed shell. Near the bottom, Layer D is a dark brown clay (Munsell 10YR 2/2), with large sand lenses within. Layer E is the sterile brown sand (Munsell 10YR 3/3) of the original beach.

A charcoal sample was taken from the base of each unit and submitted for radiocarbon analysis. The sample from the 2001 unit provided a result of 930 to 670 cal BP (860±60 BP; Beta-158748). The sample from the final excavated level of the 1999 unit yielded an age estimate of 970 to 740 cal BP (970±60 BP; Beta-134657). As this unit had not reached the base of deposit, the initial occupation of this portion of the site would have been somewhat earlier.

### **Artifacts Recovered**

Only 34 artifacts were found at Himayis (28 in the 1999 unit and only 6 in the 2001 unit). This represents a very low artifact density for volume of deposit removed (3.1 artifacts per cubic metre). This is substantially below the main site of Ts'ishaa (4.5 artifacts per cubic metre), which has already been noted as having a low artifact density, and markedly below other major Nuu-chah-nulth sites, such as T'ukw'aa (13.3 artifacts per cubic metre).

Himayis artifact categories and numbers are shown in Table 9. Those of bone and antler domi-



**Figure 64. Stratigraphic profile at Himayis (S 5-7 W 11-13, east wall).**

nate this small assemblage, comprising 91.2% of the total. Only two abrasive stone fragments and a fragment of historic glass are of other materials. Although the actual numbers are small, bone points, bipoints, and fragments of such tools make up the most common categories (accounting for 58.8% of the total), as at Ts'ishaa. Most or all of these would have been parts of composite fishing gear.

#### *Artifacts of bone and antler*

**Barbed bone point** (1) This small reworked artifact, measuring (2.9) x 0.8 x 0.4 cm, is missing only a small area at its tip (Fig. 65, lower row). One clearly defined barb is evident along one side. It appears to be the tip portion of a barbed bone point that has been reworked after breakage. The base of the object has been sawn from each face

perpendicular to the axis, then snapped to length, leaving a central ridge. Deep incisions run nearly the length of each face, from the barb to the base, suggesting that the object was being sectioned in width. It was snapped from the groove on one side, but did not break to the opposing groove, which was left intact. It would appear that a small barbed point was being made from a fragment of a larger barbed artifact.

**Bone points** (9) Three points are characterized by an abrupt tip, with greatest width near the tip (although two have their greatest width closer to the centre than the norm for this type). All are roughly rounded rectangles in cross-section, with sides contracting to flat or slightly wedged bases. The largest, missing only a small area at the tip, is (5.4) x 0.7 x 0.4 cm. Two others are complete (3.2

**Table 9. Artifacts from Himayis (DfSi-17)  
No.=34.**

	1999	2001	
<b>Bone and Antler</b>			
barbed bone point	1		
bone points			
abrupt tip	3		
small wedge-based	1		
fragments	5		
bone bipoints	6	1	
tips of pointed	3		
bone tools			
bone awls	2	2	
harpoon valve	1		
possible fish hook	1		
shank			
misc. worked bone	2		
large whalebone	1		
harpoon fragment			
whalebone wedge		1	
worked whale bulla	1		
Total bone & antler			31 (91.2%)
<b>Stone</b>			
abrasive stones	1	1	
Total stone			2 (5.9%)
<b>Historic materials</b>			
glass fragment		1	
Total historic			1 (2.9%)
materials			

x 0.7 x 0.4 and 3.3 x 0.6 x 0.4 cm). These objects likely served as arming points in composite harpoon heads, although other uses, such as barbs on composite fishhooks, are also possible.

One small wedge-based point was also recovered. It is a thin, finely finished point of bird bone which has a sharp tip and a polished narrow wedge-shaped base. It is complete at 3.4 x 0.3 x 0.1 cm.

Five point fragments are of land mammal bone. All are fairly large, with several clearly being from points of substantial size. All come to a blunt point, which presumably is the base of the artifact.

**Bone bipoints** (7) The four complete examples are slender, symmetrical, finely finished objects of bird bone or land mammal bone which are sharply

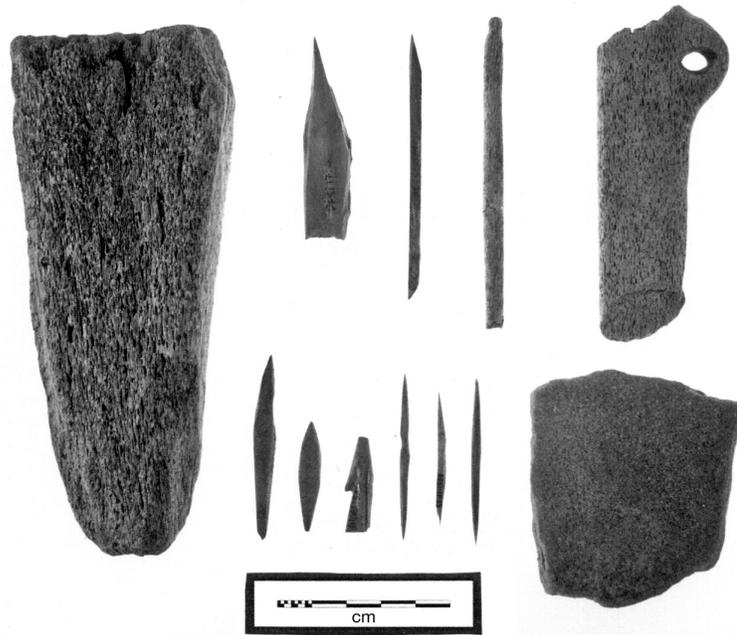
pointed at both ends (Fig. 65, lower row). Two are 4.9 cm in length, while two are 4.1 cm. One of the larger examples is markedly indented around its centre, presumably for attachment of a line. The three incomplete examples are all slightly stouter bipoints of land mammal bone. All three are markedly asymmetrical, taking the form of elongated scalene triangles. All objects in this category would have served as gorge hooks for taking fish or waterfowl.

**Tips of pointed bone tools** (3) Three relatively small and thin pointed fragments presumably came from small bone points or bipoints. They could also be tips of other tools such as awls, but seem too slight for such a purpose.

**Bone awls** (4) All four objects in the category are splinters of land mammal bone which have been sharpened to a point at one end (Fig. 65, upper row). One complete example, 5.9 cm in length, has been worked to a long tapering rounded sharp tip at one end, while the other end is the natural bone splinter. A longer and narrower bone splinter, 7.8 cm in length, has been modified only at its sharpened tip, which is placed asymmetrically at the end of one side. Two other fragments are also rough splinters with one sharpened end.

**Harpoon valve** (1) One small, wide, flaring, bluntly pointed bone object (3.2 x 1.0 x 0.4 cm) is identified as a small ancillary valve for a two-piece harpoon head. It lacks any channel for the foreshaft socket, but its general shape and flaring base suggest identification as a valve. Similar objects were relatively common at Yuquot (Dewhurst 1980:243–8), particularly in the earlier levels. They are recorded, but rare, at Ts'ishaa. The more common channelled or slotted valves of later period Nuu-chah-nulth sites were not found at Himayis, although this is likely due to the small size of the assemblage.

**Possible fishhook shank** (1) This narrow elongated artifact of polished sea mammal bone, (9.2) cm in length, is missing its distal end (Fig. 65, upper row). It is a rounded square in cross-section, 0.7 cm in thickness. The intact, presumably proximal, end is a flattened circle, with a shallow encircling groove just below it, presumably for line attachment. One possibility is that this is a fishhook shank which is now missing its distal end, although other interpretations are possible.



**Figure 65. Himayis artifacts (clockwise from left: whalebone wedge, two bone splinter awls, possible fishhook shank, large whalebone harpoon fragment, abrasive stone, three bone bipoints, barbed bone point, two bone points).**

Miscellaneous worked bone (2) An elongated fragment of worked sea mammal bone is oval in cross-section and has one rounded end. The other end is missing. The second object is a small fragment of land mammal bone with a deep sawn groove down its length.

Large whalebone harpoon fragment (1) This well-made, highly-polished artifact of sea mammal bone appears to be the base of what would have been a very large, presumably barbed, one-piece harpoon head (Fig. 65, upper right). It takes the form of an elongated rectangle, with a semi-circular line guard projecting from one side. The line guard is biconically perforated with a central hole for line attachment. In cross-section, the object is essentially rectangular, with flat polished faces and sides. It is (9.8) cm in length, 3.8 cm in width (across the line guard), and 1.3 cm thick (at the line guard). The complete object would have been very large, with an estimated length in the range of 25 to 30 cm.

Dewhirst (1980:295) illustrates a very similar artifact from Zone III at Yuquot. That object also has a rectangular base and a projecting biconically-drilled line guard. It is complete at 30.1 cm in length, with three large isolated barbs along

one side. Large barbed whalebone harpoons also came from Shoemaker Bay II (McMillan and St. Claire (1982:100) and Ch'uumat'a, on western Barkley Sound (McMillan and St. Claire 1996:34–35).

Whalebone wedge (1) This complete wedge (measuring 15.1 x 6.2 x 2.1 cm) is based on a split section of whalebone (Fig. 65, left). It has relatively straight sides which converge to a slightly rounded bit. It is roughly made, with little finishing evident. The flattened butt shows evidence of battering, which has compressed the bone and knocked off several small flakes.

Worked whale bulla (1) The thinner outer edge of this whale auditory bulla appears to have been chipped away, leaving only the hard, dense bone at its centre. Apparent flaking scars are evident along a ridge where the thinner bone was removed. One end of this object is blackened by burning.

A nearly identical artifact came from the main village of Ts'ishaa. Similar objects were found in some number at Ozette, where it was first suggested that these hard bones served as crude scraping tools (Fisken 1994: 375–6).

### *Artifacts of stone*

Abrasive stones (2) Both are fragments of sandstone abraders. The largest has been ground flat on both faces and on its one intact edge. The other is a very small fragment with rounded sides, but with both faces ground flat.

### *Artifacts of historic materials*

Glass fragment (1) This is a piece of clear window glass, 0.2 cm in thickness. It is obviously recent, coming from the upper stratum, just under the surface. It likely dates to Benson's use of the area, rather than the aboriginal occupation, although occasional Tseshaht use of this site continued into quite late times.

### **Faunal Remains**

No detailed analysis has been conducted on the shell from Himayis, nor on the vertebrate fauna

except for one column sample. Field notes indicate that vertebrate remains, particularly fish, were abundant. At least one large concentration of whale elements was exposed. One fragment, a vertebral process, was identified through DNA analysis as humpback whale (Watt 2003). This came from toward the bottom of the 1999 unit, but well above the radiocarbon date of 970 to 740 cal BP.

The column sample collected from the 1999 unit was examined for microfauna, particularly small fish remains (Appendix E). A total of 3403 faunal elements was recovered, with those of fish comprising 99% of the total. Herring dominate the identified fish species, at nearly half (46.97%) of the total, followed by anchovy, greenling, salmon and rockfish. This suite of fish closely parallels the fish assemblage from the main village of Ts'ishaa. Herring, anchovy, greenling, and rockfish would have been available in the rocky nearshore environment around Benson Island. Salmon becomes more abundant in later deposits, as is documented in the upper layers of EA 2 at Ts'ishaa.