



Lake Babine Nation

Commercial/Economic Fisheries; Brief Overview

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Best Practices Forum, Kamloops

Lake Babine Nation (LBN)



- ❑ Babine-Carrier peoples
 - Made up of 5 communities located along Babine Lake and upper Babine River
- ❑ Membership of ~2500
 - Off-reserve membership all over but primarily Smithers, Burns Lake and Prince George
- ❑ Babine system – major Skeena tributary
 - 90%+ of the annual Skeena sockeye production

Skeena Watershed and the Babine System

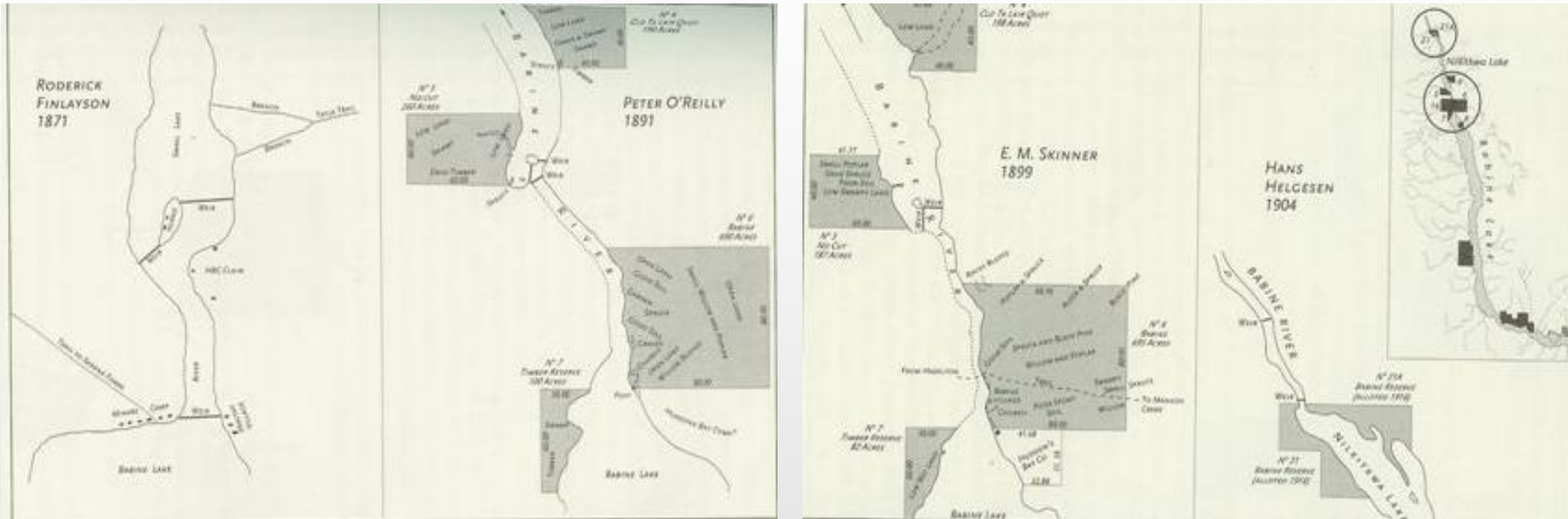


- ❑ Map of watershed and Babine system
- ❑ LBN particularly well situated to manage and harvest returning sockeye
- ❑ Possessed a well developed management system
 - Series of intricate weirs and traps used to manage & harvest salmon
- ❑ 1904-1906 Barricade Treaty
 - Outlawed the weir system – for the purposes of the emerging marine-based industry

Traditional Weir on Babine



Unique Position; Weir Systems, Harvesting and Processing



- Prior to contact Aboriginal Fish Harvesters were able to maintain high levels of exploitation without causing a negative effect on the fisheries resource (Walter et.al , 2000)
- The LBN people were known to catch and preserve approximately 750,000 sockeye in one season (Harris, 2001)
- Allowed extensive trade with other First Nations, and later with Europeans
- The business relationship between the HBC and Babines lasted almost one hundred years, is well documented, and would probably have carried on had regulation not prohibited the sale of salmon (Palmer, 2004)
- Consumption of Sockeye by Aboriginal Peoples in 1928 was estimated at 100- 200 pieces/year. This figure is likely low as the Hudson's bay Company estimated ~ 4/day for an adult and 1/day for a child (Palmer, 2004)

Skeena Sockeye; Key Points



- ❑ Babine – by far largest lake – largest contributor to “Skeena sockeye” production (90%+ annual adult returns)
 - 1945 – enumeration fence built
- ❑ 1951 – slide on Babine River (major impact)
- ❑ BLDP (Pinkut and Fulton channels)
 - Initiated in 1962 – enhance fry production to fully utilize Babine Lake’s productive capacity
 - 1965-1971 – 3 spawning channels; 2 flow control devices

Skeena Sockeye; Key Points



- ❑ Babine – largest nursery lake – largest contributor to “Skeena sockeye” production (90%+ of annual adult returns)
 - 1945 – enumeration fence built near lake outlet
- ❑ 1951 – slide on Babine River (major impact)
- ❑ BLDP (Pinkut and Fulton channels)
 - Initiated in 1962 – enhance fry production to fully utilize Babine Lake’s productive capacity
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Skeena Sockeye; Key Points



- ❑ Some results...
 - Sockeye production predominantly from enhanced (Fulton and Pinkut) stocks since mid-1970s
 - Spawning channel origin allows high rates of exploitation
- ❑ By-catch issues constraining exploitation in mixed stock fisheries
- ❑ ESSR common; increasing pressure for reduced mixed stock exploitation due to other values
 - i.e. stock/species selective fisheries

Lake Babine's "Contemporary" Economic/Commercial Fishery



- ❑ Since 1992 ESSR (Excess Salmon to Spawning Requirements) opportunities in years when declared
 - More recently – ESSR and Economic Opportunity (EO)
 - Both types of licenced fisheries operated and managed by LBN
 - Business model has generally been sale-direct to buyer/processor at landing sites (focus on maximizing harvest)

Lake Babine's "Contemporary" Economic/Commercial Fishery

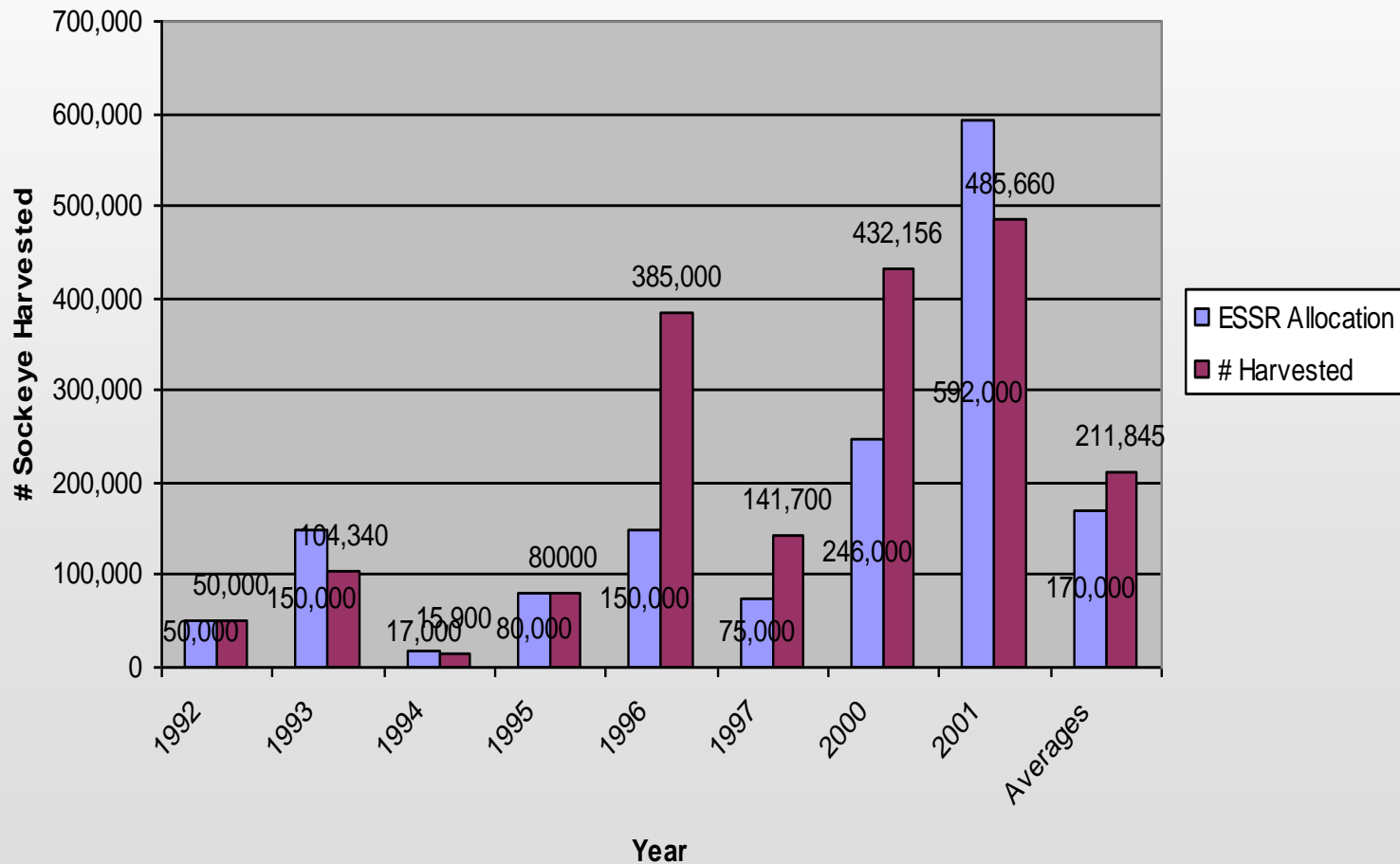


- ❑ Size of harvest has been highly variable
- ❑ Two methods of fishery
 - Dip-net fishery at the Babine weir (counting fence)
 - Higher visual quality characteristics/value fish
 - Beach seine and purse seine fishery (in front of spawning channels – Pinkut and Fulton)
 - Size of harvest has been highly variable

Annual Harvest Variability



LBN Commercial Sockeye Harvests 1992-2001



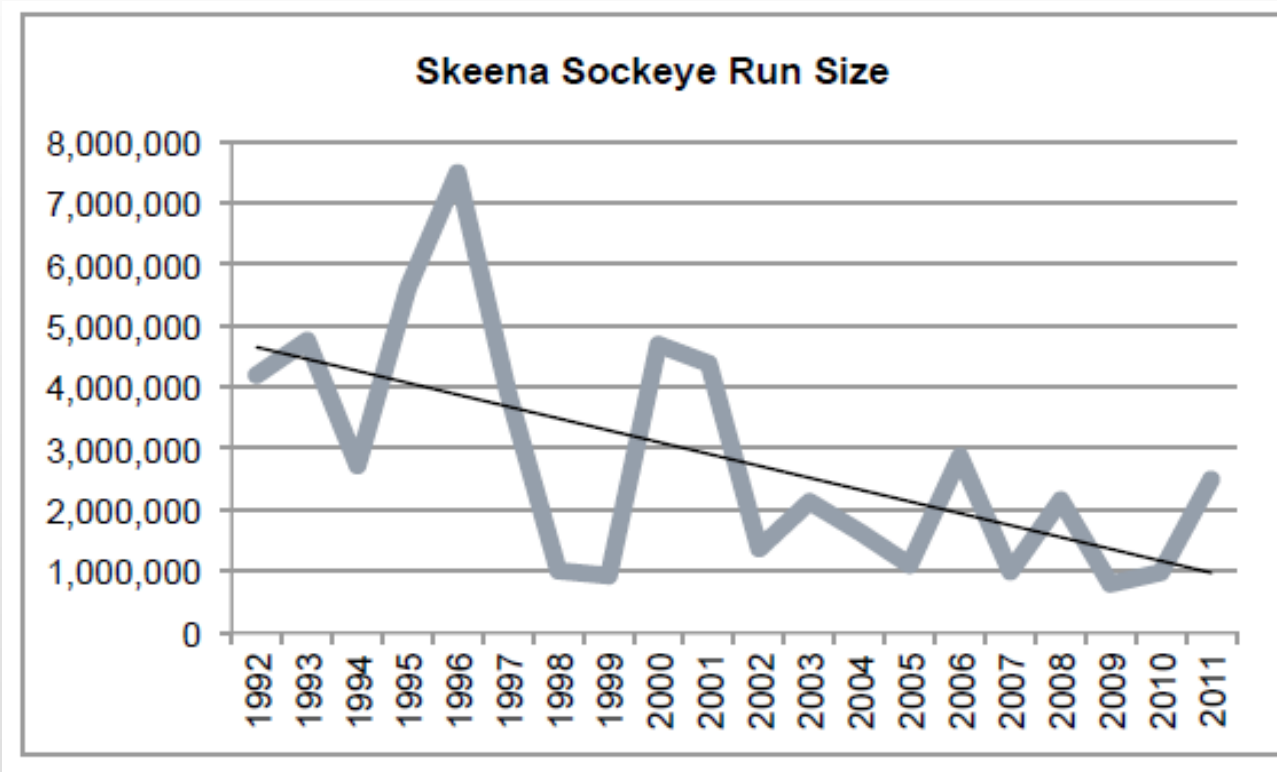
Annual Harvest Variability



- ❑ Since 2001 – far more variability
- ❑ Numbers below represent total Skeena ESSR and EO

Period	Average Run Size	# Yrs with No ESSR	Avg Allowable ESSR	Avg Allowable Econ Opp
Last 5 Yrs	1,487,899	3	129,935	22,672
Last 10 Yrs	1,657,178	4	158,554	27,183
Last 20 Yrs	2,813,000	6	520,324	73,152
2002-2006	1,826,456	1	187,173	31,693

Run Size Trend (effects ESSR)



Some Photos



Some Photos



Some Photos



Some Photos



Some Photos



Some Photos



2011 Fishery Summary



- ❑ Dip-net (Babine Fence) – 32,848 pieces (adult sockeye) – 5 days of harvesting (Aug 13 – 24)
- ❑ Beach seine (Fulton) – 185,393 pieces – Aug 20 – Sep 8
- ❑ Sales (direct to buyer)
 - Multiple agreements (different buyers, fence/Fulton)
 - 99+% to two processors
 - Some to Skeena Wild, UFFCA, ifoods
 - Some fresh sales (700+)

How is FSC fishery protected?



- ❑ Very vibrant FSC fishery (all species); sockeye in particular – strong cultural linkage to sockeye
 - Strong support for commercial component (conceptually inseparable from “food”)
- ❑ LBN operates/manages the Babine Fence
 - Facilitates ease in its use as a commercial and FSC platform
 - Open and closed times for FSC – set schedule
- ❑ Seine fisheries separated spatially from key FSC fishery areas

How is the “viability” of the fishery being ensured?



- ❑ Viability of opportunity
 - Very conservation oriented – supports long term viability of stocks
 - Strategic partnerships
- ❑ Economic viability – pursued via PICFI & strategic partnerships
 - Branching-out beyond existing business model
 - “Brand” recognition being developed
 - Professionalizing – efficiencies
 - Seeking access (over & above ESSR)

Challenges

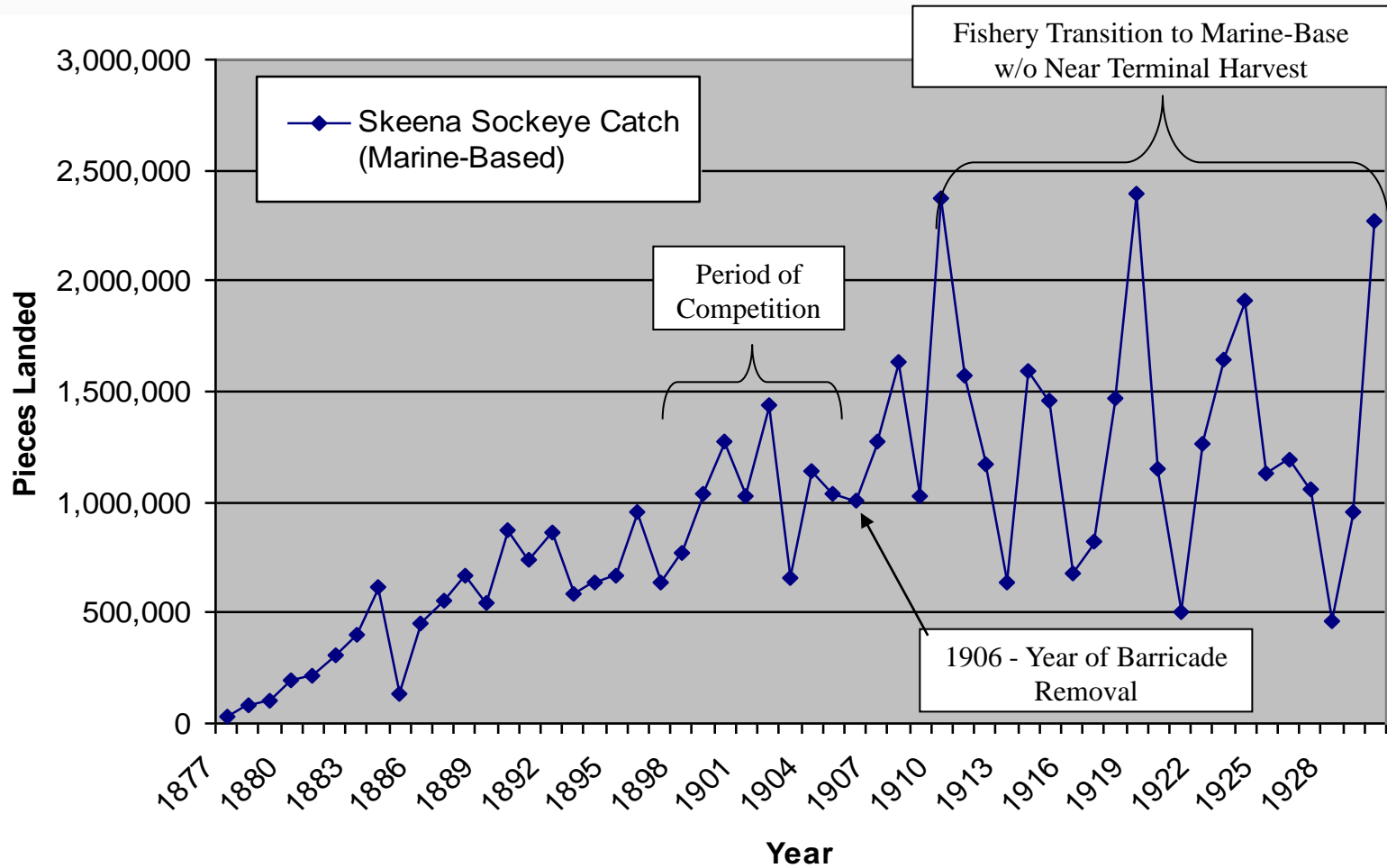


- ❑ Similar to other inland scenarios – infrastructure limitations force the economic model
 - towards redress via strategic partnerships and PICFI
- ❑ Timing-Notice (ESSR Fishery)
- ❑ Capacity (skill sets, HR availability, equipment, resources)
- ❑ Data (stock id and timing) – harvesting method
- ❑ Community dynamics
- ❑ Opposition from marine fisheries/sport fisheries

Questions?



Marine-Based Skeena Sockeye Catch 1877-1930



Marine-Based Skeena Sockeye Catch 1931-1997

