

August 12, 1957

Dr. Jacques Rousseau,
Director, Canadian Museum of Human History
(National Museum of Canada),
Ottawa, Ont.

Dear Dr. Rousseau:

I am writing to explore the feasibility of a project which I have had in mind for a long time.

You have on file in the National Museum voluminous field notes on the Tsimshian Indians, collected over many years by Marius Barbeau. I understand they contain for example, the genealogies and traditional histories of all the Tsimshian lineages. This is very important material, and most of it could no longer be obtained in the field. I understand also that the notes are mostly in Dr. Barbeau's private shorthand, a mixture of English, French and Tsimshian which he alone can read. It is a matter of great concern to those of us who are interested in Tsimshian ethnology that the material is not in a more usable form, and since Dr. Barbeau's interests seem now to lie in other directions, that it may never be made generally available. This is especially true in view of the fact that some of his published statements, presumably based on these field notes, are not wholly acceptable to other students without further documentation.

I would like to come to Ottawa and work over this material while Dr. Barbeau's help is still available. My first aim would be to transcribe all the field notes into English. My second would be to prepare definitive studies of Tsimshian history and social organization for publication, either corroborating or re-evaluating Dr. Barbeau's published works. I discussed this idea in a preliminary way with Dr. Barbeau during a visit to the National Museum two years ago, and received a favourable and friendly response.

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Dear Dr. Rousseau:

I am writing to explore the feasibility of a project which I have had in mind for a long time.

You have on file in the National Museum voluminous field notes on the Talmashian Indians, collected over many years by Marius Barbeau. I understand they contain for example, the genealogies and traditional histories of all the Talmashian lineages. This is very important material, and most of it could no longer be obtained in the field. I understand also that the notes are mostly in Dr. Barbeau's private shorthand, a mixture of English, French and Talmashian which he alone can read. It is a matter of great concern to those of us who are interested in Talmashian ethnology that the material is not in a more usable form, and since Dr. Barbeau's interests seem now to lie in other directions, that it may never be made generally available. This is especially true in view of the fact that some of his published statements, presumably based on these field notes, are not wholly acceptable to other students without further documentation.

I would like to come to Ottawa and work over this material with Dr. Barbeau's help to make it available. My first aim would be to transcribe all the field notes into English. My second would be to prepare definitive studies of Talmashian history and social organization for publication, either collaborating or re-evaluating Dr. Barbeau's published works. I discussed this idea in a preliminary way with Dr. Barbeau during a visit to the National Museum two years ago, and received a favourable and friendly response.

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As I envisage it now, the project would take about a year. I would have to take leave of absence from my position here and obtain a temporary appointment to your staff. Since I would have to bring my family to Ottawa, my salary requirements would be at the level of Anthropologist Grade IV. While on your staff, of course, I would be available for services other than this specific project. For my part, I would welcome the chance to become more familiar with your techniques of display, cataloguing, and general museum service because it would greatly improve my qualifications as a museum curator. You no doubt consider the provision of this sort of training as an important potential function of the National Museum. It does provide added justification for temporary appointments such as the one I am requesting.

The project should be started as soon as possible. While I realize it will take some time on your part and on my own to make the necessary arrangements, I have a sense of urgency about it because of Dr. Barbeau's advanced age.

Since this is a preliminary enquiry I am not sending a complete statement of my personal and professional qualifications. However I must tell you something about myself in order to convince you that I am a capable person, (and the most logical one) to carry out the project. I am 32, born in Vancouver, married, with two children aged $6\frac{1}{2}$ and $1\frac{1}{2}$. I served three years in the war, with the R.C.A.F. I obtained my B.A. at the University of B.C. in 1949 and my M.A. in Anthropology at the University of Washington in 1950. Since 1950 I have been Anthropologist at this museum. I founded and am editor of our series of publications called "Anthropology in B.C.", and my published writings include an ethnography of the Fraser Valley Indians, a study of the prehistoric stone sculpture of the Vancouver area, and a number of other articles and maps, both technical and popular. I am the director of our totem pole carving programme, and have organized a number of salvage projects to collect and preserve the last totem poles from our native villages. I have taught non-credit courses at Victoria College. My major field of interest is Northwest Coast ethnology and prehistory, and I have spent time in the field with the Tsimshian, Coast Salish, Carrier, Haida and Kwakiutl. Referring specifically to the Tsimshian, I have had two field trips to their villages and have published one paper on their totem poles and social organization. I plan to work more with the tribe in future with or without the advantages of Dr. Barbeau's field notes. At present however the most rewarding Tsimshian research can be done in your files in Ottawa.

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I expect that you will obtain Dr. Barbeau's opinion on this proposal and on my suitability to carry it out. If you wish to obtain other opinions of me, I suggest that you ask Dr. T.F. McIlwraith, Dr. Richard MacNeish, Dr. Diamond Jenness, and Dr. Harry Hawthorn.

I am sending for your personal library all of our anthropological publications which are still in print. I apologize for not having placed your name on our mailing list sooner. I will await your reaction to my proposal with interest, and would appreciate an early reply.

Yours sincerely,

Wilson Duff,
Curator of Anthropology.

WD:EMcG

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