Dimensions of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy:
Language, heritage, and meaning

by

Shane Brooks Doddridge
B.A., University of Northern British Columbia, 2013

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We acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Abstract

Tŝilhqot'in toponymy—the place names and place naming systems of the Tŝilhqot'in First Nation in British Columbia, Canada—is complex, multiplistic, and dynamic, rooted in notions of ancestral presences, happenings, perceptions, and territoriality that resonate across Tŝilhqot'in pasts, presents, and futures in culturally and ontologically specific ways. The particularities of Tŝilhqot'in place names therefore both highlight and reflect unique aspects of Tŝilhqot'in culture, language, history, geography, and world views. As contemporary applications call on Tŝilhqot'in place names—for example, to label maps, display on road signs, and adopt into official records—they put at risk the nuances of these more traditional dimensions. Novel toponymic practices of commemoration and recognition are therefore obfuscating deeper dimensions of heritage, language, and meaning, while paradoxically contributing to their preservation and dissemination. This thesis explores these themes through an ethnographic methodology emphasising ontological openness in order to highlight new theoretical possibilities that emerge from Tŝilhqot'in toponymic discourses in Tŝilhqot'in-specific contexts.

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Note on terminology

I use a variety of terms throughout the following text that require some up-front definition. Since Tŝilhqot'in consider themselves to be 'Tŝilhqot'in' first and all other designations second, I use this specific ethnonym as often as possible. This thesis is, after all, specifically about Tŝilhqot'in toponymy. I use the term 'indigenous' not with a cultural, biological, or racial purpose (and thus have chosen not to capitalise it), but as a descriptive and political denomination for first peoples in general. When referring to an indigenous ethno-linguistic group, I try to use the specific ethnonyms of each group, including preferred spellings. These peoples are distinct (yet dynamic), self-determining, and self-identifying nations with unique histories, traditions, cultures, sociopolitical organisations, and familial relations.

In the same spirit, I have done my best to avoid using racialising terms throughout the text. When unavoidable I revert to terms more common among Tŝilhqot'in, including '*Nenqayni*' ('people of the earth'), 'native' or 'Native', 'indigenous' (when speaking generically and politically), 'Indian' (in legal or administrative contexts), and 'Aboriginal' (in legal contexts). I use the terms 'nation'/'Nation' and 'First Nation' interchangeably to refer to a socially and/or politically distinct and self-defined indigenous group. I use the terms 'band'/'Band' and 'community' somewhat interchangeably to refer to a contemporary Indian Reserve and their membership, as delineated by Canada's *Indian Act.* I do so while also acknowledging the unique social and cultural identities, distinctive histories, and political autonomy that have emerged with these groups since their colonial origins.

Note on spelling, pronunciation and orthography

Tŝilhqot'in call their language by a few different names: *Nenqayni Ch'ih* 'Native way (of speaking),' *Tŝilhqot'in Ch'ih* 'Tŝilhqot'in way,' and more commonly just Tŝilhqot'in, Chilcotin, or *Nenqayni*. Throughout the text I primarily refer to the language as Tŝilhqot'in. Words in Tŝilhqot'in are here spelled using a working orthography that primarily follows the system developed by Eung-Do Cook in the mid-1970s, which had built on previous work by Quindel King and Michael Krauss. Although the fundamentals of Cook's orthography have been adopted by nearly all writers of Tŝilhqot'in, there are a few popular departures which I also follow here: high vowel tones are not marked (with an acute accent),[1] and the consonant /gh/ is preferred to /ŵ/ in word-final position—having the same pronunciation. Capitalisation and punctuation follow English.

A maxim of Tŝilhqot'in transcribers is to 'spell it how you hear it,' meaning to spell words the way they are pronounced by a speaker and as heard by a transcriber. This is also done here to preserve variation in word pronunciation between individuals and groups, out of respect, and to acknowledge one's own positionality in the process. I follow this principle here when transcribing Tŝilhqot'in speakers, which results in some inconsistent spellings, however when using Tŝilhqot'in words outside this context (e.g., when writing from my own voice) I *try* to maintain consistency of spellings based in my own experience and style, largely flowing from what I have learned from my mentor, Tŝilhqot'in language keeper Bella Alphonse.

All Tŝilhqot'in words are italicised in this text, except for the standard spelling of 'Tŝilhqot'in' which is so often used as an ethnonym and language name as to not warrant

[1] Low vowel tones are not marked by Cook, nor most Tŝilhqot'in writers who otherwise do mark tone.

marking the variance from English. This is only done for ease of reading, to mark the language change.

The Tŝilhqot'in orthography contains forty-seven consonants and six vowels[2] (Cook 1993 2013). The consonants /ŝ/, /ẑ/ and /ŵ/ are marked with a diacritic to indicate that they flatten adjacent vowels, as do the back consonants /gg/, /q/, /qw/, /gh/, and /x/ (Cook 1993; Smith 2008). Nearly half of the Tŝilhqot'in consonants are not found in English, and the English /f/, /r/ and /v/ are not found in Tŝilhqot'in (Smith 2008), making approximated English spellings impractical and impossible. The following consonant chart, Figure 1 below, is based on Cook (2013; see Cook 1993 for phonemic symbols).

	(bi)labial	dental	lateral	alveolar	post-alveolar	alveo-palatal	velar	labio-velar	uvular	labio-uvular	glottal
plain stops	b	d	dl	dz	dẑ	j	g	gw	gg	ggw	
aspirated stops	p	t	tl	ts	tŝ	ch	k	kw	q	qw	
glottalised stops		t'	tl'	ts'	tŝ'	ch'	k'	kw'	q'	qw'	ʔ
aspirates			lh	s	ŝ	sh		wh	x	xw	h
spirants			l	z	ẑ	y		w	gh	ŵ	
nasals	m	n									
	neutral	neutral	neutral	sharp sibilant	flat sibilant	neutral	velar	velar	uvular	uvular	neutral

Figure 1: Tŝilhqot'in consonants organised by location and mode of articulation

Tŝilhqot'in vowels are complicated. They are subject to flattening, nasalisation, and high and low tone. Cook (1993; 2013) classifies the vocalic system into tense/long vowels, and lax/short vowels, each of which having multiple allophones depending on adjacent consonants which may flatten or nasalise backwards or forwards. Nasal vowels are not marked but typically

[2] Not including nasal vowels.

arise preceding a syllable-final /n/ (called a "nasal-N") when followed by a continuant (such as /y/, /l/, /lh/, /s/, /ŝ/, *etc.*) (Cook 1993). Many Tŝilhqot'in speakers today do not pronounce any nasal vowels (denasalisation) and this is described by Cook (2013) to be the only dialect distinction in Tŝilhqot'in. However, many speakers argue that there are no proper dialect differences while others assert that each Indian Reserve has its own dialect. The term dialect is sometimes used by Tŝilhqot'in speakers, as well as many non-speakers, to describe subtle regional, familial, or even individual variations in word pronunciations. There appears to be little evidence that these variations represent discrete dialects, but a full study of Tŝilhqot'in dialect has not yet been done (Cook 2013; see Chapter 3 for a more on dialects).

The six vowels are organised in Figure 2 below along with close English comparisons and Tŝilhqot'in examples. Phonemic symbols for sharp and flat allophones are shown in brackets beside the orthographic symbol.[3] The vowel sounds are underlined and the consonant that triggers vowel flattening[4] is shown in **bold** text. Nasal-N's are *italicised*.

	Tŝilhqot'in Vowel		As in the English (sharp | flat)	Tŝilhqot'in example (sharp | flat)
tense/ long	i	[i | ᵊi/e]	st<u>ee</u>p | sh<u>i</u>ne	b<u>i</u>s 'obsidian' | ʔes**gg**<u>i</u>dam 'ancestor'
	a	[æ | a]	s<u>a</u>d | d<u>a</u>wn	d<u>a</u>ndzen 'loon' | j<u>a</u>**ŝ** 'spring salmon'
	u	[u | o]	tr<u>u</u>th | sh<u>o</u>w	yat<u>u</u> 'ocean' | bi*n*l<u>u</u>**gh** or bi*n*l<u>u</u>**ŵ** 'knife'
lax/ short	i̵	[ɪ | ᵊɪ]	b<u>i</u>t | t<u>i</u>me	dl<u>i</u>g 'squirrel' | ya**q**<u>i</u>g 'ball'
	e	[ɛ | ə]	b<u>e</u>d | <u>a</u>bout	n<u>e</u>n 'land' | **ẑ**<u>e</u>l 'sweat'
	o	[ʊ | ŏ]	c<u>oo</u>k | j<u>o</u>ke	deld<u>o</u>n 'drum' | yeq<u>o</u>**x** 'river'

Figure 2: Tŝilhqot'in vowels with English comparisons

[3] This is not done above for consonants as the location and mode of articulation is made clear.
[4] For more on Tŝilhqot'in pharyngealisation (vowel flattening), see Cook (1993; 2013).

Prologue:
Locating the researcher and the research

My introduction to the Chilcotin—a region in west-central British Columbia (BC), Canada—was during the summer of 2009. I had been working summers between semesters of my undergraduate studies as a survey technician in the adjacent Cariboo region where my parents lived. One job took our small firm to Nemiah Valley in the south Chilcotin to survey a right-of-way through the Indian Reserves of the Tŝilhqot'in community of *Xeni*. Despite growing up so close to the Chilcotin, it always seemed to me distant, separate and enigmatic. The Cariboo and Chilcotin are often characterised as two parts of a single "Cariboo-Chilcotin" region. Both fall within the same regional district (BC's version of counties), regional health authority, tourism region, natural resource district, and several other administrative areas. There are also parallels in biogeography. Both are covered in forests of Douglas fir, lodgepole pine, trembling aspen, and various species of spruce, with cedar and hemlock in wetter areas, and juniper and sage brush in drier ones. Vast networks of meadows, marshes, lakes, and streams of all sizes intersect through these forests. Both the Cariboo and the Chilcotin sit on a high volcanic plateau bounded by the Coast Mountains on the west and the Cariboo Ranges of the Columbia Mountains on the east. The canyon of the Fraser River that cuts through the plateau from north to south functionally divides the Chilcotin (west) from the Cariboo (east).

Despite these and other commonalities, the Chilcotin has many distinguishing geographic qualities. It has a somewhat drier climate, higher and more glaciated mountains, and significantly fewer people[5] than the Cariboo. At the time of writing, the Chilcotin is almost entirely without cell phone reception, there is limited tourism or other hospitality infrastructure, and much of the

[5] There are no incorporated municipalities let alone cities in the Chilcotin, and the settlements are much smaller and further apart—the largest being the Tŝilhqot'in Indian Reserve communities.

region is only accessible by four-by-four vehicle, helicopter, float plane, or horseback. The 450 kilometre Highway 20, which bisects the region from east to west through its middle, is the only paved road in the region, the rest being gravel or old dirt wagon roads. It is perhaps for these reasons that the Chilcotin *feels* much more remote and isolated than it really is. The eastern portion of the region is within only a half-hour drive of the City of Williams Lake (population around 11,000) and the south Chilcotin is only about 180 kilometres from metropolitan Vancouver as the crow flies. Yet even now that I have worked in the Chilcotin for a decade, I still feel as though I'm entering a foreign country every time I cross *ʔElhdaqox* (Fraser River) and ascend the Sheep Creek switchbacks westbound on Highway 20 into the rolling expanses of the rocky Chilcotin.

By the time I was nineteen, I knew most of the Cariboo intimately but had yet to visit the Chilcotin. Growing up, my family moved towns every few years following my father's evolving career in highways construction and maintenance. The Cariboo towns of Quesnel and 100 Mile House were two such places, as were Prince George and Ashcroft to the north and south. My "home town" felt like the whole central interior of BC, and my emerging cultural identity was heavily influenced by its landscapes. When I began a degree in human geography at the University of Northern BC in 2007, I instantly gravitated towards themes that spoke to this identity, including natural resource development and our fur trade and gold rush histories. I was also drawn to cartography and geomatics as more tactile mediums for studying and representing these topics, which is also what led me to work summers in land surveying. Survey work took me across the south Cariboo where we traced down old property lines for ranches, hobby farms, and lakeside recreational properties.

Our job in Nemiah Valley was to spend a week locating old Indian Reserve corners—one hundred year old carved wooden posts set in stone mounds—and then to come back for another week to establish a right-of-way through those Reserves for a new community water line. One afternoon while I was waiting for my colleague to make some calculations, an old Tŝilhqot'in man came out of his house and wandered over to me for a chat. I was used to neighbours poking around us while we worked, usually hoping to learn more about what was happening in their neighbourhood. However, the old man was less interested in our work than in telling me about the land we happened to be working on. I now forget most of that conversation but one part remains—the old man looked up to the jagged mountains across Chilko Lake to the west and explained to me how war parties from coastal First Nations used to cross the icefields beyond to raid Tŝilhqot'in lands. He described how many Tŝilhqot'in women were killed and others taken as slaves during those raids. Tŝilhqot'in dead were not buried at that time but cremated. He turned and nodded towards his house. "They built my house on an old cremation site," he said chuckling, "when it rains, the bones come up." I looked over at the patch of dirt in front of his house but saw nothing ominous. A little incredulous, I asked how he felt about living in that place. He didn't mind. Their spirits could be dangerous, but he assured me that he was respectful and they never bothered him too much. He felt some comfort living so close to his ancestors.

The old man's story stuck with me—not so much about the bones, but to imagine what a feat it must have been for anyone to cross those imposing mountains *on foot* and to still be prepared for war. It was the first time I really imagined the history of British Columbia before the gold rushes, before the fur trade, before colonial surveyors carved up the lands into *my* province.

It was about a month later when we returned to the valley to finish our surveying job. On one of those days, I found myself walking alone in front of the old man's house once again, but this time he didn't seem to be around. Remembering that it had been raining the night before, I thought I'd have a look at the same muddy patch of ground. At first glance I saw nothing, but then I noticed what looked like an old rib bone poking out of the mud. Then I saw another one, and then some more greyish white bones. Unsure of how to react, I carried on quickly down the road, eager to put some distance between myself and that place.

That experience left an impression on me through the months that followed, and even today, wondering what it must be like to inhabit the same lands as one's ancestors—not only in the same country but in the very same places. What must it feel like to encounter your ancestors' belongings, homes, or their very remains as you carry out your daily life? It's a feeling I will never know. I've never visited any of the places of my fractured ancestry—my forgotten forebears resting in northwestern Europe, and probably other places I'm not aware of. I feel very little connection to those countries and their cultures. Home for me has always been BC's central interior, from the Pine Pass to the Thompson Canyon, but it's a home of a very different kind from that of the old Tŝilhqot'in man.

I shifted my academic focus to include indigenous topics once I returned to university that fall. I was motivated to learn more about First Nations' traditional knowledge and how it connected to the same plants, animals and landscapes that I knew so intimately but by different names. In many ways, this remains a fundamental motivation in my career.

I had also been focusing coursework in cartography, remote sensing, and geographic information systems (GIS) as well as working part time in the UNBC GIS lab. Through the lab I learned of a field school in Ayacucho, Peru, that would incorporate GIS and indigenous

(*campesino*) knowledge in the wake of Peru's internal armed conflict in the 1980s and 1990s. I signed up and also applied for a Canada International Development Agency internship with our host organisation, *El Equipo Peruano de Antropología Forense* (EPAF)—the Peruvian Forensic Anthropology Team. It was in Ayacucho that I became interested in the power of indigenous toponymy. I did take part in some exhumations and forensic analyses with EPAF, but my main internship project was to develop a map of the village of *Huamanquiquia* showing the community's topography with an emphasis on water resources such as creeks, springs, canals and acequias to support planning and maintenance for water management. Much of their agricultural infrastructure had fallen into disrepair following the massacre of the community's men during the political violence some 30 years earlier. Both the people and the knowledge systems that maintained agricultural (including water) infrastructure had been lost and the community wanted a map that would help them with the management and revitalisation of their agricultural systems.

To make the map with limited resources, I met with knowledgeable community leaders to sketch out the valley and its water features on a large sheet of paper—it would have to do for a base map in the field. There didn't seem to be much enthusiasm for the project as the participants were struggling to orient themselves in two dimensions on the paper. I emphasized the cardinal directions but this wasn't helpful. I was about to give up on the project when my translator Ricardo conveyed to me that Andean campesinos usually understood where things are by their locations relative to the *apu*s—protector deities in the form of mountains with living spirits. One elder began to point out and name each of the visible mountains from our location in the village plaza: *Antapata*, *Llaccta Llaccta*, *Piruruyuq*, *Chicre*—all who gathered to participate knew each of these names intimately. Once I added the *apu* names to the page in relative location the

participants were able to orient themselves in two dimensions and there was much more enthusiasm to continue on with the work. The project was well received once completed (EPAF 2012). This shift in geographical ontology was the key to the whole project, and it was achieved through careful attention to indigenous toponymy.

A few years after returning from Peru, I learned that the Tŝilhqot'in National Government (TNG) was looking for a GIS technician for an upcoming traditional use study (TUS). It was a great fit for me. I was excited to return to the Chilcotin, especially as the Tŝilhqot'in had just won their landmark Supreme Court of Canada case for Aboriginal title[6] which sent a buzz of excitement and opportunity throughout indigenous communities across and beyond Canada. My role over the next two years was to work closely with Tŝilhqot'in elders and other knowledge keepers to carefully document and map historic and contemporary land use and occupancy sites as well as cultural and spiritual features, place names, oral histories, traditional teachings, and genealogy. We poured over maps in band office boardrooms as well as in elders' homes, and we made site visits on the land to ground-truth our mapping work. On the drive to and from elder interviews, as well as in the office sorting through the data, I learned as much about Tŝilhqot'in culture, language, territory, and history from my Tŝilhqot'in colleagues (especially Geraldine Elkins and Maryann Solomon) as I did from the elders we were interviewing. Many of those relationships have since blossomed into friendships that I still cherish today.

TNG kept me on as a general GIS technician in their Stewardship department after the TUS project ended in 2016. My first main project was to clean up TNG's place name dataset and to develop from it a series of scripted, dynamic, dual-name (Tŝilhqot'in and Anglo-colonial) toponymy labels that TNG could use on all maps we produced. Several issues had become clear

[6] *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*, 2014 SCC 44.

after having used their original place name dataset in TUS interviews for the previous two years: there were many geographical and etymological gaps and errors, it was not carefully organised, the Tŝilhqot'in orthography (writing system) was applied in non-standard and problematic ways, and there were many typographical and spelling errors. Some names seemed to have had a wide variety of acceptable pronunciations and spellings while other names were clearly located in the wrong places or were misplaced/misspelled duplicates. These issues were a barrier to elders during our interviews, many of whom struggled to orient themselves on paper maps in the first place and were only confused by the dataset's inconsistencies. Recalling how attention to indigenous toponymy supported our community mapping project in Peru, I advocated that we invest some resources into improving our place name data. After acquiring project funding, this then became the focus of my work for the next two years at TNG.

Apart from facilitating orientation for TUS map interview sessions, we also recognised that carefully labeling all the maps we made at TNG using Tŝilhqot'in place names would help younger generations of Tŝilhqot'in (as well as interested non-Tŝilhqot'in) to remember, learn, and use these increasingly esoteric toponyms as well as to support vicarious connections with the cultural aspects of the Tŝilhqot'in landscape. These labels, we thought, would also stand as subtle assertions of sovereignty on every TNG-made map—a symbolic message to external audiences that Tŝilhqot'in ownership of and jurisdiction over their territory has deep and continuous roots. Developing a series of dynamic and cartographically conventional label scripts through ArcMap's Maplex label engine therefore became another core project that I attended to.

Between 2016 and 2018 I conducted many individual toponymy interviews with elders and other key people, and facilitated several community review sessions, in order to improve TNG's place name dataset. This work—with a lot of support by TNG colleagues fluent in

Tŝilhqot'in and skilled with the Tŝilhqot'in writing system—cleared up many of the obvious errors. We also filled many spatial and etymological gaps. However, there was, and still remains, much more work to be done. The persistence of spatial and etymological gaps in the dataset as well as other issues associated with organising Tŝilhqot'in toponymic data, became especially evident when we began working with the Province of BC to have Tŝilhqot'in place names adopted into the official Provincial gazetteer and displayed on public road signs. These new applications calling on Tŝilhqot'in toponymy required the display of only one name in one spelling, yet after years of working with Tŝilhqot'in place names it was clear that this would mean excluding a multiplicity of other names, name versions, pronunciations, spellings, and interpretations of meaning and location (see Doddridge 2021).

By 2018, my mapping workload at TNG had expanded and I no longer had time to conduct toponymy interviews with knowledgeable Tŝilhqot'in. After all the interviews I had already done with Tŝilhqot'in elders, I felt a sense of responsibility to give the project some proper attention. A graduate research project seemed an appropriate avenue for continuing a focus on Tŝilhqot'in toponymy, both to carry on the inventorying work and to elucidate some nuances. After being accepted into the Anthropology Department at the University of Victoria in 2019, I pitched the idea of a collaborative toponymy study to my colleagues at TNG, and then to Tŝilhqot'in leadership, where it received support. I also pitched the idea to respected Tŝilhqot'in language keeper and community researcher William Myers *ghinli*[7] who agreed that much more place name documentation was needed so long as it was done properly. For William, this meant that select elders known to be uniquely knowledgeable about Tŝilhqot'in place names should be

[7] The term *ghinli* (sometimes spelled *ghili*, *xinli*, or *xili*) refers to a person lately deceased.

interviewed and audio recorded, and that these recordings be interpreted by a linguist as well as the elders themselves.

I naïvely believed that a few months of focused time interviewing elders and sorting through spatial data as part of a graduate research project would be enough to complete a comprehensive inventory of Tŝilhqot'in place names, to develop an interactive web-atlas, and to write about the unique qualities of the toponymic system—this was my original inspiration for the following thesis. Yet soon after starting graduate school, I learned that Richardson and Galloway's (2011) inventory of Nooksack place names was the culmination of 35 years of work between two seasoned researchers with backgrounds in linguistics, and with a nation much smaller than the Tŝilhqot'in. I was not prepared to carry out a similar task with Tŝilhqot'in place names. Early in my studies I had also engaged with seminal writings of Keith Basso, Thomas Thornton, Yi-Fu Tuan, and Julie Cruikshank, among others, and was inspired to take a more ethnographic approach to themes surrounding Tŝilhqot'in place names, rather than solely developing an inventory of names and meanings.

Therefore, as I will detail below, I conducted interviews for this research with a dual purpose. On the one hand, I carried out interviews appropriate for a toponymic survey—reviewing previously documented names with participants as well as continuing to address etymological and spatial gaps in TNG's place name data, adding new names and new interpretations where I could.[8] On the other hand, I also interviewed Tŝilhqot'in language and knowledge keepers who were interested in speaking more deeply about issues that bound Tŝilhqot'in toponymy up with various other themes including heritage, meaning,

[8] This work remains ongoing, and while I have shifted its focus out of the present thesis, I continue to attend to place name inventorying work through my current role at TNG as Cultural Heritage Coordinator, which I have held since April 2020.

commemoration, and culture, as well as language preservation and revitalisation. These themes have become the central thread of the present thesis.

Although I am passionate about this subject, I am not an authority on Tŝilhqot'in place names. This comes from knowledgeable Tŝilhqot'in elders who lived their lives on their territory in close connection with the named places themselves (see Chapter 4). Following Tŝilhqot'in knowledge protocol, I endeavor to mention who or where I learned something from—memory permitting. When I present a place name in the text below, it should be seen as only one of a possible many names, in many pronunciations, with many spellings, and many interpretations of meaning. There will be many errors, and I will have made many mistakes. To readers who catch these, please don't hesitate to point these out to me.

Since I began working on this project, William Myers as well as several other respected knowledge and language keepers have sadly passed away. Their losses have driven home for me the importance of continued efforts to shed light on Tŝilhqot'in toponymy (and cultural heritage in general) in order to help keep their traditional meanings and roles alive while also exploring new, contemporary forms of representation. I have been given the honour as well as the responsibility to play a role in supporting these ongoing efforts through my role at TNG over the past decade, my role here as a researcher, and through my personal relationships with Tŝilhqot'in. This responsibility is at the heart of my motivations for completing this thesis. I hope that readers find it as useful in the reading as I have found it meaningful in the writing.

Chapter 1:
Introduction

Overview

A nation's toponymy—their geographical or 'place' names, and place naming systems—provides a valuable window onto their history, culture, language, geography, ways of life, ways of knowing, and ways of being in the world (Basso 1996; Boas 1901-07; 1934; Cruikshank 1990; Müller-Wille 1989-1990; Thornton 2008). By shedding light on the specifics of a people's place names, much can also be revealed about the complex set of circumstances and relationships that they are entangled within, particularly in indigenous/intercultural spaces (Salazar and Maulén 2022). This study seeks to do the same with the toponymy of the Tŝilhqot'in—an Athabaskan-speaking First Nation located in the Chilcotin region of south-central British Columbia, Canada.

To date, very little has been written about Tŝilhqot'in culture, and even less about their toponymy. As the first study to focus on the latter, it is important that Tŝilhqot'in voices and perspectives are centred here, and that the themes and concepts presented are specific to and resonant with the Tŝilhqot'in context. To do so requires setting aside theoretical presuppositions in favour of a descriptive and ontologically open approach that seeks to elucidate *new* theoretical possibilities that emerge when listening closely to Tŝilhqot'in discourses and looking closely at Tŝilhqot'in place names themselves (see Henare *et al.* 2007; Salazar and Maulén 2022). This resulting thesis presents a picture of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy that is multi-dimensional, plural, multiplistic, and dynamic, rooted in notions of ancestral presences, happenings, perceptions, and territoriality that echo across Tŝilhqot'in pasts, presents, and futures in culturally and ontologically specific ways.

In recent decades, Tŝilhqot'in place names have been increasingly called to action outside of these more traditional contexts. Names which were until recently only held in memory, used in speech, and passed on orally from elder to youth are being increasingly textualised, stored in lists and databases, labeled on maps, displayed on signs, adopted by external governments, appropriated for building or company names, concretised in formal documents, and drawn into other new contemporary applications. While these new spaces of recognition and commemoration are an important part of culture and language preservation, celebration, and resurgence, these often low-resolution, *tangible* representations of what are otherwise *intangible* words are also obfuscating, essentialising, and even trivialising deeper notions of heritage, language, and meaning in problematic ways. This issue further underscores the importance of this study which highlights the rich nuances of various dimensions of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy as well as the unique aspects of Tŝilhqot'in history, culture, language, geography, and world views that come to light as a result.

The Tŝilhqot'in Nation

Tŝilhqot'in 'people of *Tŝilhqox*'[9] (Chilcotin) are a strong, proud, and resilient people unified by a shared language, territory, culture and history. The Tŝilhqot'in language remains one of the strongest indigenous languages in BC, by fluency rates (First Peoples' Cultural Council 2022), and many older people continue to carry out their daily lives in the language. The Tŝilhqot'in ancestral homeland is, very broadly speaking, located from *Dẑelh-ch'ed* 'atop/place

[9] *Tŝilhqox* (also pronounced *Tsilhqox*, or sometimes *Tsinlhqox*/*Tŝinlhqox*) is the name for the river that flows from the northern tip of *Tŝilhqox Biny* 'lake of *Tŝilhqox*' (also *Tu Nenchagh* 'big water'; Chilko Lake) in an arc north then east then southeast down to its confluence with *ʔElhdaqox* 'sturgeon river' (Fraser River). There is no agreed upon interpretation for the name *Tŝilhqox* as its linguistic form is archaic. While the suffix *–qox* means stream, river, or flowing water, *Tŝilh-* is much more difficult to disentangle, and there are many differing 'folk etymologies'.

of glaciated mountains' (Coast Ranges) to *ʔElhdaqox* 'sturgeon river' (Fraser R.)—an area equivalent to the country of Denmark—in BC's south-central interior (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Map showing the Tŝilhqot'in homeland

The colonisation of Tŝilhqot'in people and territory by Anglo-Europeans began occurring comparatively recently, following a major smallpox epidemic in 1862 and the Chilcotin War of 1864. Both events are still vividly remembered by Tŝilhqot'in today. Before this time, very few settlers had attempted to live on Tŝilhqot'in territory and the only other significant colonial influences in the 58 years between Simon Fraser's 'first contact' with Tŝilhqot'in in 1808 (Lamb 2007) and the Chilcotin War in 1864 were from the fur trade (Turkel 2007), Catholic missionaries (Cronin 1960), and the Cariboo Gold Rush (Swanky 2012; 2016). However, between the 1870s and 1950s, few settlers had made homes in Tŝilhqot'in territory and the region remained sparsely inhabited. Even today, there are still no incorporated municipalities, let alone cities, across all of Tŝilhqot'in territory.

There are eight main communities, all Indian Reserves, where most Tŝilhqot'in today reside within their territory (see Figure 4): (1) *Tl'etinqox* 'river trails through the grass' (Anaham/Anaham Flats); (2) *Yunesît'in* 'people of the south' (also known as *Gex Nats'enaghinlht'i* 'snowshoe hare clubbed to death'; Stone/Stoney); (3) *Tl'esqox* 'muddy river' (Toosey); (4) *Tŝideldel* 'red stone' (Redstone); (5) *Xeni* or *Xeni Gwet'in* (Nemiah; Nemaiah Valley); (6) *ʔEsdilagh* 'peninsula' (Alexandria; Castle Rock); (7) *Tagwedisdzan* 'where the water is murky' (Towdystan); and (8) *Nagwentl'un* 'woven across the water (as a fish trap)' (Anahim Lake). The first six of these communities are united under the Tŝilhqot'in National Government which was established in 1989 as a nation-level of government to serve, support and represent their six independent member communities. Many Tŝilhqot'in also reside outside their territory, notably in the cities of Williams Lake and Quesnel but also Kamloops, Prince George, Kelowna, and Vancouver.

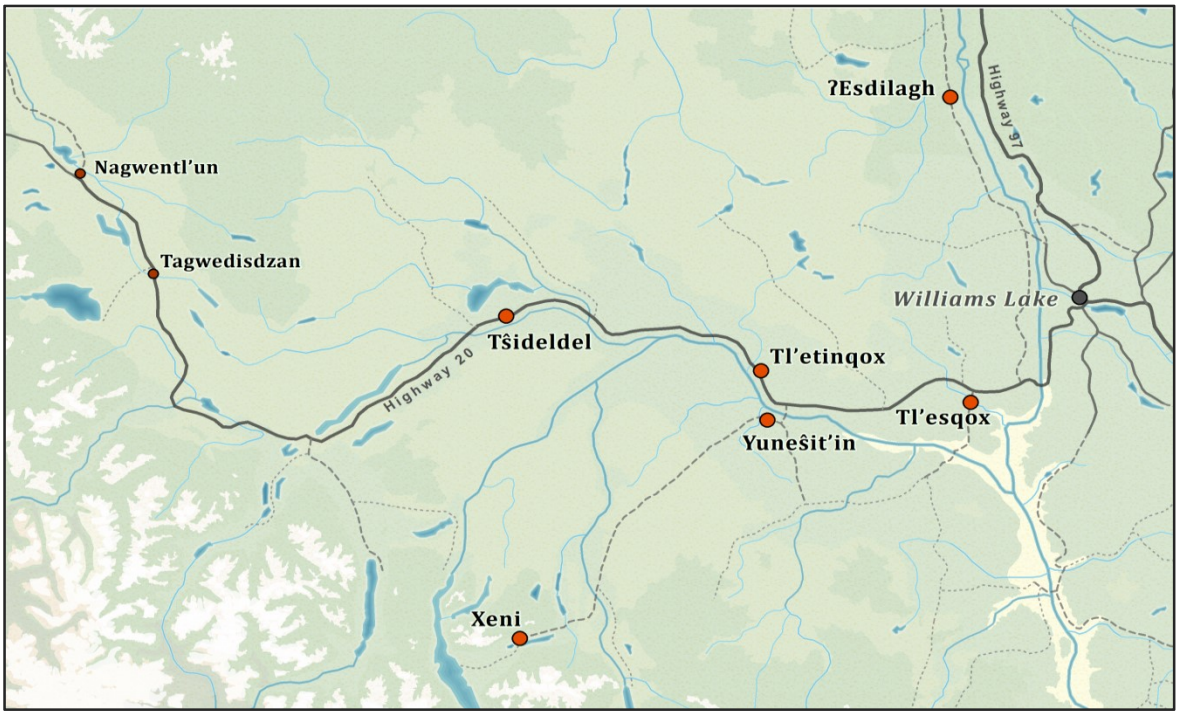

Figure 4: Map showing the Tŝilhqot'in communities

Research context, significance, and motivations

The problem

The present research centres on themes that have emerged through ongoing place name work at the Tŝilhqot'in National Government (TNG). Some of these projects include the use of Tŝilhqot'in place names on maps made by TNG's geographic information systems (GIS) team, the adoption of Tŝilhqot'in place names in BC's 'official' place name repository, and the display of Tŝilhqot'in place names on public road signs in collaboration with BC's Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI). A foundational project through all of this work is the inventorying of Tŝilhqot'in place names—thoroughly documenting names, their locations, and meanings. This is because there still remains many gaps and uncertainties in the GIS-based Tŝilhqot'in place name dataset created and used by TNG.[10]

The persistence of spatial and etymological gaps in TNG's place name dataset as well as other issues associated with organizing and displaying Tŝilhqot'in toponymic data became especially evident in our work to have Tŝilhqot'in place names adopted by the BC government. These adoptions were deliverables of the *Nenqay Deni Accord*—a reconciliation framework agreement signed in 2016 between TNG and the Province of BC in the wake of the landmark 2014 *Tsilhqot'in Nation* case at the Supreme Court of Canada (2014 S.C.C. 44), which was the first recognition of the land-status of 'Aboriginal title' in Canada and beyond. The Accord sought to renew the relationship between BC and the Tŝilhqot'in Nation following this decision,

[10] I had initially hoped to use the present research as a means of attending to this foundational inventorying work, but it has proven well out of scope. Inventorying work has therefore become adjacent and parallel to this thesis, but has remained a productive *medium* for ethnographic participant observation, as have other aspects of my work with place names at TNG. While place name inventorying was an initial motivation for this research, the issues that surround inventorying work have remained central to the problem that this research seeks to address.

and it committed both parties to work together on many actions associated with Tŝilhqot'in jurisdiction and self-determination.[11]

While several actions related to Tŝilhqot'in place names are outlined in the Accord, they were by no means central to its purpose. Compared to much more complex innovative actions such as the settling of territory-wide land claims and other jurisdictional reforms the Accord's place names actions were thought to be uncontroversial enough to stand as "quick wins" for both parties to celebrate some early collaborative successes.

Tŝilhqot'in place name actions outlined in the *Nenqay Deni Accord* (2016, 19-20) included:

> 12.43 At the request of the Tsilhqot'in [sic] Nation, British Columbia will name, dual name or rename a set of key geographical features… in accordance with existing provincial policy and procedures. Adopted place names will be identified in the BC Geographical Names database.
>
> …
>
> 12.45 The Tsilhqot'in Nation may propose that British Columbia name, dual name or rename other geographic features within Tsilhqot'in Territory with Tsilhqot'in place names, and British Columbia will consider those proposals in accordance with existing provincial law, policy and procedures.
>
> 12.46 At the request of the Tsilhqot'in Nation, British Columbia will record Tsilhqot'in place names and historical background submitted by the TNG, for geographical features, in accordance with provincial law, policy and procedures. Recorded place names will be identified in the BC Geographical Names database.
>
> 12.47 British Columbia will implement bilingual Tsilhqot'in-English highway signage stating the distances to the respective Tsilhqot'in Communities.
>
> 12.48 The Parties will consider further opportunities for public displays of Tsilhqot'in culture and history…

[11] The *Nenqay Deni Accord* (2016, 4) aimed at establishing a "shared vision, principles, and structures" that would "effect a comprehensive and lasting reconciliation between the [Tŝilhqot'in] Nation and British Columbia." The agreement also sought to "foster immediate and ongoing action" to attend to TNG's social, economic and cultural priorities.

Section 12.47 was the first to materialise—in fact, several months before the Accord was signed. Bureaucrats at both TNG and BC moved quickly[12] on this item recognising its opportunity as a tangible, visual, and symbolic first deliverable of the Accord (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Photograph of public road sign showing distances to Tŝilhqot'in communities

Given my combination of experience with Tŝilhqot'in place names and spatial data management, I was asked to lead TNG's role on the Accord's other place name related actions. First and foremost of these were sections 12.43 and 12.45—the adoption of Tŝilhqot'in place names into BC's geographical names records (the provincial gazetteer) both within and beyond the declared Tŝilhqot'in Aboriginal title lands. Although not explicitly outlined in the Accord, we also started working with MoTI to ensure that other forms of public road signage (at creek and river crossings) were updated to reflect the ongoing changes to BC's official gazetteer. None of these projects have proven to be quick wins, as they are much more complex than anticipated.

[12] Perhaps too quickly as the name of one community (Tŝideldel) had been misspelled on the signs (Tŝi Del Del), some of the distances were incorrect, and the brown colour of the signs was later scrutinised as racialising by MoTI representatives.

To have a Tŝilhqot'in place name adopted by the BC Geographical Names Office (GNO; see Figure 6), we were required to provide: (a) the name in one official spelling, (b) its geographical feature type (*e.g.,* mountain, creek, community, *etc.*, selected from the GNO's official list), (c) a guide to pronunciation (using the English alphabet and English phonemes), and (d) the precise spatial extent to which the name applied (either by description, analogue with an Anglo-colonial named feature, or through a GIS Shapefile).

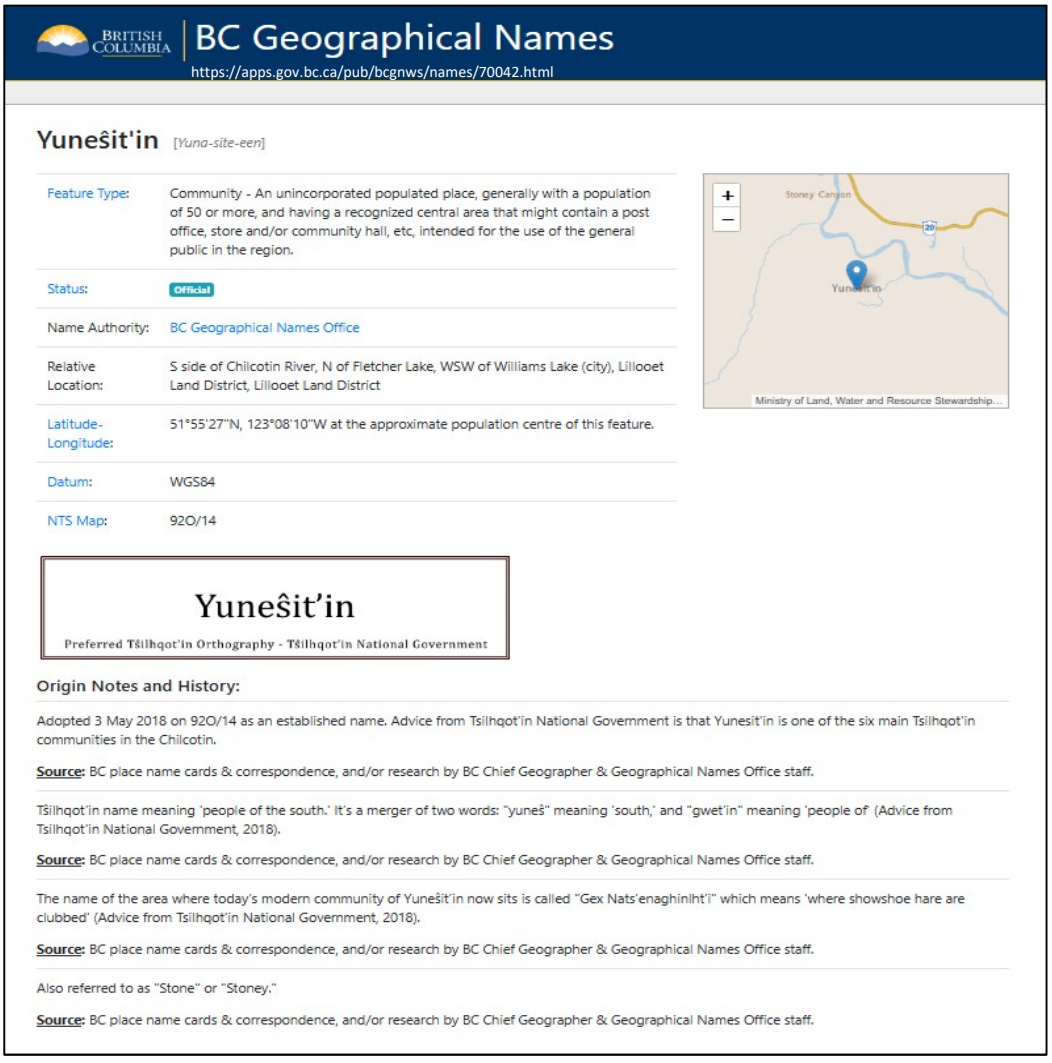

Figure 6: Image showing screenshot of BC GNO web app with adopted Tŝilhqot'in name

We were also invited to provide (e) notes on the origin and history of each name. The GNO uses these notes as records to trace the history and meaning of each 'recorded' and 'official' name in their database in order to assess or justify its acceptability and authenticity according to their principles, policies, and procedures. The origin and history notes we submitted with each name were focused primarily on elucidating the name's meaning(s) and its cultural context(s) for a settler audience, and they were published in each name record as "Advice from the Tŝilhqot'in National Government."

Preparing GNO place name submissions involved extensive community engagements to both select priority names and confirm 'official' (or at least preferred) spellings. A thorough review of TNG's records and further interviews with knowledgeable Tŝilhqot'in were also required for each priority name. To have Tŝilhqot'in place names displayed on MoTI's public road signs involved similar engagement to determine priority features to sign, identify locations of proposed signs, and confirm preferred spellings.

Apart from navigating issues with the GNO's archaic database requirements,[13] the adoption process was relatively straightforward for the first round of name submissions. These were the names of TNG's six member communities (bands) which had pre-established spellings and somewhat clear (or at least widely accepted) etymologies.[14] These were adopted in May of

[13] When we began working with the BC GNO on these adoptions in 2016, their official database for storing and managing British Columbia's place names was not UNICODE compatible. Therefore, we were asked to provide a spelling of each name without 'special characters' or diacritics (accents, *etc.*) to stand as the officially adopted spelling of the place name. For example, *Yunesît'in* would have had to be adopted as "Yunesit'in," which has a different pronunciation in the Tŝilhqot'in language. We could provide a "preferred orthography" image of the name with the correct spelling, but this would be only visible on the BC GNO web app. We stood our ground on this issue, stating that there was little reason to have Tŝilhqot'in place names adopted if they would be spelled incorrectly, and this led the BC GNO to restructure their database to be UNICODE compatible.

[14] *Tl'esqox* (Toosey; Toosey Indian Band), *Tl'etinqox* (Anaham; Tl'etinqox Government Office), *Xeni Gwet'in* (Nemiah; Xeni Gwet'in First Nations Government); *Yunesît'in* (Stone; Stone Indian Band; Yunesît'in Government); *ʔEsdilagh* (Alexandria; ?Esdilagh First Nation), and *Tŝideldel* (Redstone; Tŝideldel First Nation; Alexis Creek Indian Band).

2018[15]—the first time Tŝilhqot'in communities were acknowledged on official maps of BC.[16] However, subsequent submissions required a great deal more community engagement, research, and deliberation before we were confident enough to submit them to the GNO for adoption, or to MoTI for signage for that matter.

In our review of each name, we encountered a great deal of variation, plurality and multiplicity of names, pronunciations, spellings, orthographic representations, and interpretations of meaning and location. As a coarse example, Figure 7 shows a selection of some Tŝilhqot'in place names recorded by TNG around *Xeni Biny* 'lake of/at *Xeni*' (Konni Lake), documented through various projects (each represented by a different text colour) and from various knowledge keepers. What we presented in our GNO submissions was therefore only a snapshot of the previously recorded place name knowledge at TNG, let alone the wealth of cumulative knowledge held by living people, and it seemed a shame to concretise only one version of one name in one spelling and with one interpretation. The closer we looked at each place name under review, the more the particularities of the Tŝilhqot'in toponymic system stood out. It was clear that we were trying to force dynamic oral elements of a living cultural heritage to conform to toponymic structures rooted in the foreign notions of Cartesian mapping, writing and inscription, bureaucratic officialdom, and the contested nature of representation.

These issues remain at the core of the problem that this research seeks to address. What are some notable particularities of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy across various dimensions, and how are contemporary toponymic applications obfuscating them? Like Tŝilhqot'in toponymy itself, the

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[15] With the exception of *Tŝideldel*, which was initially adopted as *Tŝi Deldel*, then changed to *Tŝideldel* in the following round of name adoptions at the direction of new leadership in that community.

[16] Previously, Tŝilhqot'in Indian Reserve names (and their numbers) were the only records in the BC Geographical Names database. Many of these reserves today have no population, and typically the 'community' of people live on only one or two main reserves. The adoption of Tŝilhqot'in community names therefore truly was the first acknowledgement by the BC GNO of the existence of these places as 'communities of people' rather than as administrative land designations.

answers to these questions have proven to be exceedingly complex, and this research merely scratches the surface in its answers. Tŝilhqot'in toponymic heritage in all of its vibrant complexity transcends Anglo-colonial presuppositions about toponymy. It reflects and informs Tŝilhqot'in-specific world views. It stands at the centre of Tŝilhqot'in discourses of language, cultural identity, history, territoriality, and many other aspects of Tŝilhqot'in life.

Figure 7: Map showing some recorded names from various projects (denoted by colour)

A lack of literature to review: Trust and responsibility

Although there have been some community-based Tŝilhqot'in place name surveys, there has been no study to date of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy.[17] Scholarly research that has engaged with Tŝilhqot'in place names in any respect has only done so peripherally (see Smith 2008). In fact, very little has been published regarding Tŝilhqot'in culture in general. Anthropologist Robert Lane wrote in his seminal 1953 dissertation, "[t]here is very little material, ethnographic or

[17] See Tobias (2009) for the difference between toponymy surveys and studies.

otherwise, available on the Chilcotin" (25), and little has changed since then. Tŝilhqot'in researcher Linda Smith wrote in 2008, "I feel almost a sense of panic when I realize how little research has been done, the enormity of what needs to be done, and in so little time" (2-3). Smith's urgency is shared by many Tŝilhqot'in who recognise that the disruption of traditional knowledge systems, namely oral transmission, has impeded younger generations' retention of the language and teachings of their elders. A considerable amount of Tŝilhqot'in knowledge fades out of memory every time a Tŝilhqot'in elder passes away, and therefore careful documentation of elders' knowledge has for almost 30 years been a major priority for Tŝilhqot'in of all communities.

There has been a great deal of popular writing published on the region's pioneer culture and history (*e.g.,* Bonner *et al*. 1995; Bracewell 2015; Phillips 2008; Schreiber 2013; Stangoe 1994: 1997; 2000; Wilson 2007) but only a handful that share Tŝilhqot'in stories, voices, or perspectives (*e.g.,* Birchwater 1995; 2017; 2022; Glavin 1992). There is also a large body of popular and academic writing on the Chilcotin War (Mole 2011; Swanky 2012; 2016; Williams 1996), but again these accounts don't incorporate Tŝilhqot'in voices, and some are actively hostile towards them (including Hewlett 1973 and Rothenburger 1978).

Academic engagement with indigenous traditional knowledge requires trust—between participants/knowledge keepers, indigenous governments, researchers, research institutions, and the research process itself (Kovach 2009). In many indigenous research contexts, including those in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, the building of trust can be an uphill battle given the often brutal and ongoing legacies of colonisation (see Furniss 1999). Many Tŝilhqot'in remain mistrusting of outsiders, especially *midugh* 'Euro-Canadians' and their institutions. This is not without a great

deal of justification. I believe that this is the primary reason why so little research has, even today, engaged directly with Tŝilhqot'in traditional knowledge. Smith (2008, 5) clarified:

> *Tsìnlhqút'in* elders in general are more comfortable being interviewed by members of their own family, as outsiders are not usually well-known, thus are seen as potential threats within the community. There is a long history of mistrust of outsiders among *Tsìnlhqút'in*, which makes it difficult for researchers from outside the community to elicit proper responses.

These attitudes towards outsiders have resulted from a pattern of disrespect, abuse, and oppression dating back to some of the earliest relationships between Tŝilhqot'in and colonial actors. Notable examples include the unfair and coercive trading tactics of the Hudson's Bay Company through the early 1800s (Turkel 2007), the spread of smallpox in 1862, the verbal threat of spreading it again in 1864, and the deceptive capture and wrongful hanging of Tŝilhqot'in warriors during that same year (Swanky 2012; 2016), the Province's reneging on a promised 1872 peace treaty, and over a century of prejudice, intimidation, deception, vandalism, and forced removal of families from their lands by private and state interests. The traumatic legacies of Canada's Indian Act and Indian Reserve system, Indian Residential and Day Schools, and Indian Hospitals continue to reverberate in disruptive and destructive ways across Tŝilhqot'in country as well.

In spite of these and other events, Tŝilhqot'in have remained steadfast in the defence of their people, culture, language, homeland, and sovereignty, and a healthy mistrust of outsiders has contributed to many successful resistance movements. In fact, mistrust was a hallmark of the Tŝilhqot'in's reputation among outsiders for a long time. At the turn of the twentieth century, amateur ethnographer James Teit wrote of the Tŝilhqot'in as "a rather turbulent and roguish people, inclined to take advantage of strangers, and hard to deal with" (1909, 763). Teit had only spent a few weeks among Tŝilhqot'in. Around the same time missionary priest A.G. Morice

wrote of the Tŝilhqot'in, "I know of no more primitive people throughout the whole of British Columbia" (1892-3, 23), referring to their reluctance to assimilate to settler ways of life and conversion to Christianity (see also Cronin 1960).

These comments do not paint the region as an inviting space for ethnographic research and may have been why so few anthropologists were attracted to the region. Livingston Farrand wrote of his 1897 field visit to Tŝilhqot'in territory that "[t]he conditions were not particularly favorable for the work, for the Indians were by no means cordial at the outset, and good interpreters were not to be had" (1900, 3). Almost no ethnographic work occurred among the Tŝilhqot'in for the first third of the 20th century, and by the 1930s Verne Ray (1939) was only able to find *one* willing Tŝilhqot'in informant (in Lane 1953). However, ethnographer Robert Lane (1953, 41-2)—who spent a total of twelve months over four trips between 1948 and 1951 working with Tŝilhqot'in—found them "honest, friendly, and usually cooperative," noting the same from pre-smallpox era fur trader Ross Cox who found them to be "remarkably hospitable" (cited in Lane 1953, 41). Lane (1953, 42) believed that the "uncomplimentary reputation" of the Tŝilhqot'in by outsiders was probably owing to their fierce independence and individualism, but to me it is clear that the legacies of colonialism are also at play, even to this day.

Lane's experience highlights the importance of non-Tŝilhqot'in researchers who are called to conduct research with Tŝilhqot'in to invest their time and effort in building personal relationships as well as showing some commitment to the work. He spent considerably more time among Tŝilhqot'in than did Teit, Farrand, and Ray combined. Following Lane, Robert Tyhurst also conducted extensive fieldwork among Tŝilhqot'in between 1975 and 1980 for his PhD research—which sadly remains only as a draft dissertation, though still very informative. Tyhurst noted:

> Very early in my research I learned that the Band Council members of Stone and Nemaiah Bands had a continuing and active interest in my research insofar as it preserved cultural information. My research was regarded with some good-natured, but nonetheless very real, suspicion… (1984, 21)

Tyhurst thought that both the interest in and suspicion of his research was likely the result of Tŝilhqot'in concerns for cultural preservation in the face of increasing intensity of natural resource extraction, namely logging. There was a worry that Tyhurst as an outsider may use the information he collection against the Nation's interests. He continued:

> I felt, as an "unaffiliated" research worker (that is, one not connected directly to Band interests), that my role in the community and my interest in such information required careful and repeated explanation.
>
> I found this type of attitude towards research by non-Indians to be very widespread among members of Band Councils, and individual Chilcotin people. In the time since I began my fieldwork, I have felt this attitude changing, although it has by no means disappeared. In my own case, this may have been due to my continued field trips, as well as to my willingness to share such linguistic and cultural information as I had collected with interested Band members (Tyhurst 1984, 23).

What Tyhurst observed first hand is what today we understand to be compulsory when conducting academic research in indigenous contexts. The investment of a researcher's time and effort to build relationships of trust with community members and their leaders, to continuously report back on what is being learned, and to ensure that the research will produce a benefit for the community—these, among others, are understood to be important components of indigenous research methods (see Kovach 2009). They are also important practices for overcoming mistrust. However, with the building of trust also comes a great responsibility to carry that trust throughout the research process, and beyond it.

Over the decade that I have now worked for the Tŝilhqot'in National Government, I have experienced and continue to experience mistrust, and justifiably so. Why should people trust me? What *are* my motivations? Despite my time at TNG, I am and will always remain an outsider. However, my life has become entangled with the Tŝilhqot'in world in ways that are deeply

meaningful to me. I have developed many cherished relationships, both professional and personal, with Tŝilhqot'in people as well as Tŝilhqot'in places. Over time, many elders and knowledge keepers have come to honour me with their trust, and with that trust has come access to information but also a responsibility to care for, use, and pass on that information appropriately. Many of these elders have since passed away, and this has for me underscored my responsibilities even further.

The gravity of this responsibility is intensified when considering just how little academic work has been published regarding Tŝilhqot'in culture. That several of the most seminal works on this subject are graduate theses and dissertations (notably Lane 1953; Smith 2008; Tyhurst 1984) has been cause for a great deal of consideration and caution in how I compose this work. My goal here is therefore not only to complete a master's degree with this thesis but also to provide some useful writing on Tŝilhqot'in heritage and the Tŝilhqot'in cultural landscape such that future work can build upon it. There is, after all, much more work to be done. While I hope that I can be part of this work, the present thesis presents only a very small amount of the knowledge and insights that my respected Tŝilhqot'in colleagues and friends have imparted to me, both through this research and through my role at TNG since 2014, and is barely scratching the surface of the knowledge and insights held collectively by Tŝilhqot'in themselves.

Chapter outlines

This thesis is organised into seven chapters, with this introduction as the first. Chapter 2 presents my approach to this research, both in terms of theory and methodology. I begin by introducing a number of important theoretical contributions to the study of toponymy, and then point to opportunities for this research to shed light on new theoretical possibilities through an ethnographic methodology that emphasises description over theoretical frameworks, and weaves

together Tŝilhqot'in voices and perspectives, my own observations and reflections, and connections with literature where they stand out.

Chapter 3 is a thorough look at the intersection between language and toponymy, highlighting many themes and issues of language that emerged from my interviews with Tŝilhqot'in language keepers and advocates. It further contextualises the increasing roles of textual representation of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy and the many challenges and opportunities that come with it.

Chapter 4 opens the doors to what Tŝilhqot'in place names are when looking beyond the bounds of language. After highlighting the epistemological context within which Tŝilhqot'in place names operate, I present two prominent ontological themes that emerged from my research—Tŝilhqot'in place names as important elements of an ancestral heritage assemblage, and Tŝilhqot'in place names as connections to and reflections of a living and supernaturally charged landscape.

Chapter 5 is a meditation on the multiplicity of meanings which are bound up with Tŝilhqot'in toponymy, both at the level of the name and the entire named landscape. Again, this chapter seeks to highlight the linguistic dimensions of meaning but to also move beyond it. Doing so revealed three prominent themes: the importance of etymology as space for the negotiation and renegotiation of various forms of meaning for Tŝilhqot'in; the meaning of Tŝilhqot'in place names as signifiers of ancestral *happenings*; and connections of meaning between toponymy and territoriality.

Chapter 6 is an exercise in place name elucidation using 'typological considerations' as a medium for bringing nuances about Tŝilhqot'in place names and place naming practices to light. By walking through some of the ways that Tŝilhqot'in place names might be categorised, other

aspects of Tŝilhqot'in culture, language, territory, history, heritage, and world views are also brought to light. The reflections of these themes in and by Tŝilhqot'in toponymy also presents many other areas for future research, including: various spatiotemporal dimensions of Tŝilhqot'in ontologies and epistemologies; entanglements between Tŝilhqot'in and Anglo-colonial toponymy and other forms of geographical terminology; and a number of cartographic considerations for applying various kinds of place name and geographical entity typologies.

The final chapter of this thesis is a conclusion which reflects on the core problem of this research, namely the dissonance between the kinds of traditional roles of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy that much of this thesis seeks to highlight and the contemporary roles that Tŝilhqot'in toponymy is being increasingly drawn into. I conclude that these are roles of a very different kind, and that more work in both ethnography and in theory is needed to better understand their complexities, significance, and paths forward.

As a final note, I ask readers to keep in mind that the audience for this thesis will be varied, and include academics who will recognise prominent cited works and theory jargon as well as non-academics and community researchers who may benefit from more thorough descriptions of terms and ideas.

Chapter 2:
Approaching Tŝilhqot'in place names:
Theory and methodology

Introduction

I came to this research from the opposite direction that most scholars encounter their subjects. My everyday life involves working with Tŝilhqot'in elders and knowledge keepers in TNG's offices, in Tŝilhqot'in communities, and on Tŝilhqot'in territory. Meanwhile, 'the field'—which is often understood as the distant place where research data is collected—felt to me a more applicable term for the university setting where I spent only eight months attending classes in what was, for me, a foreign place. I therefore began this research from a place of intimacy with the subject and a desire to advance work around it, rather than from within academia looking for an interesting topic. As such, I have had to wade through theoretical tradition after theoretical tradition, searching for one that I think would resonate with what I have come to understand about Tŝilhqot'in toponymy, and what might also resonate with Tŝilhqot'in readers. While some have come close, no theoretical tradition has emerged as a clear fit. As a result, and with much consideration, I have decided not to impose a 'theoretical framework' on this research. Instead, I hope to let theory emerge as connections to, and conclusions of, what I see revealed by my research data. In order to do this, I lean heavily on the ethnographic processes of observant participation, thick description, scholarly reflexivity, and iterative reflections characterised by an ontological openness (Campbell and Lassiter 2015).

While none of them seem to me to *frame* Tŝilhqot'in toponymy appropriately on their own, scholarly traditions in place name theory are rich and revealing. I therefore begin this chapter with a review of theoretical literature. If not a 'framework', this could be conceived of as

a 'theoretical well'—a place where scholarly theory can be stored and later retrieved from when the themes I present throughout the following chapters require some clarification. As I describe below, leaning on ethnography's attention to description allows for the emergence of new theoretical possibilities (Henare *et al*. 2007), including Tŝilhqot'in theories (see Chapter 4).

Navigating theory

Theoretical foundations

Although scholarship on place names (especially in geography, history and onomastics) has historically focused on the collection and classification of place names as well as tracing their meanings and origins (Wright 1929; Stewart 1975; Zelinsky 2002; Taylor 2016), there was also parallel interest across these and other disciplines, notably anthropology, in the deep connections between place names, the people who use them, and their cultures, languages, and environments (Boas 1901-07; 1934; Egli 1893; Schoolcraft 1845; see also Thornton 1997). By the end of the nineteenth century, Swiss geographer J.J. Egli (1893) had documented over 40,000 place names from around the world and in their analysis he came to understand geographical naming as flowing from the 'unique essence' (*geistigen Eigenart*) of a people, as well as a particular historical moment and the broader contexts that surrounded their development. While this framing carries with it the hallmark issues of essentialism (see Kurzwelly, Rapport, and Spiegel 2020), Egli correctly pointed to the deep interrelationships between place names and peoples, cultures, and environments across time. Franz Boas, the so-called 'father of anthropology,' provided a bit of a course correction. He saw place names as fundamental to the study of cultural groups because of the many insights they provided into the 'mental life' of distinctive cultural groups, and as such he advocated for their careful documentation and analysis (Boas 1901-07; 1934; see also Thornton 1997).

Boas and other systematically-minded anthropologists took great care in their indigenous place name inventory work. The efforts of these 'particularists', however, were not restricted to building inventories or conducting etymological analyses. They also often asked important questions about the broader sociocultural contexts within which the names operated. Thornton (1997) provides an excellent overview of these projects in North America. He highlights Boas' (1934) linguistic work with *Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw* place names which was situated within a broader inquiry about the relationships between people, language, and environment, and these contributed to his ideas about qualitative understandings of human phenomena (see Boas 1887). Kroeber (1916) centred his work on the systematic study of indigenous place name origins, but also examined the utility of place name mapping to locate important cultural sites, territorial extents, and land use patterns. Harrington's (1916) encyclopaedic work with Tewa place names led into other hypotheses, including an important link between etymological obscurity and duration of territorial occupation. Further, Waterman's (1922) documentation of indigenous place names along the west coast of North America shaped his observations about the deeply ancient origins of many of those names, their persistence across vast periods of time, and the propensity for etymologies to be easily misinterpreted by much later inheritors of ancient names.

Thornton (1997) also described how some anthropologists were less interested in the particulars of a given name and sought instead to make observations about their uses. Edward Sapir (1916), for example, was interested in the connection between languages and environments, and touched on place names in that pursuit, Melville Jacobs (1934) found that place names were integral to narrative structures and storytelling processes, and Cora du Bois (1935) and Frederica de Laguna saw that place names conveyed enormous amounts of

information about language, environments and ontologies in specific cultural contexts (Thornton 1997).

The cognitive turn

Anthropologists seem to have lost interest in the study of place names in North America in the post-war era. Keith Basso commented in the 1980s, "Once a viable component of the discipline, [place name research] rests today on the verge of its own demise, a casualty of scholarly indifference, ethnographic neglect, and the apparent assumption that place-name research has little bearing on topics of general interest and theoretical value" (1984, 78). Renewed anthropological interest began to occur in the late 1980s thanks in large part to Basso's eloquent ethnographic work among the Western Apache, which emphasised place naming practices and their complex interrelationships with peoples, cultures, languages, and landscapes (Thornton 1997). This represented a theoretical turn towards human cognition and its diverse manifestations via toponymy across cultures. Previous interest in these relationships were primarily centred on demographic patterns, subsistence strategies, social organisation, and environmental adaptation, but Basso believed these approaches overlooked "the conceptual systems in which Indian people interpret their homelands and invest them with forms of meaning and significance" (1984, 79)—something he believed would be best addressed through ethnographic fieldwork.

Although this 'renaissance' of anthropological interest in place names primarily followed Basso, it ultimately stemmed from the work of A. Irving Hallowell in the 1960s (Thornton 1997). Hallowell saw place names as culturally constructed linguistic elements that connect people with places in symbolic ways, and he believed they are integral to how people experience, interpret, and interact with their environments (Hallowell 1967). This was an important

theoretical link between the ‘particularists’ of earlier days and the ‘cognitivists’ who soon followed (Thornton 1997). “It is not only the direct experience of the terrain which assists the individual in building up his spatial world,” wrote Hallowell (1967, 193), “language crystallizes this knowledge through the customary use of place names” which “function integrally with the geographical knowledge and experience of the individual.” What emerged was a cognition-centred approach to place name theory. Drawing also on Rappaport’s (1979) ‘cognized models of the environment,’ Basso framed place names as linguistic elements that “provide access to cultural principles with which members of human communities organize and interpret their physical surroundings” (1984, 79).

Basso began to study place names for similar reasons to my own—not out of a pre-existing interest but because they were a clear priority for his Western Apache colleagues. People enjoyed ‘talking names’ and insisted Basso join in and pay close attention (1996). Through extensive ethnographic work he came to understand the profundity of the topic, noting that a single evocation of a place name can simultaneously, among other things, call up the image of a place, engage with historical narratives, affirm ancient wisdom, convey interpersonal emotion, provide personal advice, and heal wounded spirits (Basso 1988; 1996).

Other anthropologists who took a cognitive approach found place names to play key roles in the narrative structures of people’s lives. Van Valkenburgh (1974, 17-18), for example, viewed place names as key components of mythology, ritual, song, and prayer, and Cruikshank (1990, 52) recognised place names as spatial markers in the structure of personal autobiographies as a way to “encode, enrich and even structure accounts of the past.”

Geographers had also shown interest in cognitive approaches to place naming (and geographical terminology in general), though perhaps more often using the language of ‘place

making' than cognition. Stewart (1954, 1), for example, understood the fundamental role of place naming to be rooted in "one basic motive, that is, the desire to identify a place and thus distinguish it from others." Many geographers in the mid-twentieth century saw place naming practices as intimately linked with processes of place making and maintenance, shaping and reflecting conscious beings' perceptions of the world around them (Müller-Wille 1989-1990, 53; Stewart 1954; 1975). Through these processes, Yi-Fu Tuan commented that naming has "the creative power to call something into being, to render the invisible visible, to impart a certain character to things" (1991, 688).

Cognitive approaches to toponymy emerged out of phenomenology and in particular Martin Heidegger's famous concepts of *Dasein* (being-in-the-world), *Sorge* (care), and *Wohnen* (dwelling) (Basso 1996; Casey 1997). Heideggerian phenomenology, particularly as it connects with human perception, was significantly expanded in psychology. Building on Heidegger, psychologist Ludwig Binswanger described that "what we perceive are 'first and foremost' not impressions of taste, tone, smell, or touch, not even things or objects, but meanings" (1963, 114). Conscious experience of the world can be understood in this way through a series of constrained categories—a practical and manageable subset of our infinitely detailed environments that allow us to interact aimfully and *meaningfully* in the world. Drawing on Binswanger as well as Medard Boss, Peterson described how naming (the use of general nouns to designate general categories, as well as proper nouns to designate specific ones) plays a central role in this process. "To name something," Peterson wrote, "is not only to make it shine forth against the infinite background of potentially nameable things, but to group or categorize it, simultaneously, with other phenomena of its broad utility or significance" (2021, 8).

Place naming as a cognitive process can therefore be understood as a process of reducing the complexity of the landscape and its features into a discrete, manageable, and useful number of meaningful spaces, conceived of and communicated about through communal processes of perception, experience, language, and memory that directly and indirectly reflect the priorities of a given group or people. I subscribe to this notion. "Over the whole world the total of potentially discernable places," wrote Stewart (1975, 4), "reaches a kind of meaningless 'astronomical' figure, far into the billions," and it is only a small subset of these potentially nameable places—those that matter to people who engage with those parts of the world—that are made explicit through naming.

This process is, of course, culturally, linguistically, and geographically specific, as well as historically contingent. Thornton (1997, 209) summarises this neatly:

> Place names… intersect three fundamental domains of cultural analysis: language, thought, and the environment. As linguistic artifacts and distinct semantic domains… place names tell us something not only about the structure and content of the physical environment itself but also how people perceive, conceptualize, classify, and utilize that environment. Even more fundamentally… toponyms, both by themselves and in the context of narratives, songs, and everyday speech, provide valuable insights into the ways humans experience the world and appropriate images of the landscape to interpret and communicate their experiences. Thus, in addition to conveying a wealth of detail about the physical environment, place names also convey a great deal of information about the social environment.

Ultimately, therefore, cognitive theoretical approaches to studying indigenous place names offer a unique window onto a host of culturally and ontologically specific dimensions of human being.

The critical turn

Soon after the 'cognitive turn' in anthropology, the critical toponymy movement began to emerge in response to what was perceived to have become, in geography, a theoretically stale field. Cultural geographer Wilbur Zelinsky wrote in 2002 that when it comes to names and

naming, “the theoretical cupboard is bare” (244). He called for a systematic and multidisciplinary effort to address what he saw as the lack of a unified theory of names, which would, among other things, define the concept of a name and its various forms, integrate concepts of names and naming within the broader human experience, and plot out some universals (Zelinsky 2002, 252-3; see also Algeo 1985, 143-4). No such project materialised, and instead much toponymic research in geography and beyond took a hard theoretical turn into the critical.

For critical toponymists the theoretical question is centred not on place names and their qualities but on the spatial politics of place naming, including motivations behind acts of naming and their implications (Berg and Vuolteenaho 2009; Rose-Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu 2010). Toponymy’s critical turn called into question the political innocence of linguistically focused and encyclopaedic-oriented toponymic surveys of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that focused on accumulating, etymologising, and categorising place names. It was also a response to a rising emphasis on the concept of landscape-as-text, which underestimated the multiplicity of ways that people interpret written place names (Bellentani 2016). Critical toponymists focused instead on place naming as a *contested* spatial practice bound up in dynamics of power, authority, and control (Rose-Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu 2010; see also Giraut and Houssay-Holzschuch 2016). On the more extreme end of the critical spectrum, some have argued against the analysis of names altogether. Giraut and Houssay-Holzschuch, for example, asserted that “the focus of enquiry should be place naming *processes* rather than place names themselves” in order to “[decipher] power relations and actors’ motivations” (2016, 1-3).

Toponymy’s ‘critical turn’ successfully opened the toponymic discourse for feminist, poststructuralist, and postcolonial theory as well as to spotlight a fertile research field regarding

neoliberalism and the built environment (Giraut and Houssay-Holzschuch 2016). More recently, postcolonial and decolonial approaches that have emerged out of the critical turn are being underscored in indigenous/colonial spaces (see Rose-Redwood *et al.* 2020). Apart from postcolonialism and other critical frames, the 'decolonisation' movement also has theoretical roots in activist traditions (see Tuck and Yang 2012). In toponymy, this is exemplified through various 'calls' to *re*-centre, *re*claim, *re*cover, and *re*store indigenous place names, both substantively and methodologically (Rose-Redwood *et al.* 2020). "[T]oponymic reclamation," wrote Rose-Redwood *et al.*, "involves not only the inclusion of Indigenous place names on existing colonialist-statist maps but also the making of new maps altogether, or some combination thereof" (2020, 153). The authors make a distinction between *de*colonial and *anti*colonial mapping/spatial practices. The latter "is characterized by its resistance to colonialism" which "paradoxically has the effect of *re-centering* the 'colonial' (as a target of resistance)," whereas the former seeks to "[*de-center*] colonialism as the primary pivot around which ways of knowing and being-in-the-world are conceived, imagined, and lived" (152). Therefore, notes Rose-Redwood *et al.*, "even ostensibly 'progressive' counter-mapping projects can have the unintended effect of reinforcing colonial narratives that erase Indigenous histories, geographies, and lives" (2020, 153). This danger is something that I have become acutely aware of throughout my work with Tŝilhqot'in place names, in this research and beyond, and this critical position is something I hope echoes throughout my methodology.

The role of critical toponymy is shifting away from a central explanatory frame to an adjunct one as scholars continue to explore and refine other theoretical possibilities under the critical umbrella. Performativity or speech act theory is one such example where the theoretical foundations remain critical but further developments are being constructed above (see Rose-

Redwood 2008; Tucker and Rose-Redwood 2015). J. L. Austin's (1962) *How to do things with words* explores the ways in which language is used to perform actions in the world rather than to merely describe it, and connections between place naming and performativity are evident.

Rose-Redwood (2008, 877) suggested that "place naming in general, and street naming in particular, can best be understood as a set of performative practices which political authorities seek to monopolize by devising 'official' toponymic systems backed up by the force of the law." However, Rose-Redwood (2008) advocated a critical view of Austin's (1962, 239) assertion that "we agree" on established naming conventions, when in fact performances of naming are often highly contested. He asks, for instance, "who gets to decide what the appropriate circumstances are, who the appointed authority should be, and what procedures or social conventions must be followed in order to ensure the performative enactment of a name?" (877). Rose-Redwood's conclusion was that the legitimacy of naming is heavily dependent not only on the context of 'official' acts, but also on counter-performances and their subsequent effects. Here we can see a clear example of critical theory merging with other theoretical traditions to illuminate a wider breadth of toponymic phenomena.

New theoretical possibilities

Many theoretical trends in indigenous place name research—including the cognitive, critical, and performative—provide useful interpretations of indigenous toponymic phenomena. However, they also share an important problem in that they rely on etic interpretations from academic outsiders imposing their own theories onto indigenous phenomena. I am not claiming that the use of theoretical frameworks is wrong, *per se*, but many theoretical traditions still unknowingly decentre, if not outright disregard, indigenous understandings of their own cultures, histories, traditions, and languages. This is in large part what fuels my distaste for using theory

as a ‘framework’ when studying or writing about Tŝilhqot’in toponymy. What do we miss when our chosen theoretical frameworks only selectively corroborate, do not leave space for, or even explain-away emic understandings?

In a recent study of indigenous Mapuche place names in Norpatagonia, Salazar and Maulén (2022) attempted to address these issues. They argued that because indigenous place names emerge out of complex socio-spatial practices and meanings that accumulate over time in highly particular intercultural spaces, they are intertwined with other local and specific social, environmental, and political phenomena. In order to understand these complex interrelationships, Salazar and Maulén assert that researchers should “question the bases of understanding place-names from the perspective of Western culture”—which often “stoke hegemonizing and homogenizing dynamics”—and should instead “create an ontological opening to understand indigenous toponymy from its own complexity and individuality” (2022, 642). In other words, they highlight the importance of providing space for indigenous place names to ‘speak for themselves’.

One of the reasons I have gravitated towards Salazar and Maulén (2022) is that their theoretical approach to indigenous toponymy echoes ontological turns in archaeological theory which I have found to be highly compelling. In *Thinking Through Things*, Henare *et al.* (2007) argue that the Western philosophical presuppositions (*i.e.,* theoretical traditions) that researchers impose on their analyses of the objects that they study may be “obscuring theoretical possibilities” (2). “Instead of advancing yet more complex and ostensibly sophisticated theoretical models (piling up the assumptions as it were),” Henare *et al.* present an approach that “explores the peculiar mileage afforded by the ethnographic method itself” (2007, 2):

> With purposeful naïveté, the aim of this method is to take ‘things’ encountered in the field as they present themselves, rather than immediately assuming that they signify,

> represent, or stand for something else. Adopting an approach that might be called 'radically essentialist'… can be seen as exploring a more open, heuristic approach to analysis that allows 'things', as and when they arise, to offer theoretical possibilities (Henare *et al.* 2007, 2).

This approach is thus "primarily *methodological*" as it "encourages anthropologists to attend to 'things' as they emerge in diverse ethnographic settings… rather than providing data to which theory is applied… the things encountered in fieldwork are allowed to dictate the terms of their own analysis – including new premises altogether for theory" (Henare *et al*. 2007, 4).

Building on these notions, Fowler (2013) presented a 'new kind of reflexivity' in archaeological theory that Alberti (2016, 173) described as being "characterized by openness or wonder, by an emphasis on the descriptive rather than the theoretical, and by attentiveness to our embodied responses." "Wonder," continued Alberti, "or a kind of intentional naïveté or naïve empiricism in the face of what is studied is meant to sustain the alterity while enabling meaning or some kind of understanding to take place" (2016, 173). *Alterity* or 'otherness' is a concept at the heart of the anthropological endeavour. Holbraad (2012, 54) defines alterity in this context as "the divergence between ethnographic materials and the assumptions the analyst brings to them."

Subjects of study in archaeology are primarily material things, whereas place names are immaterial.[18] However, place names should also be understood as things—*immaterial things*. Place names have frequently been presented as 'linguistic artifacts' (Lhuyd 1707; Macniven 2013; Taylor 2016; Thornton 1997; Wainwright 1962). As such, it is not a stretch to imagine them as part of wider 'assemblages' of the material and immaterial remnants that have been accumulated from and deposited by past peoples. Further, much like archaeological objects, we

[18] It seems to me that place names in text, for example on signs or maps, are representations or instantiations of an otherwise more fundamentally cognitive and linguistic (immaterial) phenomenon. For one, spellings can vary (*e.g.,* Springhouse v. Spring House, a small community in BC), but there can be typographical or other errors which make each representation unique. Where does the name *exist* if not in any one given written record—even an *official* written record? Fundamentally, they exist in our collective memories. More on this in Chapter 4.

can document place names in lists, describe their elements, map their locations, and also 'excavate' historical names from written and oral records. Like archaeological 'artifacts', place names are often seen as an important form of intangible cultural heritage for indigenous and non-indigenous peoples around the world (Aird, Fox, and Bain 2019; Helleland 2011; 2012; UNGEGN 2015).

To go one step further, Alberti (2016, 172) argued that there are often major disconnections between the ontologies "at work" in non-Western societies, especially small scale ones, and the metaphysical approaches that scholars use to describe and understand them. He warned that top-down applications of meta-ontological orthodoxies could remain "impervious to the words and deeds of small-scale societies, whose own metaphysics are often presented in a complex narrative form that… seem quaint and inaccessible to systematization" (172). By definition, ontological alterity is that which does not fit within *our* preconceived theoretical frameworks, as outsider researchers. "If ontology is what 'is'," describes Alberti, "then alterity is the part of what others say what 'is' that does not make sense to us" (172). How to approach alterity in toponymic research is therefore an important consideration—something Salazar and Maulén emphasised as part of an "ontological decentration" (2022, 643) requiring a "questioning and/or transcending [of] universalistic typologies of toponymy" (662). Here a 'recursive' anthropological methodology is useful, where recursivity is understood to be "the willingness to allow our concepts to be transformed in relation to indigenous ones" (Alberti 2016, 172; see also Holbraad 2012).

What theoretical prospects emerge when taking seriously Tŝilhqot'in ontologies, understandings, discourses, and engagements with their place names and place naming practices? I want to end with this question open as a means of letting theory be something of a conclusion,

or conclusions, that surface throughout my navigation of the various themes that have emerged throughout this research. In other words, although many Western academic theoretical traditions are useful and explanatory, and although I do draw them in here and there throughout the following chapters, I also want to remain as open as possible to presenting new theoretical connections in Tŝilhqot'in-specific contexts. I do this mostly in an effort to present theory in ways that I hope will resonate with Tŝilhqot'in readers, today and tomorrow.

Methodology

My original intention for this research was to produce a comprehensive inventory of Tŝilhqot'in place names complete with maps, lists, and useful typographies for TNG to use in a variety of applications, as well as a chapter or two in this thesis which would outline this work and highlight some other themes surrounding Tŝilhqot'in place naming practices in contemporary applications (digital, maps, signs, legal, *etc.*). This inventorying work is still happening on an ongoing basis but is for now separate from this thesis. Nonetheless, I had originally set out to 'collect data' based on this collaborative goal, so before conducting place name surveys (mapping sessions) with knowledge keepers I consulted with some key Tŝilhqot'in colleagues to develop an appropriate methodology for the surveys. These people were the late William Myers, Bella Alphonse, Geraldine Elkins, Marilyn and Joyce Charleyboy, and Chiefs Roger William and Russell Myers Ross. Through these preliminary interviews, I had hoped to glean some useful information for perhaps one chapter of my thesis while also addressing some contextual issues I faced while working at TNG to represent Tŝilhqot'in place names in contemporary applications (databases, maps, commemorative spaces, *etc.*). In these interviews, I asked questions around place naming (how/which places are named, name changes, forgotten names, *etc.*), language (distinctions with English language names, questions of dialect, versions

of names, spelling, *etc.*) and epistemology (importance of names within knowledge systems, methods of documentation, *etc.*).

These preliminary interviews were so rich and revealing that I had to pivot, and from them I have compiled the core 'data' for this thesis. I also conducted several place name documentation and review sessions with knowledge keepers, and this provided for me a medium for further ethnographic inquiry. From these sources I also wove in personal reflections and narratives as well as key pieces of academic and grey literature as a means of bridging the gap between anthropology and ethnography (see Ingold 2008).

Tim Ingold (2008) made the case that while anthropology and ethnography often complement each other, they are pursuits of very different kinds. Anthropology seeks "a generous, comparative but nevertheless critical understanding of human being and knowing in the one world we all inhabit" whereas "ethnography is to describe the lives of people other than ourselves, with an accuracy and sensitivity honed by detailed observation and prolonged first-hand experience" (69). This distinction, according to Ingold (2008, 70), is what Radcliffe-Brown deemed a separation between *nomothetic* (philosophical) and *idiographic* (descriptive) forms of inquiry. Both are important to understand human experience. As both a field methodology and form of writing (see Campbell and Lassiter 2015), ethnography is a core method I have employed here. But in the Ingoldian/Radcliffe-Brownian distinction, my observations and descriptions must be put into conversation with a broader anthropological inquiry. The goal here is not to prove theory with data, but to be open to theoretical possibilities that emerge *from* the data, and taking thorough field notes is an important part of this description-reflection dialogue (see Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011).

Anthropology and ethnography share a problematic history bound up with colonial hegemony and misguided representational authority that must be addressed in practice today (Alberti 2016; Cervone 2015; Kovach 2009; Starn 2011). There are many ways that scholars account for these problems, including engaging in collaborative research practices, writing reflexively, building and maintaining personal relationships, engaging in shared experiences and meaning-making, recognizing the problematic of 'the field', and making active efforts to ensure research design as well as outcomes produce decolonising effects (Budhwa and McCreary 2013; Cervone 2015; D'Amico-Samuels 1991; Kakaliouras 2012; Kovach 2009; Pels 2008; Thom 2017). I have tried to weave all of these antidotes to the problems bound up with academia in indigenous contexts into this research through all stages.

Collaborative practice

Ethnography is at its core a collaborative methodology, always relying on some degree of shared work (Campbell and Lassiter 2015, 5). It provides opportunities to write from our own experiences as researchers through shared work on the land. Owing to the collaborative nature of this project, I engaged in community, personal, and academic priorities, emphasizing overlaps and common goals between them (see Kovach 2009). This kind of interchange through cooperative research design, as well as the development of multiple research deliverables, is often essential in ethnographic work (Campbell and Lassiter 2015, 32-34), especially in indigenous research contexts (Cervone 2015; Kovach 2009, 81-82).

Adopting collaborative practices through my research design process ended up being complicated due to my role then, as now, as an employee at TNG. In early 2019, while working in TNG's GIS department, I pitched my research plan with Tŝilhqot'in leadership (chiefs and upper management at TNG) as a project that would focus on two things: (1) exploring the

connections between Tŝilhqot'in place naming traditions and the resurgence of Tŝilhqot'in place naming in contemporary applications as mediums for political action (namely in sovereignty, rights, title, and reconciliation); and (2) compiling known place name sources and addressing geographical and etymological gaps in order to build an interactive web-atlas. Leadership was unanimously supportive of my initial proposal. By September 2020, I had completed a more concrete research proposal with my academic supervisors based on a deeper interrogation of the relevant literature. In this formal research proposal, I shifted the emphasis away from politics and reconciliation to a more broad overview of the contemporary and traditional roles that Tŝilhqot'in place names are called to do, as well as maintaining the 'community deliverable' of a comprehensive digital inventory of names. In August 2020, I received a letter of support from TNG to carry out this proposed research. I then consulted with select TNG staff to produce a set of interview questions—some of which I used, others of which came to seem irrelevant once the interviewing began (more below under data collection). From this point on TNG has been largely hands-off, and my 'collaborators' shifted from TNG staff to my research participants—respected Tŝilhqot'in community leaders, language advocates, elders, and knowledge keepers.

Ultimately, the inventorying side of this project proved to be far out of scope, and therefore remains incomplete and ongoing. I met with TNG management several time between 2021 and 2023 to discuss how best to reorganise roles and expectations given this change, and we agreed that it remains my responsibility to continue the inventorying work in my role as an employee—something I take seriously. Part of the 'community deliverables' that I have been able to complete include the wealth of data that I have accrued through this study, including my interview recordings and transcripts, field notes, photographs, maps, and spatial data (both place names and the various traditional use data that I collected during place name mapping sessions).

Copies of these will be stored at, managed by, and used at the discretion of TNG. I will retain originals for archival purposes, and will work with TNG and the informants themselves, or their next of kin, should there be interest in drawing on these data in future research outside of TNG.

Ethical considerations

The underlying ethical imperatives of this research were to ensure the dignity and safety of all participants, and to avoid any detrimental implications to the Tŝilhqot'in Nation. This research followed Canada's Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (Government of Canada 2018).

Relationships that I've made with Tŝilhqot'in people and places over the past decade have been my inspiration for pursuing this research from the outset. Like in many indigenous research contexts where communities are often small and tight-knit, I did personally know most of my participants from previous working or personal relationships. This was not only unavoidable, it was desirable. Strong personal relationships, while potentially problematic in positivistic research, are essential in most community-based ethnographic studies.

I am currently employed full-time at TNG in the role of Cultural Heritage Coordinator where I manage a variety of projects that advance Tŝilhqot'in heritage protection, commemoration, understanding, and practices. This could be seen as a conflict of interest through a blurring of lines between my role as a researcher and as an employee. In reality, these lines were always blurred, unavoidably. However, I always requested clear, informed, and ongoing consent before being 'on the record' for this research. Collaborative ethnographic research often means negotiating these kinds of entangled relationships.

Finally, participants were provided opportunities to remain anonymous, though none chose this option. Tŝilhqot'in knowledge is relational and knowledge protocols include

attributing the source of the knowledge you are conveying—especially the name of the person who shared with you. I am honoured to be able to share the names of the remarkably knowledgeable people who participated in this study, and who made it happen.

Data collection

I conducted 13 interview sessions with 19 people between January and November 2021, including nine women and ten men from four of eight Tŝilhqot'in communities.[19] Selection of participants was purposive—I approached people who were known to hold a great deal of knowledge with Tŝilhqot'in place names. I also approached advocates of the Tŝilhqot'in language, most of whom are/were fluent speakers, and some of whom are/were considered experts in the Tŝilhqot'in writing system. I personally knew most prospective participants either by acquaintance or through longer professional and personal relationships, though a few had been introduced to me throughout the course of the study. Unlike other academic fields, personal relationships are not only encouraged but are often integral to ethnographic research, especially in indigenous contexts (Campbell and Lassiter 2015; Kovach 2009). On the basis of these relationships, I encountered ample receptivity to participation in this study. There were, however, many knowledgeable Tŝilhqot'in whom I was unable to directly interview due to time constraints, including representatives from the communities of *Tl'esqox*, *ʔEsdilagh*, *Tagwedisdzan* and *Nagwentl'un*—a notable shortcoming of this research. I have nonetheless attempted to bring in my reflections on various aspects of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy that I have gleaned from members of these communities over the years.

[19] Here I include *Tagwedisdzan* (Towdystan) and *Nagwentl'un* (Anahim Lake) who are represented by the Ulkatcho First Nation, and not member communities of the Tŝilhqot'in National Government.

Nine interviews were conducted as one-on-one sessions while the others were with groups of two or three participants together (usually family members). Seven sessions were focused primarily on reviewing maps of TNG's existing place name records as well as recording and mapping other yet-undocumented names. These documentation sessions attended primarily to what has become the parallel inventorying project, while another six sessions were focused on broader topics in toponymy including place naming practices, language, representation, and other themes.[20] These sessions not only resulted in a wealth of audio recordings which I have transcribed and woven into the following chapters, they were also an essential medium for ethnographic participant observation.

One elder, the late Herbert Jeff, participated in a thorough place name documentation session and then spent three long field days with me visiting many of the places whose names we had discussed in our initial session. Spending time on the land with Herbert presented me with a great deal of insight about Tŝilhqot'in toponymy, as well as history, ontology, land use patterns, and many other topics. Not only did Herbert recall many more names while we were on the land (see Figure 8) than he did by merely reviewing maps on a table in his yard at *Chezqox* (see Figure 9), it was another ideal medium for ethnographic observant participation which may take a career, or an entire lifetime, to unpack.

Rick Budhwa and Tyler McCreary (2013) encouraged researchers working in indigenous communities to follow what they call a "landed methodology" that stresses time spent on indigenous territories developing relationships *in* and *with* places as well as people. Being on the land with knowledge keepers also offers researchers valuable opportunities to share transformative experiences with their interlocutors (see Thom 2017). Pursuing this kind of

[20] In most cases, I had already (through previous work at TNG) conducted place name documentation sessions with those in this latter group.

methodology also reflects what I hear from Tŝilhqot'in knowledge keepers—that learning a place name is one thing, but you can't *understand* a place or its name until you actually go there.

Figure 8: Photograph of late Herbert Jeff at *Tŝilangh* 'rock pointed (like a leaf)'

Throughout the research process, I have also drawn upon my memories and experiences working at TNG since 2014, both in my role as a GIS technician (2014-2019) and as their Cultural Heritage Coordinator (2020-present). For this reason, an ethnographic medium has also been through my job—engaging in my professional relationships and responsibilities, past and present, and now drawing my observations, experiences, and reflections into conversation with academic literature and interview data: metaphors of braiding, bridging, and weaving come to mind (Kimmerer 2015; Snively and Williams 2018).

Figure 9: Photograph of map interview set-up at late Herbert Jeff's place at *Chełqox*

My interview style varied from participant to participant, and from place name to place name, in an attempt to 'read the room' and to only dig deeper with prompts and probes when participants showed an interest in elaborating. This was done to avoid participants feeling interrogated using hyper-specific questions or overly formal interviewing styles which I have found to be off-putting for many Tŝilhqot'in elders. Elders often prefer an open opportunity to share what they wish, and what they believe you need to hear (see also Basso 1996). I have also

found that introducing topics of conversation and following up with probes and prompts, without interrupting, is a much healthier way to interview elders. Embracing a degree of uncertainty in interviewing structure can be important in ethnography, and adopting elements of 'emergent design' into a research plan provides opportunities to address important questions we may not know to ask at the outset (Campbell and Lassiter 2015, 34-38). For this reason, I mostly used unstructured and semi-structured interviews, waiting for opportune moments to ask after broad topics, and employing gentle probing techniques (see Bernard 2011).

Place name documentation sessions

The seven place name documentation sessions were aimed at improving TNG's working place name inventory both by confirming and further elucidating previously documented names, meanings, and locations, as well as expanding the number of documented names. These sessions involved reviewing with participants a series of 1:50,000 and 1:80,000 paper maps that I had produced specifically for this project. These 25 maps, plotted at 24 by 36 inches, covered the breadth of Tŝilhqot'in territory and displayed previously documented Tŝilhqot'in place names from ten different sources.[21] Displayed names were colour coded to correspond with the different sources as a reference. This allowed for the simultaneous display of multiple cumulative place name sources. Names documented across multiple sources were therefore displayed in clusters, spatially revealing variations of the same names, and sometimes different names altogether. These patterns were helpful to orient participants on the maps and prompted discussion of various kinds.

[21] Most of these sources were from TNG projects, but some also included community and individual Tŝilhqot'in research initiatives, and place names documented in the *Tsilhqot'in v. British Columbia* case at the Supreme Court of BC. Provincially gazetted as well as colloquial Anglo-colonial place names from various sources were also displayed, mostly for reference and orientation.

The place name documentation sessions were not intended to be a test of elders' knowledge, as was the intention in the Tŝilhqot'in Aboriginal title case at the Supreme Court of BC, nor was it intended to be a positivistic place name survey of the kind that Tobias (2009) described. Rather, the aim was to provide opportunities for participants to contribute to and build upon a living, collective body of Tŝilhqot'in toponymic knowledge. For this reason there seemed no reason not to include previously documented place names on the interview maps. In many cases, elders would review the existing place names on the interview maps and affirm their accuracy.

TNG's working place name inventory is stored in an ESRI geodatabase file format and uses a unique Tŝilhqot'in place name identifier (TPNID) which corresponds to each distinct name. Different versions of place names (*i.e.,* compounded names, alternate pronunciations, *etc.*) are linkable to the main inventory through the TPNID whereas different names for the same feature are assigned a separate TPNID in the same spatial location. When participants commented on names displayed on the interview maps (*e.g.,* spelling adjustments or elucidation of meaning), these were recorded in my field notes and indexed by their TPNID. Participants identifying place names that had not yet been documented, or adjustments to the location of the name on the map, were marked on the maps in ink[22] as a point, line, or polygon, labelled with the name and a project-specific code,[23] and then the name and associated data (*e.g.,* meaning interpretation, English translation, other versions, *etc.*) were recorded in my field notes along with the corresponding project-specific code.

[22] Standard mylar overlays were intentionally not used in order to keep a cumulative record on the maps with each proceeding interview. In this way subsequent participants would be able to see and comment on all recorded Tŝilhqot'in place names, including those of the present study.

[23] For example 05-PN-015 (participant PIN – place name – data collection number)

Beyond the importance of attending to questions of place naming and place making in indigenous place name research, Thornton (1997, 222) highlighted that "mapping, transcribing, and interpreting place names remain important foundational tasks." Some indigenous place name inventory projects have also documented and presented other aspects of indigenous place names beyond these most basic. For example, Richardson and Galloway's (2011) inventory of Nooksack place names includes for each name notes on linguistic elements, descriptions of name variations, descriptions of scale and location with which the name applies, and other ethnohistorical notes and comments (see also Hunn *et al.* 2015).

I considered these as well as other attributes for inclusion in my data schema for Tŝilhqot'in place name documentation. Therefore, for each name I attempted to elicit responses regarding: (1) the name transcribed according to pronunciation; (2) a general description of the name; (3) its 'meaning', as described by the participant; (4); an English translation where possible; (5) associated personal, oral-historical, or legendary stories; (6) the spatial extent of the named feature; (7) alternative names, if any; (8) notes on the types of use or activities that happen in the named place; and (9) whether there are any protocols for using or visiting the named place.[24] In most cases, participants showed disinterest in continued probing after these topics so I was content to learn and document what each person had to share about each name and its corresponding geographical feature. Nonetheless the goal with these prompts was to connect each name, meaning and location within the broader context of TNG's goals to preserve, understand, practice, and celebrate Tŝilhqot'in heritage, as well as to advance Tŝilhqot'in title, rights, and jurisdiction over their territory and heritage.

[24] I had produced an interview guide for place name documentation, though it was rarely used explicitly, providing me instead with topics for prompting and probing.

I used other methods for documenting place names outside of map review sessions. When working outside, I marked GPS points on the iPad application GIS Kit, noting the names and other relevant information about them in my field notes. When place names arose during interviews without the map review component, I added them to my field notes and then drew them out of interview transcripts, noting location by description or reference to other names. Occasionally, other place names arose in my everyday life among Tŝilhqot'in friends and colleagues, and these were jotted on sticky notes or emailed to myself for later addition. All documented place names were added to an ESRI geodatabase file which is held at TNG for their ongoing purposes.

Thematic interviews

The remaining six interview sessions focused on three broad themes associated with Tŝilhqot'in toponymy: (1) Tŝilhqot'in relationships with named places; (2) Tŝilhqot'in place naming practices and processes; and (3) language and toponymy. By embracing principles of emergent research design, many other important themes arose during these interviews as well. I tried as often as possible to have these interviews out on Tŝilhqot'in territory in an effort to help trigger memories of places and names from participants. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. As mentioned above, these interviews were initially intended to colour the context of the broader place name documentation work, but because they proved to be so illuminating, they have formed the core data that this thesis has been structured around. Many more themes than could be fit into these pages emerged, and there remains much more work to do.

Conclusion: Methodologising theory

The approach I have presented here is one that seeks to lean in on the 'thick description' offered by an ethnographic methodology in order to let theory emerge and connect in a less rigid

way than applying theory as a preconceived framework. I have attempted this predominantly because I am not Tŝilhqot'in, and I feel a strong sense of responsibility to follow the lead of Tŝilhqot'in voices when it comes to representing Tŝilhqot'in culture, history, and world views. I have developed some insights throughout the past decade which I think do add something to the picture of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy here, largely in the specific themes that I have chosen to highlight. But ultimately, the audience of this thesis is intended to be future Tŝilhqot'in researchers as opposed to theoreticians. I hope that the approach I have chosen resonates with both groups, but it is the former who I have prioritised throughout this study.

This was certainly not an easy way to complete a master's thesis, and I have undoubtedly failed at times throughout these chapters by overemphasising the theoretical connections that personally resonate with me. However, to present a case study of a strictly cognitive, critical, or performative approach would be to miss the point of this research. As the first study of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy, Tŝilhqot'in themes, voices, perspectives, concepts, and theories should be centred.

Chapter 3:
The language of Tŝilhqot'in place names

Introduction

While they are also many other things, place names are, first and foremost, words. They are spoken, remembered, and written elements of language that connect to, represent, define, and even call into being discrete spatial entities. It is therefore unsurprising that themes, issues, and questions of language are ever-present in Tŝilhqot'in discourses of place names and place naming. Trends occurring across the broader linguistic landscape inevitably wash over toponymy to one degree or another, including themes of fluency and literacy, orthography and spelling, lexical, phonological and grammatical borrowing, and a variety of other forms of language variation and change.

I have therefore included this chapter on language for a few reasons. First, language issues are echoed across all contemporary toponymic practices, especially as they relate to textual representations of place names. I encountered these issues constantly in my work with place names at TNG, prompting me to ask interview participants several questions about the intersection between Tŝilhqot'in language and toponymy. Second, issues of language are so central to toponymic discourses among Tŝilhqot'in that they would have emerged from my interview and ethnographic data whether or not I had intentionally centred them. Third, I think a chapter on language is a helpful way to contextualise these unique elements of language in further chapters as well as a way to juxtapose the many *other* things, beyond words, that Tŝilhqot'in place names are understood to be (as I discuss in following chapters). Finally, by attending to the nuances of the Tŝilhqot'in language itself, I hope to address some of the

language-oriented issues facing TNG's ongoing toponymic practices, namely in cartography, signage and commemoration, and adoptions into the Provincial gazetteer. In order to present the particularities of these themes, I sometimes stray away from an overt discussion of place names and naming in this chapter. However, the details will become relevant throughout following chapters.

The Tŝilhqot'in language

Tŝilhqot'in call their language *Nenqayni Ch'ih* 'Native way (of speaking),' *Tŝilhqot'in Ch'ih* 'Tŝilhqot'in way,' or commonly just Tŝilhqot'in, Chilcotin, or *Nenqayni*.[25] Tŝilhqot'in is classified as a Northern Athapaskan language (Krauss and Golla 1981) which is part of the larger Na-Dene family of languages (Goddard 1996). It is the southernmost of the extant 23 Northern Athapaskan languages, with only the *Dãkelh* (Carrier) as an Athapaskan neighbour, to the north. This unique geographical position brought about significant Tŝilhqot'in exposure to non-Athapaskan neighbours, including several coastal and interior Salish groups, that contributed to the development of a distinctively Tŝilhqot'in ethnolinguistic condition (Cook 1993; Goddard 1996; Lane 1953; 1981).

Like all languages, Tŝilhqot'in has undergone many changes in the past, as it continues to do so today. The Northern Athapaskan languages probably began to differentiate from each other around 2500 years ago (Krauss 1973; Krauss and Golla 1981). Based solely on archaeological evidence (Matson and Magne 2007), we might speculate that the Tŝilhqot'in language was further distinguished around 500 years ago.

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[25] Linguists often spell the word as *Tŝinlhqut'in* (flattened and nasalised) or *Tsilhqut'in* (denasalised) (Cook 2013; Smith 2008), the /u/ being more phonologically accurate than the /o/ used in the common spelling. The anglicisation "Chilcotin" is commonly used by linguists (Cook 2013; Goddard 1996; Pye 1992) and other writers, as do many Tŝilhqot'in themselves when English is the language of discourse.

Tŝilhqot'in language advocates often discuss an older version of their language. It is described as more complex than the language spoken through the second half of the 20th century, using 'high' words that few now understand. "Our maternal grandmother spoke *really* old Chilcotin and we grew up listening to that," described Geraldine Elkins—a younger-generation Tŝilhqot'in speaker—"the language was different, even then" (personal comm. 2021). Younger generations of Tŝilhqot'in-speakers, born roughly between 1965 and 1985, are known to speak an even more simplified language. Tŝilhqot'in remained a thriving language long after European colonisation, but in recent decades has come under threat as fewer and fewer children are learning it, and older language speakers steadily pass away.

Tŝilhqot'in was not well documented by linguists until the 1970s, with the fieldwork of Michael Krauss and Eung-Do Cook—a time when it was still the first language of most Tŝilhqot'in children (Cook 2013; Goddard 1996). Working with Tŝilhqot'in language keepers Bella Alphonse, Maria Myers, and Stanley Stump at the Fish Lake Cultural Centre in 1976, Cook built upon the work of Quindel King and Michael Krauss to complete a phonemic inventory of the language and develop a functional orthography (Cook 2013). This orthography was quickly adopted by the Tŝilhqot'in Nation and has been used to develop a number of pedagogical materials, including public school curricula, since the 1980s. Bella, Maria, and Stanley along with Linda Smith and William Myers *ghinli* were the first to learn Cook's system (Cook 2013) and are still considered leading experts. However, as Smith (2008, 148) notes, the Tŝilhqot'in language remains understudied when compared with many other indigenous languages.

Language and identity

Language is a major unifying factor in Tŝilhqot'in cultural identity. Lane (1953, 164-5) observed that "[t]he Chilcotin were distinguished from their neighbours by their exclusive

sharing of a common dialect, a common territory, a common culture, and a feeling of basic unity." Lane believed that "[p]robably the deepest tie was language… as long as the linguistic bond was there, the person would be recognized as Chilcotin" (164-5). A Tŝilhqot'in who lost their language, noted Lane, may risk losing recognition as a Tŝilhqot'in, while a foreigner who adopted the language could gain recognition as a "Chilcotin of foreign origin" (1953, 165). Today the linguistic landscape is much more complex, and Tŝilhqot'in identity is not tied so strongly to fluency, but fluency does remain an important factor in how many Tŝilhqot'in understand their unique cultural identity. This may be partly why many Tŝilhqot'in language topics continue to be politically charged. Geraldine Elkins exemplified this with a description of her mother's attitude about language use in the home:

> Our mother said, like, "you're not White, why are you speaking English?" We were told that so many times, "you speak the language [Tŝilhqot'in] in the house, because you're not—you're not what you're speaking," sort of. That was her understanding of how important it was to be *Tsilhqot'in*. To say "I'm *Tsilhqot'in*"—yeah somebody could say that when they haven't learned the ways and the language, [and] they were just born into the community… but without those teachings, how are you connected? (G. Elkins, personal comm. 2021).

The deep connection between language and cultural identity reflected in Geraldine's statement is interwoven throughout Tŝilhqot'in discourses of territory, history, culture, heritage, nationhood, and many other important and ongoing discussions.

Lost in translation

English and Tŝilhqot'in are about as different as two languages can be. Translating and interpreting between them is seen as not just a challenge but often futile given how many nuances are lost. Smith (2008, 145) shed light on this issue:

> Translations from *Tsìnlhqút'ín* to English are generally not exact in most instances, and one has to be satisfied with achieving only the gist of the meanings. The translations

> often lose special cultural elements, become merely outlines, repetitious, and disorganized, but this is not the case when told in the original language.

Solomon (2012, 4) also provided insights about the challenges of translating Tŝilhqot'in into English:

> To translate or interpret anything from the Tsilhqot'in language to English is in some sense complicated, particularly when you want to capture the true meaning of what is being shared by the elders. The Tsilhqot'in language is a very simple, sensitive language and when you speak it, it seems to come from your heart. It can lose the true concept when it is translated into English… There are many words in the Tsilhqot'in language that do not have a corresponding word in English…

Despite this issue, Solomon makes it clear that the documentation and transmission of culture and customs from elders—many of whom don't know English well, or at all—to younger generations who are monolingual Anglophones requires careful and accurate translation, highlighting the importance of attending carefully to Tŝilhqot'in-English translation work.

Marilyn Charleyboy further described the problem, showing how her language and culture are often bound together into a unified mode of being:

> [Language is] huge, you know, and that's why [our culture is] getting lost is that our younger generations don't know the language. Because lots of the teachings *mean* so much more in the language than when you translate it. You know, if you tell a story and part of it has to do with behaviour—correcting behaviours and stuff—the description in Chilcotin is *so* much bigger than how it would sound when it's translated (M. Charleyboy, personal comm. 2021).

The imprecision of translations is exacerbated in linguistic elements like place names that are often already etymologically obscure, full of contractions and archaisms. However, even for names that have relatively straightforward translations, the *meaning* behind the translation often requires full sentences or even a lengthy back-story to describe. This is not to say that translation should therefore be avoided—but it is important to note that when translating Tŝilhqot'in place

names and their meanings to English, we have to acknowledge that there will be loss, and be okay with that.

Writing Tŝilhqot'in

The development of a Tŝilhqot'in orthography

The Tŝilhqot'in language has found expression in writing since the early 19th century, with varying degrees of depth, specificity, and standardisation over the following 170 years. Simon Fraser was the first to write about the Tŝilhqot'in on his 1808 descent of the river that would later bear his name. Fraser attempted to transcribe the ethnonym *Tŝilhqot'in* in several places throughout his journals of that expedition, each time with a slightly different spelling:[26] "Chilk-hodins" (Lamb 2007; 91), "*Chilkcotin*" (105), "Chilkoetins" (144-5), "Chilk-ho-tins" (158), and "Chilk-hotins" (168). This kind of variation is representative of how most indigenous words were spelled in the journals and letters of fur traders, surveyors, missionaries, clerks, miners and settlers before the 20th century. Few had the philological training or linguistic tools necessary to be able to represent (or even hear) sounds not found in English or other European languages, and the result is an often messy and ambiguous string of names and terms.

Accurately and practically writing previously unwritten indigenous languages is a long understood challenge (Duff 1964; Goddard 1996). Wilson Duff described the problem well:

> Anyone who speaks or writes about the Indian tribes is immediately faced with the perplexing problem of how to pronounce and write down Indian names. The Indian languages use many sounds which are unfamiliar to a speaker of English, and it soon becomes apparent that our tongues and our alphabet are quite unfitted for the accurate reproduction of Indian words (Duff 1964, 10).

[26] Note that some of these are pluralised with /s/ in the English fashion.

Duff (1964, 10) saw two solutions to this problem: (1) "to establish English spellings of Indian names, which, though admittedly imprecise, are nevertheless acceptable," and (2) "to devise a system of phonetic symbols which can be used to transcribe the Indian sound systems with precision." Duff goes on to note that "there is no one 'correct' English spelling of an Indian name. In some instances a single form becomes established by usage and general acceptance, but in most cases we find a number of alternative spellings in use" (1964, 10). Duff is here referring to the process of anglicisation common to ethnonyms, toponyms, and personal names during a certain period.

Anglicised Tŝilhqot'in place names have been represented on maps for as long as maps of the region have been made. Many of these names have persisted through performative repetition and citation by settlers and Tŝilhqot'in alike, and stand as officially gazetted names today. Yet as we can see by the example of Fraser's journal (Lamb 2007), these early representations of Tŝilhqot'in language paid little attention to specificity or consistency in spelling as well as orthographic representation. Thus we are left with some rather silly anglicised names today, like Kleena Kleene from *ʔElhinadlin*, Towdystan from *Tagwedisdzan*, Itcha (Mountains) from *ʔAchax*, Sapeye Lake from *Sabay Biny*, and dozens of others.

A.G. Morice's interest in philology allowed him to quickly learn some Tŝilhqot'in during his brief appointment as headmaster of St. Josephs Mission, and his spelling of Tŝilhqot'in words (which were mostly toponyms) is strikingly accurate[27] in comparison to some of his contemporaries in the Chilcotin (Farrand 1900 and Teit 1909, for example). Lane's (1953) orthography of Tŝilhqot'in was hand-written, and therefore often illegible, but appears to use a standardised phonetic alphabet. Quindel King, Michael Krauss, and Eung-Do Cook then

[27] It is also strikingly similar to Eung-Do Cook's detailed orthography developed over a century later.

developed their full and detailed orthography between Lane's 1953 dissertation and Tyhurst's 1984 draft dissertation. Tyhurst loosely applied Cook's then-new orthography, but in a simplified form without diacritics or glottal stops.

Goddard (1996, 10) wrote that "[i]n order to present Native American languages with the same degree of authority and respect that would be demanded for any language it is necessary to transcribe them accurately, spelling their distinctive sounds in a consistent and fully explicit way." Linguists working to develop writing systems for oral languages will commonly apply symbols that universally correspond to all sounds in every spoken language, such as the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), but no single writing system can be fully standardised and universally applied. The inevitable inconsistencies between writing systems largely grow out of a tension between the desire to use as uniform a writing system as possible (such as IPA), while on the other hand adapting the system to fit the particularities of a given language and accounting for the preferences of its speakers (Goddard 1996).

While the use of phonetic alphabets might prevent inconsistencies in spelling between languages, Goddard (1996, 11) describes a few reasons why language-specific writing systems can be preferable. Notably, many speakers prefer to simplify their writing system as much as possible to promote learnability and readability. This might mean that some subtle sounds are not represented on the page, but it makes for a more approachable text overall. Other strategies include using non-standard phonemic symbols that bilingual native speakers are already familiar with in their non-native language, or borrowing other grammatical structures from non-native languages, like using English conventions for punctuation and capitalisation. This has largely been the case in the practical Tŝilhqot'in orthography, where English punctuation and rules

around capitalisation are ubiquitously applied, and Latin letters found in English are used (with the occasional diacritic) to represent all sounds except the glottal stop: /ʔ/.

The Tŝilhqot'in writing system uses forty-seven consonants (see Figure 1) and six vowels (not including nasal vowels, see Figure 2). The consonants /ŝ/, /ẑ/ and /ŵ/ are marked with a diacritic to indicate that they flatten adjacent vowels, as do the back consonants /gg/, /q/, /qw/, /gh/ and /x/ (Cook 1993; Smith 2008). Nearly half of the Tŝilhqot'in consonants are not found in English, and the English /f/, /r/ and /v/ are not found in Tŝilhqot'in (Smith 2008). Tŝilhqot'in vowels are subject to flattening, nasalisation, and high tone (Cook 2013). Cook (1993) classifies the vocalic system into tense/long vowels, and lax/short vowels, each of which having multiple allophones depending on adjacent consonants which may flatten or nasalise, backwards or forwards. Nasal vowels are not marked but typically arise preceding a syllable-final /n/ (called a nasal-N) when followed by a continuant (such as /y/, /l/, /lh/, /s/, /ŝ/, *etc.*) (Cook 1993).

Cook (2013) prescribed marking high tone with an acute accent (e.g., *dení* 'person') while leaving low toned unmarked.[28] Very few individuals today write Tŝilhqot'in with marked tone. Cook himself commented that tone remains one of the most challenging problems in Tŝilhqot'in phonology, with many nuanced rules that carried frequent exceptions (Cook 2013). While tone may be important in speech (*i.e., senén* means 'my land' whereas *senen* means 'my back'), there seems to be no comprehension issues when it is not marked—as has been the norm for 40 years (Cook 2013).

The sound system in Tŝilhqot'in is likely the most complex of all Athabaskan languages given the amount of phonemes, allophonic variations, and morphophonemic processes (Cook 2013, 13). Among these is the complex process of pharyngealisation (vowel flattening) where

[28] Smith (2008) did mark low tone (with a grave accent), though I have not seen this done elsewhere, and in her later writing (*e.g.,* Smith 2020) she seems to have dropped the practice.

certain consonants (/ŝ/, /ẑ/, /ŵ/, gg/, /q/, /qw/, /gh/, /x/, *etc.*) trigger the flattening of adjacent vowel sounds in sometimes unpredictable ways (Cook 1993). Like any language, the average native speaker is not directly conscious of these processes when engaged in everyday communication—one simply knows what sounds right and what sounds off. The result is a writing system that appears overly complex (Cook 2013) and can be intimidating to learners.

Departures in the practical orthography

Although the basics of Cook's orthography have been adopted by nearly all writers of Tŝilhqot'in today, there are a few popular departures as well as some general variation in how Tŝilhqot'in is represented on the page. To start, as we've seen, vowel tones are rarely ever marked. Further, the consonant /gh/ is preferred to /ŵ/ in word-final position—having the same pronunciation. Some writers do not mark a glottal stop /ʔ/ to lead words beginning with a vowel, as this is also unmarked in English. Nasal-N's are commonly not marked by those who use denasalised language. Hyphenation in various situations was not standardised by Cook, and therefore the use of spaces and hyphens between words and even prefixes and suffixes vary considerably. And finally, there is a great deal of confusion among semi-literate writers with regard to the use of diacritics, and some tend to avoid using them whenever possible.

Typing Tŝilhqot'in

Like most languages, Tŝilhqot'in has characters that are not found on a standard English keyboard. These are /ʔ/, /i̱/, /ŝ/, /ẑ/, and /ŵ/. Excepting /ʔ/, which has long been substituted with a /?/, each of these symbols can be reproduced reasonably well on a manual English typewriter. However, this is not as straightforward in digital environments. To be able to type the UNICODE characters for /ʔ/, /i̱/, /ŝ/, /ẑ/, and /ŵ/ requires some extra technical knowhow and most digital typists of Tŝilhqot'in simply made it a habit to ignore diacritics years ago.

In the late 1990s or early 2000s, a few font sets were developed that coopted some standard characters, displaying Tŝilhqot'in special characters instead (@=ŝ, #=ŵ, ^=ẑ, /=ʔ, and &=ɨ). This was a reasonable workaround but had some flaws. There were limited font options, all recipients of a document needed to have the font sets installed on their computers for the characters to display, and it prevented the use of the coopted characters in the same font (*i.e.,* could not use the /&/ character without displaying /ɨ/). An alternative method was to insert special characters one at a time, which works in programs like Microsoft Word but not other software (*e.g.,* ESRI's ArcMap)—not to mention this is a thoroughly tedious process. The original TNG place name dataset used Tŝilhqot'in fonts rather than encoded characters. As the file format for these data was ESRI Shapefile, the data would read 'T@ilhqox', for example, but when displayed using the custom font would show 'Tŝilhqox'.

A much better solution is the one widely used today by those working closely with Tŝilhqot'in text—myself included. We use a custom digital keyboard developed by linguist Chris Harvey at www.languagegeek.com, which coopts keys rather than symbols, allowing direct typing of special characters. It therefore also allows for Tŝilhqot'in to be typed everywhere UNICODE encoding is used, which is virtually everywhere today (word processing, emails, social media, database software, *etc.*). The biggest issue with the use of UNICODE symbols in general is that most fonts don't encode every character, restricting the number of available fonts with which one can type (Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman, and Cambria are safe bets).

The digital keyboard is also not universally adopted as it does require some technical knowhow to install. Therefore, it is still common to see /?/ in place of /ʔ/, and the total absence of diacritics. Many semi-literate but fluent speakers have come to accept that the technologies available to them, from manual typewriters to smart phones, necessarily constrain the ways in

which their language is presented in writing. This acceptance is now so widespread that it rarely receives second thought. For example, in large letters painted on the floor of the new Frank Joe Health Centre in *ʔEsdilagh* reads, "**ʔEsdilagh**." Community merchandise like hats and hoodies commonly follow this spelling, and I have also seen several tattoos of Tŝilhqot'in words that are missing diacritics or use a question mark in place of glottal stop.

This trend may not impact fluent speakers who anticipate how words should be pronounced without requiring accurate textual representation, but it can be a significant obstacle to language learners who don't have adequate access to oral learning opportunities, which is increasingly the situation for most Tŝilhqot'in today. In this way, the technical constraints around typing have contributed to a blasé attitude towards spelling and orthography in general, but it is certainly not the cause. As I describe below, many Tŝilhqot'in language keepers see their language as a strictly oral phenomenon, and writing their language is a tool only as useful as it brings people back to speaking.

Spelling Tŝilhqot'in

There has been very little effort to standardise the spelling of words in Tŝilhqot'in, and this is also reflected in place names which show a great deal of variation in spelling (and use of orthography) between different sources and transcribers of place names (see Doddridge 2021). The widespread maxim among Tŝilhqot'in writers is to 'spell it how you hear it,' meaning to transcribe spoken words as close to the way they were pronounced as possible. This is done to preserve the variation between speakers (see section below on language variation and change), something of great importance to many Tŝilhqot'in language advocates. Transcription of spoken Tŝilhqot'in into text and the translation of English text into Tŝilhqot'in text remain the primary uses of the written language today. I know of no real movement to write prose in Tŝilhqot'in, but

when one is writing from one's own voice, spelling conventions seem to follow the same principles. For instance, when translating English text to Tŝilhqot'in, writers use their own voice in the interpretation process and spell words the way *they* would pronounce them.

The 'spell it how you hear it' maxim directly applies to the transcription of place names, which as proper names often have a higher degree of variation in pronunciation and form than other terms. This may, in part, be due to etymological obscurity, and is certainly subject to processes of language change. Bella Alphonse described the maxim as one based in respect for elders and language diversity: "Especially with place names, especially when it's an elder speaking, you pretty well have to spell the way they're speaking. Out of respect, I guess. That's my belief" (personal comm. 2021).

These attitudes around non-standard spellings result in a wide variety of spellings between writers, between texts from the same writer, and sometimes even within the same text. Writers often change the way they spell words over time to better fit changing philosophies around spelling and orthography, or perhaps do so accidentally. Spelling variation is seen as more or less inconsequential as are the sometimes dramatic variations in the way the orthography is applied in these already fickle situations. I have argued that this should be a sign to embrace the widespread variability, plurality, and multiplicity of indigenous place names, in spelling as well as other forms of variation, or at least not worry too much about it (Doddridge 2021).

If written Tŝilhqot'in is nearly always seen as subordinate to, and in service of, spoken Tŝilhqot'in, rather than an independent expression of language on the page, there seems to be no real need to standardise spelling. However, this poses a significant challenge for language elements like place names that are being evoked in an increasing number of spaces where there is

no speaker to transcribe. For example, there is only room on a public road sign for one version of one name in one spelling.

Perspectives on writing among Tŝilhqot'in language advocates

Perspectives on writing in Tŝilhqot'in—including the writing of place names—seem to fall along a spectrum. More conservative opinions tend to encourage the careful use of Cook's orthography with all its bells and whistles, while more liberal views are much less concerned about details and accuracy and are embracing of plurality. Some in the latter camp assert that writing Tŝilhqot'in is more or less irrelevant and anathema to what they consider a solely oral language. However, nearly everyone seems to agree that any writing system is only as good as it serves to preserve or revitalise the spoken language.

More conservative perspectives on writing Tŝilhqot'in tend to come from those who are highly literate, have worked closely with the language for many years, and who know the orthography and its subtleties intimately. Most consider simplifying the writing system to be detrimental to language preservation as nuances of speech are easily lost if they are not properly documented on the page. Every effort is made to accurately spell words, include the proper diacritics, attend to the use of nasal-N's, and even to mark tone in some cases. But despite the emphasis on language preservation through writing, there is also recognition that the writing system is not easy to learn and requires significant dedication to master.

Having been among the first to read and write Tŝilhqot'in, Bella Alphonse tends to prefer a more conservative approach to writing, focused on accuracy and consistency but also recognising the associated challenges. She presented unique insight into the development, uptake, and learnability of the working orthography:

> I noticed that even the ones that have been writing for *years*, I still see some spelling mistakes. The reason why [the few of us are] fluent writers… is because over the years we've worked with *lots* of different projects. It *is* hard to teach it. I've attempted, along with Ed Cook, a few times. Even now I see [those that we taught] have trouble with the G-H, the X, the caps—it *is* complicated. But if you're really interested in it then you can get it. If non-speakers can get it, I don't see why our people can't get it… (B. Alphonse, personal comm. 2021)

Bella drew on an example using the Tŝilhqot'in word for dip-net, *ʔeteqash*. It frustrates her that some people spell it ʔ-E-T-E-Q-A-**Y**-S-H, because the A-Y sound (as in the 'i' in 'tide') is supposed to be implicit in the syllable /*–ash*/:

> I get frustrated with all that because we were taught one way, and when I see stuff like that, that's why I kind of pulled away from reading and writing… People really have no idea. They can't seem to grasp the writing system… I don't know, it seems too much for a lot of people that they can't get the writing system. And you can't really change it, either. Or can you?
>
> When Quindel King was starting [to write Tŝilhqot'in] he was using the Navajo alphabet. I couldn't get it. I remember after a week's training I got home and I was trying to read my mother [something written with it]… and I was really slow at it. I never did get it. The way [Cook] presented [his orthography], and how it was all phonetical… To me it was easy, I guess mainly because I was interested in it. So yeah, I think people are losing interest in the reading and writing… Yeah, if you're interested in it I think you can grasp it. Like for me I was always interested in reading and writing my language, that's how I got it (B. Alphonse, personal comm. 2021).

Bella is by no means the most conservative voice on questions of spelling and orthography, nor are any of the conservative voices really all that strict. Instead, they share a general emphasis on orthographic accuracy and consistency. More liberal perspectives tend to frame the writing system as a set of flexible tools for furthering language learning and use, rather than any hard and fast linguistic rules. Former *Yuneŝit'in* Chief Russell Myers Ross explained to me:

> It's an oral language—as long as you understand each other, that should just be respected. But I know that it does, you know, drop interest. Even people that use, say, the glottal stop [/ʔ/] for [names] like *ʔEsdilagh*… when I look at the word, it's E-S. You don't need a glottal stop for that. Put a glottal stop in-between when you say *haʔanh* ['yes'], because it's a distinctive two syllables. There's little things like that where people hang onto the

> old [ways], those old glottal stops and stuff, in certain spaces. But I just kinda remind myself or remind other people it's an oral language so who cares as long as you understand it (R. Ross, personal comm. 2021).

Russell emphasises language learning and mutual intelligibility over textuality in general. This is a sentiment shared by many, including Marilyn Charleyboy who explained to me that "sometimes people get into the argument of spelling—that's so childish. It's not about that, it's about people learning it." (personal comm. 2021).

Marilyn's sister Geraldine Elkins took this attitude one step further, describing why she believes writing her language in a standardised orthography is anathema to what is ostensibly a spoken language bound to a specific cultural context. Geraldine is a fluent speaker but finds the writing to be non-intuitive in ways that inhibit learning by children and adults:

> I refuse to learn to read and write it because, yeah, it's some PhD who said, "this is how the Chilcotin language should be written, and read." How do we expect our children to learn what a PhD came up with? Like, in the Western culture, Western way of learning, we learn simple words and how to write simple words like "cat," "bat," and "hat"… How to say something. But our language [doesn't work like that]. I can read some of it but I don't know the rules, and I don't think that's a way to teach children at all. Fumbling through—that's what I do. I have to say it and try to—like if I see a written word it takes me a long time to figure out exactly what it says because I don't know the rules. And [when I realise what it means] I'm like, "oh, I wouldn't have written it like *that*" (G. Elkins, personal comm. 2021).

Marilyn does read and write Tŝilhqot'in, but agreed with her sister that it is often overly complicated, contrived, and lacking an inherently Tŝilhqot'in origin or quality: "It was *created*, you know? Like the glottal stop, and the hook [/'/], and the cap over the S and stuff" (M. Charleyboy, personal comm. 2021). *Xeni Gwet'in* Chief Roger William also described the writing system as external and contrived: "Spelling is a tricky one because it's foreign. We never did spell, it was just made up by [someone]" (R. William, personal comm. 2021). In contrast to the view that *spoken* language is central to Tŝilhqot'in identity, and a rich form of ancestral

heritage in its own right, many Tŝilhqot'in see the *written* language as a shallow, manufactured and overly complicated facsimile, unconnected to Tŝilhqot'in identity and inherently non-indigenous. But again this seems to depend on whether writing can serve as a tool for language preservation and revitalisation or not.

Again we see the theme that written Tŝilhqot'in is predominantly seen as subordinate to and in service of spoken Tŝilhqot'in, rather than an independent expression of language. This attitude causes some novel problems as the use and display of Tŝilhqot'in has shifted in recent years. There is an increasing call for Tŝilhqot'in language to be displayed in a variety of spaces that necessitate a single (seemingly authoritative) spelling.

Tŝilhqot'in has been taught in classrooms through written and oral curriculum since the late 1970s, as it continues to be done today, but curricula are expanding to include other Tŝilhqot'in themes, such as the Chilcotin War, that are written in English but use a lot of Tŝilhqot'in terms. Tŝilhqot'in words—including place names—are also being increasingly integrated into Nation and Band policies, strategies, reports, planning documents, website content, posters, legal agreements, maps, and so on. These are also predominantly written in English but pull in Tŝilhqot'in words and phrases for titles or concepts. Signs of various kinds are also increasingly integrating Tŝilhqot'in text, outwardly signalling a Tŝilhqot'in cultural or political presence in a variety of spaces including welcome signs, geographical identification signs, and even washroom doors. As Tŝilhqot'in place names are relatively discrete and self-contained elements of language, they are perfectly suited for these kinds of roles, which is why they have come to feature so prominently on signs as well as on maps, event posters, databases, gazetteers, and other records.

In these kinds of spaces, only one spelling can be accommodated, leaving off the sometimes large number of alternative spellings. The 'spell it how you hear it' maxim cannot apply. The processes for deciding on spellings is therefore a central issue in contemporary Tŝilhqot'in toponymic practice, and there are a variety of attitudes on the subject. For this reason, I asked those of my research participants who often write in Tŝilhqot'in how they might address the problem. Bella Alphonse's response was somewhat representative: "To me it does [matter how place names are spelled]… I think it's good [that] it's written the proper way, or *is* that the proper way?" (personal comm. 2021). Bella acknowledged that her preference to have spellings be as accurate as possible is not without problems—problems inherent to writing down a dynamic and variable oral language.

William Myers *ghinli* also preferred spellings to be as accurate as possible. When I asked him the same question of how to decide on a single spelling, he pointed to the almost infallible nature of elders' knowledge, and how it is usually those of us who seek to document that knowledge that make the errors. There are at least some with the attitude that certain spellings are more right and others are more wrong, but this may vary depending on where the seat of authority is thought to derive. William was too humble to consider himself a language authority, but those who knew him understood that he was. When confronted with a question of language or other form of traditional knowledge, William would always consult other elders older than himself. For William, and many others, the seat of authority for all traditional knowledge, including language and toponymy, is found in the unbroken connections between ancient ancestors to recipients alive today—Tŝilhqot'in elders.

Linda Smith elucidated this notion when describing the "pureness" of her mother's language and knowledge:

> In soft gentle tones, choosing her words carefully, she hints, warns, and sways us through stories, allowing us to make our own choices. Her strength as teacher comes from her love and respect. The fact that she is a monolingual *Tsìnlhqút'in* speaker sets her apart in that she has remained relatively uninfluenced by technology and most of the other modern intrusions of mass culture. She thus has a 'pureness' of knowledge (2008, 3).

The 'pure' knowledge of Tŝilhqot'in elders is still seen as the ultimate source of knowledge[29] authority, including language, but when it comes to spelling and writing we rely on only a few authoritative voices.

Among these is Bella, who is often consulted for translations and spellings by members and staff across her Nation. She told me of a time when the Chief of another community consulted her on the spelling of the word *ts'utanchuny* 'hummingbird,' which they wanted to use as the name of a new building on the reserve. The Chief was himself a language keeper, strong and fluent in spoken Tŝilhqot'in, but sought Bella's support with spelling:

> And he said to me, "I want *you* to spell it the way *you* speak." That's what he said to me. So I don't know where that was coming from. I said, if I was speaking, I would say *ts'utanchuny*. "That's how I want the spelling," he said. And I said the reason why is because of the nasal-N (personal comm. 2021).

While Bella also consults with her network of elders to solve a language question, she and only a handful of other fully literate and fluent speakers carry the burden of trying to maintain a degree of consistency in written Tŝilhqot'in.

Roger William's response to my question of how to select a single spelling of place names was also representative of a commonly held opinion, and a possible solution:

> What communities, what families are closer to that place on a map. We want to put it on a map, that spelling, that word should be used wherever that is, and whoever is involved, who's closer to that… who's connected to it. … if that community, those communities agree with that spelling, sure (R. William, personal comm. 2021).

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[29] More on Tŝilhqot'in knowledge in Chapter 4.

This could be a kind of rule: whoever (individual, family, or community) is more intimately connected to the geographical feature in question should decide (or at least agree) on a spelling. Landing on an acceptable spelling would therefore mean tracing connections to place rather than consulting generalist authorities. For these reasons the topic of selecting a spelling can get political, but is it an inherently political one? I asked Bella, who didn't think so: "There's a few people that will get kind of smart-alecky about it… I don't think the elders even know there's a difference. I don't think so" (B. Alphonse, personal comm. 2021).

In my work to display Tŝilhqot'in place names on maps and signs for TNG, Bella's last point here rings true. Elders seem to care that their language is being shown respect through increased use and visibility, and we do our best to present an appropriate spelling, but at the end of the day the spelling is of little consequence to language keepers. However, spelling consistency might be of great consequence to future speakers of this threatened language who are increasingly relying on textual language learning tools in increasingly non-immersive, non-oral environments.

Language variation and change

The topic of dialect in Tŝilhqot'in has become a contested subject among Tŝilhqot'in language speakers, educators, and advocates. Questions of dialect differences often creep into every discussion of the variability we see in Tŝilhqot'in place names. I have included this section on dialect because it was a major theme that emerged from my interview data. Questions of dialect are at the heart of one of the dominant discourses among Tŝilhqot'in on language that bleeds directly into topics around spelling and representation of Tŝilhqot'in place names on signs, official records, maps, and so on.

There seems to be two main camps of opinions around dialect: one that plays up speech variations and another that plays it down. Commonly, those who play up language variation do so as a means of celebrating distinctiveness, but occasionally there is an assertion that variation derives from *right* and *wrong* pronunciations. On the other hand, those who play down language variation are more likely to embrace the linguistic richness that can come with variation. There is perhaps a third camp who reject the idea that variations in the way people speak Tŝilhqot'in are reflective of dialect differences, and that the variable ways that people speak come from a variety of other language-change processes.

The term dialect is itself contested in the Tŝilhqot'in context, with several notions and definitions as to what it may refer. In technical terms, Cook (2013, 1) noted the following:

> Although no thorough dialect survey has been conducted, it is useful to distinguish two dialects: one in which nasal vowels are more prominent (e.g., Stone), and another in which nasal vowels are being denasalized (e.g., Anaham). No problem of mutual intelligibility has been noted among the speakers from different communities.

Cook observed that denasalisation as a trend is increasing among the broader Tŝilhqot'in speech community. It strikes me, then, that Cook's dialect distinction is geographically delineated *vis a vis* Stone and Anaham. Tŝilhqot'in communities are small, in relatively close proximity to one another, and there are many people living in a different community from the one in which they were raised. In other words, there seems to me very little reason why the process of denasalisation as a primary dialect marker would be geographically determined given the extensive interconnections between families in the broader Tŝilhqot'in speech community.

Nonetheless, the notion that each Tŝilhqot'in (Indian Reserve) community has its own dialect has become a popular idea, both among speakers and non-speakers. However, I have never heard denasalisation cited as the dialect marker. As a prominent language keeper and

advocate, late William Myers described for me what people refer to when they are referring to dialect differences between communities:

> Everybody when they talk to each other, [from] different reserves, they understand each other pretty good, but there's little differences, heh? Like, 'look at them:' *gubenilhʔin*. Some people in Anaham say *jubenilhʔin*.
>
> Could be different family, too. A lot of the Anaham [people], just like people talking here [Stone], heh? But some of them, you know there's [one late elder from Anaham], I don't know why it is, I don't know if they was raised by somebody else or something? He talks just like us [in Stone], heh? But [another elder from Anaham], he said *jubenilhʔin*. And his wife says it our way. And I talk to them, heh? Talk to his wife: "he says that, and you say different." "The way I said it is right," she says [chuckles].
>
> It's not that much words like that, heh? Like people see something thin… or somebody's skinny: *nendud.* And some say *nendad*, heh? Some people [say] 'corner': *ʔets'ih*. Some people say *ʔests'ih.* And, 'I think it's this way', *gunezilid*. That's the way we say it here [in Stone]. [In] Anaham, [a] lot of them [say], *gunezilhid*. Little different, heh?
>
> You understand everything they say, heh? Just little bit different, like that. It's not that much, heh?
>
> And some people from Toosey—we say *ʔaben*: 'morning.' They say *k'aben*. Yeah. There's hardly that much, heh? And, some people say 'floor' [as] *qwenjih*, but [others say] *qwenjeh* (W. Myers, personal comm. 2021).

Late William, like most literate language keepers, fell into the camp of people who down-play language differences, despite being acutely aware of their nuances. I asked William if he would call these variations *dialect* differences. "No, no," he said, chuckling. "Just a variation?" I asked. "Yeah. That's what it is, I guess. Yeah, yeah everybody understand each other." On the other hand, those in the camp that play up language differences can be rather forceful about their views. Although not in this latter camp herself, Bella Alphonse highlighted the point. It was evident that she was being careful about how she explained the situation, avoiding any criticisms of other perspectives:

> People are sensitive, heh? Especially with the dialect thing. I guess, if you understand what they're saying, I guess it's, you know—our family would say it a little different than others. I think it's—what would you call a family dialect? Maybe even accent. Yeah, so it wouldn't be a dialect. I was talking to my cousin about that last night and she said she went to school with this lady from Redstone, and she said [they] got into disagreeing on

> how to say something, and the teacher was listening. The instructor said, "stop it right there, that's a dialect difference!" So I don't know. Yeah, and some of them even get rude about it. I had one lady telling me, "you guys [Bella's family] don't have nasal-N's because you're Carrier!" Looking back on it, I would have something to say. I like what [my nephew] says about the nasal-N, and how we shouldn't concentrate on who is right. Over the years, even with students, a lot of them didn't have it, including myself, but I'm aware of it now. When I see it [written], I use nasals. Even in high school there was kids that didn't have it, and now I see more and more—even the ones that have high nasal areas, coming from those places, I notice they don't have it either, the younger kids… Only if you're a fluent speaker can you *hear* that some people don't hear the nasal-N.
>
> When I was working in the high school, of course I have Anaham kids in my class… and even those kids were commenting on the nasal-Ns. So the kids from my community were being smart-alecky, they would cover their nose and they would say *biny*.[30] I think [de-nasalisation began] earlier than that. I think it's been there for a long time (B. Alphonse, personal comm. 2021).

Bella pointed both to family influences and geography as possible sources for what might shape someone's way of speaking, but she continued on to describe how language change is probably more influenced by a disconnection from older generations and the languages they spoke:

> To me I think it's by generations. That's what I think, because the younger generation don't speak as fluently, or they weren't around the elders *a lot*. I always like to use [my nephew] as an example because [he] spent a lot of time with my grandparents. I would say he's at my level with speaking fluency… For a younger person he has a lot of knowledge (B. Alphonse, personal comm. 2021).

I have often heard people describing how the language of today is different than generations past. "High Chilcotin," I've heard Bella call it. This comes up with many place names that are etymologically obscure—probably due to their having been around for so long, and language has since changed (see Chapter 5). Geraldine Elkins touched on this:

> *Bendziny* [Puntzi Lake], that's *old* Chilcotin language. And I've heard recordings of some very—probably sixty, seventy year old recordings, where the language is different, even then. Our maternal grandmother spoke *really* old Chilcotin and we grew up listening to that… (G. Elkins, personal comm. 2021)

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[30] *Biny* {bĩ}'lake' has a nasalised /i/ as denoted by the /n/ (nasal-N); denasalised would be *bi*; the /y/ is a continuant.

Geraldine's sister Joyce Charleyboy had a similar understanding:

> Some of the names I know have changed over the years, only because of contact, and the way that they're pronounced as well. Because the older Tŝilhqot'in people had an older language. That was the dialect—our dialects slowly started to change with contact (J. Charleyboy, personal comm. 2021).

Furthering the notion that language changes are running predominantly along generational rather than geographical lines, Bella directly connected changes in place name pronunciation with broader language changes she has been observing:

> *ʔElhinadlin*—Kleena Kleene. Some people [were] calling it *Jinadlin*… I think [one is an older version of the same name]… Yeah, like another place name for example. The older people would say *ʔEst'anchis Gunlin*, now I'm hearing them say *ʔEt'anchis Gunlin*…
>
> Because [younger speakers] tend to shorten a lot of the place names. Even the way our language is changing today, heh? Even… *xents'agult'ih qungh*—'a house for praying' [church]. And they've shortened it [to] *xents'alinqungh*. You see what I mean, how they shorten? The same with *tsananqungh* [outhouse/washroom]—*tsanaqungh*. You see what I mean? Like it's really—that's how we're losing our language. To *me* it *is* a problem, as a fluent speaker. I try not to correct. I don't want to offend any younger generation. I would say there's different levels, but as long as they can get their message across, I *guess*… Even our verb forms, our sentence structures (B. Alphonse, personal comm. 2021).

Bella knows that languages change and evolve, but she can't help but lament the preventable loss of nuances. While some forms of language *variation* (e.g., denasalisation, alternate pronunciations) are seen as acceptable, language *change* (simplification, contractions) is more worrisome for her.

I also spoke with former *Yunesît'in* Chief Russell Myers Ross, a language learner who has championed language revitalisation in his community for many years. Like Bella, Russell is equally not fussed about dialect differences: "I don't think dialects matter that much. I mean certain people might get raised by somebody who just says something a little different and they want to stick with that way. To me it's fine…" This comment reflects an attitude that many are increasingly advocating—that all barriers to language learning, including debates over dialect,

spelling, and pronunciation serve only to distract from what is most important: preservation and revitalisation of the language. Minor scruples should be set aside. Russell continued on to describe how one of the major barriers to learning is criticism from other Tŝilhqot'in speakers:

> Everyone got that in residential school, the criticisms about not saying things right, or needing to correct people, or shaming people for things. So for me it's something that we kind of have to put aside for a little while and just focus on hopefully just encouraging people and building people up. Even if they say it a little bit wrong (personal comm. 2021).

Bella's and Russell's statements are not in opposition but they do reveal the differences between older, fluent, and literate speakers focused on language *preservation* and younger language learners focused on language *revitalisation*. Both are important for keeping the language alive and thriving, and both play down the differences in the way people speak. Both also speak to the importance of having respect for others on their language journeys. This attitude is very much what shaped TNG's stance on the subject of dialect, as is seen on the TNG's Tŝilhqot'in Language Hub website:

> The Tŝilhqot'in language is valuable to our future generations, we need to respect and acknowledge the diversity of the Tŝilhqot'in language dialects of each community; *Tl'esqox*, Tŝi Deldel, *Yunesît'in*, *ʔEsdilagh*, *Xeni Gwet'in*, and *Tl'etinqox*.
>
> When we use the term 'dialect', we are not referring to any 'correctness' nor 'inaccuracies' in how Tŝilhqot'in is spoken, but simply acknowledging that the pronunciation may differ slightly in each community. When our elders speak Tŝilhqot'in we listen and learn and appreciate the richness of the different dialects (Tŝilhqot'in National Government 2024).

I have mixed feelings about this statement. On the one hand, I agree that a respect for language diversity is important for both language preservation and revitalisation. As language is central to Tŝilhqot'in cultural identity, these are crucial endeavours. I also agree that language variation should not generally be seen in terms of correctness and incorrectness. However, on the other hand, there is a difference between variation and making mistakes that in turn perpetuate more

mistakes. I have personally seen how my own typo in spelling a Tŝilhqot'in place name on a map has resulted in the perpetuation of a fully incorrect way of pronouncing that name among language learners. Moreover, I also think it is unwise to unequivocally state that each Tŝilhqot'in community *does* have its own dialect when there is really no evidence for this. TNG's Language Hub statement on dialects represents a growing trend I have observed among Tŝilhqot'in language learners and non-speakers, as well as non-Tŝilhqot'in staff and consultants at TNG and the communities, to attribute any language variation to 'dialect differences'. I worry that this trend will further concretise the idea that dialects exist, because this may create perceived barriers to language learning by making it appear overly complex and political.

A changing language context

Tŝilhqot'in was a thriving language centuries before contact with Europeans, "serv[ing] as the basis of communication within and between families and in subsistence activities" (Dinwoodie 2002, 17). Many Tŝilhqot'in also spoke *Secwepemctsín* (Shuswap) in the east, *Dãkelh* (Carrier) in the north, and *Nuxalk* (Bella Coola) in the west (Dinwoodie 2002, 17). Tŝilhqot'in people did not immediately take to learning colonial languages during colonisation:

> [G]enerally speaking, the Chilcotin were not centrally involved in the social institutions that grew to encompass the greater Pacific Northwest. As a result, Chilcotin speakers continued to rely on their native vernacular long after other groups began shifting towards the general use of Chinook Jargon, French, or English (Dinwoodie 2002, 17).

No doubt the legacies of colonial hegemony and subsequent mistrust of outsiders also contributed to a slower adoption of the colonisers' languages, as did geographic isolation, but a shift towards English at the expense of Tŝilhqot'in did eventually occur.

With BC's push to expand natural resource development, road networks expanded into the Chilcotin in the 1950s (Pye 1992; Turkel 2007). Some areas, like *Xeni*, did not see a proper

road until the 1970s. By this time, most Tŝilhqot'in children were either attending public schools, on-reserve mission 'day' schools, or the residential school at St. Joseph's Mission. Learning English became unavoidable. Before the 1950s, however, only a handful of children attended school at all (Lane 1981). Nearly every Tŝilhqot'in born between 1950 and 1970 became bilingual, and everyone born after 1970 spoke English (Dinwoodie 2002, 19).

Tyhurst (1984) observed that some phonological and lexical changes had been occurring by the mid-1980s but that Tŝilhqot'in still "remain[ed] the main vehicle for discussion of day-to-day matters both in life on the Chilcotin plateau and (between Chilcotin speakers) in [Williams Lake]" (1984, 5). "[A]s a living language," wrote Tyhurst, Tŝilhqot'in "is capable of describing any late twentieth century object, process, or human individual or group, using almost entirely a late eighteenth century lexicon" (1984, 6). Most Tŝilhqot'in children were still acquiring Tŝilhqot'in as their first language until the early 1980s (Cook 2013), but due to increased exposure to settler institutions—notably from improved infrastructure, labour opportunities, public schooling, and public broadcasting—most Tŝilhqot'in born after this time have grown up in an English-dominant context (Dinwoodie 2002; Lane 1981; Pye 1992).

As English has come to be more and more essential for Tŝilhqot'in children to navigate their world, Pye (1992, 78) observed that this has put Tŝilhqot'in parents into a challenging position: "Either they stimulate their infants by speaking to them in Chilcotin and violate cultural[31] expectations, or they raise their children in an English environment and so contribute inadvertently to the decline of the Chilcotin language." In an increasingly competitive language environment *outside* the home, Pye (1992) believed that the only way for a child to learn and retain Tŝilhqot'in would be if it was the only language spoken *inside* the home. This, however,

[31] Pye is referring to the cultural expectations of the broader *settler* society, as well as those Tŝilhqot'in attempting to work within it.

did not occur, and by the mid-1990s very few children were learning Tŝilhqot'in as a first language (Goddard 1996; Pye 1992). Dinwoodie noted that as Tŝilhqot'in communities have become more complex around the end of the 20th century, so too had the linguistic situation. By the early 2000s, most people spoke both Tŝilhqot'in and English. At that time, Dinwoodie observed that "[t]here is a 'range of abilities of speakers' in the contemporary language context," and that "[c]onsiderable variation is evident" (Dinwoodie 2002, 19).

Tŝilhqot'in remains among the strongest indigenous languages spoken in BC today, at roughly 13% of total population, however it is still a language in steep decline (First Peoples' Cultural Council 2022). According to data from the First Peoples' Cultural Council (2010; 2014; 2018; 2022), the number of fluent Tŝilhqot'in speakers has been decreasing by 20-30 speakers every year for over a decade. At this rate, all else being equal, there will be no fluent speakers by the year 2052. This is an alarming projection. There are many Tŝilhqot'in language programs and initiatives aimed at reducing language loss as well as increasing language learning. However, if Pye (1992) was correct, the only way to ensure language fluency would be if children hear *only* Tŝilhqot'in at home. This is not happening.

This is an alarming situation, but because a critical mass of Tŝilhqot'in adults are still fluent speakers, I fear that there may be a false sense of security around the health of the Tŝilhqot'in language. Language loss would be a major issue for a First Nation who see their language as a core component of their cultural identity. For this reason, TNG set 'strong language and culture' as one of their 'eight pillars', a framework for the vision of the Tŝilhqot'in Nation's ongoing work. From this pillar has come a TNG department focused on language and education, a Tŝilhqot'in radio station, the development of several language apps, and a variety of other exciting language initiatives. Other important language programs have been developed at

the community-level, including a popular language nest in *Yunesît'in*. But despite all of this hard work and dedication, these current language revitalisation efforts do not seem to be slowing the steady decline of fluency rates (First Peoples' Cultural Council 2010; 2014; 2018; 2022).

While Tŝilhqot'in is not presently a language in need of 'revival', the trend is pointing in that direction. In the sad event that this trend does continue, language revitalisation efforts would have to shift towards language reclamation (see Zuckermann 2020). This point underscores the importance of paying close attention to the particularities of language today, including the language of place names.

Conclusion

As further chapters show, Tŝilhqot'in toponymy extends well beyond its linguistic contexts. However, language will always remain a core dimension of any toponymy. As we have seen, the broader issues facing the Tŝilhqot'in language permeate into Tŝilhqot'in toponymy at nearly every level. A loose consensus of both older speakers and younger language learners conceive of the language as an oral phenomenon inherited from their ancestors, and that matters of writing and textualisation should be in service of maintaining the spoken form. However, as language contexts change, and as fluency rates continue to decline, writing will become increasingly important for the reinvigoration, revitalisation, and reclamation of the language. It is therefore critically important to pay close attention to the specifics of representing Tŝilhqot'in language in writing. Through their complex links to other domains of Tŝilhqot'in culture, history, geography, and world views, place names as words will play a disproportionately important role in the 'revivalistics' of Tŝilhqot'in language (see Zuckermann 2020) *and* culture. This point underscores the importance of careful attention to the many particularities of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy across other dimensions as well.

Part of making Tŝilhqot'in toponymy more accessible means making it more visible, and as place names are increasingly being taken out of traditional, oral contexts, their representations on road signs, maps, digital media, and other textual spaces brings important concerns. These contemporary toponymic applications often require the display of only one version of one name in one spelling. Performative reiterations of these narrower, lower-resolution representations will obfuscate important nuances and details about this rich, complex, and dynamic phenomenon (see Lipp 2013). Textual representations of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy, therefore, simultaneously promotes a stronger presence for Tŝilhqot'in culture, language, and political interests, while also eroding and essentialising many of their important and unique characteristics. I don't offer a solution here, rather a caution to be aware of how our practices to promote the former will lead to the latter.

Chapter 4:
Understanding Tŝilhqot'in place names

Introduction: Beyond words

If we are to take seriously the idea that indigenous place names should be understood from their own 'emic' particularity, rather than imposing Western theoretical frameworks onto their analyses, then it seems to me that a crucial place to begin a study of Tŝilhqot'in place names could be to listen closely to how Tŝilhqot'in talk about their names when describing what they *are*, what they *mean*, and what they *do*. While Chapter 5 discusses what Tŝilhqot'in place names *mean*, and discussions of what they *do* can be gleaned throughout many sections of this thesis,[32] my goal with this chapter is to centre what they *are* beyond a purely linguistic framing. In other words, what are some of the uniquely Tŝilhqot'in ontological dimensions of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy that emerge when listening closely to how Tŝilhqot'in talk about their place names, and when looking closely at the names themselves?

Just like the places that they call into being, Tŝilhqot'in place names are 'multivocal' in that they are simultaneously many different things to many different people (Rodman 1992). However, there are a few common themes that emerged throughout this research that I think sheds a great deal of light on what Tŝilhqot'in place names *are* and therefore how they should be understood. The first is that Tŝilhqot'in place names are the inherited manifestations of the lives, values, and actions of their ancestors. The second involves the living aspects of the Tŝilhqot'in cultural landscape that are called into being by evoking place names. However, before exploring these ontological dimensions, I will first speak to some epistemological ones as Tŝilhqot'in place

[32] More work is needed to discuss specifically what Tŝilhqot'in places are called to do in both traditional and contemporary practices, however the size limitations of this thesis prevent such a discussion here.

names depend upon the broader systems of Tŝilhqot'in traditional knowledge that they also exist within.

Further ontological and epistemological dimensions also appear in following chapters. In Chapter 5, I discuss processes of meaning making and significance which have clear epistemological connotations, and some subtle ontological ones. In Chapter 6, various important epistemological and ontological dimensions emerge from my walkthrough of various place name types, including, importantly, Tŝilhqot'in concepts of time and space. However, the present chapter highlights some important concepts that provide a foundation for understanding Tŝilhqot'in toponymy outside of the silo of the linguistic context.

Epistemological considerations

Themes of knowledge and knowing are woven throughout Tŝilhqot'in discourses of place names and place naming. These epistemological dimensions are core to how Tŝilhqot'in toponymy operates in the world. Among the everyday roles that Tŝilhqot'in place names play in is as an aspect of cognitive cartography and wayfinding. As I've shown in Chapter 3, Tŝilhqot'in toponymy in the traditional sense is also fundamentally understood to be embodied in oral and memorial domains. However, as new applications for Tŝilhqot'in toponymy emerge in increasingly textual spaces including maps, signs, legal documents, tattoos, and even social media posts, the systems of knowledge that maintain place names in the minds and on the tongues of knowledgeable Tŝilhqot'in are beginning to change. This is, perhaps, a necessary process to help preserve Tŝilhqot'in toponymy as more traditional, oral knowledge systems are being increasingly disrupted by influences from the outside world. Yet this form of preservation may come with the cost of further contributing to the disruption of oral knowledge systems.

Knowledge distribution and authority

Tŝilhqot'in place name knowledge is an integrated aspect of a much broader system of Tŝilhqot'in traditional knowledge that has social and spatial dimensions. For her 2012 book on the ancestral laws and customs of her Tŝilhqot'in community of *Xeni Gwet'in*, Maryann Solomon wrote:

> I found the teachings of each Xeni Gwet'in elder I interviewed to be unique. The same is true of the information that was compiled from the Xeni Gwet'in court case affidavits and transcripts. Because each elder shared differing aspects of their knowledge, I have attempted to include the most complete compilation of their teachings (2012, 5).

Solomon pointed to how each elder carries a unique portion of the broader body of traditional Tŝilhqot'in knowledge. These distributions of traditional knowledge also extend into the realm of toponymic knowledge—knowledge of traditional place names—where it is understood and expected that every Tŝilhqot'in knows a unique subset of the total place name cover of their territory.

Joyce Charleyboy also noticed in her review of the Tŝilhqot'in elders' affidavits, submitted for the Tŝilhqot'in Aboriginal title case at the Supreme Court of BC, that each elders' knowledge is one part of a larger whole, and that no one person holds Tŝilhqot'in knowledge in full (personal communication 2024). Together, all stories and teachings can be woven into deeper understandings and point to deeper truths—just as Russell Myers Ross described to me: "It's all part of cross-referencing to build upon a knowledge base" (personal comm. 2021). Joyce also explained to me that this knowledge has geographical dimensions. For example, each elders' version of the story *Lhin Desch'osh* 'Little Dog', which sees *Lhin Desch'osh* and his children on various deeds and adventures across the territory, tends to be centred on the activities of *Lhin Desch'osh* that happened in the part of the territory most familiar to each storyteller.

This distributive traditional knowledge system requires relational interconnections between knowledge keepers, their sources, and the knowledge itself, in order to maintain integrity of the knowledge and the knowledge system. This is precisely the function of Tŝilhqot'in knowledge protocols. A book could be written on Tŝilhqot'in knowledge protocols, so here I will briefly mention only one example. When Joyce Charleyboy is telling a story, singing a song, relaying oral histories, or conveying a traditional law, teaching, or practice, she will always indicate where that piece of knowledge came to her from: "*ʔEtsu* (grandmother) always used to say…", or "This song came from *ʔInkwel*'s (mother) family," and so on. Because knowledge is embodied rather than written, this kind of relational knowledge practice is key for maintaining integrity and conveying trustworthiness (or at least understanding) in the knowledge itself as well as its sources. Therefore, when people hear that Joyce's teaching comes from her late *ʔEtsu*—someone known to be a knowledgeable person—it resonates with greater authority.

The distributive and relational aspects of Tŝilhqot'in traditional knowledge also apply to geographical knowledge, including knowledge of place names. This is what we saw above in Chapter 3 on the question of knowledge authority and purity. Even the most knowledgeable Tŝilhqot'in today maintain humility about their authority, deferring to others who may know more—usually their elders, even late elders, or people more intimately connected with the places or subjects in question. When I ask knowledgeable Tŝilhqot'in about place names, I am often given a list of *other* peoples' names: "talk to Harold about that one," or "Sheila would know more on that," for example. Only after attending to a web of these deferrals will I have done due diligence to represent the distributed, relational knowledge about a given place name (or any other oral-historical or cultural element).

As I hinted at above, Tŝilhqot'in traditional knowledge is not evenly distributed. Some people are understood to have more knowledge on a particular subject than others. In Chapter 3, I presented a quote from Smith (2008, 3) which speaks to this concept:

> In soft gentle tones, choosing her words carefully, [my mother] hints, warns, and sways us through stories, allowing us to make our own choices. Her strength as teacher comes from her love and respect. The fact that she is a monolingual *Tsìnlhqút'in* speaker sets her apart in that she has remained relatively uninfluenced by technology and most of the other modern intrusions of mass culture. She thus has a 'pureness' of knowledge (2008, 3).

Fluency in the Tŝilhqot'in language is a proxy for knowledgeability—a symbol of one's connection to their elders and therefore their elders' knowledge. The language is also understood to convey ancestral knowledge through its very usage. Influences from outside cultures, languages, and lifestyles, including attendance at a residential school, is often seen as a mark against knowledgeability (though these can be overcome). If someone was raised by elders, if Tŝilhqot'in was their first language, and if they spent a lot of time on their territory especially as a young person, they will be more likely to be honoured with a reputation as a knowledgeable person. Language fluency is a near-necessity for place name knowledge, as is a lifetime spent on the Tŝilhqot'in territory. When fluent elders have travelled extensively across their territory, often by cowboying, they are the people I am often told to talk with about place names.

Integrated knowledges

Throughout dozens of traditional use and occupancy interviews with knowledge keepers, I have observed with few exceptions that Tŝilhqot'in toponymic knowledge is directly correlated with knowledge of the land itself. Those who have spent more time on the land can recall a greater number and density of place names in the areas most familiar to them. The collections of

place names held by each person forms a kind of personalised map of memories, experiences, and relationships with places and features on the territory.

I had asked late William Myers which versions of which names, given their variability, we should be using on maps, signs, or other contemporary applications of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy:

> Shane: When we make maps we usually can only put one name on the map, but you know if five different elders say a place name differently, how do we decide which one goes on the map?
>
> William: Mm-Hmm. Yeah. Yeah the older ones that use that area, they're the ones that have [the knowledge]. If somebody didn't use that area, could have changed little bit, heh? Guy is familiar with that area, and he use it all the time, he'll have the right name. Coming from elder is about the best, I think. More elderly people that use the land, maybe.
>
> (personal comm. 2021)

Earlier in the conversation, William had been telling me more about the connections between place name knowledge and knowledge of the land itself, highlighting how previous generations had been more connected, and knew a lot more:

> Yeah the old people, they've been all over sometimes, heh? And they know a lot of place names. [One late elder] said his dad—he went with his dad [to] different areas in Nemiah Valley. They go certain places, they probably go trapping, and that's how he knows quite a bit of place names. He probably been to Eagle Lake and all that, heh? And his grandfather too was a real story teller, and must have caught quite a bit of his stories. I heard he—you know when… people visit each other they come from a long ways and they usually just tell stories after stories, hours and hours. I guess his name was *ʔAlɬg Jack*, his grandfather. He's been all over. Yeah there's people like—I guess in their area… they know all the place names, some of them, because they've been all over in there I guess. Yeah, they go trapping and all that (W. Myers, personal comm. 2021).

Chief Roger William of *Xeni*, in the south of Tŝilhqot'in territory, explained that "[e]ven back in *ʔesggidan* days, before contact, there were names in Anaham [in the centre of the territory] that our old-timers here wouldn't know, and they wouldn't know some of the names here" (R. William, personal comm. 2021).

Bella Alphonse recalled to me an esoteric place name that exemplified her late father's deep knowledge of his corner of Tŝilhqot'in territory:

> One [place name] that stands out for me is *Nagwedizu*. When my dad lost his driver's license, we drove him around a lot, my sister and I. And he had that red four-by-four that I drive now—it has seen a lot of mileage. He would point out areas, and the one that stood out for me was *Nagwedizu*. It's an area where, many years ago, there was a forest fire, and even in the winter time underneath how many feet of snow it was still smouldering underneath there… I was always fascinated with how in the world did that happen! (B. Alphonse, personal comm. 2021).

This anecdote shows how knowledge of place names is integrated and embedded within and alongside aspects of Tŝilhqot'in knowledge in heritage assemblages, especially geographical and ecological knowledge, oral histories, and knowledge of places themselves. Maryann Solomon (2012, 90) further highlighted these interconnections:

> My dad taught me that stories are like a learning tool to pass on knowledge. It teaches our children the Tsilhqot'in language, pronunciation, and the different names of places, animals, plants and people. This is how we teach Tsilhqot'in history. We learn the type of food our ancestors ate, the types of homes they lived in... Ancestor stories teach us how to act and behave; how to survive; and how to live in harmony with the earth, the animals and other people.

Maryann showed how Tŝilhqot'in pedagogies and epistemologies are interwoven with these various elements. On this subject, Solomon carried on, citing late *Xeni* elder Francis William:

> Tsilhqot'in people don't have anything like a book. They teach people one to the next. There's a Tsilhqot'in word "ʔElhxaʔen"; it means "from generation to generation". That's how we keep our stories going – you pass them from generation to generation. Tsilhqot'in people learn the stories from the old people. When the old people die, the younger ones keep the stories going.
>
> I can play the fiddle and I can sing, too. Learning a Tsilhqot'in story is a bit like learning a new song by heart. You can listen and you think about it. Maybe you practice it. Some people only hear it a few times and catch on, some people have to hear it lots of times (Francis William in Solomon 2012, 91).

The connection between knowledge and the land is also a sacred one. Late Herbert Jeff explained to me part of the process that is needed when taking seriously the role of a formal, traditional Knowledge Keeper:

> You get directed when you're going to become a Knowledge Keeper, you get directed to go into the bush and spend time—listen to the trees. All of them make different noises. You think about how they lived—they live too—they live a peaceful life, there. You'll know things about them that you never knew before. I wrote about a tree, too—how it warns you when there's going to be cold weather, and everything (H. Jeff, personal comm. 2021).

Late Herbert took his role as a Knowledge Keeper very seriously. I would often ask him questions, and he would often give me answers, but if he didn't know the answer he would always say, "I'm not allowed to guess." This went for details in stories as well as for place names and place name meanings.

Place name knowledge is something that many Tŝilhqot'in take very seriously. Like the state of the Tŝilhqot'in language as both being the strongest indigenous language in BC but also one that is in steep decline, I fear that place name knowledge may not be as strong as it once was. Again, this underscores the need to focus on careful attention to documenting the nuances of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy at every level. Through their interconnections with other forms of knowledge, the importance of preserving Tŝilhqot'in place name knowledge cannot be understated. It seems quite clear to me that preserving and maintaining Tŝilhqot'in place name knowledge is essential for the broader preservation of Tŝilhqot'in traditional knowledge in general.

Pedagogical connections

The above Tŝilhqot'in voices together help reveal that learning traditional Tŝilhqot'in knowledge, including place names, is part of a rich oral system that is both intergenerational and personal, and deeply rooted to the land itself. Interconnections between knowledge, land, and

place names were demonstrated further by late William Myers's early work with Tŝilhqot'in place names. In the late 1990s when William was developing the first inventory of Tŝilhqot'in place names, he did so on his own time in order to support the interviewing process for a major traditional use study (TUS) underway at TNG.

The TUS was intended to be a comprehensive documentation of Tŝilhqot'in land and resource use (hunting, fishing, gathering, *etc.*), as well as historical occupation, in order to support land claims (see Tobias 2009 for context). Late William described to me his thinking about the use of place names in the interview process:

> [D]uring that TUS, heh, I figured it would be helpful to have place names. I went to each community and then asked for place names… It made it easier—that's what they said, heh? Those place names made it easier [to] get more from the elder (W. Myers personal comm. 2021).

During the TUS interviews, participants would be shown topographic maps and be asked to mark the areas where they undertook various traditional activities. However, it was hard for many elders to orient themselves on the maps, and displaying Tŝilhqot'in place names ameliorated this. Further, the name itself was a kind of mnemonic device that through its utterance unlocked stories and experiences that participants associated with these places (see also Basso 1996). The integration of place name knowledge with other forms of knowledge, namely language, oral history, and land use, suggests that attention to learning one of these forms of knowledge will necessarily support the learning of others. Conversely, inattention to or loss of knowledge in one of these domains will lead to loss of knowledge in the others.

For William, it was important to carefully document place names, map their locations, and determine their meanings where possible. While this work was initially intended to support the documentation of *other* traditional knowledge for the TUS, accurately recording place names and getting them right with the elders was essential:

> Sometimes they make a mistake, heh? Redstone I collect words—[there was a different] chief then, and he brought a lot of maps. They already had a lot of place names on there and I wrote it all down. And I told him, "I'm going to run this through with an elder, name one elder." [He] wanted a [certain person]. Since died, heh? At first he didn't like it, but I sat with him and say all the names that I wrote down from the map. There was one [already on the map]—*K'es Gulin*, it was. [The elder] said, "you might be saying *Ch'es*—instead of *K'es*," heh? Somebody wrote it down [wrong] (W. Myers personal comm. 2021).

In spite of his quintessentially-Tŝilhqot'in epistemological humility, William still pressed the importance of getting the names right. This attention to integrity is something I refer to as the *fidelity* of place name knowledge, which I unpack more below.

Knowledge disruption

Toponymic knowledge transmission has been increasingly disrupted in recent decades, similar in kind and degree to the disruption of Tŝilhqot'in language more broadly (see Pye 1992). These disruptions are complicated and multifaceted. Maryann Solomon pointed to some of the challenges she faced in her research on Tŝilhqot'in laws and customs:

> Many of our elders have told how they could not teach their children the traditional ways because the children were taken away to residential school. Sadly, the residential school system dramatically changed the way we lived, our language, and our traditional belief systems, as our cultural practices were forbidden at residential school and punishment ensued when the rules were broken.
>
> Some elders wouldn't share their beliefs because they felt the kids today don't believe or wouldn't listen… As our ancestors and elders have voiced many times; this is the way it is and the way it always has been (2012, 5).

I have found that only a few Tŝilhqot'in adults under the age of about 50 have a reputation for deep place name knowledge. This may be connected with related disruptions in language and culture transmission more broadly, but it may also be a reflection of a concurrent change in relationships with territory and subsistence resources.

Tŝilhqot'in land use patterns have shifted from a seasonal round of activities on the land through *yedanx* (ancient times) and *ʔundidanx* (more recent history), to a more spoke-and-hub pattern of land use *k'andzin* (nowadays).[33] This has meant that people are spending far less time *between* places—camping overnight on the way to somewhere else; picking berries where the patches are good alongside the wagon roads; taking a rest from travel at lesser-known scenic or intriguing places along the way from destination to destination. In any case, if knowledge of place names is indeed tightly connected with knowledge of the land, disruptions to these connections along with disruptions to language have endangered oral, land-based knowledge traditions, including toponymic knowledge. The documentation of Tŝilhqot'in place names in writing through various technologies that make them increasingly visible (signs, maps, *etc.*) offer pathways for new performative enactments to help keep Tŝilhqot'in toponymic practices alive.

Ontological considerations

Tŝilhqot'in place names are more than the descriptive monikers from past generations—they are manifestations of the very lives, actions, and values of their ancestors. In other words, through their memory and continued utterance, Tŝilhqot'in place names transcend linguistic categories to become the emplaced perceptions, stories, happenings, intentions, and relationships of past generations. These intricate patterns of the past are inherited in the form of words, and in this way Tŝilhqot'in place names are a living heritage that, through active processes, connects people, places, and meanings across and through time. These connections are, simultaneously, material and immaterial, tangible and intangible, natural and supernatural.

[33] Different families in different parts of the territory shifted away from seasonal round based land use at different times. Some born in the 1970s still remember a childhood moving from place to place to camp, ranch, and harvest plants, animals, and fish.

Heritage

Place names are commonly understood to be an important form of cultural heritage, both in indigenous (Aird, Fox, and Bain 2019) and non-indigenous (Helleland 2011; 2012; UNGEGN 2015) contexts around the world. This is no different in Tŝilhqot'in territory where place names are woven into discourses of ancestral inheritance and cultural identity. These themes emerged continuously throughout my research, but before presenting them I think it will be useful to take a step back to consider the concept of heritage and how it operates in the Tŝilhqot'in context.

The term 'heritage' has until recently been predominantly used to refer to property inherited by heirs or descendants, and by will or bequest. "The range of meanings attached to this formerly precise legal term," wrote Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge in their introduction to *A geography of heritage*, "has recently undergone a quantum expansion to include almost any sort of intergenerational exchange or relationship, welcome or not, between societies as well as individuals" (2020, 1). In this sense, heritage has emerged as a useful, if broad, category. "Heritage," wrote Logan (2007, 34), "usually comprises those things in the natural and cultural environment around us that we have inherited from previous generations – or were sometimes created by the current generation – and that we, as communities and societies, think are so important we want to pass them on to the generations to come."

As human intentions and values are so implicit in this equation, I find it anathema to distinguish between 'cultural' and 'natural' heritage. All heritage has a cultural dimension, by definition. A more useful distinction is that of tangible (material) and intangible (immaterial) heritage. While tangible heritage is somewhat straightforward—physical objects, structures, landscapes, works of art, monuments, and so on—intangible heritage is a more slippery concept.

The United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) define intangible cultural heritage as:

> …practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO 2003).

UNESCO describe intangible heritage as "manifest[ing] inter alia in the following domains: (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; (b) performing arts; (c) social practices, rituals and festive events; (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; (e) traditional craftsmanship." However, according to Andujar (2020, 125):

> Heritage concepts are, far from being monolithic constructs that provide consensual definitions about the value of the cultural legacies of a given society, social and political constructs that evolve over time. Heritage does not exist per se, but depends on how actors, at specific historical moments, perceive and administer the legacies of the past.

Because heritage is understood differently in different social, cultural and political contexts, Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge (2020, 5) point to two key questions: (1) who is deciding what is and what isn't heritage, and (2) whose heritage is it?

There are many ways in which there can be conflicting views on both of these questions, especially in colonial and other intercultural contexts such as Tŝilhqot'in territory. For this reason, I am not setting out here to provide a definition of Tŝilhqot'in heritage. Rather, I hope that by highlighting Tŝilhqot'in voices on themes of heritage we might learn more about Tŝilhqot'in-specific understandings of such a concept, and how toponymy fits within it. To do this, I begin by drawing together various excerpts from Tŝilhqot'in authors and knowledge

keepers that together help convey uniquely Tŝilhqot'in concepts of heritage. I then pull place names back into view and discuss their dimensions as heritage elements.

Tŝilhqot'in heritage discourses

Despite the Tŝilhqot'in National Government developing a burgeoning 'heritage' department since 2020, and employing a full-time Cultural Heritage Coordinator, the English term 'heritage' is not one that I commonly hear used by Tŝilhqot'in. It is in many ways a foreign *midugh* (White/Western) concept. More common are phrases that describe 'our ways', or of things that are 'passed down' from previous generations. In a 2019 policy paper from the First Peoples' Cultural Council in BC, Aird, Fox and Bain (2019, 7) noted:

> It is difficult to find a direct translation for cultural heritage in Indigenous languages. The closest translations often relate to the sacred, or to knowing oneself. Indigenous Peoples understand and describe cultural heritage according to their perspectives, traditions and languages. While creating one definition of Indigenous heritage is difficult, generally this would include ideas, experiences, worldviews, objects, forms of expression, practices, knowledge, spirituality, kinship ties, places and land valued by Indigenous Peoples. Each of these concepts is inextricably interconnected, holds intrinsic value to the well-being of Indigenous Peoples and affects all generations.

These authors provide here an excellent starting point for framing 'heritage' in indigenous contexts, including the Tŝilhqot'in. They also show how although the idea of heritage may not have straightforward equivalents in indigenous languages, the values and ideas that underlie such a concept certainly do.

There are a few Tŝilhqot'in authors who eloquently paint for readers images of Tŝilhqot'in cultural inheritance that seem to be representative of what I understand to be heritage, at least in the way described above by Aird, Fox, and Bain (2019), Graham, Ashworth, as well as Tunbridge (2020) and Andujar (2020). To me, the most poignant of these comes from Tŝilhqot'in researcher Linda Smith of *Yuneŝit'in* who in her 2008 masters' thesis wrote:

> The ancestors are continuously present today on the landscapes. They have left us ancient names, hand tools, and trails. We bring them to life in singing their songs and telling their stories. We continue to use their language and we are acquainted with their cherished places. The past and the present merge together into the future (Smith 2008, 15).

I often return back to these words from Smith. In so few words, she effortlessly reveals distinctly Tŝilhqot'in notions of heritage that connect the intangible (language, stories, songs, and names) with the tangible (routes, objects, and places) through the lens of an ancestral inheritance that is continuously animated by active practices of use and engagement.[34]

So poignant are these words from Smith that we included them in the *Strategic plan for the management of Tŝilhqot'in cultural heritage* (Tŝilhqot'in National Government 2022, 6), a document I prepared in my role as Cultural Heritage Coordinator at TNG. We were not seeking to use this strategic plan as a place to define Tŝilhqot'in heritage either, but we did need to point to *something* in order to lay out a plan that would attend to a host of Tŝilhqot'in priorities for the preservation and revitalisation of many cultural legacies. Drawing upon the above words from Smith, as well as engagements with other knowledgeable Tŝilhqot'in, we settled on the following language to stand in lieu of a Tŝilhqot'in definition of heritage:

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[34] Smith (2020, 71) later expanded on these sentiments:

> Our *esghaydam* [alt. sp. for *ʔesggidam* 'ancestors'] were spiritual people who know their traditions and were spiritually in tune with their environment, and they embedded their ancient traditions wherever they traveled and lived. They have walked on the many trails that connect to the landscapes within and beyond their territory. They have fished at numerous lakes, hunted practically every land mammal, gathered food and medicine, and made sacred areas of their hearths. They have a presence on the landscapes today and will exist into the future. Our *esghaydam* continue to walk in places. They exist through the seasons. A few of our *esghaydam* are said to be visible as *dẑelh* 'mountains' and transformer rocks. They have handed down ancient hand tools and trails, and have left footprints in rock. As we walk on our paths, old stories come into our minds to blend with the present, imbuing our senses with ancestral visions and thoughts. Today, people are near their ancestral spirits wherever they go to gather berries, hunt, catch fish, or travel… There are areas in the territory where one may sit and look out over sacred waters, trees, and watch wildlife and know the mystery of feeling part of a mysterious whole. One feels contentment, wonder, a deep sense of well-being, a contentedness to our *esghaydam* who sat in the same spot, felt the same feelings, and one knows a spiritual connectedness with human existence as part of a whole.

> Ancestral spaces, structures, and belongings, as well as place names, stories, songs, and teachings are at the heart of Tŝilhqot'in heritage. From time immemorial, we have protected and cared for that which has been handed down by our *ʔesggidam* (ancestors). They walked these lands long before us. They fished, hunted, gathered plants, practiced their traditions, followed their laws, and lived their lives in harmony with other beings. The *ʔesggidam* made the places of their lives sacred, leaving behind physical and spiritual traces in their footprints. Their presence on the landscape remains strong today as it will continue into the future.
>
> It is our responsibility to care for Tŝilhqot'in heritage. We do this by learning and following *dechen ts'edilhtan* (Tŝilhqot'in law), singing our songs and telling our stories, and by standing united against forces that would damage our sacred places and our ways of life. We are guided through this important work by the voices of our people, our elders, youth, women and leaders, as well as our *ʔesggidam* and the land itself (Tŝilhqot'in National Government 2022, 7).

Given how little has been written about Tŝilhqot'in heritage, I hope to use the present chapter as a space to expand on some of these ideas. Doing so will allow a deeper discussion of Tŝilhqot'in place names and Tŝilhqot'in ontologies.

Based on Smith's words, I see some core themes of Tŝilhqot'in heritage emerging. First, Tŝilhqot'in heritage is about ancestral connections—links between generations. Heritage is by its nature inherited, and in Tŝilhqot'in contexts the responsibility to care for, cherish, and pass on heritage seems to go hand-in-hand with heritage itself. Tŝilhqot'in heritage also seems to involve living processes which require action and intention to both access and maintain them, and which are rooted in spiritually mediated intergenerational connections. So while Tŝilhqot'in heritage implicates both tangible and intangible elements, there seems to be a subtle emphasis on the intangible—in Tŝilhqot'in: *ch'ih* 'ways'.

In more recent writing, Smith further emphasised the importance of notions like spirituality, interconnectivity, fidelity,[35] and responsibility in Tŝilhqot'in heritage systems, as well as the role of Tŝilhqot'in heritage to enrich lives:

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[35] By fidelity I mean attention to the accuracy of details when passing on a tradition or teaching from one generation to the next. This is not to say that Tŝilhqot'in heritage practices are or should be static—they are often

> Our *esghaydam*, their inheritance (land, resources, traditions), and the receivers of this birthright are spiritually intertwined. In turn, it is a sacred and fundamental duty to preserve and to pass on these sacred gifts in their purity as we received them.
>
> *Deni* [people] use the natural resources in their territory… and these gifts from our *esghaydam* are part of our culture, language, songs, dances, and ceremonies. Our responsibility is to pass these gifts to future generations of humans and non-humans who all deserve to live dignified lives (Smith 2020, 73).

In her work to document her community's ancestral laws and customs, Tŝilhqot'in writer Maryann Solomon of *Xeni* touched on similar themes connecting ancestors, inheritance, responsibility, and fidelity as well as active, living processes and interconnections that transcend time:

> We give thanks and do food offerings to the spirits and those who have gone before us as they give us their strength, courage, and blessings for a long healthy life. Our ancestors, ʔesggidam*,* are always in our midst, no matter where we are. It is our responsibility to practice and capture the very essence of the teachings passed down since ʔesggidam time began; as our Elders today are teaching us. And it is my hope that these teachings will continue to be passed on to the many generations that follow.
>
> …
>
> It is the universal view of our community that it is crucial that we keep these beliefs and teachings alive from one generation to the next. Many times I've heard the elders say that this is the way of our people – and it has always been. Passed from generation to generation – there is no other way (Solomon 2012, 4-5).

Responsibility and fidelity are integrated notions here. Not only do these writers describe a responsibility of generations today to pass on Tŝilhqot'in heritage to future generations, there is also a responsibility to previous generations to ensure that what is passed on is accurate.[36] Smith sheds light on this theme in the *Tŝilhqot'in Nation Water Declaration*: "We embrace this solemn and sacred duty to our ancestors to pass our territories and our cultures to the following generations in good order" (n.d., cited in Smith 2020, 1).

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dynamic and ever-shifting based on the individuals involved, and changing socio-cultural environments (J. Charleyboy, personal communication Aug. 21, 2024).

[36] Again, "accuracy" here is not to suggest that there is not important diversity of interpretations and manifestations of traditions that are passed on between families and individuals, yet it is important that attention is paid to the spirit of the teachings, acknowledgement of whom knowledge and teachings have been learned from, and generally doing right by the ancestors (J. Charleyboy, personal communication Aug. 21, 2024).

Gratitude, care, and reciprocity are three other important and interrelated aspects of Tŝilhqot'in heritage highlighted by Smith at two points in her master's thesis:

> I treasure the annual strands we wove onto the ancient patterns of my ancestral homeland. I understand now, how the traditions of my people are re-imbedded through memories and storytelling.
>
> Our ancestors left a rich and diverse landscape for the future generations of living creatures and people, a time-honoured tradition that has been heedlessly ignored in present forestry and land use practices… (Smith 2002, cited in Smith 2008, 16)

> There is no *Tsìnlhqút'ín* term for "sacred" or "spiritual" likely because everything is considered to be sacred. The natural environment stimulates an energy of gratitude, and for people who have lived for centuries in one area, nature provides close connections to one's ancestors. Stones, creatures, and vegetation are sacred, and water from the river and mountains are ancient ancestors. The yearly journey of salmon, our relationship with everything, and all our activities on the land are spiritual. *Tsìnlhqút'ín* life is full of rituals and ceremonies. A hunter begins the day with a purification ceremony, and makes a request for a successful hunt, and calls upon the ancestors. A successful hunt ends with a thanksgiving ceremony where food is shared with the ancestors[37] (Smith 2008, 88).

Writing from Smith and Solomon together shape an image of Tŝilhqot'in heritage as one interwoven with mundane and supernatural qualities that reflect uniquely Tŝilhqot'in ontologies/world views. Walking ancient trails, finding and admiring stone tools, and using ancient place names are all examples of mundane ancestral connections, but for many Tŝilhqot'in these are also deeply spiritual.

One important quality of these ontological dimensions of Tŝilhqot'in heritage is, in the mundane sense, 'continuity', and from a more supernatural angle as 'time-transcendence'. Time is always a complicated subject, and non-Western concepts of time are often difficult for me to grasp. However, the notion of time-transcendence among Tŝilhqot'in began to make sense to me during a conversation I had with Marilyn and Geraldine Charleyboy of *Tŝideldel*:

> Shane: What is it about the land itself that allows [healing and learning] to happen, rather than inside a classroom, or…

[37] The sharing of food with ancestors is commonly done through burning.

Marilyn: Well, I personally think if you think about a place, if you think about *this* place, I can connect to, "wow, my ancestors walked on this earth!"

Geraldine: Energies, spirits.

Marilyn: The spirits, the energy, it's alive. You know, the grass, the ants, the insects, mosquitoes, the trees—it's all alive, it's all got a life force. And it's all positive.

Shane: When we were at *Lhin Desch'osh* this spring, you were teaching me about healing and the land, and I kind of wanted to revisit that conversation now that we have the microphone running, because I found it sort of spoke to a lot of—I think it reveals a lot about connection, and *time*. You were talking about how if you have trouble in your life, or if there's pain, you can bring it with you onto the land. And maybe you put it into a rock through your intentions, and then leave the rock *there*. Can you expand more on how that works?

Marilyn: Yeah, because sometimes you can't talk to people, you know. You can't even—you don't have the words. We have such a connection with the earth and the land that if you bring that pain out—and yeah, sitting on the shore of the lake and you just pick up a rock, and through your thoughts—you don't have to talk, just through your thoughts of what you're going through—and putting that into that rock, and then leaving it there. You're not holding it *in* anymore. You know, because I've had a lot of conversations with [a late elder] around this stuff—you know, because he had cancer and that's what he died of. And he talked about not holding onto things, and how it was so important to release a lot of those things. Because that's what he felt that made him sick was his holding onto stuff.

And so, if we can do that, that energy *changes* when you put it into the land or to something *on* the land, it changes. It doesn't always stay heavy. You know, and if you think about, like, if you believe that we're created by the Creator, *Gudih Nits'il?in*, *he* created us with these emotions. It's only like residential schools and stuff that taught us that those emotions were negative. They're not. All emotions help us through things, you know? Even stress—stress tells us we're doing too much, or we're taking on too much. But society has made us see those things as negative.

And then even at residential school, it wasn't necessarily the teaching, it's amongst each other. If somebody cried they were viewed as *weak*. You know, so you had to be *tough*. So then we learned not to let that stuff go. But being where I'm at, here, I've learned that tears are—it's important to release them…So how are you going to *release* those tears? Some people don't know how, so if we can teach them that it doesn't have

to be in a counselling session, in a room, with a counsellor, seated like this [on the land]…

Geraldine: Sit in the lake and cry.

Marilyn: Yeah! Exactly! … releasing it in a good way, out on the land—and if you think about how our elders or our ancestors did it, their tears are probably here! You know?

Geraldine: I heard something a while back about—and it didn't connect until I heard it—it was that our ancestors *prayed*. My ancestors prayed for me, just like I am praying for those [in] the future. So, my ancestors prayed that I would be an amazing, loving, wonderful, caring, passionate, whatever—all of those things that you pray for the next generation, somebody prayed for me. And realising that, and connecting with that, was—I don't know, it just opened up a different spectrum, a different area for me. And realising that yeah, somebody wanted me to be successful…

Right now, it's not against the law or against anything to come out here and sit and cry by the lake, or come out here and do your offerings and your prayers and whatever. But there was a time when it was—when our people weren't allowed to do all of the things that our ancestors did. So that's passed down through the generations. Going to those places like *Deldun-dax*, or anywhere along the river, our ancestors lived, and prayed, and died, and cried, and were happy, and were born—their mark is on the land.

Marilyn: Their essence is there, still—I think.

Geraldine: Energies. Like when we went to *ʔEsdilagh*, the grave-site there. What happened there when I was drumming and singing? To me that was like my ancestors are happy that I'm here honouring them with a song. They came and made themselves present to all of us that were there…

Marilyn: And aware.

Geraldine: And aware that yeah, "we're here." In making those affirmations too, like, "I'm here, hey! I'm here to say a prayer for you," and help me. Like the song I was just talking about, *ʔEtsu Selhaghunt'in*, 'help me grandmothers,' help me to be who you wanted me to be, who you prayed for me to be. So the connection to the land I think is pivotal in any part of surviving as an indigenous person, because without the land, without the language, without all of those teachings, we're just an empty vessel human being.

(M. Charleyboy and G. Elkins, personal comm. 2021)

Among the many things that I took from this conversation with Marilyn and Geraldine was the deep sense of time-transcendent continuity that Tŝilhqot'in have with other generations, past and future, and that these connections happen spatially on the land. On a similar theme, Smith (2008, 29) cited Tewa anthropologist Alfonso Ortiz:

> The notion "world view" denotes a distinctive vision of reality which not only interprets and orders the places and events in the experience of a people, but lends form, direction, and continuity to life as well. World view provides people with a distinctive set of values, an identity, a feeling of rootedness, of belonging to a time and a place, and a felt sense of continuity with a tradition which transcends the experience of a single lifetime, a tradition which may be said to transcend even time (Ortiz 1973, 91, cited in Smith 2008, 29).

I can see why these words would resonate with Smith as a Tŝilhqot'in. She described this feeling of cultural continuity from her own experiences:

> In my own lifetime, my early exposure to seasonal camps, and later as a teen, learning the stories which are situated on the land have given me the sense of traditional continuity and a deep connection to the land and to my ancestors (Smith 2008, 29).

Learning and using place names is part of this practice of continuity, and part of deep ancestral connections that inform the lives of many Tŝilhqot'in. These ancestral connections go beyond continuity of traditions, they are ongoing happenings from ancestral lives that occur in places and implicate past and future generations in the present, and in those places. These, I believe, are core elements of Tŝilhqot'in heritage.

Towards a Tŝilhqot'in heritage assemblage

In 1996, two Tŝilhqot'in researchers, Dianne Lulua and Inez Setah, completed a cultural heritage overview report for the newly established *Ts'il?os* [sic] *Provincial Park* in the south of Tŝilhqot'in territory. The purpose of this study was to identify and manage for Tŝilhqot'in heritage values within the new park. These values were expressed by the content of the report which focuses on subsistence resources and traditional use areas; heritage sites including places

with archaeological, historical, cultural, and spiritual values; and a list of 74 Tŝilhqot'in place names.

The report's introduction to the section on place names illustrates how these three dimensions of Tŝilhqot'in heritage are so tightly interwoven:

> The place name sites are of significance to our ancestors and provide a history of sites used for cultural purposes. This is evidence that sites were historically used by our ancestors, sites chosen primarily for their plentiful food supply, material structures, and medicine purposes. The place names reflect history associated with myths, legends, descriptions of the land and its environment, animals and events. A few sites have been recorded as historical by archaeological studies (Lulua and Setah 1996, 8).

There is much to unpack with these words, but here I hope to draw readers' attention to how these authors, along with the previous insights by Smith (2008; 2020) and Solomon (2012), frame Tŝilhqot'in heritage as collections of dynamic elements that connect past, present, and future meanings and happenings. In other words, Tŝilhqot'in heritage involves patterns of interrelationships between material (people, other beings, objects/ancestral belongings, structures, and geographical features and spaces) and immaterial (narratives, teachings, knowledge, songs, spirits, language,[38] laws, place names, and so on) *things* that coalesce in time-transcendent and spatially anchored groups, collections, or, *assemblages* of these things.

The concept of 'assemblage' is widely used by archaeologists[39] to refer to the collection of archaeological objects that are associated by means of shared material types and forms, or

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[38] The Tŝilhqot'in language as a whole is also heritage, handed down from the voices of those who came before (see Smith 2008, 3).

[39] Because I am building a theoretical connection between ontological theory in archaeology (Alberti 2016; Fowler 2013, Henare *et al.* 2007; Holbraad 2012) and Salazar and Maulén's (2022) approach to 'ontologically-open' place name research, and because I am linking intangible heritage (including place names) with tangible heritage (notably archaeological materials and sites in Tŝilhqot'in and other indigenous contexts in BC), I here lean specifically on archaeology's use of the term 'assemblage' rather than how it has been used in other social sciences and humanities disciplines (see also Ingold 1993). Notably, my use of the archaeological concept of 'assemblage' here contrasts, for example, with Wideman and Masuda's (2017) use of the term in their definition of 'toponymic assemblage'. While I use the term to refer to specific collections of associated discrete *things,* both tangible and intangible, their definition (more in line with actor-network theory) presents a category that "remains radically

found within the same archaeological contexts (see Lucas 2012), however the term is increasingly being applied in other fields outside of archaeology (Hamilakis and Jones 2017). Often flowing out of the archaeological tradition, the concept of a 'heritage assemblage' is also gaining some traction (Andujar 2020, Edensor 2023; Horwood 2019). I use the term 'heritage assemblage' here to refer to a broad collection of associated elements, both tangible and intangible, that are bound together through their shared value, use, and collective inheritance by a group of people with a common cultural history and/or ancestry, and are bound together through shared spatial and/or social contexts.

If places, broadly speaking, are what Cresswell (2009, 1-2) described as containers of materiality, meaning, and practice, heritage assemblages are the materials, meanings, and practices contained within places that are intergenerationally exchanged. But as Cresswell also noted, materials, meanings and practices are all linked. Tŝilhqot'in place names, stories, teachings, traditions, songs, and even spiritual energies are all *immaterial things* that are meaningfully practiced, performed, and re-created across time. As I point out in Chapter 2, place names are commonly understood to be linguistic or cultural artifacts (Lhuyd 1707; Macniven 2013; Taylor 2016; Wainwright 1962). But Thornton (1997, 222) thought they should be considered as more than artifacts, and also as "cultural resources." This echoes Lulua and Setah's (1996) framing, above. Thornton emphasised that land and resource management in indigenous contexts should integrate place names alongside other natural (timber, wildlife, minerals, *etc.*) and cultural (archaeological, human remains, *etc.*) resources rather than viewing them solely as objects of academic study. Unlike natural resources which can be over-harvested and depleted, cultural resources like place names are a source of inexhaustible wealth, continuously enriching

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open," is "highly fluid," and "enrolls both the material and the discursive" (Wideman and Masuda 2017, 496-7). While subtle, I think this is an important difference.

and edifying generations of learners and users with cultural and linguistic currency in the world. However, like natural resources there is also a danger that they may be exploited—used and manipulated in contrived ways that diminish them when they are strategically essentialised, frivolously re-applied to corporate or institutional structures, or interpreted-away by forcing them to fit into etic theoretical frameworks.

Thornton's framing of place names as "cultural resources" very much reflects what I imagine when I talk about them as elements of heritage assemblages. Using this conceptual lens, Tŝilhqot'in heritage assemblages could be seen as collections of all the elements that Tŝilhqot'in consider to be their cultural or ancestral inheritance that manifest at various spatial (site, locality, area, region/territory) and social (individual, family, community, nation) scales across the Tŝilhqot'in cultural landscape.

I recognise that this position may seem hypocritical in that I could be accused of imposing here a framework concept of 'heritage assemblage' onto Tŝilhqot'in cultural themes. I do so therefore only insofar as it remains a helpful heuristic when writing in English about Tŝilhqot'in discourses and understandings of, as well as engagements with, their place names. When this heuristic no longer ceases to be helpful, I'm happy to discard it. That said, in defence of the notion of place names as elements of heritage assemblages, this idea has emerged because it resonated with my ethnographic observations, rather than as a presupposition with which I arrived.

The heritage of place names

Lulua and Setah (1996) and Smith (2008; 2020) call directly on place names as part of their ancestral inheritance—things that reflect the happenings and perceptions of Tŝilhqot'in pasts while simultaneously informing Tŝilhqot'in presents and futures. It seems clear that

Tŝilhqot'in place names are meaningfully understood through the lens of heritage, and thus as important elements of heritage assemblages that serve to bind and interconnect various other elements (language, story, song, place, *etc.*).

This is not a revolutionary observation. Peoples around the world understand their place names along similar lines. The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) recognises "the importance of geographical names as significant elements of the cultural heritage of nations" (Natural Resources Canada n.d., 32). Toponymy as cultural heritage across international contexts is particularly evident in the UNGEGN's *Information bulletin* from May 2015, where toponymists from around the world described how their country's place names are a valuable and important form of heritage for their people. Cecile Blake of Jamaica (2015, 4), for example, noted that "[g]eographical names are addresses, the keys to identifying specific places, but also of irreplaceable cultural value of fundamental importance to local identity, and a person's sense of belonging, and therefore must be protected and preserved." Beatriz Cristina Pereira de Sousa of Brazil wrote (2015, 8):

> The geographical names, by the understanding of their origins and motivations, allow us to establish numerous relations with the cultural, social, political, economic and natural aspects of the area they refer to. Because they are symbolic spatial forms they allow us to retrieve cultural aspects related to groups of individuals which sometime in history lived and took part in the construction of a given place. In this sense, therefore, geographical names have the ability to present the cultural heritage inherent in the place they identify.

Writing about their work with geographical names in Tunisia, Friha and Calvarin (2015, 12) commented that "[t]he collection of geographical names allow[s] everyone to realize that a geographical name… is a discrete witness of the national cultural heritage that needs to be conserved and saved in good conditions in order to raise its profile." Finally, Lucy Phalaagae of Botswana (2015, 16) wrote insightfully:

> Geographical place names in Botswana reflect the languages spoken in the country, with reference to about eighty dialects. The derivation of these names signifies the historical events, the languages and history behind these names form one basis of Botswana's culture and heritage. Most of the names in all the regions of Botswana have maintained cultural background despite the different dialects.

It is important to note that the contributors to the UNGEGN (2015) *Information bulletin* are working with place names in state-oriented contexts seeking to preserve, commemorate, and standardise an often wide array of local toponymies. Indigenous and other local, colloquial toponymic heritage is not necessarily oriented in such formal or practical ways.

Place names in non-state contexts may have some similar dimensions, but also many other cultural, linguistic, and ontological specifics. "Place names are historical monuments," wrote Norwegian toponymist Botolv Helleland, "that transmit a multifaceted picture of older generations' experiences and insight into the interplay between man and Nature, and they are a valuable source of local history, at the same time as they represent an important factor for the well-being of the people in a local community" (2011, 7).[40] Helleland later fleshed out these notions:

> Place names may be said to represent the oldest living part of human cultural heritage, in the sense that they have been handed down orally from generation to generation for hundreds or thousands of years at the place where they were coined. They are a special part of our cultural heritage in that they tell us something about the place to which they refer and about the name givers. Thus they provide important supplements to the history of the places where people settled, as ties to the past. Many place names are also identified with past events and are pegs upon which stories both written and oral can be hung. One can also see geographical names as a reflection of the interplay between humans and nature through different periods of time. Besides, if a person has some meta-linguistic and historic awareness, he may listen to place names as voices of the past, which in its turn may strengthen his feeling of home…
>
> When one takes into account that many place names have been coined as descriptions of the area or place in question, it becomes evident that we are dealing with material of immense historic value. Place names are links to the past, mirrors reflecting

[40] This is not an uncontested process at both the local and state levels, but toponymies outside of formal state-centred structures often have a much higher tolerance for variability and multiplicity because they derive from a diversity of voices from the past.

> various scenarios and activities of the past. More recent names like names of dwelling places, streets, and fields and other microtoponyms also form a part of our collective onomastic memory and heritage. Although many people do not seem to be particularly aware of the historical richness of the place names in their surroundings they may still feel that the name stock contributes to their rootedness. People who have become acquainted with the etymological contents of names will of course appreciate their historical value to a greater degree. Through the place names of a district small or large, in particular its settlement names, it is possible to read many details of the area's history (Helleland 2012, 101-2).

These themes of the toponymic heritage of local peoples are likely to resonate in both indigenous and non-indigenous contexts. Many dimensions of local place name traditions are perhaps better understood as *ancestral* rather than *cultural* heritage due to their descent along long familial lines, and their connections with deep senses of rootedness, belonging, and identity.

Tŝilhqot'in place name discourses evoke all of the above themes that I have associated with Tŝilhqot'in heritage more generally, including intergenerational inheritance, spirituality, interconnectivity, fidelity, responsibility, ancestral connections, gratitude, care, reciprocity, and the ability to enrich peoples' lives by expanding feelings of rootedness, belonging, cultural identity, and wellbeing. Rather than combining these themes into a definition of Tŝilhqot'in heritage, I am more inclined to append these themes to the concept of a Tŝilhqot'in heritage assemblage, which includes place names and toponymic knowledge, and together add them to the well of theory from which further conclusions can be drawn, and further work be done.

Names and the living landscape

Tŝilhqot'in place names connect with the landscape in ways that extend beyond the mundane, physical, or 'natural'. The specifics of these '*super*natural' connections are important considerations for how Tŝilhqot'in place names are framed and understood. As we've seen, Tŝilhqot'in place names spiritually connect people with their ancestors (and descendants), but they also point to the spiritual vibrancy of the landscape, evoke supernatural narratives, and call

on some supernatural beings directly. Tŝilhqot'in understand that there are deep interconnections between all the various living dimensions of the landscape, including people, places, rocks, trees, rivers, and mountains, all of which have spirit, and all of which are infused with supernatural energies. In this way, there is no separating the natural from the supernatural.[41]

Vibrant descriptions

Linda Smith described how her peoples' place names "add colour to the landscape" (2008, 14)—imbuing it with a deep sense of meaning and vibrancy. She described how the profound respect that Tŝilhqot'in have for the land stems in large part from the living qualities of the land itself, as well as the continued presence of all the beings that have come to shape and inhabit it. Russell Myers Ross recalled something similar:

> One thing my Uncle… would always teach me was that everything has spirit. He'd talk about the inanimate things like rocks and trees and stuff like that, but he'd say even a road itself has a spirit. It can guide you, it can teach you. Even the river itself is respected as a form of spirit, in a way. And even the way you direct where and how you situate your house, and where the door goes, and stuff like that… it's a place where spirits may travel, so you have to be careful about those things… I think it's implicit in some of those places as well that they have spirit too. Yeah they have, when you're there—they're part of a different energy (personal comm. 2021).

The Tŝilhqot'in landscape is charged with supernatural energies, and as place names are used to call forth places, they also call forth these other living qualities.

Evoking narratives

The connection between place names and stories is almost self-evident. Basso (1996, 47) described how they are powerful tools used in storytelling "as situating devices, as

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[41] By using the term 'supernatural' here I don't intend to draw in with it the problematic baggage of a natural/supernatural binary (*e.g.,* true versus untrue, or knowable versus unknowable). Instead, I use the term for the sake of clarity to show how things like landscape features and the beings that inhabit them have the potential to be both at the same time. I therefore use the term 'supernatural' flexibly and only insofar as it helps me to convey these themes in English.

conventionalised verbal instruments for locating narrated events at and in the physical setting where the events occurred." He also famously portrayed Western Apache place names as elements of language which through their utterance can evoke for listeners complex narratives that deeply edify, reaffirm, and instruct, among many other things. "The canon of narratives that are associated with place names," wrote Thom (2005, 214-5), "much like those associated with Indian names, are powerful linguistic devices that bring certain storied senses of place into being. ...Thus, when people use place names as linguistic shorthand for complex social metaphors, they have learned to *think* with the land."

All Tŝilhqot'in place names evoke stories. "A name comes with a story, and a name comes with a purpose," described Geraldine Elkins (personal comm. 2021). Some stories evoked by place names are of personal experiences that happen within a person's lifetime, and calling on the names of those places evokes the memory of those events and the stories that convey them (see also Cruikshank 1990; Helleland 2012). Other stories are more ancient, handed down through time in oral traditions including the mnemonics of toponymy (see also Basso 1996).

Deni Tishnil?ad '(where a) person died in the water' (Punkutlaenkut Lake) evokes (and also helps keep alive in memory) the story of Tŝilhqot'in hunters at that lake many years ago. Elder Ervin Charleyboy recounted the story to me over a casual phone call in 2020. Before European colonisation, Tŝilhqot'in used to construct long barriers through the forest by falling trees in a long line and piling up brush along them, almost like a fence. These fences would begin near an area where caribou would be known to congregate at certain times of year, and end at a body of water.[42] Hunters running in something like a relay would then drive a herd of caribou against the fence and into the lake at the far end. Other hunters would be waiting in

[42] This practice was also famously carried out at Charlotte Lake from the nearby Caribou Flats there.

canoes in the water ready to spear the animals when they were much slower and more vulnerable, and then tow them ashore to be butchered. During one of these drives, a canoe came up too close to a caribou and the animal kicked a hole in the boat, causing it to sink. Sadly, the hunter drowned as a result. *Deni Tishnil?ad*, '(where a) person died in the water'.

Ancient stories tied to place names connect with supernatural aspects of the Tŝilhqot'in landscape in different ways, and to different degrees. I would not say that some stories are supernatural while others are not—they are both at the same time (e.g., see Weir and William 2023, 262). The story of *Deni Tishnil?ad* that Ervin told me did not come with explicit supernatural elements, but perhaps another storyteller, or another telling by Ervin, would reveal them. This is beside the point.

However, some stories evoked by place names *are* explicitly supernatural. Many of these narratives involve themes of transformation, or lessons for moral behaviour through the inevitable consequences of going against *dechen ts'edilhtan* (Tŝilhqot'in traditional laws and protocols). While we were reviewing place name maps for this study, I asked late Herbert Jeff about the meaning of the name *Dan-qiyex* (Bidwell Lakes area). Since *dan* is 'summer', and *qiyex* is a family-use area, usually including a fishable body of water and some underground pit houses (a home), I took the name to mean something like 'summer home'. Herb corrected me:

> It's a spirit of a man, there. *Dan* means 'Famine.' It's the spirit that if you play with the food—like if you mount animal heads on the wall and that, that Famine will take your hunting [abilities] away, there. You'll get sick. You're not supposed to brag about hunting, you're supposed to respect it, and pray for it. You're not allowed to mount its head on the walls, or anything. Otherwise there could be a very large hunger going on. When Famine comes—that one [place] there—the pit houses are still there. That story, there. There's some people that think that it's impossible for spirits to show themselves to people, but it happens to us. And that's what happened on that story. That's something about European people, when they hear something like *Dan* they think it's about their names. They always think that way (H. Jeff, personal comm. 2021).

Later that summer, while walking around at *Dan-qiyex* itself (see Figure 10), Herbert told me the story of how the spirit of Famine visited a family in their home there. *Dan-qiyex* would be better translated as 'Famine home' or 'Famine (in the) home', and merely mentioning the place name evokes these teachings through narratives of supernatural (and natural) events and beings.

Figure 10: Photograph of *Dan-qiyex* 'Famine home'

In describing some of the living qualities of her territory, Smith used the prominent example of *Lhin Desch'osh*[43] 'little/miniature dog'—the hero in the central Tŝilhqot'in story of original transformation. The following excerpt from Smith (2008, 12-13) reveals a perspective on the connections between legend, land, and lifeways with place names:

> The historical figures in this story remain alive through story, and the main historical figures are tied to the landscapes via placenames. They sit in their final fossilized forms along the Chilcotin River, near *Tŝèlyú Ts'ílhèd* 'where smoke fled down a cliff'. It is told that in their search for beaver, they carved ditches using their feet, creating *Tŝìnlhqóx* 'a river; Chilcotin River' and they finally caught up with the beaver below [*Tízîlín*] 'where it flows'. *Lhìndèsch'ósh*, at the end of the story, planted *súnt'îny* 'spring beauty corms' (*Claytonia lanceolata*) and *èsghùnsh* 'yellow avalanche lily bulbs' (*Erythronium grandiflorum*) along mountain slopes in the western, more mountainous part of the territory, in places like *Èlàgì Ŝèqàn* 'where (a field of) flowers sit (in a container or

[43] Smith's (2008) spelling is "*Lhìndèsch'ósh* 'miniature dog'," and also refers to the story as "*Lhìn Nìts'én Nánàyídásh*'a dog who courts someone'" (12).

> plate)' and *Èsgàny Ànx* 'chickadee's den'… Before the availability of garden vegetables, wild root vegetables formed a considerable portion of *Tsìnlhqút'ín* diet.

Smith then connects the story of *Lhin Desch'osh* with the Salmon Boy story through the place name *Tiẑlin* 'where it flows', referring to the northern tip of *Tŝilhqox Biny*/*Tu Nenchagh* (Chilko Lake) where the lake water begins flowing, eventually becoming river:

> [*Tiẑlin*] overlooks a traditional fish camp where spring salmon, sockeye, and humpback go to spawn each year. In one ancient *Tsìnlhqút'ín* story, a boy witnessed the migration of salmon and said that the salmon were excited when nearing the mountain of their destination and as they flipped out of the water, they called out, "[*Tiẑlin*] *gúyèd*" 'where it flows is near'. This story comes to life with each storytelling and each fall with the return of the salmon (Smith 2008, 13-14).

These examples from Herbert Jeff and Linda Smith reveal how place names are more than static commemorations of legendary or historical figures or events, they are evoked by Tŝilhqot'in in the present as anchor points in a time-transcendent interweaving of ancient narratives with historic and contemporary lifeways—something Dinwoodie (2002) also described among Tŝilhqot'in in *Xeni*. Place names offer nodes for a *living* engagements with the themes offered up in these narratives, including teachings, wisdom, tradition, law, and supernatural beings themselves—each a component of Tŝilhqot'in heritage assemblages.

Geographical personhood

Another excerpt from Linda Smith highlights a further theme in the connection between Tŝilhqot'in place names and the supernatural dimensions of the landscape—geographical personhood. Smith recalled memories of her mother from her childhood:

> My mother personifies everything in nature: *dechen tŝilghelh* 'the trees are shaking their heads'; *belh senax ghinlh'az* 'drowsiness has crept into my eyes' as if sleep crawls on insect-like legs;' and she refers to rivers and mountains as *Yeda-Denilin* 'ancient ones; ancestors' (Smith 2008, 16).

In more recent writing, Smith also sheds light on geographical beings in the broader context of supernatural transformations:

> [Our esghaydam (ancestors)] have passed down stories of animals who were people, and told about people who became part of the constellations, for example *aldzi* 'the moon' and about people who became part of the landscape, the best example being *dẑelh* 'the mountains'. Using this type of knowledge, elders have taught principles on how to show respect for everything in their universe. The environment holds *Nenqayni* ['indigenous'] ancient history and memories. *Dechen* 'the trees' remember *qwen* 'fire', *tŝi* 'the rocks' heal the people, *tu* 'the water' is our ancestor. All of these parts of nature are living and intelligent spiritual beings that can observe, speak, and help *deni* ['the people'] (Smith 2020, 4).

Many of these ancient ancestors now in geographical form remain supernaturally powerful. Writing on the consequences for disrespect in general, Smith turned to the most well-known 'geographical persons' in the Tŝilhqot'in territory: *Tŝ'ilʔoŝ* and *ʔEniyud*:

> As an example of nature's reaction to disrespect shown by *deni*, it is believed that *dẑelh* 'mountains' were once *deni*, as explained to elder Helena Myers of *Yunesît'in*. Every *Nenqayni* knows that it is disrespectful to point at *Tŝ'ilʔuŝ* 'Mount Tatlow' or *Eniyud* 'Niut Mountain', and Alice William of *Xeni* said, "This is one of the first things that newcomers to the territory are told." Pointing at *Tŝ'ilʔuŝ* is considered rude, and potentially dangerous for the disrespect it shows… It is known that *Tŝ'ilʔuŝ* and *Eniyud* will cause it to rain, snow, sleet, or hail on individuals who have shown them disrespect… (Smith 2020, 12).

These teachings are linked with the beings who remain standing on and influencing the landscape to this day, and they are called upon by their names. *Tŝ'ilʔoŝ* and *ʔEniyud* thus stand as both place and personal names as they are both places and persons.

Above, Smith (2008, 16) cites her mother's reference to rivers and mountains as "*Yeda-Denilin* 'ancient ones; ancestors'." In 2020, she expanded on this term:

> We consider the Chilcotin River to be a person and this river is known to be a powerful healer. *Tŝilhqox* is referred to as "Yeda-Denilin" (*Yeda* from the word "*Yedanx*" 'historically' or meaning 'in ancient times'). The term "*Denilin*" is from "*Deni*" 'person' and used together "*Denilin*" means that 'the person is living', and "*Yeda-Denilin*" can be fully translated as 'ancient living person' (Smith 2020, 17).

I asked Chief Roger William about the term as well:

> *Yedanx denilin* could be a person that turned to stone, maybe I'm thinking. It's like the river, alive, it's almost like the tree is alive. Those are people, you know. Land. Water. Just my thought, just when I'm thinking of that word (personal comm. 2021).

Weir and William (2023, 264) presented the term *yedanx denilin*, from elder Minnie Charleyboy's description, as 'long time ago people'. *Tŝ'ilʔoŝ*, *ʔEniyud*, and *Tŝilhqox*, as well as other geographical features on the Tŝilhqot'in landscape, are ancient, living people. They are beings with agency and a power to affect the lives of Tŝilhqot'in, as well as non-Tŝilhqot'in—those who believe in them, as well as those who don't.

On June 26, 2024 when Canada's Prime Minister visited Tŝilhqot'in title land to mark and celebrate the tenth anniversary of the 2014 Supreme Court of Canada's declaration of Tŝilhqot'in Aboriginal title, the weather turned on us. What began as a pleasant day at *ʔElhti-ʔelhtɨlh* 'grouse wing-drumming' (Elkins Creek/Nemiah Valley Lodge), with *Tŝ'ilʔoŝ* standing proudly above us, the sounds of the Prime Minister's fleet of incoming aircraft came also with a sudden shift in weather. At first it rained like it does on BC's coast—a steady, heavy drizzle uncommon for our region. Then, especially as the Prime Minister took the microphone, the clouds opened up drenching everyone and everything. Talk around the event was permeated throughout the day, and for weeks after, with surreptitious comments about whether 'someone' pointed at *Tŝ'ilʔoŝ*, or whether *Tŝ'ilʔoŝ* simply didn't approve of the visitors from Ottawa. Nonetheless, we *all* felt his displeasure.

Conclusion

Tŝilhqot'in place names are so much more than words. They are integral aspects of a collective body of Tŝilhqot'in traditional knowledge that is deeply rooted to the landscape and embodied by individual people. Through these remembered names, Tŝilhqot'in carry the intentions, perceptions, values, and stories of their ancestors. By passing place names on to

younger generations, Tŝilhqot'in impart aspects of their own lives that are then carried on through the names, and the places themselves, into the future. This process of ancestral inheritance is interwoven not only with other knowledges but also other tangible and intangible *things* in assemblages of Tŝilhqot'in heritage. These assemblages are simultaneously mundane and spiritual, material and immaterial, natural and supernatural. These uniquely-Tŝilhqot'in ontological dimensions are central for understanding the depths of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy, and are part of what is lost when elements of heritage like place names are tangibly represented in new toponymic applications which obfuscate many of these important nuances.

Chapter 5:
Tŝilhqot'in place name meanings

Introduction

What do Tŝilhqot'in place names say? At the surface, this is a question about the meanings of the words that make up Tŝilhqot'in place names. Tracing place name etymologies has long been the pursuit of scholars across fields like geography, anthropology, linguistics, and cartography, among others, but the relationships between names and meanings are more complicated than etymologies, largely because of the complexity of meanings which people attached to places and place names. When talking about place name meanings as etymologies, we're talking about *lexical* meanings[44]—the meanings of the words that make up place names. We're also talking about 'referents'—the geographical features that are being named. For example, the lexical meaning of the Tŝilhqot'in name *ʔElhdaqox* is 'river of/with sturgeon; sturgeon river' (*ʔelhda-chugh* 'sturgeon'; *-qox* 'stream'); its referent is the wide muddy river which runs north-south at the eastern edge of Tŝilhqot'in territory (Fraser River).

However, place names have more than lexical meanings. There are countless meanings that are *associated* with Tŝilhqot'in place names—everything from personal memories and emotions to ancestral narratives, evidence of territorial occupation, and ecological/subsistence values. The ways that Tŝilhqot'in engage with their place names is itself an important space for new meanings to emerge. This chapter begins with a framing of the complex territory of 'meaning', then moving on to highlighting these dimensions in the Tŝilhqot'in context, and finally concluding with some theoretical connections.

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[44] Here I am borrowing some terms from semiotics.

Kinds of meanings

Many scholars have argued that names themselves don't have meanings, only references, and the words referenced in names are what have (lexical) meanings (see Nyström 2016). In this sense, the real meaning of a name would be the individual person, place, or thing that is being named. Nyström provides a helpful example in his country:

> *Stockholm* is 'the city that is the capital of Sweden situated on a group of islands where Lake Mälaren meets the Baltic Sea and where . . .' or something like that. The fact that the words *stock* 'log' and *holm* 'islet' were once used to form the name is not at all important to the people using the name today. A meaning 'the islet with the logs; log island' is completely irrelevant. The name *Stockholm* has a clearly identifying function, but no meaning (Nyström 2016, 40).

Nyström points out that many names are not even made up of other recognisable words, and therefore the 'meaning' of names like these could be seen to be *only* what it identifies and refers to: the geographical feature itself.[45]

These concepts remind me of my conversation with former Chief Russell Myers Ross of *Yunesît'in*. I had asked Russell about his thoughts on the difference between colonial and Tŝilhqot'in place names, and place naming systems:

> Well, I think the ones that got named by colonial settlers, they're just random to me. They have no embedded history with the place, it's just, you know if Stewart was there it's called Stewart Lake now. So it just felt arbitrary and random to have these names (R. Ross, personal comm. 2021).

Extrapolating from Russell's response, I think, reveals a key difference between place naming in indigenous versus colonial *terra nullius*[46] contexts, namely that referents and references are understood in indigenous contexts to be inextricably connected in relevant and meaningful ways.

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[45] When I read this, I couldn't help but think of the first chapter of Tolkien's *The Hobbit* when Bilbo asks the old wizard his name, "I am Gandalf, and Gandalf means me!"

[46] *Terra nullius* is a latin expression meaning 'empty land' or 'vacant land', and this notion was used as a justification for European colonial expansion and settlement of indigenous territories.

Nyström (2016) carried on to describe how other scholars, including himself, disagree with the position that names themselves don't have meanings, arguing that names can and do hold kinds of meanings other than the lexical meanings of the words that make them up. While the primary function of a name (as opposed to other nouns) may be to *denote* a specific person, place, or thing without having to describe or explain it, names also *connote* other individual and collectively held meanings which Nyström described as categorical meanings, associative meanings, and emotive meanings. *Categorical* meanings are based on the presumption that people intuitively group names into categories meaningful to them. These categories are, by definition, culturally and linguistically informed. *Associative* meanings are those that individuals and groups attach to or correlate with names, and are also highly dependent upon culture, language, traditions, and personal experiences. Associative meanings are often the thoughts, feelings, images, and memories that arise when a name is read or heard. *Emotive* meanings are similar to associative meanings in that they connect names with emotions, but they differ in that they refer to how names *cause* positive and negative emotions, rather than being merely connected with them.

Each of these forms of meaning, along with lexical meanings and the purely denotative aspects of place names, arise throughout Tŝilhqot'in place name discourses, and they do so in complex, culturally and linguistically specific, and interconnected ways. These networks of meaning are deeply interwoven into Tŝilhqot'in understandings of, and engagements with, place name etymologies, intergenerational happenings, notions of territory, environmental perception, historical narratives, and being-in-the-world. Thinking of this, I'm reminded by something Joyce Charleyboy described to me:

> [My grandmother] said… "I want your family, your kids and your grandkids, to remember where we came from. Each of these places have their unique names." And she

> said the reason why these names [are there] is because we *use* these areas. "There's a reason why," she'd always say, "there's a reason why *Chexîch'ed* is there." It's because that's where the salmon go as well, you know, for spawning. "There's a reason why Chilko Lake is there," *Tsilhqox*. "There's a reason why that was one of the main camps for the whole nation." She said we would practice our traditional ways [in these places]…
>
> And [place names] had a purpose not just for people coming into the territory, but for certain families. She said, "if you don't know a place name, you don't know who your family are—we've used these areas for hundreds of years." She said, "some of our families… we've been coming back to these sites for hundreds of years. *This* area is so-and-so's fishing spot, *this* area is so-and-so's hunting place." She said, "we went through the whole territory that way, we didn't have *one* area that we hunted out like the non-natives want us to—we had areas that we went to and rotated during the season…" She said that was to preserve the animals in that area, you know… (personal comm. 2021)

Etymological considerations

Despite the importance of centring associative meanings in Tŝilhqot'in toponymy, lexical meanings remain important as well. This may be an extension of the principles of responsibility and fidelity that I outlined above when discussing Tŝilhqot'in concepts of heritage. Russell Myers Ross' above note about the arbitrary-seeming connections between place name referents and references in colonial place names points to the counter situation in Tŝilhqot'in place names where these connections are often highly relevant, correlative, and specific.

Descriptive place names like *Tŝi-deldel* 'red stone', *Nen Nanizŵed* 'land bends around', or *Tŝ'ɨsh-chugh Gunlin* 'where there are big mosquitos' have lexical meanings that directly connect with these places, in this case through place-specific imagery or indications of what might be found there. Other names like *Tsanlgen* '(where) beaver skins are dried', *Patrick Tl'ugh ʔAghinlhʔinsh* 'where Patrick cut hay', and *Nagwentled* 'place of landslides' allude to or reference human and non-human occurrences that happened or happen in these places. There are many other examples of how the lexical meanings of Tŝilhqot'in place names (their references) directly connect with the geographical features they name (their referents), including connections with emplaced historical narratives, in-situ supernatural beings, and traditional use of and

occupancy at specific places, among others. It follows that projects documenting and representing Tŝilhqot'in place names should focus on getting these lexical meanings right—a notion that is magnified when considering Tŝilhqot'in place names as the inherited words and names of ancestors. It continues to matter to Tŝilhqot'in what their ancestors originally meant when they named these places.

According to Taylor (2016, 71), "the most commonly asked question of any place-name, or rather of anyone who admits to some expertise in the subject, is: 'what does it mean?'" Here Taylor is referring to the name's lexical meanings, and the origins and development of those meanings—its etymology. In order to responsibly present a name's etymology, Taylor argued that it is important to trace back the earliest known or recorded forms of each name as these are closer to their original intended meanings. This is not always a straightforward process as place name etymologies are often obscured through long and slow processes of language, geographical, and social change (Harrington 1916; Nicolaisen 1993; Waterman 1922; Wright 1929). Later versions of names are often interpreted by local peoples in ways that are distorted from their original meanings, and these 'folk etymologies' are often seen by scholars to be inaccurate, unscientific, and mistakes to be avoided (Sihler 2000; Stewart 1975; Waterman 1922). However, when we bring associative, categorical, and emotive meanings back into view, etymological obscurity provides an opening through with processes of folk etymology become productive spaces for the negotiation and renegotiation of meanings.

Etymological obscurity

Many Tŝilhqot'in place names have lexical meanings that are not easily interpreted. My experience with and knowledge of the Tŝilhqot'in language is at a novice level, and I run out of etymological capital quickly when trying to interpret some place names (I am often *quite* far off

the mark). However, some Tŝilhqot'in place names are so etymologically obscure that even elders fluent in the old language and its 'high' words find them opaque to interpretation. Late William Myers thought that a good solution to this problem would be to partner with linguists:

> I knew lots of those place names, sometime pretty hard to know what it means, heh? And that's why I talk about that linguist, heh? They'd be helpful. They got software that'll do that, that'll collect all those little meanings in one word… (W. Myers, personal comm. 2021).

While linguists have tools that can help elucidate lexical meanings of some obscure place names, other names may always remain mysterious.

Etymological obscurity is likely connected with the complex suite of geographical, historical, linguistic, and sociopolitical factors that over time shape toponymy more broadly, but the difference between etymologically clear and etymologically obscure names seems to be that the latter are often much older and have therefore been subjected to these factors for much longer. American geographer John Kirtland Wright wrote:

> The living names in any particular district at any particular time are an accumulation from the past, the quality and the density of which depend partly upon the density of the population, partly upon the length of time during which the country has been occupied and upon the character of the various waves of settlement that have swept through it, and partly upon the nature of the ground. If the topographical aspect of a region or the character of the population and language spoken within it changes materially there will be a corresponding alteration in the name cover. This alteration, however, is likely to be exceedingly slow. European experience has shown that a place name, once established, is often even more enduring than a nation or a language (1929, 141).

Thomas Waterman made similar observations about the durability of place names, specifically in indigenous contexts in the western United States: "Old place names are extraordinarily likely to persist even through migrations and conquests, when the spoken language shifts and one tongue is replaced by another. Thus place names remain as puzzles and conundrums for new generations" (1922, 176). Waterman elaborated on this latter point:

> The *meaning* of Indian names… must remain in many cases a matter of some uncertainty. There is a probability of error which cannot be precisely measured. This is true, for the matter, as regards the place names of all countries and peoples. Place names often come down from a hoary antiquity, and the original meaning is often not known to the latter-day people who live in the region (Waterman 1922, 176).

Chief Roger William described to me the struggle of trying to disentangle some older Tŝilhqot'in place names:

> That whole area there, *Tl'etsinged.* You can't really translate it, it's almost like you put a whole bunch of meanings into one word. So it's not a real Chilcotin [word]… it means a whole bunch of things (personal comm. 2021).

Tl'etsinged evoked for Chief Roger images of poplar trees in an open area. However, even though he is a fluent Tŝilhqot'in speaker, it was not possible for him to pull the separate words apart in order to explain why that was the case. He mused over how place names like these may have come about:

> Maybe a person explains an area, and they decided to just say one word to it. And explaining all these things that happened there becomes this one word that everybody [knows]. Like, "oh, we know where that place is," you know? Even when you're naming someone, *Nezulhtsin*, one of the warriors, *Nezulhtsin* like, what is… it doesn't mean anything to me if I were trying to figure out what is a '*Nezulhtsin*'… (R. William, personal comm. 2021)

Teasing apart the multiple lexical meanings in some compound place and personal names like *Tl'etsinged* and *Nezulhtsin* will always come with a degree of uncertainty, but the act of *trying* to tease the words apart presents an important way that Tŝilhqot'in engage with their place names, opening a productive space for negotiating and renegotiating many different kinds of meanings. Here again, Chief Roger described to me how the compounding of words into a place name evokes for him notions of ancestral intentionality:

> Me, knowing my language and just trying to understand what has been said. Like *Dasiqox* [Taseko River]. *Dasiqox* it's almost—you know there's a river in there [because of *-qox*]. *Dasi-* is, ah, it almost sounds like um, glacier, but not quite. But it's just how they put it together… some elder, some old timer or…some *ʔesggidan* [ancestor] person

> put whatever happened in that one area into one word. And sometimes our elders, they don't know those stories (R. William, personal comm. 2021).

Late William Myers cared deeply about trying to understand the intended meanings behind etymologically obscure Tŝilhqot'in place names. In our conversation for this research, we tried to unpack some of these themes together:

> There's one place not too far here… called *Tl'eh Gunchagh*. We just don't know, you sort of kind of think about it, maybe it means the area. You know your belt, *tl'eh*. Yeah, *tl'eh* is here, around your waist, *tl'eh*. *Tl'eh Gunchagh…* Yeah, big area there [*gunchagh* meaning 'big area']. And the old-timers… I hear them talking. They talk about a pasture not too far away where he said he rode right around it. He said *tl'eh naghdeẑiyeh*, it means 'he went right around'… we must have lost quite a bit of words already, he was saying, heh? From way back… when I was a kid we'd go by there and just don't know when it was named, heh? Quite a bit of those place names go way back, I don't know when (W. Myers, personal comm. 2021).

William reflected deeply on place name meanings and origins, perhaps more than anyone I know, which is why I took it to heart when he told me that "sometimes a name is just a name." I asked him about the place name *Jigwedijan*, called colloquially Popcorn Cabin (Meadow).

> William: There's some words or place names, like *Jigwedijan*, that's where the linguists kinda would be helpful, because they study the language quite a bit, heh?" And, we asked my mom too. And I asked for that one, *Jigwedijan*, 'It's just a place name!' Don't want to think about it, heh? Like ah, starting of something, I guess—*Jigwedijan*. Like if I say *ji?adest'in*—'I started working', or something. And ah, I don't know about that *–jan* part, pretty hard. There's another one, *-jan*, heh? In Eagle Lake area? *Ŝanagwedijan*.
>
> Shane: You mentioned before some of the words have been lost? Do you think that's the reason why they're hard to translate?
>
> William: Yeah I think so. The old people of long ago had a lot of words. That's where the place name came from, heh? And even [another *Yunesît'in* elder], eighty years old… he's still not too young yet, he said [laughing], 'I don't know about lots of names.'
>
> (W. Myers, personal comm. 2021)

When names are etymologically obscure, their lexical meanings collapse into pure denotation and the name becomes its referent. But this depends on whether one is willing to accept that "a

name is just a name," or if their curiosity, creativity, and motivation to understand their ancestors' words drive them on to puzzle-out new theories and interpretations.

It seems to be a common theme that some individuals in indigenous communities show a special fondness for place name discourse—"talking names," as Basso (1996) famously described it (see also Harrington 1916; Tobias 2009). Some obscure names also call out to have their meanings understood. Two of the three largest rivers in Tŝilhqot'in territory—*Dasiqox* (Taseko R.) and *Tŝilhqox* (Chilko/Chilcotin R.)[47]—have obscure etymologies. The sheer weight of these features in the Tŝilhqot'in geographical imagination is enough to bring their etymologies into most discussions of Tŝilhqot'in place name meanings as examples of those that are "too old" to be fully disentangled. The latter, *Tŝilhqox*, carries even more weight as it is at the core of Tŝilhqot'in cultural identity—something reflected in their name for themselves as a people: Tŝilhqot'in 'people of *Tŝilhqox*'. I discussed *Dasiqox* and *Tŝilhqox* with late William Myers:

> Yeah that's pretty hard those. I asked [that same elder] on that one too heh, and he don't know what it means, that *Da-si-qox*. Just don't know why it's named like that. Maybe from way back they knew what it meant, but right now we don't know what it means (W. Myers, personal comm. 2021).
>
> …
>
> William: You know [chuckles] sometimes, yeah people, different people got their own way, I guess. Sometimes you don't agree with it, heh?
>
> Shane: Oh okay.
>
> WM: Yeah, mm-hmm. *Tŝilhqox*. The way I think of it is, ah—I know there's a lot of rivers that are like that, but—*tŝi* is rocks, that river's got lots of rocks. *Tŝilh*, maybe, maybe it's *tŝi belh*…*yeqox*, or something, I don't know.
>
> SD: *Belh*, meaning...?
>
> WM: 'With'. It's going through lots of rocks, anyway. You see just rocks…

[47] The third being *ʔElhdaqox* 'river of sturgeon' (Fraser R.).

SD: And the *be-* just kind of falls off?

WM: Yeah. Sometimes happens with place names like that. Like *Gwedelden-day*, I always think about that one, heh, *Gwedelden-day*. People—my mom talks about it. Her grandmother told her about it, that people used to get married there. People gathered there. They bring their own food, long time ago it was mountain of food, or different food that they bring and they share together, gathering. And it says it's 'on the ground that drums.' They danced right on the ground that drums. *Gwedelden* means its 'drumming sound'; *-day* I don't know, maybe dance? *Ts'anaday* means 'people dance there'. Maybe you put just *–day*, there. *Ts'-gwedelden-day*, maybe, when you think about it, hey?

(personal comm. 2021)

Late William knew Tŝilhqot'in place names better than most and was considered an expert in his language, both spoken and written. It was prudent to trust his judgement with etymologies, but also his judgement about when to embrace uncertainty. Whenever we worked together, William seemed to always have a theory for what obscure place names meant, but he was also always humble, and never asserted that he was sure or even right. When considering place name meanings more broadly, where lexical and associative meanings come into productive interrelationship, it seems to me that embracing rather than trying to 'resolve' etymological obscurity allows for an important opening. In this opening is a space for the negotiation and renegotiation of both lexical and associative meanings.

Folk etymologising

The most important mechanism for these negotiations, I would argue, is the process of folk etymologising. However, folk etymologies have long had a pejorative reputation. Even the very name for such a concept shows some disdain for 'folk' (of the people) interpretations. In the introduction to his revealingly titled, *Folk-etymology: A dictionary of verbal corruptions or words perverted in meaning, by false derivation or mistaken analogy* (1882), Palmer wrote: "By Folk-etymology is meant the influence exercised upon words, both as to their form and meaning,

by the popular use and misuse of them." Palmer's portrayal of folk etymologies as corruptions and perversions is, I think, an uneven and unfair representation of an important meaning-making process.

Early anthropologists like Thomas Waterman (1922) observed how indigenous place names along the west coast of the United States were vulnerable to misinterpretations by both settlers and indigenous peoples themselves. "When people are invited to engage in a search for meaning," wrote Thornton (1997, 215) on Waterman's observations, "they are prone to finding explanations that seem credible, regardless of their basis in fact." "If [folk] etymologies are plausible," Thornton continued, "they tend to replace the more obscure interpretations of names simply because they are more meaningful, or at least more entertaining." Over time, these newly embraced interpretations may result in pronunciation shifts that resonate more with the folk etymologies, further concretising their validity in a kind of positive feedback loop of semantic change (see Sihler 2000).

Folk etymologies are therefore 'wrong' by definition, in the sense that they are not the original lexical meanings of place names, or at least we can never be sure which if any folk etymology might be accurate. We can't say that these are 'true' reflections of ancestral connections with the landscape, but I argue here that the novel associative and emotive meanings evoked by folk etymologies are nonetheless valid and insightful, and also represent an important process rather than only products. Tŝilhqot'in folk etymologies for obscure place names come to resonate with contemporaneous Tŝilhqot'in relationships with and understandings of their landscape, history, and cultural identity, among other things.

My assertion that folk etymologising of Tŝilhqot'in place names should not be seen as a pejorative process but a productive one can even be exemplified with a colonial place name.

Farwell Canyon is a narrow section of the lower *Tŝilhqox* (Chilko/Chilcotin River) canyon known for being an excellent place to dipnet for salmon. Dipnetting is a kind of fishing used in narrow canyons where migrating salmon are forced to swim up the sides of the river to avoid the stronger currents in the middle, making them easier targets for fishermen who stand often precariously on the rocks at the edge of the river with long-handled nets that they dip in and out of the river in a long, slow, stroking pattern.

Farwell Canyon was named after an early-twentieth century owner of the surrounding Pothole Ranch, Gordon "Mike" Farwell (Sale 2020). Although the Tŝilhqot'in name for the canyon is *Nagwentled* 'place of landslides', many Tŝilhqot'in use the colonial name when speaking English. But instead of calling the place 'Farwell Canyon,' I've only ever heard Tŝilhqot'in say 'Farewell,' or 'Farewell Canyon.' As a Tŝilhqot'in from *Tl'esqox* once explained to me, it's named 'Farewell' because if you fall in the river when you're dipnetting there, "it's farewell!" Many people have tragically been lost here in this way, and tying oneself off while dipnetting is today seen as important as wearing a seatbelt. Permanent concrete structures and tying-off anchor points have been installed here to improve safety. 'Farwell Canyon' is not a Tŝilhqot'in place name, but 'Farewell Canyon' might be—it is a folk etymology that reflects and informs Tŝilhqot'in understandings of, and connections to, this place.

Below is an excerpt from my conversation with Russell Myers Ross (personal comm. 2021), who provided a great deal of insight on the topic of etymology as a whole:

> Russell: I always remember [one *Xeni Gwet'in* elder], because people try to break things down, too, but I remember—I think he had theories about some of the names. Although there's always a little bit of disagreement, here and there, but I always thought it was neat. He was trying to theorise *Dasiqox* as… *tu-tŝi-qox...* so it's like water-rock-river… But then I think that there were some elders that were like, "yeah, no."
>
> Shane: Do you think it matters what it originally translated to, or meant?

> Russell: I mean, yeah. I always think that there's part of our philosophy that's like—sometimes you just don't know, and you should just acknowledge that you might not ever know. I always find it's worth talking about, or trying to think about connecting stories to try to understand it better because, yeah, I mean even aside from place names there's stories where I might have heard it from three or four different people and I have to piece together a story. And you have to piece together those forms of knowledge, I think, because somebody might leave a sentence out or somebody might forget about one thing. I always feel like we're still reconstructing a lot of things, but I think it's also just important to be open about it and go like, "I might not know, but it could be *this*." Sometimes I hear people that are really definitive about what it is, and sometimes, you're kinda like "yeah, were you there a thousand years ago to know?" Not always, but yeah. So I do think that it is important to kind of like reconstruct things, but also be mindful that it might not be exactly that. And I think it's all part of cross-referencing to build upon a knowledge base.

Russell's comments exemplify how Tŝilhqot'in care very much that place name etymologies are accurately documented and represented, but in cases where etymologies may remain indefinitely obscure, embracing uncertainty leaves the door open to new etymological possibilities.

Turning back to Palmer's (1890) *Folk-etymology*, we can see a clear contrast in tone when it comes to approaching uncertainty of place name meanings, or the meanings of really any word:

> In every department of knowledge a fertile source of error may be found in the reluctance generally felt to acknowledge one's ignorance. Few men have the courage to say "I don't know." If a subject comes up on which we have no real information, we make shift with our imagination to eke out what is wanting in our knowledge, and with unconscious insincerity let "may be" serve in the place of "is" (Palmer 1890, vii).

Palmer clearly saw folk etymologies as corrupted words deriving from unconscious ignorance and the unwillingness to embrace uncertainty. Yet as Russell and others above have shown clearly, Tŝilhqot'in folk etymologies emerge from a meaningful engagement with language, historical narratives, and the landscape, all situated within a healthy uncertainty and a respect for others' interpretations, family traditions, and insights.

Opinions vary on what obscure place names mean, but opinions also vary on what *most* place names mean. As we saw in Chapter 3, Tŝilhqot'in place names vary widely in pronunciation, form, spelling, and orthographic representation, and from these variations come many folk etymological interpretations. Respect for a diversity of names comes with a respect for a diversity of interpretations. Standing from the outside as a non-Tŝilhqot'in, I don't have a grandmother who taught me place name meanings, and so I can't lean into my own familial knowledge traditions in order to make sense of the plurality of place names, pronunciations, and interpretations. Following knowledge protocols, Tŝilhqot'in often begin their description of a place name meaning with a disclaimer they are only presenting what they learned from their family, and that they respect how other families understand things in different ways. The way that Russell, above, noted that navigating different interpretations is "all part of cross-referencing to build upon a knowledge base" (personal comm. 2021) aptly describes, I think, how many Tŝilhqot'in situate their own knowledge within their broader community and nation.

Happenings

One of the most salient 'meanings' that Tŝilhqot'in place names have, outside of the etymological, is through their connection with happenings of various kinds and at various locations across the Tŝilhqot'in cultural landscape. In nearly every conversation I've had with Tŝilhqot'in about the meanings of their place names, themes of *happening* emerge. Tŝilhqot'in name places because something happened, or happens, there. These happenings vary in kind and significance, but always present to name users a time-transcendent connection to place. As Tuan (1991, 688) commented, naming has "the creative power to call something into being, to render the invisible visible, to impart a certain character to things." This is certainly the case with Tŝilhqot'in place names as they reveal connections to happenings of the past, present, and future.

Use and significance

While working on the Pacific coast of the United States, anthropologist Thomas Waterman (1922) was astonished by the vast numbers and densities of indigenous place names:

> These names often refer to the very minute places in the topography. Indeed, it may be stated as a rule that there is a large series of names for small places, with astonishingly few names for the large features of the region. A special name will often be given to a rock no larger than a kitchen table while, on the other hand, what we consider the large and important features of a region's geography often have no names at all (Waterman 1922, 178).

In observing that this was a common phenomenon among other indigenous groups, Waterman concluded that these patterns must be a reflection of indigenous thought and expression—"One may perhaps regard it as a cultural index to some degree" (176).

Having made similar observations with Tŝilhqot'in place names, I thought to inquire further about it in a conversation I had with Bella Alphonse in 2021:

Shane: I wonder why certain places don't get named. You know there might be a tiny little swamp and it has a name, but another lake, like Salt Lake, I haven't been able to find a name for it. It's a big lake but I've never heard a name for it.

Bella: Chances are the names might have been forgotten.

Shane: What about places that just maybe never had a name, was that possible?

Bella: Well if the place isn't being used, it wouldn't have a name.

(personal comm. 2021)

Both of Bella's comments here strike me as deeply insightful. It was so matter-of-fact to Bella that a place wouldn't need a name if it wasn't a used place. I asked late William Myers the same question:

Shane: Why would some places get names and other places don't get names?

> William: Ah, I don't know. Maybe, maybe some place gets used a lot, maybe heh? Like they camp out, hunt, or something. Maybe yeah, some place name from way back, and later on when the Hudson Bay Company came, and then they got people to trap. They probably used a lot of areas, because the fur was all over, heh? And yeah all winter they were out in the bush, trapping. That's what they say, heh. You hear those stories. You trap in winter time, come Christmas time they come back down, and then after Christmas they go back out in the bush.
>
> (personal comm. 2021)

A little later in our conversation I asked William if preservation of place names was important to him. "Yeah I think so," he responded, "You have to preserve them, and…" William paused, then turned the topic back to use. "Our people used that land and they named places. Wherever they make use of the land, got place names." I think William's response here shows *why* it is important to preserve place names. Preserving the names means preserving memory of Tŝilhqot'in happenings on their territory across time.

Several other Tŝilhqot'in who I spoke with for this research shared a similar sentiment connecting place names with use, and the significance that comes with use. When I asked her what Tŝilhqot'in place names mean to her, Marilyn Charleyboy said, "It means that our people resided in those areas, because place names mean that people were *there*, using that land" (personal comm. 2021). Joyce Charleyboy expanded on what it means for a place to be useful:

> Places that we have within the Chilcotin all have a unique—there's uniqueness to each of them, based on what [the ancestors] were doing in their year round ceremonies or year round activities that they had… Each place had their own unique way of providing for Tŝilhqot'in people (personal comm. 2021).

For Tŝilhqot'in, places become significant for many reasons, but the utility of a place as part of a subsistence lifeway has long been a key factor. However, as Bella notes above, the reverse isn't necessarily true since we can never know how many place names and even places themselves

have faded out of memory over many generations. While all named places are therefore by definition significant, we can never assume than an unnamed place is without significance.[48]

Themes that frame Tŝilhqot'in place names as indicators of utility and significance are commonly connected with some activity, as Chief Roger William explained to me:

> A place name is an action word—something happened there. Some movement happened there, or someone did something, or some animal did something… It's an action word (R. William, personal comm. 2021).

By 'action words' Chief Roger isn't suggesting that place names are themselves verbs, although most do include verbs. Instead, he is pointing to how they are words that evoke actions—occurrences, events, *happenings*. He continued:

> Throughout time there's [been] significant areas that people would recognise as a place—that it's significant. It could be that a family used to hunt and fish there, or trap. They would give it a name. There are areas that most likely people are traveling through that are not significant enough for a name unless maybe somebody got hurt there, somebody got killed there, maybe a bear attacked them, or whatever. Then they'll give that place a name. And sometimes even when that happens they don't name it. It could be an area that's kinda used often. It's recognisable, important. Could be a trail. It could be a campsite. It could be a hunting site, fishing site—those places would kinda be given a name. And I'm sure there's names we totally don't remember, none of our elders ever heard (R. William, personal comm. 2021).

The presence of a Tŝilhqot'in place name always signifies happening in one form or another, regardless of whether those happenings are referenced in the name itself or not. Geraldine Elkins described to me that places are named because of "the activities people did there" (personal comm. 2021). "Like up at *Tŝ'iqi Ch'elats'elht'i,*"[49] she continued, "that's something that

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[48] Having extensively reviewed BC's digital repository of archaeological sites (Remote Access to Archaeological Data, or RAAD) across Tŝilhqot'in territory, and having worked on archaeology crews to record new archaeological sites in the territory, I can attest that there are many times more places of past dwelling and occupancy—places that would surely have had names—than known Tŝilhqot'in place names. Further, it is also clear that the disruptive influences of colonialism have eroded Tŝilhqot'in traditional knowledge, including place name knowledge and knowledge of important places (Tŝilhqot'in National Government 2022).

[49] *Tŝ'iqi Ch'elats'elht'i* '(where the) women were slain' (no colonial name).

happened up there… where all the women were murdered." "A huge event," added Marilyn Charleyboy, "that happened to the people."

Specific happenings

Often Tŝilhqot'in place names do directly reference happenings that occur in, or in association with, these places. Names speak often simultaneously to individual events in the past and to recurring events and activities across time.

Tŝilhqot'in place names referencing individual events are common. Examples include *Deni Tishnilʔad* '(where a) person died in the water' (Punkutlaenkut Lake), and *Ya Deni Ghadadenilhʔaz* '(where) people were infested with lice' (Dome Mountain Meadow). These names are often commemorative in tone and thus stand as monuments or memorials, implicating cultural or spiritual protocols for recurring visitation. Some names referring to individual events connect with stories of everyday happenings, causing me to wonder why such mundane events are worthy of commemoration as a place name. As Chief Roger described above, sometimes it takes a significant event for a Tŝilhqot'in place name to come about, while other times it could be a minor incident—there isn't a formula.

An example is *Tlaŝ Tats'aghilhghiz* 'bladder of fat lost in the water,' referring to a story of when a woman threw a bag full of freshly rendered deer fat into a small lake, out of spite, so that others would stop pestering her to share. Late Herbert Jeff explained to me another name with an equally mundane tone:

> *Tsa Chighats'eqwezlah*.[50] That's a little lake there, eh? At one time, when people were poor, they sold hides year round. Then that guy was trying to get a beaver, and then it went in a den there, and he dug around after that beaver, to kill it. That's why it's called that (personal communication, 2021).

[50] I haven't heard a direct English translation for *Tsa Chighats'eqwezlah*.

Why such a minor event has been memorialised with a place name while countless others have not is unclear to me, but I would suspect that it is a combination of something resonant and timeless in the anecdote, perhaps a moral teaching or a reminder of how things used to be, as well as the practicality of having an already-named landmark along what has become an otherwise uniform stretch of BC's Highway 20. In any case, the presence of a place name points to *something* significant.

Basso (1996, 50) observed that Western Apache place names that call on historical tales were used to "shoot" social delinquents and impress upon them "the undesirability of improper behavior and alerting them to the punitive consequences of further misconduct." I'm sure this would resonate with Tŝilhqot'in readers. Often I've been told that historical narratives are used by parents, elders, or others in the community as a means of subtly calling attention to someone's misdeeds. It has been explained to me that Tŝilhqot'in are often not predisposed to calling someone out on their bad behaviour, but would instead wait for a more appropriate time to call that person over and share a story with them. It is up to the recipient of the story to puzzle out which of their actions was being called into question, and which lessons (or merely the presentation of expected consequences) should be gleaned.

Despite these powerful connections between place names, stories, and teachings, I can't help but think that a place name like *Tish Ts'enindenz* '(someone) farted underwater', for example, stuck around purely for comedic value. Marilyn Charleyboy mused about this in our conversation in 2021: "Thinking about, you know, the storytelling and how it's tied to those places, you know [the name] would go along with that story. Or if somebody was telling a story, and they would tell a funny story about something *happening* to somebody at a certain area, and that place would be named that." Surely many place names have come about through the

memory of everyday events that don't signify anything more profound than, "this is where that funny thing happened." These names need not evoke stories that implicate the entire Tŝilhqot'in Nation either, and perhaps only one family, or a group of siblings, may coin and use a place name because it connects with an event in their lives that was worthy of remembering.

Driving by *Tsa Chighats'eqwezlah* with Joyce Charleyboy more recently, I asked her why such a story might have stuck around as the name of this little pond. "Probably because it's the only thing that ever happened there!" she said, and we both laughed.

Recurring happenings

There are many Tŝilhqot'in place names that refer to individual events but also many others that speak to recurring ones. Some recurring events happened within discrete historical time frames whereas others have a more continuous recurrence. For example, *ʔAgad Tl'edeghint'ih* '(where) Agatha cut hay' (Agatha's Meadow) is a place name pointing to one woman's recurring use of that place as a hay meadow, for a period of time. Another example is *Suʔanats'aghdelʔinsh* 'one dresses while over there' (colloquially, Dress-up Mountain), which refers to a place along the road from Anaham Meadow to more remote hay meadows further north. Bella Alphonse explained to me the meaning of the name:

> Bella: It's a pretty high mountain, and once you're done haying, like, 'you've been bushed.'
>
> Shane: You've been bushed! Is that what you call it? [chuckles]
>
> Bella: 'You've been bushed', you're not at your best. So once you go over, heading back down, you go over the mountain. At the foot of that mountain that's where they stopped and they would freshen up, put on their best clothes before they get to Anaham Meadow. That's why they call it *Suʔanats'aghdelʔinsh*. And then the younger generation they would tend to say *Sunats'aghdelʔinsh*—shortening [it]… *Suʔanats'aghdelʔinsh*, 'one dresses while over there.'

Su?anats'aghdel?insh points to a recurring activity that some families practiced for a certain period of time. While changing economic and social circumstances have resulted in the practice itself losing relevance, the name has remained relevant to Tŝilhqot'in today in how it sheds quite a lot of light on the everyday life of many Tŝilhqot'in families through that *?undidanx* (recent history) period of time. In this sense, names like these can be understood as commemorative—not commemorative of getting dressed up nicely or of cutting wild hay, but of a bygone way of life.

Place names that refer to subsistence resources also point to a recurring happening—the harvest of those resources, both in the generic and the specific. They also point, simply, to the recurring growth or presence of certain useful plants or animals in those places—non-human happenings. Such place names are usually in the form of '(object) *Gunlin*'—where *gunlin* (also denasalised as *gulin*) means 'where there is' or 'is there.' Some examples include *Ŝul Gunlin* 'where there is cow parsnip'; *Gex Lhan Gunlin* 'where there are many snowshoe hare' (an area near Big Creek/Fletcher Lake); and *Dek'any-chugh Gunlin* 'where there are large rainbow trout' (Taharti Lake). In addition to pointing out the recurring presence of useful resources, these names also indicate that these resources were of notable sizes, volumes, or densities. In other words, these names speak to where Tŝilhqot'in ancestors found to be such good places for harvesting resources that they were worthy of naming for this reason.[51] This, of course, informs present and future generations' engagement with these places for similar reasons, promoting a further continuation of these recurring happenings.

[51] Places like *Ŝul Gunlin* that point out a useful resource also describe the visible character of a place. This is less the case for *Dek'any-chugh Gunlin* because the presence of large rainbow trout in the nearby lake does not describe how the place looks. In this way some names that point to subsistence happenings also stand as descriptive names for landmarks. A few other place names take similar form to the above but stand solely as landmarks as they do not point to useful resources. For example *Tŝi Gunlin* 'where there are rocks' and *Tisht'an Gunlin* 'where there are leaves in the water' stand more as colourful landscape descriptions.

Other individual and recurring happenings of non-human animals are also referenced in Tŝilhqot'in place names. An example is *Chezîch'ed* 'place of/with moulting birds' (Chezacut/Chilcotin Lake and area). This name may indicate 'use' in that moulting birds are much easier to hunt when moulting because they can't fly, or it may indicate a place to avoid at certain times of year in order to promote stronger populations of huntable ducks and geese in the future.

Place names that denote past happenings also connote spaces for continued happenings. A named place where something happened in the past thus becomes a space for cumulative activities and happenings across time. *Deni Dazîtŝan* 'where the people died' (Graveyard Valley) is a clear example of this. The name recalls a historic battle between Tŝilhqot'in and the *St'át'imc* Nation (*ʔEŝch'ed Deni*, in Tŝilhqot'in) before European colonisation. Those who died in this battle were buried there, high in the mountains near the Tŝilhqot'in-*St'át'imc* boundary. In 2003, parties from both nations traveled to *Deni Dazîtŝan* by horseback to honour their losses, re-mark the burials, and to quite literally 'bury the hatchet' in a formal gesture of peace. Four years later, they worked together again to erect a monument to mark the site, and again in July 2024 both nations sent delegations to upgrade the monument and commemorate their shared heritage. The place name *Deni Dazîtŝan* therefore points not only to events of the past but to contemporary recurring visits to that place—new and ongoing happenings that are shaped by the name as well as the other elements in the broader heritage assemblage of that place.

While many Tŝilhqot'in place names linked to happenings have as their references the happening or occurrence itself, sometimes this is not the case. A named place may still reflect a happening without it being referenced directly in the name. Joyce Charleyboy shed light on this sometimes complex relationship between reference and occurrence:

> When our ancestors named places, something *occurred* there… there's different names for different places. It's something that occurred in that place…
>
> Like Potato Mountain, you know, they call it Potato Mountain. And then we have Goat Mountain, Huckleberry Mountain… Sometimes it ties back to the creation story, sometimes it ties back to what occurred over the last how many years these areas have been used, you know. I'm trying to remember the place going down to the Homathko where you have to stay quiet—there's a Chilcotin name for it where when you cross you have to stay quiet. Things happened in that area, it's the reason why it's named that, you know. And so those are some of the ties that we have back to places, is what happened there.
>
> …It's something that I can't explain. Things *occurred*. There's certain places that our women… went to give birth. There's a certain place that they went because they believed that to bring a child into the world the energy has to be positive. Because *ʔEtsu* [grandmother] was a midwife she always believed that whatever that child is being born into is what they're going to carry, and so you have to have the most positive energy around them when they're coming into the world. So Canoe Crossing was one of the birth sites (J. Charleyboy, personal comm. 2021).

First, Joyce affirmed that Tŝilhqot'in place naming is deeply linked to occurrences, then she described how many place names are direct references to these occurrences, using Potato Mountain, Huckleberry Mountain, and Goat Mountain as examples.

Notably, these are colonial or English colloquial names for these places rather than the Tŝilhqot'in. There is a lot to unpack with this. When speaking in English many Tŝilhqot'in, like Joyce here, will often use the English-language names instead of switching to Tŝilhqot'in phonology mid-sentence because it can make for an awkward way to speak. However, the example names that Joyce uses here show that the specifics of the name's reference can sometimes be less relevant than the occurrences that they represent. Potato Mountain is the colloquial English-language name that Tŝilhqot'in and other locals use for what is gazetted as "Potato Range." In the BC Geographical Names Office online records for this feature, the origin notes read:

> Potato Mountains adopted 6 May 1924. Form of name changed to Potato Range in the 19th Report of the Geographic Board of Canada, 31 March 1928.

> So named because the Indians here dig the roots of the tubers Claytonia, which they call potatoes.

In Tŝilhqot'in the place name is *Chonoẑ-ch'ed*, or *Tŝimol-ch'ed*. Both of these names are difficult to translate because while the suffix /*-ch'ed*/ means 'atop' and is often translated as 'place'. The *chonoẑ* or *tŝimol* roots have no agreed-upon meanings since they are considered to be such old place names that the language is too archaic to disentangle. However, in both cases it is clear that the name does not mean 'potato mountain', which in Tŝilhqot'in would be *Sunt'iny Xadalgwenlh* 'mountain of/with wild potatoes', or perhaps *Sunt'iny Gunlin* 'where there are wild potatoes'. Only the English name, which I would guess was coined by English-speaking Tŝilhqot'in in the early twentieth century, refers to the harvesting of *sunt'iny* at this place. For Joyce, this name was still a suitable example of how Tŝilhqot'in place names connect with occurrences, including traditional harvesting of *sunt'iny*.

Many English/Anglo-colonial place names are connected with Tŝilhqot'in happenings. Huckleberry Mountain similarly refers to the Tŝilhqot'in harvesting of huckleberries here, but the two Tŝilhqot'in-language names recorded for this mountain, *Tach'i Dinlhgwenlh* 'mountain (of/at) water birch' (or perhaps 'bay mountain'), and *Tŝi Nadilʔah* 'standing rock' or 'rocky point', don't reference huckleberries (*selhchugh*).

Joyce's other example of Canoe Crossing sheds even more light on this complex situation. Canoe Crossing is the English-language name Tŝilhqot'in use for a stretch of *Tŝilhqox* (Chilko R.) near its source at *Tŝilhqox Biny* (Chilko L.). Here the river widens out, flowing slower and shallower than both up and downstream. This made it a safer place to cross the river, which historically was done by dugout canoe. However, the Tŝilhqot'in name for this place is *Biny Gwechugh*, which means 'big lake', referring to how the water widens out here. Thus,

neither the English reference nor the Tŝilhqot'in reference the occurrence that came to Joyce's mind as a suitable location for birthing babies because of the positive energy of the place, but they both still reference Tŝilhqot'in use of the place as a river crossing.

These examples show that the multiple occurrences, happenings, or events which themselves may not be referenced in the name are still deeply associated with it. Joyce clarified this to me:

> It doesn't have to necessarily be—how would you put it? It's [about] usage as well. Like how our people are using it to this day, even if they may have forgotten the Chilcotin name for it. Some of them are using English names, right? But you also have to look at the usage. People may not know the Chilcotin name for a certain area, but they know that they've gone there for—their families have been using it for generations, and can go back there. They can give you an English name for it and why they go back there. That's another tie to the land (J. Charleyboy, personal comm. 2021).

In these ways, the presence of a name, whatever the name, remains an important indicator of place significance. These notions raise important questions about what a Tŝilhqot'in place name is, and whether it can be in another language (see Doddridge 2021). Is a place name Tŝilhqot'in because it was named by a Tŝilhqot'in person? Because it references Tŝilhqot'in people or events? Because it reflects Tŝilhqot'in histories?

At one point, I asked late William Myers about the name *ʔAwi Gwedaghint'ih* 'where *ʔAwi* (Howie) cut hay.' Since cutting wild meadow grass for making hay was a common practice for Tŝilhqot'in engaged in the ranching economy of the late 19th and early 20th centuries—well after European contact—this name is clearly newer than most. I wanted to know if it was still considered a 'traditional' place name, and William assured me that it was. With that in mind, I asked William if that would also be true of even newer place names, and he told me a story about a name he had come up with in his lifetime:

> You know people talk about a place and then they don't know where you're talking about. You have a name for it. That's what we did before. We want to make money, we sell—we usually rope them, heh? Wild horses. Quite a while back. And we want to talk about where we've been that day, and we named some places just so everybody knows where we're talking about, heh? And that's what we did. I guess that's the only way to communicate, heh? "I roped one horse, and it's tied up in the bush beside this lake." And we name the lake, sometimes we name it just, I guess, [to] know where it is. Maybe I rope it and tie it up in the bush, one place, and they want me to go this way next day to rope some more horses. But this guy wants to get that horse, and he'll know where to go. Yeah.
>
> And then we'll talk together and we know where we're talking about, heh? There was one [frozen] lake—I don't know what happened there, but [there was] a baby crib right on the ice, heh? I don't know what happened, really—[maybe] somebody was moving by and that fell off. And it was there. And it slowly sank every year—you could see it sometimes on top of the ice, you could see it sticking out [chuckles]. Called it 'Crib Lake' (W. Myers, personal comm. 2021).

The small lake hadn't needed a name until it did, and Crib Lake was as good as any to identify the place for its purpose. William recalled that there was one non-native wrangler with their group who didn't speak Tŝilhqot'in, hence the name being in English. There are performative dimensions to how this naming occurred—a place needed a name for a certain group of people, and for a certain reason, and thus it was given one that was agreeable to those people in that context. In this case, Crib Lake has since fallen out of usage because William and his buddies no longer chases wild horses there, and nobody else has started using that place. The lake no longer needed a name, but one day it may again.

William's story about Crib Lake gives us a lot of insight into how many Tŝilhqot'in place names have likely come into being, and for what purpose. Place names enable people to communicate about the specifics of the landscape. They arise when they're needed and can coalesce around the most mundane references. Yet as Geraldine Elkins put it, "a name comes with a story, and a name comes with a purpose" (personal communication, 2021), and that purpose is often to identify a place of significance so that it may be referred to and engaged with.

This helps to further clarify why the use of English-language or otherwise colonial place names need not interfere with the 'Tŝilhqot'in-ness' of a place name (see also Doddridge 2021), because the connection to place is maintained despite the language shift. If ancient Tŝilhqot'in place names have been forgotten—many of which have, and for many reasons including disconnections from territory brought on through colonisation—this is not enough to sever Tŝilhqot'in connections to place. It can be okay when a colonial place name becomes useful for referring to Tŝilhqot'in places, and thus become associated with all of the important occurrences and happenings in those places—past, present, and future. The camp sites, the berry patches, and the ancestors' continued presence in these places do not disappear when a place name is forgotten. Therefore, as I have argued before (Doddridge 2021), embracing the complexity, plurality, and multiplicity of indigenous toponymy does not undermine the cultural relevance of indigenous place names with Anglo-colonial entanglements, it reaffirms them by highlighting cultural continuity and sustained connections to place and territory *in spite of* colonisation.

Place names and territoriality

I asked Marilyn Charleyboy and her sister Geraldine Elkins what Tŝilhqot'in place names mean to them. "It means that our people resided in those areas," responded Marilyn, "because place names mean that people were *there*, using that land" (personal comm. 2021). "Place names tie us to our traditional territories," responded Geraldine, "we have names for all the places that our people lived in" (personal comm. 2021). As I showed above, these responses from Marilyn and Geraldine point to the connection between Tŝilhqot'in place names and happenings, but they also reveal another important dimension of meaning in Tŝilhqot'in toponymy: while Tŝilhqot'in place names signify ancestral presences at various important named places and features, when taken in aggregate, these connections to places become connections to *territory*.

Territoriality is an important theme in Tŝilhqot'in place name discourses. However, it is so fraught with political overtones that it, when centred, can overshadow subtler aspects of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy that also deserve to be brought to light. My goal with this section, therefore, is not to present a critical analysis of the intersections between territoriality and the politics of place naming, but instead to point to some of these themes, as they emerged from my research, in order to elucidate these interconnections. In this way, I leave some space for future work to build upon.

Place names as evidence

The connections between Tŝilhqot'in place names and ancestral use and occupancy of territory is one that is readily coopted in legal contexts. When Marilyn Charleyboy said that the presence of a place name "means that our people resided in those areas," and "that people were *there*, using that land" (personal comm. 2021), she is speaking about intergenerational connections to territory while simultaneously making a strong legal argument. Legal notions of indigenous 'use' and 'occupancy' have important bearing on Aboriginal rights and title in Canada (Cumming and Mickenburg 1972; Elliot 1985; McIlwraith and Cormier 2015) and beyond (*e.g.,* Hemming and Rigney 2012). In this context, place names can be evoked as a form of oral history *evidence* (see Campo 2008) in various land claims processes in order to show how indigenous peoples' connections to their territories precede Crown/colonial assertions of sovereignty over otherwise 'unoccupied' lands.

As we saw above in Chapter 4, explicit terminology of 'evidence' was employed by Lulua and Setah (1996) in their description of Tŝilhqot'in place names in the cultural heritage overview report for the Ts'il?os Provincial Park:

> The place name sites are of significance to our ancestors and provide a history of sites used for cultural purposes. This is evidence that sites were historically used by our ancestors, sites chosen primarily for their plentiful food supply, material structures, and medicine purposes. The place names reflect history associated with myths, legends, descriptions of the land and its environment, animals and events. A few sites have been recorded as historical by archaeological studies (Lulua and Setah 1996, 8).

I think it is important to return to this excerpt in order to highlight how it represents what has become a blurring of lines between cultural (place names as heritage) and legal/political values. First Nations like the Tŝilhqot'in have been fighting for the recognition of their inherent rights, title, and jurisdiction over their traditional territories since colonisation began in their respective territories. For many First Nations, this fight continues at negotiations tables and in court rooms which require substantial amounts of 'evidence' in various forms. This endless fight to prove their pre-colonial presence to colonial authorities has coloured indigenous discourses of their history, geography, culture, and heritage. As a result, terms like 'evidence' and 'proof', as well as other underlying legal notions like 'strength of claim', have become deeply entangled with other cultural dimensions of Tŝilhqot'in toponymic discourse.

Working among Inuit in the Canadian north, geographer Ludger Müller-Wille (1989-90, 53) described place names as "proof to the integration and appropriation of space into the environmental perception of distinct cultures"—a description that neatly links the cultural, cognitive, and legal domains at play within indigenous toponymies. "This perception is expressed through oral and written traditions," continued Müller-Wille, "[b]oth attest to the validity of place names and thus represent aspects of territoriality and sovereignty." Indigenous place names, therefore, are not only elements of cultural heritage and environmental perception that *can* be used as evidence in indigenous land claims, they provide a uniquely *good* form of evidence by revealing, through their mere presence and through their lexical meanings, the magnitude of depth that these connections to territory hold.

It is precisely because they are a powerful form of evidence that Tŝilhqot'in place names played an important role in the Tŝilhqot'in case for Aboriginal title. According to case law in BC, in order for a First Nation to prove that the Aboriginal title to their lands (as issued by the 1763 *Royal Proclamation*) has not been 'extinguished,' they need to pass the three-part legal test established in the Supreme Court of Canada's 1997 *Delgamuukw* decision. First, they have to prove that the Nation occupied the land in question prior to the European assertion of sovereignty, which in the Tŝilhqot'in context was 1846, at the signing of the Oregon Treaty. Second, the Nation has to prove that they have continuously occupied the land since pre-sovereignty times. And finally, the Nation has to prove that they exclusively occupied the land, with no competing claims from neighbouring First Nations. The Tŝilhqot'in successfully passed this test in 2007 through the famous case at the Supreme Court of BC, *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia* (2007 BCSC 1700). The full declaration of Aboriginal title would have to come from the Supreme Court of Canada, which it did on the 26th of June, 2014 (*Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*, 2014 SCC 44). This was the first time Aboriginal title had been declared in Canadian history, and set an important precedent for other First Nations to follow.

Throughout the Supreme Court of BC trial, an incredible amount of evidence had been brought to bear on the question of whether or not the test for Aboriginal title would be met in the Tŝilhqot'in claim. In order to contextualise much of this evidence with real places in the claim area, the court relied on Tŝilhqot'in place names. These place names therefore not only served as evidence of pre-sovereignty Tŝilhqot'in occupation in their own right, they also anchored other forms of evidence including oral history testimonies to the land. At least 202 unique Tŝilhqot'in place names were documented and cross referenced throughout the court case, through affidavits, elder testimonies, historical maps, and so on.

This work not only represents a significant contribution to ongoing place name inventorying work at TNG, it shows just how politically powerful indigenous place names can be as a form of legal evidence. However, it is also important to note that it was not only the place names in the *Tsilhqot'in Nation* trial that led to the case being successful. For Tŝilhqot'in and other indigenous groups pursuing recognition of their pre-colonisation territorial title from statist authorities, place names may seem evidence enough. However, as anthropologist Brian Thom highlighted in the Coast Salish context, place names don't often have the potency of land claims evidence that we expect they will:

> Indeed, almost every time I discuss… territorial mapping ideas with elderly and knowledgeable people in the community, the first response I get is 'no, lets show them our place names to prove that we were always here', as local knowledge, history and association with named places is one of the key mnemonics through which connection to place is understood. Unfortunately, as Coast Salish people have discovered after nearly 15 years of stalemated land claims negotiations in the BC Treaty Process, place-name maps have so far had little utility in resolving outstanding issues over land title and indigenous self-government (Thom 2009, 200).

A shortcoming of 'place names as evidence' is similar to other cases where the names are pulled out of their local, traditional, heritage, and cognitive roles (such as the 'connection to place' role mentioned by Thom 2009) in order to serve another often novel process—namely that these more traditional roles become obfuscated. Centring indigenous place names as tools for legal wins and political gains not only overlooks their other important roles, meanings, and values, it may put them at risk. There are many cherished Tŝilhqot'in place names that can be traced to time periods after the Crown's assertion of sovereignty over Tŝilhqot'in territory in 1846. These names, as I detail in Chapter 6, are vibrant reflections of the ongoing historical movements and happenings of the Tŝilhqot'in Nation in spite of colonisation. In these ways, their heritage values are affirmed, sustained, and reinforced. However, these newer names may not be useful as evidence for land claims, and they may even be used by opposing parties to argue

against these claims.[52] They therefore have a tendency to be disregarded or otherwise passed over (not documented or detailed) by lawyers preparing a land claims case. In this way, a continual fight for the return of indigenous land and sovereignty may perpetuate the problematic and false narrative that the histories, happenings, and heritage of indigenous peoples *after* their contact with Europeans is somehow inauthentic, or less important. It is not.

Territory and toponymy among Tŝilhqot'in

Despite the victory that the declaration of Tŝilhqot'in Aboriginal title represents for Tŝilhqot'in today, Tŝilhqot'in territory exists independent of colonial legal constructs like 'Crown sovereignty,' 'Aboriginal title,' and 'strength of claim'. The Tŝilhqot'in word for land, or landscape, is *nen*, and the terms *Tsilhqot'in nen* 'Tŝilhqot'in lands', or *nexwenen* 'our lands', might be the closest translations for 'Tŝilhqot'in territory'. The concept of 'territory' in the Tŝilhqot'in context is not something that I have the space here to unpack, nor was it a theme that emerged from my research data. My understanding of what 'Tŝilhqot'in territory' is, rather than *where* it is, has been largely shaped by the same ontological dimensions that I reviewed earlier in this chapter. Namely, that Tŝilhqot'in territory is the bounded accumulation of all spaces of Tŝilhqot'in ancestral happenings across time—past, present, and future.

The 'bounded' component of this understanding of Tŝilhqot'in territory (I would not presume to define it here) is a nuanced but important one, as my conversation with Joyce Charleyboy revealed:

> I remember learning the boundaries and then learning important place names. Boundaries, they've always been really important to the *Tsilhqot'in* people, not just because of other nations but because of the people coming in—the colonisation… you

[52] This would be a weak argument. Layers of place names are *expected* to accumulate over long stretches of time, just as archaeological materials do.

> can't change boundaries… Because there's history behind those boundaries. There's history of why we are where we're at... (personal comm. 2021).

"As Tŝilhqot'in people," continued Joyce, "place names were very important, because one of the things that we were taught growing up was that if you can't name the place, you don't own it." Joyce isn't speaking of ownership here as in private property, or even explicitly in the terms of Aboriginal title—though there may be some relationship there. Instead, she is describing another form of evidence that Tŝilhqot'in place names are *outside* the legal context. This is more in line with Marilyn and Geraldine's sentiments above, where place names signify that Tŝilhqot'in ancestors resided in and used these places, and it is from this basis that Tŝilhqot'in are tied to their territory. In other words, having and remembering place names reveals a critical link between Tŝilhqot'in and their ancestral territory.

As we have seen above, many place names have been forgotten. I asked Joyce about how this factors into the relationship between place naming and territory:[53]

Shane: What about places where the name has been totally forgotten, or nobody is really sure. Maybe one elder has one idea and a different elder has a totally different idea, and it's basically forgotten. Like [one river], I've heard a few different names for the river itself, but no one seems to be sure, and nobody seems to agree with each other.

Joyce: I think that the reason why with [that river] is because that was a corner of our boundary. As you notice when colonisation happened and [European] people started coming into the area, most of our boundary places were not used anymore. A prime example is toward [one mountain range], you know. There's three different places where our people used to use, and because it was a boundary thing, and the location and how to get to it, we don't use that area anymore. And the same with going into [one particular river], you know, that's another boundary.

Shane: Those are also areas that are harder to access today, because there were no real big roads put through there.

[53] I've removed some of the specifics of these boundary places in order to keep the focus here on the underlying points Joyce is making, and not on the politics of territorial boundaries.

> Joyce: Yeah, so that's why people don't utilise those areas anymore. But I remember—I'm not sure how old I was but my grandmother telling me where me where our boundary was—and she always said, "you gotta remember that. *You* have to teach *your* kids this, because this is the boundary of the Tŝilhqot'in people…"
>
> (personal comm. 2021)

Joyce pointed to the disruptions from colonisation, and in particular from devastating disease epidemics like smallpox, which led her ancestors to regroup away from the more dangerous boundary areas and towards the more defensible centre of the territory. This resulted in disconnections from these boundary places that further contributed to fading memories. These disconnections were then later perpetuated by accessibility issues, as well as mechanisms of colonisation like Indian Reserves, the labour economy, Catholic mass, and Indian residential and day schools, which coerced Tŝilhqot'in to live permanently in certain areas and abandon places on the fringe of the territory.

My conversation with Joyce continued on this topic. She described to me the boundaries that her parents and grandparents had taught her, and how intermarriages between Tŝilhqot'in and neighbouring nations sometimes led to the shared use of certain areas along the borders of Tŝilhqot'in territory, both within and without, but that shared use doesn't imply shared ownership. She continued:

> Our boundaries will never change. Dad drilled that into us. Oh my god, dad was very political with that… there's these boundaries that we just didn't identify now, it's been there for thousands of years for the Chilcotin people—this is who we are. We've had wars because people have tried to push that line…
>
> …
>
> Boundaries, they've always been really important to the Tŝilhqot'in people, not just because of other nations but because of the people coming in—the colonisation. Now we're starting to shift of the next generation where… my kids are saying, "okay mom, we need to know. If anything was to ever happen to you," they said, "dad doesn't say anything, so you're the one that needs to tell us. What is the significance around our boundary, and how do we protect that, and how do we hand that down to our children and

> our grandchildren?" You know and I told them, "it's so simple," I said… I gave them one of dad's maps. I said, "this is a map that dad had forever." I said, "any time that we would ever have a dispute about boundaries he would take it out and say no, this is what it is—you can't change boundaries."…
>
> There's history behind those boundaries. There's history of why we are where we're at. Yes we've had shared areas [outside Tŝilhqot'in territory]. Those are shared areas. They don't *belong* to us, like, we can utilise it, you know (J. Charleyboy, personal comm. 2021).

I asked Joyce why boundaries can't change. She told me that it is because they've been passed down, generation to generation. I have to admit that I didn't really understand this at the time. I'm still at my cognitive limits trying to understand it now, but after more conversations with Joyce as well as other Tŝilhqot'in knowledge keepers I have come to understand that Tŝilhqot'in territoriality is inextricably bound up with ancestral happenings in ontologically specific ways.

As described above, Tŝilhqot'in ancestral presences on the land are continuous. The places where Tŝilhqot'in ancestors lived out their lives remain constant and timeless as happenings permanently imbued onto the land. These happenings, and especially momentous happenings like births, deaths, and tranformations, echo both forward and backwards through time (M. Charleyboy, personal comm. 2021). Happenings also build up across time in places of long dwelling and recurring usage, like villages, camps, *qiyex* (family areas), and subsistence use areas like root grounds, hunting corridors, and fishing sites. And as we've seen, these concentrations of happenings, past, present, and future, are nearly always named places.

Thus when viewed in aggregate Tŝilhqot'in toponymy becomes a kind of heat map of Tŝilhqot'in ancestral presences across the landscape, and since ancestral presences are permanent and unchanging, Tŝilhqot'in connections to these places are also permanent and unchanging. However, knowing that many names have been forgotten especially following colonisation, this notion should not be extrapolated uncritically. Instead of using georeferenced place names as

proxies for territorial ownership—which I think would be an irresponsible thing to do—we can instead think of place names again in archaeological terms. Just like archaeological assemblages are always incomplete but can still provide valuable information about the past, so too can place names be mapped in order to piece together valuable information about peoples and territories in the past. Former chief Russell Myers Ross of *Yunesît'in* described it to me this way:

> When I think about the reasons why you'd want to build research around trying to identify all the place names is mostly just trying to see at a quick glance what our footprint was like, in living memory, with people that are still around and people that are still talking about these places. And just to have a real good scope of where people have gone, where Tŝilhqot'in have been, and then start to piece [together] the history from those places (R. Ross, personal comm. 2021).

Thinking cartographically, spatial toponymic data may offer a much better way to represent indigenous territoriality than land claims boundaries, Indian reserves, or so-called 'language areas,' all of which are low-resolution and overly political constructions. While toponymic spatial data has the potential to be misused as well, I believe it offers a better way to cartographically represent the complexity of relationships between people and territory, within and beyond the Tŝilhqot'in context. Mapping place names can therefore be understood as a form of mapping territory.

Conclusion

Just as Chapter 4 showed how Tŝilhqot'in place names *exist* in ways that extend beyond their linguistic dimensions, I have shown here that their dimensions of meaning are also much deeper than their etymologies. The way that Tŝilhqot'in engage with their place names is a productive space for understanding meanings, and making new ones. Through their mere presence, these place names signify occurrences, uses, doings—happenings of varying degrees of significance—that point to ancestral presences on the land. These presences define and bound

Tŝilhqot'in territory in ways that transcend the passage of time, and extend well beyond the political.

I think that the themes I presented in this chapter also have some important theoretical implications, namely with respect to theory about place names and cognition. As I described in Chapter 2, Binswanger observed that "what we perceive are 'first and foremost' not impressions of taste, tone, smell, or touch, not even things or objects, but meanings" (1963, 114). "To name something," followed Peterson, "is not only to make it shine forth against the infinite background of potentially nameable things, but to group or categorize it, simultaneously, with other phenomena of its broad utility or significance" (2021, 8). Named places are places of significance, as we have seen in the Tŝilhqot'in context throughout this chapter. Stewart's (1975, 4) observation that "the total of potentially discernable places reaches a kind of meaningless 'astronomical' figure…" resonates here. The Tŝilhqot'in cultural landscape has *not* been grouped or categorised by names in a random way—nor in a uniform way. Not every marsh, mountain peak, or berry bush has had a Tŝilhqot'in place name—some potentially nameable places have never needed to stand out. Maybe they were useful at one time, but maybe that utility has changed, or disappeared. Maybe it will become useful again, or maybe something will happen there, and when this is the case it will be named again.

Taking this notion from the place to the landscape, Müller-Wille's (1989-90, 53) description of place names as "proof to the integration and appropriation of space into the environmental perception of distinct cultures" resonates with themes of territory and territoriality. For Tŝilhqot'in, place names are connected with territory through the ancestral presences that they represent, much in the same way that archaeological materials do. Indeed, through their roles in 'meaning-making through folk-etymologising', as indicators of past,

present, and future happenings, as evidence of territorial connections, and as heritage elements in their own right, place names have a lot in common with other archaeological aspects of Tŝilhqot'in heritage assemblages.

Anthropologist Tim Ingold understood 'time' and 'landscape' to be integral to the process of human life, therefore making archaeology and socio-cultural anthropology part of the same intellectual enterprise (1993). Instead of seeing the landscape as a neutral backdrop for human activity, nor as a set of separate cultural, cognitive, or symbolic constructions of space, Ingold understands the landscape as one "constituted as an enduring record of - and testimony to - the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves." With this perspective, the landscape itself is an inheritance by present generations of all that all past generations have imbued in and on it. This 'dwelling perspective' of Ingold's both complements and dissolves the idea of a Tŝilhqot'in heritage assemblage. On the one hand, we could understand Tŝilhqot'in heritage assemblages as a subset of the total—those aspects of the inherited past that are Tŝilhqot'in in origin or character, or had some other bearing on Tŝilhqot'in lives.[54] On the other hand, it is a reminder that past generations were entangled together through various material and immaterial relationships—between peoples, places, and things of the same and different time periods—making the idea of an assemblage a heuristic rather than a necessary one.

[54] A Tŝilhqot'in heritage assemblage could have many definitions. In the broad, non-Tŝilhqot'in things could be entangled with Tŝilhqot'in heritage assemblages. For example, the former Hudson's Bay Company Fort Chilcotin was not Tŝilhqot'in in origin or character, but it was built to do business with Tŝilhqot'in people, and it influenced Tŝilhqot'in lives, and could therefore be seen as part of the fold of a Tŝilhqot'in heritage assemblage. In the narrow, one might understand a Tŝilhqot'in heritage assemblage to be one comprised *only* of things with Tŝilhqot'in origins. I think a broader definition better captures the picture of Tŝilhqot'in pasts.

The collection of all place names on the landscape reflects one that has been inhabited across time, and thus has bearing on its inhabitation in the present and future in a time-space compression (see also Salazar and Maulén 2022). For Ingold, the landscape itself *is* a story:

> It enfolds the lives and times of predecessors who, over the generations, have moved around in it and played their part in its formation. To perceive the landscape is therefore to carry out an act of remembrance, and remembering is not so much a matter of calling up an internal image, stored in the mind, as of engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past (1993, 152-3).

These are notions that seem to resonate well with Tŝilhqot'in world views, but also to extend beyond them. Perhaps in this way the ontological dimensions of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy have the potential to elucidate, through their particular manifestations in the Tŝilhqot'in context, these broader anthropological (and archaeological) understandings of human lives—past, present, and future.

Chapter 6:
Kinds of Tŝilhqot'in place names:
Elucidating further dimensions

Introduction

In his seminal book, *Names on the globe* (1975), toponymist and historian George Stewart devoted significant space to considerations of place name typology. "Since place-names exist by so many millions," wrote Stewart, "their division into classes becomes essential, and many methods have been used" (85). When first considering typology with regards to Tŝilhqot'in place names, I thought to find or develop an appropriate Tŝilhqot'in-specific typology that would resonate with Tŝilhqot'in users. Perhaps such a classification system would be useful in cartographic processes in order to represent the Tŝilhqot'in cultural landscape with greater attention to its unique cultural and linguistic qualities? Many typologies of place names, including indigenous place names, have been formulated (see Stewart 1954; 1975; Thornton 1997; Tent and Blair 2011; Hough 2016; Salazar and Maulén 2022; and many others). However, critical toponymists rightly call into question any system of place name classification that ignores the political motivations behind their usage, feigns political innocence, or asserts itself as a universal typology (see Rose-Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu 2010; Giraut and Houssay-Holzshuch 2016; Salazar and Maulén 2022).

Particularly salient to this research, Salazar and Maulén (2022) highlighted the problem with applying universalising (Western) typologies onto indigenous toponymies in intercultural contexts. Despite sharing a landscape, indigenous and settler languages and, more importantly, ontologies differ often significantly such that Western classification systems obfuscate important and unique qualities of indigenous toponymies. To address these incongruities, Salazar and

Maulén advocated for the development of new, culturally specific, and ontologically open typologies to represent indigenous place names from within their own complexity and heterogeneity. What could such a typology look like for Tŝilhqot'in toponymy?

It may be that Tŝilhqot'in do intuitively understand their place names to be of naturally different kinds—having 'categorical meanings', as Nyström (2016) put it—but if this is so, I haven't been able to identify what these classes would be. Even if a classification system could be uniquely shaped around Tŝilhqot'in place names, language, and ontologies, I would argue that any one system would not capture or represent the full picture of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy. Attempting to use one system would only serve to highlight some qualities while simultaneously obfuscating others. Each system may be useful to achieve various goals but each also misses the mark if uncritically applied.

I am inclined to argue, therefore, that applying any one classification scheme onto Tŝilhqot'in place names should be understood as a purely strategic process to operationalise Tŝilhqot'in toponymy in contemporary applications. There are, after all, many ways that place name typologies can and do affect positive outcomes in the world. For example, TNG's place names are currently classified in a GIS database by geographical feature type (river, mountain, locality, *etc.*), which allows for more conventional annotation of territorial maps made at TNG (*e.g.,* blue, splined, and italicised text for water features). This makes the maps and the Tŝilhqot'in place names more intuitive to those familiar with Western mapping styles.

However, the critical question remains: who has the power to categorise place names, and to what ends and effects? Keeping this critical question in mind, what are some other options for classifying Tŝilhqot'in place names that could produce useful outcomes in contemporary applications? Stewart (1975, 85-6) presented six main ways that place names were, until that

time, commonly classified: alphabetic or specific, by territory, chronological, by language of origin, by geographical feature type, and by motivation. But as Stewart himself noted, these classification schemes miss the mark when it comes to understanding the place naming process. For this reason, he advanced 'mode of distinction' as a more appropriate means of classifying place names. Of these he includes, for example, descriptive names, associative names, incident names, possessive names, commemorative names, commendatory names, and so on.

As I have stated, I personally don't have a strong opinion on what kind of classification system is best. Each can be useful. However, while reading through Stewart's (1975) presentation of these various typologies, I was struck by how many diverse points of connection I found with Tŝilhqot'in toponymy. So, I started taking notes, and the result is this chapter: an exercise in place name elucidation using 'typological considerations' as a medium for bringing nuances about Tŝilhqot'in place names and place naming practices to light. This exercise also brought to light other aspect of Tŝilhqot'in culture, language, territory, history, heritage, and world views through their reflections in and by toponymy. I don't walk through Stewart's classification schemes uncritically. There are issues with how he frames certain concepts, and he is the definition of the kind of West-focused, universalising typologist that Salazar and Maulén (2022) warned against. Nevertheless, as I show here, he still presents many useful insights.

Alphabetical or specific classification

Stewart (1975) described how alphabetical categorisation is a common format for place name dictionaries and gazetteers. Therefore each name can be seen to represent a category in itself—a specific name with a specific usage and meaning. This kind of a classification scheme, if it can be called that, seems to be the absence of a classification. Having struggled to see a single, clear classification scheme emerge from Tŝilhqot'in toponymy, this idea does hold some

appeal. After all, the idea of making 'lists' of Tŝilhqot'in place names, and then categorising them for other applications, is an etic notion. Even an alphabetical categorisation is a strategic process for contemporary applications as it lays place names out in a single and easily searchable list.

Territorial classification

Territorial classification involves the grouping of place names into categories defined by territorial extents (*e.g.,* '*Tŝilhqot'in* names', '*Dãkelh* names', '*St'át'imc* names', *etc.*). Stewart noted that although this was the most common way to classify place names, "[i]ts shortcoming is that it is a classification of places rather than of names, and lumps together all sorts of naming processes" (85). As Tŝilhqot'in share one territory and one language between all communities, it does not seem particularly useful to separate place names based on which Indian Reserve they were recorded in or which Indian Band the informants were registered with.

However, this kind of a classification scheme could be more usefully applied when considering place names in a GIS or database where multiple spatial and non-spatial attributes can serve as sorting parametres. For example, if a toponymy survey was to be conducted across all Tŝilhqot'in territory, the place name data could be collected through a schema that includes each participant/knowledge keeper (either by name or by PIN), and the registered (or home) Band of each participant. One could then categorise all the collected place names by knowledge keeper, and/or by Band. Grouping place name data by knowledge keeper would reveal spatial patterns representing each person's territorial connectivity. These data, along with other lifetime traditional use (TU) data (such as where they hunt, fish, or gather plants), could be seen as a kind of biographical map (see Tobias 2009). By grouping siblings' place name (and other TU data), patterns of family use would also emerge. By sorting place names (and other TU data) according

to the registered Band of each knowledge keeper would create a further spatial picture of the aggregate 'footprint', so to speak, of that community's 'areas of interest' within Tŝilhqot'in territory, among other things.

Chronology and temporality

A chronological classification of place names, according to Stewart (1975), would not be to list place names from oldest to newest. This is probably not even possible with most collections of place names. It would instead mean grouping names into a series of historically meaningful time periods, presumably having some bearing on the names of these periods themselves. To do this with Tŝilhqot'in place names would involve attending to several questions: What might be meaningful time periods for a chronological classification of Tŝilhqot'in place names? How might these classes shed light on Tŝilhqot'in toponymy, and conversely, how might Tŝilhqot'in toponymy shed light on these time periods? Finally, how does temporality connect with Tŝilhqot'in toponymy in general?

To answer these questions, I first need to disassemble a popular but often irrelevant temporal frame that surrounds indigenous discourses: 'first contact,' or simply, 'contact.' In indigenous contexts, scholars taking a Western perspective might be tempted to use the quintessential historical categories of 'pre-contact' and 'post-contact' to group place names chronologically, citing the moment of first European contact as a pivotal moment for a given indigenous group. I think such a classification would be intended to portray 'authentic', 'traditional', or 'pure' indigenous place names as distinct from those that have been somehow tainted by European influences (on the people, their language, their connections to territory, and so on). However, I argue that such a notion serves only to re-centre Western notions of indigenous authenticity, meanwhile denying indigenous peoples' living and ongoing historical

development independent of Europeans, their notions, and their influences (see also Lucchesi 2018). I contend that 'contact' should be seen in its specifics before implying that it had any influence, symbolic or tangible, on those indigenous people. Among Tŝilhqot'in, for example, 'contact' does not weigh in the historical memory of the people—it is instead the onslaught of other colonial forces that came later which marked changes in Tŝilhqot'in lives.[55]

Indigenous histories and heritage practices didn't end "with the first swing of the pioneer's ax" (Tuan 1991, 687). The majority of Tŝilhqot'in place names collected by Tŝilhqot'in community researchers are indeed very old Tŝilhqot'in-language place names, yet many are not. Many names come from more recent times, referencing people, places, and happenings from more recent generations. So, instead of re-centring Western historical notions when classifying Tŝilhqot'in place names chronologically, how might Tŝilhqot'in historical notions be brought to bear in this regard? I have long considered what it might be like to classify Tŝilhqot'in names based on what might be called an emic Tŝilhqot'in chronology. I think such a classification scheme might have some utility insofar as these represent Tŝilhqot'in categories of time, rather than Western or Anglo-colonial ones.

Here I think an extension of the archaeological metaphor of 'assemblages' is useful, namely that of 'horizons.' Just as different layers in the soil capture the accumulation of archaeological materials in 'horizons' of cultural materials across time, so too do place names

[55] In the Tŝilhqot'in context, Alexander Mackenzie may have made 'first contact' with some Tŝilhqot'in traders visiting *Nuxalkmc* territory in 1793, but clearly such a moment would have produced almost no change to Tŝilhqot'in lives. Fifteen years later in 1808, more clear contact was made with a small party of Tŝilhqot'in by Simon Fraser's party (Lamb 2007). While some minor trade may have occurred during this visit, and there was clearly a buzz among Tŝilhqot'in who "came on purpose to have a sight of us, having never seen white people before" (Simon Fraser, in Lamb 2007), but again I can imagine no lasting legacy that resulted from this moment itself. I have never heard an oral-historical account of either Mackenzie's or Fraser's 'first contact'. Further, the onset of a fur trade economy in the decades that followed these contact moments happened only slowly for Tŝilhqot'in who were often unfairly ignored by the European trading companies (see Turkel 2007).

accumulate along horizons of time. The temporal dimensions of place names will therefore reveal clusters of place names that emerge along somewhat distinctive historical periods.

Tŝilhqot'in chronology presents time in four major horizons: *sadanx* (legendary time; origin time); *yedanx* (ancestor time; long time ago); *ʔundidanx* (recent history, approximately 1870 to 1970; characterised by Tŝilhqot'in lifeways incorporating elements from the ranching and wage labour economies, the introduction of Christianity, settlement patterns involving Indian Reserves, *etc.*); and *k'andzin* ('nowadays', characterised by increased connections between Tŝilhqot'in communities and the outside world through improved roads, telecommunications, social services, public schooling, *etc.*).[56]

These temporal horizons have not been widely written about, and it would be prudent to flesh them out more thoroughly with more directed ethnography before operationalising them in various ways, further concretising any mistakes that may be portrayed here. It may not be possible or even desirable to classify all Tŝilhqot'in place names based on their time of origin within these horizons, but I think it is still helpful to see some examples from each to show how place names can shed light on Tŝilhqot'in history, and *vice versa*.

Sadanx place names

Place names with clear ties to *sadanx*-era (legend/origin time) stories, or that are featured within them, are those that can be understood to fall into that 'category'. Some examples of the former include: *Lhin Desch'osh Dilhtŝish* 'Little Dog sits there' (where *Lhin Desch'osh* and his three sons turned to stone); *Guli Dẑelh ʔElhghenbedaghilhdenz* 'where Skunk split the mountain

[56] I have here based these descriptions on Weir (2013, 402) and Kunkel (2014), who drew them out of the *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia* (2007 B.C.S.C. 1700), as well as Tŝilhqot'in Language Group and Kunkel (2012); notes about the *ʔundidanx* period from Tyhurst (1984) and Lane (1981); some notes about *k'andzin* from Pye (1993). I also am drawing from memory various unrecorded personal communications with many Tŝilhqot'in over the past decade.

with his fart'; *Tŝ'il?oŝ* and *?Eniyud*, who were once a married couple until they separated and turned into mountains; and *Datsan Ts'i Setan* 'Raven's canoe is there'. Of the latter there are many, but two examples are *Tiẑlin* 'where it flows' which is referenced in the Salmon Boy story (see Smith 2008), and *Tŝilhqox* (Chilko/Chilcotin R) which is referenced in the original transformation story of *Lhin Desch'osh* (see Cook 2013 or Farrand 1900).

Names from *sadanx* may not outwardly show themselves to be connected to this time period, but there are some clues which suggest that they might. Etymologically obscure names like *Dasiqox* (Taseko R.) are justifiably presumed to be of that antiquity, as are other names like *?Elhixidlin* 'flowing together' (Chilcotin-Fraser River junction), given their geographical magnitude. However, others like *Lhuy Nachasgwen Gunlin* 'where there are many small fish' ('little' Eagle Lake) may or may not be a name from *sadanx*, and we may never know for sure one way or the other.

For this reason alone, I would be hesitant to use these chronological categories in a formal place name typology. There are too many uncertainties. Instead, I find it more useful to reflect on what chronological classification of Tŝilhqot'in place names can reveal or elucidate about Tŝilhqot'in geography, history, territory, culture, language, and other aspects of Tŝilhqot'in life across time. With *sadanx*, for example, place name references reveal what *sadanx* stories do as well—that during this period animals were much larger, more powerful, and more dangerous, they could speak Tŝilhqot'in, and they affected people and the landscape much more readily. There was also much greater supernatural energy 'about' at that time, causing more happenings and transformations of people, animals, and the landscape itself. These are common themes Tŝilhqot'in storytellers have described to me about this period of Tŝilhqot'in history.

Yedanx place names

Sadanx was a time when more grandiose things happened, but it was also an unstable time, and people suffered more (R. William, personal comm. 2021). After *Lhin Desch'osh* made the Tŝilhqot'in territory safer and more abundant in resources for the people, *yedanx* (ancestor time; long time ago) could be said to begin. This period could be characterised by Tŝilhqot'in ancestors who, with their strong and healthy bodies and minds, lived in harmony with other beings including plants, animals, and other spirits. As such, I think some place names from the *yedanx* period may include those that point to these harmonious relationships between the people and the land. These relationships were structured around seasonal movements along a round of places that allowed for taking advantage of the available resources (see Lane 1981 for a description of these movements and the main targeted resources). Examples may include place names that point to abundant resources like *Dek'any-chugh Guniln* 'where there are big rainbow trout' (Taharti Lake), *Tsalhanqox* 'river of many beavers' (Chilanko River), and *Gex Lhan Gunlin* 'where there are many snowshoe hare'.

Yedanx place names would also include names attached to historical narratives from the time before what Tyhurst (1984, 200) calls, "[t]he boom frontier"—when social, economic and political upheaval followed the 1859 Fraser River Gold Rush, the 1862 smallpox epidemic, and the 1864 Chilcotin War. Before these events dramatically disrupted Tŝilhqot'in lifeways and connections to territory, Tŝilhqot'in were much less influenced by European colonisation,[57] and I think they are therefore perhaps useful markers for understanding when *yedanx* begins to fade into *ʔundidanx*. Nonetheless, some examples of place names with associated *yedanx* narratives or

[57] Exceptions would be the shift of the Tŝilhqot'in economy to include trapping for the fur trade, though this shift was less dramatic than with other neighbouring nations (Turkel 2007), or the subtle but present influences of travelling Christian missionaries (Cronin 1960).

events may include: *Deni Dazt̂s̄an* ‘where the people died’ (Graveyard Valley), *T̂selyu Ts’ishtled* ‘*T̂selyu*[58] jumped off’ (Battle Mountain); *Deni Ch’elatselht’i Tl’ad* ‘bay where the people were massacred’ (a place on the west shore of Puntzi Lake).

ʔUndidanx place names

ʔUndidanx may be understood as a period of ‘recent history’, where Tŝilhqot’in lifeways took on some elements from settler and colonial societies and economies and refashioned them in Tŝilhqot’in ways. Tyhurst (1984) overviews this period in detail, describing how after about 1870 and surely by the turn of the twentieth century, Tŝilhqot’in lifeways were being increasingly influenced by the Catholic Church, growing numbers of settlers in their territory, and economies that shifted towards ranching, associated agricultural activities, and wage labour. These presented a major shift in Tŝilhqot’in culture, land-use patterns, and social organisation:

> The patterns of land use might centre around the exploitation of a clustering of lakes, swamps, and meadows within a radius of, say, thirty km. Within this area, local knowledge of the terrain would be quite detailed, enabling a group to take the greatest possible advantage of the available resources [trapping, hunting, plant gathering, cattle range and watering]. At the boundaries of this area, hunters or outsiders might come into contact with members of another group and, not infrequently, visits would be made to socialize, or to pool resources for, say, the fall round-up, or for an extended hunt (Tyhurst 1984, 239).

ʔUndidanx is the time when today’s Tŝilhqot’in elders grew up. Some people in their 50s, and many in their 60s, remember childhoods traveling across their territory on horseback or with team-and-wagon, chasing cows, cutting wild hay, and staying in log cabins ‘up the meadow’. We can see *ʔundidanx* place names most clearly when they point to these lifeways, or when they reference people or other events which we know to fall within *ʔundidanx* years. The former may be exemplified with names like *Nenqayni Tl’ech’ed* ‘Indian meadow’ (Toosey IR 2; Baptiste

[58] *T̂selyu* means tobacco, but in this case it was a person’s name, or perhaps their nickname.

Meadow) and *ʔEsdluŝ ʔElhighelqed* ‘broken hay-sleigh’ (Broken Sleigh Meadow), and the latter with names like Johnny Sam *Bebiny* ‘Johnny Sam’s Lake’ (Johnny Sam ‘Baboon’ Lake); *ʔAdshis Gwedaghint’ih* ‘(where) *ʔAdshis* made hay’; *ʔAntuŵan Betl’ech’id* ‘Antoine’s meadow’; *Bidal Benen* ‘*Bidal*’s (Petal’s) land’; and *Mus Tl’ech’ed* ‘moose meadow’.[59]

Other *ʔundidanx* names would include most of the names for the Tŝilhqot’in communities, both their Anglo-colonial and Tŝilhqot’in language versions. These are *ʔundidanx* names for two reasons. On the one hand, the Anglo-colonial names for the communities (Anaham, Redstone/Alexis Creek, Alexandria/Castle Rock, Stone/Stoney, Toosey, Nemaiah Valley[60]) were established as part of the process to establish the Indian Reserves themselves (or at least concretised through that process) which occurred exclusively in *ʔundidanx*. On the other hand, even the Tŝilhqot’in language names which may have (and often did) precede the establishment of the Reserves did, at this time, come to be applied to what were then *new* geographical features—the Indian Reserve communities themselves. For example, *Tŝideldel* ‘red rock’ has long been used as the (*sadanx* or *yedanx*) name for a ruddy outcrop of rock, but was only used to reference the Reserve community when it was established there in *ʔundidanx* time.

K’andzin place names

Place names newer than *ʔundidanx* might be considered *k’andzin* names, names from ‘nowadays’. Depending on how you look at it, there are not many of these, and I suspect that many Tŝilhqot’in would not even consider them to be Tŝilhqot’in place names because they are not ‘traditional’, and didn’t come about in any kind of a ‘traditional’ way. Nonetheless, place

[59] Moose were first seen in the Chilcotin in the early twentieth century. This is why there is no Tŝilhqot’in word for moose, thus the spelling *mus*.

[60] Note that some *ʔundidanx* names are English or anglicised names, as English was having a greater influence on Tŝilhqot’in lives throughout this period (more on this in the next section on language-of-origin names), and colonial power over ‘official’ place naming was being increasingly exerted through this time as well.

names that mark new features on the Tŝilhqot'in cultural landscape, such as names from the contemporary built environment, represent geographical features of increasing relevance in Tŝilhqot'in lives today.

Three clear examples of *K'andzin* place names are road names on Indian Reserves, Tŝilhqot'in language names for new/modern buildings, and names of Tŝilhqot'in-owned businesses. Some road names include Chelʔiɣ ʔEten 'coyote road' and ʔEsggidam ʔEten 'ancestor road', some building names include Dasiqox, the name of TNG's newest office building (which mirrors the name of a major river on the territory some 100 km west) and Ts'utanchuny ('hummingbird') Centre in the community of *ʔEsdilagh*, and some business names include Elhdaqox Developments (from *ʔElhdaqox* 'sturgeon river', the Tŝilhqot'in name for Fraser River) and Dechen Ventures (from *dechen*, meaning trees, logs, or sticks).[61] One can only assume that as new roads, buildings, and businesses are established, more *k'andzin* place names will emerge.

The name for the Tŝilhqot'in community of *Yunesît'in* might also be considered a *k'andzin* place name as this name came to apply to the Indian Reserve community of Stone/Stoney in recent decades. The Tŝilhqot'in place name for that area is *Gex Nats'enaghinlht'i* 'where snowshoe hare are clubbed to death', but the community there chose instead to call itself *Yunesît'in* 'people of the south'—an older name for the group of people who came to make up the contemporary community in its present location.

[61] I am not italicising these names, as others below, because while they derive from the Tŝilhqot'in language, they are being used within a new *textual* linguistic context that is otherwise enveloped and surrounded by English. While italicising Tŝilhqot'in words and names throughout this text marks a linguistic difference that I am intentionally trying to highlight, I feel that the use of Tŝilhqot'in words as road or business names, for example, brings them into an entangled English-Tŝilhqot'in linguistic context that does not require this same distinction.

Other new uses of Tŝilhqot'in place names being used to represent geographical features that have emerged in recent decades would also be considered *k'andzin* place names. Dasiqox Nexwagweẑʔan—an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA)—is one, as is Ts'il?os Provincial Park. Tŝi ʔEzish Ecological Reserve, formerly Cardiff Mountain Ecological Reserve, is another very recent example. The name of the ecological reserve, which stands on Tŝilhqot'in Aboriginal title land, was officially changed in 2024. *Tŝi ʔEzɨsh* 'scattered rocks' is the *sadanx* or *yedanx* era name for Cardiff Mountain (known colloquially to Tŝilhqot'in as 'Cardoff'), but its recent adoption as the name for the *k'andzin* era geographical entity of the ecological reserve makes this an unequivocally *k'andzin* name.

Following similar logic, I think that all 'official' adoptions of Tŝilhqot'in place names by the Province should be understood as *k'andzin* names. For example, while *ʔEniyud* has since *sadanx* been the name for the woman-turned-mountain, ʔEniyud as the name for Niut Mountain in the eyes of the Province does not apply to the same geographical entity. 'Niut Mountain' was never *ʔEniyud*, the ex-wife of *Tŝ'ilʔos*, who turned to stone there many ages ago. In this case, there is a difference between geographical entities as understood by different societies, Tŝilhqot'in and settler, but perhaps all adopted place names should be understood, independent of this distinction, as *k'andzin* names. They have, after all, only come into being as a result of the performative acts of Provincial and First Nation government authorities. The Provincially adopted name *Tigulhdzin-chi* has existed, as it continues to, as a Tŝilhqot'in name independent of the name made official by Provincial authorisation (which changed the name Alexis Creek to Tigulhdzin-chi).

Bestowed names

As I mentioned above, using these Tŝilhqot'in chronological categories to classify *all* Tŝilhqot'in place names is not practical or even possible given the amount of speculation involved in this process, especially for *yedanx* names. However, I think that there is an important and practical distinction to make between the 'traditional' place names of *sadanx*, *yedanx*, and *ʔundidanx*, and the newer *k'andzin* names. Stewart (1975, 5) highlighted a significant distinction between what he called 'evolved' and 'bestowed' place names. By 'evolved', Stewart was not referring to any kind of biological process of evolution, rather he used the term as a metaphor for place names that "seem to spring from some unconscious and communal process, as if through an unpersonalized linguistic development" (Stewart 1975, 5). Conversely, 'bestowed' names are those that evoke a conscious act of naming. This distinction is perhaps Stewart's most fundamental classification:

> Between the two of them, *evolved names* and *bestowed names* divide the total field. Theoretically, the distinction may be considered clear. Usually, however, actual documentation is lacking, and it is necessarily lacking for all names that arose before writing (1975, 6).

Stewart's evolved-bestowed distinction requires the same kind of clear evidence that is missing when trying to classify all Tŝilhqot'in place names by chronological period. We will find no written records of Tŝilhqot'in place names from *sadanx* and most of *yedanx*, and only some from *ʔundidanx*, but few of these records would provide certainty of when the majority of Tŝilhqot'in place names came to be. However, we have written records for perhaps all *k'andzin* place names, and we can know that they are bestowed names.

I think there are some important considerations for taking the evolved-bestowed distinction seriously. Acts of bestowal are quintessentially performative and therefore come with

social, cultural, and political baggage that raise many critical questions: Who bestowed the name, and on what authority? Why was that particular name chosen? Would others have chosen other names, and do others use other names? Does a multiplicity of names create contestation or conflict? What further effects does the use of this bestowed name have on those who use or hear/see it used? As such, bestowed names are the kinds of names that critical toponymy addresses most saliently. However, many or most Tŝilhqot'in place names are better understood as 'evolved' place names—or to use my own terminology, 'emergent' or 'ancestral' place names. These names, like the Tŝilhqot'in names *Bis Nadiʔah* 'obsidian jutting up' (Anahim Peak) and *ʔElhghanenandlin* 'flows back on itself' (Horseshoe Bend), are not understood to have come from an act of bestowal. Instead, they *emerge* from memory and continued usage across countless generations. Such names therefore seem to have deeper connections with notions of heritage, and ancestral happenings or perceptions. Joyce Charleyboy reminds me often that "you can't change place names." What's been handed down has been handed down, and that's the way it is. Therefore these 'emergent' or 'ancestral' place names seem to stand in a realm apart from the names that *can* change, like the names of roads, buildings, companies, parks, or the *terra nullius* imagination of the colonised landscape as one whose rivers and mountains can be assigned 'new' names by the authority of the Crown, indigenous or otherwise.

Language of origin

After chronology, Stewart (1975) discusses the use of language-of-origin as a common classification for place names (see also Aurousseau 1957). In today's England, for example, place names are commonly classified as Latin (Roman), Celtic, English, Scandinavian, and (Norman) French. In the Chilcotin, a broader analysis of the colonial place name cover by language-of-origin would reveal, I think, a surprisingly large number of Tŝilhqot'in place names.

It would also reveal a great deal of other entanglements between the Tŝilhqot'in language and the English language in place names of both settler and indigenous peoples. The long, complex, and ongoing interrelationships between Tŝilhqot'in and Anglo-colonial peoples, cultures, senses of place, and languages are reflected in, and by, place names across the region.

Edelman (2009, 145) noted that "languages have no clear-cut borders: due to genetic relatedness and language contact, many names 'belong' to more than one language" and that "[p]roper names seem to be more readily borrowed or adopted from another language than common nouns." Sandnes also observed how names are easily and commonly borrowed between languages in language-contact scenarios around the world:

> To function in a new linguistic setting, borrowed names are adapted to the sound system of the recipient language… No further adjustment is needed, but adaptation is still possible on all linguistic levels. Syntax and morphology may be adjusted. The elements of the name may be translated or substituted by similar-sounding words in the new language…
>
> The importance of the speaker is particularly obvious… since so many of the changes observed cannot be explained as a result of regular linguistic change. Processes such as translations, replacement of elements, and syntactic adaptation… can only be explained as a result of a speaker's interpretation and adaptation (2016, 553)

For these reasons, looking at Tŝilhqot'in place names through the lens of language-of-origin reveals a great deal of nuances and complexities about Tŝilhqot'in toponymy in general, and some names in particular. In this section, I discuss some of these nuances as they manifest in anglicised Tŝilhqot'in place names, Tŝilhqot'inised Anglo-colonial place names, translated place names (English to Tŝilhqot'in and vice versa), Tŝilhqot'in place names that manifest in the English language, and other entanglements between Tŝilhqot'in and English in the place name cover of the Tŝilhqot'in territory.

Anglicisations

Many borrowings have taken place between the Tŝilhqot'in and English languages since the very first point of contact between these two cultures. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, Simon Fraser was the first to write about the Tŝilhqot'in in 1808. He transcribed *Tŝilhqot'in* in his journals, but with varying spellings:[62] "Chilk-hodins" (Lamb 2007; 91), "*Chilkcotin*" (105), "Chilkoetins" (144-5), "Chilk-ho-tins" (158), and "Chilk-hotins" (168). This kind of variation is representative of how most indigenous words were spelled in the journals and letters of fur traders, surveyors, missionaries, clerks, miners, and settlers before and even into the twentieth century, as few had the linguistic tools necessary to represent (or even hear) sounds not found in European languages. Since 1808, there have developed many more anglicised Tŝilhqot'in place names, though some are quite difficult to pin down. "The interpretation of Indian names," wrote Wright (1929, 141-2), "demands highly technical knowledge, especially because many of these aboriginal designations have undergone violent transformations during the centuries that they have been maltreated on the tongues of white men."

Some obvious anglicisations of Tŝilhqot'in place names include Taseko River (*Dasiqox*), Chilko River (*Tŝilhqox*), Puntzi Lake/Creek (*Bendziny*), Beece Creek (*Bisqox* 'obsidian creek'), Itcha Ranges (*ʔAchax*), Tatla Lake (*Tatl'ah* 'in the bay'), Clisbako River (*Lhizbay-qox* 'river of/with alkali mud), Sapeye Lake (*Sabay Biny* 'lake of dolly varden'), Kleena Kleene (*ʔElhinadlin* or *Jinadlin* 'flows back on itself'), Towdystan (*Tagwedisdzan* 'murky water'), Niut Mountain (*ʔEniyud*), and many dozens more. Some less clear anglicisations might be, I suspect, Chaunigan Lake (*Tsanlgen*, '(where) beaver skins are dried'), Tête Angela Creek (*Tisht'an Gunlin Xagninlin*), and Cochin Lake (*Gwedzin*), among many others.

[62] Note that some of these follow the English convention of pluralisation with a word-final /s/ not used in the Tŝilhqot'in language.

There have also been other Tŝilhqot'in words or names that have been borrowed to become gazetted Anglo-colonial names, including Nuntsi (Provincial Park) from *nunitsiny* 'grizzly bear,' Nemaia/Nemiah (Valley, Creek) from Tŝilhqot'in Chief *Nimaya*, and Alexis (Lake, Creek) from Tŝilhqot'in Chief *ʔElegesi*. However distorted these names have become through anglicisation, their references remain Tŝilhqot'in.

The use of anglicised Tŝilhqot'in place names is widespread, not only among English speakers but Tŝilhqot'in as well. Calling *Bendziny* 'Puntzi Lake', for example, is not seen as derogatory or disrespectful in any way, just as using the term 'Chilcotin' is a perfectly acceptable way to refer to a Tŝilhqot'in person or their nation or language. I commonly hear Tŝilhqot'in wryly describe anglicised versions of their place names as a result of Europeans not having the skills to pronounce words from their language. Rather than disrespect, it is seen as a trivial and often comical deficiency on the part of the anglophone. Some anglophones today avoid the term 'Chilcotin', imagining it to be a disrespectful colonial term, and yet instead they use a *new* and *equally* distorted anglicisation, 'Silk-a-teen', which does often annoy Tŝilhqot'in people.

I think there is something to be said for embracing anglicised Tŝilhqot'in place names, and perhaps this extends to other contexts across BC, Canada, and the rest of the colonised Anglosphere. I hope to flesh this idea out in future research, but here I will briefly outline my argument. For one, many gazetted Anglo-colonial place names across the region (and BC, see Akrigg and Akrigg 1997) are already widely used Tŝilhqot'in (or other indigenous-language) anglicisations, and as I mentioned above, it is not seen as disrespectful to use these names as all English-speaking Tŝilhqot'in do. Secondly, I think we can celebrate anglicised indigenous-language place names as contributions towards indigenous-settler relationships built upon respectful coexistence. Indigenous place names can stand proudly on indigenous authorities, but

for those settlers who simply can't pronounce indigenous words (like the case of 'Silk-a-teen' above) but who still want to be respectful, developing common new anglicised versions of indigenous place names would be a great improvement over of the actually disrespectful honourifics like 'Mount Waddington,' 'Begbie Summit', and 'Murderer's Bar'.[63]

Tŝilhqot'inisations

Borrowing has also occurred in the other direction, as some Tŝilhqot'in place names are 'Tŝilhqot'inisations' of English words or names. These are typically English names of Tŝilhqot'in people adapted to Tŝilhqot'in phonology and used in various place names. Some examples are *Lalah Beʔunqay* 'Laura's *ʔunqay* (fishing place),' *Malyan Beqiyex* 'Maryann's *qiyex*' (family area),[64] *ʔAgad Tl'edeghint'ih* '(where) Agatha cut hay,' as well as other Tŝilhqot'inised English words such as *Mus Tl'ech'ed*, 'moose meadow'. I'm not convinced that the English origins of certain components of these names should void their 'Tŝilhqot'in-ness.' Not only do they reference Tŝilhqot'in people and their activities on and perceptions of their territory, these names are cherished by Tŝilhqot'in today as part of their toponymic heritage.

Translated place names

Beyond direct borrowing, there are several English-language place names that are translations of Tŝilhqot'in-language place names. Examples include Groundhog Creek from *Dediny Gunlin Yeqox* 'river from where there are marmots,'[65] Sucker Lake from *Delji-yaz Gunlin* 'where there are redmouth sucker fish,' Redbrush and Redstone from *K'i-deldel* 'red

[63] Alfred Waddington and M.B. Begbie were two colonial actors who contributed to the mistreatment and subjugation of Tŝilhqot'in during and leading up to the 1864 Chilcotin War. Murderer's Bar references the Tŝilhqot'in act of war against Waddington's abusive road crew in 1864, starting the Chilcotin War—an act which has for too long framed these Tŝilhqot'in warriors as murderers, rather than heroes defending their people.

[64] *Qiyex* translates literally in English as 'under foot,' and refers to small areas, usually including a fishing lake, where a Tŝilhqot'in family-head holds a sort of usufruct right to use and maintain for the benefit and survival of their family. Many Tŝilhqot'in place names are names of *qiyex*.

[65] Marmots, as well as ground squirrels, are commonly called "groundhogs" in the Chilcotin.

willow' and *Tŝi-deldel* 'red rock,' respectively. There are also a few commonly used Tŝilhqot'in language place names that are translations of English place names, including *Yeqox Gunchagh* 'big river' from Big Creek, and *Datsan Biny*[66] 'raven lake' from Raven Lake. Of these latter names, it is clear in most cases that there was an older Tŝilhqot'in place name but the newer translated name simply became more popular among Tŝilhqot'in, or else was applied to a novel scale of the feature that became useful to identify.[67]

Despite being translated from one language to another, it is arguable that both English and Tŝilhqot'in translated place names retain, in part or in full, 'Tŝilhqot'in' dimensions. On the one hand, English translations are merely phonemic variations of the same often ancient Tŝilhqot'in names, and, on the other hand, Tŝilhqot'in translations have often been so widely embraced that they have become fixtures on the Tŝilhqot'in cultural landscape today, irrespective of their origins.

English Tŝilhqot'in place names

Finally, there are several either wholly or partially English language place names that are nonetheless considered Tŝilhqot'in place names. Some examples of fully English language Tŝilhqot'in place names include Crib Lake, Tomahawk Spring, Gravel Lake, Weatherman Mountain, and Tea Mountain. Partially English place names usually reference Tŝilhqot'in people

[66] Note that this kind of naming structure with an animal (raven) followed by a feature type (lake) is very uncommon in Tŝilhqot'in toponymy. If this name originated as a Tŝilhqot'in name and was later translated to English it would more than likely have been *Datsan Bebiny* 'Raven's lake,' or some other name referencing something about what ravens did/do in that area (see Doddridge 2021). This is the reason why Tŝilhqot'in elders William Myers *ghinli* and Bella Alphonse were convinced that this was a translation from the English.

[67] Late William Myers described to me that *Gex Lhan Gunlin Yeqox* 'river from where there are many snowshoe hare,' for example, was the older name for *Yeqox Gunchagh* (personal communication, 2021). However *Gex Lhan Gunlin Yeqox* only referred to the lower stem of Big Creek, with upper tributaries each having their own names. However when the Anglo-colonial name "Big Creek" was coined, it referred to the lower stem as well as one of these (the longest) tributaries. Thus the translated name *Yeqox Gunchagh* represents a re-scaling of that feature to come into alignment with the spatial entity of Big Creek.

with English personal names, such as Patrick *Tl'ugh ʔAghinlhʔinsh* 'where Patrick used to cut hay,' and Alec Joe *Betl'ech'id* 'Alec Joe's meadow.'

English-Tŝilhqot'in entanglements

English or English-influenced Tŝilhqot'in place names shouldn't be dismissed. In many cases they have been purposefully indicated *by* Tŝilhqot'in *as* Tŝilhqot'in, and this is perhaps all that is needed to classify them as such. But they also have other Tŝilhqot'in dimensions. For one, if English language place names were coined by Tŝilhqot'in namers, they clearly signify contemporaneous relationships between Tŝilhqot'in and features of significance on their cultural landscape—a continuation of age-old Tŝilhqot'in toponymic practices despite the language shift. Many of these names also reference Tŝilhqot'in people, cultural activities, and historical occurrences, and thus maintain Tŝilhqot'in references. Tea Mountain, for example, is the name of an elevated place where *bedzɨsh ts'ediyan* (trapper's tea, *Ledum glandulosum*) grows in abundance, and where many Tŝilhqot'in families go to harvest it. It may have an older Tŝilhqot'in-language place name, but those who have told me about Tea Mountain don't recall one.[68]

Since only around 13% of Tŝilhqot'in are fluent in the Tŝilhqot'in language (First People's Cultural Council 2018), and therefore most people live their daily lives in English, it is not unexpected that English dimensions in Tŝilhqot'in toponymy will continue to emerge. Younger generations of English-speaking Tŝilhqot'in will continue to build memories on and develop personal relationships with places and features on their ancestral territory, in both traditional and novel ways. While it is a priority for most Tŝilhqot'in that the old names not be forgotten, this doesn't need to disqualify the emergence of new ones. In fact, this is probably an

[68] See Doddridge (2021) for more examples.

unavoidable process as Tŝilhqot'in relationships to territory are living, contingent, and dynamic, and place names will continue to reflect these changing patterns as they always have.

Thinking again to the concept of a Tŝilhqot'in heritage assemblage, I think these linguistic entanglements play an important role in understanding how place names should or should not be considered part of the assemblage. A narrow definition might frame only names in the Tŝilhqot'in language that are of pre-*ʔundidanx* origin to be justifiably included in the assemblage, whereas a broader definition—one that I would endorse—might welcome all place names that are connected with Tŝilhqot'in people and their pasts. Taking the broader definition, not all place names inherited in this way need to be embraced or celebrated. Not all inheritance is wanted. Names like Murderer's Bar, referencing a Tŝilhqot'in act of war in 1864, frames these warriors as murderers rather than heroes defending their people. Yet it is part of the assemblage of inherited names that are still imbued on the landscape today.[69]

Geographical features and entities

Having previously worked with Tŝilhqot'in place names predominantly through the mediums of cartography and GIS, grouping place names by feature type feels like a natural fit to me. By doing so, different features can be easily symbolised and annotated on maps such that they reflect the topography in a way that also reflects aspects of the cultural landscape. According to Stewart (1975), "[m]any books on place-names have been based upon classification according to the kind of place which is named, that is, more or less, according to generics. Thus we have studies of town-names, of field-names, and of river-names" (85). Toponymists have no shortage of such categories, which come with many other sub-categories. For example, the category of 'hydronyms' (names of water features) includes 'helonyms' (names

[69] TNG made an official request to the BC GNO to have the name Murderers Bar changed to Warriors Bar in October 2024.

for swamps, marshes, and bogs), 'limnonyms' (names for lakes and ponds), 'pelagonyms' (names for seas and bays in the oceans), 'potamonyms' (names for rivers and streams), and others (Room 1996). Because there are nearly endless categories by which to sort place names in this way, some obvious question are: which list of geographical feature types or entities could or should be used to sort Tŝilhqot'in place names?

When leaning into the Tŝilhqot'in language generally, and geographical terminology more specifically, I think there are interesting possibilities for a geographical entity-oriented classification scheme for Tŝilhqot'in place names which could better represent the Tŝilhqot'in cultural landscape through, for example, annotating maps according to these unique feature types. Not only does the Tŝilhqot'in language have a different set of terms for geographical entities than English, they have different entities altogether. I don't present such a list here, merely some considerations for future work in this regard based on my observations, experiences, and conversations with some knowledgeable and insightful Tŝilhqot'in.

Specificity of geographical terminology

The Tŝilhqot'in word *yeqox*, or suffix /*–qox*/, does not distinguish between 'river', 'creek', or 'stream'. This example helps to convey the idea that geographical terminology is culturally and linguistically specific, and therefore also reflects an ontological specificity in geographical entity formulations in each unique ethnolinguistic context. I am not well positioned to provide a detailed analysis here as I have no formal training in linguistics and I did not conduct extensive interviews on this topic with my research participants. However, I think it is important to briefly review a few Tŝilhqot'in geographical terms as they connect with specific place names in order to exemplify some details about the distinctiveness of Tŝilhqot'in geographical terminology and how it reflects uniquely Tŝilhqot'in geographical entities. These

various spatial dimensions of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy therefore also have ontological implications, shaping and reflecting Tŝilhqot'in world views through the entities that are called forth through place names. This is something to consider while walking through the following Tŝilhqot'in-specific geographical categories.

Flowing water

To begin, there is a brief amount more to say about streams. In many cases, Tŝilhqot'in stream names have /-*qox*/ as a suffix, indicating that they refer to flowing water (*Tŝilhqox*, *Dasiqox*, *Tsalhanqox*, *Chezqox*, *etc.*). However, there are other ways to indicate flowing water. For example, the suffix /-*chi*/, meaning 'tail', is also sometimes used. I have noticed that the /-*chi*/ suffix is often used when its source lake tapers to the point where outflow begins, almost like the body of some animals taper at their rear before the tail begins. Some examples are *Tigulhdzin-chi* 'tail of *Tigulhdzin*' (Alexis Creek), *Ts'uni?ad-chi* 'tail of *Ts'uni?ad*' (lower Tsuniah Creek), and *Techezich'ed-chi* 'tail of *Techezich'ed*' (Merston Creek). Another suffix /-*lin*/ refers to flowing, and the stem of the word as well as variations on the suffix can vividly describe *the ways* that waters flow. These are common in Tŝilhoqt'in place names, for example *Tl'aday Xaghinlin* 'flows down from upper-place', *Tŝinah Naghinlin* 'water falls down through where the rocks spread' (Big Creek Falls), *?Elhixidlin* 'flows together' (Chilcotin-Fraser and other major river junctions), and *?Elhinadlin* 'flows back on itself' (Klinaklini River). In some cases, these place names apply to only a portion or section of flowing water.

Mountains and hills

There are two main types of mountains in the Tŝilhqot'in language that are reflected in Tŝilhqot'in place names. The first is *xadalgwenlh* or *dinlhgwenlh*. These features may be anything from large hills to raised areas of ground to small, round-topped mountains. Usually,

trees grow right to their peaks. Some examples include *ʔEqedinlhgwenlh* ‘mountain in line between mountains’ (Mt. Tom), *Bendziny Xadalgwenlh* ‘mountain at *Bendziny*’ (Puntzi Mtn.), and *Ch’etsintsen* ‘topped with fir trees’ (Luck Mtn.). The second mountain type is *dẑelh*. These mountains are often called ‘snow-mountains’ in English. They are much taller than *xadalgwenlh*, and they usually have a rocky, pointed, or jagged peak that extends well above the tree-line. As such, *dẑelh* are often snow-covered for much of the year, including summer time, and many also have alpine glaciers. Some examples of *dẑelh* include *Tiẑlin Dẑelh* ‘snow-mountain at where-it-flows’ (Tullin Mtn.), *Yanats'idlush* (*Dẑelh)* ‘(snow-mountain at) where people froze’, *ʔEniyud* (Niut Mtn.).[70]

Lake naming

Note above that the words ‘*Dẑelh*’ and ‘*Xadalgwenlh*’ are often only included in the place name itself when the mountain does not have a distinct proper name (like *ʔEniyud* or *Ch’etsintsen*), and its name comes from another nearby feature or place where the mountain is understood to be located at, within, or otherwise associated with. The same is true for lakes, where only occasionally the word for lake, ‘*Biny*’, is used in a place name itself. I asked a few people about this in my interviews for this research, trying to clarify when it is appropriate to represent lake names with ‘Biny’. I had noticed that this was commonly done for Tŝilhqot’in lake names documented during the Tŝilhqot’in case for Aboriginal title at the Supreme Court of BC, but that the same names documented in other projects did not include the word ‘Biny’. Bella

[70] I’m tempted to also include *Tŝi Nadilʔah* as another kind of mountain, though this one is less clear and I may be off here. There are multiple places named *Tŝi Nadilʔah* ‘rock jutting up’ or ‘standing rock’, and it is often referred to as ‘rocky point’. One of these is, itself, called Rocky Point along with its surrounding area. These features are usually volcanic necks jutting out of the otherwise level, plateau landscape. Bella Alphonse, whose family comes from the Rocky Point area, told me that her mother used to also call *Tŝi Nadilʔah* “*Tŝi Xadalgwenlh*”, meaning ‘rock mountain’. This is why I’m not sure if this is a distinct geographical category. However, other place names also seem to employ similar geographical imagery, for example *Bis Nadiʔah* ‘obsidian jutting up’ or ‘obsidian point’. Another similar image comes from two places called *Tŝi Deldel* ‘red rock’, though both of these do not have clearly defined peaks, and are rather ruddy outcroppings of rock along another ridgeline.

Alphonse had noticed this too, and not only with the place names documented at court but in everyday speech:

> All of a sudden they've been adding '*Biny*' to all the lakes. Because, *Benchuny* [Anah Lake]—I didn't hear *ʔEtsu* [grandmother] and my uncles calling it *Benchuny Biny*. I never heard that. And same with *Tegulin* [Stum/Pelican Lake], not *Tegulin Biny.* [But for lakes that didn't have a specific name] then you would say, 'the *biny* at *Tŝi Nadilʔah*,' so referring to it as *Tŝi Nadilʔah Biny*… Yes. And then you could use it that way. Like, over at Gravel Lake, *Ŝach'ebiny*, the *biny* is in there because the lake is on top of the *tŝiŝay*, which is gravel. Then you could use the '*biny.*' It's [*Tŝiŝay-ch'ed Biny*], and it's shortened, to *Ŝach'ebiny*. And I have heard my mom's dad and his family—they used that area—as *Ŝach'ebiny* (B. Alphonse, personal comm. 2021).

Bella also pointed out how often there are different place names for different places around a lake, but that they aren't the name for the lake itself:

> …even around [*Tugunlin* (Stum/Pelican Lake)] there's different areas—there's that island there, *Nuŝeʔan.* And so my mother and her sisters in law… [t]hey would build a raft and they would point out all the place names around that area (B. Alphonse, personal comm. 2021).

In our interview for this research, Geraldine Elkins and Marilyn Charleyboy also spoke to lake naming. We were, at the time, sitting on the banks of Puntzi Lake, and discussing the Tŝilhqot'in name, *Bendziny:*

> Geraldine: *Bendziny* is not the *entire* lake, it's a portion of the lake, and every part of the lake had a different name because of how it was used or how the landscape was in that area … If we were to do a study of every lake name, I don't think we named water. We didn't name *water*, it was the areas around those water sources that were named. If you were to say it in *Tsilhqot'in* you would say, "I'm going to Puntzi," where in Western we're like, "yeah we're going to the lake," but what part of the lake are going to? And if you were saying in *Tsilhqot'in*, "I'm going to go to *Bendziny*," we all know where *Bendziny* is—it's… the part of the lake where all the camps were—where they did the fishing, probably, Puntzi Creek, there.

Marilyn: Or, where they put the nets are just on the other side of Puntzi Lake Resort. They had a place where they would put nets out. That's where *Bendziny* would be.

Geraldine: So *Bendziny* is like, 'tents are everywhere'—the translation of that is like, 'there's tents all over the place.' Like, *gwenaz-dziny*, or *ben-dziny*. So if you were to put yourself a hundred years ago, two hundred years ago, if you said you were going somewhere, you weren't going the middle of a lake, kind of, that's not feasible to say, 'I'm going to Puntzi *Lake*.'

Shane: Mm, you're not going to the *water*?

Geraldine: Yeah.

Shane: You're going to a *place*.

Geraldine: You're going to a specific place.

Marilyn: Yeah, *along* the lake.

Geraldine: Along the lake.

(G. Elkins and M. Charleyboy, personal comm. 2021)

This topic also arose during my interview with late William Myers, this time referencing the place name *Teẑtan* (Fish Lake), which due to a controversial proposal for an open-pit mine that would see the lake turned into a tailings pond, this Tŝilhqot'in lake name received wide attention outside the territory. However the Tŝilhqot'in name that has gained international notoriety is *Teẑtan Biny*. William and I discussed it together:

Shane: I wonder if there's a difference between a place name and a lake name, you know what I mean?

William: Hmm. Yeah. Yeah like *Teẑtan* is just a lake, I guess.

Shane: *Teẑtan*? You don't have to say *Biny*?

William: Ah, I think before they just say *Teẑtan*, heh? It's already got the *teẑ* in, just something, lake, heh? Already there.

Shane: What does that mean, *Teẑtan*?

William: The way I think, hmm—maybe there's a hill on one side, heh? And it goes down, on Taseko River side of it. There's a hill. And the wind usually come from the coast, and it usually goes above, maybe not quite into that lake. Maybe more of a calmer—not like Chilko Lake, you got big waves. Maybe, something like that, I think.

Shane: Like it's up above?

William: Like the wind goes above, just like… [gestures]

Shane: The wind goes above?

William: Yeah, yeah. The wind kind of misses it, little bit, the full wind from the coast. That way you don't have big waves like Chilko Lake. When the wind hits Chilko Lake you have pretty big waves. But this one, *Teẑtan*, seemed like more still water.

Shane: What is *teẑ*—what's that?

William: It's, it's something [to do with] water, I think—*teẑ*.

(W. Myers, personal comm. 2021)

After speaking with several people about the topic, I feel pretty confident that there is a growing influence of English in Tŝilhqot'in geographical terminology. In English, few lake names (perhaps more so outside of England) *don't* have the word 'Lake' in the name, either at the beginning (*e.g.,* Lake Superior) or at the end (*e.g.,* Quesnel Lake). Because of this kind of specificity in English to point names directly at bodies of fresh water, there has very likely been a growing trend to mirror that specificity among Tŝilhqot'in place name users who spend more and more time in English-dominant settings. I can imagine for the place names documented in the Tŝilhqot'in case for Aboriginal title that there was a decision made to map lake names with

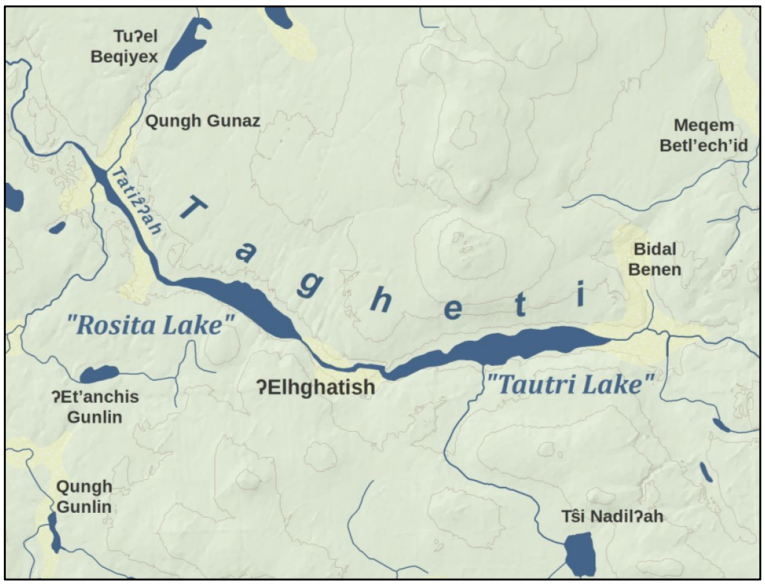
the same degree of specificity as English, leading to the greater number of lake names with '*Biny*' added in those data, even when it wasn't needed.

Several Tŝilhqot'in place names do, after all, make specific reference to lake water. This is usually the case when there is something notable about the lake itself that the place name points to. Sometimes this is done with the word '*Biny*' (*e.g., Biny Gunchagh* 'big lake', Fletcher Lake—which is the biggest lake in the area), and sometimes it is done with other references to water (*e.g., Tegunlin* 'something in the water', Stum Lake). As Bella mentioned above, sometimes there is a need to point specifically to a lake which may not itself have a Tŝilhqot'in name—similar to my examples above with *dẑelh* and *xadalgwenlh*. Bella's example of *Tŝi Nadilʔah Biny* being better translated as 'the lake at *Tŝi Nadilʔah*', rather than 'Tŝi Nadilʔah Lake, is telling. Perhaps this might be better written as *Tŝi Nadilʔah biny*, with the word for lake not capitalised, and therefore not part of the place name itself? These kinds of considerations may help to lead to more accurate representations of the Tŝilhqot'in cultural landscape when, for example, annotating maps.

Twin lakes

A further Tŝilhqot'in geographical concept relating to lakes is that of 'twin lakes'. There are a few instances where two adjacent, similarly shaped, and similarly sized lakes share one Tŝilhqot'in place name, while in Anglo-colonial toponymy, each lake has a unique name. 'Twin lakes' is a colloquial English language place name that I have heard a few Tŝilhqot'in as well as settlers use for these situations. There are two prominent examples, *Tagheti* (Tautri and Rosita Lakes) and *Nabi Tŝi* (*Biny*) '(lakes at) muskrat head' (Elkin and Vedan Lakes) (see Figure 11 and Figure 12). In both cases, and despite being over 100 km apart on opposite corners of the

territory, the small area of land between the twin lakes has the same place name: *ʔElhghatish* 'between the waters'.[71]



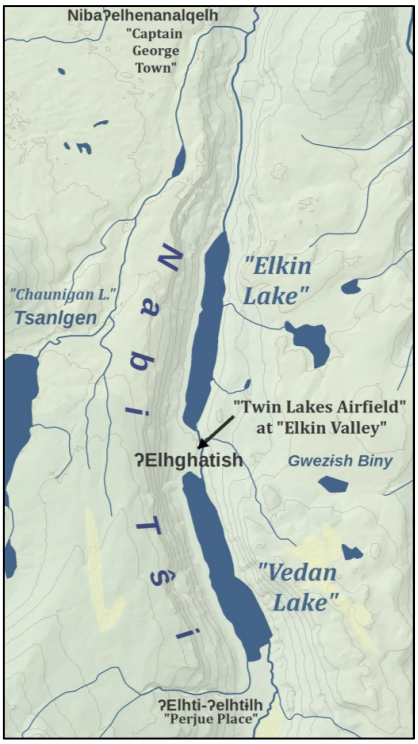


Figure 11: (Above) Map of *Tagheti* (twin lakes, Rosita and Tautri)
Figure 12: (Right) Map of *Nabi Tsi* (twin lakes, Elkin and Vedan)

It may be that there are unique Tŝilhqot'in names for each of the twin lakes that we simply have not yet been able to find, but it is striking that in both cases we only have one recorded name for both, and the name *ʔElhghatish* is present between the lakes in both cases. Following Tŝilhqot'in lake naming practices in general, it also seems possible that *Tagheti* and *Nabi Tŝi* are both referring to the *areas* encapsulating both lakes, rather than the water bodies themselves. This came up when I was talking about twin lakes with Chief Roger William:

> Almost sounds like a certain area. When I was talking to mom, she said that whole hillside was almost like *Nabi Tŝi*. Like *ʔEsdilagh*, like here on *Tŝilhqox Biny*, *ʔEsdilagh*, it's almost like saying that. You're not saying *Tŝilhqox Biny* [the lake itself], you're saying a place [along the lake].

[71] *ʔAgad Bebiny* 'Agatha's lake' (Bug Fire Lakes, or Twin Lakes) is another example, but on a much smaller scale to the other two. Doc English Lakes has also been described to me by a *Tl'esqot'in* elder as 'twin lakes.' It also seems to me that *Dasiqox Biny* is a twin lakes name for both Upper and Lower Taseko Lakes.

...

> *Nabi Tŝi*, it's like an area too. But I might be wrong. When I was talking to mom, it sounds like it's going into the lake, and it almost sounds like across the lake there's the whole hillside. So it might be the whole lake called like that too. I'm just trying to make sense of it in my mind what my mom was saying (personal comm. 2021).

Late William Myers also described the connection between the twin lakes and the place name *ʔElhghatish*:

> Yeah, between two lakes too, heh? … *ʔElhghatish*—there's one [around] Anaham, there's one near Elkins Creek." … Yeah, it's between this—the area between those two lakes, *ʔElhghatish* (personal comm. 2021).

This twin lakes feature may be an extension of a broader kind of geographical relatedness. When I brought up the notion of twin lakes to Joyce Charleyboy (personal comm. 2024), she recalled how a *Tŝideldel gwet'in* elder had recently told her something similar about streams—almost as though some can be siblings. The lakes *Bendziny* (Puntzi L.) and *Benti* (Punti L.) may be another example, though these examples are stretching my knowledge, and more focused future research could expand these concepts with further examples. In any case, the 'twin lakes' or 'sibling features' phenomenon is not a distinction made in Anglo-colonial place naming, though it seems to matter a great deal in the Tŝilhqot'in geographical imagination.

Geographical persons

As described above in Chapter 4, there are many geographical features on the Tŝilhqot'in cultural landscape which are themselves also beings, including *Tŝ'ilʔos* (Mt. Tatlow; Figure 13) and *ʔEniyud* (Niut Mtn.; Figure 14). Briefly then, it is worth noting that a Tŝilhqot'in-specific classification of place names by geographical entity type could include such beings. This is a complex idea, however, as I have heard from some elders that every *dẑelh* was once a person, and that it is rude to point not only at *Tŝ'ilʔos* and *ʔEniyud*, for example, but at all prominent

mountains for this reason. Many other times elders have indicated to me that every rock, every tree, every stream has a spirit. Perhaps, then, the notion of geographical personhood can be understood to be implicit in many other feature types as well.

Figure 13: Photograph of *Tŝ'il?os* (Mt. Tatlow)

Figure 14: Photograph of *?Eniyud* (Niut Mtn.)

Qiyex

The last example I want to discuss regarding Tŝilhqot'in-specific geographical entities is *qiyex*. Literally, the word means 'under-foot', and could be translated as 'footprint.' But the term in a geographical context refers to a kind of place. There are many Tŝilhqot'in place names specifically referencing (and defining) *qiyex*, including *Malyan Beqiyex* 'Maryann's *qiyex*', Big Joe *beqiyex* 'Big Joe's *qiyex*', and so on, often with the possessive *be-* prefix.

Through many conversations with knowledgeable Tŝilhqot'in, before, during, and after conducting interviews for this research, I have come to understand *qiyex* to be something like a portion of Tŝilhqot'in territory that would sustain a Tŝilhqot'in family through the harsh and long Chilcotin winters.[72] Important resources in or nearby a *qiyex* would include caches of stored food (dry meat, fish, berries and roots), always a source of fresh fish, a good fresh water source, and ample firewood. Later on in *?undidanx*, plenty of fur-bearing mammals for trapping, hay

[72] See also Tyhurst's (1984, 239) above quote on page 169 of this thesis.

meadows, and grazing pastures became additional considerations for families. Roger William explained this to me when I asked him about *qiyex*:

> It's almost like since contact people were getting traplines, people were getting meadows, and then they kinda like name it. *Qiyex* is like family area. So before contact imagine *qiyex* was like an area that the whole village used to use. *Qiyex*. Then now, families start, you know, wherever they got their cattle or horses or whatever, and trapping and all that for trading with Hudson's Bay, that was new. That's foreign.
>
> Back before contact, I don't know if they actually—everybody used certain areas, from this area, from Anaham, Stoney, from their areas going further apart. I think—I don't know if they named areas *qiyex*. A lot of it is around—*Qiyex*—what I hear it seems to be along the river, Chilcotin River, *qiyex*… But when I ask people what does that mean, do they own it? They say 'no no no, just a place.' That's where found a good fishing hole, so they kinda name it and people just use it, it doesn't mean they own it. Stanley *Beqiyex*, Stump *Beqiyex*, but it's not theirs it's just [named after] people [who use it]…
>
> *Qiyex* is like a—it almost sounds like to me, *qiyex*, survive from, survive from that area. It's an important, significant area to catch your resource. It could be medicines, berries, hunting, fishing, meadow—it's significant to a family or group, and it's an important place where people can survive off. But when I ask elders it's almost—when I was asking about someone's *qiyex*, they were saying oh, this is just named because they found the place. Yeah, it's almost like a recognition (R. William, personal comm. 2021).

I also asked late William Myers about the term:

> William: Only place they call *qiyex* is a lake where there's fish in there. That's where they get fish, heh? They name it after somebody. There's *Nik'ewhum Beqiyex* not too far. *Nik'ewhum*. Yeah, *Nik'ewhum Beqiyex*. And there's a *Malyan Beqiyex*. You would think it means… '*Malyan*'s fishing area.' Usually a lake, heh?
>
> Shane: Is it the name for the lake or the whole area?
>
> William The whole area. Where she set's foots on, I guess. Foots on. Like it sound like 'bottom of our feet,' *qiyex*. 'Below her feet', or something.
>
> Shane: 'Where her footprints are?'
>
> William: Yeah that's what it means, heh? Yeah.

Shane: Would that be something that somebody owned? Or was it more of a caretaker?

William: No, just, anybody can use it but they name it after somebody anyway. I guess that New Meadow*, Malyan Beqiyex*, they put up hay there, they look after their cows there, and that's where they usually get their fish. That's the reason they name it after her, I guess.

Shane: Wonder if those lakes had a name before *Malyan* or *Nik'ewhum*. Maybe it was named after someone else?

William: That I don't know. The only name *we* know of, right now, is…

(personal comm. 2021)

In another similar conversation, Geraldine Elkins and Marilyn Charleyboy explained to me similar parametres for what makes up a *qiyex*, and how it can also apply to areas along rivers:

Geraldine: From my understanding, like, along the river there's areas that certain families used to go fishing, like that was their *place* on the river.

Marilyn: That sustained them.

Geraldine: Yeah they had an area on the river, like—so they always say whoever, somebody's name *beqiyex*—that's where they lived off of the river. So, 'under your feet'—*beqiyex*. It's how you survived. I think I've only heard of that on the river, when they say *qiyex*.

(personal comm. 2021)

Based on these descriptions, I think that there are many Tŝilhqot'in place names that don't explicitly reference *qiyex* but nonetheless would have defined them historically. In a recent conversation with a *Dãkelne* (Carrier) elder about their system of *keyoh*s, I have become convinced there are some important parallels with *qiyex* (not least because they are probably linguistic cognates), and I think this is an important area for future research.

Geographical entities and place name adoptions

When submitting Tŝilhqot'in place names into BC's geographical names database for adoption, we have been asked to provide with it a series of other common geospatial attributes, including a feature type from BC's list of several hundred uniquely defined geographical features. These feature types and definitions are associated with all "official names" in BC. Sticking to the water theme, some of these include: "Stream: Watercourse, smaller than a river;" "River: Watercourse of variable size, which has tributaries and flows into a body of water or a larger watercourse;" "Creek (1): Watercourse, usually smaller than a river."

Through our work at TNG to have Tŝilhqot'in place names adopted by the Province, we found it a consistent challenge to fit these Tŝilhqot'in names into BC's exclusive list of Anglo-European categories (for example the suffix /*–qox*/ meaning flowing water of various magnitudes, streams, rivers, creeks, and brooks). Further, Tŝilhqot'in often have names for sections of watercourses that do not match the scale of Anglo-European conceptions of those features. Tŝilhqot'in place names also rarely point to waterbodies such as lakes or ponds themselves, instead referring to places which include lakes or ponds in them, or places alongside them. Tŝilhqot'in also have feature types like *qiyex* that find their closest match with "Locality: A named place or area, with or without a scattered population," or *ʔunqay* 'fishing stand', which doesn't really fit "Site: A named place that has historic, geographic, or folkloric significance," and also has to therefore be lumped into "Locality." Finally, names like *ʔEniyud* and *Tŝ'ilʔos* refer to a *yedanx denilin*, ancient living persons who happen to stand today in geographical form. The Provincial name categories of "Mountain: Mass of land prominently elevated above the surrounding terrain, bounded by steep slopes and rising to a summit and/or peaks," and "Peak

(2): Summit of a mountain or hill, or the mountain or hill itself," are only partially reflective of what, or rather *who*, the names refer to.

Alterity of scale

A final note about the uniqueness of Tŝilhqot'in geographical entities is a brief comment on the differences of scale between named Tŝilhqot'in geographical entities and their purported Anglo-colonial counterparts. Here is no space to expand on elements of scalar politics—for that, see Mackinnon (2010)—nor is there space to expand this into a full case study for the role of place naming in the rescaling of geographical features by performative reiteration of citational practices—for that, see Tucker and Rose-Redwood (2015)—though, both are highly relevant here. Instead, I seek to use this section as an opportunity to showcase the particularities of these two specific toponymic traditions as they relate to the alterity or 'otherness' of scaling geographic entities between Tŝilhqot'in and Anglo-colonial geographical imaginations.

The alterity of scale can be seen at various resolutions between Tŝilhqot'in and Anglo-colonial place names. It is common, for example, for Tŝilhqot'in names to apply only to sections of streams, whereas Anglo-colonial names often strive to scale a named stream from its smallest source all the way to the sea. The rescaling of *Tŝilhqox* is a good example of the alterity of scale between Tŝilhqot'in and Anglo-colonial geographical entities, not by differences in geographical imagination but because of differences of care in getting the names right. Tŝilhqot'in understand well that "Chilcotin River" and "Chilko River" are not Tŝilhqot'in geographical entities, although both are used to represent protions of the river they understand to be *Tŝilhqox*—the river from which that nation names itself (see Figure 15).

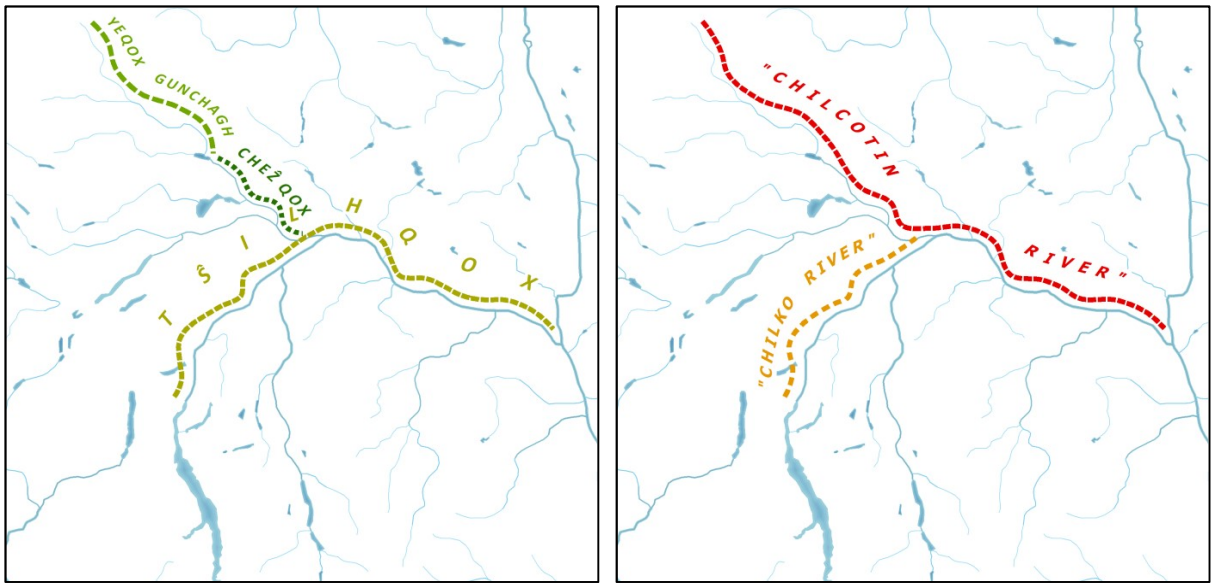


Figure 15: Maps of *Tŝilhqox* / *Cheẑqox* versus Chilcotin / Chilko Rivers

Tŝilhqox is a milky blue-green river that begins at the northern end of *Tŝilhqox Biny* 'lake of *Tŝilhqox*' (Chilko Lake, also known as *Tu Nenchagh* 'big water'). From there the river flows northeast through places like *Gwedats'ɨsh*, *Tŝi-t'is Gunlin* (Henry's Crossing), *Nuŝay Bighinlin* 'flows into a bucket', *Tŝilangh* 'rock pointed (like a leaf)', *Tl'egwated* 'in the tall grass' (Quiggly Holes), and *ʔElhixidlin* 'flows together' (Chilko-Taseko junction) where it becomes an even milkier-blue. It then flows through *Gwetsilh* (Siwash Bridge/Gap Rapids) and bends east to a second *ʔElhixidlin* 'flows together' (Chilko-Chilcotin junction) and then through *Tŝiyi* 'inside the rock' (Bull Canyon). From there, *Tŝilhqox* bends southeast and flows through *Tl'etinqox* 'river trails through the grass', *Gex Nats'enaghinlht'i* 'snowshoe hare clubbed to death', *Tŝ'iqi-chosh* 'little woman', *Nagwentl'ed* 'place of landslides' (Farwell Canyon), and finally ends at its confluence with *ʔElhdaqox* 'sturgeon river' (Fraser River) at a third place called *ʔElhixidlin* 'flows together' (Chilcotin-Fraser junction).

This is the course of *Tŝilhqox*, but it is not the course of the Chilko or Chilcotin Rivers. These colonial names scale the river and one of its major tributaries very differently. For example, the Chilcotin River, such as it is, begins as an alpine trickle high in the Itcha Mountains. From there the river flows steadily southeast, gradually growing from successive tributaries as it passes through Chilcotin Lake and then down to its confluence with the Chilko River where it suddenly grows in size by several orders of magnitude, just above Bull Canyon, as Chilko River is a tributary many times the size of the upper Chilcotin River. From there it continues flowing southeast all to way to the Fraser River confluence.

These utterly different scales are not only defined by place names, the names themselves create the geographical entities by scaling them. In a 2018 unpublished manuscript for the Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin titled *The Bentinck Arm Company's Road, 1860 to 1864*, Tom Swanky sheds light on how this obvious misapplication of the name "Chilcotin River" came to apply to only the lower *Tŝilhqox*, as well as the small tea-coloured tributary of *Chezqox*. In the early 1860s there had been a mad rush to develop a wagon road from the Pacific coast (where steamships could unload cargo, people, livestock, *etc.*) to the newly discovered Cariboo Gold Fields. While the Fraser Canyon route ultimately won out, a route from the North Bentinck Arm at Bella Coola, which would cross the breadth of Tŝilhqot'in territory, was also being investigated. Swanky described in this article, and further during personal communication with me in 2019, how a reconnaissance party (James Kenny and Colin McKenzie) for this 'Bentinck Arm Road' had initially termed *Chezqox* ("Chisco") correctly, but that a later expedition by separate interests (George Barnston and Ranald McDonald) started calling the river 'Chilcotin

River'[73] instead. simply because they met Chilcotin people there. "[A]fter Barnston's report," wrote Swanky (2018), "settlers began referring to the smaller tributary known to the Tsilhqot'in by the name Chuzqox [Chezˆqox] as the 'Chilcotin River.' Later, they began referring to the main river known to the Tsilhqot'in by the name Tsilhqox [*Tsˆilhqox*] as the Chilko River." Performative reiteration and citation (see Tucker and Rose-Redwood 2015) of this novel scale of the river concretised these place names on colonial maps, beginning a geography of confusion that persists to this day.

Highlighting these spatial differences between Tsˆilhqot'in and Anglo-colonial toponymies presents opportunities for new representations to clarify (and commemorate) these distinctions. Tsˆilhqot'in-specific feature types like '*qiyex*' and '*dzˆelh*' can, for example, be used in place name datasets both at TNG and the BC GNO, though with the latter party it may take some convincing. Further, dual-name road signs allow for place names to be used to clarify the cross-cultural differences in the way that geographical features are understood. This is well exemplified by the new signs we (TNG and BC's Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure) have installed at multiple road crossings over *Chezˆqox* and *Tsˆilhqox* (see Figure 16). Simultaneously, these signs celebrate multiple forms of Tsˆilhqot'in heritage, reveal evidence of enduring connections to territory, highlight cross-cultural differences in geographical perceptions, and provide a performative enactment of Tsˆilhqot'in spatial order, essentially re-scaling the streams in line with Tsˆilhqot'in geographical perceptions.

[73] And the nearby lake, *Chezˆich'ed*, as 'Chilcotin Lake', which has previously been more correctly labelled as Chisikut or Chezacut Lake.

Figure 16: Photographs of dual-name road signs at three river crossings

Modes of distinction

"Although convenient, useful, and even to be called essential, these [above] methods of classification of place-names fail to grapple with the actual *giving* of place-names," wrote Stewart (1975, 86), who argued that classification of place names should be based on an "elucidation of the naming-process." Stewart contended "that all place-names arise from a single motivation, that is, the desire to distinguish and to separate a particular place from places in general"—a notion that has clear links with cognitive theoretical approaches (see Chapter 2).

Stewart argued that there are many advantages to this form of classification. For one, it deals more with specifics than generics which centre the name as a distinguishing feature, rather than the *type* of feature it seeks to distinguish. Second, it is more representative of the specific reasons why one feature is marked as distinct and separate from others. Third, it allows for the

classification of every single name, which many other systems cannot do. Fourth, it allows for a multiplicity of name origins. Fifth, it is inclusive of both 'bestowed' and 'evolved' names. Finally, classifying names based on mode of distinction accommodates place names of isolated indigenous peoples, rural agricultural peoples, and contemporary urbanites. In other words, it is universalising in a way that Stewart believed transcended cultural preconceptions.

However, just as walking through the above classic approaches to place name typology sheds a great deal of light on Tŝilhqot'in toponymy, history, geography, and other topics, I think it is also a useful exercise to briefly walk through a few of Stewart's classes of "namings" (1975, 87) with Tŝilhqot'in toponymy in view (though again, not uncritically).

Building on his 1954 *Names* article, "A classification of place names," Stewart (1975) lays out ten classes of names, or what he calls "namings," that are, in his attempt, more linguistic in nature. He made it clear that his presented classifications were intended to be practical and expedient in many general cases, and *not* to be taken as universal or scientific. Because many of the below themes have already been discussed in other places in this thesis, I will here only briefly introduce some of the classes, describe some pertinent connections to Tŝilhqot'in toponymy, if any, and then provide some example names.

Descriptive names

Self-evidently, descriptive place names describe the physical characteristics of the features they identify. "More than any other kind of name," wrote Stewart (1975, 97), "they identify the place and thus serve a practical purpose." Stewart explained descriptive names as being among the most common kinds of place names across the world, especially for natural features, and as "super-linguistic" (90) in that their structures are similar across languages.

Descriptive names often comment on the distinctive quality of a feature (colour, size, shape), which makes them worthy of pointing out.

"All is comparative" when it comes to descriptive names, meaning that a small rise of land in an otherwise perfectly flat landscape may be seen as Big Hill (Stewart 1975, 90). The Tŝilhqot'in place name *Biny Gunchagh* 'big lake' (Fletcher Lake) is a good example of this phenomenon. While *Biny Gunchagh* is not at all a large lake by Chilcotin standards, it is the largest lake in the south-central Chilcotin by some measure, and for some distance.

Stewart highlights that some descriptive names are "counterpart-names" that "stand (so to speak) in opposition, they measure up to no standard of feet or metres, but the one is merely so named in comparison with the other" (1975, 90). A Tŝilhqot'in example is *Binlugh-chugh* 'big knife' (Beaver Lake), which has the counterpart *Binlugh-tsel* 'small knife' (Alex Graham Lake). Stewart then breaks down descriptive names into further subcategories, including 'sensory descriptives' (size, colour, shape, material), 'relative descriptives' based on a relationship to other features, and so on, each of which have some Tŝilhqot'in examples.

Associative names

These kinds of names, according to Stewart (1975, 98), "identify by means of something with which the place is conveniently associated and by which it can be distinguished from other places bearing the same generic in the area" (98). Many of these, of course, overlap with descriptive names. A Tŝilhqot'in example might be *Dek'any-chugh Gunlin* 'where there are big rainbow trout' (Taharti Lake). Most lakes in the region have rainbow trout, but only this lake has a name which points to how big they grow here. The nearby *Tagwedechen* 'logs in the water' (Fir Lake) also has some big rainbow trout, just as *Dek'any-chugh Gunlin* also has some logs in the water, but *Tagwedechen* is the lake with more noticeabe logs in the water.

Incident names

"An incident-name," according to Stewart (1975, 105), "is one which arises from a particular event occurring at that place, thus identifying it and distinguishing it from other places in the area." As I have described above in Chapter 5, all Tŝilhqot'in place names can be seen to connect with happenings of one kind or another. Stewart sees this category as reserved for notable happenings, not commonplace happenings. This is not a distinction that I have noticed in Tŝilhqot'in discourses, and again in Chapter 5 it was made clear that minor and major happenings result in Tŝilhqot'in place names. Further, Stewart also sees names based on "repeated or habitual happenings" (105) as 'associative' (of the repeated event), or *descriptive* (of the event), rather than incident names. I don't think this is a useful distinction for Tŝilhqot'in names, again given how Tŝilhqot'in connect the presence of any and all place names with happenings of all kinds.

Possessive names

Another self-evident category of names, there are several Tŝilhqot'in place names with a possessive tone, or explicitly possessive denotation. The 'possession', as it were, may be at the individual, family, group, or nation level. I should note here that it has been drilled into me by elder after elder that Tŝilhqot'in territory is the territory of *all* Tŝilhqot'in, collectively held, and that no person can be seen to 'possess' or 'own' any portion of it. This was, I think, clearly demonstrated in the above section on *qiyex*. There is more ethnographic work needed here to elucidate Tŝilhqot'in concepts of ownership and possession, especially as it connects to the land and places. However, I can see that 'possessive' Tŝilhqot'in place names point to a form of mutual respect for a person or a family's longstanding use at, and caretaking of, certain sites, places, and areas, rather than some kind of ownership. Therefore when Stewart describes

possessive names as arising "after the act of taking possession," it doesn't quite hit the mark with Tŝilhqot'in 'possessive' names—if they should even be called such. However, Stewart also notes that these names "constitute, therefore, a kind of recognition of an already existing state" (117) which rings a little closer to *qiyex* names in the Chilcotin.

For examples, the prefix *be-* (his, hers, their) denotes belonging, and can be found in several place names of various geographical types. These names have a 'possessive' tone: *Lalah Beʔunqay* 'Laura's fishing stand'; *Mulis Beyeqox* 'Morris' creek' (Gaspard Creek); *ʔEtsi Beqiyex* 'grandfather's family use area'; *Galin Benen* 'Galene's land' (a garden); *Nisdẑun Bequngh* 'Owl's (Henry Case's) house'; *ʔEsnin Betl'ech'id* '*ʔEsnin*'s (Alexander's) meadow'; and *ʔAgad Bebiny* 'Agatha's lake'; to name a few. Other names are less 'possessive' in tone, but mark similar relationships to place. *ʔAwi Gwedeghint'ih* 'where Howie cut hay', for example, reveals that this meadow is known to be where *ʔAwi* (Howie) cut(s) wild hay.

I have had several conversations with knowledge keepers over the years about the consequences for using Tŝilhqot'in resources without permission. I have myself been openly scolded for shooting a few grouse in Tŝilhqot'in territory without having sought explicit permission from the local community's leadership. Given the long and often harsh winters in the Chilcotin, respectfully avoiding another family's *qiyex*, *ʔunqay*, or even hay meadow helps to ensure that family's chances of making it to spring. Historically, conditions were often so dire that less fortunate Tŝilhqot'in had to overwinter among *Nuxalkmc* relatives in the more bountiful Bella Coola Valley. Infringing on another family's resources without consent was once, therefore, punishable by death. Tŝilhqot'in are also the most generous people I have ever met, and people in need who ask for help will always receive it from those who can afford to share. Still, these conditions show important context for Tŝilhqot'in possessive place names.

Conclusion

"Without a historical check," wrote Stewart (1975, 161), "the student of names is sometimes, inevitably, left in an either-or predicament" regarding which category to place a given name. This may be true, but I have fewer scruples about embracing ambiguity, even if it means avoiding the application of a classification system altogether. Tŝilhqot'in place names don't *need* to be classified, and all categories beyond, perhaps, 'categorical meanings', are etic contrivances which may or may not complement emic understandings, and may or may not be useful in the world. If proposed categories don't serve as opportunities for better understanding Tŝilhqot'in toponymy, both in the general and in the specific, or if their applications don't produce positive outcomes for Tŝilhqot'in in the world, they can be disregarded.

Stewart did, however, make it clear that the goal of his work, or the work of any toponymist, should be to elucidate place names—to shed light on all of their qualities and dimensions. He was writing before the critical toponymy movement and was therefore not as attuned to contested naming practices. He was also not a linguist or anthropologist, and his approach to names shows weaknesses when it comes to non-European contexts. Nonetheless, I share Stewart's ultimate goal, both in this chapter and throughout this entire thesis: to shed light on place names in order that their nuances, complexities, and richness may be more visible. Place names are important elements of Tŝilhqot'in cultural heritage and therefore new strategies including the creation of place name typologies should be considered if they can positively contribute to better protection, understandings, celebration, and ongoing usage of Tŝilhqot'in place names. I hope this chapter has been helpful in this pursuit, shedding light on some geographic, linguistic, ontological, and historical dimensions of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy.

Chapter 7:
Conclusions, questions, and reflections

Anthropologist Tim Ingold stressed that "[t]he objective of ethnography is to describe the lives of people other than ourselves, with an accuracy and sensitivity honed by detailed observation and prolonged first-hand experience" (2008, 69). As *ethnography* is a core methodology of this research, I have tried to keep the emphasis on description throughout these chapters, presenting what I have read, what I have heard, and what I have seen. What has emerged is a picture of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy as a system and set of place names that are multi-dimensional with many particularities. Now that this work is drawing to an end, I turn away from the ethnographic and towards the *anthropological*, closing with some reflections on how themes that have emerged throughout these chapters connect with and have bearing upon the world beyond the Chilcotin.

Contrasting it with ethnography, Ingold described the objective of anthropology as "[seeking] a generous, comparative but nevertheless critical understanding of human being and knowing in the one world we all inhabit" (2008, 69). This is a distinction that resonates with me. Until this point, I have tried to let Tŝilhqot'in voices and perspectives lead the direction of the ethnography—following the object of indigenous discourse, as it were. But Tŝilhqot'in-specific themes of heritage, happenings, supernatural landscapes, relational etymological processes, territoriality, and geographical perception each have the potential to inform broader theoretical discourses in anthropology, geography, archaeology, cartography, ethnohistory, heritage studies, and onomastics.

Having set out to let theoretical possibilities emerge as conclusions rather than as a preconceived framework, I would highlight these themes as important areas for future research

not just with Tŝilhqot'in toponymy but with toponymy as a more universal human phenomenon. I have learned from Tŝilhqot'in toponymy several things that stand out to me as key theoretical conclusions which extend beyond the Tŝilhqot'in context and, I think, offer exciting new directions for theoretical inquiry. The first of these is that place names fundamentally *live* in our collective memories, rather than through their static textual representations. Second, place names—as they emerge through everyday engagement with the world rather than through contrived attempts to order it—connect with the key spatio-temporal phenomenon of *happenings*. A third theoretical conclusion that I have learned from Tŝilhqot'in toponymy is the central importance of contextualising place names within dynamic heritage assemblages that entangle together the material and the immaterial, requiring us as recipients, stewards, and conveyors of this heritage in ever-ongoing, active, and relational processes. These are fertile areas for future work.

Beyond these theoretical conclusions, I also want to use this concluding chapter to reflect on one particular theme that has posed an unresolved issue throughout each of these chapters—that many of the contemporary applications that are calling on Tŝilhqot'in place names to perform ever new roles in the world make less visible the nuanced and multiplistic dimensions of Tŝilhqot'in toponymy. This is a paradox, as Tŝilhqot'in toponymy as well as culture, language, history, and so on, are in many ways made *more* visible when they are labeled on maps, displayed on signs, or adopted into official records. They may even be better preserved in these new forms as language fluency rates continue to drop, and connections to traditional knowledge systems are also endangered. However, in these forms they will be preserved as low-resolution representations. Relying on these tangible representations of intangible heritage will undoubtedly result in some degree, perhaps a high degree, of loss—of context, nuance, and richness, and also

loss of many names, versions, pronunciations, and interpretations which are key to the richness of this dynamic form of heritage.

For some insight on this problem, I turn to German anthropologist Thorolf Lipp and his 2013 article, *Materializing the immaterial*. Lipp highlighted the same paradox I pointed to above as a problem for all forms of intangible cultural heritage, and also noted that there are no easy solutions. Although he doesn't offer many *answers*, Lipp (2013) offers many insightful *questions* on the problem of what he calls 'medialising' intangible heritage—making it tangible through various audiovisual media formats. If immaterial culture (like place names) are understood to be intangible heritage, and if it is therefore intended to be inventoried, preserved, and widely shared and distributed, Lipp concludes that medialisation is a necessary process. In these circumstances, Lipp (2013, 145) asks questions of 'how' this can or should occur:

> Can the fundamental openness of immaterial culture be represented other than in direct and physical person-to-person interaction? Is it possible to create adequate audiovisual representations that are specifically tailored to the needs of safeguarding, disseminating and archiving Intangible Heritage? And what does "adequate" mean? Can immaterial practices be reinterpreted and revitalized through their medialization and virtualization, or does this merely reduce them to pieces of folklore and museum curiosities? Which narrative forms should be applied? How can external representations by the outsider, self-representation by the insider and shared representations… relate to each other in a fruitful way? Due to the content, agency and narrative form of the producer, are some types of representation more valid than others? And who decides that? Some intangible heritage practices are already endangered. If parts of the knowledge are missing, how should this be dealt with in audiovisual representations? Does medialized intangible heritage become heritage itself?

Each of these questions apply to Tŝilhqot'in toponymy and the toponymic practices that TNG is involved with. While it does seem like leaning on traditional protocols can help resolve some of these questions—like using the names, pronunciations, and interpretations of the elders who grew up most connected with the places in question—there will inevitably be disagreements, and some elders' grandmother's knowledge will be disrespected when it is not chosen to be put up on

that road sign, or labeled on that map. These questions therefore remain open in the Tŝilhqot'in context.

Lipp (2013, 145-6) then goes on to questions of 'who' should be involved in processes that medialise intangible heritage:

> Whose job is it to produce intangible heritage media? Indigenous media producers? Visual anthropologists? Independent film-makers? Commercial film-makers? Who is supposed to pay for it? The state? UNESCO? Universities? Museums? Research foundations? … In a postcolonial world, what is the role of scientific specialists such as anthropologists or visual anthropologists? What is the use of their expensive scientific research if the knowledge created is, perhaps for political reasons, received critically by the source communities? Or if it is produced exclusively for an extremely limited audience of scientific peers and neither fed back into the communities nor made visible in (global) cultural memory? If there are different ways of performing intangible heritage practices and if they are performed differently at different places, who defines and decides what is to be medialized? What is the role of the people depicted? Who is the owner of intellectual property rights associated with Intangible Heritage? Who should be credited and who should materially benefit from medialized Intangible Heritage? The individual performer? The whole community? … The chiefs? Indigenous film-makers? Visual anthropologists? … UNESCO? The state? All of them? None of them?

Again, all of these questions resonate in Tŝilhqot'in toponymic contexts. In particular, what is the role of TNG, the Tŝilhqot'in communities, other Tŝilhqot'in non-profit organisations, and individual elders and knowledge keepers to make 'official' or even 'unofficial' representations of Tŝilhqot'in place names? And on what authority? Again, if we lean on protocol, as I think we should, the elders and knowledge keepers do hold the most authority but they very often do not have the means, resources, or capabilities to carry out major projects involving Tŝilhqot'in place names. Often, the Tŝilhqot'in communities also don't have the capacity to carry out these projects either. TNG has been filling this capacity gap, for now, but it is not without controversy. Just as everyone can at times be critical of their governments, not all Tŝilhqot'in think that TNG has the authority to make the call on cultural representation projects like museum exhibits, or place name adoptions at the BC GNO. Band and Nation politics come into play when making

these decisions, and again, inevitably, some people are left feeling as though their grandparents' knowledge is being ignored and disrespected. Lipp's questions of 'who' therefore also remain open with Tŝilhqot'in toponymy.

Finally, Lipp (2013, 146) has 'for whom' questions which connect with the heart of the paradox of medialisation:

> For whom should audiovisual representations of intangible heritage be produced? For contemporary or future generations? For members of the respective cultural group, for instance as a remembrance tool for the practitioners? For scholarly research? For display in museums? … *Does their raising awareness of intangible heritage outweigh the fact that these are created solely for the sake of entertainment and often at the cost of extreme abbreviation and even falsification?* [emphasis added]

This last question hits the hardest for me, and causes me the greatest amount of concern in my work with Tŝilhqot'in toponymy. I have been asked to contribute to Tŝilhqot'in place name documentation, preservation, understanding, and celebration, largely to support the continuation of age place name practices of learning, using, remembering, reflecting on, etymologising, and so on. I can already see how some of the place names that I have chosen to stand in place of multiple others on maps or on signs are beginning to concretise among younger generations. When I hear TNG staff, younger Tŝilhqot'in adults, or older Tŝilhqot'in who didn't grow up in their language, state with confidence that '*this* is the correct place name, because it is here, on this map', I am not filled with satisfaction that my work has contributed to place name learning. I am instead disappointed that all the richness of other names, versions, pronunciations, spellings, orthographic representations, and interpretations of meaning and location are one step closer to becoming irrelevant, or being forgotten.

Even if these details are recorded in a spatial database, who has access to it? Even if they are published into a comprehensive inventory of names, like Richardson and Galloway's (2011)

Nooksack place names, or Hunn *et al.*'s (2015) *Sahaptian place names atlas*, or even other digital atlas platforms which can include audiovisual media, there will be a great deal of loss of meanings, values, and details because again, the knowledge associated with place names is itself being further medialised. Just as 'the word is not the thing' and 'the map is not the territory' (see Korzybski 1933), any single representation of a place name and its meaning is only ever a model, a version, an instantiation of a much deeper phenomenon that is collectively held in the minds and on the mouths of many people—past, present, and future.

In the same spirit of Lipp's (2013) final question, above, I ask: just as most Tŝilhqot'in language keepers see the role of the written language as a tool to preserve and revitalise the spoken language, can we look to these new roles of Tŝilhqot'in place names as tools for preserving and revitalising at least some of the richness of Tŝilhqot'in heritage? I think the answer to this questions has to be yes, but not without a caveat. I conclude, therefore, that the solution to this paradox is not only to invest in *new* technologies to better represent and disseminate Tŝilhqot'in toponymy in novel forms, but to simultaneously double down on the *oldest* technology: spending time on the land with elders—learning, remembering, using, sharing, and reflecting on Tŝilhqot'in place names.

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