

# Guide to the Owen Luck, Photographs of Haida Gwaii, British Columbia

WA Photos Folio 178



by Matthew Daniel Mason

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
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**CALL NUMBER:** WA Photos Folio 178

**CREATOR:** Luck, Owen Craig, 1947- , photographer

**TITLE:** Photographs of Haida Gwaii, British Columbia

**DATES:** 2012

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 5 linear feet (3 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** Inscriptions in English.

**SUMMARY:** Photographs of Haida Gwaii (formerly known as the Queen Charlotte Islands), British Columbia, created during the summer of 2012, and printed as 77 inkjet prints that document the Haida and Kwakwak'awakw (also known as Kwakiutl) people and cultures.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.luckwpf178>

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## Requesting Instructions

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Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Owen Luck on the Walter McClintock Memorial Fund, 2013.

## Conditions Governing Access

The Owen Luck, Photographs of Haida Gwaii, British Columbia, are the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

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## Preferred Citation

Owen Luck, Photographs of Haida Gwaii, British Columbia. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

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## Processing Notes

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit. These materials have been arranged and described according to national and local standards. For more information, please refer to the Beinecke Manuscript Unit Processing Manual.

Each folder in the collection contains a single inkjet print.

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## Owen Luck (born 1947)

Owen Luck is an American photographer known for his photography of Native American and First Nation Canadian life and history. In 1973, after serving two tours as a combat medic in Vietnam, Luck travelled to Pine Ridge, South Dakota to provide medical support during the occupation of Wounded Knee by the American Indian Movement (AIM). He also carried a camera and created an extensive record of the confrontation between AIM and the United States Marshals Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation agents, and other law enforcement agencies. His account of that experience, "A Witness at Wounded Knee 1973," was published in *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* in 2006. In 1975 Luck documented the Menominee Warrior Society's occupation of the abandoned Alexian Brothers Novitiate in Gresham, Wisconsin, near the Menominee Indian Reservation. Since 2004 he has worked among indigenous communities of the Pacific Northwest. Luck has donated photographs to Ogallala Lakota College in Pine Ridge, to the Haida Gwaii Museum in Skidegate, and to the Makah Museum in Neah Bay. Significant collections of his work are held by Princeton University Library and the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

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## Description of Photographs

Photographs of Haida Gwaii (formerly known as the Queen Charlotte Islands), British Columbia, created during the summer of 2012, that document the Haida and Kwakwak'awakw (also known as Kwakiutl) people and cultures.

Images of Haida include portraits of Haida artisans Christian White and Vernon White as well as dancers from the Tluu Xaada Naay Society (Canoe Peoples House) including Roberta Kennedy (Haida name Kung Jaadee), Cynthia Anne Samuels (Haida name Gulee), Tiffany Amber Vanderhoop, and Bryce Williams (member of the Coast Salish). Includes images from the coronation of Allen Davidson (Haida name Skil Hiilans) from the St'langng Laanaas clan as one of the potlatched hereditary leaders of Haida, which was also attended by fellow Haida leader Roy Collison (Haida name Gya awhlans) of the Kuun Laanaas clan. Other images include the burning of a headdress by Georgia Liddle Bennett (Haida name K'inggay 'liwaans).

Images related to the Kwakwak'awakw include views at Alert Bay on Cormorant Island of totem poles, the "big house," and the derelict St. Michael's Indian Residential School. A group of images document a potlatch at the big house in Alert Bay led by Beau Dick (Kwakwak'awakw name Walas Gwa'yam) that includes an initiation ceremony for the Hamatsa society, dances, and the burning of traditional masks with identified attendees including Corey Bullpit, Bill Cranmer, Gwaliga Hart, and Christian White.

The collection also includes a view of the mural, *Sunset Whale Tail*, by Jeff King at Prince Rupert.

Signed, numbered, and dated by the photographer on versos of prints.

Edition number 1 of 15.

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## **Arrangement**

Arranged by the photographer.

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## Collection Contents

### Inkjet Prints

Photographs of Haida Gwaii (formerly known as the Queen Charlotte Islands), British Columbia, created during the summer of 2012, that document the Haida and Kwakwak'awakw (also known as Kwakiutl) people and cultures.

The descriptive titles of images and associated notes in this guide are by the photographer. Notes by the processing archivist are in brackets.

Arranged by the photographer.

Haida Gwaii		
b. 1, f. 1	1. Prince Rupert Mural "I have photographed many times in [black-and-white] but it never resonated as it does in color."  [The mural is <i>Sunset Whale Tail</i> by Jeff King.]	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 2	2. Christian White and his son Vernon "Christian has since completed the Totem Pole and, as is his wont, [he] has not revealed the final destination of the Pole to be raised. Sharing with only a few of us the story the pole tells. I will disclose the story and the raising site after the task is completed."	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 3	3. Christian laying out totem pole	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 4	4. Christian getting tattoo	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 5	5. Finished tattoo	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 6	6. Burning Ravens Tail headdress "This evening was particularly poignant as Georgia Bennett, [a] Raven's Tail Weaver, passed a Ravens Tail Headdress around the fire to be cut and thrown piece by piece and. burned in the fire.  A few years ago, a man posing as a photographer came to Haida Gwaii and befriended many people while taking portraits. In the end he did not make good on delivering photographs that were already paid for, and left town with Georgia Bennett's work including the headdress, an apron and leggings. It took over a year for the thief to be arrested and imprisoned, and Georgia's weavings returned. This was her response."	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 7	6a. Tluu Xaada Naay (Canoe Peoples House) Dancers	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 8	7. Cynthia Samuels (Haida name Gulee)	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 9	8. Bryce Williams	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 10	9. Roberta Kennedy (Haida name Kung Jaadee)	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 11	10. Tiffany Vanderhoop	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 12	11. Then and Now	2012 Summer

Coronation

## Coronation (continued)

b. 1, f. 13	12. Allen Davidson is crowned with Hereditary Chief's headdress of white ermine and frontlet of red cedar and abalone.	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 14	13. Wrapped in Ravens Tail Blanket	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 15	14. Chief leads men in first dance	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 16	15. Haida women's dance	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 17	16. It is always about the generations . . . "It is always about the generations and encouraging children from a very young age in the ways of the Haida culture."	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 18	17. Two worlds	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 19	18. Dancers from Skidegate honor the new chief	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 20	19. Skidegate Moon Dance	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 21	20. Hereditary Chief Roy Collison	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 22	21. Eagle Dancer of tomorrow	2012 Summer

## Kwakwak'awakw

Alert Bay, Cormorant Island, British Columbia, Canada

"My photographs are set in the complicated context of the raw emotional, and spiritual energy of the Potlatch rather than the cloistered museum setting, or posed studio images. Here in the atmosphere of pageantry where dancers, and singers adorned in the living art of woven wool Chilkat robes, cedar hats, and button blankets regalia, magnificent sculpted masks engage, storytelling dances, songs, and recitations that reaffirm families spiritual status inherited from transcendent, primordial ancestors with the intangible treasures of honor and power. Keeping the moments of the past, the present, and the future as one fluid continuum."

b. 1, f. 23	22. This Mortuary Pole was raised in 2009 "[In 2009] Kwakwaka'wakw hereditary leader and artist Beau Dick called a Potlatch and invited the Haida to Potlatch in memory of their shared history. [According to Candace Weir White,] 'There was no formal, 'golden-western-civilized way-invitation' for this event, it wasn't put out like that. It was oral. This is how our people used to do things - the word was spread up and down the coast and the message would get around. People would either go or not, and we went - we took the invitation seriously. . . . We'd heard about the trip and we knew its significance, we were going! Small Pox wiped out as much as sixty percent of the Haida population. In many villages one hundred percent were lost. There are stories from White and Native People as to how this all was handled. Claims that a Minister instructed the Haida that God was punishing them for their mortuary practices and Totemic Art, and would only give vaccines to those who would convert, while others regaled the Hudson Bay Company for providing vaccines for Haida in Victoria. That is until they began forcing Haida to leave when they fell ill to the disease brought on the Steamer Brother John from San Francisco, on March 12, 1862."	2012 Summer
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## Kwakwak'awakw (continued)

b. 1, f. 24	23. Here at the base of the 178 feet tallest totem pole in the world we can see the Big House	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 25	24. Protestation scrawled on the walls of the derelict St. Michael's Anglican Residential School  [Luck cites the following quote from the Anglican Church of Canada website about St. Michael's School at Alert Bay, British Columbia]: "In 1877, the Church Missionary Society persuaded [Reverend] James Hall to relocate his Anglican mission at Fort Rupert, BC to nearby Alert Bay. The following year, [Reverend] Hall built a mission house where day schooling was first provided for native children, mostly drawn from the local reserve-ancestors of today's Nimpkish Band. It would soon be expanded into a full residential school. The mission was located on Cormorant Island, off the northeast shore of Vancouver Island. The adjacent village of Alert Bay soon became a thriving commercial fishing centre, the livelihood for native and non-native alike."	2012 Summer
b. 1, f. 26	25. Protestation scrawled on the walls of the derelict St. Michael's Anglican Residential School	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 27	26. Gathering for the unveiling of a Totem Pole dedicated to the Kwakwaka'wakw people [probably] in recognition of the chief	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 28	27. Kwakwaka'wakw Chiefs	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 29	28. The Big House awaits  "The Alert Bay Big House is modeled on the traditional residences of the Kwakwaka'wakw, where extended families, numbering as many as fifty people. Completed May 1966 this building is primarily used for potlatches. The Big House was enlarged and repainted c. 1987, at which time 'Namgis artist, Doug Cranmer, designed the extended house front. The Big House was lost to fire on August 29, 1997.  The Grand opening of the new Big House that we see now was held May 29-30, 1999."	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 30	29. Hereditary leader and artist Beau Dick instructs the Women's Dance to begin	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 31	30. The Women's Dance begins the ceremonies	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 32	31. Beau Dick leads an adoption dance	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 33	32. Haida Dancers enter the Big House	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 34	33. Artist Corey Bullpit and Gwaliga Hart wearing Bear Mask	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 35	34. Christian White sings after presenting Beau Dick with a copper shield	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 36	35. Beau Dick begins his dance with the copper shield in appreciation of receiving the gift  "Coppers are a sign of wealth and status, and bragging rights Beau reminded me."	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 37	36. The Hereditary Chiefs stand in recognition of Christian White's gift of a copper shield to Beau Dick  "An aside, I was allowed to participate in the creation of this Copper. I was honored by the experience."	2012 Summer



## Kwakwak'awakw (continued)

b. 2, f. 38	37. With this revealing of new masks carved and painted for the Potlatch the ceremonies enter a new phase of the celebrations and rituals	2012 Summer
	Hamatsa "Vital to Kwakwaka'wakw culture, and Beau's Potlatch is the highly ritualistic, secret society of the Hamatsa. This arcane sequence of dances serves to initiate new members to the Hamatsa Secret Society."	
b. 2, f. 39	38. First in the Hamatsa ceremonies the initiate remains possessed by Baxwbakwalanuksiwe' ("Man-Eater from the north") ... "... must be lured out of the woods and brought into the Big House to be tamed, as his symbolically enacts his cannibalistic possession."	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 40	39. The initiate enacts his Gwaxwkwakwalanuksiwe', the man-eating raven "... the most prestigious role in the Supernatural Man-Eater Birds community."	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 41	40. Galuxwadzuwus ("Crooked-Beak of Heaven") "This part of the ritual was in a distant dark area of the Big House; Consequently I was unable to capture the event. Huxhukw (supernatural Crane-Like Bird who cracks skulls of men to suck out their brains)."	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 42	41. As his evolution continues the initiate is offered the copper shield that will commemorate his accomplishment	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 43	42. New ceremonies may now begin	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 44	43. The fire is an important part of the ceremonies as dancers glide over the dirt floor introducing a series of gift givings	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 45	44. Here Hereditary Namgis Chief Bill Cranmer displays a mask carved for him by Beau Dick ... "... in recognition and appreciation for his hard work in bringing around the Potlatch."	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 46	45. Here Hereditary Chief shows off his bent wood box	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 47	46. The young man squatting on the right, beside his father holding his copper shield, witnessed by Hereditary Kwakwak'awakw matriarch in wheelchair ... "... has been initiated into the Cannibal Society and is prepared to be Hereditary Chief."	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 48	47. Here father standing holding rattle and Copper Shield, son kneeling, and Beau Dick's family attest to the accomplishment "These two photographs will be collected by Beau Dick and held in the Umista Museum to stand against any claims."	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 49	48. Masked dancer of the woodland spirits	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 50	49. Masked dancer	2012 Summer
b. 2, f. 51	50. Masked dancer of the spirit world	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 52	51. Masked dancers	2012 Summer

## Hamatsa (continued)

b. 3, f. 53	52. Spirit world mask dancer	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 54	53. Masked dancer "Wind"	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 55	54. Masked dancer	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 56	55. Sun Dancer and Beau [Dick]	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 57	56. Spirit World mask	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 58	57. Beau Dick dances in contemplation around a fire that is encircled with the mask of the spirit world	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 59	58. Beau Dick directs the beginning of the mask burning ceremony "The late day sun shafting cold light into the Big House.  The mask-burning portion of the Potlatch remains highly controversial. Hereditary Chief Beau Dick has done this once before to the consternation of many and the support of many more.  It is Chief Dick's belief that the masks have been used enough, and that it is time to free the spirits to the spirit world."	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 60	59. The fire of masks	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 61	60. The sun mask	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 62	61. Beaver Spirit mask	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 63	62. Spirit mask	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 64	63. Raven Transformation mask	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 65	64. Raven transforms into man	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 66	65. Halibut mask dancer	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 67	66. Spirit World masks	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 68	67. Killer Whale mask dancers	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 69	68. Sea lion mask	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 70	69. Thunder Bird head detail	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 71	70. Thunder Bird takes flight	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 72	71. Thunder Bird takes flight	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 73	72. Puk mask	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 74	73. Octopus mask	2012 Summer
b. 3, f. 75	74. Sun mask	2012 Summer

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### Subjects

Coast Salish Indians -- Pictorial works  
Coast Salish Indians -- Portraits  
Haida Indians -- Pictorial works  
Haida Indians -- Portraits  
Indian masks -- British Columbia -- Pictorial works  
Indians of North America -- Pictorial works  
Indians of North America -- Portraits  
Kwakiutl Indians -- Pictorial works  
Kwakiutl Indians -- Portraits  
Kwakiutl Indians -- Rites and ceremonies -- Pictorial works  
Totem poles -- British Columbia -- Alert Bay

### Acquired From

Owen Luck, bookseller

### Geographic Names

Alert Bay (B.C.) -- Pictorial works  
British Columbia -- Pictorial works  
Haida Gwaii (B.C.) -- Pictorial works  
Prince Rupert (B.C.) -- Pictorial works

### Genres / Formats

Inkjet prints  
Photographs

### Names

Bennett, Georgia Liddle -- Portraits  
Bullpit, Corey -- Portraits  
Cranmer, Bill -- Portraits  
Davidson, Allen -- Portraits  
Dick, Beau, 1955-2017 -- Portraits  
Hart, Gwaliga -- Portraits  
Kennedy, Roberta -- Portraits  
Samuels, Cynthia Anne -- Portraits  
Vanderhoop, Tiffany Amber -- Portraits  
White, Christian, 1962- -- Portraits  
White, Vernon, 1980- -- Portraits  
Williams, Bryce -- Portraits

### Corporate Body

St. Michael's Indian Residential School (Alert Bay, B.C.) -- Pictorial works