

“IT IS LIKE STANDING UP AGAIN”: THE *STÓ:LŌ* WEDDING CEREMONY,
IDENTITY, REVIVAL, AND CHOICE

by

Melissa M. Curry
B.A., University of Victoria, 1997

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In the Department of Anthropology

© Melissa M. Curry, 2003
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by
photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

Supervisor: Dr. Margot E. Wilson

ABSTRACT

The modern *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony is the vehicle used to discuss the complex issues of identity, cultural revival, and self-determinism of the *Stó:lō*.

I began my research in the Fraser River Valley, B.C. with the intent to document *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies through time. Through the interview process I realized that what was most important to the *Stó:lō* with whom I spoke were the three themes of *Stó:lō*-ness (identity), cultural revival, and choice (self-determinism). In this thesis I examine these three themes as they were discussed with me throughout the interviews and as demonstrated in a wedding ceremony I attended.

The *Stó:lō* are striving to achieve self-determinism and the following work describes and documents some of the thoughts and actions the *Stó:lō* have and use to control their own lives. By highlighting the words of those *Stó:lō* with whom I spoke priority is given to their ideas as expressed in the interviews. Through the framing of those ideas, or themes, a picture is constructed of the *Stó:lō* voice for *Stó:lō* self-determinism.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Dedication	vii
Epigraph	viii
CHAPTER ONE	
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	
The Issue	1
The People	4
<u>METHODOLOGY</u>	
In the Beginning	7
In the Field	11
Organizing the Data	12
The Interviews	17
In Conclusion	19
CHAPTER TWO	
<u>CONTEXTUALIZING THE RESEARCH</u>	
Introduction	21
Geographic Positioning	22
Ethnohistorical Positioning	23
Past Writings: An Ethnographic Context	25
Legal Positioning	29
Cultural Persistence and Change	29
In Conclusion	32
CHAPTER THREE	
<u>RESULTS</u>	
Participant Observation: Experiencing a <i>Stó:lō</i> Wedding Ceremony Today	34
CHAPTER FOUR	
<u>RESULTS</u>	
What Was Said: Conversations About <i>Stó:lō</i> Weddings	50
I. <u>"<i>Stó:lō</i>-ness" as Identity</u>	54
Question #1 – WHO ARE THE <i>STÓ:LŌ</i>?	55
Question #2 – HOW DOES MARRIAGE EMBODY "<i>STÓ:LŌ</i> -NESS"?	58

	Question #3 – WHY IS “<i>STÓ:LŌ</i>-NESS” IMPORTANT TO PERSISTENCE (AND MARRIAGE)?	61
II.	<u>Cultural Revival</u>	64
	Question #1 – WHAT IS BEING REVIVED FROM “TRADITIONAL” <i>STÓ:LŌ</i> CULTURE?	65
	Question #2 – WHY DOES <i>STÓ:LŌ</i> CULTURE NEED TO BE REVIVED?	67
	Question #3 – HOW ARE THE <i>STÓ:LŌ</i> REVIVING THEIR TRADITIONS?	72
III.	<u>Choice: Rites and Rights</u>	78
	Question #1 – HOW DO THE <i>STÓ:LŌ</i> DEFINE CHOICE?	79
	Question #2 – HOW ARE THE <i>STÓ:LŌ</i> MAKING CHOICES/SELF-DETERMINING/TAKING CONTROL OF THEIR LIVES?	82
	Question #3 – WHY IS CHOICE IMPORTANT TO THE <i>STÓ:LŌ</i>?	84
 CHAPTER FIVE		
	<u>SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</u>	87
	The Interviewee Themes Summarized	89
	Identity	90
	Cultural Revival	92
	Choice/Self-determinism	94
	In Conclusion	96
 LITERATURE CITED		
 APPENDICES		
	• Map Showing <i>Stó:lō</i> Traditional Territory	109
	• <i>Stó:lō</i> Nation Archives Oral Interview Consent and Release Form	112
	• <i>Stó:lō</i> Marriage Questionnaire	114
	• Vital Statistics, “Milestone” Pamphlet	119
 VITA		
 UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE		

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Coding Categories for Content Analysis	16
---	----

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following work was made possible by the generosity of the *Stó:lō* people and employees of *Stó:lō* Nation. I am especially grateful to Gwen Point who shared so much of her life history with someone who understood so little.

I am also very grateful to Dr. Margot Wilson for her patience and support in my endeavors. She was instrumental in my completion of this project.

I am thankful to Dr. Michael Asch for his insightful comments and advice. I have enjoyed our many conversations concerning First Nation issues that occurred over a cup of coffee or a glass of wine.

I am thankful to Dr. C. Brian Harvey for his kind words and immediate support of my thesis.

I am thankful to Dr. C. Christopher Morgan for his thoughtful comments and questions concerning my research.

There are many individuals, teachers, colleagues, acquaintances, employers, friends and family members who participated and contributed to this final work. I wish to thank them all for the years they devoted to listening to me and helping me work through this degree.

To my parents.

No words could ever express my gratitude for all that you have given me.

We were a rich people. For a time we had nothing and now that is what I see, is that people are taking back what rightfully belongs to them. We don't even say, "it belongs to me;" it doesn't belong to a specific family. Our elders would say that it belongs to the children and our children's children... And again, we have got a long way to go in our communities but at the same time I have hope in my mind and in my heart that more work that is done in our communities by our people and for our people, it is like standing up again. That is the only words that come to my mind, is standing our people. Standing our children. Allowing them to be who they want to be... It always goes back to choice. And I see that as far as marriages are concerned today, but it takes a few families to embrace that. It takes a few families to kind of help people along and show them different ways of doing things.

- Gwen Point 1999

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

The style, set early in the century, of giving a student a good theoretical orientation and then sending him [her] off to live among a primitive people with the expectation that he would work everything out for himself survives to this day... Men who are now professors teach their students as their professors taught them, and if young fieldworkers do not give up in despair, go mad, ruin their health, or die, they after a fashion, become anthropologists. (Margaret Mead 1972: 142)

This quote by Margaret Mead provides a preliminary frame of reference for my experience as a student entering a fieldwork situation for the first time. I quickly learned that the focus of this thesis came from the knowledge I gained from my interviews with the *Stó:lō*¹ people rather than any preconceptions I had as I entered the “field.” The knowledge that I gained included an understanding that three themes or issues were of central importance to those I interviewed: identity, cultural revival, and choice. These three themes became my thesis focus as opposed to my original intent, to write a detailed account of a traditional *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony. This thesis became representative of the voices of those *Stó:lō* with whom I spoke. Beginning with a generalized discussion of *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies through time, the interviews became conversations of *Stó:lō* self-determinism.

The Issue

Your responsibility is that seven generations from now the people again, are supposed to enjoy the same things we enjoy. That was just a fundamental teaching... And so I know that this work was important because there is so little information on our people, whether it is marriage, whether it is archaeology, whether it is treaty, there is so much information about our people that needs to be shared with the larger community in a good way. (Gwen Point 1999)

First Nation² people frequently use anthropological research as a vehicle to uphold their legal rights. Anthropologists can contribute to First Nations’ strivings for self-

¹ The Halkomelem word “*Stó:lō*” is used today by the First Nation people inhabiting the Fraser River Valley to refer to their collective community. *Stó:lō* is pronounced stah low.

² For the purpose of this thesis the term “First Nation” refers to the political groups defined by the Indian Act and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. The terms “Aboriginal” and “Native” refer to

determinism that are often at odds with the legal and legislative mechanisms and structures surrounding treaty negotiations with the Canadian Federal Government and the Provincial Government of British Columbia. In this thesis I examine how the modern *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony³ is a thread connecting the current reality of the *Stó:lō* with their desire to revive and maintain their cultural identity and determine their own futures.

The idea that one model of traditional Aboriginal wedding ceremony exists is as erroneous as the common misconception that all Aboriginal peoples are alike (Harkin 1996). *Stó:lō* marriage ceremonies in the past, much like today, are as diverse as the individuals participating in them (McHalsie 1998; Point 1998). Obviously, traditional Aboriginal ceremonies have undergone many changes due to the influence of immigrant European populations (cf. Collins 1974; Galois 1995; Harris 1987, 1997; McIlwraith 1996). Intermarriages, as well as arriving missionaries played a role in these alterations. In this thesis, based on my interviews with *Stó:lō* people, I document what makes a wedding ceremony legitimate to the *Stó:lō* and speculate briefly on how the practice of a traditional wedding ceremony through time supports *Stó:lō* claims to rights and title in the Province of British Columbia.

My thesis focus originated with a research topic list which was generated by *Stó:lō* Nation's Aboriginal Rights and Title Department and based on *Stó:lō* community input. The list details research the Nation felt was needed on a variety of topics and areas relevant to the *Stó:lō* people. The topic of wedding ceremonies was listed as follows,

Marriages: History of marriages, their motivation, intent, purpose, the ceremony and how it has changed/stayed the same over time. How and why are *Stó:lō* people getting married? (Currently many people get married in traditional longhouse ceremonies, sometimes with a Catholic priest officiating over certain aspects of the ceremony. Potlatching still occurs at these events, but what does it mean and how is it understood by those involved. Some Elders have called for a return to arranged marriages). We have very little information on this subject in

the indigenous people of Canada in more general terms.

³ Throughout the thesis I use the terms "wedding ceremony" and "marriage ceremony" interchangeably. Although the word "wedding" connotes the ceremony more so than the word "marriage," the interviewees used both to refer to the ceremony where two individuals are united in matrimony. A distinction between the meanings of the two words was made by Father Gary when he noted during our interview that "a wedding is a day, a marriage is a lifetime" (Father Gary Gordon 1998).

our Archival collection, but the *Stó:lō* Nation is interested in gaining jurisdiction over marriages through the treaty process. This project would have practical application. (*Stó:lō* Nation Aboriginal Rights and Title 1998:4)

Although this particular topic was created by professionals (the staff of *Stó:lō* Nation's Aboriginal Rights And Title), both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people within the *Stó:lō* Nation governing body, the list was composed of topics specifically requested by *Stó:lō* Nation members. Throughout the interviews, I was repeatedly told how important is the need to document wedding ceremonies. Because the oral tradition of passing knowledge from generation to generation has been inhibited due to colonization, information has been lost and practices have been disrupted. Some time after the interviews, a second reason that this topic is important emerged. The traditional *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony establishes the *Stó:lō* as a First Nation society organized within legally defined parameters (Asch 2002: pers. comm.). The importance of this proof stems from current rights and title claims by the majority of First Nations in British Columbia on the one hand and Provincial/Federal legal requirements born of past case precedent on the other. Hamlet of Baker Lake v. Ministry Of Indian Affairs And Northern Development (1979) sets out the requirements necessary for labeling a First Nation community as an organized society, thereby validating that community's claims to rights. Thus, my thesis evolved into a documentation of *Stó:lō* marriage as a focus for discussions of *Stó:lō* peoples' strivings for cultural identity, revival and choice, and as evidence of long-standing and persistent cultural patterns that may meet the legal requirements for proof of *Stó:lō* social organization. As opposed to a documentation of the elements of *Stó:lō* weddings *per se* which was the original focus of the interviews I conducted.

Community members are currently developing a wedding ceremony that meets the provincial requirements for a legally binding marital union while at the same time reflecting *Stó:lō* culture. Complex issues involved in this project stem from the influence of religion in *Stó:lō* peoples' lives in the past and present as well as from what *Stó:lō* people and past ethnographers define as "traditional."⁴ One result of this present research will be the

⁴ It is difficult to separate pre and post-contact influences or what the *Stó:lō* consider to be "traditional." I

provision of a description of a present-day, “traditional” *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony. Integral to the treaty negotiation process, such detailed information is necessary to compare and contrast what constitutes a marriage to the *Stó:lō* versus the Provincial Government requirements. The problem inherent in this research and in the structure of First Nations’ legal relationships with the Province of British Columbia is the belief that there was only one traditional ceremonial form of wedding in the past, the re-creation of which requires only simple step-by-step instructions. Beyond this a compromise is needed to meet the legal needs of the Province and the privacy (not to mention agency) needs of the community. To work effectively with governmental bodies the *Stó:lō* need to educate non-Aboriginal people about *Stó:lō* culture and government representatives must educate themselves about respecting a way of life that is perhaps very different from their own.

My research accomplishes four goals:

- **first**, elements of *Stó:lō* weddings that have been used before, after and during European contact are briefly described (Chapter Two);
- **second**, comparisons are drawn between what are the *Stó:lō* requirements to sanction a marriage versus those requirements of the Province of British Columbia (Chapter Three);
- **third**, anthropological methodologies are used to elucidate *Stó:lō* desires for a distinct identity, cultural revival, and choice or self-determinism (Chapter Four);
- **fourth**, the misconceptions that one model of a traditional *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony exists and can be replicated in a simple and straightforward manner are discounted.

The People

The *Stó:lō* are First Nation people currently inhabiting the region surrounding the lower Fraser River. Traditionally these people spoke the Halq’emeylem language in which the word “*Stó:lō*” or “*stá.lo(w)*” means “Halkomelem-speaking people of the Fraser River” (Galloway 1977: 638). Although the current territory of the *Stó:lō* includes the regions

therefore use the term “traditional” defined by interviewees as cultural practices that the *Stó:lō* themselves identify as quintessentially their own.

along the shore and tributaries of the lower Fraser River, traditionally it encompasses the entire watershed of the lower Fraser River (see attached map, Appendix #1). This traditional area “extends west to the Strait of Georgia, east to the Cascade Mountains, north to the headwaters of the Pitt and Harrison lakes, and south to include the drainages of the Chilliwack and Nooksack watersheds” (Thom 1996: 2).

Archaeological work carried out in this region produced evidence suggesting that the beginnings of the *Stó:lō* culture occurred approximately 10,000 years ago (Schaepe 1998). However, according to *Stó:lō* oral traditions, the *Stó:lō* peoples have occupied this region since “time immemorial” (Thom 1996: 2). The population of the *Stó:lō* prior to European contact is estimated to have been between 10,000 and 30,000 individuals (Thom 1996: 2). This figure dropped drastically when the *Stó:lō* were decimated by the first smallpox epidemic in 1782 and at least three other epidemics: smallpox or possibly measles in 1824; measles in 1848; and smallpox in 1862 (Carlson 1997: 37). At its lowest numbers the *Stó:lō* population is estimated at approximately 1,300 people, but by 1996 it had climbed to around 6,000 (Thom 1996: 2). Anthropologist Crisca Bierwert has recently provided a description of the *Stó:lō* people.

Twenty-four reserves with a total population of about 4,200 people are recognized by federal authorities today in the Upper *Stó:lō* area. Each has its own administration (the band), and these bands are consolidated into a regional government that presently incorporates all but two of them and is known as the *Stó:lō* Nation... the bands are still the political units of government, and they receive federal funds directly as well as through federal programs administered by *Stó:lō* Nation (which they must agree to be part of). (1999: 12-13)

The unity of cultures in the Lower Fraser River region is “manifested in such things as the common use of the [Halq’emeylem] language, intermarriage between individuals in the separate tribal groups, and a constant friendliness and social intercourse between villages” (Lerman 1952: 1). Today, the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs attempts to maintain this unity between bands through the representation of Aboriginal interests, “in relationship to the provincial and federal governments” (Bierwert 1999: 26). However, conflicts occur as not all bands accept representation by the Union as appropriate due to

each bands' unique interests. For example, the Nisga'a First Nation placed by Wilson Duff in the "Tsimshian Ethnic Division" (1997: 22) now negotiate on their own behalf.

The *Stó:lō* have also been called the Central Coast Salish, or more specifically, the "Upriver Halkomelem" language speakers of the Central Coast Salish Aboriginal peoples (Duff 1997; Suttles 1990: 455, 1980).

METHODOLOGY

It is a strong tradition in anthropology that a department should not have a required course in teaching students how to cope with the practical side of anthropology. Still, a course might offer students planning research an arena in which to carry out some systematic planning. Students recently back from the field might help to keep the discussions focused upon a useful level, professors might admit that they become concerned with the practical details of fieldwork - shopping, food preparation, and accommodations-from time to time, and admit that they were not born knowing how to carry out all these elaborate arrangements. Students, going to the field might be encouraged to plan rationally and consciously, rather than simply close their eyes, grit their teeth and jump in. (Nancy Howell 1990: 189)

I use two forms of analysis, ethnographic description and coding, to explore the *Stó:lō* communities' two different, but not necessarily competing, goals of documenting information for treaty negotiations and self-determinism. The first method of analysis holistically links the components of *Stó:lō* culture that flow into and out of *Stó:lō* marriages. It focuses on the qualitative and individual elements of this community experience. The second method of analysis, a coded, systematic analysis of interviews conducted with *Stó:lō* community members, emphasizes the interviewees' words and points of view regarding the *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony.

Throughout the summers of 1998 and 1999 I carried out research for this thesis in the Fraser Valley, British Columbia. In total, I interviewed twenty-six people, eleven men and fifteen women. Most respondents were thirty years of age or older; however, six were in their twenties. Twenty-three of the interviewees were *Stó:lō* and three were not.

In the Beginning

It was over beers at the Cherry Bank Lounge where I first heard of the pilot History field school going to Sardis, B.C.⁵. The University of Victoria (UVic) in cooperation with *Stó:lō* Nation, the governing body for the majority of *Stó:lō* bands in the Fraser River Valley, planned to place a handful of graduate students in the community to research topics interesting to the individual student and relevant to the *Stó:lō* community. Extremely excited at the prospect of gaining field experience and conducting interviews I contacted the History professor organizing and supervising the field school.

Being in the “field” was not as I had come to picture it after graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Anthropology and completing my first year of graduate classes. My first field experience was as a member of the University of Victoria’s History field school that went to Sardis, B.C. for a little over a month. I feel that this experience, however brief, did constitute fieldwork and helped to better formulate the design of this project and frame the questions that arose for me from the writings of ethnographers that I had read. Being in the field put into context all of the theory and case studies I had been studying for years. In her text First Fieldwork Barbara Gallatin Anderson states,

fieldwork lies at the foundation of anthropology. Without protracted periods in the field, the understanding of culture - anthropology’s domain - is enfeebled into vicarious speculation. Without the experience of fieldwork, students pursue a more imperfect and troublesome course in their development as anthropologists. (1990:149)

During my four weeks in the Fraser Valley I undertook archival research at the *Stó:lō* and Coqualeetza Archives, reviewing both written and taped material. I conducted interviews with *Stó:lō* people during my first visit to the area and during three subsequent visits after the field school was completed. The interviews became the crux of my research methodology. This came as a surprise to me as I had expected the archival research to have a higher profile in the final writing. I also had not expected the breadth

⁵ Thank you Bruce Hoskins for bringing this opportunity to my attention.

of knowledge on many topics that came out of the interviews. Valerie Yow elaborates on the importance of respondents' words,

qualitative research... involve[s]... a multiplicity of variables and their relationships are considered... as being interrelated in the life context. The in-depth interview enables the researcher to give the subject leeway to answer as he or she chooses, to attribute meanings to the experiences under discussion, and to interject topics. (1994:4-5)

Similarly, Delgamuuk'w v. British Columbia Supreme Court of Canada (1998) established a legal precedent for the use of oral history as testimony in First Nations' struggles towards the entitlement of rights. Nevertheless, courts still require validation of oral histories when used as evidence.

The interpretive aspect of oral history is valuable. Written history and oral history are both subjective; a reality that must be acknowledged as a way to recognize the two sources of information as equal and important windows to what has occurred through history and through the processes of colonialism.

I found the process of fieldwork among the *Stó:lō* to be a complex undertaking. Sources I found extremely helpful on the subject of fieldwork include Nancy Howell (1990), Charlotte Aull Davies (1999), Michael Agar (1980), James Spradley (1979), Valerie Raleigh Yow (1994), Roger Sanjek (1990), John Van Maanen (1988), and Julie Cruikshank (1990). In the following section I detail the methods I employed when approaching prospective interviewees, arranging interviews, and conducting the interviews themselves. I also critique my underlying methodology in the hope that others will learn from my mistakes as well as benefit from my final approach.

Prior to our departure for the "field" there were two weeks to prepare. Our preparation consisted of six lectures that acquainted us with the design of the field school and choosing specific research questions to address during our time in the field. We each wrote proposals to submit to the University of Victoria's ethics committee⁶, along with a

⁶ The Ethical Review Committee of UVic granted Dr. John Lutz of the History Department approval for research under the file number 173-98. This approval was extended to the research proposals submitted by each of the History field school participants for a period of one year. Consent forms, see Appendix #2,

general field school proposal written by our professor. We received lectures on the concept of “ethnohistory,” as well as specific information about the *Stó:lō* and the Fraser Valley. Two classes were devoted to seminars with an historian who is also an anthropologist. During the first seminar the instructor, along with Wilma Keitlah, an Aboriginal woman, lectured on oral history methods. In the second lecture we were given practical advice on the use of recording devices. A guest lecture by Albert “Sonny” McHalsie, a respected *Stó:lō* elder affiliated with *Stó:lō* Nation’s Aboriginal Rights and Title Department, comprised the classes on relevant field techniques.

Before entering the field I did an introductory topic search at UVic’s McPherson Library, the Begbie Law Library, the Royal British Columbia Museum Library, and the British Columbia Archives on the subject of Northwest Coast Aboriginal wedding ceremonies. At UVic’s McPherson Library the majority of sources were written accounts by 19th century anthropologists and missionaries. The Royal British Columbia Museum Library contained similar material, as well as the field notes of two prominent anthropologists of the region (Boas 1966; Duff 1997) and one lesser-known researcher of Northwest Coast peoples (Smith 1945). The British Columbia Archives contained these same field notes, newspaper documentation of Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal marriages (usually Aboriginal women marrying European men), and “RG 10” government files containing the communications of the Department of Indian Affairs. Finally, I consulted the Begbie Law Library for information on existing Provincial and Federal marriage law, as well as Federal legislation that directly or indirectly affects Aboriginal peoples, such as the Indian Act (1876, 1985, 1987, 1990, 1995), Bill C-31 (1985), the Royal Proclamation (1763), and the Constitution Acts (1867-1982). I also began to familiarize myself with case law that is specifically relevant to the pursuit of legal rights for First Nation peoples (cf. Calder 1973, Sparrow 1990, Van der Peet 1996, Delgamuuk’w 1998).

While in Sardis I accessed primary and secondary materials located at both the *Stó:lō* Nation and Coqualeetza Archives. An overlap in sources occurred between these archives and the information I found in Victoria, B.C. However, the *Stó:lō* (Heritage

were used and each interviewee was informed of their right to control the way in which the information

Trust) Archives were specifically designed to house information on the *Stó:lō* people⁷. Most written material that either directly or peripherally discusses the *Stó:lō* can be found at this location. This includes primary and secondary written accounts, information on the continuing treaty process for Northwest Coast peoples, as well as tapes of oral interviews, photographs, maps, and material examples of basketry. Although there is some question as to the continuation of the Coqualeetza Archives, this facility has a large photocopied portion of the Marian Smith field note collection; a valuable resource for anyone doing research on Northwest Coast peoples⁸. The Coqualeetza Archives also contains videotapes on the region and genealogical information about family connections and family names. All of this research provided a valuable framework in which to conduct interviews on the topic of *Stó:lō* weddings. Although a lifelong resident of this province I had little understanding of the context in which Aboriginal peoples exist, and the legal framework in which they attempt to navigate the non-Aboriginal dictates on their existence. Through archival research I began to gain an understanding of this context.

The *Stó:lō* Nation Archives contain the report I wrote following the conclusion of my field school experience (and first entry into the *Stó:lō* community), as *per* the requirements of the *Stó:lō* Nation Registry⁹. The Archives also contain copies of all my interview tapes, a copy of which was given to each interviewee as well. Copies of consent forms and transcripts were also given to the interviewees if requested. Finally, I will submit this thesis to the Archives as is standard procedure for all researchers of the *Stó:lō* community¹⁰.

they gave was shared with others. Only two people I interviewed requested that their names be changed.

⁷ None of the work I carried out in this archive could have been accomplished had it not been for the generous help of the archivist Dave Smith.

⁸ I am grateful for the help of Shirley Leon at this archive.

⁹ Every researcher working within the *Stó:lō* Nation in 1998 completed a form and paid a \$20 fee detailing their research focus. The members, various members of band and council, of the *Stó:lō* Nation Registry then reviewed this request for research and approved of or disallowed the work. The form was supplemented with a short presentation by each field school student.

¹⁰ I have also been asked to submit the complete set of field notes I wrote during my work in the Fraser River Valley. I have agreed to do so upon my death.

In the Field

The *Stó:lō* Heritage Trust is located at 7201 Vedder Road, Sardis, B.C. This governing body speaks on behalf of the majority of *Stó:lō* bands located along the Fraser River from Hope to Fort Langely. The field school is operated through the *Stó:lō* Heritage Trust of the *Stó:lō* Nation, more specifically the Aboriginal Rights and Title Department. The Trust invited the University of Victoria to operate a field school in cooperation with the *Stó:lō* and provided preliminary help meeting *Stó:lō* community members. It was on the *Stó:lō* Trust's Crown property, considered by some to be a *de facto* reserve, that the field school was located. I became familiar with the *Stó:lō* staff at the Trust and then began making connections further afield with their assistance. There is an obvious bias in this method of contacting community members as every voice becomes, in some way, tied to the Trust and possibly its agendas. I found it difficult to contact community members who belonged to bands not affiliated with the Trust. There also existed a homogeneity in those I interviewed; the majority were middle-aged and from similar economic, religious, and family backgrounds. This is not to say each person with whom I spoke did not have something unique and meaningful to add, however, for future work I suggest that interviews be conducted among a wider spectrum of individuals for a greater representation of *Stó:lō* points of view.

The *Stó:lō* value an oral tradition of sharing knowledge as a way to define themselves and others in the framework of their culture. To put it another way, in sharing knowledge about their culture the *Stó:lō* claim to be sharing "pieces" of themselves. This cannot be taken lightly and emphasizes the need for tact and respect, as well as humility in approaching sensitive issues. The students of the field school gave small gifts after each interview in recognition of the time individuals made for our questions as well as for the knowledge or "pieces" of themselves that they shared with us.

Due to the concurrent presence of two field schools (UVic's History field school and the University of British Columbia's (UBC) Anthropology field school) many of the

elder members of the *Stó:lō* community were asked to interview multiple times. As ours was the second field school to arrive, a number of potential interviewees declined to be interviewed. Some elders would not even talk to the UBC students due to years of interviewing with past students and researchers¹¹; UBC has offered their Anthropology field school since 1993 (Smith 2000: pers. comm.).

Organizing the Data

A questionnaire¹², which was in essence an interview protocol or outline of issues to address during the interview, consisted of open-ended questions including the topics:

- why do people get married; should people marry?
- why have a wedding ceremony; “traditional” or other?
- describe “traditional” wedding ceremonies versus non-traditional wedding ceremonies
- where or how did you learn about “traditional” wedding ceremonies?
- describe your wedding ceremony, your children’s, your parents’, your grandparents’
- what form do you see wedding ceremonies taking in the future?
- what legitimizes/sanctions a wedding ceremony?
- who legalizes a ceremony?
- describe the difference between public and private aspects of a ceremony.

The process of this thesis has been interactive. I have learned more about the discipline of Anthropology through my continued education and employment doing research for First Nation rights and title claims. This education occurred throughout the writing of this thesis and organizing of the interview data. At the time that I conducted the interviews my focus was on the details of the *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony and treaty negotiations in general. I did not ask each interviewee any questions concerning genealogical information, nor did I ask questions about particular kinship ties between

¹¹ This situation may further bias the data collected.

families and *Stó:lō* communities. If I had known then what I have now learned, this thesis would look very different. In writing this text I have tried to stay true to the information I received from the interviewees in 1998 and 1999. Through the organizing and analysis of their words this thesis presents new ideas on themes that already exist in the academic literature and ideas unique to a group of people in a particular time and place.

The responses I received during the interviews, which provide the foundation of this thesis, were based on a particular series of questions and were not meant to produce anything but a general discussion of *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies, identity, cultural revival, and choice. This thesis is only a place from which to start an in-depth study of *Stó:lō* self-determinism¹³ and is reflective of certain individuals' points of view not *Stó:lō* Nation or the *Stó:lō* community as a whole.

Where possible, the interviewees led the discussion after I introduced the topic of research and my intentions for the use of their words; the introduction became my interview framework of the issues I wished to address during the interview. I explained the project and what I hoped to learn from the collective interviews upon completion of my research. Similarly, Barbara Gallatin Anderson describes her form of introduction as follows:

I grew careful always to preface a professional contact with an unhurried statement as to what I would be interested in learning and why... I would attempt some explanation of why the information which I lacked but they were privileged to possess... would further the goals of our study. (1990: 48-9)

In addition to the interviews, I also kept field notes during all visits to Sardis. These field notes are used where they provide a context for the issues raised in the interviews or where they describe my participation in events/activities as in Chapter Three, which describes a wedding ceremony I attended¹⁴.

¹² See Appendix #3 for the questionnaire I used as a guideline while conducting the interviews.

¹³ I use the word "self-determinism" as opposed to "self-determination" to better reflect the flexible and multifaceted nature of choice for the *Stó:lō* as choice was explained to me during the interviews with *Stó:lō* individuals.

¹⁴ The majority of my field notes are cathartic writings of my culture shock, disappointments and triumphs in the field. I have promised to release them to the *Stó:lō* Nation Archives.

I conducted twenty-one interviews with twenty-six people: fourteen interviews took place with individual interviewees, with two interviewees being interviewed twice, and seven interviews were with couples. I recorded nineteen interviews and three interviews were not recorded due to interviewee request. Following the first few interviews I stopped taking interview notes while the interviews were taking place; I felt that it was more appropriate for the interviewees to have my undivided attention. I transcribed the majority of the taped interviews verbatim. However, I chose not to transcribe those parts that were not relevant to the thesis topic¹⁵.

Interview notes were sorted and categorized along with the transcripts and primary and secondary archival information according to categories that emerged through the interviews and are extant in the relevant anthropological/historical literature. I present these categories in Table 1. I classified the interview data into two general categories: either historic change or *Stó:lō* relations with European society. The first category was expanded to include four elements: pre-contact ceremonies, intermarriage, missionization, and marriage law. The second category also contained four elements: revitalization, self-determinism, identity, and future roles (see Table 1). It is this second category and, primarily, the first three elements that are the focus of my thesis. The first category, historic change, merely sets the stage for the themes that emerged through the interviews.

The significance of coding data, by establishing categories of variables that emerged from the data, is explained in detail by Ole Holsti:

Coding is the process whereby raw data are systematically transformed and aggregated into units which permit precise description of relevant content characteristics. The rules by which this transformation is accomplished serve as the operational link between the investigator's data and his theory and hypotheses. Coding rules are thus a central part of the research design... categories should *reflect the purposes of the research*, be *exhaustive*, be *mutually exclusive*, *independent*, and be derived from a *single classification principle*. (1969: 94-95)

In an attempt to systematize the data that came out of the interviews and following

¹⁵ These sections of the interviews not relevant to the thesis included personal information, opinions, and general musings on subjects either not directly related to the thesis question or requested as being "off the record."

Holsti's coding/category rules, I created two variable categories (historic change and *Stó:lō* relations with European society) to reflect the focus of the interviews, as discussed previously (see Table 1).

Table 1: Coding Categories for Content Analysis

HISTORIC CHANGE	Pre-contact Ceremonies		*information discussing elements of wedding ceremonies pre-dating first contact with European populations (brief survey)
	Post-contact Ceremonies	Intermarriage	*wedding ceremonies of European men to Aboriginal women (brief survey)
		Missionization	*effects of European clergy on Aboriginal wedding ceremonies (brief survey)
		Marriage Jurisprudence	*Federal and Provincial marriage law (brief survey)
STÓ:LŌ RELATIONS WITH EUROPEAN SOCIETY	Self-determinism	Dissention and Choice	* establishing agency over issues previously controlled by non-Aboriginal governments
	Revitalization		* revival of First Nation wedding ceremony elements termed "traditional"
	Identity		* what it means to be First Nation and Stó:lō presently
	Future Roles		* including the topics written culture, treaty negotiations, and Stó:lō children

The Interviews

I made three separate return visits after the conclusion of the field school. The first, in June 1998 less than a week after returning home to Vancouver Island, was due to a scheduling difficulty. One interviewee had been unable to meet with me until after the field school had concluded. I stayed for one day. My second and third return visits occurred the following year. The purpose of my second visit was to arrange a time for a second interview with Gwen Point and to renew connections with interviewees. The purpose of my third visit was to conduct the interview with Gwen Point. During the third visit I also had an opportunity to attend a long house wedding ceremony (Chapter Three).

My second interview with Gwen Point, during my third return to the Fraser Valley, clarified issues raised during our first interview. These issues had not been addressed directly and included *Stó:lō* adaptation to change and the construction of *Stó:lō* identity. These are core concepts for discussing the dynamism of the *Stó:lō* people through the course of contact with European people. It was during that interview I learned of a wedding ceremony occurring in the Charlie long house the next day¹⁶. The bride-to-be was the sister of one of the interviewees (Kelsey Charlie) and the daughter of another (Pat Charlie). I contacted Kelsey Charlie and was invited to the wedding of Jolie Patrice Charlie and Darius Lee Kelly Lawrence that occurred June 17th 1999. I drove to the Chehalis Reserve and was privileged to witness their union. I was asked to refrain from recording the ceremony in tape or note form¹⁷. However, I was permitted to take pictures at prescribed times and mentally note the sequence of events for the purposes of this thesis. This unique and overwhelming opportunity allowed me to begin to synthesize all I have learned of the complexities of *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies through the interviews.

Throughout the interview process I met and discussed wedding ceremonies and the

¹⁶ I was given permission by Kelsey Charlie to use the Charlie family name and the names of the wedding ceremony participants.

¹⁷ To take notes would have diverted my attention from the ceremony and would have been perceived by the host family as rude. I was, however, given permission to recount the ceremony for the purposes of this thesis provided I did not write in any detail of the blessing component of the wedding (Chapter Three).

topic of marriage with complex and interesting people who were extremely patient with me and generous with their time. One woman in particular made an indelible impression. Gwen Point spoke articulately on many topics and it was because of her clarity, breadth of knowledge, and respected status in the *Stó:lō* community that I have focussed on her voice as the primary narrator of *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies. Many of the themes that emerged from her words are representative of the other interviewee's views. These included:

- what does it mean to be "*Stó:lō*?"
- what were the effects of European laws on wedding ceremonies and, therefore, on identity?
- what is the importance of "spirituality?"
- what is the importance of "personal choice?"
- what is the responsibility to future generations?
- why accept difference (distinctiveness)?

Two questions of particular interest to me pertained to treaty negotiations:

1) "Who has control over wedding ceremonies versus who would you like to see have control over wedding ceremonies?"

2) "As treaties are being established, would you like to see *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies included in this process? How?"

Although many did not feel knowledgeable enough about the topic of treaty negotiations to comment, those who did had strong opinions. The majority of those interviewed felt that control over Aboriginal wedding ceremonies should be under specific band control. However, none of the *Stó:lō* people with whom I spoke (cf. Pat Charlie 1998; Doug and Sherry Kelly 1998; Elizabeth Thomas 1998) had any objection to Aboriginal commissioners being appointed by the Provincial Government. The general consensus was that someone has to say, "this is a legal union" in order to have that union recognized both by the community and also by the Government of Canada. As a result, wedding ceremonies are combining religious and traditional ceremonial elements. For

example, Kelsey Charlie felt that the Roman Catholic aspects of his wedding honored his deceased grandmother while the traditional elements honored his more distant ancestors (Kelsey Charlie 1998).

European contact caused a shift in the wedding ceremonies of the *Stó:lō*. As marriages began to occur between traders and *Stó:lō* women ceremonies began to reflect elements from both cultures. However, this ceremonial blending was short lived following the arrival of the clergy. Missionaries, who took up residence in and around the Forts, insisted that only weddings sanctioned by Christian religious rites were legitimate marriage unions. Today, with the Provincial Government's appointment of Aboriginal commissioners who have the legal power to solemnize marriages, many couples are again incorporating more traditional *Stó:lō* elements in their ceremony. Unfortunately, I was unable to interview Wendy and Arnold Richie, the provincially appointed *Stó:lō* Aboriginal commissioners. They were the only members of the *Stó:lō* community, at the time of the interviews, who could legally join two people in marriage under British Columbia law.

Jurisdiction over Aboriginal wedding rites is an issue being discussed in treaty negotiations throughout the province. Although marriage falls within the larger topic of "social issues," it remains an important issue on its own for the people living with the final outcomes of treaty negotiation. Who has the power to legalize Aboriginal marriage ceremonies is only one of many elements that Aboriginal peoples will have to consider in detail before treaty negotiations can be resolved. The implications of the data collected for this thesis for treaty negotiation are exciting, however, the primary emphasis emerging from these discussions of the *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony is *Stó:lō* identity, cultural revival, and self-determinism.

In Conclusion

Generally, the interviewees spoke with great ability to their own issues. Therefore, I have minimally interpreted the text of the interviews and restrained my own voice to

allow the reader to interpret for themselves what words and opinions emerge from the interviews.

There is a dearth of information on *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies from the pre-contact period. The unfortunate outcome of the search for a single “traditional” wedding ceremony is the image of pre-contact cultures as static. Nevertheless, in Chapter Two, I briefly outline the anthropological and historical representations of Aboriginal wedding ceremonies based on written records, and the legal requirements in Federal and Provincial laws.

Chapter Three expands on some of the anthropological and historical material on *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies and describes the present day long house ceremony that I attended. This ethnographic description of the wedding incorporates my recollections of the ceremony along with detailed explanations of some of the key elements, such as the role of Aboriginal marriage commissioners and the effects of colonization on the ceremony.

Chapter Four presents the results of the interviews I conducted. I began with transcripts and notes from a series of interviews based on open-ended questions. Conversations about ceremonial elements evolved into generalized discussions of issues on identity, cultural revival, and self-determinism (choice) - issues that emerged and were emphasized in interview after interview. I eventually realized that this interview based thesis was really about these three themes rather than the documenting of a wedding ceremony. *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies provide a focus for talking about these larger and more complex subjects. In other words, talking about marriage ceremonies provided an entrée into other subjects considered most important to the *Stó:lō* I interviewed.

In Chapter Five I draw conclusions from the work in its entirety and consider its relevance to the *Stó:lō* people.

CHAPTER TWO CONTEXTUALIZING THE RESEARCH

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature related to my thesis question: how does the *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony explicate the *Stó:lō* desire to revive and maintain their cultural identity and determine their own futures and how does this discussion contribute to the current reality of *Stó:lō* legal claims and treaty negotiations?

There is a dearth of writing pertaining to *Stó:lō* pre-contact and contemporary wedding ceremonies. For reasons such as the inaccessibility of wedding ceremonies to non-Aboriginal people and historic precedents including a general lack of interest in wedding ceremonies and in women's activities in past ethnographic work, *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies are written about very little. This thesis does not provide a comprehensive detailing of *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies in pre-contact times beyond a brief synthesis of descriptions found in the sources the *Stó:lō* themselves reference (cf. Boas 1966, Duff 1997, and Suttles 1979, 1987, 1990). This thesis is predominantly focussed on the data received through interviews with *Stó:lō* people and the themes that emerged from those interviews. These themes of identity, cultural revival, and choice were expressed as more important than a detailing of pre-contact wedding ceremonial elements and forms. However, this chapter places my analysis of *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonial forms and *Stó:lō* perceptions and choices regarding those forms based on interviews and observation, in a larger societal and academic context.

To contextualize my account of a contemporary *Stó:lō* long house wedding ceremony (Chapter Three) this chapter reviews the literature on ethnohistorical accounts of *Stó:lō* "traditional" wedding ceremonies, and post-contact influences such as intermarriage with fur traders, impact of the clergy, the implementation of a colonial reserve system, potlatch laws, residential schools for Aboriginal children, and Federal and Provincial laws generally. These influences have contributed to the contemporary manifestation of wedding ceremonies and the persistence of what the *Stó:lō* term "traditional." As stated in a footnote in Chapter One, it is difficult to separate pre and

post-contact influences or what the *Stó:lō* consider to be “traditional.” I therefore use the term “traditional” defined by interviewees as cultural practices that the *Stó:lō* themselves identify as their own.

Through the discussion of themes in Chapter Four I present *Stó:lō* views of wedding ceremonies as they frame three interconnected themes: *Stó:lō* identity (“*Stó:lō*-ness”), cultural revival, and choice (self-determinism). In this way, *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies serve as a focus for the discussion of these three themes which emerged from the interviews. In the end, this research reveals a recurring and overarching emphasis on *Stó:lō* self-determinism. As Gwen Point stated, “it is not so much going back to buckskin and beads... it is about choice. That is what I will give my children” (1999: interview).

Geographic Positioning

The *Stó:lō* are a people physically and psychologically connected to a diverse and rich resource base. As a result the *Stó:lō* emphasize the ties between families that promote interconnectedness, that allow everyone access to all of the *Stó:lō* territory in the Fraser River watershed. Due to this predominant focus on the creation and maintenance of familial ties, and as a result of a rich resource base, the importance of elaborate ceremonies and clan complexity is minimized (Suttles 1987). Following this premise, changes in *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies can be used to understand, or can be taken as reflective of, more general processes of *Stó:lō* culture change due to colonization and contact with non-Aboriginal peoples. To begin a discussion of *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies is to describe *Stó:lō* social structure and system of kinship. To understand this one must understand the physical environment in which the *Stó:lō* live.

The Fraser Valley landscape, located in British Columbia, Canada is varied and spectacular. Beginning at the river’s delta and continuing northeast and then north, the land shifts between flat riverine agricultural space and dense forests occupying mountainous terrain. The weather is predominantly temperate providing a combination of sun and rain that is ideal for a multitude of fauna and flora species. The Fraser River is a rich resource base and a home to which the *Stó:lō*, in the Halkomelem language “people

of the river,” are well adapted. Crisca Bierwert, an anthropologist who has worked with Aboriginal peoples in Washington State and British Columbia, discusses the issue of Fraser River Valley resource use by Aboriginal people.

The valley floor, recontoured, supported a mixture of large and small single-crop farming from orchards to hopyards and dairy farms. Compared to the abundance that had supported the Native economies of fifty years before, the Fraser valley was ecologically devastated. [Central and Coast] Salish people worked in canneries at the river’s mouth, in logging camps on the mountains, and in commercial berry farms on the valley floor. In addition, they continued - almost without exception - to fish for salmon in the Fraser and its tributaries. This litany of land and resource takeover, surrounding continued Native utilization of a traditional subsistence base closely associated with their identity as well as independent livelihoods, is a scenario matched in many rural reservation areas of Canada and the United States. (Bierwert 1999: 20)

Although the *Stó:lō* record their traditional territory as encompassing much of Southwest British Columbia (refer to the map in Appendix #1) today reserve lands are scattered along the Fraser Delta and Fraser River, only approximately twenty-five percent of this territory. I have interviewed individuals whose homes geographically radiate out from Sardis, B.C. Sardis is a juxtaposition of Euro-Canadian suburbs, farmland, and commercial zones with lush reserve lands criss-crossed by major highways and railroads. Crisca Bierwert notes, “growth in the valley has intensified in the past decade; private land development, municipal governments, and public schools have shaped most of the *Stó:lō* peoples’ environment” (1999: 13). First Nation reserves are a refuge from the sprawl of concrete cities and urban crowding. Wandering dogs greet visitors and the sight and smell of cedar stands are immediate. Travelling through the various reserves today, one notes the close proximity to water, the lushness of the surrounding landscape and the intrusion into the forested environment of public transportation-roads, major highways and railway tracks.

Ethnohistorical Positioning

Anthropological, historical, religious and adventurers’ writings that have discussed *Stó:lō* peoples directly and indirectly are numerous and span approximately

three centuries. Bierwert best summarizes these texts in her book Brushed By Cedar, Living By The River: Coast Salish Figures of Power (1999):

Anthropologists' documentation of contemporary Coast Salish culture has included a number of recollected ethnographies, major works on religious practice, and quite recent publications on political structures, both ethnohistoric and ethnographic. In general, cultural documentation has portrayed Coast Salish groups in western Washington and southwestern British Columbia as being relatively egalitarian and decentralized, historically organized in webs of ambilateral kindred, without clans, with an ethos of hierarchy based on cultural knowledge. In regional warfare, they were raided people rather than raiding people, and their warriors provided defense and retribution. Locally, they defined their territory based on village residence and on access to resource areas inherited through kindred relations. Rivers connected not only watershed ecologies but the social networks of upstream and downstream villages. Leading families married between watersheds. (1999: 17)

The *Stó:lō* are classified anthropologically as Central Coast Salish, Halkomelem speakers. Pre-contact they did not have intact clan groups but organized relationships and resources bilaterally (through both maternal **and** paternal sides of the family) or ambilaterally (through the maternal **or** paternal sides of the family) (Duff 1997). However, pre-contact importance was placed on an individual's maternal family, with habitation and ceremonial elements such as the *sxwó:yxwey* mask following a pattern of matrilineal inheritance in particular (Gwen Point 1998, 1999: interview).

Intertwined were *Stó:lō* social organization and a seasonal resource gathering round or movement predicated on resource availability. Throughout the summer, families including extended members, dispersed to fully utilize the expansive *Stó:lō* traditional territory. During times of resource scarcity such as winter, larger family groupings, referred to anthropologically as "bands," pooled harvested resources and solidified family ties through ceremonial practices (Duff 1997). During these winter congregations a hierarchy or class differentiation existed. Classes in *Stó:lō* culture are flexible categories determined by family wealth and prestige (Duff 1952). This class hierarchy was generally based on an individual's knowledge of *Stó:lō* culture traits and family lineages. Knowledgeable people and their families were the worthy or upper class (*sí:yá:m*). Less knowledgeable *Stó:lō*, people without extensive access to cultural,

sacred, and/or familial information were the middle class or common membership. Slaves, due to their situation of displacement, were the lowest class. Slaves would have been taken from neighboring First Nations distinct from the *Stó:lō*, during incursions into these neighboring First Nations' territories for resources or, rarely, retribution (Suttles 1987). Slaves were rare in *Stó:lō* culture as the *Stó:lō* were not a warring people but inevitably found themselves defending their resource rich territory. Marriage ideally did not occur across class lines, before European population influence, but in practice there were exceptions.

Kathleen Gough defines marriage as “a relationship established between a woman and one or more other persons, which provides that a child born to the woman under circumstances not prohibited by the rules of the relationship, is accorded full birth status rights common to normal members of his [or her] society or social stratum” (1959: 32). As the topic of marriage has been discussed in numerous anthropological works, the task of this particular thesis will be to place an analysis of the *Stó:lō* ceremony within the larger anthropological context. For example, Lewis Henry Morgan (1877), Roger Keesing (1975), Jack Goody (1969), and Anita Jacobson (1967) all examined marriage for the purposes of cross-cultural comparison. By contrast, Paul Bohannan and John Middleton, in their text Marriage, Family, and Residence (1968), specifically look at marriage within particular cultures such as the Nayar. My examination follows this pattern and considers *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies as they are practiced today.

Past Writings: An Ethnographic Context

For the most part, written records pertaining to traditional Aboriginal wedding ceremonies were produced by European, and generally male anthropologists, missionaries, and “adventurers” (cf. Barnett 1938; Boas 1966; Jenness 1977; Wells 1988; Hill-Tout 1907)¹.

As stated previously, Aboriginal marriage is described by Wilson Duff as occurring in different forms that accommodated the different classes in the *Stó:lō*

community. Duff writes in his text, The Upper Stalo Indians Of The Fraser River Of B.C., that the upper class usually arranged marriages between their children. The ceremony consisted of lavish gift giving during a time of year considered to be a “slack period,” during the winter months when people came together due to the lack of opportunity to follow food getting strategies (Duff 1952: 92-93). The grandparents were the planners of the union, with some input from the parents, and witnesses were asked to comment on the marriage and given gifts in recognition of their “work.” Witnesses recognized and sanctioned the marriage and seated the bride and groom on top of the wedding gifts from the groom’s family, signifying the completion of the event.

The form of wedding ceremony occasionally used by the lowest class families consisted of the groom-to-be having sexual relations with the bride-to-be while her parents were away. In well-to-do families this would not be considered a legitimate union but an insult.

An exception to the above ceremonial forms is the post-contact Prophet Dance wedding. The Prophet Dance arose from the *Stó:lō* people’s introduction to Christianity by colonizing Europeans. A popular religious event, the Prophet Dance enabled marriages to occur across class lines. Men and women danced in a circle and when one of the dancers decided that they wanted someone for their spouse they merely tapped that person on the shoulder or locked arms. The speaker of the event then lined up the couples and had them repeat brief vows witnessed by those present. Not all writers agree that this form of marriage existed, but Wilson Duff and Wayne Suttles both describe the Prophet Dance form of uniting two individuals, based on interviewee testimony (Duff 1952: 92 and Suttles 1990: 633). A variety of sources exist detailing the gifts given, the food eaten, and the people in attendance at past ceremonies of prominent individuals’ (c.f. Maud 1978; McFeat 1966; Pidcocke 1965; Hill-Tout 1907).

Stó:lō wedding ceremonies have gone through many changes during the course of approximately two hundred years of European contact. The significance, or effect, of European contact for *Stó:lō* marriage is evident in the frequency of intermarriages and the

¹ Although Marian Smith, a European female researcher, studied the *Stó:lō* she focused on male-oriented activities. Smith did examine birth and puberty rituals, female specific activities; however, wedding ceremonial details were not examined at length during her interviews and her studies in general.

number of marriages sanctioned by the Church that occurred post-contact and still occur today.

The first non-Aboriginal inhabitants of the Northwest Coast were the fur traders. As European women did not join their male counterparts at first, there were obvious social reasons-sexual and procreative-for marriages between Aboriginal women and European men. However, there also existed economic reasons for these marriages as well. Intermarriage was encouraged by chief factors of the forts and company heads as it was seen as an effective means for forming more intimate bonds with Aboriginal groups who were believed to have access to valuable furs. Hudson's Bay Company junior officers preferred to marry women of the noble, higher class in Aboriginal society because of the beneficial political and economic alliances such unions provided. At Fort Langely in the Fraser River Valley, the chief factor even went so far as to consider affairs of a "clandestine nature" as against company policy (McNeill 1982: 39). Silvia Van Kirk has written about the seriousness with which marriages between fur traders and Aboriginal women were considered.

The norm for sexual relationships in fur-trade society was not casual, promiscuous encounters but the development of marital unions which gave rise to distinct family units... fur-trade society developed its own marriage rite, marriage *a la facon du pays*, which combined both [Aboriginal] and European marriage customs. (Van Kirk 1980: 4)

Interestingly the Hudson's Bay Company records also document that some Aboriginal women also had an Aboriginal husband with whom they might live for varying periods of time in addition to a British fur trade husband (McNeill 1982: 2).

At first marriages between Aboriginal and Europeans, almost always between Aboriginal women and European men, were conducted according to the "custom of the country" or "laws of the land" (Van Kirk 1980: 28-52). Van Kirk defines these as,

an indigenous marriage rite which evolved to meet the needs of fur-trade society ... practised by both Hudson's Bay Company men and Nor'Westers, although marital patterns within each company framework differed, largely because of the contrast in official company policy toward intermarriage with the Indians. (1980: 28)

No member of the clergy presided over the ceremony and it often took place in the bride's family's home territory or within the encampment that members of her band erected to be nearer the fur traders' forts (Van Kirk 1980). Within the forts the holding of a dance and perhaps the issuing of an extra ration of liquor publicly acknowledged wedding ceremonies. McNeill writes that,

until the presence of the clergy in 1841, it appears that public recognition through bride price and ceremony provided the only social stability in a relationship between a white trader and native woman. Also, for many of the men the expense of the bride price ensured that the trader stayed with his native wife for at least the duration of his employment. (McNeill 1982: 43)

As a fur trader's time stationed in various locales was unpredictable, husbands would leave, separate from, or divorce their Aboriginal wives. In some cases, they would arrange for their wives to remarry a fellow trader to assure the continued support of their family; this was called "turning off" (McNeill 1982: 7). This began to change with the arrival of the first missionaries and the traders' increased concern for, and emotional ties to, their families. As fur traders began to find wives from the subsequent generations of mixed blood (Metis) offspring of the Aboriginal women and European men, weddings began to reflect a more European model (McNeill 1982: 7).

The Church had a great impact on the course and current form of Aboriginal wedding ceremonies. With the advent of the clergy, sanctioned wedding ceremonies began to take on a uniform design with few of the elements of previous ceremonies that represented the distinctiveness of each Coast Salish band. The interviews I conducted with *Stó:lō* individuals highlighted the importance and sacred nature of the Church wedding as well as the prominence of this new tradition in the lives of an overwhelming number of Aboriginal peoples (Gordon 1998; Victor 1998). The importance of the Church sanctioned wedding ceremony is evident directly and indirectly in the testimony of the *Stó:lō* people (Douglas 1998; Fowler 1998; Fraser 1998; Hall 1998; Herb and Helen Joe 1998; Tracy Joe 1998; Gina Kelly 1998).

Legal Positioning

Stó:lō wedding ceremonies as practiced by the *Stó:lō* today have developed to reflect a distinctiveness claimed by the *Stó:lō* as “Indian” or Aboriginal. Past meanings are re-interpreted in the search for something that is specifically or characteristically *Stó:lō*, something separate or set apart from white society, created for and controlled by the *Stó:lō*. The focus is then on the ways in which wedding ceremonies are embedded in cultural understandings of what it means to be *Stó:lō* as opposed to the documentation of ceremonial elements.

Courts prefer to focus on the material elements of ceremonies, which are tangible and, therefore, easier to document and interpret. But focusing on the wedding ceremony’s traditional elements overlooks the actual intent of the ceremony and places an emphasis on ceremonial elements as evidence of “Indian-ness,” instead of reflections of belief or worldview. As a result, ceremonies as representations of belief systems and worldview cause problems for the Court. Their intangibility hinders their presentation and defense in court.

The *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony provides an example of a practice, custom, and tradition that the Court recognizes as necessary to justify rights and title litigation. As an established practice, or institution, the wedding ceremony becomes a political vehicle through which *Stó:lō* claims as an independent and preexisting political entity are supported. The *Stó:lō* goal is to create a place of political autonomy under Canadian law or by the assertion of self-determinism through self-government (Gwen Point 1999: interview).

Cultural Persistence and Change

The *Stó:lō* continue to practice wedding ceremonies of a distinctly *Stó:lō* form despite the influence of mainstream Canadian society². Although the *Stó:lō* marriage ceremony has changed through time, partially due to the influence of non-Aboriginal

culture (ex. Canada 1969 [under the authority of Jean Chrétien, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development]) central precepts continue to exist through time and despite external pressures to change. In other words, *Stó:lō* culture has experienced both change and persistence through time; tandem processes which Robert Bee defines as adaptive.

There is a real danger of distortion in presenting the problem as a dilemma of change versus persistence, of conceiving of the dynamics of group behavior as an either-or situation and then trying to sort out which pattern is an example of which condition. The actual conditions of human existence for most purposes could perhaps more accurately be conceived as an infinite series of adjustments between tendencies toward both change and persistence... there is thus a constant adjustment process that attempts to keep the system alive and adaptive. (Bee 1974:13-14)

Although changes to *Stó:lō* culture have occurred, many elements of *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies have persisted. *Stó:lō* interest in the persistence of the wedding ceremony itself and of certain traditional elements of the ceremony is evidenced by the inclusion of the wedding ceremony on the research topic list developed by *Stó:lō* Nation for the History field school.

Some *Stó:lō* people commented on the strength of the *Stó:lō* belief or value system which possibly explains cultural persistence. Following Evon Vogt's argument, the Mayan Zinacantecos of Mexico persist as a distinct culture apart from the European cultures that colonized them because of a pervasive ceremonial schedule that maintained community connections and allowed non-Zinacantecos cultural elements to be borrowed (Spindler 1977: 75). Similarly, the *Stó:lō* value system has survived laws prohibiting the gathering of the *Stó:lō* people in part due to the importance placed on family, community, and creator (pre-contact this was *Xá:ls* the primary transformer figure of Coast Salish mythology). However, as in the Zinacantecos situation, syncretism between Christian religions such as the Roman Catholic Church and traditional belief is increasingly common and the *Stó:lō* today include Catholic ceremonial elements in the rites which legitimate their marriages. The Catholic Church ceremony may be the only ceremony sanctioning the marital union or it may comprise only one of a number of ceremonies

² For the purposes of this work, "mainstream Canadian society" refers to the dominant culture of North America. Although mainstream Canadian society includes individuals of diverse origins of descent I make

sanctioning a marriage (Kelsey Charlie 1998). A physical manifestation of this blending of practices and belief systems can be seen in the courtyard of St. Mary's Catholic Church, located in Chilliwack. Given as a gift to the Catholic Church by the *Stó:lō* community, a carved cedar depiction of the Virgin Mary with palms up in the *Stó:lō* gesture of thanks, stands across from a stone statue of the Virgin Mary. This Mary stands in repose with one hand at her chest and the other by her side, a representation more typical of European religious statuary.

Why do certain elements of *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies persist? Why do the *Stó:lō* maintain that these material elements are necessary components for sanctioning a union between two individuals? The use of *sxwó:yxwey* masks, hand woven blankets, and representations of the resources from *Stó:lō* territory, as well as the importance placed on the involvement of family and community in the ceremony, have persisted through time. Goodenough postulates the following explanation for the persistence of cultural traits:

The inference is that customs, as shared habits, must be gratifying in some way to the majority of a society's members (or of those who wield power in it) if they are to persist... the appraisal of behavior as gratifying or not is so often in terms of material wants or social advantage that we easily lose sight of the important role that emotional gratifications play in reinforcing habits and customs... customs do not usually serve specific wants in isolation, but more often relate to many wants and felt needs at once, that it is not their net efficacy which accounts for their persistence. (Goodenough 1963: 64, 72)

Like Goodenough, the *Stó:lō* with whom I interviewed emphasize the value of intangible results of custom continuity, such as pride in one's identity and a strengthening of community ties, as well as the importance of not isolating traits from one another but rather viewing them as a part of a cultural system. The persistence of traits and beliefs is key to any discussion of cultural persistence.

It is beyond the scope of this work to review alternative predictive models of persistence but it is insightful to follow Goodenough's advice and focus on the function and meaning of those wedding ceremony elements that have persisted. This focus points,

a simple distinction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures here.

again, to the importance of family and community as the ceremony's creators, reinforcing a distinctly *Stó:lō* identity and the strengthening and creating of ties to family and community through the elements of traditional wedding ceremonies. For example the *sxwó:yxwey* masks are passed through generations within families and the movements or dance steps of the *sxwó:yxwey*, as well as the accompanying songs, are known and owned for exclusive use only by those in the same kin group. The *sxwó:yxwey* mask sanctifies weddings and strengthens family ties when used in a sacred ceremonial way. It is the sharing of these rites and artifacts that consolidates and solidifies ties within and between families. Even though non-kin members may observe these masks in use, the sacred nature of their performance is directed to the families linked to them and their power flows through these kin group members only. When *Stó:lō* gather and share masks, songs, and natural resources, social bonds are strengthened. For example sharing food during the ceremony strengthens and creates bonds between community members. The hosting family provides sustenance to those attending the ceremony and those guests attending sanction the union taking place.

In Conclusion

Today the *Stó:lō* live and persist in a global world system. In the preceding sections I have presented literature from anthropologists, historians, adventurers, missionaries, and fur traders. The accounts of these non-Aboriginal people are based on first, second and even third hand knowledge of the First Nation people about whom they wrote. In her article "Engaging Historicism," Joan Vincent discusses practices she believes "hold the potential of resituating metaethnograph" (Vincent 1991: 46). One of these practices, labeled "contextualism" is the lens through which I view past written accounts (including, but not exclusive to, ethnographies) of First Nation culture. According to Vincent, "contextualism"

involves understanding ethnography not as aesthetics or poetics, but as a historical phenomenon that must be associated with social, political, and material circumstances... the study of these ethnographers [Roy Franklin Barton, Bronislaw Malinowski and Franz Boas] in the context of their

times advances an assessment of the critically distinctive, but many-layered, relationship between anthropology and colonialism... a conceptualization of the role of ethnographers on the moving edge of capitalist expansion, and of the function of ethnographic writing in a larger scheme of things. (Vincent 1991: 47)

I discuss texts produced in the context of colonialism to better understand the focus of these accounts and the conclusions made. Vincent summarizes the general perspective of past anthropologists in the following way.

Thus it was during the Edwardian era... that anthropology became distinctively *ethno-graphic*, by which I mean that professional, academic anthropologists chose to define themselves as writing about “peoples” rather than, for example, polities, places, or problems. (Vincent 1991: 56)

Many anthropologists not only wrote about cultures as they saw or heard them presented but drew conclusions as to the nature of the people who practiced that culture. I am not disputing the value of these accounts and the information they provide. This information is sometimes the only existing documentation for a detail forgotten in the course of colonization and the disruption of the oral traditions of First Nation people. However, a complete picture of a people is difficult to construct without the voices of the people themselves to tell their story (Chapter Four).

In the following chapter, I describe a traditional *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony that I attended and observed. Chapter Three and Chapter Four, together, represent the story told to me by those *Stó:lō* with whom I interviewed. This story is about identity, cultural revival, and choice as told in the context of a wedding ceremony.

CHAPTER THREE RESULTS

Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of a law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (Clifford Geertz 1973: 5)

You need to experience it before you can understand it. (Darwin Douglas 1998: interview)

Participant Observation: Experiencing A *Stó:lō* Wedding Ceremony Today

The *Stó:lō* First Nation today searches for meaning in lives lived between two cultures; what it means to be “Indian” living within a dominant European descended society. Navigating this cross-cultural context and defining an identity representative of who one was versus who one has become, and will be, is a difficult course to plot, especially under the spectre of colonization¹. Nevertheless, one can maintain a First Nation or *Stó:lō* identity in this reality,

I think our people are starting to understand that they have a choice in things. And it has built up who we are; that we can coexist in the larger society and still maintain who we are... I am still *Stó:lō* because I carry the knowledge, the teaching and the values... you know you can't buy that. Nobody can give it to you. You have got to take the time to learn it, to find out, and that is invaluable. It is free. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

There is a conflict inherent in the belief that to be “Indian” one must be “traditional” and practice a static culture, a culture that once was (Point 1999: interview; Alfred 1995). This ideology denies the *Stó:lō* people growth, change, and dynamism that are the hallmarks of all cultures. Many of those with whom I spoke believe that to be *Stó:lō* includes a reinterpretation of “tradition” and a blending of past practices with new ones. Kelsey Charlie’s remarks about his wedding ceremony reflect this blending of past and present practices.

¹ For the purposes of this work colonization includes urbanization, missionization, and sedentism. As defined in The New Lexicon Webster’s Encyclopedic Dictionary Of The English Language: Canadian Edition, “colonialism [encompasses] the economic, political and social policies by which colonies are governed” (Cayne ed. 1988: 193).

You can never turn back time. Everything evolves. That is one of the things [my wife and I] said, [we would] make sure we [did the ceremony] legally... so it can be recognized by the mainstream society and be recognized in our own way. So that you are still getting things taken care of. (Kelsey Charlie 1998: interview)

The following detailed description of a *Stó:lō* long house marriage ceremony demonstrates that the *Stó:lō* are a people in the process of defining their place in the Eurocentric society of British Columbia and how they will determine their own futures as a people. As Gwen Point has said, “it is not so much about buckskin and beads. It is not. It is about choice. That is what I will give my children” (Point 1999: interview).

Herb Joe is well regarded in the *Stó:lō* community as being knowledgeable of *Stó:lō* culture due to his cultural teachings by *Stó:lō* elders. An articulate and charismatic speaker, he is often requested to speak at long house ceremonies and important events of the *Stó:lō* Nation. He spoke (and I quote him) at some length on the subject of marriage. He explains the importance of this ceremony to past, present and future *Stó:lō* people and the implications to *Stó:lō* Nation today.

The [marriage] ceremonies, I think, shouldn't be taken out of context, shouldn't be looked at in isolation. The ceremonies are all a part of the overall societal structure... I think you need to take a look at how our society is set up and of course, how it evolved to get to point X and that the ceremony evolved out of that societal and family needs. I guess the simplest way to approach it would be to take a look at how you were taught first as individuals then as part of your immediate family, part of your extended family and of course to the community and to the tribe or to the Nation. The same values were taught throughout. The same values were... taught at all levels of the societal structure from the elders right down to the children. And because we lived in a communal society structure... we had to teach certain values that are present throughout everything that we did that involved living together in that community... respect, common respect, mutual respect, and that was taught to everyone and it was taught from the time you were able to understand...

...historically if you have these belief systems, these value systems in place, doing a marriage ceremony was a relatively simple ceremony. [It] wasn't something extravagant and it was basically the same things that happen in a modern church ceremony if anybody ever listens to the words that are being said. It was strange for the people of the Old Catholic Church because they have the masses all said in Latin, so nobody really understood what the heck was being said. You know, as a third language our people spoke our own language, Halkomelem, and then the common language that was used was English, and then

the priests spoke a third language that nobody understood. And the ceremony became sort of mystical because no one understood what the heck it meant. But if you listen to the vows... really listen to the words and try to understand what the words mean about commitment, about respect, about love, about sharing, all of those kinds of things then it's easy to understand how our ceremonies say exactly the same things. The only difference is we say it in Halkomelem and you didn't necessarily have rings that were a symbol of the bonding of two people, we had a ceremony where a couple were brought together and their two families representing them. The couple who were marrying were standing there and the whole of the parties that were involved including the two that were married basically exchanged promises to each other that this is a relationship that would last for a lifetime.

You know of course, sometimes it didn't, but as I understand it, that was the very basis... the actual ceremony itself was [an]... interpretation of the spiritual leader... and then of course, there were traditions that were developed and evolved over years with a particular family. In particular the high status families. The high status families [in times before contact], of course, have the wealth to put on large potlatches to celebrate such a happy event, so they would, as our elders would say, they would set a table and invite all of the important people in their community and all the surrounding communities. They invite them all to this ceremony because they could afford it. They could afford to feed all those people because that was the most that was expected. When you invite somebody then you respect them enough to invite them, then you respect them enough to feed them, take care of them while they are in your home... the ceremony in itself depended on the tradition of the family, the position of the family, and also the interpretations of the spiritual leader, whoever that happened to be.

So the ceremonies weren't so structured that they couldn't be changed. All that needed to happen was that it needed to have the basics, the necessities in there. The words that would bond a couple. The words that would commit two families to each other... our marriage ceremony... went beyond just a couple getting married or being bonded in a relationship. It was the commitment and bonding of two families and for that reason and because of, again, the value system and the belief system that was in place, it made the responsibility on the couple to honor the traditions of their families so they not only committed to each other but they committed to each other's families. So it became a very strong commitment, and if you were a respectful or an honorable person then you respected that commitment, and you learned to live together. (Herb Joe 1998: interview)

Gwen Point explained that the wedding ceremony and other uniquely *Stó:lō* cultural traits need to be documented for future generations (Point 1999: interview). The oral tradition of passing teachings from generation to generation has been suppressed because of European contact, until a recent resurgence of cultural traits and practices

reaffirming *Stó:lō* identity. Past colonial policies of residential school education for *Stó:lō* children, and the resultant separation of children from their families, inhibited cultural teachings from being passed from one generation to the next. Today the value of the *Stó:lō* culture is once again being celebrated openly. Writings preserving community cultural knowledge will become more important as younger generations desire to learn more. This “cultural revitalization” began in the sixties and seventies (Kelsey Charlie 1998: interview) and has increased with Canadian society’s identification with multiculturalism and the legal recognition of Aboriginal rights (Isaac 1999). Herb Joe sees the importance of *Stó:lō* culture to the youth of *Stó:lō* Nation in the following terms.

Our young people are finally realizing, beginning to understand that this, these ceremonies, are a part of who they are and if they continue to think about them as needing to be behind locked doors then they’re locking away part of who they are... they’re putting part of who they are behind locked doors. So that nobody else in the world can see them, so all the people on the outside, all they’re seeing is a shadow... a shell of who you really are, because a part of you is locked away. I think our young people are getting to a point now where they’re realizing that, “I need to bring [out] that part of me that I hid away for so long, I need to bring it out and become a whole person again; to become a balanced person, a person who can live in harmony with everyone and everything that’s around me. If I’m going to be a healthy person then I need to do that.” (Herb Joe 1998: interview)

In 1999 a *Stó:lō* family from the Chehalis band performed a “traditional” *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony in keeping with their familial beliefs to publicly demonstrate cultural distinctiveness as well as the strength of their commitments to family and community. The following description is based on my field notes of the long house wedding ceremony that took place at the Charlie long house in the summer of 1999. Two days later a second wedding, a Roman Catholic service, was performed at St. Mary’s Church in Chilliwack out of respect for the staunchly Catholic grandmother of the bride.



The sun was beginning to set as I pulled the Volkswagen van up on the lawn and extended parking lot of the Charlie long house. It had been a challenge finding the Charlie long house located on Chehalis Indian Reserve #5. The reserve sits on the northwest bank of the Harrison River and travelling from the Trans Canada Highway along the Agassiz-Rosedale and Lougheed Highways is a drive through mountainous

terrain broken by rivers, creeks and roadside waterfalls. As I pulled in, the sun slowly fell below the tree line and I quickly took a few photographs of the exterior of the long house and surrounding yard.

I was almost an hour late. Mistakenly, I had taken the circuitous route to Chehalis driving as far north as Hope and doubling back through the Seabird Island Reserve #1 and the township of Agassiz. Feeling timid and unsure of my invitation² to attend this event I slunk through the cavernous entrance. The “front door” was on the right side of the long house, if approached from the road, and was sheltered by the overhang of the long house roof as well as that of the kitchen building located beside it, approximately six feet away. The majority of those gathered immediately noticed me and, feeling self-conscious, I immediately wanted to turn around and get back into the van.

The day before, on a return visit to Chilliwack to interview a Stó:lō community member (Gwen Point) for the second time, I had heard that a couple was to be married in a “traditional” ceremony at the Charlie long house. A Roman Catholic ceremony was planned two days later at St. Mary’s Church in Chilliwack. The bride-to-be was the sister and daughter of two Stó:lō people I had interviewed so I set out to obtain permission to attend. I contacted Kelsey Charlie, the bride’s brother, and he generously invited me and talked with his parents to secure my role as observer. Then with directions in hand I made plans to attend the traditional wedding ceremony of Jolie Patrice Charlie and Darius Lee Kelly Lawrence³ that took place on the evening of June 17, 1999.

As I stood in the entranceway trying to decide how next to proceed, Kelsey Charlie walked up and warmly welcomed me to his family’s long house and his sister’s wedding. There were two large folding banquet tables filled with salmon, salads, fruit, cakes and non-alcoholic beverages. He told me I had missed the dinner and introductory welcome speeches but that I should help myself to the remaining food and dessert. I

² As I had received my invitation from Kelsey Charlie, the bride’s brother, I was unsure whether the Charlie family as a whole would welcome me. I had reservations about imposing myself on a very generous person.

³ I have been given permission to use the names of the bride and groom and I was also permitted to use the names of the majority of those individuals interviewed, with two exceptions (see Chapter One, methodological section).

apologized for being so late and feeling contrite said that I wasn't hungry. He frowned. Kelsey explained that the food was not necessarily about sating hunger; it was more about sharing in the plenty of the hosting family and taking part in the nurturing of the community (the guests). I quickly put some fruit in my mouth.

Kelsey led me to my seat behind the seats of the bride's family (the hosts). They sat on a section of benches with three bleacher-like tiers, running along all of the long house walls, furthest from and to the left of the main entrance. The rectangular long house, with its vaulted ceiling and subtly pitched roof, was large enough to have comfortably seated two hundred people. The roof was made of corrugated sheet metal but the rest of the structure appeared to be entirely constructed of cedar. Cedar shingles covered the exterior and six cedar posts supported the building's roof. To the immediate left of the main entrance on the highest and widest tier were placed the couches and plush easy chairs for the elders; the rest of us sat on blankets or our jackets on the bare wood tiers.

There were three entrances including a main doorway and two smaller entrances. The main doorway was on one of the two square walls with the smaller doorways opposite. Two carved wall plaques were hanging above the smaller entrances. Cedar boughs were placed above all entrances and on each of the six supporting posts.

The floor was hard packed dirt, sprinkled with water to prevent dust. Two wood stoves with brick chimneys equal distance apart were in the center of the floor to better facilitate the heating of the long house. Three flower vases, especially for the ceremony, accompanied each wood stove. One vase was placed on top of the stove and one vase was placed to each side of the stove. Near the stove closest to the main doorway was a neatly stacked wood box and a table was positioned in front of the stove furthest from the main doorway. This table held the implements to be used by the Stó:lō wedding commissioners and respected cultural advisors, Wendy and Arnold Richie, as they performed the ceremony. These ceremonial implements consisted of another flower filled vase, two water filled champagne flutes stenciled with "bride" and "groom," a tin foil covered plastic bowl filled with small pieces of various foods, and a pen in a holder.



Marriage commissioners are appointed by the Province of British Columbia⁴ to advise couples on the legal requirements of wedding ceremonies. Approximately eight years ago the British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency sent out brochures (see Appendix #4 for a copy of this pamphlet) to each First Nation in the province. These brochures explained that the Provincial Government would sanction First Nation people in positions such as district registrar, marriage license issuer, and marriage commissioner for First Nation communities. First Nation Chief and Council for each First Nation in the Province submitted the names of individuals they felt were best suited to fill these roles. These individuals work for the Provincial Government but administer only to the Nation of which they are members. The Vital Statistics Agency did not receive many recommendations and today there are only five Aboriginal commissioners for the Province of British Columbia (Storm Edgar 2002: pers. comm.), two of whom are Wendy and Arnold Richie. There is no significant difference in the requirements for an Aboriginal commissioner as opposed to a non-Aboriginal commissioner; a potential commissioner must complete the Provincial training course in order to perform ceremonies (British Columbia 1992). One or two Aboriginal commissioners may be assigned per Nation. Similarly, a limited number of commissioners are hired to serve the needs of the non-Aboriginal population in the region. These commissioners may be Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.

Marriage commissioners can perform any kind of ceremony whenever and wherever it is requested. The ceremony does not have to conform with any set ritual forms such as a traditional *Stó:lō* long house ceremony or Roman Catholic ceremony (British Columbia 1992). The Richies, as respected members of *Stó:lō* Nation who hold the legal authority to solemnize marriages, are in a unique position to support *Stó:lō* couples desiring a long house wedding ceremony. Wendy and Arnold Richie are respected for their knowledge of traditional wedding ceremonies and wisdom in advising couples on the sacredness of the marital union. Gwen Point describes the significance of the Richies' role as spiritual leaders and marriage commissioners for *Stó:lō* Nation.

⁴ When I conducted my field work in 1998/99 marriage commissioners worked under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors, they are now directed by the Ministry of Health Planning.

You see the big thing I think with our people is... when you call the people together to witness something you are standing up and telling them that this is your commitment. It is the same as the Church. You are still going before the people and in the eyes of God and of the Great Spirit, saying publicly that your relationship or commitment you are making is life long... but because our [long house ceremony or tradition] isn't recognized [as a legalizing ceremony by the Provincial Government]... we need people like the Richies. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)



A tarp covered by blankets lay on the floor between the wood stoves with a bench covered by blankets placed directly on top. Flanking this bench were two chairs also covered by blankets; the closest chairs to the bench were the size and shape of plastic patio chairs and the furthest two chairs were smaller.

The wedding gifts from family and friends were piled on a banquet table to the right of the main entrance beside a large commercial beverage cooler. The give-away presents for the guests were piled beside the bride's family to the left of the main entrance in the furthest corner from that entrance. The hosting family of the long house event or ceremony gives these presents to those who witness and participate in the ceremony.



Gifts recognize the guests, who through witnessing the ceremony sanctify it. As noted ethnographically (cf. Cole and Chaikin 1990; Duff 1952: 87-88), and reinforced in my conversations with *Stó:lō* elders, the giving away of gifts, or "potlatches," redistribute wealth back into the community.



The wedding had technically begun over an hour before; by now the guests were fed and seated. The "workers" had cleared away the folding banquet tables of food, leaving two tables with leftovers for latecomers. The "workers" were relatives and friends of the Charlie family and were recognized for their efforts with handshakes and monetary payment or gifts such as blankets, kitchenware, artwork, and food.



There is a tremendous amount of work involved in a wedding as indicated by the mother of the bride.

It is a lot of hard work. People often say to me, "it is really hard." Whenever we are doing it, it is the Spirit that carries us. We get tired but we never let that set in [because we believe in] the seven laws of life... health, happiness, generations, generosity, humbleness, forgiveness and understanding. So we are carrying all those things and, sort of, carrying yourself in the true way, of what you are supposed to be doing... so now the people feel more happiness about [a long house wedding ceremony] because it is a simple way but also it is a meaningful way... traditional weddings, and all of the things that we do, it is not something that is very quick. It takes a lot of time. There is so much teaching... all those teachings represent a lot of thought that just comes out. (Pat Charlie 1998: interview)



After quiet had settled over the hundred or so seated people, Jolie and Darius held hands as they entered the long house through the main entrance and slowly walked to the bench in the middle of the room.

The bride and groom were dressed in handmade costumes. The bride wore a sleeveless fitted white dress. The material of the dress had a subtle pattern that shimmered in white on a white background. A slim beaded belt circled her waist in purple, pink and blue floral patterns with a border on a white background. A purple stylized image of a salmon was appliquéd on the skirt of her dress. The bride's hair was left down, curly and long, and was crowned by a braided cedar band with eagle feathers hanging down on either side of her face. Above her forehead the ends of the band were tied together, left as a fringe, and framed by two smaller eagle feathers. The bride's wedding ensemble was completed with a necklace of pearls. The groom also wore a cedar band with two large eagle feathers hanging on either side of his face. The detailing of his simple white shirt incorporated the purples, pinks, and blues worn by the bride. These details were a purple ribbon bordering the neck of the shirt, a multi-colored ribbon bordering the vertical center, top quarter of the front of the shirt (the yoke) and a multi-colored ribbon sewn along the bottom hem. The back of the shirt had a stylized animal image in purple appliquéd on the upper half of the shirt with ribbon attached to each of the four corners of the square image. Black dress pants completed his outfit.

One of the bride's brothers walked to the center of the long house and addressed the guests. Certain members of the audience were formally requested to act as witnesses and view the upcoming ceremony with special care. These witnesses would be remembered by all present as the official audience members. They were the principals, the leading participants, to be called upon in the future should questions arise concerning the elements of the ceremony. These witnesses were the living testimony to the sanctity of the union. Numerous people, both Stó:lō and non-Stó:lō, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, were asked to witness and each was given a number of twenty-five cent coins. This payment, to seal the couple's request and the witnesses' acceptance of that request, occurred when each parent of the bride held the right hand of the witness. I was privileged enough to be among those asked to witness this wedding and I received six quarters in recognition of my responsibilities.

Following the call to witness, four men and eight women were asked forward from the tiers. Members of the Charlie family placed one blanket across the shoulders of each man, shawls made by the Charlie family were placed on the shoulders of each woman, and bandanas were tied around all of their foreheads. These twelve Stó:lō people began to sing and play drums or spoons. The men drummed and the women each hit two carved spoons together while singing songs in Halkomelem.⁵

Next a young Stó:lō couple was called to attend the bride and groom⁶, one on either side of the bench near the blanket covered chairs. A young boy, the bride and groom's son, and a young girl, the bride's niece and Kelsey Charlie's daughter, were also asked to come forward and stand beside the bride and groom, near the small chairs on the outside of the bench-chair formation. The Richies called the attending couple forward and covered each of them in thick sashes fashioned from blankets. The attending couple each wore a cloth bandana around their foreheads. The man wore a white shirt similar to the groom's with a square, stylized animal image appliquéd on the back. The young boy wore a suit with a gray vest. He was also covered with a blanket sash and wore a cloth bandana. The young girl wore a hand-made buckskin dress, delicately

⁵ I did not ask the Charlie family why these twelve people were invited to sing and play drums and spoons for the couple as opposed to others present at the ceremony. I believe the songs sung are "owned" by the Charlie family but I did not confirm this with any Charlie family member.

⁶ I do not know why this particular couple attended the bride and groom.

beaded and fringed. She too was draped with a blanket sash and wore a cloth bandana around her head. The seating order from left to right of my position was as follows: the bride's niece, female attendant, bride, groom, male attendant, and the bride and groom's son.

*Jolie and Darius' union was blessed by the use of *sxwó:yxwey*, or blessing, masks in the ceremony. The Charlie family requested that I not write in detail about this part of the ceremony. I have agreed and the following is only a generalized description of this *Stó:lō* blessing tradition.*



The *sxwó:yxwey* masks are sacred blessing implements with accompanying songs and are passed matrilineally or through the female members of an extended family or lineage. Both the bride and groom's families had inherited the right to use *sxwó:yxwey* masks. Following the abolition of the potlatch law in 1951, a revival of potlatches occurred at special events such as births, deaths, naming ceremonies, and weddings. Kelsey Charlie explained this revival as happening,

right around 1967 or something like that... from there it sort of exploded like wildfire. They were searching for such a long time to have something that was... ours... so it kind of goes through the stages where the Spirit is only giving us what we can handle at the time. Until we grow a little bit more, then we will get a little bit more to work with... there is going to be more things that are going to be coming back. We are going to continue to get stronger. (Kelsey Charlie 1998: interview)

The *Stó:lō* have argued that the sacredness of the *sxwó:yxwey* masks were depleted over the last thirty years due to their over-exposure to non-Aboriginal people in the form of pictures and displays⁷. In response, the *Stó:lō* limit exposure of *sxwó:yxwey* masks in order to preserve the sacredness of these rites and the sacred artifacts themselves. The *Stó:lō* claim that this sacredness defies written explanation.



Out of one of the smaller entrances emerged four sxwó:yxwey masked dancers. Kelsey leaned over and above the ensuing roar of drums and stamping feet explained to me that the first mask was over one hundred and fifty years old and from the Musqueam band⁸. It had been hidden during the time of the potlatch law, 1885 to 1951, and had recently⁹ been brought back into use once again.

The sxwó:yxwey mask dancers executed their prescribed movements under the watchful gaze of all present. Those individuals in the audience who had been entrusted with the responsibility of acting as witnesses to the ceremony fulfilled their promise by noting that the ceremony was executed with due attention paid to every detail. It is extremely important that the dancers undertake the performance meticulously because mistakes would be considered disrespectful to the bride and groom and shameful for the host family. According to Kelsey, the dance performance was just as it should be, but I would have had goose bumps regardless.

The sxwó:yxwey mask dancers escorted the bride and groom counter-clockwise around the long house and then the dancers returned Jolie and Darius to their attendants. The bench to which they were returned was covered with four blankets. The bride and groom sat on three of the blankets with the fourth put aside to cover them later. The drumming and singing men and women then left the floor and returned to sit on the long house tiers.

Wendy and Arnold Richie began this portion of the ceremony with a few words as they covered the bride and groom with the single blanket. They spoke of the importance of the union to the couple, their son, their extended families, and to their communities. The plastic bowl containing pieces of foods was brought forward and the Richies directed the couple to feed each other the roots, berries, fish, and meat contained in the bowl. The bride and groom were then given the fluted glasses filled with water to serve to one

⁷ For example, pictures of the sxwó:yxwey masks can be found in ethnographies and sxwó:yxwey masks are displayed in museum exhibits.

⁸ The Musqueam band or community is a *Stó:lō* community (although it is not a part of the *Stó:lō* Nation political body) and related to the bride's family. I do not know the specifics of the Charlie family genealogy.

another. This food and water were said to represent the rich resources of the earth. The Richies then displayed eagle feathers while explaining that tonight this couple would be leading the flock consisting of their families and community. The Richies described the "V" formation that one sees in the sky when flocks of birds fly in a group. They explained that Jolie and Darius, in their union, became the point of that "V."

The families of the bride and groom stepped forward and were directed by the Richies to embrace in front of the couple and exchange gifts symbolizing the coming together of the two families and the creation of a new, larger family. The families then embraced the bride and groom. At this point the audience was allowed to quickly take photographs. I refrained at this juncture because few guests took the opportunity to step out on the floor and intrude on the intimacy of the bride and groom's family coming together for the first time as one family. I also knew, from Kelsey Charlie, at the conclusion of the ceremony there would be ample opportunity to take photographs when the audience would be congratulating the newly married couple.

The Charlie family waited until everyone, including the wedding party, was seated once again to publicly apologize to the biological father of the groom for the omission of his introduction to those assembled during the welcome speech. The groom's mother had remarried necessitating the acknowledgement of both fathers. To rectify this oversight the Charlie family gave gifts to all members of the Lawrence family. Following this public apology the Charlie family requested that established couples share their wisdom on marriage and partnership. Four couples volunteered (or had been pre-arranged to volunteer) and spoke about their experiences in marriage. This concluded the more formal stages of the ceremony and the guests were invited to congratulate the newlyweds. A receiving line began and the bride and groom stood with their attendants to shake hands and hug all of their friends and family (and acquaintances like myself). Jolie's brothers began to drum and sing family songs with several women joining in soon after. Everyone was now standing, smiling and embracing. Jolie and Darius, followed by their attending couple and both children, slowly began circling the long house floor

⁹ Kelsey did not tell me whether this was the first time this mask had been used since the declaration of the potlatch law (during which time most ceremonial artifacts were destroyed) and the eventual abolishment of that law.

counter-clockwise amid resonant music, clapping and cheering. At this point many of the guests, including myself, took photographs.

Some men began to dance and members of the Charlie family handed out gifts to the guests along with cake and water. This was the “give-away” or potlatch portion of the wedding ceremony.



Pat Charlie, Jolie’s mother, explained her understanding of the reasons for having “give-aways,” emphasizing the continuity of *Stó:lō* community reciprocity.

A lot of people... say [a traditional wedding] is expensive compared to modern day weddings [in part due to “give-aways”]... I save things and gather things all the time... the bedroom is always full of stuff, because of what I gather, people give me things. Most of these things have been given to us... and it comes back. Gifts come back. I gave out fifty blankets this last winter to other people just to help them out and then it comes back, and I have one hundred blankets in my bedroom. These are the kinds of things that always get passed back because they are the things that you do. (Pat Charlie 1998: interview)

Pat Charlie furthered explained that gifts were given to those attending the wedding ceremony because, “it is a part of our teaching that you honor those people that have come to share this special time with you; you honor them because they are there” (Charlie 1998: interview).



As the family and friends danced, drummed and visited together and with the newly married couple, the “give-away” gifts were presented. Everyone received candies, peanuts, plastic cups and ribbons embossed with the couple’s names and the dates of their “traditional” and Catholic ceremonies. Certain people who had contributed in more tangible ways, such as physically sharing in the work or monetarily supporting the hosting family, were recognized and thanked accordingly. The greater the contribution an individual or family made to the hosting family the more effusive the public acknowledgement and the greater the gift given as thanks.

As the evening wore on and approached midnight the last remaining guests, comprised mainly of close family, talked quietly while others continued to drum and sing softly. “Workers” cleaned up the remaining food in the kitchen building and the long

*house. Children slept snuggled in blankets and jackets on the long house tiers and in various corners or on the laps of family and friends. As I shook Pat Charlie's hand in congratulation, I discretely passed her a twenty-dollar bill in thanks to her family for the work they had done and for including me in such an important event in their lives. I had asked Kelsey earlier what to give as a wedding gift and how to give it and this was what he had suggested. I then gathered up my gifts and walked out to the van with *sxwó:yxwey* masked dancers filling my head and the faint thought that I had missed the last ferry back to Vancouver Island, and home. I didn't mind at all.*



Doug Kelly, a *Stó:lō* man who has also recently been married in a traditional long house ceremony, remarks on the lessons for non-Aboriginal persons in attending a traditional *Stó:lō* ceremony.

Our friends and our loved ones that aren't from the *Stó:lō* culture started to develop an appreciation of what the culture was all about and started to maybe address some of the stereotypes... so that helps with showing people that weren't from the culture. I mean, often times people only see the stereotypes and [do not have the opportunity to] hear the things and witness things for themselves, often times [the result] is negative. Well this wasn't negative at all. It allowed them to see, witness, a ceremony that they could relate to from the culture they come from. I think it is really important for people to understand that if you can focus on similarities, you are going to find harmony. You are going to find peace. If you focus on differences, you are going to create conflict. And what we did, we showed people that there is a lot more similarities to culture around significant life events, like marriage, than there are differences. The teachings are very similar, whether it is from the Roman Catholic Church or it is from an Anglican Church, or whether it is from a different type of spirituality altogether. The teachings are similar and the belief system around it. And some of the rituals may be very different but there are a lot of similarities in terms of values and teachings. And so I think that was one of the positive outcomes of this. (Doug Kelly 1998: interview)

For me, witnessing this long house wedding ceremony allowed me to come a little bit closer to understanding all of the information on *Stó:lō* marriage that had been told to me during the course of my time in the Fraser River Valley. However, more importantly, I began to understand the lived reality of a people geographically my neighbors for over two decades whose name I had never heard.

In the following chapter I discuss the data I received through interviewing twenty-six *Stó:lō* people on the topic of *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies. The description and discussion presented in this chapter, provide the reader with an overall picture of a *Stó:lō* “traditional” ceremony as it is conducted today. In the chapter that follows I proceed with an analysis of the interviews I conducted with *Stó:lō* individuals. Although not underscored in this chapter, flowing from the interviews are three themes that emerge from the interviews and underlie the ethnographic reference I have provided here. These themes are identity, cultural revival, and choice.

CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS

I expect that Europeans cannot define our societies with any accuracy or draw connections between our society and their own. Further, I hardly expect them to be able to look at our laws and see the traditions, values and body politic that arise out of our legal system. I expect them to interpret history so as to justify their genocide against us in the name of humanity and civilization. But I did not expect our own people to parrot the racist formulators of sociology and cultural anthropology and call it “spirituality”... Tradition is useful only insofar as it allows us to continue to make use of our history... We need to reclaim our essential selves as the cultural, spiritual, emotional and physical beings we were and march forward, laying to rest one hundred years of cultural prohibition and arrest. (Lee Maracle 1996: 39, 89)

This is the voice popular media most often heralds as it reports on the struggles of Aboriginal peoples against colonization the world over. Lee Maracle’s words are a poetic example of the genre of Aboriginal writings documenting oppression as a result of colonizing factors. The above sentiment was what I expected when I first set out to discuss wedding ceremonies through time with the *Stó:lō*. I expected anger and indignation to be the underlying tone during discussions of the forces that have affected *Stó:lō* culture since European peoples first immigrated to British Columbia and *Stó:lō* territory. What I heard and recorded throughout the interviews was a different voice. A voice that consistently talked about change and persistence. This *Stó:lō* voice expressed a commitment to having pride in one’s distinct *Stó:lō* identity through acceptance, growth, and strength. This distinctive identity is strengthened through cultural revival and self-determinism with a renewed sense of self encouraging the further continuation of cultural revival and the ability to choose one’s future.

What Was Said: Conversations About *Stó:lō* Weddings

I began to speak with and listen to *Stó:lō* people one summer over four years ago. I was initially interested in documenting the details of *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies through time; from “pre-contact” to the current time. The interviews began with discussions of location, dress, and the procedures of solemnization but evolved into discussions of the ceremony’s more ideological details. These ideological details have

persisted over time but have also evolved due to European contact and continued attempts first by British, then Canadian and British Columbian governments to assimilate Canada's First Nation population. The emphasis underlying the dialogues of those individuals with whom I spoke was the ability to control one's own life or "to have choice."

The *Stó:lō* maintain that everything in their culture is interconnected, like a wheel with many spokes. As a result *Stó:lō* marriage cannot be reduced to a set of artifacts or rites for identification and legal purposes. The *Stó:lō* people refuse to limit themselves to these categories. The themes discussed here, "*Stó:lō* -ness" (identity), cultural revival, and choice (self-determinism), emerge from the interviews and reflect the variation and heterogeneity of *Stó:lō* culture and practice. Some *Stó:lō* practice non-Aboriginal faiths, some practice Aboriginal rites, and some practice a variety of spiritual practices; for example some *Stó:lō* are Catholics, others practice the sweat lodge and some participate in both. No matter the differences, everybody I interviewed spoke of the importance of passing on "traditional"¹ knowledge from the elders. When I first began interviewing I asked for a breakdown of how a wedding is planned and organized. I quickly discovered, however, that the *Stó:lō* with whom I spoke were unwilling or unable to provide a simple description of a typical ceremony. Instead they argued that while they have rites and use ceremonial artifacts, to reduce *Stó:lō* marriage to a collection of "things" or actions is to disregard cultural understandings, stories, and worldview that underlie the practices.

People make choices about how they want to perform their wedding ceremony and they are choosing to use artifacts and rites that were once prohibited by law (cf. the potlatch law). Accordingly a contemporary discussion of identity using marriage as a focal point necessitates a discussion of choice about the ceremonial elements that the couple and their family use. As restrictive laws were repealed, prohibited ceremonial elements have been reintegrated into wedding ceremonies because knowledge of how they were used in the past has survived. Now that knowledge and its production are once

¹ The use of the word "traditional" is considered problematic in the context of cultures that have undergone considerable acculturation by outside groups. In the case of the *Stó:lō* however, the people use this term to refer to cultural traits identified by the *Stó:lō* as distinctly *Stó:lō*. Despite the somewhat tautological nature of this definition, the term "tradition" is used throughout this thesis in accordance with my understanding of the use by the *Stó:lō* I interviewed.

again in the hands of the *Stó:lō*, *Stó:lō* traditions are practiced and acknowledged. This is not to say that these traditions ever disappeared, instead they were hidden either in a real physical sense, as in the case of the masks described in the previous chapter, or kept safe in the recesses of elders' minds and, therefore, in the *Stó:lō* collective consciousness (Herb Joe 1998: interview).

Having revived the use of artifacts, such as the *sxwó:yxwey* masks, and rites, such as the potlatch, family and community ties are reinforced, concomitantly reinforcing a distinct *Stó:lō* identity. Further, the practice of these rites reinforces demands for choices and self-determinism. That is, *Stó:lō* people now enjoy the ability to make their own choices; where to send their children to school, whether to speak or learn the Halkomelem language, or to gather for purposes such as winter dances. Choice reinforces a distinct *Stó:lō* identity and creates a community better able to advocate on behalf of its own needs, which reciprocally include promotion of “*Stó:lō*-ness,” cultural revival, and individual as well as collective choice.

Accordingly identity, cultural revival, and choice are not discrete entities but overlapping themes that emerged from the interviews. I've separated them here in order to simplify the discussion. I differentiate three themes, first examining “*Stó:lō*-ness,” a word employed by respected *Stó:lō* elder Gwen Point to explain what it means to the *Stó:lō* to be *Stó:lō*. “*Stó:lō*-ness” as individual and group identity is what defines past or current wedding ceremonies as distinctly *Stó:lō*. The second theme is cultural revival or revitalism. Those *Stó:lō* interviewed discussed this theme as the revival of those ceremonial elements that had been suppressed by non-Aboriginal laws prohibiting their use, non-Aboriginal governmental assimilationist policies, and racism.

The final theme of choice or self-determinism is integral to both the reinforcement of “*Stó:lō*-ness” (identity) and the revival of material and ideological cultural practice. *Stó:lō* people I interviewed often emphasized the importance of *Stó:lō* individual and community rights to control their own lives, to have choice in all aspects of their lives through treaty making and litigation with the Federal and Provincial Governments. The ability to decide what one wants for oneself, one's family, and one's community is a fundamental choice. Where to live, how to celebrate a marriage, or even what is a

“*Stó:lō*” identity, were choices denied the *Stó:lō* from the time of non-Aboriginal settlement in British Columbia. Indeed some *Stó:lō* individuals and non-Aboriginal people alike would argue that the ability to exercise agency is still denied the *Stó:lō* today.

In the discussion that follows, I focus on the three themes as they emerge from the interviews. Quotes substantiate the persistence of the *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony through time as it reflects the dynamism of a people faced with significant culture change due to European contact. Contact between First Nation populations and European immigrants charts a course from “a system that worked” (Point 1999: interview) through First Nation decimation and assimilation to the contemporary reality of a negotiated revitalism of “tradition.”

Discussions of both material and ideological aspects of *Stó:lō* culture emerged consistently in the interviews. The interviewees identified these parallel aspects of culture as the two streams of *Stó:lō* history that explain how cultural persistence occurs alongside culture change. Material culture is defined as those artifacts and rites that can be physically quantified and/or described. Ideological culture includes those beliefs and values that share a common meaning for individuals who self-identify as *Stó:lō*. While these beliefs and values are shared, they vary subtly between individuals as each *Stó:lō* translates what “*Stó:lō*” culture means to them. The analogy of two streams (material and ideological) not only pertains to persistence and change in the *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony through time but to *Stó:lō* culture more generally. Thus changes and continuities in the *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony stand as metaphors for changes and continuities in *Stó:lō* culture as a whole.

The differentiation between the two streams of culture as described by the *Stó:lō* explains the apparently contradictory statements made by the interviewees that *Stó:lō* culture persisted despite non-Aboriginal culture contact on the one hand, yet was also severely disrupted by non-Aboriginal culture on the other hand. The two streams analogy illustrates that although culture elements were destroyed, prohibited, and taken away by non-Aboriginal authorities causing a breach in *Stó:lō* cultural processes, material and ideological elements of *Stó:lō* culture continued due to the “a constant adjustment

process” described by Bee (1974: 14, see quotation in Chapter Two). The formalized oral tradition of transmitting knowledge between elders and younger generations was inhibited. Nevertheless, that collective knowledge persisted; whispered for a time but never silenced. Forbidden artifacts were hidden and the *Stó:lō* remained *Stó:lō* despite changes brought about by contact with other cultures. The reemergence of “traditional” ceremonies as defined by those interviewed gives evidence of the persistence and continuity of *Stó:lō* culture. Thus “traditional” ceremonies, including the wedding ceremony, stand as a symbol of the tenacity of the *Stó:lō* people and *Stó:lō* culture.

I. “*Stó:lō*-ness” as Identity

The interviews I conducted with *Stó:lō* individuals have given me a picture of “*Stó:lō*-ness” that fleshes out who the *Stó:lō* are according to the *Stó:lō* themselves. The work I present here follows in the footsteps of past anthropologists such as Homer G. Barnett (1967), Philip Drucker (1967), Wilson Duff (1952), and Diamond Jenness (1977).

Three questions regarding *Stó:lō* identity emerged from the interviews. First, who are the *Stó:lō*? This is a deceptively simple question that raises the issues of identity and “tradition;” how *Stó:lō* people perceive their traditions, and how those traditions reinforce *Stó:lō* identity. Second, how do marriage ceremonies represent or embody *Stó:lō*-ness? Marriage links individual families and communities through the negotiating and reinforcing of kinship ties, aspects of *Stó:lō* culture that *Stó:lō* people repeatedly discuss as central to *Stó:lō* identity. Lastly, how is “*Stó:lō*-ness” (as expressed through *Stó:lō* marriage) important for understanding concepts of change and persistence? This last question provides an opportunity to ameliorate persistent and widespread misconceptions and stereotypes of First Nation people. Wright calls for a revival of “humanism in anthropology,” highlighting the colonial context for contemporary Aboriginal culture.

In anthropological writings and ethnographies, there is a need to set standards and to expose the sorts of thinking that covertly contribute to distorted images of native people. Textbooks used in elementary and secondary schools often contain such images, based on anthropological descriptions. These portray native peoples through either romantic views that belittle the human potential of native cultures, or derogatory views that reinforce popular prejudices. The images

anthropologists present are, it must be recognized, determinant elements in the course of human events. Nineteenth-century evolutionism portrayed Indians as “savages,” fueling the military conquest of scores of tribes. To avoid this happening again, anthropology must constantly affirm its humanistic concerns. (Wright 1988: 385-6)

The *Stó:lō* with whom I spoke painted the effects of colonialism onto the background of traditional *Stó:lō* culture with broad strokes. They described past influences of European immigrants and the current reality of being subsumed in a dominant Western way of living. Many *Stó:lō* expressed resignation that the past cannot be changed yet in no way are they abandoning a unique *Stó:lō* culture in present day. Those with whom I spoke explained what it meant to be identified as “Indian,” how that identity has shifted through the effects of non-Aboriginal cultural influences, and how the *Stó:lō* identity has persisted through these changes. Conversations about identity were woven into and emerged throughout the interview discussions of wedding ceremonies. Even the persistence of “traditional” ceremonial elements is discussed with reference to this larger topic, often as a sign of resistance to imposed non-Aboriginal cultural practices. As wedding ceremonies are significant aspects of *Stó:lō* culture, not to be viewed in isolation from those who practice it, *Stó:lō* self-identification is inextricably linked to *Stó:lō* marriage rites as they unite individuals, families and communities.

Question #1 - WHO ARE THE STÓ:LŌ?

The *Stó:lō* people with whom I spoke identify themselves as “Indian.” This word is multi-layered as it can mean different things according to the context in which it is used. Gwen Point felt shame in the past both at self-identifying and at being identified by others as “Indian.” However, she now feels that the word “Indian” has been reclaimed by those who wear the label and has been infused with positive attributes by popular culture which appropriates indigenous spirituality and material culture worldwide in an attempt to have and to hold something seen to be lacking in themselves. As well, with the repealing of culturally prohibitive laws such as the potlatch law, First Nation peoples of Canada have the choice to practice rites reaffirming an indigenous identity and community pride associated with “Indian” self-identification.

I'm just happy because I'm a grandmother now and I have nine grandchildren and... it makes me feel good because I know my children and... my grandchildren have something to look forward to... I grew up not understanding and being ashamed of being... Indian. I know my grandchildren are proud of who they are and they're going to... practice who they are. They have a choice. (Gwen Point 1998: interview)

Many of the *Stó:lō* people I interviewed described a past *Stó:lō* society that was successful and functional. This societal system was fueled by unhindered access to a rich resource base in their traditional territories along the Fraser River Valley. As it was not an all-consuming task to secure food, shelter, and materials for clothing, the basic necessities for living, there was time to reaffirm family and community connections. These connections were solidified and then emphasized in ceremonies. Prescribed tasks, determined by gender and age, were flexible enough to allow for individual proclivities and talents.

What comes to my mind is that our people were a rich people. Not so much rich in material, how people view the word "rich" today, house, two cars, but were a complete people because they had everything prior to contact. And I tell the people that the value [of the *Stó:lō* community] today is still viewed, I think, by the larger society as a place to come to, because we have everything here. Our people, years ago, we had no real needs or wants. We didn't have to go warring on other communities because we had everything we wanted. We had the resources, like the salmon. The rivers, my grandfather used to say you could walk on the backs of the salmon across the river. That is how much salmon there was in the river. And the people would set up fish weirs and would harvest fish. We didn't have refrigerators so they would set up a fish weir and catch so many fish in there and then let the rest go. So then every day they had fresh salmon. Whatever salmon was running throughout the seasons. We had cedar bark. The people would harvest the cedar in different parts of the valley. You know, every year you wouldn't harvest the same place. We had plants that we needed. We had certainly the ducks and the deer. We had everything. But there was also, I think, our people were rich in spirit. Our people were spiritual people, strong spiritual people. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

Gwen went on to highlight the importance of matriarchies in establishing organizing principles that determined who did what and who married whom. Related women formed the core of *Stó:lō* society, a society where ability, or individual strengths, and spirituality were valued over material wealth.

When I look at [*Stó:lō*] society today, at times it hurts my feelings because I see so often people struggling just to survive. And other people are so much on the other end of the scale and that kind of hurts my feelings because I remember the stories that my grandmother told me. Some of the things that she said that I didn't understand when I was young, that she would say that the chief sometimes was the poorest person in the village, materialistically. Why? Because he was helping the people. He was in charge of taking care of the people. And of course we didn't have a chief prior to contact. Ours was a family system where women were considered, the only English word I can find, probably not the right word, was the head of the family. [Women were] responsible for the family and how that was done was the oldest daughter [of] the oldest daughter [of] the oldest daughter, and that is why you had to know who you were. And it was the oldest daughter's oldest son that was the spokesperson for the people, not the women... But how the history was handed down is you had to train right from birth. They trained you right from birth. That was for everybody in the community. When the people watched you and you were a baby and said, "oh, she is good with her hands and she works well with cedar, well she is a cedar person," thus they trained her, put her with people that would train [her] to work with cedar. Or stone. Or plants. But if you were the oldest daughter of the oldest daughter of the oldest daughter then they would train you, and teach everything. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

Stó:lō society reinforced *Stó:lō* identity. Consistency with elders' teachings and a community investment in universal respect for community members, as well as respect for the flora and fauna contributing to the continuation of that community, created and perpetuated a cultural system that was successful. This system is a circular reinforcement of culture as a system of belief and practice and as a group of people, where the place and abilities of individuals were incorporated and validated as a part of the community.

Our people had a system that worked. And from the very young to the very old they were all part of the system. The elders played a role. They were part of the community. They were the ones that took care of the children. Why? Because they had the patience, the time, and the knowledge... Prior to contact you had your children when you were young... You bore children... when you were young and healthy. But you didn't have to raise them. Why? Because the young people had the children and then they were free to do the work that needed to be done in the community. The grandparents may not have the strength to do the labor... they are the ones that took care of the children. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

Stó:lō society met physical as well as ideological needs and supported a number of ceremonies, including the "traditional" *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony. As Gwen

explained, in the past families arranged marriages for their children, “they matched you up with someone and they married you up with someone when you were young,” and the community’s value system supported this form of union between individuals (Gwen Point 1999: interview). Wedding ceremonies and the subsequent marriages, whether arranged by the couple’s family or chosen by the couple themselves were intended to represent the society in which the couple lived by highlighting family ties, community connections and geographic positioning. The circular reinforcing of community values by ceremonialism and ceremonialism by community values represents *Stó:lō* identity to the *Stó:lō*. Thus, if one value disappears or is suppressed, disruption occurs in others.

The ceremonies... shouldn’t be taken out of context, shouldn’t be looked at in isolation. The ceremonies are all a part of the overall societal structure... I think you need to take a look at how our society is set up and of course, how it evolved to get to point X and that the ceremony evolved out of... societal and family needs. I guess the simplest way to approach it would be to take a look at how you were taught first as individuals, then as part of your immediate family, part of your extended family and, of course, to the community and to the tribe or to the Nation. The same values were taught throughout. The same values were... taught at all levels of the societal structure from the elders right down to the children. And because we lived in a communal society structure... we had to teach certain values that are present throughout everything that we did that involved living together in that community. The values that we [valued] most in relation to living together [were]... respect, common respect, mutual respect, and that was taught to everyone and it was taught from the time you were able to understand. There’s a term in our language that means “when you come to your senses”... that’s when you teach, or start teaching your children... so respect was a word that we used everyday. Our parents. Our grandparents. Our aunts and uncles. They used it everyday... the teachers in our family. The role models in our family. They used that word everyday. So if you extrapolate that to the whole of society, then you can see how everybody uses respect as the basis for forming all relationships... and you use a marriage ceremony for instance, as part of a relation... you have to understand that respect for all that you are, or that you ever hoped to be is part of your belief system already. We have a lot of arranged marriages that certainly wouldn’t have worked had this belief system and value system not been in place. (Herb Joe 1998: interview)

Question #2 - HOW DOES MARRIAGE EMBODY “STÓ:LŌ-NESS?”

Family oral history, as recounted by interviewees, describes traditional *Stó:lō* territorial expanses that are not reflected by non-Aboriginal reserve land allocations (to read more on this topic refer to Making Native Space by Cole Harris, 2002). Because, in

the past, the *Stó:lō* were positioned within a larger and more geographically diverse territory with little restrictions on movement, marriage partners were selected in order to unify independent families, increasing each family groups' access to different biological resources. The only exception to resource sharing within communities was individual family's exclusive rights to certain resource locales such as berry fields, root picking areas and fishing spots (Duff 1952). Marriage between families allowed for more than one family to have access to these particular resources. Exogamy was preferred by these extended families (Duff 1952). Elders were responsible for knowing and transmitting genealogical knowledge, and their guidance prevented unions between closely related individuals. Marital unions were a product of what Gwen Point calls "common sense." *Stó:lō* common sense was born of a healthy community and *Stó:lō* common sense perpetuated the existence of a healthy *Stó:lō* community.

I do know that in a marriage it was more based on families. We didn't have reserves... we had cranberry fields in New Westminster and cedar places in Chilliwack... So this family was rich in cedar but their fishing spot wasn't good anymore. Or maybe they would look at other families and say, "well, if this boy marries this girl... and he comes over here, then we would be able to utilize fishing or something." Or maybe they wanted the cedar. So when he went there, this family could then travel with this family for cedar. Do you see how that worked? But you weren't allowed to even think about your third cousin, or the fourth. Because your third cousin was really your fourth cousin. Because your first cousin was your brother and sister. So that one didn't count... In my own understanding too it wasn't necessarily because it was high rank or anything, as much as it was for common sense reasons. If you marry too close your children are not going to be right... our people were common sense people. There was no real mystery as to how business was done... I don't think [high and low ranking] was... as prevalent, or whatever, as... making sure that the people were taken care of. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

Accordingly, the *Stó:lō* people were a "common sense" people connected through common beliefs and common values. These connections fed into a spirituality born of a creator Spirit (*Xá:ls*) and a complex spirit world (Duff 1952) resident in the surrounding *Stó:lō* environment. The understanding of "tradition" links *Stó:lō* spirituality and culture through rites and beliefs shared within the *Stó:lō* community and expressed in the wedding ceremony.

It is in front of the Spirit that you are doing this [getting married]. And you can't lie to the Spirit. And so there was no reason to sign [a Provincial marriage register] for it, because you knew in your heart that you were doing it. You are doing it in front of the people but also the Spirit... it is not just us that is getting married, our families are married also. (Christine Sitting Eagle 1998: interview)

It wasn't just a traditional ceremony; it is a traditional, spiritual, cultural ceremony. (Kelsey Charlie 1998: interview)

“Traditional” *Stó:lō* weddings incorporating “traditional” *Stó:lō* rites and beliefs reinforce pride in oneself and one's spirituality, the foundation of *Stó:lō* identity. *Stó:lō* pride leads to strong individuals, strong communities and a strong culture. These give birth to strong marriages that in turn nurture and raise strong children who continue to build the strong communities that perpetuate strong cultural beliefs and values. Thus, *Stó:lō* marriage serves as a statement of cultural pride and a reaffirmation of “*Stó:lō*-ness.”

I knew that if I went through [a wedding ceremony] just in terms of the legal, what was legal in the province, that that wouldn't do it, because I did that once before. I wanted to make sure that I found a way within my family, within my spirituality, within my culture that allowed me to do that. So that is why we planned it with the two ceremonies. To me it was a way of expressing where I come from. It was a way of showing my family, my extended family, my long house family, my community the pride that I have for being *Stó:lō*. The pride in having come from the family I come from. The pride in the family carrying the gifts of the masks. It is a powerful gift. It is a lot of responsibility that goes with this. When we get married in that way, it is for life. For that family that carried that gift, it is for life. When you accept the responsibility to carry that gift it is for life. And so those are really powerful, strong beliefs. They are powerful teachings. And that is what I wanted to bring to my marriage. That is what I wanted, to make sure that my marriage would survive the test of time. (Doug Kelly 1998: interview)

The “traditional” *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony and the continued practice of hereditary rites, such as the *sxwó:yxwey* mask blessing tradition, link families and strengthen *Stó:lō* identity. Even when community members do not have the right to practice certain traditions these rites are perceived as culturally distinct and when viewed by the entire community reaffirm their “*Stó:lō*-ness.” Weddings, through the use of

“traditional” rites, identify families, connect households, and carry forward “traditional” cultural values into a modern cultural reality.

Part of learning about the family that I come from... was learning about the sacredness of that particular practice [the *s̄xwó:yxwey* masked dancers]. It is used for all kinds of purposes, funerals, weddings... it is a very powerful gift. It gives a lot of depth and a lot of meaning to a ceremony... And so only people that come from that gift can use that gift... There is other gifts in our culture that were used in a very similar way... That is just one way [to bless a marriage]. There are a number of other gifts that flow through other families. They allow for blessings, new starts... There are gifts that go from the Creator to our people. They go through certain families and they are carried on through the families. Before the influence of the Church and before the influence of government. (Doug Kelly 1998: interview)

Wedding ceremonies legitimize commitments made between individuals, families and communities. What differentiates one culture from another is the source of that commitment, the beliefs and value systems, and how commitments are sanctified. *Stó:lō* people identify and differentiate themselves from other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures by distinct cultural traits or elements such as language, blessing traditions and alternative methods of sanctification or solemnization. In the case of *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies, what differentiates the *Stó:lō* from other groups are the “traditional” rites and values representing and inherent to the *Stó:lō* community and *Stó:lō* culture.

The commitment that we encourage our young people to make in a marriage is a spiritual commitment, it’s a personal commitment, and we need to look at where these commitments are coming from. They come from God, for one. They come from [our]selves. They come from your family, and of course, when you extrapolate... from your community and your Nation. (Herb Joe 1998: interview)

Question #3 - WHY IS “STÓ:LŌ-NESS” IMPORTANT TO PERSISTENCE (AND MARRIAGE)?

The *Stó:lō* stated that now is the time to act, drawing from the past values and beliefs that engendered a healthy, functioning way of living and a healthy, complete people. The *Stó:lō* believe that assuming an advocacy role for today is to live as a *Stó:lō* person, to disavow past and present negative images based on popular culture stereotypes.

We have always been portrayed as the romantic Indian or the savage one, or the drunken one. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

I grew up right at home there in Chehalis [a *Stó:lō* community], with not too much contact with mainstream society and I didn't think anything different about dancing and singing and stuff like that. But when I came to be thirteen years old, or something, I started integrating more, going to the public school... And I sort of lost touch with our [traditions]... I put it away because I didn't feel it was worth it. (Kelsey Charlie 1998: interview)

We had body, mind, and spirit and our people were a healthy people. Not that we didn't have problems but there was a way to deal... and there was a process. Judgement was very minimal. And that is what we lost. And that is what we are struggling to get back is that complete, the whole person. Healthy body, mind and spirit. And I think we are on our way. I think *Stó:lō* Nation is the testimony of that... where people are trying to take responsibility here. And again, other people say, "oh right, you guys are no better than DIA [Department of Indian Affairs]," or "you are still not doing it right, our communities are still struggling." Well you know, damn it, at least we are doing it. And I say if we do everything backwards at least we are doing it and we are making the mistakes ourselves. Nobody learns if they don't make mistakes. I think the fact [is] that we are doing this and we are trying to stand up our communities... the fact is we are doing it. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

One strategy voiced by interviewees to promote a healthy *Stó:lō* community was to teach both mainstream Canadian society members and *Stó:lō* community members about *Stó:lō* culture from the *Stó:lō* perspective. Informing Canadian society of *Stó:lō* beliefs and values helps to dispel the negative "Indian" stereotypes of popular culture. Prejudices based on misinformation and ignorance may be prevented and *Stó:lō* pride, unhindered by these prejudices, could continue to flourish within the community. The *Stó:lō* people would be considered by the *Stó:lō* community and the wider contemporary Canadian society in a more informed and realistic way. *Stó:lō* teachings, especially the reliance on oral transmission of knowledge, perpetuates positive cultural values and beliefs. This benefits not only the *Stó:lō* but also those cultural groups that live alongside the *Stó:lō* today because understanding a different culture is to move towards accepting it.

And that is a responsibility that was given to the people. They said, “your responsibility is that seven generations from now the people again, are supposed to enjoy the same things we enjoy.” That was just a fundamental teaching. That was just something that we were supposed to carry. And so I know that this work [this thesis] was important because there is so little information on our people, whether it is marriage, whether it is archaeology, whether it is treaty [or lack thereof]. There is so much information about our people that needs to be shared with the larger community in a good way. Not that we are trying to brainwash anybody, but we are trying to share... what needs to be shared for a better understanding. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

So I suppose another outcome of us doing the marriage in the way we did, was that our friends and our loved ones that aren't from the *Stó:lō* culture started to develop an appreciation of what the culture was all about. And started to maybe address some of the stereotypes... so that helps with showing people that weren't from the culture. I mean often times people only see the stereotypes... often times it is negative. Well this wasn't negative at all. It allowed them to see, witness, a ceremony that they could relate to from the culture they come from. (Doug Kelly 1998: interview)

The *Stó:lō* emphasized that living in a “good” way constitutes a healthy lifestyle resulting in both individual and cultural survival. To survive is to have future opportunities to heal. To heal holds the promise of one day being a healthy society again. Through the use of “traditional” *Stó:lō* rites in wedding ceremonies, the *Stó:lō* are not attempting to return to a time before European culture contact but rather to work towards rebuilding a functioning community. A functioning *Stó:lō* community will still be situated within a non-*Stó:lō* dominant society but it will be a distinct, self-determining society. To be both healthy and self-determining, *Stó:lō* society must be dynamic without losing sight of its past identity. The *Stó:lō* identity provides the strong foundation upon which contemporary *Stó:lō* society is built.

I really believe that the *Stó:lō* people, my people, were a very practical people. And being very practical people, they were survivors, they are survivors. And we will do what is necessary to continue to survive... we're survivors and people who have a talent to live in a good way. Our values are still very present in most of our communities. (Herb Joe 1998: interview)

It has taken a lot of time, to get to where we are right now... traditional ways, [are]... more to the heart and giving [of] that strength. Today it is a different world... I believe there is a lot of hard effort that we need... I know that it is

going to carry on. My sons all carry it [the strength born of traditional ways]. My grand children carry it. (Pat Charlie 1998: interview)

There is this big thing amongst our people, cultural resurgence, or resurgence of our culture and traditions and me becoming more involved in all of this has made me have much more pride in doing it this way. And it was also something that I thought would sort of set precedence, have more awareness because a lot of our people, I mean I didn't even know about them [traditional ways] until a few years before... I started asking around [about] a traditional way because I found I was becoming more proud of my own culture. Identity. I guess it is a good memory [for] me and for the other people. Just showing other people that it is okay to be proud of who you are and practice traditions that our people almost lost. (Kelsey Charlie 1998: interview)

II. Cultural Revival

Cultural Revival was called many things during my discussions with the *Stó:lō*: revival, resurgence, coming into the open, an awakening. The underlying premise is that the practices and belief system that the *Stó:lō* people label “*Stó:lō*” or “traditional” has never been extinguished². Many interviewees spoke of “traditional,” or pre-contact, culture traits and how contact with European culture engendered fear and forced traditions underground, both figuratively and literally.

Fear is highlighted as the driving force behind the interruption of the *Stó:lō* practice of orally transmitting “traditional” knowledge. Negative effects of colonization, the reserve system, the residential school system, alcoholism, and prejudice, were emphasized by the interviewees. As these factors were diminished through the years, especially highlighted by interviewees as beginning during the 1960s and 1970s, the *Stó:lō* felt more able to determine how they wanted to live their lives as *Stó:lō* within a predominantly European influenced culture. Changing external forces allowed the *Stó:lō* to reside together as families, to choose where to live, and to practice the ceremonialism, such as the *sxwó:yxwey* masks in wedding ceremonies, that the *Stó:lō* use to define themselves.

² I use the phrase “never extinguished” deliberately because of the legal implications of this phrase which usually refers to the extinguishing of rights to land and resources. However, as all rights and title issues to do with First Nation peoples seem to be moving into the legal arena, the idea of extinguishment or lack thereof is appropriate to use in connection with ceremonial rites.

Those interviewed embrace a necessary dynamism. They repeatedly stated that a return to pre-contact time was neither possible nor desired. What is desired is the ability to self-determine, to have choice, at the individual, family, community, and Nation level even if this requires redefining “tradition” or incorporating “tradition” within a contemporary context.

For purposes of clarity, interview quotes related to the second theme of cultural revival are further organized according to three questions. These three questions are posed and answered by the words of the interviewees. The first is, what in *Stó:lō* culture is being revived? This question includes discussions of “tradition,” past ceremonies and cultural practices surrounding marriage, and pre-contact teaching methods for the transmission of *Stó:lō* cultural knowledge. The second question asks, why does “traditional” *Stó:lō* culture need to be revived? In response, the *Stó:lō* describe the process of colonization, the effects of that colonization, and their current status as a Fourth World people. The third question is, how are the *Stó:lō* reviving *Stó:lō* culture? Revival efforts within contemporary *Stó:lō* society are explained while hopes for the future of *Stó:lō* society are expressed. The *Stó:lō* described different methods currently used in the revival process as well as others that will assist in its continuation. To act or “doing it” is a primary concept highlighted by the *Stó:lō* as they strive for a healthy future.

Question #1 - WHAT IS BEING REVIVED FROM “TRADITIONAL” *STÓ:LŌ* CULTURE?

Although cultural revival can encompass many traits of a culture, such as language, law, political structures, artifacts, kinship patterns, economy and so forth, the interviews focused specifically on traits particular to wedding ceremonies³. These traits include courtship practices, the sacred elements of wedding ceremonies which sanctify the event and the oral method of teaching cultural knowledge, in this case wedding “traditions,” from one generation to the next. These three traits are identified by the *Stó:lō* as distinctly “*Stó:lō*” and central to reestablishing a “traditional” wedding

ceremony. As these traits are revived, or brought out into the open again, they will solidify, through use, a revival of practices distinctly *Stó:lō*, thus reinforcing *Stó:lō* identity discussed previously as “*Stó:lō* -ness.”

Traditionally *Stó:lō* elders discussed with *Stó:lō* youth those cultural practices that were essential to the perpetuation of *Stó:lō* culture. In the case of weddings, elders advised younger individuals of suitable marriage partners, sometimes arranging unions. They taught information about the sacred familial practices that could be used by individuals to sanctify their marriage. They described the basic premises underlying strong marriages and each individual’s responsibility to themselves, their spouse, their families and their communities. Lengthy, detailed and repetitive instruction provided a foundation upon which each *Stó:lō* individual’s identity was built. A sense of cultural unity and understanding permeated the *Stó:lō* First Nation communities and a functioning system continued the perpetuation of the Nation. From these teachings, individuals knew what to expect during courtship and the wedding ceremony; they knew how the community would recognize the union, and they understood their roles in a marriage. This did not preclude each couple’s distinctiveness but provided guidelines for societal expectations allowing for community cohesiveness and a sense of belonging.

During our interview, Albert “Sonny” McHalsie, *Stó:lō* cultural advisor and researcher with *Stó:lō* Nation since 1985, summarized pre-contact *Stó:lō* courtship. He believes that gift exchange between families sanctified unions.

The traditional style where the two families sat opposite each other and took turns bestowing each other with gifts... It doesn’t seem like there was much of a role of somebody in there that kind of, you know, did the ceremonies. The families just met, got together and did that. Prior to that as well, I understand, that there was still other ways where families would, where a man who was wanting to court a woman would go to the family’s house, sit outside the house and wait to be recognized, to be accepted. And usually the father-in-law, or future father-in-law would show some sort of reluctance to accept him and would test the young boy’s patience and sincerity and would kind of ignore him, do things to try and discourage the young boy, let the young boy go and split wood, and pile up the wood beside the house or something and then the future father-in-law would come along and he would just ignore the boy... and go grab the wood and chuck it all

³ This was because of my original research intent to document the elements of *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies through time.

away. And then the boy would bring the wood back and put it back. Do things like that, do chores and sit around there and wait to be invited in or wait to be talked to. In some cases, the father of the girl would just ignore him for days and days and days. The boy would just kind of sit there, not really try and talk himself because he knows he has to be spoken to first before he can try to initiate a conversation, he has to be invited in or something... it seems that that is what sealed the marriage, was the exchange of gifts, the exchange of wealth... quite often in the past marriages were arranged so the families would make the arrangements for that, and we would set the time to get together and exchange gifts between each other. That would be the legal... ceremony that seals the marriage. (Albert "Sonny" McHalsie 1998: interview)

Christine Sitting Eagle told me that in the pre-contact period she would have begun learning about her community's kinship practices when she was still a child. Instead, as an adult, Christine learned about *Stó:lō* culture from family members like her aunt and her mother Gwen Point⁴. She learned that in the past the *Stó:lō* practiced matrilocality with the couple living with the bride's family and that sacred blessing traditions were passed matrilineally, through the women in a family. She is eager for herself and her community to revive past *Stó:lō* practices and to reinforce what it means to be *Stó:lō* in this way.

I remember sitting with my auntie and... she said, "well, a long time ago we would have sat you down... we would talk to you about it... how to take care of your husband and how to take care of yourself and they don't do that so much today"... that is what I remember auntie telling me. She was almost sad because she knew that the training was not there at all... and it is not just the marriage ceremony that is changing, it is everything... in the olden days... it is the woman that carries [the sacred blessing such as the *sxwó:yxwey* mask] and he [Christine's husband] would have come home with me. But the most common misunderstanding is that the woman isn't considered very high [status], it [was] just the very opposite. It is the woman who owns the house. It is the woman who owns the children. It is the woman ways of the family that you follow. (Christine Sitting Eagle 1998: interview)

Question #2 - WHY DOES *STÓ:LŌ* CULTURE NEED TO BE REVIVED?

Colonization must be understood on more than one level. It is not just the physical manifestation of one population entering and controlling another population's

⁴ The *Stó:lō* believe that the passing of cultural knowledge between generations of family members is what occurred pre-contact and it is therefore considered to be a "traditional" practice.

geographic space, nor the effects on the colonized culture's practices. Colonization occurs on a mental and spiritual plane as well⁵.

Everything went underground. And after a number of generations of being behind locked doors, being underground, a lot of the elders who originally put them behind locked doors, well they passed on. And we had younger people making interpretations of why we were doing all these things behind locked doors and underground. So it was very secretive. Today our people, our younger people haven't grown up with being told that these are sacred ceremonies, therefore, they [the ceremonies] remain secret... [it is still believed that these ceremonies] have to be behind locked doors. They're not for any eyes other than our own families, our own blood. That kind of mentality was carried through to relatively recently. (Herb Joe 1998: interview)

Through loss or prevention of language, ceremonial rites, and societal practices, cultural distinctiveness is also lost, prevented and/or suppressed. If those colonized peoples reject the dominating culture's assimilationist practices, oppression and violence occur and fear results. What are then transmitted between generations of colonized peoples are the emotional after-effects: fear, anger, and shame. At the very least a culture is buried or hidden away, at the worst it is exterminated along with the people identified with that culture. The *Stó:lō* I interviewed describe the former as occurring when European populations immigrated and settled in British Columbia. Even though contemporary Canadian society still influences the *Stó:lō* First Nation, the fear, anger, and shame that resulted from colonization are slowly being replaced by feelings of self-worth and community pride due in part to the revival of these *Stó:lō* cultural practices defined by the *Stó:lō* as "traditional."

As British Columbia began to be inhabited by incoming European populations the Provincial Government and, later (after the 1871 union with the confederation) the Dominion Government, believed it to be in the best interest of both "Indians" and settlers to police interactions between the two populations. This "management"⁶ occurred throughout what was believed to be a transition period, until all "Indians" were

⁵ For a further discussion on this topic please see Franz Fanon's text *The Wretched Of The Earth*, New York: Grove Press, 1963 and Jean-Paul Sartre's work *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, New York: Routledge, 2001.

⁶ Refer to the British North America Act, Terms of Union, 1871-"The Charge Of The Indians."

assimilated and all lands settled and put to “efficient” use⁷. To speed the assimilation process First Nation children were separated from their families and communities and sent to residential schools where they were prohibited from speaking indigenous languages. Traditional First Nation territories were deemed *terra nullius*, or unoccupied, and subject to Crown allotment or use with First Nation peoples relocated to much smaller tracts of land called reserves⁸. As well, the enactment of the Canadian potlatch law in 1885 prohibited gatherings of First Nation people⁹. Below Gwen Point and Herb Joe explain the impact of colonization on *Stó:lō* people.

Our people are struggling today to go back to our traditional ways. And I say, with a lot of compassion and with a lot of excitement, [that] these are exciting times because I was raised at a time when our ways were put down and weren't accepted. No one wanted to speak the language. People were afraid to do our dancing and singing because of everything that happened since contact. The residential school impact, being put on reserves and made to give up a lot of our traditional ways of survival, the hunting, the fishing and laws imposed to keep control over our people, where we lived, what we learned. As a result, I believe that is one of the reasons why... our people are struggling. The same with the spirituality. Our spirituality was put down and almost wiped out. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

Yeah. I believe that there is a cultural renaissance if you will. I think it's just our people have always known and believed that our culture was still alive. But there seems to be all these doubts in their minds as to whether or not they could bring it out from the closets, from under their rugs, out from behind locked doors... for fear of losing what was valuable to our people, the culture, the traditions, the customs. When certain things happened, like of course the Church, the influence of the Church, the influence of a European educational system, and then of course, later on, the influence of certain laws... [the] potlatch law for instance that made it illegal for us to even gather in groups of more than six to a dozen people... and everything that was done in our ceremonies, our sacred ceremonies, all the artifacts and objects, sacred objects, were all confiscated. So, as a result of all that everything went behind locked doors. (Herb Joe interview: 1998)

First Nation identification has been permeated with negative stereotypes. Kelsey Charlie and his mother Pat Charlie, as well as Gwen Point, argue that the open-

⁷ Refer to the 1969 “White Paper” written under the authority of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and Minister of Indian Affairs, Jean Chretien.

⁸ For a more detailed examination of the reserve system refer to Cole Harris' recent book *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia*. UBC Press: Vancouver, 2002.

mindedness that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s has caused non-Aboriginal people to revisit entrenched negative stereotypes about First Nation people prevalent in Canadian mainstream society and to realize that these stereotypes are based on purposeful ignorance or a general lack of information. They believe that positive change is occurring in how First Nation people are viewed due to non-Aboriginal people becoming informed by and about First Nations people. Negative judgements by mainstream Canadian society have caused First Nation people to experience both physical and mental pain.

I see the hurt and pain that comes from judgement. Whether it is in a family, or a community, or society, or the world. And I think people are struggling with that. Yet if you turn that around to just acceptance, certainly there has to be fine lines, but I think if people really did respect and love one another we wouldn't have the atrocities that are happening today, the destructiveness of people. My only hope and prayer is [to encourage] our people to fall back on our traditional ways. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

The effects of colonization are so obvious even non-Aboriginal people associated directly with colonizing institutions, such as the Catholic Church in the Fraser River Valley, acknowledge the profound impact on *Stó:lō* First Nation people. Father Gary, the non-Aboriginal priest for Saint Mary's Catholic Church discusses this issue.

And I think the Native people are quite reticent [to experience a cultural revival]... because, after all we have kind of burnt all their stuff, a long time ago, we have done a lot of stupid things, but hindsight is twenty-twenty. Anyway, [the masks] do represent, sort of, the highest form of blessing, the sacred, in our territories. It is good medicine. It is good people. It connects. (Father Gary Gordon 1998: interview)

The effects of colonization and prolonged suppression of cultural identity and self-determinism are not only pain but also shame and confusion due to the breakdown in the verbal transmission of knowledge and the banning of ceremonial rites that reinforce cultural identity.

All of our people felt, well, this is sacred, it has to be behind locked doors. We're finally coming to a point now and in the re-education of our younger people

⁹ Refer to Cole and Chaikin's text An Iron Hand Upon The People: The Law Against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast, Douglas & McIntyre Ltd.: Vancouver, 1990.

where they are finally realizing that all of these ceremonies weren't, didn't evolve, didn't grow, didn't develop behind locked doors. Because in our communities we didn't have locked doors. There was no need for it, because we lived in a communal system, everything we had was shared. Everything we'd done was out in the open, so now our young people are finally realizing it's okay to have these sacred ceremonies out in the open, the way they were done originally. It's okay to unlock those doors and bring these ceremonies out. So from that point of view, that perspective, yes, there is a renaissance, a cultural renewal but basically I guess what I'm saying is that the culture has never been renewed, it was just behind locked doors for a long time. It was just underground for a long time. (Herb Joe 1998: interview)

There is confusion in the generations because of that [the potlatch law and loss of traditional knowledge and cultural rites] and a lot of displaced fear and anger and hurt and if you take all that away from the people what do you have left? (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

Although those *Stó:lō* I interviewed will attest to a cultural revival, many explained it is not a readily accepted process. Many *Stó:lō* still carry the fear and pain learned during colonization. Fear and pain has been passed from elders to their children and their children's children. Nevertheless, they also fear losing cultural traditions entirely; of leaving a void to be filled by negative practices adopted during colonial times, such as alcoholism and domestic violence.

I knew a few [*Stó:lō*] First Nations [individuals] who won't pick up the culture. And actually with my grandmother who was put in a residential school, she was beaten and whipped for speaking her language, and she was raped and she was really hurt and refused to teach my mother the language because of that. And my mom has some brothers and sisters who won't pick up the culture because of my grandmother, who is not with us today, but I have some uncles who won't pick up the culture because they are afraid to. Because that is what they were taught. There are some First Nations out there who are afraid to pick up the culture. There are some who are afraid to lose it. There are some who are trying to learn it and there are some who won't have anything to do with it. (Christine Sitting Eagle 1998: interview)

What is there to replace it with, when your way of life is taken away, when your dignity is taken away, what are you left with? You are not complete. And so a lot of our people are still suffering because of it. The alcohol is so available and prevalent today in our communities and our families are struggling. But what do you give to someone that has nothing? (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

Question #3 - HOW ARE THE *Stó:lō* REVIVING THEIR TRADITIONS?

The *Stó:lō* discussed the process of revival as a representation of the dynamism and persistence of the *Stó:lō* First Nation. The fluidity of these processes comes out of a community coping with change and fighting to maintain a distinct character through that change. Many *Stó:lō* indicated that one cannot go backwards in time; however, that does not negate the fact that their rich cultural tradition has survived even during extreme cultural upheaval.

Mmm, I don't know. It's hard to go back, you know? Once... we've lived in your world. It's hard... to go back... there's a lot of things we believe in... different things, but that's our personal feelings... things that are sort of sacred to us. (Mary Fraser¹⁰ 1998: interview)

Most interviewees noted that the revival of *Stó:lō* cultural traditions is recent, beginning during the 1960s and 1970s. Some *Stó:lō* believe this time period engendered an openness that allowed for open-mindedness and acceptance of differences from mainstream Canadian society, some interviewees also believe that mainstream Canadian society began searching at that time for a spirituality felt to be lacking in its own practices, a spirituality found in the Aboriginal culture. This made it more acceptable for Aboriginal people to openly practice their religions. Whether this is why a revival of *Stó:lō* traditional culture began or, as some *Stó:lō* elders believe, because the Spirit answered their prayers, it remains that a revival began and continues among the *Stó:lō*.

Our people are just now starting to practice. So it is a very recent phenomenon. It's a very recent thing... and it's such a good thing. (Gwen Point 1998: interview)

It was just unheard of... Right around 1967 or something like that... from there it sort of exploded like wildfire. They were searching for such a long time to have something that was there, that was ours. They weren't allowed to do it because it was outlawed... I could see it coming back, right through the '70s and '80s and... right from 1967 to now there was just a handful, little more than you can count on your hand, dancers that were practicing traditional things from this area. Now if you take a look at it... there must be at least over 1,000 people who are actually dancing. Almost all the people know what it is all about. Now we have other

¹⁰ This interviewee did not wish to be identified by her real name.

ceremonies that [have] come back in the last two years. (Kelsey Charlie 1998: interview)

They never knew anything about the traditional ways, in the 60s. I talked a lot to the elders and I heard somebody say that... a lot of emotion and feeling... our people [lost]... now it is awakening, we are seeing more things. But there is a reason he said, because we were praying for it... That is part of our traditions. (Kelsey Charlie 1998: interview)

Some *Stó:lō* feel that the reasons behind *Stó:lō* cultural “traditions” were obscured during the time of suppression by colonizing forces. However, they believe that the reasons for and community understanding of traditional practices have always remained just below the surface waiting for a time when the practices could be revived.

Because you can take away the land, you can take away where we live, you can control what we read, eat, where we sleep. You can control all there is here, but you can't control the Spirit. And I know the Spirit brought back our drums, it brought back our long houses. I know the Spirit gave us back the sweat lodges, and I know the Spirit brought us the Ritchies [Aboriginal marriage commissioners] to do what they are doing. I know the Spirit brought you and I know the Spirit brings the people. But the people have got to listen. And I think, more and more, people understand that. We are here for a reason, obviously, and I think it is any human being's right to be happy. And if you are not happy we should look at why. And I think the Spirit has given us everything we need. I think we have lost [the reasoning behind] why we need things and why we need one another. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

A concern exists in the *Stó:lō* community, and for some non-Aboriginal people such as in the academic community, that elders are passing away before having the opportunity to share their cultural knowledge with others.

More and more young people are concerned about keeping their practices and beliefs alive... I think the young people are going to be looking [to] the future, and they are going to be struggling [with] that teaching. I think we are losing our elders faster than we are learning all we can learn from them. If we are not careful we will not have much to pass on to our children... there may not be much to pass on, to share with them. I am concerned about that. (Doug Kelly 1998: interview)

Some *Stó:lō* community members claim that the transmission of knowledge is occurring and has been even during times of overt legal repression¹¹. Transmission of knowledge during the time of the potlatch law (1885-1951) was limited but it did not cease entirely as many *Stó:lō* assumed the responsibility for safeguarding artifacts from seizure and protecting ceremonial participants from arrest, allowing knowledge of these rites to be passed to the next generation.

We had ancestors who made it a life's goal to maintain these sacred ceremonies, to maintain these sacred objects and have them so that they could pass them on to their children and their grandchildren. They made it their life's work to do that. And we should thank those ancestors that did that, that could make themselves do that, so the culture isn't being revived... it's simply coming out from behind locked doors and that's my interpretation. Simply coming out. It's always been there. It never died. It's simply coming out in the open now. And our young people are finally realizing... these ceremonies are a part of who they are and if they continue to think about them as needing to be behind locked doors, then they're locking away part of who they are... they're putting part of who they are behind locked doors. So that nobody else in the world can see them, so all the people on the outside, all they're seeing is a shadow... a shell of who you really are because part of you is locked away. (Herb Joe 1998: interview)

Many interviewees herald openness as conducive to community health. To be healthy is to be whole, as individuals and as a community; what the interviewees call the mind, body, and spirit connection (Gwen Point 1999: interview). This is not seen as returning to a *Stó:lō* identity of the past but as reclaiming an identity that has always existed even through times of prohibition and assimilation.

The *Stó:lō* I interviewed initiated a call for individuals willing to assume leadership roles and responsibilities, to encourage Aboriginal self-determinism.

I think our young people are getting to a point now where they're realizing that, "I need to bring that part of me that I hid away for so long, I need to bring it out and become a whole person again, to become a balanced person. A person who can live in harmony with everyone and everything that's around me. If I'm going to be a healthy person then I need to do that." And I think that's what's happening. So that's my interpretation of what we're calling a cultural revival or a cultural renaissance. That's what I think is happening. (Herb Joe 1998: interview)

¹¹ The *Stó:lō* do believe that the lessened scale of this knowledge transmission is a cause for concern as fewer elders spoke of cultural practices due to fear of non-Aboriginal reprisal or overt sanctioning.

We were a rich people. For a time we had nothing and now... what I see, is... people are taking back what rightfully belongs to them. We don't even say it belongs to me, it doesn't belong to a specific family. Our elders would say that it belongs to the children and our children's children... we have got a long way to go in our communities but at the same time I have hope in my mind and in my heart... it is like standing up again. That is the only words that come to my mind, is standing our people. Standing our children. Allowing them to be who they want to be... It always goes back to choice. And I see that as far as marriages are concerned today, but it takes a few families to embrace that. It takes a few families to... help people along and show them different ways of doing things. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

The *Stó:lō* state that “tradition” has always resided in the *Stó:lō* people, waiting for the right time to emerge, and that now it is being valued. By being passed on and practiced “tradition” has been brought into public awareness again. The point for the *Stó:lō* is not how these traditions are being revived but that revival is occurring. Interviewees acknowledge that conflict and confusion are a part of the revival process because traditions are being interpreted and learned by younger generations in a way that is heavily influenced by mainstream Canadian society. Many young people are learning through ethnographic writings as opposed to or in conjunction with participation in the traditions. Although past and present practices of cultural learning may differ, interviewees pointed out that the teachings remain the same. For example, the marriage ceremony has the same underlying commitments to spouse, family and community being passed from one generation to the next. Those taking part in the wedding ceremony may have learned of the rites as adults from sources written by western ethnographers with *Stó:lō* informants or from instruction by family members, but the intentions of the ceremony and those involved have persisted since “time immemorial.”

Our traditions, our customs, are being looked at in a very different way now and the *Stó:lō* people are saying, “well, there is value there.” There is certainly value there... it evolved over centuries by our people and I think a lot of them, their teachings, became a part of us... a lot of the things our fellow people do, have been consistent even after the changing of the learning systems. My son hasn't learned as well from the old teachings that my people have, he learns better from the written word because that's how he was educated. So now that our culture is coming back, that there is a renaissance of the *Stó:lō* culture, and many of the other First Nations cultures' history and traditions, it's confusing our young people... because their parents and grandparents are remembering how they were

taught and bringing that back... it's making a certain kind of conflict [in] the way it's being taught and the way that these young people are able to receive it... the proper connections aren't being made because the oral traditions teaches from the left side and... the young people are receiving it from the right side. The right brain/left brain thing... they are not making the proper connection and they're not learning in the same way so they're having slightly different interpretations of what the old traditions meant. Those old traditions were taught century after century because that was the way our belief system taught us to live together. It gave us structure and it gave us boundaries and the marriage ceremony was only one small part of the society that we lived in. But it all came from a common kind of basis... today we have the same very basic commitment in a marriage or a union [but] they're being presented from opposite directions and I think that's confusing for our children, for our young people. And they're not able to understand that they are very much the same teachings... the same basic principles being made... the vows and the commitments that are made. (Herb Joe 1998: interview)

Although the above discussion paints a picture of a thriving cultural revival, accepted by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, many interviewees acknowledge that one must have patience and that the revival will be a long process.

I think everything takes time. And I think where our people are now is a good place. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

So it kind of goes through the stages where the Spirit is only giving us what we can handle. The Spirit is only giving us what we can handle at the time. Until we grow a little bit more, then we will get a little bit more to work with... there is going to be more things that are going to be coming back. We are going to continue to get stronger. (Kelsey Charlie 1998: interview)

Most interviewees stated that the *Stó:lō* First Nation is getting stronger through the revival of traditions but that cultural practices must be desired, understood, and above all practiced to become entrenched in *Stó:lō* society. The *Stó:lō* suggest that traditions be taught in homes, schools, and within communities in order to become a reinforcing part of *Stó:lō* society.

I want to learn more about my culture and traditions so I go out and learn as much as I can. Be around [the traditions] all the time. I do it all the time, at home and wherever. Even just this weekend we were playing soccer and playing a bit. We all sat down and sang a victory song from our people, [the *Stó:lō* community of] Chehalis. We sang that. Nobody had ever done that before. We do that because we are proud of our heritage... it wasn't a boastful thing to do. It was just

something we felt in our heart... because the resurgence is here, it is coming back, so I think they really enjoyed the singing. (Kelsey Charlie 1998: interview)

The drums... they wanted to try to keep cultural things alive in the school, but that is really not where it has to be. It has to be at home. It was hard to try and teach it until we really grasped onto making a great endeavor to find our cultural ways. Because we didn't just learn how to do whatever it is over night you know. There was more... they took all of that away from us. When we started, I know, we started to fight for it and it was really hard... thirsting all the time to get it. (Pat Charlie 1998: interview)

Many *Stó:lō* couples are now choosing to incorporate sacred traditions from a multitude of sources into one or more ceremonies. Kelsey Charlie and his sister Jolie¹² both had Catholic ceremonies as a way to acknowledge and respect their grandmother's strong Catholic beliefs. However, they also each participated in "traditional" long house ceremonies using the *Stó:lō* blessing tradition of the *sxwó:yxwey* masks which they had inherited through their mother Pat Charlie. Kelsey also participated in a third wedding ceremony with traditional rites particular to his wife's family, members of the Musqueam *Stó:lō* community. This practice of blending ceremonial traditions, or having multiple ceremonies for one marriage, incorporates revived *Stó:lō* ceremonial wedding traditions while also respecting other family members' beliefs.

Because times have changed the ceremony [we chose] would be from my mother's family one day and my father's family the next day. And because my husband is Catholic we also had a ceremony that was done by his family too. And also my father is brought up with the fact of the Church and we got married in the Church. So in the olden days I think we would have just gotten married in my mother's family [spiritual way] and he [the groom] would have had to stay here with me. But we still have a choice to go back to his reserve, or he would have had to stay here with me, because times have changed and they're not as strict, I think. We also got married from my father's family because that was my choice. They asked me if I wanted to get married by either one. I said I wanted both... the traditional ceremony that we did at the long house we did both times, both days. And then we did another ceremony with his [the groom's family]... it was in a church actually... My father walked me down the aisle the way they would, I guess. He had a gift for his [the groom's] father and his father [the groom's grandfather], and him [the groom] and his father came and met us two down the aisle. And our dads exchanged gifts and then Hutch [the groom] and I

¹² Jolie Charlie's traditional longhouse ceremony was described previously in Chapter Three.

walked down the aisle together... I don't think the marriage... before... is the same as what it is today. (Christine Sitting Eagle 1998: interview)

Many interviewees commented on the flexibility of Father Gary (St. Mary's priest, Chilliwack's Catholic Church). He has allowed *Stó:lō* cultural traditions into the Church and encouraged dissemination of traditional knowledge during wedding ceremonies for the benefit of those in attendance. Some interviewees expressed concern that some community members were adding cultural traditions to their Christian wedding ceremony and then believing the ceremony to be "traditional." They were concerned that this is not reviving *Stó:lō* traditions but appropriating cultural artifacts and practices in a superficial way. For them, revival requires a deeper understanding of the values underlying cultural practice.

I wonder at times if it's not just for the show... I guess I feel that within my own heart that with my beliefs that it's something that if you are raised and you respect it and it's culturally provided for you by your family as a means of showing respect to your people and your culture, then I can appreciate them using it but... and I appreciate the fact that a lot of people are trying to bring it back but... it goes a lot farther than the ceremony... it's not something that you do one day and think about the next. (Catherine Hall 1998: interview)

Therefore, as repeatedly suggested by those with whom I interviewed, the principal ingredient of cultural revival is knowledge; knowledge concerning distinctive *Stó:lō* identity at the individual and community level. Knowledge informs and defines *Stó:lō* cultural beliefs and practices and empowers the *Stó:lō* with the ability to self-determine. Self-determinism is analyzed in the next section as the last theme emerging from the interviews. Self-determinism or "choice" enables the *Stó:lō* to practice cultural traditions that strengthen identity which completes the discussion of cultural persistence that has, at this point in the thesis, come full circle.

III. Choice - Rites and Rights

"Choice" is the third theme that emerges from the interviews. I use the word "choice" because the interviewees use this word as it connotes the ability to control factors internal and external to one's life. "Choice" and "to choose" are defined by the

New Lexicon Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary Of The English Language as "the act or instance of select[ing] out of a greater number...[to] take or select one or another... [to] decide... determine..." (R.E. Allen ed. 1990: 198). Closely associated with the idea of choice, self-determinism is a concept that stresses "a nation's right to determine its own allegiance, government, etc. [as well as] the ability to act with free will" (R.E. Allen ed. 1990: 1097). "Choice" is an important component of this discussion because it is used so frequently in academic and legal arenas to mean access to rights by colonized peoples. When the *Stó:lō* people interviewed speak of and use the word "choice," they are speaking of self-determinism as described in the definition above.

As in previous sections, three questions best reflect the issues related to choice. The first is, how do the *Stó:lō* define choice? What does it mean to the *Stó:lō* to be self-determining? The second question is procedural: how are the *Stó:lō* choosing, self-determining, or taking control of their lives? The final question highlights the reasoning behind actions: why is choice important to the *Stó:lō*?

Together, these three questions frame the final theme of "choice." The reader is reminded of the interconnectedness of all the themes ("*Stó:lō*-ness," cultural revival, and choice). The interviewees underscored that this final theme is not the conclusion of a discussion of *Stó:lō* traditional (wedding) ceremonial persistence but the beginning and continuation of a larger discussion of *Stó:lō* self-determinism.

Question #1 - HOW DO THE *STÓ:LŌ* DEFINE CHOICE?

After the first explorers, Cook, Mackenzie and Vancouver, first began interacting with local First Nations in the late 18th century and the Hudson's Bay Company became entrenched in the area, building forts in traditional territory in the early 19th century, European clergy began to make contact with the *Stó:lō*.¹³

Beginning in the mid-19th century Christianity permeated *Stó:lō* society. Various Churches and their associated clergy began dividing up the traditional territory and establishing permanent sites for religious teachings. The *Stó:lō* people were encouraged

¹³ As discussed previously in Chapter Two.

to accept these religious teaching opportunities and, therefore, attended the church closest to their individual communities along the Fraser River Valley. It is beyond the scope of this work to detail the reasons why First Nation people first went to churches and continued to attend. It is sufficient for the purposes of this thesis to underscore that the *Stó:lō* felt they had no choice regarding which Church they attended or even about embarking on Christian religious training in the first place.

My mom is from Nanaimo, and her mom is from Chemainus... that is, a matter of fact, the root of Catholicism [for my family] too. This community was united. So all we have to look at is where the church is and how they divided up the Indians as traditional territory for their respective churches... there weren't many Catholics here and when my mom and dad married, they married in the Catholic Church. My dad was baptized there at 34 or 35 years [of] age so they could get married in the Church. And then my uncle, he got married in the Catholic Church as well. So the same thing. He got baptized. (Doug Kelly 1998: interview)

What happened is that a church will just go up in a community; whatever church went up that was the denomination that we became a part of. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

It seemed like Christian ceremonies, it just seemed like people just did it because they thought... that was all there was to do. That is what everybody else did. (Albert "Sonny" McHalsie 1998: interview)

When I asked the *Stó:lō* what constitutes a "traditional" *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony today I rarely heard about ceremonial details. The common element was ideological. It was "choice": choice in how to be married, how to display one's "*Stó:lō*-ness" through a distinctive ceremony and, most importantly, choice in how one embraces one's spirituality, be it *Stó:lō*, Christian, or both. This has led to a number of couples (five of the seven I interviewed) having more than one wedding ceremony. For example, the couple described in Chapter Three whose long house ceremony was followed the next day by a second Catholic ceremony in St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church (performed by Father Gary). Gwen Point is a strong advocate of choice when it comes to marriage ceremonies.

So, in a nutshell I think the *Stó:lō* marriages today depend on where the people are [psychologically]. Some of them get married by J.P [Justice of the Peace] and

that's it... others will get married by family masks and J.P. because they want to be legal in B.C., they want it recognized, and other people will just, "hey we're getting married,"... some of our people are really comfortable just getting married in our traditional ways in the eyes of the Creator and say, "that's it!" And other people are very comfortable having, like we did... four sermons. And to me there's no wrong way to do it. (Gwen Point 1998: interview)

It gets confusing when you run into issues today. I think our people right now are living at a time where we can offer our children choices... I brought them to the church. Why? Because I think I came to the conclusion that, how are my children going to know and choose if they have never experienced it? (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

The definition of *Stó:lō* self-determinism, in the example of *Stó:lō* traditional wedding ceremonies, is a couple's choice of what constitutes *Stó:lō* "tradition" and what constitutes contemporary "*Stó:lō* -ness." "Good intentions" are the underlying commonality in *Stó:lō* "traditional" wedding ceremonies. The intention to have a "good mind and heart" honors yourself, your family, and your community. Respected *Stó:lō* speakers Herb Joe and Gwen Point hope that more young *Stó:lō* people will explore *Stó:lō* traditions originating from pre-contact times but they acknowledged that the *Stó:lō* remain *Stó:lō* even while incorporating non-Aboriginal cultural elements into the *Stó:lō* culture and, on a smaller scale, into *Stó:lō* "traditional" wedding ceremonies.

I think it is almost a personal choice. I don't think anyone can dictate what it [a *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony] should be, or how it should be... there is no right or wrong way to do things. I think the bottom line/ultimate teaching that comes with that is that it is done with a good mind and a good heart. So whether you have several hundred people there or whether there is the two of you, whether you get married on top of a mountain or whether you get married in a church or a long house, I think [the wedding ceremony] has got to embrace the spiritual part or the spirituality in some way, shape, or form... that is the blessing... sure you have to make plans to organize things but I think as far as the marriages of the future, [they] will only rely on the people [the couple] at the time. So I hope that more and more families will pick up our tradition, pick up... different ways of doing things and practice. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

Good God, we were functioning communities that had our own laws and we had our own leaders and we had our own... spiritual people and... we had everything, you know? And it's about time, our people are starting to kind of gain that back and it's exciting. I think it's wonderful if someone wants to get married in the Church. That's wonderful. What's important is they're getting married. And I

think it's special if they can acknowledge their *Stó:lō*-ness and their First Nations... if they can embrace it all and be proud that they're First Nations and if they can do both more power to them, you know? So, I guess I'm a believer that there's no wrong way of doing something. It's how you do it that's important and why you do it. (Gwen Point 1998: interview)

Question #2 - HOW ARE THE *STÓ:LŌ* MAKING CHOICES/SELF-DETERMINING/TAKING CONTROL OF THEIR LIVES?

Stó:lō choice or self-determinism is not straightforward: the process begins with knowledge. Many interviewees spoke of the past, both pre-contact and as a colonized people, as a history to be learned and as knowledge to be shared. This history forms the context in which *Stó:lō* contemporary society has been shaped. From a pre-contact society that included female centered extended family villages (matriarchy), newly-weds moving to the bride's familial community (matrilocality), and the practice of women taking care of women including widows joining their sister's household (informal sororal polygyny) the *Stó:lō* experienced great change with colonization. This change included an imposed patriarchal framework that defined where one lived, how one experienced marriage (and kinship), and introduced a new way of controlling familial communities through a male "chief."

That was part and parcel of not having the treaties before... because they're [non-Aboriginal society] telling us, "oh you can't do this, you can't do that, you have to live here." And until the day comes that we can stand up and say, "this is self-government, don't tell me what to do"... they'll get married in a traditional, say *Stó:lō* way, with the masks and that's good enough for them and [they] don't need the Native commissioner. (Gwen Point 1998: interview)

We know who all our relatives are, but because of the Department of Indian Affairs band list, we are stuck living here. Each one of us have relatives in other places and in the past it was easier and more free to move from one community to the other. It all depended on the housing that was available, the types of resources and of course they [*Stó:lō* individuals] are going to pick a place that is more resourceful, has more space and can accommodate you. At least you had a choice. But nowadays it is whatever band you are on and that is where you live. I would have preferred living over in Chehalis [a *Stó:lō* community]. Linda [Sonny's partner] has got relatives over there. (Albert "Sonny" McHalsie 1998: interview)

You see that [transfer] of knowledge of how you do things is kind of lost in our generation... so prior to contact that was all in place but after contact happened then they [non-Aboriginal people] started imposing, not so much laws, as much as they acknowledged the chiefs of the day. What I remember being said was that you couldn't be a chief or a leader if you had more than one wife, kind of thing. And yet years ago, say if my sister lost her husband, then my husband would take care of her because she is my sister you see. I am responsible for my sister and my children's daughters. So that would just naturally come under our responsibility. While it looks like the chief has more than one wife, it is not because he wanted more women, it [comes] out of who takes care of whom. So a lot of that affected... they wouldn't talk to the women, they wouldn't acknowledge women as being the heads of the household... and I know it affected me and my mother because prior to contact... you got married, your husband comes to live with [you], because the women were the head of the household. So you couldn't displace the head of the household. But when Department of Indian Affairs came and said that [when] women get married they have to go live with their husband. So they displaced all the families and took away that leadership role. And the confusion started setting in. And names are lost and rights were lost and things like that, over the years... and I know a lot of women struggle in communities that are not theirs. So to me it makes sense in that respect as well. We talk about the anti-potlatch laws, and then Bill C-31, that displaced a lot of people as well. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

The *Stó:lō* describe a form of quiet control that occurred for them in response to the apparent lack of choice during the colonizing processes. Through acceptance and compromise, two methods still employed today, the *Stó:lō* remained self-determining and traditions persisted. They choose to blend Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ceremonies as described in the previous section, a compromise, including having Aboriginal marriage commissioners solemnize weddings, which enables *Stó:lō* couples to determine for themselves how they will be married while acknowledging the legal responsibilities inherent in the dominant society.

You can never turn back time. Everything evolves... I have learned to accept it... we all have our own ways and we all have to respect each other regardless. Just because these [non-Aboriginal] people live one way that doesn't mean it is the right way... it is just the way of the people. It is just the way that they think. Learn to accept it and coexist. So that is my thinking. (Kelsey Charlie 1998: interview)

Our traditional ways of doing things aren't recognized by the Province... that is the whole thing about trying to be a part of the larger society and still maintaining our own traditions. So if a family doesn't want to go to a church for whatever

reason, but they still want to be recognized by the Province, well they can then have their sacred ceremony and then do the ceremony with the Richies being the marriage commissioners so that it is acknowledged by the Province. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

In addition to learning of one's past, accepting one's contemporary reality, and compromising within that reality, the *Stó:lō* emphasized education and understanding as methods for achieving self-determinism. As Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are educated about British Columbia's and Canada's colonial past, an understanding of the context of contemporary *Stó:lō* society will be achieved. By understanding the pain and anger that result from oppression and suppression of tradition, change can occur. Gwen states that in order to continue moving towards *Stó:lō* self-determinism with confidence *Stó:lō* people need to know their history and how they have arrived at this point in time.

I think the anti-potlatch laws and the effect that it had on the marriages was we weren't allowed to have our sacred masks. We weren't allowed to sing and dance. We weren't allowed to even gather, you know, and the stories that go... all the stories that I heard about... through the family about how they would hide just to gather, just to practice our sacred traditions. Whoever was caught was sent to jail or paid a fine. We didn't have the money. In the words of my uncle was that a lot of the people died in those jails. I think from heartbreak... hopelessness, a sense of hopelessness. And I know people today, they say, "oh that was in the past, why should we talk about it any more?" And stuff like that. Well, people need to know what happened. And they need to know that it happened to my grandparent's generation... so the anti-potlatch laws took away everything... if anything ruined our people it was that law. [If] anything created a loss it was that law. That is what I see in our communities. Our pride, our self-esteem, that feeling of belonging, that sense of being complete and being whole. And I see that coming back. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

Question #3 - WHY IS CHOICE IMPORTANT TO THE *STÓ:LŌ*?

The final question is answered very simply: "choice" is important to the *Stó:lō* because this is what the *Stó:lō* want. As Kelsey Charlie succinctly puts it "I think people should have the power" (1998 interview). To have control over one's own life, or to have agency, is to have choice. Having choice is to have more possibilities and limitless opportunities. This is what the *Stó:lō* want for their children.

That's it. And the ultimate whole idea to me about Aboriginal rights is having choice, you know? Who has the right to say, "oh, you shouldn't do that?" And that's exactly what's happened to our people. We've been told how to live, where to live, when to live, and where to go to school, what to believe in, what not to believe in. And it's so great today, I think it's a wonderful time and I'm just grateful... to be a part of it... seeing the change and seeing the healthiness... and then, more importantly, seeing our children having the choice. So it's really special. (Gwen Point 1998: interview)

It was not long ago (1951) that the potlatch law still prevented First Nation people from gathering, let alone "traditional" First Nation ceremonies from being held. Without remembering the past, the *Stó:lō* become static. The future, which has already begun through cultural revival, includes a pre-contact past that can be used to instruct contemporary *Stó:lō* about sacred rites that connect communities. The past also instructs or reminds the people of values that underscore the respect, pride, and strength in "*Stó:lō*-ness."

In *Stó:lō* territory that's exactly what the family masks did [legalize wedding ceremonies]. You know, there were ceremonies that did that... [for] births, when the baby was born the masks came out for the families, when puberty ceremonies happened the masks came out, when weddings happened masks came out, when somebody died masks came out. So, we had our own form of ceremonies to do that, to acknowledge that. Really, what it does ultimately, and I guess that's what I think the whole premise is based on... really our people believe that you're calling together people to witness what you're doing. What you're really saying is, "I want all these people to know that... this young woman or this young man is my wife or husband." Whether you do it in a church or in a ceremony it's the same message, right? You're telling the people in a wedding ceremony that... "we're going to be together now through sickness and through health and all those same values or same understanding," right? That you're not going to look at other men or women, right? You're going to be true to this man or true [to] this woman, only. You're going to take care of one another. But the people become a witness to that... you can't do it without them. (Gwen Point 1998: interview)

And I look at today, I see our traditions coming back. I see our people turning back to our culture and I think the teachings are coming back. And I think our people are starting to understand that they have a choice in things. And it has built up who we are, that we can co-exist in the larger society and still maintain who we are. I have said this before, that as *Stó:lō* either here in Chilliwack or up in Prince Rupert, I am *Stó:lō*, whether I have the full regalia on or whether I am sitting and meeting anyone. It doesn't matter. I am still *Stó:lō* because I carry the knowledge, the teaching, and the values... you know you can't buy that. Nobody

can give it to you. You have got to take the time to learn it, to find out, and that is invaluable. It is free. (Gwen Point 1999: interview)

In summary, the three themes that emerged from the interviews are circular and self-determinism can be perceived as the beginning and end of that circle. During pre-contact times the *Stó:lō* were self-determining and currently, through cultural revival and a strengthening of *Stó:lō* identity, they are self-determining again. As Gwen has stated, and was brought to the fore in my conversations with other *Stó:lō* people, “we are standing up again” (Gwen Point 1999: interview).

CHAPTER FIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The preceding four chapters have explored the themes highlighted by the twenty-six people, *Stó:lō* and non-*Stó:lō*, I interviewed during the summers of 1998 and 1999. Throughout the interviews and archival research, the *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony provided a vehicle with which to address the three themes of identity (*Stó:lō*-ness), cultural revival, and self-determinism (choice). What emerges is a quiet assertion of these themes in the words of the *Stó:lō* people in stark contrast to popular media representations, for example excessive coverage of blockades, and recent texts on Aboriginal self-determinism (cf. Adams 1995; Alfred 1995, 1999; Deloria, Jr. 1997; Maracle 1996; Smith 1999). The *Stó:lō* with whom I spoke did not speak of the need to revenge or acquire compensation for past and continued injustices perpetrated against Aboriginal people. Rather, they spoke of the future and of striking a balance between maintaining a distinct culture, experiencing the cultures surrounding them, and sharing their unique gifts as *Stó:lō* people. This sentiment and viewpoint is equally valid as more radical Aboriginal assertions. Because this voice is less militant, it is not always portrayed in the media. Nevertheless, it carries a no less dramatic call for justice, fairness, equality and choice for Aboriginal people.

The *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony blends “tradition” with Provincial requirements. “Traditional” wedding ceremonial elements describe a continuum through time supported by past writings and the present day description of a *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony presented in this thesis. The *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony fulfills the demands of the current Canadian legal paradigm which requires First Nations to prove themselves as organized societies through demonstrations of cultural persistence and the existence of pre-contact customs, ceremonies, and artifact creation and use to substantiate claims to rights and title. Although the legal framework developed by the province and country through past case precedents is problematic the *Stó:lō* are continuing to work towards self-determinism within that framework, at least for the interim. The *Stó:lō* use the ethnohistoric reconstructions which include and supplement the *Stó:lō* oral tradition and history to develop claims to rights and title based in jurisprudence. Nevertheless, the *Stó:lō* are not

helpless victims. They are negotiating for policy change even as they continue to seek justice through legal process (Bierwert 1999, Carlson 1997). The research presented here provides a context in which the *Stó:lō* can negotiate for that change. Many First Nation peoples, researchers of many disciplines, negotiators, consultants, and lawyers (non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal) are working towards a day when Section 35(1) of the Constitution Act is acknowledged without legal challenge where “the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed” (Canada 1982).

The *Stó:lō* have a prescribed process to unite individuals in marriage. From mate selection, through courtship and the ceremony itself, steps are followed to garner family and community approval. The influence of non-Aboriginal culture changed *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies as it also changed *Stó:lō* culture. However, this influence did not completely eradicate *Stó:lō* identity. The *Stó:lō* adapted, continue to maintain a society distinct from the populations that soon surrounded them, and adopted some non-Aboriginal ways that were incorporated into that *Stó:lō* identity construct.

Thus, *Stó:lō* culture persists in the world system. *Stó:lō* values highlighting children, family, and community as well as the mind, body, spirit connection are very much alive among *Stó:lō* people today. In this regard, Nagar has argued that, “it is increasingly important for us [academics] to produce *scholarly* analyses that can be accessed, used and critiqued by our audiences in multiple geographical, social and institutional locations” (2002: 185). Similarly, Wazir Jahan Karim, an indigenous Malaysian, writes of the ways in which anthropologists can make the results of their studies more useful, relevant and sensitive to the needs of those they have studied. His comments have relevance for anthropologists studying First Nation People in Canada.

For more than five decades, anthropologists have been studying culture as an academic exercise, either advancing or applying western theories, concepts and methodologies without reference to the global-local dimensions of social realities. The discipline has also rigidly bound itself around obsolete notes of cultural ‘objectivity’ or ‘objective’ representations... a humanistic committed approach may be more relevant, representative and helpful to minority groups... participatory anthropology would be a positive direction of change and may give anthropology a better image and identity, not to mention a good kick in the

backside. The appeal of the anthropologist is in the transferability of culture from the local to the global in the direction of 'high culture', while the appeal of the indigene is in the transferability of interest in culture from the global back to the local... a humanistic approach will come out with better strategies of self-involvement and participation in the struggles of indigenes for social equity, justice and empowerment while a hermeneutical approach will lead to the formulation of alternate paradigms which may be reactive and defensive more than useful to the participants of culture. (Karim 1996: 123, 134-6).

Although Sacks writes specifically about a social and economic construct she terms "working class women's community culture," her claims have similar applicability to the Canadian legal paradigm within and through which *Stó:lō* people pursue their claims to rights and title.

Subordinated groups arguably have a fuller understanding of their society than dominant groups because the subordinated must learn to see the world from at least two vantage points in order to survive: their own and their rulers'. By contrast, the privileged are insulated by their own power from having to see things from the perspectives of those they rule. (Sacks 1993: 3)

Accordingly, the data on marriage presented in this thesis provide a context for understanding a current *Stó:lō* reality which enables and supports claims to cultural identity, revival and self-determination within the framework of Federal and Provincial law in a way that is meaningful to *Stó:lō* people whether they be urban or rural, status or non-status, enfranchised or not, living either on or off the reserve.

The Interviewee Themes Summarized

These three themes emerge from the analysis of interview data and are reinforced by the literature and my participant observation of a recent *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony. While the information derived from the interviews is generalized, due to the original focus of my questionnaire on wedding ceremonial elements, it is valuable as an overview of what is important currently to those *Stó:lō* with whom I spoke. I stress that this thesis is only a place of beginning for a rigorous analysis of identity, cultural revival, and self-determinism as represented in *Stó:lō* lives today. This thesis is representative of some *Stó:lō* individuals' perspectives on these topics at a particular time and place during

interviews meant to discuss something else conducted by a researcher with more enthusiasm than ability.

Identity

“*Stó:lō*-ness,” is a word used by respected *Stó:lō* elder Gwen Point to explain what it means to the *Stó:lō* to be *Stó:lō* and it is this affirmation of individual and group identity that defines both past or current wedding ceremonies as *Stó:lō*. The reintroduction and use of artifacts such as the *sxwó:yxwey* masks and rites such as the potlatch, reinforce family and community ties, which consequently reinforce a distinct *Stó:lō* identity. The *Stó:lō* remain essentially *Stó:lō* despite changes brought about by contact with other cultures, which explains why wedding ceremonial elements are termed “traditional” by those with whom I interviewed. Thus, the “traditional ceremony” is seen by the *Stó:lō* people as a symbol of the persistence of *Stó:lō* “tradition.”

Marriage links family and community directly through kinship, an aspect of *Stó:lō* culture that people repeatedly discussed as central to *Stó:lō* identity. “*Stó:lō*-ness” as expressed through *Stó:lō* marriage is important as a concept for understanding change and persistence. Those with whom I spoke explained what it means to be identified as “Indian,” how that identity has shifted through the effects of non-Aboriginal cultural influences, and how the *Stó:lō* identity has persisted through these changes. Persistence of “traditional” ceremonial elements is discussed within the context of *Stó:lō* identity, perhaps as one indication of resistance to imposed non-Aboriginal cultural practices.

As wedding ceremonies are a significant aspect of *Stó:lō* culture, not to be viewed in isolation from those who practice it, *Stó:lō* self-identification is inextricably linked to *Stó:lō* marriage rites which unite individuals, families, and communities. Gwen Point views the word “Indian” as a positive reclamation by those who are “Indian.” Thus the label “Indian” has been infused with positive attributes. As culturally prohibitive laws such as the potlatch law are repealed, First Nation peoples of Canada make the choice to practice rites reaffirming an indigenous identity and community pride associated with self-identification as “Indian.” Consistency with elders’ teachings and a community

investment in universal respect for community members, as well as respect for the flora and fauna contributing to the continuation of that community, creates and perpetuates a cultural system that is successful. Thus, *Stó:lō* society reinforces *Stó:lō* identity. A circular reinforcement of culture as a system of belief and practice, and as a group of people, incorporates individuals within that culture and validates them as a part of the community. Marriages and associated wedding ceremonies, whether arranged by the couple's family or chosen by the couple, reflect the society in which the couple lives by highlighting family ties, community connections and geographic positioning. The circular reinforcing of community values through ceremonialism and of ceremonialism through community values represents and reflects *Stó:lō* identity for the *Stó:lō*.

“Traditional” *Stó:lō* weddings incorporating “traditional” *Stó:lō* rites and beliefs reinforce pride in oneself, one's family and community and one's spirituality, culture and tradition. They form the foundation of *Stó:lō* identity. *Stó:lō* pride leads to strong individuals, strong communities and a strong culture. Strong marriages nurture and raise strong children who continue to build strong communities and perpetuate strong cultural beliefs and values. In this way, *Stó:lō* marriage serves as a reinforcing statement of cultural pride and a reaffirmation of “*Stó:lō*-ness.”

The “traditional” *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony and the continued practice of hereditary rites, such as the *sxwó:yxwey* mask blessing tradition, link families and strengthen *Stó:lō* identification. Even when community members do not own the right to practice certain traditions the perception of these rites as culturally distinct reaffirm *Stó:lō* identity when viewed by the entire community. Weddings use “traditional” rites, identify families, connect households, and carry forward “traditional” cultural values as defined by the *Stó:lō*. *Stó:lō* people identify and differentiate themselves from other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures through cultural elements such as language, blessing traditions and alternative methods of legitimation. In the case of *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies, what differentiates the *Stó:lō* from other groups are those rites and values defined by the *Stó:lō* as “traditional.”

Cultural Revival

Those interviewed used the word “revitalism” to mean the revival of ceremonial elements that were suppressed because of non-Aboriginal laws prohibiting their use, non-Aboriginal governmental assimilationist policies, and racism. The *Stó:lō* used many expressions to mean cultural revival: revival, resurgence, coming into the open, an awakening. The underlying premise is that the traditional practices and traditional belief system the *Stó:lō* people recognize as distinctly “*Stó:lō*” has never been extinguished. Cultural revival encompasses many traits of a culture, such as a language, law, political structures, artifacts, kinship patterns, economy and so forth, nevertheless, the interviews focus on those specific traits specific to *Stó:lō* wedding ceremonies. These traits will solidify a distinctly *Stó:lō* identity described in this thesis as “*Stó:lō*-ness.”

From elders’ teachings, *Stó:lō* individuals know what to expect during courtship and the wedding ceremony; they know the community will recognize the union, and the bride and groom understand their roles in marriage. These expectations do not preclude each couple’s distinctiveness but provide guidelines for societal expectations. By following societal expectation, community cohesiveness and a sense of belonging are enhanced. When language, ceremonial rites, and societal practices are suppressed, cultural distinctiveness is prevented. The *Stó:lō* I interviewed describe this as representative of their experience, or that of their elders, when European populations immigrated and then settled in British Columbia. Even though contemporary Canadian society still influences the *Stó:lō* First Nation, the effects of colonization are slowly being replaced by feelings of community pride and self-worth due in part to the revival of “traditional” *Stó:lō* cultural practices. Many *Stó:lō* still subscribe to the lessons learned during the colonial period. Passed from elders to their children and their children’s children, negative practices adopted during colonial times, such as alcoholism and domestic violence fill the void left by cultural suppression. Nevertheless, some *Stó:lō* still fear losing cultural traditions entirely. Revival represents the dynamic nature of the *Stó:lō* First Nation today and the fluidity in *Stó:lō* definitions of what is “traditional” reflect a community coping with change and continuing to persist as a distinct society

through that change. Many *Stó:lō* recognize that one cannot go backwards in time; rather a rich cultural tradition will survive even during extreme cultural upheaval.

The revival of *Stó:lō* traditions began during the 1960s and 1970s. Some *Stó:lō* believe this time period engendered liberal attitudes that increased open-mindedness and acceptance of differences from mainstream Canadian society. Some interviewees also believe that mainstream Canadian society was searching for a form of spirituality perceived to be lacking in its own practices, a lack filled by Aboriginal spirituality. This made it more acceptable for Aboriginal peoples to openly practice their religions. Whether this is why a revival of *Stó:lō* traditional culture began or, as some *Stó:lō* elders believe, because the Spirit answered their prayers, it remains that a revival can be documented as beginning at that time within the *Stó:lō* First Nation. Some *Stó:lō* feel that *Stó:lō* “traditions” were obscured during the time of suppression by colonizing forces. However, they maintain that the reasons for and community understanding of traditional practices have always remained just below the surface waiting for a time when the practices could be revived.

That elders are passing away before passing on their cultural knowledge to others is an ongoing concern for the *Stó:lō* community (Doug Kelly 1998: interview). Nevertheless, some *Stó:lō* community members claim that despite this concern the transmission of knowledge is occurring today and continued even during times of overt legal repression. The *Stó:lō* recognize that the lessened scale of this knowledge transmission in the past is a cause for concern as fewer elders spoke of cultural practices for fear of non-Aboriginal reprisal or overt sanctioning. The *Stó:lō* maintain that “tradition” has always been present among the *Stó:lō* people waiting for the right time to emerge and now having emerged, is valued once again. Passing on and practicing “traditions” have renewed *Stó:lō* awareness in them. What is important to the *Stó:lō* is not so much how these traditions are being revived but that revival is occurring. Interviewees acknowledge that conflict and confusion are a part of this revival process because traditions are being interpreted and learned by younger generations in a way that is heavily influenced by mainstream Canadian society. Although past and present practices of cultural learning may differ, interviewees point out that the teachings remain

the same. Those taking part in the wedding ceremony may have learned about the rites as adults from instruction by family members and elders in the community or from sources written by western ethnographers based on information from *Stó:lō* informants, but the intentions of the ceremony and those involved have persisted since “time immemorial.” Many interviewees acknowledge that patience is essential because the revival will be a long process.

Most interviewees state that the *Stó:lō* First Nation is getting stronger through the revival of traditions but that cultural practices must be desired, understood, and above all practiced to become entrenched in *Stó:lō* society again. The *Stó:lō* suggest that traditions must be learned in homes, schools, and throughout communities in order to become an integral part of *Stó:lō* society, in order to reinforce *Stó:lō* identity. Repeatedly, those with whom I interviewed stressed a deeper understanding of the values underlying cultural practice. Therefore, the foundation of cultural revival is knowledge.

Choice/Self-determinism

When I asked what constitutes a “traditional” *Stó:lō* wedding ceremony today I rarely heard about ceremonial details. Rather, the common response was an ideological one: choice. Choice in how to be married, in how to confirm one’s “*Stó:lō*-ness” through a distinctive ceremony and, most importantly, in how to embrace one’s spirituality be it drawn from the *Stó:lō* spirit world/power or life force (*shxweli, syúwál*) (Carlson ed. 1997: 55 ; Galloway 1977: 543), Christian, or a combination of both. To use *sxwó:yxwey* masks, to potlatch, and to sing traditional songs in the wedding ceremony reflects broader issues concerning the right to make choices and enjoy a degree of self-determinism. The *Stó:lō* often voiced the significance of *Stó:lō* individuals’ and communities’ rights to control their own lives; to secure choices in all aspects of *Stó:lō* life through the current process of treaty making and litigation with the Federal and Provincial Governments. *Stó:lō* self-determinism is defined in traditional wedding ceremonies through a couple’s choice of what constitutes *Stó:lō* “tradition” and the ways in which each couple chooses to reaffirm their “*Stó:lō* -ness.” To have “good intentions” is the underlying theme here,

the intention to have a “good mind and heart,” thereby honoring yourself, your family, and your community.

The *Stó:lō* choose to blend Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ceremonial elements as described in the previous section. This compromise, as well as the acceptance of Aboriginal marriage commissioners appointed by the Provincial Government to solemnize weddings, enables *Stó:lō* couples to determine for themselves how to organize their wedding ceremony while still acknowledging the legal requirements of the dominant society. Thus, learning about one’s past, accepting one’s contemporary reality, and compromising within that reality are ways contemporary *Stó:lō* people gain control or agency. The *Stó:lō* also emphasize education and understanding as methods for achieving self-determinism. As Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people become increasingly aware of British Columbia’s and Canada’s colonial past, an understanding of the impacts of oppression and suppression of tradition on contemporary *Stó:lō* society will be reached. Gwen Point states that in order to continue moving towards *Stó:lō* self-determinism with confidence, *Stó:lō* people need to know their history and how they have arrived at this point in time.

Choice is of primary importance to the *Stó:lō*. To have agency or control over one’s own life is to have choice, to have increased possibilities, and limitless opportunities. This is what the *Stó:lō* desire for their children. The three themes that emerged from the interviews are interrelated and reinforcing one another. Choice reinforces the distinctiveness of *Stó:lō* identity, creating a community better able to advocate for community needs. Community needs include the promotion of “*Stó:lō*-ness,” cultural revival, and individual as well as collective choice regarding such things as the right to practice *Stó:lō* rites. During pre-contact times the *Stó:lō* were self-determining. Although this ability to control their lives was suppressed during the colonial period, through cultural revival and a strengthening of *Stó:lō* identity they are increasing their ability to self-determine again.

In Conclusion

Anthropology may help to elucidate the differences, if any, between invented and old traditional practices... One marked difference between old and invented practices may be observed. The former were specific and strongly binding social practices, the latter tend to be quite unspecific and vague as to the nature of the values, rights and obligations of the group membership they inculcate. (Hobsbawm 1983: 10)

The changes... Indians have made over time, taken all in all, seem selective. Some inner man resisted complete annihilation of self and identity and held fast to values and attitudes acquired in a mother's arms and on a father's knee and chose from us [non-Aboriginal people] some things of us but not others. They chose principally what we call material culture and technology and little of our sentiments and values and our philosophy of life. (Lesser 1985: 111)

The *Stó:lō* emphasize that living in a "good" way constitutes a healthy lifestyle resulting in both individual and cultural survival. To survive is to have additional future opportunities to heal. To heal holds the promise of being an increasingly strong and healthy society. Through the use of "traditional" *Stó:lō* rites in wedding ceremonies, the *Stó:lō* are not attempting to return to a time before European culture contact but rather to work towards rebuilding a functioning community. *Stó:lō* communities will continue to be situated within a non-*Stó:lō* dominant society but the *Stó:lō* will remain a distinctive, self-determining community within that society. To be both healthy and self-determining, *Stó:lō* society must be dynamic without losing sight of its past identity. The *Stó:lō* identity provides a strong foundation upon which contemporary *Stó:lō* society is built.

Negative effects of colonization, the reserve system, the residential school system, alcoholism, and prejudice, were emphasized by the interviewees as the driving forces behind the interruption of the *Stó:lō* practice and oral transmission of "traditional" knowledge. As these external forces have diminished through the years the *Stó:lō* felt more able to make choices about how they wanted to live their lives within the dominant Canadian culture. Today the *Stó:lō* reside together as families, choose where they will live, and practice the ceremonialism that defines them as *Stó:lō*. Those interviewed embrace a necessary dynamism. They repeatedly state that a return to pre-contact

patterns is neither possible nor desired. What is desired is the ability to exercise choice at the individual, family, community, and Nation level, even if this requires redefining “tradition” or incorporating “tradition” within a contemporary context. Traditional knowledge informs and defines *Stó:lō* cultural beliefs and practices and empowers the *Stó:lō* through the ability to self-determine. Self-determinism or “choice” enables the *Stó:lō* to practice cultural traditions that reinforce and strengthen *Stó:lō* identity. Thus tradition, choice and identity come full circle in the processes of revival and cultural persistence that characterize the *Stó:lō* today.

LITERATURE CITED

LITERATURE CITED

- Adams, Howard
 1995 *A Tortured People: The Politics Of Colonization*. Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books Ltd.
- Agar, Michael H.
 1980 *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography*. Toronto: Academic Press.
- Alfred, Gerald R.
 1995 *Heeding The Voices Of Our Ancestors: Kahnawake Mohawk Politics and the Rise of Native Nationalism*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Alfred, Taiiaki
 1999 *Peace Power Righteousness: an indigenous manifesto*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Allen, R.E. ed.
 1990 *Choice and Self-determinism*. In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary: Thumb Index Edition*. 8th edition. Toronto: Oxford University Press Inc.
- Anderson, Barbara Gallatin
 1990 *First Fieldwork: The misadventures of an anthropologist*. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Asch, Michael
 2000 Personal communication. Victoria, B.C.
- Barnett, Homer G.
 1938 *The Nature Of The Potlatch*. *American Anthropologist* 40: 349-358.
- 1967 'The Coast Salish of Canada (1938).' In *The North American Indians: A Sourcebook*. Roger Owen, James Deetz and Anthony Fisher, eds. Pp.302-323. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.
- Bee, Robert L.
 1974 *Patterns and Processes: An Introduction to Anthropological Strategies for the Study of Sociocultural Change*. New York: The Free Press: A Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.
- Bierwert, Crisca
 1999 *Brushed by Cedar, Living by the River: Coast Figures of Power*. Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press.

Boas, Franz

- 1966 *Kwakiutl Ethnography*. Helen Codere, ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Bohannon, Paul, and John Middleton, eds.

- 1968 *Marriage, Family And Residence*. New York: The Natural History Press.

British Columbia

- 1979 *Terms of Union (Order of Her Majesty in Council Admitting British Columbia into the Union), 1871*. Revised Statutes of British Columbia, Appendices (1979) 7: 83-86.
- 1992 *Milestone: A Communication Link From Vital Statistics*. Pamphlet dated December 1992, Volume 1, Number 1. BC Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors.

Canada

- 1969 *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969*. Published under the authority of the Honourable Jean Chretien, PC, MP Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Cat. No. R32-2469. Ottawa: Queen's Printer.

1876, 1985, 1990, 1995 *Indian Act (R.S.C.)*

1982 *The Constitution Act*. Canada Gazette, Part III. 21 September, 1982.

1987 *Report to Parliament: Implementation of the 1985 Changes to the Indian Act*. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. June 1987. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.

Carlson, Keith Thor (ed.)

- 1997 *You Are Asked To Witness: The Stó:lō in Canada's Pacific Coast History*. Chilliwack, B.C.: Stó:lō Heritage Trust.

Cayne, Bernard S. ed.

- 1988 *Colonialism*. In *The New Lexicon Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary Of The English Language: Canadian Edition*. New York: Lexicon Publications.

Charlie, Kelsey

- 1998 Interview with author. Sardis, B.C. May 29 and June 15, 1998.

Charlie, Pat

- 1998 Interview with author. Sardis, B.C. June 10, 1998.

- Cole, Douglas and Ira Chaikin
 1990 An Iron Hand Upon The People: The Law Against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast. Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre.
- Collins, June McCormick
 1974 Influence Of White Contact On The Indians Of Northern Puget Sound. New York: Garland Publishing Inc.
- Cruikshank, Julie
 1990 Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.
- Davies, Charlotte Aull
 1999 Reflexive Ethnography: A guide To Researching Selves And Others. London and New York: Routledge.
- Deloria Jr., Vine
 1997 Red Earth White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing.
- Douglas, Darwin
 1998 Interview with author. Sardis, B.C. June 5, 1998.
- Drucker, Philip
 1967 'Indians of the Northwest Coast (1955).' In *The North American Indians: A Sourcebook*. Roger Owen, James Deetz, and Anthony Fisher, eds. Pp.291-302. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.
- Duff, Wilson
 1952 The Upper Stalo Indians Of The Fraser River of B.C. Anthropology In British Columbia, Memoir No.1. Victoria, B.C.: British Columbia Provincial Museum.
 1997 The Indian History Of British Columbia: The Impact Of The White Man. New edition. Victoria, B.C.: Royal British Columbia Museum.
- Edgar, Storm
 2002 Personal communication. Victoria, B.C.
- Fanon, Franz
 1963 The Wretched Of The Earth. New York: Grove Press.
- Fowler, Laura
 1998 Interview with author. Sardis, B.C. June 1, 1998.

- Fraser, Stan and Mary (name changed)
1998 Interview with author. Sardis, B.C. June 6, 1998.
- Galloway, Brent Douglas
1977 A Grammer of Chilliwack Halkomelem (Parts 1 and 2). Ph.D. dissertation. University of California, Berkeley.
- Galois, Robert M.
1995 The Native Population Of The Fort Langely Region, 1780-1857: A Demographic Overview. A report submitted to Parks Canada on September.
- Geertz, Clifford
1973 The Interpretation of Cultures; selected essays. New York: Basic Books.
- Goodenough, Ward Hunt
1963 Cooperation in Change. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Goody, Jack
1969 Comparative Studies in Kinship. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Gordon, Father Gary
1998 Interview with author. Sardis, B.C. June 8, 1998.
- Gough Kathleen
1959 The Nayars and the Definition of Marriage. Journal Of The Royal Anthropological Institute Of Great Britain 89: 23-34.
- Hall, Catherine
1998 Interview with author. Sardis, B.C. June 3, 1998.
- Harkin, Michael
1996 Past Presence: Conceptions Of History In Northwest Coast Studies. Arctic Anthropology 33 (2): 1-15.
- Harris, Cole
1987 The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays. Vancouver, B.C.: UBC Press.

1997 Social Power And Cultural Change In Pre-Colonial British Columbia. B.C. Studies, Number 115/116: 45-82.

2002 Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia. Vancouver, B.C.: UBC Press.

Hill-Tout, Charles

1907 *British North America: I. The Far West: The Home Of The Salish And Dene.* London: Archibald Constable And Company Ltd.

Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger

1983 *The Invention of Tradition.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Holsti, Ole R.

1969 *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities.* Reading, M.A.: Addison-Wesley.

Howell, Nancy

1990 *Surviving Fieldwork: a Report of the Advisory Panel on the Health and Safety in Fieldwork, American Anthropological Association.* Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association.

Isaac, Thomas

1999 *Aboriginal Law: Cases, Materials, And Commentary.* 2nd edition. Saskatoon, Sask.: Purich Publishing.

Jacobson, Anita

1967 *Marriage And Money.* Sweden: Berlingska Boktryckeriet.

Jenness, Diamond

1977 *The Indians of Canada.* 7th edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Joe, Herb and Helen

1997 Interview with the author. Sardis, B.C. June 8, 1998.

Joe, Tracy

1998 Interview with author. Sardis, B.C. June 5, 1998.

Karim, Wazir Jahan

1996 *Anthropology Without Tears: How a 'local' sees the 'local' and the 'global'.* In *The Future of Anthropological Knowledge.* Henrietta Moore, ed. Pp. 115-138. New York: Routledge.

Keesing, Roger M.

1975 *Kin Groups and Social Structure.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Kelly, Doug and Sherry

1998 Interview with author. Sardis, B.C. June 6, 1998.

Kelly, Gina

1998 Interview with author. Sardis, B.C. June 12, 1998.

- Lerman, Norman, compiler
 1952 *An Analysis Of Folktales Of Lower Fraser Indians, British Columbia.*
 M.A. thesis. University of Washington.
- Lesser, Alexander
 1985 'The right not to assimilate: the case of the American Indian (1961).' In
History, Evolution, And The Concept Of Culture: Selected Papers by
Alexander Lesser. Sidney W. Mintz, ed. Pp.108-117. Cambridge:
 Cambridge University Press.
- Maracle, Lee
 1996 *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective On Sociology And Feminism.*
 Vancouver, B.C.: Press Gang Publishers.
- Maud, Ralph
 1978 *Salish People: The Local Contribution of Charles Hill-Tout Volume IV:*
The Sechelt and the South-Eastern Tribes of Vancouver Island.
 Vancouver, B.C.: Talonbooks.
- McFeat, Tom, ed.
 1966 *Indians Of The North Pacific Coast: Studies in Selected Topics.* Toronto:
 McClelland and Stewart Limited.
- McHalsie, Albert "Sonny" and Linda
 1998 Interview with author. Sardis, B.C. May 28, 1998.
- McIlwraith, Thomas
 1996 Problem of Imported Culture: The Construction of Contemporary *Stó:lō*
 Identity. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 20 (4): 41-70.
- McNeill, Janet
 1981 *Fort Langley: A Case Study Of The Relations Between The Fur Traders*
And Native Women. M.A thesis. University of British Columbia.
- Mead, Margaret
 1972 *Blackberry Winter: My Earlier Years.* New York: Morrow.
- Morgan, Lewis H.
 1877 *Ancient Society.* New York: World Publishing.
- Nagar, Richa
 2002 Footloose Researchers, 'Traveling' Theories and the Politics of
 Transnational Feminist Praxis. *Gender, Place And Culture*, Vol. 9, No. 2:
 179-86.

- Piddocke, Stuart
 1965 The Potlatch System Of The Southern Kwakiutl: A New Perspective. *Southwest Journal of Anthropology* 21: 244-264.
- Point, Gwen
 1998 Interview with author. Sardis, B.C. June 3, 1998.
 1999 Interview with author. Sardis, B.C. June 16, 1999.
- Sacks, Karen Brodtkin
 1993 Euro-Ethnic Working-Class Women's Community Culture. *In* *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol. XIV, No. 1.
- Sanjek, Roger, ed.
 1990 *Fieldnotes: The Makings Of Anthropology*. London: Cornell University Press.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul
 2001 *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*. New York: Routledge.
- Schaepe, David M.
 1998 Household Inferences Form A 4800 Year Old Plankhouse In The Upper Fraser River Valley, BC. Unpublished essay in *Stó:lō Nation Archives*. Sardis, B.C.
- Sitting Eagle, Christine and Tyrone "Hutch"
 1998 Interview with author. Sardis, B.C. June 5, 1998.
- Smith, Dave
 2000 Personal communication. Sardis, B.C.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai
 1999 *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research And Indigenous Peoples*. New York: Zed Books Ltd.
- Smith, Marian
 1945 *Marian W. Smith Collection*. London: Museum Of Mankind And Royal Anthropological Institute.
- Spindler, Louise S.
 1977 *Culture Change And Modernization: Mini-models and case studies*. Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Spradley, James P.
 1979 *The Ethnographic Interview*. Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Stó:lō Nation Aboriginal Rights and Title

- 1998 Suggested Topics for 1998 UVic Ethnohistory Field School Submitted by various *Stó:lo* Nation AR&T staff members. March 13 update. Unpublished research topic list. Sardis, B.C.

Suttles, Wayne

- 1979 Katzie Ethnographic Notes. *In* Anthropology in British Columbia Memoirs, Number 2 (1955). Wilson Duff, ed. Pp.5-31. Victoria, B.C.: British Columbia provincial Museum.
- 1987 Coast Salish Essays. Vancouver, B.C.: Talonbooks.
- 1990 Northwest Coast, Volume 7: Handbook of North American Indians. William C. Sturtevant, general ed. Washington: Smithsonian Institute.

Thom, Brian

- 1996 (May) *Stó:lo* Traditional Culture: A Short Ethnography of the *Stó:lo* People. <http://web20.mindlink.net/stolo/culture.htm>.

Thomas, Elizabeth

- 1998 Interview with author. Sardis, B.C. June 2, 1998.

Van Kirk, Sylvia

- 1988 "Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870. Winnipeg: Hignell Printing Limited.

Van Maanen, John

- 1988 Tales Of The Field: on writing ethnography. Chicago: University of Chicago.

Victor, Gary and Patricia

- 1998 Interview with author. Chilliwack, B.C. June 1, 1998.

Vincent, Joan

- 1991 Engaging Historicism. *In* Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present. Richard G. Fox ed. Pp.45-58. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press.

Wells, Oliver N.

- 1988 The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbors. Ralph Maud, Brent Galloway and Marie Weeden, eds. Vancouver: Talonbooks

Wright, Robin

- 1988 Anthropological Presuppositions Of Indigenous Advocacy. Annual Review Of Anthropology, Vo.17: 365-90.

Yow, Valerie Raleigh

1994 *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide For Social Scientists*. London: SAGE Publications.

CASES, STATUTES, AND LAWS

Cases:

Calder v. Attorney-General of British Columbia, 7 C.N.L.C. 91, [1973] S.C.R. 313, [1973] 4 W.W.R. 1, 34 D.L.R. (3d) 145, (S.C.C.), affirming 7 C.N.L.C. 43, (1970), 13 D.L.R. (3d) 64, 74 W.W.R. 481 (B.C.C.A.).

Delgamuukw v. British Columbia, [1998] 1 C.N.L.R. 14, (S.C.C.), reversing in part, [1993] 5 C.N.L.R., [1993] 5 W.W.R. 97 (B.C.C.A.), varying in part [1991] 5 C.N.L.R., [1991] 3 W.W.R. 97, 79 D.L.R. (4th) 185 (B.C.S.C.).

Hamlet of Baker Lake v. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, [1979] 3 C.N.L.R. 17, (1979), 107 D.L.R. (3d) 513, [1980] 1 F.C. 518, [1980] 5 W.W.R. 193 (F.C.T.D.).

R. v. Sparrow, [1990] 3 C.N.L.R. 160, (1990), 46 B.C.L.R. (2d) 1, [1990] 1 S.C.R. 1075, [1990] 4 W.W.R. 410, 56 C.C.C. (3d) 263, 70 D.L.R. (4th) 385, 111 N.R. 241 (S.C.C.), affirming [1987] 1 C.N.L.R. 145, 32 C.C.C. (3d) 65, 36 D.L.R. (4th) 246, 9 B.C.L.R. (2d) 300 (B.C.C.A.).

R. v. Van der Peet, [1996] 2 S.C.R. 507, [1996] 4 C.N.L.R. 177, 50 C.R. (4th) 1, 109 C.C.C. (3d) 1, 23 B.C.L.R. (3d) 1, [1996] 9 W.W.R. 1, 137 D.L.R. (4th) 289, 200 N.R. 1, (S.C.C.), affirming [1993] 4 C.N.L.R. 221, 5 W.W.R. 459, 80 B.C.L.R. (2d) 75 (B.C.C.A.).

Statutes:

The Royal Proclamation, 1763. In RCS 1970, Appendices: 123-29.

APPENDICES

Appendix #1: Map; <i>Stó:lō</i> Traditional Territory	109
Appendix #2: <i>Stó:lō</i> Nation Archives Oral Interview Consent and Release Form	112
Appendix #3: <i>Stó:lō</i> Marriage Questionnaire	114
Appendix #4: Vital Statistics, “Milestone” Pamphlet	119

Appendix #1: Map; *Stó:lō* Traditional Territory

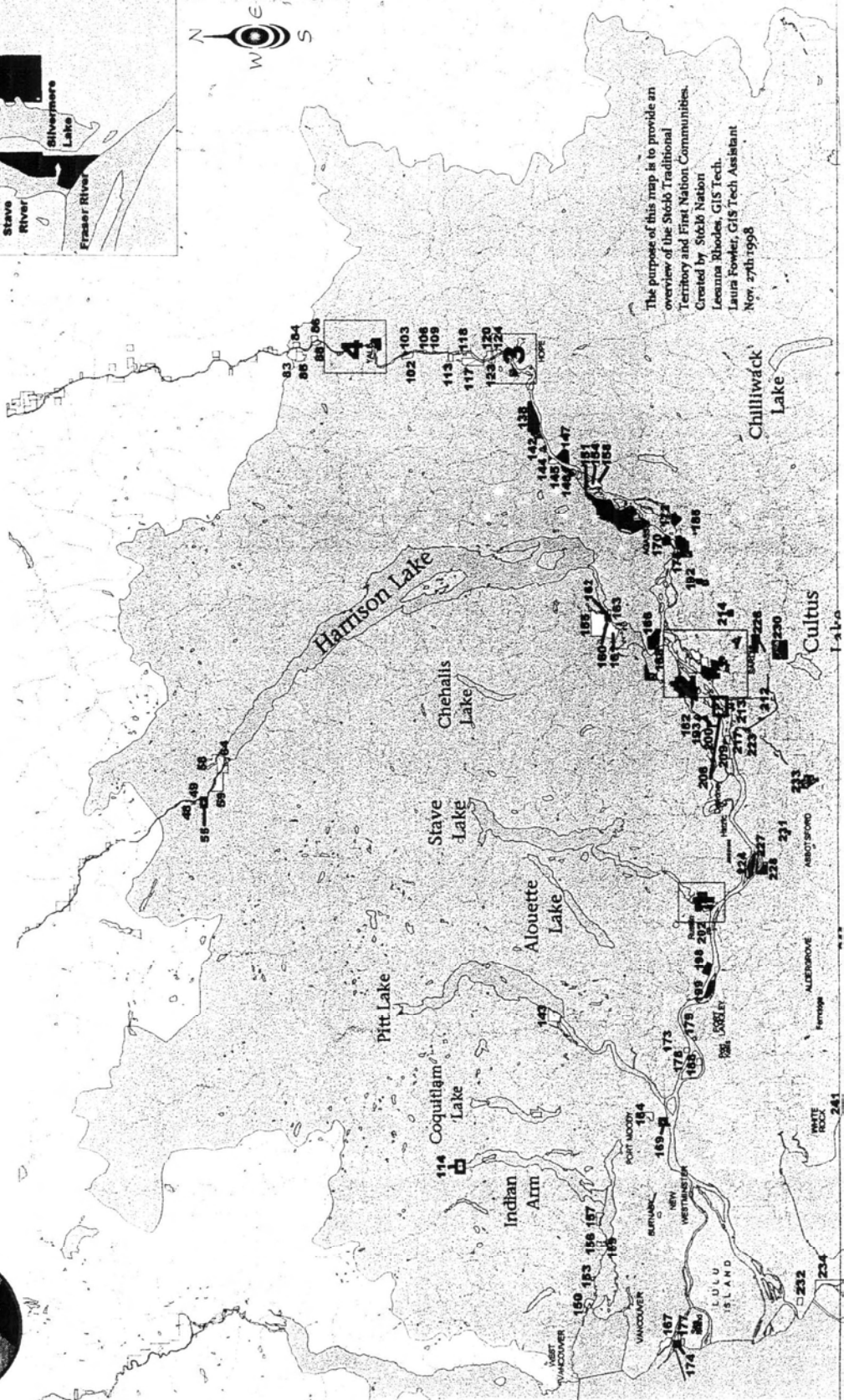
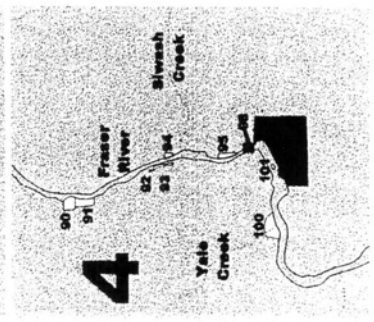
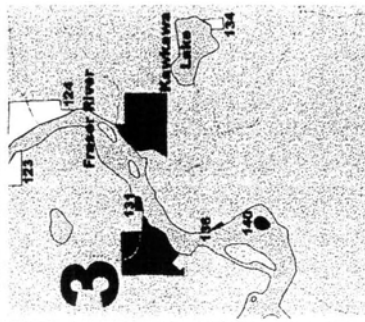
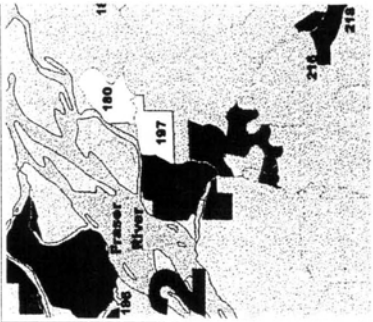
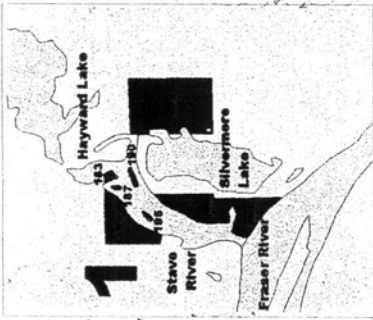
Note: I was granted permission to include this map by the creators: Leeanna Rhodes, GIS Technician, and Laura Fowler, GIS Technician Assistant.



Stó:lō Traditional Territory
with First Nation Communities

Legend
Communities

- Stó:lō Nation Member
- Non Stó:lō Nation Member
- Built Up Areas
- Stó:lō Traditional Territory



The purpose of this map is to provide an overview of the Stó:lō Traditional Territory and First Nation Communities. Created by Stó:lō Nation Leanna Rhodes, GIS Tech. Laura Fowler, GIS Tech Assistant Nov. 27th 1998

INDEX

48 Lelachen IR 6
 49 Lelachen IR 6
 55 Tipella IR 7
 58 Douglas IR 8
 59 Douglas IR 8
 64 Douglas IR 1
 83 Spuzzum IR 7
 84 Spuzzum IR 7
 85 Spuzzum IR 1A
 86 Stout IR 8
 88 Saddle Rock IR 9
 90 4 1/2 Mile IR 2
 91 Yale IR 23
 92 Yale IR 22
 93 Yale IR 22
 94 Yale IR 21
 95 Yale IR 20
 98 Yale IR 19
 99 Kuthalth IR 3
 100 Yale IR 1
 101 Yale IR 18
 102 Alberta Flat IR 5
 103 Qualark IR 4
 106 Squeah IR 6
 109 Kaykaip IR 7
 113 Stullawheets IR 8
 114 Inlailawatash IR 4
 117 Puckathoetchin IR 11
 118 Skawahlum IR 10
 120 Swahliseah IR 14
 123 Klaklacum IR 12
 124 Trafalgar IR 13
 129 Aywawwis IR 15
 130 Schkam IR 2
 131 Tunnel IR 6
 134 KawKawa IR 16
 136 Hope IR 1
 138 Chawuthen IR 4
 140 Greenwood Island IR 3

142 Skawahlook IR 1
 143 Pitt Lake IR 4
 144 Ruby Creek IR 2
 145 Lukseetsissum IR 9
 147 Shxw'ow'hamel IR 1
 148 Wahleach Island IR 2
 150 Capilano IR 5
 151 Peters IR 2
 152 Seabird Island IR
 153 Mission IR 1
 154 Peters IR 1
 155 Chehalis IR 5
 156 Burrard Inlet IR 3
 157 Burrard Inlet IR 3
 158 Peters IR 1A
 159 Seymour Creek IR 3
 160 Chehalis IR 5A
 161 Chehalis IR 4
 162 Chehalis IR 6

163 Chehalis IR 6
 164 Coquitlam IR 2
 165 Squakum Creek IR 3
 166 Scowlitz IR 1
 167 Musqueam IR 2
 168 Williams IR 2
 169 Coquitlam IR 2
 170 Tseatah IR 2
 171 Holachten IR 8
 172 Popkum IR 1
 173 Graveyard IR 5
 174 Sea Island IR 3
 175 Skumalasp IR 16
 176 Cheam IR 1
 177 Sea Island IR 3
 178 Katzie IR 1
 179 Katzie IR 2
 180 Skwalli IR 3
 182 Lakahahmen IR 11
 183 Kwantlen IR 2

184 Kwantlen IR 2
 185 Popkum IR 2
 186 Zaitscullachan IR 9
 187 Kwantlen IR 2
 188 Barnston Island IR 3
 189 Skwahla IR 2
 190 Kwantlen IR 2
 191 Kwantlen IR 4
 192 Schelowat IR 1
 193 Lakahahmen IR 11
 194 Lakahahmen IR 11
 195 Kwantlen IR 2
 196 Kwantlen IR 3
 197 Skwah IR 4
 198 Kwantlen IR 5
 199 Kwantlen IR 6
 200 Skweahm IR 10
 201 Skway IR 5
 202 Whonock IR 1
 203 Kwantlen IR 3

204 Kwawakwawapilt IR 6
 205 Squiala IR 8
 206 Yaalstrick IR 1
 207 Squiala IR 7
 209 Papekwatchin IR 4
 211 Aitchehltz IR 9
 212 Lakway Cemetery IR 3
 213 Lakaway IR 2
 214 Grass IR 15
 215 Skowkale IR 10
 216 Skowkale IR 11
 217 Sumas Cemetery IR 12
 218 Yakweakwoose IR 12
 223 Aylechootlook IR 5
 224 Three Islands IR 3
 226 Tzeachten IR 13
 227 Three Islands IR 3
 228 Matsqui Main IR 2
 230 Soowahlie IR 14
 231 Sahnacum IR 1

232 Musqueam IR 4
 233 Upper Sumas IR 6
 234 Tsawwassen IR
 241 Semiahmoo IR
 244 Matsqui IR 4

Appendix #2: *Stó:lō* Nation Archives Oral Interview Consent and Release Form

Stó:lō Nation Archives: Oral Interview Consent and Release Form

Acc. No: _____

TITLE OF INTERVIEW OR ACCESSION: _____

I _____ hereby consent to the recording of an interview of myself. I agree that this interview may be kept on magnetic tape, transcribed, printed, and/or published by Stó:lō Nation or its agents.

I understand that this interview will be kept by the Stó:lō Nation Archives and will be used in accordance with the policies and principles of the Stó:lō Nation Heritage and Archives policies. Any conditions on the use of this material are described below.

Conditions:

None

I would like a cassette tape copy of the interview and I reserve the right to correct or add material to the interview within two months of my receiving the copied recording.

Other (describe): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Interviewer: _____

Date: _____

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Date(s) of interview(s): _____

Appendix #3: *Stó:lō* Marriage Questionnaire

STÓ:LŌ MARRIAGE QUESTIONNAIRE: A Guideline For Interviewing On The Meaning And Methods Of Legal Marriage Within The *Stó:lō* Communities (third draft 31/05/98)

PROTOCOL

- begin by introducing self and explaining affiliation with *Stó:lō* Heritage Trust (Keith Carlson – Department of Aboriginal Rights and Title)
- explain that the research design of personal project, as well as that of the University of Victoria field school, is intended to create a cooperative vehicle in which to research topics relevant to the *Stó:lō* peoples (all topics pursued by the school were developed or suggested by the *Stó:lō* Heritage Trust in association with *Stó:lō* elders and the *Stó:lō* cultural advisor, Sonny McHalsie)
- do not begin session with a rigid, straight-to-the-point firing off of questions directly related to the topic; for example, ask about the area, the length of time that the interviewee has lived there, etcetera
- be clear that the time of the interview will only be as long as the interviewee would like and that the information volunteered is entirely the interviewee's choice
- explain the various ways in which the interview can be recorded and encourage the interviewee to choose the format they would be most comfortable with
- explain what the accumulated knowledge will be used for and ask if this is acceptable
- ask if the interviewee would like to place restrictions on that knowledge and if they would like copies (tapes, transcriptions, notes, finished report)
- inform the interviewee how they can contact self if they have further questions and/or comments (*Stó:lō* phone number and Victoria phone number)
- ask if self can contact the interviewee if there arises further questions
- give a thank-you gift

Why get married?

What does it mean to be married?

Why have a ceremony?

How is one legally married?

What was/were the traditional *Stó:lō* marriage ceremony/ies?

(** bearing in mind that the *Stó:lō* were never static**)

How do you know about traditional ceremonies? Where did you learn this; did you witness “traditional” ceremonies; did an elder explain past ceremonies to you; did you learn of “traditional” ceremonies by reading ethnographies?

Were traditional marriages considered binding / legalized by the community? How?

What was marriage in relation to the Prophet Dance of pre-missionary(?) times?

Has the traditional *Stó:lō* ceremony been altered since the times of European contact?
How?

What form do marriages typically take today?

Does status affect marriages? How?

What form did or will your marriage ceremony take? What was involved?

What was unique / different about it?

Who will organize it? Who will be consulted?

What form did / are the preparations take/ing?

Why have a ceremony/feast/potlatch?

DID SOMEONE SOLEMNIZE / OR PRESIDE OVER THE UNION?

(If a religious ceremony) are you and your spouse religious? (if yes) what does it mean to you to be religious?

What form(s) would you like to see *Stó:lō* marriage ceremonies take?

Should *Stó:lō* ceremonies be SOLEMNIZED?

How do you feel about Wendy and Arnold Richie being recently commissioned to PRESIDE over *Stó:lō* marriage ceremonies?

Who has control over marriages versus who would you like to see have jurisdiction over marriages?

As treaties are being established, would you like to see *Stó:lō* marriage ceremonies included in this process? How?

IS THERE A DICHOTOMY BETWEEN WHAT IS CONSIDERED PRIVATE VERSUS PUBLIC? IF THIS EXISTS, HOW CAN THE PRIVATE ASPECTS OF A CEREMONY BE INCORPORATED INTO TREATY NEGOTIATIONS? WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR KEEPING THE PRIVATE ASPECTS PRIVATE AND NOT INCLUDING THEM INTO THE TREATY PROCESS? WHAT IS THE MIDDLE-GROUND THAT WILL ENABLE PRIVATE CEREMONIAL ASPECTS

TO BE RECOGNISED AS LEGALLY BINDING AND YET NOT HAVE TO PLACE THESE PRIVATE ASPECTS ONTO THE NEGOTIATION "TABLE?"

Was divorce present in *Stó:lō* culture pre-contact times? What was its form?

How did you learn about these acts / ceremonies?

What was divorce and what did it mean to be divorced in pre-contact times?

Do *Stó:lō* divorce their partners today? How (typically)?

What does it mean to be divorced today?

Would you like to see divorce incorporated into the treaty process? How?

What is inheritance (typically)?

Was inheritance affected by marriage (and divorce?) in the past, before European contact? How?

How do you know about past practices?

Is inheritance affected today by marriage and divorce? How?

Would you like to see inheritance incorporated into the treaty process? How?

****always bear in mind that every choice by each individual comes from a framework borne of the times in which those decisions are being made****
(Historical Context)

PROBLEMS:

*how will personalized, marriage, ceremonial elements find their way into the negotiation table if they are considered sacred or private to each family?

Note: Divided Sovereignty > 3 stages(?), *Stó:lō* band, family, jurisdiction.

*where are the individuals obtaining their information about past ceremonial practices? How big of a role are ethnographies played in the seeming "revival" of traditional practices? What are the implications of an entire generation educated by past ethnographers such as Wilson Duff, Diamond Jenness, and Franz Boas? Who is to say what is authentically *Stó:lō* as opposed to what is recorded by non-aboriginal peoples?

How will aboriginal people react today if told that what they have believed and practiced to date may not be “traditional?”

Note: Elders may have decided to place information with anthropologists to preserve while communities in turmoil and no societal tolerance

*how do I bring divorce into the conversation after talking about marriage, especially when talking to a couple?

*how do I bring inheritance more formally into the interview process? It always sounds discordant with the flow of the conversation up to that point.

*women are not being represented equally in couple interviews. Will I have to resort to interviewing each person individually? TIME CONSUMING!

*need to know about fur trader and missionary influence on past ceremonial elements.

Note: Sylvia Van Kirk, Jennifer Brown may be in archives.

*how do I deal with the sacred elements in my information search and in their representation in their final report? For example the rattle and the masks.

Note: Ask Herb Joe.

Note: How is my research affecting interviewees? (Darwin Douglas tape)

Appendix #4: Vital Statistics, "Milestone" Pamphlet



Milestone

A Communication Link
From Vital Statistics

December, 1992
Volume 1, Number 1

GREETINGS... from the Division of Vital Statistics!

This bulletin is being sent to bands, friendship centre staff, urban agencies and tribal councils. It contains news about an exciting pilot project which will improve the collection of statistical information about aboriginal births, deaths, and marriages. The collection of these vital statistics will allow aboriginal people to more easily qualify for benefits like health care and old age pension.

Background information

The Division of Vital Statistics is a part of the B.C. Ministry of Health and is responsible for keeping records about the important events in people's lives: births, deaths, marriages, and name changes. At one time, separate statistics were kept for aboriginal people, but this practice was discontinued in 1982. Now, however, aboriginal communities, health care providers, and other special interest groups have requested a return to the previous system, so that specific and accurate information can be obtained about the health and social well-being of aboriginal people in British Columbia.

A fresh approach

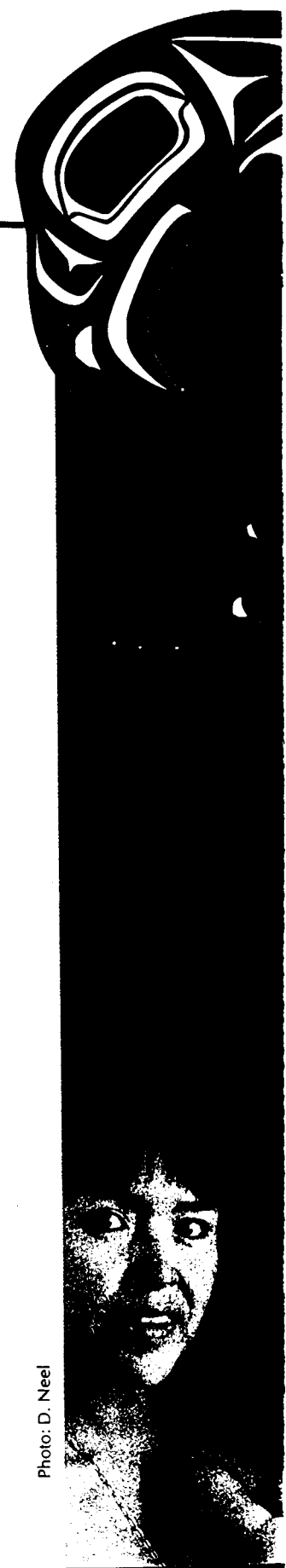
To ensure that the record-keeping system meets the needs of both aboriginal groups and government, the Division hired a consultant to do field work research in 1990. Several aboriginal communities throughout the province were consulted, and their opinions and concerns were noted. Some of the findings are outlined in this bulletin.

Births

Many aboriginal leaders expressed concern about the problems in getting community members to register births. They also spoke about the difficulty in obtaining delayed birth registrations, for people who had not been registered at birth.

RESPONSE: A brochure and poster stressing the importance of registering births are being developed for aboriginal communities. These materials will assist in explaining the steps involved in registering births and will be distributed in the coming months.

Also, a package of information explaining the steps involved in obtaining a delayed birth registration is under development and will be available early in the new year.



Marriages

Aboriginal leaders urged that their communities be given the authority to perform marriages – either traditional, or modern-day ceremonies.

RESPONSE: Any group may choose to have a member of their community appointed as a Marriage Commissioner. That person will then have the authority to perform civil marriages which would be recognized by law. As long as certain legally required statements are included in the ceremony, the rest of the ceremony can be designed to meet the cultural needs of the community and the personal wishes of the couple.

New criteria are also being developed under The Marriage Act which will allow aboriginal groups to qualify as religious bodies. The groups will then have the right to perform traditional marriages which would be recognized by law.

Aboriginal groups and communities should explore both of these options, to see which one would best meet their needs.

Administration

Many aboriginal communities expressed interest in registering their own vital events, and passing on the information to the Division as required.

RESPONSE: The Division of Vital Statistics will provide training and assistance to bands, tribal councils, or other aboriginal communities wishing to assume responsibility for their own vital statistics registration and administrative functions. The needs of each group will be reviewed on an individual basis, resulting in a decision regarding the most appropriate types and levels of service to be provided. The various training opportunities to be offered are outlined on the back of this bulletin.

Health Statistics and Planning

Accurate statistics about vital events are of interest to many aboriginal communities and other groups in government. These statistics can be transformed into a variety of health status indicators which can be very beneficial in identifying local health care priorities and for planning suitable health care programs.


RESPONSE: An indicator of aboriginal status will be added to all Division of Vital Statistics registration forms in order to assist in the analysis of health statistics that are pertinent to aboriginal people in British Columbia.

Pilot Project Area

The responses outlined in this bulletin will begin as part of a "pilot project" in six aboriginal communities:

- Fort Nelson Band
- Louis Riel Metis Association
- Cowichan Band
- Penticton Band (Okanagan)
- Skidegate Band (Haida)
- Carrier Sekani Tribal Council

Photo: D. Neel



Once the pilot project is complete, an evaluation is conducted, and, any necessary refinements are made, this entire initiative will be made available to all aboriginal groups throughout the province.

Training Opportunities

To help aboriginal groups administer and record their own vital statistics, the Division of Vital Statistics will be offering the following training programs to groups within the pilot project area:

Marriage Licence Issuer

The Marriage Licence Issuer provides information and direction to couples who wish to marry, and issues the marriage licence. After taking the training course, the participant will be able to:

- determine whether both persons are eligible to receive a marriage licence in British Columbia;
- review and process applications for a marriage licence;
- recognize any special needs the applicants may have, and offer advice or assistance;
- issue a marriage licence;
- account for the money collected, and perform the necessary administrative work.

Marriage Commissioner

The Marriage Commissioner is authorized to perform civil marriages which are recognized by law. After taking the training course, the participant will be able to:

- determine if a marriage licence is valid, so that a couple may be married in British Columbia;
- advise couples about the legal requirements of a marriage ceremony, and tell them about the different ceremonies available to them;
- perform civil marriage ceremonies;
- account for the money collected, and perform the necessary administrative work.

District Registrar

The District Registrar collects registrations of births, deaths, and marriages, and forwards them to Vital Statistics headquarters. After taking the training course, the participant will be able to:

- recognize correct and incorrect information on new registrations for births, marriages, deaths, and stillbirths;
- process complete registrations, including confirmation of control numbers;
- issue burial permits;
- certify requests for certificates (birth, marriage, etc.) received with new registrations;
- perform the necessary administrative work.

District Registrar Clerical Support

The District Registrar Clerical Support staff provides a variety of Vital Statistics services. After taking the training course, the participant will be able to:

- review, and process or reject a request for a certificate;
- take requests for changes and corrections to registrations;
- issue birth, death, and marriage certificates for new and historical events;
- perform the necessary administrative work, including revenue and stock control and reconciliations.

Conclusion

The Division of Vital Statistics is enthusiastic about this initiative. It is believed that the responses outlined here will improve the quantity, quality, and reliability of vital statistical information collected on aboriginal people in British Columbia. The Division hopes that aboriginal groups will welcome the chance to develop a valuable community-based resource in the area of vital statistics. The ultimate result will be a partnership that benefits both the Division of Vital Statistics and aboriginal communities throughout British Columbia.

...For more information about these training opportunities, please contact:

**Ministry of Health and
Ministry Responsible for Seniors
Division of Vital Statistics**

818 Fort St. Victoria, B.C. V8W 1H8 (604) 387-0041	250 - 605 Robson St. Vancouver, B.C. V6B 5J3 (604) 660-2937	2nd Floor - 1340 Ellis St. Kelowna, B.C. V1Y 1Z8 (604) 868-7798	407 - 1600 Third Ave. Prince George, B.C. V2L 3G6 (604) 565-7105
---	--	--	---

Business hours are Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

TOLL-FREE NUMBER:
1-800-663-8328

