

Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF GEOGRAPHER

Ottawa,.....

DEAR SIR,

I wish to obtain information respecting the derivation of the place-names of Canada—of the names of the villages, towns, cities and of the natural features, such as rivers, lakes, capes, bays, mountains, etc.—and shall be much obliged if you will give me any information that you may possess or can procure, respecting the below-mentioned name and also respecting the names of any other features in the vicinity of your residence concerning which you have knowledge.

In many localities, the older generation is passing, or has passed away, and unless steps are taken to collect this information, it will, in many instances, be too late. In most communities there are persons who take an interest in things of this nature or that have been connected with the early settlement of the locality. If there are any such in your neighbourhood, will you kindly submit this to them.

Below I have indicated the lines along which I desire information and also the commoner derivatives of place-names in Canada :—

(1.) Whether named after a village, town, or city, or natural feature in any other province or country ; if so, the name of province or country in which the original locality is situated.

(2.) Whether named after a person ; if so, the person's name, occupation, spelling of name as rendered by the person and any details of interest respecting him (or her) such as (a) Whether alive or, if dead, approximate year of death ; (b) Whether at any time a resident of the locality and, if so, whether still living there.

(3.) Whether named after a natural feature ; if so, any details respecting the origin of the name as applied to the feature and the geographical position of the latter.

(4.) Whether the town, village or city ever had any other name or names ; if so, at what dates, approximately, and the origin of these obsolete names.

Any information bearing on the above will be deemed a courtesy.

Yours truly,

JAMES WHITE,
Geographer.

Kindly write your reply on the attached sheet.

To ensure free transmission of your reply I enclose herewith an addressed envelope which will come free of postage.

Kitkatla

B. C.

THE ORIGIN OF KITKATLA

Sir—In connection with Kitkatla Inlet, I have the pleasure to enclose you the Indian account of the first arrival of the white man and his wonderful ways in that neighborhood, kindly sent me by Mr. W. Duncan, the well known missionary, which may interest some of your readers.

JOHN T. WALBRAN.

Victoria, B. C., November 11, 1905.

Kitkatla Inlet.—After the tribe of Indians residing at the village of Kitkatla, Dolphin Island ("kit"—people; "katla"—salt; the village by the sea.) The hereditary name of the head chief of the tribe is Sebaska, by which the band was known to the traders at Port Simpson. The early records of the fort often mention the arrival of Sebaska Indians, and also mention the chief by this name. This tribe, like the Hesquats, have also a tradition in connection with the first arrival of the white men in their neighborhood. The story, in substance as follows, was told with great animation in 1860, by an old chief, to Mr. Duncan, the well known missionary.

"One foggy morning a party of Kitkatla Indians were out fishing for halibut, when they heard approaching them from seaward some monster making sounds as if it was rushing or leaping through the water (the old man uttered the sounds, "Shoo, shoo!") The Indians hastily pulled up their fishing lines and made for the shore, where they left their canoes and hid themselves in the bush. From their hiding place they watched the movements of the monster, which proved to be a boat with men on board. On reaching the shore some long sticks were suddenly lifted upright, so quickly that the water dropped from them like tears into the sea, and this impressed the Indians with awe. The strange men left the boat and proceeded to make a fire. This was done by a flash from the hands of one of the men, and was instantaneous. Next, something was brought from the boat and placed on the fire—but the fire did not consume it! Which, to the Indians (who had no metal vessels) was another and most wonderful thing. The Indians then knew their visitors were gentl, and they died of fright (fainted). They revived and witnessed the pouring out of the contents of the vessel, which had been taken off the fire. These contents (rice) appeared to the Indians to be maggots, to which was added blood (treacle), and this horrid mixture the men from the sea began to eat. "The Indians died." After this, another wonder. A man pointed what appeared to be a piece of wood at a flying goose—a flash, with dreadful noise, and the bird fell to the ground—dead! "The Indians died again." The strangers having vainly tried to induce the Indians to approach them, returned to their boat. The fog cleared away, and a monster vessel was seen at sea; trees were growing out of it, and on these trees hung human heads (blocks), surely those of the victims that had been slain! The Indians then hurried to their village to tell of the wonderful visitors and what they had seen."

It is purely a matter of conjecture what nationality or at what date this vessel appeared, though the action of throwing the oars up together described by the Indian would indicate that the vessel was a man-of-war, or at least had a trained crew. Mr. Duncan was unable to say whether the old chief who narrated the story had himself seen the strange visitors or not, but is of opinion the Indian had seen them, judging from the animated and graphic manner he related every incident. This will bring the date about 1790, supposing he was a child at the time.

This inlet was shown on the chart by the surveyors of 1867-1868, probably to communicate with Edye's passage. It was on examination in 1890 by Captain J. T. Walbran, found to be an inlet only, with no opening to the northward, and therefore named Kitkatla Inlet.

Sebassa

Edye

From the Victoria Daily Colonist, Nov. 12, 1905