

Shuká Kaa is Given a Final Resting Place after 10,300 Years

(Observations During the Ceremony: Sept. 25-27, 2008)

Mim Dixon
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A young man who had experienced periods of hunger and probably died hunting a bear was finally laid to rest by the Tlingit people of Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska on Thursday, September 25, 2008. He died 10,300 years ago.

Animals had scavenged the body and scattered the bones of the man whose name, given by a council of tribal elders, is Shuká Kaa, which translates into English as “The Man Ahead of Us.” Some of his bones – jaw, vertebrae, hip and a few ribs – were discovered in a small cave in a remote area of the Tongass National Forest on Prince of Wales Island on July 4, 1996. U.S. Forest Service archeologist Terry Fifield was called to the site and within 24 hours he contacted the tribal governments on Prince of Wales Island to consult with them about the scientists’ proposal to study the bones. Two federally-recognized tribes on the island were involved throughout the life of the project: the Klawock Community Association and the Craig Community Association.¹ After discussion and debate, the tribes agreed to the scientific study under conditions that the tribes be kept informed and engaged in the process.

Study of the human remains and the associated archeology, paleontology, and environment was important for understanding how people may have first come to the Americas. These were

the oldest human remains ever found in Alaska or Canada. For five field seasons over a 12-year period, teams of scientists assisted by tribal members worked on the site with funding from the National Science Foundation, Office of Polar Programs. The archeology team under the direction of my husband, E. James Dixon, excavated the entrances of the cave, while the paleontology team under the direction of Tim Heaton worked inside the cave’s passages. Another scientist, Brian Kemp, joined the project after completion of fieldwork and took responsibility for the DNA analysis. Geologist Tom Ager did prehistoric environmental research in the area using pollen cores.



Several stone bifaces (knives and spear points) were found during archaeological excavations. Casts of these artifacts were presented to the Klawock Schools by archaeologist James Dixon. (Photo courtesy University of Colorado Boulder.)

When the scientists finished their analysis, they returned Shuká Kaa to the U.S. Forest Service in June 2007. Following the protocols in federal laws, the Forest Service returned the bones to the Klawock Cooperative Association (Tribe) and Craig Community Association (Tribe) in August 2007. The Tribe placed the bones in a bank vault for safe keeping for 8 months while they made plans for a proper burial.

Tlingit carver Jon Rowan created a bentwood box with images symbolizing an eagle and a raven forming an arch like the cave in which Shuká Kaa had been found. Tlingit weaver Debbie Head used red cedar strips to weave a mat to line the box. A small group of people designated by the Tribe took Shuká Kaa to an undisclosed location in the forest on an island where they buried the box and placed a headstone. For the next two days, there were celebrations of Shuká Kaa's life, the longevity and survival of the Tlingit people, and the unprecedented cooperation between the Tribes, the US Forest Service and the scientists.

After watching my husband's devotion to this project for 12 years, I wanted to witness the finale. The Tribes on Prince of Wales Island were in a unique situation because this may have been the first time archeologists working on a site of this age in the United States had actually returned scientifically significant human remains that they had excavated to a local Tribe.ⁱⁱ Historically, most archeologists have been reluctant to bring their research to an end, or they have simply drifted away to their academic settings and neglected to communicate their research findings to people living near the archeological sites. The Tribes on Prince of Wales

Island didn't have a role model for what to do with a 10,300 year old ancestor. It was exciting to think of Klawock in this ground-breaking situation, both literally and figuratively. The historic significance of this event was not lost on the federal government as the Secretary of the US Department of Agriculture, Ed Schafer, attended along with many high officials from the U.S. Forest Service, which is part of the USDA.

This is my diary from the weekend.



The bentwood burial box commissioned by Sealaska Heritage Institute. (Photo by Terry Fifield.)

Thursday, September 25, 2008

When we arrived at the terminal for the ferry from Ketchikan to Prince of Wales Island, we met Susan Marvin, the archeologist from the Forest Service regional office standing in line to board. Forest Service Tribal Liaisons for Alaska, Lillian Petershoare, and the Tongass National Forest, John Autrey, were there as well as anthropology professor Priscilla Schulte from the University of Alaska Southeast in Ketchikan. To my surprise and delight, I

saw Dr. Dennis Demmert, the former University of Alaska Fairbanks professor and former President of Sealaska Heritage Foundation (now Institute) who had retired in Sitka and was returning to his birthplace of Klawock for the weekend ceremonies.



Respected elder, Dr. Dennis Demmert, on Friday, September 26, 2008. (Photo by Debbie Head.)

On board the ferry for the three-hour trip, James was reunited with two of his former interns. Yarrow Vaara, a Klawock tribal member, had excavated at the site several summers and had presented a paper that correlated Tlingit traditional knowledge with the scientific findings at a session James had organized at the 2002 annual meetings of the Society of American Archeology in Denver. Linda Blankenship had been a high school teacher in Ketchikan when she volunteered at the site one summer. Now she is the Night Principal at Mt. Edgecumbe Boarding School near Sitka. It was like a family reunion.

We learned that people were coming to Prince of Wales Island from all over

Southeast Alaska for this historic event, including dancers, community members, elders and leaders from Haines, Juneau, Petersburg, Cape Fox (Saxman) and Ketchikan.



An enlarged event program was displayed in the Craig Tribal Hall entryway. (Photo by Mim Dixon.)

Friday, September 26, 2008

When we walked into the Craig Tribal Hall at 8:45 am, we saw a display of photographs of petroglyphs from the area and photos from the On Your Knees Cave excavation where Shuká Kaa was found. We were greeted by a young woman who handed us a program for the weekend with a cover that had a color picture of the design on the burial box.

The Craig Tribal Hall was set up with long tables decorated with vases with wild flowers and shells from the island. School children had decorated paper placemats with drawings and stenciled paintings of Tlingit designs. Knives, forks and spoons were wrapped in paper napkins, tied with colorful strings, and put at each place. Many villagers

were already seated enjoying their breakfast.



Placemats for meals were made by Debbie Head's students at Craig City Schools. (Photo by Lillian Petershoare.)

A senior from Craig's alternative high school dressed in a dark business suit approached me and asked if he could bring me some juice or coffee. His poise and graciousness made me feel instantly welcome. James and I took a seat beside Virginia Demmert, an 86-year old tribal member. Then went to fill our plates at the sumptuous breakfast buffet that featured scrambled eggs, bacon, homemade venison sausage, pancakes, French toast, oatmeal, berries, bananas, yogurt and more. The fabulous meal was sponsored by the Craig Community Association Tribal Council and Staff.



Craig School District's PACE students served guests and helped with set-up. (Photo by Debbie Head.)

As we ate our breakfast, students came around the room distributing to everyone presents that they had made: a bag of s'ikshld"een (locally grown Hudson Bay tea) with a label that had brewing instructions, and a bag of candies that had a label with the same artwork as the program cover. The gifts were compliments of the Cultural Arts Students at Craig City School District.



Gifts distributed to guests during breakfast, September 26. (Photo by Mim Dixon.)

Wearing a vest with traditional buttons and beadwork, teacher and weaver Debbie Head presented us with a token that had been made by the high school students from the red cedar strips left over from the mat that lined the burial box. The edges of the little weavings were finished with cedar twine that also created a loop for hanging the memento. Attached to one side was a photo of the burial box artwork overlain with the message, "Thank you for joining us, September 26-27, 2008, Prince of Wales Island, Alaska." I learned later in the morning from anthropologist Steve Langdon, who came from Anchorage to participate in the weekend festivities, that Debbie had been accepted for a Smithsonian Institution internship next summer. She has been introducing high

school students to the Tlingit and Haida arts of basket weaving and hastened to add that she wanted to schedule the internship so that she would not miss any of her job as a teacher in Craig.

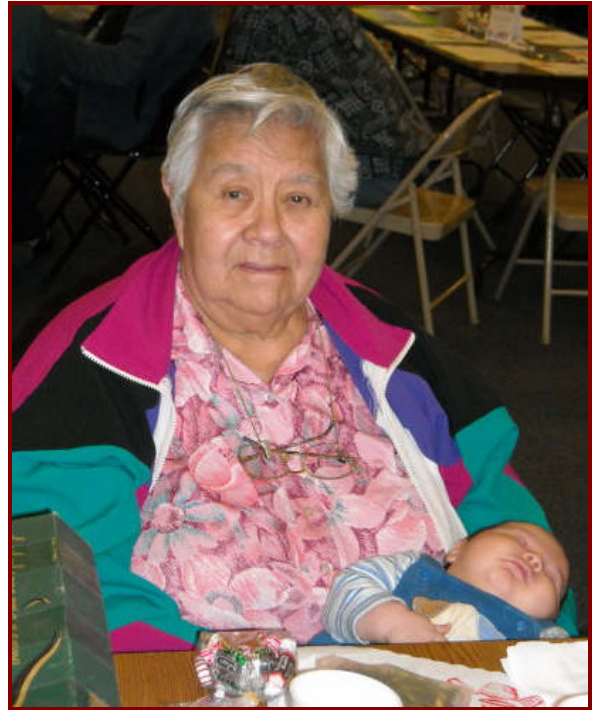


Debbie Head, weaver and Cultural Arts teacher, Craig City Schools. (Photo by Mim Dixon.)

At breakfast we met Sarah Dybdahl from Sealaska Heritage Institute who had travelled from Juneau with her 5-week-old son to help record the weekend activities on videotape. Her son slept comfortably in the arms of his great-grandmother, Virginia Demmert. The Craig Tribal Hall has wrap-around windows that frame the island views of ocean and rainforest. At one corner of the hall, several local people had set up tables to sell things they had made – jams from local berries, canned and jarred salmon, quilts and crocheted items, books and drawings, jewelry and carvings.

As we left the community hall after breakfast, a crew of volunteers was

finishing washing dishes in the kitchen and another group was changing the tablecloths on the buffet in preparation for the lunch.



Virginia Demmert, respected elder of Klawock, holds her five-week-old great-grandson. (Photo by Mim Dixon.)

After a break, we started walking from the Shelter Cover Lodge where we were staying back to the Craig Tribal Hall for lunch. The weather had changed and I put up the hood on my jacket to protect against the wind and rain. A silver car drove past us, stopped and backed up. A woman with gray hair rolled down her window and asked if we needed a ride to the community hall. She introduced herself as Barbara Peratrovich and said that she came from Ketchikan to learn about the history uncovered by this project. She had Tlingit, Russian and Croatian heritage and had volunteered for many years in domestic violence programs.

Our program said the lunch was sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service. Forest Service employees lined up at the entrance to greet people and handed out lapel pins. Quite a crowd had gathered for lunch and Forest Service Archeologist Terry Fifield welcomed everyone. Tlingit elder Rachel James offered a prayer that included giving thanks for the Man Ahead of Us that we could learn from him. A line formed at the buffet table for people to help themselves to pasta and meat sauce, garlic bread and salad. Later we learned that the Forest Service couldn't find a legitimate way to pay for the lunch, so Terry Fifield and other Forest Service employees had paid for it out of their own pockets.



Forest Service employees serve Friday lunch at the Craig Tribal Hall. (Photo by Terry Fifield.)

After lunch there was an announcement that vans would be available to provide rides to the village of Klawock for the afternoon program. The Klawock High School gymnasium is festooned with black, red, and white banners proclaiming state championships in basketball, volleyball, wrestling and cross-country running. Students in sweatshirts and blue jeans filed into the bleachers. Terry Fifield had delivered

lectures at all the schools on Prince of Wales Island in the past month to prepare them for this event. Students came in groups from other communities along with their teachers. Elders and dignitaries were invited to sit on chairs facing a screen and podium.

"A Vault of Knowledge and Homecoming"
 Friday Afternoon: September 26
 2:00 PM to 5:00
 Klawock School Gym

Movie: Introduction by Sealaska Heritage Institute
 Tlingit Protocol Specialist, Bob Sam
 Forest Service, Archaeologist, Terry Fifield
 Paleontologist, Dr. Timothy Heaton
 Project Archaeologist, Dr. James Dixon



The Klawock City School gymnasium. (Photo by Mim Dixon.)

For three hours, people sat in a dark gymnasium with poor acoustics and listened carefully. The first speaker was Robert Sam who had been asked by the Planning Committee to assist in developing the protocols for the burial and honor ceremony. For the past 25 years, this Tlingit tribal member who lives in Sitka has escorted human remains from museums to tribes throughout the United States. He

shared his philosophy that treating the dead with dignity and respect is basic to being a human being. “We did a very good thing. Those who have participated should be proud,” he told the group. “We’ve never done anything like this before. There are no protocols that we know to follow.”



Bob Sam. (Photo by Lillian Petershoare.)

Terry Fifield recalled the history of the project and the involvement of the U.S. Forest Service. He said that he was honored to be invited to participate in the reburial ceremony the previous day. He showed a video, *Kuwóot yas.éin (His Spirit is Looking Out From the Cave)*, produced and distributed by Sealaska Heritage Institute, that explained how the project became a model for cooperation between tribes, the federal government and scientists.



Terry Fifield (left) and Dennis Nickerson at the Friday night ceremonies. (Photo by Debbie Head.)

Next paleontologist Tim Heaton delivered a lecture on the important finds from the cave relating to animals and geology. Bear bones found in the cave were 35,000 years old, the oldest ever found in the area, and this changed how scientists regard the environment before, during and after the last Ice Age. The final lecture of the afternoon was about the archeology of the cave and what was learned from Shuká Kaa. In summary, James told the audience that this research helped archeologists to re-orient from the Bering Land Bridge theory to the Coastal Migration theory for the first colonization of the Americas, and from a big game hunting economy to a marine diet for the earliest people who came to the Americas. He said that he expected sites that are even older to be found underwater on the continental shelf.



Paleontologist Timothy Heaton accepts an award during the Shuká Kaa Honor Ceremony. (Photo by Phil Sammon.)



James and Mim Dixon at the Craig Tribal Hall during the Shuká Kaa Honor Ceremonies.

During the lectures, the kitchen at the school had been busy with preparations for dinner to feed hundreds of people. As soon as the talks finished and the lights came on, a crew of junior high school students began setting up tables and chairs for dinner in the Klawock High School gymnasium. They put placemats with a Tlingit design colored by students, little cups of soy sauce, and sticks of butter on each table. These same young people were present throughout the evening serving elders, distributing bottles of water from coolers, collecting used plates in big yellow garbage bags, and even dancing with the traditional dancers.

Dinner was prepared by the Alaska Native Sisterhood from the community of Craig who offered trays of salmon and halibut, kelp and salmon roe soup, chowder, salad with sea asparagus, herring roe on hemlock branches, rice balls with seaweed, fried seaweed, pasta salads, fresh rolls, blue berries

with grapes, and several kinds of cake. The line for the buffet encircled the basketball court.

After dinner, everyone was given gifts, including a white cotton kerchief with logos and a commemorative message. Linda Blankenship told me that traditionally one clan tied the kerchiefs around their necks so that the other clan would know to whom to give their gifts during a potlatch. One man in the crowd folded the white cloth into a hat that he wore on his head. The other gifts – a nylon bag that could be worn as a backpack, pens, notepads and candy – had the logo of First Bank. One person at our table said that he didn't ever remember First Bank sponsoring a give-away and wondered why they were doing it now. Bob Sam explained that the bones of Shuká Kaa had been held in a vault at First Bank after they had been returned to the tribe and before they were buried. Later I learned that First Bank was encouraging youth volunteerism by donating to youth organizations \$10 for every hour of volunteering in the community.

After dinner Klawock Mayor Don Marvin presided as elders offered their comments on this historic occasion. Clarence Jackson spoke about how the name Shuká Kaa had been chosen after rejecting other names that had been suggested, such as one that translated as First Man. He recounted a traditional story about a Tlingit man who had been separated from his tribe and had a long and arduous journey to find his way home, including being sealed in a bubble or skin balloon. He used this story as an analogy for Shuká Kaa who had been sealed in the cave and now is properly buried so that he could be reunited with his relatives.

Several of the Native speakers suggested that their Christian religion trumps science. One expressed his doubts about evolution (“There are no monkeys in the Tlingit family tree”) and didn’t ascribe to migration theories either. I thought that this archeological find could as easily have turned out like Kennewick Man with tribal people in opposition to scientists. What made the difference was the courageous leadership of individuals such as Millie Stevens Schoonover who was President of the Craig Tribal Council at the time the bones were found and expressed the intellectual curiosity that characterizes so many of the tribal members. It also made an enormous difference that Terry Fifield, the U.S. Forest Service archeologist, was living in the local communities, communicating in a timely and non-threatening manner, helping to build trust, and coordinating the work of the scientists. James also made a difference by employing tribal people as interns at the archeological site, giving lectures at all the little communities on the island after every field season to share what was learned, inviting people to visit the site and sponsoring tribal leaders to travel to the museum where collections were stored and analyzed.

At the head tables Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer, Alaska Regional Forester Denny Bschor and other agency leaders sat on one side of the podium while the tribal elders sat on the other side of the podium. After Mayor Don Marvin introduced Secretary Schafer, the former two-term governor of North Dakota acknowledged that as a Republican he probably didn’t get a single vote from an American Indian. Nevertheless, he said, he had lived near the Rosebud Sioux Reservation and

held the tribes in high esteem. He didn’t talk about the USDA and all of their tribal programs, but rather focused on Shuká Kaa and the partnerships that the ancient man had forged between the U.S. Forest Services and tribes and scientists. To my surprise, he talked a lot about love and peace. At the end of his remarks, Secretary Schafer assisted Terry Fifield in presenting framed posters commemorating the project to representatives from all the partner organizations.

Then the dancing began. The two dance groups that were guests at the



Secretary Schafer (center) presents a token of appreciation from the Forest Service to Sealaska Corporation Board members Ed Thomas (left) and Clarence Jackson (right). (Photo by Phil Sammon).

ceremony went first. As tradition demands, each dance group gathered outside the door to the gymnasium in their regalia and signaled their entrance with drums and calling to ask permission to enter. After their dramatic entrance Kiishaadei, the Haida dancers from Hydaburg, sang a song that is usually sung one year after a person is buried, noting that they were about 10,000 years late.



Denny Bschor, Alaska Regional Forester, and Secretary Schafer join the Cape Fox Dancers for the "Tlingit Twist." (Photo by Phil Sammon.)

The second dance group, from Cape Fox, had a song in which dancers invited individuals from the audience to join them. As people came to the dance floor, the Cape Fox Dancers removed their own dance shawls, gloves, and hats and adorned the guests with this



Jon Rowan Jr. carver and Heinyaa Kwaan Dance Leader. (Photo by Phil Sammon.)

regalia. Secretary Schafer seemed delighted to participate and there were many flashes from cameras capturing

the image of him dancing in Tlingit regalia.

The final dance group was Heinyaa Kwaan Dancers from Klawock, who were joined by the other groups. One of their songs originated with the wedding of Virginia Demmert, the elder with whom we enjoyed breakfast that morning. Another song they called "The Tlingit Twist." Young women asked men in the audience to dance with them a version of the "twist" not unlike Chubby Checker's. Again Secretary Schafer seemed happy to participate. The leader of the Heinyaa Kwaan Dancers was Jon Rowan, the artist and school teacher who had carved the burial box. Between the drumming and singing, he thanked the elders, the sponsors, the cooks from the Craig Alaska Native Sisterhood, and the scientists.

Saturday, September 27, 2008

We woke up late and straggled into the breakfast sponsored by the Prince of Wales Island Veterans at the Craig Tribal Hall. We learned that we had missed the spontaneous public expressions of support for the project, including one person who had said that the experience had been "life changing." We had missed the presentation of a woven spruce sun visor that Debbie Head made for Terry Fifield.

We got plates of pancakes and French toast and joined three lively non-Native ladies from Port Protection, the community across Prince of Wales Island that was closest to the cave where the bones were found. During the excavations, the crew hiked down the steep hill and took an inflatable boat to Port Protection once a week for showers, to do laundry and to make

phone calls from a pay phone at the marina. Litzie Botello Bean, the teacher's aide for the 12 students at the Port Protection school, often visited the excavations. When she received the notice about the weekend activities, she organized students and parents to make the three-hour drive to Klawock to participate. I had fun talking with Terri Metcalf, another Port Protection resident, about living off the grid, the elections, and the best coffee on the island.



Veteran Willard Jackson and Secretary Schafer at the Saturday breakfast hosted by the Prince of Wales Island Veterans Association. (Photo by Phil Sammon.)

I shopped the vendor tables and bought a few jars of jams made from local salmon berries, thimble berries and raspberries. Except for the volunteers cleaning up after the breakfast, I think we were the last to leave. We walked to the coffee shop and enjoyed some of their fresh roasted coffee and did a little more Christmas shopping. The Post Office opened at noon and we mailed a box of purchases before returning to the Craig Tribal Center for lunch.

The Prince of Wales Chamber of Commerce sponsored lunch with additional volunteer help from the Girl Scouts. Lunch featured more great seafood – halibut sandwiches, baked

halibut, salmon spread and pilot crackers, seafood chowder – along with green salad with apples, pasta salad, Jello and cookies. A delicious punch with local berries was served from a glass punch bowl.

After lunch, the scientific sessions were repeated at the beautiful new Craig High School in a modern auditorium with excellent acoustics and the assistance of an audiovisual technician whose time the school had contributed to the event. About 25 people attended this session which was more intimate and allowed for questions from the audience.

In his talk, Bob Sam filled in more details about the burial. He said that he had fasted before the reburial and that he was the last to leave the grave site. He burned a red cedar bough. He explained that the smoke is not put over the bodies of living people as some tribes do for purification. Rather, in Tlingit culture the smoke is used to direct the spirit to the sky. “We ask the spirit to don’t follow us home,” he said but rather to follow the smoke into the sky. “Go home, go back to the Creator,” he told the 10,300 year old man. He said he had asked nature to take care of this man.

He also shared more about his calling to assist in these types of situations. He said that it was considered taboo to touch old bones. He had been told that if he handled the human remains his teeth would fall out, his health would be bad, and he would fall over and die all of the sudden. But he felt that someone had to step up and take the bones and make sure they were treated with proper dignity and respect. He said that it is work that he really treasures and that it had taken him all over the world. He

acknowledged that many Native people were fearful of scientific studies. Having been part of this remarkable journey, he said, "You didn't need me. You had wonderful people volunteering here to do everything that needs to be done." He thanked Terry for sticking with the project to the very, very end. He said, "When one culture meets another the results should be more than the separate cultures." The person is now home, Bob Sam said, and we are better people because of it. He summarized the feelings of many who had been present: "How powerful this week has been for me!"

After the film and the scientific presentations, there was time for audience questions. One person asked if the bones had been preserved in a way that they could be studied again in the future when there are better analytical methods. Terry explained that the Planning Committee had considered that and rejected alternatives such as placing the wood box in a cement vault. He estimated that the bones would deteriorate in a century or two.

When we arrived at the Klawock High School for the evening feast, all the seats at the tables were taken, so we sat at the top of the bleachers with Terry Fifield and his wife Cheryl, and Tim Heaton and his wife Julie. This time the other chapter of the Alaska Native Sisterhood from Klawock had prepared the food – salmon and halibut cooked in dozens of ways, as well as turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, and gravy. Sea asparagus made its appearance in several salads. Shrimp was in soups and cooked to peel and eat.

Millie Stevens Schoonover, who had been president of the Craig Community

Association (Tribe) for 18 years, including the time when the archeology at On Your Knees Cave first began, acknowledged all the participants in the academic work. Terry Fifield recounted the history of the research and tribal relations from the Forest Service perspective. Dennis Nickerson, Chair of the Planning Committee, thanked the impressive list of people and organizations that had contributed to the celebration, from gathering traditional foods to cooking and organizing and serving. It seems that nearly everyone on this island of 5,500 people got involved. Dennis said that everyone the Planning Committee had asked to help had said, "Yes!" The list included sports teams and youth organizations, businesses, veterans, schools, community groups, and the Tribes.



Millie (Stevens) Schoonover with Forest Service archeologists Terry Fifield (left) and John Autrey (right) at the Shuká Kaa Honor Ceremony. (Photo by Lillian Petershoare.)

James took the podium to thank the Tribes and the Forest Service on behalf of the scientists. He said that in addition to the bones, the archeologists had found some beautiful artifacts including chipped points that were made by ancient people. To assure that future generations could learn from this experience, he presented a complete

set of replicas of the points to the Superintendent of the Klawock City Schools, Richard Carlson.



Klawock Tribal member Yarrow Vaara dances with the Heinyaá kwaan Dancers. Yarrow was an intern with the project for three years and a valued team member. (Photo by Mim Dixon.)

As the evening dancing began, everyone was given red kerchiefs on which the name of Shuká Kaa and the date were hand written with magic markers. Some people folded them to make headbands that they wore with Shuká Kaa's name on their forehead. The dancing on the second night seemed more celebratory. Perhaps it was my birds' eye view from the top of the bleachers, but I thought that more children and youth participated. Our program mentioned the J.O.M. Craig Island Dancers, the youth who participated in the Johnson O'Malley cultural enrichment programs. Some dancers donned different shawls that had more contemporary designs and more of the young women painted their faces. Two young men wore elaborate wolf masks. The singing and dancing had more audience participation,

including a call-and-response song that featured each village represented.



Visiting Juneau Woch ji Een Dancer Eva Rowan. (Photo by Debbie Head).

On a more serious note, the leader of the Haida dancers introduced a song to honor all of the matriarchs of the clans. She noted that the young man who lived 10,300 years ago had a mother, too.

During a break in the dancing, people went to the food line and returned to their seats with folded sheets of kelp covered in herring eggs. Plates of excess food were prepared for the elders to take home.

When the dancing ended, the celebration came to a conclusion with gifts from the Planning Committee to thank some of those who had assisted Klawock in this historic event. Dennis Nickerson presented copper pendants made especially for this occasion to Mayor Don Marvin for serving as the Event Host for the two nights of celebration, to Bob Sam for advising the Tribe on protocols for the burial, and to Joe Hotch for travelling from Haines to serve as a spiritual leader. It was Joe Hotch who gave the closing remarks. He ended by saying, "We will never see anything like this again in our lives."

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Terry Fifield and E. James Dixon for reviewing this account and offering helpful suggestions to make it more accurate. Many thanks to Debbie Head, Terry Fifield, Lillian Petershoare, and Phil Sammon for sharing their photographs. I especially want to express my appreciation to the people of Prince of Wales Island for making me feel welcome at this historic event.

ⁱ Terry Fifield also invited the Hydaburg Cooperative Association (Tribe) and the Organized Village of Kasaan tribal governments from Prince of Wales Island and the Organized Village of Kake, from Kupreanof Island, to the north. Hydaburg and Kasaan opted not to attend, perhaps because the site was pretty clearly in Tlingit territory. Kake sent elder Charles Johnson (now deceased). They later decided not to participate deferring to Klawock and asking to merely be kept informed.

ⁱⁱ According to Terry Fifield, this is the first time human remains of this antiquity have been returned to tribal claimants under federal law. In 1989 a 12,000 year-old skeleton – the “Buhl woman” – was returned to the Shoshone under Idaho State repatriation statutes, the year before passage of NAGPRA. And there have been many instances of less ancient human remains being repatriated or transferred to tribes.



Award Poster developed by Terry Fifield



This photo was taken September 27, 2008, in the Gan a'ax adi Clanhouse on the Klawock River during Secretary Schafer's tour of important sites on Prince of Wales Island. Front row, from left to right: Fred Clark, Director, National Office of Tribal Relations, USFS; Dawn Charging, Director of Native American Programs, US Department of Agriculture; John Autrey, Tribal Relations Specialist, Tongass National Forest; Crystal Leonetti, Alaska Tribal Relations Director, Natural Resources Conservation Service; Lillian Petershoare, Alaska Region Tribal Relations Specialist, USFS; Yenie Tran, Special Assistant to Undersecretary of Agriculture, Mark Rey. Back row, left to right: Greg Killinger, Craig District Ranger, Tongass National Forest; Phil Sammon, Public Relations Specialist, Tongass National Forest; Ed Schafer, Secretary of Agriculture; Richard Peterson, President Organized Village of Kasaan and Vice President of The Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska; Stormy Hamar, Tribal Council Member, Organized Village of Kasaan, and carver; Eric Hamar, Tribal Member, Organized Village of Kasaan, and carver; Terry Fifield, Prince of Wales Zone Archaeologist and Tribal Liaison, Tongass National Forest; Jon Rowan Jr., City of Klawock and Klawock City School District, Master Carver and teacher; Denny Bschor, Alaska Regional Forester, USFS; Rebecca Nourse, Deputy Forest Supervisor, Tongass National Forest; Forrest Cole, Forest Supervisor, Tongass National Forest; and Susan Marvin, Heritage Program Manager, Alaska Region, USFS. (Photo courtesy of Tongass National Forest.)