

Giga'ak at Takush Harbour

The village in Takush Harbour, known by the elders as Giga'ak but generally known as Takush, was an ancient village. As early as 1867 British Admiralty charts show an "Indian Village" at its present location but it was not until around 1890, when the Gwa'sala moved from their winter village at Wyclese that Giga'ak became the principal village and home that Gwa'sala elders remember today.

When the Gwa'sala relocated to Tsulquate in 1964, they left behind a self-sufficient village of 11 houses connected by a wooden walkway to a schoolhouse and teacher's house. Three of these houses were built on two small islands facing the shore and two were float houses in the bay. A sketch of the village site made shortly after the relocation to Tsulquate identifies the following house owners: Robert Walkus, Jim Walkus, John Wesley Walkus, George J. Walkus Charlie Boone, Ed Walkus, David Johnny, Mary George, Happy Boone, Louis Walkus, and Vivian Paul.



Takush, 1964

Each family had their own boat that they tied to the float houses at high tide or anchored in the bay. If they needed a doctor they went to Bella Bella or Alert Bay by boat until the 1950s when they travelled by plane.

The first school was built in 1927 and the first teacher was Charley G. Walkus. He was followed by a succession of teachers, usually white single women. The Gwa'sala and the United Church struggled to keep the school open in spite of many attempts by the Department of Indian Affairs to close it down but there was still a school at Takush at the time of the relocation, even though a number of young Gwa'sala children also attended residential school at Alert Bay. In the 1950s and 1960s the school at Takush was run by Frank and Ada Johnson of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

In the 1950s the community took up a collection to buy a sawmill from one of the local logging companies. The sawmill belonged to everyone and was used to mill lumber to build homes, to repair old houses and floats and to build gill net boats. The community also built a wooden walkway between the village and the school.

There was a little pond in the middle of the village, a 10 x 10 hole of moving water where the families did their laundry and rain water was collected in big wooden barrels. Above the pond was a spot where they got drinking water. There was sometimes a shortage of good quality drinking water in the summer and in the 1950s the water problem prompted the villagers to consider moving to Ethel Cove. Dan Goertzen, a local logger, offered to help and plans to move were underway when the Department of Indian Affairs vetoed the idea.