
Sealaska Heritage Institute

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July 2009

Tlingit Kusteeyí: The Real Peoples Way of Being

During our 10,000 years or more of occupation of Southeast Alaska, the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian developed cultural traditions that have been modified by rapid culture change that began in 1867 after the Treaty of Cession between the United States and Russia. Our ancient values allowed our People to adapt to the changes and to survive as a distinct cultural group. Today, we are also seeking to integrate our cultural values into the institutions that directly serve our People.

Haa Aaní: Our Land

Honoring and Utilizing Our Land

Our ancestors, who have lived in this land for more than 10,000 years, taught us that everything has a Spirit. When we utilize our resources, we must acknowledge the Spirits of the Land, Sea and Air and tell them the benefits that their use will bring to our People. Our ancestors protected the ownership of our land for their children and grandchildren just as we must do for future generations.

Haa Shuká: Past, Present and Future Generations

Honoring our Ancestors and Future Generation

We maintain strong bonds with our ancestors whom we honor through our lives and in our ceremonies. We also have responsibilities to our future generations, and we must ensure that we protect our land and culture for our children and grandchildren and those who will follow them.

Haa Latseen: Our Strength

Strength of Body, Mind and Spirit

The “Way of the Warriors” path is to achieve physical and inner strength. Above all, young men and women are taught to protect and to care for their families and clans. They are taught to seek truth and knowledge and to adapt to changing times while maintaining the integrity of our ancient values.

Wooch Yax: Balance

Maintaining Spiritual and Social Balance and Harmony

Wooch Yax must be maintained to ensure social and spiritual harmony lest ill will goes wondering and causes harm. Wooch Yax governs Interrelationships between Eagle and Raven clans Interrelationships between the Tlingit and others, including tribes, nations and institutions. Wooch Yax includes Kaa yaa awuné or Respect for Others and Át yaa awuné or Respect for All Things. Wooch Yax requires that our People and our organizations conduct business with Yán gaa doonéekw or “Dignity,” realizing that everything has its rightful place and that all action and business must be done with integrity.