

An Uneasy Peace

Redoubt Saint Michael stood for less than two years, isolated deep in Tlingit country, before it was burned to the ground. What provoked the attack?

Bad Blood

Before leaving Redoubt Saint Michael, Baranov instructed his chosen manager, Vasilii Medvednikov, to not offend the Tlingit, who vastly outnumbered the Russians. However, Medvednikov could not control all the Russian-America Company (RAC) employees, many of whom were Alutiiq and Aleut. Almost immediately, a rash of violence between local Tlingits and employees of the RAC broke out, resulting in the deaths of several Tlingits.

Trade Disputes

Redoubt Saint Michael primarily existed to enforce the fur trade monopoly of the RAC. Before the Russians arrived in Sitka Sound, European and American traders were already doing business with the Tlingit. These foreigners were not opposed to trading guns, ammunition, and alcohol, which the Russians thought would be detrimental to the stability of the region. The Russians' goal was to control all trade in Sitka Sound. Not surprisingly, the Tlingit did not acknowledge the RAC monopoly, and they continued to trade with whomever offered the best goods.

Stoonook's Shame

Stoonook, a Kiks.ádi noble, went to visit his father's people at Klukwan. During his visit, a family member deeply insulted him and insinuated that the Russians were shaming the Tlingit. Stoonook got up and left straight for Sitka without finishing his meal. When he arrived, he found the Kiks.ádi already in an uproar. The Russians had tricked a Kiks.ádi aristocrat into eating the flesh of a human—an abomination in the eyes of the Tlingit. Shk'awulyeil, Kiks.ádi clan leader, was furious with the Russians for insulting his people and when Stoonook told him what was said at Klukwan, he had heard enough.

*He kicked all the fire apart,
and stamped on it.*

*Shk'awulyeil
declared war*

*"The Russians have now gone
far enough.*

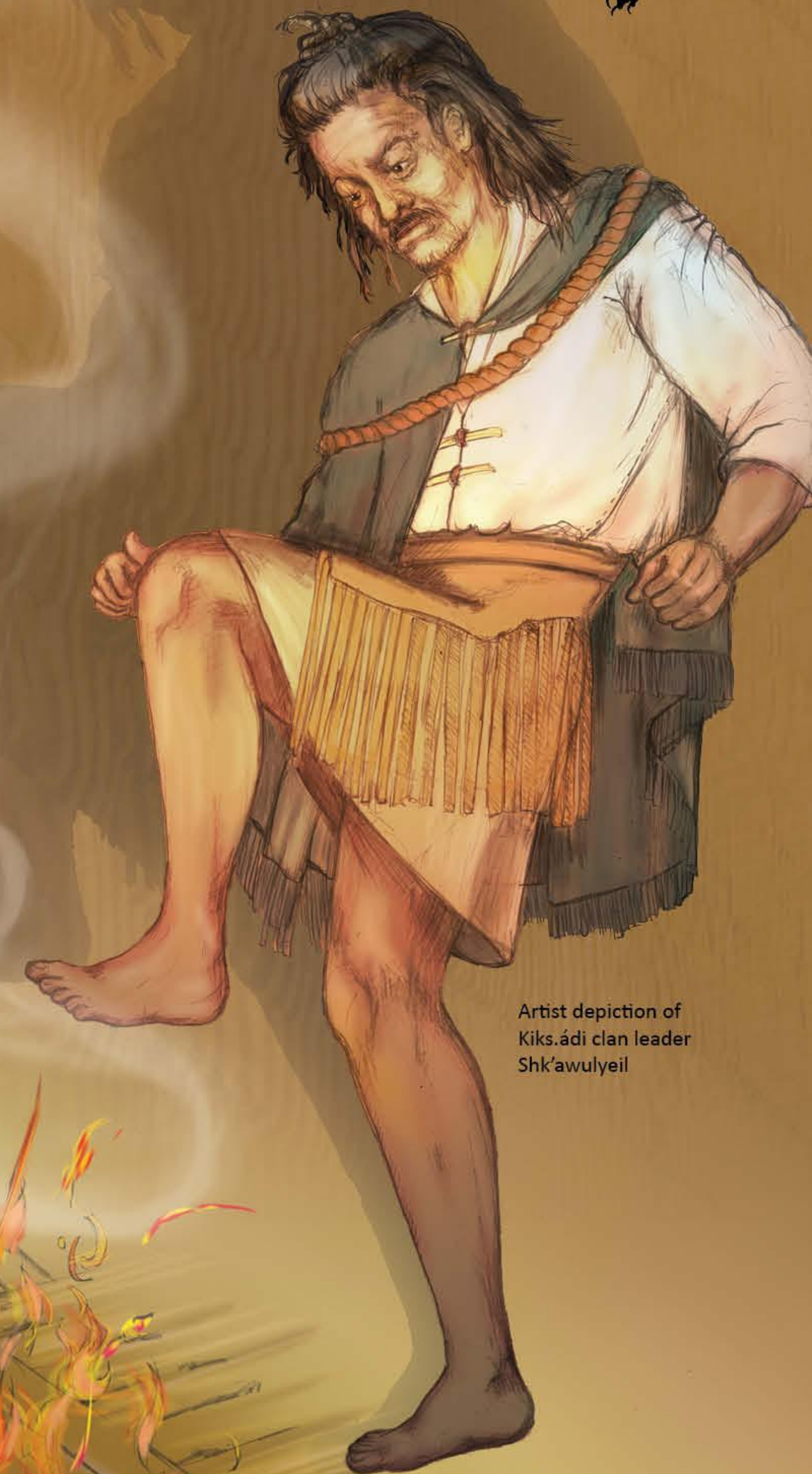
We are not animals.

*We are not
Savages,
to eat our own flesh.*

We declare war."

They start planning.

A.P. Johnson, Sitka, 1979 "The Russians Move into Sitka" (863-875)
(As quoted in Dauenhauer et al., *Anozochi Lingi Aani Ka: The Battles of Sitka 1802 and 1804*,
Sealaska Heritage Institute, 2008, p. 121)



Artist depiction of
Kiks.ádi clan leader
Shk'awulyeil

