

The silhouette of a pole on the shore of the Nass River

“**The pole of ’Neesyoq and ’Neeskyinwaet**, members of a Wolf clan at Gitlarhdams, on upper Nass River. It stood seventh from the uppermost in the row of poles along the river front.

Description. It stood in front of a house called House-of-the-Sky (wilparhae) and belonged to the ptsaen type (hollow-back and carved all over). Its figures, from top to bottom, are: (1) mythical man with the deep sea cockle adhering to a rock (kal’own) holding his hand fast—illustrating a myth; (2) the head of the Sperm Whale (hlpoon), the jaw hanging down; (3) Person (gyet) wearing a garment with many faces on it, probably the Garment-of-Marten (gwishádao’tk); (4) the bird Gyaibelk, at the bottom of the pole. This mythical bird was also used as a head-dress (amhallait) and as a spirit (narhnorh or narhnok).

Function, carver, age. Erected in memory of a former ’Neesyoq by the present (in 1927) chief of the same name, an old man. It no longer exists. Carved by Paraet’Naerhl, assisted by his son, about eighty years ago.

(Informant, Dennis Wood of Gitlarhdams.)”

—Marius Barbeau, *Totem Poles*: 1950 page 442

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The silhouette of a pole on the shore of the Nass River. When I was satisfied with the day (field notes completed) and when my ears were sufficiently exhausted by the translations (a process wherein an informant evaluates the qualities of a speech in one language and readjusts them to suit another language), I made my way back to the river. The branches from the trees overhead dipped onto the path (noteable), and the needles bristled against my palms (a casualty of the ethnological process).

My informant (Dennis Wood), caught up with me at the bank of the river. He was out of breath, offering up my notebook in his hands. "You forgot this," he said, handing the book back to me. This gesture (a description of a bodily action) took me a moment to comprehend, but once I gathered myself, I patted him on the back and said, "Thank you." This affirmation was not lost on him, as he began to speak at once about the crested column that stood against the river. He explained that the man on the top was telling a story, and I gathered that he was comparing me to this man (as I had been endeavoring to learn all of their stories). Although I knew that I must be nothing like this man, I was flattered all the same, and did not object as my informant continued to speak.