

LIGHTKEEPERS ON HUU-AY-AHT SHORES:

Indigenous Labour and Knowledge in the History of Coastal Navigation

JESSE ROBERTSON

ON 23 DECEMBER 1906, a journalist from the *Seattle Times* landed at remote Cape Beale on Vancouver Island's west coast in search of a story.¹ He came to interview Minnie Paterson, the resident lightkeeper's wife. Two weeks earlier, Paterson had run some ten kilometres through howling winds and thick brush to raise the alarm that the American barque *Coloma* was in distress. She reached Bamfield Inlet and alerted the Dominion lighthouse tender, which steamed to the cape in time to rescue the ship's crew. Paterson's courage and perseverance garnered praise from across the Pacific Northwest. The journalist marvelled that it was a "frail woman" who saved the crew members when they frantically signalled "for human aid from that unpeopled coast."² In fact, the very possibility of "human aid" on that blustery December day had everything to do with the coast's ongoing occupation by Indigenous Peoples whose labour, dugout canoes, seafaring skills, and local knowledge supported the construction and operation of Cape Beale and other West Coast lighthouses. Minnie Paterson was the rightful heroine of the *Coloma* incident, but there is a broader history that explains her presence and how it depended on the HUU-ay-aht people in whose territory she found herself that fateful day.

¹ I wish to extend my gratitude to John Lutz, the Canadian Coastal Histories Workshop, Denis St. Claire, Stella Wenstob, and two anonymous reviewers who read and provided perceptive comments on earlier drafts of this article, and to Michael Foreman, for sharing his knowledge of regional oceanography. Any errors are my own. Thank you to Brittany Bourdages for generously producing the maps which accompany this article. Among many helpful archivists, particular thanks are due to Heather Cooper of the Bamfield Community Museum and Archives for personally boating me across Bamfield Inlet to their facility. I am deeply grateful to Benny Baird and family for friendship and accommodation at Bamfield, and to the Wenstobs for offering this landlubbing historian a chance to experience Barkley Sound from the water.

² Walter Deffenbaugh, "Nine Men Owe Their Lives to This Frail Woman," *Seattle Sunday Times*, 13 January 1907, magazine section, 2–3.

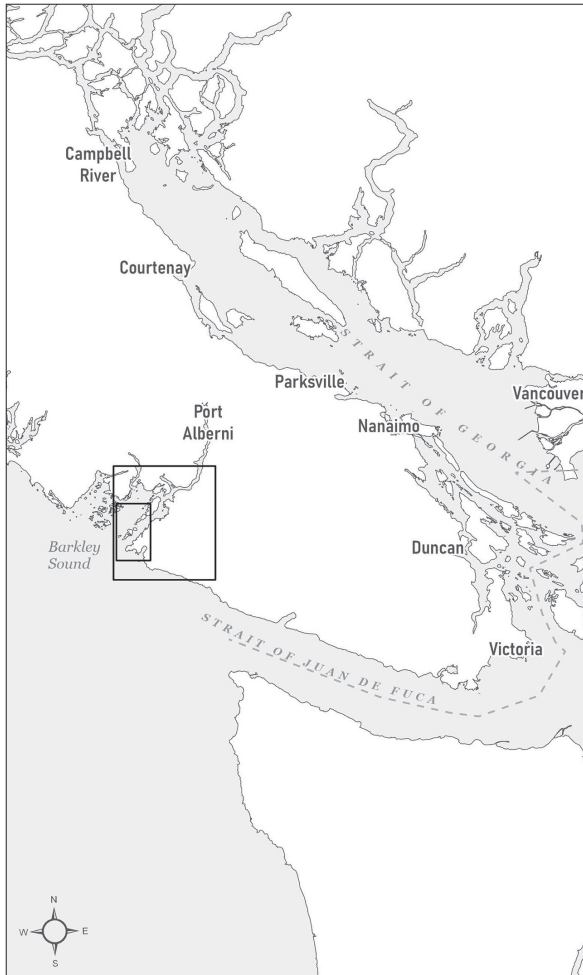


Figure 1. Overview Map showing Barkley Sound's location on Vancouver Island. Map by Brittney Bourdages.

By 1906, the Indigenous foundations of marine transport had been rendered largely invisible to the casual visitor. The concurrent growth of steam travel and state-sponsored navigational aids – marine charts, sailing guides, lighthouses – allowed settlers to bypass the Indigenous intermediaries who, in previous eras, were frequently necessary for coastal travel. This distancing effect shaped settler perceptions of the coast. Cole Harris argues that nineteenth-century settlers “considered Native ways irrelevant ... and constructed their own system of transportation and communication from scratch.”³ Bruce Braun echoes this perspective,

³ Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 167, 182.

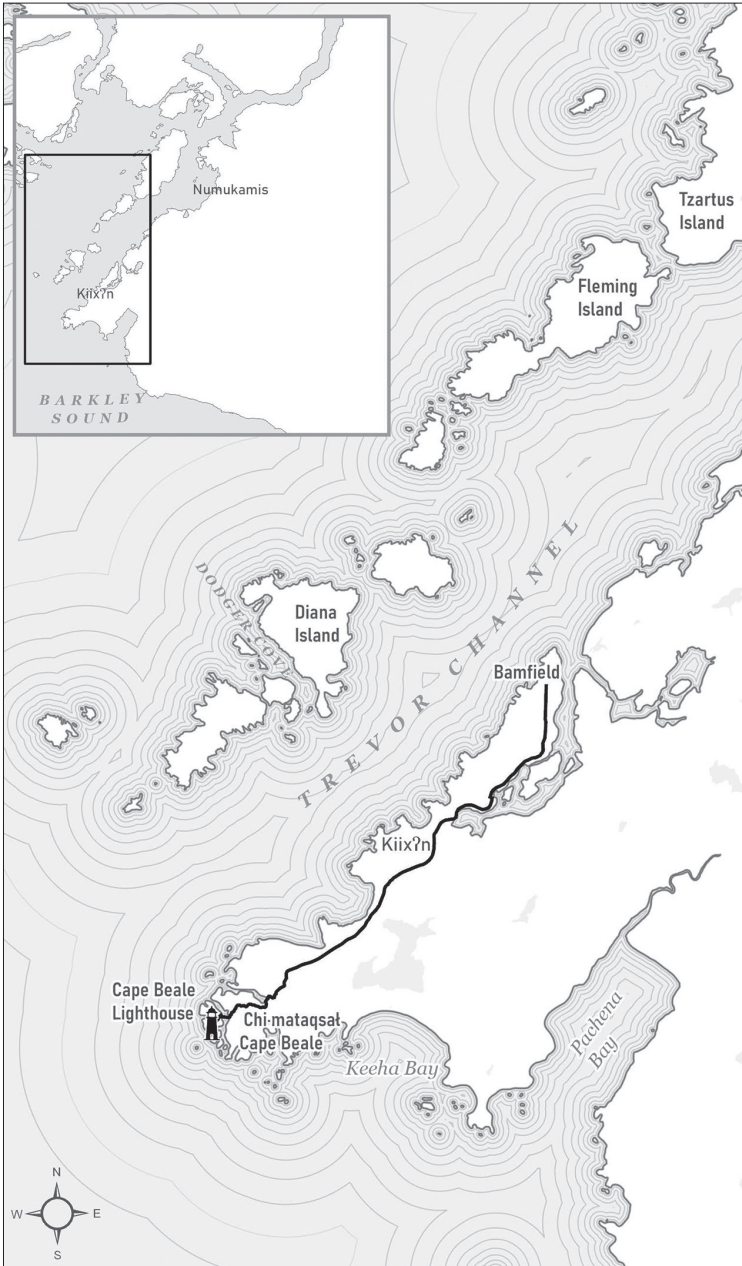


Figure 2. Detailed Study Area Map showing the proximate location of Cape Beale, Dodger Cove, and Bamfield. The solid black line indicates the historic telegraph trail traversed by Minnie Paterson, itself based on an earlier Indigenous trail to the cape. Map by Brittney Bourdages, with reference to Brenna Bell and Heather Wolsey, "Cape Beale Trails: Their Place in History," School for Field Studies, Centre for Coastal Studies, Bamfield, BC, 1996, 22.

arguing that European mobility was increasingly distanced from direct encounters with Indigenous Peoples by the early 1900s. According to Braun, the advent of steamship service helped produce the “West Coast” as a distinct Canadian region in which Indigenous villages were reduced to anachronistic elements of the landscape.⁴ These assessments better reflect the perspective of White coastal itinerants than they do the more complicated realities of industrial-era transportation. A different story emerges when we shift our attention from steamships to the shore-based aids to navigation upon which they depended. Lighthouse logs, government records, and settler reminiscences reveal that Indigenous labourers and Knowledge Keepers played a critical part in producing the infrastructure that ultimately transformed settler perceptions of the coast. This article turns to Cape Beale – known to the Huu-ay-aht and other Nuučaanał (Nuu-chah-nulth) speakers as Chiːmataqsəl – to show how settlers and state officials engaged Indigenous Knowledge and labour to construct a navigable coast.⁵

Oceans connected distant populations and markets to an unprecedented degree in this era, but intricate coastlines, dense fogs, powerful tides, and hidden hazards made marine environments potentially devastating spaces for the uninitiated. The navigational infrastructure deployed to alleviate such risks was essential in enabling ships to supply colonies, bring settlers, and extract resources. In this sense, lighthouses generated a kind of state knowledge that was integral to settler projects

⁴ Bruce Braun, “Colonialism’s Afterlife: Vision and Visuality on the Northwest Coast,” *Cultural Geographies* 9, no. 2 (2002): 219–20. For an earlier variation on these ideas, see Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774–1890* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990 [1977]), 96. Daniel Clayton locates the displacement of Indigenous-settler “geographies of interaction” within prior processes of imperial mapping exemplified by Captain George Vancouver’s expeditions. See Daniel Wright Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), xi–xiii.

⁵ Alternatively, Chːimaːtaqsəʔa, čimataqsul, čimataqsuʔa. E.Y. Arima, Henry Kammler, Terry Klokeid, and Kathleen Robinson, eds., *Family Origin Histories: The Whaling Indians – West Coast Legends and Stories, Part 11 of the Sapir-Thomas Nootka Texts*, Ethnology Paper 145 (Gatineau, QC: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2009), 65, 355; Denis St. Claire, “Barkley Sound Tribal Territories,” in *Between Ports Alberni and Renfrew: Notes on West Coast Peoples*, ed. E.Y. Arima, Denis St. Claire, Louis Clamhouse, Joshua Edgar, Charles Jones, and John Thomas (Hull, QC: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1991), 104; Kathryn Anne Bridge and Kevin Neary, *Voices of the Elders: Huu-Ay-Aht Histories and Legends* (Victoria: Heritage, 2013), 138. Numerous orthographies have been developed for Nuučaanał. This article follows those in the cited sources, based primarily on Randy Bouchard’s practical orthography. Alternate spellings are provided in footnotes where available. For more on Nuučaanał orthographies, see Barkley Sound Dialect Working Group, *Nuu-Chah-Nulth Phrase Book and Dictionary: Barkley Sound Dialect* (Bamfield, BC: Barkley Sound Dialect Working Group, 2004), 17; E.Y. Arima, Denis St. Claire, Louis Clamhouse, Joshua Edgar, Charles Jones, and John Thomas, eds., in *Between Ports Alberni and Renfrew: Notes on West Coast Peoples* (Hull, QC: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1991), 3–5; Arima et al., *Family Origin Histories*, 8–10.

of mobility and access to land, resources, and marine environments.⁶ As Matthew Edney observes, “To govern territories, one must know them.”⁷ The same principle applies to marine environments. Bernard Nietschmann reminds us that sea territories emerge from a group’s relationship to a given area, including their knowledge, names, and use of marine space.⁸ Indigenous scholars from across the Pacific have defined maritime sovereignty in terms of enduring, intimate, and embodied knowledge of particular environments: “Only those who make the ocean their home and love it, can really claim it as their own,” writes Epeli Hau’ofa.⁹ In a similar vein, Rachel Yacaaʔaʔ George and Sarah Marie Wiebe celebrate oceanic knowledges like canoeing, wayfinding, and fishing as powerful refusals of a settler-colonial governmentality that compartmentalizes the ocean into abstract, geographic spaces.¹⁰ But despite their considerable differences, the state knowledge required to navigate and control marine space was, to a considerable extent, grafted onto the prior forms of Indigenous Knowledge that George and Wiebe discuss. James Scott offers a simple formula for determining whether a vital margin of political safety exists in a given environment: ask whether an outsider would need a local guide to find their way successfully.¹¹ By showing how outsiders used lighthouses to absorb Chi-mataqsaaʔ into global networks, this article seeks to chart the deceptively mundane process by which settlers assumed the knowledge required to navigate marine environments independently of Indigenous intermediaries.

If geographic knowledge can be said to embody claims to territory, then the Nuu-chah-nulth exerted formidable authority over the waters off Vancouver Island’s west coast. Following an 1874 visit to Barkley Sound,

⁶ For a discussion of lighthouses as imperial technologies and tools of “infrastructural globalization,” see Robert Bickers, “Infrastructural Globalization: Lighting the China Coast, 1860s–1930s,” *Historical Journal* 56, no. 2 (2013): 431–58; Eric Tagliacozzo, *In Asian Waters: Oceanic Worlds from Yemen to Yokohama* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022), 309–43, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691235646>.

⁷ Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1.

⁸ Bernard Nietschmann, “Traditional Sea Territories, Resources and Rights in Torres Strait,” in *A Sea of Small Boats*, ed. John Cordell (Cambridge, MA: Cultural Survival, 1989), 60.

⁹ Epeli Hau’ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” *Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994): 155.

¹⁰ Rachel Yacaaʔaʔ George and Sarah Marie Wiebe, “Fluid Decolonial Futures: Water as a Life, Ocean Citizenship and Seascape Relationality,” *New Political Science* 42, no. 4 (2010): 503–5, 509. See also Vincente M. Diaz, “Voyaging for Anti-Colonial Recovery: Austronesian Seafaring, Archipelagic Rethinking and the Re-Mapping of Indigeneity,” *Pacific Asia Inquiry* 2, no. 1 (2011): 21–31; Karin Amimoto Ingersoll, *Waves of Knowing: A Seascape Epistemology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 79–102.

¹¹ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 54.

George Blenkinsop remarked that “the ocean is more the home of these people than the land.”¹² Europeans referred to Nuučaanuł speakers as “Ahts” or “Nootkas” but often recognized the complexity of their political organization on the local level. Societies like the Huu-ay-aht on Barkley Sound’s south shore, whose territory includes Chi·mataqsał, were led by a Tayii H̄awil̄ (Head Chief) and connected to neighbouring groups through kinship, trade, and ceremonial ties. A H̄awil̄ (Chief) controlled a local group’s hahoulthee (ancestral territory), including terrestrial areas but also marine environments like fishing banks, spawning grounds, and whaling areas. H̄awiih̄ (Chiefs) also retained rights to salvage anything that drifted onto their beaches, from whales and canoes to runaway slaves and European vessels. Anyone else using these resources was required to pay a tribute, frequently used by H̄awiih̄ to host a feast for their communities.¹³

The delineation of marine environments into chiefly property is an important factor in understanding Nuu-chah-nulth peoples’ navigational proficiency. Knowing the extent of a halibut bank was essential not only to procuring food but also to avoiding the conflict that could result from poaching a neighbouring hahoulthee. These banks were owned, named, and known. In the 1960s, Huu-ay-aht Chief Louie Nookmiis recounted how mountainous offshore halibut banks were revealed to his forebears when the tide withdrew prior to a tsunami.¹⁴ Other banks were located by triangulating one’s position via observable landmarks. Hopaqso:ʔis (Seven Mile Bank), for example, is a valuable salmon bank that Huu-ay-aht fishers found by aligning islands with specific landmarks, including Chi·mataqsał. Navigational knowledge was also communicated in toponyms. Chi:t.sa:wpsi:ł, just north of Chi·mataqsał, denotes a strong current known to suck canoes and other objects into the rocks.

¹² George Blenkinsop, “Reports on the West Coast of Vancouver Island and of Barclay [Barkley] Sound (Map, Census Report),” 23 September 1874, 25, file 4105, vol. 3614, reel C-10107, Black Series, Department of Indian Affairs Fonds, Record Group 10 (hereafter RG 10), Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Ottawa, Ontario.

¹³ H̄awil̄/H̄awiih̄ alternatively rendered as hawilth, h̄awilth (singular), and hawiih (plural); hahoulthee alternatively rendered as hahuulthi, h̄ahuulthi. Huu-ay-aht First Nations, “Our History and Kiiḡin,” Huu-ay-aht, 31 July 2012, <https://huyuayht.org/services/language-culture/culture-history/>; Alan D. McMillan and Denis E. St. Claire, *Huuʔii: Household Archaeology at a Nuu-Chah-Nulth Village Site in Barkley Sound* (Burnaby, BC: Archaeology Press, Simon Fraser University, 2012), 11; E. Richard Atleo, *Tsawalk: A Nuu-Chah-Nulth Worldview* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 80–82; E.Y. Arima and Alan L. Hoover, *The Whaling People of the West Coast of Vancouver Island and Cape Flattery*, rev. ed. (Victoria: Royal BC Museum, 2011), 105–7; Philip Drucker, *The Northern and Central Nootkan Tribes*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 144 (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1951), 243–56.

¹⁴ Arima et al., *Family Origin Histories*, 305.

“Chi·mataqsał” itself refers to a canoe-swallowing monster inhabiting nearby waters.¹⁵ The Nuu-chah-nulth had the knowledge and canoe-handling skills to avoid such hazards. Reading and responding to wave motions was critical. Specific paddle strokes were employed to brace the canoe amidst turbulent breakers, and handlers carefully timed landings to wait for an ideal set of waves to carry canoes to shore. Canoes were adeptly engineered for particular conditions and usages and could be augmented with sealskin floats for additional buoyancy and propelled by sails.¹⁶ In his 1874 report, Blenkinsop remarked that Nuu-chah-nulth canoe-handling was “truly wonderful,” their defiance of danger rivalling that of “any boatmen in the world.” According to Blenkinsop, the Huu-ay-aht were esteemed as the “most expert canoe men” in Barkley Sound. This reputation likely derived in part from Huu-ay-aht access to the outer coast, where deft canoe handling was essential to the prestigious whale hunt.¹⁷

In the 1780s, European and American merchants arrived in Nuu-chah-nulth waters in pursuit of sea otters. The Nuu-chah-nulth referred to these waterborne itinerants as *mamałn’i*, “those living on the water and floating around, like they have no land.”¹⁸ Although Chi·mataqsał was a landmark for these mariners, Barkley Sound was never central to the sea otter trade.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the ensuing decades brought their own changes as local groups engaged in territorial conflict, amalgamated for protection, and absorbed novel goods from the emerging Pacific world. The arrival of sporadic settlers and a sawmill at the head of the Alberni Inlet in the late 1850s marked another change, to be accompanied by

¹⁵ Arima and Hoover, *Whaling People*, 65; Arima et al., *Family Origin Histories*, 351; St. Claire, “Barkley Sound Tribal Territories,” 103–4, 174.

¹⁶ Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1868), 82–85; Stella Wenstob, “Canoes and Colony: The Dugout Canoe as a Site of Intercultural Engagement in the Colonial Context of British Columbia, 1849–1871” (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 2015), 68–73.

¹⁷ The extension of Huu-ay-aht Territory to the outer coast occurred through their amalgamation with several seaward villages (including one at Chi·mataqsał) prior to European arrival. See Blenkinsop, “Reports on the West Coast,” 19 and 53, RG 10, LAC; Arima and Hoover, *Whaling People*, 21, 56–64; St. Claire, “Barkley Sound Tribal Territories,” 67; Louis Clamhouse, Joshua Edgar, Charles Jones, John Thomas, and E.Y. Arima, “From Barkley Sound Southeast,” in *Between Ports Alberni and Renfrew*, ed. Arima et al, 218.

¹⁸ Alternatively, *mamani*. See Arima and Hoover, *Whaling People*, 161; Joshua L. Reid, *The Sea Is My Country: The Maritime World of the Makabs, an Indigenous Borderlands People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 30.

¹⁹ Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 143–48; Richard I. Inglis and James C. Haggarty, *Pacific Rim National Park* (Parks Canada, unpublished report, 1986), 292, <http://www.parkscanadahistory.com/series/mf/257.pdf>; Alan D. McMillan, *Since the Time of the Transformers: The Ancient Heritage of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth, Ditidaht, and Makah* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 190, 202–3.

trade and labour opportunities, tensions over land and resource use, spread of disease, and interference from the emerging colonial state and military apparatus.²⁰

While such developments increased *mamał̓n̓i* traffic to Barkley Sound, the need for navigational knowledge of the area was driven by events elsewhere in the region. The frequency of vessels along the coast had grown steadily following the establishment of the Colony of Vancouver Island (1849) and Washington Territory (1853) and accelerated dramatically in the wake the 1858 Fraser River gold rush.²¹ All vessels bound for Fort Victoria, Puget Sound, and the Fraser River were required to bypass Vancouver Island's rugged coast, and a confluence of poorly understood natural forces sometimes conspired to drive them off course. Current and wind systems in the northeastern Pacific vary according to season. A southeast-flowing current courses along the continental shelf during summer, but a shift in prevailing winds increases the relative force of the northwest-flowing Davidson Current come winter. The annual rhythm of the Fraser River's discharge, meanwhile, contributes to a distinct northwest "countercurrent" that hugs the coast of Vancouver Island from spring to fall. The complexity of these seasonal variations is compounded by tidal streams that differentially alter surface speed and elevation in mere hours, depending on location.²² Navigating these waters proved taxing and sometimes fatal for all manner of seafarers, and the topography of the island was a hazard all its own. Nineteenth-century mariners described it as "a rockbound shore, without a single safe anchorage for vessels of any size" and complained about the difficulty of distinguishing one headland from another.²³ It didn't take much under

²⁰ McMillan and St. Claire, *Huuł̓i*, 15–25; Barry M. Gough, *Gunboat Frontier: British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians, 1846–90* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1984), 111–13.

²¹ Sean Fraga, "They Came on Waves of Ink: Pacific Northwest Maritime Trade at the Dawn of American Settlement, 1851–1861," *Sean Fraga, PhD* (blog), 1 May 2019, <https://seanfraga.com/wavesofink/>.

²² R.E. Thomson, *Oceanography of the British Columbia Coast* (Ottawa: Department of Fisheries and Oceans, 1981), 61–63, 194–95, 230–34; Diane Masson and Patrick F. Cummins, "Numerical Simulations of a Buoyancy-Driven Coastal Countercurrent off Vancouver Island," *Journal of Physical Oceanography* 29, no. 3 (1999): 418–20; T.A. Okey and A. Dallimore, "Overview of the Climate and Oceanography of the West Coast of Vancouver Island, Canada," in *Social-Ecological Assessment of the Marine and Coastal Areas of the West Coast of Vancouver Island*, ed. T.A. Okey and L.A. Loucks (Port Alberni, BC: The Tsawalk Partnership, West Coast Aquatic, 2011), 2. For a historical perspective on these currents, see R.C. Mayne, *Four Years in British Columbia and Vancouver Island: An Account of Their Forests, Rivers, Coasts, Gold Fields, and Resources for Colonisation* (London: J. Murray, 1862), 19–22.

²³ William E. Banfield, "Whale Killing by the Netinett Indians," *Daily Victoria Gazette*, 19 August 1858, 1, microfilm copy, BCA. Captain John Devereux to Minister George Foster, 24 March 1887, file 7904-V1, vol. 1532, Department of Transport Fonds, RG 12, LAC.

such circumstances – a damaged vessel, dense fog, or driving wind – to make the difference between reaching harbour and running aground.

Lighthouses were among the suite of technologies that colonial authorities imported to render the coastline more hospitable to marine traffic, capital investment, and extractive industry. The lighting of the region commenced in the 1850s with the construction of four lighthouses in Washington Territory, including Cape Flattery at the southern entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The pace was slower in British territory, but lighthouses were erected at Race Rocks and the entrance to Esquimalt Harbour in 1860. When Barkley Sound was surveyed by the Royal Navy in 1861, Captain George Richards identified “Cape Beale” as a promising location for a lighthouse to mark the Juan de Fuca’s northern entrance. As one of his officers commented, a light at the cape would allow mariners to make landfall with less anxiety and to shelter in Barkley Sound when facing high winds or thick fog.²⁴ This remained to be accomplished when Canada assumed responsibility for lighthouses following British Columbia’s entry into Confederation in 1871. The following year, Minister of Public Works Hector-Louis Langevin recommended a light at Cape Beale to guide “navigators desirous of entering the Strait of Fuca, and prevent their being cast away on the coast.” Marking the entrance to Barkley Sound was a secondary concern, but Langevin had high hopes for the development of the area, due in part to the possibility that the Alberni Inlet might be selected as the terminus for the Canadian Pacific Railway.²⁵

Construction was delayed when an initial attempt to survey the site was rebuffed by November winds and thick brush. Finally, in July 1873, the schooner *Surprise* was commissioned to transport a working party and materials to the site. Because the headland’s rocky cliffs made a coastal landing untenable, the party anchored in a cove behind the cape that could be accessed by running a narrow gap in the rocks at high tide. This passage was well known to the Huu-ay-aht, who used it

²⁴ The headland was first designated as “Cape Beale” in 1787 by the fur trader Charles Barkley, who named it for his purser, John Beale. See George H. Richards, *The Private Journal of Captain G.H. Richards: The Vancouver Island Survey (1860–1862)*, ed. Linda Dorricott and Deidre Cullon (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2012), 117; Mayne, *Four Years in British Columbia*, 226–27; John T. Walbran, *British Columbia Coast Names, 1592–1906, to Which Are Added a Few Names in Adjacent United States Territory: Their Origin and History* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1909), 39.

²⁵ Canada, Parliament, “British Columbia: Report of the Hon. H.L. Langevin, C.B., Minister of Public Works,” in *Sessional Papers for the Fifth Session of the First Parliament of the Dominion of Canada, Session 1872*, vol. 6, paper 10 (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1872), 31, 42.

as a tidal shortcut around Chi·mataqsał.²⁶ The captain of the *Surprise*, accustomed to hiring Nuu-chah-nulth crew and sealers in the area, likely enlisted the Huu-ay-aht labourers who canoed the lumber ashore and packed it to the construction site. The attached tower and dwelling were completed in October, but the station still awaited a lantern and a keeper to be put into operation.²⁷ An account of the lantern's arrival provides a telling glimpse into the Department of Marine and Fisheries' dependence on Indigenous seafarers. In June 1874, Marine Agent James Cooper chartered the schooner *Kate* to transport the lantern glass and other materials to the new station. In what became standard procedure, the party anchored at Dodger Cove, a protected harbour eight kilometres north, where the Huu-ay-aht had two villages, Chapʼis and ʔA:ʔat.sowʼis.²⁸ In a subsequent report, Cooper was forthright about his reliance on the villagers:

The landing at the light-house is nearly always bad, and sometimes dangerous, but the sea-coast Indians are very expert in handling their canoes, and it is considered safer to entrust property or life to the care and management of the natives than to risk the same in (frequently) very inferior boats.²⁹

Unfortunately for Cooper, the villagers knew his dependence on them. They directed him to hire more labourers than he felt necessary and scorned his initial payment offer. The Huu-ay-aht villagers had a strong hand to play, knowing the Department of Marine and Fisheries (DMF) had already run advertisements announcing that the light would be exhibited in little more than two weeks.³⁰ Cooper soon lost his patience and threatened to land the schooner himself. The villagers knew this

²⁶ "Cape Beale Expedition," *Daily British Colonist*, 5 November 1872, 3; "The Cape Beale Lighthouse Party," *Daily British Colonist*, 19 July 1873, 3; Pattie Alexander Haslam interview, 26 March 1962, recording T0309:0001, MS-3268.U, PR-0374, Imbert Orchard Fonds, BCA.

²⁷ "The Cape Beale Lighthouse," *Daily British Colonist*, 28 October 1873, 3.

²⁸ Chapʼis alternatively rendered as čapʼis. See Arima et al., *Family Origin Histories*, 344–45; St. Claire, "Barkley Sound Tribal Territories," 109; Bridge and Neary, *Voices of the Elders*, 138.

²⁹ Agent Cooper was not known for his tact, nor for his understanding of Indigenous Protocols. Encountering him fourteen years earlier, Captain Richards complained that Cooper (then a harbour master at Esquimalt) had frustrated planned negotiations with Kwakwaka'wakw Chiefs due to his "little knowledge of the people." See Richards, *Private Journal of Captain G.H. Richards*, 67, 70. Canada, Parliament, "Seventh Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries being for the Fiscal Year Ended 30th June, 1874," app. 5, in *Sessional Papers for the Second Session of the Third Parliament of the Dominion of Canada, Session 1875*, vol. 4, paper 5 (Ottawa: MacLean, Rogers & Co., 1875), 163–64. Annual reports hereafter cited as "Canada, Annual Report for the Department of *x* for the Fiscal Year Ended yyyy."

³⁰ Official notice of the light was published the week prior to Cooper's visit. See "Notice to Mariners," *Daily British Colonist*, 9 June 1874, 4.



Figure 3. A boat runs into the narrow cove behind Cape Beale lighthouse on “a very calm day.” A faint ‘x’ inscribed to the left of the boat marks the position of an unseen rock beneath the waves. Image P-J47.4 reproduced with permission of the Bamfield Community Museum and Archive.

was “almost a physical impossibility” and smirked that he was welcome to try. As the exasperated agent later commented, “They knew that I was more or less dependent upon them, and were sharp enough to know how to make me pay for it.” Cooper threatened to inform the Indian commissioner that they were a “bad race of people,” but he ultimately agreed to pay them each \$4.50 – six times his initial offer – plus three dollars for each of two canoes. The HUU-ay-aht canoe pullers further bewildered Cooper by returning some days later to transport him back to Dodger Cove without additional payment.³¹

The HUU-ay-aht continued to gain from their proximity to the Cape Beale Lighthouse, despite DMF efforts to relieve keepers of their reliance on Indigenous labour. In 1875, Agent Cooper (evidently still miffed) furnished keeper Robert Westmoreland with a surf boat, “rendering him independent of Indian help, upon which he previously had to depend for every trifling service.”³² Such independence proved elusive. In 1878, when Westmoreland’s successor was appointed, the new keeper and his family were deposited by paddlewheel tug at Numukamis, a HUU-ay-

³¹ Canada, “Annual Report for the Department of the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the Fiscal Year Ended 1874,” 163–64.

³² Canada, “Annual Report for the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the Fiscal Year Ended 1875,” app. 8, 102.



Figure 4. The Cape Beale Lighthouse as seen from the southwest. The rocky waters offshore made this a treacherous coastline. Image P-G04.415 reproduced with permission of the Bamfield Community Museum and Archive.

aht village on the southeastern corner of Barkley Sound.³³ Emmanuel Cox, Frances (née Shortt), and their children were shuttled by canoe to Tzartus Island and, later, Dodger Cove, where a storm delayed them for many days. The Coxes and their belongings were finally transferred to the station on a drizzly winter day in canoes piloted by fifteen Huu-ay-aht men and women. Keeper Cox, a “tall, rugged man,” was hauled to shore by two men, his three-year old daughter Pattie carried all the way to the lighthouse by a man she called Whiskey Charlie. The family found the lantern and house “badly in want of repairs,” forcing them to enlist another Huu-ay-aht, John Mack, to paddle 150 kilometres down the coast to alert Agent Cooper in Victoria.³⁴

The Cox family would operate the station for the next seventeen years. Eager to supplement the preserved foods brought by government steamer,

³³ Alternatively, Nomaqami:s, nuumaqimyis. See St. Claire, “Barkley Sound Tribal Territories,” 91; Bridge and Neary, *Voices of the Elders*, 138.

³⁴ George Nicholson, *Vancouver Island's West Coast, 1762–1962* (Victoria: George Nicholson, 1962), 139–40; George H. Bird, *Tse-Ees-Tah (One Man in a Boat): Sketches* (Port Alberni, BC: Arrowsmith Press, 1971), 208; Pattie Alexander Haslam interview, BCA; 22 February 1878, Cape Beale Lighthouse logbook, vol. 1 (1878–1886), PR-1470 Cape Beale Lighthouse Fonds, BCA; Chas. A. Cox memoirs, Alberni District Historical Society (ADHS), Port Alberni, British Columbia.

the family maintained a herd of goats, learned to fish and dig clams, shot ducks, and tried their best to grow vegetables. Having a stockpile of food was essential in the event of a shipwreck, and the Coxes were eager to get wrecked sailors aboard the first vessel to pass the light, lest their stores be fully depleted.³⁵ As uninvited residents in the hahoulthee who lacked social status, kinship, and ceremonial relations, the Huu-ay-aht probably regarded the Cox family and DMF property as fair for the taking.³⁶ In 1880, Cox complained to the new marine agent, Frederick Revely, that Huu-ay-aht individuals had begun “stealing” lumber from the site and were “very insolent and defiant in demanding food.”³⁷ The Ditidaht, who lived down the coast from the Huu-ay-aht, stopped at the lighthouse en route to Potlatches at Dodger Cove to request water, food, and other supplies. Old tins, emptied of the coal oil that fuelled the lighthouse, were coveted for storing whale oil.³⁸ Huu-ay-aht harvesters also continued to visit the premises for their own land use practices. Keeper Cox interfered when “Indian Harry” was discovered cutting down a tree close to the lighthouse tramway and described Harry as “impertinent” when he was prevented from continuing.³⁹ On another occasion, a storm forced Huu-ay-aht whalers to bring a dead whale into the cove behind the lighthouse. The whalers asked Keeper Cox if he objected to their leaving it there but didn’t bother to comply when he ordered them to take it away. The carcass remained for weeks while the Huu-ay-aht butchered and transported it home in pieces, leaving a stench that Pattie Cox would remember decades later.⁴⁰ That the Coxes understood such actions as theft or begging, and characterized Huu-ay-aht behaviour as “insolent” and “impertinent,” is indicative of their inability or refusal to comprehend the cultural and legal norms governing the coast on which they found themselves.

A more serious incident took place in April 1880, when a group of Indigenous people was discovered hunting the family’s goats. Keeper Cox fired his shotgun at their dogs and demanded a missing goat be returned. A man called Man-as-atta seized his own rifle and threatened to shoot Cox if he remained on the beach. Cox was outnumbered and reluctantly obeyed. Agent Revely had Man-as-atta arrested on his next inspection

³⁵ Pattie Alexander Haslam interview, BCA; Frances Morrison interview, 26 March 1962, recording T1299:0001, MS-3268.KK, Imbert Orchard Fonds, BCA.

³⁶ Reid, *Sea Is My Country*, 48, 64.

³⁷ Memo, Agent Revely to Deputy Minister Smith, “Reports Keeper of Cape Beale (BC) Lighthouse Molested by Indians,” 14 June 1880, file 21973, vol. 3715, reel C-10191, RG 10, LAC.

³⁸ Pattie Alexander Haslam interview, BCA.

³⁹ 25 April 1883, Cape Beale Lighthouse logbook, vol. 1, BCA.

⁴⁰ Pattie Alexander Haslam interview, BCA.

visit and provided Cox with a Winchester rifle and ammunition to protect his family and government property. Revely also wrote to DMF's deputy minister, urging that an Indian agent be appointed to Barkley Sound to curb the "bad character" of the local population. Man-as-atta was tried in Victoria and released on bond. Trespass notices were posted at the lightstation a few months later.⁴¹

Such eruptions do not altogether characterize the dynamic between the Coxes and the Huu-ay-aht. Other reports suggest that the relationship was often friendly. Pattie Cox felt sorry for visiting Indigenous people and compensated them with empty coal oil tins when they were bitten by the family's dog. The family watched ceremonial dances at Potlatches, and while Pattie Cox disliked "Indians," she described them as "very kindly" and marvelled at their "beautiful" war canoes and "melodious" voices. A family member described the Cox children as having Indigenous playmates, from whom they learned the Chinuk Wawa (or Chinook jargon) needed to converse in their new home. In this respect, the Coxes conformed to a familiar pattern of communication in the Pacific Northwest, whereby Indigenous Peoples, European traders, and early settlers sought a common vocabulary across linguistic barriers. The family simply "had to know the jargon," according to Pattie, "there was no way else to speak." Pattie's older brother Augustus "Gus" Cox went a step further, however, and learned to speak Nuučaañuł, reportedly one of only two White men who could do so proficiently.⁴² Huu-ay-aht people imparted ecological knowledge as well, instructing the Coxes never to run away if they encountered a cougar and reportedly teaching Pattie to canoe and trawl for salmon. "They were always trying to teach us and talk to us," she later recalled.⁴³

Indigenous labour remained central to the light's routine maintenance and provisioning. The family purchased fresh fish from their neighbours, and for all his bluster Keeper Cox hired Huu-ay-aht men to cut wood

⁴¹ Memo, Agent Revely to Dep. Min. Smith, RG 10, LAC; 28 April 1880 and 11 September 1880, Cape Beale Lighthouse logbook, vol. 1, BCA; "Municipal Police Court," *Daily Colonist*, 27 May 1880.

⁴² Gus Cox would later deploy the language and cultural knowledge he developed at the lighthouse in his capacities as a policeman and Indian agent. See John Ross, "A Pioneer Family of the West Coast," *West Coast Advocate*, 2 October 1947, 9, microfilm copy, BCA; Pattie Alexander Haslam interview, BCA; Edward Cox interview, 8 March 1965, recording T0857:0001, MS-3268.S, Imbert Orchard Fonds, BCA; Chas. A. Cox memoirs, ADHS.

⁴³ Pattie Alexander Haslam interview, BCA; George Nicholson, "They Came to School by Schooner," *Daily Colonist*, 21 July 1957, 8–9. Nuu-chah-nulth salmon trawling is discussed briefly in McMillan, *Since the Time of the Transformers*, 17–18.

and repair and paint lighthouse structures.⁴⁴ The difficulty of landing at the cape and the high cost of White labour meant that DMF continued to depend on Huu-ay-aht labourers to transport lumber, machinery, and other materials to the lighthouse.⁴⁵ Cox's logbooks and DMF reports give only a partial account of such exchanges. Huu-ay-aht labourers were generally hired indirectly by the marine agent or a local White sealer, and their presence at the lightstation was sometimes only noted by happenstance several months later.⁴⁶ Securing labour was easy enough in the summer months, when the Huu-ay-aht resided in outer coast villages like Chapʔis and ʔA:ʔat.sowʔis from which they fished and hunted sea mammals. Most families moved to Barkley Sound's inner coast salmon rivers and streams during the fall, and to larger, protected villages like Numukamis come winter. DMF was subject to this seasonal rhythm, and lighthouse tenders had to venture farther into Barkley Sound if there were no labourers at Dodger Cove.⁴⁷ This likely explains why the Coxes were deposited at Numukamis when they arrived in winter 1878.

The demands on DMF's sole steamer, and the relative infrequency of shipping between Victoria and Barkley Sound, meant Nuu-chah-nulth seafarers were sometimes able to turn a profit on longer trips transporting men and materials to the Cape Beale Lighthouse. Again, as is often the case, Indigenous labour is probably obscured in colonial records.⁴⁸ DMF paid White sealing captains for transportation costs, but their schooners often had Indigenous sailors. When the *Surprise* arrived in April 1874 with a repairman to fix lighthouse machinery, it numbered a Ka:ʔyu:k't'h' (Kyuquot) boatswain named Nomucos and Mowachaht assistant sailor Chechiepe among its four crew members.⁴⁹ Failing the availability of a

⁴⁴ Ross, "Pioneer Family of the West Coast"; 28 June 1878, 27 September 1879, 1–7 October 1879, Cape Beale Lighthouse logbook, vol. 1, BCA.

⁴⁵ 22 January 1881, 1 November 1881, 11 February 1885, 31 January 1892, Cape Beale Lighthouse logbook, vol. 1, BCA; Canada, "Annual Report for the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the Fiscal Year Ended 1884," app. 7, 119.

⁴⁶ Canada, "Annual Report for the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the Fiscal Year Ended 1877," app. 6, 252; November 1881, Cape Beale Lighthouse logbook, vol. 1, BCA.

⁴⁷ Canada, "Annual Report for the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the Fiscal Year Ended 1877," app. 6, 245.

⁴⁸ Martha C. Knack and Alice Littlefield, "Native American Labor: Retrieving History, Rethinking Theory," in *Native Americans and Wage Labor: Ethnohistorical Perspectives*, ed. Martha C. Knack and Alice Littlefield (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 3–4; Lutz, *Makúk*, 40; Carol Williams, "Introduction," in *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism*, ed. Carol Williams (Baltimore: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 20.

⁴⁹ August Joseph Brabant, *Mission to Nootka, 1874–1900: Reminiscences of the West Coast of Vancouver Island*, ed. Charles Lillard (Sidney, BC: Gray's Publishing, 1977), 13; Cairn Elizabeth Crockford, "Nuu-Chah-Nulth Labour Relations in the Pelagic Sealing Industry, 1868–1911" (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 1996).

sealing schooner, Indigenous seafarers might be hired directly, as when Agent Cooper tried to enlist help to transport a painter from Victoria to the lighthouse.⁵⁰ Huu-ay-aht intermediaries were essential for outward travel and communication from the lighthouse, and Keeper Cox enlisted canoes to report broken machinery and transport items for repair.⁵¹ When such assistance was required Cox had only to raise a flag to summon help from Dodger Cove.⁵² The Coxes also entrusted their children to the care of Nuu-chah-nulth mariners. On one occasion, Pattie and her sister Annie were conveyed home from Victoria by Dick Clamhouse and his wife, who were themselves returning from hop-picking in Washington.⁵³

The family's closest associations at Barkley Sound were mail carriers like Clamhouse, who visited the station on a monthly basis to deliver and receive letters from Victoria, Port Alberni, or passing ships. When the sea was rough, mail carriers took the customary trail that linked Chi·mataqsał to other Huu-ay-aht settlements, on which Minnie Paterson would later tread with a message of her own.⁵⁴ Many of the carriers' names and dates of employment are known from Cox's logbooks and other records. Charlie (1879–85), Joe (1885–88), Clamhouse (1890–91), and John Mack (1892–94) served regularly and became known to the family over several years.⁵⁵ Pattie Cox spoke highly of Mack and his wife. When Keeper Cox died in 1894, Mack refused payment for

⁵⁰ "Supreme Court," *Daily Colonist*, 19 December 1878, 3.

⁵¹ 16 August 1881, 24 May 1884, 3 April 1892, 5 April 1892, Cape Beale Lighthouse logbook, vol. 1, BCA.

⁵² Nicholson, "They Came to School by Schooner"; Colin McKea, "The McKee's: A Brief Biography by Collin McKea," file D-F02.70, Bamfield Community Museum and Archives.

⁵³ Clamhouse (elsewhere rendered "Thlaamahuu" or "La:mahos:") appears in ethnographic texts as one of Edward Sapir and Alex Thomas's local interlocutors. There he is described as a Uchucklesaht who lived among the Huu-ay-aht. See Ross, "Pioneer Family of the West Coast"; 24 March 1886, 5 April 1892, Cape Beale Lighthouse logbook, vol. 1, BCA; Edward Cox interview, BCA; E.Y. Arima, Katherine Robinson, and Terry Klokeid, eds., *The Whaling Indians: West Coast Legends and Stories: Tales of Extraordinary Experience*, Sapir-Thomas Nootka Texts 10 (Hull, QC: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2000), xiv; Edward Sapir, *Native Accounts of Nootka Ethnography*, 1 (Bloomington: Indiana University, Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics, 1955), 55.

⁵⁴ An "Indian path" between Cape Beale and Bamfield is referenced in a newspaper article in 1864 and described in Cox's logbook entries as leading to the Huu-ay-aht village Kiixʔin. See 10 December 1884, 11 February 1885, 25 May 1886, Cape Beale Lighthouse logbook, vol. 1, BCA; "The Land We Live On (continued)," *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, 10 May 1864, 3.

⁵⁵ The family's first regular mail carrier was probably the "Whiskey Charlie" who carried Pattie to the station in 1878. Other mail carriers were hired on a more casual basis: Harry (1878, 1892); Jackson (c. 1883); Ah-ack-Soa, a.k.a. "Jimmey" (c. 1884); Taylor (1885); Douglas (1890); Pete (1891); Sam (1892–93). See various months, Cape Beale Lighthouse logbooks, vols. 1 (1878–86) and 2 (1886–94), BCA; Canada, "Annual Report for the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the Fiscal Year Ended 1881," app. 7, 106; "... 1882," app. 7, 107; "... 1883," app. 7, 102–3; "... 1884," app. 7, 119; Pattie Alexander Haslam interview, BCA.

informing family members in Port Alberni and reportedly took considerable offence at Pattie Cox's efforts to pay him for the service.⁵⁶ Trips to Victoria and Alberni were no doubt an appealing opportunity for Nuu-chah-nulth mariners who, like Clamhouse and his wife returning from the hop fields, had their own kinship, ceremonial, and economic motivations for plying the coast.⁵⁷ The exposed route to Victoria took several days by canoe, but it was reportedly regarded as an easy voyage even for older individuals. This attitude reflects the seafaring skill and local knowledge that enabled Nuu-chah-nulth mariners to shelter in countless nooks "of little use to the white man's boats."⁵⁸

Local expertise – ecological, technological, and social – underpinned all the above activities to some extent, but it is particularly striking in the pilots and guides who levied their geographic knowledge for pay. Government notices counselled "strangers" against navigating local harbours except in the fairest weather and warned against entering Barkley Sound "without local knowledge or a pilot."⁵⁹ Unfortunately, it is difficult to quantify how often Indigenous pilots were secured as they were hired on a casual basis and sometimes documented only when voyages went amiss. A Catholic missionary at Numukamis related one instance in which three prospectors decided to paddle to Victoria "without any Indian assistance." He protested that it "was not only foolish, but risky and dangerous" given the fierce breakers off the cape. His misgivings proved prescient when the expedition's remains were discovered beneath the lighthouse. A newspaper account conjectured that the three failed to

⁵⁶ Ross, "A Pioneer Family of the West Coast," 140.

⁵⁷ Paige Sylvia Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 98–115; Jennifer Seltz, "Epidemics, Indians, and Border-Making in the Nineteenth-Century Pacific Northwest," in *Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories*, ed. Benjamin Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 91–115; John S. Lutz, "Work, Sex, and Death on the Great Thoroughfare: Annual Migrations of 'Canadian Indians' to the American Pacific Northwest," in *Parallel Destinies: Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies*, ed. John M. Findlay and Ken S. Coates (Seattle, Montreal, and Kingston: Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest in association with University of Washington Press and McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 80–103; Bird, *Tse-Ees-Tab*, 49.

⁵⁸ Bird, *Tse-Ees-Tab*, 49.

⁵⁹ G.H. Richards, *The Vancouver Island Pilot: Containing Sailing Directions for the Coasts of Vancouver Island, and Part of British Columbia Compiled from the Surveys Made by Captain George Henry Richards, R.N., in H.M. Ships Plumper and Hecate, between the Years 1858 and 1864* (London: Hydrographic Office, Admiralty, 1864), 181, 184; Canada, "Annual Report for the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the Fiscal Year Ended 1874," supp. 1, 50–51.

find the entrance to the cove behind the cape and were caught among the reefs outside when a wave capsized their boat.⁶⁰

Two contrary accounts provide another tantalizing, if uncertain, glimpse of the local piloting economy. Frances Cox related how a barque identified as the *Dumbarton* dropped anchor to avoid running aground in Barkley Sound after the captain mistook it for the Strait of Juan de Fuca. A Hāwīl brought the captain to Cape Beale and volunteered to pilot the ship to safety provided the captain obey his instructions to the letter. Acting as interpreter, Keeper Cox explained that the Hāwīl previously came to the assistance of an American trading schooner that struck rock after his guidance was ignored. Knowing him to be a capable pilot, Cox reportedly advised the captain to “let this Indian take the wheel and don’t interfere.” The captain reluctantly agreed, and the Hāwīl safely led the four-masted barque out of the sound a few days later. Cox’s logbook makes the briefest mention of the captain’s visit and later notes simply that the “*Dumbarton* sailed out, Middle Channel.” A newspaper reported a variation of this incident, referring to the barque as the *Dumfriesshire*. According to this account, the captain tried to telegraph at Cape Beale after he “went to the Indians for a pilot” and found none that was willing to take him. Finding the line down, the captain decided to sail out and by “good luck” reached the Juan de Fuca Strait. The accounts differ in important respects, but both reveal that Indigenous guides were solicited when mariners ran into trouble in Barkley Sound.⁶¹

Indigenous communities also played important roles in responding to marine disasters. Colonial officials fretted about Nuu-chah-nulth treatment of wrecked sailors and their cargo, and they tried to impress upon them the need to return salvaged goods and to afford wrecked sailors hospitality and passage to Victoria. Stories of “murder,” “plunder,” and other “cruel atrocities” continued to circulate long after their actual occurrence, but the reality was quite different by the 1870s. Pattie Cox recalled that Indigenous people refrained from looting vessels and

⁶⁰ “The Loss of the West Coast Prospecting Party,” *Daily British Colonist*, 21 April 1877, 3; Charles A. Moser, *Reminiscences of the West Coast of Vancouver Island* (Victoria: Acme Press, 1926), 150.

⁶¹ Ross, “A Pioneer Family of the West Coast (continued),” *West Coast Advocate*, 9 October 1947, 22; 13 and 16 October 1892, Cape Beale Lighthouse logbook, vol. 2, BCA; “Out in the Reckoning,” *Daily Colonist*, 20 October 1892, 6; Nicholson, *Vancouver Island’s West Coast*, 142–43.

provided aid when there was a wreck.⁶² According to Pattie, wrecked sailors' best chance of survival lay in waiting for Indigenous assistance:

If the sailors got to shore they would start beating their way through the thick bush and die of exhaustion and starvation. If only they had stayed in one place the Indians would have reached them either by canoe or trail. They had trails all up and down the coast. Once we came upon three skeletons – sailors who had perished only a short way from a trail that would have led them directly to an Indian lodge.⁶³

Intricate trade, ceremonial, and kinship connections between Indigenous communities meant news travelled rapidly along the coast.⁶⁴ “Indian report” was often responsible for spreading news of derelict vessels and waterlogged debris to colonial authorities in Victoria and Alberni.⁶⁵ In some cases, the Coxes only learned of wrecks from the Huu-ay-aht seafarers who first encountered them. The British barque *Becherdass-Ambiadass* was en route to a Moodyville sawmill in July 1879 when it dragged over a reef south of the cape. The Huu-ay-aht residents came to the crew's assistance, helped secure their belongings, and reported the wreck to Cox.⁶⁶ The Coxes were similarly alerted when the steamer *Michigan* ran aground in January 1893.⁶⁷ Customary drift rights within the hahoulthee meant that salvaging of debris continued to occur in some cases (including with regard to the *Michigan*) and probably encouraged

⁶² Blenkinsop, “Reports on the West Coast,” 53, LAC; Canada, Parliament, “Report of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for British Columbia for 1872 & 1873,” in *Sessional Papers for the First Session of the Second Parliament of the Dominion of Canada, Session 1873*, vol. 5, paper 23 (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1873), 4; Canada, “Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended 1875,” part 1, 46, 53; Memo, Agent Revely to Dep. Min. Smith, RG 10, LAC; Pattie Alexander Haslam interview, BCA.

⁶³ Bernice McDonough, “Childhood on a Rock,” *Vancouver Sun*, 29 August 1953, 22.

⁶⁴ “A Startling Rumor,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 13 November 1899, 8; Sproat, *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life*, 79; Reid, *Sea Is My Country*, 36.

⁶⁵ These include the *Charles V*— (1886, name obscured on wreckage), *Dare* (1890), *Ericsson* (1892), *Kilmenny* (1896), and *Lamorna* (1904). A narrow escape or failure to return Indigenous mariners to their home communities on schedule could also produce false reports that a ship had wrecked, as in the cases of the *Theresa* (1889) and *Willapa* (1899). See “The Wreck at Cape Beale,” *Daily Colonist*, 19 December 1886, 3; “Victoria News,” *Vancouver Daily World*, 4 September 1889, 1; “Not the *Theresa*,” *Daily Colonist*, 7 September 1889, 4; “Wreck of the *Dare*,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 1 January 1891, 33; Pattie Alexander Haslam interview, BCA; “Cape Beale Wreck,” *San Francisco Call*, 14 January 1896, 4; “A Startling Rumor,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 13 November 1899, 8; “*Quadra* Sent Out after Queen City,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, 21 March 1904, 1; “The *Lamorna*,” *Daily Colonist*, 17 April 1904, 8.

⁶⁶ “The Wreck on the West Coast,” *Daily Colonist*, 31 July 1879, 3; July 1879, Cape Beale Lighthouse logbook, vol. 1, BCA.

⁶⁷ Pattie Alexander Haslam interview, BCA; McDonough, “Childhood on a Rock,” *Vancouver Sun*, 29 August 1953, 22.

Indigenous mariners to accept compensation when they transported wrecked sailors and their goods to Victoria.⁶⁸

The ongoing occurrence of shipwrecks on Vancouver Island alarmed citizens in port cities across the Pacific Northwest. Pressure to improve coastal navigation increased considerably following the completion of transcontinental railways to Seattle (1883) and Vancouver (1885).⁶⁹ The turn of the century marked another moment of departure in state efforts to foster dependable navigation on the coast. Where rail dominated the late nineteenth century, Canadian and American statesmen increasingly looked to marine transportation to extend their nations' influence at the dawn of the new century.⁷⁰ Klondike gold and plans for a northern railway spurred renewed hydrographic charting, accelerated the pace of lighthouse construction, and encouraged the first Canadian lighthouses north of Vancouver Island. Amidst the activity, two shipwrecks in the same year attracted international attention. The wreck of the steamer *Valencia* southeast of Chi-mataqsāł on 22 January 1906 resulted in the deaths of at least 116 crew and passengers. Amidst the deluge of reporting that followed were accounts of local Nuu-chah-nulth finding one group of survivors and conveying them to a passing steamer.⁷¹ The *Vancouver Daily World* reported that parties of "Indians" had been dispatched to search for survivors and retrieve bodies, and were "taking desperate chances ... to investigate every floating object that may prove a human

⁶⁸ The *Daily Colonist* reported that the Ditidaht salvaged rolls of carpet, cigars, and whisky from the *Michigan*. Pattie and her sister also indulged themselves, retrieving carpeting and a keg of honey from the wreck. See Arima and Hoover, *Whaling People*, 107; Drucker, *Northern and Central Nootkan Tribes*, 254. "The City," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 22 June 1893, 5; McDonough, "Childhood on a Rock"; "The Pacific Disaster," *New York Times*, 13 November 1875, 1; 21 March 1881, Cape Beale Lighthouse logbook, vol. 1, BCA; "Wreck of the *Dare*," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

⁶⁹ Copy of a report of a Committee of the Honourable the Executive Council, approved by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, "For establishment of a Life-Saving Station on the West Coast of Vancouver Island," 13 May 1887, file 7850-2, vol. 1500, RG 12, LAC.

⁷⁰ Sean Fraga, "An Outlet to the Western Sea: Puget Sound, Terraqueous Mobility, and Northern Pacific Railroad's Pursuit of Trade with Asia, 1864-1892," *Western Historical Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (2020): 458; Richard H. Gimblett, "The Incarnation of Energy: Raymond Préfontaine, the Hydrographic Survey of Canada, and the Establishment of a Canadian Naval Militia," in *Charting Northern Waters: Essays for the Centenary of the Canadian Hydrographic Service*, ed. William Glover (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 77-82.

⁷¹ Newspaper reports record the discovery as being made by "Indian policeman" Charlie Ross and/or an unnamed sister. See "Story of Men on Turret Island," *Victoria Daily Times*, 27 January 1906, 1; "The Story of the Wreck Told Pictorially by Times Artists," *Victoria Daily Times*, 29 January 1906, 1.

being alive or dead.”⁷² A tug picked up Indigenous crews at Bamfield and Clo-oose and attempted landings near the site of the wreck.⁷³ As hope dimmed for survivors, the British Columbia Provincial Police offered Indigenous people rewards for recovering bodies, thus acknowledging their familiarity with the coast and ability to work more effectively from their canoes than were those on the boats brought to the scene by steamer.⁷⁴ The second shipwreck – the *Coloma* – was quite different, ending with the keeper’s wife receiving widespread and deserved acclamation for her sprint to Bamfield. Finding no boat at the head of the inlet, Minnie Paterson ran to the home of Annie McKay (Emmanuel Cox’s daughter), who canoed her to the government lighthouse tender in time for it to rescue the *Coloma*’s crew.⁷⁵

There are several ways to understand the acclaim that Minnie Paterson received in the months that followed. Reporters and local women’s associations found in her “ardent desire to succor those in great peril” a worthy example of benevolent maternalism, one reinforced by her choice to return on foot the same evening to nurse her infant child.⁷⁶ The growing fascination with shipwrecks during the era also played an obvious role. As John Gillis notes, improvements in nineteenth-century marine safety – “more and better lighthouses” and the adoption of steam power – magnified the horror of shipwrecks in the eyes of the public by transforming them into romantic symbols of enduring human fragility before nature.⁷⁷ But the recounting of Minnie Paterson’s singular feat was also shaped by the settler colonial context in which it took place. It bears the hallmarks of other rural “frontier myths” that distil complex processes of historical change into dramatic accounts pitting protagonists against a hostile wilderness.⁷⁸ One newspaper described the events of the day as “a heroic struggle along the hurricane-swept cliffs and through knee deep bogs,” while others emphasized the “relentless ocean” and

⁷² “Fourth Man Is Insane,” *Vancouver Daily World*, 26 January 1906, 13; “Indian Carousals on Beach Cause Anxiety,” *Vancouver Daily World*, 27 January 1906, 10.

⁷³ “Surf Too High Yesterday for Indians to Land,” *Province*, 30 January 1906, 1.

⁷⁴ “Number of Bodies Found to Date,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 1 February 1906, 1; “Bodies Brought from the Wreck,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 2 February 1906, 1.

⁷⁵ Deffenbaugh, “Nine Men Owe Their Lives,” 2–3.

⁷⁶ “Work of Heroine Will Be Rewarded,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 12 December 1906, 1.

⁷⁷ John R. Gillis, *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2012), 139–40. See also Carl Thompson, “Introduction,” in *Shipwreck in Art and Literature: Images and Interpretations from Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Carl Thompson (New York: Routledge, 2014), 11–12, 17.

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Furniss, “Pioneers, Progress, and the Myth of the Frontier: The Landscape of Public History in Rural British Columbia,” *BC Studies* 115/116 (Autumn/Winter 1997/98): 7–44.

“angry surf.” Because the remoteness of the setting is key to such narratives, Indigenous presence is almost altogether overlooked. The *Seattle Times* feature on Minnie Paterson refers to “the little Siwash village” across the sound at Ucluelet but says nothing of Chapʔis, ʔA:ʔat.sowʔis, Numukamis, or countless other Nuu-chah-nulth settlements and cultural sites in the area.⁷⁹

The story of Minnie Paterson’s response to the wreck of the *Coloma* is a good yarn. It’s digestible, dramatic, and redemptive. But all yarns simplify, and this one is the product of an era in which Indigenous people were easily dismissed by coastal travellers thanks to the increased availability of hydrographic information, the expansion of the lighthouse system, and the advent of steamships. If the *Seattle Times* reporter saw the coast as “unpeopled,” it was because he was taken to Bamfield by steamer and rowed to the cape by Keeper Paterson. The trip was unremarkable. The coast was illuminated and charted, the weather mercifully calm. There was no need to push on to Numukamis to secure canoes, no need to haggle with savvy labourers at Dodger Cove, no need to be hauled through the surf by forbearing Huu-ay-aht men. In this sense, the coast shifted markedly in the fifty years since Captain Richards first identified the cape’s suitability for a lighthouse. Indigenous Knowledge and labour, mediated by new technologies of light, helped render the coastline legible, and therefore navigable, to the countless mamaʔnʔi newcomers who plied these waters at the turn of the century. And yet the ongoing risk of shipwrecks meant that the coast quickly reverted to a less predictable space of cultural encounter when marine disaster washed mamaʔnʔi seafarers ashore and Indigenous mariners were called to their aid.

The development of Canada’s Pacific lighthouse network represented a meaningful extension of the colonial state to corners of the coast where, previously, it had only a tenuous presence, but this extension relied heavily on Indigenous Knowledge and labour. Lightkeepers undertook to enforce colonial norms of land use and property at their stations and could call on police or Indian agents when their efforts were flouted, even as they relied on Indigenous neighbours for food and transport. Of more significance, navigational knowledge and technology beckoned the marine traffic that wove Barkley Sound and Vancouver Island more tightly into imperial and capitalist trade networks that spanned the globe. Indigenous people suffered the consequences of these changes, while also leveraging them

⁷⁹ “Work of Heroine Will Be Rewarded”; “Purse for Heroine to Be Sent Thursday,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 19 December 1906, 9; Deffenbaugh, “Nine Men Owe Their Lives.”

to procure new wage labour opportunities, additional sources of material wealth, and captive markets for fish, canoes, and other goods. Settlers in this new era may have “considered Native ways irrelevant,” but that doesn’t mean that they constructed new systems of transportation “from scratch.” Records left by government agents, mariners, journalists, and lightkeeping families help reposition Indigenous people as essential actors in a historical drama to which they have often been assigned a marginal role. The very presence of a lighthouse at Chi·mataqsał owed much to Hūu-ay-aht and other Nuu-chah-nulth seafarers. Hāwiih navigated mamaŋ’i ships through the complex channels of Barkley Sound. Dugout canoes ferried keepers, materials, and the very fabric of the lighthouse to the cape. Whiskey Charlie, Dick Clamhouse, John Mack, and other mail carriers connected the lighthouse to the outside world. And when disaster struck, Indigenous communities provided aid to the shipwrecked or picked their bodies from the shore. If maps, lights, and steam shaped historic perceptions of the Pacific coast, they also present vantage points from which to reconsider coastal history today. Colonial navigation was built on Indigenous Knowledge and labour – sometimes literally. This new dimension of the coast emerges when we shift our attention from Minnie Paterson to the myriad exchanges that preceded her actions on that fateful December day.