

**Native Art in the American Museum of Natural History, New York City**  
**Thoughts on Photographs taken by Gene Baade**  
**Christopher L. Murphy**

Gene Baade, a Washington state researcher, has provided me with photographs he took at the American Museum of Natural History, New York City (2010). I was quite surprised with the Nootka setting, seen on the right, which is labeled as:

**“Wild man spirit and supernatural bears.”**

Generally speaking, the Nootka people are Northwest Coast aboriginals. Their word for the sasquatch is “matlox.”

What surprises me is that this is the first time I have seen a full-figured, fully hirsute, more or less natural looking, hominoid model in Native art. We know that Native people give the sasquatch spiritual significance, so calling the creature “wild man spirit” is an expected outcome.



The image on the left is a shot taken by Gene of the creature’s face. Noteworthy perhaps is the visible white sclera (white of the eye—highly evident on the actual model), a human feature. The face in general appears to be along the same lines as the famous Tsimshian “monkey mask.”

Although the display gives the impression that the creature is quite small (much like a boy), I think it needs to be viewed in relation to the “supernatural bears” which would be very large. We can visualize that the creature would be just as tall/big as a bear standing on its hind legs.

I would venture a guess that the creature has been covered in the hide of a black bear. This is what was used on the head and under the chin of the Chehalis sasquatch mask created by Ambrose Point.

Although I can’t say categorically that what is seen here is a sasquatch, it is by title a “wild man,” is covered in hair, and does look like a sasquatch. It is likely that the models seen are essentially costumes used in ceremonies that have been put on mannequins. There are other examples of hirsute Native sasquatch costumes, but the heads are far more “mythological” than that shown here. Kathy Moskowitz Strain has pointed out to me that it is highly unusual for costumes of this nature to be in a permanent museum exhibit as they are, “generally considered items of cultural patrimony,” and must be returned to the tribe. However, I am not sure of the status here. It could be a temporary exhibit, or perhaps the scene shown has been replicated.



Two other images Gene sent to me of Native masks caught my eye because we see that whatever is depicted has whiskers (moustache/beard). Why is this interesting, and what has it to do with the sasquatch?

We believe that male aboriginal people in the Americas did not originally have whiskers. By far, most of them even now do not have this type of facial hair (coarse hair, quite different from head hair). As a result, Native art does not generally show men with a moustache and/or a beard

It appears obvious that the trait was introduced by a race (or races) of men who came to the Americas from countries where men had whiskers.

The earliest, but unconfirmed and unsubstantiated, date for the arrival of such men in North America is 2200 BC. The men (and women), came from the Middle East and thrived until about AD 421. By this time they all slowly disappeared leaving no confirmed (scientific) trace of their existence. The existence of these people is based on religious text and has some 14.4 million believers.

I will mention here that many aboriginal people were in the Americas long before this time. A “dig” in Mission, B.C. dates artifacts at about 7000 BC, and one near Yale, B.C., at about 7600 BC.

The earliest confirmed arrival of “men with whiskers” is about 813 AD. We know that Vikings visited Newfoundland, Canada at about that time. However, I would think that their “influence” on aboriginal people would have been at the most “marginal.”

The next influx into the Americas took place in the late 1400s when European explorers arrived on the East Coast of the “new world,” and over the following years many settlements were established. Without doubt, at this time European traits would have been passed on to aboriginal people with the result that some/many men of aboriginal extraction now had whiskers.

Whatever the case, we know that aboriginals were surprised to see men with whiskers when they arrived in the late 1400s. Obviously, in the East at least, they had not seen such before. As to the Pacific Northwest (Land of the Sasquatch),





the whisker trait would have migrated from the East and would have been reinforced by European explorations of this region in the late 1700s, and subsequent settlements.

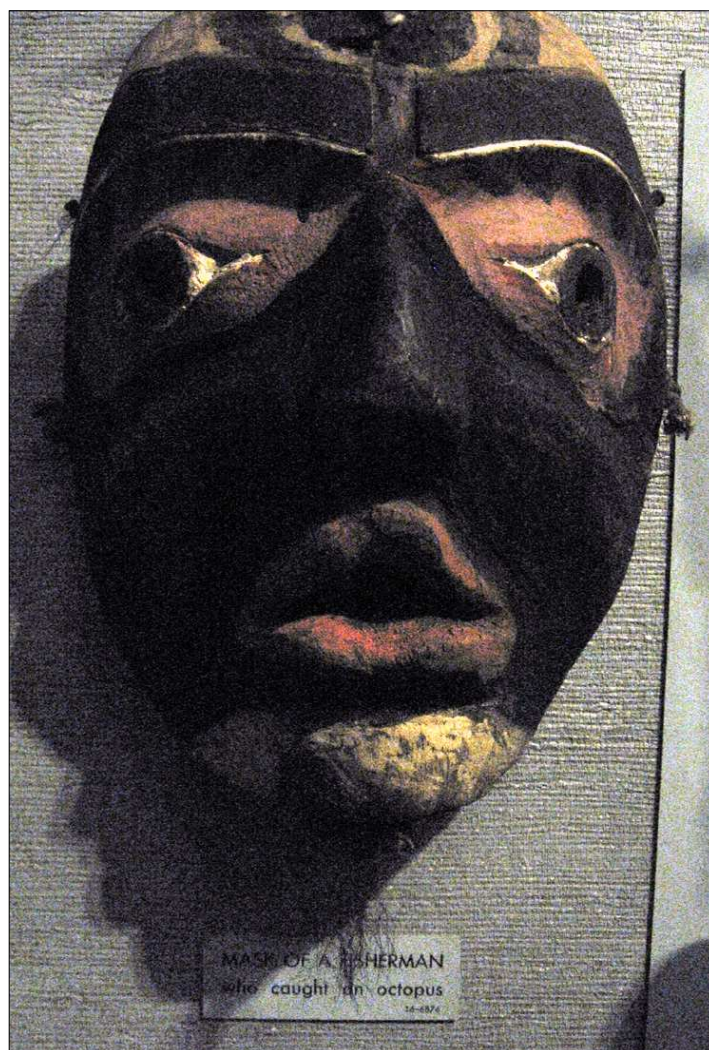
Now that we have established the history of “whiskers” in the Americas, and the fact that some native masks show such, as demonstrated by Gene Baade’s photographs, one would think that if male sasquatch have whiskers, then Native people would have shown moustache and beards in their traditional “sasquatch masks” of males (i.e., the “buck’was” as generally known). Whether or not sasquatch have facial hair is not the question. It appears they have a fine hair covering the same as most animals with hair/fur. All credible sasquatch reports state that the creature was “covered in hair.” However, very few state that the creature had a thick moustache or long beard.

Nevertheless, the fact that there are some reports that mention whiskers, then we have the same situation as with North American aboriginals. In other words, most don’t have whiskers, but some do. I don’t think the sasquatch would have got the “whisker trait” in the same way as aboriginals, but it’s a consideration if one gives any credibility to sasquatch abduction stories. The implication here, of course, is that the sasquatch is closely human related.

This photograph provided by Gene caught my eye because the individual depicted appears to have a cleft palate (hare-lip). For certain, what we see could be a simple chip in the wood or some other anomaly, however, the image came at a time when I was discussing a significant recent (2011) sasquatch sighting in Deroche, BC, wherein the witness claimed the creature had either a damaged mouth (injury) or a cleft pallet. The sighting, thoroughly investigated by Thomas Steenburg, appears to have more than considerable credibility. The witness (a First Nations lady) showed up at a private viewing I held of my sasquatch exhibit in Yale, BC on April 6, 2013, so I met her.

The cleft palate is *predominantly* a human affliction (for lack of a better word). It does occur in other primates, but not to the same degree as in humans. There are even charities (as seen on television) that specifically try to alleviate the problem with children in Third World countries.

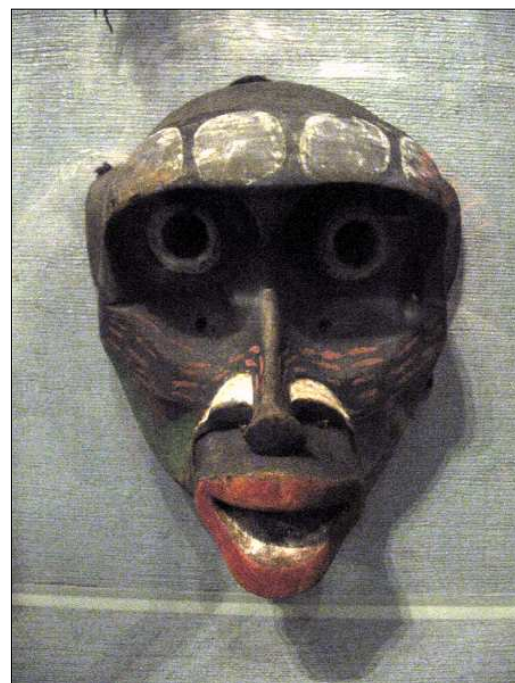
If what the witness saw was a cleft palate, then this is the third probable predominantly human condition the sasquatch appears to suffer. We have the possibility of a club foot (*talipes equinovarus*) as indicated by the cripple-foot tracks; the possible leg hernia (which afflicts athletes) seen on the creature in the Patterson/Gimlin film (first noticed, I believe, by Doug Hajicek/Whitewolf Entertainment), and now a possible cleft palate.



Please note that none of what I present here has any significant bearing on the nature of the sasquatch. It does not have scientific validation of any sort. It’s all based on the old adage, “If the shoe fits, wear it.”



Some of the other Native masks Gene photographed are provided here for interest. Many of you will recognize the first one shown as that used on the cover of Rob Alley's book, *Raincoast Sasquatch* (Hancock House Publishers, 2003).



The study of North America's aboriginal people is beyond fascinating. My first true exposure was in working with Kathy Moskowitz Strain on her remarkable book, *Giants, Cannibals & Monsters: Bigfoot in Native Culture* (Hancock House, 2008). Kathy profiles 57 diverse and amazing North American aboriginal peoples of which few of us even know share the great land in which we live. I often thought, "my goodness," all of this is right here in my own backyard (albeit a rather large backyard).

Many thanks are extended to Gene Baade for sharing his photographs, and to Kathy Moskowitz Strain for sharing her knowledge of Native culture..