

The Faustian bargain of technological change:  
Evaluating the socioeconomic effects of the  
bow and arrow transition in the Coast Salish  
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# The Faustian bargain of technological change: Evaluating the socioeconomic effects of the bow and arrow transition in the Coast Salish past

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### Highlights

- â€¢ We assess labor organization associated with particular hunting technologies.
- â€¢ Ethnographically, atlatl and darts are often associated with collective hunting.
- â€¢ For the Coast Salish, the bow and arrow was associated with hunting by individuals.

- â€¢ We examine general shifts in hunting emphases through faunal assemblages over time.
- â€¢ Faunal percentage shifts reflect changes in technology and labor organization.

## Abstract

Changes in technology can have transformative effects upon ancient economies. Commonly, the advantages of technology are highlighted in the past, with diagnostic markers of tool types, serving as the important signatures in regional culture histories. While technological changes generally do improve efficiency or provide other benefits, new technologies also bring new additional costs, presenting what Neil Postman calls a "Faustian bargain." In this essay, we consider such costs in the transition from atlatl and dart technologies to the bow and arrow for the precontact Coast Salish economy, focusing on consequent organizational changes in hunting strategies. We maintain that technologies also can be indicators of broader socioeconomic changes in labor organization. We analyze shifting patterns of hunting emphasis through faunal assemblages in relation to changes in tool technologies. We postulate that the transition to the bow and arrow brought benefits in increased efficiency for individual hunters, but at a cost for collective hunting teams based on atlatl and dart technologies that were headed by elites. In so doing, with the bow and arrow, individual hunters exerted greater economic autonomy and this is marked in the faunal archaeological record of the Coast Salish area.



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## Keywords

Northwest Coast; Coast Salish; Atlatl and dart; Bow and arrow; Technology; Labor organization; Faunal analysis

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