

Statement of Project

The files of the National Museum of Canada contain voluminous field notes on the Tsimshian and other North Pacific Coast tribes, assembled over many years by Dr. Marius Barbeau, and considered by him to be his chief contribution to research in Canada. Much of this information could no longer be obtained in the field. Nobody else has become conversant with this body of material, and some of it is written in a private shorthand which Dr. Barbeau alone can read. The first part of my plan, therefore, is to work at the National Museum under the guidance of Dr. Barbeau, becoming familiar with the contents of these files and transcribing the field notes where necessary.

Some of Dr. Barbeau's published interpretations of these materials, involving for example the recency of certain aspects of Indian art and social organization, and the evidence for recent migrations from Siberia, have not met with complete acceptance. It is therefore desirable that another active scholar become conversant with Dr. Barbeau's basic data, in order to support or re-evaluate his interpretations. A second part of my plan is to make such a critical evaluation of his previous publications.

Further field research among the Tsimshian without the benefit of this vast body of information, by myself or anyone else, would be a senseless duplication of effort. It is therefore important that the basic data, and studies based upon them, be published as soon as possible. The final part of my plan of research is therefore to work in collaboration with Dr. Barbeau preparing manuscripts for publication. These will deal with Tsimshian social structure and traditional history (subjects central to my field of interest) and with other subjects which may be fully treated in the files. My own ultimate aim will be to relate these studies to problems of the nature and development of the unique culture of the Northwest Coast, and of recent diffusions of culture from Asia.

The number of publications resulting from the project will be limited by the time allotted to it, which is one year. In view of Dr. Barbeau's advanced age, it should be started as soon as possible. I suggest July 15, 1958. Facilities for publication exist both at the National Museum and at the Provincial Museum of British Columbia, and still other publication outlets may be used. The project already has the approval of Dr. Barbeau and of the Director of the Canadian Museum of Human History (National Museum of Canada).

It is my intention in future to continue research in the field of Northwest Coast ethnology and prehistory to as great an extent as my work in the Provincial Museum of British Columbia will allow. An added value of the project would be that the association with the National Museum would improve my qualifications as a museum curator.