

CARRIER BAL-HATS

CARRIBOAL MATS

Luksilyou: **Tak Kik Keyan**
Frog

DeneYaz

Grand Trunk

Kwun Ba Whut'en

Dulhts'chyera: **Yah Whut Datan**
Caribou
Tsay Ba'yah

Yah Tsa hol'gus

Tsumusyo: **Tsayoon**

Beaver
Dunee

Atah'

Dumdenyoo: **Shas**

Bear
Sus

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The Origin of the Balh Hat

The balhats has its roots in the olden days. A time when our ancestors lived in large family groupings, gathered through the winter or summer for large scale hunting for furs, fish, which they could survive.

Our ancestors saw that when two or more families together there were problems, sometimes they did not get along...

If there was a dispute between families, it didn't take much, if one or two people talk about each other. Then there was a problem, if that happens, where were they going to go?

The people felt the need of a system whereby they could settle disputes and thus avoid antagonistic families.

In particular, they wished to avoid the customary practice of killing other families.

According to the legend, the very first balhats was called the first hero Ustas.

Ustas wanted to help settle the people in the land. The families were scattered across the Carrier territory, they established a council of spokesmen.

Each family was given a fair portion of the land and each family was to look after it and to work on the land, the balhats decided hunting.

They were told to take care of the fish and the animals, not to kill them, have them for food, to provide for the next generation.

They did not allow fires, if they burned their land, and the animals would be gone, what would they do? So they were careful to prevent forest fires as it will kill all the inhabitants for a whole generation. People cannot survive on burned areas.

In the beginning, at the time of Ustas, the balhats was not yet known by any name.

Instead, the people spoke of a "du'ghe'hu'tel-dulh" in the olden days. In the course of the morning, one or several families at an important meeting. "Where you were were given a word and after that they would have to settle all the problems in the village.

The du'ghe'hu'tel-dulh became the way to settle important disputes between the families. The balhats was the way they governed the people and the land.

If there was any dispute with one another in that group, the balhats was the way to settle it.

If someone commits murder then this spokesman was the one to deal with it. It was up to this head man person to find out why it happened.

Also, it is the father's clan, which "buys the seat a person takes when initiated into clan membership. All money and goods paid out by the opposite clan must be returned with interest: it is the duty of the person's own clan to help raise the repayment. This has no "no return" that is, it is not a loan.

The Funeral Bal-Hats

The funeral bal-hats is the most common rite. It is held right after the burial or a few months after the funeral, as soon as the bereaved family and clan can pay the funeral expenses, which includes paying the funeral workers.

These workers are selected from the opposite clan at the time of the death to carry out the necessary work during the wake and burial.

Workers are selected by the dead person's family with the help of the clan leader and other prominent members of the clan. When the necessary goods have been raised the family approaches the clan leader and asks her to arrange the payout.

A date is decided and notices are posted throughout the village among every one in the village and place. If there has been more than one death in the same household, two or more events may be held at one time.

The payout is held in the community hall, after the funeral or late in the afternoon. Early in the day a chosen member of the host clan, that is of the dead person's clan, goes throughout the village stopping at every house to invite everyone.

The invitation is given with a drum of melody. A cane is carried and is tapped on the ground as the announcement is made. When the guests arrive at the hall they wait at the door until invited in by the clan leader. The clan leader announces each guest as she or he arrives and takes each person to the courtyard.

The guest sits on one side of the hall, on the bench, according to the status. Important persons or those known as *duneza*, *de-keza* and *skeza* sit in the centre of the bench while less important persons are seated at the ends. Occasionally the women and men of the guest clan are seated, but this is not always the case.

The workers sit on individual chairs at the front of the hall and to the left of the members of the host clan. In front of the workers and on either side a large sheet or paper is hung. Behind the workers food and payout goods will be placed behind the guests.

From a table at the centre of the hall the host clan distributes the money to the De-hat-hats.

The clan leader acts as the speaker for the rite. She or he announces the names of the host clan members to the payout as each one of the family records the money. The host clan members then take place. The other clan members distribute the payout goods. This is the end of the funeral. The host clan members of all ages.

The Tombstone Payout

The tombstone payout is not held as frequently as the funeral payout. If the tombstone payout is held, it is usually put up approximately one year following the death. This is not always the case.

The form of the tombstone payout follows that of the funeral payout in several respects. The family arranges it through the clan leaders.

The family and its clan members raise the money to repay the opposite clan for the tombstone expenses and the work of putting it up. As with the funeral payout, food is served although now there may be more food including desserts and drinks.

The ceremony of paying out and distribution are the same. The difference lies in the inclusion of singing and dancing. This is not the case with the funeral payout, and the ceremony is more solemn.

The close family members do not pass out the tombstone cash and the payout goes mainly to clothing, clothes, and cash and household linens. The clan adds to this and receives no return for their own contributions.

Respect is shown to members of the opposite clan by displaying them if they wish to say good-bye to the tombstone. The payout is given which must show respect and will include money, food and a wide range of household and personal items.

The tombstone is used to be carried to the cemetery on a wagon, but now it is put on planks of wood. The deceased's clan pulls with ropes from the back of the wagon, while the opposite party pulls the wagon toward the cemetery.

This process is "high spirited" with many members on the wagon and many people on the ground.

The atmosphere is one of "high spiritedness" with the two clans acting in a friendly manner.

Following the erection of the tombstone, everyone returns to the community hall for the payout.

Here the rope, which was sectioned by knot, thus, cut up the knot, is given as a part of the payout as a "sort of souvenir" which is kept to show respect for the deceased.

After the payout distribution is complete, the clan songs are sung, and the clan drum is played with the clan crest. The drum is used to pass out the money and the singing and dancing.

In the past only a clan member could use the clan drum. But today, because of the "incomplete" and a drum is shared across the clan.

Also the drum is no longer just used on special occasions such as workshops and dance practices.

Clan songs are as precious as the clan drum, but again are no longer just used by clan members. Some are sung at the dance practices and other special occasions in the community in the old days.

Paying For A Chair

A person is "seated" when the opposite party buys her/his chair.

The opposite party, that is the person's father's clan, announces that they will seat the person and begin to collect money and goods.

The seating is done with great respect. The person being seated is seated on a blanket on her/his chair and is made a formal member of the clan.

Her/his clan helps but does not receive a return for the payout. The new clan member will now be available to help the clan on its business. When the chair is paid for, the seating begins and does not end except if this makes it a funeral payout.

Very young children may be sat down if they are going to take someone's place. One day a child's parent.

When being seated at a payout the women extend the invitation for the person whose seat they will take.

If someone has not taken a chair when a child, it is the practice to buy them a chair when they get married.

Crossing The Table

Sometimes a person crosses a table to join the opposite party.

This is known as being "bought back" by the father's clan.

It cost a great deal of money.

It happens with the daughter and her clan who wish to take the place of their father or to take an important name in the clan family.

It also occurs if two members of the same clan are to be seated at the same time.

Other Business Of Respect

Special jobs which honour the dead such as maintaining or repairing tombstones, making photographs in a relative's house, or making items to honour the dead are paid for at payouts.

As always, the family arranges their business with the clan leader who acts as their speaker. If the payment for these services does not take place at a payout, it is done at a dinner to which witnesses are invited.

Taking A Name

Important names are expensive; they are taken only by persons who have character and personality or the last holder of the name and who have shown that they are worthy of it.

Descendants of the name holder have a special responsibility for helping the successor pay for the name.

The heads of the clans decide who is entitled to take a name and try to settle any disputes. However, disputes over names can carry on for years, and some disputes are never settled. The tse'keza and duneza who are taking a name are big or strong men, at which the person shows some is a "big shot."

A payout for the tse'keza and duneza means that the person will wear a blanket - decorated either in a west coast style or in a style with lines or bands, diamonds, and snails.

The blanket has a white stripe on the back and is made by a member of the opposite clan.

People who wear a blanket have a Carrier name of their own. Their own crest song, dance and drum. It is for these that they pay so much. The name is precious and is accorded great respect.

To insult the holder of the name means to insult the name and such insults are made in public, often at a payout. The payout for the name is made without a return payment. The initiated name holder must at the payout and is helped by his friends and family. The clan name is always given to a new person.

This payout is more extensive and more costly, involving a donation than the funeral payout, according to some elders.

In addition to giving a name, the tse'keza and duneza are given a personal gift, a dried food bear, beaver, mouse, deer, and berries, and a small distribution.

Certain parts of the heaver, particularly the tail are reserved for the tse'keza and duneza while berries are passed with great ceremony from clan leader to clan leader.

The berries are held high above the head when passed while the clan leaders sing their clan songs. The payout for the duneza and tse'keza is made at the payout.

Guests from all Carrier reserves and from all of all parts and even the commoners are invited to receive large amounts of payout.

Hiring Workers

Workers who are hired to assist at a wake or funeral are persons of high standing with reputation seals.

The workers are selected by the family with the guidance of the clan headman and members of the tse'keza.

They should be invited to a dinner where it is announced that they have been chosen for this work and where their various jobs are assigned.

No one without a potlatch seal should be hired for this sometimes happens. They must always be members of the opposite clan.

Shame

A family is shamed if they do not hold a funeral. Sometimes, some families wish to, but could not afford to pay back financial costs.

The family could be scorned by the community and when the family has a second death, the clan does not help with the funeral; the family will be shamed by having the dead person's proper grave.

When the clan arranges for a multiple payout it is able to wipe out the shame of death of the family.