

CHURCHES OF HOONAH

Just before the turn of the century, the village of Hoonah was introduced to the white man's form of religion and style of worship. Prior to the white man's influence, the people of Hoonah had in their minds and their culture the idea of a single God that controlled over all, a God that was a center of attraction. This God controlled the things of nature, the sea monsters and fish, the people and the unseen spirits.

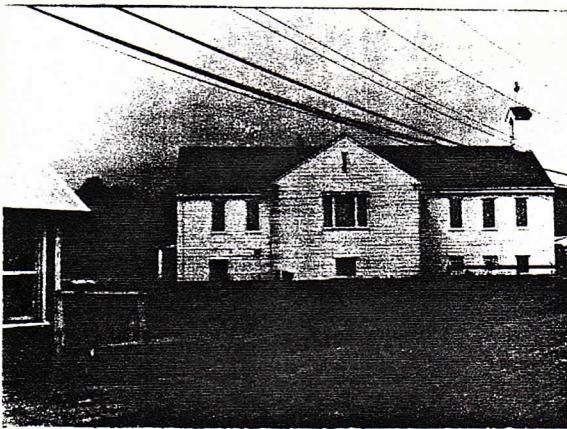
Before the 1870's the people of Hoonah turned to the Indian Doctor (ixt') for advice and predictions dealing with family and fishing. It is believed that the Indian Doctor was the "master of the Spirits", (Yeik). Whenever an Indian Doctor provided advice or prediction he had to be given a gift of tribute.

When a person was preparing to become an Indian Doctor they would have to live four to eight months off by their-self and they were never allowed to eat any kind of sea food from the beaches unless the spirits permitted it. If the Indian Doctor did not follow the spirits, misfortune would come upon himself and his family.

The people believed in the spirits above your own, (Kee naa yei gee).

An Eagle tribe member (Ch'aak'na) could only marry into the Raven tribe (Yeil na) or vis-a-vis. If this was ignored, the spirits belonging to the whole family would die.

In 1879 the first structured church was introduced and took root in Hoonah. This was the Russian Orthodox Church. The first leader's name was Micheal Wannk. Since a building was not constructed until 1904, Wannk and his members held home meetings in the community. The Hoonah people took on the concept of a loving God that was made up of a Godhead of three; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Through their

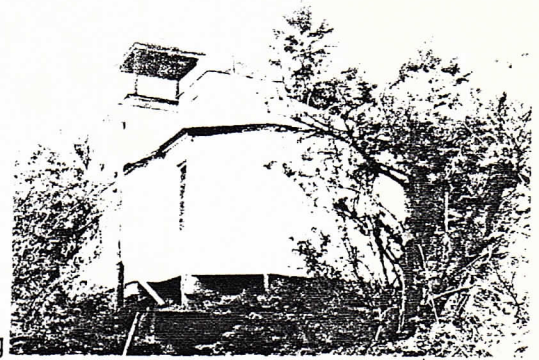


Presbyterian

religious teachings the Tlingit culture changed and advanced into a Western culture.

A Presbyterian group led by Rev. S. Hall Young was the first church group to visit Hoonah in 1878; however, the church did not take root until 1880 and 1881. On November 7, 1881, Sheldon Jackson built a school house and teacher's residence. Jackson placed Walter B. Styles and wife of New York in charge. Seventy students attended the school and were quick to learn the courses provided.

The Salvation Army was the third church to enter Hoonah. In 1902 Sgt.



Russian Orthodox

