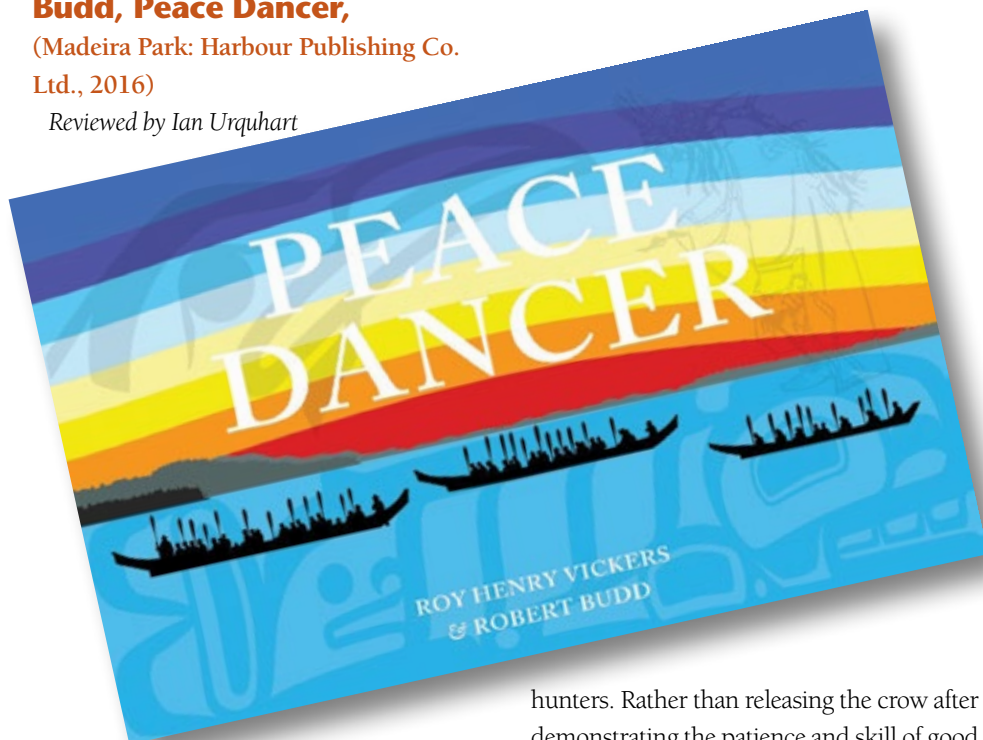


# Reader's Corner

## Roy Henry Vickers & Robert Budd, *Peace Dancer*,

(Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd., 2016)

Reviewed by Ian Urquhart



Respect. Responsibility. Love. When these values animate our actions we move closer to living good lives and to being wise stewards of our natural heritage. These values flow through the veins of world-renowned artist Roy Henry Vickers and historian/author Robert Budd and inspire their series of books about the legends of Northwest B.C. Coast peoples. In *Peace Dancer*, their most recent book, they tell the tale of how the Peace Dance came to the people of Kitkatla, Vickers' home village near Prince Rupert on B.C.'s north coast.

*Peace Dancer* tells the story of what befell the Tsimshian when the people lost touch with ancient traditions. The story opens with an idyllic portrait of life in Kitkatla. Elders sang beside the warmth of their home fires, adults fished for salmon, children played, and the seas were calm. The children, aspiring to be good hunters like their parents, thought it wise to make a trap to see if they could catch a bird or other animal. They succeeded. Their box trap caught a crow that couldn't resist the bait set by the young

hunters. Rather than releasing the crow after demonstrating the patience and skill of good hunters the children wanted to keep it. To cripple the crow's ability to fly away the children plucked so many of the bird's feathers that it could no longer fly. They made the crow their prisoner.

The children's lack of respect for the crow angered the Chief of the Heavens. The Creator decided to punish the village for this behavior. Week after week their community was battered by severe storms; it seemed the rain and wind would never end. The people begged the Chief of the Heavens to stop the storms that were destroying their homes and flooding the land.

The Creator was unmoved until an elder had a dream. In that vision the people could return home if they found their way again, remembered the ancient ways, and taught their children the ancestral laws of love and respect. The people's promise pleased the Creator. The Chief of the Heavens stopped the storms and brought peace again to the world.

The Peace Dance was initiated to remind the people of the need to show respect and

love to all of the Creator's creatures and to the land. A chief, blessed with the power of healing, is chosen to be the Peace Dancer and to perform a special song and dance at potlatches (ceremonial feasts). The dance reminds the people of the time when they lost their way and caused floods to cover all of the land.

*Peace Dancer*, like *Orca Chief* – the third book of the Vickers/Budd series, stresses the responsibility we have to the natural world and to the creatures who we share it with. *Peace Dancer's* message is timeless. Its presentation is as impressive as are the stunning illustrations by Vickers that complement the text. *Peace Dancer* is a wonderful addition to any family library. Its call for respect, responsibility, and love for nature is as powerful now as it was when Vickers' ancestors first told this story thousands of years ago.

