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# **Trampling the Shaman**

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*“What We Are”*

In Yandeistakye, a chief is dying.

Accompanied yesterday by his slave, Usha, Kood-wot climbed Gei Sun, whose massive rock face darkens the sky behind the village, to hunt goats. Not far from the summit, Kood-wot slipped on a crumbling precipice, and fell. Usha found him broken, vomiting blood. After comforting his master, the slave slid down three thousand vertical feet of steep ravines to the village where he roused a rescue party. Clansmen ran up the mountain until they found their *sha'dehuni* and bore him home to a bed arranged in a prominent place in the clan house.

Aloft in thick layers of goat cape and bearskin, an unconscious Kood-wot retains a regal pose. He wears the clan tunic, its story woven in goat wool by women three generations gone. Brown bear claws curve upward from a necklace on his chest. Snowy ermine skins drape his head from a shukiyat, or shaman's hat, from whose crown sea lion whiskers bristle at the spirit world.

To signify the power of clan *aat.oow*, Chilkat blankets and regalia hang around the large, central room of the house, enfolding two hundred mourners. Hoop drum cadence booms from a shadowed corner. A final, authoritative thump signals the shaman's entrance.

Yealh-neddy is “hideous in the extreme,” writes early Haines missionary, Caroline Willard, in her novel, *Kin-da-Shon's Wife*, published in 1892. “His body is bony and nude, except that girdling chest and loins are strings of teeth from the carcasses of sharks and beavers, with the claws of bears, talons of eagles, and bones of various kinds.” Every breath held, every child hushed, a pall clutches the room.

More than his freakish apparel, Mrs. Eugene S. Willard (her pen name) fears the shaman's face “with its uncanny, snakish power... the gaping mouth, the wide, thin lips, the sunken cheeks, the vulture-like nose ... but the mystery of the face is in the eyes, felt,

not seen...deep-set in shadowy hollows and overhung by matted hair, they seem to emit flame.” In Yealh-neddy, Willard exposed to gaslight Americans a barbaric force in their midst, evil to the bone. Satan’s child on earth.

Hardly louder than a heartbeat, the drum resumes. The shaman sways with the rhythm, breathing like a file rasp. Breath becomes a mutter, then chanting. Transfixed, the crowd leans in. Eyes roll back as if to peer within, writes Willard, then snap back to focus. The otherworldly gaze sweeps the room, “throwing light lurid as from hell.” Drum beat quickens. Invisible forces tug his shoulders and elbows, yanking the man into a dance “moved by infernal machinery.” Each spidery hand grips an ornate wooden rattle, shaken with rising urgency until the last loud beat freezes Yealh-neddy.

“With the cry and spring of a panther,” the shaman lands at Kood-wot’s bedside. His shrieks pierce the dense drum pulse, poun-ding, poun-ding, bone and cartilage hiss from sinew strings that twist around the writhing form. He leaps over the bed once, twice, again, always casting glares at nearby onlookers, then dashes at the dying man “as if he were about to tear him to pieces.” He clutches and claws the air, leaps again, then sinks into a tight coil. “Moved by irresistible power,” Yealh-neddy lurches again toward the bed for an epic battle with unseen spirits. At his most frenzied pitch, two men have to restrain the shaman “to prevent him from eating his own flesh.”

After a long pause, Yealh-neddy crawls into the audience, sniffing, muttering, searching for the witch that caused this. As minutes pass, his search grows more animated, sending ripples of paranoia through the crowd. Spasms wrack the shaman’s body. He mutters like a man trying to awaken from a nightmare. In a coarse whisper he declares that the “spirit of the great chief must pass before us ere the setting sun.” People strain to catch his next word. “Sha-he-he.” The name of a young woman of a lower caste, new to town. The crowd turns upon her, binds her feet and hands, and proceeds to torture her in ways that surely startled, perhaps outraged, Mrs. Willard’s readers.

Following magic-lantern depictions of brutal savagery, the missionary’s wife moves her mob to tether Sha-he-he to a stake until she confesses to witchcraft. The frenzy hits its peak with the sacrificial beheading of ten slaves, including faithful old Usha, whose spirits will accompany Kood-wot to the next world. Clansmen cremate their passing chief, and scatter the slaves’ remains in the forest behind the village as offerings

to bears and ravens. Despite the midnight sun of Alaska, Willard rhapsodizes that the “unwonted night of pitchy darkness falls over the land of Chilkat.”

Three New York printings of *Kin-da-Shon's Wife* in 1892 suggests a popular curiosity about America's indigenous heritage, by then largely resculpted into a relic of our glorious frontier past. Throughout the book, Willard footlights her principal players in a cultural chiaroscuro steeped in shadow and fire. Revealed in these pages are the last, violent throes of a collapsing culture composed by the hand of one of its would-be saviors. Murder, theft, vengeance, greed, and betrayal enmesh the villagers, who are shattered by successions of alcohol-fueled violence, much of which is linked to one shaman or another. The only light that pierces Willard's literary gloom are individual acts of compassion, like starpoints in a glacier night sky.

The accused witch, Sha-he-he, eventually escapes her tormentors, whose fury swerves the next day toward a middle-aged slave using witchcraft to kill an infant. Men drag the woman to a lowtide sandbar where they lash her to a stake and leave her to watch for hours as the tide creeps in, then covers her. She is saved at the last possible instant by Kotch-kul-ah, daughter of the deceased Kood-wot, who needs the slave as protection against the shaman's advances. Kotch-kul-ah names the woman Usha, in memory of her father's long-time servant.

Willard's portrayal of the relationship between the two women opens a portal through which the reader explores the powerful matriarchy woven into the complexities of Tlingit society. Among house leaders, or *hitsaati*, men displayed power in a public way—as speakers, warriors, shamans, or diplomats—as did women to a lesser degree, while managing the internal activities of the house, each containing multiple families.

Even when missionaries forbade the practice, Klukwan clan structure proved durable—headmen were acknowledged, and matrilineal kinship protocol determining clan status remained intact. Preachers moved Tlingits into single family houses, but they couldn't move the clan house out of Tlingits.

Eyewitness to cultural transformation, Mrs. Willard viewed Old Ways through Western lenses focused on traditions as quaint or noble, but still disgusting and immoral. The twenty-nine-year-old mother of two began writing the day she arrived. Distilled from a collection of letters sent home in 1882-1883, *Life in Alaska* “ throbs with the loyalty of

Christian devotion” as the author evokes her family’s crusade to tame one of America’s final heathen enclaves. From godless wilderness, the reverend and his wife sowed community. They delivered an impassioned gospel to an audience well-acquainted with oratory, drawn by promises of prosperity and eternal life.

Willard’s second book, *Kin-da-shon’s Wife*, dramatizes the era just prior to Presbyterian contact. Within its pages, a robust culture is undone by barbaric tradition, venal sins compounded by those of the white traders—alcohol, sex, deceit. When the missionaries arrive, however, hot-blooded prose turns tepid as Natives take the cure, leading to Yealh-neddy’s soft-shoe exit, a deathbed conversion, Christian marriage, establishment of a “two-one home” (Willard’s emphasis and reference to single family dwelling), and birth and baptism of a baby daughter. As in her first book, Willard concludes *Kin-da-Shon’s Wife* with the promises of civilized America, and seating in heaven for the righteous.

Many of Mrs. Willard’s promises came true, shadowed by unanticipated consequences. Klondike Goldrush money poured into the pouches of Tlingit packers, as did income from fishing, tourism, regional trade, and commerce with the new U.S. Army fort. “Boston goods” and wealthy tourists arrived on steamships eager to purchase Native art. Tlingit children were schooled, their illnesses treated at the mission hospital while epidemics raged in town. Families relocated to individual homes of two-by-fours insulated with moss, beach-straw, and newspaper. Teachers punished students for speaking Tlingit. Easy access to molasses encouraged growth of illegal “hootch” stills, and the beginnings of a dark, alcoholic legacy. Increased pressure on fish and wildlife populations made traditional foods unreliable. Shamans disgraced. Old ways shunned.

These scenes fill the Manifest Destiny playbook, systematically staged by new Americans against the old. Three key factors, however, shifted the Chilkat-Chilkoot experience away from the script.

Timing. By the 1880s, Americans lugged with them baggage from Civil War, Custer’s defeat, and the surging sentiment that Indians were people, too. The Willard’s 1881 arrival at Deishu coincided with publication of Helen Hunt Jackson’s *A Century of Dishonor*, a national bestseller chronicling the “dark stain” of injustice perpetrated on Native Americans. As players in the final scene of the first act in the nation’s frontier

drama, soldiers and missionaries approached the northern Tlingit more as clients than threats. Likewise, a desire to acquire wealth and upgrade living conditions brought the “most feared Indians of Alaska” to the table.

Location. Tucked into the far corners of an intimidating landscape, Chilkats and Chilkoots exercised a defensive advantage that prevented strangers from knowing the territory. Lack of information about resources stemmed as much from the hostile environment as from the aggressive reputation of its masters. The upper Lynn Canal was considered a dead end until word spread about the wealth beyond the twin passes, gateways to gold.

Cultural integrity. Limited Anglo contact contributed to the wholeness of the northern Tlingit. Residents thought of themselves as ruling class, and Klukwan as the “capitol” of the Tlingit nation. Capitulation was never in the game plan.

Though riven with tragedy, the story of the northern Tlingit shows a vigorous people seeking to retain their heritage while accommodating the rising tide of outsiders. Through declamation and dialogue, Natives and newcomers exchanged key notions about sustaining viable community processes. Respect. Restraint. Humility. Traditional Tlingit justice required that the most heinous acts be repaid in blood, with steps toward reconciliation set by the *Guwakaan*, in the ceremony of the deer. Instead of blood atonement, Americans required payment with blankets, cash, and/or incarceration. Positions were declared, promises signed. Both cultures used ceremony to heal the aggrieved, to set the community back in balance.

This rhetorical history of Tlingit-Anglo encounters in the northern Lynn Canal sifts through behavior and language imbedded in stories of conflict, change, and reconciliation. When the time for action arrives, wrote American rhetorician Kenneth Burke in 1969, orators deliver messages on a “dramatistic stage” designed for group “salvation” on an arc toward “the good.” Professor Leland Griffith added that groups clash when moral grievances can’t be ignored, and abuses “give voice to the ‘No!’” Following Daanaawaak’s “yes” to build a mission at Deishu, the Presbyterian “No!” to traditions spurred the same dysfunction that historically destroyed Native Americans.

This time, though, things were different.

Although missionaries play key roles on the Chilkat-Chilkoot dramatic stage, their voices blend among many. Soldiers, statesmen, scientists, anthropologists, art dealers, fishers, miners, loggers, and environmentalists all challenged the sense of *aat.oow*, or traditional property, that empowers clans. Conflicts arise between Natives, too, and when the time comes, protocols exist to restore harmony. These pages contain stories of confrontations between northern Tlingits and outsiders who forced the complex process of finding balance in a community. In most cases, the Golden Rule is paramount. To yourself and others, show respect. Then move on.

Outsiders seeking entrance to Chilkat country receive the respect one expects from a propertied host, but to gain their trust may take a lifetime. At this writing, Tlingits dominate local political power—a Chilkoot woman as borough mayor, Chilkat man as district representative, Angoon man as senator. Educators, project managers, health providers, tour guides, artists, heavy equipment operators, business owners. Tlingits are people comfortable with where they live, certain that they will, in the end, prevail.

Kindly and soft-spoken, Klukwan headman Joe Hotch's voice turns firm in his declaration of Chilkat/Chilkoot dominion. "Two-point-six million acres," he tells me several times over the years, sometimes accompanied by a sweeping gesture. "That's us, what we are."

Twenty months after hearing their first sermons from Hall Young and John Muir, a party of richly ornamented Tlingits welcome the Presbyterian minister Eugene S. Willard and his young wife, Caroline, when their dory from the steamer *Wachusett* beaches at Deishu. East Coast emissaries of Alaska's foremost evangelist, Sheldon Jackson, the Willards expect a wild land guarded by wild men, so are grateful for a reception draped in art and dignity. Clergy are equally delighted when their hosts escort them to the mission building, erected by Hall Young's crew the previous August. Under the direction of Dr. Jackson, a crew from the trading post constructs a manse while the Willards prepare for their first church service. Jackson names their outpost Haines Mission, to honor Mrs. F.E. Haines, of Elizabeth, New Jersey, secretary of the Woman's Executive Committee of Home Missions, for her purchase of building materials for the Willard's home. A fellow committee member, Mrs. C.H. Langdon, also of Elizabeth, donated a church bell, the first in Alaska from the denomination.

“Just a perfect Presbyterian tone!” exults Mrs. Willard on hearing peals that herald the death of one tradition, and birth of another.

*Permission*

A century after Caroline Willard chimed about saving Chilkat souls, a survivor of the New Way assured me that Tlingit traditions remained vital despite the missionaries, recorded for future generations in the treasures of his people. Within minutes of our first meeting at his culture camp in 1983, Chilkoot traditional leader Austin Hammond showed me the deed to village land he intended to reclaim. “Some people ask me where is your history,” Hammond said. “I’ll tell you. We’re wearin’ our history.”

As the 72-year-old headman rose to his feet in the fire-circle, a large Chilkat blanket unfurled from his shoulders, revealing an intricate design traced in mountain wool. Slowly he pivoted, extending his arms for full display. “Raven showed us why we’re gonna own everything,” Hammond said as he began a story about the unique relationship between Lukaax.adi people and Sockeye Point on Chilkoot Lake, and how his people can be whole only when they occupy their home again.

“My grandfather told me to dress this way when we’re in trouble,” Hammond said. Raised by his mother’s parents, Jim and Martha David, Hammond bears the name of his great-grandfather, Daanaawaak, once headman of Yandeistakye. As Raven House *hitsaati* in 1982, Daanaawaak displayed the robe, *xaq’naakein*, to Haines magistrate Carl Heinmiller who accepted the woven proof of land ownership. The following summer, Lukaax.adi clansmen and supporters pioneered the Chilkoot Culture Camp, one of the first Native culture camps in Alaska, and an important step toward reclaiming home.

Over the next three seasons of kids and elders, bears and dry-fish, Hammond’s culture camp drew me, first as a print and radio journalist, then oral historian and volunteer. In time, relationships with elders grew into projects, then friendships. Once a week for three years, Maria Miller and Rachel “Dixie” Johnson trudged arm-in-arm up a long flight of stairs to meet me in KHNS studios for another episode of “Tlingit Words and Songs.” For fifteen minutes a week they spoke and sang in Tlingit, encouraging the white guy’s awkward attempts, sometimes responding with giggles. Dixie asked me to

repeat a phrase until she'd cut in with a knowing "Aaaaah." Pause. "Now you're talking like an Indian." Niece and auntie laughed like birds at low tide.

Maria and Dixie contributed to another radio project called *Yeil Koo'klak: Raven Stories*, in which producer Gordon Sandy, myself, and others assembled an elaborate audio presentation featuring Miller, Dixie and Pete Johnson, Austin Hammond, George and Matilda Lewis, Richard and Mary King, David Andrews, Ann Keener, Charlie Jimmie Sr., and Tommy Jimmie, Jr.—mostly from the L'koot *kwaan*. Five men hefted Hammond's brother Horace Marks in his wheelchair up (and down) the twenty-eight stairsteps to the studio. On three consecutive nights, people squeezed into glass radio booths to sing songs and tell stories from time immemorial.

In the next decade I spent many warm evenings in local living rooms listening to life histories. Following one such session, Dixie said, "I think I'm gonna give you an Indian name. Might as well, you know too much already." Setu'kwaa. Idea man. "Now you're tied in with a lot of big people," she said. "Kaagwaantaan—the whole kit and kaboodle."

Years later, my gratitude has grown for the hours elders contributed to local oral history projects. At times I ached knowing how much more I could do more for my adopted clan, but didn't. Memorial potlatches missed, fish not shared, conversations unspoken. I felt guilty for my name, that I should do more to earn it. Some of that feeling cleared over the years when I could offer family members interview transcripts with their loved ones. Maybe that's my clan job: helping people remember.

Like blankets and berry-patches, Tlingit people "own" clan stories, so it is not my place to repeat the Sockeye Point narrative told to me by Austin Hammond. Nor, for that matter, is it proper for me to relay the clan stories of two dozen elders I interviewed since the early 1980s. Nora Dauenhauer says that although traditional Tlingit law allows retelling stories without direct permission, the "oral copyright" requires source attribution, respect, and accuracy. Those stories are for others to tell; I seek the heat of community engagement to study its effects on politics and culture, much of which is public record. Beyond words on paper, however, local Tlingit history is muffled by myth, metaphor, or silence. Researching this story the white-man way only took me so far; I had to earn the trust of a people recovering from two centuries of outsiders like me.

In my early years as a local journalist, some Native leaders were clearly more accessible than others. Concerns about land ownership and subsistence drew vocal Chilkoots to mediagenic projects. Three seasons of hanging around Hammond's culture camp was enough to elicit warm smiles, handshakes, and free-range opinions. Klukwan folks were more evasive. News from the Chilkats spread along clannish lines, rarely surfacing in public. Several times I drove the forty-mile round-trip for an interview only to find empty houses. I took it as a sign to back off, so satisfied myself with the longer route—basketball games and cultural celebrations, funerals and graduations. Gradually, eye contact increased, then came the ribbing, jokes, and laughter.

After a quarter century of teaching Chilkat kids, recording Chilkat elders, and broadcasting Chilkat culture, our stories wove us together. In 2005 I produced "Tlingit Time," a 52-part Tlingit language radio program featuring language instructor, Marsha Hotch. Two years later, I taught a semester-long University of Alaska public speaking course to the village administration. Rather than open the first week's class with Aristotle, I reviewed one-hundred-fifty years of rhetorical encounters between Chilkats and white men.

"Are these stories are okay for me to tell?" I asked the class at the beginning of the lecture. Characteristic silence filled the room, the sound of minds working, mouths waiting. Council president Kim Strong cleared her throat and smiled like a well-prepared student. Heads nod once, acknowledging what is to come. White-man history is different than clan stories, she explained. "Your people's history is your business, but for our stories, you get permission and you give credit."

Seven generations since Daanaawaak conveyed land for a Presbyterian mission , the indigenous people of my hometown still act like they own the place. Treated like royalty for centuries, the Northern Tlingit were venerable orators and fighters, and among the last Native Americans to acquiesce to civilizing pressures. Wealthy and warlike, they approached white newcomers first as intruders, then as business associates and, finally, brethren.

"Our roots are together, no matter what color we are," Hammond/Daanaawaak said to members of our fire-circle. "You are my family, every one of you. Raven put us together from all the way down." A sergeant-major in the Haines Salvation Army,

Hammond preached an Old-Time Gospel that borrowed openly from his culture. Old Tlingit stories parallel the Bible, Hammond insisted, including the Trinity—Big Raven, White Raven, and the virgin birth—Raven the Son. “The Son, he’s gonna come again. The story fills me up. We know the story, how to respect everything.”

A pitch-glob sizzles and pops. In the flare, a brown hand tentatively emerges, then grasps a corner of the Sockeye Robe. Twin tears track Eva Davis’ ruddy, round cheeks as she recalls her grandfather telling her that one day she would be the last in the family to tell the story. “I’m not talkin’ about myself, I need to save all my grandchildren!” Gently, her hand tugs at the robe with the cadence of her speech. “Now all our people are scared to use this blanket. I’m not afraid to protect all my people, all the way down.”

Mrs. Davis clings to *xaq’naakein* as her words sink in. No one speaks for a long time, a silence filled by river voices. A raven chortles overhead on a slow draft sliding downriver. Austin raises his face, eyes closed, speaks Tlingit in prayerful tones of tumbling water and birdcall.

Trickster, prophet, or pest—Raven is a harbinger of mischief, often followed by phenomenological change and insights. In the Tlingit origin story, Raven flies to Nass River, opens the lid of a chief’s treasure chest, and allows the sun, stars, and moon to escape through the smokehole. Raven follows, flinging light across the world. Christian reformers balked. Only one savior brought light to the world. Raven was no Jesus.

Allied with their Presbyterian colleagues in Wrangell and Sitka, Mr. and Mrs. Willard targeted Raven as a demonic symbol upon which an entire web of beliefs depended. Raven artwork was forbidden in school, as was discussion of the bird. The shaman’s ceremonial reliance on Raven was well-known, adding further reason to quash the practice. In Tlingit, raven is *yeil.x*, or *yealth*, the root for the shaman’s name in *Kinda-Shon’s Wife*. Further complications arise from Tlingit social divisions, or moieties, in which children are raised as Eagles or Ravens, and not allowed to intermarry within bloodlines. Lani Hotch of Klukwan says that moieties maintain a “balance of power” between clans, like “Republicans and Democrats” by enforcing behavioral protocols across party lines. Removing Raven destroyed Tlingit *tundataanee*, “the way we think.” Tillers of men, the Willards aimed to plant the messiah and reap an American town.

“We’re not making fun of the Lord,” Charlie Jimmie, Sr. tells me in 2009 from his easy chair at Deishu senior apartments in Haines. “It was something we could believe in.” For sixty years of public performances around the world, Charlie Jimmie was *the* Tlingit shaman. In his beaded tunic, furs, and bear claw *shukiyat*, Charlie’s fierce, nose-ringed visage is familiar not only from thousands of shows with the Chilkat Dancers, but from his image on state and regional promotion campaigns, magazine covers, national television, and even the commemorative blanket draped over his couch, on which I lean during our interview.

While a young man attending Wrangell Institute, 15-year-old Charlie Jimmie’s teacher, “Mrs. Presbyterian,” Walter Soboleff’s mother, chose him to recreate the shaman in the school’s traditional dance group. “I talked loud, and liked having a good time.” A broad, easy smile spreads across his face. Charlie learned to use his voice and body to the maximum dramatic effect, stealing the show every time, including dozens of live performances I attended over the years. Charlie drank in the attentions of world leaders, celebrities, tycoons, and a Supreme Court Justice named Clarence Thomas. It was an honor, he says. “One of the prize things you could do was to imitate the medicine man—*ixt declain, ixt*—you know, we don’t do it too often. I’m the only one that’s done it as far as I know.”

Ten years ago Charlie was a large, drum-like man who played several shows a day in the Fort Seward tribal house, capturing cruise ship audiences with his booming voice and carved rattles held high—ancient healer in full regalia. Now in his seventies, Charlie’s body is shrunken, his once-rotund face thinner behind a salt-and-pepper beard. He often bursts into Tlingit exclamation, still powered by a life of full-throated theatre, but when I ask how Charlie reconciles his Salvationist beliefs with shamanism, he pauses, face thoughtful. “Those things I believe in very much,” he says in a quiet voice. Charlie turns his big face toward me, then to the floor. “People don’t like to talk about it.” He beseeches the ceiling in Tlingit, returns to the floor. “It’s not good that way, you know.” More passionate Tlingit. “That’s why we hold our tongue a little closer. ‘Don’t go tellin’ everything like you’re the almighty king.’ That’s what my grandfather used to tell me. If you’re gonna stay together as a family, you got to work together.”

We shift our discussion back to the old song and dance.

*Homeland Security*

Building a mission at Deishu held special meaning for the Tlingit hosts. Popularly translated as “end of the trail,” the mile-wide isthmus was a jump-off for traders taking the “Grease Trail” northwest following the woven channels of the Chilkat River past Yandeistakye, Kuthwultu, and Klukwan, then overland to the thirty-three hundred foot pass into the Yukon Interior for commerce with the southern Tutchone and Inland Tlingit.

East-facing mission windows offered a view across Portage Cove into Chilkoot territory, where Chilkoot Inlet narrows into fingers walled by sheer mountains. The western finger, Lutak Inlet, terminates at the mouth of the Chilkoot River, home to a productive salmon run and the village of L’koot. To the east, Taiya Inlet follows a fifteen-mile trench cut into rock by ancient ice. At its farthest extent, perhaps one-hundred twenty miles from open ocean, the Taiya River crashes down mountain slopes until glacial-gray lifeblood meets saltwater at Dyea Flats. Just inside a rim of old-growth spruce at tideline, a hundred-twenty residents occupied Dyea, the northernmost Chilkoot village.

In a region where every place and resource belonged to someone, Deishu was neutral ground.

Set three miles from the closest Tlingit village, the Willards meant to draw converts who would relocate to Haines Mission and dedicate themselves to Christ, beyond the grasp of their traditions. Though long used as a canoe portage to avoid paddling around the 18-mile-long Chilkat Peninsula, Deishu was never settled. “Way too windy,” Chilkat elder Ed Warren explained to me. “Tlingits don’t want that much exposure. Better to be protected in a sunny spot.” He was thinking of Klukwan twenty miles upriver, furthest coastal Tlingit village from tidewater, protected from warships and williwaws. In Haines, Presbyterians gained beach access and open land, but forged an eternal relationship with tempests.

Tlingits chose their village sites for the long haul, but in a country ruled by ice and sea, home is subject to change. In warm eras, these valleys are rich watersheds, home

to bear, salmon, and human. During cooling trends, however, great ice-rivers grind down from the mountaintops into narrow canyons and fjords, pushing back even the sea. Most agree that about ten thousand years ago a large group migrated from an inland British Columbia tribe down the Nass River into the southern reaches of a vast domain of islands and ocean passages. As glaciers retreated, growing numbers of Tlingit spread north, reaching the upper Lynn Canal as early as 1000 AD.

Ganaxtedi were first to arrive. Torn by a family dispute, members of the Henya *kwaan* paddled three hundred miles north from Prince of Wales Island in search of a new home. In the hydra-headed terminus of a huge fjord they discovered an unoccupied region of rivers, the largest of which they named *Jil'kaat*, or fish storehouse. The newcomers established an initial camp at the river's mouth that became Yandeistakye, but most migrated a day's paddle upstream to establish Klukwan, or "Always been a Community."

The Little Ice Age (1400-1800 AD) abruptly reversed the long warming trend that opened Tlingit country. Across a mountain range west of Lynn Canal, Glacier Bay had been a plain up to nine miles wide through which braided streams carried meltwater from a great glacial flag unfurling beneath the 15,300 foot mast of Mount Fairweather. Along the sockeye-rich river on the eastern flank, several hundred Tlingits lived in Klem'sha'sshakeen, or Sandhill Town. A smaller village occupied the mouth of Chookanheeni, or Grassy Creek, at the western corner of the outwash. The advancing ice-wall forced many to resettle on the opposite shores of Icy Strait, in what became known as Hoonah.

According to Joe Hotch, Klukwan sha'dehuni and Kaagwaantaan clan leader, members of his ancestors' house escaped in two directions. Some followed the rugged outer coast south to a protected harbor where they found Kiksadi people who eventually allowed the immigrants to remain in Sheet'ka. Others paddled east through Icy Strait, an ocean passage five to eight miles wide that twice daily flushes the northern arteries of the archipelago. A clan house went up at Point Couverden, where Icy Strait meets the southernmost point of Lynn Canal, but most Kaagwaantaan headed north until they encountered Ganaxtedi at the mouth of the Chilkat River.

While the main watersheds of the upper Lynn Canal remained ice-free during four centuries of cool temperatures, a blanket of ice several hundred feet thick covered the great glacial plane that pushed into Icy Strait. When he sailed past the Kaagwaantaan ancestral home in 1794, Captain George Vancouver marveled at the towering ice palisade five miles wide. It was like no one had ever lived there.

According to Austin Hammond, a third group, the Lukaax.adi, migrated to the northern Lynn Canal from Lukaax, or Duncan Canal, on the mainland a week's paddle south. "We were sojourners here," Hammond often said. His people built their homes on the mile-long river that flows from a large, sockeye-bearing lake into a rich estuary, Lutak Inlet. They called their village L'koot, meaning "without a cache," where fish stocks overwintered best in the shade of the old-growth spruce forest. Known by whites as Chilkoots, the group dominated the eastern stem of Lynn Canal, controlling lands around Haines (Deishu), the goldrush boomtown of Dyea, and the secret trading route whites would one day call the Chilkoot Trail. Epidemics in the 1830s and 1840s nearly emptied L'koot, but the population was up to about one hundred-thirty when the mission was built in 1881. Within the span of a generation, most Chilkoots moved to town.

People disagree about parts of these stories.

"We were all one Chilkat," *sha'dehuni* Joe Hotch tells me in April 2009. When I ask about people before the Ganaxtedi, he shakes his head slowly. "No. They were the first." Now in his late seventies, Hotch emanates stability. Crowned by a shock of white butch-cut hair, the Kaagwaantaan clan leader holds his stocky body like a wrestler prince. His voice is calm, never tentative. "We got divided because non-Natives started to infringe all over our land." As soon as property was conveyed to the mission, he says, the elders knew that "we were going to have some people living in Deishu." For Natives to claim continuous land occupation, Hotch claims, "a group of our people had to move down to Haines and Chilkoot to protect the spawning lake."

Austin Hammond's grandson, Tom Jimmie, Jr., bolts to attention on his couch cushion when I ask him about Hotch's perspective. Fiftiesh, TJ's angular face squares with mine, contention sparking in his dark eyes. Salt-and-pepper spikes atop his temples, black hair plunges to his waist. We have known each other since culture camp in the early Eighties. His mother, Dixie Johnson, gave me a name, so we are clan brothers. He

devoted years listening to Austin tell the stories of Chilkoot in a voice he still can't get out of his head.

“Whenever I would start writing notes when Austin was telling me things, he would stop talking. He said, ‘grandson, if you have to keep writing this down, you’re going to forget it.’ So he just kept on repeating it. Over and over.” The stories took him down the same path: “‘You are of L’koot,’ my grandfather would say. ‘Never forget that.’”

First there is the matter of the 800-year-old fish traps discovered in recent years at the Chilkoot River mouth. “Indisputable evidence” of residency, TJ maintains. When the Lukaax.adi arrived, he says, Kaagwaantaan were “the people that reigned in this country,” and were “due the courtesy” of visitors. In Chilkat country, that’s still true. TJ’s people expect the same. But today he says, Anglos in Haines and Skagway hardly ever acknowledge Lukaax.adi control of L’koot territory. “They think they’re in Chilkat country, for goodness sake!” Before white contact, TJ says, “If anybody came into this country without first extending the courtesy to the *sha’dehuni*, our big man—typically this man wouldn’t say no—but if you didn’t extend him the courtesy, he didn’t ask any questions. He just killed you.”

In a land so closely tied to Self, protocol can save your life. Walter Soboleff, centenarian Tlingit leader and scholar, described his culture’s key values in a simple page that is posted on refrigerators and bulletin boards throughout Southeast Alaska. The commandment-style list opens with “Be obedient; the wise never test a rule.” Of the thirteen values, each derives from the second: “Respect Elders, parents, property and the world of nature. Also respect yourself so that others may respect you.” I’ve heard the message repeated over and again: Respect your home and those who got you this far.

Words count when you are committed to centuries-long relationships. Confined within the steep topography of northern Lynn Canal, the effects of speech and deed inevitably collide unless residents adhere to certain standards. Respect, says Joe Hotch, comes in the way we touch others with words. “It’s just like carrying a long pole,” he recalls elders saying. “If you’re talking any old way, you never know who that pole will hit.” Careless words and deeds are blamed on historic conflicts in the Chilkat-Chilkoot *kwaan*, retold generations later with notice of payment and resolution. Elders say that use

of the labret became a traditional way to reduce conflict by curbing gossip among women. Replaced with larger versions through one's life, the lip plug made speech quieter, slower. Thus encumbered, the matriarchy nonetheless retained control.

Whether by strict protocol or cosmetic tradition, Tlingit society required highly regulated discourse. Even the shaman's theatrical frenzy was, for the most part, scripted. Like Greek theatre, shamanic rituals rent the membrane between tangible and intangible realities, supplying catharsis to a fearful audience. But in matters of state, oratorical protocol ruled. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, encounters with Spanish, French, and Russian ships touched the lives of all Tlingits, Chilkats least of all. Difficult geography kept out the rabble, and "Always been a Community" grew, Old Ways intact.

Twenty miles upriver from the Chilkat mouth, Klukwan hugs south-facing shores, protected behind by Iron Mountain, in the rugged Takshanuk Range. In Klukwan's viewshed, the confluence of three rivers creates an open expanse called the Council Grounds, with enough late-run salmon in the braided channels to attract three or four thousand bald eagles each fall. On the southern horizon ten miles away, the Takhinsha Range rises into a serrated glacial crown that tilts ice-rivers into Glacier Bay's ocean fingers.

Shielded from weather and white men, Klukwan people believed they lived in the best place on earth. No other coastal Tlingit village boasted access to teeming fish and wildlife resources so far out of the range of gunboats. Ample subsistence stocks and a singular commitment to place left leisure time enough for a proliferation of traditional arts—carving, weaving, dance, oratory. The "last old-time Tlingit village," Klukwan became a repository of the cultural treasures of an unconquered people.

Economics of the "Grease Trail" added to Chilkat wealth. Named for the highly valued oil of the eulachon ("hooligan"), the trading route led from Portage Cove at Deishu over the isthmus to Yandeistakye, upriver to Klukwan, then followed the Klehini watershed to crest at Chilkat Pass, fifty miles from tidewater. The route continued inland to the Tatshenshini and Alsek Rivers, where Klukwan traders walked one-hundred thirty miles to the Gulf of Alaska, then trudged westward on three days of North Pacific beach to relatives and trading partners in Yakutat.

In 1999, hunters found the half-thawed body of a man released from the glacial crevasse into which he fell, near Chilkat Pass, not far from the Grease Trail. Forensic examiners announced in 2004 that Kwaday Dan Ts'inchi, or Long Ago Man, died around 1450 AD, lived most of his twenty-two years on the coast, and had eaten a meal of shellfish and asparagus a day or two before his death. Genetic investigation found Long Ago Man's blood relations among contemporary Tlingit people in Klukwan and Yakutat. During a public review of a draft of this chapter held in the Sheldon Museum in July 2009, one elder groused that despite flaunting his genetic link to Long Ago Man, he still can't get a girlfriend in Haines.

European explorers first became aware of the Chilkats through a meeting in Yakutat. When navigators Dmitrii Bocharov and Gerasim Izmailov sailed into Yakutat Bay on June 11, 1788, they encountered several canoes containing friendly "Koloshes" who helped tow the Russian vessel out of the open surf and behind a cluster of sheltering islands. The navigators wrote about a village tour that brought them to a group of subchiefs, called "toion" by the Russians. When Bocharov and Izmailov inquired about the biggest headman, Yakutat toion deferred to Yeilxaak, a visiting Chilkat leader. Although the navigators observed tensions among their hosts, including "attacks" amongst them, "all without exception" obeyed the Klukwan headman. Yeilxaak claimed jurisdiction over all the coastal Tlingit, and traveled to Yakutat each spring to trade and "inspect his subordinates." Smaller parties traveled overland, but that year, more than a hundred villagers accompanied the Chilkat headman on the two-hundred-mile sea voyage to their trading partners in Yakutat.

A few days later, Yeilxaak boarded the *Three Saints* and inquired about the Russian royal portraits displayed in the ship's quarters. The navigators assured him of the great power and beneficence of the Russian empire. As evidence of Russian allegiance, Bocharov and Izmailov presented Yeilxaak with a copper Russian crest, and told him to show it to all foreigners "as demanded by the duty of a faithful subject of the Russian state." The next day, Yeilxaak returned, shield already sewn into his cape, and asked for a portrait of the Great Heir of Russia. He received it with "exaltation and shouts," then repaid the gesture with gifts, including a piece of iron shaped like a raven's beak, a woven grass bag, and six sea otter parkas.

To maintain their trade link with the *gunaho* of Yakutat and Dry Bay, Chilkats kept a small, seasonal village called Nukva'ik, on the Alsek. According to Tutchone elder Annie Ned, Chilkats extended the Grease Trail north to the Interior when Nukva'ik villagers noticed wood chips in the river. Tlingits found people upstream dressed in decorative furs. Annie Ned said that the coastal people were wearing “just cloth clothes, groundhog clothes. Nothing!” Soon they were trading eulachon oil for Athabaskan attire.

One well-known story suggests that Khaakeix'wti of Glacier Bay was the first coastal man to cross the barrier mountains and make contact with Southern Tutchone, an Athabaskan tribe. Joe Hotch and Tom Jimmie Jr. tell another story about unknown people spotted by Klukwan villagers on Chilkat Pass. At first, they were so shy that locals called them *gunana*, or “strange people.” Lured by salmon and eulachon oil left on rocks, the newcomers eventually established trading and family relationships with Chilkats who came to consider much of the southern Yukon as their economic realm.

As trade expanded, so did Klukwan. Ganax.teidi and Kaagwaantaan clan intermarriage produced a large, stable population. Joe Hotch says that about fifteen hundred residents lived in the village before white contact. Although the smallpox epidemic of the late 1830s reduced Chilkat population by as much as half, a Russian navy census thirty years later reported 1616 Chilkats (including Chilkoots), making Klukwan the largest permanent settlement in indigenous Alaska. Whatever the village size, Klukwan always *seemed* formidable, whether by its strategic location or from the presumed authority that enables privilege. Yeilxaak's proprietary mindset—and his deferential subjects—came from long relationships and the lingering lessons of war.

At the mouth of the Chilkat, the “cross-over village” of Yandeistakye guarded the border between realms. Although leadership was traditionally L'koot, Chilkats were active in trading and familial relationships. Clustered along a bank where the deepest Chilkat channel meets an intertidal estuary, Yandeistakye was the only one of five Chilkat-Chilkoot villages in plain view of the sea. As a place of outside contact and interclan convergence, Yandeistakye was the front line for upriver residents in the “mother village” of Klukwan, and nearby Kuthwultu. Her people served as welcoming committee, the manner of which depended on visitors' intentions. If sojourners paid their respects to the Yandeistakye headman, they might advance upvalley. For those who tried

to pass the village undetected, death; the blood smeared on the four-mile cliff walls as a warning to others who attempt to sneak by.

Walled by peaks, the mile-wide valley floor is a rare bit of level real estate. At ten-mile, the river turns with the mountains' northwest angle, broached on its course by glacial tributaries—Tahkin, Klehini, Kelsall, Tahini—each nurturing large salmon runs. Yandeistakye waits at the bottleneck where mountain meets ocean. Perhaps one hundred-twenty residents occupied the place whose name meant “everything from afar drifts ashore” (Joe Hotch: “following eulachon”), but as gatekeepers to Chilkat Country they maintained tight control of valley access. From their vantage, villagers monitored the Chilkat Inlet side of Lynn Canal. Sentinels posted at intervals on the Chilkat Peninsula shores relayed any news of visitors, as they did with John Muir's arrival in 1879. Yandeistakye residents likely comprised some part of the first confrontation with non-Tlingits in Lynn Canal.

On July 13, 1794, a cutter and two yawls commanded by Captain George Vancouver's Lieutenant Joseph Whidbey rowed against a north headwind into Lynn Canal. For three days the boats crawled up the great fjord pounded by green-water fists until they came in sight of smoke from Yandeistakye, ten miles distant. They camped on a broad, sandy shore opposite a Fuji-shaped sand island shaped by a glacier, now a smooth green hump where Chilkat glacial meltwater meets the sea. As a precaution against attack, sailors fired muskets “to deter them from approaching us for the night which we passed undisturbed.” What happened next depends on which version you choose to believe. Vancouver's log entry (likely written by Whidbey) conveys the following encounters in terms of strategic maneuvers through hostile territory. Journal entries from ship's surgeon Archibald Menzies conveys a milder threat. Today Klukwan chief Joe Hotch recounts a dark event which he claims the British overlooked.

Early the next morning near the campsite several canoes landed from which occupants emerged singing in a style that Menzies felt reflected the “solitary gloom” of the “deep narrow vale” in which he was confined. Chilkoot clan leader Ray Dennis says it would have been typical to sing a trade song before approaching an unfamiliar group to identify social connections and motives. As the crew advanced on Yandeistakye, more locals approached, entreating the white men to stay for a few days to meet “Gincaat,”

probably the *Jilkaat* headman from Klukwan. Inquiries about the territory prompted maps drawn in the sand that showed passes at the heads of each inlet over which trails led to lakes and rivers into the Interior. The Tlingits were eager to trade, and promised to return with the finest furs and “trinkets.” Disappointed to learn that the sea passage did not persist to open ocean, the crew turned south. The three small ships sailed the rocky length of Chilkat Peninsula fifteen miles to its tip then out to the five small islands flung into bigger water.

Joe Hotch will tell you that at least one of Whidbey’s boats tarried at land’s end. Smoke from a cooking fire near the point spurred the British sailors to investigate. Perhaps they hoped to establish trade or diplomatic relations. Perhaps they were hungry. The crew found a woman left to tend camp for a group of seal hunters.

“Five men,” says Joe Hotch. “They raped the woman and left her on the beach.”

As they sailed south, the Brits were overtaken by a large canoe that glided out from behind an island. On a box amid-thwarts stood the Klukwan headman Gincaat “dressed more gorgeously and tastefully than any other chief on the Northwest Coast.” Snowy ermine furs flowed from the *shukiyat* atop the headman’s head. Two Chilkat blankets hung from his tall frame, “curiously wrought & diversified with a great variety of black emblematical figures.” The sailors were “astonished” by the *sha’dehuni*’s unrestrained capers, wrote Menzies, especially his dexterous spinning of an ornate rattle. The white men demanded an encore performance after which they made for the nearest island to prepare supper. Gincaat presented Whidbey with sea otter pelts to which the officer responded with several small gifts. Eased by the warm welcome and calm seas, the ships lingered through the long twilight of mid-summer.

Good weather held at daybreak, but the mood soured. The ships’ log reports that five war canoes bore upon Whidbey, “steered and conducted (by) five principal ladies” who, with thirty or more warriors apiece, seemed bent on plunder. The women were Kaagwaantaan, according to Joe Hotch, respected for their strength and courage. The headman says the appearance of unexpected reinforcements indicates motives beyond last-minute shopping: they desired to avenge their kinswoman.

Vancouver estimated that more than two hundred locals gathered around the sailors; Menzies claimed “the whole party did not amount to a hundred.” The numbers

were enough, however, for the watchman to rouse comrades whose first sight of the day was the headman's large canoe alongside Whidbey's *Pinnacle*. Menzies reported Gincaat leaping aboard to pass items back to his men; Vancouver's log describes "Indians in all directions" seizing anything that wasn't nailed down. When a sailor aimed a musket at his craft, Gincaat "very coolly took up his blunderbuss" and prepared to return fire. Whidbey ordered ships to weigh anchor and to display weapons. Encircled by five war canoes, the flotilla slowly drifted south.

Through his brass megaphone, Gincaat spoke in conciliatory tones, appearing "exceedingly anxious" to make peace and resume trading. Whidbey refused. According to Vancouver, the headman became aggressive, interrupting his speeches to peer into a spy-glass or aim his blunderbuss. Though well-armed, the warriors refrained as the British prepared for battle. Commands in Tlingit and English rung across calm waters.

After a few hours of tailing the intruders the canoes faded back into the northern recesses of the great fjord Vancouver would name Lynn Canal for the English district where he spent his youth. Captain Vancouver chose the name Seduction Point to commemorate the "artful character of the Indians" who ushered his sailors out of the *kwaan*. For some Tlingits today, Seduction Point's English name still evokes anger.

Two years after the failed 1802 Russian attempt to take Sheet-ka, Aleksandr Baranov captured the waterfront hill on which he erected a fort christened New Archangel. Demoralized Kiksadis and Kaagwaantaans retreated to the "Ranche" adjoining the Russian toehold. When a Kiksadi man attended a potlatch in Chilkat, he was mocked by his Kaagwaantaan "opposites" for the shame endured by his clan members in Sitka. The man returned to Sitka with a "fighting spirit" that is credited for sparking revolt against the Russians. In winter of 1806-07, a thousand Tlingit warriors from villages throughout the region converged on the Ranche.

The sight of so many fighting men in war canoes unnerved Commander Ivan Kuskov, so he called a meeting with a visiting Chilkat headman. Forty men accompanied their leader to meet Kuskov who wrote that he "was kind to these guests, and gave them gifts." Rumors were out, Kuskov confided, that the Chilkats "always had a friendly face, but evil intentions." The Russian commander judged the rumor to be untrue, and convinced the men to preserve the peace and their honor by leaving the Ranche. Pleased

by Kuskov's acknowledgement of his special status, the headman withdrew his forces. Leaderless, inter-*kwaan* unity dissolved, and the Russians gained ground.

The uneasy truce between northern Tlingits and trading ships unraveled the following summer when seventy Chilkats were killed as they attempted to "board and loot" a Boston brig. The incident kindled a hatred of Americans in Klukwan, incurring debts repaid in blood.

White men notwithstanding, Chilkat headman Xet-su-wu was at least as concerned about the shift of power in Klukwan. By the 1830s, the aging Ganax.teidi *sha'dehuni* worried about the purity of his bloodline, holding that marriage to "lower caste" Tlingits endangered the social order. To reassert the "first-class" status of his clan, the headman proposed to build a "White House" for the Tlingit nation and, as tribute to a long-held clan symbol, named it *yeh'hit*, Whale House. Beyond its prominent size, the clan house would contain the finest woodcarvings of the time designed to tell the Ganax.teidi story to the ages.

For an artist worthy of his vision, Xet-su-wu sent a delegation on the week-long paddle to Stikine to summon Kadjisdu.axtc, called the "Michelangelo" of the Tlingit world. In his youth, the Stikine nobleman studied with Haida master carvers; while still in his twenties, he established a reputation around 1775 by contributing to a fabled array of art pieces for the great Chief Shakes House in Stikine, later called Wrangell. When Xet-su-wu made his offer fifty or sixty years later, Kadjisdu.axtc was at the end of a long career, but he accepted and brought his family to Klukwan in 1834.

Four nine-foot house posts, a thirty-foot rainscreen, and a fourteen-foot feast trough called the Woodworm Bowl comprise Kadjisdu.axtc's primary work in the Whale House. His level of technique and design far exceeded any standard of the time, and is still unparalleled. In a 1991 article in *Connoisseur*, art critic Barry Herem effused that the Klukwan artifacts "transcend what we term beauty. Electrifying, monumental, they combine equally the undying primal energy of myth and the unique spark of individual genius." More than a year of carving earned Kadjisdu.axtc ten slaves, fifty dressed moose skins, and stacks of blankets.

The Stikine artist's creations invigorated the Ganax.teidi, who completed the timber-framed Whale House in time to shelter their *aat.oow*. "It represented the best type

of Tlingit architecture,” wrote ethnographer George Thornton Emmons at the end of the century, “a broad, low building of heavy hewn spruce timbers, carefully united through groove, tenon, and mortise, to support each other without extraneous fastening.” Set vertically, hewn boards four to six inches thick formed the walls of the fifty-by-fifty-three-foot house, be used for treasure storage and guest lodging.

In the same year, the schooner *Chilkat* carried Lieutenant Kuznetsov and his men into the Chilkat Valley for the first glimpse of Klukwan through European eyes. Sent by the Russian America Company’s Aleksandr Baranov, Kuznetsov sought talks with Xet-su-wu and his successor, Annahootz, to determine the source of the Chilkats’ luxurious Interior pelts. The crew probably inspected the big clan house under construction, and met the headman’s carver. Certainly, villagers prepared a feast for the guests during which clan leaders gave lengthy speeches about their lineage, and to honor their relationship with Russia. Doubtless, Xet-su-wu displayed the copper crest given to Yeilxaak. A generation later, some elders say, a Chilkat headman lost the crest when his canoe capsized in the fjord.

Shrewd entrepreneurs, northern Tlingits knew the value of customer relations. A procession of Klukwan traders followed the Grease Trail a few times a year to trade with Athabaskans two to four weeks away. The pack of an average overland trader weighed a hundred pounds, three-quarters of it retail. “The best article of trade” produced by northern Tlingits were Chilkat blankets, cinched into northbound packs along with hides and eulachon oil. According to Tutchone elder Annie Ned, Tlingits also introduced alcohol, guns, and sugar to Interior bands.

Deadliest of all imports, Tlingit packers brought disease. Like the large settlements in Sitka, Stikine, and Tongass most Tlingit villages were located on a sheltered bit of shoreline a few feet above tidewater. In this manner, the easy access to passing ships that coastal residents enjoyed also exposed them first to pestilence. Smallpox appeared in Sitka in 1835, passed from one or more ships from Russia, China, England, or Spanish America. By 1836, Russian Orthodox priest Father Veniaminov said the disease had claimed up to four hundred, or about half of the Sitka village. The disease reached epidemic proportions in the northern *kwaan* by 1837, the year Austin Hammond told me the community of Chilkoot was wiped out, leaving the few survivors to

recombine with clans in Yandeistakye and elsewhere. As much as three-quarters of Klukwan—perhaps a thousand people—perished at the time. On the Alsek, Nukva'ik disappeared without a trace. While such die-offs among other North American indigenes hastened cultural disintegration, the relative isolation of northern Tlingits prevented complete break-down. The Grease Trail sent them inland, away from sources of infection while maintaining a steady economy. Absent the sustained contamination of a nearby non-Native community, Klukwan survived the ravages.

But white people didn't go away. Prompted by a bid from Hudson's Bay Company to lease trading rights in her waters, Russia dispatched a survey team in 1838 headed by a German pilot named Lindenberg. The crew landed at Glacier Point, then proceeded along the thin strip of beach between tide and the glacier's hundred-foot wall. Thirty years later the glacier would be named Davidson; its Tlingit name forgotten.

Once past the glacier, the surveyors hiked the steep, irregular coastline of Chilkat Inlet to Chilkat River. The men kept to the shore opposite Yandeistakye, more than two miles across the mouth, away from lookouts. Once in Klukwan, villagers hired on to accompany the crew on the trek to Chilkat Pass. High on a tundra bump the surveyors took readings while the Native crew marked the Russian boundary with a huge rock slab suspended by two up-ended slabs. Few stumble upon Stonehouse today, fewer recognize it since the roof slab slipped off one upright support to lean on the other.

The bearing signified a map point for Russians who were accustomed to drawing lines around conquered lands and people, but for the Klukwan men, Stonehouse denoted Russian limits by marking the entrance to the Chilkat inland trading empire.

Leasing the littoral of Russian America in 1840 opened new markets for the enterprising Tlingits. For several springs, three Hudson's Bay ships appeared at Labouchere, a pocket of deep water in the western corner of the Chilkat mouth, known later as Pyramid Harbor. As local Natives learned the needs of their white customers, palaver sharpened, product line deepened, bottom line stuck. Despite an agreement with the Russians to do otherwise, British traders routinely used alcohol as a bargaining lubricant. Unfettered by government ethics, the Company tapped thirsty markets among Native clients.

With economic expansion among the northern Tlingit came a growing sense of propriety. By the 1840s, a half-century of Interior trade engendered a monopolistic attitude among Tlingits. “The Stick Indians were our money,” Tlingit anthropologist Agnes Bellinger said at a workshop in Klukwan. Trade with Southern Tutchone introduced Chilkats to Athabaskan handiwork, and by degrees, to the art of Inupiaq people living on the Arctic ocean. Strengthened also by business connections down the West Coast, Klukwan developed as “the trading center of Alaska.”

Competition arrived in June 1848 when Hudson’s Bay’s Robert Campbell built Fort Selkirk at the confluence of the Pelly and Yukon Rivers, three hundred miles north of Klukwan. In August, a Chilkat trading party arrived to exchange goods with the Company steamer, *Beaver*, but instead found Campbell and his dozen men at the new fort. The durable Scot complained about the “villainous” attitude of the coastal Natives who likely conveyed their ire with hideous noises and mock attacks. The Company remained. Determined to squeeze out the interlopers, Tlingit traders attempted to wrest control of the fort three years later, but were chased off by Indians loyal to Campbell.

“We warned them twice,” Joe Hotch says one morning in April 2009. An outbreak of smiles creases the faces of a mostly Native audience in the Klukwan school library. “Then we had to do something.”

The next year, Klukwan *sha’dehuni* Koh’klux enlisted twenty-seven men—including sons Scundoo’o and Yenda’yonk—for the thirty-day trek to Selkirk. On August 19, Campbell spotted the war party bearing on his shore in five rafts. Compromised by the absence of men out hunting, Campbell ordered all others inside the fort-house. According to Hotch, when the Tlingits arrived at the post “Kal.a’xch (Koh’klux) told Hudson’s Bay that they needed to go,” but they refused. Campbell said that though he “used every conciliatory appearance to soothe them they were like a volcano, every moment ready to burst out.” Through that day and the next, Tlingits strolled the fort grounds with loaded rifles, keeping their prisoners indoors. Two women and a man sneaked away in the night, leaving the fort, according to Campbell’s notes written under siege, “entirely in their power.”

Arrival of hunters and traders in three boats inflamed the Tlingits. “No one who has not seen it can imagine,” Campbell prefaced the transformation from calm to the

”wildest fury.” Screaming like “a fiend let loose from pandemonium,” the raiders descended upon the river party, who fled. “To prevent bloodshed,” Campbell ran after them. Vicious attacks on Athabaskan employees drew the fort founder into the fray. “They were already our masters,” Campbell wrote of his assailants who stripped him of weapons, carried him to the river bank, and left him “stunned with vexation.” No one was seriously hurt during the ordeal, but the Company’s inventory was “smashed into a thousand atoms.”

Koh’klux led his men into the hills behind the fort where, in the twilight of a northern summer night, they stoked huge fires through the night. When they returned the next morning, the Tlingits found the fort abandoned. They burned it to the ground, then tramped back to Klukwan loaded with booty for a “big celebration.”

Campbell retreated, leaving the Yukon without a Company presence until 1938.

*Heart Full of Eagles*

For residents of Mrs. Eugene Willard's literary *kwaan*, Kood-wot's death triggers a desperate slide toward cultural breakdown. Ascendance of the shaman Yealh-neddy fuels an epidemic of fear. He regains control of the chief's daughter, Kotch-kul-ah, by dissolving her will in an "alcoholic servitude." Hootch-fired eruptions destroy balance among villagers who, more than ever, need each other to survive. Even among the unaffected few, fatal disease lurks in the wake of white men. People question the old ways.

At mid-book, Yealh-neddy and a party of Chilkats pilot six Tsimpsonian carvers back to their home at Fort Simpson, four hundred miles south. Ten days of paddling brings them to Stikine where they see their first white man, a trader who calls the place Fort Wrangell.

Immediately, the shaman demands to know his purpose. "Who is this white man? Does he want to buy skins?"

"No; he is one of the 'up above chief's' men. He doesn't want your skins."

Yealh-neddy's face clouds as the Stikine explains the white man's interest in hitching a ride to the mission at Fort Simpson.

"He wants to see their God's-man."

"What did he want here in your place?"

"To see our God's-man."

"*Yours?*"

"Yes, *ours*—high chief Chilkat! You are slow of hearing, if this is the first you know of it. We have a school, too, and are getting the white man's tongue. The Stickeens are a long step ahead of the Chilkats—for all of you carry so many eagles in your heart."

"No more eagles than we've talons for, let me tell you."

Despite his suspicions, the shaman consents when the white man offers to pay for passage in silver. When they get to Fort Simpson, a dying Chilkat chief, Kasha, converts to Christianity. He prays for a "God's-man" who will teach Chilkats to read the Bible,

and his son Kin-da-shon to preach the Gospel. On their return, Kasha sinks into a feverish state, and takes his last breath as the canoe approaches home. The same leadership vacuum that inspires in Kin-da-shon on a righteous path consumes Yealh-neddy with a “wicked” campaign to retain his authority.

The shaman’s urgency stemmed from his role in maintaining traditional values. After all, Tlingits had relied on their *ixt* for centuries. He kept things in balance, spoke with spirits, protected his people from harm. “He cures everything,” Austin Hammond told me in 1985. “Sometimes he makes a lot of noise, that’s when he gets the power.” As keeper of old ways, the shaman required a dramatic stage from which he sought spiritual intervention, and conveyed a message that earned the devotion of his audience. Mrs. Willard called it fear. In her book, Christian competition unhinges the *ixt* who produces more noise with less success, talons slipping from his people.

Loss of traditional spirituality gouged holes in hearts that Chilkats attempted to fill with liquor. One nineteenth century observer remarked that Tlingits “become fond of ardent spirits” for which they will “sacrifice everything in their possession.” Some accounts hold a former U.S. soldier responsible for teaching residents of Hootznawoo (near Angoon) how to distill molasses into a strong alcoholic brew widely known as hootch. Soon, stills appeared in every community; Mrs. Willard knew of sixteen operations in the Chilkat Valley in the 1880s. Hootch became an integral element in the *koo’EEK*, memorials also called potlatches. Liquor dulled the grief, and eroded the elaborate traditions of the gatherings, which lasted days.

When she hears about the missionaries Kin-da-shon met on his voyage, his mother condemns whites for teaching Chilkats how to distill the “blood-of-witches,” which causes them to spend more money on guns, resulting in bloody disputes. “They are devils in white skins,” she snaps. “I want to see none of them in this country.” Despite her son’s assurances that the missionaries can kill witches and promise everlasting life, mother responds with “a contemptuous grunt.”

Early European contacts alerted Chilkats of increased interest among outsiders; their entrance onto the American stage quickened the pace. Even before the 1867 purchase of Alaska, American traders openly flouted the Russian-British agreement forbidding alcohol to Tlingits—uncorking competitive ambitions along the coast. Drink

drove up the prices Natives might pay, commensurate with impulsive, sometimes violent, behavior.

On October 16, 1867, U.S. Revenue Steamer Lincoln met a dozen canoes at “God’s Island” (Pyramid Island) near the mouth of the Chilkat River. Captain W.A. Howard invited a *sha’dehuni* and his entourage aboard. When Howard asked to meet Koh’klux, Daanaawaak declared that his current war with the Klukwan headman made an upriver journey impossible. The Yandeistakye headman wished to be treated as America’s liaison with the northern Tlingit, but Howard declined and dispatched a runner to Klukwan. Disgusted by gifts of tobacco, bread, and molasses, Daanaawaak demanded whiskey. Again, the captain declined.

The next afternoon, Koh’klux party came alongside the revenue cutter in five war canoes, one flying a Hudson’s Bay Company flag. Captain Howard’s first impressions of Koh’klux was of a “very quarrelsome Indian,” especially when denied whiskey. Broad-chested, six feet tall, and ornately attired, Koh’klux presented a threatening figure. The bullet hole in his cheek earned him a name meaning “Do not hit a shark on the head,” or “Hard to Kill.” “If I have no presents,” growled the headman, “why come? Talk without whiskey is nothing; s’pose plenty whiskey and presents, then talk good.”

Eventually, Howard convinced Koh’klux that he was not a trader, but an emissary of the great Boston chief. When presented with an American flag and a red broadcoat trimmed in gold braid, the headman departed “much better disposed.” On the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup>, a crew hoisted the flag at “Chilkate” a few minutes before the colors flew at Sitka. Moved by ceremony, solemn speeches, and free trade, local Natives pledged allegiance to the American Way.

At a regional council of Tlingit leaders months later, Koh’klux urged cooperation with their latest landlords. The United States proved itself a superior force, he said, “able to purchase the interests of the Russians and drive away King George’s Men whom we know to be strong.” The Klukwan *sha’dehuni* acknowledged the greater authority of a new trading partner, but ceded nothing. Other *kwaans* might make different arrangements, but Chilkats fully controlled their country—monitored for intruders, owned overland access, and sustained a large, defensible village protected by satellite

settlements and camps on every salmon-bearing river in the region. Two-point-six million acres.

A total solar eclipse confirmed Koh'klux' opinions about Boston strength. From his 1867 survey taken on God's Island, scientist George Davidson determined Klukwan to be ideal for viewing the eclipse due August 7, 1869. Upon his return, Dr. Davidson met Koh'klux in Sitka where he arranged to release the chief, jailed for "some petty offense." Fatal shootings of Chilkats in Sitka had stirred tensions between Natives and the new administration of General Jefferson C. Davis who considered the Lynn Canal Tlingits to be the "most formidable and hostile" of any Alaska Natives. In exchange for his freedom, "the greatest warrior and diplomat of all the tribes north and west of the Stak-heen" invited Davis and Davidson into his realm. The General declined, but Davidson and others eagerly accepted the invitation.

Among the guests was President Lincoln's closest colleague, former Secretary of State William Henry Seward and his middle-aged son Fred, touring the territory on which the elder Seward had staked his career. Survivor of Civil War, attempted assassination, and national ridicule over his bid for Alaska, the lawmaker was due his victory lap. The visit to Chilkat country put the famed abolitionist onstage with the one of the last slaveholders in the Land of the Free.

A week in a canoe brought Davidson to the mouth of Chilkat Inlet where two years earlier he had "discovered" the three-mile-wide glacier that bears his name. Sketches from the first trip show ice-cliffs within a few feet of saltwater. Scientific accounts spread the glacial word to a public hungry for Alaskan images, including John Muir of Yosemite, who yearned to see the glacier "grandly" descending into Lynn Canal. Davidson's crew pressed on to the mouth of the Chilkat River, then paddled twenty miles upriver toward the Tlingit stronghold. Though startled by celebratory bullets whizzing overhead on the upriver paddle, the scientist reached Klukwan unharmed. A few days later, the steamer *Active* threaded upriver to disembark Seward's entourage at the professor's camp on the outskirts of the big village. Koh'klux enticed the party into Klukwan with his offer of two "great lodges," including the Whale House. As keeper of the *kwaan*, Koh'klux guaranteed Davidson full protection, and proved himself an ideal

host: “absolutely honest,” attending to “every wish,” and meeting the “spirit and letter of every promise.”

When the sun turned “sick” on the appointed day, a Sitka newspaper told of horrified Klukwan residents fleeing to their homes. Eyewitness Frederick Seward saw it differently--describing villagers huddled close around Davidson’s crews as light faded. Intent upon their duties, the surveyors’ hushed tones and rapid exchanges gave the impression that they were “personally conducting the exhibition.” When shadow half-obscured the sun, a man broke the silence, saying he was “convinced of the ‘Boston men’s’ skill...(but) feared bad consequences” if the display continued. The crews ignored him.

At the apogee of the eclipse, visiting Sitka Tlingits dropped to their knees as trained by Russian priests, and began to recite the Lord’s Prayer. The shaman’s impotent responses left Klukwan residents to face their horror shoulder to shoulder, bent over white men holding mirrors and sextants, and scribbling calculations. Light’s return brought relieved shouts from villagers. Did the shaman join his disciples in their joyful chorus, or did he stand silently in awe of the power of these men who control the sun? Seward only notes that in the moments after the eclipse, two or three hundred locals gathered around the chief’s house in “grave, passive rows.” Koh’klux emphatically addressed the renowned statesman about murders of three Chilkats committed by Sitka Tlingits. Would Seward intervene? The diminutive statesman with the prominent nose responded:

“When did this killing take place?”

Koh’klux confirmed that the crime occurred nine or ten years earlier.

“Then it happened when this country belonged to the emperor of Russia,” Seward replied, “long before it became the property of the United States.” He urged Koh’klux to seek reparations with the czar, which, after translation, prompted more discussion among all headmen. In time, Koh’klux answered:

“We did appeal to the Emperor of Russia, but he gave us no redress. Perhaps he was too poor. We know he was poor because he had to sell his land to the Great Tyee. But now the great Tyee himself is here in his stead. And we want to know what he is going to do about it.”

After consulting General Davis, Seward asked the headman about his desired redress. Upon translation, Frederick reported visible enthusiasm in the crowd.

“A life for a life is the Indian law and always has been,” Koh’klux replied. “but as these three Chilcats were of the chief’s family, we reckon each of their lives to be equal to the lives of three common Indians. What we want then, is the great Tyee’s permission to send our warriors down to kill nine of the Koloshes (Sitkas), to avenge the death of the Chilcats.”

Absolutely not, Seward returned. Killing is out of the question. What about other restitution? Chilkat faces, wrote Fred Seward, “beamed with satisfaction when this was translated to them. Things were looking like business.” The headmen regrouped for further discussion, then Koh’klux announced terms:

“We know that the Boston men are averse to any killing, except by their own soldiers. So we have sometimes consented to take pay in blankets. We think that the life of each Indian is worth about four blankets. Nine times four blankets, if the great Tyee chooses to give them to us, would be full redress, and make our hearts glad; and we would henceforth regard the Kolosh as our friends and brothers.”

Seward turned to Davis. “Well General, there you have the conclusion of the case. I think we can afford to give them thirty-six blankets to make peace between the tribes.”

Impending forgiveness occasioned days of festivities. At the frequent feasts, delicacies were laid before the esteemed visitors—seal gut stuffed with black seaweed, deer rib racks, gobs of herring roe, and salmon prepared a dozen ways—all drenched in eulachon oil.

“I had the reputation of a great medicine man,” Davidson wrote, a status that earned him the confidence of Koh’klux. Unsolicited, the headman offered to draw a map of the 1852 expedition he led to destroy Fort Selkirk. For three days, Koh’klux bent over the floor drawing the route on the backs of ship’s charts, often pausing to confer with both wives. Though he had never before used paper and pencil, the *sha’dehuni* sketched a topographic corridor between Seduction Point and Fort Selkirk in a “corkscrew spiral” four hundred miles long. With over a hundred Tlingit place-names, the map filled in details of a vast landscape previously unknown by outsiders.

Davidson's questions about mining prospects along the route stirred in Koh'klux "as much interest in the gold, silver, copper or coal" as it did in the Americans, so he guided a few men to the summit of Chilkat Pass. Once guardian of a secret trail network, Koh'klux now shone light on his people's pathway to wealth, attracting further attention from white men. When a team of miners arrived in Klukwan a few weeks later, Natives announced that if they found valuable minerals, they couldn't "build houses" in Chilkat country, and vowed blood retaliation for white settlement, including beheading the military governor of Alaska, General Davis.

Adamant as Tlingits were about sovereignty, Chilkat-Chilkoot leadership could not stem Anglo influence. More destructive than physical trespass was the drumbeat of disease and/or alcohol reverberating in every house. A measles epidemic spread north from Fort Simpson to reach Lynn Canal in 1868, wiping out whole families, erasing clan memories. In May of that year, a weakened Chilkat leadership paddled to Sitka to "make many apologies for their past conduct to the whites." The speakers' sincerity convinced Davis of their "desire to cultivate friendly relations." Previous hostilities prevented settlement of whites among northern Tlingit, but the delegation's tone encouraged Davis, who believed the Natives held keys to unlock the gates to the Yukon. He reported their repentance to Washington, and recommended that an Army post be established.

Economics changed. Rising competition from Anglo traders cracked the Chilkat cartel by generating increased demand for liquor, guns, and molasses. Though compromised, Chilkats continued to charge tolls and require local hire for packers.

In Lynn Canal's eastern seafingers, Chilkoot Tlingits were accustomed to trading with ships, but not until 1874 did a white man pay to hike their "money trail." That summer, George Holt hired Chilkoot Jack and two Native slaves to accompany him over Chilkoot Pass into the headwaters of the Yukon, a gateway Tlingits "guarded with a jealousy bordering on fanaticism." Two big nuggets Holt bought from Interior Natives were enough proof to convince a band of twenty white Sitkans in 1878 to organize an expedition to Dyea. Escorted by a U.S. gunboat, the men disembarked on the Taiya River delta, an expanse of intertidal meadow locked between sheer mountainsides. Koh'klux, who happened to be in Dyea visiting relatives, stepped forward to greet the visitors. The great Tyee wanted American lands open for all his people, a man announced, which

would mean jobs for cooperative Native packers. Rounds from a Gatling gun punctuated their sincerity. “Chief Hole-in-the-Face” assented. Although he surely said a few words about protocols and boundaries, the big news was that the Chilkoot Pass was officially open for business.

Among those protesting the American occupation of Alaska, a counter-insurgency led by Sitka Jack in the 1870s was most feared. Tied to powerful clan members in Sitka, Angoon, and Klukwan, Sitka Jack declared his resistance regionwide with roving bands of renegades in war canoes. He argued against Boston restrictions on firearms and alcohol, and for re-establishing ties with their true friends, Hudson’s Bay Company. To celebrate building his “white man’s house” in Sitka, Sitka Jack hosted a grand *koo’eeek* in 1877 at which he publicly refused to free his slaves and threatened to lead a thousand men in an insurrection against the government. His marriage to Koh’klux’ sister obligated Sitka Jack to frequent travel north for visits with in-laws. He was a “big man who knew how to throw a big party,” says Tommy Jimmie, great-great grandson of the famed maverick.

Among Sitka Jack’s Chilkat allies was Scundoo’o, brother of Koh’klux and principal shaman of Yandeistakye. Fiercely opposed to the Bostons, the outspoken Scundoo’o likely supplies the model for Mrs. Willard’s Yealh-neddy. After S. Hall Young established the Presbyterian mission in Wrangell in 1878, Scundoo’o accompanied Sitka Jack’s brigands who confronted the newly Christianized Stikines of Fort Wrangell. Young complained that the shaman disrupted the mission’s civilizing influence by “insisting on making medicines...and collecting blankets on foolish charges from those he accused of witchcraft.” His spiritual ethos perforated, the *ixt* grew desperate. At stake was his very existence.

Although shamanism was somewhat tolerated by other faiths claiming Alaska souls in the nineteenth century, Reverend Young targeted the Tlingit medicine men as “*conscious frauds*” whose “diabolical persecution” of witches made scapegoats of innocents. Superstition, he wrote, “is hydra-headed and dies hard,” conquered only by an “uncompromising attitude.” Young measured the depth of his devotion by the zeal he applied to destroying shamans.

Crusades require villains, so the shaman was an ideal mark for Presbyterian fury. Of his own conversion at twenty, Young wrote that the “whole tide of my life flowed towards the Christian ministry and evangelization of those who ‘sat in darkness.’” Nine years later, a speech by church leader Sheldon Jackson electrified Young’s desire to spread the Word. “Thirty-five thousand natives in a land without law, order, or protection!” he recalled. “The shameful neglect of this, America’s last frontier, was a reproach to civilization.” Bookish and sickly, Hall Young of the East embarked on a personal transformation into the man of his memoir title, *Hall Young of Alaska: The Mushing Parson*.

As the Reverend Young’s steamer slipped away into the drizzle of July 10, 1878, the Pennsylvanian was greeted by a Hudson’s Bay agent who offered him words he would live by: “*Don’t become an Indian.*” The aphorism separated Young from his charges and guided his strict assimilationist policies.

If missionaries succeeded, Young wrote, their converts became “God’s children” whom, though “naughty, wayward, and careless” should be “pitied, loved, borne with and patiently tended *as children.*” Once the sheep were in the shepherd’s custody, Young recommended steps to “replace anarchy with law” with an especially “strong stand” against Tlingit language. He banned spoken Tlingit in schools, and refused to initiate the “useless and even harmful task” of translating the Bible into Tlingit or making a Tlingit dictionary. Better to “replace these languages with that of the Christian civilization” — compulsory English.

As Young’s colleague in Christ, Amanda McFarland distilled the reverend’s preaching to daily practice in her Home for Indian Girls. A pioneer missionary among Navajo and Nez Perce (who had slain her husband), Mrs. McFarland arrived a year before Young and held meetings that drew Wolf clan headman To’watte, who became one of the first Christian Tlingits in Wrangell. Church membership swelled. Aside from Bible study, Mrs. McFarland’s Home required giving up Tlingit ways—language, attire, foods, customs. Two of the school’s first graduates, Sarah Dickinson and Tillie Kinnon, were instrumental in early Chilkat conversions.

By the time John Muir landed in Wrangell in July 1879, Presbyterian missionaries counted all coastal Tlingit villages as theirs except the northernmost. Entrance into the

largest and most isolated of the *kwaans* required delicate diplomacy. Reverend Young knew a Chilkat party had encountered missionaries two years before, depicted in *Kin-dashon's Wife*. The “God’s-man” that accompanied the Chilkats was Sheldon Jackson who, as Rocky Mountain Superintendent for Presbyterian Home Missions, was in Alaska investigating prospects for expansion. Following the headman’s conversion at Fort Simpson, Chilkoot *sha’dehuni* Klanott and another leader declared to Jackson “their desire to give up the old way and learn the new,” and “inquired how soon a teacher would come.” Eager to complete the Home Mission’s territorial imperative, Jackson promised to submit their request to the Board.

For Muir and Young, Jackson’s pledge added urgency to their missions. Throughout the summer, Muir assailed his host with visions of the “dreary, mysterious” land of “ice and snow and new-born rocks” that reputedly lay to the north. That the north contained souls yet uncommitted to the Lord gnawed at Young for whom making first contact with heathens was a fantasy. Three years after the Battle of Little Bighorn, Young and Muir were primed to their roles as acculturators, backed by Navy gunboats which Muir believed would deliver “a good thrashing, prompt, heavy, wholesale, and whole-souled” to recalcitrants. Unlike Indians elsewhere, Muir noted, Tlingits “seem literally to kiss the rod and love it, and therefore need it seldom.” They sought missionaries not because they were “predisposed to piety,” but because the Presbyterians offered a new route to wealth. Muir lamented that Christian Indians elsewhere “lose their wild instincts...they mope and doze and die on the outskirts of civilization like tamed eagles in barnyard corners, with blunt talons, blunt bills, and clipped wings.” Tlingits, on the other hand, produced “good and fair work for fair wages.” Only alcohol prevented Tlingits from assimilation, warned the man they called Glate Ankow, remedied by “common-sense Christian teachers.” After his first few weeks in Wrangell, Muir judged that “Uncle Sam has no better subjects, white, black, or brown, or any more deserving his considerate care.”

News of changes in the Chilkat stronghold filtered all summer to Wrangell from growing numbers of traders and soldiers. On August 27, the U.S. Customs House in Wrangell certified an agreement that Daanaawaak escort Dan McKenzie’s men to a lodestone up the Chilkoot River in return for “equal interest” in the prospector’s claims.

Young and Muir also heard that Sitka Jack was on a rampage in Klukwan, throwing big parties that plunged the village into an alcoholic whirl.

Known as much for his daring-do as his scientific acumen, Muir persuaded Young that they must travel before winter. With the aged headman, To'watte, at the rudder, a crew of four Tlingit men brought Young and Muir into the north of their desires. The elder *sha'dehuni* expected those in his keep to uphold Tlingit protocols, such as dining, dress, and travel precautions. What Muir's cultured readership might think courageous, To'watte likely viewed as reckless. His counsel saved Muir's life more than once.

Early conversion and influence among the Stikines earned the Wolf Clan headman high respect among missionaries, who also expected him to deny integral aspects of his culture. While he openly celebrated his new faith, some say that To'watte despaired at the death of the old ways. During a time in Sitka, the Stikine headman composed a song stemming from a missionary who forbade him from helping his uncle repair a clan house. Drumming as he strolled the muddy streets of the Sitka Ranche, To'watte sang, "My grandfather's land is turned upside-down. This is a strange culture." Tlingit groups still sing this today.

As songleader for the *Gei'saan* Dancers in the 1960s through the nineties, Dixie Johnson kept To'watte's song alive. "He found Christianity and men were poking fun at him because he couldn't do anything about his uncle's house," she said, so he wrote the song about "the battle that was going on inside him." In the second verse, To'watte cried out "What Raven can save me?" from which Johnson infers "Only God can save me."

Fervent belief propelled by oratorical octane ignited in To'watte the ability to move his Tlingit audiences with the Word. Though the party had been enthusiastically received on their Southeast Alaska tour, they "never felt it so keenly as at Yindastuki." The weather turned raw the first week of November 1879. High pressure bearing down from the Interior caused temperatures to drop far below freezing, clogging Chilkat river channels with ice. In Daanaawaak's house, however, high pressure produced heat. More than three hundred souls pushed inside until the great room held no more, compelling late

congregants to rip away heavy planks and hang from timbers, shouting “Go on, go on! A good word, a new word, tell us more!”

Agitated expressions and gestures flickered through the room when To’watte stepped up to deliver his sermon. Among the throng stood Koh’klux, and Scundoo’o, both of whom evoked deep bitterness in the Stikine headman and his pastor. Several times in the past year, Young had chased Scundoo’o away from Stikine homes, but the shaman always returned to mock the white man with a call like a “laughing gull.” Koh’klux, the missionary insisted, “remained a heathen of all heathens” with such a fearful past that Young “did not breathe freely until he left.” In earlier times, To’watte had killed Chilkats in battle, so in Yandeistakye he openly feared for his life. To stand before his avowed enemies required an act of extraordinary faith; his speech conveyed the humility of a transformed warrior, “a model of kindness and diplomacy.”

“We are not different tribes,” said the old headman. “We are one family. God is our father; Mr. Young and Mr. Muir are our brothers. No one is better than the other. All are equal. All remembrance of former hurts and anger and war is wiped out by this new Word. Let us be at peace. If I have offended any Chilcat, I ask his pardon.”

Koh’klux was moved enough to ensure the Stikine elder’s protection in Chilkat country, but not enough to invite To’watte to join his party for a meeting in Klukwan.

When the crowd demanded that he speak, John Muir reinforced To’watte’s themes, underscoring that they were “all children of one father.” The celebrated Scot’s rhetorical choice to amplify To’watte’s message of brotherhood and equality, rather than indulge his tendency to wax rhapsodic, reinforced the visitors’ unified purpose. Muir’s speech differed only in his opening remarks about glaciers and responses to the audience: Why would anyone want to tramp on the backs of ice-giants? You could kill yourself! Like Davidson, Muir seemed to possess powers beyond those of normal men. Two things set Muir apart from his predecessor—transparent goodwill and a passion for ice. Being the “first white man who didn’t want something from us,” according to Klukwan leader Kim Strong, was key to Muir’s acceptance.

An incidental ethos-booster for Muir may have been his brevity. Often characterized as rapturous and long-winded, in Yandeistakye the eco-prophet kept his speech down to a few minutes, which, says Joe Hotch, may have further contributed to

his perceived standing. Although Tlingit public speaking is fabled for length, in Chilkat tradition “you make your talk as short as you can.” Some speeches are longer than others, which may be appropriate to the topic or circumstance. Still, Hotch maintains, “If you talk too long it’s like words piling up. If you talk too long, it costs us money. Recognize everybody, thank them, honor them, talk for a little bit, then move on.”

Merely a sideshow to his evangelical companions, Muir moved on. His Tlingit audience was moved. A mission would come to Chilkat.

On the morning of their departure, Daanaawaak requested that the band carry a document verifying that he had not killed them, and “could not be held accountable” for deaths en route to Wrangell. To’watte probably felt blessed to leave Yandeistakye alive, but Muir’s rash impulses continued to endanger the group. A day away from Stikine, Muir insisted that they risk a rough bar crossing, nearly swamping the canoe. Once in safe water, To’watte pulled ashore before he summoned John Muir and translator Stikine John.

“Glate Ankow may possess knowledge about many things,” To’watte allowed, but Muir repeatedly acted “like a silly child” in a land where he knew little. “If we had listened to you we would not be alive now,” the headman charged. Though “Muir did not often acknowledge his faults,” Young wrote, the headstrong Scot was “as meek as a child” for the rest of the journey.

Upon their return home in early December, Muir departed on a southbound steamer carrying the copious notes he would cobble together for a report of his Glacier Bay “discovery” and, years later, for his final book, *Travels in Alaska*. Young and his Christian Tlingits continued their crusade to transform the culture. On January 10, 1880, Young and To’watte faced a band of “Hootchenoos” in Wrangell, “a mob of drunken savages” packing guns. After declaring to Young that he held nothing against the warriors, To’watte walked into the fray, intent on making peace. In his hands, a heavy, carved spear signified high status. Despite his pleas to retreat, Young saw only a smile on “that grand old face” the instant before a volley of gunfire cut down a dozen men on each side. A bullet pierced To’watte’s skull; the first Tlingit Christian fell at his pastor’s feet.

“It seemed,” Young wrote, “as if the world had come crashing about me.”

*End of the Ixt*

In the deep-fried prose one expects from the back of a 1950s café menu (“The Best Food in Alaska”), Haines businessman I.B. Howser offered his story of Scundoo’o for hungry customers awaiting their “Real He-Man/She-Woman Breakfast Plates.” Aside from concocting cures, “the last of the great Medicine Men” could predict the future and “show off and use his mystic powers.” Crowned with dangling red locks sprouting from double cowlicks, “Scundoo” cut a fearsome figure among the Tlingit.

His power, however, was eroding. Elements of the New Way—disease, liquor, Boston food, science, medicine, and theology—cut into his *ethos*. When the people stopped believing in their *ixt*, business suffered. The shaman increased his forays to other villages, demanding blankets in payment for relief from nonexistent maladies. U.S. Navy gunboats sought him out, but the “copper-haired” Scundoo’o “didn’t do that back seat stuff;” his “bombastic methods” continued.

“In the midst of all this upheaval,” the menu explains, “an official of the vicinity took sick,” so Scundoo’o came for the cure. Despite a display of “mystic powers befitting such an important man,” the patient died. The medicine man was tried for murder and sentenced to forty years at McNeill Island federal prison in Washington.

By this time, I.B.’s wife, Merle, glides back into the steamy diner with refills (“Coffee goes with a meal—No limit to number of cups”) and conversation with customers. Most are locals—loggers and fishermen—with a few stragglers from the weekly steamship. An occasional vehicle rolls off with folks asking about conditions on the new Haines Road, one-hundred fifty miles of pot-holes to a junction at the fresh-built Alaska Highway. Merle can count on one or two menu-readers in Howser’s Cafe to crack a comment or query. What about this Scundoo’o? Was he for real? Where’s he buried? She chuckles, offers the action end of her coffee pot, taps the menu. Read on.

Not long after settling into a cell at McNeill, the shaman had a vision. A large cash theft in the Chilkat Valley gave rise to Scundoo’o’s offer to identify the culprits in exchange for a pardon. After a year in prison, the shaman returned to Haines to finger the

four Natives “guilty of this dastardly deed of stealing the white man’s money.” Exonerated, Scundoo’o became known as “Judge Scundoo’o” until his death at eighty-three. His body was wrapped tightly in skins and placed on a cliff-top bier overlooking Yandeistakye and the Chilkat River delta. In the ensuing years, “lowly thieving men” pilfered bones and valuables from the gravesite, leaving only “a couple short ribs, a vest, a some pieces of wooden boxes.”

Breakfast clatters onto the speckled Formica table-top. Merle cocks her head and beams a trademark smile. What’ja think? Distracted by the hot odors emanating from the He-Man platter (ham, bacon or sausage links with “spuds, oleo, jelly, and coffee”), thinking becomes a chore. Using a forefinger emboldened by caffeine, the patron slides his coffee cup forward. Where’d you say that rascal was buried?

Decades of coffeeshop chatter constructed a mythic sense of Scundoo’o, the last medicine man. As the most accessible shaman biography in town, locals knew the story by heart. When the café closed in the eighties, the big black-and-white menus became endangered. The Sheldon Museum inherited a stack; I rescued one from a burn barrel.

Boil the six-hundred word blurb down to the truth and this much is clear: Scundoo’o was a red-headed shaman who was called Dr. Scundoo'o before he was sentenced to San Quentin (not McNeill) and returned three years later as Judge Scundoo'o. He did not have a mystic vision in prison. Grave-robbers stole his treasures.

Beyond menus and foggy legends, local knowledge about Scundoo'o is scanty. Historical records reveal a bit more. Though not the last Tlingit to practice shamanism, Scundoo’o was the most vocal about its demise. After Sitka Jack disbanded his raiders and allied with the Great Tyees, the Shungu’keidi shaman drifted among Chilkoot relatives who shielded him. In his report to the 1882 Congress, Commander L.A. Beardslee reported that despite the successes of his Tlingit police force elsewhere, they were useless at tracking shamans. Soldiers apprehended Scundoo’o in 1888 and sheared his dreadlocks to break his power, but he continued his practice. In March 1894, Klukwan villagers sent for the U.S. marshal after witnessing Scundoo'o torture and kill a fourteen year-old girl for witchcraft, another in a string of abuses or deaths for which Scundoo’o was said to be responsible.

Days after Daanaawaak delivered a deposition avowing Scundoo'o's presence in Dyea, an unlit cutter landed in darkness on the Taiya mud flats. More than a dozen armed men roused the shaman from a clan house, then escorted him back to Juneau. A U.S. District court manslaughter conviction in 1895 landed Scundoo'o in San Quentin federal prison for three years.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, I listened to Dixie Johnson lead the Gei Sun Dancers in "San Quentin Song," written by Scundoo'o while behind bars. "He's crying for his land," Dixie told me. "He won't feel whole until he comes back home."

At the end of his hitch, Scundoo'o returned to Lynn Canal a changed man. He morphed his infamous outlaw persona into "Judge Skondooo," a Main Street eccentric who bore a tin star on his breast and beat a drum for the Salvation Army. In 1906 Winter and Pond commissioned an aged Scundoo'o to recreate shamanic rituals for photographic sessions in their Juneau studio. The photos captured a series of costumed poses, but details of his life stayed unfocused.

After exhausting public records and café hearsay, I knock on 85-year-old Charlie Brouillette's door at three-mile Haines Highway, the closest residence to Yandeistakye. His mother, Mary, was Scundoo'o's great-niece, which points the matrilineal finger at Charlie as the medicine man's closest living relative. On this drizzling day in September 2009 I find Charlie and his wife Harriett in their last hour in Haines before ferrying out for six months in Seattle. Wife and daughter finish last-minute packing and cleaning while Charlie and I talk at the kitchen table.

Elders spoke little of Scundoo'o while Charlie was growing up. The Scotch side of his mother's family was Campbell, but Charlie doesn't remember her saying much about her Tlingit ancestors. He suspects she preferred it to warring with his father, Charles Brouillette Sr., a French-German teamster who hated Scundoo'o. Anything he said about the old shaman "wasn't very nice," Charlie chuckles. Once when his father was driving a load through Klukwan Scundoo'o accosted him for a ride back to Haines in the horse and wagon, but the elder Charles was headed further upvalley to Porcupine. He loudly refused. Between hideous exclamations, the shaman scooped dust from the road and blew it at Brouillette, who drove away shouting his own epithets. Charlie recalls another story his father told about pitching in a baseball game in front of a local crowd

that included the medicine man. “He thought Scundoo’o was trying to put a jinx on him somehow or another so he threw a wild pitch and hit him accidentally on purpose.”

Charlie laughs. I chuckle to affirm the elder and encourage more stories.

What of Scundoo’o’s opposition to missionaries? The details don’t come easily, but since he was a boy, Charlie heard “nothing but bad attitude” in the Presbyterian church, of which he is a lifelong member. “We (Tlingits) called him a shrewd businessman, but they called him stingy, sharp. A funny way, a different way.”

The elder characterizes non-Native views of Scundoo’o as somewhere between a hapless relic and evil holdover, but as a Tlingit it is hard to dismiss the shaman’s connection with the spirit world. Some say a Yandeistakye shaman sent and received telepathic messages, and could fly. Ed Shotridge told Charlie that Scundoo’o convinced him of his powers when the eagle down he cast on a swift river channel floated upstream. “They took what they saw and what they had,” Charlie says of old beliefs.

When witches are part of those beliefs, what of the crime that sent his great-great uncle to prison? Charlie shrugs, palms up, fingers outstretched. “He thought he was doing what was right,” the former teacher declares. “Whoops, she died you know.” Charlie looks at me with eyes I recognize from sepia-toned photos of a man dressed in amulets and furs, crouching, ready to spring, an ornate rattle in each hand.

After thanking the Brouillettes, I head out the highway, slowing to cast a glance at the cliffs behind the rotting remains of Yandeistakye. Though a late convert, the lapsed shaman wasn’t buried among Christians, but accorded traditional rites appropriate to his status, remains cached on a cliff with a hundred-mile view down the grand fjord.

After receiving instructions from a L’koot man, I first climbed up to Scundoo’o’s grave in late October 1984 where I found none of Howser’s ghoulish inventory, just scraps: five or six lathed railing-posts, a three-foot section of paint-flecked picket fence, shreds of soiled cloth. And the canoe—the canoe was still there. As is customary, Scundoo’o’s relatives filled the twenty-foot canoe with *aat.oow*—Chilkat robes, furs, bear-claw necklaces, headpieces, carvings, eulachon oil in bentwood boxes—to ease his journey to the next world. By the time I arrived, the canoe was empty, hull cracked and rotting, still tucked into the cliff four generations after the shaman’s death.

Over three decades I occasionally returned to the grave, in part to imagine when the view included a village instead of a highway and an airport, and to note the disappearance of things. The posts vanished, as did all but the most rotted woodwork. On a recent visit I am startled to discover the prow of the canoe sawed off and missing. I mention the gravesite's condition to a couple of Native guys with ties to Yandeistakye. They react with shrugs and cynical remarks, agree it's best leave it alone. One forty-year Haines resident recalls a flap surrounding Scundoo'o's skull, reputedly stolen by Fort Seward soldiers. They pressed I.B Howser to buy it, but he refused. Speculation is that the skull was sold out of state. "Nothing left at his grave or anywhere in the valley," the Native-adopted artist told me. "They took everything."

A six-hundred year-old Sitka spruce extends sheltering branches over the moss and wild roses that nearly smother Scundoo'o's gravesite. From a sunny cliff-top nearby I look over the village site, now Haines airport. Though the site of Daanaawaak's great house is under tarmac, it isn't hard to imagine it on the stream channel (also filled for a runway) with a dozen other houses. The same story of engagement on which I've reflected a thousand times runs through my mind once more.

Likely crowded in with hundreds of kinsmen in the headman's house is Scundoo'o, witness to the power of the Christian competition. Following extended, heartfelt sermonizing from Kadachan, To'watte, and Reverend Young, the woolly Scotsman stands near the fire pit in the center of the great house. Here is an unusual white man, Glate Ankow, who clambers through icefields to learn secrets locked in ice and rock, then divulges his findings free of charge. Furthermore, John Muir girds his discoveries with goodwill when he speaks about connections between Tlingits and whites, members of the same divine brotherhood.

For one feel-good moment, Muir's speech takes locals and outsiders to the "same side of the river, eye to eye, heart to heart." In his collegial response, the "old, white-haired shaman of grave and venerable aspect" asserts his role as spirit-world arbitrator in certifying Muir's homily. Likely he is the elderly shaman-chief of Chilkoot village, Karskarz, whose speech also derives context from an inter-clan conflict and reconciliation only weeks before, in September 1879.

A barrel of molasses Koh'klux gave at a *koo'eeek* incited violence between Chilkats and Chilkoots. Alarm spread quickly that both sides suffered losses and "Hard to Kill" was badly hurt. When word reached Sitka, Commander Beardslee dispatched three canoes carrying thirty Tlingit policemen, including Koh'klux's nephew, Dick. Sitka Jack also paddled north at Beardslee's urging to advise his brother-in-law to "stop drinking hoo-che-noo and fighting." The crew carried documents prepared by the Commander to verify Koh'klux' commitment to peace. Though old-time Tlingits knew little English, Beardslee wagered that a "superstitious respect for written words" would cement their vows. In a post-Custer frontier, sending Natives with papers seemed more prudent than sending the Cavalry.

Honored by Davidson and Seward a decade earlier, Koh'klux sustained amicable relations with America, but his name still evoked a fearful fascination. The Klukwan leader was "very savage and vindictive," attested a writer for *Century*, "but as he holds a monopoly of the fur trade up and down his river, he is very wealthy and influential and can be of great assistance to any expedition." Klukwan's upriver location made it impossible for Beardslee to threaten him with gunships, so the Commander tried a different approach: trust.

Beardslee's Tlingit advance guard lived among the villagers for months before returning to Sitka in February. Likely they helped their relatives harvest and prepare coho salmon, hauled in the winter wood supply, taught skills to nieces and nephews. No doubt the policemen talked with others about the new American laws and expectations. They probably stood among the throng listening to Muir and Young in Daanaawaak's house. Before the Sitkans left Klukwan they persuaded Koh'klux to sign a letter from Beardslee granting miners open access to Chilkat country.

News of Koh'klux' "invitation" sparked fevered preparations in Sitka: boats built, supplies ordered and received, crews mustered. In orders issued May 20, 1880, the commander directed E.P McClellan to speed "under sail and oar" to Chilkat with thirteen soldiers and two dozen miners. Upon landing, the orders required McClellan to arrange an "interview with the chiefs" which he would attend in full military dress. The lieutenant would remind leaders that the Navy sent Native policemen rather than gunboats to the previous Chilkat-Chilkoot conflict. Naval patrols came up Lynn Canal because Chilkats

desired peace with the Great Tyee; the U.S. expected Koh'klux and his headmen to treat whites as guests, allowing them to "live peaceably and friendly with the Indians." If they failed, Beardslee warned, "in the future no Chilkhat Indian will be allowed to land in Sitka for trade or any other purposes."

The chiefs pledged their cooperation.

On June 5, the Navy launch returned to Sitka bearing news that "Chilkhat country was now fairly open to the whites." Within days, Commander Beardslee posted a letter to President James A. Garfield, then to Koh'klux, lauding the "good conduct" of Chilkats. Keeping their promise, Beardslee vowed, enabled the cunning traders "to make money by selling all of their furs, oil and other things."

In a letter penned aboard the U.S.S. Jamestown the next week, Commander Beardslee tells Koh'klux how pleased the President will be to hear that the chief will allow outsiders free passage in the *kwaan*. He lauds the "good conduct" of village leaders, who are "so wise that they can see" the economic value of relationships with white men. If the great *sha'dehuni* guarantees safe passage for prospectors, their discoveries "will enrich the Indians also." Moreover, Beardslee shows faith: "I am glad you kept your promises, and I felt sure you that you would. Brave men of all colors are alike; they will not lie."

As an act of good faith, the Naval officer breaks his own rule against giving gifts by sending Koh'klux a fine American pipe and some tobacco. "Keep the pipe as long as you live, then give it to the next chief, to be used always as a pipe of peace."

A threat, a promise, and a gift made for the sort of gunboat diplomacy Tlingits respected. Beardslee's rhetorical approach emphasized the *logos* of economics, *pathos* of praise, and the goodwill so vital to a speaker's *ethos*. In the language of trade, advantages are palpable and imminent. Change came quickly.

The first outsiders to settle in the *kwaan* arrived six months later when Northwest Trading Company built a store at Portage Cove. The landing party included one of Amanda McFarland's star students, Sarah Dickinson, her white husband, trader George Dickinson, and their two children. The white man carried a civilizing inventory of "cloths, buttons, shoes, hats, beads, blankets, combs" as well as "bogus meerschaums and cheap medicines" which he traded for the rich furs packed by Chilkats from the Interior,

and oils they rendered from “whales, porpoises, and seals.” As instructed by Reverend Young, Sarah taught English and Bible studies.

A model graduate of the Wrangell girl’s school, Sarah Dickinson was groomed to be a Christian teacher. The Tongass Tlingit woman possessed linguistic and cultural understandings that brought the Good Word closer to her audience. As Young’s interpreter in Wrangell, she faced down a powerful *sha'dehuni*, shamanic agonistics, and parents unwilling to surrender their daughters to the boarding school. Now in her early thirties, Mrs. Dickinson brought to Haines a righteous fervor tempered by uncommon compassion. Young credited her with reforming the common Native practice of “entering complaints against and berating one another in prayer-meetings and confessions.” One-stop access to English, religion, and Boston goods attracted families from Yandeistakye and L’koot, who began to relocate near the trading post at Deishu.

The steamer *Favorite* paid several visits to the Dickinsons that year, disgorging each time a rough mix of soldiers, prospectors, and traders. Less than two months after the family arrived, hostilities broke out again between Chilkats and Chilkoots. They discovered that a white miner named Steele circumvented local markup by dealing directly with their traditional trading partners, the “Stick Indians” (southern Tutchone) of southern Yukon. Discontent turned dark, fueled by a hootch river flowing through “nearly every house” toward a sea of trouble. Tensions soared in August over a barrel of molasses sold by trader Pierre Erassard. A nephew of Koh’klux declared a “blood feud” with Erassard as payback for being stabbed by a white man in Wrangell the year before. Mindful of his agreement to the white Tyees, the old headman protected the French trader. The hellbent nephew settled his score by shooting and killing a Chilkoot man who had bitten off his ear in a past scrap. Honor-bound, tribal partisans descended into a deadly civil war.

The Dickinsons’ prayers were answered when the *Favorite* steamed into Portage Bay on August 24 carrying troops led by Commander Beardslee and Major William Gouverneur Morris. A distraught George Dickinson immediately swept the officers into the brutal details of their ordeal. Months later, Beardslee’s military report recounted the events in the crisp language of function; but using the pseudonym “Piseco,” Beardslee

sketched a jaunty dispatch to *Forest and Stream* magazine. From both narratives, an unusual account of frontier diplomacy emerges.

The drunken grudge match, Beardslee/Piseco wrote, arose from white encroachment on Interior trading partners, the main reason that Chilkats had “always been opposed” to opening their *kwaan* to outsiders. Steele slipped away, so rival groups took out their frustrations on each other. Beardslee sent messengers to invite headmen of each watershed to resolve the dispute with him aboard the *Favorite*. As much as the soldiers wanted to hunt and fish, wrote Piseco, they remained aboard the steamer in the “the monotony of expectancy” as they awaited responses.

Early the next day, the Major and Commander were lured ashore by flocks of ducks landing in a Deishu swamp. After a few minutes on a trail, they met Pierre Erassard walking with five Natives. Koh’klux was among them, “a tall, well-built, dignified old fellow from whose good looks, however, a wad of cotton, stuffed into a hole in his left cheek, somewhat detracted.” Another headman was “Kak na tay,” who Piseco estimated to be older, in his seventies. Erassard, a well-built voyageur “arrayed in red,” displayed a “most profound obeisance” to the commander, with a “true shrewdness and French politeness” that verged on fawning.

As Beardslee struck up a conversation with Koh’klux, concerns about his duck-hunting attire vaporized when, “stripped of all external show of power,” the two men sat under a large tree to talk over the problem. In addition to pressures on Interior trading partners, Koh’klux complained to the commander that “white men demoralize the Indians by selling them liquor and debauching their women” which, the journalist agreed, “is only too true.” When Beardslee’s cigars were smoked down, Koh’klux brought out the pipe sent by the commander in June. As they talked and smoked, the two men paused from time to time to shoot Beardslee’s breach-loader. “If the true history of wars and diplomacy could be written,” opined Piseco, “how many times have such little matters had more weight than elaborate speeches, convincing only their utterer?”

Free of his attendants, Koh’klux “unbosomed” himself to Beardslee, admitting that his family was to blame and he was eager to make peace. The murdered man was “not worth a hundred blankets,” the *sha'dehuni* assured the commander, but “he would pay two hundred if not less would heal the breach.” The greater crime, Koh’klux

maintained, was disrespect from transient whites whose attitudes about alcohol, women, and money produced deadly tensions. Since fear of reprisal kept most Tlingits from striking white men, Natives took it out on each other. Blood atonement amplified and prolonged the internecine conflicts. Koh'klux would keep his promise to protect whites, but Beardslee must keep his people from harm.

Aggrieved parties met Beardslee and Morris at the trading post later that morning, officers in full uniform, Tlingits in regalia that “vied with our splendor.” Flanked by attendants, Chilkat leaders Koh'klux and Colchika gathered on one side of the building; Chilkoots Daanaawaak and Karskarz on the other. Signaled by a gunshot, they boarded the *Favorite* together.

The commander read from a prepared speech which framed a history of U.S.-Tlingit relations driven by old threats and promises. The “great Tyhee” William Henry Seward, had been “greatly pleased” with the abundant resources of Chilkat lands and praised the friendly treatment by “brave and intelligent tribes.” Beardslee admitted that in the ensuing years “both good and bad men” followed, some whites teamed up with “bad Indians” to stir up trouble enough for Navy gunship patrols. In most cases, Boston men had relied on Native leadership to stop conflicts because without their cooperation the business Tyees would go elsewhere. Beardslee was “very grieved and mortified” over the latest clash which, he said, was “like a little fire which has started, and which can easily be put out by a cool breath,” but if allowed to burn “will destroy the country.” Since the Navy was unwilling to unilaterally intervene, Beardslee asked the leadership to “help me blow it out.”

A headman spoke. If both sides told the story of the war, would the commander arbitrate between opponents?

Beardslee refused, emphasizing that he came as a friend, not a judge: “We know that you Indians have laws, and that by them this dispute can be settled better by your chiefs in cool, deliberate council than by young men, crazy with hoo-che-noo, killing each other.”

Honored by the commander's trust, Koh'klux agreed that the dispute was best resolved by traditional means, that he would first speak with the family of the deceased to determine the number of blankets, then make the payment himself. The old *sha'dehuni's*

pledge enlivened Daanaawaak and Karskarz, who broke their silence to engage in a “friendly consultation.” After Beardslee received assurances that the leaders would pursue peace, Major Morris spoke at length about the liquor trade. If the Tlingit leaders cooperated, he said, the Navy promised to build a schoolhouse around which a new village would be constructed, Chilkoots eastward of the store, Chilkats on the west. And should the Tlingits halt their use of “trouble-brewing molasses,” Morris added, the *Favorite* would bring them “good, wholesome beer” from the Sitka brewery. Headmen chuckled and nodded as Major Morris patted his ample belly to show how beer drinkers became “fat and healthy.” Beardslee reported that they were “very willing to have the experiment tried.”

Before the Tlingit leaders disembarked, sailors demonstrated the force of their weaponry. In testimony twenty years later, Scundoo'o's brother, Yenda'yonk, recalled hearing about the “shots over the hill” during the howitzer demonstration. Rounds from a Gatling gun were especially impressive to the men aboard the gunship as the weapon showed “what one man could do to a fleet of canoes coming from all directions.” Back ashore, the headmen met amongst themselves to determine Koh'klux' payment, then signed a peace treaty.

“So Haines was founded,” ethnographer George Thornton Emmons pronounces in his seminal text, *The Tlingit Indians*. The new name offered a tone more mannered than the heathen-worded wilderness before it, even though the mission's eastern benefactor, Mrs. F. E. Haines, never visited her namesake. Missionaries Eugene and Carrie Willard's arrival a year later marked the official installment of Eastern gentility into the *kwaan*, just in time to confront renewed hostilities in the decade-long “Hootch Wars.”

In a July 1, 1881 report to Beardslee's successor, Commander Henry Glass, Navy Master G. C. Hanus described the Dickinsons as so “thoroughly frightened” by bloody rumors that he found it “impossible to get a precise statement” about the conflict. Of one thing he was certain: “nearly all the trouble is caused by hoochinoo.” First, Hanus transferred all molasses kegs from the trading post to the *Favorite*. Next, he gathered information: clan battles had left eight dead in Klukwan—“four Crows and four Whales”—and many wounded. Koh'klux sent word that he was doing all he could, but that two high-caste Ravens were among the dead, complicating the payback. In two small canoes,

Hanus paddled upriver to the big village with his commanding officer, Edward Lull, Tlingit interpreters and a photographer.

Because all Whales were barricaded in their houses, Hanus met first with about a hundred Ravens. The Tlingits patiently listened to the officer's "long speech" in which he urged them to stop fighting, then replied that they would "make peace if the Whales would pay a thousand blankets." Hanus walked the offer across town where he delivered the deal with a similar speech. The clans settled on a payment of a hundred blankets, Lull reported, "and in my presence they shook hands and promised to live peaceably."

Classes started in the Haines Mission on August 8.

Despite the military reconciliation in Klukwan, deep divisions lingered. Eager to pour Presbyterian balm on village wounds, Eugene and Carrie Willard set out September 1 with interpreter Sarah Dickinson and others on their first voyage to Klukwan. After maneuvering up the Chilkat river, a late scene in *Kin-da-shon's Wife* dramatizes the meeting between the missionaries and the "rich old chief" Koh'klux. Since the headman is "in nowise involved in the war" Willard is vexed that he maintains "a position so neutral that he could confer with either side while attempting to control neither." The *sha'dehuni* proves himself a generous host, however, lodging his visitors in the Cinnamon Bear *aat.oow* house "with its hundreds of carved vessels and boxes of blankets and oil and every Indian treasure." Lavish adornment, however, does not distract the missionaries from the "pall" hanging over what was once a "busy, thriving town."

The roots of the conflict are saturated with hootch, observes Willard, which reaps a dark harvest for the "emissary of evil," Yealh-neddy. Her shaman retains his power by using alcohol to keep villagers "in a state of abject slavery," while Koh'klux remains concerned, but detached. Ingredients for a classic showdown, but Mrs. Willard's villain shrinks from the light of Christ instead, never to return.

The Reverend Willard calls a meeting.

Hundreds of Ravens and "servants" jam into the big house. Willard bears to them the "suffering, struggling world" from which, with faith engenders its "message of peace and love" can emerge. Their "shame" was paid for by the Son of God who died so that they could live forever. God asks only that "all tribes" obey Him. "To be *received* his love must be *obeyed*."

The hush that follows the sermon contains the breath of transformation for the author. “Hard faces softened, dull faces kindled. Their hearts had been touched. The Chilkat war was at an end.” Brimming with new faith, villagers assure the missionaries that this promise is not like the one they made to the Navy, which was “a quick and easy way of getting them out of the country.” Real peace is different. “When the taste of blood is out of our mouths, we see that we are brothers,” a speaker said. To demonstrate the weight of their commitment, headmen will live as honored guests in former enemies’ houses for a week “proving thus their own sincerity.”

Mrs. Willard describes the scene in a letter to Sheldon Jackson. A day after the reverend’s sermon, Koh’klux adopted her, the first white woman to be given a Chilkat name. When the *sha’dehuni* tells her the name’s meaning (which she never reveals), she says she will give it an “even more precious meaning:” Chilkats are “priceless bits of copper” once separated by “bitterness,” now melded by love, cast into one by “the great Chief above” melded the bits into one. As copper-bearer for a new covenant, Mrs. Willard assures Jackson that while Tlingit culture can be complex and colorful, the Old Ways must perish.

Four months later, Koh’klux invites Reverend Willard and ethnographer Aurel Kraus to witness a shaman’s initiation in Klukwan. The white men join a large crowd in the headman’s house where hundreds of soles pound a booming rhythm. In the midst of the thunderous dancing, Koh’klux speaks to Billy Dickinson, who translated to the white men: “This initiation is the last of its kind. His people want to live the new way.”

Encouraged by the headman’s actions, Sheldon Jackson proposed to Koh’klux that Klukwan change its name to honor another Presbyterian—Willard.

I wonder how the *sha’dehuni* declined.

