



Through salmon paradise *By Fritz Mueller*

A few years ago, I joined a raft trip on the Taku River in north-west B.C., just south of the Yukon border, at the invitation of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation. The Taku and its tributaries, a 30,000-square-kilometre area straddling the B.C.-Alaska border, is the largest pristine salmon-bearing watershed in the world. It's home to plenty of wildlife, including high densities of bears and all five species of Pacific salmon (chinook, sockeye, pink, coho and chum).

This might have been the fishiest place I've ever been – everything eats salmon, smells of salmon, and the ecology of the watershed revolves around salmon. It's also a spectacular wilderness.

The Tlingit have a long history in the region, and nowadays they have an active commercial and subsistence fishery on the river.

Inland Tlingit people work and hunt throughout the Taku watershed. Many commute from Atlin, B.C., to the river to work on the aboriginal fishery. On the river, they welcomed us to fish camps and gave us tours around their operations. They told us they are concerned about reclamation, access and reactivation plans for the abandoned Tulsequah Chief Mine on a Taku tributary. The Tlingit care deeply about the sustainability of the Taku River, and each year carry out ecological monitoring programs throughout the watershed. [UP](#)



MAIN: Loni Jack in her family's salmon smokehouse on the Upper Taku. **TOP LEFT:** Elycia Carlick works at a fish weir at Kuthai Lake. Bears here are abundant, so she carries a shotgun. **TOP RIGHT:** Vernon Williams lives in Atlin, but works at the fish plant on the lower Taku in the summer. **ABOVE:** River guide Patricia Thomson steers sightseers down the Taku. **FAR LEFT:** Michelle Williams hoists a chinook on the dock in Juneau. **LEFT:** Sacred sites, like this Tlingit grave house, are left behind from when people lived here year-round.