



LIḡWÍŁDAḡW RESEARCH CENTRE

We are continuing regular newsletter updates to share exciting history from the Archives with the communities. Some of you have heard these stories while others have not, so it is a pleasure to introduce V.2, Edition eight of; **Tales from the Vault.**

THE FOLLOWING STORY WAS RECORDED BY EDWARD CURTIS IN THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN (1915, REPRINTED 1970, VOL. 10, PP. 60–61). IT SHARES THE DREAM EXPERIENCE OF YAHNIQULUS, WHO JOURNEYED INTO THE SPIRIT WORLD AND RETURNED TO TELL HIS PEOPLE WHAT HE HAD SEEN.

Yahniqulus' Dream Experience



CHIEFS PARTY - FROM EDWARD S. CURTIS'S "THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN - VOLUME 10, THE KWAKWIKWUTL."

Long ago, a young man named Yahniqulus had a powerful dream. While his body lay as if dead, his spirit traveled into the next world.

He saw a canoe coming up the river. The men inside called to him: "*Come! You are the one we have come for.*" Yahniqulus climbed in, and the canoe carried him toward his home village of **T̓aka** (Jackson Bay). Though the canoe moved without paddles, the journey felt familiar, he recognized every place along the way. In this spirit world, the light was not like sunlight, but more like the flash of a shining surface.



As they passed through **ǰostowí** (Seymour Narrows), two drowned men sitting on the rocks called out to join them. The spirit men explained, *“Those are drowned ones, we do not take them.”* Near **Qućumin** (Bear River), two others on shore were taken aboard. Yahniqulus recognized one of them as Qunhwulahl, but the other, whose face was blackened, he did not know.

When they reached **Tǰaka**, there were houses but no smoke. All the spirits were gathered in the dance house. Inside, a cloud of eagle down floated through the air like fog, and when Yahniqulus breathed it in, it caught in his throat and nearly strangled him. He was told to follow careful steps around the fire to keep safe. The noise of the drumming and the striking of batons was deafening, shaking the house. At the right moment, Qunhwulahl urged him to run for the door. Yahniqulus escaped, followed by Qunhwulahl and the black-faced man. They turned back again and again to block the path, holding off the spirits who pursued them.

At last, Yahniqulus found himself alone on a high point of land, sitting beside a stone and weeping for his parents. Then he heard a whistling in the air. When he finally looked up, he saw a great white bird gazing at him. Something in his heart told him to climb onto its back. The bird ran forward on the ground, then rose slowly and heavily into the sky. Higher and higher it spiraled, until it perched on the top of a mountain. Yahniqulus got off, and the bird flew upward until it vanished from sight. Again, he wept.

Before long, the great bird returned. Once more he climbed on, and this time it carried him across the water, setting him down on the top of another mountain. From there he saw a long straight road leading to his people’s camp. As he hurried along, he passed between two trees bent with the weight of owls, the spirits of the dead.

Far ahead he saw a house, and near it a man standing by a stream. The man called out: *“Be careful. You must leap all the way across. If you fall into the water, you will never return. That is why I stay here, to warn those who pass.”* Yahniqulus drew back, then ran and leapt far across, landing safely. He went straight on to the camp, entered the house, and lay down.

At dawn, he awoke to the sound of his mother weeping. His body was already wrapped and bound for burial. He spoke: *“Tell my mother not to weep. Bring me water, for I am thirsty.”* His family brought him water, and he drank. He was alive again.

Yahniqulus told his people what he had seen in the spirit world. Not long after, the two men who had helped him escape from the dance house passed away themselves.