



# U'mista News



## Special Issue On The BIG HOUSE

This issue of the U'mista Newsletter is dedicated to the Big House. In this issue there will be articles on the history of the Big House, the Traditional House and the 'Na'mima, along with an article on the proper etiquette for the Big House.

In gathering information for these articles on the Traditional Big House I found that there are not too many elders left who know the actual meaning of the Na'mima and the Traditional Big House which we came from and lived in. Although the Big House lifestyle has not been practiced by our people for many of years, it is a part of our culture and it is of great importance, for it tells the history of our families' beginnings.

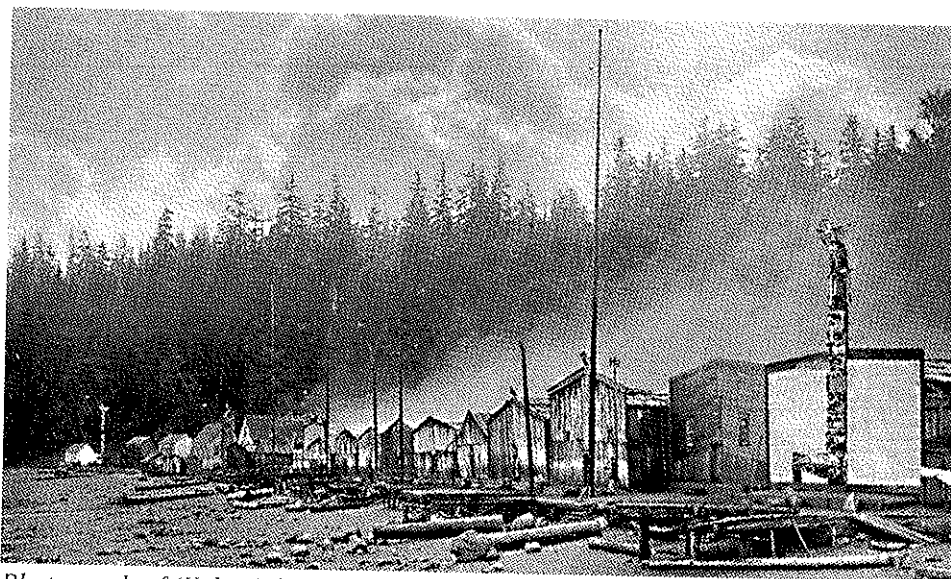
It has been difficult in gathering information on our present Big House. There is

not much recorded or published on the construction or the opening of the Big House in the early 60's. It has been a challenge to find the facts and it concerns me when we, as a nation, a tribe, a native family, have not taken the time to ask our elders the simple questions — Why, When, Where, and How come? It is these simple questions that are asked and answered that keeps our culture alive. It is so important to learn our history from our elders for they are all we have to learn our cultural ways. So the next time an elder says to you "I have something I want to share with you", PLEASE listen with a loving, caring and patient heart and attentive ears, for one day you will be an elder and our children will come to you for the knowledge of our culture.

## GLORIA RECEIVES ANOTHER AWARD!

Gloria Cranmer-Webster will be presented with an Honorary Degree from the University of British Columbia for her services as a leader in First Nations Cultural Affairs. She joins thirteen other distinguished individuals who graduated from the university. The Honorary Degree will be conferred during the morning convocation of June 1st, 1995 starting at 9:30 by Chancellor Robert H. Lee.

Among the distinguished recipients are Wendy Clay, Surgeon General of the Canadian Armed Forces; Joy Coghill, Award Winning actor and member of The Order of Canada; William Esson, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia; Thomas Franck, Director of New York University's Centre for International Studies; Jack Hodgins, one of Canada's finest fiction writers; Wan Kyoo Cho, President of the Bio Industry Association of Korea; Hong Tao Chow, National Policy Advisor to the President of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and a leader in establishing the Annual Canadian Taiwan Higher Education Conference; Leslie Dan, Founder



*Photograph of 'Yalis (Alert Bay) looking North, H.N. Topley 1894.*

*Photography Courtesy of Public Archives of Canada C 22368*

*Continued from page 1*

and President of Noropharm Ltd. and founder of the Canadian Medicine Aid Program, which provides medical assistance to emerging nations; Garth Drabinsky, who placed Canada in centre stage in live theatre, along side with London and Broadway, with his production of "Kiss Of The Spider Woman" and "Showboat"; Ivor Ekeland, Former President of the University of Paris-Dauphine, who was instrumental in facilitating the opening of Palestinian Universities in the West Bank in Gaza; Vincent Stogan, Cultural and Spiritual leader of the Musqueam and Sto:Lo Nations and a principal resident Elder of the First Nations Longhouse.

This award is well deserved. Gloria was part of the driving force in establishing the U'mista Cultural Centre and the returning of the artifacts in the "Potlatch Collection". During her tenure as Curator and Administrator, Gloria was instrumental in establishing the U'mista Cultural Centre as a reputable institution, recognized throughout North America and other parts of the world.

Gloria's dedication was only too self evident when considering the very modest salary she received, due to budgetary constraints. While Gloria is no longer with the U'mista Cultural Centre, we can still count on her expertise from time to time. CONGRATULATIONS Gloria on a well deserved award!



*Gloria Cranmer-Webster. Photograph Courtesy U'mista Cultural Centre.*

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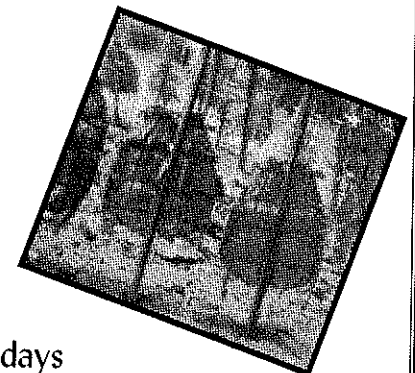
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Since the last newsletter your Board of Directors have been meeting regularly to deal with all the issues which confront our administration on a daily basis. All projects are on line.

I have been attending the meetings of the Kwakwala Steering Committee. This committee was formed as a result of a Kwakwala Language Conference held in Fort Rupert on December 6, 1994. This conference was organized by the Tri-Band, consisting of the Kwakiutl, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw and Quatsino Bands, to discuss further direction to insure the survival of our language. Colleen Hemphill has been instrumental in organizing the meeting and ensuring that the initiative is ongoing. Funds to allow for the startup of the Kwakwala Steering Committee were acquired by the Tri-Band from the Indian Studies Program, Province of British Columbia, with the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Band administering the funds. The first two meetings identified the issues encountered by those who have been working in the Kwakwala language programs both in the Band Operated Schools and in the School Districts. In all communities there is always a small core group who realize the importance of language and culture, but they alone cannot ensure the survival of our language. Both the people in the community and those in the political arena must set language survival as the number one priority. The Kwakwala Steering Committee developed the following mission statement:

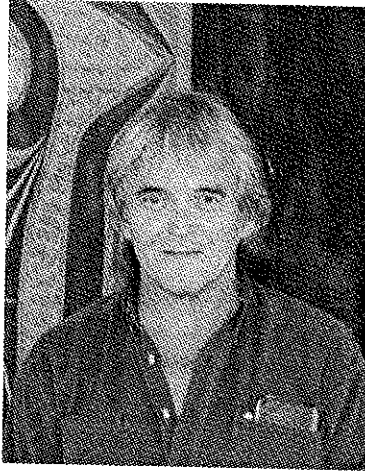
*"Kisttanux hitk'alat Ka Kayoxwides  
s'nanux taxw'alax yakumdasa-yumans nalux"*

*"We will not allow our beloved language to disappear - It is our past, present, future."*

The Kwakwala Steering Committee also prepared a resolution to be presented to all the Bands and Tribal Councils which would establish a Language Authority and include the Kwakwala Language as a major component in the Treaty Process.

A Language Conference sponsored by the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation was held in the Squamish Recreation Centre on the Capilano Reserve on March 22, 23 and 24, 1995. The theme of the Conference was "Our Languages, Our Remembrances, Our Endurances, Our Celebrations".

## Chairman's Report



*William T. Cranmer  
Chairman of the Board*

I was invited to be the part of the Opening Panel Discussion to provide a historical overview. For this overview, I chose to tell the history of the Potlatch prohibition, the past and present activities of the U'mista Cultural Centre, and to emphasize that without our language we have no past or future - Our language is our History. I ended my presentation with the statement that, at the end of the conference, we should come forward with the message to all governments, including our own political leaders, that our languages must be saved. Each of our languages must be recognized as an Official Language, and a goal to use the languages in all our day to day activities must be established.

The majority of the remainder of the conference included delegates telling of their experiences and the reasons for the loss of their languages. The Gitsan delegate raised my hopes and reinforced my belief that we must teach our children in our own language. He stated that, in their school, their children are fluent in grade five. He also stated that his community has set language as a priority. All Bingo revenues are used for the language initiatives and the local governments (Bands) also contribute funds from their overall budget. This is an example of what can be done with community and political support to ensure the survival of our languages. There is no reason why the Kwakwaka'wakw cannot do the same NOW!

There were also people in attendance from

different funding sources, including the Provincial Aboriginal Education Department, B.C. 21 (lotteries), Employment and Immigration Canada (Bruce Parisian) and of course the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation, who shared information about their programs.

An update of our ongoing efforts to secure Tribal Council support for our application to the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation is in order. I attended the last executive meeting of the Musgamagw Tsawataineuk Tribal Council in Alert Bay last month to speak on our request. I was encouraged by the apparent support from the Executive Members, who were present, especially when they asked me if the U'mista Cultural Society would provide a Band Council Resolution (B.C.R.) for signature. A B.C.R. was prepared by Linda, our administrator, and I hand delivered the B.C.R. to the meeting a few minutes later. We were then informed (after the meeting) that they were unable to sign the B.C.R. because another Band had been assured that they would be the next applicant to be supported after the Namgis First Nation's 1994/1995 application. My disappointment only increased upon learning that the other Band did not have an application ready for submission and it was questionable whether they would meet the policy guidelines. This should reinforce our suggestion and indeed the original suggestion of the people who set up the guide lines for the First People' Cultural Foundation that existing Cultural Centres should not have to become involved with the local politics in order to receive funding.

To end on a positive note - we have been approached by Peter Macnair for the Royal British Columbia Museum to work in partnership with them on their plans to put their Ethnographic Collections records on a format similar to what we have developed at the U'mista Cultural Centre. This will give us a high resolution image of each Kwakwaka'wakw artifact in their collection and all the information available on the artifact. Your Board has agreed to work with Peter on this very exciting Project.

Yu'am!

Gilakas'la,

Xixan'aus,

Bill Cranmer

Well, another year has come and gone and it is time to plan for the new year.

A large part of my responsibilities include finding the funds to operate for another year, developing a budget based on the funds coming in and then making sure that the Centre operates within that budget. This year developing a budget will be extremely difficult since a number of the programs from which we have obtained funding in the past no longer exist and the ones that are still in existence have sustained major cuts in their budgets. We have still to find out what these cuts will mean to us but there will probably have to be a lot of changes at the Centre to ensure that we don't overspend.

Some of the proposed projects (all dependent upon funding) for the new year include:

#### UPGRADING AND EXPANSION OF THE U'MISTA CULTURAL CENTRE

Since the mid seventies the U'mista Cultural Society has fought for the return, preservation and presentation of our ceremonial objects. This is an ongoing process, beginning with the return of the "Potlatch Collection," and the construction of the U'mista Cultural Centre.

As the Centre ages, further upgrading is required. This includes the replacement of the environmental controls, replacement of the Centre's roof, and new flooring in the work areas.

Also, the U'mista Cultural Society is in desperate need of additional space and must expand the conservation, storage and research areas. A few of the contributing reasons for the necessity of expansion are:

- a) The U'mista Cultural Centre is used to store personal and family regalia. As more and more individuals and families store their regalia at the Centre we are becoming desperate for additional storage space.
- b) Within the 1994/95 fiscal year over forty artifacts which belong in the "Potlatch Collection" will either have been repatriated to the U'mista Cultural Society or transferred from the Kwagiulth Museum and Cultural Centre. Since we continue to insist upon the repatriation of the remainder of the "Potlatch Collection" wherever it may be, artifacts will constantly be returning. More space to conserve, store and exhibit

## Administrators Report



*Linda Manz*  
*Administrative Director*

- c) these artifacts must be created. The Centre is receiving more and more donations and space must also be found to display the pieces.
- d) Presently, a number of items we have had donated (including two totem poles and a cradle) require conservation work. There is no space in which to do this.
- e) Space is also required to continue to expand the exhibition and sale of the work of local artists.

The cost of expansion of the Centre by only 2,000 sq. ft. will be well over \$700,000.00. Presently, we are trying to find the funds to carry out this expansion.

#### EXTRACURRICULAR CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The goal of this project is to encourage adults and young adults to learn and participate in their language, traditional knowledge and skills. Just a few of the activities planned for this year are:

- a) Beginning Kwakwala: An eight week introduction to the sounds and basic vocabulary of Kwakwala.
- b) Traditional (Ceremonial) Dancing and Singing Classes: An instructor and singer will be in attendance, as well as, an elder to provide background and detailed information on the history of the songs and specific dance movements.
- c) Cedar Bark Weaving Workshops: Actual cedar bark gathering, and preparation, as well as, basic weaving skills will be taught.
- d) Cedar Bark Stripping Workshop: A weekend workshop that involves going into the forest to learn the traditional method of cedar bark stripping. On the second day, the participants will be taught how to prepare the cedar for weaving.

Yvonne Wilson is our activities coordinator as well as editor of the Newsletter and our fund-raiser (i.e. bingo and raffles). If you have any suggestions about activities you would like to have at the Centre or activities you would like her to organize for your village please let us know. There are already plans to hold Cedar Bark Weaving Workshops in some of the other Villages.

#### CATALOGUING THE RESOURCES AT THE U'MISTA

Kwakwaka'wakw culture is presently at a crisis state. It was

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imperative to organize the information currently held in U'mista to make it accessible to the old people, thereby stimulating further retention and recovery of the culture.

In a desperate effort to make the information accessible, the U'mista Cultural Centre and the Museums Assistance Program are jointly sponsoring a permanent position of Collections Manager for a period of five years. This is approximately the length of time required to catalogue all the audio, audio visual, photographic, archival, language and ethnological resources of the Centre.

Also, due to the lack of information readily available on the background of many of the pieces in the Potlatch Collection, their true significance to the people is being lost. We have made arrangements with the Royal British Columbia Museum for Peter Macnair to work at the U'mista Cultural Centre to help determine the importance of each piece. Explanations of the cultural significance of each artifact in the Potlatch Collection are being imputed into the computerized cataloguing system along with all the possible information available on its origin, history, picture, English name and Kwakwala name.

Eventually we hope to produce a brochure on the Collection, as well as, accumulate extensive archival hard copy including bibliographies of all known references to each particular type of artifact and their historical and cultural connotations.

As the cataloguing of the resources continues Juanita Pasco, our Collections Manager, has been very busy. As more and more information becomes available, she has been distributing audio and video tapes to all the Bands and individuals who are requesting access to them.

The cataloguing of all the resources in the Centre will continue during for the next year.

#### LANGUAGE PROJECTS

The U'mista Cultural Society has been and is committed to the retention of the Kwakwala language. To this end we are working with the Kwakwala Steering Committee to develop a language retention program which may include development of a Kwakwala curriculum, a second Kwakwala Teachers Training program and certification of Kwakwala Speaking Teachers.

The U'mista Cultural Centre is also attempting to obtain the funding necessary for the development of computerized interactive multimedia ("Talking") Kwakwala language books based upon our existing Language Books and Tapes. As well, we are desperately searching for the funds to continue to expand our "Talking" Dictionary.

"Talking" Kwakwala /English Dictionary — The "Talking" dictionary is a computerized Kwakwala /English dictionary, which includes the ability to hear the word spoken in Kwakwala

at the press of a button.

Interactive "Talking" Kwakwala Language Books — As the language has been historically oral and learning is visual, the U'mista Cultural Centre hopes to develop computerized interactive ("Talking") Kwakwala language books, with a multimedia flavour, based upon the Language Books and Tapes it published in 1981. Presently, these Language Books and Tapes are used in the Tribal Schools in the North Island.

The U'mista Cultural Society is presently in the developmental stages of a prototype.

These "Talking" Dictionary and "Talking" Language Books will be accessible to all Kwakwaka'wakw and others interested in learning Kwakwala. They will be able to be used in the homes, schools, Native Friendship Centres, Band Offices, and Villages of all Kwakwaka'wakw.

The demand for Kwakwala language training by both adults and children needs to be met. Without the language there can be no culture. To this end, all Kwakwaka'wakw must work together.

#### GENEALOGY PROJECT

Individuals have been contacting us on a regular basis, asking for information on their family histories. Though a number of people have been attempting to gather their family histories, this is a long and difficult task. To aid people in their research and organize a systematic way of carrying out this research, the U'mista Cultural Society has received some funding from the "Lillian Brown Trust" to carry out a pilot genealogy project.

This project must involve the cooperative efforts of all the Old People, the rest of the community and the U'mista Cultural Society in the development of a database using the computer facilities at U'mista. Then researchers will be hired to interview the Old People and other members of the community regarding their family histories.

A record of the histories of the various Kwakwaka'wakw families is important to the individual family members on a cultural and historical basis, as well as, the entire community, since the culture is based on the family and the interrelationships between the various families. Rights to specific dances, songs, designs, privileges and territories are dependent upon the family relationships, marital relationships and the passing of these privileges.

It is important for your children, your children's children and your children's children's children to be able to know their history. Please help us save this information.

#### DEVELOPING PROMOTIONS OF QUALITY ARTS AND CRAFTS

In 1994/95 the Board of Directors determined that the Centre should investigate the possibility of becoming a world wide

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distributor for Kwakwaka'wakw arts and crafts. There were a number of reasons for this decision. As the interest in West Coast Aboriginal Cultures increases we have received more and more requests from around the world for information on the products available at the Centre and the possibility of us distributing these products. As well, part of the commitment of the Society to the continuation of the Kwakwaka'wakw culture is the retention of traditional arts and crafts. A world wide distribution system of arts and crafts from the community would enable the artists to concentrate on their work on a year round basis. They would then be in a position where they did not have to depend on other sources of income and could concentrate on the production of quality products. In the long run this would encourage more young Kwakwaka'wakw to become involved in the production of traditional arts and crafts. Another benefit is the generation of revenue for the U'mista Cultural Society. This will enable the Society to become more self sufficient so we can carry out some of the other projects mentioned in this article.

#### ETHNOBIOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

Research needs to be conducted on the topic of traditional knowledge and use of plants and animals by the Kwakwaka'wakw and the Kwakwala names applied to those plants and animals.

An important element to a Kwakwaka'wakw ethnobiology research project will include the identification in scientific terms of the plants and animals referred to by Kwakwala names. While the identities of many plants referred to by Kwakwala names are already known, the species referred to by many Kwakwala animal names, on the other hand, have not been properly identified in scientific or English terms.

An efficient, effective and accurate method of establishing the proper species referred to by Kwakwala plant

and animal names will include the collection of some specimens from the local Alert Bay area combined with visits by knowledgeable Kwakwala speakers to various biological reference collections at the University of British Columbia.

If possible, the research project will also focus on the documentation of other aspects of traditional plant and animal knowledge such as the unique ways in which Kwakwaka'wakw classify these living things from their traditional cultural perspective. It may also involve the documentation of the cultural roles of plants and animals as sources of food, medicine and materials, as well as in their ceremonial, mythological and other roles in Kwakwaka'wakw culture.

Along with this research project, Girija Emery, one of our very committed volunteers, is helping us develop a traditional plant garden at the Centre.

These are just some of the projects we want to carry out at the Centre, but these can only occur if we have the financial and physical support necessary.

The U'mista Cultural Society has accomplished more than I would have believed possible in the last year. Just a few of these accomplishments are the completion of the Big House Addition, the computerized skeletal cataloguing of the artifacts, audio tapes, library and video tapes in Centre, all the many cultural activities and classes that have happened at the Centre, as well as managing to carry on our day to day activities. This would not have been possible without the dedication of the staff, the Members of the Board who have donated so much of their time and expertise, and most important of all the many individuals who have contributed so much towards the accomplishment of our goals. Also, I wish to thank the various funding agencies, the 'Namgis First Nation and the Bands which politically supported us.

*Qilakas'la,*  
Linda Manz

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Yo 'wiksas. The U'mista Cultural Centre has been very busy these past few months offering many cultural activities to the community. The activities that have been offered were the Beginner's Kwakwala classes instructed by Christine McDougall and Audrey Wilson. Traditional Dance & Singing Classes were also offered on Wednesday Evening for 8 Weeks, the instructors for this program were Ethel Alfred, Wayne Alfred and William (Wah) Wasden Jr. There were workshops offered as well. Cedar weaving workshops were offered in February and March 95. Such projects as headrings and baskets were made with pride by all the participants. A Carving Tool Course was also offered in February 95 that was instructed by Joe Wilson. Each participant made different tools such as a planer, straight blade knife and a curved blade knife. I am very pleased with the community's involvement with the U'mista's Cultural Activities. I have enjoyed working with the instructors and the participants and look forward to seeing the many familiar faces and the new faces that will join in our learning and fun experiences at the U'mista Cultural Centre this coming year. Gilakas'la to William (Wah) Wasden, for the many volunteered hours in Kwakwala Singing services he has given to the Singing and Dance Program on Wednesday Nights and the Singing Classes on Saturday Afternoons at the U'mista Centre and the many private singing sessions he has done in the village. Gilakas'la also to

## Editor's Update



**Yvonne Wilson**  
**Cultural Coordinator/  
Newsletter Editor**

Wayne Alfred, Ethel Alfred Audrey Wilson, Donna Cranmer, Norine Cranmer and Joe Wilson for sharing their knowledge of our culture.

A BIG "Thank You" to the many participants who attended the programs offered, and to the many people who organized the classes and workshops, for we all feel that it is important to learn our culture and help one another to keep "Our Circle Stronger".

The Spring/Summer 95 schedule has many events scheduled for the upcoming months. The activities planned for the upcoming months are Cedar Basketry,


Cedar Bark Stripping, Seaweed Picking and Preparation, as well as the Traditional Singing and Dance Classes. Planning is underway for another evening Beginner's Kwakwala Class as well as an Advance Kwakwala class. The U'mista Cultural Centre will be busy in the upcoming evenings and weekends with many Cultural Activities being offered, so please feel free to call or drop by to see what's on the schedule.

When you come to U'mista Centre within the next few months you will see a lot of dirt and movement in the front of the U'mista building. As many of you may not know, the Centre has been working on an Ethnobotany Project. Part of the project is an Outdoor Exhibit of Traditional Medicine Plants used by the people in this area. We are at the beginning stages of the Ethnobotany Garden. We are also gathering information on plants and their uses and the Kwakwala names of these plants. Girija Emery and Christine Joseph are working with Dr. Brian Compton from the University of British Columbia, along with many people from the different villages on this project. We are seeking information on this, so if you or if you know of anyone who may have any information on medicinal plants that were or are still being used, please contact us at the U'mista Cultural Centre.

*Gilakas'la,*

Yvonne Wilson

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The past few months in Collections have been very busy. So far this year we have received three sets of new accessions (objects which the museum acquires). We are also streamlining the entered data and eliminating any duplicate numbers or number problems.

On February 19th we welcomed an intern from the Aboriginal Cultural Stewardship Program (ACSP), Lucille Bell was with us for two weeks and left on March 3rd to return home to Massett for a few days before she heads back to finish off the ACSP.

On February 24th, the chairman of our board, Bill Cranmer, volunteered to drive down to Campbell River and pick up the Sam Charlie pieces for us. You will be happy to know they arrived safe and sound and we are still seeking funds to mount these and the Hanuse regalia.

March was quite busy for us here in Collections. The artist exhibit opened on the 15th and

## Collections Update



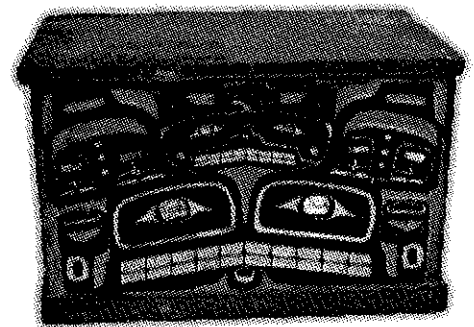
*Juanita Johnston*  
*Collections Manager*

the documentation changes to the collections database are being done so that they can be e-mailed to the "Dogwood Network" for upgrading to CHIN (Canadian Heritage Information Network). CHIN is a national database linking all the major museums in Canada. Any uploading or changes to the

existing documentation on CHIN is facilitated through the Dogwood Network. For those of you who missed the exhibit opening, feel free to come in and have a look at the exhibit, it will be up until the end of April. Separate files have also been created for each artifact in the collection. We have completed cataloguing our audio tape collection but more in depth information will be added on the audio and video tapes, which will enable us to facilitate information requests more efficiently.

Mr Peter Macnair was also here for a few days during the month of March and he is working on updating certain fields within our Potlatch Collection documentation.

In May 1995 we will be welcoming two UVIC Co-op students who will be working with us until the end of August 1995.



*Three of Sam Charlie's pieces recently transferred by the families request from the Kwagiulth Museum and Cultural Centre in Cape Mudge, located on Quadra Island.*

*All photographs courtesy of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, catalogue photographs.*



# SUCCESS STORY

*Contributed by Michele Mundy*

The recent success of my niece, Chastity Mae Bruce, has inspired me to write this article. Chastity ventured from Alert Bay in September 1994, at which time she came to live with my family in Victoria

When Chastity first came to Victoria, she was very uncertain about where she would fit in. She seemed apprehensive and uncertain at times, yet she still held that quality of enthusiasm and tenacity, which comes naturally to her. Chastity recently celebrated her 16th birthday with her new found friends. She has also found herself part-time employment at the local Dairy Queen.

Chastity has done exceptionally well adjusting to the very different lifestyle and various opportunities available to her. She is quite proud of her scholastic achievements, which she anticipated to be a challenge.

During her first two months attending

Spencer Jr. Secondary School, she joined the basketball and wrestling teams. Her connection with these teams has given her confidence in herself to deal with the peer pressure commonly faced by teenagers. It helps even more when great achievements are found as one ventures into the unknown; which leads me to the reason I am sharing Chastity's success story.

Chastity is now a key player on the wrestling team, a sport she had no prior knowledge or experience of before she started in October. When the time came for her first tournament she was quite anxious and reluctant to participate. However, she persevered and left for her first competition in Campbell River where she proudly brought home a gold medal. Although she was originally apprehensive to take her newfound sport to the level of competition, she returned with a whole new outlook. Her gold

medal gave her the confidence she needed to continue wrestling.

At her most recent tournament, held at Lansdowne Jr. Secondary School in Victoria, Chastity won her third silver medal. This qualified Chastity to compete in the B.C. Championships held in Abbotsford. She has the opportunity to participate in a six-week program at wrestling school in Port Alberni, which will end with a competition in July. Chastity has also been approached to join the Native Wrestling Team, which would qualify her to compete in the Indigenous Games. As the season draws near, she is looking forward to next year. She has been approached to join a wrestling team that would offer the opportunity to compete throughout the United States.

We are all proud of you Chastity, keep up the good work!

*Editor's Note: Chastity was a summer student employed at U'mista late last summer. We are the U'mista are very pleased to hear of her success in Victoria. Way to go Chas!*

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# Perceptions and Misconceptions

Andrea Sanborn

In part this article is in response to a letter we have received regarding the U'mista Cultural Society which was extremely critical of what we haven't done, and informing us of what we should be doing.

Constructive criticism is more than welcome. It is only with input from the community that we can continue to improve. The problem with some of the criticism we receive is that it seems to be based on misinformation.

The people and/or organizations that are the most critical seem to have the perception that vast amounts of money flow into U'mista's coffers. This is nowhere near the truth.

Just as you don't want to go into debt every year, neither do we. Therefore, what we can achieve depends upon the money that we can raise. While we have some funds saved, this money is set aside for those "extreme" emergencies, such as the day when no money can be found and our roof and/or furnace must be replaced (estimated minimum cost of \$120,000).

Our Funding in the last year (April 1, 1994 to March 31, 1995):

1. Federal and Provincial funds for operating expenses for the U'mista Cultural Centre for the last year totalled \$35,000.00. Maintaining the heat and humidity systems last year cost \$7,461.00 (parts of the system have also had to be shut down because we can't afford to get it replaced right now). The insurance on the building and the regalia cost \$11,805.97. The power cost \$10,584.31. Well as I am sure you note, these costs alone total \$29,851.28. That leaves us with \$5,148.72 to pay for the telephone, postage, paper, and not to be forgotten staff, so that the Centre can remain open. There was no financial support from any Band or Tribal Council for operating costs of the Centre, yet we are still supposed to have the staff not only to keep the Centre open but also provide the bands, tribal schools and tribal councils as well as individuals with information on land claims, language resources, historical information, family information, etc. It has been a bit of a challenge!

2. We received \$9,000.00 to develop a multimedia language book. We are still in the process of developing this since we must depend on volunteers etc. for the majority of the work. I'm not sure if people realize this, but this type of book usually costs considerably more to produce.

Everyone in the community wants access to our computerized "talking" dictionary. Part of the money to develop a prototype came from the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation but this source of funds has not been available to us for the last two years and not one cent has been contributed to the Centre from the community for its continued development. Any additional work on the "Talking" dictionary has been

accomplished by staff adding to their already overloaded schedule and the help of everyone we have been able to appeal to. This tends to make the ongoing development of the dictionary a very slow process. I wish we were magicians, but since we aren't, we need help.

3. The only way we completed the Big House addition was to use several government programs. This included a training program funded by the Aboriginal Training Program of the Department of Human Resources (Employment and Immigration) for carpentry/construction trainees (\$62,000.00). The Provincial Government through B.C. 21 contributed \$20,000.00. U'mista over the last two years has contributed over \$72,952.61 which we fund raised through our Bingos, raffles, etc. This does not include all the time contributed by U'mista Staff and volunteers. The Centre has made upgrading the Big House a priority for the past two years. We work with limited manpower and finances, therefore this has been a drain on all of our other projects. The only Financial Support we have received from any Band or Tribal Council in the last year was from the Nimpkish Band, the actual owners of the Big House, who contributed \$15,820.00 in and at least another \$12,000.00 in labour and equipment towards upgrading the Big House. Without their contribution and the contributions of individual volunteers and donors the Big House addition would not have been completed.

We are often criticized for not providing services to the outlying villages. This comment seems a little hasty, since the Big House is used, not only by the people in Alert Bay, but also individuals from every village.

4. The Department of Human Resources, Challenge 94 provided us with \$3,449.00 to hire two summer students last year. One of our students was Chastity Bruce, who has done so well for herself in Victoria. Congratulations Chastity!

5. Indian and Northern Affairs, Cultural Education Centres Program provided \$14,205.00 worth of funding last year. This was supposed to cover the salary of our Cultural Activities Co-ordinator, the honorariums we pay to our elders and the people who teach our cultural activities, the supplies for the activities, etc. We must be magicians since we not only have held regular Kwakwaka'wakw Classes, Traditional Singing and Dance Classes, Cedar Weaving Classes, Button Blanket Making Classes, consulted the elders on traditional plants and animals and started the development of a traditional plant garden but we have also managed not to have our staff totally burn out (so far anyway). It appears that this is not

*Continued on page 11*

*Continued from page 10*

good enough for some political organizations in our community, somehow we are also supposed to travel to the various villages out of this yearly \$14,205.00, in addition to the above mentioned. Perhaps the organizations which have these expectations could give us some hints on how to pay all these costs out of the limited funds we have, since at the moment we must depend on volunteers, unpaid staff labour, etc. to keep the activities going. Also, again without the help of 'Namgis First Nation we could not have started the garden since they helped us get the top soil.

6. The Department of Canadian Heritage contributed \$37,290.00 last year to our Collections Management position. This money went towards the computerized cataloguing of the resources of the Centre. This computerization of the resources has lead to an increased demand for our resources not only from individuals but from many of the Bands. Included in this demand is the dubbing of over seventy audio tapes (our machine has now worn out and we are borrowing one from a board member) for such organizations as 'Namgis First Nation, Nun'wa'Kola Cultural Society (Kingcome), and various individuals in the community. As well, over thirty video tapes have been dubbed for individuals and bands. For all these tapes we have charged just enough to cover our costs (tapes and machine use), without calculating in our labour.

Both individuals and organizations such as T'hisalagi'lakw School store their regalia at the Centre. We are happy to provide a safe place for this regalia but around Potlatch time signing in and out the regalia puts extra pressure on our staff since most of the time they should be on their days off.

7. The Lillian Brown Trust has funded an application for a

genealogy project for \$50,000.00. Since the funding was received as we were approaching our year end, this project is due to start in the new year.

Some of the economies we resort to are:

1. None of the Members of the Board receive or has received any money out of our Budget to attend any Conferences in the last year. Neither Board Members or Staff attends any Conference unless some other agency agrees to pay for it and ninety percent of time members of the Board pay all their expenses out of their own pocket for the various meetings they attend as representatives of the U'mista. If staff is required to go out of town, they usually hitch a ride with someone else and stay at friends places so there are no hotel costs. Board Members and Staff don't get to go down Island on personal business without being asked to bring back supplies, artifacts, meet with government officials, etc. so we can save the cost of the freight and/or travel expenses.
2. Depending on volunteers to cover staff holidays, move equipment, make repairs to the Centre, run programs, fundraise, catalogue, donate items for raffles, and on and on and on.
3. Persuading outside consultants to either donate their work, or to charge a lot less than they normally ask for their services.
4. Working with old photocopiers, fax machines etc. because we can't afford to replace them.

In the new year, because of the cuts in the budgets of the various funding agencies we will have even less money to access from outside sources. We need the support of not only individuals from the community but also political and financial support from the various Bands and Tribal Councils within our language group. At the moment, we spend most of our time just trying to keep the Centre open let alone accomplish the work we need to do.

**WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE!**

### U'mista Needs You

Can you spare a few hours to do some volunteer work for U'mista? We will be needing your help for a variety of things at different times. For example, volunteers are needed to:

- Help out with the newsletter
- Preparing the newsletter for mailing
- Help with tours through the centre
- Help put up and take down exhibits
- Do minor construction projects
- Provide transportation for elders to U'mista activities
- Help out with other miscellaneous things that may arise from time to time.

If you are interested, please fill out the form to the right and mail to us or bring it down to the centre, you will be contacted when your services are required.

Yes! I am interested in volunteering my services.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone:(H): \_\_\_\_\_ (W): \_\_\_\_\_

I would be willing to help out with:

\_\_\_\_\_

- Newsletter
- Transportation
- Museum Tours
- Exhibit Assistance
- Minor Construction
- Other

# History Of The BIG HOUSE IN ALERT BAY

The Big House structure was completed in May of 1966. Although the structure was completed the art work on the house front wasn't completed until May 1967. The original design on the Big House was the artwork of Benjamin (Blackie) Dick. It was reported in the May 24, 1967 issue of the North Island Gazette that a crew worked on the completion of painting the house front design for the Pioneer celebration that was held at the Big House May, 1967. There were Pioneer medallions distributed by Dan Campbell, Minister of Municipal affairs and Social Welfare to such pioneers as Ivey Melvin "Hup" Stauffer, Alert Bay's oldest pioneer.

Also presented to the Kwakiutl Nation for the successful completion of the Big House, was a letter by the Lieutenant - Governor of British Columbia, in a book called *Kwakiutl Houses and Totem Poles at Alert Bay, B.C.* by, S.W.A. Gunn, M.D. and it reads:

*Chief Sewid and the members of the Kwakiutl nation are to be congratulated for choosing as their centennial project the construction of a Big House at Alert Bay.*

*These dwellings, sometimes fifty to sixty feet in length, were one of the distinctive feature of the West Coast Indians. Many people lived in each house, families being allotted specified sections, closed off by cedar mats from the central area common to all. The Chief's authority and parental discipline ensured a happy communal life.*

*The houses were decorated with Totem Poles and ceremonial entrances, depicting the exploits of their chiefs and the legend of the race. Thus, the children were reminded of the virtues esteemed most highly by*

*their forebears, for the Kwakiutl were, and still are, a proud people.*

*The past hundred years have been a difficult period for the West Coast Indians. Deprived of many of the sources of food and economic survival, exposed to diseases against which they have never built up immunity, and unable to obtain employment in unfamiliar trades, their numbers declined to approximately one third of the original population. Happily in recent years, through their own courage and adaptability, stimulated by a more enlightened understanding by the non-Indians, these conditions are changing.*

*Now the Indians' population is rapidly increasing. In every village one sees hundreds of healthy, happy children, attending schools and holding their own with the other boys and girls. They realize that an education is necessary if they are to survive in this modern world. While this process of integration is at work there are few who would like to see the passing of this great nation.*

*Therefore, young Indians and non-Indians will applaud past and to inculcate in the younger generation the virtues, such as courage in the face of danger, stoicism under adversity, the value placed on physical fitness, their initiative and, above all, their loyalty to parents and to the band, that their ancestors prized so highly.*

*I am proud that a few years ago these people honoured me by making me one of their chiefs, and I hope that this little book will explain many of their ancient ways of life.*

During the construction of the Big House, the following article was written in the Upper Islander, Progress Edition July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1965.

*One of Canada's most unique construction projects is rapidly nearing completion at Alert Bay, B.C. Twelve native Kwakiutl Indians have carved, painted and erected a full-scale model of an Indian long-house, complete with totems and family carvings.*

*These buildings were at one time the main habitat of B.C. Coastal Indians.*

*The new 70 feet long by 50 feet wide structure will house an organization setup to manufacture and promote the*

*Continued on page 13*



*Big House in Alert Bay during construction, before Benjamin "Blackie" Dick's Sea Monster design was painted on the house front. 1967*

*Photograph courtesy of Royal British Columbia Museum PN7833-25*

*Continued from page 12*

*sale of Indian handicrafts.*

*Organizers of the scheme say they hope to provide Indians with off-season employment making dugout canoes, totems and other artifacts on a commercial basis.*

*James Sewid, chief councillor at Alert Bay and one of the proponents of the project, says that enquires of yet-to-be manufactured Indian wares have come in from prospective customers all across North America.*

*It was about two years ago that Mr. Sewid sat down with representatives from other tribes, mapping out a plan to provide employment for local Indians with special emphasis placed on those with little or no education.*

*"Many of our people are poorly educated and we are attempting to interest them in the basic Indian crafts as a means of livelihood," Mr. Sewid says.*

*"It will also give our young people the chance to keep alive the culture of their people."*

*Initial meetings were held with the late Simon Beans of Alert Bay, Charles George of Blunden Harbour and Henry Speck of Turnour Island, who is one of B.C.'s best known Indian artist.*

*Alert Bay was chosen as the site of*

*the longhouse because of its strategic location and the fact that site was available on the ground of the old Anglican residential school.*

*Another advantage of the Alert Bay location is that it is the home of a present day Indian vocational training school with its student complement of young people.*

*The idea of the longhouse caught on and soon local forest companies were contributing lumber and individual and other groups donated money for materials.*

*Through the efforts of the Department of Indian Affairs the job was granted winter works status and in February 1964, 12 men were busily employed getting the heavy job underway.*

*Logs were towed in from coastal logging operations, one of them large enough to provide three lengths of 33 inch thick beams.*

*But the winter works money ran out with the arrival of fishing season the 12 men left the longhouse for the fishing grounds.*

*Last fall they took up their tools again and although winter works money has again been depleted, Chief Sewid is confident that he can raise enough money to see the project through before the arrival of summer.*

*Foundation of the building is concrete and has already been laid. At each end of the structure are carved and painted archways about 17 feet high. A huge 70 foot long timber beam runs the full length of the building supporting the roof.*

*This beam will be carved on the inside to depict the stories of all the tribes.*

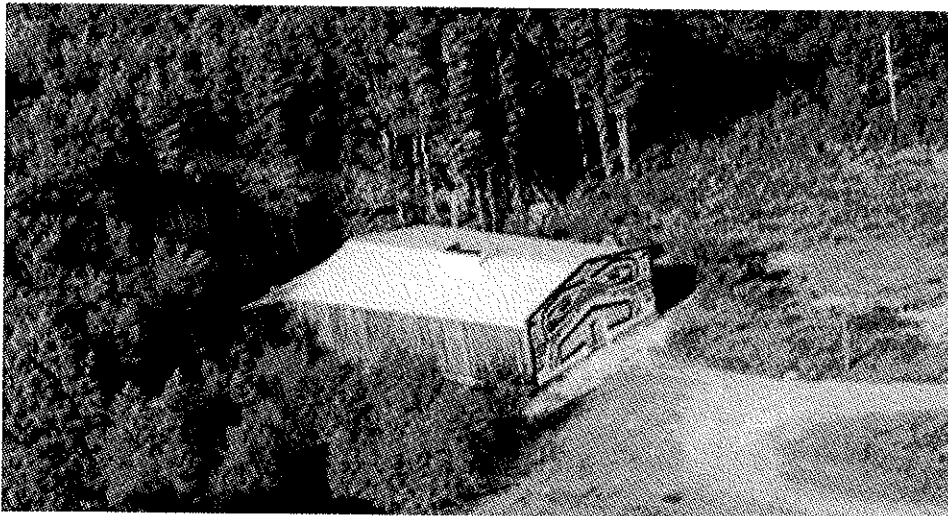
*Roof and siding will be as in the old days, the longhouse will be used for all tribal affairs, including ceremonial dances to which the public will be invited.*

*It will be a definite tourist attraction for the area and Chief Sewid is optimistically looking forward to it being the area's centennial project.*

*A Kwakwiltl dream became a reality in 1963 after careful planning and endless discussions and meetings, Simon Beans, Chief Henry Speck and James Sewid formed a Building Committee. They notified all the chiefs of the tribes in the area at the time. However, the response was not what they had expected and found it to be discouraging at times. They, the Building Committee, did decide to carry out the idea to construct a Big House. It would not be long before they found that the Bands in the area did subsequently joined in helping with the success of the completion of the Big House.*

*The people who were responsible and credited for the construction of the Big House were as follows:*

- James Sewid - Architect Advisor, Building Committee
- Chief Henry Speck - Artistic Advisor, Building Committee
- Charlie George - Carving Advisor, Building Committee
- Simon Beans - Building Committee
- Robert Bell - Concrete Advisor
- George Alfred, Stevie Beans, Jim



*Aerial View of the Big House in Alert Bay, 1969.*

*Photograph courtesy of Royal British Columbia Museum PN 7762-33*

*Continued on page 14*

*Continued from page 13*

Dick, David Matilpi, Henry Beans, Dora Cook, Willie Hawkins, Herbert Martin, John Beans, Fred Cook, Tom King, Gideon Whonnock, Simon Beans, Ben Dick, Bill McDougall, Max Whonnock

Mr. James Sewid, Chief Councillor extended a special thanks to the following, who without their assistance the project would not have succeeded: the Indian Affairs Branch, Mr. Clifford Roach, Superintendent of the Kwakiutl Agency; Indian Commissioner J.V. Boyes appropriated funds under the Winter Works project; Mr. Howard Elder contributed the huge beams; Telegraph Mills contributed the logs. Mr. Norman Corker loaned us equipment; St. Micheal's School allowed us to use their tractor; and the Alert Bay Board of Trade helped us financially.

Mr Sewid also acknowledged the men who contributed to the construction of the Big House and praised their great accomplishment of the difficult feat of lifting the huge beams, for this heavy task was done mostly by the tradi-

tional method, aided only by a small hydraulic jack. He also thanked many people, who he referred to, as friends too numerous to mention. A particular thanks was expressed to Major-General the Honourable George Randolph Pearkes, V.C., P.C., C.B., D.S.O., M.C., Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, who officially opened the Big House Included in this thanks was Dr. Sisvan William A. Gunn, who was an enthusiastic believer in our traditional aspirations and who had written the book *Kwakiutl Houses and Totem Poles at Alert Bay, B.C.*

The first Potlatch held in the Big House located in Alert Bay, was hosted by Mr. and Mrs. James Knox in May 1966. It was the first of many potlatch's to follow in the future. Since that first Potlatch, many families have shared their wealth and held marriages and other many important ceremonies in our Big House. We owe a thank you to the elders who have since, gone home to the creator, for their perseverance and caring enough in the culture to re-establish such an important part of our culture to continue to relive and create our history.

You would see the peoples names who

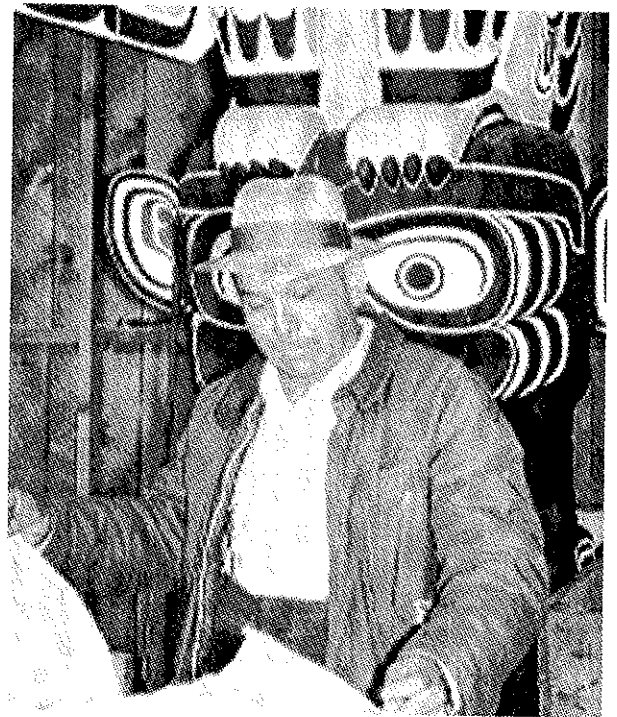
constructed the Big House proudly displayed on wooden copper plaques at the Big House today. These people shared their knowledge unselfishly to ensure that we as a nation will continue to grow with strength, pride and a self identify as aboriginal First Nation Natives. We can only hope that we have made these people proud with the continuing use of the Big House.

Over the many years, it has become necessary to maintained the Big House and to also renovate and add an extension in width and length to accommodate the amount of people that attend the events at the Big House today. The renovations that have taken place are adequate washroom facilities with wheel chair accessibility, a modern kitchen and with equipment, adequate storage space, new and more seats, as well as new electrical wiring.

Due to the changes in the size of the Big House the design of the house front had to be redesigned to fit the new size of the Big House. The house front design now on the Big house was designed by Doug Cranmer and the crew who painted the design were Bruce Alfred, Harold Alfred, Doug Cranmer and Al West.



*Left - Chief Henry Speck, Artistic Director. Photograph courtesy S.W. Gunn.*



*Right - Chief James Sewid, Director of Architecture and Engineering. Photograph courtesy S.W. Gunn.*



*Top - Sisiyut<sup>+</sup> cross beam during Big House Construction. Bottom - Thunderbird over Dzunukwa - Interior Houseposts of the Big House in Alert Bay. Both photographs Courtesy S.W. Gunn, "Kwakiutl Houses and Totem Poles at Alert Bay, B.C."*

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# RESPECT AND THE BIG HOUSE

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In gathering information for the Big House through the old newspaper clippings at the Alert Bay Public Library and Museum, I came across these articles on the Big House. The first of which appeared in the *North Island Gazette*. July 28, 1982:

## VANDAL DAMAGE TO LONGHOUSE

*Alert Bay - RCMP here are still investigating attempted arson at the Long House on the Nimpkish reserve which was reported to them last Saturday morning.*

*A spokesman for the RCMP said that they received a call at 10:40 am July 24, reporting the incident.*

*He said that several juveniles are suspected of attempting to set the building on fire and doing considerable other damage to the premises.*

*Chairs were piled up together and an attempt was made to burn them, according to the RCMP spokesman.*

*Other damages done to the building were lights broken, damage to music and audio equipment, chairs ripped up, the stove pushed over and a canvas roof ripped down and unsuccessfully set on fire, said police.*

*Total damage to the Long House is undetermined, according to the RCMP.*

*A follow up article in the North Island Gazette July 28, 1982:*

## DELINQUENT KIDS' PARENTS MAY PAY

*Alert Bay - Parents of the juveniles who attempted to set the Nimpkish "Big House" on fire last week will probably be asked to pay for damages, said Gloria Cranmer, of the U'mista Cultural Centre.*

*Cranmer said that the exact dollar*

*amount of damage done during the raid of the big house July 23 or 24 is not known.*

*She said that a painted screen which was hung at the rear of the house between two poles was ripped down and burned.*

*She thought that part of the screen might still be salvaged, but it was painted by one of the artists who is no longer alive and could never be replaced.*

*The screen was used as a back drop for dancers.*

*Cranmer said that all the chairs in the house had been piled in the centre where the fire usually is and a plastic gas can was thrown into the pile, but the vandals weren't able to get the fire started.*

*Microphones were smashed and thrown into the pile of chairs as well.*

*Every light bulb and fluorescent tube in the house was broken too, she said.*

*The big house is not needed until fall, said Cranmer. It is not being used for tourism as it was last year.*

*Cranmer said that she thought the Nimpkish band council would probably ask the parents of the children involved to pay for damages.*

*The last article printed by the Gazette August 11, 1983 on the damage to the Big House:*

## PARENTS WILL PAY

*Alert Bay - Chief of the Nimpkish band, Bill Cranmer, told the Gazette Monday that he didn't think there would be any problem collecting for damages to the Big House from the parents of the kids involved.*

*Cranmer was referring to damages from the attempted arson which occurred around July 24.*

*He said that he sent a letter to the parents*

*stating that they are going to be held responsible for the damages.*

*Estimates of the value for total damage to the Big House are not in yet, said Cranmer. "I think parents realize that they are responsible for their children's actions," said Cranmer.*

Over the past 13 years there has been no serious damage to the Big House as mentioned in the articles, but there still remains the problem of people who use the area for disposing of their garbage.

In an attempt to stop this problem, we have made a plea to the public to stop disposing their garbage at the Big House. The garbage cans have been removed from the Big House and are brought out only during an event. This has not curtailed the problem.

When visitors go to our Big House they are faced with the grounds littered with used pampers, papers and other types of garbage scattered everywhere around the building. The first impression is not nice. It also gives an impression that we do not care about the Big House or have any respect for ourselves. I know this is not true, for there are a lot of people who take pride in, and respect what the Big House represent to our culture, it is just the few people who do not think of this and believe that getting rid of their garbage in this irresponsible manner is a bit more important. In respect to our forefathers, elders, and our culture we are asking those who are disposing of their garbage at the Big House to STOP this very unsanitary behavior



# BIG HOUSE PROTOCOL

By Peggy Svanvik

Laws governing behavior at the "Big House," are very strict. All people, including the men, must wear a shawl or blanket, not necessarily a button blanket in the Big House. Once you enter the Big House you must sit down and not move until all proceedings have come to an end, or if there is a coffee or meal break.

If one should misbehave or fall in the Big House our families are obligated to erase the humiliation by promptly giving a potlatch. A fee of money to be handed out to the guest at the Big House is the tradition of today. We are always to respect ourselves, parents and grandparents and mostly our host by minding the rules.

There is to be no eating in the Big House, no chewing gum, pop, chips, candy, etc., It is believed to drive the Hamat'sa wild. No one is supposed to eat before the Hamat'sa for this reason.

The reason for being at the Big House during any celebration is because you are there to witness the dances and names that have been given. The names are important at the Big House for you may not enter a Potlatch until you have been given a name. We should be able to call that person by the name they have been given at the Big House both inside and outside the Big House.

But today, in most cases, we cannot

hear the activities that are taking place during the ceremonies, what we are there to witness, due to the noise and disruption that goes on. The sadness of this is that adults are also participating in being disrespectful to the hosts. We are there to earn our gifts by witnessing and being respectful to the host and the events that are taking place.

It is true that over the years the Potlatch system has undergone many changes, but that does not give us reason to disregard the important values of respect that is so much an important part of our Native Culture.

The advisors for this article were, Myrtle Rufus, Mabel Rufus, Martha Jacobson, Norma Dawson and Gloria Webster. Many thank you's for your invaluable time and knowledge.

*Gilakas'la.*



*Peter Smith's Potlatch in Gilford, circa 1970.*

*Photograph courtesy ?*

# Construction of a TRADITIONAL KWAKIUTL HOUSE

Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians - Franz Boas

The houses of the Kwakiutl form a square, the sides of which are from 40 to 60 feet long. (Figs. 7 and 8.) The door (D) is generally in the centre of the side nearest the sea, which forms the front of the house. The latter has gable roof, the ridge of which runs from the front to the rear. The walls consist of boards, which are fastened to a framework of poles. The sides of the door are formed by two posts (A) from 6 to 8 inches in diameter and standing about 4 feet apart. Over the door they are connected by a crossbar (B). (Fig. 8) Some times the framework of the door is made of heavy planks. The framework of the house front consist of two or three vertical poles (C), about 3 inches in diameter, on each side of the door. They are from 8 to 10 feet apart. Their length diminishes towards the sides of the house according to the inclination of the roof. These poles are connected by long crossbars (E), which are tied to their outer side with ropes of cedar bark at half the distance between the roof and the ground. The frame work of the rear part is similar to that of the front, but that the sides of far stronger, as it has to support the roof. Two heavy posts (F), about 9 inches in diameter, are erected. Their heads are cut out and a beam of the same diameter is laid over them. At the joints it is cut out so as to fit into the heads of the posts. On both sides of the door and in the corresponding part of the rear side, about 3 feet from the wall, inside the house. These uprights are about 2 feet in diameter. On each side of the cross-piece rests a heavy beam (H), which runs from the front to the rear of the house.

Sometimes these beams are supported by additional uprights (U'), which stand near the centre of the house. The rafters (R) are laid over these heavy timbers and the beams forming the tops of the side. They are about 8 inches in diameter. Light poles about 3 inches thick are laid across the rafters. They rest against the vertical poles (C) in the front and rear of the house.

After the heavy framework which supports the central part of the roof is erected, a bank about 3 feet in height is raised all around the outlines of the house, its outer side coinciding with the lines where the walls are to be erected. Long, heavy boards 4 or 5 inches thick are implanted lengthwise along the front of the house, their upper edges standing 2 1/2 or 3 feet above the ground. Then the earth forming the bank is stamped against them, and thus a platform is made running along the front of the house. Later in this is continued all around the house. The framework of the front is the next to be erected. The poles (C) stand in the dirt forming the platform. The upper edges of the front boards which were implanted into the ground are grooved, and in this groove the boards forming the front wall stand. They are tied or nailed to the crossbar (E)

and to the foremost rafter, which is connected with the framework of the front. The next thing to be done is to make the rear wall and the sides. The former exactly corresponding to the front, the door only being wanting. The boards forming the side walls are implanted in the ground, standing vertically, their upper ends being tied to the beam forming the top of the framework. The platform running along the inner sides of the walls are finished by stamping the earth against the side walls. The roof consists of peculiar kind of boards, which run from the gable to the sides of the house. They lap on their edges like Chinese tiles. This arrangement has the effect that the rain runs from the roof without penetrating onto the house. The house front is generally finished by cutting the boards off along the roof and

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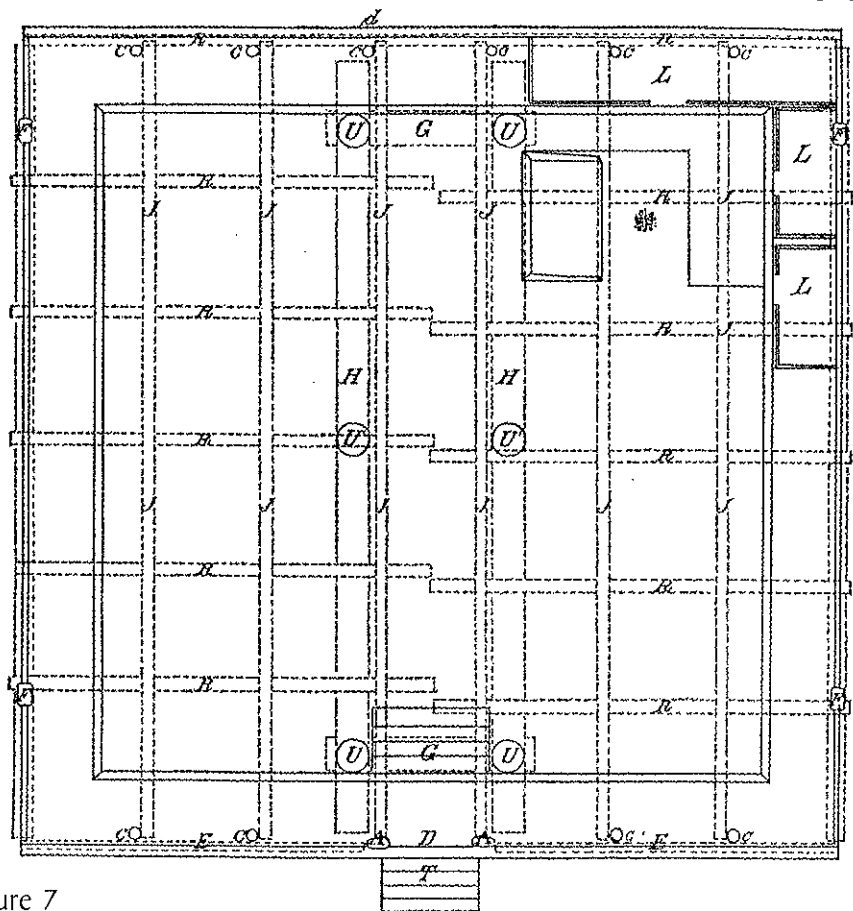
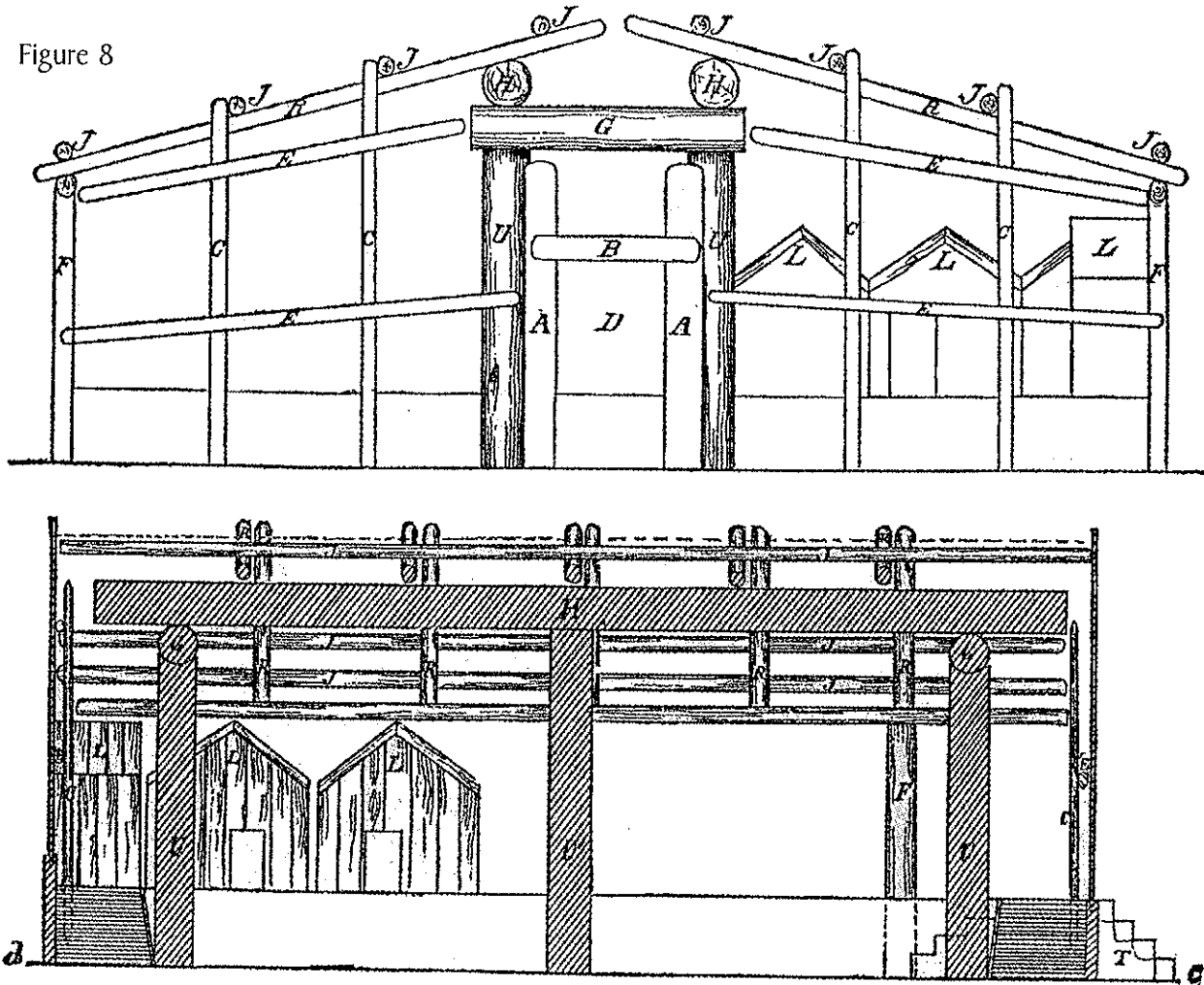


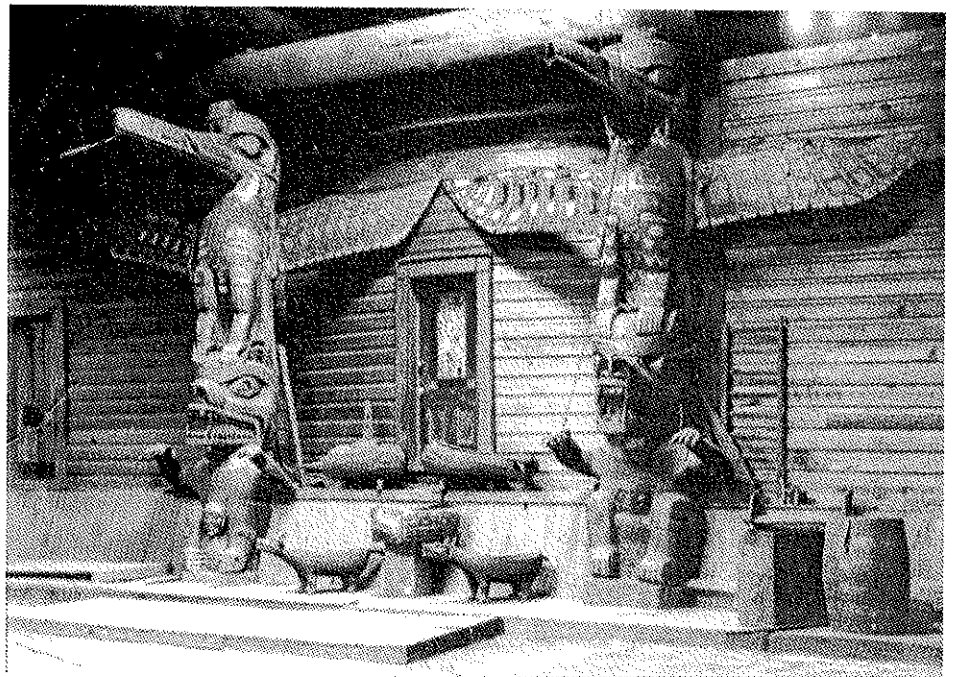
Figure 7

Figure 8



*Continued from page 18*

by finishing them off with a moulding. A few logs are placed in front of the door, forming steps (T) that lead to the platform. Steps of the same kind lead from the platform to the floor of the house. The board forming the inner side of the platform slopes slightly inward. The house has no smoke escape, but several of the boards forming the roof can be pushed aside. During the night these openings are closed, but in the morning one board over every fireplace is pushed aside by a long pole. As it is necessary to look after the roof from time to time, a stationary ladder is leaned against the side of the house. It consists of one half of the trunk of a tree or of a heavy board, into the upper side of which steps are cut.



*Chief Harry Hanuse's Big House - Ligit. Depicted are feast dishes.*

# The Kwakiutl of Vancouver Island

Franz Boas - Jesup Expedition VOL.5 Pt.2

## PERMANENT HOUSES

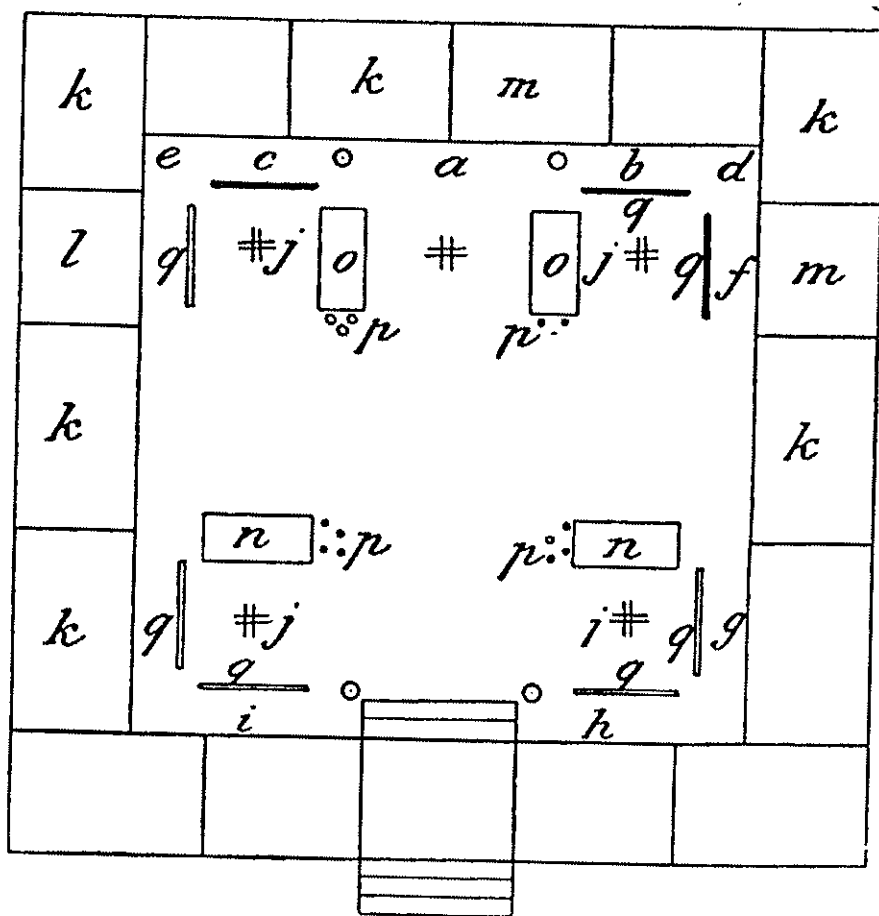
The parts of the house are named right (Fig. 95) according to the positions they have in relation to a person looking in at the door. The rear of the house is called its "forehead." Thus we have the terms *'neqe'waliṭ* - *'naki'waliṭ* "middle forehead of house" for the middle of the rear part (a); *hēt'kotewaliṭ* - *heit'koti'waliṭ* and *gEmxote'waliṭ* - *gamxotiwaliṭ* respectively for the right (b) and left (c) of the rear part; *hēt'k'loḏene'gwiṭ* - *heṭ'kodanigwiṭ* and *gEmxodene'gwiṭ* - *gamxodanigwiṭ* for right (d) and left (e) rear corners. The rear part of the sides (f) is called "up river," the front part (g) of the sides,

"down river," and we have *'nelk'loḏo'yaliṭ* - *'nal'kodoyaliṭ* and *gwak'loḏo'yaliṭ* - *gwak'odoyaliṭ*, "up river and down river middle of house," and more specifically these terms combined with *hēt'k'loḏo'yaliṭ* and *gEmxodo'yaliṭ* ("right and left sides"). Right and left sides of the door (h, i) are *hēt'k'lotsaliṭ* - *heṭ'k'otsaliṭ* and *gEmxotsaliṭ* - *gamxotsaliṭ* respectively. The four fires (j) are called accordingly right and left, front and rear, house fires (for instance, *gEmxote'waliṭ* *legwi'ṭ* - *gamxotiwaliṭ* *lagwi'ṭ* "left-handed rear fire"). The fire in the middle of the house, which is used at feasts, is called *leqa'waliṭ* - *laka'waliṭ*.

The place of honour is the middle rear of the house, then the right side, next the left, and finally the door-side. The bedrooms (k) which stand on the embankments are arranged accordingly, the owner having the middle room in the rear. It is said that in former times there were no rooms in the rear, which tends to be smoky, but the owner lived on the right-side. In former times the door way of the bedrooms were as low as a box. They had sliding-doors attached to a rope which passed along the walls of the house to the bedroom, in which the house owner lived. When the rooms were closed, the door was tied to a post in this room.

For novices, hunters, and others who had to be guarded against defilement by chance contact of impure persons, or against any one stepping over their belongings, rooms were erected on a staging in the rear of the house, which was reached by a ladder that was pulled up by the occupant when he was in his room.

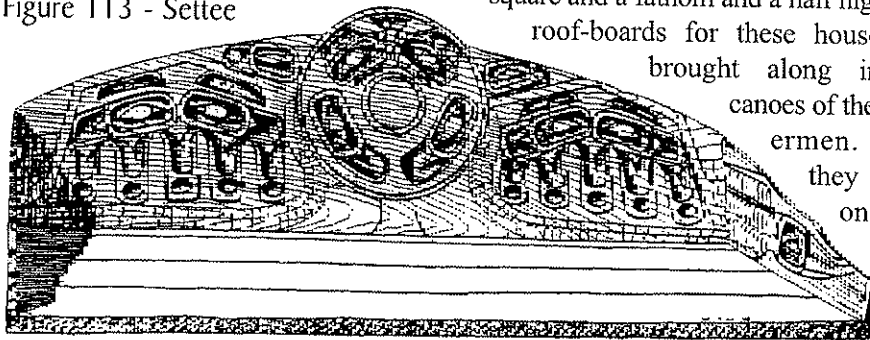
Fire-wood is kept between the bedrooms (l) and at the sides of the door. Boxes containing provisions are kept on the side and rear embankment (m). There are also separate sheds (*go'yats'e* - *go'yatsi*) on the embankment, in which personal property is kept. Provisions that must be protected against dampness are kept on a platform of poles which are suspended from rafters (*da'giliṭ* - *da'giliṭ* or *q'a'liṭ* - *ka'liṭ*). Clover-root and cinquefoil-root are kept in deep hole made under the settee near the fire. This hole is about one metre wide and two metres long, and is lined with fern-leaves, on which basket containing the clover and cinquefoil- roots are placed.



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Figure 113 - Settee



In the house are kept also the long frames on which berries, salmon-roe, etc., are dried.

There are seats on three sides of the fire. The seat of the housewife is generally in the rear of the front fires (n) and on the medial sides of the rear fires (o). Her cooking utensils (p) stand on the left side of her seat. The other seats (q) are generally so arranged that the medial side of the front fires is open, while the front side of the rear fires is open. The seat for guests is opposite that of the housewife. The seats are either settees (see fig. 113) or planks supported by posts driven into the ground so that they slant slightly backward, and mat-covered planks placed in front of these. The divisions of the house are sometimes shut off by mats hung from horizontal poles which are tied to rough posts that are driven into the floor of the house. During the celebration of festivals all these divisions, the family fires and the family seats are removed.

In olden times houses with many embankments (tso'yagik - tso'yagik) were also built. The platforms were covered with planks, and only the fireplace in the middle of the house remained free. These houses must have been quite similar to those of the Haida and other northern tribes.

### TEMPORARY HOUSES

The houses in Knights Inlet, which were occupied only during the olichan

fishing seasons, are built like winter houses, but they are only two fathoms square and a fathom and a half high. The roof-boards for these houses are brought along in the canoes of the fishermen. Often they travel on rafts made of two

canoes tied together. Then these boards form the raft. The sides of the houses are made of old mats. The beds, which are made of grass spread over boards, are at the sides. The man sleeps on one side of the door, his wife on the other side. Houses of similar kind are used by clam-diggers.

In bad weather, hunters will sometimes build small houses for their protection. A framework is put up similar to that of a permanent house; the side-posts being about one metre high, the middle post about a metre and a half high, and the beams about three metres long. The width of the house is about the same.

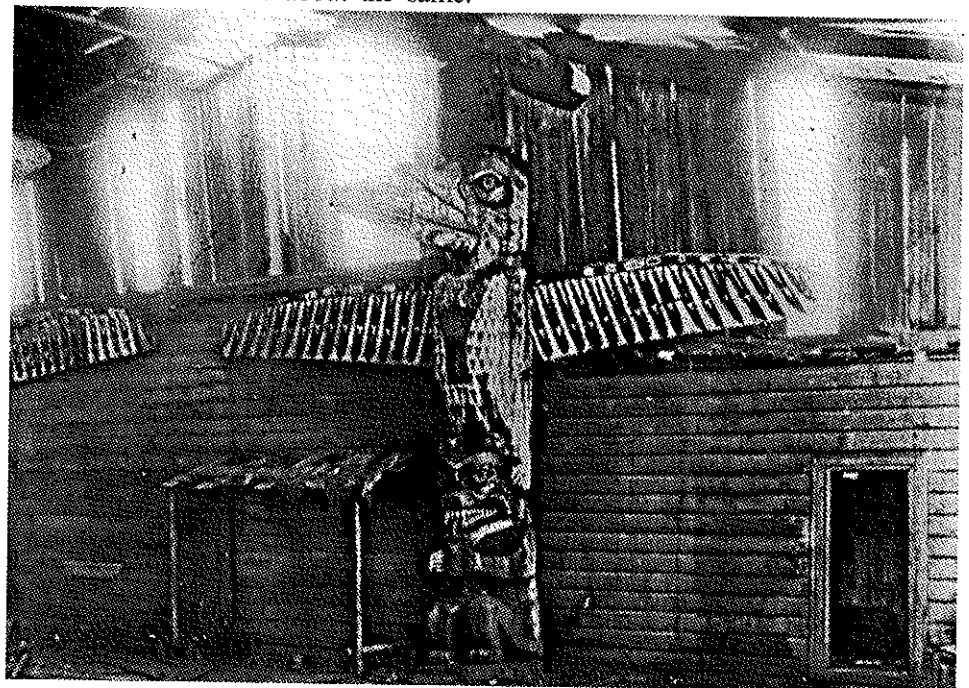
Then pieces of cedar-bark are placed on the roof, the under row with the sap-side up. The joints of this row are covered with pieces with the sap-side down. Then a fire is built under this shelter and as soon as the cedar-bark becomes hot, it begins to curl, and the upper piece hooks firmly into the turned-up rim of the lower piece. The sides are left open.

Another kind of shelter is built over a similar frame, only with a steeper roof frame, which is covered with four or five layers of spruce branches.

The shamans of the Koskimo build a shelter with a steep roof made of four or five layers of spruce-branches, like a hunter's shelter. The ground is covered with the same kind of branches, which are so arranged that the tips are at place where the men lie down.

When seal-hunters are overtaken by bad weather, they will turn the canoe upside down and use it as a shelter.

Women who go berrying, and hunters, may also protect themselves by building a lean-to. A number of poles are laid against a low horizontal branch of a tree, and are then covered with matting.



'Naki'walił, "Middle of Forehead of House", Tsaxis, no date. UPN-00044

# The 'Na'mima System

*This article is based on the system of the Kwakwaka'wakw Traditional Big House. In order to understand the system here is a brief introduction to the history of the Kwakwaka'wakw. The Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakwala-speaking peoples), speak the same language, but live in different places and have different names for separate groups. Some of the tribes the Kwakwaka'wakw have disappeared, among them the Awa'ettala of Knights Inlet, the Nakamgalisala of Hope Island, the Yut'inux, of Cox and Lantz Islands. A few of the groups died out, while some amalgamated with other groups. Some of the villages have been abandoned for years.*

The Kwakwaka'wakw lived in a structure called a Big House. Unlike the Big House that we are familiar with "Today", the houses our ancestors occupied were a more important part of their daily lives

other than for shelter. There was a system of divisions that were the ultimate units bound together by strict social obligations. Each Kwakwaka'wakw village group is ranked with status, wealth and privileges. Within each village men of several lineage, or extended families, or 'Na'mima, meaning "Of One Kind" are ranked.

Tribes originated either by the joining of a number of 'Na'mima in one village or by the recognition of separate family lines descended from brothers as separate 'Na'mima, which might live in separate villages. 'Na'mima are not necessarily blood relatives and that the various 'Na'mima of a village in many cases are unrelated, except by later intermarriage. The 'Na'mima was essentially a family or a house community.

The structure of a 'Na'mima is best understood as consisting of a certain

number of positions, the Chief and closely related males, usually brothers, and cousins are ranked, they are called the 'Na'mimot or 'Na'mima fellows" each with a name, a "seat" or "standing place," their number is limited, and they form a ranked nobility. The direct descendants of the ancestors form the nobility, which entitles the ranks and privileges. At the head of the 'Na'mima is the Xa'magami Gi'gamite "head Chiefs" and those of lower rank are addressed, by courtesy, as "chiefs," they are distinguished from the head chiefs and those rank to him, as "lower chiefs" or "new Chiefs." Others that are accepted as members of the 'Na'mima form the common people, called Alkwalil. The wife of the head chief also has a definite position, called Mu'dziṭ, "Lifting the Blanket in the

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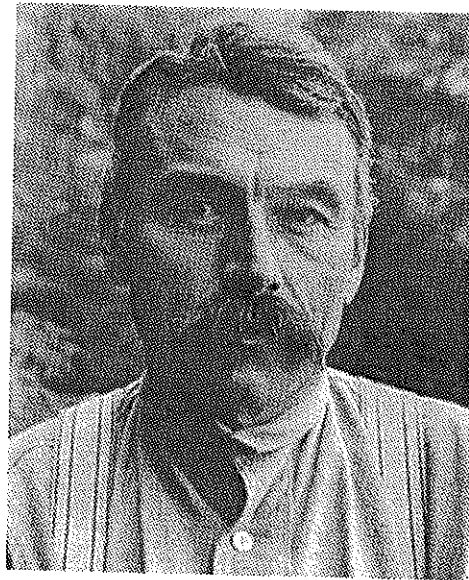
*Hereditary Chiefs of the Kwakwaka'wakw photographed in 1914 during the McKenna McBride Commission's visit to the area.*

*Photograph Courtesy Royal British Columbia Museum PN 12531*

*Continued from page 22*

House" which is said to mean that she has to be ready to do so all the time, because he is continually giving feast. Those lower ranked might have been called U'ma "Chief's Wife", with their position in the 'Na'mima.

The Kwakwaka'wakw creation story is that the ancestor of a 'Na'mima appeared at a specific locality by coming down from the sky, out of the sea, or from the underground. Generally in the form of an animal, it would take off its animal mask and become a person. The Thunderbird or his brother Kolus, the Gull, the Killer Whale (Orca), a sea monster, a grizzly bear, and a chief ghost would appear in this role. In a few cases, two such people arrived, and the both would become ancestors. Also there are a few 'Na'mima that do not have the traditional origin, but are said to have come as human beings from distance places. To this group belong the Si'sant'a', at one place, their ancestor is called "Son of the Sun" who travelled to as far north as Bella Bella. These ancestors are



*George Hunt.*

*Photograph courtesy AMNH PN 11854*



*Mary Ebbetts Hunt, George Hunt's mother. A Tlinget noblewoman.*

called "fathers" or "grandfathers," "root," "chief root," "chief ahead," and the myth is called the "home myth." It is also called the "myth at end of world." It is significant that one of the 'Na'mima of the tribes named after their ancestor bears the name "the real ones" such as "the Real Mamalilikala", "the Real Wiki"; and

"the Real Sint'a". This suggest that other 'Na'mima came later.

The following list of villages and their subdivisions shown on pages 24 and 25 were recorded by Franz Boas in 1930's with the help of George Hunt in consultation with the knowledgeable people of his time.



*George Hunt, 2nd from left, top row, and Franz Boas far right top row, posing with George Hunt's family.*

*Photograph courtesy of Norman & Doris Boas*



*One man's family. No Date.*

*Photograph Courtesy?*