



# T'sitsak'alam

## U'mista wins Award...

The U'mista Cultural Society is proud to announce that we are the recipients of the Aboriginal Tourism BC Cultural Authenticity Award.

This award recognizes an Aboriginal tourism person or business that has demonstrated a commitment to ensuring cultural authenticity in business activities.

Our Executive Director, Sarah E. Holland accepted the award on behalf of U'mista. We are extremely honoured to win this award that was created in honour of Andrea Sanborn's memory. It was her dedication and commitment to cultural authenticity that made her a role model for everyone involved in aboriginal tourism.

Gilakas'la to our Board of Directors for their support and allowing us to continue with the important work that we do.

*Reprinted from "The Power of Giving" exhibition catalogue.*

## History of the Potlatch Ban

*by Pam Trautman*

Although there was no immediate condemnation of the potlatch at the time of initial contact with Europeans, opposition grew after the arrival of the missionaries and government officials in Kwakwaka'wakw territory. Missionaries became increasingly concerned about the Hamat'sa dance, which they believed was an expression of actual cannibalism rather than a theatrical performance. Also there was concern regarding Kwakwaka'wakw marriage practices. The authorities perceived arranged marriages as a bride purchase and they did not understand the flamboyant distribution of goods that is expressed in the potlatch.

Indeed, a potlatch host would nearly empty his home of material goods as a, "great display of gift-giving" and would

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Keith Henry, Lillian Hunt, Sarah E. Holland and George 'Slash' Taylor after the trophy presentation. Oct. 25, 2011  
*Photograph by Vincent L. Chan, courtesy of ATBC*

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## Successful Book Launch at U'mista

On November 1st, 2011 the U'mista Cultural Centre celebrated its 31st anniversary with a book launch and reading by local author, Diane "Honey" Alfred.

After a short welcome speech and introduction to Honey by Bill Cranmer, she began her talk by discussing the process involved in all aspects of publishing a book from, writing, editing and the production and printing. She also told us a bit about the debate that went into the title of "My Life with the Salmon".

Unfortunately, the dedication of Honey's book to Bert Svanvik was accidentally omitted before it went to press. Honey has generously supplied us with a copy and it is reprinted below. The reading ran the full gamut of emotions with sadness during the dedication to Bert and laughter at the hilarious chapter on Bas and the seal. During her reading, the audience was enthralled.

Honey is a talented writer, she hooks her audience and brings them with her into her memories and world. Mostly she writes as she speaks, the 'Namgis have a great sense of humour and so does Honey, they are full of hand gestures and great at telling stories. What other author could hold 30 plus guests spellbound listening to them describe fertilizing fish eggs? After the reading, Honey spent some time signing copies of her book and chatting with the audience.

Gilakas'la Honey for such a great event! We can't wait until your next book, but, you know, no pressure.



*I would never have written another book without Bert Svanvik being my inspiration. The day he was no longer here was the day that I started to use the keyboard again. I had tried to tell the story of our native hatchery and all that it involved but could not get it started for almost three years.*

*The day that I could no longer talk to him, was the day that the floodgate of memories opened up. I knew that our people had to know what he meant to our salmon enhancement program. His love of our 'Namgis Valley had to be told along with his natural ability to teach and how he made learning fun for all of us.*

*My goal is to teach others to love the salmon and the valley as Bert did. Bert learned why the fish and 'Namgis valley meant so much to him. For me, writing this book was for Bert because working beside him taught me how to love the valley as much as he did.*

*I hope that by reading this book you will come and enter our world through my written words and then come to the actual world of the 'Namgis by supporting us in bringing our river back to what it was in our past because that was Bert's dream and I will always carry his dream with me.*





Potlatch Collection paraphernalia on display at the Old Parish Hall in Alert Bay, BC 1921. Photographed by William H. Haliday. Left, AA186, right H-03978.

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appear to become absolutely impoverished. What outsiders could not observe was the great wealth in prestige accumulated by this act. Also, Canadian federal Indian agents felt that native people were too wrapped up in the old customs, and the agents were concerned about the problems created by the expansion of potlatching.

Engaging in a potlatch was made a misdemeanor by the Canadian government in April 1884 and became effective on January 1, 1885. It was believed that potlatches were a detriment to the expansion of the national economy. A tremendous economic endeavor was required to accumulate items given away at a potlatch. The Kwakwaka'wakw are and always have been extremely industrious, and they utilized the European economic system to reinforce and expand the potlatch. Native peoples' labor was needed by non-native, market-oriented business enterprises (especially local canneries) at specified, regular times and locations. Such businesses could not abide the inconsistency of a native labor force whose time and energy were often needed for participation in the potlatch.

Other non-natives believed that, if left alone, the potlatch would eventually vanish because of the increasing influence of European cultural practices, which included formal education and missionary work. However, the Kwakwaka'wakw were determined to hold onto the potlatch as a most important part of their social system and indeed, the very glue that held their culture together.

In a speech at Fort Rupert in 1896, they challenged

*Photos courtesy of Royal BC Museum, BC Archives*  
 anthropologists, including Franz Boas, to support them. Boas and others in turn protested the law making the potlatch illegal, but it remained in place. Early legal efforts at prosecution were not successful in that enforcement was impossible—the law did not even define a potlatch—and cases were thrown out of court. In addition, early authorities were outnumbered by native peoples. Even after the law was strengthened, arrests that were made were thrown out of court or suspended sentences were handed down. A general period of tolerance followed for a number of years.

By 1913 a new Indian agent, William Halliday, was in place who was against potlatching. He took no action at first. However, in the same year, Duncan Campbell Scott became the new Superintendent General of Indian Affairs and it was under his directorship that things began to change. Halliday was now given orders from Scott to eliminate the potlatch. Several arrests took place but, once again, the courts only issued suspended sentences; in one instance the case was completely thrown out. Halliday was frustrated by the suspended sentences or outright acquittals and was reluctant to pursue the matter further unless he could be guaranteed a conviction.

The period from 1915-1918 was relatively quiet. No arrests were made for a variety of reasons. Potlatching decreased out of respect for those who were fighting in World War I. In 1918, Scott requested and obtained changes from Parliament in the anti-potlatching law. These changes reduced the crime of potlatching from a

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## Introducing...Coreen Child

Yakawilas (Place where property is given) – Coreen Child (nee Wilson) is a young, committed leader from the Kwakiutl Nation near Port Hardy, BC on northern Vancouver Island. She has been trained from an early age in many areas of leadership and possesses strong values grounded in the culture, language and the territory of her people. Yakawilas is a descendant of many high-ranking Kwakiutl chiefs and their families and is the daughter of Rupert Wilson and Hazel Wadhams. She can trace her kinship 14 generations back from her three children to marry her roots to the places of origin where times have begun for her family amongst the Kwakiutl First Nation.

Coreen is renowned for her traditional dancing, singing and teaching abilities, and is a cultural leader and researcher of many of the oral histories of the Kwakiutl tribes. She has a background in Indigenous Child and Youth Care and is currently working to complete further certification in Kwak'wala Language Revitalization combined with her professional capacity as the elected chief counselor for the Kwakiutl Band.

Coreen currently lives in Tsaxis, Fort Rupert BC with her husband and three daughters. Her background makes her a welcome addition to the U'mista Cultural Society Board of Directors for her first two year term. Gilakas'la Coreen, we look forward to working with you.



Coreen Child in Dresden, August 2011.

*Photograph courtesy Coreen Child.*



ᑕᑕᑕᑕᑕᑕᑕᑕ, Sun Mask owned by Robert Brown, carved by Charlie James.

*Photograph by Sabalx̄is, Christina Cook*  
© U'mista Cultural Society

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criminal offense to a minor offense. This had drastic implications for the Kwakwaka'wakw because now Halliday, as Indian Agent, was also the justice of the peace. He could not only try a case, but also convict and sentence at his discretion.

Lako'sa (Johnnie Seaweed) and Gwusdidzas (Japanese Charlie) were immediately arrested, tried, and convicted for violating Section 149 of the Indian Act for arranging the marriage of Gwusdidzas' sister to Lako'sa. They were sentenced to two months at Oakalla Prison Farm near Vancouver. In March 1918 charges were filed against four other Kwakwaka'wakw men (August, Isaac, Harry Mountain and John McDougall) for potlatching. After negotiations in this matter, the accused pleaded guilty with sentences suspended upon the written promise by those charged, in addition to seventy-five other Kwakwaka'wakw present for the trial, to quit potlatching. Lako'sa and Gwusdidzas were among those who signed the agreement, a total of seventy-nine men in all. However, potlatching continued illegally.

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Once the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) detachment was established in Alert Bay in December 1919, efforts to arrest increased, this time with convictions and imprisonment. From 1920-21, a total of thirteen men, including Charlie Nowell, were arrested and sentenced to prison; eight for potlatching and five for selling a copper. This was the first time anyone had served prison time for potlatching. RCMP Sergeant Donald Angermann, working with Halliday, led the investigation.

In December 1921, Dan Cranmer, a 'Namgis Chief, held a big potlatch at Village Island so that his wife, Emma, and her family could return her bride payment. More than 300 people attended. After hearing about this, Halliday conducted an investigation and instructed Angerman to arrest, without a subpoena, all the potlatch participants under Section 149 of the Indian Act.

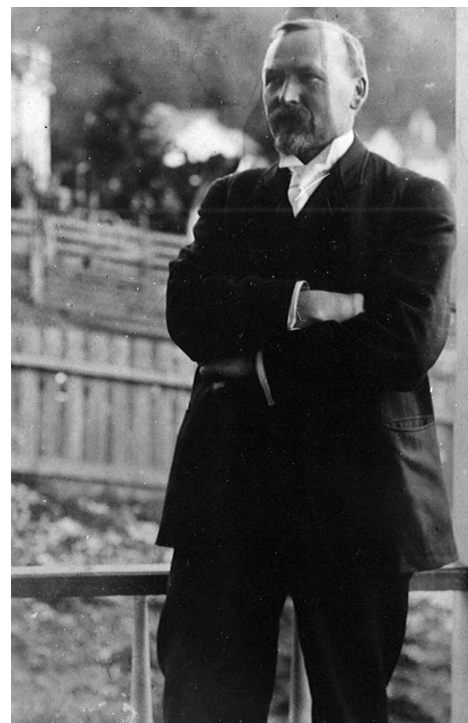
Eventually, more than twenty high-ranking Kwakwaka'wakw nobles were found guilty of violating the Potlatch Law and were sentenced to terms of up to six months in the Oakalla Prison. People were sent to jail on charges of dancing, speech-making and carrying gifts to recipients. The 'Namgis, the Mamalilikala and the 'Nakwaxda'xw signed pledges that they would give up potlatching. As a stipulation for lighter sentences, they were illegally forced to surrender their potlatch paraphernalia, including masks, whistles, cedar bark regalia and coppers. The Fort Rupert Kwagu'ł, and the Ławit̓sis (Turnour Island), the Da'naxda'xw (New Vancouver) and the Dzawada'enux (Kingcome

Inlet), refused to sign agreements to stop potlatching and, therefore, served prison sentences.

Over 600 potlatch-related pieces were surrendered. In his own statement, Halliday said that he had accumulated over 300 cubic feet of potlatch material. The coppers were estimated by their owners in 1921 to have a total value of over \$35,000. However, the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs paid only a token amount of \$1,495 for the masks and other materials; no compensation was ever paid for the coppers.

The confiscated masks and other goods were transported out in the open by boat and then exhibited on benches in the Parish Hall of the Anglican Church at Alert Bay. They were photographed by Halliday. It was particularly difficult for the Kwakwaka'wakw to endure the display of the materials openly in the boat because these items were sacred and were considered to be treasures. Tradition required that they be stored away in cedar boxes out of sight when not in use.

Inventoried and crated, the treasured belongings were sent to Ottawa. They were then turned over by the government to the Victoria Memorial Museum, now the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec, and to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. Before they were packed away, Halliday illegally sold thirty-five objects to George Gustav Heye from the United States. An avid collector, George Heye established his private Museum of the American Indian in New York. This museum has recently become a public collection, the National Museum of the



William May Halliday. Indian Agent, ca. 1922.

*Photograph Courtesy RBCM, BC Archives*

American Indian (NMAI), under the stewardship of the Smithsonian Institution. Although Halliday was reprimanded in a letter from his superior at the Department of Indian Affairs, for allowing the materials to leave Canada, nothing further came about the sale of the artifacts. Duncan Campbell Scott, the Canadian Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, kept several masks for his personal collection, including the Ba'kwas (UCC 80.01.013), which he hung on his office wall.

The Kwakwaka'wakw continued to protest the anti-potlatching law by petitions and other legal means. However, these efforts were not successful and potlatching remained illegal. In spite of all that happened to them, many continued to participate secretly, believing that it was right to potlatch and dance in spite

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## On the U'mista Book Shelf

**MY LIFE WITH THE SALMON** by Diane “Honey” Jacobson’s latest book is an important comment about First Nations efforts to save the salmon and her personal youthful journey to find meaning and a sense of place in life. Like the style in her first book, “My Life in a Kwagu’l Big House,” Diane’s style in “My Life with the Salmon” is full of action, amazing adventures and fascinating connections between land, water and people. In “My Life with the Salmon,” we follow “Honey” through sometimes hilarious and sometimes difficult periods but we always learn a life lesson.



Only  
\$18.<sup>95</sup>

Diane Jacobson lives in Alert Bay in British Columbia. As a researcher for the ʼNamgis First Nation, Diane knows that there is always more to learn about her rich culture and history, and she has become a cultural resource person for the ʼNamgis. Diane enjoys being outdoors and camping, she is an avid soccer and basketball fan and she raises funds for local sports teams every year.



Bags of flour to be given away, Alert Bay, 1921. Photo by W.M. Halliday.

*Photograph courtesy RBCM Images H-03980.*

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of the law. Celebrations effectively went underground and resistance took many forms. Potlatches were sometimes scheduled specifically during stormy weather when the authorities did not like to travel. Potlatching practices also became disjointed at times; gifts were handed out separately from when the dancing took place or they were disguised as holiday presents or charity. Potlatching decreased over time because of the impact of the market economy, the Great Depression and other stresses from the outside world. However, Kwakwaka'wakw solidarity remained intact.

The anti-potlatching law was never actually repealed through formal legislative action, rather it was merely deleted from Canadian legal codes in 1951. The Kwakwaka'wakw had hoped that the Canadian government would make a stronger statement about the nature of the law by formally repealing it.

### Repatriation

Chief Andy Frank, who lived at Comox, unsuccessfully petitioned the federal government to return the potlatch goods and to help establish a native museum to house them in Comox. Several other early attempts by native individuals to have the potlatch material returned were not successful.

The Kwakwaka'wakw began a concerted effort to have their treasures repatriated in the 1960s. About ten years later, the Kwakwaka'wakw people as a whole petitioned the Canadian Government to return their potlatch materials. The U'mista Cultural Society was formed on March 22, 1974 for the explicit purpose of negotiating the return of these items. Harkening back to a time when people were sometimes taken as slaves, U'mista is the Kwak'wala word for a slave who was returned to his or her family. This term is considered particularly appropriate for the Cultural Society because these masks, costumes and coppers are U'mista and, as such, are a symbol of Kwakwaka'wakw cultural survival.

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## Year in Review...

We were so incredibly busy this year that our annual report included up to September 31, 2011! Some of the highlights of the past year were the successful completion of “The Power of Giving”, the exchange with the Staatlich Kunstsammlungen Dresden, which included two simultaneous exhibits (see previous issues of T’sit’sakalam). While wrapping up the pieces to return home, Sarah Holland and Juanita Johnston worked with an innovative art-imaging company Sythescape to document the exhibit including three-dimensional high resolution images of the pieces lent to Dresden. In September, we were busy with the re-display of the Big House Gallery. The entire Gallery was re-worked and the video and lower galleries were also redone. So that almost the entire Potlatch Collection can be enjoyed. If you haven’t been to visit us in a while we highly recommend you come and have a look. A magnificent totem pole carved by Charlie James was given pride of place at the museum entrance where it will offer our visitors a warm and inspiring welcome.

Throughout the summer we hosted a highly successful story telling series led by Beau Dick. Our visitors and locals alike enjoyed Beau’s sessions. We plan on repeating and expanding these storytelling sessions next year based on their popularity.

We are also working in partnership with First Voices to produce a Kwak’wala First Voices App. This technology is another step towards to goal of hearing Kwakwa’wakw youth use Kwak’wala in their everyday lives. You can find this free App in the iTunes Store.

With funding support provided by FNCCEC, the U’mista supports the generation and sharing of cultural information through this quarterly newsletter. In an effort to get the newsletter to as many people as possible, keep costs down, be more environmentally sensitive, we are going to make our newsletters available to all through our website in 2012. We will still provide paper copies to our honorary members and any members who request one.

Trevor Isaac’s Arts Internship was completed and he was responsible for co-curating U’mista’s 30th Anniversary exhibit, “*Gifts We Have Been Given: U’mista Celebrates 30 Years of Generosity*”, conducting research, assisting local artists with sourcing funding and hosting a number of groups visiting us over the year.



U'mista Cultural Centre, August 03, 2011.

*Photograph courtesy of Juanita Johnston*

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The Kwakwaka'wakw were able to demonstrate that Indian Agent Halliday had illegally pressured people to give up their regalia. The Board of Trustees of the Canadian National Museums Corporation eventually agreed and the process was begun for the return of these treasures to their rightful home. In addition, the federal government was forced to admit that they had not maintained the treasures in the correct manner.

As part of the agreement for the return of the paraphernalia, two Kwakwaka'wakw museums were constructed to properly house the material. Each family decided where their regalia was to be held, and the combined Kwakwaka'wakw tribes were involved in the decisions and planning for both museums. One museum is located at Alert Bay, and the other is at Cape Mudge on Quadra Island at the southern end of Kwakwaka'wakw territory. The Nuyumbalees Cultural Centre (formally known as the Kwagiulth Museum and Cultural Centre) at Cape Mudge opened on July 29, 1979, and the U'mista Cultural Centre at Alert Bay opened on November 1, 1980.



## Become a Member...

Is your Membership up to date? Do you want to become a member or volunteer? Do you know what a membership will give you? Find out more! Contact us at the number or email address below or look us up on the web.

### Your Opinion Matters...

Please let us know what you think of our Newsletter. We welcome any suggestions, ideas, and feedback, especially if its positive!

### HOURS of OPERATION

**Winter Hours** Open Tuesday to Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
September 6, 2011 to May , 2012

#### NEW ADMISSION FEES (plus HST)

Adults \$10.00

Seniors/Students \$9.00

Youth (8 - 18 yrs.) \$5.00

Children under 8 - Free

Group over 15 - \$8.00

Group over 15 (senior and students) \$7.50

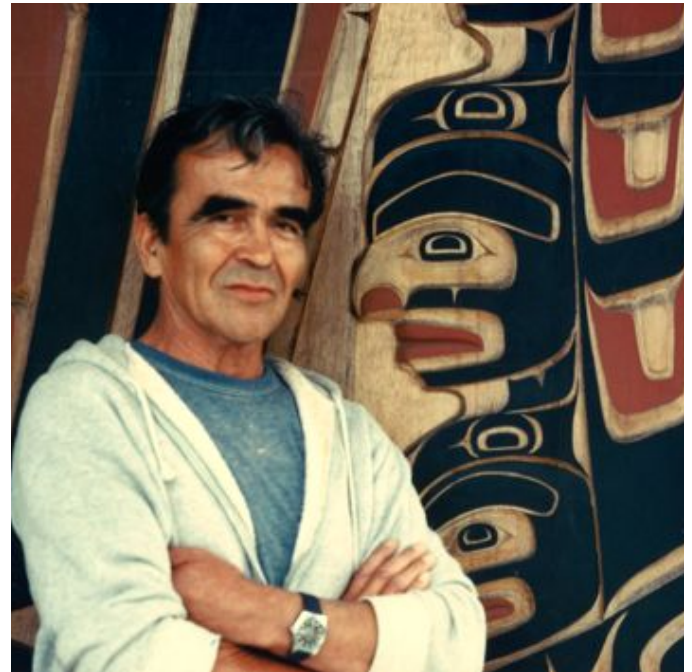


*U'mista's logo shows the sun in human form. The creator Doug Cranmer said, "It wasn't a great big fireball in the sky to the [Kwakwaka'wakw], he's a little guy who gets up every morning, puts his abalone earringson and walks across the sky. His earrings are the things that get the light."*

## Doug Cranmer Retrospective Exhibition

The Museum of Anthropology, UBC (MoA) has asked U'mista to partner with them on an initiative to document and present the importance of artist Doug Cranmer (1927-2006) to the revival and retention of Kwakwaka'wakw culture. An exhibition, publication and programming initiatives on Doug Cranmer are being developed and we are pleased that the exhibit will be shown at MoA, The Museum at Campbell River, and the U'mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay (March to September 2013). We look forward to working with MoA staff on developing legacy components from the exhibition for our own community as well as curricula for school programs. This initiative continues our tradition of collaboration with the Museum of Anthropology on preserving, documenting and working together to present the cultural achievements of the Kwakwaka'wakw to the people of British Columbia and Canada.

**The exhibit runs from March 17, 2012 to September 3, 2011 at UBC MoA.**



Doug Cranmer in front of door panels at the U'mista. Doug carved these panels for the World's Fair in Osaka, Japan. Photographed in 1983 by Vickie Jensen.1983. UPN-01448

*Photograph courtesy of U'mista Cultural Centre.*

