

A *family* or *house* is a portion or branch of a clan-section. It has its own crest and sub-chief, subordinate to the clan totem and clan-sectional chief, and of itself or in combination with other kindred families forms a complete clan-section.

A *clan-section* is a company of one or more families having the same totem and totemic name, and forming one division of a tribe.

A *clan* is the aggregate of kindred clan-sections having the same totem and totemic name.

A *tribe* is a community of two or more different clan-sections residing in one place, bearing a common territorial name, and governed by the chiefs of the clan-sections in council assembled.

A *confederacy* is an alliance of several tribes for offensive and defensive purposes, and is governed by the united suffrages of the clans in public assembled.

The principal clans of the Nishga Confederacy are the Lak-Gibu (*Lupians*), the Ganhada (*Ranians*), the Lak-Shik (*Aquilians*), and the Gishgahas (*Canabians*).

Each tribe on the Naas is composed of a clan-section from each of the above-named clans, so that for the transaction of business (which is chiefly dynastic) in any tribe on the river, it is necessary to summon the other tribes and thus bring together all the clan-sections of each clan in public assembly. And this is the *raison d'être* of the Potlatch.

Indian affairs are, as I have said, principally dynastic, that is they have to do with hereditary rights and titles, successions to chieftainships among the chiefs, to a higher social standing among the gentry, and to the "going up one" in the family circle among the common people, for everyone is somebody's junior, and wants to become somebody's senior.

These successions often carry with them substantial emoluments in the way of hunting and fishing rights over certain lands and streams, and are not infrequently a bone of serious contention, sometimes ending in bloodshed.

Then in each clan-section there are many vacant places, filled by men of renown in the good old times when the Indians were numerous, but now retaining only the name. To fill these vacant places and revive the old names is the one ambition of the surviving members of clan-section families, and this, like other successions, can only be accomplished by obtaining the united assent of the clans.

Thus there is only one topic of interest in life to these people, only one object for which to live and only one scope for their natural activity, viz.: the glorification of self. In each Indian town you will find the clan-sections living together on apparently very good terms, but, in reality holding each other down or staving each other off with all the cunning imaginable. Jealousy of one another is the characteristic feature of Indian life, and so socialistic are their ideas that no individual dare improve his condition above the general average, while at the same time each clan-section is consumed with a burning desire to make a better show than any other.

You are all of course aware that members of the same clan may not intermarry. Such a thing, according to Indian ideas, would be an abomination. But it may not have become evident to all of you that notwithstanding this law the majority of Indian marriages are very close as to family affinity. In most families I find it has been the custom of the men for generations to select their wives from one particular clan-section of another but still the same clan, because of equality in rank or from other social considerations. And this may be one reason why the Indians do not increase.

Marriage never unites the man and the woman; from first to last the parties belong to different clans, and maintain respectively their own social positions. Children are counted in on the mother's side as her elder brother's family, belonging, of course, to her clan. And all rights, titles, and property descend from uncle to nephew or niece, and not from father to son. The idea of a widow laying claim to her late husband's property or a son to his father's, would be absurd to the Indian mind. But it is very hard to suppress nature, especially when it is human; for, in spite of all, the paternal or filial instinct crops out at times and sets up serious complications in this social machinery.

No better description could be given of the Indian people than that supplied by the name they give themselves—*Alu-gigiat*. Truly they are a *Public-people*, for they have no private business, no private rights, and no domestic privacy. Every right is *holden* (that is the meaning of the work *Yuqu*, which the White-man, judging from outward appearance, calls Potlatch, i.e., *giving*) and every matter regulated by a public manifestation of assent on the part of the united clans. And this public expression of assent, made by the clans and acknowledged by the individual, is what we call potlatch. Even babies are legitimized, so to speak, in this way, the naming of children recorded, and their admission to tribal privileges signalized by the same means.

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, by 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, no, 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 does it swallow up the sustenance of an entire community but the community itself, and only says "Shimoigt" (Hail, chief!) in return. It consumes five clear months out of every twelve in simply gorging, sleeping and dancing; the most that any of its votaries can earn is all too little for it; the money that ought to be spent upon the necessities of life is squandered on this idol, which is feted and glutted to its heart's content, while the poor, the aged, the feeble and the sick lie in poverty, filth, and rags—dying for want of a little nourishment.

It is a pitiable sight to behold sick folk, invalids, delicate children and babies travelling to and fro over fifty miles of waste ice and snow, the thermometer