

## **Map'ehghem and Ukw'enehy - Deserters**

In the spring, most of the 'Nakwaxda'xw left their winter homes at Ba'as and Sagwembala for the halibut fishing on the Deserters Group of Islands located off the northeast coast of Vancouver Island between Port Hardy and Blunden Harbour. The old village and reserve (IR#4 Mahpahkum) was a substantial 'Nakwaxda'xw village located at the northern end of Deserters Island. A second fishing village, Uk'wenehy, was located on Wishart Island. The name Uk'weneh also refers to the whole group of islands.

In 1888, Nakwaxda'xw Chief Maxwa, requested a reserve at "Mar-que-cum" at Deserters. At this time there were nine houses and gardens at a halibut fishing village and sealing station on Deserters. The local Indian Agent recommended an 80 acre reserve but only a small 19.3 acre reserve was allotted.

The importance of halibut as a dietary staple as well as a trade item was described in Indian Agent Halliday's 1912 Report: "In the early spring they fish and cure halibut, which they use themselves and sell to other Indians or exchange for other products. This curing is done by cutting the fish in very thin slices and drying it in the sun. It keeps well and is very wholesome."

In 1914 Chief George Putl'idaghamah testified to the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs: "That Island out there where we have our fishing station: we fish for halibut on that island - There are two things we get there, the halibut and the seaweed... There are nine houses there."

In 1922 Charles Gileese, Alfred Charlie's father, submitted another request to the Commission, "We want the Group Islands (Indian name Ugina) to be established as a reserve for our use." No additional allotment was made.