

## Palah'tsis: Place of Cradle

Prior to contact the Lkwungen had a sacred place they referred to as Palah'tsis, which translated to "Place of Cradle". This area today is known as the Songhees Development or Delta Ocean Pointe Resort. Along the beautiful stretch, upon contact, the Lkwungen gathered in this specific area to conduct trade, to work as cheap labour for Fort Victoria, and strategically place themselves so any other Nations that wanted to negotiate with the early settlers had to request and negotiate with the Lkwungen as traditional keepers of this area. Well before Fort Victoria was built this area housed the Kosapsum, Camosung, and Sxweng'xwung all of which are the ancestors of what is now known as the Esquimalt Nation today. They identified as the Lkwungen elth'telnexw "place to smoke herring people".



The landmark Palah'tsis was a large rocky area where the Lkwungen would conduct rites of passage ceremonies for toddlers. The teachings are when parents recognized that their child was walking soundly on the ground that the little one was acknowledging that they are choosing to stay in this realm of reality with us and not choosing to go back to the spirit world. To acknowledge the child's decision, the family would host an event at Palah'tsis and invite family and community to participate and witness this landmark for the child.

Parents in preparation would invite family to place day to day work objects, foods, medicines and ceremonial items into the cradle. Cradles were often Cedar coil weave or red cedar bentwood. They would place each item into the cradle with intention. Intent and commitment that whatever they individually placed into the cradle they would ensure throughout that child's journey they would teach them the balance and important of that item and how it related to their family, culture, governance, and land and water resources.

Family would host an event where they would place that cradle into the ocean by Palah'tsis and set it free into the waters. They would hire a speaker to conduct the work for them and call upon witnesses to the work. By all witnessing they committed to supporting that child and all the gifts that were placed in the cradle. They became the parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents of that child and mentored all the necessary teachings so that they were equipped to manage and become a caretaker of their family, community and culture.

Today, there are no Lkwungen families that practice this ceremony. Though some families still conduct rites of passage ceremonies for their children, it is not done in the old way as likely there would be cultural barriers that would impact this work. We bring honour to these old connections by ensuring that the old teachings and connections to land and water stay alive through oral tradition and continuity in sharing the importance of these landmarks for a child and our role and responsibility as parents and family in ensuring our children and children's' children stay connected to family, community, culture, governance, economics, and land and water relations resources.

Hay'sxw'qa si'em (thank you respected)

Yuxwelupton/ Qwal'qaxala (Bradley Dick)  
Lkwungen, Mamalilikulla, Ditidaht