

# Kaska

Data source: eHRAF

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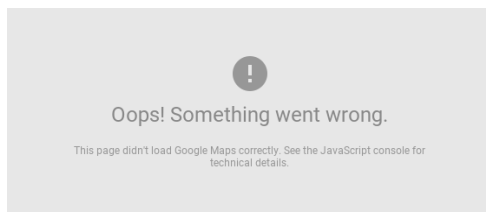
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*\* Secondary Source entry, prepared from a literature review by a Ph.D. RA*

Entry tags: Native American (North American) Religions, Circumpolar Religions, Religious Group

The Kaska are native to the Canadian regions of northwestern British Columbia, southern Yukon, and southwestern Northwest Territories. This entry focuses primarily on the Upper Liard Kaska (located northwest of Lower Post, British Columbia) around the time of 1900, predominantly using reconstructive ethnographic information collected by principal authority anthropologist John Honigmann during field expeditions in the 1940s. For the Kaska, continuous contact with Europeans began in the 1820s at the Hudson Bay Company post Fort Halkett, on Liard River. During this time, Protestant and Catholic missionaries visited the area, but did not start continuous work until the establishment of the mission at McDame Creek on the Dease River in 1926. Consequently, this entry focuses on Kaska beliefs and practices as they existed prior to major changes as a result of contact with foreigners. Traditional Kaska beliefs recognized a variety of supernatural beings, including spirits, souls of the departed, and monsters. However, these beings are not described in substantial detail, perhaps because, as Honigmann (1954:100) notes, "cosmological speculation remained unelaborated in aboriginal Kaska culture." Kaska religious practitioners were known as shamans and specialized in curing, divination, and clairvoyance. Anyone could become a shaman and gain powers by successfully completing a vision quest, during which the individual would dream of animals and communicate with their spirits. Ethnographic materials reference religious ceremonies including the vision quest (undertaken by young men around the time of puberty), as well as summer dances and potlatches. The most important socio-political unit among the Kaska is the local band, which is typically comprised of the matrilineal extended family and led by the head of the family. The Upper Liard River Kaska were divided into two exogamous matrilineal moieties: the Wolf and the Crow. For the Kaska, religion is not a distinct sphere of life. It is interwoven throughout the functioning of society as a whole. Consequently, this entry considers the religious group to be coterminous with the society itself.



Date Range: 1870 CE - 1915 CE

Region: Upper Liard River

Region tags: North America, Arctic and Subarctic, Canada

Upper Liard River, Canada (northwestern British Columbia, southern Yukon, and southwest Northwest Territories) around the time of 1900

## Status of Participants:

✓ Religious Specialists    ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

## Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

— Source 1: Divale, W. 2004. Codebook of Variables for the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample. *World Cultures: The Journal of Cross-Cultural and Comparative Research*.

- Source 2: Murdock, G.P. & Wilson, S.F. (Jul., 1972). Settlement patterns and community organization: Cross-Cultural Codes 3. *Ethnology*, 11(3), 254-295.
- Source 3: Tuden, A. & Marshall, C. (Oct., 1972). Political organization: Cross-cultural codes 4. *Ethnology*, 11(4), 436-464.

#### Online sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=nd12-006>
- Source 1 Description: Honigmann, John Joseph. 1954. "Kaska Indians: An Ethnographic Reconstruction." Yale University Publications In Anthropology. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Source 2 URL: <https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=nd12-008>
- Source 2 Description: Honigmann, John Joseph, and June Helm. 1983. "Kaska." *Handbook Of North American Indians. Subarctic*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution : For sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O.
- Source 3 URL: <https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=nd12-005>
- Source 3 Description: Teit, James Alexander, and June Helm. 1956. "Field Notes On The Tahltan And Kaska Indians: 1912-15." *Anthropologica*, no. 3: 39-171.

## General Variables

### Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

Notes: "Continuous contact for the Kaska Indians began in the 1820s at the Hudson's Bay Company post of Fort Halkett on the Liard River (Honigmann 1949). In 1838 a trading post opened on Dease Lake but survived only three years. Another post started operating on Frances Lake in 1843 but closed in 1851 to be briefly reinstated in 1880. In 1873 gold seekers in large numbers penetrated the Cassiar, as the territory of the Kaska Indians is called, and they came again in 1897-1898 when the country became a route to the Klondike goldfields. White trappers and several trading companies have been in the area since the end of the nineteenth century...Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries visited the Kaska Indians prior to 1926, the year when the Catholic Oblate Father E. Allard established a mission at McDame Creek on Dease River" (Honigmann and Helm, 1983:442-443).



Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1649, Frequency of Internal Warfare (resolved rating), indicates that "internal warfare seems to be absent or rare". SCCS Variable 1654, Pacification, coded the Kaska data to have "ambiguous or contradictory information". Source of information: Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004.



Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1650, Frequency of External Warfare (resolved rating), indicates that "external warfare seems to be absent or rare". SCCS Variable 1654, Pacification, coded the Kaska data to have "ambiguous or contradictory information". Source of information: Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004.

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the Kaska would recruit new members.

Does the religion have official political support

– Yes

Notes: Among the Kaska, religion is not a distinct sphere of life. It is interwoven through the functioning of society as a whole, and this entry considers the religious group to be coterminous with the society itself. Consequently, the religion can be considered to have official political support. Note that there is no singular head of the religion, nor singular head of the polity. Anyone can become a religious practitioner (shaman) after competing a successful vision quest and obtaining enough practice. Band leaders (headmen) are typically the head of large, extended family groupings.

↳ Are the priests paid by polity:

– No

↳ Is religious infrastructure paid for by the polity:

– No

Notes: No religious infrastructure is present.

↳ Are the head of the polity and the head of the religion the same figure:

– No

Notes: There is neither a singular head of the polity, nor head of the religion.

↳ Are political officials equivalent to religious officials:

– No

Notes: According to SCCS Variable 1745 (Religio-political overlap), no formal political office is present (variable 1740, Levels of political hierarchy, coded as 1: no political office present). Source of information: Lang, 1998; Retrieved from Divale, 2004.

## Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Estimated population, numeric: 500

Notes: "Few helpful data are available with which to estimate the aboriginal population of the Kaska tribes. Kroeber, following Mooney, gives a population of 500. Since he allots a somewhat smaller area to the nation than we do his density figure of 1.00 per hundred square kilometers probably needs reduction if it is to conform to the Cassiar as we have defined it" (Honigmann, 1954:23-24).

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: "Every young man received the opportunity to acquire power that would enhance his personal capacities. Hence every man was a potential shaman (meta or nudita; the latter word appears to designate the curing status of the person). Women too could be visited by extraordinary dreams through which they, like men, acquired shamanistic power. By working harder at shamanism some men and a few women acquired a wide reputation as curers, prophets, and conjurers" (Honigmann, 1954:104).

↳ Is there a hierarchy among these leaders:

– No

Notes: There does not appear to be a hierarchy among Kaska shaman. Some shaman are more powerful or effective than others, but there is no formal hierarchy.

↳ Are leaders believed to possess supernatural powers or qualities:

– Yes

Notes: "Every young man received the opportunity to acquire power that would enhance his personal capacities. Hence every man was a potential shaman (meta or nudita; the latter word appears to designate the curing status of the person). Women too could be visited by extraordinary dreams through which they, like men, acquired shamanistic power. By working harder at shamanism some men and a few women acquired a wide reputation as curers, prophets, and conjurers" (Honigmann, 1954:104).

↳ Powers are acquired by individual deeds carried out in the current life:

– Yes

Notes: "By working harder at shamanism some men and a few women acquired a wide reputation as curers, prophets, and conjurers" (Honigmann, 1954:104).

↳ Powers are culturally transmitted from a supernatural being:

– Yes

Notes: "The power to perform shamanistic functions came from 'dreaming of animals in a lonely place'" (Honigmann, 1954:104).

↳ Are religious leaders chosen:

– No

Notes: Shamans were not chosen; anyone could become a shaman after a successful vision quest and practicing their craft (Honigmann, 1954:104-106).

- ↳ Are close followers or disciples of a religious leader required to obediently and unquestionably accept the leader's pronouncements on all matters:
- I don't know

## Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also "oral scriptures" (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of scripture.

## Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– No

Notes: According to Murdock and Wilson (1972, Column 6: Large or Impressive Structures), "there are no structures in the community that are appreciably larger or more impressive than the usual residential dwellings".

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

– No

Notes: According to Murdock and Wilson (1972, Column 6: Large or Impressive Structures), "there are no structures in the community that are appreciably larger or more impressive than the usual residential dwellings".

Are there specific sites dedicated to sacred practice or considered sacred:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of specific sites dedicated to sacred practice.

Are pilgrimages present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of pilgrimages.

## Beliefs

### Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Notes: "It was expected that on the third day (or about three days) after the burning of the corpse, numerous ghosts would come around to get the spirit of the deceased or to search for it" (Teit and Helm, 1956:161).

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: "There were several afterworlds about which informants remained vague" (Honigmann, 1954:136).



Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: "There were several afterworlds about which informants remained vague. Up in the sky lay the realm reserved for the souls of the good where people spoke a language different from that employed on earth. Here the winds [souls] spent the time in play and eating but they did not hunt" (Honigmann, 1954:136).



Afterlife in vaguely defined "above" space:

– Yes

Notes: "There were several afterworlds about which informants remained vague. Up in the sky lay the realm reserved for the souls of the good where people spoke a language different from that employed on earth. Here the winds [souls] spent the time in play and eating but they did not hunt" (Honigmann, 1954:136).



Afterlife in vaguely defined "below" space:

– No

Notes: Honigmann, 1954:136

Reincarnation in this world:

– Yes

Notes: "The wind [soul] enjoyed only a single reincarnation" (Honigmann, 1954:137).



In a human form:

– Yes

Notes: See Honigmann, 1954:137



In animal/plant form:

– No

Notes: Reincarnation is only described as occurring in human form.

↳ In form of an inanimate object(s):

– No

Notes: Reincarnation is only described as occurring in human form.

↳ In non-individual form (i.e. some form of corporate rebirth, tribe, lineage. etc.):

– No

Notes: Reincarnation is only described as occurring in human form.

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Yes

Notes: "The dead were disposed of in four ways, through cremation, inhumation, abandonment, and caching in a tree" (Honigmann, 1954:138).

↳ Cremation:

– Yes

Notes: "The dead were disposed of in four ways, through cremation, inhumation, abandonment, and caching in a tree. In 'really cold' weather the corpse was burned" (Honigmann, 1954:138).

↳ Mummification:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of mummification.

↳ Interment:

– Yes

Notes: "In summer a pit three feet deep was dug with sharp poles to accommodate a corpse. Sometimes inhumation also occurred in winter when a fire had to be built to thaw the ground. The grave, usually located on a ridge, was lined with poles and a layer of spruce brush... Variant patterns of inhumation include use of a hollow-log coffin and the winter practice of burying the deceased within the dwelling. The family thereupon moved camp without demolishing the former residence" (Honigmann, 1954:138-139).

↳ Cannibalism:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of cannibalism.

↳ Exposure to elements (e.g. air drying):

– Yes

Notes: Corpses were exposed to the elements in the sense that they were sometimes simply abandoned (Honigmann, 1954:138).

↳ Feeding to animals:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indication that corpses were fed to animals.

↳ Re-treatment of corpse:

– Yes

Notes: "Following complete destruction [via cremation] the skull and bones were raked together and deposited in a small hole dug on the site of the fire. People planted a stick over the place of interment" (Honigmann, 1954:138).

↳ Other intensive (in terms of time or resources expended) treatment of corpse :

– Yes [specify]: Tree burial

Notes: "For tree burial an ordinary platform cache was constructed between three or four trees. The unflexed corpse, wrapped in a skin, was lifted to the stage and left there" (Honigmann, 1954:140).

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

– Yes

Notes: "If the deceased was a wealthy man and possessed slaves one or more slaves were killed at his death. Their bodies were not burned but thrown away some distance or more often thrown in the river or in water. If the deceased had been a kind man and fond of his slaves he told the people before his death 'Do not kill any of my slaves', and none were killed. They became the slaves of his heir" (Teit and Helm, 1956:158).

↳ Human sacrifices present:

– Yes

Notes: Teit and Helm, 1956:158

↳ Out-group humans are sacrificed:

– Yes

Notes: War captives were taken as slaves, and therefore slaves are considered to be out-group humans (see Honigmann, 1954:86).

↳ In-group humans are sacrificed:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating that in-group humans were sacrificed



during burials.

↳ Animal co-sacrifices present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of animal co-sacrifices.

Are grave goods present:

– Yes

Notes: "The only grave goods were the clothes and ornaments worn at the time of death" (Honigmann, 1954:138).

↳ Personal effects:

– Yes

Notes: "The only grave goods were the clothes and ornaments worn at the time of death" (Honigmann, 1954:138).

↳ Valuable items:

– No

Notes: (Honigmann, 1954:138)

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for available information regarding formal burials.

↳ In cemetery:

– Yes

Notes: "Cemeteries or graveyards were generally situated on prominent points and edges of terraces near the main camps or villages" (Teit and Helm, 1956:160).

↳ Family tomb-crypt:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of tomb-crypts.

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):

– Yes

Notes: "Variant patterns of inhumation include use of a hollow-log coffin and the winter practice of burying the deceased within the dwelling. The family thereupon moved camp without demolishing the former residence" (Honigmann, 1954:138).

↳ Other formal burial type:

– Yes [specify]: Graves dug on ridges

Notes: "In summer a pit three feet deep was dug with sharp poles to accommodate a corpse. Sometimes inhumation also occurred in winter when a fire had to be built to thaw the ground. The grave, usually located on a ridge, was lined with poles and a layer of spruce brush" (Honigmann, 1954:138).

## Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

Notes: "Like most people the Kaska Indians postulated the existence of certain normally unseen and unsensed entities, including counterparts or souls of the empirically sensed animals. Other sensed events, like stones or clouds, also possessed a transcendental character such that they perhaps warrant designation of Kaska thinking as animistic. The normally unseen world included Guslii'na ('devil'), who dwelt at the last point of a long river. He lived in the company of a woman, (ɔ)'ya, who became the first sheep after she had been killed by the culture hero, Tsu'guya...The Indians were cognizant of the North Wind Man (itsiipa□otena) who brought suffering...Cannibalistic giants, like Teyutsiia and Etceyus'tala, inspired considerable fear. Tsitayitsatse, another giant, befriended men" (Honigmann, 1954:101).

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of a supreme high god. Further, SCCS Variable 238 (High Gods) indicates that a high god is absent or not reported (Murdock, 1962-1971; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– Yes

Notes: "As already brought out, the shadow [spirit of the deceased] remained, for a time at least, around the death camp or the body's burial place. In apparitions the ghost's color seemed black. Apparently a ghost largely devoted itself to punishing relatives who had treated the deceased meanly during life" (Honigmann, 1954:137). Although previously human spirits are present, they are not described in substantial ethnographic detail. See questions below for available information.

↳ Human spirits can be seen:

– I don't know

↳ Human spirits have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "...a ghost largely devoted itself to punishing relatives who had treated the deceased meanly during life" (Honigmann, 1954:137).

↳ Human spirits can reward:

– I don't know

↳ Human spirits can punish:

– Yes

Notes: "...a ghost largely devoted itself to punishing relatives who had treated the deceased meanly during life" (Honigmann, 1954:137).

↳ Human spirits have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– I don't know

↳ Human spirits communicate with the living:

– I don't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: "Like most people the Kaska Indians postulated the existence of certain normally unseen and unsensed entities, including counterparts or souls of the empirically sensed animals. Other sensed events, like stones or clouds, also possessed a transcendental character such that they perhaps warrant designation of Kaska thinking as animistic. The normally unseen world included Guslii'na ('devil'), who dwelt at the last point of a long river. He lived in the company of a woman, (ɔ)'ya, who became the first sheep after she had been killed by the culture hero, Tsu'guya...The Indians were cognizant of the North Wind Man (itsiipa□otena) who brought suffering...Cannibalistic giants, like Teyutsiia and Etceyus'tala, inspired considerable fear. Tsitayitsatse, another giant, befriended men" (Honigmann, 1954:101).

↳ These supernatural beings can be seen:

– I don't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "The Indians were cognizant of the North Wind Man (itsiipa□otena) who brought suffering. 'If I am mean he will make a big wind to make me suffer. He doesn't want an evil man to follow his track, so he covers it with snow'" (Honigmann, 1954:101).

↳ These supernatural beings can reward:

– I don't know

↳ These supernatural beings can punish:

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "The Indians were cognizant of the North Wind Man (itsiipa□otena) who brought suffering...Helpful to man and powerful in his behalf were the dwarfs, who, however, were constantly menaced by animals. In warfare these small beings helped to bring up wind and cold that paralyzed the enemy" (Honigmann, 1954:101).

↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: "Like most people the Kaska Indians postulated the existence of certain normally unseen and unsensed entities, including counterparts or souls of the empirically sensed animals. Other sensed events, like stones or clouds, also possessed a transcendental character such that they perhaps warrant designation of Kaska thinking as animistic. The normally unseen world included Guslii'na ('devil'), who dwelt at the last point of a long river. He lived in the company of a woman, (ɔ)'ya, who became the first sheep after she had been killed by the culture hero, Tsu'guya...The Indians were cognizant of the North Wind Man (itsiipa□otena) who brought suffering...Cannibalistic giants, like Teyutsiia and Etceyus'tala, inspired considerable fear. Tsitayitsatse, another giant, befriended men" (Honigmann, 1954:101).

↳ Organized by kinship based on a family model:

– No

Notes: In ethnographic materials, supernatural beings are not described as being organized by kinship.

## Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient ethnographic evidence to be certain. It is unclear whether or not the following excerpt refers to norm violations: "...a ghost largely devoted itself to punishing relatives who had treated the deceased meanly during life" (Honigmann, 1954:137).

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Yes

Notes: "...a ghost largely devoted itself to punishing relatives who had treated the deceased meanly during life" (Honigmann, 1954:137). "The Indians were cognizant of the North Wind Man (itsiipa□otena) who brought suffering. 'If I am mean he will make a big wind to make me suffer. He doesn't want an evil man to follow his track, so he covers it with snow'" (Honigmann, 1954:101).

↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

Notes: The spirits of deceased humans, as well as the North Wind Man (itsiipa□otena) are described as agents of supernatural punishment (Honigmann, 1954:101, 137).

↳ Done only by high god:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of a supreme high god. Further, SCCS Variable 238 (High Gods) indicates that a high god is absent or not reported (Murdock, 1962-1971; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Done by many supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: The spirits of deceased humans, as well as the North Wind Man (itsiipa□otena) are described as agents of supernatural punishment (Honigmann, 1954:101, 137).

↳ Done through impersonal cause-effect principle:

– No

↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for available information.

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

– No

↳ Done randomly:

– No

↳ Other [specify]

– Yes

Notes: Done to promote pro-social behavior. "...a ghost largely devoted itself to punishing relatives who had treated the deceased meanly during life" (Honigmann, 1954:137). "The Indians were cognizant of the North Wind Man (itsiipa□otena) who brought suffering. 'If I am mean he will make a big wind to make me suffer. He doesn't want an evil man to follow his track, so he covers it with snow'" (Honigmann, 1954:101).

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in the afterlife:

– I don't know

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in this lifetime:

– Yes

Notes: Limited ethnographic examples of supernatural punishment. See questions below for available information.

↳ Supernatural punishments in this life are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– No

Notes: Presumably, supernatural punishments are not highly emphasized as they are described in minimal detail.

↳ Punishment in this life consists of crop failure or bad weather:

– Yes

Notes: "The Indians were cognizant of the North Wind Man (itsiipa□otena) who brought suffering. 'If I am mean he will make a big wind to make me suffer. He doesn't want an evil man to follow his track, so he covers it with snow'" (Honigmann, 1954:101).

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– I don't know

## Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of messianic beliefs.

Is an eschatology present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of an eschatology.

## Practices

### Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of required castration.

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of required fasting.

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

– No

Notes: Several species of animal (including the mink, otter, and wolf) were avoided as food sources because they were believed to be magically dangerous, causing ailments from nosebleeds to serious illnesses. However, these animals seem to be avoided, rather than tabooed. (see Honigmann, 1954:108).

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household):

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient ethnographic information regarding religious ceremonies.

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

i.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient ethnographic information regarding religious ceremonies.

## Society and Institutions

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### Levels of Social Complexity

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The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– A tribe

Notes: The primary social unit, the local band, was comprised of a matrilineal extended family. Beyond the family/kin level was the "microcosmic" band, which included the family as well as other non-related individuals and adopted children. These bands were fluid and varied in structure, with some being patrilineal (Honigmann, 1964:75). "The term 'band' designates the microcosmic extended family group with its unrelated hangers-on or adopted children. Several such units occupying contiguous districts constituted the unorganized and highly amorphous macrocosmic band for which we have used the word 'tribe.' Beyond speaking a similar dialect and intermarrying, the component units of a macrocosmic band experienced little feeling of solidarity. Vague shifting boundaries further reduced the integration of these groups. As already pointed out, relatively large aggregates of people remained in temporary association around a fish lake in summer and winter. Such transitory villages, however, probably did not usually include an entire macrocosmic band, although the pattern of living and playing together, like marriage, must have counteracted feuding and thus strengthened the integration of the people in a territory...Each of the migratory bands recognized a headman...These leaders were primarily family heads...The headman's ability as a hunter, a quality that attracted people to join his band, also helped him to accumulate wealth...His wisdom derived from experience, and the ability to speak convincingly reinforced his authority in moral matters" (Honigmann, 1954:84). "The dwellers on the upper Liard River were divided into two exogamous matrilineal moieties, the Wolf and Crow. Slightly greater prestige appears to have attached to the Wolf section" (ibid. pg.85).

### Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with a formal bureaucracy within their group:

– No

Notes: The Kaska do not have a formal bureaucracy. See question on levels of social complexity, above.

### Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 20, Food Storage, indicates that food is stored in individual households (Murdock and Morrow, 1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

– No

Notes: "Travel was nearly all on foot and this still continues to be the principal method of locomotion" (Teit and Helm, 1956:82). Because walking is the principal mode of transportation, it is assumed that transportation infrastructure is not present.

Is transportation infrastructure provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:



– No

Notes: "Travel was nearly all on foot and this still continues to be the principal method of locomotion" (Teit and Helm, 1956:82). Because walking is the principal mode of transportation, it is assumed that transportation infrastructure is not present.

## Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– No

Notes: According to Tuden and Marshall (1972, Column 10: Police), "police functions are not specialized or institutionalized at any level of political integration, the maintenance of law and order being left exclusively to informal mechanisms of social control, to private retaliation, or to sorcery".

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– No

Notes: According to Tuden and Marshall (1972, Column 9: Judiciary), "supreme judicial authority is lacking at any level above that of the local community".

Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of a formal legal code.

## Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Yes

Notes: The Kaska rely predominantly on fishing, with hunting as a secondary form of subsistence. Source of information: Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.



Please characterize the forms/level of food production [choose all that apply]:

– Hunting (including marine animals)

– Fishing

Notes: The Kaska rely predominantly on fishing, with hunting as a secondary form of subsistence. Source of information: Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.