

While the accompanying paper is based chiefly upon the collection in the United States National Museum, quite a number of valuable data were found in the interesting collection of ivory records in the museum of the Alaska Commercial Company in San Francisco, California.

In addition to these two sources of information, the writer was so fortunate as to have the services in San Francisco of a native Alaskan half-caste, who had for a number of years been in the employ of the Commercial Company. This man had spent most of his life in traveling among the various settlements of southern Alaska, chiefly for the purpose of securing furs and peltries in exchange for goods desired by the natives. Vladimir Naomoff, in addition to his thorough familiarity with the Russian and English language, was fluent in five or six native dialects. His keen observation of the habits of the people of the mainland, and their various methods of conveying information by recording on different materials their thoughts, enabled him to interpret with ease the numerous records in the museum referred to; and he also prepared a number of sketches in imitation of records which he had observed, and which he had been instructed to prepare and deposit at habitations at which he had called during the absence of the regular occupants or owners.

The primary studies relating to the subject of the interpretation of pictographs were begun by the writer in 1871; and but limited progress was made until the year 1879, when the Bureau of Ethnology was organized and furnished the facility necessary to officially conduct investigations among the various Indian tribes of the United States and British Columbia, and to visit nearly all known pictographs and petroglyphs in order to make personal investigations, comparisons, and to secure tracings and sketches thereof.

In addition to these researches in pictography, the gesture language of the various tribes was also studied, the latter frequently aiding very materially in interpreting obscure characters, and attempts at the graphic portrayal of gestures and subjective ideas.¹

The collection of gesture signs obtained from Vladimir Naomoff, and subsequently verified, to a great extent, by a Mahlemut native from St. Michael's, is appended hereto,² in connection with the list of objects in the National Museum, to which special reference is made.

These gesture signs are of importance in the study and interpretation of many of the Eskimo records.

Many of these gesture signs are natural, and intelligible to most people who are known, on account of peculiar linguistic position, to have knowledge of this mode of communication because of their

¹For names and number of tribes visited, see Salishan Bibliography. J. C. Pilling. Washington, D. C. [Bulletin of the Bureau of Ethnology] under caption *Hoffman, W. J.*

²Collected by the writer in 1882, and deposited in the manuscript collections of the Bureau of Ethnology.