

## 1. Description

- 1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: **Tsimshian, Tsimshianic language, Penutian and Tsimshian language family [1]**  
**Alternative names are Chimmezyan, Tsimpshean, Zimshian [2]**
- 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): **tsi [2]**
- 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): **North coast British Columbia. Southern Tsimshian at southern end on coast at Klemtu. Also in United States.[2]**
- 1.4 Brief history: **At one time the Tsimshian lived on the upper reaches of the Skeena River near present day Hazelton BC. It was after a series of disasters that befell the people, that a Prince from the leadership lead a migration to the coast, away from the cursed land and founded Kitkatla, which is today one the oldest continually inhabited communities on Earth. Following suite, other Chiefs migrated down the river and began to occupy all the lands of the lower Skeena valley. Over time a new dialect of the language developed and so did the Tsimshian proper; but still sharing all the rights and customs of their upper river brothers the Gitksan. In 1862 smallpox annihilated many of the Tsimshian population. Further epidemics ravaged their communities for many years until the late 1890s. There were at least three large scale outbreaks, in total one in four Tsimshian died. Lax Kw'alaams began burying the dead without ceremony, on Rose Island. Protestant English culture became the way Tsimshian began to lead their lives, including language, religion and culture from this time forward. In fact the Head Chiefs themselves were the ones to lead the assimilative process. It was not until the 1970s when Tsimshian culture began to return to the communities, appearing first in the school district. In the 1880s the Anglican missionary William Duncan, with a group of Tsimshian, requested settlement on Annette Island from the U.S. government. After being approved, the group founded New Metlakatla in Alaska. William Duncan later requested the community gain reservation status. After approval, it became the only Native reservation in the state. [1]**
- 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: **Protestant English culture became the way Tsimshian led their lives, including language, religion and culture from the 1890's forward. In fact the Head Chiefs themselves were the ones to lead the assimilative process. It was not until the 1970s when Tsimshian culture began to return to the communities, appearing first in the school district. In the 1880s the Anglican missionary William Duncan, with a group of Tsimshian, requested settlement on Annette Island from the U.S. government. After being approved, the group founded New Metlakatla in Alaska. [1] Tsimshian comprises fourteen Aboriginal nations in British Columbia. Tsimshian (Tsim-she-yan, meaning "People of the Skeena") is a name that is often broadly applied to all northern BC Aboriginal groups speaking languages of the Tsimshian language family: The Tsimshian language can be grouped into four dialects; Northern Tsimshian found along the the lower Skeena River, NISHGA (or Nisga'a) along the Nass River, GITKSAN (or Gitzsan) from the upper Skeena River, and Southern or Coast Tsimshian from the Skeena River to the coast.[4]**
- 1.6 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: **Population total in all countries: 930. Ethnic population: 3,200 in Canada [2] There were twenty-six known villages in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was estimated the 1835 total population of Tsimshian-speaking peoples at 8,500, of which 1,200 were Southern Tsimshian, 3,000 were Coast Tsimshian, 1,700 were Nishga, and 2,600 were Gitksan.[6] Generally, each house could hold 20-50 individuals with a village size between 300-500 people [12]**

## 2. Economy

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): **Berries, roots, bark and greens supplemented the diet. Wild vegetable roots were collected for food and spruce roots gathered for weaving into hats and baskets.[3]**
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: **Fish and shellfish was the dietary staple. Large quantities of it were split or filleted to be dried in the sun or smoked in sheds. The fish could then be stored for up to twelve months (depending on the fat content of particular species). Mammals and birds were also important sources of food. Their meat was usually smoked and dried. Of all the animals that were hunted, deer were by far the most important as a source of food and of skins for clothing. Mountain goat, caribou, porcupine, beaver, groundhog, lynx and rabbit were also hunted.[3]**
- 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns: **A whale-bone club found at an ancient Tsimshian village site, near Prince Rupert. It has been dated at approximately 2,000 years old. Bows used in war were made of yew wood and decorated with the owner's crests. Ceremonial versions of these bows were inset with abalone shell. War arrows were made of Saskatoon berry branches obtained from the interior. Quivers consisted of tubes of red cedar, often elaborately decorated. Copper and steel daggers were obtained from Siberian fur traders for hundreds of years. Some were double-bladed like the knives of Siberian bear hunters. A steel dagger was as valuable as a slave and was the prized possession of a chief. The pommels of daggers provided a special field for artistic decoration. Hand-to-hand fighting favoured the use of clubs. One ancient form that can be traced to Siberia and Shang China was made from caribou antlers armed with stone tips and decorated with geometric or zoomorphic designs. These clubs came to symbolize power among the Tsimshian, in particular, and miniature varieties were made as non-functional badges of achievement. Tsimshian stone clubs were the most elaborately carved on the coast, a tradition that developed during a period of intense warfare in the first millennium B.C. The animal and human figures that decorate them are unlike any known crests produced later. Whalebone clubs, which could be very large, were sometimes carved with delicate designs and inlaid with shell. The witnessed histories (adawk) mention that warriors concealed pointed stones in their fists for surprise attacks on their enemies. According to the witnessed histories (adawk), large boulders were thrown at attacking canoes, then retrieved for reuse by means of a rope run through a hole in them. Straight-grained cedar canoes split easily if large boulders were thrown at them with great force. The enemy could also throw the boulders back, with destructive results. An atlatl (an Aztec word) is a throwing board that served to extend the arm and add propulsive force to spears. Used throughout North and South America before the introduction of the bow, it was retained on the Northwest Coast until the introduction of the gun. [3]**
- 2.4 Food storage: **The chum salmon that had begun moving up the rivers were ideal for preservation, because the fat content was lower and the product was less likely to go rancid; they were smoke-dried in great quantities. The fish were either dried or**

processed into nutritious oil or “grease” that was highly prized. Some berries were dried while others were preserved in grease [6]

2.5 Sexual division of production: **Women contributed to the welfare of the family in many ways: raising children, tending the fire, cooking, making clothing, and weaving baskets. They collected shellfish, and dried wild fruits and vegetables as well as plants used for dyes and medicines. Processing and drying fish for winter meals was a major activity. Women also harvested cedar bark to make mats, hats, capes, skirts, and ornaments. The main economic contribution made by women was the collecting and processing of food for long-term storage. A large supply of preserved food ensured that village populations could survive the winter. Tsimshian men performed a variety of essential activities, including fishing, hunting and woodworking. [3] Women were responsible for collecting berries and other plants from throughout the forest. While the women gathered, the men were always responsible for hunting. [5] Utilitarian wooden objects made by men, included a wide variety of storage boxes and chests, the northern type of canoe, woodworking tools, and fishing and hunting gear. [6]**

2.6 Hunting: **Hunting was undertaken by groups smaller than those for the spring and summer activities; permission to use hunting and fishing territories was granted by the house chief. [6]**

2.7 Basketry: **All women learned to weave cedar and spruce-root baskets, but those who were especially adept were excused from household chores to practise their craft. Used for storing and transporting goods, baskets came in various sizes, both decorated and plain. Men carried fishing, hunting, and woodworking tools in baskets. Women used them for gathering wild fruits, berries, and other materials such as moss, shellfish, and seaweed. Woven hats served as protection against the sun and rain. Ropes, belts, necklaces, and mats were also woven from cedar bark. [3] Coast women mainly used the bark of the western red cedar for mats and containers, while upriver women also used maple and birch bark and spruce roots for containers. Functional classes of Tsimshian basketry include plaited bark containers used for berries and the transport of goods, plaited mats, eulachon baskets and twined-root cooking baskets. There are stylistic differences between the coast and upriver peoples. [6]**

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: **At the end of winter before the river ice breaks up, the main activity was eulachon fishing on the Nass River. The man who caught the first eulachon gave it to the oldest child of his eldest brother, who gave gifts in return. The woman who picked the first salmonberry of the year gave it to her husband’s or father’s sister, who would return gifts of high value. Chiefs managed the diverse resources available from house territories to provide food throughout the year, surplus for trade, and the liberal quantities of special delicacies served at feasts. Chiefs received tribute in the form of the first sea otter and seal caught by each canoe of sea hunters and other fur animals captured by land hunters. Chiefs hunted sea lions and mountain goats, activities required courage and endurance, but that they seldom participated in other hunting, except to perform a supervisory role. As chiefs, they could expect slaves and other hunters to provide for them. [6]**

2.9 Food taboos: **Cultural taboos related to prohibiting women and men eating improper foods during and after childbirth.[7]**

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? **The Coast Tsimshian went to war in large, seagoing canoes that could carry up to 50 warriors. Campaign supplies were stored in the canoes, so that there was no need to stop for food. The canoes were 12 to 15 metres long and about 2 metres across at the beam. All canoes had a name, and were painted with crest designs. After contact with European sailing ships, masts and sails were also added to the large canoes. [3]**

### **3. Anthropometry**

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): **No evidence found**

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): **No evidence found**

### **4. Life History, mating, marriage**

4.1 Age at menarche (f): **Both boys and girls were given their first names at puberty ceremonies, at which time their lineage relatives made gift distributions. [6]**

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): **No evidence found**

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): **Generally, each house held 20-50 individuals [11]**

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): **No evidence found**

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): **These secondary marriages often persons of very unequal age, so in compensation a suitably related young person might also be appointed as “future wife,” or “future husband,” when the older spouse died. [11]**

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: **Divorce was probably frequent. [6]**

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: **Polygyny was permitted for chiefs, although it was apparently rare, and a widow was expected to marry her husband’s successor or brother. [6] A man might be married to two or more sisters at the same time. [11]**

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: **The wealth given by the bride’s father, in return for the bride price from the groom’s relatives, might include crest objects (appropriate since father-in-law and son-in-law were ideally of the same clan), and marriages might be arranged solely to secure such treasures. An established man could take his bride home; a poorer man remained for a time to work for his father-in-law. [11]**

4.9 Inheritance patterns: **Tsimshian society was based on a matrilineal line of descent: all children would inherit their lineage, or clan affiliation, from their mothers. Inheritance and status were passed on to the oldest son of the father's oldest sister. [3]**

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: **All marriages were supposed to be between social equals; the children of parents of unequal rank inherited rank no higher than that of the lower-ranked parent. [6]**

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: **No evidence homosexuality**

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): **No evidence found**

- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized? **No evidence found**
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”) **No evidence found**
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? **No evidence found**
- 4.16 Sexual freedom? **Males and females were separated from each other during puberty years to avoid sexual intercourse. [5]**
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): **The social distinction between the chiefly families and those who had names of lesser rank was maintained through intermarriage with other chiefly families. Marriages were arranged. It seems likely that the Tsimshian favored marriage with either cross-cousin. What is clear is that the primary goal of marriage was consolidation of wealth and position. [6] On the death of a wife he was entitled to replace her with her younger sister or other close kinswoman. Similarly, the widow was expected to marry her husband’s brother or maternal nephew, although there were said to be a few women of high rank who had several husbands simultaneously. These secondary marriages often persons of very unequal age, so in compensation a suitably related young person might also be appointed as “future wife,” or “future husband,” when the older spouse died. It was all but impossible to take a new spouse from another clan, once one was “married into” one, yet instances are not unknown. While marriages of the aristocracy perpetuated alliances between the same two noble lines, those of their junior relatives or commoners might be with various clans in the opposite moiety. [11]**
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? **Women are allowed to marry multiple husbands but it is a rare occurrence [11]**
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring? **No evidence found**
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? **Maternal grandmother often participates in the rearing of children [11]**
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: **No discussion found**
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades: **No evidence found**
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): **No discussion found**
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? **No discussion found**
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: **It is interesting to note that children received their position in society from their mothers. [5]**
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules: **It was forbidden to marry someone from the same lineage. There were four lineages: Raven, Wolf, Eagle, and Fireweed (for the Gitksan) or Blackfish/Killer Whale (for the Coast and Southern Tsimshian and the Nisga’a).[3]**
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? **The marriage ceremony was an extremely formal affair, involving several prolonged and sequential ceremonies.[7]**
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? **The birth of a child was attended by its father’s sister and other woman of his lineage, who brought gifts for the infant. A first naming ceremony was held at which the chief or father’s relatives announced the name. When children of both sexes were about seven, they were given their first initiation ritual, in which a chief “threw” power into them. A father’s sister or other female relative pierced her ear as a sign of rank; high ranking girls also had their lips pierced for labrets. Both boys and girls were given their first names at puberty ceremonies, at which time their lineage relatives made gift distributions. [6]**
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) **Marriage was always with a member of the opposite moiety, preferably with a member of the father’s clan and house. Marriage of a man with his “father’s sister” (or with her daughter or maternal niece, called by the same term), or of a woman with her “father’s brother” (or his maternal nephew and heir, also termed alike) were ideal unions, insuring that the spouses were of equal rank. Since an individual’s mother’s brother was frequently married to his or her father’s sister, the cross-cousin sought as a mate was their child, and the two houses or lines were continually linked. The wealth given by the bride’s father, in return for the bride price from the groom’s relatives, might include crest objects (appropriate since father-in-law and son-in-law were ideally of the same clan), and marriages might be arranged solely to secure such treasures. An established man could take his bride home; a poorer man remained for a time to work for his father-in-law. If a man, as heir, married his uncle’s widow or her daughter, there was, of course, no removal; the girl in such a case remained in her father’s house [11]**
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? **Marriages were arranged. It seems likely that the Tsimshian favored marriage with either cross-cousin. What is clear is that the primary goal of marriage was consolidation of wealth and position. [6] Marriages might be arranged solely to secure such treasures. [11]**

#### **Warfare/homicide**

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: **No discussion of percent adult death due to warfare found**
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: **No discussion of outgroup vs. ingroup cause of violent death found**
- 4.16 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): **Raids by small groups of tribes from the interior driven by hunger posed a constant threat to the Tsimshian, as did major, but infrequent, raids by Haida and Tlingit from their islands to the west and north. Tsimshian men built fort-like enclosures to protect their clans during times of invasion. The original Kitwanga Fort was built by the ancient warrior, Nekt, on a hill about 3 km north of the present village of Kitwanga. Nekt was a highly feared warrior who led raids against villages on the coast and on the Nass River. To defend against enemy raids, a fence of spiked logs was built around the five houses of his tribe. The logs could be released to roll down onto the invaders. The “man-crushing log” became a crest that was put on totem poles by some Kitwanga and Gitsegyukla families. [3] The Tsimshian competed with the Tlingit, Haida, the Athapaskan groups in the north, the Dunne-Za in the east, and the Kwakiutl groups in the south.[7]**
- 4.17 Warfare armor? **Warriors before 1830 (when muskets were introduced) wore protective clothing when going into battle. Leather jackets and tunics made of sea-lion or bear skin protected their bodies, while helmets and visors made of wood protected their heads and necks. These items of clothing were usually decorated with crest images that identified their owner’s clan affiliation. The warrior Nekt fashioned himself a suit of armour made of grizzly-bear skin lined with pitch and slate.**

During raids, his enemies mistook him for the mythical Grizzly Bear, who was invincible because of his impenetrable armour and his magical war club called "Strike Only Once". The story of Nekt and his fort is often portrayed in art. Today, many Nisga'a and Gitksan still claim him as their illustrious ancestor. [3]

## **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: **Generally, each house could hold 20-50 individuals with a village size between 300-500 people [12]**
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): **Each local group customarily occupied a single winter village, moving in the spring to fishing villages and in the summers to fishing camps on other rivers [6]**
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): **Tsimshian society had three main classes: nobles, commoners, and slaves. The nobility included the immediate families of the chiefs of each tribe. Among the privileged individuals were the chiefs and the chieftainesses, and their children. The majority of people were commoners who offered their labour in support of their chief and whose own prestige depended on the success of the chief in feasting and warfare. Slaves were owned by the chiefs. They were war captives who were first offered to their own tribes for a ransom. Those not ransomed and their offspring became hereditary slaves. There was little social mobility through intermarriage between the classes. [3] Chiefs managed the diverse resources available from house territories to provide food throughout the year, surplus for trade, and the liberal quantities of special delicacies served at feasts. Since descent among the Tsimshian was reckoned matrilineally, succession to a man's names and position went in theory to a younger brother or sister's son. Actual succession, which involved a number of situational factors, was often a source of controversy. The village chief was the chief of the highest ranking house in the village, and the other houses, in all clans, were ranked under him in descending order. [6]**
- 5.4 Post marital residence: **Boys would live with their biological fathers until the age of nine or ten, when they would go to live with their maternal uncles. Girls continued to live with their parents until they married and moved to their husbands' homes.[3]**
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): **Each lineage held territories that included a mix of economic resources, namely salmon streams, intertidal fish-trap sites, clam-digging flats, cod and halibut fishing grounds, and tracts of land for timber and bark harvesting. They also held the rights to family crests, myths, dances and songs. [3] In traditional Tsimshian thought, each village was held to be a world apart, distinct in history, custom and law; to enter the territory of another village was to enter a foreign land, whether a nearby village which shared the same language or a distant one with a different language. [6]**
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): **Women were of the same levels as men, although their names and status did not ordinarily entail the same sort of political power. [6]**
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: **No discussion over special friendships or joking relationships**
- 5.8 Village and house organization: **The highest-ranking chief's house was generally the largest, and was located in the center of the village, with the houses of lesser rank chiefs ranged on either side. [3] The salmon are an abundant food source which enabled the Tsimshian to live in permanent towns. They lived in large longhouses, made from cedar house posts and panels. These were very large, and usually housed an entire extended family. [1]**
- 5.9 Specialized village structures: **Tsimshian winter houses were constructed of massive timbers hewn from red cedar. The average house was about 50-55 feet long and 30-35 feet wide. The walls were independent of the post, beam, and roof structure. Thick upright base planks at the front, rear, and sides were set just outside the corner posts and grooved to receive thinner horizontal planks. Vertical wall planks were carried by to spring and summer camps. An excavated pit, five feet deep and 30 feet square, usually lined with cedar plank retaining walls, formed the main living space and contained the central fireplace, which was lined with sand and the beach cobbles that were used for stone-boiling. Cedar-bark mats were used as insulation in the winter. Some houses had narrow platforms around the main pit; narratives tell of famous chiefs' houses with multiple platforms. The ground level platform served as a storage area. The door was at the gable end facing the beach. Some houses had entrance doors cut through totem poles placed at the front of the house. House names were inherited as crests. The chief and his immediate family occupied one or more cubicles at the rear of the house; people of lesser rank had family quarters along the side walls. Sacred red cedar bark was used to transform chiefs' dwellings into dance houses during the winter ceremonial season. House fronts were painted with crest designs and sometimes had projecting beaks. Wooden screens painted with sacred designs were erected at the inside rear of the house. Other structures included menstrual huts, summer houses, sweat lodges and underground caches. [6]**
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? **Inside the house, the floor was dug down so the sides of the house could hold two or more levels of benches, a platform where people sat and a higher one divided by wooden partitions into sleeping compartments.[9]**
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: **The customary anthropological picture of Tsimshian society has been that it had a four-fold structure, being divided into four exogamous matrilineal clans. The four clans were Killer Whale, Wolf, Eagle, and Raven. This four-clan structure appears to have been the case only in the post-contact villages, where most of the early fieldwork was done. The basic social unit in Tsimshian society was a corporate matrilineage called a "house". The members of which, children belonging to other lineages and slaves, occupied one or more dwellings. Houses fluctuated widely in size, and hence in productivity, at times resorting to adoption to prevent extinction, at other times growing so large that they fissioned two or more separate houses. Each house owned fishing, hunting, and gathering territories and localities, which it exploited under the direction of the house chief (in exceptional circumstances, a woman could be house chief if she bore its highest-ranking name). The house owned crests, songs, names, and other privileges, also under control or stewardship of the chief. The transfer of the right to use natural resources to another house by gift or through seizure in payment of a debt was fairly**

common. Matters of mutual interest, such as defense, were discussed with the chiefs of other houses in the village. Each interacting group of chiefs had an established rank order, which determined their rights to precedence in both political and ceremonial events. [6]

5.12 Trade: Trade between Native groups across North America and Asia has existed for thousands of years. Dozens of overland trails linked Native villages with navigable waterways, forming a network between the villages and the resource areas used for fishing, hunting, plant- and food-gathering. Trade on the north coast of British Columbia has been traced back more than 10,000 years through the dating of archaeological finds. Trade items included rare stones, such as obsidian, jade and quartz crystal, as well as earth pigments, medicinal substances, rare woods, furs, preserved meats, shellfish and berries. Eulachon oil from the Nass River was the Tsimshian's main trade commodity. Used as a condiment and medicine, it was in great demand among the peoples of the interior. Their woven goat-hair blankets and beautifully carved raven rattles were highly prized by their trading partners. Some important goods gained from trade were copper, steel, and jade. Copper metallurgy, which evolved during the Bronze Age of China, spread to the Northwest Coast about 1000 B.C. (via Siberia and Alaska) through intertribal trade. At first the exclusive prerogative of shamans who traded magical techniques among themselves, metallurgy became important for weapons and markers of chiefly wealth. In prehistoric times, cold hammering of copper was commonly practised, and smelting and annealing were unknown. The major source of copper was on the Eyak River, just below the Aleutian Peninsula in Alaska. The strategic advantage of steel created long-distance trade from Siberia to the Northwest Coast, via Alaska, even before contact with Europeans. Throughout the eighteenth century, knives and guns were eagerly sought from European fur traders. The trade in weapons increased warfare on the coast at the end of the century, until British gunboats imposed peace and encouraged trade to prevail. Steel "strike-a-lights" for fire making as well as chisels and adze blades were popular trade items in the 1800s. Iron was probably traded with tribes from Siberia within the past 2,000 years. Double-bladed iron war daggers were identical on both sides of the Bering Strait well before the 1700s. Cast iron was also traded from an early date in the form of kettles and pots. Revered among the high cultures of the Americas (particularly the Maya) as well as in China, jade was an important trade item on the Northwest Coast. Major sources of jade were found on the Fraser River and in the interior of northern British Columbia. Jade is a hard stone used to make war clubs and adze blades. [3] The Tsimshian monopoly on the fish grease trade brought them wealth. [6]

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Power in Tsimshian society was derived from encounters between the ancestors and spiritual beings that controlled all resources. Depicted on totem poles, clothing and personal items, this link to the primordial source of power was displayed with pride. The encounters were the common element in myth, witnessed histories (adawkw) and dramatic performances at feasts. In addition, encounters with the supernatural owners of valuable territories gave families privileged access to economic resources, as well as spiritual power and prestige. [3] Slaves were captives taken in war or purchased from slavers, especially from the south, and their children; their status was hereditary, and it was unthinkable for free persons to marry them. [6]

5.14 Social Crests: Crests are images and privileges acquired by one's ancestors during encounters with supernatural beings that are owned as property by a house and ceremonially displayed by its members. When listing crests and their owners, Tsimshian informants often mentioned the kinds of artifacts on which the crests could, and more rarely could not, be represented. Categories of artifacts most often specified for crest representations were: architectural features-totem poles, including house entrance poles, house posts, house front paintings, beams, rafters, and ceremonial entrances: costume features-ropes and headdresses; and feast dishes and ladles. In other words, crest images were worn in the potlatch, used in the feast, and represented on the houses where potlatching occurred. Each Tsimshian clan was associated with and identified by two primary crest animals: for the Blackfish or Fireweed clan, the grizzly and killer whale; for the Wolf clan, wolf and bear; for the Eagle clan, eagle and beaver; for the Raven clan, raven and frog. These animals were the building blocks of the crest system and, with rare exceptions, could be displayed by all members of the clan. Additionally, there were other animals, mythological beings, celestial phenomena, some items of costume, plants, water phenomena, and varieties of fires that were claimed as crests. One factor that accounts for the abundant use of human faces in Tsimshian art is that many of the crests identified as celestial phenomena and mythological creatures were represented by stylized human faces. Special crests that could be made of real animal heads and skins, and included ermine and abalone decoration, were restricted to the chief. [6]

## 6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Among the Tsimshian, a shaman could be a man or woman endowed with special powers. Shamans specialized in one of the following areas: healing the sick, attracting fish or game, influencing the outcome of warfare, or predicting the weather. Shamans had psychic powers, enabling them to see events happening far away or to bring news of the future. Shamans usually served an apprenticeship to learn how to manipulate the natural and the supernatural forces that influenced people and events. They might also receive these powers through dreams or encounters with supernatural beings. Some individuals received these powers, even though they did not seek them. Shamans often had survived a serious illness, thereby gaining the power to heal others. Shamans were usually called upon for their curing powers after all known herbal remedies and purification rites (sweat-baths) had failed. By this time, the patient could be very ill. After making a preliminary examination, shamans could refuse to treat the patient, saying their spirit power could not handle that particular type of illness. In difficult cases, shamans informed the family that the patient would probably die, but that they were willing to attempt a cure, as long as it was understood that there was no guarantee of success. This protected the shamans if the patient died. Tsimshian healing shamans did not usually wear masks while performing curing ceremonies. They wore bearskin robes, aprons, and crowns of grizzly-bear claws. They also used a number of aids, including round rattles, skin drums, and charms. When shamans fell into a trance, they called on supernatural powers to cure the sick.[3]

6.2 Stimulants: No evidence for stimulants

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Males and females were separated from each other during puberty years to avoid sexual intercourse. [5] There were menstrual huts for women on their menstrual cycles. The birth of a child was attended by its father's sister and other woman of his lineage, who brought gifts for the infant. A first naming ceremony was held at which the chief or father's relatives announced the name. When children of both sexes were about seven, they were given their first initiation ritual, in which a chief "threw" power into them. A father's sister or other female relative pierced her ear as a sign of rank; high ranking girls also had their lips pierced for labrets. The traditional belief seems to be that people were reincarnated in their lineage grandchildren. [6]The most important event in a girl's life was her first menstruation, for her conduct then would determine her own future and that of her relatives. She was confined ideally for two years, but the length depended upon her rank and her father's wealth. During this time she was supervised by her father's sister, although often her mother or maternal grandmother would take charge and teach her the traditions of their clan. She would emerge from the dark cellar or room with the admired transparent complexion, but with legs almost too weak for walking. Ritual acts were performed to bring wealth. She had to use a special scratcher to avoid self-contamination; she had to use a special scratcher to avoid self-contamination; she wore a black feather cap and had her hair washed in blueberry juice to preserve its color in old age. For the first eight days she had nothing to eat or drink except for a little water offered on the fourth day and on the eighth. If she reached greedily for the offered drink, it was thrown away, to teach her self-control. When she broke her fast at the end of eight days, her maternal relatives feasted her "opposites" and gave her dolls to paternal cross-cousins. During the remaining months of seclusion she was forbidden fresh fish, shellfish, and seaweed and was served from her own dishes. If she looked at the sky, it would bring storms or other disasters; to prevent this she wore a big hood, hung with tassels of dentalia. At the end of this time, she was bathed, given new clothes, including perhaps a button blanket, gold bracelets and other ornaments. Her labret hole was pierced or perhaps enlarged for a small stud, and at the potlatch to reward her paternal aunts she was presented as ready for marriage. A girl also had to learn practical things, and she was subject to food taboos in anticipation of her first menses. A small boy's training began in earnest at seven or eight when he went to live with his maternal uncle, who saw to it that the lad toughened and purified himself by taking morning baths in icy water, switching his body, chopping wood, and doing other daily exercises, and who also taught him hunting magic and ritual. The boy had to observe certain food taboos until his first successful hunt, celebrated by a feast, established him as a "master of game." From his uncle, he also learned the traditions and prerogatives of their clan and lineage, especially important if his uncle were a house owner or chief and the nephew his selected heir. Although he could use his uncle's property and even had access to his wife, he was subject to his uncle's orders and had to work for him. [11]

6.4 Other rituals: The purpose of both feast and potlatch was to announce a significant social event: the birth, marriage or death of a person of high rank, or inheritance and ascension to a title, such as the naming of a new chief. During a feast, only food was distributed; during a potlatch, objects of wealth were distributed as well. All members of the lineage hosting a potlatch would contribute to the wealth that was given away by their chief. The prestige accorded the host chief depended on the amount of wealth he displayed and gave away. In return, the host expected to get back more wealth than he disbursed at the next potlatch given by a rival chief. Potlatch guests were important because they acted as witnesses to the event. The ascension of the new chief took place during the memorial potlatch, where coppers and other objects of wealth were prominently displayed. The songs and dances performed during feasts and potlatches celebrated a family's crests and the history of their ancestors.[3] To fend evil creatures off, the tribe took great care in consulting Shamans, whom could be male or female, and performed personal activities to prevent the monsters from harming them. Some of these activities included participating in periodic fasts, scrubbing the body with branches, and avoiding all sexual relations for a certain period of time. Religion was a pivotal element of the tribe. [5]

6.5 Myths (Creation): In ancient times, a young goat was captured by a hunter on Stikyadin Mountain (on the upper Skeena River). The boys in the hunter's village teased it remorselessly. Soon after, a messenger appeared inviting the chiefs to a feast in a village up the mountain. They were welcomed by a chief wearing a one-horned mountain goat headdress and entertained with dances that made the house tremble. Suddenly, after the dancers covered every corner of the floor, the house plunged down the mountain, killing all the chiefs. The desolate survivors of the landslide searched for a new village and eventually reached the Prince Rupert Harbour.[3] Tsmishian myth is known from orally-passed tales. An adaawx is a story concerning animal spirits in human guise and is usually linked to the origin of the Earth and the peoples on it. A malesk, in contrast, is an adventure or history tale that purports to entertain rather than explain. The raven spirit is known as We-gyet or Txamsem. Txamsem is said to have a brother named Logobola who is responsible for the lack of fresh and clear water as well as the existence of the fog into which Txamsem became lost.[1] The Tsimshian worshiped and praised the Gods of the forest, mountains, and beaches. At the same time, the tribe believed there were terrible Spirits that could cause tremendous amounts of pain and misfortune. Beasts like sea monsters, ogres, and thunder birds were all believed to be great threats. [5] The Raven cycle tells of the exploits of txamsm, a trickster and shape changer. One of his accomplishments was the liberation of light from a box in the Sky Chief's house. He also brought fire to humans and taught them the use of the eulachon rake. While txamsm cannot be called a creator, since the elements and creatures with which he worked were already in existence, he put the world in its present order. [6]

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): The elaborate two-dimensional Tsimshian decorations, utensils, painting, carvings, coppers, totems, of the Pacific Northwest coast were a direct reflection of an elaborate and intricate culture. The work, it it was baskets or wood was full of symbology and meaning. Nothing was ever undertaken on a whim. There was great skill in creating artifacts that represented a family or tribe, i.e. totem poles, bentwood boxes, tools, masks, headdresses, drums, carved house columns, gorgeous carved chests that held household goods, dishes and, of course, the magnificent canoes. [8] The Tsimshian poles only use red, black, and turquoise colors or may leave the wood natural. Although the Tsimshian poles are rarely the ones

seen in a museum display, those who study the various totem poles say they have a softer feeling about them than the Haida or Tlingit poles that feature more fierce themes.[10]

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Men purified themselves before hunting or fishing. They fasted, bathed, drank the juice of the root of the devil's club, and practiced sexual continence. [6]

6.8 Missionary effect: With the arrival of the Europeans, such beliefs and practices were described as pagan and uncivilized. Eventually, they were outlawed by the federal government (1884) and the Tsimshian were ruthlessly turned away from their spiritual practices. Missionaries, William Duncan, Thomas Crosby and Reverend Collison were all instrumental in turning the Tsimshian into devout Christians. In fact, these men were quite shameless in their constant attacks on Tsimshian knowledge, referring constantly to the fact that their beliefs and practices were the scourge of the universe, and in league with Satan. In time, the Tsimshian came to reject their time-honoured spiritual heritage. "Even with a reawakened appreciation of their past greatness, the accept translation of the word 'swansk' is 'witch doctor' or 'devil worker.'"[8]

6.9 Secret Societies: *Mila* (Dancers), *Nulim* (Dog Eaters), *Ludzista* (Destroyers), and *Xgyedmhalaht* (Cannibals) Wherein culture hero's such as Raven fall into the *Naxnox* category, Spirit Doctors are considered to be an integral and natural part of the supernatural world, and, therefore, referred to as *Halaayt*. The Tsimshian were not cannibals; it was abhorrent to them. The Cannibal society taught the Tsimshian that if their desire to kill overcame their reason, then they would suffer terrible calamities throughout their lives. *Mila* and *Nulim* were secret societies with initiated members. Destroyers and Cannibals were the personal privileges of high chiefs and as such, had no orderly associations. Unlike *Naxnox*, *Halaayt* was the preserve of the elite with only royalty and nobility as members in all four orders. Royal children were initiated during the winter. Cannibal society was reserved for the greatest chiefs who bore *Halaayt* names linking them with the Chief of Heaven or Sun Chief, the grand chief of the Tsimshian upper world.[8]

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Tsimshian religion centered around the "Lord of Heaven", who aided people in times of need by sending supernatural servants to earth to aid them. The Tsimshian believed that charity and purification of the body (either by cleanliness or fasting) was the route to the afterlife. [1] The preparation of the body and related tasks were the responsibility of the deceased father's lineage. Traditionally cremation was practiced. The bodies of shamans were placed in caves or special grave houses. [6] The Tsimshian believed that charity and purification of the body (either by cleanliness or fasting) was the route to the afterlife.[7] The house and clan of the deceased person paid for the funeral. Preparation of the body rested with the House Chief and also included conducting the ceremony. The body was cremated; a clear day was chosen in order that the smoke from the funeral pyre could rise to the unseen world unimpeded. Cremation of Chiefs, in particular, assured his heirs of their right to his title and the authority that went with it. Occasionally, the heart would be buried and the rest of the body cremated OR the corpse was placed in a box that was secured high in a tree and his internal organs burned. A Black Feast was held (Tsimshian version of a wake); black paint was worn to signify mourning to compensate the Father's house. One year later a Red Feast was held to commemorate the deceased and to also confirm his/her successor. People wore red paint to signify the end of the mourning period. Depending on how someone died. Old age or disease, for example, the soul went to the west and crossed water barriers (usually rivers). Shaman's souls went to an island (Haida); certain powers remained with the body which is why they were not burned. To some extent the souls depended on their surviving relatives for food and clothing. The latter was chiefly supplied at the time of the funeral, but food was sent frequently by placing it in the fire. [8] Every baby was believed to be a reincarnation of a deceased maternal relative; the time between death and rebirth was when one was "ashes." Many babies are said to have remembered persons and events known in their previous incarnation. [11]

Childbirth took place in a bark shelter, where mother and child remained about 10 days, to avoid contaminating the house and its occupants. She was attended by two or more experienced women, preferably her husband's sisters, who were later well paid.

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? Free people who had not taken ancestral names in the potlatch system were termed "unhealed people" or "having no relatives." [6]

6.12 Is there teknonymy? No discussion of teknonymy

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) Totem poles were usually carved with human, bird, animal and mythical figures that displayed family crests and myths of ancestral achievements. The same figures were repeated on clothing and on household items. The witnessed histories (adawkw) taught that the hunter must show respect to the animals by singing a dirge song to them after their death. Weapons for hunting land and sea mammals, as well as birds were carefully designed to bring death cleanly and quickly.[3]

## 7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: No discussion of body paint

7.2 Piercings: A father's sister or other female relative pierced her ear as a sign of rank; high ranking girls also had their lips pierced for labrets.[6]

7.3 Haircut: long hair and beards for protection from the cold climates [1]

7.4 Scarification: No evidence of scarification

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Everyone wore personal adornments, although what people could wear was regulated by daily activity and social rank. Chiefs and their wives and children wore bracelets, labrets (lip plugs), earrings, pendants, and elaborately decorated clothing, as visible symbols of spiritual power and prestige. Certain furs such as ermine and sea otter were only worn by chiefs. Nobles wore elaborate headdresses and helmets with crest images carved or painted on them. [3]

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Their ceremonial clothing included woven Chilkat blankets, aprons and leggings.

Chilkat blankets, aprons, and leggings were woven from yellow cedar bark and mountain-goat wool. Men were responsible for

**the design, women for the weaving. Leather clothing made from animal skins and furs was sewn together with sinew and leather thongs. [3]**

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: **No discussion of sex differences in adornment**

7.8 Missionary effect: **Following the introduction of European woollen cloth, a new type of clothing was made from blue trade blankets, decorated with red-flannel crest designs and pearl buttons. With the introduction of European wool blankets, button-blanket clothing became popular. Button blankets are usually identified by a crest design and mother-of-pearl buttons. Contemporary Tsimshian people continue to wear this garment on ceremonial occasions.[3]**

## **8. Kinship systems**

8.1 Sororate, levirate: **Polygyny was permitted for chiefs, although it was apparently rare, and a widow was expected to marry her husband's successor or brother. [6]**

8.2 Kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): **The kinship system was of the Iroquois type, with separate terms for affines. The relationship with father's side was extremely important throughout an individual's life. Pole-carving and canoe-carving were also purchased from the father's side. Affinal relationships between clans were expressed in a relational naming system unique to the Tsimshian on the Northwest Coast. Children's names, which were owned by the matilineage, referred to physical and behavioral characteristics of the two major crest animals of the father's clan. Some examples of such crosses-clan names are "mocking raven," "the eagle never flies crooked," and "the eagle has nothing to eat". [6]**

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