

How has it been done?

As soon as Mr. Duncan had made sufficient progress with the language, eight months after his arrival, he wrote out a sermon in the Indian tongue. In the meantime a report had been circulated widely among the tribes that he had brought them a letter or paper which was from God. They have no word for "book." They were anxious, therefore, to know what he had to say to them. He went the first day to nine different camps or tribes, for they were all so hostile and jealous of each other that he could induce no two tribes to come to the same meeting. The Indians showed great interest—perhaps as much in Mr. Duncan's clothing, his buttons and his hair as in what he had to say, and were very attentive.

After he was able to talk to them, Mr. Duncan very soon gained the confidence of some of the Indians. His whole manner was calculated to win their love. His face alone, as a visitor to Metlakahla wrote not long ago, is a passport for piety, goodness and benevolence anywhere, and his honest blue eyes, his kindly smile and cheery manner, go straight to the heart of the most savage Indian. But his work was by no means free from obstacles. One of these arose from the selfishness of the Indians. They desired to be paid for attending his services, after the novelty of his preaching had a little worn off. It took time, of course, to convince them that they had nothing of that kind to expect.

Although very few went regularly to church, and some would not go at all, Mr. Duncan always found them ready, with few exceptions, to listen to him in their own homes. In fact, he was a welcome guest, and when he entered they would place a box for him to sit upon and a mat for his feet, stir up the fire so as to make a blaze, and sometimes they would light a candle (which was often a fish), and show him anything he wished to look at. He was not formal in his talks with them around their firesides. When he was in a house the news would very soon spread abroad, and in other houses in close proximity there would be silence, so that the inmates of the other houses on each side

could also hear through the chinks in the wall. In this way he was able to address from twenty to forty people at once.

Of course the medicine-men who profited by their heathenish customs did not like to see their people become interested in Mr. Duncan's teaching, and they sometimes managed to stir up trouble, but he never received bodily harm at their hands. For example: He was addressing a gathering of Indians one dark night, while the cannibal party outside were yelling and biting and tearing. The people in the house were very much alarmed, not so much for their own safety as for Mr. Duncan's, and they offered him a mat with which to cover himself. They said that one of the cannibals would be sure to come in and bite anybody he could get hold of, if not covered up. The other inmates of the house took their mats and covered themselves. Mr. Duncan did not care to do that, and said he would go out. They warned him not to do so. But he took his walking stick and went out to go home. When he approached the party there was sufficient light to see the figures moving about. The noise of his feet was heard because he had shoes, while the Indians wore none. Immediately the word was passed among them that the white man was there, and they stopped their noise and allowed him to pass unmolested.

Mr. Duncan next opened a school in the house of a chief in June, 1858, with twenty-six children and fifteen adults, and in a few months he had in it one hundred and forty children and fifty adult pupils. By the time it was found desirable to build a schoolhouse, enough of the Indians were interested to supply the material. Some of them brought bark for the roof, others planks for the floors, and a few even took bark from the roofs of their own dwellings and the pieces that formed parts of their beds. A piece of steel was hung up to serve as a bell.

The most serious trouble that Mr. Duncan had at Fort Simpson was in connection with this school. About six months after it was opened, a principal chief of the Tchimpseans, Legiac, undertook to close it up. He sent a message to the missionary directing him to stop his work.