**TOUCHING THE HEAVENS:
THE CARVING AND RAISING OF A CONTEMPORARY NISGA'A
TOTEM POLE**

by

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Bachelor of Arts, 1981

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

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TOUCHING THE HEAVENS: THE CARVING AND RAISING
OF A CONTEMPORARY NISGA'A TOTEM POLE

submitted by Rocque Berthiaume, B.A.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

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September 20, 1996

Abstract

This thesis is a study of a contemporary totem pole raising on Canada's northwest coast. The work analyzes the relationship between the people of the Nisga'a nation and their art forms. The purpose of this thesis is to examine how Nisga'a art is related to a process of cultural (re)production through which the creation and use of art (re)constructs the personal and social identities of people. This thesis attempts to answer the following questions: Why was this totem pole raised? What meanings have the people of Gitwinksihlkw attached to the raising of the pole? The research strategy for answering these questions has involved exploring theories on the anthropology of art, examining Nisga'a data on social organization and art, and carrying out fieldwork including interviewing and participant observation. My argument in this thesis is that contemporary totem pole raisings inform cultural values as well as signify the survival of a distinct society. They also address broader issues such as the relationship between the Nisga'a and the nation state. Pole raisings are interpreted as products of creative and political struggle. They form statements between a people and their land at a time when the ownership of the land is still in question.

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Note on Orthography

Anthropologists have developed a variety of orthographies for writing the Nisga'a language. The orthography that I have used is the one that the Nisga'a use in their own texts. In quoting from written sources, I used the orthographies that they have employed.

The people then pulled the totem pole the rest of the way up, lodging the base firmly into the ground. There it stood. Those of you who read this story will come to know and understand it more clearly if you visualize what took place. If you know and your eyes are truly opened to these facts, you will weep, because of its sincerity and truth. You will be moved when you recall what happened thousands of years ago.

Nisga'a Tribal Council
Nisga'a: People of The Nass River, 1993

If one can teach people to interpret and value the properties of the objects of another culture according to the aesthetics of that culture, then one may provide a powerful insight into that world, and into what it feels to be a member of it.

Howard Morphy
The Anthropology of Art, 1994

I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The subject of this thesis is the anthropology of art. The inquiry that follows is a research of the art, ceremony and social organization of First Nations people from the Northwest Coast culture area; specifically, the work is a study of the relationship between the people of the Nisga'a nation and the art forms of their parent culture.

The rationale for my producing the study is an interest in the relatively recent cultural resurgence of Nisga'a art and ceremony. Published works on the subject are few and very little has been done that relates the aesthetics, functions and meaning of Nisga'a art forms to broader social categories. The purpose of this thesis is to examine Nisga'a art as a process of cultural (re)production through which the creation and use of art (re)constructs the personal and social identity of a people.

The ideas for this thesis were shaped by my participation in an important cultural event in the Nisga'a community of Gitwinksihlkw. In the late 1980's, the village leaders through the sponsorship of the band council commissioned the carving of a new totem pole which was raised in their community on October 17, 1992. The pole raising was an emotionally charged event for both the hosts and their guests as this was the first pole to be raised in the community in nearly one hundred years. Two interrelated questions remained with me. Why was this totem pole raised? The second question is more problematic: What meanings have the people of Gitwinksihlkw attached to the raising of the totem pole? These two questions have stimulated the research. My argument in this thesis is that the act of contemporary totem pole carving and the raising of poles informs cultural values and makes a statement of cultural identity and survival. It is my intent to examine cultural production in the arts in order to analyze modern totem pole ceremonials as assertions of

First Nations identity. To do this, an analysis is offered in this thesis that indicates the empowering effects of such an event for a First Nations community. The analysis takes into account Nisga'a social and cultural changes as a consequence of colonial and nation state relations. I assert that First Nations resistance can be seen in how Nisga'a totem pole raisings represent a reappropriation of cultural artefacts and territory once taken by the dominant culture. Questions such as identity construction, self-determination and land rights are embedded in the act of making and raising totem poles; the poles are cultural as well as political statements of survival, autonomy, and returning strength.

The research strategy attempts to explain the meanings of one particular Nisga'a totem pole raising. To do this, I explore theories on the anthropology of art and I examine the archival and published data on Nisga'a social organization and art forms. The data are organized around totem poles and ceremonies associated with them and they focus upon the social institutions of chiefs and artists who are the driving forces of totem pole raisings. The focus of the inquiry is primarily on the Nisga'a community of Gitwinksihlkw. The field work included participant observation in the totem pole raising and interviews with artists and chiefs prior to and after the raising of the totem pole. A brief social history of the community provides a deeper context for understanding the local social dynamics associated with the pole raising.

The intention for analyzing and historicizing Nisga'a discourses on art is to develop Howard Morphy's concept as quoted in the introduction of this work. That is, by interpreting and valuing cultural objects from the aesthetic codes of their producers it is possible to get a sense and a feeling of the world from their point of view. This part of my analysis is also influenced by James Clifford's approach of analyzing the changing historical relationship between First Nations and state institutions. It is by analyzing

changing First Nations and state relations that the contested nature of struggles over cultural identity and appropriation are seen. With respect to contemporary First Nations and their art forms, discussions of meaning must include the meaning of their relations as citizens in the nation state of Canada. For example, the recent revival of totem pole carving is best understood in the context of its past decline as a result of state repression; its renewal is associated with a strengthened First Nations consciousness regarding heritage practises as well as larger related questions such as self-government and land rights. The political dimensions of this thesis involve examining how art is, to use Clifford's term, a tool of cultural relativism, and as Valda Blundell states, a source of "native power" providing economic and social rewards for those who commission and create it.

The questions that this thesis is attempting to answer regarding why the Bear's Den totem pole was raised and what meanings the people of Gitwinksilhkw have attached to its raising can best be answered by examining the ceremony as a social phenomena involving the Nisga'a community. In this way the kinship, political, economic, religious as well as aesthetic dimensions of the event can be fully explored. The pole raising is a classic form of a public ritual. Rosman and Rubel (1995) refer to Bloch (1989) when they describe ritual as

"an event or performance, often associated with the sacred, which is distinguished from ordinary day-to-day life by the use of special language, music or dance. Ritual is a form of communication...What ritual, in its stylized form, communicates are important central themes of the culture"

(Rosman and Rubel 1995: 25-26).

My own approach deals with the problem of data reconstruction as it relates to the Nisga'a knowledge of totem poles and their raisings by combining their own data with those of other sources. Nisga'a researchers started recording their own oral histories in the 1970's. Up until that point, all fieldwork was formally done by outside anthropologists. For Nisga'a researchers to record this data required tremendous persuasion as the ada'awk (Nisga'a histories) were considered the privileged property of their owners. However, in the 1970's the Nisga'a elders were persuaded by their school district and later their own tribal council to record their histories both for the sake of measuring knowledge and because of the relevance of data on land ownership and occupancy for their land claims negotiations.

I focussed on contemporary Nisga'a data as it related to Gitwinksihlkw and their totem poles. The biggest problem associated with this data is that today's generation of elders has never participated in the pole raisings of the historic period as no poles were raised in the Nass Valley between 1910 and 1976. The pole I studied was the first to be raised in the community of Gitwinksihlkw in nearly 100 years. I dealt with this problem by focussing on the oral history as told by the late Eli Gosnell. Mr. Gosnell, who passed away in 1978, was a respected chief amongst the Nisga'a. He was a Wolf chief from Gitwinksihlkw. His Nisga'a name was Wigadmiksaak and by tradition he was the closest chief to Baxk'ap, the leading chief of the village. He was also a noted historian and artist. In fact, he carved the first totem pole to be raised in the Nass Valley after over 70 years in Gitlakdamiks in 1976. The pole was named the Four Crest Unity Pole. While I have no knowledge as to whether he attended totem pole raisings as a young boy it was his leadership in the protocol associated with carving and raising that pole which was instrumental in the revival of that practise. While he personally was not credited in the text entitled Nisga'a: People of the Nass River, Nisga'a, (Nisga'a Tribal Council: 1993),

the majority of the data including the material on totem poles are his recitations (pp. 114-121). It is his words that form the first opening quote of this thesis.

Theoretical guidelines

The thesis is guided and informed by three particular areas of theory and research: 1) the anthropological theories regarding the generation of ethnographic texts; 2) more general theories associated with the anthropology of art; and 3) research that has focussed on the specific arts and culture of the ethnographic area of this study, Canada's Northwest Coast. My approach is to begin at the level of theory building in anthropology, proceed to specific concepts in the anthropology of art, and link this data to the art and culture of the field area. This method of working from the general to the specific is intended to contextualize and structure the field data into a more coherent ethnography.

The theoretical framework for this thesis has been shaped by seven anthropologists; Clifford Geertz (1973), James Clifford (1986, 1988, 1991), Valda Blundell (1992), Howard Morphy (1994), Marjorie Halpin (1973, 1994), John Cove (1982, 1987) and James McDonald (1985, 1995). Except for Geertz, these authors are cited for their work in the anthropology of art (Morphy, Clifford, Blundell) or for their common ethnographic area of study (Halpin, Cove, McDonald).

Both Morphy and Blundell are referenced for their work on the relationship between art and anthropology. Halpin's work has centred on the arts, Cove on the mythology, and McDonald on the contemporary political economy (1985) and culture (1995). I use these sources along with the archival data, other published sources, participant observation and interviews to explain the relationship between culture and art.

The work of Geertz is included for his theoretical interpretation of local cultures. In particular the analysis of the pole raising has been shaped by the interpretive anthropology of Geertz. His methodology for translating the varying layers of meaning that cultures encode through public forms such as speech, actions and objects provides an ideal method for analyzing totem poles and their raisings. I am especially interested in capturing the cultural intentions that the Nisga'a are attaching to their social practises of making and raising poles. I also support Geertz' position that "social actions are comments on more than themselves" (Geertz 1973: 23) and that the anthropological project must include how local developments have been affected by the wider social context. It is by looking at these questions relationally that it becomes possible to comprehend the depth of these events and provide their meanings for the Nisga'a, as well as for providing a translation of their meanings for others.

The region of my study is referred to in the anthropological literature as the culture area of the Tsimshian of Northwestern British Columbia, Canada. More specifically, this region comprises three discreet groupings. One of those three groupings is the Nisga'a of the Nass River Valley. The others two groupings are the Coast Tsimshian of the lower to middle Skeena River Valley and the adjacent coastal region, and the Gitksan of the upper Skeena River Valley. In many respects, the three groupings are, culturally speaking, closely interrelated. The three groupings speak dialects of a common language and share similar social structures, including the observing of matrilineal descent and hereditary chieftainships. All three groupings express their social relations through the institution of the feast, or potlatch. On a material level, all three groupings practised similar subsistence strategies. Trade and intermarriage among these groups is still common. However, each grouping cherishes its distinct status and prefers the recognition of its nationhood.

Thesis Structure and Goals

The presentation of this thesis is organized in the following way: This first chapter introduces the thesis subject and elaborates on its methods, data sources, and its central argument. The second chapter focuses on theories that inform the thesis analysis, namely those regarding ethnographic discourses, the anthropology of art, and works from the field area. The third chapter introduces the Nisga'a people and their community that raised the totem pole in order to establish the social and cultural contexts for the particular totem pole raising at issue here. The fourth chapter explores the subject of Nisga'a art, including the role of master carvers and their totem poles. The logic of this chapter is to analyze the cultural forces for producing totem pole art and to foreground the coercive role of the state in prohibiting cultural practices such as carving as well as the recent resurgence of Nisga'a totem pole art. The fifth chapter offers my analysis of a contemporary totem pole raising and thus forms the heart of the thesis. The final chapter concludes the thesis with a discussion of the politics of raising contemporary totem poles, the role of art in cultural (re)production and identity politics, and how the analysis offered in this thesis has relevance for theories in the anthropology of art.

The overall goal of this thesis is to examine how Nisga'a art is a process of cultural (re)production through which its creation and use (re)constructs the personal and social identities of the Nisga'a nation. I want to demonstrate how contemporary totem pole raisings inform cultural values as well as signify the survival of a distinct society. I also want to show how pole raisings can be interpreted as products of both creative as well as political struggle. In the case of the Nisga'a, pole raisings are statements about ownership to the land at a time when its ownership has been in question.

II

**A THEORETICAL OUTLINE:
DISCOURSES ON ETHNOGRAPHY,
THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF ART,
AND WORKS FROM THE FIELD REGION**

The work of Clifford Geertz is an ideal starting point for theorizing about the study of culture. Geertz, a leading proponent in the field of interpretive anthropology, suggests that the task of the anthropologist is to translate the varying layers of meaning that cultures encode through language, behaviour, and material culture (Geertz: 1973). He describes his approach to interpretive anthropology as a construction of "thick description" (1973: 6). Geertz' position is that culture is a publicly "acted document", conveying meaning through symbolic activities such as speech, actions and objects. Geertz' symbolic approach informs his belief that in order to capture the meaning of cultural behaviour it must be interpreted or "read" like a text. His approach focusses on the cultural intentions that people attach to their social practices. Geertz' overall strategy is to have the cultural anthropologist work outward to comprehend the depth of social events from the point of view of their practitioners. He says the work must be done in this way in order that the events can be interpreted and analyzed in a conceptual language that translates and integrates meanings of intent (Geertz: 1973).

Geertz' method of thinking and writing about culture is applicable to theorizing about the making and raising of totem poles because these acts are the most public and symbolic cultural activity on the Northwest Coast. My study has been influenced by Geertz' statement that "anthropologists don't study villages...they study *in* villages. You can study different things in different places, and some things - you can best study in confined localities." (Geertz 1973: 22) His definition of ethnographic description as the recording of an interpretation of social discourse at the local, or "microscopic", level is ideal for understanding the meanings that people attach to their totem poles. However, as Geertz suggests, there are methodological problems associated with the strictly "microscopic nature of ethnography" (1973: 23). Anthropological discourse must link the data of the local level to the broader macro level so their relational effects can be interpreted. Geertz

deals with this problem by stating:

that social actions are comments on more than themselves; that where an interpretation comes from does not determine where it can be impelled to go. Small facts speak to large issues...because they are made to (Geertz 1973: 23).

This linkage must be made by the anthropologist's own explicitness in examining how in this particular case one indigenous culture has dealt with large issues such as self-determination, resistance to assimilation, cultural appropriation and land claims through their arts.

Writing of Culture

The work of James Clifford is useful for examining directly applicable subjects such as the ethnographic process, the collecting of art, and museum policy. Clifford, in his introduction to Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography, stresses the role of the field worker and the integrity of the writing process in the creation of ethnographic texts (1986:2). Clifford is correct in his assessment that social anthropology has traditionally focussed on methods of participant observation but until recently social anthropology has either underscored or disregarded the role of the ethnographer and the writing process. This inattention to the ethnographic process is based in the long held but now discarded belief that, ideally, ethnographic practise happens in the background of both the field and the text. Clifford's emphasis on role and process is vital because it forces ethnographic producers to question their own assumptions about their subjects, and it demands that ethnographers pursue reflexive and dialogical approaches to research and writing. This is not to suggest that ethnography is an egocentric act; rather, that

ethnographers produce texts where their own voices and values have been consciously incorporated into the account.

Clifford suggests that new paradigms in ethnography are associated with the collapse of previous concepts of “representation and...experience” (p: 2). This collapse has led to the questioning of the legitimacy of both modern and classical ethnographic texts. The classic fieldwork model of establishing ethnographic authority by living amongst a people for a limited period and capturing the entire knowledge base of their culture through the supposed detachment of participant observation and text production has now been challenged by the work of post-modern anthropologists.

The current emphasis on textual analysis of past works and on textual practises in general reflects post-modern concerns regarding culture as a series of power relations mediated through contested codes, the potential for cultural appropriation through the formal discourse of scientific authority, and criticisms regarding the validity of the scientific method in the field of social anthropology. To use Clifford’s language ethnography acts as the “invention” rather than the “representation” of culture (Clifford: 1986). This is not to suggest that ethnographies are inherently fabrications; rather, ethnographies are documents constructed upon contingent truths. Though a finished ethnography is a product of one’s invention it can still act to at least represent the partial truth about a culture. However, I would agree with the post-modern project that ethnographic texts should be considered as cultural artifacts that reveal as much about the ethnographer’s historic, social and artistic setting than the cultures they purport to explain.

Art and the Politics of Culture

Clifford's observations on collecting art (1988) and on Northwest Coast museums (1991) have influenced my own analysis. His 1991 piece, entitled **On Collecting Art and Culture**, is a critique of indigenous artifacts and cultural practises after they are relocated to museums. The work focusses on what Clifford calls the "art - culture system" (Clifford 1988: 215). This system refers to the ideological and institutional practises that provide the context and values for examining non-western works of art. The latter essay, entitled Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections, compliments his previous work; for as Clifford states, he "had become interested in the four museums while writing an essay on collecting in western museums and in anthropology" (Clifford 1991: 214). Both of these works are invaluable because in them Clifford contextualizes the history as well as the contemporary changing relationship between First Nations and state institutions such as museums. My own work attempts to build on Clifford's critique of identity construction through the process, production, and exhibition of art by examining this dynamic within the context of Nisga'a - State relations.

While researching the anthropology of art, I became influenced by Clifford's statement that treating "artifacts as fine art is currently one of the most effective ways to communicate cross-culturally a sense of quality, meaning, and importance" (Clifford 1991: 225). In fact, the emergence of the theoretical outline of this thesis was first developed after reading the following reference in Valda Blundell's New Directions in the Anthropological Study of Art:

"Clifford also notes that exhibiting cultural forms as 'fine art' can have very positive consequences. Despite the controversial nature of such exhibitionary practises, they can be sources of both 'native power' and

also economic rewards for the aboriginal peoples whose cultural forms are exhibited." (1991: Note 10, p. 251) Artefacts can provide ways to communicate cross-culturally a sense of quality, meaning, and importance in ways that do not "simply equate non-western and western aesthetic criteria" (1991: 225) (Blundell 1992: 19).

Howard Morphy, in The Anthropology of Art, also refers to Clifford in the statement that "art can be, par excellence, a tool of cultural relativism" (Morphy 1994: 648). Using this collection of quotes, I began to organize my field data into a concrete argument that would stress the "quality, meaning, and importance" of art but within what Blundell refers to as the context of "cultural politics (1992: 34); in other words, how art is a process of expressive forms that promote and contest political interests between and amongst social groups.

Clifford's analysis is refined in his later piece on Northwest Coast museums (1991). Clifford comments that his earlier work:

"ended by evoking several contestations of the art - culture system by resurgent native groups...these groups had been both playing and subverting the dominant art - culture game. Theirs were different, not separate, paths through modernity (no one escapes the market, technology, and the nation state). The repatriation of objects...seemed to be a striking example of how a dominant practise of collection and display has been turned to unanticipated ends. Master narrative of cultural disappearance and salvage could be replaced by stories of revival, remembrance, and struggle" (Clifford 1991: 214).

Clifford's analysis of the institutional practises of four British Columbia museums - University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, Royal British Columbia Museum, Kwagiulth Museum and Cultural Centre, and the U'Mista Cultural Centre - highlights the different discursive practices of state-controlled institutions (U.B.C and R.B.C.M.) versus First Nations controlled institutions (the cultural centres). Clifford historicizes the development of institutional practise by focussing on the social and political dimensions of State - First Nation relations in both the colonial and post-colonial eras. In his introduction, Clifford gets to the core of the struggle between the First Nations of the Northwest Coast and the state over the politics of self-determination:

"...many Northwest Coast communities have survived and resisted the violence visited on them since the mid-nineteenth century: devastating diseases, commercial and political domination, suppression of the potlatch, forced education in residential schools and by missionaries. Despite enormous damage to indigenous cultures and continuing economic and political inequality, many tribal groups and individuals have found ways to live separate from and in negotiation with the modern state. In the anthropological art museum milieus I frequented the political climate was charged in ways I had never felt in other metropolitan settings: New York, Chicago, Washington, Paris, London. On the Northwest Coast today, struggles over land claims, the repatriation of museum collections, and community constraints on scientific research are increasingly common. Indigenous artwork (carving, building, painting, printmaking, jewelry and blanket design) participating simultaneously in market and museum networks and in the tribal and political contexts, is a leading public manifestation of cultural vitality. A recurring pressure and critique - the threat of at least

public embarrassment, and even of legal intervention - is felt by anthropologists and museum curators concerned with ancient and modern Northwest Coast Indian traditions" (1991: 215).

This statement reverberates to the core of my own work. In focusing on the Nisga'a and their totem poles, other questions about post-contact cultural change, self-determination, land rights, art as a process for achieving identity, the production of art for internal versus external use, and the threats of appropriation by anthropologists and curators who document, purchase and display the art and culture of Northwest Coast peoples are clearly questions that those of us now working in the field need to address.

I would suggest that contemporary discourses regarding Northwest Coast art and culture are so interwoven with politics and history that their relational dimensions must be studied in order to understand the field. For example, Northwest Coast First Nations have negotiated relationships with state institutions such as the Royal British Columbia Museum, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, and as a result, sensitive questions of artefact display and ownership of these institutions' collections are reforming relations between these institutions and First Nations. These negotiations include museum commissions of works by contemporary First Nations artists, First Nations involvement in the design and opening of exhibitions, the use of museums as sites for First Nations cultural and political activities, and in the case of the government-controlled R.B.C.M. and C.M.C., a willingness to transfer some artefacts to the Nisga'a as part of a land claim settlement.

The repatriation agenda of First Nations is based on political and moral claims for the return of sacred treasures to their original territories. The repatriation negotiations between First Nations and the state over museum-controlled artifacts involves not only

rights of ownership to property but also struggles about the political rights of First Nations to represent their own identities and to reclaim their histories from others. This agenda emphasizes the dynamic rather than the static nature of Northwest Coast culture. This quality of dynamism is evident in the discourse First Nations use in their cultural and political struggles. First Nations prefer the terms "cultural centres" and "cultural objects" over the terms "museums" and "artifacts"; the former emphasize vitality and currency while the latter connote stasis and history. Northwest Coast First Nations, by asserting that cultural objects are associated with the community and used for specific ceremonies, are effectively creating new and powerful discourses on art, culture, politics and history.

Discourses on the Anthropology of Art

Essentially, Northwest Coast cultural ceremonies and cultural centres act to reframe objects and texts about the First Nations; in so doing, the First Nations are redefining their relations with others. This is especially evident in contemporary totem pole raising ceremonies. While such ceremonies are primarily an internal discourse to signify cultural and political rights, they also implicitly challenge the dominant culture's discourse about First Nations' socially subordinate and marginalized position. As indicated in the lengthy quote by Clifford, contemporary First Nations people of the Northwest Coast are products of a history that included a series of epidemics - the most serious being the small pox attack of 1862 that killed one-third of coastal British Columbia's First Nations population, the imposition of the reserve system without treaties in the 1880's, the criminalization of the potlatch and all other cultural ceremonies between 1884 and 1951, and religious and educational coercion by missionaries from the turn of the century through to the 1960's (Raunet: 1984). Totem pole raising ceremonies are examples of

what Clifford refers to as expressive “ways to live separate from and in negotiation with the modern state” (Clifford 1991: 214). In this context, totem pole raisings can be interpreted as sites for articulating and negotiating cultural and political rights within the nation and externally with other First Nations, the non-aboriginal population, and the state.

Blundell’s text is a useful guide for studying the anthropology of art. Her work demonstrates an understanding of cultural politics and historicizes past anthropology of art debates. Blundell provides my work with context and boundaries for examining the anthropology of art when she writes:

“Importantly, for anthropologists the making and use of art never occurs in a vacuum but within a wider cultural context where it both influences and is influenced by other aspects of culture (as a way of life). Anthropologists argue that we must always view (or listen to, or feel, or taste) art within this broader context. Art must also be related to the technological, economic, and political aspects of a group’s way of life. And, finally, art must be defined cross-culturally not solely in terms of the West” (1992: 9).

Blundell stresses the importance of viewing art holistically within a broad cultural context, the necessity of understanding aesthetic principles, and the value of a cross-cultural perspective; as such, Blundell captures both the essence of the anthropology of art and defines a method for anthropologists to view expressive forms.

Howard Morphy writes about aesthetics, definitions of art and anthropology, applying concepts of art cross-culturally, form and function, and representational systems and style (1994). Morphy’s definitions of art and anthropology, his illumination of cross-cultural

concepts, and his understanding of aesthetics are worth exploring. I concur with Morphy when he writes that anthropologists of art must problematize how art is to be defined. Problems with the definition of art are a result of the attempts early in the development of the study to apply western concepts of art and culture to non-western cultures. Essentially, the evolutionist model that shows culture progressing through successive stages culminating with the western tradition dominated the discourse of anthropology through the nineteenth century, and any non-western cultural practises that did not fall into the western categories such as art, history and religion were ignored. As a result, western studies of non-western culture were generally limited in scope and reinforced the ethnocentric position that non-western peoples lacked what was thought of as art-based cultures. It is in this historical context that Morphy writes about the distancing effect of early anthropology; he writes that art "can also be used today as a rhetorical device to include them within a world culture of people who are equally civilized. "Art can be, par excellence, a tool of cultural relativism" (Clifford 1991: 241 and Morphy: 648). This strategy can be used in contemporary field work to establish that aesthetic values are relativistic and global in nature, and to review the objects, archives and published data so that new perspectives of cultural understanding may be developed.

Morphy's approach in defining art for anthropology establishes the cross-cultural position that in order to analyze and understand cultural objects, the meaning of those objects must be framed in relation to the producing culture (Morphy: 653). He cautions against ethnocentrism when he writes:

"The anthropology of art is not the study of objects of other cultures that Europeans have accepted as belonging to their category 'art'. If the anthropology of art is to make a useful contribution, then it must be used by virtue of a concept of art that is sufficiently open to allow the

analysis of objects from other cultures on their own terms, while at the same time, perhaps, helping to identify categories of objects in other cultures that, though not identical with the European category of art objects, overlap with it to a certain extent" (Morphy: 655).

This approach of analyzing the meaning of objects within the context of the producing cultures is valuable for it permits us to understand the aesthetic values as well as the associated interpretations of cultural forms from the point of view of its producers. Morphy writes "the explanation of the differences between different cultures' way of seeing should...be the primary task of the anthropology of aesthetics" (Morphy: 672). The task of art anthropologists is to achieve a broader understanding of the cultures of others through the process of art. In order to do this, art anthropologists must first suspend their own definitions and categories of art and learn the aesthetic codes and values of others - this requires an opening of the senses as well as the intellect - and then articulating those aesthetic values within the broader social values of the producing culture.

One goal of this work is to expand on Morphy's statement that:

"if one can teach people to interpret and value the properties of the objects of another culture according to the aesthetics of that culture, then one may provide a powerful insight into that world, and into what it feels like to be a member of it" (p. 673).

I would agree with Morphy that the study of form provides us with what he calls a "point of entry" (p. 662) for understanding art and the cultural processes of their producers. For example, the study of art and form provides an ideal strategy for analyzing connected social processes and structures of groups. The second goal of this work is to understand

such social processes in action. I am going to analyze totem pole art in relation to Morphy's statement that:

an analysis of art may be an excellent way to approach the question of individual and group identity, revealing how people compete with one another at one level and express common identity at another (p. 662).

However, such a strategy requires that studies of form be integrated with knowledge of function and meaning within the context of the producing culture. The explaining of form through the function of objects such as totem poles allows the anthropologist of art to ask, for example, what the totem pole represents, what the totem pole does, and what its effects are to the people who make and raise the totem pole. By focussing on these cultural processes the anthropologist of art can learn more about the ideology, spirituality, and if you will, the world view of those peoples.

Morphy points out that the anthropology of art has been enriched by a growing interest in material culture and by an interest in the meanings of signs and symbols (p. 659). He analyzes this process as:

"the interest in how symbols were organized and how they encoded meaning, rather than in the meaning themselves, which closed the gap between our anthropology of religion, joined content with form, and projected a new set of issues into centre stage" (p. 659).

The contemporary anthropologist of art has to answer questions about how art can function as a system of communication that creates meaning, how the art process orders social relationships, and how art creates collective representations of, and for, social groups. Because systems of meaning and communication are central in the anthropology of art, anthropologists of art must focus on the ways that art encodes, or represents,

meanings. Specifically, anthropologists of art doing fieldwork must focus on the subject of art as a system of signification.

Blundell suggests that the field of cultural studies offers new methods of analyzing art forms (Blundell, 1992: 32-34). Cultural studies shares with anthropology common concepts, including viewing culture as an encompassing part of everyday life and understanding that the arts must be analyzed within a broader social context. Cultural studies also shares semiology's interpretation of art forms as signifying devices. Cultural studies critiques culture as a process of construction and contestation (p. 33). This more dynamic approach emphasizes the conflicts and contradictions associated with how art is produced and contested in societies. This analysis of "cultural politics" is described by Blundell as how:

"(meanings) about the world are encoded in art forms, and so art is not merely a reflection of ideas originating elsewhere in society but a major means whereby these ideas are constructed and reproduced. In particular, meanings encoded in art often promote the interests of dominant groups in a society, but art is also a means (or a site/sight) whereby the ideas of dominant groups in a society can be resisted or negotiated by subordinate groups" (p. 34).

The cultural studies model provides a sound theoretical orientation for analyzing the anthropology of art and, more specifically, for understanding the making and raising of totem poles. In this case, cultural studies critiques the dialectical nature of "cultural politics" by analyzing sites/sights as places where meanings of art are contested and negotiated between and amongst social groups. Cultural studies emphasizes the historically specific development of relations of domination and subordination in

societies. This is especially relevant to my thesis because relations between First Nations and nation states typify unequal power relations. Cultural studies also posits that ideas associated with aesthetic forms are never neutral or passive; rather, aesthetic ideas embody ideological values. As a consequence, aesthetic forms become social forums where producers and viewers contest their meanings in societies. Blundell discusses this dialectical and ideological nature of art when she writes that cultural studies should:

"make a link between art and political processes of domination...but such studies also take into account the utility of art processes of resistance: they show how subordinated peoples advance their own claims through art and how they challenge the legitimacy of dominant ideas and advocate alternative ways of experiencing - and acting in the world" (p. 39-40).

This statement resounds deeply in the discourse of anthropology because anthropology was established and developed in the context of colonization and domination. The recent political and cultural debates about the rights of indigenous peoples to protect their ethnicity and territories through policies of self-determination can be interpreted as new political discourses and acts of empowerment against the forces of the state. It is in the context of these changing social relations between First Nations and the state of Canada that what Blundell refers to as discursive "transformative practises" are being created (p. 62). Those involved in the discourse between First Nations and the state includes those who write on the subject of First Nations and those who display their art in museum and galleries. I would agree with Blundell when she suggests that for the field of study to be relevant,

"We need a language in the anthropology of art that can acknowledge the histories of transformation in aboriginal communities and the dynamic nature of the forms by which their members wish to be distinguished. We

need discursive practises that can reflect the way in which traditions, including aesthetic ones, are always processes of cultural production in action...rather than transcendent forms frozen in time" (p. 62).

Outlining the Anthropology and Art of the Field Region

The analysis offered in this thesis has also been shaped by the ethnographic contributions of Marjorie Halpin (1973, 1994), John Cove (1982, 1987) and James McDonald (1985, 1995). These anthropologists have all undertaken extensive fieldwork on the Northwest Coast. All have pursued Northwest Coast subjects as part of their doctoral degrees at the University of British Columbia, and the dissertation topics of both Halpin and McDonald address the same ethnocultural region as my own work. Their contributions have been invaluable for analyzing the relations between social organization and the art, mythology, cosmology, and the political economy of this particular region.

I have also read three doctoral dissertations as part of the literature review. I will comment firstly on the relevance of Stephen McNeary's dissertation, Where Fire Came Down: Social and Economic Life of the Niska, Bryn Mawr College, 1976. McNeary's dissertation is the only one written on the Nisga'a. His work focusses on their traditional social and economic life. It analyzes Nisga'a social structure and it describes how the Nisga'a traditionally exploited their territory. While his work provides some solid data and a context for analyzing Nisga'a society, it is theoretically limited for my purposes by his ecological interpretation. My work emphasizes different topics. He devotes little space to the subject of totem poles, and concentrates on the production of material culture for subsistence purposes. However, he does provide some insight to art making and to

the role and function of Nisga'a artists in their society. He describes these roles and functions in the context of skills acquired by specialists:

"There were no full time professions...shamans and artists, however, often receive very substantial payments for their work, and the most famous spent a great deal of their time practising their specialty. An artist who was engaged in a long term project, such as the production of (sic) totem pole, might be housed and fed for a considerable period by his employer...Any craftsman was called Gwixjap, 'He who makes'...It was the responsibility of the father's house to provide the memorial totem pole for a chief...The pay which a craftsman received was called Tgo'o...Today, the artists who are best remembered are the great totem pole carvers, reflecting the high development of this art among the Niska" (McNeary: 156-157).

My own work explores in more detail the relationship between chiefs, artists and totem pole production.

Of much greater relevance for my research is Marjorie Halpin's thesis, The Tsimshian Crest System: A Study Based Upon Museum Specimens and the Marius Barbeau and William Beynon Field Notes, University of British Columbia, 1973. Halpin's work analyzes the important field work contributions of Marius Barbeau (1883-1969) and William Beynon (1888-1958), both of whom spent much of their professional lives gathering Tsimshian-related data. Barbeau, a staff anthropologist with the National Museum of Canada (now the Canadian Museum of Civilization), began his fieldwork in the region in 1914. In the field, he met Beynon, a man of Nisga'a and British descent who would eventually become a Chief of the Wolf Clan, and engaged him in anthropological field work on behalf of the museum. Together, they collected texts and

material objects over a forty-three year period of field work. Their collections include information on village histories, family histories, personal names, territories and crests of the Tsimshian, Nisga'a and Gitksan peoples. Most importantly, they recorded the ada'awk, or traditional histories, of families. These ada'awk are sacred stories of origin that explain the rights of chiefs and their families to possess crests and territories. Their field notes are now on deposit in the Salle Barbeau of the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Halpin's thesis is a study of that data and it focusses on some 750 named crests and some 1,600 material objects associated with those crests. The crest system refers to visual symbols exclusively owned by chiefs and their families and used to express their social and economic rights in public forums such as feasts. A knowledge of the ada'awk system is necessary for understanding the specific property rights of groups to claim names, crests, territories and other powers as their own. A knowledge of how groups use crest representations on objects such as feast regalia, house fronts, and totem poles provides an understanding of how visual symbols act to order the social and spiritual worlds of these peoples. While Halpin's classic structural approach to her data about Tsimshian culture is different from my own, her decision to contextualize that data in the anthropology of art is critical to my work. Halpin's systematizing of the crest data on the Nisga'a and on the village of Gitwinksihlkw was particularly useful. In addition, my work with the Barbeau-Beynon notes on subjects such as the history, territories, and totem poles of Gitwinksihlkw was contextualized and clarified by concepts in Halpin's dissertation.

The third thesis reviewed was James McDonald's, Trying to Make a Life: The Historical Political Economy of Kitsumkalum, University of British Columbia, 1985. His work is a case study of the relations between the Tsimshian people of the village of Kitsumkalum,

located in the area of the middle Skeena River Valley, and the state. His analysis is in the Canadian tradition of neo-Marxist political economy, and as such, focusses on the relations between economic processes, political systems and political actions of the Tsimshian in the Canadian state. While my work focusses on a different village from another First Nation (Kitsumkalum and Gitwinksihlkw are approximately 120 kilometres apart), the larger questions he raises about the First Nations-State relationship of subordination and domination illuminate First Nations' resistance and accomodation of the state through the colonial and post-colonial period. McDonald's documentation of the transformation of First Nations property into state property, state regulation of First Nations life through legislation, and state facilitation of a market economy in the region provides a political critique for exploring the effects of colonialization and the recent efforts by First Nations to negotiate equal relations with the state.

John Cove's field work with the Gitksan Nation and his writings on subjects such as the relationships between their social organization, mythology, and traditional concepts of land ownership have been useful to me. During his work with the Gitksan (1978 - 1987), he studied how the ada'awk system signifies and mediates traditional social structure, land ownership, and cosmology. I did similar work with the Nisga'a Tribal Council between 1982 -1984. My work was first influenced by Cove's paper "The Gitksan Traditional Concept of Land Ownership" (1982). In this essay, Cove comments that recent anthropological research on the Northwest Coast has clustered around two goals: one cluster tries to answer applied questions of aboriginal land claims while the other cluster concentrates on symbolic systems. He states that these two orientations of research could be mutually supportive, and that such a research combination would allow for a greater understanding of different models. For example, the Gitksan have tried to establish in Canadian courts the laws concerning property rights, land use and land

ownership systems that flow from their ada'awk. Using totem pole raisings as an example, Cove refers to Wilson Duff when he states:

"Depicted on totem poles, there is another complete statement of acquired power and their origins. This representation provided a connection between a house and its territory. Placing a totem pole in the ground was, in part, a means of putting a house's powers into it, acting as a 'deed' to a territory (Duff 1959: 12). A house without territory would not erect totem poles, since the components of its being did not exist" (Cove 1982: 236).

For the purposes of my study, contemporary totem pole raisings are sites/sights of "cultural politics"; it is in these sites/sights that claims to power and lands are advanced through a discourse that articulates First Nations' autonomy through relevant but ancient social practises. It is by means of such unique Northwest Coast symbolic systems - the telling of ada'awk, the raising of totem poles, the holding of feasts - that the Northwest Coast culture is promoted while it simultaneously challenges, and in some cases subverts the hegemonic power of the state.

Cove's Shattered Images: Dialogues and Meditations on Tsimshian Narratives (1987) is a phenomenological analysis of the ada'awk collected by Barbeau and Beynon. I was immediately interested in this text as it is the only published source, other than articles, that concretely analyzes the Tsimshian mythology collected by Barbeau and Beynon. I used Shattered Images' second chapter, "The Totemic Vision", and its subchapter, "Crests and Powers" (pp. 112-125), in order to analyze how the phenomena of crests and powers flow from the ada'awk and become encoded through totem poles. In "The Totemic Vision" Cove describes one ada'awk about the power of totem poles:

"The history of the totem pole Ha-Ne-Lal-Qaq states: They had a ceremony and put their power on that river and that land, which meant it belonged to them..." (Duff 1959: 23). Duff (1959: 12) analyzes this statement and concludes that totem poles function like "deeds" in our legal system. When they are put into the ground, they assert a connection between a house and specific territories. Barbeau (n.d.: 16) further argues that a house without territories will not erect totem poles" (Cove 1987: 119).

Two recent essays by Marjorie Halpin (1994) and James McDonald (1995) have also influenced the theoretical orientation of my study. Halpin's essay, "A Critique of the Boasian Paradigm for Northwest Coast Art", and McDonald's "Building a Moral Community: Tsimshian Potlatching, Implicit Knowledge and Everyday Experiences", each contribute to contemporary discourses of art and culture on the Northwest Coast. Halpin's article challenges Boas' interpretation of Northwest Coast art and the hegemonic discourse that he established. Specifically, Halpin notes that "of paramount importance in my analysis is the relationship between crest art and the oral tradition that still gives it meaning, a relationship that Boas did not understand" (1994: 6.) Her criticism of Boas is based on his comprehension of Northwest Coast art as a system of images representing natural animals only, and that his assumption that these images could be analyzed independently of other data such as the *ada'awk* (p. 6-9). Halpin asserts that:

"by separating art from its stories, Boas and his followers separated art from the community context which gave it meaning and life, and finally, obscured the connection between art and the land which, whether intentional or not, was part of the colonial enterprise of separating natives from their lands" (p. 13).

Halpin further remarks that Boas' "system of rules about Northwest Coast art...permitted him and successive generation of anthropologists to write and lecture about it without connecting it to the family stories told about it in the *native context* (her emphasis)" (p. 13). I agree with Halpin's assessment of the impact of Boas' anthropological study. The contextualizing of a First Nations connection between its art forms and family stories is precisely the primary fieldwork objective of my study. My study, like Halpin's, eschews the method of interpreting First Nations art through a system of formal principles only. The point of my study, and Halpin's, is that to understand Tsimshian art it must be analyzed as part of the crest/ada'awk/territory relationship; specifically, we must examine the ada'awk as an expression of the right by chiefs and their houses to own crests and lands (p. 10-13). Halpin emphasizes the importance of this relationship when she writes "the telling of the Adaawk at a potlatch validates the rights to claim and display the crests - and claim the lands - associated with it. In the shorthand of ritual action, crests become visual symbols of the economic resources of the group" (p. 11). Halpin adds that "crest display on the Northwest Coast occurs during the potlatch context and is about property rights" (p. 11).

My strategy, as was Halpin's, was to analyze the Barbeau-Beynon fieldnotes for evidence linking the Nisga'a's crest/history/territory relationships. This approach yielded information that clarified the rights of specific families to use certain crests and, appropriately, developed a cultural context for studying the meaning of crest symbols used in the art. Next, my study called for me to go into the field to check the Barbeau-Beynon data for errors, consistency and contemporary continuity. I discovered that working with the community's people, in conjunction with archival data, brought vitality to my work. My fieldwork brought to mind Halpin's conclusion that:

"Meanings of art are contextual and communicate with those who are co-cultural with its creators. As scholars, we can grasp those meanings to the extent that we grasp that context. Our ability to be 'experts' on Northwest Coast art is necessarily considerably diminished under this mandate, for it can no longer be a function of learning and applying simple rules to complex phenomena" (p. 13).

McDonald's paper (1995) attempts to explain how consciousness socially shapes and reshapes ideas and structures the relations of the Tsimshian people of Kitsumkalum. He devotes considerable attention to questions of the formation of social ideas within the context of what he refers to as the "cultural revival" (p. 125) of the Tsimshian. He writes that the:

"focus of the paper is not on the psychology of ideas, but on the middle ground between these two fundamental anthropological concerns: the interrelations between ideas and society and the creation of a social reality" (1995: 125). He analyzes the Tsimshian's "issues of consciousness in the context of redefining the relationship between community structures and symbolic structures so as to regain some of the power to control their own lives that was lost during colonialization" (p. 125-126).

There is a tremendous value in analyzing cultural practises within a materialist approach.

As McDonald states, his theoretical stance:

"...endeavours to place ideas in the context of history and colonial capitalism. These materialist analyses treat ideology as part of a social process structured by economic and political inequality and domination, as well as by linkages between various cultural orders that

exist in a global but unevenly developing social world. Culture is a text that is *being* (his emphasis) written" (p. 126).

He interprets culture as a text which is being written as opposed to a text which has *already* (his emphasis) been written. McDonald cites Bourdieu in that a text which is being written emphasizes collective ideas as ongoing products of struggle while an already-written text emphasizes ideas as products of individual experience within already established social structures. As McDonald points out, an ideational approach is suspect because it usually avoids critiques of power relations (p. 126). McDonald's materialist approach to ethnographic data permits him to see the interrelationship between Tsimshian culture, history and power; consequently, he relates how colonial and post-colonial social formations are presently undergoing processes of decolonialization (p. 126-127).

The theoretical orientation of my own work shares McDonald's materialist approach. Our approaches analyze issues of cultural revival within the greater context of self-government, economic development, and land claims initiatives that First Nations are now pursuing. I especially support McDonald's attempt to demonstrate the relationship between First Nations ideas of imagining personal selfhood and community sovereignty in conjunction with the political debates that have been just described. This strategy of linking personal and community development aspirations through negotiations with the nation state requires an analysis that articulates the historically specific development of a group in relation to state legislation that sought to control First Nations people and their lands.

McDonald's analysis of feasting "as an instrument of knowledge...for the construction of social reality" (p. 134) provides an ideal framework for examining totem pole raising

feasts. His model has three points: 1) it treats feasts as the formation of common "heritage practises"; 2) these practises allow people "to act as Tsimshian"; 3) this behaviour allows the Tsimshian to "generate further appropriate practises..." (p. 134). My emphasis on the feasting component of totem pole raisings (the first two points of McDonald's model) developed out of my interest in the articulation of heritage practises as a form of identity construction designed to counter cultural assimilation and the hegemonic power of the state.

McDonald illuminates the third point of his model of appropriate practise and cultural revival by suggesting:

"that feasting practises tend both to develop a compatibility with the social conditions that are appropriate for feasting and to respond to the stimulus of those social conditions" (p. 137).

The pole I studied was the first to be raised in the community of Gitwinksihlkw in nearly 100 years. While two other contemporary totem poles had been raised in neighbouring Nisga'a communities in 1976 and 1989, there had been no totem pole raising feasts for three generations. Contemporary pole raisings can be examined within the context of changing historical conditions, as opposed to "non-traditional" social activities. I would suggest that the dialogues of all post-contact Northwest Coast feasts have been affected by colonialism, and that post-colonial dialogues represent both statements of cultural and political autonomy and struggles to overcome the state's suppression of cultural practises. Finally, I would agree with McDonald that while feasting cannot challenge the authority of the state, feasting produces discourse that can challenge the hegemony of state practises.

III

THE NISGA'A OF GITWINKSIHLKW: A PEOPLE AND THEIR TOTEM POLE

Figure 1: Map of the Traditional Territory of the Nisga'a Nation

Source: Nisga'a: People of the Nass River

A Social and Economic Profile of the Community

In order to answer the questions of why this totem pole was raised and what are its formations of meanings for those who have raised it, it is first essential to form contexts and boundaries for understanding the social forces that have returned the Nisga'a to the carving and raising of totem poles. Specifically, it is necessary to express the values of the Nisga'a parent culture tradition and to establish it as the motivation for cultural practices such as feasts, or potlatches, and for its perpetuation of social institutions that produce chiefs and artists. Such an approach permits an ideological analysis of the cultural values and practises of a people.

In the late 1980's, the chiefs of the Nisga'a village of Gitwinksihlkw commissioned through their Band Council the carving of a totem pole for the village. This was a significant community undertaking as no totem pole had been raised in their community in nearly a century. All that remained in the memories of elders was the destruction of some of their village poles by missionaries in 1917 and the sale and removal of their remaining poles to the National Museum of Man in 1929. The carving and raising of contemporary Nisga'a can be interpreted as statements of cultural autonomy and survival by a people who have resisted colonialist policies of social and economic destruction. One of the chiefs of Gitwinksihlkw, a totem pole carver of the Ganada p'deck, or Raven Clan, named Hlayim Wil, or Chester Moore, describes the importance of raising a contemporary totem pole as a reclamation of Nisga'a spirituality from the Christian missionary period (Terrace Standard: October 28, 1992). It is the contention of this thesis that the carving and raising of poles are expressions of decolonization as such acts create social contexts and boundaries for expressing Nisga'a concepts of authority and responsibility that are distinguishable from, as well as counter to, the authority structures

of western state institutions that have attempted to dominate the lives of First Nations people.

The village of Gitwinksihlkw is the smallest of the four Nisga'a communities. Census data from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs 1989 Indian register lists 273 Gitwinksihlkw band members. The three other Nisga'a communities each have over 1,000, for a total of 4,078 Nisga'a, as of 1989. But the Nisga'a contend that their membership is around 6,000 people. (Nisga'a Tribal Council: 1992a). Federal data do not reflect the actual numbers of people living in the villages. For example, while there are 273 Gitwinksihlkw registered band members, around 200 people live in the village. The others live on other reserves or in towns and cities.

Table I	
Nisga'a Population	
Gitlaxdamiks	1,314
Gitwinksihlkw	273
Kincolith	1,400
Lakalzap	<u>1,091</u>
TOTAL	4,078

Data from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs 1989 Indian Registry.

Source: British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, the Aboriginal peoples of British Columbia: A Profile.

The village of Gitwinksihlkw is a relatively isolated community. The village is connected to Gitlaxdamiks, Lakalzap and Terrace, by a gravel road network. The roads of the Nass Valley were established in the late 1950's for the forestry industry (Raunet 1984: 181). The road was built primarily to transport old growth timber for processing in Terrace area saw mills 110 kilometers away (Marchak 1983: 325-347). Access into Gitwinksihlkw remains difficult because of its location on the north side of the Nass River opposite the road network. Unfortunately, no bridge was built to link the village to the road. People drive to a site across from the village but boats are required to move people and materials across to the village. In 1969, a foot suspension bridge was built to span the canyon over the Nass River (Inglis, Hudson, B.R. Rigsby, B. Rigsby 1990: 289). This bridge allows for greater personal access into the village but heavy materials such as building supplies can only be brought into the village by barge. Concerns over personal safety have recently prompted the Government of British Columbia to build a one-lane vehicle bridge into the village at a cost of \$4.3 million. This bridge was opened on October 16, 1995.

The scenic beauty of the drive to Gitwinksihlkw is an enticement to travel the highway. The road cuts through the Kitimat and Coast Mountain Ranges and as you approach the Nass Valley the area broadens out providing a vista from valley bottom to mountain tops. Unfortunately, many of the mountainsides have been scarred as a result of clearcut logging. The sighting of wild life such as bears, moose, ravens and eagles is common. The most spectacular stretch of the highway is the final 25 kilometers into the village. The highway is over a lava bed from a volcano that erupted around 250 years ago. The entire area is a flat plain of lichen covered molten lava rock with the occasional small shrubs surviving in whatever soil remains. The site of Gitwinksihlkw is over a canyon that was shaped by the lava flow, hence its other name of Canyon City.

There is a sign at the highway turn off that says "Welcome to Gitwinksihlkw." The sign is a Nisga'a painting by Sim'oogit Hlayim Wil. The subject matter of the welcome sign are the animals representing the four crests of the Nisga'a - the Eagle, the Wolf, the Killerwhale and the Raven - surrounded by lizards. The lizard, or the salamander, represents the time before the volcano eruption when the site was a small lake filled with salamanders. The lake was covered over by the lava flow but out of respect the Nisga'a who settled on the site refer to the village as Gitwinksihlkw—The People of the Place of Lizards. There are around 45 dwellings in the village, and the majority of those houses are relatively new. There are a few older wooden-built houses but the newer residences with their vinyl sidings have a suburban appearance. The village also has its own band office, a new elementary school, a community hall, a Salvation Army church, and a carving shed. The carving shed is located next to the old Salvation Army church which was built in 1927.

The Gitwinksihlkw Band is responsible for administering village by-laws and for carrying out other services as prescribed under the Indian Act. An elected chief and council and Band Council employees are responsible for maintaining community services that include social and educational programmes and infrastructure operations. The major employers in Gitwinksihlkw are the band council, the school, and a Nisga'a operated logging business called Simgan Industries. Simgan Industries holds the cutting rights of a small area near the village. Some Gitwinksihlkw peoples also work in the nearby larger village of Gitlakdamiks. The major employers there are the Tribal Council, the School Board, and the Health Board. Every one of these agencies is operated by the Nisga'a through agreements with the federal and provincial governments. Also, there is employment in the commercial fishery sector and in the forest industry. Unfortunately, there has been a continuing decline in resource sector employment caused by decimation

of salmon stocks and liquidation of old growth forests (Nisga'a Tribal Council: 1992a).

The Nisga'a economy is unevenly developed. While there is a core of employed Nisga'a in a wide variety of occupations, the major local employers are in the quasi public sector. The rate of unemployment among the Nisga'a living in the Nass Valley is 80%. This distorted economy is based in state policy which alienated the Nisga'a property rights over their traditional territories. The devastation of the territory has created both an economic as well as ecological crises in the area. The Nisga'a estimate that over 250 forestry jobs have been eliminated in the Nass Valley over the past 15 years. Nisga'a research indicates that over 36,000 hectares of the Lower Nass have not been properly reforested. Some clearcuts in the Upper Nass are as great as 6,000 hectares. Salmon runs that were once estimated at 2.5 million fish now average less than 1 million. A total of 68 million grams of gold, 2,268 million grams of silver, 389 million kilograms of copper, 38 million kilograms of lead, 24.4 million kilograms of molybdenum concentrate and 13.6 million kilograms of zinc have been extracted from the territory (Nisga'a Tribal Council: 1992a). The total value of natural resources extracted from the territory has been estimated between \$2 billion and \$4 billion. (Nisga'a Tribal Council). The Nisga'a position is that the costs on the state of the land far outweigh the benefits of seasonal wage labour for some.

Perhaps the greatest crisis facing the Nisga'a is social in nature. Sim'oogit Hlayim Wil's statement of spiritual reclamation can be interpreted as a struggle of moral responsibility under present social and economic circumstances. The Nisga'a rationale for a land claim settlement is the creation of social as well as economic empowerment. The Nisga'a believe that many of its citizens living off-reserve would return home should greater

economic opportunity be made available through Nisga'a operated industries. A social agenda is also necessary to overcome cycles of abuse. The community of Gitwinksihlkw is aware of its social problems. In some respects it is no different from any other community. What distinguishes smaller and inter-related communities from others is its level of awareness regarding the health of that community. What is most evident in village events such as a totem pole raising is the exhilaration created by a people's pride of their community and culture. Public events are not replacements for overcoming personal problems, but they create self-esteem and form the basis of a social solidarity amongst a people.

The Land Question

The greatest source of social strength for the Nisga'a is their resolve to achieve a just and honourable settlement of the land question. The land question is the Nisga'a term for their claim to their traditional territory in the Nass River Valley. The Nisga'a specifically refer to this struggle as a "question" rather than as a "claim" for they say, "How can one claim what one has never surrendered?" The land struggle provides a social and political context for promoting Nisga'a values of autonomy and nationhood. The Nisga'a land committee was established in 1890 and it was the first of its kind in Canada (Nisga'a 1993: 136).

The political struggles between the Nisga'a and the state originate with the formation of the colony of British Columbia in 1858. The colonial government chose not to treaty land settlements with the First Nations prior to emigration by newcomers. When British Columbia entered into the confederation of Canada in 1871, under the Terms of Union all

aboriginal matters passed from the local government to the federal office of the secretary of state. Also, under this act the trusteeship and management of lands reserved for First Nations was assumed by the government of Canada. The provincial government was granted jurisdiction and authority over all matters regarding land and natural resources in the province. The province was only required to convey lands needed by the federal government to implement the reserve lands policy over First Nations (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs undated: 3). Effectively, the Terms of Union separated the First Nations of British Columbia from their territories.

The federal government consolidated its previous legislation regarding First Nations with the creation of the Indian Act of 1876. The act defines the legal status of aboriginal peoples and lands in the nation state of Canada. The act is best understood as another instrument of colonization. As to the effects of the act on their ancestors, the Nisga'a state:

"The Indian Act denied aboriginal and treaty rights, denied natives the right to vote and denied them basic civil rights while confining them to tiny reserves. In 1884 the Act was amended to outlaw the feasting ceremonies which had recognized the succession of chiefs and the transfer of cultural property and territory. Totem poles were destroyed and native leaders were sent to jail for heathen practises" (Nisga'a 1992: no page number given).

The Nisga'a have an important story about the land question which they tell their people and their guests. The story is recited by Rod Robinson, Chief Minesque of the Laxsgiik, and a long time participant in the contemporary land struggle. This story describes a

conversation in 1886 between Chief Sgat'iin, the highest ranking chief amongst the Laxibuu (Wolf Clan) and a noted totem pole carver, and the government surveyors who had attempted to plot out reserve lands.

"The surveyors told him they were going to give us land, and the chief asked how he could give us land that was already ours. 'These are our mountains and our rivers,' Chief Sgat'iin said" (Nisga'a 1993: 11).

In this confrontation Sgat'iin informed the surveyors that the land belonged to the Nisga'a and not to the Queen. The surveyors were then ordered to leave the Nass Valley. The Nisga'a describe the incident in the following way:

"Chief Israel Sgat'iin banished the first surveyors sent to carve up Nisga'a territory. But he couldn't stem the tide of repressive legislation" (Nisga'a 1992: no page number given).

On September 3, 1887, Indian Reserve Commissioner Peter O'Reilly visited the village of Gitwinksihlkw. He was told by their speaker Chief Tsebasa, another famous totem pole carver, that the Nisga'a chiefs owned the Nass River Valley and that they objected to the Indian Act and the reserve system. O'Reilly's correspondence states, "I remained here several hours and explained fully the mistake that they were making" (Raunet: 100). Shortly afterwards, the reserve allocations were finalized. In total, the Nisga'a received 76 square kilometers of a territory consisting of 24,862 square kilometers. The state now controlled 99.5% of Nisga'a territory while also maintaining control over the Nisga'a people on their reserve lands.

The Nisga'a land committee of 1890 was formed to lobby for land rights and legislative changes under the Indian Act. Politically, the land question provides the central organizing theme for Nisga'a relations with the state. The ideology of Nisga'a ancestors

having never surrendered their land title provides the moral and social solidarity of the struggle from generation to generation. Internally, the land question promotes concepts of cultural integrity and outwardly the struggle exemplifies Nisga'a concepts of a legitimate as well as patient political institution pursuing issues of social and economic justice.

The Nisga'a land committee experienced few gains between 1890 and 1973. While the land committee did send a petition to the British Privy Council in 1913 to resolve the land question, the council refused to hear the case as it believed the Nisga'a first required approval from the government of Canada. Later, in a significant response by the state, the Indian Act was amended in 1927 to prohibit all First Nations people from organizing or even discussing claims. It became a criminal offense to promote land claims in Canada between 1927 and 1951. In 1951, in response to social pressure, the Indian Act was amended to permit the legal reinstatement of the Potlatch and land rights causes. Four years later, the Nisga'a land committee was re-established as the Nisga'a Tribal Council.

The greatest legal victory to date of the Nisga'a Tribal Council was its 1973 Supreme Court of Canada split decision on the rights of the Nisga'a to claim aboriginal title to the lands and waters of the Nass Valley. This decision, known as *Calder vs. The Queen*, as Frank Calder was the president of the Tribal Council, began as a legal action against the province of British Columbia over the Nisga'a claim that they had never surrendered title to the lands where they lived. At first, the Nisga'a entered the Supreme Court of British Columbia. They lost their case at that court. They then went to the appeal court, the highest court in the province, and lost again. In 1971, the Nisga'a case was heard in the Supreme Court of Canada. In this ruling, six of seven Justices ruled that the Nisga'a had aboriginal title initially. Three of the Justices concluded that the Nisga'a retained their title to the land and three others ruled that their title had been extinguished as a result of

colonial and federal statutes. The remaining justice ruled against the Nisga'a on a technicality. While the result of *Calder vs The Queen* appeared inconclusive the split decision on the land question forced the federal government to recognize that aboriginal title rights required negotiations between the federal and provincial states with First Nations (Nisga'a Council: 1992 and Raunet: 1984).

The result of *Calder vs. The Queen* legitimized the negotiations of aboriginal land claims not just for the Nisga'a but for all First Nations of Canada which had never signed formal treaties. Ironically, while some First Nations in Canada have derived benefits from the state's willingness to reach land claim settlements, the Nisga'a claim has yet to be resolved. While formal negotiations between the Nisga'a and Canada commenced in 1976, the province of British Columbia would not enter into negotiations as its policy refused to legally recognize its obligation to transfer lands and resources to First Nations. The position of the province was that under the Terms of Union, First Nations had become solely a constitutional responsibility of the federal government. The province believed it had effectively transferred all matters regarding First Nations including lands created for reserves to the Federal Government. Without the province, important issues regarding claims to crown lands, renewable and non-renewable resources could not be negotiated. Only areas of federal jurisdiction and authority such as self-government, fisheries and band eligibility could be discussed.

The provincial government, responding to social and political pressure, formally agreed to participate in negotiations in 1990. In 1991, a framework agreement was signed by the Nisga'a Tribal Council, the government of Canada and the government of British Columbia. This agreement established schedules and processes for achieving an agreement-in-principle. The significance of this agreement lies in the fact that it

represents the first time all parties would be committed to the negotiations of a comprehensive land claim in British Columbia and that the province recognized aboriginal title and the inherent right by First Nations to self-government.

The framework agreement was signed on March 20, 1991 in the Nisga'a village of Lakalzap. Topics for negotiations include lands, resources, environmental issues, cultural artefacts and heritage, economic development, compensation, taxation and self-government. As the Nisga'a state, "Whatever form of a final treaty or agreement, Nisga'a negotiators insist on security for their people's future, the right to protect and practise cultural traditions and a guarantee of self-determination (Nisga'a 1992: no page given). Significantly, the Nisga'a emphasize their right to maintain their cultural practises alongside other social, political and economic rights. One indicator of the value placed on cultural practises is that the framework ceremony included chiefs in their regalia, Nisga'a dancers and a traditional banquet. In the ceremony, the federal and provincial ministers of cabinet were reminded of the historic nature of the agreement and that they signaled tripartite government to government negotiations.

Social Organization and the Territory

The Nisga'a say that they have lived in their homeland of the Nass River Valley since time immemorial. The Nass River Valley is situated in what is now called Northwestern British Columbia near the border between Canada and Alaska. The Nass River is 380 kilometers from its headwaters in northern British Columbia to its mouth at the Pacific Ocean. The original name for the river is K'alii'aksim Lisims meaning "River of the Nisga'a." The literal translation is K'alii = up, Aks = water, im = of, Lisims = mighty, or

the Mighty River of the Nisga'a. The river and the valley are now generally referred to as the Nass or Naas, and this name has been said to mean a big basin or a kettle filled up with food.

Chief Mince'eskw in recounting the origin story of the Nisga'a states that in

"the beginning of the history of our ancestors, they related that there was no light on earth. There were no inhabitants nor creatures, when our Chief of Heavens founded the earth. The world was dark, and there was not anything to give light. The only light there was, the likeness of a moonlight night or semi-darkness. When our Chief of Heavens sent people to earth they were grouped in four clans. Our Chief of Heavens gave our people these crests when they were placed on the Lisims. Our ancestors made preparations to make it their home ground. The first location on Lisims for their new community was Gwinsk'eexkw (Village in Darkness). This was their first village" (School District 92: undated).

The Nisga'a oral tradition represents a complex body of thought which seeks to explain the origins of the world and a culture's place within it. A common theme of these stories of origin is transformation. The Nisga'a say that their culture hero Txeemsim, or Raven the Trickster, is the messenger of the Chief of Heavens. Nisga'a origin stories often feature Txeemsim as the Nisga'a helper on Lisims. Txeemsim is portrayed in the origin stories as a shaper of natural phenomena such as daylight, mountains and bodies of water. The Nisga'a also believe that Txeemsim taught their ancestors the ways of their culture.

At the core of these stories is the moral and legal code of the Nisga'a, called Ayuukhl Nisga'a or the laws of the Nisga'a. They deal with responsibilities and obligations between and amongst individuals, social groups, and the land. Nisga'a histories (called

ada'awak) document the histories of clans (called pd'eek), their sub groups or Houses (called wilp), and individual ancestors. The ada'awak, according to the Nisga'a, are based upon historical fact. The ada'awak take place in the more recent past and their subjects are the journeys and encounters of actual lineage ancestors. What is important is that the ada'awak are culturally accepted histories. They are used to trace family origins and to validate their property claims and rights. For the Nisga'a, the ada'awak combined with the Ayuukhl Nisga'a forms the bases of their ceremonial relationships to each other, the world of spirits, and to the land.

The names of the Nisga'a villages from coast to upriver are Gingolx, Lakalzap, Gitwinksihlkw, and Gitlakdamiks (also known as Kincolith, Greenville, Canyon City and New Aiyansh, respectively). At one time, the Nisga'a lived in five large villages called Gwinwok, Ank'idaa, Gitlax'anhlo'o as well as in Gitwinksihlkw, and Gitlaxdamiks. Lax ksiluux and Gwinsk'eexkw are amongst the remembered ancient villages. There were also many other villages that were occupied seasonally or for briefer periods (Barbeau: B- F- 104 - 33).

Table II
Names of Villages

<u>NAME OF VILLAGE</u>	<u>MEANING OF NAME</u>
Gingolx	Place of Scalps
Lakalzap	People on the Village
Gitwinksihlkw	People of the Place of Lizards
Gitlakdamiks	People of the Place of Pools
Gwinwok	Where People Sleep Over
Git'lks	People of The 'lks! - an Exclamation
Ank'idaa	Where They Rake Oolichan
Gitlax 'anhlo'o	People of the Sand Bar
Lax ksiluux	People of the Place of Alder
Gwinsk'eexkw	People of the Place of Darkness

The subdivision of pd'cek (or clans), into wilp (or houses), forms the foundation for Nisga'a social organization. The wilp are the social institution which hold the traditional Nisga'a cultural property of names, crests, stories, songs, dances, art objects and territories of the people. They operate as corporate matrilineages holding the property of collective groups. The wilp are organized by demonstrated descent in which kinship members trace their founding ancestors from their ada'awak. All wilp have their own tradition about their specific origin. Individual wilp possess names and titles which act as social reflections, as well as, spiritual confirmations of their ada'awak. Presently there are some sixty wilp which own and manage the cultural property and territory of the Nisga'a Nation. Nisga'a wilp vary in size but average between twenty and sixty members. Occasionally, a wilp grows too large and divides into two or three smaller houses. These related houses are referred to as composing a Wilnaat'ahl, meaning "those that are of the same kind". Conversely, a wilp can diminish in number. A wilp may adopt others into their own to ensure their survival, otherwise a wilp will become extinct.

The land that a wilp owns is called an angoskw (or territory). There are now around forty angoskw in the Nisga'a territory. Most wilp have their own angoskw and in other cases angoskw are shared by related wilp. The knowledge of the ada'awak is a traditional requirement of wilp members. The ada'awak is the confirmation of the family history which forms the wilp's basis of claim to the property rights of angoskw which are distinguishable from the angoskw and the property claims of the other wilp within the Nisga'a Nation (Nisga'a Tribal Council: 1992b). The Nass River and its tributaries form the overall national claim to the territory with certain tributaries and creeks acting as the natural boundaries of the wilp. The use of watersheds as wilp boundaries provide for an ecological distribution of resources and it ensures equal

opportunity to the resource harvest in the seasonal round. It grants every wilp access to spawning salmon runs located at the mouths of rivers, valley plants and animals at higher elevations, and big game such as mountain goat from high alpine areas (Cove: 1982).

The chieftainship model of authority with a matrilineal rule of descent forms the basis of traditional Nisga'a political organization. The Nisga'a recognize fixed positions of leadership and they have a formal method for rights of succession. The traditional authority structure of the Nisga'a is based upon wilp leaders as they control the collective property and rights of their groups. The Nisga'a names for wilp leaders are the simgigat (chieftains) and sigidimhaanak (matriarchs). Each wilp is led by a matriarch and a chief. Normally, wilp chiefs are men but under certain circumstances women will hold the office until the appointment of a male heir. In Nisga'a society, the formal political leadership of men is organized around their relationship with women. Matriarchs have the authority to confer the chiefly titles and other names within their wilps. In turn, appointed chiefs are responsible for public roles such as providing political advice, material wealth, and spiritual health for wilp members.

The Nisga'a name for a chief or wilp leader is sim'oogit meaning a "real person", or a "whole person". Simgigat is the plural of sim'oogit. The name signifies that wilp leaders must embody certain characteristics and possess extraordinary abilities in a variety of areas. The Nisga'a believe that the simgigat (chieftains) and sigidimhaanak (matriarchs) are not owners of names and territories as much as they are holders of them. The name of the sim'oogit and the ang'ooskw is held in trust on the behalf of wilp members. They are held in the memory of their ancestors and are kept for their descendants. It is believed that great chiefs add prestige to the names which strengthens both the wilps and the nation. The positive character traits of respected simgigat are

wisdom and generosity. The role of the simgigat is to ensure the individual as well as the collective well-being of the wilp. The simgigat must be conversed in the areas of public speaking in the Nisga'a language and in cultural activities such as dancing and sometimes carving. The simgigat act as political leaders dispensing wisdom within their wilp and throughout the nation. In the past, the simgigat had to ensure that their wilp members were fed and housed. They were the organizers of wilp hunting and fishing parties. They were required to understand the ecology of their angoskw and possess the necessary proficiency to ensure success in the hunting and fishing activities of their wilp. Most importantly, the simgigat are the spiritual leaders of the wilp and they are responsible for performing the sacred functions in the ceremonies.

A Social History of the Community

The people of Gitwinksihlkw that are of local origin trace their lineages to a village by the name of Lax Ksiluux, or "The Place of Alder". They were known as the Gitlaxksiluux, or "The People of the Place of Alder". The Gitlaxksiluux have ada'awak, or histories, that describe their village as once being the largest of all the Nisga'a villages (Nisga'a Tribal Council 1993: 82). The ada'awak state that the wilp (or houses), of the Laxsgiik - Eagle clan - and Laxgibuu - Wolf clan - were strongest in the village. Traditionally, Nisga'a houses were ranked both within clans and relative to other clans. (Halpin 1973: 281) and the Nisga'a describe the ranking of the Gitlaxksiluux at one time as follows:

"...The chiefs were the government. Wii Seeks was the head chief, then Baxk'ap, then Gwiixmaaw, and finally Naws. Lesser chiefs came behind each of the main chiefs" (Nisga'a Tribal Council 1993: 82).

Sim'oogit Baxk'ap is the head chief of the Laxgibuu, Sim'oogit Wii Seeks is the head chief of the Gisk'ahaast (Killer Whale), Gwixmaaw and Naws are of the Laxsgiik. All sides remained together and they lived their lives in peace until their village was destroyed by the laxmihl, or lava flow from the mountain crater called Wiiksi Baxhl Muhl.

The Nisga'a believe that half of the Gitlaxksiluux, or 2,000 people, perished as a result of the lava flow that spewed its path through the village. The village and the dead of Laxksiluux are buried underneath the lava plain (Nisga'a Tribal Council: 1992). The cause of the volcano is interpreted by the Nisga'a as originating in the Akgoot, or irresponsibility of young people. The ada'awak of the Laxgibuu describe the volcano erupting as a warning from K'amligihahlhaahl (The Great Spirit) who was offended by foolish young boys who mistreated the salmon. The ada'awak describes how these boys would:

"tear the bark off the trees; then they'd roll them up, then set fire to them.

Then they'd stick them in the backs of the fish. The fish looked like boats with lights swimming in water at night. The Chiefs warned them again and again but they would not listen. The Great Spirit then got angry with them. The Chiefs warned the children they were being disrespectful.

They expected the Great Spirit to use fire (lakw) or water to kill them all"

(Nisga'a Tribal Council 1993: 82).

The ada'awak continue with a description of how currents of fire flowed into the village. The survivors had run up into the mountains and those that chose to take their canoes across the river were consumed by fire and smoke. It is said that in all of that commotion a woman rescued an important crest object when she "chopped off one of the Bear statues from a carved pole, put it in a bag, packed it on her back and saved it" (Barbeau B- F -

104. 43 pp 18-19). The survivors believe that they were saved by a *nax nox*, or spirit, named Gwa *Xts'agat*. This creature emerged from a mountain and used its nose to block the path of the lava flow thus rescuing the survivors of Gitlaxksiluux.

The descendants of the Gitlaxksiluux have lived in the vicinity of Gitwinksihlkw ever since that fateful event some 250 years ago. The people of Gitwinksihlkw have lived on that particular site of the canyon since the fall of 1918. The people had moved there from Hlaxwkl Yan, or Underleaf, which was situated along the river bank opposite from Gitwinksihlkw. The name of that village derives from the fact that tree foliage hung over the canoe landing of the village. People were forced to leave that site because of flooding conditions on the Nass River. In the late nineteenth century, the people lived in Gwinahaa but the fire in 1892 had resulted in their moving to Hlaxwhl Yan. The present site of Gitwinksihlkw on top of a bluff is high enough to escape river flooding.

In 1927, the anthropologist Marius Barbeau visited Gitwinksihlkw and interviewed Chief Gwiixmaw, also known as William Foster, of the Laxsgiik (or Eagle clan) on the subject of the social organization of the Gitwinksihlkw people. Foster gave Barbeau information on the origins of the local wilp and he provided a placement of those wilp on a map of the village. According to Gwiixmaw there were once 21 Houses in Gitwinksihlkw.

Gwiixmaw told Barbeau the following:

"There were many people in each house. They were big houses. In the old days there must have been 20 people in a house. There were lots of old people in those days. Gitwinksitk had more houses and more people than the village before. It was the best time for them. They had a story of the flood and it was then that a great many people scattered." (Barbeau: B - F 108).

The houses of the village were once arranged by pd'EEK. There were three rows of houses overlooking the Nass River. The houses of the "real" Gitwinksihlkw consisted of 11 Laxsgiik residences referred to as Gawele' and six Laxgibuu residences referred to as Andawilp. The remaining row of four houses was called Gitseq. Three of those residences were Laxgiik and one was Gisk'ahaast, or Killer Whale. Traditionally, there were no wilp of the Ganada pd'EEK (Raven Clan) in Gitwinksihlkw.

In many respects, the Laxgibuu along with the Laxsgiik remain as the leading clans of Gitwinksihlkw and it has been suggested that the Laxgibuu are now the strongest clan in the village (Raunet 1984: 13). Such a claim is possible by virtue of the flexible rather than the fixed nature of the ranking system. All of the wilp of the Laxgibuu in Gitwinksihlkw are organized under Sim'oogit Baxk'ap who as Raunet suggests is "by protocol, the most important person in the village" (p. 14). The Laxgibuu of Gitwinksihlkw are all considered closely related and their ada'awak state that they are of local origin.

The Laxgibuu of Gitwinksihlkw are referred to as the Willuuxs' Anuuklkw which means "the house sounds like a big drum beating in it" because there were once so many of them living together. The ada'awak of Baxk'ap describes that long before the volcano the house was subdivided as there were so many Laxgibuu in the village. There are now four houses under Baxk'ap. Wii gadim Xsgaak is the head of the second house and Wihoon and Naaya'ayt lead the third and fourth houses respectively. The Sub Chiefs who come directly under Baxk'ap in his own house are Malgaksu, Oyai and Niik'ap in that order. To have the title Sim'oogit Baxk'ap one must be responsible to all of the people in those families.

The main crest of the house of Baxk'ap is the Bear's Den. The Bear's Den is represented by a small cub peering out of a den in the shape of a circle. Sapir calls it the "Son of a Black Bear" (Sapir 1915: 13). Sapir as well as Barbeau states that the crest means "new taboo, recently forbidden" (Sapir 1915: 14). The name is in reference to a young woman who was lured away by bears. This story is part of a cycle of Bear Mother myths that are associated with the Laxgibuu on the Nass River. In these stories young women are kidnapped by bears. They produce offspring that are considered to possess qualities that are human as well as bear. Eventually, the women and children are discovered by their people. In this story, the bear parent is always sacrificed and the animal becomes a family crest. Also, the children are well loved by their family in the villages for they possess supernatural powers by virtue of their heritage.

The other major crest of the house of Baxk'ap is the "Split Wolf". The name is perhaps representative of the fact the Willuuxs' Anuuklkw were themselves split into smaller groups. According to the ada'awak the house members discovered a great wolf who sat in a circle of many wolves and governed. The imagery of the story is that the animal itself is a chief amongst wolves. The wolf is also described as a supernatural with a bright ring in its tail. Eventually, the wolf is hunted and its fur becomes a crest represented on a blanket that only Baxk'ap wears in the feast hall.

The angosk, of Baxk'ap and the other Laxgibuu Simgigat (or chiefs) of the Willuuxs' Auuklkw are all in the area of the Nass River Valley near the village of Gitwinksihlkw. Some of the sacred land marks on their angoskws include Lax Ksi luux, Lax mihl or the place of lava, and Sganism Xhlaawit also known as Vetter Peak. Xhlaawit which means "Sharp Peak" is a 6,889 metre mountain about 10 kilometres south of Gitwinksihlkw. The Nisga'a have a sacred story about a flood in the time of the

Wahlingigat, or the First Peoples. In this story, people had taken to their boats as the waters continued to rise. The waters rose until nearly all of Xhlaawit was submerged. The people survived by spiking their stone anchors into the rock face of Xhlaawit until the waters receded some time later. It is a story that is usually told as part of the recital of first origins. This story may be a reference to the warming weather patterns at the end of the glacial period.

The present Sim'oogit Baxk'ap is Jacob Nyce. Nyce, in his mid sixties, is a commercial fisher by trade. He has been instrumental in promoting Nisga'a art and culture in Gitwinksihlkw. His cultural leadership is evident in his advocating of totem pole carving and developing the Four Crest Dance Troupe of Gitwinksihlkw. Virtually everyone in the village is a member of the Four Crest Dancers, and they, along with the carvers, have become integral to Nisga'a ceremonial life. The source for much of this activity is the sponsorship by the Gitwinksihlkw chiefs of totem pole carving in their community.

The Feast and Crest System

Every ceremonial occasion included the eating of food and the giving of gifts. Nisga'a feasts are called yuukw. The name derives from the verb 'yuu' meaning to give away. The yuukw is referred to in ethnographic literature as the potlatch. A good definition of the feast system is by Wilson Duff:

“A potlatch was a large gathering to which important people were invited in order to witness some event, such as a young person assuming a new name or the completion of a new house and erection of a totem pole. On such an occasion the host would display his wealth and present gifts to his

guests. The more he gave away, the more prestige he acquired" (Duff 1965: 58).

McDonald refers to feasts as a public event between hosts and invited guests where "the heirs" rights to those prerogatives are publicly explained during the ceremony, in order for those rights and social positions to be publicly validated by the witnesses to the proceedings (McDonald 1995:130-131). McDonald's two main points regarding feasts is that they are the:

"focal political forum in the government of social relations and the central integrative institution of that society" (McDonald 1995: 131) .

The Gitskan offer the best published perspective for understanding the operation of feasts. The Gitskan state:

"...In the feast hall, the events that unfold are at one and the same time political, legal, economic, social, spiritual, ceremonial and educational" (Gisday Wa and Delgam Uukw 1989: 31).

The feast system is best understood as a totality of cultural expression. It is the forum for expressing and negotiating all aspects of cultural practises.

There are many different types of feasts in Nisga'a society. Traditionally, there were feasts to mark life cycle events such as the birth of children, puberty, marriages, and funerals. There were also feasts associated with the opening of long houses and the raising of totem poles. The most important feast is associated with the death of a Sim'oogit. It requires that a wilp transfer the responsibility of the Sim'oogit name, territory, and other collective property to another. This particular feast is called a settlement feast for it "settles" accounts within and amongst the wilp of the nation. The Nisga'a describe the procedure of the settlement feast as:

"When a chief passes on, a settlement feast is held so that the tribe can pass on title to the territory he owns to the next in line. Other ranking tribal chiefs must be present to witness, to participate, and to approve of this investiture. In that public ceremony, our individual holdings of land are reaffirmed to the chiefs in front of religious leaders and declared as Nisga'a law to our historians and to the people who are assembled as witnesses to the event" (Nisga'a Tribal Council: undated).

Traditionally, the settlement feast was a cycle of activity that included the erection of a totem pole as a memorial for past title holders of the wilp. The Nisga'a continue the tradition of marriage, funeral and settlement feasts. In the recent period, wilp long house opening feasts have been replaced by feasts to honour the opening of community centres which function as feast halls. The three recent Nisga'a totem pole raising feasts are commemorative of ancestors but they are no longer raised as part of the Sim'ooGit settlement cycle.

The feast system is the formal gathering of the nation. Feasts are ceremonial statements of the common roots of social solidarity within and amongst kin groups. They provide opportunities for people who are bonded to one another through varying relationships to come together as a whole. In Nisga'a society, people belong to their own wilp but they also relate to the wilp of their paternal relatives as well as to the wilp of their spouses. There are also broader relationships organized around membership within pd'eek. Pd'eek relations are based upon a general recognition of crest identity. Crest membership is an acknowledgment of shared ancestry at a level beyond the lineage relations of wilp. The most significant kin relationship in Nisga'a ceremonial life is at the level of one's paternal relatives, or wilksiwitkw meaning "from whence I came" (Cove 1987: 78). Wilksiwitkw relatives perform the ceremonial duties of their opposite kin relations feasts.

Paternal relations undertake this duty as a sign of love and respect for their close relations in their life cycle events. In the feast hall, this entire network of relationships with its prescribed roles and duties is organized and carried forth by the simgigat and the sigidimhaawak from all pd'cek on behalf of the wilp and the Nisga'a Nation.

The feast system provides for the social ordering of people and their ancestors, crests, territories and powers. The acquisition of property by wilp, such as names, crest, myths, songs, dances, and territory, must be validated through the institution of the feast hall with assembled guests acting as witnesses and adjudicators. At this point, it is vital to introduce a definition of property rights, for it is crucial to understanding the relationship between feasts and the rights of wilp to things. Property is both a right as well as a thing which determine relationships between people and things. As Clement states:

"property is a social creation (Jure Humano) that orders and maintains specific relations between people. It is not, as it is used in an every day sense, what is owned (or an object) but the rights attached to ownership; specifically, it is the right to control the use or benefit to which ownership is put" (Clement 1988: 26).

The feast system, with its basis in chiefly titles that include angoskw ownership and ada'awak that act as deed titles and provide for crest prerogatives, is interpreted as groupings of people negotiating their relations of power over rights to claim and use things within their own nation.

The use of specific crests by wilp are representations of property and signify relationships between and amongst other wilp. Halpin and Seguin describe crests as:

"images and privileges (acquired by one's ancestors during encounters with supernatural beings) that are owned as property by a House and

ceremonially displayed by its members. Categories of artifacts most often specified for crest representations were: Architectural features - totem poles, including house entrance poles, house posts, house front paintings, beams, rafters, and ceremonial entrances; costume features - robes and head dresses; and feast dishes and ladles. In other words, crest images were worn in the potlatch, used in the feast, and represented on the houses where potlatching occurred" (Halpin and Seguin 1990: 276-77).

Crests are represented by animals, plants, natural phenomena, and by supernatural spirits called *nax_nox*. Wilps earned the exclusive privilege of these crests by holding feasts and claiming their rights of use. Each *pd'eeek* had access to its general crest of the Wolf, Eagle, Raven and Killer Whale. However, the most important crests were those which distinguished Wilp from others. Generally, the Bear is associated as a primary animal crest of Laxgibuu wilp, the Beaver is associated with the Laxsgiik, the Frog is associated with the Ganada, and the Owl and the Grouse are associated with the Gisk'ahaast. In turn, certain features of these animals are associated with specific houses. For example, the primary wolf and bear animal crests of individual Laxgibuu Wilps include the Wolf, Chief Wolf, Prince of Wolves, Wolf of the Rafters, Sleeping Place of Wolf; Black Bear, Grizzly Bear Cub, Hat of Grizzly, Standing Bear, Den of Bear, and thirteen other Bear image crests (Halpin 1973: 341 - 344).

Table III
Nisga'a Nation Wilps and Crests

<u>Pd'eeek</u> :	Laxgibuu	Laxsgiik	Ganada	Gisk'ahaast
<u>Wilps</u> :	49	48	20	22
<u>Crests</u> :	59	74	21	14

Total number of Wilps = 139
Total number crests = 168

Sources: M. Halpin: The Tsimshian Crest System, 1973.
J. Cove: Shattered Images, 1987.

There is a relationship between the acquisition of crests as sources of "power" and the histories and territories of Wilp. Cove describes that:

"crests in particular are a key extension of histories. They are manifested in material culture, and are used to define larger social units and kinship relations. The entire complex of narratives, songs, crests, names, and territories are associated with major rituals, the feasts" (Cove 1987: 46).

The "power" of the feast complex is that as a total expression of culture it has dimensions which could be considered secular in activity—social, political economic and legal but within a spiritual or sacred context. The Nisga'a feast ceremony is an inclusive institution where the Ayuukhl Nisga'a are deliberated and agreed acted upon by the

Simgigat and Sigidimhaanak who are both the political as well as spiritual leaders of the nation.

Social and economic changes over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have affected many aspects of the social organization of the First Nations of the Northwest Coast. As noted, one of the first great assaults were mortality rates from epidemics that threatened entire populations. Other changes occurred after the forced integration of First Nations people and their territories in the nation state of Canada. Once the lives of First Nations people were ordered under the Indian Act and their lands divided from them they experienced additional state force that sought to marginalize and assimilate them. Examples of social and legal marginalization include repressive legislation that denied First Nations people equality under the law. Examples of economic marginalization include transforming First Nations people from titleholders to wage labourers on their own lands. The most devastating of state assimilationist policies were those that attempted to divide First Nations people from their cultural activities. The effects of the prohibition of heritage practices created long lasting psychological and spiritual dislocation for First Nations people and their communities.

However, it is remarkable that the social organization still exists in some form that emanates from the parent culture tradition. Amongst the Nisga'a, the feasting system went underground during the era of the anti-potlatch laws. While the chiefs and matriarchs were no longer the sole authorities in their communities as they now competed morally with missionaries, politically with Indian Affairs, and economically with external sources of income and employment, they remained the legitimate voices of authority for those that remained interested in the values and ways of Nisga'a culture.

These practises are evident in contemporary feasts. While outwardly the appearance and lifestyles of First Nations people are now typical of those who live in an advanced industrial society in that they work for wages and purchase consumer goods, there still remains a moral and social code that is Nisga'a. This is expressed whenever they hold feasts whether it be for title settlements, raising of totem poles, or for honouring dignitaries. The elders still speak in Nisga'a; they refer to the ayuukhl, and when appropriate recite the ada'awak and rights associated with them. What has changed most is that Nisga'a cultural practises are at risk of becoming reserved for purely ceremonial occasions. As examples, only the elders presently speak Nisga'a as a living language. Very few Nisga'a under the age of fifty are fluent. This is a result of residential and later day schools, living in towns, and the effects of media, especially television. People no longer live as extended families under one roof. In fact, half of the Nisga'a population live off reserve. Also, except for commercial fishing, people no longer produce as family units. What presently survives is a people who believe in the social value of feasting. This is evident in the time and resources spent on these activities. The system still provides rewards and benefits for its participants; otherwise, the institution would whither away. What one witnesses at feasts today is people taking time to make their culture, even with all of its changes produced through two hundred years of contact with westerners.

The Bear's Den Totem Poles

In the late 1980's, the Chiefs of Gitwinksihlkw wanted to honour an ancestor by name of Louisa Oyca with a totem pole. Louisa Oyca was born in 1847 and died in 1912. She is considered the mother of the village as her bloodline is responsible for over 400 people today. According to the Nisga'a, she was the only surviving young woman in the House

of Bax'kap after the small pox epidemic of 1862. Her uncle, the famous totem pole carver Sim'oogit Oyai, realizing her importance, refused her suitors. Louisa Oyea then decided to marry a white man in Victoria. She moved there and gave birth to three boys. Her husband passed away when the boys were still young. One of the chiefs of the Gisk'ahaast in Gitwinksihlkw, a man by the name of Peter Williams, asked Sim'oogit Oyai if he could marry Louisa. Oyai granted his permission dependent upon Louisa Oyea's interest in returning to Gitwinksihlkw. She returned to the village in 1885. It is said that Sim'oogit Oyai wept for a long time and that in the "return feast" Louisa Oyea gave away handkerchiefs to all (Terrace Standard: Oct. 28, 1992).

In many respects, Louisa Oyea represents the survival of the Gitwinksihlkw people. Disease and the assimilation of First Nations women caused many of the wilp to become extinct in the period between 1860 and 1920. Data from the handbook of Indians of Canada states that the 1902 Nisga'a population was 842; in 1906, 814; in 1911, 738. The fact that Louisa Oyea returned to Gitwinksihlkw and helped the community survive is also a statement which is applicable for the present. The culture and the community is only as strong as those who contribute to its ways of life.

The chiefs of Gitwinksihlkw asked Alver Tait, originally from Kincolith but now living in Gitlaxdamiks, to carve their totem pole because he is considered the finest carver living in the Nass Valley. He is also respected for his contributions in the cultural life of the Nisga'a. Tait was honoured by the offer of carving the Gitwinksihlkw pole; but he accepted it with a degree of uncertainty. He is an accomplished carver but he had yet to work as a principal carver on a totem pole. All of his totem pole carving experience to that point was as a crew member for his older brother Norman Tait's totem poles. Alver

Tait acknowledges that his brother's encouragement throughout his carving of the Gitwinksihlkw Pole strengthened him in the task.

The chiefs decided that it was most appropriate that the subject matter of the Louisa Oyea memorial pole be based upon the ada'awak and the crests of her family the Wilp of Bax'kap. They requested Alver Tait to produce a totem pole similar to their original Bear's Den Pole which was raised in Gwinahaa in around 1890. The original pole was carved for the Laxgibuu of Bax'kap by Sim'oogit Wiiseeks. Wiiseeks was assisted by Neeqawrhse and Leonard Douglas, a member of the Laxibuu Wilp of Kwaksuu (Laforet 1992: 49 and Barbeau: B- F- 107). It took them one winter to carve the 40 foot totem pole. There are six major figures on the original Bear's Den Pole. Barbeau describes the totem pole as follows:

"The figures from the top are (1) Shadow, a crest explained in a myth; (2) the Wolf; (3) Yet - Taboo or Bear Cub (the small animal head in a round hole); (4) the Hunter with a bow who killed the Bear, in the myth of Bear mother; (5) Personified Bear, a large grizzly; (6) Through-Pack-On-Back, the two human figures with arms interlocked" (Barbeau 1950 Volume 1: 237).

Barbeau mistakenly identified the order of the pole. The order should read (1) Shadow; (2) Wolf; (3) Hunter; (4) Grizzly; (5) Bear Cub; (6) Through-Pack-On-Back. There are also discrepancies regarding the figures on the base of the pole as well as the figure on top. The top figure is said to be the naḡ noḡ Gwa Ḳts'agat whom protected the Nisga'a people from the fires of the lava flow. This would make sense judging by its protruding beak. As well, naḡ noḡ figures were usually represented on poles by having protruding

beaks (Halpin 1994: 12). The base figure has been described as an ancestor holding siamese twins. The twins could represent the personification of bear cubs.

Alver Tait began searching for a suitable totem pole log in early 1990. Tait discovered the ideal log at a sawmill log dump in the community of Terrace. The log was once a hundreds of years old red cedar tree from a place near the Nass River called Meadow Creek. Tait said that he found it appealing because "it was the right diameter, I didn't want it too small. It had no major bends and its core was free of rot. That was the first thing I looked for. No rot at all." (Nisga'a Tribal Council: 1992c).

The people of Gitwinksihlkw built a carving shed for Tait. The building is adjacent to the suspension bridge. It is the first building that you see upon entering the village. The carving shed is about 70 feet in length and 15 feet in width. Above the door is a painted sign that reads "Totem Pole in Progress Visitors Welcome." On one side of the sign is a traditional painting of a Laxgibuu and the Laxsgiik is represented on the other side. The painting of the crests signifies the historic cooperation between the two pd'eeck in activities such as carving of the Bear's Den Pole. The shed is a carver's typical working space. When I visited in the summer of 1992, the log was in the middle of the shed resting on its back on stumps. The entire building held the aroma of cedar. The floor was covered in sawdust and there were carvers tools as well as small carvings in progress tucked away on a shelf. There was also a guest book for visitors to sign. In fact, according to the guest book, the carving shed along with the suspension bridge and the lava beds are now popular places of local interest for visitors. Guests from all over North America and Europe had signed the registry.

There is a traditional belief that a totem pole becomes a living being. It has a shape, a life, and a spirit of its own. Those particular values are recognized by the artist from the moment he touches the wood. Tait's first act was to remove the sapwood from the log to prevent it from rotting. He then cut away at the back of the log in order to reach the smooth wood of the inner heart. Tait's treatment of his pole as a living being is evident in this statement:

"In mid November of 1990 I began to debark the log... I cleaned the sapwood, the part of a log that rots quickly... I turned it on its stomach to take its back off. I flattened it out, took out the well so the log wouldn't 'check' or crack when it dried. I flipped it onto its back to take the bumps off. But not too much or I'd end up with a skinny log" (Nisga'a Tribal Council: 1992c).

The tool that is used for this rough cutting is called an elbow adze. The adze handle is made from the branch of a hardwood tree. The wood is from where the branch meets the trunk, hence its shape. Traditionally, a stone cutter was bound to the elbow with cedar bark thus creating a chopping tool. Wooden adze handles are still used by artists but metal and nylon have replaced the stone and cedar bark. The adze is the first tool to touch the log and its heaviness is felt in the carvers hands and wrists by the end of his carving.

Tait laboured on the Bear's Den Pole over a period of two years. He was assisted by another Laxsgiik by the name of Dennis Nyce. Nyce is the son of Baxk'ap and his working on the pole is both his apprenticeship as well as a fulfillment of his father's clan or wilksiwitkw responsibilities. Nyce is an extremely personable man who genuinely enjoys talking to tourists while he is working. Together, Tait and Nyce adzed the pole

into shape. On one of my visits to the carving shed Tait showed me photos of the original Bear's Den Pole. This pole was purchased by Marius Barbeau in 1929. I found it astonishing to discover that Tait had never seen the original pole in the Canadian Museum of Civilization but his piece was taking its shape. Tait told me that before carving he sketched the figures out on wax paper. These paper sketches became the templates of the figures that he would carve into the pole. He describes the process and the figures as follows:

"I started to draw the figures - six faces and one bear head. I closed the door of the shed for two days and didn't allow anyone in. I had to concentrate. There are 12 figures - 7 major ones and 5 others. At the top, is the mythical being Nax Nox who, with his long beak, stopped the lava flow when the volcano erupted. On top of his head are three faces and, in his mouth, another. This signifies the 4 tribes of the Nisga'a Nation - Eagle, Wolf, Killer Whale and Raven. Then comes a large wolf, then a hunter with a bow in his hands kneeling on top of a grizzly. Right in the middle of the pole I carved a grizzly head. On one side I put a crawling lizard; on the opposite side a human being. Below that is a large human figure with two smaller ones, their arms interlocked. Another large human figure embraces a child, showing that we care for our young and pass along our culture. Right at the bottom two large faces signify the people of our village" (Nisga'a Tribal Council: 1992c).

The story of the Bear's Den Pole belongs to the wilp of Baxk'ap but it is also a story of the village. The pole represents the specific crests of Baxk'ap in the form of the Wolf and the Bear's Den and it also refers to their ancestral figures such as the Bear hunter and the interlocking twins that are held by an adult. Yet the pole is a village history. It refers to

the savior Gwa Xts' agat, the lizards from which the village gets its name, and all of the people from the four pd'eck living and gone from the community.

The Alver Tait interpretation of the Bear's Den Pole is different from the pole carved by Wiiseeks a century earlier. The Tait pole is 55 feet, or 15 feet longer than the original, thus offering a different scale to the figures. Also, the Tait version has more figures and faces and the larger bear's head juts outwards from its den. Tait's additional figures are a contemporary interpretation on the need of the Nisga'a to pass on their culture from elders on to the young. Yet, both poles are very similar works because each is carved in the classical Nisga'a style. The new Bear's Den Pole has become a much cherished part of the community. As you stand at its base and look up to admire it you are reminded of the fate of the old poles and marvel that the art of totem pole carving and the giving of feasts continues in the village of Gitwinksihlkw.

In order to understand Nisga'a heritage practices such as feasting and totem pole carving it is necessary to establish their cultural values as articulated through the oral tradition. Cove, while referring to the Gitksan, described their relations to their territory as part of a more comprehensive social network. By extension, this system would also refer to the Nisga'a. Cove states,

"Their concept of proprietary rights can be seen as an extension of a cosmology which defined the acquisition of supernatural power as central to human, if not cosmic, existence. Through a range of symbolic modes, ownership of territory was expressed as an element of that totality" (Cove 1982: 238).

Cove's argument is that while some of their heritage practices have been eroded by acculturation the system still maintains what he calls "concrete features" (p. 238). These features include symbolic modes such as myths, crests, songs, poles and other art forms, and, of course, feasts. Halpin asserts that it is the relationship between the oral tradition and crest art that gives Northwest Coast art its meaning (Halpin 1994: 6). In other words, it is the oral tradition that provides both the vitality and the rationale for the art; and the art acts to form attachments between a people and their land.

Without the oral tradition, heritage practises such as totem pole carving and feasting would lose the cultural logic required for their production. This symbolic network is in operation as long as the oral tradition exists, and that tradition is expressed in the feast hall. Interestingly, while the house of Baxk'ap's totem pole was removed from the Nass Valley in 1929, the family continued to recite its ada'awak in the feast hall. And while the present titleholder has grown up without that pole in the village the story and the riches associated with it are expressed and understood by him and others. The point is that Nisga'a moral values as articulated by the oral tradition through the institution of the feast hall establish the relationship between social values and social organization, and that this network forms the motivating force for the creation of Nisga'a art forms.

IV

**NISGA'A:
THE ARTS OF A PEOPLE**

Contextualizing Nisga'a Art

As stated in the Introduction, the purpose of this thesis is to examine Nisga'a art as a process of cultural (re)production through which its creation and use (re)constructs the personal and social identities of a nation's people. The purpose of this section is to contextualize the making of Nisga'a art and the raising of totem poles within the pre-contact and the historical period. Admittedly, there are methodological problems associated with such a reconstruction as the majority of my sources are relatively recent and non-Nisga'a. However, some of the historical sources are quite important. Written observations by eighteenth century European mariners regarding totem poles indicate that the art form was already established prior to the arrival of Europeans. Recent archaeological discoveries also indicate that Northwest Coast cultural forms are well over 3,000 years in their development. Amongst the best historical material on Gitwinksihlkw and other Nisga'a village totem poles comes from Marius Barbeau's fieldnotes that are based on his work in the Nass Valley in the late 1920's. His work is invaluable for it outlined the community connections between chiefs and their houses to territory and cultural property such as names, myths and totem poles. His work on totem poles is so extensive that it includes the names of commissioning chiefs and the names of their carvers, as well as the dates of their raisings.

The purpose of examining contemporary master carvers is to establish the current vitality of Nisga'a art in general, and totem pole art in particular. This section is used to introduce concerns such as resistance to assimilation and contemporary struggles of self-determination. Also, by focusing on the differences of contemporary totem pole production for internal cultural use, as opposed to external market use, it establishes a

coherent context for examining the carving and raising of a contemporary Nisga'a totem pole by these artists in one of their communities.

Contemporary Master Carvers

While today many Nisga'a people are involved in the arts as creators and performers only around ten men earn their full-time living as artists of the Nisga'a tradition. Amongst this group, Norman Tait and his brother Alver are considered by the Nisga'a as the Master Artists of the nation. The definition of a contemporary Master Artist working in the Northwest Coast art tradition is someone who can create accomplished works of art of many types in different mediums. A Master is capable of creating sculptures in wood, engravings in precious metals, and producing graphic art both in traditional mediums and on paper.

The requirement for earning the title of a Master Artist is the designing and carving of a large totem pole. The sculpting of multiple and interlocking figures on a totem pole demands an accomplished sense of design principles, an in-depth level of carving skill, and an overall knowledge of the medium of cedar. For these reasons, the carving of a totem pole is interpreted as the carver's final test of his skills. The distinction for earning the status of a Master Artist is complete with the artist's demonstration to his First Nation's hereditary leaders that he understands their particular style of art and the cultural basis from which the art is derived.

The work of Norman Tait has been particularly significant in the revitalizing of the Nisga'a art style over the past 20 years. He has studied and mastered the Nisga'a art

tradition and he has taught it to his brothers Alver and Robert, and to his maternal nephews Ron Telek and Wayne Young, as well as to his son Isaac Tait (Jensen: 1992). All of these men are of the group earning their living working in the Nisga'a style. Other full-time Nisga'a carvers include Harry Martin, who was also taught by Tait, Murphy Stanley, an early graduate of the 'Ksan School of Art, and his sons Virgil and Murphy. The resurgence of Nisga'a art and the art forms of other First Nations of the Northwest Coast is associated with both the revival of heritage practises and a growing interest of those practises by others. These others would include those who manage the institutional cultural sectors of the state such as museums and galleries and those who own private sector art galleries. The significance of these institutions is that they are responsible for both contributing contemporary discourses on Northwest Coast as well as developing a marketplace for artists' work. As already established, this thesis is influenced by Clifford's statement that treating "artefacts as fine art is currently one of the most effective ways to communicate cross-culturally a sense of quality, meaning and importance" (Clifford 1991: 225). I am especially interested in how the work of the Tait family has contributed to enriching Nisga'a heritage practise, as well as promoting Nisga'a culture to the greater society. As a result of their work, their art has become "a loci of cultural relativism" (Clifford 1991: 241) and a vivid example of how art can create "stories of revival, remembrance, and struggle" (Clifford 1991: 214).

Norman Tait credits his father, the late Josiah Tait, for being his inspiration for learning Nisga'a art and culture (MacFarlane and Inglis: 1978). The Tait family is originally from Kincolith but they moved to the city of Prince Rupert in 1944, when Norman was three years old. Tait recalls being a young boy watching his father making small poles and plaques that would be sold to tourists in Prince Rupert (Tait: 1978). The elder Tait was a commercial fisher who carved in order to supplement his income in off seasons. He was of the Laxgibuu clan and his wife Sadie is of the Laxsgiik clan. Their children, like the

others of that generation, were taken from the family and sent to residential schools. In the case of Norman Tait, he was sent away at the age of six to a residential school in Edmonton. He spent six years there before being reunited with his family. It is a remarkable statement of personal courage that the Tait and so many of the other artists of their generation are survivors of a church and state education system that actively attempted to commit a form of ethnocide upon them.

The biographical histories of the Tait family is important for it documents that their father continued to carve through this period and that his children's early exposure to the art would contribute in their interest for learning it as adults. Also, Norman Tait and the other artists of his generation who survived the residential schools are now at the forefront of contemporary First Nations heritage practises. It needs to be emphasized that this generation of chiefs and artists has emerged with a sense of identity and political empowerment that has been shaped from their early experiences of being uprooted from their families, cultures, and their homelands. While their institutionalization has contributed to some of their personal and community social problems such as alcoholism and abuse, the return to heritage practises indicates a surviving strength of consciousness for promoting First Nations identities and causes.

Totem Pole Art of the Northwest Coast

Totem poles are carved monuments in cedar used to express the genealogies and histories of families and nations. The antiquity and development of totem poles has been debated extensively. Barbeau suggests totem pole art is a by product of trade in the post contact period. According to Barbeau, artists could not create such detailed works without

western tools (Barbeau: 1950). However, Stewart provides evidence of an emerging totem pole art at the time of first contact (Stewart: 1993). Stewart mentions that Captain James Cook saw interior house posts at the Nootka Village of Yuquot in 1778, George Dixon saw Haida poles in 1787, and Alejandro Malaspina saw carved posts in the Tlingit Village of Yakutat, in 1791 (p: 19). Others, such as Malin suggest that while the grandest of poles likely developed in the post-contact period the art itself evolved from a long established cultural tradition (Malin: 1986); and Halpin suggests the introduction of western tools stimulated the refinement of an activity rather than the development of a new artistic expression (Halpin: 1981).

A total of six totem pole types have been identified and specific types are more prevalent amongst certain First Nations of the Northwest Coast. The totem pole types are memorial or commemorative poles raised by chiefs in honour of their predecessors, mortuary poles which contained the bodies of the deceased, portal or house frontal poles that acted as doorway entries, interior house posts, grave guardians, and welcoming poles that were placed near beaches for greeting guests (Stewart: 1993). In the northern area, the Nisga'a, Tsimshian and Gitksan have traditionally preferred tall free-standing memorial poles, house frontal poles and house posts. Amongst those nations, mortuary poles and welcoming poles were less common and grave guardians were rare as they are a post-contact phenomena associated with the changing funerary practices as burials replaced traditional cremation. The Haida carved the same pole types as the Nisga'a, Tsimshian and Gitksan with the notable exception of their preference for mortuary poles. The bodies of Haida chiefs were placed in boxes on tops of poles. In some cases, high ranking chiefs were put in boxes between two posts. This style of pole is called the double post mortuary (Stewart 1984: 78). The Tlingit carved shorter memorial poles,

house posts, and grave guardians amongst shamans were especially common (Jonaitis: 1988).

The most significant totem pole type of the Nisga'a is the memorial pole. The memorial pole signifies the history, crest rights and territory of a wilp. The subject of the images on the memorial pole are based upon the ada'awak of the wilp (Laforet 1992: 11).

Generally, memorial poles were raised about a year after the death of the Sim'oogit of the wilp. The event was co-ordinated by the Sim'oogit's successor and family members. The pole raising is always accompanied with a feast to validate the titles and claims of the wilp, settle payments, and honour guests (Stewart 1984: 79).

The social and economic conditions of the nineteenth century acted to motivate the high point of totem pole carving along the Northwest Coast. The chiefs dominated the wealth that was created both from the maritime fur trade, between 1780 and 1825, and in the land-based fur trade afterwards (Fisher: 1977). The chiefs elevated their social positions by injecting their economic prosperity into totem pole raisings and other feasts. The feasts allowed chiefs to honour their lineages and to distribute their wealth in their societies. Over time, totem poles became associated with greater wealth and the on-going quest for prestige drove the cultural demand for larger and more exquisite poles. In turn, master artists and their apprentices used the newly introduced western metal goods to their advantage and by fulfilling the demand for poles developed the most skillful renditions ever created in cedar.

The cultural apogee of totem pole art between 1860 and the 1890's occurred ironically in a period characterized by social and economic forces that would destabilize the First Nations of the Northwest Coast. There was the coastal wide epidemic of small pox in

1862. By the end of that year about 20,000 of the Colony of British Columbia's 60,000 First Nations people had perished (Fisher 1977: 116). The high death rate significantly affected the spiritual and social life of First Nations. In this period and under certain conditions, competitive feasting developed between those who vied for the chiefly titles left behind by the deceased.

On the economic front, the introduction of wage labour permitted more individuals to gather the necessary economic resources to commission poles and hold feasts in order to claim titles. The other great irony of this period is that while First Nations negotiated their rights to titles and territories amongst themselves in the feast system, B.C. entered into confederation in 1871 and both levels of government promptly assumed all resource rights for the state, declared First Nations people as wards, and imposed the reserve system of residence (Raunet: 1984). Such was the backdrop for the golden era of Northwest Coast totem pole art.

One hundred years later, Northwest Coast art and culture is experiencing a resurgence of interest by its people and others. More First Nations ceremonials such as pole raising and other feasts are being held. More artists are learning the traditions of First Nations art and are having their work used in ceremonials as well as marketed to public institutions and private galleries. In fact, First Nations art is at the fore front of their social recognition in Canadian society. It is the art form of First Nations people which outwardly distinguish their status as a distinct cultural group of the Canadian ethnic mosaic.

The Tait's and Their Totem Poles

The first totem pole of Norman Tait's career was carved in partnership with his father. In 1973, the Tait's were commissioned by the village of Port Edward to produce a pole to commemorate its incorporation as a municipality. Port Edward, a fishing and pulp mill community about 15 kilometres from Prince Rupert, is a popular off-reserve community for First Nations people of the region. The Tait's carved a 37 foot four crest unification pole signifying the crests of the Nisga'a, Tsimshian, Gitksan and Haida Nations people who live in the community. The pole raising was especially significant for Nisga'a culture as it was the first Nisga'a pole to be raised in over 60 years (Jensen 1992: 168-169). The importance of this totem pole raising for the Nisga'a cannot be over estimated. Somewhat fittingly, the pole was raised in the same year as the Supreme Court decision of *Calder vs. The Queen*. While the pole was neither raised in Nisga'a territory nor was its symbolism associated with the specific *ada'awak* of Nisga'a *wilp*, its raising was a powerful event signifying cultural unity and survival. The carving of the pole represented the reawakening of the Nisga'a parent culture tradition and the support of its members for the continuation of that activity.

It is in the beginning of this era, and in this context, that a demand develops for Nisga'a art by those within the culture and by outsiders. For example, Nisga'a artists have produced not only poles but also frontlets, masks and talking sticks for chiefs. This contemporary period is characterized by a growing Nisga'a demand for cultural objects for internal ceremonial use. At the same time, an external market of collectors now exists for their work. I would suggest that growing economic rewards associated with the marketplace has led to a generation of artists who produce for the marketplace while also producing for their own cultural purposes.

The political significance of producing cultural forms associated with the parent culture tradition must also be emphasized. A people's wearing of regalia and their participation in heritage practises constructs boundaries and contexts for expressing identity and difference. The fact that the Nisga'a wear their regalia in formal occasions amongst themselves and also with state dignitaries indicates the convergence of culture and politics both within their communities and towards the greater society.

The career break through for Norman Tait was his being hired as an artist in residence by the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology in 1976. Tait was hired to do restoration work on the museum's one Nisga'a totem pole. The museum's Sim'oogit Lay Eagle Halibut Pole is one of the finest examples of surviving Nisga'a totem pole art. The pole was carved around 1870 by the renowned Nisga'a Master Artist Oyai of Gitwinksihlkw. Tait's restoring of the pole allowed him to discover the technique and style of a previous master. As Tait says "it was like working with the old master carver. He taught me a lot" (MacFarlane and Inglis: 1977). Tait's work at U.B.C. included the demonstration carving of a House Post, which now graces the outside lobby of the Museum of Anthropology, which coincided with a major solo exhibition of his work between November 1, 1977 and January 31, 1978. Significantly, Tait was the fifth living Northwest Coast artist and the first Nisga'a to have his work exhibited at M.O.A. (Ames 1993: 65). The show consisted of one hundred and four pieces of Tait's work in wood, precious metals and on paper. His carvings in wood included masks, bowls, talking sticks, a spoon, a rattle, a ladle, a bent box and an eagle clan helmet.

The commission which secured Tait's status as a Master Artist was the 55 foot 'Big Beaver Pole' that he carved in 1981 -82 for the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. The pole commemorates the re-opening of the Indigenous People's Hall of the

Museum. This particular pole was significant for the Tait family as it was part of the apprenticeship project for Alver and Robert Tait. The pole was ceremonially raised in the spring of 1982. Upon the raising of the pole, Norman Tait was given the name of a Sim'oogit. He described the earning of his title as follows:

"I was given a new name Nə Wutxw Lik' insxws Lax Gal Ts'ap, which means 'Grizzly Bear coming into the village.' The name is because of the pole, and the Eagle tribe (my tribe) is brought up one step again. Because of the pole, all of the Nass River recognizes what I have done. My grandfather said that I deserved the name, which was dormant for a long time. It was a hereditary chief's name, and actually belonged to another carver of our people. The carver received his name when he was a young man because of his career as a carver, being an artist and a doer. His name became so powerful that people refused the name along the way because they could not uphold it. When I came along and started doing the same things he did, they decided the name should go to me"

(Jensen -Sargent 1986: 61).

Since earning the title of a Sim'oogit, Tait's work has included many carvings in wood including four large totem poles in the Vancouver area, two ocean-going dug-out canoes, and one pole that is now in the United Kingdom (Jensen: 1992).

Alver Tait, whose Nisga'a name is Jagam Txalpx, meaning "Four Canoes Coming In" earned the title of a Master Artist upon the raising of the 55 foot "Bear's Den pole" at Gitwinksihlkw. Tait, born at Mill Bay cannery near Kincolith in 1943, has practiced traditional Nisga'a art since 1980. Alver Tait apprenticed with his older brother Norman between 1980 and 1986. In that period, Tait worked on various totem pole and canoe projects that were supervised by his brother. A particular highlight of Alver Tait's

apprenticeship was his carving of an eagle designed alder wood bowl purchased by the City of Vancouver as a gift for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in honour of her Royal Visit to British Columbia in 1983 (Coe 1986: 270). Tait continues to work in wood as well as in precious metals. He also paints murals and produces silk screen prints.

The strength of Alver Tait's carving style is in his sensitive portrayal of the subject. The critic Ralph Coe (1986: 270-271) describes one Tait spoon as "every contour of the piece is proportioned with exactitude down to the smallest detail. Note also the exquisite control of swelling and diminishing forms exhibited here by this insufficiently known Nishga artist". This quote defines both Tait's style and situation as a Northwest Coast artist. What distinguishes him from the other carving members of his family, and Northwest Coast carvers in general, is that rather than living near galleries and museums he prefers to make his primary residence in a Nisga'a community. He lives in Gitlakdamiks which is the village of his wife. He is highly respected by the chiefs and others of the Nisga'a Nation for his active promotion of the Nisga'a culture in the Nass Valley. While he may be 'insufficiently known' in the wider art community, as rarely are his pieces in private galleries, he earns commissions from chiefs to produce ceremonial pieces such as poles and headdresses. He has also painted the backdrop screens used by the Gitlakdamiks ceremonial dancers. Currently, Tait his five apprentices are producing a second totem pole for the village of Gitwinksihlkw. The 60 foot pole was designed by Tait and it is a commemoration of Nisga'a elders and children. The pole will be raised in 1995 in front of the newly built elementary school in that community.

Nisga'a Totem Poles

There were three standing totem poles in the Nass River Valley in 1994 and all three were erected since 1976. At the turn of the century, there were well over fifty totem poles in various Nisga'a villages throughout the Nass River Valley. A combination of state forces, pressure by missionaries, and the natural elements were responsible for the removal, destruction and decay of Nisga'a totem poles. By the mid twentieth century, totem pole carving and the raising of poles were in the distant memory of elders. The recent revival of totem pole carving and raisings is part of a greater cultural tradition for expressing social and spiritual relations and responsibilities between and amongst the Singigat and their wilp, the Nisga'a Nation, and others such as neighbouring First Nations and the State.

The pts'aan or totem poles of the Nisga'a are carved from western red cedar (thuja plitica). The Nisga'a call the cedar tree simgan meaning the "first or most important tree" (Nisga'a Tribal Council 1993: 117). The red cedar is highly rot resistant and its softwood is ideal for carving. The life span of totem poles in a coastal exterior environment is anywhere from 50 to 100 years. Over time, totem poles become weather beaten and they eventually fall and decay. Traditional believers perceive totem poles to possess a life course similarly to humans, and it is the course of nature that poles, just as people, return to the ground as part of the earth.

At the turn of the twentieth century totem poles stood in the down river Nisga'a villages of Git'iks, Gwinwoj and Ank'idaa as well as in the upper river villages of Gwinahaa, Gitwinksihlkw and Gitlakdamiks. In this period, flooding conditions on the Nass River, a village fire at Gwinahaa and the forming of Christian settlements caused the population's

movement into the villages of Gingolx, Lakalzap, Gitwinksihlkw and Gitlakdamiks. At times, Nass River poles were removed from old sites and ceremonially raised again in new villages. In most other cases, totem poles were left standing in their original places where eventually they would get covered with brush and fall to the ground (Barbeau: 1950).

In the early twentieth century all Nisga'a totem poles were under threat of being destroyed either by the elements or by the hand of the missionaries. The turn of the century was an era of rising social tensions caused by Anglican and Methodist missionaries whose preaching of the Christian gospel included diatribes condemning traditional activities such as feasting, carving and totem pole raising (Patterson: 1982). In this period, traditional believers fought openly with missionaries and their converts regarding the authority of chiefs and the place of traditional social institutions within the culture (Cole & Chaikin 1990: 44-49). Eventually, missionaries won the religious struggle and by 1910 the majority of the Nisga'a Chiefs and their people proclaimed themselves Christians (p. 55). Unfortunately, the missionaries demanded that the Nisga'a display their new found faith by selling or destroying their traditional cultural property including their totem poles.

The Nisga'a feasts of the early twentieth century were already incorporating Christian elements within a traditional social structure. Village chiefs held prominent social places in church activities, the Lord's Prayer was translated into Nisga'a, and Christmas and Easter became the most important calendar celebrations of the year. By this period, totem poles were no longer being carved and raised. Symbolically, western style headstones had replaced the memorial poles of the Nisga'a (p. 58). However, this compromise did not satisfy the missionaries of the two traditional villages of Gitwinksihlkw and

Gitlakdamiks. The missionaries continued to rail against totem poles as heathenous idols, and they encouraged the cultural monuments of Gitwinksihlkw and Gitlakdamiks be cut up or burned. The totem poles of Gitwinksihlkw and Gitlakdamiks were burned in 1917, and 1918. Each village lost over 20 poles. Some of the Gitwinksihlkw poles were used to buttress the foundation of the village church (Terrace Standard, Oct. 28, 1992).

By the 1920's, only 15 totem poles remained standing along the Nass River. Three survived the destruction of Gitlakdamiks, and the old villages of Gwinahaa, Gitiks and Ank'idaa had three, four, and five respectively. Between 1929 and 1947 these totem poles were also taken down for their removal to museums and other public sites in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and France (Barbeau: 1950). The 1892 fire at Gwinahaa and the religious fervor at Gitwinksihlkw had taken their toll on the totem poles of that area. The three totem poles at Gwinahaa were all that remained in the 1920's. The Bear's Den Pole, The Pole of Gwaneks and Weeharlar, and the Half Protruding Pole stood amongst the cottonwoods in the abandoned settlement of Gwinahaa. Marius Barbeau describes being taken to the site in 1927:

"...We followed our elderly guide into the woods, and behold a totem pole completely surrounded by tall trees: then another, and a third, one apart from the other, and lost in this forest. Oblivion had befallen these splendid carvings. Our guide looked for a fourth pole somewhere but could not find it. Still only 30 years had passed since the people moved away from here to Place-of-Lizards, which we had seen across the river, a short distance above" (Barbeau: B - F- 104.43).

All three of these totem poles were purchased and removed in 1929. The Canadian National Railways purchased the Half Protruding Pole for a park site located near the

train station in Prince Rupert. This pole is one of three that were lost. Both the original Bear's Den Pole and the Pole of Gwaneks and Wecharlae were sold to the Museum of the American Indian. These two totem poles were since repatriated to Canada in 1977 and both are now part of the Grand Hall Exhibition at The Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec.

The Canadian state appropriated the cultural property belonging to the First Nations of the Northwest Coast under especially repressive circumstances. The state actively dominated First Nations people from the time of Canada's nationhood in 1867. It was State policy which permitted church missionaries to act as internal agents demanding social as well as spiritual change. In turn, the State attempted to destroy First Nations culture through the creation of the Indian Act of 1876, the Anti-Potlatch Law of 1884, and the Reserve System of the 1880's. The political context of the State's purchasing of Nisga'a totem poles in the 1920's offered the Nisga'a no other choices but their sale or destruction. Some of the Gitwinksihlkw cut up their own poles and used them as house foundations rather than sell them to museums. First Nations people could not vote federally until 1960, the residential school system was in effect, and the Anti-Potlatch Law under the Indian Act was being enforced in other First Nations on the Northwest Coast. Also, the 1927 amendment of the Indian Act made it illegal for First Nations organizations to seek their property rights through the courts, and church officials actively encouraged the sales of the poles (Raunet: 1984).

The Barbeau Legacy

Canada's National Museum of Man operated as the state agency which purchased the 15 Nass River poles. The person responsible for their purchase was museum staff ethnologist Marius Barbeau. Barbeau had a particular interest in totem poles, as that was the subject of his 1910 doctoral thesis at Oxford. He began his career with the museum following his graduation, and he remained there until his retirement in the late 1950's. In that period, Barbeau developed a specific interest in the area of Tsimshian cultural studies. He did fieldwork amongst the Tsimshian/Nisga'a/Gitskan first in 1914-1915 and then throughout the 1920's. He spent two of those seasons amongst the Nisga'a in July - September of 1927 and in May - October of 1929 (Maud 1982: 201). During those two field seasons Barbeau recorded cultural information such as histories, *ada'awak*, and songs, and purchased Nisga'a cultural property including 13 of the 15 poles.

The state had granted Barbeau the authority to negotiate the purchase of Nisga'a totem poles as part of his fieldwork. The sale of Nisga'a poles created many controversies within Nisga'a society. While a majority of the poles had decayed, or were destroyed for religious reasons, none had yet been sold. In fact, the Nisga'a were the last First Nation of the Northwest Coast to sell totem poles (Cole 1985: 201-202). For the Nisga'a, disturbing questions arose regarding the sale of their poles. Who would have the right to sell totem poles? What would be the asking price? Some chiefs openly refused Barbeau's offers. For example, Barbeau approached Sim'oogit Mountain of the Laxsgiik Clan, the same chief who had lobbied the province of British Columbia over the land question in 1887, at Gingolx regarding the sale of his pole. The Oyai carved pole, called

Sakau'wan or Sharp Teeth, was at 81 feet, the tallest in the Nass Valley. Barbeau, through an interpreter, remarked that it would be an "honour" to have Mountain's Pole in a museum. Barbeau describes Mountain's response as follows: "The old man, whose long white hair flowed down his back, at first could not quite understand; his mind was lost in a fog. When it dawned upon him that someone wanted to buy the memorial erected to his ancestors, he remembered that once before he had received a similar proposal... Old Mountain's answer was, "give me the tombstone of Governor Douglas; I will give you the totem of my grand uncles" (Barbeau 1950: 33). Other chiefs demanded that any asking price would have to incorporate the stored up economic value of the poles based upon the total cost of the feasts associated with their raisings. The economic reality of the era was that many Nisga'a were employed as seasonal wage labourers in commercial fishing, and poor returning runs of fish in the late 1920's created economic hardship in many Nisga'a communities. Eventually, Barbeau was able to negotiate favourable prices for the buyers and the majority of the poles were purchased in 1929. One of the poles purchased that year was the Sakau'wan Pole of Chief Mountain. Mountain had recently passed away and Barbeau purchased the pole from the family. After 1929 only two totem poles remained standing in the Nass Valley, and they would also be purchased by Barbeau in 1947.

Barbeau's enterprise secured the preservation of 12 Nisga'a totem poles, and his published data in association with William Beynon provides a permanent ethnographic record of the social and aesthetic principles of Nisga'a totem poles. The collected data on over 40 Nass River poles are extensive and they include names of poles, their original owners, owner's histories as represented by crests, crest descriptions, artists' cultural styles, and the dates and places of their raisings. What is especially significant for those

interested in the anthropology of art is that the data overcome the general bias of treating the producers of non-western art as anonymous figures. They confirm the achievement of acknowledged master artists, and posit the role of those artists within the social structure of the Nisga'a Nation. The documentation of the social institutions which developed artists, the reputations of specific artists, and the social relationship between artists as producers and chiefs as commissioners demonstrates that Nisga'a artistic activity was negotiated in the political power structure of the Nisga'a Nation.

Halpin (1994) credits the work of Barbeau and Beynon for their thoroughness in the field. She refers to the eight field seasons undertaken by Barbeau in the region (1914-15, 1920-21, 1924, 1926, 1927, 1929, 1939, 1947) and that he and Beynon collected data from 26 Nisga'a-Tsimshian-Gitksan communities with anywhere from 13 to 46 house histories per village. Also collected was information on names, crests, territories and, of course, cultural property. The completeness of the social and material cultural data has had a positive effect for First Nations researchers in that the data can be used to check questions on certain groups to express their rights of ownership to material culture, territory, and other property. For example, Barbeau's interviews regarding the original Bears Den totem pole clearly establishes that it is part of the cultural heritage belonging to those who are of the House of Baxk'ap.

Barbeau had learned of the relationship between houses and their rights to claim crests which were then expressed on cultural objects such as totem poles. Halpin refers to an article written by Barbeau in 1917 where he had reviewed Boas' just-published text entitled Tsimshian Mythology. In this review, Barbeau had challenged Boas' wrongful interpretation of crests as generally the common property of groups (Boas 1916: 527).

Halpin quotes Barbeau's review with the following in order to establish his knowledge of the unity of the crest/ada'awak/territory relationship:

"So exclusive and restrictive was the ownership of any valuable crest...that hardly a single one was the common property of a collectivity...A crest without a myth to explain its origin and its connection to the owner was an impossibility...The virtual rule is: one crest, one owner" (Halpin 1994: 10).

Halpin's rationale for referring to Barbeau was that he offered an alternative paradigm to Boas. Her point is that Boas did not understand the relationship between the oral tradition and crest art and as a consequence the discourse of Northwest Coast art that he constructed focussed on explaining totemic images as the "recognized symbols" of natural animals (Halpin 1994: 7). As Halpin states,

"Far from the natural species used as crests in the Boasian model, the crests recorded and described by Barbeau and Beynon are momentos of ambiguous and composite **supernatural beings**" (her emphasis) (p. 11).

One need only refer to the images on the Bear's Den pole to confirm the supernatural basis of Nisga'a crest art.

Table IV
Institutions Holding Nisga'a Poles

<u>INSTITUTION</u>	<u>NUMBERS</u>
• Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, Quebec	3
• Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Ontario	3
• Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, British Columbia	1
• University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia	1
• Charlesbourg Zoo, Quebec City, Quebec	1
• British Museum, London, United Kingdom	1
• University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, United Kingdom	1
• Musee De l'homme, Paris, France	1

The Social Use of the Arts

The creation of surplus wealth amongst the First Nations of the Northwest Coast permitted the development of a class of artisans whose livelihood was derived primarily from their arts. Amongst the Nisga'a, artists were hired by chiefs to create material representations of chiefly crest objects that would be used to express wealth and rank in the winter ceremonials. Artists sold their services in return for prestige and material goods. For example, totem pole carvers were guests of the family who had commissioned the pole. The carver and his apprentices would be supported by his hosts over the year it would take to carve it. Upon its completion, the artist would be publicly acknowledged in the pole raising feast with speeches of gratitude and gifts. Those who were considered the best artists earned prestigious reputations, attracted the greatest attention from chiefs, and were paid considerably for their efforts.

The relationship between artists and chiefs as commissioners of poles operated within the structure of wilksiwitkw relations rather than the principle of individual choice. The role of the wilksiwitkw establishes that paternal relations assist their maternal side in the feast. This assistance includes the production of ceremonial objects such as totem poles (Halpin & Seguin 1990: 273). This role obliges artists to produce for their relations rather than for themselves. Fathers appointed carvers who were of the crest of the artists' mothers to produce totem poles. In times when families lacked capable carvers to work for their wilksiwitkw relations it remained the duty of fathers to appoint another artist from outside the family (p. 273). The role of wilksiwitkw ensured that families would have a required number of artists to fulfill its ceremonial responsibilities to their relations. Fathers paid great amounts of wealth to have their sons apprentice under master artists. Eventually, fathers would get a return for their efforts as their sons who are of the crest of their mothers would carve for fathers and their crest relations.

In Nisga'a society, art production is perceived as ultimately a spiritual activity. Artists are treated as possessing special powers by virtue of their ability to create on some superior level. Superiority in artists' activities such as carving but also painting, drumming, dancing, singing and story telling is interpreted as a practice originating from a gift through an encounter in the world of spirits. It is believed that master artists are intermediaries between humans and supernatural beings when producing representations of family crests. For this reason apprentices were initiated into the sacred societies that controlled the art institutions of the Nisga'a.

The Nisga'a social institution which trained art producers was a highly respected body in the society. Artists fulfilled both social and religious roles in the community as their work articulated family histories, clan relationships, and spiritual encounters. The master

artists were also high-ranking chiefs and sub-chiefs which acted to reinforce the relations of power within the society. In Nisga'a society, social elites were also by definition cultural elites as only the well-birthed could be versed in spiritual activities such as the arts. Great artist chiefs were thus able to raise their social status to higher levels. Highly respected artists often produced commissioned works in other villages and First Nations. The reputations of certain artists were so great that they lacked neither work nor apprentices therefore ensuring another generation of producers.

The art of totem pole carving had disappeared on the Nass River by the early 1900's. The *yuukw*, or feasts, were becoming more Christian in form and the gravestone effectively replaced the memorial pole. Until the 1970's, totem pole carving and raising feasts on the Nass River were of the past. Since the 1970's, three totem poles have been raised by the Nisga'a in their communities. The first pole to be raised was Eli Gosnell's Four Crest Unity Pole of Gitlakdamiks, raised in 1976. The next pole to be raised was the Community Pole of Lakalzap, carved by Murphy Stanley and raised in 1989. The most recent pole raised in the Nass Valley is Alver Tait's Bear's Den Pole of Gitwinksihlkw, raised in 1992. The revival of totem pole carving is accompanied with the revival of the totem pole raising feasts. In one respect, contemporary pole raisings have merged tradition with rediscovery. They are current events revived by chiefs and elders in order to express the continuing cultural tradition of a peoples.

The Completion of the Bear's Den Totem Pole

Alver Tait completed his carving of the Bear's Den Pole over the summer of 1992. Creating a totem pole begins with the labour intensive work of rough adzing, and concludes with the finest of detail work that only masters can execute. Alver Tait and

Dennis Nyce started by adzing its general form into shape, and then used mallets and chisels to define the figures from the background wood. At the next stage, the rounding form of the totem pole was created as the sculpting of figures and faces took their shape around the front and sides of the log. Throughout this activity, the carver uses his hands as well as his eyes to measure the proportion and balance of the figures.

The tools required for detailed work include scalpels or straight edged and curved blade knives. These are much smaller tools than adzes. The handles are made from hardwood and they are usually 15 or 20 centimeters in length. The blades are placed into one end of the tool handle and nylon is used to secure the knife into the tool. Traditionally, the blade consisted of beaver tooth and cedar twine provided its binding. Generally, contemporary master carvers make their own fine cutting tools. These fine knives are used for cutting v-shaped grooves into the eyes, eyebrows, nostrils, and mouths of the figures. This sculptural technique is absolutely integral in creating Nisga'a totem poles as it's this style of relief carved grooves, rather than painted colours which highlight the Nisga'a art of totem poles.

In the summer of 1992, I had the opportunity to speak to Alver Tait and Dennis Nyce as the totem pole was taking shape. I told them that I was immediately impressed by its sculptural quality. Tait, who is a quiet and extremely gentle man, softly said that it's that quality and that it will be unpainted which makes it a Nisga'a totem pole. I asked him which part of the carving that he found most challenging and he said the making of the hands and the attachment of pieces can be extremely time consuming. He motioned over to the hands of the Bear Hunter, the snout and mouth of the Wolf, and the beak of the *nax nox* which had to be carved separately and attached to the totem pole by a technique called mortise and tenon. In this procedure, a space in the back of the wood of the

attachment is carved into a block and interlocked with a space which has been hollowed from the pole. I looked over the pole and marveled in its form. I felt in the company of an artist with his masterpiece. Every principle of Nisga'a totem pole art was embodied in the work. The organization of the design and the sculptural technique accomplishes the overall sense of rhythm, balance, and harmony required in Nisga'a art. Tait spoke about how the features of Nisga'a art produces figures that are intentionally rounded and three dimensional in form. He mentioned that figures protrude outward towards you and that the carving of the eyes are exaggerated to emphasize their bulging qualities. He referred to the eyes both as looking down towards you and as following you. He emphasized that the purpose of the pole was to strength Nisga'a unity and heritage.

I asked Tait for his permission to touch the pole. He told me to go ahead. I walked alongside of it and placed my hands on it. I wanted to feel the wood and its figures. The act of touching the pole reinforced my respect for Tait and his work, and it also reminded me of the Nisga'a values associated with working in wood. They emphasize the importance of touch when creating wooden sculptures. They say that when the artist touches his work that he is communicating with it. In the same way that the practise of carving is interpreted as a spiritual gift its undertaking is perceived as a spiritual activity. In touching the wood the artists are considered to be touching the spirits. They are giving form and life to the figures associated with the ada'awk and they are in turn giving of their power to the artists. Also, this is interpreted as a communication with the heavens. By planting the pole into the ground, a people's spiritual touch between their land and their creator K'amligihahlhaahl, the Chief of the Heavens has been achieved.

Over the course of Tait's carving of the pole some of the differences for producing cultural objects for internal ceremonial use rather than for an external market became

evident. Usually, artists producing market carvings use general aspects of their heritage as the basis for their production. They work within rules of stylistic consideration but the ideological content of these works have been decontextualized from their cultural base. These works are based on stories either created by artists or are general references from already established stories. However, the creation of objects for internal ceremonial use makes specific references and connections to what Halpin refers to as the crest/ada'awk/territory relationship. In this case, the production of the Bear's Den pole was undertaken within a prescribed set of cultural demands. The artist was required to describe specifically the origin myths and crests of Baxk'ap and the Laxgibuu of the Willuuxs'anuuklw. Interestingly, while Tait's interpretation includes the additional statements of cultural unity and the need to pass on culture to the next generation of Nisga'a this was as a result of negotiations between the family who owns the rights to the pole and the artist. Such an act indicates the dynamic rather than static nature of Nisga'a culture for it demonstrates how these people use their art forms to express their contemporary conditions and values.

V

NISGA'A:

A TOTEM POLE RAISING FEAST

Totem Pole Raising Feasts

To this point, I have examined Nisga'a cultural values and cultural production in the arts in order to establish some of those important cultural themes. It is now possible to link that data specifically around the raising of the Bear's Den pole. By analyzing Nisga'a ideology of kinship, history, political economy, religion and aesthetics the formation of contexts and boundaries for understanding the significance of the pole raising for the Nisga'a have been developed. McDonald's work on feasts, Halpin's analysis of the relationship between crests and art form, and Cove's work linking social organization to prerogatives such as feasts, myths and crests are included in the analysis of the pole raising.

McDonald's work on feasting is an important beginning point. His framework for analyzing the institution of feasts is what he calls "the inter-relationship between ideas and society and the creation of a social reality...in how ideas gain substance and meaning, and how ideas are structured into an indigenous theory of practise" (McDonald 1995: 125). He refers specifically to Bourdieu's theory of knowledge in order to understand the connection between a people's consciousness and their changing ideologies, and how such changes are manifested in both ideological and cultural activities (p. 126-127). McDonald's specific focus is on how "ideas are perceived to be political forums that organize internal and external relationships" (p. 127); and he examines these practises by focussing on the social institution of feasts.

The feast hall of the Nisga'a is the site where chiefs and matriarchs express their cultural values, settle their relationships to one another and to the land, and pass on their culture to the next generation of Nisga'a. The Nisga'a refer to the feast hall as their centre for

expressing the Ayuukhl Nisga'a which they define as the "unwritten code of law and social customs that regulate the social activity of all Nisga'a, and sets the standards for Nisga'a cultural and economic institutions" (Nisga'a 1992). It is the Ayuukhl Nisga'a that establishes and defines their code of conduct and their social institutions. It is essentially their culture's moral and legal system. The Ayuukhl Nisga'a accord that every Nisga'a belongs to a wilp and that it is through this social structure that their government has been practised. As an example, the Nisga'a describe the functioning of this governance in the context of the passing away of wilp chief:

"When the head of a wilp dies, his next oldest brother or his oldest sister's son assumed the role of the custodian for all the property of the house.

This process occurs through a sophisticated ceremony known as the settlement feast. Like a deed in a land registry office, the settlement feast is a formal registration of title and ownership" (Nisga'a 1992).

Therefore, the feast hall and the practise of feasting is their institutional structure of governance.

Modern totem pole raising feasts of the Nisga'a are composed of three distinct and yet interrelated public activities. Evident throughout those activities are currents of ideological as well as emotional powers which act to unify the event. The first act is the raising of the pole. This begins with the carver who for the final time ritually touches the pole with his tools. The totem pole is then carried by villagers and their guests from the place where it was carved to the site of its raising. Before raising, the carver in another ritual breathes life into the totem pole, and then bids it good-bye. Once the totem pole is raised and set into the earth, there are solemn speeches from the chiefs. The speeches include the ada'awak which relate wilp identities and confirm their rightful powers to raise the totem pole.

The second stage is the *yuukw*, or feast. In this event, all guests are invited into the feast hall. The hosts of the feast arrange the seating of their guests with chiefs and elders surrounded by their kin. The seating arrangement of the feast hall is a reflection of the social as well as the moral order of the Nisga'a, as those acknowledged for their wisdom are at the centre of the order. The feast begins with speeches and the serving of traditional foods; afterwards there are speeches of thanks from the chiefs. In the speeches, the chiefs honour certain people for their contributions. Those that are honoured include the carver of the totem pole, village chiefs and matriarchs, and others who have assisted in what is called "Putting up the Feast". The giving of gifts to all guests accompanies the speeches of the chiefs. The act of giving signifies the generosity of chiefs and their people and the act of accepting means there is agreement with the claims made by chiefs to rights of things such as crests, other powers, and territory. The serving of food, speech making, and gift giving together comprise what is called the "Settlement of the Feast" between and amongst the *wilp* and their guests.

The final stage of a totem pole raising feast is a presentation of traditional Nisga'a music and dance. The final dance of a Nisga'a totem pole raising feast is a representation of unity and it involves everyone. Once the final dance is finished the totem pole raising is considered complete. The event has served to confirm the powers and territories of the *wilp* and the Nisga'a nation as a whole is considered strengthened.

Raising The Bear's Den Pole

The village of *Gitwinksilhlkw* had issued a general invitation to its totem pole raising feast. The chiefs and matriarchs welcomed everyone to celebrate the cultural life of the Nisga'a. Invitations were issued personally by chiefs to prominent guests. Public

advertisements in the regional media were also used. It was estimated that 800 people witnessed the pole raising. The witnesses were both First Nations and others. There were Nisga'a people from their four villages and Nisga'a people from off-reserve. There were also First Nations people from the neighbouring Tsimshian, Gitksan, Haisla, Haida, Tlingit and Tahltan Nations in attendance. The non-Aboriginal peoples included those who were married to First Nations people and other friends and guests. These included the elected member of parliament for the area, church ministers, local professionals such as teachers and nurses, tribal council and band council employees and many others who attended for reasons of general interest. The high number of non-aboriginal peoples in attendance was welcomed by the hosting chiefs and matriarchs who wanted to use this event to share their culture with their neighbours in the wider society.

At this point, I would like to emphasize that my involvement in both the pole raising and in the feast was purely as a participant. Because of my specific interests in the anthropology of art, the focus of the research was on the social and aesthetic uses of Nisga'a cultural forms. I intentionally chose not to involve myself in extracting data from Nisga'a sources regarding their decisions with respect to the negotiating and the organizing of the pole raising and the feast. I believe such matters require discretion and while that data may have enriched the academic content of this work it may have been at the expense of exposing issues that best remain internal within the community.

The pole raising ceremony had started around noon. The totem pole was carried out of the carver's shed. It was placed flat on its back on supporting blocks of wood. Everyone had formed a circle around the pole. First, the pole was blessed by the chiefs and ministers. This feature of accomodating Nisga'a and western religions and spiritual views is a contemporary mainstay of their social lives. Typically, local western ministers have

been adopted into Nisga'a families and certain high ranking chiefs have also become clerics. The Nisga'a rather than treating these systems as historically oppositional prefer a co-cultural structure for integrating systems of spiritual knowledge. The Nisga'a believe that in such sacred ceremony the powers of the supernaturals are active forces throughout the community. At the centre of the circle were Alver Tait and his brothers Norman and Robert. Alver Tait was dressed in his deer hide dancing outfit with his carving tools wrapped around his waist. He was about to perform the Carver's Dance. According to the Taites, the totem pole raising ceremony serves to recognize both the peoples as well as the artists. As Norman Tait says, "The carvers honoured the people with their work. Now it's their turn to be honoured. I told them to act it, to feel it" (Jensen 1992:133-134).

The chiefs and the artists wore their regalia for the occasion to show their respect for their culture and for their totem pole. Sim'oogit Baxk'ap was especially noticeable as he is the only chief amongst the Nisga'a who wears the head and skin of the Wolf as his crown and cape. The other chiefs wore their am'halaites, or carved head frontlets with ermine skins and their robes to signify their status. For example, Baxk'ap's brother Wii Gadim Xsgaak wore his carved helmet representative of a Bear's head with fur trim. Both the staffs of Wii Gadim Xsgaak and Baxk'ap have carvings of Wolves on their tops. The regalia of these chiefs of the Luuxs'anuuhlkw are reflections as well as confirmations of their power from their ada'awak which is described in the Bear's Den Pole.

Halpin refers to crest display as an expression of social identity that occurs in the context of the potlatch and that its role is primarily about property rights (Halpin 1994: 11). She states this in opposition to the Boasian discourse that the primary function of wearing crest regalia is to express *pd'eek* as well as *wilp* identities. She notes that crests certainly act as expressions of identity but "that these are qualities of social position already known

to his/her fellow actors. They do not 'read' a pole or a crest robe in order to know how to act towards its owner" (p. 11). Her point, and I would concur, is that the functions of crest display operate at a deeper level of meaning. By stressing the concept of property she is emphasizing how the oral tradition acts to articulate cultural and territorial property rights. Essentially, the ada'wak forms the basis of the Ayuukhl Nisga'a. The rights and powers of chiefs, houses, and territories are contingent upon the ada'awk. As Halpin states,

"The telling of the ada'wak at a potlatch validates the right to claim and display the crests - and claim the lands - associated with it. In the shorthand of ritual action, crests become visual symbols of the economic resources of the group" (p. 11).

It is in this context that the interaction of people in regalia should be interpreted. The wearing of frontlets and robes serve as representations of power and property. The robes, commonly called button blankets, are a product of the fur trade. Their production is considered a woman's art form. They are made from red and black blanket cloth accented by buttons traditionally made of mother of pearl. They are also called crest blankets as the crest of the wearer is woven to be worn across the back. Every member of the Nisga'a Nation has the right to wear a blanket. Men's blankets always use black as the primary colour and red is used as the secondary colour and women's blankets reverse the colour scheme with the red serving as the primary colour and the black as the secondary colour. Women's blankets are predominately red to honour their status as the givers of life.

The blankets are designed to represent the four general crests of the pd'EEK or the specific crest of the wilp. Any pd'EEK member may wear a general crest blanket but only wilp

members may wear blankets which refer specifically to their ada'awk. For example, any member of the Laxgibuu has the right to wear the Wolf as a crest but only Bax'kap's people may wear the image of the Bear's Den as a blanket crest. Some of the chiefs also wear Chilkat style robes. Traditionally, they were woven from mountain goat wool and cedar bark. Unfortunately, the art of Chilkat weaving is gone from the Nass River as it was effectively replaced by button blankets. The robes of today are painted stencils on hides.

Everyone in the circle watched as Alver Tait approached the Bear's Den Pole. Norman and Robert Tait stood beside their brother. Norman, to signify his status as the Sim'oogit of the family wore his treasured Eagle Clan helmet with around a dozen white ermine skins attached to it. Only a Sim'oogit has the privilege of wearing ermine skin. Alver and Robert wore their cedar bark head bands to signify their status relative to Norman who is called the Head of the family. Both Norman and Robert Tait wore their button blankets. Norman Tait's blanket is a representation of a family spirit figure called the "Mischievous Man." This design is considered Norman Tait's signature. The high chiefs surrounded the Tait's as Norman began beating his eagle-designed tambourine drum and Robert followed with his globular-shaped shaman's rattle. In Alver Tait's words:

"I danced around the pole with my tools tied to my body. Once I started, all the people disappeared. My brothers - Norman and Robert - drummed and chanted. My mother and sisters danced to show I wasn't alone" (Nisga'a Tribal Council: 1992c).

In the ceremony of the Carver's Dance the artist removes the tools from his body and symbolically raises them to the Chiefs, the pole, and to the heavens. It is believed that the power of the carver is in his spirit and that it comes out in his hands. The hand

gestures with the tools are symbolic of the shaman with his rattles. You could see as well as feel Alver Tait's extraordinary state. He was experiencing an intensely emotional moment. The totem pole was finished and the Carver's Dance is used to signify the final time that the artist will touch the totem pole with this tools.

The protocol of the totem pole raising was arranged between the Chiefs of Gitwinksihlkw and the Tait family. In my discussion with the Tait's, it was agreed that the Tait's would perform two totem pole raising rituals of the Carver's Dance followed by a dance called the Breath-of-Life but that the actual raising of the totem pole would be organized and carried out by the village. To show respect for the totem pole it would be moved and raised traditionally by human hands only, rather than with machines. It is considered essential that the people have handled and raised the pole to its standing position.

Upon completion of the carver's dance the pole moving commenced. Over the course of around two hours, the Bear's Den pole was moved from the carving shed through the village and to its final resting place in front of the community hall called the Tsaul Tsap Memorial Centre. The carrying of the pole started when Sim'oogit Axdiiminajax, or Max Haines, a wilp chief of the Laxgibuu asked the public, first in Nisga'a and then in English, to move the pole. He was accorded this honour in virtue of his status as an extended family member of the lineage being respected by the pole raising. The movement of the totem pole is considered a spiritual as well as a physical journey. In moving the totem pole, there is always concern regarding the safety of the pole and its carriers. The chiefs had requested that twenty four pole carrying lifts be placed across and underneath the pole. The chief then requested that people place themselves four per side of each lift. Altogether, the pole was moved by nearly two hundred people. They all took their turns and lifted the pole. You could hear as well as feel the group's power as they

first lifted the pole off its support blocks. The Nisga'a believe the lifters are supported by the power of the spirits as they carry the pole throughout the village. At that point, appointed chiefs encouraged the movers. One chief told the movers In Nisga'a to be careful and to take their time. Two other chiefs led the procession by walking and drumming on each front side of the totem pole. Another stood immediately in the front of the pole, and symbolizing its journey carried a large bowl in the shape of a canoe which touched the base or the "bow" of the pole as it moved. The act of carrying the pole is the symbolic inversion of canoeing. In a canoe journey the tree carries the people inside. In a totem pole moving ceremony, people carry the tree. Yet, the physical act of carrying is analogous to the act of paddling. The pole carrying ceremony was stopped three times in order to Naaxuxw, which means to unite the chiefs and their villages together as a nation. Symbolically, each stop ritualized the unity of the Nisga'a nation in this pole raising. At the first stop, the chiefs of Gitlakdamiks acknowledged their support. On the second and third stop the chiefs of Laxgalzap and Gingolx spoke respectively on the same theme. All of these speeches were in Nisga'a. Finally, the chiefs and the people of Gitwinksilhkw were acknowledged at the totem pole's eternal stand.

Over the period the pole was moved, it had gotten colder and the snow continued to fall. Once again, the pole was rested on stumps and the people gathered around it. The Tait's then approached the pole for the final time. They would now perform the Breath-of-Life Dance on the Bear's Den Pole. In this ceremony the power of the carver's spirit is considered transferred into the figures which he carved. It is believed that at this moment the totem pole becomes a living being with its own spirit.

The ceremony is considered to have so much spirit power that Norman and Robert Tait, as well as Ron Telek, must give their own energy to Alver Tait as he approaches the pole.

I was not prepared for the sensation that followed. Alver Tait appeared to be in another state of consciousness. He had removed his button blanket and was wearing only a short sleeve T-shirt under a sleeveless vest and leggings. Usually this dance is undertaken barechested, but as it was so cold he had left his t-shirt on. Norman Tait then directed Telek to begin drumming and Robert to start shaking the rattle. Norman also took his drum and stood next to Alver. At first, Alver Tait slowly circled the pole and forcefully expelled air into the mouths of each of its forms. He then danced a series of encounters with each of the pole's figures. In the Breath-Of-Life Dance, the carver stands back and by shaking his body and grunting, finds his energy source and throws it into the pole by thrusting his neck and shoulders into the carving and placing his fingers and hands across it. All the major figures on the pole were touched this way. In the Nisga'a tradition, the Breath-Of-Life Dance signifies both the carver's goodbye and that he will never touch that totem pole again. Tait danced in a circle around the pole for nearly 15 minutes. As Alver Tait said:

"I did the Breath-Of-Life Dance just before the pole was raised. It was the final time to touch the pole. I breathed life into the major figures, like the Bear. It was emotional for me. I chanted all the while. Then I turned it over to the people who raised the pole" (Nisga'a Tribal Council: 1992c).

The physical raising of a totem pole is an intense and potentially hazardous undertaking. The totem pole is first wrapped in four ropes which must be tied in such a way that they won't turn into cutting knots once the pulling up of the pole begins. Men are assigned to both tying the ropes and lifting the pole. All four ropes were wrapped at about the 40 foot mark of the 55 foot Bear's Den pole. In this case, they were tied around the face and head of the Bear Hunter figure. Also used is a scaffold for four men to climb and handle the ropes when the pole is being raised and pole resting crutches. Crutches, two poles

ted together with rope, are employed in order for men standing on the ground to rest and balance the pole as it is being raised.

Many of those who raised the pole were from other First Nations and non-Aboriginals. Amongst the raisers was Jim Fulton, the member of parliament for the region. The Nisga'a chiefs had encouraged non-Aboriginal participation as a statement of the necessity for togetherness between the Nisga'a and their neighbours regardless of ethnic status. Once the signal was given by the chiefs, the pole raising began. The ropes were pulled in four directions. The pole was raised by pulling the two ropes behind the pole, while pulling the two ropes from the front to create the necessary tension to prevent the pole from swaying. (Stewart 1979: 80). As the pole rose, the crutches and ropes were constantly repositioned. Once the pole was secure in its base and stood upright the men on the scaffold removed the ropes. The image that Norman Tait provides of a totem pole raising is that of a "birthing, and the ropes are the umbilical cords" (Jensen 1992:139).

The chiefs interpret the act of raising the pole as the strengthening of the pole's power. For this reason, the use of prayer is required throughout the activity in order to ensure everyone's safety. The actual raising and swaying of the pole is filled with emotional tension as a miscue could injure the pole and or the people raising it. In this case, injury could be of a physical or spiritual nature as the chiefs believe it is the growing power within the pole which links the wilp to the spirit power and property of the group as a whole. The successful raising of a pole signifies the accomplishment of a group's social power achieved through a sacred harmony with spirit forces. (Gisday Wa Delgam Uukw 1989: 26-27)

There was a sense of elation once the Bear's Den Pole was raised and the ropes removed. There it stood—the first totem pole to be raised by the people of Gitwinksihlkw in one hundred years. Dustings of snow formed behind the ears of the Wolf and the Bear figures. At that point, Alver Tait said that he felt:

"exhausted. I never left the pole until it was safely raised. I was like a mother with her child. After it went up, I lingered outside in the snow; then I went inside for the feast" (Nisga'a Tribal Council: 1992c).

Once the pole was raised, the chiefs encouraged their guests to go into the feast hall and warm themselves. Only a few people remained around the totem pole for the final blessing ceremony. I was permitted to stay. I watched as Sim'oogit Baxk'ap and Sim'oogit Wii Gadim Xsgaak stood beside each other at the base of the totem pole. Also at the base of the pole were Colonel Don Kerr, Field Secretary of the Salvation Army who had settled and taught in Gitwinksihlkw between 1959 and 1961, and Father Ian McKenzie the archdeacon of the Diocese of Caledonia. As I looked over at the ministers it made me realize the significance of their denominational support for Nisga'a causes. This is especially so with respect to McKenzie. He is non-Aboriginal but a spiritual leader and an active member of the Nisga'a Tribal Council. He was adorned in his own button blanket. As he blessed the pole he thanked God for giving the Nisga'a their land and their culture. It made me realize the new-found ideological compatibility between the Nisga'a and contemporary western religious institutions. Baxk'ap recited in Nisga'a the ada'awak of his wilp, relating the history of his ancestors and their crests. He talked about the power of those crests. I could feel from his words the power of his emotion. I was emotionally touched when Baxk'ap commemorated his family by singing the wilp lim'ooy, or dirge song traditionally sung at funeral feasts and at totem pole raisings. According to the Nisga'a this is done because:

"The red cedar was the first tree (simgan) and its use for totem poles, pts'aan, is especially important to us. On completion..., the chief would conduct a ceremony and commemorate the very origin of the simgan. He sang a Lim'ooy... of his forefathers, that was what he sang. After the song the chief then commemorated the beginning of the Nisga'a..." (Nisga'a Tribal Council 1993: 117).

After Baxk'ap had spoken, I walked alone in the snow for a few minutes and then entered the community hall.

The Bear's Den Pole Raising Feast

The feast system is the public site for the validation of sim'oogit and wilp origins, powers, and their title rights to their ang'o'oskw. Feasts are a cultural requirement for expressing wilp rights for as Cove explains:

"title is not a proprietary right, but evidence that such a right exists...it can be argued that title was vested in house myths, songs, crests, and real names. The institution in which evidence of this kind was formally presented was the potlatch, or feast" (Cove 1982: 23).

Feasts are undertaken by wilps who wish to make cultural and territorial claims to things just described by Cove. A wilp either act alone or with other wilp in the hosting of feasts. Those invited serve as witnesses to the claims made by hosts. Guests may be directly affected by such claims but usually their representation is more neutral. The giving of food and gifts to guests is an expression of generosity and its intention is for making others wealthy. Also, the acceptance of food and gifts by guests serves as their recognition of the powers claimed by houses.

The relationship between hosts and guests is vital for understanding both the procedure and the outcome of feasts. Feasts are sites for negotiating social, territorial and spiritual powers. As Cove states:

"The invitation itself had significance. It showed that the hosts were a corporate entity with resources and a dwelling at their disposal. Both presenting and accepting an invitation indicated membership in a moral community in which those claims had importance" (p. 23).

This concept of a moral community is also analyzed by McDonald. It refers to the sacred nature of feasting as ritual actions that embody moral values. These values are informed through the Ayuukhl Nisga'a and ceremonially articulated in the feast hall. This is key for understanding the political as well as the spiritual dimension of feasting. For example, settlement feasts are the most important ceremonial activity among the Nisga'a because while the procedure is transferring political and legal claims of a deceased sim'oogit to his successor it is undertaken primarily within a spiritual context. In this case, when the wilp transfers its authority from one sim'oogit to another their powers that are associated with their names, crests, myths and songs are recounted because the successor is expected to personally embody the moral attributes associated with those powers. Also, the moral context for the settlement is expressed as a communication of the powers between the living and their ancestors whose powers are considered awakened and present in the feast hall.

Nisga'a heritage practises associated with raising memorial totem poles are also moral statements about the sim'oogit, their powers, and their angoskw. The raising of memorial poles and their feasts serve to recognize both the powers of the deceased and the enduring powers of the wilp. In the totem pole raising feasts, the ada'awk are recounted, crests displayed, and songs are sung in order to recreate the powers they

represent. The ada'awk represented on the totem pole is brought to life in the feast hall.

As Gisda Wa and Delgam Uukw state, it is through this ritual action that the:

"history is relived in the feast. The identity and power it confers on the house group is thus kept alive through its continuous recreation by each generation" (Gisda Wa and Delgam uukw 1989: 28)

What is especially interesting about the Gitwinksilhkw memorial pole raising feast is that its form and subject is firmly rooted in parent culture heritage practises but in some respects it differs from the classical model of a memorial pole raising. First, the pole was not raised as a memorial to a recently deceased sim'oogit. Instead, the pole was raised to remember a long deceased sigidimnak, or matriarch. The pole raising by honouring Louisa Oyca reinforced the role of high ranking women to confer decisions regarding names and inheritances. Also, by honouring the matriarch it recognized her power as the saviour of the lineage of Bax'ap. On an organization level, the pole raising feast was undertaken not only by Baxkap's wilp but it was co-hosted by the Laxgibu and Laxsgiik pd'eek, and the Gisk'ahaast and the Ganada also contributed as well as distributed Yuukw gifts. Thus, the pole raising feast is considered an expression of village unity rather than as activity of one leading wilp. This point would be reinforced in the feast speech by Sim'oogit Bax'kap when he gave thanks to all from the village who had gotten involved in the planning and presenting of the feast.

As I have already established, I was not involved in any aspect associated with the planning and presenting of the feast. However, I was informed that the event took nearly three years of planning. The fact that the majority of Gitwinksilhkw people were involved in this activity indicates that the social benefits of practising their heritage outweighs the financial costs and the time spent on organizing such activities. The chiefs

and the matriarchs of the wilps were responsible for co-ordinating every detail. Community meetings were held to decide how groups would contribute in the proceedings. The gathering of economic resources amounted in the thousands of dollars. (See appendix 3 for a list of gifts given at the feast.) Virtually every family in the village contributed time and money. What is notable about the gift list is that, apart from traditional foods, feast gifts are mostly store bought items, as cash and the market economy have replaced traditionally produced goods in the feast system. The economic implication of this change is that feast goods are no longer internally produced for distribution and consumption. This is why traditionally prepared food and handmade items are valued for they represented the care and labour associated with their production. On a symbolic level, the intent of the feast system as a validation of rights remains the same.

The Nisga'a word for feast goods is da wilk. Gifts gathered in Nisga'a feasts are distributed by women who symbolically fulfill their roles as givers of both culture and life. Gifts are given to guests based upon their rank, gender and age. Specific gifts are considered symbolically appropriate for chiefs, commoners, and children. For example, chiefs are honoured by receiving items such as store-bought quilts, hand-crocheted blankets, and oolichan grease. Other men received store bought blankets, hand-crocheted socks and or towels. Matriarchs received clothes such as jackets, kitchenware, and oolichan grease. Other women received kitchenware such as dishtowels. Children received clothes such as socks and other accessories. Children also received toys and games. The gifts serve to reinforce notions of rank and expected gender roles. I felt honoured to receive a pair of woolen home made socks. According to the feast list, only nine pairs of handmade socks were given away.

Once the Bear's Den pole was raised the formal procedures soon began in the feast hall. The Tsaul Tsap Memorial Centre is designed in a modified style of a Northwest Coast longhouse. The centre was ceremonially opened in 1984. Outside, there is a plaque commemorating the hall in the names of the previous chiefs. One name I recognized was that of Johnny Moore, Louisa Oyea's son and a man who once carried the name of Bax'kap. Inside the main foyer are large framed photographs taken by Marius Barbeau of the old village sites and the totem poles or Gwinahaa. Amongst them are close-ups of the original Bear's Den pole. These act as further reminders that the people of Gitwinksihlkw recognize their ancestors and remember their old poles.

As I looked at the photos of the Bear's Den pole I thought of Barbeau and its removal but within the new context of the pole that had just been raised. To me, it indicated a people's living connection to their culture. Once I saw the photos, the pole raising confirmed to me that this event was another example of what Clifford meant by "narratives of cultural disappearance and salvage could be replaced by stories of revival, remembrance, and struggle" (Clifford 1991: 214).

The feast began shortly after 5:00. All guests were met at the hall entrance by two of the village chiefs assigned to welcome them. These chiefs were appointed by the hosts to acknowledge and seat guests. As people entered the hall, one chief called the name of the guest and the other beat his drum. The strength of the voice and the depth of the drum beat was relative to the 'power' of the chiefly names. The welcoming chiefs then escorted guests to their seats. Protocol requires that they recognize chiefs and matriarchs of their own nation, as well as other First Nations, as it is imperative they avoid personal slight. In this situation, they also had the additional task of seating guests whom do not regularly attend feasts.

The welcoming chiefs assigned seating places relative to the Nisga'a social and moral order. The high chiefs sat in the front and or the centre of the seating arrangement and lesser ranked First Nations people and non-native guests sat on the side of the order. Symbolically, the arrangement of social space signifies the protection of chiefs. I was taken to a table on the side. There were 8 to 10 people at each table, my table included a Nisga'a family and a Tsimshian family. In all, there were over 50 tables of guests at the feast. The food was prepared by over a dozen women. They worked all day preparing 100 gallons of soup and Nisga'a sea foods.

The feast hall is considered a sacred place by the Nisga'a. It is believed that the powers and the spirits of K'amligihahlhaahl and their ancestors' spirits are present in the room. For these reasons, the hosts and guests of feasts are expected to follow appropriate decorum. Guests are expected to remain in their assigned seats, to accept food and gifts, and listen respectfully to the words spoken by the chiefs and matriarchs. In turn, the hosts acknowledge the spirits through their blessing of the feast. The generous actions of chiefs in their offering of food, gifts, and words of kindness form the goodwill which is necessary to create a successful feast. All successful feasts are marked by their peaceful settlement of relations between and amongst the wilp and the nation as a whole.

Feasts are sites and processes that the wilp chiefs of the nation use to maintain its social order. Cove refers to feasts as "assisting in asserting and maintaining that order; part of which consisted of territorial relations" (Cove 1982: 238). His statement is framed in the context that feasts are important for negotiating conflict resolution (p. 237). He states:

"given that conflicts of these kinds ultimately involved powers, they would be deemed as disruptive of the cosmic order; and considerable

public pressure would be used to bring about a peaceful settlement"

(p. 237-238).

While the Bear's Den pole raising feast was a project that symbolized cultural unity, every aspect of the protocol amongst wilp chiefs was highly ordered and tactful in order to ensure that none of the feast's aspects would question the harmony it attempted to construct.

The feast began with words of welcome from Sim'oogit Baxk'ap. After the speeches, a feast of soup and traditional Nisga'a seafood was served. Upon the completion of the meal, there were more speeches and the distribution of feast goods took place. The two most important speeches of the evening were given by Sim'oogit Baxk'ap and the matriarch Mrs. Dorothy Doolan, the eldest surviving member of the wilp of Luuxs'anuuhlkw. Mrs. Doolan turned 77 on the day of the pole raising. While the pole commemorated all of the peoples that day it was especially intended for both Louisa Oyea and her surviving granddaughter Mrs. Doolan. It was a dramatic moment when the small and somewhat frail Mrs. Doolan stood up and walked to the microphone at the front of the hall. She said, "I'm very pleased today...because of the effort to finish the totem pole...This pole belongs to the whole village." Mrs. Doolan and many others were overcome with emotion at that point. You could feel the power of those emotions throughout the hall. Mrs. Doolan then requested that all of her nephews, nieces and grandchildren come and stand behind her. Over one hundred people joined her. She said "Jacob (Baxk'ap) come forward please with your children..." The others that came forward were the other Laxgibuu Sim'oogits, Wiigadimxsgaak, Maurice Nyce, and Adjiimanajax, Max Haines, and their families. At that point, Mrs. Doolan was held by her grandson Simon Calder, aged 9. This boy is considered in line to become Simoogit Baxk'ap. She then said,

"These are my nephews and nieces which I am very proud. I thank the Good Lord for them tonight that they have witnessed the raising of the totem pole. These are the two, three, generations raised of my grandmother Louisa Oyea."

It was an emotional moment for everyone. The words of Mrs. Doolan with the gathering of the family behind her demonstrated to everyone the importance of the mothers in Nisga'a culture. The speech also confirmed the significance of Louisa Oyea to the community and why the Bear's Den Pole was created and raised in her honour.

Later, Baxk'ap spoke to honour the artist, Alver Tait. Baxk'ap stated:

"The carving of the totem pole tells the story of the courage of this young man here working. You know, sometimes he gets to be depressed when he is working by himself. Those of us that volunteered to help him - we gained an honor and knowledge of what he brought as a Master Carver. Alver, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart and the bottom of the hearts of the village. You have made us proud to reclaim our culture in order to make us a stronger and loving village of Gitwinksihlkw. We have come together not as one tribe but as four tribes (four clans). We have seen it work tonight when the ladies came out and handed out the gifts. Each one of them had a part in it and I'm proud of that. Alver, on behalf of the family, we present you with this picture of yourself carving the Bear's Den Pole. Thank you very much."

The essence of Baxk'ap's speech was confirmation of the contribution made by Alver Tait to the people of Gitwinksihlkw, and to the Nisga'a culture. The words of Baxk'ap stressed that culture is the source of strength and unity for the Nisga'a people. Later,

Baxk'ap stated that he wished that more totem poles be raised in the village. The feast was considered settled with the completion of the meal, the giving of the gifts, and the final words of thanks from the chiefs and matriarchs.

The Bear's Den Pole Raising Dance

The dance ceremony represented the final stage of the Bear's Den pole raising feast. At about 8:00 pm, the hosting chiefs had requested that all guests vacate their seats and assemble themselves on the spectators bleachers. At that point, the hosts cleared away the tables and the chairs from the gymnasium floor while others went off to change into their dance regalia. The dance is an integral aspect of the feasting system. Nisga'a dances represent the re-enactments of the wilp ada'wak and they are performative assertions of wilp powers. Cove refers to the songs which accompany dances as also integral to the ada'wak and that their performance can act to provide evidence for specific wilp claims to powers and territory (Cove 1982: 237). Garfield in an early reference to dance and music describes the art form as "re-enactments for the glorification of chiefs and their lineages, for the spiritual benefits of individuals and for the pleasure and instruction of spectators" (Garfield 1951: 56). These references indicate that the art forms of dance and music serve many functions at once. They symbolize wilps' communicating with the supernatural powers of their houses while also informing and pleasing spectators.

The performative aspect of dance and music makes it difficult to compare with its past heritage practises. While Nisga'a sculpture remains as a permanent visualization of that art form, the performing arts of dance and music are momentary creations that exist in performance only. I would suggest that contemporary Nisga'a people have been able to

successfully return to their heritage practises of carving and painting partly because they have studied the art form through analyzing the collected works of their past masters. However, as there is no visual record of Nisga'a dance prior to the contemporary period it is difficult of assess to what degree that art form has changed. The same can be stated about the songs. In the case of the Bear's Den Pole raising, some of the songs and dances were created specifically for the event while others reflected long-standing parent culture practises. For example, the most important dances of the Nisga'a are the Chief's Dance and the Dance of the Naḵ Noḵ Spirit. Those dances were performed in the same manner as described in the ethnographic literature. I had the opportunity to ask Baḵk'ap who performed the Chief's Dance how he had learned it. He told me that he had begun as the Naḵ Noḵ Spirit dancer almost fifty years ago. He developed the practise of the Chief's Dance by observing and learning from those who still danced it. While only his generation of elders recall that practise, they have reconstructed it for contemporary usage. The same can be stated about the totem pole as its figures specifically refers to the ada'wak while containing additional contemporary messages of cultural unity and heritage. Significantly, the Nisga'a do not interpret these activities as traditional versus non-traditional. Rather, those changes are incorporated into their heritage practises in order to reflect contemporary social conditions.

In the Bear's Den pole raising dance, all of the performers either wore their personal regalia or the costumes representing the principal characters of the dramas being represented. The leading dancers represent powers of chiefs, halaits, and naḵ noḵ spirits. The Nisga'a ensemble is divided into dancers and musicians. The musicians are always men. The symbolism of men playing instruments is their representation of the physical, as well as protective power of warriors. Their instruments are rhythm producing drums and rattles. Occasionally, whistles are also employed. The whistles and rattles are used

to beckon or awaken the *nax nox*. The metaphor of the tambourine drum as the warrior's shield reinforces the gender division of drumming as a man's role. An important Nisga'a instrument is the bentwood box drum. The drum is a large rectangular open box which a man pounds with his fist. The player is responsible for producing the bass rhythm which the other musicians and dancers follow. The composition and presentation of songs form the unifying element of Nisga'a performing arts.

The people of Gitwinksihlkw planned eight practices prior to the raising of the Bear's Den Pole. The performance includes the recreation of the *ada'awak* carved in the totem pole. As Clifford Nyce states,

"You can't just put a pole up with nothing else to mark the event. Our lives are meant to be based on ceremonies and feasts and story telling"

(Terrace Standard: August 10, 1994).

The Gitwinksihlkw peoples' group, The Four Crest Dancers' is virtually everyone from the village numbering nearly two hundred. The principal dancers of the troupe are Mansell Griffin of the Laxgibuu and Dennis Nyce of the Laxsgiik. Griffin in his early twenties, is a university student majoring in computer science. His grand-uncle, Baxk'ap, bestowed upon him the honour of the *halait* dance which he had performed when he was a young man. Baxk'ap chose Griffin because of his nephew's commitment to the culture. Baxk'ap has stated that although his nephew is now at university he still has a place amongst the people of Gitwinksihlkw as signified by his dance. The other principal dancer Dennis Nyce states that the *halait* "was a clean and pure medicine man and Mansell represents this" (Terrace Standard: August 10, 1994).

Nyce, the son of Baxk'ap, is a both a carver and a dancer, who performs the dance of the supernatural *nax nox*. He is the only dancer who wears a mask throughout the entire performance. His mask was carved around sixty years ago by the former Baxk'ap Johnny Moore, the son of Louisa Oyea. Nyce describes dancing with a mask as "being under a mask is like a whole other world. You kind of drift away from yourself for a while and everything moves inside you" (Terrace Standard: August 10, 1994). During the dance, Nyce always enters the hall first and exits last. He states that,

"I have to lead so the dancers behind me can feel the spirit of *nax nox*. I follow behind the dancers as they leave so that they have access to the spirit the whole time they are dancing" (Terrace Standard: August 10, 1994). For Nyce the dance is important. "I really enjoy doing this because I was of the people taken to residential school and was forbidden to sing the songs. I realized I had lost touch with my culture and this has reconnected me" (Terrace Standard: August 10, 1994).

None of the dancers had yet entered the hall of the pole raising feast when a voice cried out—Hap! Hap! Hap!, followed by the sound of Tak!, Tak!, Tak! Suddenly the *nax nox* dancer appeared. The subject of the *nax nox* mask is strikingly humanoid but it has a curved bird-like beak over its mouth. Halpin describes such creatures as having beaks that curve downward into a mammalian mouth. She emphasizes the ambiguous nature of these creatures. As crests, they represent supernatural rather than natural symbols. She refers to Cove by stating

"Far from the natural species said to be used as crests in the Boasian model, these crests are momentos of supernatural experiences [Cove 1987]" (Halpin 1994:12).

Also, there are boughs of cedar attached to the tops, sides and back of the mask which represent the wild state and place of the nax nox. The dancer made a clapping sound with two sticks that he held in one hand and clapped in his other palm. The dancer wore a Chilkat style robe, a dance apron, and leggings with boughs of cedar attached to the shin front. The dancer moved in a squatting and bouncing fashion. He turned in a circle, stopped, and tilted his head from side to side occasionally yelling and beating his clapper. This gestures symbolizes the calling of the spirits.

Once the spirit of the nax nox was felt, the other performers entered the hall. The procession was led by Baxk'ap who wore his full regalia of wolf headdress, chilkat robe, dance apron, and leggings. All of Baxk'ap's regalia signified his ada'wak. His headdress and talking stick expressed the symbolism of the supernatural wolf that was slayed and the painting on his dance apron signified their most important family crest - the Bear's Den. The image is that of a bear within a circle. He carried his talking stick and he kept the rhythm of the Four Crest Dancers by tapping the base of the talking stick on the floor as he walked. Baxk'ap was followed first by the other chiefs, and then the matriarchs, girls, and boys. The drummers surrounded the group to signify their role as protectors. Together, they moved across the hall to their appointed places. The drummers arranged themselves into two rows on one side of the hall. The chiefs were noticeable by their frontlets with ermine skin. The chief drummers stood in the first row with the younger warriors behind them. Baxk'ap and a few of the other highest ranked chiefs stood front and center with their people behind in four rows, each by clan. Baxk'ap and Hlayim Wil served as performance leaders using their talking sticks to point to various musicians and dancers. Also, four elderly chiefs and matriarchs sat at center stage between Baxk'ap and Hlayim Wil. These elders had prominent seats of honour to recognize their wisdom and

legacy in the community. Though they would not dance, their presence was considered vital in order to empower the performance of the others.

Five songs and dances were presented at this feast. All four clans led in the performance of their own song and dance. One of the two most important solos of this dance cycle was the halait performance. In this case, the Halait dancer approached center stage wearing a frontlet representing his own wolf crest. In the song, each chorus symbolized the different level of power that the halait possesses. The power of the halait is symbolized in the dance through his encounters with the other spirits who danced with him. At one point, the halait danced with a young warrior wearing a carved Bear mask and hide. The halait's eventual sacrificial killing of the bear symbolizes the relationship between the Laxgibuu and the bear as represented in the Bear's Den Pole. The bear allows itself to be killed by the halait. In turn, the power of the bear's spirit is recognized by the Laxgibuu who honour the bear by taking it as a crest for their wilp.

The final song of the Four Crest Dancers is called "Obeeyai" The song refers to the moon before spring equinox. The Nisga'a believe the sliver moon of the month of February is a sign of the oolichan run to follow. Should the sliver appear upright as a dug-out canoe on the water, many oolichan will come. Otherwise, the threat of hunger could occur. As Norman Tait states:

"The moon is so much a part of our stories that a story will usually begin with the words 'On the moon before the eulachen', or 'On the moon that I was born on'... and continue from that point. The moon is such a powerful force and symbol that no person can claim it as a crest or otherwise. It is shared by everyone. The moon is the symbol of ultimate power" (Wyatt 1994: 27).

Obeeyai symbolizes power and sharing—the sharing of food as well as the sharing of culture.

In the performance of Obeeyai all members of the group danced in a circle. The matriarchs led the young while Baxk'ap and the other chiefs and drummers kept the rhythm rising. Each chorus got stronger and deeper as everyone chanted - O-bee-Yai!... O-bee-ai-ai-ai!... O-bee-ai-ai-ai!... O-bee-Yai!... In the circle, all the dancers moved as their own crest animals signifying Eagles, Wolves, Killer Whales, and Ravens. Once the rhythm of Obeeyai reached its peak, Baxk'ap signaled Hlayim Wil to invite everyone in the audience to join the circle. At that point, the drummers encircled the group and the energy of Obeeyai was shared by everyone. Baxk'ap stood alone in the middle of the circle to perform the most important of all Nisga'a dances called The Great Dance of Chiefs, or the Wihalait. He tilted his head back and moved from side to side swaying his Wolf robe. As everyone in the village danced around Baxk'ap, you were reminded of his ada'awak of the great Wolf with the radiant tail who governs from the center of the circle. When Baxk'ap finished the drummers formed two rows on each side of the feast hall entrance. Baxk'ap then led his people out, followed by the drummers, the box drummer, and the nax nox, in that order. The singing and drumming of Obeeyai continued outside for another five minutes. This dramatic gesture allowed those remaining in the feast hall to imagine what otherwise could not be seen.

The performance of the Four Crest Dancers created an emotionally charged atmosphere for both the performers and the spectators. Afterwards, I met up with my friend who is a drummer in the group. He had removed his regalia. We stood outside in the midnight cold with the Bear's Den Totem Pole behind us. I asked him how he felt. He thought about it and said that as the village social worker he had just participated in a ceremony

that had cleansed as well as strengthened the community. As we walked down the trail to his house he said, "How could I put it? You've just seen our system of psychotherapy." I found it difficult to fall asleep that night. I felt that I had witnessed a powerful event. I thought about the people of the village living and gone from the community. I thought about the new totem pole and the ones that were removed, but what I really felt was the power of the circle - the circle of time, spirits, and events that at moments like this touch the people of the Nass Valley upwards to the Heavens.

VI

**THE POLITICS OF RAISING TOTEM POLES,
THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF ART,
AND SELF-DETERMINATION**

The Politics of Contemporary Totem Pole Raisings

This thesis began with the following questions: Why was this totem pole raised? What formations of meanings have the people of Gitwinksilhkw attached to the raising of the totem pole? I have tried to examine Nisga'a art as a process of cultural (re)production through which its creation and use (re)construct the personal and social identity of a nation's people. My strategy focussed upon a particular pole in one village in order to make the connection between a community and its family histories as the primary source for producing art forms which serve to link peoples to one another and to their lands. I have tried to establish that the Bear's Den Pole was raised to honour many aspects of Nisga'a culture and that its meanings express the survival and strength of the Nisga'a. I would maintain that in order to analyze contemporary Nisga'a totem pole raising ceremonials it is necessary to return to the politics of the land question. In examining the Nisga'a and nation state relationship, totem pole raising ceremonials can be comprehended as products of political as well as aesthetic struggle.

The political dimension of contemporary totem pole raising ceremonials is the addressing of questions of power that are both internal within First Nations as well as between First Nations and the nation state of Canada. In this case, the term power is used to describe a group's legitimate capacity to exercise its autonomy and the term politics refers to that group's ability to negotiate the distribution of social and economic rewards amongst its citizens. The first question is a definitional one. Are First Nations in fact nations? The term "nation" is distinguishable from the term "state". A "State" refers to an organized political community under one government. A "Nation" has a broader sociological meaning. It refers to a people's culture and it includes such aspects of heritage as history, language, religion and territory. In this sense, it refers to the common spirit of a people.

First Nations in Canada are certainly nationalities in the sociological usage of the term. They also comprise organized political communities but ones whose authority is superceded by that of the nation state. This is not to suggest that the authority of nation states are any more morally legitimate than that of First Nations but that the powers of states are enshrined through legislation that has established the political and legal framework of the state.

Interestingly, national consciousness can precede state building as well as endure under a First Nation to nation state relationship. This has certainly been the case with the Nisga'a. The contemporary relationship between the First Nations and the nation state of Canada is currently being politically restructured through new arrangements which will redefine the power relationship between the state and First Nations. Ultimately, the outcome of these negotiations will likely grant First Nations people more recognition and autonomy within the nation state. As First Nations negotiate powers which will both enhance their autonomy and produce rewards for their citizens they will in effect decolonize their historical relationship with the state.

The relationship between First Nations and the nation state of Canada is best understood as a product of struggle. Using the Nisga'a as an example, their gains have been achieved by resisting total cultural assimilation under the nation state while using existing political and legal structures of the state to negotiate greater Nisga'a autonomy.

Contemporary Nisga'a strategies of self-hood have combined the revitalization of cultural heritage practices in order to express their distinct status in the nation state and western political and legal practises in order for them to negotiate a new status within the nation state. My point is that the broader implications of contemporary Nisga'a heritage practises is that they speak both to the nation as well as for the nation.

The acts of carving and raising of totem poles and the feasts associated with them have always been undertaken by First Nations within a political context. The whole process can be considered as negotiations by chiefs to distribute social and economic rewards amongst their peoples. The added political dimension of contemporary pole raising feasts is that the political context has been broadened to include the Nisga'a and nation state relations. For example, the land claims goals of the Nisga'a have eight points. Those points refer to subjects of culture as well as to political and economic self-determination. This is highlighted by the first point:

"To preserve and enhance Nisga'a self-determination, cultural survival and well-being for generations to come...". Other points include "to bring the Nisga'a peoples, lands and resources and cultural heritage into the Canadian confederation" and "to provide the basis for the survival of the Nisga'a as an economically self-reliant and sustainable distinct society within Canada."

Other points refer to constitutional recognition and economic compensation.

Following McDonald, I would suggest that Nisga'a heritage practises such as feasting and the raising of totem poles form indigenous theories of practise which act to counter state hegemony. The fact that the Nisga'a have a social and land ownership system which is hundreds if not thousands of years old and that the British North America Act and the Province of British Columbia have been in existence only since 1867 and 1871 respectively is reinforced by the chiefs in the feast hall. This point is usually referenced around the question of who has authority to the land and that parent culture heritage practises forms an unbroken legacy between a people and their lands. The matter of authority over the land is also addressed with the raising of totem poles. This is Halpin's

point when she refers to art being connected to family stories and the link between art and the land (Halpin 1994: 13).

As McDonald points out the potlatch legitimizes social and political relationships and it acts as the institutional equivalent of a parliament. He also notes that the institution of feasting by articulating indigenous forms of self-government both challenges the parliamentary model while providing a native context for articulating contemporary struggles over land claims and economic development. This is what McDonald means what he says that feasting accesses and generates a type of knowledge that constructs "native experience" as well as a "native representation" of such experiences (McDonald 1995: 134). McDonald describes feasts as an instrument of knowledge for the construction of a social reality that operates on three levels. First, feasting forms a community consensus for what he calls "homogenizing knowledge" about a people's awareness of their heritage and their heritage practises. Secondly, the practise of feasting creates "dispositions and competencies" for First Nations people which enable them to act according to their heritage. Thirdly, McDonald states that feasting "provides principles for a practical logic that generates further appropriate practises in the same and different contexts" (p. 134).

These points are important for understanding modern Nisga'a totem pole raising feasts. On the first point, the Nisga'a have maintained a cultural network to express their heritage and to practise culture. Certainly, many of those cultural forms have changed, and in some cases disappeared, over the past century. However, I would suggest that the continuation of settlement feasts and the moving of gravestones has been the key institutional feature for the continuation of the Ayuukhl Nisga'a, and that it has also been the basis for revising other forms of feasts such as those for raising totem poles. My

point is, the Nisga'a return to raising totem poles was facilitated by their common understanding and knowledge of other feasting practises in general. In this case, "concrete features" of Nisga'a social life such as the Simoogit and wilp system and all of its associated prerogatives regarding myths, crests, and territory as expressed through the feast hall has been the activating force for revising the cultural use of crest art and totem pole raising ceremonials.

Contemporary Nisga'a totem pole raisings are best interpreted as ceremonial (re)constructions developed by an emergent type of knowledge. They are social (re)constructions in that they are shaped by a people's imagining of the appropriate conduct of their past heritage practises while accomodating for the currency of their present social reality. There is no question that the form and substance of contemporary pole raisings are different from the raisings of the last century. Unfortunately, the extent of those differences are difficult to analyze because the only textually documented record of past century raisings are from Barbeau's interviews with elderly chiefs who recalled those events from their childhoods. In this case, the present generation of chiefs has relied on its memories of pole raising stories as told to them more than fifty years ago by that generation of elders who would have remembered attending such events and by forming contemporary orthodoxies to express the practising of their social identities.

McDonald deals with this concept of changing heritage practises in his second point regarding dispositions and competencies. His point is that the participants in the preparation and presentation of contemporary feasts become immersed in the cultural logic of feasting. By working out protocol, organizing of gifts, sending out of invitations and the rehearsing of presentations they are constructing knowledge for informing decisions based on culturally appropriate practises. In the case of the Nisga'a, they are

well versed in the process of feasting protocol. They have already formed an institutional set of social dispositions and competencies for such practices. It is this fact that has allowed the Nisga'a to (re)construct the contemporary practise of totem pole raising feasts. While the Bear's Den pole was the first to be raised in Gitwinksilhkw in a century, this activity was coordinated by a group of chiefs who are well versed in all aspects of feasting. They knew how to proceed with the raising because of their cultural knowledge developed by and from feasting. In this way, the raising of the Bear's Den pole should be perceived as a revitalized activity created from new competence, but within the context of existing social dispositions of the community.

On McDonald's third point of the practical logic associated with feasting he suggests that potlatching engenders broader meanings and practises. He states that with respect to the process of revival that potlatching competencies influence other related cultural activities as well. The activities that he includes are:

"art, ceremonialism, self-government, land claims, economic development and education" (p. 137). His point is that feasting practises "develop a compatibility with the social conditions that are appropriate for feasting and to respond to the stimulus of those social conditions" (p. 137).

In this case, contemporary feasts are about constructing and communicating culture both within First Nations and outwardly to the broader Canadian society. Also, there is a dialectical relationship between those internal and external sets of communication. Contemporary pole raising feasts articulate prerogatives and powers associated with parent culture heritage practises and through such formation of self-government they are also articulating projects of decolonization. The raising of the Bear's Den pole and its associated feast is best understood as statements of Nisga'a interests and identities on

matters such as heritage, kinship and cultural and territorial rights while also expressing other discourses on questions such as aboriginal rights, land claims and self-government.

On the evening that the Bear's Den Pole was raised Sim'oogit Baxk'ap expressed his wish that more totem poles be raised in the village of Gitwinksihlkw. Three years later his wish was fulfilled. On October 16, 1995, the Nisga'a raised five more totem poles in the village. Four of those poles were raised adorning the corners of the new bridge that was ceremonially opened on that day. The subjects of those poles are the four crests of the Nisga'a. Each pole represents one of those crests. The fifth pole was raised in front of the new elementary school. Alver Tait carved both that pole and the Eagle pole on the bridge. Chester Moore carved the Raven pole, Murphy Stanley carved the Killerwhale pole, and Dennis Nyce - who apprenticed under Alver Tait - carved the Wolf pole. For Nyce, this was his first pole. This is what McDonald means when he states that heritage practises engender further dispositions and competencies. In the speeches by the artists, Dennis Nyce stated that the totem poles represent "The signatures of the ownership of this land." His statement best captures the meaning of totem poles to the people of Gitwinksihlkw.

When I began this thesis, I stated my interests in Cove's project for combining the study of symbolic systems with land claims. I would suggest that the land question for the Nisga'a is inextricably attached to their symbolic systems as socially constructed by their sim'gigat and their wilp, and that feasts and pole raisings act as endorsements of those systems. McDonald also refers to Cove when he states the relationship between chiefs as titleholders to ang'o'skw and the cosmological aspect of their land ownership (McDonald 1994: 138). I would also concur both with Cove and McDonald that while feasting and pole raising expresses a way of life they do not in themselves demonstrate

legal ownership of the land. Rather, they represent the question of ownership until land claims are negotiated with the state.

Ironically, the Nisga'a continue to claim their territory by emphasizing their cultural system, but that system will be severely compromised once a land claim settlement has been negotiated. According to those who adhere closest to parent culture practises the land was given by God to the titleholders who keep it in trust for the next generation of titleholders. Should the Nisga'a settle for what is currently being offered they will control under ten percent of their traditional territory. What will happen to their social and symbolic networks when the state formally acquires title to most of their lands? The Nisga'a Tribal Council believes in the philosophy of the common bowl, meaning that all Nisga'a will share equally in a land claim settlement. While this is the fairest strategy under the present conditions, it captures the contradiction between a long established social system and the contemporary demands of the bargaining table. I believe that a land claim settlement is imminent and that more totem poles will be raised in the Nass Valley. The subject of those poles will continue to be clan and community unity as responses and demands to the common bowl approach. At this point, the social and political conditions are such that it is unlikely that the Nisga'a will return to their past practise of raising sim'oogit memorial poles only. However, as their return to carving and raising totem poles would indicate the people and their art form are incredibly resilient. They will continue to construct their culture and their history by responding and resisting as well as by building symbols and institutions which speak of being Nisga'a in our time.

Contemporary Totem Poles and the Anthropology of Art

I would like to conclude this thesis by examining the significance of contemporary poles for the subject of the anthropology of art. Throughout this work, I have emphasized that totem poles are art and that as objects of expressive culture they are especially potent for constructing identity. I have shown how the Nisga'a art of totem poles is linked to the rest of their cultural order and how the production and use of totem poles (re)produces as well as (re)constructs their social identity. At this point, it would be worthwhile to revisit some of the theories associated with the anthropology of art in order to establish the contribution of this work to the field.

The opening quote of this thesis by Morphy (1994) regarding teaching others to interpret the properties of objects from other cultures according to their aesthetics as a way of providing insight and feeling into their world has been my primary technique for explaining Nisga'a totem poles. The theoretical construct of this thesis was influenced by Morphy's observations on art and aesthetics, especially his statements that concepts of art must allow for the analysis of objects from the producing culture's values (Morphy 1994: 655). By following this method, I was able to create what Morphy calls a "point of entry" (p. 662) for understanding Nisga'a art and their other cultural processes, and this strategy allowed me to connect those processes in action. It permitted me to analyze Nisga'a totem pole art in relation to Morphy's statement that:

"an analysis of art may be an excellent way to approach the question of individual and group identity, revealing how people compete with one another at one level and express common identity at another" (p. 662).

In analyzing both the form and functions of totem poles in general, and the Bear's Den pole in particular, I was able to answer what the objects represent, what they do, and what effects they have for the people who make and raise them. By focussing on this cultural practise it allowed me to express aspects of their ideology and spirituality inherent in their world views.

This thesis was also interested in the degree to which the world of the Nisga'a has changed and how these changes are expressed in their heritage practises such as totem pole raisings. In this area, I found Clifford's (1991) work invaluable because he analyzed Northwest Coast art within the context of colonialism and its effects while also capturing contemporary post-colonial struggles between the First Nations and the state. By following this approach, I used anthropological and other social data to answer questions regarding cultural changes as a result of European contact while introducing current debates on subjects such as resistance to assimilation, strategies or self-determination, and how art acts as a creative and political process for achieving identity and maintaining difference. This work was especially influenced by Clifford's statement of how the First Nations people of today use their art to show "how a dominant practise of collection and display has been turned to unanticipated ends. Master narratives of cultural disappearance and salvage could be replaced by stories of revival, remembrance, and struggle." (Clifford 1991: 214). This was the approach that I used for analyzing the making and the raising of the Bear's Den totem pole.

The work of Valda Blundell (1993) was significant for analyzing cultural politics in the anthropology of art. While this thesis is a study of the aesthetics of cultural forms, totem pole raisings are interpreted as sites for expressing and negotiating cultural and political rights both within the Nisga'a nation and externally with other First Nations, the non-

Aboriginal population and the state. My analysis of totem pole raisings was structured within Blundell's statements that:

"The making and use of art never occurs in a vacuum but within a wider cultural context where it both influences and is influenced by other aspects of culture...Art must also be related to the technological, economic and political aspects of a group's way of life" (Blundell 1939: 9).

By using this approach, this thesis analyzes the making and raising of contemporary totem poles by examining the political relationship between the Nisga'a nation and the state.

Halpin's work on crest art is useful in that it provides for a "co-cultural" approach for understanding northwest coast art (Halpin 1994: 13). My own work on examining this pole was undertaken within her statement that:

"meanings of art are contextual and communicate with those who are co-cultural with its creators. As scholars, we can grasp those meanings to the extent that we grasp that context" (p. 1994: 13).

This context includes connecting the art to the powers of the ada'awk as articulated by their owners through the feast hall. By telling of the ada'awk at feasts the rights of chiefs to claim their crests and their lands have been confirmed.

I introduced historical data on the subject of the Nisga'a and their totem poles in order to describe the effects of colonization within their culture. This approach allowed me to describe the vitality and then later decline of carving and raising poles while also creating contexts and boundaries for analyzing the recent renewal of totem pole carving amongst the Nisga'a. This was achieved by working back and forth analytically linking local questions to the wider macro political level of the nation state. The overall purpose of

this method was to describe how symbolic meanings of totem poles have in some ways remained constant and in other ways have changed. The constant feature of contemporary totem poles is that they describe the ongoing Nisga'a relationship between themselves and their territory through their art. The greatest change of contemporary totem poles is that they are now statements of cultural identity while also expressing their political empowerment vis-a-vis their relationship with the state.

As stated in the introduction of this thesis, the key organizing concept of this work was developed by Clifford, and referred to by Blundell and Morphy, that treating:

"artifacts as fine art is currently one of the most effective ways to communicate cross culturally a sense of quality, meaning and importance" (Clifford 1991: 225).

My reasoning for approaching the subject in this manner was to communicate these themes both with respect to the art form as well as to the culture of their producers. This thesis was most influenced by Clifford's claim that the study of art can be:

"par excellence, a tool of cultural relativism" (p. 241) and by Blundell's statement regarding how the exhibiting of First Nations art acts as sources of "native power" (Blundell 1993: 19).

Ultimately, this work has been a study of power. Throughout this thesis I have tried to show that different types of power exist and that our social world is a series of power relations. What the raising of the Bear's Den pole by the Nisga'a has taught me is that we as people have the power to act, to create, and to survive within the spirit of a culture.

Postscript: The Settlement of the Nisga'a Land Question

On February 15, 1996, the Nisga'a Tribal Council and the governments of Canada and British Columbia announced they had reached an agreement-in-principle on a treaty settlement. The treaty is historic in that it is the first comprehensive land claims settlement in the province of British Columbia. The agreement was first announced in a media release issued jointly by the Nisga'a Tribal Council, the Government of Canada, and the Province of British Columbia. In the communiqué, Chief Joe Gosnell Sr., president of the Nisga'a Tribal Council, stated,

"This represents a hard fought compromise that has seen a generation of Nisga'a growing old at the negotiating table but we are making that compromise in order to become full and active participants in the social, political and economic life of this country."

Also, Ronald Irwin, the federal minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development stated,

"Today we make history. This agreement in principle forms the fundamental basis on which Canada, BC, and the Nisga'a people are forging a new relationship based on partnership and mutual respect."

When the negotiators publicly initialed the treaty document Irwin offered an apology to the Nisga'a for their 120-year struggle for recognition of their land rights (Vancouver Sun: February 16, 1996).

The terms of the agreement-in-principle establishes a Nisga'a central government with ownership to and self-government of 1,930 square kilometres of land in the Nass River Valley. The agreement also provides a cash payment of \$190 million to be managed by the Nisga'a central government. The agreement states that the federal government will

provide \$175.5 million and the province \$14.5 million. The agreement also contains provisions of the new social, health, and educational jurisdiction of the Nisga'a government, as well as their other newly established authority in the areas of lands and resources, fisheries, environmental assessment, taxation and cultural artifacts. (Nisga'a Treaty Negotiations Agreement-in-Principle: 1996). Essentially, the agreement grants the Nisga'a broader powers of self-government and an economic base to manage and control under 10% of their traditional territory.

It is important to note that the agreement-in-principle only forms the basis for negotiating a final agreement by the three governments. The terms of the agreement still requires ratification by all of the parties through their respective assemblies. The implementation of the treaty is projected to take two years. The Nisga'a Nation has already voted over 90% in favor of the agreement. The political opposition over the agreement has been intense at both the federal and provincial levels. According to Joe Gosnell Sr., the Nisga'a are not prepared concede any concessions. He has stated, "In our view, it's already watered down" (Vancouver Sun: February 16, 1996). Critics of the agreement have focused on its cost and that it creates collective rights and powers based upon ethnic status. The only potential barrier to this agreement would be a change of government either at the provincial or federal levels. Otherwise, the agreement will be finalized in either its present or somewhat modified form.

The section of the agreement-in-principle on cultural artifacts and heritage defines Nisga'a artifacts as "any object having past and ongoing importance to Nisga'a cultural and spiritual practices" (Nisga'a Treaty Negotiations Agreement-in-Principle: 108). The agreement also recognizes:

"the integral role of Nisga'a artifacts in the continuation of Nisga'a culture, values and traditions (and) the Nisga'a Nation's traditional and sacred connection with Nisga'a artifacts regardless of whether such artifacts are held by the Nisga'a government, the Canadian government, the Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC) or the Royal British Columbia Museum (RBCM)" (p. 108).

Essentially, the agreement provides for the repatriation of a few hundred items of Nisga'a cultural property presently owned by the two museums. Both museums have agreed to transfer the legal ownership of some Nisga'a cultural property to the Nisga'a central government within five years of the effective date of the agreement. This time will allow the Nisga'a to build their own appropriate facility and to train some of their citizens to operate a cultural centre.

The agreement defines which objects of Nisga'a cultural property will be transferred outright to the Nisga'a central government by the CMC and the RBCM and which objects may be occasionally loaned to the Nisga'a. George McDonald, the executive director of the CMC, stated that with the agreement, "We're not emptying our vaults. What we're doing is sharing with them, and pieces will move back and forth" (Vancouver Sun: February 17, 1996). I went to the appendices to locate the Bear's Den Totem Pole. It is located in Appendix O on page 4. All objects in this appendix are subject to the following conditions: "8. At any given time, some of the Nisga'a artifacts listed in Appendix O may be in the possession of Nisga'a central government." (Nisga'a Treaty Negotiations Agreement-in-Principle: 109). In the appendix, the object has one line consisting of a catalogue number, an object name, the name of its collector and the date

of its collection. Every one of those objects has a story. Perhaps the story of the Bear's Den totem pole is that one day it will be returned and raised in its rightful place with the Nisga'a of the Nass River Valley.

Appendix A

The Raising of the Bear's Den Totem Pole

Illustration I: Raising the Totem Pole to the Sky

- Note the pole resting crutches, the ropes, and the men working on the scaffold.

Illustration II: Balancing the Totem Pole

- The pole resting crutches are used to balance the pole. Note the Sim'oogit using his drum to keep rhythm for the crew.

Illustration III: Planting the Totem Pole into Place

- The totem pole is being pushed into a metal back brace. Note the Sim'oogit using his drum stick to direct the lifters from the back. Norman Tait wearing the Eagle Helmet is in the foreground watching.

Illustration IV: Touching The Heavens

- The totem pole is now resting upright. The cutting of the ropes and the removal of the pole resting crutches are the final acts of the raising.

Appendix B

The Village of Gitwinksihlkw

Illustration V: The Village Welcome Sign

- Note the animals representing the four crests of the community. Top from L. to R: The Wolf, the Eagle, the Raven, and the Killer Whale. The two bottom figures represent Lizards.

Illustration VI: The Suspension Bridge:

- The bridge hangs fifteen metres over the Nass River. The village is in the background. The carving shed is the low roofed building on the left hand side.

Illustration VII: The River and The Village

- The village is built over a flat area on the river canyon. These buildings are the newer homes of the village.

Illustration VIII: The Old Salvation Army Church

- The church was built in 1927. The majority of village residents belong to this denomination. The Church is a highly active organization in the community.

Illustration IX: The Community Centre

- The community centre was opened in the mid 1980's. The wall plaque above the bench honours the building in the name of past Simgigat. Inside the foyer are large framed photographs of the old totem poles from Gitwinksihlkw and Gwinahaa.

Illustration X: The Elementary School

- The school was officially opened on October 6, 1994.

Illustration XI: The Blessing of the Bear's Den Pole

- Simoogit Baxk'ap and his son the apprentice carver Dennis Nyce honour the totem pole.

Illustration XII: The Breath of Life Dance

- The artist Alver Tait dances with the Bear's Den Pole. Norman Tait is on the left and Robert Tait is on the right. Dennis Nyce is standing in the centre behind Alver Tait.

Illustration XIII: Preparing To Move The Totem Pole

- The carriers are receiving their instructions from the Simgigat. Note the carrier of the canoe bowl to signify the journey.

Illustration XIV: Lifting Of The Totem Pole

- Note that the carrying of the totem pole is the inversion of a dugout canoe in the water.

Illustration XV: Touching The Totem Pole To The Sky

- All hands are required to flip the totem pole around prior to raising.

Illustration XVI: The Last Touch Before Raising

- The holders are awaiting instructions prior to raising.

Illustration XVII: The Bear's Den Totem Pole

- The Bear's Den Totem Pole of Gitwinksihlkw. The community centre is in the background. See the following page for a description of the meaning of the totem pole.

Illustration XVII: A Description of The Bear's Den Pole

1. The long beaked super natural Naḡ Noḡ being that stopped the lava flow
2. On top of its head are three faces with another in its mouth, signifying the four clans of the Nisga'a.
3. The supernatural wolf whom the people of Baxk'ap and his wilp claim as their crest.
4. The hunter figure who slayed the wolf and the bear is aiming his bow and arrow.
5. The supernatural bear killed by the hunter is claimed as a subcrest by the Wolf Clan.
6. The Bear's Den is portrayed as a cub peering outward from its den. This is the primary crest belonging to Baxk'ap.
7. Surrounding the Bear's Den is a crawling lizard on one side and a human being on the other side, signifying the people of Gitwinksihlkw.
8. Large human figure holding twins with their arms interlocked.
9. Another large human figure embracing a child, signifying the caring for the young and the passing along of culture.
10. At the bottom are two large faces signifying the people of Gitwinksihlkw.

Illustration XVIII: Bear's Den Pole

Owner of Pole: Arhtimenazek

Name of Clan: Wolf

Place of Pole: Gwunaha

Date Raised: 1892 or 1910

Carvers: Weesaiks, Neewqawrkse, Leonard Douglas

Buyer: Museum of the American Indian, New York

Date of Purchase: 1929

Other Information: Purchased by the Museum of Man in 1977. Pole is now in the Grand Hall of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, Quebec.

Illustration XIX: The Original Bear's Den Pole in Upper Detail

Illustration XX: The Original Bear's Den Pole in Lower Detail

Appendix C

Gifts Given for the Feast

Gifts Given for the Feast **October 17, 1992**

Jacob, Peggy Nyce and Family:

12	Comforters
15	Gift Bags and Gloves
60	Men's Socks
25	Plastic Baskets
3	Cushions
4	Sets of Dishes
1	Cordless Sander
1	Men's Large Blanket
1	30 pc. Kitchen Ware Set
12	Pairs Nylons
2	18 pc. Glass Ware Set
15	Pairs Women's Socks
4	Crochet Blankets
14	Blankets
38	Beach Towels
24	Bath Towels
50	Hand Towels
20	Flower Mats
45	Handkerchiefs
102	Dish Towels
10	Pairs Knitted Slippers

Tom and Mary Nyce:

4	Blankets
1	Pair of Pillow Slips

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Moore:

	Panty Hose
5	Sponges
1	Soap on a Rope
9	Bowls
1	Set of Kitchen Helpers
1	Serving Tray

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Moore: (con't)

1	Table Mat Set
2	Change Purses
5	Ceramic Bowls
12	Cups
1	Plastic Bowl
24	Spoons
7	Silver Spoons
3	Pot Holders
1	Mens Wollen Socks
6	Serving Spoons
27	Combs
1	3 pc. Pain Brush Set
11	Pencils
3	Napkin Holders
1	Ornament
1	Memo Pad
1	32 pc. Crayon Package
19	Dish Towels
16	Dish Cloths
6	Face Cloths
3	Blankets
1	Basket
20	Bath Sheets
60	Mugs
24	Small Glasses
48	Face Cloths
120	Combs
150	Pairs of Kids Gloves
79	smiw Aids
41	Fruit Nappies

Olive and Irene Azak:

16 Towels
 45 Tea Towels
 10 Pot Holders
 24 Face Cloths
 6 Pairs Men's Work Gloves
 16 Pairs of Panty Hose
 10 Aprons
 3 Pairs of Girls Gloves
 2 Sets of Bed Sheets
 1 Pair of Work Socks
 2 Pair of Girls Socks
 2 Hats
 1 Set of Men's Gloves
 3 Scarves
 1 Kitchen Set
 1 Lid Grip
 2 Boxes of Magic Handlers
 1 Jet Stream Oven
 2 Packages Skewer Brochette
 1 Package Poultry Laces
 1 Package Nut Crackers
 1 Package Crayola Crayons
 1 Spoon
 1 Food Saver
 1 Set of Cups and Spoons
 1 Plate
 1 Tray
 2 Glasses
 4 Bowls
 1 Sewing Kit
 1 Pair of Earrings
 1 Bathroom Set
 1 Cribbage Board Set
 1 Knife

Julia Adams:

1 Basket
 6 Towels
 24 Dish Towels

Alison Stevens:

1 Blanket
 12 Dish Towels

Lawrence Adams:

1 Blanket
 12 Beach Towels

Phyllis Adams:

12 Towels

Jackie Nyce:

13 Large Towels
 11 Medium Towels
 24 Dish Towels
 18 Tea Towels
 24 Face Cloths
 12 Pairs of Men's Socks
 10 Handkerchiefs
 1 Blanket

Mr. and Mrs. Bert Azak:

3 Blankets
 5 Bath Towels
 10 Hand Towels

Lavinia Azak:

2	Blankets
24	Towels
5	Pcs. of Material
8	Tumblers
6	Mugs
4	Sets of Oven Mitts
2	Sets of Pot Holders
2	Shawls
2	Pairs of Pillow Cases
24	Dish Towels
6	Pairs of Wollen Slippers
12	Face Cloths

Bev Azak:

1	Blanket
6	Baskets
16	Dish Towels
3	Aprons
3	Aprons
3	Pairs of Nylons
2	Scarves

Tina Bolton:

2	Blankets
30	Towels
20	Basins
20	Little Baskets
1	Cushion Cover
1	Man's Work Shirt
1	Pair of Knitted Stockings
3	Pairs of Men's Work Socks
38	Pairs of Boy's Long Johns
9	Waist Bags
1	Vinyl Table Cover
14	"Captain Planet" figurines
6	Packages of Girls Barretts
8	Pairs of Knee Highs
17	Dish Cloths

Anne Robinson:

2	Tea Towels
20	Towels
10	Hand Baskets
15	Travel Companions
20	Bubbles (Kids)
3	Sets Of Three Strainers
7	Measuring Cup (11 Pc. Set)
25	Mini Baskets
10	Plastic Store 'n View

Teresa Azak:

1	24 pc. Beverage Glasses
1	6 pc. Beverage Glasses
10	Place Mats
5	Bathroom Trays
4	Tupperware Containers
10	Face Clothes
12	Kid's Garbage Containers
4	Blankets
5	Men's Cotton Shirts
6	Balls of Wool
2	Packages of Twizzlers

Lorna E. Azak:

15	Bath Towels
4	Towels
25	Tea Towels
20	Dish Cloths
2	Baskets
1	Comforter
2	4 pc. Towel Sets

Norma Morgan:

5 Blankets
 12 Beach Towels
 12 Face Towels
 24 Dish Towels

Arlene Morgan:

3 Blankets
 12 Face Towels
 24 Dish Cloths

Mary-Anne Haldane:

25 Towels
 2 Beach Towels

Judy Azak:

12 Pairs of Men's Socks
 8 Pairs of Panty Hose
 1 Queen Size Comforter

Sharen Alexcee:

1 18 pc. Glass Set

Peggy McLean:

2 18 pc. Glass Set

Frances Azak:

chips, cheezies, pretzels put in
 glasses
 10 Bags of Peanuts

Grace Azak:

13 Beach Towels
 11 Hand Towels
 24 Pcs. of Material
 2 Baskets
 8 Blankets

Debbie (Nyce) Azak:

17 Towels
 6 Pairs of Men's Socks
 10 Glasses
 20 Tea Towels
 4 Beach Towels
 24 Dish Clothes
 7 Hair Clips
 10 Pencils
 2 Erasers
 1 Pot Holder
 3 Bowls
 2 Aprons
 1 Tupperware Container
 1 Large Basket
 3 Small Baskets
 2 Plastic Basins
 2 Pairs of Girl's Socks
 2 Pairs of Earrings
 5 Pairs of Nylons

Pat Squires:

6 Towels
 12 Dish Towels
 12 Dish Cloths

Mrs. Jean Squires:

12	Plastic Cups
4	Pairs of Girl's Socks
12	Pairs of Men's Socks
11	Dish Towels
10	Place Mats
10	Pairs of Nylons
4	Baskets
1	Blanket
6	Cases of Pop
4	Large Bags of Goodies
1	Case of 1/2 pint Jars of Oolican Grease

Geraldine Alexcee/Janet Stevens:

12	Glasses
12	Face Cloths

Christina Azak:

1	Pie Plate
2	Dish Cloths
1	Picture
4	Small Baskets
2	Tea Towels
2	Sets of Potholders
4	Kid's Play Sets
2	Hair Brush Sets
15	Glasses
4	Balls of Wool
1	Pearl Comb

Lorna G. Azak:

3	Blankets
1	Quilt
54	Glasses
11	Pairs of Sport Socks
4	Pairs of Work Socks

Lorna G. Azak: con't

1	Alarm Clock
20	Towels
1	Stoneware Salt/Pepper Set
2	Donut Cutter
4	11 pc. Measuring Cup/Spoon sets
9	Preschool Finger Crayons
9	Super Stretch Gloves
2	Kid's Waist Pouches
22	Tea Towels
1	Oven Mitt Set
1	Men's Shirt
1	Lap Blanket
6	Mugs
7	Bowls
4	Kitchen Utensils
1	Laundry Basket
5	Bags of Cockles/Herring Eggs
39	Quart Jars of Salmon/Saskatoon Berries
2	1/2 Gallon Jars of Salmon Berries
36	1/2 Pint Jars of Soap Berries
14	Ziplock Bags of Seaweed

Nora Azak:

50	Tea Towels
9	Men's Home-made Socks
5	Pillow Cases
3	Scarves
6	Handkerchiefs
3	Big Towels
6	Sets of Sheets
2	Handy Packs of Apples
6	Baskets/Bowls/Mugs
1	Doily
1	Men's Bag
2	Blankets
6	Jars of Fruit
6	Bags of Half Smoked Fish
2	Bags of Fresh Sockeye Salmon

Natalie and Sally Nyce:

18	Glasses with Hankies/Face Cloths
8	Plastic Cups with Face Cloths
1	33 pc. Glass Ware
5	Cups
32	Pairs of Socks
6	Hangers
1	Package of Fish Hooks
1	Notebook
14	Packages of Hockey Cards
1	Package of Bath Sponges
1	Hand Mitt
6	Face Cloths/Hair Ties
	Bags of Earrings
1	Plastic Basket
57	Tea Towels
49	Tea Cloths
2	Pot Holders
38	Towels

Jackie Barker:

24	Bath Towels

Irene Griffin and Family:

	sandals
	Pony Tail Ties
1	8 pc. Covered Bowl Set
1	4 pc. Mixing Bowl Set
1	Cutlery Tray
1	7 pc. Salad Set
10	12 pcs. 10 oz. Glasses
3	Suitcases
6	Small Plastic B askets
1	Coleman Cooler
1	Men's Watch
1	Eagle Pin
3	Tribal Magnets
1	Eagle Sweater

Irene Griffin and Family: (con't)

11	Plastic Laundry Baskets
1	Wicker Laundry Basket
1	Hiche Carousel
5	Sparkly Bracelets
3	Pairs of Kid's Sunglasses
2	Weird Balls (for kids)
1	Blow-up Beach Ball
2	San Francisco Boxed Gifts
1	Glass Plate Platter
1	Pot Holder
1	Glass Fish Platter
2	Butter Dishes
4	Blankets
1	Comforter
1	Storage Container
1	Leaf Design Glass Platter
1	Mitred Platter
2	Salt/Pepper Shaker Sets
1	Doily
4	Hats
4	12 pc. Glass Coffe Cups
18	Tea Towels
1	Shaving Kit Bag
1	11 pc. Bar set
17	Aprons
8	Bath Towels
1	Glass Dish
2	Rolls of Yarn
1	Roll of Twill Tape
3	White Barrets
107	Pairs of Socks
6	Cork Coasters
1	Plastic Shell
10	Pairs of Mini Gloves
5	Magic Wipes
2	18 pc. Glass Set
9	Ninja Turtle School Kits
9	Plastic Table Cloths
12	Beach Towels
5	Canvas Tote Bags
30	Pairs of Ladies White Socks

Irene Griffin and Family: (con't)

13	Pint Jars of Soap Berries
12	Quart Jars of Fruit
4	Gallon Jars of Clam Cockles
200	Men's Hats
25	Bags of Peanuts
200	Wafer Bars
200	Suckers

Kitsumkalum:

	Jarred Fruit
	1/2 Smoked Fish
	Moose Meat Cut & Wrapped
	Cod for Deep Frying
4	5 Gallon Pails of Salted Herring Eggs
13	Seaweed Squares
2	Bags of Frozen Cockles in Shells
1	Quart of Kiimaat Grease
1	Large Bear Roast
8	Bags of Frozen Seaweed
21	Dried Fish
3	Whole Halibut
1	Pail of Dried Herring Eggs
1	Bag of Chopped Seaweed
9	Frozen Herring Eggs
4	Bags of Smoked Oolicans
25	Pounds of Potatoes

Alice Gillis:

8	Garbage Cans
24	Face Cloths
22	Pairs of Men's Shoes
10	Strainers
4	Rolls of Masking Tape

Loma J. Azak:

1	Blanket
4	Towels
30	Tea Towels

Mr. and Mrs. Silas Azak:

2	Bath Towels
2	Hand Towels
2	Aprons
9	Dish Cloths
2	Kitchen Hand Towels
2	Sets of Compact Speakers
2	Blankets
1	Metre of Material
2	Baskets
1	Set of Pot Holders
1	Combination Set

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