

## Chapter 18



# Social Organization and Life at Keatley Creek: A Reconstruction

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### Introduction

It is possible to embellish the basic conclusions that have been established thus far with yet other observations from archaeological, historical, ethnographic, and ethnological work to create a more complete picture of how the Tl'at'l'h (Keatley Creek) community was organized and what life was like for its residents. Because this community was situated in a transition area between the Shuswap and Lillooet ethnographic groups, I will draw most heavily on both of these traditions. Observations from similarly complex groups on the Coast will also be used at times to provide insights into social and economic organization since the overall level of complexity was probably similar, the basic organization into residential corporate groups was similar, and since there was clearly considerable contact in terms of trade and marriage between the Coast and the Interior. The goal of this section is to flesh out what life may have been like, from my point of view, using these sources as guides. Indications of the sources used for these reconstructions are included wherever possible. Other details are derived from my own conceptions of how these communities operated. As is consistent with the original aim of the FRICGA project, most attention will focus on the large residential corporate groups.

### Seasonal Resource Acquisition

The time is late summer in the year AD 800, about 50 years before the catastrophic collapse of the salmon runs and the nearly total abandonment of the community. At the height of the hot season, the terraces were rich with saskatoon berries, goose berries, soapberries, and blackcaps (Turner 1992:423). Women and children collected large quantities and dried them for the winter. Toward the end of the Berry Moon (late July) before the edges of the Great River became black with salmon, all the members of the great ancestral houses, the *pel'u'em*, were down at the river repairing fishing platforms, scaffolds, and drying racks, and repainting the crest poles and rocks that displayed their ownership of the sites (Teit 1906:255; 1909:576; Kan 1989:85). During the Salmon Moon (August), at the peaks of the salmon runs, all the men took turns in the fishing; all the women helped in the butchering and drying; and all the children that were old enough helped in carrying the fish from the men to the women or in dumping fish wastes into ravines, or helped in whatever way they could. Everyone was involved except those women in their lunar period and the elite girls in their isolation periods<sup>1</sup> (Owens and Hayden 1997; Alexander 1992:136). The peaks of the runs were exhausting for everyone, with men fishing throughout

1. The longer the elite girls stayed in seclusion and the less physical work that they did, the more valuable they were in marriage exchanges (Oberg 1973:33). The highest ranking girls stayed in seclusion for four years or more (Teit 1906:265).

the night in order to take in as much of the most productive part of the run as possible (Bouchard and Kennedy 1990:253) and women and children trying to keep up with the processing.

During the peaks of the runs of sockeye and spring salmon, many of the independent poor families had helped the great families fish and process salmon at the platforms and scaffolds owned by the great houses. The poorer families did not own any platforms or scaffolds or fishing sites of their own, so were paid for their help in salmon. The poor were also permitted to salvage (for a share of the product) any salmon which the great houses could not process themselves. The poor could use the fishing sites (again for a share), but only after all members of the great houses had obtained what they wanted (Teit 1909:582–3; Romanoff 1992a: 244; 1992b:493; Kennedy and Bouchard 1992:308; Schulting 1995:59; MacDonald 1987:6; Swanton 1909:71; Curtis 1915:28).

At the fisheries each family dried hundreds of sockeye and spring salmon, either for winter consumption or trade. Spring salmon were the richest nutritionally and the most valued fish for trading. These oily spring salmon were carefully sliced into long thin slab fillets, then scored every finger width and smoke dried to prevent decay. Dried backbones were tied into bundles for emergency soups. Scraps were given to the dogs (Desmond Peters, Senior, personal communication) or boiled up into thick broths from which the precious oil was skimmed off and put into salmon skin bottles (Romanoff 1992a; Kennedy and Bouchard 1992).

When the processing of the salmon was complete, the women and dogs carried the dried salmon up the towering river gorge and across some 3,000 paces of terrace to the great houses. There the salmon was kept in baskets in deep earth pits inside and outside the houses where they were best preserved (Teit 1909:495; Lamb 1960:140; Romanoff 1992b:488). The least valuable backbones were always placed on skins and straw at the bottom to prevent dampness from affecting the most valuable dried salmon (Spier and Sapir 1930:179; Romanoff 1971:40). The remaining roots and berries that had been gathered in the summer were also placed in these pits or stored in baskets under sleeping platforms. Each family had its own storage pit or shared a part of a pit with others in the house depending on the amount to be stored and the rank of the families involved (Teit 1917:45; Kennedy and Bouchard 1975:45). Since outside storage pits froze up in the winter and were inaccessible, additional salmon storage was either located in sheds on elevated platforms down by the river where it was less cold and would be accessible throughout the winter, (Boas 1891:635; Romanoff 1992a; Kennedy and Bouchard 1992; Bouchard and Kennedy

1990:253,278–80; Alexander 1992:131) or in pits close to the houses that were not covered with earth but only by poles (Teit 1898:109,150fn; 1900:199; 1906:223). Food for more immediate use was hung from the rafters or placed in baskets in the great house (Vol. II, Chap. 2). Supplies left down by the river were relatively safe after everyone entered their pithouses since the mountain passes leading to enemy territories were generally blocked by snow within a moon or two (Desmond Peters, Senior, personal communication).

Between the peaks of the major runs, men entertained the many traders that traveled from one fishery to another trying to exchange dentalium shells, nephrite, copper, buckskin, furs, pipes, beads, ochre, feathers, slaves, and other prestige commodities for the tasty dried salmon of the region. People who did not stop to trade were charged transit fees for carrying wealth across the land of the *pe'uxem* (Vol. II, Chap. 17). Evenings were spent with visiting traders playing *lahal*, dancing, singing, and sometimes arranging marriages (Teit 1900:167,259; 1906:231–2; 1909:536,616; Lamb 1960:120–1; Romanoff 1992a). Children amused themselves by burning off berry patches and brush at night (Teit 1900:230; Turner 1992:413) providing spectacular sights like fireworks visible for miles. If there were no interesting social events, adults spent time making mats, baskets, snowshoes or other items (Alexander 1992:161).

The sockeye and spring salmon runs were unusually abundant this season, the greatest of the four years in the sockeye cycle, and the nobles of the great houses were reassured that the winter would be comfortable and enjoyable with the possibility of hosting major feasts. After a few weeks, as the main runs of the valued sockeye and spring salmon subsided, the elite hunters of the great houses realized that they would soon have to travel to the alpine areas if they wanted to obtain as much deer meat as possible before the snows arrived. They craved deer meat as superior food, as a respite from eternal salmon, and as an essential valuable food for holding feasts of renown and profit (Romanoff 1992b). Deer skins, so valuable for their warmth in winter, were in their prime condition now, and the deer meat was richest in fat at this time of year. Without deer skins, it might be necessary to use the embarrassing sagebrush bark capes and blankets of the poor.

The elite hunters therefore left the fisheries under the care of the elderly house nobles who were unable to make the arduous trip into the mountains, who stayed by the river to direct the commoners of the house and the slaves in the fishing, drying, and storage of the most abundant, but less desirable salmon runs—those of the dry tasting pink salmon (Garfield 1966:29). With

the arrival of the pink salmon, every family could construct a cobble or brush jetty along the gravel banks of the river and obtain almost enough fish to last them for the winter. However, the pinks were not as nutritious, or tasty, or valuable for trade as the other species (Kennedy and Bouchard 1992:275). Pink salmon were often dried with the backbone still attached to the split fish, and towards the end of the season, they were even freeze dried.

Staying by the river for the runs of pink salmon, however, meant that the poorer families could not participate in the fall hunt in the alpine meadows; they therefore had little opportunity to accumulate dried deer meat for feasting. The poor never hunted by themselves, but always tried to accompany the elite professional hunters if they could afford to (Steven Romanoff, personal communication). Even then, they were not always given a share of the kill to take back (Teit 1912b:360). Generally, the poor stayed at the river until the end of the pink runs and then packed a good quantity of their dried fish to the winter village.

The elite hunters and their families made the difficult trek to the tops of the high mountains and the valley beyond to hunt and dry deer meat during the Hunt Moon (October) and to gather pine nuts, moss, and huckleberries (Turner 1992:423). The women, slaves, and dogs carried almost all the household possessions and supplies on these trips (Teit 1917:37; Lamb 1960:140–1). They camped under the subalpine trees, and the women worked hard to tan as many skins and dry as much meat as they could when not out gathering. If there were too many hides to tan before leaving, they would be dried and brought back to work into fine buckskin in the great houses. Each great house had its own deer fences in its traditional hunting area (Dawson 1892:14; Romanoff 1992b; Teit 1909), and while there, the men picked up as much good quality tool stone as they could carry back to the winter village (Vol. I, Chap. 16; Vol. II, Chap. 17).

## Preparations for Winter Hardships and Celebrations

Like some tribal Europeans, the year began for the Tl'at'lh community with the notable increases in darkness and cold. Everyone returned to the winter villages during the Enter Winter Houses Moon

(November). The elite hunting families returned from the high mountains laden with dried deer meat, dried fleshed deer skins or furs, tool stone, and any roots that had been cached during the previous summer. Daughters in their seclusion periods and women in their moon periods followed the main group. Hunters gave portions of their kills, especially the rich deer fat, to the Firstman of the pel'uʒem (Teit 1912b:363; Oberg 1973:30; Arima 1983:70; Boas 1921:1337). The remaining families from the fishing locations along the river returned with the last of their bundles of dried fish to store at the village. Families went far to bring back firewood for the winter which they stacked mostly outside the houses but also brought some inside to put on ledges or under sleeping platforms<sup>2</sup> (Condrashoff 1972; Teit 1917:26; 1912a:222; Barrett 1975:39).

Perhaps it was at this time too, when the dead were honored just as the contemporary bands have a special cemetery day. Important wealthy families also held *sxwayxwey* mortuary feasts in the region in front of the carvings and crests of their ancestors, some even reburying bones in new wrappings and with new wealth<sup>3</sup> (Ostokowicz 1992; Teit 1900:330; 1906:259,270; 1909:576,593).

Before the funeral rituals, houses were cleaned out. All old grass and fir bough bedding, along with sweepings and unusable rock or stone or bone were carried up the steep notched log ladder and thrown on the outside edge of the house roof. Mats were unrolled from their storage places and placed on the floor between the hearths and the sleeping platforms, as well as on the walls (Teit 1900:188; Post and Commons 1938:40). New grasses and boughs were brought in and placed between the rush mats and the poles of the knee high sleeping benches which extended out from all the house walls (Teit 1900:199; 1906:215; 1909:676; Bouchard and Kennedy 1973, 1977:63; 1985:35). The roof was checked for any necessary repairs. Valuables stored in pits inside the house (Teit, n.d.) were taken out for use and display. The carved tops of the log ladders and the large carved interior posts representing the ancestral animals of the great houses (Teit 1900:194; 1906:204,213; 1909:492,576) were repainted to reflect the crests of each pel'uʒem: bear, beaver, coyote, dog, deer, eagle, owl, hawk, raven, cougar, wolf, serpent, frog, or toad. The same designs were woven into mats hung along the walls and between domestic areas within the great

2. Even on the coast, John Jewitt (1974:96) had to travel 3 miles (5 km) from a major village in order to obtain firewood. The high population concentration at Keatley Creek and the scant forest cover must have made firewood there even more difficult to obtain.
3. The grave goods, grave sculptures of deceased family heads, secondary interments, and honoring of elite ancestors is characteristic of Entrepreneur societies and chiefdoms in many parts of the world (Hayden 1995) and make sense as part of ritual strategies for validating inheritance of resource and/or managerial rights as well as for claiming supernatural superiority of one's immediate ancestors, a superiority which is passed on to the living sponsor of the funeral feasts. This is probably also why burials in general are so important for most native communities in the Northwest.

houses (Teit, n.d.; Condrashoff 1980), especially those around the house chief. Hide or mat flaps over the side and top entrances (Teit 1898:23,28; 1912b:369; 1917:72, 86) were also repainted, repaired, and secured, with log ladders from roof to floor inside and out of the house. Hammocks were set up for babies, and lines were strung for drying clothes (Teit 1900:199; 1906:206).

Every generation, it was necessary to replace the decaying roof of the great houses, a major undertaking requiring considerable expenditure (Teit 1900:192). It was necessary to accumulate the logs, mats, poles, bark and requisite wealth payments over a number of years in order to accomplish this job. As on the Coast, many helpers had to be paid and a major group feast had to be given for all participants and other nobles of great houses. But this did not have to be done this year. Girls and women in seclusion went off about 15 paces from the great houses to set up and repair their tiny seclusion houses, only 3–5 paces across (Post and Commons 1938:41; Teit 1900:198,326–7; 1906:263; 1909:495). When the weather was very cold, or when girls or women were sick, the women in seclusion might be lodged in the loft area or in special corners of the great house (Teit 1912a:361).

This was the period when raids were most likely to occur from enemy groups, although it was generally the smaller houses that were most vulnerable. By this time, all surrounding and distant groups could assess quite accurately whether they had enough salmon and other stores to last the winter without major shortages. If they were seriously short, it would be necessary to make up the shortfall either by trading or raiding before snows blocked the mountain passes (Cannon 1992:510). Sometimes this happened toward the end of the fishing season, consequently, many groups put up fortifications around their summer or fall shade shelters (Lamb 1960:82). The Lillooet were rich in food and surpluses. They preferred to trade and exchange rather than go to war, and they were known for preferring peace. They were therefore frequently raided, especially whenever they were traveling in small groups in the mountains (Teit 1906:240; 1912b:331). Small groups were always more vulnerable (compare Burch 1975:226), and one of the most important advantages commoners obtained from their affiliation with great houses was protection.

## Feasting Forms and Functions

### Feasts to Promote Alliances

Socially-bonding feasting took place after entering the great ancestral houses in the fall to celebrate and give thanks to everyone who had helped obtain the salmon for the year, to thank honored guests for their support, and to thank the ancestors of the elite owners

of the fishing locations for having established the fishing locations (and the great houses) and made them productive (Spier and Sapir 1930:175). Prior to such feasts, the elite men and women indulged in sacred sweatbaths down by the creek (Teit 1900:198; 1906:267; Post and Commons 1938:42; Commons 1938:193). Taking these sweatbaths required considerable amounts of wood to build the fires and heat the rocks, but they felt both pleasurable and empowered participants with new knowledge, strength, and magic (Teit 1912b:345,348).

The largest ancestral feasts of the fall and winter served to impress specially invited guests with the richness and success of the great house and instill in them the desire to become affiliated with the house either by contributing productive labor, goods, investments, or marriageable partners which would benefit the guests, as well as the great house. Thus, members of the great house always made a special effort to serve the most sumptuous foods, in beautifully painted bark trays, wood plates, or coiled baskets, spread on finely woven and decorated serving mats (Lamb 1960:84; Teit 1900:200; 1909:482–3). Rich and tasty pounded salmon mixed with oil and berries were served with smoked dried deer meat and rich deer fat. Thick soups of fish and lily roots were eaten with wooden or sheep horn spoons. As always, water—the only drink ever consumed—was brought from the creek in bark buckets and served in bark cups. These feasts were rewards for those who were members of the great houses, and enticements to others to become part of the social and economic web of the great houses. Only about 40% of the families in the village could afford to give such feasts (Romanoff 1992b:477).

During the fall ancestral and harvest celebrations, like all feasts, the house Firstman, or house chief, presided from his fur covered platform along the south wall with the most sacred crest mats and roof support posts around him. He was dressed in fine fringed white buckskin tailored clothes ornamented with rich furs from ancestral totemic animals—coyote, wolf, lynx, bear, or beaver. He also wore exotic feathers, dentalium shells, incised bone plaques, and copper rolled beads or sheets (Teit 1900:218; 1906:257). He wore much of the inherited wealth of the great house, wealth amassed by previous generations and handed down to him, wealth to which he had also contributed. The copper jewelry represented his spiritual connection to the sun and stars as well as his wealth (Teit 1912b:343–4; 1917:44). He sat proudly on goat hair blankets, displaying his facial tattoos, his ear and nose ornaments, and his impressive feather and fur headdress. His lavishly dressed wives were at either side together with his children, pet foxes, hawks, dogs, and almost naked slaves (Teit 1906:218,220–1,250; Post 1938:34).

When he received high ranking nobles of the great house or guest nobles of power at these feasts, he would carefully withdraw his tubular pipe from one of the decorated hide pouches hanging by the wall and share sacred smoke<sup>4</sup> with them thereby binding their social and economic relationships (Teit 1900:350; 1906:250; 1930:154,165; Spier and Sapir 1930:269; Vol. II, Chap. 13).

Fires burned in front of all the elite domestic areas on the western half of the house. The central area before the Firstman was the foremost dance and speech area, a sacred area chosen because of the soft loam that occurred naturally in the ground at this spot, which made it more comfortable to dance upon. Small children climbed up on the walls in the east where archaeologists later found their footholds. The children crouched under the eaves to watch the performances by firelight, sweat glistening in the packed and overheated house (Teit 1909:669).

Throughout the night, drums thundered, rattles droned, flutes and whistles pierced the air, songs rose and fell, and elaborate costumes of the spirit realms came to life—costumes and masks worn by dancers and made with parts of totemic ancestors or individual power animals (Teit 1900:354–7; 1906:253,257,290; 1909:576–8; 1912a:353; 1912b:361–2,367–8; Veniaminov 1982:22–3; Anatolii 1982:57). These masks, too, were prestige items of great value inherited from the house ancestors. At times, the entire house seemed to pulse and vibrate like a living entity (which it, in fact, was), and spectators sometimes fell into ecstatic states of rapture or were transported into spirit realms. During the speeches to the ancestors, speeches for the performances, speeches for serving food brought in from the outside ovens, and speeches for the distribution of gifts, the Firstman and his nobles often spoke in the special language of their ancestors with spokesmen interpreting the speeches for the general assembly (Walters 1938:98; Goldman 1940:355–7; Ray 1939:23–4; 1942:229; Hudson 1994). Firstmen never spoke directly to people in public. The ancestors were always addressed in a special language that ordinary people could only half understand, but which was used by the elites whenever undertaking anything involving spirit power, including trade, marriage, and negotiations among themselves (Hudson 1994). In fact, transegalitarian elites everywhere always seem to claim to have special or exclusive supernatural powers (Goldman 1975:5 cited by Kan 1989:81; Drucker 1965:167; Hayden 1995).

Other feasts, such as the largest, most impressive feasts between the great houses, required years of careful investments, exchanges, trade, and preparations. The Firstman of the house had to convince his

elite relatives that they would benefit from such lavish and costly feasts, or at least that they had a strong chance of benefiting from it (Rosman and Rubel 1971:27). Nothing was ever certain, even when other people had accepted the Firstman's initial gift of wealth indicating their agreement to support an upcoming feast (Kamenskii 1985:44) and even after they had made firm promises with the traditional binding rituals involving sacred pipes and oaths, they sometimes failed to provide what they promised. The chief's success relied to a great deal on his ability to convince others that he knew how to choose reliable people to conduct transactions with. This was his "prestige" and it was critical for wealth transactions. His relatives and supporters could absorb occasional and minor miscalculations, but the Firstman knew that if these happened too frequently or were of too much consequence, it could spell ruin for himself and his kin. They might even force him to retire in disgrace and force him to assume all the outstanding debts that he had convinced them to invest in. In order to maintain confidence and support, the Firstman paid off whatever bad debts or promises that he could with the hope that future transactions would again bring him greater wealth and increased power.

## **Marriage Feasts**

Holding feasts to secure military allies, to end wars, to arrange marriages accompanied by wealth exchanges, and to out-compete rival great houses were some of the easiest pretexts to use in order to obtain contributions from the other families of the great house (Teit 1898:54; 1900:322–3; 1906:267; 1909:611,659,664; 1912a:261,270; 1917:30–1,73; Boas 1898:3). Often two or more of these purposes were combined in hosting a single great feast. Wealth exchanges associated with marriages were especially secure types of investments. By paying a large purchase price of salmon, dried deer meat, and prestige valuables for a boy or a girl with proper training from another elite family, the entire great house would benefit by being favored in the future with external trade relationships that brought wealth, with invitations to future feasts hosted by other elite groups, by the ability to use the other group's fishing stations and hunting grounds, by the ability to borrow food and prestige goods for feasting or investments, and by obtaining allies. Such lavish events were also important in advertising the success of the great house. Finally, properly trained incoming elite spouses could also play a productive role in facilitating all of these matters and in hosting rituals, transactions, and feasts of the great house. Thus, the Firstman of the house had to consult all the leading families for such

4. Smoke was not from tobacco, as tobacco was unknown to the community.

marriages and could argue forcefully for substantial payment contributions from everyone in the great house since desirable marriages benefited everyone in the house (Sproat 1987:80-1) although the largest portion of the marriage feast was usually paid for by the spouse's family.

### Maturation and Marriage Feasts

Similarly, it was relatively easy to obtain some contributions for feasts that would mark the progress of great house children through various stages of birth, maturation, and training (Teit 1900:291,309,321; 1906:260). The greater the training and special recognition of the children, the greater the payments would be upon their marriage. In this way, other powerful and wealthy great houses could be lured into marriage, and political or wealth exchange alliances. Once again, it was normal that the child's family would make the greatest contributions to these costs, but the Firstman of the house tried to emphasize the needs of the *pel'uʔem* and benefits to the house as a whole. By encouraging everyone to contribute as much as they could at shorter intervals, he could increase the total surplus being invested by the great house, he could increase the brokerage benefits to himself, and he could more easily justify demands for contributions from other families which would be made when the children were married. Wealthy families always tried to marry their children into other wealthy families (Teit 1900:325; Hayden 1995; Schulting 1995:73) and the greatest amount of wealth in marriages could usually be gotten from other elite families in other villages (Rosman and Rubel 1971:13,144; Sproat 1987:72). It was also a matter of honor and a sign of success to be able to provide at least some marriage payments and maturation feasts or training for all children of the great house, even the poorest common children. But the largest, most expensive, impressive, most lucrative feasts, training, and marriage payments were reserved for elite children and were graduated according to their own internal ranks and family wealth (Kan 1989:87-8,91; Owens and Hayden 1997). Marriage feasts involving substantial wealth exchanges required at least a year of financial and other preparations (Nastich 1954:59-60).

Marriage payments, together with the training and grooming of children for high marriages, were ways of transforming the surpluses of normal years into stored wealth and power. As Hunn (1990:223) noted for groups on the Columbia Plateau, gifts were necessary for people to function in society, but they were also a source of conflict. The food that was not needed was given away at feasts and invested in children or marriage partners or traded for prestige objects used for these same purposes, with the promise of future return in kind or other wealth. These were mechanisms of using

excess food, food that would otherwise simply decay and be lost over time.

### Reciprocal Feasts

Some of the feasts that ensued between intermarrying great houses were simply reciprocal with no attempt to gain excessive profits (Teit 1900:296-9; Boas 1898:3). These feasts were held in order to retain the other great houses (either those at Keatley Creek or those in the other regional communities) as allies in warfare, in financial matters, in politics, and in marriage. Once again, the Firstman of the house could appeal to the common interest of everyone in the great house to contribute to these occasional feasts, but the lowest ranking, common families and slaves always bore the brunt of the work required (Burch 1975:231). These feasts were, in fact, necessary for the continued functioning of the great house and its success. Being without allies in warfare could lead to destruction; being without wealthy marriage relations led to poverty and incompetent management; being without allies that could loan food or wealth when they were needed could lead to starvation and missed investment or other opportunities of great importance. Attracting only lazy moochers as co-members of the great houses would mean proportionately more work for everyone else and could lead to impoverishment (Nastich 1954:84).

Reciprocal feasts, too, were ways of transforming and storing food. Surpluses could be used to feed guests with the promise that the hosts would be guests at some future date usually within the following year (Teit 1900:299). Common foods such as salmon were used to underwrite the production of more socially important foods and items such as hunted deer meat and exotic shells, which were also given at feasts, with similar returns expected in the future. While the Firstman of the house could appeal to the necessity of maintaining the alliances with other great houses in order to obtain contributions and support for feasts, he also benefited directly from them as the spokesman, chief ritualist, and titular administrative head of the great house. He could certainly argue that in order to conduct his duties for the house, he required many things, including appropriate ritual regalia, prestige foods to offer the other administrative heads of great houses, fine clothes, properly trained wives, slaves, appropriate gifts to give (which of course involved receiving items of similar worth in return).

Like marriage payments, the value of feast gifts and honors were always determined by the estimated ability of the recipients to return as much or more than they received (Burch 1955:257). Gratitude was rarely expressed by receivers of the gifts since it was generally

recognized that self-interest motivated all these transactions (Sproat 1987:112–3). Under these pretenses, the *pe'uxem* Firstmen and to lesser extents depending on their rank, the other elite families, could benefit enormously from the holding of reciprocal feasts. It seems that everyone in the great houses thought that they were benefiting to some extent, from the holding of these feasts, as long as they did not stretch their own food reserves too far.

All feasts, funerals, marriages, and maturation ceremonies involved people from other houses who were invited in order to witness the events taking place and to be able to convey these events to the rest of the community at large. Thus, at all these events, the prestige, the power, the success, and the potential benefits of the great house were on display for all to take note of. Since these great houses depended for their success on the quantity and the quality of members that they could attract, as well as the quantity and quality of occasional helpers and allies, these displays had a strong tendency to become competitive, with each house attempting to put on as lavish and impressive a display as possible according to their abilities and recent fortunes in subsistence and financing (see Teit 1900:289,298–9; 1906:255). While there might rarely be enough surpluses for the great houses to actually compete with each other to the point of demanding increases from each other at every feast, they clearly tried to outshine each other whenever conditions were favorable enough (Teit 1906:258; 1909:583). Winners in these battles might not get all of their investments back, but the resulting renown and fame was the best advertising that could ever be wished for in terms of attracting the most desirable alliances and the most capable, productive members for the great house.

The absolute limit on the salmon supply, the absolute limits on the access to that supply, and the dramatic cyclical fluctuations in the salmon supply, all probably created conditions under which increases (interest payments) on loans and gifts from one feast to the next could not be sustained on a regular, reliable basis. Substantially increased returns on gifts and loans was probably only possible on an occasional basis and was seized upon by individual great houses opportunistically to achieve temporary renown or dominance within the community. The very large mandatory investment and feasting increments that characterized some of the Coastal groups may have largely been the product of disease-related nineteenth century population losses coupled with the introduction of European trade goods, and may not have been typical of the prehistoric situation at all (Codere 1950:61,63,70,94–5; Goldman 1940:345). Certainly in the Lillooet region, it would seem to make most sense to view investment and feasting as being largely reciprocal in nature with

any increments in repayments being used on an opportunistic and fluctuating basis in order to gain temporary dominance in the region. As on the coast and in other Entrepreneur societies, the largest competitive feasts might require up to 8–10 years of investing and preparation, whereas validating new Firstmen only required preparations of about a year, similar to important funerals and marriages.

In addition to the many feasting obligations and opportunities, there were also many individual investments. With his elite connexions in allied great houses and other communities, the Firstman of the house could borrow considerable sums of salmon, deer meat, deer fat, and prestige items. He would borrow these goods when they were needed for feasts or marriages or other events in order to increase the values involved and the amount of wealth that would eventually come back in return, or to enhance the image of the great house for the public. Sometimes the Firstman would have to repay these costs largely from his own production in the following years, but whenever he could, he tried to obtain contributions from other families in the great house, particularly if the event could be portrayed as being for their own benefit. When not needed, he always tried to place any extra food or wealth with other families as loan investments and to create the maximum number of debts as possible (Gregory 1982:19,197). Most of the elite families in the great house also had connexions with other great houses or individuals from which they often borrowed supplies for feasts to increase the worth of their child's maturation ceremonies, marriages, or for other purposes.

In order to undertake all these ventures, items of value were required, and many of these could only be obtained from other elites via exchange, or by traveling to the sources of these items and trading directly for them. While going directly to sources (such as to the Coast for dentalium shells) may have been the most profitable way to obtain prestige valuables, it was also the most dangerous and risky. Because of these dangers, great spiritual power was required together with much spiritual training and preparation. Many traders painted their power spirits on the rocks above the long lakes before beginning their journey to the Coast.

Although feasts were critical for retaining power (Jewitt 1974:112–3), keeping track of all of the costs of feasts, marriages, obligations to allies, loans, debts, training, equipment and formal dress, ritual needs, interpersonal conflicts, trading expeditions, and the thousand and one details of running the great house, often gave the Firstman of the house headaches. He was all too aware, as his parents never ceased to remind him, that it was easy to fall from a high position and that it was very difficult to rise from a low position

(Barnett 1955:248). Maintaining the wealth and status of the family and the great ancestral house required constant vigilance, self discipline, a great deal of administrative work, and especially good marriages and training. Marriage to a commoner could ruin an entire family's fortunes (Nastich 1954:24–5,58); but marriage to a rich family could lead to access to other fishing resources and open up helpful exchange relationships for acquiring prestige valuables.

Moreover, the Firstman had to please the people of the Great House that he depended upon almost all the time, and they never liked a Firstman who acted in an openly greedy or selfish fashion. While most Firstmen tried to advance themselves as much as possible, they always had to appear magnanimous, friendly, and helpful (Teit 1900:366). Outwardly, they maintained a commitment to egalitarian principles, while in reality they held considerable hierarchical power and wealth. Many Firstmen continuously strove to enhance their privileged position (Donald 1985:241; Hayden 1995). The Firstman tried to put on a show of being especially generous at his installment feast in order to obtain enthusiastic support from as many people as possible. He received a great deal of help from his supporters for this, and used much of the wealth they loaned or gave to him to establish his first official exchanges as house chief.

From then on, he had to keep careful track of how frequently and how large the feasts were given so that winter supplies did not run out too soon. If he miscalculated, if he could not provide adequate benefits or returns on loans to his supporters, the families of the great house would simply refuse to give any more and would begin to grumble with discontentment, become aggressive, and might even move to another house or remove him from his administrative position, especially if they felt that he had misused surpluses or could not repay loans that they had made to him (Sproat 1987:81; Jewitt 1974:112–3; Kenyon 1977; Arima 1983:70). Because his role was to organize all the economic and social aspects of the great house, and because he claimed special spiritual powers, he could be blamed when almost anything went wrong, especially investments. But the rewards were too enticing to abdicate his position. The thrill of organizing an impressive feast, the riches that he obtained for his personal use, the power that he held, his slaves, his wives, his comfort, were all too important to him. The large feasts and all the organizing were especially addicting. The intense competition, the social adulation, the sense of power and achievement, the spectacular displays all combined to make these some of the most exhilarating experiences a person could ever know (Polly Wiessner, personal communication).

All the principal players in these events shared these experiences, but the Firstman's were the most intense. He did everything he could to push everyone in the great house to produce or borrow as much as they could for feasting, wealth exchanges, and child maturation ceremonies. Industriousness, prestige, success, and respect were the leitmotifs of all his harangues and speeches (Romanoff 1992b:498). Sometimes he was too insistent and created resentment. All of these feasts and alliances demanded a great deal of organizing and work, and haranguing. Like other powerful Firstmen on the Plateau, in order to distance himself from bothersome or nuisance claims, and to seem more impressive on important occasions the Firstman often used a commoner individual as his "speaker" and would not talk directly to those who came to bother him for small favors or early return payments or other complaints (Ray 1939:23–4; 1942:229; Goldman 1940:356; Walters 1938:98).

## Making and Maintaining a Great House

The great houses were owned and run by closely related families that could all trace their descent (by straight or crooked genealogies) back to the original founder of the great house—a very powerful ancestor (Teit 1906:257; Spier and Sapir 1930:175). All the families of the great house were supposed to be closely related, but there were always some rumors of genealogical irregularities from the past. Commoners, too, were all supposed to be related to the founding ancestor, only more distantly. In fact, the kinship link between the commoner families and the elite owners was often more fictitious than real (Hayden 1995; Allen and Richardson 1971:49; Deetz 1968:47); but it was a convenient and comforting fiction, and everyone seemed content to pretend that it was true for the strength of the group.

As on the coast (Jewitt 1974:65), about half the families of the great houses were wealthy elite families with varying claims to the resources, prestige goods, privileges, and running of the house affairs (Teit 1909:576; Romanoff 1992b:477). They formed the council of the great ancestral house (Teit 1906:257); and they occupied the south and west sectors of the house which were farthest from any seepage and also were warmed a bit more by the winter sun than the other sectors. They were also in deeper shadows during the day which gave a greater sense of security. Although only a few slaves were owned by the Firstman or other high ranking families, these were mainly women, and slept in the same houses as their owners either at the edge of their owners' domestic areas or in the least desirable part of the house (Teit 1912b:318,320; 1930:277).

The great houses needed hard working noble descendants as well as productive common workers and slaves in order to be successful (Nastich 1954:23). The work of the elites was often organizational and administrative or required specialized training, whereas the work that commoners and slaves performed was primarily that of producing food staples.

The nobles measured their lucre primarily in terms of the value of their food, their skins and furs, their buckskin clothes, ritual costumes and masks, quillwork, elk teeth, copper, blankets, feathers, coastal shells, worked nephrite, canoes, large nets, elaborate baskets, wives, slaves, and the size of their house (Teit 1898:54,75; 1900:261; 1912a:261,270,328; 1917:30–1,73,88; Nastich 1954:51; Romanoff 1992b:478–9; Mitchell and Donald 1988:321; Duff 1952:80,91; Minc 1986:89). Much wealth had been accumulated by the earlier generations of the great house, and these valuable inherited stores were supposed to be used to benefit the current members. The labor required to obtain large quantities of dried deer fat and meat for feasts might be compared to the considerable labor necessary to raise fattened pigs or cattle in transegalitarian societies elsewhere in the world. The Firstman controlled the vast majority and the best of all the wealth items, as well as holding title to the great house's fishing sites, weirs, hunting grounds, masks, and crests. However, many of the prestige valuables and all of the economic resources were viewed by the other nobles of the house as only being provided to the Firstmen in trust for the group as a whole. They were viewed much more as property belonging to the office, rather than property belonging to the office-holder. They were materials used in trust for the *pel'uʔem* as a whole (Teit 1906:253,255–6; Oberg 1973:62; Walker 1982:60; Stott 1975:11; Garfield 1966:14,22–3,26–7; Boas 1921:1345; 1966:35; Jewitt 1974:11; Kan 1989:82–3,91). Because other members felt the Firstman represented their interests, and perhaps their family, an insult to the Firstman of the house was an insult to the entire *pel'uʔem* (Sproat 1987:81). Therefore hitting Firstmen was punishable by death or severe reprisals (Jewitt 1974:44–5). As on the Coast, Firstmen of the most powerful great houses did little menial work in order to show how well-off and successful the *pel'uʔem* was (Oberg 1993:25,89; Swanton 1975:50; Barnett 1955:180; see also Marquardt 1991:171,173).

The nobles also told stories of tragic results when common people tried to undertake projects beyond their power or spiritual training (Teit 1898:41)—thinly veiled admonitions to commoners and moral lessons for elite children. In the beliefs of the nobles, even an impure or improperly trained wife could cause her husband's loss of power and success. Thus, children in successful noble families were trained over many years and underwent painful exercises that common children would never

want to endure and perhaps, some people thought, could not endure. Some boys were said to train in the mountains for four years to acquire their spiritual power and knowledge (Teit 1912b:362,365). Similar practices were taken to the extreme among the distant Mayan nobles of Central America, where the nobles pierced their hands, tongues, and phalluses in order to contact their ancestors (Schele and Friedel 1990). Among the Lillooet nobles, training was not as excruciating, but nevertheless involved exhausting fasting, running, abstinence, whipping, cutting, and burning. These training ordeals could last up to 10 years (Teit 1900:310; 1906:262,263,265; 1909:588–90; Nastich 1954:51–9,81–4).

The children of the elite families received the most training, the most lavish (and costly) maturation ceremonies, underwent the longest seclusions, acquired the greatest number and the most powerful spirit guardians (Schulting 1995:50–4,73; Goldman 1940:360–6), and obtained the most desirable marriage partners associated with the most powerful and wealthy families in the other great houses (Teit 1900:325; 1906:260–5; Kan 1989:87–8,91; Owens and Hayden 1997). As in many other cultures with chiefs or Entrepreneur Big Men (e.g., Helms 1994:58; Berman 1994:504–5), only the elite knew the secret language used to address the spirits, used in trading prestige valuables, used in making peace, and used in all important transactions or negotiations with other elites; and only the elites knew the full sacred and myth cycles of the *pel'uʔem* (Kan 1989:91). All these abilities required long and costly training if not handed down within the family. But the hardworking common members of the great houses also received assurances of obtaining mates and some reasonable role in community or great house affairs if the *pel'uʔem* was successful.

The long, elaborate, costly, and "hard" training of noble children certainly had its practical side in some cases, but it served above all to separate the successful noble resource-owning families from the non-nobles and the impoverished noble families, maintaining these differences over generations. The training of the noble children also served to justify the greater power, privileges, and wealth of the nobles since success and wealth were argued to be the result of this training (Nastich 1954:81–4); and their training served to support noble claims of special access to superior spiritual power (Teit 1900:318; Nastich 1954:58–9,81; Drucker 1965:167; Schulting 1995:50–4,73).

When an elite child died before he or she could be married, it was a great loss for the entire great house. They would display their loss, as well as the greatness of the house, for everyone in the village to see during the funeral of the child by burying the body with wealth and ritual and fanfare. The greater the investment in the child, the more lavish was its funeral. In fact, all funerals of important members, and all marriages were

used to advertise the greatness of the houses for all to see. Much dried deer meat, other special food, and many small gifts were given away at these events to all who attended without any expectation of return (Teit 1900:334–5). As with marriages, it usually took a year or more to acquire enough smoked deer meat through hunting and exchange to hold a funeral for an important member of the *pel'ussem* (Teit 1900:334; Nastich 1954:58–60,67; Romanoff 1992b:475). Much food was consumed by the participants, but these events were also often used to set up subsequent contractual exchanges of surplus and wealth between great houses by giving special gifts.

The more wives that could be obtained by the co-residents of a house, and the more hard-working and skilled the members were that joined, the more productive and wealthy such houses would become (Lightfoot and Feinman 1982:67). The great houses needed agile strong men to man the fishing stations, efficient hard working women to fillet and dry as many fish as possible, expert hunters who could provide quantities of deer meat and especially deer fat and hides, and good warriors. Without good workers, the inherited resources of the great houses would be useless (Drucker 1951: 273). The great houses also needed highly skilled men and women as administrators: individuals who knew how to host feasts, how to invest and exchange wealth, how to address other elites, how to respectfully negotiate loans or marriages, how to speak effectively, and how to maintain the craft production and the wealth of the great house. It was not easy or inexpensive to find such well-trained individuals. Those that had the training and the qualities were highly sought after and marriage payments were often very high.

In addition to all of these basic costs, the desirability of belonging to a specific great house was often judged on its ability to put on impressive ceremonial and ritual displays, just as ritual displays were used in the coastal potlatches to display wealth, success, and power, even though on ordinary days the elites might not be dressed much more lavishly than any other person (Marshall 1992:206–7; Walker 1982:51). Thus, the members of each great house, and especially the elite members, made or obtained highly decorated impressive dancing and ritual costumes, drums, rituals, songs, dances, and membership in cults. “Prestige,” and “status” became elite euphemisms for advertising their success in this competition for good people.

One of the great houses at Keatley Creek even held a spectacular wolf ceremony in which cult members worked themselves into a wild frenzy and killed two dogs with their bare hands (Vol. II, Chap. 10). Another house was renowned for antlered dancers that

performed remarkable imitations of deer copulating (Teit 1909:578). Each house tried to involve as many dancers and performers as possible with full costumes and coordinated dances. Supporting impressive shamans, too, was a sign of prestige, even though they lived in separate dwellings at a distance from the great ancestral houses to which they belonged (Nastich 1954:52; Kamenskii 1985:86). Adding to the splendor of the feasts and dances were specially trained and dressed hunters and warriors with armor coats of wood and leather or birch bark, armed with killing clubs of wood, antler, or bone (Lamb 1960:80; Teit 1898:67–8,75–6; 1906:234; 1912a:244,270,340; 1912b:319).

Training and supporting all of these individuals required additional surpluses and wealth. With all the real and imagined competition, conflicts, stakes, and high emotions, great houses needed community “watchers” to ensure peace within the *pel'ussem*, within the village, and at the feasts (Nastich 1954:30). They reported directly to the Firstman and he not infrequently used them in order to obtain cooperation from others and “respect” for his wishes.

The most difficult task of the Firstman of the house was to decide how to budget the salmon reserves and other wealth of the great ancestral house. This involved not only deciding how to use the surplus that he, his three wives, and his two slaves produced, but it also involved trying to determine how he could obtain contributions from his siblings, uncles, aunts, and cousin co-elite owners and from the commoner members of the great house. He knew that appealing to their own interests was one of the best ways of obtaining support, but he could also appeal to them for support for the good of the great house—a more indirect but sometimes effective means of appealing to their self-interest and obtaining some of their surplus. Thus, everyone contributed something to the feast that honored the great house ancestors because everyone realized that these feasts were important for attracting productive families and marriage partners.

As on the coast, the Firstman of the house always had to be careful to consult with the other families that were close to inheriting the administrative position of the great house (Dawson 1880:119), for they had almost as much claim on the position as he had. Thus, he was ever wary to defend his position and justify it both in deed and in heritage. Like the house chiefs on the coast (Sproat 1987:80–1; Rosman and Rubel 1971:36,39), he spoke for everyone in the great house; he held the greatest influence of anyone in the great house; but he was always in the debt of his house confreres and could never function without them.

A Firstman’s relationship with others was always full of potential conflicts. He always wanted more surpluses

from the elite and common members of the great houses. They always wanted more benefits from the Firstman and the higher elites. Although everyone contributed some of their productive efforts to the glorification and aggrandizement of a few key people in the house, everyone benefited in some way from their relationship with each other (Mitchell and Donald 1988:332). Even the lowest ranking kin and commoners obtained benefits of protection and food, but worked much harder and received less in return than the high ranking families (Burch 1975:226,231). Because commoners had few options, house owners often took advantage of them. Refugees from wars or other destitute families often did not fare much better than slaves. Unaffiliated families that did not store enough food in the fall had to beg at the entrances of the great houses in order to survive and were reviled as lazy moochers. Although the nobles exacted services and other debts from these people for the food that they received, the service was often of poor quality and repayment of debts was unreliable at best (Teit 1900:297,366; 1909:705–6,731; Nastich 1954:24,84; Romanoff 1971:62).

Some of the most coveted advantages that commoners obtained by being members of the great houses were the chief's ability to provide their children with marriage partners and training considerably above what would otherwise be possible. From the elite viewpoint, only lazy and incompetent people were poor; if people were poor, it was their own fault and no respectable noble would even consider marriage with such people (Nastich 1954:24,84). The Firstman carefully calculated the relative benefits that he could provide to the commoner families that supported him, and he used this power to exact compliance and surpluses for other projects of the great house. Marriages between the elites of great houses were much more in the nature of economic contracts between the great houses than they were romantic alliances between lovers. Both intensive training and betrothing children at young ages to other successful elite families were used to maintain the high status, privileges, and wealth of the children. Betrothed children who married with great wealth exchanges between families could never divorce, although commoners who married without much exchange of wealth could divorce relatively easily (Nastich 1954:31,58,62,83–4). Only low-ranking independent households without much wealth or prestige engaged in such frivolities.

The poor independent households of the community built their houses small so that the heat would be retained better. Like poorer common members and slaves of the great houses, they were scantily clad in only sage bark capes, blankets, and fish skin shoes, or items made from other types of bark or from vagrant dogs' hides (Teit 1900:206,217; 1906:218). These less

fortunate members of the community huddled in clusters during the winter. The coldest part of the winter often felt like hibernating. No one wanted to take the special foods to the women's seclusion hut or even go outside to excrete (Teit 1909:614,630). On the very coldest nights in the great and small houses, fires were lit and hot soups were prepared, but fires often created more misery with their smoke than they created comfort with their heat (Teit 1912b:363).

## Mid-Winter Activities

Between the great feasts, little of interest happened. Leading members of the house always painted their faces and greeted the Day-dawn with prayers as well as praying to the sun, the mountains rising up behind the village, and the Old Man (Teit 1900:344; 1909:511–2). Elite children went through their daily outdoor running, bathing, or other endurance training exercises (Nastich 1954:51; Teit 1906:262–5). The coldest days and nights were spent with other members of the family huddled for warmth under heavy, comfortable fur blankets or capes on the sleeping platforms (Bouchard and Kennedy 1973; 1985:35).

When the sun shined and the air warmed up enough, members of the great houses became more active. They went outside to work on crafts against the sunny part of the roof, or to work hides on the shady side of the roof. Men spent time sitting on their sleeping platforms making and sharpening stone tools and manufacturing most of the necessary bone and wood objects used by members of the great house (Vol. II, Chap. 2; Teit 1900:182,297; Turner 1992:425,433). They decoratively carved or ochred their arrow shafts, made bone or stone jewelry and skin garments (Teit 1898:38; 1917:23; Vol. II, Chap. 3). Some objects like antler arrow-head flakers, were endowed with remarkable magic powers (e.g., Teit 1917:4,17,19,20). Women spent time in the communal center of the house or in their own domestic area working on baskets, mats, hides, clothing and other crafts (Teit 1900:182,185; Alexander 1992:138). Sometimes men also worked in these areas working on their spears, arrows, or bows with stone tools. Anything that created a mess or required a lot of space was carried out in the central part of the house floor or outside.

In the warmer winter days, children went outside and played in competitive games such as racing, shooting arrows, and in a ball game like lacrosse (Teit 1898:32,116,253; 1900:280; 1912a:262). The elite hunters would also venture out onto the lower slopes of the mountains to see if they could find deer and bring back fresh meat. They and other wealthy families were the only ones with the warm buckskin clothes, bows and arrows, and snowshoes needed to travel in the winter

for hunting, or for ice-fishing, or for retrieving salmon stored in the elevated sheds by the river (Bouchard and Kennedy 1990:253) or even for obtaining firewood (Romanoff 1971:6; 1992a:224,253; 1992b:472,478-9; Nastich 1954:24). Common members of the great houses and people in poorer houses had to go around and borrow buckskin clothes to get firewood or other things, and they had to give a portion of whatever food or wood they procured to the owners of the clothes.

The elite hunters were lucky if they could find one or two deer during the entire winter. Often they returned with only some firewood. When the hunters were successful, everyone ate their fill, and the women put the thinly sliced remainder on wooden racks over the elite hunters' long hearths to be dried for future feasting (Vol. II, Chap. 1, Fig. 6; Teit 1900:234). It was then hung for further drying or rolled up in grass and put on the pole shelves that stretched around the inside of the house (Vol. II, Chap. 2, Teit 1909:672,688; 1912b:367). The bones were sometimes given to slaves or poorer residents or dogs, but whichever people got them almost always smashed the bones up for marrow and used the pieces in soups in order to extract every last bit of fat from the inside of the bone (Teit 1898:29; 1909:672,675; 1912b:324).

Between the times of huddling, hibernating, and craftwork, there were an ongoing series of small and large feasts and dances, particularly in the great houses which were more able to host such affairs because they were rich and powerful. The Firstmen of these houses acted as ceremonial leaders (Nastich 1954:26; Teit 1906:224,284; 1909:669; Cline 1938:146). There was at least one dance and feast per month in the village, and many more (and more elaborate ones) at the Winter Solstice. The arrival of the Solstice was determined by observing alignments of the rising sun with trees or mountains from special sighting rocks (Teit 1900:239; 1909:604,610). At all the feasts, many hours of fun were often spent gambling with the lahal bone game (Teit 1900:275). Sometimes families would return late at night when the cold winter winds rattled tree branches in the creek or the trees made creaking noises that frightened children and conjured up images of baleful spirits that might capture children and eat them.

The elite domestic groups of the great houses seemed to be always coming and going, hosting or being hosted in small, more private, feasts and negotiations between themselves and their elite allies (Teit 1900:275). They were always arranging affairs at these small dinner feasts: loaning or borrowing dried salmon or deer meat for transactions or larger feasts; exchanging the exotic shells from the coast for other goods or favors; arranging marriages; paying for insults, injuries, or deaths caused by members of their own great house (Teit 1906:236; Nastich 1954:28); or paying allies to mount

revenge parties (Nastich 1954:41,44). They also had to arrange for tattooing or piercings done with sharply pointed bones (Nastich 1954:64) at children's namings, puberty ceremonies, first fishing or hunting or berry picking ceremonies, or vision quests. They arranged for the spiritual and physical training for noble children's future roles as hunters, warriors, shamans, fishers, runners, gamblers, or administrators (Teit 1900:354; Romanoff 1992b:474).

## Spring

By the spring, after the Winter Solstice Moon (December), and the Coldest Weather Moon (January), and the Chinook Winds Moon (February), and after a number of feasts and maturation ceremonies had passed, the residents of the great houses and the independent small houses emerged during the Grass Grows Moon (March) to go out and gather the shoots of cow-parasit, fireweed, balsamroot, and berries, together with onions, some lilies, and the inner bark of pine trees (Turner 1992:416). When people began to leave, they dispersed into small groups of families that went into the mountains. Everyone in the *pel'užem* agreed to meet again in the late summer at the fishing locations owned by the great house. Some old and very young people often stayed in the village to watch over affairs (Bouchard and Kennedy 1990:277; Walters 1938:87; Teit 1898:52). But if everyone left, they hid some salmon and deer meat surpluses in pits at Keatley Creek together with some of their more bulky, heavy, and valued possessions—those that were too cumbersome to carry into the mountains (Teit 1898:66; n.d.).

Over the next months, people would stop by at the winter pithouses to store other materials and ensure that everything was in order. And they looked forward to the fishing and hunting that would come again in the late summer and the fall. For the time being, the Old One had been benevolent and kindly and the great house had prospered. Everyone had experienced some exhilarating dances, ceremonies, and feasts. They looked forward to the generous and exotic gifts that they would receive from other great houses in feasts and in marriages in the coming year. The land was rich, and the people of the great houses were content and proud of their achievements over the past year. But now, supplies were low and they moved into the hills in search of fresh food.

## Epilog

The Keatley Creek community thrived for several thousand years. Then it was affected by natural disasters that undermined the very foundation of its society. Faced with an almost total decimation of salmon runs due to

landslides (Hayden and Ryder 1991), faced with the specter of starvation, people pulled the valuable main supports from their houses, burned their dwellings before leaving them for an unknown length of time, and left Keatley Creek. They sought shelter and help with elite allies in other communities along the Great River to the south, or even farther afield. Only many generations later would people again begin to populate the Lillooet region, coming perhaps from the Secwepemc country to the north and east, and from the Lillooet country to the west. It took centuries to re-establish the

salmon runs and to re-establish the pel'uzem. The great ancestral houses were never again quite as powerful or as strong as they had been in the past. New Firstmen of renown and power emerged. They began to re-establish the greatness of the Classic Lillooet communities such as Keatley Creek and Bridge River, Seton Lake, and the Bell site, but on a smaller scale. They commanded the respect of visiting Indian traders as well as the new white-skinned traders. And their feasts and marriages and child maturation ceremonies were among the most impressive on the British Columbia Plateau.

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