

TLAKUIT. See WISHRAM

TLI-CHO. See DOGRIB (THLINGCHADINNE)

TLINGCHADINNE. See DOGRIB (THLINGCHADINNE)

## TLINGIT

The Tlingit, or Tlinkit, are unique among American Indian peoples in that they had much to do with ending the Russian colonial period in North America, proving a stubborn menace to the Russian fur-trading empire. The Russians called them *Kolush*. The name *Tlingit*, pronounced TLING-kit, means "people."

The Tlingit occupied ancestral territory along the Pacific coastal regions and nearby islands in what is now southern Alaska in the United States and northern British Columbia in Canada. To their north lived INUIT and ALEUT, and to their south lived the HAIDA and TSIMSHIAN. The Tlingit actually consisted of various independent bands: Auk, Chilkat, Gohaho, Hehl, Henya, Huna, Hutsnuwn (Killisnoo), Kake, Kuiu, Sanya, Sitka, Stikine, Sumdum, Taku, Tongass, and Yakutat. The various bands divided the Tlingit territory into different regions, or *kwans*. Many of the band names survive today as place-names. The Tlingit bands spoke various related dialects of the Tlingit language, part of the Na-Dene language family and related to that of the Haida. The Tlingit also are thought to have been distant relatives of the ATHAPASCAN living to their east.

### Lifeways

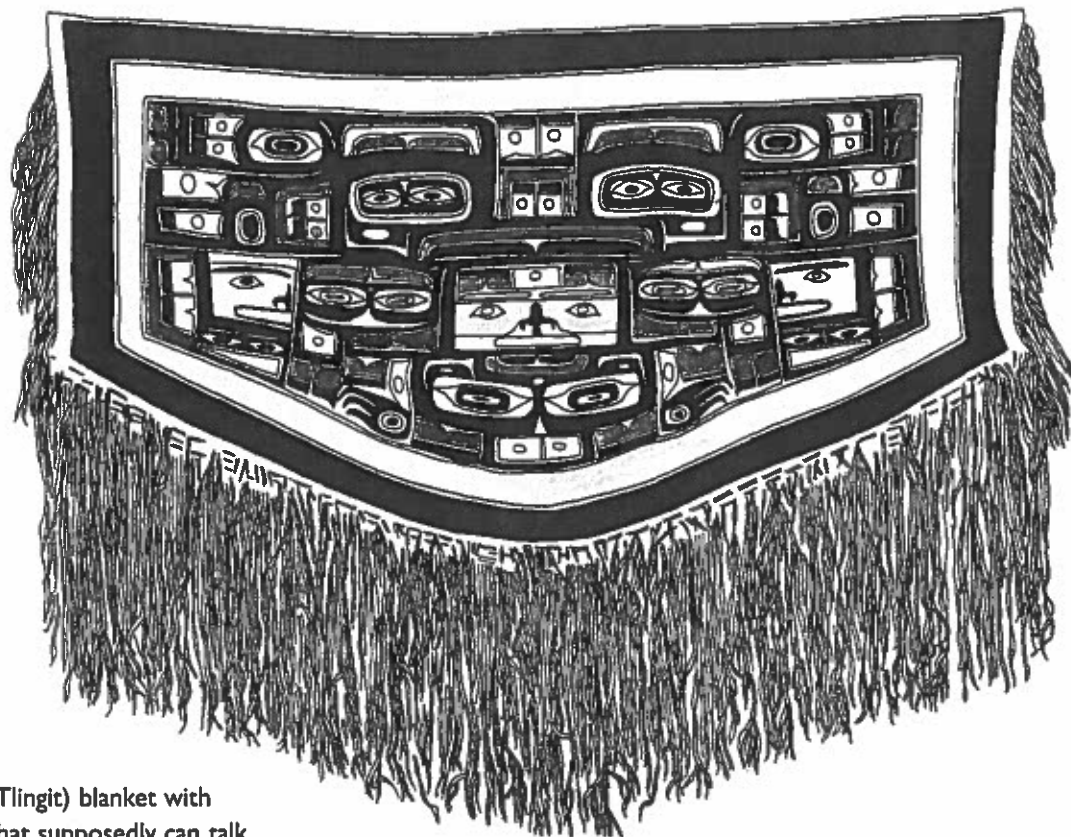
The Tlingit are classified as part of the Northwest Coast Culture Area. Typical customs of the NORTHWEST COAST INDIANS include salmon fishing; sea mammal as well as land mammal hunting; large houses made from beams and planks of wood; totem poles; wooden ceremonial masks; dugout canoes; cedar chests and boxes; the potlatch (a ceremony for giving gifts) and other elaborate rituals; a society based on wealth and rank; powerful shamans and secret societies; the practice of keeping

slaves; and extensive trade contacts among other tribes. All are true of the Tlingit.

Tlingit totem poles were constructed as part of or separate from their houses. Each delicately sculpted and brightly painted figure on the poles, representing both people and animals, had a special meaning to a clan's history. When the pole was erected, a speaker would relate stories about the clan's ancestors and about animal spirits.

Of the southern Northwest Coast tribes, the CHINOOK were the most famous traders. But of the more northern tribes, the Tlingit had the most extensive trade contacts. They were middlemen among many different peoples: their coastal neighbors, the Athapascans of the interior, and the Inuit. They dealt in all kinds of goods, some their own and some made by other tribes: boats, blankets, baskets, boxes, raw copper, copper plaques, cedar boards and bark, seal and fish oils, whale oil and bones, ivory, mountain goat and mountain sheep horns and hides, elk meat, caribou meat, sinews, lichens, beads made from tooth shells, abalone and other seashells, the mineral jadeite, slaves, and more.

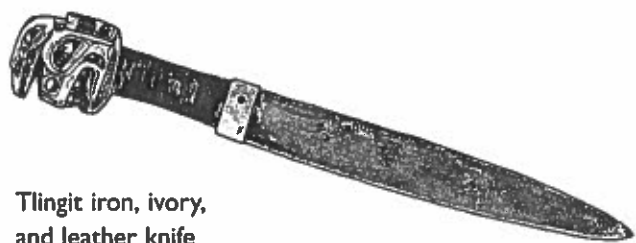
The most-sought-after Tlingit product was the Chilkat blanket (named after one of the Tlingit bands but made by other Tlingit bands and Tsimshian Indians as well). Tlingit women made these blankets from cedar-bark fiber and mountain goat or mountain sheep wool, working on them as long as half a year. Some of the yarn spun from these materials was left white; the rest was dyed black, blue-green, or yellow. Then the women wove them with their fingers into intricate abstract designs and animal forms. The completed blankets had an unusual shape. They were about six feet long with a straight edge at the top. But



Chilkat (Tlingit) blanket with designs that supposedly can talk

the bottom edge was uneven—about two feet at the ends and three feet in the middle. There were long fringes on the sides and bottom but none along the top edge. The women also made Chilkat shirts. The designs had special meanings for families or clans. It was said that if one knew how to listen, the Chilkat blankets and shirts could actually talk.

The Tlingit wore armor in warfare. They placed wood slats over two or three layers of hide to repel enemy weapons. They also wore helmets of solid wood for protection and masks to frighten their enemies. They used spears, bows and arrows, and different-shaped clubs in their fighting. They also made daggers of stone with ivory handles. After the arrival of Europeans, the Tlingit used steel for the blades.



Tlingit iron, ivory, and leather knife

### Wars against the Russian Fur Traders

During Vitus Bering's voyage of exploration in 1741, in which he claimed Alaska for Russia, Tlingit warriors killed several of his men, the first incident in what might be called the century-long Tlingit resistance. The *promyshlenniki* (the Russian word for fur traders) followed soon afterward to exploit the huge supply of fur-bearing mammals. The Russians first developed the fur trade on the Aleutian Islands among the Aleut. The Russian traders, led by Alexander Baranov, and their Aleut hunters did not reach Tlingit territory until the 1790s.

After some early skirmishes with the Tlingit, the Russians built a fort at Sitka on Baranov Island in 1799. That same year, the Russian American Fur Company was founded. This huge monopoly competed with the British Hudson's Bay Company to supply the world with furs.

In 1802, Tlingit warriors under Katlian attacked and destroyed the fort, killed many Russians and Aleut, and stole thousands of pelts. They felt the furs belonged to them since they had been taken on tribal lands or in tribal waters. Two years later, Alexander Baranov returned with an armada. Russian ships bombarded the Tlingit with cannonfire, and Russian soldiers stormed and recaptured the post.

The Tlingit kept up their attacks. In 1805, they moved on a post at Yakutat. The Russians dreaded the Tlingit raids and used whatever means they could to calm the insurgents—violence and cruelty, or negotiations and gifts. But the Tlingit were not to be conquered or won over and kept up their resistance to Russian encroachment.

The Russians eventually gave up their foothold in North America, selling Alaska to the United States in 1867. The militant Tlingit presence helped influence their decision to abandon their posts in North America.

The increasing number of Americans in the region—developing the fishing industry, searching for gold, or seeking new homes—during the 19th century led to hardship among the Tlingit. Prospectors and squatters violated their land rights. U.S. officials ignored Tlingit land claims and used the navy to prevent a new rebellion among the Native population. Meanwhile, disease and alcohol were taking their toll. With shrinking lands and depleted numbers, the Tlingit lost much of their traditional way of life.

## Economic and Cultural Revitalization

The Tlingit struggled to preserve their identity. To do so, they reached out to other Alaska Natives. In 1912, they helped found the Alaska Native Brotherhood, one of the earliest of the modern-day intertribal organizations.

A land and cash settlement to Alaska's Natives in 1971 as compensation for lost lands—the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act—has helped the Tlingit and other tribes in the region rebuild their lives. The Tlingit and Haida are united in the Sealaska Corporation, which develops tribal resources. Both peoples are considered some of the best Alaskan fishermen.

More and more Tlingit practice traditional crafts, too, such as the making of Chilkat blankets and woodcarving. Some tribal members are building reputations in the fine arts as well. Tourists, especially those who arrive in the region on Alaskan cruise ships, regularly purchase Tlingit arts and crafts.

TOBACCO. See TIONONTATI

## TOHONO O'ODHAM (Papago)

The Tohono O'odham have been popularly known as Papago. *Tohono O'odham*, their Native name, pronounced TO-ho-no oh-OH-tum, means "desert people." *Papago*, pronounced PAH-puh-go, from *Papahvio O'odham*, given to them by the neighboring AKIMEL O'ODHAM (PIMA), means "bean people." The Tohono O'odham occupied ancestral territory in the Sonoran Desert near the Gulf of California in territory now along the international border between southwest Arizona and northwest Sonora, a state of Mexico.

The Tohono O'odham speak a dialect of the Uto-Aztecan language family, similar to that of the Akimel O'odham. Anthropologists classify both the Tohono O'odham and Akimel O'odham in the Southwest Culture Area (see SOUTHWEST INDIANS). They theorize that the two tribes were descended from the ancient Hohokam Indians (see SOUTHWEST CULTURES).

### Lifeways

The peoples of the Hohokam culture irrigated their farmlands by channeling water from rivers. The Akimel

O'odham also practiced desert irrigation and were able to live in permanent village sites year-round. The Tohono O'odham, however, were seminomadic, with two different village locations. They passed the warm weather months—from spring until the fall harvest—in the desert, usually at the mouth of an arroyo where flash floods from rainstorms provided water for their fields of corn, beans, squash, tobacco, and cotton. They called these sites their "field villages." Winter was spent in the sierra, near mountain springs. These were the "well villages." Here tribal members hunted deer and other game for food. In times of famine, Tohono O'odham families sometimes moved to the Akimel O'odham villages along the Gila River and worked under the supervision of the host tribe to earn their keep. While working with their kinsmen, the Tohono O'odham might sing the following corn song:

Here on the field, corn comes forth.  
My child takes it and runs happy.  
Here on the field, squash comes forth.  
My wife takes it and runs singing.

