HIGHLIGHTS:

- Describes the rituals associated with the Hamatsa dance.
- Relates story of how the Hamatsa dance originated.

Imbert: Did you live there for long?

William: Oh yes. It wasn't a permanent village, though. We migrated between Kingcome and Gilford Island.

Imbert: Oh, I see. Which is the main...?

William: Well, I think it all had a bearing on the livelihood of the people there. See, Gilford was a place where the ceremonial customs were being practised, and Kingcome was the sort of place where you would obtain your food either early in the spring or late in the fall.

Imbert: So the rest of the time you were in Gilford?

William: Rest of the time we were in Gilford. From Gilford you went to the fishing grounds.

Imbert: What was the name of the village at Gilford?

Imbert: How do you spell that?


Imbert: And what was the name of the village at Kingcome?


Imbert: Oh yeah. This would something to talk about, these two villages. They were the two parts of the same, really, home in a sense. It was a home that was in two places, depending on the time of the year it was.

William: Yeah, that's right. It was a residence of four tribes of people. There was the people from (Indian) -- that's from Mckenzie Sound area, and there was the (Indian) from Wakeman Sound.

Imbert: Now at Gilford -- I have to use the English name for it -- what does it look like? What kind of a village was it? What was there as you remember it, growing up?

William: Well the first, when I... As you know, as you grow up there's certain things you don't know, but in my earlier recollection it was quite a good sized village. Must have had about fourteen community houses. I never known before that we could call these houses longhouses. We always called them community houses because there would be four families and they're composed of one head of the household.

Imbert: Was the sort of regular number of the four families, or would they vary between four, and more, or less?

William: They vary between more or less. Sometimes a distant relative would make up the number to two, four accommodations. They had fairly good accommodations. I've read certain articles about how they lived, you know, drafty houses with old cedar shakes on the sides. But it wasn't that bad, you know. They had cubbyholes made out of cedar shakes possibly about the size of these gyprock. And it had a cedar matting to cover your bedding. You wasn't altogether exposed to drafting, you know, well protected.

Imbert: So within the big house there were partitions that made the sections for the families?

William: That's right.

Imbert: And then there would be the, what would there be in the middle of the house?

William: Well, they had four fireplaces. Four fireplaces in the main building. There was nobody in the middle part. The middle part of the building was merely for ceremonial
functions. But in everyday life you had your separate sections, your four parts of the house where you had kind of partitioned off and you had your own fires there.

Imbert: What... Inside the house, did they had... In your house did they have these carvings? Or was it just...?

William: Yeah, well, that... Not every house had carvings, you know. There was some houses just merely poles but they were etched, you know, all the way around. And there were certain houses that had totem house posts. I know our own house didn't have any totem until it was renovated, but it had a house front of different sorts and shapes, designs. My dad was quite a busy man.

Imbert: What was he doing? What kept him busy?

William: Well he... Mind you, I didn't know he was trusted man as I was growing up, you know, but I knew that he was, had something to do with a bunch of people. He used to have about 150 people with him, including women. He used to hire men for this fishing companies where they had supplied their own nets and boats, you know, I mean the companies did. And women folks worked in the canneries. And I understand he used to go in early days, before my time, across to the state of Washington, where they picked hops and one thing or another. Well, I remember the old father there in the peak of the season in Rivers Inlet. I didn't know you had to have papers to operate machinery. I used to see him walk up and down and every unit in the plant and the plant had a separate steam engine to operate your fish conveyors, and your fish colors, and your (inaudible), and your retorch, and your lidding machines, you know, capping machines. I used to see him go there and turn those valves and you could see the machinery move. I didn't know until I've reached manhood that it was all practical experience, but he seemed to know what he was doing.

Imbert: What was his name?

William: Johnny. Johnny Scow, that was his English name.

Imbert: What was his Indian name?

William: Oh, he had several. He was (Indian), (Indian). Different stages of your life as you're growing up you adopt a different name. Oh, he was highly respected, and he was a man of good understanding. People used to come from miles for advice, consult him. That's...

Imbert: Where does your mother come from?

William: She was from here at Alert Bay. My house is situated right now where my grandfather's property.

Imbert: The Kingcome village, was that not such a big affair
as the Gilford village? Or how did it compare with the Gilford village?

William: In comparison it was a place where there's quite a lot of activity going on, food gathering and one thing and another. Some of the people were canoe building right there in the sandy beaches and they... It was a place where they got their winter supplies like salmon, berries in the summer, bear hunting and one thing another. Later on in years they start to practise the old customs up there too, you know. In the '20s they really moved up there -- the four tribes -- and stayed and made it their permanent village. It was due to the suppression of the old customs, you know, when the government really put their foot down and prohibited them from practising the potlatch.

Imbert: So they wanted to move away where it was more remote, was that it?

William: That's right. You know they... At the height of their customs they wait until the river was frozen, and then they used to post people down the flats to watch to see if there's any strangers coming up the valley or the inlets. So in the '20s they moved up there. And when the government changed their policies they approached the heads of the tribes and says, "You don't suppose to live here. Your reserve is in Gilford, or your reserve in Wakelman, or yours is in Hopetown." So they kind of divided the four people that was in the habit of living together.

Imbert: Did they want to be divided?

William: I don't think they wanted to, but I think, as I said -- mind you, this is my own interpretation -- I think it was one means of depriving them of practising the old customs. Because you can't practise very well within your own family, you have to have an audience. So there's four bands living together, you naturally have three tribes of Indians being your audience any time you conduct this ceremonial potlatch that they have carried on, you know.

Imbert: Yes, I see. You grew up then, of course, with the group that was practise the customs and kept them going for a long time. You must have been very familiar with them as you grew up. This would be, this would so, wasn't it? They were, I suppose, as active as anybody on the coast here, would they be, in keeping up the old customs?

William: That's right, because as a child I didn't know that it had been forbidden. But I thought it was the general practice of all human beings to be, you know, reactivated with these feelings that you must forever perpetuate the name of your traditions of your family. As a result of that I was quite close to my father. I didn't know he was quite an important man in the customs. There were just everyday thing you... occurrence to me, as a child, to see people come and
talk to him and plan for this celebrations that they had practised from year to year.

Imbert: Was this actually associated with a potlatch or more with the Hamatsa? What, I mean was it that kind of a ceremony, or are the two things somewhat the same? A potlatch, of course, I mean in that sense of the giving away. Sometimes potlatches are used for the whole thing, but it isn't necessarily so. As I understand it, of course, the law was that the potlatch was forbidden. That was way back in Sir John A. Macdonald's time. And that was this ridiculous and oppressive law that cut everything away without taking full account of the, you know, what was important. So I just wondered whether they both... If you give a potlatch as well as have these ceremonies, or whether it would be just one or the other... (laughs) I would be very interested to know, you know, how you saw these ceremonies when you grew up with them, and what they were.

William: Well, it was only later in life that I began to piece together the requirement of the functions that they had practised. You had to marry into a high-ranking people if you're of that caliber. And when you do marry then you expect certain returns. As you say, Hamatsa was one of the things that would be carried on from your wife's side to you. Or if she didn't have it you could revive your own Hamatsa side of the family if you must have a Hamatsa. But there a certain phases of the customs where it's not necessary to have a Hamatsa. If you haven't got a background for Hamatsa then you don't have to have it. You can either revive some traditional background where it would... A basis for you to give certain things you'd like to give to the general public.

Imbert: I see. So the potlatch was the main thing and then these were associated with the giving away. You picked a custom that belonged to you, so to speak, in giving the potlatch.

William: That's right. You could either have just a straight dance. There are a lot of fine things that they used to display. So this dance that I remember in particular... A chief would have so many daughters and then they're recognized by the general public as such. He would call a big gathering and then they'd sit these women in a platform, like, and raise it above the songsters. And they would sing so many songs and these ladies didn't perform anything, they just sat there. You know, dignified... They didn't... nothing would bother them. They just sat there while the song was going on.

Imbert: Could you describe to me in as much detail as you can...? Here am I, somebody to whom this is not an experience at all, you know what I mean. In fact I'm sorry that even I missed the ceremonies on Saturday night. Had I known they were going to be I'd have come a day earlier. In other words I haven't seen anything, not even that in a big house, of the
ceremonies. How, as a child, to you, did these things seem to you? Of course, they seemed very natural to you.

William: Well, as a child attending this Hamatsa dances for a matter of understanding, as you say, it appeared to me to be very natural. None of it was put on as we come to know it today. In the first place is principal people in the Hamatsa Society, they disappeared from the village community life. It all depended on how long it would take the chief to accumulate or gather all his material things from his fellow men. And this chap who would be designated to be the Hamatsa, he's away from the community life. You don't see him at all until the day he appears. And then the village life... They used to stay three, four months at a time in a gathering. And you know that it would be climaxed just before the people break up to go back to wherever they were. But during this time they had dances, all the visitors, or whoever you may be, you could designate what day you wanted to be allotted to you. The main chief, he doesn't do a thing. He's just there -- he may give a feast now and then, that's all he would attempt to do until the final day. And then when the time approaches he'd have a dance every night, you know. It takes four nights to bring the principal people in the society to appear. And then the last night they have this gathering -- all the different tribes they come in. The tribes used to have... You can't come before the Fort Ruperts. The Fort Ruperts were supposed to be the first and then on down the line. That's when they have doormen at the high-ranking people at the door to take care of who should come in and perform this final night.

And then to climax this final night the Hamatsa come in, of course, and then sometimes they would get a person that plays the role of departed souls, (Indian). That's, he'd come in a skeleton and then skulls all decorated around your blankets. And then that draws the cannibal in you, if you had been a Hamatsa. And as a result of that all the cannibal people they, I would call it a riot, they all get agitated. There may be half a dozen of them. And they all had their whistles -- you didn't know they had whistles. And to me it sounded as if they come from the bowels, you know. Fancy whistles that they had, raven whistles and what not.

And then to climax the thing, what you're there for, the final Hamatsa, for the new Hamatsa, he descends upon the roof, and you could share the... And all the Hamatsa they kind of more or less quieted down. And then this chap is running around on the roof with all his whistles, the Hamatsa, and everybody, by this time everybody's all worked up in this community house. Everybody is standing. And everybody plays a role. Some of these fellows -- they're quite songsters, you know -- they'd be singing and chanting a song -- those that have that compacity to do so. Not everybody is allowed to do it unless you have been recognized as person to do it. And the Hamatsa he shows himself on one part of the roof. He sticks his head through the roof and his arms comes out. And then he utters this
Hamatsa cannibal cry, and then he withdraws and he runs around again. And then he shows in the next side of the roof -- goes through the same performance. Then he runs around again and he comes to the next part of the roof and he shows himself again. And he looks strange, because the people haven't seen him for about three months. And then the final act is the fourth time he sticks his head through the roof again, just about the centre and about the back end of the building, like. He comes through, half ways through the roof again. You don't see the attendants -- they must be up there somewhere -- but you see this big commotion while he's performing up there. And then he turns around and his feet come first through the roof. By this time down below these people they have a mat of some kind to break his fall as he comes in. Maybe about a dozen people around this and then he drops from the ceiling. And some of those ceilings were quite high too, but they made it. And then as he comes down everybody gathers around him and he's there at the top of this group of people and he's going around the room. You couldn't see any other head but him, he's up here. And all the time he's offering his cannibal cry and his arms waving around, and he has little branches across his head. He hasn't got any red cedar bark. And he runs around.

By this time the chief is talking, unintelligible speeches they make, you know, telling each other they have succeeded in bringing this chap back into the community, and people to be prepared to concede to whatever request that they may be called upon to do. At the height of this thing then he finally disappears. You don't know where he's gone. He's possessed with his supernatural power, he just disappears. He didn't go out the door, he didn't go back up the roof, he's just gone. That finishes the night.

And nobody knows you going to bring him back in the morning. Next morning he, you're up bright and early, and you can hear maybe one end of the village all his whistles are going and the cannibal is uttering that cry and all the villagers they go out, all the visitors they go there to bring him in. Oh, it was a long, tedious process. What you see now today is just to entertain the general public.

Imbert: What was the climax of the Hamatsa? There were four days, were there, of the same sort of ceremony?

William: Four days, day in and day out. And then the climax once he throw his mask, he's subdued.

Imbert: He has a mask?

William: He has a mask but he's not in it himself; he doesn't show. All they do to climax the thing, he runs around, he's quite mad, he's possessed. Then he gets behind the curtain and everything is so quiet you could hear a pin drop. And then those masks they start moving their jaws, you know, and you could hear it from one end of the house to the other.

Imbert: What would you hear?
William: You know, just the beaks coming together. You know those beaked, long beaked masks, that's it. You could hear it, you know, as it comes.

Imbert: Like two sticks?

William: Two sticks going together like that. (demonstrates) And then he offers that cannibal cry too. And then they start singing and then he comes out. And then by the time he gets to the lower end of the building the other one -- if he has two -- the other mask comes out. It would have a hooked nose or the other one would be, first one might be a raven mask. And that's the climax of the Hamatsa. When that's finished he comes out, he's quite subdued, he's got a blanket on, he's peaceful. That's it.

Imbert: Did he have any paint on him at all?

William: No he didn't. When you're fresh from the woods like that, just have acquired your supernatural powers, you don't have no paint on. But in time... Mind you, during your process of Hamatsa you're kept quite active by your chief. Actually the Hamatsa himself he doesn't know what goes on. There is the producers. I mean the men, men of the chief -- they're the ones that supervise your activities. And you have to perform according to what they tell you. After all, you're just an actor. You see, it's on the same basis as actors of different nationalities, you know. You have to abide by certain rules and you can't formulate rules yourself. It would have to be someone greater than you to do that.

Imbert: He is, he is worked up but he's in control of himself?

William: He is, he is in control of himself. This is just a put-on. I didn't know that as a child, you know. I thought these people were really possessed.

Imbert: These whistles and things, were they inside the house or outside?

William: Well, it was right there with the Hamatsa as he was going around.

Imbert: Were they on the roof?

William: No, no. It's concealed by the attendants.

Imbert: Oh, they're right in the room?

William: Right in with the Hamatsa. See, we have a Hamatsa here, there may be a dozen people, attendants, to subdue him any time he's supposed to run out of control. You're there to hang onto him. But as you bunch together there's people that
had these whistles inside their blankets. They were fixed in such a way that you couldn't see those whistles. And the way it sounded, it sounded as if the Hamatsa had it in his bowels.

Imbert: Did he have any costume on?

William: He didn't have any. Nothing when he first come out.

Imbert: He wears nothing at all?

William: Nothing at all. He just have a band of branches around the waist and around the ankles, anklets, and then your wrists, and then a piece of... across your head.

Imbert: As if he came right out of the wild woods?

William: He come out right from out of the wild woods. And that's... In your imagination as a child you know he's just come back from somewhere, nowhere. He just disappears and he disappears any time he wants to and he comes back.

Imbert: What is the light under which this would be done? How would you see this?

William: Well, it didn't matter too much about light, you know. This can just be carried on during the day and in the evening, well, at night. At night is more impressive because you can't see too much of what's going on, you know. But during the day, if there was a feast, and if a cannibal was in such a mood, he would take a snipe at some one's arm, you know. And you could see the blood coming out where flesh has been gouged. This is the first day, like, you know. He's still quite wild as a cannibal.

Imbert: There would be the light of the fire, I suppose, would there?

William: There's always a fire in the middle, when you go around in a circle. Oh, it was quite impressive.

Imbert: It would light up the figures and costumes.

William: And the shadows in the corners and one thing and another. And then as you come in in the evening... He's not running around at all times, you know. Day by day he becomes more subdued. And then you'd have the curtain -- by this time he's got his curtain with a design on it, his own family's crest is on this curtain. And then as you come in you could hear that whistle going and you'd see that curtain moving and that's it -- the sound is making it move. But actually your whistle's got nothing to do with curtain, it's just... (laughs) They used to tell us when we were small, you know, he says, "You mustn't make any noise or the cannibals would come after you." Well, you have to behave. You seen your elders are being bitten by the cannibals. But you got paid -- the
chief would pay whoever's been gouged out, you know. Anywhere's from 100 to 150 blankets or what have you, canoe or some valuable item that was given to you in repayment of the damage that has been done to you.

Imbert: Apart from the wonderful, dramatic performance itself, what do you think this meant? I mean was its meaning...?

William: Well I... As far as I can analyze, it merely portrayed the historical background of a certain tribe of Indians in the north country who were supposed to have come in contact with the cannibal family. And this man was known as Wisdom Within Wisdom -- that's my interpretation. And (Indian) was the name of the chap -- he was from Rivers Inlet. And from there, he was the first man that had subdued it, but he was never told how to perform. His sons were out hunting up in the mountains and headwaters of Rivers Inlet, you know; they were goat hunting. And then they got caught in a snow storm. And one of the chaps went into a building, which they didn't know, never heard that there was anybody living in it or any habitation up around that area. But they went into this hut; all those ones they consider it a hut, you know. And one of the -- there's four brothers -- one of them had a wound. He had knocked his knee against a rock and blood was kind of clotting up on that. And then he got a chip of wood there to scrape the blood off and throw it on the floor. And the lady's child ran and grabbed the stick and supposed to have devoured the wood and all, you know.

Imbert: There was a lady in there?

William: There's a lady. The cannibal's wife was there in the house with a child. But the boys didn't know that this was the cannibals. But the first, when it first come to their knowledge, they figured this must be the cannibals, the way that child went after the blood on that piece of wood. And while they were there they could hear the cannibal making a noise as he was approaching his own residence, and he come in. Well, he was quite normal, you know, and he talked to the boys that were in there -- these four men -- and questioned them; what were they doing, where did they come from. And it wasn't long as they come to their mind that this was a cannibal. It was just waiting to pounce upon them.

(END OF SIDE A)
(SIDE B)

William: ...so the older brother said to the youngest one, he says, "You better shoot your arrow out of the door, so it would an excuse for us to get out of this building." You know, they were whispering at one another. So the young fellow he shot an arrow out of the door. So there's no one there to bring it back to him so he told the older brother, he says, "Go and bring my arrow." So he went but he didn't come back and he sent the other guy out. Pretty soon he went out himself. In
the meantime they start running. And they have gone, covered quite a distance, when the cannibal become aware of what they had done -- that they had run away from him. And he start in pursuit of those boys, those men.

And then, of course, as legend would have it -- it's quite lengthy, you know -- they have all the obstacles that they could use any time that the Hamatsa was just about ready to pounce upon them. They either dropped a comb and then it became a brush pile. And then when at certain phases of his pursuit with these men, then they would drop an oil and it become a lake. And then certain times they'd take the down from a goat's hair and drop it and it becomes a fog, you know, to obstruct the cannibal from reaching them.

And finally they got to their father's, their own residence. When they got into the house the old man, (Indian), Wisdom Within Wisdom, as I said, you know, he start wrapping cedar rope around his building. And the cannibal he got to his residence and start pouncing around and so he could be let in. He wasn't going to leave until he was let into the house. Somehow he got in. But in the meantime, while he was making an attempt to getting in, the old gentleman -- the father of the boys -- he dug a pit behind a seat like this, you know. Well, Indians always had seats propped up beside your fire where your guests would sit and lean back on it, the board, you know. So he invited the cannibal family in and we had a big pot of some kind on the stove, I mean in the fire, open fire. And he was cooking something there. He said he had... He made a deal with the cannibal. He said, "Now," he says, "if you will leave me alone I'll feed you. I'll cook my own sons and call you in and you will have your feed." So the cannibal says, "Okay." He says, "I'm willing to abide by your suggestion." So he got into the house and he was sat in this seat, which I had described, you know. And old Wisdom he starts telling a story.

He was quite a storyteller. Well, the heat from the fire and everything else and the smell coming from -- he had a bunch of dogs that he had thrown into these pots that he had there. And he kept telling and telling and telling. Every now and then old cannibal, his head would fall, and finally he couldn't lift his head no more. And the old (Indian), Wisdom Within Wisdom's attendants, he gave the signal and they knocked off the props in behind this backrest and down they went into the pit. Soon as they went into the pit, which he had dug, he covered them up with ashes from the fire. And that's why, as legend would have it, you have your mosquitoes -- that was the ashes from the cannibal. When they drifted up into the air and that's how you got your cannibal, so that's why they go after your blood. That's an Oowekeeno version. (laughs)

Imbert: And that's how the ceremony, that is...

William: That is the legend of the cannibal. That's how... And then through marriage this northern people have acquired
the right, or could I say authority, to be able to dramatize the cannibal. And then the descendants, you'd either get married within the Oowekeeno people, and then you'd acquire this ceremonial dance. And if you acquired it from them then you have the power to pass it on to someone else and that's how the thing become widespread.

Imbert: So that was the meaning behind it. It was a re-enactment of something happened in legends?

William: That's right. You merely dramatized the story that was being told you.

Imbert: What was the feeling after the ceremony when the...? How was it? Did it produce any effect afterwards?

William: No, not the effect that you and I would be looking forward to, you know. Mind you, they were well-coached in the art of carrying out what they made believe, you know. At the conclusion of those dances, when they showed the ceremonial dances, the chief would get up. He's now have authority to speak after those ceremonial masks has been shown. He would merely inform the gathering, "We have concluded that quite successfully." And he would say, "What else could we expect? We have been always, from time immemorial, been able to perform and conclude all things successfully." That's all.

Imbert: I wondered -- this doesn't have any really psychological meaning in the sense of subduing the beast. I suppose this is carrying the meaning much further and reading something into it.

William: I think it... This, mind you, the other aspects of the custom was that what you gave in connection with it, and how the achievements of the person, of the main person that has made this possible. His achievement is being recognized by people, and the higher it is the more respect you get. But in a grown, as a grown children of the community, you know that you, it's been impressed upon you that you should behave so that you could be left alone by the cannibals.

Imbert: There were other ceremonies, of course, besides the Hamatsa. I mean this was just one of them, was it? Or was it the chief one? Or how were the others?

William: Well, that's the chief one. There's all sorts and varieties of dances that different families would revive from background. There's a mountain goat hunter, and a grizzly bear, which is just as important as the cannibal. Sometimes it is more so because it originates from your own background. You didn't reach out to get someone's background to show to the public. And all the animals from the animal kingdom you can revive, you know, you can dramatize.

Imbert: Would this mean wearing masks of these different
William: Masks, masks of different things, and costumes. But before you're allowed to do that the community can... You change your life. You know, I mean to say when you change... You're made to change your outlook when you come within the secret societies of the Red Cedar Bark. Right from the very beginning, when the Red Cedar Bark has been given to the public, you have to live under the spell of the Red Cedar Bark. You change your names. You adopt your Red Cedar Bark names, you're not just an ordinary civilian after that, I would say, as a matter of distinction. See, Bokwis (?) is ordinary person. See, if you haven't got, you know, your Bokwis(?) right now, we haven't got the Red Cedar Bark. And when you got Red Cedar Bark you become a changed person. You have to live within that Red Cedar Bark.

Imbert: When you say Bark [sic] was an ordinary person, what is the meaning of that?

William: Oh, Bokwis(?). You're an ordinary person, you have no supernatural powers.

Imbert: What is the significance of the Red Cedar Bark then? How, what was the meaning of that, in making you something special?

William: Well, I... If I may say this, you're talking to an Indian that has made a study of that. Not too many people make it a study. But you take the red cedar now, I mean the cedar bark, you know, ordinary red cedar bark, that's (Indian) -- that's the name of the bark. And then this ceremonial dance is in connection with the animal kingdom, or cannibal, what have you, that's (Indian). (Indian) and then that red cedar bark is (Indian). You see the two join together, the sound, (Indian). So you have to know, the same as you do, you put on a Johann Strauss, or waltz, or foxtrot. See, you got to know what you're doing. So when you become (Indian) you have to function within the confines of the (Indian), that's the red cedar bark. That's (Indian).

Imbert: This is almost a symbol of the...

William: Yeah.

Imbert: ...of joining, of being that kind of a person.

William: That's right. That's right, you got it.

Imbert: Is red cedar regarded then as something more important than the other trees in this sense? Is there any relationship of that to it, or did it just happen to happen to be the symbol?

William: Well, you've dug into something that other people
haven't dug into. Cedar is something superior. It's recognized by all the Indians of the coast -- I mean the Kwakiutl Nations -- as something superior. Wilk(?) is the name of the timber, wilk(?). When it becomes just a stick, it's stick (Indian). But as a tree upstanding you call it wilk(?). And then some people base their names on the wilk(?). It's supposed to be a background of certain tribes. So it's something out of this world, that cedar's being recognized. And as you say, that's why it's, that's the symbol of the red cedar bark is, it's bountiful, it's full. You can make your house out of it, you can make your canoes out of it, you can make anything you want out of it. You can make your clothing in the early days. Therefore, whoever was the first one to adopt the cedar as a background, you're really something.

Imbert: This is what I wondered because of the importance of the cedar. I had somebody down (break in tape).

William: They say they come from, either come from a rock, animal, and cedar. See, there's a certain tribe of people come from the cedar, wilk(?). And they're the people that can make this great big (Indian), you know, the red cedar bark. Mind you, that could cover every person's head in the universe. Not many people can do that, but the people of the cedar, they're the only people that can do it.

Imbert: Just hold it for a second. (Break in Tape).

William: Our association with the sea is not so much in the same light as the Nootkas or the West Coast people associate themselves with the sea. But we do associate ourselves with the waters of the coastline. As legend would have it, we were the first people to have a self-propelled vessel. This was supposed to be derived from the salmon. Salmon, you will know, some people refer to... You've often seen this Indian design with two head and a figure in between with horns on it. And the two outside figures will have a great big tongue, you know, and horns on it as well. Well that, some people refer to it as a double-headed snake. But it isn't a double-headed snake. A friend of mine, the late Henry (name), he made anthropology his hobby. He said it was a mistake for people to say it was a double-headed snake. He referred to it as spirit of the salmon. Because this double-headed creature that you see now is in a form of a salmon caught by a human being, as legend would have it.

And then the minute you... Not all species of salmon belong to this type of salmon. When you butcher it, if you're an ordinary person your body is distorted. You're all out of shape -- then you know you got the real thing. And it becomes your servant, the (Indian). So this historical background claim that they have got this salmon and it turn into (Indian) and they made a canoe out of it. Any time he wanted to travel he just touched the edges of this (Indian), you know, and then the thing would go. Mind you, he had his attendants too.
And this chap, his name was (Indian). His historical background (Indian). He was a huge man, as legend would have it, but his body was petrified. I use that -- that's my analysis of the thing, but we call him Stonebody, the Indians call him Stonebody, (Indian). His only vulnerable spot was right here in the small of your neck. The rest was, you can't penetrate it. But then he used to travel up and down the whole coast, and he acquired just whatever he needed, he'd get it.

He was the first man with the self-propelled vessel. He could cover one end of the coast to the other. Which was the Indians, as legend would have it, the world, he travelled the whole world. But... And that's how he respects the waters. He got his salmon.

There's one channel there that's always been a constant wonder to me. It's just this out-of-the-way placed channel, and they claim that all species of salmon used to come through this bit of a channel, you know. And they call it Spear Point, (Indian). And that's where the early times the people used to go and spear the different species of salmon for their own use. And that's how we were connected with the sea.

And there's a place there in Broughton Island where this tribe used to go and keep themselves in physical trim. I've often visited this rock formation. There's a ledge, and there's bluff right by the sea. And I don't suppose I would pass that physical test today with my tummy. (laughs) There's an outcropping rock there -- it's quite a drop, you know, from the bluff. The whole tribe used to go there in single file. You can't come back because it's just wide enough for one person to go. And when you get to this outcropping rock there, if you're big around the waist, there's only one thing for you to do is go under the water. And if you're in the water you're a laughingstock of your people. You have to trim yourself right down. You'll be able to pass the test next time. (laughs)

That's about the only significance we had to do with the sea. Of course we depended on it for our salmon and... You know yourself, the coast Indians, we're not farmers or vegetarians. We use a bit of berries and berries, and then clover leaf roots. That's about the extent of our food from the land, the rest is from the sea.

Imbert: (Inaudible).

William: Well, that is very hard question to answer or to bring out any significant result of that. There's always pros and cons about the whole thing, the effect it had on the Indian. I think it would be far better if an older man was being asked because, as I told you the other day, I attended this little red school where I was being loaned to the settlers in these Inlets, you see. So when I say it should have been and too bad it should have been an older person that was being asked this, because from my observation of the thing the good aspects of the customs does not overcome the bad features of the whole system to this day and age. But my observations when
the authorities or the missionaries in that time, in the '20s, really went after it, it seemed to have been true. Some of the older people said it was a cause of some of the older people in those days to just about let things go and give up. They didn't want to live beyond allotted time, you know. It just broke their hearts to see that something that they had lived for, enjoyed for... I mean they enjoyed it, they lived for it. I know myself, because I used to go and -- as I said before, I didn't know my father was highly respected in those customs -- it was nothing new to me to go maybe in the morning and call maybe half a dozen of his relatives or his friends for breakfast. And that's the only thing they would talk about, when will they gather at such and such, so and so's do. They had nothing else to talk of, because they didn't have any other occupation. They had no employment other than what little things they had to do for themselves, which they created for themselves.

Mind you, they were self-supporting in true sense of the word. My father particularly, he built himself so many homes just about every place where he went. He didn't have any government assistance, he bought all the nails himself and he used his own bare hands to build it. And he was a canoe builder, he was a hunter. Well, that was his occupation.

But the main thing that those people had in mind was, "When will so and so have his gathering? How long are we going to be there? And so and so has achieved quite a bit in his lifetime. I guess this will be the climax of his desires, this next one that is coming up." But they felt quite hurt when the government had suppressed that because, as I said, they felt that some of those fellows didn't live to the full extent of your life expectancy due to the breakdown of the cultural background.

Imbert: Do you think that the suddenness of this coupled with the missionaries assistance on making yourselves Christians...?

William: Yes, I do have that observation. You know, it was pitiful the way some of those old timers reacted to the suppression of the customs. As you say, they had nothing to take its place. That was their mode of enjoyment, that was the mode that they were accustomed to in association with other people. And they had some of their desires when they did get together, you know. But when the thing was cut up, you're forbidden to meet, you're forbidden to enjoy yourselves where you have been in the habit of enjoying. It was quite a setback to them. And they were not ready for any changes that were being introduced. It takes time for certain people to accustom to any changes that is being introduced.

And I know it had its carry-over to my own generation. No doubt if we were better prepared than our generation before us we would have been, been of a lot more help to the community of today. Because quite a few of my own generation we've, you might say, look upon it as a waste of time and effort to try
and readjust our people to the rapid changes that is being introduced within our people. A lot of us, especially myself, we've forgotten about, deprived ourselves of some of the material things we would have gained if we didn't bother with ourselves to try and readjust our people to the changes. But it has its bad effects. I know there's a lot of people... Not only the jail sentences, jail sentence was a mere small thing as far as they were concerned. It was the total stoppage of the customs that they had practised.

Imbert: It was (inaudible)?

William: In the '20s I think they became severe. They didn't care too much whether they went after the so-called right culprit, you know. If you were taking part... It was a vicious section if you might to look at the old Indian Act they had, you know. Festivals and one thing another, if you were there, if you were there you are liable. Even if you were just looking on you were liable. Liable for what? The Indian says, "What, what is it coming to?" As far as they were concerned they were not committing any crime. They didn't murder anybody, they didn't steal from anybody, everything that they did was above board as far as the Indian politic was concerned. And anybody, it's... There are certain principles that all humanity want to follow and the Indians no doubt follow the same pattern. Murder was never allowed within them, and stealing was never allowed. And all of a sudden the things that they enjoyed, had been habit of practising -- not all the time, you know, just whenever they had spare moments they got together so they can associate with one another and enjoy themselves and it was cut off.

Imbert: And in the relationship to the law... Did this produce a feeling of guilt in the, about the old things in the younger generation growing up? Did they feel guilty about these old traditions? You see what I mean, it was something quite outside imposed upon them. Could that have contributed toward turning their backs on it, to some extent, the younger people?

William: Well, I tell you, you might consider I'm the younger people.

Imbert: I was thinking of you with the younger people.

William: You might consider I was one of those younger people. My father was quite industrious. He didn't have to depend on anybody, he worked. He was an honest man. In terms of dollars I think he made a lot of money, if I may not be permitted to say thousands of dollars. But what did he do? He just gave it away. He didn't have anything to show for it, you might say. Oh sure, he had a good community house and the four carved posts and everything, but that's about all he left behind. He didn't create any employment for a family. I mean a lasting self-employment so he found employment when he was being hired by major companies to be responsible for certain bunch of
people; therefore, he gave us that employment. But he hadn't, there was nothing permanent that he could give us. Yet he was a man that would have been in a position to do so if he wasn't, if he hadn't centered all his activities on this custom.

But the ultimate aim was the old time is in that custom was that you would be... You're not forced to repay back. It was more or less looked upon as an investment for those that might follow after him if he didn't get it within his own lifetime. So when the thing was suppressed and we accepted it, the impact was so great on my own generation that we decided the thing is not worth it. It isn't worth it, so we just dropped it.

Now if you're going to revive it I would never regain his investments; it's gone. And no one can say that they can properly revive the thing. Because, mind you, within the tribe all those ranking people... It was always four ranks, four families, you might say, stemmed from four families. And within those four in the tribe there may be a hundred in each one of those four divisions; first, second, third and fourth. And we, now just for instance now, we belong to the same family within that four. We say we're maybe the second family in that four families in that tribe. You're the first, you're second and I'm third. Anyone got anything to give away they give it to you first and to you and to me. It will never change. We each have a name for those positions. We could never pass one another within our position, within that tribe. Every person in that tribe has a position, same as you have on your records in the Indian office. I can't go beyond you. Whoever is first on that record, you're there for life. So every individual within that tribe have your position, recognized position, within all the tribes of a Kwakuitl nation. You can't change, I can't take your position. But now today who knows my position? Nobody. Who knows someone else's position? Nobody. If they're going to give anything away now they just start from one corner of the building to the other just right straight around -- that wasn't the practice. Even if you're not there in the early times you receive what you're supposed to receive even if you're not there. Because whoever is giving he has to give every one of those people within their own rank and their own tribe. But now if you're not there you don't get anything.

I would suggest it would be far better if people would write a record of your achievements or achievement of your forebears and keep it. There's too many important things that you could devote your life to in a lifetime now. We have to sort around responsibility.

(END OF SIDE B)
(END OF TAPE)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>IH-BC.60</th>
<th>W. SCOW #1</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEREMONIES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-government</td>
<td>IH-BC.60</td>
<td>W. SCOW #1</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suppression of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7,8,26-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DANCES AND DANCING</td>
<td>IH-BC.60</td>
<td>W. SCOW #1</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Hamatsa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Pacific Coast)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUSSING</td>
<td>IH-BC.60</td>
<td>W. SCOW #1</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-traditional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,3,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIETIES</td>
<td>IH-BC.60</td>
<td>W. SCOW #1</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Red Cedar Bark Society</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21,22,23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Pacific Coast)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STORIES AND STORYTELLING (GENERAL)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-beasts and monsters</td>
<td>IH-BC.60</td>
<td>W. SCOW #1</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16-19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>