

You will observe, therefore, that according to the constitution of the tribes and the distribution of clans, Potlatch, or a system analogous to it, is a necessity, from an Indian point of view, in order to preserve the unity, distinctions and traditions of the race; for one clan-section may not assent to an act except in concert with the other sections; if it do, the act in question is only recognized within that section. And if an individual assumes any right to which he may be entitled, without a public manifestation of assent on the part of the clans, he finds himself in the position of a miner who stakes off a claim without recording it; the next individual in the line of succession may, on going through the usual formalities, jump the other's claim. Sometimes the rightful claimant of a privilege is too poor to call the clans together for their assent, in which case some one else of kin who is better off asserts a counter claim, sends out a runner, calls the clans, and so takes the other's place. When you hear of Indians killing each other, or attempting to do so, it is because of some such reason as this. There lies extant in this system an unlimited possibility of serious trouble, but it is not to be found in the mere giving of a feast or dance, nor even in the distribution and destruction of property, nor in the eating of dog or human flesh; the evil and the roots lie deeper and quite apart from these things.

You will further notice that, although not an idol itself, the Potlatch puts all the idols of heathendom in the shade, for not only