In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

(Signature)

Department of HISTORY

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date AUGUST 8, 94

DE-6 (2/88)
Abstract

This is a preliminary examination of a body of coastal Tlingit oral narratives about first contact with Europeans collected and recorded by ethnologists between 1886 and 1984. In this paper, I compare how three features of the contact situation -- the Tlingit's initial perception of European ships, the nature of the first Tlingit-white interaction, and the Tlingit's reactions to European cultural products -- are portrayed in different versions of the accounts. I adopt the idea that one useful way to interpret these narratives is to understand them as a means by which the Tlingit interpret and order their past, and I argue that both the immobility of some features in the narratives, as well as the transformation of others, can perhaps best be understood if the chronicles are analyzed within the historical contexts in which they were told.

Such an analysis reveals that a correlation may exist between the way contact with Europeans is depicted in the narratives and the historical events and social structures that were having significant impact upon the Tlingit's existence at the time of their telling. And I suggest in this study that this correlation demonstrates that the Tlingit, far from possessing ritualized, immobile, or mythic preconceptions of the past, possess active historical traditions that, like all historical traditions, are periodically revised and reinterpreted in the light of new information and insight.
# Table of Contents

Abstract iii

Acknowledgements iv

Thesis - Text 1-44

Table One 8-9

List of Works Cited 45-49

Appendix A 50-63

Appendix B 64
I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Arthur Ray, for his helpful direction as supervisor of this work; my second reader, Professor Dianne Newell for her useful suggestions in its later stages; and Professor Julie Cruikshank for the insightful and encouraging discussions she shared with me when I first began the consideration of these narratives. I am also grateful to my parents for their ongoing support of my desire to study history, and to my dear friend, Robyn Laba, for her patience and humour in listening to the development of each painful little step.
they saw --
they saw themselves.
Actually it was a huge mirror inside there,
a huge mirror.
They gave this name then,
to the thing an image of people could be seen on.¹

In George Betts' 1960s narrative about first contact with Europeans in Lituya Bay, Alaska, he states that two Tlingit men who boarded the European ship discovered an object that allowed them to observe their own reflections. In this paper, I will attempt to understand Tlingit reflections about the repercussions of contact with Europeans as represented in a body of Tlingit oral narratives.² These narratives, recorded between 1886 and 1984, recount the events surrounding contact at both Yakutat and Lituya Bays.

I will begin my discussion of the stories by analyzing the one element that remains unchanged in all but one of the Lituya Bay narratives -- the initial perception by the Tlingit of the Europeans as Raven.³ But I will focus in this paper on the analysis of significant transformations of, additions to, and deletions from, the narratives over time -- in particular, those changes concerning who approached the European boat, how the initial trading relationship was negotiated, and what the Tlingit's

¹From George Betts 1960s narrative of first contact with Europeans. For complete text, see Appendix A, #5 C.

²The coastal Tlingit inhabit the coastal mainland and islands of the south-eastern Alaskan panhandle. See map in Appendix B for an overview of this area.

³The exception is in one of the stories contained in deLaguna's collection, where Europeans are initially perceived as Land Otter people -- an occupance which will be discussed below.
reactions were to aspects of European culture and technology. I will argue that changes that appeared in the narratives over time may be interpreted as reflections of the Tlingits' changing attitudes towards Native-white interaction over the course of the century in which they were recorded -- attitudes which, in turn, were influenced by the changing political, social, and economic status of the Tlingit between 1786 and 1984. But before I begin my discussion of the stories themselves, I would like to situate my approach to understanding them within the context of the scholarship dealing with Native oral history.

A prominent debate in this field concerns the issue of how oral narratives can be used as historical sources. Beginning with Jan Vansina's 1965 *Oral Tradition as History*, scholars began rejecting the notion predominant in the first half of the twentieth century that under no condition could oral traditions be understood as having any historical value whatsoever. However, many scholars (not to mention judges) continue to make the assumption that fundamental differences exist between oral historical narratives and written sources such that the former can not be understood as containing the same type of historical information as the latter.

The performative nature of oral narratives, of course,

---

4 I have summarized the significant changes to the narratives as well as in the historical contexts in which they were told in Table 1, p.8-9.


6 See Julie Cruikshank, "Invention of Anthropology in British Columbia's Supreme Court: Oral Tradition as Evidence."
distinguishes them from written sources. However, I do not believe that this aspect of oral narratives implies that they differ essentially in their content from written sources. Neither do I agree with scholars like Calving Martin who believe an essential difference exists between Native and Euro-American modes of thinking about the past. Martin believes that while Europeans possess "historic" and "anthropological" worldviews, North American Natives possess "mythic" and "biological" perspectives of the world. I believe that Martin's conception of Native understandings of the past is not only inaccurate, but also lays the foundation for potentially harmful assumptions about the existence of essential "Indian-ness".

Rather than attempting to slot oral narratives into categories of "myth", "history", "fact", and "fiction", historians could profit from the insight of Native North American groups (including the Tlingit) that the distinction between myth and history is a false one. A useful approach to understanding oral traditions recognizes that they, like all historical accounts, are models people have constructed in order to organize, interpret, and understand the past. I agree with South American Native scholar Jonathan Hill's contention that oral narratives can best be understood in terms of a broader definition of history than that

---

7 See his introduction to The American Indian and the Problem of History.

8 See Susan Hegeman's criticism of Martin in "History, Ethnography, Myth: Some Notes on the Indian-Centered Narrative."

dictated by the rationalistic empiricism:

In sum, history is not reducible to the 'what really happened' of past events nor to global situations of contact but always includes the totality of processes whereby individuals experience, interpret, and create changes within social orders and both individuals and groups change over time as they actively participate in changing objective conditions.\textsuperscript{10}

This approach to oral narratives has perhaps been most eloquently expressed by Hill along with other South American Native scholars, including Terence Turner and Stephen Hugh-Jones.\textsuperscript{11} A similar approach has also been advocated by anthropologist Julie Cruikshank, who believes that oral narratives are best understood as windows into understanding the societies that produced them.\textsuperscript{12}

If oral narratives are interpreted as models people use to understand the world (its present as well as its past), then it is clear why some elements of them are so flexible. The narratives change in order to accommodate new circumstances, are influenced by recent events, and are designed to address the current concerns of their narrators and audiences. Since I endorse an understanding of oral narratives that interprets them as models people use to understand change (among other things), I am unsympathetic to

\textsuperscript{10}Jonathan Hill, "Introduction," Rethinking History and Myth, 2-3.

\textsuperscript{11}See Turner, "Ethno-Ethnohistory: Myth and History in Native South American Representations of Contact with Western Society" and Hugh Jones, "The Gun and the Bow -- Myths of White Men and Indians."

\textsuperscript{12}Julie Cruikshank, "Oral Traditions and Written Accounts," 31.
approaches to understanding them rooted in structuralism.\textsuperscript{13}

Psychological and sociological structuralist interpretations of Native oral traditions were first developed by Bronislaw Malinowski and Claude Levis-Strauss in the 1960s. One problem with Levis-Strauss's conception of Native oral traditions as "cold", in opposition to "hot" European traditions, is that his conception implies that Natives understand their past in a ritualized, predetermined manner -- in other words, he denies that Natives possess historical consciousness.\textsuperscript{14} Even though they are problematic, however, structuralist approaches, including anthropological and literary ones -- continue to characterize some scholars' interpretations of native oral traditions.

Anthropologist Catharine McClellan produced a preliminary study of Tlingit accounts of first contact in 1970.\textsuperscript{15} In her essay, McClellan made several important points about how these narratives might be interpreted -- for example, that they must be "understood only in relation to the total bodies of literature in which they appear."\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13}I do not want to suggest that there are no permanent features in oral traditions. In fact, there are a great many of these, as Catharine McClellan demonstrates in \textit{The Girl Who Married the Bear}. What I am suggesting is that elements will remain fixed in the stories as long as they are useful explanatory devices. If they cease to be relaxant or useful, it is more likely that they will be dropped.

\textsuperscript{14}See Hugh-Jones, "The Gun and the Bow," 139.

\textsuperscript{15}Catharine McClellan, "Indian Stories about the First Whites in North America."

\textsuperscript{16}McClellan, "Indian Stories," 128.
She analyzed three versions of the Tlingit account of contact and noted that they shared a great number of common elements. She attributed their similarity to the phenomenon of diffusion of the stories in Coastal Tlingit literature, and wrote that the standardization of the stories may be have been due to the structured mode of coastal life with its good communications, frequent social gatherings, constant reference to oral traditions in the presence of large audiences, and with its general preoccupation with social "correctness" in all matters.\(^\text{17}\)

McClellan correctly stated that there are common features in the narratives she studied, however, I do not agree with the extent to which she implied that the narratives followed rigid patterns determined by the structures of the societies that produced them. I do not believe her approach to understanding the narratives allows enough room for the possibility that successive generations of Tlingit might have re-interpreted the stories in the light of new historical developments including changing social structures. And I believe that McClellan, upon close inspection, might have noticed that significant differences do exist between the different versions of the narratives that she studied.\(^\text{18}\)

Michael Harkin is a second scholar who has recently published work on one of these Tlingit oral narratives.\(^\text{19}\) I agree with some of Harkin's ideas -- for instance, his statement that the primary

\(^\text{17}\)McClellan, "Indian Stories," 120.

\(^\text{18}\)In this paper, I will analyze two of the narratives McClellan discussed in her paper. Her third source was an unpublished recording of her own.

\(^\text{19}\)Michael Harkin, "History, Narrative, and Temporality: Examples from the Northwest Coast."
function of a Tlingit Lituya Bay narrative is to to be repeated within a bounded community over a period of several generations as a means of understanding an important aspect of a contemporary historically constituted world.²⁰

However, I am less receptive to the approach Harkin develops later in his paper of understanding the narratives through two tropes (figures of speech): metonymy (a symbolic relationship in which a part of something stands for its whole) and metaphor. Harkin writes that the narrator's shift, within one Heiltsuk contact narrative, from the use of metaphor to the use of metonymy can be interpreted as signifying a shift in the ability and willingness of the Heiltsuk to adopt and assimilate to aspects of European life.

Harkin's conclusion, that a change in the Heiltsuk's responses to European culture is represented in the narrative of contact that he studies, may be correct. But his reasoning, which is based on the idea that structuralist Roman Jakobson's conceptions concerning the formation of language tropes are universals, consciously employed and manipulated by the Heiltsuk people, is less sound.

I believe it is both more reasonable and more respectful to interpret these narratives by following two directives advanced by Catharine McClellan and Julie Cruikshank: to understand them in terms of the contexts in which they were told, and in terms of the bodies of literature to which they belong. This is an approach that I will now attempt to employ in my analysis of Tlingit contact narratives.

²⁰Harkin, 103-4.
The first element in the narratives of contact that I would like to discuss is the initial perception by the Tlingit of the European ships as Raven. This perception is the most constant.

Table One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Recorded</th>
<th>Significant Element</th>
<th>Historical Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>1) Representation of Europeans as Raven. 2) Drowning of Europeans in Lituya Bay. 3) Cannon fire from the boat. 4) Old warrior goes out to meat the Europeans. 5) Rejection by the warrior of European food. 6) Establishment by him of fur trade with the Europeans</td>
<td>Previous strength of the Tlingit in decline since purchase of Alaska by the United States in 1867. American government establishes segregationist policies that contrast with Russia's earlier more assimilationist ones. Bombing of Angoon by the United States Government, 1884. Existence of Raven-Eagle moiety tension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4,5,6) Absence of any discussion of interaction between Europeans and Tlingit.</td>
<td>ANB campaign in 1947 to ban white-owned commercial fisheries in Alaska.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7) Omitted -- never reappears.</td>
<td>Launching of preliminary land claims case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8) Tlingits' halibut-skin bags</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-1954 Yakutat Bay</td>
<td>9) Contact occurring between a white woman and the Tlingit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10) Rejection by Tlingit of European fire-arms; use of iron to make spears.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Two young men go out to meet the Europeans.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) Acceptance by them of European food.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) No mention of establishment of the fur trade.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8) Repeated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and immobile element of all the texts studied here. The first recording of the coastal Tlingit's story of initial contact was published in the *American Anthropologist* in 1911, but was recounted in 1886, by Cowee, the principal chief of the Auk qwan Tlingit, and recorded by ethnologist George Emmons. Cowee opens his story by stating that the Tlingit, when they first observed two ships entering Lituya Bay,

...did not know what they were, but believed them to be great black birds with far reaching white wings, and, as their

---

21 All the narratives discussed in this paper are reproduced in Appendix A.
bird creator, Yehlh, often assumed the form of a raven, they thought that in this guise, he had returned to earth.\textsuperscript{22}

According to Cowee, the Tlingit were so frightened by the appearance of Raven that they hid in the woods where they observed his approach through rolled-up tubes of skunk cabbage leaves. At first, nobody would dare approach the boat, but at last a blind old warrior, accompanied by only two slaves, volunteered to investigate the strangers' arrival. Cowee ends the story by noting that many white men were drowned at this time when two boats lowered from the ships were lost at the mouth of the bay. This detail makes it clear that the story was referring to Jean Francois Galaup de La Pérouse's arrival at Latuya Bay in 1796. He was the only European known to have lost two boats of men there during this period.

In this narrative, as in other Tlingit accounts recorded in 1927, 1940, 1949, in the 1960s, and in 1984,\textsuperscript{23} the Natives' initial response to the arrival of the Europeans, when they perceived their ships to be the return of Raven, can be characterized as surprised and fearful.\textsuperscript{24} This characterization, of the Tlingit's behaviour, however, contradicts with the contemporary European sources of first contact.

\textsuperscript{22}Narrative 1, Appendix A.

\textsuperscript{23}See narratives #2, #4B, #5B, #5C The one exception to this perception, in narrative 4A will be discussed below.

\textsuperscript{24}This initial response, as well as the Tlingit's subsequent overcoming of their fear to establish trade with the Europeans is akin to Native responses to first contact with Europeans in eastern Canada in the 16th century -- see Bruce Trigger's discussion in "Early Native North American Responses to European Contact: Romantic versus Rationalistic Interpretations."
In LaPérouse's account of his arrival at Lituya, he does describe a significant meeting between himself and a Tlingit chief, but LaPérouse writes that this man was accompanied by several canoes of Tlingit, who, before boarding the ship, parut adresser une prière au soleil; il nous fit ensuite une longue harangue qui fut terminées par des chants assez agréables ...

According to LaPérouse, as well as according to many other Europeans who encountered the Tlingit in Alaska in this period (G. Shelikov, George Dixon, Alejandro Malsapina, and George Vancouver), the Tlingit in coastal Alaska did not hesitate fearfully on shore when European ships first entered their bays, nor did they send out lone ancient warriors to encounter the ships. Instead, these writers claim that large parties of Tlingit set out in boats and surrounded the Europeans vessels, singing and dancing, eager to board the vessels and initiate trade.

In William Beresford's record of George Dixon's initial entry into Yakutat Bay in 1789, for example, Beresford writes that upon entering the Bay,

we saw a number of the natives on the beach, near the entrance of this creek, making signals for us to come on shore...

Later the same day, he continues,

The people were well pleased at our arrival, and a number of them presently came along-side us. They soon understood what

---

25LaPérouse, 17.

26This contradiction in the accounts is a curious reversal of a phenomenon that occurred elsewhere in Native-white contact where, according to Europeans, Natives reacted to them as if they were gods; while Native sources recount that they viewed them very pragmatically. See Gananeth Obeyesekere's discussion in The Apotheosis of Captain Cook.
we wanted, and an old man brought us eight or ten excellent sea otter skins.\textsuperscript{27}

The Tlingits' matter-of-fact attitude to the Europeans' arrival as described in the European sources seems reasonable when viewed in the context of historical and ethnological information about the Tlingit at the time of contact. Before the arrival of the Europeans, the Tlingit were an extremely strong people -- they lived in a richly endowed natural environment, had a large population, and participated in an extensive system of inter-tribal northwest coast trade. They were such a powerful society, in fact, that they had managed to absorb other regional Northwest Native coast groups, such as the neighbouring Eyak people.\textsuperscript{28} Prior to the Europeans' arrival in Alaska, the Tlingit had also been exposed to European trade goods, including prized iron, either through intertribal trade, or when objects from shipwrecks were washed up on their shores.\textsuperscript{29}

The Tlingit, then, would have had every reason to desire to approach the Europeans ship -- and according to the European sources, this is exactly what they did. But the Europeans' description of the bold response of the Tlingit to their arrival, as well as of the praying and singing described by LaPérouse, is in marked contrast to the Tlingit accounts of their behaviour upon

\textsuperscript{27}Dixon, 168. See also descriptions of Izmailov and Bocharov's initial encounter with the Tlingit in Yakutat Bay in 1788 in Grigoirii I. Shelikov, \textit{A Voyage to America}, 93.

\textsuperscript{28}deLaguna, "Tlingit", 203.

\textsuperscript{29}deLaguna, \textit{Under Mt. Saint Elias}, 116.
first perceiving the European ships.\textsuperscript{30}

We can not know for certain whether the Tlingit, upon first observing the European ships in 1786, actually believed they were witnessing the return of Raven and so reacted accordingly by hiding in the woods and observing him through rolled-up skunk cabbage leaves, or whether these elements were introduced into the narrative some time between 1786 and its first recording in 1886. As with another conflict between European and Native sources that I will discuss below, the issue of whether or not the Tlingit did initially perceive the European ships as Raven, seems to be irresolvable.

However, I believe it is probable, given the Tlingit's strong social, economic, and political power both at the time of contact, and -- as I will subsequently demonstrate -- throughout much of the nineteenth century, that this depiction of the Europeans as Raven, an apparition to be feared, was not developed until closer to the 1886 recording. In any case, what I am primarily interested in understanding here is why the Tlingit might have represented the arrival of the Europeans as Raven in their narratives at least by 1886, and why the motif continued to occupy such a persistent place in the body of Tlingit contact narratives over the next one hundred years. One possible explanation is revealed through an examination of the changing nature of Tlingit-white relations in Alaska between

\textsuperscript{30}It is, of course, likely that the Tlingit would not have mentioned details of such ceremonies in their accounts to audiences already familiar with what may have been norms of etiquette either in worship or before initiating trade.
contact and 1886.

Although the Tlingit experienced strains on their communities between contact and the United States' purchase of Alaska in 1867 -- in particular, population losses due to European-induced diseases, and the weakening of their social and political systems\textsuperscript{31} throughout this period, they possessed relatively strong positions of economic, political and social power.\textsuperscript{32}

The Tlingit had always been a strong people who militantly defended their property and land-use rights, and wreaked retribution for injustices committed to fellow clan members.\textsuperscript{33} Neither the Tlingit's militancy about their land and resource rights, nor their capability in defending them, diminished immediately after contact with Europeans.

The Tlingit's struggle to maintain land ownership rights in Alaska began with the initiation of the European fur trade. LaPérouse wrote in his journal that during his visit to Lituya Bay, his boats anchored at what he Christened Cenotaph Island and his crew began helping themselves to the resources -- wood, fish, and fresh water -- of the island and nearby mainland. Shortly

\textsuperscript{31}These European fur-trade induced strains are discussed by William Ostenstad in "The Impact of the Fur Trade on the Tlingit During the Late 18th and 19th Centuries."

\textsuperscript{32}As Robin Fisher argues in \textit{Contact and Conflict} was the case for most North-West Coast Natives during the initial stages of sea-based fur-trade.

\textsuperscript{33}See discussion of Tlingit's strong positions in the conduct of trade with Hudson's Bay Company -- Laura F. Klein, "Demystifying the Opposition."; and treatment of their pre-contact territorial and trade-related status vis-a-vis other Native groups in Catherine McClellan's "Culture Contacts in the Early Historic Period."
thereafter, LaPérouse received a visit from a Tlingit chief who demanded to know if LaPérouse would like to buy the island. The idea that Tlingit lands and resources should be free for the taking by any European who happened along was clearly intolerable to the Tlingit. Eventually, the French explorer sent the chief off with "several yards of red cloth, hatchets, adzes, bar iron, and nails, and made presents to all his attendants."  

After LaPérouse's visit, the Tlingit continued to assert their ownership of the region so strongly that the Russians never felt secure about their claim to Alaska's land and resources, or about their domination of the Tlingit. Indeed, the Tlingit successfully attacked and occupied the Russian colonial establishments and fur trading centres at Sitka and Yakutat in 1802 and 1805 respectively, and over the course of the nineteenth century repeatedly attacked the Russian settlement, Novo Archangel, at Sitka after it had been re-established in 1804. Because of these raids, the Russians lived in constant fear of the Tlingit, and no European felt safe about venturing outside the protective walls of their settlements.

Another factor that clearly demonstrates that the Europeans, rather than the Tlingit, found themselves in a weak position in nineteenth-century Alaska, is related to food supply. Historical geographer James Gibson and historian Laura Klein have convincingly

---

34 DeLaguna discusses this interaction, Under Mt. Saint Elias, 119.

35 Reproduced from his diary in deLaguna, Under Mt. Saint Elias, 119.

shown that throughout the nineteenth century, the Tlingit provided virtually all the food-stuffs Europeans needed to live in Alaska.\(^{37}\)

Clearly, then, up until the United States' purchase of Alaska, the Tlingit remained a strong and confidant people. But beginning in the late nineteenth century (the time at which we have the first recording of a Tlingit contact narrative), the social, economic, and political power of the Tlingit began to decline, and it is this erosion of their power that, I am suggesting, may have been responsible for their representation of Europeans, from at least 1886 onward, as Raven.

The reason for the change in the Tlingit's power status was the purchase by the United States of Alaska from Russia in 1867, and the influx of white people to the region that it triggered. Many of the newcomers were either soldiers (Alaska was governed by military force from 1867 to 1877), or were engaged in whaling, placer gold mining or the saloon trade. The immigrant white population, perhaps particularly those who flooded Alaska and the neighbouring Yukon territory during the Klondike and Yukon goldrushes in the 1890s, made no effort to co-exist in peace with the Native population in the region, but instead displayed a propensity for gambling, drinking, and getting into violent confrontations with them.\(^{38}\)

From 1877 to 1884, the United States government effectively

\(^{37}\)Gibson, "European Dependence," Klein, "Demystifying the Opposition."

\(^{38}\)Clarence C. Hulley, *Alaska -- Past and Present*, 205-212; Rosita Worl, "History of Alaska Since 1867."
disassociated itself from any involvement in Alaska, and it transferred authority for the region from the military to the Department of Customs. A Sitka-based customs officer, occasionally assisted by deputy collectors in other towns formed the only government representation in the region until 1879. But although the United States' governmental activities in Alaska during this period were minimal, the expanding white population in Alaska continued to have many harmful impacts on the Tlingit community.

The white inhabitants of Sitka, for example, sought racial separation from the local Tlingit, and this culminated in the establishment of racially segregated schools, churches, and other public and private institutions by the turn of the century.\(^3^9\) The Tlingit were also adversely affected economically by America's purchase of Alaska because the U.S. government began passing legislation that legally excluded them from pursuing their traditional livelihood -- hunting and fishing. Legislation also barred them from profiting from the newly developing placer gold mining industry in the region.\(^4^0\)

Probably the most blatantly destructive impact whites had on the Tlingit community was caused by their failure to understand or abide by the Tlingit system of justice. During a series of accidents and skirmishes during the 1860s and 1870s, the white population and the territorial U.S. government repeatedly refused

\(^{3^9}\)Congress, for instance, passed legislation establishing separate Native and white schools in incorporated towns in Alaska in 1900 -- legislation that was not revoked until 1949. Worl, 153.

\(^{4^0}\)Worl, 152-3; DeLaguna, "Tlingit", 224.
to make amends with the Tlingit for the loss of family members and important community leaders. In 1875, for instance, an American-owned company refused to compensate the families of seventy-seven Sitka Tlingit who had drowned while working for them.\textsuperscript{41}

This refusal was a violation of the Tlingit system of justice, which demanded that the loss of life of a clan member be paid for either materially, or with the taking of life of a person from the killer's clan. The violation of this code by the whites perpetuated long and bitter battles between Tlingit and white communities, including two skirmishes that resulted in the destruction of Kake villages and the bombardment of a Stikine village at Wrangell.\textsuperscript{42}

By 1877, the immigrant community at Sitka was becoming paranoid about possible retaliation by the Tlingit for the injustices it had committed against them. So they began clamouring to the American, Canadian, and even the Russian governments to provide them with naval protection. In March of 1879, their pleas were answered and with the arrival of a British gunboat, the H.M.S. Osprey, which marked the beginning of five years of gunboat rule in Alaska. This rule may have reassured the white settlers at Sitka, but it meant only devastation for the Tlingit. One tragic incident, resulting from the U.S. government's inability or unwillingness to perceive or respect the Tlingit system of justice, deserves

\textsuperscript{41}Hulley, 213.

\textsuperscript{42}For a detailed discussion of the repercussions of whites' failure to understand this code, see Julie Cruikshank, "Oral Traditions and Written Accounts."
particular mention.  

In 1882, a Tlingit Indian working for the U.S.-based Northwest Trading company at Killisnoo, was killed when felling a tree. The company refused to pay any compensation to the man's family for his death. Later in 1882, a second Tlingit man, this time a shaman, was killed during a whaling expedition. This time, instead of asking for compensation, the Indians in the crew rose up and captured the whaling vessel with all its supplies, as well as two white prisoners, and demanded payment of two hundred blankets for the dead shaman.

The whaling company responded by appealing for aid to naval Commander Merriman who was stationed at Sitka. Merriman set off for Angoon aboard the government's revenue steamer, Corwin, and accompanied by the tugboat Favourite. Upon arriving there, Merriman demanded that the white men be returned, and that the Tlingit pay a fine of four hundred blankets for their mischief, or suffer the penalty of having their principal village shelled and burned. Merriman reported that by the next day the Indians had not complied to his demands, and so,

after ascertaining without their knowledge that their women and children were in the woods, I proceeded up to the village [Angoon], after capturing two of the leaders. As soon as the village was in range, the Corwin opened fire, and the Favorite following, opened fire with the howitzer, she having previously destroyed the canoes and principal houses in the lagoon.  

---

43All information regarding this event comes from DeLaguna, The Story of a Tlingit Community, 158-172.

44Merriman's report of the bombing is quoted by DeLaguna, The Story of A Tlingit Community, 165.
Merriman added that he generously spared some buildings ("although apparently accidentally) sufficient to house the Indians for the winter.

The bombing of Angoon by the U.S. government took place only four years before George Emmons' first recording of Tlingit perceptions of initial contact with Europeans. I believe that this small span of time would have meant that the memory of Angoon would have been powerful enough in the public consciousness of the Tlingit people to have influenced contemporary narratives about whites' influence on Natives in Alaska. I might even go so far as to suggest that the representation in the narrative of "the second coming of Raven" might actually have in it echoes of the second coming of the whiteman's ships -- the first time as explorers and traders, and the second as bombers and rulers. Given this reading, it is likely that the mention in the 1886 narrative of the European ship's canon fire at the Tlingit warriors served as a recollection of the 1882 bombing of Angoon.

This interpretation of the 1886 Tlingit narrative would explain why the Tlingit reacted to the Europeans' arrival with fear in the narrative even though an examination of the Tlingit's actual historical position at the time of contact makes it clear that they, then a fearless nation, would have had little cause to view La Pérouse, or any other foreign visitors to Lituya Bay, with anything but defiance. This interpretation of the 1886 narrative, however, does not address the question of why the Tlingit represented the initial arrival of the whites as the return of...
Raven. I would like to suggest two possible answers to this question.

First, it is possible that the Tlingit chose to represent the coming of the Europeans, at least initially, as the return of Raven as a way of making themselves responsible for some of the misfortune that had befallen their society by the late nineteenth century.45 I do not mean to suggest that the Tlingit had a victim complex and wished, martyr-like, to cast blame upon their own shoulders for the American people and government's treatment of them after 1867. Rather, I agree with ethnologist Stephen Hugh Jones' assertion that a people's act of transferring responsibility for their history from the actions of an outside force, to forces that are controlled from within their community -- or perhaps from within their own mythology -- is, in fact, an act of self-empowerment, a denial of victimization. By creating an association, if only a brief one, between Whites and the return of Raven, the Tlingit are asserting some measure of control over their own past, as well as over Whites, their actions, and their motivations. By incorporating encounters with Europeans into their own cosmology, the Tlingit are demonstrating that they are not a weak and victimized people who did not understand what was happening when Europeans began to arrive on their shores, but a wise people, who worshipped powerful gods -- gods who, in turn controlled many

45I am influenced in my reading of the narrative in this way by Stephen Hugh Jones' reading of Barasana and Tukanoan Indian groups from the Vaupés region of the Columbian Northwest Amazon -- see "The Gun and the Boa -- Myths of White Men and Indians."
events within and beyond the Tlingit's own experience.

An alternative explanation of the depiction of Europeans as Raven relates to the state of inter-moiety\(^46\) Tlingit politics at the close of the nineteenth century. Tlingit society was divided into two moieties -- Raven and Eagle. During the years immediately preceding the United States' purchase of Alaska, the Eagle moiety had been exhibiting some domination over the Raven moiety.

The captain of a United States revenue cutter sent to the scout out Alaska shortly after its purchase, reported that he sighted a flotilla of Tlingit canoes decorated with the Raven motif paddling through a channel in the Prince of Wales archipelago. Virginia S. Eifert, who discussed this incident in an article published in the 1950s, wrote that the captain addressed the group and learned that they were members of the Raven Clan of the Tlingits, who had been harassed by a group of the predatory Eagle Clan of the same tribe. For years the Eagles, aggressors and warriors, had preyed upon this group of Ravens, had triumphantly captured numbers of them, and had grown rich and powerful in the slave trade.\(^47\)

If the Raven moiety, or significant members of it, were being subjugated towards the close of the nineteenth century by the Eagle moiety, then this might explain why members of the Raven moiety would have wished to represent the initial encounter with the

\(^{46}\) a moiety is one of two units into which a tribe is divided on the basis of unilineal descent.

\(^{47}\) Virginia S. Eifert. "Lincoln on a Totem Pole," 64.
Europeans as Raven. If the Raven moiety was experiencing a loss of power and status at this time, it may have wished to re-establish its strength by creating an association between themselves, their moiety symbol, and the arrival of these important trading partners -- people who would become such powerful figures in Alaska by the close of the nineteenth century.

Either (or both) of these explanations might explain why the Tlingit initially represented the arrival of the Europeans as Raven in 1886. It is also necessary, however, to explain why the symbol of Raven persisted in subsequent versions of the contact narrative. I believe it persisted because it continued to serve a useful function in the Tlingit understand of the history surrounding contact. Between 1886 and 1984, although the Tlingit experienced a resurgence of power during the Indian rights renaissance, they continued to lose much of their former power -- and all of their resources -- to the white population and government in Alaska. So, in the face of power crises, the desire to continue to exert symbolic power over their history and over whites probably explains why the representation of Europeans as Raven in contact narratives persisted over time.

The Raven moiety would have had an additional incentive to

48 Unfortunately, none of the ethnologists who made the recordings used in this study noted which moiety their informants belonged to.

49 Native Hawaiians may have similarly created an association between James Cook and an important chief from their mythology in order to advance their own current political agendas in Maui warfare; Obeyesekere, 97.
keep the association between themselves and foreigners. According to anthropologist Frederica deLaguna, the practice of moieties linking themselves to strangers was perpetuated in the history of Tlingit-white relations in Alaska. With regards to the Eagle moiety, deLaguna wrote in 1972 that the American Eagle, first made known to the Tlingit through naval insignia, could be interpreted as a crest, permitting the fiction that Americans belong to the Eagle moiety. This explains why the Sitka Kawaantan could 'adopt the Navy as brothers' which they did at a potlatch.\textsuperscript{50}

Having now concluded my discussion of the most unchanging element in Tlingit contact narratives, I will now discuss the elements in the stories that underwent significant transformations over time. These include the drowning of Europeans in Lituya Bay, the context of the establishment of the European-Tlingit fur-trade, and the Tlingit responses to European culture and technology.

Drownings by Europeans in Lituya Bay are first mentioned in the 1886 narrative. Cowee closes his story by stating: "it was at this time that two boats were lost at the mouth of the bay and many white men were drowned."\textsuperscript{51} LaPérouse confirms the event in his journal.\textsuperscript{52}

Dying by drowning had particular significance in Tlingit society. For one thing, it was viewed as the most horrible possible death because there was no way relatives could retrieve the body of the deceased to cremate it and thus send the person’s soul on to

\textsuperscript{50}DeLaguna, \textit{Under Mt. Saint Elias}, 430.

\textsuperscript{51}See Appendix 1, Narrative 1.

\textsuperscript{52}LaPérouse, 22-24.
the after-life.\textsuperscript{53}

The Tlingit had at least two traditions dealing with creatures who claimed the bodies of the drowned. George Emmons discusses a Tlingit tradition about the monster of Lituya Bay, Kah Lituya ("the Man of Lituya"), who, "resents any approach to his domain, and those whom he destroys become his slaves."\textsuperscript{54} The other tradition tells of the feared Land Otter People, who befriend drowned humans, invite them back to their lairs, and eventually transform them into Land Otter People. It is possible that the Tlingit would have interpreted the Frenchmen's drowning (particularly given their dangerous and difficult entrance into the bay)\textsuperscript{55} as either caused by the retributive power of Kah Lituya, or by Land Otter People outraged that the Europeans were violating the code of respect due to them by hunting land otters (taboo in Tlingit society.)\textsuperscript{56}

No mention of the European drownings, noted by Cowee in 1886, however, is made in the next recording of the contact narrative, although an interpretation of the arrival of Europeans as Land Otter People (creatures associated with drownings) is made in one of the narratives recorded by anthropologist Frederica deLaguna in 1949. "How the White Men Came to Lituya and What Happened to Yeahlth-kan Who Visited Them", was published in the *Alaska Magazine*

\textsuperscript{53}Emmons, "Native Account," 295.

\textsuperscript{54}Emmons, "Native Account", 295.

\textsuperscript{55}LaPérouse, 13-14.

\textsuperscript{56}deLaguna, 259.
in 1927. Unfortunately, we do not know the exact date when the story was transcribed. A footnote to the story, however, states that the narrator, Mr. Phillips, is in possession of a trade item, a bell, that was given to the old man in the story, Yeahlth-kan, by La Pérouse in 1786, and was subsequently passed down to him through eight generations. If we can assume that a generation consists, at the earliest, of just under seventeen years, then the narrative must have been recorded in about 1920, or shortly thereafter. I believe that the absence of any mention of the European drowning in the second narrative may be explained through an examination of the historical circumstances in which the Tlingit were functioning between the times in which the two narratives were recorded. Between 1886 and 1920, and particularly after the turn of the century, the American government began investing more interest in its newly acquired territory. During this time, private companies, including the Alaska Commercial Company, began to realize that serious potential for profit existed in Alaska, and established monopolies in the areas of transportation, seal hunting, and salmon canning. Many of the Tlingit, beginning as early as 1879 and

57See Appendix A, #2 for the complete text.

58DeLaguna writes that Tlingit men were married at 16, and women at 15, Under Mt. Saint Eliás, 524.

59This recording must be treated with some trepidation because it was transcribed by a Russian priest and there are several elements in this version of the story that suggest he attempted to "christianize" it in his transcription. Readers should also be wary of the flamboyant style in which it was told, which I also attribute to the creative genius of this transcriptor.

continuing into the twentieth century, worked for American companies and lost resource ownership and access rights that had formerly been theirs alone.\textsuperscript{61}

Aside from this work for whites in American-owned enterprises, however, the Tlingit remained largely segregated from white communities in Alaska. The Americans' desire for segregation is notable in the United States government's late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century strategies for dealing with Natives in Alaska -- particularly under the General Allotment Act of 1879 which established isolated reserves for the Alaskan Native population.\textsuperscript{62}

In 1912, the Tlingit established the Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB), to represent the rights of Natives in Alaska in the newly constituted territorial legislative assembly. Throughout the century, this political organization played an important role in lobbying for Native rights, especially for land claims settlements for Aboriginal people in Alaska. Phillip Drucker, in his pioneer study of the ANB, however, claimed that during its early years, the organization's primary objective was the abolishment of what they deemed to be the "savage" elements of Native culture -- including Native languages and potlatch ceremonies. Drucker wrote that during this period the ANB encouraged natives to become like whites and leave their Native traditions behind them.\textsuperscript{63} George W. Rogers, 

\textsuperscript{61}DeLaguna, "Tlingit", 206-224.

\textsuperscript{62}Rogers, 283.

\textsuperscript{63}Phillip Drucker \textit{The Native Brotherhoods}, 42-43.
writing ten years after Drucker, stated that up until 1960, the political mode of the ANB "was not one of revolution or even portests, but of learning the intricacies of the established system and how it could be manipulated and influenced." After 1918, the ANB changed directions and began concentrating its energy on the battle for equal rights for Natives. It lobbied, for instance, for the abolition of separate schools for whites and Natives, and succeeded in obtaining the right of citizenship for Alaskan Natives in 1915.

Although the ANB did succeed in generating significant changes in the lives of Alaskan Natives in the first half of the twentieth century, the period between America's purchase of Alaska in 1867 and the beginning of the Native rights renaissance in the 1950s marked a low point in Native economic, social and political power in Alaska. During this time, the American government and the white community in Sitka either ignored the Tlingit community, or, worse advocated Native-white segregation. Meanwhile, the most powerful Native rights organization in Alaska was supporting the rejection of traditional Native customs.

Understanding this point about the context in which the 1927 narrative was told may illuminate why no mention is made in this account of European drownings. I believe this omission may reveal something about the narrator's attitude towards the Tlingit's current state of interaction with the white community at the time in which the story was told. If my earlier comments on the

---

Rogers, 292.
interpretation by the Tlingit of the drownings of the Europeans in Lituya Bay are valid, then this omission of a discussion of them perhaps signifies some kind of acquiescence or resignation to the whites' presence in Alaska.

In the 1927 account of contact, when Native resistance to the white's presence in Alaska was at a low point, resistance to the white's arrival in Alaska is also absent. Therefore neither the Man of Lituya nor resentful Land Otter People are represented as exacting revenge upon whites for intruding into the Bay, and therefore no mention is made of Europeans drowning upon arriving there. The possibility of Tlingit acquiescence to white's presence in Alaska in 1927 is also suggested by the fact that, in contrast to the 1886 account, in this version, no mention is made of a group of Tlingit warriors setting out in their battle gear to confront the European ship.

Besides the later omission of European drownings, a second component of the narratives that changes greatly from version to version is the treatment of how initial face-to-face contact between the Tlingit and the Europeans transpired. I will posit that these differences can also best be understood from the perspective of the historical positions of the Tlingit at the time of their telling.

The 1927 version of the initial encounter aboard the European ship is like the 1886 version in that it recounts that an ancient warrior volunteered to approach the boat, and once there, was able to initiate a trading relationship with the strangers. However, one
significant difference between the 1927 version and its earlier counterpart is the attention the old man pays in the later version to the details of his surroundings.

In the 1886 version, the "nearly blind old warrior" who boarded the Europeans ship did not fully understand who the strangers were until he had left the boat and given it "much thought." But in the 1927 version, the Tlingit chief is not depicted as having vision problems. He quickly sees that the strangers are merely humans wishing to trade with him and his people.

He also promptly recognizes that there are differences between them and himself, particularly in terms of white-ness:

he saw that their faces and their bare feet were white, while their eyes were grey and blue. They had strange clothing and their hair was brown, or auburn -- some almost white, and often curly -- not straight and black like his own.

In this narrative, the old warrior also establishes that geography is the primary determinant of the differences that he perceives between himself and the strangers. He expresses this idea in the name he gives to whites: "People-who-came-from-the-Horizon." The Tlingit chief realizes that these strangers are not gods, or even superior people, but merely different people who have come from another place. By establishing that the primary difference between himself and the strangers is caused by geography, the Tlingit narrator in 1927 is perhaps calling attention to the fact that the primary cause of difference between whites and Natives is
accidental, rather than essential and immutable. If difference between the Tlingit and the whites is accepted as accidental, then the narrator might be indicating that it would be possible for the Tlingit to become like whites if they chose to. This impulse for a desired potential equality with, and even an assimilation to, white culture coincides with the contemporary philosophy of the Alaska Native Brotherhood.

There is another significant shift in the discussion of initial Tlingit-white interaction in the next published accounts of contact -- those collected and recorded by anthropologist Frederica deLaguna between 1949 and 1952. In deLaguna's narratives, there is a noticeable move away from the discussion of a Tlingit-European face-to-face encounter that resulted in the establishment of trade between the two groups. The first narrator in deLaguna's collection ends his tale by saying: "No one came ashore; no one went out to them. They were scared of one another." In only one of these mid-century narratives is any face-to-face contact between the two groups described, and in this story, the mention of the one man "who went over and talked with the white comers" appears as an afterthought, dislodged from its earlier position of prominence.

Once again, I believe that some familiarity with the historical context of the Alaskan Tlingit during the 1950s can assist us in understanding this change. Perhaps the most important

---

65 This is similar to a conception Stephen Hugh-Jones writes that Tukanoan Indians use in explaining difference between themselves and Europeans.

66 See Narratives 4 A-E in the Appendix.
influence upon the Alaskan Tlingit in the 1950s was the beginning of the renaissance of a powerful Native Rights Movement. During this period, the Alaskan Native Brotherhood along with other groups initiated activism for land and other Native rights in Alaska.

In 1947, for instance, the ANB launched a campaign to ban the predominantly white-owned, commercial fish traps that were depleting Alaska's salmon stock. And during the time deLaguna was making her recordings, the Tlingit would have been in the process of launching a land settlement court battle (The Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska and Harry Douglas, et al., Intervenors v. The United States). The 1959 verdict of the case ruled that Tlingit and Haida had established aboriginal title to six designated areas on the Alaskan Archipelago and were entitled to compensation for the taking of their land by the United States government. It set a precedent for the legal validity of later Native land claims cases in Alaska.

It is this growing sense of strength and militancy that was developing in Tlingit communities beginning at mid-century that I believe may be in part responsible for the omission, in these mid-century narratives, of the representation of any desire on the part of the Tlingit to initiate trade with the whites. The omission might be understood as a reflection of a resurgence of the Tlingit's former strength and the devaluation of interaction with

---

67 Worl, 153.

68 See reproduction of portions of the ruling in Lautarat, 102-104.
Another significant change occurs in the discussion of initial Tlingit-European contact in a final collection of narratives that I will analyze in this paper. This is a body of texts collected by Nora and Richard Dauenhauer in the 1980s.69

George Betts' 1962 narrative from this collection contains many intriguing changes regarding the initial face-to-face contact situation. Although many of the opening elements of this account are similar to the 1886 and 1927 versions, there are also several significant alterations in his rendition. For example, instead of describing a nearly blind old warrior volunteering to approach the strangers' boat, Betts states:

Then there were two young men; from the woods a canoe (the kind of canoe called "seet") was pulled down to the beach. They quickly went aboard.

As I will discuss more thoroughly below, I believe that this innovation of representing two young men entering into negotiations with the Europeans may be symbolic of an expression of Native politics and attitude which differed from the politics and attitude prevailing at mid-century.

In Betts' account, interaction with whites is re-established, but here it is enacted by two youths instead of by an old warrior "with most of his life behind him". This characterization of

69Although of the three texts discussing contact in this collection, two date from the 1960s and one from 1984. See texts, #5A-C in the Appendix.
interaction with white society may reflect a belief by the Tlingit, infused with the stimulation of the Native rights movement, that they need not totally reject interaction with the white community, but rather possessed sufficient strength, youth, and adaptability to utilize the institutions, particularly the economic ones, of white society to their own benefit.\textsuperscript{70}

Besides collecting stories from the Lituya Bay tradition, when deLaguna was working in Alaska in mid-century, she also recorded a group of stories from another tradition -- first contact at Yakutat Bay.\textsuperscript{71} The most striking feature of the Yakutat Bay traditions is that in all of them, initial face-to-face contact is made between the Tlingit and a white woman. All of the stories discuss how two young men find a foreign woman stranded in a ship-wreck, who, after introducing them to peculiar European objects -- in particular guns and gun powder -- marries one of the men and lives a happy and prosperous life with the Tlingit. The narrator in the first story from this group recounts, for instance:

The woman's husband treated her fine. She was like an Indian woman. All that we ate, she ate. She did what we do. She lived so long she got old and died.

Three of the narrators say it was a Russian woman and one of them claims it was a woman who "talks different from the Russians," a woman who predated the arrival of the Russians by ten or twelve

\textsuperscript{70}Although this may be have been what the Tlingit desired, it was far from the reality in Alaska in the 1960s, when Natives, for the most part, continue to live segregated from whites and continued to exist primarily in subsistence style economies. -- Baker, 15.

\textsuperscript{71}See narratives in Appendix A, #3 A-D.
The first European record documenting interaction with the Tlingit in Yakutat Bay is the journal of the British Captain, George Dixon, who entered the Bay in 1787. He was followed by Captain Colnett and by two Russian boats, under Izmailof and Bocharof, in 1788. The Spanish, under Alejandra Malsapina, entered the Bay in 1791, and Captain George Vancouver arrived there three years later. None of the accounts from these voyages document the loss of a ship near Yakutat Bay.\textsuperscript{72} Neither do any of them mention that women were aboard their vessels, although it is possible that the journalists would not have mentioned women even if they were aboard.\textsuperscript{73}

Of course, according to the Tlingit account, no European record of such an interaction would exist because the woman was the only survivor of a shipwreck. Once again, there is a seeming impasse here between Tlingit and European sources. However given the information we possess, it seems to me possible, but not likely, that first contact would have been made at Yakutat Bay by a white woman.

The phenomenon of white women becoming assimilated into Native communities, did, of course occur -- as in the case, for instance of Anna Petrovana Bulygin. She was captured in 1808 by a group of

\textsuperscript{72}Alexei Chirikov did lose two boatloads of men in 1741 in Alaska, but this occurred at Chichagof island, over one hundred miles from Yakutat -- deLaguna, \textit{Under Mt. Saint Elias}, 108.

\textsuperscript{73}There were white women present in other early contact situations in Canada -- see Sylvia Van Kirk, \textit{Many Tender Ties}, 173.
Quillayute Indians from a Russian party exploring the region near New Archangel for the purpose of locating a site for a new trading fort. But later that year, given the opportunity to return to her compatriots, she decided that life spent amongst the Makah, a tribe she had been given to, was preferable to life with the exploration party, and she chose to remain with the Makah. What remains in dispute, however, is whether this act of Tlingit-European female contact and assimilation was the first kind of white-Tlingit contact to have occurred in Yakutat Bay.

I am not, however, going to attempt to solve the mystery of whether or not contact between a European woman and the Tlingit predated George Dixon's arrival at Yakutat -- first because I believe it is an impossible question to answer, and also because it is only of secondary importance to me whether a European woman actually did make first contact. What I am primarily interested in is the fact that in narratives recorded between 1949 and 1954, this event was of great enough importance to the Tlingit community to have been featured so prominently in their narratives of first contact.

Tlingit women had, since the beginning of the European presence in Alaska, been incorporated into white society. Several other Tlingit narratives mention this occurrence. For instance, Harry Brienen in his discussion of the Tlingit attack on the Russian fort of New Archangel in 1804, recounts:

They took the children away from them, onto the ship. Tanuz said

---

74See Hector Chevigny, "The Tragedy of Anna Petrovana."
they go to school. One of the ship's captains married a Yakutat woman. Her name was Kusqan-tla [or Kusquan-tla]. She reported back to Yakutat: 'Is not school -- is slave!'  

And other sources confirm that Tlingit woman-white man intermarriage frequently occurred in Alaska in the nineteenth century. Indeed, it was even the official policy of the RAC during a period of its occupation of Alaska.  

Although this kind of inter-marriage no doubt continued to a certain extent under American rule, the institution lost its popularity after 1867, both because more white women became available once the white population in Sitka expanded, and also because government policy and American public opinion moved more towards a segregationist attitude towards the Tlingit.

However, in the genesis of the Native rights renaissance (the time during which deLaguna was recording her narratives) the Tlingit began countervailing these segregationist and racist policies and attitudes of the American population and government. I believe it is this attitude of resistance to segregation, and pride in their own communities and traditions, that may explain the prominence of a white woman who marries a Tlingit man in the Tlingit narratives.

In the Yakutat Bay narratives, the Tlingit may be renouncing both Russian and American colonialism by recounting that a white woman was first assimilated into the Native community instead of the reverse phenomenon, which was more prevalent historically. The

75 DeLaguna, Under Mt. Saint Elias, 234.
76 See Rogers, 282; also Cole, 130.
Tlingit demonstrate in these narratives that they, like the Russians, were capable of assimilating foreign women into their societies; and they refute segregationist American attitudes by advancing the claim that white women might even choose to integrate themselves in Tlingit society.

The final changing element of the narratives I will discuss here involves the Tlingit's attitudes towards white society as represented in their changing depictions of how they purportedly reacted to European products -- particularly to food and firearms -- at contact.

In his 1886 account, Cowee says that the Tlingit chief who first boarded the European boat believed that "the cooked rice that they set before him to eat looked like worms, and he feared to touch it." The chief allegedly did agree, however, to accept a tin pan in exchange for his cloak of sea otter fur, and he returned to shore, bringing presents of food from the strangers along with him. None of the people in his community, however, could be convinced to eat the strangers' food.

In the 1927 version of the story, the Tlingit warrior again initiates trade with the Europeans by exchanging his sea-otter cap and cloak for a metal bell and a strip of iron. Once again he rejects European food products -- rice, which he believes to be maggots; pilot bread, which he calls a product of human skulls; and red wine, which he deduces must be human blood.

In the Yakuatat Bay traditions collected by deLaguna in the mid-twentieth century, the Tlingit are portrayed as rejecting a
wider range of European products. In these stories, the Tlingit men
discover European armaments and gun powder at the same time as they
discover the white woman ship-wrecked on their beach. But in both
narratives mentioning these European fire-arms, the Tlingit reject
to adopt the European weaponry. As the narrator explains in the
first narrative,

They found iron and guns. They made a big bonfire and put the guns
in it, and pounded it with stones to make spears out of it.

Ethnologists and historians agree, however, that the Tlingit
adopted white fire-arms almost directly after contact with whites
in Alaska. Their willingness to trade firearms for furs with the
Tlingit was certainly one of things that made the Americans and the
British attractive trading alternatives to the Russians during the
nineteenth century.

Since we know that the Tlingit did not actually reject
European fire-arms when they were first introduced to them, I
interpret the supposed refusal of these weapons depicted in 1950s
Yakutat Bay narratives as symbolic of the assertion of Tlingit
pride in Tlingit practises and products, and the rejection of
harmful European practises and products, that was developing in
mid-century as part of the Native renaissance movement.

---

77 Frederica deLaguna, and George Emmons *The Tlingit Indians*,
1132; Cole, 119-20; Joan Townsend, "Fire-Arms Against Native Arms",
27.


79 This is again similar to a phenomenon recorded by Hugh-Jones
regarding the Tukanoan Indians rejection in their myths of European
fire-arms, and their choice of bows and arrows as superior
weaponry. See "The Gun and the Bow."
Pride in Tlingit technological products also appears in deLaguna's 1950s recordings from the Lituya Bay tradition. In these stories, the emphasis is placed on the skin bags of furs that, when these Indians' boats' capsized, drifted out into the ocean and the Tlingit's desire to establish trade with the Europeans is downplayed. The narrator of one account from this era spends nearly half of his story admiringly describing these bags:

They had large halibut-skin bags full of valuable furs, fox, etc... these bags were made of halibut skins sewed together and were water-tight. They floated. They were filled with valuable skins... And then they thought the white people must have picked up a halibut-skin bag of pelts floating way out somewhere and knew from that they must have pelts at Latuya Bay and so the whites headed straight for Latuya Bay.

In the Yakutat Bay traditions from the 1950s, trade with the Europeans is completely de-emphasized. The only discussion of it comes, in fact, when it is noted that the Tlingit actually initiated trade with the Europeans by accident, after these skin bags were swept out into the ocean and the Europeans caught sight of them and realized they could establish a fur trade with Indians in the region.

Historically, the most significant changes that affected the Tlingit between Frederica deLaguna's recordings in mid-century, and the later stories collected by the Dauenhauers in the 1984 was the continuously increasing strength of Native rights activism in Alaska. This activism was responsible for lobbying Congress, after Alaska became a state in 1959, to finally legislate a land claims settlement act for Alaska in 1971. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement (ANCSA) was the first and most comprehensive land claims
settlement of its kind in North America. Among other things, it provided a grant to Native groups of unrestricted title to forty million acres of federal public domain in Alaska, as well as a total grant of $962.5 million to Native groups. Although the shortcomings of this settlement, particularly in dealing with the social (as opposed to the strictly economic) issues affecting Alaskan Natives, become more apparent in retrospect,\textsuperscript{80} ANCSA at least succeeded in carrying Congress and the American public along the first step to acknowledging their responsibility for making reasonable provision to Natives for the appropriation of their land and resources in North America.

Native strength in Alaska as represented by land-claims victories, then, continued to increase between mid-century when deLaguna recorded her stories, and 1960s to the 1980s, when the Dauenhauer's recorded theirs. Unsurprisingly, then, many of the elements represented in deLaguna's recordings from the 1950s continue to be represented in the Dauenhauer's recordings from the 1980s.

In "First Russians", for example, the emphasis in the stories is still placed on Tlingit technology as manifested in their halibut skin bags. Narrator Jenny White points out that in contrast to the advanced technology of the Tlingit halibut skin bags, which were "just like rubber bags," the Russians "didn't have machines either, they'd just sailed in canvas."

\textsuperscript{80}For more discussion of the Act and its limitations, see Ernest S. Burch "Native Claims in Alaska, an Overview."
The new stress on Native youth possessing the ability to adapt and use white society to suit their own needs suggested in George Betts' account from the 1960s is also manifest in his discussion of the young Tlingit men's reactions to European products. In earlier accounts the Tlingit chief rejected European food but agreed to establish fur-trade relations with Europeans. In this story, however, establishment of the fur-trade is not even mentioned (it is no longer a feature of Tlingit-white interactions in 1962) but the Tlingit men in this narrative, for the first time, accept the food and drink offered to them by the strangers. The Tlingit ambassadors continue to initially perceive the food the same way previous narrators suggested, but in this story, they sample it anyway:

What they thought were worms, was rice.
This is what they had just been staring at.
At what point was it one of them took a spoonful?
"Hey! Look!
Go ahead! Taste it!
"It might be good."
So the other took a spoonful
Just as he did, he said "This is good food,
these worms,
maggots, this is good food."

This discussion of the Tlingit ambassadors' acceptance of European food is a final example of how the Tlingit, because of the changing historical contexts in which they were existing, altered their understanding of first contact and their representation of it in contact narratives.

In the field of contact history, there exists a dearth of material that analyzes contact and its repercussions by using
Native accounts as principle sources. For too long, Native oral narratives have been either dismissed by academics as unreliable historical sources, used only as a means of filling out preconceived notions of history, or understood as capable only of providing scholars with information concerning the psychological or sociological structures of different societies. A deeper familiarity with these sources, however, is essential to our understanding of the history of contact and subsequent Indian-white relations, and most especially to our understanding of how Natives viewed these events. I have attempted, in this paper, to make some initial steps towards such an understanding.

I have suggested that the representation of contact as depicted in a body of Tlingit oral narratives can perhaps best be understood through an examination of the historical circumstances and social structures in which the Tlingit were operating between 1886 and 1984. The representation in the 1886 narrative, for instance, of the European ship as a fearful apparition shooting canon-fire at approaching Tlingit canoes may be a direct reference to the arrival of the American government's gunboats at Angoon four years earlier. Omission of the discussion of canon fire, as well as of European drownings in Lituya Bay in the 1927 narrative may be symbolic of the Tlingit's lowered resistance to white's presence in Alaska during a period in which their social, economic and political status had declined. Alterations in the portrayal of the

81 Julia Blackburn's The Whitemen -- The First Responses of Aboriginal People to the White Men, which includes examples from Canadian history, is one exception.
establishment of contact with Europeans, rejection of European fire-arms, and promotion of Tlingit technology in the narratives from mid-century onwards may have resulted from increasing pride and power that the Tlingit gained during the Native rights renaissance.

My interest in tracing these alterations in coastal Alaskan Tlingit's depictions of first contact has been to understand how they, like other Native and non-Native societies, use their narratives as a means of ordering and interpreting history. Their use of these narratives has suggested to me that the Tlingit do not possess a ritualized, pre-determined, and mythic understanding of the past, but rather, a sophisticated historical consciousness that enables them to re-interpret their understanding of the past as they gain new insight into what repercussions it has had on present realities.

Works Cited


Beresford, William -- Dixon, George. *A Voyage round the world: but more particularly to the North-West Coast of America: Performed in 1785-1788 in the King George and Queen Charlotte, captains Portlock and Dixon.* London: George Goulding, 1789.


McClellan Catherine. "Culture Contacts in the Early Historic Period in Northwestern North America." *Arctic Anthropology* 2:2...


Rogers, G. W. "Goodbye Great White Father Figure." Anthropologica 13 (1971): 279-307.


Turner, Terence. "Ethno-Ethnohistory: Myth and History in


Appendix A -- Tlingit Narratives
Before the coming of the white man, when the natives had no iron, the Chilikat and Hoon-ah made long canoe trips each summer to Yakutat, to trade with the Thlar-har-yeek for copper, which was fashioned into knives, spears, ornaments, and tinneh\(^82\) and which again were exchanged with the more southern tribes for cedar canoes, chests, food boxes, and dishes.

One spring a large party of Thluke-nah-hut-tees from the great village of Kook-noo-ow on Icy Straits, started north, under the leadership of three chiefs - Chart-ah-sixh, Lth-kah-teech, and Yanyoosh-tick.

In entering Lituya, four canoes were swallowed by the waves and Chart-ah-sixh was drowned. The survivors made camp and mourned for their lost companions. While these ceremonies were being enacted, two ships came into the bay. The people did not know what they were, but believed them to be great black birds with far reaching white wings, and, as their bird creator, Yehlh, often assumed the form of a raven, they thought that in this guise, he had returned to earth, so in their fright they fled to the forest and hid. Finding after a while than no harm came to them, they crept to the shore and, gathering leaves of the skunk cabbage, they rolled them into rude telescopes and looked through them, for to see Yehlh with the naked eye was to be turned to stone.

As the sails came in and the sailors climbed the rigging and ran out into the yards, in their imagination they saw but the great birds unfolding their wings and flocks of small black messengers rising to [?]rows, and again in fear they sought the shelter of the woods.

One family of warriors, bolder than the rest, put on their heavy c[?]f hide, the wooden collar and fighting head-dress, and, armed with the copper knife, spear, and bow, launched a war canoe. But scarcely had they cleared the beach when a cloud of smoke rose from the strange apparition followed by a voice of thunder, which so demoralized them that the canoe was overturned and the occupants scrambled to shore as best they could.

Now one nearly blind old warrior gathered the people together, and said, that his life was far behind him and for the common good he would see if Yehlh would turn his children into stone, so he told his slaves to prepare his canoes, and putting on a robe of the sea otter, he embarked and paddled seaward. But as he approached the ships the slaves lost heart and would turn back, and all deserted him save two, who finally placed him alongside. He climbed on board, but being hardly able to distinguish objects, the many

\(^{82}\)The well-known "copper" or shield-like pieces that might be considered as money, and which had a fixed value in accordance with their size.
black forms moving about still appeared as crows, and the cooked rice that they set before him to eat looked like worms, and he feared to touch it. He exchanged his coat of fur for a tin pan and with presents of food he returned to the shore. When he landed the people crowded about surprised to see him alive, and they touched him and smelled of him to see if it were really he, but they could not be persuaded to eat the strange food that he had brought to them.

After much thought the old man was convinced that it was not Yehlh that he had gone to and that the black figures must be people, so the natives, profiting by his experience, visited the ships and exchanged their furs for many strange articles. It was at this time that two boats were lost at the mouth of the bay and many of the white men drowned.

Frederica de Laguna also reproduces this recording in her Ethnology of Yakutat Bay using her own (potentially more reliable) orthography. Under Mt. Saint Elias, 259.

Before the White man came, the people of Chilkat and Hoonah used to go to Yakutat to get copper from Tlaxayik people. One spring a large party of Tl'uknaxAdi went from the big village at KAXnuwu [Grouse Fort] in Icy Straits, under three chiefs: CadasIktc, Lkettitc, and YEnucAtik. Four canoes were lost at the entrance to Lituya Bay, and the first chief was drowned. While the survivors were still mourning, two ships entered the bay. The Indians thought they were two great birds with white wings, perhaps Raven himself, and fled to the woods. After a time they came back to the shore and looked through tubes of rolled up skunk cabbage leaves, like telescopes, for if they looked directly at Raven they might turn to stone. When the sails were made fast, they thought the birds folded their wings and they imagined they saw a flock of crows fly up from the ships, so they ran back into the woods again.

One family of warriors dressed in armor and helmets, and took their copper knives, bows and arrows, and launched a canoe. They were so frightened when thunder and smoke came from the ship that their canoe overturned and they scrambled ashore.

Then a nearly blind old man said his life was behind him, and that he would see if Raven really turned men to stone. He dressed in sea-otter furs, and induced two of his slaves to paddle him to the ship. When he got on board his eyesight was so poor that he mistook the sailors for crows, and threw away the rice that was offered him, thinking it was worms. He traded his fur coat for a tin pan and returned to shore laden with gifts of food. The people were surprised to see him alive, smelled him to make sure of his identity, and refused to eat the food that he had brought. The old man finally decided that it must be ships and people, so the Indians visited the ships and traded their furs. Then the White men lost two boats at the mouth of the inlet and many were drowned.

2."How the White Men Came to Lituya and What Happened to Yeahlth-
No clouds were in the sky that day. The water lay smooth under a gentle western breeze, and young boys and girls were playing on the beach, while the men hunted and fished, and the old women prepared clams, wild game and berries for the winter, and dried salmon on the smoking racks.

Yeahlth-kan the wise man, carved dishes and spoons as he sat in front of his log house. This dishes were birch, and the spoons were made from the horns of the mountain goat. The whole village was peaceful and quiet.

Then suddenly the wolf-cry came -- the sign of great news -- and one of the hunters came running toward the camp as if he were very much frightened. As he came nearer folks heard him cry, faintly at first, and then louder and louder, "Yeahlth is coming; Yeahlth is coming;" he comes from the western horizon. He is all white. His wings turn this way and that was as he moves across the water." And the messenger rushed to his wife and children and gathered them in his arms while the tribe surrounded him with excited questions.

Then many of them went down to the point of land from which this strange sight had been seen; some of them remembered that the bright rays from Yeahlth would blind those who looked straight at him, and they took hollow kelp stocks and looked through the. Those with guilty consciences drove knives of bone horn or copper through the flesh over their breasts and held their faces and bodies in a rigid posture, expecting to be turned into stone. Others who did not fear the coming so much decorated their faces with paint and prepared to receive Yeahlth.

Some thought of their children first, and these built fires of grasses and brushwood through the flames and smoke of which they drove their children in order to cleanse them of sin. And, as if attracted by the smoke, Yeahlth turned slightly from his course and headed directly across the water toward them.

When well within the harbor, Yeahlth's wings were folded; a harsh grating sound drove terror into the hearts of the wicked, but the good felt greater joy.

And now more excitement than ever prevailed. At last Yeahlth-kan, the wise man, quieted their voices, and said: "My daughters,

---

83 An authentic legend. Related by Henry Phillips to Wright Wenrich; an identical story is of record in the journal of V.V. Satffief, of Kodiak, Alaska, whence it was transcribed by Rev. A. P. Kashevaroff.

84 Yeahlth, the principal divinity of Tlingit mythology. He is symbolized by the Raven; in olden times he arranged the world and then left his people, but was to reappear some day and reward those who followed his teachings and punish those who disobeyed him, but turning them into stone.
sons and grandchildren; I am old and have but little longer to live. My usefulness to you is nearly ended. Come what may, I will go out in my canoe and meet Yeahlth, and beg him to turn me into stone, that the others may be spared."

Everyone agreed with this plan, and the young men brought the wise man's light hunting canoe to the water, where Yeahlth-kan entered it and paddled off to the great ship. When he approached the ship, the crew lowered ropes and hoisted him and his canoe on deck; to those who stayed ashore it seemed as if he had been caught up into the air and taken to the bosom of Yeahlth.

When the canoe was swung in on deck, the ships crew gathered about Yeahlth-kan, and he saw that their faces and their bare feet were white, while their eyes were grey and blue. The had strange clothing and their hair was brown, or auburn -- some almost white, and often curly --- not straight and black like his own. "Can this by Yeahlth?" the wise man wondered, and as he wondered a man appeared whose feet were covered, who wore clothing of a finer sort than that of the crew, and who seemed to be the chief.

And to him, Yeahlth-kan prayed with arms outstretched; "E-shan, Oohan, Yeahlth -- have mercy on us, Yeahlth!"

The white chief spoke to a sailor standing near by and this one disappeared, to return with what folks now think must have been ship-biscuit, or pilot bread. It was offered to Yeahlth-kan but the wise man refused it, calling it a product of human skulls. Again the sailor disappeared and again returned. This time he had with him a bowl of what folks now think must have been freshly cooked rice. It was steaming hot, and when the grains came in contact with the cooler air on deck, they seemed to move slightly -- Yeahlth-kan said: "Surely this is a dish of maggots they serve me," and he refused.

Then the white chief turned to his servant and spoke, and the man went away and brought back a glass filled with red liquor, which he handed to the wise man, who took it in his hand, thumb at bottom and forefinger at top of glass. "This is human blood," said Yeahlth-kan, "It will destroy the foundations of my people," and without touching it to his lips, he handed it back.

At that moment a man came forward dressed entirely in white clothing. In his hand he carried and beat upon what the wise man called Ik-nadj-gau, a brass bell. The man stopped near him and he reached out and took hold of the bell. As he touched the bell, this man took the covering from his head -- he was wearing a cap woven from strips of seaotter skin, with the fur left on.

Now Yeahlth-kan had been taught and believed that every part of Yeahlth was alive. He tested the bell in his hand by biting it, but he could detect no life.

And then the white chief made the universally known sign of a desire to trade, by crossing his hands twice in the air. Yeahlth-kan understood, and nodded his consent. All his hopes and fears in the presence of Yeahlth vanished -- he was not in the presence of the god after all, but of human strangers -- People-Who-Came-From-The-Horizon.

In trade for his cap, the bell became his, and he exchanged
his body garments of sea-otter skins for a strap of iron. Stark naked, with his bell and iron strap, he was lowered into the water and paddled ashore, where he related his experience to an exited crowd.

Later in the day a boat was lowered from the ship. In it six men rowed about the bay but did not approach the native village. This was the first time the tribe had seen oars used -- for they always used paddles themselves.

At sunrise the ship disappeared into the horizon from whence it had come, but the people of the village still talk about it, and some still talk of the second coming of Yeahlth.85

3. A) "GAKYIX-KAGWANTAN and the First Ship". This is party of a narrative regarding the history of Yakutat Bay told by Harry K. Breiman and Yakutat bay in 1949, with revisions in 1952 and 1954; recorded by Frederica de Laguna. Under Mt. Saint Elias, 256.

The GalyiX-Kagwantan had trouble among themselves, no killing. One group moved to Point Manby. The chief of the group made a lucky flower was called kayani ["leaves," synonym for plant "medicine"]. There are other kinds of kayani. We learned about it from the Haida. This flower helped them to find a ship on the beach. It was a Russian ship.

They found a woman there, the first White person they ever saw. They couldn't understand her. She tried to explain -- pointed to herself and held up two fingers -- that two white men with her had walked up that way. So the Indians looked and found their tracks. They tracked them because they knew they were in danger. They had fallen into the glacier and were dead.

So one of the men, Qatska, took the woman as his wife. They had a lot of things in that ship. They found iron and guns. They made a big bonfire and put the guns in it, and pounded it with stones to make spears out of it. She tried to show them how to use guns, but they didn't understand. The people became rich with all the things from the ship. They found some black powder and poured some water on it and tried to eat it. The woman tried to stop them. It was gunpowder.

The people knew how to work iron because they knew all about copper from the Copper River. They used to be able to make copper hard as steel, for knives. Now nobody knows how to do it.

The woman's husband treated her fine. She was like an Indian woman. All that we eat, she ate. She did what we do. She lived so long she got old and died.

B) An extract told by Maggie Harry from her comments on the history of Yakutat Bay, recorded by de Laguna at the same time. Under Mt. Saint Elias, 236.

85Mr. Phillips says: "The bell has become an heirloom, and I possess it today, and can trace it back tough an unbroken line of eight generations."
White people were here before the Russians came. A ship wrecked near Summit Lake. One woman was saved. She talks different from the Russians. The two men with her drowned in Summit Lake when the ice broke. Ten or twelve years later the Russians came.

C) "The Galyix-Kagwantan and the First Ship". This narrative was told by Helen Bremner on June 20, 1952, and recorded by delaguna. Under Mt. Saint Elias, 233.

Along the east of Yakataga, two [Galyix-Kagwantan] boys were beachcombing, running around the beach. They saw a White landy sitting inside. She was holding a gun. She pointed it at them. They didn't understand what it was. She thought the two Indians had done something to the two men from the ship. [Apparently this was explained by signs.]

They saw the tracks of the two men and followed them back to the glacier, to where the men had fallen in the black pit under the ice. They came back and took her by the hand and led her to the place, so she could see what had happened.

Then they took a lot of things from the ship, but they didn't understand them. They thought rice was worms and threw it overboard, although she explained it was good to eat. The black powder they thought was dried blueberries and tried to eat it, but she explained with gestures that it would explode, and made them throw it away. She gave them guns and tried to show them how to shoot. But they took them and burned the wooden part off and broke them up for iron. They made the steel into spears. An iron spearpoint used to cost a slave. So they became wealthy.

One of the boys was Qatsxa (Katsxa). He was the bravest and the fastest runner. The White woman married him and finally died of old age.

Qatskz used to run across the ice from Point Manby to Yakutat. He was the fastest one.

There was a big tree at Point Manby, hollow. He would get inside and hear the storm coming long before. Then he wouldn't try to cross on the ice. If he didn't hear anything, he can run across. (Other people could also use the tree as a storm warning.)

D. Sarah Williams, a Kwakquwan woman, recounted this narrative to delaguna in 1954. Under Mt. Saint Elias, 257

He's talking about it. He's the first -- Qatsxa married with the Russian girl. They find her in the boat on the beach, in the ship. They got four White men -- Russians -- and they die under that glacier, and put that White lady in the boat. That White lady never understand them [the Indians who found her], and they never understand that White lady. The people were looking for the four men.

He's the one married with that White woman. He's Kagwantan. The Copper River people told them [i.e. there were apparently Kwackquwan with the Galyix-Kagwantan], "We better help that woman." And they go in the ship and ask her what happened. And they say
it's on the beach, that ship. And they were looking for something, those men, and they lost it [or, the four Russians were lost]. They never come back. The fell under the glacier. And that man saw it, that Qatsxa saw it.

"I'm going to be married with that woman" [he said.] She is the one.

They came, came from the Copper River close to Mount Saint Elias, that's where they found it. And they came with us [Kwackquan], they married with that Kagwantan. That Kagwantan took care of that woman.

That's the way he [PF] say it. He just talking about it, and I hear him sing two songs.


The CAnkuqedi were over at Lituya Bay. The reason the Russians came was because baggage fell overboard and the swift current carried it out. The Russians found it in the ocean, so they knew they were near shore.

When they came to Lituya Bay, the Tl'uUknaXAdi and the CAnkuqedi looked at the Russians through kelp -- no, skunk cabbage leaves -- like a spyglass, because they thought the Russians were land otters. Skunk cabbage would protect them. The Indians thought the Russians were land otters disguised as people.

The Russians just came to the mouth of Lituya Bay in a big schooner -- they don't come inside. They anchored there. No one came ashore; no one went out to them. They were scared of one another.

B) Another version recorded by Harrington in the spring of 1940 on a trip to Disenchantment Bay with Jack Ellis. Under Mt. Saint Elias, 259.

J.E. says that Latuya Bay is a bad place.

Just at one time 10 canoes full of Indians were drowned at Latuya Bay. They had large halibut-skin bags full of valuable furs, fox, etc., etc. -- but they did not go much for mink and sea otter. The Indians believed that these two kinds (mink and sea otter [Harrington should have written land otter]), if a man got lost and suddenly became weak, that the mink or otter (people) came to him and the man felt his hands and legs growing short -- he was turning into a sea otter. And he turned into one. So the Tlingit never killed minks or sea otters much. These bags were made of halibut skins sewed together and were water-tight. They floated. They were filled with valuable pelts.

So when the Latuya Bay Indians saw a white-colored schooner of otter hunters coming on the high tide into Latuya Bay the following year, they thought it was "Crow" [Raven] coming back -- they were always looking for the re-epiphany of Crow. And then they thought the white poeple must have picked up a halibut-skin bag of pelts
floating way out somewhere and knew from that they must have pelts at Latuya Bay and so the whites headed straight for Latuaya Bay.

The Crow [Raven] had told them that his again-coming anyone that looked at him directly would turn to stone, and that all should look at him thorough a funnel made of a rolled up skunkcabbage leaf. When the schooner came in, all the Latuya Bay people took to the woods, form which they looked at the comers through skunkcabbage leaves. Only one man looked at the comers without skunkcabbage leaf, and he later went over and talked with the white comers.

C) DeLaguna Writes: "The following statement was made by a Tl'UknaXAdi woman, after telling about the war between the Tl'UknaXAdi and TlaXayIk-Teqwedi." Annie George told the story to de Laguna August 7, 1952. Under Mt. Saint Elias, 275.

That's how the Russians came on this side in a schooner. The saw those things drifting by [flotsam from the canoes]. They want to find out where those things come from, and they found out on this side there were so many skins. And then they go to the native people. People were at GAnAWas [Knight Island], and at Nessudat, and at Gucine [at or near Diyaguma'Et], when the Russians came. I don't know why they left GAnAWAs.


You know Lituya Bay? The Tl'UknaXAdi get drowned over there. And all that good stuff washed out to sea -- sea otter skins wash out to sea. And those halibut skin bags [waterproof bags in which the furs were carried] -- it floats. The Russians get it. That's why the Russians came o Lituya Bay.


Frank Italio told me that story. All I know, when the Tl'UknaXAdi used to trade, they used to go south and would trade with furs, and then come back here. And the seven canoes are what capsized in Lituya Bay, at the time the song was composed. Maybe there's another song, I don't know. But that song may be at the time it capsized over there.

There's another song they're singing. All those things they had -- those halibut skin bags had a lot of furs in them. And that's what drifted out and those Russians found it. That's why the started looking up this way. That's what she was singing about...

There's lots of furs in it, and those things [halibut skin bags] got buoyancy; they could drift far away... The don't use skin boats -- all wood, big canoes, yakwyAdi.

[A Tl'UknaXAdi woman added (Minnie Johnson; July 4, 1952):] The houses at Gusex became empty because the eight canoes,
going south to the southeast of Alaska got drowned in Lituya Bay. A Russian cannon was left at Gusex. That's where you should dig. The people that lived there moved to Dry Bay and to here [Yakutat].


My age is 88. On August 15th that will be my age. That's how long I have lived. Situk is where my father raised me. My father had his house there in Situk. That's where I was born. It's where I grew up. My father raised me there. Yes, and from there we moved to this place called Laaxasyik from Situk. And that is where we lived. Yes, we are called L'uknax.adi. In the world there aren't many of us. Yes, L'uknax.adi were traders. They travelled a lot also to that side, the mouth of the Copper River, Darkness now covered them. the men with them were now gone. They all died. Daylight came without them straddling the bottom of the overturned boat. Yes, through this the furs that they had bought -- in a halibut skin bag, like what we have today, it must have been like rubber bags, they didn't leak, they're called halibut skin bags, this is what they had these furs in -- sea otter, fox, everything -- marten, marten furs,
land otter,  
mink,  
everything --  
all this  
the tide swept over to Russia.  
Through this,  
when they discovered it,  
the Russians  
grew searching  
so they could find the mainland.  
Through this  
the Russians  
sailed into Lituya Bay.  
Through this they arrived at the mainland,  
the first that the L'uknak.adi capsized with,  
that were swept to their land.  
Through this the Russians came upon this land.  
So!  
I have finished telling the story.  


The rapids are very scary.  
Twice the L'uknak.adi capsized there.

This one boat travelled out of Lituya Bay when the tide had dropped.  
No white man knew of Alaska.  
The bundle of furs  
floated out to the face of the clouds.  
The intestines resembled a plastic bag.  
Brown bear intestines.  
They are cut and sewn back together.  
The intestinal  
bag of furs floated to the face of the clouds from Lituya Bay,  
the ones the people drowned with.  
This is why  
the Russians searched for Alaska.  
That's how they found Tlingits in Alaska.  
They didn't  
have machines either they'd just sail with canvas.  
A Russian boat  
first sailed into Lituya Bay.  
And so  
the Tlingits didn't tell it like it really was.  
It was the Raven boat,  
was what they told one another,  
the Raven boat.  
That's what they were saying about the Russians.  
If you looked directly at it you would turn to stone.
lay like a lake.
There was a current;
salt water flowed in when the tide was coming in.
But when the tide was going out
the sea water would also drain out.)
So the thing went right on in with the flood tide.
Then the people of the village ran scared right into the forest,
all of them;
the children too,
were taken to the forest.
At one point
they heard strange sounds.
Actually it was the anchor that was thrown in the water.
"Don't look at it!"
they told the children.
"Don't anybody look at it.
If you look at it, you'll turn to stone.
That's Raven, he's come by boat."
"Oh! People are running around on it!"
Things are moving around on it.
Actually it was the sailors climbing around the mast.
At one point after they had watched for a loooong time,
they took blue hellebore
and broke the stalks,
blue hellebore.
They poked holes through them
so that they wouldn't turn to stone while watching,
someone said,
"Let's go out there.
We'll go out there."
"What's that?"
Then there were two young men;
from the woods
a canoe
(the kind of canoe called "seet")
was pulled down to the beach.
They quickly went aboard.
They quickly went out to it, paddled out to it.
When they got out to it,
a rope ladder was lowered.
Then they were beckoned to go aboard,
they were beckoned over by the crewmen's fingers,
the crewmen's fingers.
Then they went up there.
They examined it; they had not seen anything
like it.
Actually it was a huge sail boat.
When the crew took them inside the cabin,
they saw --
they saw themselves.
Actually it was a huge mirror inside there,
a huge mirror.
They gave this name then,
to the thing an image of people could be seen on.
Then they were taken to the cook's galley.
There they were given food.
Worms cooked for them,
worms.
They stated at it.
White sand also.
White sand
was put in front of them.
Then they spooned this white sand into the rice.
Actually it was sugar.
What they thought were worms, was rice.
This is what they had just been staring at.
At what point was it one of them took a spoonfull?
"Hey! Look!
Go ahead! Taste it!"
"It might be good."
So the other took a spoonful.
Just as he did, he said "This is good food,
these worms,
maggots,
this is good food."
After they were fed all kinds of food,
then they were given alcohol
alcohol
perhaps it was brandy.
Then they began to feel very strange.
Never before...
"Why am I beginning to feel this way?
Look! I'm beginning to feel strange!"
And "I'm beginning to feel happiness settling through my body too,"
they said.
After they had taken them through the whole ship,
they took them to the railing.
They gave them some things.
Rice
and sugar
and pilot bread
were given to them to take along.
They were told to cook them.
Now I wonder what it was cooked on.
You know, people didn't have pots then....
There was no cooking pot for it.
When they got ashore
they told everyone:
"There are many people in there.
Strange things are in there too.
A box of our images,
this looking glass,
a box of our images;
we could just see ourselves.
Next
they cooked maggots for us to eat."
They told everything.
After that,
they all went out to their canoes.
This was the very first time the white man came ashore,
through Lituya Bay;
Ltu.aa is called Lituya Bay
in Alaska
Well! This is the end of my story.
Map of the Coastal Tlingit Region