Context:
Gabriola, Snunéymux^{w} woolly dogs

Citations:
Doe, Nick, Old dogs, *SHALE* 3, pp.25–26, January 2002.

Phyllis Reeve, Book review: First Nations. first dogs—Canadian Aboriginal ethnocynology by Bryan Cummins, *SHALE* 8, p.43, June 1994.

Doe, Nick, A dog note, *SHALE* 8, pp.43–44, June 1994.

Errors and omissions:

There have been a couple of minor editing changes and corrections since it was first published.

Reference:

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November 27, 2011.

Notes

This section of *SHALE* provides an opportunity for contributors to present the partial results of ongoing research, publish less-than-normal-length articles, and provide "interesting facts".

Old dogs—*by Nick Doe*

A dog shows the way…Nanaimo harbour in the 1850s Panter-Downes

All the early European visitors to this area remarked on the dogs that lived here. The visitors were surprised to find that there were two breeds of indigenous dogs—a *wool dog* and a *village dog*. I suppose that the surprise stemmed from the assumption that in "primitive" societies, dogs were just scroungers, free to "mongrelize" at their pleasure. In fact of course, dogs, as everyone knows, were useful animals. The village dogs would have helped with the hunting; amused and protected the children; and given warning of the approach of bears, cougars, unfriendly neighbours, and assorted European explorers.

Simon Fraser recorded that on several occasions his men procured dogs from the Indians for—cover your ears Buster and Baxter—a meal. He is always careful though to leave the impression that this was a habit peculiar to the *voyageurs*. "Mr. Stuart", he writes in July 1808, "procured many curiosities [from a visit to a village], and the men brought back some dogs which, to their palates, proved a delicious dish". [*my emphasis*]

George Vancouver and his officers made several observations of the local wool dogs. He writes that they traded with the Indians of the Juan de Fuca Strait for bows and arrows…and woollen garments, which were "neatly wrought". He continues:

> "The dogs [of these people]…were numerous, and much resembled those of Pomerania, though in general somewhat larger. They were all shorn as close to the skin as sheep are in England; and so compact were their fleeces, that large portions could be lifted up by a corner without causing any separation."

Vancouver observed that the wool used to make Indian apparel appeared to be a blend, a conjecture that was probably correct. A Snunéymux[w] elder, around 1930, tells that:

> "…at certain times canoes would arrive at Nanaimo of Sliammon Indians from Squirrel Cove, Cortez Island. They brought bales of mountain goats hair in trade for native dogs hair. The Sliammon Indians had procured the hair from the mainland…as the mountain goat is not native to Vancouver Island. In the business of exchange, the bales of hair would be laid side by side, the hair patted down by hand, adding more of this kind or that of hair, until all were satisfied that the bales were even, then agreement was reached."

For two breeds of dogs to have survived in the same village, someone must have taken considerable care to keep them apart at certain critical stages in their life cycles. That the early European visitors didn't just get it wrong, by not being able to distinguish puppies from adults for example, has been

proven by the archaeologists—the bones of the two breeds are easily distinguished. One way of keeping dogs apart would have been to keep one breed on an island. I sometimes wonder if this is what is behind Galiano's remarks made on Gabriola. He was at the time, unaware that he was on an island.

> "Salamanca [who had gone to investigate the departure of the Snunéymux^{w} from their village in Taylor Bay] found…the remains of the fire and shellfish, and found that they had entirely moved their home, leaving the dogs, which according to tribal customs, would soon follow them by land."

The Spanish made similar observations to the British about the wool dogs:

> "The animals are of moderate size, resembling those of the English breed, very woolly, and usually white.* Among other differences from those of Europe is their manner of barking, which is simply a miserable howl."
>
> ** the number of breeds of dogs used to be very much smaller than it is now.*

Miserable howl?—real wolves don't bark either you know. Any chance of a Jurassic-Park style recreation of the now-lost breed of wool dogs? Not really. They're all *Canis lupus* at heart. In spite of the large variation in the characteristics of dogs, the differences in their DNA are undetectable. Which is probably just as well. Dogs should be dogs, and sheep should be sheep, especially when it comes to what goes with mint jelly. Isn't that right guys? Yep, Buster at least agrees, and he should know; he's a Border Collie.

Sources:

William Barraclough, *Dogs that were Indigenous to the Pacific North-West Coast,* BC Historical News, May 1969, pp.6–13

Susan Crockford, *Osteometry of Makah and Coast Salish Dogs,* Simon Fraser University, 1997. ◊

Reviews & reports

This section of *SHALE* provides an opportunity for contributors to record interviews and to write about books, journals of other societies, Internet sites, exhibitions, conferences, symposia, and meetings.

Book reviews

First nations, first dogs— Canadian Aboriginal ethnocynology by Bryan D. Cummins, Detselig Enterprises Ltd., Calgary, 2002.

REVIEWED BY PHYLLIS REEVE.

The dog's history of Gabriola was first introduced in a note in *SHALE* 3;[1] and now comes further elucidation by way of a new book by Bryan Cummins. As the title suggests, Cummins combines a careful academic approach to the subject with a personal interest in dogs and their people.

After introductory chapters, "*Canis familiaris* meets *Homo sapiens*" and "Canadian First Nations and the North American Dog", Cummins divides the country into regions, with a chapter for each—Arctic, Eastern Subarctic, Western Subarctic, Eastern Woodlands, Plains, Plateau, and Northwest Coast. Within each chapter, there is a discussion of the various Aboriginal peoples and their dogs, species by species. Most readers will not be inclined to curl up with this book, but nevertheless, selected sections make fascinating reading, and the whole is a valuable reference for Aboriginal history.

Cummins devotes a section to the *little woolly dog* of the Coast Salish, more prosaically known as the *Clallam-Indian dog*, and refers to the visit to Gabriola Island of the Spanish vessels *Sutil* and *Mexicana* in 1792, and includes the description of the dogs' bark as "simply a miserable howl". We also see the little woolly dog with its people in Paul Kane's painting *Interior of a Clallam Winter Lodge, Vancouver Island*, and artist Joanna Briggs offers her interpretation of what they looked like based on the Spaniards' description.

Cummins discusses at some length the use of the little woolly dog's hair in the making of clothing. It seems to have been rapidly superseded by Hudson's Bay Company blankets, just as some northern species have been replaced by snowmobiles.

By the end of most chapters, Cummins has written himself from scholarly mode into unabashed dog-lover, and few of the indigenous, or arguably indigenous dogs (with the obvious exception of the Newfoundland)[2] come across as loveable as the little woolly dog. After speculating on possible origins of the breed, he concludes: "What is relevant, is that the Coast Salish people bred and maintained for some years a unique breed. The tragedy is—as is far too often the case—that the breed no longer exists except in the pages of books and in paintings. How tragic for the Salish, for Canadians and for the world. Extinction is forever." ◊

A dog note—editor

Thanks Phyllis.

While on the topic of dogs, here's something else to be noted. The picture accompanying

[1] *Old dogs, SHALE* 3, pp. 25–26, January 2002.

[2] The "doormat" dog at Page's is a Newfoundlander.

A dog shows the way…A small detail of a painting of Nanaimo harbour in the 1850s. The date of the painting is not known, but it is almost certainly after 1860.

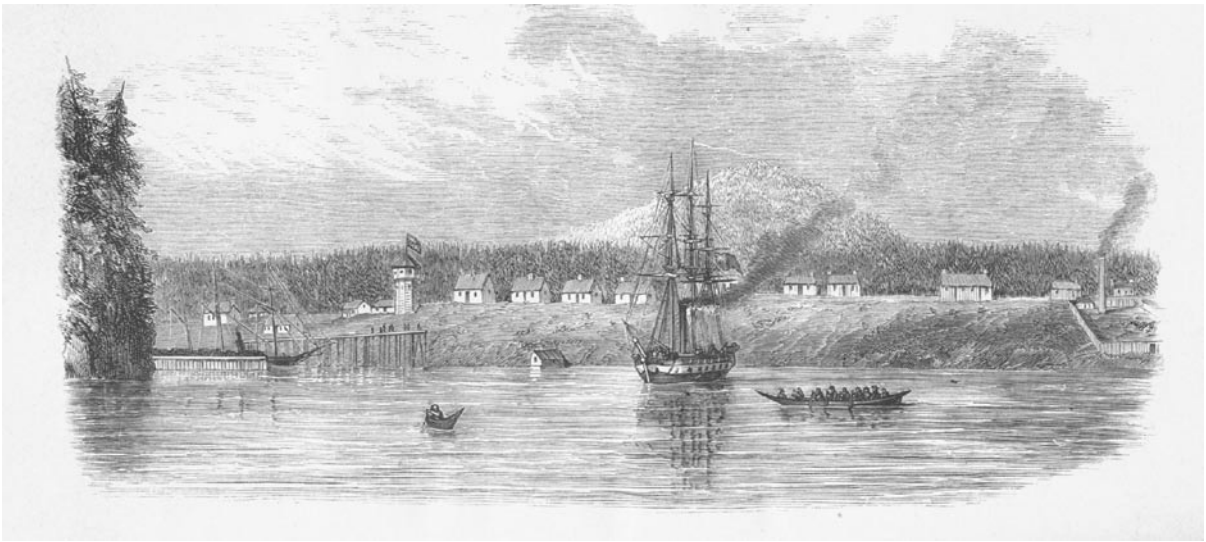
Lt. Edward D. Panter-Downes

the note in *SHALE* 3, a *dog shows the way*… reproduced here, was, in early printings, attributed to Lieutenant Dawnes. This is a garbled typo of a type not unfamiliar to those who study local history. Judging from its style, I think the painting is the work of Edward D. Panter-Downes, notwithstanding the fact that BC Archives attributes it to Edward Parker Bedwell. [BCA PDP-02614. For a good copy of the whole painting, see Terry Reksten, *The Illustrated History of British Columbia*, p.102, Douglas & McIntyre, 2001]

Not a lot is known about Panter-Downes, other than he joined the navy in 1847 and served aboard HMS *Duke of Wellington* and HMS *Tribune*. He retired in 1860.

More interestingly however, is that the painting is clearly closely related to a drawing by Edward Parker Bedwell who was aboard HMS *Plumper* when it was on the coast, 1857–60. There's no dog in Bedwell's drawing, shown below, which, given that it is probably the earlier work of the two, means it is also probably more accurate historically.

Don't you just hate it when people include pictures of dogs in their pictures just because they like them! ◊



Nanaimo, from the anchorage—fort and coal-works (circa 1859). Note the absence of a dog.

Lt. Edward Parker Bedwell