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The Life of Kaatxwaaxsnéi: A Biography of Florence Shotridge

Maria Murad

Kaatxwaaxsnéi, or Florence Shotridge (1882–1917), was a member of the Jilkoot kwáan and Lukaax̲.ádi clan. She was the first known Indigenous American woman to formally lead an anthropological expedition.[1] She embarked on this expedition with her husband, Stoowukáa, or Louis Shotridge, a well-known Tlingit ethnographer and collector, affiliated with the Kaagwaantaan clan.[2] During his lifetime, Louis worked for the museum at the University of Pennsylvania (known today as the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology—the Penn Museum for short) to collect and preserve material culture from the Tlingit Nation.[3] Perceptions of his legacy today are mixed: some see him as a traitor to his own people; others see him as a preserver and protector of his culture.[4] What is missing from these discussions, however, is Florence's contributions and collaborations with her husband during her lifetime. Much of Louis' start in the field is thanks to Florence's English-speaking and Chilkat-weaving skills, but her contributions to Tlingit history and anthropology have been neglected in the historical record. This article aims to fill in this historical gap and is the first biography written solely about Florence Shotridge.

My goal is for this research to reach a wide audience to ensure that her contributions to anthropology are no longer in the shadow of her husband's and to hopefully provide more information about her to the Tlingit community and her descendants. Often, anthropological research done "for" Indigenous communities is not accessible to those communities once it is complete. In an effort to aid in decolonization and connect this research with the Tlingit community today, I have also created a Wikipedia page for her. I did this because Wikipedia is free to access, is often the first place people go to for information, and is the most widely used encyclopedia in human history.[5] I also created a short film about Florence's life and legacy that is free to access at this

link (https://youtu.be/dQTTGmLd63k). I hope to make her story as accessible as possible to scholarly and nonscholarly audiences alike.

In this article, I first discuss my methodologies for this research and the Tlingit collaborators on this project. Then, I detail Florence's life history starting from her birth and early life to the creation of her only existing, completed Chilkat blanket known as the Tina'a blanket. I then discuss how she traveled around the United States with Louis participating in expositions and musical performances. This eventually led to their careers and scholarship at the Penn Museum. I finish with the story of her untimely death, which occurred during the John Wanamaker Expedition in Haines, Alaska. Although her life was short, her contributions to anthropology are significant and should not go unnoticed. I finish with a discussion on how I created the accompanying short film to this research and the significance of Florence's life and contributions to the field of anthropology.

Tlingit Collaborators and Methodologies

I personally have no ancestral or cultural ties to the Tlingit Nation. I am a second-generation Pakistani American woman who arrived at this research topic in an undergraduate course about underrepresented women in the University of Pennsylvania's history with Heather Sharkey. After learning a little bit about Florence, I felt an intrinsic longing to know more about her story. I noticed that there is little to no record of her or her contributions to the Penn Museum, and this led me to construct a full biography to ensure she receives the credit she deserves. As I am not Tlingit, I collaborated with two Tlingit women on this research, Lily Hope and Donna Beaver, who provided incredibly important context and knowledge about Florence Shotridge and Tlingit culture for me. Lily Hope is an artist and teacher from Juneau, Alaska, and is affiliated with the T'akdeintaan clan of the Raven moiety. Lily learned Chilkat weaving from her late mother, Clarissa Rizal, and Kay Field Parker. Her contemporary work in textile and paper collage weave together Ravenstail and Chilkat designs.[6] I also collaborated with Donna Beaver, an artist and poet, also originally from Juneau, Alaska. She is affiliated with the Kagwaantaan clan, and her family is from Juneau. Her grandmother was Annie Dalton James, the sister of George Dalton, a famous caretaker of stories. Her mother, Anna Beaver, was a great traditional beader who also made dolls, moccasins, and embroidered pieces.[7] Lily and Donna provided me with a nuanced understanding of Tlingit culture, not only in the early 1900s but today as well, which was essential when constructing Florence's biography.

It is important to note and recognize the violent and unequal power dynamics anthropologists have used in the past to extract information from Indigenous communities. Anthropology is historically rooted in unequal power relations that "other" and "orientalize" non-Western cultures, leading to harmful and inaccurate research that continues to harm Indigenous communities today.[8] In this research, I wanted to center the perspective of Tlingit Nation members and collaborate with those who

have information that could fill in the gaps of Florence's story. Anthropologists who work on decolonizing research practices have noted how collaboration with Indigenous scholars can lead to more access and better research as long as it is done on egalitarian terms.[9] Linda Smith, in her seminal book on decolonizing research methods, discusses the harm researchers have caused Indigenous communities and offers various case studies and guidance on how to remediate the power imbalance embedded within anthropology. Following her advice, I centered not only oral histories from my Tlingit collaborators when writing Florence's biography but also the material objects Florence created in her lifetime that outlive her and reside in museums across North America today.

Much of Florence's story is fragmented and lies in different places. This article is my best attempt at constructing her full life story and understanding what her experiences may have been like as an anthropologist, performer, educator, Chilkat weaver, and wife to Louis Shotridge. Smith notes, "These [Indigenous] contested accounts [of history] are stored within genealogies, within the landscape, within weavings and carvings, even within the personal names that many people carried. The means by which these histories were stored was through their systems of knowledge."[10] In line with Smith's argument, I studied the Chilkat blankets Florence wove during her lifetime to learn more about her. The Tina'a blanket is the only completed Chilkat blanket made by Florence that exists today, along with an unfinished Chilkat blanket that still resides in the Penn Museum.[11] The Tina'a blanket is currently housed at the Canadian Museum of History and is an example of her expert Chilkat-weaving skills, which contributed to Louis' career development. She wrote an accompanying history of her blanket that survives today in the Penn Museum archives and is one of the only "description[s] of a Native American object written by its maker, particularly a woman" from its time.[12]

The rest of her biography is scattered within newspaper interviews, letter exchanges, biographies of her husband, her published articles, and photographs. In this research, I used all of the material objects and archival material that exist on Florence in conjunction with my interviews with Donna and Lily to piece together a biography. This research is significant because of Florence's status as the first known Indigenous American woman to formally lead an anthropological expedition. This is not only a contribution to Indigenous studies and the history of anthropology as a discipline; it is also, hopefully, a contribution to Tlingit history. I hope to connect Florence's life story to the Tlingit community today and make her biography as widely accessible as possible. In the following sections, I discuss her life story, starting with her birth in 1882.

Figure 1. *Florence Shotridge in Tlingit-style hide dress and moccasins in front of her Chilkat blanket, known as the Tina'a blanket, on August 15, 1915, at age thirty-three.*[13]

Florence Dennis[14] was born in 1882 in Haines, Alaska, near the Chilkoot River (see fig. 2).[15] Her Tlingit name was Kaatxwaaxsnéi, which refers to a special ceremony in which clan elders would mix powdered abalone and clam shells with tobacco and smoke it.[16] In Tlingit culture, birth names give humans a personal identity.[17] They can often show social rank and evoke *shagóon*, or ancestors' memory.[18] It is common for Indigenous Americans to be given names that have a connection to place. Tlingit names do not typically have a place name *in* them, but rather "place is more part of who you are."[19] Usually, Tlingit children are named by their grandparents or close clan elders. This is because elders could often discern certain aspects about their grandchildren at birth.[20] For example, when Donna Beaver was born, a village elder, Grandpa Anderson, was present. When her mother considered giving her away—she was a single mother—Grandpa Anderson said she could not because Donna would grow up to be the only grandchild still connected to her tribe and culture. Donna's

great-grandparents were born in the same time period as Florence. When they were young, American missionaries entered the Tlingit Nation and changed their system of naming. Since the Western missionaries could not pronounce Tlingit names, Tlingit people stood in lines to get an anglicized or Christian name. This might be where the name "Florence" came from.[21]

Florence was from the Raven moiety, and her clan was Lukaax̲.ádi, the people of Lukaax̲ (Duncan Canal), which translates to "Off the Point."[22] This area is situated within the Jilkoot Kwáan in Haines on the Chilkoot River. A *kwáan* is a regional grouping of several clans in the Tlingit Nation, numbering about thirteen to eighteen.[23] Florence belonged to the Mountain House[24] and her father was a "well-known medicine man," or shaman.[25] Her mother shared the same socio-identity as her, passed down matrilineally. Florence also had a brother named Bert Dennis.[26] When recounting her childhood, Florence writes the following:

> I . . . have often heard my father say with pride that his house totems were painted by Shkecleka.[27] Shkecleka was of the nobility of the Raven side, and, besides being the most famous chief of the Ravens, was a clever artist as well. These house totems are very old, having been erected by my father's ancestors. They were repainted by Shkecleka when my father was a boy. I can remember the rebuilding of the house, or rather some incidents connected with it, although I was then but a small child. What impressed me most was the mountain of steps at the entrance. I was so tired going up these steps that I begged to be carried in the ceremony attending the opening of the house. A long line of women dancers formed around the room, and I cried to be allowed to dance with my aunt. They finally gave permission in spite of the fact that I was of the Raven side and the dancers were of my father's side, the Eagle. This was but one of the many dances which were performed during the feast which attends the opening of a family house and lasts a week. There were a certain number of them, each being danced in its order.[28]

As a young girl, Florence enjoyed partaking in community gatherings; during this time, she went through the traditional rite of passage Tlingit women experience after having their first menstrual cycle.

Florence detailed this experience in her only solo-authored article, "The Life of a Chilkat Indian Girl." When transitioning to womanhood, Chilkat society discouraged girls from talking loudly, prizing silence and decorum. Upon puberty, girls underwent a period of training of four to twelve months in which they engaged in seclusion, fasting, learning manners, and instruction in making a ceremonial outfit or object. At the end of this period, girls engaged in the custom of "coming out," dressed in a hooded leather robe to signify their entry into womanhood. Christian missionaries starkly opposed these customs during Florence's lifetime, so they were occurring less often among Tlingit women.[29] Donna's mother only spent one week secluded in a dark room instead of months, and Donna never underwent the seclusion period. She clarifies that this ceremony was not meant to suppress women but rather signify their importance in Tlingit society.[30]

Figure 2. *Middle section of the Chilkoot village. Photograph by Louis Shotridge.*[31]

In her mature years, Florence attended Presbyterian Mission school in Haines. At this time, the US government, which purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867 for $7.2 million, banned the use of the Tlingit language and promoted English through missionary schools.[32] Florence's school was in the newly established Christian town at Portage Cove on Lynn Canal. At the school, Tlingits were taught to live in the white man's Christian world.[33] She attended four years of high school here and became a talented piano player, singer, and fluent English speaker.[34] She also first met Louis Shotridge there. Their parents had arranged a marriage between the two when they were young, but they grew very close in their years together at school.[35] Both Florence and Louis were in the noble class,[36] and following tradition, marriages were arranged between people of equal castes to prevent wars.[37] In 1902, on Christmas Day, the couple married.

Figure 3. *Florence spent twenty-two months weaving this Chilkat blanket, known as the Tina'a blanket, completed in 1906. It currently resides in the Canadian Museum of History in Quebec.*[38]

Three years later, in 1905, the governor of Alaska, John G. Brady, visited the Klukwan area and personally asked Florence to become a representative of the Tlingit Nation and demonstrate Chilkat weaving at the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition in Portland, Oregon.[39] The exposition drew 1.6 million visitors, who enjoyed not only Indigenous craft exhibitions but food, drinks, and motion picture screenings, along with other recreational and educational activities. The event was meant to boost Portland's local economy and showcase "prosperity and progress," but it is now critiqued for presenting Indigenous Americans as "savages" from a Euro-American perspective.[40] It was here, at the Alaska Exhibit, where Florence demonstrated Chilkat weaving. She learned to Chilkat weave, produce beadwork, and weave baskets from her mother.[41]

Chilkat weaving is one of the most difficult weaving techniques in the world, while also being one of the only weaving techniques that can create a perfect circle. Chilkat blankets are large, seventy-inch robes that are usually commissioned by someone from the opposite moiety.[42] This intermoiety transaction strengthens ties both inside and outside of the community.[43] It is typical that a husband would ask his wife to make a blanket for him, and this was the case for Florence. In figure 1, Florence is standing in front of the only Chilkat blanket she completed in her lifetime. She wrote a description of the materials she used for it in an article titled "History of the Tina Blanket." This

is one of the only recorded descriptions of an Indigenous object written by its maker, in particular a woman, from this period. In the article, Florence writes the following:

> Wild mountains goat's wool is used in the manufacture of the blanket; the wool is not sheared but plucked from the skin; after the long hairs are pulled, the down is separated and rolled on the lap and so spun into the fine yarns; the warp, which also forms the fringe, is interspun with fine strips of yellow cedar bark that gives body to the blanket. The dyes are vegetable and mineral; the hemlock bark is used for the black, the yellow tree moss for the yellow, and the copper ore for the blush of green.[44]

Florence used the wool of five wild mountain goats to make her blanket, mentioning in a newspaper interview that the yellow tree moss used in the blanket could only be found in Alaska and was difficult to extract.[45] This is part of what makes her blanket so rare and expensive.

The Chilkat weavers who used traditional weaving methods with local materials, postmissionary contact, were highly respected for their skill and knowledge of the land.[46] Materials originally included mountain goat wool (though now Tlingits often use commercially manufactured wool yarn), spruce root, and yellow cedar bark.[47] Chilkat weaver Lily Hope notes that it has probably been about 100 years since someone has been able to make a full seventy-inch robe with the traditional combination and ratio of cedar bark to mountain goat wool.[48] From looking at Florence's second, unfinished Chilkat blanket (see fig. 5), Lily guesses that it was made out of more than 50 percent bark, which was the standard, as cedar bark was easier to find then. Now, Chilkat weavers use different variations of sheep's wool, which is more accessible and creates a much thinner thread, or warp, than what Florence used.

The traditional colors of a Chilkat blanket have always been blue-green, yellow, and black because of the natural dyes Tlingits had access to, but sometimes red was used for mouths on crest designs. Lily notes how her mother's teacher, Jenny Thlunaut, told her to use red sparingly in designs.[49] The colors of Florence's Chilkat robe aligns with the traditional colors of other Chilkat robes made by Tlingit weavers. They traditionally mixed baby's urine with copper ore to get the vibrant blue-green color. This is because baby's urine is clean and pure.[50] However, many Chilkat weavers began using blue-green dye from trade goods to create this vibrant color.[51] I was able to see how vivid this hue was when viewing the backside of her unfinished Chilkat blanket in the Penn Museum (see fig. 5).

Once selecting their design, Chilkat weavers then take their materials and begin weaving on a backboard that supports the grand project (see fig. 6b). Chilkat weaving uses no tools except this backboard. All weaving and knotting are done by hand.[52] Lily showed me the various braiding, weaving, and knotting techniques she uses, which can be seen in the accompanying short film linked in the introduction of this article. Lily explains how Chilkat weavers shape negative space and use strong, braided black lines to create distinctive shapes. Each blanket features the clan symbols and crests of the person who requested the blanket, and each crest symbolizes a larger story that evokes clan history.[53]

Tlingit storyteller and academic Ishmael Hope notes how, for Tlingits, "[art is] inseparable from the contextual appreciation of its history, its ties to a clan and its ownership, how it was made, the crests it embodies, and its deep connection to our lands and waterways. . . . While Tlingit people never had a word for *art*, Europeans never had a word for *at.óow*."[54] *At.óow*, or "something that has been purchased," connects the wearer of the Chilkat robe to their ancestors.[55] Lukaax̱.ádi clan leader Austin Hammond says, "Woven into the blanket that I wear is important legend . . . and to those who come asking 'Where is your history?' I answer, 'We *wear* our history.' Traditionally, we have not been writers of books. . . . Our clothing is the ownership and history of our land."[56] When hearing Lily's emotions toward weaving, it is evident that there are certain overlaps between the wearer's and the weaver's experiences in connection to the Chilkat robe. Lily says that when she is weaving, it feels like "breathing with the universal consciousness. It feels like a union of spirit realm and physical world. It feels like the best meditation you can do, and . . . on a physical and mental aspect, it's like organized chaos."[57] This connection to ancestors is known as *shagóon* in the Tlingit language.

Florence's Chilkat blanket is referred to as the Tina'a blanket because it includes an image of two *tina'a*, or copper shields, which are crest objects made out of hammered copper. For Tlingits, a *tina'a* is a sign of wealth, as copper was a valuable resource and one of the most expensive gifts a Tlingit could give someone.[58] The two *tina'a* on Florence's blanket are woven at a deep angle, which is rare to see in Chilkat blankets (see fig. 3). It takes skill to do this because the warps will start to spread, and the weaver must account for how this affects the full shape of the blanket.[59] Florence's blanket also features both the grizzly bear and shark emblems, which stands out because it was rare for Chilkat robes to have more than one animal on them. This is most likely because the grizzly crest was one of the first clan symbols of the Wolf (later Eagle) moiety, and Louis wanted both this ancient symbol and the then modern shark symbol to be included on the robe. All Eagle crest animals have teeth or claws, while Raven crests are less ferocious (e.g., a frog or a beaver). One can see bear claws in the bottom half of the copper shield and a shark in the lower middle of the blanket.[60] There is also a human face on the top center of the robe with two mirroring, side-profile images of a human face to the bottom left and right of that section. Anthropologist Thomas Thornton argues that "the head or face was the most important motif in [Tlingit] art."[61] Chilkat blankets often had human faces on them because when someone wore the robe, the eyes faced inward and acted as a representation of self-reflection.[62] This blanket would have been woven from a wooden pattern board and uses common Chilkat and totemic form line designs such as mirroring images and several eye-shaped ovals. [63] Given how skillfully this blanket was made, it was likely not the first blanket Florence wove. She may have helped others weave their blankets before this. This is, however, the only completed Chilkat robe known today that attributes her as the creator.

Florence spent twenty-two months weaving this blanket. While weaving the Tina'a blanket at the Lewis and Clark Exposition, Florence and Louis were introduced to George Byron Gordon, director of the University of Pennsylvania's museum. Gordon

purchased forty-nine objects from the couple at the exposition. He discussed the possibility of having them lead an expedition in "the Kuskokwim River area of Alaska," and opened the discussion to hiring them "to tell the history and meanings of the different things" as employees at the Penn Museum.[64] Although this conversation eventually led to Louis' employment at the Penn Museum, he was not offered the position for several years after this conversation.

Education and Life as Performers

In addition to participating in the Lewis and Clark Exposition, the couple also worked in Antonio Apache's Indian Crafts Exhibition from 1906 to 1911 in Los Angeles. Louis sold crafts alongside the manager of the event, Antonio, who was believed to be a con man posing as an Indigenous person to further his own career.[65] It was here where Florence finished weaving the Tina'a blanket. During this time, Florence also attended an all-women's college in Michigan, where she studied ethnology and anthropology.[66] Her precise location and years of attendance are undocumented. Florence likely attended either Michigan Female College in Lansing or Michigan Female Seminary in Kalamazoo around 1910.[67] From 1907 to 1911, the couple also worked with tutors to improve their singing and English skills while continuing to partake in various travel excursions and "Indian" craft displays.

Beginning in 1911, they also toured the country with the Indian Grand Opera Company.[68] The company was managed by Mademoiselle Toona, or Mathilde A. Coutts-Johnstone, who recruited Indigenous Americans capable of singing opera in French, German, and Italian. Performers would sing opera while wearing Plains Indians' clothing, as the company aimed to depict a very stereotypical image of Indigenous life to American audiences.[69] The show was not a success. The next year, the couple participated in the World in Cincinnati Exposition in 1912.[70] In a newspaper ad, the exposition was advertised as an event organized by "a committee of business men" where items would be auctioned off to visitors.[71] This was the last of the couple's many temporary jobs. Their diverse skill set would next take them to the Penn Museum, where Florence would work until the end of her short life.

Selling the Tina'a Blanket

Upon arriving in Philadelphia, Florence and Louis stayed with Frank Speck, chair of the University of Pennsylvania Department of Anthropology, while searching for more permanent housing.[72] They eventually moved to 4013 Locust Street.[73] Louis initially tried to sell the Tina'a blanket to Gordon, but instead, at Speck's suggestion, Louis negotiated the sale of the blanket to Edward Sapir, a famous linguistic anthropologist who had been a fellow at the University of Pennsylvania around 1909 before moving to Quebec.[74] The letter exchange between Sapir and Shotridge began with a request from Louis for permanent employment and housing in Ottawa, where he and Florence were still considering moving, but it eventually led to the sale of Florence's robe to the Canadian Museum of History for $200. Sapir hesitated to meet the asking price, but Louis did not allow sale of the robe until Sapir agreed. He mailed to Sapir Florence's

written history of the blanket, "History of the Tina Blanket."[75] Louis argued that the materials used to make the blanket alone cost over $200 and that "the weave in the 'Tina Blanket' is rather coarse in comparison with some of the finest woven commercial blankets, but it must be remembered that even the material used in the finer parts of the 'Tina Blanket' is rolled and twisted by hand, while most of the wool in the commercial blankets are machine spun or store-bought yarn."[76] In many of the twenty-one letters involving the negotiation and sale of her blanket, Louis signed off by stating "Mrs. Shotridge joins me in sending our best wishes to Mrs. Sapir and yourself."[77] The transaction became final in 1914, and Florence's blanket is still housed at the Canadian Museum of History today.

Figure 4. *Louis and Florence Shotridge stand outside the Penn Museum in traditional Plains Indians garb in 1915.*[78]

Career at the Penn Museum

In 1911, Gordon offered Louis a temporary position at the Penn Museum. At the time, he was the museum's first and only Indigenous curator.[79] Louis gave four formal lectures about Alaska for which Florence may have contributed as a collaborator.[80] Meanwhile, Florence did not receive a paid position but instead became a volunteer educator guide and gave young students tours through the museum galleries.[81] During these tours, she once again wore the clothing of Plains Indians and was identified as an "Indian princess."[82] Similar to their life as performers, Florence and Louis adhered to what people expected Indigenous Americans to look like in their public-facing role at the museum.[83] However, in a newspaper interview with Florence, the author writes, "Katwachsnea (Mrs. Shotridge, if you prefer) has adopted the garb of her white sisters." The author adds, "In her native dress, with features chiselled like a cameo, she presents an excellent type of the sort of beauty which a few gifted painters have immortalized as the classic standard of the North American Indian."[84] This interview shows how enamored the public was with the stereotypical persona Florence adopted for her work.

Florence was beloved by the schoolchildren at the museum and was viewed as "very intelligent, educated, and sweet."[85] During this time, Florence helped Louis organize and document the museum collections and also traveled, thanks to funding from the Penn Museum.[86] This is around the time that Florence started to weave her second Chilkat blanket, which was never completed. Though it is unfinished, one can still learn a lot about Florence's weaving process from this object. Lily notes how it is unique that the braids on the outer edge of the blanket are already complete. Usually, Chilkat weavers save this for the end. Florence also already signed the blanket (on the left side of fig. 5), but Chilkat blanket signatures are not always reliable.[87] Signatures on Chilkat blankets added value to these gifted items and displayed the weaver's pride for their work.[88]

Figure 5. *This Chilkat blanket, never finished by Florence Shotridge, is in the Penn Museum collections today.*[89] *Her supposed signature is on the left side of the blanket. Photograph by the author.*

In Tlingit culture, connection to place is strong, and this is clear from the work Florence and Louis accomplished at the Penn Museum. Louis, with the help of Florence, created a model of the center of his home village, Klukwan (see figs. 6a and 6b), as his first task while employed at the museum. Despite their collaboration on the architectural model, Florence received no credit.[90] Louis had never built a model before, but this architectural piece is remarkably detailed and accurate. Even within the dwellings, the furniture, painted crests, and figurines are to scale. This model is a prime example of the Shotridges' deep knowledge of place. In their coauthored article "Indians of the Northwest," they wrote, "A man was proud to be known as a member of his hometown where he was born and raised."[91] The Shotridges mentioned early in the article that they hoped to give the reader an idea of what their lives were like growing up in Haines and Klukwan. They used the majority of the latter part of the article to discuss the structural details of Chilkat houses from their villages. These descriptions included several detailed architectural renderings, showing the significance of house construction for Tlingits.

Figure 6a. *The model of Klukwan village that Louis and Florence made as their first task at the Penn Museum. Photograph by the author.*

Figure 6b. *The Chilkat weaver inside the Klukwan village diorama could have been inspired by Florence Shotridge. Photograph by the author.*

Collaborating with Boas and the Wanamaker Expedition

Both Florence and Louis were producing high-quality work for the Penn Museum in their respective roles. In 1914, after receiving museum funding, the couple was sent by Gordon to meet anthropologist Franz Boas in New York and attend his lectures at Columbia University for two months. Both Florence and Louis discussed Tlingit linguistics with Boas while there.[92] Louis collaborated with Boas to create the first Tlingit grammar guide in 1917, but received no coauthorship credit, short of a mention in the book's foreword and preface. It is possible Florence may have contributed to this guide as well, likewise receiving no credit.[93] At the end of their funded travel, the couple returned to Haines, Alaska, where they completed a small but successful field project before being asked to return to the Penn Museum to produce more ethnographic work and collect more objects.[94] In 1915, Louis received full employment at the museum; Florence never did. The next year, Philadelphia retail magnate John Wanamaker, vice president of the museum's Board of Managers, asked both Florence and Louis to lead the Wanamaker Expedition to the Northwest Coast and return to Haines for fieldwork.[95] This is the first recorded anthropological expedition formally led by Indigenous Americans,[96] and it accordingly received wide press coverage.[97] It is important to note that Louis was paid as an employee but Florence was not, despite them being coleaders on this expedition. On their way to Alaska, the couple visited the San Francisco World Fair and California before settling into their field site. Once in Haines, they collected ethnographic data on Tlingit potlatches, music, genealogies, stories from community elders, along with several material objects that later traveled back to the Penn Museum.[98]

Florence's Death

Florence fell seriously ill with tuberculosis during this expedition, something she had been dealing with for years prior. Despite her symptoms, she "insisted on taking the trip."[99] The time and place she originally contracted the disease is unknown. While she was sick, Florence and Louis settled into a house Louis had set up for fieldwork, and Louis hired someone to help care for her.[100] It was there on June 12, 1917, two years into their expedition, where Florence died. After her death, Gordon encouraged Louis to take time off from his anthropological work to grieve.[101] Though they never completed the expedition together, Florence's contributions to the first two years of the expedition were never accredited to her. The online Penn Museum catalog attributes all objects collected on this expedition to Louis Shotridge, with no mention of Florence.[102]

Florence was buried in her family cemetery along the Chilkoot Lake, which would have been right next to her village, almost like a neighboring "village of the dead."[103] Her photo was hung in the Raven House to honor her life and legacy.[104] Her loved ones would have presumably enjoyed a *ku.éex'*, or potlatch ceremony, to commemorate her life in the physical world, although these ceremonies were criminalized in the United States in 1905, along with the ability to gift Chilkat robes.[105] A potlatch would have occurred about a year after a prominent figure died.[106] Members of Florence's Raven moiety would have hosted the event, and the guests would have come from the opposite Eagle moiety. Potlatch ceremonies included singing, oratory from a respected community member, sporting of regalia and crests, a feast, the reallocation of the dead's *at.óow*, and the naming of new children in the community. The Tlingit would cremate their dead at potlatches because it eliminated the polluted outside, leaving the pure inside behind. Once the cremation was complete, the dead would be considered participants in the ceremony and played a central role throughout the night. The identity of the deceased lived on through the renaming portion of the ceremony and the passing down of *at.óow*. The potlatch was the last place mourners could express their grief publicly.[107]

Louis was shaken by her death and took time before returning to work. He finally completed their expedition in 1919 and later returned to complete the second Wanamaker Expedition to southeast Alaska in 1922.[108] He also remarried twice. Over a roughly twenty-year period he returned to Philadelphia on only a few occasions. Over the course of his employment, he collected a total of 560 objects, 300 black-and-white photos, and several audio recordings. Most are still housed in the Penn Museum collections, and a number of objects have been repatriated back to the Tlingit Nation.[109] Today, many people from across the world visit the Penn Museum to access these materials for both research and other purposes. Though she is not formally accredited with contributing to the accession of any objects on the Wanamaker Expedition, it is my hope that her life story and contributions to Tlingit history and anthropology are no longer uncredited and ignored.

The Short Film

In addition to the biography I have written about Florence Shotridge, I also use filmmaking as a tool to create a visually engaging research output to hopefully attract a wider audience to Florence's story. I chose to create a video as part of this project because "anthropologists rarely, if ever, employ [visual media] . . . [which] can arguably provide a richer perspective."[110] Historically, visual anthropology, specifically photography, arose to classify the racial phenotypes of different cultures.[111] Edward Burnett Tylor, the first professor of anthropology at the University of Oxford, championed photographs for their ability to accurately depict a fieldwork site and its inhabitants through visual evidence.[112] Without photographs, fieldwork sites and interlocutors were subject to biased written descriptions or sketches made entirely by the anthropologist.

In fact, many of the nineteenth-century photographs of Indigenous Americans were "constructed" by Edward Curtis, a photographer and ethnologist, to conform to his idea of what an "Indian" looked like. His subjects were often photographed in what was presumed to be traditional clothing for Indigenous Americans from a Western perspective (as Florence and Louis are photographed in figure 4). At this time, photography was used as a tool of observation in anthropology, which was meant to show a definitively true image of reality.[113] In actuality, it led to the circulation of inaccurate, stereotypical, and harmful representations of Indigenous peoples. Once film was invented, it was used as another tool in the field by anthropologists. Anthropologist Margaret Mead favored it as a medium because of its ability to be viewed by other anthropologists who could not be in the field. Today, observational cinema remains an important part of visual anthropology.[114] However, anthropologists now acknowledge how photography and film can still be edited or doctored by anthropologists to share a biased image of another culture or society.

Ethnographic film has been extremely harmful to Indigenous Americans. The first, and arguably still most famous, ethnographic and documentary film is *Nanook of the North* (1922), directed by Robert Flaherty. The film follows the life of an Inuit man, Nanook, who is called an "Eskimo" throughout the film.[115] Nanook's real name is *Allakariallak*, but Flaherty gave each "actor" in the film Inuit nicknames. Flaherty attempted to preserve a dated and stereotypical image of Indigenous peoples. In reality, by this time, "Eskimos" already wore American clothes and had access to guns along with other modern hunting technologies. *Nanook of the North* instead presents Indigenous people in a way that preserves the "myth of the authentic first man."[116] Since 1922, ethnographic film and its representation of Indigenous Americans has significantly changed. Now, there are several Indigenous film festivals, awards, and directing programs. Indigenous filmmakers have even made films in conversation with and in critique of *Nanook of the North*.[117] It is not in the scope of this article to speak extensively about these shifts and the rise of Indigenous filmmaking, but these changes are important and worth mentioning.

In my own short film about Florence Shotridge, I use scans of photographs, letters, and newspapers from the Penn Museum and Canadian Museum of History archives, and a small number of contemporary images taken in Alaska by Lucy Fowler Williams,

senior keeper of American Collections at the Penn Museum. In addition, I incorporate footage I took myself of objects and screen-recorded interviews with Lily Hope and Donna Beaver. I combine all of these materials with a narration voiced by myself to provide context and bring cohesion to the material shown. The song in the background is called the "Paddling Song (Tlingit)."[118] I had hoped to travel to Alaska to gather footage for this film, but this project was done entirely during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the end, I had to use footage I could shoot from Philadelphia.

My hope is for this film to bring a new dimension to the story of Florence. Ishmael Hope takes note of how odd it is for Tlingit people today to see their "*at.óow* lifelessly displayed in museum cases"[119] when their art is meant to be appreciated through communal ritual and cultural practice. The video portion of this project aims to combat this lifelessness, creating an engaging piece of media that is hopefully as enlightening and educational as Florence herself was when she taught in the Penn Museum halls.

Significance and Concluding Thoughts

Though Louis completed the Wanamaker Expedition on his own after Florence's death, many of the objects collected early in his career would not have been procured or studied without Florence. It was her weaving and English-language skills that caught the Alaskan governor's eye and allowed Louis to attend the Lewis and Clark Exposition, where he met Gordon. It was also her Tina'a blanket that created a connection between Louis and Edward Sapir, leading to its sale.[120] Her written description of her blanket is an important and rare insight into how a Chilkat blanket was made. Her weaving work at expositions in Portland, Los Angeles, Cincinnati, and the Penn Museum also helped create vital connections in the academy that would be essential to Louis' career long after Florence's death. Once gaining a foothold at the Penn Museum, Florence's thoughtful article conveying the importance of tradition for young Tlingit women along with her interests in languages, music, and education all speak to her academic capabilities and intelligence.

According to Lucy Fowler Williams, "The Shotridge collection has always been of significance to Tlingit people because it represents their cultural heritage. Today several objects in the collection have been claimed for repatriation under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990 by different Tlingit entities."[121] Some Tlingit people today marvel at Louis as a preserver of their cultural objects and heritage despite the controversies of his collecting practices at the time he was alive, but Florence's contributions to these collections have largely been left out of the conversation.[122]

I originally turned to this project after a trip to the Penn Museum archives where I noticed how scarce Florence's files were in comparison to those of her revered husband. Despite a lack of archival material on Florence, I used whatever fragments of her life I could find, paired with the rich insights of Lily Hope and Donna Beaver, to paint a fuller picture of the life of Florence Shotridge. Florence's work has long been overshadowed and left uncredited despite being a collaborator with her husband. In her

short life, she authored several articles, wove and sold a Chilkat blanket while starting another one, taught students at the Penn Museum, made connections with important figures in the field of anthropology, and co-led the first formal anthropological expedition run by Indigenous Americans while coping with tuberculosis. The goal of this article and the accompanying short film is to create a sense of visibility and understanding of Florence's biography in the larger context of Tlingit culture and anthropology to ensure that her contributions no longer remain unknown.

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Notes

1. Many indigenous women (e.g., Sacajawea) provided essential knowledge on expeditions but were not formally credited with doing so by any institution. I say Florence was the first *known* American Indigenous woman to *formally* lead an anthropological expedition, though there may have been other women who have done so before her who are not known in the historical record. I also argue this because she is the first Indigenous woman officially credited with coleading an expedition by a formal institution. However, I note later on in this paper how the Penn Museum still does not accredit her in the accession catalogue today for the objects and ethnographic material collected on the expedition.

2. Maureen E. Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket: The Journey of Florence and Louis Shotridge," in *Haa Kusteeyí, Our Culture: Tlingit Life Stories*, ed. Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 548–64.

3. The university's museum was renamed the Free Museum of Science and Art in 1894 and now is formally known as the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology. I refer to it as the Penn Museum throughout the rest of the article—the shortened term used for the museum today.

4. Lucy F. Williams, "Louis Shotridge: Preserver of Tlingit History and Culture," in *Sharing Our Knowledge: The Tlingit and Their Coastal Neighbors*, ed. Sergei A. Kan and Steve Henrikson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 63–78.

5. "Florence Shotridge," in *Wikipedia*, 2020; Zachary J. McDowell and Matthew Vetter, *Wikipedia and the Representation of Reality* (First Edition) (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2022), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003094081.

6. Lily Hope website, n.d., https://www.lilyhope.com/about.

7. Donna Beaver website, n.d., https://www.donnabeaver.com.

8. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Edward Said, "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors," *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (1989): 205–25; Michel-Rolph

Trouillot, *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World* (New York: Duke University Press, 2003), Chapter One.

9. Faye V. Harrison, *Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further Toward an Anthropology for Liberation* (Arlington: Association of Black Anthropologists, American Anthropological Association, 1997); Hussein Fahim, *Indigenous Anthropology in Non-Western Countries* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1982).

10. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 36.

11. The Penn Museum catalogue did not credit Florence as the maker of the unfinished Chilkat blanket, but after I confirmed it was hers through this research, it is now rectified.

12. Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket," 556.

13. Bain News Service, *Katwachsnea (Mrs Shotridge)*, n.d., Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

14. "Dennis" was Florence's anglicized maiden name, but she is also sometimes referred to as Florence "Suzie" Scundoo before marrying Louis and adopting the last name "Shotridge."

15. Louis Shotridge Digital Archive, 2011, https://www.penn.museum/collections/shotridge/.

16. "Indian Leads Exploring Tour into Alaska," *Christian Monthly* 1 (1916), Louis Shotridge Collection, Penn Museum Archives.

17. T. F. Thornton, *Being and Place among the Tlingit* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015).

18. Thornton, *Being and Place*, 55.

19. Donna Beaver, interview by Maria Murad via Zoom, January 26, February 15, and March 24, 2021.

20. Ibid; Thornton, *Being and Place*, 98.

21. Thornton, *Being and Place*, 57.

22. Ibid, 48.

23. X'unei Lance Twitchell, "Kwáan," in *Tlingit Dictionary* (Juneau: University of Alaska, Southeast, and Goldbelt Heritage Foundation, 2017), https://tlingitlanguage.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/tlingit-dictionary.pdf.

24. Florence Shotridge and Louis Shotridge, "Indians of the Northwest," *University of Pennsylvania Museum Journal* 4, no. 3 (1913): 80.

25. "Indian Leads Exploring Tour into Alaska."

26. Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket."

27. After presenting this research at the Sharing Our Knowledge Conference in 2022, an audience member mentioned that Shkecleka was an artist who painted the rain screen at the Whale House in Klukwan, one of the great masterpieces in Tlingit art.

28. Shotridge and Shotridge, "Indians of the Northwest," 84.

29. Florence Shotridge, "The Life of a Chilkat Indian Girl," *Museum Journal* 4, no. 3 (1913): 101–3.

30. Beaver, interview.

31. Louis Shotridge, *Image 14774*, n.d., photograph, n.d., Penn Museum Archives.

32. "Cession of Alaska Treaty, US-Russia" (Treaty of Cession, June 20, 1867)," *United States Statutes at Large* 11 (34th and 35th Congress): 1216.

33. Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket."

34. "Indian Leads Exploring Tour into Alaska."

35. Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket."

36. During Louis and Florence's lifetimes, the concurrent degradation of (and curiosity with) Indigenous culture in the United States was a constant. In almost every newspaper that features an

article on Florence, her noble status is highlighted and celebrated. In a letter from George Byron Gordon to Edward Curtis, a photographer and North American ethnographer, Gordon informed Curtis that he could not get in touch with Louis Shotridge, as he was on a trip. He follows with "I doubt if we shall see him here again, as his restlessness under civilized conditions makes him disinclined to stay long in one place"—proof that Americans did not always perceive the social identity and status of a Tlingit person accurately. Even though the couple had noble status in their own Tlingit communities, which newspapers highlight, the Americans they worked with, like Gordon, did not often treat them as such.

37. Shotridge and Shotridge, "Indians of the Northwest."

38. Florence Shotridge, *Chilkat Robe*, textile, 1905, Canadian Museum of History, VII-A-131, https://www.historymuseum.ca/collections/artifact/58835.

39. Nathan Sowry, "Civilized Indians Exploring the Wilds of Alaska: Florence and Louis Shotridge," in *Turning the Power: Indian Boarding Schools, Native American Anthropologists, and the Race to Preserve Indigenous Cultures* (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 2025), 231.

40. Carl Abbott, "Lewis and Clark Exposition," in *Oregon Encyclopedia*, 2018, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/lewis_clark_exposition/#.YGdPQC1h1pS.

41. Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket."

42. George Emmons and Franz Boas, "The Chilkat Blanket," in *Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History*, ed. Frank Boas et al. (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1907), 329–404.; Lily Hope, interview by Maria Murad via Zoom, April 12, 2021.

43. Beaver, interview; Mark O'Connell, "Natural Practices: The Creative Autonomy Encoded within First Nations Dye and Weaving Processes of the Chilkat Blanket," *Textile* 21, no. 1 (2023): 212, https://doi.org/10.1080/14759756.2022.2047486.

44. Florence Shotridge, and Louis Shotridge, "History of the Tina Blanket," Quebec, 1914. Box 718, Folder 14, Box of Florence Shotridge, Canadian Museum of History Archives.

45. Maude Smith, "A Little Chat with Katkwachsnea," *North American*, 1912, Louis Shotridge Collection, Penn Museum.

46. Thornton, *Being and Place*, 162.

47. Ibid.

48. Hope, interview.

49. Ibid.

50. Emmons and Boas, "The Chilkat Blanket."

51. O'Connell, "Natural Practices," 208–23.

52. Emmons and Boas, "The Chilkat Blanket."

53. Hope, interview; Thornton, *Being and Place*, 32.

54. Ishmael Hope, "Tlingit Art," in *Unsettling Native Art Histories on the Northwest Coast*, ed. Kathryn Bunn-Marcuse and Aldona Joanitis (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020), 289.

55. Joseph Marks, "History Becomes Present: Constructing Worlds for Past, Present, and Future Ancestors through Tlingit Oratory," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 48, no. 1 (2025).

56. Thornton, *Being and Place*, 60.

57. Hope, interview.

58. Hope, interview; Sergei Kan, "The Nineteenth-Century Tlingit Potlatch: A New Perspective," *American Ethnologist* 13, no. 2 (1986): 191–212.

59. This was mentioned to me by a member of the Tlingit community at the Sharing our Knowledge Conference in 2022.

60. Beaver, interview.

61. Thornton, *Being and Place*, 97.

62. Beaver, interview.

63. Lucy F. Williams and J. Cloud, "The Tlingit Map of 1869," *Expedition Magazine*, 2012.

64. Robert W. Preucel, "Shotridge in Philadelphia: Representing Native Alaskan People to East Coast Audiences," in *Sharing Our Knowledge: The Tlingit and Their Coastal Neighbors*, ed. Sergei A. Kan and Steve Henrikson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 44.

65. Sowry, "Civilized Indians Exploring the Wilds of Alaska."

66. "Men and Women Whose Lives Count," *American Indian Magazine* (1917); "Indian Leads Exploring Tour into Alaska."

67. After speaking with the Michigan government's archival team, I found that both schools' records have been destroyed or lost, so her name has not appeared in any of the extant directories, yearbooks, or class listings.

68. Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket."

69. Sowry, "Civilized Indians Exploring the Wilds of Alaska," 238.

70. Preucel, "Shotridge in Philadelphia," 44.

71. "Seat Sale: For 'World in Cincinnati' Pageant Opens With Auction Thursday," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1912.

72. Sowry, "Civilized Indians Exploring the Wilds of Alaska."

73. Correspondences between Edward Sapir and Louis Shotridge, 1913–14, Louis Shotridge folder, Canadian Museum of History Archives.

74. Lucy F. Williams, interview by Maria Murad, February 23, 2021.

75. Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket," 556.

76. Correspondences between Edward Sapir and Louis Shotridge.

77. Ibid.

78. *Image 10993*, 1915, photograph, 1915, Penn Museum Archives.

79. Lucy F. Williams, "Louis Shotridge and the Penn Museum," *Expedition Magazine*, 2012, https://www.penn.museum/sites/expedition/louis-shotridge-and-the-penn-museum/.

80. Williams, "Louis Shotridge: Preserver of Tlingit History and Culture."

81. Shotridge Digital Archive, 2011.

82. Sowry, "Civilized Indians Exploring the Wilds of Alaska," 241.

83. Beaver, interview; Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket."

84. "Indians Interpreting Tribal Lore at Museum," *Evening Bulletin*, February 28, 1912.

85. Alden J. Mason, "Louis Shotridge," *Expedition Magazine* (1960): 11, Louis Shotridge Collection, Penn Museum Archives.

86. Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket."

87. Hope, interview.

88. O'Connell, "Natural Practices," 218.

89. Florence Shotridge, *Unfinished Chilkat Robe*, Textile, 1912, Penn Museum, https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/74443.

90. Louis Shotridge, *Village of Klukwan*, 1912–13, diorama, Penn Museum, https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/371956#:~:text=Model%20of%20Klukwan.,every%20detail%20of%20the%20model.

91. Shotridge and Shotridge, "Indians of the Northwest," 81.

92. Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket."

93. Franz Boas, *Grammatical Notes on the Language of the Tlingit Indians* (University Museum, 1917).

94. Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket."

95. Preucel, "Shotridge in Philadelphia."

96. Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket."

97. Sowry, "Civilized Indians Exploring the Wilds of Alaska."

98. Ibid.

99. "'Minnehaha' Shotridge Dies at Home in Alaska" (Obituary), *Telegraph*, June 14, 1917.

100. Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket," 558.

101. Sowry, "Civilized Indians Exploring the Wilds of Alaska."

102. "Accession Lot: Wanamaker Expedition to the Northwest Coast, Louis Shotridge, 1917," *Penn Museum Online Catalogue*, https://www.penn.museum/collections/accessionlot.php?irn=5132.

103. Kan, "The Nineteenth-Century Tlingit Potlatch."

104. Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket," 559.

105. O'Connell, "Natural Practices," 219.

106. Thornton, *Being and Place*, 174.

107. Kan, "The Nineteenth-Century Tlingit Potlatch."

108. Mason, "Louis Shotridge."

109. Williams, "Louis Shotridge: Preserver of Tlingit History and Culture"

110. Margaret Dorsey and Miguel Diaz-Barriga, "Beyond Surveillance and Moonscapes: An Alternative Imaginary of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall," *Visual Anthropology Review* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 132.

111. Chris Morton, "Photography and the Comparative Method: The Construction of an Anthropological Archive," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18, no. 2 (2012): 369–96.

112. Christopher Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011).

113. Sharon Gmelch, *The Tlingit Encounter with Photography* (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2008).

114. David MacDougall, *The Looking Machine: Essays on Cinema, Anthropology, and Documentary Filmmaking* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).

115. Robert J. Flaherty, director, *Nanook of the North*, documentary, 1922.

116. Fatimah Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 99.

117. Kirk French, director, *A Century after Nanook*, documentary, 2025.

118. Mt. Edgecumbe Boys Chorus, *Paddling Song (Tlingit)*, 1979, https://folkways.si.edu/mt-edgecumbe-boys-chorus/paddling-song/american-indian/music/track/smithsonian.

119. Hope, "Tlingit Art," 290.

120. Milburn, "Weaving the 'Tina' Blanket."

121. Lucy Fowler Williams, personal communication with author, 2021.

122. Hope, "Tlingit Art"; Lucy F. Williams and Robert Starbard, "Woosh.Jee.Een, Pulling Together: Repatriation's Healing Tide," in *Unsettling Native Art Histories on the Northwest Coast* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020), 218–39.