
A Haida Writing: About Chief *Wiiaa*

by

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Abstract

My thesis is a life history of Chief William Matthews, the fourth and last hereditary chief *Wiiaa* of Masset Haida, who was also my grandfather. Of paramount value in telling his story is the significant role of my grandmother, Emma Matthews, in his life. Examining his life history and the role he played in his community and the province is significant because he lived during a critical period in the history of British Columbia. He lived in a traditional cedar plank house, reported to be the largest Haida house on the Queen Charlotte Islands, and by the time he was an elder, he was among special guests for the opening of the 1973 fall session of the BC Legislature. His life spanned a period from the suppression of the potlatch to the public rebirth of potlatch activities in the 1970s. Stories told about my grandfather are significant because of his role as a chief and because they address changes in potlatching and rank today.

As a framework, I draw on ethnohistoric accounts that pertain to my grandfather's hereditary title. Anthropologists such as Stearns, Blackman, and Boelscher, who have conducted fieldwork in my community of Masset and who have worked with one or both of my grandparents, have provided rich published material for research. I had the good fortune of receiving fieldnotes produced by Boelscher, who lived and worked with my grandmother, Emma Matthews, as she carried out her fieldwork among the Masset Haida elders from 1971-1981. Nancy Turner's tape-recorded interviews with both of my grandparents from the early 1970s are also of great value to me. Finally I interviewed both family and community members about my grandparent's lives.

Through the oral narratives presented here, the reader will gain a richer sense of my grandparent's compelling personalities, and to their important social and ceremonial roles. This life history account will provide a model for research and the writing of an oral history account from within a Haida genre.

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Preface

Context of Other Life Histories

The spirit of my late grandparents, *Naani* and *Tsimi*, remains always within those of us who knew and loved them, so when I visited my home of Masset, on Haida Gwaii, it wasn't unusual for me to be reminded of their presence. One visit, my brother handed me a small cardboard box, and I opened it to find several reels of tapes that were about five inches in diameter. At least two had discernible labels with my grandparents names, Mr. & Mrs. William Matthews, on them and were dated 1971. The remaining twelve or so, with no labels, appeared to be much older. As I inspected the contents of the box, aware that it contained the voices of my grandparents, I was thrilled and fascinated with this "box of treasure." What is needed now, is to open the treasure box – to show the world the gifts that we have to share. Growing up with my grandparents, as far back as I can remember I understood that they were important people, as visitors from all walks of life spent countless hours talking to them. Yet, a close scrutiny of the vast literature on the Haida over the years indicates that while ethnographic material abound, and the more visible material of the culture, such as the art, have received considerable attention, what was missing was the voices of our people. In the past, native informants were rarely accorded individual dignity and few comprehensive studies of Haida individuals have yet emerged. Also, much of the available information amounts to repetition of earlier popular accounts, and earlier errors also remain uncorrected. Today, as leaders and community members become more educated, their judgments have become more critical as they are alerted to the implication of "scientific findings". The voluminous literature, then, on the Haida over the past two hundred years begs the question - how many additional studies are going to be needed, or wanted, on the Haida. The justification for research is that it provides us with information that did not previously exist or that exists but in unusable form. As I look at this "box of treasure", in it's non-accessible form, I am excited by the potential contribution that these voices can make to the rich, but largely untapped, vein of life history.

It is the cooperative effort of generations of good scholars that we must protect; on the whole, scholarly writing provides us with the best information on subjects that would otherwise remain obscure. In *An Annotated Bibliography of American Indian and Eskimo Autobiographies* (1981), Brumble offers over 500 entries of American Indian and Eskimo autobiographical narratives dating back to the eighteenth century. He notes, though, that it wasn't until the twentieth century that the interest in American Indian autobiographies became professionalized. But, he continued, the anthropologists were not alone, "Indian enthusiasts of many persuasions

began to record these narratives, and to urge Indians themselves to write them. Spiritualists, nostalgia mongers, newsmen, sensationalist, liberal activists, poets, amateur historians, all found their appropriate Indians” (Brumble 1981:1). He would later publish *American Indian Autobiography* (1988) in which he gives valuable insights into the importance of having an understanding of the early, oral autobiographical narrative in order that one may fully appreciate the autobiographies of the later, literate Indians. Brumble shares with his readers what he refers to as an “embarrassing” moment as he realizes his own bias to western literary conventions of life-history material with its turnings and adaptations as guidelines of life history data. He explains that he was intrigued by the way in which N. Scott Momaday told his own life story in *Way to Rainy Mountain*: a two-hundred-word story on one page, an even briefer story on the next, snippets of James Mooney’s (1979 [1898]) work on the Kiowas scattered here and there, a bit of Kiowa history on this page, a bit of family history on the next” (1988:16). In his effort to understand why Momaday wrote the way he did, he decided to set out to read all the published autobiographies by other Indians. His assumption, he notes, was that Momaday, a Kiowa Indian, and scholar, who established the Native American Studies Program at Stanford, surely had been influenced to write in the style that he did after reading published Indian autobiographies. It was only after Brumble had the opportunity to talk to Momaday that he came to understand as he said:

I found that I was right and I was wrong. I was right in assuming that reading Indian autobiographies had prepared me to understand Momaday. I was wrong in assuming that Momaday had read them. This came to me as a comic revelation. I realized in that moment how book-bound I had been; I realized how much more vital oral traditions could be than I had given them credit for. The autobiographical narratives of Black Hawk, Geronimo, White Bull, Crows Heart, and Maxidiwiac had helped me to understand Momaday but not at all because Momaday had read their narratives; rather, all of them had been participants in closely related oral traditions (Ibid:17).

Northwest Coast Life Histories

Important to the project of writing life histories is the understanding of how the natives’ own narrative tradition and culture norms may have influenced the shape of the collaborative work. Recent work done by Cruikshank, Dauenhauer, and Blackman has offered valuable insights into the process of doing life histories. Cruikshank’s, *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders*, in collaboration with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned (1990. 1992), contributes to the growing body of work by scholars to recognize

traditional oral material. Among Cruikshank's many contributions is her appreciation for understanding ways in which oral tradition can enlarge our understanding of the past. In particular, she alerts the reader to ways in which "written documents are biased by the circumstances or conditions under which they were produced. Oral testimonies are very different from archival documents and are never easily accessible to outsiders" (1990:3).

Nora Marks and Richard Dauenhauer recorded a remarkable life history accounts by fifty-three Tlingit men and women in *Haa Kusteeyi Our Culture: Tlingit Life Stories*, the third volume in the series, *Classics of Tlingit Oral Literature*. The Dauenhauers note that as their work evolved they "understood more and more that its main purpose is not only to document individual lives, but to show the interaction of people and communities, of genres of oral literature, of visual art, verbal art, history, and social structure" (Dauenhauer:1994:xiii).

Margaret Blackman's *During My Time. Florence Edenshaw Davidson, A Haida Woman* (1982) focuses on Florence Edenshaw's narrative, as one of the last fluent speakers of Haida, or as Blackman says, "one of the last legates" (1982:51). This work offers fascinating autobiographical data and contributes to our understanding of Haida ethnography. The Dauenhauers note the similarity of both themes and setting between their work among the Tlingit and Blackman's Haida life history study. This holds true for my own study, as Florence Davidson is not only from the same lineage as my grandmother, but they belong to a cohort of prominent elders. Also, the connection stems from the close family ties between the Masset Haida and the Haida members, the *Kaigani* or Alaska, Haida, who migrated from the northern area of Haida Gwaii in the early nineteenth century and settled in Southern Alaska. Taken together, all three works are welcome approaches to my own project in documenting my grandparents' lives.

Sergei Kan makes a familiar argument that can be applied to the Haida, as it can across many cultures, in his article, "Cohorts, Generations, and their Culture: The Tlingit Potlatch in the 1980s", where he states that rather than speak of a unified "culture" shared more or less equally by every Tlingit, he refers to three "cohorts" whose values were shaped by the generational experience of growing up in different historical periods characterized by different sociopolitical and ideological processes. While he notes that these groups are only "ideal types", he describes the Tlingit values based on following three age sets, where language plays a pivotal role: traditional elders (those born prior to 1920); progressive elders and Tlingit-speaking middle-aged (those born between 1920 and 1940) and; English-speaking middle aged and the young (those born between 1940 and 1970) (Kan 1989). In his assessment, with respect to the Northwest

Coast potlatch, he contends that while preliminary studies have been carried out, none of them use cohort analysis.

Important contributions to this line of study, though, can be gleaned from fieldwork conducted in the early 1970s through the 80s with Masset Haida elders who were born in the 19th century. Several elders, many of whom are now deceased, contributed to Blackman's study, she notes: "The amount of ethnographic data gathered during the 1970-71 year indicated that some knowledge of traditional Haida culture is still to be found, and that even today's informants may sometimes serve as a check on data gathered at the turn of the century or before" (1972:223). And, Stearn's study acknowledges that those elders in the village born between 1880 and 1905 maintain an important link with a former set of values, or as our elders say, the "Haida ways" or "old ways," as she states:

Just as the attitudes and behavior of younger generations can only be understood in their social context, so the old people must be seen against the backdrop of their time.... The oldest members of the community grew up at a time when ceremonial life was still vigorous, when the old arts and crafts were matters of household economy, and the social structure, despite the presence of the missionary, was comparatively unchanged.... Seventy years later people born during the nineteenth century were still espousing the norms and values instilled in them as children (Stearns 1981:176-177).

Also, in her fieldwork carried out in 1971-81, Boelscher makes the distinction between two old age sets in Masset Haida, as she explains: "those roughly between 60 and 80, who know Haida but, with a couple of exceptions, speak English more fluently, having spent some of their formative years in residential schools; and those roughly above 80 who are fluent speakers of Haida and are the children of parents who still potlatched" (Boelscher 1989: 15). As this analysis reveals, cultural change or stability has influenced every generation, though not each generation equally. Boelscher cautions, "We must not forget, however, that the latter look upon their own parents, uncles, aunts and grandparents as the authorities on the "old ways" (Ibid). Miller (2002) notes that this viewpoint is commonly expressed among Coast Salish communities in both British Columbia and Washington and refers to O'Neill's (1996) concept of the "empty center," a circumstance in which indigenous peoples view their own lives as inadequate compared to those of their ancestors" (Miller 2001:117). Miller explains, "Since community elders do not regard themselves as equal to their ancestors, they have become aware of an "empty center," in the absence of anyone to carry the community in the way it is thought to have once been led" (Ibid).

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Introduction

Today, the oldest age-set of elders described by Boelscher, and also noted by Blackman and Stearns which includes my grandparents, have all but passed on. My generation has experienced a tremendous loss with their passing; but at the same time we are distinctly aware of just how fortunate we are to have known and loved these great elders who have gone before us. And what holds true among the Tlingit, as expressed by the Dauenhauers, holds true among the Haida: "One of the common denominators is that their era will never be experienced again" (Dauenhauer 1994: xvii). It is crucial, then, that the stories of these individual lives be told. And in the process, whether documenting a single or multiple life history, the documentation offers one point of departure for investigation questions about oral traditions, stories, memories, and cultural continuity. Much has been commented upon with respect to Native American life histories as a genre, and the Dauenhauers (1994) give an excellent overview on the topic, and, with respect to Northwest Coast in particular, point to the growing interest in the writing of life histories (also see Blackman 1992; Cruikshank 1990).

With respect to the writing of Native American life histories, scholars have remarked upon the reluctance of native informants to open up their souls in the uniqueness of self of true autobiography. Among the Tlingit, for example, the Dauenhauers describe how uneasy Tlingit elders were when they were asked to talk about themselves. This is not surprising, as the Dauenhauer's explain that among the Tlingit, "It is acceptable to talk about the achievements of others, but it is poor taste to talk about oneself, to "beat your own drum." (1994: xi; also see Brumble 1981, 1988; Dockstader 1977; Krupat 1985; Radin 1920; Sarris 1993, 1994). And, in Haida society, where ranking is important, an individual runs the risk of losing both rank and respect if suspected of any acts of self-aggrandizement or bragging. Why, then, would I take such a risk?" Put simply, my grandparent's understood that it was important to record the many stories of the Haida past, as the succeeding generation of children and adolescents are now learning from White cultural forms, breaking the pattern of the ways in which they themselves learned. And no one describes this better than the way Mrs. Kitty Smith did in her life history account as she explained her motives for recording her stories with reference to her little granddaughter, documented by Cruikshank: "Well, she's six years old now. She's going to start school now. Pretty soon paper's going talk to her!" (1990:16). And it was through these collaborative efforts that we can be thankful for much information that would otherwise be lost.

Boelscher's (1989; 1991) analysis details the central concept underlying Haida social order where Haida rank is linked to respect, *yahguudaang*, or 'fitness for respect'; that is, only by showing respect to others can one receive respect for one-self. And, as Boelscher shows, while showing and receiving respect is part of everyday life, it is most open to public scrutiny during public events where speeches are given. Through the structure of both public and everyday discourse, one never explicitly addresses one's own entitlement and social position, but rather that of the host. The rhetorical device is to cite the accomplishments of the host, or another, and in turn the speaker's own status is elevated. "True legitimacy is gained by verbally denying it for oneself and conceding it to others" (1989:84). As my grandparents are no longer living, I have gathered and presented the material to tell their story with this cultural standard in mind. As a Haida genre, in place of the standard life history account of an individual written by one author, I propose to stake out new ground by allowing the voices of community members to witness and ratify many of the events in their lives; events which spanned the course of a century as they witnessed both the ordinary as well as epochal events.

Of importance, in writing their life history, I not only focus on features which emerge as most significant in their lives, but that the stories relates them to the larger society and great civilization in which they participated. Many of the social and political experiences in Alaska described by the Dauenhauers (1994) and Cruikshank (1990) parallel events described in the present work, and in Northwest Coast life history accounts in general (See Assu & Inglis 1989; Blackman 1992; Ford 1941; Holm 1983; McFarlane 1992; Morley 1967; Mortimer & George 1981; Spradley 1969). Important themes include genealogical information and kinship links, missionization, the practice of rank and the potlatch; cohort effects; the important function of oratory; fishing; education; and the formation of The Native Brotherhood in British Columbia. Other themes are the more personal accounts, as I knew them at the end of their lives, as well as features of daily community interaction.

As Native society has continued to evolve, as all societies do, what is clear is that cultures did not simply disappear but, rather, changed. And close analysis of these changes makes clear that my people were not, and are not, simply submitting to pressure toward "assimilation." Instead, as my grandparent's and community member's stories reveal, our people have always been actively involved in making choices, trying to take advantage of new potentials and attempting to deal with new problems. Always, their vision was for a better life for their children, and, in its way, maintained a traditional kind of adaptation to bring about

change within continuity. And, in the face of exploitation and oppression, they continued to fight for rights to land and resources, and paved the way for succeeding generations to have greater opportunities and freedom from foreign oppression. They were much more likely to talk about the gains that have been achieved rather than the pain they suffered. Our elders taught us that each group has a duty to the generation to come to make certain that they have a culture, a way of life, and a set of beliefs that correctly reflect the generations that have gone before. Oral tradition, clearly a central facet of Haida culture, is shared in both formal and everyday settings. By sharing these stories of cultural experiences, whether mythical accounts or the events of one's life, our societies have remained intact, as communally held experiences, histories, and beliefs are passed from one generation to the next.

Oral testimonies have been called 'statements of cultural identity where memory continuously adapts received traditions to present circumstances.' Looking at how individuals take these shared cultural traditions – their statements of identity – and how they use them to interpret events from their own experience and then pass them on to succeeding generations may add a different perspective to debates about cultural persistence and cultural change (Cruikshank 1990:12).

As the granddaughter of the late Chief William Matthews, Chief *Wiiaa*, and Emma Matthews, it has been my infinite blessing to have known them, and their cohorts. If I have one regret, it is that I never took the time to record the stories my grandparent's had to tell. But, in retrospect, such a task escapes a youthful heart. But I can treasure my memories as well as the opportunity to interview family members, and community members of the next generation, who are now our cherished elders, and who, as described by Boelscher, as noted above, is the age-set who know Haida, but speak English more fluently, and are the perpetuators of the Haida culture. All sessions were conducted in English, and the orthography used for any Haida terms is that developed by John Enrico. In addition to these interviews, I was able to draw on published historical oral narrative accounts pertaining to my grandfather's hereditary chieftainship. And, I had the good fortune of receiving the field notes produced by Boelscher, who lived and worked with my grandmother, as she carried out her fieldwork among the Haida elders from 1971-1981, work which is on-going. To her I owe a debt of gratitude, as learning the existing oral legacy involves intimate and endless listening to stories and dialogue with elders and others. This process takes time and patience. And, finally, to Nancy Turner I am eternally grateful to for the many recordings of stories told by my grandfather that she captured on tape while interviewing my grandparents for their knowledge on plant species, which, as it turns out, were part of my

“box of treasure”, and were made available at an earlier date on cassette recordings, which I then transcribed. With these recordings of oral stories told by my grandfather, (as he sums them up from fifty years before, or more), I have access to his voice and the humour and warmth that resonates in it. While both my grandparents’ were fluent speakers of Haida, the recorded stories are kept alive through the medium of English. So much, then, is conveyed in how they say it, “how they talk.”

Dell Hymes contributed significantly to the study of Native American texts by showing how the conceptual structures of Native narratives were reflected in the linguistic structure of narratives. Referring to the Northwest Coast narrative, Hymes calls our attention to the way the audience marks intonational contours, or intonation phrases, when hearing the texts. “Where only the written text is available,” he notes, “much can still be learned. Sometimes a narrative tradition puts markers at the beginning or end of almost every line or verse” (Hymes 1990:598). Such is the case with my grandfather’s text, where the conjunction “and” appears at the beginning of many lines in his stories. His speech also evidences what Hymes calls “the patterning of action” (Ibid), as he acknowledges the number of times an action takes place within the story. Also, in transcribing his stories, I not only heard how stories were told spontaneously, but note similarities in his performance to the style used by Momaday, which Brumble says reflects a common base of oral tradition. In this narrative style my grandfather often changed topics, at times from one sentence to the next, as he constructed his account. This aspect of story telling, born to oral societies, in which a variety of stories are used to make a particular point or added humor, is part of both formal oral narrative performance and stories told in everyday settings among family and friends.

While this study is a joint life history account of Chief *Wiiaa* and Emma Matthews and authored by me as the granddaughter, I have placed the emphasis on the recording of my grandfather’s life. My decision was based on the love and respect that I have for my grandmother and my wish to honour her. She was my moral high ground throughout my life, and as I knew her well into adulthood, I came to understand how important it was to her, without her saying it, that my grandfather’s name and title be rightfully acknowledged and honoured. I am dedicating this paper to her memory. It is my hope that this work be viewed as a starting point for further study of my grandparent’s life history, as it is only a fraction of all of who they were, and there is still a wealth of information to be compiled on both of their lives, of which includes the “box of treasure” yet to be opened. Furthermore, in the course of working on this paper I have realized how many stories still remain unknown to the larger world, confined as they are to

the memories of the descendants. Thus I hope that this study serves as encouragement for further Haida studies modeled on work by the Dauenhauers (1994) in recording multiple Tlingit life histories; work that will place a large number of major Haida figures in their proper niche in Haida history. This is important as we all have a story to tell.

Sandlenee

My grandmother's given name at birth was *Sandlenee*, and later she would receive the Christian name of Emma. Her lineage, determined through the matrilineal line, is *Yakulanas*; and, we, the women who follow my grandmother, are called *Yaku jinas*. My grandmother got her name, *Sandlenee*, from her great-grandmother, who was *Yaku jinas* from the village of *Dadens* on North Island, and who married at *K'yuust'aa*. *Sandlenee's* mother, *kueege 7yuuwas*, who later took the Christian name Sara, and who was born about 1856, was one of the last in her generation to be given a *waahlal* potlatch or a house-building potlatch by her parents. During this important occasion, she would receive her potlatch name and tattoos that, subsequently, accorded high-ranking status. My grandmother, so many years later, described how her mother had tattoos on her arms and her hands. A *waahlal*, a major Haida potlatch, given in honour of their children to bestow noble status (See Swanton 1905; Murdock 1934), then, became the criteria for the children whose parent's who potlatched, to be the Haida agents who worked to preserve the ranking system, and through it, the viability of a uniquely Haida universe.

Not long after this potlatch, when Sara's parents died, her brothers took Sara, my grandmother's mother, to live with relatives in Alaska. When she was ready to be married, she was brought back. She then married *Ildjuwasw*, whose Christian name was Ruben Spence, a *Tcitic gitenei* from the Yakoun River, and who was also a Chief. The Yakoun, one of the major fishing campsites, was where my grandmother came into the world on September 20, 1894. The month of September was *K'algyaa Kongaas* "Ice-month", in Haida, meaning 'The first ice appears on the rainwater in the canoes' (Swanton 1912 in Boelscher 1989: 23). My grandmother passed on the story of the day that she came into the world as she explained how in the old days, as birthing did not take place inside of the house, when she was ready to be born, her father had prepared a bed of moss in a lean-to off the main house and the moss was then covered with clean sheets made out of 25 lb. flour sacks. She then continued with her explanation by describing how a tree, 15 cm in diameter, (size indicated with her hands), would be cut and rammed into the ground for the woman to hold onto as she was squatting and having her labour pains (Boelscher

interview with Emma Matthews, December 1981, no page given). Two other children were born to Sara and Ruben Spence, Emma's two brothers: John and Peter Spence. Her brother John, died as an adult of tuberculosis, and her surviving brother, Peter, who had become blind later in life, died tragically later in his life in a house fire. (See below). There was also a half-brother, Mark Spence, the son of Ruben Spence from an earlier marriage, whose surviving granddaughter, Eva Spence, resides in Vancouver.

My grandmother described a time when the sea otter was plentiful and the fur would be traded for knives and axes; as these first European goods obtained were integrated into the traditional culture as prestige items and useful tools in native technologies. And, while changes associated with the maritime fur trade occurred along the Northwest Coast, often changes began with the establishment of a Christian mission at Masset, as shown below. As the sea otter population was depleted in the 1830s and the trade shifted to other furs, my grandmother recalls that, when she was young, only the fur seal was left. My grandmother's earliest memories brought her back to the times when she would venture out on the open water by canoe with her mother for fur seals. She also described the period when the Missionaries wrought specific outward changes to Haida mortuary practices; though, as will be shown, the mortuary potlatch has continued to be an important feature of twentieth-century Haida culture.

The seal were sleeping on top of the water floating. They paddled there quietly. Sometimes two or three see it together and they tried to see who gets it. They used to take the skin across to Port Simpson, where the Hudson Bay was. And that's where they buy the head-stone from there. Before that they used to go down to Victoria to get the head stone (Boelscher interview with Emma Matthews, December, 1981, no page given).

In reference to her great-grandmother and namesake, *Sandlensee*, from *K'yuust'aa*, my grandmother recalls her mother's words that, to the Haida, means the transfer of identity, or reincarnation, and is a symbolic, unifying gesture that link the individual of alternating generations, and reinforces pride in individual heritage (See Boelscher on Names & naming 151-166; kinship links 86). She said, "*Sandlensee* used to like to sleep in the morning, that's why they put a stick against the door, so it wouldn't bang. That's why, when I used to sleep longer in the morning, my mother used to say, 'she's copying *Sandlensee* at *K'yuust'aa*'" (Boelscher, field notes, interview with Emma Matthews, January 7, 1980, no page given). And in exploring the relationship between rank and respect, Boelscher, as noted in more detail below, states that

stories, like the one of *Sandlensee* at *K'yuust'aa* ..., make reference to young chieftainesses whose parents permitted them to sleep in as a sign of their high position. *Sandlensee* used to tell that her mother's references to the ancestral *Sandlensee* were

always made in a mildly chiding manner (“she’s copying Sandlenee at K’yuust’aa), in order to induce her to be industrious rather than lazy” (Boelscher 1985: 76).

And industrious she was, as my whole life I witnessed her work tirelessly, both inside and outside of the home, as she contributed so much to not only her family’s welfare, but equally important, to the perpetuation of community ceremonial life. Boelscher notes that “Maintaining one’s respect and that of one’s husband and children was thus achieved through actively contributing to the productivity of the household, especially where it also provided for one’s children’s future” (Boelscher 1989: 77; Also see autobiography of Florence Davidson by Blackman 1982).

My grandmother attended the first Industrial Day school, run by Reverend William Duncan, which opened its doors in 1889 in Old Metlakatla, on the mainland (see below), at the age of twelve, where she spent two years. She would recall how she had traveled to the mainland on the “Princess Victoria”, a Schooner built by Daniel Stanley, which he named after his mother. She did not know that within two years, Daniel Stanley, who was born in 1881, would be, in her words, “that one they made me get married to” (Boelscher field notes, interview with Emma Matthews, December. 1981, no page given). When she received word that arrangements were under way for her to marry *skildaqahldju*, Daniel Stanley, of the *S7ajuugahl 7laanas*, she attempted to put a stop to it the only way she knew how, thereby, challenging centuries of culture and tradition. That is, at the age of fourteen, in a show of rebellion against her arranged marriage, she tried to make herself sick by eating lots of snow (Ibid; also see Blackman 1992:147 & 26-33). In any case, in the end, she complied with her parents’ demands, and her marriage took place in about 1910. Haida elder, Claude Jones of the *Yaahl naas yahgu 7laanas* lineage, recounts the story of feasting and celebration when my grandmother married and describes how a canon thundered its announcement of the marriage of a young Haida “princess”: A chief’s daughter married a chief.” he said, “You couldn’t go below yourself. When she got married, her two uncles that lived on part of the hill, taking her two steps, then the gun, canon go off” (Personal communication, May 20, 2002).

While demographic analysis of Haida marriage practices, between 1820-1909, have been carried out by Stearns (1981); and Boelscher (1989); with respect to moiety exogamy, outmarriage, and in particular, cross-cousin marriage, what needs to be accounted for are the actions of individuals – accounts only life histories can reveal. Though my grandmother’s resistance to her arranged marriage was ineffectual, as was her childhood playmate’s and cohort, Florence Davidson, as described in her life history account (See Blackman 1982: 147); the

challenge in itself appears incomparable in the face of Haida law, and thereby offers up insight into how cultural transformation develops (See Ahear 2001). By the time her children married, arranged marriages were no longer in practice, as they could now make their own choice of who to marry.

My grandmother's marriage to Daniel Stanley would be cut short, though, when only eight months later, he got sick and died in Prince Rupert, in 1911. She recalls how someone had taken a boat from Prince Rupert to Skidegate, and then made the 110 km trip by foot to Masset to give her the news (Boelscher field notes, interview with Emma Matthews, November. 13, 79, no page given). While my grandmother's first husband, who was also a chief, was a household name as the famed builder and nineteenth-century artist, I never heard my grandmother talk of their marriage; yet, and in spite of her opposition to the marriage, she had this to say to anthropologist, Marianne Boelscher, some 80 years later:

Daniel Stanley was half-breed. He was very handsome, and all the girls were after him because he carved, too. His name was *Skildaakahluu*, "waiting for the fairy". That was the name of the chief across *S7uljuu kun*. He made lots of money across Port Simpson that's how he built a big schooner and all his relatives helped him. Winnie's mother baptized it "Princess Victoria" (Boelscher interview with Emma Matthews, November 13, 1979).

After his passing, Emma married William Matthews, my grandfather, also *S7ajuugahl 7laanas*, and the nephew [*Tsinmi*'s mother was his sister] of Daniel Stanley, who later succeeded Harry *Wiiaa* as town chief of *7Ad7aiwaas*, Masset Haida.

Raven to Eagle Village

My grandfather, William Matthews, was born in 1887, during summer camping at North Island and was given the baptismal first name, William, after the first white man to live among the Haida, Rev. William Collison. My grandfather spent his early childhood in one of the last traditional cedar-plank houses where he was raised by his uncle, Chief Harry *Wiiaa* [Anglicized to Weah], whose position he assumed. My grandfather's mother's name was *Giidii* (1871-1909), which was Christianized to the Haida pronunciation for Katie, an Eagle of the *S7ajuugahl 7laanas* (from the village *S7uhljuu kun*?); and his father was Matthew *Skihlang*, who was *St' langg 7laanas* (see names/footnote). My grandfather's only surviving sister was *Xanaa jaad*, Eliza Collison, mother of Violet Carl of Alaska, and another sister, Matilda, who died young. His

only brother was Christopher (1890-1914), who later took his father's baptismal name, Matthew, as his surname; hence Christopher and William Matthews (see Boelscher on names 1988:151-166).

My grandfather's name and hereditary title, Chief *Wiiaa*, relates to the history of the great Chief *Siigee*. It also concerns the account of a Raven village that was transferred to the Eagle Clan around 1840, breaking the law of matrilineal succession. The event marked *Siigee*'s decision to declare his own son, a member of the *S7ajuugahl 7laanas* lineage, upon his death, as heir, rather than declaring his eldest sister's son heir according to matrilineal order. Upon which, *Siigee* bestowed his own father's father's name, *Wiiaa*, on his son. This remarkable account, of the famed chief *Siigee*, and the subsequent exploits of his heir, took place before the first significant written descriptions of the Masset Haida; yet it has been amply described in ethnohistorical accounts (See Swanton, 1905); and, more recently, analyzed by combining the study of written documents with oral tradition (See Blackman 1972; 1981; Stearns 1981, 1984; Boelscher 1988: 131-137). Boelscher says that the Masset elders version of the transfer to son instead of maternal nephew, recorded a century or more later, was that "the chief loved his son so much that he gave him the village although he knew that he wasn't suppose to get so close to him" (Boelscher 1989:38). Stearns (1981, 1984) documented my grandfather's account of his predecessor, chief *Wiiaa*'s, appointment. Chief *Siigee*, of the *Skidaakaaw*, the head chief of the Raven village of Masset, married the chief's sister from across the Masset Inlet, which was an Eagle village called *S7uhljuu kun*. My grandfather describes how *Siigee* declared his first born son, *Skildakahluu*, who was born around 1810, and a member of the *S7ajuugahl 7laanas* of the Eagle moiety, as his heir and not his maternal nephew, as Haida law decrees, and which resulted in the transfer of the town. *Skildakahluu*, then, took the name Weah [*Wiiaa*], from his father's father's lineage, upon his succession to chiefship.

There was a girl over on the west coast in Tian. She was the chief's daughter and was very pretty. Our grandmother's son from here got one of his father's servants to take him across the inlet in a canoe in the fall of the year. He walked on the beach way around to the west coast. When he got to Tian he stayed with relations from here. He stayed a whole year. He got married to the chief's daughter. After the marriage his father-in-law gave him a six fathom canoe, dried halibut, dried black cod, preserved fruit and two man servants. (footnote). He came back here to his father's village. He was very popular with his father's tribe members. He got lots of property by hunting. His father made a big feast. He called people from Yan, Kayung, Hiellen, Sangan, all the towns around. When all the guests were here, the chief said, "I got a son. He's very popular here. He's a good hunter and has slaves of his own. I don't want him to be a common member of this village. I give him this village" (In Stearns: 1981:229).

In a paper published later, Stearns (1984) would note that the late Chief William Matthews' wife, Emma Matthews, would bring new information to light that was later recorded by Boelscher (1989). This new information described by my grandmother, but not recorded before, refers to a younger brother of the great Chief *Wiiaa*, who did not live long.

When the first chief *Wiiaa* was going to become chief, he walked over to the West Coast and walked along shore to *Tiaan*. He married a *Tass jinaas*. . . . Her father was chief *Kuns*. This *Kuns* gave his daughter a woman and a man slave, two of each. Then he gave them a big size canoe. They called out "whoo-who." They were close to the shore over there [at *Masset*]. Chief *Siigee* had a big house there. It was clded *Hlkamaal Naas* ["branches house"]. Then this chief *Siigee* invited lots of villagers from all around and he told them he's going to the *Wiiaa*. . . . Chief *Wiiaa*-going-to-be traded the house with his brother, who had a big house there, *Na 7iiwans* ["big house"]. They invited all the villagers and had a big time [potlatch] inside the house, and that's when he told all the villagers when he took his name (Emma Matthews in Boelscher 1989:39).

This information told by my grandmother was corroborated with a document, uncovered by Boelscher among my grandparent's documents, written by W.F. Offutt, the factor of the Hudson Bay Company posted at *Masset*.

June 1st, 1869

I would say the death of *Wiha* is much lamented by all his people. His brother assumes his name and I find him to be an exception. He is well disposed and likes to see the whites come among them. He is of great service to me in trade. He has great influence among his people. I find him to be trustworthy in every particular. Hudson Bay Trading Post.

W.F. Offutt in Charge [punctuation added] (In Stearns 1984: 213).

Stearns' fieldwork during the 1960 and 1970s involved collecting information from the elders of the "old elite", my grandfather among them, yet this information did not come to light. In what she refers to as "structural amnesia", Stearns (1984) makes the analysis that "in this instance does not indicate that the events occurred beyond the reach of memory," but rather, "...that the fraternal succession of the younger *Skil ta qa dju* was considered unremarkable" (Stearns 1984: 214).

In her study "Succession to Chiefship in *Haida Society*" (1984), Stearns makes the persuasive argument that where indeterminate modes of succession are operative, more than one rule applies. She writes, "It is only when the preemptive heir is an unlikely candidate, such as the chief's own son, that we see appointment as a separate mode. "Appointment," she continues, "...

is testimony to the power of the incumbent, to his undisputed right to name his successor" (218). Boelscher (1989), who gives an in-depth picture of the *Wiiaas* at Masset, strengthens this argument in her analysis of rank and the importance of public opinion in granting or refuting chiefly positions (1989:27-90; 1991). Within a few years of his inauguration, then, *Wiiaa* moved to Masset to take up residence there, upon which he began construction on the traditional cedar-plank house around the time period of 1840 to 1850. Blackman (1972) would cite Rev. Charles Harrison, the missionary in Masset between 1883-1890, and my grandfather in the early 1970s, as stating that "Nei:w[o]ns was the largest Haida house erected in recent times. Harrison (1925, p. 58) adds that all the old-fashioned houses were referred to as 'wi-ha houses' by the Masset Haida, a fact which he attributes to the fame and size of Chief *Wiiaa*'s house" (In Blackman 1972: 213). Its sheer size (approximately 55 feet in width and 38 feet in length), and in turn, the manpower needed to build it, as well as its central location in the village, all point to the importance of Haida social rank (Also see Boelscher 1988). *Na7i iwans*, in itself, has become the stuff of legend by Haida members and outsiders alike. With the multiple photographs available that were taken by visitors to Masset in the late nineteenth century of *Na7i iwans*, thus, providing a window to that period, Blackman carried out an in-depth study on *Na7i iwans*, entitled "Nei:wons, the "Monster" House of Chief Wi:ha: An Exercise in Ethnohistorical, Archaeological, and Ethnological Reasoning" (Blackman 1972; Also see Blackman 1981), where she relied heavily on the living memory of my grandfather. When Chief *Wiiaa* died in 1883, his sister's son, Harry *Wiiaa*, succeeded him and inherited the house and its contents (For fuller descriptions on *Wiiaa*'s house also see MacDonald 1983; 1996).

While *Na7i iwans*', in its former glory, would have been the scene of lavish potlatches and home to many of *Wiiaa*'s family and house members, by about the turn of the century, the occupants consisted of my grandfather, his brother, Christopher, their mother, Katie, four slaves, and Chief Harry *Wiiaa*. While slave taking ceased in the last century, it has already been documented that Chief *Wiiaa* did not give up his slaves, who were transferred from his predecessor Chief Harry *Wiiaa*, as noted. One individual continued to live on with Chief Harry *Wiiaa* long after slave taking ceased elsewhere, my grandfather remembered fondly saying: "My mother use to tell me he was my *Tsimni* (grandfather). I sleep with him; go to Tow Hill with him, we use the fish trap" (Copy of Turner interview with Chief William Matthews, August 1970, in possession of my family).

A model of *Wiiaa*'s house, carved in slate, was purchased by the National Museum of Man (Canadian Museum of Civilization), and was later attributed to Haida artist, Charles

Edenshaw, by George F. MacDonald (1983; 1996). In an evocative article, though, "Two Haida Artists from Yan: Will the John Gwaythilhl and Simeon Stilthda Please Step Apart?" Robin Wright correctly attributes the work of art to Haida artist, John Gwaytihl (Wright 1998:42-57).

As a young boy, while living in *Na7iwwans*, my grandfather attended the new Day School operated by the Anglican Missionary, Rev. Keen and his wife, in the early 1890s. It was there that my grandfather received his first instruction in the English language, reinforced by church services that were also held in English. The Industrial School for Indians opened its doors around this same time, in Old Metlakatla, on the mainland, and was attended by a number of pupils from Masset. My grandfather told a story about when he was a young boy of eleven years old that can only be expressed as "one of life's moments." And, importantly, his telling embodies the important cultural knowledge of "*yahguudaang*" (fitness for respect), as noted above, namely, among other things, the use of discourse – which is to be passed on "properly" in Haida oral society. Thus, he draws on important elements of oratory by first establishing kinship links, followed by citing the accomplishments of Adams rather than his own (See Boelscher 1991). He described how, the then seventeen-year-old, Alfred Adams, a major Haida figure and founder of the Native Brotherhood organization in British Columbia (see below), returned home after graduating from this school. While there, he would have received lessons in arithmetic, writing, music and singing, with English being the most important. He continues his account, which was recorded in 1971, by describing how Adams would make the trek home by foot after arriving in Skidegate by steamboat from the mainland.

I'll tell you about our leader, late Alfred Adams. He was my brother-in-law, his wife is still alive, Salina Adams Peratrovich, he adopted Christianity. He died when he was working in the church and all that. So, he's got very interesting life because the best part of my life was with him, I stayed with him.

He went across to Skidegate, and he come back through the coast line, he come home through the coast line from Skidegate. It takes a healthy man, three days, two or three days to walk the coast, from Skidegate, it's way over one hundred miles. Ah, he come home anyway. And I remember that, when he came home people were excited, the whole village were excited! (Turner interview with Chief William Matthews, July 23, 1971)

Grandfather continued: "He played the organ, oh, that was something new to my people. Oh, he could make that thing sing! The people thought, 'he must be a medicine man, or something like that!'" He then recalled how several different instruments lined the walls of the Day school when he was in attendance there, explaining that they were sent by the Missionary Society:

There were nine or ten pieces, brass instruments, clarinet, drum. They hung it up in the school, they just for ornament, nobody knows how to play them, but the English people send them up anyway. So when Adams sees those instruments, he begin to think, you know, so he asked the minister, Mr. Keen, if he got instruction book for those things. So, Mr. Keen, the minister had one, gave it to Adams, and Adams studied that instruction book. He took one of this one - the clarinet - he took it home. Oh, he practiced for a long time on that thing, finally he began to play a few easy pieces, and then from then on he studied the others. When he got pretty near complete, with even the base, big horn you know, he organized a band, you know, he got ten, twelve, young fellows, and they started practice. And people begin to, when they practicing you know, people got fed up with it, they're all kinds of noise you know, and that things a nuisance, what they doing that for? Anyway, in time you know, after they took quite awhile, they begin to play "God Save the Queen", in that band, oh, my, it was wonderful! And then they play religious pieces, "Come to Jesus" and all those easy pieces. One day, a fine day, they come down on the road, and they start to play. Nobody knew they could play that, the majority of people didn't know they could play that thing. Oh, the whole village was upset. Everybody was running, and it was crowded all up. Oh, the most mysterious thing they ever witnessed. "God Save the Queen", they play it over and over again, until the people are satisfied. That's Adams' work, yeh that's his beginning (Turner interview, July 23, 1971).

It was in that time frame, when Adams returned home, just before the turn of the century, when so many sweeping changes had already begun. Following the devastating epidemic diseases of the late nineteenth century (see Duff 1964: 39), the missionaries influence, coupled with the attraction of the small Hudson Bay post established in 1869 in Masset, the remaining outlying villages began moving to Masset. Thus, the single lineage village became a multilineage village (Swanton 1908), where the traditional competitive spirit of the Haida was maintained. Two examples of the effects created by rivalry, prestige, and competition, were the first establishment of a make-shift church in Masset in 1892, followed by the desire to imitate the white man's form of housing. Yet, chief Harry *Wiiaa* did not vacate *Na7i iwans* until 1903 or 1904, when he had the house razed and replaced by the newly adopted style of housing; bringing to a close the physical evidence of the most important potlatch type, the *waahlal* or house building potlatch, which also, in turn, gave noble status to the house owner's children, as noted above (See Swanton 1909; Murdock 1934; Blackman 1977; Boelscher 1989: 66-70).

As a young man, my grandfather continued to live with his uncle, in his newly built one-family two-story frame house, absent only long enough to attend the Industrial School for Indians in Old Metlakatla, that was operated under church supervision. My grandfather would have this to say about his experience there:

That's where the first bishop of the English church was located, and the first missionary that came on this coast was located there, Father Duncan. He got very interesting history,

Father Duncan. ... And there were 26 boys in there, boys from different part of this coast, boys from Skeena, and Port Simpson, and around down the coast, as far as Klemtu. And, then, there was another school for Indian girls, Mrs. Matthews was in there, for about four years, I think, some of our children were in there. Of course it was a strange place for us, we don't know their language. So, we were strangers over there, when we go into that school, and the children from that part of the country never like us because we're strangers. They call us Haidas, and they didn't like us. Oh, we had a lot of scraps in there, a lot of arguments and disputes. I tell you, I was there for three years! (Turner interview, August 1970)

My grandfather's only brother, Christopher, would follow in his brother's footsteps and attend Old Metlakatla School. Claude Jones chuckled when he remembered the story of *Tsimi* Willie's younger brother, Christopher, as he said, "He was raising hell all the time, Christopher. The principal at the school said, 'Gee, that couldn't be Willie's brother!' (laughter) They said Willie was the role model student in the school, never did anything wrong" (Personal communication, May 20, 2002).

My grandfather's brother, Christopher, was his only family blood relative left to him since the devastating epidemic diseases of the nineteenth century. And so, when Christopher drowned, a common fate of the Haida, it was especially tragic for my grandfather and loss to the community. Haida elder Claude Jones remembers that fateful day that clearly expresses my grandfather's grief, as he was a man of extraordinary passion.

When Christopher drowned outside the village there wasn't a dry eye in the place. They were trying to take him away from the body after the doctor say he's gone, his brother Christopher. They were trying to take him away, he was still trying to hang on to him, you know. Yea, we use to talk about it, because of the culture, I guess, he was saying, 'it's so hard to grow up knowing you don't have a sister.' He said, 'you know there's nobody that'll ever call you *gagii* [Uncle]. He said, 'that was really hard to take!' (Personal communication, May 20, 2002).

Throughout his long life he would endure more than his share of grief. Two surviving sons, Christopher, his brother's namesake, and Richard, who lost their lives, so tragically, through drowning accidents. Thus for a man and a woman for whom control was important, their grief was almost too great for them to bear; yet they found the courage and strength to move on. But, while this tragic time moved further into the past, the memory of that day had never faded.

"I'm the last chief recognized in this village, Indian Affairs spoil it"

The traditional rivalry and competition which existed between villages and individuals, albeit in new form, attests to the fact that the first one hundred years of contact, and the culminating consolidation that occurred in only two centers, Masset and Skidegate, had done little to destroy the institutional behavior of the Haida. The highest-ranking chief that owned the village site held the title of "town master" or "town mother" (See Swanton 1905). Thus, Harry *Wiiaa*, the "town chief" of Masset, welcomed the outlying village groups, whose numbers were greatly reduced since the smallpox epidemics. And they steadfastly identified themselves with their own lineage and abandoned territory, as the extended family or lineage governed itself, settled disputes and knew no higher authority. As a skilled Haida orator, in public and in everyday life, my grandfather, embodying important cultural knowledge, was careful to acknowledge all other lineage chiefs and lineage leaders. This was an especially important element of proper speech making, as noted above, after amalgamation occurred at the two central locations, as my grandfather explains: "They got it in their blood," he said, "and so, when the descendants of the other chiefs come here, you couldn't rule them, they wouldn't submit themselves under another chief." He continued by illustrating the fact that custom and tradition were still maintained while acknowledging the increasing incursion on a way of life as the imposed laws which delegitimated traditional chiefs and systems of law, devaluing the importance of the hereditary system as he explained:

"After I grow up, when I was twenty-one, I was in the council, with [Alfred] Adams, Elijah Jones and Peter Hill. Four of us graduated from that Industrial School. And what little education we got in there, we make good use of it here." He continued by stating:

At that time, they never vote in the council members, it was appointed, the head of each tribe. There's nine tribes in here, and they got nine members of the council, he head of each tribe. But, that was a good system, see, because they chiefs in there. But, after while, when the Department changed that thing, it upset everything, because, my tribe, they respect me, and they look up to me, and they obey me. And they won't submit themselves under another chief, oh, no, that's why when the government step in to vote in men, they vote anybody in, maybe more from one tribe, and the member of the other tribe don't like that. That's why they get upset. I'm the last chief recognized in this village. Indian Affairs spoil it! (Turner interview, August 1970)

At the time of my grandfather's birth, the leading chief of Masset was his uncle, Chief Harry *Wiiaa*, who had assumed that position from his uncle, Chief *Wiiaa*, whose ascension to

chieftainship was through an unprecedented series of events, as noted above. This line of chieftainship would remain unbroken when my grandfather succeeded his uncle upon his death, in 1932, as “town chief” of Masset. Any such change had to be recognized by the community. And hereditary town chief of Masset, Chief *Iiljuwaas*, Reno Russ’ telling of an oral history account by naming known individuals who were present to witness the status change, legitimates his version: “The story I heard my Dad talk about was, I remember that in the 1930s is when they started building the hall that burnt down, there was another hall just at the foot of the church road, and that’s where *Naani* [Emma] and *Tsinmi* [William Matthews] had a gathering of people, where he accepted the chieftainship” (Personal communication, May 21, 2002).

Good leaders know that nothing happens without the help of others. Often they attribute this to their spouses, family, friends and mentors who provide support. This is the way of the Haida. As my grandfather was already in council for several years before he assumed his hereditary title, he credits much of his early training to his time spent working with Haida leader, Alfred Adams, whom he held in high regard, and as he so eloquently explains:

I travel with him all the time that’s why I learn to talk in big gatherings. I had lot of practice. And, then, he coach me all the time, he knew the Bible. Oh, yes, he always encourages me! I’m human, I’m weak, and, oh, he coaches me all the time. He said a lot of things you know, I remember, he said, ‘As a man think it in his heart, always think pleasing thoughts and, willful thoughts. You’re going to win,’ he said. I learned how to talk in the public, I learn how to preach in the church, through his coaching. Lot of times I give up, he encourages me, he say, ‘carry on!’ (Turner interview, July 23, 1971)

While too often, careers of Haida leaders with acquired artistic abilities were the ones who have figured so prominently by most writers and their readers, social leaders, and others, often escape notice. Not only does this result in an unbalanced portrayal of the success that many others have achieved over the years, it ignores the importance of many individuals to the people themselves (See Bedard Sparrow, 1998).

My grandfather was an important leader to his people and a significant Canadian. He confronted the new world of the colonizers, learned to speak their language and know their ways, thus, earning respect as a valued leader able to protect the heritage of his people. He, and others, were the first generation of indigenous scholars accomplished in both eurocentric and Indigenous thought, hence, providing a bridge for us to enter into a dialogue that would begin the anti-colonial resistance struggle and the movement for recognition of Aboriginal title. Many of these prominent men and woman played an active role in the village government, and my

grandfather dedicated his life's work to his people, and the results of his wise counsel are still evident today. Haida elder, Willis White, of the *Yaaku 7laanas* lineage, made this statement about my grandfather:

His public life, he did pretty good around here, very good. If he was still around, we wouldn't have the problems we have today. He was in all the things that use to go on, decision making you know. Yes, he wasn't only a Chief, but he was in the council all the time, he always had a position. Then a church lay reader, he did that really well too, pretty good all around. *Tsinni* Willie that's what everybody used to call him. That's more than a name than what they think it was. Like, I'm uncle Willis to everybody, that's the way he was (Personal communication, May 17, 2002).

Stearns, who worked with both my grandparents, and their cohort, in the early 1960s, had this to say about my grandfather's role in his community.

As a man who had served 48 years on the band council including several terms as chief councilor, as special constable, lay reader in the church, and active organizer in the Native Brotherhood in Masset [see below], the chief could claim to have met the expectations of community service attached to his role. In addition he was always called upon as counselor and comforter during the life crises of his people (Stearns 1984:232-233).

The side of *Tsinni* Willie remembered best by community members is the significant role that my grandmother played in his life and career, where she was always by his side. Whether it was a community event such as a feast or dinner, or whether it was one of many visits by journalist, dignitaries, and others who came to appreciate and record his eloquence and grace, *Naani* Emma, as she was affectionately known to all who knew her, was always there to encourage my grandfather with her wisdom and strength. She was there to offer bits of information or to ensure that no one who needed to be acknowledged was left out. He valued her word and her judgment. Feasts were customarily dominated by speech makers of honored guests, who made tribute to the host, and my grandfather as town chief was called upon first. As indicated above, an important attribute to a *yahguudaang* person, a person "fit for respect", is the ability to speak well in public, and everyday talk, and an esteemed chief must have oratorical skills. To master this traditional art, a speaker not only had to be fluent in the language, but also would have to have a thorough knowledge and talent to express oratorical devices, as Haida use a rich and elaborate style of talk, with metaphor, allusion, and elusiveness, which are all vehicles for maintaining or renegotiating social and political relations. (For a fuller development of this

see Boelscher, 1989: 48-90; 1991). Boelscher includes a speech given by my grandfather, William Matthews (Chief *Wiiaa*) during a memorial potlatch given in 1972 in honour of Peter Hill of the *Kunn 7laanas* lineage, in her analysis (See Boelscher, 1991: 133-135).

Clearly such talent was shaped by culture as Haida elder, Claude Jones, explained: "You know speech is quite a bit different than ordinary conversation. When they teach them how to make speeches, they have them stand right beside them; my Uncle Ben Bennett and Charlie Thompson were the ones that did that. Your *Tsinmi*, his uncle [Harry *Wiiaa*] taught him" (Personal communication, May 20, 2002).

Chief Matthews was not only valued and praised for his oratorical skills in both Haida and English but is also remembered for his talent as a lay reader in the church where, well versed in the scriptures, he translated the bible into Haida for a loyal audience. My brother, Ken Bedard, though, fondly remembers the long hours our grandmother contributed to his efforts. "He learnt a lot from our *Naanii*," he said, "she was the original translator of the bible, she always made the corrections" (Personal communication, May 27, 2002). And, just as Ken notes how our grandfather was known as a "master of one liners", writer Leslie Drew had this to say: "Capability in speech-making seems to have lost little over the years. A person like the late William Matthews, Masset's Chief *Wiiaa*, in old age could hold audiences spellbound one minute and have them in fits of laughter the next. Talented individuals use the Haida language to profound effect on public occasions" (Drew 1982: 86). Looking back, as a young child, I can remember being immensely proud and in awe of my grandfather's confident, well spoken and convincing speeches where, when the occasion demanded the utmost attention, in the place of a "talking stick", he would bang his cane on the floor for emphasis. Boelscher notes,

Several chiefly names, such as Guusuu Jingwaas, "long speech," Kil Guulaans, "his words are just like gold," or Kil K'aagangwaas, "things fall over by his word" allude to the significance attested to words (kil) and speeches (guusuu). In this context it is also noteworthy that the material symbol of the office of town chief is his "talking stick," gaag kilsdluudaal. This is ceremonially handed over to the chief during inauguration, and he pounds it on the floor when commencing to speak (1989: 81; also see Collison 1981[1915]:67).

And telling anecdotes or jokes is also part of the Haida speech making, noted above, my grandfather almost always had something humorous to say about my grandmother and their married life together where the humor and affection was known by all. There are many funny stories that he would tell, when the occasion warranted, full of wit and humor and that people often delight in re-telling. For example, on one occasion, he said, "You know, Mrs. Matthews,

she was upset with me, I guess, she call me a skunk. So, I said, 'O.K., that's all right, so then you're a skunk's wife.'" On another occasion, after delivering a long, complicated speech by acknowledging the different lineages and their leaders, he concluded by saying: "Sometime, when Mrs. Matthews get peeved, you know, she says her tribe is better than mine. In order to keep peace in the house, I agree with her. And, then, on top of that, I'm deaf, and that's a good thing, she call me a lot of bad names and I couldn't hear her. I think it's a blessing in a way. If I could hear like you, I'd be in trouble!" (Turner interview, August 1970) Boelscher's (1991) analysis of Haida public discourse calls attention to the fact that jokes and anecdotes about oneself function similar to the rhetorical device of inversion by belittling oneself; that is the rhetoric of lowering one's status to accomplish just the opposite. And she notes, "... only those whose status is intact can afford to belittle themselves symbolically through anecdotes about themselves" (1991: 128).

With kidding aside, long after my grandfather's death in 1974, my grandmother continued making important contributions as a tradition-bearer on matters of importance to Haidas and scholars alike (see below). Stearns (1981), in her inquiry of comments by rivals who occasionally attempted to minimize my grandfather's role as town chief, made the following insightful analysis with respect to the limitations of potlatching as an avenue to high rank, where she elaborated these ideas later in a major essay (See Stearns 1984), notes, "My conclusions there about Haidas' attitudes concerning proper behavior for chiefs are confirmed by Emma Matthews" (Stearns 1981: 266). Her insight came after Marianne Boelscher put the question to my grandmother in 1980 as to whether or not my grandfather had given a feast when he took his uncle's position in 1932. "'Yes,'" she said, they "'put on a small feast. It didn't have to be a big one because he already had a chief's position and didn't have to promote himself'" (Ibid). Stearns, then, concludes with the following analysis: "The value placed on dignity and moderation explains the disdain and resentment many people express toward the highly publicized "spectaculars" with which some villagers support their ambitions" (Ibid.).

"We had a nice little village, clean village"

William and Emma were married in Prince Rupert shortly after the death of her first husband, in 1911. Upon their return home to Masset, they stayed with Chief Harry *Wiiaa* and his wife. Not long after, Emma and Willie had their own new European-style house built about five houses away at the very northern end of the village. This is where they would raise their family.

My grandmother's first daughter, Rhoda (1913-1935), unlike my grandmother, was born inside of the house with a mid-wife in attendance. This was not always the case, though, as my grandmother explained, "When there was no midwife around, the woman would just help each other" (footnote/Boelscher's notes). Other times she was either alone when she gave birth, or *Tsinni* was there to help. When her second child, Harold, was born, in 1915, her childhood friend, Florence Davidson, had helped her. But as serious illness and death was commonplace during this time, my grandmother described how she and Florence rowed up to New Masset with her newborn baby, but sadly "the little boy died anyway" (Ibid). Esther, born in 1916, also died as an infant; Christopher (1917-1949) was born next; followed by Vesta (1919-2000); Bernice (1924-1943); my mother, Phyllis (1927-1988); then, Richard (1928-1950), and Katie (1930).

Their house located at the north end of the village, as I recall from my earliest memories of growing up with my grandparents, was built according to the new two-storied design and was furnished in all that afforded the newest fashion to a Haida home. The large living room that took up most of the space of the main floor was filled with luxury items such as china cabinets, chesterfields, and a piano. Other items included bedroom furniture, a sewing machine, and an impressive assortment of bone china, among other things. The large living room was the scene of many social and ceremonial gatherings, at times filled with sadness, and other times with jubilation.

While most often, during the winter months, ceremonial events took place in the host's home, other events involving the whole village, such as weddings, anniversaries, funerals, and potlatches would take place in the community hall. The hall at the foot of the "church road" was the first white style communal place of gathering, other than the church, that was built in our village and Claude Jones recalled its origins in this way:

Daniel Stanley was your *Naani*'s first husband, he had a seining schooner, he use to go to Ketchikan [Alaska] to get the lumber when they going to build the hall. It was outside of Bunny Weir's house, I guess. He got the lumber, that's why they named it "Stanley's Hall" because he was the one that brought the material over. There was no mill around here at that time. They had a sawmill in Ketchikan (Personal communication, May 20, 2002).

When that hall got too small, they built the next one a little further up along the beach.

"The hall was quite a bit bigger" Claude continued, "the first one was 30 x 60, the one that they built later was 40 x 80" (Ibid.). This hall, also built by community labor, was complete with a

stage at one end and a kitchen at the other, and the two sides featured elevated bleachers for spectators.

A break in the row of the white-style housing in the old section of the village, near Harry *Wiiaa*'s house, stretched the church road that is a distance of about a quarter mile from the beach to the church entrance. It was the hands of skilled Haida builders who built this church in 1920, replacing the makeshift church of an abandoned Haida house. The interior of the church was encased in yellow and red cedar where light filtered into it through a large stain glass window, which was then completed with a large bell tower. Clearly, Adams' work in the church had considerable influence on my grandfather's role, and others, in the church. In his later years he would recall a time in his youth that Adams played the organ in the church by relieving the Rev. Keen's wife who played the organ during their stay in Masset from 1890-1900. "And then, he was in the choir," he continued, "with white settlers. And he could read the bible, oh, everybody thought he was a wonderful man!" These very sentiments are echoed today about my grandfather's role in the church as a choir leader and a lay reader. Chief Reno Russ recalled how such public roles became an important part of Haida social life in the twentieth century as he remembered my grandfather like this:

The other interesting or important role that he [Chief Matthews] played in this community, he was one of the leaders of the Church. Not having to go to school to read the bible, not having to go to school to study the Bible, and yet just by exchange of information between the group of people, reading the Bible, they understood the Bible so well, they could interpret the bible from English to Haida. Both him and all of them: Elijah Jones, Alfred Adams, and Peter Hill. This gave a lot of interest to the people of the community, because a lot of people did not go to school and could not understand the bible in English. They would tell the story in Haida (Personal communication, May 21, 2002).

While oratory, formal speech making, was an aspect of my grandfather's leadership qualities, where speaking well and often for long periods of time were noted features of oratorical skills, and that are finely integrated with the social and political life, he rarely talked about himself. Rather, as a person associated with high rank, who is said to be *yahguudaang*, or a person who is "fit for respect", never talks about himself or promotes himself in any way, but rather acknowledges others in both public or everyday discourse. These were notable attributes possessed by my grandfather remembered by many people. On one occasion, among many, after telling a lengthy story about Alfred Adams' life work in the church, he alludes to his own role in the church only to end on an imaginative and humorous note, as telling jokes is an important

element of proper speech making (see Boelscher 1991:127-128), as he adds: "And I was in the church all my life, preaching to my people." And with a mischievous tone said, "I don't know if I'm good enough to go to heaven yet!"

Clearly, by the time the first missionaries had arrived in Masset, Haida culture had reached a crisis point with the epidemic diseases, and coupled with the competitive nature and obliging ways of the Haida, the missionaries found a fertile ground for conversion. The greatest changes can be attributed to these early missionaries who, for example, convinced several of our chiefs that the bodies of our ancestors should be buried, which followed by the persuasion to replace the memorial totem pole with tombstones; to the eventual conversion of the entire Haida population by the turn of the century (See Blackman 1973;1977;1981). Yet, there were limits beyond which they would not go. Beneath all the changes, traditional ideas and customs persisted as the Haida accepted Christianity on their own terms; and in turn, contributed to the preservation of a distinct Haida culture. Early reports describe the Haidas own reaction to missionization that focuses our attention on the dual consideration of change within continuity. Brink refers to one report, for example, in 1915 when groups from Port Simpson had gathered in Masset, and Skidegate, for a revival meeting where on this occasion the Anglican minister was not invited. He explained that this minister had some reservations and is reported to have said:

The whole village is excited, I can hear the big drum and the singing, although the meeting is held in the village hall, I am not so very sure about these excitable meetings myself. I told them I was afraid the big drum was making so much noise they would not be able to hear the 'still small Voice (Creary in Brink 1974: 122).

This same report continued by lamenting the fact that the Haida were obviously unwilling to merely cast aside their important traditional seasonal patterns, as he exclaimed: "The spiritual atmosphere is maintained through the winter, but with the approach of spring comes a restlessness to get away and the enthusiasm wears off, not to be renewed until services are again in full swing in the fall" (Ibid.).

Blackman makes a telling argument in her article "Totems to Tombstones: Culture Change as Viewed Through the Haida Mortuary Complex, 1877-1971" that in a period of rapid cultural change since the introduction of Christianity nearly 100 years ago, the Haida mortuary potlatch did not disappear but was transformed, and was correctly appraised as a focus of conservatism. She writes,

A headstone, to the church a visible symbol of a Christian death and burial, meant something quite different to the Haida; it became a symbol of wealth and status and an indication that a potlatch had been given for the deceased. The hymns is another instance of reciprocal change or "indigenization." To the missionary, the performance of hymns indicated an acceptance of Christianity, while to the Haida it betokened the acquisition of new and prestigious incorporeal property (Blackman 1973:55).

Thus, as new conditions for achieving status had been introduced, new skills and knowledge were added to Haida values. However, coercive laws brought about these very changes.

My grandfather also learned how to play the clarinet and would soon be part of Adams' newly formed brass band that clearly had such a profound effect on him. He remembered with such great pride:

And then, he [Adams] kept on building up that brass band, and we had a wonderful band when I grew up. I played clarinet in there, solo clarinet. And, ah, we had thirty-four members when we got disbanded, and we had a nice band! We use to play fourth grade music in that brass band (Turner interview, July 23, 1971).

Appropriate conduct in Aboriginal societies was assured through the transmission of values – the teaching of proper thought and behavior – from one generation to the next (see Miller 2002). The elders were the vital link with the past and the repositories of knowledge about how to behave suitably and honorably in every situation. Their personal memories of the past that they had gleaned from their own teachers were the basis for the unwritten code of conduct. And when it came to decision making for the welfare of our community, our leaders and our esteemed elders sought to harmonize community interest and achieve a consensus. My grandfather always maintained his spiritual belief that one had to maintain a clean mind and healthy body in order to survive, and furthermore, respected the fact that any violation of the rules of nature could result in repercussions. He always said, "My people were clean people, fast! When I was a boy," he said, "something in the air, very powerful, keeps you alive. Close to what Israelite's know. When young get foolish, reckless, you think this world is level, no it is sharp, you'll fall off!" Thus in the following account, my grandfather explains himself and his passion for sport, which also reveals his enduring sense of responsibility to the young people, which clearly sums up a side of him I remember well, including his ability to, when the occasion warranted, make clear, straightforward and persuasive statements, which he concludes in his own style of wit and humour.

One time when they building, young people playing basketball in the hall, that first time they start game like that in here. Old people here, kick up a rowel by it, say it's dangerous. I was chief councilor then, I give permission to the young people there, but the whole village had public meeting against it. Oh, yea! And, I, big meeting, I explained, why, I encourage that, it's encouraged all over the world, every nation. You know why, I said, when young people are walking around, they doing nothing, it breed discontent, breeds lot of funny, dangerous stuff. What going to happen, they commit an offense. That's why people encourage this sport, in the field and in the houses, games, and, "*dasingu*", I said. After they take part in the sports, they got clean mind, just like you bath your body. They got clean, healthy mind. And, besides that, they got healthy body. And, then, besides that, all the people that work them, it makes them happy. It create three things, that why I encourage it. And, when they take a vote on it, everyone voted for it, yea. Oh, I learned things, and here I learn in this village, I learn a lot of things, from Mr. White Man (laughter!) (Turner interview, July 26, 1971).

Indeed, the sport of basketball, and all sports, became a lifelong love for my grandfather, as Chief Reno Russ recalls:

You know *Tsimi* Willie was always a very sport minded person, he just loved basketball and the young basketball players always recognized him at the time. He was always there. He never gave up on it; he wanted kids to continue with basketball, and other sports. Like softball on the field, if you want to see Chief Matthews, you just go up there and he'd be there. That's just the way he was (Personal communication, May 21, 2002).

An Athletic Club was soon added to the various other social clubs that were created around this time and the winter evenings became a buzz of excitement as intervillage basketball tournaments were organized, drawing players from the mainland and Alaska. I can remember how this was an especially happy occasion for my grandparents as this was the occasion that my grandfather's only blood relations, his nephew, Francis Carl and his wife and their boys, would arrive on their seine boat with the basketball team from Hydaburg, Alaska. They would often come bearing prized gifts, such as their famous Alaskan pilot biscuits, and that family bond remained strong, as it does to today. Since this time, the North Coast basketball has come to play an important role in First Nations communities. I can only imagine how my grandfather would marvel at, and be filled with pride; to witness how teams from the Northwest Coast come together for the All Native Tournament in Prince Rupert, to contend for the honour of their communities, drawing crowds of two thousand, or more. Further, he would be equally proud to witness his grandson, and my brother, Ken Bedard, who is the television and radio broadcaster for the games, which has become one of the most competitive and prestigious All-Native events in Canada.

He also found great joy in living and his basic life principal was to strive for a better life for his people. Thus, while our legal and political structures had been undermined since before

the turn of the century, those structures were still functioning even as new forms of authority were introduced. Several villagers were appointed constables, my grandfather among them; a position he held before he was elected councilor. In the early part of the twentieth century as there was no police to enforce the law, it was our esteemed and honored leaders who were living role models and the obedience to these leaders was derived from the respect that the people had for them. People listened to them and typically followed their leadership because they respected their wise opinions, conflict resolution skills, and proven good judgment. Their actions were regulated by customs, not laws. My grandfather's account describes that time when senior people had the capacity to pull the people together and where the people respected the law.

We use to have a ten o'clock curfew by law here, under his [Adams'] administration. I was with him, Elijah Jones, Peter Hill, four of us, Alfred's the head. Of course, some other people. And, at ten o'clock we got a bugle going off. Everybody retreat, everybody got to go home. I never see nobody on the streets. If somebody's around, we got four constables, they ask him what he's doing. And if they say, just fooling around, they send him home, otherwise they hold him up. And, we use to promote, every year, clean up the village, you know, environmental. We enforce that law. "We had nice clean village." And we use to promote public work, for two weeks without pay. We build road to the north beach, we build road to that cemetery. All of the public, you know, all the people come out. And, of course, there is the women, when we do that they prepare a meal, and in the evening, they take it to the town hall. And, we have lovely time in there. The people come out and tell stories, some of them go ahead and sing, just like they did up there yesterday.

And, then even when we have environmental, they clean up the village, clean up the street, build it up, even women take baskets and sacks. They go down the point and collect those clam shells, carry it all, whole village full, women, boys and girls, everybody, scatter it on the road out here. Oh, the road was dry as that, clamshells, even when it was raining, no wet. Today, people civilized, yea!, they waiting till the law say 'You do that, you do this.' hm, foolishness!' (Turner interview, July 23, 1971).

Over time, though, as traditional government was seen as an obstacle to the process of "civilization" and integration, the Canadian Indian policy called for the eventual elimination of all vestiges of, albeit limited, Indian political power. Thus, after the new Indian Act of 1951, the council's authority was displaced by 1955, where, in effect, band councils functioned as agents of the Canadian government in a model of colonial indirect rule rather than as representatives to their own people, clearly, a notable source of frustration felt by my grandfather. Furthermore, "In February of 1961 the Indian commissioner for British Columbia announced that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police would henceforth enforce band by-laws dealing with the regulation of traffic, observance of law and order, prevention of disorderly conduct, regulation of hawkers,

and protection of fish and game" (Stearns, 1981: 73). It is these policies that have strangled native people and is caused above all by a lack of effective power.

"After they quit the canoe"

To be successful hunters and fishers, the crew that manned a canoe, large or small had to be highly trained to face the inevitable stormy seas. The *Globe and Mail* published a lengthy interview with my grandfather in the Sunday edition of 25 March 1970, entitled "Warmth, openness of Haida chief hint at happy era before whites," where the caring nature of my grandfather was well expressed by the author, as well as my grandfather's recollection of such training that began when he was a young boy.

I can remember," he said, "in the morning with snow on the ground, the chief would get up and put a blanket around him. He'd round up all the young boys in the village and have them swim out in the ice-cold water up to their necks." And the author noted, 'With a chuckle, he said:' He only got me once (Platiel, 1970).

Haida canoe makers had an envied reputation along the coast and, as early as 1884 Chittenden could write, 'Masset is the shipyard of the Hydats,' (In Stearns 1981:43). And these canoes, referred to by MacDonald as the "Cadillacs of the coast" (MacDonald 1996: 131), were sought after by the coastal groups in trade (Also see Murdock, 1934). And along the *Wiiaa* line, my grandfather's father's father was brother to master canoe builder, prominent shaman, and Chief, the great *Dr. Kuday*. Family stories describe how he would make the voyages to the mainland in one of his fine, newly carved canoes to trade with the Tsimshian's for oolachan grease, a food product prized to this day. The *Wiiaa* clan was kept in good supply.

My grandfather explained how canoes were still being made up in the Yakoun Valley, the canoe-manufacturing centre, because of its high quality cedar, and used for transportation right up until the 1920s. He said, "They were still making canoes up the inlet, you know those six fathom canoes. There was no transportation then that's the only thing they use to travel around, those days until almost nineteen hundred and twenty. Then we get regular steamboat, transportation, before that old canoe, transportation" (Turner interview, July 26, 1971).

Even before the last skilled canoe maker hollowed-out a cedar tree, though, shipyard-built fishing boats were in use. Just as the occupational training in carpentry taught in the residential school system was highly esteemed, so, too, was training in boat building, where skills were easily transferable. My grandfather continued by stating, "After they quit the canoe,

they must have built about sixteen, eighteen big seine boats here...". In fact, during the first decades of the 20th century, the Masset Village became known as the "shipyard of the Queen Charlottes." While boathouses once lined the water front of our village, I can recall one of the last that was located directly in front of my grandparent's home on the north end of the village, and which also served as an intriguing and fun place to play as a child when it was not in use. This large boathouse was dismantled in 1969 and the last boathouse to fall into ruins was owned by Jeffrey White and his brothers and was located on the opposite end of the village.

Important to the completion of building a boat was the naming of it. Many people tell stories today of how the names of certain boats originated. Chief Reno Russ remembered, for example, that Matthew Yeomans, a descendant of Chief *Wiiaa*, owned the boat called "Chief *Wiiaa*". "And," he continued, "The 'White Creek' was owned by Robert Brown, their trap line was out here at White Creek, and that's why they named their boat 'White Creek.' The boat called *K'yuust'aa*, John Marks owned that, he built it. He called it *K'yuust'aa* because he was a descendant from *K'yuust'aa*. There was quite a few boats named after the villages that they came from" (Personal communication, May 21, 2002). And it is remembered how Adam Bell called his boat the "Haida Queen" after his mother, since she was known as the Queen of the village after she had taken the chiefship from her uncle, Charlie Johnson. My brother, Ken Bedard, explained that the largest seine fleet on the coast in the 1920s and 1930s were Haidas, namely from Masset. Many of these boats are still operational today and as a former United Fisherman and Allied Worker's Union employee, Ken affirms that "Still, to this day, the union insists that the rights to the names of these boats belong to the Haida" (Personal communication, May 27, 2002).

My grandfather recalls the time when he was just a young boy when canoes were used to fish in the traditional Haida manner to earn a livelihood.

And we go to Skeena, on canoe, every summer. There was no work here of any kind. When I was a boy, we use to sail across in the month of May, so we can take part in fishing in Skeena River, with net. Some people make maybe over one hundred dollars whole season, some women make about sixty, seventy dollars. That's enough money to tie them over the winter. That's lots of money in those days, you can work for only ten cents an hour. And then one dollar will feed you quite awhile (Turner interview, July 26, 1971).

It wouldn't be long, though, when he, too, would eventually move on to modern methods of fishing and skipper his own boat; thereby, earning his livelihood by doing what he knew best. My grandfather, then, experienced the beginning of a century-long transformation from

subsistence to commercial production. One boat he skippered was called the "R&S" and another was the "Worthman T", which he ran for many years for the Francis Malard Fishing Company. He would venture to the traditional salmon-spawning locations, such as the Yakoun and the Ain River, where fish were taken in abundance, to be sold to the local cannery or used for consumption.

Fish canneries began to dot the whole of the Northwest Coast as well as Haida Gwaii, and provided employment for many Haida, especially the woman, who, in turn, contributed their earnings to the Haida ceremonies. Hard work, both in and outside of the household, has always been a virtue of Haida women, as providence and industry is associated with social hierarchy (see Boelscher 1989: 76-77). And, as it was not uncommon for women to spend their childbearing years working in these canneries, many women bore their children at these locations. My grandmother, who spent many years working at the various fish canneries, gave birth to two of her daughters while working at local canneries: Bernice, was born at the Masset Tow Hill clam cannery, and Phyllis, my mother, was born at Watun River cannery. My grandmother also traveled to the mainland in the springtime, as native labour was essential and sought out by commercial interest to process the catch. As a young girl I used to listen to her talk about these places that she had traveled to, and, at that time, these names and places seemed so mysterious. In listening to her stories, I realized that these locations on the mainland, such as the Inverness cannery, were places that came to be social gatherings of friends and family. I would later learn why these cannery locations seemed so strange as most of these canneries had long closed with the consolidation of the canning industry along the coast. And these closures would displace the number of native people employed as cannery workers as they were now viewed as competitors to white commercial interests (See Pearse 1982; Knight 1978). It was then that I came to understand the full impact of these fishing stories, as they were deeply concerned about maintaining this essential aspect of Haida culture in what has become a lucrative but risky business.

While our people fished for cash, traditional subsistence gathering and the division of labour persisted. Wage labour became a supplement to the bounty of the natural sources of food available to my people. And it was the sea that provided the principal source of food that was usually eaten with a variety of Western foods. I can recall how, at any given time, as a result of my grandfather's labour, buckets of chitons or sea urchins lined the kitchen floor. My grandmother would prepare enough for the family meal and the remaining portions would be divided and shared with others. Haida elder Lawrence Bell often expresses his admiration and

respect that he feels towards my grandparents. A recurring theme in the stories he has to share about my grandfather is his caring and thoughtful nature. "Your *Tsinni* knew all the good spots," he said, "he knew just the place to go where there were lots of chitons. Oh, the people would just gather on the beach, they'd be so happy to get it!" (Lawrence Bell, Personal communication).

Family and I share our greatest memories of times spent at our traditional fishing camp along the Yakoun River, the birthplace of our *Naanii*. My grandparents returned every spring during the salmon runs to their traditional spot to their cabin perched on the riverbank, where they would set up camp. We would spend several days or weeks at the camp where my grandfather caught the fish in abundance, and the skilled hands of my grandmother, who labored long and tediously to clean and butcher the catch, and tended it for smoking and drying it. While all were rewarded for hard work with a good supply of food, the greatest reward was being able to return each year to our campsite along the riverbank, as we continue to do today. I can recall the peace and comfort of the little shack, where we slept together on an over size feathered mattress, and how the little wooden stove was there to keep us warm. A booklet filled with wonderful stories by my *naanii*, mother, and other descendants and family members of the Yakoun River, was published and entitled *Yakoun: River of Life* (1990). This book was graciously dedicated to the memory of both my late grandmother (1894-1989) and mother, Phyllis (1926-1988). The author writes:

Naanii Emma Matthews was born at the Yakoun River in 1894. Her daughter Phyllis Bedard was born at Watun River in 1926. There was a bond between them that carried them together through life and through difficult situations as they stood for the rights of human dignity and understanding. Their love for life and nature touched many lives and the Yakoun had a special place in their hearts. This publication is dedicated to their memory (Collison et al. 1990: 3).

Clearly, for the Haida, and most Northwest Coast native communities, perhaps no resource is seen to be more important than the fishery (See Knight 1978; Pearse 1982; Newell 1993). Yet, with the passage of the *Indian Act* in 1876, which regulated virtually every aspect of Indian life through a resident agent, laws against fishing were also unlawfully enacted (see Sharma 1998; Lane 1978; Miller 1992a). By 1888, federal authorities passed legislation, which stated that the Aboriginal fishery was to provide food only for personal consumption. The fishery was no longer in our control. However, my people, and other North Coast fishers, continued to assert their fishing rights after 1878. We have never surrendered our lands and resources. In fact, for several years after the Fisheries enacted the regulations, my grandfather,

and others, continued to practice an ancient right and fished in violation of the white man's law. These laws were certainly oppressive and symbolized colonial values, and under prosecution for fishing, among other laws, native people were placed in a purely defensive position, but there were times when they were successful in arguing their cases before the courts. Charlie Bellis, a lineage mate from the *Yahgu Tlaanas clan*, recounts one particular story that my grandfather shared with him where the judge threw out the case against my grandfather based on the following comment: "You can't charge an Indian because an Indian is not a human being." Charlie said, "We sure laughed about that one!" There are many stories about my *Tsinmi* with respect to fishing by community members that have yet to be recorded, and the name and details of this court case are unknown at this time. My grandfather also had success in avoiding prosecution when it came to defying the imposed fishing regulations that made selling or buying of any "food fishery" fish illegal. Fortunately, a few of these stories told by my him are available on cassette, where his eloquence, with so much fire, so much compassion, is captured, and from which I excerpt:

Lot of times they try to chase us out of the river when you get sockeye, like in the month of May and June. Just now they chase us out. All right, we got enough fish anyway. But, when I was able to get around, I heard a lot of fight around – four different times they try to chase me out of there. They close the river, because they didn't want me to sell the fish to white man. They don't want me to live. And yet, they say in the British North American Act, the natives will be allowed to get fish for their food anytime, with gaff hook or a spear, or a net, whatever, or a trap. Anytime they want it, they can get it for their own food, or they can go out hunting for the food. Now, six, four times the fishery officer come up there, after they close the creek. Of course, one of them was raised up in this Island, young fellow, called Moore, he was little boy when he came up here. And he was fisheries officer.

He come around one day on a row boat, and he said, [He referred to my grandfather by this name] "Billy, I said the river is closed, you get the hell out." I said, "What?" "The river is closed," he said, "you have to go." I said, "Come on, you come ashore." I said, "I didn't quite understand you." So he come ashore. "I said, the river is closed, two days ago." he said. So I said, "Now look Mr. Moore, I just come here yesterday. I happen to be visiting in Skidegate, and I over stayed over there, I got interested over there, and I forgot about getting fishing here." "Oh, that's too bad" he said, "you have to get out." "Now look," I said, "I'm not getting out, I want a few fish." "No," he said, "you're liable." "All right," I said, anything you want, you can persecute me. Go ahead." "Well, Billy, too bad," he said, "I think we'll let an exception," he said, "you stay one week." I said, "What, one week" I said, "what's the idea? Now look," I said, "this is not a vegetable garden. A man can't go out there and pull up what he wants. Cabbage and turnips and, other things, he could see what he wants. Don't you know this fish, sometimes they stop coming, for whole week, maybe more, according to their directing nature, they can direct things. Even if I get few in one week, they not get cured in one week, for us to hang them up, smoke them." He throw up his hands, he says, "Oh,

oh, all right Billy!" He never come back again. Oh, I had a lot of fight up there, myself! (Turner interview, August 1970)

Clearly, the concepts that are most important for understanding the unequal relations that have prevailed since soon after contact between natives and whites are those of dependency, coercion, and domination. Chief Reno Russ remembers a time when group interest was paramount to self-interest, as he noted: "This community was never poor, never poor that I could remember. Somebody always had something to give, hey! People never worried about going up to New Masset, going uptown or anything you know. Everything was done around here; a lot of things were being done in the community (Personal communication, May 21, 2002). The message is that people who are forced to depend on others will cease to depend on themselves. Under those circumstances, it is a tribute to our people who have been able to overcome these circumstances and to those who have fought, and who are continuing to do so, to bring an end to these ugly conditions.

Yet, while my grandfather experienced the best of many changes, some of these changes had drawbacks that bemused him as he so eloquently expresses in his own inimitable style, as noted, always full of biting satire, and irresistible humor, as well as his obvious pride and love of nature:

Then we get regular steamboat, transportation, before that old canoe, transportation. Boy I use to get sea sick, though, I didn't like that, I thought I'd die. I sail across in the west wind, oh about eighteen, twenty-two canoes, white sail. That's life, boy, when you sail along, good breeze you know, oh, boy, you think you're in heaven! And then when you land on good spot, sandy beach and gravel beach, lot of flowers around, you think you landed in heaven! You hungry and you eat any thing and you enjoy. Today, no enjoyment in that thing, you fly in and you're scared to death, and then you go on a gas boat, sometimes you stay inside too much and you get the smell of gas, oh, no! (Turner interview, August 1970)

"We Held Him Up"

My grandparents lived to witness the first Europeans to arrive and settle among us in a location about four kilometers north of our village, which would eventually become known as "New Masset." While in the beginning, white settlers were few, and the best roads were our own roads that glistened with white clam shells, the close proximity of our village to the white community of New Masset meant a continual influence of Western culture. And, too, by then,

my people were by no means isolationist, as they were already traveling to work in the canneries or visiting with relatives on the mainland and Alaska. And as a wider world was beckoning, trips to the newly established cities of Vancouver and Victoria were also a common occurrence. Relationships with these early "homesteaders" were generally good and have remained so with several families of the descendants who still reside in New Masset. Kathleen Dalzell, the author of two popular books on the Queen Charlotte Islands, recalled the story of her father, who, along with three other prospectors, had met with Chief Harry *Wiiaa*, in 1908, to request permission to enter his territorial lands. And, she also remembered how Chief *Wiiaa*'s great dignity left a lasting impression upon her father (Personal communication, May 16, 2002). Everyone remembers "old Kurt" and his wife, two very kind and hard working people, who were also long time residents and who ran a general store in the small white settlement. "By offering charge accounts, free delivery, and 100-pound sizes in potatoes and flour, Kurt catered to the Indian trade. It was said that there was one price for whites and a lower one for Indians" (Stearns 1981:207). As the frequency and intensity of contact with white settlers increased, though, incursions on the Haida way of life increased.

From the time Reserve Commissioner Peter O'Reilly arrived and met with Chief *Wiiaa*, and other lineage leaders, in 1882, to survey and set aside a number of reserves (see Blackman 1981:30; Boelscher 1989:13), there was significant resistance by our leaders. The main issue was the land issue. Our leaders understood then, as now, that our land not only has economic and political significance to our lives, but it is also connected to our values, our way of life, and is viewed in profoundly spiritual terms. No agreement exists whereby we surrendered ourselves to the Government of Canada. The government, on the other hand, with its well-established concept of land ownership and practice of surveying, assumed we would accept and understand. Thus, culture conflict appears to have reached a peak as outsiders began to encroach upon our traditional and sacred sites, and as more and more laws were being enforced against our way of life. In fact, many of our leaders, my grandfather among them, who were well schooled in the English language, developed under the tutelage of Anglican missionaries, as noted above, were making compelling arguments to the Government as early as 1911, which, in turn, merely turned a deaf ear to the cause. The failure of the Government to acknowledge the validity of original ownership and Aboriginal Rights settlement was clearly a source of great frustration, as my grandfather exclaimed. "We sent petition to Ottawa, we sent letter to Ottawa demanding, you know things, we get an answer all right: 'We have received your communication, we have received your petition. It's under consideration.' That's what we got. And we got piles and piles

of 'under consideration', nothing done!" As a result of these varied forms of protests that were taking place among native groups in British Columbia, the Crown responded only by making it an offense, in 1927, to organize for land claims throughout British Columbia by banning any political activity on the land question

Also, up to this point, my people were able to maintain self-respect and autonomy due to their superiority in the fisheries. But, with the increasing numbers of European boat owners and fishermen, the effects of over-fishing were felt. And lower fish prices, combined with the discriminatory practices by cannery owners, among other factors, caused the number of native fishers and cannery workers to decline drastically (See Pearse 1982; Tennant 1990). My grandfather observed how a firm from the Mainland had sold new engines to many of the seine boat owners from our village, and when they were unable to make the payments, the company sized the fleet in lieu of payment. His mounting frustration is clear.

And that's all taken away by Nelson Brothers in Port Edward. They put new engines on, some of them, and then they run up too much bills and Nelson had to take them away from them. So we got nothing here, just little trolling boats. They already take our land away and they take our things away and just now they take our cattle away. We had quite a lot of cattle here, ourselves, we got seven or eight heads and since I couldn't get around, couldn't look after them, these grandsons, grandchildren, are in school, and got no help. And the New Masset people start to kick up a rowel about it, they didn't want our cattle to go into their village. The white people, they took our land, then our cattle, they don't want us to have anything! (Turner interview, July 26, 1971)

In spite of the banning of political talk in 1927, the council of chiefs from various tribes formed organizations to press for land claims and other crucial issues, that would lead to the formation, in 1931, of The Native Brotherhood of British Columbia on the initiative of several Haida leaders. To achieve this task, spurred on in their efforts to better the conditions of our people, our leaders looked to the Alaskan Native Brotherhood that formed around 1900, as their model. Haida elder, Willis White remembers my grandfather, and other founding members like this:

When it first started it was Alfred Adams. The [Alaskan] Native Brotherhood told him he should start one in BC. When he got here, well, naturally, Willie Matthews, Godfrey Kelly and Alfred Adams was the one that started it first. It started right here in Masset, and when they going quite good around here, started the Brotherhood, everybody joined up (Personal communication, May 17, 2002).

My brother Ken described how our grandfather, Alfred Adams, and Elijah Jones, and others were called upon because they had large seine boats to transport people to these meetings. They would travel over to the mainland and pick up the Tsimshian representatives and travel from there to Alaska, where relatives greeted them. Later they would travel to several other villages, at their own expense, signing up recruits. The first official meeting was held in Port Simpson on December 15, 1931. My grandfather's words describe how it was necessary to bring people together as a united front of Indian Nations in British Columbia in order to take on the government, a movement that brought villages together politically for the first time.

So when we organized the Brotherhood here, Alfred Adams, we learn it from Alaska, we use to make a trip over there, visit our people over there, Haidas, a lot of relations over there. In fact, I got over ten nephews and a niece over there. I got nothing here, closer, but that is where my own blood is, Hydaburg. Yea, I got eleven nephews over there, about four or five girls over there. And, they come here and visit us sometime. And, we learn that Brotherhood. Well, we insist on being organized in BC. We have a lot of experience dealing with the Indian Department. So, we got organized here in 1930, Alfred Adams, we went to Port Simpson, near Prince Rupert, and we give lot of advertisement before that, all the villages, way down to Vancouver, we notify each Indian villages. The only way we could get government to listen and do something for us, we organize into one body – British Columbia Indian! So, they thought it was a good thing, we went to Port Simpson, in the month of December, and we organize the Brotherhood over there, and we had nice happy time over there! And, all of the men from Port Simpson was elected as a president. And we had quite an organization, our people were happy. First time, for years and years, we never visit people on the mainland, that first time we had chance to get together like that and it created lot of wonderful spirit. You know, of course, we intermarried once in awhile, although we enemies. But, that first time, as friends, we got together. And, we use to call for meeting every, twice a month, or once a month, you know, the Brotherhood organization (Turner interview, July 23, 1971).

As mission activity had become important in the village, church affiliated societies for the women were already well under way at this time. The first women's auxiliary had begun with the arrival of the wife of the first resident missionary, in 1876, and they were referred to as the "White Cross *jade* [women]", and later would evolve into the Women's Auxiliary of the Anglican Church and today the Anglican Church Women or ACW. The women spent much of their effort in raising funds for the church, so, it is not surprising that they took a leading role in the raising of funds for the travel costs for our leaders in the promotion of the Native Brotherhood, so significant to its founding success (see Drucker on the Native Sisterhood, 1958: 116; also Pritchard 1985; Cole 1994). My grandmother was the president of the Women's Auxiliary in the early 1930s and remained an active member throughout her life. Chief Reno Russ remembers my grandmother, as he said, "A very active lady. She always played a leading

role in the community, but even during our time, our wives did that. They taught them, that if we were leaders of the community, they had to belong” (Personal communication, May 21, 2002).

Our Nation has had a succession of leaders who have played important roles in our history, and many of their ideas, new transcendent ideas, would often take place during their meetings on the beach. Chief Reno Russ remembers our leaders in this way, while adding his insightful interpretation on culture:

We all lived in the lower end of the village, and they were always together. Alfred, *Tsimi* Willie [William Matthews], my grandfather, Ed Russ, the others, Peter Hill, Roger Weir, they all somehow used to gather down on the end. Lots of discussions on the beach, something that we don’t have anymore. You know they would sit on the logs and they would tell stories, and lots of information passed to each others, hey? They talk about knowledge of elders; people refer to other people as elders. One elder did not have the knowledge of all things in life. If one person, one elder knew about something and another elder knew about something else, and in a gathering they would exchange this information (Personal communication, May 21, 2002).

Clearly, the Native Brotherhood offered a new forum for our leaders to discuss the surmounting difficulties affecting their lives brought about by culture conflict. And my grandfather’s role is remembered with great appreciation, as he was elected the first recording Secretary for the newly formed organization of the Brotherhood, because of his writing abilities and his use of the English language, so essential for dealing with whites. He was also a speaker of the Chinook language, the Northwest Coast trade language. Philip Druker’s study of the history and accomplishments of the Alaska Native Brotherhood and the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia makes the following reference: “On the 13th of December 1931 (according to the journal of events kept by William Mathews (sic), of Masset, who was good enough to place his record at my disposal), the Masset delegation arrived at Port Simpson” (1958: 105).

Our leaders who formed The Native Brotherhood and engaged in various forms of protest, I argue, are the ones who formed the backbone of the anti-colonial resistance struggle and Aboriginal rights movement (See Fisher, 1977; Tennant, 1990). Today, more negotiations are under way between Canada’s Aboriginal people and various levels of government than any time in history (See Culhane, 1998). While concern by all the coast tribes with respect to land rights and fishing rights were brought to the forefront, these leaders also pursued other issues that would benefit their people and culture, and the generations to come (see Whiteside 1974; Joseph 1981). Haida elder Claude Jones recalled the words of leader Alfred Adams, during a

visit with him in the hospital during his last days; words that bespoke a vision of a better life for our people:

'The day is coming when our old people don't have to go out fishing until they die. Maybe in your time,' he said, 'you're gonna get pensioned off like anybody else. The women will get paid for having babies.' Claude added, I didn't know he was talking about family allowance. (Personal communication, May 20, 2002).

My grandfather credits their work to better their lot to the efforts put forth by the founding members of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia, as he noted: "And, begin to take effect with the government, that's why we got children's allowance, from that time on. And, then, we got old age pension, improvement on hospitalization, and doctor attendance. Improve, and then they teach our young people agriculture, and technical education, and all kinds of other things." But the lines that follow are even more significant as he states: "So, we got result from the Brotherhood organization, and we were all in it – Adams, 'We hold him up', I and Elijah Jones, Peter Hill and myself. Three of us use to support him all the time." My grandfather was not simply a person of wide learning, he was also someone with sophisticated theories about culture itself, and often interpreted text from the Bible with his own Haida values. He continues, then, by identifying the success of the founding leader of the Brotherhood with a scripture from the Bible:

Three of us use to support him all the time. It got me to think of, ah, when Israelites departed from Egypt, and those Israelites were, they were not use to warfare, they were slaves, servants, all they understand was obey their masters, and do hard work for them. They didn't know warfare; they never went to take part in this warfare, so they were all helpless. People come out against them when they break away from Egypt. And, Moses went up the mountain, and another helper went up with them. As long as Moses hold up his hands, like that, his people were winning. When he got tired and his arms start to go down, Israelites begin, they drove them back, they begin to lose. When Joshua and another man, helper, so that they both stood, hold his hands up. That's what made me think of when we supported Adams. Otherwise, he wouldn't of had the confidence, to carry on, because we supported him and everything. And, that's why he was successful. Made me think of that (Turner interview, July 23, 1971).

An important and lasting contribution made by my grandfather and other leaders was their concern for getting the best possible education for their children. I can hear my grandfather's words as he would say, "You have to get an education!" as he was convinced that an education was the answer for our youth to find a place in the world, especially after seeing the Native Brotherhood of Alaska at work. Native people recognized education as the key to equal

opportunity and to social and economic mobility. To achieve their goals, they lashed out at the lamentable laws of the Indian Act; namely the policies pertaining to the advent of the residential schools. While they credit much of their own success to these schools, they were long aware of the culturally invasive intentions of the schools and the fact that, among other things, were ultimately designed to train and introduce a body of semi-literate labourers to the already filled white work force. Willis White recalls his experience with his friend, Christopher Matthews, my grandfather's son and namesake of his only brother, at Coquelitza residential school.

Yeah we went to high school there. Christopher was a pretty smart boy; he went to high school there for about a couple years I guess. Until we got too old, then that was the end of our schooling. If you weren't in grade eight by the time you were sixteen, they kicked you out. I only reached grade six myself, then if you're not in grade eight it's no use. They send you home and that's that (Personal communication, Willis White, May 17, 2002).

As many of these lamentable laws were changed over time, my grandfather would live to witness the implementation and right to a formal education for our people, which became a reality for his own grandchildren. Looking back he marvels at the changes he witnessed, and with a stroke of his wit and humour, as I fondly remember, he seemed to revel in seeing the world through his grandchildren's eyes.

And, we all from Government Industrial school, and we govern this village for good fifty years. Those boys got small education from government industrial school, and today, they got wonderful education, like my grandson [Danny], he's from the university, and the other one, big fellow, [Kenny] was from college, another girl, who's married to white fellow, Sharon, we raise them ourselves, they got our name, Matthews. Sharon was ready to go into university when she got married. So, I said, 'what was the idea getting a good education and then you have to go and get married?' (laughter). But, then, she make good use of it, her husband was head bookkeeper in the cannery and she use to help him, look after the books. So, she didn't waste her education (laughter!). So, I guess it's OK for married girls to go ahead! (Turner interview, August 1970)

Many of these stories are memorable for the small moments they recall, for a funny line. But, there is also a common theme of pride in all that they've accomplished for themselves and their families, and so little clamor for attention given all they've done. The feelings of pride instilled by their own parents a century earlier still remains.

“When a man gets this old he has valuable things to say”

I never forgot that day, in 1962, when my grandparent's home, their first European style house, located at the north end of the village, was destroyed by fire. While it didn't burn completely, the house could not be saved and the loss was great. It wasn't the material loss that mattered to my grandparents, though, it was the tragic loss of my grandmother's only surviving brother, Peter, who died from smoke inhalation. As “Uncle Peter” had become blind later in his life, I can remember how, as just a little girl, I was his eyes, as I would lead him by the hand about the house. Though the events of that day never faded and Uncle Peter was not forgotten, I cannot recall ever hearing my grandparents talk of this terrible time, for my grandparents seldom complained about their hardships in life.

My grandparents then moved into Uncle Peter's small two-room house, his former residence before he came to live with us. His former house stood just behind Chief Harry *Wiiaa*'s grand white style house, which was demolished, as it was empty and deteriorating, to be replaced by a new house for my grandparents. Fortunately, most of their furniture and many other prized possessions that were purchased around the turn of the century were salvaged from their burned-out home, and many of these items we are still enjoying today.

Always adapting to circumstances, my grandparents were happy with their new home, where they would live out their retirement years, and were especially proud of the fact that it was built by their daughter Vesta's husband, Dan Helmer. My grandfather took such great pride in his son, our Uncle Dan, and held him in high esteem, as he was a skilled builder. “He's a good man,” he is recorded as saying, and he continued by saying, “he built this house. Oh, he's a good man, he even builds speed boats.” As children, my siblings and I often climbed under this house, now occupied by my brother, Dan Matthews and his wife, through a small crawl space and played in the sand that now fills the hole that was once part of the living space of Chief *Wiiaa*'s “Monster House”, as noted above. The retaining wall of the enormous long house, that is still intact and visible to this day, after a hundred and fifty years, or more, was always a source of wonderment as it was a visual connection to the many stories we often heard adults discuss of our *Tsinni*'s predecessor, the great Chief *Wiiaa*.

As a child in the early sixties, I recall still living with kerosene lamps and outhouses, and the only source of heat came from a wood-burning stove in the kitchen. Our village was electrified in 1964, and in our new home a single light bulb beamed light that hung from the center of the ceiling by a wire. My grandfather, then in his mid-seventies, played an instrumental

role in introducing such a convenience after arrangements were made to sell timber from reserve lands directly behind our present village. Chief Reno Russ gives the following account that describes how our people made things happen – together:

A complete change and they made it happen, they made the changes happen. They wanted better things for the community. One of the things, there's so much things that come to mind. This was during your Chinney's time, and Godfrey Kelly, Ed Jones, and others. When Clarence Martin, said that he could supply us with electricity, Indian Affairs didn't have the kind of money that they could wire all the houses. The only way it could be done was to log off the timber back here. They sold it, and that's how all the houses were being wired. It was Chinney Willie and that group of people, and that's when we started getting electricity, from Clarence Martin. They took a lot of wood out from behind there, there was lots of wood there. At the same time, up on the hill, *Naani* looked around and she said, 'I can remember when I was a young girl, there was no trees back there. You could see the canoes coming around Tow Hill, around the spit.' Amazing, but that's the story she told, and that's the way it was. She was the one that brought that to the people and they all understood what she was talking about. We were all up the hill. These are some of the stories that I remember of the family. He was a great leader! (Personal communication, Reno Russ, May 21, 2002).

While out-door water pumps, one located in front of our house, were not removed until a few years after electricity was installed, wood-burning stoves remained, and many remain to this day. Unfortunately, the loss of home and more tragically of many lives from house fires was an all too common experience. My brother Ken recalls the concern our grandfather had for the type of chimneys in use at this time, which was the source of so many house fires. Our grandfather pushed to implement the first volunteer fire department in our community. Chief Russ remembers when the Air Force station then at Skidegate gave my grandfather second hand fire equipment. Through his efforts, my grandfather was assigned the position of the first Chief Marshall of the newly formed fire Department in our village; this was his first non-traditional occupation outside of fishing.

Outside of his life of service, his greatest living and proudest moments came in his personal life with his wife, Emma, and children and grandchildren. My grandparents had three surviving children: Vesta, Phyllis, and Katie. I am the sixth of ten children and daughter of Phyllis, who had the great privilege of growing up with my grandparents; while the remaining grandchildren and great-grandchildren were close by. In so many ways, we were the focus of our grandparent's lives as they lived out their later years. They were very affectionate and loving people. We can all recall variants of their loving words to us. Our grandfather, for example, would often say to us: "I'm still alive today because of you kids!" As they passed on their values

to us, they demonstrated that it was possible to retain a strong Haida identity while integrating into the wider world.

The Christmas season was the most anticipated time of year when the village was bustling with ceremonial activities. Today, as Blackman (1977) has suggested, feasting or “doings”, which include important life cycle events such as birth, marriage or death, and name taking, while conceptually distinct from potlatching involving the distribution of property, have assumed the function of most potlatches. And, Stearns (1977; 1981) and (Boelscher 1989) have shown that those who feast show a continuing moral commitment to Haida ceremonial life, and in turn earn prestige. The heart of my grandparent’s house remains the large size living room that faces the sea, and this was the scene of many dinners that sat upward of fifty people, or more. On these special occasions hosted by my grandmother, our household was a flurry of planning, cooking and baking, which never failed to culminate with a fine meal among friends. On one such occasion, for example, Stearns observed: “At the large family dinner held in Emma Matthews’ house at Easter 1980, the menu was the familiar one of turkey, ham, mashed potatoes, dressing and gravy, carrots and peas, cranberry sauce, cole slaw, ice-cream, and the usual pies and cakes” (Stearns 1981:212).

On such occasions, for special guests and feasts, my grandmother’s “best dishes”, or “feast dishes”, were brought out and used. While in the past, as family status and wealth were reflected through the splendor of great feast dishes, these would be the beautifully carved feast dishes and sheep horn ladles, for example, and were the property of men, “created by male artists and carvers for male patrons” (Blackman 1982: 46). These items were replaced by bone china and silverware in the latter part of the nineteenth century and would become the property of the women. My grandmother would recall the time, almost a century earlier, as she described how my grandfather’s mother, *Giidii*, or Katie, had acquired some dishes as new prestige items. “They used to get all kinds of grub and supplies from the schooners that went to Bering Sea and Japan. They would get dishes from Japan, too. *Tsinni*’s mother had a box of Japanese dishes that she gave when her brother got married” (Boelscher interview with Emma Matthews, July 1980). These happy occasions, then, did not conclude until long after our guests departed, as our family gathered and socialized well into the wee hours of the night to wash the stacks of dishes and cutlery from the evening’s dinner, to my grandmother’s approval, to be stored away in a little pantry under the stairs, out of sight, until the next occasion.

On other occasions, such as family weddings, or the celebration of my grandparents’ sixtieth wedding anniversary, for example, the celebration would be an occasion to feast both

lineage heads as well as their families, which could include up to a 150 or more people. Such occasions would take place, in the same fashion, in the community hall. During public events hosted by others my grandfather, as hereditary town chief, was usually called upon to speak first. Boelscher (1989) has called attention to the importance of rank positions based on heredity and, validated by a person's parents' and own potlatching and feasting record. She also shows how the "Haida themselves express rank as the concomitant of respect, *yahguudaang*, which is received only by showing it to others in words and in action" (1988: 49). That is, only by showing respect to others can one receive respect for oneself. It depends, then, on the moral conduct expected of a highborn person, ritual observance, and the appropriate use of words (Boelscher 1989: 71; 1991).

And despite decades of colonial pressure, the exchange system was still of crucial importance to my grandparents. Right to the end of their lives, gift exchange was still a tacitly-accepted way of life for my grandparents; and during the years of economic hard times, this exchange system was usually in the form of currency or food (For more on the ceremonial exchange system see Stearns 1981: 246-282). But, it seems, my grandmother, in awaiting a cultural renaissance, could once again put into practice the teaching and example of her own parents to acquire and give. This was especially true when any material gift was bestowed upon my grandmother. Eternally grateful, she would add it to the other gifts she was amassing for that future family potlatch.

My fondest memories are of my many *Naani's* and *Tsinmi's*, my grandparent's closest and life-long friends who came to visit. As our grandparent's endeavored to teach us Haida values, it was our job and privilege to greet our elders, usually with a welcoming embrace, as a show of respect. An enduring memory of these occasions is my grandmother's wonderful gestures that I came to love so much as she nodded towards her guests as a sign of respect, and my grandfather's eloquent words in Haida as he gestured to them, "*diidguaa*" (Come and sit in the place of honour.) (Personal communication, Lawrence Bell) (For a fuller development of social rank in the vertical and horizontal axes of a house see Blackman 1982; & Boelscher 1989: 74-75). They would sit and visit for hours, usually one or more couples at a time, and drink tea from china teacups and enjoy my grandmother's jarred fruit and home made bread. They only spoke Haida to one another. And like most people, they did the majority of their dramatic living while they were young and most of their reflective living while older. Indeed, our elders had a lot to reflect upon after experiencing a century of some of the greatest changes. It was always a great pleasure to be around our beloved elders, especially when it came to receiving their love

and approval, which ultimately had a great cultural influence on my life. Such guidance and assurance was observed by Stearns (1981) as two young children were handing out gifts, thereby contributing to the ceremonial role, during a memorial dinner in their home: "There was much nodding of the old people about this; the performances of the very young are a matter of pride to the old" (1981: 261). Another example of how the young are taught to behave in culturally appropriate ways comes from a highly esteemed lady, and descendant of the *Wiiaa* House, our Auntie Irene, wife of Chief Dempsey Collinson of Skidegate, who reached back in her memory as she fondly remembered her "Old Uncle", my grandfather. She so respectfully shared those memories with me: "Well, even when we were young we were taught to look up to him, my grandmother, Libby Moody was from the *Wiiaa* House. Everytime they came down from Masset to visit her, she'd make sure that we acted properly in front of him and taught us to look up to him. Call him 'Old Uncle!' (Personal communication, May 20, 2002). It was always a wonderful thing to just sit and listen to them speak in Haida to one another; and to know that they also respected each other's silences as well as their words.

As my grandparents quietly began to assume the role of the elderly, they were consistently sought out for their knowledge of the Haida past, and their fluency in the Haida language, and they willingly shared their knowledge with researchers, and others. In many ways I feel that my grandfather understood the urgency to record and document cultural knowledge especially for the younger generations. My sister Andrea recalls how he often spent time alone at his typewriter two-finger typing or recording stories onto his reel-to-reel tape recorder. We can only hope that these moments captured on tape are part of the "box of treasure" not yet heard, as I am reminded of my grandfather's dictum to which I cling: "When a man gets this old his words are valuable."

My grandfather also received visiting dignitaries to our homeland and on other occasions he acted as a spokesperson in cultural exchanges with other Nations. On one occasion, as my grandmother and grandfather were among special guests for the opening of the 1973 fall session of the BC legislature, the headlines read: *Chief of Haidas Honored* (Daily Colonist, 14th September 1973). What is so remarkable about this is the fact that almost a century earlier they were living in traditional cedar plank houses and their means of travel was by canoe. During another event, when Queen Elizabeth's tour took her to Haida Gwaii in 1971, it was my grandparents', among other Haida leaders, privilege to welcome her. My grandfather summed up the occasion on a mischievous note, and it's a sure bet that he had that familiar twinkle in his eye, as made the following comment: "I had a little talk with the Queen!" (Turner interview, July

26, 1971). A strong memory in my mind as a young child was watching the magic of artists who visited our home to capture my grandfather's image on canvas. One such painting by the artist Minn Sjolseth, where my grandfather is pictured wearing his ceremonial regalia, symbols of rank to which he is entitled by hereditary right, would grace the cover of the 1969 Autumn edition of *The Beaver*.

As my grandfather believed that you had to dress in your Sunday best everyday, he was always impeccably dressed in a suit and tie. And with his tall stature, I remembered how he always looked charming in his trademark fedora hat and his walking cane. He was a gentle man, and he was famous for his loving, caring presence. He was a man at peace and he had great dignity. Indeed, he had a charisma that enchanted everyone he met. Recently, for example, in a waiting area of a restaurant, I happened to meet an elderly gentleman, and his wife and daughter who sat next to me. A warm chitchat ensued, sparked by the First Nations studies calendar in my hand. It turns out that the gentleman was a retired medical doctor from Prince Rupert. This chance encounter occurred some thirty years after my grandfather had passed on, yet the kindly gentleman turned to me, totally unaware of who I was, and said: "I had the great fortune of operating on a Haida Chief – his name was Chief William Matthews. He was such a dignified man. I never forgot him, it was a great honour to have met him!" (Personal communication, Dr. William Mitchell-Banks, January 2002) Stories of my late grandfather come to us in so many ways. This was a moment that left a deep impression on me.

Both of my grandparent's lives spanned a period from the suppression of the potlatch to the public rebirth of potlatch activities in the 1970s. In 1969, when the first totem pole was raised in 100 years, carved by Haida artist, Robert Davidson, my grandfather stood proud on this day, as he witnessed the event. And while he had a deep commitment to his Anglican faith his understanding of Christianity was clearly affected by Haida values, as he stated to his audience:

The first missionary here saw the animal carvings on the poles and how much it cost for a man to host a potlatch. He believed we worshipped the poles and eventually our people had to cut them down and stop the potlatch. But he was wrong. We believed in the supreme being and I believe we already knew the Bible story from our legends. (*The Province*, Saturday, August 23, 1969).

Chief Reno Russ recalls how the end of my grandfather's life seemed to lend him a new kind of dignity when, during a Native Brotherhood convention held in our village on December 4 & 5 of 1973, *Tsimi* gave one of his last major speeches, a speech for which he received a

tremendous ovation. "He was always prepared to meet the public," Reno said, "and people still today talk about that speech." (Personal communication, Reno Russ, May 21, 2002).

My grandparents and family members have always maintained a close bond with our relatives in Hydaberg Alaska, my grandfather's only remaining blood relatives after the sweeping disease epidemics of the late twentieth century. Thus it was a poignant reminder at times when he would say, "I'm the fourth and last Wiiaa! There's no one here closer!" Hereditary Chief was a position of leadership based on traditional Haida custom; thus in the interest of perpetuating the culture, my grandfather, then, who had no sister or sister's son in our village to pass on his title to, a classificatory sister's son Oliver Adams, son of Alfred Adams and Selina Harris, was selected.

My grandfather, Chief Wiiaa, died peacefully in his home, at the age of eighty-seven, surrounded by loved ones, and with my grandmother at his side. The date was February 6th, 1974. The loss was great for all that knew and loved him. He was accorded the ultimate Haida funeral of a high-ranking leader. The crowd of several hundred people who came to pay their respect included a procession of people from all walks of life: community members and Chiefs, community members from Skidegate and the mainland, family from Hydaburg, Alaska, representatives from the Native Brotherhood, and from the United Fishermen's and Allied Workers Union (UFAWU), and members from New Masset. Marching behind the pallbearers and Chiefs was a delegation from the New Masset Canadian Forces Military Station, which included two superior officers and five officers who, in his honour, saluted him. It was an impressive tribute. A year or so later, as witnessed by the opposite moiety, a "stone moving" ceremony was given with the erecting of a large size marble head-stone followed by a large feast as a completion of my grandfather's life (See Stearns for a fuller description of death rites 1981: 252-264). My grandmother took comfort in her family and her greatest comfort came in the honor and respect paid to him by community members in death as he had received in life. In remembering our loss, I am reminded of the poignant words spoken by my grandmother on the occasion of a memorial potlatch given in honour of Herman, Mary, and Paul White Sr.: "On occasions like this, in our hearts we are weeping, but our faces are smiling!"

Clearly, Chief *Wiiaa*, who occupied many leadership roles, as an outstanding characteristic of his socialization in Haida society, not only looked to the past, but also to the future where his people would enjoy equal opportunities and benefits in society. He is remembered as a leader and is respected for his knowledge as well as the wisdom acquired through living. Indeed, my grandfather, and his cohort, the very people who took the lead, in

their ability to create new ways of life by combining aspects of both cultures in novel ways, instilled in all of us a great sense of pride and importance of continuing the fight to keep our lands and our culture. The struggle continues unabated. And as a leader trained from childhood in orally transmitted traditions, my grandfather was not unlike other storytellers who are “struggling to express themselves, to comment on their society and their times, and to establish their own position in the larger scheme of things” (Bruner 1993:328-329). His enduring memory is his legacy; and the message is clear – as pioneers they did it together. Everyone knows who he was in our community. A school built in our village for children from kindergarten to grade three, who receive instruction in the Haida language and culture, opened its doors in 1996, and was named “Chief William Matthews School” in his honour.

In 1976, two years following my grandfather’s passing, Oliver Adams, of the *Git7ans* lineage, celebrated his accession to town chief taking the name *Gaa7laa*. Sadly, the reign of Chief *Gaa7laa*’s, Uncle Oliver, as we affectionately knew him, was cut short by illness. Upon his death in 1979, Reno Russ of the *Maa man Git’anee*, succeeded Chief *Gaa7laa* and became Chief *Iiljuwaas* in 1984, hereditary town chief of Masset.

My *Naanii* would live for another fourteen years after my grandfather passed on. We were clearly blessed. And she continued to play a contributing and important role as a Haida agent of the ceremonial system, while at the same time working hard to run her household. I will never forget how she was always touchingly grateful for every kindness, no matter how small. She would love to make us laugh with that enduring and subtle witty way of hers. She was thoughtful of others, making sure of their comfort, and worked hard right up to the end. She taught us how to behave in culturally appropriate ways and it happened in many ways. It was those winter nights, for example, that my sisters, Sharon and Andrea, and I remember so well, when our *Naanii* told us those bedtime stories that we so cherish today. It is our hope to publish these stories in the near future.

And, my grandmother was often sought out on matters of importance to the community. In referring to the status of older Haida women, Blackman states: “Their ceremonial and symbolic status has become increasingly important in the present day, as by virtue of age and survivorship they have become the final repositories of the native language, of ceremonial etiquette, of kinship, and of a heritage fast disappearing in the latter part of the twentieth century (Blackman 1992 [1982] also see Cruikshank 1979; 1983; Miller 1992b; 1994a 1994b). She is also remembered as a fighter, as she often spoke out against injustices and is remembered for her

influential and dynamic testimony in local court cases. (The court transcriptions have not yet been researched.).

As noted above, my grandmother also played an important role as a culture-bearer. Her many hours of work made a valuable and an important contribution to Boelscher's (1989) study, among others, on the culture of Masset Haida, as she opened up her life to Boelscher, sharing memories that stretched back almost a century. The countless hours of collaborative work included considerable collections of text, which Boelscher, with a solid grounding in linguistics, was able to compare with earlier work of Swanton (1909), who carried out the earliest ethnographic investigation on the Haida, and Murdock (1932) who recorded kinship, social organization and potlatching on the Haida.

When my mother, Phyllis, *Skiljaade*, succumbed to breast cancer on December 16, 1988, the loss, it seems, unlike any others, was more than my *Naani* could bear. Throughout the procession of our mother's burial ritual, we did our best to console her. A poignant moment I will never forget, my grandmother, in her grief stricken state, looked around at her grandchildren, as we gathered around the kitchen table, and for a spontaneous moment, cried inconsolably as she remembered her own mother, *kueegee 7yuuwass*, and said, "I miss my mother so much, how are you kids going to live without a mother?" She never recovered. In retrospect, my *Naani* found the strength and courage to pay the greatest tribute that she could to her daughter. We returned to Vancouver together, where I reside, and the next day we entered the funeral home where my grandmother purchased a marble headstone for her beloved daughter.

We spent several more days together, taking comfort in one another as we drank tea and talked. We looked at the dishes that she had given to me over the years, many of which had belonged to Maud *Wiiaa*, daughter of Chief Harry *Wiiaa*, who had died many years before I was born. Yet "Aunt Maud", as my grandmother said her name, seemed a familiar figure from the many stories I had heard about her over the years. She knew that she was at the end of her life and she had so much to reflect upon. The silence would only be interrupted as she continued to reflect out loud. In another moving moment, she was remembering her own two sons, Christopher and Richard, who died too young, which was so emotionally charged and could only be fully grasped in words as she said, "They use to make them pile the skins this high," gesturing with her hands, "but they can't do that now because you kids got the education." Even while I had assured her that she was right, I knew that she felt confident in her knowledge as she had witnessed the many positive changes in the education system, many of which had become a

reality for her own grandchildren. And, importantly, she was an active agent in making these changes a reality, as she was a teacher of the Haida culture and language, which has since been developed into local programs offered in the local schools.

When my grieving grandmother returned home, it was to die. Upon her return, my sister Sharon, who is our *Naani*'s mother's namesake, *kueegee 7yuurwas*, never left her side. So it was *kueegee 7yuurwas* then who was holding her hand when she died – it was March 8, 1989, less than two months after our mother's passing. Before her passing, at the age of 98, she was the oldest member of the Old Masset Village. I returned to Vancouver, after her funeral, and entered the same funeral home where my mother's head stone was purchased, alone this time, and purchased the identical marble head stone that our *naani* chose for her daughter.

Two years later, on April 18th, 1992, a memorial potlatch, or "headstone raising", was given by my family in honour of our *naanii* and mother – a final tribute to their lives. While we were preparing for this day for two years, in fact, our *naani* was preparing us for several years before her passing. So we did not proceed until we were confident that we were heeding her words "You have to be ready!" And we were ready, and thankful, to all those who came out to honour our *naanii* and mother and to share in an evening that will always be remembered. The newly built community hall was filled to capacity with standing room only of approximately 700 people. This hall replaced the older and smaller community hall that had been built by the skilled hands of our community members, as noted above, after the old hall burned down. The people were feasted and the evening was dominated by speeches in tribute to our *naani* and mother. And, then, and unlike the time of my grandfather's memorial feast where dance performances still did not take place since its outlawing of major Haida potlatches, with its revival, the ceremonial dances for the evening began with Haida artists and singers, Robert Davidson and his brother, Reg. After a speech by Robert was given in honour of *Naanii* Emma and Phyllis, he made the announcement: "I'm going to sing for two girls!" At that moment, it seems, it became deafeningly quiet until they began to drum and chant the melancholy "after mourning" song. It was a beautiful song and a sad lament that beckoned the dancers from the entrance of the hall to begin their descent through the crowd to the front of the hall. All eyes were on the two dancers, my sister Andrea and late cousin, Phyllis, who were concealed under elaborately carved masks and button blankets. A hush fell over the crowd. It was magical as the dancers transcended into the beings of the masks. Their movements swayed and their heads bowed as an accompanying gesture of respect to the crowd as the drumming and the chant continued. The dancers became personified, they were at once - my grandmother and mother - they had returned one last time to

say goodbye to their family and to their people. The drumming and singing gave suasion and movement to our spirit loved ones, and after completing their performance for the people, they made their breathtaking exit from the same point of entry. We then wiped away our tears, as they moved on to the land of the spirits. The evening ended with the distribution of property to mark their passing, and as the hosts, we felt humbled and blessed in our knowledge that the evening of performance, protocol, ceremony and ritual in their honour was witnessed and that their names will be remembered forever.

One daughter, Katie Adkins, the matriarch of our family, survives my grandparents, Chief *Wiiaa*, William and Emma Matthews. She brings us great comfort as she often delights in keeping the memories of our late grandparents and her two sisters, Phyllis and Vesta, alive by telling stories that are filled with irresistible humour, humour that she undoubtedly inherited from both our *Naanii* and *Tsinni*. The date was August 12, 2000, when our family lost our Auntie Vesta, daughter of Chief William Matthews and Emma, at the age of eighty-one. As we mourn her passing, sadly, as I write, we lament the passing of her son, our dear brother, Jerry. As family and community members came to pay their respects, we gathered in our grandparent's home, as we have done so many times before in honouring our loved ones who have gone before us. And nowhere is my grandparent's presence felt more strongly, than during these times of grief. As the evening was filled with singing and prayers, a poignant moment passed as my brother, Dan Matthews, stood tall and delivered the following powerful Haida verse:

Aagwa naanang tлагаагуут
Diinang kwiindalani,
Waghan sttagha kugawaanii.
Gam hia kunggingang.

In his grandmother's land
My child is striding.
Therefore his foot is precious.
Don't keep crying.

Cradle song of the HL'yaalangkunlnagai

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