

THE INDIANS

The Indians were the first, and they came to Canada perhaps 40,000 years ago. History books customarily say they came across on a land bridge from Asia during the ice age, and an innocent child might imagine one that was long and narrow along the lines of the Brooklyn Bridge or at least the pontoon spans soldiers built in World War II. It wasn't. It was more like a small continent or a very large island that covered the Bering Sea until the ice started melting and it was covered by the waters. The Indians didn't just walk across it either. They moved out of Asia without even noticing they were doing so, while pursuing large animals such as the mammoth, and they lived on the middle land mass for centuries, moving occasionally eastward when the animals became scarce. Slowly they ascended the Yukon valley, then crossed over the hills to the upper waters of the Mackenzie. Every once in a while a tribe inched south, and in the course of thousands of years, as the glaciers retreated, they moved down through Alberta and Saskatchewan. Eventually they spread all over North and South America.

The Tribes of the Northwest

The Tlinkit, the Haida and the other tribes of British Columbia are strikingly different from the Indians on the other side of the Rockies. It seems entirely possible that their ancestors arrived in the New World at a different time by a different route, and they may be distantly related to the Inuit. Some scientists have suggested that since their carved house posts greatly resemble similar ones found among the tribes of New Zealand, they may have sailed across, but most other scientists say this is nonsense.

Allies

During the extended wars that occupied the French and English in the eighteenth century, each side had its Indian allies. The French had more—all of the Algonkian tribes including the Montagnais of the Saguenay region, the Chippewas, the Ojibwas and the Hurons. The English had the Iroquois Confederation, which was particularly warlike and strategically situated between the French to the north and the Dutch and English to the south.

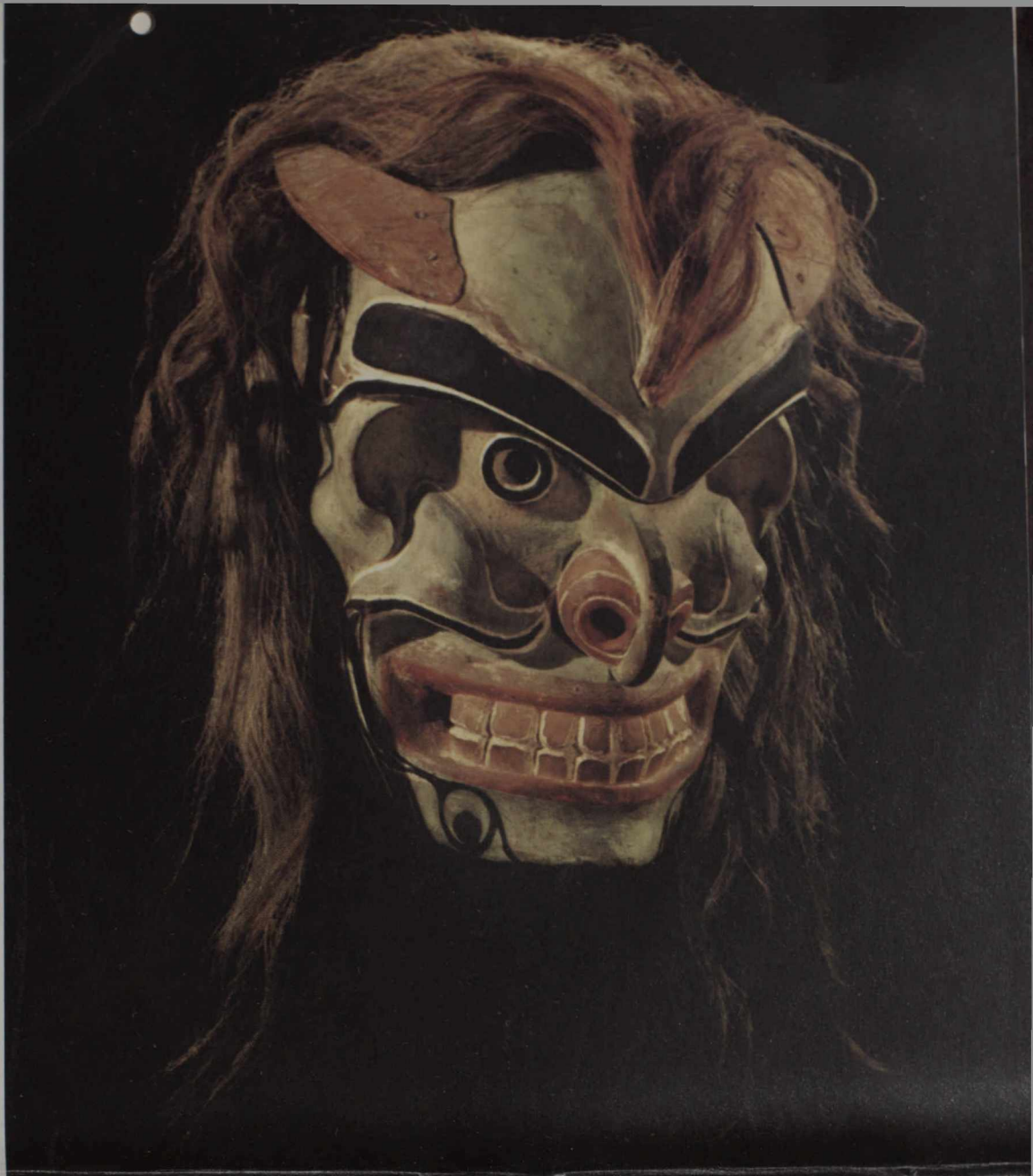


Photo: *Kwakiutl Buquis or Wild Man of the Woods*, courtesy of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria, B.C.

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CANADA
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Photo: Courtesy Department of the Secretary of State.