

Heaven at the Ninstints



Paddling into the Ninstints in the Queen Charlotte Islands is a breathtaking experience, as well as a soulful one.

As a futurist and thought leader, I often look at the past in search of the essence of the human spirit, to further understand our present values and level of consciousness.

The Kunghit Haida of Ninstints was a culturally rich society. The earliest recorded Haida village was off the southern end of Moresby Island, in a sheltered bay on Anthony Island. When you paddle through

the rocky inlet's narrow channel, you are struck first by surprise with the emergence of the village, then by the power of its history and culture. The largest collection of Haida poles in their natural site is found at Ninstints, now a world heritage site.

The unfortunate end to the village followed the introduction of smallpox in 1863—declared as accidental—that decimated the population of 300.

It is documented that “Ninstints” was the Europeans’ interpretation of the head chief’s name, *Nān stins*—he who is two. The remaining 20 houses and mortuary poles and memorial poles, with family crests for those families entitled to use them, can only

beg questions of conscience from visitors privileged to walk this land today.

As I wandered among the poles, I was moved to tears as witness to a cultural achievement that lay in ruins. The loss belongs to all of us.

For a future organizational retreat, remember there is a place in our province that holds many lessons for creating a future that honours our differences. ▲

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