

LEGEND OF "WOLF TOTEM" POLE

Naas River pole- being recarved Prince Rupert, B.C.  
for erection in 1958- B.C. Centennial year.

This Totem Pole formerly belonged to a Nishga Chief Dauk and stood in front of his lodge at Gitlakdamix on the Upper Naas River. The carved figures seen on the top of the pole represent the principal actors in legends describing the origin of the family crests. The owner of the totem pole belonged to the "Wolf" Clan.

The principal legend which explains how the Wolf was adopted for the family crest is as follows:-

One day long years ago, a great lava eruption took place at Gitwunshilku on the upper Naas River. The molten mass pushed the waters of the river back across the valley to the mountainside and formed a great lava plain which extends from the head waters of the Kshluich to the canyon at Gwinsha. The fiery flow overwhelmed villages and fishing hamlets in its path, and the people fled to the surrounding hills. Among these fugitives was an Indian Chief named Gum-lu-gidis, the ancestor of the owner of the pole. Gum-lu-gidis fled with his family to the highlands of the Shkamal river where they camped. Night after night they had no rest, but were disturbed by weird sounds and voices accompanied by the beating of tomtoms. At length the Chief and some of his braves determined to set out and discover where the sounds came from. The legend describes how they found themselves in the abode of the "Luluks" Spirits of the dead where they beheld many strange things. Escaping from these haunted regions, Gum-lu-gidis, overcome by fear, again took up his flight- this time across the grease trail to the Skeena River, leaving the Naas with its terrors far behind. When the winter snows had melted and the ice had left the river, Gum-lu-gidis and his companions travelled down the Skeena River in dugouts made from cottonwood trees until they reached the Island of Khern- now known as Kaien Island on which Prince Rupert is situated. Not very long after they had settled Gum-lu-gidis' rest was once more disturbed, this time by the nightly howls of wolves which seemed to be calling Gum-lu-gidis by name. The old fear overcame him after the howling had continued for two nights, the old Chief determined to meet his fate. Dressed in his ceremonial robes, and face painted he set out alone from the camp armed with his Chief's tomahawk set with abalone shell. Following the direction from which the sounds proceeded, Gum-lu-gidis came face to face with a large white Wolf. Raising his tomahawk prepared to defend himself he noticed the animal was in great pain and unaware of his approach, as it was vainly trying to dislodge a sharp piece of deer's bone which had pierced its jaw. Gum-lu-gidis said "Brother do me no harm and I will removed the bone." After Gum-lu-gidis had removed the bone, the wolf became very friendly, and each time the Chief went hunting the White wolf killed a deer for him- thus supplying him and his family with food. So, the legend states Gum-lu-gidis adopted the White Wolf for his "Crest" and in his ceremonial dances always wore a white wolf skin robe. After some years of peace, Gum-lu-gidis became homesick and returned to the Naas, for he longed to fish once more in the waters of the Kshliich where the "Hangiwozuch " (White salmon) spawn.

.....