

Order of gifts doesn't show rank, but  
amount does

(Planning and Preparations)

During the previous years 1943 and 1944 a strong feeling sprang up among the Gitksan villages on the Upper Skeena. Three poles were taken from the remains of the flood of 1936, when most of the totem poles were destroyed.<sup>1</sup> The same happened in the lower villages of Kitsegukla and Kitwanga. It created a revival of feelings among the Gitksan to try and save the remains of these poles, and where these were totally destroyed to replace them. The Hazelton house of ganaó took up their pole which had drifted out and erected it at what is now the park, and spahx took his pole from the river bank and was followed by ni-kátén -Ganhada (te·n). These houses in some instances were assisted by their own organizations rather than clan assistance. In the case of the group of ganaó, they financed it themselves.

Soon after these in 1943 the Kitwanga people re-erected many of their poles that had fallen during the same flood, and the next year many of the Kitwancool poles were re-erected. At each of these villages similar ceremonies as /were to be/ done by the Kitsegukla people were used, patterned after the olden procedures. This at first started a controversy among /between/ the younger thought and the remnants of the older thought. The younger men felt that ~~ax~~ they were now in modern times and that these totem poles were simply a reminder to the

1. These were presumably the three Hazelton poles mentioned just below. WD

2. Béynon's marginal notes: "Informant for Hazelton ha-xk<sup>w</sup>, Ganhada" and "Informant Moses Jones, Kitsegukla".

coming generation of what the rights and uses of the totem were and that aside from being just a memory of the past /they/ also showed the art. They wanted to adopt new methods of erection ceremonies which was to send out to the invited guests written invitations advising the guests to come at a certain date.

The older men who felt that they were reviving a memory /also felt that it was not simply a matter of erecting the poles/ but also a display of the many naxnōks in the possession of each of the houses, these to be dramatized and their songs sung by the members of the house and if necessary all of the village would assist in the rendering of these songs. These older chiefs also claimed that the dirge songs would have to be sung, also narratives explaining what crests were to be shown on the poles /would have to be told/, and also as they would be in full costumes the guests also would come as invited in full regalia and thus show an acceptance of the rights of each pole erected in the same manner as /was/ formerly done. At Kitwancool and Kitwanga the older thought very soon overcame the protests of the younger groups, and messengers they sent out went in groups to represent the clans of the people giving the feasts. That is, the Fireweed group of Kitwanga sent their own men and the Ganhada and Eagles and Wolves sent their own inviting the people of the Kitwancool. These were dressed according to their rank and standing, each clan chief being accompanied by his own group.

Now this idea was not acceptable to the younger people of Kitsegukla who wanted that the ceremonies should be all combined and gotten over with in a few days. Most of the younger chiefs were with this plan and wanted to do everything in a modern way; that no messengers be sent out, /that there be/ no formal Indian dancing but all the dancing would be modern, and /that there be/ no word of mouth invitation. The majority of the younger chiefs wanted this. The older thought said nothing, thus signifying their disapproval of this modern suggestion.

wi'séks (Steven Morgan), one of the head chiefs of the tribe, even moved away and went to visit among his wife's people, who were the Hagwilgets. The another leading chief həxpəgwətək" (Arthur McDames) also refrained from making any expression of thought. So unexpected to the younger group the older thought took matters in their own hands and were making preparations to send their own messengers to invite their own guests and to /prepare/ to carry out their own ceremonies in the regular prescribed manner. This caused considerable feeling among the younger men, who saw that they were going to be made the butt of many references, so they gathered together and then agreed to the matter being conducted on the old plans.

So then carvers were called in to make many preparations. Two of the poles to be erected were re-conditioned old poles taken from the old village site on the lower river bank, and three /new/ poles were to replace the older ones lost in the last flood. Carvers were called in. Tom Campbell (lutkudzi/us) of Hazelton was commissioned to carve one and həxpəgwətək" (Arthur McDames) was commissioned to carve two new ones, and local men were called in to assist and also Abel Oakes ('te'n) of Hazelton was called in as a carver. Tom Campbell was appointed the song leader for the Kitsegukla people and had full charge of the arrangements for the halait receptions and the namox exhibitions. When all these preparations were made then wigt who is practically the admitted head chief of the Fireweed groups and 'mɪlxən of the Ganhada groups approved and /gave/ word that the messengers should be sent out.

The Fireweeds sent out wi'séks, gwaxsɛn, han'amu'x, and tsa'wals as leaders of the Fireweed group as these were the men /who were going to/ erect the Fireweed poles. The Ganhada sent out gaxska'ba'xs (Simon Turner) and wi's'ti's and other Ganhada followers as this was the only Ganhada pole to be erected.

(The Invitations)

The date being finally set at after New Years, the messengers went in one large body and went direct to Kitwanga, and when they arrived there they started to sing an alu s song in front of ksg mhig x's house. This chief /being/ away, his place was taken by t w l ask who gathered the people together and they were billeted to the different houses of Kitwanga. The Eagle clan then immediately called together their people and in the hall received the Kitsegukla people and danced before the visitors who were placed according to their rank and position<sup>1</sup>

After the naxn xs of ksg mhig x were shown, he came forward and was announced and danced, spreading upon the messengers eagle down, and then food was placed in front of them.

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1. /Beynon footnote/ In halaits the chief sat in front; immediately behind was his successor and behind that the next in line. In this case the chief sat in front, as he would be called upon to dance should the naxn x performer call upon him to do so. In iya uk feasts the chief sits in the middle row and his successor sits in front and the next in line in the back. In this way it became known who were the legitimate successor and next in line of any chief.