

Cover Page



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Title: History of Yukon first nations art

Date: 2012-05-23

Chapter Nine-Trade Art & Current Period

Trade Art

There are not many examples of art that came from the coast and made its way into the interior. It seems it was more the case that interior art was being traded to the coastal people. A number of examples of art that were traded into the interior from the coast have been shown earlier in this work. See figures # 85 on page 115 for a rattle; # 329 on page for a smock; # 333 on page 318 for a mask and # 371 on page 347 for a Chilkat robe. Next is another example that was traded into the interior, the beautiful spoon in figure # 404. It was collected in Aishihik



Figure # 404. Tlingit sheep horn spoon. VI-Q-15, CMC.

This spoon is in the Canadian Museum of Civilization collection and is listed as Southern Tutchone. The spoon looks unlike any of the Yukon First Nations spoons that I have shown so far. As you can see, it is of obvious coastal Tlingit origins because of the placing of the figures on top of each other, as you find in totem poles, and because of the use of the modified ovoid, “L” and “S” shapes. These are not traits of Yukon First Nations art. While there are some examples of southern Yukon First Nations art that do use ovoid shapes they are simpler than and not as refined as this example. This sheep horn spoon was collected by D.D. Cairnes in the summer of 1911 from the Taylor and Drury Store in Whitehorse. The museum catalogue card states:

Decoration indicated that ladle was intended for a potlatch. Bowl is relatively narrow and deep, handle curves backward slightly and is carved in relief on the upper side with figure of a man, and downward facing body of an animal (frog), below which is a head (bird?) Traces of red and blue pigment on carving. Incised circle and dot designs down back of animal, and down either side of handle. Eyes of man and animal inlaid with copper, eyes of face inlaid with brass. Circle and dot designs coloured with red pigment, last two dots on side are of copper.

The spoon has some blue colouring. The common Yukon First Nations dot and circle motif is present but the coastal Tlingits also used this motif. I have heard from various Southern Tutchone people in casual conversations that there is a Frog House in Hutchi and maybe in Champagne. For this reason I suggest that this spoon may have been traded to Southern Tutchone members of the Frog house. See figure # 405 for a photograph showing details of the frog and other designs on the handle. Mrs. Marge Jackson and Mrs. Emma Shorty also felt this was a trade spoon and that its origins are from the Frog crest in Klukwan. Mrs. Shorty also stated that her grandfather, Jim Fox, made spoons in this fashion.



Figure # 405, detail of Frog spoon. VI-Q-15, CMC.

The trade between the south-central Yukon and coastal Tlingit men carried on until the Klondike Gold Rush and the establishment of trading posts throughout the Yukon. The trading posts effectively ended the big Tlingit trading expeditions into the interior. However, there was still trading between the southern Yukon First Nations people and the coastal Tlingits until at least the 1960s. This trade was conducted between women. At the Sheldon Museum in Haines, Alaska is a gopher skin jacket. See figure # 406. When I first examined the jacket I thought that this was an interior made jacket that was traded to the Chilkat Tlingit, since Athapaskan people made gopher skin coats and there are no gophers in the Haines area. On inquiry I was put in contact with the daughter of the maker of the jacket, Ms. Irene Rowan, a Chilkat Tlingit Elder and political activist. Ms. Rowan informed me that her mother Mildred Sparks made regular trading trips into Southern Tutchone territory after World War Two when the United States Army built the Haines Road that goes from Haines, Alaska to Haines Junction, Yukon Territory. Mildred Sparks would travel to Dalton Post and trade with Ms. Susie Pringle. Ms. Rowan would bring hooligan and seaweed and trade for gopher skins and moose hides. She stated that most moose hides used by the Chilkat Tlingits came from Canada, mainly from Kluksu. The gopher skins were used for coats and also on the inside of blankets that were used for hunting. Ms. Mildred Sparks died in the 1980s.



Figure # 406. Gopher skin jacket. Chilkat Tlingit made. 1985.011.0009, Sheldon Museum.

I was surprised to hear about the continued trade long after the men stopped trading. Through my examination of Yukon First Nations artifacts I slowly began to realize that the trade between the south-central Yukon and the coast was more widespread than I thought. I have come across a number of Yukon First Nations artifacts that were made from sealskin. This baffled me somewhat since, except for the arctic coastline, there are no seals in the Yukon. The example below is a hide-sealskin bag I purchased from an antique dealer in Whitehorse. She stated that this bag came from Carmacks. This bag was assembled from various pieces of hide and sealskin using both hand-stitching and a sewing machine. The beading style is typical of post World War Two beading: a simple central floral bead design. Note in the floral design the use of the outcrops on the stem-work, a typical central Yukon beading trait.



Figure # 407. Hide-sealskin bag, Northern Tutchone. UvK Collection.

The next example is from the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, England. These moccasins were collected in Whitehorse circa 1950. They were collected by Mrs. E. Sargent and she donated them to the museum in 1998. They are made of arctic hare and sealskin and are well worn. The museum notes list the moccasins as Tlingit. Does this mean coastal Tlingit or Inland Tlingit? The moccasins were collected in Whitehorse but we do not know if they were new at that time. See figure # 408 and note the beaded design on the moccasin tops in the detailed photograph. The beaded eagle design is typical for the south-central Yukon except for the face within the body. I think that this is an Inland and coastal Tlingit trait.



Figure # 408. Hide and sealskin moccasins. 1998.17.1-2, PRM.

These examples show a trade of art and materials between the interior and the coast that lasted right up till the 1960s. The trade between women outlasted the men's trade by quite a few decades and few to no historical references have been mentioned about this interesting fact.

Current period

I identify the present period of Yukon First Nations art, consisting of blended styles and outside territory influences, as the Current Period. This period starts with the introduction of trade items that contributed to the decline of men's geometric art. The men were no longer making their own tools and instead were importing them through trade. With these new tools they did not add images or motifs. They might not have had the same pride in an imported tool as opposed to one made with their own hands. If some of the art was formerly done as a form of identification, now the men could simply write their names on the tools. With trade, men's art declined and women began using beads and adopted the floral designs. As time progressed men's art almost vanished but women's art, beading that was established in the Beaded Period, did not begin to change until the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898. But the real change occurred at the completion of the Alaska Highway and related roads built by the United States Army during World War Two. Other than beaded art there was a void of Yukon First Nations art for three decades, from after the construction of the Alaska Highway until the 1970s. This void began to be filled first by the Northwest coast art style and later by other Pan-American Indian imagery. These introduced styles were easy to learn and make since the images were readily available. The result of the changes is that the earlier geometric and beaded styles have become unknown to present day Yukon First Nations artists. This has

created a situation where Northwest Coast Indian art and Pan-Indian images are considered to the traditional art of Yukon First Nations.

Changing beading styles

The decline of the Floral Period started with the Klondike Gold Rush and continued with the introduction of tourism in the area. Up until then each area had its unique beading style. It was possible to look at bead work and have a pretty good idea from what part of the Yukon it came. The beaded work was for personal reasons, such as items for family members, or to trade with groups such as the coastal Tlingits. There was not a big 'market' until the Klondike Gold Rush which caused the decline of the more individual beaded designs. Designs began blending to the point where many designs had the same 'feel' to them. The Han women in the Dawson area started accepting orders and made items and beaded images that would be desirable for the miners and other members of Dawson society. Suddenly, there were a lot of customers. To meet the demands, we can see the complex bead patterns evolve into simpler ones. Another factor in the decline of one of the more expressive periods of Yukon First Nations beading art was the construction of the Alaska Highway. The highway increased the tourist trade and also made travel easier. This resulted in bead patterns being shared to a greater extent than previously. The early floral bead patterns began to merge into more common ones. The earlier bead patterns did not always have flower designs, but with the changes, simple flower designs became the common motif. Mass media also contributed to the merging of bead designs. For example, the T. Eaton's catalogues were sent all across the north and they sometimes had floral pattern examples in them. These were on dresses, table cloths, curtains and so forth. Many of these items were ordered. Yet another factor that caused the 'old style' patterns to fall into disuse was the trading and buying of other peoples' bead designs. It is now a common practice for a person who is making a lot of moccasins or mukluks to buy ready-made beaded tops from anywhere in the Yukon. As a result of this practice, when one person adopts a new bead pattern, it can spread quickly throughout the whole beading community.

There seems to be no problem for a beader to like someone else's bead pattern and copy it. They sometimes call the bead pattern after the creator or place of origin. A noticeable design change with Tutchone beaders is the rare use of the transversal color splitting within petals or leaves. The pedals are now mostly made up of solid colors with a band of color circling the outside of the pedals, or a series of bands within the pedals. Leaves are treated in the same way as the flower pedals, or there may be one color with darker lines incorporated into the design to represent the natural lines of a leaf. See below in figure # 409 for two examples of modern Yukon First Nations moccasins, both made by Southern Tutchone Elder Marge Jackson. She has created both modern beaded style moccasins on the left and a pair of moccasins on the right that is reminiscent of the older styles. The example on the left is a simpler design with a four pedal outlined flower at the end of a green stem and two leaves. The example on the right is more complex with a stem with 'grouse tracks' and three 3-pedal flowers coming off it. Those flowers have had the colour transversal split. Mrs. Jackson stated that she wanted to keep creating older bead designs and that she sometimes does designs that her mother Maggie Jim created.



Figure # 409 Example floral beaded designs by Southern Tutchone Elder Marge Jackson.

The moccasins, which are now the most used palette for bead work, have simpler bead designs but the floral designs are still unique. People who are familiar with their community's beading can identify the maker. See below for another example of a southern Yukon beaded moccasin top. This is a contemporary design that appears on many moccasins in the Whitehorse area.



Figure # 410. Common floral design, Whitehorse area. UvK Collection.

On a side note, it was my examination of such bead works in the late 1980s and early 1990s that revealed the unique art to me. I started painting floral designs as works of art themselves. See a recent example below of a combined floral-geometric design for a drum I painted for well known Yukon First Nations singer, Lacey Scarff.



Figure # 411. Floral-geometric drum design created by UvK, Lacey Scarff Collection.

Fortunately, some floral designs from the past are still done today, such as forget-me-nots and strawberries. Duncan writes about the past use of such plants:

Figural motifs occur on about three-quarters of the Han pieces in museums—botanically identifiable forms (strawberries, pansies, daisies, forget-me-nots), and eagle, spiders, swastikas, bows and hearts. (Duncan 1989: 152)

Below is a present day example of beaded forget-me-nots made by Southern Tutchone Elder Mary Deguerre.



Figure # 412. Forget-me-nots floral design by Mary Deguerre. UvK Collection.

In figure # 414 is strawberries beaded by Ms. Frances Joe. I have seen strawberries, blueberries on a number of moccasins, mitts and gloves throughout the Yukon. I will write more about Ms. Frances Joe beading in a moment.

The merging of bead patterns happened in the whole south-central but not the north of the Yukon. Because the isolation of the Gwich'in community of Old Crow, the only way to reach the community is by plane, their beading styles did not change nearly as much as their southern neighbors.

This next pair of moccasins in figure # 413 is in fact from Fort MacPherson and was collected in 1955. The only way into Fort MacPherson in 1955 was to fly or by river. In 1979 the Dempster Highway was completed which ran from the interior of the Yukon to Inuvik, Northwest territories.



Figure # 413. Gwich'in moccasins from Fort MacPherson, 1955. VI-I-68a-b, CMC.

If you remember my earlier notes about Gwich'in beaded styles from Chapter Four- Beaded & Floral Designs, you will notice that the beaded area still covers much of the area. Now however, the flower and leaf designs have become much simpler. When the tops are fully beaded they are often referred to in the Yukon as the “Old Crow” style.

Yukon First Nations women continue to add their bead designs to a variety of items such as jackets, vests and baby belts. An example of a recently beaded vest is by Elder Ms. Francis Joe from the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. See figure # 414. When I purchased this vest from Ms. Joe I asked her why she had put eagles on the vest. She said it was because Wolf claims Eagle, meaning that the Eagle comes under the Wolf Moiety (F. Joe, personal communication, 2003). On the back of the vest Mrs. Joe put a central flower and on each side a strawberry motif. Mrs. Joe is well known for her beaded strawberries. Notice that Mrs. Joe used gopher skin in making this vest, something that is very rare today.



Figure # 414, Frances Joe vest. Uvk collection.

Following is an example of a cape recently made by Mrs. Marge Jackson. See figure # 415. On the back of the cape Crow is placed in the central location and is flanked by two floral beaded designs. The floral designs are repeated at the front of the cape. Mrs. Jackson used split colour flower pedals and split colour leaves and is based on her mother, Maggie Jim's bead designs. It is also interesting that Crow is beaded in the same manner as it could be painted in a silhouette style. Mrs. Jackson uses buttons along the edge of the gopher skins as a reminiscent past use of buttons on jackets and other articles of clothing. The bottom half of the cape is made of gopher skins.



Figure # 415, Crow on Marge Jackson cape. Pam van Kampen collection.

The next image, figure # 416, is a beaded wolf and is again made by Elder Marge Jackson (showing off her creation). While I have not seen any traditional images of wolves howling, recently howling wolves have become popular in art. The painting on Johnny Fraser's drum shows a wolf sitting but it does not look like it is howling.



Figure # 416. Champagne and Aishihik Elder Mrs. Marge Jackson with her beaded wolf design.

Besides the simplification of bead designs another change that has occurred is the creation of beaded scenes. The imagery is somewhat like the earlier hunt and warfare scenes discussed in chapter seven. Instead of simply placing the animal or image on a plain background a scene is created around the main image. This is done by adding plants, trees, mountains or other animals. In figure # 417 is a scene with a beaded moose. This bag is in the Field Museum in Chicago and the museum notes state that the bag was made by Mrs. Dora Austin (née Wedge) in 1950. I am impressed with the composition of the moose. There is no question that this is a moose walking in the wilderness. The moose is walking over blue beads and may indicate that the moose is possibly walking over a shallow creek. On each side of the moose are willow brushes, the moose's food. Moose often eat in wet areas so this image is showing the moose in its natural habitat.



Figure # 417. Moose bag by Mrs. Dora Austin, 1950. 2003.4161.337907. Field Museum.

The next bag with a scene on it is also from the Field Museum and was made by Mrs. Angela Sidney. The museum notes state that Mrs. Sidney is Tagish and from Carcross and that the bag was made in 1949 or 1950.



Figure # 418. Angela Sidney made bag. 1949-1950. 2003.4161.337886, Field Museum.

The bag shows three mallard ducks flying. There are also beaded words: “The call of the Yukon” on the bag. This makes me think of a spring scene since the ducks would be flying to the Yukon from the south. There are a series of flower designs between the words and the ducks to balance the scene. The flowers themselves are often the first sign of the coming summer after the melting of the snow. This is followed by the migratory birds that return to the Yukon for the summer. The birds and animals are no longer ‘crests’ but composed in a more or less realistic manner to create a scene familiar to all Yukon First Nations people.

First half of the Current Art Period: move towards realism

While beading styles show a gradual change during the Current Period, the other art forms can be divided distinctly into two halves or time periods. The first is when the art changed from the recognizable geometric into more realistic forms. That is when the artists began adopting new ideas, methods and imagery from the modern western world. The first half of the Current Art Period is from the end of World War Two until the mid-1980s. The second half of the Current Period starts in 1986, when there is a whole-hearted adoption of the Northwest Coast Indian Art style that carries on till today. At that time the emerging realistic style, as well as almost all traditional art styles, were swept aside in favour of all things Northwest Coast Indian.

I will examine a number of drums and carvings to show the art from the early Current Period until the adoption of the Northwest Coast art. The drum below shows art in transition but not toward the Northwest Coast Art style. This drum, although modern, still has the old style geometric designs, much like the geometric designs on the Tanacross ganhook in figure # 351 on page 331. A modern image is added to the drum, a flag that has YUKON painted on it. The drum was obtained by the Glenbow Museum in 1992 and it lists the production date as 1966. The notes state that this drum came from Pelly Crossing, Yukon and is Tutchone. See figure # 419 for a photograph of the drum.



Figure # 419. Tutchone drum from Pelly Crossing, Yukon. AC 548 A-B, Glenbow Museum.

The drum has modern colours of bright red and yellow. The repeating semi-circles and strips along the side are in the geometric style as are the flag and pole. The semi-circles alternate with the red and yellow colours except at the bottom where two reds join. This is the result of the odd-numbered 23 semi-circles. The alternating coloured strips around the outside rim do not match up with the semi-circles. “Yukon” appears on many drums of the 1950s and 1960s. It is also during this time that many of the early Current Period Art images moved toward realism. The more realistic images were painted on drums, carved and beaded. The next drum is an example of a realistic image drawn on a drum, with what appears to be a felt

pen. See figure # 420 for the drawn scene on the Yukon drum that is in the Alaska State Museum collection. The museum notes on this drum state that the drum was made by Billy Fox in 1970 that was then 60 years old. It also states that “Father was 107 when he died in 1962”. I wonder if Billy Fox is related to Jim Fox in figure # 89 on page 118, who has been mentioned a couple of times earlier. If they are related then this would be an Inland Tlingit drum.



Figure # 420. Yukon drum. II-C-275, ASM.

The scene is of a duck flying in front of the forest and over a lake in the Yukon wilderness. This is one of the most realistic images on any Yukon Drum I have seen during that time period. The word YUKON is printed across the top.

During the 1960s and 1970s the carvings also became more realistic, like the earlier story-based carvings of Kitty Smith. In figure # 421 is a beaver carved in wood by an unknown artist. It was collected from Teslin and is now in the Field Museum's collection. This beaver was carved in the same style as the animals carved by Leslie Jackson in Teslin in the late 1970s. In the museum are a couple of other Leslie Jackson carvings collected at the same time. Therefore, it is possible that this was also made by Jackson. There is however another person who carved beavers in a very similar style. This is Joe Ladue who carved a beaver in 1968 which is now in the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development collection. See figure # 422 of my drawing of the beaver. Joe Ladue is a Kaska from Ross River but was living in Cowley, a small settlement of people about 20 kilometers south of Whitehorse, at the time he made the beaver. This would place him in a border area between the Tagish and Southern Tutchone territories when he created the work. Two differences can be noted when looking at Ladue's and the Teslin beaver. Ladue's work has the beaver's pattern carved in its tail while the other beaver's tail does not have this. Also, Jackson's beaver has a stick in its mouth. Other than these two differences they are almost identical.



Figure # 421. Yukon First Nations carved beaver. 2003.4161.338043, Field Museum.

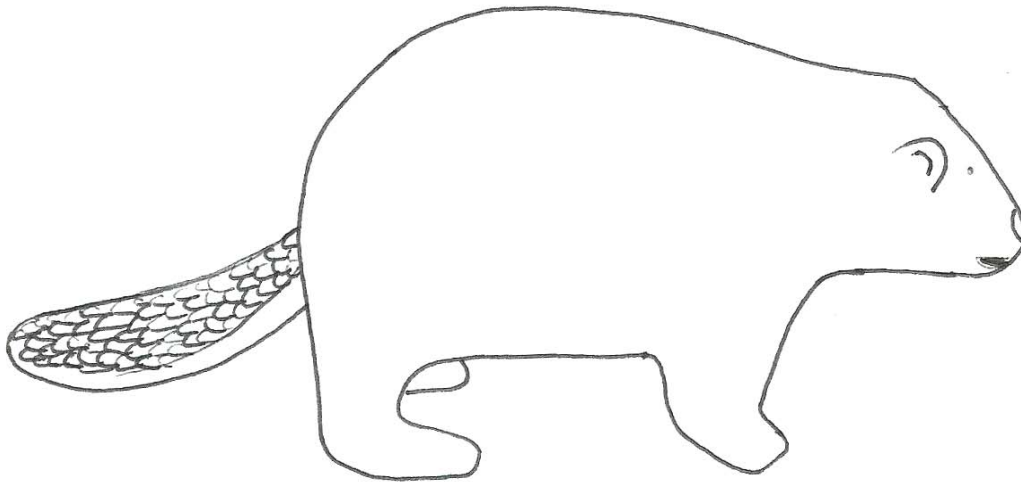


Figure # 422. Carved Beaver by Joe Ladue. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. UvK drawing.

The carved sheep in figure # 423 was done by Leslie Jackson of Teslin. This artifact is in the Field Museum collection and was purchased in 1977. The natural wood colour is maintained as is the case in many of the carved animals of this time period. A piece of bark is used as the rocky part of the mountain side the sheep is standing on. The sheep is looking at us as if we were approaching it.



Figure # 423. Carved Sheep by Leslie Jackson. 2003.4161.338039, Field Museum

The next animal is a carved goat, again by Leslie Jackson. This example, seen in figure # 424 is also in the Field Museum collection and I believe was collected at the same time as the sheep above. This carving is done in the same manner as the sheep. Both these carvings, while being smaller than Kitty Smith's, are carved in a similar, realistic style. These renderings by Jackson and other carvers of his period were images of animals and targeted the tourist trade. This is confirmed with my conversation with Jimmy Ladue, the son of Joe Ladue, who stated that his father did these carving to sell to tourists. The difference with Kitty Smith's carvings is that, although aimed at the tourist market, they were creations representing stories of Yukon First Nations people. I think this is representational of the gradual and step-wise loss of culture for Yukon First Nations people. Animal images were no longer carved as a direct link between the person and the animal or to represent a story or event. The sole purpose became the sale. This practice was typical in the Yukon in the 1960s and 1970s. Although the carvings were wide spread, there are not many examples to examine. A likely reason is that most of these carved animals were purchased by tourists and ended up in American living rooms as a souvenir of their "I Drove the Alaska Highway" trip.



Figure # 424. Carved goat by Leslie Jackson. 2003.4161.337862, Field Museum

Below is a bear carving done by Les Jackson and is shown in George M. White's *Craft Manual of Yukon Tlingit* on pages 18 and 19. Les Jackson and Leslie Jackson are one and the same.



Figure # 425. Les Jackson bear. UvK Drawing.

It appears that the bear has a fish in its mouth and is standing on a piece of bark to represent the ground beside the river or creek the bear is fishing on. The bear, as well as the other wood carvings, were of a size that would fit on a shelf and could be carried by the person who purchased it. As I have mentioned, most often the carvings were left in natural wood colour. The next carving is an exception. It is of a bird. See figure # 426. With the addition of paint it takes on a very realistic appearance. The painting of animals may have indicated the direction Yukon First Nations art was heading, were it not replaced by the Northwest Coast Indian art style in the 1980s. Ironically, this goose is a more traditional art image for the early Inland Tlingit than the present popular coastal Tlingit art style.



Figure # 426. Carved bird. Field Museum. 2003.4161.338040

Pan-Indianism

With the visual culture void there were also elements of Pan-Indianism that started showing up in the Yukon. With Pan-Indianism is meant those ideas that are generally thought of as being North American “Indian”. They are spawned by white people’s romantic ideas of what Indians are supposed to be like. The Plains Indians were considered the ideal image of “Indian” and ideas about and practices of their culture became a marketable template. Examples of Pan-Indian practices in the Yukon today are sweet-grass smudges, circle prayers, the ‘speaking feather’, sweats, and the ‘sacred fire’. In visual culture examples of Pan-Indian imagery are the soaring eagle, eagle feathers, the ‘end-of-trail warrior’ on a horse, dream catchers, war bonnets and teepees.

One result of Pan-Indianism in the Yukon was that the traditional style hide clothing vanished and was replaced by a type of hide clothing that has the appearance of the hide clothing worn by the Indians in western movies: a styled shirt or dress with fringes across the front chest and back as well as along the bottom hem. The traditional style dresses shown earlier were no longer made since they had become unknown. Headbands with sometimes a feather sticking out the back were also added to this appearance. These can be seen in figure # 427 of what appears to be a late 1960s early 1970s photograph of a parade float with First Nations dancers. This photograph would have been taken during the February winter carnival in Whitehorse called the Sourdough Rendezvous.



Figure # 427. Indian display on float during a winter carnival in Whitehorse. George Kellet fonds, 80/118 17, YA.

There are still some distinct Yukon First Nations garments present in the photograph. The second woman on the right is wearing Johnny Joe's jacket over her dress which is shown earlier in figure # 91 on page 119. The dress she is wearing is pointed and may be reminiscent of the earlier pointed tunics. There are at least three button blankets in the photograph, two around George Dawson. Dawson is the man in the group to the right wearing the cowboy hat. The third button blanket is in the left of the photograph being worn by a young girl. While I cannot see if there are any images on the back of the button blankets, the Northwest Coast style button blankets with animal clan designs on the back have by this time taken effect in many of Yukon First Nations' cultural imagery. These blankets were traditionally only traded from the coast by the rich. They were rare and highly prized. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Athapaskans such as the Tutchone and Han did have button blankets which were without the animal or clan designs on the back. There are only a couple left in museum collections and these are rarely seen. The North West Coastal style button blankets are now thought of as a locally created cultural item, indigenous to this area.

My grandfather is the man who is sitting in the right center of the float and is wearing a blanket wrapped around him. Wrapping a blanket around yourself seemed to be a somewhat common practice. See Figures # 141 on page 163 and # 333 on page 318 for examples of blankets use during potlatches. It appears he is working on something, perhaps carving.

Second half of the Current Period: adopting Northwest Coast Indian art

Along the Northwest Pacific coast the First Nations people also experienced a loss of culture. However, when they found themselves in the late twentieth century, they were still surrounded by their long houses, totem poles, bent wood boxes and other examples of their art. They had the examples of their rich visual culture to refer to and were able to maintain and build on it. This was to have a major impact on First Nations art in the Yukon.

The first example I have seen of using the Northwest Coast art style is on the drum in figure # 18 on page 51. I have examined this drum in Chapter One: Cultural & Environmental

Background, Art Periods and Comparative Art Styles. This 1950s drum shows an early transition from the Geometric Art Period towards the Northwest Coast Indian art style.

The next examples of Northwest Coast Indian art shows up in the 1960s. Yukon First Nations artists started seeking to create Native art but found no examples of their own visual culture to refer to. Some of these artists learned from other British Columbia First Nations artists the Northwest Coast Indian art style. In the 1960s Freddie Smith, who is my uncle, was living in the Vancouver area and began learning the Coastal Salish style of Northwest Coast Indian art. The more southern regions of the Northwest Coast Indian art practice are not as solid and block-like as the northern Haida and Tlingit style of Northwest Coast Indian art. The southern styles use thinner and longer lines and do not follow the strict use of ovoid, “U”, “S” & “L” form lines. This is the style that Freddie Smith learned and when he returned to the Yukon in the mid 1970s he carried on creating art in this manner. See Freddie Smith in the mid-1970s in the photograph in figure # 428 as well as an example of his art.



Figure # 428. Freddie Smith and his tabletop. 1976 Uvk Photograph. Hazel Guyett collection.

The art is engraved on a coffee table. Freddie Smith also made a lot of lamps and totem poles which are in collections in British Columbia and the Yukon. There were two or three other artists who were creating various forms of Northwest Coast Indian art during the same time period. This time also gave birth to the first permanent example of First Nations art publicly displayed in Whitehorse. This was the British Columbia centennial totem pole that was gifted to the Yukon in 1971. See figure # 429.

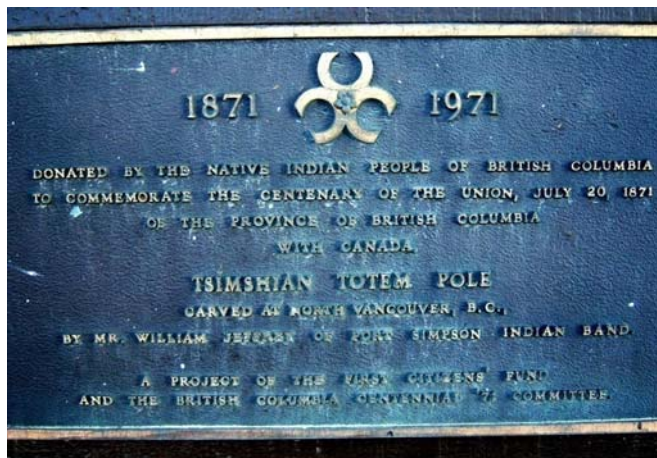


Figure # 429. British Columbia Centennial Tsimshian pole.

With a couple of artists working in the Northwest Coast Indian art style and the Tsimshian totem pole, Yukon First Nations artists started learning the Northwest Coast Indian art style. One person who contributed to this is well known artist Ted Harrison. Ted Harrison was an art teacher from the United Kingdom who had taken a position teaching art at the Yukon Vocational School and later at F.H. Collins High School. When Ted Harrison began teaching art at the Vocational School he noticed that there were no First Nations students and he set about trying to recruit them. Harrison approached the Yukon Native Brotherhood to inquire about possible First Nations students. The Yukon Native Brotherhood recommended Stan Peters. Stan Peters was born in 1945 to an Ahtna father, William Copper Peter, and Northern Tutchone mother, Lena Jack. Stan lived in the wilderness with his family until he was six or seven years old when the Royal Canadian Mounted Police came to his parents' camp and took Stan away to the Catholic Mission School in the northern British Columbia community of Lower Post. Stan stayed in mission schools until he was seventeen years old. Upon his return home Stan began carving. His father carved various animals such as moose, bears, wolves and sheep. These were carved in wood and were about 8 inches high. He left them in the natural wood colour. While I have not seen any of Stan Peters' father's

art, I presume they were close to the small carved animals presented above in figure # 421 on page 388 to # 425 on page 390.

In the early 1960s Stan bought a book on Northwest Coast Indian Art and began to teach himself that style. Stan carved little masks and totem poles up to 12 inches in size. Stan was living in Beaver Creek by that time and it is here that Ted Harrison travelled to ask Stan Peters to enroll in the art program at the vocational school. Stan was impressed that Ted Harrison travelled all the way from Whitehorse, at his own expense, to ask him to join the art program. At the art course Ted Harrison talked to Stan about making a totem pole and after meeting with the Yukon Territorial Government an agreement was reached. With the assistance of Northwest Coast Indian art books Stan carved the totem pole that you can see in figure # 430. The pole was erected in 1973 and became the second totem pole in the Yukon and the first Yukon First Nations carved pole. Stan Peters is still active in his art and lives in Beaver Creek. He has moved away from the Northwest Coast Indian art style to work on his brand of carved Northern Tutchone floral beaded designs as well as nature influenced imagery.



Figure # 430. Stan Peters and his totem pole.

I was influenced by Ted Harrison as well. As a grade ten student at F.H. Collins in 1975 I was in Ted Harrison's art class. He saw that I expressed an interest in Native art and he pointed me toward the Northwest Coast Indian art style. Since there were no other examples of Yukon First Nations art for me to see other than the two totem poles and the carving of my uncle Freddie Smith, the Northwest Coast Indian art seemed to be correct. On

top of that I believed I was Tlingit Indian. Like Stan, I used Northwest Coast Indian art books to learn from. See figure # 431 for examples of my early artwork from 1975. I am standing at the door of Yukon Hall, an Indian residential school, with a friend helping me hold my ink drawings. These drawings were purchased by one of the supervisors at Yukon Hall.



Figure # 431. Ukjese van Kampen's art from 1975.

In 1977 I joined the Canadian Army and later served in the Canadian Airborne Regiment. I was away from the Yukon from 1977 until 1980. In 1982 I joined the United States Marine Corps and served active duty until 1985. Because I served in Canada's elite unit and was now joining the elite branch of the United States military there were a number of newspaper articles published in which one headline stated: 'Yukon Tlingit Joins United States Marines'. When my mother saw the article she wrote me a letter and informed me that I was a Northern Tutchone. This was a major surprise to me for I had always thought I was Tlingit. This is an example of the major loss of our culture and the confusion that is left in its wake. Finding myself a Tutchone I felt I should be doing Tutchone art. I began seeking to learn more about Tutchone art. This was followed by Yukon Athapaskan and finally First Nations art from the Yukon and surrounding areas. I realized early on that "Tutchone art" was like the Tutchone language, a dialect of Athapaskan. All Athapaskans speak Athapaskan but groups speak different dialects. The same goes for the art. Art styles are generally the same over a wide area but the details may be different between the different groups of Athapaskan peoples. Since the Inland Tlingit for the most part adopted the interior lifestyle and visual culture, I included their art in my research.

In the meantime there were major developments in Yukon First Nations art. These developments came about because of the works by Keith Wolf-Smarch, an Inland Tlingit. Like many of us young First Nations people in the Yukon in the 1970s and 1980s, he was searching for his culture but found none. While Keith did see the smaller animal carvings that people in his community made he felt he wanted to create a stronger art. There was also the prevailing attitude that these carvings were a craft and not art. Like Stan Peters, Keith Wolf-Smarch began studying books on the Northwest Coast Indian art style in the early 1980s. In 1984, Dempsey Bob, a Tahltan/Tlingit artist, came to the Yukon to teach a Northwest Coast Indian Art design course. Keith took this course and the two soon became friends. In 1985 Dempsey Bob invited Keith to work with him and in May 1986 Keith moved to Prince

Rupert to work with Dempsey for a year. Keith felt it was more important to learn about his culture than to accept an invitation to be a featured artist at the 1986 Expo in Vancouver. After his return to the Yukon, Keith was a talented crest and mask carver and he wanted to use his skill to create cultural items for potlatches and ceremonies for his people. After his training Keith created his first mask, "Young Man Eagle Clan" in March 1986. I mark this as the first modern day Northwest Coast mask created in the Yukon. As time progressed his masks became popular and he became a well known carver. Keith went on to become the Yukon's master carver in the Tlingit style and has had many successes. He is known internationally and has taken his work to many countries overseas including Europe and Japan. Keith also started teaching others about creating Tlingit style art. With Keith's teaching and an increasing interest in First Nations art, the Northwest Coast Indian art style became very popular to the point that the general public now thinks that it is the traditional Yukon First Nations art form. This has cumulated to the point that there is not a single Athapaskan or early Inland Tlingit example of art on permanent display in Whitehorse. There are some examples of beadwork from the Yukon Permanent- and other collections that are rotated in and out of display cases, but nothing permanent. There are a couple of examples of early Athapaskan or Inland Tlingit images on display but these were not even created by First Nations artists.



Figure # 432. Keith Wolf-Smarch and one of his many poles. This example is in the Yukon Government Permanent Collection.

The only exception to the Northwest Coast Indian art creation is from the Kaska. In the late 1980's carving instructors started going to Ross River to teach the Northwest Coast art style and mask making. Carvers like Keith Wolf Smarch, Dempsey Bob and Norman Tait all taught the Northwest Coast art style in workshops at Ross River. Local carvers such as Norman Sterriah, Joe Glada and William Atkinson took these workshops and learned the Northwest coast art style. After about five years the style slowly changed. The Kaska carvers realized that the Northwest Coast art style was not from their area and began changing their approach. Some of the masks still have the influence of the Tlingit style masks while others seem to have been influenced by the False Face masks made by the Iroquois people. Many of

the present Kaska style masks are quite close to the traditional Yukon face masks that were discussed earlier. Some of the Kaska carvers have their own unique style. For example, Norman Sterriah produces masks that have a direct connection to events in present day Kaska society. He often makes masks that are about the land claims negotiations with the federal and territorial governments. Norman also has a mask that is a face with a wide open mouth with three smaller faces inside the mouth. See figure # 433 below. This mask is showing the negotiation process, that is, talks between the Kaska people, the Yukon and federal governments.



Figure # 433. Norman Sterriah mask.

Northwest Coast Indian art is now totally accepted, by First nations and non-First Nations alike, as the traditional art form of the Yukon First Nations people. Northwest Coast Indian art is the most common taught art. In the next section of this chapter I will look at some of the reasons of the lack of interest in the traditional art forms of the Yukon.

Current artistic issues

During the years I was growing up in the Yukon, the official history we learned began with the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898. There was little interest in Yukon First Nations culture. While this is now changing there was still a huge gap in cultural and historical understanding between First Nations people and white people. Many of the people who are in positions of cultural and artistic authority are often not from the Yukon. They do not understand the cultural past of the Yukon, but even longer time “Yukoners” lack often in First Nations historical knowledge. Consultation and cooperation of government employees with First Nations people can still be a challenge. An example of this attitude can be seen

with the Yukon Arts Centre's art exhibition of June 2007 where the YAC and MacBride Museum held an exhibition of Yukon First Nations art; *Beads: patterns in time* without any First Nations person directly involved. This is not an isolated event and seems quite acceptable when dealing with First Nations people. Yet it would not be acceptable when dealing with other peoples. For example an exhibition of women's art without any input from women, or an exhibition of Canadian French people's art without these people's input would be totally unacceptable today. Yet these organizations feel it is perfectly okay to have exhibitions of First Nations art without First Nations involvement. The people in positions to decide such events still do not recognize their obligations about giving First Nations people the deciding powers when dealing with First Nations issues. I can give another example. In 2006, as the curator of the Society of Yukon Artists of Native Ancestry, I created an art exhibition about masks at the Yukon Arts Centre. The reaction from the attending public was very positive and a television show was produced about the exhibition. This was produced by the Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon and the show still is aired on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network. But the reaction from the Yukon Arts Centre was an extremely negative e-mail sent to the office administrator of the Society of Yukon Artists of Native Ancestry. A substandard exhibition was hinted to, the ethics of me, including my work in the exhibition, was questioned. My personal behavior was questioned and the future relationship between the Yukon Arts Centre and the Society of Yukon Artist of Native Ancestry became shaky. I believe it was because they did not like the loss of control, since they had no say in the content of the exhibit. It was a First Nations curated exhibition about First Nations art and history. There were no non-First Nations input to the exhibition other than providing the space and some of the funding. These (unconscious) colonial attitudes are still a barrier for the development and understanding of Yukon First Nations culture.

Yet the white non-governmental organizations and government are not totally to blame. The Yukon First Nations' non-confrontational ways are also contributing to the challenge. To understand the situation requires a separate and more detailed study in the field of relationships between Yukon First Nations and non-First Nations. There are a number of issues at hand that contribute to the present situation. I will reflect briefly on some of the factors that I think play a role. The first five are related to factors that have influenced the loss of our culture and the last one is related to present day forces that keep the culture suppressed.

Language

Almost all the fluent speakers of Native languages in the Yukon were born before the building of the Alaska Highway in 1942 and in the next twenty years most of them will have passed on. The present younger speakers are few and they often speak like children! First Nations 55 and older accounted for only 13% of all Aboriginal people in Yukon in 2006 and they are the majority of fluent Native language speakers. Yukon First Nations languages are in serious trouble. Personally I do not speak Tutchone and only know a couple of people around my age (52) who almost speak their language fluently. They still make grammar and pronunciation errors that are quite amusing to Elders. Furthermore, many of the traditional words used when living a hunter-gatherer existence have vanished. Because we are living in a modern western society many new words have been invented to describe all devices and situations that exist today. Sadly, in the Yukon, the third most spoken language after French and English is German, at about 950 speakers. There are more German speakers in the Yukon than all the Yukon First Nations speakers combined! There are also 150 Dutch first language speakers in the Yukon, greater than the two largest Native language groups (Gwich'in and Inland Tlingit).

Art/visual culture

Since there are no examples of the early Yukon First Nations art on public display or any efforts to show more traditional Yukon First Nations art, many Yukon First Nations people, including artists, have little chance of seeing their own visual culture. The result of this lack of reference is reduced interest in a revival of the earlier art forms. At present the market for First Nations art is the Northwest Coast style. The original early Yukon First Nations art styles are unknown and would hold little interest for buyers. We as a people have put little effort in researching and promoting our past culture and instead are happy to just let things carry on the way they are going. The problem with this is that this affects our self-identity which in turn affects our self-esteem as a people. A lack of self-esteem leads to social problems of which there are many.

Religion/spirituality

I think it is safe to say that the potlatch is a last remaining expression of our spiritual life. Gone is the belief in the white winter, animal, sky and other worlds; gone is the belief of the power of animals such as their ability to hear and understand what we are saying, the owl who foretells the coming bad news or spirit helpers who guide us. Gone are many of the taboos. These losses cannot have but huge implications for how we find meaning in our lives, how we fit into this present day world and the sense of where we came from. We have lost our rituals and understanding of why things are done. Today's society has different values and our adaptation to them is only successful from a superficial perspective. Our spirituality has been largely replaced by Christianity and there are some people who have adopted Pan-Indian spiritualism. This replacement has made traditional objects without meaning and therefore interest.

Living off the land/traditional lifestyle

Indistinguishable from our spirituality is the land and the relationship to it. In fact, the land was our spirituality. We did not live apart from nature, we were integrated with nature. We were part of this land and did not "own" it in the sense of how land is owned in modern society. This land is our last solid connection to our past and culture. We can stand here on the soil and tell of our ancestors' activities, providing we still know our history. Many of us no longer know our history with the land. This connection is becoming less and with that the relationship to objects and visual art made directly from the land.

We have also lost our ability to live off the land and as a result spend little time there. Some Elders are spending most of their time in the bush but they are few and far between. There are younger people going to the land but those are only visits. It may be for hunting or going to a fish camp but after that they return to the city.

Acceptance of status quo/unconscious expectations

There are a number of unconscious expectations we place on each other. White people are successful, Indians are not; White people are rich, Indians are poor; Indians are drunk on Main Street, white people much less so; White people go to university, Indians do not. You may think this is rhetoric from the 1950s and this is not the case anymore. Well, yes and no. It is true that opportunities for Indians in the Yukon have greatly caught up with the white population. It is also true that racism has vastly reduced. But what about our deeper thoughts and expectations that even First Nations people have adopted? An example is when my First

Nation, Kwanlin Dun First Nation, hired a white person as the first Executive Director for the new cultural centre in Whitehorse. The First Nation did not even attempt to hire a First Nations person for the position, feeling that we as a people cannot handle running our own cultural center without it failing. My First Nation did create a training position at the cultural centre but I suspect it will be years before a First Nations is running it.

Economic development as the golden rule

The downside to the lack of early Yukon First Nations visual culture is that there has also been little effort from the First Nations governments to push culture, since their focus has been on land claims governance and economical development. In a way this may be a mixed blessing since I feel now that Northwest Coast art has become too commercial and as a result has begun to lose its meaning and cultural value for its people. When an image of a clan crest is reproduced by the thousands on cups, t-shirts or prints, you have to question what the real cultural value of that art is. That art has now lost its power and any sacredness that it once held. Can the creator understand and tell you the stories that their art represents? But then, what is the worse deal: traditional art being obscure and mostly forgotten or art that is tainted with commercial intentions.

It is hard not to be swiped away by western bureaucracy and capitalism and at the same time keep practicing our own values. Thus, we also place economical development ahead of culture. What good is an economic development program without the deep understanding of our culture? It is band aid practice, not irrelevant but less important than answering the question: who are we and where do we come from? Our traditional visual art can help us answer this question. It can make us proud, again. I hope this dissertation provides a piece to the answer.