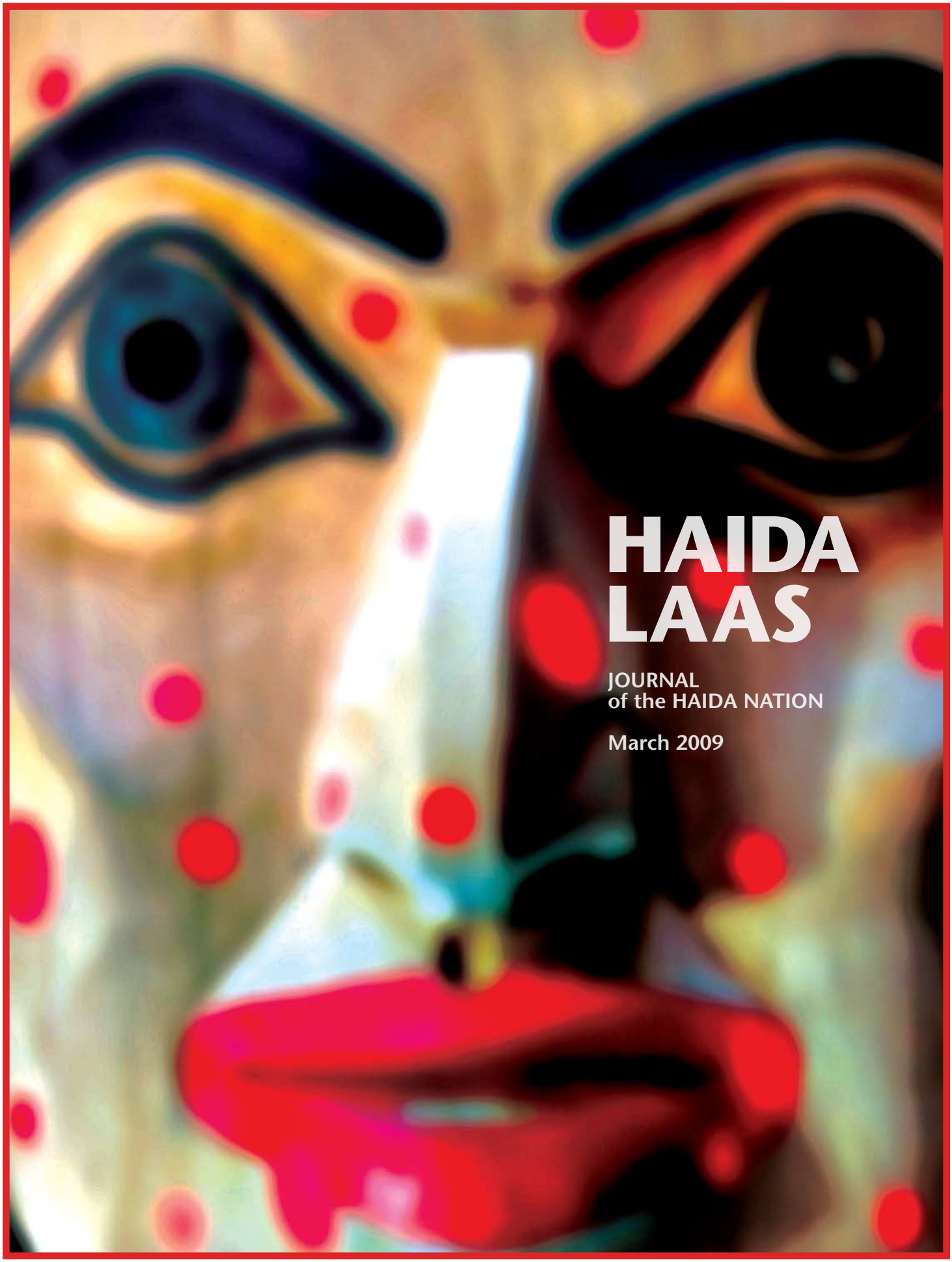

HAIDA LAAS

JOURNAL
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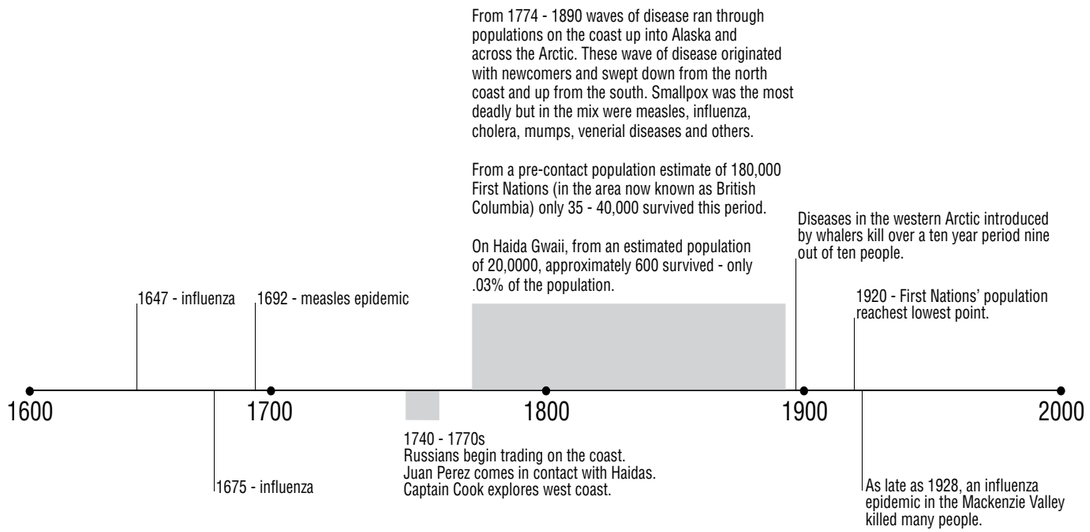
> A TIMELINE SHOWING SOME OF THE DISEASES THAT SCOURGED THE ISLANDS.



STRANGE NEW SICKNESS by Kil'iljuss, *Barb Wilson*

The years 1700 to 1900 were a time of great upheaval for people all over Haida Gwaii. Smallpox, measles, dysentery, consumptions, influenza and other communicable diseases wiped out thousands of people. In documents starting in the 1770s right through to 1918 there is clear evidence of these epidemics.[1]

Although the authors do not in many cases state or describe the impact on our population, it was enormous. Trade and travel brought us in contact with all regions and people of the Pacific North West coast. Our oral family histories and birth certificates tell the stories of children being born in places now located in the United States. Swanton collected some of his first Haida stories at Port Townsend in the Olympic Peninsula area.[2]

The Haida nation went from an estimated population of 20,000 prior to 1770 to less than 600 by the end of the 19th century.3 It is impossible to track the members of families in an orderly manner as the diseases also had a huge impact on our oral history. Most ways for passing on the information have been broken. Knowledge has been lost and many of the people from whom these oral histories would have been gathered have long passed on. In Swanton's book, *The Haida* there is a written account of the deaths that occurred in Victoria and along the coast as we travelled home.

He writes: "After Victoria was settled, flotillas of Haida Canoes were continually resorting there, and a whole chapter might be written on the wars which broke out between them and the Kwakiutl tribes along their route. There were one or two notable encounters with the whites as well, particularly that at Cape Mudge. Later the Small-pox broke out and carried the people off by hundreds. Doleful tales are related at the present day of large flotillas of canoes, which started from Victoria and other points along the coast is mainly responsible."

In the video *Women of the Inlet,* the people of Jarvis Inlet talk about a Haida canoe left there. It is one story of many that verifies our knowledge of people dying all along the coast as they tried to return to Xaaydaa Gwaay. •

1 Green 1829, p 33; Poole 1863, p 158; Crosby, 1907, p 105; Blackman 1984, 158; Langess 1984, p 262; Miller 1984, p 144; Boyd 1999, pp 266-268; Coqualeetza Story 1886 to 1956, n.n.p.
2 McDonald 1972, pp 35, 53, 150
3 Fedje 2001, p 25

Timeline Sources:
The coming of the spirit of pestilence : introduced infectious diseases and population decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874 - Boyd, Robert T. (Robert Thomas) and the Haida Gwaii Museum at Kaay Llnagaay.

The data for the timeline has been taken from various sources and is by no means complete. From the first days of contact up to the recent past there have been many waves of disease that scourged the land killing over 90% of the Haida population as well as a high percentage of other First Nations throughout the coast and Arctic.

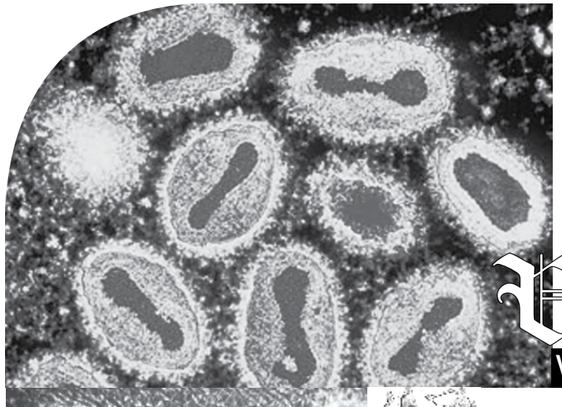
CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

Photo above right: A gauge for measuring the size of smallpox pustules, made by Young's of Edinburgh. A doctor could relate a patient's pustules to four typical sizes, ranging from half an inch to four fifths of an inch in diameter.
Image number: 10289190: Science Museum/Science & Society Picture Library

Smallpox is an infectious disease unique to humans.

Smallpox is also known by the latin names Variola or Variola vera, which means spotted, or varus, meaning pimple. The term smallpox was first used in Europe in the 15th century to distinguish Variola from syphilis.



Variola major is the worse of the two strains of smallpox and kills about 30% of those infected. Variola minor is a milder form and kills about 1% of its victims. Of all children infected about 80% didn't survive.

Symptoms appear suddenly and include a high fever, headache, body pains and sometimes nausea and vomiting. This continues for the duration of the illness. Two or three days later, and generally fourteen days after first exposure to the disease, a rash begins on the face, hands and feet. This is the most contagious time. The rash spreads over the whole body and in about three days the rash will turn into red spots and then become raised pus-filled lesions. These blisters are about the size of a dime. Sometimes the blisters merge and cover large parts of the body. It takes about a month for the disease to run its course. For people who survive, the blisters become scabs and slowly fall off. About six weeks after infection most of the scabs are gone but leave permanent scars on the body and for some blindness in one or both eyes.

WHAT IT IS

Smallpox is believed to have emerged in human populations about 10,000 BC. During the 18th century it is estimated that the disease killed 400,000 Europeans each year and was responsible for a third of all blindness.

top; the virus seen under a microsccope
bottom: the pustules that rise on the skin

During the 20th century, it is estimated that smallpox was responsible for 300–500 million deaths. As recently as 1967, the World Health Organization estimated that 15 million people contracted the disease and that two million died in that year. After vaccination campaigns throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the WHO certified the eradication of smallpox in 1979. To this day, smallpox is the only human infectious disease to have been completely eradicated from nature. •

Speaking about the potlatch held at Alert Bay to honour the Haida at Bones Bay.

FOR THOSE OF US AT BONES BAY

It *was* an invitation, but it wasn't delivered in a way many are familiar with, says Candace Weir, who travelled to the Alert Bay potlatch at the invitation of artist and hereditary leader, Beau Dick.

"There was no formal, 'golden-western-civilized-way-invitation' for this event, it wasn't put out like that. It was oral. This is how our people used to do things — the word was spread up and down the coast and the message would get around. People would either go or not, and we went — we took the invitation seriously. […] We'd heard about the trip and we knew its significance, we were going!"

So began the preparations. People were contacted, gifts gathered, masks carved and regalia and arrangements were made and finally, 30 people travelled to Alert Bay where another 30 Haida from the urban areas joined them. The potlatch that people were invited to was put on by Beau Dick. It was to bring closure to an event that in the past left Haida wandering away from home, and today to bring honour to those resting at Bones Bay.

The 300 people who died of smallpox at Bones Bay had perished on their return voyage from Victoria or Mak'toli as it was called then. The Kwakwaka'wakw knew about the Haida paddling north and the fact that they were infected with smallpox. They had been told this by a trusted source. They knew many wouldn't make it home and with that knowledge they prepared a place for them; it was isolated but it had good water, food and firewood and it is in this place, Bones Bay, that many Haida came to end their days.

Beau Dick had been told this story many times while growing up, and he in turn told the story to any Haida that would listen. He talked about it for many years and one day, he set a time and place to bring closure to this chapter of shared Kwakwaka'wakw and Haida history.

The story of the Alert Bay potlatch is told in these pages by those who were there. Each story is a little different from the other, but taken together they tell a rich and compelling piece of history. It is a story of putting ancestors to rest, but it also the story about the legacy of smallpox, which is still manifest in our villages today. •

SOMETIMES, IT'S ALL RIGHT THERE

Kii'iljuus, *Barb Wilson* speaking about the legacy of smallpox.

Smallpox running through our people can be likened to a fire burning a library of 30,000 books. Our elders are our books of knowledge and the young people are the first drafts, they are the fresh ideas, and the middle-aged people are the manuscripts in final draft. When you think of the knowledge that was contained in 30,000 people and then we were decimated to less than 600, the fact that we can function as a people is truly amazing.

The other things I keep thinking about as I work healing myself are the things that really affected our people — the latest wave has been residential schools and the fall-out from that which is alcoholism, abuse, drugs and now there's HIV/Aids. Just take a moment and think about those things and what they did and what they are still doing to us. When I talk with people some of them can't understand why they feel the way they feel, and I think, oh lord, that we have any feelings left is amazing.

If we look back to 1730, we have about two hundred and eighty years of continual assault — measles, smallpox, influenza, malaria, cholera and so on. All of these things have taken away our history, some of our stories, songs, dances, and our face — our face is how we feel about ourselves. I can't say it enough, but the fact that we have anything left is phenomenal.

Children that grew up away from home may not have the knowledge or understanding of the things that affected us. For them it must be very difficult. How can they understand the sadness, the addictions, the abuse of alcohol and the other abuses that happen in the family without understanding the background? It's only by understanding all those things that you can begin to move through them. Today, even though we weren't physically part of the epidemics, we still suffer the consequences and the ingrained sadness that a lot of people suffer from can lead to depression, alcohol, abuse and other things — people are looking to get their power back.

We have people who are able to stand up at a feast and talk about all of these things and not cry. I remember the times I have stood up and cried, but as I heal myself and try to understand where I have come from, I believe I have been blessed, because I was able to recognize that I needed help.

In 1980 I started to go to counseling, that's 28 years ago! I don't go all the time, but I am thankful just to know I figured out that I needed to get to help and then I was brave enough to say that these things did happen to me. Sometimes I wake up in the morning and it's all right there again. It is only with time that I have learned to move beyond it. I turn 65 this year and I think it's getting easier as I get older.

I say to my kids that you need to remember that you are the descendants of the very toughest people on earth. I say that because we have come through so much and we can still laugh and smile.

It is really important for us to understand that smallpox and all the other diseases are part of our history and the reason we are sitting here is because of our ancestors who survived. Those times are still very close to us. My mother was born in Tacoma and her mother was born in Victoria, and her mother was born in Cumshewa, and that's not so very long ago. •

Contemporary house front at Alert Bay.

For those of us at Bones Bay: Kwiaahwah Jones

One of the things that smallpox did was drive our culture underground.

Kwiaahwah Jones

I have been to quite a few events at Alert Bay and at times I was the only person in the Big House who didn't understand Kwakwaka'wakw. I was lucky though, I usually had interpreters. It's amazing being there; it's like stepping back in time. The Kwakwaka'wakw dances never seem stop, not like ours, and that is where smallpox comes in. When we were only 600 people it was easier for the government to keep a watch over us and easier for missionaries to tell on us, so our potlatches went underground and became house parties. But for the Kwakwaka'wakw, they could travel up to Kingcome and potlatch there so that's one of the effects of smallpox on us. We couldn't perform our dances and our ceremony regressed to speeches, that is one reason why speeches are such a big thing for us today. Jewellery is another thing. Other nations don't wear as much jewellery as we do and they make fun of us. Being able to identify ourselves is really important and that is why we wear so much today — or some of us — and it's also a reason that we're such an artistic society.

At Alert Bay all the Kwakwaka'wakw dances are very deep and time doesn't seem to matter. You could be back 200 years or in the present. Today obviously, the ceremony is somewhat condensed, in the old days potlatches would last months, today it is done in one or two days... but you still get the spirit of it. When I first went to the Big House, I went as a child, and as I got older I noticed the differences between ours, and their culture. Back then I was envious because theirs appeared so rich, and I didn't initially see that in our culture because our form is so different.

I had heard that Christian White and other Massett people were going to go to the potlatch. For me being able to share that experience with other Haidas was a pretty powerful motivation to get myself down there. There is no way of finding words for an event like that... the

The small headland at Bones Bay where everyone gathered for the ceremony.

words don't mean anything to someone who doesn't know it or has experienced it.

At one point I wasn't going to be able to go, but at the last minute I swung a couple of deals at work and got some shifts covered and I had just enough money. There were 28 people from Massett and three people from Skidegate. We took the ferry down and all arrived at Ken Bedard's place in Port Hardy. In all Haida journeys there was camps scattered along the way, so it was like the same idea, we went there and ate, rested and showered. It was so neat just to chill out with so many of us in a foreign place in a Haida house. Then Beau Dick showed up in the afternoon with two big vans. He came to pick us up. What a host! It was amazing. That is one thing of many that the Kwakwaka'wakw are so good at — hosting people.

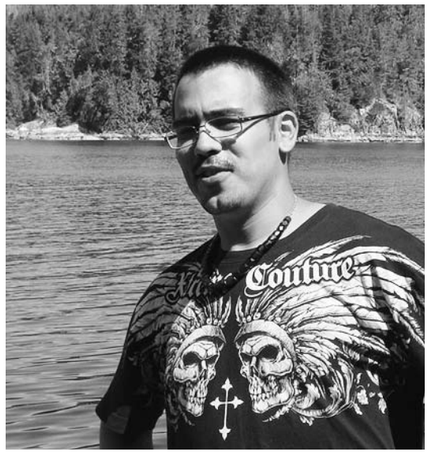
Beau picked us up and we went across to Alert on the ferry. He said, "Ok, I want you all to walk off the ferry." And so we all walked off and there was this great welcoming with singing and dancing. We were holding up traffic! It was just awesome but finally the ferry people said, "Okay, that's it, get out of the way," and the cars started coming off. It was neat, Dawn Cranmer who was the billet coordinator was there and she had been up to Haida Gwaii for the weaver's celebration in March, so she had a good connection to us and she was passionate about taking care of us. As we came off the ferry, Corey Bullpit was there. He was our carver who worked on all of the projects for this event. He worked on the plaque that went up at Bones Bay and on the mortuary pole that went up at Alert Bay. All that work was on his own time and I think it is important to acknowledge the time he gave. So many people think that artists make so much money or whatever, but artists give so much back to the community and he is one of them. He is just a young guy, a couple years older than I am.

When we got to Alert we all took some time and settled in. The Massett people had a lodge and we were down there a lot. I stayed at Gloria Cranmer Webster's house. She has been one of my heroes since I began being interested in museum work. I've been reading her articles and I was very excited to meet her. I stayed at her house, which is a testament to Kwakwaka'wakw hospitality. Beau's mother also stayed there and Gloria was expecting at least fifteen more people. I offered to sleep on the couch, but she said no, it was first come, first served, so she gave me the room upstairs. It's called the Girl's Dorm. I expected it to be just a room... but I walked in and there were five beds and all the beds are made. Then there is her room and another room, which is the Couple's Room, and downstairs there is the Boy's Dorm with another five beds. So she is equipped for a solid 20 people, and she has an extra water heater, so everyone can have showers! I thought, wow, this is *potlatch ready*, I've got to get myself prepared like this one day. So, she's my hero all over again, she doesn't mess around!

The next day we all went out to Bones Bay on a large boat. The first run carried 48 people and was over an hours ride out. I went out on the first run as I had my camera and that was part of my job, if I was going go to the potlatch I had to make sure I documented it.

Kwiaahway Jones speaking

I always imagined Bones Bay to be this beautiful bay with a sandy beach, but when we get there it feels like it is almost meant to be a place for people to die in. I'm not sure how to say that in the right way but it was so rugged, it was a hard place, there was no sand. My initial shock of seeing it was pretty amazing. They dropped us off and a group of people erected the plaque. Among us was Arthur Dick who is chief of some of the other people who died there with the Haida. He has close connections to my family as my dad and he fished together. They shared some pretty amazing experiences. He told us that there had been a cannery near Bones Bay and when people were working at night they could hear voices in a different language and they didn't realize it at the time that it was Haida. They could also hear singing and dancing, there was a lot of stuff going on because I guess the people who died had not been put to rest properly. There are several stories like that. His son and I are good friends, we keep in touch, and he said another story is that when everyone was dying in Bones Bay there were people staying close by and they could hear them dying as there was so much pain. It's a pretty intense place because there is so much energy still there. The second boat came about two hours later and all told there were about 100 people on this little rugged knoll of a place.



Corey Bulpitt worked with Beau Dick and several other artists to carve the mortuary pole at Alert Bay and paint the plaque that was raised at Bones Bay.

All the Haida women got to work and put together a food plate. Candace Weir had brought food from home, so there were herring eggs, salmon, blueberries, oolichan and a big jar of grease. The plate was beautiful and all the elder women and the young women like Candace's daughter and Monica's daughter contributed to the preparation of it. Then the Kwakwaka'wakw chiefs spoke and then the Haida chiefs, and following that were what I call our noble men, people like Christian White and Robert Davidson. We then moved into our ceremony with song and burnt the food. I passed out tobacco to the men and as the women took part in the food burning the men put tobacco in the fire. We were out there about two hours, and when we finished the ceremony the chiefs and elders went back on the first boat. I stayed out, waiting for the second trip, it was hot and sunny, and not what Haidas are used to. The young people who were left there started hiking around; singing songs it was quite an experience.

At six there was dinner and ceremony at the Big House. I was really excited because I knew we were going to see some of the red cedar bark ceremony, like the Hamatsa dancers. In the past the dances have always been explained to me, I've had people provide me with the details about where they got the dance and all the protocols behind them. It was different this time because now I was sitting with Candace and I was explaining to her what I had learned. It was neat to be the person in that position because you get a chance to articulate what you have learned. So we're into the red cedar bark ceremony and then the Hamatsa come out, which is indescribable, it's just something you have to see. We also saw the tamed Hamatsa.

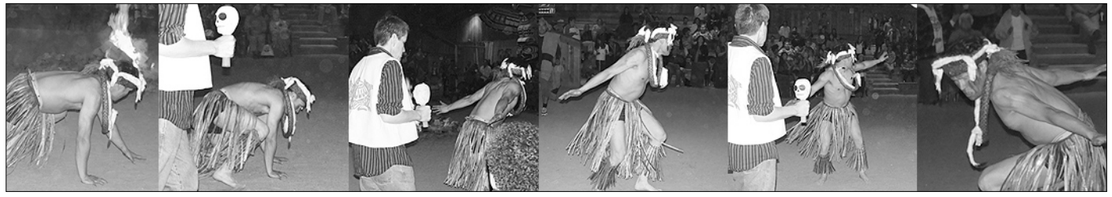
In the Big House it's the women who decide who is going to dance in the group dances, so Beau's mom and sister went around and pointed at people and those chosen had to go to the back of the Big House, put on a blanket and get ready to dance. I've always thought, wow, it's probably pretty cool back there behind the scene.

Raven Potvin and myself were sitting there talking because she and I have been to the Big House several times together so we had a bond. Jerry pointed at Raven and me and we looked at each other and were like, oh my gawd! It was the woman's professional dance and you don't mess around! I thought, I don't know how to do this! I've messed around outside the Big House, I've played Kwakwaka'wakw, it's like playing house, lets play Big House, but I'd never actually danced in the Big House though it's always been a secret wish. So she points at us and Kerry Dick is there with us, Beau's daughter, and she is a really good dancer and she

Kwiaahway Jones speaking

says, “Aw, you guys will be fine,” and I’m like, “I don’t know!” In the back all the other girls were giggling and it was a little uncomfortable as it was a new thing and because we weren’t Kwakwaka’wakw. We did our best, I wouldn’t say we were *the best* but we made it through. Beau’s mom said we did okay. Most of the Kwakwaka’wakw women dance very stoic, but I couldn’t help smiling because it’s always been a secret desire to dance in the Big House. Following this dance they had a bunch of fun dances where everybody gets up. It’s not a hard dance movement and it’s the spirit of enjoying the dance that is important. So that was cool.

At the end of the night the chiefs’ spoke, that is how they do it. It’s not like here where the speeches are the main event; there the dances are the main event. The Kwakwaka’wakw don’t



Hamatsa dancer at the Big House in Alert Bay.

have dance groups. It’s like you are initiated and you have a dance and that is what you do. So it is a lot different from what we know here and that, I believe, is another product of smallpox, because in the past everybody would dance. You still see people today, like the kids today that are shy to dance. It’s that engrained missionary, residential thing — don’t dance, you have to be ashamed! You see a lot kids like that today, even young kids, and young girls. I used to be the same even though I grew up dancing. I would have moments of acting cool or whatever, and its actually not that cool.

The next day was Haida day. We began at the Namgis burial grounds, in Alert Bay and raised the mortuary plaque that had been carved. Corey Bullpit worked on it with eight other carvers, Bruce and Wayne Alfred, Beau Dick, Marcus and others. The carvers danced around the pole and then the woman came in. There were two Eagle women and two Raven women and they cleaned the pole with cedar boughs. It was really good to see because they did it in such a neat and meticulous way. They did it with so much care. When the pole was raised it went up pretty quick, then they tweaked it a bit and secured it. All the woman had cedar bark roses and we all put them in front of the pole and a wreath was placed. It rained quite a bit through the ceremony but it didn’t really matter.

Beforehand, Bill Cranmer and Bobby Joseph spoke and blessed the grounds. The ceremony was an interesting mix of Haida and Kwakwaka’wakw and when it was finished all the Haida went back to the lodge to work on regalia. For a few hours it was a massive — lets get some buttons on! I don’t know how many buttons I sewed on between the time of the pole raising and the time we got to the Big House.

At the Big House we started the evening with the smallpox dance. Vernon White had carved the mask but it was still up in the air about who’s going to dance it. What are we going to do, and what’s the dance going to look like? I’ve done my own fair share of studying smallpox out of personal interest. In *Contributions to the Ethnology of the Haida*, John R. Swanton talks about the ‘spirit of pestilence’. In one story the spirit comes in on “canoes with huge white sails” and the Haida didn’t offer him food because he was such a powerful spirit and just too scary — we didn’t go near him. I’ve always been fascinated by smallpox, because the legacy of smallpox is still so strong in our culture, even today. So I was really interested in doing the dance. I’ve always dreamt about a smallpox dance and now it was actually happening. It’s something very close to my heart.

Kwiaahway Jones speaking

Anyway, nobody wanted to do it. Everyone was kind of scared. No one volunteered and I was waiting because it’s their dance group, it’s not my dance group, had I been part of the dance group I would have been more open to stepping forward. But after a while I said, “I’ll do it,” and Candace said, “Yes, finally someone.” Then she said, “I’ll do it with you.” It was like holy smokes! How did that happen? But, it was meant to be because it was someone from Massett and someone from Skidegate.

Candace and I then worked out how to do the dance. We had the mask, a beautiful woman’s portrait mask. Candace was the attendant because I couldn’t see out of the mask, it was really hard to see and it just had a bite on it. We covered the mask with all these red dots and we put some on Candace’s face. I didn’t know what to wear so I put on a blanket that I had brought with me, which is weird because my dad had just given it to me, ideally it would have been a Hudson’s Bay blanket with the stripes, it was a Pendleton, but it was the same concept. Candace had a long black dress, a rattle, and a Hudson’s Bay scarf that I also had brought with me. She had a sea otter pelt, so it all tied together — our trade of sea otter for blankets, it just came together.

“One thing to note is that the boat company who ferried everyone out to Bones Bay was going to charge us for the trip. Beau said no, you can’t charge them so he paid for it. At the feast, when we hosted our part we did a lot of presentations, we gave out some k’aaw, Robert Davidson gave out some of their cds, we gave out different things to everybody. At the same time we did a money dance for Beau because we realized he was paying a lot of money for the boat. So we fundraised. There were 50 to 60 Haida there and we raised $5700 just from those people. That averages to about $100 per person. So Beau had the money to pay for the boat and some of his costs. But then the boat owners heard about it and felt so touched by the whole event that they donated their boat and their time. They just wanted their gas covered, so we wrote them a card and thanked them for their great generosity.”

As I came out on to the floor, Vern Williams started singing the pestilence song he had written. The whole hall became silent — it was so quiet — and then all of a sudden the babies started to cry. I could just hear what was going on but I didn’t know what to do. It was amazing because everything came to me instinctively at the right time and as we moved through the Big House it was like at every corner, babies would cry. It was very emotional. When we were finished, two spirit masks came out dancing for the end of mourning and a male and female mask came out and danced which symbolized all the people that died at Bones Bay. Robert Davidson and Guujaaw sang the songs that accompanied the dances. After that, Christian’s group went into their program. It was very a powerful performance and the highlight for me was the men’s challenge song. All the young men just exploded onto the floor, the floor was thumping and alive. When the group exited they were really strong — singing with lots of energy.

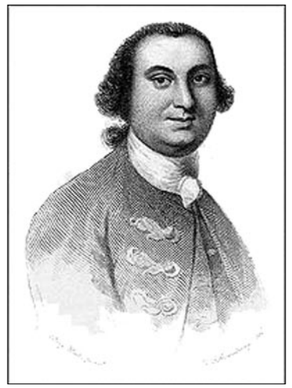
Following the Massett dance group, the Kwakwaka’wakw performed the peace dance. With this dance they use a headdress and people are then brought out for various reasons. So, there are maybe five or six people from different families that end up doing the headdress dance, the actual dance is similar to our chief’s dance. When they do that they always have attendants on the floor to take care of the dancers, because they become possessed. They also had a raven transformation mask. The Kwakwaka’wakw transformations are so advanced. They also did an earthquake dance. When the dancer comes out its eyes are closed and when they open everybody in the hall starts shaking so it feels like an earthquake, even the attendants are falling around on the floor, so there is a lot of interaction with people that are watching. Then they did a few fun songs and then the farewell song. The Kwakwaka’wakw people stood on one side of the hall and all the Haida on the other, and they sang a song to us, it went on for a good fifteen minutes and then it was over.

\+ + +

We spent the next couple days in Alert Bay. We had a dinner and invited a bunch of singers to come over. We sang, and then they sang, and then we sang, and they sang, it was pretty cool. We had a lot of different exchanges over the few days we were there. •

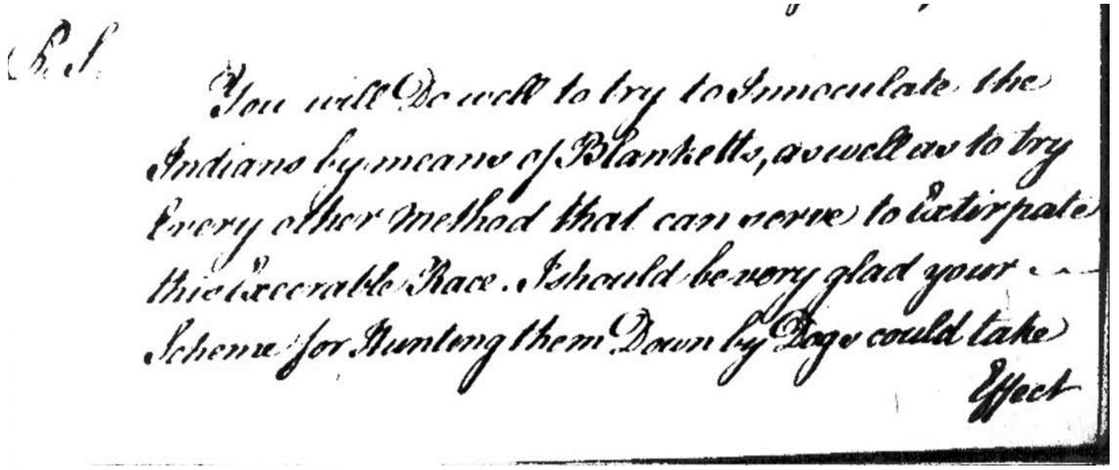
AMHERST WAY

above: Lord Jeffery Amherst
below: Colonel Henry Bouquet



A TRANSCRIPTION OF WARD CHURCHILL SPEAKING ON THE USE OF SMALLPOX AS A WEAPON OF WAR.

Lord Jeffery Amherst, Commander of the British Forces in the Ohio Valley in 1763 issued a written order to his subordinate [Henry] Bouquet, suggesting that since the Indians were being a little unruly and Amherst wasn't sure what to do, they should open peace negotiations with the Indians and present to them gifts, gifts composed of items taken from a British smallpox infirmary in hopes that the result would be "the extirpation of this execrable race." That is [the] precise language used in the document.



You will Do well to try to Innoculate the Indians by means of Blankets, as well as to try Every other Method that can serve to Extirpate this Execrable Race. I should be very glad your Scheme for Hunting them Down by Dogs could take Effect

Transcription of the letter above: from Amherst to Bouquet

P.S.
You will Do well to try to Innoculate the Indians by means of Blankets, as well as to try Every other method that can serve to Extirpate this Execrable Race. I should be very glad your Scheme for hunting them Down by Dogs could take effect

Transcription and edit courtesy of Ward Churchill.

Ward LeRoy Churchill is an American writer and political activist. He was a professor of ethnic studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder from 1990 to 2007. His work focuses on the historical treatment of political dissenters and American Indians by the United States.

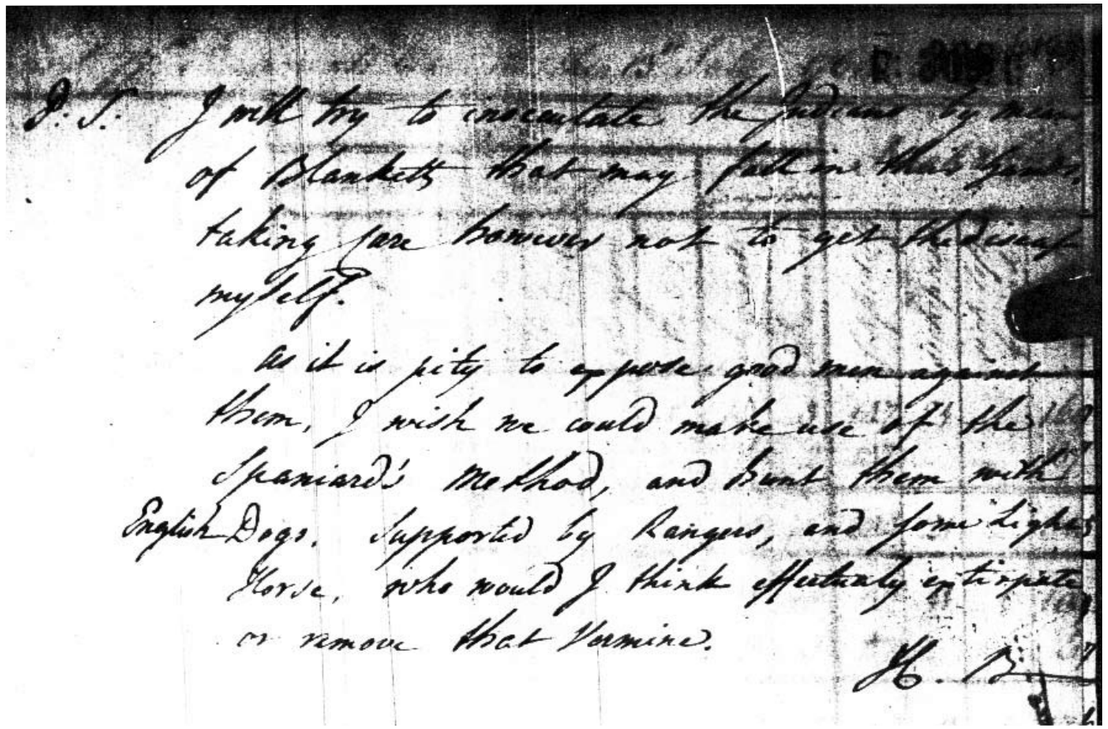
A little later Bouquet informs his superior Amherst, for whom Amherst College is named in present day Massachusetts, for whom Amherst, Massachusetts the town is named, as well as Amherst Street and Amherst Boulevard, Amherst Lane and Amherst Way, in honouring his memory throughout the North East. Bouquet writes to Amherst and says that he has passed along several blankets, several handkerchiefs and sundry other items and hopefully this will obtain the desired result. It did.

As many as 100,000 Indians died of disease in the immediate aftermath of that one little peace overture — the world's first case of documented biological warfare. There may have been earlier ones, there may have been ones practiced by Winthrop against the Pequots also in Massachusetts and Connecticut. There may have been some across the Atlantic but they are not documented, and so this stands as history's first absolutely, unequivocally proven instance where biological warfare was practiced for the specific purpose not simply of destroying the military capacity of an opponent but to destroy the opponent as a population, as a people in its entirety. There's a message in that.

There is a similar message when the United States army in 1837 at Forts Clark and Union on the Missouri River caused to be transported from St. Louis up river in Makinaw boats, a whole load of smallpox contaminated blankets to be dispensed among the Mandans and others with whom the United States was not even at war but who were in the way of U.S. expansion on the plains. These were passed out as gifts and gestures, signs and symbols of friendship, and when the Indians began to sicken the surgeons at Fort Union told them to run for their lives, to seek sanctuary and shelter among their healthy relatives, thus unleashing a pandemic that ran from southern Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. The number of people consumed by that smallpox pandemic is unknown; according to sources cited by Russell Thornton in his book, American Indian Holocaust and Survival, the death toll may have been as high as 400,000. This has been passed down in history books to the children of the United States of all races as being an unfortunate, indeed a tragic error.

Smallpox vaccine had been known about for over a century. The entire British army had been inoculated prior to the end of the 1700s, the United States army had been inoculated in its entirety by 1803.

They didn't understand virus, they didn't understand bacteria in scientific terms, but they understood the principles by which the disease was spread. They certainly understood as a matter of



D. S. I will try to innoculate the Indians by means of Blankets that may fall in their hands, taking care however not to get the disease myself.

As it is pity to [illegible] good management [illegible], I wish we could make use of the Spaniard's Method, and hunt them with English Dogs, Supported by Rangers, and [illegible], who would I think effectivly extirpate [illegible] that Vermine.

H. B.

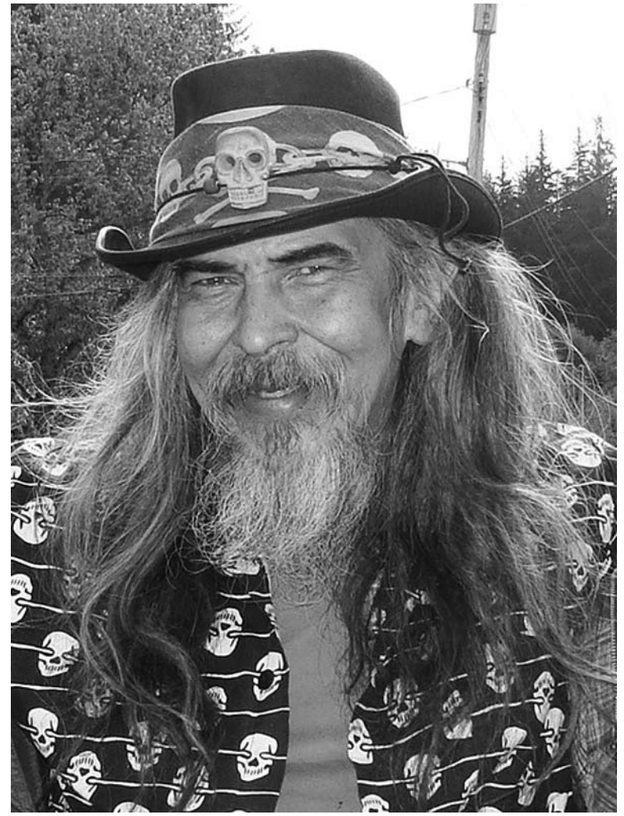
Transcription of letter above: from Bouquet to Amherst

P.S. I will try to innoculate the Indians by means of Blankets that may fall in their hands, taking care however not to get the disease myself.

As it is pity to [...] good management [...], I wish we could make use of the Spaniard's Method, and hunt them with English Dogs, Supported by Rangers, and [... ...], who would I think effectivly extirpate [...] that vermine.

medical practice, a practice which the surgeons of course could be expected to understand. Oh well… the ones who become sickened by smallpox, you quarantine them; after all, that is where they got the blankets. There was no mistake in telling sick Indians, sickened with a disease that had been deliberately introduced among them to run and seek shelter among their healthy relatives.

Bacterial warfare and genocide in the process of conquest of the Great Plains and subsequently the Great Basin regions of the United States were made very much easier as a result of the vast numbers of people who had been killed by disease prior to the army's onslaughts. •



For those of us at Bones Bay: Vince Collison

So, you have this person, Beau Dick he's doing his own thing, he's an artist, but the difference is that he's also a hereditary leader.

Vince Collison

Kwakwaka'wakw people are a patrilineal society, their society is based on an individuals relationship to their father, it's not matrilineal like ours. The old-time connections between our nations, the Haida and the Kwakwaka'wak, are still with us. The thing I liked about the Alert Bay trip was that those old connections were revisited and everybody talked about them. They are family, there are connections and we are related historically. Beau has a Haida daughter, Kerri Dick, we've always traveled back and forth.

The coastal connection between all of the coastal nations is huge and the fact that this present-day potlatch at Alert Bay happened because of a trading expedition in the past, is a continuation of our connection. At that time, Haidas had traveled down there and it was evident they weren't going to make it all the way home. So you have these caring people who looked upon the Haidas and said we've got to set something up for them, which is basically the story of Bones Bay. When I heard the Bones Bay story there was no question that I was going to go

Vince Collison speaking

Gene Davidson Jr.

"We were there for the ancestors, for the ones that didn't make it all the way home. ... Whenever we did things in the States and Canada, when we repatriated human remains to Haida Gwaii there was no question about why we did it. It was more of a question of these ancestors connection to Haida Gwaii. It's not natural to be stowed away in a box and being away from Haida Gwaii is certainly not natural. Our state of being is here ... "

Alert and it's not just because I'm on the repatriation committee, it's also because it's a Haida thing and a Kwakwaka'wakw thing. They are doing us a huge honor and we should be there. I was really glad Guujaaw went, I was really glad Arnie was able to go because our leadership has to be at the forefront of these kinds of things. Culturally it's good that Christian White's group went. Our leadership does have to be at these kinds of things because it's got a lot more to do than just putting up a memorial pole, it's also those connections that exist and are built between the leadership.

We were there for the ancestors, for the ones that didn't make it all the way home. And, even if they weren't related personally to you, you should be there and be part of the event. Whenever we did things in the States and Canada, when we repatriated human remains to Haida Gwaii there was no question about why we did it. It was more of a question of these ancestors connection to Haida Gwaii. It's not natural to be stowed away in a box and being away from Haida Gwaii is certainly not natural. Our state of being is here and that is why we do the work to bring these people home.

We have to find a way to honor Beau for what he did. I'm not sure what that will look like. It's not a big how'aa, it's a bigger thing than that and I don't know what it is but I feel we owe him something because of the great thing he did for us, and our ancestors. Beau is a gracious man and he knew this smallpox story and he wanted to do something with that knowledge.

At Alert Bay the performances in the Big House are quite different from what we're used to. There will be a dance and when that is over another begins, there is no applause, and it just rolls and flows. It's very old school. There's this huge array of masks and all the dancers have these slick moves, it's all really smooth. It was amazing. There was this one mask that had an eagle on one side and a thunderbird on the other. The dancer was spinning it to show it's different sides, and then in the back you have all the singers around this huge log drum. You're in another world and that's kind of what the idea is, you're taken to this different place and it challenges you if you are not used to it.

If a kid falls down in the Big House the parents have to pay, if a dancer falls down, they have to pay. If you don't have enough money you find the money and you can't leave the house without paying. It's that disciplined. There are no kids running around. It's an old school place. The building is a little larger than Christian's longhouse. It's got a sand floor and bleacher-style seating on both sides and in the middle a huge fire. The fire is taken care of by this one guy. All he does all night is stoke the fire to keep it going.

The day after we raised the pole we were all in the Big House and they said, okay, it's up to you guys now, you have the floor, you do it however you want to do it. So it was our time to do our business and perform. It was amazing how stressed we were thinking we had to get done in two or three hours. We had Guujaaw and Robert Davidson as our MC's and like I said, we were stressed about being done after we got the floor. I think it was self-imposed that we were trying to get it all done in three hours. Once the Kwakwaka'wakw got the speakers staff back they basically didn't care about time, it was going to take as long as it took. I think we finished our stuff by nine or so, maybe ten. Once they got the floor back they took their own sweet time.

During the next portion I felt a lot stronger because it wasn't Kwakwaka'wakw or Haida, it was this collective space that occurred between our two nations. They were reaching out to us and us and we were responding. At the end of the end of the evening, Wasdon Jr., a singer songwriter, everyone knows him as Wa, sang us a farewell song. He wants us to translate it into Haida and that will then be our song. So there it is, that sharing again and the connection between nations. That connection is something we are going to explore a lot more and we are going to be a lot more active about it. That is what I liked about going to Alert Bay. We went and did it and we were all part of that — we all wanted to contribute and we did . •

For those of us at Bones Bay: Beau Dick

The details that I want to reveal to you are from our own family history and I would also like to honour the name of my uncle, Jimmy Dawson who kept the history alive.

Beau Dick

He was a brought up with the story of the family history. I was fortunate when growing up to be under his influence and he always reminded me of this history and suggested that something should be done.

Going back to the beginning of our story, it is when James Douglas proclaimed British Columbia the new found colony and he hired a man who was a topographer to make maps because Douglas had no idea about the coastline that they were laying claim to.

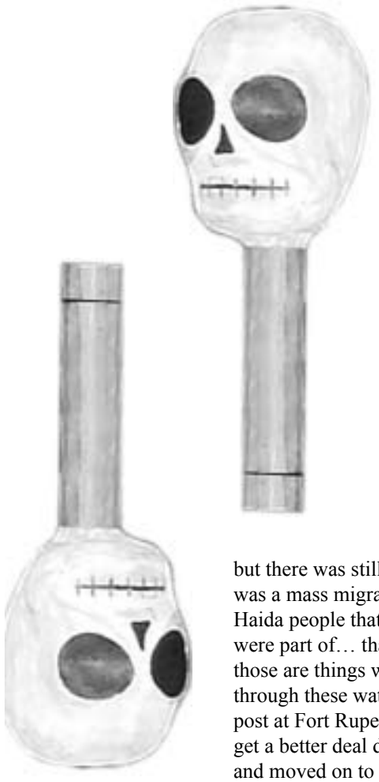
It should be brought up again, the fact that they were laying claim to our coastline and they didn't even know what it consisted of so how can they have any jurisdictional claim at all? Even looking back 150 years ago it is a great embarrassment and it probably still is for British Columbia when they look in the mirror and see the truth.

James Douglas hired George Thomas Dawson, a topographer, to map the coastline. George T. Dawson is not to be confused with George M. Dawson. As Dawson approached the Kwakwaka'wakw territory he encountered a young man who then assisted him and was

Beau Dick speaking

paid quite handsomely. The man was my great-grandfather, Kakab. As a young man Kakab escorted Dawson around our territory and showed him the lay of the land and offered him protection as it was still a pretty wild place.

Kakab was a very prominent individual to begin with because of his standing within our social structure. He was very high ranking and so offered Dawson protection and they became very good friends and Dawson paid Kakab cash money for his services. But also in their friendship Dawson taught Kaakb how to read and write and do arithmetic on paper, which in those days was very beneficial as few native people knew how to do that. So that gave Kakab an edge later on in his life; that was one things Dawson offered my great grandfather, which he really appreciated.



In their friendship Dawson travelled further north, past Bella Bella making his maps and he always returned to Mimquimlees, the village of my great-grandfather. Whether he was on his way south to Victoria or heading north to continue his map making he would always stop and visit. There is a comical story that is told, a little detail, that when Dawson and Kakab encountered each other on the beach they would hug each other and Dawson was very short and Kakab was very tall and they describe him as hugging Kakab around his waist while Kakab would hold him around his shoulders, and it was such a comical site that someone rendered a carving which disappeared in time, I have only be told about it but that gives you some idea of their relationship.

Through the research I have done there were about 390 houses prior to 1850 in villages on Haida Gwaii. Three hundred and ninety times, say an average of 35 people a house, some had more some had less, and the census does coincide, then there were over 14,000 inhabitants on Haida Gwaii at that point in time.

There had already been scourges that had decimated the population before so this was already a lower population than normal, but there was still a strong 14,000 people. In 1862 for one reason or another there was a mass migration to Victoria. Inside information says that there were possibly Haida people that were involved with the Hudson's Bay Company who actually were part of… that may have been part of … there might have been some rivalries, those are things we will never know, but for some reason over 1200 canoes passed through these waters. That is a well-known fact, they bypassed the Hudson's Bay post at Fort Rupert and that was part of the scheme I believe, because they could get a better deal down in Victoria. They were shut out of business at Fort Rupert and moved on to Victoria and as they passed through Johnston Strait it was the most amazing site that the Kwakwaka'wakw, at that time, had ever witnessed.

Up until 1850, the waterways were pretty well controlled by the Kwakwaka'wakw but when the Hudson's Bay Company moved into Fort Rupert all of a sudden things changed and there was a lot more traffic and at that time they witnessed this mass movement.

It was not all in one group but smaller groups of eight, ten or a dozen canoes all from one clan I imagine. And they sang their paddling songs as they went by, but again a most amazing site. They said you could see canoes coming from far up Queen Charlotte Sound and heading down Johnson Strait as far as the eye could see.

Alert Bay: The U'Mista Cultural Centre sits at the waters edge overlooked by the the boarded up residential school.

After that had happened, Dawson appeared again at Village Island and among the people he encountered was my great grandfather and he called him aside. Everyone was still talking about the group of Haida and Dawson told my great-grandfather to stay away from them when they returned from Victoria and of course Kakab asked him why? Dawson said they would all be sick and embarrassingly told him that he knew first hand that the government he worked for — that James Douglas and the Hudson's Bay Company were holding hands, as he described it — and they had a plan to distribute smallpox infested blankets amongst the Haida in the hopes that they would spread this disease to all the other tribes on the coast on their way home.

Why would they want to do that? The answer is very simple — they wanted to control the resources on our coastline and they were very successful because we know that after this there were only about 600 Haida left, there are different accounts of the number but that is close.

The twenty-four canoes that did show up were escorted between Hanson Island and Craigcroft Island down Barnet Pass to a place that is now known as Bones Bay, for obvious reasons. Chiefs have suggested and through other stories that this place had been used prior to that quarantine for our people who had got ill and to save everybody else they were sent there because there is running water. When the Haida arrived they were escorted there and told to stay away from us, most of them were dying and they were given provisions in the form of food and dry wood and they were left to die there in peace.

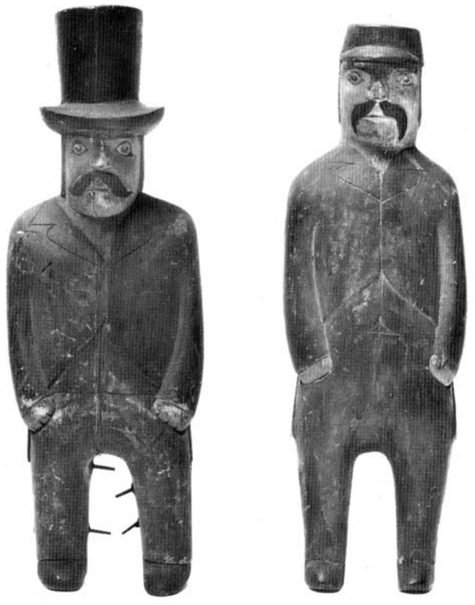
That is our story and the reason we know all of these details is that the Kwakwaka'wakw were so grateful to Dawson for what he had done that my great grandfather took his name when it came to register with the white people — George Thomas Dawson. That is why my mother's maiden name is Dawson. And there are three other families that took the name of Dawson. It was an honourable name and we are ever grateful to this conscientious whiteman who came amongst us and warned us. Again, thank you to Jimmy Dawson for

Beau Dick speaking

keeping this family history alive and to acknowledge that something needed to be done for the people who weren't remembered at Bones Bay. When this first came up I was a very young man and he asked me, "Whatever happened to the Haida people?" I would say, "What do you mean? "Well what happened to them?" "I don't know." "Well, I'll tell you," he said.

We know in the early 1800s that Princess came from a place called Kiusta, she came from the house of Simeon, she was not a direct daughter of the chief there but she was a niece of the great chief at Kiusta and when she came to our people what she brought us was a chilkat blanket. That is so far back in history that we don't know the arrangements or the details, we only know a little bit about it, but we know there is a connection way back directly to Harry Mountain, his sister, my great grandmother who was partly from there.

So we have a kinship to the Haida people, we also have a great grandmother whose name is Anasiglia who is from Tongass, Alaska from the house of Chief Shakes who married a white man named Robert Hunt. It was Hudson's Bay policy to marry in to hire ranking families which would give good business relationships with local natives and she and her husband moved to Fort Rupert and married their children off to Kwakwaka'wakw. My great-grandmother was the oldest of their children and was married to Chief John Watum who had a long line of descendents as well as her younger brother George Hunt and a few others so we have a long lineage from the Hunts, and we hold that in high regard. She had a sister named Emily who married a man named Albert Edwards, the principle chief of the Haida at that time. She brought the name 7idansuu with her to Albert Edwards and they had a son who in their wisdom they named Albert Edwards Edenshaw and I think that all the females that come out of that lineage that married amongst the Haida people, pretty much connects us to the whole nation because of the population decline.

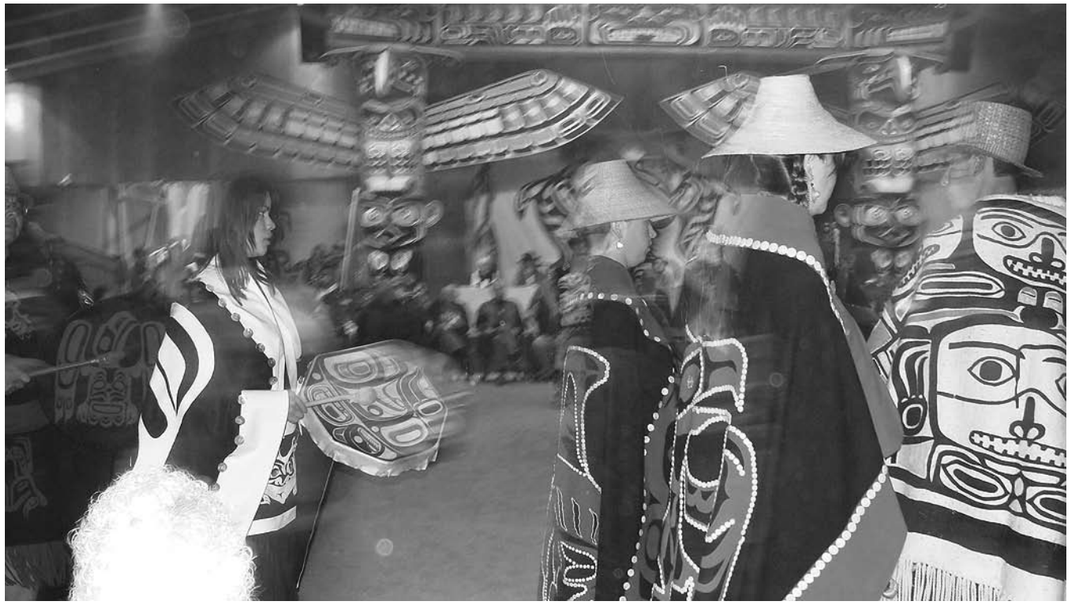


The Ridicule figures. The man with the top hat represents Judge Pemberton of the Victoria Police Court and the other is George Smith, the Victoria town clerk.

- from Haida Monumental Art - George M. MacDonald

There is another story I would like to add and it is a detail that helps put things in perspective. Before the last epidemic a man from Haida Gwaii went to Victoria and got in trouble and ended up being made a scapegoat. They railroaded him and he was accused of this that and another thing. He was demoralized and he went to prison and served a bit of time and was so shamed by his experience that he went home to his Chief, Chief Wiah and said you have to do something to clear my name, I have been wrongfully accused of these things.

In those days he was suggesting that he had to go down [to Victoria] and straighten this mess out with the white people and clear his name — he had been unjustly treated. Wiah said there is nothing we can do, we can't go down there, they won't listen they're crazy. So they had a feast for him amongst his family and the people to clear his name and he put up two poles on the side of his house ridiculing Judge Pemberton and the prosecutor. They put up the poles to ridicule the behaviour of those men and how they treated the Haida man. Word eventually got down to Victoria about this and they were pretty upset. They said these Haida people are just laughing at us and making fun of our justice system, what are you going to do… they had to do something, you know what I mean. So that is an important aspect of the story that kind of leads to this, it is all tied together. •



For those of us at Bones Bay: Candace Weir

The purpose of the trip to Alert Bay was to honour the Haida people who were passing through Kwakwaka'wakw territory in the 1800's and died of smallpox.

Candace Weir

Everything for the trip came together really quickly. There were things we had talked about and we had a dance schedule figured before we left and practiced at the longhouse but things weren't set in stone. My stepson, Vernon White, and a couple of other apprentices were working on different masks. We wanted to purchase a smallpox mask with some money we had received and my stepson was working on a portrait mask. I asked him if it could be made into a smallpox mask — not really knowing — this was only a week before we were going.

On the ferry trip everybody was busy working. On both ferries, from Skidegate to Prince Rupert and Prince Rupert to Port Hardy, we were sewing buttons on blankets, and making gifts. There was no worry, there was no panic, and things were going to get done. Vernon was still carving the mask, but there was no panic about it and we knew that things would come together. We had worked on all the dances except the smallpox dance.

In Alert Bay on the second day at the Big House, we hosted, the first day was Kwakwaka'wakw time and an introduction of all of us to them. On the second day, we hosted the first portion of the evening and we wanted to follow our protocol. This was later in the evening after the memorial pole had been raised to honor the Haida people. Normally after that type of event you would have an end of mourning ceremony. Our group really thought out how we wanted to do things. Corey Bulpitt had carved a male and female end of mourning

continued page 24

Courtesy of the Bill Reid Estate

Candace Weir speaking

continued from page 21

mask. Robert Davidson and Terri-Lynn Williams Davidson, Guujaaw and a few others did a series of songs and instead of the Crying Song, we wanted to do the Steamboat Song, because that was a song that was sung during the smallpox epidemic period and is about people losing their lives. So that was added in. I missed the songs because right after the end of mourning performance I was to do the smallpox dance and I had to get ready. Vernon was just finishing the smallpox mask, he was literally putting finishing touches on it as Kwiaahwah Jones and I were talking about what to dance. Robert Davidson and Guujaaw were MC's and I went to Robert to have him write in the smallpox dance after the end of mourning dance but he had already done it.

L-R: Kwiaahwah Jones, Candace Weir and Carrie Carty discuss the smallpox dance. The mask was carved by Vernon White.

When Vernon delivered the smallpox mask and Christian [White] asked, who's going to dance it? Everybody was getting busy, I gave my sister the song order and she put it up on the flip chart for us all to get it into our minds. But, without even knowing, it was like, I want to do it! Then Kwiaahwah said, I'll do it too! After that we just figured it out. Kwiaahwah would wear the mask because I'm not a mask dancer. It was a calling, a calling that both of us got. We must have had our minds together as the coming together was unspoken.

When we left Haida Gwaii, our dance group was one mind and we went on this mission to be part of the event at Alert Bay, yet there was this little piece that Kwiaahwah and I wanted to do. Vern Williams was part of it as well; it was just this triangle that totally connected. Vern had a pestilence song and we didn't even tell him that he's doing it, but he was there and he had this beautiful song — it came together. It would be really hard to do that dance again. It was a time and a space and a place, and in the setting of the Big House.

It's not like here on Haida Gwaii, where we're in a western civilized setting, where we have fluorescent lights and tables and chairs that divide us. In Alert Bay it was traditional, it is like the Haida and Kwakwaka'wakw lived a hundred years ago. I think for the people who were there, well I know for Kwiaahwah and myself, we were taken back in time.

Everything we needed for the dance was there. Kwiaahwah had a Hudson's Bay scarf, which she leant me, she had a blanket, which she put around herself, and Christian had a three-pelt sea otter cape. It gives me goose bumps just thinking about it. It felt like it was a message that we were asked to bring. It's hard to explain, but the best way to explain it's as if you are given a message from somewhere else — this is what you need to do. I think that is what happened to Kwiaahwah too — the message, this is what you need to do.

Kwiaahwah has been to Alert Bay quite a few times already. It was my first time there and she helped educate me about their ways and how they do things. It felt really good.

I know for my younger sister, when she did the end of mourning dance, it was the same thing; she was given a message that this was something she should do. The message is so overpowering, and you get taken into that time and place. For the pestilence song we moved around the Big House twice and Kwiaahwah's performance was like, wow! It was like being in the

Candace Weir speaking

presence our ancestors. In the dance she kept putting the sea otter out to me but then would pull it back — she didn't want to give it to me, it was like this is what the ancestors endured but this is what they had to do.

Vern Williams

"When we were dancing I heard Vern singing the pestilence song and yet I didn't. I knew he was singing, but it was in the distance and I didn't really see or hear. I didn't see anybody who was there, anybody who was present; it was just a whole different world."

We started the dance from the back of the house and exited through the front door. And coming out of the house was like, all of a sudden back to reality — wow, holy, geez! What just happened? That's what it felt like to me. When we were dancing I heard Vern singing the pestilence song and yet I didn't. I knew he was singing, but it was in the distance and I didn't really see or hear. I didn't see anybody who was there, anybody who was present; it was just a whole different world.

The potlatch was so good because we needed to honor what the Alert Bay people were doing for us and we needed to end what had happened to us — it was a release. It was our time to let go, and to be part of what I see as history making, too move on and let go of what happened to us there, and to help release our ancestors spirits in their territory, it felt good and I felt so much lighter after that, it was an incredible feeling.

Today, the trip seems a lifetime ago. It was such a humbling experience to be there, to be part of that, to be a part of the celebration. I'm glad I didn't stay at home and then say, I should have gone... why didn't I go? I know there were people that missed out, even though the invitation was out there. There was no formal "golden-western-civilized-way-invitation" for this event, it wasn't put out like that. It was oral. This is how our people used to do things — the word was spread up and down the coast and the message would get around. People would either go or not, and we went — we took the invitation seriously. Forget the golden invite! Forget the western thinking! We'd heard about the trip and we knew its significance, we were going!

In the past Christian had worked with Corey Bulpitt, and Corey kept in touch with Christian. When they came up in March for the weaver's celebration, we made contact again and we said we're going to attend the potlatch and we'll figure out how to get there. And of course nobody in our dance group wanted to be left behind. It was excellent because our spouses were there. Some of us took children, and it was such a huge educational experience, even for our children to let them learn by us showing, and them watching and doing, that's what we did. At Bones Bay our young girls prepared most of the food plate for the ancestors when we did the burning. It was their time to do it, it was their time to learn.

One thing I became more aware of when I came home was of the Haida from the urban areas — Victoria and Vancouver. There were a lot of us from Old Massett and some from Skidegate and when we were in Alert Bay there wasn't that invisible line that defined that you're Skidegate, you're Massett, or you're urban. There weren't those invisible boundaries. When we're here at home we have those invisible lines with one another, which don't make sense. In the 1800s, in Bones Bay, there was no division, the Haida that lost their lives there, were *Haida*. When we went to Alert Bay, there were a couple of people from Skidegate on the ferry with us, Kwiaahwah and Tanu Lusignan and they were not separated from our group. When we got to Port Hardy we were invited to this huge breakfast/brunch at Ken Bedard's place and we all went, we looked out for them and we made them part of everything we did. There was an awareness of including, not excluding. It was about all of us coming together to honor Haidas and not have those boundaries that sometimes divide us. All of us were representing the Haida Nation and everything we gave, everything we gifted came from all of us, all of our people. Each and everyone of our group helped by making necklaces, sewing buttons — everyone pulled together and that was an awesome feeling. That was big for me. When I go out into the world I'm from Old Massett, but I say I'm Haida. •

courtesy of the BC Archives

the knife that shut up

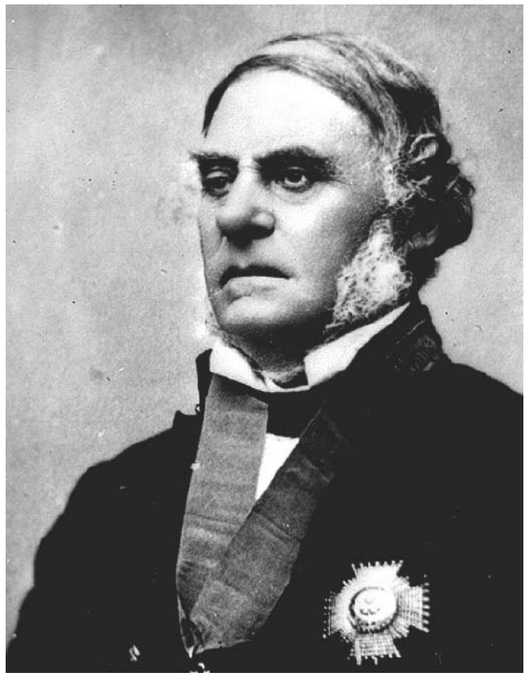
by Rand Flem-Ath & Rose Flem-Ath

The south-west Bastion at Fort Victoria.

When the steamship Brother Jonathan set sail from San Francisco in March 1862, bound for Victoria, there was no forewarning of the plague she carried on board. Fearing bad publicity might discourage immigrants; most San Francisco newspapers failed to report an outbreak of the deadly smallpox virus in the city. Only one newspaper, the San Francisco Bulletin, mentioned the outbreak with three short sentences tucked away on page three:

> "We understand that there are now 26 cases of small pox in the smallpox hospital, most of them mild cases. There is a good deal of this loathsome disease in the city. Let no one neglect to employ all precautions vouchsafed by vaccination."

In the terrible months that followed not another word was written about the epidemic. This single entry in the Bulletin, dated 11 March 1862, arrived too late to be included in the press accounts that were bundled aboard the Brother Jonathan that had set sail on the 8th of March.



Governor General of the Colony, James Douglas

The ship arrived first in Seattle where eager citizens lined the dock to read the latest US Army dispatches from Civil War battlefields in the papers. In their personal mail they also read the frightening news about the terrible disease that had struck the 'city on the Bay'. As a result, the Seattle authorities wasted no time initiating a bold smallpox vaccination program and quarantine policy that saved thousands from the scourge.

At Fort Victoria, the first hint that something was terribly wrong came five days after the March 13th docking when The Daily British Colonist confirmed rumors that a passenger from the Brother Jonathan had contracted "varioloid" (smallpox). For the first time Victorians learnt that smallpox was widespread in San Francisco and throughout California. The paper urged citizens "… to proceed at once to a physician and to undergo vaccination…" Two days later, a second passenger was diagnosed with the disease. On March 26th The Daily British Colonist called for quarantine of ill people:

"The most stringent regulations ought to be enforced, and enforced without a moment's delay. If a case occurs the parties ouaht [sic] to be placed beyond the reach of communicating the infection to others. Imagine for a moment what a fearful calamity it would be, were the horde of Indians on the outskirts of the town to take the disease. Their filthy habits would perpetuate the evil; keep it alive in the community, sacrificing the lives of all classes."

Four years earlier the population of Victoria was only 300. Gold fever changed that. The unsuspecting citizenry now numbered 5000; half of which were First Nations.

About 150 goldbugs looking for a quick fix to their perpetual poverty disembarked from the Brother Jonathan. That night most of the aspiring prospectors, gripped by the fantasy of certain riches waiting for them squandered what little money they had in the bars and brothels of Victoria. The next afternoon found them on board again steaming toward the Columbia River with the hope that further upstream into Idaho, the Salmon River gold strike would change their lives forever.

On March 26th the Governor General of the colony, James Douglas (1803-1877) who had experienced the 1837 smallpox epidemic spoke to the House Assembly. He proclaimed that it was "… desirable that instant measures should be adopted to prevent the spread of the infection …" and strongly recommended to the House that funds be allocated for an emergency hospital to be located in some isolated location where all cases of smallpox could be quarantined.

At least two physicians sat in the nine-member House Assembly. The Hudson's Bay Company had hired Dr. John Helmcken in 1850 and Dr. William Tolmie. Tolmie had more experience with smallpox than Helmcken. He had been dispatched by the Hudson's Bay Company to help curb the great epidemic of 1837 and again during the 1853 outbreak he was active in vaccinating many First Nations people and quarantining others. Coincidentaly he had married the daughter of Govenor James Douglas in 1852.

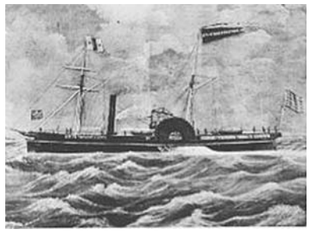
Samuel deWolf, Captain of the steamship Brother Jonathan

When the House Assembly convened to consider the recommendations of Douglas both Helmcken and Tolmie stood to oppose the motion. Helmcken accused Douglas of being an alarmist and said his plan was too costly. This was odd behavior for physicians who had seen first hand the ravages of the disease.

In an editorial dated April 28th, The Daily British Colonist printed a story entitled, "The Small Pox Among the Indians." It revealed some startling facts. At the time, Vancouver Island was a colony and the mainland was called British Columbia and the government had departed. No one was in charge:

"We are assured that the Indians cannot be removed because the Government is absent in British Columbia! The Police Commissioner can do nothing in his absence: nor no one else in authority! Are we then to remain inactive whilst our factotum Governor is absent? Never! In the absences of the Governor, in the absence of a Town Council with authority to enforce sanitary regulations, let our citizens improvise a Board of Health. Let them meet today. Let them call a public meeting at once. Let them take any means, no matter what, to protect their families from the pestilential scourge that is hovering among the savages on the outskirts of the town. We appeal to our authorities, our clergy, our leading citizens, to adopt vigorous measures without a moment's delay, as there are none to be lost."

The Douglas government, including Doctors Helmcken and Tolmie could wash their hands of the crisis. Safe on the mainland they let events unfold. It was left to the people to "take any means, no matter what" and it was left to the Police Commissioner to implement the "vigorous measures" of the people. The Douglas government had its alibi.



The steamship, Bother Jonathan

The fate of the Brother Jonathan: During an 1865 summer storm, the Brother Jonathan, still commanded by Captain DeWolf, foundered while seeking refuge near Crescent City. All but 19 of the 200 passengers and crew perished.

In the area surrounding Fort Victoria the ocean-voyaging Haida lived apart from the other First Nations. They occupied Ogden Point, a hinge of land that today provides a soothing ocean view for walkers who stroll the waterfront of Beacon Hill Park. They were feared warriors who had chosen the point for its strategic location. Today, it is where the Coast Guard located and it is in this place the Haida were abandoned to their dire fate.

The English and Smallpox

The English have a long history with smallpox. In October 1562 a young Queen, Elizabeth I contracted the disease. She survived but not without cost. Her hair fell out, leaving her bald and forcing her to wear a wig for the rest of her life. She also bore a legacy of pocked and scarred skin, which she attempted to conceal with the heavy white powder evident in many of her portraits.

In December 1715 a beautiful socialite whose husband held a seat in Parliament contracted smallpox. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu lost her beauty but survived the disease. Two years later she was in Constantinople with her husband, the new British ambassador when she learned of a method to immunize people from smallpox.

The practice was called 'variolation' – a process of introducing smallpox tissue taken from a diseased patient into a healthy individual – and had been used by the Chinese as early as 1643. It had been discovered that smallpox was far less deadly when contracted through the skin rather than the respiratory system; the death rate falling to 1% from the usual 30%. Variolation was a radical and desperate approach for the Europeans to adopt. It was the equivalent of fighting fire with fire.

In 1718 Lady Montagu instructed the embassy surgeon to variolate her five-year-old son, Edward. There were no side effects. Knowing that the Royal Family had lost a son to smallpox, Lady Montagu told the Princess of Wales about this amazing new procedure. The Princess

was skeptical and decided that she would test the wonder cure using her own methods. She freed six condemned prisoners on condition that they would agree to be variolated. Willing to do anything to escape the gallows of Newgate Prison - all six agreed. This included a young woman who was charged with sharing a bed with a smallpox victim. She survived and was freed along with the others.

The great "Royal Experiment" proved the effectiveness of variolation. Queen Anne who years later followed Queen Elizabeth to the throne had her two daughters treated on April 17, 1772. Thereafter, variolation was, for all intents and purposes state policy in England.

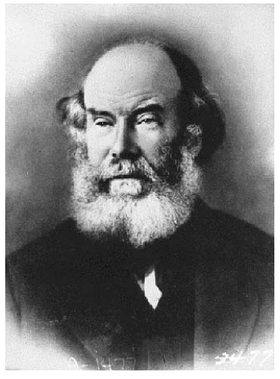
Dr. John Helmcken

In 1796 Edward Jenner (1749-1823) discovered a vaccine that proved to be even more effective than the primitive variolation method. With the arrival of this powerful new antidote the British implemented a policy to protect its citizens by passing the Vaccination Act of 1840. The Act required all infants to be inoculated against smallpox. Though the policy was later repealed, it was not before thousands of British subjects had been rendered immune to the scourge. The two-prong strategy of quarantine and vaccination quickly became the accepted doctrine amongst all physicians of the realm. Except when it came to certain First Nation populations.

Smallpox proved to be as powerful a weapon as the musket in the war waged by the British against the native populations of North America. Not well known is that this biological weapon was part of action taken on behalf of the crown that resulted in genocide. Such an explanation makes sense of the deplorable inaction of the key members of Victoria's House Assembly between the months of March and June 1862.

British Bioterrorism

On May 29th, 1763 the British encampment at Fort Pitt, Pennsylvania was surrounded by the combined forces of the Shawnee, Mingo and Delaware. British Colonel Henry Bouquet described the situation in a letter to Sir Jeffrey Amherst, the British Commander-in-Chief of North America. Then on July 7th, Sir Amherst responded with a proposal that is almost as shocking for its off-handed tone as its content.



Dr. William Tolmie

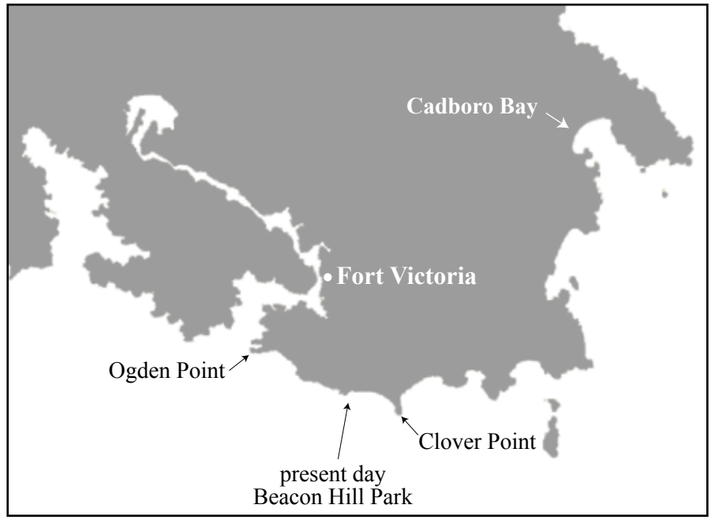
> "Could it not be Contrived to Send the Small Pox among those Disaffected Tribes of Indians?' he wrote. "We must, on this occasion, Use Every Stratagem in our power to Reduce them."

Colonel Bouquet appears to have lost no sleep debating the ethics of this request. On the contrary, he enthusiastically took up the idea, replying with that the disease could be spread by giving the tribes, "…Some Blankets that may fall in their Hands, taking care however not to get the disease myself."

The resulting smallpox epidemic that raced through the Delaware, Mingo and Shawnee tribes brought a decisive end to the siege of Fort Pitt. It was a critical turning point in the war between Europeans and the First Nations. Eighteenth century British biological warfare had won the day.

The disease results in a slow, disfiguring and painful death. An invisible eight- to fourteen-day incubation period enables the virus to travel far a field before the first symptoms appear. These symptoms include a debilitating fatigue followed by a raging fever during which the body's temperature can reach 106 degrees. Extreme backaches, headaches, chills and nausea follow this. Some patients pass in and out of consciousness. Others are delirious.

After four days of suffering the temperature suddenly drops. The patient feels better but is only suspended in the quiet eye of the storm. Then red blotches appear on the hands, feet and face. The patient is now contagious to anyone who inhales droplets from the victim or dust particles from objects contaminated with the disease. These can be air-born by coughing or



Map showing the locations of the Haida camps.

passed by inhalation from particles left on blankets used to ease the distress of the 'chills'. The marks spread over the body and fill with pus. Itching drives the patient to relentless scratching which become deep scars for those who survive the agony. Some victims develop deep blisters inside their mouth and throat; to swallow even water can be agony. At this point many are released from their pain by death.

For those who survive there are more trials to endure. The face can swell so much that coughing may cause a hemorrhage. The disease blinds many victims and the old and young suffer the most.

The Knife that Shut Up

A story attributes the pestilence that destroyed the Haida population to a 'knife that shut up.' This could have been a pocketknife (any object having smallpox 'droplets' on it can transmit the disease if inhaled). In 1862, Dr. Helmcken had described how to administer the smallpox vaccine: "You can use a needle or pen-knife for making the punctures." The Haida threw the pestilent knife into the ocean and hoped that its drowning would end the dreadful plague. It was a false hope.

ARTHRITIS & SMALLPOX

Haida have the highest percentage of ankylosing spondylitis (AS) per population. Ankylosing spondylitis is a type of arthritis that commonly presents in young people and is more severe in young men. The first complaints are pain in any part of the neck, back, hips, or chest wall region. These pains are more severe in the morning, after sitting and after resting. There is long lasting stiffness after sleeping; often pain awakens from sleep. Over time, people affected lose normal movement and some have a permanent stooped posture. Rheumatologists first described the high rates of AS, 35 years ago in the Haida but the reason why the disease is so common was not known. AS develops primarily in people with a gene called HLAB27. Ninety percent of individuals with AS have this gene.

Half of the Haida population has the HLA-B27 gene compared with only 7% in the Caucasian population. This means that the Haida are much more likely to develop AS than the general population. In fact Haida have the highest rate of AS in the world.'

Why do so many Haida have the HLA-B27 gene?

Research shows that the HLA-B27 gene may provide protection for Haida in particular circumstances, helping them to survive as a people. Studies in HIV AIDS have provided some clues. Most people who are infected with HIV will become sick and die without treatment, but there is a small number who survive without becoming ill. HLA-B27 is one gene, which seems to allow people with HIV to live longer; the gene provides protection in some people with chronic HIV delaying the harmful effects on the immune system.

A computer model of the HLA-B27 gene

One theory is that the Haida who survived the smallpox epidemics were the ones with HLA-B27. In other words, those with HLA-B27 had a greater chance of surviving. • *Dr. Alice Thompson*

courtesy of the BC Archives

A view of Victoria from the Songhee land.

Saving the Songhees

The Songhees had settled in the Victoria area long before the British arrived. Dr. Helmcken vaccinated many of the tribe in late March 1862. Both the vaccination program and their isolation were part of a well-coordinated plan that effectively saved the Songhees. The nation was advised to move to the relative safety of Discovery Island where they remained until the pestilence had passed and they could then resume hunting for the Hudson Bay Company.

The question must be asked why the good Doctor did not offer the same lifesaving treatment and advice to the Haida?

The Body on the Beach

In mid-April the body of a white male smallpox victim was found on the beach directly below a First Nations site called the 'Northerner's Encampment' near the present-day Upper Harbor of Victoria. People from the camp made the deadly mistake of investigating the corpse on their beach. How the body got to the beach belonging to the 'Northerners' is unknown but soon afterwards the smallpox epidemic exploded in a new round of infections. Police Commissioner Augustus Pemberton refused permission to let his men bury the smallpox victims. The situation was getting out of control and the newspapers started calling for action to rid Victoria of the disease-ridden Northerners. Then came an editorial of the 28th of April calling for 'vigorous measures'. Pemberton took up the challenge and employed a gunboat to persuade the people at the encampment to leave the city. By the 30th April, with the Songhees safely on Discovery Island, the rest of the First Nations were ordered to leave the area.

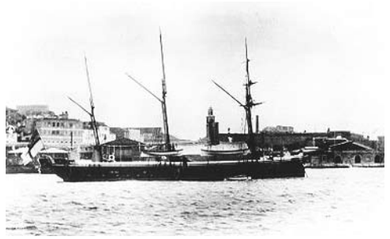
11 May 1862

The Haida were living in their own camp on the Inner Harbor at Ogden Point. When smallpox broke out, they climbed into their canoes and moved to Cadboro Bay on the east side of the city in an attempt to distance themselves from the plague. Police Commissioner Pemberton followed and with his gunboats arrived at the camp on the 11th of May. He forced the Haida into twenty-five canoes that were tied to the H.M.S. Grappler and H.M.S. Forward. The convoy then began the five hundred mile journey up the coast of British Columbia.

Little is known about that journey which these days is cruised by luxury liners offering tourists a view of wilderness rarely found elsewhere and the vessel logs are remarkably lean about

events that transpired along the Inside Passage during that spring of 1862. Only the H.M.S. Forward completed the trip to Fort Simpson (present-day Prince Rupert). The H.M.S. Grapple was forced back to Victoria when some Haida, who had eluded Pemberton's roundup, attacked the Songhees on Discovery Island.

On the 14th of May, just three days after the Haida were removed from Cadboro Bay an editorial in The British Colonist revealed the fact that the hospital for treating small pox was almost ready:



The H.M.S. Grappler

> "The new building at the rear of the Royal Hospital, for reception of patients of this kind [small pox victims], is approaching completion, and will be ready in a day or two."

So there was really no need to expel the Haida. They had already isolated themselves from the rest of the First Nations.

The number of the canoes that made it safely to Fort Simpson is not known. How many canoes were simply cut adrift as their passengers died to float into one of the thousands of lagoons and coves along the way is impossible to know. We do know that the Nuxalk people contracted smallpox after finding a drifting canoe and that the Haida nation underwent a tragic implosion — at least 83% of the population was lost in the year of 1862-1863. By the turn of the century the only occupied villages on Haida Gwaii were Massett and Skidegate.

17 June 1862

Back in Fort Victoria, with the threat of smallpox all but gone, the press belatedly wrote about the terrible 'policy' of the government in its treatment of the smallpox epidemic amongst the First Nations. A June 17th editorial entitled 'The Indian Mortality' included these remarks:

> "What will they say in England?' when it is known that an Indian population was fostered and encouraged round Victoria, until the small-pox was imported from San Francisco. Then, when the disease raged amongst them, when the unfortunate wretches were dying by scores, deserted by their own people, and left to perish in the midst of a Christian community that had fattened off them for four years – then the humanizing influence of our civilized Government comes in – not to remedy the evil that it had brought about – not to become the Good Samaritan, and endeavor to ameliorate the effects of the disease by medical exertion, but to drive these people away to death, and to disseminate the fell disease along the coast."

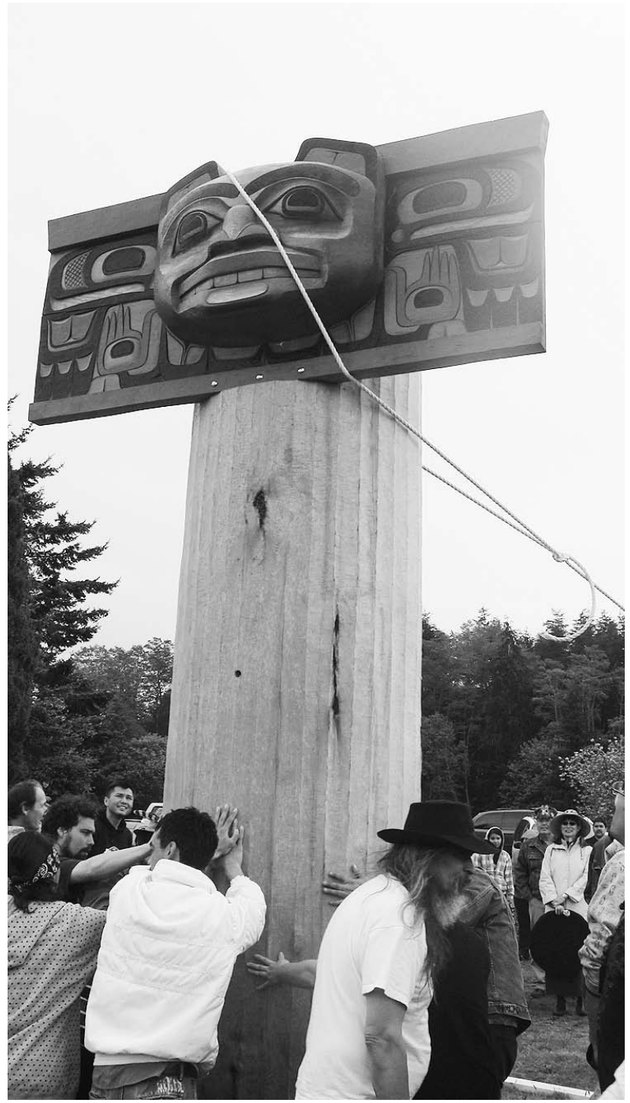
and:

> "How easy it would have been to have sent away the tribes when the disease was first noticed in the town, and if any of the Indians had taken the infection, to have had a place where they could have been attended to, some little distance from Victoria, until they recovered as they in all probability would have done with medical aid. By this means the progress of the disease would at once have been arrested, and the population saved…"

Sources: The British Colonist 18 March to 17 June 1862

Boyd, Robert
The Coming of the Spirit Of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999.

See also: http://web.uvic.ca/vv/student/smallpox/overview/index.hmtl



The mortuary pole rasied at Alert Bay to honour the Haida at Bones Bay.

For those of us at Bones Bay:
Christian White

A couple of years ago before this recent invitation we were invited to Alert Bay, and at that time several Haida went.

The carving that was created for this recent gathering was in progress then, it was a mortuary style plaque, formed almost like the front of a bentwood chest with a mask carved out of the same piece of wood. The overall carving looked like a box front. The event that we were invited to then was a memorial gathering amongst the Kwakwaka'wakw.

Christian White

Recently, the Kwakwaka'wakw people were invited up to the Islands by Robert Davidson to perform at a weaver's celebration he hosted here in Massett and then again in Skidegate. At the feast, the invitation from the Kwakwaka'wakw to attend a potlatch at Alert Bay, was again extended so we continued preparing for it, we had actually started preparing for some time before this most recent invitation.

We then set a date to travel and had to arrange and organize for the ceremony. The Kwakwaka'wakw people many, many years ago had a truce with the Haida. Haida would be traveling through their territory on their way to Mak'toli, which was the Haida way of saying Victoria. Haida would travel to Mak'toli to purchase goods that they would use back here on Haida Gwaii — European manufactured goods. They had become accustomed to iron pots,

Christian White speaking

blankets and other things. Every year they would travel to Victoria, some would even stay down there. Usually they would be under the leadership of village chiefs and they would travel in large groups paddling canoes down the coast; of course they had been doing this for hundreds of years and had made truces with tribes along the coast. We had heard these stories as we were growing up and we heard other stories about Haida getting smallpox. As they paddled north they would be falling dead with the smallpox. By the time the last few of them had made it up to the Islands they actually carried the smallpox with them and it spread through the islands. There was more than one wave of smallpox and other diseases too, measles, chicken pox, mumps, tuberculosis and venereal diseases. Smallpox was the most devastating. It wiped out over 90% of our population. We heard of Haida dying all along the way back

Preparing the food offering at Bones Bay.

home and we now know that Bones Bay, near Alert Bay is one of the places they died.

Left (L-R) Skil Jaadee White, Dorcus Bell, and Shaylana Brown.

Centre (L-R) Katie Adkins, Skil Jaadee White and Shaylana Brown.

Right (L-R) Candace Weir, Kwiaahwah Jones, and Lisa Boyko.

We know our ancestors' remains have been taken off the Islands by collectors and anthropologists and these remains are stored away in different museums throughout the world. Over the past few years our community began the process of repatriating these remains for burial. That took us several years and involved the communities of Skidegate and Old Massett and other Haida that lived in the cities, including Victoria. That was part of it, so that gave us an understanding of repatriation.

We also know that when Haida perished in battle away from the Islands, they would be cremated and their ashes would be placed in a box and brought back to the family they belonged to. Repatriation has always been part of our culture. In this case, the remains at Bones Bay are with many other Kwakwaka'wakw people who also died there and we felt that it would be impossible to return them home. We thought it would be better to leave them where they lay.

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The carving of the new plaque was carried out by a Haida who was one of my apprentices, his name is Corey Bulpitt. His parents were Haida but he was adopted-out when he was a baby and raised by a couple that live in Langley near Vancouver. When he was about nineteen years old he returned to Massett and I took him under my wing and taught him to carve. He was quite an artist already and he picked up the Haida style quickly. He worked with me for several summers and helped me on projects such as masks and totem poles. Later on he worked on his own in Vancouver and carved several poles and different things. He had several commissions and then he met Beau Dick and they started talking about doing this mortuary plaque for our Haida ancestors that had perished at Bones Bay.

Beau talked about our Kwakwaka'wakw/Haida relationship through a Tlingit woman known as Anasiglia, she was from Tongass in southeast Alaska but she also had relatives amongst the Haida. One of my ancestors, Skilaaw, was an uncle of Albert Edward Edenshaw and his wife

Christian White speaking

was a Tongass, Tlingit — his house was out at Tow Hill.
So there is a relationship that goes way back. Charles Edenshaw and Albert Edward Edenshaw's nephew also retained a relationship with the Kwakwaka'wakw people. On his way to Victoria he would stop and he would sometimes be commissioned to carve silver bracelets for potlatches. And, even more recently fisherman from the Islands — my family, Henry White and my grandfather, Jeffrey White — maintained connections with the Kwakwaka'wakw people. They were commercial fishermen and they would stop at different villages along the coast and visit with their comrades. So there was quite a relationship that kept on going through the years. One of Beau's relatives, known as Blacky, came up to Massett and lived for a few years and while here he commercial fished. He was a great friend of our families also. So the relationship carried on and Beau eventually married a cousin of mine, Sherri Lightbown, and they had a daughter Kerri. Contact has been maintained over the decades and centuries and it carried on to my young apprentice, Corey Bulpitt, who joined up with Beau to carve this mortuary plaque for the Haida who passed at Bones Bay.

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So we prepared for what we thought would be the best way to honor the ancestors. We brought our traditional foods and we created new masks and regalia. Many of us had never

L-R: Jeffrey Williams, Vernon White, Gene Davidson Jr. and Neil Goertzen at Beau Dick's.

been to Alert Bay, but there were some that had and some had attended residential school there. Many of our people had also gone there in the past to join in celebrations. It was a good chance for us to renew those ties and friendships.

Once we arrived, they got us settled and took very good care of us. They even welcomed us as we came off the ferry. From there we prepared to travel the next day to Bones Bay. They arranged for probably a hundred of us to travel to the bay, which was over an hour and a half away. Some of us traveled there early that morning to put the plaque up. The plaque was a painted copy of the carved one that would stand in the village at Alert. Within minutes of our

Christian White speaking

raising the plaque people started arriving. Around the bay you could see remnants of different activities that had gone on in the past, I walked around and saw several bones lying on the beach. Other people saw skeletal remains in the forest. We were all on this small point of land that was jutting out into the bay. It was covered in trees and was really only a rocky outcrop with a small grassy area and a fire pit.

We assembled and were welcomed by the Kwakwaka'wakw people. They then passed the ceremony over to us. Beau had supplied us with a carved Yellow cedar tray and we used that for the food. All the young ladies and woman prepared the food. The food was then placed onto the fire to send through to the ancestors and we then sang a feast song and several happy songs. The Kwakwaka'wakw wanted us to do the ceremony the way we do it and the best way

The Kwakwaka'wakw earthquake mask.

we could honor our ancestors was by showing respect to them and the Kwakwaka'wakw. The Kwakwaka'wakw let us know that they do a similar ceremony; I think that really helped us unite.

When we returned to Alert Bay, we were invited to the Big House. When we got there they feasted us and right after the feast we were greeted once again. A Hamatsa dancer came out guided by a man with a rattle. They showed us their culture, their masks and we recognized several dancers that we had met over the years. Guujaaw and the chiefs Iljawuus and Gaahlaay were invited to sit with their chiefs, there was probably close to forty of their chiefs there. It was quite an evening. Many of their chiefs spoke only in Kwakwaka'wakw so it was impressive to see and hear. Beau, as the principal host of the event, gave a payment to each of the chiefs that spoke.

The next day we were invited to the burial grounds in Alert Bay to raise the mortuary pole. A lot of work was still being carried out that morning. The final details were being finished — getting the pole prepared and the plaque attached.

We all met at the burial grounds and did our ceremony. The carvers did a dance with their tools, breathing life into the pole. Two Eagle clan ladies and two Raven clan ladies cleansed the pole with cedar boughs and there was a speech welcoming us to raise the pole. They wanted to see us doing our traditions and now there is a Haida mortuary pole with a plaque that stands in the burial grounds on Namgis territory at Alert Bay.

After the pole raising we had to go and prepare for our evening performance but before that we took some k'aaw that the Skidegate Band Council had provided to the cooks along with other food that we had brought down to contribute to the feast. I was mainly involved in the dance performance that evening and we still had to prepare a few masks for the perfor-

Christian White speaking

mance. Several masks had been carved by Corey Bulpitt and Vernon White. Vernon carved the smallpox mask and Corey carved two ancestor masks that were danced. Even though they were behind masks it was still very emotional for the dancers. There were a lot of feelings that came up as they realized they were portraying their ancestors that had died. It's quite a healing process for us to reconnect with our ancestors like that and to honor them.

For many of us it was the first time we danced in a house with a dirt floor; our dancing is quite different than the Kwakwaka'wakw style. The way they dance they don't raise much dust but when the Haida got there… during our performance we also featured a white raven and a large box, the sides of the box were blankets and four women held them. Inside the box there was a moon that rolls up and down four times and then the white raven entered into the box and then a moment later a black raven peaked his head above the box and then came out and danced around. So he changed from a white raven into a black raven. We also featured a new eagle mask, so it was quite the event.

We presented several gifts to the Kwakwaka'wakw chiefs, matriarchs and people. Many of our group contributed necklaces made of argillite and glass and April White contributed several art cards, which were presented to the chiefs and matriarchs. It was our way of showing our appreciation for being invited there and hosted so well. After our performance and several other speeches the Kwakwaka'wakw people reciprocated with more speeches and dances, which they invited some of our group to perform with them.

Over the following hours and days we had heard that there were many places along the coast where Haida people had also died. So, I guess we will be hearing from other nations about what had happened in their territory.

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I don't really know too much about the smallpox disease. Before the first missionary came to Massett the shaman were the spiritual leaders but their powers could not overcome the sickness, which we called pestilence.

Shaman were inspired during their lifetime to become a medicine man and they would go through different rituals all through their lifetime — they wouldn't cut their hair, they would fast, they would drink sea water, they would eat different medicines to purify themselves. They would have visions and they would go into a trance-like state, sometimes for almost a month at a time and during that time they would travel to other dimensions, to other places, and sometimes they would return speaking another language, sometimes they would return with different stories or songs. They were able to drive out evil spirits but they weren't able to drive out smallpox.

When the missionaries came they already had a vaccine for smallpox and one of the chiefs volunteered to be vaccinated. In a way the shaman were discredited for being unable to cure the illness. Of course we have heard about infested blankets being taken from dead bodies and we also heard of sick people being dropped off from ships, which we took in to care for and ended up getting the disease. Some of it could have been done on purpose; it's something we will never really know. •

Illustration: Michael Nicoll Yaghulanaas, from *The Tale of Two Shamans*

Smallpox & Healing
Tom Dyer is My Name

by Jusquan

Jusquan

Historical accounts of our population before 'contact' – widely cited as Juan Perez and the Santiago's 1774 visit – estimate that there were between 10,000 and 12,000 Haida living on the Islands. This 'pre-contact' number is used in historical texts to contrast the number of Haida living in the villages of Massett and Skidegate in 1904 – 587. This means a staggering ninety-five percent of our population was gone within 130 years. It is agreed that the main reason for this was disease brought by European visitors, the most ruinous being smallpox, which we referred to as 'Tom Dyer'.

The most recent smallpox epidemic occurred in 1862. Historical accounts, however, do little to show the depth of loss, a loss that included an immeasurable amount of knowledge and culture. Prior to the waves of introduced disease, there were many villages along the coastline of these Islands. Haida historians cite a much larger population before the contact period — as many as 30,000 or even 40,000. Our powerful nation thrived during the trade period (1774 -1830), adapting and then mastering the new commerce with European nations. Quickly, our reputation as intelligent and adept traders spread. To the visiting traders the autonomy of the Haida nation was unquestionable and the attempts of some to show their superiority over us were met with powerful resistance and had definite consequences.

Although documented extensively, the 1862 smallpox epidemic was not the first. There were at least four previous smallpox epidemics along the coast: in the early 1770s, 1781-1782, in 1801 and in 1836. Captain Bishop of the Ruby in July 1795 in conversation with 'Kowe' (of Cumshewa) said that the Haida "are very numerous, and where [sic] much more so before the small Pox, which raged here a few years since, and by Kowes Account, swept off two thirds of the People, scarcely any that where [sic] affected Survived…" Definitely, as two waves of smallpox occurred at the beginning of the contact period, this may explain the low population estimates of Haida by explorers, traders, and historians. As well, smallpox was not the only introduced disease to hit the many indigenous populations of what is now North America – as measles, influenza, tuberculosis, and venereal disease also hit other nations very hard.

Provincial Politics

As the trade period dwindled due to the hunting and decline of the sea otter, controlling resource development became the focus of colonial and company officials in what is now

called British Columbia. The short lived and largely unsuccessful 'gold rush' on Haida Gwaii in 1851, (due to the Haida assertion of their rights and ownership of territory), drove the British to declare Haida Gwaii the "Colony of the Queen Charlotte Islands" in 1853 (done with no consultation or negotiation with the Haida leaders of the day – so the gesture was in name only). This was the British response to a perceived American threat by way of increased trade activity. The Hudson Bay Company controlled 'Mak'toli' (otherwise known as Fort Victoria) was virtually inseparable from the British colony – at this point in history, commerce and government were well known bedfellows. It is of interest that James Douglas, the Governor of the Colony of Vancouver Island from1851 to 1864, (and thus by name only, of the Colony of the Queen Charlotte Islands), and also the first Governor of the Colony of British Columbia (1858), worked for the Hudson's Bay Company.

Dancing in the Big House. At far right is the daners attendant.

Mak'toli was no stranger to the Haida people. Large contingents of us would travel there and enjoy what the centre had to offer – an opportunity to trade, mingle with other indigenous peoples, to gamble and generally have a good time. Mak'toli became a prestigious destination. Traditional trade items were brought in abundance and traded with the other indigenous nations camped there, as well as items for the European newcomers.

During the mid to late 1850s, Mak'toli did not have a large population of non-Indigenous settlers – in fact, the Indigenous population well outnumbered the Settler population. The government of the day was well aware of this. This imbalance was soon to change though. The major incident that changed the demographics of what is now British Columbia was the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush, sparked by finding gold in the Thompson River in 1856. A flood of Americans rushed north to try and profit from the metal. This onslaught forced the establishment of a formal administration for the Colony of British Columbia in 1858.

As a result of the gold rush in the newly formed British Colony, the population of non-indigenous peoples in Mak'toli jumped considerably. Whereas a few years earlier, indigenous people were the majority, gold seekers and others now rapidly filled the town and suddenly Haidas and other nations found themselves camped on the edge of the bursting capital.

On March 12, 1862, the Brother Jonathan carrying 350 mostly gold seekers arrived in Victoria from San Francisco, on its way to the Columbia River. The Brother Jonathan stayed in Victoria for 24 hours – dropping off freight and passengers. A few days later it was discovered that a passenger had smallpox. Along with this discovery, another steamer from San Francisco, The Oregon, arrived in Victoria also carrying a victim of smallpox.

At the time, there were two well-known ways to prevent or minimize the spread of this disease — quarantine and vaccination. Although there was ample opportunity for officials in Victoria to hamper its spread among the indigenous camps, the exact opposite took place. The actions by the officials in Victoria encouraged the rapid and devastating spread of the epidemic along the Northwest Coast. Considering the response to smallpox by government officials and other influential individuals of the time, a solution to the "Indian Problem" was found and then helped along: namely, the smallpox epidemic, or, Tom Dyer.

Officials in Mak'toli did not approve of imposing quarantine or administering vaccinations and chose instead to build a small hospital for non-indigenous smallpox patients where admission was voluntary. One alarming aspect about this decision is that two members of the House of Assembly, which was the governing administration in the colony, were doctors. Dr. William Tolmie and Dr. John Helmcken were both employees of the Hudson's Bay Company and both had vaccinated natives elsewhere during previous epidemics, in 1837 and 1853 respectively. Even more alarming was that Governor James Douglas, who had witnessed two previous epidemics on the coast, had actually proposed in March 1862 to the House of Assembly to build a hospital in an isolated location for all cases of smallpox and to compel all patients to be sent there. Four days after Douglas' proposal, the majority of the House voted against the smallpox hospital. Speaker Dr. Helmcken stated he was against a fully staffed hospital and against forcing all cases of smallpox to go there. He expressed concern about the cost of establishing and operating the hospital, and "that it would interfere with the liberty of the patients." The same reason was supported by the House to reject the notion of quarantine.

Of particular note is that there was no shortage of smallpox vaccine at the time. In May 1862, Father Leon Fouquet, a Catholic Missionary, vaccinated 3,400 natives along the lower Fraser River; and other reports exist of Missionaries vaccinating natives elsewhere such as Reverend William Duncan at Metlakatla. When the first outbreak of smallpox occurred in a native at Mak'toli on April 1, 1862, there was no reaction from authorities. Two weeks after that a small number of local natives began to receive vaccines. By April 25, the Daily British Colonist reported that since the outbreak Dr. Helmcken had vaccinated "over 500 natives" – almost all of them Songhees. There were reportedly well over 2,000 visiting indigenous peoples camped at Mak'toli during the 1862 outbreak.

Treacherous Action, Treacherous Intent

Denying the need for quarantine and widespread inoculation, the administration in Mak'toli did not stop in hastening the spread of smallpox amongst the Northwest Coast nations camped nearby. The Daily British Colonist documented the rapid spread of the disease amongst the indigenous peoples, from the initial outbreak beginning in April 1862 to the devastating ravages of mass death throughout May and June. The deaths of Northwest Coast people were detailed in the local paper inciting concern and panic in Settler Victorians. The Commissioner of Police reacted by issuing an order on April 28, 1862 that the gunboat Grappler force the Tsimshian encampment to leave. The Colonist notes several other incidents of forcing smallpox-infected natives leave the area. The most disturbing incident being when the Commissioner on the gunboat Forward towed 26 canoes of over 300 infected men, women, and children – 25 of the canoes were Haida – 15 days to Fort Rupert, forcing them toward home and sending them either to their death on the journey and or to spread the disease up the coast. By the beginning of July, there were very few indigenous survivors left near Mak'toli, and authorities were still forcing them home.

In June 1862, The Daily British Colonist wrote the following about the Haida who had recently been forced to leave Mak'toli:

> How have the mighty fallen! Four short years ago, numbering their braves by thou sands, they were the scourge and terror of the coast; today, broken-spirited and effeminate, which scarce a corporal's guard of warriors remaining alive, they are proceeding northward, bearing with them the seeds of a loathsome disease that will take root and bring both a plentiful crop of ruin and destruction to the friends who have remained at home. At the present rate of mortality, not many months can elapse 'ere the Northern Indians of this coast will exist only in story.

The desired effect of the actions taken by Mak'toli officials worked with precision. The groups of natives forced out of Mak'toli arrived in their communities carrying with them

smallpox – and those that didn't arrive home floated in their canoes dead and infected to the shores of other communities. The horror that ensued was beyond imagination.

Going Home

Few Haida forced out of Mak'toli made it home. However, there is no doubt that those who did were infected with smallpox. Similar to many nations along the coast, there are stories of entire families dying from the disease — so many people died that they were left where they fell; no one remained to bury them. Entire villages were deserted, the few survivors escaping to live with relatives in other villages. The pain, suffering, and horrible death that overtook our people were catastrophic and heartbreaking, and as it is clear from the evidence above, entirely avoidable.

There are few stories amongst us that detail this tragic part of our history. The general story that has survived is that thousands of our relatives died a horrible death, and that our many villages merged into a few due to the rapid depopulation. One story that has survived and is well known today is from the song "Weep you high ones, Steamboat." The song tells of a steamboat full of Haidas who leave for Victoria, and only two people come back, the rest die from the smallpox epidemic.

Today, underlying our thriving and vibrant nation, a deep scar remains. So many people were lost to the epidemics, specifically the 1862 epidemic, there are many restless spirits still roaming who have been left unburied with no proper ceremony performed to put them to rest as our culture dictates. This pain is evident generations later; there are still many unknowns and uncertainties about our place in this world as Haida – part of that knowledge was lost due to the appalling mass death, and is 'out there', in the air, land and sea of Haida Gwaii still, waiting for us to find it again.

Healing

In May, 2008, Beau Dick of the Kwak'waka'wakw nation held a ceremony, memorial pole raising, and potlatch in his community of Alert Bay, Vancouver Island. Always trade partners, friends, relatives, and sometimes rivals, the Kwak'waka'wakw and Haida have a relationship that spans millennia. The two-day event was an acknowledgement of a shared tragedy. The Kwak'waka'wakw tell a story that during the smallpox epidemic of 1862 canoes full of infected Haida came through their territory. The Kwak'waka'wakw led their northern neighbors to a place that is now known as Bones Bay and in this place over 300 Haida died of smallpox.

Given the documentation, it is indeed possible that many of our people at Bones Bay were the very ones the Police Commissioner of Victoria and his gang towed up the coast with the gunship Forward. In the years following the epidemic, a cannery was located across from Bones Bay and the Kwak'waka'wakw tell of voices and singing heard through the night in a language they did not recognize. The sense is that these are the restless spirits of the many Haida who perished at that place to the awful disease.

Beau grew up hearing these stories, these and others about the Haida and the smallpox epidemic and he told these in great length at the potlatch he held for us in May 2008. I was lucky enough to be one those who traveled to Alert Bay and be part of the events.

The first day, Beau chartered a large boat to make two trips to Bones Bay with both Haida and Kwak'waka'wakw people. Corey Bulpitt, the Haida carver who has apprenticed with Beau and now lives in Alert Bay, painted with others a large memorial plaque that was raised at Bones Bay that day. The gathered Haida conducted a food burning ceremony for our ancestors who were resting there. The day was beautiful and calm; and there was a sense of peace

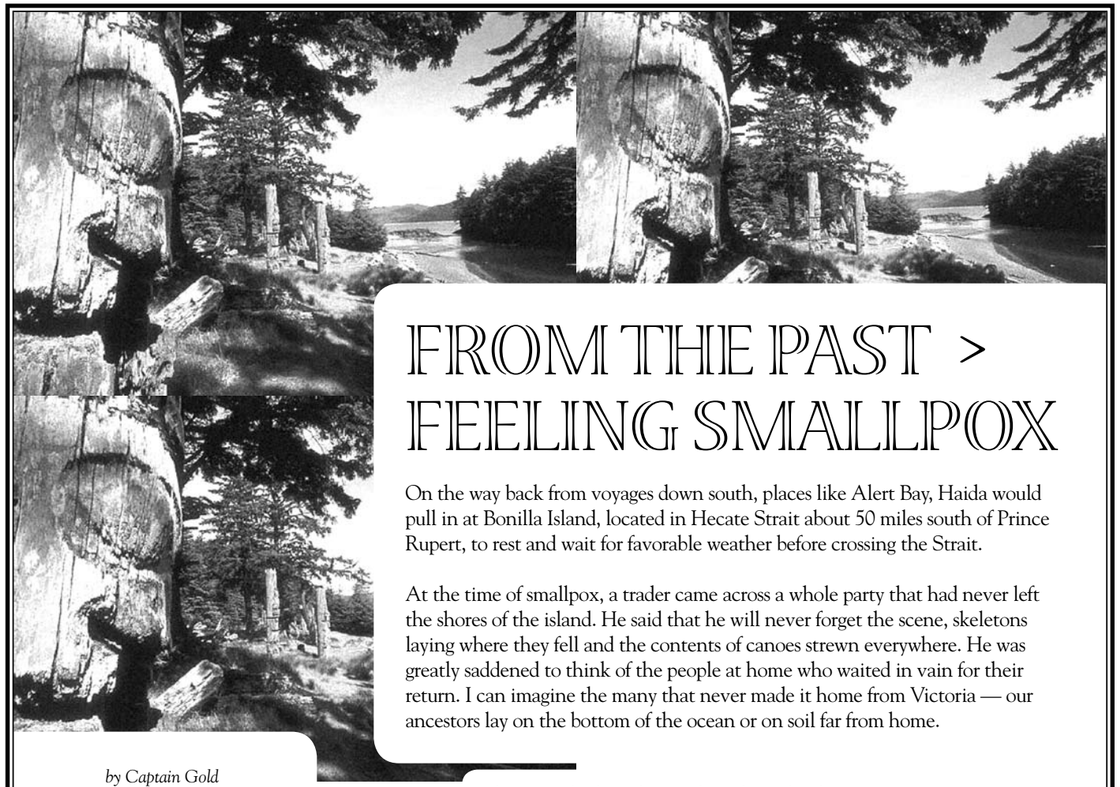
L-R: Rosemary Hart, Joan Hart and Candace Weir at the Alert Bay pole raising ceremony.

felt by all those who attended. Over a century of pain and mourning was addressed in a good and heartfelt way and that night the Kwak'waka'wakw held a feast for us in their Big House, complete with dancing and ceremony to honour our shared history and the events that took place that day.

The following day, a memorial pole was raised in their graveyard, carved by Corey and Beau to honour and remember our ancestors who died at Bones Bay. That evening, we were invited to conduct our end of mourning ceremony at the Big House as well as any other business we needed to do to address the loss of our people and the events that had taken place during that day and the previous day.

In all, the two days were an incredible healing and learning experience for all who participated. A piece of our lost history was found again, and dealt with in the proper way, so that we as a nation put to rest just part of a catastrophic event that has shaped who we are today.

The potlatch in Alert Bay was just the beginning. Beau, a friend and relative of the Haida nation, put into motion a chain of events that will inevitably affect each one us living today. The healing that began at Bones Bay will continue, following the same route our ancestors took from Northern Vancouver Island, up the coast, and home to Haida Gwaii. •



FROM THE PAST > FEELING SMALLPOX

On the way back from voyages down south, places like Alert Bay, Haida would pull in at Bonilla Island, located in Hecate Strait about 50 miles south of Prince Rupert, to rest and wait for favorable weather before crossing the Strait.

At the time of smallpox, a trader came across a whole party that had never left the shores of the island. He said that he will never forget the scene, skeletons laying where they fell and the contents of canoes strewn everywhere. He was greatly saddened to think of the people at home who waited in vain for their return. I can imagine the many that never made it home from Victoria — our ancestors lay on the bottom of the ocean or on soil far from home.

by Captain Gold

Their eyes look to the northern homeland
Their hearts and minds fly to loved ones
Their final hour so far from home
We shall always call them home

In the old days, the common size of a village was about 300 people but after smallpox came through there may only be 30 souls left.

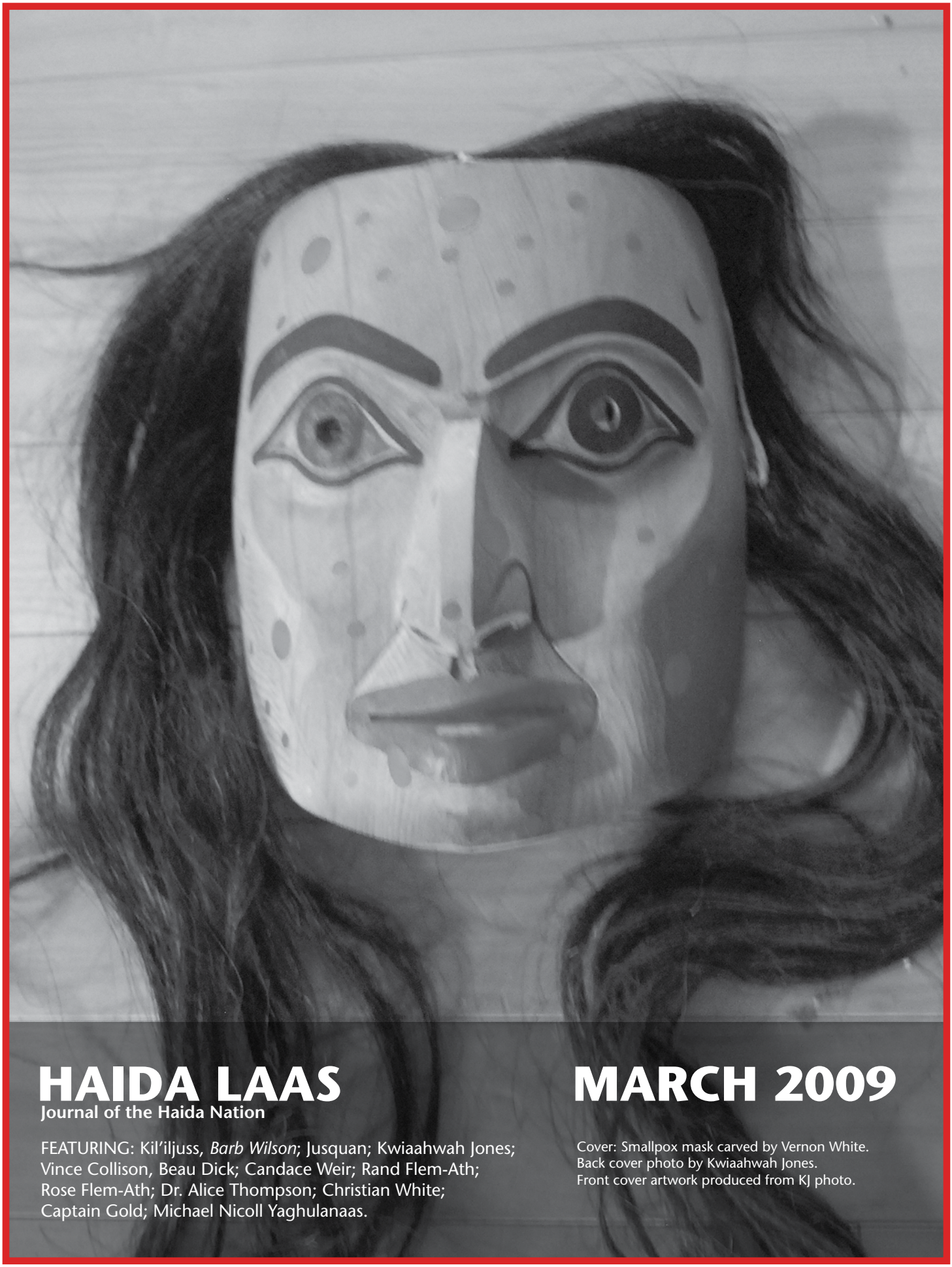
All of that devastation happened in a very short time, just months. That is how quick it happened. I can imagine Skung Gwaii Lllnaagai as one village that had only 30 people left after 1862. Those who survived lived with the ghosts of their friends for over 20 years, it had to be tough! There are stories of people who canoed from Skidegate to Skung Gwaii and offered a hand in peace and asked those survivors to come to Skidegate to be with others from around Haida Gwaii.

I can imagine that the offer was made as one survivor to another and probably took place inside Chief Elijah Ninstints longhouse.

I study history and can imagine that the Skung Gwaii people knew when they left that many would never be able to return.

I can imagine that Chief Elijah, an old man at the time and a seasoned warrior of many battles knew this to be true.

I can imagine that they gathered to tell the old stories, sing the old songs, try to make peace with the lost ones and next day canoe away never to return. •



HAIDA LAAS

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FEATURING: Kil'iljuss, *Barb Wilson*; Jusquan; Kwiaahwah Jones; Vince Collison, Beau Dick; Candace Weir; Rand Flem-Ath; Rose Flem-Ath; Dr. Alice Thompson; Christian White; Captain Gold; Michael Nicoll Yaghulanaas.

Cover: Smallpox mask carved by Vernon White.
Back cover photo by Kwiaahwah Jones.
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