DREAMSPEAKER

B.C. Region, DIAND — Fall 1998

IN THIS ISSUE:

People of the Coyote

In this performance of the teaching story How Turtle Set the Animals Free, Eagle is portrayed by Richard Kenoras, Turtle by Madeline Kenoras and Muscrat by young Vanessa Mitchell.

Photo by Barb Marchand

by Renae Morriseau, Saulteau/Cree Nation

"The Okanagan People are traditionally known as the People of the Coyote. Sen'klip in Okanagan means Coyote." (quotation from Sen'klip promotional material)

Creativity thrives when both inspiration and cultural integrity are intact. For the Sen'klip Native Theatre Company, its eleventh year of production, training, and performance represents the continued success of bringing Okanagan culture to on-stage theatrical presentations.

Lynn Phelan, Artistic Director and Manager of Sen'klip since 1987, believes that the company has maintained its mandate over the years by providing culturally relevant plays. "Our commitment grows out of the need to provide a means where Okanagan people can preserve, express and promote our ongoing cultural heritage," Phelan states. "We present issues and ideas to benefit all people."

In 1987 Sen'klip began as a Native Youth Summer Theatre Project with its parent organization, the Vernon Native Friendship Centre. This part of Sen'klip programming gave first-time employment and training to youth in theatre productions and drama.

Jenny Marchand, 23, began working in 1990 in the Native Youth Summer Theatre Project. Her skills in acting and stage production in 1990 gave her the opportunity to return in 1992 as a mentor to young people who are beginning their work with Sen'klip. The Youth Mentorship Program, which started in 1992, allowed individuals like Jenny to take on the roles as seasoned performers and pass their skills on to those just starting out. "The people I was working with were my friends," says Marchand, who continues to work with Sen'klip. "I knew more than them and that was really cool, to work as a teacher."

The company's active research into culture and lifestyle has resulted in a style of theatre where oral tradition is combined with standard theatre practices. In 1994 its feature production How Names Were Given set the style of performance for the company in school touring and contracted performances. These productions incorporated Okanagan language and focused on the "chaptikwl" or teaching stories. The demand from schools throughout the province of B.C. has made these productions a core feature in the company's annual programming.

In 1991 Sen'klip designed and constructed an outdoor mainstage for performances at Newport Beach on the Okanagan First Nation's Vernon reserve. Inspired by the legend that the earth was once a woman before being transformed, the 100-foot-long landscaped Earthwoman stage was designed with artistic theatre concepts in mind. Various levels trimmed with indigenous plants accent the body of a "woman" lying on her side, and intricately inlaid rocks create the final touch of Earthwoman's close-eyed human face.

The company today has developed a unique cultural perspective and achieved a balance in its programs and productions to provide a sound foundation for its work. Sen'klip continues to operate as a viable organization and is supported by its board of directors, elders committee and local community. Together with past achievements in training and development, the Sen'klip Native Theatre Company has developed a strong foundation for fulfilling its mandate in the

years to come.

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DREAMSPEAKER

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Joint venture means jobs and stability for Nanaimo First Nation

For coastal First Nations, shellfish harvesting has been part of their traditional lifestyle for many generations. Here, employees prepare oysters for shipments to international markets.

by Barbara Hager, Cree/Métis

British Columbia is known around the world for its superior quality of clams, oysters and other shellfish. Few consumers are aware, however, that the majority of the province's shellfish is harvested by First Nations diggers, including members of the Nanaimo First Nation.

In 1997, the Nanaimo First Nation took its economic and traditional interest in shellfish harvesting a step further -- it bought 23 percent interest in a company called Unique Seafoods, making it a major player in the shellfish depuration, processing, and exporting business. Unique Seafoods will add shellfish farming to its growing list of ventures this year, when it begins operations at a shellfish farm south of Nanaimo.

The Nanaimo First Nation and Unique Seafoods, Inc. partnership began to evolve in the mid-1990s. The Band's Fisheries Council was looking for economic development ventures that would provide Band members with jobs, and offer a return on the community's investment. With the support of the Chief and Council, a group of Fisheries Council members began discussions

with Tom Harper, the owner of Unique Seafoods

Despite some hurdles -- including convincing a bank to loan the Band the money and selling the project to community members -- the Nanaimo First Nation went into business with Unique Seafoods in the fall of 1997.

“The partnership was a success from day one,” according to Al Anderson, Economic Development Director for the Nanaimo First Nation.

The figures clearly show that Unique Seafoods has grown significantly since selling stock to the Band. In 1996, the year before the joint venture, the company processed and sold 225,000 kilograms of clams. The following year the figure rose to 360,000 kilograms, and in 1998 the company expects to process 450,000 kilograms of shellfish.

The benefits have been evident from the start as well. Unique Seafoods has a consistent supply of shellfish and the Nanaimo First Nation has access to a bigger percentage of the shellfish industry. The Band is not limited, as it was in the past, to harvesting and selling shellfish to a non-Aboriginal processing plant -- it is now an actual stakeholder in the company. The Nanaimo First Nation also receives a monthly dividend from its shares, and more of the community members are working steadily as harvesters and employees of the company.

Tom Harper, the majority shareholder in the company, felt that the partnership would be viable when he was first approached by the Nanaimo First Nation. “Shellfish is a difficult business,” says Harper, “particularly the marketing and exporting.”

He points out that each party brought something important to the partnership -- Harper had the plant, staff and a distribution network; the Nanaimo First Nation had a stake in the resource, a long history in shellfish harvesting, and a strong interest in being an active player in the processing and exporting business.

Jeff Thomas, a Councillor for the Nanaimo First Nation, is a former seine fisherman. “We started looking at opportunities in the shellfish industry because we knew we couldn’t depend on fishing any longer. Lots of First Nations have shorefront reserves, and have access to shellfish in their own communities.”

Thomas explains that economic development is a balancing act of pursuing job creation and profits. The community is beginning to look at ways to tie education and training programs to the shellfish industry. As the company grows, there will be opportunities for First Nations marine biologists and business administrators.

“The reason we put so much energy into this venture is to create employment for our community members and those from other First Nations,” Thomas says.

The Nanaimo First Nation is already experiencing success with its investment in Unique Seafoods. With the support of the Chief and Council, the community, and financing from the Bank of Montreal, the Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation is looking at other opportunities that will bring prosperity and stability to the community.

Perhaps that opportunity is not too far off. “I feel confident that this company will continue to thrive with First Nations involvement,” Harper says. In fact, he believes his First Nations business partners may someday become majority shareholders. “I would be happy if I eventually became an employee of this company. I know that it would be in good hands.”

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Trails blazed by our Ancestors

The Gitwinksihlkw Four Crest Dance Group celebrates the initialing of the Nisga'a Final Agreement in New Aiyansh, B.C., on August 4, 1998.

by Edna Tait, Nisga'a Nation

Tuesday, August 4, 1998, marked an historic day of celebration as tears of laughter, tears of joy, and tears of sorrow swept across the congregation of descendants of the Nisga'a Nation. The deafening beats of the traditional box drumming echoed through the Nass Valley as though to deliver a message of victory. Over one hundred years of silence was broken as singing and cheering accompanied the witnessing of the official initialing of British Columbia's first modern-day treaty, which introduced the government of the Nisga'a Nation.

All in attendance experienced incredible differing emotions based on their remembrance of their late relatives who made significant contributions to the land question issues, e.g., Chiefs and matriarchs, residential school survivors, urban residents. It wasn't possible for some to contain their tears for loved ones who have gone on, as we named them during a moment of silence honouring them.

Once again the voices of the Ayuukwhl Nisga’a -- the traditional laws of the Nisga’a – can be heard. Once again their language can be spoken with great pride and dignity. And once again, for as long as the river flows many generations of Nisga’a will flourish. It was a good day to be Nisga’a. Tooyaksiy Nisim. Wii Ksim Smax, Wilps Wii Gadim Xsgaak ksi witkw gwiy. (Thank each and every one of you. Edna Tait, from the House of Wii Gadim Xsgaak.)

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Unity Ride of 1998

by Renae Morriseau, Saulteau/Cree Nation

Saulteau First Nation Chief Stewart Cameron and Treaty 8 Tribal Chief Judy Maas on site of the 1998 Unity Ride and Pemmican Days.

"The ride is a way to bring our people together and to revive the traditional teachings of our Elders." (Chief Ernest Sundown, Joseph Bighead First Nation, Saskatchewan)

Fifty Aboriginal people on horseback, and a multitude of runners and supporters took part in the Unity Ride of 1998 from Sunchild First Nations in Alberta to the Saulteau First Nation in northern British Columbia. They made their way through the wind-blown prairies, steep hills, and hot pavement from June 29 to July 31, 1998, to revive the sacred teachings of our elders.

"Many elders through time have voiced concern in regards to the depletion of our traditional customs and languages,"says Joseph Bighead First Nation Chief Ernest Sundown, the Unity Ride host and participant. "We need to remember it is our duty to keep our First Nations heritage alive for our children and future generations. We have to work in unity to keep it alive."

And in 'unity' he did for two years. His involvement in the unity ride journey began with the prophecies of the Lakota Sioux.

The birth of a White Buffalo in 1994 introduced the Joseph Bighead Cree Nation to the spiritual leader of the Sioux, Chief Arvol Looking Horse, the 19th Generation Keeper of the White Buffalo Calf pipe. Chief Looking Horse had long been working towards the unity, healing and reconciliation which was prophesied by the birth of the female white buffalo. Through discussions with Chief Looking Horse, Cree Chief Sundown agreed to host the Unity Ride concept through western Canada until the year 2000.

The first time the Unity Ride came to Canada was in 1996. It started at Wahpeton Dakota Reserve in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, and ended in Wyoming in South Dakota. The 1996 journey was to begin mending the 'Sacred Hoop' broken during the Wounded Knee massacre that took place over a hundred years ago and to reunite relatives who are direct descendants of Chief Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse -- Indian Chiefs involved with Wounded Knee massacre in 1890.

In supporting the efforts of Chief Arvol Looking Horse, Chief Sundown and the Joseph Bighead Sasknorthern drummers believed that bringing the Unity Ride to Western Canada would unite not only Aboriginal people of different Nations, but educate the next generation that will be carrying on the traditions and customs.

On late Friday, July 31, 1998, the Unity riders entered the Saulteau First Nations territory. They were greeted by members of the community, their Tribal Chief Judy Maas and Saulteau First Nation Chief Stewart Cameron. "It was like not seeing your brothers and sisters for a long time," recalls Chief Cameron. "I was honored to have them end their journey on our territory."

The Unity riders were greeted with ceremony, prayers, songs, dances and food. The event correlated with the Saulteau First Nation's Pemmican Days -- an annual event in which treaty monies are be handed out, culture celebrated, and ceremonies practiced.

One of the key organizers of the month-long journey was Ernest Sundown's sister, Marianne Sundown. "For 1999 we will be heading south to the Okanagan territory. We are now currently speaking to members of the Penticton Indian Band and linking all

the Aboriginal communities in between.”

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Nootka Merchandising - cashing in on cedar chips

Nootka workers add wood to the vast stacks of lumber waiting to be processed.

by Jolayne Marsh

Everybody wins when a First Nation and an industry heavy-hitter form a joint venture. Scott Clarke, president of the Clarke Group of forest companies, knows this very well. “It makes sense politically to do business with First Nations. Governments are more likely to have the initiative to do something for you if you are linked up with a First Nation. They give you more of an ear,” he says. The First Nation often contributes a strong and dedicated human resources base, knowledge and history of the land, while the outside company can bring to the venture the experience in business and management necessary to turn a good idea into a successful venture.

This is certainly true in the case of the link forged between the Mowachaht/Muchalaht people and the Clarke Group. Emphasizing their industry experience, Clarke says, “Our company has been around for 25 years. We’ve been doing it for a long time.” The resulting venture is a

new cedar merchandising and value-added manufacturing facility now gracing the handsome harbour of Tahsis on northern Vancouver Island, producing top-quality wood products out of waste wood. Nootka Merchandising opened shop in June of 1996.

The company is owned equally by all members of the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation, so earnings go directly into Band general revenue. The current arrangement allows the First Nation a percentage of the mill profits. The Tahsis mill merchandises cedar pulp and low-grade shingle logs to make cedar chips, shake and shingle blocks bound for the American construction market. All waste wood, specifically red cedar from which the mill makes the shingles and shakes, is provided by a contract with Doman Western Forest Products.

How did this handy arrangement come together? Almost five years ago the Clarke Group installed the infrastructure for the mill, to the tune of nearly a half-million dollars, after being wooed by the promise of a 40,000-cubic-metre contract for timber. The Band members, in return, invested their knowledge of the industry, found the location for the mill and secured the fibre contracts.

Scott Clarke admits it was him who first approached the First Nation, although he explained that Larry Andrews had been nosing around the area looking for joint ventures. “The idea was to get Native employees,” says Andrews, a Nootka Merchandising board director and Hereditary Chief of the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation. Although Mowachaht/Muchalaht people have first right-of-refusal for jobs at the shake mill, the staff is mostly non-Native. Why? Most members live in Tsaxana, a new Mowachaht/Muchalaht reserve community near Gold River. The community is very strong culturally, and members don’t often want to move from their pretty hometown into an unfamiliar non-Native community. Many feel moving would displace them from their cultural heritage.

That doesn’t stop the First Nation from making this mill successful. On the contrary, the company has recently applied for a value-added timber sale licence to secure fibre for the future expansion of the operation. The additional fibre, combined with the expansion plans, would increase the employment at Nootka Merchandising by six additional employees, to a total of 18 full-time employees.

In January 1998, Nootka Merchandising’s mill installed two short-block primary breakdown saws, which produce 18" x 3/4" boards to be used in the off-site production of clear cedar panelling. The chips produced at the operation are sold to the Avenor mill in Gold River. Future plans for the Nootka Merchandising mill include the addition of equipment that will allow further on-site processing of the 18" boards.

Green River Log Sales, Ltd., the largest producer of shake and shingle products in the world and another Clarke Group member, distributes Nootka Merchandising’s end products. This successful family of forest-industry companies got its start when Mr. Clarke Sr., Scott’s father, bought out his own father’s mill in 1969. Scott and his brother Louie

joined the team in 1979 for a major expansion of the business, which is now known as the Clarke Group. After all these years Scott still calls business “fun,” and that’s the most important thing.

You might not recognize the Tahsis waterfront now. It has expanded to meet the needs of a small community, and has done so very well. If the Mowachaht/Muchalaht people have anything to do with it, the expansion in their sleepy little logging town will not stop here.

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DREAMSPEAKER

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IN THIS ISSUE:

KMC - a model for cooperative business relationships

In KMC crew installing residential gas pipeline in Saanich.

by Barbara Hager, Cree/Métis

In 1989, Cowichan Tribes Chief Dennis Alphonse posed a question to Art Willms, president of Westcoast Energy -- how could the introduction of natural gas on Vancouver Island become an opportunity for employment and economic growth for his community? It was a topic that both Alphonse and Willms took very seriously. Nine years later, that initial discussion has evolved into Khowutzun Mustimuhw Contractors Ltd. (KMC), an

Aboriginal-owned company that has captured 35 percent of the natural gas distribution system installation contracts on Vancouver Island and has a workforce of 50, of whom 45 are Aboriginal.

The Cowichan Tribes had to clear several major hurdles before they could become competitive contractors in the natural gas industry. They needed technical and management training for their Band members, access to close to a million dollars in construction equipment and vehicles, the ability to post bonds when bidding on contracts, and a history of successfully completed installation contracts. Facing these formidable challenges, many contractors would have admitted defeat. Chief Alphonse, however, entered into discussions with Art Willms to develop a plan to achieve these goals.

On June 1, 1990, Alphonse and Willms signed a letter of agreement that supported the participation of the Cowichan Tribes in the natural gas industry. The two entities agreed to work cooperatively in investigating business opportunities in the areas of distribution, installation and maintenance services, ownership in distribution facilities, gas marketing, and ownership in an electrical generation plant.

The Cowichan Tribes recognized that to be a competitive player in the industry, they would need to learn from an established company. In 1991, a partnership was formed between Northern Pipeline Ltd., a non-Aboriginal contractor with a long history of servicing the energy sector in Canada and the United States. A joint-venture partnership was created, with the Cowichan holding 25 percent and Northern Pipeline holding 75 percent of the company. The intention of the venture, which had a five-year time line, was to provide the Cowichan with experience in all aspects of distribution installation. The plan called for the Cowichan Tribes to launch a wholly-owned First Nations distribution installation company at the end of five years to independently pursue its own contracts.

From the earliest days as a 100 percent First Nation-owned company in 1996, KMC was successful in securing Centra Gas contracts. Jac Kreut, President of Centra Gas, points out that in order to win pipeline installation contracts, “a company must be competitive, and proposals must meet established criteria. At the end of the day, KMC proved to be the most competitive contractor.”

Bill Burton, Director of Customer Services for Centra Gas, adds, “We have pipelines throughout Vancouver Island. It’s our priority to participate in communities, whether they are Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.” Burton said that Centra Gas is committed to

building positive long-term relationships with First Nations, for many reasons.

Business relationships between First Nations and corporations are important, according to Burton, because, “they are building blocks for the future. They contribute to capacity building, and they recognize leadership in First Nations communities.”

KMC’s current contract with Centra Gas to install main and residential natural gas pipelines in the Capital Regional District runs through 1999. Today, the company’s ten full-time crews are working to capacity on southern Vancouver Island. Close to 90 percent of the crews are Aboriginal, from Cowichan as well as other First Nations on Vancouver Island and the Mainland.

Employee satisfaction has been high since KMC was launched in 1996. “We have virtually no turnover in our staff,” Field Foreman John Williams proudly declares. He attributes the high morale and personal dedication displayed by KMC staff to the fact that the company is First Nation-owned. “The management and crews work together because there’s a shared sense of ownership, of being part of a team,” Williams said.

Recently, KMC was the successful bidder on a Centra Gas contract to build a portion of the proposed natural gas pipeline from Squamish to Whistler. The $12-million project will start in 1999. Parsons is in discussions with First Nations communities on the Mainland about training and employment opportunities. “There are hundreds of First Nations people who would like to work in the energy sector,” comments Bud Parsons, Operations Manager for KMC.

“We’ve become a very successful Native company,” Williams said, “because we have made a commitment to keeping First Nations people working.”

If KMC is any indication, a successful business venture often begins with a straightforward question between a First Nations representative and the head of a major corporation: “Can we find a way to work together to create an opportunity for employment and economic growth in this First Nations community?” For the Cowichan Tribes, the answer is a resounding yes.

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Vancouver Sunshine Coast First Nations Labour Force Development Society

On May 7, 1998, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the First Nations Chiefs who make up the board of the Vancouver Sunshine Coast First Nations Labour Force Development Society. The MOU outlines a partnership between the Society and DIAND on Income Security Reform. This partnership, the first of its kind in British Columbia, is designed to demonstrate that Aboriginal labour market programs and DIAND social development programs can work together effectively to reorient First Nations welfare systems from passive to active systems to assist employable social assistance recipients who live on reserve. Present for the signing were (left to right): Linden Pinay, Administrator of VSCFNLFDS; Chief Gilbert Hanuse, Klahoose First Nation; Chief Allen Stager, Mount Currie First Nation; Winona Scott, Technician, Musqueam First Nation; Minister Jane Stewart, DIAND; Chief Harry O'Donaghey, N'Quatqua (Anderson Lake) First Nation; Chief Gary Feschuk, Sechelt First Nation; Ann Whonnock, Councillor, Squamish First Nation; Chief Leonard George, Tsleil Waututh (Burrard) First Nation.

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IN THIS ISSUE:

First Nations Big Sister Mentoring Program

Although Amanda Yellowquill (left) isn't a Little Sister anymore, she can recall the good times she had with her Métis Big Sister Rana Le Blanc (right). "She was someone I could talk to," says Amanda. About the new partnership between Big Sisters of B.C. Lower Mainland and the First Nations Big Sister Mentoring Program, Rana says, "I think it's a needed service. Many of our young people can gain a lot more in terms of our cultural world view." Rana and Amanda were matched in 1996 because they shared the same personal history and cultural background.

by Renae Morriseau, Saulteau/Cree Nation

Freedom is reborn within every generation. How it's defined and where it can take you is usually a daunting task. But for a few of our young people, the trip down life's path can be made easier with the help of a mentor.

A mentor typically acts as a sounding board, a friend, and a confidante giving insight into personal matters, and companionship to a younger person. The Big Sisters of B.C Lower Mainland has been providing these human relationships since the late '50s. Its established program has provided long-term benefits for children, youth, volunteers and families. In 1997, about 300 matches were supported; about half of these are with high-risk youth.

Over the years Big Sisters has carried out recruitment and

outreach campaigns to have First Nations women as Big Sister volunteers. Despite these efforts they have not been very successful in recruiting First Nations women.

The First Nations Big Sister Mentoring Program, a new partnership initiative with Aboriginal communities and Big Sisters of B.C. Lower Mainland, is aimed at increasing the involvement of First Nations women in mentoring girls and young women in the Lower Mainland. One of its goals is to review Big Sisters' current programs and policies to reflect the circumstances unique to First Nations. In doing so, the mentoring program hopes to encourage First Nations women to volunteer their time as a Big Sister.

"This partnership will help strengthen cross-cultural understanding, and open new doors for our young people in our communities," Janet Austin, Executive Director of Big Sisters of B.C. Lower Mainland states. "Our goal is to identify the barriers to participation in our program for First Nations women, with a view of closing this gap."

Right now there is an urgent and pressing need for First Nations women to become Big Sisters to First Nations Little Sisters. Currently, there are 52 children of First Nations ancestry enrolled in Big Sisters programs. Most of them express a preference to be matched with a mentor who shares their history and culture.

The concept of mentoring is nothing new to Aboriginal communities. "The idea of passing down cultural knowledge to our young people was and continues to be an integral component of our Aboriginal traditions," states Wendy John, spokesperson and steering committee member for the First Nations Big Sister Mentoring Program. "It provides the tools for our young people to move forward with the spiritual, physical, mental and emotional abilities to sustain our cultural identity."

The ten-member steering committee made up of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal professional women is currently seeking funding to begin the process of training and recruiting First Nations women for the Little Sisters who are in need of a mentor.

"The Big Sisters program, although well established within our society, has had little input or participation from the hundreds of Aboriginal businesses and organizations in B.C.," says Wendy John. "We hope with our fall Big Sister Partnership Feast at the UBC First Nations House of Learning we will be able to begin our recruitment of First Nations women for our Little Sisters."

For further information on the First Nations Big Sister Mentoring Program please call the Big Sisters of B.C. Lower Mainland office at 873-4525.

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National Aboriginal Day

Aboriginal dancers and drummers head down West Georgia Street toward the Vancouver Art Gallery for the opening ceremonies of National Aboriginal Day, June 21, 1998..

Photo by James T. Cooper

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DREAMSPEAKER

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IN THIS ISSUE:

The Housty and Extended Family Potlatch

by Tatiana Housty, Heiltsuk First Nation

Chief Gary Housty in regalia featuring a stunning eagle mask trimmed with ermine.

Singing, dancing, feasting, and the distribution of property are some of the traditional events that occur at a potlatch. Beginning in 1885, Canadian law prohibited potlatching and related activities, Native Canadians were criticized for potlatching and urged to let go of their traditional ways and become more like other Canadians. Although the potlatch continued in secret, much knowledge of tradition was forgotten or lost by the time the prohibition was lifted in 1951. Fragments of knowledge were all that remained by the 1970s.

The revival of the potlatch was evident at the Housty potlatch held at the Wawiskas Community Hall in Bella Bella, B.C., May 4 and 5, 1998. An immense screen backdrop displaying the family crest of wolf and eagle set the scene, concealing dancers, gifts and masks. Traditional foods such as crab, herring eggs, seaweed, oolichan (candlefish), clams and fish made up the feast that was served to four hundred people.

Hosted by Chief George Housty, the potlatch celebrated and acknowledged many events, particulary the dressing of a new chief. A highlight of the ceremonies was the transference of chieftainship from George Housty to his eldest son, Gary. Gary danced in his father's regalia to be initiatied and recognized as Chief. For Gary Housty, the role of Chief is an important voice for preserving and nurturing the culture and environment it speaks for.

Dances, songs and masks are important and entertaining aspects of a potlatch. In Heiltsuk tradition each dance and song is private property. However, with diminished cultural traditions, families who own songs and dances willingly share to support those without. The history and story of a dance is usually explained before it is performed. There were many dances throughout the two-day event. Family crests of raven, wolf, eagle and whale adorn intricately designed button blankets. Crest designs are usually inherited and refer to the stories and songs that define the history of the family.

The "washing ceremony" is a traditional potlatch event that provides psychological healing. If a serious accident or life-threatening incident occurs in a persons's life, they are "washed" of the incident. Tribute is paid to those who helped avoid disaster. Recounting the details and publicly acknowledging the incident helps to put it behind them. One particularly adventurous member of the family was relieved to not be involved in the washing ceremony for the first time in many potlatches!

In cultures that come from an oral tradition, the public display of events such as new births, coming of age, memorials, and name giving are an important way to let people know what changes are taking place. Potlatches are a great way to communicate within a community. In order to honor special relationships to the family, adoptions are an important part of the ceremony. Adoptions are usually formalized by giving a gift to the adopted persons. The Housty family adopted twenty-four new members in one evening!

Traditionally, at the end of a potlatch, Hereditary Chiefs speak and the floor is left open for anyone. The speeches are of great importance as they give members of the community and guests a chance to communicate to a wide audience. One such guest was Dr. David Suzuki. His speech urged the people of Bella Bella to preserve their traditions and hold on to their history and culture into the twenty-first century. To honor their friendship, the Suzukis were adopted into the Housty family.

The potlatch ended at 3:00 a.m. after items like jarred salmon, preserved food, blankets and household goods were distributed to all the guests. Guests help to redistribute wealth to everyone,

including those in need. The two-day event brought the community together and provided an arena for stories to be shared and gratitude to be expressed. The community pulled together to support a family and celebrate the traditions that make their people strong. The revival of the potlatch proves to be an important occasion te celebrate traditions into the twenty-first century.

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