“Asserting Territorial Jurisdiction”: A Microhistory of Clayoquot Sound During the Maritime Fur Trade, 1785-1811

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Nicholas Lawrence Obedkoff

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INTRODUCTION – ENTERING THE GLOBAL MARKET

When an international array of explorers, diplomats, traders, and seamen began arriving on Nuu-chah-nulth shores between 1778-1811, the Tla-o-qui-aht had recently taken control of Clayoquot Sound and were looking to expand. The Europeans quickly realized they were in Indigenous territories of three related peoples, each with a leader that mediated whether their missions succeeded or failed. Arrivals at Clayoquot Sound, the centre of the Nuu-chah-nulth territory, identified that the territories were led by the Hawith (chief) Wickaninnish (Tla-o-qui-aht). To the north was Nootka Sound under Maquinna (Mowachaht), and to the south, across the Strait of Juan de Fuca, was Cape Flattery under Tatooch (Makah). They shared (and continue to share) the same language family (Wakashan), and, at the time, were trade allies strategically interlinked through marriage, though they were regional rivals as well.[1] The first Europeans in Nuu-chah-nulth territories were Spaniards with Juan José Pérez Hernández who coasted off Hesquiaht in 1774, and British Royal Navy Captain and explorer James Cook who spent a month in Nootka Sound in 1778. Cook's crew realized that the sea otter pelts they had acquired could be sold for high profits at the Chinese port of

Figure 1: ***Map of Key Nuu-chah-nulth Locations***

[1] Intermarriage was common within the Nuu-chah-nulth region. Most notable of these connections was Wickaninnish's sister's marriage to Mowachaht Confederacy Hawith Callicum; Maquinna's daughter Apenas was meant to marry Wickaninnish's son in 1792 (although whether this happened is disputed by historian Scott Ridley). Yvonne May Marshall. "A political history of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth people: a case study of the Mowachaht and Muchalaht tribes." Phd diss. (SFU, 1993), 213; Kaye W. Lamb (Ed.), *The Voyage of George Vancouver, 1791 – 1795* (London, UK: Routledge, 1984), 916-7; Scott Ridley, *Morning of Fire: John Kendrick's Daring American Odyssey in the Pacific* (Harper Collins, 2010), 308.

Canton (Guangzhou). The journals of Cook and his crew, which first appeared in 1781, set off a rush of European and American traders, who by 1785 began to frequent Clayoquot Sound. Most extant records made by explorers and traders acknowledged and remarked on Wickaninnish's wealth and power.

This analysis focuses on the Tla-o-qui-aht – European / American interactions during the period of the North Pacific sea otter fur trade, aiming to broaden understanding of power dynamics in Clayoquot Sound. Similar Nuu-chah-nulth – European / American exchanges that occurred in Mowachaht territory (Nootka Sound) and Makah territory (Neah Bay) provide additional context. The current historiography is beginning to shift from a largely one-sided Western colonial perspective, typically centred around the European explorers and traders who left records of their visits, to one that attempts to centre narratives around Indigenous peoples in their territorial lands. In the early twentieth century, historians emphasized themes of imperial triumph over inferior Indigenous peoples.[2] By the late twentieth century, they emphasized a story of mutual gain.[3] At the beginning of the twenty first century, historians like Joshua Reid and his study of the Makah, *The Sea Is My Country* (2015), have begun to shift the historical focal point to Indigenous worlds where European and colonial entities were visitors or intruders. Historians Keith Carlson and Colin Osmond detail the development well in their article "Clash at Clayoquot: Manifestations of Colonial and Indigenous Power in Pre-Settler Colonial Canada" (2017) and attempt to balance European perspective with what we know of Indigenous motivations. By taking a closer look at these relationships than previous scholarship, I leverage a

[2] American historian Hubert Howe Bancroft (1832-1918) overtly dehumanized Indigenous peoples, while Canadian historian F.W. Howay (1867-1943) is more paternalistic and emphasizes the victimization of inferior peoples. There are many examples occur in this article: F.W. Howay, "Indian Attacks upon Maritime Traders of the North-West Coast, 1785–1805." *The Canadian Historical Review* 6, no. 4 (1925): 287-309.

[3] While many are still valuable resources, sources such as Thomas Vaughan's and Bill Holm's *Soft Gold* (1982; 1990) emphasize peaceable exchange downplaying or omitting violent confrontations.

similar approach to Reid, shifting the Eurocentric focal point to the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation who exercised their territorial jurisdiction. While Reid's book examines the Makah world over a vast time frame, my paper shifts the geographic scope north to Tla-o-qui-aht territory and is limited to the sea otter fur trade era, to craft a microhistory that is a more detailed, nuanced, and robust depiction of power relations. I do not speak for the Tla-o-qui-aht. As a non-Indigenous (third generation Canadian settler), I am largely removed from this specific topic. My analysis of these interactions, however, shows a rebalancing of agency and authority in this era. It is a telling example of early contact which, I believe, showcases the mutuality of cultural and economic exchange, as well as conflict, demonstrating Indigenous sovereignty. While very few Nuu-chah-nulth records limit interpretation, the extant European accounts, however prejudiced and self-serving, provide useful clues and evidence for discerning patterns of diplomacy and retribution. These glimpses into the past allow us to chart the Tla-o-qui-aht rise in prominence during this international era.

The Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation had emerged from smaller groups around Ha-ooke-min (Kennedy Lake) – Tla-o-qui-aht means both "people of different tribes" and "people of Clayoqua" (Tla-o-qua).[4] In the 1720s, they came together to 'annihilate' the Esowistaht (Esowista translates to "clubbed to death.") and seize their territory as retribution for raids on their villages and for restricting access to sea resources.[5] In intertribal warfare, tactics of surprise attack, typically during the night, could result in the massacre of whole houses and the

[4] "Chapter Two: The People of The Sound," *Tofino and Clayoquot Sound, A History*, knowbc.com: https://www.knowbc.com/knowbc/Books/Tofino-and-Clayoquot-Sound-A-History/Contents/Chapter-Two.
[5] Barry Gough, *Possession Meares Island* (Canada: Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd., 2021), 23; "Chapter Two," *Tofino and Clayoquot Sound*.

destruction by fire of entire villages.[6] By taking Esowistaht territory, the Tla-o-qui-aht gained greater control of Clayoquot Sound and significantly increased their access to whaling grounds. They now moved between a summer whaling base at Echachis (on Echachis Island), a main village at Opitshat (on Meares Island), and the traditional salmon rich wintering grounds near Ha-ooke-min. Wickanninish (who changed his name from Ya'aihlstohsmahhlneh following the conquest) established his paternal lineage as the authoritative Tla-o-qui-aht leaders.[7] Neighbouring nations, such as the Ahousaht (centred on the northern side of Vargas Island), led by Hawith Cleaskinah (Chief Hanna), eventually fell under a tribute system dominated by Wickaninnish's Tla-o-qui-aht lineage, a type of "family oligarchy" according to archaeologist Yvonne Marshall.[8] Their initial legitmacy was gained through ceremony which included redistrubtion of the buildings and territorial rights of conquest; it was maintained through ceremonial redistribution (potlach) of the abundant natural wealth of whaling, regional trade and pillaging adversaries.[9] Nuu-chah-nulth ceremonies hold vital significance in various cultural practices including signifying wealth and kinship, bestowing of rank and privilege, marriage, wealth redistribution (potlach), spiritually

Figure 2*: Map of Clayoquot Sound*

[6] Fisher, "Arms," 5.
[7] Daniel Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* (UBC Press: 2000), 132.
[8] Marshall, "A Political," 161-2
[9] Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 132.

blessing hunts and war efforts, diplomatic negotiations, and other important purposes.[10] Nuu-chah-nulth Hawiths characteristically held a hereditary role that encompassed "leadership in all dimensions of human reality: the social, political, economic, and spiritual."[11] They were both audacious and protective, either collaborative or competitive, as circumstances dictated.

While Nootka Sound became embroiled in the Spanish and British diplomatic conflict which led to the Nootka Conventions (1790-95), Clayoquot became a vibrant trade hub for first British and then American traders. To the Nuu-chah-nulth the British were *King George Men* and Americans were *Bostonahts* (the port from where many of their ships launched).[12] Ahousaht Hereditary Hawith Atleo states that the Americans who favoured Clayoquot Sound for trade, "like all foreigners, were subject to a Nuu-chah-nulth designation."[13] All visitors were rival nations with distinct cultural values and mores, and they brought new technologies, like firearms and long-haul ships. They arrived in a variety of sailing vessels, such as schooners, snows, brigs and naval vessels bringing an array of items over the era. Early on, beads, iron, sheets of copper, and glass were common commodities in exchange for foodstuffs and pelts. As trade intensified, clothes, blankets, swords, gun powder, muskets, and swivel cannons became common commodities. Cordial trade was commonplace and diplomatic ceremonies were frequently held in Nuu-chah-nulth villages, and even on-board ships. Visiting explorers and traders invariably differed in their approach to Nuu-chah-nulth leaders and peoples, some peaceable and some malevolent. These typically rigid captains intended to set the agenda according to historian William Phelps:

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[10] Ruth Kirk, *The Wisdom of Elders* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1986), 37-8, 49.
[11] Eugene Richard Atleo, *Tsawalk: A Nuu-Chah-Nulth Worldview* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 135.
[12] Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life* (London: Smith, Elder, 1868), 3-4, 202.
[13] Atleo, *Tsawalk*, 99.

> Their ships were captained by some of the most hard-headed, heavy-handed officers, many of whom owned their own vessels. Families such as the Magees, the Winships and the Perkins sent forth their stoutest ships and their toughest sons in a line of work that was laborious and hazardous as it was lucrative and exotic. […] They were transients on a savage coast, and made no provisions under government regulations, unlike their English competitors, to regulate trade, to establish a monopoly, or to license ships. This was an open commerce where free-spirited Bostonians had no limits to their needs, and no rivals to interfere with their business.[14]

Some were assertive and aggressive people, many pressed into service while others were simply adventurers with nothing to lose. Many crews were multi-ethnic, comprised of young men from various nationalities.[15] Theirs was, as historian Daniel Clayton describes, a "self-contained world, and isolation heightened a sailor's awareness of the physical and symbolic uses of power and the importance of self-defence."[16] Preconceptions ran rampant and reinforced bigotry. The exploitation of Indigenous women during the era, especially by the Spanish, has a strong remembrance in Nuu-chah-nulth oral histories.[17] Sailors held false notions that Indigenous peoples were cannibals and erratic murderers. For example, Europeans saw the Nuu-chah-nulth war tactic of decapitating victims as horrific, even though this was a similar practice in Europe (especially during the concurrent French Revolution). An air of both fearful tension and wilful arrogance clouded their beliefs and behaviours. This attitude coloured ship's logs and expedition records to reinforce negative stereotypes of Indigenous inferiority, facilitating the eventual dispossession of their lands and marginalization of their cultures. At that time, however, it was in

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[14] William Dane Phelps, et. al., *Fur Traders from New England: The Boston Men in the North Pacific, 1787-1800: The Narratives of William Dane Phelps, William Sturgis & James Gilchrist Swan* (Spokane, Washington: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1997), 18-9.

[15] John Price's "Relocating Yuquot" presents a comprehensive study of various nationalities that arrived on the coast during this era. John Price, "Relocating Yuquot: The Indigenous Pacific and Transpacific Migrations," *BC Studies* no. 204 (2020): 21-236.

[16] Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 77.

[17] Barbara S. Efrat, W. J. Langlois, and Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Aural History, *Nu·tka: The History and Survival of Nootkan Culture*, Vol. 7, no. 2 (Victoria, B.C: Aural History, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1978), 60.

the best interest of the visiting parties to behave relatively well to foster trade and remain secure. Aggressive visitors were typically met with force.

A microhistory of Clayoquot Sound, where Nuu-chah-nulth leaders interacted with foreign visitors and intruders, aims to tell a story of Tla-o-qui-aht prominence during this distinct area and time, but it also adds to a new approach to examine early contact history along the entire coast. Academic analysis is often orientated from the European or *Bostonaht* perspective, focused on either the Nootka Crisis (1789) and Conventions (1790-5) or specific journeys of imperial explorers, diplomats, or traders. By focusing on interactions at Clayoquot specifically and combing evidence left by numerous explorers and traders, a more comprehensive picture of foreign and local power dynamics emerges. "The glory of microhistory," according to historian Richard Brown, "lies in its power to recover and reconstruct past events by exploring and connecting a wide range of data sources to produce a contextual, three-dimensional, analytic narrative in which actual people as well as abstract forces shape events."[18] European and *Bostonaht* visitors/intruders sailed into a Nuu-chah-nulth world whether they acknowledged it or not. Clayton contextualized coastal European-Indigenous trade relations best with his assertion that "Traders carried great bulks of wealth and prestige, and they entered Native orders of inclusion and exclusion."[19] This was especially true for the Tla-o-qui-aht. Foreigners who disrespected local leadership or transgressed protocol faced stiff, calculated retribution. The ultimate retaliation came in the attempted or successful seizure of a ship and massacre of the crew. While the era was mutually prosperous, it was also turbulent and culminated in an international incident that would echo across the continent. Charting both the peaceable and

[18] Richard D. Brown, "Microhistory and the Post-Modern Challenge." *Journal of the Early Republic* 23, no. 1 (2003), 18.
[19] Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 130.

violent interactions between the two disparate parties reveals new insights into the balance of power, the motivations for trade and war, and the internal power dynamics within the Nuu-chah-nulth world.

PART ONE – AN ARRAY OF POSSIBILITIES

The first dedicated trader to enter Nuu-chah-nulth territory, Captain James Hanna exemplified the extremes of the era that had just begun – from audacious massacres to diplomatic cooperation. Hanna entered the increasingly well-known Nootka Sound on 18 August 1785, commanding the aptly named sixty-ton brig, *Sea Otter* with twenty crew.[20] No first-hand accounts of his voyage exist, leaving us to rely on the stories of several of his contemporaries, including Portlock, Dixon and Meares.[21] Hanna's crew is said to have been apprehensive as they approached relatively unknown territory. As the Mowachaht approached in canoes to greet them, Hanna's crew stood at action stations perceiving an attack.[22] The Mowachaht, however, were friendly with the intent of *makúk* ("let's trade"), like they had been with Cook and his crew when they visited seven years earlier.[23] Chief Maquinna, along with sub chiefs, traded aboard the ship over the next few days, breaking a European convention set by the Spanish. They had preferred to trade over the side of a ship, such as when the Spanish commander Juan José Pérez Hernández traded with the Hesquiat on their coast in 1774.

The territorial leaders had their own protocols. Trade would take place after an exchange of gifts, either on board or on shore. If captains who had come from great distances wished to trade, they would have to surrender a degree of safety to increase trust and respect. Historian

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[20] Not to be confused with the 120-ton British snow also named *Sea Otter* that arrived the following (1786). Barry M. Gough, *The Northwest Coast: British Navigation, Trade and Discoveries to 1812* (UBC Press: Vancouver, 1992), 74.

[21] Hanna did make "useful" charts which were used by early traders, including Meares, and his early presence in the region was referenced in advancing British claim. Gough, *The Northwest Coast*, 72, 75; F. W. Howay, "Indian Attacks upon Maritime Traders of the North-West Coast, 1785–1805," *The Canadian Historical Review* 6, no. 4 (1925): 287.

[22] F. W. Howay and Richard A. Pierce, *A List of Trading Vessels in the Maritime Fur Trade, 1785-[1825]* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1930), 114.

[23] John S. Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008; 2014), ix.

F.W. Howay, in the early twentieth century, highlighted that some captains were anxious to let chiefs and warriors aboard, because it "led to attempts to overpower the small crews and capture the ships."[24] This may have been the case for some, but the main reason European captains did not want Indigenous people aboard was the prospect of theft. Ironically, Europeans accused Indigenous groups along the coast of theft while aboard vessels, even though they felt free to take natural resources that were the property of Indigenous leaders. The Nuu-chah-nulth were not intimidated by the newcomers. Maquinna had demanded compensation from Cook's men who cut grass in Mowachaht territory to feed livestock aboard the *Resolution* and the *Discovery* – evidence in a contemporary Nuchatlaht land claim for territory in northern Nootka Sound.[25] Furthermore, theft was not simply an Indigenous 'vice.' Another coastal Indigenous group led by Tsimshian Chief Seax remarked of the irony in trader James Colnett accusing some of his tribe members of theft onboard, when his own crew were thieves as well. Colnett recorded that Seax "took particular notice of the Locks & keys & hinted if we had no thieves what use were they of?"[26] No matter the wishes of the foreign visitor, Maquinna, Tatooch, and Wickaninnish would insist on boarding ships from this point forward if trade and diplomacy was to proceed. Already, coastal Indigenous groups were attempting to assert their territorial jurisdiction.

[24] Howay, "Indian Attacks," 287.
[25] Jason Proctor, "'Historic' Aboriginal land title trial to begin in B.C. Supreme Court," *CBC News*, Mar 21, 2022, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/land-title-nuchatlaht-tsilhqot-in-1.6389789.
[26] James Colnett and Robert Galois. *A Voyage to the North West Side of America: The Journals of James Colnett, 1786-89* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2003), 146.

The first tentative relationship between a sole trader, James Hanna, and a Nuu-chah-nulth nation, the Mowachaht, deteriorated quickly due to Hanna's arrogance, resulting in disaster for the Mowachaht. Two versions of the account exist. Hanna told his contemporaries that Maquinna's men stole from him. He responded by expelling them from his ship in dramatic fashion. Days later, Mowachaht canoes launched a concerted attack on *Sea Otter* during daylight. The crew "repulsed" the canoes armed with handheld weapons using their firearms quickly and mercilessly, killing approximately twenty warriors and chiefs.[27] Hanna's self-serving explanation made him look bold and the Mowachaht thieving and unpredictable, bent on taking a ship with little provocation. A heavy hand was 'necessary.' Maquinna's version, as related by Spanish explorer and naval officer Esteban José Martínez in 1789, was quite different. Maquinna accused Hanna of lighting firecrackers under his seat while he sat aboard the *Sea Otter*.[28] Perhaps out of spite for having to follow local protocols, Hanna tried to 'humble' the chief from what he considered an 'inferior' civilization. Humiliating a chief was a grievous offence, compromising the prestige of the Hawith (as with nearly any other sovereign leader around the world). Retribution for multiple reasons, including disrespect of leadership, was the most common motive for Nuu-chah-nulth warfare.[29] An attempt to seize the vessel was made,

Figure 3: ***'Maquinna, Chief of the Nuu-chah-nulth People of Nootka Sound'*** – by Tomas de Sura of the Malaspina Expedition, 1791. Tomas

[27] Gough, *The Northwest Coast*, 73.
[28] Ibid., 73.
[29] Morris Swadesh, "Motivations in Nootka Warfare." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 4, no. 1 (1948): 86.

the ultimate act of Nuu-chah-nulth defence against an adversary. The *Sea Otter* was a relatively small brig compared to Cook's larger ships, *Discovery* and *Resolution*, from seven years earlier. In addition to remediating the personal and diplomatic slight, it offered a lucrative opportunity to increase prestige.[30] Regardless of possible intentions, the attempt failed horribly. Hanna's crew exacted dozens of deaths, a massacre, against warriors with handheld weapons. Hanna sailed south where, ironically, he participated in a lasting diplomatic gesture.

This era was shaped by a contrast of progressive and regressive European / *Bostonaht* – Nuu-chah-nulth relations. James Hanna symbolized the paradox of the era himself. After failing to engage in good faith with the Mowachaht, Hanna then participated in an instance of lasting diplomatic exchange only days later in Ahousaht territory (northern Clayoquot Sound). Chief Cleaskinah led a name exchange ceremony where he traded names with Hanna. The gesture, as historian Barry Gough highlights, was made "out of mutual respect" and stuck with the Ahousaht Hawith.[31] For years to come, Chief Cleaskinah, who thereafter called himself "Hanna" would trade with Europeans and *Bostonahts* as an ally of Wickaninnish and his relatives. Captain Hanna was never known to refer to himself by Cleaskinah's name. The lasting use of Hanna's name by Ahousaht leadership during the era demonstrated that a range of diplomatic exchange that pre-existed European arrival would be extended to the new visitors. A variety of cultural transactions, envoys, and ceremonies, initiated with Cook at Yuquot in 1778, would take place in Nuu-chah-nulth territorial waters and lands.

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[30] Since the *Sea Otter* was considerably smaller than Cook's ships, Gough builds on Howay's earlier suggestion that the Mowachaht may have perceived this as a realistic opportunity to not only remediate the personal slight but obtain a relatively small sailing vessel for their own purposes. Howay, "Indian Attacks," 287; Gough, *The Northwest Coast*, 73.

[31] Ibid., 74.

As traders began to arrive in Clayoquot Sound, Wickaninnish and his family asserted themselves as the main power brokers. In June 1787, British explorer and trader Charles William Barkley (*Imperial Eagle*), his wife Francis (the first European woman on the coast), and his crew became the second known international trading group in the sound. Francis had kept a diary, but only fragments survive. Trade was immensely profitable, and charts of the area were made.[32] Barkley named the inlets and bays "Wiccanninsh Sound," a symbolic gesture denoting the chief's prominence. Barkley then sailed south to the next larger inlet, where several Indigenous groups resided, and named it after himself, Barkley Sound. Of course, these two vibrant and *inhabited* territories already had names, but Barkley's act of naming Clayoquot Sound specifically after Wickaninnish is telling. The wealthiest Hawith of Clayoquot Sound who had traded many furs with him had made a strong impression.

In 1788, John Meares arrived and established cordial relations with the Ahousaht and Tla-o-qui-aht, offering the first substantive, surviving account of the international interaction at Clayoquot Sound. He started in Nootka Sound in 1788, initiating diplomatic and trade relations with Maquinna and Maquinna's regional ally, Chief Callicum. Shortly thereafter, Meares claimed to have bought land from Maquinna near Yuquot for his majority Chinese crew to construct lightly fortified buildings and build a schooner while he continued to trade along the coast.[33] For Maquinna and Callicum, having a foreign trading post offered advantages, such as a

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[32] The *Imperial Eagle* crew gained 800 pelts which were sold for over 30,000 Spanish dollars, a very high margin considering that the Europeans traded relatively inexpensive industrial goods with Indigenous peoples. Barkley also made extensive and accurate charts which were used by some later explorers and traders. David Lynch. "'Claiming Refuge': A Settler's Unsettling History of Hot Springs Cove." Master's Thesis (2018). Supervisor Dr John S. Lutz. (UVic: unpublished), 54.

[33] Meares claimed to have bought land from Maquinna at Yuquot. At the Nootka Conventions negotiations in 1792, Maquinna called Meares a liar. Apparently, Meares had only been allowed to build a modest structure for an indeterminate amount of time. At this time, Maquinna may have perceived an international post as beneficial to his people. The Chinese carpenters and smiths did build a trading post with some armaments, and they built the first schooner on the north west coast, the aptly named *North West America*. Gough, *The Northwest Coast*, 96-8.

sustained trade connection and a higher degree of control over the foreigners. During his stay in Nootka Sound, Meares noticed the luxurious attire of Wickaninnish and his envoy when they visited their allied Mowachaht. He presumed their wealth to be indicative of whaling and associated trade.[34] Having set his builders to work, Meares sailed for Clayoquot Sound in June. Approaching the sound, Meares was greeted on board by Hawiths Hanna and Detootche. Meares recorded that they "shook every person on board by the hand, and gave us very friendly invitations to receive the hospitality of their territory."[35] He gifted them "some trifling presents", and they departed on friendly terms. Meares sought to trade with Wickaninnish directly, however: Meares "had predetermined to seek out the residence of Wicananish."[36] The Tla-o-qui-aht leader arrived the same day accompanied by a "small fleet of canoes," boarded the *Felice Adventurer* and welcomed Meares to his territory.

[34] Marshall, "A Political," 216.
[35] John Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789 from China to the North-West of America* (The Netherlands: N. Israel & Da Capo Press, 1967), 136.
[36] Ibid., 136.

Meares provided insight into Wickaninnish's geographical mastery of the sound and interest in his large, masted vessel which represented new maritime technology. Wickaninnish piloted the *Felice* five miles into the sound. Meares was impressed by his calm demeanour and navigational expertise: Wickaninnish "proved an excellent pilot, and was not only indefatigable in his own exertions, but equally attentive to the conduct of his canoes, in their attendance of us."[37] He would do so again six days later during inclement weather. Noticing Meares' ship under sail attempting to reach a more inner harbour, Wickaninnish arrived, boarded, and directed the ship past sand bars and into the protected harbour near Opitsaht, which Meares named 'Cox's Bay.'[38]

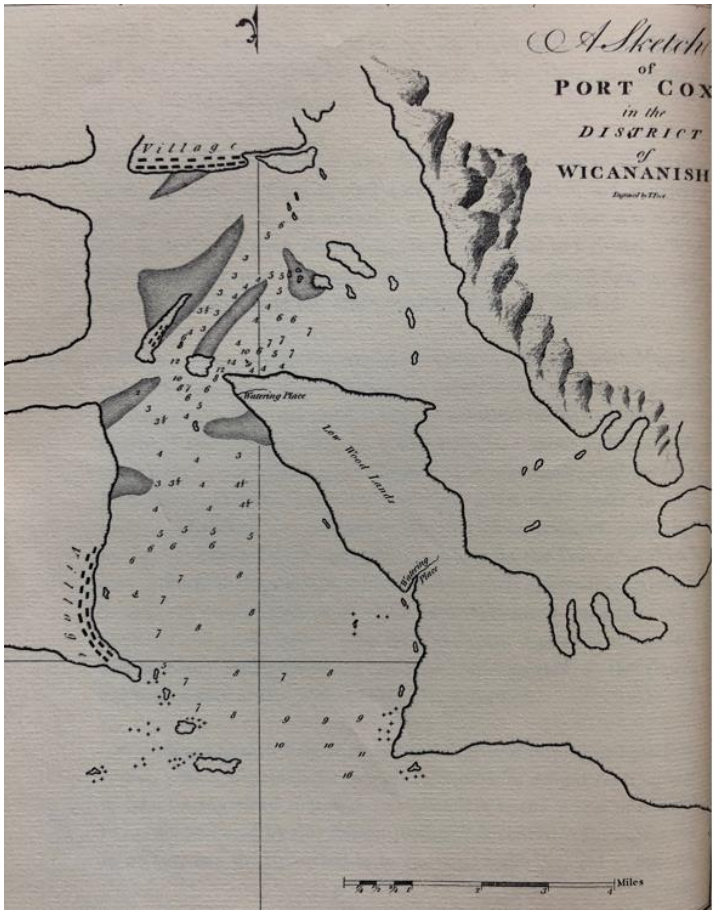

Figure 4: ***"A Sketch of Port Cox in the District of Wicananish"*** by John Meares. Meares*, Voyages,* 112.

Meares also provided some insight into intertribal power dynamics. The vast sound was home to between eleven and seventeen tribal groups of varying size and influence.[39] On the 17th

[37] Ibid., 137.
[38] Port Cox was the name of his commissionaire, John Henry Cox. It did not last. Spanish authorities named the bay across from Opitsaht, Tofino after cartographer Vincente Tofiño de San Miguel in 1792. Meares' name now dons the largest island in the sound where Opitsaht is located. Ibid., 143.
[39] Lynch, "Claiming Refuge," 35.

of June, Meares stated that "some strangers had ventured to visit the ship without the knowledge of Wicananish, the chief had ordered his people to fall upon the intruders, one of whom they had now seized and brought on shore."[40] Meares' crew sought clemency for the Tla-o-qui-aht rival to no avail and believed the man was subsequently murdered. Perhaps struck by unfamiliar intertribal power dynamics, Meares belittled the altercation as "a very plain tale of a savage mind."[41] A more nuanced power dynamic than simple "political jealousy" was at play, however.[42] Wickaninnish's lineage were asserting control over the sound. Sustaining a tight grip required coercion as much as diplomacy. A sustainable resolution resulted from this altercation – Wickaninnish brokered an intertribal treaty eleven days later with Chiefs Hanna and Detootche, stating that all available furs be sold to Wickaninnish until a later date when free trade would be declared.[43] Wickaninnish was beginning to set a trend of maintaining his central authority through controlling import goods and redistributing this wealth in ways sufficent to maintain his legitimacy while consolidating his power.[44] This assertion of central authority through diplomacy backed by militaristic might furthered the Tla-o-qui-aht geopolitical position. They had a formidable presence. Meares' claims that Wickaninnish was a decisive figure "both loved and dreaded by other chiefs" who led as many as thirteen thousand people.[45] While those numbers are exaggerated three-fold, archaeological evidence confirms that Tla-o-qui-aht villages of Echachist and Opitsaht had more inhabitants than Yuquot at Nootka Sound.[46]

[40] Meares, *Voyages*, 142.
[41] Ibid., 142.
[42] Ibid., 142.
[43] Meares, *Voyages*, 146.
[44] Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 140.
[45] Meares, Voyages, 230-1.
[46] Marshall, "A Political," 216.

Meares and Wickaninnish navigated misunderstandings and jostled for equitable trade and diplomacy. Meares felt unsecure at Clayoquot Sound, deeming the Tla-o-qui-aht "far less civilized than our friends at Nootka."[47] He thought that "any relaxation of our vigilance might tempt them" to attack. Wickaninnish, however, saw their anxious disposition as threatening. He scolded Meares and crew for arming themselves during trade: Wickaninnish "not only left the ship in great anger, but refused to trade with us himself, and forbade his people from bringing us supplies of fish or vegetables."[48] Wickaninnish's demand to be treated fairly and respectfully represented his strong position. Meares relented, attending a ceremony the next day and leading the gift exchange, presenting Wickaninnish with a brass handled sword and copper plate; Meares was presented with "five beautiful otter skins, a fat doe, and a supply of fish for the crew," and "the treaty of friendship was renewed."[49] Wickaninnish may have begun to prefer industrial weapons as a commodity at this point. Later, he delighted in the gift of twelve more swords, and according to Meares, he kept "a couple of muskets and ammunition" that Meares did not intend to gift him.[50] Given that the protocol of gift exchange was uncommon in European mercantile transaction, Meares became frustrated by the practice and saw it as opportunistic, a "rage for presents."[51] In addition to trade, Meares pursued the prospect of land purchases in Clayoquot Sound, as he had done at Nootka Sound, a prospect that never came to fruition. Gough reflects that these aspirations were more aligned with developing trading posts to foster peaceable and equitable trade rather than laying the groundwork for colonization.[52] Meares would gain international relevance, however, for that purpose. His land 'purchase' near Yuquot became

[47] Meares, *Voyages*, 144.
[48] Ibid., 145.
[49] Ibid., 145.
[50] Ibid., 204-5.
[51] Ibid., 142.
[52] Barry, M. Gough, *Possessing Meares Island* (Canada: Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd., 2021), 35, 41.

evidence in the British claim for the territory, just before the Spanish occupied Yuquot in 1789 and detained British trading ships the following year. While parts of Nootka Sound came under a five-year Spanish occupation, Clayoquot Sound would remain an Indigenous space.

As the Spanish occupation at Nootka Sound (what they called Santa Cruz de Nuca) displaced the Mowachaht and disrupted international trade, Clayoquot Sound became a more lucrative trade hub. In summer 1789, Spaniard commander Esteban José Martínez began building Fort San Miguel near the site of Yuquot. Chief Callicum approached Martinez unarmed, in a canoe with his family, to protest the unsanctioned Spanish presence and was shot and killed by one of the Spanish soldiers.[53] After the grievous murder of his ally, Maquinna and his people moved farther away and began to visit Wickaninnish at Clayoquot Sound more frequently. The Spanish began impounding British vessels, including Captain Thomas Hudson's sloop the *Princess Royal* and Captain James Colnett's brig the *Argonaut*. Martinez sent the Argonaut with both captains as prisoners to San Blas, Mexico. Freed only months later, the *Argonaut* headed back to Nootka Sound to retrieve the *Princess*. Becoming badly damaged on the way, Colnett sought refuge in Clayoquot Sound. In mid-October 1790, they spotted the sound and Hudson piloted them into what he knew as "Port Wickinnishes or Cleaquat" – Colnett remarked, "It's a difficult port and a Place I had never seen. "[54] They met an undisclosed chief who offered to sell them canoes as they prepared to send Hudson to Nootka Sound to retrieve his ship. By the 18th, the *Argonaut* began extensive repairs. Complicating the situation, however, Colnett fell and broke several ribs, incapacitating himself. The situation would deteriorate from there.

[53] Ridley, *Morning*, 134.
[54] James Colnett, *Colnett's Journal Aboard the Argonaut*, edited by F. W. Howay (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 182-3.

As repairs got underway, a serious incident unfolded where Colnett attempted to assert his authority in Tla-o-qui-aht territory. Hudson left on his mission to Nootka Sound in a *jollyboat* on October 17th with Spanish paperwork authorizing the release of his vessel.[55] Even though one-third of the way was a sheltered passage, Colnett was wary of any open sea travel in such a small vessel at this time of year due to rough seas.[56] By the 24th, Colnett, physically hampered and perhaps suffering from mental illness, grew anxious and dispatched a longboat to follow the path of Hudson's Nootka expedition.[57] Other crew members began to desert. On November 1st, three Portuguese crew members stole one of Colnett's canoes (which he had purchased upon arrival to the sound) and deserted to Nootka.[58] Fewer and fewer crew manned the vessel. Colnett, worried about his long boat crews, paid Chief Hanna to have his men deliver a letter to Nootka on the 15th. The next day, Colnett learned that Hanna had not left, nor did he send a crew (he apparently never intended to deliver it).[59] Colnett then began to hear conflicting stories from the Ahousaht and Tla-o-qui-aht regarding what had happened to the expeditions. European clothes washed up just north of Clayoquot Sound, and a local eventually brought Colnett the pants of Russel Carpenter, a *Princess Royal* crewman.[60] The captain then decided to act. He forcibly detained Wickaninnish's brothers, chiefs Tatoochkasettle and Tatooche,[61] holding them hostage at gun point for two weeks, demanding that the Tla-o-qui-aht or Ahousaht intervene and return his apparently shipwrecked crew members.[62] Eventually, Wickaninnish's own sister (Callicum's

[55] Ibid., 183-4.
[56] Ibid., 182-3.
[57] Colnett was thought by contemporaries to have suffered by psychosis or some type of mental illness. He apparently attempted suicide after being detained by the Spanish in Nootka Sound. It is unclear whether this factored into his agitation. Ridley, *Morning*, 128; Colnett, *Colnett's Journal*, 185, 187.
[58] Colnett later recorded that they were "never heard of after." Ibid., 188, 196.
[59] Ibid., 189, 193.
[60] Ibid., 189.
[61] In Howay's endnotes, he states that this was not the Makah Chief of the same name. Ibid., 195.
[62] Ibid., 191.

widow) agreed to search for any lost crew. She returned four days later with two survivors of Hudson's shipwrecked boat, and Colnett released the captive chiefs.[63] Further inclement weather delayed the return of the second longboat which arrived the following day.[64]

While Colnett believed that cordial relations had been restored, the affront evidently inspired Wickaninnish to plan revenge. Repairs continued, and ironically, diplomatic relations appeared to improve. Colnett lent his expertise to Wickaninnish to improve the efficiency of his personal canoes, installing a mast, sails and a rudder.[65] Masts and sails would become common on the personal canoes of both Maquinna and Wickaninnish over the era. Relations were not as good as they seemed, however. The captain's former abrasive conduct caught up with him. By the very end of December, the ship finished repairs. On New Year's Eve, during low ebb, in the shadow of the trees, four canoes approached while the crew ate beneath deck. With adept planning based on the intelligence gathered from the formerly kidnapped chiefs, Tla-o-qui-aht forces attempted to board the vessel discreetly and seize the ship. However, a deckhand alerted the crew, and they emerged quickly, firing their muskets at the attackers. According to his journal, Colnett even fired a cannon towards Opitsaht.[66] It is unclear how many casualties were incurred. The repaired *Argonaut* departed hastily the following day never to return. Like the Mowachaht's attempt on Captain Hanna, the Tla-o-qui-aht warriors failed. They did, however, carry out a calculated and delayed attempt to seize a modern sail powered vessel in response to an affront to their sovereignty.

[63] Ibid., 193-5.
[64] Ibid., 197.
[65] Ibid., 200.
[66] Ibid., 201.

PART TWO – MANAGING AN INTERNATIONAL TRADE HUB

European explorers who sought to map Clayoquot Sound ran the risk of violating territorial protocols. The Ahousaht defended a territorial incursion by Spanish explorers and cartographers in May 1790. While Spanish naval officers Francisco de Eliza and Jose Maria Narváez engaged in diplomatic relations with Wickaninnish at Opitsaht upon arrival to Clayoquot Sound, the visit did not bestow them free reign to map the sound in Ahousaht territory. First mate Juan Pantoja y Arriaga surveyed the north of the sound between 11 – 19 May 1971 in the tiny schooner *Santa Saturnina*, manned by "fourteen armed sailors."[67] They "unknowingly" entered Ahousaht territory, passed the large settlement of Marktosis and arrived near the summer villages of Sumaxqwuis and Ma´nu7is.[68] They appeared without warning, and Ahousaht warriors fired arrows and assembled "several canoes" to pursue them. The Spaniards returned musket fire and cannon shot, hitting at least one warrior. [69] The Spanish managed to escape, but the warriors shadowed them at some distance. As the Spanish camped for the night on a small island nearby, McDowell states, "Continuous shouting by the Ahousaht warriors during the foggy night gave the exhausted mariners little sleep."[70] This balance of power and terror made it clear that regardless of establishing relations with Wickaninnish prior to surveying, allied Nuu-chah-nulth groups would protect their own territories against any intruder, Indigenous or European. Given that these longboats were much smaller vessels, they could have been more easily detained. The next morning, the *Saturnina* crew encountered the Ahousaht canoes again

[67] Jim McDowell, *Uncharted Waters: The Explorations of José Narváez (1768-1840)* (Vancouver, BC: Ronsdale Press, 2015), 78.
[68] Ibid., 79.
[69] Ibid., 79.
[70] Ibid., 79.

but managed to slip away.[71] Two similar incidents played out in Barkley Sound. On May 28, Narváez reported being attacked by approximately 200 Toquaht (Ucluelet) warriors, a Tla-o-qui-aht ally to the south, who were defending the settlement of Humuwa (Omoah Reserve) on Effingham Island. The *Saturnina* managed to pass into the sound unharmed to survey for almost two weeks, but again, on their departure, they encountered the warriors. This time the crew fired "four three-pound cannons" at them to escape.[72] Territorial breaches were an omnipresent threat to a First Nation's security regardless of the fur trade era, so these foreigners were treated in the same manner as Indigenous intruders.

The Tla-o-qui-aht continued to assert their regional authority and prestige through maintaining trade dominance, as exemplified through the experiences of *Bostonaht* trader Robert Gray (at first commanding the *Lady Washington*, and later, the *Columbia Rediviva*). When Gray arrived in Clayoquot Sound in March 1788, he received Wickaninnish and his brother Tatoochkasettle to trade and they both drove a hard bargain. Crew member Robert Haswell recorded that the Tla-o-qui-aht charged an "exorbutant price" for chisels and demanded copper which was in short supply.[73] Gray returned 5 June 1791, now commanding the *Columbia* which he had exchanged with his former trade partner John Kenrick in 1789. Wickaninnish and his brothers were disinterested in trading with Gray unless he produced better gifts and demonstrated more respect for their trade protocols: the Hawiths "were taken to the cabbin and shown our various articles of traffic; but they appear'd quite indifferent about trading; rather wishing to

[71] Ibid., 79.
[72] Ibid., 92.
[73] (Haswell's Log of the First Voyage of the Columbia). F. W. Howay ed. *Voyages of the Columbia to the Northwest Coast, 1787-1790 and 1790-1793* (Boston, MA, 1941), 92, 96.

receive our articles of traffic as presents."[74] In the meantime, the crew could only buy fish and leeks from a "lower class of people."[75] Clayton affirms that "[n]ative peoples had their own ways of bending commercial equations to their own advantage."[76] Nevertheless, Gray was able to land a scurvy ridden crew on shore at the seasonally uninhabited Opitsaht. Chief Tootoocheetticus arrived, and he and Gray planted potatoes together on shore in an act of cultural exchange. Crew member John Hoskins recorded that the chief was "honoured" by the act.[77] The reciprocity was tenuous, however.

As much as possible, the *Bostonahts* acted by their own rules, but Gray's heavy-handed tactics threatened peaceable relations. On the June 14th, a Hawaiian crew member, known as Otto, deserted the ship. Gray brought the sick crew back aboard and vowed to take a high-profile captive to leverage Otto's return.[78] The following day, Tatoochkasettle ("Tootiscoosettle" as Hoskins recorded) was lured aboard the ship in good faith and became that hostage, just as he had been lured aboard the *Argonaut* and forcibly confined by Colnett months before. Once Otto was found and returned, Gray forced Tatoochkasettle to watch his flogging, a corporal punishment that the Nuu-chah-nulth abhorred.[79] As the Hawith was being released, Gray attempted to project his authority. Paradoxically, he warned him that if even one of the *Columbia* crew deserted again, "the first Chief that was caught should also be punished."[80] The Tla-o-qui-aht did not retaliate for this grievous transgression immediately, but the possibility of delayed

[74] (Hoskin's Narrative of the Second Voyage of the *Columbia*). Howay, *Voyages*, 204.
[75] Ibid., 205
[76] Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 78.
[77] (Hoskins). Howay, *Voyages*, 205.
[78] Ibid., 206.
[79] Marshall, "A Political," 227.
[80] (Hoskins). Howay, *Voyages*, 207.

retribution at a more opportune time remained. Regardless, the *Columbia* would return to winter in the sound starting in late August.

Bostonaht John Kendrick (arriving first on the *Columbia Rediviva*, then on the *Lady Washington*), who had split from his fellow Captain Robert Gray, approached the Nuu-chah-nulth more like Meares, acquiescent and looking to build long-term relationships. Kendrick earned a reputation as an arms dealer, but he also negotiated a land / territory access deals, an *ad hoc* alliance. In 1789, Kendrick spent almost a year at Nootka Sound establishing diplomatic relations with the Mowachaht, just as the Spanish usurped Yuquot. There he had met Wickaninnish, who was visiting the now displaced Maquinna. In mid-July, Kendrick took up Wickaninnish's invitation to visit him at Clayoquot Sound.[81] The timing of the trip may have been strategic. Maquinna was in Clayoquot Sound relocating Wickaninnish's sister, the widow of his ally, Chief Callicum (recently killed by the Spanish). Kendrick met with both Maquinna and Wickaninnish. According to historian Scott Ridley, Kendrick sought to capitalize on the deteriorating Spanish – Nuu-chah-nulth relations by fostering positive diplomatic relations to later establish *Bostonaht* trading posts in Mowachaht and Tla-o-qui-aht territories.[82] After restocking in Macao, he returned two years later to develop this strategy.

Kendrick returned 11 August 1791 aboard the *Lady Washington*, with arms and ammunition from Macao intending to negotiate land deals.[83] After making a land access deal by trading arms and other commodities with the Mowachaht, he made a similar deal with Wickaninnish, his brothers and two other undisclosed chiefs at Clayoquot Sound. Kendrick

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[81] Ridley, *Morning*, 92.
[82] The population of Clayoquot Sound was growing quickly. Even some Mowachaht (and Maquinna briefly) relocated there after the Spanish imposition which led to abuses and raids, as well as murder of Callicum. Ibid., 138, 140.
[83] Ibid., 232, 277.

likely thought this was a *deed* to swaths of Tla-o-qui-aht and neighbouring Nuu-chah-nulth lands; the Tla-o-qui-aht likely thought was *land access* deal to establish a trading post on their territorial lands and waters.[84] On paper, the accord drawn up by Kendrick granted him vast territories in exchange for four muskets, an unspecified amount of gun powder, woven sails, and other commodities.[85] Kendrick affirmed his agreement with Maquinna and other local chiefs at Mawinna in Nootka Sound by potlach, but it is unknown whether he did so in the Clayoquot Sound.[86] While the extant copy of the agreement did not explicitly state it, reports later emerged that Wickaninnish now possessed, according to Spanish naturalist José Mariano Moziño, "two hundred guns, two barrels of powder, and a considerable portion of shot."[87] While several factors limited the effectiveness of these weapons in the best of conditions, a large quantity of western weapons would increase intertribal prestige substantially.[88]

Despite their previous falling out, the Tla-o-qui-aht welcomed Robert Gray back to winter in Clayoquot Sound on 17 September 1791. It is unclear whether Kendrick's previous deal had any bearing on Wickaninnish assenting to the Gray's plans. On the 20th, Kendrick guided the *Columbia* to a suitable place in the sound to winter the *Columbia*, while accompanied by "several canoes" of Tla-o-qui-aht onlookers. Haswell described the location as desirable, "in

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[84] Gough, *Possessing*, 80.
[85] Ridley, *Morning*, 237.
[86] Ibid., 233.
[87] José Mariano Moziño and Iris Wilson Engstrand. *Noticias De Nutka: An Account of Nootka Sound in 1792*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), 71.
[88] Historian Robin Fisher's comprehensive study of arms and manpower during this era highlights the unreliability of early firearms, especially in the humid coastal climate. The tedious loading procedure, the propensity of the flint to become wet in damp weather, and the overriding fact that muskets manufactured for trade were typically "inferior" to those procured for military use are all considerations to take into account (Fisher, "Arms," 8-9). This is exemplified by Hoskin's *Narrative of the Second Voyage of the Columbia*: "It is worthy of remark that while the ship was mooring one of our people fired at a flock of geese then flying over the musket burst to pieces in his hands and though there were as many as twenty of the people besides natives standing near him yet he nor they did not receive the least hurt." Howay, *Voyages*, 177; Robin Fisher, "Arms and Men on the Northwest Coast, 1774-1825," *BC Studies* 29, (1976): 18.

an excellent cove … fifteen miles from the sea."[89] They would now construct Fort Defiance and build a schooner, the *Adventure*. Although the two parties conducted relatively positive diplomatic relations over the winter, the crew of the *Columbia* lived in a state of subdued terror.

The crew understood that they were in Tla-o-qui-aht territory. Even before the kidnapping elevated tension, scouting, wooding, and watering parties were always sent ashore armed.[90] On October 4th, "four cannon, forty muskets several blunderbusses and pistols and a quantity of ammunition" were deployed to guard Fort Defiance and the frame of the 45-ton *Adventure* now under construction.[91] While these modern arms may have given the crew a sense of security, historian Robin Fisher states, "The assumption that firearms, in themselves, conferred a superiority on the Europeans was perhaps a dangerous one for captains to make."[92] On edge, Haswell reported that the apprehensive crew raised a false alarm over a suspected ambush that turned out to be nothing more than a rock formation in the fog.[93] One direct confrontation did leave a justifiably unsettling impression, however. Three canoes of warriors

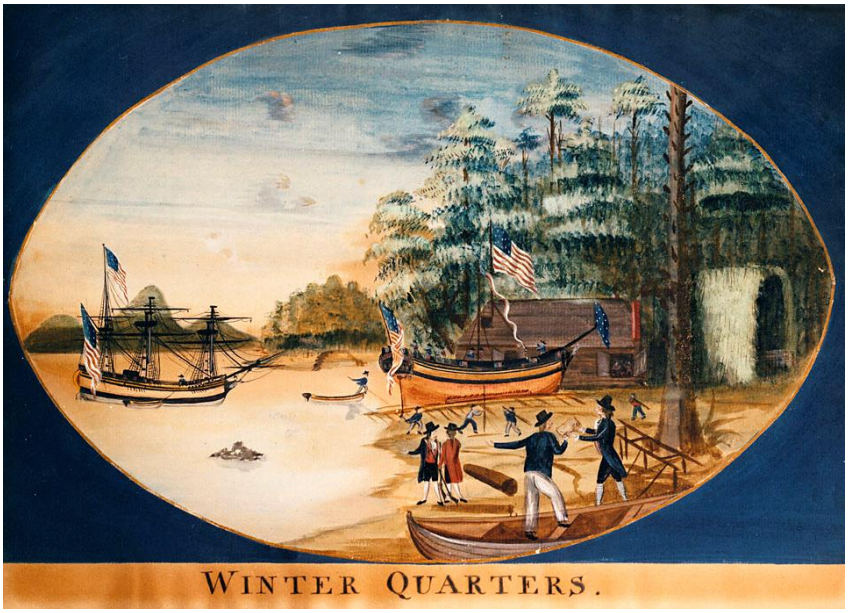

Figure 5: ***Fort Defiance in Adventure Cove (Clayoquot Sound)***, original watercolour by crewmember George Davidson depicting himself front centre. Bill Holm, *Soft Gold*, 213.

[89] (Hoskins). Howay, *Voyages*, 268.
[90] (Hoskins). Ibid., 206.
[91] (Hoskins). Ibid., 270.
[92] Fisher, "Arms," 14.
[93] (Haswell). Ibid., 324.

came ashore and confronted the young crewman John Boit one day. The undisclosed Tla-o-qui-aht men stripped Boit of his ammunition box and demanded to see Gray (who happened to be away hunting). Boit then managed to fend them off at gun point.[94] The crew thought this was an attempt at revenge for the kidnapping of Tatoochkasettle earlier in the year. Then, four days later, they were relieved to see Tatoochkasettle arrive at their camp in a friendly disposition. He borrowed two long poles from the *Columbia* to corral sardines into a trap, impressing Gray and Hoskins with his technique.[95] Wickaninnish and his brothers would visit occasionally. On October 7th, they visited the fort, and as Haswell recorded, "they gazed with much admiration at our house and vessel and expressed much wonder."[96] Acts of reciprocity continued throughout the winter. By the 22nd, Gray and Hoskins attended to Wickaninnish's ill younger brother Chief Yethlan in Opitsaht, visiting him regularly over the next few weeks.[97] Wickaninnish and other chiefs then attended Christmas celebrations on board the *Columbia*.[98] In early January 1792, Chief Yethlan was brought aboard for further treatment.[99] Boit and Hoskins stayed overnight in Opitsaht on the 17th and witnessed a ceremony where Wickaninnish apparently passed his hereditary title on to his son who "had become old enough to head his whaling canoe."[100]

Two days later, however, the good relations were disrupted. Gray began to disengage from diplomacy, turning down an invitation to attend a subsequent ceremony in Opitsaht. This left the Tla-o-qui-aht envoy "by no means pleased," especially because Gray sent the ill Chief

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[94] (Hoskins). Howay, *Voyages*, 271.
[95] Hoskins notes that the ship's crew attempted to emulate this practice days later and failed. Ibid., 272.
[96] (Haswell). Ibid., 324.
[97] (Hoskins). Ibid., 276.
[98] Ibid., 276.
[99] Ibid., 280.
[100] Hoskins suggests that Wickaninnish passed his title to one of his sons at this ceremony. However, it is difficult to verify whether the son became the principal leader from this point on. This highlights the hereditary nature of the role, and that Wickaninnish, as with Maquinna, may not have been solely one individual throughout the era. Ibid., 283.

Yethlan back with them.[101] We can assume that something had alerted Gray that there was a looming threat, and Hoskins would later attribute Chief Yethlan's stay to a reconnaissance mission "to see what look out we kept of nights."[102] Nuu-chah-nulth strategy included reconnaissance under the guise of diplomatic envoy, such as scouting new resources in enemy territory, like salmon streams, and returning to fight for possession.[103] Gray's blunt refusal to continue cordial diplomatic relations constituted a further breach of protocol. In the following weeks, the relationship deteriorated precipitously.

The Tla-o-qui-aht could have seen the large, masted *Columbia* as both the ultimate retribution for protocol violation and a means to gain greater wealth and prestige. At the beginning of February with the *Adventure* nearing completion, the *Columbia* was unmoored and sent away from its relatively secure position at Fort Defiance to be graved in a more accessible location. Hoskins objected to the move, because the ship would be vulnerable near a bank and without cannons properly positioned.[104] The increase in tension coincided with Tla-o-qui-aht preparations for an alleged intertribal offensive. By the 14th, guns were heard overnight near the ship.[105] The next day, Tootoocheetticus explained they that were preparing to attack the "Hichahats," and he sought advice on how to fire muskets at night.[106] Gough identifies this rival Nuu-chah-nulth group as the Hesquiaht, north of Clayoquot Sound.[107] Hoskins visited Wickaninnish at his village two days later. Witnessing a buzz of activity, he learned that an intertribal attack was imminent. Allied warriors were arriving, and the potential for an intertribal

[101] Ibid., 286.
[102] Ibid., 295.
[103] Swadesh, *Motivations*, 78-9, 85.
[104] (Hoskins). Howay, *Voyages*, 289.
[105] Ibid., 289.
[106] Ibid., 290.
[107] Gough, *Possessing*, 97.

offensive or an attack on the *Colombia* increased. As Wickaninnish and Tootiscoosettle continued to inquire about the status of the *Adventure* and the progress of graving *Columbia*, Hoskins perceived that the attack was meant for them.[108] On the 18th, an alleged conspiracy was exposed: The crew grew suspicious of Otto talking privately with Tootoocheetticus, who then "quickly snuck off.' When interrogated, Otto explained that the chief had pressured him to wet the flints and gun powder, as well as confiscate ammunition, to assist an imminent attack on the ship.[109] Indigenous leaders had learned from early contact that 'wetting the primer' disabled muskets and cannons.[110] Both Haswell and Hoskins corroborated the plot, which coupled with the observations they made of the amassing warriors from other allied tribes, made an attack on them seem imminent.

Gray and crew immediately moved the ship back toward Fort Defiance and began scraping the bottom hurriedly overnight.[111] As they worked, Haswell reported seeing two canoes approach the former position at the bank. Shortly thereafter, they heard cries of 'hooping' coming from a distance, which the crew perceived as the beginning of attack. The anxious crew spent the night on guard, firing cannons into the forest at least once.[112] Some of the crew members were somewhat accustomed to Indigenous "forest actions" (guerrilla warfare), because they had fought in the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) against Indigenous allies of the British.[113] Although no attack followed, they passed a very anxious night. In the next few days, the *Adventure* was launched, and Gray went on the offense. He stole skins from Wickaninnish's 'father' who came aboard the ship to trade while Tatoochekasettle stayed in his canoe beside the

[108] Ibid., 291-2.
[109] (Hoskins). Ibid., 292; (Haswell). Ibid., 329.
[110] Fisher, "Arms," 11.
[111] (Haswell). Howay, *Voyages*, 330.
[112] Ibid., 330.
[113] Gough, *Possessing*, 67.

ship (perhaps wary of being kidnapped for a third time).[114] As the *Columbia* was about to leave Clayoquot Sound for good, Gray sent Boit and a crew in three long boats to destroy the unoccupied village of Opitsaht (estimated at 200 houses).[115] In Gough's perspective, it was "a premediated act […] designed to check the Natives and destroy their military power."[116] The destruction of villages, occupied or not, had a precedent in pre-contact intertribal warfare, a tactic familiar to the Nuu-chah-nulth.[117] It was a grievous act. However, to assume that all Indigenous groups were terrorized by destructive attacks by fire or by cannon at this time, Fisher highlights, is presumptuous.[118] Regardless, it severed their relationship with the local Nuu-chah-nulth nations. The Tla-o-qui-aht would rebuild the village and maintain their self-directed agenda.

The amassing of allied warriors for an attack, no matter who it was against, demonstrated that the Tla-o-qui-aht were powerful and the intertribal geopolitical context was tense. Wickaninnish told Hoskins that the reason they were attacking the Hesquiaht was because they "had not of late in every respect paid them that homage which they thought due to so great a nation."[119] The Hesquiaht resided on the outer north sphere of Tla-o-qui-aht influence between Clayoquot Sound and Nootka Sound. Whether or not the '2,000 well-armed Tla-o-qui-aht men' were preparing to attack an intertribal foe or the crew of the *Columbia* is difficult to discern, but Haswell and crew assumed it was meant for them.[120] A multitude of protocol violations, including the kidnapping, had been made by the crew to this point. Wickaninnish and

[114] (Haswell). Howay, *Voyages*, 331.
[115] (Boit's Log of the Second Voyage of the *Columbia*). Howay, *Voyages*, 407.
[116] Gough *Possessing*, 97.
[117] Fisher, "Arms," 11.
[118] Ibid., 12.
[119] (Hoskins). Howay, *Voyages*, 290.
[120] Ibid., 97.

Tatoochkasettle were monitoring the progress of the *Adventure* almost daily, awaiting completion.[121] Gough suggests "they had also begun to think that the *Bostonahts* might not go away."[122] Regardless, "Wickaninnish could afford to play a two edged game with the European traders" according to Marshall, because of their great wealth derived from whaling, facilitating a superior trade position in an intertribal network that became plentiful in sea otter pelts.[123] The Tla-o-qui-aht were not necessarily dependant on any one ship, but ambushing one could have deterred future international visitors. They would not relent to European or *Bostonaht* pressure as the new season began.

The 1792 season was the busiest on Nuu-chah-nulth shores – twenty-six ships traded along the coast – leading to an inevitably strained supply chain and intense conflicts.[124] In Clayoquot Sound, William Brown's squadron committed thefts, murders, and disproportionate vengeance threatening the trade as a whole. His British 392-ton *Butterworth* led the sloops *Prince Le Boo* and *Jackal.* Brown and crew became frustrated by their inability to obtain furs as the season had begun to exhaust supply. He was especially annoyed after giving gifts to the Tla-o-qui-aht, as per protocol, only to find very few furs were available, according the to the *Margaret*'s officer David Lamb.[125] Brown was having an unprofitable year, like Gray had experienced the previous year.[126] Brown then claimed to be the victim of an unprovoked attack his men in early August.[127] However, *Bostonaht* Joseph Ingraham's second-hand rendition of

[121] Marshall, "A Political," 227.
[122] Gough, *Possessing*, 87.
[123] Marshall, "A Political," 228.
[124] Keith Thor Carlson and Colin Murray Osmond, "Clash at Clayoquot: Manifestations of Colonial and Indigenous Power in Pre-Settler Colonial Canada," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (2017): 168.
[125] Ibid., 176, 183.
[126] Ibid., 161, 171.
[127] F. W. Howay and T. C. Elliott, "Voyages of the "Jenny" to Oregon, 1792-94," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (1929): 201.

compatriot Bernard Magee's (*Margaret*) observations, provided an alternative account confirmed by more witnesses. While Ingraham's and Magee's nationalistic dislike for Brown may colour the account, they provided a clearer impetus behind 'the Tla-o-qui-aht attack.' During the morning of 5 August 1792, Brown and his men landed long boats, wielded their arms and robbed the Tla-o-qui-aht, entering longhouses and stealing pelts. The Tla-o-qui-aht quickly retaliated, incurring two deaths and three wounded. The *Butterworth* crew fled under a "steady volley of musket fire" while two canoes of Tla-o-qui-aht warriors pursued them, killing one sailor and wounding two others.[128] Ingraham (*Hope*) reported that Magee (*Margaret*) fired a cannon at the Tla-o-qui-aht to deter them from culminating their attack at the *Butterworth* (although, Brown claimed that the Americans had fired at his crew).[129] Brown had grievously contravened local protocol by his "own imprudence," not to mention the conventions established by years of trading between international visitors and local authorities.[130] Magee claims to have sent his first officer, who spoke the local dialect, to investigate. The villagers claimed that Brown and his crew had 'plundered' their canoes for "several days" before attacking the village.[131]

[128] Carlson, "Clash," 162.
[129] Joseph Ingraham, *Joseph Ingraham's Journal of the Brigantine Hope on a Voyage to the Northwest Coast of North America, 1790-92* (Barre, Mass: Imprint Society, 1971), 226.
[130] Ingraham, *Joseph*, 226; Carlson, "Clash," 163.
[131] Ibid., 186.

As the *Butterworth* squadron left the sound, they carried out a stunning act of disproportionate retributive violence which could only have provoked the Tla-o-qui-aht to take a more hard-line position overall. On 8 August 1792, Captain William Brown enticed a group of four chiefs (one brother to Wickaninnish) and five other Tla-o-qui-aht men onboard, had them whipped "in a most unmerciful manner" and "threw them into the sea" where the nearby *Jenny* fired on the injured men, killing them.[132] Missing both chiefs and warriors, Wickaninnish appealed to Maquinna to rectify the situation. Despite recent the diplomatic progress that Maquinna had made with the new Spanish Commander at Nootka Sound, Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, no investigation took place and justice was not served.[133]

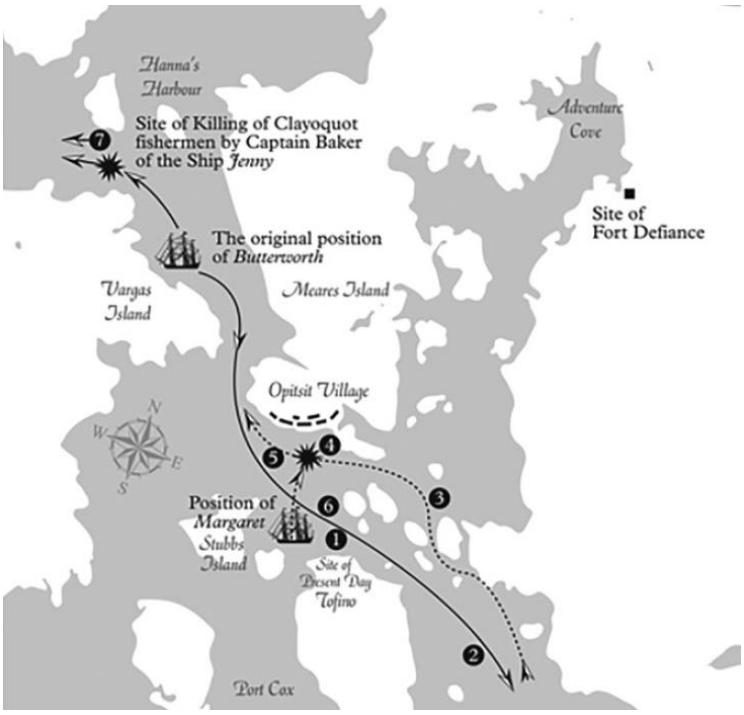

Figure 6: ***Map of the Butterworth squadron and the Jenny during August 1792***. Osmond, "Clash at Clayoquot," 184.

In the larger regional context, the three Nuu-chah-nulth allies / rivals negotiated the challenges of the exceptionally busy year differently. Starting in 1791, Manuel Quimper began to mend Spanish – Mowachaht diplomatic relations, a process forwarded by Bodega y Quadra in 1792. The Makah and Tla-o-qui-aht, however, grew increasingly wary of the Spanish. The Spanish attempted a settlement at Neah Bay, under Salvador Fidalgo y Lopegarcía (*Princesa*) in

[132] Ingraham, *Joseph*, 226.
[133] Ibid., 226; Moziño, *Noticias*, 43.

spring 1792. In July, the Makah killed Fidalgo's pilot, Antonio Serantes, near the settlement. Makah oral histories claim retribution for the sexual abuse by the Spanish.[134] Fidalgo's men then retaliated, killing eight Makah men, saving only two children.[135] Bodega y Quadra's logs indicate that he learned of the Serantes murder from a letter delivered to him by a passing ship. He wrote a response urging Fidalgo not to escalate the conflict, a letter which Maquinna agreed to deliver to Neah Bay himself.[136] On his way, however, Maquinna was stopped by his Nuu-chah-nulth allies who were "arranging the manner of revenge" for the *Butterworth* incident and wanted him to collaborate.[137] Marshall speculates that Maquinna now held the power balance in the region, because he could have joined an allied offensive. Instead, he decided against endorsing a concerted Nuu-chah-nulth war effort against the Spanish.[138] When Bodega y Quadra questioned Maquinna about an unrelated murder weeks later, Maquinna delivered an 'eloquent' response indicative of the potential for a coordinated, militaristic Nuu-chah-nulth offensive. Hawiths were trained from youth to become skilled orators, able to connect with "the minds and hearts of listeners" to enhance their prestige.[139] Maquinna amplified the threat of a regional, concerted offensive effort against an international adversary in stern diplomatic rhetoric:

> You would be the first whose life would be in great danger if we were enemies. You well know that Wickinanish has many guns as well as powder and shot; Captain Hana has more than a few, and that they, as well as the *Nuchimanes* [Nimpkish], are my relatives and allies, all of whom, united, make up a number incomparably greater than the Spanish, English, and Americans together, so that they would not be afraid to enter combat.[140]

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[134] Joshua L. Reid, *The Sea is My Country: The Maritime World of the Makahs, an Indigenous Borderlands People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 76.
[135] Ibid., 76.
[136] Marshall, "A Political," 233.
[137] Ibid., 234.
[138] Yvonne Marshall, "'Dangerous Liaisons': Maquinna, Quadra and Vancouver in Nootka Sound, 1790-1795," *Papers on the Vancouver Conference on Exploration and Discovery, April 24-26, 1992, Part I* (Burnaby: SFU, 1992), 203.
[139] Atleo, *Tsawalk*, 51.
[140] Moziño, *Noticias*, 56; Marshall provides clarifies that the "Nuchimanes" are the Nimpkish on the eastern side of Vancouver Island. Marshall, "A Political," 235.

While such an effort would have deterred overall international trade, it did not negate the possibility. A concerted regional war effort from such an organized, militaristic society would have exerted considerable militaristic power.

Figure 7: ***Fort San Miguel at Santa Cruz de Nuca (Yuquot, Nootka Sound) in 1793.*** Sigismund Bacstrum, (ca. 1750-1805), "View of the Spanish Fort and Cove at Nootka Sound, no. 20 [36]," Yale University Library: Digital Collection.

PART THREE – THE VOLATILITY OF TRADE

Each side had advantages and disadvantages when it came to power dynamics. While the mutuality of lucrative international trade typically offset violence, each side continued to take precautions and augment their defences accordingly. As time passed, the *Bostonaht* owners sent larger crews meant to be more alert.[141] They designed ships with loopholes for musket fire and hatches convertible to quasi 'pill-boxes,' and ships were equipped with anti-boarding nets, cutlasses and boarding pikes, and armed with swivel guns on bulwarks, cannons with grape, langrage, or canister.[142] Under optimal conditions, these arms offered adequate protection. As much as they were a deterrent against an attack, they would also have made a valuable prize for Indigenous groups. Although the Tla-o-qui-aht had traded for arms and cannons, ammunition would have inevitably run out. They still preferred covert coordinated attacks with handheld, traditional weapons, such as bows made of hardwood backed by sinew, arrows of hardwood with shell or bone tips (typically barbed), and lances or spears that were used as pikes or bayonets.[143] By 1795, trade conventions were altered to deal with the potentiality for hostilities. The Tal-o-qua-aht required prominent hostages be exchanged as collateral to board ships and engage in trade.[144] Wickaninnish nor his brothers would board ships at night unaccompanied.[145] While both parties had increased their defences, another tactic devised by Wickaninnish could have been considered collaborative.

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[141] Phelps, *Fur Traders*, 24.
[142] Ibid., 24; Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 84.
[143] Fisher, "Arms," 4-5.
[144] Lynch, *Claiming*, 66.
[145] Charles Bishop, *The Journal and Letters of Captain Charles Bishop on The North-West Coast of America, in The Pacific and in New South Wales, 1794–1799*, ed. and intro. Michael Roe (Cambridge, Eng., 1967), 105.

In 1793, the Tla-o-qui-aht began to encourage *Bostonahts* to get involved in intertribal affairs on their behalf, encouraging disproportionate attacks on adversaries. Intertribal rivalries and warfare were of course common in the region. When trader – Indigenous incidents occurred with his rivals, Wickaninnish now sought to exploit them to his own advantage. In September, as the *Jefferson* wintered in Toquaht (Ucluelet) territory to the south in Barkley Sound, first officer Bernard Magee reported that Wickaninnish visited them often.[146] On one visit, Wickaninnish learned that a crew member had recently been killed in Toquart Bay. He suggested that the crew should kill two of the suspected nation in retaliation.[147] On a different visit, he learned that the crew had witnessed a rival Barkley Sound tribe referred to as the "Clahasset" plunder a local Toquaht village, "carrying off two young girls as slaves."[148] Wickaninnish suggested that the crew ought to attack them and kill "40 of the local people as they were 'troublesome' and had 'paid him little tribute.'"[149] The *Jefferson* crew, however, declined to interfere in the intertribal conflict. However, just before they left for the season in April 1794, they did raid and raze the Tseshaht village (possibly on Benson Island) to avenge frequent thefts from the ship. It was an all-out assault, "firing swivel and blunderbuss guns" causing casualties, forcing the villagers to flee, pillaging the village for any valuables, and then destroying structures.[150] Any additional

[146] The *Jefferson* wintered at Toquart Bay at the invitation of the Toquaht (Ucluelet) Chief Huiquis. His warriors were the same who had defended their territorial boundary against Pantoja in 1791. Although they were under Tla-o-qui-aht influence, intertribal trade here was freer – many local chiefs from as far north as Ahousaht and south as Ditidaht came here to trade. Howay, *A List*, 134; Traditions Consulting Services, Inc.; Chatwin Engineering Ltd. *Culture and Heritage Study, Marine Resource Sites and Activities, Maa-nulth First Nations, Huu-ay-aht First Nation Project Final Report*, *2004*, 21.
[147] Mary Malloy, *"Boston Men" on the Northwest Coast: The American Maritime Fur Trade, 1788-1844* (Kingston, Ont: Limestone Press, 1998), 57.
[148] Traditions, *Culture*, 21.
[149] Ibid., 21.
[150] Ibid., 21; Ridley, *Morning*, 337.

support from well-armed *Bostonaht* crews could further the Tla-o-qui-aht cause intertribally, however informal or temporary.

Besides encouraging the *Jefferson* crew to kill their adversaries, the Tla-o-qui-aht decided to use their wealth and trade acumen to buy a masted ship. Bernard Magee reported that Tatoocheticus (Wickaninnish's brother) arrived in Barkley Sound to negotiate with Captain Josiah Roberts of the *Jefferson* to buy his ninety-ton schooner *Resolution* for fifty prime otter skins.[151] After a month of negotiations, the three Tla-o-qui-aht brothers finally inspected the ship and struck a deal. However, Roberts wanted to finish the trading season first, so he sent the schooner to the Columbia River for one more fateful trading mission. Intentionally or otherwise, it never returned.[152] Wickaninnish made a similar offer to Charles Bishop of the *Ruby.* In early October 1795, Bishop waited for days in Ucluelet territory for Wickaninnish to arrive so that he could trade solely with him.[153] Bishop did so because he respected Wickaninnish's bold trade style which he described as backed by wealth and guided by intelligence.[154] When Wickaninnish and his brothers arrived, he "Suprized" Bishop, "demanding to know if [he] would sell the Ship" in return for a "Cago [sic] of Furs."[155] Bishop refused in part because, like most other traders, he did not own the ship. Instead, Bishop 'promised' to oversee the construction and delivery of a new ship made to Wickaninnish's specifications for a "very ample Quantity of the best Skins."[156] Wickaninnish's brothers provided detailed specifications: "54 feet in length and 16 feet Beam: 6

[151] Marshall, "A Political," 240.
[152] Ibid., 240.
[153] Charles Bishop recorded that Maquinna died at this time. Bishop had noticed was ill when at Nootka. Days later in Barkley Sound, Wickaninnish and his brothers asked him to stay there for two days while they went north to deal with his death (Bishop, *The Journal*, 106-7). Again, the possible death of the person holding the title of Maquinna highlights that this narrative focalizes the Mowachaht leadership position over the role of the individual.
[154] Ibid., 108.
[155] Ibid., 106.
[156] Ibid., 107.

Carriage Guns & Schooner Rigged with a Gigg Wale Boat."[157] The Indigenous-backed order for a modern masted ship had a parallel 4,500 km to the south east. Hawaiian King Kamehameha had the forty-five-ton schooner *Tamana* built in 1805.[158] As the Sandalwood trade picked up in Hawaii, Kamehameha II bought six ships in his aspiration to establish a Hawaiian navy in in 1810.[159] Whether Wickaninnish wanted a ship to defend his territory and "keep his ascendency" as Gough claims,[160] or sail directly for Canton and remove the middleman from the trade process as Marshall claims,[161] his actions were in line with other Indigenous peoples across the Pacific. The Tla-o-qui-aht attempt to buy a ship ultimately failed. As sea otter neared extinction in Nootka Sound and Clayoquot Sound, *Bostonahts* shifted trade to Haida Gwaii. Although they continued to visit Nuu-chah-nulth territories for provisions, such as fresh water and foodstuffs, fewer foreign vessels meant fewer opportunities to acquire a modern ship in trade or by seizure.

As the fur trade declined precipitously after 1795 in Nuu-chah-nulth territories, the first major ship seizure occurred at Nootka Sound. The story became a well-known frontier survival story in American history. Survivor John Jewitt (1783-1821) published his journals, and later, the highly romanticized narrative, ghost written by American author Richard Alsop, became widely publicized.[162] Maquinna had fostered a peaceable reputation at Nootka Sound over the era, even during much of the Spanish occupation. That came to an end in dramatic fashion. The *Boston* arrived in 1803. Its captain, John Salter, treated Maquinna poorly. Salter gifted Maquinna a

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[157] Ibid., 107.
[158] Howay, *A List*, 60.
[159] Ibid., 122.
[160] Gough, *Possessing*, 99.
[161] Marshall, "A Political," 228.
[162] Historian Richard Ingles says that Alsop "invented a few dramatic incidents" and "improved others," so the narrative, as well as the journal for that matter, must be treated with caution. Alice W. Shurcliff and Sarah Shurcliff Ingelfinger, *Captive of The Nootka Indians: The Northwest Coast Adventure of John R. Jewitt, 1802-1806* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1993), xi.

"double barrel musket" which Maquinna returned, claiming it was defective. Salter became "very angry, called him a liar, took the musket and threw it down in the cabin."[163] Even though Jewitt, the ship's smith and armourer, reported that he could fix it, Maquinna left the ship deeply offended. He returned the next day with warriors under the guise of ceremony only to commence the armed seizure of the ship. According to Jewitt, the Hawith convinced Salter to dispatch some crew members to a good fishing spot, splitting the crew. Maquinna and men then commenced a ceremonial dance and song wearing a "very ugly mask of wood" (a war mask) to the delight of Salter.[164] Maquinna then signalled his warriors to murder the crew with handheld weapons and take the ship. Maquinna had Jewitt spared to be his personal armourer. Incidentally, the sail maker, John Thompson, survived, and, for a time, made sails for Maquinna's canoes.[165] The

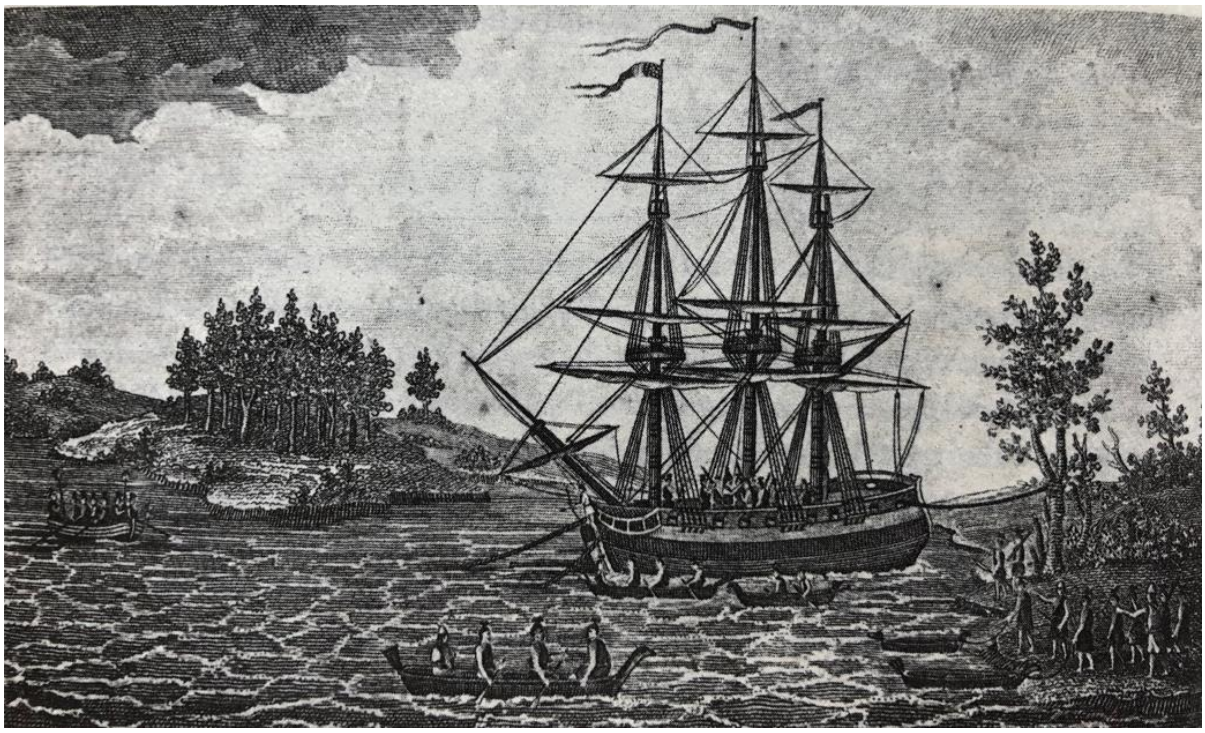

Figure 8: ***The Attack on The Boston 1803***, taken from *The Adventures and Sufferings of John R. Jewitt* (Boston, 1816). Reid, *The Sea*, 78.

[163] Ibid., 112.
[164] Ibid., 29.
[165] Ibid., 112.

Mowachaht, however, could not sail the vessel, nor keep it as a prize. The sails and masts were disabled, then four days later, a Mowachaht member accidentally set it on fire.[166] Nevertheless, provisions, including weapons and cannons, had been removed from the ship, leading to potlaches and increased defensive armaments. Besides its historical notoriety, this major seizure made international news. Reid highlights that "[n]ews of the cannon battery Maquinna had set up in front of the village […] travelled on to Mexico City and Spain, via San Blas."[167] Any future traffic was further jeopardized after the Mowachaht fired on the *Juno* and *Mary* which arrived near Yuquot days later.[168] Reid asserts that the attack was motivated primarily by Maquinna's "wanning" prestige and geopolitical influence.[169] Mowachaht oral histories tell of motivation rooted in a reaction to cumulative slights and abuses by traders over the years, making this seizure the ultimate act of tribal defence.[170] Both underlying motivations are possible, but it is probable that Salter's direct insult to Maquinna triggered the act, a diplomatic and personal slight that warranted retribution.

In June 1811, the Tla-o-qui-aht welcomed an extremely valuable and symbolic ship, the *Tonquin*, whose captain and supercargo exemplified the highs and lows of international relations in Nuu-chah-nulth territories during this era. American tycoon John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company (PFC) sent the ninety-four-foot, 290-ton, *Tonquin,* to establish the first American colony in the Pacific Northwest and reorient trade from inland networks to the Pacific Ocean. After reaching the new American settlement of Astoria on the Columbia River, a site that the

[166] Jewitt's version of the events is corroborated by Ahousaht elder Peter Webster. Webster also notes that a Nuu-chah-nulth man had previously sailed to Europe aboard a European vessel, attaining sailing knowledge on the journeys. This man was put in charge of sailing the ship "2 or 3 miles" to Yuquot. Ibid., 112-3; Efrat, *Nu·tka*, 61.
[167] Reid, *The Sea*, 83.
[168] Shurcliff, *Captive*, 23.
[169] Reid, *The Sea*, 78.
[170] Marshall, "A Political," 270; Efrat, *Nu·tka*, 60.

Tonquin was meant to assist in developing, it hastily set out on its initial trade mission, stopping first at Clayoquot Sound. All reports of the violence which transpired stem from the lone survivor of the thirty crewmen, Quinault guide, Joseachal (George Ramsey or Lamayzie) – he survived the international incident and received safe harbour in Tla-o-qui-aht territory partly due to his familial relations to Maquinna.[171] From that testimony came dozens of conflicting accounts of location and motive.[172] American author and historian Washington Irving, hired by Astor to romanticize (and sensationalize) the ultimately failed business venture,[173] provided a third hand account at best, but his "main points" have been said to align with Tla-o-qui-aht's generational understanding of the event.[174] The ship is generally agreed to have docked near the Tla-o-qui-aht summer village of Echachis.[175] While in port, PFC agent (supercargo) Alexander McKay and Captain Johnathan Thorn demonstrated the two divergent paths traders would take with diplomacy during the maritime fur trade. McKay led an overnight diplomatic envoy to the summer village while Thorn stayed aboard.[176] While McKay was away with Wickaninnish, Thorn traded with Chief Nookamis (Heeshi-a) who drove a hard bargain. Infuriated by Indigenous directed trade, Thorn grabbed a fur from the chief, shoved it in his face, then threw him overboard.[177] Such conduct was a major diplomatic transgression. The 'lesser' chief was still

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[171] Gough, *Possessing*, 118.
[172] E.W. Giesecke, "Search for the Tonquin: Part 3" *Cumtux – Clatsop Country Historical Society Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (1990), 24.
[173] Malloy, *Boston Men*, 5.
[174] Giesecke, "Search," 28.
[175] E.W Giesecke, "Search for the Tonquin: Part 1" Cumtux – Clatsop Country Historical Society Quarterly 10, no. 3 (1990): 7; E.W. Giesecke, "Search for the Tonquin: Part 2" Cumtux – Clatsop Country Historical Society Quarterly 10, no. 4 (1990): 11. Giesecke, "Search […] Part 3," 29.
[176] Irving recorded it as being one night, but Franchere, an Astoria trader who had personably communicated with the witness, claimed it was several nights. Irving also wrote that six natives were taken onboard as collateral during the visit. Washington Irving, *Astoria, Or, Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains* (R. Bentley, 1836; eBook), 174; Gabriel Franchere, *Narrative of a Voyage to the Northwest Coast of America in the Years 1811, 1812, 1813, and 1814 Or the First American Settlement on the Pacific*, Translated and Edited by J. V. Huntington (New York; Redfield: 1854), 125.
[177] Franchere, *Narrative*, 125; Irving, *Astoria*, 175-6.

a major player in local leadership. Gough points out, "[f]or Nookamis we can substitute for Wickaninnish, for he set the style of trade."[178] McKay apparently pled for Thorn to depart immediately after learning of the slight. He had become acquainted with the strength of Wickaninnish, an ally of Nookamis, during his visit to the Tla-o-qui-aht village. Irving emphasized Thorn's reliance on the superiority of western weapons as well as customs: it was "sufficient safeguard against naked savages."[179] The advantage that these weapons offered, however, was overblown. British Royal Navy officer (*Chatham*) Peter Puget had realized years before that a coordinated and disciplined Native attack would probably succeed regardless of ship armaments.[180] As trade declined and the interest in obtaining a ship increased, the *Tonquin*, now a site of diplomatic disrespect, became fair game.

The seizure and subsequent explosion of the *Tonquin* is an infamous chapter in Nuu-chah-nulth history – the details have been explained differently, but the immediate and overarching motives are well-known. Howay's "Loss of the 'Tonquin'" (1922), a comparative study of Gabriel Franchere's and Ross Cox's accounts of Joseachal's testimony, still stands as the primary insight into events.[181] While discrepancies appear, the main

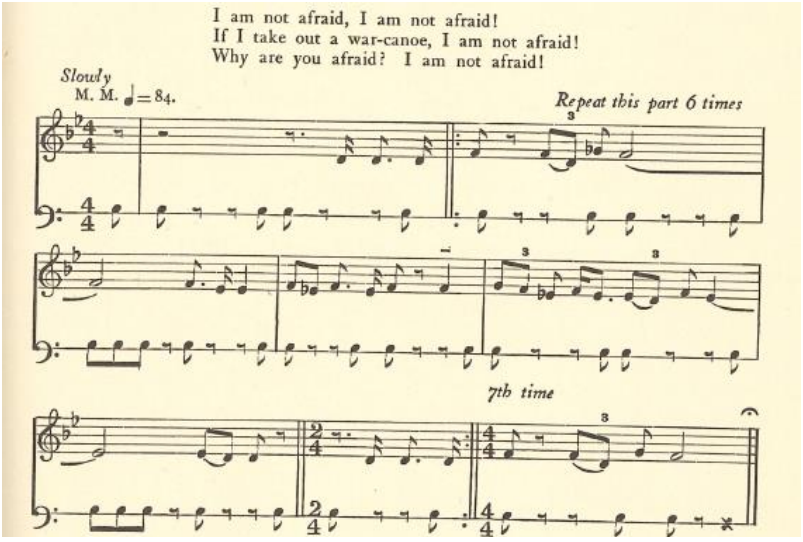

Figure 9: ***A Written Version of a Tla-o-qui-aht 'War Song.'*** *The Portable Curtis - Selected Writings of Edward S. Curtis*, Barry Gifford (ed.), (Berkeley: Creative Arts Book Company, 1976), 101.

[178] Gough, *Possessing*, 119.
[179] Irving, *Astoria*, 177.
[180] Fisher, "Arms," 13.
[181] F. W. Howay, "The Loss of the 'Tonquin,'" *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1922), 85-9.

points show that while Thorn and McKay slept, twenty or more seemingly unarmed Tla-o-qui-aht warriors (handheld weapons concealed) returned the next morning and were allowed aboard despite the ship's protocol that Indigenous groups only be allowed to board at the captain's discretion.[182] A brutal attack ensued, and shortly thereafter, all but a few of the crew were killed. While the Europeans saw surprise attack as 'treacherous,' it was a sound option for Indigenous soldiers who tried to minimize casualties. After massacring most of the crewmembers, the Tla-o-qui-aht left the ship only to return the next day by the dozens, possibly lured on board by a survivor, who then exploded over four tons of gunpowder below deck.[183] This suicidal act of sabotage was catastrophic, killing between 80-200 Tla-o-qui-ahts on or near the ship.[184] It is unclear if Wickaninnish participated directly or survived the explosion, because ships avoided the area for decades following the incident. Regardless, it was a dark moment for the Tla-o-qa-aht that convinced many of them to disengage from further international trade.[185] As news of the incident inevitably spread across the region and the continent, ships kept away and now frequented Makah territory instead.[186] The Tla-o-qui-aht lost many men, a *Bostonaht* ship, and the good standing of the sound as a relatively safe port of call. The tumultuous era ended in a dramatic international incident.

The Nuu-chah-nulth strategies of seizing ships fit a larger pattern of Indigenous power across the Pacific. Hawaiians were known to seize ships. A group took the small American

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[182] Irving, *Astoria*, 178-80; Gough, *Possessing*, 119.
[183] Howay, "Loss," 87-8; Giesecke, "Search […] Part 1," 3.
[184] Gough, *Possessing*, 109.
[185] Reid, *The Sea*, 82.
[186] Ibid., 87. Robert Kemp second mate on the brig *Otter* stated that the number of skins available in 1810 was too few to warrant further endeavours from Boston. Malloy, *Boston Men*, 38; Historian E.W. Giesecke argues that the *Tonquin* stopped at Clayoquot Sound first by mistake. Due to his inexperience with the coast, Thorn received little advice from secretive competitors. They may not have known that the trade had shifted to Haida Gwaii. Giesecke "Loss of the Tonquin: Part 3," 35.

schooner *Fair American* in 1789, killing the captain and five crew.[187] William Brown and the crews of his *Butterworth* squadron were massacred when their ships were seized in 1795. Brown had allied with one Hawaiian group in an inter-island conflict and then went on a fateful power trip that alienated them.[188] Ship seizures also occurred in Haida Gwaii. In 1794, Howay suggests that three ships were presumed captured in Haida Gwaii with all, but two men killed.[189] Over the era, many ships disappeared in rough seas, and some were suspected of being 'cut off' by Indigenous groups. With few available Indigenous oral histories, these mysteries remain unsolved. It is safe to assume, however, that many Indigenous leaders in the Pacific strategized how to best seize foreign vessels, for a variety of reasons, despite the difference in weapons technology. Whether remediating a diplomatic slight or increasing chiefly prestige, a ship laden with cargo represented a potentially valuable asset. As Clayton summarizes, Wickaninnish, like other Indigenous leaders, balanced the difference between "the performative search for prestige and the demonstrative exercise of power," dealing with the *Bostonahts* or intertribal adversaries alike.[190] In Clayoquot Sound, the foreigners entered the jurisdiction of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation.

[187] Howay, "A List," 118.
[188] Ridley, *Morning*, 352-3, 355-6.
[189] Howay, "Attacks," 296-8.
[190] Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 140.

CONCLUSION – A VIBRANT AND VIOLENT ERA

Many European and American sources and a smattering of Indigenous sources allow us to take a close look at power relations in Clayoquot Sound between 1785-1811. These European sources have previously been used to tell of the complete voyages of these ships made or certain incidences they were involved in. Re-orienting the focal point to a specific geographic location – the sovereign territory of the Tla-o-qui-aht within the greater Nuu-chah-nulth region – allows for a better understanding of how explorers and traders perceived Wickaninnish and his people. The scarcity of Tla-o-qui-aht sources is a real problem that hinders this study. However, we can gain glimpses into this time and place through Western accounts, parsing back the rampant self-interest and prejudice, to tell a clearer *story* of this shared era of early inter-cultural and commercial exchange and conflict.

The overall period exhibits several patterns of Tla-o-qui-aht dominance in Clayoquot Sound, indicative of Nuu-chah-nulth sovereignty over their lands and waters. In peaceful times, the Tla-o-qui-aht conducted trade on their own terms. When violence occasionally erupted, it typically fit Nuu-chah-nulth strategies of warfare, retaliating for European / *Bostonaht* breaches of protocol.

Controlling the Terms of Trade

International trade largely occurred on Tla-o-qui-aht terms to the chagrin of many captains, offering great benefits for both sides. Foreigners were expected to gift respectable presents before trade could begin, allow local leaders aboard and attend local ceremonies. Although the sea otter trade was an ecological disaster, the exchange of their furs for European commodities was largely mutually beneficial and peaceful. Trade allowed Nuu-chah-nulth

leaders to increase their power, prestige and wealth. For the Tla-o-qui-aht who had expanded their territory and resource base before the era began, international trade fit into a longer pattern of regional ascendancy. While European / *Bostonaht* traders were able to garner large profits in China for the furs they procured, the Tla-o-qui-aht obtained a range of sought-after goods which varied to meet preference. In terms of power dynamics, the most significant commodity was modern industrial weapons which bolstered Tla-o-qui-aht militaristic power as both a practical threat and a symbolic deterrent to traders and adversarial tribes.[191] As a seafaring culture centred around whaling, shipping technology was sought after. Wickaninnish assembled his canoes with masts (from readily available cedar trees) and sails (a Euro American trade commodity) to improve their range and dexterity. Buying or seizing a masted vessel would not only improve their hunting capabilities but increase prestige and militaristic prominence.

Conflict Remediation

European diplomatic slights, threats, kidnappings and assaults typically led to Tla-o-qui-aht (and Nuu-chah-nulth) retaliation, sometimes delayed, sometimes immediate. While the kidnappings of Tatoochkasettle led to delayed retributive offensives to maximize success and potential gain, the response to the *Butterworth* crew raiding Opitsaht represented an immediate defensive measure. Another element of Nuu-chah-nulth territorial defence were the reprisals for incursions by adversaries. Spanish explorers triggered Ahousaht defensive measures while mapping the northern sound, further demonstrating that Europeans had entered Indigenous territories governed by local protocols.

[191] Fisher, "Arms," 18.

On the European / *Bostonaht* side, captains avenged real or perceived Nuu-chah-nulth offensives with forceful counterattacks and destructive attacks of their own. From the *Argonaut* crew repelling an attempted sacking, to the *Columbia* crew burning down Opitsaht after uncovering a suspected plot to seize their ships, the foreigners recognised that they had to have a forceful counterattack or attempt to project their own authority through intimidation. Still, in Tla-o-qui-aht territory, direct trade, diplomacy, and retaliatory responses inevitably happened mostly on Tla-o-qui-aht terms.

Seizing a Ship

The act of seizing a foreign ship whose crew had transgressed local protocol was a sovereign right of the Tla-o-qui-aht. As the ultimate remediation of diplomatic disrespect, slights and violence, the Nuu-chah-nulth often treated the foreigners as they were a rival nation. The Mowachaht attempt to seize James Hanna's *Sea Otter* after the humiliation of Maquinna offered a dual purpose: redress the diplomatic slight and seize a relatively small, masted ship. This dual potential guided later Tla-o-qui-aht offensives. The ships, after all, were 'floating villages' representative of the crew, company or nation that sent them, and in effect, foreign territory. The Nuu-chah-nulth occasionally engaged in offensives tantamount to a "full-scale war of annihilation," like the Tla-o-qui-aht had with the Esowistaht decades previous. The same brutal tactic would be applied to ship a ship seizure resulting in the massacre of the crew.[192] This pattern, paralleled by Indigenous seizures of European ships throughout the Pacific, was solidified when the Mowachaht seized the *Boston*, and the Tla-o-qui-aht seized the *Tonquin*.

[192] Atleo, *Tsawalk*, 136.

International trade moved away from Nootka and Clayoquot Sounds following the seizures, which most likely arose from personal slights from the heavy-handed captains. After the *Boston* burned, and the *Tonquin* exploded killing dozens of Tla-o-qui-aht, further opportunities for trade or ship procurement were negated, and the international trade that enriched local Nuu-chah-nulth leaders ceased. It is impossible to know with certainty Nuu-chah-nulth motives for capturing ships given the mostly one-sided evidence. However, Europeans themselves perceived the real threat posed by powerful local groups and typically worked to foster peaceable trade relations with Nuu-chah-nulth leaders to avoid open conflict while the ships were in their sovereign territories.

Overall, this microhistory redirects our focus away from the colonial gaze that had largely dismissed Indigenous peoples as an unpredictable threat.[193] It reveals a complex pattern of power dynamics that both sides negotiated. The period saw both sides enrich themselves through the benefits of trade, though that exchange of commodities and diplomacy invariably happened on Tla-o-qui-aht terms. A wide range of offenses were inevitably met with a decisive response. The historiography of the era has shifted over the decades from presumptions of Indigenous cultural and societal inferiority to narratives romanticizing the mutual enrichment of trade or perpetuating victimization. To argue that the era had a wholly detrimental effect on the Tla-o-qui-aht necessitates caution, because Atleo deems this the worst type of victimization narrative. Comprehending an Indigenous culture as less "authentic" and consequently tainted due

[193] This sentiment has endured for almost two centuries. In his popular history book about the *Tonquin* debacle, anthropologist Gary Brannon stated that the Tla-o-qui-aht "gained a reputation of being both a savage and unpredictable people." Gary R Brannon, *The Last Voyage of the Tonquin: An Ill-Fated Expedition to the Pacific Northwest*. (Waterloo, Ont: Escart Press, 1992), 67.

to contact and engagement with Western cultures "is a most arrogant position to hold because it attributes inordinate and unreasonable powers of transformation to the colonizers."[194] Historians, such as Fisher, Clayton, and Reid have begun to shift the Western gaze to acknowledge Indigenous nations with rich histories, complex intertribal familial relations, trade networks, politics, warfare, and spirituality. As Clayton aptly recognizes, "The maritime fur trade was not a one-way traffic, with traders exploiting Natives, and it should not be studied in terms of White power and Native resistance."[195] Shedding the supremacy narrative of righteous explorers and traders having their way in the Nuu-chah-nulth coast from colonial interpretations is especially difficult given our reliance on this viewpoint for insight into the era. Yet it is through these records, interpreted with the healthy degree of relativism their subjectivity demands, that a strong Tla-o-qui-aht presence emerges. Led by Wickaninnish, they maintained control and defended their sovereign territories during an era where Clayoquot Sound was an international trade hub. The Tla-o-qui-aht and many other Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations continue to live in their territories, residing beside settlers, while defending their sovereign rights.

[194] Atleo, *Tsawalk*, 76.
[195] Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 78.

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