

Re-Imagining S'ólh Téméxw: Tunnel Narratives in a Stó:lō Spiritual Geography

by

Margaret Louise Robbins  
B.A, University of Saskatchewan, 2008

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## **Supervisory Committee**

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## Abstract

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Stories exist throughout S'olh Téméxw, the traditional territory of the Stó:l̓ō people in the Lower Fraser Valley of British Columbia, of subterranean tunnels connecting disparate locations. These stories, recounted in archival records and by contemporary Stó:l̓ō community members, provide a gateway into Stó:l̓ō spiritual connections to place. Through the tunnels, I will explore the complexities of a subterranean spiritual geography – what is significant about the tunnel stories and what they can say about the way that Stó:l̓ō people relate to the place world of the valley. Central to this thesis is ideas of imagining and re-imagining space. Through the exploration of the tunnel stories, and the complex and often cross-cultural research relationships that they are recounted in, I hope to show that the connections the tunnels provide can bring distant places, both physical and mental, together in a social imagination. This thesis focuses on the relationships that the tunnel narratives describe – relationships between people and places, researchers and storytellers, physical and metaphysical landscapes, and cultural ways of imagining the space of the valley.

## Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
List of Figures .....	v
Acknowledgments .....	vi
Introduction: Tunnels and Relationships .....	1
Chapter One: Theorizing Spiritual Landscapes .....	16
Chapter Two: Tunnel Narratives and Storied Relationships .....	47
Chapter Three: Colonial Encounters and Relationships of Imagination .....	87
Conclusion: Boundaries and Identities .....	106
Bibliography.....	111

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of Stó:lō Traditional Territory.....	15
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## Introduction: Tunnels and Relationships

In the summer of 2009 I started the research for this project. It all began with my first interview with Albert ‘Sonny’ McHalsie, cultural advisor to the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre. Stories were of primary interest to McHalsie and my research project grew out of his desire to document, record and think through stories that included travel through mystical, underground tunnels.<sup>1</sup> He introduced me to this body of stories and to the idea of mystical tunnels. The idea that lakes could be hiding powerful passageways in their depths caught my imagination. Mysterious connections, that could be deadly, with histories that went back to mytho-historical times reminded me that to know a place like this (and perhaps others as well), one had both to engage with stories that give the place meaning, and to remain open to the possibilities those stories revealed.

From McHalsie I learned that there is an entire network of subterranean portals throughout the Fraser Valley of British Columbia. Stories about these mystical portals or tunnels provide connections between disparate places. This underground network is part of the spiritual and literary geography of the Stó:lō People of British Columbia. Tunnel narratives exist at the intersection of people, place and story. In this thesis I analyze and interpret a group of stories about tunnels and tunnel travel produced in the cultural context of the Stó:lō First Nation: this analysis is set against the backdrop of their internal and external community relationships.

Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin writes, “Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are

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<sup>1</sup> Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chilliwack, B.C, May 12, 2009

populated by intentions.”<sup>2</sup> The most basic building blocks of stories, the words that comprise them, are full of cultural meaning, texture, and intention. The stories I read in the archives, and heard told aloud, described tunnels with mystical properties, some with the ability to provide instantaneous travel, grant power, or kill the traveler. Unlike the storied topography of the aboveground world, these tunnels will not visually reveal themselves to an unaware bystander. They are part of a hidden spiritual landscape - sacred places of the mind more than sacred places of the physical terrain. I explore this concealed spiritual landscape of the Stó:l̓o people and its implications for the multiple ways in which the Fraser Valley can be understood, imagined and visualized. It is important to recognize how these processes of creating meaning using physically nested narratives influence how relationships to other people, other cultures and other places are imagined. The tunnel stories are a portal into the way Stó:l̓o people historically understood and imagined the depths of their territory and the evolution of this hidden geography. Of central concern for my work are the intersections between ways of speaking of spirituality and place, people and environmental consciousness, stories and storytellers, and maps and geographical reality.

The tunnel stories are housed both in archives and the oral repertoires of modern Stó:l̓o people. They are one way of thinking about how Stó:l̓o people historically and currently understand their relationship to place, to each other, and to the wider world composed of settler and Indigenous communities. There is nothing, on the surface, that seems to hold these stories together aside from the potential inclusion of a tunnel. They sprawl across many genres, areas and ages. References to them exist scattered through

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Janet Maybin, “Language, Struggle and Voice: The Bakhtin/Volosinov Writings,” in M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S.J. Yates, S. J. (Eds.), *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader* (London: Sage Publications, 2001): 68.

archival materials, and versions of the same story can exist both with and without a tunnel.<sup>3</sup> The connections in and between the stories are sometimes tenuous and, with this in mind, I explore the social life and intentions of the stories and storytellers, myself included, attempting to understand what the tunnel stories mean. This analysis is grounded in the understandings I carry of who the Stó:lō are, my own position as student and researcher, and the parameters of the project itself. It is fitting to introduce this thesis with introductions to these foundations. All of these introductions, and indeed the entire project, are about relationships between people and places, between stories and environment, between storyteller and listener, and between settler and Stó:lō.

### **S'ólh Téméxw te ikw'elo**

It is difficult to define the identity boundaries of the Stó:lō people. The geographic demands of reserves, river systems, and international borders all contribute to how Stó:lō, and wider Coast Salish, designations are politically, culturally and academically applied. Early anthropologists created the Coast Salish grouping based on linguistic patterns and historical ties in coastal British Columbia and Washington.<sup>4</sup> The Stó:lō are only one part of this larger historically defined culture world. It is almost impossible at this historical juncture to disentangle identity categories based on pre-contact cultural ties and the imposition of settler and government distinctions. The identity politics of who is Stó:lō, and the larger question of who is Coast Salish, are inextricably tied to the politics of resources rights, treaty negotiations, and debates over

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<sup>3</sup> For example, there are many versions of the Sxwó:xwey mask stories and some include no tunnels, others include one, and still others include multiple tunnels.

<sup>4</sup> Alexandra Harmon, "Coast Salish History," in Bruce Granville Miller, ed. *Be Of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007): 30.

contemporary cultural identity. These tensions reveal themselves, and are sometimes hidden, in the stories that are embedded in S'ólh Téméxw.<sup>5</sup>

David Schaepe writes, “As defined for the BC Treaty Process, the Stó:lō Nation asserts a traditional territory equivalent to the lower Fraser River watershed, stretching along the Fraser River from the Gulf of Georgia to the lower Fraser Canyon.”<sup>6</sup> The language of this definition points to some of the identity tensions that inform my understanding of the term Stó:lō. Schaepe’s assertion is geographical, naming the region that the Stó:lō claim as “traditional territory.” This is the working definition for a specific relationship, that of the treaty process. This claim to territory is premised on a historical relationship to the land that the Stó:lō name as S'ólh Téméxw. Family lines are embedded in physical locations, creating and maintaining that historic relationship to land. Relationships to places are genealogical and, at its core, defining the Stó:lō First Nation is about family relationships and the familial connections between people and places.<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that these family lines are clearly denoted and well defined. They are complicated webs of relationships that are continuously contested both internally and externally.

Who the Stó:lō are, though, in fact depends on which Stó:lō people you ask. Definitions are fluid and made to fit the circumstances at hand. Some working definitions used in the context of communities might not fit larger definitions used in negotiations with the state. The need to define a cultural, historical, and territorial claim in order to

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<sup>5</sup> See Figure 1: Map of Stó:lō Traditional Territory. Map Courtesy of Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, Chilliwack, BC (2010). Used with permission.

<sup>6</sup> David Schaepe, “Stó:lō Identity and the Cultural Landscape of S'ólh Téméxw,” in Bruce Granville Miller, ed. *Be Of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007): 237.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce Granville Miller, “Introduction,” in Bruce Granville Miller, ed. *Be Of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007): 19.

negotiate with the Canadian Government often neglects the internal community politics that complicate the definitions of who is Stó:lō, or who can speak for the Stó:lō. Keith Thor Carlson links these divisions with familial historical connections to resources. Claims to fishing spots, for example, are legitimated through collective recognition of tradition.<sup>8</sup> Communities who are not members of Stó:lō Nation, who may be independently negotiating the treaty process or abstaining from it, may have conflicting territorial claims. Since claims to identity and claims to land are so complexly interwoven, identifying as Stó:lō can mean a myriad of things.

Defining who, or what, is Stó:lō is so much more complicated than I, as a graduate student from outside the community, can hope to address comprehensively. What is important is to recognize that issues of identity, land, legitimacy and tradition are intricately tied together. Speaking to one issue quickly becomes speaking to them all. My understanding is that the Stó:lō people have historically lived and currently live in the lower Fraser Valley. By living, I mean they have physically, spiritually and culturally occupied and identified with this valley, defining themselves as People of the River.<sup>9</sup> They define the Fraser Valley as S'ólh Téméxw te ikw'elo, translated to English as 'our land.'<sup>10</sup>

The impetus to define First Nations groups is fraught with contention. The struggles are over land, but also over who has the right to create the definitions of people and places. Claiming an identity is about more than self-definition and cultural ascription.

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<sup>8</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, "Toward an Indigenous Historiography: Events, Migrations, and the Formation of "Post-Contact" Coast Salish Collective Identities," in Bruce Granville Miller, ed. *Be Of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007): 139.

<sup>9</sup> Schaepe, "Stó:lō Identity and the Cultural Landscape of S'ólh Téméxw," 255.

<sup>10</sup> Naxaxalhts'i, Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, "We Have to Take Care of Everything That Belongs to Us," in Bruce Granville Miller, ed. *Be Of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007): 82.

Academic Alexandra Harmon writes, “Aware that the power to tell their histories is inseparable from the power to determine who they are, Indians are asserting the right – even an exclusive right, in some places – to be their own historians.”<sup>11</sup> History demonstrates long-term relationships to other communities and to place. Stories inform cultural identities and legitimate familial, community and state relationships. Who has the power to tell stories contributes to who has the right to be Stó:lō and, in turn, who can claim to be ‘of the River’. The relationship between identity, family, story and place is so complex that I can only hope to point in the direction of that complexity. For the purposes of my experiences and research with the Stó:lō I define them as the Indigenous people of the lower Fraser Valley who share, to a greater and lesser degree, a culture, history and connection to the land. Geographical, historical and cultural divisions that are both internally conceived and externally imposed mark their boundaries and cultural, social and physical closeness brings them together in a shared identity, however porous and fluid it may be.

### **Historiography, Legacy, and Me**

Indigenous people have long been of interest to academics, particularly anthropologists and ethnographers. Early academics often overlooked the Coast Salish groups because of the perceived cultural vibrancy of other coastal groups and the intensive settlement of the Coast Salish territory by non-Indigenous communities. This led academics interested in researching some kind of pre-contact ‘authentic’ Indigenous culture away from the Coast Salish.<sup>12</sup> Eventually, though, researchers did do work in these areas and the foremost thinkers in anthropology, including Franz Boas and Claude

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<sup>11</sup> Alexandra Harmon, “Coast Salish History,” 45.

<sup>12</sup> Miller, “Introduction,” 2.

Levi-Strauss, worked amongst the Stó:lō and other Coast Salish groups. A burgeoning publication of work on the Coast Salish occurred in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>13</sup> Organizations such as the Stó:lō Nation began hiring academics themselves, and the work produced in these relationships, as well as research relationships that developed outside of this employment framework, was more directed by community interests. These interests include research work used in litigation or to historicize territory claims.

The relationship between Stó:lō people and settler researchers has a complex pedigree that has resulted in a re-formulation of current research projects. Contemporary academics who work with the Stó:lō, as with other Indigenous communities, are held more accountable to ethical standards created by the communities they work in.<sup>14</sup> Equally, they are influenced by theoretical positions emerging from the academy including post-structural, post-modernist, and post-colonial thought. Community politics, academic currents, and institutional ethics must all be navigated concurrently. The academic genealogy is problematic, particularly in terms of its almost uniform whiteness. It is, however, the tradition that I am a part of as a young, white, female graduate student who came to community-based research through an ethnohistory field school I attended in May of 2009. I did not grow up in the Fraser Valley, nor even in British Columbia, making me an outsider in a cultural, racial, and geographic sense. As an outsider and a student certain stories were told, while others may not have been. My position influenced

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<sup>13</sup> Miller, "Introduction," 1.

<sup>14</sup> For example, my own research proposal had to be submitted to the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre for ethical clearance before I could work in the community. All academics who want to conduct research within Stó:lō communities must go through this process to ensure an adherence to the research policies of the Stó:lō Nation.

my relationship to my research and the people who generously allowed me to work with them.<sup>15</sup>

My position as researcher influenced my readings of archival material and the process of conducting oral interviews. Alison Pullen argues that “Research is itself a social practice in which researchers not only perform the customary research functions by constructing the field and representing the other, gathering, questioning and interrogating data, but also produce and reproduce the researcher – as self, as identity, as authorial voice and even as research subject.”<sup>16</sup> This awareness of representation is unsettling in the context of Indigenous communities, but the addition of self-representation can be equally problematic. Walking the fine line between self-indulgence and invisibility, I intend my thesis to interrogate my source material and my role in its interpretation and creation.

Stories are always relational in their telling, they do not exist without storytellers and listeners.<sup>17</sup> The recorded tunnels stories have come to me filtered through the relationships between ethnographers and informants, myself included. When using these sources, I am aware that I am not accessing an unmediated voice of a Stó:lō storyteller but rather witnessing a narrative performance, shaped by a relationship with all the complexities of cross-cultural communication and power. This research is informed by the writings of amateur and professional ethnographers who worked with the Stó:lō between 1895 and today. Aside from the oral interviews conducted by Stó:lō Nation

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<sup>15</sup> For more information about the Ethnohistory Fieldschool see <http://web.uvic.ca/vv/stolo/>.

<sup>16</sup> Alison Pullen, “Gendering the Research Self: Social Practice and Corporeal Multiplicity in the Writing of Organizational Research,” *Gender, Work and Organization*, 13(3), (2006): 278.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Jackson, “West-African Warscapes: Storytelling Events, Violence, and the Appearance of the past,” *Anthropological Quarterly*, 78(2), (2005): 359

cultural advisor Albert ‘Sonny’ McHalsie, the entirety of the archival holdings were recorded and interpreted by white academics. Likewise, the interviews conducted for this research include relational dynamics equally complex. The majority of storytellers and recorders are men, with only a handful of women participating in the records I have accessed.

Like my ethnographic predecessors, I have various relationships to Stó:l̓ō communities and people. These relationships come out of my time at field school, and the multi-year relationship between Stó:l̓ō Nation and the field school conducted with the University of Victoria and the University of Saskatchewan. My project is just one of many projects that have emerged from this arrangement. The field school itself is premised on ideas of reciprocally beneficial community-based research conducted under the ethical guidelines of both the Stó:l̓ō Nation and the two participant schools. Community members and academics work towards mutually valuable research that fulfills the requirements of the students and produces a useful report for the community. The interviews and connections created through this process have provided the primary research of this project, a project that was itself chosen by community members.<sup>18</sup> Lisa Weems argues that reciprocity in research relationships should include an “investigation of the historical, social, cultural, and locally contingent discourse that enable particular knowledges and practices of representation.”<sup>19</sup> This research is part of a larger web of relationships between the academy and the Stó:l̓ō Nation. It should be viewed as one

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<sup>18</sup> The ethnohistory field school projects are selected by both the Stó:l̓ō Research and Resource Management Centre and the professors from the University of Victoria and the University of Saskatchewan. My particular project was put forward by the community.

<sup>19</sup> Lisa Weems, “Unsettling Politics, Locating Ethics: Representations of Reciprocity in Postpositivist Inquiry,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 12, (2006): 1008.

avenue of this wider inter-connective dynamic of cross-cultural, community-based research.

### **The Tunnel Project**

From a list of possible topics I selected the project of documenting and mapping tunnel stories using archival records and oral interviews conducted with culturally knowledgeable community members. The report I produced, with the digital and physical copies of the interviews I conducted, was given to the archives at Stó:lō Nation as part of the field school agreement. The original questions focused primarily on searching the field notes and published materials of early ethnographers for references to tunnels or portals in order to compile a list of tunnel sites and associated stories. From there, I mapped the tunnel locations and attempted to discover if the existence of tunnels fostered a social closeness between disparate communities.

This project was one branch of a larger effort by the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Center to collect stories and place names. The production of *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* in 2001 was an outcome of this effort, and this book showcases the ways in which Stó:lō cultural geographies are both explained and mapped. The tunnel project fits into this larger work of asserting a cultural geography in the lower Fraser Valley. Thoroughly engaged in this work is the cultural advisor to Stó:lō Nation, Naxaxalhts'i (Albert 'Sonny' McHalsie). McHalsie is my access point to my own project, as it grows out of his interest in place names and collecting stories. In the edited collection *Be Of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish*, he writes, "I want to share my perspective of our unique Stó:lō culture and history and its importance of the ultimate

recognition of Stó:lō Aboriginal rights and title.”<sup>20</sup> In his view, collecting and mapping these cultural geographies will contribute toward the largest struggle that the Stó:lō and other First Nations groups are facing, that of asserting physical and cultural rights to their traditional territory. While the tunnel narratives are not explicitly claims to physical space, they do represent a familial connection between Stó:lō people and their physical landscape and are therefore part of this complex political claim.

Through this project, I became increasingly interested in the complexities of the stories. The layered relationships within the narratives as well as within the research processes altered my direction. Moreover, the intricate relationship between archival ethnography and the interviews I was conducting challenged my own role in the representation of these stories. Out of the field school report, I expanded the project to include a more complex discussion of the relationships surrounding the tunnel narratives, particularly the spiritual relationship between Stó:lō people, the physical environment of S’olh Téméxw, and stories. The tunnel narratives are an interesting access point into a Stó:lō cultural geography because of their hidden nature and the diversity of stories that include a portal in some way. Unexpected questions have become increasingly interesting, such as the important claim to spiritual and literary space that is embedded in the narratives of tunnels. From here, I explored the theoretical, storied, and visual relationships that connected Stó:lō people to place.

A wide range of literature dealing with the spiritual and emotional connections between people and place offers a place to ground this research. Like tunnels connecting disparate communities, the theoretical framework connects literature from a wide array of

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<sup>20</sup> Naxaxalhts’i, “We Have to Take Care of Everything that Belongs to Us,”: 82.

disciplines. Grappling with the nature of the relationship between people and places has been the focus of geography, history, philosophy, and anthropology. Indigenous cultural communities offer alternative accounts of such relationships that create fissures in the traditional theoretical work on people, place and the sacred in North America. In my first chapter I explore the academic literature and the implications and applicability of these concepts to narratives of tunnel travel.

Building on this grounding in the theoretical and historiographical literature, in Chapter Two I look at the stories themselves and the ways that narratives of tunnel travel simultaneously challenge and support academic ideas concerning human relationships to their environment and the production of cultural identities. There is complexity in the tunnel stories themselves and the research relationships through which they are expressed. The story genealogies and the trends that appear within them are part of this hidden spiritual geography only visible through narrative. In this chapter, I explore stories and the relationships between storyteller and listener, researcher and informant, people and place, disparate communities and across cultural divides.

The third chapter deals primarily with how tunnel stories affect the way space is imagined in the Fraser Valley. Using maps as a medium, I explore the ways in which Stó:l̓ō and settler claims to the way space is imagined are negotiated. Initially, my interest in mapping the stories and spiritual landscape was based on the parameters of my original field school report. By thinking through the cross-cultural research relationships that documented the tunnel stories in the archives, I became increasingly interested in forms of spatial imagination presented to me in that initial phase of my study. Stó:l̓ō people are interested in mapping stories as a claim to territory, a claim to imagine and narrate that

territory. Thus, map making and story-telling become formats of political and cultural negotiation and reclamation of the valley. The dialogue between ethnographer and storyteller, Indigenous community and colonial authority, occur cartographically, so to speak. A study of these stories also offers us an avenue to explore the ways in which different spatial imaginations, that of settler and Stó:lō people, can be put into dialogue. It is here that major efforts to describe and lay claim to space are focused – asserting rights to the literary, spiritual and social space of S’olh Téméxw.

### **Claiming Space, Offering Disclaimers:**

As the tunnels are under the surface of S’olh Téméxw, politics are just under the surface of this work. Anthropologist Toon van Meijl argues that ethnography suffers from the political tension between observing and participating.<sup>21</sup> Participating and honestly engaging with the politics of land, culture and identity is difficult to reconcile with critical academic analysis. In the case of my project, I am conscious of my own desire to produce something that is of use to the Stó:lō people with whom I worked. With that in mind, I am also aware that Stó:lō community members might legitimately disagree with my interpretations. Even technically accurate quotations can be changed beyond recognition in the mind of another person, across academic and cultural borders.<sup>22</sup> I am cognizant of the potential for this project to take on tones I did not intend, or to speak to issues on which I do not consider myself, by any means, an authority. What I offer is the research and analysis that is, in my best estimation, appropriate and honest.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Toon van Meijl, “The Critical Ethnographer as Trickster,” *Anthropological Forum*, 15(3), (2005): 243.

<sup>22</sup> Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981): 340.

<sup>23</sup> This reflection is influenced by the work of Elizabeth Povinelli, *Labor’s Lot: The Power, History, and Culture of Aboriginal Action*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993): 2.

The subsurface political tensions are generated largely by the position of Stó:lō communities negotiating title to S'olh Téméxw. These are more than negotiations with the Government of Canada for recognition and control. They are negotiations for land in all its senses - physical, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional. The tunnel stories are only one intersection of these claims, one site of negotiation within distinct Stó:lō communities, between the Stó:lō and the state, between Stó:lō and settler cultures. These sites of interaction can be national or exist within the imagination of one person. Mystical portals that in the past might have functioned culturally as cautionary tales about dangerous waters now potentially take on new functions as indications of sacred places and social closeness. Bakhtin writes, "For, we repeat, great novelistic images continue to grow and develop even after the moment of their creation; they are capable of being creatively transformed in different eras, far distant from the day and hour of their original birth."<sup>24</sup> Narratives of mystical tunnels are in the process of being transformed to serve new cultural purposes, while still providing or bespeaking a relationship between stories, places and people.

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<sup>24</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 422.



## Chapter One: Theorizing Spiritual Landscapes

The layers of connection between people and the physical locations they inhabit physically, spiritually and emotionally are, even in their most simplistic rendering, immensely complex. Anthropologist Keith Basso writes,

What do people make of places? The question is as old as people and places themselves, as old as human attachments to portions of the earth. As old, perhaps, as the idea of home, of “our territory” as opposed “their territory,” of entire regions and local landscapes where groups of men and women have invested themselves (their thoughts, their values, their collective sensibilities) and to which they feel they belong. The question is as old as a strong sense of place – and the answer, if there is one, is every bit as complex.<sup>25</sup>

People do not just live on top of their physical environment; they live inside of it.

Through experiences, stories, memories and histories, individuals and communities form bonds with places. The relationship between people and place is hard to see and describe. It is in the way that people have written about connection to place, particularly social and spiritual places, that provides the foundation of my own theoretical framework.

Every academic discipline broaches the relationship between people and places differently. Geographers, philosophers, historians, poets, archeologists, anthropologists, and others have all theorized about the importance of place. The growth of literature dealing with this topic might be indicative of a far-reaching academic renaissance of sorts. Increased interest across disciplinary boundaries since the middle of the twentieth century may point to a fundamental shift within the academy, and perhaps elsewhere, toward a deeper appreciation of the importance of place to people around the world.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996): xiii.

<sup>26</sup> Paul C. Adams, Steven Hoelscher, and Karen E. Till, “Introduction,” *Textures of place: exploring humanist geographies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001): xvii.

Each discipline uses its own specialized language and conceptual frameworks – those that most effectively reflect their modes of thinking. The consequence of this is both a wonderfully rich literature and many complex competing definitions. This is a complicated context for exploring ideas of place, space and landscape in an interdisciplinary framework and establishing working definitions. For the purpose of this project, the ideas of space, place and landscape will be broadly used as reference points.

Space brings to mind an image of a wide expanse and place suggests a specified locality – the macro and the micro of physical environment. E. Relph argues that “Space is amorphous and intangible and not an entity that can be directly described and analyzed. In general it seems that space provides the context for places but derives its meaning from particular places.”<sup>27</sup> This does not mean that space is meaningless, but rather that it is made up of localized centers of experience where people create or draw meaning from the broader expanses. For Stó:lō people, the entirety of their territory, S’olh Téméxw, is a space within which the localities of Peqwpa:qotel or Tekwóthel, for example, provide places of concentrated meaning.

A wider debate exists about the binary that divides space and place. Geographer John Agnew argues that historically ‘space,’ as an academic concept, was used by objectivist theorists whereas place was favoured by those arguing for more subjective and experiential theories.<sup>28</sup> In the definition of space and place provided by Relph, a similar tension can be identified. Space is a more abstract idea when compared with the specificity of place as it encompasses a wide variety of localities of significance. Rather

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<sup>27</sup> Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> John Agnew, “Space: Place,” in Paul Cloke and Rob Johnston, eds, *Spaces of Geographical Thought: Deconstructing Geography’s Binaries* (London: Sage Publications, 2005): 81.

than viewing space as the objective physical environment and place as the subjective experience of a physical setting, both should be recognized as equally participatory in the relationship between people and their physical environments. Places may have a more visceral impact, but the relation between place and space is one of mutual dependence, as opposed to confrontational binary.

Eugene Victor Walter asserts that encounters with ‘place’ include “sensory perceptions, moral judgments, passions, feelings, ideas and orientations.”<sup>29</sup> It is the foci of intimate human interaction with a physical location. Landscape is perhaps the slipperiest geographic definition because, of all three terms, it is the most emotive – focusing the imagination on art or perceptions of beauty in the natural environment. Relph argues that “place has a physical, visual form – a landscape.”<sup>30</sup> Landscape raises the same question of objective and subjective experiences of place. John Wylie asks, “Is landscape the world we are living *in*, or a scene we are looking *at*, from afar?”<sup>31</sup> The connection between landscape and art or photography makes this more complex given the role of the viewer. Landscape inspires nostalgic or romanticized visualizations of nature particularly however, this emotional appeal is also what makes it powerful. Landscapes can also be layers of geography, such as landscapes of imagination or spiritual landscapes which exist as part of a larger geographic space.

Landscape, place and space are three of the terms that litter writing about how people relate to their physical environment. They are the foundations for the study of human interaction with environment – be it localized, broad, visual or otherwise. Places

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<sup>29</sup> Eugene Victor Walter, *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988): 21.

<sup>30</sup> Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 30.

<sup>31</sup> John Wylie, *Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 2007): 1.

comprise the vastness of space and the physicality of landscape. Specific location (place) is the building blocks of both wide ambiguity (space) and physically located scenery (landscape). Starting from the access points provided by these terms, it becomes possible to explore the relationship between humanity and the world at the largest scale and ‘me in my backyard’ at the smallest – how people relate, and have related, to their physical surroundings.

### **Visualizing and Mapping Space:**

Intimately tied to these ideas of space, place and particularly landscape are their cartographic expressions. The fields of cartography and cartographic history demonstrate the dominant European way of imagining and visualizing space. Maps offer examples of the most widely conceived ways of imaging space, place and landscape. The importance of these visualizations lies in their power, authority and sustained use. Before engaging in a discussion of academic approaches to the relationship between people and place, it is useful to explore the cartographic currents that often shape the imaginative framework on which those relationships are conducted or created.

Art historian Erwin Panofsky writes, “a sphere obviously cannot be unrolled on a surface.”<sup>32</sup> Maps are often assumed to be accurate representations of space, giving the viewer a perspective of separation, allowing us to look down from above. Mapping is premised on the idea that geographical space can be accurately represented on a flat sheet. Mark Monmonier argues that, “Not only is it easy to lie with maps, it’s essential. To portray meaningful relationships for a complex three-dimensional world on a flat

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<sup>32</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, Translated by Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 1997): 36.

sheet of paper or a video screen, a map must distort reality.”<sup>33</sup> If Monmonier is right, then a truly accurate representation of ‘reality’ through mapping is not only impossible, it is undesirable. What maps are designed to do is to show the relationship which exists between places. Whereas a Stó:lō cultural imagination may pull places closer together, maps provide a different narrative of distance – how far apart places appear from above. Early maps drawn by Stó:lō people in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century use a topologic frame of reference to show the relationships between places. Instead of using the geometry of precise locations favoured in Euclidean map-making, these maps show locations in terms of their relational closeness to each other.<sup>34</sup> Topologic frameworks describe physical space in terms of importance rather than geometry.

A map is not a description of space, but a construction. Christian Jacob states, “Thus it could be said that the map of the earth does not represent but gives birth to the earth, creates it, makes it visible, as a reality that can be thought and seen only after it has been represented.”<sup>35</sup> Maps are, like other artistic forms, highly cultural. They are largely a Western way of representing and of seeing space. Accepting the cultural and constructive nature of maps, and their imperial history, allows for a thick description of the images themselves. J.B Harley argues that this process has the potential to reveal “the pregnancy of the opaque.”<sup>36</sup> Viewing maps as cultural texts means that probing the empty spaces, or the silences, can reveal the way geographical space was, and continues to be,

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<sup>33</sup> Mark Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991): 1.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel L. Boxberger and David M. Schaepe, “Stó:lō Mapping and Knowledge of the North Cascades, c. 1859,” in Keith Thor Carlson, ed. *A Stó:lō Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001): 125.

<sup>35</sup> Christian Jacob, *The Sovereign Map: Theoretical Approaches in Cartography Throughout History*, Translated by Tom Conley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006): 272-273.

<sup>36</sup> J.B Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001): 159.

imagined. Maps are designed to promote a specifically visual imagining of space – they are not descriptive of landscapes in the way travel narratives are, nor are they as place focused as stories about specific experiences, but they are all-seeing.<sup>37</sup> Sigmund Freud, using the term scopophilia, argued that every human with the ability to see takes significant pleasure in observing the visual.<sup>38</sup> Maps cater to this pleasure in visualizing our environment. It is a way of seeing, almost as much as a way of drawing, the world.

Maps are powerful cultural forces precisely because they frame the possibilities of understanding geography. John Pickles, in his work *A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping and the Geo-Coded World*, argues, “Cartographic technique is seen as an ongoing approximation to the real, presupposing a correspondence or representational theory of truth.”<sup>39</sup> The distancing of the viewer and the environment suggests an inherently objective distance between creators and created. J.B. Harley’s work on maps and the history of cartography challenges the cultural assumptions that grant the map objective, scientific, and authentic status. Gillian Rose states “Visual imagery is never innocent.”<sup>40</sup> Harley is quick to point out that maps are not immune to the politics imbedded in visual representation. The size differentiation of the north and south on Mercator projection maps frame the world in Eurocentric, and geographically questionable, ways. They emphasize European and North American primacy in the global geography.

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<sup>37</sup> John Pickles, referring to the work of Donna Haraway, describes this imagery as playing to a human desire to have a ‘God’s view’ of the world. John Pickles, *A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping and the Geo-Coded World* (London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>38</sup> Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials, Second Edition* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publishing, 2007): 107.

<sup>39</sup> Pickles, *A History of Spaces*, 46.

<sup>40</sup> Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 26.

Maps have cultural and political authority and Harley argues that, “Much of the power of the map, as a representation of social geography, is that it operates behind a mask of a seemingly neutral science. It hides and denies its social dimensions at the same time as it legitimates.”<sup>41</sup> Harley gives cartographers themselves, of the colonial era particularly, a duplicitous role in the process of establishing cartographic authority.<sup>42</sup> Cartographers, in this estimation, “manufacture power.”<sup>43</sup> While Harley is correct in looking to authorship for explanation, giving cartographers such significant agency assumes they understood their role in creating problematic representations rather than straightforward scientific images. It denies the ways in which culture controls the possibilities of mapmakers to challenge the conventions that frame spatial discourse in the same way that Stó:lō narrative culture dictates the form spiritual geographies take.

The most interesting aspect of the authority of the map is its influence as a cultural discourse. Christian Jacob states, “The map spreads out the entire world before the eyes of those who know how to read it. The eye does not see; it constructs, it imagines space. The map is not an object but a function.”<sup>44</sup> Stories and maps are both cultural functions. In the Lower Fraser Valley, and indeed at all sites of empire, maps made entire continents fit into the cultural framework dictated not in the locality, but rather in the distant foci of empire building. Spiritual geographies, and all counter narratives of geographic significance, were rendered invisible in the intellectual formula of map-making.

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<sup>41</sup> Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 158.

<sup>42</sup> Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 165.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>44</sup> Jacob, *The Sovereign Map*, 11.

As new places were added to the known world, maps had to be rearranged, spaces had to be filled. Early North American maps not only described the environment seen by explorers, but combined both what was viewed and what was imagined.<sup>45</sup> Maps showed what explorers and cartographers saw and also what they hoped and anticipated. J.B. Harley argues, “All maps state an argument about the world and they are propositional in nature.”<sup>46</sup> The arguments proposed evolved as the medium of European mapping attempted not only to adapt to the addition of new places, but to understand them within a distinctly European spatial imagination. Just as tunnel narratives evolve, mapping narratives change.

Explorers who reached North America used the established medium of mapping to try to make sense of the places they saw. If the development of cartography represents an “intellectualization of space over time,” the introduction of the ‘New World’ provided new areas to be intellectualized using a cartographic model.<sup>47</sup> Claiming territory was linked to mapping it, as Karen Piper explains: “What is seen is claimed, or thought to be owned; thus, one is sovereign over that which one sees.”<sup>48</sup> Creating maps allowed explorers to place new and strange landscapes into a rubric of understanding they could comprehend and identify with, and the production of maps allowed a claim to that space

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<sup>45</sup> See Nathaniel Harris, *Mapping the World: Maps and Their History* (San Diego: Thunder Bay Press, 2002) and David Buisseret, ed. *From Sea Charts to Satellite Images: Interpreting North American History Through Maps* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990): 41.

<sup>46</sup> Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 163.

<sup>47</sup> Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *The Power of Projections: How Maps Reflect Global Politics and History* (Westport: Praeger, 2006): 13.

<sup>48</sup> Karen Piper, *Cartographic Fictions: Maps, Race, and Ethnicity* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002): 7.

that was recognized in international law as a claim to territory.<sup>49</sup> Maps concurrently created empire and attempted to understand it.

Empire building, in this visual framework, was firmly rooted in who had the power to imagine, to visually detail, territory. Mathew H. Edney argues that Imperial mapmaking was a new era of European cartography. He states, “mapping by one polity, within its own spatial discourses, of the territory of another establishes a geography of the mind, within which empire can be conceptualized and advocated, and a geography of power, within which empire can be physically constructed. “Empire” is a cartographic construction; modern cartography is the construction of modern imperialism.”<sup>50</sup> Empire, and the geographical space that composes it, required a re-conceiving of the ‘thinkable’ for explorers.<sup>51</sup> The process of understanding and implementing control over, at first in terms of social imagination and eventually in terms of total control, was made visual and possible through maps. Imperial mapping, in many ways, shaped how people now understand or imagine their relationship to physical places. While it is a literature fraught with complexity, it is integral to contemporary approaches to place.

### **The Relationship Between People and Places**

This backdrop of cartographic discourse has influenced the way that modern academics approach notions of space, place, landscape and the human relationship to environment. Historians, generally, have not been particularly interested in the role of place. This is not to say that historians are not interested in the significance of physical

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<sup>49</sup> Piper, *Cartographic Fictions*, 8.

<sup>50</sup> Matthew H. Edney, “The Irony of Imperial Mapping,” in James R. Ackerman, ed. *The Imperial Map* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009): 45.

<sup>51</sup> Notions of the ‘thinkable’ come from Michel De Certeau *The Writing of History*, Translated by Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

environment, but rather that the relationship is either taken for granted or is peripheral to other historical dynamics, such as change over time. W.G. Hoskins, in 1985, wrote *The Making of the English Landscape* in an attempt to locate landscape studies within historical discourse. His work focused on nostalgic descriptions of the English landscape with a particular interest in locality, rural settings and the objective nature of landscape.<sup>52</sup> Hoskins was interested in a historical description of landscape to demonstrate loss, rather than explore how people relate to place and the impact of place on the past.

A decade later, historian Simon Schama attempted again to apply a historical approach to the question of place. His work *Landscape and Memory* explores the connections between place, history and memory. He suggests that there is a cyclical relationship where place is created by memory as much as memory is created by place. Schama writes, “For although we are accustomed to separate nature and human perception into two realms, they are, in fact, indivisible. Before it can ever be a repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock.”<sup>53</sup> Schama, in his argument for the importance of place, promotes the idea that to have an experiential understanding of historical events or phenomena, writers should travel to the physical locations.<sup>54</sup> This is an acknowledgment of the subjective experience of place and a recognition that memory and landscape are deeply connected. Historians are interested in place; in fact they rely on it as a point of comparison or an explanation of difference between countries and communities, but place is generally used as a setting of historical drama.

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<sup>52</sup> Wylie, *Landscape*, 35

<sup>53</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1995): 6.

<sup>54</sup> For a more thorough discussion of this approach see Simon Schama, *Dead Certainties: Unwarranted Speculations* (New York: Knopf, 1991).

Environmental history, in contrast to other streams of history, seems the most obvious place for historians to engage with place. Authors such as William Cronon deal with place through how people conceptualize and engage with ideas of wilderness.<sup>55</sup> These ideas are intrinsically connected with the environmentalist movement. In fact, many environmental historians came to the field through work as activists working for the protection or preservation of natural environments.<sup>56</sup> Some authors trace environmental history as the academic wing of the environmental movement more broadly.<sup>57</sup> Like many anthropologists, these academics grapple with complex political alliances.<sup>58</sup> Environmental historians do deal with relationships to place, but within the framework of preservation of nature. Histories of resource extraction, the creation of parklands and cultural responses to desecration of nature all focus on human interaction, or interference, in the natural world. Some environmental histories, conversely, deal with the impact of natural disasters on human populations or the role of, for example, fire in culture. These historians are fundamentally engaged with the relationship of people to place, but the focus on degradation and impact leaves little room to explore the complex relationships people and communities have with physical places. Through a focus on wilderness and nature, environmental historians neglect how people interact with the environments of their day-to-day social and cultural lives.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1(1), 1996: 16.

<sup>56</sup> See authors such as Samuel P. Hays for examples

<sup>57</sup> Michael P. Cohen, "Comment: Resistance to Wilderness," *Environmental History* 1(1), 1996: 34.

<sup>58</sup> Toon van Meiji, "The Critical Ethnographer as Trickster," *Anthropological Forum*, 15(3), (2005): 241.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas R. Dunlap, "Comment: But what did you go out into the wilderness to see?" *Environmental History* 1(1), 1996: 45.

In his seminal work of the early 1960s, E.H Carr argued “Scientists, social scientists, and historians are all engaged in different branches of the same study: the study of man and his environment, of the effects of man on his environment and of his environment on man.”<sup>60</sup> Carr exposes the underlying connections between history and place, as well as between history and other disciplines. Geographers have, since the 1920s, grappled with how to describe and interpret the way environment and human societies act upon one another, as described by Carr. Prior to the 1920s, ideas of environmental determinism were prevalent. Culture, in this school of thought, was “drawn up through the soles of your boots.”<sup>61</sup> Geography dictated culture. In the 1920s American cultural geographer Carl Sauer, and his Berkeley School approach to the culture - environment binary, challenged this position. Sauer argued that cultures imprinted themselves onto places, rather than the other way around.<sup>62</sup> Both of these positions reflect a wider academic school that argued that it was not a question of relationship but rather of dominance. Environmental determinists and the Berkeley School disagreed about whether culture makes landscape or landscape makes culture.

Sauer, and the intellectual movement he founded, was interested in landscape morphology, premised on a highly descriptive analysis of place. John Wylie describes this position: “the task was to describe the *morphology* – that is, the shape, form and structure – of a given landscape, and in doing so to reveal the characteristics, trace, distribution and effectivity of the human cultures that inhabited and moulded it.”<sup>63</sup> Much

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<sup>60</sup> E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (London: Penguin Books, 1990): 86.

<sup>61</sup> Hilary P.M Winchester, Lily Kong, and Kevin Dunn, *Landscapes: Ways of Imagining the World* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2003): 15.

<sup>62</sup> Winchester, *Landscapes*, 15.

<sup>63</sup> Wylie, *Landscape*, 23.

like the ‘thick description’ of anthropologist Clifford Geertz, Sauer wanted to use thorough descriptions to gain perspective on place. These intricately rendered landscapes, while beautifully described, do not provide insight into the relational aspects of human-environment interaction. There are limits, in the case of cultures and environments, to the amount of insight that can be derived from description alone.

At the same time that cultural geographers argued that culture and community impacted environment, rather than the other way around, experiential geography was being conceived. Beginning in the 1920s, and operating in tandem with the Berkeley School for a number of years, experiential geographers, starting with John K. Wright, challenged the idea that there could only be two ways of understanding relationships between people and places – that of dominance on one side or the other. Wright began working with the term ‘geopiety’ designed to convey the emotional nature of human – place interaction. Wright, and the generation of geographers he inspired, moved toward a more complex understanding of the bidirectional relationship that exists between people and their physical environment.

Yi-Fu Tuan’s theory of topophilia grew out of this notion in the mid 1970s. Topophilia was meant to encompass the entirety of “all the human beings’ affective ties with the material environment.”<sup>64</sup> Tuan set the groundwork for a geography that focuses on relationships rather than a rational separation of feelings and spatial realities. The sentiments of topophilia inspire people to think about the geographic realities they inhabit in terms of their emotional responses to place.<sup>65</sup> This re-imagination of space widens the

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<sup>64</sup> Singh, “Introduction.” 8.

<sup>65</sup> Tuan’s research shows that the geographic realities of a place or community do not necessarily affect the way people think of distance. For example, a person may believe that the school is closer to their home than

possibilities for how communities or individuals can relate emotionally to place; and how this relation can affect how they think about or imagine their environment. Tuan was at the forefront of the movement towards geography of experience, placing emphasis on how people experienced, rather than rationally thought about, the places that were important to them. He argues that “Place is a center of meaning constructed by experience.”<sup>66</sup> People and places are brought into dialogue through physically located experience. Topophilia mediates how people think of places.

Victor Eugene Walter, an intellectual colleague of Tuan’s, developed a theory he called “topistics” or “placeways.” He focused on the ‘grounded intelligence’ of individuals and the role of imagination in the creation of centers of meaning – places.<sup>67</sup> Experience, in this estimation, is both individually encountered and collectively constructed. Perhaps most importantly, experiences and stories belong to a place. Memories, mythologies and histories are physically located. Walter is interested in discovering the full experience of place that combines the rational and emotional. He advocates for scholars to respect the role of imagination. Stating that it is “an organ of perception – like our eyes, ears, and legs. We get to know a place when we participate in the local imagination.”<sup>68</sup> His focus on a holistic understanding of located experience provides a way to think about the meanings inscribed on a landscape and the way in which stories and imagination are validated. In order to understand the significance of a

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the gas station, even if geographically that is not true. Their personal connections or the amount of time they spend at a location can affect the way they imagine the spatiality of their community.

<sup>66</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, “Place: An Experiential Perspective,” *The Geographical Review* 65(2), (1975): 152.

<sup>67</sup> Walter, *Placeways*, 21.

<sup>68</sup> Walter, *Placeways*, 2.

place it is necessary to feel, as well as think about, the possible meanings it could have for groups or individuals.

Experiential geographers, such as Walter, argue that the division of the study of place into various academic fields is unhelpful. He writes, “Fragmenting the experience of place in the abstractions of the special disciplines reinforces the split between our methods of feeling and our methods of thinking.”<sup>69</sup> The holism of experience, and the study of that experience, is what experiential geographers want to explore. Their work provides an interesting theoretical, and definitional, framework for the studies that followed. This type of theoretically challenging and holistic geography was popular during the 1970s and 1980s particularly. A good deal of literature during this time deals with a vast array of theoretical arguments as well as case studies. The geography of place experience in the 1990s shifted again back to a cultural geography approach interested in questions of collective culture as opposed to individual experience, but with a difference. The ‘new cultural geography’ argued that, “Culture exists *within*, as opposed to *on*, the landscape.”<sup>70</sup> This advancement reflects the impact of experiential arguments on more dominant fields within geography.

In actual fact, geography after the 1980s largely moved away from the experiential perspectives of Tuan and Walter. The legacy of their work was carried out more fully in other academic fields – particularly philosophy and archaeology, and the combination of the two expressed in the field of landscape phenomenology. Landscape phenomenologists, rather than steeping themselves in traditions of geographical realities, rely on the phenomenology school of philosophical thought. Phenomenologists are

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<sup>69</sup> Walter, *Placeways*, 2

<sup>70</sup> Winchester, *Landscapes*, 10.

interested in the physicality of being in the world, seeing the body as central to experience. The philosophy of phenomenology, or existential phenomenology, is based in the foundational texts of authors such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Paul Ricoeur.

French philosopher Paul Ricoeur states, “Taken alone, the term “phenomenology” is not very illuminating. The word means science of appearances or of appearings. Thus, any inquiry or any work devoted to the way anything whatsoever appears is already phenomenology.”<sup>71</sup> Phenomenology is the idea that being in the world, and all the experiences individuals have, are based on their perception or way of seeing. Ricoeur’s work straddles the philosophical division between an existential phenomenology where perception is everything and an ontological position where concrete things exist outside of perception.<sup>72</sup> Phenomenologists are particularly concerned with how things, be they objects or situations, appear at the time of perception – how they exist right now for the individual who encounters it.<sup>73</sup>

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a mid-twentieth century French philosopher, who argued for an embodied phenomenological perspective, takes up this focus on the present. A contemporary of Ricoeur, Merleau-Ponty was, of all the phenomenologically minded philosophers, most interested in scientific aspects of cognition. He focuses primarily on embodied perception – we can only understand the world from the place of our physical being in the world.<sup>74</sup> He writes “Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and

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<sup>71</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An Anthology of His Work*. Edited by Charles E. Reagan & David Stewart (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978): 75.

<sup>72</sup> Ricoeur, *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, 85.

<sup>73</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976): 9.

<sup>74</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated from French by Colin Smith (New Jersey: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962): 204.

sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system.”<sup>75</sup> There is no other way to understand objects than from one’s place of embodied experience. Subjectivity is everything. Objects do not exist “as they really are” because every individual sees it from their subjective position.<sup>76</sup> People can only access the world through the filter of their own position, tempered by their own cultural, gendered, and racialized experience. When applied to the research relationship of ethnography, phenomenological perspectives help to situate the researcher within their own research, through their bodily encounter with research subjects and sites of exploration.<sup>77</sup>

It also challenges ideas of a cultural or collective way of encountering or knowing place. The works of Ricoeur and Merleau-Ponty are individually centered. They do not leave room for collective understandings or memories. Gregory Brown and Christopher Raymond argue that a focus on individuality has the effect of “obscuring the collective nature of relations between people, identities, and their environment.”<sup>78</sup> This approach also, in the writings of these philosophers, neglects the gendered and culturally constructed ways in which people view the world. Elizabeth Grosz argues that, if we are to accept that every individual experiences reality from the physical location of their body through their own perceptions, that experience of embodiment is necessarily gendered.<sup>79</sup> Gender, culture, class and race will necessarily affect the active embodiment suggested by phenomenology and perhaps could be seen to draw connections between

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<sup>75</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 203.

<sup>76</sup> M.C Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988): 89.

<sup>77</sup> Alison Pullen, “Gendering the Research Self: Social Practice and the Corporeal Multiplicity in the Writing of Organizational Research,” *Gender, Work and Organization*, 13(3), (2006): 280.

<sup>78</sup> Gregory Brown and Christopher Raymond, “The Relationship Between Place Attachment and Landscape Values: Toward Mapping Place Attachment,” *Applied Geography* 27 (2007): 91.

<sup>79</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001): 32.

people, creating similar embodied experiences. It calls into question whether one can talk about a Stó:lō experience of place, or if you are restricted to the experience of individuals.

From this writing of embodied experience, other writers have applied phenomenology to the study of how people understand place.<sup>80</sup> Self described landscape phenomenologists, particularly Edward Casey and Christopher Tilley, take this idea and apply it to the human experience of being in the physical world. Experience of being is located first within the body and then within the environment – a nested approach to encounters in the place-world. These ideas have the appeal of an individualist postmodernist perspective lacking in the earlier experiential geography. Every person experiences their world and their environment from the stance of their own physical being – a profoundly personal place.

Christopher Tilley uses landscape phenomenology to explore the meanings of the place-world. Trained as an archaeologist, Tilley argues for the addition of another layer to phenomenological thought, that of embodied experience in a specific locality. He takes nested physicality to another level: “The body-subject is a mind physically embodied, a body and a mind which always encounters the world from a particular point of view in a particular context at a particular time and in a particular place, a physical subject in space-time.”<sup>81</sup> In his book *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments*, he argues for the reintroduction of place as more than a setting for human action. He states, “The alternative view starts from regarding space as a medium rather

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<sup>80</sup> Christopher Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology: 1*, (New York: Berg, 2004): 2.

<sup>81</sup> Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, 2.

than a container for action, something that is involved in action and cannot be divorced from it.”<sup>82</sup> People populate these places with stories but experiences and places are simultaneously constructed in a mutual process. This complex joint engagement shapes how people relate to their environment, coming both from their own personal place but also that of their class, culture, race, gender, and intellectual background.

Edward Casey also advocates for recognition of the power of place and its ability to shape memory, history, and imagination. His monograph *Getting Back Into Place: Toward a New Understanding of the Place-World* argues for a more nuanced understanding of the power of physical space. He states, “In imagining and remembering, we go into the ethereal and the thick respectively. By being in place, we find ourselves in what is subsistent and enveloping.”<sup>83</sup> Casey is much more interested in the way in which physical location can define, and shape, perception. Place has the “power to direct and stabilize us, to memorialize and identify us, to tell us who and what we are in terms of *where we are* (as well as where we are *not*).”<sup>84</sup> The general argument of both of these authors, and other landscape phenomenologists, is for a renewed interest in the power of place. Locations are viewed as actors rather than settings, further complicating the relationship between people and landscape by adding the elements of autonomy and reciprocity. This school of thought evolves out of the experiential geographers’ focus on the importance of place for human beings and raises the question of the importance of people for places.

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<sup>82</sup> Tilley, *The Phenomenology of Landscape*, 10.

<sup>83</sup> Edward Casey, *Getting Back Into Place: Toward a New Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993): xvi.

<sup>84</sup> Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*, xv.

How people relate to place can be approached using the lenses of historians, geographers, philosophers, or any number of academic and artistic traditions. The similarity found throughout all approaches is that there is something important, fundamental even, in the relationship between people and places. This is true whether place is seen as merely a setting or an actor in peoples' lives.<sup>85</sup> The growing concern over how people experience place, and form deep attachments to it, reflects a recognition that we rely on the physical world for more than physical needs.

### **Spiritual Landscapes: Introducing Sacrality**

Inherent in this question of how people understand their relationship to physical places is the question of why. Places are important as homes, as communities, as sources of livelihood and leisure and also as the physical dwelling place of their spiritual beliefs. Religious or spiritual ideas or feelings can be located in the physical space of a religious institution, such as a cathedral or temple, but they can also be located in the natural environment – in the spiritual landscapes of space. In ancient Greece this was described as “*genius loci* – the spirit of place.”<sup>86</sup> For Victor Walter, “People build or discover sacred places to experience hidden presences, in the feelings and meanings of a sacred space, and in the sacred places of all times, worshipers express a religious longing to recover a lost unity. Dynamists seek connections to invisible forces. Animists strive for relationships to spirits. And theists reach for God.”<sup>87</sup> For believers, spiritual landscapes

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<sup>85</sup> For a more detailed description of place as setting see Denis Cosgrove “Landscape and Myths, Gods and Humans,” in Barbara Bender, ed. *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1993): 281-305.

<sup>86</sup> Singh, “Introduction,” 5.

<sup>87</sup> Walter, *Placeways*, 95.

may speak to deep human needs and make the experience of place a holistic one – experienced through the body, mind and soul.

Adding the element of the spiritual to the discussion of how people and place interact raises questions about how to describe and understand the depth of this relationship. Spiritual landscapes are described as “co-constituting sets of relations between bodily existence, felt practice and faith in things that are immanent, but not yet manifest.”<sup>88</sup> Spiritual landscapes are not necessarily rural or natural, they can be found in urban centres or town squares, but most commonly people claim that they involve a deeply felt connection to a specific place where faith in something abstract or metaphysical is felt within the physically located body.<sup>89</sup> It is not inevitably the most remarkably beautiful or unique places that lead people to speak of spiritual connections. Thomas Bender argues, “*What is significant about sacred places turns out not to be the places themselves. Their power lies within their role in the marshalling our inner resources and binding us to our beliefs.*”<sup>90</sup> While this may be the case, people look for spiritual power within specific places, at particular times and within cultural understandings that speak in that place – spirituality rooted in the body, culture and environment.

Many authors in a wide range of disciplines have discussed the spiritual or sacred connection between people and places. Scholar Mircea Eliade, in his work *The Sacred and the Profane* published in 1957, provided one of the most foundational discussions of

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<sup>88</sup> J.D Dewsbury and Paul Cloke, “Spiritual Landscapes: Existence, Performance, and Immanence,” *Social and Cultural Geography*, vol. 10 (6), (2009): 696.

<sup>89</sup> Dewsbury, “Spiritual Landscapes,” 697.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Bender, “Making Places Sacred,” in James A. Swan, ed. *The Power of Place: Sacred Ground in Natural and Human Environments* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 1991): 323.

this relationship. He argues that “Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane. To designate the *act of manifestation* of the sacred, we have proposed the term *hierophany*.”<sup>91</sup> This point of sacred recognition is connected by Eliade to the essence of being – being part of a sacred cosmos, being part of a community, being in the most fundamental meaning of the word.<sup>92</sup> Physical features are transformed and imbued with meaning more significant than their forms. This idea of sacred places being something that is recognized rather than constructed is problematic. It neglects the human impulse – be it motivated by culture, politics, environment or spiritual belief – to make claims to places constructed as important.

Wright’s exploration of the emotional and keenly felt connections between humans and their environment that produced the concept of ‘geopiety’ includes inescapable religious connotations.<sup>93</sup> The reverence felt is much stronger than a mere appreciation of place but a fundamental, and profound, bond. People can have stronger or weaker feelings of geopiety depending on their own understandings and constructions of spiritual places or landscapes. Rana P.B. Singh argues, “the quality of the sacred place depends upon the human context that has been shaped by it, with respect to memories, experiences, miracles and expectations.”<sup>94</sup> Not all places will elicit the same response or the same human construction of sacred space. Our responses to place are inextricably tied

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<sup>91</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1957): 11.

<sup>92</sup> Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 12.

<sup>93</sup> Singh, “Introduction,” 6.

<sup>94</sup> Singh, “Introduction,” 7.

to our cultural knowledge and memories and how we choose to utilize them.<sup>95</sup> The relationship between memory, history and the sacred is intricate and difficult to disentangle.

Related to cultural and experiential geographers' understandings of geopiety is geomancy. This concept, as explained by Richard Feather Anderson, revolves around finding the most appropriate and ecologically harmonious way of living in the world.<sup>96</sup> James A. Swan argues, "At the core of geomantic wisdom everywhere is the assertion that not all places are alike, some places have more power and presence than others."<sup>97</sup> Geographers applied concepts of geomancy to their study of human – place interaction. A growing body of literature addressing spiritual landscapes using ideas of the profound bond between people and place in combination with the idea that certain places may be perceived or described as more powerful than others. Landscapes deemed to be spiritual are one geographical layer of relationships between humans and environment. While not the only layer of significance, these landscapes produce strong reactions and have significant cultural currency. They are as much moral, cultural, imaginary and religious geographies as they are physical.

Spiritual landscapes offer some complications to landscape phenomenology. The embodied experience, when it includes powerful spiritually defined encounters, alters how we think of nested physicality and individual experience. This is because spiritual place experiences are both physical and metaphysical in nature. If places are experienced

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<sup>95</sup> Donald J. Hughes, "Spirit of Place in the Western World," in James A. Swan, ed. *The Power of Place: Sacred Ground in Natural and Human Environments* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 1991): 15.

<sup>96</sup> Richard Feather Anderson, "Geomancy," in James A. Swan, ed. *The Power of Place: Sacred Ground in Natural and Human Environments* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 1991): 191.

<sup>97</sup> James A. Swan, "Introduction," in James A. Swan, ed. *The Power of Place: Sacred Ground in Natural and Human Environments* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 1991): 1.

through the physical body, the spiritual elements that are not physical must also be explained. Critiques of phenomenological approaches focus on the unearthly qualities of spiritual experience, arguing “How can there be phenomenology of something when it forever remains concealed?”<sup>98</sup> The felt experience of a spiritual landscape may be impossible to describe in terms of bodily experience of place. Nevertheless, places perceived as spiritually potent are part of both a metaphysical and physical landscape experienced from the position of the mind or spirit within the body. It also seems that spiritual landscapes are constructed and accepted by communities of believers. If there is a collective recognition of these places, how can experience of them be phenomenologically individual? If spiritual landscapes are also somehow cultural landscapes, then the role of individual experience is further complicated. Claims about spiritual places are tied up with claims about cultural identities and can be political statements about belonging or disassociation.

Human interaction in spiritual landscapes is fraught with complications of description and understanding. Approaches to spiritual landscapes grapple with how to talk about experiences that occur in places but include elements of intangible belief constructed on the foundation of a physical location. The recognition that places within the natural environment have a particular appeal to the spirituality of human beings reflects a more holistic understanding of place attachment. Nevertheless, the natural environment provides communities of belief with a connection to a spiritual landscape that is not always visible to people passing through. The physical environment is nurturing to the human body, providing places to live, feed, and work, but as the

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<sup>98</sup> Dewsbury, “Spiritual Landscapes,” 700.

interviews I conducted demonstrate, certain geographical spaces are also understood to have a special capacity to nurture the human spirit and to bind people together in distinctive – “spiritual” – ways as they pursue social, cultural and political objectives.

### **An Indigenous Lens, The Stó:lō Context**

With the growing interest in spiritual places there has been a corresponding growing interest in how Indigenous people in North America experience spiritual landscapes particularly, and place attachment more generally. Christopher Tilley argues, “Spatial experience is not innocent and neutral, but invested with power.”<sup>99</sup> In the same vein, the literature about spatial experience is likewise a negotiated power relationship. Who gets to write about an Indigenous spiritual experience of place is a complicated question. Many writers have looked to the Indigenous experience as inspiration for holistic relationships between people and places. This tendency has quite often had the effect of creating nostalgic and romanticized descriptions of Indigenous communities and their relationship to the environment.

John Wylie argues that academics writing about emotional bonds to landscape “run the risk of romanticizing the pre-modern, and particularly the non-Western, in a manner that inadvertently perpetuates notions of the historical pre-eminence and priority of Western cultures.”<sup>100</sup> Sympathetic academics often look to the Indigenous example, or romantic representations of Indigenous experience, for a pure spiritual connection to place. Vine Deloria Jr. argues that many non-Indigenous people seek the Indigenous relationship to land because they believe that these communities have a deeper, more sacred, bond to the earth. He states “I also believe this assertion is being made by people

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<sup>99</sup> Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, 11.

<sup>100</sup> Wylie, *Landscape*, 183.

who do not really think deeply about what land and sacredness are, and by people who would be content to receive the simple poetic admonitions and aphorisms that pass as knowledge in the American intellectual cafeteria.”<sup>101</sup> Academics looking to an Indigenous context to explore ideas of spiritual geography need to treat Indigenous experience with the same critical frame of mind that they bring to Western notions of spiritual place. Even with this approach, it remains uncertain if this could be achieved or if the results would be desirable for either the community involved or the academic.

Indigenous examples, prior to the 1980s, were mostly used as foils for examples in more European contexts. This is partly because of the contrast between institutionalized religion in the West and Indigenous spirituality. Author James A. Swan points to the apparent difference between the spiritual places of Western and Indigenous peoples. In an institutionalized religion context, most spiritual places are connected with religious figures and the places they lived or performed miracles. Swan argues that the difference lies in the “ongoing personal experience of the spirit” of Indigenous spirituality.<sup>102</sup> It is this personal, everyday experience, or perhaps an outsider’s inability to understand holistic place attachment, that has both attracted and confused Western academics researching Indigenous relationships to the place-world. Perhaps the Indigenous example seemed more in line with phenomenological understandings of individual experience. However, the descriptions being utilized here are themselves romantic, and perhaps static, understandings of Indigenous spirituality. They deny the

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<sup>101</sup> Vine Deloria Jr, “Reflection and Revelation: Knowing Land, Places and Ourselves,” in James A. Swan, ed. *The Power of Place: Sacred Ground in Natural and Human Environments* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 1991): 28-29.

<sup>102</sup> James A. Swan, “The Spots of the Fawn: Native American Sacred Sites, Cultural Values and Management Issues,” in James A. Swan, ed. *The Power of Place: Sacred Ground in Natural and Human Environments* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 1991): 77.

fluidity and range of experience present in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous spiritual communities.

There has been a distinct growth of interest, particularly in anthropologists' work, in understanding and representing Indigenous place attachment since the 1990s. Given the criticisms leveled at academics seeking romantic quotations from Indigenous peoples, this work is growing in complexity as authors attempt to honestly engage with how communities and individuals relate to their physical environment. The works of Hugh Brody, Robin Ridington, and Keith Basso offer examples of the engagement of outside academics with Indigenous communities that attempt to address place attachment.

Hugh Brody, in his book *Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier*, engages in a land biography of the traditional territory of the Beaver, also known as the Dunne-za, First Nation of Northern British Columbia. His work, published in the early 1980s, attempts to reconcile settler and Indigenous ways of thinking about, and mapping, the land. Included in this study he addresses distinct relationships that exist between the Indigenous community and the land that they depend on for their livelihoods, homes, and cultural vibrancy. Interestingly, Brody divides the chapters of his books into two different styles of writing, and therefore two different styles of thinking or imagining the landscape. Alternating chapters are written from an experiential perspective, which attempts to demonstrate the way that this Indigenous group understands place through his personal experiences and interactions with community members. The other chapters use a more academic approach, written in a more abstracted and analytical style. Brody describes listening to elders who had “spoken beyond us, addressing the richness of

another culture, another spiritual domain.”<sup>103</sup> Brody’s work deals primarily with the economic relationship between the First Nation and the state in terms of land use, but this study inevitably covers a wide range of place attachments. His work offers a complex engagement with, and attempt to understand, not only another way of using the land, but also another way of thinking of it altogether.

Robin Ridington uses a similar avenue of exploration in the monographs *Trail to Heaven: Knowledge and Narrative in a Northern Native Community* and *Little Bit Know Something: Stories in a Language of Anthropology*. Like Brody, Ridington is interested in the Dunne-za, or Beaver, First Nation. His work is an anthropological study of the Dunne-za culture and story-world in British Columbia. In terms of place attachment, Ridington is interested in the relationship between experience and story. He argues, “Dunne-za mythic reality lies within the reality of everyday experience.”<sup>104</sup> He further states, “knowledge and power come to a person through direct experience of the world.”<sup>105</sup> Ridington is essentially talking about a phenomenological view of grounded experience within an Indigenous context. His discussion, while not formally dealing with spiritual landscapes, cannot help but address how the spiritual world presents itself to community members through experience in place.

While Brody and Ridington did not address spiritual landscapes directly, their work is part of a larger body of literature that looks at the intersections of Indigenous experience, place, and stories. Keith H. Basso is perhaps the best example of how

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<sup>103</sup> Hugh Brody, *Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier* (London: Jill Norman & Hobhouse Ltd., 1981): 11.

<sup>104</sup> Robin Ridington, *Trail to Heaven: Knowledge and Narrative in a Northern Native Community* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1988): xii.

<sup>105</sup> Robin Ridington, *Little Bit Know Something: Stories in a Language of Anthropology* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990): xv.

academics have successfully used the theoretical framework of human-place relationships and applied and adapted it to an Indigenous context. Basso is interested in storied places of the Apache First Nation of the United States of America. His primary focus is on the relationship between place and story – which inevitably is a focus on the relationship between place and people. Basso focuses on reciprocity in this relationship and the continuous mutual reshaping that creates both culture and place. He states, “When places are actively sensed, the physical landscape becomes wedded to the landscape of the mind, and the roving imagination, and where the latter may lead is anybody’s guess.”<sup>106</sup> Basso attempts to explore the physical and metaphysical connections that bring narrative and place into conversation. His work is a blending of Western intellectual traditions and an Indigenous community focus.

While Basso, Ridington and Brody all attempt to bridge the disjuncture between Western and Indigenous ways of experiencing spiritual connections to place, there remains a question of the appropriateness in applying a non-Indigenous theoretical framework to an Indigenous way of knowing landscape. Much as Elizabeth Grosz argued for adding a gendered dimension for embodied experience, cultural and racialized dimensions must also be considered. Indigenous people construct and experience spiritual landscapes from a specific political and cultural position that is fluid and continuously shifting. It would be both misguided and disorientating to neglect the points of either convergence or divergence between these experiences of location. An approach that considers the applicability of non-Indigenous intellectual currents while also being wholly open to the Indigenous specificities of place and culture would be the most

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<sup>106</sup> Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, 107.

beneficial for understanding these relationships to the place-world in the context of my project.

This is partly because I, as an outsider to the community I am studying, cannot claim an Indigenous understanding of place. I am constrained by my own cultural assumptions about relationships to place. Knowing both the strengths and limitations of the way that I understand, academically and emotionally, my own cultural bonds to place better allow me to consciously engage with the ways that tunnel narratives create Stó:lō spiritual landscapes. Basso writes, “relationships to places are lived most often in the company of other people, and it is on these communal occasions – when places are sensed *together* – that native views of the physical world become accessible to strangers.”<sup>107</sup> It is in this communal narrative interaction that this exploration of Stó:lō spiritual geography takes place, through the medium of cross-cultural storytelling.

The challenges of cross-cultural ethnohistorical projects arise in this context. The ethics of exploring culturally different ideas of place relationships are complicated, as are the possibilities of understanding concurrently two different ways of imagining place. Andie Palmer states, “I found that in doing my fieldwork I imposed some social constructs of my own onto the landscape, and created some boundaries and amalgamations with my verbalized categories where none exist for the Secwepemc, or exist with different boundaries than mine.”<sup>108</sup> Recognizing both the hybridity of place boundaries and the inherent cultural difference is a point of tension, in terms of approaching a topic on story and place relationships.

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<sup>107</sup> Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, 109.

<sup>108</sup> Andie Diane Palmer, *Maps of Experience: The Anchoring of Land to Story in Secwepemc Discourse*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005): 159.

It is within this larger context of literature that I situate the storied spiritual landscape of the Stó:lō First Nation. The Stó:lō context will depart from the other case studies and theoretical frameworks aforementioned, but will also be informed by these wider ideas about the relationship between people and places. Part of this effort is an attempt to renegotiate the power dynamics of description – challenging who has the power to define how meaning is inscribed onto a landscape. The Stó:lō example, as part of a broader Indigenous Canadian context, also includes the tensions of colonization. Settler society has had the ability to control the popular imagining of place, most obviously manifested in cartography. This project addresses this powerful discourse. The process of decolonizing includes not only physical, but also spiritual places. The danger in not undertaking such a project is an increase in what E. Relph terms ‘placelessness,’ “The weakening of distinct and diverse experiences and identities of places.”<sup>109</sup> The recognition and validation of Stó:lō spiritual geographical knowledge is a step towards a renewed respect for the diversity, and power, of spiritual place attachment.

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<sup>109</sup> Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 6.

## Chapter Two: Tunnel Narratives and Storied Relationships

My first experience with tunnel stories told on site occurred during an interview with Melvin Bailey in May 2009. This interview spanned an entire day, eight hours of recorded tape, and included Albert ‘Sonny’ McHalsie, fellow student Andrée Boisselle and myself. Walking around Pitt Lake with Bailey in the last hour of our day he remarked that the lake was one of those “strong places” for the Stó:lō. This is a place not only of personal significance, but a place of spiritual power. Under the water, hidden from unknowing eyes, the “whole lake is honeycombed with tunnels.”<sup>110</sup> These tunnels have almost mystical properties – dangerous to those who do not know how to use them and sources of power for those who do. Bailey’s poignant description provides a beautiful, if unsettling, visual. Hearing the stories while looking out onto the lake made them feel closer and more foreboding. The idea that under the surface exists an entire system of connections is a sharp reminder that there is more to the landscape of the Stó:lō people than can be appreciated in a superficial glance.

Throughout the territory of S’olh Téméxw subterranean tunnels connect disparate locations. These portals are powerful elements of a uniquely Stó:lō geography that occupies both the physical and metaphysical landscape of the Fraser Valley, a landscape that shapes, and in turn is shaped by, the history, mythology and complex identities of community members.<sup>111</sup> The existence of the tunnels necessitates a re-imagining of social and physical distance as well as challenging Western notions of time

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<sup>110</sup> Melvin Bailey, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Andrée Boisselle and Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Katzie, May 14, 2009.

<sup>111</sup> Denis Cosgrove, “Landscapes and Myths, Gods and Humans,” in Barbara Bender, ed., *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*. (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1993): 281.

and place.<sup>112</sup> Geographer D.W Meinig argues, “any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads.”<sup>113</sup> The knowledge that tunnels, even when not in use, are pulling places closer together changes how we view, and understand, the geography of S’olh Téméxw. Tunnel stories exist at the intersection of physical and supernatural geographies as Stó:lō people “walk simultaneously through both spiritual and physical realms of this landscape.”<sup>114</sup> The intersection of place, story, and storyteller is where I locate the tunnel narratives. This chapter explores the stories themselves and the relationships that are inherently intertwined within narratives of tunnel travel.

How can outsiders comprehend the significance of these portals and the places that they connect? Hearing and thinking about the tunnel stories is itself a gateway into a worldview composed of Stó:lō history, mythology, and geography. Like travelers through the tunnels themselves, we engage in a transformative experience that brings us to a new place of understanding. Julie Cruickshank writes, “Storytelling may be a universal human activity, but understanding what one hears requires close attention to local metaphor and local narrative conventions.”<sup>115</sup> The tunnel stories offer a place for this kind of engagement with localized cultural knowledge and ways of relating to, and talking about, the significant places that make up S’olh Téméxw. Re-imagining physical space is one

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<sup>112</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power Of Place, The Problem Of Time: An Study of Aboriginal History and Collective Identity along the Lower Fraser River or Aboriginal Identity in the Crucible of Colonialism*. (unpubl. PhD Dissertation, University of British Columbia, 2004):5.

<sup>113</sup> D.W. Meinig, “The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene,” in D.W. Meinig, ed. *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979): 34.

<sup>114</sup> Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, David M. Schaepe and Keith Thor Carlson, “Making the World Right through Transformations,” in Keith Thor Carlson, ed., *A Stó:lō Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001): 6.

<sup>115</sup> Julie Cruickshank, *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005): 66.

step towards a more holistic understanding of how Stó:lō people may be concurrently connected to their sacred and physical geography.<sup>116</sup> Christopher Tilley argues, “The real world is the perceived world is the phenomenal world.”<sup>117</sup> What people believe about the places they inhabit imbues them with meaning and it is that meaning that inspires their actions and beliefs about themselves and their environment. The tunnel stories reveal cultural, literary, and spiritual truths about S’olh Téméxw through their telling.

### **Finding the Tunnels**

Stories about tunnels can be found throughout early ethnographic accounts of the Stó:lō up to present-day narratives still recounted by community members and elders. While there are many tunnel stories, it is possible that the stories that have survived in the collective memory of Stó:lō people and the written documents are only a fraction of the possible tunnel sites. For example, there is a place at Tsawwassen known in Halkomelem as *Smakwts* which, when translated into English, means “centre from which (underground) passages radiate.”<sup>118</sup> Despite this promising tunnel nexus, only a few references remain connecting *Smakwts* with any subterranean channels. The tunnels located and documented may be only a fraction of those in existence, and therefore should not be viewed necessarily as a comprehensive list.

Despite that caveat, the extant tunnel stories demonstrate a variety of interesting things about Stó:lō spiritual geography, the power of place, and the importance of storytelling. Tunnels themselves are transformative in nature; travel through them can

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<sup>116</sup> The term ‘sacred geography’ is taken from Fernando Santo-Granero, “Writing History into the Landscape: Space, Myth and Ritual in Contemporary Amazonia,” *American Ethnologist* 25(2): 141.

<sup>117</sup> Christopher Tilley with the assistance of Wayne Bennett, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology: I* (New York: Berg, 2004): 16.

<sup>118</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, ed. “Plate 45D”, in Keith Thor Carlson, ed., *A Stó:lō Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001): 148.

result in an acquisition of power or in death.<sup>119</sup> The stories that exist about them can be divided into two very general temporal categories. The first group is connected to both the Sxwoxwiyam, “the oral histories describing the distant past,” and the Sxwó:xwey origin story.<sup>120</sup> These tunnels are invariably associated with power – only those who have power can use them effectively and those who want to increase their strength seek them out. These mytho-historical accounts often describe the origin of the tunnels.

The second group of stories is more contemporary accounts of tunnel travel. These stories mostly occur within living memory – for example, stories recounted by grandparents about their contemporaries.<sup>121</sup> These stories almost always result in death for the tunnel traveler.<sup>122</sup> While the two groupings do not offer perfectly neat categories for understanding the tunnels, they do present some interesting points of departure. For instance, tunnels connected to ancient stories often reappear in the contemporary accounts – suggesting the continued activity of the site as well as the sustained importance and power of the tunnel itself.

These two groupings also relate to the larger structure of Stó:lō narrative culture. The tunnel stories are only one group of stories which give the space of S’olh Téméxw meaning for Stó:lō people. Albert ‘Sonny’ McHalsie describes two categories of stories that connect communities to place – the Sxwoxwiyam stories and skwelkwel stories. McHalsie states, “those are the two main categories that connect our families to things so

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<sup>119</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power Of Place, The Problem Of Time*, 4.

<sup>120</sup> McHalsie, et al, “Making the World Right through Transformations,”: 6.

<sup>121</sup> This example is taken from Melvin Bailey, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Andrée Boisselle and Albert “Sonny” McHalsie, Katzie, May 14, 2009. Bailey describes tunnel stories set during his grandfather’s life, particularly about a doctor living on Pitt Lake who traveled through tunnels in his canoe.

<sup>122</sup> The tunnel that connects the whirlpool He’mk’alak to Tekwóthel is an exception to this generalization. The young man who traveled through this tunnel in a more modern account lived.

we have a connection to our place with the Sxwoxwiyam to like our ancestor being transformed into a local resource or into a rock or a mountain and then we have our skwelkwel stories that talk about where did our grandfather go picking berries or hunting or where did our grandmother go gathering cedar bark.”<sup>123</sup> Stó:lō people, through these two canons of mytho-historical and contemporary familial stories, relate themselves and root their identities to the physical landscape of S’olh Téméxw. They imagine their connections to place through both distant and close ancestors, growing stories out of family genealogy. This connection between place, family and narrative is closely linked to cultural vibrancy and continuity— S’olh Téméxw is only made visible through the transmission of narrative through family lines. Meaning is embedded in both family and place, and can only be made visible, or comprehensible, in the relationship between storyteller and audience.<sup>124</sup>

The tunnels, and the geography that they are a part of, are more than strictly environment. Denis Cosgrove argues that “the landscape is not passive; it is given a constitutive role as the stage set for the human drama itself.”<sup>125</sup> The tunnels are both characters and settings for the stories that place them in the spiritual landscape. Tracing the tunnel stories through historical records and oral accounts can show where the tunnels are located and provide the basis for understanding the sacred geography of S’olh Téméxw. These sources, be they ethnographic records or transcriptions of oral interviews, are stories within stories and relationships within relationships. The stories, and the tunnels they describe, have to be understood both within the relationship between

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<sup>123</sup> Albert ‘Sonny’ McHalsie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chilliwack: November 28, 2009.

<sup>124</sup> Julie Cruickshank, *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000): 40.

<sup>125</sup> Cosgrove, “Landscapes and Myths, Gods and Humans,” 282.

Stó:lō people and their narrative culture, stories and families and within the relationship of interviewer and interviewee. It is not always easy to disentangle these relationships, but it is important to be aware of the historicity of sources and the complex interconnection of people, place, and story. The following stories are loosely organized from those in which I found the fewest recorded stories to those with the most archival and oral testimony about them. This organization reflects the increasing complexity that accompanies increased source material.

#### Yale to Spuzzum:

“Xéls came to Spuzzum. He had many friends there. K<sup>w</sup>iyútkl dug under the ground until he came up at Yale, while xéls was on his way. As soon as K<sup>w</sup>iyútkl got to Yale, xéls walked underground to Spuzzum.” – Mrs. Louis George<sup>126</sup>

Stories involving the figure of Xéls (sometimes written as Xéxals or Xals) sometimes include tunnel narratives. Xéls or the Transformer in the mytho-historical past transformed a chaotic world into the Stó:lō world. The term ‘mytho-historical’ refers to the very distant past “when the world was not quite right.”<sup>127</sup> The stories are partly cultural legend and partly family history for the Stó:lō. Xéls was the being that entered this chaotic world and set things right and these transformations created physical features, many of which are still visible on the landscape, as well as turning people into resources like cedar trees or sturgeon. Xéls is the most prominent figure in the stories from this distant time and families trace their histories and rights to these transformative acts. Crisca Bierwert argues that there is an inherent irony in the publishing of Transformer stories, the published copies of which are the primary recordings of these tunnel

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<sup>126</sup> Mrs. Louis George, recorded by Norman Hart Lerman, “Transformer Tale – First Version,” in Norman Hart Lerman, *An Analysis of Lower Fraser Indians, British Columbia*, (unpubl., M.A Thesis, University of Washington, 1952): 87.

<sup>127</sup> McHalsie, Schaepe and Carlson, “Making the World Right through Transformations,” 6.

narratives. The Transformer inscribed the landscape with the mnemonic places that physically imbed narrative.<sup>128</sup> For this figure to be inscribed in writing physically displaced from the landscape is a strange exercise. Bierwert is pointing to one of the problematic aspects of locating Indigenous narrative – that of removing the story from the place. This problem, combined with the complexities surrounding early ethnographic works largely compiled and written by white ethnographers, makes the process of writing about stories, and narrative culture, problematic. The tunnel stories connecting Yale and Spuzzum are an interesting place to begin an exploration of tunnel sites and narratives and this implicit problem of de-inscribing, or removing the stories from their physical sites on the landscape, through written inscription.

Franz Boas, in 1895, recorded the earliest surviving written account of the tunnel connecting the communities of Spuzzum and Yale. Boas, working primarily with George Steelis and his wife living at Chehalis, recorded a story about an Indian doctor, who Boas calls QelqElEmas, who encountered Xéls.<sup>129</sup> In the version recorded by Boas, the tunnel was built by Sk.Ela’o, the brother of the doctor. The account reads, “Sk.Ela’o (Beaver), the brother of QelqElEmas, was the first chief of the Spe’yim (Spuzzum, the southernmost village of the Ntlakyapamuq). When he saw that Qals [Xéls] came to his brother, he dug an underground passage to his house to be able to help him in case of

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<sup>128</sup> Crisca Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar, Living by the River: Coast Salish Figures of Power*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999): 73

<sup>129</sup> Xáls or Xexá:ls refer to the transformers, two brothers and one sister or, in some stories, one man. The transformers traveled throughout Stó:lō territory transforming people and animals in order to make the world right. See Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, David M. Schaepe and Keith Thor Carlson, “Making the World Right through Transformations,” in Keith Thor Carlson, ed., *A Stó:lō Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001): 6 for a more in-depth description of the transformers. They also are referred to, in various sources as Xéls or Qals.

need.”<sup>130</sup> This account is similar to many of the accounts that follow chronologically in that the tunnel was built as an escape route for the doctor.

Norman Lerman, conducting interviews and publishing in the early 1950s, recorded the most detailed versions of this tunnel story. Mrs. Louis George is credited with the story appearing in Lerman’s thesis *An Analysis of Lower Fraser Indians, British Columbia*. In her story, the doctor is named K<sup>w</sup>iyútkl and he himself builds the tunnel, starting at Spuzzum and coming up at Yale. He uses the tunnel to avoid a battle with Xéls. He goes back and forth multiple times through his built channel until finally, after finding his sister transformed to stone, he does battle with Xéls.<sup>131</sup> According to McHalsie, recounting a version of this story told to him by Agnes Kelly, the Indian doctor was misusing his power, necessitating a battle with Xéls. The doctor traveled through the tunnel from Spuzzum to Yale to do battle and was turned into Lady Franklin Rock, a prominent landmark in the Fraser River.<sup>132</sup>

Oliver Wells, an ethnographer in the Chilliwack district during the 1960s, recorded a number of references to the Spuzzum to Yale tunnel but, due to his own research interests, he did not pursue the topic and therefore did not record any complete versions of the stories. In his interview with Mrs. August Jim, Mrs. Albert Cooper, Joe Lorenzetto, and Willie George, conducted in October of 1962, Mrs. Margaret Jim mentions the sacredness of Lady Franklin Rock, equating it to a person named

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<sup>130</sup> Franz Boas, *Indian Myths and Legends from the North Pacific Coast of America: A Translation of Franz Boas’ 1895 Edition of Indianische Sagen von der Nord Pacifischen Kuste Amerikas*. Edited and Annotated by Randy Bouchard and Dorothy Kennedy. Translated by Dietrich Bertz. (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2002):108. The spelling is taken directly from Boas.

<sup>131</sup> Norman Lerman with Betty Keller, *Legends of the River People*, (Vancouver: November House, 1976): 40.

<sup>132</sup> Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chilliwack, B.C., May 12, 2009.

Xéylx̄elemòs.<sup>133</sup> Later in the same interview Willie George makes reference to a tunnel coming out near Xelhálh, close to Yale.<sup>134</sup> In these instances, the story of the tunnel is not recounted in full, but the references to both the significance of Lady Franklin Rock and the tunnel itself indicate the continued importance of the places associated with the story. Interviews with elder Amelia Douglas, recorded in 1988, mention the tunnel in a similar way. While visiting the area near Xelhálh, she states, “there was one powerful person that made it, had a tunnel and it went out up to Spuzzum I think somewhere.”<sup>135</sup> She does not provide a more complete narrative.

The story of the tunnel from Yale to Spuzzum has changed over time. Early accounts name the doctor transformed by Xéls, while later accounts refer more generally to him. The tunnel is one of the few documented that seems to be bi-directional, although all accounts describe the tunnel beginning at Spuzzum and being built to end at Yale. This tunnel is also a built channel, as it has an origin story related to human intervention – making it a part of a Stó:l̄ō built metaphysical environment. It was created to connect two places that are physically disparate and, while undergoing changes to meet the needs of the community, the tunnel continues to serve that purpose. If the metaphysical connection had proven redundant, the spiritual connection would presumably have receded in cultural memory. The significance of the tunnel may have changed over time, but the cultural importance of the places concerned has not - Spuzzum and Yale continue to be linked in a spiritual geography.

#### Whirlpool to Tekwóthel:

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<sup>133</sup> Mrs. Margaret Jim, Mrs August Jim, Mrs. Albert Cooper, Joe Lorenzetto and Willie George, Interview with Oliver Wells, *Edenbank Farm Collection*, Chilliwack, B.C, October 1962: 219.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>135</sup> Amelia Douglas, Interview with Sonny McHalsie, Interview number DA88-25, Chilliwack, B.C, n.d.

“Don’t be running away from the whirlpool!” –Willie George<sup>136</sup>

Geographically near to the Yale end of the aforementioned passageway exists another portal – connecting a powerful whirlpool in the Fraser River, just downriver called Hémq’eleq,<sup>137</sup> to the cave Tekwóthel high up on a steep mountainside overlooking Yale.<sup>138</sup> The stories describing this tunnel do not have the same rich genealogies that the previous tunnel stories possessed, but they do have contemporary significance. This tunnel is part of the second category of tunnel – those accompanied by stories within living memory. Albert ‘Sonny’ McHalsie, recounting a story told to him by the late Peter Dennis Peters, describes a young man canoeing on the Fraser River. He was using the edge of the whirlpool to propel himself up the river when he was sucked into it. His family, waiting for him to come up in the water near Hémq’eleq, heard him yell. They looked up and saw their son in the cave of Tekwóthel. Travel through this channel was almost instantaneous for the youth, appearing in the cave one or two minutes after falling into the whirlpool.<sup>139</sup>

This story has a historical counterpart told by Robert Joe to Wilson Duff in 1950. Joe describes Hémq’eleq as a “whirlpool just below Yale. Hole in mountain comes right down to this large whirlpool. River boats had trouble with this whirlpool.”<sup>140</sup> While Joe does not describe anyone traveling through the tunnel, his anecdote provides context for

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<sup>136</sup> Mrs. Margaret Jim, Mrs August Jim, Mrs. Albert Cooper, Joe Lorenzetto and Willie George, Interview with Oliver Wells, *Edenbank Farm Collection*, Chilliwack, B.C, October 1962: 224.

<sup>137</sup> Spelling taken from Amelia Douglas, Interview with Sonny McHalsie, Randel Paul, and Richard Daly, Chilliwack, B.C, October 3, 1989.

<sup>138</sup> Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chilliwack, B.C, May 12, 2009. For a geographic location of Tekwóthel see ‘Map F’ in Keith Thor Carlson, ed., *A Stó:lō Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001): 140.

<sup>139</sup> Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chilliwack, B.C, May 12, 2009.

<sup>140</sup> Robert Joe, Interview with Wilson Duff. *Wilson Duff’s Stalo Notebooks*. Notebook #1, July 1950, Yale. (Binder 1 of 3): 66.

Peter Dennis Peters account. McHalsie prefaces his retelling by stating, “I don’t know what the origin of the tunnel is, but it’s a story that’s told about to prove that it exists.”<sup>141</sup> This demonstrates the continued significance of the passage to the Stó:lō understanding of their environment, despite a gap in the continuity of stories about it. Some of the significance may have been lost, but the connection remains open.

The tunnel connecting Hémq’eleq and Tekwóthel has not generated a comparable number of stories as many of the other tunnels. There is no origin story, no apparent linkage to the mytho-historical past, and no destructive power associated with it. The young man who traveled through the tunnel survived, a remarkably different outcome compared to the other temporally equivalent stories.<sup>142</sup> In fact, in this story, the tunnel appears to save the life of the young man. There is no story currently recorded detailing the building of the tunnel, perhaps suggesting that this tunnel is part of the natural geography of the sacred world. Requiring no effort to travel through and resulting in no harm, the Hémq’eleq to Tekwóthel tunnel is remarkable in its benignity. It is located near Lady Franklin Rock and no doubt contributes to the power of the larger place.

It may be that many of the stories associated with this tunnel have not been collected or are no longer part of the Stó:lō canon. The gap may represent a gap in the continuity of the narrative culture of the Stó:lō, perhaps pointing to a wider gap in story transmission to younger generations. The legacy of the tunnel, however, manifests itself in the names of the places brought together through it. Translated to English, Hémq’eleq

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<sup>141</sup> Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chilliwack, B.C, May 12, 2009.

<sup>142</sup> Most of the stories set in a more contemporary timeframe result in the death of the traveler – they will be detailed later.

means “getting swallowed” and Tekwóthel means “where things pile up.”<sup>143</sup> This tunnel primarily transports driftwood swallowed by the whirlpool and piled up in the cave – a natural force of transportation between the Fraser River and the canyon surrounding it.

Point Roberts and Pitt Lake:

“‘When the Lord Above created you,’ he said, ‘he gave you power over all the underground channels that lead from Point Roberts to Sechelt, Pitt Lake and other places.’” – Old Pierre<sup>144</sup>

Pitt Lake is a powerful and storied place in S’olh Téméxw. The tunnels that run underneath the lake, connecting it to places as far away as White Rock, are only one element of the spiritual geography of the site. These tunnels have a rich genealogical tradition. The Pitt Lake channels have all the origin stories and tales of the distant past that the Hémq’eleq to Tekwóthel tunnel lacked. This rich oral tradition is directly tied with a family genealogy. The stories collected about the Pitt Lake tunnels for this project all come from the family line of Old Pierre, the key informant for anthropologist Diamond Jenness in the 1930s. His eldest son, Simon Pierre, played a similar role in the 1950s working with Wayne Suttles. His great-nephew, Melvin Bailey, spoke with me in 2009, continuing this noteworthy tradition.<sup>145</sup> The connotations of this family tunnel connection are complex. It is worth noting that all the stories found about the Pitt Lake tunnels came from these sources, but that does not mean that other community members, both historically and contemporarily, do not have stories to share. These unrecorded stories may have influenced and affected the stories told by the Pierre line. It may be a coincidence that the stories are so closely linked to a familial line, but it also interestingly

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<sup>143</sup> Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chilliwack, B.C, May 12, 2009.

<sup>144</sup> Diamond Jenness, *The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*, (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1955): 11.

<sup>145</sup> The stories from all three generations were collected when the interviewees were elderly men.

demonstrates very clearly the role of family connections to stories and to physical places. The direct line of the stories can help excavate some of the underlying shifts that shape the Stó:lō spiritual landscape of Pitt Lake.

Old Pierre, who was living on Katzie Indian Reserve, narrated the earliest recorded stories to Diamond Jenness in 1936. The stories told by Old Pierre about the tunnels appear in the chapter titled by Jenness ‘The Katzie Book of Genesis.’ They were stories of the earliest times, Sxwoxwiyam stories, equated by Jenness with Christian mythology – a connection that has since fostered significant debate about the nature of the narratives. Diamond Jenness was a renowned anthropologist when he was working with Old Pierre and his politics aligned with the complete assimilation of Indigenous people.<sup>146</sup> ‘The Katzie Book of Genesis’ might reflect his own attempt to read assimilative possibilities into the stories he was recording. Interestingly, Old Pierre’s narrative is much more cohesive than most Sxwoxwiyam stories, which generally are episodic in nature. Jenness, according to Bierwert, thought of the story more as the product of Old Pierre’s unique intellect as opposed to a more generally, and culturally, held narrative.<sup>147</sup> This assertion is puzzling and problematic, but the texts’ unique qualities and association with Christian mythology have led later scholars to question its merit, and Jenness’ role in its production. Despite these qualifications, Old Pierre’s story includes some interesting tunnel references that have been passed down through following generations of his family line.

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<sup>146</sup> For a detailed overview of Jenness’ political positions and career see Peter Kulchyski, “Anthropology in the Service of the State: Diamond Jenness and Canadian Indian Policy,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 28(2), (1993).

<sup>147</sup> Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar, Living by the River*, 76.

Old Pierre told of sma'k'w'ec, a leader in the community at Point Roberts, whose son became very powerful and transformed his mother into the south wind and father into the north wind.<sup>148</sup> Before transforming his father, he mentioned that he had been given power over “all the underground channels that lead from Point Roberts to Sechelt, Pitt Lake, and other places.”<sup>149</sup> Jenness footnotes this statement with truncated anecdotes of other tunnel systems that he had been told about. They included a tunnel running from the Orcas Islands to Point Roberts, Pitt Lake to Point Roberts and “Certain other deep pools were supposed to communicate subterraneously with Point Roberts. The Indians carefully refrained from bathing in them lest they be drawn under and drowned.”<sup>150</sup> One of the stories included in Jenness’ footnote describes two dogs, which chased a deer into the water near Orcas Island, who drowned. Their bodies, along with the body of the deer, were found drowned on the shore near Point Roberts. This story has an interesting possible connection with a story told to McHalsie by Rosalyn George. She described supernatural beings on the same shore that look similar to dogs.<sup>151</sup> These beings lived in the water and perhaps are the same dogs who Jenness’ describes. The animals may have gained mystical power through their journey through the tunnel. Jenness, unfortunately,

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<sup>148</sup> Jenness, *The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*, 11.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 11. Jenness’ footnote reads as follows: “Some of the Indians still believe in the existence of subterranean channels extending from Point Roberts to places far distant, and they related the following anecdotes in partial substantiation. . . . A youth who had performed for the first time at the winter dances went to bathe at a deep pool in Pitt Lake, hoping by that means to augment his supernatural powers. His companions tied a long rope round his waist and advised him to dive to the bottom and to ascend with the first object he grasped with his hands. The youth dived into the water and disappeared from sight. Suddenly an irresistible force pulled the rope through the hands of the watchers above. Anxiously they waited for a short time, and when the youth failed to emerge, returned home and reported that he had drowned. Soon afterwards the Tsawwassen Indians sent word that the corpse was lying on the beach at Point Roberts, carried there evidently through an underground channel from Pitt Lake.”

<sup>151</sup> McHalsie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chilliwack: November 28, 2009.

does not include references for these stories, leaving us with only sparse information about the tunnel system.

In *The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian* we can see the stories of the tunnels of the distant and more recent past existing together. Jenness' footnote describes events within the living memory of the community whereas the story being told by Old Pierre references the very remote past. The tunnels that originate at Point Roberts were not only remembered vaguely, the tunnels continued to be active – with unplanned travel through them resulting in death. The idea that someone had ownership over the tunnels appears only in the Old Pierre story. It is unclear if ownership of the subterranean network was passed down, as it is not mentioned in any clear way in later accounts.<sup>152</sup>

Simon Pierre, son of Old Pierre, referenced the tunnel stories when in conversation with Wayne Suttles in the 1950s. He indicates, on a map drawn by Suttles, a place called x<sup>w</sup>ta'q<sup>w</sup>eset in reference to a slough between Pitt Lake and Alouette. Included in this place description is the following: “a hole here leads to an underground passage that comes out at Point Roberts.”<sup>153</sup> In contrast to this more sparse recollection of the tunnel, Melvin Bailey told multiple stories of the tunnels of Pitt Lake in May 2009. He recounted a story of a tunnel connecting Penn Island to Crescent Beach, near White Rock.<sup>154</sup> A young man of Bailey's fathers generation fell into the tunnel and came

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<sup>152</sup> Melvin Bailey does mention tunnels owned by, or at least only known and used by, a doctor during his Grandfather's time. These tunnels do not seem to be the same as those discussed by Old Pierre.

<sup>153</sup> Wayne Suttles, *Katzie Ethnographic Notes*, (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1955): 19.

<sup>154</sup> Melvin Bailey, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Andrée Boisselle and Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Katzie, May 14, 2009.

through it to Crescent Beach, drowned. Bailey states, “One of my uncles told my grandfather and he knew. Well he says you got a tunnel there he says.”<sup>155</sup>

Along with that tunnel, which is potentially the same channel described by both Old Pierre and Simon Pierre, Bailey talked about another tunnel, or rather a set of tunnels used by a doctor named Slumach<sup>156</sup> who lived on the shores of Pitt Lake during his Grandfather’s era (contemporaneous with Simon Pierre). Slumach was a powerful, but dangerous, doctor who reportedly had access to an impressive goldmine that remained hidden after his death. Bailey describes him as having little respect for human life. Part of his power was tied to his ability to use a set of tunnels starting at the north end of the lake and going into the centre, which he traveled in his canoe.<sup>157</sup> Bailey describes him as having sole access to these tunnels.

The Pitt Lake tunnel stories indicate some interesting things about the genesis of tunnels in the area. New stories, and new tunnels, appear after the account of Old Pierre. The original tunnel, or at least the one first accounted for, remains a part of the spiritual geography of the area along with stories of other beings, such as the supernatural dogs on the shores of Point Roberts.<sup>158</sup> The lake, and the points that connect to it, are imbued with power. Dangerous doctors can use tunnels for transportation, but accidental tunnel travel results in death. The tunnels are themselves actors, not passive geographic features on the landscape, making decisions about the life and death of travelers seemingly based on the

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<sup>155</sup> Melvin Bailey, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Andrée Boisselle and Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Katzie, May 14, 2009.

<sup>156</sup> The legend of Slumach and his goldmine has been written about in-depth including the recent reprinting of the 1972 book by Rick Antonson, Mary Trainer, and Brian Antonson, *Slumach’s Gold: In Search of a Legend* (Surrey: Heritage House Publishing, 2007).

<sup>157</sup> Melvin Bailey, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Andrée Boisselle and Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Katzie, May 14, 2009.

<sup>158</sup> Melvin Bailey, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Andrée Boisselle and Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Katzie, May 14, 2009.

power of the individual traveler. The doctor Slumach could control, and possibly even build, his own channels while others, from Old Pierre's time up to the present day, suffered fatally from attempting to enter them.

The genealogy of the tunnel stories and its connection to the Pierre family line shows how tunnel stories have been passed down through generations. While each generation told different stories of the tunnels, the central passageway remained prominent. More modern stories took root and the older tales were not as readily told. However, the tunnel stories still seem to provide a connection both between places and to the power of those places. Despite narrative shifts, the same powerful places are brought together through tunnels.

#### Cultus Lake:

“If anyone got drowned at Cultus Lake, they were never found. A lot of people think there is an undercurrent there.” – Mr. Gus Commodore<sup>159</sup>

Cultus Lake, like Pitt Lake, is a place of significant power – it is a strong and storied place in the Stó:lō landscape. The stories about the tunnels connecting it to other locations also, like those connected to Pitt Lake, have an intricate and complex pedigree. Mrs. Cooper, interviewed by Oliver Wells in 1962, said that the lake used to be named Swilhcha. It was a place where people wanting to gain power, to become doctors, went for weeks at a time. Because of this it was called a “cultus” place. Mrs. Cooper said, “It’s “bad” in Chinook.”<sup>160</sup> ‘Cultus’ could also be translated as ‘worthless’ in reference to a decrease in the potency of the lake when too many people attempted to harness its power.

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<sup>159</sup> Gus Commodore, Interview with Norman Lerman, *Lower Fraser Indian Folktales Collected by Norman Lerman, 1950-1951*, (Typescript, Chilliwack: Stó:lō Nation Archives, n.d): 226.

<sup>160</sup> Mrs. Cooper, Interview with Oliver Wells, in Ralph Maud, Brent Galloway and Marie Weeden, ed., *The Chilliwacks and their Neighbors*, (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1987): 48.

These translations suggest both the power and the hazard located there, and tunnels are an integral part of what makes it a “cultus” place.

The story of the formation of Cultus Lake itself is a tunnel story. Norman Lerman, in his literary recounting of many Stó:lō stories, *Legends of the River People*, describes how Cultus Lake used to be a basin inhabited by a community. A young man who was very fast and growing up to be powerful, named Koothlak, went swimming at a small lake he constructed on the side of a mountain. He slowly dammed more and more space, creating a large body of water. The boys in his community used to tease him about going to swim there every morning until one day he released the collected waters thereby drowning the community. Lerman describes how before the basin was flooded, all the water flowed into an underground river leaving the basin free for the community.<sup>161</sup> When Koothlak released the water, “The branches from the dike went into the underground river, stopping it up, and the lake which we call Cultus Lake covered that place.”<sup>162</sup>

The underground river was only partially covered in this story, and what used to keep the basin inhabitable becomes, in stories taking place after the formation of the lake, a source of both power and danger. Those desiring the power of Indian doctors often ventured to the bottom of the lake. In one of Chief Sepass’ (1843-1943) poems he mentions a doctor who went to Cultus to acquire power. He calls him “Tslam, the Magician.”<sup>163</sup> This doctor may be the same man spoken of in Charles Hill-Tout’s 1902 *Report on the Ethnological Survey of Canada*. This young man ventured to the bottom of

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<sup>161</sup> Lerman, *Legends of the River People*, 17.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>163</sup> Oliver N. Wells, *Myths and Legends of the Staw-loh Indians of South Western British Columbia*, (Vancouver: Frank T. Coan, Ltd., 1970): 34.

Cultus Lake seeking power and returned to the community a very influential doctor. Others who tried a similar feat were pulled up to the surface as skeletons.<sup>164</sup> Oliver Wells also recorded a story with Albert Louie that describes a powerful doctor digging a hole from a small lake and ending up in Cultus Lake, perhaps describing the origin story of yet another tunnel.<sup>165</sup> Still others did not resurface at Cultus Lake at all, but rather their bodies were retrieved sometime later after they were transported through the underground river to Mud Bay, Washington.<sup>166</sup> The partially clogged river still was able to transport and kill those who were unworthy of the power granted by the forces living under the lake.<sup>167</sup>

Gus Commodore told a story to Norman Lerman about the power of the tunnel. He stated that some youth “wanted to see if they could conquer the lake. If they could, they would become pretty good medicine men. . . There was a story about one young man who didn’t take anyone with him at Cultus Lake, and when he came to, he was on the beach, way down there in Bellingham.”<sup>168</sup> This is the only account on record of anyone surviving the tunnel travel from Cultus to another location. Mr. Bob Joe, also talking to Lerman, said, “There were other young men watching when the undercurrent took him right under. Well, he was lost – drowned. Sometime after, down there at Mud

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<sup>164</sup> Charles Hill-Tout, *Report on the Ethnological Survey of Canada*, (London: British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1902): 15.

<sup>165</sup> Albert Louie, Interview with Oliver Wells in Ralph Maud, Brent Galloway and Marie Weeden, ed., *The Chilliwacks and their Neighbors*, (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1987): 160.

<sup>166</sup> Bob Joe, Interview with Norman Lerman, *Lower Fraser Indian Folktales Collected by Norman Lerman, 1950-1951*, (Typescript, Chilliwack: Stó:lō Nation Archives, n.d): 264.

<sup>167</sup> Dan Milo, Interview with Oliver Wells, *Edenbank Farm Collection*, Chilliwack B.C, July 1964. Milo tells of the community buried by the young man who formed Cultus Lake. In some versions of the story they then become the underwater people of Cultus Lake.

<sup>168</sup> Gus Commodore, Interview with Norman Lerman, *Lower Fraser Indian Folktales Collected by Norman Lerman, 1950-1951*, (Typescript, Chilliwack: Stó:lō Nation Archives, n.d): 226.

Bay, between White Rock and Point Roberts. . . They didn't know where this underground river was until this young man was drowned and came out at Mud Bay."<sup>169</sup>

While the tunnel remained active underneath Cultus Lake, the exact location of the tunnel entrance had been lost. Its rediscovery contributes another story to those attributed to the Cultus Lake tunnel.

Similar stories exist in other parts of the Coast Salish world. William W. Elmendorf, an ethnographer working in the Skokomish area of Washington State in the 1930s documented stories of young men seeking power in the water in a similar way to the stories originating around Cultus Lake. Working with elder Henry Allan, Elmendorf wrote that they often tied rope around themselves before jumping in and "Many seekers who dived like that never came back, nobody ever saw them again."<sup>170</sup> While these divers may have met other fates, it is possible that tunnel travel of this nature is spread throughout the Coast Salish world, and perhaps in Indigenous communities in other parts of the world. Seeking power through water and not surviving is a theme for many tunnel narratives told by Stó:lō people.

The tunnel, or potentially tunnels, of Cultus Lake go to Mud Bay, Bellingham, and White Rock. They seem to be associated with the recurring underground river originally draining the basin. The lake continues to have power and the tunnels continue to violently transport those seeking them. The multiple exit points of the tunnel could suggest multiple passageways or a tunnel with the ability to change its course – or perhaps a course that has changed over time. These tunnel stories combine the spiritual

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<sup>169</sup> Mr. Bob Joe, Interview with Norman Lerman, *Lower Fraser Indian Folktales Collected by Norman Lerman, 1950-1951*, (Typescript, Chilliwack: Stó:lō Nation Archives, n.d): 264.

<sup>170</sup> William W. Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives: Native Historical Accounts of a Coast Salish Culture*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993): 166.

landmarks of the mytho-historical past with more modern stories. With one exception, contemporary seekers of the power of Cultus Lake are more likely to be drowned than to return to their community with power equivalent to Tslam. The powers of Cultus Lake, while clearly still active in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, have become either more powerful or more discerning over time. Cultus Lake was founded on the site of a tunnel, and it may be that this original underground river, and its history, provides the place with its strength.

### Kawkawa Lake and the Sxwó:xwey Mask Stories

“They hired Beaver to make a little tunnel from the lake to a little pond out in the river.” -Mrs. Harry Uslick<sup>171</sup>

The Sxwó:xwey mask origin story is one of the most culturally significant stories of the Stó:lō people. The masks, regalia, songs and dances associated with the Sxwó:xwey are central to the cultural vibrancy and spirituality of the Stó:lō people in the Fraser Valley.<sup>172</sup> Three tunnels are associated with the Sxwó:xwey, all built in order to bring the masks from the underwater people of Kawkawa Lake to a small pond in the Fraser River near the village of Iwowes. The stories surrounding these tunnels differ in the nature of their construction, but almost all versions of the story include at least one tunnel, suggesting their importance to the sacred geography of the Stó:lō people.

Albert ‘Sonny’ McHalsie tells the story of the Sxwó:xwey, as it was told to him by Amelia Douglas. He states, “the underwater people were trying to figure out how can we bring this mask from Quelquem<sup>173</sup> to the village of Iwowes which is across the mountain

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<sup>171</sup> Mrs. Harry Uslick, Interview with Norman Lerman, *Lower Fraser Indian Folktales Collected by Norman Lerman, 1950-1951*, (Typescript, Chilliwack: Stó:lō Nation Archives, n.d): 222.

<sup>172</sup> For a detailed description of the Sxwó:xwey story and significance see Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, “Sxwó:xwey Origins and Movements,” in in Keith Thor Carlson, ed., *A Stó:lō Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001): 10.

<sup>173</sup> I am unsure about this spelling.

and there is a little lake there so they figured that's how they would bring it but they needed to dig or make a tunnel."<sup>174</sup> The underwater people asked three animals to dig tunnels in turn. The first animal, whose name neither McHalsie nor Douglas knew, dug a tunnel that came out at a rock bluff around the corner. The second animal was Bird, but this tunnel ended too far north of the village and resulted in many small tunnels at a place called Sqweliqwehiwel, meaning "many small tunnels." Finally the third animal, Beaver, successfully dug a tunnel from Kawkawa Lake to the deep pool near Iwowes.<sup>175</sup> The tunnel was necessary, according to McHalsie, because the underwater people could not bring the mask across land. They needed to travel underground in order to gift the mask to the Stó:lō people.<sup>176</sup>

Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his book *The Way of the Mask*, discusses the tunnels of this story. He states that beaver and the Coho salmon, perhaps the animal that was unnamed by McHalsie and Douglas, made the tunnels.<sup>177</sup> Lévi-Strauss goes on to say that in some renditions of the story, there are even more animals who attempt tunnels, indicated by the names given to the masks. The successful tunnel, in Lévi-Strauss' account given by unnamed sources and amalgamated into his synthesis, apparently goes from Kawkawa Lake to Yale, as opposed to returning the young man to Iwowes.<sup>178</sup>

In recordings, Amelia Douglas tells a nearly identical story of the mask tunnels. In one version she tells of how some of the underwater people did not want to give the

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<sup>174</sup> Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chilliwack, B.C, May 12, 2009.

<sup>175</sup> Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chilliwack, B.C, May 12, 2009.

<sup>176</sup> Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chilliwack, B.C, May 12, 2009.

<sup>177</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Way of the Masks*, Translated by Sylvia Modelski, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd, 1982): 22.

<sup>178</sup> Lévi-Strauss, *The Way of the Mask*, 22.

young man the mask after he had cured their sickness, and they in turn had cured his. The one who did not want to give the mask did not tell the people the right way to make the tunnel to the boy's home. She says, "they were all too far away from where they were supposed to go. So, finally the one that was mad and the one that knew the trail, which way to go, finally took him home."<sup>179</sup> In this version the multiple tunnels are not mistakes of the animals that helped, but rather the result of one underwater person being reluctant to give the masks away. The multiple tunnels are, then, either the result of a fallible but honest effort of the animals or the reservations of one of the underwater people. Either way the multiplicity of tunnels in these versions suggest that getting the masks to Iwowes was an ordeal – a task that took effort, thought, and multiple attempts making the final tunnel a greater achievement.

Some descriptions of the story do not include the multiple tunnels. Instead only one tunnel is mentioned – the successful tunnel made by Beaver. Mr. Peters, talking to Oliver Wells in 1964, only describes one tunnel.<sup>180</sup> The account given to Wilson Duff in the 1950s by Mrs. R.J. describes two tunnels, but Beaver constructs both. Her account reads, "Beaver was told to dig a tunnel from the lake down through the mountain to the deep pool in the Fraser at the village. He dug one hole, but came out too high above the water, then dug another which came out in the deepest part of the pool."<sup>181</sup> Robert Joe

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<sup>179</sup> Amelia Douglas, Interview with Sonny McHalsie, Randel Paul, Peter John, Interview number: DA88-26, SRRMC Archives, Chilliwack., B.C., August 17, 1988. A similar version is also recorded in Amelia Douglas, Interview with Sonny McHalsie, Randel Paul, and Richard Daly, Interview number: DA89-10, Chilliwack B.C., October 3, 1989.

<sup>180</sup> Edmund Peteres, Interview with Oliver Wells, *Edenbank Farm Collection*, SRRMC Archives, Chilliwack B.C., August, 1964: 221.

<sup>181</sup> Mrs. R.J, Interview with Wilson Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians of the Fraser Valley, British Columbia*, (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1952): 124.

recounts this similarly.<sup>182</sup> While the accounts may vary, the centrality of the tunnels and their building suggests that they are vital to the acquisition of the masks. They are, like the tunnel from Spuzzum to Yale, part of a built metaphysical environment. The tunnels that were unsuccessful are also part of the physical landscape – increasing the physicality of the story by inscribing it onto the environment.<sup>183</sup> It is perhaps instructive that the failed attempts are easily visible whereas the successful tunnel remains hidden in the deepest part of the pond. The most important avenue of transportation in this story remains hidden in the depths of a spiritual geography concealed from those who do not know it is there.

Only a single account of the tunnel's modern activity is recorded. Patrick Charlie, speaking with Wilson Duff, told of the possibility of being able to visit the underwater people at Kawkawa Lake. He said, "Today, people live under the lake. Go there, jump down. You'll hit a roof. . . then the person comes out at outlet of lake. If he is lying on the N. side of creek he is dead. If S. side, alive."<sup>184</sup> Charlie went on to say that the body could lie for one or two days and then come back to life with the power of the lake. He also told Duff that one white man, named Murphy, tried this but ended up drowning – the only time a white person is mentioned directly in a tunnel story. Non-Indigenous people do not seem to be aware of the spiritual landscape or do not attempt to use the tunnels. These routes of transportation are protected from the colonizer's eyes by virtue of their

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<sup>182</sup> Mr. Bob Joe, Interview with Norman Lerman, *Lower Fraser Indian Folktales Collected by Norman Lerman, 1950-1951*, (Typescript, Chilliwack: Stó:lō Nation Archives, n.d): 264.

<sup>183</sup> Santos-Granero, "Writing History into the Landscape," 140. Santos-Granero discusses this process as the creation of "topograms" – landmarks that have acquired their present form because of the actions of people or supernatural forces in the past. They are a physical inscription of history onto the landscape.

<sup>184</sup> Patrick Charlie, Interview with Wilson Duff, Duff, Wilson. *Wilson Duff's Stalo Notebooks. Notebook #1*. Patrick Charlie. July 1950, Yale. (Binder 1 of 3): 51.

concealment. It seems that, like Cultus Lake, Kawkawa Lake retains its power and the tunnel remains active, although leading more often to a violent end for those who attempt to harness its power.

The tunnels associated with the Sxwó:xwey masks are the most mentioned of all the tunnels in contemporary stories. This is not surprising given their significance in the story, and the place of the Sxwó:xwey in Stó:lō culture. The significance of the Sxwó:xwey is integral to the spiritual geography of the area. The tunnels are an important part of this cultural landscape, providing the means necessary for giving the gift of the Sxwó:xwey.<sup>185</sup> They are one of the ways in which Stó:lō people are connected to one another across community lines. Wolfgang Jilek, a doctor working with some Stó:lō communities in the 1970s, surmised that the Sxwó:xwey operated as “a mediator between distant kin groups, joining man and woman in exogamous marriage (brother gives mask to sister when sister marries into another band), and also joining distant tribes in ceremonial functions.”<sup>186</sup>

Jilek associates the connections between communities through the marital movement of the Sxwó:xwey masks, but other stories exist that even more explicitly connect tunnel travel and community connections. Darren Charlie, of Chehalis, talks about the arrival of the Sxwó:xwey mask in the Harrison River, and other places throughout the Stó:lō place world. He describes a rock, called Sxwó:xwey Rock located at the mouth of the Harrison river, that looks like a Sxwó:xwey mask. Near to this place is a spiral pictograph etched onto the rock of the Harrison River. These two landmarks

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<sup>186</sup> Wolfgang Jilek, M.D, *Indian Healing: Shamanic Ceremonialism in the Pacific Northwest Today*, (Surrey: Hancock House Publishers Ltd., 1982):153.

are said to be where the Sxwó:xwey mask appeared for the people of Chehalis.<sup>187</sup> The mask appeared, floating up in the water, after traveling through a mystical portal from Kawkawa Lake to the Harrison River. The portal, which was supposed to lead to Iwowes, accidentally led the mask to the Harrison. Charlie says that similar mystical tunnels opened up in other parts of S'olh Téméxw including at Musqueam and on Vancouver Island. When the mask floated up, the people who received it instantly knew of the story and the power of the mask. Charlie says that the spiritual channel “doesn't know time and distance” so the arrival of these replica masks may have happened instantaneously.<sup>188</sup>

Charlie describes these masks that appear across the territory as replicas endowed with the authentic story. They are not considered, by the people in the communities who received them, as lesser than the mask that was given to the young man's sister at Iwowes in the most commonly told story. What is interesting about these tunnel stories is the way in which they simultaneously brought disparate communities together in a shared cultural imagining. Charlie states, “our spirituality and our belief in the mystical tunnels is they are mystical in the sense that I haven't actually seen them but I believe they're there. . . they are for a purpose. If we have to be told something about what's happening with our world or there's a message that that's when they show themselves.”<sup>189</sup> In this way, the tunnels connected to the Sxwó:xwey mask origin story brought the vast territory of S'olh Téméxw, and the disparate communities that comprise it, close together. These portals, and the social, cultural and spiritual imagination they are a part of, draw distant communities together without reference to distance and time.

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<sup>187</sup> Darren Charlie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chehalis: November 29, 2009.

<sup>188</sup> Darren Charlie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chehalis: November 29, 2009.

<sup>189</sup> Darren Charlie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chehalis: November 29, 2009.

The masks arrive at different parts of the territory while the sister waits at Iwoves for the delivery of the mask. There are multiple ways of reading this story. One would be that multiple communities want to claim a relationship to the original Sxwó:xwey mask as it is a claim to one of the most important Stó:lō symbols in the ceremonial culture. Another way to read this is as one way physically separate communities could imagine themselves as part of a larger cultural shift. Rather than a claim to the original mask, then, these are claims to a participation in the story of the original mask. Charlie discusses the masks that came up in the Harrison River and other places as replicas. The tunnel was meant to take the mask to Iwoves but made a mistake. Once the mask came up elsewhere it was no less ‘real’ but it was not the original. The complicated claim inherent in these renditions does not have clear connotations. It is a claim to the mask, through a tunnel, but it can be read either as communities imagining themselves as closer together or as communities making a claim that they did not need to connect themselves to the Sxwó:xwey through marriage.

No single meaning can be drawn from the collective tunnel stories. The possible significance of each story is as diverse as the number of stories that exist about it. However, some themes emerge about the place of tunnels, and tunnel travel, in the Stó:lō understanding of their landscape. Anthropologist Christopher Tilley argues that “Places such as sacred mountains associated with light and air that lie up and above always tend to be privileged culturally and emotionally while places situated down below tend to be associated with darkness and death.”<sup>190</sup> I have yet to come across any literature describing a Stó:lō understanding of what the collected tunnels could mean but tunnels, in

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<sup>190</sup> Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, 6.

a Stó:l̓ō intellectual framework, are clearly powerful, but hazardous, places thereby fitting into Tilley's understanding of how cultures, generally, understand impressive landscapes. Part of what makes them so potent is their seeming invisibility. Only a very small group of people can safely travel through tunnels and gain power from the places they connect. Stories of tunnel travel occurring within the living memory of people usually end in death.

There is a tension in the tunnel narratives about whether these portals are physical or metaphysical. The stories, while usually dealing with spiritual potency and the acquisition of power, do not really detail travel through the tunnels. It is unclear, for instance, if people walk through the tunnels or are instantaneously transported.<sup>191</sup> It is not a question necessarily of the 'real'-ness of the tunnels, but rather what plane of existence they are a part of. Albert 'Sonny' McHalsie has thought about possible connections between tunnel stories and the ancient geological activity of the ice age. He postulates, "I often wondered if that was what the story was about, the ice had covered the river but the river was still running underneath and whether or not where the tunnel was marked a spot where our ancestors used to be able to hide under the ice to get access to the Fraser."<sup>192</sup>

Similarly, Julie Cruickshank in her work in the Yukon has found many stories of travel in underground rivers existing below glacial surfaces.<sup>193</sup> She argues that similar stories can be found along most rivers, suggesting both that this kind of travel may have been ubiquitous and that stories of it can be found in many places. McHalsie's idea of Fraser River ice bridges might in fact be very possible. Interestingly, though, the

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<sup>191</sup> In the case of the tunnel between the whirlpool and Tekwothal, travel does seem to be instantaneous.

<sup>192</sup> Albert 'Sonny' McHalsie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chilliwack: November 28, 2009.

<sup>193</sup> Cruickshank, *Do Glaciers Listen*, 40.

geological or ‘deep time’ truth of these findings does not seem to be very important. They are possible scenarios that can add to ideas about tunnels and tunnel travel, but the realities of the tunnels are in no way hinged upon some kind of Western scientific verification.

Darren Charlie, in a similar way, discusses the scientific work that has been done in Harrison Lake where scientists surveying the waters found areas so deep that they could not register the bottom.<sup>194</sup> It is these places in Harrison Lake where tunnel connections are located, linking Harrison with Cultus Lake and Pitt Lake.<sup>195</sup> These tunnels might be both geological and metaphysical. Charlie does seem to draw a distinction between these type of tunnels and those associated with the Sxwó:xwey mask. While the geological tunnels may be powerful, the spiritual component of tunnels is their importance. Charlie says, “In English terms it’s a tunnel but actually it’s a spiritual tunnel . . . it’s like a channel or a tunnel to another dimension.”<sup>196</sup> This points to the problem of translatability of tunnel narratives. The scientific or physically literal existence of the tunnels creates questions in listeners who think in terms of Western scientific cultures of argument. For people like McHalsie and Charlie, this scientific physicality has interesting possibilities but is not a necessary criterion for belief. Maybe the word ‘tunnel’ itself is a misnomer in these narratives – an imposition of an English language concept onto a Stó:lō spiritual geography. The physical and metaphysical truth of these portals may, like the tunnel stories, connect very different places.

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<sup>194</sup> Darren Charlie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chehalis: November 29, 2009.

<sup>195</sup> Darren Charlie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chehalis: November 29, 2009.

<sup>196</sup> Darren Charlie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chehalis: November 29, 2009.

Julie Cruickshank writes, “Good stories, like good theories, make connections that are not always straightforward.”<sup>197</sup> In terms of the tunnel stories, it is true that the conclusions and connections do not always seem to follow obviously from the narratives themselves. There seems to be a fairly clear divide between stories set in the distant past and those occurring in a more recent time. This could suggest an increasing number of Stó:lō people who are not aware of the tunnel networks. A lack of historical knowledge or cultural continuity could be read into these stories as a threat to human life. McHalsie suggests that the increase in tunnel fatalities could be linked to a wider culture loss. He states, “people are supposed to know their history and they don’t know it or they don’t have a shwalam that can help them.”<sup>198</sup> There also seems to be a difference between tunnels existing within the natural spiritual landscape and those built for specific purposes within the stories. The natural and the built metaphysical environment coexist, but built tunnels represent a more conscious act of creation – a human alteration of the landscape.

### **Stories and Storytellers**

The tunnels, because of their secretive nature, are only as detectable as the narratives told about them. As such, the role of story and storyteller becomes increasingly important to this spiritual landscape. The primary source material for this study comes from a variety of people and eras. Stories change over time and with each retelling they may be consciously or unconsciously altered to meet the needs of the storyteller, audience and cultural current. They have what Julie Cruickshank describes as a ‘social

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<sup>197</sup> Cruickshank, *Do Glaciers Listen*, 50.

<sup>198</sup> Albert ‘Sonny’ McHalsie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chilliwack: November 28, 2009.

life.’<sup>199</sup> A myriad of causes could inspire these alterations and they could reflect the process of collective forgetting, generational knowledge gaps, new construction, new knowledge or changes in the tunnels themselves. The relationship between story, storyteller and place is essential to understanding and honestly engaging with the hidden topography of the Stó:lō world. It is through the stories themselves that the buried tunnel environment is made visible. Academic Kent C. Ryden writes that every place has “an unseen layer of usage, memory, and significance – an invisible landscape, if you will, of imaginative landmarks – superimposed upon the geographical surface and the two-dimensional map. To passing observers, however, that landscape will remain invisible unless it is somehow called to their attention.”<sup>200</sup> Our access to this invisible landscape is mediated by the stories told about it. Those stories are themselves mediated by the thoughts and ideas of the storytellers– we cannot access the tunnels without them.

Non-Indigenous anthropologists and ethnographers collected many of the stories recorded about the tunnels. The storytellers and recorders are mostly men, with a few female storytellers present. This gender imbalance may point to the interests or access points of the ethnographers or the interests and availability of community members. While it is not entirely clear what the impact of this gender divide is, it is worth noting the male dominance in both the teller and listener roles of the recorded storytelling process. My own interviews were conducted entirely with male community members. This may have affected the stories I was told, but perhaps more likely the story choice in my own interviews reflects the questions I raised and the community familiarity with the

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<sup>199</sup> Cruickshank, *The Social Life of Stories*, xiii.

<sup>200</sup> Kent C. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing and the Sense of Place*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993): 40.

field school. In some ways, my role as listener was dictated by the nature of this larger relationship, as I had access to community members and events that otherwise might not have been available to me.

Accessing the voice of the informant in the records I used was challenging, particularly because of the phenomenological nature of the stories dealing with tunnels. They are a challenge to Western ideas of the real and the imaginary. Michel De Certeau postulates that cultures exist within a framework of the “thinkable.” Each group defines what ideas are even possible to entertain, and every culture differs in what falls into this category.<sup>201</sup> Stories of unseen portals with mystical qualities probably fell into early ethnographers realm of the “unthinkable” or impossible, resulting in a dismissal of the stories as mythic. The air of disbelief is problematic, and may colour early accounts. Stories collected later by Stó:lō people, such as those collected by Albert ‘Sonny’ McHalsie, have a different tone as the relationship between informant and interviewer changes the kinds of stories told. This is particularly evident in the level of detail the stories lack when recorded by such ethnographers as Oliver Wells. Wells, trying to collect the language and place names of the Stó:lō, often interrupted stories that dealt with spirituality or mythic histories.<sup>202</sup> The tunnel stories are now approached with greater sensitivity – allowing them to enter the realm of the “thinkable.” It is, though, important to remember that specific stories are told to specific listeners at specific

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<sup>201</sup> Michel De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, translated by Tom Conley, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988): 21.

<sup>202</sup> For example: Edmund Peters, Interview with Oliver Wells, *Edenbank Farm Collection*, Chilliwack, B.C., August 1964: 222.

times.<sup>203</sup> Ethnographic records and transcribed oral interviews are not a random assortment of anecdotes; rather they are the transcripts of a relationship.

Robin Ridington, working with the Dunne-za First Nation, attempted to deal with this in his own writing about Indigenous people. He discovered that it was an unending struggle to reconcile his own culture with the culture he was trying to understand and write about. He writes, “style cannot be separated from substance. The way we write about culture is highly cultural.”<sup>204</sup> The separation of story and storyteller is impossible. Understanding the stories of the tunnels is an exercise in understanding the role of stories in the Stó:lō world – both literary and geographic. The stories reflect both personal and collective constructions of the spiritual landscape. There is an intimate bond between these collective histories, personal connections to them and the ability to experience them in a tangible way.<sup>205</sup>

The role of the storyteller in the construction of the tunnel narratives also raises the question of who can tell this type of story. Wilson Duff, in his section on the Sxwó:xwey stories, gets a story from a Mrs. R.J. “whose family owns the right to use it.”<sup>206</sup> Mrs. R.J.’s family probably has a hereditary right to use the Sxwó:xwey mask, but the idea of right to use could also reflect a right to tell the story. The same could potentially be said for the Pitt Lake stories told in the Pierre family genealogical tradition. The stories of the Pitt Lake tunnels begin with a reference to the ownership of the tunnels

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<sup>203</sup> Elizabeth Cory-Pearce, “Locating Authorship: Creativity and Borrowing in the Writing of Ethnography and the Production of Anthropological Knowledge,” in Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold, ed., *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation* (New York: Berg, 2007):138.

<sup>204</sup> Robin Ridington, *Trail to Heaven: Knowledge and Narrative in a Northern Native Community*, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1988): xii.

<sup>205</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, “Place: An Experiential Perspective,” *The Geographical Review*, 65(2), (1975): 164.

<sup>206</sup> Mrs. R.J, Interview with Wilson Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians of the Fraser Valley*: 124.

that have been passed down through the familial line of the storyteller, perhaps indicating rights to both the stories and the tunnels themselves.<sup>207</sup> It is not possible to make any concrete statement about story ownership, but the tunnel stories seem to be held by individuals with connections to the places they link.<sup>208</sup> Who then, in terms of academics and ethnographers, has the right to retell these stories? My own work and experiences with Stó:l̓ people and communities was premised on permission from the Stó:l̓ Nation to research and ask questions about these stories. Despite this general endorsement, I struggled with how to interpret the stories I read in the archive and the interviews I conducted. The role of the mediating, usually white, imagination of an outsider is problematic in the issue of narrative ownership, even in my own case. If place centered narratives, told by storytellers with the right or knowledge to narrate, are told in the context of a relationship, how then can they be reinterpreted successfully and thoughtfully when taken out of that context and put into a wholly different project?

Many of the stories, both those that appear in historical ethnographic accounts and those that are told by contemporary community members, include references – either written or oral – indicating the source for the story. These citations provide legitimacy to the storyteller and present a link to the narratives of the past. Storytellers recounting the tunnel stories today infuse their narratives with references to the people who told the stories in the past. Stories have genealogies and their changes can be traced. For example, Albert ‘Sonny’ McHalsie credits many of his stories to Amelia Douglas based on interviews he conducted with her in the late 1980s. The transcripts of those interviews

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<sup>207</sup> The reference to tunnel ownership is from Jenness, *The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*, 11.

<sup>208</sup> This assertion is based on the communities from which the storytellers come from. Storytellers tend to tell stories about the places where they grew up or currently live, perhaps with the exception of Kawkawa Lake stories, whose cultural capital seems to transcend community borders.

reveal that the stories, while remaining largely the same, undergo transformations with every telling. They also reveal the difference between reading a story and hearing it in person. Listening to the intonation and cadence of stories changes their felt meaning – perhaps accounting for some of the difference between listening to McHalsie and reading Amelia Douglas.

The tunnel stories, then, are intimately tied to the stories of the past. They are also intimately tied to the places described. They are localized narratives and, as such, are inextricably connected to the places described as well as the discourses surrounding identity, belonging, and rights to land and resources. The physical landscape of S’olh Téméxw, like all storied landscapes, provides places that are mnemonic – offering physical and visual prompts for the stories about them.<sup>209</sup> It is around these places that collective histories and personal biographies connect, rooting the narratives produced in a place.<sup>210</sup> The importance of the places connected by tunnels provides part of their significance. These stories and storytellers are decidedly place-bound. The locations and the narratives compliment and shape one another. Place, according to Ryden, “is in fact as much a verbal as a physical or geographical phenomenon.”<sup>211</sup> Tilley pushes this idea further by suggesting that words, or stories, create place. He states, “this is the task of a richly textured carnal phenomenological ‘thick’ description in which we truly attempt to reflect on the character of our experience.”<sup>212</sup> The tunnels and the narratives about them

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<sup>209</sup> Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, 26.

<sup>210</sup> Santos-Granero, “Writing History into the Landscape,” 141.

<sup>211</sup> Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, 42.

<sup>212</sup> Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, 28.

are dependant on one another and both are complexly rooted in the physical and metaphysical landscape of S'olh Téméxw.

### **Space, Place and Spiritual Landscapes**

Tunnels connecting geographically distant places in S'olh Téméxw raise questions about how the Stó:lō think about space – be it social or geographic. Subterranean channels provide links, however rarely operationalized, between distant communities.<sup>213</sup> This necessarily affects social spatiality as these connections make S'olh Téméxw a much smaller place. Belief in the tunnels fosters a social closeness and inspires a collective identity based on physical and social proximity. Christopher Tilley argues that “Personal and social identities are played out in the context of landscapes and the multitude of places that constitute them. To be human is to be place-bound in a fundamental way.”<sup>214</sup> Tunnels bring places socially closer and provide another bond between communities and people who seem far apart to the unknowing eye. They also help shape the identities of those who know of them, and believe in their existence. Landscape phenomenologist Edward Casey writes, “If imagination projects us out *beyond* ourselves while memory takes us back *behind* ourselves, place subtends and enfolds us, lying perpetually *under and around* us.”<sup>215</sup> The places in which people live, and about which they tell stories, become the sites of both history and mythology. Identities are likewise physically located, providing the literal and metaphorical ground for communities to share experiences and culture.<sup>216</sup> The tunnels fit into this collective

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<sup>213</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power Of Place, The Problem Of Time*: 6.

<sup>214</sup> Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, 25.

<sup>215</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back Into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993): xvi.

<sup>216</sup> Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, 25.

imagining of space and place. They bring places, and therefore people, closer together and inspire a connectedness by simply existing in the Stó:lō landscape and providing a possibility of operationalization.

Cultural ways of imagining geographic space and difference are hard to excavate. It is interesting, for example to think about the differences in spatial imaginations between Stó:lō tunnel narratives and Western Canadian understandings of national borders. Anthropologist Tim Ingold uses his theory of ‘dwelling perspective’ to argue “the immersion of the organism-person in an environment or lifeworld as an inescapable condition of existence.”<sup>217</sup> The dwelling perspective is interesting in terms of thinking about cultural relationships to geographic realities. For example, the lifeworld of a Stó:lō person may include tunnels as one of the ways they understand their relationship to the physical environment they live in. Equally, a member of a settler community in the same valley may not dwell in the same lifeworld. Instead of imagining the valley underscored with tunnel network, they might imagine the border between Canada and the United States as both a political and a cultural boundary. This international border runs through the cultural world of the Stó:lō. In fact Darren Charlie describes elders in his community who do not believe in the border, perhaps in much the same way as settler society may not believe in the tunnels as part of their cultural world.<sup>218</sup>

Tunnel narratives require new listeners to re-imagine geographic realities and the meaning of ‘place.’ The landscapes that make up S’olh Téméxw are littered with important places – rocks transformed by Xáls, hereditary fishing spots, and the

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<sup>217</sup> Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, (New York: Routledge, 2000): 153.

<sup>218</sup> Darren Charlie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chehalis: November 29, 2009.

boundaries of reserves are only some examples of the kinds of places that currently inform the Stó:lō geographic landscape. Tunnels occupy a place somewhere between the physical and the spiritual realm. They also can be viewed as a stark reminder for outsiders that Stó:lō people may not divide the spiritual and the physical in the same way. Journeys through tunnels are journeys to, and between, specific places - important places for various reasons.<sup>219</sup> Tilley argues, “it is mistaken to draw distinctions between natural and cultural landscapes and places or the material and the mental. They are intertwined in social Being.”<sup>220</sup> Tunnels are one part of this landscape – at once geographic, cultural, political and spiritual. They are though, by their own nature, intractably mysterious. They are places that, if the stories about them were lost, could disappear from the geography they inform. Experiential geographer Yi-Fu Tuan writes that place “is a construct of experience; it is sustained . . . by the quality of human awareness.”<sup>221</sup> The relationship at work here is dialectical: the geography inspires the stories and the stories create the place. Tunnels, then, are places vulnerable to erasure because of their secretive locations, sustained by the stories told about them.

These narratives are part of a mental geography that is intimately connected to the physical world and also firmly rooted in a spiritual plane. Denis Cosgrove writes that the “surface does not delimit our imaginative life and it is given ‘depth’ or meaning only in relation to what exists above and below it.”<sup>222</sup> Tunnels, in this estimation of the meaning of landscape, provide the hidden depths and the mystery of the place. Spiritual landscapes

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<sup>219</sup> Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*, 274.

<sup>220</sup> Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, 24.

<sup>221</sup> Tuan, “Place,” 165.

<sup>222</sup> Cosgrove, “Landscapes and Myths, Gods and Humans,” 282.

inform a cultural and collective identity just as much as a physically tangible place does, arguably even more. Yi-Fu Tuan argues that landscape, that is ideas and meanings attached to specific locations, is a function of the mature human mind.<sup>223</sup> The creation of a landscape is itself a mental exercise – an effort of imagination. Kent C. Ryden writes “It is stories . . . of what happened to people in a place, of what they have done with the things that they found there, that best reveal the “real geography”: geography, that is, experienced and understood as place.”<sup>224</sup> In this estimation, tunnels are not a challenge to geographic understandings of place, they are part of a spiritual and storied landscape - they create place.

### **Drawing Conclusions**

It is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions about the role of tunnels, their importance and their meaning for this community. They are a part of the metaphysical and physical geography that inform Stó:lō collective identity, spirituality, and history. They are unique in the landscape of S’olh Téméxw because they are hidden from sight. Transformed rocks lack meaning without stories but remain visible to passersby, but tunnels do not. They are completely dependent on stories told about them and therefore provide a link between stories, storytellers and place. Ryden argues that storytellers, such as McHalsie, are “literary cartographers . . . trying to portray both the exterior, visible landscape . . . and, more important, the interior, invisible landscape that lies atop it – a world of deep and subtle meaning for the people who live there, one that can be mapped

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<sup>223</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, “Thought and Landscape: The Eye and the Mind’s Eye,” in D.W Meinig, ed., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979):90.

<sup>224</sup> Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, 46.

only with words.”<sup>225</sup> It is at the nexus of storyteller, story and place that the tunnels create their connections – providing another way of thinking about social and physical space and creating bonds between physically separate locations.

The tunnel stories have changed over time, and will continue to undergo alterations as new stories are added to the list as needed and others are removed after serving their purpose, and as new storytellers engage and create the spiritual geography of S’olh Téméxw. The relationships they form between these “strong places” continue to influence the way people inscribe meaning onto the landscape and understand their place within it. Outside of these spiritual and social ideas but inherent in these understandings of belonging and identity are political and cultural arguments about the depth of the relationship between Stó:l̓ people and S’olh Téméxw. When I started this project, I was looking for the ways that tunnel stories might foster a social closeness between communities – a connection that was operationalized when necessary to make an explicit link between groups. These connections are so culturally, politically, historically and spiritually complex that it is difficult to determine that tunnel narratives always provide that link. The narratives do, however, provide continuity, though sometimes with significant gaps, between communities, within families and across temporal divides.

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<sup>225</sup> Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, 52.

### Chapter Three: Colonial Encounters and Relationships of Imagination

Albert ‘Sonny’ McHalsie tells a story recounted to him by the late Bill Pat

Charlie. Charlie described walking with his father through a railway tunnel near Lady

Franklin Rock. McHalsie states:

He was walking through there with his father and they kept getting turned around so as they were walking through the tunnel when they got out the other end they were at the same end that they started in and they tried to get the other way and then they’d go walking again and they’d try and they were right back where they started. And they did this a couple of times and then they ended up going to see their grandfather Charlie. And Captain Charlie is supposed to have done some work for them so that they could go through the tunnel so they went back there and they walked through the tunnel.<sup>226</sup>

This is a story that does not quite fit with the other narratives of tunnel travel. A railway tunnel built by settler society through the rock along the shores of the Fraser River does not, at first glance, appear to part of a Stó:lō spiritual geography. This story points to a number of interesting ideas about the possible connections between tunnel narratives, place, and the relationships between settler and Indigenous cultures in the Fraser Valley. The railway tunnel – a marker of settler colonization and industrial development – keeps turning the Stó:lō father and son around. They get lost in the tunnel created by a colonial imagination, and the only way to escape or to pass freely through it is to go to their elder for help, Captain Charlie, a *sxwlá:m* or Indian doctor, whose cultural knowledge allows them to find their way.

The relationship between Stó:lō people and their spiritual landscape is complicated by the relationship between settler and Indigenous ways of understanding place. These can be seen within the tunnel narratives. The Fraser Valley and S’olh

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<sup>226</sup> Albert “Sonny” McHalsie. Interview with Margaret Robbins. Chilliwack BC: November 28, 2009.

Téméxw are two layers of imagination laid onto the same geography. The relationship between them historically has been affected by the power dynamics of colonialism, as European explorers or, later, settler society did not readily see the cultural geography of S'olh Téméxw. For newcomers, the Fraser Valley was described using European ways of understanding and imagining place. Given the cross-cultural research relationship that produced almost all of the recorded versions of the stories, there is no way to escape the interaction between Stó:lō storytelling and non-Indigenous imaginations. The unseen layers of these conversations are the interactions between two cultural ways of understanding and narrating space.

The boundaries of maps and the boundaries of stories can both be restrictive or liberating.<sup>227</sup> As Bill Pat Charlie lost his way in the constructed railway tunnel, many Stó:lō communities also struggled with traveling through colonized space – physical, spiritual, and literary. It was through cultural knowledge, a rediscovery of the strength of S'olh Téméxw as a storied and powerful landscape, that the railway tunnel became possible to pass safely through. Indigenous communities are in constant negotiations with both internal and external entities over issues of identity and culture. While Bill Pat Charlie was able to use cultural knowledge to move through colonial spaces, other Indigenous people look to combine their cultural and historical identities with tools imported by settler society. One of the sites of this negotiation over cultural and political identity boundaries occurs within the lines of maps. Like the railway tunnel, cartographic expressions of the Fraser Valley are constructed spaces of a non-Indigenous imagination.

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<sup>227</sup> Michael Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression and Intersubjectivity*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2002): 18.

Stó:lō people and communities are attempting to express their cultural, political and spiritual identities within their borders.

Post-colonial and decolonization theory, blossoming out of critiques of colonial hegemonic power structures, often wrestles with the idea made famous by feminist activist Audre Lorde, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”<sup>228</sup> In the context of maps and counter-maps or imaginings and re-imaginings, it is interesting to think through these critiques. Is it possible, or desirable, to refashion a Stó:lō conception of place into a format understandable to settler communities? Theorist James Corner persuasively argues, “The power of maps resides in their facticity. The analytical measure of factual objectivity (and the credibility that it brings to collective discourse) is a characteristic of mapping that ought to be embraced, co-opted and *used* as the means by which critical projects can be realized.”<sup>229</sup> These maps make a cultural world visible to a, potentially, wide audience.

These “critical projects” described by Corner are post-colonial and community-based in nature as challenges to hegemonic views of land and mapping. They use the model of maps and stretch their possibilities. These attempts are efforts at reconciling two cultural ways of viewing place – providing a way to communicate a glimpse of a Stó:lō cultural framework. The audiences of these counter-mappings are settler and Indigenous community members alike. If tunnel stories can be seen to bring the edges of the Stó:lō cultural world closer together, maps brought the Imperial world closer together by

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<sup>228</sup> Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in Audre Lorde ed., *Sister Outsider* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1984).

<sup>229</sup> Corner, “The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention,” 251.

creating an imaginative connection between the foci and outposts of Empire – they may perform similar cultural functions.

Historian Daniel Clayton, in his monograph *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island*, argues, “Colonialism does not start with occupation alone, and it does not work solely on land; it also works with images and representations, with imaginative geographies that precede, and to a degree anticipate, colonialism.”<sup>230</sup> Fiction, travel writing, and other descriptions were used to imagine the New World, and one of the most powerful mediums used by explorers and settlers was mapping. These cultural narratives became dominant ways of imagining space. When I began this project with the Stó:lō Nation they were interested in creating maps demarcating the significant sites of these stories. Maps of cultural landscapes have become an avenue of demonstrating cultural, as well as physical, occupation of space as a expression of the breadth and depth of the land that communities assert political and legal rights to. They are part of a negotiation in the relationship between Stó:lō and settler communities.

Counter-mappings, or the use of the cartographic medium as an avenue of displaying Indigenous understandings of place and territory, have become a reaction to colonialism and the movement towards land rights and decolonization.<sup>231</sup> James Corner postulates, “If maps are essentially subjective, interpretive and fictional constructs of facts, constructs that influence decisions, actions and cultural values generally, then why not embrace the profound efficacy of mapping in exploring and shaping new realities?”<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Daniel W. Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000): 166.

<sup>231</sup> Robin Roth, “The challenges of mapping complex indigenous spatiality: from abstract space to dwelling space,” *Cultural Geographies* 16 (2009): 207.

<sup>232</sup> Corner, James. “The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention,” in Denis Cosgrove, ed. *Mappings* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1999): 250.

This is what Indigenous communities are attempting to do through mapping cultural landscapes. The question of mapping stories, and narratives more generally relies on a cultural understanding of what a map is, or has the potential to be. Maps exist somewhere between an artistic and scientific expression. Add to this dialectic the problem of mapping culturally specific narratives and an interesting intersection between Indigenous and Western understandings of space, and the possibilities of imaging and re-imaging S'olh Téméxw is possible. While completely different cultural models of imagining space, stories and maps perform similar functions by describing spatial relationships and bringing places closer together.

Cartography was one of the ways of storytelling used to fit a new territory into an old model of spatial imagination. Mapping of empire stemmed from the desire to understand the New World and allowed newcomers to redraw the maps of their imaginations.<sup>233</sup> It is a case of translatability, of translating a new physical space into an understandable and formulaic medium. Matthew Edney argues, “all maps empower their users and readers to discipline the world and to construct territory.”<sup>234</sup> It is a normative action, to render this new space as the equivalent to all the spaces that preceded it in the mind of the viewer.

How does this Western impulse to visually normalize space affect Indigenous populations, and particularly relate to Stó:lō understandings of S'olh Téméxw and the metaphysical tunnels that underlie the territory? The relationship between the European imagination of space concretized through maps and Indigenous people is complex. This is partly due to the invisibility of Indigenous people in cartographic discourse. One of the

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<sup>233</sup> Jacob, *The Sovereign Map*, 99.

<sup>234</sup> Edney, “The Irony of Imperial Mapping,” 44.

interesting features of maps is their depiction of empty space. Daniel Dorling and David Fairbairn propose that this blank space has an assimilative aspect, whether explicit or implicit, of mapping people as if they were all the same.<sup>235</sup> Cultural identity is not necessarily represented on maps, creating a dissociation between Indigenous populations and their traditional territory.<sup>236</sup> Blank space in a European cartographic gaze opens it up for conquest, control, and settlement. Christian Jacob states, “It is also a space of anticipation, or predictability, of omniscience tied to the very fact of the synoptic gaze. By materializing a spatial organization, a map thus objectifies that space.”<sup>237</sup> This objectification ignores Indigenous ways of seeing space and does not allow cultural geographies to be made visible.

The idea of spatial imagination is based on Charles Taylor’s work *Modern Social Imaginaries*. In this book, Taylor defines the social imaginary as “ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.”<sup>238</sup> His work, and my use of his ideas, is interested in how society or culture is represented, or imagined, through cultural narratives, visualizations and popular stories.<sup>239</sup> In this way European cartographic imagination and Stó:lō narratives of place can both be understood as social imaginaries – ways of imagining a social and physical world.

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<sup>235</sup> Daniel Dorling and David Fairbairn, *Mapping: Ways of Representing the World* (Essex: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1997): 69.

<sup>236</sup> Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 99.

<sup>237</sup> Jacob, *The Sovereign Map*, 99.

<sup>238</sup> Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005): 23.

<sup>239</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 23.

While this view of mapping is based on the role of imagination, the consequences of map-making were substantive in the lives of Indigenous people in the Fraser Valley. Cole Harris, in his book *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia*, argues “Whatever else it may also be, colonialism – particularly in its settler form – is about the displacement of people from their land and its repossession by others. This is its geographical core.”<sup>240</sup> The first step to this dispossession in British Columbia was the symbolic erasure of Indigenous people from the map. The Imperial imagination had to incorporate the new geography into representations it could understand, paint that landscape as empty, and then claim it as its own. Daniel Clayton argues that George Vancouver, a British explorer whose expedition in the early 1790s mapped much of the Northwest Coast, “desocialized the coast by opening up a conceptual gap between contact and cartography.”<sup>241</sup> These representations came to be powerful ways in which Indigenous people were imagined invisible and denied both tangible and intellectual jurisdiction over their territory. Control over the medium of geographic imagination turns out to be substantively linked to control of land itself.

John Pickles argues, “The ways in which the world has been represented visually have, historically, been important elements of the ways in which we have come to understand and act upon the world.”<sup>242</sup> The visual re-emergence of Indigenous space on conventional maps occurred in British Columbia with the creation of reserves. Indigenous people went from having exclusive sovereignty over the geographic imagination of North America, to being made invisible in the cartographic representations of Europeans, to

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<sup>240</sup> Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002): xxiv.

<sup>241</sup> Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 204.

<sup>242</sup> Pickles, *A History of Spaces*, 4.

visually returning to the map as vastly reduced populations ‘contained’ on geographically demarcated reserves. This represents what Cole Harris calls “a historical narrative of geographical change.”<sup>243</sup>

### **Relationships of Imaginations and Narrating Space**

The example of S’olh Téméxw provides an access point into these larger questions regarding the power of the cartographic imagination in shaping how space is conceived and narrated. Maps are designed to communicate something about relationships in the geography they make reference to. This is a form of narration and a story about what a place looks like. The power, or authority, to narrate that story is an important one. Theorist Edward W. Said, in his work *Culture and Imperialism*, argues “The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course, but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative.”<sup>244</sup> It is interesting to apply Said’s assertion to the project of mapping, where the power of narrative and the contested arena of the land itself are so intrinsically connected. Can the narratives of metaphysical tunnels, as part of a larger spiritual geography, be visualized through mapping in a way that challenges or puts them into conversation with the narratives of imagining space utilized by settler cultures? Who has the power to narrate the story of how the Fraser Valley/S’olh Téméxw looks in the cartographic or geographic imagination?

Tunnel stories and maps are different place-centered narratives occupying the same physical environment, and today, they co-exist in the imagination of many Stó:lō

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<sup>243</sup> Harris, *Making Native Space*, xviii.

<sup>244</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993): xii-xiii.

community members. Maps, as a mode of spatial expression, permeate the Stó:lō imagining of space disproportionately to the effect than tunnel stories, and other narratives of a Stó:lō geography, have on wider settler society. Both ways of understanding place are culturally constructed, but their co-existence suggests the possibility of creating relationship between imaginations and within narratives.

Stó:lō people wanting to reclaim the right or ability to actively participate in shaping the geographic imaginings of S'olh Téméxw must participate in a spatial discourse dominated by cartographic conventions. It is fundamentally a question about the reclamation of physical, literary, and cultural space of the valley. Should tunnel narratives be made to fit within mapping practices, or are the implicit assumptions and power dynamics within maps too impossible to reconcile? Geoff King argues that during the era of Imperial mapping, Indigenous spiritual geographies “were to the invaders invisible, unmeasurable and therefore non-existent.”<sup>245</sup> Since maps have been historically such a powerful force in rendering Indigenous ways of knowing invisible in the colonial imagination, engaging with mapping discourse is a logical site to challenge that erasure. Through this challenge it may be possible to forge a relationship of imagination – putting ways of knowing into conversation.

Postcolonial theorist James S. Scott argues that through narratives of colonization, “landscapes may be viewed as now sacred, now desacralized, now resacralized.”<sup>246</sup> In the process of resacralizing, mapping stories could legitimize claims to spiritual space as one aspect of a larger assertion of rights to that space. Creating a relationship of imagination

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<sup>245</sup> Geoff King, *Mapping Reality: An Exploration of Cultural Cartographies* (Chippenham: MacMillan Press, Ltd, 1996): 146.

<sup>246</sup> James S. Scott, “Mapping the Sacred Across Postcolonial Literatures,” in James S. Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley, ed. *Mapping the Sacred: Religion, Geography and Postcolonial Literatures* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001): xxvii.

is important because of the complicated, changing and historically rooted relationship that exists between settler and Indigenous communities, Indigenous people and the Canadian state, and Indigenous people and land. Issues of land title, treaty making, and economic development are all rooted in ideas of rights to space. What is troubling is the seeming necessity of mapping stories to demonstrate legitimate cultural connections to places.

The tunnel stories challenge Western understandings of space and time and present the possibilities and impossibilities of mapping spiritual landscapes in a meaningful way and forging a dialogue of geographic imagination. Post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha writes, “It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.”<sup>247</sup> These spaces of negotiation present possibilities of relationship between Indigenous and settler ways of knowing space. At issue are the commensurability of cultural imaginations and the question of how and why the tunnel stories would be visually rendered in a map, conventional or otherwise.

The issue of commensurability is raised by Elizabeth Povinelli. In her article, “Radical Worlds: The Anthropology of Incommensurability and Inconceivability,” Povinelli states, “if indeterminacy refers to the possibility of describing a phenomenon in two or more equally true ways, then incommensurability refers to a state in which two phenomena (or worlds) cannot be compared by a third without producing serious

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<sup>247</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994): 2.

distortion.”<sup>248</sup> While Bhabha suggests that negotiation can occur in areas of overlap and displacement, Povinelli suggests that there may be moments where cultural difference can not be bridged – that there might be worlds that can not be usefully or accurately understood by one another.

The tunnel stories are one way of understanding the power of S’olh Téméxw given their role within a cultural framework of imagining. These stories map place in an unfamiliar way, irrespective of Western ideas of distance. Rather than hiding the social world,<sup>249</sup> these stories are fundamentally connected to the peopling of place – tunnel stories are always about humans, be they mytho-historical or modern, and their experiences. They are stories of embodied experience within a place. It might be argued that translating a tunnel story into the narrative of mapmaking forces a dehumanizing, and perhaps a distortion, of spatial imagination by removing the phenomenological aspect of these narratives.

Lydia H. Liu, in her work on translatability, warns of the danger in focusing on cultural difference. Her argument is that “such articulations are themselves embedded in the process of global circulations that determine which elements count as difference and why they matter.”<sup>250</sup> Ideas of difference, particularly cultural difference, are intimately tied to political issues surrounding relationships to land, colonialism, and Indigenous rights. In fact Indigenous and Western spatial imaginations have been engaged with one another since contact – even though the relationship has been subject to power struggles.

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<sup>248</sup> Elizabeth A. Povinelli, “Radical Worlds: The Anthropology of Incommensurability and Inconceivability,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 320.

<sup>249</sup> See Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 35.

<sup>250</sup> Lydia H. Liu, “Introduction,” in Lydia H. Liu, ed. *Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999): 1.

Denying this contact, Liu warns, can itself be a denial of the effects of colonial interaction on culture.<sup>251</sup> The earliest maps of British Columbia were only made possible through a relationship between European explorers and Indigenous knowledge of the land. Likewise, the recorded tunnel stories were expressed in the context of a research relationship usually between a Stó:lō storyteller and a white academic. While cultural difference does exist in how Indigenous and settler societies understand and imagine their relationship to land, they may not be wholly incommensurable but rather powerfully entangled with one another in a complicated relationship.

Despite the seeming incommensurability, the interaction between Stó:lō and settler geographic imagination is undeniable. Darren Charlie, a Stó:lō man from the Chehalis reserve, discusses how contemporary Stó:lō communities are dealing with the results of sustained contact with settler communities in the Fraser Valley. He states, “it’s almost like trying to live in two worlds.”<sup>252</sup> Stó:lō people are already negotiating living in two worlds and challenging the geographic and colonial imagination that has been constructed in the Fraser Valley. Edward W. Said argues, “The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming or emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them.”<sup>253</sup> Add to this James R. Ackerman’s contention that “mapping was ultimately a site of contestation between the colonizers and the colonized,” and the power negotiation is brought to the fore.<sup>254</sup> There is a concern about creating static and essentialized ideas of a ‘Stó:lō’

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<sup>251</sup> Liu, “Introduction,” 3.

<sup>252</sup> Darren Charlie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, Chehalis BC November 29, 2009.

<sup>253</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xiii.

<sup>254</sup> James R. Ackerman, “Introduction,” in James R. Ackerman, ed. *The Imperial Map* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009): 3.

understanding of place that denies a cultural fluidity that the tunnel narratives demand. Denis Cosgrove describes the “aesthetics of closure” which allow maps to appear stable and authoritative without being reflective of the fluid imaginings of space that are possible.<sup>255</sup> This closure, when implied in the mapping of tunnel narratives, could present an image that ignores the ways in which the narratives can be reshaped.

However, Stó:lō people have been engaged with the Western notions of maps and map-making since contact, and are interested in using maps as a way of demonstrating territory. *A Stó:lō Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, published in 2001 by the Stó:lō Nation, is an example of the history of Stó:lō engagement with cartography and the ways Stó:lō people are re-defining that engagement to describe cultural landscapes. Articles in the atlas describe a historical relationship between Stó:lō people and map making. Maps made in 1859 by a man named Thusoloc and his father represent the earliest maps drawn by Stó:lō people. These maps used a topologic method to show the relationships between places. The authors Daniel L. Boxberger and David M. Schaepe state, “the composition of these maps projects the relationship between people and “place” as understood by these two Aboriginal men.”<sup>256</sup> Schaepe and Boxberger make an explicit claim that these maps show a Stó:lō understanding of geography using mapping techniques.

Another set of maps made by K’hhalserten in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century are used to demonstrate how Stó:lō relationships of place changed with the introduction of settler communities. Whereas the maps of Thusoloc used what could be described as a settler medium to describe relationships of place in an Indigenous way, these later maps dealt

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<sup>255</sup> Denis Cosgrove, “Introduction: Mapping Meaning,” in Denis Cosgrove, ed. *Mappings* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999): 2.

<sup>256</sup> Boxberger and Schaepe, “Stó:lō Mapping and Knowledge,” 125.

with the introduction of not only settler ways of representing space but also the representation of settler people themselves. While still topological in nature, the maps of K'hhalserten in 1918 depicted the homesteads and villages of settler communities.<sup>257</sup> Schaepe states, "K'hhalserten's maps, with their juxtaposed *Stó:lō* and *Xwelítem* (settler) settlements and mixed *Halq'eméylem* and English place names, subtly capture the ever escalating struggle for land, resources and "place" between the *Stó:lō* and immigrant settlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."<sup>258</sup> The struggle and conflict over representation of space, depicted in the maps made earlier by *Stó:lō* men, is slowly made invisible in subsequent maps. While the cartographic imaginings of K'hhalserten can be read as texts of hybrid imaginings of spatial relationships, later maps erased the topologic features that were important to *Stó:lō* understandings of the valley.

The atlas itself is a reclamation of *Stó:lō* spatial relationships. Many of the maps included in the book are similar to those of K'hhalserten, as they include aspects of both settler and Indigenous communities, but the book claims the cartographic and spatial imaginings of the valley. Produced by the *Stó:lō* Nation, a political organization of some, but not all, of the communities in the valley who self-identify as *Stó:lō*, the history and maps presented can be read as an attempt to direct the way the Fraser Valley is understood. Understanding the space of the valley, since contact, has been a process of negotiating a relationship. While *Stó:lō* interests may have been methodically written off the map, the atlas asserts a current and an historical right to S'ólh Téméxw. The atlas makes the case that *Stó:lō* people since contact negotiated and struggled for the right to

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<sup>257</sup> David M. Schaepe, "The Maps of K'hhalserten, c.1918," in Keith Thor Carlson, ed. *A Stó:lō Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001):126.

<sup>258</sup> David M. Schaepe, "The Maps of K'hhalserten, c.1918," 126.

describe the relationships between people and place. Just as topologic maps focus particularly on the relationships between places, as opposed to exact locations, the maps made by Stó:lō people in the *Atlas* focus on relationships. The relationships of interest have shifted from relational propinquity between places to those between English and Halq'eméylem place names, settler and Stó:lō communities, and between ways of understanding the relationship between people and places.

Tunnel narratives fit within this tradition of Stó:lō negotiations of mapped realities. Darren Charlie, when talking about the powerful properties of the tunnels around Harrison Lake, said that the tunnels are “for a purpose. If we have to be told something about what’s happening with our world or there’s a message, that’s when they show themselves.”<sup>259</sup> Mapping the extant narratives could potentially present the mistaken view that tunnel narratives are not changing as Stó:lō communities change. Maps might give the appearance of closure – an appearance that can be questioned and challenged. Despite the possibility of fluidity, it is worth remembering that it is often a question of territory. Just as early cartographers represented space as a means to claim it, Indigenous groups can use counter-mapping projects as reclamation. In their work with Indigenous groups in Nicaragua and Belize, Joel Wainwright and Joe Bryan recognized that “Mapping this cultural space is a precondition for securing legal recognition for indigenous land rights.”<sup>260</sup> While mapping the cultural geographies is an exercise in challenging the relationship between Indigenous and settler imaginations, it is also a

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<sup>259</sup> Charlie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, November 29, 2009.

<sup>260</sup> Joel Wainwright and Joe Bryan, “Cartography, territory, property: postcolonial reflections on indigenous counter-mapping in Nicaragua and Belize,” *Cultural Geographies* 16 (2009): 153-154.

claim to the Stó:l̓ō relationship to S'olh Téméxw – a relationship that is rooted in stories of land use, occupancy, and cultural importance.

In this context, the political organization composed of some Stó:l̓ō communities amalgamated in the Stó:l̓ō Nation put forward a Heritage Policy in 2003 that covered some issues of mapping cultural or storied landscapes. David Schaepe, archeologist for the Stó:l̓ō Nation, argues that the use of geographic information systems (GIS) technology to make detailed and place-specific maps of Stó:l̓ō cultural and spiritual landscapes is a way to actualize the claims made by Stó:l̓ō communities to the sacredness of those sites.<sup>261</sup> These “Indigenous counter-maps” directly challenge the resource base claimed by the Stó:l̓ō and assert a wider claim, a cultural claim, to the space of the Fraser Valley. These rights to land have layers including cultural and spiritual geographies that demonstrate a long, and deeply felt, relationship to place. The explicitness of these maps is largely for the benefit of negotiation with newcomers. Mapping cultural geographies might not be necessary outside of these processes.

Schaepe argues that the process of learning to draw a map of a cultural landscape highlights a ‘fissure point’ between the fundamental cultural roots of Indigenous and settler society. He argues that “The Stó:l̓ō broadly define themselves as the People of the River – not the People *by* the River or the People *near* the river but the People *of* the River.”<sup>262</sup> The government, be it federal or provincial, “is characterized as a government *on* land.”<sup>263</sup> This fundamental and deeply cultural divide, pointing to a deeply rooted instance of incommensurability, identified in the Stó:l̓ō context by Schaepe, is the

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<sup>261</sup> David M. Schaepe, “Stó:l̓ō Identity and the Cultural Landscape of S'olh Téméxw,” in Bruce Granville Miller, ed. *Be Of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007): 250.

<sup>262</sup> Schaepe, “Stó:l̓ō Identity and the Cultural Landscape of S'olh Téméxw,” 255.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

difference between mapping railway tunnels and telling stories of spiritual tunnels – they are different ways of demarcating space. Yet, counter-mapping projects used globally by Indigenous groups including the Stó:lō essentially accommodate and participate within a cultural grid of objectifying, or of living on rather than in, the physical environment.<sup>264</sup> Wainwright and Bryan point out that “indigenous cartography tends to be viewed as a practice of replacing bad colonial maps with good anti-colonial maps,” but counter-mapping, given its reliance on Western cultural conventions, cannot necessarily provide the justice in reclamation it seeks.<sup>265</sup> The tension in the tunnel narratives is the challenge to Western ideas of time and space coexisting with Western ideas of physicality within the confines of a map.

Like legal disputes over land claims, resource development and treaty negotiations, the central issue is defining who has the power to narrate the relationship - narrate the space. Historian Mary Louise Pratt, in her work on transculturation, is interested in these instances and ways in which Indigenous people “represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer’s own terms.”<sup>266</sup> Like Pratt, I am interested in this engagement and the process of decolonizing through a renegotiation of the relationship of narrating space. Locating tunnel sites on maps might make a statement about cultural legitimacy as well as challenging non- Stó:lō people, living inside or outside of the Fraser Valley, to rethink how they imagine geography.

The other reason to thoughtfully engage with mapping discourse is the recognition of the diversity of cultural knowledge and background both outside of and

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<sup>264</sup> Wainwright and Bryan, “Cartography, territory, property,” 155.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>266</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992): 7.

within Stó:lō communities. Recognizing that the relationship of colonialism has for many generations shaped the education, culture, and ways of thinking of space for many Stó:lō people is recognizing that these ways of imagining space are no longer the cultural ground of Western society alone. Maps now shape the way Indigenous populations all over the world engage with space both in terms of negotiations with the state but also within Indigenous imaginations. This is what Jane M. Jacobs describes as an “interdiscursive political space” which cannot be understood as wholly Indigenous, wholly colonial or wholly hybrid.<sup>267</sup> The Fraser Valley/ S’olh Téméxw is a complex site of competing imaginations and competing identities. In British Columbia, cartography has always been a struggle over narrating space between Indigenous and settler communities. Indigenous guides were indispensable to the earliest mapmakers of the Fraser Valley, and their knowledge always informed the cartographies of empire, even when very subtly. Claiming a space for tunnel narratives, and the larger spiritual geography they are a part of, is an act of claiming a larger place in geographic discourse. It is part of what Michel Foucault calls the “reactivation of local knowledges”<sup>268</sup> – a process of decolonizing narratives, imaginations and ultimately space by diversifying the discourse.

Tunnel narratives speak to the dangers and power embedded in S’olh Téméxw. Despite the cultural power dynamics hidden under the surface of any representation of space, decolonizing the spiritual and cultural space of the Fraser Valley must take place within the relationship between Indigenous and settler society. Engaging with the tunnel

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<sup>267</sup> Jane M. Jacobs, “Earth Honoring: Western Desires and Indigenous Knowledges,” in Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose, ed. *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies* (New York: Guilford Press, 1994): 170.

<sup>268</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Power/knowledge : selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980).

stories is a recognition of Indigenous ways of knowing place, understanding spatial relationships, and cultural ideas of time and distance. The story sites make places in the expanse of space in the valley by making cultural meaning. Albert ‘Sonny’ McHalsie, while thinking about what the tunnel narratives may mean, states, “people are supposed to know their history and they don’t know it. Or they don’t have a *sxwlá:m* that can help them like Bill Pat Charlie and his dad turned around in the tunnel.”<sup>269</sup> Knowing the stories, having the cultural knowledge, is what allows safe travel through tunnels of the Stó:lō spiritual landscape and the tunnels created by settler communities. It is a way of expressing cultural knowledge and claiming the right of Stó:lō communities to narrate their own cultural, social and spiritual relationship to the landscape within a relationship of imaginations.

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<sup>269</sup> McHalsie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, November 28, 2009.

## Conclusion: Boundaries and Identities

The tunnels of S'ólh Téméxw have been a gateway into the intricate and intimate relationships between people, place and communities in the Fraser Valley.

Anthropologist Michael Jackson writes, “storytelling mediates our relation with worlds that extend beyond us, and the important thing is not how we name these other worlds but how narrative enables us to negotiate an existential balance between ourselves and such spheres of otherness.”<sup>270</sup> The spheres of otherness that Stó:lō tunnel narratives bridge are cross-cultural, geographic and temporal. Tunnels connect remote parts of S'ólh Téméxw by creating connections. These connections, however infrequently operationalized, are one of the bonds that links Stó:lō people together historically and in the modern world. It also links people to important and powerful places. There is the potential for the tunnel narratives to provide linkages between the multiple and varied Stó:lō and settler ways of imagining and relating to place.

French theorist Henri Lefebvre writes, “Space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations, but it also is producing and produced by social relations.”<sup>271</sup> The Fraser Valley/ S'ólh Téméxw is interconnected with social relationships that sometimes compete and sometimes compliment each other. The tunnel networks and the narratives about them represent a connection of social relations, which bring people together into a shared understanding of the power of place. Lefebvre divides

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<sup>270</sup> Michael Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression and Intersubjectivity*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006): 23.

<sup>271</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, edited by Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden, translated by Gerald Moore, Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009):186.

space into three interrelated categories – conceived, perceived and lived.<sup>272</sup> Tunnels occupy all three, as they include representations of places, narrative practices in place, and experiences of telling and listening. They are part of the circuits and connections that Lefebvre describes as the networks of social relationships that make meaning in space.<sup>273</sup>

Social closeness can be seen in the connections provided by the tunnels between communities but also between the shared experiences of hearing stories in their physical settings. My own experiences hearing tunnel stories, as well as other kinds of stories, while conducting fieldwork taught me that social closeness and meaning making can cross cultural divides. Learning to listen for these stories, and to ask the appropriate questions that might prompt their telling, allowed me to see glimpses of S'ólh Téméxw, obscured by my cultural framework of the 'Fraser Valley.' Emotional connections to place might be culturally located, but ways of relating to the places that are significant can be negotiated across cultural divides.

This thesis has attempted to understand the social relations involved in tunnel travel and storytelling. I have tried to understand what these stories mean historically and in my own interviews. It has been an exercise in trying to comprehend the complex identities that Stó:lō people have as well as the negotiation for physical and cultural space that they are engaged in. Michael Jackson, in his work on storytelling, tries to “set aside or bracket out all questions regarding the *essential* identity of individual persons or the definition of the terms that are often set up in opposition to them . . . in order to describe the strategizing and boundary crossing that goes on continually between human beings as

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<sup>272</sup> Ceri Watkins, “Representations of Space, Spatial Practices and Spaces of Representation: An Application of Lefebvre’s Spatial Triad,” *Culture and Organization* 11(3), (2005):209.

<sup>273</sup> Lefebvre, *State, Space, World*, 224.

well as between human and extrahuman worlds.<sup>274</sup> It is not my intent to essentialize a Stó:lō identity or a Stó:lō way of relating to and narrating place. Rather I want to recognize the fluidity of identities. The tunnel stories are not necessarily part of every Stó:lō person's imaginative framework. What is compelling about these narratives is their ability to cross boundaries of communities, cultures and physical and metaphysical worlds.

I chose to explore this set of stories using the theories about how people relate to places, the stories and storytelling processes, and the visualization of tunnels through cartography. At the core, it is the relationships between people that I found compelling. Given the increasing urbanization of S'ólh Téméxw, negotiating relationships to land is very important. Part of this negotiation is a need to recognize different ways of relating to and imagining space. There are places of convergence and divergence in these constructions of spaces, and spiritual and geographic relationships add depth to this negotiation and alter its foundation, however slightly, towards an understanding of the valley that includes more Indigenous voices.

The past, both in terms of deep-time and living memory, is navigated and used in these stories to demonstrate the long-term nature of these social relations. Tunnels, and the larger spiritual geography they inform, change over time. The narratives are told to creatively address present concerns that may range from young people not being aware of their cultural heritage to treaty negotiations with the state.<sup>275</sup> Darren Charlie, in an interview with me in November of 2009, described the tunnels showing themselves when

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<sup>274</sup> Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling*, 13.

<sup>275</sup> Michael Jackson, "West-African Warscapes: Storytelling Events, Violence, and the Appearance of the Past," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 78(2), (2005): 358.

the people needed to know or be aware of something, which might be a warning about danger or harbinger of good news.<sup>276</sup> The tunnels are portals from one plane of existence to another as well as between places. These spiritual connections communicate. Since the tunnel narratives are wide ranging and episodic rather than linear, the messages received also seem to be singular, depending largely on the reason the speaker tells the story. They could be warnings of dangerous places, assertions of community connections, or explanations for the way things are ordered in S'ólh Téméxw.

In the same interview, Charlie discussed the Stó:lō culture-world, which extends across the international border and outside the Fraser Valley. When talking about Stó:lō spirituality and the boundary between Canada and the United States, he said “our people didn't really believe there was a border there before. It was all the same land, and that goes into another story about land claims or who owns the land . . . really the depth of the negotiation is deciding who owns us.”<sup>277</sup> It is interesting that my conversation with Charlie started with questions about tunnel stories and eventually turned to issues of land title and Stó:lō identity.

This suggests to me that the interconnections between stories, identities, and the importance of rooting both in meaningful relationships to physical places are always just below the surface when Stó:lō people talk about their histories and relationships. These issues might come to the fore more quickly in the context of research relationships where explicit questions about land and culture are addressed. I think, more importantly, stories about tunnels are told and referenced as gestures to familial and cultural bonds to place as

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<sup>276</sup> Darren Charlie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, November 29, 2009, Chehalis BC.

<sup>277</sup> Darren Charlie, Interview with Margaret Robbins, November 29, 2009, Chehalis BC.

an assertion of identity. Tunnels offer connections and nodes of communication between communities and people. They also reorient the way we can imagine the space of the valley, the ways we can imagine relationships between people and places. They are an assertion of rights to the spiritual, literary, and cultural space of the valley, and it is on this fluid and metaphysical ground that rights to physical spaces will be based.

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