Canadian, Alaska Tlingits explore common ties

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Tlingit Journal

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The weekend of our visit - I was traveling with my wife and Toby Tobiason of KTOO-FM for Southeast Native Radio - the Tlingit Tlingit were conducting their General Assembly at Brook's Brook, a tribal campground 30 miles north of Teslin. The membership of the tribe meets several times each year to discuss a number of issues and develop tribal strategies. Keenan describes the process as "making love." The tribe provides meals to the members and workshops and meetings are conducted in tarp-covered shelters. He emphasized that the fundamental policy of the tribe is to "Tlingitize" Canadian government programs, i.e. adapt them to serve the interest of the Tlingit.

"We take the best of the non-Native programs and meld them to the best of the Tlingit customs and traditions," he stated. Keenan represents the Teslin Tlingit Council on the Council of Yukon Indians board. The Council of Yukon Indians is a federal agency of first nation tribes in the Yukon that provides oversight for the Yukon Native Language Center, the Aboriginal Language Service of the Yukon Government and the ongoing Land Claims negotiations with the Canadian federal government.

A number of Alphabascan tribes in British Columbia and the Yukon have organized Tlingit-style, with Raven/Wolf moieties and clans, including the Tahltan, the Tagish and the Southern Tutchone. Each of these clans will be invited to the First Conference of Clans scheduled for April 1983 in Kukwan. The Alaska Tsimshians settled at Metlakatla and the Kaigani Haida will also be invited to participate in this historic conference. The purpose of the conference will be to reaffirm customary and traditional law and relations among the respective clans and clan house leaders.

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Andy Hope is president of the Before Columbus Foundation, a nationwide group organized in 1978 to promote and disseminate American multi-cultural literature.
Manuscript to be key element of clan conference

T he Southeast Tribal Council voted in August to sponsor a Conference of Clans in April 1993. SEATC is a consortium of tribal governments which have the southeastern Alaska region as their tribal home. The conference is an event that will bring together representatives of all the constituent tribes, to address issues of mutual concern. The conference will provide an opportunity for the tribes to learn from each other, to share knowledge and to build relationships.

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There has never been a meeting like the proposed clan conference, in which representatives of all respective Tlingit clans will be invited and encouraged to participate.

There are some 75 clans among the Tlingit of Alaska, British Columbia and Yukon. These clans are divided about evenly between the two sides or moieties, the Raven and the Wolf. The clans have about 250 clan house subdivisions.

George Emmons lists 18 tribes in his book on the Tlingit, from Galyax Kwaan (Tribe of People of Galyax, the Kalkiak River or the Yakataga-Controlling Bay area south of Cordova) to Taanta Kwaan (Sea Lion Tribe/People - also known as Taangaash Kwaan) at the extreme southern tip of Southeast Alaska.

The 250 clan house were documented by Emmons in his 1916 article "The Tlingit: A name once given (to a clan house) survives even though it was stolen shortly after I received it. I: "The Tlingit Indians" is certainly a major contribution to the literature of the Tlingit, though the parts left out of the book certainly are at least of equal value. The guts of the manuscript was the chapter "The History of Tlingit Tribes and Clans," which inexplicably was left out of the book. I say this because I believe that without an understanding of Tlingit clan relations, one will never have a true appreciation of the Tlingit.

I had been aware of the Emmons manuscript for years. Indeed, I had obtained a copy from the University of Victoria archives in the late 70s, without it was stolen shortly after I received it. I tried to secure a copy of the Emmons papers from the American Museum of Natural History in the early 80s, but was told they weren't available because deLaguna was editing them for publication.

I renewed my request after publication of "The Tlingit Indians." With the cooperation and support of deLaguna, the museum provided me a copy of the manuscript in July of this year.

The History of Tlingit Tribes and Clans portion of the Emmons manuscript runs some 200 handwritten pages. The first part is comprised of historical outlines of the 18 tribes of the Tlingit, with narratives of how the communities were settled. It also includes clan and clan house listings. He provides explanations of the Tlingit names of these tribal communities:

- SheeAtika (People of or on Shee) Baranof Island, their territory was named Shee from Shee.ee (the limb of a tree) because of its shape, a length of land decreasing in width from the north to its termination at Cape Omanye and cut on both sides by deep arms, suggesting a great limb with numerous branches. In later years, tika (outer edge) was added, making the name SheeAtika Kwaan, which would seem to refer to the people or tribe living on the seaward or outside of the island, as all the permanent settlements were on the western shore.

The second part of this chapter contains more detailed histories of clans, clan houses and clan crests. The Raven clans are grouped together, as are the Wolf clans. Emmons groups the Wolf clans with the river systems on which they migrated to Southeast Alaska, which provides a rare, comprehensive picture of clan relations.

- The Emmons manuscript will serve as an important source document for the clan conference steering committee. Though a number of anthropologists and ethnographers have documented Tlingit clan and clan house names, the Tlingit have never done so themselves. The clan conference will provide the Tlingit with an opportunity to build upon documentation left by people like Emmons.

- Andy Hope is president of Before Columbus Foundation, a nationwide group organized in 1976 to promote and disseminate American multi-cultural literature.
Keepers of Tlingit language: a dedicated group

Tlingit Journal

There are limited Alaska Native language job/career opportunities. Usually these are in Indian education programs that are, for the most part, outside of the school system.

Andy Hope

Tlingit songmaster of the Kakweidi clan of Angoon, the late John Fawcett of Hoonah, John Marks (of the Lukaax da clan of Haines), the late Henry Davis (Native Studies Director at SJC), Katherine Mills (of the Chookwaneidi clan of Hoonah) and Richard and Nora Dauenhauer (then affiliated with Alaska Methodist University).

Ed Scholz of the SJC staff taught me how to prepare simple photo "masters" and to operate the photo offset press in the school print shop. From 1971 through 1973, I printed a number of pamphlets and booklets at the print shop. The pamphlets included articles by Louis Shotridge, excerpts of the Goldschmidt-Haas report on the Possessory Rights of the Natives of Southeast Alaska, a book on Tlingit crests, and several publications of the Tlingit language (some were developed by Tlingit language workshop participants) under the Tlingit Readers imprint, a press founded by Dick and Nora Dauenhauer and myself.

The modern Tlingit orthography has evolved through the efforts of the above-mentioned people and many others. The Dauenhauers and Jeff Leer will be making major presentations to the Tlingit Clan Conference scheduled for early May 1993 in Kluwan. The Tlingit language workshop met for the last time in the summer of 1972.

The 1972 session of the Alaska Legislature enacted a bill that established the ANLC at UAF. The ANLC has had a decidedly academic, ivory tower orientation in the past 20 years. In 1992, Jim Kari contrasted Alaska Native language policy with that of the Yukon, Canada:

"... the Yukon Native Language Centre ... does not have a research and publication mandate as does the ANLC. The central theme ... has been a well-organized teaching program ... I feel that there is need for "expandable discussion and review of Native language issues and linguistic resources in Alaska with all interested groups. Many issues merit discussion; new ideas for potential language activities, economic issues such as funding for a wide range of jobs in language work, the delivery of technical training in language work skills, etc."

The economic issue that Kari refers to is the challenge to create job opportunities in Native language programs. I moved my family to Angoon in the spring of 1973 for an independent study practicum. My real purpose in moving to Angoon was to pursue my interest much further. He told me that it would be next to impossible to make a living. Ed's advice rings true today, nearly 20 years later. One of the things that struck me while writing this column is the number of people who worked on development of the language that have passed on.

There are limited Alaska Native language job/career opportunities. Usually these are in Indian education programs that are, for the most part, outside of the school system. There are no programs in which one can learn the technical skills that would enable them to become interpreters, translators or language instructors of Tlingit.

With few job opportunities, there is little incentive for Natives to participate in language and cultural programs. If one wants to learn Tlingit language and culture, one must have independent means to do so. One must accept the challenge and do it.

There are faint reasons for optimism, however. Congress approved the Native American Languages Act of 1990. That law, which President Bush signed into law on October 26, will provide funding to tribes through the administration for Native Americans for (1) projects that facilitate and encourage the transfer of Native American language skills from one generation to another; (2) training of Native Americans to teach others to enable them to serve as interpreters or translators; and (3) development, printing and dissemination of materials to be used for teaching and enhancement of Native American languages.

Georgianna Lincoln introduced similar legislation in the last session of the Alaska legislature, but the bill went nowhere.
The purpose of the conference is to document the customs and traditions of the respective Tlingit tribes and clans. Scholars generally agree that some 70 clans and either 17 or 18 tribes existed circa 1890. No contemporary genealogy of Tlingit clans and clan houses exists.

The conference will provide a forum for contemporary clan leaders to speak for the record and to present in-depth logical records. Participants will also confirm, update or correct existing documentation on Tlingit social organization. As I mentioned in an earlier column, George Emmons' unpublished manuscript, "The History of Tlingit Tribes and Clan," will serve as a key reference.

The conference will also provide a forum for scholars to make formal presentations on such subjects as Tlingit genealogies, toponyms (i.e., place names), linguistic challenges, documentation of Tlingit traditions, clan ownership rights and recommendations on museum repatriation policies. A long-term goal of conference organizers is to compile a comprehensive genealogy of Tlingit clans and clan house affiliation.

The conference format will be loosely based on the Tlingit Language Workshop of the early '70s - it will be a working conference. There will be general or plenary sessions, workshops and time will be reserved for performances and ceremonies. Invited presenters will include Dr. Jeff Leer of the Alaska Native Language Center of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Dr. Leer will speak on problems of translation and documentation of Tlingit place names. Nora Dauenhauer of Sealaska Heritage Foundation will speak on documentation of stories, names and biographies.

Dr. Steve Langdon (better known as Trajan Langdon's dad), will speak on documentation of customary and traditional use of subsistence resources. Harold Jacobs will speak on documenting clan house custodians, ownership of clan crests and recommendations on museum repatriation policies. Beatie Cooley of the Yukon Territory's Aboriginal Language Service will speak on the Inland Tlingit genealogy project.

Maria Williams of the Alaska State Council on the Arts will speak on contemporary Native dances. Richard Dauenhauer of Sealaska Heritage Foundation will speak on problems relating to hearing, pronouncing and spelling Tlingit names and developing a Tlingit songbook. Herb Hope will speak on documenting the Klitsa family's survival march of 1884. Richard Jackson will speak on the Tongass Tribe's Chief Johnson pole rededication project of 1989.

Sergei Kan will present a comprehensive, annotated Tlingit source bibliography. Sergei and his family emigrated from Russia to the U.S. in 1974. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Boston University in 1976, an M.A. from the University of Chicago in 1978 and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1982.

He is employed as an associate professor of anthropology and Native American studies at Dartmouth College. I met Sergei in Sitka in 1979. He was doing field work for what turned out to be his Ph.D. While in Sitka, and even after his return to Chicago, he contributed a number of articles to "Neek", the newsletter of the Sitka Tribe of Alaska. His articles were translations from the Russian writings of Ivan Veniaminov, Anatoli Kamenski and others. Sergei has authored a number of articles on various aspects of Tlingit culture over the last 10 years. His book, "Symbolic Immortality: The Tlingit Potlatch of the Nineteenth Century," was published by the Smithsonian Institution Press in 1989. It received the Before-Columbus Foundation American Book Award in 1990.

My favorite Kan writings are those that address Tlingit Christianity during the missionization period of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These articles include "Russian Orthodox Brotherhoods among the Tlingit. " (1985), "Memory Eternal: Russian Orthodoxy and the Tlingit Mortuary Cycle." (1987) and "Russian Orthodox Missions." (1988).

The subject of Tlingit Christianity has been addressed by less than a handful of ethnographers and historians. It is an important subject because Tlingit Christians laid the basis for all of the modern Native organizations in Southeast Alaska. Tlingit Christians organized the Alaska Native Brotherhood in 1912 and the Alaska Native Sisterhood in the early 1920s.

Kan has been working on the Tlingit Source Bibliography for more than a year. The bibliography, says Kan, "will consist of both published and unpublished works and will cover the entire Tlingit history from the earliest European accounts of the culture to the present. The annotation will assist the reader in selecting needed materials and becoming aware of the author's biases."

Kan's bibliography will also include materials from research such as the late William Nelson's account of the life of his clan uncle Eli Katanook (a founder of the Alaska Native Brotherhood) and the story of the Russian Orthodox Church in Killisnoo and Angoon that Kan recorded from the late Jim George in 1979.

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Haines, Klukwan to host Tlingit Tribes and Clans

Evelyn Hotch is President of Klukwan Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB) Camp #8. He will serve as Evening Program committee chair for the Conference of Tlingit Tribes and Clans scheduled for May 5-9, 1990. The conference will take place in Haines and Klukwan. Ed is a member of the Klukwan Thunderbird clan of the Wolf moiety. Like all other conference planning committee members, Ed is an unpaid volunteer. Ed will be assisted by Lani Hotch, a member of the Kaagwaantaan clan of the Wolf moiety. Lani is also a member of the Chilkat Indian Village.

The conference planning committee met recently in Juneau. Representatives from Sitka, Juneau, Haines and Klukwan roughed out scheduling for the conference and appointed working groups and committees.

Among the committees formed were the Invitational committee (chaired by Irene Jimmy of the Kiks.adi clan of the Raven moiety of Sitka), the Housing committee, the Meals committee, the Daytime program committee (chaired by yours truly, a member of the Sik' nan.adi clan of the Wolf moiety), the Evening program committee and the Publicity committee.

From the outset, the conference has been structured to function without a large budget. I felt that if the project was dependent on large grants it would never happen. Fortunately or not, I was correct in this approach, since large grants did not materialize.

The conference planning committee has proven that projects like this can happen with volunteer labor and small in-kind and cash contributions.

Conference daytime sessions will take place in Haines on May 5 and 8 at the Haines ANB Camp #8 Hall. Daytime sessions will take place in Klukwan on May 6 and 7 at the Klukwan Camp #8 ANB Hall and the Klukwan Camp #8 Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANS) Hall.

workshop topics will include archival strategies, documentation strategies, migration traditions, repatriation issues, developing clan trusts and developing a tribal college.

The Kluwan ANS Hall is the only one of its kind in the world. It reflects the proud ANS tradition of this community. Evelyn Hotch is ANS Camp #8 President. She also serves on the conference planning committee.

Morning sessions will consist of formal, scholarly presentations and panels. Morning sessions will run from 9:30 to noon each day. A partial list of presenters was included in a previous column.

Afternoon sessions will consist of workshops and will run from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day. The workshops will be facilitated by the presenters listed in my February column. Workshop sessions will run concurrently and will be repeated to allow participants to attend as many different sessions as possible.

Two workshops will run each of the four days of the conference: Tlingit Personal and Place Names, and Developing Resource Atlases. Other workshop topics will include archival strategies, documentation strategies, migration traditions, repatriation issues, developing clan trusts and developing a tribal college.

Evening programs will begin at 8 p.m. and will take place at the Chilkat Center in Haines. Evening programs will include dance performances, traditional ceremonies and poetry readings.

A number of Canadian tribal and clan representatives have been contacted and have informed conference organizers of tentative plans to participate.

The Champagne Aishishik Band Council is a Southern Tutchone Athabascan tribe headquartered in Haines Junction, Yukon Territory. There are two clans affiliated with the band.

The Carcross Tagish First Nation Council is a Tagish Athabascan tribe headquartered in Carcross, Yukon Territory. There are 2 clans affiliated with this tribe, one from the Wolf moiety and one from the Raven moiety.

The Teslin Tlingit Council is headquartered in Teslin, Yukon Territory. There are 5 clans affiliated with the Teslin Tlingit (the same as those listed for the Taku River Tlingit above). The tribe has approximately 1000 members.

Bessie Cooley, a member of the Kookhitaan Raven moiety clan of Teslin and a staff worker with Aboriginal Language Service of the Yukon, serves on the conference planning committee. Bessie will attend the conference with representatives from each of the Teslin clans, David Keenan (the tribal chief), and several tribal members.

The Alaska Marine Highway schedule between Juneau and Haines coincides nicely with the conference schedule, with a northbound ferry on May 9 and a southbound ferry on the evening of May 9. For more information on the conference, contact Gerry Hope at 225-7391.

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The Alaska Native Reading Program was established by state legislation in 1972 as a center for research and documentation of the twenty native Indian, Aleut, and Eskimo languages of Alaska.
ANOTHER DAY TO JOIN THE HERALD

Tlingit Journal

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Andy Hope

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Before Columbus Foundation: Supporting literacy

Poet, essayist and novelist Ishmael Reed, author of "God Made Alaska for the Indians," "The Last Days of Louisiana Red," "Reckless Eyeballing" and "Japanese by Spring," founded the Before Columbus Foundation in 1976. The foundation was organized to promote and disseminate American multicultural literature.

The first Before Columbus Foundation board included Reed, Rudolfo Anaya, Bob Callahan, Shawn Wong, David Meltzer and Victor Cruz. I was appointed to the board in 1986 and have served as President since 1992.

Novelist Rudolfo Anaya author of "Bless Me Ultima" and "Tortuga," currently teaches at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.


Poet Victor Cruz author of "Snaps," "Tropicalization" and "Red Beans," currently lives and works in Puerto Rico. All of the aforementioned writers continue to serve on the foundation's board.

Before Columbus established the American Book Awards in 1980. The first award ceremonies were conducted in New York. The ceremonies have become a tradition of the annual American Booksellers Association Convention.

The ceremonies began with the 1985 ABA Convention, which was held in San Francisco. The ABA Convention and the American Book awards are scheduled for Los Angeles in 1994.


Since 1987, Before Columbus has sponsored readings and literary panel discussions at the Bumbershoot Festival held on the Labor Day weekend every year at the Seattle Center. The 1993 presentations featured readings by poet Lawson Inada and a panel discussion that included Inada, Shawn Wong and novelist Tery McMillan.

Before Columbus, in association with the PEN Oakland, California chapter, also sponsors the Media Season Program. This program, originated by Reed, is an ongoing series of "town meeting" forums that examine the impact of negative portrayal of minorities by network television. The latest Media Season town meeting took place in East St. Louis on October 6, 1993, emceed by 1993 ABA award winner Professor Eugene Redmond. Media Season Town Meetings will follow in New York, San Francisco, Oakland, Houston and Washington, D.C.

When asked about the role of the foundation on the American literary scene, Reed responded with the following statement: "Before Columbus is on the cutting edge of the multicultural movement in the United States. Because of the racism of literary politics, the American Book Awards are not given the status of other major American literary awards. Before Columbus programs encourage cooperation between different ethnic groups and therefore do not receive the attention the media votes to conflict between ethnic groups."

The Before Columbus Review is published twice a year. Recent issues include a "Works in Progress" issue, which featured works by foundation board members; a Quincentennial issue; an "America: A Prophecy Renewed," issue; and an "Alaska" issue. The next issue of the review will address writing by women.

Before Columbus, ANB Camp #2 and the Juneau Indian Studies program serve as cosponsors of the Alaska Native Reading Program, which I described in my June column. This program will provide copies of books to the various schools in the Juneau area, the Native Culture Club at Lemon Creek Correction Center, and the Indian Studies library.

A number of publishers, including the University of Washington Press, the Alaska Native Language Center, Sealaska Heritage Foundation, Before Columbus, I. Reed Books and Norton have offered substantial discounts to the program.

A committee was recently appointed to develop a book order list. The program will be administered by Juneau Indian Studies staff. Copies of the Norton Before Columbus Anthologies and the Before Columbus Review will be included on the program book list. For more information about the reading program, contact Nancy Eddy at 463-1850.

For information on Before Columbus Foundation, write to: Gundar Strads, Administrator The Glen House, 603 13th Street, Suite 203, Oakland, CA 94612.

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