

# An Historic Event in the Political Economy of the Tsimshian: Information on the Ownership of the Zimacord District\*

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This paper reconstructs and presents a bit of ethnographic information that is based upon a piece of the oral history of the Tsimshian people, a society native to what is now northwestern British Columbia. The value of the history lies not only in the events described, but also in the illustration it provides of relationships between a set of houses in two neighbouring villages prior to the Canadian Confederation. In the history can be seen several aspects of the old property relationships under which the Tsimshian lived, as well as an outline of their social organization.

Anthropologically understood, property is a socially embedded definition of relationships between persons within a society. The property piece itself, not necessarily a material object, is a mediation of these relationships, a focus of attention for how persons and groups are to relate to one another. Thus, property defines the rights and obligations people and groups have to each other, setting the limits to the use of the property while demanding adherence to the dominant mores of the community, and re-establishing these relationships in the process.

Any particular form of property is always stamped by the impression of the society in which it exists and by which it is defined. In the story about the Zimacord District lies the mark of Tsimshian society attempting to re-assert proper practices towards territorial resource property, and to justify a particular arrangement of ownership, in this case that of the acquisition of property by one group from another. In both the history and the additional associated archival information we encounter a form of ownership of resources that is thoroughly permeated by three

\* I wish to dedicate this paper to a man who was considered to be an elder of the Kitsumkalums, and who was filled with stores of knowledge gathered in the course of many years of living and visiting among his relatives along the Skeena. Edward Charles Feak (1903-1981) was from New Metlakatla, Alaska, but was always welcomed in the Canadian Tsimshian villages. Because of his enthusiastic participation in preparing this history and in other researches, I suggested to Chief Clifford Bolton that its publication be dedicated to Eddie as a token of my respect and of my appreciation for the friendship of Eddie and his family. Cliff agreed, and I now fulfil that desire.

principal relationships in Tsimshian social life: residence, descent, and associations or sodalities. These three interactive elements, which were central to the Tsimshian political economy because they were also property relationships, provide a convenient framework for conceptualizing the dynamics and organization of Tsimshian social structure.

The history is presented in two rather discrete parts: first, the story itself and, second, archival information, including abstracted information on place names and variations in certain spellings, concerning the changing ownership and use of the Zimacord District. Following the history is a consideration of the Tsimshian social relationships that are represented in the history — specifically the concepts of property and social structure upon which the story is developed. A final section discusses the sources of the reconstruction and the process of piecing together the history, in order to allow the Tsimshian people and other experts to judge for themselves the validity of the history.

### *The Story about Zimacord District*<sup>1</sup>

It happened a long time ago

No one knows the exact time but the story of how the Kitsumkalum came to have the Valley of the Zimacord is still remembered. This used to be the hunting grounds of the Gitlan, who would come up the Skeena to tend their gardens<sup>2</sup> and to dry their fish in the Fall. The territory touched some of the land of the Kitsumkalum.

When this story took place, there lived in Kitsumkalum, in the House of Lhagaax, a chief with the name of Wedeldow. His nephew, Niiyas Guoss, was one of the best hunters and trappers, always providing well for his family. One time when this prince was out in his territory, a bunch of Gitlans sneaked into his village and stole his wife.<sup>3</sup> They took her back to their village.<sup>4</sup>

When Niiyas Guoss returned and discovered what had happened, he decided he must go after the Gitlans. Since this was a kidnapping, Niiyas Guoss expected that they would demand to receive wealth in exchange for

<sup>1</sup> This is a reconstruction of the historical information given to me by Eddie Feak and Winnie Wesley. I also include material from Arthur Stevens and Sam Kennedy which was recorded in the Barbeau files and from Tate in the Beynon notes. The story incorporates all the details contained in these sources, but is not a direct narrative. For further information on the sources, the reader is referred to the postscript.

<sup>2</sup> Miriam Temple, an elderly Kitsumkalum, said her mother's mother also had a garden there, in more recent times.

<sup>3</sup> It is not clear in Feak's story if it was a group or just one Gitlan prince.

<sup>4</sup> Wesley simply describes her as a daughter of a chief. Wesley said they took the wife to Port Simpson; Feak said it was to a village up the Zimacord river, past the forks.

his wife. He gathered what he considered to be the necessary amount and off he went to the village of the Gitlans, accompanied by his bodyguard. (In those days a prince never went alone, he was always accompanied by a bodyguard.)

At the Gitlan village, Niiyas Guoss was met by treachery and was murdered.<sup>5</sup> His bodyguard, managing to escape, ran off to Lax-ka-gila-queoux to tell the news of the death of the prince.

At that time the Kitsumkalum had a very powerful and experienced man who rallied all the warriors of the Kitsumkalum and set off to avenge the death of the prince.

Down the Skeena River they went to make war against the Gitlan. Past the Gitlan marker that stood near the big point below Kitsumkalum, the group was spotted by a lookout. The Gitlan were fortunate to live in a place on the Zimacord that was difficult to get to and, with the advantage of their lookouts on the Skeena River, they had always been able to prepare a defense against invading war canoes. But when the Kitsumkalum arrived, the revenging warriors had only to take possession of a deserted village.

When the Gitlan recognized the wrong in which they had been involved, they sought to make compensation by giving to Kitsumkalum the territory in the Zimacord Valley<sup>6</sup> — for when a prince is killed, a high price must be paid.

Since then, there have been no wars between the Kitsumkalum and Gitlan, but the story of the ownership of the territories has not always been remembered by everyone.

The Gitlan were supposed to get a headstone and place it over the spot where they killed the prince, but they have never done this.

This is why the Kitsumkalum have a claim to the Zimacord River and why they have a small reserve there, for the story happened before the Indian Commissioner gave out the Reserves.

This is why Eddie Feak hunted beaver there with his Grandfather, Benjamin Bennett.

That is all.

### *Archival Information on Zimacord District<sup>7</sup>*

In the Kitsumkalum Valley there was a trail from the Robin Village (Dalk-ka-gila-queoux) to the canyon on the Zimacord River where the main Gitlan village was situated. On it would pass the members of the houses of the *gispawadawada* phratry and the house of Wudiwiyaē (of the *labyibaaw* phratry) to the territory which they held in common, west of the Kitsumkalum Valley.

<sup>5</sup> Wesley did not mention this portion of the story. She skips to the point where the Gitlan pay compensation to the Kitsumkalum for the kidnapping.

<sup>6</sup> Wesley said the land was called Kitnajowowitch (my spelling).

<sup>7</sup> See postscript.

In the nineteenth century, beaver were hunted in the valley, as well as bear, mountain goat, marten and other animals. People gathered cranberries, *lhayox* and huckleberries, much as they do today.

An elder of Kitsumkalum who is now long dead, Arthur Stevens (who was the *gispawadawada sm'oogyit* Lhagaax), told the anthropologist Barbeau that the hunting territory comprised the whole of the valley of the little Zimacord River (Ksangot<sup>8</sup>) and the lower valley to the Skeena River (*Lhkudinomksomgod*, which translates as "the valley of the Zimacord"). Samuel Kennedy, another deceased elder, was less comprehensive in his statement but specifically named a Groundhog Mountain (*Naganugwiyuku*), the upper and lower territory of the Zimacord River (which he called *maganksems*, or "above the Shames River"), and *Luksgigeni*, all of which were in the same area, apparently at the headwaters of the Zimacord. These spots were used by Hawts of Kitsumkalum. The "left side" of the river (as one looks towards the coast?) was used by the *ganhada* phratry of the Gitlans, now of Port Simpson. Their chiefs (of *sm'oogyit* status?) were called Niiyas Yalap and Gemosox.

A few place names are mentioned in the story and can be looked to for information on the Tsimshians' relationship to the district. Names can be taken as indication of a people's use of territory, on the principle that people generally create referents for landmarks that are significant to them. Some are simply descriptive and identify geographic features (Canyon of the Zimacord, *Ksamgot*, *Lhkudinomksomgod*, *Ksems*) or reveal how individuals perceived the land as they trekked across it (*Naganugwiyuku*, *Maganksems*). Others refer by themselves or as well to the use of the area (*Luksgigeni*, *Naganugwiyuku*, *Maganksems*). Still others are associated with historical events. Thus, there is in the names information about the overall history of the Zimacord, the specific locations of the villages, the spot where Hawts hunted (*Naganugwiyuku*), and the location of a transportation route (*Maganksems*).

The information that is available on the place names is presented below. The *sm'algyax* spelling of these names comes from the archival sources, as does the translation. The locations were derived by my piecing together archival clues on a map in consultation with the elders.

*Naganugwiyuku*. The Groundhog Mountain where Hawts snared the valuable groundhogs. It seems to be the mountain now called Mount Remo. The ending of the name (*gwiyyuku*) compares well to the word for groundhog that J. Dunn recorded in his *Practical Dictionary of the*

<sup>8</sup> The spelling of these place names is Barbeau's.

*Tsimshian Language* (NMC, 1978): gwiiiku (word #525). The first part refers to "the place of the traps."

*Maganksems*. The translation is "above the *Ksems* River." This is the territory adjoining the Zimacord River, approximately one and a half miles above the canyon of the Zimacord, between Mounts Remo and Morris. It is the place of flat land where people walked over to the Shames (*Ksems*) River. They could lie there and watch the beaver in the Shames.

*Luksgigeni*. The translation is "in above low waters." This was an area for trapping marten, probably by the forks that are along the east side of Mount William Brown, although an elder suggested an alternate site to be the headwaters of Erlendson Creek.

*Canyon of the Zimacord*. This was at the end of the trail from Dalk-ka-gila-quooux and west of the confluence of Molybdenum Creek.

*Ksamgot*. The Zimacord River.

*Lhkudinomksomgod*. The valley (*lhkudinom*) of the Zimacord (*Ksom-god*).

*Ksems*. The Shames River.

Finally, the spelling of the name of the district varies considerably, and can be a source of confusion. The following list gives the different forms, and their usual context.

Zymagotitz — official topographical name of the river

Zimagord — official Department of Indian Affairs spelling for the Reserve (I.R. #3)

Zimacord — popular spelling, possibly from the train station

Tsəmgət — the spelling in the Beynon notes, here typed as Tsamgot

Ksəmgə't — the spelling in the Barbeau files, here typed as Ksangot

Parts of this territory have been the subject of an old dispute over ownership. Stevens told Beynon that Wudiwiyae had the Upper Zimacord River as a hunting ground, but according to Kennedy, Wudiwiyae was not the real owner. Therefore, only the *gispawadawada* house of Hawts can claim real rights. If this is correct, then Wudiwiyae probably just had the privilege of using the area, just as another *lagyibaaw*, the royal Niiyas Laganos of the Gitlan, had the privilege of hunting there on account of his status as *sm'oogyit*. Although Niiyas Laganos claimed

these territories as his own, Kennedy described him as a newcomer to the area without ownership (see also Boas 1916:486, 509, 513; Barbeau 1917:406, 555).

The story in the previous section explains why the Kitsumkalum have the Zimacord territory. Another story related to it, called "The woman left to her fate," deals with a supernatural encounter between Hawts and a *naxnox* on the Zimacord River (see the Beynon/Barbeau files, 1926). Although I do not include it here, it provides further evidence of Hawts' involvement with the district.

Kitsumkalum did not establish a village in the Zimacord Valley, but it was a residential area for them. In the archival sources, Sam Kennedy said there was a hunting lodge in the valley where the river forks at the base of Mount William Brown. The lodge did not belong to Arthur Stevens, but it is probably the one that I was told was used by his relatives.

A major change of rights in the District occurred when the Indian Reserve Commission denied Indians ownership of their territories and allocated reserves on the Skeena. In 1891 the Kitsumkalum received I.R. #3 at the mouth of the Zimacord River, in recognition of their use of the locale as a fishing station, and of the valley as a hunting ground.

It was the *gispawadawada* leader, Benjamin Bennett (Wedeldow), and his group of Kitsumkalum who were the last to hunt and trap the Zimacord Valley. In 1914 Bennett permitted a settler, Jens Erlandsen, to trap a portion of the area. This proved a mistake. Under a new law that required all traplines to be registered, Erlandsen took advantage of Bennett's generosity and made the whole of the Zimacord Valley his personal trapline. The move was protected by provincial law and, accordingly, the courts failed to restore ownership to Bennett. Thus, by 1932, management of the valley had passed fully out of the control of the Kitsumkalum.

With the loss of the trapline, the death of Bennett's generation, and the orientation of the Kitsumkalum towards fishing out of Port Essington, their use of the valley temporarily declined after the 1920s. The trend reversed itself in the 1950s when Port Essington had its fires, and since then there has been a definite revitalization of Kitsumkalum's utilization of the territory, despite the strip logging, road networks, and settlement now present. Kitsumkalum people go there now to hunt animals, to gather plant foods, and to fish the river but this is all that regional economic development has left for them. Commercial and

industrial resources that would have been developed by the community are currently in the hands of others.

### *Social Organization*

At the time of the story, the Tsimshian lived along the lower Skeena River and throughout the archipelago of islands spilling out of its mouth, south to the Estevan Group. Scattering across this territory during most of the year for the harvest of the abundant resources that underlaid their complex social organization, the Tsimshian consolidated themselves every winter into residential groups, usually referred to as winter villages or "tribes." Each village was associated with a particular population and territory, and was an important alignment within the political economy of the area.

On the Skeena, at least eleven such groups are known to have occupied the mountainous valleys of the major tributary streams. Nine of these formed a loose confederation during the merchant stage of Tsimshian history and became known as the Port Simpson tribes, after the name of the Hudson's Bay Company post where they settled. One of them, the Gitlan, appears in the story as a principal antagonist to its neighbouring village of Kitsumkalum. The latter village, in turn, was the tenth group upriver. At the start of the industrial stage, in the 1870s, Kitsumkalum formed a residential alliance with Kitselas, the final Tsimshian village group on the Skeena. Together they lived in the cannery centre of Port Essington. Since the decline and abandonment of that centre, Kitsumkalum and Kitselas have returned to their ancient valleys, in the shadow of the city of Terrace.

In general, the respective territories of Gitlan and Kitsumkalum were the adjacent valleys of the Zimacord and Kitsumkalum Rivers. The interaction resulting from such physical proximity, including the easy movement over and regulated utilization of each other's territories during periods of normal relations, is outlined by the archival information. The transformation of these relations in times of crisis is the subject of the story. The souring of relationships described in the story highlights the importance of residence as Gitlan and Kitsumkalum each become activated as a social unit — all the warriors of Kitsumkalum go off to fight the Gitlan, who recognize their collective danger and flee; and, later, it is the Gitlan who are held responsible, as a village, and forfeit their occupation of the valley.

The second social connection that plays an important part is the kinship of descent groups. The basic units were matrilineally defined line-

ages or households of real and fictive (adopted, closely related) consanguineous and affinal relatives. Of these, the minor lineages were organized into Houses led by closely related but more important lineages. At a yet higher level of organization that extended between villages, groups of lineages and houses, which were descended from a common known ancestor, formed recognized clans. Each of the lineages and houses held resource property rights which were vested in the name or title given to and acquired by their leader. The holders of such titles assumed control over the property associated with the name. It is this which underlies the social setting of the story, structuring the relationships among people, and ordering their responses to events.

The following is a summary list of the houses and titleholders involved in the story. Among the Kitsumkalum there were the House of Lhagaax (of the *gispawadawada* phratry) and the house of Wudiwiyae (of the *lagyibaaw* phratry). In the House of Lhagaax there were four lineages, whose chiefs were Lhagaax ("old raven"), Wedeldow (this spelling is only the commonly used, short form of the name meaning "big echo of the raven"), Hawts ("cormorant" — a *naxnox* name?), and Ganexsontkwa ("steps of glass" — a *naxnox* name?). In the House of Wudiwiyae there were two lineages, both headed by the chief, Wudiwiyae. Niiyas Guoss was apparently in Wedeldow's lineage, although he was possibly the head of a lineage of the *laxsgiik* phratry. Among the Gitlans of Port Simpson Niiyas Yalap and Gemosox were the chiefs of lineages of the *ganhada* phratry.

Marriage, obviously an important aspect of social life, and a necessary condition underlying the story, is not given a role in organizing the actors. We are not told who married whom, what alliances were created, or whether the respective sets of lineages that were united by the marriage of the prince behaved differently in the course of events. Instead, the story maintains a careful focus on the relationships between residential and descent groups.

Overlaying residence and descent are the influences of two major sodalities of Tsimshian society: phratry and class-based associations. These were important mechanisms that cut across the divisions of residential and descent groupings to unite people, but at the same time they were also the source of other divisions within those groupings.

There were four phratries: *laxsgiik*, *lagyibaaw*, *ganhada*, *gispawadawada*. Based upon matrilineal principles and common mythical origins, these exogamous associations were, in a way, simply extensions of the lineage/house/clan hierarchy. Although they were little more than weak



federations of clans, the pratries did generate some sense of obligation for mutual sharing and protection among phratry members, even those who otherwise were strangers. This sense of obligation provided a basis for interaction between villages and village members that could be activated in times of practical or ceremonial need (e.g., Garfield 1939:24ff, 257ff). In the archival information, the phratric memberships of the people were carefully noted. These memberships characterized their status to each other and indicated the types of behaviour each could expect from the other. Apparently it was a *gispawadawada*, Niiyas Guoss, who was in dispute with a *ganhada* (who is not named in the archival information).

Class was the basis for other Tsimshian sodalities of importance here. Slaves and the non-titled freepeople had little opportunity that we know about to unite on the basis of their class, but the titleholders tended to exert a pan-village influence through feasting, religious ceremonialism, and the associated secret societies. Their power at such occasions depended on the strength of their titles, a strength created by their own abilities, the support of their followers, and the prestige already accumulated with the title. Titleholders were not a caste, although there was a set of royal lineages. Nor were they a closed class, for there were a series of graded ranks. Unfortunately, these features and the effects of colonial de-population have confounded recent anthropological analysis of Tsimshian classes.

Kinship and the communal nature of lineage property provided the titleholders with their prerogatives, at the same time dividing them and working against their forming stronger pan-village associations. The story illustrates how alliances, exemplified by mutual privileges in relation to resources, could break down in crisis.

The agents in the story all seem to be of title, some even of royal descent. Notably, however, the main people are apparently not of highest rank. The prince who died hunted for his people. This reference to hunting on behalf of his people is partially a statement of the obligations attached to his status and refers to the nature of lineage property. It compliments the man, but at the same time suggests that he did not have sufficient rank to be fully leisured. The high titleholders of Kitsumkalum did not need to work hard. One *sm'oogyit* reputedly did not need to work at all, as his slaves and followers provided all he needed (Boas 1916:516). The prince, on the other hand, was not of sufficient stature to avoid obligations towards his family (lineage) in the realm of production.

Nonetheless, the unfortunate prince did have a bodyguard, as befitted his station in life, and his death did require the payment of a specially high price. His exact position is indicated by the hierarchy outlined at the beginning of the story. To an informed Tsimshian, the names mentioned show the prince (a royal) to be the nephew of a titleholder within the house of another (a *sm'oogyit*). The uncle might have been of councillor, or *lagyigyeyet*, status and thus a man of importance and the head of his lineage, but not leader of the House. Other ethnographic sources collaborate these suggestions.

### *Property*

The history provides an outline of the social organization of the Tsimshian, but the main purpose served among the Tsimshian by the story was to give an account of a property relationship between two villages and their constituent houses. The properties involved were resource territories owned by identifiable lineage groups. The specificity of ownership enabled houses to exploit explicit territories for their productive requirements. The fundamental relationship was that between the house and the resource, with ownership being vested in the house leader, its titleholder.

Yet the story also indicates that the property relationships held by the lineage groups were not independent of other structures. The transmission of property in retribution was discussed as a relation between residential units, the village groups. The original seizure of the territory was accomplished by a mobilization of all the warriors of Kitsumkalum, and was directed against the Gitlan village, not simply the property-owning house that committed the offence.

Further, although the territory is discussed as belonging to such and such a titleholder, when it is given as retribution payment, it is given by the "tribe," that is by the particular group, not just the *sm'oogyit* or household. This fact recognizes the role of both the descent and the residential principles in controlling resource properties. The *sm'oogyit*, despite the chiefly powers consolidated by members of that class, was not above the communal nature of his society.

The importance of landed property to the class of titleholders is illustrated by the information that each had areas of his own, and could be punished for a crime by the loss of the use of territorial property. Such a retribution was considered to be a high price, fitting for the crime of killing a prince (or the wife of a prince). Since resource territory was a

source of wealth for this class, its loss was a severe blow to the position and power of a *sm'oogyit*.

The history shows that it was not simply territories that were owned but specific resources as well, with carefully defined rights attached to different ones. Thus one lineage, represented in the history by titled persons, could be given the privilege of hunting or trapping upon the territory of a particular house without affecting either the overall claim of the house to the territory or the exploitation of other resources on that territory. The recognition of different resources prevents the simple identification of a geographic area with a group. To take an example from another context, I learned that just above the forks of the Zimacord, above the Gitlan village, was the place where some Kitsumkalum went for their spring salmon or trout. Elders said Kitsumkalum's claim to this deep pool was stronger than that of the Gitlans even though it was on the Zimacord River. Privileges were explicitly defined and contingent upon intergroup arrangements.

Interestingly for the concept of Tsimshian ownership, the retribution property discussed in the story was not simply transferred from one group to another by the conquest. Although Kitsumkalum's houses apparently exercised all the privileges associated with ownership, a final resolution of the crime was yet to be made to settle the arrangement and finish the story. This resolution would entail either an alternate retribution or the ultimate validation of ownership. In theory the territory could not be alienated permanently from the Gitlan, but in practice this option had precedence (Garfield 1966:14). In the present case, the expectation of Kitsumkalum was that the Gitlan would erect a memorial and make payment of a later to be determined quantity of wealth at a public feast. The Gitlan never "filled the table," and until that occurred to the satisfaction of appropriate parties the question could go either way. Failing settlement, full control rested with the conquering and offended group that held the land. Although formal ownership remained with the Gitlan, the story continually reminded them of their debt to Kitsumkalum.

Finally, in the information associated with the history is a record of property concepts during the period of Canadian Confederation. Beginning with the distorting codification of Tsimshian property relations during the establishment of the Indian Reserve system, the concept of landed property was radically altered in the twentieth century, with a concomitant loss of resources, by the evolution of the laws of the province and Dominion — laws in the making of which the disfranchised Indians had no say. It was but a series of short steps from establishing a claim to

the Zimacord, through accepting the Valley as a trapping territory behind a Reserve, to losing it as registered trapline. The transformation from *sm'oogyit* lands to Crown lands took less than seventy years to accomplish. But even now, an additional seventy years later, it is still not complete as property is being redefined and land claims are slowly being reconsidered.

*Postscript: Information on the Reconstruction*

The story is not the only one published that touches upon the subjects of Tsimshian property and social organization (see, for example, Boas, 1916), but it is the first one in which the fragments of the record of these particular historic events have been brought together. It is notable that, unlike the stories in Boas, which tended to be of a less significant type for the legalities of the Tsimshian property system (see Barbeau's 1917 critique of Boas, 1916), this story recites the circumstances surrounding the Kitsumkalums' acquisition and possession of the Zimacord Valley, thereby outlining the justification for their occupation of it. Such documentation would have properly been made and confirmed at public gatherings like the feast, and subsequently maintained orally as common history in everyday life. The widespread knowledge of the story in Kitsumkalum, Kitselas, Port Simpson and New Metlakatla by elder Tsimshian and those now long dead but who spoke to Barbeau or Beynon, suggests that the practice of public confirmation had in fact been completed, even though now the story is largely forgotten, a consequence of life under the regime of Canadian property arrangements.

The story as presented is not a direct narrative, so it is important to note carefully the sources and authority behind the form given here.

During the course of many months' residence at Kitsumkalum, I recorded several fragments of the history of Zimacord from elders of the village, mainly Winnie Wesley and Eddie Feak, both well respected for their knowledge of the past. These were truly fragments, mere abstracts, unable to stand on their own without supplementation. Fortunately, the invaluable Beynon/Barbeau files in the National Museum of Canada had additional material which, in conjunction with what I already had, provided enough to piece a fuller story back together. The archival material was given to the museum by two Kitsumkalum men, Arthur Stevens and Sam Kennedy, when Barbeau visited the village in 1926, and by the Port Simpson man, Tate, who supplied the information to the Tsimshian ethnographer, William Beynon.

Besides supplementing my own notes, these early sources lent additional authenticity to the story, especially because Beynon was a Gitlan *sm'oogyit* (Halpin, 1978) and the successor to the Gitlan *lagyibaaw sm'oogyit* mentioned in the story (see Garfield 1939:190). This last point strikes me as significant for the implied acceptance of the story's validity by a Gitlan *sm'oogyit*. Of course, this is not to suggest that Beynon would modify his ethnographic information, but rather that he might contribute his own version as an alternate piece of information, if he disagreed. Beynon had, after all, a vested interest here.

Having brought the fragments together, I was faced with the question of how to present them as a whole. Two considerations moved me to attempt a conversational style: the original material came from oral history, and the reconstructed form could be more easily used by the village in its social history programs. Not being either a native Tsimshian or conversant in the language and its rhetorical forms, I made no serious attempt to mimic the manner of speech that a *sm'oogyit* would use in his native language, *sm'algyax*. Although I incorporate the original sources as thoroughly as possible, I wrote the story simply as I felt sounded right, subjectively, to my English ears. I hope it is readable and enjoyable like this. Some positive feedback from the community has satisfied me that the approach is acceptable and useful to them.<sup>9</sup>

Oral histories have a way of changing over time, especially when they are important and not subjected to the scrutiny of public recitation provided by the context of the feast. It is during those events that the accuracy of the spoken version of history is accepted or challenged. Kitsumkalum has not actively been involved in this type of function for a number of years, so there was no occasion to test the story properly. Instead, a small group of elders from Kitsumkalum, Kitselas and New Metlakatla were invited to listen to the history as reconstructed. It met with their approval, although they were good enough to make several minor modifications that clarified certain aspects.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> This process was exciting for the complementary information it drew out of the elders, who talked throughout the session about their younger days and the old way of life as they remembered hearing about it from their elders. Paul Mason and Eddie Feak both had heard their grandfather, Benjamin Bennett, tell the history of Zimacord as they hunted together in the Valley. They freely reminisced about the times they had had together and the places mentioned in the story. Some of that information is incorporated in this paper; some will appear elsewhere. Working in this interactive way is personally more fulfilling and professionally more rewarding than merely returning final reports to the people who provided the original information.

<sup>10</sup> I would like to thank Don Roberts, Sr., Paul Mason and Roy Bolton for their participation and assistance; and I remain grateful to the late Eddie Feak. Lucy

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Hayward, of Port Simpson, also discussed some aspects of the story with me. Of course, I still must take final responsibility for the reconstruction, and for the manner in which I incorporated their suggestions. I did so as accurately as my understanding permitted.