

Sense of Place Among Children of an Isolated Island Community

by

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Abstract

This study examined the connection between children living in the remote, isolated area of Gilford Island and the natural world surrounding them, and how the physical and cultural experiences of these children have helped to shape their sense of place. Qualitative, descriptive methods of gathering data were utilized and included semi-structured interviews, place excursions, drawing activities, map constructions, and parent/guardian interviews. It was found that as a group, these children feel positively toward their community, although many children share a concern over its dwindling population. The children demonstrated a comfort with, and considerable knowledge about, the natural world and marine and forest ecosystems which surround them. Place excursions with participants revealed that the children value their special outdoor places as sites for imaginative games, retreats, and for recreational uses such as swimming. Most of the participants demonstrated a high degree of concern for the health of the environment.

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Dedication

To the children of Echo Bay and Gwa'yasdam's, past and present: May you never lose your awe and excitement at the wonders that are just outside your doors. I will forever remember the music to my ears when you would grin up at me on the dock on a low-tide morning and say "Ms. Sweeney, it sure looks like a good day for a beach walk..."

Introduction

The community of Echo Bay, Gilford Island, is nestled in the group of islands known as the Broughton Archipelago between northern Vancouver Island and the BC mainland. Located at the mouths of two mainland inlets, the area is in the path of a constant flush of nutrient-rich water. The abundance of life that follows that same nutrient-rich path has resulted in the area being referred to as the “salmon forest” (Morton, 2002) by a local researcher. The affluence of life is obvious: on an autumn trip to a spawning stream, I counted upwards of twenty bald eagles and more species of waterfowl than I recognized, watched as a black bear sniffed at us from the beach, warily eyed up wolf tracks, and rode home amidst a pod of playful Pacific white-sided dolphins.

The area also reveals ample evidence of human inhabitation from time immemorial. White shell beach middens speak of the many feasts of natives. Children and adults alike revel in the excitement of finding trading beads and other artifacts on the beaches, revealed anew with the rolling action of the tides. A well known, longtime resident of the area, known as ‘Kingfisher’ throughout this study, has housed his found native, pioneer, and industry (trapping, fishing and logging) artifacts in a museum which he must continuously build bigger to accommodate his growing collection.

Kingfisher’s passion to learn about and pass on the history of the area is a tireless quest. Children exploring the beach, locals seeking out the most profitable prawn fishing location, and tourists asking about safe anchorages have all benefited from his vast local knowledge. His willingness to share local lore and history has resulted in many residents, children and adults alike, turning to him for information on artifacts and unusual phenomena that they have stumbled across. Over the four years I lived in

Echo Bay, I spent countless hours sipping strong tea with Kingfisher and his wife and listening to their stories accumulated over a lifetime of living in the area. Many of these stories were followed up with hikes or boat trips to show me a place or phenomenon that we had discussed the night before.

The population of the Echo Bay area has dwindled over the years as it has changed from a thriving logging community with more than thirty children, (personal communication, Proctor, 2002) to more of an isolated refuge for the families of the fifteen children now living in the area. The lack of available amenities has resulted in a self-sufficient population who independently provide or produce their own power, water, transportation, firewood and food. However, it is not uncommon for the people of the area to band together to re-roof a neighbour's house, help repair a boat, or pool together for the three hour boat ride to "town" for a grocery run.

The introduction of fish farms into the area over the last twenty years has created some rifts in the community between those who view the farms as an important economic boon, and those who fear that the farms are doing irreparable damage to the health of the marine ecosystem. Residents formerly shy and reclusive have now found themselves speaking out at public hearings in Vancouver, and writing letters, articles, and books to publicize their observations of the impact that the farms have had on the salmon, whales, and other wildlife of the area (Morton and Proctor, 1998; Proctor and Maximchuk, 2003).

Few of the people living in the Echo Bay area have regular-paying year-round jobs. In the past few years, many of the residents have been involved in stream enhancement work, and the hatchery employs one person (although many community members volunteer their time when needed). Other locals are self-employed in environmental

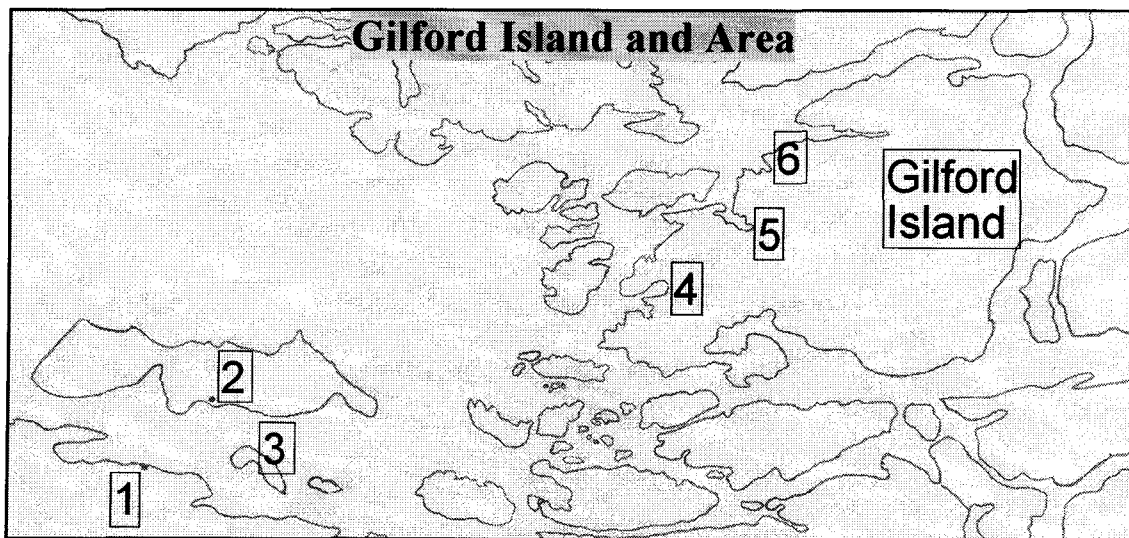
research, lumber milling, log salvage, running fishing resorts, and as artists. Several people work seasonally clam-digging, on fish boats, or in nearby logging camps.

The Echo Bay post office and school service a greater population than the fourteen families who were living in the immediate area at the time of the study. Gwa'yasdam's, a First Nations community approximately 12 kilometres down the channel from Echo Bay, boasts a population of more than thirty people. The families of Gwa'yasdam's live much more communally than the other families of the area, as the houses are situated together in one community, on land, and the Band provides residents with power and water. In contrast, other residents of the area are spread out in float houses and on homesteads, and thereby forced to lead more self-sufficient lifestyles.

I taught in the one-room elementary school at Echo Bay for four years, and I found myself in a continuous state of awe over the knowledge that these children shared about the natural world during everyday conversation. These are children who are being brought up in the heart of nature, and who may travel past sea lions, orca whales, and heron rookeries on their way to and from school each day. Their lives are directly affected by natural phenomena, as a howling wind, an iced-over bay, or a bear wandering through their front yard may mean a day home from school. Many of the participants' parents are heavily involved in environmental protection and restoration projects. Regular 'dockside' conversations include discussion about hatchery progress, the impact of fish farms, and recent observations of natural phenomenon such as spring salmon pooling to head up a stream, or an increase in the number of dead octopi found along the local shoreline.

Watching the children interact with nature and demonstrate their vast practical knowledge of it often raised questions in my mind. I found myself intrigued by how

these children view the natural environment that shapes their lives. Many of the parents in the area have chosen this secluded lifestyle because they believe it is a healthy environment in which to bring up children, but I often wondered if the children perceived the same benefits. I was curious whether the children felt the same sense of stewardship and concern for the state of their environment that their parents shared.



Map not to scale

Map of Gilford Island and area

- 1: Port McNeill, Vancouver Island
- 2: Sointula, Malcolm Island
- 3: Alert Bay, Cormorant Island
- 4: Gwa'yasdam's (Gilford Village)
- 5: Shoal Harbour
- 6: Echo Bay



Photo 1: View of Echo Bay from school yard

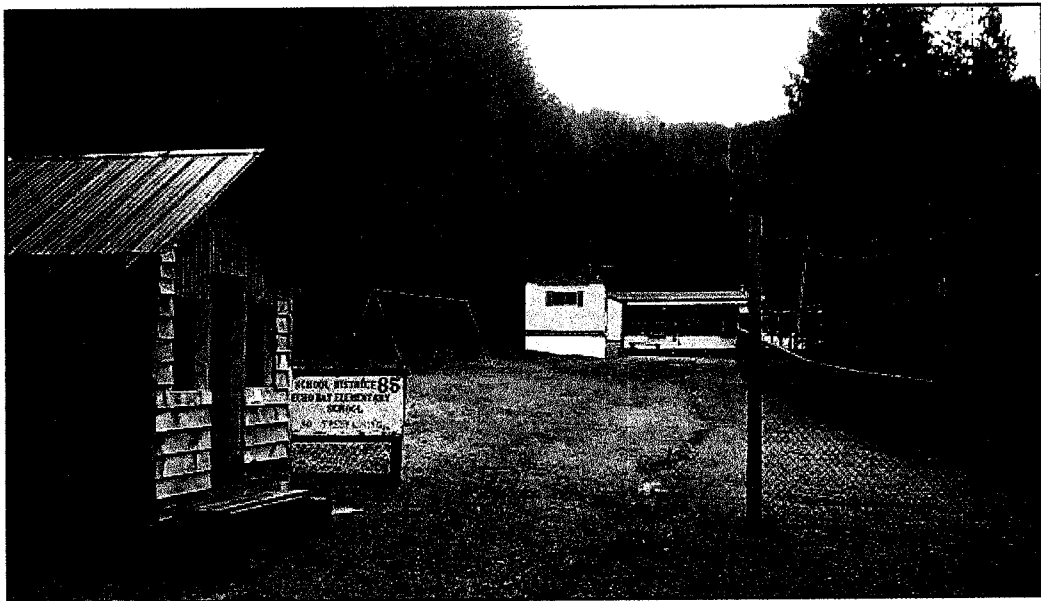


Photo 2: Echo Bay School Yard

Community-built playhouse (foreground); teacherage (centre); school (right)

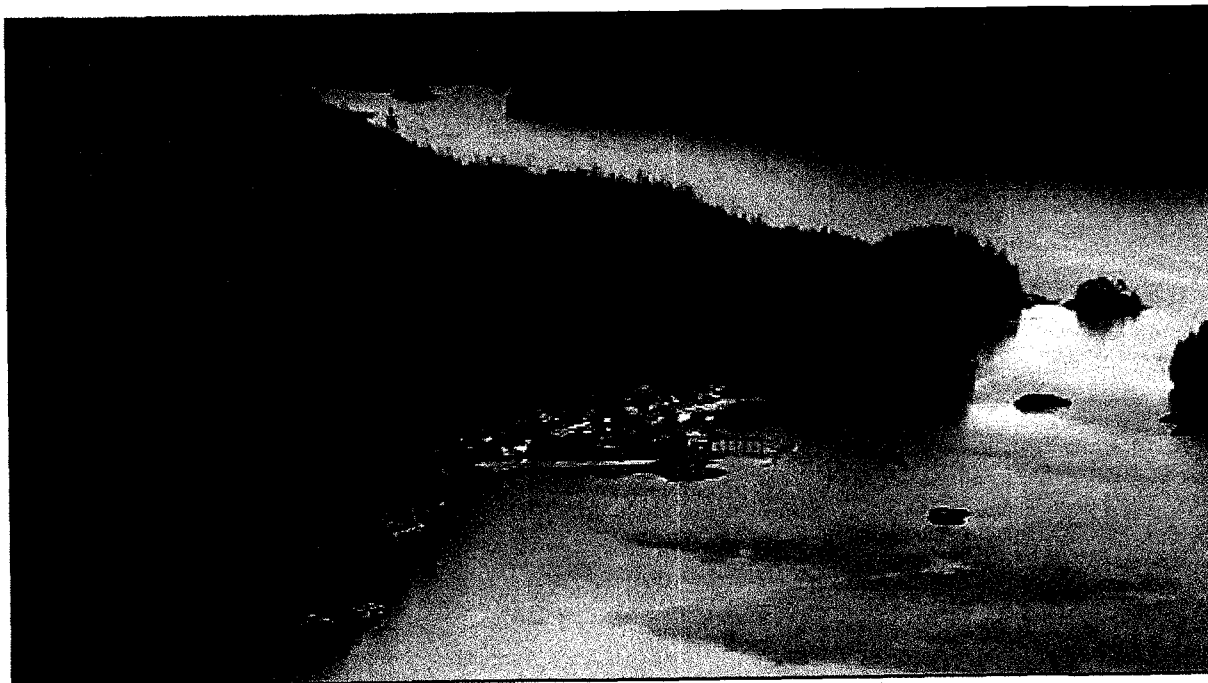
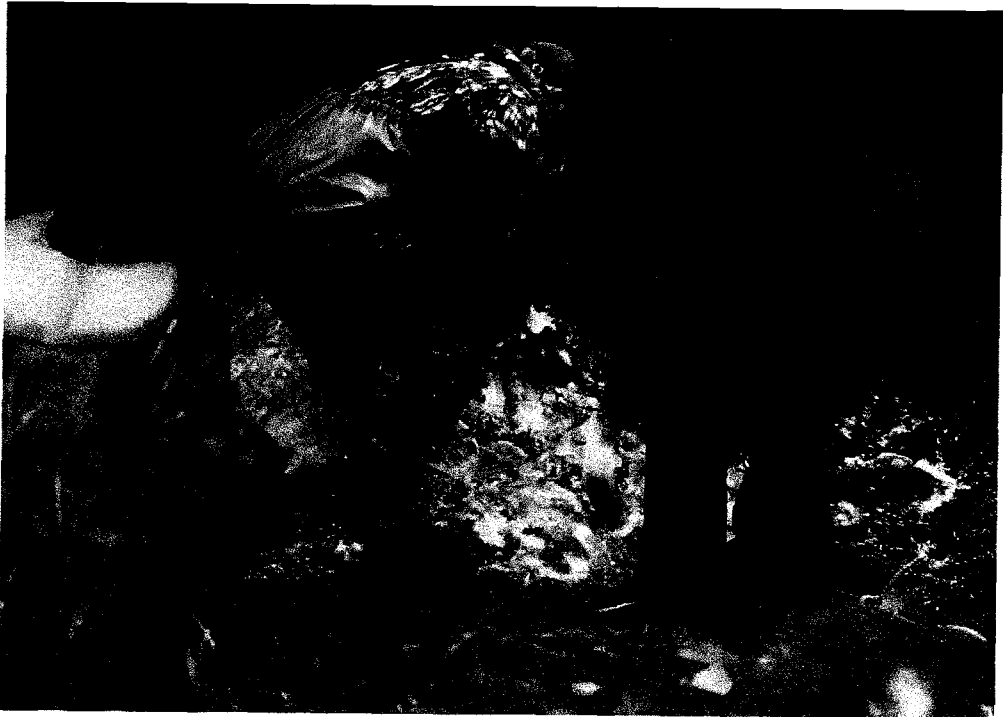


Photo 3: Aerial view of Gwa'yasdams



Photo 4: Students playing on school beach (Echo Bay)



Photos 5 and 6: Community volunteers of all ages assist with hatchery brood stock harvests (above) and egg planting (below).



Chapter 1

This chapter provides an overview of the study and its participants. It opens with a description of previous studies of home place and how a child's home place experience affects his or her worldviews. Following in the second section is a list of the specific questions that I sought to answer through my own study. A snapshot of the group of children involved in the research is provided in the third section, and geographical boundaries of the study are discussed in the fourth section. The fifth section, which comprises the bulk of this chapter, outlines the methodology and research tools used to generate the data of the study. Finally, the chapter closes with an overview of the significance of the research.

Literature

Several studies have considered factors influencing how children view the natural world (Hart, 1979; Matthews, 1992; Sobel, 1993). Hart's (1979) study of *Children's Experience of Place* looked at factors affecting children's interaction with the environment. Hart (1979) considered children's actions in, knowledge of, and feelings toward the outdoor environment in terms of how they affected children's place experience. Through his study, Hart (1979) was able to view the nature of children's place experience as a whole-group phenomenon among the children of a small New England town. Hart (1979) described the town as "exhibiting... many urban traits" (p. 19), which is in obvious contrast to the communities of Gilford Island.

Sobel's (1993) study of *Children's Special Places* also looked at children's experiences of the outdoor environment, and through his ethnographic study he

considered the role that outdoor interaction played in a child's life, across cultures. Sobel (1993) concluded that although the groups in his study varied significantly in geographic location and cultural background, both their outdoor activities and how they related to the natural world followed similar patterns.

Unlike the studies mentioned above, Moore (1986) focused on how children living in different types of neighbourhoods interacted with their outdoor environments. Moore (1986) carried out his observations in three types of urban neighbourhoods, which he characterized as 'big', 'new' and 'old' (p. 24). While his study considered the effects of neighbourhood size on how children viewed the natural world, Moore's study was limited to children living in cities.

Derr (2001) focused her study of *Children's Sense of Place in Three Communities of Northern New Mexico* on smaller, more rural communities. Because Derr (2001) included parents and grandparents in her study of the children's connection to their environment, she was able to observe the important role that family and culture play in developing children's sense of place.

The above-mentioned studies make an important contribution to the study of children's sense of place, in that they shed light on some of the factors contributing to how children connect to the natural world. Derr (2001) emphasizes the necessity of understanding how sense of place develops and why it is important, by stating that "without this understanding, creating or preserving a true sense of place is not possible" (p. 2).

The study of the children of the Gilford Island area adds further insight to our understanding of how children connect to nature, and how they create their sense of place within it. Previous studies have focused on children living in urban areas, or at

least in less-isolated areas. In the communities of Gilford Island, children live surrounded by nature itself, and the study of how they connect to the natural world provides further insight into how children construct their sense of place.

Research Questions

In addressing these ideas, my research focused specifically on the following questions:

1. How do children living in the isolated island community of Echo Bay area view their community and the natural environment that surrounds them?
2. How have the physical and cultural experiences of living in the isolated island community of Echo Bay area shaped the sense of place held by the children living there?
3. What concerns do these children have for the health of their community and natural environment?

The Participants

The participants in the study included the students that I was currently teaching, as well as three students that I had taught at Echo Bay School for either two or three years before they moved away to larger communities. A group of twelve children took part in the study, although the children who had moved away did not take part in all activities. All three of the children who had moved took part in the interviews, and one of them also took me on a place excursion. The participants ranged in age from six to sixteen years old. Five of these children were primary students (three in grade

one and two in grade two), while the others ranged from grade four to ten (two in grades four and seven; one in each of grades five, six, and ten).

Within any group of children, there is likely to be a range of abilities and cognitive development. This proved to be especially true with the group of participants taking part in this study, as there was such a significant range in participants' ages. To account for this, it was important that my research methods be varied to allow the opportunity for all children to express themselves, and to ensure that the study captured the richness of their experiences and views. In addition, individual children's personalities and comfort levels meant that some children were not as articulate and open during the recorded interviews as they were during the more active components of the study (such as place excursions and map building). Thus, the data produced by some of the children during their interviews was not as rich as that produced during other activities.

The Location

Although the community that all families in the area are a part of is called 'Echo Bay', none of the students that attended Echo Bay School during the year of the study actually lived in Echo Bay. The distance children traveled by boat each day ranged from 4 km from a floathouse a few bays away, to 12 km from Gwa'yasdams, the Native Village down the channel. In addition, two 'Home-Links' students attended the school two afternoons a week. These students lived 24 km away, a distance too great to travel by open boat every day (especially in unpredictable winter weather). Children and parents were advised at the onset of the study that in the final report, the names of participants would be changed to pseudonyms, chosen by the children, to

allow for confidentiality. However, I felt it important to honour the unique nature of the community by identifying the location by name.

Methodology

The study of the children of the Echo Bay area was multi-faceted, as the focus was not only on the sense of place held by the children, but also on the factors of family, culture, geographical area, and personal experience which contributed to the development of this sense of place. Thus, it was necessary to utilize a range of methodological techniques to capture the richness of these influences. In addition, the participants spanned a range of ages and cognitive development, so research techniques needed to be varied and flexible to accommodate these differences. Drawing and mapping activities, story-telling, place excursions, and semi-structured interviews were all used together to help form a complete picture of how the children in the study connect to their natural world.

My research was qualitative in nature, as the small number of participants in the study allowed an opportunity to capture the richness of their experiences through close interaction and engagement with them. As I spent a considerable amount of time with these children during and outside of school hours over the four years that I lived in the area, I developed a rapport with all of them that allowed them to openly share their views and feelings with me. This likely contributed further to the collection of rich, detailed data that helps to provide insight into the children's sense of place within their community. Our shared history also resulted in many comments and references to activities we had taken part in together, and conversations we had had in the past, throughout the interviews and activities. The rapport also led to some unexpected

“teachable moments”, as in the conversation I had with Beetle during the mapbuilding activity over the fact that both a male and a female dog are required to make puppies.

Atkinson and Hammersley (1998) describe characteristics of ethnographic research such as consideration of the nature of a phenomenon rather than the manipulation of it; the study of unstructured data generated by working with small groups; and analyzing data through interpretation. Years prior to this, Hart’s study (1979) was based on ethnographic principles of building a trust and rapport between the researcher and study participants. My research was developed on an ethnographic framework, as it was comprised of interpretation based on observations of a small group of participants. I sought to ensure a trusting relationship between myself as interviewer and the children as participants as we carried out activities designed to capture, rather than manipulate, the richness of the children’s connection to the natural world.

Research Tools Used

The sections which follow describe in more detail the four research tools used: Children’s Drawings, Mapbuilding, Place Excursions, and Semi-Structured Interviews.

Children’s Drawings

As there were many young children in the study group, drawing activities allowed all participants the opportunity to express themselves without the limits of written language. Goodnow (1977) points out that children’s drawings are a representation of the “great deal of thinking and communicating [which] takes place visually” (p. 2). Likewise, Shepardson and Britsch (2000) explain that through drawing and journaling, “children are able to depict their ways of seeing and understanding... phenomena, constructing or reconstructing the phenomena through their own lens of experience”

(p. 29). Thus, I felt that including drawings as a research tool would allow the less articulate children in the study an equal opportunity to express their perceived role in the community. The focus of the drawing activity was on capturing the children's perceptions of their community and their place in it, and to encourage children to think about what is important to them in their community. Children were asked to individually draw a picture entitled "This is Me in My Community". Analysis of the images represented in the participants' pictures took place after children discussed their drawings with me and I had compiled notes of participants' comments made during the drawing, and during the post-drawing interviews.

Mapbuilding

Children's mapmaking has played a significant role in research on place experience and sense of place (Sobel, 1993; Hart, 1979). However, these studies found that in some cases, "the map is not an effective vehicle for eliciting personal responses from the children" (Sobel, 1993). As previously mentioned, the young age of many of the children in the study might have limited the depth of their written and drawn responses, and this needed to be accounted for in the design of data-gathering methods. Hart (1979) noted that drawings and sketches may be limited in usefulness in a study of place representation, due to both "the very great variation in motoric and graphic ability with age... [and] because the pencil or pen brings a degree of commitment to each element drawn which is unsuited to the creative act of constructing a map" (p. 92). Hart (1979) developed a more interactive and dynamic procedure for mapping to allow children to build their maps rather than draw them. I used a modified version of Hart's (1979) map constructions in my study.

Map constructions were used to allow children to represent their place and community in order to gain an understanding of how the children viewed their environment. Participants built their maps individually with me in an area away from the classroom to minimize the distraction and influence of other children, and to reinforce that the activity was not part of “school”. Children were provided with large sheets of paper, felt markers, pencils, clay, models and toys as they were read scripted instructions to build a model of their area (Appendix B). These instructions included guidelines such as beginning with placement of the children’s own homes and working out from there, and reassurance that they could build any clay models that they need that were not provided. They were advised that if they thought of any other supplies they needed, I would do my best to find whatever items were needed. Throughout the activities, I stressed that elements of the map could be moved or rearranged if children chose to make changes, and that I would only label features in pencil so that they could be changed.

The sessions were tape recorded to allow me to interact with the children and to trace and label the models once they were placed in their final position. These recordings, along with any notes describing participant behaviour, were considered with the completed maps to seek an understanding of common trends among the place representations of the children. In addition, the content of the maps and comments made by participants demonstrated which of the local areas were most significant to the children, and what they valued most about their area. The activity was found to be especially useful with children who had been intimidated by the recorded interviews and hadn’t volunteered much information beyond “I don’t know” when asked direct

questions. Some of these children produced amazingly detailed maps and made comments that provided insight into the locations of their community that they valued.

Place Excursions

Place excursions and field excursions appear to be a commonly-used tool for gathering data on children's connection to place (Kylin, 2003; Sobel, 1993; Moore, 1986; Hart, 1979). Their frequent use is understandable, as it can be argued that the excursions allow an understanding of "... the continuity and diversity of interaction between children and their surroundings" which can be "much too rich and subtle to have been clearly expressed in the drawings and interviews alone" (Moore, 1986, p. 56).

Many of the students at Echo Bay School would stay after school to play in the yard or neighbouring park. As I was invited to many tea parties on the lawn, walks on the beach, and 'secret' meetings at forts during this hour, I was well aware of the children's love of playing outdoors. Place excursions, visits with individual children to the places that they value the most, were a natural extension of this interaction.

My technique for using place excursions was modeled after that used by Hart (1979) during his study of *Children's Experience of Place*. Hart (1979) described the value of this research tool:

This [technique of place excursions] successfully avoided the problem of depending entirely upon children's verbal expression of feelings for a place, because I asked them to not only tell me, but to show me how they used or felt about a place.... Through empathy, the fluid transaction between a child's plans and the environment's attraction was opened up to me as we meandered through their physical world (p.158).

Hart (1979) invited children to lead him to ten of their favourite places, where he asked open-ended questions to elicit clues as to the value of the place to the child. Because Hart's study involved a much larger group than mine (86 children as opposed to the 12 in my study), he worked with only a subset of his participants. Because I felt it important to include all participants in my study in as many of the various research activities as possible, I limited the number of place excursions to three per child. However, as previously mentioned, two children who had moved from the area were unable to lead me to local favourite areas due to the distance from their new homes to the Echo Bay area. A third child who had moved led me to one favourite place, as the family's visit back to the Echo Bay area was limited by time.

After participants compiled lists of their three favourite local places, I accompanied them individually to these locations. Many children told me that they had a difficult time thinking of just three places to share with me, as they had so many favourite places. Several other children repeatedly stressed to me that some of the places they were sharing were sacred and they did not want anyone else to know their location (especially, it seemed, big sisters!). As several of the children lived so far away, I made several weekend forays to their areas to take part in the place excursions.

Place excursions were tape-recorded as much as travel to the location would allow. Obviously, travel by boat or hiking single-file through the forest was not conducive to recording conversation. However, the conversations once we reached the special places were recorded, and all places visited were photographed. During conversations at the special places, children were asked questions to determine the significance and valued characteristics/uses of the place, how often they visited it, and what they liked best about it. Once all of the place excursions were completed, the participant-

described uses of each place, nature and physical characteristics of the area, and participant comments on the value of each place were considered in forming a picture of the nature of local areas that the children valued.

When visiting the children at Gwa'yasdams, it proved nearly impossible to work with only one child at a time. Children in this community are close-knit and do not play outside without the others very often. In addition, a parent, aware of the threat of wild animals in the area, expressed concern over hiking up the road behind the Village without the security of a pack of noisy children. Thus, all place excursions at Gwa'yasdams were done as a group, and wherever possible I pulled the child I was working with away from the group to allow for a more individual conversation. This was obviously not the ideal situation, as the group still proved a distraction, but the group dynamic was a reality that needed to be accommodated.

Additionally, I was not able to go on place excursions with all of the participants from Gwa'yasdams, as one of the older children did not seem to want to take part and would alter between stalking and evading me throughout the day as I worked with the other children. This participant promised to work with me three different times after completing the errand of the hour that they were involved with; however, the next glimpse of that child would be a streak as they went by on a bicycle (on the other side of the trees from me), or the back of a head as they powered out of the bay in their speedboat. Ultimately, I decided that since participation was voluntary, I would have to let the child come to me if they chose to participate. In the end, I did succeed in one place excursion with that child. Unfortunately, another child from Gwa'yasdams was away each time that I visited for the purposes of the place excursions.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Gubrium and Holstein (2002) explain that “qualitative interviewing is based in conversation with the emphasis on researchers asking questions and listening, and respondents answering” (p. 83). It differs from the more traditional concept of interviewing in that its purpose is more to derive interpretations rather than to directly compile facts. Further, a qualitative interview commonly relies on three types of questions: main questions to guide the interview; probes to expand on or clarify answers; and follow-up questions to delve into the implications of responses to main questions (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). All three of these types of questions were utilized during the semi-structured interviews with the participants in the study of the children of the Echo Bay area.

Throughout all activities, an understanding was sought of how the local children perceive their environment, what they value about it, and any concerns they have for it. While observations of how the children interacted with, and depicted their involvement in, their environment played an important role in this research, these questions were also addressed more directly through the semi-structured interviews. Individually, children were asked open-ended questions concerning how they use, and how they feel about, their natural environment. The questions were grouped by the researcher into four broad categories: ‘Concept of Nature’, ‘Concept of Community’, ‘Natural Resources’, and ‘Cultural Understanding’. Some of the questions focused on certain environmental issues relevant to the area. For example, participants were asked if they had ever hunted, and how they felt about hunting. Other topics included feelings and knowledge about fishing, fish farms, and logging.

In addition, some of the interview questions were more open-ended to allow participants to mention other feelings and concerns that may not have been considered by the researcher. Questions of this type included, “If you could change anything about the area where you live, what would it be?”, and “If you could move anywhere in the world, would you want to?”, and “Where?”. Other questions included “What do you like best about your community?” and “Do you ever worry about your community and if so, what do you worry about?”

Some of the interview questions generated by the researcher focused on more cultural aspects of participants’ sense of place. For example, questions were asked about knowledge and experience in collecting plants for medicine and food, and about who had taught the children to do this. Other questions involved participants’ knowledge of/experience with local First Nations’ legends and ceremonial sites. These topics for discussion were decided upon after many lunch-hour talks with my friend Stella, who was working with students to teach them the Kwak’wala language and local First Nations traditions. It was hoped that Stella would contribute a great deal more to the study than she was able to, as sadly, she fell ill in the spring and was no longer able to work with us.

While a great cultural diversity exists among the students of Echo Bay School (students were of either First Nations, Japanese, German, Dutch, French-Canadian, or American descent, and in four cases, English was the second language of at least one parent in the house), it was recognized from the beginning of the study that the sample was too small to draw conclusions about specific cultural influences. Rather, it was hoped that a picture of the multi-faceted culture of the group, and its influence on development of sense of place, would be obtained.

Interviews With Parents

The final research task of the study involved participants' parents and guardians. It was intended that brief, recorded individual interviews would be held with these individuals to discuss issues such as why they chose to live in the area, concerns they had with living there, their sense of community and how they saw it passed on (or not), as well as how they viewed the nature of their child's outdoor activity. However, the parents and guardians proved to be a shy lot, and all but one preferred to answer the questions independently, in writing. Unfortunately, this did not allow for the richness of data potentially created in a qualitative interview utilizing probes and follow-up questions (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). However, the questionnaires themselves did prove to be a valuable tool in contributing to the richness of the data collected from the children, providing a context to frame the information, and shedding light on the cultural and environmental values that parents seek to instill in their children.

Sequence of Research Techniques

It had been my intention to begin the research process with drawing and map constructing activities to provide initial insight into the places that children valued and the way in which they viewed their environment, before beginning the relatively more structured interviews to expand upon the ideas presented by the children during the more play-oriented activities. However, because my time with individual children was limited to after-school or weekend hours in the form of windows of opportunity convenient for both the children and their parents, time constraints dictated which activity we had time to work on during a given day. In addition, if other children were present in the schoolyard on an afternoon that I was working with an individual, it was more difficult to venture out on place excursions. I questioned whether or not I would

get truthful personal responses from a child in this situation, or if they would be influenced by having a pack of peers tag along. Thus, wherever possible I tried to schedule place excursions on weekends rather than weekday afternoons.

Potential Bias

While the fact that I am friends with the children in my study and their families was an obvious benefit to an ethnographic study which depends on rapport, trust, and a relationship with the participants, I was constantly aware that it could also lead to potential bias in my research. Thus, I exercised caution in ensuring that my role as a teacher, friend, or researcher was clear at all times.

In the B.C. Ministry of Education document *Field Based Research* (2001), responsible reporting is defined as ... presenting a complete and balanced view (as opposed to using research results to make a case). Reporting needs to address conflicting points of view, present a comprehensive picture of what was learned and represent the various viewpoints (p. 13).

In the study of the Gilford Island children, interviews and all activities were recorded to allow me to capture children's responses word-for-word. These interviews were designed with a more open-ended nature to reduce the possible influence of leading questions. However, there were a few times during interviews when specific questions were asked to elicit responses from children that I knew were apprehensive about the tape recorder and were mumbling "I don't know" for most of their answers.

I was also aware that children's responses and participation could have been influenced by the fact that the study was being carried out by their teacher and their

desire to give a “right” answer. At all stages of the research (i.e., before, when participants were signing consent forms as well as during the research, before each new task was begun), I stressed to children that their participation and data would have no bearing on their school grades or report cards. Carrying out the study outside of school hours, and in a part of the school not usually used by the class, further helped to draw the distinction between my role as a teacher and my role as a researcher.

A moment came during the data collection process when I knew that I had been at least partially successful in keeping my roles as teacher and researcher separate with one participant. A child was leading me to his secret hideout, and he confided that his friend had taken rolls of toilet paper from the school for their fort. After the child had told me this, he asked me “not to tell on him”, which was humorous because as the teacher-in-charge at the school, it would have been me that it would be reported to!

Significance of the Study

Wilson (1997) makes a strong case for the significance of children having opportunities to become connected to a place. She cites reasons such as learning about the natural world, contributing to a child’s developing senses of self, imagination, and creativity, and shaping attitudes toward “the world of nature and their role as caretakers or guardians of the land” (p. 192). Studies which delve into the creation and nature of connection to place will only help to further our understanding of how valuable sense of place is to a developing child.

Once all the data of the study of the children of the Gilford Island area was compiled and analyzed for common trends, the results helped to create a snapshot of how these children viewed their local area, the sense of place that they felt there, and

any concerns they had related to their home place and the natural world. This information is valuable for educators to consider in looking at the role that setting plays in developing environmental and cultural awareness in students. In addition, this study has provided an opportunity to examine the impact that living immersed in the natural environment, in a small isolated community of mixed ethnicity, can have upon shaping the world view of children.



Photo 7: Children arriving for school at Echo Bay

Chapter 2: Literature Review

“As I walked away from the lunch table, the students were having a lively debate over the pros and cons of hunting. E. made the case for the poor defenseless deer, and R. countered with the health debate: “Well, I wouldn’t want to eat meat from the store because it is pumped full of hemorrhoids.” I paused. If she didn’t know the difference between steroids and hemorrhoids, whose concern was she expressing? And did I really want to join her family for dinner that night?”

-Journal entry, Rena Sweeney, May 2000

Significant ethnographical research has been carried out with children to explore their construction of sense of place, and their connection to nature (Derr, 2001; Sobel, 1993; Moore, 1986; Hart, 1979). However, the unique setting of the Echo Bay area, that of a rural community set within and dependent upon the natural world, presents an opportunity to explore further the influence of nature on children’s sense of place.

This chapter has been divided into seven sections to provide an overview of literature related to the study. The first section considers the rural context of the community and the impact that this isolation may have on children’s perceptions of their community. In the second section, Piaget’s theories of cognitive development are summarized in relation to the participants in the Echo Bay area study. In the third section, prior research on children’s sense of place and connection to the natural world is discussed with respect to the participants involved in my study. The fourth section discusses briefly the integral weaving between the natural world and First Nations culture. The fifth segment describes relevant research into children’s development of

sense of place. Parental influences into children's concepts of the natural world are discussed in the sixth section. Finally, the chapter concludes with a presentation of the research considered when I chose and adapted the research tools used in the study of the children of the Echo Bay area.

Rural Setting

According to a review of some studies of rural and urban student populations (Bogner and Wiseman, 1997), the community of Gilford Island is an aberration. According to many of the studies compiled by Bogner and Wiseman's analysis, rural residents tend to be less concerned about environmental issues than their urban counterparts, due to the fact that they face less "exposure to environmental degradation" (Van Liere and Noe, 1981, as cited in Bogner and Wiseman 112). These researchers are not familiar with the hundreds of hours logged by Echo Bay locals as they work to restore local salmon stream stocks to the level that they were before the logging in Scott Cove wiped out an entire run of coho salmon. A similar theory is cited which "sees rural residents as generally possessing [a] utilitarian orientation toward nature... [because of a] nature-extractive tradition" (Harry, 1971, as cited in Bogner and Wiseman, 1997, p. 112). Again, these researchers have never watched as local fisherman Billy Proctor lovingly caresses a hideous-looking spawning Chinook salmon and croons "Isn't he a beauty?" before milking it for sperm for the hatchery and gently slipping it back into the stream. Further, some studies claim that "urban children are more likely to be socialized to recognize the role of humans in determining environmental conditions" (Glenn & Hill, 1977; Lowe and Pinhey, 1982, as cited in Bogner and Wiseman, 1997, p. 112). I would invite the researches of these

studies to sit in on any dinner table conversation in the Gilford Island area to listen in as parents and their children discuss the impact of fish farms on the local ecosystem, or the impact that the helicopter logging had on the marine life in Viner Sound.

Bauch (2001) presents a much more positive view of rural communities in her discussion of “School-Community Partnerships in Rural Schools: Leadership, Renewal, and a Sense of Place.” She states that “rural families often have deep roots in a community, dense relational networks, and strong intergenerational closure that serve to strengthen community norms, values, and attitudes” (p. 211). Throughout her paper, Bauch (2001) presents arguments to support the network created between rural schools and their community members:

... such communities are often tightly knit, take pride in their sense of place and its history, and provide social capital for the children. Familiarity, community spirit, the influence of elders, and social activities in which the whole town participate provide opportunities that support a parent-teacher-community model of school renewal. (p. 211)

The model presented by Bauch (2001) appears to be more representative of the atmosphere of stewardship and mutual concern for environmental health present in the tight-knit communities of Gilford Island than that presented by Bogner and Wiseman (1997).

Cognitive Development

The children’s cognitive developmental stages identified by Piaget provided a useful backdrop in which to ground my research. As all but one of the children in my study ranged in age from 6-12, they fell into various levels of the spectrum of Piaget’s

stage of 'concrete operations'. Piaget observed that as children approach this stage (at about 4-7 years), they are becoming more socially interactive, thus developing a less centralized world view. The hallmark of the stage of concrete operations (usually reached by children aged 7-12) is operational thinking, or the ability to think using symbols rather than objects (Richmond, 1970).

It was important that the research tasks set out for the children to engage in were appropriate for their developmental levels. The nature of the research required children to be capable of symbolic thought as they drew and constructed their maps of the local area. Further, younger children only capable of egocentric thought (i.e. preschoolers not included in the study) might have found discussions about their concerns for the local natural environment difficult or confusing, as they may not be able to conceive of organisms other than themselves facing threats or dangers.

Piaget's research into how children perceive the world also proved useful to the development of my interview questions. In *The Child's Conception of the World*, Piaget (1929) describes the nature of children to demonstrate a tendency toward implicit animism until the age of about 6. As a result of this tendency, younger children "talk about things in the terms used for human beings, thus endowing them with will, desire, and conscious activity" (p. 210). However, Piaget also notes that until the age of 7, children demonstrate a tendency toward artificialism; that is, "the child believes in the all-powerful nature of man's command over things and animism serves to explain the obedience of things" (Piaget, 1929, p. 189). For instance, a six year-old child may view objects in nature (e.g., mountains or the ocean) as being present to serve a purpose for humans. There may be a perception that "every object is endowed with a particular activity and force destined to enable it to fulfill its role"

(Piaget, 1929, p. 198). Thus, a child's discussion in response to questions that consider how he or she perceives his/her connection to the natural world may be influenced more by the developmental stage of the child than anything else. If a child is not yet capable of seeing the environment as anything but a man-made entity created for the benefit of humans, he/she will not likely be able to understand questions relating to the fit between an ecosystem and humans.

Piaget (1929) notes that because the developmental stage of a child may limit the capacity for expressing the true nature of his/her thoughts verbally, "the only method of gaining an insight is careful observation, both of the child's behaviour and of his [sic] words" (p. 210). Piaget advocates that "observation must be at once the starting point of all research dealing with child thought and also the final control on the experiments it has inspired" (p. 4). He dismisses experimental test methods as effective methods of studying child thought because of their tendency to create artificial situations which "falsify the perspective by diverting the child from his [sic] natural inclination," neglecting the "spontaneous interests and primitive reactions of the child" (p. 4). Thus, Piaget lends support to a more qualitative approach that involves looking at the child's spontaneous language and actions instead of only at the responses to structured questions.

While Hart (1979) acknowledges the value of Piaget's work in the area of cognitive development, he notes that Piaget's research failed to take children's interests and feelings into account. There is a great deal of research that lends support to the theory that childhood experience, locale, and age are all factors in a child's interest in, and feelings toward, the environment (Matthews, 1992; Hart, 1979; Sobel, 1993). Piaget's studies focused primarily on how the developmental stages of a child affect his or her

perception of the world, at the expense of other contributing factors. However, Piaget's work does provide a reference to consider in further studies on how these other factors do affect a child's view of the natural world.

Prior Studies

Hart's (1979) study of *Children's Experience of Place* is a comprehensive look at the factors which affect the way a child interacts with an environment. Hart begins his study with the assumption that "all children have an urge to explore the landscape around them, to learn about it, to give order to it, and to invest it with meaning- both shared and private" (p. 3). During his two-year study of the place experience of the children (aged 4-11) of Inavale, Hart focused on children's action in, knowledge of, and feelings toward their outdoor environment. This he explored through four areas: spatial activity, place knowledge, place values and feelings, and place use. Research techniques employed by Hart include geographic diaries, semi-structured interviews with children and parents, constructed maps, photo recognition, and place expeditions.

While the purpose of Hart's (1979) study parallels my research into exploring the sense of place and place use of the Gilford Island children, the two studies take place in significantly different locations. When choosing the site for his study, Hart deliberately sought out a small town in New England "exhibiting as many urban traits as possible" (p. 19), which was "rapidly expanding through tourism", and had "a busy commercial center... and two major state highways" (p. 19). Gilford Island is only accessible by water (or float plane), and its small rural communities do not boast any of the amenities of a city. Thus, the opportunities for interaction with the natural environment vary significantly between the two locales.

The results of Hart's (1979) study indicated significant differences among the place experiences of male and female children, and he noted that girls tend to be more "constrained in their movements and in the nature of their manipulation of the environment" by their parents (p. 345). Further, he was able to draw some distinctions between the place-use of children living in the suburban and more residential areas of Inavale. Due to the small number of participants in my study, it was not possible to draw such distinctions between gender, cultural background, or socio-economic status. Rather, the purpose of my study was to provide an overall picture of how the group of children living in the Gilford Island area perceive and connect to the natural world.

In his study of *Children's Special Places*, Sobel (1993) looked for significant differences in the role that outdoor sites play in children's lives, depending on gender, culture, and age level of children. Sobel (1993) used interviews, mapping, and field explorations to study children's experiences with the landscape in a town in England, and in an island community in the Caribbean. Specifically, Sobel was interested in how children from the two different cultures perceived, built, and used forts, dens, and bush houses. Sobel (1993) found that the use of constructed play places by children followed a similar pattern in both England and Cacciadou, in that forts were built and used primarily by both girls and boys aged 8-11. However, girls tended to focus more on the interior of the forts, while boys were more concerned with the construction. Hart (1979) also noted that "whereas boys concentrate on building structures with walls, and roofs, with little detail in the interior of the places, the girls' emphasis is almost entirely upon interior detail" (211). Likewise, another cross-cultural similarity between the two studies was the tendency of children to be less interested in outdoor play as they became more socially developed at about age 12.

Moore (1986) sought insight into differences in how children interacted with their environments in three types of urban neighbourhoods in England: a 'big city', a 'new city', and an 'old city' (p. 24). Using mapping, interviews, and field trips to places identified by the children as important to them, Moore questioned what made childhood domains meaningful to children. He found that while most children stated that they preferred to play outside, the "outdoor experience of many children is severely constrained", through parental safety concerns and lack of suitable outdoor areas to play in (p. 51). Moore's (1986) study is essentially a call for change in policy, to provide more access to, and diversity in, urban play areas but the research techniques used can be applied in a study of a rural area.

The studies of Hart (1979) and Sobel (1993) both rely heavily on interacting with children, and on their own personal childhood recollections, to gain a better understanding of children's outdoor place-experiences. Nabham (1994) points out the value of experiencing the natural world with children: "Going out together to discover new places is the surest way to be reminded that we do not see the land with the same eyes, nor smell it with the same nose. It sings different songs to each of us, and what we hear changes in accordance with our years" (p. 3). Hart (1979) notes that the more he allowed himself "to be led by a child, the more [he] experienced that child's environment" (p. 184).

Of course, children need to trust an adult researcher before they are willing to lead them to their special places. Ethnographic studies such as those of Hart (1979), Moore (1986), and Sobel (1993) all require a relationship of trust with the children. Children need to feel comfortable in sharing their sacred, secret places with the researchers. Moreover, parents need to feel comfortable in allowing the researchers such free

access to their children. Moore (1986) recounts an embarrassing moment when a child's mother inadvertently read his notes about a journey her daughter had taken without her permission. The researcher of studies involving children must make a conscious effort to maintain the trust of the child, without alienating the parents. I am fortunate in my situation, as I have developed relationships with both the children and parents involved in my study through years of living in the community, being invited to dinners and socials and interacting with parents in a variety of informal social situations.

Thus, there has been significant research into children's interaction with, and value for, the natural environment. While these studies have provided cross-cultural insights, they have all tended to focus on the experiences of children living in urban centres, or at least in more developed areas. The study of the children of the Gilford Island area will further add to this body of research by providing a glimpse into how children in a remote, and undeveloped area, create their own perceptions of the natural environment.

Underlying all of the above-mentioned studies is the premise that children need (and deserve) outdoor areas in which to play. As early as 1969, Cobb identified a "middle age of childhood" when children have the optimal chance to strike out on their own to explore:

... a special period, the little-understood, prepubertal, halcyon, middle age of childhood, approximately from five or six to eleven or twelve, between the strivings of animal infancy and storms of adolescence- when the natural world is experienced in some highly evocative way, producing in the child a sense of some profound

continuity with natural processes and presenting overt evidence of a biological basis of intuition (cited in Sobel, 1993, p. 78).

While Cobb's suggestion of a significant middle childhood window predated the idea of biological critical periods, she implies that there are certain experiences that children need to go through during this time to develop a healthy relationship with the environment. Sobel (1998) concurs with this, stating that from the ages of 5-12, "there is a sensitive period for helping children bond with the natural world" (p. 11).

Kirkby (1989) makes an argument for providing children with natural outdoor spaces where they can take part in unstructured, imaginative play. In designing her study of the outdoor play area preferences of preschoolers, Kirkby (1989) relied heavily on an evolutionary-based theory proposed by Appleton that suggests children prefer small secluded "refuges" to play in because of their biological need to hide and "see without being seen" (Kirkby, p. 8). The preschoolers in Kirkby's study demonstrated a preference for play in natural, vegetated hiding areas rather than in a built 'refuge' (fort area) that was available. Additionally, she noted that the children preferred enclosures with multiple point entry and exit sites and those with a high degree of "plasticity and manipulability" [ability of area to be modified by loose and flexible parts such as cones and leaves]" (p. 11).

Based on her study, Kirkby (1989) states that "enclosures offer a sense of privacy, safety, familiarity, and ability to know, which makes children feel comfortable" (p. 11). She argues for designers of playgrounds to give more consideration to the inclusion of natural environments than to equipment and structures.

Kylin (2003) focused on a group of children aged 9-13 in Sweden to gain an understanding of what the children valued about their special outdoor places. Through

place excursions and essays, she explored children's 'dens' (a term encompassing forts and tree houses) from the perspectives of both adult playground planners and of the children who themselves used these places.

Like Kirkby (1989), Kylin (2003) found that children placed a high value on sites that offered refuge: "... as most of the children in this study were reluctant to build a den if it was not secret and out of view, one can assume that these qualities encourage children's construction of dens" (p. 8). Further, Kylin (2003) found that many children's dens included measures such as grass traps or rope snares to prevent intruders, and that some dens were described as "hidden observation points from which one could collect information and spy on adults or other children without being seen" (p. 13). However, while children may have referred to their dens as secret places, these dens were often shared among several close friends, and Kylin (2003) maintains that these dens serve important purposes in both assisting children to develop their own identities, and to further their social skills.

The necessity of "wild places" for children is stressed by Nabham and Trimble (1994) as they describe how they "...sense some common ways in which wildness- even in its simplest forms- can nourish a lasting attachment to the earth, and, in turn, nurture self-esteem" (xiii). Trimble (1994) points to the sense of acceptance provided by Earth, "without regard for whether we say the right words, wear the right clothes, or believe the right dogma... such acceptance restores us for the social fight" (p. 23). It is easy to see how the passion of these environmentalists drives their argument that all children need the opportunity to experience and connect with nature.

Importance of Natural World to First Nations Cultures

First Nations cultures have been rooted in the natural world since time immemorial. Cajete (1999) claims that “the story of indigenous peoples is about the place of nature in the soul of each of us” (p. 195). Pasco (1998) points out that the “living world of the Kwakwaka’wakw has provided for generations the physical and spiritual foundations of the Kwakwaka’wakw culture- the foods, medicines and materials that have supported and are cherished by the Kwakwaka’wakw” (p. 4). In a culture such as that of the Kwakwaka’wakw, there is an inextricable mesh between the child and the natural world.

Cajete (2000) points out that this link is a result of living within the natural world:

Being in a community in natural places... further engendered this connectedness. The concept of biophilia- the idea that human beings have an instinctual understanding and need for affiliation with other living things- reflects what Native people have always known: affiliation is a part of being human. (p. 99)

Through my research, I hoped to capture some of the biophilia of the people (both First Nations and non-First Nations) of Gilford Island that I had observed over the years. Cajete (2000) points to the transmission of culture as “the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next” (p. 99), and it was an important part of my study to observe how passion and concern for the natural world are passed on to the children of Gilford Island as part of their cultural heritage.

Sense of Place

Orr (1992) points out the interconnectedness between a physical place and self-

concept with his insight that “knowledge of a place- where you are and where you come from- is intertwined with knowledge of who you are. Landscape, in other words, shapes mindscape” (p. 130). Wilson (1997) explains that when discussing sense of place, it is important to note that the term ‘place’ refers to something bigger than a geographical location. In this context, it refers to both a location and a set of factors that make that location unique. For example, these factors might include opportunities for seclusion, exploring, and effecting change, as well as “complexity, diversity, opportunities for immersion with the natural world, and opportunities for the experience of magic or memorable moments” (p. 191).

Derr (2001) also acknowledges that sense of place is more than a connection to a geographic location when she defines it as “a relationship to place, a dialectical way of thinking of and experiencing a biophysical and cultural place” (p. 1). She describes how this relationship occurs on multiple levels for children: on the scales of child, family, and community. Derr (2001) stresses the importance of understanding how sense of place develops, and why it matters, “for without this understanding, creating or preserving a true sense of place [for children] is not possible” (p. 2).

In her study, Derr (2001) looked at the effect that cultural and ecological factors play in the development of sense of place among children in communities in New Mexico. She approached the study of culture and connection to the land by interviewing children about their use of the natural world, and by interviewing family members (parents and grandparents) about how their family history, stories, traditions, and respect for the natural world are passed on to the next generation. Derr (2001) noted that “when children experienced nature, culture, and family as an interwoven

entity, their connections and attachments [to place] were indeed strong and powerful” (p. 224).

Sense of place development among children is a well-studied topic, and it has been noted that sense of place does not necessarily translate to ‘sense of nature’ (Derr, 2001). As Matthews (1992) points out, “where children live has a profound effect on their opportunities for play, exploration and environmental interaction beyond the home” (p. 37). A child growing up in an urban centre will have fewer opportunities to interact with the natural world in a meaningful way than a child growing up in an area such as Gilford Island, and this may affect the way that the urban child develops a connection to the natural world. In fact, there may be factors which discourage outdoor exploration for the urban child, such as “traffic danger and the limited nature of formal open space” (Matthews, 1992, p. 41).

Derr (2001) makes the case that a child’s sense of place may have more to do with strong ties to family and culture than with ties to the natural world. This is supported by Chawla’s (1992) analysis of autobiographies in her quest to understand factors contributing to place attachment. Chawla (1992) found that “the most common form of attachment was simple affection for a place associated with family love and security, [and] its value was defined by family ties and cultural roots” (p. 74).

Bauch (2001) argues that rural communities promote a stronger sense of place than urban areas. She claims that “sense of place involves a rootedness in one’s community and the desire to cherish and cultivate one’s local community” (p. 212), and that the decreased mobility, and interdependent nature of the members of a rural community, foster a stronger sense of place. In describing the sense of community she feels in her rural island community, Morton (1998) tells of a time after the death of her husband

when she did not feel up to attending a community square dance but knew she had to, because “they couldn’t complete the square” without her (p. 189). The sense of personal obligation as a part of a larger whole is strong in a small community.

Thus, it would appear that geography, family and cultural roots, and the social fabric of a community all contribute significantly to the development of a sense of place. The children of the Gilford Island area are both immersed in the natural world and enmeshed in a strong cultural community fabric. Therefore, the challenge of my research was to explore how the physical, cultural, and social setting of the community have shaped the sense of place and perception of nature held by these children.

Parental Influence

A factor that significantly affects the range of childhood outdoor exploration is the imposition of boundaries by parents. Hart (1979) and Moore (1986) explored the range restrictions imposed by parents on the children in their studies of place experience. Both researchers discuss the parent-child negotiations regarding range restrictions, and the increase in permitted range related to chronological age. Moore (1986) notes that these restrictions “reflect parental apprehensions about traffic, physical hazards, social threats, and fears about their children getting lost or abducted” (p. 201). Hart (1979) found that the concerns of parents of younger children were related to traffic and the river, while parents of older children were more concerned with drugs, loitering, and the influence of other children.

Parents of children in the Gilford Island area obviously do not share the same “urban” fears as the parents in the studies of Hart (1979) and Moore (1986). It was expected that factors affecting range restrictions for children of this area were more

likely to be related to natural physical hazards such as the ocean or wildlife, and these concerns were indeed expressed by both the children and the adults interviewed during the study.

In a study involving young children's perceptions of and concern for the natural environment, it may be difficult to distinguish the child's own opinions from those of the adults that they spend time with. For example, a large percentage of the parents in the Gilford Island area are actively involved in environmental stewardship, enhancement, and protection projects. Their children have grown up in the midst of this concern and activism, and it could be difficult to distinguish whether a child is presenting her or his own view, or just repeating what she/he has heard adults discussing without actually having her or his own opinion about the topic.

Piaget (1929) offers some insight into the issue of "how to distinguish those beliefs imposed by the adult and those showing an original reaction on the part of the child- a reaction influenced, but not dictated by the adult" (p. 28). A structured interview might not yield an understanding of whether a child's statements are his/her own thoughts, but it is more likely that a guided discussion (in the form of a semi-structured interview) might, as it would allow the opportunity for relevant probing questions to further explore the child's opinions. Piaget states that ideas which are truly the child's own will persevere, evolve through time as the child develops, will resist suggestion opposing them, and will be supported by "neighbouring conceptions" (p. 32). Thus in the case of questioning a child about his or her environmental concerns, the child should be able to discuss these in relation to other conceptions held by him/her.

As a child I feared acid rain, although I had no idea what it was or what caused it. I had overheard adults discussing it and the name alone scared me. Thus, it really was

more a personal fear of mine than it was a concern for the environment. Sobel (1995) discusses the hazards of scaring children with environmental concerns before they are ready to understand them. In his article entitled 'Beyond Ecophobia: Reclaiming the Heart of Nature Education', Sobel's concern centres on the question of "what really happens when we lay the weight of the world's environmental problems on eight and nine year olds already haunted with too many concerns and not enough real contact with nature" (p. 16). Throughout his article, Sobel (1995) stresses the importance of providing opportunities for children to connect with their local natural world, "to learn to love it and feel comfortable in it, before being asked to heal its wounds" (p. 18).

Thus, the children of the Gilford Island area are in an incredibly unique position. Not only are they well exposed to the efforts of their parents and other community members to heal the environmental wounds of the area caused by logging, over-fishing, and fish-farming, but these children are also immersed in a living ecosystem. These children rely on their natural environment to provide their families with food, firewood, and solar and hydro power, but they also have daily opportunities to connect to the natural world through activities such as gardening, building forts, exposure to wildlife, and even their daily boat ride to school. The information yielded through a study of their concerns for the health of their natural world, and whether or not they feel empowered to protect it, could reveal a great deal about the effect that living in such a natural environment can have.

Sobel (1993, 1998) has used mapmaking extensively to gain an understanding of the place experiences of children. Sobel (1998) states that "from an evolutionary perspective, maps are one of the earliest forms of visual information and are inherently accessible to children... a valuable bridge between the real world and the abstract

world” (5). Sobel (1998) notes that as children develop the ability for representational drawing at about five years old, they also become able to draw simple maps. As children develop, so do the scope and perspective of their maps.

Literature Underpinning the Methodology

Atkinson and Hammersley (1998) describe ‘ethnography’ as a term encompassing social research that involves looking at the nature of a phenomenon, rather than seeking to manipulate it to test hypotheses. Further characteristics of ethnography are described as working with unstructured data, studying a small number of cases, and analyzing data with an interpretative focus (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998). The study of the children of the Gilford Island area involved interpreting unstructured data produced through observations of a small group of children, and can therefore also be classified as an ethnographic study.

The study of the sense of place of the Gilford Island children utilized a range of research tools to provide a broad picture of the cultural, environmental, and family influences involved. As the study involved children of varying ages and cognitive development, it was necessary to use an eclectic approach comprised of adapted research techniques. Drawing and mapping activities, story-telling, place excursions, and semi-structured interviews were all used together to help form a complete picture of how these children connect to their natural world. These techniques were adapted from researchers who have carried out similar studies, as discussed below. Matthews (1984) advocates the use of a variety of research techniques, as “it is by only experimenting with different techniques focusing on a variety of familiar places that true environmental understanding will be appreciated” (p. 39).

The range of research techniques used was adapted largely from previous studies conducted by prominent researchers in the field of children's sense of place development, and their connection to the natural world. While Hart's 1979 study of *Children's Sense of Place* is dated, it has provided a background reference for much of the more recent research into how children connect to a place (Derr, 2001; Sobel, 1998; Moore, 1986), and is discussed below in addition to these more recent studies.

Sobel (1998) has identified three stages of childhood that correspond to advances in both place exploration and mapmaking ability. The first of these stages occurs at about five or six. As the child's world is still centred primarily on home, the maps drawn by children of this age are dominated by their own homes. Children of about seven or eight years of age are interested in forts and secret places, and areas beyond their own yards, and their maps reflect these interests. The final stage identified is that of children aged nine or ten who are the "explorers of childhood" and whose sprawling maps reflect their growing range (Sobel, 1998, p. 17).

Sobel (1993) and Hart (1979) found it necessary to adapt mapping techniques when working with the groups of children in their studies. Sobel (1993) notes that in some cases, "the map [is] not an effective vehicle for eliciting personal responses from the children" (1993, p. 32). Hart (1979) found that for his mapping work with school-aged children of various grade levels, "drawings or sketches were unacceptable not only because of the very great variation in motoric and graphic ability with age, but because the pencil or pen brings a great deal of commitment to each element drawn" (p. 92). For the purposes of his study, Hart (1979) developed an interactive approach that allowed children to construct their maps on large sheets of paper using models. Using

this technique, children were able to arrange their maps rather than be limited to the rigidity imposed by using pencil and paper.

Although Hart (1979) dismisses children's drawings as unacceptable for an analysis of children's place experience, there is support for the drawings to be useful sources of information. Goodnow (1977) states that "children's drawings contain much beneath the surface, and ... can tell us something not only about children but also about the nature of thought and problem-solving among... children" (p. 2). Goodnow (1977) argues for more attention to be paid to children's drawings, as "a great deal of thinking and communicating takes place visually" and the drawings are a representation of this (p. 2).

Like the arguments made for the value of information that can be imparted through a child's drawings, a case can also be made for the importance of children's stories. Engel (1995) points to recent studies which indicate that stories "reflect the values, interpretations, and ideas of narrator and listener" (p. 9). In this light, the stories told by children may impart a great deal more than what is apparent at face-value. "Narratives are an effective form for making emotional sense of the world partly because of the cooling function they serve... talking about something can at the same time revive the experience and evoke the feelings associated with it" (Engel, 1995, p. 40). Thus, asking a child to draw a picture of him/herself in the environment, then listening as the child describes the story behind the picture, has the potential to reveal insight into what the child values in the natural world, and into his/her feelings and sense of connection toward it. The type of phenomenon illustrated and pointed out by the child (plants, terrestrial organisms, marine organisms, man-made structures, etc),

as well as the frequency of each phenomenon, may indicate which elements of the natural world are of particular importance to the child.

Taken together, mapping, drawing, and telling stories about experience with special places all help to provide a more complete picture of a child's sense of place.

However, the most direct and effective way to observe a child's interaction with the natural world is to actually be in the natural world with that child. Hart (1979) found that by participating as fully as possible with the children in his study in their outdoor activities, he was able to form a more complete picture of the children's place experience than if he just looked at the "various aggregate analytic data" (p.14).

While it appears that Hart (1979) spent a considerable amount of unstructured time with the children in his study, he also relied on planned 'place expeditions'. These individual excursions followed the child creating a list of his/her ten favourite places. Once at each location, the child took a Polaroid picture of the area to be used later during an interview. Hart (1979) did not tape record these excursions, although in hindsight he recommended it as a way to keep conversations flowing and informal. Place excursions have been used in a similar manner by other researchers studying children's experiences with the natural world (Kylin, 2003; Sobel, 1993; Moore, 1986).

In *The Island Within*, Nelson (1989) points out that "what makes a place special is the way it buries itself inside the heart" (p. xii). With the frameworks provided by other researchers looking at sense of place, it is hoped that the study of the Gilford Island children will provide a rich, vibrant collection of data to further add to our knowledge of how children connect to nature, and how they create their sense of place within it. This information is vital to have if we are to develop an understanding of

how place, in this case a natural environment, can bury itself within the hearts of children.

Chapter 3: Overview of Data

The purpose of the study of the children of the Gilford Island communities was to gain insight into how they view their community and the natural world, how their experiences of living there have shaped their sense of place, and what, if any, concerns they have about the area. Research tools used to explore these concepts were semi-structured interviews, participant drawings, map-building activities, and place excursions.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section summarizes the data gathered through semi-structured interviews with all twelve of the participants. The second section describes the participants' drawings and how the nine children who drew pictures explained how they depicted themselves in their community. The third section summarizes the portrayal of the community by the nine participants who created maps. Finally, the fourth section describes the place excursions during which nine of the children showed me places that were meaningful to them.

Throughout this thesis, children were referred to by pseudonyms that they had chosen. This was to ensure anonymity, as well as to encourage children to share honestly and openly, knowing that their real names would never be used anywhere in the study. In addition, for the purpose of discussing children's place excursions, participants' identities were masked through a system of assigned numbers. This was necessary because the personal nature of their special places would make it possible for a reader familiar with the families to identify individual children.

Participant Interview Data

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with all twelve of the study participants.

The outline of this interview is appended as Appendix A. The data generated by these interviews follows.

The first section describes children's responses to questions about their concepts of nature. The second section deals with questions involving participants' concepts of their community, their role within it, and any concerns that they have for it. In the third section, questions involving the area's natural resources and recreation opportunities are summarized. The fourth section deals with questions about the children's cultural experience and understanding. Finally, the fifth section summarizes further insights and information that participants added at the conclusion of the interview.

I. Concept of Nature

Of the eleven children who answered the question, "What is nature?", five responded with "trees" or "woods". The next most frequently occurring answer (given by three children) was more to do with what their concepts of nature do not include; for example, "anything that is natural and not manmade" (Abra Interview) and "the environment and life outside of the modern, built-up human technology" (Robin Interview). Three children also associated the term 'nature' with the concept of wildness or "life in the wild" (Brontosaurus Interview). In addition, animals were mentioned by two children, and two others volunteered "living things" (Alder Interview) and "all of life... it's [a] circle of life" (Sculpin Interview). During the interview, Abra expanded on this concept by describing nature as "a cycle which is so when a tree breaks down it goes into dirt which other trees can grow out of" (Interview).

Other associations with nature articulated by the children in the group were centred more on human activity within the natural world. For example, concepts such as “[nature is] something to be protected and it is something to play in” (Hummingbird Interview), and “[nature is] pretty” (Cedar Interview) involved more human activity within, or perception of, nature than with its wildness and untamed elements.

Of the twelve children interviewed, only one did not respond to the question, “What is nature?” While several other children initially responded that they did not know, they were able to name some concepts they associated with nature after further prompting from the interviewer with questions such as, “When someone says ‘nature’, what do you think of?” As five of the twelve participants required this additional prompting in order for them to answer the question, it is assumed that it was a difficult concept to articulate.

Further insight into the children’s concept of nature was provided by the second question asked: “Are you ever in nature?” Through this discussion, the children’s associations with nature became more apparent. Of the twelve children interviewed, only one was unable to answer this question.

The majority of the responses to the question, “Are you ever in nature?” can be grouped into three main categories. Four children mentioned that they were in nature when they were in the forest ecosystem (which was described as ‘woods’, ‘forest’, or ‘bush’). One child named another location associated with nature: “When you go out of the yard out onto the grass”, (Abra Interview) but since Abra’s family lives in a forest clearing, this answer could also be taken to mean the forest ecosystem.

Four other children’s responses to the question concerning when they are in nature involved specific activities. Two children cited hunting as an example of when they

are in nature, while a third mentioned hiking. One child described being in nature “every day... on my way to school” (Eagle Interview).

Three responses described a more general sense of being surrounded by nature and these included comments such as “all the time... every time you go outside” (Robin Interview), and “when you breathe the air even, you are in nature” (Abra Interview).

When asked if they feared anything in nature, eight of the twelve children mentioned wild animals, and their lists included cougars (seven children), bears (six children), wolves (two children), and mink (one child). One child denied a fear of wild animals, but mentioned concern over “volcanoes, eruptions... earthquakes... [and] things like that which everyone should be afraid of” (Abra Interview). Another child expressed a fear of hunters. Three children stated that they fear nothing in nature, although one of these children mentioned later in the interview that he is sometimes afraid of wolves and bears.

Thus, the concept of ‘nature’ seemed difficult for the participants to articulate directly. However, with the use of less direct questions, they were able to share more of their understanding of what their concepts of nature encompass. For example, it seems that many of the children associate ‘nature’ with forest ecosystems, while other participants associate it with more general concepts of wilderness and wild animals.

II. Concept of Community

To gain insight into how the participants viewed their community and their role within it, questions such as the following were asked:

- What is your community?
- Do your parents have rules about where or how you can play outside?

- Do you have an important job in the community?
- What do you like best about your community?
- Is there anything that you don't like about your community?
- Do you ever worry about your community?
- If you could change anything about the area where you live, what would it be?
- If you could move anywhere you wanted to in the world, would you want to?

These main questions were followed by probes and follow-up questions (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002) to gain further understanding of how the participants view their community and their role within it.

When asked to describe their community, six of the twelve children began by giving the name of where they lived. While none of the children involved in the study live directly in Echo Bay itself, two of them did name 'Echo Bay' as the name of their community, and another four children named 'Gilford Village' as theirs. In interviews with children who had moved from the area, I may have used the term 'Echo Bay community' to ensure that participants understood they were talking about their former community, rather than about their current location. If these children then used 'Echo Bay' subsequently to name the community, it was not counted in the above total.

In describing their community, seven children mentioned its small size. Transportation, shopping conditions, and personal feelings about the area were each mentioned by five children during the twelve interviews. When discussing transportation, comments such as "We catch boats to school, we don't catch buses... we don't get to shop here, we just go on boats and go shopping" (Alder Interview), were typical.

One child reflected on the effort involved in grocery shopping: “It [takes] nine hours to get groceries and ... you [have] to get groceries for a month (Abra Interview). Cougar said that when talking about the community to someone who had never been there before, it would be important to tell them that “the store only sells meat and stuff... jam and peanut butter and tacos” (Interview). When asked what the store doesn’t sell, Cougar pointed out that there was no kale in the store, but that you could grow it yourself.

Five children mentioned the way that they feel about their community when they were describing it. Adjectives used to describe this feeling included ‘fun’, ‘paradise’, ‘cool’, and ‘very special’. Hemlock elaborated more on the sense of community felt there: “It’s kind of like one big family kind of thing, everyone... helps each other out because [it’s] so small” (Interview).

While wilderness and wildlife were only mentioned by four of the children, those that did discuss this aspect of the community were quite passionate about it. In explaining what the community is like, one child said that “there’s bushes, lots of different kinds of trees, you can see birds, and chickens. You can see deers [sic], and wolves. And lots of flowers.... there’s fish in the ocean. There’s crickets” (Cedar Interview). Another child pointed out that “you can’t go a single day without seeing a seal, or a deer or a wolf... or a seagull or an eagle and a heron. There’s wildlife in everything everywhere” (Robin Interview). Two children used the expression ‘in the middle of nowhere’ to describe the location of the community.

In describing their community, three children mentioned activities that they enjoy doing there. These discussions ranged from listing activities such as playing on “the swing set and swimming, riding our bikes, and playing hunting” (Beetle Interview) to

a more general sense of the area being “the best place on earth because there’s always something to do, there’s always something to watch” (Abra Interview).

Only two children mentioned the unique nature of the Echo Bay School when describing their community. These comments referred to the small size of the school, and its location. Traveling to school by boat was mentioned by three children. One child described the effort sometimes necessary just to get to school: “The bay would ice over sometimes because the top half of it is fresh water and I’d have to sit on the bow of the boat with a pike pole and break the ice as we tried to get out of the bay” (Robin Interview).

When the children were asked if their parents had rules about them playing outside, three children said they have little restriction as long as they tell their parents where they are going, and if they later change their minds and are going somewhere else. Some children mentioned specific places that they are not allowed to go without adult permission or accompaniment, such as the woods (two children); the dock (two children); and the graveyard (one child), while two others said that they are not allowed to be outside at all without adult supervision. Five children who explained their family rules stated that these rules are necessary because of the wild animals in the area (specifically, bears and cougars were mentioned). Hummingbird told me that they are “not supposed to be having food outside because that would attract bears and things” (Interview).

Several rules specific to the water-oriented life style of the community were mentioned. Three children said that they have to wear lifejackets. (Although they did not elaborate on when they needed to wear them, the marine lifestyle of the area requires that people live, travel, and work on the water, and I have observed that many

children automatically put their lifejackets on before they leave the school or their home- whether it is a floathouse or a houseboat). Two children referred to adult accompaniment and/or supervision when on the dock, and one child mentioned the need to “play safe around the edges of the dock and stuff” (Abra Interview).

Several rules related to younger siblings. In one case, a child told me their family rule is to always close the gate so that her younger brother can’t get out onto the deck of their float, and another child told me that she is not allowed to argue with her brothers. Two children told me that their parents have no rules about them playing outside, while a third stated that “there’s not really any restrictions outside where to go,” and that their parents often tell them to “go row a boat... [or] go in the woods” (Robin Interview).

When asked if they have an important job in their community, nine of the twelve participants said that they do. Five of these responses can be grouped into an “environmental” category. Three children made references to cleaning their community, which ranged from “keeping it clean and not littering” (Sculpin Interview), to Eagle describing a job to “pick up garbage, lawnmower the grass, [and] weed-eat” in the community (Interview). Cedar feels responsible to “take care of nature” by not spilling oil in the water or soap on the ground (Interview). One other child feels a responsibility for raising baby fish, as he assists at the local hatchery.

Two children mentioned that they are important in their community for the sake of numbers. Hemlock stated that because the community is “so small, everybody’s kind of important” (Interview), and Hummingbird expressed the concern that “we do need to have a lot of people here because otherwise we would be nothing except a spot on the map” (Interview).

Robin felt a role in the community defined by being one of the older children and being “relied upon to take care of the children... and held responsible for a lot of things” (Robin Interview). Abra felt that the role of a child anywhere “is to learn and go to school and be the next generation of BC, Canada, and for the community” (Interview).

A myriad of factors were mentioned when the children were asked what they liked best about their community, but it appears that these responses can be grouped into three areas: the natural world; activity possible in the area; and more personal feelings about the community. Six of the children responded with comments about the natural world. Two of these comments were general, mentioning the nature and wilderness that surrounds the area, while other children pointed out specific elements of the wilderness that they appreciated: water (mentioned by two children); trees and forest, and wildlife such as “deer [that] go wherever they like practically... squirrels... and whenever it’s time for birds to migrate, they usually fly over where we live” (Cougar Interview). Robin expressed an appreciation for the lessons the area has taught about its wildlife: specifically, salmon. Robin related a story about an assignment in school last year in which the class was asked to write a paragraph about salmon reproduction; Robin wrote “an essay practically because I didn’t feel that I could say everything I knew about [it in] five sentences” (Interview).

Five children said that what they liked best about the area are all the activities possible there. The list generated includes swimming (two children), playing on the swing set (two children), hiking (two children), building forts, biking, visiting town, running boats, hunting, and fishing (each mentioned once).

Two children commented on the small, quiet nature of the community, while two others referred to “how friendly it is” (Hemlock Interview). In addition to the six children mentioned above who expressed appreciation for the natural elements of their community, a seventh child said that the Burdwood Islands were their favourite thing about the area. This group of islands is a popular gathering area for local families who picnic, swim, and explore there, but without further questioning it is not possible to determine whether this child appreciates the Burdwood Islands for their wilderness, the activities possible there, or for their social function.

When asked if there was anything that they did not like about their community, six children said there was nothing they didn’t like. The other six listed elements such as there being too few children their own age (mentioned by two children), as well as not enough people in general, the presence of wild animals, the puppies that attack people, concern over people drinking, trees being cut down in the area, and not being able to “just go out to the park, anywhere...I’d like to see somewhere near that’s really fun” (Sculpin Interview).

Eight children shared their concerns when asked “Do you ever worry about your community?” Three children said that they worry that the community population will dwindle so much that the school will close. Hummingbird expressed a concern that “if we don’t get enough students our school might close down and then I think that would really have a huge impact on... the community. I don’t think many people would stay if their kids can’t go to school” (Interview). In contrast, Abra worries that “way more people will come and it will be a big town” (Interview). Other concerns expressed by the group involved the state of the natural world: littering, ocean pollution, and pollution from boats (three children); logging (two children); extinction of animals;

and the impact from fish farms (each mentioned once). One child worries that when “people drink they leave the elders alone... in the house” (Eagle Interview).

Two children said that they do not worry about their community, and two other children said they sometimes worry, but were not able to articulate their concerns. Abra spoke of a concern about “Canada being bombed because of the USA actions”, but doesn’t “really worry” about the Echo Bay community in that respect (Interview).

When asked what they would change about their community if they could change anything, eleven children responded. Of these, six children commented on nature-related issues which supported Robin’s wish to “get rid of some of the things that are preventing or proving to be an obstacle in the way of wildlife” (Interview). Within this subset, getting rid of fish farms was mentioned three times, and reducing pollution (air pollution from boats and burning recyclables, and ocean pollution) was mentioned by three children. Two comments were made about reducing the number of wild animals around the area. Wolf explained the reason for wanting fewer wild animals around: “I can hardly do anything up the hill with wolves and bears around” (Interview). Getting rid of loggers and hunters were each mentioned once, and one child wanted to fix the taste and smell of the drinking water. One child stated that there should be fewer rowboats in the area. The reason for this desire was not clear, other than “It’s everywhere. Everyone practically has a rowboat” (Cougar Interview).

In addition, two children said that they would increase the population of the community, with one child specifically stating a wish for “having a few more kids in school” (Hemlock Interview). One of these children returned to an earlier stated wish for “something near a park” (Sculpin Interview). A wish was expressed by one child

for more sharing of local Native traditions like the spring Aboriginal Day celebration that had been held the year before at Gwa'yasdam's.

When given the choice of moving anywhere in the world, seven of the twelve children said that they would choose to stay in (or in the case of the three children who have moved away from the area, return to) the Echo Bay/Gwa'yasdam's communities. Reasons given for this preference were generally vague and included comments like "I like where I live" (Cougar Interview), and "this place is nice" (Brontosaurus Interview), but one child indicated specifically that they wanted to stay in the area because of the ocean.

Of the five children who would choose to live elsewhere in the world, all chose a city they had visited before. Three of these cities were in BC, one was in Asia, and one child named two European cities. Three of the children stated that their reasons for moving would be to be closer to relatives, while the other two made comments about the place they would move to such as "[There are] lots of fun things to do there. There's still wild animals there but it's a fun place" (Alder Interview), and "There's better stuff to hunt there than just deer... It's a cool place" (Wolf Interview).

Thus, when considering the responses to this set of questions as a group, it appears that the participants feel quite positively about living in their community, and that many would prefer to stay there. It also appears that the children feel that the features that make their community unique are its isolation, small size, and close-knit nature. Additionally, recurring themes of the "wild" nature of the area and the necessity of traveling by boat for school and shopping indicate that these are features of the community that are significant to the children of area.

As worry over the dwindling population of the area arose in several discussions with a number of participants, it can be assumed that this is a significant concern for the children. Over the four years that I taught at Echo Bay School, student enrolment fluctuated from five students to twelve. Every spring, parents would pose concern over whether or not the school would still be in operation the following fall. Pregnancies were celebrated as the promise of future students, and there were often jokes about adding dogs to the roster for the sake of numbers. Thus, the participants in the study who discussed the issue of the declining population numbers were voicing a significant concern of the community.

It seems that concern over the environmental health of the area also caused considerable worry to the participants, as the impact of logging, fish farming, and pollution were all discussed. Further, five of the nine participants who stated they had an important role in the community described their roles as caring for the environment: taking care of nature, not littering, cleaning up garbage, and helping to raise baby fish at the hatchery.

III. Natural Resources and Recreation Opportunities of the Area

The third set of interview questions sought to gain insight into how the participants viewed and used the area's natural resources and recreation opportunities, as well as any concern they had for the natural resources and health of the area's ecosystems. The main questions asked whether participants had hunted, fished, or collected plants for food, medicine or other reasons, and with whom; if they felt that resource-based industries and activities such as hunting, fishing, logging, and fish farms were important and why; what the participants enjoyed doing "in nature"; and if the

participants ever did things to look after nature. Answers to these main questions were further expanded upon with probes and follow-up questions. Below, the responses to questions within this section are further subdivided into those dealing specifically with natural resources, those dealing with recreation opportunities of the area, and those involving concern for conservation or pollution.

Natural Resources

Only two of the twelve children said that they have hunted with relatives for meat which included ducks, deer, and seals. Of the ten children who said that they had never hunted, two of them clarified that while they have never hunted for meat, they have hunted for animals such as worms, salamanders, frogs, and fish for other reasons.

The nine children who said hunting is important all justified it by saying that hunting provides meat, and as Wolf pointed out, “You gotta get meat to eat” (Interview). However, five of this group appeared to wrestle with the issue, and presented arguments against hunting as well. Four children made caveats to their initial support of hunting to make it clear that they felt hunting was important when it was for food and not for “just skin or trophy hunting” (Hemlock Interview). One child did not support hunting for furs or sport, but said that it “might not be so horrible if everybody used everything of what they killed” (Hummingbird Interview). Abra seemed to share this opinion:

I think you should only kill if you are going to eat it or use it for... building your house or something, like if you needed... hide or something to make a coat... and you know it's freezing out, I think that would be okay, but you should get something like a bear that you can eat and use the coat (Interview).

Two of the three children who said that they do not feel hunting is important supported their opinions with “it scares the birds and it makes them...extinct” (Cedar Interview), and that when hunting, “you kill animals that... should be alive” (Sculpin Interview). The third child felt that hunting is not important because wolves might attack people when they are hunting.

All twelve children said that they have fished, and the list of who they had fished with included fathers (six responses), both parents (three responses), friends (three responses), alone (two responses), with family other than parents (two responses), and mothers (one response). When asked “What do you fish for?” one child patiently explained that it is “to get the fish out of the sea!” (Cedar Interview). However, other children compiled the following list of what they have fished for: salmon, shiners (small silver fish found near docks and pilings), halibut, bullheads, flounder, perch, lingcod, yellow-eye (a cod also known as ‘red snapper’), and rock cod. Salmon were mentioned four times and shiners were mentioned three times, while the other fish were each mentioned once or twice.

Ten children stated that fishing is important, with most (nine) responses involving the use of the fish as food. These responses ranged from the nutritional value of fish: “They’ve got minerals that feed your... brain and... they are good protein” (Abra Interview) to the more direct: “Fish taste good” (Brontosaurus Interview). The other comment in support of fishing was that “fishing is fun... and it’s also a lesson for me about patience” (Sculpin Interview). Three children who felt that fishing is important cautioned that it needs to be done in moderation, not for sportsmanship, and that all parts of the catch should be used, “for bait or whatever” (Hummingbird Interview).

However, there were three participants who talked about catching fish (bullheads, herring, and shiners) and then releasing them.

The two children who did not feel that fishing is important had very different reasons for sharing this opinion. One child expressed concern that fish will become extinct if they are overfished commercially. The other child felt that fishing is not important because fish stink. It is assumed that this child interpreted the question to be on a more personal level, as in “Is fishing important [to you personally]?”

Of the eleven children asked if they had ever collected food from the sea (other than the fish they had already mentioned), nine said that they had. Two participants said that they had not collected any other food from the sea, but that they had eaten what other people had caught. Crabs were mentioned by six children. Four children said that they had dug for clams before with their families, and a fourth child said that while she had never dug clams herself, she had eaten them at community potluck dinners. Prawns were named by four children, although one child said that her family had been given them and she had not been involved in catching them. Likewise, the two children who named octopus as a food they had collected later specified that they had not caught the octopi themselves, but had watched while they were caught by a father and an uncle. Three children mentioned having collected edible seaweeds, with kelp and rockweed (also called bladderwrack) each named twice. Sea urchins, sea cucumbers, oysters, seal, and duck were each listed once.

The eight children who were asked who they had collected food from the sea with said that they had collected food with their parents. Four of them named both parents, while three children specifically named their fathers, and one child specifically named

her mother. Three children said that siblings accompanied them as well. In addition, an uncle and a family friend were each mentioned once.

Ten children said that they have collected plants for food. Seven of these children named plants specifically cultivated for food in gardens or greenhouses, such as carrots, Brussels sprouts, kale, avocado, peas, and other vegetables; plums, apples, pears, peaches, and watermelon; blackberries and raspberries; and lemon balm and other herbs. Foods collected from the wild were named by five participants and the list included mushrooms, wild onions, thimble berries, salmon berries, huckleberries, salal berries, and stinging nettles. Each of these plants was mentioned once, with the exception of huckleberries, salal berries, and nettles, which were each named by two children.

Fewer children have collected plants for medicine than for food. Chickweed, fungus, and stinging nettles were each mentioned once, although two other children volunteered information about plants (yarrow and St. John's Wort) that they knew could be used medicinally, although they had never collected these plants themselves. Abra's family grows "chickweed and stuff which would be good medicine" (Interview). Another child mentioned that during a visit to Gwa'yasdam's, they were asked to find a fungus with an elder there: "Someone was really sick, and it's sort of like a tradition kind of thing, and I went and got a shelf fungus. I don't know why, but they wanted it" (Sculpin Interview). Eagle talked about having collected stinging nettles to be used to "make tea... or to smack it on something like... if you have a real pain in your arm... they'd smack it on there" (Interview).

When asked who they collected plants for food and/or medicine with, five of the nine children asked said that they did this with their parents. Most of them named both

parents, (with the exception of one child naming a mother, and another child naming a father) as their usual companions for collecting plants. In addition, grandparents, a grand-uncle, a local elder, and a group of youth from Gwa'yasdam's were each mentioned once.

Half (six) of the children interviewed said that they have collected plants for uses other than food or medicine. The primary use of these plants appears to be aesthetic, as five children reported having picked flowers for uses such as "to decorate the table" (Alder Interview), "to make the house look nice" (Abra Interview), and to make daisy chains and necklaces. Three of these children said that they did this activity alone, one child said she usually did this with friends, and the fifth child did not say who accompanied her. Most children did not identify the types of flowers picked, but Cedar described picking Forget-Me-Nots, and Hummingbird's bouquets included flowers, salal leaves, and ferns, which are "kind of fun to put in bouquets, because they stay green for a little while" (Interview).

Three children also described picking plants as props for use in imaginative games with other kids. Abra explained that "if I was playing with my friends sometimes we might get grass and pretend it's some great herb that can heal you or something" (Interview). Sculpin described helping an older sister who "wanted to make a mud pie so I helped her get some ingredients for her, and it was mostly sawdust and mushrooms" (Interview). Robin talked about picking flowers for "making daisy chains or... necklaces or for playing, making potions like me and my friends used to do" (Interview).

Traditional cultural uses of plants (other than for food or medicine) were mentioned by a few children. Eagle described going with relatives and a group of youth (who

return to the area each summer) to get “cedar bark for making headbands and stuff for the Animal Kingdom [dancers]” (Interview). Hemlock also volunteered knowledge of the use of cedar bark for making baskets and other woven goods.

Three other children shared their knowledge of the traditional uses of some plants in the area, although they themselves had never collected plants for these purposes. Robin shared knowledge of the use of yarrow to help heal “open bleeding wounds... You turn it into a poultice and it will heal better than a lot of medications” (Interview). Cougar was prompted to share information that had been volunteered before the interview began: that some people “can weave rugs or they can weave blankets... from the bark of a tree. And they can begin fires with the sap off a tree” (Interview). Hummingbird “had an idea that maybe people could use... the leaves of salals [sic] and sew it together as a bag because they are very watertight, salal leaves... They have a plastic coating” (Interview).

Hummingbird also mentioned the commercial market for salal leaves. Other uses for plants that were described by children included painting on shelf fungi, blowing dandelion seeds into the wind, and heating cedar with sandalwood oil for use as an aromatic mosquito repellent.

In response to the question, “Are fish farms important?”, all but two of the twelve children either said that fish farms are not important, or are important in a negative sense. Reasons given for this opinion were varied, but the most frequently occurring answer concerned the impact of sea lice spread from farmed to wild fish. Four children expressed this concern which was articulated by Cougar as, “the wild fish... fry [young salmon] go by the farms and there’s so much sea lice that they get killed” (Interview), and by Hemlock as, “the sea lice thing is spreading to... the wild fish”

(Interview). Three children commented on the impact on wild stocks from feeding the farmed fish, with comments such as, “they give the [wild] fish some food and then they are always coming to the fish farms... to get some food and never get their own food” (Cedar Interview), and “... [fish farmers] feed too many fish the farm food and they don’t taste as well as they used to” (Eagle Interview).

Three children specifically mentioned ocean pollution as a concern they have over fish farming, which was articulated by Hemlock as a concern that the farms are “destroying the environment... [because] all of the waste of the fish is going down so much that it’s killing everything it touches” (Interview). Other reasons given for the negative opinions toward fish farms included that the farms are smelly, that the farms feed medications to the farmed salmon that affect the wild stocks, and that “all the preservatives and stuff in the fish” add taste but reduce nutrients (Abra Interview). Abra added that “if people want to eat salmon they should make a point of going somewhere where they can go fishing” (Ibid).

Two children said that fish farms are important, but one child was not able to articulate why. The other child appeared to be confused over what the interviewer meant by fish farming, as Beetle said that fish farms are important “because it could catch fish” (Interview).

It also appeared that two children interviewed who expressed negative opinions of fish farming were unclear of exactly what a fish farm does. This was the case with Brontosaurus, who said that fish farms are not important because “they take the salmon... [from] the ocean [and] feed them to us” (Interview). Another participant said that fish farms are “more bad than good... they catch them and whatever is dead they throw back... in the ocean and pollute it... They drag the bottoms, and they

wreck the bottoms” (Sculpin Interview). It is possible that all three of the participants mentioned above confused fish farms with commercial fishing practices such as those used by draggers.

Of the children who discussed the negative impact of fish farming practices, three also acknowledged positive aspects of the industry. Sculpin lent support to fish farms by stating that “they’re kind of important that we do get to eat fish” (Interview). Robin mentioned that “fish farms are important because they employ people and... they are providing a lot of the salmon stock for... the food stock of the world, but they need to be more controlled” (Interview). A third child acknowledged the careers created by the industry, but said that “people can get other jobs” (Hemlock Interview).

Of the eleven children who discussed the question, “Is logging important?”, five said that it is not important, or that it is important in a negative sense. Four other children cited disadvantages of logging, but also gave reasons supporting the industry. Of the eleven children, five expressed concern over the killing of trees, and two of these children elaborated that “people need trees to ... breathe and stuff like that” (Hemlock Interview). Two other children discussed the impact of slides created by logging on the terrestrial and ocean environments, as well as the concern that helicopter logging practices “... drop most of the logs in the water [and] you... crash boats, you waste the wood, and if it sinks it wrecks the bottom” (Sculpin Interview). Hummingbird stated that “some of the areas where they have just swiped the hillside [is] just like a scrape on your knee and everybody sees it if you’re wearing shorts” (Interview). Other concerns, each mentioned once, included animals displaced by logging large areas, and the fear that trees may become extinct.

Abra expressed concern over the negative ecological cycle created by over-logging:

... if they cut down all the trees the oxygen is going to go because trees take in carbon dioxide and they release oxygen. And we breathe in oxygen so... if they die then we die and animals breathe in oxygen so if [trees] die then [animals] die and then pretty much everything would be dead... everything, all the animals, all mammals and some of the non-mammals, like lizards and stuff, they're breathing oxygen, ...all at the same time, so if there's only like a certain amount of trees, then we can all breathe [the oxygen], there'd be too much carbon dioxide and we'd have to mutate to get to something that could breathe less oxygen and that's not going to happen unless it's over thousands of years (Interview).

Only one child gave unequivocal support to the logging industry, stating that logging creates jobs. Of the four children previously mentioned who were ambivalent toward the industry, employment was mentioned once as a positive aspect, and the need for wood and paper were each mentioned twice. One child said that logging is acceptable if a person is clearing their own property and using the wood to build their home. Of the two children who mentioned the need for paper production, one said that "people need to recycle more [because] the more we recycle, the less amount of trees will have to be cut down" (Robin Interview). The other child who discussed paper production did not mention recycling as a way to decrease logging, but instead said that "there isn't any other way to make paper but I think that they could make paper in other ways... I think someone could invent another way" (Cougar Interview).

Two children's responses to the questions concerning logging were included in the above synopsis, but it appears that these children understood the question to be asking them if logging is important to them as part of their personal lives. Both children said

that it is not. Reasons given were because “I’ve never really had much to do with it” (Eagle Interview), and because the logs are “real heavy” (Beetle Interview). One other child was unable to answer the question, and replied with “I don’t know”.

Recreation Opportunities

When asked what else they like to do in nature, six of the twelve children said that they like to swim. Four children said that they enjoy running, hiking, or walking in the forest. Climbing trees was mentioned by three children. Building and playing in forts, boating, and catching seashore animals (sculpins and crabs) were each mentioned twice. Activities only mentioned once comprised a long and varied list: playing in ponds, playing hide-and-seek, playing with the dog, riding quads, going to school, planting plants, riding bikes, playing on the swingset, collecting seashells, hunting, reading outside, and watching wildlife.

Two children named five different imaginative games that they play outdoors: ‘Animal Rescuers’, ‘Stall’, ‘Lookout’, ‘Hunters’ and ‘Playing House’. The first three games mentioned above were described in great detail, and appear to be elaborate frameworks for role play. For example, ‘Animal Rescuers’ is a role play of finding sick animals and caring for, rehabilitating, and releasing them. ‘Stall’ takes place in a specific area, a forest clearing, and the game incorporates the natural elements of tree roots, stumps, the forest, and the beach as household features and furniture. ‘Lookout’ also takes place in a certain area in a forest and involves a game of collecting imaginary foods from the forest: “... we often cut away the stump a bit and call it bacon. Slabs of old rotten wood and it’s kind of rust-coloured and we call it bacon” (Hummingbird Interview).

Concern for Conservation and Pollution

When children were asked if they ever did things to look after nature, nine were able to give examples of things they had done. Five of these children's answers involved trees: planting trees, weeding around trees, and replanting trees from areas that endanger them. Children explained how these actions show care for nature by comments such as "trees help the animals to eat and stuff... and for air" (Hemlock Interview), and that removing weeds means that they "don't hurt all the grass and the trees that grow" (Cougar Interview).

Five children mentioned actions involving litter as things that they do to care for nature. Picking up litter was mentioned by three children, with one specifically mentioning removing waste (pop cans) from the ocean. Three children also said that they do not litter; one of these children specifically mentioned an effort to keep from spilling soap or oil in the water, as "the fish breathe oxygen from the water and they would breathe oil instead" (Cedar Interview). Robin stated that picking up garbage "whenever I'm walking anywhere.... shows I don't want it to be polluted and that I actually care about the planet and I want things to grow and live without having another obstacle in its way.... I guess I see it as my way of helping out wherever I can" (Interview).

Only one child mentioned recycling as a personal action to show care for nature: "We don't burn anything except paper and wood, which goes into our woodstove. We burn any paper we can ... but we don't burn plastic. We recycle a lot... we just bring it out... to town" (Hummingbird Interview). Hummingbird explained that disposing of garbage in this manner shows concern for nature because they "don't leave it lying around" or "burn it and make a lot of bad smoke" (Ibid). Hummingbird also

mentioned a family concern that burning garbage outside could lead to an unintentional wildfire.

In addition to the aforementioned children's comments on keeping pollution out of the ocean, two other children also mentioned actions taken to enhance salmon habitat. Abra talked about helping parents to "clear logs out of the beach so the salmon can get up [rivers] easier" (Interview), and Hemlock shared a story about walking along a stream and making "a little spot for a fish to go in so it could get away from the current" (Interview).

After prompting on the part of the interviewer to describe an activity she had observed Beetle initiating, Beetle talked about removing crabs from a pile of fishing net that was left on the beach, because the crabs were "dying because they were caught in the net" (Interview). At the time of this release, Beetle had yelled "Hey, we are helping animals!", but did not independently relate this later to the question about helping nature. Beetle's response was not counted in the above tally, as it was only volunteered after I asked her about the event directly. It is useful to note that Beetle was observed taking part in the activity, but she did not equate this with taking care of nature on her own.

When viewed as a whole, the participants' responses indicate a group concerned with maintaining the health of the area's ecosystem. Although all of the children were familiar with edible animals and plants of the area, it seemed to be a recurring theme that most of the children advocated use of these resources (particularly the animals) in moderation. Likewise, there seemed to be significant concern over the environmental impact of local industrial practices and the impact of pollution.

IV. Cultural Understanding

Echo Bay School was fortunate to have “Aunty Stella” join us for a six week program each spring to teach First Nations language and culture. Having grown up in the area and returned to live at Gwa’yasdam’s, Aunty Stella’s passion and concern for passing on the traditional ways and knowledge to the children was truly inspirational. Based on conversations I had with her and other long-time residents, and the use of the locally published *My Elders Tell Me* (Wright, 1996), I was able to develop questions based on specific aspects of Kwakwaka’wakw culture that were of local cultural significance. These included the cave in Shoal Harbour, the Hamatsa, the Bak’was, the Dzunuk’wa, oolichans, a local midden, and artifacts that participants may have found.

Shoal Harbour, located around the corner from Echo Bay (see map on page 6), is the site of a cave described by Thornton (2003):

Indians say that there is a cave on Gilford Island about eighty feet up from the ground where the animals dance. There is a hole just big enough for them to crawl through and when you get inside you see a large room in the rocks. On one wall is the figure of a man with his hands outstretched, palms up, to welcome everyone. This is the secret place where all the wild creatures meet for their ceremonies (p. 16).

When the group of twelve participants was asked if they knew anything about the cave in Shoal Harbour, all but three had heard of it. Two could not remember how they knew about it, but four others said they had heard of it from family, two children said they had heard from friends, and one child mentioned Kingfisher, a local natural historian. Of these nine children who knew about the cave, six had been to visit the

cave themselves, and a few had been there several times. When asked who they had gone with, family members were mentioned four times (with two children specifically identifying mothers and one child identifying a father), friends were mentioned four times, and Kingfisher was mentioned once.

Most of the nine children's associations of the cave were related to First Nations ideas or stories, with the exception of one child who had heard that the cave was the home of a bear. Six children talked about the Native paintings on the walls of the cave, and four children described stories that they had heard that recalled the history of the cave. Eagle discussed the possibility that there is still a box of Native masks buried there from long ago that people today want to dig up but should be left alone. Cougar related that "The Natives say that's where all the animals came from" (Interview), and Abra said that "Indians went there to get their animal spirit" (Interview).

Robin, who described the cave as "calming", remembered two stories about the cave. The first was that the cave was "an old Native cave... where they went for... peace and powwows... a cave where there were their spiritual being... a sacred place" (Interview). The second story was that the cave was used by a group of seven people from Gilford Village who were away from the Village at the time of an attack:

The other story is that it is where they hid out... where they stayed when they had the last potlatch with the other Natives... One of the Gilford Native girls, one of the young women, stole a rattle from the other tribe, and the other tribe got mad about this and they wiped out the entire population except for... five women and two men which were up the hill picking

berries and so the entire Gilford tribe was wiped out. [The cave] was where they were staying when it happened (Interview).

The children who had visited the cave were able to describe it vividly. Several talked about the insects that cover the walls of the chamber. Cougar described these as grasshoppers, while Robin called them large crickets. Abra warned of the wasps' nest above the cave entrance, and also described the rock formation outside of the cave: "There is a chair which looks like it would protect you completely from the rain and maybe people have sat there before... it's just a dig out of the rocks" (Abra Interview). Wolf also mentioned this formation: "First when you get there, you'll see a rock. Sometimes people leave that smudging shell out on it" (Wolf Interview). Although unsure of the reason, Wolf said that people visiting the cave are not able to use their light until they reach the end of it.

While seven of the children in the group had visited the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria on a class trip several years earlier, only one mentioned the replica of the cave that is displayed there. Abra described it as "a structure, they used plaster to make it look like one of the rooms in the cave. And then they put it in the museum in Vancouver, I think it is" (Interview).

The second question asked in this set referred to the Hamatsa. The Hamatsa is the character depicted in a high-ranking dance performed by authorized people, usually the sons or nephews of chiefs, or high ranking women (Wright, 1996). The dance symbolizes the cannibal spirit taking hold of a young initiate, and the villagers subsequently taming the spirit.

When asked about the Hamatsa, only five of the twelve children said they had heard of it before. Four of these children used the word "wild" and male adjectives to

describe the Hamatsa, such as, “it’s that wild man, I guess. That’s what people say anyway” (Wolf Interview). One of these children described it as a dance rather than as a person: “It’s just for men and... it’s like wild men, they dance (Eagle Interview). Alder remembered being told the story of the Hamatsa during a school presentation, but couldn’t recall the details: “There was a young boy... He’s running through the forest or something and... I can’t remember how he went wild... but it changed him or something like that” (Interview). The fifth child said that “the Hamatsa would take the kids that were bad in a basket” (Cougar Interview). Of the five children, two said they had learned about the Hamatsa from friends, and two children could not remember how they had heard about it. One child had been told by a relative during a school presentation.

Another figure significant to Kwakwaka’wakw culture is the Bak’was, a mythical wildman (sasquatch) of the woods. Only two children said that they knew about the Bak’was, and they had different ideas about what it was. Eagle recalled a grandparent who said that it was “just another wild man who goes through the woods” (Interview), and Wolf described it as “a wild woman with a basket that kidnapped kids” (Interview) but could not remember the source.

Local First Nations legend also tells of a wild woman, the Dzunuk’wa. This large, “slow-moving giant... collected children and ate them” (Wright, 1996). When asked what they knew about the Dzunuk’wa, six children recalled hearing about it, and five of these children either described the Dzunuk’wa as a woman or used feminine articles when describing it. Four children told stories about the Dzunuk’wa collecting and/or eating children, with one child specifying that “she grabs the children at night if they’re naughty” (Hummingbird Interview). Wolf, who had described the Bak’was as

a woman, said that the Dzunuk'wa was "the same as the woman [the Bak'was], but it's a man" (Interview).

Two children said that they had learned about the Dzunuk'wa from grandparents, two had heard about it from their fathers, one from a relative during a school presentation, and Eagle could not remember the source. Eagle claimed to have heard the Dzunuk'wa one night during a fire:

We were all standing around a pitfire and we looked at the house that got burned down not too long ago, we could hear it [the Dzunuk'wa] smacking the house and after a while it'd be going down the beach and start crying away and it'd be like, 'Eee...' (Interview).

Alder seemed confused between the Dzunuk'wa and the Bak'was. The two characters were used interchangeably during a story that Alder shared:

...There was a whole bunch of kids in there. It was a big, real big basket. I think it was the Dzunuk'wa who put a whole bunch of kids in her basket and ... then the little boy cut it open and ran and he saw the Bak'was and... no, he saw the Dzunuk'wa or whatever, and he climbed up the tree and he saw her and he ran (Interview).

The next question asked was about the oolichan, a small fish that is collected in local large rivers (such as those at the head of Knight and Kingcome Inlets) in the spring. Traditionally, this fish and the oil rendered from it were considered a delicacy and "an important food source because the run came into Knight Inlet in late March or early April, when other preserved food sources eaten during the winter were depleted" (Pasco and Compton, 1998). Locally, it is still an important fishery, and during some

spring runs of the fish, half of the students would be gone from the school for the week.

When asked, eleven of the twelve children were able to identify oolichans as “fish”, although two comparisons were to bullheads and smoked eels. The twelfth child did not know what an oolichan was, but said that it might have a shell. Of the seven children who have tried oolichans, four said they liked them. The other three had very strong negative associations with the taste, and used words such as “horrible” and “disgusting”.

Three children mentioned associations of oolichans with First Nations traditions. Hemlock described them as “fish that some of the Native people eat” (Interview), and Robin stated that, “you know, they’re part of the Native culture. So you hear about them from the Native... gathering trips” (Interview). Eagle recalled that “Granny used to talk to me in Kwak’wala about that but I don’t remember it. I was a little girl”. Wolf explained the process of catching oolichans:

They’re little fish and you catch them in rivers and other places... you catch them and throw them in the boat. You can make grease out of it or you can just bag it and bring it home and eat it in a couple weeks, or months, or years (Interview).

Additionally, five children mentioned the oil made from oolichans. Eagle elaborated on the production of *tli’na*, or oolichan grease, and on preserving oolichans:

What they do is they cut the fish open and they take all the guts out. And then they grab the fish skin and they dry it out and it turns when it’s like... two to five months, it... melts sort of like you know. And they put it all in a jar and they take all the bones out again and it’s like all, liquid,

and it's gross. Or you can put [oolichans] on a stick and dry them out...

Where you put them on a stick where you lift their gills up... And you slide them on a stick, a pointy one. You can put at least 35 on a stick if it's a long one.... There's this pit fire down here and you put the sticks on there, so that they... get smoked. After that you can pull them off and freeze them and then you can fry them up (Interview).

Throughout the area of the Broughton Archipelago, there are beaches which gleam white from the piles of clam shells deposited there. Known as "middens", these white shells identify the beaches as former sites of First Nations inhabitation. The beach at the Echo Bay School (and the banks leading up away from the beach) is a large midden. Students at the school spent a great deal of time playing on and exploring the beach, both during school activities and after school hours.

When asked the question, "What can you tell me about the white shell beach at the school?", three children described it as a midden, although seven children in total mentioned that the shells came from people eating clams and disposing of the shells there. Five of these children expressed a sense of the beach having been built up long ago, through comments such as, "The Natives who used to live here threw all the clam shells onto a big pile and then... time changed everything and they got washed onto the beach" (Hummingbird Interview), and "People in the olden days... always ate clams when they were hungry" (Wolf Interview). Robin explained that "the white shell beach is the old midden from the village that used to be there" (Interview). Eagle touched on the historical significance of middens:

I think that long ago, when people used to live here, they used to get clams. When they were done with it they'd throw the clams on the beach

and that's how the clams got there.... When it's so white like that, that'd show that... there was a big tribe here (Interview).

Two other children pointed out that the shells forming the beach may have come from sources other than long-ago human consumption of clams. Cedar said that mink and otters may have contributed to the shells, as well as the current teacher (whose discarded shells had a tendency to wander back up into the school yard in the hands of children!). Abra said that in addition to “people eating clams and putting them down there, ... just clams that were on there [the beach] and died” (Interview), would make up the white shell beach as well.

The question about the beach was open-ended in nature, so it is not surprising that some responses involved the children's personal experiences with the beach. Two children said that it is not a good beach for swimming on, as the shells hurt their feet, but Abra said that despite that, “you can swim to Echo Bay Resort from there” (Interview).

Abra also noted that “you can push over rocks and you can find little crabs” (Ibid). Brontosaurus pointed out the organisms living on the beach when he said that the beach “supports lots of life... crabs, sea stars, hermit crabs...” (Interview). Robin recalled a quadrant study the school had done: “We found all sorts of different kinds of life. There was the bugs that lived on the beach, and crabs and...sea anemones and stuff once you go out into the water” (Interview). Beetle mentioned a different kind of animal frequenting the beach: “The [school's] chickens go on it” (Interview).

Two children mentioned non-organic material found on the beach at the school. Hemlock said, “I don't know much about it [the beach] other than it has obsidian...

[Kingfisher] was getting some there” (Interview). Robin talked about how “friends used to find arrowheads and stuff along the beach there” (Interview).

Ten of the eleven children asked said that they have looked for artifacts, and nine of them said that they had been successful. Five children said that they had found Native trading beads, and three had found arrowheads. Additionally, each of the following was mentioned once by children in the group: an old nail, an ear bone from a whale, a cooking stone, old pottery, a rock with writing on it, beaded bracelets, a deer horn, a wood stove and “a little cabin that was used by loggers a long time ago” (Hummingbird Interview). Sculpin described a find as “something that looked like an old Roman shield that I saw in a book” (Interview).

Eight of the children said that they looked for artifacts on the beach, and one also mentioned searching “on the land” (Eagle Interview). Five children said that they searched for artifacts with family, four children said that they have searched with their friends, and one child searched alone. Of these five children who search with their families, two specifically named their mothers, and one named a father, as companions.

Thus, most of the participants interviewed could describe the significance of the cave in Shoal Harbour, oolichans, and middens. However, not as many children were clear on the significance of the mythical figures asked about (the Hamatsa, Dzunik’wa, and Bak’was).

Due to the small number of participants taking part in this study, it was never my intention to make distinctions between children who were and were not of First Nations background.

However, in this case it may be informative to note that:

- of the four children who did accurately describe the Hamatsa, three of them were of First Nations heritage;

- of the five children who did accurately describe the Dzunuk'wa, two of them were of First Nations heritage;
- as only one child accurately described the Bak'was, it is important not to identify this child's heritage to maintain confidentiality.

The topics which participants were able to describe accurately were all tangible objects that they likely encountered in their daily lives. The mythical figures asked about, however, may not have been as clear to the children because they did not play as central a role in their lives. They were, after all, concepts that I had arbitrarily chosen to ask about. Perhaps in the case of the questions asked to illuminate cultural understanding, it is more important to note that the children were familiar with the cultural significance of features of the area that they encountered daily. Additionally, most of the participants seemed to share a concept of the traditional First Nations use and history of the area, as evidenced through the children's discussions of middens and artifacts.

V. Further Insight

At the conclusion of the interview, children were asked if there was anything else that they wanted to add about nature, wildlife, the area, or any questions that had already been asked. Five children took the opportunity to add onto their interviews.

Abra expressed further concern over hunting, fish farming, and logging practices, and this information has been incorporated into the relevant topic areas already discussed previously in this chapter. When asked if the impact of these industries is a concern, Abra replied:

Well, I just don't understand how people can be so blatant and not care. They think "Oh well, I'm going to die soon so I'm just going to ruin it for everyone else that's gonna be born." I think we should look after it and... care about what we want and stuff, but not go for us over... nature and

animals and stuff. It should be all equal, right? ...It doesn't matter if the animal's there, we'll just capture them and take them somewhere else and then we'll build our city there. It shouldn't be that way, it should be they're there so we should move somewhere else (Interview).

Hemlock shared knowledge that "Indians used to get bark from... cedar trees to make baskets and a whole bunch of other stuff" (Interview). Cedar stressed that, "I wouldn't feed any birds or stuff, 'cause they have to find their own wild food... if they come to our place when we have food then they don't get their own food" (Interview).

Hummingbird also shared knowledge about the natural world and discussed a love of wildlife:

I really like birds. I like watching birds. They're a lot of fun. And I'll find a new bird, and then I'll look it up in the book and I'll read all about it and sometimes I'll do schoolwork projects about it... But I also like deer, and ...small animals, like squirrels and things like that. I just don't like mice because my house is full of them and they run across my pillow at night and then they do their thing on... my pillow (Interview).

When asked if Hummingbird's family had bird feeders up, Hummingbird replied, "We're not allowed because... if we put bird feeders up, it'll attract animals" (Interview). Hummingbird expressed a wish that the family could hang up a hummingbird feeder, but noted that occasionally hummingbirds do visit the family's plum trees, which are finally flowering for the first time in more than six years. This led to a discussion about the family's garden of plum trees, apple trees, and roses, and the "rather oppressive" slugs that "eat everything" (Interview).

Hummingbird then went on to describe various birds that frequent the area. Bonaparte gulls, Varied Thrush, robins, Gold-Crested Chickadees, and wrens were all described in detail. Hummingbird shared frustration over the impact of the robins eating the grass seed that had been recently sown, and the “bothersome” wrens that have tunneled into the insulation of the walls:

“A wren goes and hops right into the hole, tears away all the paper that was protecting the insulation, then it makes a little nest in there and bless the little thing, has chicks!” (Interview).

Robin closed with a discussion about the impact that living in the Echo Bay area has had, and the importance of that kind of knowledge:

I know more about nature than a lot of people and it’s... because of Echo Bay. I grew up with it there and everyone needs to, I think, see a bit more, learn a bit more about it. We have to take care of the world and the only way we can do that is by knowing about nature and understanding it and appreciating it for what it really is (Interview).

Three of the children interviewed had moved from the Gilford Island area a year or more prior to the study. They were asked additional questions about how they perceived their new communities in comparison to the Gilford Island area. Hemlock made several references throughout the interview to differences between the new and old communities. For example, mention was made that people in the new community do not help each other out as much (as they do in the Gilford Island communities). When the interviewer asked if Hemlock’s family did outdoor activities such as having picnics, and building tree forts and swings in their new community (as Hemlock had

stated that they did when living in Echo Bay), Hemlock stated that they did not, “cause there’s not as much forest there” (Interview).

In addition to mentioning a dislike of the “system” of a larger school in which “the adults in it are not on the ball”, (Interview), Abra explained that there were both advantages and disadvantages to living in a larger community:

What I like best about the community now is that there’s more people....

There’s more people to play with... it doesn’t take all day to go to town, you just go down the road. And... I don’t really like it because you don’t know everybody, but it’s fun because you can meet new people (Interview).

Robin stated that the advantage of living in the new community is that “there’s kids my own age, ’cause that’s one of the things that I didn’t have in Echo Bay. I loved it out there... but it would have been cool if there were a few more people” (Interview). However, Robin finds the “disrespect for nature” in the new community frustrating and attributes “the ignorance of it” to the fact that:

They don’t need [nature] for their livelihood... they don’t have to depend on it... We wanted heat in Echo Bay, so we’d go and find a dead tree and cut it up, and use it for firewood. Out here it’s an electric stove, they don’t have to have [nature] to live, so it becomes...It’s outside you know, so what, who cares? (Interview).

Overall, the interviews proved to be a useful tool in providing insight into the participants’ concepts of, and connections to, their community and the natural world. Additionally, the discussions generated by the questions asked helped to paint a picture of the physical and cultural experiences that have shaped the participants’ senses of place.

However, the reluctance of some children to answer questions or expand upon answers during a recorded interview was apparent. Therefore, the use of other research tools that did not rely so heavily upon verbal skills (for example, drawings, maps, and excursions) proved useful to gather information from these reluctant participants. The data generated by these other methods is discussed below.

Participants' Drawings

Participants were each asked to draw a picture entitled, "This is Me in My Community". The drawing activity was purposely designed to allow the nine children the freedom to illustrate any aspect of their community that they chose. As would be expected from such an open-ended activity with children of such a wide age range, the participants' drawings varied greatly in detail and content.

Attention was not paid so much to the completed drawing, but to the conversation that followed the activity. Based upon the activities in which the children depicted themselves taking part, the themes of the picture can be grouped into three categories: those illustrating a social aspect of the community, those illustrating an activity involving utilization and/or exploitation of nature and natural resources of the community, and those illustrating a concern for the natural resources of the community. As some of the illustrations included elements from more than one of these categories, they are discussed several times below.

I. Social Aspects of the Community

The locations depicted in the participants' drawings may help to shed light on what the children consider to be their community. Five children mentioned their homes when describing their pictures. Three children mentioned the school in Echo Bay,

although one of these children discussed school events which actually take place at the community hall. One child's drawing included the Echo Bay General Store. Two children's pictures did not include any structures but instead showed outdoor scenes.

While seven of the drawings depicted the artist taking part in an activity with other people, five of these included friends or other people outside of the artists' families. Thus, these could all be considered to show "social aspects" of the community. However, the four participants' illustrations discussed below depicted more specific social functions of their community.

Hummingbird drew the community hall which has been located in Echo Bay since the 1960's and is still used for community meetings, preschool playgroup, the school's indoor PE activities, and school and community social events:

...The building is very special because it's very old. And I think it's very interesting because so many people have used it, in such a long extent of time. Now, the building is basically falling apart, but I still love it. And I love it because... so many happy things happen there and it's fun to go in. It's big and it echoes and it's a good place to play (Interview).

A key element of this illustration is the Christmas wreath drawn above the door of the hall. Hummingbird explained that it was important to note this wreath because "most of the times that we gather here are either at plays or at Christmas time" (Interview).

Alder's picture depicted three people with their bicycles: Alder and two younger children Alder looks after. The scene is set outside of their Granny's house, "in the bush", behind Alder's house. During the drawing activity, Alder discussed that the

picture showed an important role in the community of “watching out for the little kids.”

Part of Eagle’s drawing included a depiction of where older children from Gwa’yasdam’s “hang out”: the firepit. Eagle explained that these fires are usually on weekend evenings and may continue on until 2 or 3 am. Most importantly, no “little kids” take part. Sometimes the youth get into trouble because people living nearby are kept awake by the loud voices and music.

Two houses of relatives were also depicted in Eagle’s drawing. Eagle explained that these were included because they are places to “go hang out”. At one of these relatives’ homes, Eagle seemed to feel more of a responsibility: “I just go see my [relative]....cook and clean... just listen to loud music or if [the relative] is drinking I’ll just sit in my room” (Post-Drawing Interview).

Cedar’s detailed drawing depicted Cedar and the family meeting Cedar’s father, who was returning from fishing. It also included the teacher’s boat (complete with dog in the bow) off in the distance, as she was coming to have supper with the family.

II. Use of Natural Resources of the Community

The bulk of the drawings fell into this group, as six participants’ drawings showed themselves taking part in outdoor activities. Three of these illustrations depicted more recreational or social outdoor activities, while discussions of the other three drawings described family members obtaining food from the natural world.

Beetle’s drawing showed a group of friends (Beetle included) taking part in the outdoor activities of swinging on a swingset, swimming, and bike riding. Eagle’s drawing, already mentioned above, also showed Eagle and some friends hiking and swimming “at the cliffs”. Brontosaurus’ drawing showed an outdoor scene loaded

with organisms such as the teacher's dog, butterflies, birds, and wasps. In this picture, Brontosaurus was on the beach with friends, "picking shells" (Post-Drawing Interview).

Wolf described a drawing as "me and my Dad hunting for my community, for food" (Post-Drawing Interview). The picture was set "in the open where there's not much trees" (Ibid) and depicts two figures standing by their ATV and looking at two deer off in the distance.

Cedar's drawing included many marine organisms but as most of them were drawn in, Cedar would discuss their edibility, as well as comment on how they suited Cedar's individual palate. Comments were made such as, "You can make soup from kelp and it turns green when you put it in water, like magic", and "Red snapper! Definitely my favourite- sweet and sour, yum!" (Post-Drawing Interview). Thus, Cedar's drawing has been grouped under the utilization/ exploitation of natural resources heading as well as the social aspects heading (discussed above).

Cougar's drawing showed a family (Cougar and parents) "looking out to sea" from an organism-encrusted rock. Also included in the picture was a structure used by the family to pull firewood logs off the beach. Bushes in the background of the picture were annotated as "Black currants and they taste really good. We just pick them off the bush" (Post-Drawing Interview).

III. Conservation of Natural Resources of the Community

Sculpin's drawing shows a child overwhelmed by the piles of litter that needed to be picked up. Sculpin was careful to point out that the picture is not accurate, as there is not garbage all over the ground at the school, but that if there was, Sculpin would

pick it up “so a bird wouldn’t die... all kinds of animals wouldn’t die from eating it”

(Post-Drawing Interview).

IV. Elements of Nature Illustrated in Drawings

In looking at the children’s illustrations as a whole, the following elements of the natural world were included: marine organisms (twelve species in total drawn by three children); terrestrial plants, including trees (five types of plants in total drawn by six children); terrestrial organisms, including insects (six species drawn by four children); birds (five species in total drawn by three children); topographical features such as the ocean, cliffs and beach (three features drawn by three children); and seaweeds (two species drawn by two children). (See Table 1 for a detailed list of natural elements illustrated in participants’ pictures). All children included one or more of these elements in their drawings, although the three children (Brontosaurus, Cougar, and Cedar) who drew all of the marine organisms did so in pictures that were relatively more detailed than most of the other drawings.

TABLE 1: REPRESENTATIONS OF ELEMENTS OF NATURE IN CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS

Element	Number of times drawn
Marine Organisms	
seastar	3
scallop	2
periwinkles	1
herring	1
octopus	1
rockcod	1
fish (nondescript)	1
limpet	1
red snapper	1
decorator crab	1
bass	1
anemone	1
	Total: 15
Terrestrial Plants	
grass	4
trees (nondescript)	3
cherry tree	1
Cedar tree	1
black currants	1
	Total: 10
Terrestrial Organisms (including insects)	
teacher's dog	2
deer	1
cat	1
mink	1
butterfly	1
wasp	1
	Total: 7
Birds	
school yard chickens	2
swan	1
hummingbird	1
Stellar's Jay	1
bird (nondescript)	1
	Total: 6
Topography	
ocean	2
beach	1
cliffs	1
	Total: 4
Seaweeds	
rockweed	1
kelp	1
	Total: 2

**Elements counted for the purpose of determining which type of ecosystem was represented more.*

The request for participants to draw themselves in their community was deliberately left open-ended. It was hoped that by having loose guidelines, the children would include more of what they personally felt to be important elements of their community. When considered as a group, the participants' drawings reveal a heavy portrayal of natural resources and natural-world elements (see Table 1). This was evidenced by six of the nine children portraying themselves taking part in outdoor activities, as well as by the inclusion of natural world elements by all participants. Likewise, the fact that seven of children depicted themselves with other people may indicate that they chose to show a social aspect of their community.

Participants' Maps

Mapbuilding proved to be an effective tool for the nine participants to portray the features they felt were important in their community. While all participants were enthusiastic about the process (one child's map extended across three pages), the final results varied in complexity and detail, as was expected from a group with such range in age and abilities. Seen as a whole, the maps provide important insights into the qualities of their community that are valued by the children.

Community features represented in the maps can be divided into two groups: those near the school, and those near the participants' homes. These features are listed in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Participants were asked to include something to represent their school, but what they chose to include around the school was up to them. Five maps included the teacher's trailer, which is located directly outside of the school itself. The school dock (about 100m from the school) and the community hall (about 50m from the school) were each depicted on four maps. Each of the following were depicted three times in

total: the school yard, playground, or park; the flying fox (an obstacle course made up of cables and trees in a wooded area behind the school); the school's chickens and their pen; and the teacher's dog. The swing set, school beach, garden, teacher's cat, and trails in the school area were each reconstructed twice. Features of the school area that were each included only once were the school generator and greenhouse; the heron rookery located in the forest behind the school; the outdoor stage, outhouse, and the Maple tree swing, which are all near the community hall.

Six maps showed the home of Kingfisher, whose homestead is separated from the school yard by the head of Echo Bay and the creeks which run into it. Kingfisher's dock and yard/pasture were each shown three times. The museum and gift shop, the pond, and outbuildings located on Kingfisher's property were each shown on two different maps.

There were two long-established resorts in Echo Bay at the time of the study, each occupying an opposite side of the bay mouth. Echo Bay Resort, where mail is delivered once a week, was included on three maps while the other resort, Windsong Barge, was mentioned only once. In addition, details such as the Echo Bay Resort docks were shown twice, and the laundromat and storage shed once each.

Participants were directed to include their homes on their maps, and all nine children did so. Every child included at least one special outdoor place near their home, and many maps showed more than one such place. In many cases, these locations were a recurring theme, as the same places were mentioned during the interviews or place excursions. This discussion, as well as the inclusion of these spots on the maps and the new information provided during the mapping activity, makes it clear that these places are considered valuable to the children.

The Burdwood Islands, a recreational area mentioned previously, were included on three maps and mentioned by a fourth child during the mapping activity. Two other children drew different islands near their homes; in one case, a child later took me to that island on a place excursion. The other child discussed during the interview the importance of the island as a berry-picking site.

Many other sites in the natural world were identified as places significant to the participants. Three children showed special swimming locations on their maps (rocks or cliffs) and one child showed a beach near home where Native trading beads are sought. Three participants drew the same hill behind their community, although two said that it was important because it is the trail to the graveyard, and the other child said it was significant as a hunting road. One child included a stream behind their home which was important as the family's water source.

Several maps showed children's fort areas (although no child referred to them as forts) which they later took me to on place excursions. Two children included stumps used as places to play which were pointed out during the excursions but which were not the target of the excursions themselves.

Some sites included in the maps were outdoors, but not necessarily as much in the wilderness as those sites previously mentioned. These places included the laundromat, where children sit on the balcony and visit; the picnic tables, where they "play music and hang out" (Eagle Mapbuilding); and the fire pit, where they have wiener roasts and recently got into trouble because they "cranked it up" (Ibid). The swingset near Alder's house was also included.

Only two children included special indoor places that were identified more specifically than the houses of friends or relatives. These two places were a child's bedroom, and a hall used to work out and lift weights.

From the lists generated above, it is apparent that many elements of the natural world were mentioned as being important to the children. These elements, listed as Table 4, are discussed below.

Five children specifically labeled trees on their map, and three labeled clumps of trees as 'forest' or 'bushes'. One child labeled the absence of trees as well: a bare track down a hill created by a slide of trees several years ago. As previously mentioned, two children depicted stumps on their maps. Wildlife (aside from the teacher's dog, cat and chickens!) was included on five different maps. The list of animals portrayed included snakes and deer (each drawn twice) and a dolphin, heron, mouse, fish, and nondescript bird each drawn once. Kelp was also included on one map.

While several children identified certain bays, harbours and channels by their charted names (eg, Echo Bay or Scott Cove), these titles were blocked from their completed maps if they could be used to identify individual children by the location of their houses. Only one child identified a body of water as the ocean, and one other drew waves. However, four maps included freshwater pathways such as streams, creeks, and waterfalls.

Geographical features were present in all maps. These features included the cliffs (drawn by three children), the beach (specifically labeled by two children), and the islands mentioned above.

TABLE 2: REPRESENTATIONS IN PARTICIPANTS' MAPS***SCHOOL AREA***

Features	Number of Maps Depicted in
school (directed to include)	9
trailer (teacher's residence)	5
school dock	4
community hall	4
school yard/playground/park	3
flying fox (climbing structure in forest)	3
school chickens	3
school chicken pen	3
teacher's dog (Thai)	3
old teacherage (apartment attached to school)	2
swings	2
school beach	2
school garden	2
teacher's cat (Gilford)	2
trails in school area	2
school generator	1
school greenhouse	1
heron rookery	1
outdoor stage	1
Maple tree swing	1
Outhouse	1
Kingfisher's house (across beach from school)	6
Kingfisher's dock/bay	3
Kingfisher's yard/pasture/wooded area	3
Kingfisher's museum/gift shop	2
Kingfisher's pond	2
Kingfisher- other	2
Echo Bay Resort- store/post office	3
Echo Bay Resort- docks	2
Echo Bay Resort- laundromat	1

**TABLE 3: REPRESENTATIONS IN PARTICIPANTS' MAPS
HOME AREA**

Features	Number of Maps Depicted in
own house (directed to include)	9
special places (outdoor)	8
own dock/float	6
relatives' houses	3
friends' houses	3
sheds	2
plants/berries/gardens	2
beach	1
own pets	1
special places (indoor)	1
boat	1

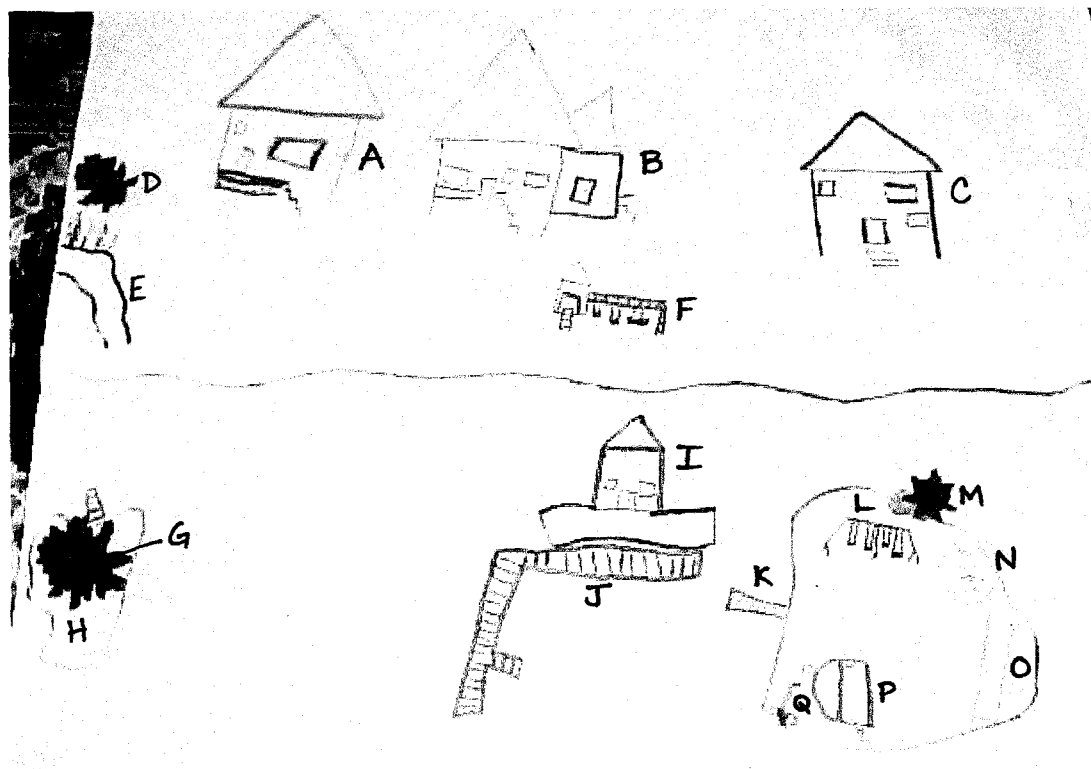
**TABLE 4: REPRESENTATIONS IN PARTICIPANTS' MAPS
NATURAL ELEMENTS OF AREA**

Features	Number of Maps Depicted in
trees	5
wildlife	5
creek/stream/waterfalls	4
specific islands or rocks	4
Burdwood Islands	3 (+1 mention)
cliffs	3
forest/bushes	3
beach	2
ocean/waves	2
stumps	2
kelp	1
slides (clearings created by sliding trees)	1

As can be noted in the preceding tables, a wealth of information was provided by the map building activity. It is interesting to note the numerous details from the school area (and in Echo Bay) that were included in the maps (Table 1). In some cases, the school yard was shown in more detail than children's home areas were, and this may indicate the importance of the school area to the children. Also, as all participants showed outdoor places important to them and only one child showed a special indoor place (Table 3), it can be assumed that these children place a high value on the outdoor environment. Additionally, six children included the home and outbuildings of Kingfisher, a senior who has lived in the area throughout his life (Table 2). This indicates that the children of the area feel that his property is a significant feature of the area.

As previously discussed, the majority of participants did not discuss their water-oriented lifestyles as a significant feature of the community during the interviews. However, almost all children depicted docks on their maps (see Tables 2 and 3). Once again, this may have been a result of participants feeling more comfortable with the active process of creating a map of their community than they did talking about it in an interview.

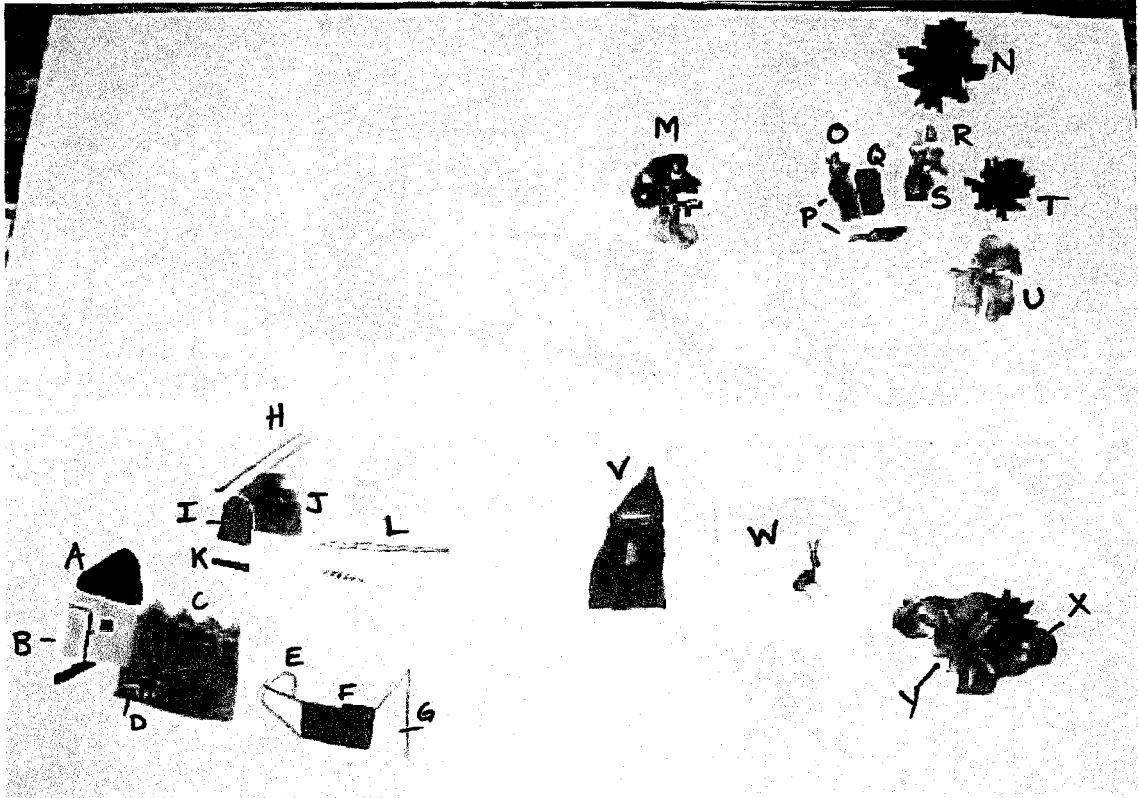
ALDER'S MAP



A Aunty's house
 B my house
 C Aunty's house
 D tree
 E cliffs
 F swingset
 G tree
 H Gilford
 I store

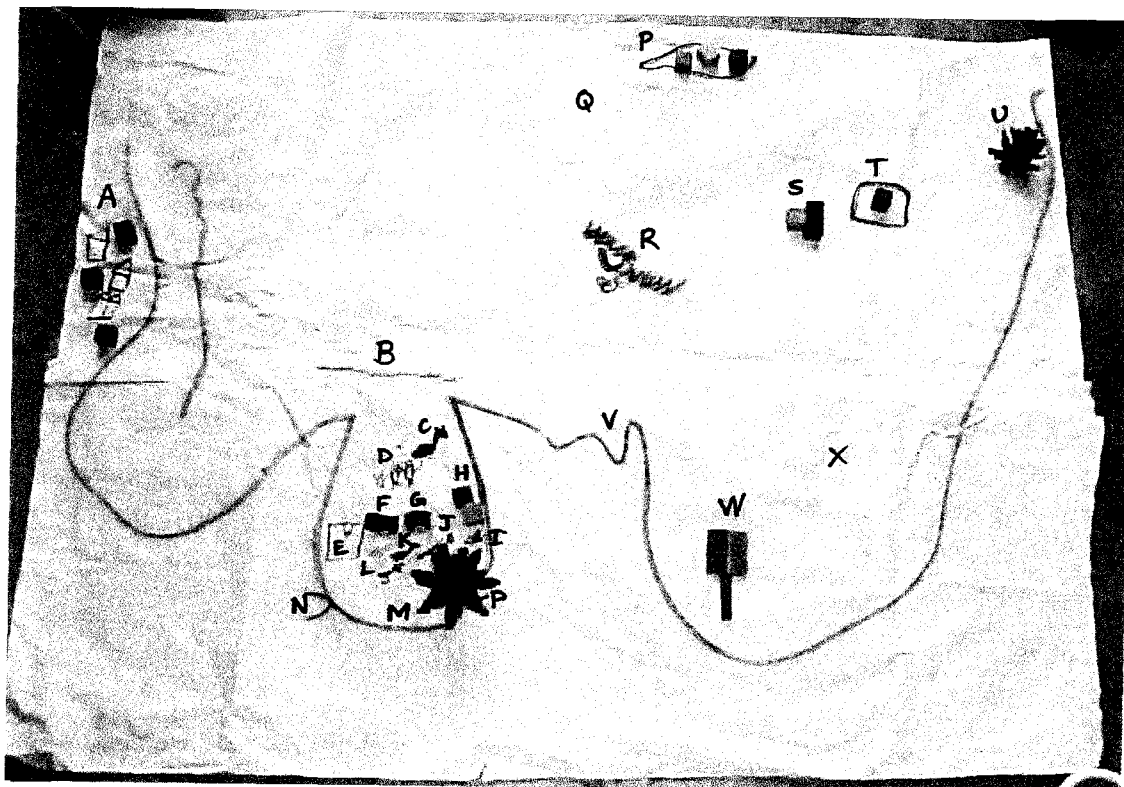
J store dock
 K school dock
 L swings
 M tree
 N trailer
 O school
 P hall
 Q swingset

BEETLE'S MAP



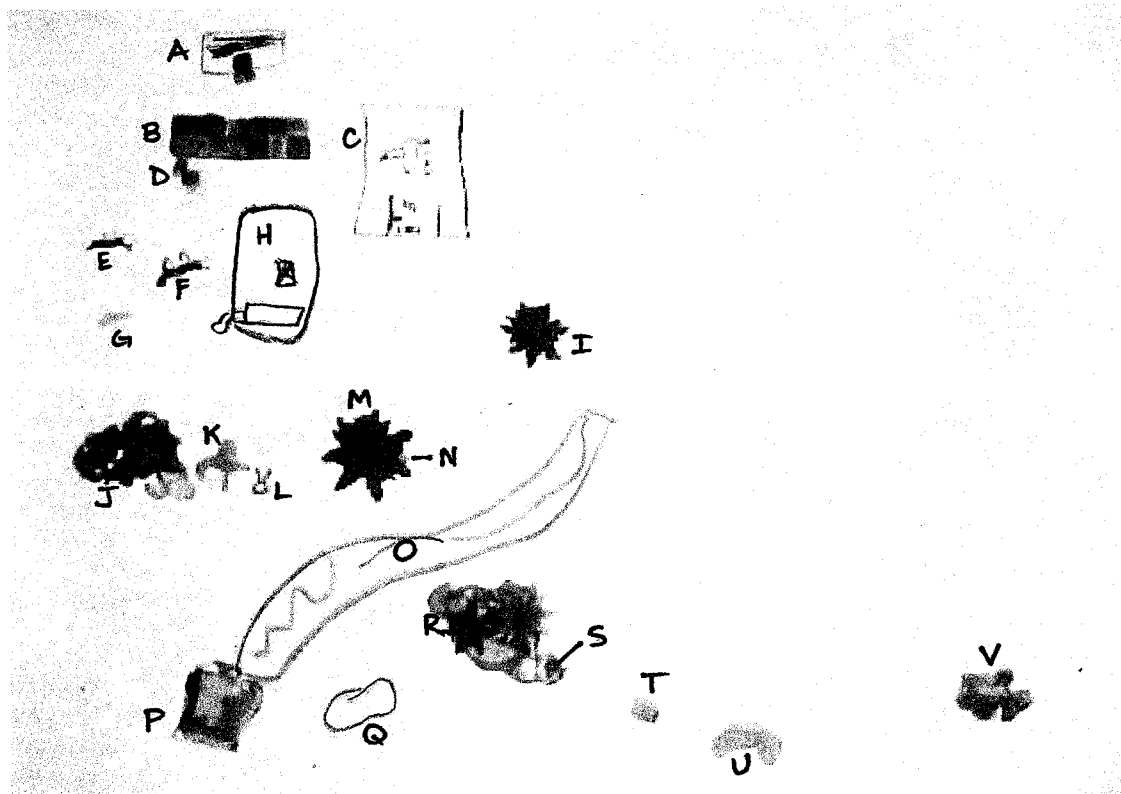
- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|-----|---|
| A | my house | O | rooster (eating a worm) and Thai (teacher's dog) |
| B | my freezer | P | lawn |
| C | berries | Q | school |
| D | Harley [dog] | R | Ms. Sweeney (looking at her flowers) |
| E | rock | S | garden |
| F | raft | T/U | trees |
| G | cliffs (we go swimming on it) | V | [Kingfisher]'s house |
| H | hill [to graveyard] | W | where the horses and donkey used to be (now there are deer there) |
| I | rocks | X | [Kingfisher]'s |
| J | trees | Y | deer in cave |
| K | clay | | |
| L | snakes (bigger'n a tree) | | |
| M | Maple tree swing | | |
| N | tree | | |

BRONTOSAURUS' MAP



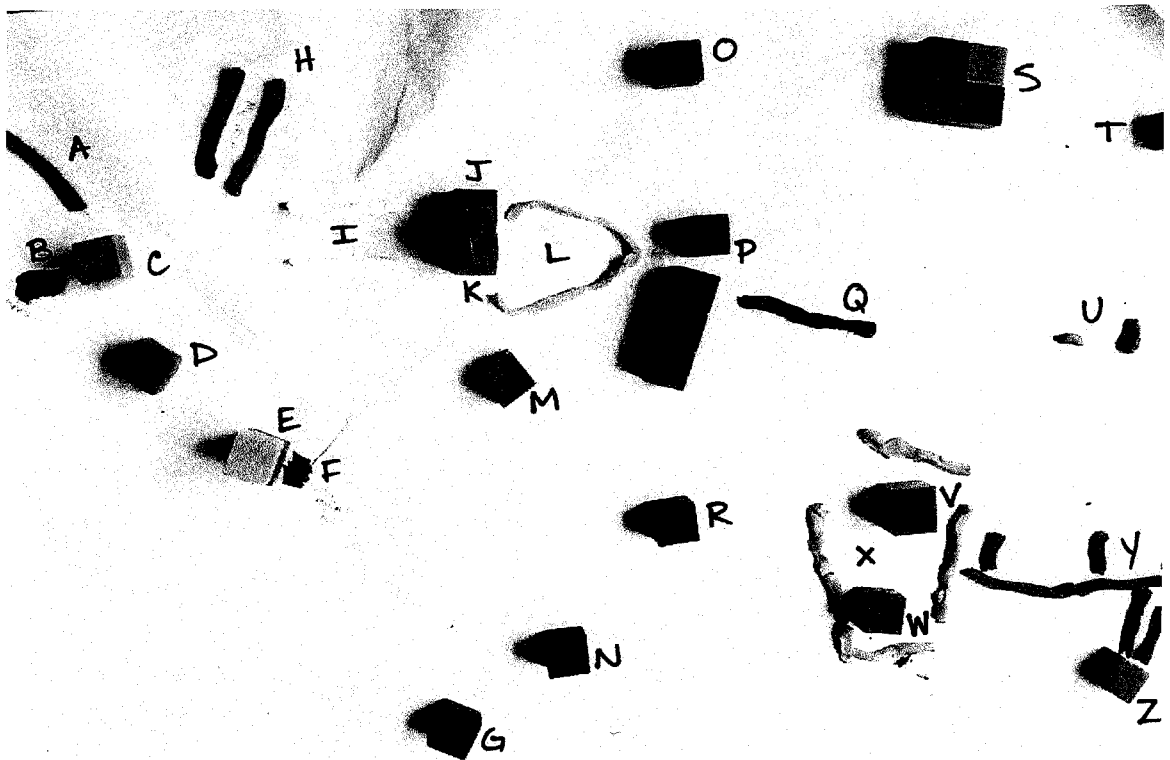
- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---|---|
| A | Gilford Village | O | Burdwoods |
| B | little waves | P | tree |
| C | Thai (teacher's dog) | Q | dolphin |
| D | kids | R | rocks, waves and kelp |
| E | chicken pen | S | an island |
| F | old teacherage | T | my house, and the float that
my house is on |
| G | school | U | tree on land |
| H | trailer | V | [C]'s Bay
[family that moved several
years ago] |
| I | mouse | W | dock across the bay |
| J | Gilford (teacher's cat) | X | [name of bay] |
| K | hens | | |
| L | Sun (school rooster) | | |
| M | Echo Bay | | |
| N | bay that [Kingfisher]'s in | | |

CEDAR'S MAP



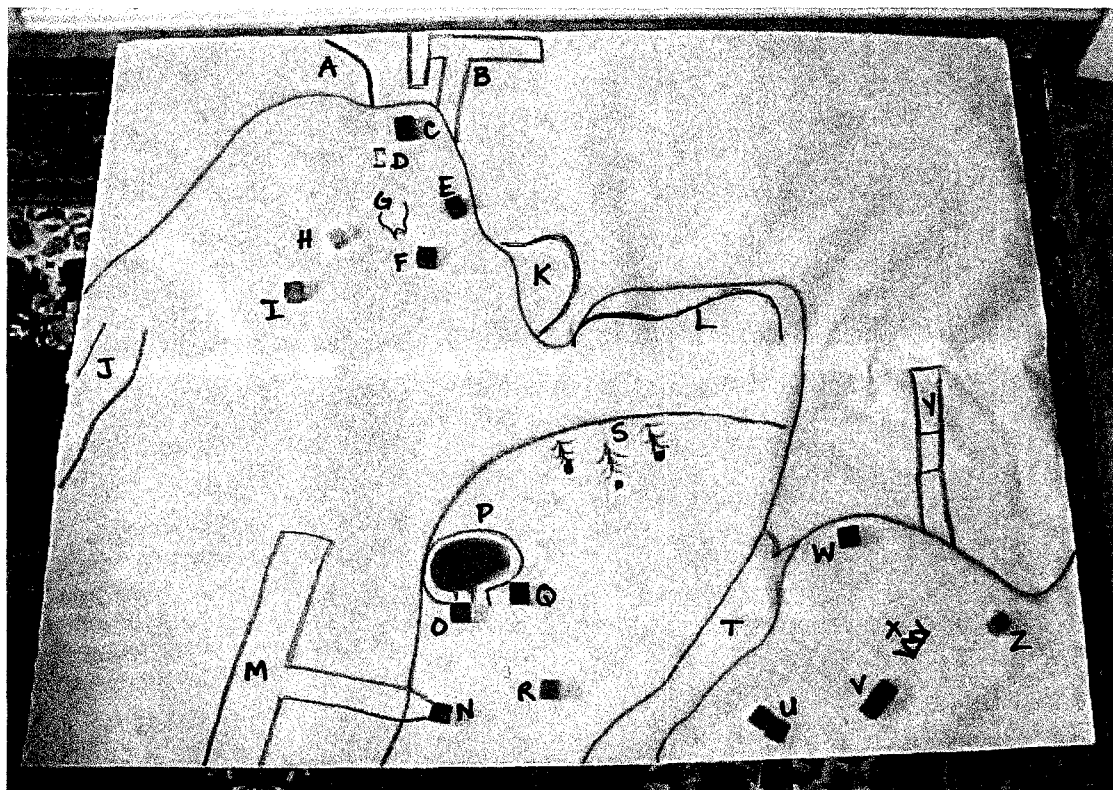
- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| A | garden
(with chives and carrots) | L | fish |
| B | school | M | tree |
| C | chicken pen
(Sun the rooster) | N | bird |
| D | Ms. Sweeney | O | the creek |
| E | Gilfie [teacher's cat] | P | my house |
| F | Thai [teacher's dog] | Q | ocean |
| G | Goldie [school neighbour's
dog] | R | forest |
| H | Ms. Sweeney's trailer | S | snake |
| I | tree | T | tree |
| J | tree | U | Burdwoods (grass) |
| K | heron | V | stump |

COUGAR'S MAP



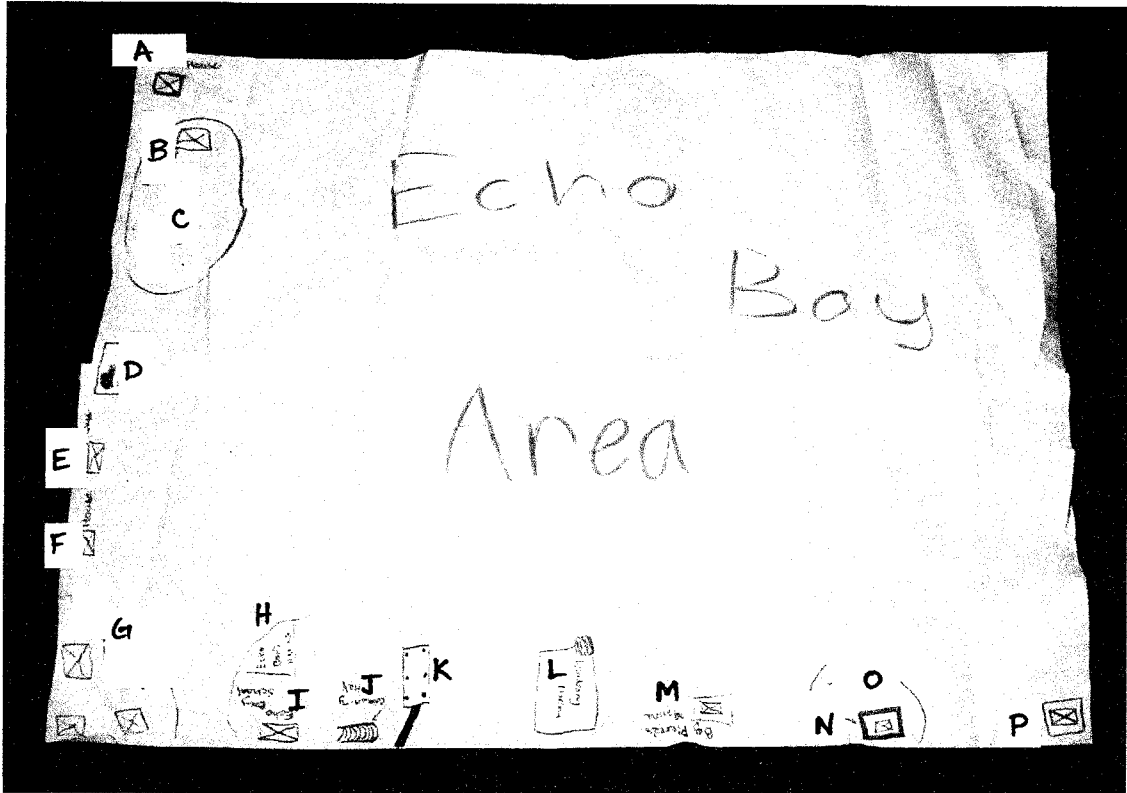
- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| A | stream behind our house | O | Scott Cove |
| B | bushes | P | trees |
| C | our house | Q | trail to salamander pond |
| D | guest house | R | [Kingfisher's daughter]'s house |
| E | Grandma's house | S | Pierre's Bay |
| F | under Grandma's house | T | [Cedar]'s house |
| G | [Kingfisher]'s bird house | U | trees |
| H | my dock | V | store |
| I | school dock | W | place where all the stuff is stored |
| J | old teacherage | X | float store is on |
| K | school | Y | dock |
| L | park | Z | where people do their laundry |
| M | teacherage | | |
| N | [Kingfisher]'s house | | |

EAGLE'S MAP



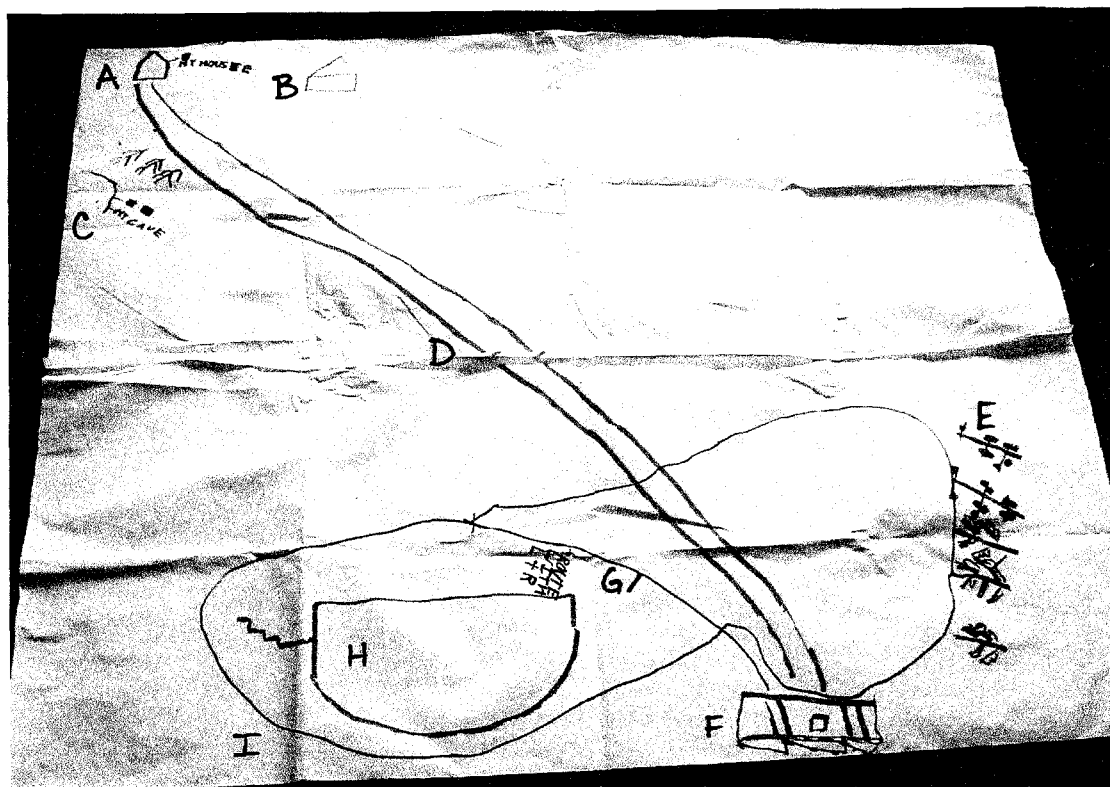
- | | | | |
|---|---|---|-----------------------|
| A | beach (find beads here) | N | [Kingfisher]'s house |
| B | dock | O | museum |
| C | house I live in | P | pond |
| D | picnic table
(play music and hang out) | Q | gift shop |
| E | laundromat (sit on balcony) | R | barn |
| F | hall (lift weights) | S | [Kingfisher]'s forest |
| G | firepit (wiener roasts) | T | beach |
| H | weekend house | U | school |
| I | Aunty's | V | trailer |
| J | up the hill
(walk to graveyard) | W | playground |
| K | rock that we swim at | X | swings |
| L | cliffs (we swim here) | Y | ramp and float |
| M | [Kingfisher]'s float | Z | flying fox |

HUMMINGBIRD'S MAP #1



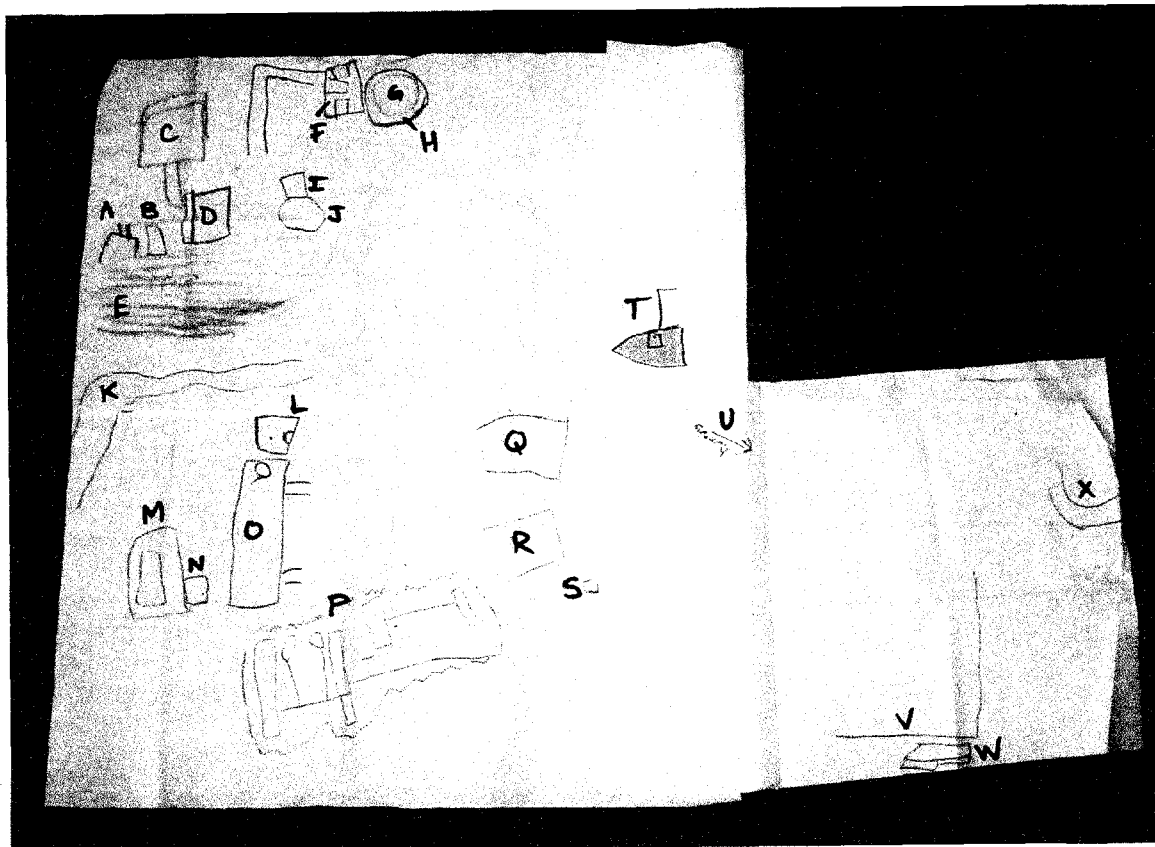
- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| A | [K]'s house | J | community hall |
| B | [Robin]'s house | K | dock |
| C | [name of bay] | L | Windsong Marina |
| D | [Y]'s house | M | Big Pierre's Marina |
| E | [G]'s house | N | [Brontosaurus]'s house
(I visit here) |
| F | [A]'s house | O | [name of bay] |
| G | [Kingfisher]'s house | P | [T]'s house
[family that moved away
several years ago] |
| H | Echo Bay Marina
(mail and visiting) | | |
| I | Echo Bay School | | |

SCULPIN'S MAP



- | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|----------------------|
| A | my house | F | school |
| B | wood shed | G | route with my friend |
| C | my cave | H | hall |
| D | route to Echo Bay | I | beach |
| E | flying fox | | |

WOLF'S MAP



- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|---|----------------------|
| A | green house by field | N | [school] greenhouse |
| B | horse pen | O | school |
| C | [Kingfisher]'s house | P | flying fox in bushes |
| D | wood thing [shed] | Q | hall |
| E | deer in [Kingfisher]'s yard | R | stage |
| F | museum | S | outhouse |
| G | pond | T | my house |
| H | walkway | U | hunting [area] |
| I | chicken pen | V | dock |
| J | [chicken] net | W | boat |
| K | stream | X | road for hunting |
| L | chicken pen / net | | |
| M | [school] generator | | |

Place Excursions

In total, nine children led me on place excursions. Seven children took me to three of their special places, but for reasons already discussed, two other children each showed me only one of their special places.

For the purposes of discussion of the place excursions, it is necessary to differentiate between the children through the use of a system other than the pseudonyms used up to this point. This is necessary because in some cases, the destinations of the excursions could be used by locals to determine the identity of the child. Some children's sites are so personal that a reader familiar with the participants would know which child was being referred to, and could therefore determine the pseudonym this child had chosen. Therefore, in this section of the study only, participants have been assigned numbers.

The locations of the children's special places varied considerably, as did the reasons that the children valued these places. However, rough groupings are possible. Each of the following types of sites was the target of four different children's excursions: forest clearings, cliffs, small sheltered places, and sites used for active purposes (eg, swingsets). Two excursions led to islands, and two to graveyards. One child led me to a beach, one to a corner of the park, and one to a chicken yard. The details of each of the place excursions are discussed, as follows.

Participant 1

All three of P1's special places were small, enclosed spaces. The first of these, a beach cave, is valued by P1 because "it's secret, small, and not many people come down" to it. P1 said that his best friend is the only one who comes to the cave with him, although his parents are aware of its location. P1 said that the cave provides shelter when it rains, and shade from the sun. When he is alone in the cave, he uses it

to read, hang out, or as a retreat when he is sad. When his friend is there with him, they use the cave to play, spy on a sister, and to teach each other things and share secrets. He visits the cave every three days or so.

The second place was the shelter under the walkway leading to the family's dock. The whole area under the walkway is used by P1, but he said that his really special spot is the hollow cave-like area above the high tide line. This space, created by the start of the walkway overhead, is not big enough for him to stand up in, but is big enough for him to crawl into. P1 said that while this place is not private, he values it because "it's a nice place to play sometimes when it's sunny...it's small". The area is used by P1 and his sister to play imaginative games that involve them taking on roles as hermits, gypsies, or animal rescuers. They tend to play there everyday in the summer, but not when it's raining.

P1 was hesitant to share his last place, a small forest clearing where he and a friend had leaned branches over a fallen tree to create a shelter. P1 said that the most important things about this place is that "it's very sheltered... and it's pretty secret". Creating the log tent that they were currently working on meant that they had "to work really hard", which was "something to look forward to every day after school". At this site, which P1 and his friend visit several times a week, they talk about things, and use it as a base to play their "gun games". They have also visited the site to have a picnic with a parent and a friend visiting the area.



Photo 8: P1 in beach cave



Photo 9: P1 walkway shelter
Cave is to the far left end of the walkway; dock is to the right

Participant 2

The first place that P2 led me to was her chicken yard. However, to get to the yard, we first had to walk up the hillside that her home is perched on- which provided an opportunity for a garden tour. P2 pointed out at least twelve different plants (many of them wild) along the way. Once we had reached the chicken yard, she pointed out that the chicken pen itself had recently been moved, and the family was now preparing the old site for a garden. The new yard was thick with weeds, grass, and brush that the chickens had not yet scratched down. Standing in the yard, we could look out across the water of the channel below.

P2 said that the most important thing about this special place is that it's where the chickens live. What she likes best about it is that "it's wild", and she likes to play there by running around, although she said that the chickens are too shy to run with her. While we visited the area, she found the chickens in the brush of a partially-cleared area behind the chicken house (outside of the pen) and spent considerable time following them around. She visits the area every couple of days, alone, or with her mother.

Our excursion was interrupted by a natural-world encounter, described in my notes:

...we were drawn to the beach to see what was making the squeals and groans we heard coming from the dock. I asked if she thought it was a bird, and she told me it was otters. A closer look revealed that it was indeed otters- who didn't seem to mind an audience as they mated. After considerable speculation over what they were doing- "Isn't it cute that they play by climbing onto each other's backs?" she asked, we resumed our interview.

The second place shown by P2 was on the deck of her home, where her father built her a wooden horse complete with bridle and halter. P2 feels that the most important thing about the deck is “that you can look out to sea”, and what she likes best about it is that she can ride the horse, which she does every day. She usually rides alone, although she will share the horse with friends sometimes.

My notes following the third excursion explain the setting of the Burdwood Island Group:

The Burdwoods are a group of idyllic, white-shell beach islands where the locals congregate for picnics, swimming, and visiting during the warmer seasons. P2 chose the Burdwoods to share with me as one of her favourite places. Indeed, her delight in exploring the islands was evident, as she spent the entire trip clambering from tidepool to rope swing, from mossy clearing to mud flat, chatting all the while about both the terrestrial and marine life she found.

P2 explained that the most important thing about the Burdwood Islands is that “it’s wild”, and she likes it best that “it’s open”. When she is at the Islands, she likes to run, swing on the rope swing, and catch sculpins from a tidepool. Her parents usually accompany her, and they often have a fire burning while they are there. She visits there less than once a week.

My notes from the afternoon explain the seriousness of sculpin stalking and tidepool gazing:

Most of P2’s time and energy on the island was spent trying to catch sculpins from tidepools. She told me that “there are ones with red eyes, but I’ve never caught one”. Her running dialogue through most of her attempts focused primarily on descriptive differences between the

sculpins- size, colour, activity level. While she was primarily interested in the sculpins, she also commented on other organisms she found- mainly, anemones and hermit crabs. She wondered if the large hermit crab we found that was hanging out of its relatively small shell would be happier if we found a bigger shell for it. She also speculated about whether or not it would trade shells with another hermit crab who had a bigger shell if they met.



Photo 10: P2 displays a sculpin caught from a tidepool.



Photo 11: P2 explores tidepools at the Burdwood Islands.



Photo 12: P2 on rope swing at the Burdwood Islands.

Participant 3

P3's first excursion led to "The Club":

'The Club' is a clearing in the forested area behind the teacherage, in the school yard. A short, very steep scramble straight up the hill (through the salal) led to a more open area with a minimal amount of brush. The day I visited, a mound of moss and grass clippings (likely taken from the pile across the school yard where the Custodian had dumped the grass clippings from mowing the school yard) had been dumped. Trees provide a cover over this area. (*Notes taken post-excursion by Interviewer*).

P3 explained that the most important thing about the Club is that she can hide from the rooster there. What she likes best about it is that it's a hiding place, but she also uses the area to play a game that involves "good kids" and "bad kids", to play house, and to hide. P3 mentioned four friends that often play there with her, and she said that she goes there a lot. The site includes a gated doorway (made with sticks woven across an opening) and a pit bathroom.

The following excerpts from my notes provides a background to the history of the second site shared by P3:

Gilford, the cat that I brought to Echo Bay, turned out to be quite a hunter and students often spent morning recess inspecting, and disposing of, the evidence of his previous night's kill. Often, this involved parading around the yard in a funeral procession (Wolf at the front flaunting the carcass and Cougar at the back of the line dragging a shovel and frowning that the animal should be buried now). The burial followed- either at sea or in the ground in one of the "graveyards".

The graveyard P3 shared with me was a flat spot of land at the base of a stump. A sharp drop on the beach side led to an area above the high tide mark, while the other side of the graveyard was somewhat sheltered by trees and brush. The total area of the spot was not big enough to allow more than three children to stand next to the burial area without stepping on it. Sticks shoved in to the ground, and two crosses fashioned from yarn and sticks, marked where the remains of some rodents and birds rested. Two of the mouse carcasses were still visible on top of the ground.

P3 felt that the most important feature of this area was the “buried mousies”. She likes that it is close to the water, and that she can hear birds. She and her friends hold funerals there, with the cat. In describing the funerals, P3 said “We pray... we be quiet... [and after the mice are buried] they turn into dirt... and they go up to heaven”. The children also climb and hang from the trees to pretend that they are on a ship.

P3 referred to the third place visited as “The Hiding Tree”. The tree sits on a ledge above the beach, near the edge of the school yard. The thick brush around its base made it hard for me to access the small clearing on the beach side, but P3 was able to squeeze through with ease. P3 said that the most important thing about this clearing is that she can see birds and bees. She likes it that it is “up in the air” (ie, on the ledge above the beach). She uses the area to hide while playing games, and has found that if she is quiet while she is hiding, “sometimes birds come around”. She visits the area “all the time” with friends, and they climb up the tree to “stand on branches and pretend it’s a ship”.



Photo 13: P3 at "The Club", closing gate behind her.
Note the pile of imported grass in the background!



Photo 14: Funeral held for dead bird.

Participant 4

The first excursion with P4 was to the area under the school dock's walkway. The sharp slope of the ground beneath this construction means that at the uppermost point of the fort, the roof is only about 15cm above the land, and this nook is used by P4 and his friend as storage space for comic books and toilet paper. Further down the slope, there is room for a child to stand. The floor itself is a dirt slope, but the area off to the

sides of the hideout is covered with a combination of long grasses, roots, and scrubby wild vegetation. P4 has dug a pit toilet nearby.

The hideout is frequently used by local children. Many times over the years I lived in Echo Bay, I was surprised by children jumping out from under the walkway and growling at me, pretending to be bears woken from hibernation or trolls catching Billy Goats Gruff. (The nature of the attackers often coincided with the theme being covered in school). One afternoon P4 and his friend had bounded out from under their cover and hollered "Border patrol! Show us your passport if you want to enter!" as I tried to step off the walkway. Luckily I had just come from the general store and was able to throw licorice at the problem to bribe my way into the country. *(Notes written following excursions with P4)*

P4 told me that the important thing about the area was that he and his friend go there whenever they can, and he likes it because it is a secret hiding place, although he acknowledged that it's "not really secret". When he and his friend play there, they play games in which it is their secret hideout. They play there about two days a week.

P4's second excursion led us to a forest clearing that he said was important because only he and his friend know about it. His favourite part of it was the toilet that they were in the process of building. They play spy games and hide and seek here several times a week. The site itself is relatively enclosed, with the earth forming part of the back wall and a fallen tree providing a front boundary.

Our third trip was to an island in front of P4's house. He apparently visits this island himself, traveling to it in his rowboat. P4 feels that the most important thing about the island is that it has good hiding places, and that it's an otter home. He plays house there alone, but doesn't visit it very often.



Photo 15: P4 entering his forest fort.

Participant 5

As P5 had moved from the area, I was only able to visit one of her special places during a weekend visit back to the area. She led me on a hard climb up a hillside, described in my notes:

The trail climbed straight up the cliffs that form one side of Echo Bay, and in five different places, we had to put blind faith in ropes dangling over steep rock faces. P5 showed no hesitation over pulling herself up with these ropes, which were tied to trees above. P5 shot ahead of me the whole way, and twice I had to ask her to stop to reel in the spool of line that was in her pocket- it had snagged on some branches and played out as

she charged up the path. When I asked her what the string was for, she told me it was in case we got lost so that we could mark our way.

The climb was worth it for the view alone, as we could see Echo Bay directly below us and had an impressive view down Cramer Pass. P5 told me that the most important thing about the cliff is “that it’s the wilderness”, and she likes it because she can “see a long ways” from the top. She did not visit the site very often when she lived in the area, but she told me about picnics and paper plane launches that she has had at the cliff with her parents.



Photo 16: P5 climbs to get to her special place.
(Interviewer climbed right behind her!!)



Photo 17: View from P5's special place, the cliff.

Participant 6

P6's first excursion was to "Stall". My journaling, done immediately after our visit to the area, explains the setting of this fort:

Stall itself is a clearing in a treed area within sight of P6's house. It is located in a truly natural setting- a stream runs along one side of it, and it is bordered by the ocean along the front side. It is evident that the area sparks a great deal of imaginative play, as P6 described so many of the games and scenarios that she and her brother play there. She has furnished the area with household items and refuse that she has recycled into props for these games, and has also used items found in nature (clam shells, tree branches, salal leaves etc) for the same purpose.

P6 feels that Stall is special because it is small, and her reading helps her to imagine a lot about it. She said that she likes "how it has so many natural things... that look

like furniture”. She plays in the area every day, sometimes serving her parents imaginary tea, but usually playing there with her brother. Their games include imaginative scenarios based on books they have read (*Animal Rescuers* and *Swallows and Amazons* were both mentioned), and usually involve natural or found objects being used as props. P6 also mentioned she uses a stump called ‘The Lookout’ as part of her games and to check the area for bears. Additionally, she showed me a retreat that she said is “a good thinking spot if you don’t want to be disturbed by your little brother”.

Our second excursion was to P6’s trampoline. She said that her trampoline is very special because her Grandmother gave it to her, and because she can play so many games on it with her brother. She explained that it is often incorporated into the scenario that they are playing in the Stall area, although there are some games (such as Freefall, Horsey, and Rabbit) that are played independently on the trampoline. They use the trampoline on a daily basis.

The third excursion with P6 was to the forested edge of the Echo Bay Provincial Park. A brass plate mounted on a brick structure commemorates military training done in the area (by Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry) in 1973, and P6 referred to this structure as “a monument for a princess”. P6 described how she and her friend had accidentally discovered “a funny kind of dirt” that yields clay when combined with water: “We had all this dirt on our feet and then we went over to wash our feet off and then we only used a little bit of water so that when we came back... our footprints were embedded... in soft clay”. Since that time, P6 has dug clay from the area to make “clay pots and bowls and things”, as well as used the area around the monument to play house and to hide from other children. She used to play often in this area with a friend who has since moved, so P6 said that “it’s kind of a place where I can

remember her... it's also a memory for a lot of happiness". She does play in the area now with other friends, but not as often.

The space between the monument and the brush of the forested area behind it creates a small space ideal for children to hide in during games. P6 recalled that it was "hard to stifle our giggles... we would hide when people were playing Wave and... the catcher would walk by and sting himself in the nettles".



Photo 18: P6's special place, "Stall"



Photo 19: A meal created from all natural foods in "Stall"!



Photo 20: P6 collecting "Bacon" from a stump.

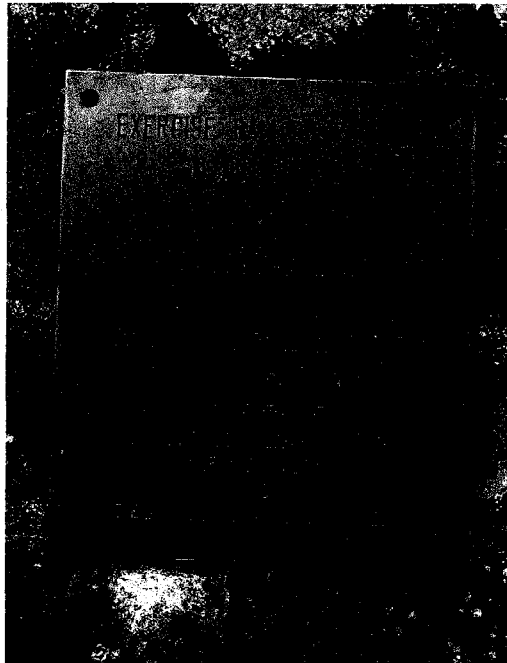


Photo 21: "A monument to a princess"

Photo A. Morton

Participant 7

Participant 7 was reluctant to take part in the place excursions. This is possibly due to the fact that I could not work with individual children at Gwa'yasdam's, as discussed previously, and his special places might have been private. However, he did share one of his places with me: the cliffs. The scene which I encountered when I arrived to do some place excursions with the children of Gwa'yasdam's is described below:

When we came around the corner on our way to Gwa'yasdam's that afternoon, there were kids (ten of them- relatives were visiting) everywhere! They all piled out of the water (and off the cliffs) to get over to the beach to meet us. We nosed our boat into the beach so that I could jump out to visit with the kids. As my partner tried to back out to tie up at the dock, the kids yelled and begged loudly enough that he heard them over the noise of the boat engine and came back to give the older kids a

ride over to the cliffs. They all bailed out of the boat over there and spent the next half hour or so jumping off the cliffs and climbing back up. In the meantime, the younger kids kept me busy throwing crab apples (from a pile they had amassed on the beach from a nearby tree) into the water for them to retrieve. When all of the kids to be interviewed were finally out of the water, their teeth were chattering so badly that I kept the interviews short so that they could go and warm up.

P7 said that the most important thing about the cliffs is that “it’s a good place to dive off”, and he likes it that there are bigger cliffs around the corner. He also likes walking around the top of the cliffs, to “check out other places”. He named a group of friends and relatives with whom he visits and swims. P7 said that he doesn’t visit the area that much, but that his last visit there was three or four days prior to my visit.

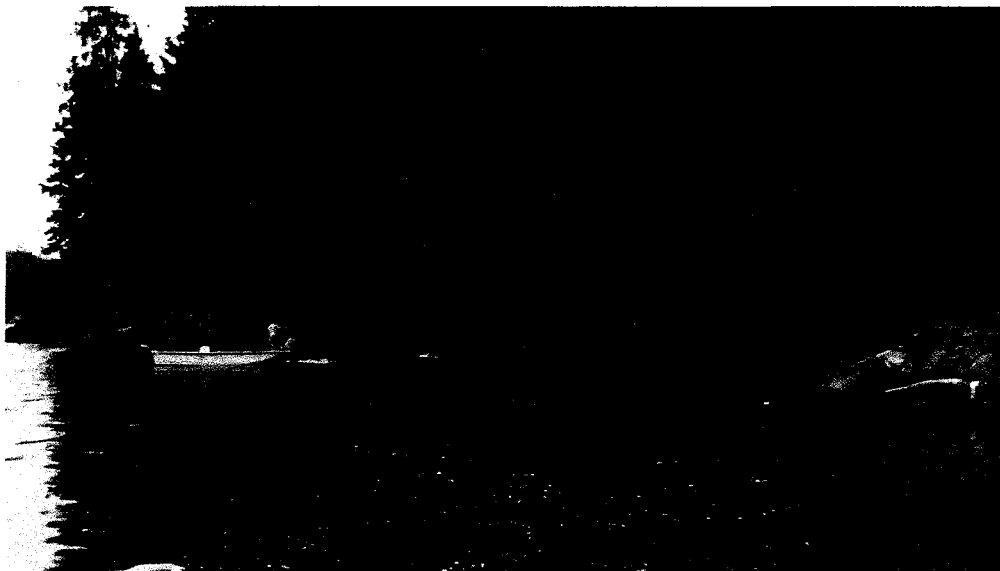


Photo 22: Cliffs used for swimming at Gwa'yasdams

Participant 8

P8 was swimming at the cliffs the day that P7 took me to the cliffs for a place excursion. She told me that the most important thing about the cliffs is jumping off of them, and that she likes it that she doesn't get cut when she is swimming there. She swims there "lots" with her brother.

The second place that P8 shared with me was the community's new swingset. My notes from that afternoon reflect the reality of my excursions with this group of children:

It was hard to record all that P8 said, as she climbed around on the structure the whole time we were talking and I had to follow her with the tape recorder. It appears that the swing set is a hub area for all the kids from Gwa'yasdam's to hang out at, as ten children were congregated there the afternoon I visited. I have also observed children (a range from toddlers to teens) hanging out in this area on other visits to Gwa'yasdam's.

P8 told me that the most important thing about the swingset, and the part she likes best, is the donkey. (A donkey is a two-seated swing on which children face each other and pump while holding onto the pole in the middle). She also likes the monkey bars and slide on the new set, as she said that the old set only had donkeys on it. P8 said that she only visits the swingset when it's not raining, and that there is one friend in particular that plays with her there.

The third excursion with P8 was a walk up the dirt road behind Gwa'yasdam's to the graveyard. As was the case with all of my visits with children from this community, we had an entourage. This was in part because a mother had expressed concern over going up the hill without a large group, and partly because eight children

and a dog wanted to go with us. We set out to visit the graveyard, but the journey involved rest stops at a mud puddle, a water tower, and a log framework left by a crew that had been cutting shake blocks. Because of the boisterous group, it was impossible to find a calm moment to have a focused conversation with P8. Therefore, I just enjoyed the tour and decided to ask the questions the next afternoon, when I could sit with her alone. Obviously, this was not the ideal situation as it removed us from the location, but it was the most practical solution.

P8 told me that the graveyard “is important... because the people are dead”. She told me that what she does there is “watch the people”, with her friend and her mother. Based on other conversations I have had with her and mother, I believe that she was trying to convey that her mother reads her the names on the headstones when they visit there. She did not say how often she visits there.



Photo 23: Road to graveyard



Photo 24: P8 found a tempting mud puddle while en route to the graveyard.

Participant 9

P9 was also swimming at the cliffs on one of my visits to Gwa'yasdams. She told me that the most important thing about the cliff is that it's a place to swim, and she likes jumping off the rocks. She also visits the area with friends to sunbathe and rock climb. She said that she does not visit the area every day, but that she goes "when it's real hot out or just whenever we go swimming".

P9's second excursion was to the swingset, where she told me that it's important because it's a place to play. Her favourite part of it is the monkey bars that span the top of the structure, although she also swings and slides on it. She said that she goes to the swingset everyday with "all the kids" to play games on and around the structure. She visits the site on her own and when she is watching younger siblings.

P9's third excursion led to the beach near the laundromat at Gwa'yasdams, an important spot because "it's a fun place to hang out". She talked about catching "real big bullheads" in the tidepools, searching for trading beads, swimming, and just

walking along the beach, in the company of friends and relatives. P9 said that she visits the beach often, “just about everyday when it’s not raining”, but that she will also walk along the beach when it is raining.

My notes from that afternoon explain what is involved in getting to this particular part of the beach:

To get to the beach, we had to wade through tall grass and scrub brush growing on the hill above the high-tide line. On the way down, P9 warned me to watch out for puppies, bees, and snakes. We were joined by a crowd of children (9 in all, ranging from 2-12) who waded into the water and turned over rocks in search of eels and crabs. Several children spent considerable time trying to catch bullheads in the three tidepools.

P9 said that when they catch bullheads, they save them for “about an hour” and then they put them in the ocean. She explained the fine art of bullhead-fishing: “...just go real close to them and then they kinda come towards us and then we scoop it. Or we’ll just go like that [motion of cupping hands] and kinda get it stuck in our hand ... [also] we use shells or tin cans”. She would like to catch eels as well but thus far they have proven to be too elusive. If she could catch one, she would give it to her brother.



Photo 25: P9 combs the beach for beads.



Photo 26: Children picking berries at the beach at Gwa'yasdam's.

The place excursions proved to be a valuable tool in observing how the participants connect to their place. Sites shared with me were valued by the children for use as secluded hiding places; places where imaginative games took place; sites of

exploration; sites for picnics and “hanging out”; and recreational places (such as swimming beaches). Through all of the excursions, it was apparent that places shared with me were indeed significant to the children and I found myself honoured that they were willing to share these places, especially considering the personal and sacred nature of some of these sites.

Chapter 4: Adult Interviews

Families of all twelve children involved in the study were sent survey questionnaires with an attached letter requesting the opportunity to interview parents and guardians using these questions as an outline. As previous verbal feedback from parents had indicated that many were uncomfortable being interviewed and recorded, the letter also offered the choice of completing the survey form on their own, without being interviewed. In the end, only one parent chose to be interviewed, and seven others responded by writing in their answers themselves and returning the questionnaires.

The twelve children involved in the study represented nine families, and of these, seven families responded. One set of parents chose to answer the questions independently of each other, which resulted in a total of eight responses. Results and discussion of results for each question follows. In each case, the italicized question is the question asked on the main survey. The wording of questions may have varied slightly to allow for more accurate responses from adults who had moved from the area, and for adults who were heavily involved with the children in the study but not necessarily as parents.

Q: How long have you lived in this area?

Overall, adults that responded to the survey have lived in the area for a considerable time. These periods range from 8.5 to 19 years, and averaged 12.9 years. One respondent noted that he/she had lived in the area most of their life but did not give a specific number of years.

Q: Have you ever lived anywhere else?

All eight of the respondents have lived elsewhere. While not everyone identified other places they have lived, the locations that were mentioned include BC cities and areas (5 locations), other provinces (1), and other countries (3).

Q: Why do you choose to live in this area?

Responses can be grouped as follows:

- close to nature/ocean (4)
- beauty/scenery/richness (4)
- peace/quiet (3)
- rural/away from city (3)
- neighbours/people (2)
- independent lifestyle (2)
- school (2)
- mail service (1)*
- employment (1)
- family lived there (1)

* this could be interpreted to mean that the respondent would prefer to live further from Echo Bay area but does not because mail is delivered to Echo Bay. At the time the survey was completed, mail was flown into Echo Bay three times a week; service was reduced to once a week in spring of 2003.

Thus, the majority of responses indicated that the primary draw of the area is its natural, rural character, its beauty and peacefulness, and the roles that the ocean and natural world play.

Q: In terms of your child/ children, do you think this is a good area to live? Why?

All 8 respondents agreed that the area is a good place to raise children. Reasons given included:

- closeness to nature (5)
- safety/cleanliness (5)
- children learn to be self-sufficient/individuals (4)
- encourages imagination (2)
- one-room school (1)
- free of advertising (1)
- children are close to one another (1)
- peacefulness (1)
- lots for children to do (1)

Q: In terms of your child/ children, do you have any concerns about living here?

Concerns listed were:

- ocean/water safety (3)
- safety (nothing specific identified) (2)
- weather (2)
- wild animals (1)
- distance from hospital (1)
- lack of extra-curricular activities (1)*
- lack of communication in "information age" (1)
- lack of high school (1)

* the comment that accompanied this statement indicates that this parent used to be more concerned about this, but now feels that the “best thing is unstructured time where highly creative play can occur”.

It appears that the primary concern of the parents is over safety, with water safety the foremost concern. This is not surprising, given that the families live on and travel over water daily, and thus are dependent upon the weather for safe and comfortable travel.

Q: Can you describe any sense of community you feel here?

All but one of the eight respondents indicated yes and descriptions can be grouped as follows:

- everyone helps others/“are there for each other” (7)
- potlucks/social events/celebrations held (4)
- family-like bickering and bonding (3)
- trust among community members (2)
- “The whole community looks out for our children”
- safe feeling (1)
- members work together for common causes/projects (1)
- rich in culture (1)

Q: (If yes) Do you see that sense of community being passed on to the children of the area? How?

The seven adults who discussed this topic raised a variety of points:

- children can relate to others (different ages/ethnicities/cultures) (4)
- children see responsibility to help others/social responsibility (4)

- children observe meetings/decisions/dealing with conflict (2)
- children feel safe (1)
- children involved in celebrations/parties (1)
- children involved in group projects (1)

It appears that the adults of the area value the close-knit, family-like nature of the community, and that they perceive that the children benefit from the adults' modeling of inclusion and support of each other.

Q: How often does your child play outdoors?

Due to the open-response format of the survey, answers were not standardized.

Seven answers indicated that their children played outdoors every day:

- Every day (3)
- All the time (1)
- Every day, 1-5 hours (1)
- Every day, 1-12 hours (1)

The other respondent indicated that children are seen "outdoors a lot".

Q: Do you set rules for your child/children about outdoor play?

(If yes) What are the rules?

All eight respondents indicated that their children do have rules concerning outdoor play. All but one of these responses involved supervision and safety:

- wear a lifejacket (3)
- tell adult where you are going (3)
- tell adult if you change your plans about where you are going (2)

- don't go outside yard without dog (2)
- stay in sight of adults (2)
- don't go on the dock/boat without adult present (1)
- stay within a set boundary (1)
- don't take food or drink outside (concern over wild animals) (1)
- don't harm plants or animals (1)

Q: What sort of things does your child do outdoors?

The list generated by the eight respondents was quite varied, but there were some commonalities:

- fish (4)
- garden (4)
- play on beach/swim (4)
- play in rowboats or kayaks (3)
- collect living things (tadpoles, sculpins and bugs) (3)
- hike or run in forest (3)
- play on playground equipment (slide, swings, trampoline, bike) (4)
- have picnics/wiener roasts (2)
- play with dog (2)
- pick berries (2)
- collect nonliving things (eg, fungus, shells) (2)
- engage in imaginative play (2)
- play low-organized games (2)
- play organized games (soccer) (1)
- climb trees (1)

- camp (1)
- entertain visitors (1)
- explore (1)
- view wildlife (1)

Q: What sort of things do you do with children outdoors?

Again, a varied list was generated, but many of the same themes were recurring:

- fish (6)
- hike/walk (4)
- play on beach/swim (4)
- camp (3)
- have picnics/wiener roasts (3)
- do yardwork (firewood, brush clearing) (3)
- garden (2)
- go in rowboats/kayaks (1)
- entertain visitors (1)
- plan/ attend community events (1)
- hunt (1)
- take part in organized sports (1)

Q: What are your priorities for how your child is raised?

Seven people responded to this question, and it was evident that instilling respect for the child's own and other peoples' feelings and cultures is a priority for this group:

- respect and understanding of other people/cultures (6)
- children's security, self esteem, and feeling of being loved (5)

- respect for nature and living things (3)
- safety/health of children (3)
- children's independence and freedom to make own choices (2)
- honesty and trust (2)
- exposure to town (1)
- reading (1)
- conservation ("Don't waste") (1)

Q: What is your biggest concern for your child, or for the children of the area?

The majority of the eight respondents expressed concern over the safety of their children:

- health/injury/accidents (6)
- how others treat them/integration into larger setting and school (3)
- abduction (1)
- world state (1)

Within the first group of responses, concern over health and injury, several specific factors were mentioned. One parent's concern was specifically over wild animals, while another expressed concern over transportation to town in the event of an injury. Other responses included "survival" and "dangers of highways".

The concern over how children fare once they leave Gilford Island was addressed by three parents with teenaged (or nearly) children. As the school in Echo Bay does not offer programs past the Grade 7 level, children need to leave the area when they are ready for high school. One parent described a concern over "integration into larger centre (ie, high school) with those whose priorities may be self-serving, consumer oriented, or focused on image rather than substance". Another parent simply stated

that when a child “is leaving to go out for high school education, [there is] a lot of fear and uncertainty”.

Q: Are there stories about the history of your family that you try to pass on to children? What are they about?

Seven of the eight respondents said that they do share stories of family history with their children. Five of them elaborated on this:

- One parent stated that both parents try to teach their child the different cultural backgrounds that they come from, and about the different forms of society that they grew up in.
- Another adult passes on stories about how their family came to be in the area, and what life was like in the country they moved from.
- One parent tells her children stories about the war experiences of her mother.
- One parent stresses stories about “family get-togethers with relatives long gone now”, and stories about her own youth growing up in different parts of Canada.
- One adult explained the importance of sharing the family’s history:

I always stress the family tree, who we are related to. I feel the importance of our culture, that family togetherness is so important, [and] that spending time with our Elders is very important. This is where we get the insight of who we are, through culture and language.

Q: Are there things about plants and animals that you try to pass on to children?

What are these things?

All eight adults said that they try to pass on information about plants and animals.

Six of them gave examples of what they share:

- Respect for all living things, and realizing that all life is worthy of existence, whether it serves us or not (4)
- Seeing the world as a whole and recognizing the interdependence of all life (3)
- The idea that animals are necessary for survival, and that we should not hunt more than we need (3)
- Information about using plants as natural remedies, as well as information about which plants are harmful (2)
- Not to feed wild animals (1)

Q: Are there things about this area that you try to pass on to children? What are these things?

Six adults responded with “yes”. Two others did not appear to understand the question, as they both wrote question marks in the space. Of the six who did respond, five gave examples:

- Concept of stewardship as a human responsibility;
- “The importance of the environment and how [life] has to feed off one another in order to become what it is... and how [the environment] can control itself”; salmon and their life cycle; the sounds of the whales; to appreciate whatever is around them; an appreciation for what is natural;
- To experience and appreciate the wild and the self sufficient, independent way of life that is part of living in an area without modern conveniences; connection with the natural environment; connection with neighbors; the history of the area which has “been inhabited and used by the aboriginal nations who have shared this overlapping territory since the ice age [and who] have long held traditions and rights that are not always respected by non-aboriginal

institutions”; an understanding of the customs and culture of the First Nations; a respect for their traditional way of life; the necessity of careful management of this area and its resources to keep the environment intact for future generations; stewardship is everyone's responsibility;

- Stories both of personal experience and historical significance;
- Knowledge and experience of harvesting traditional Native foods such as seaweed, clams, and fish; cedar bark picking and use; cultural events such as dancing, singing, and crafts.

While a great range of topics was generated, some common threads did emerge.

There were three mentions of the traditional First Nations use of the land and its history, and two parents discussed instilling an appreciation for the natural world. As well, two adults stressed the importance of individuals feeling responsibility for stewardship.

Q: How does this area differ from where you were brought up?

As one parent grew up in the area, only seven responded to this question. Six drew comparisons between the more urban, less natural areas where they grew up and the world in which they are now raising their children. Comments are summarized below:

- Two adults made references to the lack of nature in places where they grew up, with comments such as “I grew up in the middle of concrete”, and “I was brought up with everything synthetic... more material”.
- Three adults said that there are more wildlife and wild lands where they live now. One mentioned how the wildlife is different than where she grew up, as there are “not as many cool reptiles” where she lives now.

- One parent made references to a childhood in another country in big cities with no nature and lots of traffic.
- Four parents said that there are fewer people where they live now than where they were raised.
- Three adults noted that the ocean plays a bigger role in their lives now than where they lived before.
- One adult commented on the fact that there is “no power, real phone, shops etc” where she lives now, while another noted the lack of organized activities such as “sports teams, Guides/Scouts, fairs, etc”.
- One parent noted that in the Gilford Island area there is “less private ownership of land and resources”.
- When viewed as a group, the parents who responded to the survey have lived in the area for a considerable time, many having chosen to move fair distances, (and in some cases, from urban centres) to live in the isolated, rural community. It appears that one of the primary appeals of the area is its immersion in the natural world, and the opportunity to bring children up in a safe and wholesome environment. The adults seem to place a high value on the close-knit, family-like atmosphere of the community, and on the opportunity to bring their children up in a situation where respect for other people, the environment, and cultural traditions are modeled and instilled.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter presents an overview of the research project and a discussion of its findings. It begins with a brief summary of the research project, then moves into a discussion of the study results and their connection to the related literature. The third section presents educational applications and elaborates on the significance of the study. The fourth section considers implications for further research.

Summary of the Research Project

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into how the children of the Gilford Island area connect to the natural world, how living in their isolated community has shaped their sense of place, and to explore any concerns that they might have for their community. Specifically, the research questions addressed were:

1. How do children living in the isolated island community of Echo Bay area view their community and the natural environment that surrounds them?
2. How have the physical and cultural experiences of living in the isolated island community of Echo Bay area shaped the sense of place held by the children living there?
3. What concerns do these children have for the health of their community and natural environment?

Due to the small number of participants (twelve in all, although not all children took part in all activities), and the intimate nature of the research, qualitative research techniques were used. However, these methods had to be varied to accommodate the range of cognitive development, verbal ability, and attention spans in the multi-aged group. Research tools included semi-structured interviews, drawings, map-building,

and place excursions. In order to obtain as complete a picture of the children's worlds as possible, parents and guardians were offered the opportunity to contribute through a questionnaire or interview.

The group of children who participated varied in gender, age, and cultural background. However, due to the small sample size, it is not possible to break out data (for example, to compare responses of boys to those of girls) to determine the role that gender, age, or cultural background play in the children's perspective of their community and natural environment, or in the development of their sense of place. It is possible, however, to note some trends that emerged from the data when looking at the group as a whole. The relation of these trends to each of the research questions is discussed below.

Discussion

How do children living in the isolated island community of Echo Bay area view their community and the natural environment that surrounds them?

When asked what they consider nature to be, many of the participants named associations with the forest ecosystem, whether by directly identifying nature as "trees" or "woods", or by discussing activities usually done in the forest, such as hunting or hiking. Other associations with nature included wilderness and wildlife, but none of the children specifically said that they associated the ocean ecosystem with the idea of nature.

The lives of the children of the Gilford Island area are intricately woven with the ocean. They travel upon the ocean daily, and all of the participants have fished for food. Most have collected and/or eaten a range of other foods from the sea, and many of the children described spending time on the beach pursuing activities such as

exploring, swimming, or catching organisms from tidepools. Most of the participants included docks (their own or others') in their maps of important places in the area. In drawings and discussions, children generated a long and varied list of seashore and marine organisms with which they were familiar. Concern for the health of the ocean was expressed by several children when discussing the impact of fish farms and litter on the ocean and its organisms.

When listing their families' rules for outdoor play, children seemed to be aware of the potential hazards of living so close to the ocean. The need to wear lifejackets, as well as the requirement for adult supervision when playing on docks, was mentioned by several children. However, the importance of water safety rules was not stressed as much as the need for adult permission (or, in some cases, supervision) regardless of whether children were playing in the forest or near the water. This is supported by the adult responses to the question regarding rules for outdoor play: the majority of the rules cited involved the need for adult knowledge of, permission for, or accompaniment with, children on outdoor excursions.

Thus, the children of the area are obviously familiar with the ocean and its ecosystems. However, the fact that not one child mentioned it when discussing their ideas of nature suggests that they do not consciously associate the ocean with the concept of nature. Likewise, when describing their community, the only mention of the ocean-oriented lifestyle were the references to travel by boat instead of by bus. Although eleven of the twenty-three place excursions led to beaches, nine of these sites were used recreationally for activities such as swimming and fort making, and no mention was made of the organisms or marine environment at these nine sites. These omissions, when considered with the fact that the children's lives are so dependent upon the ocean, indicate that the children are not consciously aware of the importance

of the role that the ocean plays in their lives. It is possible that this is a result of *how* closely the children live in tandem with the ocean; they may be too close to it to be able to consciously separate it from themselves. I was unable to find other studies that illuminated this phenomenon, and I would be interested in pursuing this line of research further at a later date.



Photo 27: Child retrieves a mask lost while swimming.

When asked if they fear anything in nature, most children said that they are afraid of wild animals (specifically, cougars, wolves, and bears). Only one adult said that they shared this concern, although several made references to cautions taken to guard their children from wild animals (eg, rules about taking the dog along when leaving the yard and not taking food outside). As the children clearly indicated that the rules for close supervision when they are playing outside are due to the threat of wild animals, it is possible that the parents convey more of a sense of danger from wild animals to their children than they did to the interviewer. It is likely that children fear wild animals as a result of their parents' cautions about them playing in the forest. In any case, this fear has resulted in at least one child wishing that there were fewer wild animals in the

area. However, the fear did not seem to quench most of the children's adventurous desires to explore "wild" places such as the forest.

Bixler and Floyd (1997) suggest that "disgust sensitivity and desire for modern comforts may have a greater effect on negative perceptions of wildland environments than the more commonly reported overreactions to snakes and other wild animals" (p. 462). This statement was based on their study of eighth-grade students in suburban and rural communities, although certainly not communities as isolated as those of Gilford Island.

The study of the children of the Gilford Island communities did not reveal evidence that as a group, the children felt that nature was "scary, disgusting, and uncomfortable" (Bixler and Floyd, 1997, p. 443). Bixler and Floyd outline Helson's (1959) theory that 'adaptation level', a "range of a given type of stimulation to which someone becomes accustomed" indicates a person's tolerance level and is dependent upon "past experience, current physiological state, momental mood, and genetic predisposition" (p. 448).

If this is indeed the case, then it can be argued that since the children of Gilford Island have grown up in a natural world setting, their past experience has played a strong role in developing their significantly wide range of tolerance for the potential fear, discomfort, and disgust of the wilderness described by Bixler and Floyd (1997). However, it is also possible that the children's vast internalized knowledge of the wilderness displaces any irrational fears that might be held by children who are not as familiar with the natural world. For example, the participants in the study of the Gilford Island communities did not cite fears of benign tide pool creatures, but they did discuss more realistic fears of large predators.



Photo 28: Children of the Gilford Island communities showed little disgust sensitivity toward the natural world.

As a group, the children described the Gilford Island community as small, isolated, and lacking in amenities. However, the children appear to feel positively about their community, as favourable adjectives were used to describe it and most would choose to live in the area if the choice was theirs. Additionally, the lists generated of activities that children take part in, and of the wildlife present in the area, indicate that most children agree that “there’s always something to do, there’s always something to watch” (Abra Interview).

Throughout all research activities, the participants made references to a variety of outdoor activities in which they enjoy taking part. Many of the activities, such as swimming, hide-and-seek games, imaginative play, and playing on playground equipment, involved groups of children. This suggests that the children share an appreciation for the social and recreational aspects of their community. Of the twenty-three place excursions, nineteen were places that children visited with people other than their parents.

One parent indicated that she used to be concerned over the lack of structured extra-curricular activities, but now feels that the “best thing is unstructured time where highly creative play can occur”. Certainly, this seems to be appreciated by the children as well, as many of their conversations about activities in their special places described a great deal of role play and imagination.

Appreciation for the social support of the community was also expressed by the children and their parents. All but one parent indicated that they feel a sense of community in the way that everyone in the area helps each other in times of need despite any hard feelings or “family-like bickering” between community members. This sense of support was also alluded to by children with comments about people of the community helping each other out, and about gatherings for Christmas and events. Children that have moved from the area discussed that their new communities lacked this sense of family. Bauch (2001) points out the importance in “partnerships that are built on social interaction, mutual trust, and relationships that promote agency within a community” (p. 205), particularly in rural areas. Certainly, comments made by both the parents and the children indicate that the residents of the Gilford Island area appear to have developed partnerships based on interaction and trust.

When drawing themselves in their community, most children drew themselves as part of a group taking part in an outdoor activity. While five of the nine children included their homes in the pictures, all of the pictures depicted outdoor settings. Several of the locations shown in the drawings did not include any buildings at all and instead were set in the forest or on the beach, which is further support that these children’s lives are very outdoor-oriented. Additionally, when asked what they liked best about their community, six children responded with comments about the natural world, which included references to the water, forest, and wildlife.

The fact that only three children included the school or school activities in their pictures of themselves in the community hints that the children may not consciously think of the school as playing a significant role in their community. During the mapping activity, participants were directed to include the school on their maps, but what they included around the school was up to them. Thus, it can be assumed that those children who included features of the school yard (for example, the four children who showed the school dock or the three children who included the flying fox) did so because they felt these features were an important part of the school area. Additionally, eight of the twenty-three excursions were to sites near the school yard. None of these eight excursions were led by children who lived at Gwa'yasdams, which means that four of the six children who live in locations other than Gwa'yasdams' Village shared special places near the school.

While only two parents directly identified the one-room school in Echo Bay as a reason for living in the area, I am aware that the status of the school is an ongoing source of concern for many of the parents. Over the four years that I worked at Echo Bay School, I spent four springs reassuring parents that the school would indeed be open the following fall. On several occasions during my time teaching there, the school day was interrupted by television film crews there to document the plight of the dwindling one-room school. In most cases, these crews had come to the area to film something else (for example, locals' opposition to the expansion of fish farms), and had been sidetracked by the romance and novelty of a one-room school reportedly on the brink of closure.

Bauch (2001) points out the vital role that schools can play in rural communities:

Merz and Furman (1997) wondered... if rural communities, particularly those that are isolated or depressed can sustain a viable community

without a school. In rural communities, important community meanings are embedded in the school and its traditions. Community social capital, based on a sense of place, can be actively engaged through the agency of a rural school” (p. 213).

I have heard the school in Echo Bay described countless times in casual conversation as “the heart of the community”, although this sentiment did not surface as a general trend in the survey responses of the parents and guardians. This could possibly be due to the fact that there was not a question on the survey that specifically addressed the school’s status. Of the two adults who said that they chose to live in the area because of the school, one stated a belief that “all kids deserve to go to a one-room school.... they’re allowed to be themselves, [and given] a chance to believe in themselves”. While the children themselves did not seem to have concerns with their education beyond the low student numbers in their school, several parents did express concern over how their children would be accepted once they leave to attend a larger school. One participant who was completing the last year of elementary school expressed her excitement over moving to a city for high school. According to Bauch (2001), this trend is not uncommon:

On the one hand, many rural parents would like to keep their children close to home, and many rural students would prefer to work among family and friends in a familiar community... on the other hand, some parents and students are oriented outward beyond the community with the hopes of acquiring the basic literacy and other skills needed to move out of the community, go to college, and seek a job or profession that will allow students to live a successful life beyond the community (p. 207).

Interestingly, when building their maps, more participants showed the home of Kingfisher, which is across the mouth of Echo Bay from the school, than they did the teacher's residence, which is located directly beside the school. Kingfisher is a senior who has lived in the area his whole life, and whose passion still lies in exploring the nooks and crannies of the area, and collecting artifacts. His home is the sight of annual community events such as the Easter egg hunt and Halloween party, and details of Kingfisher's homestead, such as the dock and outbuildings, were depicted in many participants' maps. Also, references were made to Kingfisher and his role in the community throughout the interviews and mapping activities. For example, one child said that it had been Kingfisher that had told her about the cave in Shoal Harbour, and another child discussed having learned from Kingfisher about the presence of obsidian on the school beach. Thus, it appears that Kingfisher has played a significant role in educating the children about the natural world around them and its history, and is considered an important component of the community by these children.

When looked at as a whole, the data generated by the children of the Gilford Island area presents a picture of a group heavily influenced by the natural world, and by the forest ecosystem in particular. Although the ocean plays a significant role in the daily lives of these children, they do not view it as a component of their lives as important as that of the forest ecosystem. The wild animals and the recreational opportunities possible in the forest play a far more significant role in shaping these children's sense of place than the ocean does, at least as consciously expressed by the children themselves. However, their familiarity with the ocean and its organisms, as well as the tendency for the children to be drawn to it for their special places, suggest that the ocean does play a significant role in shaping their connection to their place. It is possible that the safety concerns of parents make it more uncommon for a child to go

exploring alone by boat than to go exploring alone in the forest behind his or her house.

While the children described their community as small, remote, and lacking in amenities such as stores, they do seem to value the small family-like atmosphere that the setting creates. Despite the small number of children and the concern that a population decline could result in school closure, the children seem to value the social aspect of their community, as most depicted themselves taking part in recreational outdoor activities with a group of children, and many of their place excursions were to places shared with other children.

How have the physical and cultural experiences of living in the isolated island community of Echo Bay area shaped the sense of place held by the children living there?

As previously discussed, the natural world around them plays a significant role in the lives of the children of the Gilford Island area. The relatively open rules that parents have for their children's outdoor play mean that the children are generally not limited in where they play as long as their parents are aware of where that is. Thus, the children are able to roam in a wide range of places. Place excursions led to many sites that were described as "wild" by the children.

Hart (1979) had children lead him on place excursions in order to gain perspective into the participants' values and feelings for places. Because Hart's group of participants was significantly larger than my group, he was able to note trends in the ways that gender and age influenced place use and value for the children in his study. Further, he grouped the places he was led to into four categories: places valued for

their use; places valued for social reasons; places valued for commercial reasons; and places valued for their look or feel (Hart, 1979).

Primarily, the children in my study led me to places valued for their use. In the case of the children from Gwa'yasdam's, many of the places I was led to were used socially as well as for the purposes discussed by the children. For example, the children who took me to the cliffs said that they valued them for swimming, but the large group of children that congregate there may indicate that the place has a social value as well. Hart (1979) found that the places he was led to that were valued for social reasons were mainly other people's houses, school areas that were used as meeting places (i.e., bus stops), and parents' workplaces. I was not led to any places similar to this, nor did any children indicate that they valued the special places they showed me for commercial or mere aesthetic value. Thus, it can be concluded that under the categories noted by Hart (1979), all of the places I was led to were valued for their use.

Of the places Hart (1979) noted that children valued for their use, he found that the most popular were the ball field, rivers and lakes used for fishing and swimming, and areas to make forts and houses. Similarly, many of the children in my study led me to forts and areas used for swimming. Interestingly, however, Hart (1979) noted the children in his study had a tendency to hold "a general fascination with woods and talk about them often, but rarely use them" (p. 165). This was in marked contrast to the children of the Gilford Island communities, who use the woods extensively for hunting, exploring, and building hideouts. As previously discussed, the children's comfort in the wilderness may be due in part to their experiences of having grown up there, as well as to their knowledge of the forest itself.

In his study of *Children's Special Places*, Sobel (1993) found that there was a variance between boys and girls, as well as age-related differences, in how children used outdoor spaces. Again, the small size of my study group made it impossible to see if a similar trend existed among the children of Gilford Island area. However, Sobel (1993) observed outdoor forts used for both imaginative role play (for example, playing house) as well as for retreats and seclusion, which is very similar to the uses I noted for the special places of the children of Gilford Island.

From the outset of the study, it was clearly stated that data would not be compared on the basis of age, gender, or cultural background. However, a definite trend did emerge in the way that children from Gwa'yasdam's Village used the natural world for their special places, in contrast to the children who did not live at the Village. Most of the children who did not live at Gwa'yasdam's led me to at least one place in a secluded wilderness setting (such as a den-like shelter or a fort in a forest clearing) often valued for being "secret" or a good hiding place. Five of the six children of this group described imaginative play in these areas such as playing house or spy games, and it seemed important to the children that four of these forts included toilet areas. Additionally, five of these children expressed appreciation for the elements of nature present in their special places, such as wild animals, trees, and "wilderness". This was in contrast to the children from Gwa'yasdam's, who all led me to exposed, open places where the whole group took part in more recreational activities such as swimming, catching sculpins, or playing on a swing structure.

The research of Kylin (2003) and Kirkby (1989) indicates that when given a choice, children will choose naturally-formed, enclosed, secluded "retreats" over more exposed or man-made locations. I also noted this trend among the children who did not live at Gwa'yasdam's. That is, I observed a trend among those children to prefer "hideouts"

and “secret” places along the edge of the forest and among trees to more open locations in fields or yards, or even for the play houses and covered climbing structure that the community had built for the children. Likewise, Kirkby (1989) noted a higher incidence of “dramatic domestic and adventure play” (9) in the more enclosed spaces than in the man-made, more exposed structures. Although Kirkby’s (1989) research focused on preschool-aged children, this type of play was noted among the school-aged children of Gilford Island who lived in places other than Gwa’yasdams.

The differences in the use of the natural world for special places could be attributed in part to the very different community atmosphere present at Gwa’yasdams. As previously discussed, it proved difficult to work with single children during the place excursions at Gwa’yasdams, as the children there have a tendency to roam together in a pack and take part in all outdoor activities together. Parents encourage this group interaction as a safety measure against wild predators in the area. While the children who were not from Gwa’yasdams did discuss how many of their places were special because they were shared with friends, they tended to only name a few friends who played and/or hid there with them due to the more secretive nature of these places.

Nine of the twelve children stated that they had done things to care for nature (again, many of these tasks involved caring for trees), and nine children said that they have important jobs in the community. Five of these jobs involved roles of environmental protection such as picking up garbage and not polluting. Thus, many of the children of the area seemed to feel some sense of responsibility for caring for nature.

This sense of responsibility may be linked to the children’s strong sense of conservation for the natural resources of their area. While only two children said that

they have hunted for meat, nine participants said that they support hunting. However, it was made clear by most of these children that they only support hunting for food and other survival-related uses of the animals and not for hunting for trophy or sport.

Likewise, all twelve participants have fished, and most of these children have collected other food from the sea with their parents. Ten of the twelve children asked feel that fishing is important, but again, caveats were made by several of the children that fishing should be done in moderation and that all parts of the catch should be used. Several times throughout the study, the concern over extinction of animals and trees resurfaced.

Through the responses to the adults' survey, it appears that the parents feel it is important to instill this balance of resource use and responsibility in their children. While only two parents used the term "stewardship", several other adults discussed their efforts to pass on an appreciation of nature and the knowledge and experience of harvesting local foods and resources.

The children seem to share a sense of the area being rooted in time. Ten of the eleven children asked said that they have searched for artifacts, and that their hunts have revealed Native trading beads, arrowheads, parts of animal skeletons, and various implements used by early settlers in the area. When asked about the midden that comprises the beach at the school, seven children described the process of the beach being built up by disposed-of clam shells. A sense of this process taking place over many years was expressed by many of these children through their descriptions of the "olden days". Additionally, many of the stories told by the children about the cave in Shoal Harbour conveyed a sense of history, and one child explained the significance of the community hall having been used by so many people over such a long period of

time. Thus, most of the children have a sense that the area has been inhabited for a long time and that they are part of its history.

This sense of time immemorial is also conveyed through the children's understandings of First Nations cultural traditions. When discussing the cave in Shoal Harbour, eight of the nine children who knew about it related their associations of First Nations history with the cave. These included the paintings on the cave walls, the traditions associated with visiting the cave, and stories about its history that had been passed on by family or friends.

Not as many children were familiar with the stories behind certain mythical figures of dances important to the local First Nations people. Of the twelve children asked, only four could accurately describe the story surrounding the Hamatsa, one with the Bak'was, and five with the Dzunuk'wa. The main source for this information seemed to be children's families, as three children recalled grandparents sharing the information and two recalled being told by their fathers. Two stories were remembered from a school presentation, and two from friends. One child told the story of actually having heard the cries of the Dzunuk'wa with another group of children.

It is interesting to note that over my years teaching this group I had read aloud stories about some of the figures, heard our Kwak'wala Language Instructor tell stories about them, and even attended ceremonies (that many of these children also attended) and observed the dances being performed. However, these experiences did not seem to change the fact that most of the children were unfamiliar with the stories.

More children were familiar with the use of oolichans for food and oil, as many of them had tried the fish or oil themselves. Several children were able to describe the importance of oolichans to local First Nations culture. Two children who had

obviously taken part in catching and preserving the fish were able to describe in detail the methods of rendering oolichan grease.

Adults surveyed made several mentions of passing on information about the use of plants as foods and natural remedies. Most children have collected plants for food with their families, although more cultivated foods were named than wild plants and berries. When discussing the local general store's lack of fresh vegetables (specifically, kale), one child pointed out the possibility of growing your own, thus demonstrating an extension of the community's self-sufficiency.

Fewer children had collected plants for medicinal use than for food, although both were usually done with families. Children who had collected plants for other purposes (ie, for decorations or for use in imaginative games) usually did so with friends or alone. Many children were aware of the important role that Cedar bark plays in First Nations culture for weaving baskets and headbands, but no mention was made of other traditional uses for the rest of the tree.

Most of the adults surveyed stated that it is a priority to instill in their children a respect and understanding of other people and their cultures. Throughout the study, the children expressed an appreciation and respect for the aspects of First Nations culture discussed, and one child even expressed a wish for more sharing of First Nations culture such as that which had occurred at the National Aboriginal Day celebration the previous spring.

One adult stated that "the importance of our culture... family togetherness, [and] spending time with our elders is important. This is where we get the insight of who we are, through culture and language". The children themselves made a few references to spending time with elders when they discussed stories and cultural knowledge that had

been passed on to them by grandparents. Additionally, one child expressed a concern over elders being left alone when family members were drinking.

Adults surveyed also expressed that they feel it is important to instill a respect for all living things and a realization that “all life is worthy of existence”, as well as a sense that the world is a whole and life is interdependent. It certainly appears that their children are aware of these concepts, and that these concepts have helped to shape their sense of place. The children’s experiences of the use of the natural world for food and survival are an everyday reality for them that have helped to develop their concept of balance between use of the natural world, and care for it. In addition to providing food, the natural world appears to be valued for purposes of recreation, retreat, and a sense of history and connection to time past. In return for these provisions, the children feel a responsibility to treat it with respect and care.

What concerns do these children have for the health of their community and natural environment?

In discussing their concerns for the community, a recurring topic was the small number of people, particularly children, who live in the area. Although one child expressed a fear that the area might someday become overpopulated and “a big town”, many of the other children shared their concerns over the small population of the area. This concern resurfaced during different discussions over their concerns about the community, what they would change about the community, and why they might want to move to other towns. Several children said that they felt important in their community for the sheer sake of numbers to keep the population up.

When asked if they would change anything about the area, six of the eleven children responded with concerns related to the environment. These included the three

children who said that they would like to see a reduction in pollution in the air and ocean, and the three who expressed a wish to reduce the number of fish farms.

The issue of fish farms seemed to be strongly opposed by the participants in the study, as ten children expressed their concern over the impact of these farms. Four children were concerned about the spread of sea lice to wild stocks of salmon, and three children mentioned the possibility of ocean pollution from the farms. These topics are frequently-discussed concerns by the adults of the community, so it was not surprising that children expressed similar concerns. However, other reasons given by the children for opposing fish farms were not necessarily as grounded in scientific research. For example, concerns over wild salmon becoming dependent upon the farmed fish food, of the farms dragging the bottoms of the ocean and causing damage, or of fish farms catching wild salmon, are not necessarily as accurate. This indicates that not all of the children have an understanding of how fish farms operate. Three children acknowledged the positive aspect of the jobs created by the fish farm industry, and two participants mentioned that the farms provide food.

When asked if they felt that logging was important, many of the children were ambivalent, and only one child gave unequivocal support to the industry for the jobs it creates. While many children acknowledged the need for the paper, wood, and building materials, they cautioned that logging should be done in moderation. Reasons given for this caution included the impact on the marine and terrestrial environments, and the role of trees in providing the world's oxygen. One child mentioned the need to recycle to reduce the amount of trees logged, while another said that a new way to make paper without using trees should be invented.

As previously discussed, nine children could describe activities that they had done to care for nature. However, during my years of working with these children, I had

observed many more instances of them showing concern for the environment, both during and outside of school hours. The most obvious omission was how few children volunteered information about their work in restoring salmon habitat. Most of the students had been involved for a number of years in 'Junior Streamkeepers', a group led by a local woman dedicated to rehabilitating salmon streams. In addition, any time that I had been involved in volunteer work for the hatchery, there had been children present who had also been assigned jobs. However, only two children shared this information when asked what they did to care for nature, and neither of them specifically mentioned Junior Streamkeepers or the hatchery (although one child did mention volunteer work at the hatchery when asked about their role in the community). Similar omissions occurred with other environmentally responsible behaviour I had observed, such as freeing crabs from a discarded net on the beach and students knowing to leave alone what appeared to be an abandoned seal pup they found on the beach.

During their study in environmental attitudes and behaviours, Bogner and Wiseman (1997) found a similar discrepancy, that "rural pupils' actual commitment is environmentally more positive than their verbally expressed commitment" (p. 118). In the case of the Gilford Island area participants, it is possible that so much of their day-to-day lives are lived within the community culture of environmental stewardship and conservation that they are not aware of the positive impact that their daily actions and behaviours have on the health of their ecosystem.

The themes of conservation and moderation in utilizing the natural resources of the area were recurring throughout the study. While fish farms seemed to be strongly opposed by the majority of the participants, most comments made about other resource-based industries were more ambivalent. As previously discussed, most

participants in the study supported hunting and fishing when the catch was to be used for food and other survival-related purposes. It certainly seems that the message adults said they hoped to impart to children, that animals are necessary for survival and that all parts of the animals should be used, has been heard by the children and carried forward to apply in their perspective on utilizing all living resources.

Educational Applications

Theobald and Nachtigal (1995) argue that “if one learns to live well in a community, the chances of a brighter global future are significantly enhanced” (p. 3). The trends observed in looking at the environmental perspectives of the children of the Gilford Island area paint a picture of a group with a sense of being well-rooted within their community. They share a respect for the history of the area, as well as a concern for its future. Certainly, the children of the Gilford Island area are growing up with the experiences, knowledge, and support necessary to live well in their environment.

Bauch (2001) notes that one of the advantages of rural communities “is that their schools are set in a community context that values a sense of place and offers a unique set of conditions for building the social capital important for helping students succeed in school” (p. 205). The school in Echo Bay is in a unique position as its multi-aged, one-room nature fosters a sense of community within the entire group of students. This sense of community was noted by adults who stated that their children can relate to people of other ages, ethnicities and cultures, and that they feel a responsibility to help others.

The natural-world setting of the school at Echo Bay allows the opportunity for first-hand exposure to biological and natural history lessons set within their context. Visits to the local heron rookery, the cave in Shoal Harbour, or even the beach in front of the

school are all opportunities for the students to revel in the natural learning that occurs from exploration in such places. David Orr (1994) advocates for this kind of education that allows us to “introduce students to the mysteries of specific places and things before giving them access to the power inherent in abstract knowledge” (p. 97).

The significant community involvement with the school provides an opportunity to use the community as a classroom. Theobald and Nachtigal (1995) state that “using the community as a curricular lens... [makes] learning more experiential and therefore more powerful... providing youths with an opportunity to understand who they are and how they might be in the world” (p. 3). The influence of local community members who have invested themselves in passing on local natural and historical knowledge was evident throughout the study of the Gilford Island area children as they discussed what parents, grandparents, and a local resident (referred to as ‘Kingfisher’ throughout the study) had taught them about the area.

It does appear that the children have taken on some of the adults’ concerns for the environment without being fully aware of the reasons why. This seemed to be the case with some children’s opinions of fish farms. Most of the children stated that they were opposed to fish farming, and many supported their concern over the impact of fish farms with factual information. However, the reasons given by some of the other participants indicated that they were confused over exactly what fish farms do, and what impact they have. Providing factual information about environmental issues from both perspectives would enable children to reach their own conclusions. Just as the area allows for school field trips to learn about local ecosystems, an opportunity for a field trip to view an operating fish farm in the area would also be possible. To further explore the issue, classroom speakers could include Alexandra Morton, a local biologist involved in researching the environmental impact of fish farms; a fish farm

representative; and a fisheries officer. Arming students with information from both sides would allow them to develop their own informed opinions.

While participants were aware of some possible measures to conserve resources (for example, selective logging vs. clear cutting), there were few references to recycling. Only one child mentioned recycling as a personal action to care for nature. The concept of recycling was so foreign to some participants that one child even speculated that someone should invent a way to make paper that didn't involve cutting down trees.

At the time of the study, there were no recycling facilities in the Gilford Island area aside from the ongoing bottle collection carried out by the school as a fundraiser. The distance from a town where there were recycling facilities made this a time-consuming and labour-intensive task for the teacher and parents involved. However, an opportunity exists within the school for students to learn about the possibilities of recycling some materials, particularly materials that should not be burned. A possible extension of this could be for students to coordinate transport of some recyclable materials to town with their empty bottle collection. Providing information on recycling as an alternative to burning refuse might also help to alleviate the concerns expressed by some participants over air pollution generated from burning garbage.

Thus, the small size, community involvement, and natural-world setting of the school at Echo Bay make it an ideal vehicle for continuing to nurture the environmental understanding and love of the natural world exhibited by the students. As well, opportunities exist to provide the background information needed for students to form more developed concepts of some environmental issues.

One of Echo Bay School's most powerful strengths is the possibility to extend the classroom out into the natural world. This could also be done with the cultural

program in order for it to have more of an impact with the students. Children asked about specific mythical characters from local First Nations culture were largely unfamiliar with them. This was surprising, given that they had been introduced to them through stories told and read to them in the classroom. However, most students were familiar with the location and traditional uses of the cave in Shoal Harbour, and with the significance, methods of catching, and preparation of oolichans. In other words, the aspects of culture that they had experienced themselves were easier to recall than those that had been discussed sitting indoors in school.

Orr (1994) stresses the importance of immersing students in the natural world to “remove the abstractness and secondhand learning that corrupts knowledge at its source” (p. 96). Likewise, a case can be made for the necessity of getting students out into the natural world to experience traditional First Nations culture in its appropriate setting. Possibly, regular field trips to Gwa’yasdam’s to take part in events such as plant walks, food gathering, or dances with people interested in passing on the culture would be more rewarding than limiting the First Nations language and cultural program to a spring-time, largely indoor program at the school.

Regular excursions of this nature would require planning and extra work on the part of the teacher and involved parents. However, there appears to be ample support for the creation of opportunities to share knowledge of local First Nations culture, as evidenced by comments made by both adults and children throughout the study. The strong sense of community, and the adults’ desire for their children to respect and understand other cultures, would likely be considerable assets in developing such a program.

The children of the Gilford Island area provide an opportunity to observe how children raised in the heart of nature develop their sense of place and a connection to

the natural world. This is a valuable contribution to the study of sense of place development, as these children are growing up immersed in, supported by, and protectors of, their place. The power of this unique relationship to the natural world is evidenced by the children's intertwined roots within the social, historical, and natural facets of their area.

Implications for Future Research

The study of the children of the Gilford Island area provides a snapshot of a group growing up in a close-knit, isolated community surrounded by, and dependant upon, the natural world. It offers valuable insight into how this particular group has developed a sense of place and connection to the natural world. Further, it reveals the common threads of environmental respect, concern and values that bind the community together.

However, the study also raises many questions. While this study was an in-depth, qualitative inquiry into the characteristics of one particular group, it would be interesting to expand upon it by comparing sense of place development, concept of community, and environmental knowledge and concerns of these students to a similar group living in another area. In School District #85, there are three other small schools (two other one-room schools and one two-room school). A comparison to these populations would be interesting, particularly since these other schools are not as isolated (two of them can be accessed by public roads, and the other can be reached by either boat or a dirt logging road). Further, the two-room school described above is located in a logging community about a 45 minute drive away from the ocean. It would be interesting to note the possible influence of factors such as accessibility,

community environmental involvement, and immersion in different ecosystems (ie, a non-marine environment).

The studies of researchers such as Hart (1979) and Moore (1986) have considered the recreational use of the natural world by children living in urban areas. However, it would be interesting to conduct a study to directly compare the environmental awareness and concerns of children living in a major urban area to the children living in isolated areas such as Gilford Island. It would be particularly interesting to note differences in awareness of the environmental concerns that are more exposed by the media in large metropolitan centres, such as landfills, air pollution, and water health, as these may be issues that the children living in a more pristine natural environment may not be aware of due to a lack of exposure. For example, the child who suggested to me that someone should invent a way to make paper that didn't use trees may have had limited exposure to recycling programs.

It would also be interesting to create a longitudinal study from the research to consider the children of Gilford Island's sense of place, connection to nature, and environmental concern and stewardship over their childhood, or even into adulthood. A future study could look at the career paths they chose and possibly explore the significant influences that led to those decisions. A study of that magnitude would obviously be time consuming and ambitious but the data it might reveal would be valuable in exploring the significant life experiences that lead to environmental stewards. Currently, much of the data collected in this field has been through the use of environmental autobiographies written reflectively by adults (Chawla, 1998, 1990; Tanner, 1980). It is possible that a study which followed the lives of children who had been brought up in the heart of nature would provide valuable insight into this field of significant life experiences.

A limitation of the study was that the place excursions and interviews with the children from Gwa'yasdam's were not all carried out independently with each child. When I visited the village for the purposes of carrying out my research, I would be swarmed with children who wanted to go everywhere I did. Additionally, some parents wanted the group to walk together up the road behind the village and in the forest, so there were few opportunities to work with children alone. The group place excursions may have influenced where participants took me, as it can be assumed that if a child had a truly secret special place, she/he may have been reluctant to share it with me in front of the group. Additionally, the distraction of the other children often resulted in the participant rushing (or mumbling self-consciously while other children were in earshot) through the place excursion questions, or the other children interrupted during the recorded sessions. If I was to plan this study again, I would plan to spend more time at Gwa'yasdam's, perhaps camping over a weekend or two, to maximize opportunities to work with children one-on-one.

As previously mentioned, there seemed to be a trend of the children not consciously acknowledging the vital role that the marine environment plays in their daily lives. Possibly, this is because the ocean is such an integral part of their lives that they don't consciously notice its influence. I would be interested to explore this phenomenon further, perhaps by visiting other isolated marine communities and conducting similar research. It would also be interesting to note whether or not this phenomenon occurred with children who lived in communities immersed in other ecosystems (for example, the tundra of northern Canada or the interior of B.C.), although it is possible that these communities would not be as reliant upon the ecosystem for so much of their daily lives.

Finally, another possibility to expand upon this study would be to more directly research the role that the Echo Bay School plays in the community, and the feelings of the community members toward it. As previously stated, I am aware of the importance of the school to the community through being a part of that community; however, there were fewer references to the role played by the school than I had expected. This may be in part because I did not directly ask about the role of the school in parental/guardian or children's interviews. The use of metaphorical interviews specifically addressing this question might prove useful.

In this case, I believe it would be more appropriate for a researcher who was not associated with the school to conduct this research, to reduce the possibility that parents and students may try to spare the feelings of the teacher and not answer questions honestly if there were aspects of the school that they did not feel positively about. If there was a perceived benefit to this study (ie, the results were to be considered as a potential action plan for school improvement), having community input into it might also help to strengthen the school-community partnership so strongly advocated by Bauch (2001). This study might parallel the parental input into the recently-abolished accreditation reporting process. The difference would be that it would be carried out by a researcher independent of the school staff.

Conclusion

Bauch (2001) explains that "sense of place involves a rootedness in one's community and the desire to cherish and cultivate one's local community" (p. 212). It is clear that the children of the Gilford Island area have developed this sense of being rooted in their community, and their passion to conserve its resources is evident. It is also evident that they share a respect for the area as it was generations ago, an

appreciation for the area as they now know it, and a concern for the future health of its ecosystems.

Perhaps the strongest argument for the power of growing up immersed in the natural world was made by one of the participants themselves:

I know more about nature than a lot of people, and it's... because of Echo Bay. I grew up with [nature] there and everyone needs to, I think, see a little bit more, learn a little bit more about it. We have to take care of the world and the only way we can do that is by knowing about nature and understanding it and appreciating it for what it really is. (Robin Interview)



Photo 29: A child explores life around the pilings of the school wharf.

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Appendix A: Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews

Concept of nature

What is "nature"?

Are you ever in nature?

Are you ever afraid of things in nature? If so, what?

Community understanding/ care

What is your community?

Do your parents have rules about where or how you can play outside?

(If yes) What are the rules?

Do you have an important job in the community?

(If yes) What is it?

What do you like best about your community?

Is there anything you don't like about your community?

Do you ever worry about your community?

(If yes) What do you worry about?

If you could change anything about the area where you live, what would it be?

If you could move anywhere in the world, would you want to? Why?

(If yes) Where? Why?

Use of/ concern for natural resources

Have you ever hunted? With whom?

Is hunting important? Why or why not?

Have you ever fished? With whom?

Is fishing important? Why or why not?

Have you ever collected plants for food or medicine?

(If yes) Which plants? With whom?

Do you collect plants for any other reasons?

(If yes) Which plants? With whom?

What other things do you like to do in nature?

Are fish farms important? Why or why not?

Is logging important? Why or why not?

Do you ever do things to look after nature?

(If yes) What things? How does this show you care about nature?

Appendix A Con't

Cultural understanding

Note: The comments in italics are a brief summary of the local cultural significance of the topics that participants were asked about. These comments are provided for the information of the reader only, and do not represent a "correct" answer. Rather, it was hoped that the participants' own interpretation of the topics would shed insight into their own connection to local culture.

What can you tell me about... (followed by) How did you learn about this?

The cave in Shoal Harbour?

This cave holds cultural significance for local First Nations people as the site where they would traditionally go to find their animal spirit.

The Hamatsa?

High-ranking dance performed by authorized people which symbolizes the cannibal spirit taking hold of a young initiate and the villagers subsequently taming the spirit.

The Bak'was?

Mythical wildman (sasquatch) of the woods.

The Dzunuk'wa?

Local First Nations legend tells of this wild woman of the woods stealing children and packing them away in a basket.

Oolichan

Small (six inch) fish that spawns in local inlets in the spring. Weeks may be spent collecting enough to provide fish and oil for the local First Nations people for the year.

The white shell beach at the school?

The shell beach is a 'midden', comprised of broken clam shells from centuries of First Nations feasts.

Have you ever hunted for artifacts? With whom? Can you tell me about what you found?

Appendix B: Instructions for Map-Building

I would like you to build a map of the area where you live. You can start with something to show your house, and then include anything around it that you think is important. Please also show where the school is, and then any places that you feel are important to you. You can use these blocks, the models, the clay, the markers, and the paper. If you think of anything else you need, just tell me and we'll try and find it. Do you have any questions?

Appendix C: Interview Questions for Place Excursions

What is the most important thing about this place?

What do you like best about this place?

What do you do here?

How often do you come here?

When was the last time you came here?

Does anyone come here with you?

(If yes) Who? What do you do here with them?

Appendix D: Questions for Parents/ Adults Involved with Children

How long have you lived in this area?

Have you ever lived anywhere else?

Why do you choose to live in this area?

In terms of your child, do you think this is a good place to live? Why?

In terms of your child, do you have any concerns about living here?

Can you describe the sense of community you feel here?

Do you see that sense of community being passed on to the children of the area?

How often does your child play outdoors?

Do you set rules for your child about outdoor play?
(If yes) What are the rules?

What sort of things does your child do outdoors?

What sort of things do you do as a family outdoors?

What are your priorities for how your child is raised?

What is your biggest concern for your child?

Are there stories about the history of your family that you try to pass on to your child?

Are there things about plants and animals that you try to pass on to your child?

Are there things about this area that you try to pass on to your children?

How does the area in which your child is being brought up differ from where you were brought up?

Appendix E: Parental/Guardian Consent

Parental/Guardian Consent Form for Children's Participation in the Study of Sense of Place Among Children of an Isolated Island Community

What do the children of the Echo Bay and Gwa'yasdam's areas think about where they live?

In my research to explore this question for my thesis project for my Master's Degree in Environmental Education through the University of Victoria, I would like to work with as many of the school-aged children from the Echo Bay /Gwa'yasdam's area as possible. The purpose of the study is to consider how the physical and cultural experiences of these children have helped to shape their development of sense of place, their connection to the natural world, and their concerns for the health of their community and the natural world. There are no known or anticipated risks to your child by participating in this study.

This letter is to request permission to work with your child. Participants will take part in a drawing activity (20-30 minutes), a map-building activity (30-40 minutes), an individual interview (20-30 minutes), and a place excursion with me to their three favourite places in the area (after school, with a possible weekend visit to your area if that is where your child chooses to show me). These activities will be spread out over the course of the three-month study (March-May 2003). Most of the activities will take place in the old teacherage area of the school during after-school hours, but I will be able to travel to Gwa'yasdam's to carry out the interviews if we are not able to arrange a convenient after-school time in Echo Bay.

All of the data gathered during the study will be kept confidential. Each child will be assigned an alternate name for their information to be recorded under, so that they cannot be identified through the study results. During the course of the study, all data gathered will be kept locked in a filing box in my residence. After I have defended my thesis, any recorded interviews will be recorded over or destroyed, and any papers which might serve to identify your child will be shredded and burned.

Your child's participation in the study is entirely voluntary, and either you or your child can withdraw at any time, without consequence or explanation. If you or your child choose to withdraw, I will not use your child's results gathered up to that point without your written permission. During the study, your child will have the right to not answer any questions which he or she does not want to.

Although the results gathered through this study may help to shape future units of study at Echo Bay School, I am carrying out the research independently of my role as your child's teacher. Your child's results will not be reflected in his/her school records, nor will they influence his/her marks in any way. Likewise, if you choose not to allow your child to participate, it will have no impact on your child's school grades or assessment.

The results of my research will be presented in my written thesis dissertation, and possibly in several articles to be submitted to environmental education journals. As

previously stated, children's names will be changed to ensure confidentiality of the participants. You will be given an opportunity to read any document arising from this study prior to publication.

Many previous studies have looked at how children develop their sense of place, and how they connect to the natural world. However, most of these studies have looked at children living in urban areas. The study of the children in the Echo Bay and Gwa'yasdam's communities will provide more insight into this research area, as the participants have been brought up immersed in the natural world, and dependant upon it in a way that urban children may not have.

I am carrying out this study under the supervision of Dr. Gloria Snively. She can be reached at (250) 721- 7764, or at gsnively@uvic.ca. You may also verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns that you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research, at the University of Victoria at (250) 472-4362.

Thank you for your help with this study.

Sincerely,

Rena Sweeney

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in the study and that you have had an opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature of Parent/ Guardian</i>	<i>Date</i>

Appendix F: Participant (Child) Consent

**Consent Form for Children's Participation in the Study of
Sense of Place Among Children of an Isolated Island Community**

What do the children of the Echo Bay and Gwa'yasdám's areas think about where they live?

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project to explore this. I need to do this research as part of my courses at University of Victoria. The purpose of the study is to look at how your experiences of living here have shaped the way you think about it. By signing below, you agree that you understand that:

- There is no known risk to you of being hurt or harmed.
- I am not doing this research as your teacher, or for your school work. This project is for my own courses and has nothing to do with your grades or your report card.
- The activities you will take part in will be drawing a picture, building a map with models, showing me some of your favourite places, and answering some questions about how you feel about where you live and what you like to do. You don't have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable.
- No one but me will ever know what you said or which places you take me to see. When I write about you for my university teacher, I will change your name so that no one can tell the person speaking was you.
- When I am working on my project, all of your information will be kept safe at my house, locked up. When I am finished with my project, I will shred and burn any papers with your name on them, and erase or destroy any tape recordings with your voice on them.
- If you don't want to take part in the study, you can just say no. It won't matter to your school grades or your report card if you do say no.
- You can change your mind any time if you don't want to take part in the study later. It won't matter to your school grades or your report card if you change your mind.

If you understand all of these things and you want to take part in the study, please sign below. You can ask me any questions you have, now or later if you think of more.

Thank you for your help with this study.

Rena Sweeney

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix G: Participant (Adult) Consent

Consent Form for Adults' Participation in the Study of Sense of Place Among Children of an Isolated Island Community

What do the children of the Echo Bay area think about where they live?

In my research to explore this question for my thesis project for my Master's Degree in Environmental Education through the University of Victoria, I would like to work with as many of the school-aged children from the Echo Bay /Gwa'yasdam's area as possible. The purpose of the study is to consider how the physical and cultural experiences of these children have helped to shape their development of sense of place, their connection to the natural world, and their concerns for the health of their community and the natural world. There is no known or anticipated risk to you by participating in this study.

As a parent or guardian of one of these children, your interview will include questions about living in this area, and your feelings about it. You will also be asked about any historical, cultural, and sense of community that you see (or would like to see) being passed on to your child. This interview will take about 30 minutes. If you prefer, you may answer the questions in writing instead.

All of the data gathered during the study will be kept confidential. Rather than record your data under your name, you will be given a pseudonym to ensure your confidentiality. During the course of the study, all data gathered will be kept locked in a filing box in my residence. After I have defended my thesis, any recorded interviews will be recorded over or destroyed and any papers which might serve to identify you will be shredded and burned.

Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary, and you can choose to withdraw at any time, without consequence or explanation. If you choose to withdraw, I will not use any of your data gathered up to that point without your written permission. During the interview, you will have the right to not answer any questions which you do not want to.

Although the results gathered through this study may help to shape future units of study at Echo Bay School, I am carrying out the research independently of my role as your child's teacher. Whether or not you choose to participate will have no impact on your child's school grades or assessment.

The results of my research will be presented in my written thesis dissertation, and possibly in several articles to be submitted to environmental education journals. As previously stated, participants' names will be changed to ensure your confidentiality. You will have the opportunity to read any document written to be published, prior to its publication.

Many previous studies have looked at how children develop their sense of place, and how they connect to the natural world. However, most of these studies have looked at children living in urban areas. The study of the children in the Echo Bay and

Gwa'yasdam's communities will provide more insight into this research area, as the participants have been brought up immersed in the natural world, and dependant upon it in a way that urban children may not have.

I am carrying out this study under the supervision of Dr. Gloria Snively. She can be reached at (250) 721- 7764, or at gsnively@uvic.ca. You may also verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns that you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research, at the University of Victoria at (250) 472-4362.

Thank you for your help with this study.

Sincerely,

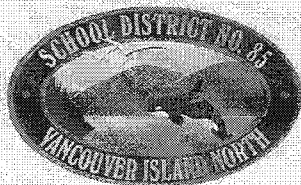
Rena Sweeney

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in the study and that you have had an opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Appendix H: Letter of Permission from School District

Bringing Learning to Life!

Vancouver Island North School District No. 85

PO Box 90, Port Hardy, BC V0N 2P0
Tel: (250) 949-6618 Fax: (250) 949-8792

February 19, 2003

Ms. Rena Sweeney
General Delivery
Simoon Sound, B.C.
VOP 1S0

Dear Rena:

I am pleased to provide my approval for you to proceed with your research project on "The Sense of Place Among Children of an Isolated Island Community" using students in your one room classroom to gather your information. As you have committed to do, please keep any names or references to students as confidential at all times.

I wish you well in your pursuits and look forward to your successful completion of your Masters degree in Environmental Education.

Thank you for bringing your research project to the attention of my office.

Yours truly,

Gilles Joubert
Superintendent of Schools

cc: D. Boudreault, Director of Instruction
T. Manders, Principal, Echo Bay School