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# **Redefining the Cultural Landscape in British Columbia: Huu-ay-aht Youth Visions for a Post-Treaty Era in Nuu-chah-nulth Territory**

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## **Abstract**

Centuries of colonial policies have influenced First Nations autonomy while preventing decision-making in accordance with their Indigenous cultural protocols. Against this backdrop, on April 1, 2011, the Maa-nulth Treaty went into effect for five Nuu-chah-nulth signatories, including Huu-ay-aht First Nations. The Treaty concerns never before ceded territories and includes provisions for land-use planning and rights to legal authority. Now comes the task of future planning for Maa-nulth signatories, which will require extra care so that Nuu-chah-nulth cultural



values are reflected appropriately. Modern treaties, however, remain complex, vaguely understood processes. Consequently, in preparation for implementation, Huu-ay-aht Council wished to understand their youths' visions for the future of their Nation. Based within a larger community-based participatory research project, this study used the interactive multimedia technique of digital storytelling to work with Huu-ay-aht youth to redefine their cultural landscape in a post-Maa-nulth era. Their stories show that while youths' perceptions and priorities involve the inclusion of services within their traditional territories, their visions are rooted in a distinctive Huu-ay-aht culture that integrates novel art forms and ever-evolving cultural identities. These findings suggest that the next generation of Huu-ay-aht leaders have innovative, culturally rooted visions for their nation in a post-Treaty era.

### **Introduction: British Columbia and 'the Indian Land Question'**

The imperial expansion of European nation-states throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries defined the state-centric political systems of today (Anderson, 1991). During these eras, imperial governments laid claim to territories through assertion of physical encroachment, violent means, and legal force. Through these processes, Indigenous inhabitants were often displaced (Said, 1994). Diverse social, legal, physical, and even genocidal tactics have been the means through which colonial agendas' ends were met: assertion of sovereignty over a territory and its people (Alfred, 2005). Resulting when colonizers occupy a land base despite Indigenous presence, settler colonialism involves establishing ownership over, and continued acquisition of, territories whereby occupation is necessary for subsistence, capital gain and assertion of settler nationalism (Wolfe, 2006). Framed simply, settler colonialism is a structure rather than an event since, "settler colonizers come to stay" (Wolfe, 2006: 388).

The nation-state of Kanata<sup>2</sup> is a prime example of a settler colonial state. Canada came to be established through successive waves of colonial explorers, missionaries, and traders seeking resources and lands for settlement (Saul, 2008; Miller, 2000). Imperial explorers and later Indian Agents acting on behalf of imperial governments often forcibly displaced Indigenous<sup>3</sup> inhabitants in order to provide settler newcomers with land. Historically, many Indigenous peoples entered negotiations with colonial governments (French and British), establishing

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<sup>2</sup> The term 'Kanata' is used here in place of 'Canada' to acknowledge the continued colonial occupation of this globally recognized nation-state. Place naming has been used as a tool of colonialism to appropriate Indigenous landscapes and claim ownership over their territories. Jacques Cartier misinterpreted 'Kanata', an Iroquoian word for village, for what he thought was a reference to the land base of what is now 'Canada' (Rayburn, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures are distinct in nature. The term 'Indigenous' will be used herein in place of the Canadian state's term 'Aboriginal' as a way of recognizing Indigeneity and refuting state definitional and allocation of identity (Alfred, 2005).

treaties in an attempt to secure certainty over their territories (Figure One: Map of Historic Treaties in Canada) (Miller, 2009). Despite constitutional inclusion of the rights and title of Indigenous<sup>4</sup> peoples living in Canada, in British Columbia (BC), Indigenous peoples and settlers/newcomers continue to live throughout a landscape located on previously unceded<sup>5</sup> Indigenous lands and resources. When viewed within the larger Canadian context, the province of BC is a distinct socio-political space (Roth, 2002).

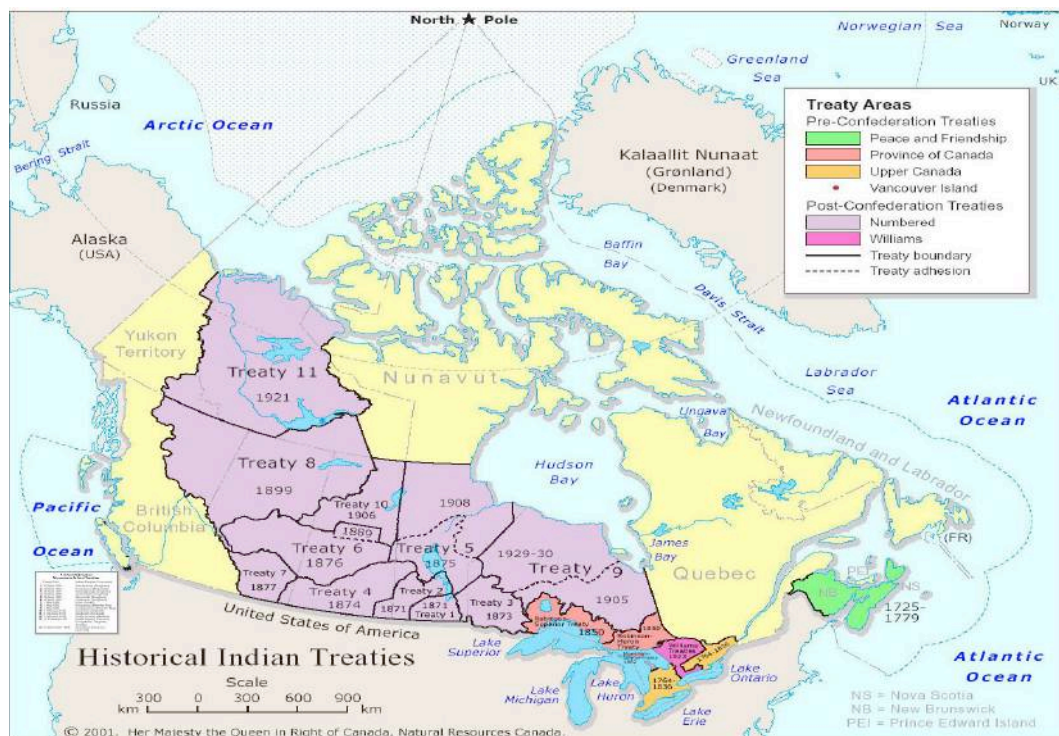


Figure One: Map of Historic Treaties in Canada (Natural Resources Canada, 2007)

With the exception of fourteen Douglas Purchase Treaties covering portions of Salish territories on the southern tip of Vancouver Island (1850-1854), and compensation to some Dene Nations in northeastern BC vis-à-vis Treaty Eight

<sup>4</sup> In 1982, the Canadian Constitution included section 35 which defined 'Aboriginal' as the legal term for First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Section 35 also affirmed Aboriginal title stating "the existing [A]boriginal and [T]reaty rights of the [A]boriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed" (Department of Justice, 2012). However, these 'rights' were not defined in full nor do all Aboriginal groups hold Treaties with the federal or provincial governments.

<sup>5</sup> 'Ceded' is a term often used in legal and political matters of geography. Referring to the surrendering or giving up of authority over, in this case, Indigenous territories, it is used here to highlight the legal nature, and non-contractual means, of Indigenous land acquisition by settler governments.

(1899) (McKee, 2009), no other treaties were historically signed. Indeed, when negotiating treaties in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the colonial government found it unnecessary to recompense the remaining First Nations (Miller, 2009)<sup>6</sup>. The ‘Indian Land Question’ is thus one that has continued to fuel an often tumultuous and unjust relationship between the provincial and federal governments, non-Indigenous residents of BC and the First Nations that have been there since time immemorial (Harris, 2002).

Postulating that First Nations did not possess a significant level of social organization to constitute the ability to negotiate against dispossession, the Common Law notion of *terra nullius* subhumanized First Nations, thus creating the legal foundation for their relocation and displacement (Radcliffe Wrightson, 2007). Indigenous peoples today remain wards of the Canadian state<sup>7</sup> (Alfred, 2009; Borrows, 1998). In an attempt to rid themselves of the Indian Act<sup>8</sup> and strive for social, political, economic and health equity, many First Nations in BC have entered into modern treaty negotiations with the federal and provincial governments. Modern treaties are intended to provide First Nations with certainty of territorial ownership through fee-simple land transfers and by reinstating relative self-determination through the abolishment of the Indian Act. To date, three modern treaties have been implemented in BC: the Nisga’a Treaty (2000), the Tsawwassen Treaty (2009), and the Maa-nulth Treaty (2011).

The purpose of this paper is to explore the long-term community goals of Indigenous youth whose First Nation recently implemented a modern treaty. To do so, youth from Huu-ay-aht First Nations participated in a research-based envisioning project to define their desired post-treaty community and cultural landscape. Recognizing that modern treaties are contested socio-political spaces<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Reasons for this neglect are often debated (see Miller, 2009; Roth, 2002; Harris, 2002; Egan, 2011; Tennant, 1992). Scholars have pointed to the need to accommodate the influx of settlers (Miller, 2009) and that the discovery of valuable resources during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century overshadowed the legal requirements for colonial governments to provide fair compensation to Indigenous peoples for acquisition of their territories (Harris, 2002; Harris, 1997). Political sentiments of the time viewed settlers as socially and culturally superior to Indigenous peoples. Given this Eurocentric mindset, regardless of the specific conditions that led to dispossession without recompense, the objective means in which settlers acquired Indigenous territories was excusable (Asch, 2002); especially with colonizers’ capital based state systems seen to be more advanced than the semi-sedentary Indigenous social structures.

<sup>7</sup> This statement is in reference to Indigenous peoples who hold state recognized and allocated ‘Indian Status’. The Indian Act governs Indigenous peoples who hold status.

<sup>8</sup> The Indian Act, enacted in 1876, is a Federal statute that governs status ‘Indians’, federally recognized Bands, and reserve lands.

<sup>9</sup> This project had two areas of focus: 1) the content of the stories; and 2) the methodological aspects of digital storytelling. The paper here presents the results from the first area of focus. The paper resulting from the second area of focus is in preparation. Please refer to Sloan Morgan (2012) for a

(Mack, 2007; Alfred, 2000; McNeil, 2001), the Maa-nulth Treaty is used as a contemporary platform for the youth to communicate their desire for change within a shifting political context: the move towards self-determination. As a precursor to understanding the thematic content of their stories, the path to modern treaties in the context of an ongoing colonial relationship between Indigenous peoples and the settler population in Canada is outlined below.

### Modern Treaties in BC

The first modern treaty in BC, the Nisga'a Treaty, was implemented in 2000. Prior to the implementation of the Nisga'a Treaty, dialogue surrounding comprehensive land claims in BC were unprecedented, lengthy and located in convoluted historical and legal frameworks that were traditionally used to delegitimize First Nations governance and claims to territories (Asch, 1997; Woolford, 2005). In order to create a logistical framework that would aid in directing future treaty negotiations, a six-stage process was created in 1992 and a tripartite body independent from First Nations, federal, or provincial governments — the British Columbia Treaty Commission (BCTC) — was appointed in 1993.

With the BCTC negotiating framework in place, the second modern treaty in BC - the Tsawwassen Treaty - was the first to successfully navigate the six-stage process. The third modern treaty, and the focus of this paper, went into effect on April 1, 2011 for the five nations of the Maa-nulth First Nations (Huu-ay-aht First Nations, Uchucklesaht Tribe, Toquaht Nation, Ucluelet First Nation and Ka:yu:k't'h'/Chek'tles7et'h' First Nations) (Maa-nulth Nations, 2008)<sup>10</sup>.

Despite the presence of a six-stage negotiation framework in BC, legal precedent for, and terms of, negotiations are often inaccessible to the majority of First Nations and settlers alike due to highly specified legal jargon and rulings from previous and evolving litigations complexly defining Indigenous rights and title<sup>11</sup>

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more in depth discussion of the methodological aspects of this envisioning project and their interplay with story themes.

<sup>10</sup> The Maa-nulth Treaty came after nearly a decade of initial negotiation under the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council (NTC) representing the 14 Nuu-chah-nulth Nations on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Disagreement during the negotiation process led to the Maa-nulth Nations breaking with the NTC to continue negotiations at their own treaty table. Becoming politically recognized as Maa-nulth First Nations in 2004, they submitted their Statement of Intent in the same year and began negotiations with the provincial and federal governments (Maa-nulth, 2003). It is worth noting that despite the six-stage process outlining the expected roles and responsibilities of all parties involved, relations between the state and First Nations are often poorly defined in the minds of First Nations and the larger Canadian society (Warry, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Discussions surrounding Indigenous rights and title in relation to treaty negotiations are vast and growing (see Alfred, 2000 & 2005; Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Borows, 1998; Borrows, 2010; Christie, 2005; Culhane, 1998; Dacks, 2002; Macklem, 2001; McNeil 1997 & 2001; Roth, 2002; Woolford, 2005). Litigation cases of particular mention in relation to current treaty negotiations in BC are *Calder v. Attorney-General of British Columbia* [1973] and *Delgamuukw v. BC.* [1997].

(Culhane, 1998; Asch, 1997). Furthermore, strains of a colonial mentality that frame settler governments as rightful and legal inheritors of Indigenous territories operate within the policies and practices of the state system, and actively disempower First Nations (Alfred, 2000; Deloria Jr., 1997; Mack, 2007). Modern treaties in BC, or comprehensive land claims, are thus not always viewed with positive intent. When combined with the legacy of racist conduct and unilateral authority exhorted by the state over First Nations, centuries of deeply rooted distrust and anguish are not easily surmountable (Dyck, 1991; Henderson, 2002). Furthermore, some argue that Treaty conditions simply perpetuate colonial trends whereby First Nations are sold short<sup>12,13,14</sup> (Woolford, 2005; Christie, 2005; Simpson, 2008). For those who *do* decide to enter the treaty process<sup>15</sup>, the end product - implementation - reinstates a level of community autonomy, sheds relative colonial control and recognizes and guarantees these conditions legally. Ironically, this recognition is granted under the same legal framework that was used to justify the displacement of First Nations centuries ago (Roth, 2002).

Despite relative self-determination being reinstated through treaty implementation, centuries of colonial policies have tainted First Nations' decision-making practices (Deloria Jr., 1997). Colonial policies in historical and contemporary forms attempted to assimilate First Nations by de-legitimizing Indigenous governance structures and cultural protocols (Bracken, 1997; Miller,

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Recognizing that much debate surrounds the foundation for treaty negotiations laid by these rulings (see Asch, 1997; Culhane, 1998; Macklem, 2001; Dacks, 2002; Roth, 2002), for the purpose of this paper the authors will use the legal precedent outlined by *Calder* and *Delgamuukw* as the point for departure.

<sup>12</sup> Many First Nations peoples view treaties as “certificates of conquest,” (Roth, 2002, 151) whereby rights are taken rather than granted. Compounded with the complex process of negotiations, mistrust in the negotiation process may be viewed as oppression, whereby Indigenous rights and title are defined by colonial courts (Dacks, 2002) and treaty negotiations result in partial erosion of traditional Indigenous territories for certainty over smaller portions of land (Borrows, 1998; Richmond, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> For example, the Nisga'a Treaty allocated 2000 square kilometres of fee simple land to the Nation. Lands are now recognized as privately owned versus the usufructory rights granted under concepts of Aboriginal title. Yet, the traditional territories of the Nisga'a and original areas claimed in negotiation were 25,000 square kilometres (Miller, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> This discussion surrounding perceptions of modern Treaties is by no means a comprehensive overview; it is intended to draw attention to the complexities involved in them. To discuss this in full would be beyond the scope of this manuscript. Please refer to Alfred & Corntassel (2005), Blackburn (2005), Borrows (1998 & 2010), Radcliffe Wrightson (2007), Richmond (2007), Price (2009), Penikett (2006), Egan (2011 & 2012), or Woolford (2005), for comprehensive discussions on this topic.

<sup>15</sup> First Nations members must vote at various stages of the six-stage process, including prior to the submission of the Statement of Intent, the first stage, to determine if the citizenship wishes to enter into treaty negotiations.

2000). In spite of these unilateral attempts at assimilation, such as the Indian Act and forceful removal of Indigenous children from their families to attend day and residential schools, First Nations remain largely rooted in culturally distinct foundations (Atleo, 2004; Coté, 2010). Reintegrating these protocols under the umbrella of self-government, however, will require skillfully navigating<sup>16</sup> colonially-imposed structures of governance and community operations that have, for decades, impacted decision-making strategies and community landscapes (Happynook, 2007). Inclusion of community voices in defining socio-political, spiritual and cultural landscapes, despite being complex, is necessary to develop and determine best practices as a critical first step towards decolonization (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Turner, 2006). Of particular importance are the voices of Indigenous youth - the future generation of Indigenous leadership who will be responsible for the unprecedented and ongoing navigation of modern treaty implementation.

### **Indigenous Youth: The Next Generation of Leadership**

The ongoing effects of colonialism on Indigenous peoples living in Canada are inter-generationally experienced (Manitowabi, 2007; Battiste, 2000). Youth, in particular, are “the current generation paying the price of cultural genocide, racism and poverty, suffering the effects of hundreds of years of colonialist public policies” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996)<sup>17</sup>. Although cultural and socialization practices for coming-of-age were, and are, incredibly diverse and adaptive between Indigenous communities, colonial policies have seriously and negatively altered the way that youth participate in community decision-making and the ability for communities to engage in intergenerational knowledge transfer (Battiste, 2000). Despite this, many Indigenous youth remain profoundly dedicated to the wellbeing of their communities (Kirmayer et al., 2003).

Indigenous youth are the youngest and fastest growing demographic in Canada. They are communicating and experiencing their culture and visions for

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<sup>16</sup> In his 2006 publication *This is not a peace pipe: Towards a critical Indigenous philosophy*, Dale Turner expands upon this notion of skillful navigation. Turner extends the role of Indigenous Warriors to encompass contemporary ‘Word Warriors’: Indigenous people versed in both an Indigenous philosophy and the colonial legal and educational systems. Through navigating the complex colonial realm while remaining rooted within their Indigenous philosophies, Turner believes Word Warriors are able to advocate for Indigenous community and cultural rights.

<sup>17</sup> Much of the literature that focuses on Indigenous youth reports the results of these colonial policies, such as epidemic rates of suicide (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008), high incidences of HIV (Larkin et al., 2007), and involvement in gangs and violent activities (Totten, 2009). In response to these social burdens, scholars have pointed to the importance of engaging youth in cultural activities to foster positive perceptions of self (Kirmayer et al., 2003; Chandler & Lalonde, 2008) and resilience in light of ongoing colonial struggles (Kaymer et al., 2009; Maniowabi, 2007; Lalonde, 2005) (see the March 2007 special edition of the *Native Social Work Journal* on resistance and resilience, addressing historical trauma of Aboriginal peoples).

their future in increasingly imaginative, self-prescribed terms (e.g., Warren & Evitt, 2010; Morgan & Warren, 2011). Although studies have shown that Indigenous youth may not be involved in conventional political practices such as elections, they are increasingly carving out spaces for their voices to be heard (Alfred et al., 2007), often through alternative, creative and/or indirect means (Hopkins, 2006) (e.g. Idle No More). Given that self-determination is undeniably tied to community health and wellbeing (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Begay et al., 2007), involving youth through innovative engagement is integral to community success (Blanchet-Cohen et al., 2011). This is especially the case since engagement is necessary in understanding and developing a sense of self and community identity, particularly within a self-determining framework (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health [NCCAPH], 2009). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) summarizes why this engagement is necessary: “Young [Indigenous people] are deeply concerned about the future because it is their future. They speak of concerns rooted in the here and now, with an eye to what can be done today to build a better tomorrow” (p. 138). The involvement of Indigenous youth as the future leadership in the current political landscape is, as never before, of vital importance. The unprecedented terrain that many First Nations will be entering in a post(modern)Treaty era will require innovative and insightful navigation.

### **The Journey to the Maa-nulth Treaty**

Since the establishment of settler colonies on the west coast of Vancouver Island, Nuu-chah-nulth nations have actively resisted assimilatory policies (Atleo, 2004). Rather than conceding to colonial regulations like the outlawing of the potlatch in 1876 - a practice integral to Nuu-chah-nulth social cohesion and the outlawing of which led to the destruction of family walls or large carved buildings representative of family clans<sup>18</sup> (Bracken, 1997) - Nuu-chah-nulth Nations reproduced family clan prints on ‘curtains’ or large canvases that could be discretely stored and displayed during social engagements (Bracken, 1997). None of the 14 Nuu-chah-nulth Nations ever relinquished title to their territories (Nuu-chah-nulth, 2008). In fact, the Maa-nulth Treaty is the first instance that any Nuu-chah-nulth community has solidified a comprehensive land claims agreement with colonial governments.

When the Maa-nulth Treaty went into effect, the Indian Act policies were no longer applicable. Instead, each of the five Maa-nulth First Nations created independent Constitutions that outlined the distinctive rights of their members and laws for their nations. For example, Huu-ay-aht First Nations’ Constitution includes reinstating hereditary systems of governance: previously denied under the Indian Act, Huu-ay-aht government now includes a guaranteed seat for the *Tyee*

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<sup>18</sup> Many of these walls were taken by Indian Agents and placed on display in museums throughout the world (Bracken, 1997).

*Hawilh* (Hereditary Chief)<sup>19</sup>, an elected legislative body, and a peoples' committee on the elected council. Land-use decision-making in Huu-ay-aht territory is now conducted in a manner that is reflective of cultural protocols, a means of decision-making that was formerly overruled by federal and provincial governments under the Indian Act (Maa-nulth, 2008). Huu-ay-aht membership is no longer determined through federal definitions of Indian status, but is based upon Huu-ay-aht definitions of identity and family lineage (Maa-nulth, 2008). The foundation to reclaim community self-determination is set, and with it, the ability for Huu-ay-aht First Nations to define their future in their own voices (Huu-ay-aht First Nations, 2000). Huu-ay-aht Chief and Council want to ensure that all Huu-ay-aht voices are heard in future decisions. The actual negotiation and implementation of a modern treaty is thus only one step in their ongoing processes of decolonization. As stated by Robert Dennis, Elected Chief of Huu-ay-aht First Nations, during his celebratory address at the Huu-ay-aht treaty celebration: "the work starts now!" (April 8, 2011).

### **Youth Vision(s) for a Post-Treaty Era: The Case Study<sup>1</sup>**

The research from which this paper stems is part of a larger, multi-year research partnership between Huu-ay-aht First Nations and the senior (second) author. Since 2005, they have been working together to answer questions of importance to the community concerning environmental sustainability and community health and wellbeing (Castleden, 2007; Castleden et al., 2009) using innovative, culturally meaningful research methods and knowledge translation strategies (Castleden et al., 2008). Because of the unique processes involved with modern treaties, and the increased self-determination that follows, Huu-ay-aht First Nations and the second author's most recent collaboration, which began in 2010, has involved an exploration of Huu-ay-aht youths' perspectives of their social, physical, and cultural landscape in a post-Treaty era. After initial discussions with the leadership, digital storytelling was proposed as a potential means of meaningfully and effectively engaging Huu-ay-aht youth in ways that would allow them to share their perspectives in an accessible manner with the entire community (and beyond) at the 2011 Treaty "effective date" celebration. Digital storytelling is reflective of Indigenous oral traditions (King, 2003; Smith, 1999); it has been described as "the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling" (Rule, 2007). Similar to other visual methodologies such as photovoice (e.g. Castleden et al., 2008), that are intended to be driven by participants, digital storytelling differs from static images by weaving them together with audio, transforming the participants into multi-media story makers and providing them with the tools and training to make short digital vignettes similar to narrative video<sup>20</sup>. Using a

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<sup>19</sup> The *Tyee Hawilh* is the head hereditary chief of the Huu-ay-aht Nation. *Ha'wiih* are chiefs of Huu-ay-aht 'houses' or collections of family units (Huu-ay-aht First Nations, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Digital stories vary in length. Most stories, however, are between two and six minutes in length.

multimedia-based platform, digital storytelling is an interactive approach that provides story makers with a medium for combining their visions and voices in digital form to communicate ideas about a particular issue or subject (Burgess, 2006; Lambert, 2008). As a qualitative research tool, digital storytelling is an innovative and novel approach and is itself a creation of cultural adaptation where technology is used to communicate the traditional art of oral storytelling (Fletcher & Cambre, 2009).

The university-based research team is not Nuu-chah-nulth. To ensure cultural protocols were maintained, and that the youth had community leaders present to voice concerns, the Huu-ay-aht Council appointed a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to oversee the project. The CAC was comprised of the *Tyee Hawilh* (Hereditary Chief) and two Elected Council members. They were available for cultural support and direction to ensure that all stages of the research were reflective of Huu-ay-aht values (Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, 2008). A community coordinator who had experience working with Huu-ay-aht youth was hired to aid in recruiting and organizing digital storytelling workshops. Before beginning recruitment, the proposed research was subjected to the scrutiny and approval of the Dalhousie University Social Sciences and Humanities' Research Ethics Board.

Recruitment for this study was done through collaborative identification of potential participants. Criteria for recruitment was limited to Huu-ay-aht identified youth as approved by the CAC. The CAC, research team and the community coordinator identified approximately 15 potential youth participants who were thought to have interest in participating in the research project. The hired community coordinator then contacted each youth via phone and through face-to-face interaction to ask if they wished to participate in the research project. Of those approached, eight were able and had a desire to partake, and subsequently gave free and informed consent to participate. Participants and their parents or caregivers (for those under the age of 18<sup>21</sup>) were given information pertaining to the project: research goals, time requirements, and general information. The youth participants created nine stories during two weeklong workshops: eight done individually and one collectively by four of the youth under the age of 18. Stories ranged in length from two to five minutes. During the workshops (in Vancouver with one youth participant and in Port Alberni with seven youth participants), participants were asked to reflect upon their vision for their social, cultural, and physical landscapes. Before consenting to participate, youth were informed that the digital stories would be screened to their entire community during the Maa-nulth Treaty celebrations. They were asked to develop ideas for a digital story that would demonstrate what

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<sup>21</sup> 'Youth' were culturally defined according to Huu-ay-aht cultural protocol, thus, story makers ranged in age from 13 to 38. Five of the eight youth who agreed to participate were under the age of 18 and, therefore, required parental consent.

they wanted the Maa-nulth Treaty to bring to their community<sup>22</sup>. Story makers received technical assistance tailored to their learning styles and abilities. Each youth elaborated upon their story's fundamental theme in one-on-one interactions with a research team member, or in group settings with other youth and the research team. This provided in-depth discussions surrounding each story, each story maker's values and perceptions of community, and their community vision. This adaptable format also allowed participants to express themselves in a manner that best suited their learning style and personal schedules<sup>23</sup>. The research team undertook participant observation during the workshops and kept detailed fieldnotes, thus providing context and recording valuable observations of both the process of digital storytelling and the stories themselves (Kearns, 2005).

The stories were analyzed inductively to better understand intersections and commonalities communicated by the story makers. A modified version of grounded approach was used to code for manifest themes, or broad reoccurring messages, within the stories (Cope, 2005). These were recorded and arranged into concepts (Glaser, 1992; Cutcliffe, 2000). These concepts were then related to broader themes within literature pertaining to decolonization and Indigenous self-determination/definition (Alfred, 2005; Turner, 2006; Atleo, 2004). This approach allowed for theoretical interpretation and comparative analysis throughout the first phase of data analysis. Preliminary results from the comparative analysis were compared to fieldnotes and participant observations to highlight intersections and add to preexisting concepts. Stories were then analyzed by semiotic (Rose, 2007) and audio discourse (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000) analysis in accordance with the reoccurring themes for latent codes (Cope, 2005). Performing a multidimensional analysis of images (semiotic) and audio (discourse) by way of the expanded concepts symbolically deconstructed the stories in accordance with the intentions of the story makers. As a result, the research team is more of a tool within the communicative process rather than an interpreter, thus attempting to address power imbalances inherent within processes of analysis (Battiste & Henderson, 2000). The research team actively sought the perspectives of its CAC to corroborate results. To do so, CAC members were sent preliminary findings for theme credibility (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Using this multipronged approach of analysis allowed emerging theories to be discussed in congruence with existing literature.

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<sup>22</sup> Story makers remained the sole owners of their stories. The research team and Huu-ay-aht First Nation did, however, receive permission to show the stories for educational and dissemination purposes. As such, a link to the stories is provided at the end of this article. In October 2011, and with encouragement from the youth, the stories were screened at ImagineNATIVE - a national film festival celebrating Indigenous film.

<sup>23</sup> All of the participants had time commitments, such as school and work, during the week long period that the workshops were taking place. Many of the younger youth enrolled in school took part in the workshops everyday after classes, while the youth not in school partook on an ad hoc basis in congruence with their work and personal schedules.

Doing so addressed an issue of rigour in qualitative research: for meaning to be discussed as a developing entity inductively, versus deductively predetermined by presenting theories as static products. More broadly speaking, this approach was employed to address the colonial practice of Indigenous voices being silenced within research interpretation (Louis, 2007), while more accurately discussing the stories (Clarke, 2005; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Below are the results of our analysis: findings that have been extracted from the stories themselves, through participant observation and through dialogues during the storytelling workshops.

## **Findings**

All of the youths' stories touched on a multiplicity of topics, with focus shifting from the individual story maker and extending to their families and the greater community. Despite integral differences in manifest and latent themes, all stories were anchored in and revolved around Huu-ay-aht culture. Definitions for how culture was perceived, lived and experienced varied, and yet three common themes were talked about by the youth: 1) cultural and social revitalization; 2) pride in Huu-ay-aht culture often through resistance to (colonial) impositions; and 3) increased community self-determination post-Treaty. Their visions for the future emerged in the social, cultural, community and physical landscapes. Themes of cultural and social revitalization are grouped together while themes of resistance to colonial impositions and revitalization through increased community self-determination post-Treaty are similarly grouped. These findings, as they are presented below, demonstrate the interconnectivity of the story makers' ideas, inspirations and aspirations for the future.

### ***Redefinition: Cultural landscapes of the past seen through eyes of the present***

Three story makers in particular evoked traditional cultural and social practices and, paralleling them to the present, provided metaphors that highlighted how they envisioned changes in the cultural landscape. These metaphors were infused with perceptions of contemporary Huu-ay-aht culture and each are elaborated in turn. The first metaphor, presented by Story maker Seven, involved discussing visions for the future through Huu-ay-aht identity as canoe people. Using images of a sweat lodge and Kiix?in - a historic Huu-ay-aht village of great cultural importance where a major battle took place, and which is now designated a national historic site (Huu-ay-aht First Nations, 2000) - the story maker expressed interest in taking the knowledge of the past learned from their Elders, and Huu-ay-aht skills as canoe people, to establish fishing charters and ethno-historical tourism. When speaking directly to Huu-ay-ahts' connection as canoe people, however, the story maker imposes a picture of a modern fishing boat followed by traditional paddlers demonstrating a cognitive recognition of the possible adaptation of Huu-ay-aht identity to suit the current economy.

The second story maker spoke of his father as a 'traditional' Huu-ay-aht artist. Drawing parallels in generational perceptions of artistic traditions he stated that his father always told him to "slow down," but "[he] likes to bend the rules"

([Story One](#), 0m:48s). The artist's story is composed mainly of his personal creations. As a means of expression, art has helped him overcome life barriers and has "given [him] more confidence to take part in things such as this [digital story] project" ([Story One](#), 2m:39s). The art depicted demonstrates the infusion of spirits and characters of cultural tradition with modern forms and mediums of expression. However, 'tradition' had not been abandoned. In the creation of cultural items, such as family curtains, the artist maintained HUU-ay-aht styles stating he felt honoured to be asked to produce such an important art piece. Combining contemporary and traditional artistic styles enabled the artist to produce creative expressions through their HUU-ay-aht cultural identity. Utilizing culturally integral characters, such as raven and wolf, and drawing from the shared experience of his people allowed for his art to build upon 'traditional' art pieces produced by his father and demonstrated the ability for conventional HUU-ay-aht artistic style to grow and build upon its foundation. This story maker additionally portrayed changes to HUU-ay-aht culture and community through generations by evoking images of Warriors in relation to the implementation of the Treaty:

When I think of the Maa-nulth Treaty I think of our ancestors. I think they are proud of us. It reminds me of the story of the 50 Warriors. We had all of our Warriors then who did all the fighting... the blood, the gore... now our modern day Warriors are doing our fighting with pens and paper ([Story One](#), 3m:25s).

Speaking to changes in forms of social relations and conflict resolution, this quote highlighted the perceived transformation of asserting autonomy. The storyteller speaks of frequent warfare that historically occurred between Nations. Within his story, he uses a recent image of a group of HUU-ay-aht youth, some of who actively participated in Maa-nulth negotiations and held seats on HUU-ay-aht Council, to discuss the battle involved with asserting self-determination. This form of 'battle', however, was conducted through treaty negotiations. The dramatic shift in relations between settlers and HUU-ay-aht First Nations, and HUU-ay-aht First Nations and surrounding Nations, from physical warfare to legal and political battles, is demonstrated.

The third story maker's metaphor related to traditional celebrations. Singing the 'All Nations Victory Song' that was given to the HUU-ay-aht Nation and all First Nations of BC in 1976 by the late Toquaht Hereditary Chief Cecil Mack, aged photographs of whale hunts are shown interchangeably with images of HUU-ay-aht Elected and Hereditary Chiefs and Council as the Maa-nulth Nations march in the streets of Victoria<sup>24</sup>. It is through these constantly interchanging photographs and the drumming of the 'All Nations Victory Song' that the story maker describes how the community celebrated the catch of a whale:

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<sup>24</sup> Victoria is the provincial capital of British Columbia and a city in which a majority of the formal treaty negotiations took place.

In itself is worth celebrating [sic]. It was a big event. It was a duty of rank. Our *Haw'iih*, our Chiefs, were the whalers and they provided for the community with this bounty. The bounty was for everybody. Everybody benefitted from the catch of a whale and everyone celebrated. They called upon their neighbours to join them... and into the night they feasted, they sang and they danced ([Story Nine](#), 0m:35s).

Likening the catch to contemporary celebrations he states:

We no longer whale but we have events worthy of celebration. This song was given to us, the First Nations people of British Columbia, to sing and celebrate when we answered the land question. Modern day treaties is what we celebrate now and it is for that reason, and that reason alone, we were given this song ([Story Nine](#), 1m:20s).

Through images and the use of the 'All Nations Victory Song', the storyteller paralleled a traditional cultural practice, one upheld by leaders of the Nation, to modern interpretations of providing for the Huu-ay-aht community. In the past *Ha'wiih* provided for their people with subsistence. Chief and Council and the *Ha'wiih* now provide for their Nation by navigating the complexities of the colonial system and securing a modern treaty. Combining these images creates a parallel between current and traditional practices, thus transforming the role of community leaders and the needs of the community to create a cohesive Nation within the contemporary political context. The implementation of the Treaty is seen as a source for celebration, one that will reinstate fundamental Huu-ay-aht values such as the hereditary governance system (taken away under the Indian Act). The 'All Nations Victory Song' is used as a common element to draw together themes of celebration, community cohesiveness and security. Demonstrating how cultural practices can be adapted to a different, yet equally relevant action - i.e. from whaling to implementing a treaty - this metaphor seeks to demonstrate how utility of actions integral to Huu-ay-aht culture are celebrated and shared while being transformed over time.

Despite only three stories being highlighted to demonstrate how tradition, culture and heritage are important and enmeshed in the identities of the Huu-ay-aht youth of today, all of the youth participants talked about these ideas in their own unique ways. It is particularly noteworthy that all of the participants spent their early years in the main Huu-ay-aht village of An'acla (see Figure Two: Map of Huu-ay-aht Traditional and Reserve Territories). Now residing in the urban centres of Port Alberni, Vancouver and Nanaimo, their reasons for relocation varied according to life circumstances. The majority, however, cited a push-factor for relocation - specifically, the lack of resources and services available at 'home'. All youth expressed a desire to return to An'acla and many of their stories indicated that they hoped the Treaty would provide Chief and Council with the opportunity to bring services, such as shops, schools and entertainment facilities, into the community.

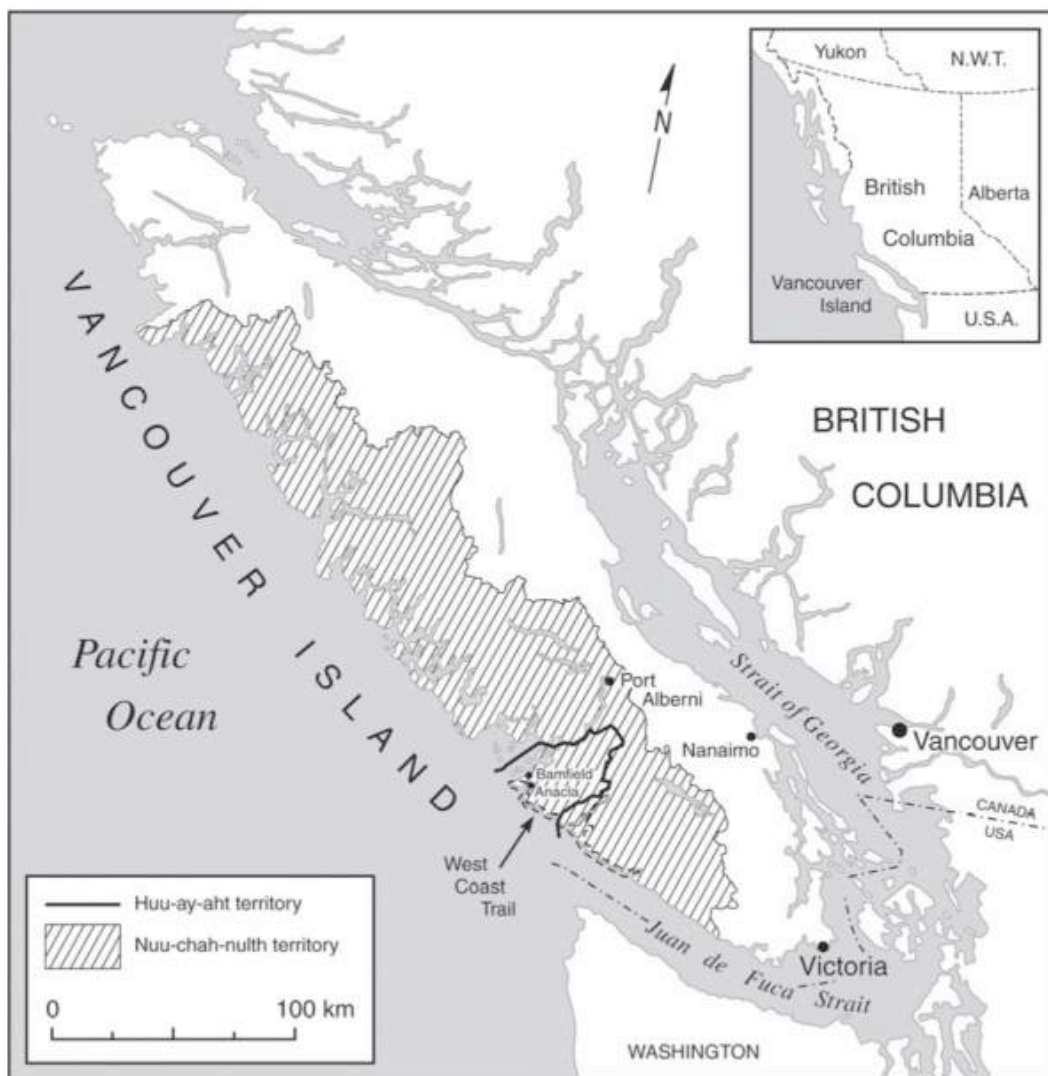


Figure Two: Map of Huu-ay-aht First Nations traditional and reserve territories (Castleden, 2007).

### ***Resilience and revitalization: Looking back to move forward***

Two story makers explicitly paralleled past events integral to Huu-ay-aht culture with current practices to discuss resistance to colonial policies and attempts of assimilation. For example, one story maker depicted this visually by presenting black and white pictures of family members dressed in settler clothing - such as collared shirts and dresses - followed by photos of First Nations rugby and soccer teams posing in front of Port Alberni's residential school. Accompanying these images, the story maker spoke of how the legacy of assimilatory policies is not forgotten and that resulting repercussions are persistent today. He used digitized, symbolic imagery - such as question marks - to suggest that the lasting effects of

these policies may be overcome with Huu-ay-ahts and all First Nations becoming more involved in their cultural values and events. This theme of practicing, involving and educating more Huu-ay-ahts in cultural events and protocols was apparent within all of the stories. Every youth saw roots in culture as a way for their community, and all First Nations, to resist colonial impositions and address/move beyond the pains of past injustices.

A second story maker expressed their passion for resilience and strength in art. Art was not only their way of telling their ancestors' stories, but the story maker saw the creation and envisioning of art as something that could not be taken away as the government had attempted to take their Nuu-chah-nulth language. Due not only to the tangible products of art itself, processes of creating pieces relays Huu-ay-aht histories, and as such is itself a learning process: a means of revitalizing the lived experiences of Huu-ay-ahts while allowing artists to confront the past. In doing so, both the creator and the viewers are able to conceptualize past oppressions while focusing upon cultural, social and personal resilience. The revitalization of practices once integral to Huu-ay-aht culture was further seen as an act of community empowerment. Despite outlawing cultural events, 'tradition' had not been lost or abandoned. It had merely been on hiatus from the larger public realm. Within this colonial context, art was seen as an action of resistance.

The same story maker who saw their strength in art also referred to his community's decision to resurrect their traditional practice of canoe-making as another form of resilience against colonial policies. Reflecting upon the making of the canoe, the story maker recalls that this was the first canoe made in over 70 years: "there was a lot of feeling in that canoe. The amount of people that came and told stories was amazing. Art helps you remember. That canoe really helped our community come together" ([Story One](#), 1m:07s). Colonial policies, such as the banning of the Potlatch, attempted to fragment social cohesion (Bracken, 1997). The establishment of reserves and single-family dwellings sought to assimilate First Nations into a more individualistic, sedentary living situation representative of settler values (Harris, 2002). The making of this canoe, however, reinstated a sense of community and was an expression of Huu-ay-aht values. Despite a canoe not being made in this manner for decades, the making of a canoe was traditionally a community-oriented event. Social relevance was reinvigorated during its constructions.

When discussing cultural transmission and building upon cultural values, all story makers depicted images of, or directly referred to, a family role model that they accredited with learning much of their Huu-ay-aht ways. The transmission of cultural values remains located within intergenerational teachings. One story maker recalled their late grandfather singing her a song. When he finished, he told her, "one day you will dance to this song" (Story Maker Eight, February 26, 2011, Port Alberni Storytelling Workshop). Images of her late grandfather are depicted interchangeably with her dancing in Huu-ay-aht regalia, and throughout the entire story the song played by her grandfather is audible. Its playing in the background

furthered the powerful image and role that this person had on her perception of HUU-ay-aht culture. Recalling the pride her grandfather placed on the idea of her dancing in the future, dancing was the story maker's "favourite part of HUU-ay-aht culture" (Story Maker Eight, February 26, 2011, Port Alberni Storytelling Workshop) and a means of reconnecting with those whom had passed. Reflecting traditional cultural transmission, and serving to reconnect with ancestors, HUU-ay-aht culture is intact and is being passed down through generations.

Most of the story makers decided to use Nuu-chah-nulth songs in the digital stories. Three of them were actually recorded on site by the story makers during the story telling workshops. The importance of participating in HUU-ay-aht cultural practices, namely singing and dancing, was at the fore of the youths' stories. One story maker discussed this importance in the context of receiving his first drum, an event that he identified as significant to his cultural growth. While he had "started culture about ten years ago" ([Story Six](#), 0m:25s), it was when his uncle gave him his first drum that he found his distinct role within events and celebrations (Story Maker Six, March, 1, 2011, Port Alberni Storytelling Workshop). Cultural practices as a site of resilience aided a story maker in finding his role within the larger community:

I saw [my mother] dancing for the first time to my uncle's...[Nam'at'sma] song at my sister's wedding... I did not know she danced. She grew up at the residential school and seeing my mum dance made me pay more attention to the drum. It made me think 'Wow! I had no idea our culture was still in my mum and in my family' ([Story One](#), 2m:05s).

The story maker, also an artist, included a sketch of his mother. A First Nations woman is depicted with half of her face representative of Nuu-chah-nulth identity. The other half of the woman's face shows her mouth sewn shut, a number sewn onto her jump suit, a cross over her eye and the image of a cross behind her left shoulder. This picture demonstrates his interpretation of the dualistic reality and conflicting identity experienced through his mother's residential school experience. The quote above, however, highlights the pride involved in the continued resilience of HUU-ay-aht culture. Later, the same story maker discusses the difficulty of channeling these positive aspects of culture into everyday experiences due to centuries of oppression: "There is lots of trauma in our people. It gets in the way of our thoughts" ([Story One](#), 2m:55s). This trauma is experienced as both a catalyst for taking part in cultural activities, while "fuel[ing] my fire," ([Story One](#), 3m:09s) for artistic creation. Whether depicting an image of a raven transforming into a man, or creating a drum beat in a story to overlay poetry, artistic and cultural creation was seen as therapeutic, a medium to transform negative experiences and enable community healing. The creation of art operates as a location for resistance and revitalizing, albeit through adapting, cultural values.

Older youth discussed their cultural practices and values as being intertwined with their daily lives. Whether they identified as professional or recreational artists, these practices became integral to their identity as Huu-ay-ahts and as a means of relating and reacting to modern society. This view differed for younger youth who discussed culture as something that they had “got involved with” or as put by [Story Maker Three](#): “I have *been into* [Huu-ay-aht] culture since I was little,” (0m: 34s). While they all expressed pride in being Huu-ay-aht, cultural practices – such as dance practices - were seen as separate from their everyday activities and identities. Taking part in these activities, depicted by one story maker through images of the planet Mars, brought him to a “whole different world,” ([Story Six](#), 0m: 07s) one separated from his everyday interactions. In a story collectively made by the younger youth, they spoke directly to the ability for culture to overtake the negative social burdens within their population. A hip-hop rendition stated “stop drinking and doing those drugs that you are smoking.” The composer of this verse included this theme in his individual story. His aspiration for his community post-Treaty was for people to abstain from alcohol and partake in cultural activities. Another younger youth, Story Maker Two, spoke to his cultural and leadership role within the community as a *Ha’wiih*. Highlighting the Treaties ability to bring resilience through leadership, despite centuries of colonial policies having negatively impacted the Huu-ay-aht Nation, Story Maker Two saw the potential for the Treaty to encourage Huu-ay-ahts to engage the Settler community and educate them about their cultures and their histories. All of the younger youth saw cultural expression and revitalization of cultural practices within the larger community as an alternative to the effects that substance abuse has had on their people.

### **Discussion: Redefinition of Cultural Landscapes as Decolonization**

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Huu-ay-ahts have been in contact with the settler population. They have been forced to endure colonial policies that have attempted to assimilate and delegitimize their distinctive beliefs and social structures that since time immemorial have allowed Huu-ay-ahts to exist with their traditional territories (Atleo, 2004). In spite of colonial governments asserting authority over their lands, and settlers establishing permanent residence on unceded Nuu-chah-nulth territories, colonial power structures have been resisted and cultural values have been upheld (Coté, 2010; Castleden et al., 2009). Huu-ay-aht identities, however, have changed over time and in response to centuries of colonial and settler impositions. Youth visions for a post-Treaty era demonstrate these changes. Despite none of the story makers currently living in the main village of An’acla<sup>25</sup>, a continued sense of place is demonstrated as all youth discussed a desire to return

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<sup>25</sup> Seven of the youth lived in, or in the area immediately surrounding, Port Alberni, while one lived in Vancouver. All participants cited that their relocation from An’acla to these urban centres was due to a lack of services, such as jobs and schools, within the village.

home. Youth wished for sources of entertainment such as basketball courts, and amenities characteristic of urban living such as wireless internet and cell phone service, be included in the village post-Treaty. Shopping centres, schools and clothing stores were mentioned as services thought necessary for the community to be self-supporting<sup>26</sup>. The desire to return to An'acla speaks to the importance of HUU-ay-aht traditional territories for the future of the community.

The youths' visions for on site services and integration of traditional HUU-ay-aht practices, like carving, into community support mechanisms, such as employment services, shows an integrated response in cultural values and attitudes to contemporary social conditions (Begay et al., 2007). The outlawing of traditional subsistence practices and forced relocation onto reserves failed to provide culturally relevant, alternative livelihoods. Combined with colonial policies denying First Nations the resources to gain education and adequate employment (Miller, 2000), a paternalistic and asymmetrical relationship was upheld between the colonial government and HUU-ay-aht Nation. Youths' stories demonstrated an infusion of traditional and contemporary technology, such as the utilization of a fishing boat in lieu of a canoe, to demonstrate a desire to uphold the cornerstones of HUU-ay-aht tradition while redefining practical aspects. This redefinition and technological inclusion is a response that has been referred to as "concrete circumstances" (Cornell et al., 2007, 51), or influences of contemporary - often practical - structures into core cultural frameworks. In this light, the Maa-nulth Treaty was seen as an opportunity for change by including cultural values and practices into the livelihoods of the community. By adapting governance structures and establishing relative self-determination, the stories demonstrated that the youth viewed the Maa-nulth Treaty as an opportunity to move forward with community healing from the injustices experienced in the past. Through story content, and even participating in the digital story telling workshops, the youth expressed and demonstrated their capacity for leadership and desire to help their Nation navigate a post-Treaty era. Likening this desire to a talking stick, a cultural object used in many Indigenous societies to maintain respectful communication in large groups, one story maker succinctly spoke to this point stating: "we, as the next generation [of HUU-ay-aht leaders], need to pick up the stick" ([Story Seven](#), 0m:27s). The younger youth who explicitly discussed his role as a *Ha'wiih* and viewing the Treaty as a means of engaging settlers further demonstrates priorities surrounding leadership and resilience. Furthermore, this link shows an important structural change brought through implementation: reintegrating and formally recognizing the hereditary HUU-ay-aht governance structures through the guaranteed

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<sup>26</sup> It is recognized that services such as grocery stores are dependent upon external food production systems. The term 'self supporting' is intended to indicate the ability for community members to access all that is needed within the community, not in a manner reflective of community subsistence external from the global economy.

representation and recognition of the *Tyee Hawilth* and *Ha'wiith* on Chief and Council.

The Indian Act forcefully imposed a colonial style of elected governance onto First Nations. Despite the reciprocity-based Potlatch remaining integral to cultural and social practice, First Nations were penalized if they did not follow the hierarchical colonial governance structure. The Maa-nulth Treaty's condition for hereditary representation to be not only guaranteed, but also recognized by external bodies, represents a shift in power dynamics. Upholding cultural values is seen as a means of defining the community and of healing the population. Reinstating traditions and rejecting colonially imposed values better equips the community to journey, as they see fit, towards their own remedial processes (Alfred, 2009). The Maa-nulth Treaty is viewed as a platform for this change that, through instating a Huu-ay-aht Constitution, will allow for the creation of self-defined laws to lead towards a future determined by the community and intended to uphold the values and best interests of its members (Turner, 2006). These laws have been adapted to best suit the current situation of the Huu-ay-aht Nation. Law, able to be read as cultural text (Culhane, 1998), has the ability to rid the community of colonially imposed policies, such as the Indian Act, allowing Huu-ay-aht First Nation to once again celebrate the bounties of self-determination. Of dual importance is the fact that Huu-ay-aht hereditary governance is now legally integrated and affirmed within imposed structures. In doing so, Huu-ay-ahts not only redefine their own structures of governance by reinstating their *Ha'wiith*, but the legitimacy of these leaders is recognized and upheld by colonial bodies. This public affirmation of governance is important not only for decision-making, but for the dominant society to recognize the legitimacy of distinctive First Nations values (Atleo, 2004). Another example of public affirmation of governance in both Huu-ay-aht and settler populations discussed specifically in one story, and arising as a topic of conversation during the story telling workshops, is through the designation of Kiiix'in as a National Historic Site. Using the same legal frameworks and concepts of land ownership that once ostracized First Nations from their territories and cultures, they are now being used by First Nations themselves to navigate and solidify legitimacy within the culture of colonialism (Turner, 2006). Through this process, the importance of Kiiix'in to Huu-ay-aht members and the values embedded within it penetrate broader society (Borrows, 2010). Huu-ay-aht cultural relevance is here extended to the public, whereas the oppressive frameworks, once used to delegitimize, are being used for empowerment (Freire, 1971).

Further integration of cultural protocols into policies, such as land utilization, demonstrates adapting to modern conditions (Stephenson, 2008). The Treaty itself was premised upon community self-determination in a manner responsive to current socio-political conditions (Maa-nulth, 2008). Developing relative self-determination allows Huu-ay-aht First Nations to define their future in their own voices by responding to conditional changes while remaining rooted within cultural beliefs and values. The digital stories further this point by

demonstrating how current conditions have manifested themselves into the story makers' identities as Huu-ay-aht youth. Integrating modern artistic styles (e.g. hip hop) into traditional cultural activities (e.g. singing and drumming) demonstrates the infusion of contemporary culture and youth identities into the distinct Huu-ay-aht identity. This infusion creates an output that, through its rootedness and innovative development, maintains distinctive cultural characteristics (Sider, 2003). Integrating new mediums, such as through the digital stories, is an example of building upon artistic styles. Throughout processes of artistic creation and communication, assimilatory ideologies can be rejected. Despite the availability of Western culture and technology, youth are choosing to uphold their distinctive Huu-ay-aht culture while themselves integrating Western practices. This self-directed use of novel mediums shifts imbalances of power so that Western culture is the one being adapted and consumed. Turner (2006) proposes a similar call to action by suggesting Indigenous intellectuals become versed in the legal and ideological disciplines that have acted to oppress First Nations communities. Returning to their community and working as a community representative within oppressive colonial frameworks, these intellectuals manifest themselves as modern day defenders through navigating the very system that has actively suppressed First Nations. They do so in a manner that is now reversed to benefit the community rather than harm them. This concept is explicitly demonstrated through one of the storytellers labeling the Treaty negotiators as Warriors fighting with "pens and paper".

The use of contemporary styles of art as communicative mediums of cultural importance and interpretation is another form of cultural reclamation. Art can be a site of resistance, an example being the use of family curtains (which can be easily hidden) in lieu of family walls following the outlawing of the Potlatch in 1876 (Bracken, 1997). The continued use and creation of family curtains today not only demonstrates a continued recognition of the suppressive tendencies of the colonial government, but acts as a site of active resistance by refusing to forget a history that has survived attempted erasure (Alfred, 2009). Bending artistic stereotypes that have traditionally upheld notions of First Nations cultures as static, whether by family curtains or carvings, artists are now able to redefine how culture itself is interpreted through the art that is created. In doing so, colonial and externally applied identities are actively rejected, thus redefining relations previously held both within and outside of the community (Nader, 1990). Culture is redefined as an evolving process allowing self-definition to transcend colonially applied definitions (Turner, 2006). The use of metaphors, such as paralleling the celebration of catching a whale to the implementation of the Maa-nulth Treaty, further demonstrates this redefinition and the adaptation of cultural protocols such as celebrations. Deloria Jr.'s (1969) drawing of cultural parallels can be likened to these metaphors. Temporal depictions of celebratory traditions such as the catch of a whale, and recreating forms of battle shown through Huu-ay-aht's battle on Kiiix'in, demonstrate that cultural transmission is inherent within the youth, yet it has transformed over time to respond to contemporary existence. Huu-ay-aht

identity, and cultural and social landscapes, has been transformed to both uphold Huu-ay-aht First Nations values and address the current needs and desires of the community through establishing greater community autonomy and adapting Huu-ay-aht culture.

### Concluding Comments

Given that this research is part of a program of community-based participatory research, located in a university, it is worth couching our concluding comments with reference to the colonial context that exists within universities. A colonial mentality transcends the university's primary function: to create knowledge (Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004; Alfred, 2009; Asad, 1973; Pinkoski, 2008). Mindful of this embedment and the history of unethical research conducted *on* Indigenous communities by non-Indigenous academics – such as knowledge being misappropriated and misinterpreted (Battiste & Henderson, 2000), findings and data not being returned (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2005) and cultural protocols otherwise being ignored (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996) - this project sought to aid Huu-ay-aht youth in sharing and communicating their visions for future change. Through the creation of digital stories, eight Huu-ay-aht youth expressed their vision(s) for the future of their community in a post-Treaty era - in their own voices, with their own symbolic meaning.

The expression of art and drawing parallels to cultural celebrations demonstrates how the youth define Huu-ay-aht culture and their personal identities. Culture and identities were shown as ever evolving in response to, rather than defending themselves from, increasing technological and social changes. Establishing a difference, both temporally and culturally, youth demonstrated the resilience of their community. Key cultural elements, such as dancing and singing, remain intact. Despite colonial policies that attempted to assimilate and outlaw socially cohesive practices, the resilient nature of Huu-ay-aht culture has continually endured in the Huu-ay-aht community.

Huu-ay-aht youth spoke to needing to better educate themselves about the conditions of the Treaty and the capacity it will bring. As stated by one story maker, “Council should sit down with the youth and talk to us about what we are getting into with respect to the Treaty” ([Story Eight](#), 1m:33s). Demonstrating the specialized nature of Indigenous law and conditions related to treaty rights, First Nations and settlers alike are often isolated from the highly complex legal jargon involved in Indigenous-state negotiations (Dyck, 1991). Even with the particulars being unknown, these youth indicated a need and a desire to emphasize the positive and resilient parts of their culture while wanting to move forward and step up as community leaders. To do this, Huu-ay-aht values and cultural practices need to be maintained. They will continue to adapt in order to accommodate the unpredictable nature of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Story Maker Seven's call for the future generation of decision-makers to “pick up the stick” demonstrates the responsibility that the

youth must take on, and of the need for future generations to be raised in accordance with cultural traditions - an integral part of the healing process as the community moves forward. In order to do this it is necessary for HUU-ay-aht First Nations to, as put by one of the story makers, "return to HUU-ay-aht ways" ([Story One](#), 4m:00s).

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<sup>i</sup> To view the youths' digital stories, select the pictures below.

Story One



Story Two



Story Three



Story Four (Collective)



Story Five



Story Six



Story Seven



Story Eight



Story Nine

