

GEORGE CLUTESI:

Tseshaht Story, Ceremony, and Social Action

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INTRODUCTIONS

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE begin with introductions that locate them in a web of kinship. Haa'yuups has been kind enough to do this here for George Clutesi, one of his paternal uncles:

Uncle Georgie's mother was Huupkwista-aks, "moon on the beach woman," a Huupa'chesaksup and my great-great-grandmother Chii-ilthimikamoko-a's youngest sister. Chii-ilthimikamoko-a translates as "Princess Who Attracts Whales to Herself." Uncle Georgie's father was Tsaawulthanulth, the lead singer, man of knowledge, and man of noble birth among the Maaktlayat-h. His paternal grandfather was Naaytaam, whose mother was a Niitiinaa-aksup. Naaytaam was also known as Thluutasii-i. Uncle Georgie spent a great part of his life in the Huupa'chesat-h community and he raised his family among us.¹

My own family name, Fee, is Irish. All my grandparents were born in Ontario, of Irish and English descent and all were Protestant. I grew up in Guelph and Toronto, oblivious that my life there was spent in a region covered by the Dish with One Spoon peace agreement between the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabe, and allied nations. In the Indigenous studies context, I am a white settler academic, someone whose privilege comes from colonization. It was my good fortune to meet Indigenous activists in the 1960s and, later, to be able to learn from my Indigenous students and Indigenous studies colleagues in Ontario, Saskatchewan,

* I thank Haa'yuups for listening to and reading this article and making many helpful suggestions as well as for providing the details about Clutesi's family. He has an eagle editorial eye! I thank Marcia Crosby for sharing the interview with Clutesi and his sister, Annie Hayes. Thanks also to Sneja Gunew, Daniel Heath Justice, and Karen Duffek for their helpful comments. I thank the anonymous peer reviewers who reminded me to think about the (potential!) audience and other details. All remaining errors are mine, as are the opinions expressed.

¹ Personal email communication, 24 April 2023.

and British Columbia. My feminist upbringing and literary education help explain my standpoint.²

I am grateful for the unfailing hospitality of the Musqueam people on whose unceded territory I have lived and worked as an uninvited guest for over thirty years. Hospitality is central for Indigenous Peoples. Many, including George Clutesi's Tseshaht people,³ share stories about welcoming even the greediest strangers. Accepting hospitality puts us into a relationship that means that we will, in turn, be expected to be hospitable. And, I suspect, in all societies, there are good and not-so-good ways to perform the roles of host or guest. However, for the Nuu-chah-nulth, hosting a Potlatch is a chiefly prerogative, and so the English word carries little of what hosting entails for them. Further, to be a guest at a Potlatch entails the responsibility of witnessing, paying close attention to proceedings that are both formal and legal.⁴ The deep knowledge of what these words mean to Nuu-chah-nulth people is not mine. I do, however, believe I have a responsibility to this place and its original owners: to be a good guest.

George Clutesi became known in settler circles as an artist in the early 1940s.⁵ He testified to the Royal Commission on the Arts, Letters, and Sciences at its Victoria hearings in 1949, noting that the 1885 Potlatch

² On standpoint, see Sandra G. Harding, *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

³ The Tseshaht and the Hupacasath are two of the First Nations who occupy the west coast of Vancouver Island. They belong to the fourteen-member Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, formed in 1958. When explorer James Cook met the Mowachaht-Muchalaht, a related people, in 1778, he called them Nootka. See "Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council," <https://nuuchahnulth.org/>.

⁴ Denise Nicole Green, "Stella Blum Grant Report," *Dress* 39, no. 2 (2013): 157: "Those in attendance accept gifts, and in so doing, commit to remembering the business that occurred, the oral histories presented, and the rights that were witnessed. One cannot passively attend a Potlatch; once the attendee accepts meals and gifts are given, they become a socially indebted witness to the knowledge imparted."

⁵ "George Clutesi," *British Columbia Artists*, Sim Publishing, <http://www.sim-publishing.com/bca/clutesig.htm>. Emily Carr, known for her paintings of Indigenous villages along the coast, willed him her unused canvases, oil paints, and brushes.

ban blocked his people from performing their culture.⁶ Vincent Massey, the commissioner, soon to be appointed the first Canadian-born governor general, told him to “go home and dance,” and he did, founding a troupe that danced for Princess Elizabeth on her visit in 1951.⁷ After searching ten thousand unindexed pages of transcript, in 2012, Tseshaht research and planning associate Darrell Ross discovered Clutesi’s statement to the commission. He comments that, “while Clutesi didn’t specifically address the provincial Potlatch laws to the federal commission, his demand for recognition and support for First Nations culture helped put the repeal of the laws in motion.”⁸ On the Tseshaht First Nation website, Margaret Shewish comments: “People used to laugh at us for dancing the way we did ... Others would say, ‘It’s no use, the dances are all forgotten.’ If it weren’t for George I’m sure they would have been.”⁹ Potlatching continued along the coast regardless of the ban, characterized by officials as “always-about-to die.”¹⁰

⁶ “Potlatch” is a post-contact umbrella term for a range of ceremonial events carried out by many different Peoples, including the Nuu-chah-nulth, in what is now Yukon and British Columbia. Particular ceremonies serve different purposes, for example, asserting territorial and other rights, giving names, seating Chiefs, resolving disputes, raising poles, and conducting ceremonies around birth, puberty, marriage, and death. They include speeches, singing, dancing, gift-giving, and sharing food. Hosts are honoured for giving their wealth away to the community, an act that clashes with settler notions of thrift and property. Most contemporary newspaper reports depict Potlatches as heathen events that took participants away from fishing, fish packing, and other industries. As a separate economy, Potlatching allowed Indigenous people some independence from the wider economy, its constructed scarcities and control over labour. Potlatches are still frequent, although shorter than in the past (see note 36 below). Charlotte Côté [utiis -ma?uʔ; Tseshaht] quotes Clutesi in her description of the Potlatch in *A Drum in One Hand, a Sockeye in the Other: Stories of Indigenous Food Sovereignty from the Northwest Coast* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2022), 61–62. See William Beynon [Gusgui’in], *Potlatch at Gitsegukla: William Beynon’s 1945 Notebooks*, ed. Margaret Anderson and Marjorie Halpin (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), for a detailed account of a Gitksan Potlatch by Beynon, who was both an invited Chief and an ethnographer. See U’mista Cultural Centre, “The History of the Potlatch Collection,” <https://www.umista.ca/pages/collection-history>, for a discussion of a Kwakwaka’wakw Potlatch. See Christopher Bracken, *The Potlatch Papers: A Colonial Case History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), for an account of the distance between settler attitudes to the Potlatch and those of the Indigenous people who conducted them.

⁷ See George Clutesi and Annie Hayes, interview with Imbert Orchard, 1965[?], Canadian Plains Research Centre, Indian History Film Project, University of Regina, 2020, <https://ourspace.uregina.ca/handle/10294/889>. They tell the story of the struggle to find people who knew the old ways and to learn from them.

⁸ Shane Morrow, “George Clutesi Royal Commission Testimony Re-Discovered,” *Ha-Shilth-Sa: Canada’s Oldest First Nations Newspaper*, 15 March 2012, <https://www.hashilthsa.com/news/2012-03-15/george-clutesi-royal-commission-testimony-re-discovered>.

⁹ Tseshaht First Nation, “George Clutesi,” <https://tseshaht.com/>.

¹⁰ Bracken, *Potlatch Papers*, 216.

While incarcerated as a student in the Alberni Indian Residential School,¹¹ and later working as school janitor, George Clutesi persisted in asserting his culture. Randy Fred describes an early artistic and activist move:

On the foyer floor George created a beautiful motif using the floor tiles. It was an image of a whale with a thunderbird on its back. This motif within a circle is what our tribe, Tseshaht, still to this day uses as our logo. I believe it was Uncle Georgie's way of marking the spot as traditional Tseshaht land. That piece of property has since been returned by the United Church of Canada to the Tseshaht tribe.¹²

THE BUNGLING HOST

One way the pleasures and problems of hospitality are taught to Indigenous children is through a story type, represented by hundreds of variants across the continent, known as "The Bungling Host."¹³ Bungling Host stories promote physical survival by encouraging people to share food, shelter, and warmth. They reveal anxiety around finding enough to eat, dealing with freeloaders, and living up to exacting standards around hospitality. These stories are both funny and thought provoking. For different Peoples, they have distinctive connections to governance, ethics, and spirituality. Clutesi published two works in his lifetime.¹⁴ *Son of Raven, Son of Deer: Fables of the Tse-shaht People* (1967) contains three Bungling Host stories about Ko-ishin-mit, Son of Raven, who is always scrounging for a meal and who, nonetheless, always aspires to return hospitality. *Potlatch* (1969) deals with a ceremony central to traditional Tseshaht culture, one with hospitality and rescued children

¹¹ The school, run by the Presbyterian Church, later the United Church, was open almost continuously between 1890 and 1973. See "Alberni Residential School," *The Children Remembered*, <https://thechildrenremembered.ca/school-histories/alberni/>.

¹² Randy Fred, "Remembering George Clutesi," *ABC Bookworld*, <https://abcbookworld.com/writer/clutesi-george/>.

¹³ Daniel Clément, *The Bungling Host: The Nature of Indigenous Oral Literature*, trans. Peter Frost (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), focuses on the practical information these stories contain for finding food. He lists almost four hundred variants and analyzes twenty from different nations.

¹⁴ George Clutesi, *Son of Raven, Son of Deer: Fables of the Tse-shaht People* (Sidney, BC: Gray's, 1967) and *Potlatch* (Sidney, BC: Gray's, 1969). Clutesi prepared text and illustrations for *Stand Tall, My Son* (Victoria, BC: Newport Bay, 1990) before his death. Most of the book follows the education of a small boy, a future Chief, into manhood. Six essays "presented as papers at conferences or inquiries" follow. I have not been able to discover whether his play, "They Were a Happy, Singing People," was published. It was performed before 1949. See Tseshaht First Nation, <https://tseshaht.com/history-culture/influential-figures/george-clutesi-2/>.

at its heart. In providing a glimpse of the richness of Tseshah cultural life at a time when Indigenous authors were few and far between, Clutesi claims an expertise and authority appropriated by outsiders as their right.¹⁵ Here I'm using some of the few published responses to the two books as a case study: How have these early Indigenous publications been received by non-Indigenous and Indigenous readers?

Responses to Clutesi's writing by settler critics reveal expectations derived from what Pierre Bourdieu calls "the field of cultural production," which is, in fact, the Euro-Western field.¹⁶ Indigenous cultural production and reception are rooted in different thought-worlds and are not fully connected to national cultural institutions, networks, or ideologies, even now. Indigenous people have founded presses, journals, creative writing schools, and literary awards because established publishers often either rejected or changed their work without their permission.

Nonetheless, when Clutesi published his first book, Canadian cultural nationalism was ramping up, and his chance to publish came because of it. Clutesi's publisher, Gray Campbell, solicited Clutesi's books, hired an editor for both, and actively publicized *Son of Raven*, *Son of Deer* as a Canadian Centennial-funded project.¹⁷ It had a second printing of sixty thousand copies; many sold to the British Columbia Department of Education for distribution to schools.¹⁸ The origin of these stories is both oral and ancient; Clutesi doubtless heard them as a child. Residential school survivors remember Clutesi telling stories to them as children at the Alberni Indian Residential School.¹⁹ In the 1940s, he began telling them on CBC Radio to a wider audience on a weekly basis.²⁰ He also

¹⁵ Ki-ke-in, in "Art for Whose Sake?," *Native Art of the Northwest Coast: A History of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charlotte Townsend-Gault, Jennifer Kramer, and Ki-ke-in (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 689, notes that Clutesi was the first Nuu-chah-nulth writer to publish. Brendan Frederick R. Edwards, in "A War of Wor(l)ds: Aboriginal Writing in Canada during the 'Dark Days' of the Early Twentieth Century" (PhD diss., University of Saskatchewan, 2008), describes how the Indian Department under Duncan Campbell Scott actively discouraged attempts by Indigenous writers to publish.

¹⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

¹⁷ Alan Twigg, *Aboriginality: The Literary Origins of British Columbia*, vol. 2 (Vancouver: Ronsdale, 2005), 61.

¹⁸ "Campbell, Gray," *ABC Bookworld*, <https://abcbookworld.com/writer/campbell-gray/>. See also Natalie Knight, "Dispossessed Indigeneity: Literary Excavations of Internalized Colonialism" (PhD diss., Simon Fraser University, 2018), 79n119.

¹⁹ Dano Underwood, "The George Clutesi Project," documentary video, YouTube, 16 March 2023, 40:20 minutes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQR2BxGd21E>.

²⁰ "George Clutesi Broadcasts Indian Folk Tales," *Native Voice* 1, no. 12 (1947): 10.

published versions of them in the *Native Voice*, founded in 1946.²¹ By the time Campbell commissioned the book, Clutesi had been refining the oral and written versions with a variety of audiences, particularly Indigenous children. *Son of Raven, Son of Deer* is clearly aimed at all children: he hoped to educate the next generation in British Columbia to live together better with each other and with the land.²²

The field that Bourdieu describes entails a complex mix of ideologies, relationships, and expectations:

It is difficult to conceive of the vast amount of information which is linked to membership in a field and which all contemporaries immediately invest in their reading of works: information about institutions – e.g., academies, journals, magazines, galleries, publishers, etc. – and about persons, their relationships, liaisons and quarrels, information about the ideas and problems which are “in the air” and circulate orally in gossip and rumour.²³

Certainly, Clutesi was well aware of the wider world of politics and culture in Canada: he had been publishing in the *Native Voice* and speaking on national radio for twenty years when his first book appeared.²⁴ But his “membership” in the national field was limited by his social and geographical location. And his contemporary non-Indigenous critics were unlikely to know anything about the world of Indigenous politics and culture that formed his intellectual perspective. The central goal of Indigenous people’s political and artistic production, then and now, is to protect and nurture their children, which means regaining their sovereignty and their land. At the same time, Canadian nationalists were attempting to distinguish themselves from both Britain and the

²¹ The first one in the series is George Clutesi, “Adventures of Master Deer, A-Tush-Mit,” *Native Voice* 2, no. 11 (1948): 4.

²² Clutesi was commissioned to paint a mural at Expo ’67 in Montreal, more evidence of the nationalist desire to include Indigenous culture in the constructed Canadian imaginary. See Magdalena Milosz, “Indians of Canada Pavilion, Expo 67, Montreal,” Smarthistory, <https://smarthistory.org/indians-canada-pavilion-expo-67-montreal/>. The mural and the building were later destroyed. Clutesi’s contemporary, Tsleil-Waututh Chief and film actor Dan George took advantage of the Centennial desire for Indigenous content to recite his scathing “Lament for Confederation” in Vancouver’s Empire Stadium on Dominion Day (now Canada Day) 1 July 1967. See Dan George [Teswahno], “A Lament for Confederation,” *Vancouver Sun*, 4 July 1967, 6.

²³ Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 31–32.

²⁴ See Eric Jamieson, *The Native Voice: The Story of How Maisie Hurley and Canada’s First Aboriginal Newspaper Changed a Nation* (Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin, 2016). Anthony Walsh, who had helped Clutesi mount an exhibition of his work in Port Alberni, introduced Clutesi to Ira Dilworth of the Canadian Broadcasting Company around the same time. See “Anthony Walsh,” BC Archives, <https://search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/walsh-anthony>.

United States by producing a distinctive national literature and culture. They continued to ignore a dark history of colonial suppression with residential schooling at its heart, suppression that had lifted only a little with the 1951 revisions to the *Indian Act* of 1876.²⁵ The Alberni Indian Residential School closed only in 1973.

Clutesi's work comes out of a worldview that he explored in his holistic practice as a storyteller, artist, film actor, and ceremonialist, including the books that he wrote, designed, and illustrated himself. In the introduction to *Son of Raven, Son of Deer*, Clutesi explains that stories were used to teach the child "the importance all living things, no matter how small and insignificant, and particularly to acquaint him with the closeness of man to all animal, bird life, and the creatures of the sea. The young were taught ... that there is a place under the sun for all living things."²⁶ Clutesi then gives a quick and dirty summary of some classic nursery rhymes, including "Rock-a-Bye Baby," "Jack and Jill," "London Bridge," "Little Jack Horner," and "Humpty Dumpty," rounding off this catalogue of breaking, tumbling, spoiling, and smashing with Henny Penny's panicked declaration that the sky is falling. He notes that a properly educated Tseshah child would find the lack of concern about the endangered children and animals bewildering. Not to mention keeping food for oneself or going *up* a hill to find water. The Tseshah way of teaching is indirect: "The Indian parent refrained from the non-Indian adage of 'Don't do this. Don't do that.'"²⁷ Here he uses the introduction to claim that stories often dismissed as trivial are superior to nursery rhymes that English-speaking children learn by heart. The reader is challenged to take what follows seriously, perhaps even to begin to learn what a Tseshah child learns. The stories he recounts are intended to prepare children "mentally and morally to communicate with

²⁵ See Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Final Report*, 2015, <https://nctr.ca/records/reports/>. It became legal for Clutesi and other Status Indians to vote in federal elections only in 1960. Leaving readers to get the obvious irony, the editors quoted an extract from Hansard in which the MP for Comox-Alberni argues for a literacy test to qualify Indigenous voters. See *Native Voice* 2, no. 8 (1948): 2. See also Matthew McCrae, "The Chaotic Story of the Right to Vote in Canada," Canadian Museum of Human Rights, <https://humanrights.ca/story/the-chaotic-story-of-the-right-to-vote-in-canada>.

²⁶ Clutesi, *Son of Raven*, 9–10. I am calling what he calls "fables" stories. English genre terms inevitably pose a translation problem for Indigenous genres. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "fable" as "a short story devised to convey some useful lesson; esp. one in which animals or inanimate things are the speakers or actors; an apologue" and says that this is "now, the most prominent sense." Fables, in my view, are more obviously didactic than are the stories Clutesi tells. Although Nuuchah-nulth children are expected to learn from them, they are left to figure out any lesson for themselves – one is not stated directly.

²⁷ Clutesi, *Son of Raven*, 10.

... god.”²⁸ Clutesi also launches an early challenge to the authoritarian pedagogy favoured in residential schools, certainly among the first by someone who had attended one. In residential schools, he comments, children were “constantly told to ‘do’ but never ‘why’.”²⁹ He notes that, even when Indigenous children are educated in public schools with settler children, they have trouble with such an unfamiliar pedagogy. This early critique is hugely important because it was written when around ninety church-run federally funded residential schools were still in operation;³⁰ the last one closed only in 1996. It took the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s findings, reported in 2015, to begin any general acceptance of their operation as cultural genocide.³¹

Indigenous listeners are not usually provided with interpretive commentary by their storytellers because their upbringing provides the appropriate context. Further, any authoritative explanation would impose on the listener’s creativity (“think this, don’t think that”). Each listener is expected to interpret a story from their own standpoint: to think for themselves. As Jo-ann Archibald (Stó:lō) points out: “Bringing heart and mind together for story listening was necessary if one was to make meaning from a story because one was often not explicitly told what a story’s meanings were.”³² Stories charm listeners into a process of interpretation that is expected to engage them both intellectually and emotionally. Of course, different listeners will devise conflicting interpretations. Scholar and Nuuchah-nulth Hereditary Chief E. Richard Atleo explains:

To the traditionally oriented Nuuchah-nulth, different perspectives on creation are not a source of disagreement, confusion, or conflict; rather, they are a source of enrichment ... Even the most powerful, the most gifted, were perceived within a context that assumed their insignificance. One of many consequences of this ancient view of reality was that each person and each family was free to experience

²⁸ Clutesi, *Son of Raven*, 13.

²⁹ Clutesi, 13.

³⁰ “Canadian Indian Residential School System,” *Wikipedia*, Graph 2, “Number of schools and residences 1867–1998,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_Indian_residential_school_system#/media/.

³¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525>. The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1951) classifies “forcibly transferring children of the group to another group” (Article 2e) as genocide, without qualification. See https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf.

³² Jo-ann Archibald [Q’um Q’um Xiiem], *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body and Spirit* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 76.

for themselves the nature of creation, without being subjected to hegemonic coercion.³³

Stories, he points out, have a “natural tendency ... to have multiple interpretations.”³⁴

Despite their role in developing an ethical outlook, the stories are far from solemn sermons: the exploits of Ko-ishin-mit, whose greed, vanity, and competitiveness often lead to disaster, are very funny. His hosts treat him with unfailing courtesy although he gobbles everything in sight, and he – sometimes after waking up from a stupefied post-meal nap – always thanks them. He tries to return the hospitality but invariably bungles it. He boasts that he will produce delicious food the same way that his hosts did. You can imagine his attempt to impress his Eagle guests by swooping gracefully into the water to capture a huge salmon. Lacking the wingspan, the hooked beak, and the great talons, he suffers a humiliating flop. A recurrent refrain is that “it is not wise to copy other people.”³⁵ Although such stories became so widespread because of a recurrent need to share food, they can be turned to new purposes while retaining their original charm and intention. In the introduction, Clutesi makes the case that Tseshaht culture has better ways of teaching children both to think for themselves and to be hospitable to others without acting like Ko-ishin-mit.

True, sometimes Ko-ishin-mit succeeds in changing the world for the better, for example, by capturing the day.³⁶ In Clutesi’s collection it is At-tush-mit, Son of Deer, who plays the heroic role of stealing fire, perhaps because he is not trying to imitate anyone. Attempts by other more powerful animals have failed to capture fire from the Wolf People, who guard it jealously. Little At-tush-mit plans his attempt carefully and then uses his hard hooves and long nimble legs to dance into their house and leap over the fire, escaping with a spark hidden in his dancing leggings. Each animal has distinctive talents that allow them to find a niche in the diverse coastal ecosystem; each child is encouraged to develop their particular qualities to support the needs of family and community. Humility, hospitality, gratitude, and concern for others are constantly encouraged.

³³ E. Richard Atleo [Umeek], *Principles of Tsawalk: An Indigenous Approach to the Global Crisis* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 2.

³⁴ Atleo, *Principles*, 156.

³⁵ Clutesi, *Son of Raven*, 90.

³⁶ Atleo, *Principles*, 6–10.

POTLATCH AND ITS RECEPTION

Published two years later, *Potlatch* is a poetic memory of past ceremonial life.³⁷ What Clutesi recounts is a traditional Tloo-qwah-nah, lasting from two to four weeks, in which high-ranking guests from far away come to witness and participate in a ceremony. This one includes the enactment of the abduction of children from the community by the Wolf People. Finally, they are safely returned to their desperate parents and community. The ceremony emphasizes the love and care children need to flourish. The community works together to welcome and feed the guests; to witness and perform songs, dances, and dramatic recreations of stories and history; and to hear accounts of the territories, privileges, and generosity of the Chiefs. Despite much seriousness, jokes and teasing are also part of the ceremony. Nonetheless, the importance of protocol is emphasized: “it is unpardonable to hurt or embarrass another person by careless talk or effrontery for it was a direct reflection of the lack or rejection of all teachings.”³⁸ A central Nuu-chah-nulth teaching is kindness to others.³⁹

The Potlatch was banned in Canada from 1885 to 1951, so the social action Clutesi performed by publishing *Potlatch*, a description by someone who had participated in them, deserves recognition.⁴⁰ For one thing, unlike the stories, an account like this is not part of a traditional written genre but a fictionalized account of a complex ceremony. In an interview, he notes that he and his age-mates participated in an illegal Potlatch on Village Island as young men and that relatives had been arrested for

³⁷ Potlatching continues. See Denise Nicole Green, “Producing Materials, Places and Identities: A Study of Encounters in the Alberni Valley” (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2014), 177–212, for a description of a Potlatch called Yaxmlthit – the “sweeping off” of a close brush with death – held in 2010 in the former Alberni Indian Residential School gym by the great-great-grandson and current name holder of anthropologist Edward Sapir’s “informant” Tom Sayach’apis. Green lists the names of ethnographers who have worked most closely on and with the Nuu-chah-nulth as follows: Franz Boas (August 1889), Edward Sapir (1910–14), Morris Swadesh (late 1930s), and Susan Golla (1976–92). See Green, “Producing Materials,” 7.

³⁸ Clutesi, *Potlatch*, 85.

³⁹ Atleo, *Principles*, 108. As with ideals anywhere, these principles did not always hold, nor did they extend even to nearby communities; raiding and warfare were common among the Nuu-chah-nulth villages; captives were enslaved. See Alan D. McMillan, *Since the Time of the Transformers: The Ancient Heritage of Nuu-Chah-Nulth, Ditidabt, and Makah* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999).

⁴⁰ I get the idea of “social action” in part from Carolyn R. Miller, “Genre as Social Action,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 151–67. Generic conventions are, in her view, formed by recurrent social situations that require appropriate words but, more important, require speakers or writers to bring their intentions into accord with a wider social context in order to have an effect on their audience. See also Julie Cruikshank, *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998).

participating in another one.⁴¹ He aimed to revise popular negative ideas about the Potlatch, showing it as an honoured and honourable tradition. Which ceremonies and other spiritual belongings such as stories and songs should be kept from outsiders, and sometimes even from insiders without particular rights, is an ongoing discussion among Nuu-chah-nulth and other Indigenous Peoples. Clutesi's nephew, Randy Fred,⁴² comments: "Today Tseshah people appreciate what Uncle Georgie did. However, in the beginning they ostracized him for his cultural work. Our people felt he was selling out our culture. This feeling extended further to his published works. When *Son of Raven*, *Son of Deer* was first published he was far from being a hero on our reserve."⁴³

The negligible reception of *Potlatch* by non-Indigenous critics reveals that Clutesi was also far from being a Canadian literary hero when they wrote, despite his honorary doctorate (University of Victoria, 1971) and Order of Canada (1973). I look at three short commentaries: by Ralph Maud in 1982, Robert Bringhurst in 1988, and Hartmut Lutz in 1997. Although we settler critics now often write about texts that are neither literary nor canonical, our critical perspectives derive from an inherently colonial perspective. As Gauri Viswanathan points out, the discipline of English literature emerged with empire and was intended to demonstrate that British civilization secured the right to rule those they deemed lesser races.⁴⁴ This history helps explain Clutesi's critical neglect.

In a brief comment, Maud writes, "*Potlatch* is extremely well-written but I do not feel I was there. A stark documentary is exactly what would have accomplished his purpose. It is a paradox that Clutesi offers himself as a doorway into the Native experience and then blocks our entry with works of art."⁴⁵ Maud does not acknowledge the "trepidation" that Clutesi expresses in his introduction even after the end of the ban. Because the event he describes was illegal, he notes that "actual names have been omitted."⁴⁶

In the *Native Voice*, Clutesi's "The Urge to Create" (1947), encourages Northwest Coast Indigenous Peoples "to reawaken and foster back into life the urge to create, to embellish, to sing and to dance."⁴⁷ Yet, on the

⁴¹ See Clutesi and Hayes, interview. See also Clutesi, *Potlatch*, 9.

⁴² Fred founded Theytus Books, an independent Indigenous-run publishing company, in 1980. See "Fred, Randy," *ABC Bookworld*, <https://abcbookworld.com/writer/fred-randy/>.

⁴³ Fred, "Remembering."

⁴⁴ Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

⁴⁵ Ralph Maud, *A Guide to BC Indian Myth and Legend* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1982), 165–66.

⁴⁶ Clutesi, *Potlatch*, 9.

⁴⁷ George Clutesi, "The Urge to Create," in *Native Art of the Northwest Coast*, 651.

same page, Clutesi states that he is opposed to Potlatches. Douglas S. White, of Coast Salish and Nuuchah-nulth ancestry, and former Chief of the Snuneymuxw First Nation, responds: "George Clutesi opposed to Potlatches? For me, this was just as absurd as if Babe Ruth said he was against baseball or Winston Churchill claimed to oppose victory."⁴⁸ However, he realizes that Clutesi did not want to state in a newspaper distributed across Canada that he supported something forbidden by law. The impact of this law on suppressing any clear expression of Clutesi's feelings is clear; indeed, his opinion may have shifted over the years. Clutesi here is speaking to coastal peoples, including his own, while also wary of their continuing surveillance by the colonial state. This "double audience" complicates how he writes and is read differently by different audiences.

Maud does not explain how he knows Clutesi's purpose, nor does he question his assumption that "we" should be given access to "the Native experience." Yurok and Diné scholar Nathalie Knight recently wrote of *Potlatch* that it provides "glimpses of cultural practices that refuse consumption by the uninitiated, allowing the text to retain its integrity more than forty years after it was published."⁴⁹ What Maud saw as a weakness, she sees as a strength. Nuuchah-nulth scholar Tommy Happynook also puts this double perspective in a positive light: "His brilliance is in how he was able to present his writing as fiction for some and teachings for others."⁵⁰

Shortly after Clutesi died in 1988, poet and critic Robert Bringhurst published "Nootka Rag: Funeral Music for George Clutesi" in the quarterly journal *Canadian Literature*.⁵¹ Bringhurst uses the short piece, generically somewhere between an obituary and a book review, to articulate and enhance his position as a modernist poet and as unusually expert on Indigenous languages and narrative in the emergent cultural field of Canadian literature. In the first sentence he classifies and ranks Clutesi as "a minor author and a minor artist, in both depth and range."⁵²

⁴⁸ Douglas S. White, "Where Mere Words Failed: Northwest Coast Art and Law," in *Native Art of the Northwest Coast*, 633.

⁴⁹ Knight, "Dispossessed Indigeneity," 77. Her chapter on Clutesi from a Yurok-Diné perspective details his "politics of recognition that affirmed community membership and did not, in that affirmation, suppress the individual's ability to express their difference within community" (75).

⁵⁰ Tommy Happynook [hiininaasim], "wałši?alín ?uu?aałuk'i Həhəuuli: Coming Home to Take Care of the Territory: A Project of (Re)Connecting with Traditional Lands, Waters, Knowledge, and Identity" (PhD diss., University of Victoria, 2022), 35.

⁵¹ I was the editor of *Canadian Literature* between 2007 and 2015. Bringhurst's piece is found in the category "Opinions and Notes" rather than with book reviews.

⁵² Robert Bringhurst, "Nootka Rag: Funeral Music for George Clutesi, 1905–1988," *Canadian Literature* no. 118 (1988): 190.

He calls *Son of Raven* “a collection of homiletic tales” and *Potlatch* a “historical fable.” He blames Clutesi’s “uncritical admiration for hand-me-down European standards, forms, and technique” on his “frontier-colonial schooling,” and notes that “his wooden and uneven second book” would have been “repaired” by “his literary colleagues, if only he had had some.”⁵³ Bringhurst asserts that un-named “readers trained on modernist literature, who expect at all costs the precise word and the economical phrase, find his prose intolerably spongy” and that his “gifts, such as they were, have fallen deeply out of fashion.”⁵⁴ One positive note is that the “rag” in the title alludes to Scott Joplin, the famous “King of Ragtime,” who died in 1917; his work gained widespread appreciation only in the 1970s. Just as Joplin’s compositions opened the door to jazz, so, Bringhurst hopes, Clutesi’s work and that of other Native authors will lead to the emergence of a powerful syncretic aesthetic form that could be seen as authentically Canadian.

Bringhurst references the problem of translating the “condensed, elliptical tonalities of recorded West Coast oral literature” and concludes that “the prosody of [Clutesi’s] songs and metrical speeches is closer to the shuffle and plod of Edgar Lee Masters than to the agglutinative purl of the underlying Nootkan originals, as Clutesi well knew.”⁵⁵ This rather snide clause – “as Clutesi well knew” – concedes knowledge while at the same time implying bad faith on Clutesi’s part. Here Bringhurst asserts that he knows at least as much about the Nuuchah-nulth language as does a native speaker and airs his opinion that Clutesi’s writing does not do it justice.

What social action does Bringhurst’s account attempt? Now labelled “one of Canada’s most revered poets,”⁵⁶ by 1988 Bringhurst’s selected poems had been nominated for the 1982 Governor General’s Award, and he had produced a collection of Haida stories, *Raven Steals the Light* (1984), in collaboration with Haida artist Bill Reid. Reid and Bringhurst bonded over their appreciation of past “classical” Haida artists. Both perfectionists, Reid in his graphic art and carving and Bringhurst in his attention to poetics, typography, and book design, they applied their standards to all artistic production.⁵⁷ As Haida-Tsimshian art critic

⁵³ Bringhurst, 192.

⁵⁴ Bringhurst, 192.

⁵⁵ Bringhurst, 192. Masters is best known for *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), which contains over two hundred poems about the citizens of a small fictional Illinois town. They speak of their own lives from beyond the grave.

⁵⁶ “Robert Bringhurst,” Poetry Foundation, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/robert-bringhurst>.

⁵⁷ See Robert Bringhurst, *The Elements of Typographic Style*, 1992, 4th ed. (Point Roberts, WA: Hartley and Marks, 2012).

Marcia Crosby puts it, their highest value was “Western art practice and its criteria for aesthetic excellence ... described as an art form made by a few *individual* men of *genius*.”⁵⁸ This focus derives from the belief that “civilization” and its aesthetic standards are not only universal, underlying all peoples’ cultural production, but also more important than the respectful relationships promoted in the stories.

Clutesi incorporates his native language into these books; Bringhurst quibbles with both Clutesi’s translations and his explanations for the words, “savouring as they do more of Longfellow than of Boas or Sapir.”⁵⁹ Like Maud, Bringhurst wants access to a distinctive and authentic artistic expression that shows little resemblance to anything European, a desire that consigns any Indigenous creator not only to copying the traditional past but also to doing so badly if they intend to reach an audience: “In his constant concern to teach what he could to an ill-educated audience of whites and of younger Indians, he pulled many punches.”⁶⁰ This “double audience” does affect Clutesi’s work, to be sure, but Indigenous readers would have understood the constraints he (and they) were under. Bringhurst sees Clutesi’s concern to teach as another lapse from aesthetic standards. The paradox here is that, despite their desire for a distinctive Indigenous art, settler critics are sure that they will know it when they see it – in some cases, even before they see it.

Bringhurst seems most concerned with finding a “literary language in some respects analogous to jazz: the fruit of another cultural collision, whose roots will be essentially aboriginal.”⁶¹ He deems Clutesi’s “earnest and ... romantic prose” as “not an instance of the fluent new literature I like to imagine being granted us in this country.”⁶² Bringhurst’s desire for a Canadian literature with Indigenous roots derives from European literary nationalism, which fostered a longing for an ancient epic origin comparable to Homer to call its own. Such a grounding became proof of

⁵⁸ Marcia Crosby, “Haidas, Human Beings, and Other Myths,” in *Bill Reid and Beyond: Expanding on Modern Native Art*, ed. Karen Duffek and Charlotte Townsend-Gault (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2004), 118, (emphasis in original).

⁵⁹ Bringhurst, “Nootka Rag,” 192. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *Song of Hiawatha* (1855) was an attempt to produce the required epic foundation for American literature. At the end, Hiawatha conveniently vanishes forever, recommending Christian conversion to his people. In Canada, Northrop Frye praised E.J. Pratt’s Canadian epics, such as *Brébeuf and His Brethren* (1940). See Northrop Frye, “The Narrative Tradition in English-Canadian Poetry,” in *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1971).

⁶⁰ Bringhurst, “Nootka Rag,” 192.

⁶¹ Bringhurst, 193.

⁶² Bringhurst, 193. The debate between late Romantic and modernist poets raged in Canadian literary circles, with modernist poetry only gathering steam after 1947. See *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*, 3rd ed., ed. Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017).

civilization and a charter for national sovereignty, in this case, Canadian rather than Indigenous sovereignty. In 1988 Bringham was working on the Haida translations that he later argued provided an epic foundation for Canadian literature, just as Italians have Virgil and Dante, or the English, *Beowulf*.⁶³ Significantly, Margaret Atwood labels Bringham's translation of the Haida orator, Skaay, "an American Iliad"⁶⁴ and later praises Bringham's contextualization of his translations, *A Story as Sharp as a Knife*, in a piece entitled "Signs and Wonders: How an Inspired Polymath Resurrected Native America's Epics."⁶⁵ Her title, filled with biblical language, praises Bringham for raising Indigenous cultures from the dead. She writes that, "for North Americans, these poems and others like them should be part of the great stack of building blocks in what we call our 'identity,' our 'history,' our 'story.' Why should our groundworks come from Greece and Rome and the Bible and European sagas, and not also from the places where we actually live?"⁶⁶ (Consider who she includes in the pronoun "we.")

Bringham's critique helps establish him as an expert both in Indigenous languages and oral texts. Unfortunately, he falls into the desire for the same cultural assimilation that drove residential schooling – "they" need to assimilate to the national standard; "we" can teach them just how the process should go because of our civilized taste. Once assimilated, Indigenous writers are expected to vanish, leaving white settler writers to claim a national literature uniquely theirs. Thus, Joplin and Clutesi are consigned to being "stage[s] along the way" to a "cultural collision whose roots," in the American case, flowers with jazz and, in Canada's case, will be "essentially aboriginal."⁶⁷ The main purpose of Indigenous literary writing, he thinks, is to make Canadian literature more authentic and more distinctive. Swiss critic Philipp Schweighauser characterizes this position as "salvage primitivism," a cross between salvage anthropology and modernist primitivism:

In the well-documented phenomenon of modernist primitivism – from Gauguin's Tahiti paintings to T.S. Eliot's "War-Paint and Feathers"

⁶³ See Robert Bringham, *A Story as Sharp as a Knife: The Classical Haida Mythtellers and Their World* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1999). He devotes a chapter to arguing that the work of Skaay (John Sky) constitutes an epic (173–200). See also Bringham's "The Polyhistorical Mind," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29, no. 2 (1994): 172.

⁶⁴ Margaret Atwood, "Uncovered: An American Iliad," *Times* (London, UK), 28 February 2004, 10 [S2].

⁶⁵ Margaret Atwood, "Signs and Wonders: How an Inspired Polymath Resurrected Native America's Epics," *New Statesman* (London, UK), 2–8 October 2015, 54–55, 57.

⁶⁶ Atwood, "Uncovered," 10.

⁶⁷ Bringham, "Nootka Rag," 193.

– this engagement is driven by a desire to rejuvenate one’s own Western art and culture through an engagement with artifacts and cultural practices that are perceived as fresher, more authentic, and less corrupted by processes of civilization and modernization.⁶⁸

However, contemporary Indigenous critics realize that Indigenous writers, even those publishing for a wide audience, like Clutesi, are performing different social actions from those of their settler contemporaries.

I cannot speak for Joplin, but I think that Clutesi’s publications assert Tseshahst difference from Canadian culture rather than supporting assimilation to it. He is not interested in a place in the Canadian canon but in changing Canadian minds. He lays out and holds up the primary cultural tools used by the Tseshahst to pass on their worldview from one generation to the next, through storytelling and ceremony. Minoritized artists, like Clutesi and Joplin, produce art from distinctive social locations and worldviews to counter their peoples’ oppression in North America. Their difference threatens the notion that European modernist standards are universal and can be used to judge all artistic production.⁶⁹

Bringhurst does praise Clutesi as “spiritually vigorous” for “his learning and his pedagogical gifts” and deplores the fact that Clutesi could not teach in the local school.⁷⁰ In fact, Clutesi did teach the students language, songs, dances, and stories.⁷¹ Indeed, he is credited by Tsa-qwa-supp (Art Thompson), an artist and ceremonialist, with being “one of my saviours.”⁷² In the mid-1990s, Tsa-qwa-supp testified in the British Columbia Supreme Court against Arthur Henry Plint, a dormitory supervisor at the Alberni Indian Residential School for ten years. Plint was sentenced to eleven years for sexually abusing boys in his supposed

⁶⁸ Philipp Schweighauser, *Boasian Verse: The Poetic and Ethnographic Work of Edward Sapir, Ruth Benedict, and Margaret Mead* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 102.

⁶⁹ See Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), for an excellent account of the formation and colonial effects of modernism.

⁷⁰ Bringhurst, “Nootka Rag,” 190.

⁷¹ Survivors from the Alberni Indian Residential School who knew him as children talk about their memories. Clutesi is consistently remembered as kind and as a role model and inspiration. Tsimshian artist Art Bolton mentions that Clutesi taught a language class at the residential school, Underwood, “The George Clutesi Project,” minute 16:13.

⁷² Tsa-qwa-supp [Art Thompson], “Where the Heart Is: From a Conversation with Tsa-qwa-supp.” See Interview with Martha Black, *Nuu-chah-nulth Voices, Histories, Objects and Journeys*, ed. Alan L. Hoover (Victoria, BC: Royal British Columbia Museum, 2000), 343.

care.⁷³ Tsa-qwa-supp remembers that Clutesi “used to come into the school and teach us Tseshahṭ songs. I heard stories from him about deer, raven, Thunderbird, sea serpents, whales ... It was one of the few bright spots of that bleak time ... Basically, he was trying to assure us that it was all right to be Native people and that there was room for us in this world.”⁷⁴ So rather than trying to produce a fluent new literary language for Canada, Clutesi was telling stories to rescue children from their physical and spiritual incarceration. Both Maud and Bringham claim to know at least as much about Clutesi’s purpose and knowledge as does Clutesi himself, a typical settler-colonialist move. (One I’m trying not to make myself! Nonetheless, I feel I can track fellow settler academics’ moves with some confidence not only because we share similar educations and worldviews but also because of the guidance of the many Indigenous scholars I have spoken with, read, and written about.)

Hartmut Lutz discusses *Potlatch* in his article “Canadian Native Literature and the Sixties,” published almost a decade after Bringham’s piece in the same journal. He classifies *Potlatch* as a “multimedia novel.”⁷⁵ Because the novel is the most valued contemporary genre, this is praise. However, here he overlooks Clutesi’s own commentary, provided in an epigraph right after the title page: “This narrative is not meant to be documentary. In fact, it is meant to evade documents. It is meant for the reader to feel and to say I was there and indeed I saw.” Clutesi resists having his text read into any Western framework and instead invites readers to the event. He even suggests that we resist simply reading: we are readers, but also participants, guests, and witnesses whose duty is to respect Tseshahṭ protocol. Samantha Nock, a Cree-Métis writer and educator, distinguishes between listening and witnessing:

⁷³ Former Alberni students launched a suit in 1997, *Blackwater v. Plint*, 2001 BCSC 997 (CanLII), <https://canlii.ca/t/4x3t>. The Supreme Court dismissed Blackwater’s appeal, in part on the grounds that “the children had not been very clear in reporting the abuse and the adults to whom they reported did not realize the children were talking about sexual abuse, an almost unthinkable idea at the time” – and thus argued that, because the crime was “unspeakable,” those in charge could not be found negligent. See Supreme Court of Canada, *Blackwater v. Plint*, 2005 SCC 58, <https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/2239/index.do>. See also United Church of Canada, “The Children Remembered,” <https://thechildrenremembered.ca/school-histories/alberni/>, which states: “Plint’s trial led BC Supreme Court Justice Douglas Hogarth to declare ‘the Indian residential school system was nothing more than institutionalized pedophilia’ and prompted an RCMP investigation of schools across British Columbia.” See also Richard Wright, “At 13 Years, Willie Blackwater Stood up to His Abuser,” *Broadview Magazine* (United Church of Canada), 1 March 2016, <https://broadview.org/at-13-willie-blackwater-stood-up-to-his-abuser-at-a-b-c-residential-school/>.

⁷⁴ Tsa-qwa-supp, “Where the Heart Is,” 343.

⁷⁵ Hartmut Lutz, “Canadian Native Literature and the Sixties: A Historical and Bibliographical Survey,” *Canadian Literature* nos. 152–53 (Spring-Summer 1997): 183.

When we witness a story we are not only present physically, but emotionally and spiritually, to hold this story in our hearts. When someone tells us their story, that story becomes a part of us. When you witness someone's story, be it a comedy or a tragedy, you are carrying a part of that person with you now. You have entered a very specific and powerful relationship that exists between the storyteller and the witness.⁷⁶

Clutesi invokes the responsibility of witnessing for readers as well as listeners.

Our disciplinary drive to classify often too quickly assimilates such texts to Western genres. That said, Lutz, having situated the book in the 1960s context, also connects it to the many genres of the *Potlatch* itself:

Often it remains unclear where the border lies between illusion (created by the skilful use of masks, music, lighting and dance in Potlatch rituals), and where the extra-textual "reality" constituted by the text transcends Western notions of realism into the supernatural or magic. This approach, in which the physical, the social, the psychological and the spiritual blend into a complex reality far larger than European notions of it, is characteristic of Native cosmology and traditional everyday life practices. *Potlatch*, in its multi-generic discourse, reflects this multi-dimensionality, and, quite in line with traditional Native practices, explanations are not given, and events are described "as seen," without ethnographic or literary omniscience.⁷⁷

He concludes that "the novel is a 'Pa-chuk,' a public gift giving in itself, and while it is a literary creation, *Potlatch* is also about literary creation and creativity."⁷⁸ For example, the Short One, who plays a major role in the feast and the narrative, is a creator. He introduces a new dance, which upsets those who see it as "a drastic departure from the long-standing and accepted fixed, prearranged, and expected movements of the dances."⁷⁹ The creativity of the Short One can be seen as analogous to Clutesi's: during his career he worked hard not only to keep tradition alive but also

⁷⁶ Samantha Marie Nock, "Being a Witness: The Importance of Protecting Indigenous Women's Stories," *Rabble Blogs*, 4 September 2014, <https://rabble.ca/indigenous/being-witness-importance-protecting-indigenous-womens-stories/>.

⁷⁷ Lutz, *Canadian Native Literature*, 184.

⁷⁸ Lutz, 186.

⁷⁹ Clutesi, *Potlatch*, 149.

to innovate through the dark times of the Potlatch ban and beyond.⁸⁰ Cultures thrive by adapting and changing, something marked in stories, where the central figure is called Transformer or Changer. In “How At-tush-mit Became a Deer,” little At-tush-mit is rude to a stranger and tells him how he will fight a mysterious figure who is rumoured to be changing Animal-People into ordinary animals.⁸¹ But, as the stranger explains, sometimes you are forced to change.

THE YOUNGER GENERATION

In publishing his books, Clutesi tackled a broader issue: revitalizing the traditions that residential schools had attempted to destroy. This revitalization is continuing, as he had hoped. In 1967, Clutesi wrote that Nuu-chah-nulth cultural knowledge was “nearly forgotten” and proposed *Son of Raven, Son of Deer* as an approach “from the back door ... to an apparently rich and cultured society.” He intended to reach “the more sensitive, the more sympathetic and the more reasoning segment of the non-Indians.”⁸² K̓i-ke-in (who now bears the name Haa’yuups) has high praise for Clutesi’s accomplishments but notes that he found Clutesi’s efforts to “make white people like us” distasteful: “He struggled to be someone and something that white people could respect and still know as an Indian.”⁸³ Now a younger generation in a less segregated social context is most interested in how the cultural knowledge Clutesi promoted can be used to foster the well-being of their communities.

In a 2011 article based on conversations with Wickaninnish (Cliff Atleo, Sr.) in 2008, Nuu-chah-nulth law professor Johnny Mack remarks, “It is clear to me that the stories that once provided our traditional communities with stability and meaning are held precariously by my generation, and we have come to rely on the settlers’ ideologies to order our experience and help us make sense of the world.”⁸⁴ Wickaninnish’s response is to promote feasting with the *ha’wiih* (the Chiefs) to start a process of reconnection to the stories among the *ha’haoulthee*, that is,

⁸⁰ For example, he painted using “illusionist” three-dimensional perspective as well as working in traditional two-dimensional flat forms. See Ronald W. Hawker, *Tales of Ghosts: First Nations Art in British Columbia, 1922–61* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 125.

⁸¹ Clutesi, *Son of Raven*, 93–97.

⁸² Clutesi, *Potlatch*, 9. See also Happynook, “wałši?əlin ?uu?aałuk’i Hāhuuli,” 49–55 and following, where he discusses what levels of access might be given to particular knowledge to different audiences.

⁸³ K̓i-ke-in, “Art,” 689.

⁸⁴ Johnny Camille Mack, “Hoquotist: Reorienting through Storied Practice,” in *Storied Communities: Narratives of Contact and Arrival in Constituting Political Community*, ed. H. Lessard, R. Johnson, and J. Webber (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 297.

everything in the territory – people, animals, plants, and minerals – all of which is interconnected. This response is aimed at restoring the connections within communities rather than at changing non-Indigenous viewpoints. However, the younger generation's pursuit of these goals often takes place within established institutions as well as in their home communities.

Nuu-chah-nulth scholars hiininaasimm Tommy Happynook and sii-yaa-ilth-supt Dawn Smith have found inspiration in Clutesi's work, marked by their contribution of artwork in his honour to the 2023 George Clutesi Exhibit at the Alberni Valley Museum.⁸⁵ Significantly, Happynook's PhD dissertation builds on Clutesi's statement that "in Nuu-chah-nulth culture we need to start every journey with a song."⁸⁶ In *Potlatch*, the Short One's song, inspired by the North Wind, modelled how new songs come to those who forge the proper relationship with the land. In the introduction to *Potlatch*, Clutesi says that the most important gift one could give anyone is "a song together with its dance and the ornate paraphernalia needed to show any subsequent ceremonial presentations."⁸⁷ Happynook's grandfather, a Christian convert, burned "the ceremonial curtains that illustrate a family's history" among other items and did not pass on the family songs or dances to his son.⁸⁸ His grandson has walked the land of which he will become *hawilth* (Chief) to hear its songs. Happynook, now an assistant professor at the University of Victoria, was able to use Clutesi's writing to argue for this chiefly creative practice as part of his doctoral fieldwork. That his project was approved is a huge breakthrough not just for him but for the usually conservative academy. sii-yaa-ilth-supt Dawn Smith uses the Nuu-chah-nulth principle of "hiil k'ii?il sił (bringing something good from way back)" as both the title of her dissertation and as a guide in her teaching as an assistant professor at Camosun College, in Victoria, British Columbia.⁸⁹ Like Clutesi, they still consider a double audience as they write; like him, they are intent on bringing good things from way back so that the Nuu-chah-nulth people can flourish both in their

⁸⁵ Anne MacLaurin. "Nuu-chah-nulth Knowledge, Teachings and Ways of Knowing," Review of the George Clutesi Exhibit at Port Alberni Museum, 1 June to 2 September 2023, <https://www.uvic.ca/news/topics/2023+nuu-chah-nulth-knowledge+news>. See also "George Clutesi Exhibit," <https://www.uvic.ca/socialsciences/anthropology/home/news/current/george-clutesi-exhibition.php>.

⁸⁶ Clutesi, quoted in Happynook, "wałši?afin ?uu?aałuki Hałuułi," 43.

⁸⁷ Clutesi, *Potlatch*, 10.

⁸⁸ Happynook, "wałši?afin ?uu?aałuki Hałuułi," 55.

⁸⁹ Dawn Marie Smith, "hiil k'ii?il sił (Bringing Something Good from Way Back): A Journey to Humanize Post-Secondary Education" (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2018).

communities and in the wider world. As Lutz says, Clutesi's books are gifts intended to show the living power of Tseshaht traditions to lift people's spirits.