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Maria Cristina Larsen

Christian Motifs in Pacific Northwest Coast Native American Art

Maria Cristina Larsen

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Committee:

Robin K. Wright

Haichang Wang

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Table of Contents	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Review of Literature on Christianity in Native Communities	9
Chapter 3: Appropriation of Christian Motifs	30
Chapter 4: Economic Motivation: The Use of Christian Motifs for Commissioned Projects	53
Chapter 5: Devotional Pacific Northwest Coast Native American Art	66
Chapter 6: Indigenized Christian Spaces	88
Chapter 7: Conclusion	125
Bibliography	132

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Foreword

A colleague once asked me, “As a Christian, how can you study the revival of Indigenous traditions that clash with your beliefs?” At the time, I did not know how to answer that. I am a Christian and at the same time, I felt compelled to continue my path to study Indigenous art history. During my studies, I always perceived a sense of animosity toward the presence of Christianity within Indigenous communities, whether that was the intent or not. It was when I first saw *II Timothy 2:11,12* (Fig. 22) by Roy Henry Vickers, a Christian Tsimshian artist, that I knew that there were multiple responses to the presence of Christianity in the Native communities. I realized that there are Native artists that identify as both Christian and Native. These artists do not see a distinction between the two and I wanted to share their response.

My goal within this thesis is to present both perspectives. There are artists that criticize the changes that missionaries brought. There are artists that use Christian motifs because they were commissioned. Every art piece and case study examined within this thesis provides unique opportunity to provide information that enriches the available scholarship. Although I have my beliefs, I give every artist within this thesis a neutral environment. I want this thesis to create an open conversation that allows multiple voices and opinions to come forth. This collection is not comprehensive, as it does not represent every Pacific Northwest Coast tribe or Christian denomination.

I can now answer my colleague’s question, and explain that my Faith allows me to have a deeper understanding of the Christian Native artists. I no longer feel that there is a single perspective on the presence and role of Christianity within Native communities. I respect and value a collection of diverse responses to the use of Christian motifs by Native artists, whether it is appropriation for exotic, political, economic or devotional purposes.

Chapter 1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to examine Christian motifs in Pacific Northwest Coast Native American art from their first appearance in the 19th century and provide an analysis of these intercultural artworks. Very little art historical research on Native art with Christian motifs and themes has been done to date. A study such as this is needed because these art pieces are important as documents of cultural interaction and Native perspectives on the presence of Christianity in their communities. They reflect a blending of Native and Christian beliefs through combined symbols and cultural expressions. There are many different explanations for why artists chose to include Christian motifs and stories in their art. This thesis will look at these reasons and analyze several themes that arise.

This introductory chapter will present an overview of the history of Christianity on the Pacific Northwest Coast. Three hundred years before Christianity arrived to the Pacific Northwest, Spanish conquistadors arrived in Central and South America. The Spanish Crown saw the conversion of the indigenous peoples as a justification for the occupation of the newly conquered lands. The first major missionary expedition in New Spain and Mexico was in 1524. A group of 12 Jesuit missionaries were sent to the newly settled colony in Mexico and then also established missions in what is now known as New Mexico, Coahuila, and Texas.¹ In 1609, the Jesuits established their first mission on Penobscot Bay. The first European explorers arrived on the coast of the Pacific Northwest in 1774.

Since the first appearance of Spanish and Russian ships, trade for sea otter pelts and materials motivated interaction between tribes of the Northwest and Europeans. Within a few

¹Robert H. Jackson. *From Savages to Subjects: Missions in the History of the American Southwest*. Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 2000, xiv.

years of contact, the maritime traders made claims to the resources of the regions and the fur trade. By the 1830's, the maritime trade was replaced by the emergence of the monopolizing presence of the land-based Hudson Bay Company.² The Pacific Northwest is a region that has had "relatively slow development of Euro-Canadian re-settlement." Between the 1780's and the 1850's, the new opportunity of trade modified Native cultures but did not disrupt them. In the late 19th century, the discovery of gold brought larger numbers of colonists. With the introduction of new wealth, Native leaders took an active participation in the trade and became wealthy and powerful.³

It would take more than one hundred years of contact with Europeans before permanent mission settlements were established.⁴ With the increase in settlers, there was also an increase in the groups of missionaries that started to Christianize the tribes of the Northwest.⁵ Throughout the latter half of the 19th century, native people were influenced not only by missionaries, but also subjugated by government administrators. Many aspects of traditional culture, such as the potlatch, were discouraged and even made illegal in Canada. Assimilation was considered to be necessary in the minds of the authorities because it was believed that the Native culture was "doomed to extinction."⁶ The government saw the Christianization of the Native peoples as a

²John R. Henderson. "Missionary Influences on the Haida Settlement and Subsistence Patterns." *Ethnohistory* Vol. 21, No. 4 (Autumn, 1974), 303.

³John Veillette, and Gary White. *Early Indian Village Churches: Wooden Frontier Architecture in British Columbia*. Vancouver, B.C: University of British Columbia Press, 1977, 3.

⁴Henderson, 303.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Peter L Macnair, et al. *The Legacy : Continuing Traditions of Canadian Northwest Coast Indian Art*. Victoria, B.C.: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1980, 24.

method to accelerate assimilation and to help the Native communities acclimate to the changing cultural environment.⁷

The first protestant Christian missionary to arrive on the Northwest Coast, Reverend Jonathan Green, came in 1829. His primary goal was to assess the Pacific Coast for future potential missionary action, and he did not spend much time on land.⁸ His recommendation to the Protestant American Board of Commissioners to begin establishing missions was ignored and would not be revisited for a couple of decades.⁹ In 1834, Friar Ivan Veniaminov made the first Russian Orthodox attempt to Christianize the Tlingit of the Russian Capital city, Novoarkhangel'sk, now known as Sitka.¹⁰ Throughout the Northwest, many Christian groups used different methods to spread the gospel, but their goals were the same. They were “agents of change, both spiritual and secular, among the Indians.”¹¹ On November 24th, 1838, the first Catholic mission, led by Friar Demers, at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River in the South lasted four months.¹² The Roman Catholic priests would then return in 1849 with the establishment of a British colony.¹³ According to Robin Fisher, “effective missionary work among the Indians of British Columbia did not begin until the middle of the nineteenth century.”¹⁴ Arriving in the late 1850’s, missionaries came knowing that there were personal

⁷Susan Neylan. *The Heavens Are Changing: Nineteenth-century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003, 5.

⁸Robin K. Wright. *Northern Haida Master Carvers*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001, 96 - 99.

⁹Neylan, 50.

¹⁰Sergei Kan. "Russian Orthodox Brotherhoods Among the Tlingit: Missionary Goals and Native Response." *Ethnohistory*. 32.3 (1985): 196-223, 198.

¹¹Veillette, 7.

¹² Philip M. Hanley, and Edward J. Kowrach. *History of the Catholic Ladder*. Fairfield, Wash: Ye Galleon Press, 1993, 18.

¹³Veillette, 5.

¹⁴Ibid, 1.

limitations, but they were confident in the power of their God.¹⁵ In Port Simpson and Metlakatla, Rev. William Duncan, sent by Anglican Church Missionary Society of London, established one of the most influential mission sites of the Northwest.¹⁶

New diseases were brought by settlers and traders including a series of smallpox epidemics that would ultimately wipe out entire families and villages. From 1835 thru 1837, a large small pox epidemic broke out in Alaska and reduced the Native population by about 50%. The Native community saw that the Russians were untouched by the disease and lost trust in their own healers. Fr. Veniaminov, equipped with Holy Water and vaccines, was able to baptize about 40% to 50% of the local Indians.¹⁷ The first mission on Haida Gwaii was built in 1876 after a large outbreak of smallpox in 1862 that killed approximately 90% of the Haida population.¹⁸

At Fort Vancouver, Friar Demers set himself the task of learning Chinook Jargon, a Native trade language, and within three or four weeks could use the language. In order to further appeal to the indigenous populations of the Columbia River region, prayers and hymns were often translated into Chinook Jargon and the Indians near Fort Vancouver were instructed in this language.¹⁹

In Washington and Oregon, the first American settlers were Protestant missionaries, Jason Lee, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, and Henry Spalding.²⁰ By 1882, the Presbyterian Church had six mission settlements operating in Southeast Alaska and succeeded in converting

¹⁵Ibid, 2-3.

¹⁶Neylan, 8.

¹⁷Kan, 198.

¹⁸Henderson, 303.

¹⁹Hanley, 18.

²⁰Albert Furtwangler. *Bringing Indians to the Book*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005, 4.

large numbers of Tlingit and Haida.²¹ During the last half of the 19th century, these Christian missions relied on the donation of supporters back home and published many of their personal letters to show their successes.²²

Through contact with Europeans and missionaries, unpredicted changes were occurring to indigenous systems such as loss of oral tradition and change from a matrilineal to patrilineal hierarchy. Another result of Missionary dominance, as seen in residential schools, was the suppression of Native cultural identity.²³ Within residential schools, children were removed from family homes, taught English and were punished for using their own Native names or speaking in their Native tongues. It is noted that “when Indian ways of life and patterns of thought have been seriously threatened by the dominant society, indigenized Christian rituals and institutions have mediated and interpreted social change.”²⁴ The end result portrays varied beliefs and cultural systems that incorporate both the adopted Christian beliefs and symbols and Native traditional values.²⁵

Charlotte Townsend-Gault says that “Christianity, with its central theme of the crucified savior, was, and remains, widely accepted by many people on the Northwest Coast.”²⁶ During times of cultural tragedy, Christianity was an avenue that offered peace. In the early 20th century, a large percentage of the Native population was “sufficiently convinced by the missionary

²¹Aldona Jonaitis. *Art of the Northwest Coast*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006, 181.

²²John Barker. "Tangled Reconciliations: The Anglican Church and the Nisga'a of British Columbia." *American Ethnologist* 25.3 (1998), 433.

²³Ibid, 462.

²⁴Kan, 197.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶Charlotte Townsend-Gault. "Northwest Coast Art: the Culture of the Land Claims." *American Indian Quarterly*. 18.4 (1994), 463.

teaching to declare themselves Christian.”²⁷ According to the census performed by the United States Department of Indian Affairs, out of the 24,696 Native populations in Oregon and Washington, 19,504 considered themselves Christian.²⁸

The religion is sometimes described as a contributing factor to the “destruction of indigenous forms of spirituality,” but it was also merged with existing belief systems to create something new such as the Shaker Church.²⁹ Christianity was adopted but changed to suit individual needs. With some examination, many people have found that Christian doctrine is comparable to Native thought and religion. . In addition to finding similarities, it has also been suggested that “North American Indians have often reinterpreted Christian ideas, rituals, and institutions, and that their approach to Christianity has been selective, creative, and synthesizing. Christianity, as a result, frequently became indigenized.”³⁰ This is reflected in the art.

In the following chapters, I will look at the different visual responses brought forth in art that reflects Christian interaction within Native communities and motivations behind the creation of Native art with Christian motifs. Chapter two will review current scholarship on the presence of Christianity within Native communities. This chapter will also review scholarship on the Christian influence on the Northwest Coast and will point out the lack of critical art historical study on Native art that contains references to Christian motifs and themes. The following chapters will be divided by themes of exotic appropriation, economic commissions, devotional pieces, and case studies of Indigenized Christian spaces.

²⁷Hanley, 1.

²⁸Ibid, 25.

²⁹Townsend-Gault, 463.

³⁰Kan, 196.

The art pieces discussed are a reflection of cultural and personal artistic appropriation. The blending of Christian motifs and “traditional” Native art forms provide an example of hybridized innovative art. Each piece serves as a source of historical, social, and personal reflection on the presence of Christianity in the Pacific Northwest. According to James Treat, it is a common stereotype that a Native American who has converted to Christianity “has lost some measure of Native authenticity; a Christian who is still fully Native has fallen short of Christian orthodoxy.”³¹ Contrary to this popular belief, in contemporary Native American Christian practices, there is often no conflict between the “traditional” and the newly constructed religious identities, and people who are active Christians also participate in traditional cultural practices. For instance, potlatch feasts often start with Christian prayers. Native American Christian institutions can provide guidance on social power, use of material resources and provide avenues for the development of religious and cultural leadership. Christian services and teachings can help fulfill ceremonial obligations and provide a system of values that aid in daily life and help to overcome personal struggles.³² In the end, according to Treat, there are many contemporary Native Christians that have been able to accept the Christian belief without rejecting native religious traditions.³³ This theme will be further explored in Chapter 5 where art created for devotional purposes will be examined.

Along with the introduction of new exotic motifs and materials such as steel tools and trade cloth, in the 19th century artists also began to appropriate Christian motifs perhaps without a full understanding of their religious meanings. The indigenous response to Christianity

³¹James Treat. *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*. New York: Routledge, 1996, 6.

³²Treat, 9.

³³Ibid, 10.

changed over time. The Christian motifs were probably first seen as exotic new forms and then in some cases, became important community symbols that held deeper and powerful meanings.

This thesis will serve to fill a gap in art historical research on Native Northwest Coast art that contains Christian motifs. It will reveal the diversity of reactions by examining different types of Christian motifs and new information that has been written on contemporary indigenous Christians in the past twenty years. Christianity is a source of inspiration to artists and serves to inspire pieces of art that reflect the diversity of indigenous responses to Christianity.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature on Christianity in Native Communities

Within the past twenty-five years, there has been a push to change the mission narrative. The recent scholarship turns to indigenous response to the early missionaries and “to the ways in which local peoples appropriated, resisted, or succumbed to the institutions and cultural assumptions introduced by the missionaries.”³⁴ The following articles and books serve to connect different themes, such as Native choices in self representation, breaking the previously established Euro-American mission narrative, presenting missionaries as collectors and sustaining current lifestyles, such as Native “traditional” or syncretic religious beliefs. There has also been a push toward the study of contemporary Indigenous Christian communities by scholars such as Sergei Kan, James Treat, and John Barker. These scholars agree that more time must be applied to the study of Native response to Christianity. Barker also states that, aside from Kan and his studies of the Russian Orthodox Church among the Tlingit, very little attention has been paid to the contemporary Indigenous response to Christianity.³⁵ These articles and books serve as departure points from previous historical studies.

In the past, scholars have focused on the missionary efforts to “save” the Indians from their “savage ways” and the “inevitable extinction.”³⁶ Much of the previous scholarly attention has been focused on the missionary efforts and whether they were successful or not. The mission histories and biographies, such as those of William Duncan, William Collison, and Thomas Crosby, tell the narrative from their single perspective. The letters, articles, and books published by the different missionaries supply a large collection of historical data.

³⁴John Barker. "Tangled Reconciliations: The Anglican Church and the Nisga'a of British Columbia." *American Ethnologist* 25.3 (1998), 433.

³⁵Barker, 433.

³⁶ Bonnie Sue Lewis. *Creating Christian Indians: Native Clergy in the Presbyterian Church*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003, xi.

Since the 19th century there have been many examinations by Euro-American scholars of missionary groups and their involvement with tribes on the Pacific Northwest coast. These studies were “limited to standard mission histories and biographies and occasional anthropological studies of acculturation.”³⁷ The scholarship primarily focuses on the success and failures of the Euro-American mission process due to the amount of primary materials written by missionaries for their patrons. There is also a lack of written Native primary sources that contributed to a missionary focused historical narrative.³⁸ Early anthropologists did not tend to focus on Christianity because Franz Boas, the “father” of Northwest Coast anthropology, had established a system that dominated the American anthropological method. The Boasian paradigm looked to study the “pre-contact” Native cultures. Most anthropologists turned to what they believed were “pre-contact” ceremonies and did not focus on “Christian churches as Indian institutions.”³⁹

Art historians did not focus on Native American art until the second half of the 20th century. During this time, art history and history texts focus primarily on the result of missionary and government tactics to convert and colonialize the tribes and on the resulting loss of knowledge and culture. Twentieth century art exhibitions also generally focused on “traditional” Native art. Survey texts and art catalogues presented the efforts of missionaries as catalysts that led to the “diminution of arts used for traditional ceremonies,” termination of traditional body

³⁷John Barker. "Tangled Reconciliations: the Anglican Church and the Nisga'a of British Columbia." *American Ethnologist*. 25.3 (1998), 433.

³⁸Robin Fisher contact and conflict, xiv.

³⁹Sergei Kan. *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity Through Two Centuries*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999, xxiii.

decoration, and advocates for the termination of important ceremonies, such as the potlatch.⁴⁰ Writing specifically on the contact and conflict through Native and European encounters in British Columbia, Robin Fisher places missionaries, government officials, and white settlers in the role of destroyers of Native cultures and civilizations.⁴¹ These single sided perspectives are no longer the norm affiliated with the Mission narrative. Further examination of primary sources and revisiting important clan elders and their oral history can demonstrate that Native communities had their own agendas within the narrative as well.

The process of 19th century missionization involved many levels of misunderstanding and miscommunication between the parties involved. This is due to factors such as “cultural and linguistic barriers, the missionaries' ethnocentrism,” and the need for Native people to protect their Indigenous social system.⁴² These studies frame a sad and predictable history. The themes are always destructive and those that suffer are those within the Native cultures.⁴³ Historian Clarence Bolt suggests “even after stripping away the ethnocentricity of the sources, students of contact, whether Native or non-Native, can only conjecture what the mental and spiritual response of Native encounters with Europeans was.”⁴⁴

The following scholars have written texts that focus on the Indigenous response to 19th and 20th century Christian missionary influence. These scholars have noted the deficiency of Native voice in the mission narrative. This chapter is divided by the focus of the published scholarship. The first two books focus on the Indigenous response of the contemporary Native

⁴⁰ Janet C. Berlo, and Ruth B. Phillips. *Native North American Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 110, 149, 201.

⁴¹ Susan Neylan. *The Heavens Are Changing: Nineteenth-century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003, 11.

⁴² Kan, 197.

⁴³ Lewis, xi.

⁴⁴ Bolt, xi.

Christian communities. The third book focuses on the role of Native Christian clergy. The following seven books and articles in the chapter are dedicated to the studies of Native Communities on the Northwest coast. The scholars represented included from research fields of anthropology, history, and art history. Finally, sources that look to the Indigenous objects as historical documents are discussed.

James Treat edited a collection of recent essays written by Native writers from the United States and Canada. The essays document the rise of a new collective “voice on the North American religious landscape.”⁴⁵ The book creates a single source of reference for articles from various religious magazines, scholarly journals, Native periodicals, and topical anthologies. These pieces were originally published in different sources, some of which are obscure or out-of print. These essays focus on contemporary Native people and new literary expression in the global theology movement. The writers self-identify as both Native and Christian. The Native writers represented within the book come from different tribal backgrounds. Some work as scholars, church administrators, ordained leaders, and activists. They use their personal involvement within the Christian religious traditions as sources and inspirations.⁴⁶ The writers cover different factions of the Christian religion from Protestant denominations to the Peyotism of the Native American Church.⁴⁷ The articles that were selected for the book were recently written by Native writers and focused on the problem of Christian identity. The Native writers selected represent the “widest possible range of Native communities and Christian communities

⁴⁵James Treat, ed. *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*. New York: Routledge, 1996, 1.

⁴⁶Treat, 1.

⁴⁷Ibid, 1-2.

in the United States and Canada.”⁴⁸ The articles are arranged within four sections organized around key questions facing Native Christians today. Part one, “Spirituality and History,” focuses on the intersection of religious experience and historical tradition.⁴⁹ The essays in part two, “Liberation and Culture,” focus on the relationship between religious activism and cultural priorities. The essays in part three, “Tradition and Community,” focus on the connection of religious heritage and community life.⁵⁰ Finally, the essays in part four, “Transformation and survival,” focus on the connections between religious pilgrimage and personal identity. These writers are sharing the importance of religious motivations, and behaviors needed to maintain their personal, family, and community relationships.⁵¹ Treat’s anthology achieves what previous ethnographic collections have failed to collect: Native voice and perspective. Although the book offers contemporary insight, it comes from a purely sociological methodology and does not reference art.

Lee Irwin edited a volume composed of multidisciplinary essays by noted Native and non-Native scholars. The book looks past the “static use of ethnography.”⁵² The essays explore the “problems and prospects of understanding and writing about Native American spirituality in the 21st century.”⁵³ The book achieves a balance of appropriateness and value toward the different Native religions explored. The Native religion ranges from the “traditional” religions to Native Christianity. The topics within the book range from ethics of religious representation, to issues of authenticity. The book, like Treat’s anthology, expresses interest in the change in the

⁴⁸Ibid, 2.

⁴⁹Ibid, 19.

⁵⁰Ibid, 20.

⁵¹Ibid, 21.

⁵²Lee Irwin. *Native American Spirituality: A Critical Reader*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000, 6.

⁵³ Irwin, 1.

dialogue used to write and understand Native American religious beliefs and practices. The book provides contemporary voices toward contemporary Indigenous beliefs, and includes a group of essays toward the end of the book that explores the reactions to Native spirituality from a historical perspective. Irwin notes that “the themes in this volume are not necessarily new”, but “they are ... as old as the earliest meetings, misunderstandings, and conflicts between Native and non-Native peoples that have led... to confusion in trying to communicate their respective differences of their alternative worldviews.”⁵⁴

The themes within the book go beyond intellectual understanding, aesthetic appreciation, or a fascination for exotic cultural activities. The collection of essays brings forth themes of struggle to sustain authenticity, the need to have “contemporary non-Native persons” fully recognize the worth and value of Native religious beliefs and practices, and to achieve a level of respect, patience and commitment when studying the different aspects of Native beliefs. An important theme within the Irwin’s book is the consequences of representation (and misrepresentation) by non-Native scholars. According to Irwin, within the communities, this has helped to create an environment of caution and with levels of mistrust towards non-Native scholars. Trust is obtained by contemporary scholars as they begin to approach Native communities with reciprocal care and listen to Native voices.⁵⁵ As research methods have changed, the data no longer lacks the Native perspective compared to the data obtained in the late 19th century and early 20th century ethnographies. There has been a change within the relationship among the various scholars and the Native communities. The relationship is more interactive and complex. The present level of understanding is on a new level listening and

⁵⁴ Irwin, 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

speaking with respect.⁵⁶ Like Treat's book, the writers are representing their own culture and present personal reflections based on their relationships with members within their communities. Irwin makes a note to avoid further stereotyping and generalization by providing that "none of the authors speak for all Native communities or even other communities and adjacent areas."⁵⁷

Irwin's and Treat's books contain no direct reference to the studies of visual Indigenous response, but instead offer a form of autobiographical insight on the complex religious choices contemporary Native people make. These books serve as a supplemental bibliography that focuses on Native and non-Native writers on Native religion. The issues that arise when writing about and studying Native religions are complex. Treat asks, "What does the future hold for Native Christians, and for Native Christian discourse?"⁵⁸ The question can be rephrased and then applied to many different discourses, such as what does the future hold for Native Pacific Northwest Coast art history that includes works that have been influenced by Christianity and contain themes of Christianity?

Bonnie Sue Lewis, an Associate Professor of Mission and Native American Christianity at University of Dubuque, wrote *Creating Christian Indians*, in 2003. This is a book that looks at the process of Indigenous missionization. The book follows the story of the Oregon mission, "cited by historians as one of the most renowned examples of missionary failure among American Indians."⁵⁹ In 1847, after more than 10 years of labor among the Plateau Indians, Dr. Marcus Whitman and his wife were slain by the Cayuse. The mission was then closed, but the mission story did not end in 1847. There were only a few converted Natives and some became

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 5.

⁵⁸ Treat, 21.

⁵⁹ Lewis, ix.

ordained within the Presbyterian Church. These groups of ordained Native ministers were to establish Native churches throughout the Pacific Northwest. Between the years 1855 and 1935, nearly 60 Native pastors were additionally ordained.⁶⁰ There were other Christian denominations in the area that also had a rise in ordained members of the Native communities, such as Methodists and Baptists, but the Presbyterian Church had the largest percentage. The book is based on the letters of the ordained Native clergy and the Presbyterian Church. Lewis used sources from Native history, written by Native hands. The study does not ignore prior missionary sources but instead, examines prior primary sources to obtain a Native perspective.⁶¹ The book looks at ordained Dakotas in Minnesota and the Nez Perce. She chose these two groups due to the similarities in training, ministry, and by their large numbers. The first Nez Perce pastor, Robert Williams, was ordained in 1879. By 1932, 16 Nez Perce, a Makah, and a Spokane had been ordained at the McBeth Mission before it closed.⁶²

Lewis, like Barker and Kan, looks to move beyond what historians have written on Native Christians. She does not focus on missionary efforts to convert the “savages.” Her book focuses on the Native leadership that is often overlooked when concentrating on Euro-American missionaries. Lewis uses a mixture of anthropological and historical methods, a form of ethnohistory that makes “greater use of the materials in understanding of culture or people.”⁶³ Lewis claims that what 19th century Euro-American missionaries failed to recognize was the necessity of a syncretic Christianity in order for the faith to survive crossing cultural boundaries. From the Native ministry perspective, the ordained Native could encourage the kind of

⁶⁰Lewis, ix-x.

⁶¹Lewis, xiv.

⁶²Ibid, x.

⁶³Ibid, xi.

contextual work that would lay a foundation for securing the gospel within the Native community. This form of ministry resulted in the development of establishing Indian Presbyterianism, a blend of cultures, beliefs, and institutions both Native and Christian.⁶⁴ American Indian scholars and *theologians* “challenge the Academy at the church to reassess the mission area.”⁶⁵ Lewis promotes the work of James Treat as the start of scholarship on the Native Christian narrative.⁶⁶ By focusing primarily on the Native ministers, the book achieves an Indigenous perspective on the missionization process in the Northwest.

Anthropologist Sergei Kan wrote a detailed series of studies on the Tlingit communities of the late 19th century that brings out a Native perspective on the missionization of the Tlingit. The book uses different strategies, like ethnography and history, to explore the role of Christianization in Tlingit culture, economy, society, and history. Kan seeks to determine why, during the late 19th century, so many Tlingit converted to the Russian Orthodox religion. Kan explains that the mission of the Russian Orthodox Church was financially weaker compared to the rival Protestant missions that arrived after the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1859. He examines the social and economic factors of the 19th century that would have influenced the Native choice. For example, after 1867, the Russian mission only complied partially with the westernizing system compared to the “civilizing” methods of local American officials, school teachers, and Protestant missionaries who arrived in the last quarter of the 19th century. The Tlingit interaction with the Orthodox Church through the late 20th century was also motivated by wealth and political aspirations. As part of his research, he not only turned to archival records, but also attended many church services, providing a source of research previously ignored by

⁶⁴Lewis, xiv.

⁶⁵Ibid, xii.

⁶⁶Ibid, xiv.

ethnographers. He was able to spend time with elders, who from a religious perspective could relate back to ancestors whose religious viewpoint had been shaped by Christian influence of the 19th century.⁶⁷

Kan looks beyond the fact that the Christianization of Native communities could be understood as a colonial process. As the economy changed, the Russian Orthodox clergymen located in Alaska had mixed reactions “to the rapid introduction of the capitalist economy into the new territory.”⁶⁸ The clergymen encouraged the continuation of “traditional subsistence activities and advocated measures that would protect Indigenous land base from commercial exploitation and appropriation by non-natives.”⁶⁹ From this perspective, the Russian Orthodox missionaries are depicted as protectors of “traditional” Native culture and land claims. They did not want the Native Alaskans to become lower middle class citizens in the new Victorian system.⁷⁰ He not only focuses on the “symbolic and the ideological process” of Tlingit Christianization but provides equal attention to the economic and sociopolitical interactions between the Tlingits, Russians, and Americans in order to understand the process of Christianization.⁷¹ Although the book covers a lot of changes among the Tlingit, Kan does not cover in depth all methods of Christianization. Although he is sympathetic to the Russian Orthodox missionaries and clergymen, his primary objective is to research the Tlingit perspective. The book does take on a slight pro-Orthodox perspective as Kan knows more Orthodox Tlingit members than Tlingit who are part Presbyterian Church. He states, “I do not, however, wish to suggest that those Protestant Tlingit who chose the path of greater assimilation

⁶⁷ Kan, xxviii.

⁶⁸ Ibid, xix.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Kan, xxii

⁷¹ Ibid.

and accommodation with the Euro-American society somehow betrayed their people.”⁷²

Although the book focuses on only on Sitka, the center of Tlingit Orthodoxy, Kan feels that the research provides a general consensus of the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Tlingit.

Kan believes that the Boasian paradigm used by American anthropologists was ineffective as it only looked for the "pre-contact" Indigenous cultures “at the expense of the present day ones.”⁷³ During the 1930’s, an interest by historians in acculturation developed, but the new studies “did not produce any substantial investigations of Indian Christianity.”⁷⁴ By not researching the Christian churches as Indian institutions, they have created an incomplete history and removed an important factor of Native daily life, past and present. Kan makes an important point that many of the Tlingit informants of the ethnographers like Swanton and Emmons were devout Christians. There has been very little written on the informants or on their process of Tlingit conversion to Christianity by these scholars.

Kan explores the changes in Tlingit funeral practices, the role of the church as an Indian institution, the visual changes seen in Orthodox cemeteries, and the inclusion/exclusion of ‘traditional’ Tlingit ceremonial practices. Although the book is detailed, the exploration of Christian motifs is not the primary objective. By using both ethnographic data, oral history and written sources, he was able to record a clear Indigenous voice and demonstrates that Native American Christianity was not completely rejected nor accepted by the Tlingit.

Following a similar approach on Native perspectives, anthropologist John Barker focuses on the Nisga'a and their continuous relationship with their founding mission churches, the

⁷²Ibid, xxviii.

⁷³Ibid, xxiii.

⁷⁴Ibid.

Salvation Army and the Anglican Church. Barker explores “the politics of religious synthesis in the post-missionary world.”⁷⁵ Unlike the Tlingit that had the Russian Orthodox Church competing with the Protestant Church, the Nisga’a did not have large numbers of different Christian factions attempting to convert the communities.⁷⁶ Within the Nisga’a villages, older churches continue to remain a presence beyond the time of missionary domination.⁷⁷ The church remains important to many Nisga’a not only because of current projects, but because the church can be traced to the early missionary period where the Nisga’a created their own form of “vernacular Christianity.” It is this development that helped create a bond between Nisga’a and the Anglican Church in the late 1960s.⁷⁸

Barker focuses on two different eras of the involvement of missionaries among the Nisga’a. He provides a detailed study of the re-involvement of the Anglican Church during the 1960s. Within the first half of the article, Barker explains that the “emergence of a social activist faction in the Anglican Church of Canada in the mid-1960s” was an important key to reconciling with the Nisga’a. The Church helped with the Nisga’a land case in order to help remove “the stigma of earlier complicity in the theft of Native lands and freedoms.”⁷⁹ The second half of the article refers back to the beginning process of Christianization by the first missionaries that came to the Nisga’a villages during the last half of the 19th century. Instead of focusing on failed evangelical processes, Barker highlights how the Nisga’a remolded Christianity to fit their own religious, social, and political needs.⁸⁰ He explains that during the last half of the 1960’s the

⁷⁵Barker, 433.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid, 434.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid, 434.

Anglican Church of Canada “rededicated considerable resources to the Nisga’a” after decades of not being involved. Barker looks at the motivations behind the two groups and the new relationships formed. The church wanted to reconcile for the past involvement of late 19th century missionaries within the communities. The Nisga’a saw this as an opportunity to create political ties and reestablish the Christian mission, “which had already developed into a vernacular expression of Christianity in the Nass valley.”⁸¹

The contemporary Christian lifestyles among the Nisga’a seem different than to the Christian lifestyles of the 19th century villages.⁸² Few people continue to attend church services on a daily basis. Important holidays such as Easter and Christmas are observed, but those that attend church services frequently are the elderly. Barker also notes that “there has been a resurgence of pride and interest in Indigenous traditions over the past quarter-century.”⁸³ The Anglican Church has been a strong supporter of the revival of traditional practices. According to elders within the community, Christianity and Indigenous religious beliefs are compatible.

Barker’s article touches briefly on a visual theme of blending Native and Christian imagery. The re-established relationship between the Anglican Church and the Nisga’a produced a return of power to Native Clergymen from the church. These clergymen are important role models and icons within the communities. Barker mentions that during the 1970s there was an interest in including “traditional” Native regalia such as button blankets, and other forms of Nisga’a art into churches and church services.⁸⁴ Like Kan’s book, Barker’s article does not examine in detail the visual response to the presence of Christianity within the communities.

⁸¹Ibid, 433.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid, 434.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 439.

Among the authors that look at the Indigenous voice, Susan Neylan examines the relationship between Protestant Christian missions on the North Pacific Coast of British Columbia during the years of 1857 and 1901 and focuses on the Native roles in the process of Christianization. The book focuses on the different discourses of conversion and of Native Christianity.⁸⁵ It pays special attention to the Euro-Canadian missionary perspective, the Native workers, and the specific events that lead to the formation Christian identities.⁸⁶ The study focuses on selected themes as it surveys the process of missionization. Neylan uses three different concepts in her approach: syncretism, convergence, and dualism. She explains that syncretism is a concept that refers to the blending of Native and Christian beliefs. These include symbols, rituals, and cultural expressions. This is a key theme within this thesis as each piece is a direct reflection of syncretism and cultural expression in some form. As seen in the case of the Nisga'a and the Tlingit, after enough contact and influence, the borders between the two religious systems can become blurred and ultimately combine. Convergence looks to the similarities between the religions. Common denominators can be seen in Native and Christian beliefs or practices. From a certain perspective these convergences will be similar enough that the believer will see them as the exact same thing. Dualism looks to distinguish the distinct existence of two different religions, Native spiritualities and Christianity. Dualism is when there is coexistence of two separate religions that do not blend or converge. Although dualism keeps the separation of the two, it does not reject or favor one over the other. Using these definitions, contradictions are explained away and are no longer problematic when referencing Native and

⁸⁵Neylan, 9.

⁸⁶Ibid, 5.

Christian belief.⁸⁷ She includes the voices previously neglected and ignored. She looks to the cultural brokers and the informants, otherwise known as “middlemen.” The interpreters and missionaries were the catalysts that would change lives.⁸⁸ Neylan’s book fulfills what Kan pointed out as lacking in previous ethno histories. She focuses on Christian men and women that held key roles within their communities and helped bring their communities to the missionaries.

Although Neylan does not focus on Native art and its blending with Christian motifs, she provides a study of the role of the Christian church and the transformation of the town in a Christian space. Houses changed, cemeteries transformed, and visitors that came to these towns were surprised that there was not much of the pre-contact life style as described by anthropologists and first generation missionaries. This definition of Christian space as a visual reminder of the presence of the Christian religion in the Tsimshian communities inspired the examination of several Canadian church structures within this thesis as indigenized Christian Spaces.

Joanne MacDonald changes the focus of the missionaries from an evangelical perspective to their roles as collectors of Native artifacts. MacDonald notes that the missionary documents provide a single perspective of Native culture and does not provide a complete understanding of the missionary involvement.⁸⁹ The paper is a detailed study of the efforts to collect Native artifacts by the first two missionaries among the Coast Tsimshian in the villages of Port Simpson and Metlakatla. The focus is on the symbolic aspects of the cross cultural transaction. The collecting was not only performed by anthropologists and museum representatives but also by the missionaries that sought to convert the communities. Her goal is to demonstrate that the role

⁸⁷Neylan, 16.

⁸⁸Ibid, 80.

⁸⁹Ibid, 197.

of missionaries as collectors has been ignored and not critically examined.⁹⁰ Prior to the missionization era, Europeans, Americans, and Canadians did not collect full-sized totem poles from Northwest Coast groups. As 19th century missionaries preached against the erection of new poles, they were also collecting or facilitating the collecting of Native material culture, including totem poles. The article explores missionary involvement in the process of obtaining ceremonial objects, poles, and sacred artifacts at Fort Simpson and Metlakatla. As many Natives in the communities converted to Christianity, many would burn or destroy their hereditary objects for it was against tradition to sell them. Items that were made of metal were deposited into the sea.⁹¹ She concludes that by the 20th century, missionaries had helped collect over 30% of the total objects removed from the Metlakatla and Port Simpson.⁹² The ceremonial objects were transformed from utilitarian and ceremonial objects into curios stored in museums in North America and Europe. MacDonald also looks at the reasons behind the giving up of ceremonial items by the Tsimshian. In North America and Europe there was a large growth of museums in North America and Europe. It was these 19th century institutions that would help validate the Euro-American belief that Indigenous populations of North America were vanishing. The late 19th century was a period of active collecting on the Northwest Coast.⁹³

MacDonald provides a brief study of the roles played by the different objects within the communities before their removal. She explains the roles of ceremonial objects and the public role of crests as a visual statement of social order.⁹⁴ She not only looks at the role of missionaries

⁹⁰Joanne MacDonald. 1990 'From Ceremonial Object to Curio: Object Transformation at Port Simpson and Metlakatla, BC in the Nineteenth Century, 195.

⁹¹MacDonald, 200.

⁹²Neylan, 258.

⁹³Mac Donald, 195.

⁹⁴Ibid, 197-198.

as collectors, but also alludes to Rev. Duncan as an entrepreneur. Rev. Duncan, for example, began to encourage the sale of baskets in the curio market in Victoria, British Columbia. The money earned went to help build a new school. In addition, as Duncan was not ordained, he used a collection of 80 different objects as a method to pay for a Bishop to perform baptism within the community.⁹⁵ Although Duncan prohibited the performing of potlatches, he encouraged his Tsimshian converts to keep their ancient carving in that the village Community Hall would “almost be entirely Indian in style and structure.”⁹⁶ Following Duncan’s arrival, in 1879, Thomas Crosby would also begin to facilitate collecting for museums. Unlike Duncan, Crosby did not encourage the Natives to continue with their traditional carving crafts. Crosby formed a working relationship with James G. Swan, the first professional collector on the Northwest, who was collecting for the Smithsonian Institution.⁹⁷

This article helps break the mission narrative from the perspective of evangelism, but instead reveals the missionaries roles in the collection of artifacts and demonstrates the change in the social environment in the late 19th century. As she discussed the role of the missionaries as collectors, there is a brief glimpse to the art that was being produced under these new circumstances. It could be interpreted that by presenting missionaries as collectors and catalysts for the destruction of ceremonial objects MacDonald is propagating the previous mission theme for destruction, but she does clarify that many of the objects obtained by William Duncan and Thomas Crosby were not taken by force. It was the Natives’ understanding that the objects gifted to missionaries were for leaders back home. The research ends with missionary involvement and does not study the artists or the art pieces.

⁹⁵Ibid, 201.

⁹⁶Ibid, 202-3.

⁹⁷Ibid, 205.

In 2006, Aldona Jonaitis examined the changes that Christianity brought to the Native communities of the Pacific Northwest. She explains that Indigenous art is part of a changing world. The constant cycle of settlers, missionaries, and government agents influenced Northwest coast art in different ways. In response to the presence of settlers and sailors, Native artists increased the production of tourist art and missionaries sought to eliminate any further production of ceremonial art. There was heavy influence by missionary and Indian agents, but members of the communities that were converted to Christianity continued to include treasured family crests on their Christian gravestones. Jonaitis provides a small presentation of the overlapping of Native and Christian tradition and creates entry points to the new mission narrative and how the art work could be used to describe current social historical environments. Although the missionaries sought to convert the Native communities, “Native people had not been completely assimilated into the white world.”⁹⁸ This section of the book is brief, but it serves as a model of how Native art with visual cultural blending will be approached, as documents of intellectual exchange, in this thesis.

In 1991, Ronald Hawker presented a detailed look at selected pieces by Tsimshian artist, Frederick Alexie. This article serves as an example of the social and cultural information that can be retrieved by studying art pieces that present syncretic imagery.⁹⁹ In 2001, Hawker wrote an expansion to his original essay entitled “Transformed or Transformative? Two Northwest Coast Artists in the Era of Assimilation.” The 2001 article examines both Frederick Alexie and Mathias Joe. He selected these two artists for the lack of scholarship on them and their “transformative”

⁹⁸Aldona Jonaitis. *Art of the Northwest Coast*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006, 188.

⁹⁹Ronald W. Hawker. *Frederick Alexie: Euro-Canadian Discussions of a First Nations' Artist*. , 1991.

role in the production of art. Hawker sees “these artists not as passively transformed by assimilation, but rather actively transformative in their use of creative strategies to respond to and reshape the world in which they lived.”¹⁰⁰ In addition to a critical analysis of the artwork produced by these two artists, Hawker’s interest rooted in the syncretic qualities of Alexie’s work and he draws connections to the often ignored Tsimshian gravestone carving that is a mix of Christian, British and Tsimshian form and function. Gravestones were more than a replacement initiated by the arrival of evangelical missionaries, but they are a demonstration of the “complex ways in which these different worldviews were negotiated, balanced, and creatively utilized.”¹⁰¹

Finally, Aaron Glass created a unique exhibition that provides new insight and methodologies in observing Native art from the 19th century. This was a multi-disciplinary exhibition that presented material culture as a study of cultural history. *Objects of Exchange* integrated digital media programs to catalogue and help label objects in order to determine if any themes would overlap. The book is a collection of catalogue entries and essays written by art historians and anthropologists. The essays provide “case studies of some of the nineteenth century social and material dynamics suggested by the exhibit’s selections.”¹⁰² The exhibition was composed of thirty-five objects from the North American Ethnology collection at the American Museum of Natural History, including a shamanic carved figure by Haida carver Simeon Stilthda that is discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis. The themes and labels that were

¹⁰⁰Hawker 2001, 38.

¹⁰¹Ibid, 42.

¹⁰²Aaron Glass, and Mique'l Askren. *Objects of Exchange: Social and Material Transformation on the Late Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast: Selections from the American Museum of Natural History*. New York: Bard Graduate Center: Decorative Arts, Design History, Material Culture, 2011, xvii.

assigned to each item were intended to enhance the “understanding of the Northwest Coast in the late 19th century and raise important questions about how these objects are classified and shown in museums.”¹⁰³ The catalogue is not completely ethnographic or focused on aesthetic or stylistic qualities of the items. Glass continues the scholarship of the 1980’s in pushing the classification of Northwest Coast Native “craft,” such as textiles, baskets, and souvenirs as fine art. The catalogue also examines the “larger sociocultural and political contexts for historical change.”¹⁰⁴ The focus *Objects of Exchange* is on the broader historical contexts and social relations instead of on the creativity of the Native artist.¹⁰⁵ In a similar manner, the use of 19th century Northwest Coast Native art as sources of historical documents is found throughout this thesis. In Glass’s exhibition, there is no specific individual focus on the artist or their style, which this thesis does explore in specific cases where a viable source provides a personal connection to the artist. In Glass’ work, the thematic term used to “tag” the items, such as Christianity, are meant to be categorical and definitive. For example, when an object is “tagged” with “Christianity”, that does not indicate that the artist or object is Christian. The “tag” is used to help inform the historical reading of the object. In the case of “Christianity,” the object might help new information emerge on the social dynamics of missionization.¹⁰⁶ These “tags” present a superficial label that does not focus on the response of the artists or the effect that Christianity had within the communities. “Tagged” keywords visually connect pieces within the exhibition, but do not provide critical examination of the individual object.

¹⁰³Glass, vii.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, xiv.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid, 27.

As seen by the scholarship reviewed in this chapter, there has been a general agreement among the writers from different disciplines in recent years that more attention needs to be paid to the Indigenous response to Christianity. In addition, there needs to be examination of the methods the local peoples used to appropriate, resist, or succumb to the institutions and cultural assumptions introduced by the missionaries.¹⁰⁷ This thesis will build on their work and look at the different visual perspectives brought forth from Christian interaction in Native communities.

¹⁰⁷Barker, 433.

Chapter 3 Appropriation of Christian Motifs

This chapter will analyze examples of Christian motifs appropriated by Pacific Northwest Coast Native artists. With a strong presence of Christianity within the Pacific Northwest Native communities, 19th century art demonstrates the blending of two cultures through the creation of hybridized, syncretic art. The result is a visually striking blend of two cultures and an example of visual documents that help scholars understand the environment of the period. With the coming of the fur traders, missionaries, and settlers, Native artists and communities were introduced to new tools, new materials and new motifs.¹⁰⁹ The use of new materials and new themes reflects an eagerness of artists to use new customs and motifs introduced by foreigners and promoted the exploration of new artistic expressions.¹¹⁰ With the introduction of new ideas in the 19th century, some pieces are visual experimentations that result in the crossing of boundaries between Native and non-Native cosmologies.¹¹¹

Appropriation of strong iconic symbols was common practice in the Pacific Northwest. Kathryn Bunn-Marcuse examines the appropriation of Euro-American designs and motifs in Native carved silver bracelets, such as the American Eagle found on silver coins.¹¹² Artists would have seen a parallel between the iconic American bird and their own Raven and Eagle clan crests.¹¹³ Victoria Wyatt explains that there is a need to listen to the voices of Native people. This creates a history that includes their contribution. As explained in the prior chapter of this thesis, Native voice is often missing from the written record. Wyatt explores the inventiveness of

¹⁰⁹Victoria Wyatt. "Art and Exploration: The Responses of Northwest Coast Native Artists to Maritime Explorers and Fur Traders" *From Maps to Metaphors: The Pacific World of George Vancouver*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993, 177.

¹¹⁰Wyatt, 182.

¹¹¹Wyatt, 182.

¹¹² Bunn-Marcuse, 63.

¹¹³ Kathryn-Bunn, 65.

Native artistic tradition within historical context.¹¹⁴ Wyatt and Bunn-Marcuse focus on the creative response to the general presence of European and American motifs of the 19th and early 20th century but do not focus on the artistic response to presence of Christianity. This chapter will present case studies of works of art drawn from 19th and 20th centuries and discuss the reasons behind the appropriation of Christian motifs.

With large ships visiting small villages, carvers often used ships and their adornments as inspiration, as seen in Haida argillite and wooden carvings of ships and European figures from the 19th century. An early-19th century carved argillite panel pipe is decorated with a Yankee angel with long curly hair and feathered wings (Fig. 1).¹¹⁵ Another example of carved argillite with Christian motifs is seen on a straight-sided container (Fig 2).¹¹⁶ On one side of the container is a winged figure wearing what appears to be a Euro-American style dress. The presence of the wings could be a reference to an angel. If this side of the container can be read as Christian then the other side is non-Christian. The image carved on the other side is a male that also bears wings with a beak projecting from under his chin and grasping a crescent moon. The image could be read as Raven who brought the light to the world.¹¹⁷ Native artists saw similar themes in angels that often reminded them of their own stories of supernatural beings and ceremonies. In some First Nation cultures, origin stories speak of a time when there were no distinct divisions between human, animal, or spirit. Humans could transform from one form to the other. The wings of the angel on the ship panel pipe and the open container mimic wings of a

¹¹⁴Fisher, 17.

¹¹⁵Bill Holm. *Crooked Beak of Heaven: Masks and Other Ceremonial Art of the Northwest Coast*. Seattle: Published for the Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum and the Henry Art Gallery by the University of Washington Press, 1972, 92.

¹¹⁶Peter L. McNair, and Alan L. Hoover. *The Magic Leaves: A History of Haida Argillite Carving*. Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1984, 96.

¹¹⁷McNair, 96.

large bird such as the eagle. Artists would read the angel to be transforming between its human and animal shape. Although the artist may not have understood the religious meaning of the angels, these images were still seen as symbols and crests with power.

During the last half of the 19th century, at a time when Rev. Collison was in the village of Old Masset, Haida artist, Simeon Stilthda carved a series of wooden shaman figures. Of these shamanic figures there is one that has a pair of wings (Fig. 3). The practice of shamanism was discouraged by missionaries like Rev. Collison. Artists continued to carve images of shamans for sale to coastal visitors. To outsiders, the practice of shamanism was abhorrent and yet, objects such as Stilthda's carved shaman intrigued the visitors.¹¹⁸ The shaman appears to be in mid-transformation indicated by the bird protruding from his chest and wings on his back. His fringed apron is decorated with deer hooves.¹¹⁹ The presence of the wings could possibly be inspired by Christian imagery. The figure could be interpreted as a dual representation of shamanic imagery with the form of a European angel that was sometimes seen on ships and other sources as figureheads.¹²⁰ There is no way to know for sure if the figure was intended to be read as an angel, but it could be that visitors to Haida Gwaii would read both Native and Christian symbolism, thus the artist was appealing to a new market. In this case, the artist may have turned to new visuals to prove that cosmological boundaries were being crossed and overlapped.

Another piece with a more blatant Christian inspiration is seen in Stilthda's Sphinx (Fig. 4). Stilthda was inspired by an illustration found within a Bible.¹²¹ Traditionally, a Sphinx would

¹¹⁸Wright, 293.

¹¹⁹Glass, 92.

¹²⁰ Margaret B. Blackman, Edwin S Hall, and Vincent Rickard. *Northwest Coast Indian Graphics: An Introduction to Silk Screen Prints*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981, 188.

¹²¹Wright, 290.

have a lion's body attached, but as the Bible only depicted the front, Stilthda's Sphinx lacks the lion's body and presents the mythological creature with a truncated torso as if perched on a box.¹²² The presence of missionaries and the Bibles with images of the Sphinx and supernatural angels would have created new sources of mythological stories to inspire his art. In the late 1870's and 1880's, the Haida people began to change the way they were named to suit the system imposed by the missionaries. It is possible that at the time of baptism, Stilthda took the first name Simeon and the last name he received from his son, Chief Stilthda. Simeon Stilthda had another son, James Stilthda, later known as a James Stanley. As Stanley had a Christian name, like Stilthda, he had converted to Christianity and been baptized. In 1877, Chief Stilthda converted to Christianity on his deathbed and is quoted to have regrets that he did not convert to Christianity earlier. Simeon Stilthda was overcome with grief as he was losing his son and threw himself upon a fire pit.¹²³ The creation of the shaman and the sphinx reflect a changing social environment. As seen in the adopting of his Christian name, Stilthda was socially appropriating Western traditions in his art as well.

Appropriation of Christian icons and figures was a method of presenting political messages in traditional and non-traditional forms. The following pieces display priests, angels, crucified ravens, and carved bibles in order to present a different perspective and relay a powerful visual message. For example a carved priest, by an unknown Haida carver, contains identifying icons such as a cross and a belted robe. His hand is also poised as if to perform a benediction (Fig. 5). In the 1880's, Dwight Wallace received a commission from Chief Skowal's daughter for a totem pole (Fig. 6). There are several different accounts of the symbols on this pole

¹²²Ibid, 293.

¹²³ Ibid, 297 – 299.

and there is no consensus among the interpretations. The pole is composed of six figures.

According to Glass, the top figure is an eagle followed by a man with his hand pointing to the sky. The next figure is avian and winged in nature and could be an angel or a winged supernatural being. The next is a bearded man with his arms crossed across his chest.¹²⁴

According to Kathryn Bunn-Marcuse, the avian supernatural being on the pole is stylized like an American eagle that is often found on coins and other propaganda.¹²⁵ Garfield likens the carving style of the angel and scroll to images found on a marriage certificate.¹²⁶

There are several different interpretations about the pole that demonstrate religious, social and political themes. One interpretation explains that the eagle at the top of the pole is the family crest of Skowal's wife and daughter. The bearded figure at the base of the pole could be Charles Vincent Baranovich, Chief Skowal's daughter's husband, an Austrian trader.¹²⁷ It was Baranovich's inheritance that funded the commissioned pole.¹²⁸ The pole originally stood outside Chief Skowal's first home and can now be found at the Totem Heritage Center in Ketchikan Alaska.¹²⁹ Both Margaret Blackman and Anna Strankman explain that the pole could have been erected to commemorate the baptism of Chief Skowal of Kasaan and his family.¹³⁰ Another interpretation sees the pole as a representation of the young men that abandoned their Haida

¹²⁴Glass, 4.

¹²⁵Kathryn Bunn-Marcuse. *Reflected Images: The Use of Euro-American Designs on Northwest Coast Silver Bracelets.* , 1998, 85.

¹²⁶ Garfield papers, box 2, folder 13, 2.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸Glass, 4.

¹²⁹ Anna M. Strankman. *Re-capturing a Legacy: In Search of the Poles of Old Kasaan.* , 2003, 83.

¹³⁰Blackman, 392; Strankman, 83.

traditions and turned to the priesthood instead.¹³¹ In addition, according to Haida informants, the carving style was inspired by a deck of cards that depicted saints and cherubs. These cards were a gift to Chief Skowal from the Russian bishop.¹³² As the cards were a gift from a religious Christian leader, the presence of the angels and saint-like men could provide support to the reading of the pole as a religious message.

The pole could also be interpreted as a political statement against the presence of new imposed Christian and Russian cultures. A first reading of the pole is provided by Albert Niblack in 1888. He explains that the eagle at the top of the pole represents Skowal's crest and identifies the figure at the base to be an early trader of the coast. Niblack explains that the pole was erected to serve as ridicule and demonstrates the missionaries' lack of success in converting the chief and his family.¹³³ An article in the *Ketchikan Daily*, from March 13, 1967, edited by Wilson Duff, explains that Chief Skowal is the second figure from the top of the pole representing "power of the ocean, his hand pointing upward at the eagle" which is his wife's crest. By pointing to the sky, Skowal is demonstrating that he is the greatest chief.¹³⁴ Another interpretation, provided by Viola Garfield, expresses "the chief's opinion of the white invaders and their attempts to civilize the Haida people."¹³⁵ She turned to members of the Skowal clan to attempt to clear up the multiple of explanations available for the pole. Members of Skowal clan agreed that the pole was erected as a form of defiance against the presence of missionaries and

¹³¹ Canadian Museum of Civilization "Kaigani Haida," Accessed on April 9, 2012 <http://www.civilization.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/aborig/haida/hvkas01e.shtml>.

¹³² Margaret B. Blackman. "Creativity in Acculturation: Art, Architecture and Ceremony from the Northwest Coast." *Ethnohistory*. 23.4 (1976): 387-413, 392.

¹³³ Albert P. Niblack. "The Coast Indians of Southern Alaska and Northern British Columbia." *Annual Report*. 1888. 24 (1890), 328.

¹³⁴ Strankman, 83.

¹³⁵ Garfield papers, box 2, folder 13, 2.

that Skowal was not a Christian convert.¹³⁶ Whichever way the totem pole is read, the inclusion of Christian clergymen and angels demonstrates an appropriation of icons and symbols for political purposes.

Like Simeon Stilthda, Frederick Alexie (1854 to c1944) was also creating hybridized pieces of art. Alexie was a Coast Tsimshian artist who was active in the last part of the 19th and the first part of the 20th centuries.¹³⁷ His work reflects the current social environment. Alexie was born in Port Simpson and was a trained *halait*¹³⁸ carver. Ronald Hawker explores the reasons behind creating pieces that did not include native imagery. He claims Native art production did not cease in the 20th century, but, as Wyatt also agreed, was affected by the white commercial market conditions and the interests of the Euro-Canadian cultural community.¹³⁹ In addition to creating art for his community, Alexie also produced pieces for non-Native audiences such as a baptismal font for the Port Simpson church, tourist curios, Western style Canadian landscape paintings, and smaller carvings of two priests. The baptismal font was originally housed in a Port Simpson Methodist Church and is currently located at the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology.¹⁴⁰ The baptismal (Fig. 7) is composed of the upper torso of male figure and round base. He is dressed in a blue-grey robe and holds a cup in his left hand.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Hawker, 40.

¹³⁸*Halait* (also spelled as *Halaayt*): *Halait* is one of the sources to spiritual power in the Tsimshian cosmology. translated into the English language means “dance,” “dancing” and “dancer.” The term can also be applied to “shaman” or “initiate.” The term can also be used to describe anyone gifted with power and often deals with paranormal and supernatural realm. A person that can be described as *halait* often comes into contact with *naxnox*. *Naxnox* can be used to describe any event, being, or ability that expresses power. The term *Naxnox* can also be used to describe the object that is the source of power. In Alexie’s case, as a carver, he would have had access to carving *Naxnox* masks (Neylan, 31).

¹³⁹Hawker, 231.

¹⁴⁰Ibid, 232.

The other palm is raised in benediction. Attached via pegs in the back is a pair of white and grey wings. This carved wooden angel was used between the 1880s and 1890s. In addition to using a Western icon, Alexie also mixed in traditional Tsimshian mask facial characteristics, such as the large eyes that represent a being that is endowed with power.¹⁴¹ According to the museum record, it was “used as baptismal font in church, but was removed when children were frightened by it.”¹⁴² Susan Neylan further explains that the missionary made claims that it was Tsimshian children that were afraid of the Angel figure.¹⁴³ According to Tsimshian belief, the power of the angel would have been apparent in the use of the font for baptisms and through the similarities in style to Tsimshian masks. This figure is a result of the social environment of the time and provides evidence of cultural syncretism. The late 19th and early 20th centuries were a time of severe cultural change and suppression. Wyatt states that the final result depicts a departure from previous ‘traditional’ style entirely and provides glimpses to the art to come.¹⁴⁴

The Native art of the late 20th and early 21st centuries demonstrate a personal stance on the presence of Christianity within the artists’ communities. There is a lack of artwork from the early 20th century due to Indian bans that were established to outlaw Native ceremonies such as the Potlatch in Canada. Native families were required to send children to Christian boarding schools where they were taught crafts, such as quilting, and agricultural techniques. Tourist art in the form of model totem poles and basketry were encouraged by missionaries and boarding schools, but few objects with Christian motifs could be found. Artwork examples obtained from the mid 20th century tends to reflect a devotional perspective and will be examined in the next

¹⁴¹Neylan, 261.

¹⁴²Hawker, 231.

¹⁴³Neylan, 261.

¹⁴⁴Wyatt, 190.

chapter. In 1985, Haida artist Don Yeomans' created *Raven on a Cross* (Fig. 8). The raven figure is composed of yellow cedar and attached to the steel cross. The piece can be interpreted in many ways. The first reading provides a visual story of one group appropriating an explanation of the mysteries of the universe by another. She also reads the joining of the raven and cross as possible alliance.¹⁴⁵ Ian Thom provides another reading. Thom looks beyond the icons and turns to traditional stories. Although the Raven is beautifully sculpted, it is still pinioned on the cross. It is, in all essence, helpless, incapable of flying away or transforming into a different form. Thom comments that the contrast between the harsh bars of steel against the natural yellow cedar "implies the imposition of a different order on the world of the first nations."¹⁴⁶

In the late 20th and 21st centuries, Tlingit artist Nicholas Galanin appropriates the Bible itself as an act of appropriation. He was brought up in a family of Tlingit artists like his father, Dave Galanin, and has a foundation in traditional formline design. Nicholas Galanin received a Bachelor of Art degree from London Guildhall University and a Masters degree from Massey University in New Zealand in Visual Arts in 2007.¹⁴⁷ When he returned to southeast Alaska, Galanin used his art as a tool to "investigate [his] cultural heritage and politics."¹⁴⁸ Galanin turns to his cultural history as foundation for his work.¹⁴⁹ Galanin risks secluding himself from his community. He often times works away from "traditional" Tlingit forms, but it is through these

¹⁴⁵Townsend-Gault, 462.

¹⁴⁶Ian M. Thom, and McMichael Canadian Art Collection. *Challenging Traditions: Contemporary First Nations Art of the Northwest Coast*. Vancouver; Seattle: Douglas & McIntyre; University of Washington Press, 2009, 180.

¹⁴⁷Aldona Jonaitis. "A Generation of Innovators in Southeast Alaska: Nicholas Galanin, Stephen Jackson, Da-Ka-Xeen Mehner and Donald Varnell." *American Indian Art Magazine*, 64.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

works that Galanin explores issues of indigenous identity.¹⁵⁰ Galanin explores the contact between Christian text and Tlingit culture in the form of three dimensional sculptures. Galanin is known for his art with themes that transcend cultural boundaries by redefining common everyday artifacts. Galanin “revisits the traditions of his Tlingit heritage in his sculpted books that take the form of masks or portrait heads.”¹⁵¹ In his *The Good Book Vol 15* (Fig. 9) and *Medicine Man* (Fig. 10), Galanin carves, shreds and deconstructs pages of the Bible to reveal a self portrait and Tlingit style bird mask. Galanin’s use of the Bible is critiquing the missionaries in their process to change traditional spiritual beliefs.”¹⁵² Written text, such as the Bibles, treaties, contracts and government laws, are seen as the new source of power in this modern age. Bibles were often translated into Native languages such as Nisga’a and Haida, and in contemporary times Anglican hymnals were translated into Kwakwaka’wakw as a method to teach and preserve the language.¹⁵³ Galanin uses different approaches within each piece. The pages that compose *Medicine Man’s* face are blank and contain no printed text, possibly referencing a time before written text. The wild and uncontrollable hair that covers the crown of the shaman’s head is composed of shredded pieces of the Bible. A visual reminder that missionaries brought a different way of thinking and the spiritual and mental change required to adjust to the new times and adhere to the new cultural practices. From the missionaries’ perspective, shredding the pages of the Bible is a sacrilegious act. Galanin’s next piece, the *Good Book Vol 15*, is part of his 2006 Master of Visual Arts show at Massey University, titled *What Have We Become?* The different

¹⁵⁰ Jessica Scarlata. *Second Lives: Remixing the Ordinary*. New York, N.Y: Museum of Arts and Design, 2008, 13.

¹⁵¹ Scarlata, 13.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Catherine E Bell, and Val Napoleon. *First Nations Cultural Heritage and Law: Case Studies, Voices, and Perspectives*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2008, 46.

pieces presented were a series of Tlingit-style masks made from book pages. Each mask is a critique of the presented literature such as Galanin's *What Have We Become Vol 5* (2006) and *Knowledge* (2008) created from Tlingit ethnology, *Under Mt. St. Elias* by American anthropologist, Frederica de Laguna, a three-part volume on Tlingit culture at the period when it came into contact with Europeans. In order for the artist to see himself in the book, he had to deconstruct the book to recreate his understanding of his Tlingit culture from its pages. Galanin said that he spent a great deal of time reading and searching for information on the Tlingit culture which is generally orally based. According to Galanin, "Tradition is a gift, diversity is a form of wealth."¹⁵⁴ He explained that the books he used for research were institutionalized texts and, like Laguna, authors that wrote about the Tlingit culture were from an outsiders' perspective. Galanin said, "That's a ... perspective I started to question when that became the only perspective I could find."¹⁵⁵ According to Galanin's observations, the Tlingit culture is transforming. Galanin realizes that the problem with the texts, such as *Under Mt. St. Elias*, "is that the publication itself becomes what it means to be Tlingit. It both freezes development and romanticizes the past."¹⁵⁶

Another mask from this exhibition, *The Good Book, Vol. 15*, depicts a bird. The carvings are inspired by nineteenth-century shamans' masks. While the self portrait mask was a moment of self-reflection using a Tlingit ethnology book, *The Good Book, Vol. 15* uses a Bible to create a Tlingit mask.¹⁵⁷ Galanin's use of the Christian text "is critiquing the role of missionaries in the

¹⁵⁴Scarлата, 13.

¹⁵⁵ Kevin Griffen "Nicholas Galanin: Challenging Northwest Coast Art Conventions" March 17 2011 Accessed on October 11, 2012 <http://blogs.vancouversun.com/2011/03/17/nicholas-galanin-challenging-northwest-coast-art-conventions>.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷Jonaitis, 64.

eradication of traditional spiritual beliefs.”¹⁵⁸ The carved mask morphs two very distinct icons, a traditionally carved Tlingit mask, and a Christian Bible, into solid inseparable icons. These masks appropriate a symbol of faith that serves as the Christian authority and presents a strong visual story on the outcome of missionary presence in the Pacific Northwest.

Appropriation of Christian icons can also be used to resolve personal stories and present a change in attitude. In 2008, Yeomans decided the 1985 *Raven and Cross* needed to be updated to reflect his new attitude toward Christianity. The *Creator* was the acknowledgment of how Christianity was affecting his life (Fig. 11). Yeomans states,

When I had initially conceived of the idea, my notion was that the Natives gave up their culture, gave up their ideology for technology. But it was a superficial observation on my part, and I realized that Christianity had a lot to offer... I've seen things in my life since then, like my father becoming a Christian, and how that transformed him as a human being and made him a better person I felt the need to go back and respect the religion, make the cross more ornate, give it as much focus as the bird.¹⁵⁹

The piece is balanced by the Celtic knots that decorate the cross and the carved ovoids and feathers on the body of the bird.¹⁶⁰ Superficially, both pieces look similar. Each piece is composed of a cross and raven, but the styles of the two crucifixions differ and display the artist's evolution in the use of material and carving detail. Compared to Yeomans' 1985 crucifixion, the *Creator* breaks political and sociological narratives by presenting a private and personal perspective of the presence of Christianity within his family. This hybridized piece is simultaneously respecting his personal Welsh ancestry and his father's faith.

These artists from both the late 19th and late 20th centuries chose to appropriate Christian icons and motifs as a method of visually spreading information on the current social

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Thom, 178.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 180.

environment, political and social messages. The artists who use inspiration from their personal experiences can be seen as presenting a new perspective on the Christian and mission narrative on the Pacific Northwest Coast.



Figure 1: Ship Pipe, Haida, Artist unknown, ca 1840, argillite stone, length 9.5 in, width 3.5 in, donated by Mrs. Anne Gerber. Image Courtesy of Burke Museum, Catalogue Number 25.0/278 (Holm, 92).



Figure 2: Argillite Container (both sides). Haida, late 19th century. Image Royal British Columbia Museum, Catalogue Number 6370 (McNair, 96).



Figure 3: Figure, Simeon Stilthda (ca 1799 – 1889), Haida, 9 1/4 X 6 7/8 X 23 3/8 in, Collected by Israel Powell between 1880 and 1885, Donated by Heber R Bishop. Photograph by Bill Holm, American Museum of Natural History, Catalogue Number 16/397 (Wright, 288).



Figure 4: Sphinx Figure, Simeon Stilthda (ca 1799 – 1889), Haida, ca 1874 – 78. Photograph by Bill Holm. British Museum, Catalogue Number 1896.1202 (Wright, 290).



Figure 5: Wooden Carved Priest, Haida?, Artist Unknown, 6.84cm H X 2.92cm W. Courtesy of Royal British Columbia Museum, Catalogue Number 14651. Accessed on January 20th, 2012. <http://www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/MainSite/research.aspx>.



Figure 6: Chief Skowl's Pole, carved by Dwight Wallace (Haida) ca. 1880. Old Kasaan Village, Prince of Wales Island, Alaska. Image Canadian Museum of Civilization, Reg. Number 71-4707. Pole Currently located at Ketchikan Totem Heritage Center (Bunn-Marcuse, 152).



Figure 7: Baptismal Font, Frederick Alexie, Tsimshian, 1886, Photography by Bill McLennan, University of British Columbia, Museum of Anthropology, Catalogue Number A1766. Accessed on January 21, 2013. Image from <http://rrnpilot.org/>.



Figure 8: *Raven on a Cross*, Don Yeomans, Haida, 1985, Yellow Cedar. 21X 14.5 inches (Townsend-Gault, 462).



Figure 9: *Good Book Vol 15*, Nicholas Galanin, Tlingit, 2006. Human Hair, 1100 pages containing text from the Bible, 6 in by 9in by 4 in (Jonaitis 2008, 65).



Figure 10: *Medicine Man*, Nicholas Galanin, Tlingit, 2008. 1300 pages of cut and bound paper, including pages from the Holy Bible. Photograph by Ed Watkins. Museum of Arts and Design, Catalogue Number L.2008-12.2. Accessed on March 11, 2013. Image from <http://goo.gl/KiAAf>.



Figure 11: *Creation*, Don Yeomans, Haida, 2008 yellow cedar, Image photographed by Trevor Mills (Thom, 178).

Chapter 4 Economic Motivation: The Use of Christian Motifs for Commissioned Projects

This Chapter will present three commissions of art with Christian motifs. Patronage is a system of economic motivation that has a long history on the Pacific Northwest Coast from pre-contact tribal chiefs to European sailors that wanted small curios to bring back as souvenirs. In addition, missionaries often times served as more than evangelists. Missionaries also served to create environments based in tourist trade and they also served as point of contacts for Euro-American Museum collectors. Between the three different commissions, there are several overlapping themes of Native art and Christianity. These pieces reflect the needs of the patron and still retain the artists' traditional values.

The role of missionaries on the Pacific Northwest was not exclusive to the spreading of Christianity. Missionaries also took the role of patron and collector, although the salvation of the Native communities was their top priority. As MacDonald pointed out, among the Tsimshian, Reverend William Duncan, an influential Anglican missionary to the Tsimshian, supported and encouraged the operation of a summer tourist gift shop in the Christian Coast Tsimshian village of Metlakatla. As a way to help establish an independent economy, as seen in Victorian Britain, the store would help phase out the pre-contact Tsimshian economic system.¹⁶¹ Presbyterian minister and later Alaskan Governor, John Brady, also saw that an industrial training school could help bring in a capitalistic economy to the Tlingit. Brady encouraged the production of art for sale. He saw that some utilitarian objects had carved decorations.¹⁶² Missionaries were involved with commissioning specific pieces and were active collectors of Native art. Today, the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology and the Royal Ontario Museum have

¹⁶¹Ronald Hawker. "'Frederick Alexie: Euro-Canadian Discussions of a First Nations Artist.'" *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* vol. 11.no 2: pp. 229-252, 236.

¹⁶²Jonaitis 2000, 182.

pieces in their collections from Reverend George H. Raley. Like Duncan, Riley was also interested in promoting the Native art as a means of income and a method to improve the economy of the Native people on the Northwest Coast.¹⁶³ Another missionary collector is Rev. Thomas Crosby. He and an influential community member, Nislgumiik/Sudaal (Victoria Young), are pictured standing next to each other (Fig. 12). The regalia Crosby is wearing would become part of his personal collection. As he is wearing the chiefly regalia and stands beside a powerful woman, Crosby could be seeking to validate his role within the community as an authority.¹⁶⁴ As Crosby donned and collected the regalia, he expedites the process of turning ceremonial regalia into curios.¹⁶⁵ Reverend Sheldon Jackson was also an advocate of collecting Native artifacts for museum collections. The rapid assimilation and education of the Native communities would change traditional ways and these missionaries believed the preserved collections would serve as a source to show Native communities their past and how their fathers lived.¹⁶⁶

In the 1970's, the Canadian Catholic Conference of Bishops commissioned artists from different cultural heritages to make contemporary interpretations of the "Good news of Jesus Christ" and heroic figures that contributed to the foundation of Christianity in Canada. These 20 art pieces would be seen in a new publication, the *Sunday Mass Book*. The book was published to display "the riches of the Church's renewed faith as expressed in its worship."¹⁶⁷ Artists were allowed to use the art pieces as a visual statement of their own spiritual vision and as part of their

¹⁶³Hawker, 236.

¹⁶⁴Susan Neylan. *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003, 122.

¹⁶⁵Neylan, 260.

¹⁶⁶Jonaitis, 181.

¹⁶⁷*Art Collection*. Ottawa, Ont., Canada: Publications Service of the C.C.C, 1976, 6.

oeuvre. The artists were invited to participate because of the open dialogue they could provide while blending Christian icons and stories with their own sacred symbols. In addition to providing a visual description of the Gospel, artists were asked to include an inner meaning. They were asked to share their insight and talent. Each piece would be a window into eternity and the spirit world and a method to learn from each other. The collection is uniquely Canadian and visually expresses Christian and non-Christian views.¹⁶⁸ The collection contains two Native artists from the Pacific Northwest Coast.

Kwakwaka'wakw artist and chief, Tony Hunt, created a *Baptismal Mural* cedar panel carved for Canadian Catholic Conference art collection and a duplicate print (Fig. 13, 14). The panel depicts the baptism of Christ. John the Baptist is shown as shaman wearing a Chilkat blanket holding a raven rattle. Christ is kneeling wearing red cedar bark regalia. A large bird, that could be a Thunderbird, hovers above while the sun shines down brightly upon the scene.¹⁶⁹ The original panel and the print share the same title *The Baptism of Christ by John the Baptist*. The iconography of the picture is Christian based with Kwakwaka'wakw traditional imagery as well. Throughout the image, Hunt has blended Kwakwaka'wakw symbolism that creates a visual fusion between the two cultures. He created “the commission with the same respect given the traditions and art of my ancestors as taught to [him] by [his] grandfather, Chief Mungo Martin.” Hunt's goal is to display the similarities of the two cultures. He explains that “within both traditions there appears a creator and historic figures who have dedicated themselves to the spiritual and secular well-being of mankind” and that through “this very project a greater

¹⁶⁸Ibid, 7.

¹⁶⁹Blackman, 105.

understanding of native culture will result in a spiritual harmony for all peoples of this world.”¹⁷⁰ Each Kwakwaka’wakw element is added to show rank through association. John the Baptist is shown as shaman or a chief wearing a Chilkat blanket adorned with red cedar and is holding a raven rattle.¹⁷¹ Hunt presents John the Baptist in regalia that “is the Kwakiutl custom in important ceremonies.”¹⁷² The young Christ is kneeling wearing red cedar bark regalia also associated with sacred *Hamat’sa* Cannibal ceremonies. The dove is depicted like a Thunderbird, descending from the heavens. Hunt depicts the large bird in its half human and half mythical form. Hunt states that “the Thunderbird is all-powerful and is associated with the creation myth.”¹⁷³ Hunt is visually drawing comparisons between the two cultures and uses the same tradition for Native commissioned for Non-Native use, as he would for pieces commissioned for Native tribes.

From the same Canadian Art Conference Collection, Kwakwaka’wakw artist, Lloyd Wadhams Sr (1939 – 1992) created a silver chalice entitled *The Raising of Lazarus* (Fig. 15). Wadhams carves in many mediums, gold, silver, stone and wood. He studied painting and carving from Kwakwaka’wakw Chief, Henry Speck.¹⁷⁴ Unlike Tony Hunt, Wadhams did not

¹⁷⁰*Art Collection*, 14.

¹⁷¹ In addition, Hunt has the right to paint the Chilkat blanket as he is descendant of Mary Ebbets Hunt. The chilkat blanket is said to have originated in the Northern regions of the Pacific Northwest Coast among the Tsimshian and the Tlingit. Mary Ebbets Hunt was a Tlingit noblewoman (also known as Anislaga). She was originally from Tongass, Alaska. In 1843, she married Robert Hunt, the chief factor for the Hudson Bay Company at Port Simpson. She moved with Hunt to Fort Rupert in 1850. She brought with her the skill and right to weave Chilkat blankets. She wove a Chilkat blanket for each of her 12 children. One of her sons was George Hunt of Fort Rupert who worked as collaborator on Franz Boas' ethnographic research (Reciprocal Research Network and Clifford, 138).

¹⁷²*Art Collection*, 14.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴“Lloyd Wadhams” Lattimer Gallery <http://www.lattimergallery.com/artistbio.php?a=179> Accessed on April 9, 2012.

provide a detailed reading of his piece, but instead explained that “everything [he] had to say is in [his] work.”¹⁷⁵ The engraved scene is from the Book of John 11:1-46. Jesus has called to Lazarus to rise from the dead. This is one of the miracles explained by the Bible as performed by Jesus Christ. The raising of Lazarus is a common image found in Western art for its themes of death, resurrection and faith. These themes are also prevalent in the Kwakwaka’wakw winter ceremonies such as the *T’seyka*. The *T’seyka* ceremony is a series of events that begins with dancing initiates being kidnapped and secluded for months at a time where they receive training for the prestigious *Hamat’sa* dance. When the initiates return for the ceremony, they are wild, untamed and display cannibalistic traits as they attempt to bite the arms of spectators. The theme of resurrection is also found in the ceremony’s *Toogwid* dance. The *toogwid* dancer, often a woman, asks to be beheaded or pierced with a wedge. These scenes were depicted in gruesome detail. At the end of the scene, the dancer always returned whole with only “scars” from the ordeal.¹⁷⁶

Wadhams uses a Christian story that finds a basis in death and the consumption of human flesh similar to the themes found in winter Kwakwaka’wakw ceremonies. These similar themes played a key role in the separation of Reverend Duncan from the Anglican Church. Duncan refused to perform the Eucharist with his congregation as it sent mixed messages about the consumption of flesh as seen in dances such as the *Hamat’sa*. The use of the chalice during Catholic Mass is used for ceremonially drinking the blood of Christ as it was commanded during the Last Supper in the Gospel of Matthew 26:27 -28. The ceremony of the Eucharist is further explained in the Book of John. Jesus states that He is the bread of life and that those that who eat

¹⁷⁵*Art Collection* ,18.

¹⁷⁶Bill Holm, “Kwakiutl: Winter Ceremonies” in Suttles (ed) *Handbook of North American Indians* Vol. 7, Washington D.C. Smithsonian Institution; 1990:378 – 386.

His flesh and drink His blood is granted eternal life and will be resurrected on the last day.¹⁷⁷

During Catholic Mass, the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Jesus

Christ.¹⁷⁸ Hunt presented a piece that was visually stylized using traditional Kwakwaka'wakw

iconography, but Wadhams chose to not use traditional imagery on the silver chalice. Wadhams

instead chose to create a chalice with Western symbolism and not apparent Kwakwaka'wakw

symbolism. It is within the overlapping themes of death, resurrection, and consumption of human

flesh that allows Wadhams to present an art piece that creates a commentary on the many

similarities between Native and Christian traditions.

In 2009, Christ Church Cathedral in Vancouver commissioned a new set of five windows

to add to its current collection of stained glass windows. The windows were made by Coast

Salish artist Susan Point and are entitled *The Tree of Life* (Fig. 16). The new stained glass

windows were installed by the entry on the southern wall of the church. The window displays

less traditional church imagery and combines Coast Salish and Christian motifs. The *Tree of Life*

was dedicated on Palm Sunday on April 5th, 2009. The ceremony would provide a link between

the Coast Salish people and the Vancouver Christian community. Each presenter explained the

importance of the presence of the new stained glass. The speakers represented the Christian, First

Nations, government, and workforce communities. Each presenter acknowledged different

aspects of importance, but let the window be the center of focus. The ceremony was opened by

Musquem Elder, Larry Grant as he introduced himself and his ancestors to the church's

congregation. Church leaders, such as The Very Reverend Dr. Peter Elliot explained that this

¹⁷⁷Book of John 6: 26-65, *The Holy Bible, King James Version*. New York: Oxford Edition: 1769; *King James Bible Online*, 2008. <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>

¹⁷⁸Henry J. Schroeder. *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. St. Louis, Mo: B. Herder Book Co, 1941, 42.

dedication ceremony would be a historic day for the Christ Church Cathedral and the city Vancouver. This cathedral is located in the center of a growing city. The newly installed window would provide new symbols to stimulate the imagination so that they would be drawn closer to God. According to Dr. Elliot, the window contains rich symbolism that “is found in Christian tradition and in the spiritual traditions of the First peoples. It is the symbol of a tree, a tree of life, with leaves for the healing of the nations. This is a symbol of healing, of reconciliation, of hope and of god.”¹⁷⁹ The creation of the window is due to the last contribution of Jean Southam, a philanthropist and supporter of the church. According to Rideau Herald Emeritus of Canada Robert Watt, the window brings faith and art together. The Dedication of the windows was performed by the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster, Reverend Michael Ingham. He said:

Bless this window, oh Lord, fashioned by Ancient people to point us to Ancient truth, bless these colors that illumine the great spectrum of your love , bless this tree of life its roots in the earth its branches in heaven , bless all who strive for higher things for the flower of peace and the fruit of harmony.¹⁸⁰

Among the speakers was Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia and Musqueam Leader, the Honorable Steven Point. He thanked the recently deceased Jean Southam for following her father’s words listening to the teachings that he passed on to her. He said, “Much thanks must go to the designers of this beautiful window, my dear relative Susan Point and to Yves Trudeau for his beautiful tradition stain glassed artistry.”¹⁸¹ During the celebration for the window’s dedication ceremony, it was of the opinion of the cathedral parishioners that the window

¹⁷⁹“Tree of Life - Christ Church Cathedral - Stained Glass Windows - Vancouver, BC” <http://video.ezinemark.com/tree-of-life-christ-church-cathedral-stained-glass-windows-vancouver-bc-487b10b9d68.html>, Accessed on April 9, 2012

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

¹⁸¹“Tree of Life - Christ Church Cathedral - Stained Glass Windows”

represents a contemporary link to the Salish Nation. The window is also a representation of the necessity for the Church to get involved with current environmental issues. The stained glass window depicts all of creation in one stroke. The largest central symbol that connects all five windows is the Tree of Life. The tree is presented with forced perspective to make it appear that the tree is rising high above the viewer. The branches spread outward and support the salmon, and birds. The *Tree of Life* celebrates the land and the colors reflect the connection to the mountains and ocean of the Pacific Northwest. The sky, leaves and water are incorporated using simple geometric and stylized leaf shapes. The leaf symbolizes the healing of nations. The vertical flow of the windows displays a visual link between all living things, and the connection between earth and heaven. The salmon, Coast Salish artistic stylization, that are depicted in also refer to Christ Church Cathedral's logo that bears a salmon in a circle referring to the cyclical nature of life in the Northwest Coast and its connection to the *Tree of Life*.

These commissioned pieces were created by Native artists for Christian patrons and spaces. The pieces created are not necessarily an expression of the artist's personal faith. The commissioned art provides complex points of comparison and overlapping themes, such as the recurring themes of death, consumption of human flesh and resurrection found in Wadham's chalice. Artists worked within the parameters established by the patron and still created pieces that reflect a deep level of respect and sincerity. There is a level of understanding between patron and artist. The pieces demonstrate a balance between the artists' Native style and the patrons need to provide visual interpretations of the Christian belief.



Figure 12: Victoria Young (*Nislgumiik*) with Reverend Crosby, 1879. British Columbia Archives Neg. No. G-0729 (Neylan, 122).

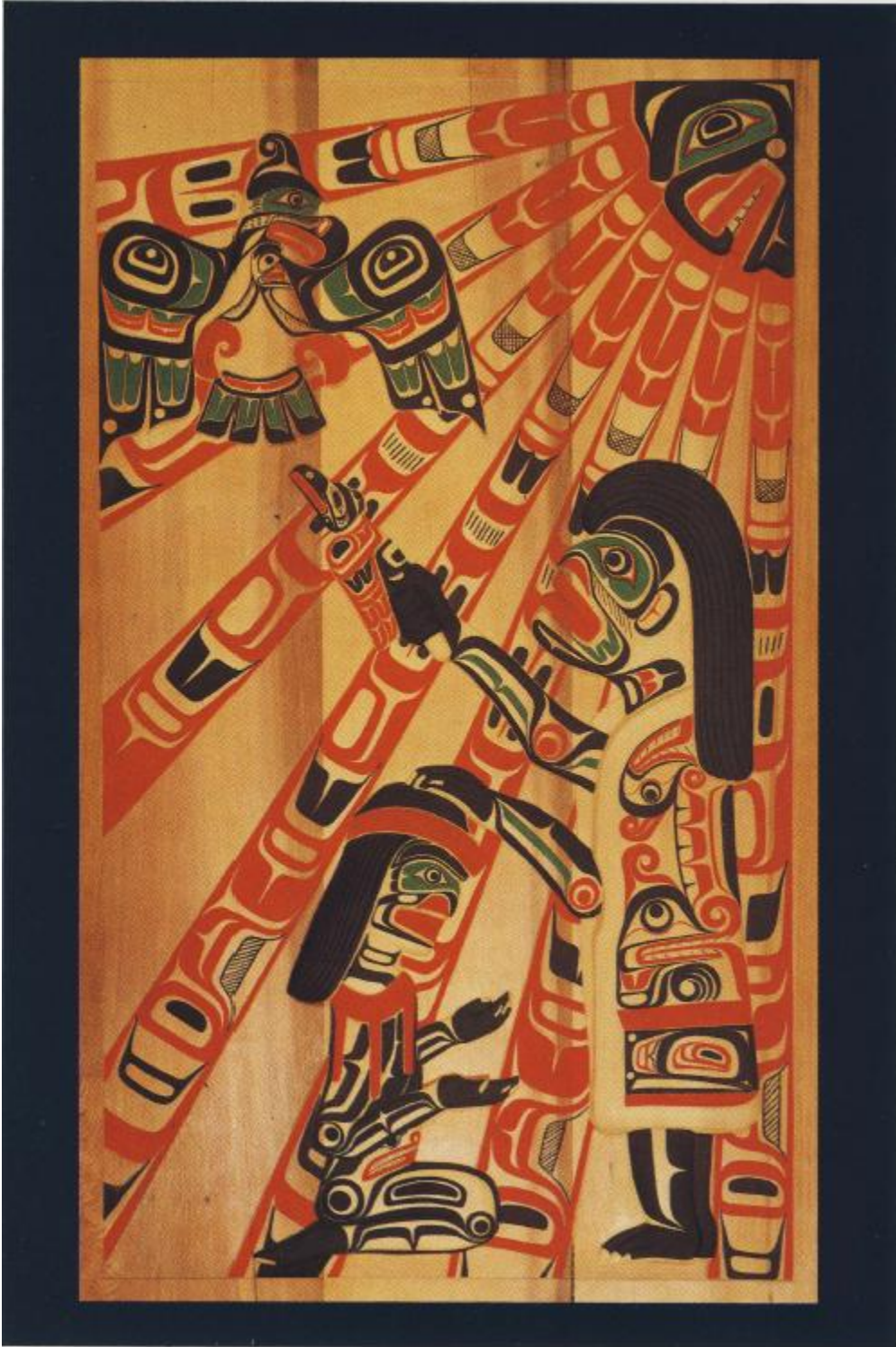


Figure 13: *The Baptism of Christ by John the Baptist*, Tony Hunt, Kwakwaka'wakw, 1976. (*Art Collection*, 15)



Figure 14: Baptismal Print, Tony Hunt, Kwakwaka'wakw, 1976. (Hall, 105).



Figure 15: *Raising of Lazerus*, Lloyd Wadhams Sr. 1976. (*Art Collection*, 19)



Figure 16: *Tree of Life*, Susan Point, Coast Salish, 2009. Published in “Stained Glass Window Self Guided Tour.” Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver, British Columbia. 2010 Web. Accessed on January 22, 2013. Image obtained from <http://goo.gl/oMKaW>.

Chapter 5 Devotional Pacific Northwest Coast Native American Art

This chapter will be a study of personal experiences and the beliefs of three artists that use different media to blend Native artistic styles with Christian stories and icons that reflect their own belief. These pieces are interpreted here based on information from the Native artist's perspective. By following Native voice, the art pieces in this chapter provide visual examples of syncretic Christian and Native values.

Between 1958 and 1964, Kwakwaka'wakw chief and artist, Henry Speck, or *Udzi'stalis* (1908 – 1971) created a number of original paintings depicting creatures from Kwakwaka'wakw mythology and Christian imagery.¹⁸² Speck was born in the Kwakwaka'wakw community of *Kalugwis*. After two years in a boarding school, Speck was initiated to be a *Hamat'sa* dancer at the age of 14. He was a leader within his community and participated in the politics, economies, and cultural practices of his community. Speck was also a fisherman and a Christian. Speck was actively involved in the ceremonial roles he undertook throughout his life, which included the period during the potlatch ban of 1884 – 1951. In addition, he worked within his village to help build a church.¹⁸³ The mixture of Christian and Native iconography in his work is a representation of his conversion and acceptance into the Pentecostal Church in 1952.¹⁸⁴ His paintings are various depictions of the birth, life, and death of Jesus. In the first painting, *No Room at the Inn* (Fig. 17) he depicts two people wearing *Dzunuk'wa* masks and button blankets. The figure on the left holds a bundle of red cedar bark and a staff with a Thunderbird figure and

¹⁸² Both Henry Speck (1908 – 1971) and Frederick Alexie (1853 – 1940's) were creating artwork during the first half of the 20th century. It is possible that more artwork with Christian and Western style motifs were made.

¹⁸³ Karen Duffek and Crosby, Marcia. "Projections: The Paintings of Henry Speck." University of British Columbia. July 2012. Accessed on December 2, 2012.

http://www.satellitegallery.ca/image/MOA-Satellite_Projections.pdf.

¹⁸⁴ "Speck, Henry - U'dzistalis – U'mista Cultural Society Alert Bay, British Columbia." Accessed on April 9, 2012. <http://www.umista.org/giftshop/item.php?item=448>.

a supernatural seal figure. The figure on the right holds its arms across the chest and stomach and faces down. The title suggests that this is an interpretation of Luke 2:7 when Mary and Joseph get turned away from the inn on the night of the birth of Jesus.¹⁸⁵ The next painting depicts the *Nativity of Jesus* (Fig. 18) in what would be a late 19th century Kwakwaka'wakw village with a long house in the distance built with windows and adorned with a *sisootl*, a supernatural three-headed sea serpent.¹⁸⁶ The baby Jesus sits upon his mother's lap under the covering of the manger. She wears a red button blanket that is decorated with a copper, a symbol of great wealth. Joseph gazes downward at mother and child as he holds an elaborately carved staff with a Thunderbird motif. The three kings come bearing gifts in three painted Kwakwaka'wakw canoes. The three Kings are adorned in different regalia such as button blankets, red cedar bark neck rings and ceremonial headdresses. The third painting portrays the crucifixion of Christ entitled *Father Forgive Them* (Fig. 19). Like the previous images, Speck has indigenized this iconic Biblical scene by draping the mourning women, Christ, and the "warrior chief" with Kwakwaka'wakw regalia such as red cedar bark rings, button robes, ceremonial spear, and coppers. Each of these paintings is a visual blending of Speck's indigenous and newly acquired Christian beliefs.

Tsimshian artist, Roy Henry Vickers has spent a portion of his life exploring the Christian and Native culture that created his environment. While studying art in Victoria as a young man, he realized early on that certain people placed the stereotyped notion of "Indian" on him instead

¹⁸⁵“Luke 2:7”. *The Holy Bible, King James Version*. New York: Oxford Edition: 1769; *King James Bible Online*, 2008. Accessed on March 11th, 2013. <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>.

¹⁸⁶ The *Nativity* was collected by Reverend AJ Hall during his visit to the Pacific Northwest coast. Rev. Hall would have collected this piece between his arrival to Fort Rupert in 1878 and his departure in 1912. (Kaye, 1979) The artist's style differs between his early work and the pieces created during the 1960's.

of recognizing that he was more than just a Native but also a Christian. Vickers felt that he had both worlds from which to choose.¹⁸⁷

While enrolled in the Gitanmaax School, he was trained as an “Indian artist.” After graduating, Vickers realized that making a living creating ‘traditional’ works of art could be very frustrating. As a result of his search for his identity, he considers himself to be a contemporary artist that has been academically trained within the old Indian culture and carries a part of that culture within himself.¹⁸⁸ Vickers explores his faith and his Indian culture in his work. *Guardian Angel* (Fig. 20) depicts a warrior angel sitting upon a bed of clouds. According to Vickers, angels, or spiritual guards, are visual icons to many different cultures. He turns to the different accounts of angels in the Bible, such as the angel that approaches Joseph in order to inform him that Mary would have a baby. Vickers chose to portray *My Guardian Angel*, dressed in the armor of a Tsimshian warrior.¹⁸⁹ A sharp red and black sword/spear is seen in his raised humanoid hands. According to Vickers, if the armor were sculpted in three-dimensions, the helmet, face guard, and breastplate would be carved of wood. Painted on the head and face is an eagle. The wings are attached to the back of the breastplate. According to Vickers, the guardian resides on the clouds so that he may watch over him.¹⁹⁰

In addition to his angel, Vickers created a series of prints depicting Christ in different ways. These prints are inspired by German artist Albrecht Durer's wood block print *Head of Christ* (Fig. 21). Durer's *Head of Christ* portrays a single perspective of the crowned Messiah. In *II Timothy 2:11* (Fig. 22), the head of Christ is depicted, like the previous *Guardian Angel*,

¹⁸⁷Roy Henry Vickers. *Solstice: The Art of Roy Henry Vickers*. Tofino, B.C.: Eagle Dancer Enterprises, 1988, 13.

¹⁸⁸Vickers, 14.

¹⁸⁹Ibid, 24.

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

using a series of different formline elements such as s-shapes, uforms, split u's, and ovoids for the eyes, hair, and the mouth. Unlike the Durer print, Vicker's rendition depicts Christ in two different states. The face and hair are divided down the center. The black half of the print shows a calm Christ while the red side, ultimately depicting a Christ donning the crown of thorns, has three tears from the eye down the cheek. *II Timothy 2:11* was also replicated on a wooden plaque that had vertical adzed marks (Fig. 23). Another piece of the crucifixion series is *John 15:13* (Fig.24). Like the previous prints, the head of crucified Christ is also portrayed through the use of formline. In order to use the print as a method to spread the message of Christianity, Vickers produced an unlimited number of prints and sold them at low cost.¹⁹¹

The inclusion of two Biblical verses as the titles of his piece reflects his values and motives for his prints. The use of Biblical references is a common characteristic of Vickers' Indigenized Christian prints. The title of the print references specific Biblical verses. *II Timothy 2:11* states, "This is a faithful saying... For if we died with Him, We shall live with Him."¹⁹² *John 15:13* states "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."¹⁹³ These verses reflect key themes within the Christian religion.

In 1970, Vickers created a print that was again inspired by Durer (Fig. 25). Vickers had an opportunity to see a Durer rendition of the biblical account of the *Creation of Eve* (Fig. 26). He wanted to create the scene using the traditional shapes and colors of Tsimshian art. The print continues to show his exploration of formline design to depict the human body. He used the same method to create Adam and Eve as he would with any traditional animal. Adam is lying on

¹⁹¹Edwin S Hall, Margaret B. Blackman, and Vincent Rickard. *Northwest Coast Indian Graphics: An Introduction to Silk Screen Prints*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981, 96.

¹⁹²"*II Timothy 2:11.*" *The New King James Bible: New Testament*. Nashville: T. Nelson, 1979.

¹⁹³Ibid.

the ground and Eve is seen emerging from his rib cage. Vickers turns to Biblical inspirations of the accounts of God's appearance as a dove and includes a bird that hovers above Adam and Eve.¹⁹⁴ The joints of Adam and Eve are composed of black solid inner ovoids. The primary formline is black and the intricate red secondary formline provides glimpses at musculature and the skeletal structure. Another print that appears to be inspired by Genesis 1:21 is *-Natl* (Fig. 27). The title of the print is the Tsimshian word for whale/killer whale.¹⁹⁵ The two whales face each other in profile and are jumping out of the ocean with waves lapping at their fins. The larger u-shape enclosing them could be a variety of different elements such as depicting the heavens above or could also be purely decorative. Although the whales appear to be symmetrical, the stylized faces within the fins both face the same direction. The verse reads,

And God created great whales, And every living creature that moveth, Which the waters brought forth abundantly, After their kind, And every winged fowl after his kind: And God saw that it was good.¹⁹⁶

Another print, *First Horsemen* (Fig. 28), is based on the Book of Revelations Chapter 6 verse 1-2:

Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

The formline rider sits astride a rearing horse holding a bow and arrow as he turns back toward unseen targets. The rider and horse have been indigenized by adding decorative elements to their bodies, crown and clothing like feathers or other animal skin. The feathered headdress is similar in style to this worn by the Plains tribes. To the Native tribes of the Great Plains, ceremonial gear

¹⁹⁴Vickers, 34.

¹⁹⁵It can also be written as *'naaxl*.

¹⁹⁶Ibid.

was considered a form of adornment that held cosmological meaning. Men, women, and children dressed themselves with feathers, claws and other items obtained from the natural world.¹⁹⁷

Feathered headdresses, also known as war bonnets, were used in battles and special ceremonies.

Using feathers as adornment was reserved for the most accomplished warriors. Each feather present on the headdress was earned by performing an act of honor or bravery.¹⁹⁸ The previous three Bible inspired scenes and the Crucifixion print series are visual representations of cultural blending and the hybridization of Christianity with Northwest art style and Plains Indian iconography.

Vickers identifies himself as both Native and Christian. In his book *Solstice*, he reflects upon past Easters in his home village of Kitkatla,

Easter was a high point in the village each year. There was a whole week of activities organized throughout the week to celebrate this special time...and Easter Sunday was a culmination of the celebrations. We had a beautiful church and an equally beautiful choir that filled the rafters with song. It seemed that the roof would rise to the heavens when the congregation sang.¹⁹⁹

The prints are to be reminders that Easter is not just a holiday for egg hunts, but was cause to meditate.²⁰⁰ He states, “The basic thought behind this creation was that if we identify with Christ in crucifixion and death, we also acknowledge his resurrection and everlasting life.”²⁰¹ *The Creation of Eve, Natl, My Guardian Angel, The First Horseman of the Apocalypse* and different

¹⁹⁷ Berlo, 112-3.

¹⁹⁸ Hope Werness. *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Animal Symbolism in Art*. New York: Continuum, 2004, 173.

¹⁹⁹ Vickers, 11.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 80.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

Christ prints illustrate his need to be different and his recognition that he has his own personal style.²⁰² These prints reflect Vickers' commitment to both Christianity and his Native culture.²⁰³

Another Kwakwaka'wakw artist to include Christ upon the crucifix was Wayne Alfred. Alfred's *Christ at Gol-Go-Tha* (Fig. 29), was created in 1988. Like Speck, Alfred grew up as a Kwakwaka'wakw dancer and carver. Alfred recalls how the practice of Native traditions of his people was long discouraged, but although not allowed, those practices still remained strong. Alfred understands of what his identity is composed. He can remember that the stories and songs he heard as a child were important parts of his identity.²⁰⁴ Alfred acknowledges his ancestral connections to the Haida and Nuu-chah-nulth, as well as the Tlingit. In addition, following the same personal motives as Vickers, Alfred finds no contradiction between his own deeply held Christian beliefs and his Kwakwaka'wakw tradition. Both of his beliefs are seen on *Christ at Gol-Go-Tha*.²⁰⁵ The Christ figure is restrained on the cross using rope and nails. The cross contains adze like marks similar to those seen on house posts.²⁰⁶ Blood drips from the wounds to emphasize the location of the punctures. The cross is stabilized by a large skull. At the top of the cross, a small copper resides above the crown of thorns as a symbol of prestige.²⁰⁷ The Christ figure has turned his face upwards and closed his eyes. He wears a small loin cloth that covers his hips. The details on the torso of the sculptural figure provide emphasis on the exposed ribs. Alfred uses a three dimensional sculpture to convey the importance of Christianity in his life.

²⁰²Ibid, 14.

²⁰³Blackman, 55.

²⁰⁴Thom, 7.

²⁰⁵Thom, 9.

²⁰⁶Barbara DeMott, Maureen Milburn, and Charles H. Scott Gallery. *Beyond the Revival: Contemporary North West Native Art*. Vancouver: Charles H. Scott Gallery, Emily Carr College of Art and Design, 1989, 53.

²⁰⁷DeMott, 53.

Throughout the piece, he also reaffirms his Native identity alongside his Christian one.

Townsend-Gault describes the piece by comparing the crucifixion, a piece of art that conveys a set of different personal beliefs, to those of the Baroque period. She reads the suffering of a Native Christ and the skull symbolism as commentary on the fearfulness of death. As the skull is located at the bottom, she compares it to the hierarchical position on a totem pole as the lowest figure on the pole that could be considered an important position.²⁰⁸ Another reading, provided by Barbara DeMott, says that the skull is a reference to Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial imagery.²⁰⁹ In addition to the previous interpretations of the skull, the title of the piece also alludes to another Christian theme. According to Christian belief, Golgotha was the name of the hill where the crucifixion took place. Golgotha can also be translated to mean "skull." Another important reading is found in the inherited privilege Alfred received as *Hamat'sa* dancer. In the movie "In search of the Hamat'sa : a tale of headhunting" by Aaron Glass, Alfred explains the importance of the moves in the dance and provides a close reading as they relate to the story being performed (Fig. 30 -32).²¹⁰ Alfred guides the viewer through the motions of the dance in perfect synchronism. The piece ultimately reflects and forces the viewer to meditate on the ideas of death, fear, and resurrection.²¹¹ Alfred was successfully able to integrate themes of the Eucharist and the Kwakwaka'wakw Tseyka where Reverend Duncan was afraid to tackle the reenactment of cannibalism.

The works created by these artists were during a time of great innovation and celebration. Canada ended its official suppression of feasting and gifting ceremonies in 1951. The following

²⁰⁸Townsend-Gault, 463.

²⁰⁹DeMott, 53.

²¹⁰Aaron Glass. *In Search of the Hamat'sa: A Tale of Headhunting*. Watertown, MA: Documentary Educational Resources, 2007.

²¹¹Townsend-Gault, 463.

years were a form a period of “art revivals.” These artists were able to create pieces of cultural interaction and are visually presenting a syncretic response to the adaption of Christian motifs and stories in their art. These pieces allow for the study of the personal reflections of the three artists. The final step will be to examine the response within a larger community and the ever present Christian Space.



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Figure 17: No Room at the Inn, Chief Henry Speck, 1964, painting, watercolour. Accessed on January 21, 2013. Image obtained from <http://aboriginalart.vancouverartinthesixties.com/>



Figure 18: Nativity, Chief Henry Speck, early 20th century, Painting, Photograph by Robin Wright. Manchester Museum, Cat. No. MAN 0.9627/44.

Father Forgive Them
watercolour on paper, 13 1/2" x 16 1/2"



Figure 19: *Father Forgive Them*, Chief Henry Speck, 1964, Painting, watercolour. Accessed on January 21, 2013. Image obtained from <http://aboriginalart.vancouverartinthesixties.com>.



Figure 20: *My Guardian Angel*, Roy Henry Vickers, Tsimshian, 1977, silkscreen print, University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology Catalogue Number 1355/7. Accessed on March 11th, 2013. Image obtained from rrpilot.org.

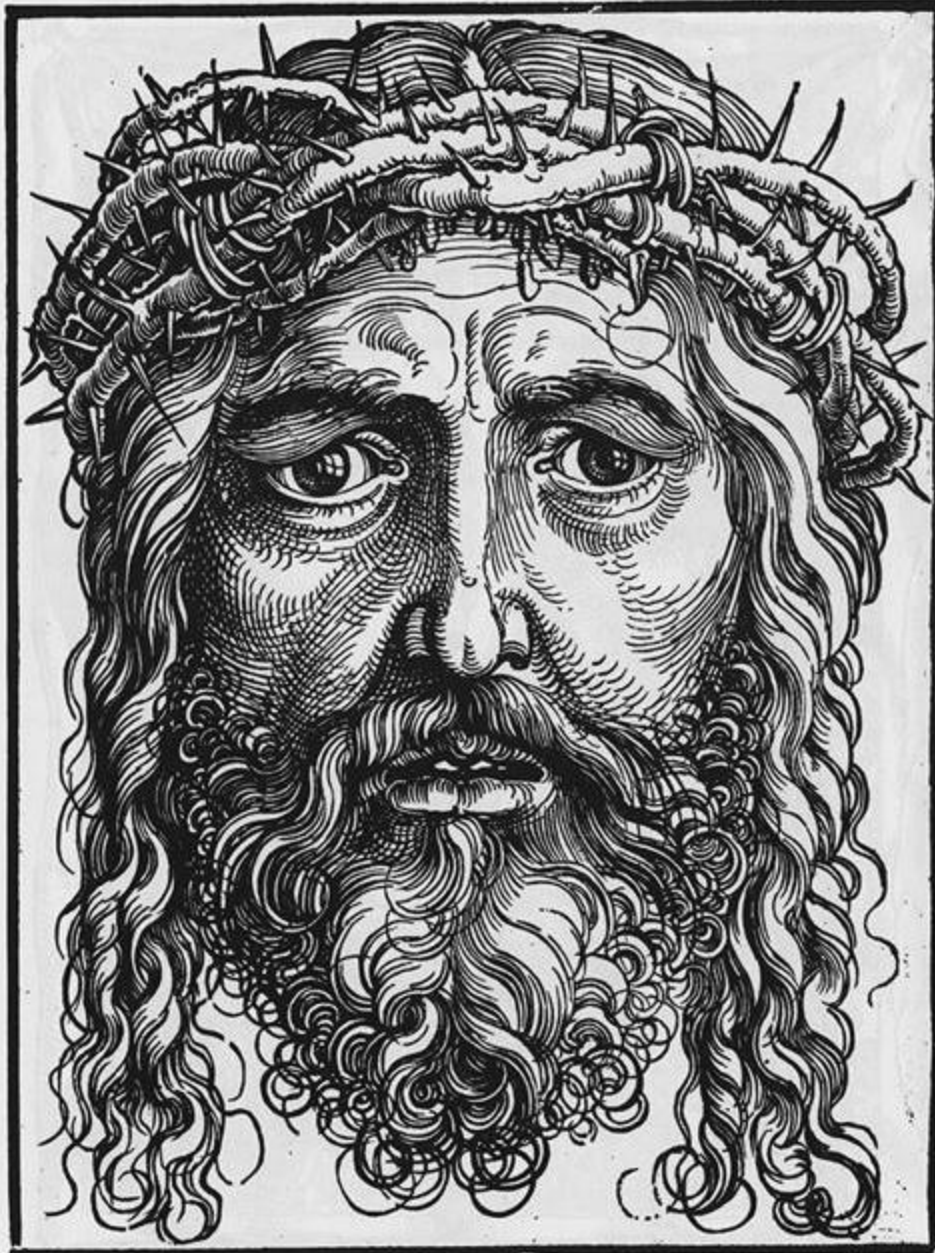


Figure 21: *Head of Christ* from the *Illustrated Bartsch*, Albrecht Dürer (1471 – 1528). Artstor Id No. [SW.X-30] . Accessed on March 11th 2013. Image obtained from <http://library.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=8zJTcjI2ISNaKyg9ez1y>.



Figure 22: *II Timothy 2:11,12* Roy Henry Vickers, 1976, Tsimshian, silkscreen print, University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology Catalogue Number Nb7.234. Accessed on March 11th, 2013. Image obtained from rrpilot.org.



Figure 23: *II Timothy 2:11,12* Roy Henry Vickers, 1976, Tsimshian , paint and wood, University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology Catalogue Number Nb7.234. Accessed on March 11th, 2013. Image obtained from rrnpilot.org.



Figure 24: *John 15:13, Hebrews 9:28*, Roy Henry Vickers, 1976, Tsimshian, Silk Screen, University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology Catalogue Number Nb7.238. Accessed on March 11th, 2013. Image obtained from rrpilot.org.



Figure 25: *The Creation of Eve* from the *Nuremburg Chronicle*, Albrecht Dürer (1471 – 1528), woodcut. Accessed on March 11, 2013.

Image obtained from

<http://library.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=8zJTcjI2ISNaKC85ez56>



Figure 26: *Creation of Eve*, Roy Henry Vickers, c1976, Tsimshian, silkscreen print, University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology Catalogue Number: Nb7.302. Accessed on March 11th, 2013. Image obtained from rnpilot.org.



Figure 27: *Natl*, Roy Henry Vickers, c1976, Tsimshian, silkscreen print, Royal British Columbia Museum Catalogue Number 15295. Accessed on March 11th, 2013. Image obtained from <http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca>.

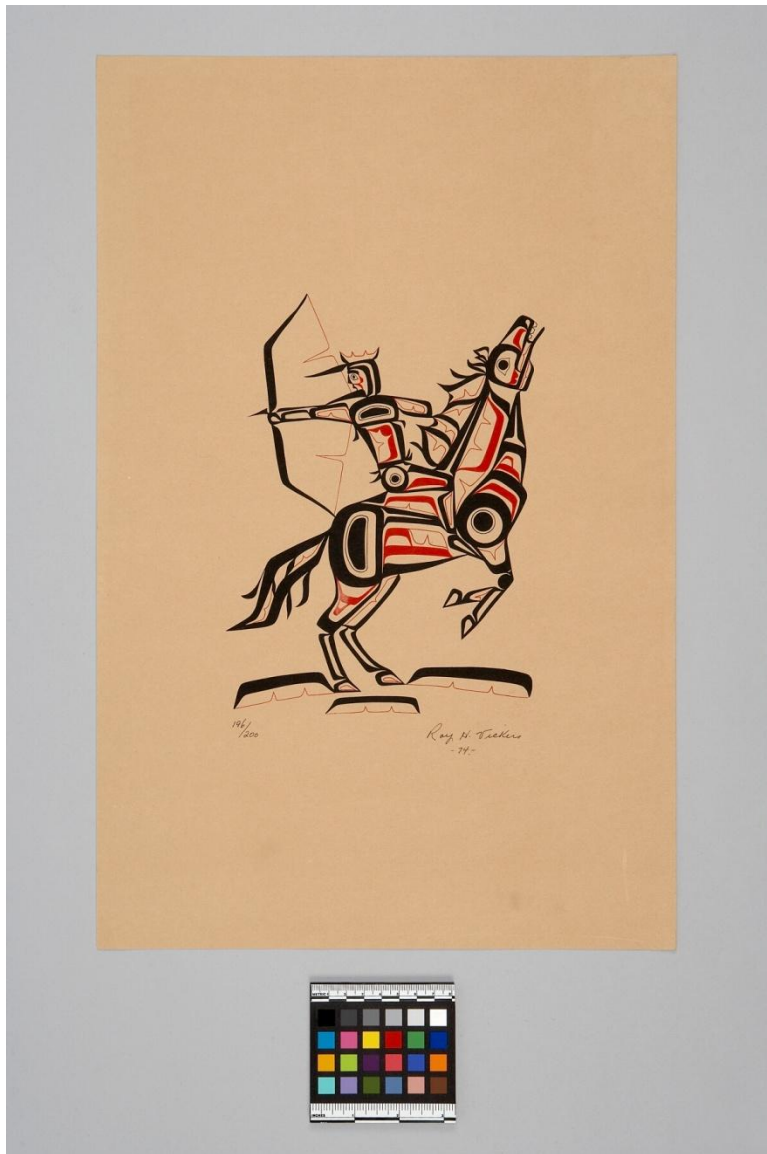


Figure 28: *First Horse of the Apocalypse*, Roy Henry Vickers, c1974, Tsimshian , Print, University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology Catalogue Number Nb7.226. Accessed on March 11th, 2013. Image obtained from rrpilot.org.

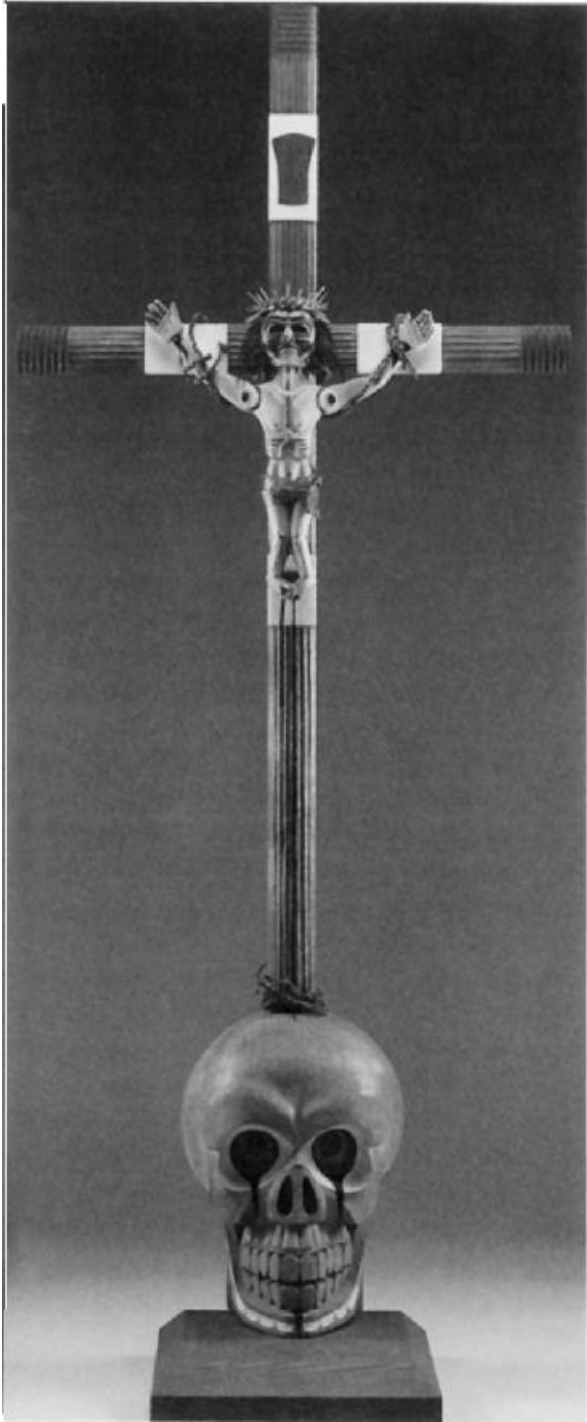


Figure 29: *Christ at Gol-go-tha*, Wayne Alfred, 1988, Kwakwaka'wakw (Townsend-Gault, 463)



Figure 30-32: Image stills obtained from Aaron Glass's *In Search of the Hamat'sa: A Tale of Headhunting*. Watertown, MA: Documentary Educational Resources, 2007.

Chapter 6 Indigenized Christian Spaces

The presence of the missionaries created unique “sites of engagement over symbolic practices.”²⁰⁹ Villages with missions had a different appearance, but still retained hints of “pre-contact” social organization. The “Christian space” was understood and conceptualized differently by the different groups. The previous chapters have explored pieces of art with different themes and reasons for the inclusion of Christian motifs. Another example of hybridization and syncretic art can be seen in Christian spaces such as churches and cemeteries, such as Susan Point’s commissioned stained glass window for Christ Church Cathedral in Vancouver, British Columbia. This chapter will demonstrate additional examples of visually merging of two distinct cultures and the dualism of Christian spaces after appropriation.

The unending influx of settlers, missionaries, and government agents affected Northwest Coast art in a variety of ways. Certain groups drastically curtailed art production as a result of the banning of the potlatch, some devoted all their artistic energies to making art for tourists or museums. Even those who fully converted to Christianity did not entirely abandon the crest system, as they depicted treasured clan images on their Christian gravestones. Despite external appearances, Native people had not been completely assimilated into the white world, and their traditional culture was by no means eradicated. Instead the blending of two different cultures provides the possibility that one can be both Native and Christian.²¹⁰

European traditions, such as the introduction of single family dwellings and the introduction of Christian cemeteries, resulted in the creation of “indigenized” Christian spaces at the community level.²¹¹ The church played an important role in most communities although the

²⁰⁹Neylan, 235.

²¹⁰Hawker 2001, 43.

²¹¹Ibid, 235.

missionaries changed. The Christian church was accepted as a social institution and moral force. The government and missionaries associated Christianity with assimilation, thus a Native could not be a good Christian unless they relinquished traditional customs. However, as we have seen explored in prior chapters, the end result was a form of “indigenized” Christianity. From a distance, church structures are easily recognizable and were symbols for the communities. As seen in Roy Vicker’s *St. Peter’s Kitkatla, St. John-Masset, and St Mary’s Magdalene*, the churches are the central focal point (Fig. 34, 35, 36). The churches are easily recognizable with their crosses and gabled roof tops. Each print also has a traditional Native icon or monument. In the *St. Peter’s Kitkatla*, there is a winged being floating above the church and a formline design bird-like head floating in the moon.²¹² The floating being could be an angel or could be referring to a supernatural being. Within *St. John-Masset and St Mary’s Magdalene*, a totem pole sits in front of the church. There is no doubt that the church in *St. John-Masset* is St John Anglican Church in Old Masset. The pole in front is Robert Davidson’s Bear Mother Pole (Fig. 49). Although the landscape surrounding the churches have been altered to represent a romanticized Pacific Northwest environment, the architecture and the names of the church show, like *St. John-Masset*, the other two prints are also based on real churches from Vicker’s community (Fig. 34, 37). These buildings have been appropriated into Vicker’s prints and showcase and Indigenized Christian space.

Missionary changes were not all based on Christian teachings. There was a lack of communication and many misunderstandings between missionaries and Native communities. The missionaries looked at the tribal houses and saw a large plank house accommodating a number of families in what they considered to be unsanitary conditions. As there were no

²¹² This stylized moon is a common symbol in Vicker’s artwork and has become his trademark.

windows, there was no circulation to move the smoke out and caused soot to coat the inside of the houses. The smoky interiors would foster pulmonary diseases such as tuberculosis that had been brought to the coast by outsiders. The missionaries did not see the big houses communities as a family unit or unit of government and pushed for single-family, Western-style residences. The new house type would change traditional patterns of living. The missionaries applied the same process toward the eradication of totem poles and potlatches. The missionaries misunderstood the purpose of the two and thought that totem poles were objects of worship. Like the new single family households, they believed the poles would serve no purpose after assimilation. Potlatching was seen as a system to dispose of goods alongside heathen celebrations of cannibalism.²¹³ These are unfortunate examples of misunderstanding from the missionary perspective.

As Natives adapted and were introduced to Christianity with more frequency, the environment changed to reflect a transformation from pre-contact traditions to new blending of cultures. As explained by Susan Neylan, “one of the most distinctive recurring visual and rich world images permeating missionary literature was the dichotomy of “before and after conversion.”²¹⁴ Pictures of Native community members appeared in the Euro-Canadian literature. The pictures provided readers back in large cities a visual way to track the belief changes experienced by the Native individuals. This same idea can be applied to the Native community environment. The villages transformed into “Christian spaces.” The church, school, and single family houses were signifiers of Victorian urban life.²¹⁵ As part of the transformation,

²¹³Hoagland, Alison K. "Totem Poles and Plank Houses: Reconstructing Native Culture in Southeast Alaska." *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*. (1997), 180.

²¹⁴Neylan, 234.

²¹⁵Ibid.

totem poles were labeled as pagan and burial ceremonies as unsanitary. There were missionaries that sought to completely eradicate “traditional” pre-contact way of life. There were also missionaries that saw the benefits of public display of crest designs in certain contexts. The Native communities were still able to blend both Christian iconography within Native art and practices although the some missionaries were attempting to remove any “pagan traditions.” An example of blending Christian belief with Native imagery is a method used by members of different tribes to blend new icons.²¹⁶ In the first church of Metlakatla, these crest poles and boxes were commissioned and installed in the church (Fig 38). These totem poles were carved to portray the four Tsimshian crests: Killer whale and Wolf on the right, and Raven and Beaver on the left. The poles are a reflection of the merging of three different cultures. The poles reside in a church and the beaver substituted for the original Eagle crest to represent the acquired wealth obtained from the fur trade.²¹⁷ The poles and crests aided Reverend William Duncan in his goal to create a unified Christian community, he said, "I never interfered with the crest business... It was very helpful to me. Members of the same crest would not fight with each other."²¹⁸

Missionaries saw a need for changing old traditions in order to improve what they thought was unsanitary living conditions. When Rev. William Collison arrived at Massett, his first project was to ask for the burial of the dead instead of placing the remains within trees and mortuary poles. Collison made the changes to the funerary traditions his first priority instead of implementing rules such as convincing the Indians to give up “devilry.” Collison wanted to clear

²¹⁶Neylan, 235.

²¹⁷Ibid, 258.

²¹⁸Ibid.

“the fetid atmosphere which hung about the village, and would aid in disease prevention.”²¹⁹ The change in burial traditions created new opportunities to blend Christian and Native imagery. As a method of keeping with tradition and adapting to the Christian burial methods, the mortuary potlatch was changed to center around the raising of headstones instead of poles.

Another example of blending of Native and Christian space and syncretic traditions can be seen in the late 19th century burial traditions. Christian-style tombstones that displayed matrilineal crest figures were produced in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The tombstones contained different crests such as eagles, ravens, killer whales, grizzly bears, thunderbirds, dogfish, fireweeds and mountain ferns. The tombstones were carved from native-drawn sketches by white stone masons from Prince Rupert, Victoria, or Seattle. The final products did not always follow the guidelines of Northwest Coast art.²²⁰ Hawker concludes that the cost of purchasing Western-style gravestones carved with aboriginal crests allowed Chiefs an opportunity to display ceremonial and economic wealth in single object, similar to memorial and mortuary poles.²²¹ The stone monuments provide an example of syncretic forms. The Tsimshian, Haida, and other Northwest Coast were able to adapt a new medium to fulfill traditional social needs.²²²

This new hybridized tradition was incorporated right away and yet, there were certain families that still adhered to prior traditions. When Haida Eagle Chief *sdiihldaa* (c1827 – 1877) passed away, he was the first to receive a Christian burial with encouragement from Rev.

²¹⁹John R Henderson. “Missionary Influences on the Haida Settlement and Subsistence Patterns.” 1876-1920 *Ethnohistory* Vol. 21, No. 4 (Autumn, 1974), 306.

²²⁰Blackman 1976, 398.

²²¹Neylan, 264.

²²²Ibid.

Collison.²²³ The new Chief *sdiihldaa*, James Stanley, commissioned his memorial pole.²²⁴ Other changes were adopted into the positioning of the body. The body of the deceased was no longer placed in the seated position but was placed on its back and interred with the accompaniment of a Christian prayer.²²⁵ The change in burial was a break in the chain of social hierarchy. All individuals, the high and low ranked members of the tribe, were destined to rest beneath the ground. In order to continue the visually displayed rank, members turned to the use of headstones and grave houses, or lack thereof, to express their status. The new earth burial system was not received easily by the people from Old Massett. The process of interment was not the only problem, but also the location of the headstones within the cemeteries. Traditionally, those that belonged to different moieties could not be buried together. The remains of individuals were located in close proximity to the homes of the same matrilineal clan. Margaret Blackman suggests that although this new system of burial was introduced, the clans kept placing remains according to matrilineal membership.²²⁶

The burial ceremony was transformed into a hybridization of a Protestant memorial service and a mortuary potlatch. The combinations of different styles and iconography created an environment that made missionaries “compromise in order to maintain their congregation’s membership in the church.”²²⁷ There totem pole raisings were to be no more, but instead there was the placement of a headstone in the village cemetery. The guest list would be composed of local villagers and the missionaries. The funeral services would be performed by the church.²²⁸

²²³Wright, 297.

²²⁴Wright, 298.

²²⁵Blackman, 49.

²²⁶Ibid.

²²⁷Hawker 2001, 43.

²²⁸Blackman, 398.

To dissuade the practice of potlatching, missionaries like Charles Harrison heavily suggested that tombstones be erected instead of memorial poles and the money that was originally to be used for the potlatch be sent to Victoria to purchase the tombstones.²²⁹ Because a portion of the tombstones were commissioned from white mason carvers, there were visual differences from the Pacific Northwest Coast style. Margaret Blackman notes that the designs appear “crudely naturalistic.”²³⁰ As seen in an early twentieth century funeral photograph, the headstone of Chief Skowal has a carved whale fin (Fig. 39). The design is based on an earlier traditional wooden crest figure which sat atop a grave house at Kasaan.²³¹ In comparison, there are documented cases where local master carvers were chosen. The commissioned artist chosen to design the crest for Duncan Ginouan was his great niece’s, Isabella Edenshaw’s husband, Haida carver Charles Edenshaw (Fig. 40).²³² The adoption of tombstones to commemorate the dead occurred all along the Northwest Coast at missionary urging, but the new headstones commemorated the dead in a method never intended by the missionaries. The gravestones were an adaptable medium and would continue the function of mortuary poles. Art historian, Ronald Hawker has extensively examined the role of gravestones as examples of Tsimshian culture adopting new traditions with traditional imagery. Art among the Tsimshian functioned as a social statement. The Christian gravestones and stone monuments introduced by the missionaries could replace the poles as a means to make claims to names and crests. There were accompanying practices of feasting, communal participation, and distribution of goods that are similar to the process of raising a mortuary pole. Gravestones advertise clan and lineage position through the inclusion of

²²⁹Blackman 1976, 397; Blackman 1973, 50.

²³⁰Blackman, 399.

²³¹Blackman 1976, 398.

²³²Ibid.

ranked names in epitaphs and carved clan crests in the monument decoration. Second, they also indicate Christian thought through their explicit references to Christian iconography.²³³ While at first glance these sorts of monuments seem to be jarring cross-cultural juxtapositions, they demonstrate the possibility of being both Tsimshian and Christian.

Gravestones could incorporate inscriptions and epitaphs. The written language was appropriated by the Tsimshian as a new source of status and a new method of recording events and history.²³⁴ Epitaphs could be used to portray different ideals to suit the deceased's memory. A Gitxan gravestone from a double-finned wolf sits on top of a base that bears the inscription "Safe in the Arms of Jesus" (Fig. 41). Another example would include the appearance of potlatching records engraved on the tombstones instead of Western epitaphs. In a photograph taken by Harlan I. Smith, archeologist for the Canadian Museum of Civilization, a Bella Coola tombstone at Tallhio was created in honor of Susan who "potlatched among her friends \$1600 before her death" (Fig. 42).²³⁵ The gravestones also had non-written displays of personal information. The Tsimshian incorporated crest designs into Victorian Canadian mortuary art, thus transforming gravestones into a stone memorial or mortuary pole. The meaning of these "stone poles" is similar to pre-contact laws that dictated who could "own" specific intellectual property. Protocol was to be followed when displaying intellectual property and the right to display crests and other intellectual property was still an important factor. Non-Native gravestone carvings, such as angels, were only reserved for children who had passed away before receiving status, names or crests.

²³³Hawker, 43.

²³⁴Neylan, 264.

²³⁵Blackman 1976, 398.

Another example of blending of Native and European tradition is seen on a Haisla Grave marker from Kitimaat (1906) (Fig. 43). The inscription from the bottom provides the deceased's name and personal information traditional to Western epitaphs. Above it, however, there is a crouching bear with small stylized faces within the ears. The bear and the traditional inscription are a visual blending of the two cultures present at the time. Although urged by missionaries to give up Native practices, tribal members managed to use both crest images and the Western style tombstones to their advantage.²³⁶ As seen in the picture taken by Marius Barbeau in 1947 of a Masset Cemetery from the collection of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the headstone reads, "In Memory of David Nahtlan Chief of Yan, Died March 8, 1887, Aged 48 years" (Fig. 44). Looking from above a little bear peers over the headstone. The English words define rank, and the bear is a crest figure that supports his claim. The tombstones became another three-dimensional medium that could be decorated with crest art and celebrated the chief's greatness.²³⁷

In the late 20th century, religious leaders and native communities would begin a long process in reconciling past events. Pope John Paul II would become the first Pope to set foot on Canadian soil in 1984.²³⁸ His visit across Canada would lead him through Quebec City, Trois-Rivières, Montreal, St. John's, Moncton, Halifax, Toronto, Midland (Ontario), Winnipeg/St. Boniface, Edmonton, Yellowknife, Vancouver and Ottawa/Hull. During this trip, he had several goals, one of which was to connect with Canadian First Nations people. He shared his views on

²³⁶Jonaitis, 187.

²³⁷Blackman 1976, 397.

²³⁸Lloyd Wadhams was commissioned to create a silver chalice in honor of the 1984 visit. It is not clear if the silver chalice from the Canadian Catholic Conference and the chalice for the Pope are the same. The collection was purchased by the Catholic Art Conference Publications Service. The artworks were commissioned by, and paid for from the then surplus of the Publications Service. The collection is on loan at the Musée des Religions du Monde in Nicolet, Quebec. As of February 2012, the Internal Publication Services department has been closed and no further information on the collection is available (Larsen Personal Email).

solidarity, justice, peace, the place of youth, the respect of Indigenous cultures.²³⁹ When he spent time with First Nation peoples of Southern Canada, Pope John demonstrated a willingness to include their spiritual rituals in the church. When the Pope ended his tour, he left an open door to people of Christian and non-Christian backgrounds. Wherever the Pope went he praised the different ethnic and religious groups.²⁴⁰

In the late 20th and 21st centuries, some Native communities have re-appropriated Christian spaces. An example of re-appropriation of a Christian space can be seen in Hugh Brody's 1994 documentary *The Washing of Tears*. The primary focus of the film follows the Mowachat tribe as they attempt to regain access to a stolen whaling shrine. A small piece of the documentary also films an important event that would change in the interior structure and role of the Catholic Church. Mowachat elder, Jerry Jack said,

On August 29th of this year in '93, August 29th in Friendly Cove, we are going to be raising house poles that my grandpa had in his long house and we hadn't got any place else to put but put inside the church. We are going to be taking over that church. We told the Bishop and the Catholics that the building belongs to us and I'm going to put my totem poles where he used to have his alter and if after on, they want, still want to have their service in there we are not going to take it away from them because we respect everybody's way of praying. We don't condemn. You can never tell the Church or a Catholic you are going to go to hell because you don't belong to my church and that's the difference between our way, our spirituality and the white man religion.²⁴¹

²³⁹“1984: Pope John Paul II's First Visit to Canada” Accessed on April 9, 2012.

<http://www.cccb.ca/site/eng/church-in-canada-and-world/catholic-church-in-canada/indigenous-peoples/3204-1984-pope-john-paul-iis-first-visit-to-canada>.

²⁴⁰Dick Gordan, “1984 Papal Tour Deemed not Particularly Memorable.” CBC News. Accessed on April 9, 2012. <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/society/religion-spirituality/the-1984-papal-visit/the-papal-tour-deemed-not-particularly-memorable.html>.

²⁴¹Hugh Brody, Gillian Darling, Cari Green, George Johnson, and Barb Cranmer. *The Washing of Tears*. Canada: NFB/ONF, 2007.

The original church was built by Father Augustin Josphe Brabant in 1875. The present church was built in 1956 and built near the same location of the original church that burned down in the 1950's.²⁴² Although elder Jerry Jack had hopes for a cohabitation of the space, the church no longer holds services, but serves cultural center and as a space to display replicas of traditional Mowachat interior house posts.²⁴³ The posts were raised in customary fashion with songs and feasting (Fig. 45, 46, 47). The post on the west side was erected in 1993 and honors of one of the Muchalaht chiefs. The Maquinna post on the east side was erected in 1994 and honors another Mowachat chief.²⁴⁴ The raising of the poles within the Yuquot Catholic Church was an act to renew cultural strength inspired by the connection to a previously lost artifact, the Whalers' Shrine.²⁴⁵ The cultural center is home to maps and architectural plans for the future Na'mis Interpretive Center.²⁴⁶ Over the entry way of the cultural center is a stained glass window depiction of the Yuquot that was donated by the Spanish government in 1957 to celebrate the new building that replaced the original church. Although the interior of the building has changed with the use of house posts and appears to have taken on the form of a big house, the exterior still reflects a Christian image and results in a space of hybridized architecture.

In 1969, Haida artist Robert Davidson was inspired to carve his first totem pole for the elders of his communities (Fig. 48). Davidson saw the elders holding a church and prayer meeting. Davidson was struck by the Christian act that was different from the older Haida ways.

²⁴²Liz Bryan, *Country Roads of Western BC: From the Fraser Valley to the Islands*. Surrey, B.C: Heritage House, 176.

²⁴³Bryan, 176.

²⁴⁴Aldona Jonaitis, and Richard Inglis. *The Yuquot Whalers' Shrine*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999, 49.

²⁴⁵Ibid, 68.

²⁴⁶Michael Leeb. 'Syncretic signs' *On Site review*, no. 18 Fall/Winter 2007/2008. Accessed on December 10th, 2012. <http://onsitereview.blogspot.com/2008/07/syncretic-signs-yuquot-bc-two-house.html>.

According to Davidson, their identity, culture and beliefs had been replaced by Christian ideals.²⁴⁷ On trips back home during his high school years, after having spent time in museums in Vancouver, B.C, he felt that his village had been emptied of art. Although Davidson's family was devout Christians, Davidson felt that there was an "emptiness of culture." Many of the old Haida traditions were "secretly kept alive" in church meetings, weddings, Christmas dinners and funerals. The government had placed laws to prevent the practice of the old traditions.²⁴⁸ His purpose for carving this pole was to provide the people a reason to shine. To give the elders an opportunity to celebrate like they had in the past prior to the bans placed on the First Nation communities. By carving this pole, he felt that he was no longer hanging between the borders of two different cultures, Haida and the white man's, but through the initiation of this large project, he felt a push that he identifies as the circle of Haida knowledge.²⁴⁹ This would be the first pole to be raised on Haida Gwaii in 90 years.²⁵⁰ The symbols on the pole were inspired by a Tsimshian story that was shared by the Haida. The story follows the life of a chief's daughter that was kidnapped by the bear people. The creation of the pole brought mixed reactions. There was some resistance from those who thought that this pole would be the beginnings of returning to a previous heathen lifestyle that conflicted with their Christian values. Others welcomed the pole and began to research the protocol to raise it.²⁵¹ The pole-raising was accompanied by a grand celebration. Old songs and dances that were originally forgotten were brought back and

²⁴⁷Robert Davidson, and Ulli Steltzer. *Eagle Transforming : The Art of Robert Davidson*. Vancouver; Seattle: Douglas &McIntyre ; University of Washington Press, 1994. 21.

²⁴⁸Robert Davidson. *Four Decades: An Innocent Gesture*. Surrey, BC: Robert Davidson, 2009, 2.

²⁴⁹Davidson1994, 21.

²⁵⁰William Severin Kowinski, "Smithsonian." Vol. 25.Issue 10 (1995 Vol. 25 Issue 10, p38, 9p, 12 Color Photograph): 38,9, 12.

²⁵¹Davidson 1994, 22.

performed once more.²⁵² Once the pole was raised, Davidson felt that there was a reawakening within their souls. The pole allowed them to reconnect to their old values.²⁵³ Values that he felt were suppressed due to the introduction of the Christian religion. As a way to reclaim some of the culture that was lost to the people of his village, the pole was raised in front of St. John's Anglican Church. The pole was a symbol of re-appropriation of their land. The pole is Haida, the land is Haida, and the people are Haida. Although not the last pole to be raised in the late 20th century, the *Bear Mother Pole* helped a people to reconnect with old traditions, such as ceremonies, song and dance. The raising of the first pole in Old Masset was a symbol of re-discovery and changes to come.

In later years, Davidson, like Yeomans, would acknowledge other changes in the church as well. He said, "I know the Anglican Church is working to change its way and now includes Haida ceremony. I feel that's a really positive step – so that we can walk side-by-side rather than denying our culture and ancestral beliefs."²⁵⁴ Compared to previous understandings of the Missionary narrative, St John Anglican Church located in Old Masset Haida Gwaii presents a mixture of hybridized indigenous Christian space and art. Davidson's totem pole acts as a visual reminder that the church is built on Haida land. Within the church, there is no distinct line between Native and Christian. Instead, there is a balance of Christian practices and Pacific Northwest Coast imagery (Fig. 49). The altar located in the front is separated from the main floor by a series of steps and a small rail. The altar holds the ceremonial objects necessary to receive communion, like a chalice. The altar is carved as if to mimic a bentwood box keeping with

²⁵²Kowinski, 12.

²⁵³Davidson 1994, 25.

²⁵⁴ Robert Davidson, "The world is as sharp as a knife." *Reflections in a Dancing Eye: Investigating the Artist's Role in Canadian Society*. Banff, Alta.: Banff Centre Press, 2006.

tradition which holds items that are sacred to the community. Behind the altar, three decorated wooden paddles lean against the wall. The church congregation is led by Reverend Lily Bell. She is one of the *Kyaanu.usalii* Raven clan leaders.²⁵⁵ Reverend Bell, in addition to leading services, also performs important community services such as blessing the new Hiellen River campground in 2003 (Fig. 50).²⁵⁶ She wears her white vestments for church services with accents of formlines, and during other community events, Reverend Lily Bell dons a button robe that bears a large mythical bird with a white cross in the center (Fig. 51).

Church organizations, like the Canadian Anglican Church, seek to repair injustices felt by Native communities based on years of struggle with residential boarding schools, Indian agents, and missionaries preaching that Native communities must give up pagan ways. Within the past forty years, the Anglican Church has started a new campaign, a campaign that would renew and rebuild ties with the Nisga'a communities after a long period of neglect.²⁵⁷ John Barker explores the changes in relationships between the Anglican Church and the Nisga'a communities. He believes that the active participation of the Anglican Church in the advocacy of Nisga'a land claims and the endorsement in the resurgence of pride and interest in indigenous traditions was a form of reconciliation for the actions of the missionary ancestors. In the 1970's the Diocese of Caledonia sent (White) priests to Aiyansh, Greenville, and Kincolith. These men enjoyed living among the native communities and actively participated in local activities and feasts that were previously avoided by the clergymen. The communities welcomed these priests and through

²⁵⁵“Haida Memories, Kyaanu.usalii Ravens.” Accessed on April 9, 2012.
www.virtualmuseum.ca.

²⁵⁶Ibid.

²⁵⁷John Barker. "Tangled Reconciliations: The Anglican Church and the Nisga'a of British Columbia." *American Ethnologist* 25.3 (1998), 437.

them, the Anglican Church was provided with a link to the Nisga'a communities.²⁵⁸ Priests and clergy men that were accepted into the communities have been given indigenous names by Nisga'a leaders. According to Barker, there have been "four white priests who served in Nass villages in the 1970s and early 1980s: two bishops and two primates of the Anglican Church of Canada."²⁵⁹ The names can be compared to a university degree that recognizes the many contributions that person has made to the community. These names are held by the priests and clergy men until their death. Once the name holder passes away, the name returns to the respective houses.²⁶⁰ The names are not just links for the church, but as a name holder the recipients must do their best to serve their Nisga'a "family."²⁶¹

Many elders claim that Christianity and indigenous religious beliefs are compatible drawing upon a parallelism.²⁶² Within the Nisga'a and Haida Anglican communities, the liturgy, some prayers and sermons had been translated into Native languages.²⁶³ Rod Robinson, the executive director of the Nisga'a Tribal Council, has said that there is "no contradiction between ancient Nisga'a beliefs and contemporary Christianity." On the contrary, he points to parallels between the Bible and *Ayuukhl* Nisga'a [Nisga'a traditional law] and draws spiritual strength from both." Many elders claim previous conflicts between Nisga'a and the 19th century missionaries was due to misunderstandings.²⁶⁴

As explored earlier, the Anglican Church of Canada and the Nisga'a communities have begun to work together and take charge of their religious institutions. The Nisga'a had the

²⁵⁸Ibid, 438.

²⁵⁹Ibid, 439.

²⁶⁰Ibid.

²⁶¹Ibid, 440.

²⁶²Ibid, 434.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴Ibid, 433.

opportunity to choose their own representative to represent their communities in the Church. In 2007, Reverend Mark MacDonald was appointed first Indigenous Anglican Bishop by the Nisga'a Sacred Circle (Fig. 52 -53).²⁶⁵ MacDonald is an American with mixed European and some aboriginal ancestry.²⁶⁶ As the Indigenous Anglican Bishop, he was not only the first national indigenous bishop, but also, the first bishop whose duties would go over and beyond national boundaries, Canadian and American.²⁶⁷ The Indigenous Anglican Bishop was given four tasks as assigned by the elders from Sacred Circle. First, the Bishop was to speak for them in the councils of the church amongst the Bishops and other places. Second, the Bishop must be able to translate back what was discussed in those meetings. Third, the elders wanted someone who would speak for Mother Earth. Bishop MacDonald explains that being a voice for Mother Earth was not just being an environmental advocate, but being the voice for the living relationship that God has given to the people of the land. This relationship cannot be sold, bought or stolen. Finally, the Bishop, at first, would act like a midwife to help with the transition of the establishment of a self-determining church within the Anglican Church of Canada. On August 9th 2009, Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald was given a Nisga'a chief status and name, *KalwilimlhkwhlLaxha* ("Heavenly Servant"), at the sixth Anglican Indigenous Sacred Circle meeting. During the ceremony, he was presented with a button blanket.²⁶⁸ During the 1970's, there was an attempt to incorporate button blankets and

²⁶⁵Christian Week. "First indigenous bishop appointed." February 1, 2007. Accessed on March 11th, 2013. <http://www.christianweek.org/stories.php?id=293>.

²⁶⁶Sue Careless. "CANADA: New indigenous bishop appointed: Non-geographical bishop to have pastoral oversight of 225 aboriginal communities in Canada." *Anglican Planet*. February 2007. Accessed on March 11th, 2013. <http://www.anglicanplanet.net/TAPCanada0702a.html>.

²⁶⁷ Christian Week.

²⁶⁸*National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald Addresses Sacred Circle*. Dir. Anglican Church of Canada. 2009. Web Video.

other Nisga'a art into churches and services. In some cases, Bishops and local clergy would wear traditional regalia but many felt that although these pieces were appropriate for feasts and other indigenous ceremonies, the pieces were not meant to be used within the church. In 1994, the amount and effort placed into including additional incorporation of Nisga'a art and culture into church activities was moderate.²⁶⁹ Although not a specific three or two dimensional art piece, the introduction of indigenous control within the church allows for the possibility of adding customary visual elements to the Christian environment.

By bringing Native ceremonies and imagery within Christian spaces, the different Christian Churches are providing respect and understanding that was previously misunderstood by earlier missionaries. These case studies provide insight to the different perspectives and opinions as to the presence of Christianity in their communities. The combination of different styles and iconographic symbols signify a complicated and profound historical process that demonstrates a series of cultural blending as accepted by both missionaries and Native communities in order to maintain balance with the churches' congregation.

²⁶⁹ Barker, 434.

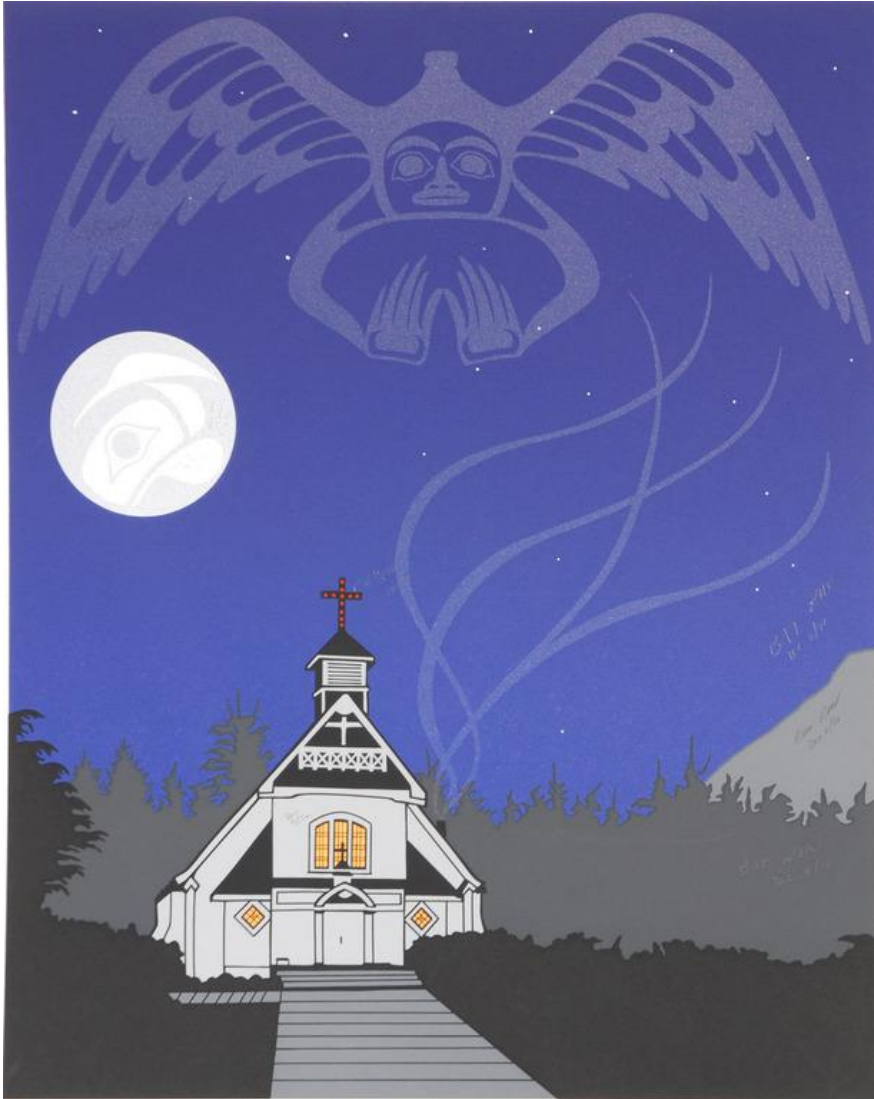


Figure 33: *St. Peter's Kitkatla*, Roy Henry Vickers, Tsimshian, 1989 – 1990, Ink Trial Proof. Image University of Victoria Art Collections Catalogue Number U991.1.22-3. Accessed on March 11, 2013. Image obtained from goo.gl/vvoHV and www.royhenryvickers.com/reproductions/product/129.



Figure 34: St. Peter's Anglican Church, Kitkatla, B.C. Canada. Accessed on March 11, 2013. Image obtained from <http://kitkatlachat.iwarp.com/photogallery/photo20.html>.



Figure 35: *St. John-Masset*, Roy Henry Vickers, Tsimshian, 1995, Ink Trial Proof. Image University of Victoria Art Collections Catalogue Number U991.1.22-2. Accessed on January 21, 2013. Image obtained from <http://goo.gl/sr5sn> and <http://www.royhenryvickers.com/prints/product/310>.



Figure 36: *St Mary's Magdalene*, Roy Henry Vickers, Tsimshian, 1995, Ink Trial Proof. Image University of Victoria Art Collections Catalogue Number U991.1.22-4. Accessed on January 21, 2013. Image obtained from goo.gl/enMFE and www.royhenryvickers.com/prints/product/311.

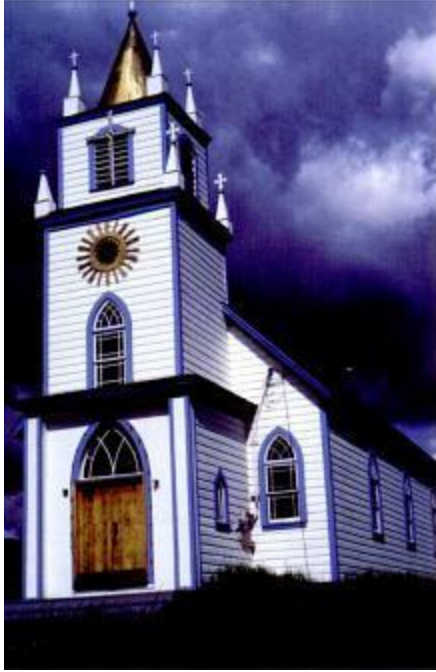


Figure 37: St Mary's Catholic Church in New Hazelton, BC Canada. (Byron, 56)



Figure 38: St. Paul's interior (chapel at Metlakatla.) Photography R Maynard [n.d.]. British Columbia Archives B-003552. (Neylan,258)

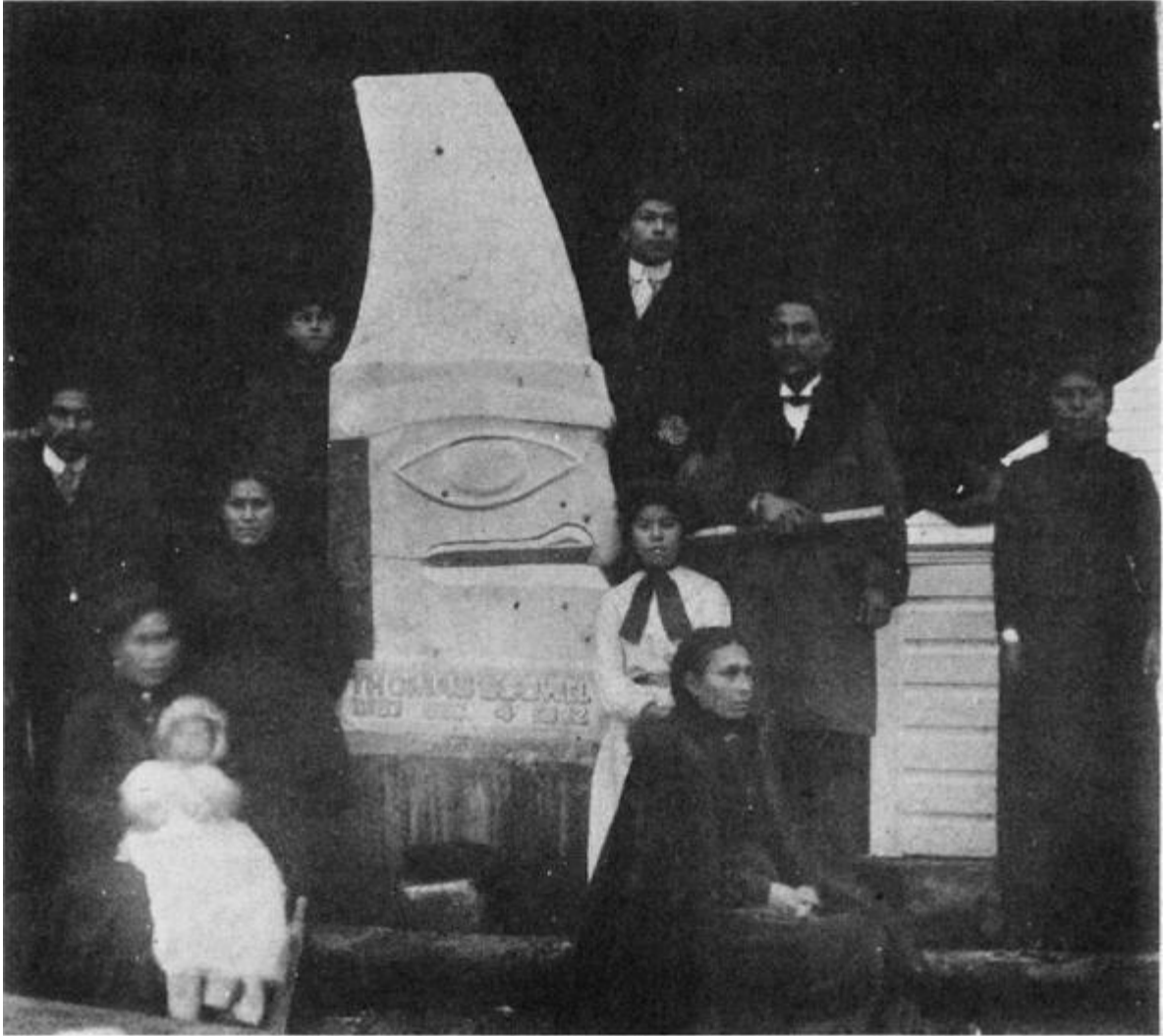


Figure 39: Mortuary photo of the Skowl family, Kasaan (New Kasaan?), Alaska. Photo National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution. (Blackman, 399).



Figure 40: "In the graveyard at Masset, Haida (Haida); Masset (Haida); 1947". Photographer Marius Barbaeu. Image Canadian Museum of Civilization Registration Number 103024. (Blackman, 401)

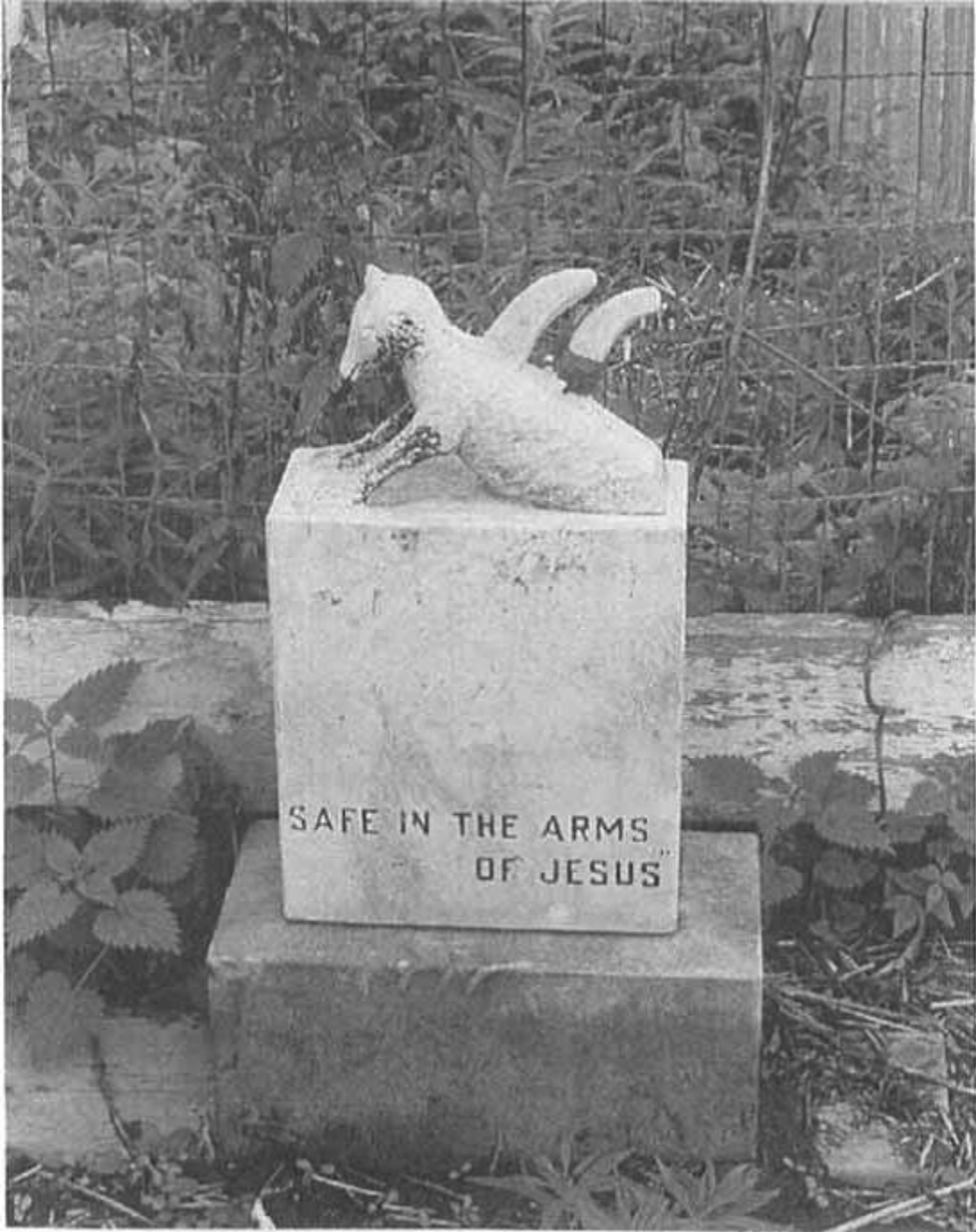


Figure 41: Gitxsan Gravestone, Photo By John Veillette, Image Royal British Columbia Museum. (Hawker 2001, 42).



Figure 42: "Grave stone with Talio, Bella Coola Indian village near head of South Bentinck Arm." [Alternative spelling: Talheo, Taliho], 1920 – 1924. Image Canadian Museum of Civilization, Catalogue Number 58614. Accessed on January 21, 2013. Image obtained from <http://goo.gl/VTZie>.



Figure 43: Haisla Grave Marker, Kitamaat, 1902-6. Photography by George Raley. Image Royal British Columbia Museum PN 11366 (Jonaitis, 187).



Figure 44: Headstone. Grave reads: In memory of David Nahtlan Chief of Yan Died March 8, 1887. Aged 48 years. Caption: Masset Cemetery. Image Canadian Museum of Civilization No. 103024. Accessed on March 12, 2013. <http://goo.gl/uWxfK>.



Figure 45: Yuquot Catholic Church. Photograph by David Stanley in June 2012. Image reproduced with permission of photographer.



Figure 46: Still Frame from Hugh Brody's *The Washing of Tears*. Canada: NFB/ONF, 2007.



Figure 47: Opposite side from Yuquot Catholic Church. Photograph by David Stanley in June 2012. Image reproduced with permission of photographer.



Figure 48: *Bear Mother Pole* in front of St John Anglican Church, Robert Davidson, 1969, Haida Photograph taken 1980. Accessed on March 11th, 2013. Image obtained from: <http://goo.gl/BqTIB>



Figure 49: Image from within St John's Anglican Church Masset Haida. Photograph taken by Jason Douglas on January 16th, 2009. Image used with permission of photographer.



Figure 50: Reverend Lily Bell blesses the new Hiellen River campground. 2003 Tow Hill, Haida Gwaii, British Columbia, Canada. Accessed on March 11th, 2013. Image obtained from <http://goo.gl/teC54>.



Figure 51: Florence Davidson Memorial, Photograph taken by Robin K. Wright. Image used with permission of photographer.



Figure 52-53: Image stills captured from Christian Week. "First indigenous bishop appointed. February 1, 2007. Accessed on December 10, 2012. Images from <http://www.christianweek.org/stories.php?id=293>.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

Since the start of missionary practices on the Northwest Coast in the late 19th century, Christianity has served as a source of artistic inspiration for many Native artists and communities. The appropriation of Christian icons, motifs, and physical spaces occurred for different reasons and reflects stories of personal perspective. Ceremonies and art are adapted to reflect community values. This thesis analyzed examples of Christian motifs appropriated and used by Pacific Northwest Coast Native artists for different reasons. The collection of art within this thesis demonstrates the blending of two cultures through the creation of hybridized, syncretic art. The final result showcases a complex blend of two cultures and a rich resource of visual documents that can help scholars understand the interaction between a diversity of Native people and their various relationships with Christianity.

Within each chapter, the examination of the presence of Native and Christian imagery in artwork reveals different perspectives in social, historical and modern sources. Today scholars agree that the Mission narrative has been too focused from the white Euro-American perspective. Current scholars are now looking at the previously ignored stories of religious leaders and accounts from contemporary Native Christians to inform their research. This thesis has built on their scholarship and applied it to an overlooked body of art that speaks of Christian influence.

This thesis has proven that there is no one opinion on the presence of Christianity in Native communities or in Native art. The voices and stories vary with personal experiences ranging from social commentaries against loss of old traditional Native ways to a desire to share a blending of their own personal beliefs. These works of art help dispel prior stereotypical labels that focused on a single perspective on the presence of Christianity within Native communities. such as Native or Christian. There are artists in the mid- and late-19th centuries that included

Western images because the artists saw parallels to their traditional iconography, such as the combined human and bird traits of an angel. Within the collection of art examined in the thesis, there was strong opposition to the outcome of aggressive evangelism by missionaries on Native communities, such as in Galanin's sacrilegious deconstruction of the Bible (Fig. 9, 10).

Galanin's physical ripping and shredding of the Christian Bible could be seen as "fair" justice, since families were torn apart by disease and boarding schools and had a constant battle to not lose old Native traditions. There were also artists, such as Yeomans and Vickers that used their art to display their personal opinions on the presence of Christianity within their communities and families.

The study of Native art pieces with Christian motifs also led to the discussion of indigenized Christian spaces. These churches and cemeteries are transformed into sanctuaries or areas of commerce that support the communities. The changes are another form of visual response to the presence of Christianity. The use of Native art and symbols within churches are visual reminders of two distinct cultures. There are three churches discussed within this thesis. Both St Paul's chapel in Metlakatla and St. Johns Anglican Church in Old Massett contain Native symbols in spaces that function as a space for Christian services for the neighboring communities (Fig 38, 49). The Yuquot Catholic Church also contains Native symbols but no longer functions as a Christian space (Fig 45, 46, 47). Instead the building is used as a gift store. From the exterior, the Yuquot Catholic Church still maintains classical church architecture from a looming steeple to the presence of Christian sculptural figure welcoming guests enter the building. The poles raised within this church symbolize control and claim the building from the Catholic Church. Even though these three churches contain a mix of Christian and Native imagery, each building serves a different purpose.

The use of icons also changed as knowledge of the Christian faith became widespread. At first angels were probably seen as nothing more than humans caught in mid-transformation, a prevalent theme in traditional Northwest Coast art and stories of supernatural beings. Carved wooden angels on the bows of ships were seen as new symbols of power. Angels and other creatures depicted on ship pipe panels would have been something new and exotic (Fig. 1). With the introduction of missionary evangelism, the meaning of the supernatural role and power of angels would have become more apparent to the indigenous people of the coast. Frederick Alexie used a Tsimshian art style blended with Christian iconography to carve an angel for an Anglican church (Fig. 7). In the late 20th century, Roy Henry Vickers created a print of a Tsimshian angel warrior that is watching and protecting him. Both Alexie's and Vicker's angles turn to blending Tsimshian artistic styles with Christian iconography to present syncretic pieces of art.

The introduction of Native symbols creates syncretic environment. Overlapping themes can also be found in commissioned pieces created by Native artists for traditional Christian settings or events and may not be a direct reflection of the artist's personal faith. Nevertheless art works reflect a deep level of respect and sincerity, such as Susan Point's *Tree of Life* and Lloyd Wadhams *The Raising of Lazarus* (Fig 16, 15). There is a level of understanding between patron and artist. The pieces demonstrate a balance between Native style and Christian belief. The combination of both Christian and "traditional" Native art serves to break previous boundaries and present the true diversity of Indigenous style. The artists obtain inspiration from their personal experiences to present a new perspective to the Christian and mission narrative on the Pacific Northwest Coast. Although superficially, Henry Speck and Tony Hunt appear to be creating similar artworks, there were different reasons behind the creation of their pieces. Both artists chose to incorporate Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial regalia and masks. However, Speck

chose to depict the birth and death of Jesus Christ in a series of paintings inspired by his recent conversation to Christianity. Hunt created the *Baptismal Mural* on commission and had to use biblical themes to fit the requirements of the patron. These artists chose to use Christian motifs in their art pieces for different reasons.

Another example of the multiple interpretations of symbols is Chief Skowal's frontal pole. There is no consensus on its meaning, whether the pole was erected to ridicule or to commemorate an event. I think that by comparing the hand gestures of the base figure on the frontal pole (Fig. 6) to the other carvings discussed, it is possible that this gesture could be referring to a Christian benediction, a short invocation that uses hand gestures at the end of prayer. The Haida carved priest (Fig. 5) and Frederick Alexie's Baptismal font (Fig. 7) both have a single raised hand. By comparing the hand gestures in the prior images, the wooden figure located at the base of Skowal's pole, the white bearded male, with his hand raised in front with palms facing out, could be a Russian Bishop in the middle of performing a benediction. All but one of the interpretations have referenced some form of Christian context, whether it was celebrating the baptism of the Skowal family or the failure to convert the Chief's family by the missionaries. The different time periods and the sources will affect the interpretation of the pole. The *Ketchikan Daily* from the late 20th century used oral stories from Skowal's descendants to reinforce ownership of the pole. In comparison, Albert Niblack's journal entry from the late 19th century explored the process of assimilation, presence of Christianity within the community and the exotic tradition of raising totem poles. In the end, there is more than one interpretation and each version of the story provides different perspectives on the presence Christianity within the village of Kasaan.

From an art historical perspective, the art pieces provide different styles that are representative of the artist's tribe and personal interpretations of Christian stories, such as Roy Henry Vickers' prints. Some of the art pieces examined were commissioned, and could be used to further study the relationships between patron and artist. The works of art described in this thesis vary from art created for display, to ceremonial and religious, to art made to spread a message whether religious or political.

This thesis has also shown that Pacific Northwest coast art can also serve as tools in the study of social change. Conversion to Christianity is not unique to any one period, and continues to this day. No longer is the primary focus of on the missionaries, such as Rev. Duncan or Rev. Collison. Instead, scholars look to Native stories to interpret the reaction of Native families to the presence of Christianity within their homes. One example is the story of Simeon Stilthda and how his family converted to the new Christian belief. As an artist, Stilthda adapted with the changing environment. Since he took the name Simeon, it can be assumed that he may have converted to Christianity. His two sons are known to have converted, one on his deathbed and the other converted at a later date as he received a new Christian name, James Stanley. Whether or not he was a faithful Christian, Stilthda may have used the new symbols in his artwork to sell his Shaman with wings to a new Christian audience or to study a fascinating new creature seen in the pages of Collisons' Bible (Fig. 4). Finding connections across time, it is interesting to point out that a similar comparison can be made with Don Yeomans, Simeon Stilthda's great-great-grandson.²⁶⁹ Yeomans created two crucifixes with two different messages (Fig. 8, 11). In his first sculpture, he explored themes of assimilation and the attempts of Western culture to "wipe" out any remaining Native traditions. He used a crucified Raven to demonstrate the plight of his

²⁶⁹Wright, 327.

family. In 2008, after seeing his father convert to Christianity, Yeomans' created a second crucifix with what appears to be a more open attitude to the benefits of Christianity with his community. He adapted his way of thinking seeing his the changes that his father underwent. These two stories take place in two different centuries and yet, the themes of acceptance and adaptability are the same.

The chapters of the thesis were set up to examine similar themes and messages, but there are themes within the chapters that overlap, creating a unifying theme, such as the appropriation and re-appropriation of Christian and Native icons. While this thesis is not a comprehensive look at all Christian motifs in every Native nation in the Pacific Northwest that has interacted with missionaries and Christianity, it has provided a representative sample. As seen by the selected pieces in this thesis, each piece provides history, personal perspective and social commentary that is not available in other historical primary sources.

Christianity on the Pacific Northwest coast will continue to incite controversy and inspire new art pieces that will act as vehicles to spread personal messages. As scholars continue to focus on the Indigenous perspective on the presence of Christianity and the views of missionaries in Native communities, there will be more information generated to fill the gap on the Native voice. The objects represented here serve to show that over the past two centuries, Christian influenced or inspired Native Pacific Northwest Coast art has helped to mediate intercultural encounters. The examination of these art works helps to restructure prior understandings and assumptions on the presence of Christianity in Native Pacific Northwest Coast communities. From a personal perspective, the discussion of the Christian Native artists within this thesis can further push the current historical narrative on contemporary Native Christians. It is a new historical narrative that emerges and creates intersections for a new discussion that can be used

in all art historical conversations about Christianity and Pacific Northwest Coast art.

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