

MEMORIES AND MOMENTS

*Conversations and Re-Collections**

MARGARET SEQUIN ANDERSON AND
TAMMY ANDERSON BLUMHAGEN

BACKGROUND

THIS ARTICLE IS THE product of a collaboration between two women whose lives have intersected in several ways. Tammy Anderson Blumhagen was born in 1960 and grew up in the small Tsimshian community of Hartley Bay, British Columbia; her mother was the youngest daughter of a large family, and her father was the only child of his parents who survived to adulthood. Tammy was an only child who grew up living with her mother and father in the house of her maternal grandparents; her paternal grandparents also lived in this household with her widowed maternal grandmother after the death of Tammy's mother in 1977; during the summers, one of her maternal aunts and her family were also usually in residence; and frequently several cousins were there as well. Tammy's childhood was spent in daily close interaction with literally hundreds of relatives — at school, church, recreation activities, and in the course of daily chores she dealt with close or distant relatives. In terms of Tsimshian kinship her maternal aunts are especially close to her, and their children are her brothers and sisters, as are the other members of the Eagle clan into which she was born.¹

* We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, which supported the research for this article through a contract to Tammy Blumhagen (Number 263-2B13). We also acknowledge the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Canadian Museum of Civilization, both of which provided research support for earlier work by Margaret Seguin (Anderson), selections of which have been incorporated into this work. Finally, we thank all the people who shared memories and recollections with Tammy during the project.

¹ Tsimshian kinship terminology emphasizes matrilineal links, with clans designated by animal powers encountered by ancestors. Tammy is an Eagle (*Laxskiik*) because her mother was. Tammy's maternal (Eagle) grandmother let her be adopted as a Blackfish (*Gispudwada*) by her father because he had no sisters, but Tammy continues to hold her Eagle name. See below for comments on Tsimshian kinship and crest adoption.

Tammy's childhood was also enlivened by other women and men some of whom she never met in person, but whose presence is manifested in stories and comments in conversations of people in the community long after their deaths. Two of these are Tammy's maternal great-grandmother and great-grandfather, known to most people in the community even now as *No'os* (mother)² and *Hade'ix* (father).³ In 1983 Tammy married and now resides in Prince Rupert with her family.

Margaret Seguin Anderson first met Tammy in 1978 when she came to Hartley Bay at the request of the teacher of *Sm'algyax* in Hartley Bay, who was Tammy's mother, Daphne Robinson Anderson. Sadly, Daphne died after the project was arranged, in the fall of 1977, and was not able to pursue her interest in written language materials; Margaret never met her. During that first summer after her mother's death, Tammy worked with Margaret on the project her mother had initiated. Part of the work that they did was to record songs, stories, and conversations with Tammy's grandmothers, who were generous in their help on the project. Through this first project, Margaret encountered many of Tammy's relatives, whose vital presence constituted the fabric of the community.⁴ More projects followed, and Margaret researched and published articles and a monograph about the continuity of the feasting tradition in Hartley Bay. In 1984 Margaret married Tammy's father, Clarence Anderson, becoming Tammy's step-mother. Clarence and Margaret now divide their time between Hartley Bay, where Clarence's commercial fishing business is located, and Prince Rupert, where Margaret recently became the Regional Co-ordinator for the Northwest for the University of Northern British Columbia after several years working for UNBC in Prince George.

The community of Hartley Bay was the site of the initial intersection of our lives, and it figures prominently in this article. It is both a very ordinary and a very special place. Eight hours by fishing boat

² *No'os* is the *Sm'algyax* word for mother; when using kinship terms as 'nicknames' there is a tendency to use a unique variant for each person. For instance some people call one person *No'os* and another person *No'oh*. There are similar patterns with *Nsi'its*, 'grandmother,' which is variously shortened to *Ji'ism*, *Ji'ji*, *Jijj*, *Ji'is*, etc. and *Ni'yaa*, 'grandfather,' which shortens to *Ya'as*, *Ya'ya*, *Ya'a*, *Yaasm*, etc. Where words occur in this article in *Sm'algyax*, the language spoken by Coast and Southern Tsimshian people, we have transcribed according to the pronunciation of the speakers following the practical orthography documented in John A. Dunn's *Dictionary of the Coast Tsimshian Language* (Mercury Series, 1978). In instances of quotation from written sources we have retained the conventions of the source.

³ *Hade'ix* is a Haida word for father; Dunn, 1984, mentions that the use of this Haida word is an honorific among Tsimshian people.

⁴ Over the years the characters of many people she had never met became familiar from stories: *No'os*, *Hade'ix*, *Ji'ism Gylhorwli*, Little Pete, Old Man Peter Bates, and others were mentioned repeatedly in conversations.

from Prince Rupert, now accessible on a daily basis by seaplane, Hartley Bay is a small isolated fishing village with fewer than 200 residents on-reserve, limited economic opportunities, and many of the social stresses and preoccupations that are familiar to residents and visitors to such places. Despite the pressures of life, however, Hartley Bay has somehow so far avoided some of the most horrific manifestations of stressed communities. Most importantly for members of the community, there have been no deaths by violence and no suicides within the community. People in the community are aware of their relative good fortune, and many link this to the strong influence of the preceding generations, specifically to the authority of *No'os* and *Hade'ix*, who were known as “mother and father” to most of the village. Some people lament the breakdown of the many rules that underpinned a strongly authoritarian regime within the community through the early 1960s.⁵ On public occasions when the community represents itself to visitors the bonds of kinship and affection among the Hartley Bay people and the need to be careful and to respect each other and the people who went before are recurrent themes.

PROJECT FOCUS

Our overall project was commissioned by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Life Histories Project. It was designed to re-collect vignettes that highlight the relationships that are made, valued, and transmitted in everyday conversations in the community of Hartley Bay, and to convey the flavour of the community to people from elsewhere. The community extends beyond the small home village on Douglas Channel to encompass the members who reside “in town” (Prince Rupert) and elsewhere. We collected research materials in the genre most familiar to the community, *conversation*. Over the course of the research the project became focused largely on Louisa Anderson, Tammy’s “little grandmother.”⁶ We found that concen-

⁵ Life in the community until the middle of the twentieth century was structured by rules enforced by the Village Council; these gradually relaxed through the 1970s. Rules included a prohibition on Sunday work, curfews for adults as well as children, patrols by local constables to enforce the curfews and fire regulations, punishment by the Council for infractions (including fines for adults and corporal punishment for children), inspection of houses for hygiene and fire safety, etc. These constraints were all locally adopted and enforced (though directly derived from the rules of Metlakatla, the missionary community that flourished during the third quarter of the nineteenth century), and their disappearance is lamented by some in the older generation now as a cause rather than a symptom of loss of control by the community.

⁶ Louisa Anderson was about five feet tall, and Tammy usually referred to her as her “Little Grandma” in contrast to the taller Violet Robinson, who was her “Big Grandma.”

trating on Louisa, who is Tammy's paternal grandmother, was a productive approach, casting a revealing oblique light on contemporary life in this matrilineal community; and that a discussion of her life expresses some of the complexities and contradictions of lived experience in a Tsimshian milieu. Seen in perspective, the shape of her life illuminates the ingenuity with which those who respect that culture now carry it forward.

To focus on a paternal grandmother for this research emphasizes the "situatedness" of the lives that we were studying, and challenges the Project Mandate for the Life Histories Projects as established by the Royal Commission, which uses terms such as "matrilineal," "rural," aboriginal" and "family" as though these were timelessly stable ideas and entities, and as though people might be found whose lives are archetypes of the concepts. The project under which our research was conducted had the following mandate: "A Three-Generation (grandmother/mother/daughter) study of a rural aboriginal family. This study to be conducted in a west coast, matrilineal nation." Writing literally to this mandate would have meant submerging the complexities of lived experience that have shifted the lives written about here from (usually) rural to (mostly) urban; from matrilineal to matrilineal for feasts/with a patrilineal surname and "going-both-ways" with adopted clans; and from "seamlessly" aboriginal to married-out/married-in/adopted-in; and from a three- or four-generation extended family resident in a single house to one- or two-generation families gathering only for special occasions. But it is clear from the complexity in our materials that there is no such stability.

The lived lives of the authors and subjects of this research are complex/contradictory/conflicted. We might have glossed over or factored out the complexity, but have chosen instead to highlight it as a revealing insight about particular people, a specific community, and the context of contemporary Tsimshian culture. In particular, we argue that to say "the Tsimshian are matrilineal" is an over-simplification that does not fully reflect the lives of any family in the community, and which marginalizes many. For example, Louisa Anderson is Tammy's paternal grandmother, and mother-in-law to Margaret; however, in some ways she acted like a mother to Margaret, watching out for her and helping her to learn things she felt would be important; when Louisa's husband Alfred adopted Margaret to his Eagle crest and gave her a name, Margaret was in some contexts able to act as Clarence's father's sister (a relationship of considerable significance within the feast system); however, the name was the one that had been

Louisa's maternal grandfather's; and when her own father adopted Tammy as his sister for the purposes of passing on some of his the Blackfish crests for which he and Louisa had responsibility, the clear categories of matrilineality became even more convoluted. In fact, each of these relationships is specific to a context, and it is only in abstract algebra of an external presentation of "the system" that they appear contradictory.

TSIMSHIAN KINSHIP BY THE BOOK

The actual practice of Tsimshian social organization is necessarily convoluted in the present context. Social organization among the Coast Tsimshian peoples is "theoretically" manifested by a tightly knit complex of relationships built around groups of people who think of themselves as very closely related. A basic building block is the single *waab* or house in which a *Sm'oigyeyt* or highest ranked chief and several other bearers of ranked name-titles and their sisters are the social and political leaders with decision-making authority over territories linked to each name-title. Married people maintain their ranks in their own *waab*, but are also granted some privileges and responsibilities in the activities of their spouse's group, particularly if they reside in the spouse's house territories. A range of acceptable post-marriage residence arrangements accommodate a balanced demographic structure in each of the territories to facilitate optimal resource use.

Each such descent group acknowledges its common membership in one of four matrilineal crest groups or *pteex*, by virtue of their shared descent through their mothers and grandmothers from ancestors whose exploits had attained mythic proportions commemorated in *adaox*, family histories publicly recounted during ceremonies hosted by the group. The four matrilineal crest groups or *pteex* into which all Coast Tsimshian people are divided are the *Gispudwada* (Blackfish or Killerwhale), *Laxskiik* (Eagle), *Ganhada* (Raven), and *Laxgibuu* (Wolf). These are sometimes called 'phratries' in technical publications, and are often called either 'clans' or 'tribes' by Tsimshian people speaking English.

There are sub-divisions within some *pteex* based on several distinct origin stories. For example, there are *Gispudwada* with the *Nuganaks* story in which several ancestors were taken to a house under the sea and returned with tokens of this experience; and there are other *Gispudwada* who don't have this story, but whose ancestors had

encounters with Grizzly Bears and One-Horned Mountain Goats. Each such sub-group is entitled to display the crests that commemorated their ancestors' experiences, and only authorized members of the sub-group should use the paintings, carvings, songs, name-titles, and dances that celebrate the powers of their origin as a group.

Whatever the story of origin, however, it is incestuous to marry within the *pteex* — all people whose mothers are sisters call one another sister and brother, and this is extended up the chain of relationship through grandmothers so that even if their relationship is quite remote it is unthinkable for a "clan sister and brother" to marry. On the other hand, the children of a person's mother's brothers, or father's sisters, are inevitably members of a different crest group. These "cross-cousins" were potential marriage partners. Arranged marriages were formerly an important mechanism for controlling the inheritance of wealth, power and social position, and for establishing advantageous connections with other groups in Tsimshian social practice.

While the matrilineal kin group is the fundamental social unit, there are elaborate social relationships with the kin group in which a person's father is a member. There are frequent service and gift exchanges with this *kswaatk* group, and respect should always be shown by gifts when their crests are displayed.

Because matrilineal relationship is primary even at great remove, it is possible for a house with no suitable heir for a name-title within the closest circle of relations to reach back to "distant" relations for an appropriate successor — as long as the person is from the mother's side, and was therefore a member of the same *pteex* and *waab*. "Closer" relations through a patrilineal link are not members of the same group, and are not eligible. There are numerous accounts in the *adaox* of such successions, often involving members of a group whose residence was in a different winter village, and might have been so for many generations.

The most significant public ceremony at which *adaox* are invoked is the *yaokw*, the series of feasts associated with status changes, especially the assumption of a hereditary name-title linked to a territory. At such events, elaborate regalia bearing the crest designs belonging to the group may be worn, and the display of these emblems always requires the expenditure of wealth as gifts to the people who witness it. The hosts at the *yaokw* are the members of one crest group, while the guests are from different *pteex*. The *pteex* comprising the local winter village in the pre-contact period were all linked in formal exchange

cycles among their name-title bearers, marking birth, naming, maturation, marriage, and, of course, death and succession. Each individual born into Tsimshian society is thus enmeshed in a web of relationships and gift exchanges set in motion by birth into a specific matrilineal group; story, house, crest, song, name-title, feast and territory are important organizers.

CONTRADICTIONS IN THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

After a single generation in a matrilineal system such as the Tsimshian have, the children of a group of men and women members of a single *pteex* are split into the children of the women, who are members of the same *pteex*, and the children of the men, who belong to other groups determined by the *pteex* to which each man's wife belonged. This pattern of matrilineal descent and group membership carries down the generations without alteration.

Though this system was stressed after the imposition of colonial barriers to traditional practices, Tsimshian people continued to adapt it to their situation; the impact of the huge population losses caused by epidemics may have contributed to the frequency of the practice of bringing back distant members of royal houses to maintain a succession, which is well attested from the nineteenth century. After the entry of British Columbia into Confederation the Indian Act was imposed on the Tsimshian, causing new strains and disruptions in implementing the traditional system.

Under the Indian Act, until 1985, Indian Status and Band membership were transmitted patrilineally. That is, the children of all male Band members would be Band members; this includes the children of any female members whose partner is a Band member of course, but also includes the children of any other women, including a non-Tsimshian woman married to a Band member. The children of any female Band member whose partner was not a Band member would not be members of the Band, but would either be members of the Band to which their father belonged, or might not be members of any Band if their father were not entitled to Indian Status or Band membership.

Since 1985 the provisions of Bill C-31 have altered the rules regarding transmission of Indian Status, and Bands have had the option of creating local rules regarding Band membership. It is still frequently the case, however, that children are registered as members of the Band in which their father is a member. Unless a strict application of

matrilineal principles were used to assign eligibility for Band membership, the dissonance between Tribal membership and Band membership principles is unavoidable even after the changes of Bill C-31.

There are many complications arising from the conflicts between the two systems. For instance, it is not now possible to marry (first) cross-cousins, which tends to diffuse the pattern of inheritance of name titles among a much larger group than the traditional practice of arranged marriage with a preference for cross-cousins for potential title-bearers. It is now legal (and increasingly common) under the Indian Act for individuals who are members of the same *pteeex* to marry, which makes the regulation of the business of the *pteeex* more complex, requiring "clan adoptions" to avoid the continuing censure on such unions. Marriage of women or men without membership in any house into the community also introduces stresses. Most of these are also handled by "clan adoptions," in which individuals are adopted at feasts to participate as members of clans which were not theirs by right of birth. The use of these practices facilitates the continuation of the system to which Tsimshian people have a strong commitment, and is clearly an adaptation of the system. That the system is flexible and adaptable does not mean that it is not a system, and it certainly does not mean that it is not Tsimshian.⁷

The actual living of lives in Tsimshian communities is both located within the Tsimshian kinship system and exemplifies the complicated process of clan adoptions and adjustments that make it functional in the contemporary world. Our family is probably an extreme case because there are "only children" in several generations and therefore a dearth of the nieces and nephews who are key to the "textbook" operation of the system. But the *adaox* show numerous examples of adjustments to the "pure" operation of the theory of matrilineality, and it is unlikely that it ever operated strictly according to abstract rules. There are similar complexities in the lives of many contemporary Tsimshian people who are working to adapt a system developed in a strict matrilineal clan system with carefully arranged marriages (with

⁷ The judgement of the court in the Delgam Uukw case includes the following language: "It became obvious during the course of this trial that what the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en witnesses describe as law is really a most uncertain and highly flexible set of customs which are frequently not followed by the Indians themselves. . . . There always seemed to be an aboriginal exception which made almost any departure from aboriginal rules permissible. In my judgement, these rules are so flexible and uncertain that they cannot be classified as laws (p. 189). As quoted in Don Monet and Skanu'u (Ardythe Wilson), *Colonialism on Trial: Indigenous Land Rights and the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Sovereignty Case*, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, 1992. The Gitksan are neighbours of the Tsimshian, and their languages and cultures are closely related.

an apparent preference for cross-cousin marriage) to the world of patrilineal last names and individually chosen marriage partners. In this contemporary context Tsimshian people continue to reflect on their lives and to represent their experiences to themselves and to the world at large in ways that are specifically Tsimshian.

MAKING MEMORIES

Remembering and the recollection of memories are social practices as much as psychological processes; so is forgetting. Whether a “Proustian evocation” stimulated by a smell/taste/feeling/sound/sight that opens up a past moment with vivid but fleeting immediacy; or a memorized recital of a formal liturgy, the shaping, storage, and retrieval of memories is experienced within a cultural milieu.⁸

Formally recited *adaox* (matrilineally inherited owned family histories which document rights in material and symbolic property) are important examples of culturally significant and highly valued stored memories in Tsimshian communities. The *adaox*, and their invocation at formal events, are a formal genre structured by conventions that reflect conversational patterns in *Sm'algyax*.⁹ On the other hand, casual reminiscences of a pleasant day recalled by friends when an almost-forgotten place name is mentioned, and other similarly informal memories, are from the genre of Tsimshian conversation, also culturally shaped, though not governed by the strict protocol governing the recital of an *adaox*. The most interesting genre of our study is somewhere in the middle-ground between these extreme cases. *'Tsal ya'ansk* are familiar anecdotes told and re-told, shaped to accentuate the characters and incidents described, and often passed on to keep alive the memory of family and friends, even when they are no longer living. These seem to be a selection of the more casual stories that are shaped into “character anecdotes” through many tellings. These have some of the same features as the formal lineage histories and even more in common with the lively traditional stories of *Txaamsm* or *Ts'ak* (“trickster” figures); experienced story-tellers apparently sometimes used these as *'tsal ya'ansk*,¹⁰ lively additions and elaborations within widely known stories in their repertoire. For example, both of the authors have heard many times the story we call “Little Pete Shoots Two Deer With A Single Bullet;” and it is simple to prompt someone who knows to tell

⁸ A. L. Becker, 1979.

⁹ Seguin (Anderson) 1984 discusses these conversationally based patterns.

¹⁰ *'Tsal ya'ansk* has a range of meanings, including exaggeration.

how “Little Pete Shot the Ganjie and Lost the Biggest Halibut Ever.” Tammy’s paternal grandfather, Ambrose Robinson, was considered a marvellous story-teller, and people say that he often incorporated “Little Pete” and other local characters into his versions of stories.

There are hundreds of examples of these glimpses of the moments that seem to crystallize the essence of a family member or friend, generally warm and familiar, but occasionally pointed and biting. Some are told by only a few people who were present, or who heard the story from someone who was, and are thus small instances of the sort of respect for authorized testimony that the *adaox* carry to a formal limit. Others are so widely known that they have become the source of nicknames that are used locally. For example, “Gale Warning” was the name that some people used to refer to Tammy’s Big Grandma in some contexts, because for years she was the village Health Inspector. This job entailed weekly visits to every house in the community to inspect its cleanliness; those houses that were not up to standards received warnings, and eventually the house might be cleaned and the householders charged by the Council. When “Gale Warning” was out inspecting, there was a real whirlwind of activity ahead of her! Sometimes just the name is used by insiders, and the significance may have to be explained to others: ‘*Ya’ sm Bilip* is a name that a few people call a man who cooks with great energy and raises a sweat like Philip Douglas did years ago.

We found that people from Hartley Bay offered us a mixture of “casual” reminiscences and a few of the more formalized *txal ya’ansk*, the elaborated anecdotes that could have titles, and that sometimes engender nicknames. The advent of writing, the erosion of story-telling as a widely shared genre, and the tendency to “freeze” traditional materials and to root out contemporary “contaminations” have all worked together to close the corpus of Tsimshian stories. The *txal ya’ansk* may well represent a new generation of episodes of Tsimshian trickster stories and even occasionally *adaox*, waiting to be incorporated to keep them alive. In the material here we contrast a brief excerpt of an *adaox*, a “plain” conversation and a *txal ya’ansk* used as a conversational cap.

NEAS HAIWAALXS

Over the course of her life Louisa Anderson was a daughter, sister, wife, mother, aunt, grandmother, mother-in-law, and friend; she was a piece-worker and wage labourer, and sometimes a fisher; she joined her husband working his trapline and collected, preserved, and pre-

pared much of the food needed by her family; she produced delicate crocheted doilies and afghans, supported the United Church Women, and sang for years in the church choir. She was, in sum, many things, but one of the facets of her identity, which was central to her, was that she was also a Tsimshian Chief,¹¹ and responsible for several high-ranking names entrusted to her by her maternal grandfather, Walter Wright of Kitselas.¹² Louisa's respect for her heritage and her efforts to ensure that the names were properly carried on were major themes in her life. Her involvement started early; when she was a small girl her grandfather took her to a feast in Bella Bella, and she recalled seven decades later that she was frightened and hid under the table.¹³ Throughout her life she attended and hosted feasts, contributed generously in money (as appropriate to the holder of a male chief's name) and in goods to be distributed (more usual for women), to feasts given by the Blackfish, and served as a cook and supervisor of the protocol for distributions and naming for the Blackfish, and sometimes also for the Raven Clan in which she was eventually adopted and given a name.¹⁴ Throughout, she maintained the knowledge of descent and protocol that made her a valued expert. Two months before she died she was

¹¹ Louisa Anderson had a Chief's name that would generally have been a man's name; in her generation she was the one who had this responsibility. She told us that when she was young she really wanted a different name, which was a woman's name, but they told her she had to have a man's name, *Neas Hairwaalks*.

¹² Louisa's maternal grandmother, Rhoda Wright Bates, was Walter Wright's oldest sister, and in Tsimshian kinship terminology he was her "grandfather." The eligible individuals of the intervening generation did not live to take on the names passed down (Wright lived to be 104 years old). Walter Wright had seven sisters, and their marriages appear to have been arranged to create or renew relationships in each of the communities that figured in the *adaox* belonging to the line; his sisters' descendants are now represented in Hartley Bay, Kitkatla, Port Simpson, Kitselas, and Kitsumkalum and also in Nisga'a and Gitksan communities and New Metlakatla, Alaska. Wright allowed his *adaox* to be written down by a non-aboriginal man from Terrace, Will Robinson, and that version is available under the title *Men of Medek*. He also allowed William Beynon to record parts of it several times, and there are a number of versions in various archives as told by him or other members of this large crest group. While Louisa was born in Kitkatla and spent part of her childhood and her entire adult life in Hartley Bay, she identified herself as 'from' Kitselas. When Clarence Anderson was about 14, Walter Wright visited his sister Rhoda at the Cannery on the Skeena where the family was staying for the season; he asked to take Clarence back with him to be trained, and identified the woman he would marry in Kitselas. Wright's sister told him that Clarence was just a boy and not ready to get married. Clarence eventually succeeded to Wright's name.

¹³ Louisa told Margaret Anderson about this occasion; she said that there was a man there who had done something "out of line," and that they kept calling his name out and pounding with a talking stick, and each time they said his name they put a thousand dollars in from of him; six times, and when they finished he couldn't lift up his head.

¹⁴ When Louisa's mother died, she was raised for a time by her father's sister, Evelyn Ridley, who was a *Ganhada* (Raven clan member). When Louisa received her Raven name this was mentioned as one of the reasons. Louisa later moved to Hartley Bay to live with her grandparents, Peter and Rhoda Bates.

insistent on having us take her for a trip to visit her cousin Sarah Shaw in Kitamaat Village “to straighten out the names.” The following excerpts from the formal *adaox* to which Louisa was privileged through her Blackfish Chief name *Neas Haiwaałxs* exemplify this most formal of the genres of Tsimshian discourse.¹⁵

Excerpts from the *Adaoxs Neas Haiwaałxs*

When I was a boy my Grandfather, who was Neas Hiwas,
taught me the history of Medeek.
. . . And since that day
the Men of Medeek have taken their right
to wear the head-dress of the One Horned Goat.
That head-dress is the insignia of the scion of the Royal House;
the emblem that denoted the youth who would, in due time,
be raised to the seat of rulership.

. . . So, in obedience, the Men of Medeek
have taken and used that strange crown —
Goat head with a single horn rising from the centre of the forehead;
while down the right cheek a vivid streak of red
stands out against the silver whiteness of the hair.

. . . In due course Neas Hiwas called a Council.
In that Council Neas Hiwas
brought to memory the gift of The Goat Crown . . .
Here was a like instance.
“From this day,” he announced,
“I take as my head-dress the head of Medeek, the Grizzly Bear.
It is the Law that when men die in a great disaster
those who follow after them
have the right to take unto themselves
the name of the destroyer.
Thus, from this day on,
I take the name of Medeek.
It shall be the crest of my Totem.”

(excerpts from pp. 1-21, *Men of Medeek*, Will Robinson, as told by Walter Wright, [written during 1935-36].

¹⁵ The name is spelled here following the current orthography with the pronunciation that Louisa used; in the excerpt it is spelled as Will Robinson wrote it, *Neas Hiwas*.

Such *adaox* are formal, public, and freighted with implications for territories, privileges, and political relations among actors and groups. They are largely restricted to the contexts in which these matters are being publicly transferred or transformed. Except for the requisite linkage to establish prerogatives, these are stories that resist the agency of contemporaries. As *Neas Haiwaalks*, Louisa provided her energy and moral and financial support to a wide net of relatives from her own crest, and was a respected guest and witness at the doings of other crests. This activity was largely within the context of memorials and feasts; outside these arenas a Tsimshian Chief engaged in the same range of activities as everyone else, including hard work from an early age. Conversations such as the one in the following section reveal the personal experiences of the speakers.

Louisa worked in the fishing industry from the time she was a child until she and her husband Alfred retired from fishing when his eyesight became poor. They made many friends at these jobs over the years, and the memories of their experiences were often a subject of reminiscence. The following conversation between Louisa Anderson and Lucy Robinson ('Dah) concludes with a humorous *'txal ya'ansk*, which seemed to provide a structured element to conclude the talk; this "parting shot" was welcome, if not essential to the conversation.

*Standing beside my Grandmother Putting the Fish in the Cans*¹⁶

LOUISA TO 'DAH I forget how old I was when I started to work, you know [a job] but I did help my grandmother in Claxton a long time ago. I don't know how much I made then. Then we went back out [to Kitkatla] — after my mother died, and I started to work for my own.

If I recall it right, it was in Kermode [Lowe Inlet/Claxton] where I started. My starting wage was 35 cents an hour.

'DAH I can't remember how much I made when I started.

LOUISA Well, when work was over, I don't know how much money I had made, and I gave it to my grandfather, that was money to buy my clothes. Well, after that, we were living in Butedale. Work [there] didn't start at eight o'clock in the morning, it was six o'clock. Gee, we worked a long day! That was when I made my own money, and I spent it on myself, I bought my clothes.

'DAH That *Sxatiin* [foreman, from the Nass]; he'd walk in the morning [to wake up the workers for the morning shift], and sometimes he'd

¹⁶ From a taped interview in *Sma'lgayax*, with Louisa Anderson and Lucy Robinson; translated by Tammy Blumhagen.

go in the evening, six o'clock to wash fish [when there was so much fish they needed an extra shift; the women who washed fish were the first ones to go to work].

LOUISA Yeah, yeah, in Claxton, yeah.

'DAH He'd bang on the door — "Time to go to work."

LOUISA That was the boss at the time, in Claxton, he was the boss.

'DAH That was when we were crazy, we still weren't out working yet.

LOUISA I was helping my grandmother already then. Ernie Janzen stacked up two boxes for me to stand on, you know where the tray was, I was standing beside my grandmother putting the fish in the cans.

'DAH I really didn't, it was just recently, it wasn't until I got married, that I quit gillnetting, then I started working in the fish plant.

LOUISA Gee, so you were working on a boat, a seine boat.

'DAH I was a cook [on a seine boat]; I don't know many years I worked on the seine boat.

LOUISA It was a long time, hey.

'DAH A long time. Two years before [her father died], that's when I moved on with Stanley [her brother]. I heard what Ida was saying, that she wanted to cook on the boat, that's when I told Stanley, I asked him and that's when I moved on.

LOUISA And I was there a long time at N.P., before I quit working; and I didn't make much for the amount of work we did, working in the packing room. I still worked at it with arthritis in my hands, and when we quit, I'd go seining with Alfred, fishing down south.

The conversation above includes several pieces of interesting information, but it has little shape or structure. After spending a few minutes in this sort of factual reminiscence, the tape was concluded by a much more dramatic anecdote that had its main link to the preceding in the topic of boats:

Oh My Gosh, The Wolves Had Eaten Cecil

'DAH We took the boat to go berry-picking, close to that place called, *gala'haitk*. *No'oh* pulled up right away, that's where we landed to pick the berries, there weren't many berries there so we packed up to go again. We travelled along for awhile, and not long after, we heard wolves. *No'oh* said "oh my gosh." Every once in awhile we'd hear the wolves, then *No'oh* would say "oh my gosh!" She thought the wolves had eaten Cecil. He was out with Frank, trapping. That was Frank's crew, up the river. That's where they went, and it was close to where we heard the wolves. I don't know what time we returned home. We

went back to Old Town, not long after. They came home too. We couldn't stop laughing, because *No'oh* was crying. She thought the wolves had eaten Cecil.

DISCUSSION

The web of shared knowledge from ordinary conversations, the insider savvy needed to interpret nicknames and anecdotes, and a commitment to the system of social relations encoded in the *adaox* are among the elements that are more or less widely shared by those people who comprise "Hartley Bays," or "The Tsimshian." A community is as much such a set of shared conversations as it is a place on a map. Newcomers to Hartley Bay are generally given access to the public varieties of these; use of *Sm'algyax* generally excludes outsiders from the private varieties. Translations and exigeses are frequently offered for the speeches at feasts, but less frequently for casual conversations. *Sm'algyax* is sometimes used to keep people from understanding, as when fishers use it on their radios to discuss success and plans.

An anonymous reviewer for the Royal Commission commented on the dearth of information in our work on negative events and sensitive topics. This is an accurate observation, and an important one. Over her life Louisa Anderson suffered the loss of three newborn infants and a young child, experienced grief, hardships, and sorrows, worked from childhood, putting in long shifts at exhausting and sometimes dangerous jobs in canneries, endured the indignities of racism and was excluded from many of the opportunities that life might have afforded her had she started her life in another time, place, or race. It is also true that over her life she acquired much knowledge about sensitive topics, and she was as well aware of the lapses and failings of those around her as of her own, about which she sometimes grieved with those very close to her. However, neither the 'confessional' nor 'expose' genres are indigenous to Tsimshian *public* discourse (though they are probably as widely practised *privately* among the Tsimshian as anywhere else). The unwillingness to indulge in these genres in public (or 'for the record' by way of a tape recording in private) is linked to the pervasive influence of the feast complex, and to the practices in that system to deal with shame. When someone is publicly shamed s/he might "wash" by giving a feast and distributing property to the guests, but once this is done it "shuts the mouths" of the witnesses, and closes the topic for good.

In general, no one raises lapses of behaviour that occurred privately in the public arena of the feast, and to do so would be a challenge to an entire group of people; people may know the foibles of their clan siblings perfectly well, and this information may even influence their deliberations about succession within the group, but clan members would unite vigorously against anyone who raised such issues in a public context. So it is not to be expected that people who respect Tsimshian values would agree to tape record material that would reflect poorly on themselves or others in their community. While among close family and friends the knowledge of pain and sorrow may be shared privately, public memories are filtered, at least in Hartley Bay. Being able to shape and control public representations is integral to the collective celebration of shared community. It is useful to observe that such communal memory-shaping underlies the reflexive self-construction of a small community such as Hartley Bay, as the community presents its face to those who view it.

We began this project focused largely on descriptive goals — we wanted to put together a picture of a family from conversations with members of the family and people who knew them in different ways, and to make this accessible to people who don't understand Tsimshian culture. We knew our subject intimately, and we tried to leave ourselves open to contradictions and complexity and to seeing how people speak from and to situated perspectives such as shared gender, age, and cultural knowledge. In making the tape-recordings that are the primary research material for our study, Tammy repeatedly experienced the following scenario: the participants would spend thirty or forty minutes casually talking about a topic, mentioning dozens of interesting points. Then they would tell Tammy they were ready, and would provide a brief, "sanitized" and usually rather stiff and formal exchange on the topics selected. This is exactly the same experience that many people working in this area have had; the use of tape-recorders is very much like the most formal feast context, and preparations are careful and the event is firmly stage-managed. That does not mean that the material is not reliable, but it is certainly not spontaneous.

The use of audio or video tape-recorders sometimes seems to afford the potential for a direct and "unfiltered" record of language or cultural behaviour. People who use these tools regularly are well aware that this is not the case, and the process of collecting materials for this study has demonstrated clearly that it is not simply the "outsider" which engenders increased formality. At least in Hartley Bay, the face that is presented to the rest of the world is carefully crafted, and a

permanent record such as a recording is definitely categorized as available for outsiders.

The court in the recent Delgam Uukw case suggested that anthropologists and other researchers who work within communities were not reliable because they become “advocates” for the people they researched. Researchers who work with written materials were accorded more credibility by that court. In privileging the written over the oral and the external over the internal perspective, the court was employing everyday ideas from elite culture. One of the responsibilities of people who do research in this context is to de-mystify the process, making obvious the constructedness of any form of scholarship, and making it clear that reliance on the written materials left by people who had little understanding of what they were seeing is not more “objective” than reliance on the oral materials of experts from within the culture being discussed; both have limits and need to be interpreted, and both are pre-shaped by assumptions and intentions. The court’s naive assumption of a “cinéma vérité” process in research is abetted by academics who obscure their active role in the writing of their articles and books, allowing readers to see them as direct or “objective” records of events.

While we have made use of tape-recorders, transcriptions, and “the literature,” the making of this article has been like the process of “making memories.” The people we worked with were thoughtful and careful in what they allowed to be recorded, and we have further selected, shaped, and established emphases in the raw material that we had available to convey as clearly as we could the realities of the lives that we were exploring. That *is* how memories are made. It is also how research is made, and this needs to be acknowledged.

REFERENCES CITED

- Asad, Talal
1990 Ethnography, Literature, & Politics: Some Readings and Uses of Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*.
- Becker, A. L.
1979 Text-Building, Epistemology and Aesthetics in Javanese Shadow Theatre, in A. L. Becker and A. A. Yengoyan, eds. *The Imagination of Reality*.
- Clifford, James
1988 The Predicament of Culture, James Clifford and George Marcus (eds.), 1986 *Writing Culture: the poetics and politics of Ethnography*.
- Coombe, Rosemary
1993 “Cultural and Intellectual Properties: Occupying the Colonial Imagination,” in *Polar: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, vol. 15.

- Crapanzano, Vincent
1986 "Hermes' Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description" in *Writing Culture*.
- Fabian, Johannes
1983 *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*.
- Foster, Hal
"For a Concept of the Political in Contemporary Art, in *Recordings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics*.
- Geertz, Clifford
1988 *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*.
- Minh-ha, Trinh T.
1987 "The Politics of Representations of Other Peoples: Beyond the "Salvage" Paradigm, in Hal Foster (ed.), *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*.
-
- 1989 *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*.
- McIntosh, Peggy
1989 *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack, Peace and Freedom*, July/August 1989, pp. 10-12.
- Owen, Craig
1983 "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism, in Foster (ed.) *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Post-Modern Culture*.
- Rabinow, Paul
1986 *Representations are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology*, in Clifford and Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture*.
- Said, Edward
1978 *Orientalism*.
-
- 1989 "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors," *Critical Inquiry*.
- Seguin, Margaret (Anderson)
1984 *Lest there be no Salmon*, in M. Seguin (ed.), *The Tsimshian: Images of the Past, Views for the Present*, UBC Press, Vancouver.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty
1988 *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*
-
- 1989 "Who Claims Alterity?" in B. Kruger and P. Mariani, eds., *Remaking History*.
- Todd, Loretta
1990 "Notes on Appropriation," *Parallelogramme*, volume 16, no. 1, pp. 24-32.
- Williams, Raymond
1980 "Means of Communication as Means of Production" in *Problems in Materialism and Culture*.