

## Weirs on Texada's Coastline

Recently a number of Texada Island residents have become more aware of the Indian fishing traps made of stones. There are several in the intertidal zone along our coast.

A weir is defined as: a fence set in a waterway for catching fish. The fence may be made of stakes or brushwood or stones.

Hunters of the sea by R. Stephen Irwin (Hancock House publishers Ltd., Surrey, BC 1984) describes how weirs used by pacific Northwest Indians to trap fish.

"Tidal fluctuations were effectively utilized to catch great numbers of salmon. Amassed at river mouths and along beached before ascending to their spawning grounds, the milling salmon rode the tidal drift as the tides ebbed and flowed. Great semicircular stone fences were constructed well below the high tide line. During the high tide, the unsuspecting salmon lolled with the flow over the top of the trap. As the tide ebbed, the top of the stone fence stuck up above the water, and prevented the fish from returning to the sea. Remains of these stone traps are still evident at several places along the Northwest Coast."

The weirs on our foreshore can be described as archaeological features. The Archaeology Branch under the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry Responsible for culture has been active in assisting the Texada Island Heritage Society in our efforts to preserve these historical structures. The Heritage Conservation Act exists to encourage and facilitate the protection and conservation of heritage sites and objects in British Columbia. The Texada Island Heritage society became concerned in August 1991, when mining of flower rock commenced in Gillies Bay very close to the weir on the foreshore between Balsam and Cedar Streets, in front of the McKenzie, Waters and Thompson properties. Although a mineral claim had been granted, such activity in the intertidal zone was nevertheless illegal. We contacted and set up Correspondence with Dr. Steven Acheson at the Archaeology Branch.

In March of this year, Mr. C. Conte, Deputy Director of the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, stated that the mineral claim in question "has no mineral rights to any land below the high tide level. This mineral claim has since been canceled. Never the less, the RCMP detachment is unable to act if the weir is disturbed until such time as the weir is officially identified and a process completed which would make the weir eligible for protection under the Heritage Conservation Act.

For this reason, Dr. Acheson arranged to come to Gillies Bay on May 17. He was accompanied by a former colleague, Mr. Sid Riley from Powell River, who volunteered his time for this project. Harry Barclay assisted them with their measurements at the weir site.

Dr. Acheson has a distinguished background in the field of Archaeology. He has studied at Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, and Oxford University in England. He feels that the weir he charted here was built more than 150 years ago and has suggested that the proposed Recreation Map Reserve on Gillies Bay would afford some protection to weirs in this area.