

KINCOLITH'S FIRST DECADE: A NISGA'A VILLAGE (1867-1878)

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Abstract/Resume

Kincolith, British Columbia, was founded in 1867 by Nisga'a Christians and an Anglican missionary, the Reverend Robert Tomlinson. The village grew and flourished over the next decade.

Kincolith, en Colombie-Britannique, a été fondé par des chrétiens Nisga'a et un missionnaire anglican, le révérend Robert Tomlinson. Le village a grandi et a prospéré pendant le décade suivante.

The modern village of Kincolith, British Columbia, was founded in 1867. Credit for this is usually given to the Reverend Robert Tomlinson. Sometimes the Reverend Robert R.A. Doolan is mentioned. Though Doolan was a veteran of three years, intermittently, among the Nisga'a in 1867, he returned to England a few months after the village was founded. Tomlinson, the newcomer who replaced him, stayed in the Tsimshian territory for the rest of his life and so became better known.¹

The role of the Nisga'a in the founding (or some may think, the refounding) of the village is largely taken for granted. Kincolith was modeled on the more famous Christian settlement of Metlakatla, where William Duncan was founder and leader (Usher, 1974; Arctander, 1909). Nevertheless Nisga'a founders and future leaders such as Cowcaelh (Philip Latimer) and Cowaikik (William Smith) were on the two rafts which carried the first settlers. A review of the history of Kincolith's first decade also reveals that the Native settlers played a dynamic and substantial part in the public life of the community. Even from Tomlinson's accounts, our major and inevitably biased source, this Nisga'a role is clear.

Nor was Kincolith merely an imitation of Metlakatla; instead it was a distinctive community developing its own character.² This essay explores the Nisga'a impetus in Kincolith's early history. It examines the village during Tomlinson's tenure there (1867-1878), focusing on the cultural and evangelistic role of the Nisga'a in their village. Continuity and controlled change were the main elements of Nisga'a participation. Nisga'a initiative was never lacking despite the energetic career of Tomlinson. The missionary was obliged to act in collaboration with the Nisga'a leadership at Kincolith. The Nisga'a were not only the main focus of the missionary, they were also the primary agents in evangelizing themselves during this period.

The village of Kincolith, British Columbia, is today one of the four villages of the Nisga'a, a people immemorally located on the Nass River. Kincolith was founded in 1867 on the north shore of the Nass estuary close to the southern tip of the Alaska Panhandle. Although intended by Anglican missionaries to be a "Christian Village," where major changes in ideology and lifestyle could occur in separation from the indigenous culture, from its inception Kincolith was a Nisga'a village, essentially in continuity with Nisga'a culture, practice, and historical sequence.

The evangelization of the Nisga'a began with brief visits to their Nass River villages by William Duncan, an agent of the Anglican Church Missionary Society, in 1860. The first resident missionary among the Nisga'a was the Rev. R.R.A. Doolan, whose incumbency in the Nass valley extended from November 1864 to mid-1867, although he actually spent most of his last year in Metlakatla on the Tsimshian Peninsula where Duncan had established headquarters (Patterson, 1988). A third

missionary, the Rev. Robert Tomlinson, arrived in the summer of 1867, and the three men decided to restation a resident CMS missionary on the Nass. A new site was chosen and the new village was begun. Tomlinson was an Irishman in his early thirties. A graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, he had studied medicine but had not taken a medical degree. His father and brother were clergy of the Church of England in Ireland.

In the summer of 1867, Robert Doolan and Robert Tomlinson led a small party of lower Nass Nisga'a to settle at Place of Scalps (or Skulls) (Kincolith). This was the beginning of the "eldest daughter" of William Duncan's successful missionary village of Metlakatla. Such at least was the missionary perspective on the founding of the new settlement of Kincolith. There was no sharp break with the past in the Nisga'a move, whatever may have been the missionary intention and hopes.

Most of the two dozen or so original settlers were not baptized Christians at the time of their move. The first adult baptism at Kincolith did not occur until November, 1869, though some may have been baptized between summer 1867 and November 1869 at Metlakatla. The settlers were mostly young people who had indicated an interest in the teachings of Doolan and were willing to remove to the new site. Most of these recruits were drawn from the lower Nass villages of Quinwoch and Ankida. Over half of the earliest settlers were from these two communities,³ though Gitiks, another lower Nass village, was also represented. A handful of people also came from the upriver villages of Gitlakdamiks and Gitwinsilth. Later, some came from the Gitksan, Tsetsaut and Tsimshian, people long in contact with the Nisga'a and with whom they shared many cultural elements. The Nisga'a, Gitksan and Coast Tsimshian are Tsimshian.⁴ The picture then is not that of a composite village of residents drawn from a variety of cultures and bound together by their new ideology, though ideology was an important factor. It was a new lower Nass Nisga'a village with modifications suitable to their experimentation with new cultural influences. Perhaps it was not unlike, in its creation, the Aboriginal coalescing and separating of villages which resulted from floods, family movements, the competitions of the nobility and the necessities of their ceremony and their safety.

Although Doolan's account of the founding of Kincolith names only the family of Cowcaelth, baptized Philip Latimer, aged 33, a *gitsonk* or carver of sacred paraphernalia and later a maker of school and church furnishings, and his wife Mary, aged 29, the names of other young settlers can be conjectured. These may include the family of John Barton (Wahlee/Wechlee), a kinsman of Claytha/Klaydach and Joshua Barton/Lochpaw; Patrick and Ellen (Claks) O'Brien; Cowaikik (baptized William Smith at age 28 in 1867), and his wife Sarah, aged 32 in 1869, and baptized in 1869. Smith was also related to Claytha. Other early colonists may be Edward

Maryon/Tuinanloak, who became an active Native missionary, Henry and Anna Alford (both age 27 years in 1867); Frank Gurney/Howay, aged 21 and Arthur Gurney/Weekanow, aged 14 in the same year.

Other settlers arrived, doubling the population of baptized people. They included Daniel Lester/Caik, a Wolf Chief, aged 60; Abraham Langley/Skuwashan, also a Wolf Chief, aged 50, and Moses Bayley/Kinow, aged 40. The pattern of arrival and baptism was to reach its high point in 1878 with Qwockshow/Robert Quockshow and Kinzadah/George Kinsada of the Gitwilnagyet sub-clan; and Claytha/Paul Klaydach of the Gitskananat sub-clan: all high-ranking Chiefs of the Wolf clan, whose conversions in their full maturity crowned the first decade of Kincolith's settlement. Most of these people were from Ankida and other lower Nass villages.

The population of the new village grew from about 25 or 30 founders in the summer of 1867 to almost 200 people by 1880.⁵ Of these, about 150 were adult Christians and their children; the others were visitors, friends, and those about to become baptized Christians. The epidemics, measles and influenza, which had hit hard in 1867-1868, did not recur in severe form.

In October, 1867, a foundation was laid for the building to be used for a church and schoolhouse. By January, 1869, this building had been roofed. Construction of the kind of houses preferred by the missionary was slower. At the end of 1879, there were eleven houses of European design, with rooms or apartments for the occupants: "Christian" housing. At the completion of the first five such structures, by 1869, Tomlinson noted approvingly that they were in a "straight line."⁶ Public works included a walk-way along the beach to make it easier for people to come to church in the winter months. This suggests that the initial lay-out of the village followed the traditional pattern of having a row of houses paralleling the beach.

The Kingfisher-the community fishing boat-was built with more speed than the church-and-school building or the European-style dwellings, despite some setbacks and foot-dragging by sceptical workers.⁷ The sawmill was also expeditiously built between January, 1876, when the Chiefs decided it was a good idea, and November of the same year, when it was completed.⁸ Tomlinson's own residence was also quickly erected and by May, 1872, he was seeking financial assistance from the Church Missionary Society for a better house. By late September, 1873, his new house was nearing completion.⁹

An initial project to raise goats ended in disaster because the goats ate some poisonous plants. A milk cow was brought in as a replacement. Chickens were also imported, and fencing and shelter were built for the

livestock and poultry. Although those may have been the first such animals on the Nass, the Nisga'a were already familiar with European domesticated animals from visits to Port Simpson and other European settlements. Tomlinson makes no mention of gardens at Kincolith during his tenure there, though some mention is made of potato patches at villages further up the Nass.

In the summer of 1877, Admiral Prevost of the British Navy visited Kincolith. He had been instrumental in bringing Duncan to Port Simpson in 1857, and remained a lifelong friend and patron of missions on the north coast of British Columbia. He donated street lamps to the village of Kincolith, and by Christmas of that year the new lights were in place on the village streets.

The slow growth of Kincolith in the first decade (compared to the mushrooming of Metlakatla) reinforces the impression of the importance of traditional considerations operating among the settlers and among their families and friends who remained at the home villages. They were cautious of the missionary and his control, looked cautiously at British power to protect them in this exposed site and hoped to continue their traditional ceremonies. They retained memories of the friction with the Coast Tsimshian. Clashes with the Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands had given the site its name, Place of Skulls, recalling the hazards of earlier times.

The more senior, older Chiefs were not among the first settlers. The traditional pattern of sending out younger people, with the leadership drawn from the younger generation of Chiefly families, was the pattern at Kincolith. Many of the settlers in the early years were the children of Chiefly people, some of them of the highest families of the lower Nass villages. They included a daughter of Qwockshow, the senior Wolf clan Chief of the Ankida; the son of Klaydach (Claytha), another high Wolf Chief who attempted to emulate among the lower Nisga'a the kind of hegemony exercised by Legaic among the Coast Tsimshian. Cowaikik (later William Smith) was of Chiefly rank, a medicine man and an early settler, as was Akshetan. Both of these men were from Ankida.¹⁰

The Chiefly Nisga'a settlers at Kincolith continued their custom of taking their spouses from Chiefly families. This meant that the founding families were linked with Nisga'a leadership families back in the home villages. Traditionally Chiefs acted as the conduits and liaison for outside contact and new influences were filtered through them. The missionary was himself regarded as having a Chiefly role. He gave advice, offered aid, provided leadership, gave medical help and was a liaison with other Whites. He knew how to work for the advantage of the Nisga'a in their dealings with the rich and powerful newcomers.¹¹

Rivalries for dominance of the Nass fishery continued with the Coast Tsimshian as did the tradition of trading with upriver Nisga'a, Gitksan, Coast Tsimshian and the Hudson's Bay Company at Port Simpson. A store was opened at Kincolith, a branch of Duncan's store at Metlakatla, but perhaps also reminiscent of the small store the company had opened at Ankida in 1866. This trade was part of Nisga'a adaptation to the fur trade since 1834. Previously, from 1831 to 1834, a trading post had been located on the Nass River not far from the site of Kincolith.¹² Despite its elements of newer culture change, Kincolith had many elements of continuity with the past.

The missionary's potential for contribution was being examined and given time to be clearly manifested. This attitude is apparent in the withdrawal of many settlers during a more than two month absence (from 30 March to early June 1868) when Tomlinson went to Victoria to marry Alice Woods (a daughter of Archdeacon Charles Woods) and to return with her. "Most of my people had gone back to their old homes."¹³ On his return, they returned to Kincolith. Since Tomlinson mentions no names it is not possible to know how many of the new settlers left or stayed. The incident suggests that to its settlers the village's future was tentative and conditional. It was not yet a "settled" community. On the other hand Tomlinson's account does not mention the seasonal pattern of dispersement for food gathering, such as fishing, hunting and trading in spring and summer and therefore may reflect the young missionary's inflated view of his centrality to the existence of the village. Missionary accounts, though useful, may bias the impression received of the factors and personalities influential in Indian decision-making.

The first decade of Kincolith saw a consistent resolution of friction between the Nisga'a and Tsimshian. Tomlinson played a leading role in that diplomacy and confrontation. Traditionally "foreign" relations included trading and feasting together, as well as raiding and warring against one another. The coming of the Pax Britannica brought these dangerous though exciting times to a close. The site of Kincolith itself had experienced a previous occupation as a result of the trading and raiding customs. The Tsimshian Chief, Haimas, had established a temporary village there, perhaps in the late 18th or early 19th century.¹⁴ The first Port Simpson (Fort Nass) during its brief existence (1831-34) had begun to draw Nisga'a to encamp there. A few miles up the estuary, at the Fishery, thousands of people-Nisga'a, Gitksan, Tsimshian, Haida, Tlingit and others-came each spring when the eulachon and salmon ran, to fish, make fish oil and trade for these items.

Kincolith was readily accessible to travellers going on the river. Its desirability as a permanent site likely reflected its suitability for temporary stopping as well. Tomlinson recognized that its position made it different

from Metlakatla and more exposed to continuous casual contact. To him, this made the missionary's job more difficult, since residents, Christian and non-Christian, were regularly tempted to return to the traditional ways of the neighbouring villages. In any case, Kincolith became a safe place for Nisga'as to live after the first few years.

The village may also have seemed a good strategic move to lower Nass Chiefs. It increased their presence on the coast and may have been thought to enhance their claims to the area or at least to render the Nass fishery more defensible against Tsimshian competition. The Nisga'a had immemorably shared the Nass mouth with Coast Tsimshian and others: by establishing a permanent settlement there, they may have hoped to consolidate their position.

Feuding between Nisga'a and Tsimshian led Tomlinson to assume the role of arbitrator and buffer between the antagonists. He disarmed Tsimshian bent on attacking the Nisga'a at Kincolith, residents and others. He restrained Kincolith settlers who wished to attack nearby Tsimshian and collaborated with the leadership at Kincolith to prevent the village from becoming a place of ambush by either Nisga'a or Tsimshian. In these ways he assisted the Nisga'a to produce an atmosphere of peace and an end to raiding and insecurity.

Doolan and Tomlinson were not unmindful of material factors affecting the Nisga'a decision to join the little settlement. Nisga'a did not distinguish material from spiritual as did the missionaries, but saw them as interrelated. To the missionary the material side of their work was only a means to save souls, though it was often a substantial part of the work reported on to headquarters. Although in the eyes of the missionary and of headquarters material assistance sometimes got in the way of the more important part, the saving of souls, they believed that maintaining a Christian life was dependent on one's surroundings and that environmental factors were important. Certain physical circumstances aided conversion and the retention of converts. One result of this belief was the policy of removing neophytes from the influences thought to be undesirable by the missionary. The missionaries sought to filter the elements of western civilization the Indians received. Tomlinson asserted that this was more possible at Metlakatla than at Kincolith; nevertheless Kincolith was also to be a Christian village and a model to neighbouring peoples.

The actions of one settler may illustrate the tentativeness of the commitment of early settlers. Chief Akshetan had been regarded by Doolan and Tomlinson as having non-spiritual motives for coming to Kincolith. His response may reflect the contrast between Nisga'a and missionary perceptions of the missionary-intended significance of the new life at Kincolith.

Young Chief Akshetan, one of the earliest settlers, was one of three persons who (in Tomlinson's eyes) temporarily defected from Kincolith and returned to the traditional life of his village. His mother acquired wealth and perhaps he was preparing to give a potlatch to fulfil an obligation. By 1872 he had returned to Kincolith and was married in the church. That he was still known by his Nisga'a name suggests that he was not yet baptized.¹⁵

In those early years efforts were made by residents of other villages to win back some Kincolith settlers, even by kidnapping. This, the Kincolith Chiefs and Tomlinson agreed, must be resisted and outsiders must be shown that Kincolith would defend its residents. Some of the "outsiders," at least, did not apparently recognize that Kincolith settlers were to be treated as separate and "called out."

The trading store which was opened at Kincolith was an attraction for some and another element which blunted the contrast between old and new. The Nisga'a were trading people. They had traded at the Hudson's Bay Company store at Port Simpson for more than thirty years. In addition there had been a store at the Nass mouth for three years (1831-34) before it was removed to the Tsimshian peninsula. In the mid-1860s the Company opened a small store at Ankida. One of the lay European missionaries, Robert Cunningham, became its manager. The missionaries, like the Company, traded furs for goods and when employing Nisga'a paid them in goods. However, the store at Kincolith was not a financial success and after two years it was closed. Tomlinson saw some advantage in this. Closing the store sharpened the difference between true Christians and those resident at Kincolith only for economic and material gain. Even so, the store was reopened in 1874.¹⁶

Another attraction of Kincolith was the hospital. Tomlinson used his medical training to draw in settlers and make converts. Built by the Nisga'a under Tomlinson's direction, the hospital was opened in November, 1871. Though not as grand as his original conception, it provided an important motivation to come to Kincolith. Tomlinson intended to cater to the sick of body and spirit. Not surprisingly some of those healed stayed on. Others returned home retaining a friendly and sympathetic feeling toward the missionary/medical practitioner and the village. The hospital contributed to the regular presence in the village of non-Christians who were only temporary residents. The hospital made friends, though not necessarily immediate converts.¹⁷

Meeting what he interpreted as opposition from neighbouring villages in his early years, Tomlinson decided to go beyond them to more remote communities. His tours on the upper Skeena and upper Nass and his medical assistance there were apparently appreciated. The upriver Nisga'a showed friendliness and hospitality, as did the Gitksan. Like the shaman/healer, Tomlinson was met with suspicion and threats if the

patient died. In one case a dying girl was thought by some family members to be trying to name Tomlinson as her bewitcher. The Nisga'a believed that those near death were able to know their enemy. Fortunately she died without naming him.

The death of young people was common in these years as epidemics hit the Nisga'a and their neighbours. Accidents, drownings, cuts, and bruises were common hazards of Nisga'a life. Added to these were assaults, shootings, stabbings and the destructive effect of diseases introduced by the Europeans. Tomlinson's medical skills were regularly in use.

The "secular" side of the work seems to have been of particular interest to Tomlinson. Store, hospital, diplomacy, arbitration, building, public affairs, dealings with Victoria form the bulk of his reports (i.e., correspondence, journals, annual letters). He showed a special inclination toward these activities, and he seems to have enjoyed playing the role of peacemaker and reporting his successes in that sphere. Even when touring upriver he would step into a local conflict in order to resolve it. His willingness to give medical aid to all undoubtedly opened doors for him and created goodwill and even a sense of formal obligation toward him. His imperious and bold manner, as he reports it, in confronting situations of conflict probably was interpreted as consonant with Chiefly behaviour.

One result of the establishment of peace was to make Kincolith a more attractive place to live. Tomlinson had power and it was at the disposal of the Nisga'a. He was accepted as part of the incorporating and adaptive technique with which the Nisga'a met the outside world and its new influences. He was working for them in their communities, especially Kincolith. This interpretation is given by the Nisga'a in 1888, a decade after Tomlinson was no longer stationed at Kincolith. Two letters were written, by George Kinzadah (Chief Councillor) and the community of Kincolith (Patterson, 1989). The letters were requests (or demands!) that Tomlinson's replacement, the Reverend W.H. Collison, be again assigned to Kincolith on completing his first furlough. The letter of January 30, 1888, gives a Nisga'a outline, history and interpretation of Anglican missions to the lower Nass. It is worth quoting at length for its insight into the Nisga'a view of the missionary enterprise and its link to their history and culture.

"You... sent one of your teacher Rev'd Rob Doolan for last 24 years ago *to teach us the ways of God*, but *he did not get work done*. He went away. Rev'd Tomison [sic] take his place and *we are always had peace* as long as he live here in *our villages*..." [Emphasis added.] Tomlinson's role as teacher and peacemaker are the strong impressions left after ten years. The village is theirs, not a mission or missionary creation. The expression "our village" is used three times throughout the short letter.¹⁸

The second letter, May 19, 1888, makes some of the same points as the first, but gives an additional insight into the Nisga'a view of their way of life, their values and their relation to the Church Missionary Society. "We expect you friends to make us happy and not to disturb us. All we want in the world is to live in peace. As we hope you listen [to] what we have said."¹⁹

Kinzadah signed both letters. He had been converted in 1877, and in 1888 was the elected Chief Councillor under the *Indian Advancement Act* (1884). As the creators, preservers and transmitters of tradition the Chiefs, in consultation, functioned as the historians of their people. Their version of Nisga'a history was the official and transmitted version. Tomlinson by his own report stressed the importance of establishing peace within and between the villages.²⁰

One of Tomlinson's most important efforts on behalf of Kincolith was to secure a Reserve at the site. At the same time he also tried, unsuccessfully, to get a grant of three to four acres for the mission station. In his letter to Joseph Trutch, Lands and Works Commissioner, Tomlinson set out the philosophy of the Church Missionary Society (or at least his version of it). He stressed the utility to the Euro-Canadian society of evangelization and gives his view of traditional Indian culture. "The CMS sends forth its labourers to teach not only the distinctive doctrines of Xtianity [sic] but also the practice of it and to further in every way the civilization and morel [sic] improvement of the natives. To overthrow dark superstition and plant instead Xtian [sic] truth. To change the natives from ignorant bloodthirsty cruel savages into quiet useful subjects of our Gracious Queen has been the object held out to those whom the Society sends forth as its agents..."²¹

These aims, he implies, clearly coincide with the interests of the government. The government should therefore assist in the job by giving the land grants asked for. Trutch did give a Reserve for Kincolith, but not one for the mission station. The mission got only a renewable lease. Tomlinson undoubtedly had in mind the two acre grant given to the Society at Metlakatla by Governor James Douglas a few years previously.

The intense language and colourful but extremely pejorative terminology used of the Indian past by Tomlinson now sounds, as it should, jarring and offensive. Even so, some writers, seeking to give a negative appraisal of the effects of the missionary have perhaps claimed too much for the missionaries' abilities as the changers of culture. The Nisga'a thereby may be misjudged. They exhibited considerable resiliency and resourcefulness in their adaptive strategy. To minimize the strengths of the Nisga'a may be to take too literally the missionary accounts of their effects and to accept a missionary-centered version of Nisga'a history.

Tomlinson's accounts reveal the usual 19th-century missionary's contempt for and repugnance to much of the traditional culture. They also show a patronizing attitude toward the unsophisticated literalism of the neophyte convert. Nevertheless, for him, the Indians have "immortal souls" to save, and once converted are "brothers," albeit sometimes "simple" and "babes."

Tomlinson illustrated his idea of Christian brotherhood when he decided to ask Philip Latimer/Cowcaelth, a Doolan convert and later leader of the Church Army on the lower Nass, to be "godfather" or "sponsor" at the infant baptism of Robert Tomlinson, Junior. Tomlinson says of Latimer/Cowcaelth that he was "One of the most earnest and enlightened of our settlers, and one who bids fair to become a useful catechist." One factor in his decision to have Latimer as sponsor was that the child, as Tomlinson explains, might "imbibe" from infancy the great lesson of the oneness of Christians.²²

Tomlinson recounts that while building their Irish style fishing boat (later named *Kingfisher*) there were many setbacks. Only Latimer/Cowcaelth, a carpenter and woodworker, remained loyally at work throughout. One purpose of the boat was to minimize contact between Christians and non-Christians at the fishing grounds in the spring months. Reduced contact would lessen opportunities for friction and prevent temptations to work on Sunday.

Accounts from journals, diaries and letters reprinted in the Anglican magazine *Church Missionary Intelligencer* were carefully selected and edited to elicit sympathy and support at home in the British Isles. Tomlinson had a good sense of the drama of his situations and the *Intelligencer's* editing enhances this. Titled "News from Kincolith," May 1, 1871, Tomlinson's story of Kincolith is a dramatic one of decline, recovery, testing and triumph, followed by consolidation and expansion. The "enemy," i.e., Satan, was embodied in non-Christians, who attacked and were defeated in the early years of the new village. Tomlinson was mindful of the mechanisms by which this was accomplished. He overcame his discouragement by: (1) better control of the language; (2) aggressive evangelism to Skeena and Nass river peoples, including the Gitksan; (3) resolution of Nisga'a-Tsimshian conflict; (4) establishing the hospital and closing the store; and (5) going on the "offensive" [his word] in his general approach and his attitude.

This was Tomlinson's response to the early years of "crisis" which began in April 1870 when efforts were made and inducements by traditionalists given to move settlers to defect.²³ One person (or family) left and this encouraged opponents of the village to continue their efforts to draw away others. A few others did leave at least temporarily, including Akshetan. A woman, long resident in the village, died after unsuccessful

medical treatment, making some sceptical of Tomlinson's skill as a healer; the brother of the deceased woman called him a murderer. Despite Tomlinson's lack of success in this one operation, others came to him for the same operation and survived.

One Kincolith resident was kidnapped by her in-laws when she returned to her home village to get some of her possessions. To meet this threat to the safety of the settlers, Tomlinson called together a council of the Chiefs (the most important matters of the community were decided by council) and they agreed that Kincolith must protect its people. The woman was recovered and there were no further such incidents.²⁴

Tomlinson antagonized a Chief at one of the lower Nass villages when he accidentally set fire to the man's orchard. Although Tomlinson paid compensation, the Chief did not readily accept Tomlinson's good intentions toward him. The efforts to "overthrow" Kincolith climaxed in October, 1870 and at this time Tomlinson decided to go "on the offensive" and made his first tour in the upper Skeena and Nass rivers (late Fall, 1870).

It may be a reflection of the cautious and careful mood of the village and of other Nisga'a toward it that not until the end of its fourth year was the first Christian marriage celebrated there, on July 4, 1871, despite the youthfulness of most of the earliest settlers. The groom, Patrick O'Brien (aged 30) was a Native of Ankida. He and his wife, Ellen, were among the first settlers and they were the third and fourth adults baptized at Kincolith (Nov. 7, 1869), by Tomlinson. After the death of Ellen, O'Brien married Claks (Clacks) (aged 16), of Quinwoch. They were residents of Kincolith. The following October the second Mrs. O'Brien was baptized Margaret by Tomlinson's father-in-law, the Reverend Charles Woods. Of the first forty adults baptized at Kincolith only three were over 41 years old. Twenty-seven were between 15 and 30 years old, eighteen were males (though one died) and twenty-one female. Latimer/Cowcaelth was baptized by Doolan while at Quinwoch (May 5, 1867). As already noted the total number of residents included others not Christians, plus transients.²⁵

Tomlinson's interest in and eagerness to participate in the "politics" of the church is illustrated by his entrance into the conflict between Bishop George Hills and Dean Edward Cridge in Victoria. Although this is peripheral to our study of Kincolith, mention is made of it to show what was on Tomlinson's mind during his incumbency at Kincolith. His support for Cridge led Bishop Hills to revoke Tomlinson's clergyman's licence in the diocese for a short period, even though he was a deacon in the church and an agent of the Church Missionary Society.

Tomlinson was emotionally involved in the liturgical controversy which formed a part of the Hills-Cridge disagreement. Tomlinson's ideas about form and order in Anglican missions (he preferred to think of himself

as part of the Irish church) were closely linked to his friendship with Edward Cridge and William Duncan. Both had shown him hospitality and Duncan had been especially considerate when Mrs. Tomlinson was ill. Tomlinson and Duncan shared a preference for modifications of Anglican forms in the mission field on a pragmatic basis as they conceived it. Tomlinson, reinforced by Duncan's experience, had great confidence, after the first few years, in his own ability to decide what adaptations were needed and evidently felt that his ways were Providence's ways. He was not so respectful of or awed by the heads of the Church Missionary Society in London as to shun hinting that God was on his side and the Society should fall in line with their (i.e., God and Tomlinson's) proposals.

Introducing his idea of opening a new mission station at Kispiox on the Upper Skeena, he wrote, "I need only add that the whole matter has cost me much thought and not a little anxiety and I earnestly pray that the great Lord of the harvest will guide and direct you in your deliberations on it."²⁶ He didn't wait to hear the Society response as to whether they were getting the same divine instruction as himself. He took his idea to Victoria and received the approval of the provincial government to begin a Christian village. However, the Society did not go along with Tomlinson's "voice" at this time and the Kispiox mission had to wait a few years.

One other incident shows Tomlinson's bold assertiveness and his wish for at least some formalism in worship. On February 12, 1875 he wrote in irate language of an encounter between the Methodist missionary, the Reverend Thomas Crosby, and some Kincolith Christians detained for a few days at Port Simpson by bad weather. Crosby invited them to attend a worship service he was conducting for the local Tsimshian. They attended and later told Tomlinson of the nature of the church service. Tomlinson reported to Salisbury Square that Crosby "called on all who loved Jesus to stand up. They [the Kincolith Christians] together with several Tchirnsians [sic] obeyed the call and were invited to take their seats on some forms previously set apart for that purpose. Mr. Crosby then called on them to pray. All prayed aloud [Tomlinson's emphasis] at once. Mr. Crosby in English. The others in Tchimsian [sic], some in Nishkah. As there was no set form, nor did they follow any leader, each prayed whatever came into his mind at the time, and thus they turned the sacred office of prayer into a mere Babel of tongues which could not benefit the listeners, for it was impossible for them to hear all at the same time. This is not a mere Indian report of what happened but has been verified by Mr. Crosby."²⁷

At his interview with Crosby, Tomlinson scolded the Methodist for this occurrence. Crosby said it would likely occur again. From this Tomlinson concluded that he could no longer regard Crosby as one of his "fellow labourers" [in the missions' vineyard].

The incident illustrates the new competitions and rivalries the Kincolith settlers had entered by their conversion. The historic differences of British Protestant Christianity were transferred to the Nisga'a and Tsimshian, doubtlessly without much initial understanding on the part of the new Christians. These rivalries constituted a new hazard for the traveller who ventured into another ecclesiastical domain. The ready participation of the Kincolith Christians suggests their openness to these varieties of European religious expression. The greater opportunity for personal participation in the worship service may have appealed to them. Later the Anglican Church Army was to offer more Nisga'a participation and become almost a Church within the Church. The Nisga'a in this incident at Port Simpson were obviously sensitive to the differing forms of ceremonial and ritual behaviour.

Tomlinson's larger interest in culture change and the abandonment of elements of Native culture led him to comment on indications of change he saw about him. On one of his Skeena and Nass rivers tours, Autumn, 1874, he noted that even in traditional Nisga'a villages the residents were giving up "some of their more disgusting rites," including dog-eating. Perhaps this was a response to White pressures generally as much as any specific attacks on these customs by missionaries and Nisga'a Christians. Missionaries sometimes expressed the view that larger contact with non-Indians would result in continuing modifications of the culture of Native peoples.

In early 1876 Tomlinson returned to the subject of voluntary culture change by those of the Nisga'a still unconverted: "not only the Christians at Kincolith, but also the great body of Nishkahs are becoming sensible to the advantages of living as civilized beings."²⁸ Several Gitksan Chiefs told him (November, 1872) that they did the "medicine work" as part of their cultural heritage, but they didn't "despise" the God taught by the missionary.²⁹

"Many" were re-examining their position by the summer, 1877. They saw the old beliefs passing, Tomlinson asserted. Only a "shadow" of the beliefs and culture of their fathers would soon be left.³⁰ The outcome of this particular soul-searching was, Tomlinson concluded, a reevaluation by the Chiefs of their relation to Kincolith which resulted in three major Chiefs moving there in 1877. Although they are not named by him, they are most likely the following men: Chief Klaydach (aged 55), long regarded by the missionaries as the fiercest and most "wicked" Chief on the Nass (Klaydach, of the Wolf clan, was baptized Paul Klaydach, March 24, 1878, by Bishop Bompas of Athabasca, and died about six months later); Chief Kinsada (Kinzadah) (aged 45) baptized as George Kinsada; and Chief Qwockshow (aged 65) baptized as Robert Qwockshow. The latter two were from Ankida and of the Wolf clan. Kinsada/Kinzadah and another

Ankida Chief of the Wolf clan, Kadounaha, had invited Duncan to the Nass in 1860. They were all prominent traders. All four of these Chiefs appear in the accounts of the Reverend R.R.A. Doolan (1864-67) (Patterson, 1982, Chapter 2).

It is not clear what factors decided these high Chiefs to settle at Kincolith. They had friends and relatives there by 1877. The village must have seemed a safe place by then. Internally and externally there was peace. The role of Native leadership was entrenched by custom. The reopening of the store, the presence of the hospital and friendliness felt toward Tomlinson for his medical work were likely factors. Kincolith's proximity to the eulachon fishery and the ease of travel to Port Simpson and Metlakatla may have influenced them. Flooding was frequently a problem at Quinwoch-Ankida and perhaps this was a factor too. Some Chiefs had been sympathetic to an "English village" since Doolan's time (1867). Thratquoquats had favoured such a community, probably influenced by visits to Metlakatla. Klaydach's great days as the "terror" of the lower Nass were over by 1877. He had settled in the village of Gitiks, the village of a prominent Eagle clan Chief, prior to resettling at Kincolith (McNeary, 1976:141).

Much culture change had taken place in the traditional villages of a kind which may have reduced some outward differences between Christian and non-Christian villages. In Kincolith the progress in building European-style houses was very slow in most of the first decade, probably because of the difficulty of obtaining sawn lumber. Not until the sawmill was built, at the end of the decade, did construction of these dwellings accelerate. As European housing appeared in the various villages of the Nass, the village of Kincolith would not have seemed quite so foreign. Although potlatches and winter ceremonies were not held there, Kincolith residents could visit older villages to participate in traditional ceremonies, Chiefs continued to give leadership, and marriage patterns were retained. The economic life was essentially the same at Kincolith as elsewhere.³¹

The missionary was interested in conversion to Christianity for its broader social impact (he had a comprehensive view of Christianity as embracing more than just the "supernatural" or "personal religion"). We find him asserting, by the late 1870s, that the life of the Nisga'a was altering and that much of the resistance to Christianity came from Whites who did not wish to have the Indians become devout Christians. He was not reluctant to publicly accuse miners, traders, Hudson's Bay Company personnel and Indian administrators, of behaviour which he thought was unchristian, unsuitable and harmful to the Indians.³²

A major example of Nisga'a initiative is the fact that the Nisga'a were the prime agents in conversions among their own people, though Tomlinson thought that the version of Christianity which they transmitted

was very "simple."³³ This evangelization took place both in formal and informal circumstances. Friends and relatives at Kincolith passed the "Word" back to the non-Christian villages. Persons from traditional villages visited Kincolith, to visit friends and relatives, and to receive medical treatment. Others stopped off in transit to other places. Influences were received and carried to others. In addition to this informal and spontaneous spreading of knowledge of the new "ways of God" there were more formal methods.

Frequently in the summer and autumn several Kincolith settlers formed a party to evangelize at Nass villages. A house would be loaned by a Chief for the purpose.³⁴ People were drawn to Kincolith by this Native evangelism, though they might not settle or immediately convert or be willing to give up potlatching. Tomlinson observed that many Christians had an "earnest desire" to spread the Gospel.³⁵ The hospital was intended to combine medical help and evangelization and seems to have succeeded. Although not always producing immediate conversions it resulted in influences which led to adaptation and the transmission of modified versions of the lessons taught at Kincolith.³⁶ These influences spread to the upper Nass villages, Gitlakdamiks and Gitwilsilth, and as far as the Gitksan villages on the upper Skeena. Tomlinson was hospitably received there on his tour, Autumn, 1874, at least in part due to contacts through the hospital work.³⁷

In 1876 Tomlinson cited an example of informal evangelization by a Gitksan man. "At one village they [the two Nisga'a teachers sent out by Tomlinson] found a man who after the fishing last spring [1876] had spent a couple of months at Kincolith where he had learned from one of the Christians [not from Tomlinson] a few hymns, prayers and texts in his own language. These he retained in his memory and when he returned to his village he regularly held a little service every Sunday in his house and taught such as joined him what he knew. Nor is this the only case."³⁸

At each of four Gitksan villages the two Nisga'a missionaries visited in 1876 they found "a little knot" of "anxious enquirers." Edward Morgan, an early convert, had preached at Port Simpson in October, 1874 on a tour of the Nass and Skeena Rivers. He was one of those directed by Tomlinson to preach. A Nisga'a missionary was sent to Gitlakdamiks in 1879 by the Christians at Kincolith.³⁹

Native teachers were not free from traditional attitudes and pressures. When Chiefs at Gitlakdamiks objected to the posting of Nisga'a teachers among the Gitksan one young teacher resigned. Tomlinson replaced him with an older man who could resist Chiefly pressures. He was Charles Woods, the namesake of Tomlinson's father-in-law, Archdeacon Charles Woods. The Chiefs may have feared some loss of their trading

position with the Gitksan and other interior Indians by this appointment. They were persuaded by lower Nass Chiefs to accept the appointment in the interest of Gitlakdamiks. This incident illustrates again the important role of the Chiefs and the necessity to work with them and through them. It also illustrates the role of Chiefs in the spread of Christianity. The new "ways of God" were coming under the patronage of the Chiefs. They were, in their traditional roles, the conduits for and controllers of outside influences. The importance of traditional ties between upper and lower Nass Chiefs is also suggested by this incident.

At Kincolith it was the usual procedure, established by Tomlinson and perhaps influenced by Doolan and Duncan, for Nisga'a teachers to conduct one of the three church services held each Sunday. They also conducted four separate Sunday school classes: for men, young women, older women and children.⁴⁰

A further example of Nisga'a initiative in the evangelization process is in the founding of Aiyansh (1879). Influenced by Tomlinson and the Nisga'a missionaries, Chiefs Tkgaganlakhatsqu, Gieksqu and others of Gitlakdamiks removed to a site a mile or two away and with their families and began a Nisga'a Christian settlement (McCullagh, 1919). The village functioned for about four years before a resident non-Native missionary came. The villagers had already developed their own form of worship by that time. This however is the story of Aiyansh, though Nisga'a missionaries from Kincolith are part of its creation.

Throughout the accounts of early evangelization the role of the Chiefs is prominent. Although the European missionaries often did not name the subject of an anecdote or incident they would frequently mention if the subject was a Chief. The conversion of Chiefs was obviously desirable to the missionary and an expeditious means of achieving further conversions. Chiefs played a major part in facilitating the work of evangelization among Nisga'a and their neighbours. This fact undoubtedly reflects the power and influence they held despite the fact that the European missionaries almost always saw themselves as the center of the story. The Indians, Nisga'a or others, were portrayed in missionary accounts as auxiliaries and are often nameless. Implicit in this omission of Nisga'a names and the failure to elaborate their activities was the idea that they were of lesser importance to the missionary work from the White missionary point of view. The Nisga'a view was a different one.

While conforming to the European picture of the masterful European missionary, Tomlinson tells enough about the Nisga'a evangelists for the historian to see them at work in their own right. Chiefs were, as already noted, a major part of this work, including the young members of Chiefly families who were the first to settle at Kincolith. Kincolith leaders met to decide on building a sawmill, on defending settlers, on resisting Tsimshian

and on other major policy decisions. They agreed to evangelize the Gitksan and to get Gitlakdamiks Chiefs to accept that decision. They invited Klaydach, Qwockshow and Kinsada for an extended visit to Kincolith, Christmas, 1875, from this visit these senior Chiefs later moved to Kincolith.

The Nisga'a understanding was that the missionaries had come to them at their invitation, were present on their sufferance and sponsorship, and functioned to perform certain works which they wished to have performed. These works extended from the material to the spiritual, or rather served an integrated material/spiritual function, in healing, trading, status-enhancement, education, diplomacy, and in increasing the range of spiritual, political, and physical power available for control and manipulation by the nobility and their clients. To the Nisga'a, this was the role of missions in the history of the Nisga'a.

Kincolith's first decade illustrates Nisga'a efforts to control their own culture and to mitigate the destructive and disruptive effects of European contact. Kincolith was the premier example of this Nisga'a policy of voluntary and selective change.

Notes

1. Patterson (1982) is a survey of early Anglican and Methodist missions to the Nisga'a. On Tomlinson see Whitehead (1981).
2. See for examples, Fisher (1977), Grant (1984), Lillard (1984). There is an unfortunate tendency among recent writers to treat Duncan's work as embracing all that needs to be said about C.M.S. missions on the Northwest Coast. The special contributions of W.H. Collison and J.B. McCullagh are ignored in such an approach.
3. See McNeary, 1976:52-53. With Ankida and Quinwoch a third village was, likely, Wilskihldemwilwilget, identified by McNeary (*Ibid.*: 53).
4. Some recent studies of the Tsimshian include Seguin (1984); Miller and Eastman (1984); Halpin (1973); McNeary (1976); McDonald (1985); and MacDonald (1990).
5. The census for 1881 gives 182 as residents. David Leask, a Duncan protegé was the census taker and some of his data is almost certainly mistaken. He identifies the entire village population as Church of England Christians. Public Archives of Canada, Census Returns 18 8 1, Reel # C-13284.
6. R. Tomlinson, Annual Letter, 1869. C.M.S. Records, Microfilm Reel # A 105.

7. Tomlinson to C.M.S., May 1, 1871. Reel # A 105.
8. R. Tomlinson, Annual Letter, May 12, 1877. Reel # A 106.
9. R. Tomlinson, Annual Letter, Sept. 30, 1873. Reel # A 106.
10. Anglican Church Archives. Diocese of Caledonia Parish Records of Baptisms, Marriages, Burial and Service Registers. Microfilm Reel #1.
11. See Patterson, 1989:16-37, *passim*, and Patterson, 1988.
12. Meilleur (1980), Chapters 2 and 3; and Tolmie (1963:281ff). The maritime trade with the Nisga'a and Coast Tsimshian had begun circa 1790s or earlier.
13. R. Tomlinson Diary of March 30 to Aug. 31, 1868. Entry for May 16, 1868. Microfilm Reel # A 105.
14. MacDonald and Cove, 1987:135-138.
15. R. Tomlinson, Annual Letter, 1871. Reel # A 106.
16. R. Tomlinson, Annual Letter, 1875. Reel # A 106.
17. See Tomlinson's Annual Hospital Reports beginning in the early 1870s. Microfilm Reel # A 106.
18. Letter of Kincolith people to C.M.S., January 30, 1888. Reel # A 121. A further evidence of the continuity at Kincolith, in Nisga'a eyes, is the "ranking" of Houses at Kincolith (and Greenville) given in 1916 by Charles Barton, as an informant of Marius Barbeau. The houses are categorized under the four traditional clans. See Halpin, 1973:303-313.
19. Letter of Kincolith people to C.M.S., May 19, 1888. Reel # A 121.
20. See, for example, Tomlinson's Annual Letter, 1875. Reel # A 106.
21. R. Tomlinson to Joseph Trutch, January 25, 1870. Reel # A 106.
22. *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, July 1872, p. 212, col. 1.
23. *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, "News from Kincolith."
24. R. Tomlinson, Annual Letter, May 1, 1871. Reel # A 106.
25. Anglican Church Archives, Diocese of Caledonia. Parish Records of Baptisms, Marriages, Burial and Service Registers. Microfilm Reel #1.
26. R. Tomlinson to C.M.S., February 10, 1876. Reel # A 106.
27. R. Tomlinson to C.M.S., February 15, 1875. Reel # A 106.
28. R. Tomlinson to C.M.S., February 10, 1876. Reel # A 106.

29. R. Tomlinson to C.M.S., Annual Letter, Sept. 30, 1873. Microfilm Reel # A 106.
30. R. Tomlinson to C.M.S., Annual Letter, March 12, 1877. Microfilm Reel # A 106.
31. An explanation of the meaning of Chiefly conversion in the context of the continuity of Coast Tsimshian traditional leadership is offered in MacDonald (1985).
32. R. Tomlinson, Annual Letter, March 12, 1877. Microfilm Reel # A 106.
33. *Ibid.*
34. R. Tomlinson, Annual Letter, 1875. Microfilm Reel # A 106.
35. R. Tomlinson to C.M.S., February 10, 1876. Microfilm Reel # A 106.
36. R. Tomlinson, 3rd Annual Report of Hospital, Kincolith, 1873-74. Microfilm Reel # A 106.
37. R. Tomlinson, Tour of Nass and Skeena Rivers, 1874. Microfilm Reel # A 106.
38. R. Tomlinson, Annual Letter, March 12, 1877. Microfilm Reel # A 106.
39. R. Tomlinson, Annual Letter, March 1879. Microfilm Reel # A 106.
40. H. Schutt, Annual Letter, Feb. 1880. Microfilm Reel # A 106.

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