

KNOWLEDGE OF NATIVE ELDERS
REGINALD AND LOUISE DANGELI

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By Wella Towarak

Today Reginald began by speaking about the Tsetsaut. The Tsetsaut have two clans: the Eagle and the Wolf. The clans are subdivided into other crests. The laws were similar to the Tsimsian, Tlingit, and Haida. For instance, a person of the Wolf clan could not marry within the Wolf clan, etc... However, they are different from the Nisqa'a crest system. The Nisqa'a have four, while the Tlingit have two clans. The Eagle is the main crest. ~~The name for this crest in Tsetsaut is~~ Toadaa. The subcrests are the skate, halibut and the beaver. (Skate is lost in the Tsetsaut language—it looks similar to the halibut, seen and caught in salt water). The halibut is called ts'iyala. The beaver is called ts'aa.

The Wolf, the other main crest, is called axa. The subcrests are the grizzly bear and the black bear. The name for the grizzly bear is lost, but the name for the black bear is fo'. Later, when the Tsimsian languages was adopted by the Nisqa'a, the names were called, skate kk'at, halibut guyh, beaver ts'mt. The main Wolf crest is called Laxgibou, Grizzly Bear Legimisk, Black Bear smayh. The laws were matilineal, for successfully building the female line. The child inherits from his/her mother's brother.

Shamans were used in case of sickness. Instead of using rattles, eagle feathers were used. They also used square drums like the Tsimsian used for their song and dancing. They had no gambling songs like their coast neighbors.

Fire was made by two means: 1) a firedrill—made of a bow, the upper end is held in a piece of bark, the lower end turns in a slit of a piece of wood. Very dry wood, or moss, is used for tender. 2) Strike a light, using hard flint-like stones which were found in Tombstone Bay. Special arrows were of yellow cedar and winged with eagle feathers. The bow made from wood, the string made from the back skin of the beaver, cut into strips and twisted. Special bow and arrows which were made larger with strong bow were used for grizzly bears and large animals. The arrow was strong enough to smash the head of a grizzly. Some of the ideas and traditions were very different from the coast neighbors. The rainbow was regarded by them with more than ordinary interest. It was believed it was formed by the spirits of the ancestors and friends who had departed this life. It is a bright and soothing idea as compared with gloomy fearful beliefs of other tribes.

The women wove waterproof baskets of spruce roots and cedar bark for containers for berries and food. They cooked food on hot stones and also in special containers made of wood to put hot stones into to also cook food. It is

evident that the Tssetsaut culture and traditions were similar to their coast neighbors in ancient times. The Tssetsaut culture and lifestyle changed as iron, blankets, rifles, and cloth were introduced by the European American traders. Also, large dugout canoes were made which were used to trade with their neighbors later on on the Nass and the entrance of Portland Canal with the Tlingits. The Tssetsaut will not fully develop a marine economy until much later. Theirs was strictly land based, they preferred to travel over land then by salt water.

The Tssetsaut moved down Portland Canal and established villages at different places. Part of Reginald's family established hunting and fishing village sites in the upper part of Portland Canal. There were major salmon rivers and hunting valleys, one was Soul River by Soul glacier. (By Davis River and No Name Lake). Reggie's grandfather, Noah, who was the oldest of three brothers, established a place there. He built a cabin by the Soul river. The river, which is fed by Soul glacier, is very gray. There used to be sweat lots there, which were fed by hot springs, and used by the Tssetsauts and later by the Nisqa'as. This place was a favorite mountain goat area. Today it is still used by the people of Hyder and Stewart. Also, any subsistence food you need is available there. There is a special place here with a plant called haas which was split and the insides scraped out. It is a delicacy. These plants were about 3 to 4 feet tall. They had to be utilized at a certain time before spring, before they flowered. This place was called by the Tssetsaut, Tsimian's and Nisqa'as kitsi haas meaning where you pick haas (Fireweed). It was also used for many things like nets and other woven material. Another river, Riverpoint, (above Tombstone Bay) is where Reggie's grandfather, Timothy, established his camp. Excellent place for hunting for bear and other furbearing animals. Also, there are a lot of mountain goats at the upper reaches of the valley and plenty of birds on the tidal flats and ptarmigan in the hills. The river was called by the Tssetsaut and later by the Nisqa'a skimilks meaning where you pick wild crab apples which were plentiful. Reggie's grandfather, Timothy Dangeli, Tssetsaut name Qaghaloo told Reggie that after the whiteman laid the boundary line up the canal, they told him he could not live at the river anymore. He had to get permission from the government to homestead it. He did not understand them because his ancestors had used the river since time unknown, yet the new people said they owned the land and he had to pay them to use the land and rivers. Timothy was one of the last Tssetsaut speakers and he died in the early 1930's. Tombstone was the largest last stronghold of the Tssetsaut. Several families established a village there, especially the Dangeli family. They established a trail from Tombstone bay to Martin river one of the rivers in pokadee quadrant. The trails were used heavily to trade with the Tlingits who lived in the area such as kasaiks cove and foggy bay.

Also, they had their camps and villages in the area. The Tsetsaut's were Levi Dangel's decedents. These people from Tombstone Bay are remnants from a once large powerful tribe who were decimated by small pox and diseases contacted through the EuroAmerican traders. Also, due to warfare between the Laxbiup tribe of the interior and the Tlingits of the East Beam canal in the 1800's. These tombstone people will join the christian mission in Kincolith, Nass Bay B.C. They number 12 at the time. Some will come back and homestead Tombstone Bay and other areas of the canal. The Tsetsaut and the Nisqa'a call the river running by Tombstone Weyaks, which means big river. They also established camps (a village) by Halibut Bay. This bay Reggie discussed has supernatural or unknown happenings called na'knog. This was a hunting area for them. They went further down to a place they called Hidden inlet (a salt water lake). They used this inlet, which was called by them q'winkes, which means there is a special stream running inside and no matter what the temperature is it is always ice cold due to the earth, it also had two large rivers in there. The mouth of the inlet is very small, it ran like a river during tidal changes. They did not utilize it so much as it was frozen over inside the inlet during the winter months. Inside the inlet the mountain goats were plentiful and easy to hunt in the fall, you could see them from the canoes. The Nisqa'a will take over this area much later, after the Tsetsaut's abandon it. The Nisqa'a's name for it is tugun, meaning big rapids. The Nisqa'a will abandon this area when the Tlingit from Laxdog, Tongass Island, made it their fish camp. Later the Tlingits will move out of the canal and turn over Saadaa' hidden inlet as it will be called by the natives of the Nass who were headed by Walter L. Dane chief Niya'skin^{wa} Reggie's grandfather and part Tlingit. Later on there will be one of the largest salmon cannery's in Southeast Alaska.

An interesting story of the giving of the stream from the Tlingits to the Nisqa'a chief. A Tlingit chief was visiting the Nass people. He was from Tongass island which had a big settlement and later an army base there. The Tongass chief was unable to return to Tongass as the northeasterly winds were blowing very hard and also the cold weather hindered them from using canoes due to the heavy icing. The bad weather prevailed for a long time. The chief died at Nass river. He had a proper chiefs burial as it was in those days. It was impossible to take the remains back to Tongass island. In appreciation of what he did, the chiefs family, when they abandoned hidden inlet the Tlingit family gave Haldane a document saying that he now was owner of the salmon creek. When the first cannery was established at hidden inlet, the owners got permission from chief Haldane to use the old village site which he consented with a small token compensation. In its early stages they hired Tsimsians from the Nass from Kincolith during construction of the cannery. Later the cannery was destroyed by fire 2

times. The Nisqa'a's had a unique treaty with the U.S. government and Canada, as many of them were descendents of the early Tsetsaut and Nisqa'a of Portland canal. The Nisqa'a were born on the U.S. side during their stay at hidden inlet in some fish camps up the canal. Some of these people were dual citizens of U.S. and Canada. They became successful fishermen and adapted to the marine environment. (Another story about the volcano exploding - on Nass River. Rerouted the Nass, there are many stories about it. You can still see the remains of it.) (Another story about the Tsimshian Wolf tribe fleeing the Stikine river area, by going under the glacier and over the mountains.) (Another story about the first visitors on the Unuk river, exchanging knowledge with Eagle clan, - story by chief Mountain told by chief Barton.) (Old regalia, totem poles, and blankets were saved by Barbo and are in a museum in Canada.)

Louise - spoke about the volcano (adowac - the people were punished by the great spirit in the sky because the children were making fun of their food.) (Spoke about the young women's puberty rights, - there is a monument formed just like the young lady buried in the volcano eruption.)

Tribal Laws - Tribal chief is from your longhouse.

1. Headman of a Welp (longhouse) is concerned with the welfare of the house. 2. The highest ranking Welp is concerned with the welfare of all tribes in the village. Council of Diiag (tribe), each headman is concerned about the entire Nass river. The band council is made up of chiefs and headman from each village concerned with welfare of respective village. Nisqa'a tribal council (headmen) is concerned with the whole Nisqa'a nation. Matters include economics, politics, ed., health, and corporate management. Each village has a band council.

After marrying Reggie, Louise was reinstated into Kincolith band council. Ancestors started the Native Brotherhood to fight for the land. Village laws were taken care of in each respective village. A mayor and council members were elected. They decided on the issues (wrongdoings). When Louise was growing up she never saw murder or anything because it was a disgrace, they are outcasts. They are reinstated by giving a big feast and giving away a lot of gifts (retribution). It is still carried out. They don't condone any wrong doings - they are either tried by white man's laws or they go through retribution.

Petroglifs - around halibut bay. It is argued about the origin of the petrified stones. They mean a lot to the Tlingit and Nass river people. Either a calling card or a warning to keep out of their territory or supernatural or important stories.

Are Tsimshian potlatches similar to Athabaskan potlatches? The Nisqa'a person that gives the potlatch provides for the food and the people of the tribe get together to help prepare the food. They have huge kettles

and other big pots to cook the food. You are giving out your wealth. During the potlatch the people start giving gifts back to the provider to help with the finances. That is when you are giving out your wealth and standing in the community. If it is a death it is right after the funeral, people help with money and material things of all kinds. A potlatch is given in the fall to honor the person who is inheriting the chief's name. Later another potlatch is given to honor the chief that has gone on and the new chief. If there is a marriage the man gives the feast. The groom has to give the family gifts to prove he is worthy of the bride. The parents then set the date. The night before the wedding the brides tribe and parents give a party for the grooms tribe because they will be preparing the feast. They are given gifts by the brides family. Now-a-days everyone brings a dish. There are some differences. For example when food is put in the fire it is done in the person's home (for the deceased to share with). A stone is put in front of the home for the deceased until the family is relieved of their sadness. There are similarities and differences to the Athabaskan, but each has the same meaning: to show grief, happiness, a new name, etc... Traditionally, speakers usually are called on after people eating.

Adowac - In 1927, at Kincolith, Barbo attempted to buy the Eagle clan totem pole. The chief said first give us the gravestone of the first governor of . The totem pole took 3 years to carve, it was three tons. They had a big ceremony when it was erected. The chief told of their epic journey to the area. (told by chief mountain). It doesn't include where the Eagle clan is from (some say far north -Yakutat area).

Nass is a Tlingit word. It means food basket.

The migration of the Nisqa'a lasted several generations. They arrived at Klawock and went up the coast. After a tragedy referred to as "cry for me," at Kasaan they resumed their journey. They then arrived at Ketchikan.