

NATIVE LEGENDS OF THE INDIAN ARM AREA

– Compiled and edited by Ralph Drew, Belcarra, B.C.

In 1934 *Tsleil-Waututh* hereditary Chief George Sla-holt recalled hearing the older natives talk of the legendary history: ‘The Great Flood’, ‘The Great Snowfall’ — a period of acute starvation — then the last great tragedy “Smallpox”, which took such a heavy toll of Indian life all up the West Coast. ⁽¹⁾

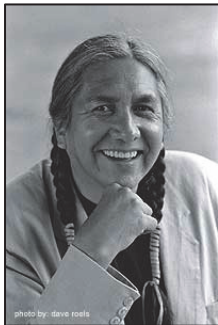
“During the long, dark leisure months of winter on the Pacific Coast, master story tellers of the Coast Salish clans often would entertain groups ... with colourful legends based on history and mythology. The listeners would gather around the central fire ... in a cavernous plank house of red cedar as the story teller spoke and acted out his legend with theatrical flare.” – Nick Booth ⁽²⁾

This anecdote about the arrival of the first train in Vancouver in May of 1887 was told to Major J.S. Matthews, *City of Vancouver* archivist, by Chief Andrew Paull of the North Vancouver Indian Reserve: ⁽³⁾

“You know the story of the *Qoitchetahl* (Serpent). Well, I have always been told that when the train first came down from Port Moody to Vancouver, the Indians along the south shore of the inlet took fright and ran. A great long black snake of a thing with a big black head came twirling around the curves blowing long blasts, Hoooo, Hoooo, Hoooo, and the Indians thought it was a *Qoitchetahl* coming back.” – Chief Andrew Paull

Legend of the First Man and Woman ⁽⁴⁾

As told to Leonard George by Josephine Charlie who worked with Leonard on the CBC series *The Beachcombers*:



Leonard George

“The wolf was very important to us because in a bad salmon year a wolf brought us half a deer, only keeping half for himself. We believe that the first man was transformed from a wolf as a gift. He was very lonely, and angry at being alone when everything else in nature had a partner. The *Great Spirit* gave him a vision of diving off a cliff into the ocean, for at the center of the world lived the *Spiritual Grandmother*. When he hit the water he went to the bottom and returned with two hands full of sediment which he was to place in a ceremonial manner in a circle of cedar boughs. He did so and the day ended.”

“When the sun came up next day a beautiful woman was sitting there. She was to be the mother of his children and treated with great respect and love, a gift of mother earth. If he failed to comply his family would not flourish.”

“That,” Josephine said to Leonard “is the story of your people’s creation.”
– Leonard George

Legend of the Mask

Leonard George continues:

“We were told that one of our men went to cut a log at Stanley Park. The tree began to shake violently, then fell down on its own. It continued to shake and vibrate, then split in half revealing a huge mask hidden inside it.”

“He went home and told his family, who brought blankets, and wrapped the mask. He placed it under his bed and had many dreams about the mask. The mask is still used in important ceremonies, weddings and memorials.” – Leonard George

Si-tai-a-much (Squai-Squai) — Legend of the Mask ⁽⁵⁾

The name of *Si-tai-a-much* belonged to the head man of the band of *Tsla-a-wat*, who lived at what is now known as *Lumberman's Arch*. He was a man of considerable wealth, being a highly skilled canoe builder.

His canoe building was done mostly on the shores of *Ach-a-tchu* (Beaver Lake). Here the magnificent red cedars were an inspiration and source of raw material for the artist.

One day as he laboriously felled a huge cedar for a new canoe, he was dismayed that it split from butt to tip as it hit the ground. Looking carefully along the split for some way to redeem this great tree, he found inside a curious mask and several strange seashells.

Carefully, he removed the mask from the tree, and as he held it he felt a new power rising in himself, which made him very happy indeed, for now his family would be safe from all perils. To honour this great event he changed his name to *Squai-Squai*, for such was the name of the mask.

Squai-Squai eventually came to be very widely known for his extraordinary powers as a medicine man, and this strange power was passed on to his daughter when the mask was willed to her upon his death.

As the pages of time have turned, the mask has seen many changes in the destiny of the Indian people.

Source: Anthony Carter, "*Abundant Rivers — Chief Dan George Edition*", *Indian Heritage Series, Volume 3, Hancock House, Saanichton, BC, 1972.*

Legend of the Killer Whales ⁽⁶⁾

After a plague almost wiped-out the tribe at Belcarra, the body of another famous descendent, *Waut-Sauk*, a Chief who lived between 1770 and 1840 (approximately), was moved to the Burrard Reserve cemetery on the North Shore of the inlet. As the canoe slipped away from the shore (of Boulder Island), two blackfish (or killer whales as we now call them) took-up guard on either side and escorted him to his final place of rest, only turning back to sea as the canoe nosed up on the beach. Even today when blackfish are seen in the Inlet, the Chief's descendants, who now live on the north shore of Burrard Inlet, wonder who these silent guards have come to escort into the land of "Forever".

Legend of Chief Waut-Salk ⁽⁶⁾

Chief Waut-Salk talked to all the elements of Mother Nature, and she always responded in some way. When he noticed some boys throwing rocks at the spawning salmon at Indian River he told them to stop.

"When you hurt the salmon, you also hurt me," he said, "but the boys only laughed and kept throwing rocks."

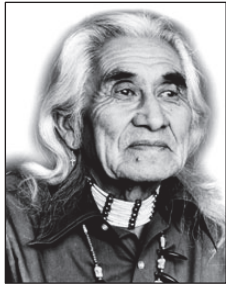
"Okay," he warned, "Tomorrow there will be no salmon". And the next day not a salmon could be seen, although it was in the middle of the salmon run, when there were so many fish you could almost walk on their backs.

The people became very concerned and asked Waut-Salk to ask for the fishes return. He did and they returned again. Waut-Salk was said to have a close relationship with all marine life. He could make them come and go at will.

When he died he was buried on Boulder Island in the traditional native custom, wrapped in cedar bark and placed in a tree. Missionaries later denounced this practice and convinced Waut-Salk's son to bury the remains. The son placed them in a canoe to transfer them to the native band's cemetery in North Vancouver. Two Orca whales and scores of smaller fish escorted the canoe to the shore and did not leave until Waut-Salk's remains were properly buried in the ground.

Legend of the Wolf ⁽⁷⁾

The following story of the wolf is told by Dan George of the *Tsleil-Waututh*:



Dan George

“When the Chief [of Tum-ta-mayh-tun] died, his wife — knowing she was doomed — wrapped her little boy in a cedar blanket and took him as far as she could from the death-place and placed him in the bush. A mother wolf roaming with her cubs picked up the little bundle and took it to her lair. She dropped it down and went to nurse her cubs and the little boy wiggled out and crawled over to feed with them. From then on, he grew-up as a wolf. As he grew, he learned by instinct to make a bow and arrow and the wolves had great respect for him. So they became companions in the hunt. When he was sixteen, he sought a mate of his own kind. Traveling up the Indian River, over the mountains to the canyon of the Fraser River, he found a bride among the people there. They came back to the Inlet and started to build a tribe. Our people have respected the wolves always. My great-great-grandfather Watsukl always walked with a wolf.”
– Dan George

Natives felt close to the animal world and had many beliefs and legends about all creatures: ⁽⁷⁾

“After the great flood, a bald eagle appeared and gave fish to the only survivor... Indians had a strong bond with the eagle and it was never harmed. Loons, with their haunting sounds, were considered magical and ravens were also seen as legendary birds. Wolves were never killed because of the *Legend of the Wolf* and beaver were believed to be like people and so were not hunted.” – Dan George

Legend of the Carved Stone ⁽⁸⁾

A large boulder, carved in the shape of a woman had belonged to the *Tsleil-Waututh* tribe. Legend has it that this woman was turned into stone by a ‘transformer’. She originally came from the Indian River somewhere. Sometime in the past a large number of the Belcarra tribe's ancestors died from a plague (most likely small pox). Their tribal friends from Point Grey, the Musqueam, came to help them dispose of their dead. To thank the Musqueam for their help, the surviving members of the tribe gave them this precious rock carving. For a number of years this stone rested in a playground at the Musqueam Village. It served as a goal in ball games. Recently, the boulder was donated to *UBC Museum of Anthropology* by Andrew Charles. The stone was returned to the Musqueam Reserve and now sits in the kindergarten class. ⁽⁹⁾

Legend of 'The Great Flood' ⁽¹⁰⁾

Pauline Johnson published 'Legends of Vancouver' in 1911, a series of tales and short stories told to her by Squamish Chief Joe Capilano (SU-Á-PU-LUCK, c.1854–1910).

It was after a long, long time of this — this rain. The mountain-streams were swollen, the rivers choked, the sea began to rise — and yet it rained; for weeks and weeks it rained.

It rained for weeks and weeks, while the mountain torrents roared thunderingly down, and the sea crept silently up. The level lands were first to float in sea-water, then to disappear. The slopes were next to slip into the sea. The world was slowly being flooded. Hurriedly the Indian tribes gathered in one spot, a place of safety far above the reach of the on-creeping sea. The spot was the circling shore of Lake Beautiful (Buntzen Lake), up the North Arm. They held a Great Council and decided at once upon a plan of action. A giant canoe should be built, and some means contrived to anchor it in case the waters mounted to the heights. The men undertook the canoe, the women the anchorage.

A giant tree was felled, and day and night the men toiled over its construction into the most stupendous canoe the world has ever known. Not an hour, not a moment, but many worked, while the toil-wearied ones slept, only to awake to renewed toil. Meanwhile, the women also worked at a cable — the largest, the longest, the strongest that Indian hands and teeth had ever made. Scores of them gathered and prepared the cedar-fibre; scores of them plaited, rolled, and seasoned it; scores of them chewed upon it inch by inch to make it pliable; scores of them oiled and worked, oiled and worked, oiled and worked it into a sea-resisting fabric. And still the sea crept up, and up, and up. It was the last day; hope of life for the tribes, of land for the world, was doomed. Strong hands, self-sacrificing hands, fastened the cable the women had made — one end to the giant canoe, the other about an enormous boulder, a vast immovable rock as firm as the foundations of the world — for might not the canoe, with its priceless freight, drift out, far out, to sea, and when the water subsided might not this ship of safety be leagues and leagues beyond the sight of land on the storm-driven Pacific?

Then, with the bravest hearts that ever beat, noble hands lifted every child of the tribes into this vast canoe; not one single baby was overlooked. The canoe was stocked with food and fresh water, and, lastly, the ancient men and women of the race selected as guardians to these children the bravest, most stalwart, handsomest young man of the tribes and the mother of the youngest baby in the camp — she was but a girl of sixteen, her child but two weeks old; but she, too, was brave and very beautiful. These two were placed, she at the bow of the canoe to watch, he at the stern to guide, and all the little children crowded between.

And still the sea crept up, and up, and up. At the crest of the bluffs about Lake Beautiful (Buntzen Lake) the doomed tribes crowded. Not a single person attempted to enter the canoe. There was no wailing, no crying-out for safety. "Let the little children, the young mother, and the bravest and best of our young men live," was all the farewell those in



Chief Capilano c.1907
(NVA 2849)

the canoe heard as the waters reached the summit, and — the canoe floated. Last of all to be seen was the top of the tallest tree, then — all was a world of water.

For days and days there was no land just the rush of swirling, snarling sea; but the canoe rode safely at anchor, the cable those scores of dead, faithful women had made held true as the hearts that beat behind the toil and labour of it all.

But one morning at sunrise, far to the south, a speck floated on the breast of the waters; at midday it was larger; at evening it was yet larger. The moon arose, and in its magic light the man at the stern saw it was a patch of land. All night he watched it grow, and at daybreak looked with glad eyes upon the summit of Mount Baker. He cut the cable, grasped his paddle in his strong young hands, and steered for the south. When they landed, the waters were sunken half down the mountain-side. The children were lifted out; the beautiful young mother, the stalwart young brave, turned to each other, clasped hands, looked into each other's eyes — and smiled.

And down in the vast country that lies between Mount Baker and the Fraser River they made a new camp, built new lodges, where the little children grew and thrived, and lived and loved, and the earth was re-peopled by them.

The Squamish say that in a gigantic crevice half-way to the crest of Mount Baker may yet be seen the outlines of an enormous canoe...

Legend of the She-Wolf of *Tsla-a-wat*⁽¹¹⁾



Long, long ago, an Indian band belonging to the Wolf clan lived on the shores of *Tsla-a-wat*, an inlet close by Vancouver. Now the inlet is called Indian Arm.

This band was very proud of its family crest of a Wolf. It was carved on the house posts and it decorated many of the wooden dishes, tools and other things used by the people.

The story of the Wolf was a favourite one among the *Tsla-a-wat* children. Grandparents never got tired of telling how the village of *Tum-ta-mayh-tun* was once deserted and left to ruins and when, many years later, it was again filled with happy people. And all because of an inquisitive Mother Wolf.

The children were told that a terrible sickness came to the village in that long ago time. Everyone died — all except one tiny baby boy. He was too young even to have a name, so we will call him “No-name.” There was no one left to care for him and he would have died too if a she-wolf had not come by and, seeing on people about, started sniffing around the village. She wondered where everybody was. It was so quiet. No sounds of children playing or men busy at their work. There was only the calling of gulls and the grating “Krrkk, Krrkk” of two ravens wheeling high in the sky. The tide was far out, but no one dug clams on the beach. No smoke curled from the blackened smoke holes on any of the buildings.

The she-wolf nosed around till she was satisfied that no harm threatened her. Then she trotted into the house where “No-name” was sleeping. She padded about, sniffing at the dried meat and fish hanging from the roof beams. She spent some time gnawing a deer

bone which was lying in the cold ashes of a fireplace. Then, licking her lips, she wandered up to the baby's cradle and peered in.



Source: *The She-Wolf of Tsla-a-Wat*

The she-wolf gave a little whine of surprise when she saw the by, whose black hair was sticking up in wisps around his head. When No-name woke up and began to whimper, she was reminded of her four cubs she had left in their den on the hillside.

She gazed with steady yellow eyes at the tiny face, so hairless, which grew all puckered up as the shim-per turned into a frightened wail. As she gazed, she sniffed. This must be a man-cub, she decided, recognizing the same scent she caught from hunters in the forest. But where was his mother? The she-wolf hesitated. Surely this small thing must be cared for, and just as surely there was no one here to care for him. Quickly she made up her mind. She took the baby up in her powerful jaws and started for home.

On her way through the fir forest the she-wolf had to put the child down several times and have a rest. She carried him gently, but it was hard to hold his squirming little naked body. As for No-name being carried in a wolf's mouth was a very strange and scary

experience. He was used to being carried on his mother's back. Also, he missed his warm cedar bark blanket and his diaper of soft moss.

The wolf cubs were whining with hunger when their mother arrived at the den. She lay down and stretched out her long shaggy body so that the little ones could suck her milk. She knew that the man-cub must be hungry too, and cold, so she put out a paw and drew him close to her soft warm belly where he sucked greedily along with the cubs.

Babies' memories are short. The little orphan quickly forgot his wooden cradle. He even stopped wondering where his mother was. Cuddling up to his woolly foster brothers and sisters, he soon felt as if the den had always been his home and the wolves his family.

After a while No-name and the cubs ate food which the mother and father wolf had chewed up to make soft. When some teeth had grown they learned to eat mice and little rabbits. Then came the time for hunting lessons. Of course, No-name could never hope to kill the animals the cubs were being taught to stalk, but he shared in the lessons and did the best he could.

The child grew big and strong on the raw red meat of deer and elk. Having never tasted the food that humans eat, he did not miss it. Nor did he miss the joy of playing, for wolf cubs enjoy games of tag, hide-and-go-seek, and wrestling as much as any boy. The she-wolf and her mate treated No-name as their own and were very proud of the son who walked on two legs and had no fur on his body.

One day, when No-name was a teenager, he went exploring by himself. After wandering for some time in the forest, he came to the village where he had been born. In amazement he stared at the great empty houses, now falling into ruin. Surely these were dens. But who had lived in them? Certainly not wolves. Inquisitively, No-name examined stone tools and weatherworn wooden dishes half-hidden in the long grass. What could these strange things be? While still puzzling, No-name noticed a bow and arrow. They were lying in the shelter of a big rock which had saved them from spoiling during the many years of sun and rain.

No-name picked up the bow and arrow. After fiddling with them for a few minutes he saw how they could be used. Before long he sent an arrow flying straight and true to hit the tree he aimed at. No-name could hardly wait to get home and show his exciting find to the family. Next day, when hunting with his foster brothers, he killed a deer with his arrow. The wolves were astonished and prouder of him than ever.

Although happy enough, No-name did sometimes wish he could find someone like himself. He realized that he would some day be man — perhaps he had some faint remembrance of his father. But where did his own people live? The wish to find them grew stronger and stronger. At last, No-name decided that he must go away and search for men. He sat beside his foster mother and stroked her soft grey fur, trying to make her understand what he had to do. He promised that she would be remembered forever among his people, if he could find them.

So No-name set out on a long journey which took him far across the mountains to the rolling plains. One day he stopped at the top of a low hill and looked down onto a large group of strange cone shaped objects. Soon people appeared and No-name realized

that the objects were dens lived in by humans like himself. He ran as fast as he could down the hillside towards the tipis, for that is what the cone shaped objects were.

The Plains people welcomed the young stranger, offered him a home, and promised to show him the ways of men. Before long No-name married a pretty young girl from the tribe. When he told her about the beautiful country he had come from. With its great forests and mountains and the bountiful sea, she agreed to return there with him. After many weeks of travel, they arrived at the shores of Tsla-a-wat.

They young husband and wife had lots of children and their children had more children and so on down the years until once again the village was filled with busy, happy people. No-name kept his promise to his foster mother by making a wolf the proud crest of the clan that she founded.

The children of the Wolf clan loved this story about their ancestor. They never shivered at the thought of wolves as some children do. In their hearts they loved them because if it had not been for that she-wolf, no one would be sitting in a Tsla-a-wat lodge listening to the tales of long ago.

Burrard Inlet Serpents

“Burrard Inlet was a great home for serpents. When I was a little boy, the old people used to see them — little serpents — just like a snake floating. A big one had his pillow, a big stone on the beach just west of Brockton Point Light, and his other head — they have two heads, one at each end — used to rest by the racing canoes just in front of the Indian church at North Vancouver; the old people used to see him in the tide rip; there were little ones too. The last one, not the serpent killed by *Qoitchetahl* (Chief Andrew Paull’s ancestor) up the Squamish River, but another one, was killed by a powerful man up above Dollarton, North Arm [Indian Arm], Burrard Inlet, in front of the *B.C. Electric* power station, where the water comes down from Lake Beautiful (Buntzen Lake); the paint put by the Indians on the rocks [pictographs] on the opposite shore is there yet, I think. One hundred and fifty years ago there were lots of serpents in Burrard Inlet.”

– Chief Mathias Joe Capilano (c.1885–1966)

Source: J. S. Matthews, “Conversations with Khahtsahlano, 1932–1954”, Vancouver, 1955, page 43.



Mathias Joe Capilano

Legend of the Giant Serpent ⁽¹²⁾

At the time when the events described took place, there were Squamish natives living on what is now Kitsilano Beach in Vancouver; and another group at the site of Tum-ta-mayh-tun, a point which divides Burrard Inlet from the Indian Arm.



**Salish Sea Serpent Petroglyph,
Nanaimo River (DgRx 8)**

One summer the Haidas came-down from the Queen Charlotte Islands, and landed on Kitsilano Beach in the oyster grey hours before dawn, catching the Squamish tribe asleep. The fierce battle that ensued was an absolute massacre, and only two children escaped, to tell the tale of horrors. A girl of fourteen and her little brother aged six, crept away while the Haidas were

celebrating their victory. Carrying her brother, the girl struggled through the forest along the shore of Burrard Inlet; tramping in salal bushes, resting the small boy occasionally on fallen logs; calming his fears, after the shock of the battle. The distance to Tum-ta-mayh-tun was about seventeen miles, and she arrived completely exhausted.

When she and her brother had been given some food, she put him to sleep, and then made her appeal for vengeance. She implored the Chief (of Tum-ta-mayh-tun) to call his men together and paddle swiftly down to fight the Haidas and wipe them out. The Chief explained that he hadn't enough men for the expedition to have any chance of success, as the Haidas had a reputation for being very great warriors. In vain the girl pleaded, until, worn-out after the long walk, and disappointed that her parent's death could not be avenged, she fell asleep. In her sleep she had a curious dream.

She and her little Brother were alone on the beach. A big wave rolled in, and from its curling foam a giant serpent emerged. Terrified, she was about to seize Little Brother and run away with him, but the serpent's quiet voice stopped her. He assured her that they were in no danger, and added that he had certain instructions to give her about the care of her Little Brother.

"He will be a big medicine man. Your brother will lead and everyone will follow his order, if you bring him up as I tell you. Are you willing to obey me?"

Hoping the Giant Serpent might be offering her a chance to avenge the death of her parents, she agreed. The Serpent raised himself higher out of the water so that his voice might be more clearly heard above the swish and splash of restless waves. "You are to tell the Chief that he must send men up this hill to build a teepee for you and your brother. There you must live all alone with him. No one must ever be allowed to see him until his time comes. They must put food for you half way up the hill every evening; and you must fetch it yourself and take it to your teepee. Every morning at sunrise, bring your brother down to this shore to bathe. Warn the Chief that no one may come near this place until the sun is high. Take your brother for long walks in the forests, that he may be strong. Feed him on mowithce (deer meat) and fish, and gather herbs in the woods to make good broth for him. He must get wood for your fire; you must put fresh moss on the floor of your teepee every day."

The Giant Serpent turned and was carried away by a monster wave, and the girl woke up. Beside her lay her small brother, still fast asleep. She gazed at him in awe, wondering what tasks lay before him, then she carried him part way up the hill and hid him behind a bush. He woke up as she laid him down. "Lie there and keep quiet until I return," she ordered him.

Running back down to the beach, she sought out the Chief, to tell him her dream. He was deeply impressed by it, as the Giant Serpent had seldom been seen, and was greatly feared by all the tribe. He summoned his men together and told them to build the teepee as the Giant Serpent had directed.

The women were told to put food each evening at a place chosen by the girl; and everyone received orders that the hill, the lake and the forest above it were out of bounds. Taking food with her, the girl rejoined her brother and they spent their first night on the hillside where she had hidden him. Next day they moved into their own teepee.

For nine and half years they lived as they had been ordered. They bathed each day before dawn; they went for long walks in the forest gathering herbs, and fresh moss for their teepee. Then one morning, as they were enjoying themselves bathing in the

sparkling waters of the Inlet, diving, swimming, and splashing each other with spray, which glistened like diamonds on their red bronze bodies, the Giant Serpent suddenly appeared, seized Little Brother and carried him off beneath the waves. In her dismay his sister began to cry bitterly, thinking her Little Brother was drowned; for the Serpent had coiled around the boy, so he had no chance to save himself. The Serpent reappeared, gliding gently up the shallow waters of the beach.

“Fear not,” said he, “Your brother will return. Go on living in your teepee and let no one else come there.” With a few smooth twists of his powerful body, he slid back and a huge wave rolled up to carry him away. For a few moments the girl sat still, thinking over not only what the Serpent had just said, but his first instruction and promises too. Finally she wended her way sadly up the hill, dreading the loneliness of the life she must now lead, and wondering how long it would be before Little Brother would be back.

Six months later, there came a day, when returning from her walk, her arms full of herbs, she saw when she reached the entrance to the teepee that a man was lying on Little Brother’s pile of deer skins. Dropping her bundle she rushed across the moss-strewn floor, bitterly reproaching the stranger for daring to invade her privacy. The man woke up, and turned over, smiling at her the while. It was Little Brother, grown so much taller that she could hardly believe it was him until he spoke. For a short space of time, he listened to her endearments, and the tale of how much she had missed him; but then staying her speech, began to give her orders.

“You must go to see the Chief. Tell him to choose eleven of his strongest young men and bid them make twelve staves of hardwood with sharply pointed ends. They must get a canoe ready and practice daily together, so that they can paddle swiftly. This must be done in twelve days. When that time has passed, at flood tide, I will go down to the beach. Do not tell them what I propose, for I intend to take them up the North Arm to kill the serpent who lives on top of the cliff, beside the lake.” (Buntzen Lake)

“To kill the serpent?”

“Yes, because there is better hunting and fishing up there than anywhere else, but no one ever dares to go because they fear the serpent may come down and kill them.”

“But I thought — I hoped — that you were preparing to fight the Haidas.”

“Later, sister. First I must win the men’s confidence. If they follow me where none have ever dared to venture and we kill the monster, they will consider themselves seasoned warriors, ready to follow me again, wherever I lead. Then we can fight the Haidas that they will never again dare to disturb these waters.

Disappointed, puzzled, but still loyal to her beloved Little Brother, Big Sister went down to see the Chief. All the tribe was astonished to hear that the boy they thought was drowned had returned a full-grown man. The girl had made no mention of the Giant Serpent carrying him off, but let them infer had been drowned when bathing, caught by some treacherous undertow. That he had now returned was a miracle, and great haste was made to obey his orders. On the appointed day, eleven young men, armed with the twelve staves, waited by the beach with their canoe.

When Little Brother, now an important medicine man, came down, he directed them to put rocks in the canoe. These were quickly collected and the youths stood waiting for further orders. The Medicine Man handed a herb to each young man and told him to eat it; for he knew that these herbs would banish their fears and so they would have more

courage. He then seated himself in the bow of the canoe, and when the crew had taken their places turned to speak to them.

“Paddle very swiftly past the place where the serpent comes down. When he sees us he will come rushing at us. You must throw the rocks so that the spray, when they hit the water, will hide us from him. Then we can dash in to one side, where he won’t expect us, and pierce him with these staves until he is dead.”

Seizing their paddles, they shot around the point, heading up the North Arm. The serpent came tearing down the rocky slopes into the water, but Little Brother’s strategy was successful. The Big Serpent was truly blinded by the spray, and attacking him on one side, as he stood in the bow of the canoe, Little Brother struck with such force that he alone nearly killed the monster, who soon died from the many wounds he received.

The return to *Tum-ta-mayh-tun* relieved a period of great tension. The Chief had worried and wondered if he had done right in risking young lives. But their triumphant return, towing the carcass of the Big Serpent, dispelled his fears. A feast was quickly prepared and special offerings produced for the young Medicine Man, who was treated as a god. Seated beside the Chief at the feast, he ate sparingly, pondering on what he should say. When the feast ended, he stood up and revealed the purpose of his training. He called on the Chief and all the tribe to attack the Haidas and avenge the death of their kinsmen. Six weeks later, after a period of strenuous training, the attack was made; the Haidas were all killed, and Big Sister’s hopes were at last fulfilled.

Legend of Scnoki ⁽¹³⁾ ⁽¹⁴⁾



There are different versions of the serpent story, but the Schlawaltuch (Tseil-Waututh) version, as told by Annie ‘Tah’ George (Ce-qual-lia or Se-quail-yah), wife of Chief George Sla-holt, is as follows:

After the flood, when the waters were receding from the earth, they left a gigantic reptile, which the Indians know as “Scnoki” suspended like a huge one-span bridge over Burrard Inlet, in the vicinity of Belcarra Park where there used to be an Indian midden.

The terrible monster had heads at both ends, which were fastened to the rocks. No one dared to come near it because all living things that approached it would curl and twist up, and die instantly. People who wished to pass the dread spot had to portage their canoes around it at Brighton Beach and Buntzen.

Great was the fear of the people. The abode of the awful creature was a place of evil to be avoided by all. Even the wild habitués of the forest crept stealthily around it, letting their padded feet fall in the utmost silence.

All the birds that flew near there hushed their singing and escaped frantically to safer branches.

When storms rolled over the mountains there were sounds of awful portent mingled with the howling gale, and the fire of the lightning itself was not more deadly than the scorching rays of the reptile’s glittering eyes.

Only the gaunt old eagle soaring at dizzy heights above dared to gaze upon it, and even he flew over with a wild scream, as swiftly as his great wings could carry him.

The hearts of the people were cold with fear, and they longed for deliverance from the accursed thing, but none dared to approach it, much less attack it, lest in some vague mysterious manner vengeance should be wrought upon them

A brother and sister lived together near where Belcarra Park now is. The sister was the older of the two and daily she bathed and cared for her little brother 'till he was big enough to bathe himself. Then he went in to swim alone. Once, while his sister watched him from the shore, he disappeared from sight. Greatly alarmed, she called for help. Men launched their swift canoes to go to his rescue.

Once they caught sight of him swimming far beneath the deep, green water, but though they paddled with all their might, they could not catch up with him. When they neared the site of the city of Vancouver, they saw him for a moment waist-high above the waves. Then he disappeared and was seen no more, one more victim of the dread *Scnoki*.

The sister went sadly about her tasks at home, but never gave up hope that her brother would one day return. Every night she made his bed in readiness for him and listened for the sound of his footfall at the door.

And so the time passed 'till a whole year had gone by since he sped away beneath the rushing waters of the Inlet. Then one night while all the people slept he came back and went to bed as though nothing had happened. Great was the joy of his sister to behold his face again.

When he arose in the morning he said he had been all over the world. He had been to many countries and had seen wonderful things. He had come back to kill *Scnoki* and to deliver the people from his baleful presence.

He went to the woods and made eight spears of pitch-wood. Very carefully and very strong he made them. Then he addressed the monster: "Depart from my people forever and take your curse with you," hurling the spears as he spoke.

His hand was steady and his sight was sure. One after another the spears found their mark and as the eighth went straight to the target *Scnoki* relaxed his hold on the rocks, slowly drew his colossal body across the Inlet, climbed over the mountains, disappeared into Lake Buntzen and was seen no more.

For the incredulous ones who doubt the truth of this story, the Indians will show the rocks on either side of the Inlet which still bear the marks where *Scnoki's* awful heads were fastened. It is said that on the ground over which his frightful body crawled as it travelled to the Lake, no living thing has ever grown. No blade of grass and no moss can thrive there to this day. And that is the story of *Scnoki*.

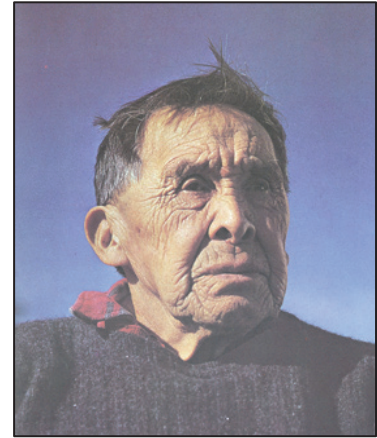


City of Vancouver Archives (CVA In P114)

Annie George ('Tah') — Ce-qual-lia (or Se-quail-yah) — circa 1940

Legend of the Sea-Serpent of Burrard Inlet ⁽¹⁵⁾

The dream of acquiring the “Power” through discipline and hardship. — As told by Squamish hereditary Chief Dominic Charlie (Tsee-Qawl-Tuhn, 1885–1972) at Capilano, December 15th, 1965 — To the native people of the Indian Arm area, the sea-serpent was a very real power and they feared to come within its grasp. The destruction of the sea-serpent came only after a life-time spent in special training with the one object in view. This legend gives the reader a clear insight into life as it was lived by the early natives.



Dominic Charlie

(Source – Anthony Carter, *Abundant Rivers*, 1972)

“The sea-serpent across Deep Cove [*sic* Indian Arm] — you could see the hole in the rock there — that is where the sea-serpent used to be — at the end of the inlet — where that power house is now [Buntzen]. The Indians used to live at a village called *TUHM-tuh-MEHK-tuhm*, in the bay [Belcarra Bay] at Deep Cove. [Deep Cove is very close to the sea-serpent pictographs located at site DiRr 12.] It is a bay facing this way [west], that’s where one end of the serpent was [Belcarra Bay] and the other end on this little island over here [White Rock Island close to Cove Cliff]. The sea-serpent used to be across there [Indian Arm] and nobody could come through here with their canoes.”

“The Indians used to make a skid-road up to the head of that bay [Bedwell Bay] where they could pull their canoes when they wanted to come out — they would pull their canoes right over rather than go out where the serpent was.”

“The place where they had to skid their canoes they called, *TUHM-tuh-MEHK-tuhm*. That’s the name of that bay [Belcarra Bay] and there used to be Indians that lived there — and the people all died of Smallpox. Everybody died — just a few left — a girl and a boy — an old man and his niece, a young girl.”

“This girl raised the baby — a boy, and he come to be a little big and I guess she got sick and tired of it, the baby, and one day she threw it overboard — she wanted to drown it. But the baby crawled and came to shore again and went into his house. This young lady thought, ‘I guess I had better do that every morning, throw him overboard’. And this young lady did that every morning — threw him overboard, her brother.”

“That boy grew fast and after a while he got big. His uncle lived. He made him a bow and arrow and he went to hunt and killed a rabbit. After a while he got to be a bigger boy and he asked his uncle to make him a bigger bow and he got a deer.”

“That girl kept training him — throwing him overboard — because she had dreamed about how to get rid of that big serpent that they can’t come by.”

“After a while, his boy got bigger and bigger and he asked his uncle to make him a canoe. His uncle made him a canoe and spear and he goes up to spear them seal when the seal are on the rocks, he spear them.”

"When he is older, he goes for a swim every morning in the salt water. You have got to be clean, you know, or you won't get the 'power'. The time comes when the seals come after him when he's in the water and they grabbed this boy. They take him out (into the bay). Everybody tried to catch them, but the seal held him up and they come around behind that little island and they go through — (thereby avoiding the serpent) and come right out. They came right out, (into 1st narrows), came right out; but they never go down, they hold that boy up. They come past here, then near to Siwash Rock."

"There is a big rock they called *SKWAH-chice* out there in the water which you can only see (it) at low tide. They came there with the boy and they went down under the water there."

"*AWS-quh*, the seal, went down with that boy — and they say, 'There is a hole from there — right through to Tsawwassen, Point Roberts; they come up there.'"

"Nobody knows where they went. The seals — they kidnapped that boy and nobody knows where they went."

"That young lady, she kept her house clean. She burned medicine around the fire — because she dreamed she should do that."

"After ten years, that boy came back. When he came back I guess the dogs knew there was somebody coming from the water and they run down and barked."

"He, the boy, went down again, under water."

"This young lady that lived there, she told those people that had the dogs to tie their dogs and put them away someplace."

"Maybe that's my brother come back," she said.

"And he came back — the fourth day he came into the house — and his bed was all ready — his bed was fixed nice — the fire was on and medicine *TLUHKS* — everything just like the fire had been kept going."

"At the time that boy goes away, there was a young lady that trained and went up to *TAY-tuhm-suhn* that lake where the power house is, when nobody knew. She was searching for her 'power' so she would be ready to marry that boy when he came home again. In day — time they would hide her. She had a bed like a bunk, away up - and when people came into the house they could not see her, up there."

"As soon as that boy came back, his uncle and that girl — they had everything ready for him; goat skins and bear skins — for rugs, you know. That young lady came down and came together with that man and got married right there."

"The young man then tells his sister, who had trained him, 'I'm going to kill this animal, this serpent.' His sister had dreamed that this would take place just as she had dreamed of his training the ten years he was away."

"When he went out to kill *SAY-nohs-KIY*, the serpent, the serpent told him, 'If you are going to kill me, you get four sticks of pitch wood, real black pitch wood.' He sharpen

them real sharp and jabbed them into the serpent, on his head — both ends, and that is the way they finished him — the sea-serpent. The 'Power' came from the pitch — that's strong 'medicine'."



Source: *Squamish Legends*

The Sea-Serpent of Burrard Inlet

Legend of the Wolf ⁽⁶⁾

Standing on the shore today one can watch the wake of history fade into oblivion. Precious flakes of time drift by and only the carefully recorded events will remain.

The preservation of the history of the Indian people was the task of very carefully chosen members of the tribe and the following story, written for the first time is one of the earliest of the historical legends of the *Tsla-a-wat* tribe.

Many years ago along the eastern shores of *Tslaa-wat Inlet* (now known as "Indian Arm") a terrible plague came into the villages and destroyed the people. One woman and her tiny infant son were now alone in her cabin for all the others had died. Knowing that soon she, too, would join the others, she gathered her last remaining strength to do what she could for her infant.

Carefully she wrapped him in a *Squo-quith* (cedar bark cloth) so at least the chill of night would not come to his tiny body so soon. And with this, her last earthly task complete, she laid wearily down on her bed of boughs and sometime through the dark night the *Spirit of Peace* came to her calling her on into the land beyond.

The dawn broke grey and cold, for this was early spring. The tiny baby boy slept quietly in his warm wrapped blanket. But soon there was movement outside. Wolves, drawn by the scent of death were beginning to prowl through the village of the dead.

Coming to the cabin where the baby lay, an old she wolf went up to the bundle and sniffed at it in curiosity. It had a warm baby scent, and having pups of her own she picked the tiny boy up in her mouth and carefully carried him to her den in the woods. Putting him gently down with her own litter she laid down for a nap while the puppies fed on her milk.

Hunting together, he and the she wolf would stalk a deer and when she saw the quarry she would look at him and wait. Then he would bring it down with his arrow. How anyone could kill a deer without touching it was too much for the she wolf to understand, but to her this foster son was the greatest of all hunters and how he performed these miracles was just his special kind of magic, and that was good enough.

As the years passed by he became lonely for his own kind and one day he sat by the shore with his wolf mother and tried in his own way to tell her he must go and search for his own mate. Somehow the she wolf understood, for she knew that it had to be, for the law of nature is "to each his own kind," and the sad day of parting had come.

The boy stroked her head gently, and said, "My dearest friend, you have devoted your life to me and now I will go." "For a time we will be lonely, but it will get better and you and all your kind will be honoured by my people." "And all the tribes in this inlet will keep your likeness and name as their crest for all time."

With a last fond look of understanding he turned and walked quickly into the forest. The she wolf watched him go and then slowly turned and trotted along the shore, remembering so well the happy days the two had spent together along the game trails of the *Tsla-a-wat*.

The boy travelled many weeks back over the mountains to the east, finally coming to Indian bands far inland. And from one of these he took a wife and returned to the waters of *Tsla-a-wat*. From these two people centuries ago the tribes, as we know them today, began. They are the "Wolf tribe" of the *Tsla-a-wat*, and the wolf packs of the head water river are the ancestors of the she wolf of long ago. Little wonder the warm bond that still exists today between these people and the gray silent wolves of the Valley.

Legend of Quai-Quai ⁽⁶⁾

Quai-Quai was born to parents of the *Stanley Park* tribe and while still very young his parents were killed by some means that was never really clear to the people where he lived and from then on he and his older sister were treated with some suspicion to a point where they feared for their own safety. Knowing that in the main and powerful tribe of Belcarra were close relatives, the girl and her little brother walked from their birthplace to the strange and beautiful country to the east.

Walking the shoreline in those early days was no small task, but by making use of the low tide they were able to avoid going into the woods, except where game trails followed close to the water. At the clam beaches of what is now *Barnet* they met some of the people of Belcarra who gladly took them back with them. Upon their arrival at the

Camp they were given into the custody of their relations who fed them and listened to the reason for the visit. After the little girl had told all she knew and of their fear for their safety, they were told that they would never go back to their old tribe again, and from now on they could call this tribe home as long as they had need. And with that the two very, very tired little people curled up on a bed of spruce tips and went sound asleep.

In the days that followed a great peace filled the hearts of the two orphaned children and the little girl took *Quai-Quai* to the quiet waters of Bedwell Bay to teach him to swim. In an amazingly short time he was a very skillful swimmer for his feeling for water was uncanny and at the age of ten he could out-swim the strongest swimmers of the tribe.

Then one day when he was 17 a great seal of tremendous size came up in front of the camp and *Quai-Quai* swam out to it as though he knew it was coming. He climbed-up on its back as it turned and it swam away with him. In a moment they were lost in the mists of the Inlet, heading for the narrows and the Great Gulf that leads to the sea.

A full year passed, and as his sister stood at the water's edge sadly pondering the fate of her beloved brother, a tiny wave splashed on the stones at her feet. She looked up and there to her surprise and delight was the great seal and her brother almost to the shore! She was overjoyed at his return and the tribe gathered round to hear his story.

He told them first that his name would now be *Squia-Aqua*, which means 'Mask' for which he offered no explanation. He also told of his wonderful voyage with the great seal and how they had travelled all over the vast sea to the west and had seen many countries and all manner of wonderful things.

And so after a great feast had been held in his honour, the old Chief of the tribe held council with his wise men. It was decided to make *Squia-Aqua* the new Chief — a decision which proved to be very sound for the people of Belcarra lived in peace and health for many generations under his wise council. In such esteem was he held by all the lesser tribes of the Inlet that he became a kind of Great Chief to all the tribes within Burrard Inlet and Indian Arm to Buntzen. It was a sad day when he finally passed away, and in his honour a beautiful and moving "Dance of the Mask" was created, depicting the life and death of this great leader.

After the plague that almost wiped out the tribe at Belcarra, the body of another famous descendent *Waut-Sauk*, a Chief of more recent times, was moved to the Burrard Reserve cemetery on the North Shore of the inlet and as the canoe slipped away from the shore two Blackfish took-up guard on either side and escorted him to his final place of rest, only turning back to sea as the canoe nosed up on the beach. Even today when blackfish are seen in the Inlet, the small band of descendants, who now live on the north shore of Burrard Inlet, wonder who they have come to follow, silent guards for someone — into the land of "Forever".

Legend of Chief Sisba-go-chatun ⁽⁶⁾

Sisba-go-chatun, one of the lesser Chiefs of the *Tsla-a-wat* whose tribe lived at what is now Port Moody, was a man of great physical stature weighing something in the neighbourhood of 400 pounds and well over six feet tall. He was notable in many ways, but probably better known for his very large harem from all parts of the coast where he

travelled, and at one time had as many as twenty women in his lodge. Any young woman who took his fancy usually ended-up in his harem, but this roving eye was also to cause his demise.

It seems he took a young girl from the Belcarra band, and her brother *Zauts-la-chaw* who was a particularly brave man and a good shot with a bow and arrow took it upon himself to rescue her.

Upon his arrival at the Port Moody camp *Zauts-la-chaw* made his presence known to the Chief, who laughed heartily at the young warrior's foolhardy mission and invited him to shoot at him at will to show how tough he was. Thinking he was quite safe in his suit of dried skin armour, he proceeded to dance and wave his arms in the air. This was the chance the young brave needed, for when the Chief raised his arms he could see the unprotected arm holes of the armour and quick as light he loosed an arrow, at this vital spot.

The Chief fell to the ground mortally wounded and so the brave's sister was free and all the other women in the harem could now return to their homes.

Legend of 'The Great Flood' and 'The Great Snowfall' ⁽¹⁶⁾

The following notes on the cosmogony [theories of creation] and history of the Squamish Indians of British Columbia, a sept of the great Salishan stock, were gathered by myself [Professor Charles Hill-Tout] from an aged Indian of that sept sometime last summer [1896]. Through the kindness of the Roman Catholic bishop of the district, Bishop Durieu, I received a cordial reception at the hands of the chief men of the tribe, and on learning what I wanted they brought out of his retirement the old historian of the tribe.

He was a decrepit creature, stone-blind from old age, whose existence 'till then had been unknown to the old bishop, who himself has this tribe in charge. I am disposed, therefore, to think that this account has not been put into English before. I first sought to learn his age, but this he could only approximately give by informing me that his mother was a girl on the verge of womanhood when Vancouver sailed up Howe Sound at the close of last century. He would, therefore, be about 100 years old.



Charles Hill-Tout
(CVA CIP18.2)

His native name, as near as I could get it, is "Mul'ks". He could not understand any English, and as his archaic Squamish was beyond my poor knowledge of the language, it was necessary to have resort to the tribal interpreter. The account will, in consequence, be less full and literal.

Before the old man could begin his recital, some preparations were deemed necessary by the other elderly men of the tribe. These consisted in making a bundle of short sticks, each about six inches long. These played the part of tallies, each stick representing to the reciter a particular paragraph or chapter in his story. They apologized for making these, and were at pains to explain to me that these were to them what books were to the white man. These sticks were placed at intervals along a table round which we sat, and after some animated discussion between the interpreter, who acted as master of

ceremonies, and the other old men as to the relative order and names of the tallies, we were ready to begin.

The first tally was placed in the old man's hands and he began his recital in a loud, high-pitched key, as if he were addressing a large audience in the open air. He went on without pause for about ten minutes, and then the interpreter took-up the story. The story was either beyond the interpreter's power to render into English, or there was much in it he did not like to relate to a white man, for I did not unfortunately get a fifth of what the old man had uttered from him, and it was only by dint of questioning and cross-questioning him that I was enabled to get anything like a connected narrative from him at all. The old man recited his story chapter by chapter, that is, tally by tally, and the interpreter followed in like order. The following is the substance of what I was able to record:

In the beginning there was water everywhere and no land at all. When this state of things had lasted for a long while, the *Great Spirit* determined to make land appear. Soon the tops of the mountains showed above the water and they grew and grew 'till their heads reached the clouds. Then he made the lakes and rivers, and after that the trees and animals. Soon after this had been done, "Ka-la'na", the first man, was made. The *Great Spirit* bestowed upon him the three things an Indian cannot do without, viz., a wife, a chisel or adze, and a salmon trap. Ka-la'na was a good man and obeyed the *Great Spirit's* commands, and in course of time his wife bore him many sons and daughters, who spread-out over the land and peopled it. When the land was full of people and Ka-la'na had grown very old, the *Great Spirit* took him away one day and the people saw him no more. Now, as Ka-la'na had advanced in years the people had become very wicked and vexed the *Great Spirit*. And after he had left them they became worse. When this state of things had been going on for a long time; the *Great Spirit* made the waters rise-up over all the land above the tops of the highest mountains, and all the people were drowned except one man named Cheatmuh, the first-born of Ka-la'na, and his wife. These two escaped in their canoe, which floated about on the water for a long time, and at last, when they were nearly dead with hunger, settled on top of a high mountain which was not quite covered with water. After this the water subsided, and Cheatmuh and his wife descended from the mountain and built themselves a house, and in course of time repeopled the land again with their offspring. A long interval now went by and the people were happy and prosperous. Many salmon came up the Squamish [River] every season, and there was food for everybody and to spare.

But the *Great Spirit* became angry with them again a second time after Cheatmuh's death, and this time he punished them by sending a great snow-storm upon the land. Day after day, and moon after moon, the snow fell in tiny flakes, covering everything and hiding all the land, and the streams, and the rivers and the trees. The snow was remarkable for its extreme fineness, and it penetrated everywhere. It came into their houses and put out the fires, and into their clothes and made them wet and cold. (In this part of his recital the old man was exceedingly interesting and graphic in his description, the very tones of his voice lending themselves to his story, and I had gathered, long before the interpreter took-up the story, that he had told of something that was very small and had penetrated everywhere.) Soon all the stores of fish and all available firewood was consumed, and no more could be got. Starvation and cold assailed on every side, and soon the children and old people began to die in scores and hundreds. But still the snow came down and the misery of those that were left increased. Dead

bodies lay around everywhere, dead and dying lying together. (Here the old man's voice was hushed to a plaintive wail, and the faces of his audience were an eloquent index of the tragic interest of this story of their ancestors' misfortunes.)

Everything that could possibly afford sustenance was eagerly sought out and eaten. The hair was scraped from their store of skins, and the latter, soaked in the snow to make them soft, were then torn into pieces and devoured. But soon even this source of supply failed them, and their only hope now lay in the approaching salmon season. But when this long looked-for relief came it was found that the salmon were so thin that there was nothing on them but the skin and bones. It was impossible to cure salmon of this description; moreover, they did not come in their usual numbers, and soon this miserable supply failed them also. By the help of this poor diet the more hardy of them managed to keep body and soul together for some time longer, but all who were sickly and weak gradually died-off, so that in a little time there remained but a few only of the whole tribe alive.

All this time the snow had continued to fall, though it was long past the beginning of summer; and now even the salmon skins and bones were consumed, and all had died of starvation but two, a man and his daughter who lived apart by themselves. These two it seems had managed better than the rest. They were the fortunate possessors of a dog, which they killed after the salmon had failed them and this they ate, bit by bit, as long as it lasted. They also burrowed down through the snow to the moss beneath, which they gathered, and after wiping the slime of the salmon on it for flavouring; they then made soup from it. This, together with the dog, had enabled them to outlive all the rest of the tribe.

But still the snow came down, and now they also had exhausted their resource and nothing remained to them but to lie down and die as the others had done. As they sat lamenting their lot, the man happened to look soundwards, and then he saw a large fish hawk swoop down upon the water and rise again with a large salmon in its claws. Hastily getting out his canoe he launched it, and with his bow and arrows ready at hand, he paddled out to sea and presently got within range of the eagle and shot an arrow at it. The arrow went home and the bird fell with the fish still in its claws. He quickly secured both and returned to his daughter with them. By means of this fish and bird they were enabled to sustain themselves for some time longer, and by the time food was consumed a great change began to take place.

The snow at last stopped falling and the sun appeared, and a great and rapid thaw set-in. In a short space of time the great white covering of snow sank down, and the long-hidden trees, and streams, and rivers, and land were seen once more. The man now took his daughter to wife, and from those two the land was in course of time once more re-peopled. Times of plenty came back, and the people learned to forget the terrible punishment the *Great Spirit* had sent upon their forefathers.

But once again a dreadful misfortune befell them. This time it happened in this wise. One salmon season the fish were found to be covered with running sores and blotches, which rendered them unfit for food. But as the people depended very largely upon these salmon for their winter's food supply, they were obliged to catch and cure them as best they could, and store them away for food. They put-off eating them 'till no other food was available, and then began a terrible time of sickness and distress. A dreadful skin disease, loath some to look upon, broke-out upon all alike. [The disease was most likely

smallpox.] None were spared. Men, women and children sickened, took the disease and died in agony by the hundreds, so that when the spring arrived and fresh food was procurable, there was scarcely a person left of all their numbers to get it. Camp after camp, village after village, was left desolate. The remains of which, said the old man, in answer to my queries on his head, are found today in the old camp sites or midden-heaps over which the forest has been growing for so many generations. Little by little the remnant [population] left by the disease grew into a nation once more, and when the first white men sailed up the Squamish [River] in their big boats [in 1792], the tribe was strong and numerous again. Following Vancouver's advent four generations have come and gone, the second of which was his [Mul'ks] own.

Legend of the *Te Smailetl* (or Wildmen Story) ⁽¹⁷⁾

Once there was a [Squamish] chief who had an only daughter. He possessed also a male slave. Now this slave was accustomed to sleep at the foot of the daughter's bed, his bed lying crosswise at the foot of hers. One night he crept to her side and ravished her while she slept. Some little while later she found herself with child, but was wholly ignorant of the person who had brought this shame upon her, not knowing that the slave had lain with her in her sleep. When she once realizes her condition she is anxious to find out who had visited her, and suspecting that the intruder would pay her another visit some night, she takes some paint and smears it all over the palms of her hands. Shortly after, the slave pays her a second visit. As it is dark she cannot discover who he is, but before he leaves her this time she presses her paint-smearred hands upon his shoulders and leaves thereon an impression of them without his knowledge. In the morning she is greatly surprised to find that it was the slave who had visited her and whom she had painted on the shoulders. When the chief became conscious of his daughter's condition he was overwhelmed with shame. And, on learning who it was who had caused this disgrace to fall upon him, he took both the guilty slave and his hapless daughter away in his canoe, and, arriving at a certain lofty cliff which overhung the water, he landed them at its base and left them there to perish together. But, although the cliff was always regarded as inaccessible, in some mysterious way the pair managed to climb it. † After they had reached the top they travelled inland amongst the mountains till they came to a lake. Here they stopped and built themselves a house, and here the girl gave birth to her child. In course of time many other children were born to them, and when these had come to maturity, as there were no others with whom they could mate, they took each other to husband and wife, and in time a large community grew up around the lake. Though living in a wild state, without proper tools or other utensils, they never forgot their mother's speech, but always conversed together in Squamish. The men were exceedingly tall and very keen of scent and great hunters. They always dressed in garments made from the untanned skins of the animals they had slain. From this habit they were called by the Squamish, *Smailetl*, or wild people.

† "The cliff, at whose base the girl and the slave are said to have been left by the irate father, is on the right-hand side of the North Arm [Indian Arm] of Burrard Inlet. Some way back in the mountains there is a beautiful little lake [Buntzen Lake, previously known as Lake Beautiful], now well-known to trout-fishers, which answers to the lake of the story. The Squamish firmly believed in the existence of these *Smailetl*. The old Indians say they sometimes saw them when out hunting. Whether such a community once really existed it is impossible now to say. But, at any rate, no such tribe or people has ever dwelt in the mountains in the memory of the oldest settlers here." — Charles Hill-Tout

Legend of 'The Lost Island' ⁽¹⁰⁾

Pauline Johnson published 'Legends of Vancouver' in 1911, a series of tales and short stories told to her by Squamish Chief Joe Capilano (SU-Á-PU-LUCK, c.1854–1910).

“Yes,” said my old tillicum [Chief Capilano], “we Indians have lost many things. We have lost our lands, our forests, our game, our fish; we have lost our ancient religion, our ancient dress; some of the younger people have even lost their fathers’ language and the legends and traditions of their ancestors. We cannot call those old things back to us; they will never come again. We may travel many days up the mountain-trails, and look in the silent places for them. They are not there. We may paddle many moons on the sea, but our canoes will never enter the channel that leads to the yesterdays of the Indian people. These things are lost, just like ‘The Island of the North Arm [Indian Arm].’ They may be somewhere nearby, but no one can ever find them.”

“But there are many islands up the North Arm [Indian Arm],” I asserted.

“Not the island we Indian people have sought for many tens of summers,” he replied sorrowfully.

“Was it ever there?” I questioned.

“It was more than one hundred years ago [pre-1800]. This great city of Vancouver was but the dream of the Sagalie Tyee [God] at that time. The dream had not yet come to the white man; only one great Indian medicine-man knew that someday a great camp for Pale-faces would lie between False Creek and the Inlet [Burrard Inlet]. This dream haunted him; it came to him night and day — when he was amid his people laughing and feasting, or when he was alone in the forest chanting his strange songs, beating his hollow drum, or shaking his wooden witch-rattle to gain more power to cure the sick and the dying of his tribe. For years this dream

followed him. He grew to be an old, old man, yet always he could hear voices, strong and loud, as when they first spoke to him in his youth, and they would say: ‘Between the two narrow strips of salt water the white men will camp, many hundreds of them, many thousands of them. The Indians will learn their ways, will live as they do, will become as they are. There will be no more great war-dances, no more fights with other powerful tribes; it will be as if the Indians had lost all bravery, all courage, all confidence.’ He hated the voices, he hated the dream; but all his power, all his big medicine, could not drive them away. He was the strongest man on all the North Pacific Coast. He was mighty and very tall, and his muscles were as those of Leloo, the timber-wolf, when he is strongest to kill his prey. He could go for many days without food; he could fight the largest mountain-lion; he could overthrow the fiercest grizzly bear; he could paddle against the wildest winds and ride the highest waves. He could meet his enemies and kill whole tribes single-handed. His strength, his courage, his power, his bravery, were those of a giant.



E. Pauline Johnson (1861–1913)

(Archives Canada PA-85125)

He knew no fear; nothing in the sea, or in the forest, nothing in the earth or the sky, could conquer him. He was fearless, fearless. Only this haunting dream of the coming white man's camp he could not drive away; it was the only thing in life he had tried to kill and failed. It drove him from the feasting, drove him from the pleasant lodges, the fires, the dancing, the story-telling of his people in their camp by the water's edge, where the salmon thronged and the deer came down to drink of the mountain-streams. He left the Indian village, chanting his wild songs as he went. Up through the mighty forests he climbed, through the trailless deep mosses and matted vines, up to the summit of what the white men call Grouse Mountain. For many days he camped there. He ate no food, he drank no water, but sat and sang his medicine-songs through the dark hours and through the day. Before him — far beneath his feet — lay the narrow strip of land between the two salt waters. Then the Sagalie Tyee gave him the power to see far into the future. He looked across a hundred years, just as he looked across what you call the Inlet [Burrard Inlet], and he saw mighty lodges built close together, hundreds and thousands of them — lodges of stone and wood, and long straight trails to divide them. He saw these trails thronging with Pale-faces; he heard the sound of the white man's paddle-dip on the waters, for it is not silent like the Indian's; he saw the white man's trading posts, saw the fishing-nets, heard his speech. Then the vision faded as gradually as it came. The narrow strip of land was his own forest once more."

"'I am old,' he called, in his sorrow and his trouble for his people. 'I am old, O Sagalie Tyee! Soon I shall die and go to the Happy Hunting Grounds of my fathers. Let not my strength die with me. Keep living for all time my courage, my bravery, my fearlessness. Keep them for my people that they may be strong enough to endure the white man's rule. Keep my strength living for them; hide it so that the Pale-face may never find or see it.'"

"Then he came down from the summit of Grouse Mountain. Still chanting his medicine-songs, he entered his canoe and paddled through the colours of the setting sun far up the North Arm [Indian Arm]. When night fell he came to an island with misty shores of great grey rock; on its summit tall pines and firs encircled like a king's crown. As he neared it he felt all his strength, his courage, his fearlessness, leaving him; he could see these things drift from him on to the island. They were as the clouds that rest on the mountains, grey-white and half transparent. Weak as a woman, he paddled back to the Indian village; he told them to go and search for 'The Island,' where they would find all his courage, his fearlessness and his strength, living, living forever. He slept then, but — in the morning he did not awake. Since then our young men and our old have searched for 'The Island.' It is there somewhere, up some lost channel [Indian Arm], but we cannot find it. When we do, we will get back all the courage and bravery we had before the white man came, for the great medicine-man said those things never die — they live for one's children and grandchildren."

His voice ceased. My whole heart went out to him in his longing for the lost island. I thought of all the splendid courage I knew him to possess, so made answer: "But you say that the shadow of this island has fallen upon you; is it not so, tillicum?"

"Yes," he said half mournfully. "But only the shadow."

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