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The “Idiot Sticks”: Kwakwaka’wakw Carving and Cultural Resistance in Commercial Art Production on the Northwest Coast

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Between 1884 and 1951 a ban on potlatching prohibited Indigenous communities of British Columbia from practicing traditional economic, ceremonial, and political activities, restricting them to state-sanctioned gatherings and celebrations. Unable to perform traditional dances and wear the associated regalia, Native artistic practices, in particular carving, began to fall into disuse as demand dried up. Restricted to only a few artistic forms permitted by local authorities, carvers turned to the growing tourist market, a field dominated by non-Native dealers but also disdained by government as inauthentic and thus, ostensibly non-threatening. Among art forms most popular with the Kwakwaka’wakw people of Vancouver Island and the corresponding British Columbia coast were model totem poles, which have often been overlooked as facile souvenir art and even sometimes derided as “idiot sticks.”

In reality, however, drawing from both historical accounts and contemporary interviews with Kwakwaka’wakw carvers, this article demonstrates that these model totem poles were a subversive method of Indigenous defiance of Canadian authority. Carvers satirically enacted resistance through these model poles, not only mocking those who would presume to judge without knowledge, but in preserving information for future generations, could ensure the survival of traditional designs and techniques and register protest at their treatment by non-Native government and society.

The term “idiot sticks” emerged in the early twentieth century. Apparently Indigenous-coined, it was a derogatory term used occasionally for the miniature totem poles which had appeared at curio shops and tourist kiosks across the Northwest Coast region since the middle of the preceding century. Kwakwaka’wakw anthropologist Gloria Cranmer Webster notes that the term was used by “carvers of later generations and other communities, which had no tradition of totem poles,”¹ and they were so called because, as Kwakwaka’wakw carver Doug Cranmer once said, “any idiot could carve [them].”² That is to say, any Indigenous person with a modicum of carving skill could pick up a knife and a hunk of wood and whittle off an approximation of the great totem poles that studded Kwakwaka’wakw communities and then put the resulting mimetic reproduction up for sale to credulous tourists and art dealers. They required no long apprenticeship, no commission by a great chief, no permission to tell the stories they depicted and no major investment in time, tools, or material. There was no requirement to formalize cuts or season the timber, and no ceremonies accompanied their completion.

A carver of miniature poles did not even have to use cedar, the standard and traditional material for such carvings, softwood red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) for large totem poles and hardwood yellow cedar (*Cupressus nootkatensis*) for small. Any piece of worn-out building timber could, in principle, do just as well. In their apparent lack of formalized, recognized and professional care and attention, the miniatures were so far removed from the large-scale totem poles they superficially resembled as to appear be an entirely separate category of object. A category that was treated by the wider world as an ostensible symbol of the degradation, commercialization and democratization of reserved and culturally significant Indigenous art practices during the early twentieth century. Eventually the imagery of totem poles became so ubiquitous, so disposable, that they crept into places in which they did not belong, becoming synonymous with Hollywood depictions of the Plains peoples, for which

the miniature totems were, to a significant extent, to blame. By 1953 it raised few eyebrows, outside the communities of the Northwest Coast, to see one in the ostensibly Plains “Indian” village of the Disney animated production of *Peter Pan*.

There they have largely remained. As recently as 2009, the bestselling strategy computer game *Empire: Total War* absurdly featured totem poles standing in animated villages purporting to belong to the Iroquois Confederacy. The totem pole is an idea disconnected from its origins, an icon that stands irrevocably attached to notions of pan-Indianism, and miniature poles have become, in popular and academic imagination, ostensible examples of “souvenir art,” a transcultural hybrid form of art production generally criticized as inauthentic and unrealistic, and described, in the words of anthropologist Nelson Graburn, as “ethno-kitsch” which “give[s] all commercial, contemporary arts a bad name.”³ Thus characterized, they appear to be facile and inauthentic expressions of the worst excesses of pseudo-Indian souvenir art: the dream-catchers of the Northwest Coast.⁴

To seriate them in this fashion, however, thus fundamentally misunderstands their origin and their purpose in that it does not recognize the long history of subversive communication through material culture—particularly miniaturized material culture—among the Indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast. Such a reading ignores, for example, deeply ingrained traditions of satire and sustained pedagogical engagement through material culture. Thus, the “ethno-kitsch” label fails both to engage with the physical affordances of the miniature totem poles themselves and the context in which they were created.

Most importantly, this move fails to understand the nature of Northwest Coast non-violent resistance to the oft-violent colonization of their lands and the deliberate destruction of social and cultural systems and consequently also fails to acknowledge the importance of hybridity in Indigenous Northwest Coast art. To consider the interplay of diverse influences on an art form to produce something new—something not quite wholly Indigenous and not

wholly external, but a product of the relationships formed when two distinct cultural traditions come into collision with one another—requires a more comprehensive analytical process, one which Ronald Hawker describes as an “understanding of First Nations visual production that sees it as a method for examining the profound entanglement of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies.”⁵

In order to recontextualize miniature totem poles, then, this article suggests alternative purposes and obscured meanings for these so-called “idiot sticks” based on research investigating the continuity and survival of Kwakwaka’wakw art in the face of determined governmental opposition. Conducted between 2014 and 2017, this work matched interviews with contemporary Kwakwaka’wakw carvers with historic object and archive resources. The results challenge the notion of whom the “idiot” really was in this material exchange, and demonstrate how, far from being merely “ethno-kitsch,” these tourist arts are instead deliberate and determined examples of subversive marketing designed to promote and preserve Native Northwest Coast traditions in the face of unsympathetic and oppressive governmental and economic conditions. My aim is to contribute to those analyses that challenge the narrative of a Northwest Coast “artistic renaissance” and, rather than a rebirth, more accurately identify it as a re-emergence of adapted art traditions.⁶

[H1] Laughing at White People

In about 1950, a recording was made of two of the most prominent Kwakwaka’wakw carvers of their generation, Ellen Neel and Chief Mungo Martin, as they expressed their thoughts regarding a model totem pole commission Neel had undertaken for the mayor of Vancouver’s “Totemland” advertising initiative. The exchange is discussed in Aldona Jonaitis and Aaron Glass’s 2010 book *The Totem Pole: An Intercultural History*. Neel’s work is a late example of the miniature poles so prevalent in tourist shops of the early twentieth century. Both Neel

and Martin were producers and vendors of miniature totem poles; from a base in Vancouver's Stanley Park, Neel maintained a carving and painting workshop, employing family members in an entire cottage industry so prolific that we can identify a significant percentage of the entire corpus of this material as the work of Neel and her apprentices. The designs on Neel's miniature sample totem pole for the mayor's "Totemland" campaign feature Thunderbird "gifting" Vancouver Island to the first (i.e. Indigenous) man. On the recording, one can hear Neel laughing at non-Natives' reactions to her creation; in response, Martin jokingly calls it a "white man's pole," and the pair both dissolve into laughter when Martin observes that "a white person wouldn't know the difference anyway," i.e., between traditional and non-traditional totem poles.⁸

Significantly, both participants in this interaction acknowledge that these miniature poles are not made for Native people in Native communities, but for non-Native people outside of Native communities, and moreover, convey that in this context the notion of "traditional" and the corresponding understanding of the term "authentic" is entirely Native-designated, and that, as a result, Natives' experiences and considerations of this work will be at odds with standard, non-Native artistic assessments. In addition to capturing the artists' view that the categories non-Native people use to interpret Kwakwaka'wakw souvenir art are perhaps flawed instruments unsuited to engaging with such material, I contend that this recording demonstrates that Neel and Martin not only knew of wider North American society's lack of regard for these objects, but in relying on that low opinion as part of their marketing and distribution efforts, were deliberately subverting non-Native cultural conventions.

So-called "tourist arts," including miniature totem poles, have long been subject to non-Indigenous dismissal and disdain. In this situation, as Ruth B. Phillips points out, these arts have become "walled off, untouchable according to orthodox curatorial and discursive

practices. Rarely exhibited or published, excluded from the canon, they have been shrouded in silence.”⁹ Danish archaeologist Morten Porsild, for example, once raged that such objects “find their way to museums, just where they ought not to be, as generally, with a few exceptions, they are devoid of all scientific value,”¹⁰ while George Heye, founder of the National Museum of the American Indian, had the “Golden Rule” that “NO TOURIST ART” would be permitted in his collection (his emphasis).¹¹ Recent analyses sometimes still bemoan that to this day “museums are cluttered with the great number of model[s]” that were produced in this period.¹²

The underlying assumption is that artworks made under such conditions with non-traditional materials or non-traditional techniques are inferior to historic “authentic” art produced before European contact—or even at an ill-defined and entirely mythical post-contact moment—when Native arts could be considered pure and untouched by European technology, taste, or commercial imperatives.¹³ Always highly problematic, this attitude generates “biases against the abilities of contemporary artists” and skews artistic fashions: if the work of contemporary artists is categorically “hybridized” and “inauthentic,” their artwork becomes more easily subject to dismissal or ridicule, and with it their entire contribution to the history of art, or any other supposedly “civilized” practice.¹⁴ In other words, to assume the existence of a “pure” practice of Native art places a fixed barrier between authentic and inauthentic which preserves, in both academic literature and popular imagination, a concept of what is traditional, or authentic, in Native American art at a particular time—with the perverse result, as J. C. H. King has emphasized, that “the most traumatic period in Native American history has provided the material basis for what is traditional and what is not.”¹⁵

Miniature totem poles in particular were so small and cheap to produce that they could be made by anyone with time to spare. In this, the poles democratized art among the

peoples of the Northwest Coast and consequently non-Native (and some Native) observers considered them to lack value, either as ethnographically interesting material culture or even commercial art pieces. Because there was no need to undergo years of exhausting apprenticeship or to win the patronage of a great family to produce something so ostensibly flimsy and transient, these “speedily made and cheaply priced imitations of full-scale totem poles”¹⁶ were thus “idiot sticks” in name and nature. Yet informed consideration of the Indigenous artists involved in this type of work renders this designation immediately problematic, because “idiot sticks” was a name originally created by Indigenous artists who applied it to the work of a rival a Kwakwaka’wakw carver of the early twentieth century, Charlie James (Yakudlas, c.1867–1938), and the master who taught both Martin and Neel as apprentices.

James himself was as far from the stereotype of the untrained, unsophisticated carver of tourist arts as it is possible to be. He was a highly skilled artist who demonstrated a deep and abiding respect for his people’s artistic traditions through decades of experience. His ground-breaking carving work was no less significant when rendered in small scale: Kwakwaka’wakw historian Gloria Cranmer Webster notes that “James showed the same care and attention to detail in his larger and smaller works.”¹⁷ The strength of James’s broad artistic oeuvre prompted Ronald W. Hawker to call him “one of the most important of the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century artists.”¹⁸ This recognition is key to acknowledging that a “reduction in scale is not necessarily a reduction in significance,”¹⁹ particularly when observing artistic practices outside the canon of Western “high art,” and to become aware of how a “reduction can have negative connotations if it is taken as the minimization of some ideal maximum” that obscures the ways in which a miniature object may be significant in its own right.²⁰

Neither Neel, Martin, nor James view these objects from a viewpoint of a classically trained art historian who had been steeped in flawed alien hierarchies of authenticity and quality, but rather as Indigenous artists and community members. Clearly, their understanding of the miniature totem poles does not derive from the pole's installation in a museum display or position on a suburban mantelpiece, but from the intimate context of the community where it originated. They recognized that in the rapidly changing environment of the early twentieth century Northwest Coast art market and in the face of aggressive assimilation, traditional material practices must adapt or they would dissipate, together with the traditions from whence they came and the communities they sustained. To understand why this dramatic situation had come about, it is necessary to trace a brief history of the antecedent art practices in the region giving rise to the miniature totem poles, to which I will now turn.

[H1] Carving on the Coast

For the purposes of this article, the Northwest Coast may be considered a loosely defined geographical term encompassing the linguistically and culturally diverse Native peoples who inhabit the coastal regions of present-day Washington state and southern Alaska in the United States, as well as British Columbia in Canada. Among the few elements common to all of the peoples of the region, the most salient is their use of cedar wood, which in both utilitarian construction and artwork is highly developed, both technologically and aesthetically. Indeed, the peoples of the region do not traditionally make a distinction between these categories; often the most utilitarian of artifacts are aesthetically beautiful and the most beautiful artworks have mechanical utility.²¹

Largely through the work of carvers like James, totem poles are recognized to be the iconic material culture product of the Northwest Coast even if they are poorly understood

around the globe. Totem poles were first recorded on Haida Gwaii in 1785, part of a more widespread corpus of monumental cedar art that gradually spread southward during the nineteenth century. Exported by itinerant carvers, the poles operated everywhere as gigantic statements of identity and ideology. The poles tell of family lineages and oral histories and are intimately linked to the potlatch ceremonies at which they were raised. They could only be carved by the most skilled professional carvers as explicit commissions from those authorized to permit use of their family crests in the carving, and were raised to celebrate or commemorate the most significant people and events of the communities in which they appeared. Not simply precious, they are literally owned and preserved as the property of specific families.²² The ownership of such monumental statements of authority was strictly reserved to those with the status, heritage, and wealth to produce and sustain the prestige and power such an icon demanded, and as such the figures and images carved into their surface were similarly restricted to those with the rights to reproduce the stories they depict.

In the late nineteenth century these enormous statements of temporal power and heritage began to appear for sale in miniature.²³ Miniaturization is an art practice which has only recently come under academic examination on the Northwest Coast, but is known to have a substantial precontact pedigree, evidenced by the presence of small wooden miniatures found in the archaeological ruins of the village of Ozette on the Olympic Peninsula. Buried two hundred years before European contact, these artifacts prove beyond any doubt that “the making of models does not seem to have been solely for the White tourist trade.”²⁴ In the early contact period miniatures were still being made, with European visitors to the region routinely obtaining miniature canoes. Collections in European museums date these objects to the 1790s. Very large, elaborate miniature vessels appeared more widely as part of the political and commercial exchanges of the mid-nineteenth century and today they continue to be produced, given, and sold.

Totem pole production significantly increased among the cedar-carving peoples of the Northwest Coast in the nineteenth century as they became an attractive method of demonstrating one's status in a time of economic prosperity brought by trade with Europeans. In exchange for the skins of the ubiquitous sea otter, chieftains with access to hunting grounds and trading posts could achieve dramatic increases in wealth, for example, which diversified power once stockpiled by certain families among those with the access to resources and the means to exploit them. As families sought to outperform one another and carvers adopted non-Native wood-working technologies, at this time many of the arts and practices recognized today as part of traditional Northwest Coast culture underwent significant alteration. In particular, one ancient means of celebration and economic exchange in the region, the potlatch, took on new importance as the decisive arbiter of wealth, status and strength.²⁵

European traders returned from their excursions not only with otter furs, but with carved ephemera as well; the early miniatures in European museums reflect the blooming of souvenir arts throughout the late nineteenth century. Among this cultural material, the miniature canoes claim attention as transportable objects clearly made as valuable gifts for potential trading partners, created and gifted to cement relationships and elevate the givers above their rivals.²⁶ Although they are sometimes dismissed as crude approximations of the canoe form, these canoes are, in fact, "allegorical autoethnographies"—objects made to evoke the importance of the giver and to associate him in the mind of his trading partner with a particular heritage, crests, and practices.²⁷ Sinuous formline killer whales decorate the hulls, which are truncated to give the crest art greater prominence, evidence of Native Northwest Coast carvers engaging with the ways in which the traders would best recall the gifter. Made to be removed, kept, and observed as curiosities, they are thus, explicitly and literally,

“souvenir” arts: objects meant to make the giver “come to mind,” as in the word’s original French meaning.

In the 1830s the Haida people of Haida Gwaii, off the Northern coast, began to carve other souvenir objects for the increasingly valuable tourist trade along the Alaska paddle steamer route. As more ships stopped at Haida Gwaii, a market developed for Haida-made items in British Columbia, permitting carvers a safe outlet through which they could “render images of the familiar past in an acceptable form.”²⁹ Argillite, a sedimentary mudstone, was popular, portable, and had been used for beads and small decoration in the precontact period, but it was only extracted and carved in significant quantities in the nineteenth century in response to the burgeoning tourist market. These works were consciously “inauthentic” in that they used European tools and techniques to produce versions of European scenes, but their supposed inauthenticity was tempered by the frequency with which the Haida incorporated political satire into them. Pipes show European sailors tangled in rigging as they flee from Haida bears, for instance, and figure groups in the collections at the British Museum provide silent commentary on both the brutality and relative powerlessness of European men.³⁰

This art production occurred within the specific context of devastating demographic collapse. In 1862 a smallpox epidemic swept the Northwest Coast. After starting in Vancouver, it spread northwards through fleeing Indigenous canoe parties and infected European sailors. Within a year more than 50 percent of the Native population of the region was dead; some communities suffered more than 70 percent mortality.³¹ With the dead went much Native history and ceremony; the disastrous loss of oral history and tradition has been likened to the burning of a library of 30,000 books.³² The survivors gathered into towns, where the US and Canadian governments and missionaries found it easier to assess and control Native communities. Under official pressure, traditional clothing, practices and

houses eroded through a deliberate policy of “de-Indianization.” For instance, an early twentieth-century report noted approvingly that the Haida had replaced all of the old longhouses with “two-story frame houses which they built according to a new design and furnished in a modern style” and also observed that “Haida women are model house keepers. It is gratifying to note the whiteness of their wash on the lines, fresh white curtains and the cleanness of their floors.”³³

The most destructive elements of de-Indianization were the Potlatch Ban of 1884, which outlawed potlatches and other Native celebrations, and the imposition of Indian Schools for the education of Northwest Coast Native children. For the Kwakwaka’wakw, the Potlatch legislation led to the establishment of local Indian Schools in a highly damaging and brutally repressive fashion. The deliberate aim of the ban was to undermine the social and economic fabric of the Northwest Coast and to force Native communities to adopt European economic and legal models. Clearly, by banning the gatherings of elders at which precedent and contract are established, the Act “effectively makes our legal system, illegal.”³⁴ Although not on the list of proscribed practices, the ban resulted in the disappearance of much of the regalia associated with the potlatch, including totem poles, which were often raised as the climax of the celebration. Although the art practice never disappeared entirely, without the ritual to sustain it totem carving began to fade away and was replaced by permitted “souvenir” art practices deemed nonthreatening by the authorities.

Patchily enforced, many communities ignored the ban, or removed their celebrations to remote islands and beaches. The ‘Namgis Kwakwaka’wakw, many of whom were now based on the 1881-built cannery town of Alert Bay, moved their potlatches to a remote site on Village Island in the Broughton Archipelago. For years the inhabitants of Alert Bay and the surrounding Kwakwaka’wakw communities did their best to evade official interference in their ways of life; some were caught and fined or imprisoned, but others escaped detection

and considered themselves safe. This came to an end in 1921 when the Alert Bay Indian Agent William Halliday decided to stamp out potlatching altogether. He learned that a potlatch had taken place at Village Island, hosted by Chief Dan Cramer, who had distributed potlatch goods worth at least \$30,000, making it the largest potlatch then recorded.³⁵

Delegations from many Kwakwaka'wakw bands attended; although few came from Alert Bay, the residents were aware that Halliday was planning a major operation.³⁶ Acting on information from an Indigenous informant, Halliday made a series of arrests of the participants, and authorized the remission of prison sentences for those that agreed to surrender their potlatch regalia.³⁷ Those who refused were sent to prison and forced to perform menial tasks as deliberate acts of humiliation. Others destroyed their regalia rather than see it confiscated.³⁸ Placing the seized material on public display, Halliday exposed reserved chiefly regalia and wealth in a deliberate attempt to desecrate it, as well as to reinforce his victory over the community. The regalia was then catalogued and sent to the National Museum in Ottawa, from where it was dispersed to other museums. Ex-gratia payments were made to the owners of the material, although the amounts were deliberately insulting and offered minimal compensation for valuable family heirlooms.³⁹ The loss of the regalia and the enforcement of the ban on potlatching was devastating; the Kwakwaka'wakw know the ensuing period as the "Dark Time."⁴⁰

Despite Halliday's confidence, potlatching did not cease entirely. As Kwakwaka'wakw historian Daisy Sewid-Smith (My-yah-nelth) wrote, "[Halliday] was sure the 'evil' Potlatch had at long last died, but the truth of the matter is that it had gone 'underground.'"⁴² Withdrawing to the fringes of Kwakwaka'wakw society, it took place in distant villages during the worst weather to obscure its appearance, known as a "bootleg potlatch."⁴³ These bootleg potlatches required far less regalia than before: it was no longer safe to display or keep these objects in the home. Carvers could no longer carve and so turned

to other professions; there was real concern that, just as Halliday intended, traditional practices would be starved and die. To reinforce his efforts to destroy the potlatch, Halliday established St. Michael's Indian Residential School at Alert Bay. The largest such institution in British Columbia, and supposedly "one of the most modern and up-to-date buildings in the whole of Canada, with a capacity of 240 pupils," it was an exercise in the mass brutalization of generations of children forced to attend by Halliday's agents and those who succeed him. St. Michael's physically dominated Alert Bay; an ostentatiously brutalist structure imposed in the midst of the Indigenous community, a constant reminder of Halliday's authority and the desire of the Canadian government to destroy Kwakwaka'wakw culture and assimilate the Kwakwaka'wakw people.

At the school, Kwakwaka'wakw culture was prohibited. Students were stripped of their Kwakwala names and arbitrarily assigned given English names instead, and later stripped of names entirely and only referred to by number.⁴⁴ Pupils were forbidden from speaking Kwakwala or other Indigenous languages and beaten or humiliated if caught; "the idea was to get them comfortable with English, because that was the language of the dominant society."⁴⁵ Throughout the school's existence, pupils recounted stories of savage, arbitrarily administered beatings for minor disciplinary infractions and rampant sexual abuse that was ignored by school authorities.⁴⁶ Given this brutally repressive environment, it is unsurprising that traditional culture suffered among the generations who endured it. Halliday's mission to destroy traditional Kwakwaka'wakw culture with his assault on the potlatch was ultimately only partially successful, inflicting severe damage but inspiring determined resistance. As Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin have pointed out, "It must be remembered that Indians were not supine victims of white legislation. That the [potlatch] law went largely unenforced [after 1927] as in great measure a result of native resistance, even defiance."⁴⁷

The methods by which this resistance was achieved speak eloquently about the resilience and communal intelligence of the Kwakwaka'wakw. The immediate response to Halliday's operation was neither a violent, doomed insurrection nor a defeated abandonment of carving; rather, replacements were commissioned by those whose possessions had been confiscated. A sudden increase in material culture production resulted, in which Mungo Martin and Charlie James were heavily involved, and carving practices were adapted to mitigate the danger of discovery by Halliday's network of agents and informants.⁴⁸ With regalia and ceremony banned and those bans enforced, open potlatching became less and less frequent over time, and the inability to publicly perform also meant that the regalia required to potlatch was no longer in such demand. Additionally, aggressive Christianization led many to willingly renounce the potlatch and to destroy regalia, while financial crises undermined the economic system on which the potlatch depended.⁴⁹

During the 1940s and 1950s much of the surviving historical material culture was acquired by collectors and dealers and found its way to museums,⁵⁰ where curators used it in generating displays which conformed to non-Native art history structures designed, deliberately or inadvertently, to diminish the importance of Northwest Coast art in comparison to art of other, supposedly higher, cultures. Most especially, museums portrayed the Northwest Coast ceremonial and artistic traditions as dying, if not actually dead. Even as this message was being disseminated, however, Ellen Neel, Mungo Martin, and their compatriots were not only producing the miniature totem poles so disparaged by "serious" collectors and so prized by curio merchants, but doing so subversively—using satire.

[H1] Satire in the "Idiot Stick"

Satire is deeply embedded in Northwest Coast art. Depending upon the dance or story, many characters, such as the Numatl and the D'zunukwa, are simultaneously sinister and comical.

Indeed, this mingling is the essence of Northwest Coast formline design, an art style in which sinuous and interwoven characters can tell multiple stories simultaneously. This allows for two-dimensional skeuomorphism, a feature Bill Holm terms “double meaning,” the ability of one stylistic element to be a part of two or more figures such that “the claws of a foot or the curve of a flipper, becomes the beak of a bird,”⁵¹ providing an artistic platform from which a storyteller can tell multiple narratives. Incomprehensible to those unversed in the art and the stories contained within, this is a system of artistic depiction founded on a deliberate unknowability or mystery designed to simultaneously fascinate and obscure.⁵² Asked about the principles of formline, contemporary Kwakwaka’wakw carver Wayne Alfred acknowledged this essential element of formline design, particularly as it applies to small carvings:

You can also change it, because you’ve got your miniature there, your model pole, and then you can say well I’ll add this and that and that on to it, may be coming out the legs or from the chest. Always sticking to the story too though, you’ve got to, it’s a Kodak moment, you’ve captured that moment in time inside that legend, do you know what I mean? Because every legend’s got truths in it, places, times and names and actions that happen in there. And it’s an entertaining legend, you listen to it and it keeps you captivated.⁵³

Because the multiplying of meanings inherent to formline style enables Northwest Coast artworks to recount legends and comment on contemporary issues simultaneously, satire conveyed through formline has often acted as a public means of expressing resentment toward, and challenging, authority. The best known example is the Tlingit pole erected at Tongass in about 1885 mocking former US Secretary of State William Seward. Seward had been hosted at a potlatch at Sitka in 1869 by Chief Ebberts and reportedly had behaved ungraciously. Worst of all, he never reciprocated the honor. In disgust, Ebberts

had a pole carved depicting Seward with a white face and red nose, a calculated insult which emphasized his diminished status before the Tlingit.⁵⁴ In another noted case from the 1870s, a Skidegate man from Haida Gwaii raised effigies of the officials in Victoria who had convicted him of drunkenness, which were then routinely subjected to public ridicule.⁵⁵

These carvers' methods demonstrate how northern Northwest coast material culture produces satirical communications that mock non-Native sensibilities and behavior in a nonconfrontational manner only clearly understood by knowledgeable community observers. The Native participants in these examples were responding to overbearing colonial authority through nonviolent resistance in a manner which reinforced their status and independence among their own people. The humorous implications in these examples use satire to critique authority safely, without overtly challenging the more powerful colonial governance; a direct challenge would force reprisal.

[H1] The Imagery of “Idiot Sticks”

It is in this context that the work of James, Neel, and Martin and their contemporaries must be considered, for their work is reflective of this same subversive resistance. As the elder of the trio, James was the pioneer. Although his work evidences a range of designs, his most common working style stems from a large pole of his own carving. Pointedly, this original pole currently stands in the U'mista Cultural Centre at Alert Bay, built on the site of the now-demolished residential school. U'mista curator Trevor Isaac explains that James frequently returned to the images on this pole to affirm the crests and lineage that he was forbidden to display through potlatch:

if you look on the top it is a *Qulos* [Sea Eagle]. The *Qulos* is the first ancestor of his people and then underneath it tells of a legend, a separate story, of going into the

undersea world, so that's why it's got the bear from the sea, or a sea bear and there's a killer whale and a frog and a bullhead and the man. So this is a story that [James] felt very strongly about that he always depicted and most of his totem poles are the same crest figures but sometimes arranged differently, but still telling the same story.⁵⁶

As Isaac notes, James adapted and played with this imagery, adding or removing characters and distributing works in a range of sizes and formats in miniature. To muddy the identity of the prodigious carver producing so much traditional imagery in nontraditional ways, he sometimes carved pseudonyms on the base. Freed from the restrictions of traditional art practice, James's miniatures play with perception. As one critic writes,

They interact. They break free of their compression onto the columnar form of the pole. They come alive. Of all James' carvings, this genre is perhaps the most captivating to the outside world. At their best, James' miniature poles are playful, beautifully carved and painted, evocative, and creatively ambitious.⁵⁷

James's miniatures captivate not only because of his ability to manipulate form, theme, and structure, but also how he incorporates the unexpected with an eye to diverse audiences. A miniature pole produced about 1930, for example, replaces the central totem figure with the contemporary Hollywood icon Pepito the Clown and playfully dedicates the work to the celebrity. Such works have been described as his "oddities,"⁵⁸ but this implies that there is something whimsical or undirected about them, as if they were flights of fancy. They are not. Rather, in directly associating the pole with another American icon, James is staking a central role for the totem pole. James knew that it would not only be a popular item on the commercial market, but would also likely generate headlines and popularity for the pole as a design form.

In fixing the otherwise-prohibited totem pole to Indigenous identity within the popular imagination, accompanied by the weight of tradition, iconography and ideology with

which poles were freighted, James preserves them as something worth emulating and preserving. Likewise, his protégé Ellen Neel later subverted the genre by carving “The World’s Smallest Totem Pole,” a tiny, intricate artwork featuring family crests in James’s style, which she publicly presented to the popular entertainer Bob Hope.⁵⁹ Today, James would be unsurprised, I think, by how widely his own poles were distributed or how totem poles became indices of American indigeneity in general, unconnected with either the Kwakwaka’wakw or the Northwest Coast in particular. While he may have laughed at the many non-Native efforts to ape and manipulate the pole as a symbol, this was the means by which he preserved pole carving and designs, and he might also have expressed satisfaction that his efforts at subverting Halliday’s crackdown on traditional art and ceremony had been so successful.

With the potlatch ban and Halliday’s crackdown, material culture practices and techniques had been restricted, and without demand for new works, carvers could not make a living. Nor could apprentices learn, which potentially created a crisis for artistic continuity. As carver Gary Petersen describes it in a later era, this apprenticeship requires bodily and mental engagement with repetitive learning of fundamental techniques:

Doug Cranmer ... taught me how to draw when I was a kid. He gave me this paper ... and he draws an ovoid on it. “Go and draw that over and then come back and see me.” So I went and filled one side of the paper, drew a bunch of ovoids, all out of proportion, ugly little things. He flipped the paper round and said “do it again on that side.” So I did that for a day. The next day I brought it back to him and he took the paper, looked at it, and he said “OK” ... So I did this for months, drawing ovoid after ovoid after ovoid after ovoid. And then one day he says “OK, you’re ready for the next step” and I think “Right On, this is so cool!” And he puts another ovoid inside that ovoid and I say “Really? I could do that on all the other ones” and he goes

“exactly,” so I’m drawing ovoids inside those other ovoids on all those pieces of paper. I had a big stack of them. And it became a trout head design. And then that trout head design became an eye design and then he started teaching me to draw the different animals from the ocean, from the land and from the air and our supernatural creatures.⁶⁰

Although what they could carve was restricted, the artists of James, Neel and Mungo’s generations responded by making what was permitted, and in doing so, they simultaneously earned vital income and taught new generations the carving techniques needed to produce large-scale works. This also enabled the wide distribution of the poles through the art market, and consequently the dissemination of the crests, animals and stories, the legends, that they contained into an environment in which they would be safe from destruction, preserved for future generations. Moreover, miniatures in particular were a highly effective method for beginning artists to learn and hone their carving skills, because they require no less rigor, discipline, and engagement than a large carving does. Contemporary carver Steven Bruce, Sr. explains that it is easier to start learning to carve in miniature because

if you can do lots of small ones you get your basics and then you switch them round on the piece and change the nose, change the eyes, the nose and create these different characters in your culture and you can learn a lot from doing these small ones ... for me it kept me excited and wanting to learn more. And then I jumped into the bigger pieces.... The smaller ones are easier, but it’s all the same steps.⁶²

Wayne Alfred, however, cautions that “making a miniature [mask] is no easier than making a big mask ... it’s just smaller and smaller knife cuts and if you make one mistake you have to throw it all away.”⁶³

As with James's work, carving in miniature encouraged experimentation: by carving large quantities of smaller objects rather than a few large ones, the carvers were able to explore a wider variety of figures and ideas at a lower cost. Clearly, carving in miniature was an effective means of preserving experience and transmitting techniques over decades and across generations, skills which could be further developed once large-scale carving was no longer prohibited. That when dances could openly begin again, when poles could be raised once more, and when regalia was again in demand, there would be a cadre of professional, trained carvers at hand to fulfill that demand.

[H1] Reflecting on the “Idiots”

A term coined in Native debates about authenticity and exclusivity in carving, in the early-twentieth-century “idiot sticks” referred derogatively to the entire corpus of miniaturized souvenir artwork from the Northwest Coast in general, and the Kwakwaka'wakw in particular. Recent historical and anthropological works uses “idiot sticks” ironically as a way of scorning those who dismiss this cultural and artistic movement as facile, inauthentic, and degraded due to demographic and political collapse under colonial rule.⁶⁵ This article, however, proposes that “idiot sticks” was always deployed satirically. If satire played a crucial role in protection and protest in relation to colonial authorities among the specifically repressed Kwakwaka'wakw in particular, this was also true of Northwest Coast artistic production in general in this period. For example, in 1931 a *Hamat'sa* dance, supposedly the last ever held, was raided by Canadian police agents. Elder James Sewid recalled how the police inspector stormed the hall with his men during the festivities and announced, “I have been sent from the government to investigate what was going on in this village and I'd like to see what it is that you were doing.”

He demanded to see it that night so we put on a good show for him. The dances we did were all mixed together and not in the right way we had been doing them. I was dancing with a fool's mask on ... one of our people was interpreting to him what it was all about. And he asked him "What is that dance there?" referring to me. "Well" he said ... "We call it the fool dance because he is supposed to be a man who doesn't know anything." ... At the end he got up and thanked the people and said "It was a wonderful dance. I really enjoyed it. I can't see anything wrong with it." After that he went back to Ottawa.⁶⁶

Sewid's ethnodramatic performance fooled the police inspector, who departed apparently satisfied that there was nothing harmful about the "fool dance," just as his contemporaries many times performed a similar satirical trick.⁶⁷ In full view of Canadian authorities, James, Neel, Martin and their compatriots were making tiny replicas of some of the most significant, complex, and meaningful material culture objects within their oeuvre, which had been outright banned, or for which demand had been crushed by legal, economic, educational, and social oppression. Moreover, they did not hoard these objects in the communities, where they might be subject to investigation and confiscation, but sold them. Their portable size, their relatively quick and simple construction and the lack of cultural proscription attached to the poles further enabled the experimentation which came to mark these objects, meaning that far more stories, and far more invention and ideas, could be incorporated within the poles and distributed in attractive vehicles which, sent to targeted audiences, could garner wider press and public attention.

The result was the incorporation of the totem pole, originally found only on the narrow coastal strip of the Northwest Coast, into a broadly appropriated cultural symbol of pan-Indian identity, realized in thousands of films, television programs, advertising campaigns, and popular literature. Stunts such as the pole featuring Pepito the Clown and the

presenting a pole to Bob Hope suggest that drawing media attention in this way was quite deliberate. These artists, recognizing that their crests, designs and legends, so unsafe in their homes and villages, might be preserved more effectively in the world beyond them, and thus disseminated their work among non-Native societies.

Significantly, although among the Kwakwaka'wakw one may distinguish artworks in terms of quality, one does not distinguish between souvenir art, political and satirical art, and so-called "high art" in terms of "authenticity." Rather, these categories are seen as parts of the same phenomenon, complementing one another in preserving, reinforcing, and developing both tradition and innovation through experimentation. As curator and contemporary graphic artist Trevor Isaac explains, artists' traditional practices intertwine with innovation in culturally complex ways, but authenticity is not determined by the art object's position within an arbitrarily determined "tradition" that often, is defined externally:

There's two kinds of aspects of carving, there's the professional side, like for a sale to tourists or galleries or collectors, and then there is the cultural aspect. Depending on the family's potlatch, upcoming potlatch, lots of the carvers they all associate with each other and work together to assist the family's upcoming potlatches. So that family's rights and privileges would determine what the carvers were to make ... And then there is the other side of it for the commercial aspect, so you kinda have a bit more free will to carve more things that you want to experiment with, or maybe other language group's art form. You know, a piece you have always admired in a museum or private collection, replicating those gives you a bit more freedom.⁶⁸

The critical standards that determine authenticity, in other words, are the intentionality and identity of the artist. Under these terms, souvenirs or modern artworks, even if not designed for use within the community, are effectively indivisible from supposed traditional cultural artifacts and consequently, carry no less significance or authenticity. To carvers and artists

from the Northwest Coast, commercial art production is not only a source of pride and sustenance, but also an activity connected in a vital and direct way with art production for cultural ritual practice.

Further, as this article has argued, the corpus of souvenir art includes substantial numbers of miniature objects and this production is an important part of the development of an artist. Given that miniaturization is also an important part of a carver's training, these two aspects of Northwest Coast carving are intrinsically linked. To separate miniaturized objects, including or even especially those hybridized pieces made for commercial sale under cultural oppression, relies upon false assumptions about inauthenticity and acculturation. Miniature totem poles, made by trained and skilled carvers for external commercial markets, were by no means the inauthentic, hybridized artworks against which curators like Porsild or Heye railed. They were also not, in the manner in which non-Native people might understand the term, "idiot sticks," which any "idiot" could make. It is true that they did not necessarily demand the cultural engagement or the carving skill that larger artworks required, and, like modern commercial works, they had less necessity to conform to what was traditional or not and permitted freedom to explore new images and techniques. But the carvers who were most famous for their production were clearly no idiots. They were professionals, skilled and highly-trained, and they did not make miniature totem poles lightly or without meaning. They made them for very specific purposes at very specific times. They sent them to audiences whom they knew full well lacked the capacity to understand the complexities and narratives embedded within the poles, but whom they hoped would be attracted enough to preserve and distribute the imagery as a method of survival and satirical resistance.

Such artworks are a fundamental part of the development and continuation of traditional Northwest Coast material culture practice and a means to satirically express resistance to colonial rule and its latent effects. In a contemporary example, in 2011 Haida

artist Michael Nicol Yahgulanaas was commissioned by the British Museum to produce “Copper from the Hood,” a copper-plated car bonnet sculpture. He chose to depict the traditional Haida story of a ravenous woodworm driven to consume all it encounters. Yahgulanaas deliberately intended this Haida representation of destruction to be prominently placed within a European museum collection which includes “thousands of wooden objects, ‘hidden’ treasures to be consumed.” He was inviting destruction on his commissioning institution—which holds large quantities of Northwest Coast material—as a commentary on the appropriateness of their ownership of the collection in the first place. Although humorous, as Nicola Levell writes, this satirical “imagery can therefore be understood as an ongoing critique of museums as keepers and containers of cultural heritage.”⁶⁹ Using his art to create an eddy of decolonization in a quintessentially colonial space, his performance was so subtle that the museum was completely unaware of the subversive nature of the artwork until five years later, when he revealed it in an interview. The copper sculpture currently has pride of place in the lobby of the British Museum’s newly-built exhibition wing, but the label does not mention Yahgulanaas’ deliberately subversive act of resistance.

The colonial history of the Indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast is brutal. There is nothing funny about it. And yet, Native artists like Neel and Martin could laugh. They laughed at the non-Native people buying and preserving something they couldn’t understand. They laughed at the colonial authorities so determined to crack down on traditional artforms without understanding that tradition is adaptable, unfixed, fluid, subversive, and determined to survive; and they laughed at themselves and their success in keeping Kwakwaka’wakw imagery and ceremony alive through autoethnographic representations that, in a manner that simultaneously reflected their own self-perceptions and those of the colonizer, subverted oppressive authority and preserved culture and design for future generations. It is a fact curiously acknowledged that these ceremonies survived most strongly among those people

for whom they were most strongly prohibited: of Sewid's *Hamat'sa*, for example, anthropologist Bill Holm wrote years later that "this dance, called the *hə'msəmala* 'wearing the cannibal mask,' was ... one of the least altered [on the Northwest Coast] by the passage of time."⁷¹ This ceremony and so many others, all so essential to the continuance of Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial and political society, and so vigorously pursued by the Canadian government in its attempt to acculturate the Indigenous population, survived through the subversive actions of the carvers of so-called idiot sticks, who laughed at those unable to understand the meanings incorporated into their design, manufacture and distribution.

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Notes

¹ Gloria Cranmer Webster, "The Dark Years," in *Native Art of the Northwest Coast: A History of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charlotte Townsend-Gault, Jennifer Kramer, and Ki-Ke-In (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 265–69, 268.

² Jennifer Kramer, *Kesu': The Art and Life of Doug Cranmer* (Vancouver: Douglas and MacIntyre, Ltd., 2012), 45.

³ Emma Poulter, "The Real Thing? Souvenir Objects in the West African Collection at the Manchester Museum," *Journal of Material Culture* 16, no. 3 (2011): 265–84, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183511413525>; *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World*, ed. Nelson H. H. Graburn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 6.

⁴ For commentaries on authenticity in Native American art, see Shelly Errington, *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (Berkeley: University of California

Press, 1998); *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Worlds*, ed. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); *Bill Reid and Beyond: Expanding on Modern Native Art*, ed. Karen Duffek and Charlotte Townsend-Gault (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, Ltd., 2004).

⁵ Ronald W. Hawker, *Tales of Ghosts: First Nations Art in British Columbia, 1922–61* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 179.

⁶ Although a term still widely used among Northwest Coast artists themselves, there has long been an academic critique of the “renaissance” narrative. For a summary, see David Summers, “What is a Renaissance?” in *Bill Reid and Beyond: Expanding on Modern Native Art*, ed. Karen Duffek and Charlotte Townsend-Gault (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, Ltd., 2004), 133–54; and Aaron Glass, “History and Critique of the ‘Renaissance’ Narrative,” in *Native Art of the Northwest Coast: A History of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charlotte Townsend-Gault, Jennifer Kramer, and Ki-Ke-In (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 487–517.

⁸ Aldona Jonaitis and Aaron Glass, *The Totem Pole: An Intercultural History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 156–58.

⁹ Ruth B. Phillips, “Why Not Tourist Art? Significant Silences in Native American Museum Representations,” in *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, ed. Gyan Prakash (Princeton University Press, 1995), 98–128, 100.

¹⁰ Morten P. Porsild, “Studies on the Material Culture of the Eskimo in West Greenland,” *Meddelelser on Grønland LI*, no.7 (1915), 233.

¹¹ Mary Jane Lenz, “No Tourist Material: George Heye and his Golden Rule,” *American Indian Art Magazine* 29, no. 4 (2004): 86–95.

¹² Ronald W. Hawker, *Yakuglas’ Legacy: The Art and Times of Charlie James* (University of Toronto Press, 2016), 210. For recent critical discussions on the nature of Northwest Coast tourist art in the early-twentieth century and how it pertains specifically to miniature totem poles, please see Molly Lee, “Tourism and Taste Cultures: Collecting Native Art in Alaska at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Worlds*, ed. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 267–81; Aldona Jonaitis, “Northwest Coast Totem Poles,” in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Worlds*, 104–21; *Objects of Exchange: Social and Material Transformation on the Late Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast*, ed. Aaron Glass (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2010); Kate C. Duncan, *1001 Curious Things: Ye Olde Curiosity Shop and Native American Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000); Kathryn Bunn-Marcuse, “Tourists and Collectors: The New Market for Tlingit and Haida Jewellery at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” in *Sharing Our Knowledge: The Tlingit and their Coastal Neighbours*, ed. Sergei Kan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 417–40.

¹³ See Bill McLennan, “A Matter of Choice,” in *Bill Reid and Beyond: Expanding on Modern Native Art*, ed. Karen Duffek and Charlotte Townsend-Gault (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, Ltd., 2004), 37–43.

¹⁴ Kathryn Bunn-Marcuse, “Tourists and Collectors,” 420.

¹⁵ J. C. H. King, “Tradition in Native American Art,” in *The Arts of the North American Indian: Native Traditions in Evolution*, ed. Edwin L. Wade (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1986), 65–92, 70.

¹⁶ Kramer, *Kesu*’, 45.

¹⁷ Cranmer Webster, “The Dark Years,” 268.

¹⁸ Hawker, *Yakuglas’ Legacy*, 5.

¹⁹ John Mack, *The Art of Small Things* (London: British Museum Press, 2007), 71.

²⁰ Charlotte Townsend-Gault, “Still a Forest, Still Symbols,” in *Carvings and Commerce: Model Totem Poles 1880–2010*, ed. Michael D. Hall and Pat Glascock (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), 39–43, 39. The term “high art” is, of course, used here ironically, although it has resonance throughout the article. I do not intend to rehash here long-settled arguments about pseudo-evolutionary hierarchies of art, but instead cite Shelly Errington, *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Stephen Davies, “Non-Western Art and Art’s Definition,” in *Theories of Art Today*, ed. Noël Carroll (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 199–216; and Emily E. Auger, *The Way of Inuit Art: Aesthetics and History in and Beyond the Arctic* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company Inc., 2005), 129–56, which provide useful summaries of the absurdities inherent in relying upon these anachronistic, flawed, and divisive terms.

²¹ Franz Boas, “Art of the North Pacific Coast of North America,” in *Primitive Art* (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co., 1927), Instituttet for Sammenlignende Kulturforskning, Serie B: Skrifter, 183–294, 183.

²² The potlatch was the most important event of the Kwakwaka’wakw ceremonial calendar, which underpinned the entire Kwakwaka’wakw social structure and economy. Held irregularly at significant moments such as a chiefly succession or a marriage, they were marked by songs, feasts, trade negotiations, and the bestowal of lavish gifts. They were also often the occasion for the raising of a large totem pole marking the event and, most importantly, the man who had held it. The Kwakwaka’wakw were particularly noted for the feats of nonchalant bravery they demanded, such as the host feigning indifference when the long-house caught fire.

²³ See Jonaitis and Glass, *The Totem Pole*; Michael D. Hall and Pat Glascock, *Carvings and Commerce: Model Totem Poles 1880–2010* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011).

²⁴ Ann M. Renker and Erna Gunther, “Makah,” in *Handbook of North American Indians 7, Northwest Coast*, ed. Wayne Suttles (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 422–430, 426.

²⁵ Helen Codere, “Fighting with Property,” in *Indians of the North Pacific Coast*, ed. Tom McFeat (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), 92–101.

²⁶ Jack Davy, “Miniature Dissonance and the Museum Space: Reconsidering Communication through Miniaturisation,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 24, no. 9 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2018.1428669>.

²⁷ *Autoethnography* is a term with many uses. Here it is deployed in the manner established by Mary Louise Pratt, to describe a material culture representation of Indigenous identity that an Indigenous person creates in direct correspondence with non-Indigenous understandings of Indigenous life within an environment where the power relations are weighted towards the non-Indigenous (colonizer) rather than the Indigenous (colonized). See Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession* (1991), 33–40.

²⁹ Peter L. Macnair and Alan L. Hoover, *The Magic Leaves: A History of Haida Argillite Carving* (Victoria: British Columbia Ministry of Provincial Secretary and Government Services, 1984), 113.

³⁰ Carol Sheehan, *Pipes that Won’t Smoke; Coal that Won’t Burn: Haida Sculpture in Argillite* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1980), 83.

³¹ Robert Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774–1874* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 229.

³² Barb Wilson, “Sometimes, it’s all right there,” *Haida Laas: Journal of the Haida Nation* (March 2009): 6.

³³ J. H. Van den Brink, *The Haida Indians: Cultural Change Mainly between 1876–1970* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 1974), 102.

³⁴ Nika Collison, “An Unbroken Line: Haida Art and Culture,” lecture presented for the Canada Seminar, Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford, February 12, 2016 (text on file with author).

³⁵ Helen Codere, “Kwakiutl,” in *Perspectives in American Indian Culture Change*, ed. Edward H. Spicer (University of Chicago Press, 1961), 431–516, 467.

³⁶ Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts* (Vancouver: Douglas and MacIntyre, Ltd., 1985), 250.

³⁷ Daisy Sewid-Smith (My-yah-nelth), *Prosecution or Persecution* (Cape Mudge, CN: Nu-Yum-Balees Society, 1979), 47.

³⁸ Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin, *An Iron Hand upon the People: The Law against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 119–24.

³⁹ See Sewid-Smith (My-yah-nelth), *Prosecution or Persecution*; Cranmer Webster, “The Dark Years.”

⁴⁰ Hawker, *Tales of Ghosts*, 17–33.

⁴² Sewid-Smith (My-yah-nelth), *Prosecution or Persecution*, 1.

⁴³ Cole and Chaikin, *An Iron Hand*, 165; Cranmer Webster, “The Dark Years,” 267; Peter Macnair, “From Kwakiutl to Kwakwaka’wakw,” in *Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience*, ed. R. Bruce Morrison and C. Roderick Wilson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1986), 501–20, 515.

⁴⁴ TRC I, 599; Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC III), *Canada’s Residential Schools: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, The Survivors Speak* (University of Manitoba, 2015), 67.

⁴⁵ TRC II, 542; TRC III, 49–50, 149.

⁴⁶ TRC II, 375; TRC III, 141; TRC II, 424.

⁴⁷ Cole and Chaikin, *An Iron Hand*, 183.

⁴⁸ Cranmer Webster, “The Dark Years,” 268.

⁴⁹ Cole and Chaikin, *An Iron Hand*, 161–64.

⁵⁰ Cole, *Captured Heritage*, 254.

⁵¹ Bill Holm, *Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965), 89.

⁵² Robert Storrie, “Ambiguity in Northwest Coast Design,” in *From the Forest to the Sea: Emily Carr in British Columbia*, 103–05 (Ottawa: Art Gallery of Ontario and Dulwich Picture Gallery, 2014).

⁵³ Wayne Alfred interview with author at U’mista Cultural Centre, Alert Bay, November 2015.

⁵⁴ Viola E. Garfield and Linn A Forrest, *The Wolf and the Raven* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1948), 55–56; Jonaitis and Glass, *The Totem Pole*, 68.

⁵⁵ George F. MacDonald, *Haida Monumental Art* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), 45.

⁵⁶ Trevor Isaac interview with author at U’mista Cultural Centre, Alert Bay, November 2015.

⁵⁷ Ronald W. Hawker, *Yakuglas’ Legacy: The Art and Times of Charlie James* (University of Toronto Press, 2016), 153.

⁵⁸ Hall and Glascock, *Carvings and Commerce*, 111; Hawker, *Yakuglas’ Legacy*, 161.

⁵⁹ Phil Nuytten, *The Totem Carvers: Charlie James, Ellen Neel, and Mungo Martin* (Vancouver: Panorama Publications, Ltd., 1982), 58.

⁶⁰ Gary Petersen, interview with author at U'mista Cultural Centre, Alert Bay, November 2015.

⁶² Steven Bruce, Sr., interview with author at U'mista Cultural Centre, Alert Bay, November 2015.

⁶³ Wayne Alfred, interview with author at U'mista Cultural Centre, Alert Bay, November 2015.

⁶⁵ Cranmer Webster, "The Dark Years," 268; Kramer, *Kesu*, 45.

⁶⁶ James Sewid, 1967, in James F. Spradley, *Guests Never Leave Hungry: The Autobiography of James Sewid, a Kwakiutl Indian*. 92-93

⁶⁷ *Ethnodrama* is a term for occasions on which invented ceremonies performed for non-Native audiences kept traditional ceremony alive under the unwitting supervision of colonial authorities; see Hawker, *Tales of Ghosts*, 120.

⁶⁸ Trevor Isaac, interview with author at U'mista Cultural Centre, Alert Bay November 2015.

⁶⁹ Nicola Levell, *Michael Nicol Yahgulanaas: The Seriousness of Play* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2016), 114.

⁷¹ Cole and Chaikin, *An Iron Hand*, 175; Bill Holm, "Kwakiutl: Winter Ceremonies," in *Handbook of North American Indians 7, Northwest Coast*, ed. Wayne Suttles, 378-86 (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 381.