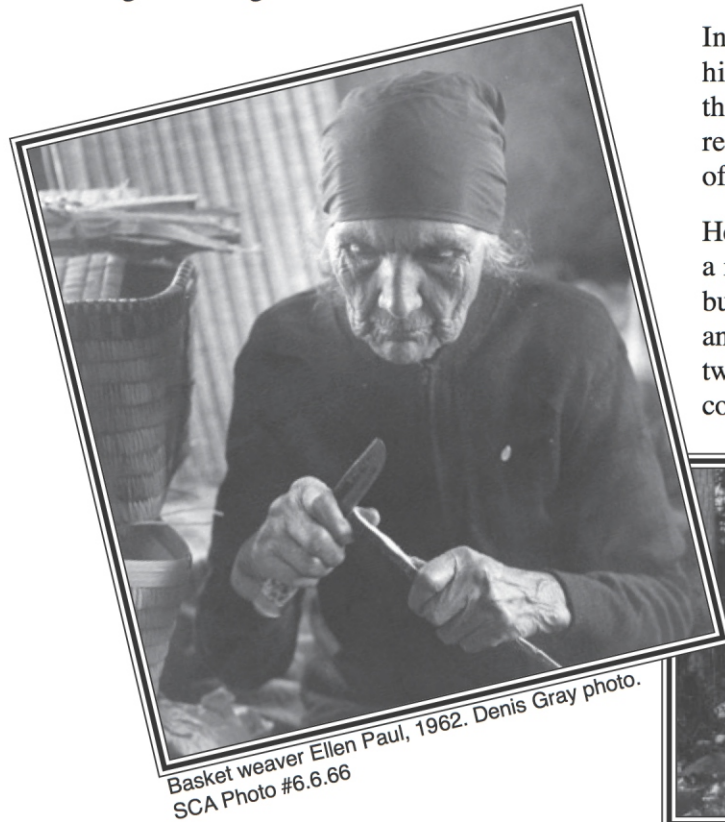


Sechelt's Story

The first self-governing nation (1986) in Canada, the Shishalh, were the original residents of the Sunshine Coast. Their tenure is measured in thousands of years. Their history and current day culture is displayed in the Band's museum in Sechelt and is visible in (protected) petroglyphs and middens along the shorelines.

After the Europeans came to the area, the band members left more than 30 villages scattered throughout the Sunshine Coast to settle in Sechelt. The T'Sain Ko mall at the entrance to Sechelt and the large sand and gravel operation on band land are testaments to their ever-growing partnerships on and off the Coast with major companies.

Captain W.S. Jemmett conducted the first legal survey in the Sechelt area in 1875 and in 1891, John Scales, formerly a Royal Engineer, received and paid for his military land grant – 150 acres comprising today's village of Sechelt. He soon sold them to the Hon. Hugh Nelson whose widow in turn sold them to recent English immigrant Herbert Whitaker in 1895.



Basket weaver Ellen Paul, 1962. Denis Gray photo.
SCA Photo #6.6.66

In 1894, Thomas J. Cook, also from England, his wife Sarah and infant daughter Ada were the first European settlers to take up permanent residence in Sechelt. Today four generations of their descendants live on the Sunshine Coast.

Herbert Whitaker saw the potential for Sechelt as a resort and a resource for lumber and fish. He built two hotels, a series of stores, two wharves and a group of revenue cottages as well as owning two sawmills, five logging camps and a steamship company, all before he was 40.



Cook family's first Sechelt home, 1894. SCA Photo #6.14.9



Steamship at Sechelt dock, 1914. SCA Photo #6.3.56

One of his revenue cottages is still occupied today on the Boulevard. Many descendants of the Whitaker family still reside and run businesses in Sechelt. Other pioneer settlers came either to work for Herbert Whitaker or to establish their own farms, logging or fishing businesses. Their descendants continue to live on the Sunshine Coast.

As access to the Sunshine Coast was by water, Herbert Whitaker started the Sechelt Steamship Company to bring tourists to his hotel and cottages, supplies to his stores and workers to his logging operations. After his death in 1925 (at age 50), the Union Steamship Company, which had already acquired the All Red Line's ships and tourist resort at Selma Park just east of Sechelt in 1917, bought the Whitaker properties and added a dance pavilion and tearoom on the Sechelt waterfront.

Union Steamships brought large parties of tourists for day trips to Sechelt and Selma Park or to spend the summer months in its campgrounds, cottages and hotels until, in 1944, its Selma Park properties were sold. In 1956 its Sechelt holdings were

relinquished and the Village of Sechelt was incorporated.

Logging and fishing may have declined in importance in the economy of the Sunshine Coast but the holiday atmosphere of Sechelt continues to this day: cottages, cabins, lodges, motels and campgrounds are run by many Sechelt residents and attract growing numbers of tourists.

One of the most attractive lodges, built in 1936, sits high above the west end of Cowrie Street – Rockwood Lodge. After almost 45 years of providing holiday accommodation, it closed in 1980 and reopened, thanks to the efforts of local author Betty Keller and other interested residents, in 1983 as the site for the very successful Sunshine Coast Festival of the Written Arts.

Today Rockwood Lodge is open to the public and is the most important heritage landmark. Plaques depicting local history can also be seen at various locations.



Rockwood Lodge, 1948. SCA Photo #rc.14