

# The eruption of the Tseax volcano on Nisga'a territory at Gitlaxt'aamiks

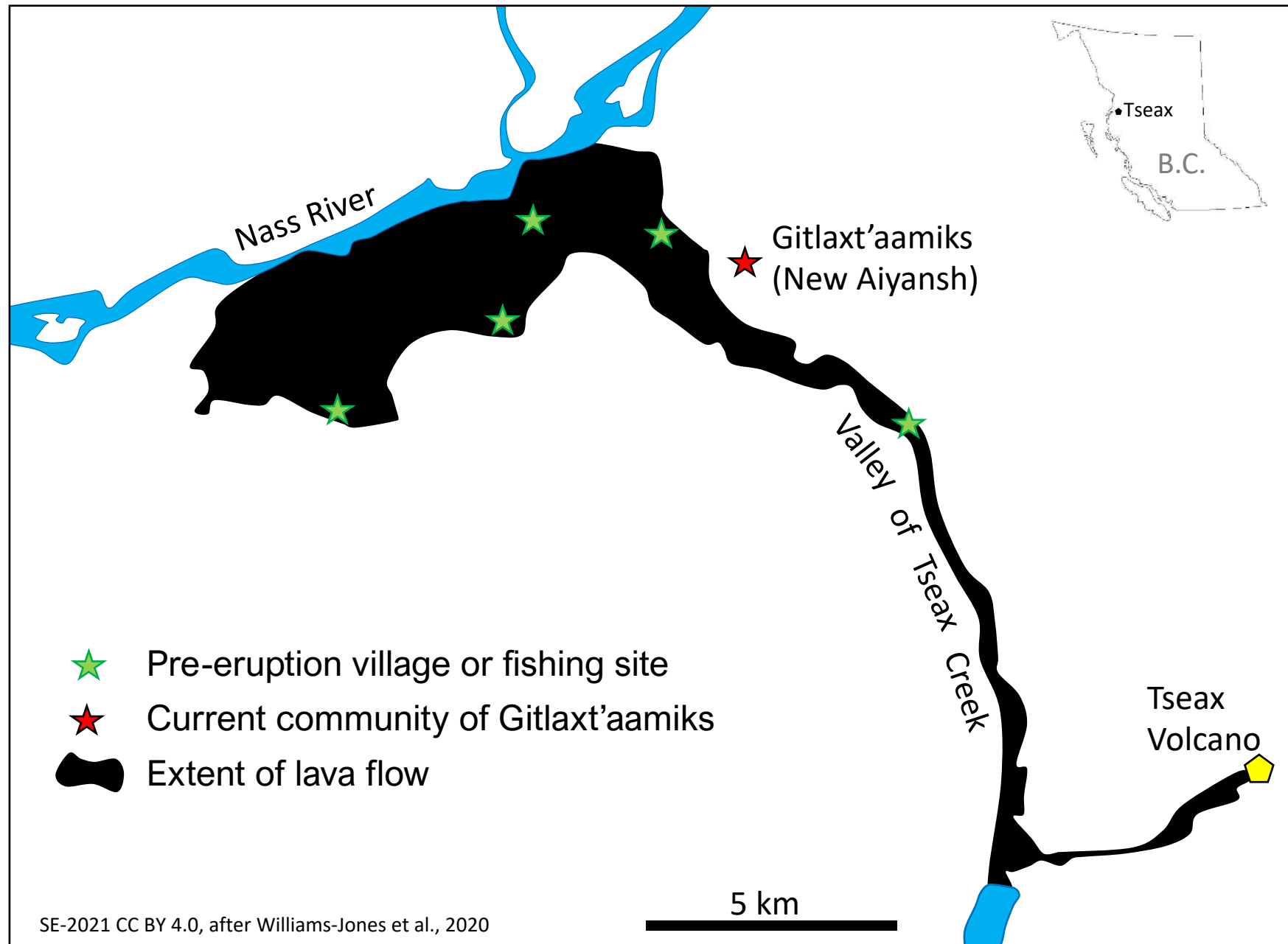
**This video has no sound track**

# Extent of the Tseax lava flow

The exact date of the eruption is not known, although it is estimated to have taken place between 1675 and 1778\*.

Approximately 2000 Nisga'a people died in the eruption, making it the deadliest in Canadian history.

\*Williams-Jones, G, et al., 2020, The age of the Tseax volcanic eruption, British Columbia, Canada, *Can. J. Earth Sciences*, 57(10):1238-1253

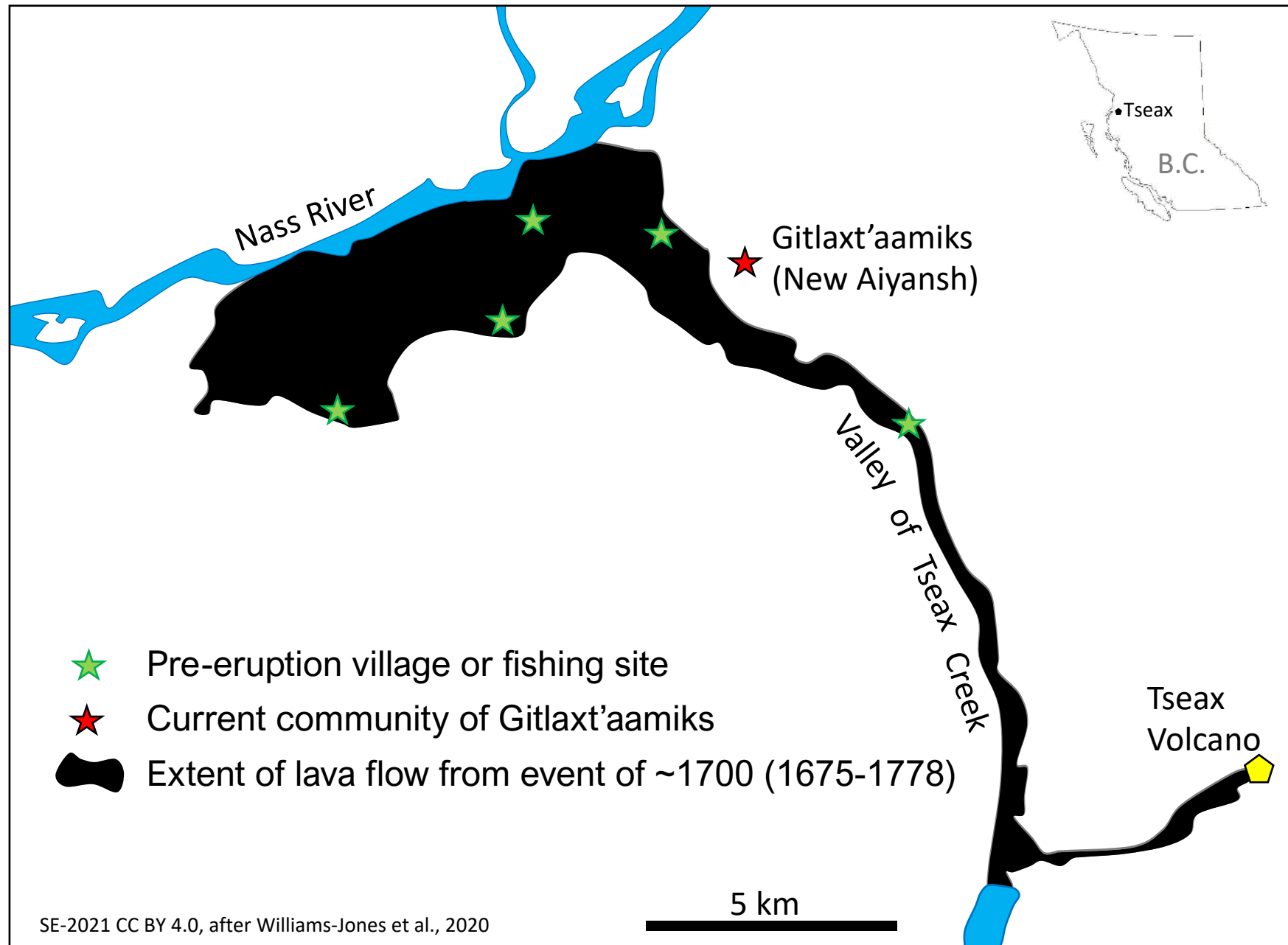


*“First there was smoke, like that coming out of a house, a big pillar of smoke. It was as if a house was burning on the mountain top. The people saw a big fire. The fire came down the side in their direction, but not as fast as forest fire. It moved down slowly, very slowly. It was strange and frightful. It was dangerous!”*

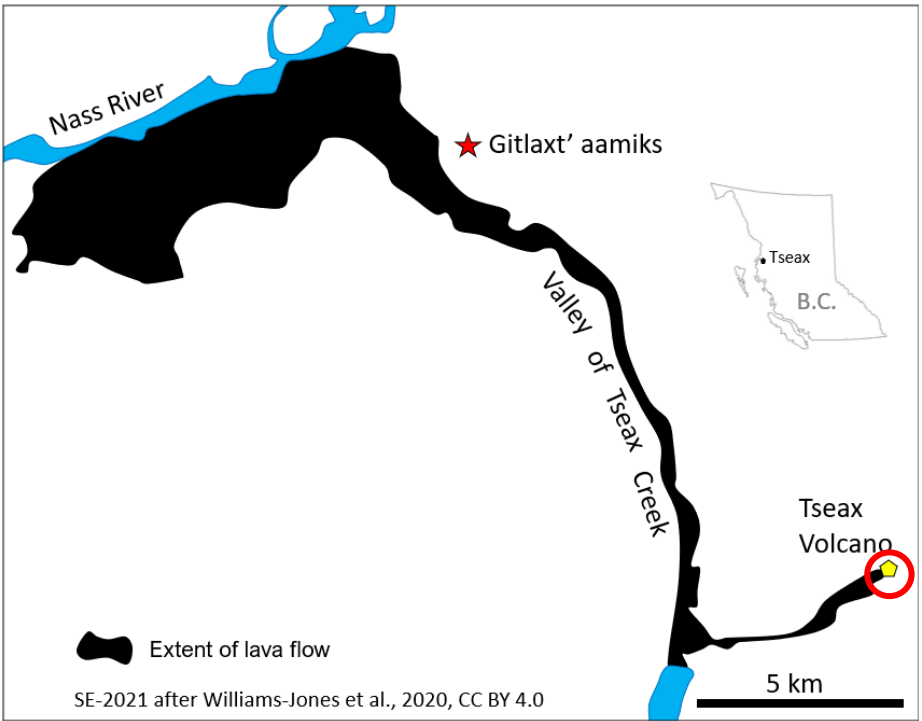
Excerpt from accounts from Nisga'a people in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as recorded in: Barbeau, M., 1935, Volcanoes on the Nass. Canadian Geographical Journal, **10**(5): 215-225.

# Extent of the Tseax lava flow

The flow started from the site of the Tseax Cone (which likely formed in the first few days), and then advanced down to the valley of Tseax Creek, and then down that valley and across the plain adjacent to the Nass River.



# Tseax Volcano cinder cone



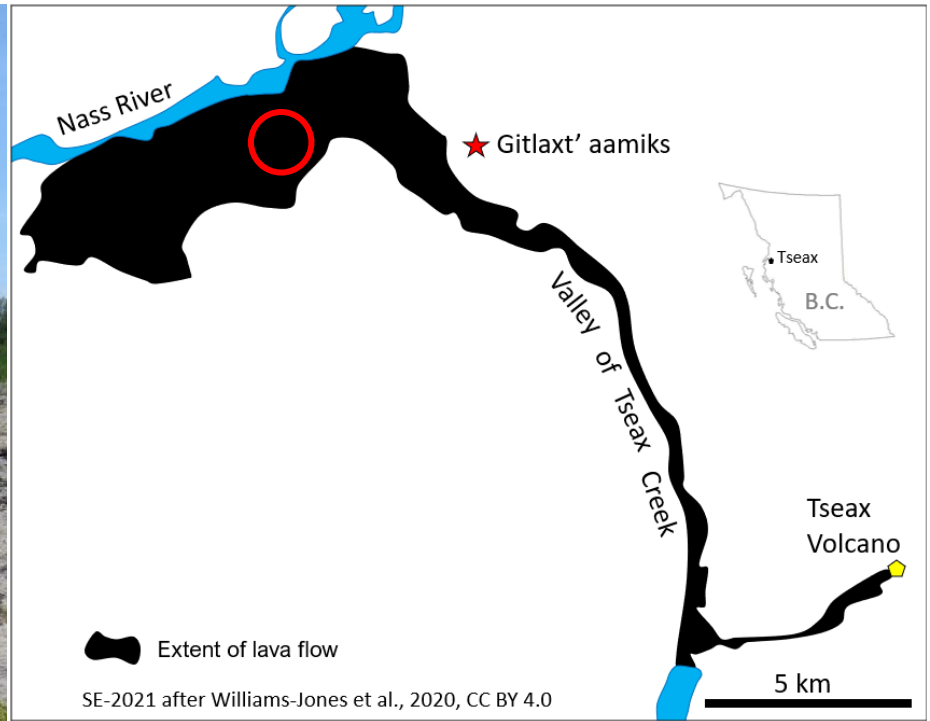
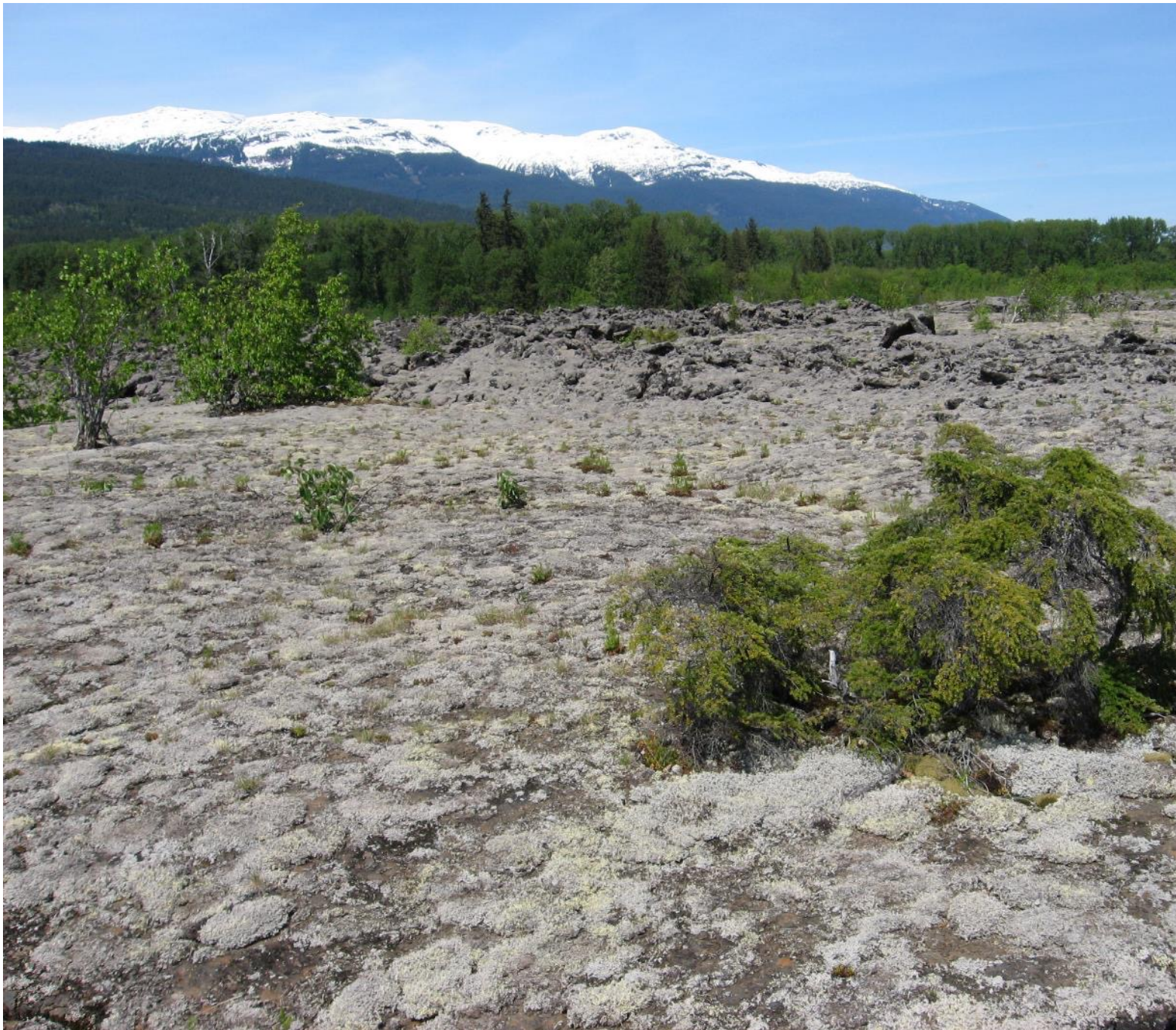
Approximate location of the image is shown by the red circle.

By S. Earle, CC BY 4.0

*“There were fumes spreading ahead, and those who smelled them were smothered\*. They died and their body stiffened like rock. Frightened, the people of one tribe dug holes in the ground like underground lodges, and hid within, scared as they were of the mountain spirits. Likewise, the other tribe. That did not keep other people from dying of the fumes, mostly in the lower of the villages.”*

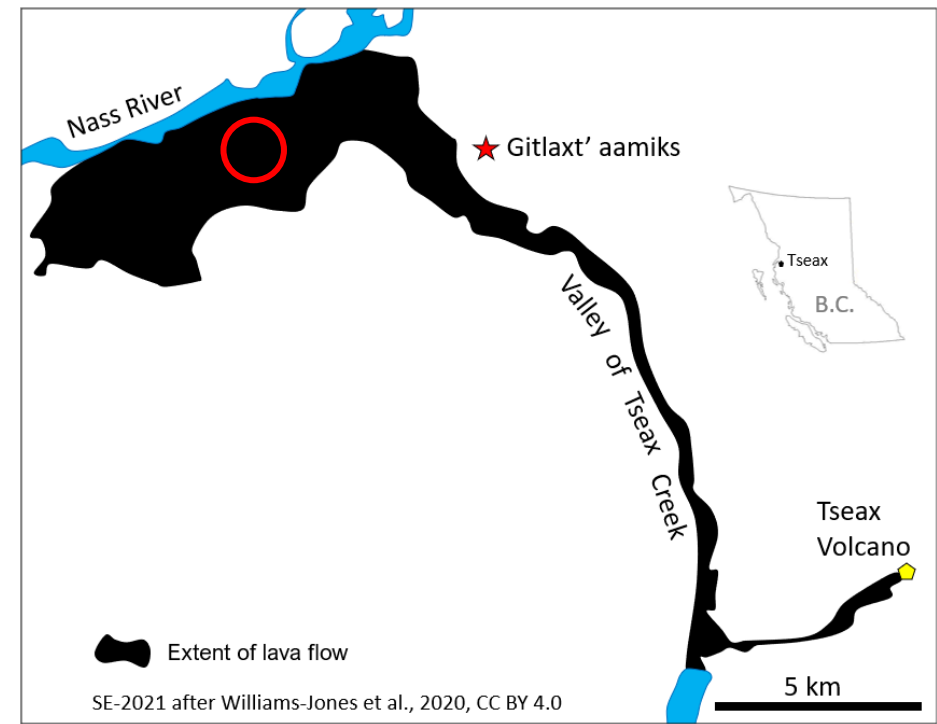
Excerpt from accounts from Nisga’a people in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as recorded in: Barbeau, M., 1935, Volcanoes on the Nass. *Canadian Geographical Journal*, **10**(5): 215-225.

\*The carbon dioxide content of the volcanic gas was the most likely cause of asphyxiation



## Lava plain

By S. Earle, CC BY 4.0



## Scoria (vesicular basalt)

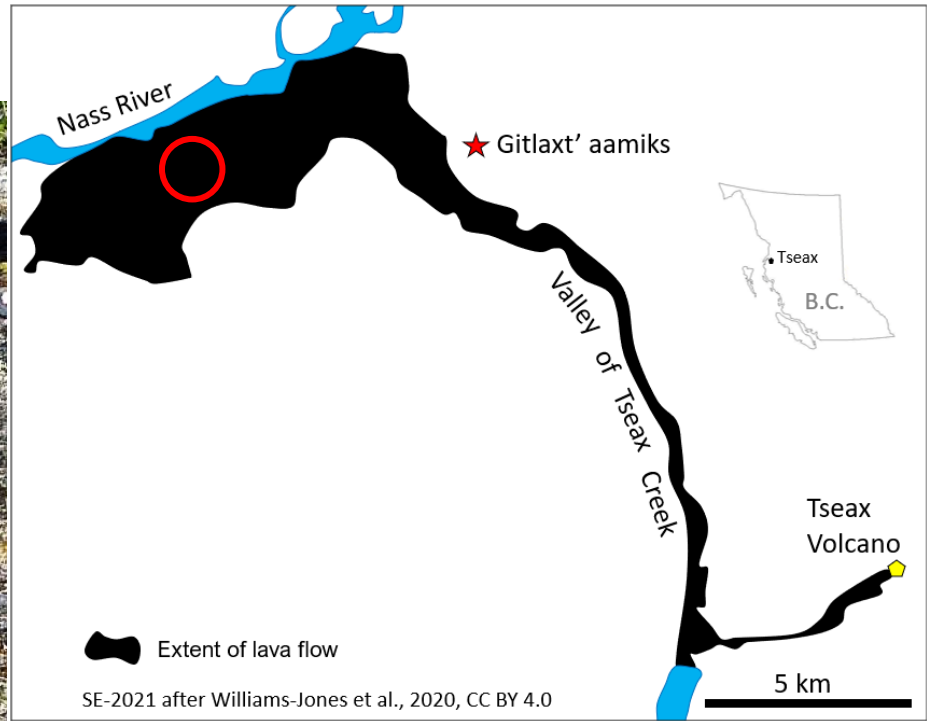
By S. Earle, CC BY 4.0

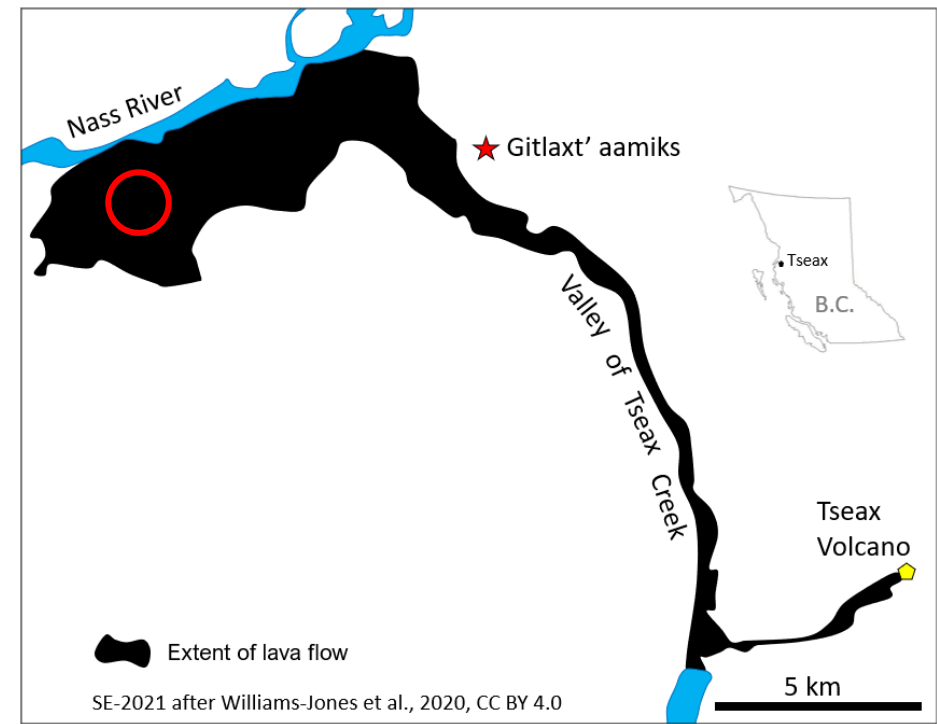


*“As soon as the smoke dispersed some people ran away; a great many others stayed on. They did not suffer any more from the smoke. The fire then rolled down like a river, filled the lake, and for a time the water was a bed of flames. The stone was red and hot there for many days. As far as it went, all the way, it was flowing red. It started from the river where the people fished salmon, away up there, and ran down to the place where the canyon now is...”*

Excerpt from accounts from Nisga'a People in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as recorded in: Barbeau, M. 1935. Volcanoes on the Nass. Canadian Geographical Journal, **10**(5): 215-225

# Pahoehoe (lava flow) By S. Earle, CC BY 4.0





## Cast of a tree toppled and then engulfed by lava

By S. Earle, CC BY 4.0

## **Text summary for: Tseax eruption at Gitlaxt'aamiks video**

The video provides a summary of the most recent eruption of the Tseax volcano in northern British Columbia (about 250 years ago) in which approximately 2000 people of the Nisga'a First Nation were killed, most by carbon dioxide asphyxiation.

Along with images of the volcanic formations, the video includes accounts from the Nisga'a people. They spoke of fumes that spread ahead of the lava killing people who breathed the air. Those that dug holes in the ground to escape were not spared. They also spoke of how the lava rolled down the slope like a river and filled a lake.