

**Statement of Significance**  
**Butedale Cannery, Princess Royal**  
**Island, B.C.**

**Description**

The Butedale Cannery site consists of the remains of buildings, structures, wharves and landscape features related to its use as a fish cannery and reduction plant. The remote cannery site is located on the northeast side of Princess Royal Island, approximately 95 km south of Kitimat in northwestern B.C. Adjacent to the cannery is Butedale Creek, originating in Butedale Lake above the site. The cannery buildings are in a general state of disrepair.



The historic place consists of all of the buildings contained within District Lot 29A, and those extending into the water approximately within District Lot 2251, Range 4, Coast Land District.

**Heritage Values**

The Butedale cannery site is valued as one of the last remaining northern cannery sites in British Columbia, and one of four that exist within the Kitimat-Stikine Regional District. The cannery site and surrounding area are part of local First Nations traditional territory. The integration of its location, natural landscape and resources with human activity have determined its form, character and cultural associations. This history is embodied in Butedale's historic, aesthetic, social, associative, and natural values.

Constructed in 1911 by John Wallace, and owned by the Canadian Fishing Company in 1923, the Butedale cannery is historically significant as part of the system of northern cannery construction and company settlement, representative of British Columbia's ocean resource-based economy since the 1880s. It is also important as one of the northern, multi-purpose fish plants that achieved, through diversification, year-round operating status. These functions included the cannery, reduction plant, cold storage and ice manufacture.

Butedale is significant for its success in spite of its early and continued isolation. Originally, all of the northern canneries were lonely waypoints served only by steamships, tugboats and fish-boats. The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway built a rail line along the Skeena River by 1914 providing the Prince Rupert-Skeena River canneries with a new shipping access. Canneries south of Prince Rupert, such as Butedale, remained in isolation. This isolation would require the consolidation of the multi-ethnic workforce and fuel the ingenuity of management and crews to solve any technical breakdowns involving cannery or plant equipment.

Butedale is valued for the extent of its historic character. Rather than in the individual buildings, this character is experienced through the combination of the remaining buildings and structures and the natural landscape of island, forest, creek and lake. The site is valued for its

intangible heritage of memories and stories, collected on the site since 1911. It is representative of the later cannery construction which did not display the traditional L-shaped form due to its original use of the fish-gutting machines, or “iron chink” of which it had two. Its variety of remaining buildings and structures still demonstrate a singular way of life in a remote cannery village.

Butedale exists in its current form in part because of the physical and natural environment found in its location. Its ideal location in proximity to Butedale Creek offered an unlimited supply of fresh water and hydro-electric power generation. Its linear form hugs the foreshore as the residences and bunkhouses step up the steep bank. This physical environment would also assist in the cannery’s physical collapse. The steep foreshore and lack of solid ground for pile driving meant that the cannery complex had to be tied to the shore with cables, and subject to collapse during harsh weather or floods.

Butedale is valued for the historical and architectural merit of its remaining buildings and structures. The buildings are important as rare representative structures of a typical northern British Columbia cannery, including a worker’s bunkhouse, management housing, cookhouse, ice house, packing house, reduction plant, herring oil tanks and powerhouse. Together, these buildings illustrate the different functions and social structure of the cannery.

Butedale’s social values are reflected through its current use as a place of high interest for water based tourism, accentuated by its location on the Inside Passage ferry route. It is valued as ongoing and visible evidence of the role of the Pacific fishery as the basis of settlement and employment in the Kitimat-Stikine region.

### **Character Defining Elements**

Key elements that define the heritage character of Butedale Cannery include:

#### **Site and Setting**

- Remote location
- Direct connection and relationship to Butedale Passage
- Presence of marine industrial heritage
- Spatial layout of the buildings along the waterfront and stepping up the slope
- Sounds, smells of the waterfront
- Evidence of past use of the waterfront
- Clean water and the natural landscape of Butedale Creek

#### **Landscape**

- Internal and external views
- Remains of pathways to the locations of the China house, First Nations bunkhouses and Japanese quarters
- Traces of domestic garden plants and small fences in the vicinity of the Manager’s houses

#### Architectural Features

- Construction on pilings
- Variety of cannery structures in their original locations:
  - Industrial buildings: herring oil tanks, boiler house and stack, reduction plant, packing house, ice house, net loft, powerhouse with intact and working pelton wheels
  - Domestic, administrative or office buildings: Hotel/bunkhouse, remains of store and office, cookhouse (now the caretaker's residence), manager's houses
- Functional design of the buildings
- Use of diverse and appropriate building materials and finishes: board and batten, corrugated iron, brick, wood frame, whitewash, shingles

#### Site Features

- Remains of cannery pilings
- Concrete wharves
- Wooden walkways
- Fire hydrant

## Select Bibliography

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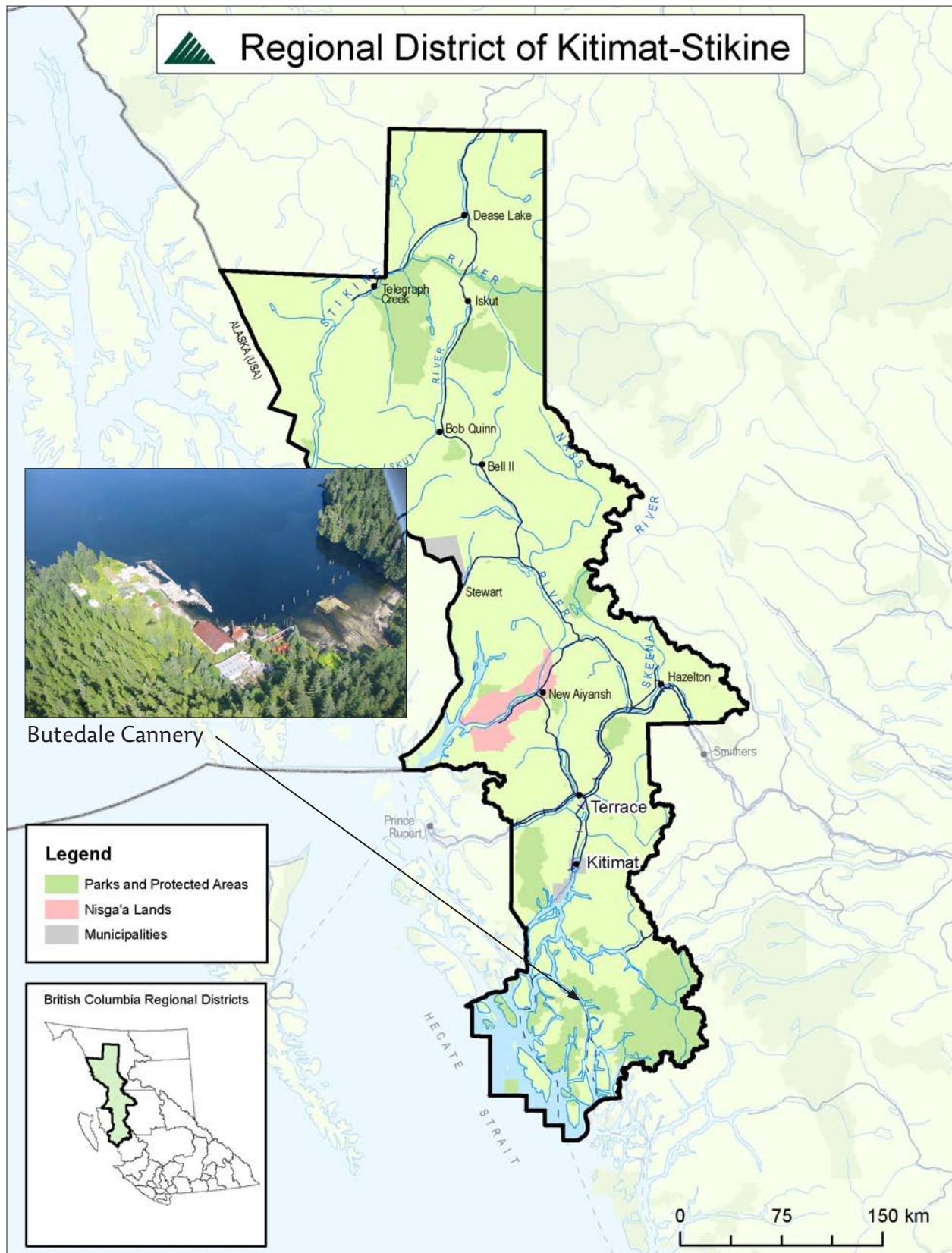
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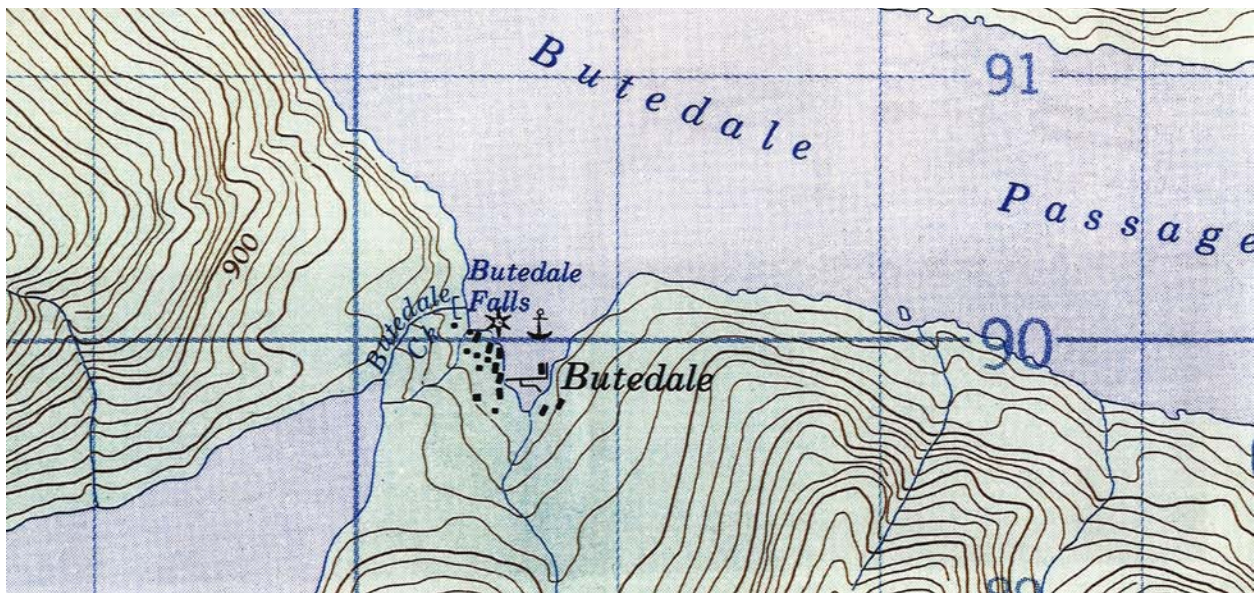
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Butedale Aerial 2008, Google Earth.



Butedale NTS Map sheet 103H/2, c.1950, UBC Map Library.

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Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine Heritage Register 2008  
Butedale Cannery Statement of Significance



Butedale Site Photographs 2008.

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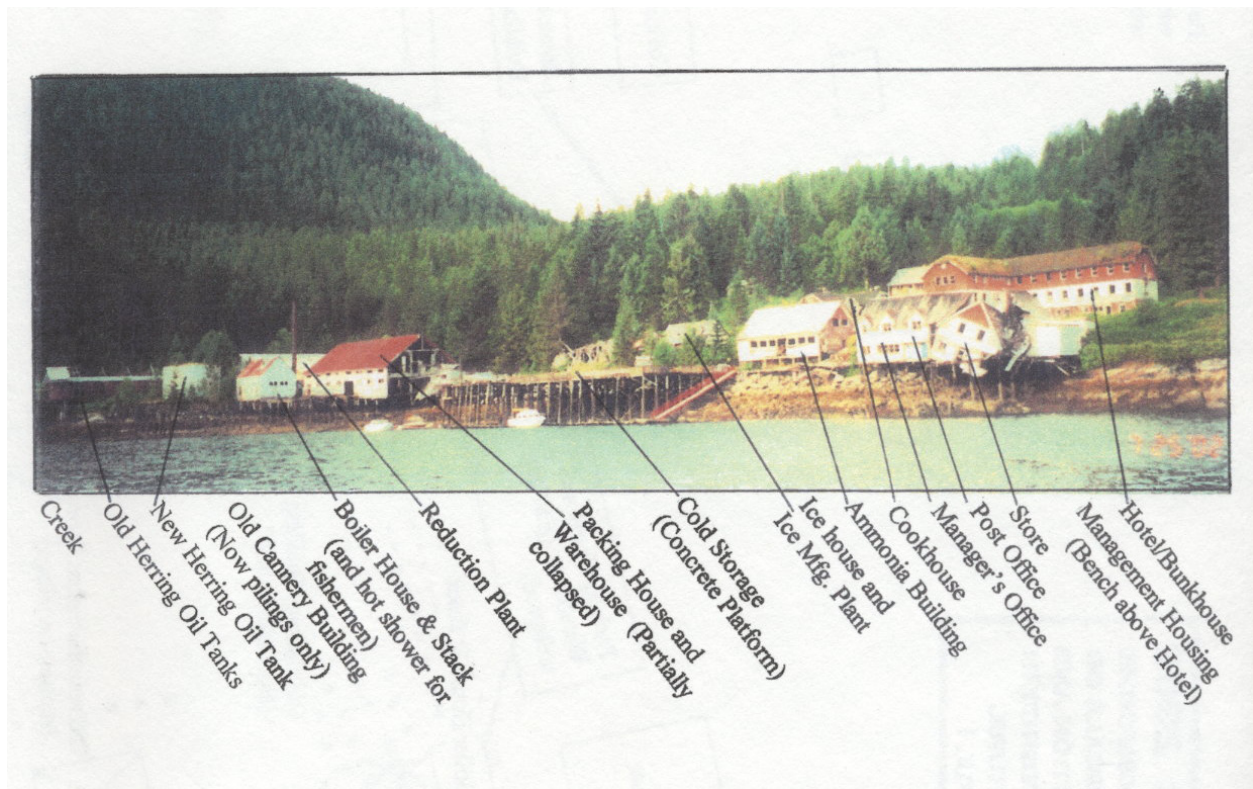




Fishboats at Butedale, 1936. *BC Archives e-01667.*



Butedale Cannery, 1954. *BC Archives i-21891.*



Butedale in 2003. Excerpted from *Butedale, The Shadow*, by Heather McPhail.