

**Inventing the Salish Sea:
Exploring the Performative Act of Place Naming
off the Pacific Coast of North America**

by

Brian Justin Tucker
BA, University of Victoria, 2010

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

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In the Department of Geography

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, a growing number of scholars have begun to explore the cultural politics of toponymic inscription. The current study contributes to the emerging literature on critical place-name studies by examining the cultural and political implications of the recent designation of the “Salish Sea,” a new name given to the water body adjacent to the shared Pacific coastline of Washington State and the Province of British Columbia. Through a critical analysis of archival materials and semi-structured interviews with participants from a variety of different groups, this case study adopts a performative approach to consider the ways in which the naming of places is implicated in the rescaling of public conceptions of “place” through the performative enactment of spatial identities. In doing so, it illustrates the importance of narrative as an integral part of the cultural production of place. Although this new toponym was initially promoted to raise ecological awareness, it also has considerable implications for reshaping the political, economic, and cultural geographies of the region. Furthermore, the findings conclude that when assessing the designation’s impact on the relations between the Indigenous and Settler populations of the area, evidence points to the official naming being representative of an act of “anti-conquest”: an act that glorifies the Indigenous culture while providing no actual exchange of power or opportunity for increased levels of self-determination.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
Prologue: An Introduction to the Author	1
Chapter 1 Inventing the Salish Sea: The Story Begins	8
1.1 Research Objectives	14
1.2 Charting the Course	17
Chapter 2 Place-Naming and Rescaling: A Review of the Literature	23
2.1 Critical Place-Name Studies	23
2.2 The Social Construction of Scale: Scaffolding our Perceptions of Reality	30
2.3 Connecting the Dots: Implicating Place Naming in the Social Construction of Scale	37
Chapter 3 A Demarcation of Boundaries	39
3.1 Framing the Study	39
3.2. Performativity: A Conceptual Approach	42
3.2.1 Reviewing Performativity Theory	42
3.2.2 A Conceptual Model	48
3.3 Methodological Approaches	49
3.3.1 The Case Study	49
3.3.2 Decolonizing Research	51
3.3.2.1 Dirty Research	53
3.3.2.2 A Methodological Approach to Decolonization	58
3.4 Methods	59
3.4.1 Ethical Considerations	59
3.4.2 Data Collection and Analysis: An Iterative Process	62
3.4.3 Semi-Structured, In-Depth Interviews	62
3.4.4 Interview Locations	65
3.4.5 Data Analysis	66
3.4.6 A Comment on Dissemination	68
Chapter 4 The Story of the Salish Sea: A Tale of Place-Making	70
4.1 What's in a Name: A Sea of Possibilities	70
4.2 A Tradition of Reconceptualization	75
4.2.1 Cascadia Emerging	77
4.2.2 Connecting Cascadia to the Salish Sea	79
4.3 Recognizing Place Through the Act of Place Naming	81
4.3.1 Let There Be...The Salish Sea	83
4.3.2 Picking up Speed in the 21st Century	87

4.3.3 Rescaling for the Future: Planting the Seeds of the Salish Sea in the Minds of Today's Youth	88
4.3.4 A Convergence of Qualities of Identity	93
4.3.5 A Political Turn: Planting Confusion, Propagating Support	99
4.3.6 A Closer Look at the 2008 Application and Approval for Final Consideration ...	104
4.3.7 Inauguration Day.....	111
4.3.8 What Now? The Continued Performance of the Salish Sea.....	115
4.3.9 The Commodification of the Salish Sea	118
4.4 A Story Far From Finished	122
Chapter 5 The Salish Sea: A Pawn of Competing Narratives.....	124
5.1 The Phases of Colonization	126
5.2 The Phases of Decolonization	128
5.3 The Salish Sea as an Act of Decolonization	131
5.4 The Salish Sea as an Act of further Colonization	135
5.5 The Salish Sea: Still a Sea of Possibilities	141
Chapter 6 Concluding the Thesis.....	143
6.1 Learning the Lessons of the Salish Sea.....	143
6.2 Limitations of the Study	147
6.3 Future Directions	148
References.....	150
Appendix A: List of Interview Subjects.....	164
Appendix B: Salish Sea Complete Lyrics by: Holly Arntzen and Briony Penn	166

List of Figures

Figure 1. Salish Sea, Map (Source: Crown Registries and Geographic Base, 2010)	11
Figure 2. Salish Sea, Map (Source: Freelan, WWU, 2009)	12
Figure 3. Fueling a regional perspective (Source: Garreau, 1981)	76
Figure 4. Performing Cascadia with Revolutionary Zeal (Source: Cascadian Independence Project, 2012)	77
Figure 5. Embracing Cascadia (Source: Flag Library, Unknown)	78
Figure 6. Salish Sea Activity Book (Source: Baker, 2003)	89
Figure 7. Salish Sea CD (Source: Arntzen & Penn, 2000)	90
Figure 8. Salish Sea Educator's Handbook (Source: Arntzen & Penn, 2000)	92
Figure 9. Further enacting the Salish Sea (Source: Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre, 2010)	96
Figure 10. Salish Sea Inauguration Day (Source: Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, 2010)	112
Figure 11. The Continued Performance of the Salish Sea (Source: Salish Sea Conference, 2011)	114
Figure 12. Strategic performance of the Salish Sea 1 (Source: Tanker Free BC, 2012)	115
Figure 13. Strategic performance of the Salish Sea 2 (Source: Warrior Publications, 2012)	116
Figure 14. Performing the Salish Sea in art and text (Source: Aboriginal Writers Collective West Coast, 2011)	117
Figure 15. The Commodification of the Salish Sea (Source: Salish Sea Technologies, 2012)	120
Figure 16. Rebranding with the Salish Sea (Source: Salish Sea Chocolate Company, 2011)	121

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Prologue: An Introduction to the Author

Emotionless, passionless, abstract, intellectual, academic research is a goddamn lie, it does not exist. It is a lie to ourselves and a lie to other people. Humans — feeling, living, breathing, thinking humans — do research. When we try to cut ourselves off at the neck and pretend an objectivity that does not exist in the human world, we become dangerous, to ourselves first, and then to the people around us (Hampton, 1995: 52, Wilson, 2008: 100-101).

My name is Brian Tucker. I was born in Toronto, Ontario in the late 1970's into a Jewish family. I was raised with an awareness of the atrocities that the Jewish people, as a displaced people without a homeland, experienced throughout their history, and the importance of the nation-state of Israel to the people as it represented a return to the land to which their ancestors were Indigenous. This story was alive in the backdrop of my childhood. The threat of being an oppressed individual, as part of an oppressed people was not distant. My people experienced the Holocaust and Russian pogroms not so very long ago. Anti-Semitism, which as a child I rarely encountered in my mostly homogenous Jewish suburban reality, is a contemporary issue, and will continue to be as long as difference is seen as a threat. In this way, Anti-Semitism is no different than any other form of ignorance-based hatred.

There has been a wide-array of responses to this history, but the response promoted throughout my community was generally one of tolerance, questioning,

valuing tradition and family, and a strong sense of community. Holy days throughout the Jewish calendar force the people to remember, through practicing ritual and telling story, what it means to be displaced, to be a slave. “We will not forget.” This notion is driven home with force.

I have no Indigenous blood, as my people may very well have been on the move for millennia. My parents were born and will one day be buried in Toronto. Their parents and their grandchildren were all born elsewhere. The stories of the Jewish people take place in far off lands, some of which I have since visited, but were initially pictures in storybooks, photo albums, and images of my imagination. As a child, I had no concept of an Indigenous relationship.

My life as a suburban Torontonion did not include an Indigenous presence. It goes without saying that Indigenous peoples inhabited the area since time immemorial. Peoples including the Iroquoian, such as the Huron, Seneca, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, and Cayuga, and later Algonkian speakers including the Missisauga, would call the region home. It should also be said that, as of 2006, nearly 27,000 people self-identifying as Aboriginal were living in Toronto, representing only half of one percent of the city’s population (Statistics Canada, 2010).

The relative absence of Indigenous presence in suburban Toronto, and the reality that I could live 20 years without forming a relationship with even one Indigenous individual, at least not knowingly, speaks loudly to the legacies of colonialism and the lack of discourse around issues of decolonization in the urban

epicenter of Canada.¹ My lack of awareness speaks to my own ignorance, and the perpetuation of that ignorance in my community. It was not until I had moved out west to Vancouver, BC that I recall meeting an Indigenous person.

I moved to Vancouver in my early twenties and immediately recognized the presence of the local Indigenous peoples. Bill Reid's iconic *Jade Canoe* and several other pieces of artwork contributed by Indigenous artists welcomed me at YVR, Vancouver's international airport, and seemed to suggest that I had arrived somewhere with a drastically different relationship to its colonial past. The symbols and trappings of Indigenous culture may have been symbolic of a colonial mentality that aimed to equate the Indigenous with the exotic, or they may have been representative of earnest respect and appreciation for the Indigenous peoples' contribution to society, I could not say. What was obvious though was that while Indigenous culture was invisible to me in Southern Ontario, my eyes were opening up to its presence in Southwestern British Columbia.

As I became further acquainted with my new surroundings, I began to notice aspects of Indigenous culture and heritage across the city and various places that I travelled throughout the province. These elements of culture appeared in many forms, though most notably as artwork, song, and dance. I also began to encounter

¹ It should not be surprising that having never encountered an Indigenous person in suburban Ontario does not make me unique. As reported on the CBC's documentary series, *8th Fire*, half of all Canadians have had no direct contact with Indigenous individuals (Hunka, 2012).

Indigenous individuals, many of whom lived in the Downtown Eastside, or in my own neighborhood near Commercial Drive. At this point in my journey, I didn't always consciously distinguish between representations of the imagined "Indian," and the real and present Indigenous person living life in the here and now. I failed to see past the romanticized notion of the "Indian," complete with appropriated cultural symbols and icons of Indigenous culture. I often failed to recognize the active agent of today, changing and growing, and facing the challenges that are the result of 500 years of colonization, and resistance to it.

I have since left mainland British Columbia, having moved to the southern tip of Vancouver Island 11 years ago. My children were born here, I was married here, and in many ways I have become a man here. Part of this process of growing involved me returning to university to finish my Bachelor degree in geography, and by doing so, I learned much more about myself, about my surroundings, and the Indigenous peoples of this part of the world.

Here, I have witnessed celebration of Indigenous culture, and attempts by factions of the Settler community to acknowledge and respect the Indigenous peoples. This respect is not found universally, of course; in many ways the Indigenous peoples of this area, mainly Coast Salish² in origin, are still ignored by

² The term "Salish" is not a word Indigenous to the local area. However, "Salish" refers to the linguistic classification of the Indigenous peoples of the region – including Interior, Strait, and Coast Salish – that was initially devised by Western anthropologists yet is now in widespread use among many Indigenous peoples

the Settler society. However, many official gatherings, including those hosted by Victoria's Mayor Dean Fortin, often begin with a public acknowledgment of the traditional territory in which people have gathered. These acknowledgments, while grossly overdue as a practice and still at times a product of tokenism, are usually delivered with apparent respect for the people of the territory. This act is, of course, symbolic in nature, and, like symbolic acts in general, can be hollow and used to obscure a greater truth. However symbolic the gesture is, I believe that it should be recognized as an act that speaks against the silencing and making invisible of Indigenous peoples.

Official apologies from heads of state, such as the one delivered by Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper to survivors of the Residential school system, often pay greater recognition to past atrocities than contemporary concerns, yet I believe the payment of recognition that the land we as Settlers occupy is also the traditional territory of another peoples shows recognition for the present, not just the past, and in doing so shows a willingness within Victoria's Settler population to build bridges with the Indigenous peoples of the region. This willingness to build bridges is certainly not shared by all, but I take it as a sign of hope that so many do share in this goal.

I did not write this prologue with the intent of identifying myself as a Jew. In

themselves (for a more extensive discussion of the origins and use of the term "Salish," see Stuttles, 1990).

fact, for reasons not entirely relevant to this project and thus not worth discussing here, I find it quite challenging to self-identify as a Jew. That being said, perhaps it is my own heritage as a Jew, as a member of a people whose culture and languages have been threatened, who have been displaced from their homeland, and several of their subsequent adopted homelands, that challenged me to take pains to understand the situation facing the Indigenous peoples of the land I now know as my home, the home of my children. As a child, my cultural and community influences encouraged me to discover who I am, and why I am here, and to live life in a way that reflects my values; some of the most important relating to issues of social justice and promoting self-actualization. As I have grown to be a man, and most importantly a father, the value I place on the relationship between people, and the relationship that people form with the land in which they live, has grown and deepened. The legacy of colonialism continues to deeply affect both the Settler population and the Indigenous peoples of British Columbia. This is a truth that will not go away. The past cannot be changed, though there is substantial room for our understanding of it to evolve. The future, on the other hand, has not yet been written, and as such there is still great leeway for it to be shaped.

Through my research I have come to believe in the spirit and actions of decolonization, both of the individual and of the greater society. The wrongs of the past can never be corrected, and one of those great wrongs has involved the silencing of generations of Indigenous peoples. We are all now suffering as the result of this silencing, whether we recognize it and acknowledge it as such. My intention

for this research is for it to be inclusive of a diverse array of voices. Rather than perpetuating the silencing, this work is intended to be an avenue for being heard. It is the words and stories of individuals that I have collected which will ultimately be presented here. The tradition of academia demands that I interpret and analyze my “data” (a cold and sterile word for stories and conversations, in this instance), and while my research has provided me with a podium from which to speak, it is within its capacity to allow others’ voices to be heard that it has found its greatest worth. In this way, I hope the legacy of my research is that it contributes what it can to the current of decolonization that is flowing in this region of the world and as resistance to colonial efforts that are still underway.

I began with this prologue so that you immediately gain some basic understanding of who I am. While I am a complex individual, I recognize that the experiences and lessons of my childhood have shaped my values, and interestingly have now come to shape my research goals and objectives. Without this introduction, my attraction to this research, and the conclusions I ultimately draw, may not be as clear. I am not hiding on the outside of my research; I think it impossible and refuse to try. I come clean that I have a perspective, and you are reading it. I stand by that perspective, as while it is my own, it is also of my parents, my grandparents, my community, and my ancestors from Egypt to Eastern Europe.

Chapter 1

Inventing the Salish Sea: The Story Begins

On the sunny summer morning of July 15, 2010, Coast Salish leaders, including those of the host Songhees nation, welcomed hundreds of people to a celebratory ceremony on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. The purpose of this ceremony was to acknowledge the 2009 approval of the designation of the Salish Sea, an inclusive place-name, or toponym, now denoting the inland waterway that stretches from the southern reaches of Puget Sound in Washington State to Desolation Sound at the northern tip of the Strait of Georgia in British Columbia. The Salish Sea also includes the Strait of Juan de Fuca, which runs along the west coast of Vancouver Island into Puget Sound (Pablo, 2009). Amongst the honored guests at the inauguration ceremony were British Columbia's Lieutenant-Governor Stephen Point, BC's Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation George Abbott, members of the Canadian military, and marine biologist Bert Webber, the latter of whom was responsible for first proposing the new designation (Tehaliwaskenas, 2010).

The proposal to establish a toponym for the marine ecosystem that was going unrecognized arose as a result of conversations that Webber had with several colleagues studying oil spills and their impacts along the waterways of Northern Washington State. Webber recognized that these three water bodies — the Strait of Georgia, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and Puget Sound — had primarily been studied,

and governed, independently of each other, yet they shared enough qualities to be considered one inclusive water body, a “reality” that was being ignored by scientists, politicians, and the public. Webber believed that studying this marine ecosystem inclusively in the future would be much easier if it were to share one common inclusive name. Furthermore, Webber was motivated by the notion that the public’s conception of this area would change if an inclusive place-name were adopted, leading to increased awareness of the breadth of environmental impact that results from human life (Cornwall, 2009). The choice of the particular toponym “Salish Sea” arose out of conversations between Webber and elders throughout Indigenous communities across western Washington.

The process of bringing this new name into being was a long drawn out affair, much longer than Webber had anticipated. Webber first submitted identical applications to the Washington State Board on Geographic Names and its counterpart, the BC Geographical Names Office, in 1990. The applications were not immediately approved or rejected, but rather tabled until proof could be provided that the name was in common usage; this being the key component that both bureaucratic naming bodies looked for when deciding the need and appropriateness for a new name. At this point, Webber, along with several colleagues and acquaintances, including Canadian writer-activist-educator Briony Penn, went about actively introducing the proposed name. For Webber that meant using it with colleagues including other marine biologists and natural resource managers. For Penn it meant mentioning the name in articles and attaching it to community

programs such as the Islands in the Salish Sea Community Mapping Project (Harrington & Stevenson, 2005). The new toponym gradually gained traction, and nearly 20 years after Webber first applied for approval of the new designation, he submitted a second application. This application, dated December 5, 2008, contained over 100 pages of documentation, including the following paragraph under the heading, *"The Name Salish Sea is well established"*:

The name Salish Sea is used widely by natural resource agencies in British Columbia, the First Nations, Washington State and the Tribes. It is used by commercial groups and by education groups. Internet use, including a Wikipedia entry and blogs are present. Books and research papers about the Salish Sea have been written. Two songs honoring the Salish Sea have been recorded. A video about the Salish Sea is available (Washington State Board on Geographic Names, 2009: 19).

It took nearly a quarter of a century, but finally, in late 2009/early 2010, the approval of both naming boards, and their national counterparts, officially brought the Salish Sea into "existence."

It may seem as though the inauguration ceremony represented a fitting and joyous end to the story of the naming of the Salish Sea, a story that chronicles the recognition of a people often under-recognized and speaks to the power of perceptions and the hopes that education can help to heal the world. Certainly this is the story that some will tell, yet the naming of the Salish Sea can also be understood as a narrative process that is far from complete. The meaning of a place, its very spatial identity, is often produced through the struggle over competing narratives, each of which fights to be heard, to be included.

The ceremony held in the Songhees longhouse represented no more than the closing of an introductory chapter of a story whose ending has yet to be written.

Now, more than two years after the ceremony of July 15, 2010, the symbolism



Figure 1. Salish Sea, Map (Source: Crown Registries and Geographic Base. 2010)

attributed to the naming of the Salish Sea remains nebulous. The meaning associated with both the act of naming and the name itself, is anything but certain, and while the geographic boundaries of the Salish Sea have been clearly demarcated on official maps (see Figure 1), these official boundaries represent a difference in vision between that of governmental authorities and those responsible for proposing and propagating the idea of the

Salish Sea (see Figure 2: A map created by Stefan Freelan of Western Washington University, for promotional purposes).³

The naming of the Salish Sea has done much more than force cartographers to amend maps of the region. The waters and coastlines of the newly named Salish

³ Some believe that in order to properly reflect the Coast Salish people's way of life, as well as to accurately depict the complete marine ecosystem, all of the watersheds that lead into the Salish Sea, especially those at the mouth of the Fraser River, should be included within the boundaries of the Sea (John Lutz, Interview); a perspective better represented on the map created by Stefan Freelan (Figure 2) than that produced by the Province of British Columbia (Figure 1).

Sea have existed for millennia; however, it appears that never before have these coastlines *collectively* demarcated the existence of a unified “place” through the act of place naming. The Indigenous peoples of the region have had an understanding and connection to these waters, and the nations that surround them, since time



Figure 2. Salish Sea, Map
(Source: Freelan, WWU, 2009)

immemorial. Yet, while Indigenous names have been recognized for numerous places within the enveloping designation of the Salish Sea, there appears to have been no Indigenous name given to this water body *as a whole* (Washington State Board on Geographic Names, 2009: 44).⁴ As for the Settler population, these waters have been conceived of as three distinct water bodies as a result of the political boundaries mutually agreed upon by the nation-states of Canada and the United States of America (USA). As will be shown, as a consequence, the naming of the Salish Sea, like

every act of place naming, was in fact a performative enactment that brought an altogether new “place” into being. It should not be ignored though that the

⁴ As described in section 4.3.5 below, Coast Salish nations came together to support this naming, which represented a participatory process of constructing a shared identity in order to establish unified positions. This process is referred to in postcolonial studies as strategic essentialism (Norman, 2012).

boundaries of this new place were not etched atop a blank canvas, but in fact were overlaid upon a fabric already rich with demarcating lines of boundary. In this sense, the demarcation of the Salish Sea introduced a newly conceptualized geographical scale, a scale defined by bioregionalist interests overlaid atop existing places defined by alternative scales including those conceived of as nation-states, traditional territories, and local communities. Each of the pre-existing places now draped by the Salish Sea already contained deep and entrenched histories, yet this newly defined bioregion is in the process of developing its own meanings and associations in the present context.

Just as important as recognizing that the naming of the Salish Sea was a performative act is acknowledging that the name and its emerging meanings have come (and our continuously coming) into being as a result of a series of performative enactments, performed by many players, some of which will be introduced to you in the pages that follow. While the enacted name has become official, and thus legitimate in the eyes of many, a continuous stream of performative enactments are still competing for space upon the awaiting palimpsest that the name represents. Much like a schoolteacher's chalkboard scribbling brings new relevance to a surface which only recently contained any number of other ideas, the diverse applications of the Salish Sea name by players throughout the region and beyond continuously add additional context and meaning, shaping its spatial identity, and further bringing it into being. Even the current study, which aims to chronicle the naming process and analyze reactions to the new designation, is itself

a performative enactment which will draw attention to, and promote, its particular findings, and in their promotion, further solidify particular notions, lending them legitimacy while quieting and discrediting others.

Although this new toponym was initially promoted to raise ecological awareness, it appears to be having additional implications on the political, economic, and cultural geographies of the region. The transnational waterway now known as the Salish Sea saddles what is considered to be the longest unprotected border in the world, that which separates Canada from the USA, yet it also exists within the traditional and contemporary territories of various Coast Salish nations.

What this act of place naming will come to mean to the various peoples of the Coast Salish First Nations is yet to be determined. It may ultimately come to be seen as Bert Webber intended; that is, as a statement of recognition of the Coast Salish people, who in spite of the long history of colonialism in the area, and the very real consequences of colonization, remain active and vibrant. If so, the naming of the Salish Sea may come to be seen as a decolonizing act. However, it is also quite possible that the naming of the Salish Sea will come to be understood as yet another neocolonial action representative of the still patronizing attitudes that Canada and the United States have toward the Indigenous peoples of North America.

1.1 Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore the performativity of place naming through a case study of the Salish Sea. This work will demonstrate how the naming

of the Salish Sea has been the key factor in the reconceptualization of place that is occurring on the Pacific Coast of North America, specifically illuminating the role that toponymic inscription plays in the shaping of spatial identities. In illustrating this, I will address the fundamental question of what political and cultural implications have arisen, and are arising, as a result of the naming and mapping of the Salish Sea.

The first series of major implications that will be addressed are in regards to the rescaling of the local geography that has resulted from the “invention” of the Salish Sea. As will be discussed, this rescaling, as intended by Webber and his colleagues, is leading to shifting public attitudes and actions related to transnational environmental awareness and stewardship efforts. However, it is clear that the implications of the rescaling are far broader, as shifting behaviors related to commercial branding and representation point to a growing embrace of a new sense of regionalism. Through an examination of these additional implications it is possible to observe how the spatial identity of this newly constructed region is being rearticulated and transformed through the participation of a diversity of voices.

The second set of major implications addressed is related to the overlapping processes of colonization and decolonization that are occurring in the region. The Indigenous peoples on both sides of the Canadian/American border continue to assert their sense of self-determination in spite of the lack of State recognition (Alfred, 2005; Anaya, 2004; Corntassel, 2008). For many Indigenous communities,

the pursuit of self-determination and external recognition has involved the re-legitimization of traditional place-names, including that of Haida Gwaii, and several others that have been returned as part of contemporary treaty and reconciliation negotiations (Hui, 2010). The Salish Sea, however, is a newly invented toponym, and there is no evidence that a Coast Salish nation ever used a name that specifically referred to the unified waters now known as the Salish Sea, thus it is not being returned, nor was it invented by an Indigenous person or community. While the name can be perceived as an homage of recognition for the Salish peoples, it can also be perceived as yet another European-imposed inscription upon the landscape, or seascape in this case.

This case study contributes to the emerging literature on critical toponymic research, a field focused on illuminating the political dimensions of place naming. Furthermore, since the study addresses the ways in which toponymic inscription is implicated in the rescaling of public conceptions of “place” through the performative enactment of spatial identities, this thesis will also contribute to the body of literature devoted to the spatial politics of geographic scale.

Moreover, this work builds upon the growing body of literature on decolonizing research as well as the literature on the processes of decolonization. To be clear, decolonizing research is different from research focused on investigating the processes of decolonization. Decolonizing research, as will be explained in much greater detail in Chapter 3, is performative in nature in that it contributes to the process of decolonization. This contribution is a result of a

methodological intent, regardless of the topic under study (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Chilisa, 2012). I classify my work as decolonizing research due to my commitment to include a diversity of voices, most importantly those of Indigenous peoples living around the Salish Sea. This research also contributes to the literature focused on the processes of decolonization as it attempts to place the designation of the Salish Sea on a spectrum that stretches from blatant acts of neocolonialism that perpetuate the imbalanced relationship between the Indigenous and Settler populations, to that of decolonization, a process that aims toward establishing self-determination for the Indigenous peoples of the Salish Sea region.

1.2 Charting the Course

Immediately following this introduction is Chapter 2, in which I begin by presenting the overarching literature related to critical toponymic research, a field that fairly recently took a critical turn (Berg and Vuolteenaho, 2009; Rose-Redwood et al., 2010) from what had previously been focused primarily upon etymological and taxonomic concerns (Kroeber, 1916; Taylor, 1896; Stewart, 1954).

As Hagen (2011) acknowledges, the practice of place naming can be interpreted as an act “whereby people, organizations, and social movements attempt to construct and act within certain scalar configurations to legitimize or challenge certain orderings of sociopolitical space” (24). This most certainly applies to the naming of the Salish Sea, since the implications of the introduction of this new toponym include the shifting away from typical conceptualizations of geographic

scale that depend on a hierarchical structure generally inclusive of the following levels: the urban, the nation-state, and the global. Clearly this turn has brought about an additional regional focus, and consequently, it is necessary to provide a review of the literature related to contemporary discussions on issues pertaining to the social construction of geographic scale. Due to the specific focus of this case study, the review highlights literature related to emerging conceptions of regional geographies, including prior attempts to define regions within the geography of the Pacific Coast of North America.

In Chapter 3, I introduce my conceptual framework, methodological framework, and the methods I used to collect and analyze data. I begin by discussing the conceptual framework from which I am approaching this case study, that being through the lens of performativity theory. I start by briefly introducing the work of English philosopher J.L. Austin and his theory of performative utterances, the precursor to performativity theory (Austin, 1962; Austin, 1970; Loxley, 2007). From there, I discuss more recent applications of performativity theory, specifically those by feminist theorist Judith Butler (1988; 1993), who wrote extensively on the role of performativity in the act of identity formation.

Following this, I introduce the various components of my methodological framework. In this section, I acquaint the reader with decolonizing research, as a way of situating and framing my research through this approach. I also describe aspects of established methodologies that I have utilized in the undertaking of this study. Finally, I finish the chapter by discussing the specific methods that I have

used to collect and process data. Here, I outline and discuss each step of my research process with a significant emphasis being placed on the iterative pattern that emerged in which the immediate but brief analysis of collected data heavily influenced the direction taken toward the collection of more data. This became a reoccurring pattern until data collection was completed. Additionally, I shall also detail the ethical concerns experienced, and considerations taken, as a result of conducting research with members of Indigenous peoples along the Pacific Coast of North America, individuals from communities in which research rightly has developed a negative reputation as a result of disrespect and degradation resulting from past activities attributed to its cause.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I reveal the results of this study. Throughout these chapters I introduce many individuals who—knowingly or not—have played, and continue to play, key roles in the performative enactment that is bringing the Salish Sea into being. Within these chapters I discuss the role of both bureaucratic and political institutions, as well as other social actors, in enacting this new name and resulting place-identity. Here, I introduce the reader to various artists, activists, educators, and ecologists who promoted the name, bringing it into the consciousness of the public before it became official, satisfying the needs of the bureaucrats and encouraging the actions of the politicians. Finally, the perspectives and opinions of journalists and monarchists, bloggers and biologists, and many more are brought into the discussion in an active process of imagining what is to come of the Salish Sea.

As I write my conclusions about what ultimately is emerging as a result of this new designation, I am crafting a narrative about my local geography, a narrative that others may come to tell, and one that may indeed contribute to the associations identified with the Salish Sea. My narrative is just one of many though. Storytellers across the region have been spinning their tales of the Salish Sea for more than two decades. These tales may complement each other, though just as often they compete with one another, as they aim to define what the Salish Sea will ultimately stand for, and be experienced as. The telling and retelling of these tales is performative in that with each telling, something new is contributing to an evolving sense of place; with each telling the associations with the Salish Sea deepen, further establishing its identity and its relevancy to local, regional, national, and international geographies. I cannot overstate the importance of story in this work, for story is both that which defines the identity of the Salish Sea and that which provides this research with the majority of its data.

In Chapter 4, I discuss how a performative interpretation of the invention of the Salish Sea allows for an altogether new conceptualization and experience of the geography off the Pacific Coast of North America. This performative enactment has resulted in a geographic rescaling that is contributing to the development of a regional identity in the area. As part of this discussion, I briefly review understandings of Cascadia, an imaginative geography that has emerged in various incarnations over the past several decades, and one that generally encapsulates the entire area now known as the Salish Sea. I do so in order to show that notions of

regionalism are not entirely new to this area, and thus the invention of the Salish Sea should be recognized as representing a performative contribution to an existing movement as much as it should be understood as something entirely new.

Consequently, the performative act of place naming in this situation should be seen as evidence that supports the argument that geographic scale is a social construct.

By charting the course of the Salish Sea from the time of Bert Webber's first proposal to the Washington State Geographic Names Board through to the present day, in which the name "Salish Sea" has been embraced and adopted by elements of society as diverse as micro-breweries, chocolate manufacturers, technology firms, educational institutions, and environmental organizations, just to name a few, I show how a series of performative acts have led to a significant reimagining of the geography off the Pacific Coast of North America.

In Chapter 5, I return to Hawaiian scholar Poka Laenui's (2000) work (to be introduced in Chapter 3) on the processes of decolonization in order to place the invention of the Salish Sea in the ongoing and overlapping processes of colonization and decolonization, processes that despite their apparent opposition to one another, are not necessarily sequential in nature but rather contend against each other, fighting for ground in the realm of public consciousness. In this chapter, I provide evidence that the naming of the Salish Sea is being experienced as both an act of neocolonialism as well as an act contributing to the decolonization of the area.

In the final chapter, I conclude the case study. I present one final review of how this study contributes to ongoing discussions regarding the performative

dimensions of place naming and critical toponymic research, geographies of scale, and the decolonization of North America. Finally, I discuss the limitations that I faced in conducting this research and offer suggestions about how this research can and should be elaborated upon in future studies.

Chapter 2

Place-Naming and Rescaling: A Review of the Literature

“We name things and then we can talk about them” (Wittgenstein, 1968: 13)

2.1 Critical Place-Name Studies

Historically, the field of place-name studies has occupied a very minor role in academic geographic scholarship (Hagen, 2011). Amongst other reasons, this may be a result of the fact that traditionally the study of place-names, or toponymic inscription, has focused primarily on etymological and taxonomic concerns (Rose-Redwood et al, 2010). Yet, as Cohen and Kliot (1992) point out, “any simple attempt to classify place-name categories uncovers complexities of meaning” (656), and thus deserve further attention.

By the mid-1990s, Myers (1996) argued that “[p]lace-name stud[ies] had largely languished in atheoretical caverns of geographical inquiry” (238), and he sought to highlight the power relations that underpin place-naming practices. Zelinsky (1997), a prominent contributor to the field of place-name studies, further supported this conclusion by pointing out that place-name studies had “barely advanced beyond its pioneering phase” (465), while at the same time calling out his fellow scholars by announcing that “a methodical exploration of the universe of names could shed a great deal of light on all manner of larger questions in the social sciences and humanities” (465). In response to these calls, geographers began to

broaden the field of research by undertaking “a theoretically-explicit critique of the cultural politics of place naming” (Rose-Redwood, 2008: 432). Over the past two decades, scholars have sought to break away from the tradition of categorizing place-names by critically examining the cultural politics of toponymy (Berg and Vuolteenaho, 2009).

Cohen and Kliot’s (1992) work can be seen as a bridge between the old-taxonomic and the new critical approaches to place-name studies, as they use classic methods of categorization and classification, while also providing commentary on the intrinsic role that place-names and place naming play in the composition of political landscapes. The authors’ work specifically focuses on the relation between place naming, nation-building, and state formation, particularly within the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the reinforcement of Zionist ideology in the Israeli administered territories of Golan, Gaza, and the West Bank.

Cohen and Kliot view place-names as symbolic expressions that “are part of a process whereby the experienced world, the world of perception and concept, is created out of the world of physical reality” (1992: 655). As such, place-names have an immense range of values, and the act of place naming has the ability to serve a diversity of ideological interests. Their study supports this conclusion through an illustration of how the political imposition of Zionist symbolism throughout the Israeli territories influenced the selection of names chosen for newly developed settlements. By doing so, the authors show how a critical evaluation of place-names can reveal changes in dominant ideological influences over people and place (1992:

677).

Saparov (2003) advanced the conversation on the symbolic value of place-names, and their use as a tool of nationalistic ideological manipulation, with his study implicating place name changes in the construction of national identity in Soviet Armenia. Through an exploration that covers various distinct eras, Saparov illustrates the capacity for the act of place-renaming to serve a diversity of nationalistic ideological objectives related to the preservation of a nation's unity and uniqueness, including: "to enforce in the national consciousness [the ruling government's] moral right to inhabit a particular territory; to protect its land from the territorial claims of its neighbours; or to justify its own territorial claim" (180).

Saparov further added to this discourse through the inclusion of a discussion focused on the bureaucratic mechanism utilized by the Soviets to push through and legitimize new place-names. While this discussion illuminated the "special framework of laws and instructions [that] was created to regulate a renaming policy" (185) within a totalitarian system that controlled all aspects of public life, its relevance extends beyond totalitarian systems and speaks to the role of bureaucracy in the naming process regardless of the system of government or ideological interests of the ruling body.

By 2009, the scholarship on critical place-name studies had sufficiently expanded to the extent that Berg and Vuolteenaho (2009) published their edited volume, *Critical Toponymies: The Contested Politics of Place Naming*. This text presents a series of studies that explore the political dimension of place naming, and

the role that place naming has played in constructing historical and contemporary landscapes (Berg and Vuolteenaho, 2009). Such works display an “interest in the entanglements of place-names with power relations and social antagonisms [while] illuminating toponymic power strategies and contestations” (Berg and Vuolteenaho, 2009: 12).

The chapters included in *Critical Toponymies* that are of particular relevance to the current study are those that explore the role of place naming in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Berg and Kearns’ (2009) analysis of three particular submissions to the New Zealand Geographic Board concerned with changing place-names “in the Otago (*Murihiku*) region of the South Island (*Te Waipounamu*) of New Zealand” is one example of such work (22). The authors attempt to illustrate an aspect of the complexity of the relationship between Maori and European New Zealanders by outlining ways that “constitutive notions of ‘race’ and gender are implicated in the politics of naming places” in Aotearoa/New Zealand (21). Berg and Kearns illustrate how place naming has been utilized as a tool for the legitimization of specific “spatialized rhetorics of ‘race’ and gender relations” (22), and likewise demonstrate how place naming has been used in the reinforcement of related dominant hegemonic ideologies. In doing so, the authors’ aim is “not to ‘uncover’ the falsehood of ‘racial’ constructs,” but rather to challenge the practice of accepting these constructs without questioning, thus passively allowing for their legitimization (23).

Through an exploration of “struggles to re-map Aotearoa, to re-appropriate

social constructions of place in the name of post-colonial projects” (Berg and Kearns, 2009: 27), Berg and Kearns further illustrate that “place-names are important signifiers of meaning, providing symbolic identity to people, place and landscape” (2009: 44). Identity, in this sense, is not pre-given. Rather it is “made” in the contested process of cultural reproduction. While never directly recognizing the act of naming, or subsequent uses of a place-name as performative, the attention the authors pay to the making or crafting of identity that sprouts forth from the act of place naming is very much in the same vein as the present study.

Herman (2009) enters the discussion of the role of place naming in the postcolonial context with his investigation into the role that toponymic inscription has played in enforcing American hegemonic control throughout the islands of Hawai’i, primarily through shifting “human-environment discourses and their political-economic contexts toward a capitalist understanding of space that served Western [haole] interests” (102). Herman begins by implicating the naming process in the reconceptualization of place within the region, immediately pointing out that the islands were never conceived of in any collective sense before James Cook’s naming of the archipelago as the Sandwich Islands in 1778: “it was not, in effect, one place, but several places” (2009: 101). Herman emphasizes that through the naming process a spatial identity was externally imposed upon the islands. Herman’s discussion of the invention of the Sandwich Islands supports his argument that place naming is a process that contributed to the colonization of the Pacific. Much like the invention of the Salish Sea, this naming begot the introduction of an

altogether new scalar experience.

Herman (2009) goes on to argue that place naming (and renaming) was not only a process that contributed to the conquest and colonization of the Pacific islands but also to what he calls “anti-conquest” (102). While the process of conquest can be easily situated within the realm of colonization, the process of anti-conquest should not be confused with decolonization. Rather, for Herman, acts of anti-conquest disingenuously pose “as antithetical to overt colonization” (103), all the while involving the glorification of “the Other at the same time that the Other is denied real power” (103).

The recent designation of the Salish Sea provides a unique opportunity to gain insights into the implications of place naming as they are taking immediate shape. As has been illustrated, the field of critical place-name studies has been greatly broadened in the recent past, and the role of place naming as it relates to questions of nationalism, identity politics, the spatialization of collective memory, and processes of colonization and decolonization have helped to repoliticize the geographies of toponymic inscription (Berg and Vuolteenaho, 2009; Redwood and Alderman, 2011). However, my investigation of the Salish Sea designation will also contribute to another under-studied theme: the relation between place naming and the social production of scale.

While many of the studies referred to earlier demonstrate how place naming is a symbolic conduit of meaning, few have delved into investigations that implicate place naming in the politically charged construction and legitimization of particular

scalar identities (Hagen, 2011; Rose-Redwood and Alderman, 2011). This investigation will address this paucity of research by shedding light on the significant matter of how the creation of the Salish Sea established a transnational space through the act of place naming, and thus the part that this particular naming of “place” is playing in the reconceptualization of notions of geographic scale off the Pacific Coast of North America. As Hagen (2011) points out, despite notions of scale being investigated within many sub-fields of geography, place-name researchers have yet to put much effort into investigating the role that toponymic inscription can play in the process of geographic rescaling.

A number of studies conducted by place name researchers within the past decade have investigated the convergence of issues of geographic scale and toponymic inscription (Kaiser and Nikiforova, 2008; Rose-Redwood, 2008). The work of Kaiser and Nikiforova contributes to both the literature on the social construction of scale and that of critical place name studies through an investigation of how the repetitive and citational use of place-names in Narva (the eastern most border town in Estonia) act to establish and reinforce at least “four distinctive scale effects: ‘international’ soviet/proletarian, ‘the nation-state’ of Estonia, ‘transnational’ Europe, and ‘local’ Narva” (559). By looking closely, it becomes clear that each of these distinctive scale effects intersects and interacts with the others, “constructing, contesting, and reconfiguring the scalar hierarchies produced” (559).

Similarly, Rose-Redwood (2008) explores the convergence of scalar politics and toponymic inscription through an examination of the post-war attempt to

rename Manhattan's 6th Avenue as the "Avenue of the Americas." Through his examination, Rose-Redwood exposes the act of place naming as a political tool with the power to rescale conceptualizations of geographical space. More importantly, the author is able to show that the supposed legitimizing authority responsible for a renaming (whether or not the renaming leads to a rescaling) is not an omnipotent power, and that public contestations of such acts, often through the sheer refusal to use the new name, can threaten to sabotage the authority's agenda. In this way, using language introduced by Cohen (1977), "producers" (legitimizing authorities) and "consumers" (groups of individuals) each play a role in determining the success or failure of a name to be adopted, and if a name is rejected by either, it also greatly effects the identity of a place that results from the performative repetition and citational use of that name.

Both the work of Kaiser and Nikiforova (2008) and Rose-Redwood (2008) are of particular relevance to the present study as they too approach toponymic inscription from a performative perspective. Thus, more on these studies can be found in Chapter 3.

2.2 The Social Construction of Scale: Scaffolding our Perceptions of Reality

The traditional conception of geographic scale has been that it is fixed and "external to social processes" (MacKinnon, 2010: 1). This concept is naturalized and perpetuated by grade school geography teachers through their insistence on narrowing the understanding of geographic scale to one that equates it exclusively

with cartographic scale. However, extensive literature on the political economy of scale, as formulated by Taylor (1982) and expanded upon considerably by various authors since the 1990s, has challenged this traditional conception with one that promotes the notion that the scales in which we operate are socially constructed (Brenner, 1998, 2001; Marston, 2000; Marston et al., 2005; Smith, 1993; Swyngedouw, 1997).

Taylor (1982) insists that the scalar framework that dominates our understanding of the world is produced in accordance with, and in order to perpetuate, the functioning of the capitalist world-economy and its dominance.⁵ Within this framework, Taylor acknowledges three commonly identified scalar levels on which the political economy is organized. The first of these levels is that of the global, the second being the nation-state, and the third being the local (or urban). Taylor is clear that from a political geographic perspective, organizing the world according to these three scalar levels is not unique (Johnston, 1973; Coates et al., 1977; Bergman, 1975; Cox, 1979; Smith, 1980). In fact, it is so commonplace that it is problematically treated as a given within the social sciences (Taylor, 1982: 21). Taylor is skeptical of the apparent blanket acceptance of the three-scale system of organization, and admonishes those who promote and perpetuate the naturalization of this organizational approach without querying why the system exists as is, and

⁵ Taylor (1982) explains that from a Marxist perspective, “all activities in capitalist societies relate to the power and domination inherent in the economic structure and as such are all highly ‘political’” (18), thus necessitating the use of the term political economy to describe the unity of the political and the economic within the world system that produces the geographic scales in which we operate.

what relationship exists between the three scales (Taylor, 1982: 22).

Quite quickly, Neil Smith (1984) echoed Taylor by further calling attention to the need to break from the traditional conceptualization of scales as fixed geographical entities. In his exploration of uneven geographical development, Smith claimed that conceiving the world as being organized into distinct spatial scales, while apparently helpful in the process of comparing different “concrete” spaces thought to be of similar scales, was in fact problematic as it ignored the fact that capital, and the capitalist system, were responsible for producing the “distinct spatial scales of social organization” in which the “concrete” spaces were thought to exist (87). Smith elaborated on this point by emphasizing that as capital increases its influence in shaping the landscape, it groups spaces into “an increasingly systematic hierarchy of spatial scales” (135).

The systematic hierarchy of scales produced through the perpetuation of capitalism, as Smith (1984) described it, consists of the same three primary scalar levels introduced by Taylor (1982): the urban, the nation-state, and the global. Smith recognized that each of these scales existed to some degree before the spread of capitalism, yet argued that each were utterly transformed as a result of the capitalist system. Smith noted that “the differentiation of absolute spaces as particular scales of social activity” is an inner necessity of capitalism as it provides the means to organize and integrate “the different processes involved in the circulation and accumulation of capital” (135). In later writings on the social construction of scale, Smith (1992; 1993; 1996) went on to explore additional levels

on the scalar hierarchy, those of the household and the individual body.

Smith's framing of the "primary scalar levels" as social constructs is widely accepted among critical human geographers; however, many scholars have contested his promotion of the idea that these levels fit into a scalar hierarchy. For example, Cox (1998) objected to the appropriateness of conceiving of scale hierarchically and promoted the notion that scales should be thought of metaphorically as a network, as it helped to better explain the porous boundaries of nation-states and the contingent logic that social actions tend to follow (Paasi, 2004). Cox developed an alternative notion of scale that involved two distinct, yet networked, types of spaces. The first of these were referred to as spaces of dependence (SD), which Cox explained point to "localized social relations upon which we depend for the realization of essential interests." The second type of space Cox (1998) referred to were spaces of engagement (SE), which are spaces "in which the politics of securing a space of dependences unfolds" (2).

Between the time Taylor was writing in the 1980s and now, the world has gone through a major geopolitical transformation. This transformation has been both the impetus and result of several processes including the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the deindustrialization of many western nations, and the spread of globalization; all of which further emphasized that the scales in which we interpret the world's geography lack fixity, and are in fact socially constructed (Smith, 1984; Howitt, 1998; Marston, 2000; Paasi, 2004; MacKinnon, 2010).

As the twenty-first century dawned, the debate on scale was about to get

heated. Sallie Marston (2000), who has written considerably on the topic, had noticed that human geographers, stemming from Taylor (1982) and Smith (1984), were increasingly and consistently implicating the social construction of scale in the production of space, and situating capitalist production in the centre of this relationship. While Marston agreed with much of the scholarship, she thought it much too narrow a focus, and thus limited in its depth. Marston (2000) argued that questions driving the scholarship on scale throughout the 1990s tended to “focus on capitalist production while, at best, only tacitly acknowledging and, at worst, outrightly ignoring social reproduction and consumption” (219). Marston suggested that this ignorance within the discourse on scale had resulted in a failure to comprehend the real complexity behind the social construction of scale (233).

In an attempt to fill in some of this perceived gap of complexity, and to illustrate how “attention to other processes besides production and other systems of domination besides capitalism can enhance our theorizing and improve our attempts to effect real social change” (Marston, 2000: 219), Marston focused her own attention on a short case study focused on the construction of gender, and its implications on nineteenth-century American domestic feminism. As part of this process, Marston effectively situates the scale of the household as an influential rung, illustrating its role as a site of both capitalist consumption practices and social reproduction, and the relationship between the two.

As mentioned, Marston’s (2000) article began a newly heated debate among geographers. Specifically, Marston’s proposal to broaden the scope of the discourse

on the production of geographic scale didn't sit well with Neil Brenner, who critiqued the trajectory of the discourse in general by stating his concern that notions of "geographical scale were being extended unreflexively to demarcate any aspect of sociospatial processes" (593). He then targets Marston specifically by suggesting that her argument, while relevant to a broader discourse on sociospatial processes, extended beyond the proper limits of scale.⁶ Brenner (2001) suggested that this unreflexively extended notion of scale jeopardized "much of the analytical power and theoretical potential of recent methodological innovations [thus causing the potential collapse of scale into] an overgeneralized 'chaotic conception'" (593). As a result, Brenner urgently called for precise specification as to the proper and appropriate application of the concept of scale. Even more specifically, Brenner promoted the idea that the theoretical grasping of geographical scale would be advanced significantly if "the hierarchical differentiation and [re]ordering of geographical scales – [were] distinguished more precisely from other major dimensions of sociospatial structuration under capitalism" (593).

Rather than allow this criticism to die in the grass, Marston, aided by Neil Smith (2001), quickly responded to Brenner's concerns by acknowledging that Brenner was correct in his assertion that "the popularity of scale theories [had] led

⁶ Interestingly, two decades earlier, Soja (1980) had proposed that the limits placed on sociospatial conceptualizations arising from an emerging "spatially explicit form of Marxist analysis" that was contributing to geographical literature on the political economy were in fact unnecessary and represented inappropriate conceptualizations of spatial relations (208). Soja argued for the same broadening of conceptualization that Marston would later be called out for.

to a certain 'analytical blunting' ... and that scale [had been] increasingly conflated with broader discussions of space" (615). However, Marston and Smith found aspects of Brenner's response to be troubling, compounding the problem he had originally identified. Of greatest relevance, they took issue with Brenner's "refusal of feminist arguments about the scale of the household" (Marston & Smith, 2001: 615). Marston and Smith (2001) stood by Marston's (2000) original assertion that it is necessary to consider "the constitutive but largely unheralded role of social reproduction and consumption, in conjunction with social production, in the production of geographical scale" (Marston & Smith, 2001: 615). They stressed the importance of this, and the need to constantly reinvent scale, in order to ward off the "fetishist juggernaut" that impedes greater understanding.

Undeterred by what could have been received as a rather personal attack, Marston continued her participation in the discussion on the social construction of scale. Later in the decade, in what must have come as a surprise to many, Marston et al. (2005) proposed to essentially throw in the towel altogether, and take issues of scale off of the geographical table. Perhaps due to a rethinking of Neil Smith's apparent over-legitimization of scalar hierarchies, Marston et al. (2005) went as far as to argue that "hierarchical naming and thinking are such powerful, naturalizing devices that conflate scales both with levels of analysis ... and with value judgments, [that] human geography would be better off if it did away with scale altogether" (420).

This perspective came across as a radical notion and contradicted other

contemporary voices such as Paasi (2004) who wrote that “it is crucial to study the dynamics of the multiscaling worlds of economics, governance, politics and culture from various viewpoints in order to understand the processes of rescaling” (537). Additionally, Kaiser and Nikiforova (2008) spoke out against the doing away with the notion of scale by communicating the “serious danger... [of] writing scale out of human geography [claiming such actions would] help to hide the social constructedness of scales and the way they are discursively deployed to naturalize and sediment a set of sociospatial relationships through everyday practices” (537-8). Furthermore, Kaiser and Nikiforova (2008) made it clear that because scale “is such a powerful device in reifying and essentializing unequal power relations ... scale deserves more, rather than less, attention than it has received to date” (538). They then go further by warning that “excising scale as a form of critical inquiry” (538) will only stabilize and reinforce hierarchical power relations. The fact that authors such as Swyngedouw (2007), Moore (2008), and MacKinnon (2010) have continued to pay attention to issues of scale in geographic discourse adds credence to Kaiser and Nikiforova’s (2008) assertion.

2.3 Connecting the Dots: Implicating Place Naming in the Social Construction of Scale

Place naming has been shown to be a key tool in the social construction of our reality. It has been used to reinforce hegemonic notions of race, gender, and nationhood, and as Herman demonstrated, the motivations for creating specific

names, and the ultimate effect of a particular place naming, may be clouded and illusive. One of the many ways in which place naming works to socially construct our reality is by prompting a reconceptualization of accepted notions of geography, including those notions related to the scales in which we experience our geographic reality.

The geographical literature on scale has led to debates as to what qualifies as a scale of experience, and whether scales are experienced hierarchically, yet most have come to accept that indeed, scale is not a fixed element of our reality. Rather, most accept that scale is socially constructed to reinforce and reiterate concepts of power, or challenges to existing power structures. As Rose-Redwood and Alderman (2011) contend, “[s]cale is central to the political construction and contestation of social space, and place naming plays an active role in the politics of mobilizing certain conceptions of scale over others” (5).

Chapter 3

A Demarcation of Boundaries

3.1 Framing the Study

This chapter will discuss the conceptual and methodological frameworks that have guided my research process as well as the methods used to gather and interpret the data in which my findings are based. In the context of this work, I use the phrase conceptual framework to refer to the use of ideas and theories that have guided my general approach to the phenomenon being studied. I use the term methodological framework to refer to ideas and techniques that have guided my approach to data collection and interpretation.

In section 3.1, I discuss the use of performativity theory in the conceptual framing of this research. In order to provide proper context for the reader, I use this section to briefly introduce the roots of performativity theory and its applications, including those generally related to the field of geography, and directly related to the study of place naming. Place naming is by nature performative; that is, rather than the naming of place being seen merely as a perfunctory act that establishes a signifier for a specific location, the act of naming should be recognized as an action that contributes to bringing a place into being. The giving and subsequent using of a place-name influences the relationships that people hold with the named place, and thus contributes to the identity associated with that place. The identity that comes to be associated with a place is a social construct, the ever-evolving result of a series

of performative acts. Several of these performative acts become the impetus for the name being given, but it should be clear that place naming itself is an especially formative act in this process.

In order to illustrate the performative nature of the act of place naming, I follow up my discussion of performativity theory by presenting a model that shows how a sequence of performative enactments, performative utterances in this case, can literally bring a new place into being (section 3.1.2). Like the Word of the Judeo-Christian God bringing light into the world, changing our reality in an instance, the inventing of place can begin with the single act of giving a name.⁷ However, as the model exhibits, the naming of place represents little more than its conceptualization. The further making and defining of place continues with every new utterance, every new enunciation. Each of these enunciations represents an additional performative enactment. However, place is never shaped to completion; it ever evolves according to the changing nature of those who experience it, and hold relationships with it. Thus, each additional use of a name further brings into being the character and identity of the place being referred to.

This understanding of the performative quality of place naming is consistent with Judith Butler's (1993) understanding of performativity being "the reiterative

⁷ I don't mean to claim that this is the only way in which places come into being. I can think of circumstances in which an awareness of place, shared or otherwise, can exist without it being referred to by name. It is hard to imagine how a society of individuals could share a common concept of a place without a name, but on much smaller scales, I see it as possible.

and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names” (2). As Butler convincingly argues, performativity involves the ongoing “process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter” (Butler, 1993: 9). Giving name to place begins the process of socially constructing that place’s identity, and through time, that identity stabilizes enough to appear to be fixed, despite the ongoing sequence of performative acts that continue to construct it as they go.

From here, I transition to a discussion focused on the various components of my methodological approach (see 3.2). I begin this section by discussing the exploration of this work as a case study. Doing so created a framework that bound the scope of my research. Next, I discuss how my approach included the intention to contribute to the growing body of decolonizing research. Decolonizing research is purposeful and performative by nature in that it intentionally affects change by contributing to a shift in the cultural and political mindset of a colonized people in a colonized land; and by that, I mean all people, Settler and Indigenous alike. Every aspect of my research process has been influenced by the intention to enact decolonizing research, including the choice of topic to study, the methods used to collect data, the manner in which I interpreted that data, the manner in which I frame my findings, and how I intend to disseminate these findings.⁸ The third

⁸ It is worth noting that I had not yet been formally introduced to the concept of decolonizing research when I first began this research project. In truth, I was well along in my process before this introduction took place. However, looking back in hindsight upon the values and motivations that steered my work, I can rightly say

component of my methodological approach is directly related to the collection and interpretation of data. There are various methodologies that I relied on in order to ensure a rigorous approach to data collection and interpretation, though I did not adhere to any of them strictly. Below, I review the applicable methodologies, paying particular attention to the components that contributed to my own methodology.

3.2. Performativity: A Conceptual Approach

3.2.1 Reviewing Performativity Theory

Drawing upon theories of performativity, this case study considers the ways in which the naming of places (in this case the naming of the Salish Sea) is implicated in the reconceptualization of “place” through the performative enactment of spatial identities. This reconceptualization includes a rescaling of public conceptions of “place” that challenges previous understandings reliant on taken-for-granted notions of geographic scale, including that geographic scales can be ranked hierarchically, and that the dominant scalar levels along this hierarchy are the urban, the national, and the global.

The root of performativity theory dates back to the work of English philosopher J.L. Austin (1962, 1970). The main thrust of Austin’s argument was that “our utterances, can be performative: words do something in the world” (Loxley, 2007: 2). Austin was not a geographer and did not directly discuss the performative

that they were reflective of the values and purpose inherent to decolonizing research.

nature of place naming. However, in both his classic work, *How To Do Things With Words* (Austin, 1962), and his later work, “Performative Utterances” (Austin, 1970), Austin relied upon a hypothetical story about the naming of a ship in order to illustrate the performative quality of naming. It is, of course, a short-step to extend this notion out to include place naming.

One area of difference between Austin’s views and the approach I have taken is that while he acknowledges that the act of naming *can* be performative,⁹ he has a narrow understanding of how a name can be given or acquired which I do not share. I believe that while the effect of a naming may vary greatly depending on how the name is given, the naming itself is *inherently* a performative act. In this sense, my approach is much more in line with that of Rose-Redwood (2008) who has previously suggested that Austin’s understanding of what qualifies as a legitimate performative speech act is limiting due to his overemphasis on the role and power of a sovereign authority. Rose-Redwood argues that this overemphasis blinds our vision to the performative and counter-performative contributions of additional social agents that play a role in the process of spatial inscription resulting from the renaming. As Rose-Redwood argues, “[p]lace naming in general... can best be understood as a set of performative practices which political authorities seek to monopolize” (2008: 877). Of course, counter-performative actions that challenge

⁹ Austin is quite particular in regards to whether an act of naming is performative, as he believes that only through the adherence to proper protocol, including the deliverance of the name emerging from an official source, can a name be truly given (Austin, 1970: 239-240).

the hegemonic monopoly should be recognized as performative as well.

My approach to performativity has been greatly influenced by the work of Judith Butler. Butler, a feminist and queer theorist, built upon Austin's work and brought it much further into prominence. Following Austin, Butler (1995) defines performativity by articulating that "if a word... might be said to 'do' a thing, then it appears that the word not only signifies a thing, but that this signification will also be an enactment of the thing... the meaning of a performative act is to be found in this apparent coincidence of signifying and enacting" (198).

Butler applied performativity theory in her exploration of identity formation, specifically surrounding issues of gender and sexuality. Butler theorized that identity is tenuously constituted in time, and specifically instituted through a stylized repetition of acts, including the enunciations of labels we apply to individuals, and subcultures of people. Most importantly, for Butler, the absorption of these stylized repetitive acts establishes the foundations of individuals' identities (Butler, 1988: 519). The repetition of acts, including enunciations, is performed as a measure of the hegemonic forces that influence societies and cultures. Butler also draws our attention to the lack of stability inherent in identities, and the constant reformation and remaking of identities that results from the evolution of a society's ideas and performative utterances in this regard (Nelson, 1999: 331).

Neither Austin nor Butler applied performativity theory to issues of an inherently geographic nature. Despite Austin's (1962) consideration of the act of naming as an illocutionary speech act, performative through its very utterance, and

Palonen's (1993) argument that it is the performative quality of place naming that renders the act political (103), until the turn of the 21st century, very few studies had "explicitly examined the performative dimensions of toponymic inscription" (Redwood, 2008: 881; also, see Kearns & Berg, 2002; Myers, 1996; Palonen, 1993).

My application of performativity theory relies heavily upon Butler, with the one difference being that as I am specifically looking into the performative nature of place naming, the identity formation I am exploring is inherently spatial. As Butler professes in regards to an individual's identities, I believe that spatial identities of a region are tenuous and consistently being constructed through various social processes at work. This process begins with the giving of a name, but progresses steadily through the reiterations and citational uses of the name. Thus, while appearing solid, the spatial identity of a region lacks stability just as Butler claims of an individual's identity.

I am not the first geographer to see a need to apply the ideas of Butler. Gregson and Rose (2000) argued that Butler's notions of performance and performativity are "crucial for a critical human geography concerned to understand the construction of social identity, social difference, and social power relations, and the way space might articulate all of these" (434). Recently, several geographers have given credence to this assertion, specifically through exploring the performative act of place naming.

Robert Kaiser and Elena Nikiforova's (2008) aforementioned study, "The Performativity of Scale: The Social Construction of Scale Effects in Narva, Estonia," is

an example of contemporary geographic scholarship that has particular relevance to this study. Kaiser and Nikiforova argue that it is essential to examine the construction and naturalization of scale as it represents “a way of thinking, and organizing knowledge about the world” (538). The authors contribute to the discourse related to the social construction of scale (see Chapter 2) through an application of a poststructural reframing of scale as epistemology, using performativity in their exploration of “the reiterative and citational practices through which scale effects are socially produced” (537) in Narva, Estonia.

Kaiser and Nikiforova’s use of performativity in their approach to reframing scale as epistemology parallels Butler’s understanding of performativity that stresses reiterative and citational practices resulting in discourse which “produces the effects that it names” (Butler, 1993: 2; Kaiser and Nikiforova, 2008: 541). The authors go on to further justify the use of performativity as a tool in the denaturalization and de-essentialization of scales. Of course, the fixity of identity (associated with scale in this context) is just an effect, an illusion of sorts, as while associations may sediment over time, further reiterations and citations have the potential to stir up new meanings, or place greater emphasis on existing meanings, and in this manner shift the identity of that which is being referred to. In this way, the socially constructed scales by which we experience the world appear to be fully formed in our “sociospatial imaginations” through the scale effects produced, yet they nevertheless remain in a constant state of becoming.

Kaiser and Nikiforova's view of scalar experiences resulting from sequences of performative acts brought them to Narva, Estonia. The authors present modern day Narva, a post-socialist border town leaning up against Russia's western boundaries, as a town on "the epistemological 'frontlines' of scale" (545). Living life in Narva, a city located in a historically contested region in which the place and its people have been forcibly re-placed and rescaled time and time again over at least the past 75 years, involves experiencing the coming together and competition of several distinct socially constructed scale effects, including "Narvan-ness, Estonian-ness, Russian-ness, European-ness, Western-ness and Eastern-ness, (each being) made, unmade, rank ordered, and rehierarchicalized" (545) through reiterative and citational performances by several actors in the region.

My work further brings the discussion of performativity into the discipline of geography by exploring the performative quality of place naming (see Chapter 2.1). In the same vein as Butler, as well as Kaiser and Nikiforova, I am presenting findings that show how the performative act of place naming, and subsequent citational utterances of that place-name, represent effects that bring about, shape, subvert and challenge the identity of that to which it refers. The following section provides a model that illustrates the potential trajectories that may ensue as a result of the performative act of place naming.

3.2.2 A Conceptual Model

Earlier in this chapter, I introduced the idea that naming a place may very well represent the spark of invention that begins the process of bringing “place” into being. Yet, whether the act of naming precedes the establishment of a relationship, or closely follows in recognition of a relationship already formed, the naming of place and subsequent citational uses of a name to refer to a place need be understood as performative enactments; either entirely bringing a new place into being, further entrenching a place into existence, or attempting to subvert the process and effectively de-establish it, forever changing its spatial identity.

Place is not inherent, despite its apparent physical materiality. Place is not an issue of physical matter, it is not the culmination of geographic qualities. Place is a product of the relationships that humans have with specific locations, in other words, it is a social construct. A location un-tethered to humanity by the strings of relationship may be seen as meaningless (or not seen at all). Relationships are both a product of and a contributor to the way in which a place comes to be experienced. In this way, while place-names are commonly understood to be signifiers of locations, perhaps it is better to understand them as signifiers of relationships.

If we accept this as true, it is important that we also acknowledge that relationships are not static. One’s feelings, or a community’s collective feelings, toward a place may change drastically over time. As a result, the associations equated with a place, and thus that place’s very identity, regardless of how

entrenched in the hegemonic narrative it may seem, is tenuous as well. Moreover, a community's collective conception of a place is rarely if ever uniform. Those opposed to the hegemonic conception of a place are bound to challenge and subvert that conception. This subversion process, regardless of its ultimate success, begins almost immediately and is fuelled by the repetitive and citational uses of the name of the place the identity of which is being challenged.

The key to the conceptual model that I am using to illustrate the performative effect of place naming is to understand that each citational use of a place name serves to either bring forth anew, or reinforce an existing, notion of place that contributed to the said place's spatial identity. In this way, naming a place, and subsequent uses of the name, work to entrench that place, and all of its associations in people's collective imagination. Yet, as I've already discussed, those opposed to the hegemonic conception of a place are bound to challenge and subvert that conception. The significance of this process is one of political and cultural consequence, as each use of a name speaks to the diversity of spatial narratives associated with a place.

3.3 Methodological Approaches

3.3.1 The Case Study

First and foremost, it is important to recognize that I have conducted my research on the naming of the Salish Sea as a case study, and in doing so, I worked within specific boundaries that determined the scope of my inquiry. As is common

to case studies, conducting my research as such had direct implications not only on my data-collection process, but also on the outcomes or interpretations of my investigation (Stake, 1994: 237). While my work comments on the implications of place naming in general, I have chosen to conduct research looking specifically into the naming of the Salish Sea, rather than conducting a larger study focused on the invention of various place-names, which would also be valuable, yet quite different.

As Stake (1994) explains, case studies typically fall into one of three categories: they can be intrinsic, instrumental, or collective in nature. Stake notes that both intrinsic and instrumental case studies narrowly focus on one specific case. However, intrinsic case studies examine a particular case study, and only the case being studied, while instrumental case studies are conducted with the intention of the findings of the case being representative of, and applicable to, a broader issue or the refinement of an idea or theory. Collective case studies, as may be obvious, are larger studies of greater depth that consider various case studies in an attempt to create a theory that applies to an overarching “phenomenon, population, or general condition” (Stake, 1994: 237). Primarily, I approached my research as an intrinsic case study as I was most interested in commenting directly on the specific implications of the Salish Sea place naming, yet I recognize that the results of my research may very well be relevant to the broader phenomenon of place naming, especially as a result of continued evidence that is provided that place naming has performative effects that extend well beyond the adding of additional names to maps.

Yin (1981) suggests that a successful case study requires an explicit design that specifies the main topics to be covered by the study and the type of individuals from whom information might be obtained (103). An exploration into various qualitative research methodologies allowed me to develop an explicit design that guided me through an investigation of my major topics of interest. These topics included the implications of the Salish Sea designation as it relates to the cultural and political recognition of Indigenous peoples in British Columbia and Washington State, as well as the potential for increased environmental awareness resulting from the geographical rescaling produced by the invention of this transnational designation. The following section highlights aspects of specific qualitative methodologies utilized in my approach to gathering and interpreting data.

3.3.2 Decolonizing Research

In the research game the playing field is anything but level.
Schnarch (2004: 83)

Over the past two decades, many scholars, Indigenous and Settler alike, have attempted to level this playing field by producing knowledge through what is being referred to as decolonizing research. Potts & Brown (2005), and later Nicholls (2009), drew attention to this by explaining that many researchers from a range of academic disciplines have embraced a “social justice methodology that seeks to alter power relations between participants and researchers” (117). However, exactly what decolonizing research is has been actively debated in an attempt to define it,

and differentiate it from research referred to as postcolonial, or anti-colonial. According to Swadener and Mutua (2008: 33), a common definition still does not exist. That being said, elements of decolonizing research are becoming more and more recognizable. While there has yet to emerge a strict adherence to specific methods, decolonizing research appears to be evident through the “motives, concerns and knowledge brought to the research process” (Swadener and Mutua, 2008: 33). Perhaps the most important element is that decolonizing research is motivated by activism against the continued colonial relationships that exist between the world’s Indigenous peoples and those that systematically settled their lands. One goal of decolonizing research is to satisfy the need to emancipate research itself “from hearing only the voices of Western Europe (and) seeing the world in only one color” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005: 212; Chilisa, 2012: 3).

Decolonizing research does not simply express opposition and disdain for colonial acts and practices, as anti-colonial research may, it goes beyond that and contributes to the tearing down of the colonial system. As a result, decolonizing research is performative in nature (Swadener and Mutua, 2008). Postcolonial research may too be seen to be performative in nature, though since postcolonial research is primarily produced from within Western research paradigms, it is more likely a performance of resistance to the oppressive colonial system rather than outright activism for change.

Chilisa (2012) suggests that the term postcolonial, when used in the research context, denotes “the continuous struggle of non-Western societies that suffered

European colonization, Indigenous peoples, and historically marginalized groups to resist suppression of their ways of knowing” (12), yet she also acknowledges that the word is contentious and thus not always read the same way. One problematic understanding is that the term expresses an assumption that the colonial era is over. Working from a place of either of these understandings (especially the latter), postcolonial work can be interpreted as performative in that it reinscribes Western intellectuals’ power to define the world. For this reason “[m]any Indigenous intellectuals actively resist participating in any discussion within the discourses of post-coloniality” (Smith, 1999: 14).

It is necessary to briefly discuss the legacy of Western research in Indigenous communities in order to begin to understand the need for decolonizing research. The following provides this discussion, which includes the provision of a set of chronological phases of research practices that have influenced the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Western researchers.

3.3.2.1 Dirty Research

From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, ‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary (Smith, 1999: 1).

There is no denying the painful legacy of Western research in Indigenous communities throughout the world, a legacy that has led to great resentment

(Wilson, 2008: 15). Western research in the era of open-colonization¹⁰ reflected and represented the values embedded in imperial and colonial thought by producing knowledge that reproduced colonial relations (Schnarch, 2004: 81), regularly acting as a “facet of control and exploitation” (Brody, 2002: xxiii). Consequently, research involving Indigenous peoples during this era should be recognized as performative in nature, as it perpetuated and contributed to the active colonization of the people and the land.

Wilson (2008), echoing Karen Martin (2003), succinctly communicates the chronological phases of Western research conducted within Indigenous communities. The chronological telling begins in the 1770s with what Martin anointed the *Terra Nullius Phase of research*, which is named after and epitomized by Captain James Cook’s telling declaration that Australia was *terra nullius*, empty land (Wilson, 2008: 45). For all intents and purposes, in the minds of Europeans, the colonial proclamation of terra nullius separated the Indigenous peoples from their lands and opened the way for the colonization of the continent (Martin, 2003).

Research of this era (1770-1900) primarily consisted of observations of the land being colonized for the purposes of assessing the potential of its resources (Wilson,

¹⁰ This is not an “officially” recognized era. My use of this term is intentional. By doing so, I assert that it is necessary to distinguish between past and present eras of colonization. Past eras of colonization were marked predominantly by European settlement, outright theft of land and resources, and the criminalization of Indigenous spiritual practices and ways of being. Most importantly, there was an open portrayal and admission of colonization within these eras that seems to be strategically absent from the current era of colonization, which arguably is being characterized by empty-apologies, and strongly encouraged assimilation.

2008: 45), with indifference to the people (Stanner, 1972), who were viewed as “possessing barely human status” (Allen, 1988: 80). In many ways this phase of research was the product of the Doctrine of Discovery, a principle of international law developed by Western nations such as Spain, Portugal, and England (in conjunction with the church) throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Doctrine of Discovery was developed with the intent of maximizing “European exploration and colonization in the New World and in other lands of non-European, non-Christian people” (Miller, 2005).

The second phase of research (1900-1940) outlined by Martin (2003), and later Wilson (2008), is known as the *Traditionalizing Phase*, and occurred during a period in which Western cultural hegemony had laid its roots, and involved considerable support by the colonial governments of the day through societal agents such as the church. Research during this period reflected the common societal understanding that Indigenous peoples were now acting as impediments to progress, and was often conducted with the goal of validating Western cultural claims and developing land (Wilson, 2008: 47). Research continued to be based upon racism and processes of dehumanization, as in the eyes of researchers Indigenous peoples were still being “viewed as part of the flora and fauna, their lands as resources awaiting European exploitation” (Wilson, 2008: 48).

The anthropological researchers of this era were busy noting the threatened extinctions of Indigenous culture, and began to conduct what became known as “salvage research” (Stanner, 1972; Wilson, 2008), recording what they could as an

act of preservation. “Scientific” research of this era included clinical investigations that measured such things as intelligence “by procuring specimens of human remains” (Wilson, 2008: 48). The legacy of this era is clear as the “scientific” data collected remains impressed upon the mindsets of many of today’s scholars who justify continued acts of research/colonization “in the guise of psychological intelligence testing” (Wilson, 2008: 48).

The *Assimilationist Phase* is how Martin (2003) describes the period between 1940 and 1970. During this period, Western states experienced intensive growth and development. Researchers supported this growth by continuing to produce work that separated Indigenous peoples from their lands, assisting with the justification to exploit and extract the natural resources that powered the engine of Western economies (Wilson, 2008: 49). What began to change during this phase was that social science researchers took up the passed torch from their “science” based brethren and perpetuated the “othering” of Indigenous peoples by beginning to focus investigations more on their social elements, rather than their physical qualities (Wilson, 2008). Still, Indigenous peoples remained silenced in the world of research, as non-Indigenous scholars became experts on Indigenous peoples (Wilson, 2008: 49). This echoed throughout society as physicians, psychologists, anthropologists, and archeologists were just some of those that claimed to speak on behalf of Indigenous peoples (Beckett, 1994). To this day, non-Indigenous scholars continue to be seen as experts in the hallways of academia, instructing courses on Indigenous studies across the world over (Wilson, 2008: 49).

The roots of Assimilationist research can be found in Western government policy (Wilson, 2008: 49). Throughout this era Indigenous peoples throughout Australia, Canada, and elsewhere had every aspect of their lives controlled by outsiders. This control was subjected as a “protectionist” act that aimed to prepare what was left of the population of Indigenous peoples for assimilation into the dominant society (Wilson, 2008: 50).

The next phase of research has been dubbed the *Early Aboriginal Research Phase*, and lasted from 1970 through the 1980s (Martin, 2003). During this time (in which human rights were being discussed more and more throughout North America), many researchers gravitated toward working with Indigenous peoples. However, research continued to be conducted rather exclusively through Western paradigms that reinforced colonial worldviews as the dominant discourse. This research increased exposure of Indigenous peoples, yet focused primarily on exotic, exciting, and easy to understand aspects of Indigenous cultures, thus maintaining the grip of silence that kept colonial truths, and the real challenges facing Indigenous communities, at bay (Wilson, 2008: 50). Many scholars concur that during this era Indigenous peoples were one of the most researched groups on the planet (Dodson, 1995; Huggins, 1998; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008), yet they remained responsible for little to none of the research produced. This has led many Indigenous people to repeat the common refrain: “We’ve been researched to death” (Schnarch, 2004: 82).

3.3.2.2 A Methodological Approach to Decolonization

It is the spirit of decolonizing research, which as noted, works to emancipate itself “from hearing only the voices of Western Europe (and) seeing the world in only one color” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005: 212; Chilisa, 2012: 3), that guided my approach to research. I realized from the beginning of my work that the chance to conduct a research project of this magnitude may not come my way again. Consequently, I determined that I must not waste this opportunity, and that my work needed to represent my values, many of which involve actively changing the world for the better; a subjective concept for certain, but for me, one that involves working within my local community and acknowledging the voices of the silenced and the oppressed. Working on a research project that invited Indigenous people to comment on the continued social construction of their immediate geography was one way for me to ensure my work met my own criteria. While I am uncomfortable representing my efforts as having brought voice to the silenced, I can confidently say that my work has provided an outlet for individuals to be heard that may not otherwise have found that outlet. With this intent, I actively sought out Indigenous voices in order to ensure their perspectives would be heard, and not merely one perspective that supposedly represented the entirety of Indigenous peoples, but a fair representation of the diverse voices present within Indigenous communities.

3.4 Methods

3.4.1 Ethical Considerations

The collection of data for this project began under the direction of my supervisor, Dr. Reuben Rose-Redwood. Prior to data being collected, Dr. Rose-Redwood undertook an ethics review related to his research proposal through the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board (HREB). This review was necessary because the proposed research involved conducting semi-structured interviews with people from various cultural backgrounds, including members of Indigenous communities. Once I began to conduct a related yet separate case study from the one captained by Dr. Rose-Redwood, the initial application for ethical approval was amended and submitted for further review by the University of Victoria's HREB. The review was completed and approval granted before further data was collected. As my supervisor, Dr. Rose-Redwood's guidance and council on issues related to conducting qualitative research in a culturally sensitive manner helped immensely throughout my research process.

As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) acknowledges on the very first page of her text, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, and as I have already made clear, within Indigenous communities "the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism [and] is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary" (1-2). For this reason, it is imperative that research inviting the participation of Indigenous individuals be

thoroughly thought through with particular consideration of the implications of the research on the Indigenous individuals and their communities. Certainly, the need for this type of reflection is necessary regardless of the cultural background of the research subjects, yet it is of particular importance when attempting to conduct meaningful work involving members of a community that have good reason, based on historical precedent, to be skeptical of researchers' intentions.

The submission of an application for approval to the University of Victoria's HREB was mandatory in order to begin collecting data while affiliated with the University, yet it represented only one part of a four-part action plan I enacted in order to ensure the ethical design and application of my research. Prioritizing an ethical basis to the design of my research, and seeing that design through, represented major contributions that helped to ensure the decolonizing nature of my research. The second aspect of this plan was to solicit the guidance and mentorship of an Indigenous scholar. For this reason I approached Dr. Jeff Corntassel of the Cherokee nation, who at the time was the acting Director of the University of Victoria's Indigenous Governance program, to sit on my advisory committee. Dr. Corntassel agreed and proved to be an invaluable resource in his role as both mentor and friend. Various times throughout my research process Dr. Corntassel and I met in order to talk through elements of my research design that brought me in contact with Indigenous individuals. Dr. Corntassel provided me with the names of individuals who may be interested in participating in my research, directed me toward organizations he thought may appreciate the work that I was

conducting, suggested texts and articles that I should read, and most helpfully, maintained an ongoing dialogue with me about the relationship between research and colonialism, the implications of this relationship on Indigenous peoples, and the assumptions that I make as a researcher that has never known a world other than that of colonized North America.

Dr. Corntassel's influence spilled out into the other two aspects of my action plan, the third aspect of which involved thoroughly reviewing the literature related to decolonizing research, including those suggested by Dr. Corntassel that directly commented on conducting research involving Indigenous individuals. The previously mentioned *Decolonizing Methodologies* (Smith, 1999), as well as Sean Wilson's (2008) *Research is Ceremony*, and Margaret Kovach's (2009) *Indigenous Methodologies* were three particularly helpful texts in this regard. The value of these and other important texts have already been elaborated upon earlier in this chapter.

The final aspect of my action plan was a commitment to continuous reflection on the process and outcomes of my research. As will be further discussed below, this commitment to reflecting upon my research process, in conjunction with reflecting upon my role, and the affect that conducting research of this nature was having upon myself, was part of an intentionally iterative experience of data collection and analysis that came to shape this study.

3.4.2 Data Collection and Analysis: An Iterative Process

The first step in my data collection involved undertaking an extensive process of gathering documents relevant to the naming of the Salish Sea. Specifically, these documents included newspaper, magazine, and online articles as well as educational handbooks, promotional materials, and governmental and non-governmental organizations' media releases.

The iterative process of data collection and analysis began with a document analysis of the above-mentioned items. Extensive reading of these preliminary documents informed my strategies for purposive sampling and helped to develop an interview guide that I would utilize in the subsequent interview process. My goal throughout this process was to develop a list of potential interview subjects who would provide "rich descriptions" of relevant experiences and opinions of expected implications of the naming of the Salish Sea. As Wilson and Hutchinson (1991) confirm, purposive sampling is the best way to gain access to such information.

3.4.3 Semi-Structured, In-Depth Interviews

As Yin (1981) points out, one of the special difficulties in performing a case study is that "the number of variables of interest will inevitably be an order of magnitude greater than the number of data points" (98). This problem was especially pertinent to me, as my interview subjects included, but were not limited to, politicians, journalists, authors, artists, and educators (see Appendix A). While

initially established as a process of purposive sampling, my list of interview candidates expanded as a result of information that came out in the interviewing process. This is what is known as snowball sampling. Through my experiences conducting my initial interviews, I broke from the traditional approach to semi-structured interviews that involve developing a flexible, but rather consistent, interview guide, and instead developed rather unique interview guides for each interview subject. This flexibility of design allowed me to target more variables and extend the depth of my data.

Each interview I conducted was followed up with a brief initial analysis, a process of reflection, and very basic coding. This initial analysis, along with the collection and analysis of further documentation often received directly from interview subjects, was immediately considered and often led to direct changes within the continuously evolving interview guide. At times this process introduced new points of interest, while at others it revealed that specific sample targets had reached a point of saturation; that is, it had become clear that new and fresh perspectives were no longer being garnered from individuals that fit into sample groups in which I had interviewed several respondents.

In total, I conducted interviews with 50 individuals (see Appendix A for the full list). In all cases but one, individuals were interviewed independently, though due to travel expenses, time considerations, and an existing work relationship, one interview was conducted that involved two individuals. Through my iterative process of analysis and self-reflexivity, I was able to continuously assess my sample

groups and acknowledge gaps within my sample that had yet to be filled. In total, 35 of the individuals were men and 15 were woman. While recognizing the disparity of the sample in this sense, I didn't find it overly problematic as my sample was compiled primarily based on relevance to the issues. However, one aspect of my sample that I did find problematic was the overall inclusion of Indigenous voices. Even now that my study is complete, I am not entirely satisfied with the number of interviews conducted with Indigenous individuals and representatives of local First Nations and Tribal bands, especially those located on the Washington State side of the shared Canadian/American border.¹¹

While the implications for Indigenous individuals and communities represents only one focus of this case study, I was sensitive to the all-too-common practice of grouping Indigenous individuals under one common umbrella, and thus failing to recognize the diversity of culture and perspective that inevitably is represented by people who have never met, and may be living as much as hundreds of kilometers apart from one another. My goal was to complete at least 30 interviews with Indigenous individuals and representatives of local First Nations and Tribal bands; however, due to time restrictions, to some degree cultural differences, and perhaps the previously mentioned poor reputation that research has in Indigenous communities, I was only able to gain the insights of 11 individuals

¹¹ I can't emphasize enough how different my findings may have been had I had greater access to Indigenous individuals on the southern side of the Canadian/US border.

of Indigenous descent.¹² Additionally, I spoke with two individuals who currently, or in the recent past, have worked within Indigenous communities, and several other individuals who regularly interact with Indigenous communities in various capacities.

3.4.4 Interview Locations

Various factors influenced the locations chosen to conduct each interview, but it should be noted that the majority of the interviews were conducted in places chosen by the interview subjects themselves. This was an intentional element of the research design, which was employed in order to increase the comfort level and reduce the burden of participation on the interview subjects. Interview locations included but were not limited to places of employment, subjects' homes, and cafes. Additionally, 16 interviews were conducted over the phone.

It was never my preference to conduct interviews over the phone as I experienced that relationships were formed throughout the interview process, and out of those relationships emerged rich descriptions and stories that may not have emerged otherwise. While the phone interviews that I conducted still reflected this experience, I found the opportunity of meeting face-to-face with interview subjects to be invaluable as it allowed me to gain a much more in-depth understanding of how each individual carried themselves, and what they felt passionate about. When in person, I was able to respond to facial expressions and body language in a way

¹² 7 of the 11 had at least some Coast Salish ancestry.

that was impossible when speaking over the phone. I don't mean to imply that the interviews conducted over the phone resulted in inferior data, for this was not inherently the case, as much as to say that it was never my preference, and I did what I could to avoid circumstances that dictated phone interviews. Circumstances that did dictate the necessity of a phone interview usually involved financial and time restraints as the interview subjects were located beyond a distance I was able to travel.

3.4.5 Data Analysis

The first aspect of the data analysis process that I engaged in was document analysis, as described above. In regards to the analysis of interviews, as is standard in qualitative research, each was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim (Bryman et al, 2009). This process assisted greatly as it allowed for a thorough interpretation of the findings by assuring the accurate reporting of all responses.

Following the advice of Lofland and Lofland (1971), as part of the iterative approach to research I embraced, the analysis of interviews began rather immediately. As part of the process of continuously reflecting upon my data, I listened to each recorded interview soon after the interview took place. This step served several purposes including allowing me to gauge levels of saturation within my sample as well as to further develop my list of potential research subjects as many interviewees suggested acquaintances and colleagues that may be interested in participating in my research.

An additional advantage of listening to interviews soon after they were recorded was that it allowed me to take note of major themes touched on by the interview subjects and to compare my initial insights with those spawned by data previously collected. This stage of my analysis is best described as open coding, which typically involves “breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Bryman et al, 2009: 253). The categories that emerged primarily correlated with the main topics I have since explored. Categories included, yet were not limited to: a) science and the environment, b) economic branding and trade, c) processes of decolonization and neo-colonialism, and d) ‘new regionalism’ and imagined geographies. I also explored the data from an angle less obviously connected to the main topics of my research, and created categories that gauged the emotional responses of interview subjects. These categories included a) expressions of hope, and b) expressions of fear. These categories aimed to illuminate affective responses, and related perceptions of the near future, which were particularly relevant as the commencement of the case study came so soon after the official naming occurred. This open-coding style is consistent with thematic analysis (Wilson and Hutchinson, 1991). I continued using thematic analysis techniques in each stage of the coding process, including the coding of documentation.

Once all of my interviews were transcribed, I performed what is known as axial coding, a coding technique that involves connecting data in new ways through the recognition of connections between categories (Bryman, 2009). I used TAMS

Analyzer coding software to assist my data analysis. This process began with assigning distinct colours to each of the themes, and highlighting quotes from within the interviews, according to the appropriate colours. Following this, databases were created that grouped quotes together so that they could easily be assessed as a whole. This coding process allowed for relatively quick and efficient analysis of the results of my study.

3.4.6 A Comment on Dissemination

Studying a phenomenon as it is taking place is not an easy task, but it does allow for constant new realizations as the context changes throughout the research process. In the case of this research, the changing or dynamic context was to some degree the best measurement of the implications being studied. This research brought me into contact with interesting individuals of diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds. For this reason, I felt the need to make sure that the conclusions of my research found their way back to the individuals involved as research subjects, as well as their communities. In order to meet this personal commitment, I have created a visual presentation and plan on presenting the results of my research in non-academic environments in which communities gather. These environments may include coffee houses and community halls, and hopefully will include a classroom at the Saanich Indian School Board campus. This will allow me to share my results and give back to the communities that aided my research. I have also considered creating a second medium of delivery to bring my findings to the

public. I am still in the process of deciding what form this will take, but in all likelihood, a web site, or some other form of social media will be part of the dissemination process. It is important to acknowledge here that the dissemination of the findings of this research, whether that be through the production of academic articles, the delivering of presentations, or the creation of a website, all act as additional performative enactments that will help to further solidify what the Salish Sea toponym will come to symbolize in the minds of the people local to the region and those in other parts of the world.

Case studies should not take the form of a one-way stream of knowledge, as research subjects will often gain new perspectives from the narratives researchers develop. As Stake (1994) notes, "Knowledge is socially constructed ... and thus case study researchers assist readers in the construction of knowledge" (240). The contemporary nature of this phenomenon has meant that those that reside in the communities that surround the Salish Sea have not necessarily had their perspectives and insights into the implications of the naming considered thus far. I intend for this work to contribute to this process and allow for the development of the next wave of questions to be posed.

Chapter 4

The Story of the Salish Sea: A Tale of Place-Making

4.1 What's in a Name: A Sea of Possibilities

Victoria, British Columbia is a relatively modest city located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. I have called the greater Victoria area my home for the last twelve years, though in that time I have star-crossed the city and its neighbouring municipalities, never staying in one location for very long. For a little over a year I lived in Sooke, Victoria's municipal neighbour 45 kilometers to the west. When I would walk through Ed MacGregor Park, down the carved out path to the ocean to watch the sunset, I looked out over the Strait of Juan de Fuca toward Port Angeles in Washington State.

For another year and a half span I lived in Saanich, Victoria's suburban neighbour less than 10 kilometers to the north of the city centre. From my residence in the University of Victoria's student family housing complex, I would walk down to Cadboro Bay, and watch the sunrise in the east. On a clear day, if my vision allowed, I could see right through Haro Strait (which weaves through the southern Gulf Islands/Northern San Juan Islands and connects the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the Strait of Georgia), and spot San Juan Island's Mount Dallas to the Northeast.

As I write this, I reside spitting distance from the Dallas Road beaches, the point considered Victoria's Mile Zero. It has become a standard part of my writing practice to start my day with my dog, walking these beaches and gathering up the nerve to write the rest of my day away. When doing so, if I gaze southeast, my mind can drift directly through the Strait of Juan de Fuca and into Puget Sound.

Despite no material changes being immediately obvious to the layman's eye, a reimagining, or reconceptualization of the geography of this region, as a region, has transpired over the past 20 years. This reimagining was prompted by distress over the state of the environment and the perceived need for collaborative care of the waters that united the coastal communities. The spark that ignited the fires of reconceptualization was the invention of a name, a rallying call with the potential to evoke emotions, and deep associations with the place it references. For a name does much more than reference a bounded geography, the act of naming performatively constitutes the spatial identity of a place by enacting that which it names.

Conducting this case study has provided me the rare and unique opportunity to observe the profound performative effects of the act of place naming in a contemporary context. This contemporary perspective has allowed for the gathering of evidence over the course of the place naming process that overwhelmingly implicates the naming of the Salish Sea in the geographical reconceptualization underway. Furthermore, it is not just the act of naming itself that has performatively shaped the Salish Sea; the acceptance and repetitive use of the name continues to shape its spatial identity. One of the predominant ways in

which identities are manipulated and changed over time is through the performative (and in the words of Butler, stylized) utterance of their names. When an individual speaks a name, they reference the spatial identity of that location as they understand it, yet as has been addressed in section 3.1, this utterance also enacts that understanding, further entrenching the specific associations being referenced within that place's spatial identity.

The spatial identity of Victoria, BC has vastly changed over its 150-year history. As a result of the presence of transient gold miners, brothels, opium dens, and gambling houses, an utterance of the name Victoria may once have aptly evoked rich associations of indulgence and debauchery. Now, it is just as likely to evoke notions of a tourist playground, rich with both the urban experience and the untamed wilderness. Somewhere along the continuum of time, the associations evoked through the utterance of the name drastically shifted, and while we cannot always see the forces at work, it is still shifting.

Studying the Salish Sea less than twenty-five years after the first utterance of its name allows for the direct recognition of a chain of specific acts that legitimized the name in the eyes of the public. Furthermore, this contemporary approach allows for the immediate recognition of enactments of the name that introduce new associations, thus challenging existing concepts, and subverting the Salish Sea's spatial identity. By observing the process in which the Salish Sea came into being, and how its spatial identity is being shaped, usurped, manipulated, and subverted, it is possible to gauge the implications that have resulted from this creation of a name,

this inventing of a place.

Recognizing the naming of the Salish Sea, and subsequent utterances of the toponym, as performative has made possible the witnessing of the birth of a spatial narrative, or rather, the birth of several competing narratives. The story of the Salish Sea is taking shape; it is still emerging through the competition of narratives that is afoot, but the invention of the name has acted as a form of toponymic inscription which signals that a story exists in these parts. The text inscribed by the invention of the Salish Sea immediately speaks of the birth of a regional imaginary. The story told of a collective recognition of a shared ecosystem, and a peoples' centuries-old relationship with the water, coming together to create a place where one did not exist before. Interestingly, it seems though that only through the invention of the name has this collective recognition finally arrived.

The findings of my case study will be found in the following pages. The evidence I present here will explore the performativity of place naming by taking a closer look at how the act of toponymic inscription can be implicated in the process of place-making. Inventing the toponym "Salish Sea" has set in motion a chain of events that has led to a reconceptualization of the local geography through concurrently creating a new place and establishing a new scale of geographic experience. Before presenting the cultural and political effects that have resulted from the Salish Sea designation, I will briefly discuss the tradition of geographic reconceptualization that has been afoot in this region over the past several hundred years. Specifically, I will focus on attempts made over the past 35 years to legitimize

a regional perspective through performative attempts to entrench the name Cascadia in the public imagination, first proposed to be understood through a bioregional lens, yet eventually enacted to encompass a much broader spatial identity.

First, I will demonstrate how the reconceptualization of place that was sparked from this designation has led to the bureaucratic legitimization of a new geographic scale in which to experience the geography of the Pacific Coast of North America. I will show how this rescaling is affecting the public's understanding of their local environment and influencing efforts to protect the marine ecosystem that has been recognized through this naming process. While these scalar effects are in line with those intended by Bert Webber, the inventor of the name, I will also demonstrate how the rescaling has led to additional effects that are further influencing the public's experience.

The second major realm of cultural and political implications that will be explored is in relation to current efforts of Indigenous peoples in the region to reestablish a sense of self-determination. In this section I will place the naming of the Salish Sea on a continuum that encompasses the overlapping processes of colonialism and decolonization. Relying on data primarily derived from qualitative interviews, I will present the perspectives of Indigenous community leaders, artists, and activists as well as non-Indigenous community members that work closely with Indigenous communities in order to support my argument that the Salish Sea place naming represents an act of anti-conquest (see section 2.1).

I present the above as two separate realms of implications, but it should be made clear that the two sets of issues are integrally intertwined, the first realm directly feeding into the second. Only once it has been demonstrated that the naming of the Salish Sea was a performative act of toponymic inscription that resulted in a rescaling of the local geography can we begin to discuss what it represents in regards to the Indigenous peoples' reclamation of their sense of self-determination.

4.2 A Tradition of Reconceptualization

The Pacific coastal areas of North America have a history of attempted (and at times successful) geographic reconceptualization. Prior attempts, at least the attempts successful enough to leave trails of evidence, typically involved the unification of smaller geographic entities into larger geographic places, and consequently constructed new geographic scales in which to experience the local geography.¹³ In this way, past reconceptualizations were much like the Salish Sea, though they differed in scale tremendously as they typically involved much larger amounts of space.

Many reimaginings of the region have adopted the commonly accepted toponym, "Cascadia." These reimaginings have involved great inconsistency in

¹³ This was certainly true of the colonial reconceptualization, though colonialism also brought with it the splintering of scales as Indigenous communities with longstanding relationships were divided from each other by new borders and boundaries drawn.

detail, both geographically and as far as their enacted spatial identities are concerned. One of the most popular, dominant, and sustaining reconceptualizations of the region depends on it being conceived of as an ecoregion. This designation is not necessarily reliant on science, nor is it the equivalent of a bioregion (though it has been described as such), but rather speaks to what is perceived as a common cultural respect and appreciation for the environment. This notion of Cascadia as an ecological region first emerged in the public consciousness in the late 1970s. The idea built off of the environmental movement that gripped Western North America during the 1960s (Smith, 2008: 64), and at least in part, can be attributed to the vision of the region portrayed in Ernest Callenbach's (1975; 1981) fictional novel, *Ecotopia*, and its subsequent prequel, *Ecotopia Emerging*.

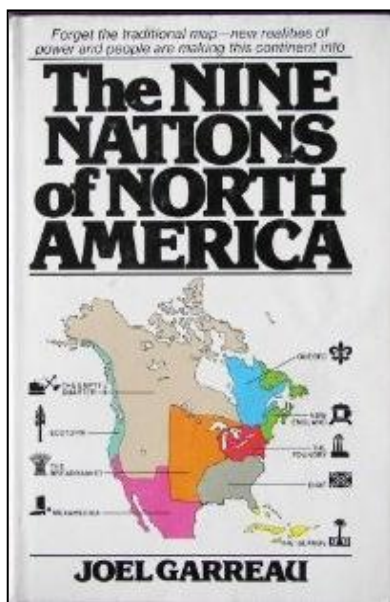


Figure 3. Fueling a regional perspective (Source: Joel Garreau, 1981)

Joel Garreau (1981) in his text, *The Nine Nations of North America*, fueled this reconceptualization. In this work, Garreau's "Ecotopia" extends from Alaska down south into northern California. Garreau's map-adorned book cover (Figure 3), with a clearly defined and labeled "Ecotopia," also introduced the iconic image of a conifer tree as a symbol of the new nation; a symbol that would prove enduring and act as a bridge that maintained a consistent spatial identity for the region as it

transitioned to a new toponym, that of Cascadia.

4.2.1 Cascadia Emerging

David McCloskey, a Seattle University sociologist with a keen interest in bioregionalism, has been dubbed “The Father of Cascadia” and been given credit as the first to introduce the toponym.

According to McCloskey’s interpretation, Cascadia consists of the region of land sandwiched between the Cascade Mountains and the Pacific Ocean.

More than merely a grouping of land,

McCloskey envisions Cascadia to be united as much by sociocultural commonalities as by bioregional boundaries (Smith, 2008: 62).

As insinuated earlier, the toponym Cascadia, having gained no official legitimization, has been envisioned and enacted quite differently by different people. Significant portions of the public have rallied behind the name and the idea of a community united by environmental values. When promoted in this light, a Cascadia defined by a revolutionary zeal not only for environmentalism, but also for independent thought and progress, is enacted through the use of its toponym, as is

Figure 4. Performing Cascadia with Revolutionary Zeal (Source: Cascadian Independence Project, 2012)



evidenced by the poster on display in Figure 4.¹⁴ This flag, much like the toponym, has been embraced throughout the region, appearing on T-shirts, baseball caps (Figure 5) and skateboards.

While the *Ecotopia*-derived associations with the physical environment and the notion of an ecoregion continue to be at the centre of Cascadia's spatial identity, other elements and applications of regionalism have begun to influence the identity as well, including those associated with developing a transboundary financial region to rival that of California. Supporters of this notion of Cascadia have not abandoned



Figure 5. Embracing Cascadia (Source: Flag Library, Unknown)

McCloskey's ideas, but have conflated them with a rejection of centralized government, an embrace of free trade, and openness to the immediate transfer of money, ideas, and technology (Sparke, 2000: 12). While McCloskey is still enacting his vision of Cascadia, mainly through the work of

his organization, the Cascadia Institute, other organizations such as the Cascadia Center, a research institution "committed to commerce, community, and

conservation," have been busy enacting a broader vision of Cascadia, one focused on

¹⁴ Note the familiar conifer, which was used to symbolize "Ecotopia" in Garreau's *The Nine Nations of North America* (1981), has now reappeared as the primary symbol on the flag of Cascadia. This flag is quite different from one developed by McCloskey. The fact that McCloskey's version remains relatively unknown while the one provided above is familiar to many supporters of Cascadia further exemplifies the notion that the spatial identity of Cascadia has been rearticulated by alternative users of the name (see explanation below). An image of McCloskey's version of the map can be found at <http://cascadia-institute.org/flag.html>.

articulating “the geoeconomic rationale for the new strategic regionalism” (Sparke, 2000: 21). In this sense, the revolutionary zeal associated with Cascadia is no longer an expression of environmentalism but rather represents a neoliberal expression of globalization and a “smaller, less interventionist” approach to government in the area (Sparke, 2000: 9).

4.2.2 Connecting Cascadia to the Salish Sea

Introducing the notion of Cascadia into this discussion of the Salish Sea was relevant for several reasons. While I hoped to communicate how the Salish Sea represents but one of many reconceptualizations that have occurred in the region, it is also possible to see evidence that the Salish Sea, once easily associated with a singular focus, namely the environment, is experiencing a similar challenge to the foundations of its spatial identity. The Salish Sea, much like Cascadia, is experiencing the effects of conflicting voices rearticulating its spatial identity through the use of the toponym to refer to, and enact, a Salish Sea quite different from that emphasized by Bert Webber and his collaborators. To a minor degree, it is even the same players that are responsible for this new articulation. Several individuals interviewed as part of this case study have been strong proponents of both Cascadia and the Salish Sea, nudging them into existence through the performative uses of their names.

Bruce Agnew, Director of the Cascadia Center, voiced “a natural affinity towards the Salish Sea,” and equated it with the “modern day Cascadia movement,

which is engaged in trade and transportation, [and] has as its kind of soul, a return to a day when we didn't have as many political boundaries as we do today" (Bruce Agnew, Interview, 2010). Agnew acknowledges that the Cascadia Center more or less usurped the toponym Cascadia, transitioning it from its "romantic" roots into one focused on day-to-day implications. He sees the same opportunities with the Salish Sea. While the Cascadia Center's initiatives can easily be connected to a modern environmental movement focused on "greening" the economy and transportation systems, by associating them with the Salish Sea, the Cascadia Center has yet again introduced a broader regional focus in order to promote their own objectives.

Another strong supporter of the concept of Cascadia, who has since become a proponent of the Salish Sea, is former British Columbia Premier Mike Harcourt. Harcourt, like Agnew, sees the Salish Sea as being about much more than a marine ecosystem. Harcourt worked with Agnew on the Cascadia Corridor initiative, and later worked closely with then Governor of Washington State, Booth Gardner. While talking with Harcourt it became clear that much like Agnew, he saw the political borders as an impediment to accomplishing collaborative work in this region.

When referring to this time of collaboration, Harcourt also brought up that starting in 1992, with his government's new approach to setting up a treaty process, initiatives were undertaken with the Coast Salish First Nations on both sides of the border. Harcourt recalls that out of these initiatives, which were geared toward establishing a new relationship based on reconciliation, "and getting on with

changing the sordid past,” arose the recognition that the Georgia-Puget Basin was in fact a sea that the Salish people had been living around and utilizing for 10,000 years (Mike Harcourt, Interview, 2010).

4.3 Recognizing Place Through the Act of Place Naming

A place is any area an observing consciousness distinguishes and separates, by whatever means, from other places... As symbols, place-names are part of the process of attaching meaning to one's surroundings; they act as sources of information, facilitate communication, help us to know, and serve as repositories of values. (Cohen and Kliot, 1992: 655)

The quote above speaks to the notion that place is not an inherent quality. By making it clear that a place must be distinguishable “by whatever means,” Cohen and Kliot infer that while a place must be recognizable by “an observing consciousness,” its definition is not necessarily dependent on clear geographic boundaries. Accordingly, before Bert Webber and his colleagues determined the need for public recognition of the transboundary marine ecosystem that is now known as the Salish Sea, the place itself did not “exist”; definitely not in the hegemonic mind’s eye of the North American mainstream, and at the very least, not with the same specific boundaries, in the consciousness of the local Indigenous peoples.¹⁵

¹⁵ A conversation of the past and present relevance of this water body to the livelihood and worldviews of the region’s Indigenous peoples will be revealed as this chapter progresses, and discussed more completely in Chapter 5.

In the case of the Salish Sea, the naming of place was more than part of the process of attaching meaning and facilitating communication that Cohen and Kliot rightfully point to. The naming was the distinguishing quality itself; the name defined it and set it apart. By doing so, the naming not only created a place where there was none before, the naming triggered a geographic rescaling. Webber's main motivation for triggering this rescaling was to encourage the general public, politicians, and environmental managers to think of the region as a unified marine ecosystem. Webber recognized that, in general, people's sense of place was bound by hegemonic understandings of boundaries that promoted an affinity to one's local community, their state or province, and their nation. In addition, funding models defined according to existing political boundaries likewise limited transboundary marine conservation and restoration research. As geographer Emma Norman (2012) explains, "Issues surrounding scale and natural resource management are particularly acute at the site of political borders, where management systems, policies, and laws often terminate abruptly" (138).

Without a common name, a marine bioregion that transcended our politically manipulated geographic conceptions was hard to recognize. Webber understood that a unifying name would allow for a reconceptualization of one's place in the world. He also understood that not any old name would do, but that one was needed that would capture the public's imagination and speak to the culture of the region. As he recalled:

If there was going to be any studying or understanding for further research on this ecosystem, it needed to be named – it needed to be named... I had a superficial understanding that people who lived around what I was thinking of the Salish Sea were mainly related in the past to Salish people, that they were for the most part Salish tribes... it seemed to me enough of a reason to use that name, to name this ecosystem (Bert Webber, Interview, 2010).

In the moment of conception, Webber may or may not have known it, but choosing the toponym Salish Sea, rather than any other that might have crossed his mind, may have been the only path that led to success.

4.3.1 Let There Be...The Salish Sea

I think it captured the imagination. It is a lovely sounding name.

- Janet Mason (Interview, 2010)

It was not all that easy. Bringing the Salish Sea into being was a process that began a quarter century ago. Back in 1990, when Webber first proposed the name to the Washington State Board of Geographic Names, and the British Columbia Geographic Names Office, he and his colleagues were the only “observing consciousness” that did in fact perceive the Salish Sea. The naming boards themselves recognized this by tabling the applications. Webber’s application was a performative act that intended on rescaling the local geography through the naming of the Salish Sea, yet the official policies of the bureaucratic boards dictated that it was their responsibility to acknowledge place-names that were already in common

use, not to act as a tool for bringing the name into usage. As Janet Mason, BC's Provincial Toponymist, explained:

It came down to whether we adopt a name and inflict it, if you will, on a substantial population just to make it easier for a marine science community to communicate amongst themselves. And so, the answer, both jurisdictions rejected the name, and suggested that some time be allowed to pass to see if there was resonance and uptake of the idea... Basically it was just, "let's wait and see," and if there was public uptake on it, it's easy to revisit this (Janet Mason, Interview, 2010).

Webber had been tackling the situation from the wrong angle, and he came to understand this. Furthermore, he came to accept the tabling of the application as a blessing:

To their credit, the Washington State Board of Geographic Names did not deny the application, had they, law says that you cannot ever consider that name again. But they tabled it; they said there was not enough evidence that this is a wise thing to do at this time so they just deferred making a decision... And there it sat, for 20 years or so (Bert Webber, Interview, 2010).

While the application sat upon the table, the name itself began to generate interest. The Salish Sea was about to experience an enactment. Faced with the initial argle-bargle of bureaucracy, the name gathered strength through grassroots efforts. It started slowly, but eventually community leaders, activists, artists, scientists, and academics throughout the coastal communities purposefully used the name when discussing the region. By the turn of the century it was really gathering steam, and references to the Salish Sea were now appearing in newspaper articles, songs, and inspiring creative projects, many of which involved spreading messages of

environmental conservation, many of the projects finding funding through governmental organizations.

One of the early promoters of the Salish Sea was a new acquaintance (and now old friend) of Webber's, Dr. Briony Penn. Penn is a woman of many hats who is best known as an award-winning columnist, but she is also an adjunct geography professor at the University of Victoria and an environmental activist who ran as a federal Liberal candidate in her Gulf Islands riding on a climate change platform, narrowly losing to the incumbent. Penn figures she is likely the first Canadian to push the name publicly as she began using it in various writing assignments, including her regular column in Victoria, BC's free weekly *Monday Magazine*. Penn's interest in the name was a product of her environmentalism, but even more than that, she believed in its ability to create a broader sense of place. As she explained it to me:

I'm very interested in place... especially this place because it's where I grew up... I grew up with families that even though they've been in this country for 3 or 4 generations still were probably more fond of British stories of place than local stories of place. So, from both a professional and a personal point of view and from an activist point of view, the re-naming of the sea, the opportunity to re-name the sea struck me as a huge opportunity. I always objected to the fact anyway that this straight was named after a sort of dead king from thousands of miles away that never even visited the place and had virtually nothing to do with the place that I lived (Briony Penn, Interview, 2010).

Penn clearly took issue with the prominence of Eurocentric names that were being used to represent the place she called home. Over the years, Penn would reference the Salish Sea in various other articles, such as those appearing in *Focus*, a free

Victoria-based magazine with a large readership, as well as the national magazine, *Canadian Geographic*. Penn also started referring to the name in meetings held with Parks Canada and the general public when developing community-based mapping projects throughout the Southern Gulf Islands.¹⁶ Penn’s desire to draw attention to “traditional uses and knowledge of this land” through supporting the creation of this new name was both purposeful and performative, and would prove to be a key contribution as it brought the public’s attention to this toponym at a time when it was otherwise unlikely to be heard. Penn described her use of the toponym as “explicit,” but at the same time, she didn’t want to be the lightning rod, she didn’t want the “Salish Sea” to be about her. Again, in Penn’s words:

I wasn’t to the point that I was promoting my own role in it but I was promoting the use of Salish Sea... there was nobody else doing it and it wasn’t without its risks because people are just kind of cranky. I deliberately though didn’t want to be known as the person who was doing it. I wanted it to come from the Salish First Nations. It seemed to me more appropriate that the name come from them. So, I communicated with Tom Sampson who was very active in promoting that (Briony Penn, Interview, 2010).

¹⁶ One result of these meetings was the development of The Salish Sea Mapping Project, and subsequent production of *Islands of The Salish Sea: A Community Atlas* (see Figure 10). The funding for this Atlas came primarily through a Canadian Millennium grant, and focused exclusively on the islands on the Canadian side of the border. When asked what the greatest legacy of the project would be, Penn responded, “The greatest legacy, I think, was to boldly promote the concept of the Salish Sea and support elders like Tom Sampson from Tsartlip First Nations who formed the Salish Sea Council—an indigenous, cross-border initiative to improve the health of the Salish Sea—at a time when no one really knew what we were talking about. But here we are several years later with the official name!” ([BC Magazine, 2011](#)).

Both Webber and Penn saw the designation of the Salish Sea, and the rescaling of the region, as an opportunity to increase awareness of both the local marine ecosystem as well as the historical and present day cultural presence of the Coast Salish peoples. In many ways these two objectives were greatly related, as before the European colonial conquest of the area the Indigenous peoples did not draw the same geographic boundaries. Penn's decision to take her mission to Tsarlip elder, Tom Sampson, and to work with the Indigenous peoples to enact the Salish Sea, would eventually give the movement a huge boost of energy. As the Coast Salish nations began to rally behind the name, their influence on the spatial identity of the Salish Sea increased dramatically.

4.3.2 Picking up Speed in the 21st Century

By the turn of the 21st century, the performative enactment was in full swing. Webber and Penn, among others, had sown the seeds of the Salish Sea on both sides of the border, and the seeds that were planted were beginning to blossom into new narratives that were infusing the spatial identity of this new region with complex characteristics. Now rich with associations, the Salish Sea spoke to many in the region about the shared marine ecosystem. It also began to speak to the cultural presence of the Indigenous peoples. Many of those who had caught wind of it through word of mouth, yet had no explanation of its proper context, assumed that the Salish Sea was a historical name that was now being reintroduced by the Salish

peoples. Many also heard, or otherwise wrongly surmised, that the name would replace existing names on the map. As the Salish Sea continued its journey toward legitimacy, these erroneous assumptions would be responsible for additional support while also providing the fuel for much of the resistance the name would face.

4.3.3 Rescaling for the Future: Planting the Seeds of the Salish Sea in the Minds of Today's Youth

One such instance in which these erroneous assumptions were embraced and reproduced, further embedding them in the spatial identity of the Salish Sea, can be attributed to Dr. Susan Baker. As a scientist and U.S. federal employee working as a Coordinator for Outreach and Education with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS), Baker first encountered the Salish Sea in 2003 on a trip that took her through Victoria, Vancouver, and Seattle. Baker's responsibilities with NCCOS involved putting together children's activity books that focus on the marine ecology of specific regions; books she has created focus on such areas as the Hawaiian Islands and Chesapeake Bay. Baker hadn't heard the name "Salish Sea" before she first arrived, but it soon found its way to her:

I was in Vancouver and I went out on a quasi-educational nature tour of the water. I was out on a boat, and it was the people there that I was talking to that originally informed me about the name and actually told me that it was the First Nations name for the area (Dr. Susan

Baker, Interview, 2010).

According to Baker, upon her return to her home base in Silver Spring,

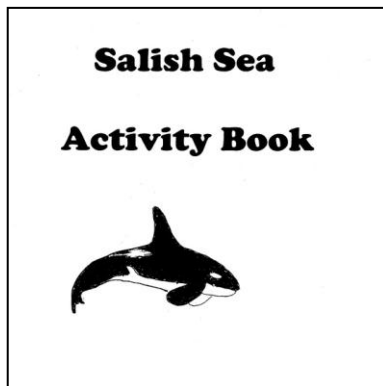


Figure 6. Salish Sea Activity Book (Source: Baker, 2003)

Maryland, she confirmed the validity of the roots of the name online, and then chose to use it in reference to the region in the production of her new activity guide (see Figure 6). The first page of the activity book provides context for its users. In its very first line it states: "Salish sea is the traditional name for the inland waters of Canada and

Washington State, stretching from Puget Sound to Johnstone Strait, that was used by the First Nation peoples who historically and presently inhabit the area" (Baker, 2003: 1). In the coming years, Baker would disseminate between 7,500 and 10,000 hardcopies of the activity book, and countless more were downloaded free of charge. Baker's text spread the still budding name far and wide, and with each citational use, she referenced the mythical reality that was quickly locating at the heart of the Salish Sea's spatial identity.

Baker would eventually learn that the name was neither officially recognized, nor of Indigenous origin, but not until the book had been available for approximately 6 years, and the name was on the verge of becoming official. She went back to her old online source only to find that the correct information was now

provided. There was no way to undo what had been done, but it is worth mentioning that the version available online as of May 2013 still contains the misinformation. Baker thinks the name “wonderful,” and that it does honor the First Nations people; however, she did “like it better when [she] thought it was the First People’s name for the area.”¹⁷ Chances are others would share her viewpoint.

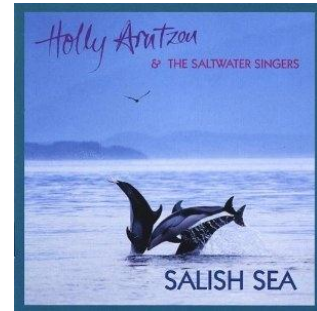


Figure 7. Salish Sea CD (Source: Arntzen & Penn, 2000)

As it stands, each activity book printed continues to performatively use the name in a way that embeds the spatial identity of the Salish Sea with the erroneous notion that the naming represented a returning of something once taken from the Coast Salish peoples. It did not; the Salish Sea is a new construct, but the truth of this matter will have little influence when blacked out by an apparent consensus of opposing opinion, regardless of the factuality of the opinion.¹⁸

Baker’s usage of the name in association with matters of marine ecology performatively worked to further link the two in the minds of the public, while also further supporting the enactment of a “region,” and thus partaking in the rescaling

¹⁷ Interestingly, Baker’s superiors eventually ordered her to recall the distributed books (an impossible notion considering the breadth of dissemination), but not for the erroneous facts about the name. Months before the name became official, her superiors recognized that the name Salish Sea was not an officially recognized toponym, and thus shouldn’t be in use by federal employees. It is safe to say that the matter has been forgotten since the name is now officially recognized (From Dr. Susan Baker interview data).

¹⁸ I oscillate in my writing, referring to this notion as both erroneous and mythical, two terms I deem appropriate. I use the word erroneous because it is clearly false; I use the word mythical because it is also a romantic notion that people want to embrace. I will touch on this again further along in this work.

of the local geography. However, her choice to draw attention to the cultural context of the name was also significant in that it gave strength to what had been until this time a secondary narrative. While measuring the influence of Baker's choices would be difficult, these two narratives were being tied together and were quickly becoming a much greater component of the saga of the Salish Sea. In addition, the fact that Baker's activity books were being disseminated to children and teachers across North America, and potentially beyond (through online downloads), meant that many who had never heard the name before, and may never set foot on the shores of the Salish Sea, were now being introduced to the name, complete with built-in associations.

Back on the Canadian side of the border, Briony Penn's influence continued taking hold. Penn's work with Parks Canada involved developing educational curriculum and brought her into contact with Holly Arntzen. Arntzen is a musician and educator, and co-founder of the Artist Response Team (ART), an organization that supports artists and musicians such as herself in the delivery of environmental messages to the greater community. Arntzen had been contracted by Parks Canada around the turn of the century to develop a CD of songs that teachers could use in the classroom to engage children around issues of marine conservation. Penn introduced the idea of using the name, Salish Sea, and since Parks Canada offered no objections, it was quickly accepted (Figure 7).

Arntzen would go on to produce the CD with the help of youth choirs from the Saanich school district, a suburban municipality located on the southern

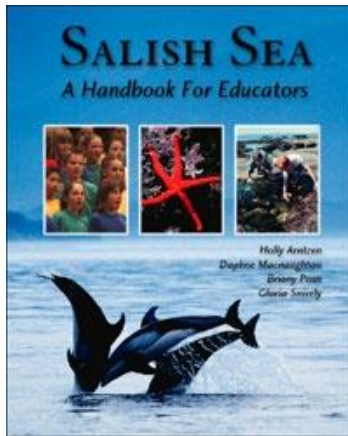


Figure 8. Salish Sea Educator's Handbook (Source: Arntzen & Penn, 2000)

peninsula of Vancouver Island. In conjunction with Penn and two other contributors, she also created a handbook designed to guide educators in their teachings of marine conservation in the Salish Sea (Figure 8). The CD and handbook were distributed to schools as part of a program called "The Salish Sea Project." As part of the

project, Arntzen and her professional partner, Kevin Wright, worked hands on with students throughout Vancouver Island and the Southern Gulf Islands,

assisting them in learning the songs and preparing them for a performance at the school in front of their community.

As in the example of Susan Baker and the Salish Sea Activity Book, the notion of the Salish Sea was being introduced into the minds of the very young. By rescaling the local geography in the eyes of children and educators, the Salish Sea was taking a fast track toward public acceptance and recognition, especially in the future. After all, many of the geographic assumptions that we adopt are first introduced to us in our childhood. In this case, those children then became tools that amplified the enactment of the Salish Sea through song, helping to grease the skids of the reconceptualization and rescaling by subsequently introducing the name to their parents and community members, many of whom would not have heard it before. In this example of a performative use of the name, it was explicitly referencing a unique marine ecosystem where "barnacles and periwinkles feed on top, limpets

slide until the waters drop... [and a host of other creatures are there to see, as they] keep singing songs about the Salish Sea” (Arntzen and Penn, 2000).¹⁹ As Arntzen put it to me:

When they sit in the theater and their children sing with great passion and intensity, they listen. They take it in. And so that was the reason that those Federal Governments put funding into various aspects of the Salish Sea project: the CD production, producing the handbook, producing that festival... (Holly Arntzen, Interview, 2010).

The Federal Governments that Arntzen refers to are actually multiple departments within the Canadian government, including Parks Canada, Environment Canada, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Their involvement in the project is similar to that of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s funding of the Salish Sea activity book. However, it appears as though openly using the name at the time was not a controversial decision for the Canadian federal departments, and their use of the name added a sense of legitimacy that lent further credence to the notion that the Salish Sea was real and tangible and something to be considered.

4.3.4 A Convergence of Qualities of Identity

As mentioned, one of the profound effects of Holly Arntzen and her children’s choir’s performative uses of the toponym was that they would introduce the name to many that had not heard it before. One of those people is Angus Matthews, who was introduced to the name through children singing Holly’s songs at an event

¹⁹ The complete lyrics to the song “Salish Sea” can be found in Appendix B.

promoting the establishment of a marine conservation area near the southern tip of Vancouver Island at the turn of the century. Now the Executive Director of the Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre in Sidney, BC, Mathews was then working to protect Race Rocks, a marine ecological reserve, located to the south of Metchosin, BC, in the Strait of Juan de Fuca:

I heard kids singing this Salish Sea song on the Race Rocks twelve...ten... ten years ago. It was the first time I'd ever heard the term. And I thought "wow, that's pretty cool." And I loved the idea of, sort of, a distinctive identifier, so that was my first brush with it, through a song, oddly enough (Angus Matthews, Interview, 2010).

Matthews really did love it, but also questioned its appropriateness. Before he started to use it himself on a regular basis, he thought it best to discuss the name with Tom Sampson, the same Tsarlip elder that Briony Penn had taken the name to a few years earlier.

As Matthews recalled, Sampson had warmed to the name, pointing out that "it showed great respect for their history on the water, and also the value that they placed on this particular ecosystem" (Angus Matthews, Interview). Sampson, a fluent speaker of SENĆOTEN (the language of the Coast Salish people that live in the Saanich area), also informed Matthews that Salish is not a word native to his language,²⁰ and that in this way it should be seen as something new, not something reclaimed. Matthews reflected on this:

²⁰ The term Salish refers to the language groupings of the Indigenous peoples of the region, including Coast Salish, Strait Salish, and Interior Salish (Suttles and Lane, 1990).

The idea that we've inflicted a lot of these names on this coastline without much respect for First Nations would only be compounded if we now added another layer of names on top of all the others and it has no basis. It's unfortunate that it doesn't really have a strong basis in the Saanich language, but it is great that it's been embraced by a number of elders... more than Tom now, many elders now. So, that really emboldened me in the idea that this is a good thing (Angus Matthews, Interview, 2010).

Once he witnessed the support of Coast Salish elders, Matthews' appreciation for the idea grew. The way he describes it, his support was three-fold. First, he agreed with the science behind it, the ecological considerations, and wanted to ensure that these were properly recognized:

Everything that happens on the upland properties and the rivers, the great rivers of the Salish Basin, these all have huge impacts on what happens to this ecosystem. So be it the Snoqhalmie, or the Fraser obviously, or any of the smaller rivers, right down to Ray Creek. All the things that happen on land, translate into the ocean [and] are really important. And they're not all bad things that happen on land. Everybody thinks about logging and everything else... but there's a lot of really important nutrients that do come from the land, and conversely from the ocean back to the land. The notion that the border of the Salish Sea should stop at the shoreline is really faulty, from an ecological point of view. When we were looking at it, we thought, well let's take the watershed... Working with the folks at Resources Canada, we came up with a fabulous map that they did for us that takes the top of the watershed and the entire drainage basin, ... and we've identified that as our version of the Salish Sea (Angus Matthews, Interview, 2010).²¹

Matthews' reference to his conception of the Salish Sea as "our version" speaks to the multitude of understandings of the Salish Sea, particularly before it became

²¹ Stefan Freelan's map (Figure 1) displays a version of the Salish Sea that incorporates the features that Matthews believes should be included. A digital version of this map and its accompanying information sheet are available on Freelan's website, at: <http://staff.wvu.edu/stefan/salishsea.htm>.

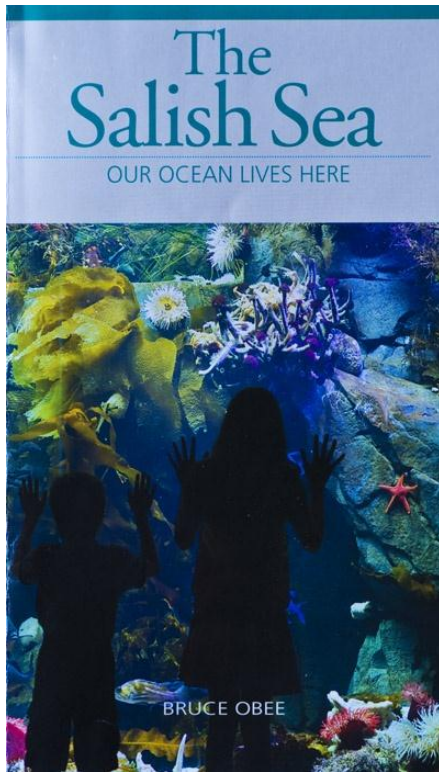


Figure 9. Further enacting the Salish Sea (Source: Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre, 2010)

legitimized and made official by the various naming boards. These various versions didn't necessarily conflict with each other, but their existence speaks to how a communal understanding of place grows in the public consciousness. By promoting a new "version" of the Salish Sea, even if the essence of its ecological roots were still central, Matthews made possible a new citational usage of the name.

As those he would come to influence were exposed to his conception of the Salish Sea, the enactment of the Sea itself, both as far as its spatial identity and its geographic borders are

concerned, had the potential to shift and sway. Moreover, Matthews' influence was quite large as once in his new position as Executive Director, Matthews began to emblazon the Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre, and much of its promotional material with the toponym (see Figure 9). His profuse use of the name embedded it in the mind of a large general public, thus aiding in the Salish Sea enactment. As the Centre's target audience is primarily made up of children, Matthews played a substantial role in normalizing the Salish Sea region and the rescaled local geography.

Matthews' second reason for supporting the name and wishing to promote it was a matter of respect and developed out of his relationships with Coast Salish elders:

There's a terrible divide in society between First Nations society and settlers... And that divide isn't just a social divide. It's a scientific and educational divide... They set aside First Nations science, and conservation, and resource management, and call it "traditional knowledge." "Oh that's, that's the spirits of the past, or the mists of the past. It's not a science it's medicine." It's an economic basis for a thriving community through generations and generations before we got here. So, for heaven sakes, just to nod to that, is well overdue... For us as a Centre, what we're really focused on is the relationship between people and the ocean, so how can you ignore 10,000 years of involvement. And when you start to look at 10,000 years of involvement, or maybe more, you start to realize that people are part of the ecosystem. So the Salish Sea name drives home the fact that there has been this human connection between ocean and people that goes way beyond our brief confirmation on this coast (Angus Matthews, Interview, 2010).

Here we see Matthews connecting the dots between the two major components of the Salish Sea's spatial identity. By synthesizing these two rationales for the naming of the sea, Matthews is conflating associations and assisting in the establishment of a more holistic, composite identity.

The third reason that Matthews supported the name was due to its marketability. The entire success of the Salish Sea depended on its ability to appeal to the people. Webber recognized this, and the naming boards demanded it. As someone who cares deeply about conservation but is also directing the operations of a business, Matthews understood this as well. A powerfully provocative name would lure people in, and make it easier to buy into the reconceptualization:

It's such a handful to explain Georgia Straight, Puget Sound, you know, the list. It's such a great way to be able to say, "O.K, here's this unit. Here's this identifiable unit." So, for us as a Centre, and for Sidney as an economic generator, and for the whale watching community, the eco-tour community, even the sports fishing and everybody else, this is a great way to really be a catalyst in this community; to identify the Salish Sea as something that people can really identify and relate to. Now, a number of people go, "It's confusing. I've never heard of the Salish Sea." That's fabulous. That's the best thing you can have. People go, well what's that? (Angus Matthews, Interview, 2010).

Matthews' three reasons for working to enact the Salish Sea speak to the convergence of the past, present, and future of the region. Matthews sees the need to recognize the 10,000-year-old relations between humans and these particular waters. He also sees the need to protect these waters if we want these relationships to continue thriving into the future, and he understands that in order to inspire conservation and stewardship, a sense of place is necessary in the present. Perhaps most importantly, he sees that the trick to this is to bait the human imagination with the creation of a toponym so sexy that people want it to be real.²²

²² Matthews and his team have unabashedly relied on this strategy in their promotional material. As the following excerpt from a Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre media release titled, "Sex in the Salish Sea" illustrates, the stylized utterances used to enact the Salish Sea have at times appealed to the romantic and playful aspects of peoples' personalities in order to further foster a sense of place:

February 10, 2011 SIDNEY, BC – Love is in the air – or in the water – at Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre. Beginning on Valentine's Day, "Sex in the Salish Sea" is the aquarium's latest theme, focusing on reproductive methods of animals in our local waters (Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre, 2011).

4.3.5 A Political Turn: Planting Confusion, Propagating Support

The year 2008 proved critical in the process of enacting the Salish Sea. It was a year in which the use and argument for the name spread from bureaucratic, academic, and community-level discussions into the world of government-level political discourse. By then, the enactment was well underway as a result of the grassroots efforts described above and the support of many Coast Salish peoples who were now using the name in common dialogue as well as in official documentation. While the name was first introduced to Coast Salish elders not long after its first incantation, the prolific use of the toponym at the 2008 Coast Salish Gathering (hereafter the Gathering) and in its accompanying Executive Report, particularly in the articulation of the Gathering's mission statement, represented a level of legitimization by Indigenous authority that had previously not been communicated.

The Coast Salish Gathering is an annual event that has brought together “over 300 Coast Salish elders, chiefs, chairmen, mothers, grand mothers, and environmental staff” to contribute to the sharing of concerns, and crafting of environmental policy recommendations to “restore and protect the Salish Sea Eco Region” (Coast Salish Gathering, 2008: 3). The Gathering is an initiative of the Coast Salish Aboriginal Council, a governing body representing more than 70 tribes and nations that span across approximately 72,000 square kilometers, and whose relationships predate the invention of the Canadian/American border (Norman,

2012).

The Coast Salish Aboriginal Council was created to manage and protect resources for and by their Coast Salish communities. The Council “has emerged as a highly important and innovative effort at regional governance that draws on the strengths of traditional leadership to successfully deal with complex transboundary environmental issues” (Norman, 2012: 139; Thom, 2010). While the Gathering is not intended to be a government-to-government consultation process, representatives from Environment Canada, the US Environmental Protection Agency, and state and provincial level environmental agencies, have previously been invited to and subsequently attended past Gatherings (Coast Salish Gathering, 2008: 16).

The use of the toponym at the Gathering was a deliberate performative act that intended to further entrench a regional perspective. The previously mentioned mission statement reads:

We, the indigenous peoples of the Salish Sea, our autonomous status as sovereign Coast Salish Tribes and First Nations and our inherent responsibility as protectors of our Mother Earth, will continue to work together and speak with One Voice for the preservation, restoration, and protection of the Salish Sea Eco Region for the sustainability of our sacred inherent family rights and values that have been passed on to us by our ancestors (Coast Salish Gathering, 2008: 4).

The choice to refer to the “Salish Sea Eco Region” as a matter of fact, rather than first introducing the name, speaks to how far the legitimization and enactment process had come, while also lending authority to its legitimacy as a region. Furthermore, the effect on the enactment process of these various representatives returning to their communities and continuing to use the toponym while describing the region

cannot be overstated. For those that may not have heard the term before, hearing it from the mouths of government and community officials communicates an acceptance of its existence in a way that proves difficult to question.

One month after the Gathering, a second significant event occurred: the 2008 First Nations Summit. The Summit, “comprised of a majority of First Nations and Tribal Councils in BC provides a forum for First Nations in British Columbia to address issues related to Treaty negotiations as well as other issues of common concern” (First Nations Summit, Date Unknown). At this event, the enactment of the Salish Sea took a giant leap forward as it was here that the Coast Salish support for the official designation was forcefully brought to the attention of the provincial Liberal government of British Columbia. While it is unlikely that members of the Liberal government had yet to hear of efforts to dub the region the Salish Sea, the issue had thus far remained, for the most part, outside of the realm of official political discussion. However, this was about to change, and change in a major way. By year’s end, the proposal to designate the Salish Sea would find its way back into the hands of the bureaucratic naming boards for another round of consideration, while concurrently the stage was being set for the enactment of the Salish Sea to receive a massive push forward through its endorsement by the governing Liberal party, even finding its way into British Columbia’s Premier Gordon Campbell’s Throne Speech in February 2010 (Office of the Premier, 2010).

Ironically, the enhanced politicization of the enactment process emerged as a result of statements that unintentionally propagated confusion. George Harris,

member of the Stzu'minus (anglicized as Chemainus) nation, had long been a supporter of the movement to officially designate the Salish Sea. Harris had noted that several Indigenous communities, as well as members of the Liberal government, including then Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, Mike de Jong, would be present. Building off of the momentum of the recent Coast Salish Gathering, and due to the influential cast assembled, Harris concluded that the First Nations Summit was the perfect place to take the efforts to legitimize the Salish Sea to the next level. Upon receiving the approval of Grand Chief Ed John, Harris brought the motion to designate the Salish Sea forward to the Summit's representative Chiefs. The motion was unanimously approved, receiving greater support than any other motion brought forth at the summit (George Harris, Interview).

The confusion referred to earlier was the result of this proposal. Harris' motion did not fully reflect the proposal put forth by Bert Webber in that it called for the Georgia Strait, and just the Georgia Strait, to be renamed the Salish Sea, which differed from Webber's proposal significantly in that the latter proposal insisted that the existing names remain while the Salish Sea designation be overlaid atop, thus initiating a geographic rescaling. While introducing a toponym that recognized the Coast Salish peoples was strategically significant and displayed a cultural sensitivity, thus encouraging Indigenous support, ultimately it was meaningless to Webber and his colleagues if it did not in fact establish the rescaling that allowed for a shift in geographic perspective, for it was this shift in perspective that had the

potential to lead to greater environmental awareness.

As Harris explains it, it was not his intention to undermine Webber's proposal, far from it. The controversial proposal, which received support from Minister de Jong, was more or less a product of Harris' lack of attention to detail, and perhaps an exuberance surrounding the name, but ultimately he was happy with the way it would turn out:

I believe that it was ... good to have the name added... over and above those bodies of water. I think that it would have been more complicated if it went the other way, where we took the names off the Juan de Fuca, Georgia Straight and Puget Sound... As it turns out now with the Salish Sea being added on as they create new maps, they'll just add the name. So, I think that it was good that it worked out the way it did, and the motion itself didn't get revised, it didn't catch up to where we were actually going with it as a process (George Harris, Interview, 2010).

Regardless of Harris' intention, his proposal garnered an impactful response, and a trail of implications. Minister de Jong, in an interview with the media soon after the summit concluded, stated: "I think the name has a certain magnificence associated with it – I sailed the Salish Sea," de Jong said. "Whether that becomes a reality or not is something that we'll take some time to look at" (Holmes, 2008). It certainly was looked at, and one can imagine that de Jong's remarks were chastised some by his superiors, namely Premier Gordon Campbell, as the Liberals were currently negotiating several land claim treaties and preparing for the upcoming 2010 Winter Olympics. The last thing the Liberals needed was a political issue centered on a place-name that evoked strong feelings by Indigenous and Settler populations alike.

George Harris' comments were made to a closed audience, but now that the

media was picking up on it, the remarks were opening a Pandora's box of reactions (Heiman, 2008; CTV News, 2008; Pablo, 2009). An example of these reactions can be seen in the comments of Keith Roy, member of the Monarchist League of Canada, who had this to say: "Quite frankly it's a terrible idea... It was named... for someone of historical significance at the time [King George III], and there's no reason to throw that out" (CTV News, 2008). Roy's remarks are mirrored in many of the letters of objection received by Janet Mason, Caleb Maki, and others involved with soliciting public reaction to the naming proposal (as will be shown below). While Webber would be horrified if his idea was ultimately usurped, and the Georgia Strait was in fact renamed, he had to be pleased with the amount of attention that the Salish Sea was all of a sudden receiving; pleased, and prompted to take further action.

4.3.6 A Closer Look at the 2008 Application and Approval for Final Consideration

Webber's return to pushing the legitimization of the name through the bureaucratic process was by and large a reactionary measure. The happenings at the First Nations Summit that prompted the Province of BC to get involved with the designation of the Salish Sea also convinced Webber that it was time to try again. Webber had good reason to believe that the performative enactment of the Salish Sea had been fruitful, and regardless of bureaucratic legitimization, all evidence pointed to the fact that the name had entered common usage, and the local

geography had successfully been rescaled. However, the enactment was fluid, as was the spatial identity of the Salish Sea. The suggestion that the Georgia Strait should be newly named the Salish Sea threatened to usurp the establishing identity just as it was settling, throwing into question the rescaling altogether. Webber recognized how important the Coast Salish Gatherings' support for the Salish Sea had been, yet it was imperative to the movement's success that the boundaries remained as originally conceived:

I heard about that and I thought well this is wrong too. You know it's not right to call the Georgia Strait the Salish Sea because it doesn't acknowledge and recognize the ecosystem structure of that body of water. So that got me interested again in thinking that maybe it was time to revisit the naming process and so I pulled together a much more in depth application and sent it off (Bert Webber, Interview, 2010).

Webber quickly got to work compiling a comprehensive package of supporting evidence to submit with this second proposal, which was delivered to the Washington State Board of Geographic Names and the British Columbia Geographic Names Office on December 5, 2008. This package of documentation included several maps of the region, some clearly delineating the borders of the sea, and others addressing factors such as the territories of the Coast Salish nations. The package also included various newspaper and magazine articles and examples of website pages that promoted the use of the Salish Sea, either explicitly through direct calls for its adoption and usage, or implicitly, by using it as if its existence was not in question. Each of these examples worked to enact the Salish Sea as the producers

wished it to be. Some of the users associated it with environmental health and beauty (such as the work of the 2007 Georgia Basin Puget Sound Research Conference), or the need for environmental conservation (such as the work of the 2009 Puget Sound Georgia Basin Ecosystem Conference). Others used the toponym in order to draw attention to their businesses and organizations, such as the *Island Tides* advertising their free delivery service, and *Journey*, the AAA travel magazine, using it to entice people to travel to the region.

Webber's second application faced initial consideration by the Washington State Board on Geographical Names (WSBGN) on May 15, 2009, at which point the proposal was accepted for final consideration. It was at this stage of the process in 1990 that Webber's first proposal was tabled, or as Caleb Maki, Washington State Board of Geographic Names board member, thinks of it, "the proponent withdrew the name" (Caleb Maki, Interview). Around this same time the British Columbia Geographic Names Office started considering this second proposal as well. Upon accepting it for final consideration, the naming boards were thrust into action. While conducting what might be explained as due diligence and preparation for making a final decision, they too participated in the performative enactment of the region.

The naming boards held to the assertion that they would only act to recognize what already existed; however, their actions taken to confirm its place in the public lexicon went beyond the passive approach they claimed to adhere to. Suggesting it was as a result of the extensive media coverage, and the transboundary nature of the application, the various boards (including those at the federal level)

working in unison conducted a joint mailing in which they surveyed parties they deemed relevant in order to capture opinions on the name's appropriateness before making a final decision. The request for opinion that was mailed did not arrive alone; it also came with additional information providing a context to be considered, not just the name itself. By providing this context (and a map of the Salish Sea), the government naming boards promoted a specific enactment of the Salish Sea, one that adhered closely to Bert Webber's vision, and failed to recognize additional considerations or visions of what the Salish Sea is or could be. The relevant segment of the letter reads:

The proponent describes this entity as an estuarine inland sea that is distinct from the Pacific Ocean to the west of Juan de Fuca Strait (Canada)/Strait of Juan de Fuca (USA) and the marine waters north of Strait of Georgia: salinity, tidal patterns and climate create habitat conditions that support plant, animal & marine species unique or limited to the inland sea area – an integral ecological unit that should have its own distinct name. Further, the proponent maintains that the name "Salish Sea" is becoming established in the region, and cites the Tribes and First Nations who met in the annual Coast Salish Gathering, the participants at the Georgia Basin Puget Sound Research Conferences (co-hosted by Environment Canada and the Puget Sound Action Committee) and assorted community groups throughout the region, as important populations that routinely use the name "Salish Sea."

The proponent also identifies *improved ecosystem management* as a compelling reason to adopt the name "Salish Sea," however, it is important to note that adoption of this or any name does not imply protection, or obligate agencies to manage the entity being named. The single outward evidence of adoption of this name might be the addition of a label on maps, charts & atlases produced by provincial, state and federal governments (Washington State Board on Geographic Names, 2009).

The form then goes on to offer boxes that can be checked off which communicate if the name had been heard before 2009, and if the proposition is supported, opposed, or receives no objection

It is not difficult to recognize how the act of fishing for comments was in itself a performative act that helped to draw attention to the name and legitimize it in the minds of the public. Nevertheless, it is worth noting some of the particulars of these letters in order to get a sense of how the name proliferated over time and which agents of change were responsible. In total, 104 responses were returned; 67 of which approved the new designation, 15 opposed it, and an additional 22 voiced “no objection.” Return letters arrived from communities as far north as Denman Island, BC and as far south as Tokeland, WA. Most of the communities sat directly on what would come to be known as the Salish Sea, yet some were from communities well away from the inland sea, including Tokeland and Nespalem, WA. Notable responses were returned from scientists and educators, city councils and Indian tribal councils, amongst others. Many of the responses included comments as well, some of which were no more than a few words, such as that of Pat Doran, curator for the Skagit County Historical Museum whose comment reads, “ABOUT TIME! AND IT IS SO ALLITERATIVE TOO!” (Washington State Board on Geographic Names, 2009: 59). Others were significantly lengthier and went into great detail regarding the writer’s support. Along with the name’s alliterative qualities, other justifications for support included that of Murray Clarke, CAO for the town of Sidney, BC, whose letter read in part, “Sidney is a primary gateway to the Salish Sea and is geographically located in

the centre of the Salish Sea ecosystem. The proposal is an appropriate recognition of the local First Nations settlement of the area and their relationship with the inland sea” (Washington State Board on Geographic Names, 2009: 65).

As far as the letters of opposition were concerned, reasons were also varied. Several people, such as Gary Lunn, Member of Parliament (MP) for Saanich Gulf Islands, thought the name designation was in fact “dangerous” (147), as it was not specific enough for search and rescue teams to have efficient location identification. Others, such as that of Roger McKeller of Gabriola Island, BC, voiced several criticisms including the following, which implied a fear that the Euro-American place-names would be erased: “the names for these bodies of water already reflect valid historicalnames [sic] contributed during the discovery, transient passage and settlement of this area by various explorers over several centuries” (146). This criticism was repeated several times, as the mistaken belief that this designation would eliminate the existing place-names was widespread.

As this quote from McKeller’s second correspondence with Janet Mason illustrates, the name was also opposed due to particular tensions and conflicts that exist between Settler and Indigenous peoples. The majority of McKeller’s second letter reads:

I can tell you from personal experience that when it comes to environmental stewardship, the Salish First Nation as I know them are a bunch of crooks and gangsters of the First order. Excuse the pun on First Nations.

No disrespect intended to you, but you clearly know nothing about (or are prepared to ignore) their wide-spread fish poaching and other

(negative) activities that have a bearing on all Canadians and Americans who live in this area. These people may not be completely corrupted as the Mohawk are with their smuggling activities back east, but they are a close second. They have an entire black market fishery that draws in millions of dollars and depletes the fishery at everyone's expense.

THAT is where I become insulted at the suggestion of a name change of any kind when linked to these people. It is the spin that gets put on it. Absolute garbage. You guys have blinders on. Do you think that a couple of drum ceremonies with lots of media attention takes away all of the other really despicable stuff that goes on?

Environmental stewardship? Baloney. It is putting the fox among the chickens to give them some kind of legitimate cache through this process. Unbelievable (Washington State Board on Geographic Names, 2009: 142).²³

McKeller was not the only person who voiced concerns of this nature. Janet Mason revealed that “hundreds” of emails came through to her desk, many of which carried similar messages, and many of which didn't deserve a response. Opposition to the name due to feelings of anger and resentment toward the Indigenous peoples being recognized have also contributed to the enactment and shaping of the Salish Sea, as utterances of the name infused with disdain have enacted a “Salish Sea” that stands for political correctness and a waste of resources, thus injecting an additional narrative into the mix.

²³ Unbelievable is right. The irony of McKeller opposing the designation based on the existence of already “valid historical names” (which were never to be erased or replaced), while later spewing a slew of derogatory generalities and failing to recognize that Indigenous place-names, not to mention the languages in which they were first spoken, were wiped out as a result of European exploration, is too much to ignore.

Taking the official letters of support and opposition into account, as well as hundreds of email correspondences (Janet Mason, Interview), the boards prepared themselves to make an official decision. Although the timelines were somewhat different, the boards were very much still cooperating with each other in this process. On August 4, 2009, Janet Mason, BC's Provincial Toponymist, drafted a recommendation for approval letter that was reviewed by the Geographic Names Board of Canada and accepted on August 7, 2009. The Washington State Board on Geographical NamesWSBGN did not meet again until October 30, 2009. At this meeting the name was proposed for final consideration. After hearing a former employee of NOAA speak against the naming, the board made their final decision. Apparently they were not swayed as the name received unanimous approval.

4.3.7 Inauguration Day

I can tell you that I was very, very happy and the spirits were very high, and I know that the spirits of our ancestors that have long gone were there helping and guiding us through this process and celebration with us.

-George Harris (Interview, 2010)



Figure 10. Salish Sea Inauguration Day
(Source: Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, 2010)

The approval of the Salish Sea place naming did not go unnoticed or unrecognized. It couldn't. The political establishment would not let it. Whereas the legitimization through bureaucratic means of other place-names have evoked little response other than the

scrambling of cartographers to update their maps, the powers-that-be saw all sorts of opportunity, not to mention a little political necessity, in the designation of the Salish Sea, and marked its legitimization with an inauguration ceremony, held on July 15, 2010 (as described in the opening of Chapter 1, see Figure 10).

When it came down to it, McKeller's premonition of celebratory "drum ceremonies with lots of media attention" was exactly what the province of BC hoped for. While Bert Webber was present, and rather ecstatic that the lengthy journey had led to fruition, it was the continued relationships that the Coast Salish peoples have with the waters that was most celebrated and promoted on that day. Appropriately, Lieutenant-Governor Stephen Point, a former Chief of the Skowkale First Nation, and Tribal Chair of the Sto:lo Nation, played the role of Masters of Ceremony. Point

concluded the event by leading a crowd of hundreds, including many Coast Salish leaders and community members who had been personally invited by Point, in song.

When McKeller proactively voiced his stance against such a public and celebratory display, asking Janet Mason if the government really thought that such an event would take “away all of the other really despicable stuff that goes on?”, he clearly meant by the Indigenous peoples; however, it is worth noting (and will be addressed in the pages to come) that many people, Indigenous and Settler alike, wonder if this naming carried any weight at all; questioning whether it was all happening in order to draw positive publicity to the BC Liberals’ attempts at defining a “new relationship” with the First Nations of the province, and away from the despicable treatment of Indigenous peoples’ by colonial governments over the past several centuries.

Butch Dick, Lekwungen elder and master carver, is one such individual that has expressed dismay and disillusionment about the designation and accompanying ceremony. While Dick’s comments to follow are his and his alone, they reveal an attitude toward the natural environment, and the politics surrounding environmental issues, that is shared by many Indigenous peoples in the area. Dick, who participated in the ceremony as a drummer upon the invitation of Lieutenant-Governor Point, can’t help but wonder what this offering truly represents:

They’ve depleted a resource, and ... now they’re gonna say it’s all depleted and polluted and you guys can have it back. And, thinking that, because you know with our history and knowing and knowledge of the sea and things that we can bring it all back, but, they’re still planning to dig for oil, in this land that belongs to our relatives in the ocean. And that’s the

way we think of it, those are our families and our relatives. It's not "those are fish, that's a resource, we can make money off of that." You know, and "we need energy, so we'll change the landscape to provide that energy." And they're selling [it] as environmental, there's the fisheries, there's the hunting and wildlife people, there's the forestry; what happens on land affects what happens in the ocean, so it's not all about the sea. It's difficult to say we're going to change it all back by just changing the name. It's not going to happen. And those governments, they're harvesting the forests, and then the sediment from those forests is washed into the ocean, and affecting all the families in the ocean. And, do you think they care? Nope, they just want now to level all that land and build resorts (Butch Dick, Interview, 2011).

Dick's participation in the inauguration ceremony cannot be misunderstood as representing unquestioning support for the naming. Dick is not interested in hollow tributes, and his thoughts reveal skepticism as to whether the BC Liberals' intentions were reflective of changing attitudes that would allow for a "new

Figure 11. The Continued Performance of the Salish Sea (Source: Salish Sea Conference, 2011)



relationship" with the province's First Nations.

Dick's comments communicate fundamental differences between a colonial mindset that views the natural environment as a resource to facilitate the livelihood of humans, and an Indigenous mindset that sees humans as being in relationship with the various other components of the natural environment. If Dick's comments are in fact representative of at least some Indigenous voices, which this research indicates is so, it is easy to see

how regardless of Bert Webber's intentions, the Liberals' embrace of the designation

which ultimately allowed for its political legitimization is seen as little more than yet another political performance.

4.3.8 What Now? The Continued Performance of the Salish Sea

With the acceptance of the 2008 application, and the subsequent ceremony to celebrate the naming, the reconceptualization and rescaling of the geography of the Pacific Coast of North America has been legitimized by all of the necessary bureaucratic bodies, as well as those political bodies that saw it in their best interests to do so. Along with the existing nation-states, as well as state and provincial governments, there is evidence that the public has accepted and embraced the regional scale implied by the Salish Sea. The most prevalent examples of this can be found in the continued performative utterances of the name.

It was always Bert Webber's intention to rescale the geography as a region; it was the ultimate purpose of inventing the name. The designation of the Salish Sea was meant to create a new nexus point that had the potential to bring diverse communities together behind the banner of a common interest; the need to protect the waters that bordered and enveloped their villages, towns, and island paradises. There is good reason to

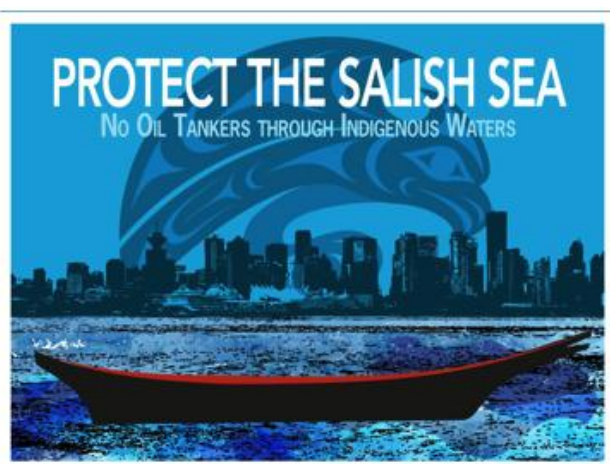
Figure 12. Strategic performance of the Salish Sea 1 (Source: Tanker Free BC, 2012)



believe that Webber's vision is playing itself out, as can be seen in the images below. Webber's colleagues, marine biologists and natural resource managers, were supporters long ago. Recently though their use of the Salish Sea toponym has shifted from something discussed at conferences to being used in the very name of the conferences, thus communicating a transition from an active promotion of the name to an acceptance of its existence. As Figure 11 illustrates, the scientific community no longer refers to the region awkwardly as the Puget Sound Georgia Basin, and are now using the name as a concrete and accepted identifier.

There is also evidence that diverse facets of those involved in the environmental movement have picked up on the strategic use of the new toponym. The Salish Sea is becoming the rallying call that Webber had intended. Figures 12 and 13 exhibit how the toponym is being used by activists and organizers to bring

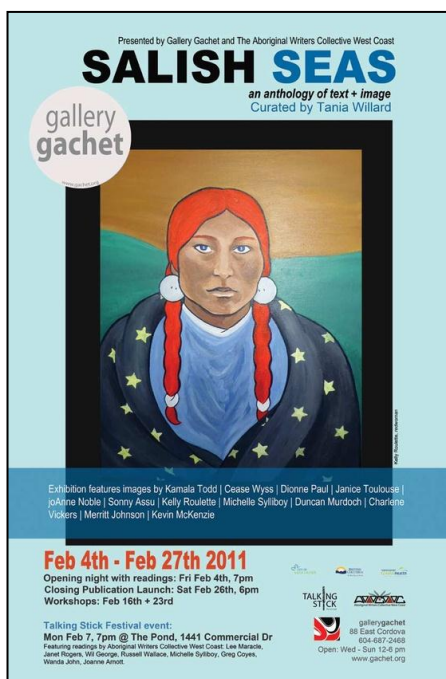
Figure 13. Strategic performance of the Salish Sea 2 (Source: Warrior Publications, 2012)



people together around issues that may previously have been promoted as local, yet now are being pushed as regional in focus. However, while the use of the toponym promotes the issues as regionally driven, it is worth noting that all examples of this kind that I found were being produced on the Canadian side of the border.

Evidence of the name being embraced by the Indigenous peoples of the area is not as prevalent as that of it being tied to environmental causes, though as we saw in Figure 13, there are occasions when the two associations converge. One example of the place-name's usage that shows acceptance and to an extent a desire to claim the name, and the Sea, for that of the Indigenous peoples, can be seen in the branding of a February 2011 art show and accompanying text. The Salish Seas art exhibition, located in East Vancouver, displayed work collected in an anthology of text and image (Figure 14), produced by the Aboriginal Writers Collective West Coast.

Figure 14. Performing the Salish Sea in art and text
(Source: Aboriginal Writers Collective West Coast)



Interestingly, while the Salish Seas art show was being held in Coast Salish territory, and no more than a five-minute walk from the shores of the Salish Sea, the artists and writers themselves were from diverse Indigenous communities throughout British Columbia that stretch well beyond the Salish Sea's shorelines. Members of the collective put the proposed name for the show forward in order to recognize the territory in which the show was located, but Janet Rogers, a Tuscarora member of the Mohawk Nation, and active participant in the collective, points out that

the decision to use the name was not unanimous. Rogers, amongst others, disagreed with the use of the name (meaning no disrespect to the nations that hosted not only the art show but the majority of the collective's operations), noting that it was "well meaning," but that it did not represent the diversity of artists participating in the show. Regardless, it was chosen, signifying that the enactment of the Salish Sea is actively being pushed by Indigenous peoples in the region, Coast Salish or otherwise.

4.3.9 The Commodification of the Salish Sea

Maybe this is what it really is... it's a great little hook for the tourism industry and the Chamber of Commerce, and, you know, in capitalism's great glory, it can absorb the mass production of Che Guevara T-Shirts along with the mass production of Ayn Rand texts—you know, and it sort of absorbed perfectly the Salish Sea idea (Terry Glavin, Interview, 2010).

Yet another indication that the Salish Sea has been successfully enacted can be found in the adoption of the name for commercial purposes. Businesses on both sides of the border have begun to use the toponym in the branding of their operations, and by doing so are continuing to use the name performatively as a way of further legitimizing a regional scale of experience.²⁴ In fact, this trend began years ago, primarily within fields related to ecotourism, as has been demonstrated

²⁴ This parallels the usurpation of the toponym Cascadia as told in section 4.2

already with the example of the Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre in Sidney, BC (while the Discovery Centre does not include the Salish Sea toponym as part of its name, the prolific use of the name throughout the Centre, and in media releases, brought attention and dollars to the Centre and thus is an act of commodification). Salish Sea Charters, a family-owned operation that provides daylong fishing trips throughout BC's Gulf Islands, is another example of this kind. Having slowly built their business for a decade, the company finally branded themselves in 2009, notably before the name became official (Salish Sea Charters, 2009).

An example on the American side of the border that further illustrates how the name has been used in this manner is provided by Salish Sea Yachts, a boat building company located in Port Townsend, WA, and selling boats on both sides of the border. Salish Sea Yachts began operating in 2006, and specializes in building family-sized yachts. The Salish Sea IS48 base model is priced at a modest \$2.2 million, and from the pictures displayed in the January 2012 addition of Pacific Yachting (Salish Sea Yachts, 2012), it is possible, if not predetermined, to have a map of the Salish Sea adorning a narrow wall of the interior. The use of the Salish Sea toponym by these two independent business owners (not to mention several others) has further enacted the region in the minds of the public and promoted a spatial identity built upon an appreciation for the marine environment encompassed by the region. Most importantly, these enactments were not conducted with the intent of shifting the public's conceptions of the region for purposes of environmental protection or conservation, or out of respect for the

Indigenous peoples and their relationship with the waters and surrounding land.

The choices to associate these businesses with the Salish Sea were profit driven, and thus contributed to a conflating of the value-laden spatial identity with a pursuit of profits within a capitalist economic system.

This conflation is even better exemplified through recent adoptions of the toponym in the branding of companies with far less directly in common with the dominant narratives embedded within the spatial identity of the Salish Sea, yet clearly still motivated to create these associations, thus lending further strength to the enactment of the region. Sooke, BC's Salish Sea Technologies is one example.

Figure 15. The Commodification of the Salish Sea (Source: Salish Sea Technologies, 2012)



This retail and service oriented shop specializing in computers and electronics not only adopted the name but has also incorporated associations with the marine environment into their logo (Figure 15). The Salish Sea Chocolate Company, located on Salt Spring Island, BC, and originally founded as Salt Spring Chocolate in 2003, is yet another example. In this case the chocolate company has chosen to represent itself through identifiably Indigenous artwork, which supports the component of the Salish

Sea's spatial identity focused on acknowledging the continued Indigenous presence in the area (Figure 16). Ironically, the artwork is not Coast Salish in origin, but rather the product of Haida Gwaii artist Jim Hart (Salish Sea Chocolate Company, 2011). The Salish Sea Chocolate Company further aligns itself with the values

incorporated in the spatial identity of the Salish Sea by sponsoring and supporting the Raincoast Conservation Foundation. Other examples of businesses that have used the Salish Sea toponym in their branding include Galiano Island Salish Sea Bed and Breakfast, Cowichan Bay's Salish Sea Art Gallery, Otter Point's Salish Sea Salts, Bowser's Salish Sea Market, and Esquimalt's Salish Sea Industrial Services Ltd, a business founded and operated by members of the Esquimalt and Songhees (Lekwungen) First Nations.²⁵

Regardless of the product, the name Salish Sea is clearly being utilized as a commodity to create associations between available goods and services and the regional geography enacted through the use of the toponym. Whether these



Figure 16. Rebranding with the Salish Sea (Source: Salish Sea Chocolate Company, 2011)

associations come easily and appear to be appropriate, as when used by charter fishing boat operators, or come across as forced and irrelevant, such as in the case of the Salish Sea Market (located on the

shores of the northern limits of the Salish Sea and beyond the territorial limits of the Coast

²⁵ Each of these examples was found through a Google search for the term Salish Sea. The research in this regard was not exhaustive, but as in the case of uses of the name by organizations promoting environmental protection, conservation, and education, the fact that each of these examples are from businesses based in British Columbia cannot be ignored. Perhaps this speaks to a greater acceptance of the regional scale enacted by the Salish Sea in British Columbia than in Washington State, but further research would be needed to prove such a claim.

Salish peoples), its inclusion insinuates that the essence of the Salish Sea can be bought and sold; the romantic notions of a regional identity shaped by a marine environment and the presence of an Indigenous peoples can be captured in inanimate objects or experienced through the act of purchasing services. In a world dominated by capitalist ideals, these may very well represent greater acts of legitimization than the acknowledgment of either elected officials or bureaucratically governed boards.

4.4 A Story Far From Finished

From an ember of an idea, a spark of realization, the notion of the Salish Sea took hold and grew into a state of legitimization. This claim seems safe; after all, the notion has gained the official recognition of naming boards on both sides of the Canadian/US border, and among most if not all of the Indigenous nations that surround its shores. However, as we have seen, the legitimization of the region is not a completed performance, but is being performed again and again with each utterance and iteration of the name, the Salish Sea.

The legitimizing naming boards insist that their responsibilities are not to enact, but rather to recognize what has already been enacted. If their role is in fact just that of the observer and recorder of what already is, then the true legitimization of the Salish Sea, and the concomitant rescaling of the region, must have occurred before their rubber stamp approved of the designation. However, in this incomplete

saga, any legitimization that has taken hold is still likely to be challenged, and so, the story of the Salish Sea has not yet been concluded, and likely never will.

Chapter 5

The Salish Sea: A Pawn of Competing Narratives

It's not a First Nations construct.

-Janet Mason (Interview, 2010)

In Chapter 4, I undertook a fairly chronological telling of the story of the Salish Sea, explaining how and why it has come to be. While the invention of the name is credited to one man, a man of European-descent, the path to its legitimization was in many ways directed by the hands of the various levels of neocolonial government. Once approved by federal, state, and provincial apparatuses, the name became official, and acknowledged worldwide. Importantly, the neocolonial governments are not the recognized representatives of the Indigenous peoples that reside in the lands they govern.

Support for the Salish Sea place naming was strong in many Indigenous communities, and as I have shown, the grassroots and organizational backing of the movement to designate the Salish Sea by Indigenous peoples was critical in moving the motion before the hands of government, forcing the BC Liberals to face the naming as an issue in which they needed to take a stand, one way or the other. However, there should be no mistake: despite being proclaimed as an act of partnership by the Liberal government in power, at no time were formal discussions held. This naming was part of no treaty or

agreement. This being said, it is salient to understand the designation of the Salish Sea as it pertains to Indigenous peoples and their communities.²⁶

Largely, the question of its salience can be understood through the perceived placement of this act of place naming on a spectrum that broadly encompasses the processes of colonization and decolonization. In his article, “Processes of Decolonization,” Hawaiian scholar Poka Laenui explains that both “[c]olonization and decolonization are social processes” (2000: 1). Various performative acts serve to push forward each of these competing processes. As we have seen, place naming is performative by nature, and in the case of the Salish Sea, the act of naming is being experienced as having contributed to both a narrative of colonization and decolonization.

This chapter will review the characteristics that define the phases of colonization and decolonization as introduced by Filipino Professor Virgilio Enriquez, and expanded upon by Laenui. Laenui presents the phases of colonization and decolonization as processional in nature. I don’t believe they need necessarily be experienced chronologically, though often they play out in this fashion. It is quite possible that stages of colonization and decolonization, each made manifest through the performative acts of various players in society, can be experienced simultaneously.

²⁶ While it is probably unnecessary, I still feel the need to remind the reader that I am not an Indigenous person, nor am I a member of an Indigenous community. I do count self-identifying members of Indigenous communities amongst my friends, but I make no attempt to speak on behalf of them or other Indigenous peoples. This work has collected the perspectives of several Indigenous people, whose generous contributions I am grateful for. I have done my best to represent all perspectives honestly and with integrity.

Primarily through the provision and analysis of interview data, this chapter will demonstrate how the placement of the Salish Sea on this spectrum is still largely a matter of perception. To some it represents an act of hope and recognition, and points to the power of a collective Indigenous voice. To others, it is seen as no more than an act of tokenism that does little real good for the Indigenous peoples, thus perpetuating colonial power structures. From this latter vantage point, the designation of the Salish Sea is yet another act of neocolonialism, or perhaps more accurately, an act of anti-conquest (see section 2.1) that glorifies the Indigenous peoples and their culture while failing to contribute to any greater sense of their ability to apply self-determination to their lives and the governing of their communities.

5.1 The Phases of Colonization

Laenui refers to the first stage of the process of colonization as Denial and Withdrawal. As he describes, within this phase the colonizers make an immediate judgment of the “indigenous as a people without culture, [with] no moral values, [thus denying] the very existence of a culture of any merit among the indigenous people” (2000: 1). While this phase is rightfully described as occurring when colonizers and Indigenous peoples first encounter one another as strangers, on a micro-level, this interaction is relived every time an individual with a colonial mindset encounters an Indigenous person they deem to be a stranger.

Laenui views the second phase of colonization as consisting of Destruction/Eradication. Acts representative of this phase are those that contribute to the physical destruction and eradication of Indigenous cultural symbols. Destructive and eradicating acts broaden the opportunity to further substantiate claims of a lack of Indigenous culture by attempting to literally erase all signs that may lead to concluding otherwise. The third phase of the process is defined by acts of Denigration, Belittlement, and Insult. Laenui situates colonizing acts that embed colonial systems and institutions into the fabric of Indigenous ways of being within this phase. These acts further erase vestiges of Indigenous culture and create greater dependence by Indigenous peoples on their colonizers.

The fourth phase is referred to as Surface Accommodation/Tokenism. Laenui explains that within this phase, “whatever remnants of culture have survived the onslaught” of destruction are given surface accommodation, and are “tolerated as an exhibition of the colonial regime’s sense of leniency to the continuing ignorance of the natives” (2000: 1-2). Modern colonial societies are ripe with examples of such acts. The continued presence of the occasional longhouse or totem pole, or the failure to completely eradicate an Indigenous language, can be seen as acts that exemplify this phase.

The fifth and final phase in the colonization process is titled Transformation/Exploitation and involves transforming traditional Indigenous cultures into the mainstream colonial culture. This phase often manifests, as Alfred points out in the case of Nunavut, with Indigenous individuals rising to the top of a colonial hierarchy, and yet despite the new levels of power and responsibility, the colonial systems change little

and the Indigenous cultural systems fail to gain renewed traction (Alfred, 2009: 27). It is easy to spot examples of the Transformation/Exploitation phase across the gambit of colonial apparatuses, including that of education and research. The implications of this recognition make certain the reality that a postcolonial world does not yet exist, and that if Indigenous peoples are not able to wrestle free from the colonial influence, the postcolonial world to come will be defined by utter assimilation.

5.2 The Phases of Decolonization

Following Laenui's presentation of Enriquez' phases of colonization, he goes on to present the five phases of the decolonization process. The first of the five is known as Rediscovery and Recovery. This phase "sets the foundation for the eventual decolonization" of society (2000: 2) and may be triggered by any number of causes, including individual or societal curiosity, as well as states of desperation or the need for escape. Rediscovery and Recovery encapsulates performative acts that lead to the reemergence of cultural practices and the use of threatened language. This phase may involve subtle shifts that lead Indigenous peoples to leave behind cultural practices that have been shaped by their colonizers expectations and stereotypes in favor of renewed representation of their own worldviews and the practicing of traditions as they had been practiced in a pre-colonized world.

The second phase of decolonization is known as Mourning. During this phase, Indigenous peoples go through an essential healing process by lamenting their

victimization at the hands of their colonial oppressors. The Mourning stage, often characterized by acts of anger and a lashing out at colonial symbols, may “accelerate the earlier stage of Rediscovery and Recovery” (2000: 4). Mourning, while situated as the second phase by Enrique and Laenui, arguably cannot be assigned a place on a processional ladder of events as it so often is experienced concurrently with various other phases of colonization and decolonization.

Laenui describes the Dreaming phase as being the most crucial to the process of decolonization, and characterized by the expression of the “full panorama of possibilities” as to what will eventually make up “the flooring of the creation of a new social order” (2000: 4). Within this phase Indigenous individuals and communities actively explore their own cultures, and their own aspirations for the future. Laenui rightly likens this phase to the formation of a fetus in a mother’s womb, as ideas and resources are given time to come together and develop, so as not to rush a process toward a less than ideal conclusion that may be dangerous if not altogether disastrous.

The Commitment phase is characterized by a sense of consensus, as the culmination of the phase results in the previously colonized peoples combining “their voices in a clear statement of their desired direction” (2000: 5). Laenui acknowledges that, as the process of decolonization is experienced on both an individual and community scale, it must be recognized as an uneven process, one in which individuals and communities may very well be at vastly different stages at any one given time (2000: 6). For this reason, the Dreaming phase often blends into the Commitment phase, overlapping and often being difficult to initially distinguish one from the other (2000: 5). However, in order to reach its

culmination, all individuals and communities must eventually arrive. This arrival, in the form of a commitment, will be so obvious and clear that a formal process will merely act as a “pro forma expression of the people’s will” (2000: 5). Alfred (2005) echoed the importance of this commitment, and the need to pass through the Morning phase in order to get it, when he stated that “a true decolonization movement can emerge only when we shift our politics from grievances to pursuing an organized and political battle for the cause of freedom” (22). The act of stating grievances represents to Alfred an engagement with the past, rather than an active shaping of the future.

Once that expression is present, the process can move into the fifth and final phase, that of Action (Laenui, 2000: 6). In this phase the vision hence committed to is made manifest through proactive acts that reflect the consensus achieved. The actions that may be taken during this phase are diverse enough to include “the full spectrum from a call to reason on one end to a resort to arms on the other”: as it is the fulfillment of a vision, not the methods used, that indicate the phase of Action (6).

Laenui’s description of the phases of colonization and decolonization implies that events and actions performed typically fit nicely into one phase or another, as if the phases themselves are concrete boxes that experiences can be sorted into and accordingly categorized. This becomes especially apparent due to the presentation of the phases as processional in nature. However, as may be clear through an examination of my argument that these phases are not necessarily processional, I believe that the nature of events and actions, as far as how they should be categorized on this spectrum, are often a matter of perception rather than fact. Any action may be interpreted and perceived quite differently

by individuals based on their experiences and attitudes. The designation of the Salish Sea provides a perfect example of this. The following sections will reveal some of the diverse perspectives of Indigenous peoples (and non-Indigenous allies) from the Salish Sea region. By examining these perspectives it will become clear that the designation of the Salish Sea can arguably represent an act of either further colonization or decolonization.

5.3 The Salish Sea as an Act of Decolonization

Laenui's discussion of the phases of colonization precedes his discussion of the phases of decolonization; however, I am taking the opposite approach. I do so for two reasons. First, the narrative of colonization is well established in the Salish Sea region, and thus acts of decolonization represent a subversion of the norm. Second, my first impressions and assumptions of the Salish Sea was that it was indeed contributing to an emerging narrative of decolonization in the region.

My introduction to the Salish Sea occurred in the spring of 2010. By this time, the name had found approval on both sides of the border, and the previously mentioned inauguration ceremony that would announce the arrival of the Salish Sea in a very public light, was in its planning stages. To this point, my views were largely being shaped by the facts and opinions presented through the lens of the media. I was immediately drawn to the designation as a sign of hope, a sign that a modicum of respect for the Indigenous peoples of the region was being offered in a very public and lasting way by the Settler governments that had dominated the governing of the region for the previous 150 years.

Place-names, at the very least in a Euro-North American sense, have long represented a sign of ownership and control (Kearns and Berg, 2002), and while I wasn't fooled into thinking that this designation represented a ceding of territory in any way, I did contemplate that perhaps the naming signaled a new trajectory in the ongoing relationship between the Indigenous and Settler populations. My hope, and perhaps innocent belief, was that this new trajectory was pointed toward the decolonizing of the region, a process necessary for both Indigenous and Settler alike.

My perception of the designation of the Salish Sea as a decolonizing act gained credence as a result of the proceedings of the inauguration ceremony. As already described, (now former) Lieutenant Governor and one-time Skowkale Chief, Stephen Point, led the celebratory ceremony that brought together representatives from Indigenous nations, including several current Chiefs, on both sides of the Canadian-American border. The ceremony involved traditional singing and drumming and, according to all outward appearances, represented a consensus of support for the designation.

My ideas were further confirmed once I began the interviewing process. While I was refused an interview by Lieutenant Governor Point, several Indigenous community leaders, some integral to the story of the Salish Sea, generously shared their time and insights with me. Many of the first Indigenous individuals I spoke with expressed beliefs about what the Salish Sea meant to their communities, and hope about what it could mean to the greater society.

One such individual was the previously introduced Stzu'minus elder, George Harris. Through his performative use of the name at the Coast Salish Gathering and First Nation

Summit, Harris was integral to the movement to designate the Salish Sea. He was an ardent campaigner for the designation, and from his perspective, it would appear that the designation of the Salish Sea was an idea manifested in the Dreaming phase of the decolonization process, and culminated as an act exemplifying the Commitment phase:

I always believed that our ancestors help us and guide us from their Spirit and whatnot. Also, the people historically have used the water for so long, it's got lots of history — oral histories to it. And, those are not public, because they're not told in public and they're not written in books and whatnot but our children, me, I know and my children are taught and told those stories and I really believe that it does pay respect not only to my generation but the past generations and future generations. Also, that our Salish People, the people around the world need to know who we are... maybe when they come down off their planes to Seattle or to Vancouver, Victoria, when they land, they know that they're landing in Coast Salish Territory — the Salish Sea... I believe that it does pay respect to us as a people (George Harris, Interview, 2010).

Harris's comments imply that the designation of the Salish Sea allows for recognition of the past, and the allowance, or at least hope, for the Indigenous peoples to use the waters of the Salish Sea in a culturally meaningful way that reflects their relationship with their ancestors and is recognized by people the world over. This opportunity had all but been stolen away from the Coast Salish peoples as a result of the demarcation of the Canadian-American border. The designation of the Salish Sea can easily be recognized as an act of decolonization if its ultimate effects include a broadening of recognition of the Indigenous peoples of the region and a greater freedom to live according to their cultural worldviews and practices.

Further evidence that the designation of the Salish Sea can be understood as an act of decolonization can be found in the comments of Roy Wilson, honorary Chief of the

Cowlitz tribe of western Washington State, and former board member of the WSBGN.

Wilson perceived a general consensus of support for the designation from the many small tribes of Western Washington. He had this to say:

That's our sea. That's where our ancestors all travelled in their canoes. So when the proposal came up, the general consensus among all the tribes as far as I'm aware was 100% in favour of this because, that's what it is and always has been the Salish Sea. It is now recognizing what it is (Roy Wilson, Interview, 2010).

In Wilson's view, the designation did not invent anything new (a point that will be discussed further in the section 5.5). The recognition of the Salish Sea, first and foremost as an inclusive body of water, and furthermore one that has cultural significance to the Indigenous peoples of the region, is being received as recognition of the Salish peoples as a whole, and it is that recognition that allows Wilson to view the designation as an act of decolonization.

The most telling evidence though that justifies the view of the designation as an act of decolonization is the fact that without the support and activities of the Indigenous peoples (as described in section 4.3.5), including the performative use of the place-name during the intermediary stage between Webber's first and second proposal, the movement to designate the Salish Sea may never have entered the realm of official political discourse, and thus never reached a state of legitimization. While the idea to establish a name, and even the chosen name itself, may have involved no direct involvement from, or consultation with, the Indigenous peoples, without the commitment to supporting the designation, and the forceful and performative use of the name, the movement to rescale the region through the designation of the Salish Sea may never have found success.

5.4 The Salish Sea as an Act of further Colonization

[C]olonialism is a narrative in which the Settler's power is the fundamental reference and assumption, inherently limiting Indigenous freedom and imposing a view of the world that is but an outcome or perspective on that power (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005: 601).

There are competing narratives being written in the Salish Sea region, weaved into the culture and inscribed upon the land. One is busy perpetuating the hegemonic colonial narrative born multiple centuries ago. The other aims to subvert the domination of colonization by telling of another process underway, an enactment of decolonization. Comments such as those of George Harris and Roy Wilson express a sense of hope fostered by the designation of the Salish Sea, a sense of hope that appears as though it has reached a noticeable consensus. When used in such ways, the name Salish Sea has acted to assert a connection between the designation and the subverting narrative of decolonization. However, additional evidence suggests that the designation of the Salish Sea has not been received with the consensus that Wilson has perceived.

The "restorying process for Indigenous peoples entails questioning the imposition of colonial histories on [their] communities" (Corntassel et al., 2009: 140). While the story of the Salish Sea can, and is, being framed as one of decolonization, the Indigenous peoples' questioning of what is being imposed upon them quickly begins to make clear that in the case of the Salish Sea, the Settler's power has continued to be asserted and remains the "fundamental reference." After all, it was only once the politicians and naming boards signed off that the name became "official," and the Salish Sea truly became entrenched in

the minds of the public and the maps of the world. Restorying is not only a process of looking back on acts of the past, but also involves a reassessment of even the most recent of events. This reassessment and restorying is underway, necessarily engaging and involving Indigenous and Settler individuals alike.

Outspoken, and at times inflammatory, Canadian author Terry Glavin is not of Indigenous blood, yet he has spent considerable time in, as he describes it, “Indian Country... [anywhere] outside of the major towns and cities of British Columbia” (Terry Glavin , Interview), forming relationships and conducting research that led to the writing of multiple books and countless articles on the fishing industry and land claim issues on the Canadian Pacific Coast. When prompted to elaborate on his view of the designation, Glavin had this to say:

I don't oppose it. I wouldn't get worked up enough to oppose it. But I do find it a little bit tawdry and a little bit symptomatic of almost a cartoonish approach to these sorts of things. If I have objections to the Salish Sea idea, it's very, very simple, the word is a mispronunciation of an aboriginal name, as I understand it, if I am not mistaken, for a group of aboriginal peoples who are actually buffalo hunters [who] came to be called the Flatheads, and linguists sort of appended the designation to a language family that was dominated by people around the Strait of Georgia and Puget Sound. It's a word that actually never existed in any Indian language ... It certainly didn't exist in any aboriginal language that you would have found among the people who live around that body of water that's come to be called the Strait of Georgia and now the Salish Sea. It's not about renaming something or taking back something or acknowledging the original name of a place. It's not about looking deeper than the nomenclature and place-names that we've assigned to this part of the world, and reviving, breathing life back into aboriginal place-names at all, it's not anything like that... (Terry Glavin, Interview, 2010).

Many Indigenous individuals now self-identify as Coast or Strait Salish and have accepted and embraced the designation of the Salish Sea, yet the colonial history embedded in the term Salish cannot be denied, nor should it.

Glavin is also right to say that promoting the designation as a rebirthing of Indigenous place-names of the past is a fabrication of reality. No known name of Indigenous origin inclusively refers to what we now call the Salish Sea, and despite the great loss of language, a loss that includes the use and awareness of place-names, it is unlikely that one has existed before, for it would be inconsistent with traditional patterns of Indigenous place naming. As Waterman (1922) observed, and later Stewart (1958) agreed, the differences in the worldviews of Westerners and the Indigenous peoples of the Puget Sound region can be demonstrated in part through an analysis of place naming practices. The Indigenous peoples prioritized naming smaller, local places, the places from which their narratives evolved. As Chris Arnett, a local heritage consultant and ethnographer who has worked closely with many Salishan communities, points out, “It’s a non-Indigenous gaze, I think. To try and create this homogeneity over a place where it’s really very diverse” (Chris Arnett, Interview). Arnett goes on to describe that not only is the physical and geographic variation in the region substantial; the cultural variation is also substantial. It makes sense that there was never a communal, inclusive place-name for the region because it was, and still is, many peoples that surround the water, not just one.

The Settler approach of categorizing and labeling the peoples as Coast Salish, or Strait Salish, had the effect of whitewashing substantial differences between the peoples

out of the Settler's understanding of who the Indigenous peoples were. Arnett speaks directly to great diversity as well as the performative element of the naming and its use:

I see these areas as so different. Even here in the Gulf Islands... Halkomeenum is sort of the political representation of, you know six, or seven sort of villages, which are in and of themselves very diverse... Even today, I'm meaning cultural practices, from Sechelt, across the inlet they're who are fjord people. And they're oriented towards mountains and different areas. And it's [allowed]... over, you know, millennia, 5,000 years at least, for the emergence of the historic, so-called Salish, Coast Salish peoples. I feel that diversity in there. I just think it's another kind of totalizing... I mean, like I said, it's getting into the public consciousness that this has an Indigenous connotation... I just, I don't know, I just question the motivation for doing it (Chris Arnett, Interview, 2010).

With all this being said, one can't help but question why so much effort was being made to identify the water with the Indigenous peoples through the use of place naming to begin with.²⁷ Furthermore, given this focus, why were the Indigenous peoples largely left out of any formal discussions regarding the new name? Webber must have understood that the involvement of the Indigenous peoples could only benefit his cause. If not he, surely the Liberal government took this for granted.

Laenui (2000) argues that "[d]ecolonization includes the reevaluation of the political, social, economic and judicial structures themselves, and the development, if

²⁷ While the Indigenous peoples didn't use a particular place-name to mark their relationship with the larger water body, there should be no mistaking the fact that the identity and culture of the Indigenous peoples that surrounded the water were greatly influenced and impacted by it. The Tribal Journey Canoeing event that brings together Indigenous tribes from throughout the region is testament to the continued importance of the water to the people. The desire to protect the marine ecosystem as is evidenced by the participation in the Coast Salish gatherings, further demonstrates this (Marshall, 2011).

appropriate, of new structures which can hold and house the values and aspirations of the colonized people” (4). Choosing to recognize the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Coast through the use of an imposed term that was appropriated from another peoples is typical to the colonial process. Thus, it becomes easy to conceive of the toponym Salish Sea as contributing to the process of decolonizing in any sense.

Back to Terry Glavin:

You can probably tell I’m conflicted about this, ...people are being made happy by this. They see in it some kind of nice relationship... or an aspect of an emerging relationship between the Settler culture and Aboriginal culture. That’s great. And there are some Aboriginal people who see this as a kind of an acknowledgement of them. I don’t want to be a jerk here, that’s nice. All I’m saying is: it’s utterly insufficient. And it may actually be, well it’s fiction, and I’m a non-fiction guy, I don’t write novels (Terry Glavin, Interview, 2010).

Glavin was not the only person I spoke with who bristled at the notion of the use of Salish in the Salish Sea toponym being a sign of respect. Most, though not all, of the Indigenous individuals I spoke with expressed, in some form or another, reservations with the practice of associating the designation of the Salish Sea with a sign of recognition of the Indigenous peoples. Tsartlip carver Temesong (Charles Elliot, a recipient of the prestigious Order of British Columbia), insisted that if the Salish Sea were truly meant to recognize and pay respect to the Indigenous peoples, the name would have replaced the colonial toponyms that had been present, rather than simply being overlaid atop them. As

Temesong maintained:

This place was fully named everywhere, was fully occupied. It wasn’t wandering tribes, it was villages and settlements thousands of years old. It’s too weak. It’s a trivial thing if they’re not going to really

change the names to what it should be. I feel it's just tokenism. If they're still going to call it Juan de Fuca so they can recognize these early explorers, then it's still trampling on our rights... They should be removed, and now we're going to call it Salish Sea. It's something we all agree. Coast Salish people are going to agree to that because we feel insulted that they have all these names on our territory that already had names. And whether it was called Salish Sea in the old days, at this point, doesn't matter, because at least we're putting a name on it that, that connects the people back to it again (Temesong, Interview, 2010).

The honesty of Temesong's remarks come through in their complexity. Unwilling to accept a hollow gesture that speaks to a business-as-usual approach, as opposed to the concept of the "new relationship" that was promoted by Premier Gordon Campbell and his Liberal party, Temesong makes it clear that what becomes of the Salish Sea is ultimately up to the present generation and future generations of Indigenous peoples, thus lending further credence that it will be particular and specific performative uses of the name that establish its identity and its legacy.

John Bradley Williams, an educator and apprentice studying the traditional ecological knowledge of his people, the Ahousat and WSANEC, shares Temesong's views to a tee. When asked whether the Salish Sea was being discussed amongst his people, he shared the following:

Not in my community and not with the people that I've spoken with about the Salish Sea. It's just a token, and what are we going to do with a token? Nothing. For us it's just like, "Oh, it's just the government trying to be the government again" ... showcasing itself that it, it is culturally sensitive to the First Nations, and it is working towards reconciling with the various First Nations (John Bradley Williams, Interview, 2011).

Williams' remarks further establish the notion that the designation of the Salish Sea is

being received, at least by some Indigenous peoples, as yet another manipulative act of colonialism. He perceives no true cultural sensitivity, but a whole lot of lip service, which represents nothing new as far as the relations between the government of British Columbia and the Indigenous peoples are concerned. Williams acknowledged that the naming left an initial positive impression on many in his community, but that the positive impression was fleeting, and quickly dissolved back into the sense of pessimism regarding the efforts of the Settler government that permeates many Indigenous communities.

5.5 The Salish Sea: Still a Sea of Possibilities

The comments of many of those interviewed for this study, including those presented throughout this chapter, confirm that the designation of the Salish Sea introduced to them a new name, but not a new way of being. Within section 5.4, I pointed out that the Salish Sea toponym was being used to draw connections between the Coast Salish peoples and their culture, and the water body being named. Throughout the section I showed how some are able to recognize the designation as representative of the Commitment phase of the decolonization process. Others see it clearly as a performative act representative of the fourth phase of colonization; Surface Accommodation/Tokenism. After being persuaded by evidence supporting both assertions, I have been convinced that ultimately what the Salish Sea will come to be is very much still being defined.

That being said, I can't help but see the designation of the Salish Sea as an example of anti-conquest as discussed by Douglas Herman (2009), whose ideas were introduced in

section 2.1. As a reminder, the process of anti-conquest is different from that of either colonization or decolonization in that acts perpetuating the process of anti-conquest disingenuously pose “as antithetical to overt colonization” (103), all the while involving the glorification of “the Other at the same time that the Other is denied real power” (103). Even those stretching to find the good in the designation, to see it as a sign of hope and to receive it as an offering of respect, provide no examples of how this designation offers an exchange of power, the type of exchange that would lead to self-determination and a resurfacing from beneath the blanket of colonialism that has attempted to stifle and silence Indigenous peoples and their culture.

Chapter 6 Concluding the Thesis

6.1 Learning the Lessons of the Salish Sea

Long before I had read Taylor's (1982) article, "A Materialist Framework for Political Geography," I had unwittingly adopted an understanding of the world made up of a hierarchy of scales. I understood, and accepted without question, that I lived in a suburb (Thornhill) of a city (Toronto) within a province (Ontario) of a nation (Canada). I was not yet old enough to consider my relationship to the global scale, or how the definitions of these scales were a product of a capitalist world-economy, but I could visualize how they all fit together like Russian nesting dolls.

In the naivete of my youth the geographic scales in which I conceived my world appeared to be entrenched. Clearly they are not. Geographic scales, much like spatial identities, are social constructs; emerging as a result of a new politically dominant idea, evolving over time, and typically dying away, giving birth to new constructs. As new ideas are introduced (and enforced), our geography is redrawn to better reflect new ways of being. Borders and other demarcating tools, once seen as solid and as opaque as stone walls, can become perforated or erased altogether.

Consequently, the need for new maps arises as lines are redrawn and geographic entities once unrecognized suddenly appear.²⁸

It is possible to look back at the historical geography of a region and see great evidence that points to how and why a reconceptualization of the scales in which we operate has occurred. For example, it can easily be recognized that the concomitant and complementary processes of colonialism and the European settlement of the west coast of North America forced a reconceptualization of the local geography, complete with the introduction of new scalar levels in which to experience the world (Brealey, 1995). This was especially true for the Indigenous peoples of the area, and the implications of this reconceptualization are still being felt today, more than 200 years since its inception, as the descendants of the colonized peoples are still fighting to have their nations' territories re-recognized, and their relationships with each other acknowledged through the application of their traditional notions of scale.

During the period of European settlement of North America, colonization represented the political idea that triggered the reconceptualization, yet it was the act of place naming (along with the remapping of territories, the use of physical violence, etc.), and subsequent use of those place-names, that enacted the new reality and continued to reinforce the reconceptualization through the establishment of places that fit neatly into a scaled hierarchy. As it was in the era of

²⁸ The act of mapping itself is not an innocent process in this regard. The mapping process confirms and perpetuates the enactment of place that it appears only to recognize.

active and open European colonization of the region, the designation of the Salish Sea represents an act of toponymic inscription that has facilitated more than merely the creation of a new place (which is no small feat in itself). Its profound implications also include a rescaling of the local geography.

The impetus for the rescaling triggered by the designation of the Salish Sea was quite different from that brought about by European colonization. Bert Webber and his colleagues saw the invention of a regional scale of geographic perception to be necessary in order to protect the local coastal and marine environment, as doing so was proving problematic in a world overly divided by the political borders and boundaries of nation-states. In order to bring about this rescaling, Webber began the process of performatively enacting the Salish Sea.

The enactment began with discussions among colleagues, and led quickly to a formal application to bring the name into being. This proved insufficient though, and the enactment of the Salish Sea would come to involve a diverse range of social actors, some knowingly doing so, while others, the majority in fact, simply began using the new designation without the realization that they were part of the performative enactment process that was altering their geographic reality.

This growing of support from those that were using the name for the purpose of enacting it into existence, to those using it either without purpose, or even more interestingly, for alternative purposes (such as to draw attention to a business venture), shows how little control the initial inventor of an idea has once they release that idea into the realm of public and private discourse. While Webber's

preeminent goal of establishing the Salish Sea was realized, and aided by every utterance and enunciation no matter how disparate the purpose, it is unlikely that Webber foresaw, or hoped for, the diverse and at times incongruous usages of the name that eventually emerged.

Of those that had some idea what they were doing, many of those first engaged were scientists and social activists. However, crucial support would eventually come from the Indigenous peoples of the region; and yet ironically, the enactment represented much less of a geographic rescaling for the Indigenous peoples than it did for the Settler population. The colonial division of land that resulted from the drawing of the Canadian/US border forced a geographic rescaling upon the Indigenous peoples who had experienced thousands of years of close relationships with each other throughout the region (Brealey, 1995). Despite great obstacles, Coast Salish nations on both sides of the border have continued to foster these relationships. In recent years, these relationships have grown through participation in such events as the Coast Salish Gathering, the Coast Salish Games, and Tribal Journeys, a ceremonial canoeing event that allows for present-day Coast Salish communities to continue traditional travels across what is now known as the Salish Sea.

Even beyond the notion of a rescaling, the enactment represented little change for the Indigenous peoples whatsoever. While the enactment of the Salish Sea was framed by some as a monumental recognition of the Indigenous peoples of the region, the evidence suggests that the enactment serves the needs of the Settler

community to a much greater degree than the Indigenous community, by glorifying the Indigenous peoples while failing to change the status quo when it comes to recognizing Indigenous self-determination.

Ultimately, the case of the Salish Sea proves that the legitimizing power that enacts a new geographic consciousness lies not solely in the hands of our elected officials or within the exclusive domain of bureaucracy; rather, the power to legitimize lies in the hands of the people willing to do something about it. While the persuasion of the people is an act undertaken by multiple social players and agents, without the buy-in of the people, the enactment would bear little weight; as would the reconceptualization and rescaling.

The Salish Sea, now legitimized in the eyes of government, is a toponymic inscription that is contributing to the narrative of the region in which it was inscribed. The name is a symbol stitched into the cartographic fabric of our reality, yet what it currently symbolizes, and what it will come to symbolize for future generations of Settler and Indigenous alike, is still in flux, still emerging. The Salish Sea, appearing on maps throughout the world, now appears as a fixed element of our geography. In truth, it is still morphing and evolving. It is still a flowing and fluctuating sea of possibility.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

The limitations that bound this study are quite common to those of Master's theses; namely, time, money, and geography. These are of course interrelated. While I successfully

completed 50 interviews for this project, and believe that a substantial and sufficient amount of data came from these interviews, I was never completely satisfied that I captured the diversity of perspectives that I would have liked. This may be a limitation of my own rather than one of the study itself.

There is little debate that the geographic dispersal of the interview candidates for this project could have been far greater. The Salish Sea established a transboundary region that enveloped the Canadian/US border, yet 37 of the 50 interviews were conducted with those living on the Canadian side of the border, and the majority of those were with individuals that lived in the greater Victoria area, lower mainland of BC, and on the Southern Gulf Islands. This result stemmed from my desire to interview people face-to-face, as well as the limited funds available to put toward travelling. Another limitation that shaped my sample of interviewees was my lack of a connection into Indigenous communities on the US side of the border. As a result, I was only able to interview one member of an Indigenous community located in the US.

6.3 Future Directions

One of the most compelling aspects of this case study was the timing in which it was being conducted. I began work on this project in the very moments of the Salish Sea's legitimization by the Federal, State, and Provincial authorities on both sides of the border. The legitimization process began two decades before the beginning of this project, yet I have demonstrated that the process itself is never ending. The authoritative designation of the Salish Sea has proven to be monumental in increasing the acceptance and common

usage of the Salish Sea toponym, and thus the enactment of the regional scale. However, due to the contemporary nature of the study, I was unable to fully address the impact of this on the enactment.

Any future research on the performative enactment of the Salish Sea would do well to address the limitations I presented above; namely by pursuing a more geographically balanced survey of perspectives, while returning to the subject after a significant period of time has allowed the enactment of the Salish Sea to come into greater focus. Now that the name is being used regularly throughout the region, not to mention throughout the world, associations with the Salish Sea are continuing to evolve and take shape. Returning to the enactment in order to determine these new directions will specifically provide further insights into whether or not the invention of the Salish Sea has truly led to a rescaling of consciousness around environmental issues, as Webber and others intended. Further research will also provide greater perspective and insights into the performative aspects of place naming, and the ability of social actors to shape their geographic reality.

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Appendix A: List of Interview Subjects

All of the following interview participants agreed to use their real names for the purpose of this study.

1. Andrew Scott, Author of *The Encyclopedia of Raincoast Place-names*
2. Angus Matthews, Executive Director of the Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre
3. Bert Webber, Marine Biologist, Inventor of the Salish Sea toponym
4. Bill Blore, Spokesman, Monarchist League of Canada
5. Bob Redling, Communications Manager, Washington State Board on Geographic Names
6. Brian Thom, Anthropologist, Professor
7. Briony Penn, Artist, Educator, Activist
8. Bruce Agnew, Director, Cascadia Centre
9. Butch Dick, Indigenous Educator
10. Caleb Maki, Executive Secretary for the Committee on Geographic Names, Washington State Board on Geographic Names
11. Cam Battley, Monarchist
12. Catherine Griffiths, Cartographer, Geographer
13. Charles Burnett, Cartographer, Geomemes
14. Chris Arnett, Ethnographer, local Historian, Carver
15. Cleveland Evans, Spokesperson, American Names Society
16. George Harris, Stzu'minus Elder
17. Grant Keddie, Archeologist
18. Grant Smith, Professor, Former member of Washington State Board on Geographic Names
19. Holly Arntzen, Artist and Environmental Educator
20. Janet Mason, Provincial Toponymist, BC
21. Janet Rogers, Poet
22. John Adams, Historian
23. John Bradley Williams, Indigenous Educator
24. John Elliot, Indigenous Educator
25. John Hague, Audio Blogger, *Voices from the Salish Sea*
26. John Luton, former Victoria City Councilor
27. John Lutz, Professor of History, University of Victoria
28. John Roe, Environmentalist, Veins of Life Watershed Society
29. Judi Stevenson, Editor, *Islands in the Salish Sea: A Community Atlas*
30. Keith Wilson, Representative, Naut'sa Mawt Tribal Council
31. Kristen Cooley, Education and Outreach manager, Puget Sound Partnership
32. Lynn Hunter, former Victoria City Councilor
33. Marie Vautier, Professor, Canadian Studies, University of Victoria
34. Martha Black, Museum Curator
35. Michael Layland, Cartographer, President, Victoria Historical Society

36. Mike Harcourt, former Premier of British Columbia
37. Mike Sato, Director of Communications, People for Puget Sound
38. Paulo Peitropaulo, Journalist
39. Robin Jacobson, Public Relations Manager, San Juan islands Visitors Bureau
40. Ronald Greene, President, BC Historical Federation
41. Roy Wilson, honorary Chief of the Cowlitz tribe, former member of the Washington State Board on Geographic Names
42. Russell Wallace, Indigenous poet and musician
43. Shann Weston, Naturalist, Washington State University Beach Watchers Program
44. Sheila Harrington, Editor, *Islands in the Salish Sea: A Community Atlas*
45. Stefan Freelan, Cartographer, GIS Specialist, Western Washington University
46. Susan Baker, Scientist, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science
47. Tania Willard, Curator, Salish Sea Art Show
48. Temesong (Charles Elliot), Tsartlip Carver
49. Terry Glavin, Author, Journalist
50. Tye Swallow, Educator

Appendix B: Salish Sea Complete Lyrics

by: Holly Arntzen and Briony Penn

A shoreline rock is like one big town,
try not to turn one upside down
Barnacles and periwinkles feed on top,
limpets slide until the waters drop

All these critters say to me...keep singing songs about the Salish Sea

Underneath the rocks the shore crabs hide,
all awaiting the next high tide
Gumboot chitons big as your shoe,
stick to the rocks just like glue

All these critters say to me...keep singing songs about the Salish Sea

Barnacle, periwinkle, flat fish, whelk, cockle, rockweed...BULL KELP!

In between the tide pools, hermit crabs graze,
sculpins lurk in a coral maze
Anemones' tentacles look like flowers,
they stay open at high tide hours

All these critters say to me...keep singing songs about the Salish Sea

Seaweed is anchored to the sea bed,
green at the top, then brown, then red
Bull kelp bobbing just offshore,
a nursery for fish, kelp crab and more

All these critters say to me...keep singing songs about the Salish Sea

Barnacle, periwinkle, flat fish, whelk, cockle, rockweed...BULL KELP!

Eel grass blooms, estuaries flow,
this is where all the herring grow
Ducks come to feed on their roe or eggs,
great blue heron on two straight legs

All these critters say to me...keep singing songs about the Salish Sea

Deep in the sand the horse clams squirt,
butter clams next and little necks first
Sea worms squiggle, sandpipers poke,
these are some intertidal folk

All these critters say to me...keep singing songs about the Salish Sea