

COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS:

The Worlds of Arthur Wellington Clah, 1855-1881

R. M. GALOIS

Book bought Jul 20, 1869 at F.S.
Writing by Dahmaks Clah a man of
tsimshen to keep Account
everything what going and what
Come. Sale or Bought Trad Buy
Sell or Something good or bad. The
Baid Pook for Labour Tsimshen

The writing By Arthur Wellington
Clah. The North old History
reported Arthur Wellington Clah.
The Same man knows all about Old
and New people he start reported
History the all our ways in this
Book old and new reported by
Arthur Wellington clah written by
him to let all new people about old
People. Before Christ Borne in this
world or after Jesus was Borne in
this world¹

Plate 1: Arthur Wellington Clah, UBC
Special Collections, A-2833.



In his biography of William Duncan, published in 1909, J.W. Arctander included a photograph of “Clah, Mr Duncan’s Language Teacher.” It shows a confident-looking, white-bearded elder, holding a staff, dressed in Euro-Canadian clothes, with a large

¹ The first quotation is found inside the front cover of vol. 4 of Clah’s diaries, the second at the end of vol. 50 (1890). See footnote 4.

document or newspaper sticking out of his coat pocket.² This was Arthur Wellington Clah (1831-1916), born at Laghco (Map 1) in the year that the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) opened a post at the mouth of the Nass River, the company's first permanent trading establishment on the northern coast of British Columbia.³ Clah died at Port Simpson, where the HBC had moved its post in 1834 and where the Tsimshian had relocated their principal settlement a few years later. During his long life Clah witnessed and grappled with the consequences of the imposition of colonial structures on the Tsimshian world. Rooted initially in the fur trade, his colonial encounters were later shaped by wage labour, industrial technology, missionary activity, and the apparatuses of the modern state. What is unique about Clah is that, beginning unevenly in the late 1850s, and continuing for a period of nearly fifty years, he kept a daily diary.⁴

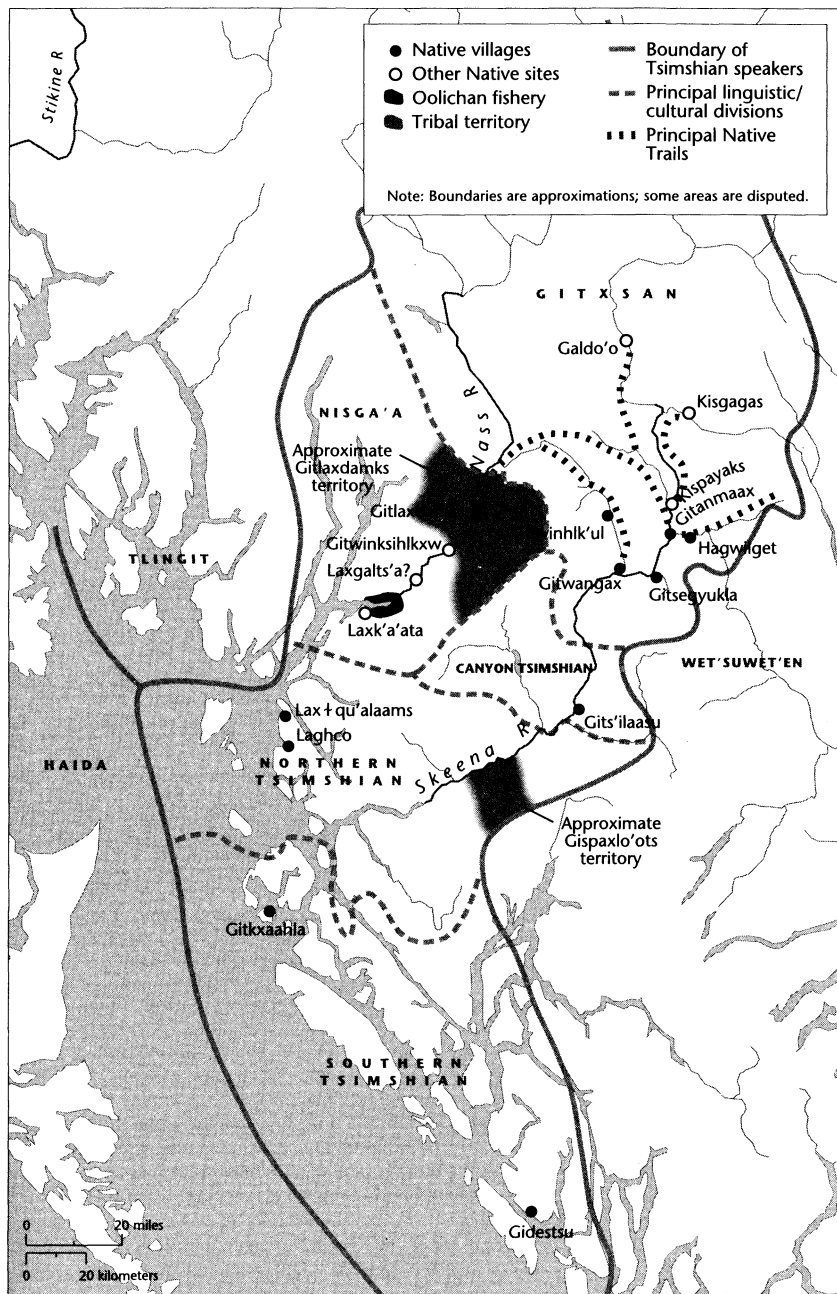
From the officers and men of Fort Simpson and a trip to Victoria, Clah acquired the rudiments of spoken English and, perhaps, some awareness of journal-keeping. From Anglican missionary William Duncan, in exchange for providing instruction in Tsimshian, Clah improved his English and learned to write.⁵ It was probably to practice

² J.W. Arctander, *The Apostle of Alaska* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1909). Initial research for this article was undertaken while working for the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en Tribal Council. Further research was made possible by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. My thanks to Susan Marsden, Cole Harris, John Barker, Richard Inglis, and Richard Mackie for invaluable comments, criticism, and assistance. I have used the orthographic system developed by John Dunn, Bruce Riggsby, and Marie-Lucie Tarpent in collaboration with numerous Tsimshian, especially Mildred Wilson, Beatrice Robinson, Verna Helin, and Pauline Dudoward.

³ In January 1916 Beynon informed Wellcome that Clah was near death; he probably died not long after (United States National Archives Regional Depository, Sandpoint Seattle [Sandpoint], Wellcome Collection, Clah Index, 302/9). My thanks to John Barker for providing copies of the Sandpoint documents.

⁴ The Clah Diaries (hereafter referred to as Diaries) are located in the Wellcome Institute, London. Microfilm copies are available at the National Archives of Canada (NAC). A diary for part of 1906 and an undated notebook are on deposit at the British Columbia Archives and Records Service (BCARS). The first diary was purchased on 27 September 1859. It contains entries before 1861, but they are irregular and may have been written after the fact. From 1861, the record is almost uninterrupted; the final diary covers 1909.

⁵ University of British Columbia Special Collections (UBCSC), Barnett Papers, file 9, vol. 1, p. 63. Duncan states that Clah had some prior knowledge of English and, by 1859, was the "most forward adult scholar" at the Fort Simpson school (University of British Columbia Library [UBCL], Duncan Papers [DP], Journals, 2 and 30 November 1857, 2 June 1859. For Bishop Hills's comments on Clah's writing ability in 1860, see footnote 104. Much later, Duncan described his language sessions with Clah (Sandpoint; *Legendary Statements*, Document 1, Folder 136/12). See also American Philosophical Society (APS), MSS 497.3/AM 4, no. 2; M. Barbeau, "The Gwenhoot of Alaska: In Search of a Bounteous Land" (hereafter APS, Barbeau, no. 120). Published version in George MacDonald and John Cove, "Tsimshian Narratives 2: Trade and Warfare," *Canadian Museum of Civilization, Mercury Series, Directorate Paper no. 3, Narratives 57 and 58* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1987), 206-12.



Map 1: Clah's Native World.

and demonstrate these hard-won achievements that Clah began his diary-keeping. In time, his intention seems to have been to participate in writing a history of his people. A start was made late in his life but did not proceed very far.⁶ It can be no coincidence, however, that Clah's grandson, William Beynon, became the leading ethnographer of the Tsimshian peoples.⁷ Beynon's work has been recognized, but Clah's own writings, stranded in London, were inaccessible and largely unconsidered.⁸

The diaries document Clah's role in, and view of, the reformulation of Tsimshian culture — his responses to the economic and spiritual crises induced by colonialism.⁹ In the 1860s, for example, Clah and the Tsimshian confronted an influx of rot-gut liquor, significant economic changes, a major smallpox epidemic, a partial failure of the salmon run on the Skeena, the impact of missionary settlement, and the imposition of colonial laws.¹⁰ Standard historical documents, oral histories, and narratives offer external or episodic windows on these processes, but Clah's diaries provide a sustained and detailed account of successes, failures, initiatives undertaken, and constraints encountered. He sheds light on many of the asymmetries and contradictions Native peoples experienced in the era between the

⁶ In 1908, Rev. Lashley Hall recorded that it was "Clah's purpose to write a book, to have pictures, and to contain the substance of a diary he has kept for over 50 years" (Diaries, vol. 70).

⁷ Beynon did produce, in manuscript, a history of the Tsimshian peoples: BCARS, W. Beynon, "Ethnical and Geographical Study of the Tsimshian Nation," ADD MSS 870, vol. 6 (hereafter, Beynon E and G). On Beynon, see M. Halpin, "William Beynon, Ethnographer: Tsimshian, 1888-1958," in *American Indian Intellectuals*, M. Liberty, ed., pp. 140-55, American Ethnological Society, Proceedings 1976 (St Paul: West, 1978); Ralph Maud, *A Guide to BC Indian Myth and Legend* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1982), 98-99 and 126-29; Peter Murray, *The Devil and Mr. Duncan* (Victoria: Sono Nis, 1991), 102. Diaries 20 June, 11 and 29 July, and 20 October 1898. Clah was also related to another Tsimshian ethnographer. According to Douglas Cole (personal communication) Franz Boas wrote to Clah in 1903, a step that led to the former's collaboration with Henry Wellington Tate, Clah's "grandson." See *The Porcupine Hunter and Other Stories: The Original Tsimshian Texts of Henry Tate*, Ralph Maud, ed. (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1993), vii-viii.

⁸ In October 1916, Wellcome wrote to Maud Cridge asking her to secure Clah's books, then in the possession of William Beynon. Presumably these were the diaries that now rest in the Wellcome Institute (Sandpoint, Clah Index, 344/15).

⁹ The term is taken from Kehoe. She describes a model that "succinctly outlines the process through which societies have adapted to changed circumstances, thereby maintaining the road of life." I have used the idea of reformulation without embracing her model, which is geared towards the role of "prophets." It should be added, however, that the Wet'suwet'en prophet "Bini" had visited the Tsimshian "a few years" before Duncan's arrival in 1857. See Alice Kehoe, "Maintaining the Road of Life," in *Violence, Resistance and Survival in the Americas: Native Americans and the Legacy of Conquest*, W. Taylor and F. Pease, eds. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1994), 193-207.

¹⁰ The salmon failure was in 1864: Diaries, 1 August 1864, 10 February 1865. See also the comments by the Fishery Guardian in 1889, referring to reports of a "great scarcity" of

installation of formal colonial structures and the influx of significant White settlement. In documenting the everyday content of this colonial embrace, Clah leaves no doubt about the “agency” of Native peoples. He also illuminates how the Tsimshian, in Usher’s words, became “a politically aware people ... well versed in those mechanics of petitioning and letter writing.”¹¹

Equally important is the light Clah sheds on the distinctive rhythm of the contact process on the northern coast. In southern British Columbia the gold rushes to the Fraser River, beginning in 1858, attracted many thousands of miners and quickly eclipsed the fur trade. In contrast only small numbers of prospectors, miners, and traders made their way to the Skeena, Nass, and Stikine Rivers. Other influences would follow, but the scale and pace of these incursions was much more modest than along the southern coast and the Fraser River.¹² In 1881, some 2,983 of the 3,086 residents of the lower Skeena/Nass region were Native Tsimshian and Nisga’a.¹³ Distance from the centres of the colonial economy and society did not stop change but did allow Native peoples more time to adjust. In this article I explore the changing geography and content of Clah’s colonial encounters. More precisely, I examine his intersections with various components of the non-Native economy and his interactions with Christianity and its missionary promoters. To provide a context for this discussion I begin by outlining the Tsimshian world and Clah’s place in it.

CLAH AND THE TSIMSHIAN WORLD

Clah was born into a complex network of social relationships that extended back through time and reached out across space. He was at once a member of four units of Tsimshian social organization: a House

salmon and consequent “great destitution,” in 1863 (Annual Report of the Department of Fisheries, Dominion of Canada, 1889, published as *Sessional Paper no. 17* [Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1890], 257).

¹¹ J. Usher, *William Duncan of Metlakatla: A Victorian Missionary in British Columbia* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1974), 128.

¹² The Stikine River attracted most attention in the early 1860s, but the Skeena and Nass Rivers were also affected. See A.S. Trueman, “Placer Gold Mining in Northern British Columbia, 1860-1880” (MA thesis, Department of History, University of British Columbia, 1935), and R. Galois, “The History of the Upper Skeena Region, 1850 to 1927,” *Native Studies Review* 9 (1993-94): 113-83. The establishment of the Colony of British Columbia in 1858 ended the HBC’s right of “exclusive trade” within that territory.

¹³ The non-Native population consisted of 101 Chinese and 92 “Whites” (Census of Canada, 1881, nominal rolls, district 187, subdistrict D, divisions 1,2,3,6,8,10, and 12). For a discussion of this census, see R. Galois and R.C. Harris, “Recalibrating Society: The Population Geography of British Columbia in 1881,” *Canadian Geographer* 38 (1994): 37-53.

Group, a wilnaat'aahl, a clan, and a tribe.¹⁴ The most basic of these was the House Group, a corporate matrilineage, known by the name of its highest ranking member, which owned territory and resources. Clah eventually assumed the name (or title) of T'amks — and with it, the status of “silgyet,” or “head man,” and leadership of the House Group.¹⁵ Although established at Fort Simpson, the members of the T'amks House traced their origins back to Gidestsu (Kitasoo), a Southern Tsimshian village located on Laredo Channel (Map 1).¹⁶ The wilnaat'aahl consisted of a network of closely related House Groups that had a common history and whose members were regarded as “brothers” and “sisters.” In Clah's case the related Houses were Nisnatsk and Ts'agomsagisk.¹⁷ The four Tsimshian clans (Gispwudwada [Killer Whale], Laxskiik [Eagle], Laxgibuu [Wolf], and Ganhada [Raven]), exogamous, extra-local kin groups with a general claim to common origins, constituted another layer of more extensive socio-spatial connections. Membership, determined by matrilineal descent, influenced the choice of marriage partner and offered potential associates among neighbouring peoples. For Clah, membership of the Gispwudwada clan provided links with members of all the other Coast Tsimshian tribes and many of the Southern Tsimshian, Nisga'a, Gitksan, Haida, Tlingit, Wet'suwet'en, and Tahltan as well.¹⁸

The people inhabiting a single winter village constituted what is usually termed a tribe. At the time of Clah's birth the ten Tsimshian tribes had their winter villages in the vicinity of Metlakatla. By about

¹⁴ For a concise discussion of these terms, see S. Marsden and R. Galois, “The Tsimshian, the Hudson's Bay Company and the The Tsimshian of the Northwest Coast Fur Trade, 1787-1840,” *Canadian Geographer* 39 (1995): 180, note 5.

¹⁵ Silgyet is used by Matthew Johnson and refers to the head of a House Group other than the leading House (UBCSC, Barnett Papers, file 9, vol. 1, pp. 15, 29, 55, 66, 69, and 74). This distinction is usually submerged within the English usage of “chief.” Johnson (b. 1855) was himself a Gispaxlo'ots and a nephew of Clah (*ibid.*, file 9, vol. 1, pp. 12 and 31). Dunn translates silgit as “eldest one” (J. Dunn, *A Practical Dictionary of the Coast Tsimshian Language* [National Museum of Man, Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service, Paper No. 42: #1703, 1978]).

¹⁶ T'amks was the highest-ranking name held by Clah (APS, Barbeau, no. 120 in *Tsimshian Narratives* 2, 1987); Diaries, vol. 70; Beynon E and G, 16-24. On Gidestsu, see J. Miller, “Moieties and Cultural America: Manipulation of Knowledge in a Pacific Northwest Native Community,” *Arctic Anthropology* 18 (1981): 24.

¹⁷ M. Halpin, “The Tsimshian Crest System: A Study Based on Museum Specimens and the Marius Barbeau and William Beynon Field Notes” (PhD thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, 1973), 60-68.

¹⁸ M. Halpin and M. Seguin, “Tsimshian Peoples: Southern Tsimshian, Coast Tsimshian, Nisga'a, and Gitksan,” in *Northwest Coast Handbook of American Indians*, vol. 7, W. Suttles et al., eds. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 267-84.

1840, all had moved north to Fort Simpson (Laxtgu'alaams).¹⁹ These Tsimshian tribes, uniquely among Northwest Coast peoples, possessed a village chief, usually the head of the highest ranking House Group, whose role included managing trading prerogatives with neighbouring peoples. Clah's tribe was the Gispaxlo'ots, and its chief was Ligeex.²⁰

Although inheritance of names, property, and other prerogatives was matrilineal, the "father's side" also brought ties and obligations. In Clah's case, the situation was complicated by an adoption and the early death of the adopting "father." Nonetheless, Clah's "paternal" background contained potentially important links with the Eagle (Laxskiik) clan of the Gispaxlo'ots and, thus, with chief Ligeex.²¹ Marriage offered further opportunities for confirming or extending connections. Indeed, among high-ranking people marriage was usually a form of geo-political alliance. By such criteria Clah's marriage was particularly propitious. His principal wife was a Nisga'a woman, variously identified as Dorcas or Cathrine Datacks, from Gitlaxdamks (Kitladamax) on the upper Nass.²² The marriage brought Clah links with the leading Nisga'a families of Gitlaxdamks and, less expectedly, with the HBC. Dorcas's mother was a sister of Nisakx (Martha McNeill), wife of Chief Mountain and, later, of W.H. McNeill, the chief trader at Fort Simpson.²³ It is unclear whether

¹⁹ Halpin and Seguin, "Tsimshian Peoples," 283, includes the Gits'ilaasu and Gitsemgeelm with the "Coast" Tsimshian; BCARS, James Douglas, Private Papers, 2nd series, pp. 28-29, B/20/1853 (transcript); this census was taken on 21-22 February 1842 (Hudson's Bay Company Archives [HBCA] Fort Simpson Journals [FSJ], B 201/a/6). Each of the tribes maintained its own segment of the new settlement at Fort Simpson; the Gitwilkseba become extinct after 1842.

²⁰ V. Garfield and P. Wingert, *The Tsimshian Indians and Their Arts* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), 33; Beynon E and G, 5. The principal trading routes are shown in R. Cole Harris, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada, Vol. 1: From the Beginning to 1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), Plate 13, and the ownership of specific routes in Halpin, "Tsimshian Crest System," III; UBSC, Barnett Papers, file 9, vol. 1, p. 43; UBCL, W. Beynon, Narratives 52 and 161, (microfilm, Reel 7173). On specific trading prerogatives, see below note 38.

²¹ According to Susan Marsden's reconstruction (personal communication), Clah's biological father was from Gits'ilaasu. But Clah was raised by Guyagan, a Laxskiik of the Gispaxlo'ots tribe. However, in 1839 or 1840, when Clah was eight years old, Guyagan was killed (Diaries, statement at commencement of vol. 1). On Ligeex, see Marsden and Galois, "The Tsimshian," 169-83; UBCL, Beynon Manuscripts, no. 214, microfilm, Reel 7173.

²² In the spring of 1867 Clah "left" his first wife and, by the summer of the same year, had a "new wife," identified as "Habbeleken" (Diaries, 27 June, 9 August, 9 September 1867). The second "marriage" was short lived, however: on 23 September, after arriving at Fort Simpson, Clah noted, "My new wife ran out before I arrive." Tomlinson, from a missionary perspective, commented on the flexibility of marriage arrangements, noting that "they are continually separating and remarriage" (E.P. Patterson, *Mission on the Nass: The Evangelization of the Nisga [1860-1890]* [Waterloo: Eulachon, 1982], 59).

²³ According to Susan Marsden (personal communication), Dorcas's family was part of the Gitgansnat Laxgibuu, whose leading chief was Sgat'in. Martha McNeill became the second

Clah's ties with the HBC led to his marriage or vice versa, but the marriage took place by 1858; the first child was born in May 1859, the last in December 1881.²⁴ Thus Clah's network of social connections was flexible, diverse, and covered a considerable geographical range. Family ties extended from Fort Simpson to the lower Skeena, the upper Nass, and Gidestsu; beyond this, clan and tribe offered the potential for even wider connections. Marriage, augmented by his own efforts, brought important links with portions of the "White tribe."

Another geographical network flowed from the Tsimshian annual round. With land and resources owned by the House Group, and with considerable spatial separation between the House's hunting territories, fishing sites, and berry patches, effective harvesting required a well developed pattern of seasonal movements. The result, in simplified form, is shown in Figure 1.²⁵ From winter villages in the vicinity of Metlakatla, people moved to oolichan sites on the Nass River in spring. After a stay of about two months for fishing and processing, they dispersed to a variety of hunting and marine resource locations to procure halibut, seaweed, clams, and the like. In summer and fall most people concentrated at salmon fisheries, primarily along the Skeena River. This was also the period for trading journeys. Late in the fall people returned to their winter villages for the ceremonial season. However, even during winter, feasting with people from other villages could involve a good deal of movement.²⁶

Clah's annual round changed over time, but it incorporated a significant component of "contact activities." These activities, however, rested upon a foundation of continuing control of access to

wife of W.H. McNeill, a former American maritime fur trader, who was in charge of Fort Simpson during parts of the 1850s and 1860s. She helped to operate the HBC post on the Nass River in the 1860s and figures frequently in Clah's diaries. See E.E. Rich, ed., *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, Third Series, 1844-1846* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1944), vol. 7, 314-18; D. Pethick, *S.S. Beaver: The Ship that Saved the West* (Vancouver: Mitchell, 1970), 47-49; H. Meilleur, *A Pour of Rain: Stories from a West Coast Fort* (Victoria: Sono Nis, 1980), 202-03.

²⁴ Clah's first trip to Victoria, in December 1855, was in the company of Harry McNeill, W.H. McNeill's son by his first wife, a Tlingit woman. See below, note 33.

²⁵ On the "traditional" Coast Tsimshian annual round, see Harris, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada*, Plate 13; Halpin and Seguin, "Tsimshian Peoples," 269-71. For a version dating from the late 1830s, see BCARS, James Douglas, *Private Papers*, 2nd Series, pp. 44-45, B/20/1853 (Transcript). For a graphic portrayal of the situation in the mid-1850s, see Galois and Ray, Plate 19, *Historical Atlas of Canada*, Vol. 2: *The Land Transformed, 1800-1891*, R. Gentilcore, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

²⁶ I use the term "feast" in preference to "potlatch," derived from the Chinook jargon. The Tsimshian term for the feasting system is "yukw."

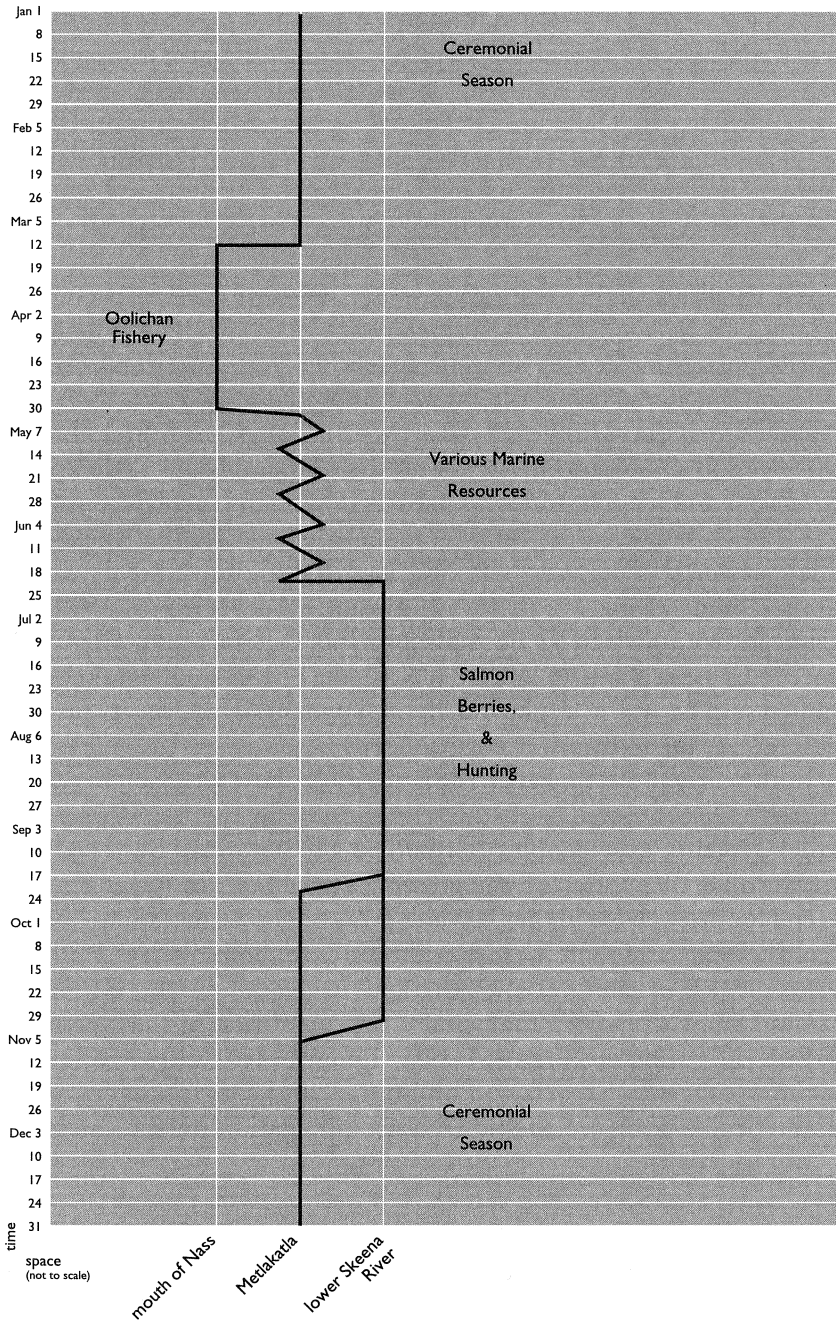


Figure 1: Generalized Tsimshian annual round, pre-contact.

country foods. Clah's role in food procurement, apart from hunting, was to provide transportation. Primary responsibility for provisioning fell upon his wife and children. Their contributions, mentioned only intermittently by Clah, are confirmed by Matthew Johnson. Clah's "wife," he commented, "is Nass & she go up Nass with sister to make dry salmon. She stay there all summer, then in fall tamusk [Clah] go get his wife & bring late salmon back here [Fort Simpson]."²⁷

ECONOMIC INTERSECTIONS

For almost two decades after its inception Fort Simpson was the principal nexus of economic interaction between Natives and non-Natives on the northern coast of British Columbia. These intersections embraced the trade of furs and provisions and various forms of employment. Indeed, Clah's first recorded involvement with the HBC illustrates an aspect of company demand for Native labour. Clah writes that he was "working in fort Simpson. 1853 3 years I Doing Same thing for in fort Simpson." According to William Duncan, who arrived at Fort Simpson in October 1857, Clah had been "a house servant" to W.H. McNeill, the officer in charge; another source said he was a "cook." Such employment, whatever its precise nature, was on an intermittent basis.²⁸

In the early 1850s, however, the situation at Fort Simpson began to change. Discontented with the HBC monopoly, the Tsimshian and other North Coast peoples outflanked the company by travelling south to Fort Victoria and the growing settlements in Puget Sound. Here, fur prices were higher; a wider array of goods, including liquor, was available; and there were opportunities for employment.²⁹ These visits quickly became very popular and, in the fall of 1853, Governor James Douglas reported that some 3,000 members "of the Northern Tribes" (Tsimshian, Nisga'a, Haida, Tlingit, Heiltsuk) were in the vicinity of Fort Victoria.³⁰ The gold rushes, beginning in 1858, dramatically increased the non-Native population on the southern

²⁷ UBSC, Barnett Papers, file 9, vol. 1, p. 41.

²⁸ Diaries, vol. 1, statement preceding 23 December 1855; UBCL (microfilm), Church Missionary Society (CMS), Duncan Journal, 2 November 1857, A/105; UBSC, Barnett Papers, file 9, vol. 1, p. 63, vol. 2, p. 49. Clah's son told Beynon that employment with the Company came as a result of Clah's connection with Mrs. McNeill (MacDonald and Cove, "Trade and Warfare," 210). Clah's annual round and a visit to Victoria contributed to the intermittent nature of his employment.

²⁹ Diaries, vol. 1. William Duncan, during a visit to Esquimalt in 1857, noted that "most of the Farm servants employed here by the Settlers" were Tsimshian (UBCL, DP, Journals, 11 July 1857).

coast and made these migrations even more attractive.³¹ Accurate figures are not available, but in 1859 William Duncan estimated that some 650 Coast Tsimshian, about 25 per cent of the entire population, were either in Victoria or on their way.³²

Clah's diaries provide invaluable information on these little-studied canoe journeys (1,050 kilometres [656 miles] from Fort Simpson to Victoria) and on Native activities at their destination. Between 1855 and 1864 he made five south-coast excursions; these consisted of trading trips, lasting about two months, and sojourner expeditions, of longer duration. Here I am concerned with the latter and review briefly Clah's second such trip, begun in 1859. Travelling with his wife and newborn son, Clah arrived in Victoria towards the end of June 1859.³³ He soon found employment in a store and worked pretty steadily for the next six months. On 18 January 1860 he recorded having worked a total of ninety-six days for Mr Roche, who operated a clothing and food store on Johnson Street. A few days later, Bishop Hills encountered Clah at the Tsimshian "camp" and was clearly surprised by what he saw:

We found the hut — or tent of John Clarh to whom I had promised a Prayer Book. He was in. There was also his wife Iarx & another,

³⁰ They seem to have developed in conjunction with the discovery of gold on the Queen Charlotte Islands. The first recorded canoe trip from Fort Simpson to Fort Victoria was made by John Work and, presumably, a Tsimshian crew in 1850 (HBCA, Fort Victoria Correspondence Outward [FVTCO], Douglas to Yale, 6 August 1850, B 226/b/3). An independent party of Tsimshian reached Fort Victoria the following year (HBCA, FVTCO, Douglas to Blenkinsop, 3 October 1851, B 226/b/4). See also, HBCA, London Correspondence Inward, Victoria (LCIVT), Douglas to Barclay, 21 October 1853, A 11/74. On the Northern Indians in Puget Sound, see Charles M. Gates, ed., "Notes and Documents: Defending Puget Sound against the Northern Indians," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 36 (1945): 69–78.

³¹ In 1855 the non-Native population of Vancouver Island was 774 (W.K. Lamb, "The Census of Vancouver Island, 1855," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 1 (1937): 51–58. In 1860, estimated populations were: Victoria 2,000; New Westminster c. 250; Nanaimo c. 165.

³² McNeill, in charge of Fort Simpson, put the total at 700 (HBCA, Fort Simpson Journal [FSJ], 2 June 1859, B/201/a/8; UBCL, DP, Journals, 2 June 1859, p. 9,738). A year earlier Duncan had calculated that there were 2,325 Tsimshian living at Fort Simpson; this figure excludes the South and Canyon Tsimshian (*ibid.*, 14 January 1858, p. 11,703). These trips probably reached a peak in the early 1860s; thereafter the frequency of vessels visiting the northern coast and the establishment of local stores to compete with Fort Simpson reduced the attraction of visiting Victoria. By 1863 Hamilton Moffatt was complaining to his superiors in Victoria about the competition from Duncan's store (BCARS, Fort Simpson, Correspondence Outward, Moffatt to Board of Management, 26 October 1863, A/B/20/R2; RG 10 vol. 3,605, file 2,959, pt. 1; Duncan to Laird, 21 May 1875). Duncan also operated a schooner to carry produce to Victoria (*Victoria Daily Colonist* [VDC], 26 October 1863). On the impact of trading vessels, see Diaries, 3 December 1862 and note 50.

³³ He embarked on the first trip on 23 December 1855, returning after an absence of five to six months in May/June 1856. The second trip was begun on 2 June 1859 and lasted until 14 January 1861. Clah does not mention his wife and son, but they were present when Bishop Hills visited (UBCSC, Hills Journal, 21 January 1860).

with his little boy. The tent had comforts not seen in others. There was a stove with cooking apparatus — a bed stead. He also had a desk. There were beautiful white loaves which he had brought home, being Saturday & the whole menage was that of a respectable cotter in England on Saturday.³⁴

It was not until 6 March that Clah found new employment, apparently helping to build a store on Yates Street. The wages were \$1 per day, probably the current norm for Native labour, but the job lasted only ten days.³⁵ Unemployed for the remainder of March and April, Clah decided to try his luck in New Westminster. Conditions were better in the mainland city, and by 17 May he had found employment. Over the next four months Clah worked steadily, earning \$100 in at least two different jobs. The only one he identifies was “working for wood” — perhaps a job at one of the sawmills in New Westminster or supplying cordwood.

In mid-September Clah returned to Victoria, obtaining a job at the “Police Barracks” — likely some kind of watchman concerned with Native visitors — at \$15 per month. Violent incidents, as newspapers and Clah’s diaries testify, were a common enough aspect of sojourner life. Most involved different Native groups; some were between Natives and Whites or mixed-bloods. Clah’s employment at the barracks lasted until the end of November and was followed by a three-day stint at a Yates Street store. Finding no further work, Clah left for Fort Simpson on the steamer *Labouchère* on 28 December. During a stay of eighteen months, Clah had held at least six different jobs in two different towns and had earned about \$250. Like other sojourners, he now had direct experience of some basic elements of a modern colonial economy: urban life, money, wage labour, discriminatory wage rates, and state apparatuses of regulation and coercion.³⁶ More important, perhaps, Clah was now in a position to operate as a fur trader.

³⁴ ubcsc, Hills Journal, 21 January 1860. Hills, an Anglican, had met Clah a few days earlier and was aware of his link with William Duncan. Clah makes no mention of the meeting.

³⁵ The Victoria directory lists B.T. Roche as operating a store on Johnson Street that sold groceries and provisions. The Yates Street store, belonging to J.D. Carroll, is also listed (Mallandine, “First Victoria Directory,” 1860, 27 and 36, ubcL, microfilm, Reel 7464/01). Clah seems to have worked in another store during July, but his role is unclear.

³⁶ Matthew Johnson recounts an incident indicating that money was not in use at Fort Simpson in 1862 (ubcsc, Barnett Papers, file 9, vol. 1, p. 15). John Lutz, “After the Fur Trade: The Aboriginal Labouring Class Of British Columbia 1849-1900,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 3 (1992): 9, quotes an estimate of \$2.50 per diem as the wage rate for “General Labourers” in 1860.

The Fur Trader

With Fort Simpson located in their territory, leading Tsimshian fur traders were intermediaries who procured furs from neighbouring peoples. Clah embarked upon this role in April 1861, some three months after returning from Victoria.³⁷ His diaries for the following three years provide a unique glimpse of one of the Native trading networks that, since 1834, had supplied Fort Simpson with furs (Table 1). Clah traded primarily with Gitxsan, Wet'suwet'en, and Nisga'a trappers, and these relationships were neither random nor the product of individual initiative. Tsimshian trade with the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en was the prerogative of the Gispaxlo'ots and their leading chief, Ligeex.³⁸ He retained the right of trading first and "exacted a

TABLE 1

Clah: Trading Trips to the Upper Skeena Region, 1861-1864

TRIP	DATE OF DEPARTURE	DATE OF RETURN	DAYS ABSENT	DESTINATION	ROUTE	TRADE RESULTS
1861						
1	22? April	26 May	34?	Hagwilget	Nass	50 skins, inc at least 30 marten
2	5 June	23 July	49	Hagwilget & Kispayaks	Nass	not very successful
1862						
1	14 May	18 June	36	Hagwilget	Skeena	poor
1863						
1	2 May	15 June	45	Hagwilget	Nass	300 marten; 40 beaver
1864						
1	20 April	17 May	28	Hagwilget	Skeena	189 skins
2	5 Aug.	26 Aug.	22	Gitsegyukla	Skeena	poor, high prices

Source: Clah Diaries

³⁷ Clah did a fair amount of hunting, but mostly for deer or geese.

³⁸ The Wet'suwet'en are an Athapaskan people, living adjacent to the Gitxsan. See D. Kerr and D. Holdsworth, eds., *Historical Atlas of Canada, Vol. 3: Addressing the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), Plate 2. The Nisga'a also obtained furs through trade with "interior" groups; Diaries, 5 to 25 December 1863, 3 to 4 January and 1 March 1864, 15 April 1868, and 9 December 1872. The HBC was aware of this trading system (HBCA, FSJ, 29 October 1840, B 201/a/5). For a discussion of Ligeex's role in constructing and expanding this network, see Marsden and Galois, "The Tsimshian," 1995.

tribute” from all who made the trip up the Skeena for the first time.³⁹ For Clah, both his paternal and maternal lines offered access to this trading system. Indeed, members of the House of T’amks occupied a particularly favourable position, being allowed to take two canoes on the journeys.⁴⁰ Clah’s links with the Nisga’a, through his wife’s family, provided a comparable basis for his activities along the upper Nass.⁴¹

Between 1861 and 1864, Clah made at least one trading trip per year to the upper Skeena. These excursions, lasting anywhere from three to seven weeks, covered about 640 kilometres (400 miles). Usually, Clah left the Coast either towards the close of the oolichan season or in mid-to-late-summer, taking indigenous trade goods, primarily oolichan grease, as well as Euro-American provisions and manufactures.⁴² The most frequent destination was Hagwilget (Hagwilgate), a Wet’suwet’en village, although he also visited the Gitksan villages of Gitwingax (Kitwanga) and Gitsegyukla (Kitsegukla). Clah travelled via both the Nass and the Skeena. The former entailed considerable land travel, along one of the principal “Grease Trails” — from Gitlaxdamks to Gitwingax or Kispayaks (Kispiox). On the Skeena canoes could be taken up to Getanmaax, but the journey was still arduous, involving hauling and poling as well as paddling.⁴³ Clah also made at least three trips each year to the Nass River: sometimes to the lower villages (Gitxatin, Laxgalts’ap, and Gitiks), sometimes to the upper villages of Gitwinksihlkwx and Gitlaxdamks. The purpose of these trips varied, but furs were procured when available. In February 1864, for example, Clah visited Gitlaxdamks and met some “Interior indians,” probably Gitksan, on their way to trade for oolichan. He returned to Fort Simpson with 100 martens.⁴⁴

³⁹ See Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC), Barbeau Files, Matthew Johnson, BF/16.10; Beynon, E and G, 76.

⁴⁰ Matthew Johnson informed Viola Garfield that “only two houses, i.e. house of xuop [Xyuup] and house of tamks could take 2 canoes in trading on Skeena with Legex, other likagigit could only take one ... Only Gispax and those who had married Gispax privileged to go with Legex trading.” University of Washington Archives, Garfield Papers, box 7, vol. 5, p. 136.

⁴¹ On his first trip up the Skeena Clah was accompanied by Ligeex (Diaries, 14 May to 18 June 1862). On other occasions Ligeex was clearly aware of Clah’s trading activities (e.g., 14 May 1864). For an outsider’s view of the comparable system operating on the trails from the upper Nass, see G. Chismore, “From the Nass to the Skeena,” *Overland Monthly* 6 (1885): 456–57; Diaries, 3 to 4 January 1864.

⁴² Matthew Johnson (CMC, Barbeau Files, BF/16.10) stated that there were usually three trips a year to the upper Skeena, the first coming after the initial oolichan run. The oolichan run usually commenced in the second half of March. See Diaries, 7 May 1863 and 2 September 1865; Diaries, “Account Books,” vols. 63 and 64.

⁴³ For a graphic description of a trip up the Skeena in a Tsimshian canoe in 1879, see G.M. Dawson, “Report of an Exploration from Port Simpson ... to Edmonton ...,” in *Report of Progress of the Geological and Natural Survey of Canada for 1879–80* (Montreal, 1881), 17B.

Clah's market for furs was not restricted to Fort Simpson. Between 1862 and 1864 he made three trips, lasting between six weeks and two months, to the South Coast where he sold both furs and other indigenous products and purchased Euro-American manufactured goods and foodstuffs.⁴⁵ In 1862, for example, Clah received \$108 for twenty-seven "skins" and \$10 for a quantity of dried salmon and oolichan oil; he also bartered two "Mountain [goat?] skins" for twenty-four yards of cotton. Most of the money was used to purchase blankets, a gun, and small quantities of foods.⁴⁶

But Clah's role as a fur trader came under challenge in the mid-1860s as new colonial agents began to transform access to his fur procurement region. In 1865 and 1866 employees of the Collins Overland Telegraph Company (COT), intent on connecting North America and Europe via Siberia, reached the upper Skeena. Although this grandiose scheme for global communication foundered with the completion of the Atlantic Cable, construction of the COT line as far as Kispiyax had important repercussions. It provided a land route northwards from the Cariboo mining area and demonstrated that the Skeena was a viable route between the Coast and the Interior for non-Natives. Clah's initial response to these developments was to intensify his trading activity (Table 2). In September 1865, after encountering the COT steamship *Union* near Gits'ilaasu (Kitselas), he made two more trips up the Skeena.⁴⁷ The second one lasted for eleven weeks and culminated in a hazardous winter descent of the Skeena. Four days after leaving Gits'ilaasu (Kitselas), for example:

an shower, sometimes snow an sometimes fine. started this morning hald Canoe down. But this day as I have Drown it in river. Ice thick about one inch. But I walk on. I put on snow shoe swimming 1/2 hour at in the river amongs Ice. If I forget great god. But my live lost very soon I remmber him the time I was in drowning. If we

⁴⁴ Diaries, 6 February to 20 March 1864. See also 22 to 24 April 1861 and 27 October to 4 November 1862. Some Gitxsan made this journey on an annual basis; Wet'suwet'en, and even Babine, visitors were less frequent (*VDC*, 29 May 1860; Chismore, "From the Nass to the Skeena," 455-56).

⁴⁵ In 1862, he left Fort Simpson on 4 February, reached Victoria after a journey of 28 days, and arrived home on 10 April after a journey of 17 days. In 1863, he left Fort Simpson on 25 June, reached Victoria after a journey of 19 days, and arrived home on 23 August, after a journey of 15 days. In 1864, he left Fort Simpson on 21 May, reached Victoria after a journey of 21 days, and arrived home on 15 July, after a journey of 16 days.

⁴⁶ Clah, Account Book, vol. 64, entries following 16 March. In his diary Clah puts his yield on this transaction at \$117 (Diaries, 4 March 1862). On Native produce taken to Victoria, see Carolina Cargo Book, 1863-64, DP, 14631; *VDC*, 26 October 1863.

⁴⁷ Diaries, 18 September 1865. Clah states the meeting took place at "mouth catchpkalon river," presumably the Kitsumkalum River.

TABLE 2

Clah: Trading Trips to the Upper Skeena Region, 1865-1868

TRIP	DATE OF DEPARTURE	DATE OF RETURN	DAYS ABSENT	DESTINATION	ROUTE	TRADE RESULTS
1865						
1	7 July	6 Aug.	31	Hagwilget	Skeena	7 marten, 18 beaver
2	2 Sept.	20 Sept.	19	Hagwilget	Skeena	nd
3	12 Oct.	20 Nov.	40	Hagwilget	Skeena	50 skins
4	23 Nov.	31 Dec.*	39	Gitwingax	Skeena	nd
1866						
1	1 Jan.	10 Feb.	41	Gitwingax	Skeena	200 skins
2	12 April	14 May	33	Hagwilget	Skeena	111 skins
3	6 July	3 Aug.	29	Gits'ilaasu	Skeena	59 skins
1867						
1	1 May	1 June	31	Hagwilget	Skeena	working for HBC
2	10 July	27 July	18	Hagwilget	Skeena	23 skins
3	23 Nov.	31 Dec.*	39	Gitwingax Hagwilget	Nass	nd
1868						
1	1 Jan.	15 Jan.	15	Hagwilget Gitwingax	Nass	not a single skin
2	7 May	31 May	25	Kisgagas	Nass	175 skins

*Trips continued into the following year

Source: Clah Diaries

prayed God the Father of our lord Jesus Christ and we die soon but I was drowning in the river at in the cold time too frost that time. I was in the river all my cloths geting wet. on shore called colamast.⁴⁸

Clah also greatly expanded the sale of goods on credit, a step that Duncan accurately described as “unprecedented and most imprudent”: Clah would have great difficulty in recovering the debts.⁴⁹ But in the short term, measured by the skins obtained, his tactics were successful.

⁴⁸ Diaries, 29 January 1866.

⁴⁹ Diaries, Debt Book, vol. 66; Diaries, 10 March and 16 April 1869; BCARS, Lieutenant Governor, Correspondence, GR 443, vol. 58, Statement of Clah, n.d. (1872); UBCL, DP, 8882/113, Duncan to Provincial Secretary, 10 May 1872.

In 1866, however, the situation changed again as the HBC established two outposts to Fort Simpson: one on the Nass near Laxgalts'ap, the other at the mouth of the Bulkley River.⁵⁰ The outposts were intended to intercept the flow of Interior furs drawn to the Coast by the higher prices of William Duncan's store at Metlakatla and the liquor sold illegally by independent coastal traders. Neither outpost was a great success, and the Skeena post was closed in the summer of 1868. According to the HBC, high fur prices demanded by Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en traders, together with high operating costs, quickly rendered "Ackwelgate" uneconomic.⁵¹ Nonetheless, the growing non-Native presence in the upper Skeena/Nass region had contributed to the erosion of indigenous trading and geo-political arrangements. Conflicts broke out between the Wet'suwet'en and the Gispaxlo'ots in 1866 and 1868, as the latter sought to maintain their trade monopoly with the former.⁵² Moreover, some non-Gispaxlo'ots Tsimshian reached the Interior, and an occasional Gitxsan or Wet'suwet'en reached the Coast.⁵³

Clah's responses to the HBC outposts were diverse and to some extent contradictory. On the one hand, as described more fully below, he was employed by the company to carry goods, people, and information to the outposts. On the other hand, he voiced his objections to the Skeena post as early as July 1866.⁵⁴ Two years later, he and a number of other Gispaxlo'ots stated their opposition in a meeting at

⁵⁰ From 1862 the HBC faced considerable competition from coastal trading vessels, and losses at Fort Simpson, for Outfits 1862 to 1866, were estimated at \$28,574 (HBCA, FVTCO, Tolmie to Manson, 2 August 1867, B 226/b/33, f 115; BCARS, Fort Simpson, Correspondence Outward, Moffatt to Board of Management, November 1864, A/B/20/r2). A policy of a cordon of posts to accompany projected telegraph construction was articulated as early as 1864 (HBCA, LCIVT, Bissett to Fraser, 10 March 1864, A 11/79). The Nass post is shown on Admiralty Chart #2190, "Nass Bay," Hydrographic Office, London, 1872. Clah identifies the Skeena post as Fort Finlayson (Diaries, 20 December 1867), but HBC records refer only to the "Ackwilgate" Outpost (HBCA, FVTCO, Tolmie to Manson, 13 November 1867, B 226/b/36, f. 26).

⁵¹ HBCA, Fort Victoria Correspondence Inward (FVTCI), B 226/b/36, Finlayson to Board of Management, 19 May 1868.

⁵² Clah records two encounters with "interior Indians" attempting to reach the coast in 1866 (Diaries, 25 April to 1 May). Later that year a conflict developed in trading with the Wet'suwet'en at Hagwilget (Diaries, 28 to 30 July 1866). See also the comments by T. Elwyn (UBCL, Great Britain, Colonial Office, Correspondence from British Columbia, Elwyn to Colonial Secretary, 4 September 1866, CO 60/25, #69, microfilm). A more serious confrontation took place in 1868 (Diaries, 30 July to 2 August, 1868; UBCL, DP, Journals, 9 August 1868, p. 11, 198; VDC, 3 August 1868).

⁵³ Duncan, to promote trade at Metlakatla and retain Ligeex's loyalty, had been supporting the latter's trade up the Skeena. When this trade was threatened in 1866 "Paul [Ligeex] came to me," Duncan noted, "to forbid the people from here to buy marten skin or food in the interior whither they are going to convey the freight of the Telegraph Company" (UBCL, DP, 5 September 1866, p. 10, 981; see also 10,558, 10,717).

⁵⁴ Diaries, 2 July 1866. The Nisga'a also sought to prevent White traders using their route to the upper Skeena (Diaries, 1 March 1864).

Fort Simpson: "Ackweleget. We all speaking to in big house about interior that HBC spoil the trad of skeenah every places. tone't wanted company keep the store ackweleget. We are lost our trad. Come nothing in two years."⁵⁵ The impact on Clah's trading activities had become clear in 1867, as his yield of furs declined. An extended trip to the Hagwilget-Kispayaks area in the winter of 1867-68 was a spectacular failure: "I brought nothing down, not single one skin. I had very bad luck this time."⁵⁶ An 1868 trading expedition to the more distant Gitxsan village of Kisgagas — Clah's first recorded visit to that area (Map 1) — was successful, but the effort was not repeated, as Clah turned to other activities.⁵⁷ Meanwhile the old trading system along the Skeena, controlled by Ligeex and the Gispaxlo'ots, continued to crumble. Another important stage was reached in April 1869, when some seventy Gitxsan, the first substantial party of Interior people to reach the mouth of the Skeena, traded furs at Metlakatla and Fort Simpson. They returned home with a "cargo of Provisions also with goods."⁵⁸ The demise of the old system was confirmed by the Omineca gold rush of 1870, when Thomas Hankin, the former HBC clerk at Ackwelgate, returned to the upper Skeena as the first independent non-Native trader in the region.⁵⁹

Other Activities of the Fur-trade Era

Tsimshian interactions with Fort Simpson were not restricted to the sale of furs. In addition to country foods (deer, salmon, halibut, cod, eggs) for local consumption, the HBC also made purchases, notably of oolichan, for sale elsewhere. On occasion, Clah participated in these activities: he sold quantities of oolichan and cod, and some of his hunting was for the provision trade.⁶⁰ Transportation was another important point of intersection. The company's system of steamers along the Coast was technically advanced, efficient, and inflexible. Tsimshian canoes offered flexibility. With spatial mobility built into their annual round, the Tsimshian readily transported company

⁵⁵ Diaries, 23 June 1868. Ligeex, now a resident of Metlakatla, reported this meeting to William Duncan (UBCL, DP, Journals, p. 11, 183).

⁵⁶ Diaries, 15 January 1868.

⁵⁷ Diaries, 24 May 1869.

⁵⁸ UBCL, DP, Journals, pp. 11,240-11,243; BCARS, Lieutenant Governor, Correspondence, GR 443, vol. 58, Clah to Lieutenant Governor, 5 April 1872; Diaries, 16 April 1869.

⁵⁹ See below, note 68.

⁶⁰ On hunting for the provision trade, see Diaries, 12 August 1862, 12 to 15 August 1865; FSJ, 17 August 1865. For oolichan and cod trade, see Diaries, 20 March to 6 April 1864; 8 to 9 June 1865; FSJ, 20 to 22 March 1864. For data on the provision trade at Fort Simpson in the 1830s, see Gentilcore, ed., *Historical Atlas*, vol. 2: Plate 19.

people, goods, and information. Clah was involved in such work as early as 1863, but the establishment of the upper Skeena and Nass posts in 1866 increased company demand for indigenous transportation.⁶¹ On his first trip up the Skeena in 1867, Clah carried company supplies in a company-owned canoe; between 1868 and 1869, he transported HBC goods to, or from, the Nass River on five occasions.⁶² Moreover, demand for transportation soon extended beyond the confines of the fur trade. Missionaries were early customers and, as the non-Native presence in the region diversified after 1870, miners and independent traders were added to the list of clients. Depending upon destinations, these commercial trips also offered, in residual form, opportunities for continuing indigenous trading relationships.

When his intermediary role came under challenge in the mid-1860s Clah adapted by using his HBC connections to secure other opportunities. Between 1866 and 1870, in addition to providing transportation services, he was employed by the company in its Fort Simpson “store” for short periods and helped procure supplies of wood.⁶³ Most interesting, though, was his role as a “trader” on the sloop *Petrel*, which the company used to counter the operations of independent coastal traders.⁶⁴ During 1869 and 1870 Clah made three trading voyages south of Fort Simpson on the *Petrel*, visiting Gidestsu (Kitasoo), Gitlo’op (Kitlope), Gitkxahla (Kitkatla), and the mouth of the Skeena.⁶⁵ This experience stimulated an “independent” trip to the same region in 1870, which yielded herring roe and a few skins.⁶⁶

The Gold Rushes: Omineca and Cassiar

Following the discovery of gold in the Omineca district (Map 2), late in 1869, hundreds of miners, prospectors, and traders used the Skeena as a route to the mines. A few remained along the route, establishing

⁶¹ The 1863 trip was made in conjunction with Martha McNeill, who was “sent” by the HBC on trading expeditions to the Nass prior to opening a post (HBCA, FSJ, 9 to 21 April, 26 September to 7 October 1863, B 201/a/9; Diaries, same dates). Steamer service on the Skeena did not begin until 1891, although the cot vessel reached nearly to Kitselas in 1865 (BCARS, Morison, Memoirs, p. 18, ADD MSS 424).

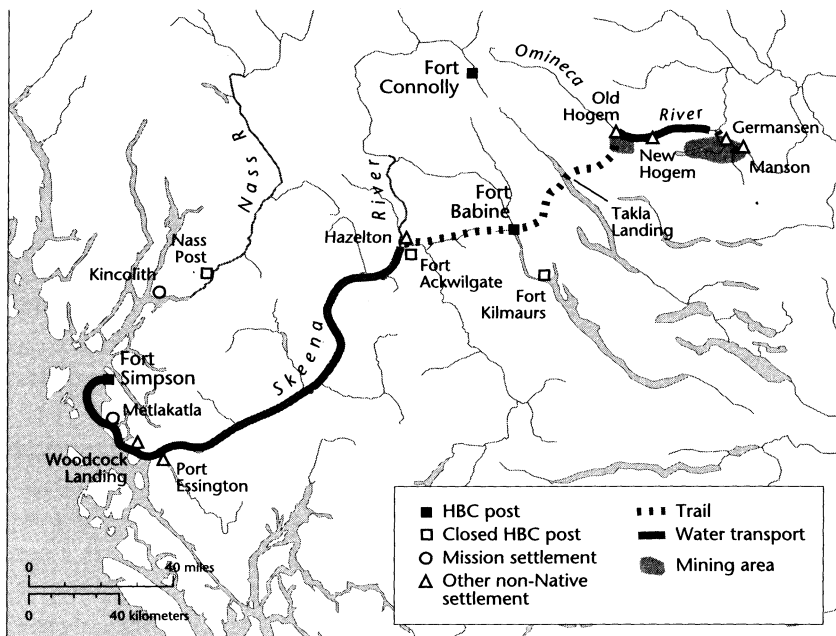
⁶² Diaries, 7 to 23 April, 5 to 19 December 1868; 25 June to 3 July, 16 to 18 July, and 1 to 9 December 1869.

⁶³ HBCA, FSJ, 9 and 24 July 1866, B 201/a/9; Diaries, 27 August 1866, 18 to 19 June 1867, 26 to 29 February, 21 to 23 April 1868, 4 to 23 January 1869. Providing supplies of wood — 6 March 1866, 27 September 1867; see also 20 November 1868.

⁶⁴ The *Petrel* was purchased in 1863 and towed to Fort Simpson from Victoria for use as a coasting vessel “to oppose the Smugglers” (HBCA, FSJ, 29 June 1863, B 201/a/9).

⁶⁵ For the trips to Gidestsu see Diaries, 30 January to 8 March and 13 March to 14 April 1869; for Skeenamouth see Diaries, 4 to 12 March 1870.

⁶⁶ The trip was to Kitemaat and Gitkxahla (Diaries, 14 to 29 May 1870). Clah also made a coastal trip to Gidestsu on his own account in 1865 (Diaries, 27 May to 6 June 1865).



Map 2: Clah's trip to Omineca, 1873.

small settlements at the mouth of the Skeena and the “Forks” (Hazelton).⁶⁷ Clah quickly became involved in these developments, conveying miners, prospectors, and their supplies to the Forks (Table 3). When the rush reached its modest peak in 1871, Clah built a temporary house at the mouth of the Skeena.⁶⁸ From this base he concentrated on the carrying trade to Hazelton for the next two seasons, even purchasing an expensive new canoe in 1872.⁶⁹ During this period Clah made five trips to the upper Skeena, one to the upper Nass, and several shorter coastal trips between Fort Simpson and the mouth of the Skeena.⁷⁰ He also fit in a steamer trip to Victoria.⁷¹

⁶⁷ On the early settlement of the Skeena, see D. Clayton, “Geographies of the Lower Skeena, 1830–1920” (MA thesis, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, 1989), 50–56. On Hazelton, at the “Forks,” see BCARS, GR 1372, Dewdney to Pearse, 20 May 1871, F 461/38; C. Horetzky, *Canada on the Pacific* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1874), 102.

⁶⁸ Diaries, 24 April to 8 May 1871.

⁶⁹ The canoe was seven fathoms long and cost \$48 in trade (Diaries, 8 April 1872).

⁷⁰ Two trips were for the independent merchants Robert Cunningham and Thomas Hankin. These former HBC employees ran stores at the mouth and the forks of the Skeena, catering to both the mining and Native populations. Hankin had been in charge of the HBC post at the mouth of the Bulkley River. After its closure in 1868, he moved to Tongass in the summer of 1869 before returning to the upper Skeena. In the summer of 1870 he operated a store at Gitwingax, moving up to the Forks by the fall (Diaries, 24 July 1869, 17 July 1870; BCARS, Sketch Survey of Skeena River and its Tributaries, E. Dewdney, September 1871, CM/A307; HBCA, LCIVT, Bissett to Grahame, 12 October 1870, A11/85). Cunningham, while

TABLE 3

Clah: Trips to the Upper Skeena/Nass Region, 1870-1872

TRIP	DATE OF DEPARTURE	DATE OF RETURN	DAYS ABSENT	DESTINATION	ROUTE	TRANSPORTING FOR
1870	24 June	20 July	27	Hagwilget	Nass	prospectors
1871	11 May*	4 June	25	Hazelton	Skeena	Cunningham & Hankin
	8 June*	28 June	21	Hazelton	Skeena	miners
	18 July*	3 Aug.	17	Hazelton	Skeena	
1872	1 May*	12 May	12	Hazelton	Skeena	miners
	15 May*	29 May	15	Hazelton	Skeena	Cunningham & Hankin
	3 June	9 June	7	Gitlaxdamks	Nass	

* Arrival and departure from Skeena mouth

Source: Clah Diaries

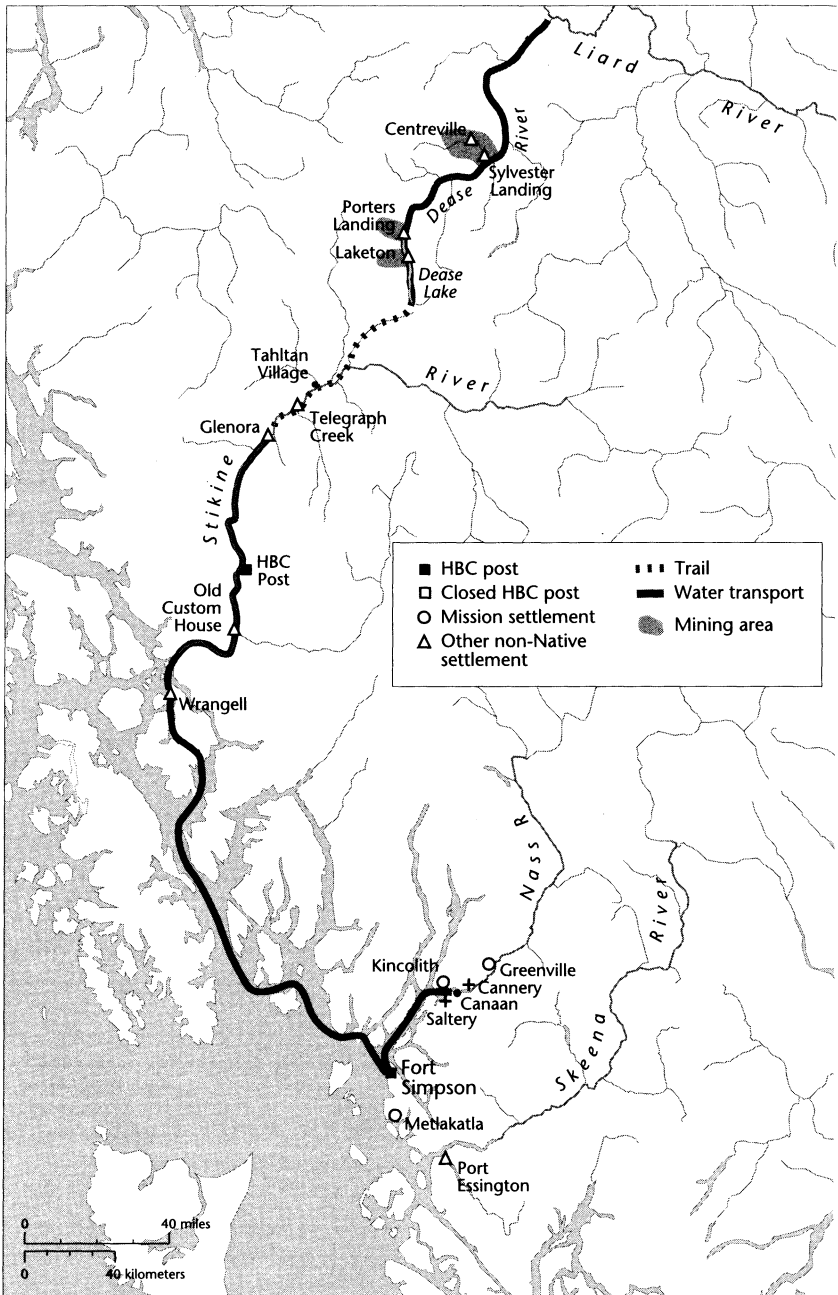
In 1872, with the rush to Omineca winding down, Clah made two trips up the Skeena and one up the Nass by the middle of June. The remainder of the season, until mid-October, he spent at or near the mouth of the Skeena going on a series of short trips — primarily hunting, but also collecting berries and fishing. Some of this activity, no doubt, was to supply the new White settlements.⁷² Next year, Clah took the radical step of travelling to the mining district with some packers he had hired to provide transport to Hazelton. After a twenty-one-day journey, covering about 550 kilometres (350 miles) from Port Essington, they reached Germansen Landing on 15 May.⁷³ Over

still employed by the HBC, had entered into a partnership with Hankin. This brought about a reprimand from the company and, early in 1871, Cunningham's resignation. Subsequently the HBC opened a store at Port Essington (HBCA, FVTCO, Bissett to Graham, 12 October 1870, B 226/b/44; Diaries, 11 February 1871). For coastal work, see Diaries, 4 to 5, 14 to 24 December 1871; 3 and 9 April 1872.

⁷¹ Clah traded with both Gitksan and miners at Hazelton (Diaries, 1 June and 31 July 1871). He offers no explanation for the trip to Victoria, although he did purchase twenty-eight gallons of molasses and some "gatratge" — cartridges? (Diaries, 29 September to 18 October 1871).

⁷² On 10 July 1872, for example, Clah returned to Port Essington with "7 dozen gale [gull] eggs, 2 deer, 6 seals, 2 gallon of Salmon berries, 1 mink."

⁷³ Some Tsimshian had made the trip to Omineca in 1872, if not earlier (BCARS, GR 526, Fitzgerald to Provincial Secretary, 17 September 1872, vol. 4, no. 640). Clah's party, which departed on 25 April, included Ligeex (Diaries, 25 April and 13 May 1873).



Map 3: Clah's trip to Cassiar, 1881.

the next three months Clah worked as a packer, a mining labourer (on ditches and ground sluices), and did some prospecting and hunting on his own account.⁷⁴ However, early in August, well before the end of the mining season, he left Omineca for Fort Simpson. Arriving on 30 August, Clah had \$100 in gold dust and an awareness that Omineca was “poor Diggins working for wege.”⁷⁵

But the gold bug had bitten Clah. At Fort Simpson he learned of gold discoveries in the Cassiar region, some 640 kilometres (400 miles) to the north. Two days later, he left on a trip to the canyon of the Stikine River, part way to the newly discovered mines, transporting goods for a Tongass merchant.⁷⁶ In 1874 the rush to Cassiar, much more substantial than the one to Omineca, prompted Clah to visit the new mines.⁷⁷ This initiative was a success and, except in 1878 and 1880, Clah travelled to Cassiar every summer between 1874 and 1881 (Map 3; Table 4). He also made two prospecting trips nearer home, venturing up the Nass valley as far as Lakwip, near Meziaden Lake, in 1877 and 1880. Through this region indigenous travelling protocols still held, and on both visits Clah was accompanied by Gitanyow guides. They found some “colours,” but nothing significant.⁷⁸

The visits to Cassiar, usually lasting between four and six months, were profitable undertakings at first. “Sometimes,” according to Matthew Johnston, “tamusk [Clah] make \$1000 — \$2000.”⁷⁹ Mostly Clah engaged in freighting, even joining several Tsimshian partners to build a boat at Dease Lake in 1875. During that summer, Clah made a dozen trips between Laketown and McDames Creek, two of the principal mining centres.⁸⁰ By the 1879 season, though, mining

⁷⁴ Clah had seen a placer mining operation on the Skeena, near Gits’ilaasu, in April 1864 (Diaries, 25 April 1864; HBCA, FSJ, 18 April 1864, B 201/a/9).

⁷⁵ Diaries, 30 August 1873.

⁷⁶ Tongass was in Tlingit territory, across Portland Inlet from Fort Simpson. An American military fort, adjacent to the village, was maintained from 1868 to 1870 (C-M Naske and H.E. Slotnick, *Alaska: A History of the 49th State*, 2nd edition. [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987]), 118. Clah also obtained a quantity of furs on the trip (Diaries, 1 September to 17 October 1873).

⁷⁷ Official returns for 1874 estimate that 1,500 White miners reached Cassiar and produced about \$1,000,000 worth of gold. For accounts of mining in the Cassiar region, see Trueman, “Placer Gold Mining”; W.A. Johnston, “Gold Placers of Dease Lake Area, Cassiar District, BC,” *Geological Survey of Canada, Summary Report, Part A* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1925), 33A-74A.

⁷⁸ The second trip included a White named Robertson — presumably the owner of the fishery at the mouth of the Nass (Diaries, 27 September to 13 October 1877, and 19 August to 6 September 1880). Meziadin was in Gitanyow territory. See W. Duff, “Histories, Territories and Laws of the Kitwano,” *Anthropology in British Columbia* 4, (1959).

⁷⁹ UBCS, Barnett Papers, file 9, vol. 1, p. 41.

⁸⁰ Clah bought out the other partners shortly after construction had been completed (Diaries, 15 to 26 June, 14 and 28 July, 9 October 1875, and 22 February 1876).

TABLE 4

Clah: Trips to Cassiar and Prospecting Trips, 1873-1881

TRIP	DATE OF DEPARTURE	DATE OF RETURN	DAYS ABSENT	DESTINATION	ROUTE
1873	3 Sept.	16 Oct.	43	Stikine	Stikine
1874	5 April	5 Oct.	183	Cassiar	Stikine
1875	18 May	21 Nov.	188	Cassiar	Stikine
1876	23 May	8 Sept.	109	Cassiar	Stikine
1877	1 May	14 Sept. ²	137 ¹	Cassiar	Stikine
	27 Sept.	13 Oct. ²	16	Lakwip	Nass
1879	7 May	21 Sept. ³	137	Cassiar	Stikine
1880	20 Aug.	10 Sept. ²	20	Lakwip	Nass
1881	28 April	3 Aug. ³	97	Cassiar	Stikine

¹ Date of return approximate.

² Date of departure from and return to Si'aks.

³ Date of departure from and return to Canaan.

Source: Clah Diaries.

was in decline and Clah had difficulty finding employment. This led him to do some prospecting and to dabble in other activities.⁸¹ He returned to Cassiar in 1881 but the situation had not improved, prompting an early departure. Reaching the mouth of the Nass on 3 August, Clah turned his attention to the salmon canning industry.⁸²

The Non-Native Fishery

The Tsimshian and the Nisga'a had long been accustomed to selling fresh and processed fish to the HBC and other visiting and resident Whites.⁸³ In 1876, however, commercial exploitation of the region's fish resources entered a new era with the opening of the first salmon cannery on the Skeena River.⁸⁴ The following year J.J. Robertson

⁸¹ In 1879, official estimates state there were 756 miners who produced gold to the value of \$34,320 (BC, Minister of Mines, *Annual Reports*). On 11 July 1879, Clah stated: "I fine hard time two months an half nobody gives me anything to do." Diaries, 13 to 28 June 1879. He later worked for a day or two in a store (Diaries, 3 July 1879).

⁸² Diaries, 28 April to 3 August 1881. This was not the end of Clah's interest in mining. Later in the 1880s he visited mining centres at Juneau and prospected in the Kitsumkalum area.

⁸³ The Fort Simpson Journals, for example, record the purchase of salmon, oolichan, cod, and halibut.

⁸⁴ On the Inverness cannery and other canneries of the region, see G.Y. Blyth, *Salmon Canneries: British Columbia North Coast* (Lantzville, BC: Oolichan, 1991); W. Ross, "Salmon Cannery Distribution of the Nass and Skeena Rivers of British Columbia, 1877-1926" (B.Ed. essay, UBCSC, 1967).

established the first non-Native fishery on the Nass. At first it processed only oolichan but, in 1878, expanded to include smoking salmon.⁸⁵ By 1881, three canneries and two salteries were operating in the Skeena/Nass region. Native labour was crucial to all these enterprises.⁸⁶

In 1878, for reasons discussed below, Clah chose a site at the mouth of the Nass for a new winter residence. This move left him well placed to participate in the developing non-Native fishery and, during the next three years, he was employed in several capacities. Some involved traditional or well established activities — fishing (salmon and oolichan), freighting supplies, and interpreting — while more novel activities included salting salmon, freighting by sleighs, making staves, working in the blacksmith's shop, some form of supervisory work (perhaps tallying), and constructing a wharf.⁸⁷ All of this employment was short term and/or intermittent. None of it seems to have been particularly well paid.⁸⁸ Although other family members also obtained some cannery work, in 1880 Clah complained of being “very short in Grub and in clothing. he [Duncan] ask to me If I had work in any were so I said to him I have work at fishery at Nass River. Sometimes works one day 2 sometimes paid me in tickets nothing paid But paper mony.”⁸⁹ H.E. Croasdaile, like other cannery owners, used the token system to supplement his returns.

ANNUAL ROUNDS: TWO EXAMPLES

Another perspective on the geographical range and diversity of Clah's activities can be gained by examining specific examples of his annual round (Figures 2 & 3).

⁸⁵ Canada, Department of Fisheries, *Annual Report* (DFAR), 1877, 292 and 1878, 294; NAC, RG 10, vol. 1275, O'Reilly to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 25 March 1882. There are no returns for the first year's operations.

⁸⁶ DFAR, 1881, 223-25; the cannery and saltery on the Nass also processed oolichan. For descriptions of these establishments in 1881, see *VCD*, 28 May, 16 July, 1 September 1881.

⁸⁷ According to Clah sleighs were introduced to the lower Nass during the 1879 season (Diaries, 12 March 1880, 14 March 1881); interpreting (2 July); blacksmith shop (9 to 30 August 1881); wharf construction (17 June 1880); making staves (21 to 26 June 1880); salting fish (16 June 1880); watchman/supervisor (25 to 31 July 1880); wharf construction (10 to 26 November 1881).

⁸⁸ The blacksmith work paid \$1 for a sixteen-hour day, and the stove-making yielded “2 [dollars] an 12 cts each man 6 days work hard labour” (Diaries, 11 August 1881, 26 June 1880).

⁸⁹ There may have been some exaggeration in Clah's claims of poverty, but he certainly complained to Croasdaile about a lack of work. See Diaries 8 and 12 July 1880. On employment of his wife and daughter, see Diaries 16 June and 25 to 31 July 1880, and 3 September 1881.

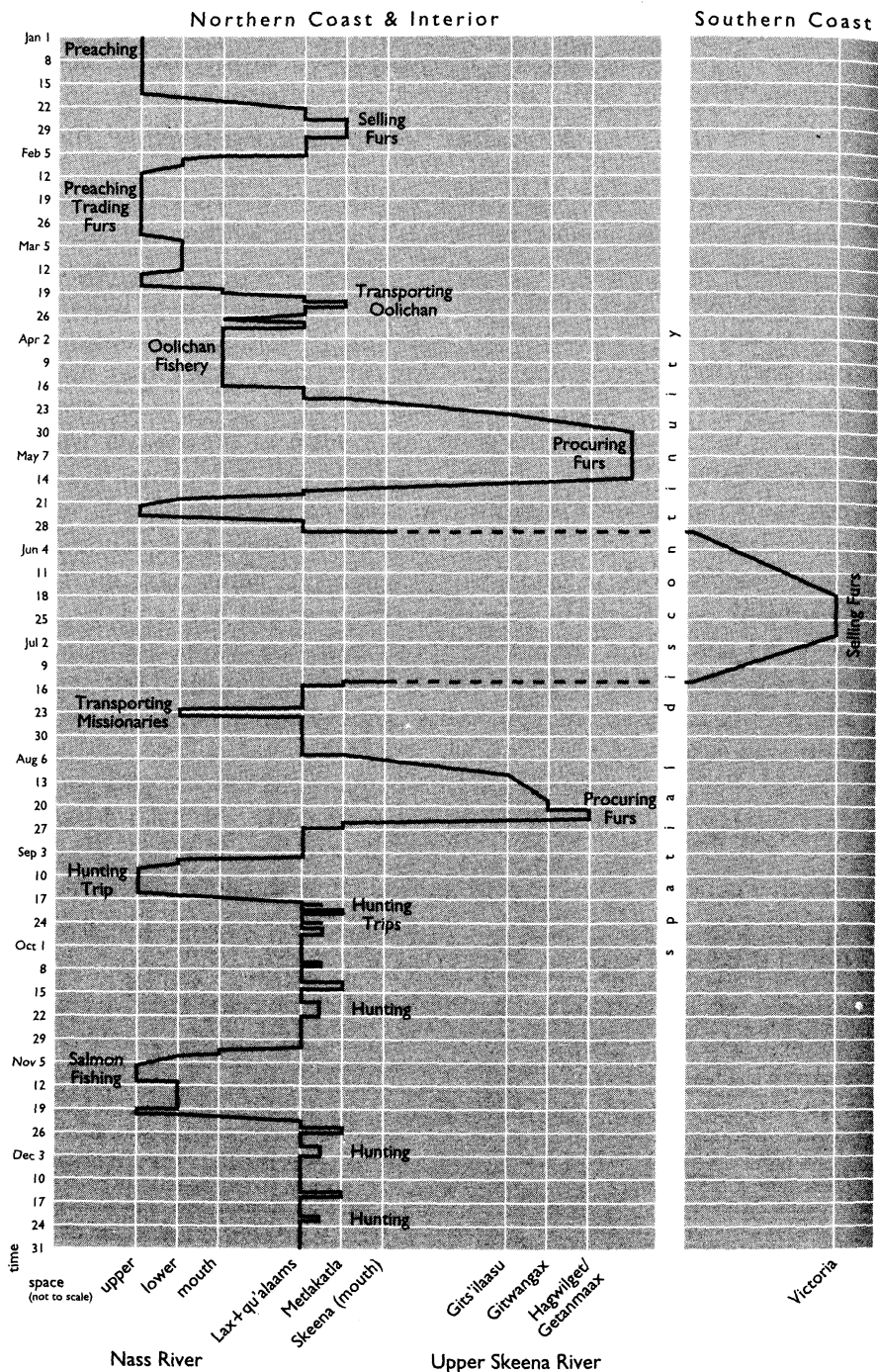


Figure 2: Clah's annual round, 1864.

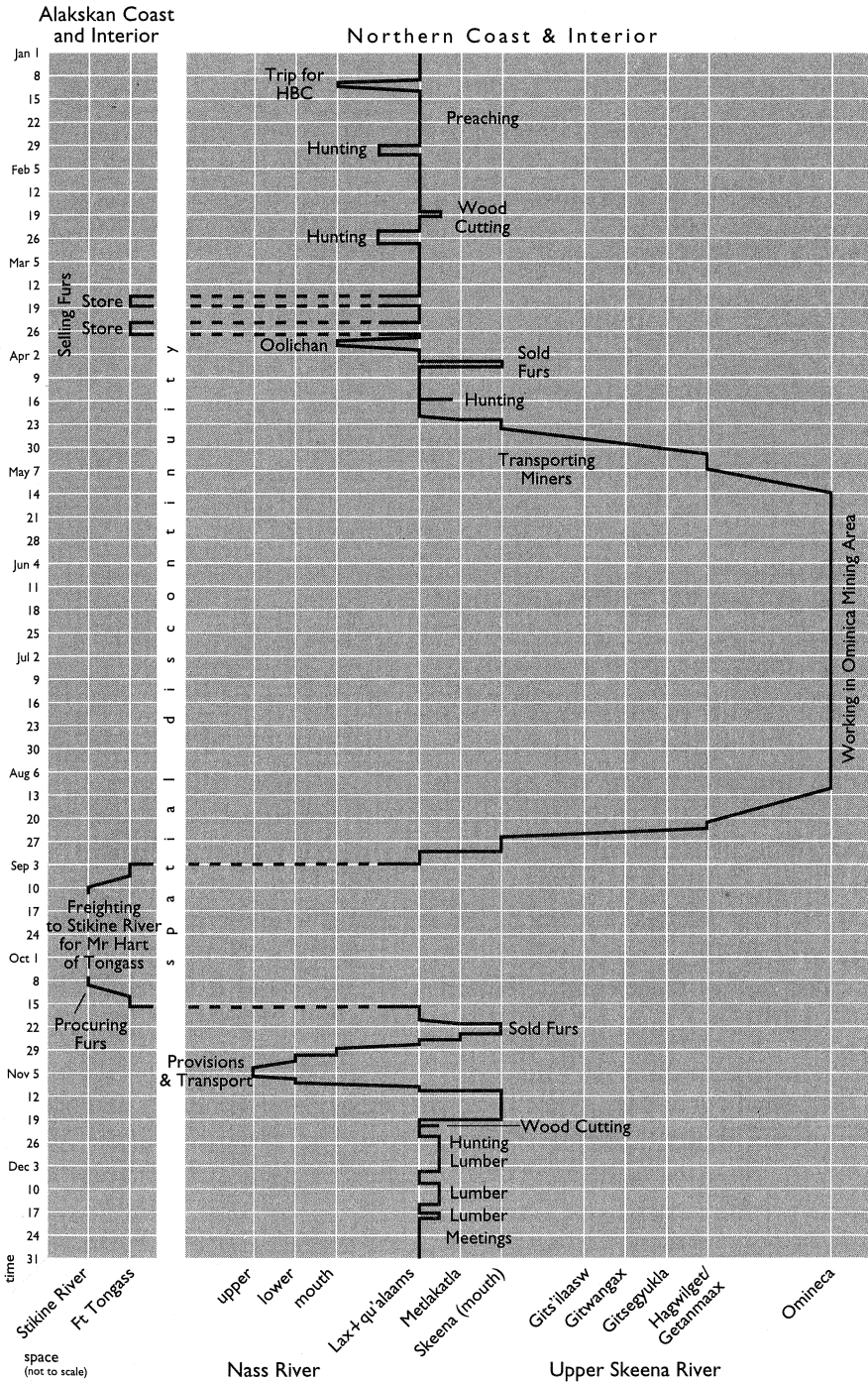


Figure 3: Clah's annual round, 1873.

1864:

Aged thirty-three, Clah started the year at Gitlaxdamks, on an extended trip to the upper Nass that had begun the previous year (Figure 2).⁹⁰ At the end of January he visited Fort Simpson and Metlakatla with a group of Nisga'a converts, then returned to the Gitlaxdamks area where he traded furs and engaged in some preaching. On 20 March Clah was back at Fort Simpson, only to leave a few days later for the oolichan grounds of the lower Nass. Here, apart from a quick trip to Fort Simpson, he remained for the next three weeks. Some of the time was spent catching fish for salting — presumably for the HBC.⁹¹

On 20 April Clah left Fort Simpson on a trading trip to the upper Skeena that occupied most of the next month. After returning to Fort Simpson he paid a brief visit to the upper Nass and then, on 30 May, left for Victoria. Having disposed of his furs and purchased supplies he was back in Fort Simpson on 15 July. A quick trip to the lower Nass followed, carrying Messrs. Doolan and Cunningham to establish an Anglican mission.⁹² Then, on 5 August, Clah embarked on a second trading trip to the upper Skeena. It was not very successful and he was back in Fort Simpson before the end of August. Clah spent most of the remainder of the year at Fort Simpson, making a series of short hunting trips and three brief visits to Metlakatla. The only deviations from this pattern were two more trips, in September and November, to the Nass. Both were partly taken up with hunting expeditions; the November trip included a visit to the late-fall fishery of his wife's family at Si'aks. During 1864 Clah travelled a little under 6,000 kilometres (3,700 miles), mostly by canoe, taking up about two-thirds of the year. In all, he spent only about 107 days at Fort Simpson, almost exactly half of these coming between 1 October and 31 December.⁹³

1873:

Clah, aged forty-two, spent most of January and February at Fort Simpson (Figure 3). Amidst the usual round of feasts and dances, he

⁹⁰ Clah had left Fort Simpson on 27 October 1863.

⁹¹ In the early 1860s the HBC purchased and salted small quantities of oolichan (BCARS, FSJ, 30 March 1862, A/C/20/S1; HBCA, FSJ, 20 March to 10 April 1865, B 201/a/9).

⁹² The mission was located at Gwinwok until 1867, when it was shifted to Kincolith. On these and other missions to the Nisga'a, see Patterson, *Mission on the Nass*.

⁹³ See Fig 2. Distances estimated as follows: Fort Simpson to Victoria, 650 miles; Fort Simpson to Metlakatla, 15 miles; Fort Simpson to mouth of Nass, 50 miles; Fort Simpson to lower Nass, 60 miles; Fort Simpson to upper Nass, 100 miles; Fort Simpson to upper Skeena, 200 miles.

preached to about 100 people in his house, made a few short trips to hunt or procure wood, and went to the Nass for the HBC. In March, there were two short visits to Tongass (now in American territory). The first seems to have been at the behest of the HBC, but on both occasions Clah engaged in some trade with the local store owner, a Mr Hart. He returned to Fort Simpson, just in time for the birth of his son, then visited the oolichan fishery at Nass and made a brief trading trip to the mouth of the Skeena.⁹⁴

The latter was a prelude to his major expedition of the year, a four-month trip to the gold mining district of Omineca. After returning to Fort Simpson on 29 August, Clah remained only a few days before crossing over to Tongass and a month of freighting along the Stikine River for Mr Hart. During this period Clah also managed to purchase some furs, selling them to independent traders at Port Essington on 23 October.⁹⁵ This was followed by a two-week trip up the Nass, as far as Gitlaxdamks, apparently to purchase provisions. Although nearly mid-November, Clah continued to be away from Fort Simpson a good deal. These excursions were short, primarily for hunting and procuring lumber in the Laghco area. During this period an important series of meetings was held to discuss inviting a Methodist missionary to Fort Simpson.

Clah's mobility, along with his involvement in the fur trade, was reduced in 1873, but he still travelled approximately 3,500 kilometres (2,200 miles). This allowed for a little more time, about 130 days, at Fort Simpson. Two-thirds of this came in the early part of the year, before his trip to Omineca; the remainder fell after mid-October.⁹⁶

MISSIONARIES AND CLAH'S PLACE IN THE CHANGING TSIMSHIAN WORLD

As the annual rounds indicate, Christianity became an integral part of Clah's colonial encounter. Visits to Victoria, employment with the HBC, and, perhaps, meetings with a Native prophet may have developed what has been described as a "certain receptivity" towards

⁹⁴ Subsequently baptized as Andrew Wellington (see appendix A). On 1 April after returning from the Nass, Clah wrote, "also presented in Cotton 8 womans in goods for my little Babe Borne 6 days ago. Mrs Morison. Mrs Quantal. Mrs Cuningham. Mrs Johnson. Mrs Legaic Some others at 4 fathoms." Presumably these were payments for assisting with the birth.

⁹⁵ He was offered a higher price than he had been at Fort Simpson.

⁹⁶ Mileages used: Fort Simpson to Port Essington, 40; Hazelton to Germansen Landing, 130; Fort Simpson to Glenora, 275.

Christianity prior to any encounter with a missionary.⁹⁷ However, the arrival of William Duncan, of the Church Missionary Society, at Fort Simpson in 1857 marked a new stage in the dissemination of Christian ideas among the Tsimshian.⁹⁸ At first, Duncan must have been something of a mystery — a White man, a resident of the fort, but his relationship to the HBC unclear. Moreover, the newcomer confirmed his difference from company men by seeking instruction in the Tsimshian language and information about Tsimshian society.⁹⁹ This quickly brought Duncan into contact with Clah who, through his prior involvement with Fort Simpson, was well positioned to provide the necessary expertise. Clah became Duncan's "language teacher" and, for a time, an intermediary between Duncan and the wider Tsimshian society. This relationship, given the considerable curiosity about Duncan, probably brought Clah new prestige and protection.¹⁰⁰

Clah has left little information about this early period, but Duncan quickly sensed his own "power" among the Tsimshian. Three months after arriving, he wrote that they were "longing for instruction," and

⁹⁷ Bini, a Wet'suwet'en prophet influenced by Christianity, visited Fort Simpson — perhaps following the measles epidemic of 1848–49 (UBCL, CMS A/105, Duncan, Annual Report 1858; J. Miller, "Tsimshian Religion in Historical Perspective," in *The Tsimshian and Their Neighbors of the North Pacific Coast*, J. Miller and Eastman, eds., 137–47 [Seattle: University of Washington, 1984]). On proselytizing at Fort Nisqually in 1833 before the advent of a missionary, see W.F. Tolmie, *Physician and Fur Trader: The Journals of William Fraser Tolmie* (Vancouver: Mitchell, 1963), 249; June M. Collins, "The Influence of White Contact on Class Distinction and Political Authority among the Indians of Northern Puget Sound," in *Coast Salish and Western Washington Indians*, vol. 2., D. Horr ed. (New York: Garland, 1974), 145–46.

⁹⁸ Duncan arrived at Fort Simpson on 1 October 1857 (HBCA, FSJ, B 201/a/8). On his subsequent career, see Usher, *William Duncan of Metlakatla*; P. Murray, *The Devil and Mr. Duncan*.

⁹⁹ Duncan had learned some Tsimshian while at Fort Victoria and had other instructors, besides Clah, at Fort Simpson (DP, Journals, 11 July, 2 and 30 November 1857). He may also have acquired some knowledge of the Tsimshian people from John Kennedy. The latter had been a student at Highbury College with Duncan before returning to Victoria. Earlier in life, Kennedy had been stationed at Fort Simpson and became the son-in-law of Ligeex, the Tsimshian chief (DP, Journals, 20 June, 2 July 1857); E.E. Rich, ed., *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, First Series, 1825–1838*, vol. 4 (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1941), 346; Tolmie, *Physician and Fur Trader*, 288; Marsden and Galois, "The Tsimshian," 169–83.

¹⁰⁰ Duncan, for example, noted: "My Instructor in Chimsyan told me to day that the Indians flock to him outside to learn how I am getting on and what I say" (DP, Journals, 31 December 1857, p. 9,572; see also entries for 14 January, 13 June 1858). Clah was paid for his services at the rate of "a blanket and a half per month," which Duncan estimated at "about 24¢" (DP, 30 November 1857). See also Henry S. Wellcome, *The Story of Metlakatla* (London: Saxon and Company, 1887), 9–10. The need for protection stemmed from an incident shortly before Duncan's arrival, in which Clah shot a woman. Although he paid compensation, the issue may not have been finally resolved (HBCA, B201/a/8, 13 September 1857; DP, Journal 2 November 1857, p. 9,564).

that the “presence of the whites & their own visits to the south has shaken their superstitions & awakened inquiry, but that is all.” Duncan also detected “a general belief amongst them that the whites do possess some grand secret about eternal things & they are grasping to know it.”¹⁰¹ Writing and literacy were probably viewed by the Tsimshian as part of the material and spiritual “powers” accessible to the White world. To Clah, more familiar than most Tsimshian with the workings of the fort, the acquisition of literacy may have represented a form of initiation into these broader “powers.”¹⁰² Moreover, Duncan, as an evangelical protestant, emphasized the spiritual dimension of the written “word” and identified Clah as the first Tsimshian to perceive this facet of his program. During a session translating the gospel into Tsimshian, Duncan

had a great deal of trouble (rather pleasurable labour) in getting my Indian [Clah] to comprehend the Mighty truth. I am glad to say, however, that I succeeded. And this is the first instance of my doing so. What a glorious thought — that at least one in these long lost tribes has already become acquainted with what is the Power of God with Salvation.¹⁰³

Through these individual sessions, and a couple of months attending Duncan’s school, Clah learned to read and write. The results, together with Clah’s intelligence and familiarity with some parts of Christian ritual, certainly impressed Bishop Hills when he met Clah outside Victoria in January 1860:

We sat. I gave him the Book. He was pleased. He brought out a box with his writing books & account books. He writes a good hand & spells well — in English. He repeated the Lords Prayer in a most reverent & touching way. He could tell of the dying of Xt for us & said he loved Xt. We had interesting conversation in which he evidently took pleasure. We all knelt down. He puts his hands together & I prayed our Heavenly Fathers blessing upon our plans, upon these poor Indians & that He wd cause His blessed truth to be

¹⁰¹ DP, Journals, 14 January 1858, p. 9,574; see also entry for 28 January. On the topic, see M. Harkin, “Power and Progress: The Evangelic Dialogue Among Heiltsuk,” *Ethnohistory* 40 (1993): 1-33, and John and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder: Westview, 1992), 187-94.

¹⁰² Shortly after reaching Fort Simpson, Duncan commented, “I have a good many visitors and all seem wishful to ingratiate themselves, some by referring me to numerous papers which they bring, obtained in most cases from the Company’s officers” (DP, Journals, 16 October 1857). Later, Duncan used such “papers” as a tool in combating the liquor trade (BCARS, GR 1372, file 347/26a, Cooper to Acting Colonial Secretary, 10 October 1860).

¹⁰³ DP, Journals, 17 May 1858, p. 9,619

known by them that all might be partakers of the same hope & be meek [?] for Heaven through his benefactor.¹⁰⁴

But it was not until the summer of 1861 that Clah took the step of making a public commitment among the Tsimshian. In August, he gave “a rice feast to the Chiefs” and announced that “he should now renounce his former savage ways.”¹⁰⁵ Clah has left no record of these events, but the context at Fort Simpson was one of mounting social tensions, as liquor flowed in and violence escalated.¹⁰⁶

Duncan’s decision to build a new missionary community at Metlakatla added to the uncertainties. Begun in May 1862, and conceived as a step into a radically different future, the new station embraced a familiar geography. The Meltakatla area contained the sites of the Tsimshian tribes’ traditional winter villages.¹⁰⁷ Initially, some fifty residents of Fort Simpson, mostly from the Gitlan Tribe, joined Duncan.¹⁰⁸ No sooner was this project under way, however, than smallpox reached Fort Simpson from Victoria. Clah gives a vivid account of the spiritual impact of this “psychic shock”:¹⁰⁹

all the indians in Tsimshen the will Burned, as all lots the things with fire about in half Day, an the wants Sacrifices to God, and wants the will God Tak away Sickness from them. this the way burned, all bad things, an all the Chiefs in Tsimshen burn all is music with Teine [?] Called Nohh-nohh [*naxnox*], an other kinds we called Ahamelk [*amiilk*],¹¹⁰ burnt them all. poor all Tsimshen, thee

¹⁰⁴Clah had requested a prayer book during an earlier meeting. Hills delivered it during this visit (UBCSC, Hills Journal, 18 and 21 January 1860).

¹⁰⁵DP, Journals, 19 August 1861, p. 10, 134.

¹⁰⁶In April 1863, Bishop Hills was informed by Captain Pike, of HMS *Devastation*, that seventy deaths had occurred “from drunken fights” in the preceding year (UBCSC, Hills Journal, 6 April 1863).

¹⁰⁷J. Usher, “The Long Slumbering Offspring of Adam: The Evangelical Approach to the Tsimshian,” *Anthropologica* 13 (1971): 57–58. The village sites are shown in George MacDonald et al., Plate 13 in Harris, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada*, Vol. 1.

¹⁰⁸Duncan had been planning the move since 1859 (CMS, A/105, Duncan to CMS, 1 July 1859, 25 October 1860). After considerable preparations, “6 canoes and about 50 souls — men, women and children” embarked for Metlakatla on 27 May (DP, Journals, 27 May 1862). The mission was located on an old Gitlan village.

¹⁰⁹The term is from John W. Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 21. The first smallpox victims reached Fort Simpson on 17 May. On the impact of the smallpox epidemic and religion, see Diaries, 21 June 1862; UBCL, DP, Journals, 17 May to 23 June 1862; FSJ 17 May to 17 October 1862.

¹¹⁰See Dunn, *Practical Dictionary*: #82 *amiilk*, #1518 *naxnox*. He translates the former as a mask and the latter as supernatural power and supernatural being. Halpin, “Tsimshian Crest System,” 127 and 135, notes that masks were used in *naxnox* performances, which were part of the *bala’it* system. Elsewhere she states that *bala’it* “cannot easily be translated, but ... can be taken as a signal that supernatural beings or forces are involved. It is variously translated as ‘dancer,’ ‘shaman,’ ‘power,’ ‘power dramatization,’ and ‘initiation’” (*ibid.*, 6, 74n).

afraid to gone to Die. thee Make God Angry as in every year thee always Telling lies, an stealing. Murder killing another. Drunkness an fighting. an We Never do Right in God Sight. But we after doing Wrong. an In our life and after that, an when all the people Done burned all things. And it was Clah going in is house. And he pray to God O God look upon poor Tsimshens. Tak away Sickness from them an Save them. an Make Clean our hearts. Make us good an Give us Thy Holy Spirits for Christ's Sak.¹¹¹

Some of this is difficult to follow, but the rejection of Native spiritual intermediaries (*naxnox*) and the destruction of their physical manifestations (masks) are clear enough. Similarly, the indigenous equation of social discord with a lack of spiritual harmony had become, for Clah anyway, a matter calling for prayer to a Christian God. This did not require, however, the mediation of a priest. Initiated into literacy, Clah had direct access to the bible and prayer book. How many Tsimshian responded in this manner is unclear, but as many as 600 people may have been living at Metlakatla by early August.¹¹² Not all remained, but the contrast between the situation at Fort Simpson, where at least 250 died, and Metlakatla, where the epidemic claimed only five victims, was obvious.¹¹³ By far the most important of the new adherents to the mission was Ligeex. This was a considerable coup for Duncan.

For Clah, like other Gispaxlo'ots, Ligeex's move added to the confusion of preceding events. On the one hand, the departure of their leading chief threatened their status, vis-à-vis the other Tsimshian tribes.¹¹⁴ Hence they maintained Ligeex's house at Fort Simpson and made periodic efforts to get him to abandon Metlakatla.¹¹⁵ On the other hand, there is evidence that some Gispaxlo'ots encouraged

¹¹¹Diaries, 21 June 1862

¹¹²Murray, *The Devil and Mr. Duncan*, 72. Sergei Kan, "Russian Orthodox Brotherhoods Among the Tlingit: Missionary Goals and Native Response," *Ethnohistory* 32 (1985): 196-222, notes that conversions followed major epidemics elsewhere on the Northwest Coast (p. 198).

¹¹³Clah counted 363 deaths among the Tsimshian, with 266 of these at Fort Simpson by December 1862 (Clah to Duncan, 2 December 1862; DP, Correspondence Inwards, p. 1,761). Others put the number of deaths at Fort Simpson much higher. See, for example, GR 1372, file 1215, Richards to Douglas, 27 September 1862, and file 1210/3, Cooper to Col. Sec., 17 October 1862.

¹¹⁴My thanks to Susan Marsden for suggesting this interpretation. Clah has nothing to say about Ligeex's move.

¹¹⁵UBCSC, Barnett Papers, vol. 2, p. 2; Diaries, 24 December 1862; UBCL, DP, Journals 26 December 1862, 19 August 1866). Later, Bishop Hills noted that Ligeex often had "been tempted by tribes to return" (Hills Journal, 13 May 1866). Patterson notes a similar pattern in the early years of Kincolith (E.P. Patterson, "Kincolith's First Decade: A Nisga'a Village, 1867-1878," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 12 [1992]: 240).

Ligeex's move to Metlakatla.¹¹⁶ Whatever its immediate causes, his departure promised greater social flexibility among those Gispaxlo'ots remaining at Fort Simpson, not an insignificant consideration for someone like Clah, striving to improve his status. Clah responded by remaining both a resident of Fort Simpson and a Christian. He observed the sabbath on some trading trips (including the winter trip down the Skeena in 1866) and, during a visit to Victoria in 1864, purchased a bible and a prayer book.¹¹⁷ Even more interesting are Clah's efforts to proselytize other Native peoples. Among the Nisga'a, for example, he showed them "Gods Book" and let them know "what Bible says," demonstrating his mastery of the power of reading.¹¹⁸ Early in 1864, Clah wrote to Duncan about his efforts at Gitlaxdamks: "I teach them in few words of God. I calling to them in every Sunday listen and I after spoken what God say to all good people an bad people in the world — thee all wished to leave all bad ways." Shortly thereafter, Clah arrived at Metlakatla with seven young men from Gitlaxdamks. They had come to receive the word directly from Duncan.¹¹⁹

As this episode indicates, Clah and Duncan were on good terms in 1864. Although living at Fort Simpson, Clah acted as one of Duncan's constables (an arrangement that supports Usher's claim that Duncan's praxis was rather more flexible than his rhetoric).¹²⁰ Gradually, however, relations between the two deteriorated. By 1868, Duncan regarded Clah as "a hardened sinner," one of the growing band of "enemies," and ordered him "to return his constable's coat and belt."¹²¹ Clah's diaries contain information about activities that may have aroused Duncan's ire: occasional episodes with alcohol and

¹¹⁶ Barnett, based on information from Matthew Johnson, suggests that Ligeex's move resulted from his shame at failing to take revenge on a group of Haida. Johnson also gave clear evidence of the ambiguity with which Ligeex's departure was received (H. Barnett, "Personal Conflicts and Cultural Change," *Social Forces* 20 [1941]: 160-77; Barnett, file 9, vol. 1, pp. 52-55). Duncan's journal, however, indicates that the smallpox epidemic played a role (UBCL, DP Journals, 3 July 1862).

¹¹⁷ See Account Book, vol. 64, page headed 25 June 1864. On the sabbath observation, see the trip to the upper Skeena (Diaries, 23 November 1865 to 10 February 1866).

¹¹⁸ Diaries, 1 January 1864.

¹¹⁹ DP, Journals, 25 to 26 January and 7 February 1864. For other examples of Clah's early preaching, see Diaries, 2 August 1863 (Victoria); 1 January, 6 to 14 February 1864 (Nass River). Patterson has discussed the establishment of the mission at Gwinwoḷ but makes no reference to the Nisga'a delegation or to Clah's role on the Nass. See E.P. Patterson, "George Kinzadah — Simoogit in His Times," *BC Studies* 82 (1989): 16-38; Patterson, *Mission on the Nass*, 33-34.

¹²⁰ Duncan visited Clah's house during a trip to Fort Simpson (Diaries, 4 to 5 February 1864). Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1977), 132-33, disputes Usher's claim.

¹²¹ DP, Journals, 10 July 1868, p. 11, 186.

the sexual transgressions involved with taking, briefly, a second wife.¹²² On the other hand, Clah criticized Duncan for travelling to Fort Simpson on the sabbath.¹²³ More fundamental, though, was the contradiction between Clah's evolving position in Tsimshian society and Duncan's opposition to the feast system.

For Clah, the late 1850s and 1860s, as described above, brought diverse new opportunities for obtaining wealth. When combined with a general decline in the Tsimshian population and the move by Ligeex and several hundred others to Metlakatla, the result at Fort Simpson was a more fluid society.¹²⁴ Clah used his growing wealth to exploit this new openness. He enhanced his own and his family's status, but he did so within the logic of the Tsimshian system. He assumed the name of T'amks and facilitated the transmission of important names to his children.¹²⁵ The former step was crucial, bringing him new status and a greater role in decision-making — both among his own people and in the village as a whole.¹²⁶ It also required the hosting of appropriate feasts. The most elaborate of these, in 1868, followed the building of a new house at Fort Simpson and probably marked the final step in Clah's assumption of the name of T'amks.¹²⁷ The ceremonies, attended by a number of Whites (including Chief Trader Manson) and Ligeex from Metlakatla, reflect Clah's position at the

¹²²Diaries, 18 August 1865, 31 May, 27 August 1866, 2 January 1867 (Drinking); Diaries, 27 June, 9 August, 9 and 23 September 1867 (second wife).

¹²³Diaries, 20 June 1869. For a secular dispute involving Duncan, Clah, and some Gitksan, see BCARS, GR 443, vol. 58, Clah to Trutch, 5 April 1872 and statement; Diaries, 20 April 1869. See also Diaries, 8 February 1866.

¹²⁴An HBC "census" compiled in 1842 produced a total of 5,183 for the Tsimshian (excluding the Kitkiata) and the Nisga'a (BCARS, James Douglas, Private Papers, 2nd Series, B/20/1853, Transcript). Allowing for the impact of the 1836 smallpox epidemic this suggests a total of, at least, 7,800 in 1831, compared with 2,893 in 1881 (Galois and Harris, "Recalibrating," 45). On the social implications of such mortality and increased wealth, see Helen Codere, *Fighting With Property: A Study of Kwakiutl Potlatching and Warfare, 1792-1930* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), first published in 1950 in *Mono-graphs of the American Ethnological Society*, 18; Rolf Knight, *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Indian Labour in British Columbia* (Vancouver: New Star, 1978), 232.

¹²⁵Two of Clah's sons inherited the name Gwusk'aayn; it was later assumed by William Beynon. See Appendix A.

¹²⁶Clah participated in these councils. See Diaries, 18 September 1868, 9 to 19 January 1874.

¹²⁷For other feasts, see 31 December 1862, 18 February 1863, 16 November 1863, 25 February 1866, 1 January and 24 September 1867. Matthew Johnson described a sequence of feasts concerned with house-raising that extended over three years. He also linked Clah's assumption of his new name with this process: "when old tamuks died lat'x took his name, built new small old fashioned house with niesnatskh and tumdikskas and their wives and children" (UBCSC, Barnett Papers, file 9, vol. 1, p. 30, vol. 2, p. 8). No date is given by Johnston but a visitor to Fort Simpson in 1867 learned that this inheritance process was under way: "After the death of his uncle, he 'took his place, and the name Tamax,' but is known by his former name Clah" (BCARS, Smithsonian Institution, ADD MSS 518, File 278). Clah added the name "Temks" to his journal on 22 April 1869.

intersection of Tsimshian, fort, and missionary worlds. The culmination of the process was reached on 24 February: “in this day at home I was spented all My Property. I gave away 6 or 7 hundred [dollars?] in goods give away all they stranger. some paid the mens work.” Two days later, Clah linked these events to his deteriorating relationship with Duncan. He heard “then about old Father Duncan throwded me away also hoisted Black Flag. Because he had [heard] about me. I gaved away all my property.”¹²⁸

Duncan later summed up his antipathy to the feast in terms that combined Samuel Smiles and the bible: “as long as the Indians had that potlatch system,” he wrote, “there was no progress. It was pride in the grossest form.”¹²⁹ He also confirmed the cause of the split with Clah: he “could only get a new name [T’amks] by giving away property, by the potlatch ... [He] didn’t go with us from Fort Simpson to Metlakahtla, the reason being that he hadn’t attained the rank to which he aspired.”¹³⁰ Yet the rupture with Duncan was not final, despite the ominous symbolism of the black flag. Clah continued to visit Metlakatla — eight times in 1870 — even meeting Duncan and trading furs on occasion.¹³¹ Moreover, residents of Metlakatla continued to visit Fort Simpson for spiritual, social, and economic purposes. Notwithstanding the rhetoric of isolation, the two settlements were far from separate worlds, and Clah’s annual rounds illustrate some of their connections. The situation vis-à-vis Tomlinson’s mission at Kincolith was not much different.¹³²

The position of Christianity at Fort Simpson changed significantly in the fall of 1873, when Tsimshian adherents of a religious “revival” among Native members of the Methodist Church in Victoria brought their faith northwards.¹³³ At this time Clah, just returned from

¹²⁸ Diaries, 18, 24, and 26 February 1868.

¹²⁹ Sandpoint, *Legendary Statements*, Document 1, folder 136/12, p. 95

¹³⁰ During an interview in September 1916 (Sandpoint, *Legendary Statements*, Document 1, folder 136/12, p. 60), Duncan added: “This man Clah ... wasn’t properly named when he was a boy. He didn’t want to be called Clah.”

¹³¹ For example, Clah visited Metlakatla on 26 July 1869 and stated: “Now My Dear Duncan pleased with us. He kindly with few Provisions potatoes rice Sugar. We stoped Legaic his house.” The following day Clah purchased a quantity of lumber “at 42 dollars an a half in furs. Some cash: 8 martins 1 lynx 3 dollars each.” Clah also visited the CMS mission at Kincolith.

¹³² On the ideology of isolation see Clarence Bolt, *Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian: Small Shoes for Feet Too Large* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 24–25; for a more nuanced view, see Usher, *Duncan of Metlakatla*, 66. On at least one occasion Clah employed a Metlakatla man (Diaries, 13 October 1865); later he met Metlakatla men at Cassiar (Diaries, 3 and 27 June, 22 August 1875).

¹³³ Alfred and Kate Dudoward were the principal Tsimshian participants (Vancouver School of Theology Archives [vst], Prince Rupert Presbytery, Port Simpson, 1: McMillan to Alfred

Omineca, had not been to church for ten months. Nonetheless, he was soon swept up in the enthusiasm and the debate about the future of the community. One topic of concern was the role of the feast system. On Christmas day, with about fifty people in his house, Clah stated his opinion: "I think we better leave all bad ways. given away all our property on big feast. Now all friends Says Very Good we all following God and Believe Jesus Christ who die for us all." Now a "head man," his status established, Clah was opposed to the excesses of the feast.¹³⁴ The broader question of the position of Christianity at Fort Simpson was addressed in a series of council meetings that winter. After rejecting an intervention by Duncan, the crucial step was taken in mid-January 1874. Alfred Dudoward wrote to the Methodist Church requesting a resident missionary at Fort Simpson. Following exploratory visits by William Pollard and Charles Tate, this position was filled by Thomas Crosby.¹³⁵ Clah's Christianity was rekindled by these events and given a strong evangelical bent. He resumed preaching at Fort Simpson and elsewhere, observed the sabbath, had his four children baptized, and underwent a Christian marriage.¹³⁶

Not all reacted so positively, and Clah records something of the ongoing debates about the persistence of "old ways" and the divisions about how to respond to Christianity.¹³⁷ Moreover, Clah's initial fervour was replaced by a fluctuating enthusiasm for Crosby's ministrations.¹³⁸ His adherence to Christianity remained firm, but Clah tired of the denominational rivalry that plagued Fort Simpson and Metlakatla. In 1877, he told the Fort Simpson council: "Duncan

and Kate Dudoward, 30 October 1873); see also Bolt, *Crosby and the Tsimshian*, Ch. 4; UBSC, Barnett Papers, file 9, vol. 3, pp. 5-7. Ironically, Alfred, the son of Felix Dudoire, an employee at Fort Simpson, had been one of Duncan's earliest pupils (UBCL, DP, School Register, Fort Simpson, October 1857, p. 15,016; NBCA, vertical file, Felix Dudoire).

¹³⁴Diaries, 25 December 1873, 1 April 1875.

¹³⁵Diaries, 23 November, 14 December 1873, 12 January 1874; for Pollard's version, see *VCD*, 14 April 1874. Pollard paid a short visit in February; C.M. Tate arrived in April and was replaced by Crosby during the summer (Diaries, 26 to 27 February, 4 April, 28 June 1874; Vancouver City Archives, C.M. Tate, ADD MSS 225; T. Crosby, *Up and Down the North Pacific Coast by Canoe and Mission Ship* [Toronto: The Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, 1914], 15-23, 37-40; Bolt, *Crosby and the Tsimshian*, 38-43).

¹³⁶Clah also preached in the house of "kaswadz," a Tlingit chief at Wrangell, as well as at Cassiar and on his prospecting trip in 1880 (Diaries, 26 April 1874, 28 July 1875). For the baptisms, see 26 February 1874; marriage, 1 April 1875.

¹³⁷Diaries, March 23 1878. Thereafter Clah spent little time at Fort Simpson.

¹³⁸For general comments, see Bolt, *Crosby and the Tsimshian*. In the early stages of Crosby's ministry Clah made donations to the church and sought baptism but was told to wait; the ceremony was not carried out until January 1881 (Diaries, 23 October 1874, 9 April 1875, 23 January 1881).

an Crosby they have two hearts If Duncan an Crosby Dont shak hands we Better put them away dont keep them in here."¹³⁹ Clah also used his interpretation of Christian morality as a basis for criticizing missionaries and other Whites: priests for love of money, and miners for gambling and drinking at Cassiar.¹⁴⁰ More dramatically, Clah had a public quarrel with Crosby and, shortly thereafter, took the unusual step of seeking a new winter home.¹⁴¹ In April 1878, after attempts to settle at Laghco and Aiyansh proved unsatisfactory, he built a house on his "father's land" at Laxk'a'ata, near the mouth of the Nass.¹⁴² Here, at the symbolically re-named Canaan, Clah established, in microcosm, a Native Christian community. "I only ask My Jesus to Helping me for my New place," he wrote on arriving: "to all I wish from Him my family will make Nicely prayer morning 9 oclock every day evening God Blessed us every day."¹⁴³ The land, however, was claimed by the Nisga'a inhabitants of Kincolith, the nearby Anglican mission village. Thanks to the intervention of their missionary, and the ignorance of the Indian Reserve Commissioner, Laxk'a'ata was allotted to the Kincolith Band as a reserve.¹⁴⁴ Thus, in November 1881, Clah was probably happy to receive an invitation from the council at Fort Simpson to return home.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹Diaries, 31 December 1876, 5 November 1877. See also Patterson, "Kincolith's First Decade," 242, for a dispute between Tomlinson and Crosby. Such ecumenical views among Native converts may not have been uncommon; for an example among the Tahltan, see Bruce MacLachlan, "Notes on Some Tahltan Oral Literature," *Anthropologica* 4 (1957): 2.

¹⁴⁰See Diaries, 12 November 1878, 10 January 1881, and 12 September 1875. Kan comments on a similar reaction amongst the Tlingit, who regarded themselves as "the true Christians" (Sergei Kan, "Shamanism and Christianity: Modern-Day Tlingit Elders Look at the Past," *Ethnohistory* 38 [1991]: 392).

¹⁴¹The quarrel stemmed from Crosby's intervention in a dispute between Clah and some other Tsimshian (Diaries, 22 February to 13 March 1876). The first reference to a new home is on 25 April 1876.

¹⁴²Clah attempted, unsuccessfully, to "purchase" land at "Laghco" in 1876. Next fall he built a house and wintered at Aiyansh, near Gitlaxdamks; this, however, belonged to his wife. The land at the mouth of the Nass, despite Clah's opposition, subsequently became Nisga'a IR #12, "a place known as Lach-tesk or Canaan" (Diaries, 28 February 1865, 25 April, 19 to 20 May 1876, 17 to 28 October 1877, 16 November 1877 to 31 January 1878, 26 April to 20 May, 23 August, 16 September 1878, 27 January, and 15 November 1879; NAC, RG 10, vol. 3818, file 57837, p. 43; Patterson, "Kincolith's First Decade," 245.

¹⁴³By Christmas of 1878 Clah had been joined by his brother, and the community numbered eleven (Diaries, 23 to 26 August, 25 to 26 December 1878).

¹⁴⁴On Canaan and its allocation as Nisga'a IR #12, see Canada, Legal Surveys Branch (Vancouver), vol. 22, pp. 77-78 and map; Minutes of Decision, 20 October 1881.

¹⁴⁵For the letter of invitation, see Diaries, 7 November 1881.

CONCLUSION

By elaborating upon indigenous patterns of mobility, Clah extended his geographical range well beyond the territory of the Gispaxlo'ots and the Tsimshian. He travelled from Cassiar in the north, to Omineca in the east, to Victoria in the south. Most of his journeys through this substantial territory were propelled by muscle-power. In 1864, for example, he travelled about 6,000 kilometres (3,700 miles) by canoe and on foot. In later years his mobility decreased, but only in 1878 and 1880 did Clah fail to travel beyond the lower Skeena/Nass region. Accompanying the experience of a new and more expansive geography was the acquisition of a new sense of space and time. Literacy, if it did not transcend space, diminished it through new modes of interaction. Douglas Harris, for example, has noted that the Nlha7kapmx of the Fraser Canyon obtained information from Victoria newspapers in the 1870s; Clah did likewise in the Cassiar region, reading of Crosby's arrival at Fort Simpson. Messages could be sent as well as received, and Clah wrote to friends and to officials and politicians in the non-Native world.¹⁴⁶

Clah's familiarity with a mechanical, or abstract, sense of time is demonstrated by the form and content of the diaries. Inculcation of this sensibility, as has been argued (following E.P. Thompson), was an integral part of the missionary agenda. Thus Duncan's school timetable embodied and promoted precisely these components of industrial culture.¹⁴⁷ Clah confirmed his internalization of this new discipline (and enhanced status) by the purchase of a gold watch.¹⁴⁸ On the other hand, knowledge of these Euro-Canadian conceptions did not mean the complete abandonment of indigenous counterparts. The annual round figures demonstrate that elements of an older, seasonal rhythm persisted in Clah's activities. Moreover, the diaries

¹⁴⁶D. Harris, "The Nlha7kapmx Meeting at Lytton, 1879, and the Rule of Law," *BC Studies* 108 (1995-96): 22-23. On reading newspapers, see Diaries, 28 June 1874; for letters, see Diaries, 8 August 1876, 21 July 1879, 27 October 1880; BCARS, GR 443, vol. 58, Clah to Trutch, 5 April 1872 and enclosed statement. On early Nisga'a use of literacy to pursue political objectives, see Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal People and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990), 58.

¹⁴⁷For Duncan's timetable at Metlakatla, see Usher, *Duncan of Metlakatla*, 137.

¹⁴⁸On missionaries, see Harkin, "Power and Progress." During a trip from Fort Simpson to the Nass, Clah stated: "started for go of but I always carry my little gold watch" (Diaries, 13 March 1866). In 1873 he received another watch in part payment for wages due (Diaries, 6 August). Nor was Clah unique. During a visit to the Coast in 1888, Boas noted that "a travelling watchmaker earn[ed] his living repairing Indian watches" (Ronald P. Rohner, *The Ethnography of Franz Boas: Letters and Diaries of Franz Boas Written on the Northwest Coast from 1886-1931* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969], 95).

show that his passage through space was marked by reference to indigenous toponymy and social structures. The territories Clah traversed contained meanings, including the system of resource ownership, unknown to any of his Euro-Canadian companions.

Geographical mobility was linked to considerable occupational flexibility. Clah moved beyond trading furs to participate in a variety of other activities, including the developing resource industries of the Skeena/Nass region. Such a trajectory, as Knight and Lutz have shown, was by no means uncommon by the 1880s.¹⁴⁹ But while Clah engaged in wage labour, he was not reduced to a wage labourer. His contact activities, thanks to the efforts of his wife and family, rested upon continuing access to country foods. The wealth accumulated through these various endeavours helped Clah assume the name of T'amks and leadership of that House.¹⁵⁰ At the same time, his familiarity with aspects of the White world made him something of an intermediary. Conversion to Christianity and subsequent attempts at proselytizing added another thread to this pattern.

Yet emphasizing Clah's agency and the diverse opportunities he pursued should obscure neither the very real structural constraints he encountered nor the toll they exacted. The endemic racism of nineteenth-century British Columbia took many forms, tangible and intangible — including lower wage rates for Native peoples, physical violence, and the condescension and legal coercion of the Indian Act (1876). Behind all this lay the lessons of “gunboat diplomacy.”¹⁵¹ Less dramatic, but no less significant, were the incursions of the COT, the HBC, and independent traders into the upper Skeena region, which dismantled an earlier trading system. Worse was to follow. In 1881, the arrival of the Indian Reserve Commissioner signalled an expanding state presence in the area and new reductions in the choices available to the Tsimshian peoples. Yet this list makes an important geographic point: the crisis of Native cultures induced by the imposition of colonial structures developed more slowly among the Tsimshian and their neighbours than it did among the Native peoples in southern British Columbia. The subsequent vigour of protest activity among these northern peoples suggests that they used this

¹⁴⁹Rolf Knight, *Indians at Work*; Lutz, “After the Fur Trade.”

¹⁵⁰He records giving a number of feasts, including one for building a new house (Diaries, 31 December 1862, 1 January 1867, 16 January and 24 February 1868). Later, after the arrival of Crosby, his attitude changed (Diaries, 2 March 1875, 12 January 1876).

¹⁵¹Naval vessels were not uncommon visitors to Fort Simpson in the 1850s and 1860s. See Diaries, 20 September 1862, 5 October 1864, 24 November 1865.

historical and geographic space to explore their cultural resources and to develop effective responses.

Clah's involvement in these later developments is beyond the scope of this article, but it is worth noting the difficulty contemporary non-Native observers had in fitting him into their stereotypes. He was neither a "lazy Indian" nor unable to adjust to changing circumstances; nor did he "wander about."¹⁵² Most remarked on his intelligence but had reservations about his character. Doolan, a missionary, mistrusted Clah and thought him a "strange man"; Chismore, a visitor, described him as a consummate rascal; and Butler, of the CoT, viewed him as an "underhanded, double-dealing rogue." The common denominator underlying these remarks is that Clah had not acted in conformity with the wishes of the observer. By denying deference he was branded as morally inadequate.

Missionaries, their fundamental values those of settler society, were very much part of the intrusive colonial realm. From the Tsimshian side, Clah sought and established connections with missionaries, much as he did with traders. Access to new spiritual powers, including literacy, clearly had something to offer in making sense of a changing world.¹⁵³ Yet Clah's responses to missionaries suggest the ambiguity of the encounter. He became, albeit with some hesitations, a Christian but not in a subservient manner. His fluctuating relations with both Duncan and Crosby reflected tension. Despite the criticism of the former he remained at Fort Simpson; discontent with the latter prompted him to take the remarkable step of seeking a new winter home.

Historian Clarence Bolt, in an examination of Crosby's missionary activity, emphasizes the role of the Tsimshian in that encounter.¹⁵⁴ Conversion, by Bolt's account, was a radical process, a "deliberate choice to substitute one culture for another." Seeking change, the Tsimshian "willingly submitted to Crosby's leadership. What he had to offer, and what they wanted, coincided." Bolt recognizes that this relationship changed and that, by the mid-1880s, Crosby's political ineffectiveness and paternalism had diminished Tsimshian

¹⁵²For a discussion of settler perceptions of Native peoples in British Columbia during this period, see Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 87-91.

¹⁵³It should be noted, too, that Christianity was not the first spiritual innovation to reach, and be adopted by, the Tsimshian in the contact era. Halpin, "Tsimshian Crest System," 85-86, has argued that dancing societies, borrowed from the Heiltsuk, probably reached the Tsimshian early in the nineteenth century.

¹⁵⁴Bolt, *Crosby and the Tsimshian*, especially chapters 4 and 6. Clah's diaries were inaccessible when Bolt was writing, but he makes no use of the Barbeau/Beynon materials or of Barnett.

enthusiasm.¹⁵⁵ Such views are in general accord with the perspective developed in this paper, but they only partially encompass Clah's relationship with Crosby or Christianity. Clah's actions suggest a wider range of Native responses, indicate that dissatisfaction with Crosby started earlier, and question the radical nature of the changes the Tsimshian sought. For Clah, at any rate, his relationships with Crosby and Duncan were not markedly different; his relationship to Christianity was contained by neither missionary.

An important part of the terrain contested by the missionaries concerned the form and content of the feast system. Duncan's relocation at Metlakatla in 1862 left a geographical space for its continuation, a space that Clah utilized. But, with the revival of 1873 and the arrival of Crosby at Fort Simpson, the issue could not be avoided. Clah's position, having secured "head man" status, was now clearly modified by Christianity. If I interpret him correctly, Clah was opposed to the excesses of the system: the "Big feast," as he termed it, as well as dancing and drinking.¹⁵⁶ Some Tsimshian were clearly more attached to the "old ways," but Clah, to adapt a comment by anthropologist Margaret Anderson, was engaged in forging a Christian Tsimshian community.¹⁵⁷ However, it was a community in which the relationships between Tsimshian and Christian components were subject to ongoing negotiation. This negotiation, according to anthropologist J.R. Miller, still continued in the 1980s.¹⁵⁸

The empirical richness of Clah's diaries, only hinted at in this short article, subverts the capacity of any simple dichotomy, such as "traditional" and "progressive," to encompass Native reactions to Christianity or the contact process in general. Clah's own actions — his shifting relationships with Ligeex and Duncan, for example — demonstrate the complexity of indigenous responses to the colonial encounter. While seeking new opportunities, Clah did not reject his Tsimshian heritage. Indeed, with the passage of time, he assumed

¹⁵⁵Bolt, *Crosby and the Tsimshian*, 106 and 111.

¹⁵⁶In 1872, on the occasion of a feast to be given by a Gits'ilaasu chief, Clah noted "Now I told my people to going in feast house well they ask to me first what was right I say I think your better going in feast. Some like going feast. Some not wanted" (Diaries, 22 January 1872). See also Diaries, 1 to 2 March 1875, 12 to 19 January 1876, 30 to 31 October 1879.

¹⁵⁷The comments concern Metlakatla. See M. Anderson, "Understanding Tsimshian Potlatch," in *Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience*, R.B. Morrison and C.R. Wilson, eds. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995), 564.

¹⁵⁸Miller, "Tsimshian Religion," 144-47, discusses aspects of indigenous Tsimshian spirituality that continued to "coexist with Christianity."

the role of repository and transmitter of his version of that heritage.¹⁵⁹ The diaries are both symbol and manifestation of Clah's ambiguous position. They are one of the vehicles he used to record his knowledge of the Tsimshian peoples. They also provide a unique view of the struggles Native peoples faced in adjusting to the changes wrought by the colonial encounters of the late nineteenth century.

Appendix A

Clah's Family

Clah and Cathrine Datacks undergo "Christian" marriage, 1 April 1875; baptized as Arthur Wellington and Dorcas Wellington by Crosby, 23 January 1881.

Son: born May 1859; died January 1860 (Clah Notebooks).

Son, Nanah: born 8 August 1861; died 3 April 1862 (BCARS; Clah Diaries, 10 April).

Leenish/Martha Wellington: born 18 May 1863; baptized 26 February 1874; married William West, 26 December 1881. Given name Leenish by 15 August 1871. In 1914, according to Beynon, she had four children, was the widow of Henry Wesley and his mother's only surviving sister (Clah Notebooks; CMC, Barbeau/Beynon Files, 26.3).

Lanh or Lauh/Rebecca Wellington: born 23 April 1865; baptized 26 February 1874; mother of William Beynon (Clah Notebooks; CMC, Barbeau/Beynon Files, 26.3).

Still-born child: 8 November 1868.

Still-born child: 16 September 1869.

Gwusk'aayn/David Wellington: born 13 November 1870; baptized 26 February 1874; died 27 February 1883. Given name Gwusk'aayn (Kuskin) on 1 January 1871.

Andrew Wellington: born 27 March 1873; baptized 26 February 1874; died 13 September 1882.

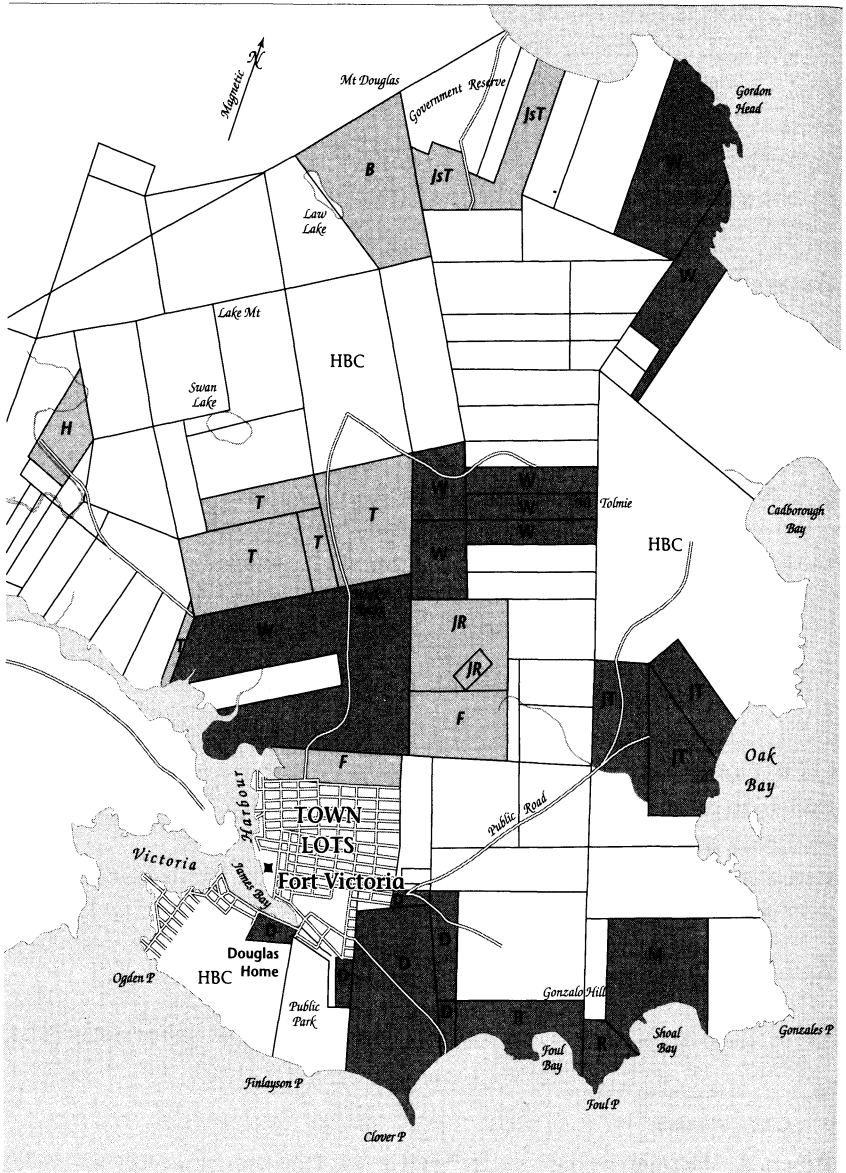
Fanny Wellington: born 1 September 1875; baptized 5 December 1875; died 23 March 1894 (Clah Notebooks).

Ancowa/Elizabeth Wellington: born 28 August 1878. Given name Ancowa by 20 March 1880.

Albert A. Wellington: born 26 December 1881 (the census records a female); married Maggie Booth, 5 January 1903. According to Beynon he held the name Gwusk'aayn; he died in 1913 (Fort Simpson Register of Births, Marriages, and Deaths, Reel 31a; CMC, Barbeau/Beynon Files, 26.3, Halpin, "William Beynan": 142).

Unless otherwise indicated, information is taken from the Clah Diaries for the relevant dates.

¹⁵⁹For some general comments and examples of Clah's knowledge of Tsimshian art, see O.B. Anderson, "In the Indian Past," *British Columbia Magazine* 8 (1912): 619-26.



- JT John Tod
- JsT James Tod (eldest son)
- M William Henry McNeill
- B George Blenkinsop (son-in-law)
- R Isabella Ross
- JR John Ross (eldest son)

- D James Douglas
- H John S Helmcken (son-in-law)
- W John Work
- F Roderick Finlayson (son-in-law)
- T William F Tolmie (son-in-law)

Map 1: Victoria, 1858 (drawn from Official Distrit Map).