

*The Many Voyages
of Arthur Wellington Clah*



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*The Many Voyages
of Arthur Wellington Clah*

A Tsimshian Man on the Pacific Northwest Coast

Peggy Brock



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Chronology

- 1778 Captain James Cook visits Nootka Sound on the Pacific Northwest Coast.
- 1821 British Parliament gives the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) sole trading rights west of the Rocky Mountains.
- 1831 The HBC establishes the first trading post, Fort Simpson, on the upper Northwest Coast at the mouth of the Nass River. Clah is born.
- 1834 Fort Simpson is relocated to Lax Kw'alaams on the Tsimshian Peninsula.
- 1836 Smallpox epidemic.
- 1838 Clah's father, Krytin, is killed.
- 1846 Clah's uncle is killed.
- 1851 William Henry McNeill stationed at Fort Simpson as chief trader. He is chief factor in 1856-59 and 1861-63.
- 1851 James Douglas appointed governor of Vancouver Island.
- 1853 Clah works at the Fort Simpson trading post.
- 1855 Clah goes to Victoria in Harry McNeill's boat.
- 1857 William Duncan, Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionary, arrives at Fort Simpson in October.
- 1858 Fraser River gold rush.

- James Douglas appointed governor of British Columbia.
- 1859 Clah embarks on an extended trip to Victoria and New Westminster from February 1859 to December 1860.
- 1860 Clah's brother Wallace is killed.
- 1861 Clah makes several fur-trading trips between May and October, up the Nass River and along the grease trail to the upper Skeena River.
- 1862 Clah makes a fur-trading trip to Victoria from February to April.
- Smallpox epidemic starts in Victoria in March (after Clah has left).
- Clah goes on a fur-trading trip up the Skeena River as a member of Legaic's party in May and returns 12 June. He visits Metlakatla on the way home.
- Smallpox epidemic arrives at Fort Simpson in May (after the fur-trading party has left).
- William Duncan and some Tsimshian establish the Metlakatla Mission in May.
- Paul Legaic moves to Metlakatla in June.
- Three white miners are murdered. Duncan accuses Clah of the killings.
- HMS *Devastation* arrives in September to stop liquor traders. Clah brings Nisga'a chiefs to Fort Simpson for a meeting with Captain Pike.
- Clah makes a fur-trading trip with Nisakx in October.
- Clah goes to Metlakatla in December to invite Paul Legaic to his feast at Fort Simpson, where he parades four hundred men in military uniforms.
- 1863 Paul Legaic is baptized on 20 April at Metlakatla.
- Robert Cunningham arrives at Metlakatla as a lay CMS missionary.
- Clah accompanies Nisakx up the Nass River in April, trading for the HBC.

- HMS *Devastation* confiscates two liquor-trading schooners, *Petrel* and *Langley*, in April.
- Clah makes a fur-trading trip up the Nass River and across to the upper Skeena River in May–June.
- Clah's daughter, Martha (Wellington), is born on 18 May.
- Clah goes to Victoria on 25 June and returns 23 August.
- William Duncan buys mission schooner *Carolina*.
- Clah and Nisakx go on trading trip up the Nass River in October and meet HBC official, Hamilton Moffatt.
- Clah hosts feast on the Nass River after Niy'skinwaatk's death.
- 1864 Clah returns with furs to trade from Nass River on 23 January.
- Trading trip to the Nass River in February–March.
- Trading trip up the Skeena River.
- Clah leaves on 30 May by canoe for a trading trip to Victoria; he returns 15 July.
- Clah accompanies Robert Cunningham to Nass River, where he establishes a mission with Arthur Doolan.
- Clah makes a trading trip up the Skeena River in August, followed immediately by a hunting trip up the Nass River.
- Hamilton Moffatt is appointed chief trader at Fort Simpson until 1866.
- 1865 Clah's daughter Rebecca (Wellington) is born on 23 April.
- Clah makes four trading trips up the Skeena River, including a mid-winter trip from November 1865 to February 1866.
- 1866 Clah accompanies Legaic on a trading trip up the Skeena River in April and May.
- Clah makes a canoe trip to trade with the Haida on Haida Gwaii in May and June.
- Robert Cunningham becomes a HBC official in charge of a store on the Nass River.
- Clah trades on the Skeena River in July and August during tensions with the Wet'suwet'en.

- Nisakx marries William Henry McNeill.
- Clah transports goods to Cunningham on the Nass River in December.
- 1867 Clah hosts feast on New Year's Day.
- Clah goes to Nass River on 4-6 April to bring down furs for the HBC from Cunningham.
- Clah makes two trading trips up the Skeena River in May and July.
- Arthur Doolan and Robert Tomlinson establish Kincolith (present-day Gingolx) mission on the Nass River.
- HMS *Sparrowhawk* with Governor Seymour visits the Northwest Coast.
- The United States purchases Alaska.
- Clah is briefly married to Habbelekepeen.
- Clah brings his wife, Dorcas, and daughters back from the Nass River in September.
- Clah makes an unsuccessful trading trip up the Nass and across to the upper Skeena River from November 1867 to January 1868.
- 1868 Clah builds a new house at Fort Simpson to mark his elevation to head of T'amks house. He holds a feast on 18 February.
- Duncan raises a black flag when he hears about Clah's feast.
- Clah works as HBC trader in February.
- Clah trades on the Nass River.
- Ligwanh, who murdered Clah's uncle, is killed on the Nass River.
- Clah makes a trading trip to the Skeena River via the Nass and grease trail in May.
- Duncan divests Clah of his constable's uniform on 10 July.
- 1869 Clah, in charge of the schooner *Petrel*, trades for the HBC in January and April.
- Omineca gold rush (gold first discovered in 1861).

- HMS *Sparrowhawk*, with Governor Seymour, visits the North-west Coast in May.
- Paul Legaic dies at Fort Simpson on 7 May.
- Paul Legaic II assumes the Ligeex name.
- 1870 Clah makes a trading trip up the Nass and the grease trail to the Skeena River with Dr. George Chismore.
- Clah's son David (Wellington) is born on 3 November. Clah celebrates his birth with a feast on New Year's Day.
- 1871 British Columbia enters Confederation.
- Robert Cunningham becomes an independent trader and store owner with partner Thomas Hankin.
- Clah transports goods for Cunningham and Hankin up the Skeena River in May.
- 1872 Cassiar gold rush.
- 1873 Clah makes his first trip to the Omineca goldfields from April to August.
- Clah makes his first trip up the Stikine River to the Cassiar goldfields in September.
- William Duncan at Metlakatla extends a Christmas invitation to the Fort Simpson Tsimshian.
- Clah's son Andrew (Wellington) is born on 27 March.
- 1874 Establishment of Methodist Mission at Fort Simpson. The permanent missionary, Thomas Crosby, arrives in June.
- Methodist Rev. William Pollard baptizes four Wellington children in February.
- 1875 Clah makes his first trip to work at the goldfields in Cassiar; he transports miners and cargo in his own boat.
- Clah adopts the name Arthur Wellington.
- Clah and Dorcas are married in a Christian ceremony on 1 April.
- Clah's daughter Fanny (Wellington) is born on 1 September.

- 1876 Clah buys land at Laghco.
First canneries built on the Skeena River.
- 1877 Clah builds a house at Aiyansh on the Nass River and invites 300-400 people to a celebratory feast on Christmas Day.
Alfred Green establishes a mission at Laxgalts'ap (Greenville) on the Nass River.
- 1878 Stephen Redgrave pre-empts the land on which Clah's Aiyansh house was built.
Clah builds a house at Laxk'a'ata (Canaan) on the Nass River.
Clah's daughter Mary Elizabeth (Wellington) is born on 28 August.
- 1878-79 Tomlinson leaves Kincolith mission.
- 1879 William Ridley is appointed bishop of Caledonia at Metlakatla.
- 1881 Clah and Dorcas are baptized on 23 January.
Clah's last trip to Cassiar goldfields.
Juneau gold rush.
First cannery on the Nass River (Croasdaile).
Indian Reserve Commissioner Peter O'Reilly visits the Northwest Coast in October to determine the boundaries of reserves.
Clah's son Albert (Wellington) is born on 26 December, the same day his sister Martha marries William West.
- 1882 Clah's first visit to the Juneau–Douglas Island goldfields in Alaska.
Andrew Wellington dies on 13 September on the Nass River.
- 1883 David Wellington dies at Port Simpson.
Nisakx dies.
Clah's daughters Ida and Maggie die.
- 1884 Parliament passes a law banning the potlatch.
Paul Legaic returns to Port Simpson from Metlakatla.

- 1885 Wellington family moves back to Port Simpson. Clah's land dispute with the HBC begins.
- 1885-87 Temporarily no canneries on the Nass River.
- 1887 Clah meets Governor Alfred P. Swineford of Alaska in Douglas. William Duncan and eight hundred Tsimshian relocate to New Metlakatla on Annette Island, Alaska, in August.
- 1888 Dominion government introduces new regulations to control fishing activities.
William West, Martha's husband, dies.
Clah's last trip to Juneau goldfields.
The Salvation Army arrives in Port Simpson.
- 1889 Dr. Albert Edward Bolton arrives at Port Simpson as medical missionary and becomes a justice of the peace.
- 1891 Wellington family starts clearing land at Laghco for agriculture.
Wellington family travels to the hop fields at Snoqualmie in Washington State.
On the death of her brother George Niy'skinwaatk, Dorcas Wellington is in line to inherit some of Nisakx's property at Shoal Bay.
Paul Legaic II dies on 8 January.
Martha Legaic becomes the Gispaxlòots' Chief Ligeex.
- 1894 Martha Wellington (West) marries Henry Wesley on 18 December.
Fanny Wellington dies.
- 1895 A house is built at Laghco.
- 1897 Thomas Crosby leaves Port Simpson.
- 1899 Wellington family goes to the hop fields at White River Valley, Washington State.
- 1902 Martha Legaic dies.
- 1903 Albert Wellington hosts a feast on the way to adopting the Gwisk'aayn chieftainship.

- 1905 Henry Wesley, Martha's second husband, dies.
- 1907 Dorcas Wellington receives her inheritance from Martha McNeill on 22 August.
Clah visits William Duncan at New Metlakatla.
George Kelly becomes Chief Ligeex.
- 1913-15 McKenna-McBride Royal Commission on Indian Affairs.
- 1913 Albert Wellington dies.
- 1915 Clah interviewed by anthropologist Marius Barbeau.
- 1916 Clah dies.
- 1918 William Duncan dies.

~~steamer~~ ~~the man~~ ~~men~~ ~~call me~~ ~~quit~~ ~~steamer~~ ~~the~~
showed me, everything on steamer.
kippers, all kinds, fern, big, shot, 4 miles
stay one hour, and go back home.

16. Monday. Very rough day. Clarendon
But ~~the~~ training, S. G. Blore.
Ladonza, shipping freight to my
promising, will start tomorrow, 19. of
December, 1889. I went over the Bridge
to see Samuda me Donald, about 9 o'clock.
went in his house. Just the time, have
Breakfast, an all his family, with him
he ask, if I had Breakfast. I say, I
have my Breakfast, one hour ago.
he ask, if I got land. I said, no, Sir
he ask, why. I speak to him about Judge
O'Prilly, that Mr. O'Prilly, wishing to help
me, about the land Nassiver and Fort
Simpson. I complain him about the agent,
the agent, he promise, to have meeting
at Fort Simpson, to ask the Chief, if they
give me, land, an ask Kingaly Camel
if they give me, land.
I told him, I don't know who belongs
the land. I come down here, to ask
Government, about my land at north.
some I told him, about our places,
an say, return every year.

Introduction

This is the story of one man's many voyages of discovery, both figuratively and literally, in the latter half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Arthur Wellington Clah, a Tsimshian man who lived on the Pacific Northwest Coast, kept a diary for fifty years between 1859 and 1909. The diary's daily entries reflect the minutiae of life in an Aboriginal community and the many journeys into the colonial world undertaken by its inhabitants. Clah travelled hundreds of kilometres by canoe (and later by steamer) from his home at Fort Simpson. He travelled south to Victoria and Washington State; north as far as Juneau and Sitka, Alaska; west to Haida Gwaii (the Queen Charlotte Islands); and inland to the goldfields at Omineca, Cassiar, and Yukon.

NWC History reported [by] arthur Welliington or indian named Sadle Clah. writed [written] when he travel[led] amongs[t] the heathen [in the] interior[,] where in land where heads [of] the rivers Skeenah [Skeena], nass[,] Stickeen [Stikine], Dyea of Alaska U.S.A. one time in Omineca. 6 years in Caisar [Cassiar] and alround the Coast amongs[t] the heathern from Victoria, Seattle U.S.A., Vancouver BC, Nanaimo, Comox, Bek-calar, Wekenoh, Bala Bala [Bella Bella] and Queen Charlot[te] island, Masuth [Massett], Skategats [Skidegate] where I travel amongs[t] them[,] preach them some times about our Saviour Jesus Christ the lord. Besid[e]s make myself good do[c]tor to them[.] But God help me for that work.¹

Clah's voyages of religious and intellectual discovery were also wide ranging. As he boasted in his diary, he was "the first man [among the

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Tsimshian to] believe the gospel of Jesus Christ in the mouth of William Duncan[.] he came from England from mission society[.] arrived Clah Callams [Lax Kw'alaams or Fort Simpson] October 1857[.] [H]e calling me to interpreted [interpret] amongs[t] the heathen people who keep all kind Dances every years and Big potleche [potlatch] amongs[t] themselves, thee not want King or Queen stop them.”² The missionary William Duncan not only introduced Clah to Christianity but also taught him to read and write in English, enabling Clah to record his observations and thoughts in a diary that is a unique record of Tsimshian life and one man’s responses to the opportunities, constraints, and restrictions of colonialism as it came to envelop his world. Such a first-hand account of colonialism from the inside is rare. It reveals the complexities of personal interactions between colonizers and the colonized and the shift from discovery of new knowledge, skills, and possibilities to the realities of land dispossession, interference by the colonial state in cultural and political matters, and diminishing economic opportunities: “Clquah Collams [Lax Kw'alaams][,] British Columbia[,], north west coast history[.] Arthur Wellington write report ... about the indian country that whit[e] people cliame [claim] that makes the indians crying for Gods Power and Kings Edwards power.” Clah, the colonial subject, did not have to travel far to encounter new intellectual, spiritual, and cultural challenges because they were imported into his community, forcing him and his people to navigate the waves of change buffeting their own society. At the same time, economic changes encouraged the Tsimshian and their neighbours to extend their physical voyages beyond the bounds of their previous seasonal rounds of hunting, fishing, gathering, and trading. New worlds opened up as established modes of thought and interaction were constricted or were made redundant by changing circumstances.

Clah’s diary is housed at the Wellcome Library in London, and microfilm copies are available. As the extracts quoted above reveal, however, there are many puzzles in the more than 650,000 words Clah wrote over fifty years. Because of the difficulties of working with Clah’s text, scholars have made little use of it. Robert Galois wrote an important article in 1997 based on the diary. More recently, Susan Neylan has written two book chapters about Clah, and I have written several articles and a chapter that use the diary as a major source.³ Many other historians and anthropologists have dipped into the diary, and Tsimshian communities have extracted

information for communal and family histories. *The Many Voyages of Arthur Wellington Clah* is the first full-length book based on Clah's diary.

Rather than presenting a truncated version of Clah's diary, I supplement his text with other archival sources to investigate Clah's life in the context of the imposition of colonial rule in British Columbia. This book follows Clah on long arduous journeys along coastal waters and fast-flowing rivers as he fulfills his curiosity about distant places and chases the wealth, often illusive, of the fur trade and the gold rushes. Other activities – fishing, hunting, and gardening – kept the Tsimshian closer to home. Clah also took many rather quixotic trips to Victoria, the centre of the provincial government, in an attempt to reassert his rights to land. Clah's spiritual and cultural journeys towards an increasingly strong commitment to Christianity are equally fascinating, for his attitude towards Tsimshian cultural and social practices and political activities reflect a certain ambivalence and pragmatism in a changing world.

Clah began writing entries in his diary after only a few months' tuition in English, as is discussed in Chapter 2. As a result of this superficial grounding in English grammar and spelling, the diary poses great challenges for the reader. Punctuation is almost non-existent. I realized how important and useful punctuation was as I read the diary. A text without full stops obscures meaning. Discussing diary entries with other scholars, puzzling over which words form a sentence or phrase, has highlighted the extent of the text's ambiguity. Clah's spelling is haphazard. Sometimes the same word is spelled differently in one entry. If Clah was not sure how to spell a word, he wrote it phonetically. The names of English and Tsimshian people and places are particularly difficult to decipher because Clah spelled them out as they sounded to him. As a result, a name might be spelled many different ways throughout the diary. The problem of the spelling of Tsimshian personal and place names is compounded by the many different spellings used by anthropologists, linguists, and Tsimshian scholars throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as they developed a range of different orthographies to accurately represent Sm'algyax, the Tsimshian language.

The task of reading and transcribing the diary has been immense. I have transcribed about 1,770 pages of single-spaced A4 pages, and the work is still not quite complete. Dealing with a document this size presents great challenges because there is no coherent narrative but rather a series of

finite daily entries. Clah describes what he is doing with no explanation or context. Despite problems with the text, Clah has taken me on a stimulating and rewarding journey. I admire his extraordinary endeavour and his lifelong commitment to his writing. Clah, the man, was a complex character – admirable and infuriating, smart and self-serving, inventive and open to new experiences and ideas – yet firmly anchored in his own community. He was ambitious and dogged in the pursuit of his own and his family's interests but sympathetic towards the struggles of other Tsimshian. And he found the poverty of the old and infirm upsetting.

I hope this book partially fulfills the elderly Clah's fervent desire to tell the history of the Northwest Coast and its people to a wide audience. Tsimshian and other scholars will in future, I am sure, find a wealth of information that I can only touch on in this first book-length foray into the life of Arthur Wellington Clah.

1

The Life and Times of Arthur Wellington Clah

The many voyages of Arthur Wellington Clah took him to distant places along the waterways that dominate Canada's Pacific Northwest. Rivers and coastal waters were the Tsimshian's highways, and their main means of transport was canoes that ranged from small canoes for gathering food on the upper reaches of the rivers to large cargo transporters for long-distance trade. The latter were superseded by steamships.¹ Clah lived close to the elements during his travels by open canoe. He was buffeted by rain, wind, and unexpected storms, which were even more dangerous during the long nights of the winter months. His life was also a voyage of revelation shaped by the devastations of epidemic diseases, the wealth generated by the fur trade, the disappointments of the gold rushes, and the tragedy of losing his lands. He encountered many foreigners on the Coast, from fur traders of the Hudson's Bay Company fort in his home village to miners from China, Europe, Canada, and the United States, from colonial officials in the goldfields to judges and politicians in the halls of government buildings in Victoria. Clah's spiritual voyage, however, was the most sustained journey of his life. He became a committed Christian and grappled with the implications of reconciling this new religion with the beliefs and values of his childhood. He lived in a society dominated by the wealth and violence of the fur trade, a society in which powerful chiefs predominated and status was celebrated by dances, magnificent feasts, and the distribution of property. But he lived to see much of that power and prosperity dissipate. He and many of his people were reduced to poverty as their lands were alienated, and the power of the chiefs was undermined by Christianity and the colonial process. Clah had to map a path through a changing social and

cultural landscape, a landscape in which powerful chiefs became supplicant Christians and Tsimshian women served as liaisons with newcomer traders and miners. Clah negotiated his way through a developing colonial society that had its own social mores and political hierarchies.

As a young and middle-aged man, Clah found these voyages of material, spiritual, and intellectual discovery stimulating and challenging. He grasped opportunities to learn new skills such as reading and writing, sailing schooners, and mining for gold. But, ultimately, he became disillusioned as he realized that these journeys of exploration and discovery did not lead to a richer (in both senses) life. Although Clah became a disappointed old man, the skills and experiences he accumulated over his long life are reflected in his lifelong project – his diary. Clah's diary was the crowning achievement of his life. Although Clah never gained the recognition he sought for this prodigious work during his lifetime, the diary ensured that his life and his achievements would live on.

THE COLONIAL SETTING

The Aboriginal societies of the Northwest Coast were maritime societies. As in the South Pacific and Hawaii, coastal food resources and transport systems were water based. People clung to coastal strips and river valleys hemmed in by rugged mountain ranges. Although the region experienced heavy rainfall, it was not ideal for agricultural development because there was little flat land. The Coast was, however, rich in food and timber. Fish (both deep-sea and anadromous, that is, fish that migrate up the rivers to spawn), fish roe, seaweed, and shellfish were abundant, and Aboriginal people supplemented their diet with berries, other vegetable foods, and game. The main communication and trading routes followed the protected waters of the Inside Passage, the rivers, and the trails connecting the upper reaches of the rivers and their inland communities.

These geographic and environmental factors shaped the history of the peoples of the Northwest Coast, including the Tsimshian, Nisga'a, Haida, Heiltsuk (Bella Bella), Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl), and Tlingit. Although oral and archaeological records suggest that people might have migrated from the north and east, these migrations were limited in scope, occurring from within the region.² Strangers from Europe and the eastern United



Clah's world. From R.M. Galois, "Colonial Encounters," 107.

States tended to approach the region north of the Columbia River from the sea rather than overland. The Spanish were the first to visit the Coast, but it was Captain James Cook's visit to Nootka Sound in 1778 that had the most profound impact. Cook's crew found a market for sea otter furs in China, a country with which Europeans had long wished to trade, in 1779. Demand for the exotic pelts ensured that ships from Britain and the United States would soon follow Cook to the Pacific Northwest Coast. Russian traders also competed for the Chinese market.³

Large sailing vessels became a common sight along the Coast at the turn of the nineteenth century. Aboriginal traders became adept at negotiating with Europeans and Americans, most of whom were independent merchants. But the large fur-trading companies of eastern North America positioned themselves to take over the trade. The North West Company sent explorers over the Rockies with Alexander Mackenzie, who reached the mouth of the Bella Coola River in 1793. Because the difficult terrain made communication and transportation between the region, which became the province of British Columbia, and the rest of the continent impractical and expensive, the ocean continued to be the most effective and efficient way to access the region. In 1821, the British Parliament passed legislation that gave the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), which had amalgamated with the North West Company, the sole right to trade west of the Rocky Mountains, the so-called Indian Territory, for twenty-one years.⁴ A few years later, in 1825, the HBC reached a boundary agreement with the Russian American Company to the north. By this time, the sea otter trade had come to an end because of the virtual extinction of the animals, and land-based fur animals had become the main target of trade.

The HBC established its first trading post in the upper Northwest Coast, near the mouth of the Nass River, in 1831. Three years later, the company moved the fort south to a coastal location, Lax Kw'alaams, which came to be known as Fort Simpson.⁵ Although the HBC was a private company, its charter gave it special privileges and a monopoly on trade. The company was part of the British mercantile system of trade that sprang up in the sixteenth century and continued through the nineteenth. Although British Columbia did not become part of the formal empire until 1858, the establishment of HBC posts along the Coast ensured the region a place in the informal British Empire by the 1830s.

The HBC initially established trading posts along the Coast to undermine private traders, particularly Americans, who outnumbered the British. American ships sailed between Hawaii (the Sandwich Islands), the Dutch East Indies, Russian Alaska, and China and traded arms, ammunition, and liquor for furs in violation of British monopoly rights and international agreements. The HBC broke its own regulations by entering the liquor and arms trade in competition with these so-called Boston traders. The company introduced the first steamship, the *Beaver*, on the Coast in 1835 to enable its traders to access inlets that the less manoeuvrable American sailing ships could not negotiate. The HBC also poached one of the most experienced American captains, William Henry McNeill, when they purchased his brig, the *Lama*, in Honolulu in 1832.⁶ Five years later, McNeill was commanding the *Beaver*. By the mid-1840s, he was in charge of various HBC forts, and in 1851 he was posted at Fort Simpson, where he remained until 1859, returning to Fort Simpson briefly from 1861 until 1863, after which he retired to Victoria.⁷

In 1846, Britain and the United States signed the Oregon Boundary Treaty, which formalized the international boundary between the United States and Britain on the Coast. Britain retained Vancouver Island, where the HBC's chief factor, James Douglas, had established a trading post, Fort Victoria, in 1843, and territory to the north of the forty-ninth parallel.⁸ The quasi-governmental status of the HBC was evident when Douglas succeeded Richard Blanshard as the second governor of Vancouver Island in 1851.

As a colonial township started to emerge around Fort Victoria, it attracted Aboriginal people from other parts of Vancouver Island and mainland coastal communities, causing consternation among the newcomer community. Governor Douglas wrote to the British secretary of state in 1856, advising him that he was raising a militia of thirty men to control the people travelling to the town from the north and noting that thirty-eight canoes with three hundred people had already arrived in Victoria.⁹ By 1860, the number of Aboriginal people converging on Victoria in the spring had greatly increased, resulting in tensions and conflict. Tsimshian, Haida, Tlingit, and other northerners were all living cheek by jowl. Violence erupted, and the colonial administration was unable to keep it under control. Douglas called Aboriginal leaders to a meeting and

informed them, using missionary William Duncan as an interpreter, that each tribe would be allocated an area to live in and that they would have to pay a poll tax to fund the police needed to control them.¹⁰ Thus, encampments were reserved for visiting tribes from the north. Douglas also sent three gunboats north as a warning to reduce rampant violence, drinking, and slavery.¹¹

Aboriginal people in Victoria were soon vastly outnumbered by the arrival, in 1858, of thousands of miners, mainly from California, in search of gold. This influx forced the British to extend the formal colony to the Mainland. James Douglas became governor of British Columbia that year. The gold rushes on the Fraser River – followed by the Cariboo, Omineca, Cassiar, Yukon, and Alaska gold rushes – changed the dynamic between Aboriginal peoples and newcomers in the province and along the Coast. Although most of the miners were transient, some remained after the gold rushes, as did other migrants who serviced the miners. With formal annexation came gold commissioners to regulate affairs, British courts, a British legislature, and other appurtenances of imperial rule. The British navy was called on to control the illegal liquor trade and the violence that accompanied it.

The HBC hoped that gold would supplement the flagging fur trade. However, the rapid influx of miners and fears that the United States would annex territory west of the Rockies over which the HBC had monopoly trading rights led to a change in the status of the company and presaged government interventions and the dispersal of government officials in regions where HBC traders and factors had been the sole representatives of newcomer authority.

Gold mining had a dramatic impact on Aboriginal communities. Hunting, trapping, and trading were activities that Aboriginal people pursued long before Europeans came to their shores, but gold mining was new. Many Aboriginal nations along the Fraser River and rivers in the Interior, including the Omineca and Dease rivers, had to adjust rapidly to the invasion of thousands of men and a few women whose sole interest in them was as guides to the goldfields. Unlike the fur traders who had depended on the goodwill of their Aboriginal trading partners, miners considered Aboriginal people to be more of a hindrance than a help. Miners ignored Aboriginal peoples' rights to land and resented attempts to regulate their access. They exploited Aboriginal labour to dig and sluice for gold and to

transport men and their provisions. Miners did not want to share the transitory benefits of mining with local people. Instead of becoming central to the colonial economy, as they had been to the fur trade, Aboriginal people were marginalized. Some were able to ignore the miners and their activities, but many were sucked into the boom, travelling long distances, only to run up debts or return to their villages with little to show for many weeks' hard labour.

A few miners decided to stay on the Coast, pre-empting land to open stores or establish fishing or agricultural enterprises. These people were a new intrusion on Aboriginal lands, where only the HBC had negotiated access previously. But land could now be claimed under British rather than Aboriginal law. The HBC's agreements with Aboriginal landowners were given new status under colonial rule. The company no longer occupied land at the discretion of Aboriginal peoples but owned the land under the British Crown.

As the rush for gold in northern British Columbia turned to a trickle, fish canneries began to appear on rivers and along the Coast. Thus began the industrialization of the resource that formed the core of Aboriginal subsistence and trade – salmon. As historian Dianne Newell notes, Aboriginal people of the Pacific Northwest “harvested prodigious quantities of local resources, especially salmon, which they processed and used for personal consumption, trade, and ceremony. Such well-managed enterprises allowed them to support a pre-epidemic [smallpox] population numbering in the hundreds of thousands without destroying the fishery resources.”¹² The industrialization of the fisheries greatly curtailed Aboriginal people's access to fish and increasingly pushed them into a wage economy. Cannery operations were seasonal and shaped by the spawning season – from late spring through summer – of the various salmon species. These operations irreparably damaged the local population's main source of food and trade and failed to provide local people with enough work to maintain themselves by wage labour.

The colonial system impinged not only on Aboriginal people's economic activities but also on most aspects of life. As industries were established and settlers claimed rights to land, Aboriginal people were relegated to reserves as the rest of their lands were claimed by the Crown and then sold to private interests. The peoples of the Northwest fought unsuccessfully for decades to have their rights to land recognized.

In late 1857, just before the gold rush but long after fur traders were ensconced on the Coast, the first Christian missionary, William Duncan, arrived. The appearance of a missionary was not completely unexpected. A few Tsimshian had encountered missionaries on trips to Vancouver Island, and the appearance of newcomers who would bring a new religion had been predicted by a Wet'suwet'en prophet known as Bini who travelled widely throughout the region. Bini's teachings included Christian elements and promised European innovations in trade and technology. Because many of his predictions came true, it did not surprise coastal people when a proselytizer of a new religion appeared among them.¹³

William Duncan was sponsored by the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS). He arrived at Fort Simpson in October and was welcomed into the fort by HBC officials. His first priority was to learn Sm'algayax and then start a school for the few mixed-descent children who lived at the fort. Tsimshian who lived outside the fort could not speak English because the main form of communication between HBC employees and local traders was Chinook trade jargon. Duncan quickly realized that life at the fort, where alcohol was readily available, was not conducive to his mission. In 1862, he and some Tsimshian moved to Metlakatla, the former site of Tsimshian winter villages. Many other Tsimshian joined him over the years. At Metlakatla, Duncan could retain tighter control over the inhabitants. He dictated where and how they lived and who could stay. He built a village with a large church and industries, including a lumber mill and cannery, and he ran his own trading schooner.

Although some Tsimshian followed Duncan to Metlakatla, many stayed at Fort Simpson. In 1874, they invited the Methodists to send a missionary to them. Thomas Crosby took up residence and remained for over twenty years. Many other Anglican and then Methodist missionaries came to the region, establishing mission communities among the Tsimshian and Nisga'a on the Nass and Skeena rivers and among other language groups along the Coast. The Salvation Army soon followed. These denominations competed with one another for adherents, and even within denominations there were rivalries among different factions.

Newcomers who came to the Coast not only brought trade, new technologies and goods, and religious innovations, they also brought infectious diseases that decimated communities up and down the Coast. The Tsimshian and other Northwest Coast peoples were as vulnerable to these

microbes as indigenous people throughout the Americas, Australia, and Oceania.¹⁴ The most virulent disease was smallpox, but measles, venereal diseases, tuberculosis, and other infections to which local populations had not acquired immunity killed many people in the latter part of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century. The impact of smallpox was immediate and devastating, for it indiscriminately killed those in their prime as well as the old and the young. Epidemics occurred periodically at least from the 1830s.¹⁵ The epidemics of 1836 and 1862 are documented and are known to have killed substantial numbers of people along the Coast. The 1862 epidemic began in Victoria, and the disease was carried up the Coast by Tsimshian expelled from the town. They reached Fort Simpson just after Duncan moved to Metlakatla. Fear of the disease encouraged many Tsimshian to follow Duncan to the more isolated location.¹⁶

During the maritime fur trade and the early decades of the land-based trade, Aboriginal people and traders from outside the area co-existed, each in their own sphere. They largely abided by their own laws and moral codes, but they learned from each other as they adopted and adapted new technologies. But colonization gradually ate away at Aboriginal people's autonomy. Some scholars, viewing this process retrospectively, represent colonization as the inevitable hegemonic imposition of one society on another.¹⁷ But those who lived through it did not see a juggernaut that overwhelmed them. They experienced triumphs and irritations that gradually became major annoyances until they realized that people in distant places were making decisions that affected their lives and over which they had no influence.

THE TSIMSHIAN

The coastal region below the current Alaskan border, including the Nass and Skeena rivers and their tributaries and the rivers and islands of the Douglas Channel to the south, is occupied by the Tsimshian, who comprise four closely related language groups that interacted through trade, intermarriage, cultural exchanges, and warfare. The Tsimshian include the Gitksan of the upper Skeena River, the Coastal Tsimshian of the lower Skeena River and coastal regions, the Nisga'a of the Nass River and, below the Skeena River, the Southern Tsimshian.¹⁸ The Tlingit reside to the north of the Tsimshian in Alaska, and the Haida live to the west on Haida Gwaii.

Both groups had strong trade and other contacts with the Tsimshian. Wet'suwet'en and other Carrier language groups reside inland with trade links to the Coast. The Kwakwaka'wakw, Haisla, and Heiltsuk (Bella Bella) occupy the lands to the south.

The Tsimshian made the most of available food resources. During periods of plenty in spring and summer, they worked hard to amass food, much of which they preserved through drying, smoking or, in the colonial era, when salt was available, salting. During winter the Tsimshian relied on occasional hunting to supplement the foods they had stored in the previous seasons. The region's heavily forested areas supplied canoe- and house-building materials and wood for weapons, implements, and ceremonial paraphernalia. Between February and October, the Tsimshian moved first to the lower Nass River, where they fished for eulachon (candle fish), from which they made a valued trade item, a highly nutritious oil. They then moved to offshore islands to collect herring eggs and seaweed, hunt sea mammals, and catch deep-sea fish, including halibut. In the summer, they moved to the Skeena River to catch and dry salmon, collect berries, and hunt game. The Tsimshian traded with other peoples (including Europeans) along the Coast, on Haida Gwaii, and inland. They returned to their winter villages (at Metlakatla before 1834 and Fort Simpson after) by November.¹⁹ From November to February, they lived in close proximity in winter villages. The days were occupied with artistic, ritualistic, and intellectual activities centred on winter ceremonials (*halait*). Alcohol and other exotic goods introduced by fur traders were incorporated into these activities.

Tsimshian social, economic, and political relationships operated within a network of socio-religious units. Tribal affiliation was based on the winter villages, the primary political and economic units. Each tribe included a number of houses (*waap*). Each house belonged to one of the four clans that formed the basis of Tsimshian social identity. A house took the name of the head of the house (*lik'agigyet*), who had the highest ranked inherited name.²⁰ The four matrilineal clans, which intersected with tribal and linguistic boundaries, were Killer Whale (Gispwudwada), Eagle (Laxsgiik), Raven (Ganhada), and Wolf (Laxgibuu). The clans facilitated intermarriage and other alliances and regulated the exogamous marriage system within communities.

Nineteenth-century Tsimshian society was hierarchical. It had the following inherited ranks: royalty, nobility, commoners, and slaves. The highest rank was unique to the Tsimshian and was a product of increased competition among chiefs in response to the wealth generated by the fur trade. After the HBC moved its Fort Simpson trading post from the Nass River to the coastal location at Lax Kw'alaams in the 1830s, the ten Tsimshian tribes wintering at Metlakatla, in separate villages built on inlets on either side of the narrow waterway, moved to the trading post. One tribe became extinct soon after. At Lax Kw'alaams, they lived in one village, but occupied separate locations in immediate proximity to one another. This proximity fuelled competition among the chiefs.²¹

Chiefs (*sm'ogit*) performed both secular and religious functions. As heads of houses – the smallest social, economic, and political unit among the Tsimshian – chiefs held feasts and allocated inherited names.²² During the winter ceremonials, they fulfilled roles as masked dancers (*naxnox*), taking on a priestly guise when they donned frontlet, raven rattle, and chilkat robe for the *smhalait*. The *wutahalait*, secret societies in which chiefs played leading roles, were an innovation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, introduced to the Tsimshian from the Heiltsuk to the south.²³ By the nineteenth century, there were four secret societies among the Tsimshian: Dog Eaters (*nulim*), Cannibals (*xegedem*), Dancers (*mila*), and Destroyers (*ludzista*). Only leading chiefs could become members of the Cannibal Society. Although membership of the other societies was open to all free people, only a few (mainly chiefs) could afford to pay for the ceremonies that were necessary to attain high rank within them.²⁴

In the early nineteenth century, the Tsimshian resolved rivalries and intergroup tensions through warfare and a range of competitive feasts, dances, and ceremonies that became known as potlatching.²⁵ Potlatches gradually came to predominate over warfare as the means to assert superiority over rivals, both within and between tribes. Increased disposable wealth, which had resulted from trade with Europeans, facilitated these peaceful, status-enhancing activities. In such a status-conscious society, rites of passage, particularly those relating to death and inheritance, were crucial. Chiefs, whose standing reflected on the whole tribe, expected and received support to accumulate property from all tribal members. The

property was then distributed to other tribal groups at a potlatch. A chief could intimidate or shame a competitor by distributing more property than his or her rival. Potlatches marked and celebrated the completion of a new house. They were the means by which a person acquired a new status within the house or tribe. Missionaries were strongly opposed to these ceremonies that related to rank, status, and wealth and lobbied the Canadian government to ban them. The government responded with a ban in 1884.²⁶ People, but most particularly chiefs, who converted to Christianity and joined a mission excluded themselves from these status-giving and status-maintaining ceremonies. This exclusion had long-term implications not only for the individuals concerned and their continuing roles in Tsimshian society but also for the society itself, for it depended on these activities to resolve rivalries, determine inheritance, and decide leadership positions.

ARTHUR WELLINGTON CLAH

Arthur Wellington Clah's diary provides a lens through which to view the interactions of the different peoples of the Pacific Northwest. Clah was born in 1831, the same year the HBC established the first land-based fur-trading post at the mouth of the Nass River. He grew up during the prelude to formal colonization and experienced the full impact of the colonial system as an adult. He died in 1916. Clah was born into the hierarchically structured, competitive society of the Tsimshian. He was a member of the Gispaxlo'ots tribe, whose head was Ligeex, and the Killer Whale house of T'amks. Ligeex and the Gispaxlo'ots had used the fur trade to enhance their position among the Tsimshian and their trading partners. Ligeex became the pre-eminent chief, controlling trade between the Coast and the Interior on the Skeena River until the late 1860s, when the incumbent became a Christian and moved to William Duncan's mission at Metlakatla. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Gispaxlo'ots found it increasingly difficult to find an appropriate person to inherit the Ligeex name. These difficulties resulted in prolonged negotiations in which Clah, as head of the House of T'amks and a senior Gispaxlo'ots, was involved.

Clah married Datacks, who was also known as Catherine and was later christened Dorcas. This was an unusual arranged marriage. Dorcas, of the Wolf Clan, was a well-connected Nisga'a from the upper Nass River village

of Gitlaxdamks. Her mother's sister was Nisakx (Neshaki), a chief who used the fur trade to enhance her position, leaving her Nisga'a husband, Chief Saga'waan, to live with and later marry William Henry McNeill. Her decision to desert Saga'waan led to a series of feasts at which Saga'waan and Nisakx tried to shame each other with extravagant displays of wealth. According to the anthropologist Marius Barbeau, Nisakx outmanoeuvred her ex-husband.²⁷ Her close ties with the HBC ensured that she and her brother, Niy'skinwaatk, would become the company's chief trading partners. She was baptized as a Christian in 1863.

Dorcas' sons inherited the chiefly name, Gwisk'aayn. This suggests that Dorcas had a higher standing among the Nisga'a than Clah did among the Tsimshian. These tribal and familial affiliations ensured that Clah had strong links to two of the most influential Aboriginal traders in the fur trade: Ligeex, who dominated trade on the Skeena River, and Nisakx, who had powerful contacts on the Nass River.

Clah and Dorcas had nine children.²⁸ Only three survived to adulthood. Clah had at least three children by other women, including Henry Tate, who was brought up by Dorcas. Clah and Dorcas separated for a few months in 1867, when Clah had a brief marriage with another woman, Habbeleke-peen, who left him when Dorcas returned with their daughters, Martha and Rebecca.²⁹ Of the children who survived into childhood, the oldest was Martha, born in 1863. Rebecca was born in 1865, followed by two sons, David in 1870 and Andrew in 1873, both of whom died in 1882-83 from complications from measles. Two daughters, Fanny and Mary Elizabeth, were born in the 1870s, but both died in their teens. The last child, Albert, was born in 1881 and died in 1914. Clah mentions the deaths of two other daughters, Ida and Maggie, in 1883, but he does not identify their mother, or mothers.

Clah's hereditary names were Hlax (la'ax) and T'amks. *Clah* is an anglicized and shortened version of his hereditary name Sga'la'axl Xsgii'gl, which translates as "the eagle holding the salmon in its mouth by biting across it."³⁰ The first entry in Clah's diary gives his names and his birth:

Clah or Damaks [T'amks]

Number and count by every years[,] and when Clah first born in May 1831 first time[,] and all hudsons bay men Building fort @ Nass River are

in that time ... My Feather [father] an[d] my Mother going [a]shore thee waited another an[d] in the bay[,] this bay also was Name[d] Kaelle-caccon 7 miles from medlakall [Metlakatla]. That place I was born in the same day and the same Month in May 1831.³¹

Clah's family life was affected deeply by the fur trade. His father was a very successful trader, which provoked his envious brother, Clah's uncle, to kill him. Clah was only eight years old. Seven years later, Clah's uncle was shot dead: "I have seen my uncle die for shot somebody Blame with him for deaths from bad diseases. Says my uncle give bad medicenes."³² Clah's father, Krytin, had three children: the first son was Wallace, Clah was the second, and there was a daughter, Cclom-S-low.³³ Wallace was shot dead by a Tsimshian chief, Ligwanh, in 1860.³⁴ Clah waited many years to be compensated and avenged for the deaths of his relatives.

Clah was in his early twenties when he went to work at the HBC fort as a servant to François Quintal, a French Canadian HBC employee who had married a Tsimshian woman. Clah managed to learn some rudimentary English as he worked at the fort, even though Chinook Jargon was the lingua franca among traders and Tsimshian. After three years, he left for Victoria in a canoe captained by McNeill's son, Harry. Although Victoria before the gold rush was a small settlement, Clah quickly found work.

Clah returned to Fort Simpson after several months, and William Duncan came to the fort one year later, 1857. Clah approached Duncan because he wanted to participate in the classes Duncan was running for mixed-descent children. Duncan hired Clah as his language teacher, despite reports that Clah had recently killed an old woman.³⁵ Clah was an able pupil. He learned to read and write in English, and Duncan believed he was the first Tsimshian to grasp the significance of Christian teaching. Duncan asked Clah to accompany him on his first attempt to preach to Tsimshian outside the fort. He was worried that his knowledge of Sm'algyax might falter when put to the test. Duncan subsequently established a school outside the fort walls. Clah attended for two months before setting off for another long sojourn in Victoria.³⁶ Duncan noted on 2 June that ten canoes filled with around one hundred people were leaving for Victoria: "One of them is my most forward adult scholar a young man named Clah but a very bad man. He has made amazing progress and would have made more if others of the class could have kept pace with him."³⁷

3

I have forgot all about fighting
 about long ago

~~My father has been fighting~~
 My uncle Die for shot
 My Father Die for shot
 My Brother Die for shot. years 1838

when I was old about 8 or
 I have seen First My Father Die for shot
 his Brother shot him for Jealousy because
 My ~~the~~ Father he his Deer Man. ~~he~~ in goods
 My Father had More things than is possible
 My father had ^{only} 2 sons one daughter and Die
 We say very much - for is still. because My Father
 die for ~~nothing~~ shot.

next time when I am 15 years old.
 I have seen my uncle die for shot. somebody
 blame with him. a man die for bad Disease
 says my uncle give bad ~~Medicine~~ Medicines.
 another time when I am ~~stay~~ ^{run} at Victoria then I had
 about my brother ~~at~~ ^{filled} filled of death. 2 of them ^{filled}
 when I am 30 years old. the ^{very my} ^{same} ^{one} ^{die} ^{was} ^{let}
 Captain who kill all My ^{filled one day} Brothers. 2 of them. 1 My
 but ^{not} ^{die} ^{at} ^{the} ^{at} ^{the} ^{at}
 Dies for whiskey after 9 years. Kill my Brothers.

Page from Arthur Clah's diary (undated, 1859). Wellcome Library, London.

Victoria in 1859 was a very different settlement than the one Clah had visited in 1856, for it had been inundated by miners from California and had grown exponentially. Clah immediately found employment. He worked at several stores in Victoria and in the newly established settlement of New Westminster on the Mainland before the police hired him to report on the illegal liquor trade among the Haida in Victoria.³⁸ Clah returned north in January 1861 in time for the spring fishing. He went on his first fur-trading trip, to Hagwilget, in May.

For the Tsimshian, the most destructive concomitant of the fur trade, far worse than alcohol or firearms, was infectious disease. Clah remembered the smallpox epidemic of 1836 and the many who died from the disease. His account of the epidemic of 1862 is much more detailed. In that year, smallpox, which had been introduced to Victoria via a ship from San Francisco, quickly spread through the Tsimshian Reserve at Rocky Bay and then to other camps. Tsimshian expelled from Victoria took the disease north. Frightened people were given a day's warning to vacate the reserve. They burned their houses and blankets before leaving, and a gunboat in the bay ensured their departure.³⁹ Although doctors started vaccinating people in Victoria, three hundred Tsimshian had contracted smallpox and twenty had died by late April. Doctors also went up the Coast to vaccinate the Aboriginal population, as did Duncan, who was concerned the vaccinations were not taking. It is impossible from the data available to determine their effectiveness. The epidemic ran its course by December, when Clah wrote to Duncan that there had been 301 deaths and 2,069 survivors among the Fort Simpson tribes.⁴⁰ Presumably, Clah had been vaccinated, for he did not get the disease, even though he nursed relatives with smallpox. The Tsimshian also tried treating themselves with remedies such as the "woomasth" plant, which Clah went up the Nass River to collect in July.⁴¹

This catastrophe ruptured the spiritual cosmos and social fabric of Tsimshian society. Drinking and violence were two symptoms; burning religious paraphernalia and making sacrifices for absolution were others.⁴² Clah believed the Tsimshian had angered the Christian God by lying, stealing, committing murder, and engaging in drunken fighting. He prayed for God to forgive them and take away the sickness. This crisis no doubt pushed others towards Christianity. Duncan's mission certainly benefitted, for Paul Legaic, chief of the Gispaxlo'ots and head chief of the Fort Simpson Tsimshian, was not the only Tsimshian to leave Fort Simpson for Metlakatla, which largely escaped the epidemic. The annual migration of thousands of northerners to Victoria ended with the smallpox, suggesting that many were concerned that their lengthy sojourns to the territory of the Songhees of Vancouver Island were contributing to their demise.⁴³

Although Clah avoided smallpox, he did become sick with measles but recovered quickly. Several of his children were not so fortunate and succumbed to the disease. Clah suffered from many other unspecified

illnesses throughout his life. He suffered for several years from a chronically sore throat that at times incapacitated him. He often had colds and influenza. He tried a range of Tsimshian and European remedies whenever he or his family became ill and became so adept that he acquired a reputation as a healer. Despite taking a variety of medications, he still relied heavily on spiritual interventions, whether they were through witchcraft or, more commonly, the Christian God. When his two daughters from outside his primary family died, he blamed a witch for their deaths. When children in his primary family became terminally ill, he prayed relentlessly to God for their recovery. Although no one in Clah's immediate family died of tuberculosis, many of his friends and relatives suffered from the disease for years before their deaths. Clah often refers to people, particularly women, dying of "bad diseases," by which he means venereal diseases. Many women were pushed into prostitution to access alcohol and other commodities, facilitating the spread of venereal diseases.⁴⁴

Legaic, who had so assiduously avoided the smallpox epidemic, died of tuberculosis in 1869 while visiting Fort Simpson from Metlakatla. He was one of many Tsimshian at the time who suffered from what Clah described as "cough speed [spit] blood."⁴⁵ Legaic had been a pivotal figure in Clah's life. When he died, Clah wrote, "O dear Paul I like him very much."⁴⁶ Despite this close relationship and Clah's dependence on Legaic to assist him in establishing himself as a fur trader up the Skeena River, Legaic and Clah had had a rocky relationship, as we shall see.

Throughout the 1860s, with wealth accumulated from fur trading, Clah had been able to hold a series of feasts that enabled him to succeed to the name of the head of the House of T'amks when his uncle, who held the name, died. It is not clear from his diary when Clah took the name and position. Historical geographer Robert Galois suggests that Clah became T'amks after he hosted a series of feasts in the late 1860s.⁴⁷ He notes that Clah first adds the name to his diary on 22 April 1869.⁴⁸ Clah also displayed his wealth through theatrical displays, including dressing young men in British and American soldiers' uniforms and marching them around the streets of Fort Simpson.⁴⁹

The new Ligeex, who also had the name Paul Legaic, was recognized at a series of feasts that began in October 1869 and ended in February 1871.⁵⁰ His accession seems to have been smooth. When he died in 1891, however, his succession provoked controversy. One of the men who hoped

to take advantage of Paul Legaic II's sudden death and become the next Ligeex was Alfred Dudoward, a man who figures prominently both as a protagonist and antagonist in Clah's diary. Clah resented Dudoward's growing influence at Fort Simpson both in religious and secular matters, particularly his attempts to be both a good Christian (while actively participating in secret society ceremonies) and the head of the Gispaxlo'ots. Dudoward had inherited the title Sgagweet, head of the Gitando tribe. Dudoward's mother was from a chiefly Tsimshian family, and his father was a French-speaking employee of the HBC. When he was about eight years old, Dudoward became a student at the first school Duncan set up for mixed-descent children of HBC staff. His mother, Elizabeth Lawson (Tsimshian name Diiks or Diex), became an early convert to Methodism in Victoria, where she worked as a servant. On a visit to his mother, Dudoward and his wife, Kate, were converted at a revival in 1873.⁵¹ On his return to Fort Simpson, Dudoward called a meeting at which it was agreed to invite a Methodist missionary to the village. Twelve years after the departure of William Duncan, Fort Simpson was once again the site of a Christian mission. Thomas Crosby became the permanent missionary who lived among the Tsimshian until 1897.

Although the internal politics of the Tsimshian and Christianity were always important aspects of Clah's life, external developments also influenced his day-to-day existence. The gold rushes had a profound affect on him. At first, he was involved in transporting provisions for the miners who were flocking into the northern Interior, but he was soon travelling to the goldfields at Omineca, Cassiar, and Alaska. He hoped to mine, but quickly realized that he could make more money by providing transport for the miners as they moved around the mining regions. Trips to the goldfields during the summer and fall kept him from home and his family for months at a time. The separation must have been difficult for Dorcas and his children, but there is little indication in Clah's diary of how they coped.⁵² In the early years of the mining boom, Clah profited from his transport ventures but, as each boom petered out, he found it increasingly difficult to maintain himself and his family.

During this period in the 1870s and 1880s, Clah and his family moved away from Fort Simpson – first, and briefly, to the Skeena River and then to the Nass. With each move, Clah built a new house, which cost him money for materials, wages, and house-warming feasts. He also became



A view of Port Simpson, showing the bridge connecting Rose Island to the mainland village in 1884. BC Archives, A-04180 (photographer: Richard Maynard).

embroiled in conflicts over the land on which he built on the Nass River. The first house near Gitlaxdamks was erected on land to which his wife and children had rights, but this put him in dispute with a white pre-emptor and the local community. He then moved down the Nass River to a place he called Canaan (*Laxk'a'ata*), where he claimed inherited rights through his father. This move coincided with the federal and provincial governments' allocation of reserves, which galvanized the Nisga'a to make claims to land where the Tsimshian had traditionally fished for eulachon. Clah became enmeshed in these fights over land, returning to Port Simpson only in 1882. A decade later, he and Dorcas spent extended periods at Laghco, to the south of Port Simpson, on land Clah had bought from another Tsimshian. They started a garden and eventually built a house, and they commuted between Laghco and Port Simpson over the ensuing years.

At the time Clah and his family returned to Port Simpson, salmon canneries were sprouting up along the Coast, at the mouths of the rivers



A view of Port Simpson in 1907. BC Archives, B-03764.

and along the Nass River.⁵³ Although the fur trade and even the gold rushes had created opportunities for Tsimshian and Nisga'a to increase their wealth, the canning industry reduced most Aboriginal people to poverty. It interfered with their long-held fishing rights and forced them to work for wages or to do piecework during the summer. Wages were low and available only for a few weeks a year. Clah and his neighbours tried to supplement their meagre incomes in other ways. Many turned to horticulture, growing potatoes and other vegetables on small garden plots. But cultivable land was limited, and the weather not conducive to agriculture. Crops suffered from frosts and torrential rains. Some people travelled to the hop fields in Washington State during the years the industry survived in coastal areas. Others worked for lumber mills. All tried to supplement their wage labour with subsistence fishing and other food-gathering activities. But when the canneries' heavy demands for salmon reduced stocks, the government passed laws to limit Aboriginal fishing. The aging Clah and his family found it increasingly difficult to maintain themselves. As Clah grew older, he depended increasingly on his sons-in-law to provide for him. But one of his sons-in-laws – married to his daughter, Rebecca

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– was a Welsh sea captain, William Beynon, who lived in Victoria and had little to do with his Tsimshian family.⁵⁴ In addition, both of the husbands of his other daughter, Martha, died prematurely. The first, William West, died in 1888 under suspicious circumstances – possibly murder. The second, Henry Wesley, died in 1905 after suffering a long illness.

The elderly Clah and Dorcas continued to tend their garden at Laghco, and Clah did a little fishing – he collected seaweed and herring eggs – and hunting, although his failing eyesight and frailty made it difficult for him to be active. Clah also became more socially isolated and politically irrelevant. He sometimes spent days alone at Laghco because he no longer had an active political role at Port Simpson. His commitment to Christianity, however, remained strong.

CLAH THE CHRISTIAN

Clah's adoption of Christianity, which took place before he started his diary, seems to have been gradual. He was introduced to Christianity by William Duncan, and it is possible that he had a sudden conversion experience, but it is unlikely. In Clah's diary, the first entries about faith in God appear when Clah was in dangerous situations on long canoe journeys, situations in which he and his passengers feared drowning. Clah called on God to save them and reprimanded those who did not have faith in God's power to protect them. Clah then began to preach to others as a matter of course as he went about his business, whether it was fur trading, fishing, or gold mining.

What was distinctive about Clah's Christianity was that he treated it as an individual decision and commitment. He did not join Duncan at Metlakatla in 1862 or later, although he was happy to play host to evangelists that Duncan sent to Fort Simpson. When the Methodist, Thomas Crosby, came to Fort Simpson, Clah attended his church and was eventually baptized and married by him, but he never described himself as a Methodist. When Clah preached to others, as he frequently did, it was as an independent Christian. He never attempted to win people over to a particular church – just to the Christian God and Jesus Christ. During his travels, he would attend any church or, occasionally, different churches on the same Sunday. He most often attended the Anglican and Methodist churches, but when Clah visited Victoria, he would also go to the Catholic church. And once the Salvation Army appeared on the Coast,

Clah attended their prayer meetings. Dorcas and Rebecca became members of the Salvation Army.⁵⁵ Christianity was perhaps the overriding influence on Clah's life. It provided the moral underpinning of his existence and gave it meaning. As he became older, prayer and preaching took up increasing amounts of his time, sometimes driving his family to distraction, even though they all became practising Christians.

Christianity did not, however, remain a private commitment in Tsimshian and Nisga'a communities. As different factions and tribal groupings aligned with particular denominations, intense rivalries emerged. Dudoward's championing of the Methodists helped his own leadership ambitions. He strongly resisted the introduction of the Salvation Army to Port Simpson because the church posed a direct threat to Methodism. By the 1890s, there were five or six Christian factions active at Port Simpson and other villages in the Pacific Northwest. The Anglican Church retained a presence, as did the Methodist Church. The Salvation Army marched around the streets on Sundays and often during the week. These churches were joined by offshoots of the Methodists – the Christian Band of Workers and the Epworth League – and the Anglican Church Army, all of which had their own marching bands and meeting halls.⁵⁶ There were also community groups that did not have religious affiliations – the Riflemen's Company and the Firemen's Company. These groups had uniforms, marching bands, and halls for communal meetings and ceremonies. Clah was closely associated with the Riflemen's Company, which was modelled on his own soldiers, whom he had decked out with uniforms, rifles, and musical instruments in 1862 and on subsequent occasions.

The spread of Christianity was facilitated by both outsider missionaries and local evangelists. Unlike Clah, many of these evangelists had denominational associations. The most prominent evangelist was Clah's nephew, William Henry Pierce. Pierce was used by the Methodists as a missionary vanguard. He set up mission communities that newcomer missionaries then consolidated. He was the first Tsimshian to be ordained, and he established an independent presence through his writings, particularly two books – an autobiography, *From Potlatch to Pulpit*, and a travelogue, *Thirteen Years of Travel and Exploration in Alaska*.⁵⁷ Villages up the Nass and, to a lesser extent, on the upper Skeena River came to be associated with the particular denomination that had either created or established a presence in them. These mission communities were modelled on

William Duncan's Anglican mission at Metlakatla or on Thomas Crosby's Methodist mission at Fort Simpson. Both Duncan and Crosby bought boats to facilitate their evangelism. While Duncan's boat was used mainly as a trading vessel, Crosby's boat, the *Glad Tidings*, enabled him to preach at different locations on the coast and rivers. His extended absences from Fort Simpson were one of the many factors that gradually turned the residents against him.

Both Anglican and Methodist missionaries became embroiled in conflicts over land, fulfilling some of the intermediary, non-religious functions that Aboriginal people expected of them. While the colonial authorities tried to sideline missionaries because they believed the missionaries were supporting Aboriginal people against the state, many Tsimshian, including Clah, came to distrust the missionaries because they were ineffectual at protecting land rights. Clah became particularly antagonistic towards Crosby because he believed he was more interested in exploiting the Tsimshian to maintain his church building than helping the Tsimshian to resist state encroachment on their lands. In 1887, after Duncan split from the CMS and the British Columbian Anglican hierarchy, many Tsimshian from Metlakatla followed him to Alaska, where he re-established his mission on Annette Island. The Tsimshian were persuaded that the US government would give them freehold title to the land and treat them as equal citizens, whereas the Canadian government had alienated their land and refused them citizenship rights.

The challenges of Christianity; new transportation technologies that were revolutionizing long-distance travel along the Coast; wage labour in canneries, hop fields, and mines; and, perhaps most importantly, the alienation of Aboriginal land put stress on the fabric of Tsimshian society. Some families tried to reassert the chiefly system as a defence against these emasculating forces; their efforts resulted in the revival of potlatching and negotiations to fill vacant chiefly names. Clah was actively involved in the Gispaxloot's negotiations, and these concerns might have been the deciding factor that determined his return to Port Simpson in the early 1880s after several years' absence.

When Clah wrote the last entry in his diary in 1909, he was an old man of seventy-eight. Over his lifetime he had witnessed dramatic changes to Tsimshian society and the landscape. The young optimist who had voyaged far and wide physically, intellectually, and spiritually, excited by innovations

and opportunities, had become an old man whose horizons had narrowed to a difficult day-to-day existence and occasional visits to his daughter's family in Victoria. Clah no longer had access to wealth or political influence; he lived a subsistence existence on his Laghco land and at Port Simpson. His Christian beliefs and strong moral stance against certain aspects of Tsimshian life continued. By the early twentieth century, anthropologists were replacing missionaries as the outsiders who took an interest in the Tsimshian and their neighbours. Clah, as a well-known and accessible Tsimshian elder, was approached for information about Tsimshian social and political formations. He was interviewed by Marius Barbeau in 1915, but he did not take up Franz Boas' invitation to become an informant. He instead recommended his son Henry Tate.⁵⁸ Had Clah been a younger man when anthropologists started taking an interest in Tsimshian culture, would he have encouraged or discouraged them? It is likely that he would have fulfilled the roles taken up by his son Henry Tate and grandson William Beynon and been stimulated by the newcomers' interest in his people and the opportunity to parade his expertise to influence how posterity viewed him and his people.

Clah was a man of great physical stamina, an intellectual with a strong commitment to his own and his family's interests. He epitomized Tsimshian curiosity in new ideas and technologies, but he could not anticipate the negative influence of colonialism on both himself and his society. He was very much a man of his time, and the daily entries in his diary allow us to glimpse his time from his perspective.

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