



Jack James' Kwakiutl mask has a graphite finish, copper brows and shredded cedar-bark hair. It represents a tso:noq'wa—a giant, habitually sleepy, mythological wild woman, whose mouth is rounded to utter her characteristic "hooo hooo" cry. This tso:noq'wa was banished unfairly from her tribe. To get revenge, she invented the black fly and, from the spirit world, blew the black flies down to pester the people.

Spruce, pine and cedar grew up to 200 feet, and the magnificent Douglas fir, up to 250; and there was wood for all uses. The yellow and red cedar was long lasting but soft enough to be cut easily with stone and bone tools. The bark could be pounded into fibre for weaving.

The bands made canoes, some sixty feet long, hollowing cedar logs by fire and adzes and stretching them into shape after filling them with hot water to soften the wood. They had handsome, rectangular houses sixty feet long, fifty feet wide, made of logs split into planks, grooved or notched and joined without pegs. The roofs were of interlocking split and hollowed logs. The Nootka and Coast Salish had apartment houses, perhaps fifty feet wide and several hundred feet long, on ocean beaches above the high tide line.



The northwestern Indians—the Salish, Nootka and Kwakiutl on and around Vancouver Island; the Bella Coola of the village of that name; the Tsimshian of the Skeena and Nass rivers; and the Haida of the Queen Charlotte

Islands—did not ride horses, and they did not wear mocassins on one end and feathers on the other. If they conformed to a stereotype, it was the stereotype of the orient. A Haida in a conical hat of woven cedar bark fibres or in a Chilkat blanket, a fringed robe of mountain goat wool and bark fibre bearing the animal crest of its owner, would seem almost Chinese.



A Tsimshian chief's wooden ceremonial hat: The bear head has inlaid abalone eyes, and each green painted basketry ring represents a potlatch given by the chief.

They lived in a well-defined social layer; the principal chief was the custodian of the community's wealth, and he directed the ceremonial and economic life of the community. Status was maintained by potlatches, gigantic give-away feasts which marked significant events—puberty, marriages, deaths, new houses. In the fifteenth century the potlatch was simply a gregarious expression of pride. The rich man did what was expected, and what was expected was that he give a great big wallop public party.



On the great day the other social leaders arrived, often from hundreds of miles away, richly dressed and decorated—their garments of intricately designed blankets and robes of otter or bearskin, their jewelry of dentalium shells. They came in ceremonial canoes with high, carved and painted prows

and sterns. They were greeted by the lesser members of the host's family. The host was the most splendidly dressed of all. On his head might have been a complicated carved hat, a fantasy erected on a basic cone—a carved face with abalone shell eyes—and, above that, cylinders of woven spruce roots, each cylinder representing a past potlatch he'd given. The feasting went on for three or four days; smoked salmon was accompanied by seal fat dip; fowl and fresh water fish were roasted on sticks; tables were covered with venison and bear haunches, fresh berries and berries preserved in rancid candlefish oil, octopus and halibut boiled in wooden boxes, rotted salmon roe and halibut heads. The celebration ended with the gift giving—blankets of mountain goat wool and bark, in natural white or dyed black or yellow in geometric patterns; robes of sea otter pelts, of marten fur and bearskin, of mink and deerskin. The gifts were given according to the rank of the recipient.