Storytelling in the Fourth World:
Explorations in Meaning of Place and Tla'amin Resistance to Dispossession

By

Lyana Marie Patrick
B.A. University of Victoria, 1997

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In the Department of Human and Social Development

We accept this thesis as conforming
To the required standard

Dr. Jeff Corntassel, Supervisor (Faculty of Human and Social Development, Indigenous Governance Program)

Dr. Leslie Brown, Departmental Member (Faculty of Human and Social Development, School of Social Work)

Dr. Nancy Turner, Faculty Associate (School of Environmental Studies)

Dr. Robin June Hood, Outside Member (Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction)

Dr. Arthur Kroeker, External Examiner (Department of Political Science)

© Lyana Marie Patrick, 2004
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopying or other means, without permission of the author.

Supervisor: Dr. Jeff Corntassel

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the impacts of indigenous dispossession from lands and resources by utilizing a concept in ecology, that of ecological keystone species, and extending it to species that play a key, characterizing role in a particular culture or society. A storytelling methodology is used to determine the presence of cultural keystones in stories and place names of Tla'amin peoples, a Northern Coast Salish group whose traditional territory is located along the coast 130 kilometres northwest of Vancouver, British Columbia. I extend the storytelling methodology to encompass film and video projects that exhibit characteristics of Fourth World Cinema and discuss how such films can be used to empower indigenous communities and reclaim cultural and political rights.

Examiners:

Dr. Jeff Corntassel, Supervisor (Faculty of Human and Social Development, Indigenous Governance Program)

Dr. Leslie Brown, Departmental Member (Faculty of Human and Social Development, School of Social Work)

Dr. Nancy Turner, Faculty Associate (School of Environmental Studies)

Dr. Robin Hood, Outside Member (Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction)

Dr. Arthur Kroker (External Examiner)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii

TABLE OF CONTENTS iii

GLOSSARY OF TLA'AMIN WORDS v

FIGURES/ILLUSTRATIONS vi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vii

CHAPTER ONE: STORYTELLING AS A STRATEGY OF RESISTANCE 1

- Cultural Impacts of the Dam: An Oral History 3
- Cultural Keystone Species 4
- Dams and Indigenous Peoples 5
- Research Methodology 7
- Decolonizing Documentary Film...10
- Mapping the Chapters 11

CHAPTER TWO: CONFRONTING THE COLONIAL NARRATIVE 13

- "Live Life Like a Story" 15
- Countering the Colonial Story 20
- Demolition of a Homeland..25
- Creating a Pulp Industry 26
- Re-conceptualizing the Landscape 32
- Creating a Subsistence Economy...36
- Conclusion 41

CHAPTER THREE: SALMON MAN AND CEDAR POWER: FINDING CULTURAL KEYSTONES IN TLA'AMIN STORIES 43

- Salmon as a Cultural Keystone 44
- Cultural Keystone Guilds...45
- Detecting Keystone Species in Stories 49
- Regenerating Cultural Keystones 52
- Locating Salmon in Story and Place..53
- Conclusion 56

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCEPTUALIZING THE LANDSCAPE: STORIES OF TOH KWON_NON 58

Calling the Spirits Back 58
A Fertile Land 60
Landscapes of the Mind 64
Recovering Tla'amin Stories Through Contemporary Struggles 68

CHAPTER FIVE: FOURTH WORLD CINEMA 74

Introduction 74
Transformative Effects of Fourth World Cinema 75
It Begins in the Sacred 77
The Film Comes From Us 82
Interview with Evan Tlesla Adams 83
Revitalizing Territorial Ties Through Fourth World Cinema 89
Interview with Nuh Nohome (Lee George) 90
Creating Indigenous Cinematic Space 94
Privileging Community Voice 97

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION 101

Mapping with Stories 101
Implications for Future Research 105
Conclusion 108

REFERENCES 110

GLOSSARY OF TLA'AMIN WORDS

K'ik'kw'us	Eating Barbecued Salmon Heads (Island in Theodosia Inlet)
Kla7amin	Place to Head Towards (Lund)
Kleqwa7nam	Scuttle Bay (meaning not known)
ko ko ten	something small to drink from (big and little dippers in the night sky)
kwenis	whale
Kw'ikwtichenam	Getting Humpback Salmon (Brem Bay)
Mam'la	European
P'ah_kee ahjim	Maple Trees (Cortez Island)
Qoq'ness	Whaling (Stillwater)
qwaga hosht ju	calling your spirit back
Qwut'tum's Toh Kwon_non	Theodosia Watershed (meaning not known)
Ta'ow	Tla'amin teachings
Teeskwat/Tiskw'et	Wide Riverbed (Townsite)
tees tahm	respect
thath'em	spring salmon
Tha7yitl's Tiskwat	Powell Lake (meaning not known)
thekay	sockeye salmon
Tishohsem	Milky Waters From Herring Spawn (Sliammon Indian Reserve #1)
Titagayits a	woman's name (Scott Point)
Tla'amin	Sliammon Nation
tl'exway	chum salmon
Tohk natch	Strung Out Rear End (Okeover Indian Reserve #5)
Toh Kwon_non	Theodosia Indian Reserve #4 (meaning not known)
Xay thekwum	Coho's Are There (Coho Creek)
Yay'ikw	Spring Salmon Rolling Along the Water's Surface (end of Ramsey Arm)

FIGURES/ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure/Illustration Page

1...34

2...79

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is the culmination of a journey that began years ago when I was working for the provincial government in Victoria. Through my position in the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, I worked with many people in indigenous communities throughout the province but one elder I met stands out in my mind. Joe Mitchell was – from my few interactions with him – a warm and compassionate man who acted as the liaison between the Sliammon Treaty Society and Sliammon Elders group. Even though I consistently felt uncomfortable going into indigenous communities as part of a government entourage, I always felt comfortable talking to Joe. I remember one conversation in particular when we discovered both he and my dad had gone to Kamloops Indian Residential School. He seemed to recall my father being there, although he may only have said that because it was obvious how much I wanted to make that connection.

Joe Mitchell has passed on, but it was my great fortune some years later to spend time with other elders in the Sliammon community, interviewing them about Toh Kwon_non, hanging out while they made cedar baskets, and feeling less like an intruder than I had in previous years. To the elders who shared their stories and memories, and who were my co-investigators in this project, I give my heartfelt thanks. I owe much gratitude to the Sliammon Treaty Society for supporting me in this project. In particular I thank Laura Roddan for seeing the value in my research, and Michelle Washington for being so forthcoming with her considerable knowledge and skills at tracking down Sliammon words. I'm also grateful to Gene Louie for providing a vital link to many of the elders, Walter Paul for detailing his struggles over the Theodosia Dam, and Lee George for sharing his inspiring work.

It was a fortuitous path that led me out of government and into IGOV. I owe a debt of gratitude to Indigenous Governance faculty, especially my thesis advisor Dr. Jeff Corntassel for his guidance and motivation over the last year. Many thanks to Dr. Taiaiake Alfred for creating a program that has inspired me on a path I never anticipated; to Leslie Brown for her strong support of my original thesis idea way back when; to Dr. Nancy Turner for her helpful comments and suggestions; and to my outside committee member Robin Hood whose suggestion that I read Keith Basso's book caused me to look at the world in wonderful new ways. Thanks to Mike Doyle for making it read that much better. I also give thanks to fellow IGOV students for being the interesting, diverse group of people they are.

My family has been a constant source of support and humour when it was much needed, so thank you Sonya, Adam and Justine from the bottom of my heart. Special thanks to Noel Davies for accompanying me on much of this journey. Finally, my deepest thanks go to my parents Archie and Sandra Patrick for lending me their cool basement in which to finish this project through a hot summer. More importantly, I thank them for their love, support, guidance and inspiration. Mussi cho!

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION: STORYTELLING AS A STRATEGY OF RESISTANCE

> When places are actively sensed, the physical landscape becomes wedded to the landscape of the mind, to the roving imagination, and where the latter may lead is anybody's guess.[1]

Introduction

Although Keith Basso wrote the words quoted above when describing the landscapes inhabited by Western Apache, this sense of place has critical implications for most indigenous communities. For a group of elders in the community of Sliammon, about 135 kilometres north of Vancouver on the British Columbia coast and known to older people as *Tla'amin*, "the landscape of the mind" has provided a vital connection to a place some of them have not seen for decades. Their collective memory has nurtured a flame of hope, like the smoldering coal that grandmother put in a horse-clam shell to save her pregnant granddaughter from raven's murderous intentions.[2] This story describes the origin of the Tla'amin people at *P'ah_kee ahjim*. Of the many places Tla'amin would come to occupy, one place in particular has been kept alive in the vivid memories of Tla'amin elders: *Toh Kwon_non*.

It is not difficult to imagine, as I depart from Lund, paddles made of maple slicing through smooth Pacific water. I'm on a boat headed up Georgia Strait to Toh Kwon_non, a lush wilderness area at the mouth of the Theodosia River, a river once so plentiful with salmon it looked as if you could traverse it on the backs of fish. The midday heat is tempered by a cool breeze off the ocean as we glide past stands of Douglas fir. Humble

---

[1] Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico Press, 1996), 107.

[2] This is the origin story of the Tla'amin people. When raven found out the girl was pregnant, he told the community to pack up their bags and leave her behind. He wanted to kill the girl and he tried to put out all the fires. The grandmother saved the girl by putting a live coal in a clamshell and hiding it in the woods.

trailers and palatial houses cling to the cliffs, isolated from each other yet connected by this vast, rocky, coastline. The elders remember paddling this route with their parents and grandparents, canoes laden with flour and sugar purchased from the floating store at Lund, anxious to return to Toh Kwon_non before the river succumbed to the winter freeze. Some left before the river froze so they would not run out of supplies in an area bountiful in summer yet barren in winter. On this quiet afternoon in August, winter snows are far from my thoughts as the boat pulls into the Theodosia Inlet, the name more commonly used for Toh Kwon_non. Shellfish nets plumb the inlet's depths as the boat docks at the head of the narrows. A large clearcut looms, slightly menacing in how close I am to the jagged ends of stumps and debris that rise up directly in front of me on a steep cut block. From the narrows, it's about fifteen kilometres by logging road to the Theodosia Dam, both the end of the line and the beginning of my journey.

I first heard about the dam in February 2000, when the British Columbia Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks announced that water flows to the Theodosia River would be restored and the dam would be decommissioned. It was constructed in 1956 to supply hydroelectric power to the Powell River pulp mill. At the time I was working for the BC Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and had been assigned to the treaty team responsible for negotiating an agreement with Tla'amin. The community wanted to revitalize the area of the Theodosia Watershed, to restore a river that had supported magnificent runs of salmon sustaining the human occupants of a lush estuary for centuries, perhaps millenia. Although, in the words of Walter Paul, the Theodosia River has been "studied to death," [3] the stories of elders who lived there have not received as

---

[3] Walter Paul (She peh the es), interview by author, tape recording, Tla'amin, 27 August 2003. Walter Paul is a Tla'amin councilor who has been instrumental in the struggle to decommission the Theodosia Dam.

much attention. This project attempts to address the dearth of literature on the cultural impacts of dam construction by using storytelling, an Indigenous form of storytelling in film described as *Fourth World Cinema*, and oral histories to examine those impacts. Pam Colorado describes how storytelling can collapse time and incorporate thousands of years of knowledge in one story:

> Because American Indian cultures are so ancient, and the stories so old, there is almost no human experience of learning which has not been recorded in those stories. Moreover, they are tied intricately with motion, relations, and a sense of collapsed time that there is a spiritual essence to them which people often describe as timeless.[4]

Storytelling gives community members access to knowledge with which they can make decisions and learn from the past in a manner that relates firmly to the present. I intend to demonstrate how colonial stories are countered and resisted by stories of Tla'amin relationships to land and salmon, and passed on through oral narratives and video projects.

Cultural Impacts of the Dam: An Oral History

Storytelling is the cultural cornerstone of oral traditions and with each chapter of this paper I will introduce a Tla'amin story. The elders have shared these stories within the community in a number of different fora, including a traditional use study initiated by the Sliammon Treaty Society and a video produced solely for community members in which elders share their memories of Toh Kwon_non. The Treaty Society is an organization responsible for overseeing the treaty negotiating process. The community entered into negotiations with provincial and federal governments in 1994. The society is governed by a five-member board of community elected directors and two political appointees from Chief and Council. They are interested in the innovative use of media to

discuss community issues. They have produced a video about the Theodosia Dam for distribution outside the community and recently finished editing a documentary film about issues of concern to Tla'amin people. I will contribute to the growing body of research that the Treaty Society is gathering, and bring these stories to a wider audience in the hope of strengthening the case for revitalizing the Theodosia River as a salmon-bearing stream rather than a source of hydroelectricity.

One way in which places are actively sensed is through storytelling. Stories truly wed physical spaces in Tla'amin territory to the landscape of the mind. Tla'amin peoples are connected to their histories and ceremonies through the descriptive power of stories that detail physical landscapes they once occupied. Through these stories, I will explore how oral history is a critical component of land management and legitimizes Tla'amin's guardianship role in all areas of their territory. This perspective has been limited by colonial authorities intent on alienating indigenous peoples from their land, and in the second chapter I contrast Tla'amin historical perspectives with post-contact settler narratives.

Cultural Keystone Species

The ten-kilometer journey to the dam site is often breathtaking. In places, dense stands of spruce and hemlock form a canopy overhead. I've journeyed here with Cathy Galligos, her husband Craig, and his father Gerry, who kindly offered to bring us to the dam on this calm summer day. Elsie Paul is riding in the cab next to Gerry. She is an elder who lived in Toh Kwon_non as a young girl and this would be her first time seeing the dam. For many elders, it is inconceivable that such projects could go ahead without the consent, or even prior knowledge, of the people who historically occupied and

---

[4] Pam Colorado, "Bridging Native and Western Science," *Convergence* XXI.2/3 (1988), 55.

utilized the area. That is why twelve years ago, Walter Paul was told by his elders to see what could be done about getting the dam removed. What had once been one of Georgia Strait's most productive salmon rivers now saw minimal returns and there was great concern about dwindling fish stocks.

Salmon plays an important role in the cultures and traditions of many indigenous nations. One methodology for examining the cultural impacts of its loss to indigenous societies is through the concept of a "cultural keystone species." Nancy Turner and Ann Garibaldi first introduced this concept in relation to the "keystone" concept widely used in the field of ecology. The ecological concept originated in the idea that a species is considered keystone to an ecological community if it holds the system in check and preferentially consumes species that would otherwise dominate the system.[5] Turner and Garibaldi extended this concept to species that play a key characterizing role in a particular human culture at a particular time and place which will be examined in Chapter Three as the notion of a cultural keystone species applies to the salmon of the Theodosia River. This concept illustrates the importance of salmon within Tla'amin culture and foreshadows the impact of its disappearance from Toh Kwon_non.

Dams and Indigenous Peoples

Just four years before the Theodosia Dam was built, a group of indigenous people in northern BC had been forcibly removed from their villages to make way for a hydro project that flooded 120,000 acres of their traditional territory. Members of these Cheslatta Carrier communities were relocated about fifty kilometres north of their villages to the south side of Francoise Lake near Burns Lake. Alcan flooded their lands to

[5] Garibaldi, Ann and Nancy J. Turner. Submitted, fall 2003. *Cultural Keystone Species: Implications for Ecological Conservation and Restoration*. Conservation Ecology, special issue.

generate electricity for its smelter operation in Kitimat. They were villages like the one my father grew up in, and the disappearance of these communities was utterly devastating. My father remembers an elder shaking his head in disbelief. They couldn't do it, he said. They couldn't flood an area that size. This, however, was what Patrick McCully called the "go-go years of the big dam era,"[6] when the social and environmental impacts of dam construction were glossed over or ignored. It was a twentieth century reprise of manifest destiny, with both Indians and fish standing in the way of "progress." As Mark Angelo pointed out, "The Theodosia Dam was conceived and built during an era when fishery resources were given little value."[7] Given the importance of salmon as a primary food source for the Tla'amin, as for many Indigenous groups, the consequences of such thoughtlessness would be considerable. One high-profile example of such total disregard for environmental and cultural impacts was the LaGrande Hydroelectric Project in Northern Quebec. Completed in 1979, it destroyed the nesting areas of the Hudson Bay geese, wiped out a herd of 10,000 caribou, put methylmercury into the food chain, and reduced Cree hunting grounds by 11,000 square kilometres.[8]

The issue of dam construction is particularly problematic for indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world. The social, environmental and economic costs of resource development, such as dam building, have been thoroughly documented by academics, grassroots and non-government organizations. Thomas Homer-Dixon, for example, has written about the social and economic impacts of resource scarcity and the

---

[6] Patrick McCully, "After the Deluge: The Urgent Need for Reparations for Dam Victims," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* (Fall 1999), 33.
[7] Mark Angelo is with the Outdoor Recreation Council (ORC) of B.C. He worked closely with Tla'amin for the decommissioning of the Theodosia Dam. The quote is from the ORC website (http://www.orcbc.ca).
[8] Katherine Weist, "For the Public Good: Native Americans, Hydroelectric Dams, and the Iron Triangle," *Trusteeship in Change: Toward Tribal Autonomy in Resource Management*, ed. Richmond L. Clow (U. Press of Colorado, 2001), 53.

intimate link between social unrest and the increasing alienation of Indigenous peoples from their homelands.[9] A recent study carried out by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights described the relationship between indigenous peoples and their land and identified the many problems and issues related to indigenous land rights.[10] Studies on the cultural impacts of resource exploitation have been slow to emerge. In Luke Hertlein's study of a diversion project and its impacts on a nearby Cree community, he wrote that "despite the lack of studies conducted from a western, scientific perspective, there exists a wealth of information from the Cree people themselves."[11] Global organizations are forming to address this issue yet these are not enough for protecting indigenous homelands.[12]

Research Methodology

The production of any body of knowledge within an indigenous community requires careful consideration of the concerns of the community itself. Through initial contact with the treaty society, I met with the Sliammon Elders Group and explained my research project. Coming from outside the community, I was cognizant of my role as an outsider attempting to structure the research around an issue with which I have not lived. I wanted to develop a relationship based on mutual respect and to ensure broad community support for the project.

---

[9] See Homer-Dixon in *Ecoviolence: Links Among Environment, Population, and Security* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), *The Ingenuity Gap* (New York: Knopf, 2000), and "Environmental Change and Human Security" in *Behind the Headlines* (Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1991). See also http://www.ingenuitygap.com.

[10] Erica-Irene A. Daes, *Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous Peoples and Their Relationship to Land*, Final working paper prepared by the Special Rapporteur, Mrs. Erica-Irene A. Daes, Commission on Human Rights, June 11, 2000 (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2000/25).

[11] Luke Hertlein, "Lake Winnipeg Regulation Churchill-Nelson River Diversion Project in the Crees of Northern Manitoba, Canada," *Contributing Paper to the World Commission on Dams*, December 1999, 7.

I received a Certificate of Approval from the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Committee on July 3, 2003 (reference number 289-03). I then interviewed five elders, three at their homes and two at the elders' lodge in Tla'amin. Several elders I approached at the suggestion of the elders group decided not to participate. However, a majority of the elders agreed to be co-investigators in this project and we discussed ahead of time questions I would ask. During the interviews, I asked such questions as where Tla'amin peoples traditionally fished, how important the fishery was to the Tla'amin way of life, and what methods they used for fishing. I brought gifts for the elders, both for those who participated and those who declined. I brought plums from my backyard and put them in a birch bark basket my grandmother made. I left the basket along with the plums to share some of my Carrier culture and I also brought moose meat for all the elders. For those who participated, I gave gifts of tobacco and paua shell, a shellfish found in New Zealand.

I used a qualitative research design to engage openly with research participants. A qualitative, interpretive approach enables the researcher to work with participants in a flexible and fluid manner and allows room for storytelling and greater subjectivity. A Tla'amin storytelling methodology is at the center of my research design. Stories are educational tools used by indigenous communities; they convey histories, impart lessons and point to sacred places that require protection because of their importance within indigenous cultures. They describe the role of individuals in the community and how community members should behave towards one another. Through stories, indigenous communities have access to knowledge accumulated over thousands of years. This

---

[12] Such organizations include the Indigenous Peoples Biodiversity Information Network (http://www.ibin.org/iabin/), Indigenous Environmental Network (http://www.ienearth.org/) and the World

knowledge enables them to fulfill their role as stewards of the land and carry out sustainable resource management strategies. A storytelling methodology uncovers these many layers of experience and sheds light on the nature of indigenous guardianship of lands and resources.

Community assistance was central to my research and Graham Smith's "power-sharing model" provides an excellent description of my motives.[13] As Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains, researchers use this model to "seek the assistance of the community to meaningfully support the development of a research enterprise."[14] This model provides a culturally sensitive and empathetic approach, but, as Tuhiwai Smith points out, it also goes beyond that to address issues that are critical to the community. When I first met with the Theodosia Treaty-Related Measures Committee – whose mandate is to work with the province to address the restoration of water flow and salmon habitat in the Theodosia River – it was clear this was a desirable project. Even so, some people at the meeting echoed what Walter Paul had said to me: the river has been studied to death. Hopefully, this research will demonstrate a different approach to studying the impacts of resource development, in particular the effects of dam construction. The power-sharing model also informed the interview process as the focus and intent of the interview questions was discussed with participants beforehand. The interviews were not constrained by the list of questions and participants were free to relate any aspects of their experiences they felt were significant.

Commission on Dams (http://www.dams.org).
[13] The power-sharing model is discussed in Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 1999).
[14] Smith, 177.

Decolonizing Documentary Film

My interest in film and video initially led me to develop a proposal for a filmmaking project to be made in collaboration with the community about the Theodosia Dam. Storytelling from an indigenous perspective can be an empowering and beneficial process on different levels. It can strengthen the community's sense of identity, be inspirational for other indigenous communities and serve as a political tool in the struggle for greater control over issues important to the community. For many years, films depicting indigenous peoples were made by non-indigenous filmmakers. This trend is slowly reversing and indigenous filmmakers are deconstructing the dominant images of the Hollywood Indian and reconstructing them from an indigenous point of view.[15] There has been little analysis of the impacts of documentary film on indigenous people, in spite of the fact that documentary filmmaking has been much more accessible to Indigenous filmmakers than the feature-length film industry. In their use of video, the Tla'amin people have given voice to both young and old and shown that a broad range of issues can be addressed in ways that are imaginative and engaging.

Although my intent with this project is not to make a documentary film, I will contribute to the existing literature by examining the notion of Fourth World Cinema in the context of documentary filmmaking, a term introduced by New Zealand filmmaker Barry Barclay. I will extend my storytelling methodology to incorporate film and video, and look at how Fourth World Cinema continues the long tradition of Tla'amin resistance to colonial narratives. Film can ultimately be a powerful medium for preserving cultural

[15] For a thorough and informed discussion see Singer (2001). Other excellent works on this topic include Bataille and Silet (1980), Churchill (1992), Francis (1997), Rollins and O'Connor (1998), Leuthold (1998), Kilpatrick (1999) and Prats (2002).

integrity and affirming social and political rights, and my interviews with two Tla'amin filmmakers who have produced videos in the community will inform that chapter.

Conclusion

At the site of the dam, we're greeted by a Tla'amin crew from the Sliammon Hatchery who are working to restore some flow to the river as part of an agreement with the dam's license holder. We help Elsie over the rocky terrain and for the first time I see the diversion project, a clean split down a river that is a shadow of its former self. A clear pool of water on the diversion side of the river looks inviting in the afternoon's heat. All of us but Elsie wade into the chest-deep pool and gasp at the water made icy from the glacial melt where it originated high up in the mountains. In spite of the steel girders and concrete slabs, there is a beauty and energy to this place. Basso wrote that "relationships to places are lived most often in the company of other people, and it is on these communal occasions – when places are sensed *together* – that native views of the physical world become accessible to strangers."[16] In the cool waters of the river I wade through, in the company of the Tla'amin people who have brought me here, I gain a sense of this place and begin to weave together the many strands that comprise a Tla'amin view of Toh Kwon_non.

Mapping the Chapters

In chapter two, I look at how Tla'amin storytelling traditions are used to counter colonial narratives created by Europeans who sought to alienate Tla'amin peoples from their ancestral lands. The storytelling methodology is further explored in chapter three where I look at the presence of "keystones" in stories. I will examine how the storytelling

[16] Basso, 109.

methodology can utilize an ecological concept to examine the importance of salmon in Tla'amin culture. Chapter four relates the stories of Tla'amin elders who lived at Toh Kwon_non and how knowledge is being kept alive by elders intent on passing the stories on to future generations. In chapter five, I explore the idea of Fourth World Cinema, a medium that can affirm cultural, political and social rights when it operates within an indigenous framework. I use a "peoplehood matrix" in conceptualizing the framework for an indigenous approach. Fourth World Cinema comes from a place that is sacred and personal, always rooted in the culture's core values, and driven by community goals and aspirations. In the last chapter, I provide key findings of my research on storytelling methodologies and discuss implications for theories of Fourth World Cinema. The following chapter establishes the framework by examining how Tla'amin conceptualized their world through storytelling and their efforts to resist colonial incursions onto lands with which they were intimately connected.

CHAPTER TWO – CONFRONTING THE COLONIAL NARRATIVE

A young woman was cautioned by her grandmother not to eat tree pitch, but she only laughed at this advice. One day when this young woman was in the forest digging lady-fern roots,[17] *she got some pitch and started to chew it. Soon she felt something moving around and told her grandmother. The old lady knew immediately that her granddaughter was pregnant with puppies.*

A lot of people, including Raven, Crow and Great Blue Heron lived in the village with this young woman. When Raven discovered she was pregnant, he told all the people to pack up their belongings and move, leaving her behind.

The young woman's grandmother cried as she watched Raven take a dipper of water and extinguish all the fires in the village. When he came to her fire, the old woman hid a smoldering coal in a horse-clam shell. Then she spoke to a little dog who was running around, "You are going to be smart. You will show her where I am hiding this." The dog watched the old woman bury the shell containing the smoldering coal. After the people left the village, only this little dog remained.

When the pregnant young woman returned to the village, she realized that everyone had left. It was very quiet. All the fires were out. She sat down and began to cry, but the little dog ran over to her and started to rub itself against her. Then it ran off into the forest to where the old woman had hidden the horse-clam shell, dug some soil from the top of it and ran back to the young woman. Three times, the little dog ran back and forth. Finally, on the fourth time, the woman went to see what it was doing. The little dog began to dig. Then the woman dug down deeper and found the horse-clam shell. Opening the shell, she discovered the smoldering coal that had been left for her by her grandmother. She returned to her house and was able to build a fire.

Winter came and the tide was very low at night. Every night the woman made a torch from pitch wood and went down to the beach to dig for clams. It was on the beach that the young woman gave birth to her children – they were puppies, ten males and one female. She returned home and made a place for her puppies beside the fire. After rekindling the fire, she went back to the beach to dig again for clams.

While the woman was on the beach, she could hear a lot of noise coming from her house, so she gathered up her torch and her clams and went to see what was happening. But when she got near, the noise stopped. She ran into the house and found only her pups, piled one on top of another to keep warm. The woman cooked the clams and fed her puppies, who were growing rapidly.

The next night, the young woman went down again to the beach, and again when she started to dig, the noise resumed. She placed her digging stick in front of the torch and hung her hat and cape on it, so it would appear that she was still standing there on the beach, digging clams. The noise from her house was growing louder and louder. The woman sneaked up to her house and, peeking through a crack, saw naked puppies dancing around the fire without their dog skins, which were piled up near the fire where they usually slept. Her children were human!

---

[17] Nancy Turner advised these are likely wood-fern roots, not lady fern; the two have often been confused by ethngraphers. See Turner NF, LM Johnson-Gottesfeld, HV Kuhnlein and A Ceska (1992) Edible Woodfern Rootstocks of Western North America: Solving an Ethnobotanical Puzzle, *Journal of Ethnobiology*, 12(1): 1-34.

While the boys danced, the little girl kept watch at the door for their mother. "Where is our mother?" the boys asked her. "Oh, she is still down at the beach digging clams," the girl replied.

The boys continued to dance. Suddenly, their mother threw open the door, ran into the house and tossed all of the dog skins into the fire, where they burnt. Now all the dogs were human.

One night, the children who had grown up quickly, were sitting around the fire and asking each other what they were going to do. One of the boys stood up and said, "I am going into the woods and hunt deer for us to eat." "I am going to hunt seals," announced another young man. Another said that he would be a porpoise hunter. Each of the woman's sons decided on a certain task. Then they asked their little sister what she was going to do. "I will cook everything that my brothers bring home," the girl replied. That is why today women cook the food that the men bring home from hunting.

The next morning the boys went out hunting and shot lots of game for their sister to cook.

Crow returned to the village one day to see if the abandoned young woman had died, but instead she saw the woman's family and their many provisions. The young men gave some smelt to Crow to take home with her, but told her not to say where they had come from.

Raven had wondered where Crow was going, so when she returned, he sent people to spy on her to see what she had brought home. Flea was the first one to spy, but he was too noisy when he jumped. Crow heard him approaching and put away her smelt. "She isn't eating anything," Flea reported to Raven. Next, Louse went to spy on Crow. She landed on Crow's head, but as she landed, she let out her breath, and Crow heard her, too. None of them could find out what Crow was bringing home.

When Crow ran out of food, she left again to visit the abandoned woman. This time, when Crow returned, Raven went over to her house, beat her up and searched for what she had brought home. But Raven couldn't find anything. Next, Bedbug was sent to spy on Crow. Because she was not aware of Bedbug crawling around her hair, Crow took out her smelt and began to eat. "So that is what you are eating!" called out Bedbug. Crow could not deny it, so she said she had received it from the young woman whom they had abandoned. "The pups became human. They have deer, mountain goat, porpoise and seal put away for the winter," Crow explained.

All the people returned to the village to visit the abandoned woman. When they got ashore, they were invited to eat. Raven sat at one end where they gave him a dogfish to eat, as it was he who had extinguished all the fires, but all the other people were given a great meal. Today we eat the same foods that were served at this feast.

These were the ancestors of the Sliammon people.[18]

Elsie Paul tells us this story as we drive to Lund en route to Toh Kwon_non.

Earlier, we spoke of how Tla'amin people show respect for salmon and Elsie mentioned

Sheh te guus (Transformer):

> There's a lot of different legends about the different creatures, the fish, the animal life, that at one time that they were human beings before the transformer came and they've now turned into something else so therefore you still respect them. You don't ever make fun, and that's why you don't waste. You don't kill just for the sake of killing. You kill animals for food only.[19]

Sheh te guus is an entity present in many indigenous cultures. When creatures are transformed, it is usually because early humans have failed in some way.[20] Tla'amin's Sheh te guus story reinforces the roles of men and women within Tla'amin society and engenders respect for a cosmology that views animals as part of the family relationship. Storytelling enables Tla'amin to better understand and occupy their territory, to care for the land, and to respect the intricate web of life supported by land and water so they continue to provide for the people. This chapter will first look at Tla'amin's storytelling tradition and the intimate connection between landscape and language. I then discuss events since European contact in order to establish context for the next chapter where I discuss salmon as a cultural keystone species.

"Live Life Like a Story"

Cherokee author Thomas King stresses the importance of stories in his latest work *The Truth About Stories*: "It really is through stories that we share our existence, not just our identify, but just our existence in the world."[21] In recording the stories of Yukon elders over three decades, Julie Cruikshank came to understand that in telling stories "no telling can be separated from the setting, the audience, and the life stage of the

---

[18] Dorothy Kennedy and Randy Bouchard, *Sliammon Life, Sliammon Lands* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1983), 12-13 (hereafter cited as *SLSL*).
[19] Elsie Paul, interview by author, tape recording, Tla'amin, 27 August 2003.
[20] John Bierhorst, *The Way of the Earth: Native America and the Environment* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1994), 49.
[21] Daybreak. CBC Radio. Montreal.

narrator."[22] Similarly, while text from the story at the beginning of this chapter was drawn from *Sliammon Life, Sliammon Lands*, the story was originally shared in an intimate setting and in abbreviated form. Elsie was prompted to tell the story in response to an amusing incident Gerry Galligos shared with us about a raven that stole his sandwich out of a tupperware container and then flew past as if laughing. Raven is a central figure in many Tla'amin stories and Elsie shared this well-known story to emphasize his intelligence and craftiness. Telling the story brought us closer on our journey as we laughed together, but also served to educate myself – as an outsider – about raven's personality from a Tla'amin perspective. Storytelling is therefore a complex and layered historical narrative. It transmits thousands of years of knowledge, anchored by time and space, as well as the immediate, personal experiences of the storyteller. Indigenous peoples counter European historical narratives by allowing their own stories to shape their worldview.

Indigenous storytelling as a counter-hegemonic practice began at the point of contact with Europeans. Stories reflecting indigenous realities were not useful to settlers who required vast, empty landscapes unoccupied except by a few "nomadic" Indians. Colonization erased indigenous histories from the landscape and replaced them with narratives that described intrepid, pioneering spirits putting land to proper (European) use, that is, cutting down forests, building railroads and prospecting for minerals. European conceptions of land use were transferred to the so-called "new world" through such activities as place naming. Naming Tla'amin places after European towns, cities and personages was part of the colonial project that attempted to mold indigenous lands into

[22] Julie Cruikshank, "The social life of texts: Editing on the page and in performance," *Talking on the Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts*, eds. Laura J. Murray and Keren Rice (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press,

European replicas, regardless of how far removed they were from the cultural, political and economic atmosphere of Europe. Reclaiming Tla'amin places names is part of a greater project of reclaiming Tla'amin identity and connection to landscapes and waterways. Tla'amin's relationship with their lands precluded them from engaging in activities that would destroy the environment. Their close relationship with the natural world is revealed in Sheh te guus stories in which animals once walked the earth as human beings. Sheh te guus stories demonstrate the fluid and flexible nature of indigenous societies while colonial narratives attempt to contain indigenous cultures as static and immutable, destined to crumble in the path of progress. Indigenous storytelling – especially Sheh te guus stories – provides a way of understanding and experiencing the world that counters colonial narratives.

One such Tla'amin story describes k*wenis* (whale) who lives in the pool below Powell River Falls. When the weather is going to change for the worse, Kwenis makes a noise which can be heard in Tla'amin Creek village six kilometers away.[23] Kennedy and Bouchard recorded a story about whale related to them by an elder from Klahoose, a closely-related group whose territory overlaps with Tla'amin:

> Mink was fishing near Mitlenatch Island when a big whale surfaced near him. Mink began making fun of Whale and bothered him so much that finally Whale swallowed both Mink and his canoe! Mink found himself in Whale's huge stomach surrounded by herring that Whale had eaten. So Mink started a fire to cook some of these herring, but he kept bumping his head against Whale's heart. Mink took his knife and sliced right through the heart, which caused Whale to beach himself. Some children who were playing nearby on the beach quickly ran off to tell their parents about the whale. Soon some people arrived ready to carve up the beached whale. Suddenly a voice was heard from inside the whale. It was Mink! The people cut through Whale's huge stomach and out jumped Mink. The

---

1999), 108.

[23] Kennedy and Bouchard, *SLSL*, 164.

> heat from the fire had caused him to become bald! That whale is known today as Big Rock, which is on the beach near Willow Point, south of Campbell River.[24]

This story symbolizes the nature of an ephemeral being that is simultaneously permanent and fleeting. Spirit and animal are separate yet indivisible components. The interconnectedness of all living things manifests as Mink travels from water to Whale's stomach, and Whale from water to land to the peoples' stomach. As Simon Ortiz writes about his life in Deetziyamah, "It was the stories and songs which provided the knowledge that I was woven into the intricate web that was my Acoma life."[25] Unlike pioneer stories in which settlers mold and shape the land to suit their needs, Tla'amin stories shape the way people respond to their environment.

For example, a story related to me by Tla'amin elder Joe Paul tells of a young man whose training led him to be a great provider for his family. Young boys underwent training at puberty when they would go to lakes and streams, eat very little, take sweat baths, and cleanse themselves with cedar boughs. If they worked hard enough a guardian spirit usually appeared in the form of a person, but its animal (or other) nature was always apparent.[26] A guardian spirit power would come in a dream or trance from a bird, an animal or – as in this case – an object from the sky:[27]

> There was a man who was married but he was really lazy. He would lie around all day and do nothing. His father got angry with him and beat him and told him to go out and do something. So he left and went out on something like a vision quest. He looked up into the sky and saw that bright constellation called *Ko ko ten* (Big Dipper) and suddenly that bright star fell down and it became a spear tip. When he put the tip on his spear and went hunting, he threw it at the deer and that tip found its way right to the deer's heart. When he put it on his fishing line, all

---

[24] Ibid, 106.
[25] Simon J. Ortiz, "The Language We Know," *I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers*, eds. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat (Lincoln: U. of Nebraska Press, 1987), 189.
[26] Kennedy and Bouchard, 47.
[27] Ibid.

> the fish became hooked on it. So he became a great hunter and was able to provide for his family.[28]

Through this story, Joe describes the consequences of action and inaction. There is a moral imperative that flows from his words. He encourages young men to be respectful in their training and describes the rewards of such an approach. Tla'amin peoples were shaped by the stories they heard and knew what actions must be taken to sustain a proper relationship with the lands and resources. Such stories resist the imposition of colonial imperatives, describing an indigenous approach to land management and how to maintain harmonious relationships within the community.

Tla'amin people had stories and songs for every place they occupied along the coast. They were treasured repositories of knowledge and history, long used to educate and entertain, the functions quite often inseparable. Cruikshank came to understand that the "foundational narratives" told to her were an essential part of everyday life:

> "These narratives provided pivotal philosophical, literary and social frameworks essential for providing young and not-so-young people with ways of thinking about how to live life appropriately. The stories erased any distinction between "story" and "life." They were embedded in social life and, in the words of one master storyteller, Angela Sidney, provided guidance about how to "live life like a story."[29]

When the evening's storytelling came to a close, the Tla'amin storyteller would put the spirits of the animal-people to rest by reciting a formula that also brought good weather: "May the waters be calm and may it be a clear sunny day!"[30] Reciting these words acknowledged the ancestors who were present in stories passed down through

---

[28] Joe (Dave) Paul told me this story during a conversation we had at his home in Tla'amin on 29 August 2003.

[29] Julie Cruikshank, "The social life of texts: Editing on the page and in performance," *Talking on the Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts*, eds. Laura J. Murray and Keren Rice (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1999), 100-101.

[30] Kennedy and Bouchard, *SLSL*, 108.

generations. It was also a reminder of Tla'amin's responsibilities to the natural world that flowed from their reliance on its resources.

Countering the Colonial Story

Freedom to travel throughout Tla'amin territory was soon circumscribed by contact with Europeans. Like the appearance of Sheh te guus in their territory, the colonial presence altered the Tla'amin landscape. A legislative framework slowly wrapped itself around Tla'amin that saw ceremonies like the potlatch, an important social and political structure, outlawed and lands slowly alienated from their original owners. Christian missionaries – the Oblates of Mary Immaculate – established themselves in the area in the late 1860's. Rose Louie describes the swift and devastating impact of their presence:

> When the missionary priests came, they made the natives burn everything, all their native costumes. They said if somebody's going to hide something, its going to be a big sin for you. So everybody had to take and burn their stuff. The missionaries told them that. They lost everything. They made them burn it.[31]

Rose is the oldest member of the Tla'amin community. She says her mother-in-law never thought she would "see the day we'd be living with [Europeans]." Descriptions of the first European visits to the area have found their way into Tla'amin stories, and Rose recalls the first encounter between Tla'amin peoples and the *mam'la* (white man):

> They seen something big coming. It's like there's an island that broke somewhere. Kept lookin', lookin'…After evening, here it got close to Texada [Island]. Here it was a big boat, lot of sail on it. Got scared lookin' at it. Man says, you woman better take your kids and go hide up in the woods. A real strange thing's coming. Here it is the white man…The guy told the woman to go and hide in the bush. They all took off. Ship come in. Stopped and made a big noise. Splash! Hear a chain. They were anchoring…There was no rope. There was chain. Next thing, another thing come off, smaller boat. Here a bunch of guys come off, got in the boat. Line up like ducks. And they went, eh? Walkin' around in their funny hats, boots, pants up to here, elastic, you know, jackets. Lookin' at them. [Tla'amin]

[31] Rose Louie, interview by author, tape recording, Tla'amin, 5 September 2003.

> were all hiding. They go around. They went nosing around in the sheds of the people, lookin' in there. And they come out, going like this, waving at the others about skin, you know. Cuz the natives used to use the skin for a rope, you know, and everything. You know, blankets. So finally, someone got brave enough and went to talk to them. Went up to meet him but they couldn't understand him. He couldn't understand them. And they went into the shacks again. They come out with the skin and showed it to the Indians. Showed it to them, talking away. They didn't know what they were saying. They said, point like that [holds her hand up], one month, here. The natives said, oh they want some skin. They want it. So the natives talked to them. One month, they came back again and the natives had all kinds of skin. Here they came and traded them with a gun, a long barrel, used to be powder. It wasn't shells. Real long. And they convinced the Indians to pile their skins up to the mouth of the gun. Now today when you buy a skin or something, it's in the thousands…Yeah, that's where they seen the first white guys.[32]

The ship Rose described was the "Beaver," a Hudson's Bay Company boat that first encountered Tla'amin and Island Comox peoples in 1838 at the north end of Texada Island. This encounter took place more than four decades after the first two fleets of foreign ships – one British the other Spanish – had entered the northern Strait of Georgia in 1792. The latter's arrival initiated a period of change that would impact all Northern Coast Salish groups. Along with the trade goods they received in exchange for food and furs, the Tla'amin were also introduced to diseases for which they had no immunity. Joe Paul talks about "witchcrafters" that wreaked havoc in the community 200 years ago. His description corresponds with the introduction of European disease and the story may have been born out of the smallpox epidemics that ravaged the coast:

> But that's the way it happened, one brother-in-law was telling me just recently. He'd say about two hundred years back, he says witchcrafter, witchcrafter killed so many people with whatever, witchcrafting. That's just like shooting people. So it happened in his time, like, cuz when [the witchcrafter] died, he says they made the coffins way back….So he said, while they're waiting to bury him, for the burial, he started burning right there. He was so wicked.[33]

---

[32] Ibid.
[33] Joe (Dave) Paul, interview by author, tape recording, Tla'amin, 27 August 2003.

Described as the most dangerous infectious disease ever,[34] one of the symptoms of smallpox is an extremely high fever (above 40 degrees) which correlates with Joe Paul's description of the body bursting into flames. As one writer described it, "Indians were fresh territory for many plagues, not just one."[35] Smallpox, typhoid, bubonic plague, influenza, mumps, measles, and whooping cough all descended on the Americas after Christopher Columbus veered eight thousand miles off course in 1492.

When George Vancouver and his crew navigated their ship through the Pacific Northwest in 1792 they found that smallpox had preceded them. As Vancouver wrote, human remains were "promiscuously scattered about the beach, in great numbers."[36] There is heated debate in social science circles about population estimates in North America before Columbus arrived but one researcher put it at 18 million.[37] In any case, the impacts of disease were devastating and widespread. What is not as hotly debated – or perhaps recognized – is the extent and scope to which peoples like the Northern Coast Salish occupied their lands and cultivated the landscapes. Recently, indigenous peoples on Vancouver Island assisted geomorphologist John Harper who was looking for an explanation for a recurring pattern he saw along beaches further up the coast from Tla'amin, in the Broughton Archipelago. Clearly visible from the air, lines of rocks which some thought were natural features turned out to be "clam gardens" intentionally

---

[34] Health Canada, "Emergency Preparedness: Smallpox," [internet site]; available at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/epr/smallpox.html.
[35] Charles C. Mann, "1491," The Atlantic Monthly (March 2002), 45.
[36] Ibid, 44.
[37] Ibid, 46. Robert Boyd has written extensively on indigenous populations and disease epidemics, including a chapter in the Smithsonian Institute's Handbook of North American Indians, Northwest Coast (1990). See also, William Denevan, *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492* (Madison: U. of Wisconsin Press, 1976); Henry F. Dobbins, "An Appraisal of Techniques with a New Hemispheric Estimate," *Current Anthropology* 7.4 (Sept. 1966), 395-416. For a so-called "low counter" perspective, see David Henige, *Numbers from Nowhere: The American Indian Contact Population Debate* (Norman: U. of Oklahoma, 1998).

cultivated by coastal indigenous groups to better harvest shellfish.[38] Such labour-intensive activity points to the existence of a substantial population along the coast. It also suggests that shellfish – the shells of which Tla'amin traded with other groups for things like eulachon oil and berries – played a critical role in the societies of coastal indigenous cultures.

To the early explorers, however, the coastline of British Columbia and Vancouver Island appeared to be sparsely populated "untamed wilderness." The smaller ships that Rose Louie described were longboats, used by the English and Spanish to conduct surveys up the inlets and around the many islands. Each was intent on claiming the honour of proving Vancouver Island separate from the mainland.[39] There was limited contact between Europeans and the Northern Coast Salish between the 1790's and 1820's as few ships traveled through the northern Georgia Strait. Trade in sea otters dominated relations between coastal indigenous groups and Europeans during this period, and without access to sea otter, Tla'amin were only indirectly affected by trade.[40] They mainly received European trade goods through barter with other indigenous peoples, a practice Elsie Paul remembers her grandmother carrying on with neighbouring communities: "In later times, it was trading for other goods such as fabric for making clothes, just all kinds of things that I remember my grandmother trading. A whole lot of other things, like canned goods, fruit and then it became dishes and bedding and things like that. It was very important to our people."[41] By the 1840's, the Tla'amin were participating directly in the land-based fur trade.

---

[38] "Science Chases Legends to Secret of Clam Gardens," *The Vancouver Sun*, 25 Oct. 2003.
[39] Bouchard and Kennedy, SLSL, 109.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Elsie Paul, interview.

In 1849, the British established the Colony of Vancouver Island and with the appointment of James Douglas as the chief factor at Fort Victoria, a brief era of treaty-making was initiated. Douglas had been a fur trader with the Hudson's Bay Company and his experience with indigenous peoples through the fur trade had made him a desirable administrator for the fledgling colony.[42] The Colonial Office in London instructed Douglas to negotiate treaties with indigenous groups on Vancouver Island. With a view to facilitating settlement, he negotiated agreements that included land surrenders in exchange for a few blankets, the reservation of a little land for their use, and the freedom to hunt on unoccupied land and to fish as before.[43] While colonial authorities felt they had extinguished indigenous rights to lands in the area, the indigenous signatories signed a document they believed provided for the sharing of lands while preserving their overall authority and jurisdiction. Douglas was instructed by London to raise funds locally to negotiate land surrenders and with no funds available for such negotiations, and increasing numbers of settlers moving onto indigenous lands, no further treaties were negotiated.[44]

The Cariboo Gold Rush of 1858 brought hordes of American miners and increasing numbers of settlers to the northwest and the priorities of the colony precluded negotiating land agreements with indigenous inhabitants. Instead, surveyors traveled the province and determined what lands indigenous peoples wanted set aside for reserves. Around this time, in 1859, a family in Minneapolis had started up a grain and elevator business. The Brooks family business would eventually become a logging and sawmilling

---

[42] Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 53.
[43] Fisher, 67.
[44] Kennedy and Bouchard, *SLSL*, 125.

empire, with operations throughout the Pacific Northwest and as far away as Cuba and the Bahamas.[45] With their sights set on Tla'amin lands, the Brooks-Scanlon Lumber Company would be the first to cash in on the pulp and paper industry that by the turn of the nineteenth century was the darling of development in the recently-confederated province of British Columbia.

Demolition of a Homeland

In 1875, R.P. Rithet illegally purchased a 15,000-acre timber lease encompassing three permanently occupied villages and many seasonal sites. Although the villages were legally protected from sale or claim, nothing was done to prevent the purchase of the area that became known as "lot 450," the municipality of Powell River. Three years later, Tla'amin and Klahoose staged a timber protest and seized logs cut by Europeans because they were cutting timber too close to village sites.[46] By 1891, the non-indigenous population outnumbered the indigenous population for the first time both locally and regionally, but the people still resisted alienation from their lands. Between 1910-1915, Tla'amin were forcibly removed from their village sites within "lot 450" but some remained to occupy their lands and protest the demolition of their homes. Traditional medicine people continued to secretly practice winter ceremonies in hidden areas such as *Kleqwa7nam* (Scuttle Bay). Because potlatching was illegal until 1951, participation was limited by the threat of repercussions from church, Indian Agent and police authorities. Such strategies of resistance were sustained as Europeans continued their encroachment.

In 1902, a decade before Tla'amin joined with other indigenous groups to protest land rights issues, the provincial government started offering "pulp leases" to attract

---

[45] J.A. Lundie, *Powell River's First 50 Years* (Powell River: Powell River News Ltd, 1960), 152.

prospective companies or syndicates to the province. The largest of the four leases was 134,551 acres, granted to the Canadian Industrial Company (CIC) at Powell River. In 1908, American businessmen that comprised Brooks, Scanlon and O'Brien Logging Company visited the Tla'amin community of *Teeskwat* and saw a future pulp mill:

> These Minnesota lumbermen who had heard about the famous pulp leases, rowed to the tumbling Powell River Falls, took one look at its potential power and possible deep sea harbour and envisioned the first newsprint pulp and paper mill west of the Great Lakes. Brooks' brother, Anson, joined them as they began to make plans, running into one snag after another.[47]

Creating a Pulp Industry

When British Columbia joined Confederation in 1871, responsibility for "Indians and Indian land" was given to the Federal Government and outlined in the 13th Article of Terms of Union. The first Superintendent of Indian Affairs for BC – holding the office from 1872 until 1889 – was a man named Israel W. Powell, a surgeon on a hydrographic survey ship that visited Northern Coast Salish territory in 1880.[48] One of the areas surveyed by the ship was well known to Tla'amin who called it Teeskwat. Joe Paul remembers the area as a clam digging spot: "My grandpa used to go dig clams right out here…That belongs to Sliammon, that Teeskwat…I think in our language it means big river or big short river or something like that…It's the lake over there. It's about 45 miles long with hunting grounds.[49]

In 1880, an enterprising officer in the Royal Navy decided to furnish this lake and the small river that flowed from it to the sea with an English name in honour of Powell.

---

[46] Sliammon Treaty Society Research Department, *Brief Timeline of Sliammon Post Contact Impact Events (Draft)*.
[47] Ken Bradley and Karen Southern, *Powell River's Railway Era: An account of the eighteen railways operating at various times in the area from the middle 1890's until 1954* (Victoria: British Columbia Railway Historical Association, 2000), 7.
[48] Grace Brett, "Out of the Mists of Time," *Powell River's First 50 Years*, 10.
[49] Joe Paul, interview.

Local histories of the townsite that later sprang up around the river illustrate the settlers' attitudes towards the displacement of Tla'amin from their village sites:

> It has often been said that before it was named Powell River, our settlement was called Teshquoit [sic], but that is open to question. That might have been an Indian name, or it might have been a later invention which found its way into the trademark of the Powell River Company.[50]

The area on the southeast side of Powell River also appears as *Tiskw'et*, according to Kennedy and Bouchard, meaning "wide riverbed."[51] This was the site of a Tla'amin village until 1909 when the Brooks-Scanlon-O'Brien firm consolidated with a local power company to form the Powell River Paper Company. They had set their sights on an area of land that – to them – was the perfect site for a newsprint mill. Teeskwat was a sheltered port that offered easy shipping links to world markets, a wealth of nearby timber, and not another newsprint or pulp mill west of the Great Lakes.[52]

In 1875, the Indian Reserve Commission was formed and was initially composed of three members. Because of incessant squabbling between the two governments, it was soon reduced to one, Gilbert M. Sproat, who became increasingly sympathetic with the predicament of the indigenous population.[53] Provincial and federal governments were locked in a battle over jurisdiction and funding for matters pertaining to Indians, a squabble that continues to the present day. As settlers and speculators increasingly took over their lands, and two levels of government delayed proceedings of the commission, indigenous groups around the province became increasingly frustrated. Finally, in 1879,

---

[50] Author unknown, *Powell River's First 50 Years*, 5.
[51] Kennedy and Bouchard, *SLSL*, 164.
[52] J.V. Clyne, *"What's Past is Prologue": The History of the MacMillan, Bloedel and Powell River Limited* (New York: The Newcomen Society in North America, 1965), 14.
[53] Fisher, 189.

Sproat traveled to the coast and visited Tla'amin where he reported on their circumstances:

> So far as I have gone I found the Sliammon [Tla'amin], Klahoose and Homathko Indians most anxious about their land and desirous of doing whatever was recommended to them as right. On a rumour reaching them that I was coming, they had assembled at their winter village and waited there for two weeks, much to my regret, for they should have been at their ordinary work and preparing their winter food. Among themselves there were land questions which were debated so hotly outside my tent that I did not go to sleep till past midnight…[54]

Sproat surveyed the area and made recommendations to Powell who, in August 1880, passed them on to George Walkem, Premier of British Columbia. With criticism mounting against the commission's work, Sproat resigned under pressure early in 1880. The position was given to Peter O'Reilly, brother-in-law of Joseph Trutch, the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works who was very much part of settler society in the province and whose beliefs in British superiority ensured that indigenous land issues would never be resolved.

Trutch and others felt that Sproat had been too generous in his land allotments and abruptly reversed policy. In a letter to the Lands and Works Department concerning Tla'amin lands, O'Reilly wrote, "These reserves are with few exceptions merely fishing stations, and do not interfere with the claims of any settler."[55] It was during O'Reilly's term that Tla'amin reserves were established, six separate parcels of land totaling 4721 acres. However, the province was consistently revisiting land allotments because it felt that too much land was in the hands of the indigenous population. In 1912, the McKenna-McBride Commission visited communities throughout the province, including Tla'amin's

---

[54] Kennedy and Bouchard, *SLSL*, 127.
[55] Peter O'Reilly to Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, 15 December 1888, British Columbia Archives, GR-2982, box 4, file 15.

main village, in an effort to make a final settlement of Indian reserve lands. Transcripts from the commissioners' meetings in Tla'amin demonstrate their remarkable lack of concern about issues brought forward by community members. The following exchange between a commissioner and hereditary Chief Willie Bob is a prime example:

> Q. Have you a Doctor who attends to the Indians when they are ill?
> A. No. We have no Doctor.
> Q. The Indian Agent says that Dr. Henderson from Powell River attends to you?
> A. That Doctor, I know the Government sent that Doctor, but that Doctor has never been here.
> Q. Do you ever send for him when you are ill?
> A. We take some of the sick people to Powell River. We know the Doctor, but he don't care much for the Indians. He gives us bad medicine.
> Q. There is one child here with [whooping] cough, and your Agent will see that the Doctor attends to that case for you.[56]

In spite of their complaints about the Indian Agent, commissioners consistently referred matters to those agents. In the 1880's, Prime Minister Macdonald had divided the province into Indian Agencies and appointed agents that were supposed to advise the Indians and protect their interests.[57] In reality, Indian Agents were no more than pawns of the federal government and quite often took advantage of the communities whose interests they were supposed to protect. In a statement prepared for the commission by five men living at Toh Kwon_non, their position towards the Indian Agent is clear: "We want to report you about our Agent. We never got a help from him yet. They never give us anything to cleared with so we all got small land. If our Agent was treated us good, we will have big land this time but no."[58] The commissioners advised that there was provincial interest in the lands and when the commission's work was finished, Ottawa would have sole charge of the lands at which point they could cut timber.

---

[56] Canada, Royal Commission on Indian Lands and Indian Affairs, p. 296.
[57] Fisher, 206.
[58] Canada, Royal Commission on Indian Lands and Indian Affairs, p. 292.

Ottawa enacted legislation in 1920 that allowed Federal Cabinet to reduce reserve land without negotiating land surrenders with Indians. Tla'amin lands were expropriated for roads, hydro and telephone lines, mill, mining and timber rights, and general population expansion.[59] This continued until 1932 when twenty-five acres of Tishohsem were expropriated to build a public access road. There was no survey or proper land transfer, and no compensation was ever received. Under the Indian Act, it was illegal for Tla'amin to raise money or seek legal council to challenge the expropriation and it is a claim that is still being heard today.

The Indian Agencies were part of a bureaucracy established to assimilate indigenous peoples into the western capitalist milieu. For coastal communities, the agents were particularly insidious as they actively campaigned against a tradition that was central to their societies, the potlatch. In 1884, in response to the agents and missionaries who saw the practice as savage and depraved, the Indian Act was amended to outlaw the potlatch.[60] The first missionaries visited Tla'amin just two decades before and with astonishing rapidity, as Rose Louie described, they abolished Tla'amin ceremonies and instituted new practices based on Catholic doctrines. With construction of a church in Tishohsem in the late 1800's, the Tla'amin people became increasingly concentrated there and by 1900 several of their villages were abandoned, although they continued to access those areas for different resources. The McKenna-McBride Royal Commission had not resolved land issues for any indigenous community in BC. The marked absence of any discussion of "Aboriginal title" to the land prompted indigenous leaders to

---

[59] Sliammon Time-line.

[60] Tina Loo, "Dan Cranmer's Potlatch: Law as Coercion, Symbol, and Rhetoric in British Columbia, 1884-1951," *Historical Perspectives on Law and Society in Canada*, eds. Tina Loo and Lorna R. McLean (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994), 222.

demand their rights and ownership of lands in British Columbia be recognized and negotiated.[61]

Resource companies, meanwhile, continued their exploitation of indigenous lands unhindered by intergovernmental bureaucracy. Deriving its legitimacy from a pulp lease obtained from a government that had never honoured its constitutional obligations to indigenous peoples, the Powell River Paper Company (PRCO) was plagued with problems from the start. PRCO, as they re-named themselves upon consolidation with CIC, discovered that a logging outfit was operating a railroad directly through the area they wanted and, as one local historian wrote, "this company had no vested right or title to the area except that 'it was there'."[62] The logging company did not have a lease or license to operate in the area and the company said the only inhabitants were "stray squatters, meandering Indians and a few nomadic loggers."[63] The logging company eventually agreed to move its railroad and construction of the mill began at Teeskwat in the fall of 1909.

Construction of the first of two hydroelectric projects in Tla'amin territory began in February, 1911 with a 25,000 H.P. concrete dam built across the narrow entrance of Powell River. When the project was near completion, one of the penstocks – a conduit used to control water flow into the plant – burst, causing widespread damage. Shortly afterwards, the canal itself collapsed and "production ceased until steel was brought to Powell River in the middle of winter by fast freight."[64] In spite of these accidents, the

---

[61] Kennedy and Bouchard, *SLSL*, 135. For a discussion of the concept of Aboriginal title, see James (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson, Marjorie L. Benson and Isobel M. Findlay, *Aboriginal Tenure in the Constitution of Canada* (Scarsborough, Ont: Carswell, 2000).
[62] Lundie, "An Outline of the History and Development of the Powell River Company," *Powell River's First 50 Years*, pages not numbered.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

company secured more capital – pledging stock from lumber interests in the United States – and in April 1912, the mill was in operation. By September 1913, the mill was producing 250 tons of newsprint daily and machines ran at speeds of 670 feet per minute, the fastest in the world at the time.

It took many decades before the dam-building industry would acknowledge such projects created a "balance-sheet" approach that traded off one group's loss with another's gain.[65] In a groundbreaking report, the World Commission on Dams reported that "in too many cases an unacceptable and often unnecessary price has been paid to secure those benefits, especially in social and environmental terms, by people displaced, by communities downstream, by taxpayers and by the natural environment."[66] In describing how indigenous populations have been impacted, the report uncovered "significant adverse effects on cultural heritage through the loss of cultural resources."[67] PRCO's activities in Tla'amin territory were no exception. Almost as important as dam building, construction of a historical narrative was critical in legitimizing industrial activities on Tla'amin lands. In countering colonial stories, it is necessary to examine first what comprised those narratives.

Re-conceptualizing the Landscape

Places throughout Tla'amin territory were randomly renamed by colonial authorities for whom naming signified ownership and control. Teeskwat became "Townsite*,"* *Kla7amin*, meaning "a place to head towards," became Lund. One Powell River historian dismissed rumours of a Tla'amin name for the townsite as a "later

[65] Aviva Imhof, Susanne Wong and Peter Bosshard, *Citizens' Guide to the World Commission on Dams*, International Rivers Network, 2002.
[66] *Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision-Making*, The Report of the World Commission on Dams, Executive Summary (http://www.dams.org).

invention."[68] For indigenous peoples, place names were bound in multiple meanings. Kla7amin, for example, was an important social and economic gathering place and this was reflected in its name. Superimposing European names was an attempt to deny that indigenous peoples used and occupied their lands. Conceptualizing the landscape as a blank slate removed many moral obstacles settlers would have faced in assuming control over lands obviously used and occupied by indigenous peoples. In a further attempt to transform the land, residents replicated the manicured lawns and gardens of Europe. As thoroughly as the landscape was torn apart to fuel the pulp mill, the streets and yards were carefully tended to maintain a sense of order:

> Each street was lined with trees and the new Golf Course in 1921 became the green buffer between the mill and the community. The Townsite Gang, numbering 55 men at its peak, kept the town like a public park, trimming boulevards, planting shrubs in three actual park areas and in all the company executives' and doctors' homes. Annual garden contests with great prizes encouraged the workers to keep their yards in winning shape.[69]

---

[67] Ibid.
[68] Author unknown, *Powell River's First 50 Years*, 5.
[69] Bradley and Southern, 8.

Illustration 1 – Business Portion of Powell River, B.C. April 8, 1911

A photo taken at Teeskwat by local photographer Rod LeMay in 1911 (see Illustration 1) is reminiscent of post-World War II pictures of damage and destruction wrought by war. Stumps and piles of charred logs spread out from rows of wooden buildings; a "beauty fringe" of trees lines the perimeter and barren earth lies fallow. Similar pictures were taken throughout the province as towns and villages sprang up around mines and mills. For Tla'amin, it must have been a jarring scene of destruction.

Cole Harris discusses the new immigrant society in British Columbia as a late product of – and active participant in – the processes of colonialism: "yet such was the extent of domination that most immigrant British Columbians were oblivious to the

impact of their society on the peoples they had largely displaced."[70] Settlers were concerned with establishing communities, building schools, naming streets and neighbourhoods, cultivating gardens, and creating a social infrastructure. Decimated by disease and displaced from their lands, indigenous communities were figuratively and physically pushed to the margins. Tla'amin living at the mill and dam site moved to *Tishohsem* which became Tla'amin's main village, about five kilometres up the coast from Teeskwat. With loss of this village, an important link was severed between Teeskwat and *Qwut'tum's Toh Kwon_non*, the Theodosia Watershed. This was an important travel corridor, connecting Toh Kwon_non village with the community at Teeskwat. Both villages were significant food-gathering sites, and Tla'amin elder Joe Paul explains how the mill and dam at Teeskwat changed that: "Every year I see [spring salmon] wouldn't get up to the dam. Again, the dam doing what it is, damaging the spring salmon…the waste from Powell River used to flood around. It'd be floating, all from the pulp. All that poison[ed] our clam."[71]

Theodosia Inlet's productive marine environment also made Toh Kwon_non a significant area for shellfish harvesting. An abundance of fresh water and natural resources made an ideal location for the village at the mouth of the Theodosia River. One elder recalled Toh Kwon_non being a densely populated community with people living two miles up the river, "just like Vancouver. There were houses all over the place."[72] Wood framed houses lined the mouth of the river, some built on stilts because of the yearly threat of flooding. Fruit orchards and berry patches supplied plentiful produce. The

---

[70] Cole Harris, "Making an Immigrant Society," The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 252.
[71] Joe (Dave) Paul, interview.
[72] Sliammon Traditional Use Study, Theodosia, SU-4401, 49-Group.

salmon run, however, was Toh Kwon_non's main attraction. Tla'amin shared the area with their neighbours – Klahoose and Homalco – for not only were marine resources plentiful but inland areas provided much in the way of wildlife, tree and plant species.[73] Toh Kwon_non was, and still is, cherished for its spiritual values and as a powerful place for guardian spirit questing. Shell middens, petroglyphs and pictographs abound, evidence of a large population base in the watershed and a record of the sacred sites that connect Tla'amin to the land.

Creating a Subsistence Economy

By the 1920s, Toh Kwon_non was no longer a bustling town. One elder describes the tragic dimensions of its decline:

> The native people were there. There were lots of native people all over, from Stillwater [*Qoq'ness*]…all the way to Theodosia. They poisoned them natives. That's what the white man did to them. If they didn't do that to our people, there would have been lots of our people left. There were lots, very many native people that died.[74]

Along the coast and into the interior, once large and thriving communities were wiped out by disease. Toh Kwon_non remained an important gathering point and families continued to access its vital resources while adapting to the new realities of life under a colonial regime. Among the realities was living next door to a hungry pulp mill whose operators demonstrated an endless appetite for "expansion and diversification." It was the "roaring 20s" and "the world, for the first time, looked to the great softwood stands of Canada for its newsprint stock."[75] PRCO accordingly added two machines to its mill and

---

[73] At one time, the three groups shared a common identity. In the community's Traditional Use Study, elders talk about Toh Kwon_non as "one common area shared by us" and that "all three tribes stayed there in Theodosia." Tla'amin, Homalco and Klahoose trace a common lineage back to the origin story described in chapter one.
[74] Sliammon Traditional Use Study, SU-2758, 35-B. Will.
[75] Lundie.

by 1926 mill capacity exceeded 500 tons daily. Lumber for the mill came from surrounding forests, and later, from logging camps the company purchased on Vancouver Island and *Haida Gwaii* (Queen Charlotte Islands). Toh Kwon_non's upper reaches were heavily logged from the early 1900s. Tla'amin, meanwhile, were relegated to six small parcels of "reserved" land totaling less than 5000 acres, a number arrived at by the first colonial surveyor Gilbert Sproat in 1880. In Qwut'tum's Toh Kwon_non alone, Tla'amin territory had been 134 square kilometres, representing 2 per cent of the total traditional territory.

Colonial authorities in the province were obstinate in their refusal to address the issue of indigenous ownership of ancestral lands. When the federal government established the Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons in 1923 to facilitate a hearing into the claims of indigenous groups in British Columbia, the province did not send a representative.[76] More ominous was the legislation proposed by the Committee (and subsequently adopted by parliament) that made it illegal to raise money for land claims. A complex legislative framework governed all indigenous activities, making resistance increasingly difficult. Settlers were moving onto Tla'amin lands and authorities were more interested in swift settlement than mediating between disparate groups. An exchange between "Chief Tom" and Commissioner Macdowall from the 1915 Commission on Indian Lands and Affairs illustrates one settler's particularly insidious approach to taking the land:

> The Chief: One man has no land – His name is Dominic Tom.[77] He has one place down a little ways and he stays there and he has some orchard trees there.

---

[76] Kennedy and Bouchard, *Sliammon Life, Sliammon Lands*, 139.
[77] Dominic Tom is actually Tommy Dominic from Klahoose who lived in Toh Kwon_non at that time. Siemthlut (Michelle Washington), Governance Project Coordinator for the Treaty Society, verified this information with Mary George who is from the Tom family.

> Mr. Commissioner Macdowall: Is that on the reserve or outside?
>
> A. Outside the reserve – he has a house and a little shed there – he has all kinds of things in the house and last year it burned down and all the orchard trees were burned down as they were close to his house, and I want you to help that man to fix it up. One man he wants to take that place and that is where the trouble is. That white man just came in to that place, and Dominic has been there for more than fifty years – the name of the white man is Nelson.

The commissioner carried on to other matters and at the end of the meeting returned to Dominic Tom, asking "Have you got any Title from the Government for [the land]?

> A. I have two letters from the Government which promises to give it to me – it is not settled up yet. There is a white man that wants that place.[78]

Well-known hereditary Chief "Captain Timothy" tells the gathering that "this white man had his house about 100 feet from Dominic's house – this white man's house it was not burned down, only Dominic's place was burned down." While settlers could pre-empt 320 acres and purchase additional lands if they could afford it, colonial authorities surveyed just ten acres per head on reserve lands.[79] Unless they relinquished their status as "Indians," Tla'amin were not allowed to buy land or receive free land grants, and were more likely to see their homes destroyed than have rights to land acknowledged.

Faced with a paucity of resources, some Tla'amin participated in small-scale hand logging operations. Joe Paul remembers his grandfathers' logging when he was ten years old: "But then they had hand logging. Grandpa at that time, I was young, they could hand log anywhere around, all around, as long as there was [a] boat by the water. Even [my]

---

[78] Canada, Royal Commission on Indian Lands and Indian Affairs, Meeting with the Sliam-mon Band or Tribe of Indians at their Sliam-mon Indian Reserve, 19 February 1915, p. 285, 297.

[79] Sliammon Treaty Society, "Sliammon Time-line," [internet site]; available at http://www.sliammontreaty.com/Sliamon%20Time.htm.

grandpa, great-grandpa, he was still falling trees."[80] Settler narratives record other creative ways Tla'amin worked to combat poverty:

> First Nations, from Sliammon, came round to Wildwood [adjacent to Teeskwat] with fish, and baskets. We were always told, "Caught this morning!" The fish were 25 cents each. On one occasion I traded a good coat for a beautiful cedar basket.[81]

They were determined to maintain access to fishing and gathering sites, in part because selling salmon to local settlers had become part of Tla'amin's economy. One mam'la account illustrates Tla'amin women's determination to fish in spite of the obstacle at the mouth of the river:

> I remember the old days at the mouth of [Powell] river. Three to four years after the dam had been built the salmon were still coming back to the river, and the Indians in the past obviously must have used this spawning ground as a great food source. We were just kids and we were fascinated by the way the Indian women went down into the water with the water coming down at quite a speed from the dam, and they were out there with tree branches fashioned in the following way. They would cut a main branch about four feet long with a smaller branch attached, that was at a sharp angle to it, almost looking like a fishing hook. They would sharpen the point of the stick at the long end away from the hook-like piece, and thread it through the gills of the large salmon, and by the time they had this filled they must have had several hundred pounds of fish on it. They were careful to keep the load under the water so that it would reduce the weight to a minimum so they could drag it to shore. We were fascinated by it all. You'd often see a salmon that would be almost four feet long.[82]

Elsie Paul remembers that Toh Kwon_non *tl'exway* (chum) were a similar size: "They were huge! They were big. I'm sure they were 20 pounders to 25 pounders."[83] Elsie lived with her family intermittently at Toh Kwon_non throughout the 1930s and 40s. The river had not yet been dammed, but logging operations higher up in the

---

[80] Joe (Dave) Paul, interview.

[81] Ingrid Cowie (Anderson), "Sliammon First Nations 1930's & 40's: An Economy based on Fishing," *Rusty Nails and Ration Books: Great Depression & WWII Memories, 1929-1945*, ed. Barbara Ann Lambert (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2002), 45.

[82] Carla Mobley, "Memories by Curly Woodward," *Mysterious Powell Lake: A Collection of Historical Tales* (Surrey: Hancock House Publishers, 1984), 17.

[83] Elsie Paul, interview.

Qwut'tum had damaged the ecosystem. As Toh Kwon_non was situated on a flood plain, houses were constructed to accommodate flood conditions. Flooding became more severe, however, as loggers cleared forest to the river's edge and debris clogged the waters: "What that does is all the bark and stuff you drop in the water when you unload the [logging] trucks, it comes off the logs and piles up in the water, and it harms and pollutes. We used to go there and fish with just a short piece of net and two hours your net almost sinks with all that coho."[84]

PRCO had exhausted its power source at Powell Lake by 1922 and in the 30s looked to a new dam at Lois River to power the addition of a seventh machine. By the 1940s, the company's new rhetoric focused on "wood conservation and sustained yield forestry," though in practice "plans were quietly prepared for the installation of an eighth newsprint machine..."[85] World War II had started and PRCO was anxious to show its patriotism by advocating conservation and sustainability. The company prudently waited until 1946, one year after the war ended, to put machine number eight into production. Spurred by massive postwar demand, a final machine was put into operation ten years later at the cost of $20,000,000 but "by the end of 1956 supply had overtaken demand and most Canadian companies were left with surplus productive capacity."[86] With Powell River and Lois Lake developed to full capacity, company planners in 1955 demonstrated

[84] Sliammon Traditional Use Study, Theodosia, SFN Site-0045, SU-1278.
[85] Lundie.
[86] Ibid.

considerable lack of foresight and built a dam on the Theodosia River that diverted water into the Powell Lake reservoir. With construction of the dam, runs of tl'exway dropped from nearly 36,000 to just under 8,000.[87]

Conclusion

In 1911, Tla'amin joined with other groups along the coast and in Southern BC to petition the government to address their grievances. In their declaration from the same year, a group of *St'at'imc* leaders expressed their support for a unified approach and made an appeal that resonated with indigenous peoples throughout BC:

> We claim that we are the rightful owners of our tribal territory, and everything pertaining thereto. We have always lived in our country; at no time have we ever deserted it, or left it to others. We have retained it from the invasion of other tribes at the cost of our blood. Our ancestors were in possession of our country centuries before the whites came. It is the same as yesterday when the latter came, and like the day before when the first fur trader came. We are aware the B.C. government claims our country, like all other Indian territories in B.C. but we deny their right to it. We never gave it nor sold it to them. They certainly never got the title to the country from us, neither by agreement nor conquest, and none other than us could have any right to give them title.[88]

It would take another seventy years for the province to acknowledge the "Indian land question" had never been resolved and to engage in political negotiations. About two thirds of indigenous groups in BC chose to enter into negotiations with provincial and federal governments after the province agreed to participate in 1990. Much ink has been spilled on this process, by both proponents and detractors, but for Tla'amin, the way forward was through negotiations. As a recent statement in the Tla'amin community newspaper bluntly stated, "Lets settle this now so that are [sic] children are not sitting around the Council table in twenty years fighting over insufficient [Department of Indian

---

[87] Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks (MELP), *Theodosia River Integrated Watershed Restoration Project*, 31 March 1998, p. 15.
[88] Declaration of the Lillooet [St'at'imc] Tribe, Spences Bridge, B.C., 10 May 1911.

Affairs] funding."[89] As Tla'amin organized itself to enter into tripartite negotiations, another issue was being quietly explored. The Theodosia River at Toh Kwon_non had once supported extraordinary runs of salmon but the dam built in 1955 had damaged these runs and Tla'amin elders wanted something done about it.

[89] Siemthlut (C. Michelle Washington), Neh Motl Community Newspaper, August 2003.

CHAPTER THREE – SALMON MAN AND CEDAR POWER: FINDING CULTURAL KEYSTONES IN TLA'AMIN STORIES

> *Raven and a friend were invited to dinner at the village of the fish. Two children, a boy and a girl, were sent into the water and, shortly after, Raven was given his salmon dinner. Raven ate his meal, but instead of putting all the bones on his plate, he kept a small bone from the salmon's head in his mouth. The bones were gathered up and thrown back into the water, where they changed back into the little children. The boy was okay, but the little girl couldn't open her eyes. The parents knew that a bone had not been put on the plate and began to look for it. They searched all over. Suddenly, Raven pulled the bone out of his mouth and remarked, "Maybe this is the one!" They told the little girl to go back into the water and then threw the missing bone in after her. When she came out, she was whole again. That is why you must always throw the salmon bones back into the ocean.*[90]

This story of raven and the salmon people depicts a common and widely held belief system among Northwest Coast cultures. Homer Barnett reports a similar story from Klahoose in which raven's friend is a man and the invitation to dine is extended after their canoe lands on the roof of the salmon people's house.[91] Yet another version tells of salmon as a proud man for whom people showed respect by tossing his bones into the ocean.[92] Salmon's importance within Tla'amin society warranted this level of respect. They relied on it for their very survival. Tla'amin believed if they threw *thath'em*'s (spring salmon) bones back into the water they would come alive again and provide more fish for the people. Tla'amin observed these protocols to meet their immediate needs and to ensure a steady supply of fish for the future.

In this chapter, I will examine Tla'amin relationships to salmon and land by examining the notion of salmon as a "cultural keystone species." This is one way to

---

[90] Dorothy Kennedy and Randy Bouchard, *Sliammon Life, Sliammon Lands* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1983), 26.
[91] Homer G. Barnett, *The Coast Salish of British Columbia* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1955), 89.
[92] Kennedy and Bouchard, *Utilization of Fishes, Beach Foods, and Marine Animals by the Tl'uhus Indian People of British Columbia* (Victoria: British Columbia Indian Language Project, 1974), 12.

understand the central role of salmon in Tla'amin daily life. I will examine how a concept in ecology can be used within a storytelling methodology by looking at the presence of keystones in Tla'amin stories, in particular those related to salmon.

Salmon as a Cultural Keystone

Thirteen years ago, Tla'amin elders directed *She peh the es* (Walter Paul) to see what could be done about removing the dam at Toh Kwon_non. "The Theodosia was very near and dear to some of our elders who lived in the Theodosia area," he tells me.[93] Their vivid memories sustained a desire to see Toh Kwon_non restored to its former bounty. Central to this restoration effort was the return of *tl'exway* (chum salmon) to its traditional spawning grounds. Tl'exway – the salmon man upon whom Tla'amin relied for survival – was the cornerstone of society. In story and song, through ceremony and trade, tl'exway was a "keystone" in the ecology of Toh Kwon_non.

The keystone concept was first used in the late 1960s when marine ecologist Robert Paine described removing dozens of *Pisaster ochraceus* starfish from the rocky intertidal zone.[94] He found that removing the starfish allowed its main predator – mussels – to invade and occupy the new area, and that other starfish species and carnivorous snails could not produce this dramatic effect. Based on his observations, Paine formulated the concept of a keystone species: one that determines "the integrity of the community and its unaltered persistence through time."[95] Turner and Garibaldi point out that a major criticism of the keystone species concept stems from the ambiguous nature of its definition which makes it difficult to identify exactly which species should be designated

[93] Walter Paul (She peh the es), interview by author, tape recording, Tla'amin, 27 August 2003.
[94] Richard Stone, "Taking a New Look at Life Through a Functional Lens," *Science* 269 (21 July 1995), 316-17.
[95] Ibid.

as having a keystone role in an ecological community.[96] "There are many obstacles, practical, economic and ethical," they write, "to determining potential keystone roles of species, but nevertheless, many biologists still see value in the ecological keystone species concept as a whole and believe that modifying rather than dismissing the idea may be a useful approach."[97]

Turner and Garibaldi extend the concept to a *cultural* keystone species that plays a "key characterizing role in a particular human culture at a particular time and place." The authors explore similarities and parallels between ecological keystones and cultural keystones. Both are context dependent and their roles may change over time, space or circumstance and between ecosystems or cultures. Changes in biodiversity/cultural diversity may thrust another species into a keystone role. Both types of species may be fluid, changing with factors such as abundance or introduction of other species in an ecosystem or cultural system. They also may act in "guilds" or interconnected groupings of species, their ecological or cultural roles intersecting in some way. Finally, "keystoneness" is a relative concept that responds to different influences over time and space, and at different scales.

Cultural Keystone Guilds

Pacific salmon and western red-cedar on the Northwest Coast of North America is one cultural keystone guild identified by Turner and Garibaldi. Cedar and salmon are intimately connected in Tla'amin society. They have powerful roles within the community as sources of sustenance and strength. The following story describes how

---

[96] Ann Garibaldi and Nancy J. Turner, "Cultural Keystone Species: Implications for Ecological Conservation and Restoration," *Conservation Ecology*, special issue, submitted Fall 2003.
[97] Ibid.

cedar boughs gave one man supernatural powers and also activates a larger historical picture:

> *There is also a story of a special man with supernatural powers who got his energy and strength through the cedar boughs. He'd get hold of the branches and break them in a certain way. The cedars were the source of his power.*
>
> *This man was so strong he was able to cross over the mountain ranges to visit the other Indians on the other side. He came back and told the people here that there was life on the other side of the mountain, that there was life beyond the places they could see. But they didn't believe him.*
>
> *This special man decided to prove that he was right, and he went all the way through the mountains and stole a newborn baby. When he came back the people were amazed that life existed beyond the mountains. The man touched and blessed the people and made trails to Bella Coola and Tlinget [sic].*
>
> *The Bella Coola were a fierce tribe who liked war. Maybe they were jealous of this man, maybe they believed that if they killed him that they would possess his strength and power. One day a large group of Bella Coola cornered him in a river but since there were too many enemies for him to fight, he dove under the logs. The Bella Coola waited until they thought he had drowned. All of a sudden they heard weird noises coming from the forest. The Bella Coola were so frightened they ran away. After they had gone he came out of the water.*
>
> *There was a battle at Goat River and one at the top of [Powell] lake. The Bella Coola would come from the coast and drive the Sliammon people up the lake.*
>
> *On one raid the Bella Coola wiped out all the Coast Salish people, except for five. The Bella Coola brought in more warriors wanting to eradicate the whole tribe, but the warriors were destroyed in a rock slide. Later when the Coast Salish went up the lake to pick berries, the families said they could hear the rocks crying because of the people who had died there, they could feel the sadness. This is the story of the weeping rocks.*[98]

Tla'amin were not known for aggressive behaviour towards neighbouring groups and even in this story, the raid on the Bella Coola resulted from the man's desire to prove his word. To protect themselves from their enemies, Tla'amin built their houses at sites that were easy to defend. The lesson from this story was well taken as Tla'amin men would

---

[98] Jackie Timothy, "Legends of Powell Lake," Mysterious Powell Lake: A Collection of Historical Tales, Ed. Carla Mobley (Surrey: Hancock House Publishers, 1984), 12-13.

hide at points where high bluffs extended over the water. From there, they ambushed Lekwiltok and Haida raiding parties, their most potent enemies, by rolling large rocks down onto their passing canoes.[99] Broad historical lessons can be drawn from this story. An attentive listener was reminded that warfare was not a part of Tla'amin life, and talking about the place of weeping rocks connected community members to a physical place on the land, reinforcing the concept that it was less desirable to be the aggressor than the defender.

Laurie Anne Whitt describes the three R's that guide an Indigenous approach to innovation: receptivity, reciprocity and responsibility.[100] These principles guided community storytellers and directly tied human action to the well being of other species and ultimately their own. The audience had to be receptive to the message – in the *special man* story one message is that power should be used wisely – reciprocate for what had been shared, and carry out responsibilities outlined in the story. In Tla'amin society, as in other indigenous groups, the responsibility is great because they have a relationship with cedar and salmon that requires them to show the same respect they would give any family member:

> The women would go out and the men would go out and help the women gather the [cedar] material. And before you take anything away from that tree, you thank the tree. You thank the Creator. You thank the land the tree sits on and you offer your thanksgiving in your prayer to the ancestors and to the Creator before you touch that tree, because that tree is a living thing.[101]

Cedar can be considered a keystone in Jackie Timothy's story because it plays a key, characterizing role in Tla'amin culture and society. Cedar boughs, for example, are a

---

[99] Kennedy and Bouchard, *Sliammon Life, Sliammon Lands*, 90.
[100] Laurie Anne Whitt, "Indigenous peoples, their environments and territories," *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity*, United Nations Environment Programme, Compiled by Darrel Addison Posey and Oxford Centre for the Environment, Ethics and Society, 1999.

critical part of funerary rites that involve strict precautions to avoid the "dangerous influences of a corpse."[102] Boughs are used to purify and cleanse both persons and possessions so the spirit can move peaceably to the land of the dead. Boughs are carefully collected after purifying and taken to an isolated area in the forest where they are left, with stems facing east, in the fork of a tree.[103] The home I stayed in at *Kleqwa7nam* had cedar boughs in each room of the house. My host explained how in Tla'amin culture cedar protected the home from unwelcome spirits.[104] *Special man's* cedar power protected him from unwelcome enemies and enabled him to survive against overwhelming odds. Without such powers, he would not have discovered routes to Tla'amin's inland neighbours. Cedar occupies a space at the center of what Turner calls the "complex web of human-ecosystem connections."[105] Stories help make these connections more apparent and emphasize the extent to which keystones like cedar influence the culture and ecology of a place.

Access to cedar was also a matter of survival. Turner and Garibaldi emphasize that "without the red-cedar for their dugout canoes, baskets, mats, cordage, storage boxes, fish weirs, and fuel, Northwest Coast people would not be in an advantageous position to catch, process and store the salmon, on which they rely so heavily." Many types of salmon were prepared by barbecuing them between the forks of a long stick of red-cedar set in front of the fire. People from Homalco and Klahoose traveled great distances to barbecue fish at Toh Kwon_non, particularly tl'exway as its size made it less suitable for drying. Elsie Paul describes another use for cedar:

---

[101] Elsie Paul, interview by author, tape recording, Tla'amin, 27 August 2003.
[102] Ibid, 54.
[103] Ibid, 55.
[104] Catherine Galligos, conversation with author, Kleqwa7nam, August 2003.

> Cedar Branches were used to gather the herring roe [eggs]. You gather up those cedar branches and you went and put it in the water and the herrings spawned on the cedar branches. And then you pull it up and you strip if of the branches after they've spawned on it for about three days.[106]

Tla'amin welcomed the arrival of herring spawn just as they did salmon. It was a joyous occasion that served an important social function as well as demonstrating respect for the herring:

> It was something that our people looked forward to because it was another source of food. And people were very happy and excited. It was always part of our social structure, you know, to share, to visit other people in the community. How you doing? How many herrings you get? You know, checking up on one another and again, doing the big welcoming of the herring by the community.[107]

Annual gatherings for the salmon barbeque allowed Tla'amin, Homalco and Klahoose to socialize and harvest, catch up on news, and assist one another through sharing and trade.

Detecting Keystone Species in Stories

Tla'amin's knowledge of ecological principles enabled them to see how component parts of the natural world comprised a whole. A recent article co-authored by Nancy Turner nicely summarized the view: "all the parts are interconnected in a seamless web of cause and effects, actions and outcomes, behaviours and sequences. People, animals, plants, natural objects, and supernatural entities are not separate and distinct. Rather, they are all linked to each other and to the place where they reside through cultural traditions and interactive, reciprocal relationships."[108] At the core of this belief system is the concept of respect for land and all life-forms upon it. For Tla'amin elders, failing to show *tees tahm* (respect) can bring about pain that seems more than

---

[105] Garibaldi and Turner, 4.
[106] Elsie Paul, interview.
[107] Ibid.

metaphorical: "it's just almost like a part of you is taken away, like a part of your body is taken away when something like [cedar] gets taken away from you. It's a use that you're deprived of now. It's no longer there, like you've lost your limb." In Tla'amin cosmology, red-cedar is imbued with powerful spiritual forces that can be shared with a deserving novice. Showing disrespect towards such a powerful entity conversely results in hardship and grief. Practical resource management was inextricably tied to the philosophies that guided Tla'amin society.

Keystone species, one article suggests, can be better detected through a combination of approaches, such as natural history observation, historical reconstruction, comparative studies and manipulative field experiments.[109] Indigenous peoples have observed the natural world – what some view as the heart of the scientific method – for thousands of years. However, as Vine Deloria Jr. points out, this cumulative knowledge has been virtually ignored:

> Regardless of what Indians have said concerning their origins, their migrations, their experiences with birds, animals, lands, waters, mountains, and other peoples, the scientists have maintained a stranglehold on the definitions of what respectable and reliable human experiences are. The Indian explanation is always cast aside as a superstition, precluding Indians from having an acceptable status as human beings, and reducing them in the eyes of educated people to a prehuman level of ignorance.[110]

Pam Colorado further writes:

> In Western terms, Indian scientists become Medicine Men or Shamans. Tools of Native science are totally unrecognized, passed off lightly as prayers or described as hallucinogens, rattles and paint. Our specialized scientific language becomes

---

[108] Nancy J. Turner, Marianne Boelscher Ignace, and Ronald Ignace, "Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Wisdom of Aboriginal Peoples in British Columbia," *Ecological Applications* 10.5 (October 2000), 1279.
[109] Mary E. Power, et al., "Challenges in the Quest for Keystones," *BioScience* 46.8 (Sept. 1996), 612.
[110] Vine Deloria, Jr., *Red Earth, White Lies* (Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997), 7.

> incantation or folk taxonomy; treatment regimes become ceremonies or customs; and our scientific revolutions are called Messianic Movements.[111]

Not only is indigenous scientific knowledge ignored, its tools are denigrated. Indeed, the ceremonies described in Tla'amin stories are prescriptions for conservation. They articulate treatment regimes that enhance resource management by making the connection between community members and their origins. In their ceremonies, Tla'amin recognize the first spring salmon of the season as an ancestor. Tla'amin relationships are based on respect for the roles and responsibilities of each person in the community, and it is no different for animal relatives who once walked the earth as humans. By observing these regimes, Tla'amin preserve harmony in their relationships and ensure the annual return of their relatives who provide them sustenance throughout the year. Respect for ancestors is reinforced in stories that describe salmon people and their relationship to the environment. Keystones, therefore, can also be detected in complex layers of ancient indigenous stories.

European exploitation of indigenous lands has made it difficult for communities to sustain the guardianship roles articulated through stories. The authors of the BioScience article describe the dilemma: "Unfortunately, poor knowledge of the structure and dynamics of natural ecosystems before massive human impacts often limits our ability to understand changes. This situation has been aggravated by the tragic loss of knowledge of indigenous peoples of their own natural ecosystems as they are displaced by large-scale development schemes."[112] Indigenous communities have indisputably suffered tragic losses from large-scale resource development – look no further than PRCO in Tla'amin's history – but the knowledge, however fragmented or dimly

---

[111] Pam Colorado, "Bridging Native and Western Science," *Convergence* 21.2/3 (1988), 60.

remembered, has survived. The chasm between western science and what became known in the 1980's as Traditional Ecological Knowledge has lessened in recent years, but work to bridge the gap (sometimes called "knowledge-integration") is as much political as theoretical. Scientific institutions have tended to ignore indigenous knowledge when it is politically expedient to do so. Paul Nasady describes the power differentials at play within the field of TEK:

> I have argued that the simple act of framing the problem as one of "integration" automatically imposes a culturally specific set of ideas about "knowledge" on the life experiences of aboriginal people. The goal of knowledge-integration forces TEK researchers to compartmentalize and distill aboriginal people's beliefs, values, and experiences according to external criteria of relevance, seriously distorting them in the process. The project of knowledge-integration also takes for granted existing power relations between aboriginal people and the state by assuming that traditional knowledge is simply a new form of "data" to be incorporated into already existing management bureaucracies and acted upon by scientists and resource managers.[113]

Another example is debate on pre-Columbian demography, a highly contentious topic in academic circles, but with significant implications for society at large. The more people on the continent prior to Columbus, the more fully was the land occupied and controlled. If Indigenous peoples once lived in large numbers on the continent, they were able to do so without negatively affecting the structure and dynamics of natural ecosystems, a legacy that now more than ever deserves a great deal of attention.

Regenerating Cultural Keystones

Cultural keystones are intimately bound up in stories, language, ceremony and place. They leave "intense cultural shadows" even after they have ceased being used. [114] The process of recovering indigenous place names, for example, often reveals the

---

[112] Power, et al, 613.
[113] Paul Nasady, "The Politics of TEK: Power and the "Integration" of Knowledge, *Arctic Anthropology* 36. 1-2 (1999), 15.

importance of certain species to a particular area. A cultural keystone is often present in the names indigenous peoples have for certain places. They are also present in stories that illustrate the relationship of plants and animals to the humans living in their territory. Through storytelling, proper protocols for managing resources are taught and ceremonial practices become an integral part of sustainable environmental management. In the following section I look at how stories and place names demonstrate salmon's importance within Tla'amin society and how they can be used to regenerate the notion of salmon as a cultural keystone.

Locating Salmon in Story and Place

Tees tahm is at the heart of the "salmon lady" story told to Elsie by her grandmother:

> She used to tell us a story about one young person who made fun of the salmon. Oh, it's making funny sound and made fun of it. One night, this young person after had stepped on the salmon and it made this noise, and oh the salmon farted. And you don't do that to the salmon. You don't make fun of it. It's there for your food. You wouldn't do that to a person. That night, the person who was doing that to the salmon woke up with a very sharp pain in his chest, a very sharp pain and he was very ill. Woke up and this vision of a very beautiful lady appeared to him. He was delirious. He was very sick. He was feverish. And this vision appeared to him of a beautiful woman and told this person in his dream that I'm the one you made fun of. I'm the salmon lady you made fun of. And he woke up and he was fine again. But that was to teach him. You don't make fun of any form of life, whether it's the salmon, the deer, the clams, anything that's alive and providing you with food.[115]

Salmon appears in human form to teach the young man an important lesson in tees tahm. Young people were taught the consequences of disrespecting salmon and in the process learned not to be wasteful. That food, says Elsie, was "provided for you. So you need to

---

[114] Garibaldi and Turner, 9.
[115] Elsie Paul, interview.

hold it in the highest regard, right from the water."[116] Tla'amin's neighbours – the Bella Coola – regarded birds and animals in many respects as belonging to a higher plane than human beings.[117] In Tla'amin stories, salmon has a similar elevated status, perhaps flowing from its ability to transform from fish to human and vice versa. As a cornerstone of Tla'amin diet, salmon commanded tees tahm as an essential ingredient of resource management. Community efforts to sustain the fishery took place through the pedagogy of storytelling which instructed the young – and perhaps reminded the old – how to care for and maintain the resources.

A cultural keystone species is widely featured in language and vocabulary, and I must recognize here a shortcoming that has somewhat reduced the scope and vision of this study. Language is essential for communicating knowledge among people and from one generation to the next. For Indigenous peoples, the legacy of the residential school system – in which Indigenous youngsters were punished for speaking their languages – was widespread language loss, and loss of the specialized vocabulary used to classify all things in the natural world. Tla'amin is still spoken among some elders, however, and this study is limited by the fact that I do not speak nor understand Tla'amin, and that no interviews were conducted in their language. Therefore, I cannot capture the nuances and meanings of Tla'amin words for salmon, or listen with a perceptive ear to conversations among elders. Language revitalization programs are now underway and students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 can take Tla'amin as a second language. In 1997, Tla'amin was accepted as a second language requirement for entry to Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. The University of Victoria followed suit in 1999. I hope this issue will be

---

[116] Ibid.

addressed in the future and the unique worldview embedded within the Tla'amin language can be explored at greater length by someone fluent in both English and Tla'amin.

Rituals and ceremonies associated with the return of the first salmon have been well documented along the entire length of the Northwest Coast. As described earlier, first salmon ceremonies were observed at Toh Kwon_non and other important harvesting areas. Tla'amin place names describe the areas where Tla'amin and their neighbours accessed places of greatest abundance. In the Theodosia Inlet, an island called *K'ik'kw'us* was a popular camping place and its name in English means "eating barbecued salmon heads." It had a pleasant gravel beach and attracted neighbouring groups who visited Toh Kwon_non during the fishing season. Other places named for salmon are *Kw'ikwtichenam* (Brem Bay), meaning "getting humpback salmon," *Yay'ikw* (end of Ramsey Arm) with the lyrical name "spring salmon rolling along the water's surface," and *Xay thekwum* (Coho Creek), whose name announces "coho are there."[118] The community's Lands and Resources Management Plan talks about many documented links that bind Tla'amin people to the lands, "not the least of which are legends and place names that describe every geographical feature in the territory."[119]

Indigenous place names are the "spatial anchors"[120] which connect people to their ancestors. Names are not simply geographic reference points, though they often highlight

---

[117] John Bierhorst, *The Way of the Earth: Native America and the Environment* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1994), 87.
[118] Sliammon Treaty Society Research Department, *Sliammon (Tla'?amin) Place Names*, September 1999.
[119] Sliammon Treaty Society, *Hojit tah gijeh eht Yeqet stu xwet (Land and Resources Management Plan)*, March 2003, 4.
[120] I take this term from *Wisdom Sits in Places*. Keith Basso quotes Harry Hoijer who uses the term to describe the Dine (Navajo) practice of relating the most minute occurrences in close conjunction with their physical setting, suggesting that unless events are "spatially anchored" their significance is somehow reduced.

important geographic features. As in the story of weeping rocks, the place name has multiple functions; it describes a historical event, teaches an important lesson, and provides a glimpse into the power available to young boys when they undertake their training at puberty. Another example is a place Cathy Galligos pointed out during our trip to Toh Kwon_non called *Titagayits a*, Scott Point in English. In ancient times, *Titagayits a* was the name of a woman who had been sitting with her child at the point, picking lice from the child's hair, when *Sheh te guus* came along and changed them both into rock. Cathy said a mam'la had tampered with the rock and broken it. A study of place names in Tla'amin territory described how "the Indians felt that the person who tampered with these rocks was 'punished' for what he did. He was going to steal the rock, but died mysteriously."[121]

Only people familiar with the territory would have known the significance of *Titagayits a*. Originating with the deeds of Sheh te guus, the story becomes a lesson about respecting sacred areas of the land, perhaps Sheh te guus's intent in the first place. Stories evolve as storytellers change and histories unfold, but core lessons are preserved. Such stories can be found throughout Tla'amin territory. The complexity and nuances of indigenous place names are beyond the scope of this study but suffice to say Tla'amin continue to preserve and pass on the cultural teachings embedded in place names.

Conclusion

When the dam was constructed at Toh Kwon_non, little attention was given to potential impacts of the dam on marine life, much less the community that relied on those resources. A sorrow pervades stories of Toh Kwon_non. The memories they evoke are bittersweet, tinged with thoughts of a lush, beautiful terrain abandoned to the bears but

never quite relinquished. Although runs at Toh Kwon_non plummeted and Tla'amin were forced to find alternative fishing sites, salmon never diminished in importance. That tl'exway is not considered an *ecological* keystone at Toh Kwon_non is a function of its absence in any significant number. Tl'exway, however, did not simply disappear. When modifications were made to the dam in 1981, their runs doubled, indicating that such modifications could encourage salmon returns even after nearly thirty years of low flow conditions.[122] As a cultural keystone species, it is a vital part of the landscape with potential to restore balance to an ecologically disturbed area and help other communities to understand their ecosystems more fully. As Turner and Garibaldi conclude, "the human dimension of ecosystems cannot be ignored."

---

[121] Sliammon Treaty Society, Sliammon Place Names, 23 May 2002.
[122] MELP, Theodosia River Integrated Watershed Restoration Project, 15.

CHAPTER FOUR – CONCEPTUALIZING THE LANDSCAPE: STORIES OF TOH KWON_NON

> Like I said about Toh Kwon_non there. First salmon there for anybody needs fish. That's where I used to go feed my children, every year, all through. My first one was born '47. All along I was fishing, '47 right to '56. Round there, every year.[123]
>
> When I was really little, from as far back as I can remember. It was probably in 40s and mid 30s. I remember going up there as a very small child and being packed from the boat to the house. I was probably about five years of age. I remember a lot of snow there and very cold, wintertime we were there. My grandparents had a beautiful home there.[124]
>
> I spent a lot of time with my parents over there which I think was really, really nice and I really liked the place. I still wish I was back there today. It's just like the way my parents lived. It was so beautiful.[125]

Memories of Toh Kwon_non form the basis of this chapter. I first look at the year-round activities that drew large numbers of Coast Salish people from all along the coast and then focus briefly on the education children at Toh Kwon_non received in contrast with the church-run schools some Tla'amin children were forced to attend. The last part of the chapter examines the decommissioning process that produced so much hope when it was announced in 2000, but which has done little towards bringing down the dam.

Calling the Spirits Back

The air is cool and still when I arrive at Toh Kwon_non. A nearby cabin is occupied occasionally by Tla'amin hunters, but the area's real residents are bears. At one time, Toh Kwon_non's human population outnumbered them but fruit orchards and berry patches are now the latter's domain. I walk on tracks carved out of the crash of water and forest debris that swept down from the hills above during a recent flood. Aware of the

---

[123] Joe (Dave) Paul, interview by author, tape recording, Tla'amin, 27 August 2003.
[124] Elsie Paul, interview by author, tape recording, Tla'amin, 27 August 2003.
[125] Agnes McGee, interview by author, tape recording, Tla'amin, 3 September 2003.

large bear population and conscious of snapping twigs coming from thick brush beside me, I hurry back on the flood track. Urban sensibilities tell me making noise will deter bears, but I'm baffled when Elsie calls out *Qwaga hosht ju Elsie* before getting in the truck. Cathy Galligos yells out the same – with her name at the end. I ask her what they're calling out. She tells me they're calling their spirits back to them so they don't stay in Toh Kwon_non.

A Tla'amin story describes how a long-time resident nicknamed Toh Kwon_non Pelix (or Felix) brought a man's spirit back to him. The spirit had left the man's body after his son died and become trapped in the mountains. When Toh Kwon_non Pelix called the man's spirit back, it could be heard coming across the mountains and whistling through the trees back into the man's body. In describing why her family left, Agnes hints that the spirits of some elders may have remained at Toh Kwon_non:

> To me, I think that's the reason why everybody moved back over here [to Tishohsem]. I guess it was too sad for them. This one uncle of mine who was really young when he got sick and died. And the older brother, that's the one that got lost. And my great grandmother, they were gettin' too old. They had to bring them home. They weren't home here very long afterward.[126]

Joe Paul talks about wanting to wear Toh Kwon_non "on his back…Because I was born there. That's why I say that. I'm proud. That's where I grew up to know all the knowledge I got into now to tell you."[127] Towards the end of our interview, Agnes McGee and Mary George express longing for a different way of life:

> Agnes: To Katherine [Blaney], I'm gonna run away, I said. Where you goin? She said, you're always crazy. I'm going somewhere, I said, where there's no phones, no electricity, no road…My God, she said, let me know when you go. You're always crazy, she said. Maybe I mean when I die, I said. She didn't like that either!

---

[126] Agnes McGee, interview.
[127] Joe (Dave) Paul, interview.

> Mary: We feel like that sometimes…like to go paddle. Like to go camping somewhere. Like Agnes said, get away from these things, TV and all that and do it the old-fashioned way. Make your little fire, heat up your tea, cook there.[128]

A Fertile Land

Toh Kwon_non is loved and cherished because it represents both in real and abstract ways the fertility of Tla'amin territory. It provided everything the people needed and attracted people from all over the coast. Families isolated from each other for most of the year came together at Toh Kwon_non to participate in its economy, to gossip and share stories. It provided fertile grounds for the body and mind. Elsie describes how families came together in August to prepare Toh Kwon_non's prized runs of *tl'exway* (chum):

> [T]he river ran behind the few homes that were there besides my grandparent's home. And it was like a walk through a park. It was beautiful. It was beautiful land. And you get to the other side where there's a beautiful river there. Really a big, big river, and salmon came up that river…The salmon that went up the Theo River was huge salmon, chum salmon. So especially around this time of the year [August] people got ready those that didn't live there would come up and stay with our family up there in preparation for doing the chum's that came up there, also known as dog salmon. They were huge! They were big. I'm sure they were 20 pounders to 25 pounders. Basically what that fish was used for was more for barbecuing. Light a fire outdoors and cook the fish around the fire. They were really big, big salmon so it wasn't good to hang it to dry. It was more for us to do barbecue. So each of our rivers had its own use. Theodosia had its use for that, plus the orchard was there, plus other gatherings such as the gathering of clams and drying clams. The land provided for our people.[129]

Rose Louie remembers preparing food at the beach:

> They build a fire down the beach. They put, where it speckles you know, make a hole there. And they go out and dig seaweeds, line it up, and they spill the clams and they cover those seaweed and they cover those branches. And they put the hot rocks on it for about an hour…Take everything out, here the clams are steamed. Then you get, you know, shell it. My auntie used to get some certain little trees, put them on, real fancy, the way she used to do it. And then she'd stand it by the

[128] Mary George and Agnes McGee, interview by author, tape recording, Tla'amin, 3 September 2003.
[129] Elsie Paul, interview.

> fire, barbecue it a little bit, dry it out. Then once it's dried then you store it away. Everything, cockles, deer meat, seal, ducks.[130]

Rose explains that Tla'amin people camped all over the coast and when they left their campsite, they "packed it with wood, pile it up, in case the next bunch get here late."[131] Survival depended on the ability of families to work together in sharing and distributing resources. Community members took care of those who couldn't care for themselves and based their relationships on generosity and trust:

> Our people trusted. They trusted the people that came. And that's always been the way of our people back then. They trusted and they welcomed people. Just like the way they welcomed the farmer up there in Theo. Just like they did when somebody came to the door and said come on in, sit down, have something to eat. You were always welcome. And they went and traveled to other communities where our people were situated up and down the coast. They were always welcome. They traded. They moved back and forth between our people and Comox and Cape Mudge and Sechelt and all over, up north and in Klahoose and up to Toby and Bute Inlet.[132]

Toh Kwon_non lay at the heart of a vast network of interconnected communities. One elder described it as Tla'amin's "home town":

> NG: That's our people's hometown. Our people lived there.
>
> KG: I wonder why they lived there?
>
> NG: Because it's one of the most sheltered places, an ideal spot for campsite. I call it campsite because everybody shared it. Everybody went there for one reason or another because everything was easily accessible and it was private.
>
> KG: But they all had houses there?
>
> NG: Yeah. They all shared. The people from Klahoose would have gone there too. Even some people from Homalco lived there.[133]

---

[130] Rose Louie, interview by author, tape recording, Tla'amin, 5 September 2003.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Elsie Paul, interview.
[133] Sliammon Traditional Use Study, Theodosia, SU-1271 (Domestic – Dwelling – Village Site), 73F-NGAL.

If Toh Kwon_non was the heart of Tla'amin territory, salmon was at the heart of Toh Kwon_non:

> Oh, the salmon. It was a place for salmon. Like coho's, dog salmon. Soon as that comes in, they start catching them and drying them…And another way they used to do it is they always had a beautiful clean wooden keg they used to salt some of their fish for their winter food…Really beautiful fish that used to go up there. Right now, it's really scarce. I don't know why. But it was really something to us. Like, my parents are from there, my great grandparents, my great gran and her grandfather. That was my dad's brother, her grandfather.[134]

Agnes illustrates how closely entwined people and salmon were at Toh Kwon_non. Genealogical connections to place follow closely on her memories of the beautiful fish that entered the Theodosia River.

Salmon was a core component of Tla'amin diet and was cherished not only for its size and abundance but its availability to families who were not able to access a variety of foods. Elsie describes the year her husband was away logging and she raised three children on salmon:

> My mother-in-law went and lived up in Okeover [*Tohk natch*] one year and times were tough and I had three children then and my husband was away logging and we lived in this little cabin, one of the remaining cabins at that time, and that was like 48 years ago. We just lived in this little cabin and we ate fish every day. I'm telling you, we ate fish about three times a day. It was smoked and it was boiled and barbecued. Fresh salmon, fish soup, fish eggs, fish heads. You know, you can cook salmon every different way. Many, many different ways of cooking every part of the salmon. Our people did not waste one little bit. They even take the bone part of the salmon, like the backbone, cuz there's always flesh there, and that was smoked. It's got a different flavour again…It's really important. I don't know of any other way to put it. For older generations, it's very important. It's life.[135]

Fruit orchards and berry patches were plentiful and made up another critical component of the diet. Joe Paul describes how they ate berries "just like candy in the wintertime:"

---

[134] Agnes McGee, interview.

> [B]efore I went to residential school, my grandma had a farm like raspberries, chickens, all that, apples and then wild berries. We used to go up pick wild berries, blackberries, huckleberries. She dried it up, grandma did, all that was before I was ten years old.[136]

Agnes explains that the ground was so rich at Toh Kwon_non that "anything you planted was good." She describes how everyone in the community participated in berry picking and fruit harvesting:

> My mom had, all my grandparents had, the big orchard, like real nice apples and plums, greengates, summer apples and another part, further past the houses there was a beautiful, like a meadow there. They all helped each other plant somehow raspberries. And, you know, they worked on it together and picked when it's picking time.[137]

Food gathering and preparation was a community endeavor, necessary for survival but also an integral part of a society that placed great value on providing for those incapable of procuring resources for themselves.

Many people remained at Toh Kwon_non year round. They made sure they had enough supplies to last through winter as the river used to freeze, "big thick ice" according to Agnes. Elsie remembers a lot of snow when she was around five years-old, "very cold, wintertime we were there." Families from Klahoose and Homalco usually stayed only during harvesting season.

Some elders in the Traditional Use Study indicated that Tla'amin families returned to Tishohsem before the river froze up to avoid being trapped without access to food sources. Some remained, however, in Toh Kwon_non with supplies adequate to see them through winter. Agnes illustrates the extent to which social realities have changed for Tla'amin people from the time she lived with her family at Toh Kwon_non: "Our

---

[135] Elsie Paul, interview.
[136] Joe (Dave) Paul, interview.
[137] Agnes McGee, interview.

parents never sit still [in wintertime]," says Agnes. "They were always out doing something. Even if they had food in the house there, they were out. They loved to be out. Not like today. People love to go out, to birthday parties and drink parties and all that. In those days, that was not fun."

Landscapes of the Mind

Well before the dam was constructed, colonial powers were disrupting the balance of life in Toh Kwon_non. Agnes describes the shift in community relations from the time she was a little girl:

> It seems before people started going to school, it seems people loved each other more. After I don't know what year, they seemed to be fading away from each other. It's not as friendly as it was before. I don't know why. Maybe because our language was taken away and they don't understand each other anymore. Maybe that's why.[138]

Colonial and church officials attempted to forcibly remove Tla'amin children to the residential school at Sechelt where children were forbidden to speak their own language. Tla'amin parents often resisted this effort to take away their children but couldn't always circumvent the tragedies that often occurred in residential schools throughout Turtle Island. Agnes' voice becomes sad when she recalls the death of her sister at the Sechelt school:

> In those days, they take your child away whether you like it or not. That's what they did to my sister. They took her. And when my sister got there, she was mistreated, without food, without bread. They were mean, not only to her, to all the kids that were there. And mind you, when they first go to school, they don't know how to speak English. When they'd be talking their language, they'd get punished, they'd get strapped. We're not only one that lost somebody there. There's a few died, mistreated. This sister of mine that died was a couple of years older than me. She got sick and they wouldn't notify my mom and dad. My auntie went over there to visit her daughters, her daughters were there too and found out she was just skin and bones lying on the bed. She hurried back, I don't know if there was phone then or what, she hurried back and got on that, you know the boat

[138] Ibid.

> that used to go, the passenger boat, came home and told my mom and dad. The next boat, my mom and dad went. They found her. She was just, she was just really sick. She couldn't walk. They wrapped her up in a blanket and they caught the same boat going to Vancouver, tried to save her, bring her to a doctor. When they got there, the doctors couldn't do anything. She was too far gone. And then they came back. She just got home here and she passed away, skin and bones. That's why my dad just hated school. Didn't want me to enter school at all.[139]

Toh Kwon_non became a refuge for parents who refused to send their children away. Intimate knowledge of the land and its resources enabled them to evade authorities and join with other families in continuing their seasonal rotation among villages and harvesting sites:

> Next I was to go to residential school for high school. My dad said no, we're going away. We're not coming back. Go live in the Harwood Island. All the family. All the family. Took all of their kids, stayed Harwood Island for one month. Go to Sayward. Keep 'em away when school comes in September. They was gonna come and pick us up and send us to residential school. My dad said no. Next island we're gonna move is Cortes Island. Keep on moving till September, end of September. We went down to Grace Harbour, to Toh Kwon_non. We dry a lot of fish there. We forget the school. We're not going home until Christmas time, my dad said. We dry the fish there. Everybody was there. Agnes and her family was there. Dry a lot of fish at Toh Kwon_non.[140]

Education happened on the land, not in a classroom, and took place under the community's watchful eye. As Mary says, "Everybody was there [at Toh Kwon_non]." Learning did not happen as a result of isolated, individualized lessons but as a result of community efforts to raise children who knew their role within Tla'amin society and would carry the knowledge that made them unique as Tla'amin people. Rose Louie describes how her education about Tla'amin history came from listening to older people who came from neighbouring communities like Squirrel Cove and Church House to fish at Tishohsem:

---

[139] Ibid.
[140] Mary George, interview.

> The old men used to stay down the beach, make fire, put a pot of herrings on that and cook. They were eatin' it and they started talking about stories and all that. And I used to like to hear them talk. I used to go sit and listen, listen to them. It was really interesting.[141]

As Rose illustrates, history and knowledge were not only passed on by family members, but by other members of the community. "So that's where I learned the history, from those old guys," she says.

Elders play a critical role in a child's education. Grandparents frequently raised their grandchildren which allowed them to pass on family history and cultural knowledge. Elsie recalls that she only went to residential school for one year, "But I learned other things from my grandparents. I was raised by my grandparents and to me that is just as important. I try to share that with my children and other younger people in the community, to share with them the values and the traditional practices that is our culture, and how rich it is."[142] Elders like Agnes, Mary and Elsie ensure their memories of Toh Kwon_non have relevance today by passing on stories to younger generations. Mary emphasizes in her repetition how important this is:

> And that's…our home, Toh Kwon_non. I pass it on to my children too. I pass it on to my children. [Agnes] does too. She tells her grandchildren that's our home, don't forget. That's our home, Toh Kwon_non. When the children grow up, we tell them the stories.[143]

Joe Paul wants his grandchildren to "understand the family tree." He longs to see a photo he leant to the treaty office of his great grandfather: "I hope and pray I get it back because I need my ancestors like you see in the picture. I want to see my grandfolks one by one. That's my ancestors. That's my true blood…"

---

[141] Rose Louise, interview.
[142] Elsie Paul, interview.
[143] Mary George, interview.

European contact ruptured the education Tla'amin children received. As Elsie explains, "there's no big bible somewhere that tells us for generations this is who our great great great grandparents were":

> I can only go back to my great grandparents that I remember simply because my grandmother told me who they were. And beyond that is like a void cuz everything was orally handed down, generation to generation. The names were handed down. But upon contact, those things were lost again. We were told you are not to use that name anymore, in my grandparents and my great grandparents time. They were given names like Bob George and, you know, you are now going to be Timothy, you are now gonna be Bob George, you are now gonna be this or that. Take away their traditional names. You are not to use that again. There are consequences if you didn't abide by those rules. So we're totally taken over. It was just so deliberate. We just got pulled into all that. So it's really difficult to give a clear picture now of what it was and what the true picture was back then other than what my memory serves me.[144]

Indigenous names for people – like indigenous place names – have layers of meaning and nuances that can only be fully revealed in the language of the people. The filmmaker I interview in the next chapter, for example, was given the name Nuh Nohome meaning "Community Provider." As manager of a salmon enhancement project, his name speaks to the important role he plays in the community and describes responsibilities he must assume in taking on such a role. Several years ago, Elsie decided to give the name Toh Kwon_non to her grandson:

> My grandparents lived in Toh Kwon_non and my great grandparents lived there, so to me it's very important. It's our origin. And I thought it was a beautiful name. I always have, and I brought it back to name one of my grandsons who's 23 years-old and I thought it was very nice that he be named after a place that is very special to me and my family. So it's very much alive.[145]

History is embedded in memory and narrative, but truly comes alive in the process of naming. Elsie's grandson carries Tla'amin history in his name, and thus knowledge is

---

[144] Elsie Paul, interview.
[145] Ibid.

transferred from one generation to the next. More than a passive recipient of cultural knowledge and ideas, he becomes a living part of that history.

Recovering Tla'amin Stories Through Contemporary Struggles

Along with imposition of European names came imposition of permanent settlements. As described in a previous chapter, reserve lands were allotted in the 1880's and Tla'amin were forced onto small parcels of land. Seasonal rotation among villages and harvesting sites became less frequent. Although Toh Kwon_non continued to be accessed for harvesting purposes, by the 1930's there were no permanent residents. In the mid-1950's, Toh Kwon_non salmon runs were being damaged as water from the Powell River Company's (PRCO) dam was diverted from Toh Kwon_non to *Tha7yitl's Tiskwat* (Powell Lake). Reduced flows of water to the river made access to spawning grounds very difficult for salmon runs. Walter Paul expresses disbelief that PRCO did this without informing any Tla'amin people:

> I find it really strange that a lot of our elders didn't even know there was a dam on the river. They didn't. There was no consultation when the dam went in with us. We're basically the biggest stakeholder.[146]

One elder talked about how the company "helped themselves:"

> They don't ask permission. Like anything they do, they figure they own the land around here. So they feel they can help themselves, but they forgot the river runs through the reserve, and that's a fish-bearing stream. That's why the watershed is happening now, so that all the people that are active in logging, or applying for logging permits in that area, to stay away from that stream, so that it will become a salmon-bearing stream again.[147]

Colonial authorities had granted PRCO a license to utilize the area without regard to the fact that indigenous rights and title to the land had never been addressed. Further,

---

[146] Walter Paul (She peh the es), interview by author, tape recording, Tla'amin, 27 August 2003.
[147] Sliammon Traditional Use Study, Theodosia, SU-1278 (Renewable Resource Activity – Water Supply), 73F-NGAL.

in the years following the dam's construction, the company did not comply with the permit and government authorities turned a blind eye while four salmon runs dropped off and *thekay* (sockeye) salmon disappeared completely. When Walter Paul and other community members first addressed the issue with the company ten years ago, it was clearly a sensitive one. Walter describes how Peter Knor, then-President of Macmillan Bloedel (MacBlo) which owned the pulp mill, "either resigned or he was let go" shortly after a meeting with Walter and Mark Angelo of the Outdoor Recreation Council. At the meeting, Walter recalls, "Knor said to us that he realizes that the dam is marginal at best and his feeling was that the dam should be removed."[148] Perhaps shareholders were not pleased with Knor's willingness to divest MacBlo of a potentially lucrative asset.

Considering MacBlo was not in compliance with the dam, and it had outlived its usefulness, Walter thought it would not be long before the dam was decommissioned. On February 28, 2000, Pacifica Papers (the mill's new owners) and the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks announced the dam would be decommissioned over a five-year period with flows gradually restored starting that spring. In a press conference, Mark Angelo said "this sets the stage for one of the most exciting river restoration projects ever undertaken in our province. And the planned decommissioning of the Theodosia Dam, which has been the cause of significant environmental damage, is good news for both the river and its salmon stocks."[149] Although Mark Angelo acknowledged Tla'amin, and in particular the efforts of Walter Paul, in his comments, Tla'amin were not mentioned in the news release and included only as a "stakeholder" in the committee subsequently formed to hear input from agencies and the public. "They created the

[148] She peh the es, interview.

Theodosia Adaptive Water Management Planning Committee [AWMP] which I thought was too cumbersome," says Walter. "People had their own agendas. I felt that [Tla'amin's] agenda was being put aside for other peoples' agendas…Basically the Theo's been studied to death in my mind. I went in with this mindset that we were gonna be able to just go in and revoke the dam because of the permitting. They were not in compliance with the permit so I thought we could just go in and do it."[150]

Power rights to the dam eventually went to Powell River Energy Incorporated (PREI) with whom Tla'amin signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in 2003. In the MOU, a mutual recognition clause states that PREI "recognizes the Sliammon people as the original inhabitants of this land, acknowledges Sliammon's stewardship role over its Traditional Territory and respects Sliammon's unresolved aboriginal rights and title to their traditional territories." Objectives in the MOU, however, encompass fundamentally different visions of the river's future. One objective is to "determine the means for releasing water to the Lower Toh Kwon_non as required to support a salmon enhancement project in the lower river, while maintaining a balance between fish and power benefits." A PREI contractor I spoke to at the dam had a similar sentiment. He said they needed to produce power but there also had to be fish, so a "happy medium" had to be found. Craig Galligos later brought this up and we agreed that the concept of a "happy medium" had never existed. Resource companies look for lands to exploit for the short-term benefit of their shareholders, not the long-term benefit to the ecosystem. There is no mention of Tla'amin's environmental standards in the MOU, only that PREI and Tla'amin "will assure the Toh-Kwonon (Theodosia) diversion is operated and maintained

---

[149] Theodosia Press Conference, February 28th, 2000, Comments by Mark Angelo (http://www.theodosia.bcit.bc.ca/news.html).

in compliance with Powell River Energy Inc. Environmental Management System (EMS).”

It was no secret the government that came into power in 2001 had a business agenda more interested in “moneymakers”[151] like fish farms than initiatives such as habitat restoration. Compensation to PREI and its shareholders for dismantling the dam would be around $300,000 a year, but the province’s Treasury Board denied approval for giving the company rental remission, a frustrating setback for those who had worked so hard to see the dam come down:

> If the government had stepped in and were willing to do the $300,000 a year compensation then the dam would be decommissioned. But we wouldn’t have gone and torn the whole thing down or blown it up or anything. We’d still have to take a cautious approach to it. You don’t want to open the floodgates and do more damage than good. But at least you’d have something to look forward into the future if it was positive and we’d move onto the next phase and the next phase til we could get it back to its natural flow.[152]

Elsie echoes the disillusionment felt by Walter and others in their decade-long struggle to address the damage done at Toh Kwon_non:

> [Walter] wanted to find out more and do whatever he could. And it was met with a lot of resistance, of course, with the people that had done the work there, that diverted the river. So there was a lot of resistance and a lot of doubt about our land, about the use of our land. You know, did people actually live there? How can you prove you actually lived there? Where is it documented? With our culture, in our language, our language is really difficult to document, especially in my grandparents time and my great grandparents time. Things were not documented. Documentation did not happen until contact. And people only documented what they wanted to document. It’s like we did not exist before contact? Our people lived there. They lived there for thousands of years. We’ve always lived on the coast for thousands of years. And because there’s no paper trail that tells you that, you know, there’s a doubt about our existence back then.[153]

---

[150] She peh the es, interview.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Elsie Paul, interview.

Not only was Toh Kwon_non occupied for thousands of years, but thousands of Tla'amin occupied the area. Denise Smith, a treaty negotiator and former elected Tla'amin chief, described how surprised some people were that skeletal remains continue to be discovered throughout Tla'amin territory and wondered when the *mam'la* would realize that Tla'amin occupied all parts of the territory, and at one time in great numbers.[154]

By 2003, most stakeholders involved with the AWMP walked away and only Tla'amin and PREI remained at the table. "We thought it was better because there were so many people at the table," Walter recalls, "so many hidden agendas that we thought, okay we need to deal with this one on one, Sliammon and the permit holder."[155] In September, 2003, PREI contracted Sliammon Construction to restore four cubic feet of water per second to the river. Restoring some water flow generates more habitat for spawning salmon and their fry. In a local newspaper article, PREI's plant superintendent Russell Storry said that "[increased flow] reduces our total energy output a little bit. But we're finding a balance between water for fish and water for power."[156] While Walter supports in general the idea of restored flows, he cuts quickly to the heart of the matter: "It's disturbing to see what they've done up in there. It's horrendous. We're taking a step, trying to fix that."[157]

It has been estimated that the environmental cost of the Theodosia Dam is ten times greater than its benefit when lost revenues from the Georgia Strait fishery are taken

---

[154] Informal conversation, Tla'amin community meeting to discuss Sliammon Land Code, 5 September 2003.
[155] She peh the es, interview.
[156] Laura Walz, "Sliammon Hopes Salmon Runs Will Return After Modifying a 1950's Era Dam," Peak Online, 23 Sept. 2003 (http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?brd=1998).
[157] She peh the es, interview.

into consideration.[158] Economic and environmental costs of dams have long dominated debates about dam building. Social and cultural costs are often included as addenda to support the environmentalists' agenda. The fact is dams have been constructed in the ancestral homelands of indigenous peoples for whom society, culture and environment are inextricably bound, and it is indigenous peoples who have suffered the most severe losses. While this study has not attempted to quantify the cultural losses brought on by the dam, it has attempted to qualify them by discussing salmon as a cultural keystone species present in stories. Impacts to Tla'amin society also become apparent as elders like Agnes point to the breakdown of social structures ("they seemed to be fading away from each other"). Forced from their communities and sent to alien educational institutions, community members were deprived of the spatial anchors that grounded their understanding of the land.

Cultural knowledge did not, however, disappear. A cornerstone of indigenous educational practice is transmitting histories and ideas from generation to generation in the form of storytelling. For this reason, I wanted to hear the stories of people who lived at Toh Kwon_non, from elders who remember that their ancestors lived here since time immemorial, and who honour that memory by naming their grandchildren after places of great significance. In the next chapter, I will look at how indigenous peoples continue to demonstrate respect for their cultures and histories by introducing the concept of Fourth World Cinema. As an extension of the storytelling methodology, its potential is unrivalled as a tool for political, social and cultural empowerment.

---

[158] *Taku and Theodosia Most Endangered Rivers of 1999*, News Release, 7 April 1999, Outdoor Recreation Council of BC (http://www.orc.bc.ca).

CHAPTER FIVE – FOURTH WORLD CINEMA

> *This film is also a tribute to ongoing Aboriginal thought, action and stewardship of ancestral territories. This film respectfully shows us at home (on the Land), in all its length and breadth, danger and tranquility, richesse and poverty, simplicity and complexity. A land includes its people, with their diversity and varying viewpoints. This film will honour those who live on the Land and share, in their individual ways, the burden of its stewardship.*[159]

Introduction

My earlier chapters outline a shameful history of European contact with Tla'amin peoples: dispossession from ancestral lands, destruction of vital resources, and devastation of salmon runs which I've characterized as "cultural keystones" embedded within a storytelling methodology to highlight their importance in the culture. But what can we do with this information? How can we begin to redress the loss and damage? One way is by telling these stories from an indigenous perspective, using an indigenous framework and with an indigenous audience in mind. Film and video can reach audiences both near and far, and with the advent of digital video, the medium has become much more accessible. Communities can seize the tools necessary to represent themselves to a wider audience and in the process affirm their own social, cultural and political goals. Some may think it naïve to believe that film and video can empower communities and inspire change, but such a pervasive medium must necessarily be challenged. Assuming control of our own representation is an integral part of the decolonization process and thinking otherwise might be seen as naïve. In this chapter, I acknowledge the work of George Manuel and Michael Posluns in their seminal work *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*[160] and give an overview of what I mean by Fourth World Cinema. I then provide

---

[159] *Kla ah men: As Far Back as the Story Goes* (http://www.sliammontreaty.com/film_site/synopsis.htm).
[160] George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1974).

background on two Tla'amin filmmakers who share their thoughts on filmmaking from an indigenous perspective.

Transformative Effects of Fourth World Cinema

Film theorist Jay Ruby discusses the democratization of cinema and asks the question, "If subjects become knowledgeable as filmmakers in order to be collaborators, why would they need the outsider? Wouldn't they want to make their own films?"[161] In other words, isn't the filmmaker working herself out of a job by training the subject in the art of filmmaking? This is a natural outcome of community-based filmmaking. Similar to community action research, where the role of the researcher is not that of an expert but a resource person, the filmmaker committed to a community-based approach guides and facilitates the creative process. She creates a foundation for the project that is based in the goals and aspirations of the community. In this chapter, I interview two Tla'amin filmmakers to explore the idea that cinema can ground itself in community aspirations, and that indigenous filmmakers are engaged in a conceptual shift away from patterns of power and control that have marked cinema's history in the West.

Like the storytelling methodology around which I've attempted to structure this project, indigenous filmmakers counter colonial narratives that have distorted and mythologized indigenous realities. They privilege oral histories over Western perspectives, though the exercise is not unproblematic as cinema tends to freeze in time stories that are meant to be fluid and change as circumstances change. One way to overcome such limitations is to create projects that involve elders and are intended for community audiences. In Tishohsem, not only are elders sharing stories with their

[161] Jay Ruby, "Speaking For, Speaking About, Speaking With, or Speaking Alongside: An Anthropological and Documentary Dilemma," *Journal of Film and Video* 44.102 (Spring-Summer 1992), 54.

grandchildren, but they are sitting down in front of video cameras and engaging with a medium that is familiar to most elders only as a transmitter of stories and ideas that originates outside their cultural context. Elders' active participation in film and video projects is critical because film provides another medium in which to transfer knowledge from one generation to the next. More importantly, when the audience is based in the community and able to watch the end product in the company of elders, there are greater opportunities for interpretation and analysis of the material presented.

I wanted to include the voices of these filmmakers for a number of reasons, the first of which, I must admit, is entirely selfish. My passion for film began at an early age, probably inherited from my father who loved going to the movies also from a young age, particularly as the theatre provided a pleasant contrast to his life in Lejac Residential School. But nowhere did indigenous peoples see their realities reflected back. My sister told me when she was younger she identified with African American characters on television because there were no indigenous people with whom to identify. There is a more visible Indigenous presence on the screen now, thanks to an expanded broadcasting framework that includes outlets like the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network and Television Northern Canada. I was interested in how indigenous communities could take advantage of these opportunities and create a cinema that reflected indigenous histories, cultures, values and traditions. I wanted to create a discussion around the idea of Fourth Cinema, a term coined by Maori filmmaker Barry Barclay and possibly with origins in the work of George Manuel and Michael Posluns in the 1970s.[162]

Through this medium of storytelling, Tla'amin are revitalizing their stories,

---

[162] George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1974).

strengthening ties to their homelands, and assuming control over production of their own images. Through these projects, the tools of filmmaking were made accessible to community members and, in the case of the video on Toh Kwon_non, were produced primarily for viewing within Tla'amin. The video's resonated with the community because not only were members involved in the process, they were the intended audience. When I discussed with the treaty office my initial research proposal to create a collaborative documentary film, there was some hesitation because people in the community had already responded unfavourably when they discovered a video project had been contracted to an outside production company. Indigenous cultures have consistently been represented by non-indigenous people. Such skepticism is a natural result of being written about and recorded, of having a voice imposed that is not one's own (such is the dark shadow of ethnographic film).

It Begins in the Sacred

Documentary film has become an important tool for indigenous filmmakers, perhaps not surprising given the history of critical thinking in the genre, more so than in fictional feature length dramas. In the 1930s, John Grierson theorized that documentary film should be an instrument of "information, education and propaganda" with the intention of involving citizens in their society.[163] His preoccupation with socially-concerned documentary is the tradition from which indigenous filmmakers work. Ruby explains that a "thin line of tradition" can be traced from the efforts of such Griersonian filmmakers as Robert Flaherty (Nanook of the North) to the power-sharing practices of

---

[163] Susan Hayward, *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996), 72. Robert Flaherty produced some of the earliest documentaries including *Nanook of the North* and *Moana*.

indigenous filmmakers today.[164] In discussing feature film in New Zealand, Barry Barclay describes a Maori approach as "fourth cinema," revealing in turn an indigenous aesthetic:

> [I[f we as Maori look closely enough and through the right pair of spectacles, we will find examples at every turn of how the old principles have been reworked to give vitality and richness to the way we conceive, develop, manufacture and present our films. It seems likely to me that some Indigenous film artists will be interested in shaping films that sit with confidence within the First, Second and Third cinema framework. While not closing the door on that option, others may seek to rework the ancient core values to shape a growing Indigenous cinema outside the national orthodoxy.[165]

For Hopi filmmaker Victor Masayesva, the indigenous aesthetic "begins in the sacred."[166] This is a critical point of departure from a Western aesthetic. Steven Leuthold describes three differences between native and non-native artists when incorporating "ancient or indigenous" forms:

- One is temporal; for indigenous artists, the past is not so distant;
- Another distinction is conceptual; indigenous aesthetic systems rely upon a unity of form and content as opposed to a formalist orientation of twentieth century Western art theory and practice;
- Finally, indigenous aesthetic vocabularies are more contained within a social context than Western aesthetic theories. [167]

A modernist view of history looks at ancient forms as "prehistoric." Western cinema's portrayal of the "Hollywood Indian" perpetuated this idea by transferring static notions of indigenous nations onto the screen and ignoring distinctions that would have made it impossible for indigenous filmmakers to portray themselves in a similar manner.

---

[164] Ruby, 44.
[165] Barry Barclay, "Fourth Cinema" (lecture for Auckland University Film and Media Studies Department, Auckland, New Zealand, September 17 2002).
[166] Steven Leuthold, *Indigenous Aesthetics: Native Art, Media and Identity* (Austin: U of Texas Press, 1998), 194.
[167] Ibid., 194-195.

Indigenous practices in documentary film can be distinguished from non-indigenous approaches by examining the peoplehood matrix developed for consideration as a core assumption of American Indian studies (see Figure 2). The diagram shows the four interlocking factors that comprise a peoplehood model: Language, Sacred History, Place/Territory and Ceremonial Cycle. The model reminds us that "human societies are complex and that Native Americans entwine everyday life with religious practice and a view that human beings are part of, rather than an imposition on, their environments."[168]

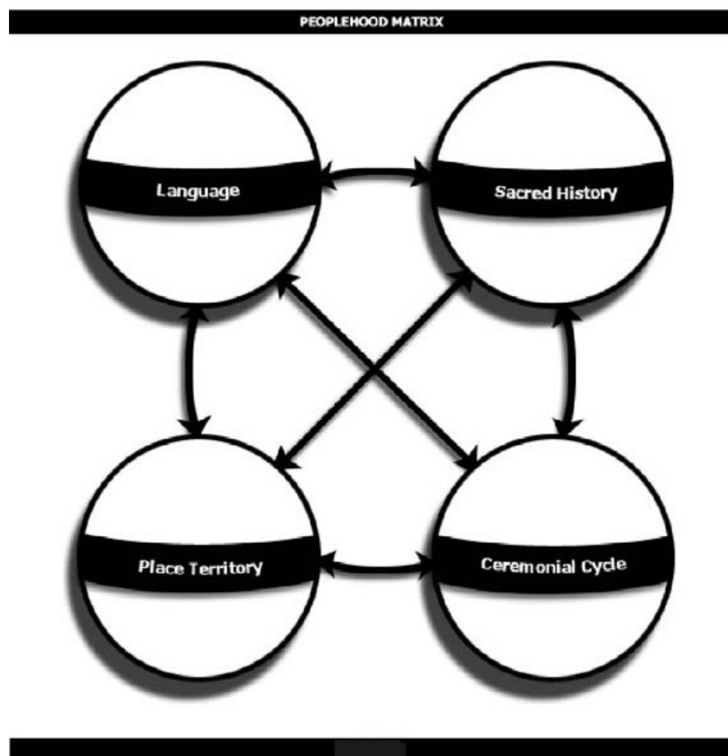

Figure 2 – Peoplehood Matrix

[168] Tom Holm, J. Diane Pearson, and Ben Chavis, "Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies, *Wicazo Sa Review*, Spring 2003, 15.

Extending this model to indigenous filmmaking enables greater understanding of how indigenous peoples can utilize Western media while preserving and enhancing their own cultural imperatives.

Another way of reading indigenous films is through Barclay's use of "Fourth Cinema," a term he may have taken from Manuel and Posluns book. In describing the Fourth World, Manuel contrasts it with the Third World:

> The Third World is emerging at this time primarily because it is rapidly learning to adapt its life-style to Western technology; it reacts to Western political concepts; and it uses racial issues to pivot its expanding influence between the super-powers, gathering concessions from both sides while struggling to imitate them.[169]

Manuel describes his own political awakening and how he came to realize that "[r]emaining Indian means that Indian people gain control of the economic and social development of our own communities, within a framework of legal and constitutional guarantees for our land and our institutions."[170] Only through legal recognition of Aboriginal title to lands, Manuel argued, could racial myths created to justify seizure of indigenous land be fully dispelled. He argued that a "genuine leap of imagination" would be required to dismantle those myths. Dialogue could only happen if assumptions were re-evaluated and indigenous peoples were able to develop within their own traditional frameworks.

What then are the characteristics of Fourth World Cinema? How can they be extended to documentary filmmaking and placed within a consciously politicized tool such as the peoplehood matrix? An indigenous approach may be seen as collaborative,

---

[169] Manuel and Posluns, 5.
[170] Ibid.

empowering and beneficial. It can transcend theory by promoting shared authority in the creative process and seek to affirm cultural and political rights. Barclay writes that Fourth Cinema is something more than the "surface features: the rituals, the language, the posturing, the décor, the use of elders, the presence of children…something else is being asserted which is not easy to access."[171] Barclay alludes to the sacred in indigenous cinema, which is difficult to quantify in aesthetic terms but an inevitable outcome in the work of indigenous filmmakers who strive to honour and respect the people and subject matter they are depicting.

To illustrate these points, I interviewed two Tla'amin filmmakers carrying on the Tla'amin storytelling tradition through Fourth World Cinema, Evan Adams and Nuh Nohome (Lee George). Evan co-directed the documentary *Kla ah men: As Far Back as the Story Goes*. According to the film's synopsis, it "attempts to capture and clarify [the complex language involved in negotiating a treaty]. Both publicly (to the average viewer) and privately (to the people of Kla ah men), capturing these important discussions and events on film provides a means of collective-consciousness building for all British Columbians on these complex themes and issues."[172] Evan describes how the filmmakers had to "honour and respect" opinions that diverged from their own and how necessary it was to "put it on film in a way that was honourable to them." Including a diversity of opinions demonstrates respect for the complex realities that inform life within indigenous communities. This is particularly important in the context of the British Columbia treaty process which has divided indigenous peoples for more than a decade and is rarely discussed from that perspective in the media.

---

[171] Barclay, U of Auckland lecture.
[172]http://www.sliammontreaty.com/film_site/synopsis.htm.

The Film Comes From Us

Evan is a well-known actor and physician who grew up in Tishohsem. He has starred in such films as *Smoke Signals* and *The Business of Fancydancing*, two of the few feature films made in North America that can be considered Fourth World Cinema. With a background in film and television, and a passion for his own community, he was the ideal person to direct a documentary on Tla'amin. As he describes it, Evan is required to "build intimacy quite quickly" as a physician, and was therefore able to accomplish one of the most difficult aspects of documentary filmmaking: building relationships of trust with subjects.

In *Kla ah men*, a documentary narrative was structured that privileges Tla'amin's voice yet places it within a larger framework to encourage dialogue among all parties, indigenous and non-indigenous. On their website, the filmmakers pose the question, "How do memory, story, dance and politics affect our relationship to the land now?" These are the questions asked in Fourth World Cinema, but it is not enough simply to pose the question. The process must be rooted in an indigenous approach. Evan made sure his film met the criteria: "the film had to come from us…it's really a film about us, by us." Echoing Masayesva, he describes the "sacredness" of their approach. They didn't "bully" the subjects or make them uncomfortable. Members of the crew honoured and respected both the subjects and each other. That honour and respect derives from a shared identity as Tla'amin people with a common history, language, territory and ceremonial cycle. The filmmakers, consciously or not, recreated a dynamic model that contrasts – but is obviously not incompatible – with Western modes of expression.

In the following interview, I ask Evan who was involved in the filmmaking process and what guided the filmmakers in tackling a sensitive topic like the treaty process in British Columbia. I wanted to know what role the community – central to the film itself – played in the process and what traditions guided Evan in his approach, especially because of his involvement in the feature films noted above. Evan's work does indeed demonstrate principles of Fourth World Cinema because it comes from a very personal, sacred place yet operates in a wider historical and political framework. He carefully crafted a film that contains the "surface features" of an indigenous film project while nurturing spiritual elements that tend to distinguish indigenous filmmakers from their non-indigenous counterparts.

Interview with Evan Tlesla Adams[173]

LP: Can you please describe the film?

EA: *Kla ah men: As Far Back as the Story Goes* is a film about the people of Kla ah men or Sliammon, a First Nation of the Coast Salish tribe near the town of Powell River, B.C. and their relationship with their land, in a sentence. Originally, we wanted the film to be about treaty, about the tripartite interests of the Kla ah men First Nation, the provincial government and the federal government in our ancestral lands. But in interviewing our subjects, elders and politicians and some of the young people about their relationships with the land, we saw it became quite necessary to talk about birthright and history and their ancestors, our Taow, or our ancient teachings and our language. So it's really about the Kla ah men people itself and primarily their relationship with the land.

LP: How many people made the documentary?

EA: Myself and Jan Padgett were co-directors on the project. We wouldn't have done it…without each other, because Jan is a documentary filmmaker but non-Aboriginal and I'm Aboriginal from the community but have not had any experience as a director, a documentary filmmaker. So we decided we would tackle it with each others help, knowing that she couldn't very well do the interviews or understand the issues as quickly as I do or did. The director of photography is quite important. The producer role is quite important because they liaise and keep the project on schedule and meeting its goals and expectations and

[173] Evan Adams, telephone interview by author, tape recording, Coast Salish territory, 23 February 2004.

that was done by Grace Adams. The editor is quite important as well. The editor tries to make sense of all the material that we've shot and tries to hone the film down, make it as punchy as possible. And of course along the way, lots of direction, assistance, and people who assisted with the writing and B roll or camera B shots. Who else was there, the assistant in sound, in the sound department. I guess there were a few people.

LP: Were any of them community members?

EA: Several of them were community members. Most of us are community members, if you look at the credits...We really wanted the film to be from us. Having worked in film for the last twenty years cannot, cannot do it any other way. If a group of men decided to make a film about women and they live with women all their lives and think they know women's issues, they couldn't possibly do a film about being a woman, so ditto for us. The film had to come from us and even if we needed technical support, we didn't have those technical skills in filmmaking, it's really a film about us, by us.

LP: Were there any documentary films that influenced you in doing this project?

EA: We had a look at several films and we saw that there really was no one as far as we could see who had really managed to tackle the treaty issue effectively, or at least in a way that we felt happy with. Treaty issues are really particular to this province and us as a lead table. No one has gotten to know the issues like we have. But we went back to basics. Alanis Obomsawin who's First Nations filmmaker, kind of the grand dame of documentary film in Canada, had several very straight forward principles and strong ethics about shooting Aboriginal people and documentaries. So we went to those. And first and foremost we had to let the subjects decide what the film was about. We thought it was about treaty but they wanted it to be about much more. That was quite difficult. And just for another example, people kept telling us there are two sides to this story. There are certainly people in our community who think we are not ready for treaty. We need to speak to them. As much as we weren't that interested in what they had to say initially, because we certainly were in favour of treaty, those of us who made the film, we did have to honour and respect them and really, really hear what they had to say. And be respectful, and put it on film in a way that was honourable to them.

LP: So you did include those perspectives in the film?

EA: Absolutely, we included them in the film. We didn't want to be a filter for anyone. We didn't want to change their words in any way. We tried to present their points of view as objectively as possible. The editor was very important in that. The editor didn't really care who was saying what so much as whatever was being said needed to be said as well as possible. So that was her goal and we all struggled together and there were many cooks in the kitchen, lots of chiefs and

not enough Indians, added to the film's scope and complexity and sophistication of the narration.

LP: How long did it take to make?

EA: It took a year and a half to make. We shot over several months and the editing process took several months. A lot of the polishing took time. You know, it's a film that has a really beautiful look to it and I think has quite a large budget for what it is. We wanted it to look that way and I think it does. It's quite beautiful, imagistically, and film has to stand as beautiful imagery, more beautiful imagery. So we took our time with it. The consultation took forever, building relationships with the subjects and making sure the team was working well together took time as well. And also just to take a little bit of time tracking the treaty process itself as well as it is. Yeah, I don't know how anyone could have done it any faster. You know, contemporary filmmaking is usually done within a certain period of time. We have the luxury because we're from there to stop/start over several months.

LP: What was the process by which you allowed the subjects to decide what was going to be said. Did it come through in the interview process, or while you were planning for it?

EA: Well, we spoke to each of them beforehand because we had to decide who were important characters to represent in the film. We had initial meetings, and just amongst the crew ourselves we knew we wanted to include children's points of view on what the land is, that we wanted to include workers, people who actually work on the land. We wanted to include a variety of cultural workers, we wanted a young woman and a young man. We wanted university educated people, we wanted people who were actually involved in the treaty process, and of course we wanted elders. And we wanted to hear from political leaders past and present. So that was our wish list and we spoke to several people and we wanted to get, you know, different kinds of voices. We wanted opposing points of view. So we found our characters, quite quickly though because everyone was very, very open to it. That was my job. You know, I've worked as an interviewer for many years and as a physician I need to be able to build intimacy quite quickly so we had to kind of cut to the quick with each of the subjects very fast. So I think that shows. Each of the interviews is very intimate and to the point. I don't know how a non-Native interviewer, well, a non-Native interviewer couldn't have done what we did, couldn't possibly have done what we did, in drawing them in and asking them to be their best and to show their Indianness. In the course of the interview itself, we were quite prepared for them, and the crew was, I was emphatic that the crew be attentive, respectful, focused and they not be laughing and joking and they not be intrusive at all, and I was firm. I've certainly worked with crews who, you know, who are not, who don't see the holiness of what we're doing, and I was firm. So I think it was also the interview process that leant itself to the contents of the interview.

LP: Did you find that you faced any particular challenges making this film in your own community?

EA: There were challenges within the team because we all were from different points of view, but we were all needed and I think we worked in an Indian way, in a communal way through, what's the word, you know when everyone comes to agreement, through consensus. We each acted to do what we did best and I asked everyone to be extremely respectful. And there were many times when people threatened not to be and I had to say, look everybody stop if we can't work together, or all our voices are needed and if someone wants to be disrespectful then they have to go. Of course no one left. It was just a reminder. So I think we worked very much in a traditional, respectful manner and that we asked each of the subjects to rise to the occasion. I think some of the subjects thought that we were going to be kind of like a Hollywood reporting team or that we had political motivation or lots of things that they had misconceptions about. But we said no, we're here to capture this moment. We're here to capture your true thoughts and feelings and we want to honour you.

LP: It sounds like that really describes the approach, as respect and honour. Is there any way you would elaborate on that indigenous approach?

EA: I think there is a sacredness or a holiness in our approach to each other and there's a sense of non-interference with us as well. We never wanted to bully our subjects. We never asked them to do anything that they were uncomfortable with. Like for instance we had a carver and he only showed us pieces that he wanted or he was proud of and he only showed himself working for our camera in a way that he felt was good, not in a way that say a white crew coming out saying oh could you do this for us because I think that would look interesting to our white audiences. I also think that the way that we joked and stayed warm and friendly, casual, was very Indian. And the way that we presented ourselves as being good people from Indian country and not as the crackerjack reporting documentary film crew. You know, that was the way to go. They felt comfortable. The subjects were not alienated. The subjects didn't have to put on a mask. And they didn't have to present their white selves, necessarily, because I think those of us who have been acculturated, we have split personalities. We're bicultural. We asked for their own culture.

LP: So you didn't have any experience directing but you had lots of other experience in film. How did that sort of help you throughout this project?

EA: I worked in film for twenty years, mostly in dramatic features. So I know that a film has to look beautiful and move at a certain clip. I also have, I think, an ear for dialogue and the subject so I think I brought those forward. When I was originally asked to join the film, I thought "I have no interest in documentary film." Thinking, if I wanted to make a documentary I would have made one by

now. But I’m definitely interested in my people because certainly my whole career has been about aboriginal subjects and aboriginal stories, presenting our voice as truthfully as possible and knowing that our voice, our images of ourselves are far more important than others misconceptions or attitudes of who we are. I wanted the film to be a tribute to all the wonderful, beautiful aboriginal people that I had known. Many aboriginal people are quite conflicted about their past and in fact a lot of imagery from Indian country is about self-loathing or ambivalence about their aboriginal roots and I am certainly absolutely not from that camp. I went into this wanting to show our very best side and to show the kind of beauty that I know we possess. Thought about that and I asked for the best from my subjects. I wasn’t interested in their petty complaints. I didn’t ask for a whine session and I didn’t ask them to gossip. I didn’t ask them to tell on each other or to be that bitchy political thing that the dominant culture has asked us to do in the political arena, absolutely not that. And to discuss things in an Indian way with an open heart and an open mind using the high morality that the old timers would’ve asked of us.

LP: How about others on the crew. Did they have much experience?

EA: My crew was exceedingly experienced. Very much so. I couldn’t have asked for a more experienced crew. They had decades of experience behind them, each of them, except for the training ones. But the training ones, maybe they didn’t have technical skills but they knew the community so they had a lifetime of experience in that regard.

LP: Do you think you’ll make another documentary?

EA: Might make another documentary. Yeah, it would have to be a subject that is really of interest to me. I’ve been sort of asked since I made this film am I interested in making other documentaries. You know I’m very busy with my practice as a physician…I’m very busy with continuing to make dramatic features in the U.S. Documentaries are, you know, they’re wonderful art forms but they’re really lousy pay compared to what I’m used to. So I can’t do them all the time, as honourable as they are.

LP: Was yesterday the first time the community’s had a chance to see it in its entirety?

EA: No, there was a cast and crew screening in Sliammon a month ago. That version screened before the agreement-in-principle vote in November. Beginning of October we showed it.

LP: And how did they react to it?

EA: Exceedingly well. They were really happy to see their story up there and part of the point of the film for me was to clarify the issues for the Sliammon people.

Assimilating our cultural history, assimilating the actual timing of events from contact in 1792 to confederation in 1867 to appropriation of our lands over the decades is hard to do, let alone to form an opinion around governance and economic opportunity and how does the federal government work and negotiate. That's a lot of stuff and so we presented it to them through the film to actually have them understand, and to help us understand, in point form and in visual form what exactly these negotiations are about. Because not only were we trying to hold up a mirror to them but a chance to show all the different sides, the levels of the treaty process.

LP: What was the reaction when it premiered at the Powell River Film Festival yesterday?

EA: I was quite nervous to present the film to Powell River because the non-native residents of Powell River have the most to lose in the treaty process and they're all quite nervous about it. And I remember the consultation process, the people of Powell River and the governance of Powell River is not part of the treaty process so their wishes are actually, you know, academic only. It doesn't even really matter what they think. We have had consultation with them and I was quite nervous that we would get a negative response, that this film was very political and it was going to be used to justify the re-appropriation of Powell River land or that this position is no good for Powell Riverites or for all Canadians, blah blah blah. But that never came up at all. In fact it was quite supportive and I think glad for a chance to glimpse Sliammon community and its members. When I was growing up, I was amazed how many Powell Riverites didn't know anyone from Sliammon. In fact it was kind of disgusting. And it was amazing how many people had never been to our reserve. So it was a chance for them to see "other" and to finally have them realize that times are a changing.

LP: Did you get many questions after?

EA: There were lots of questions, huge number of questions. In fact, I kind of got tired of it because I wanted the film to speak for itself and I certainly didn't want to re-interpret what the subjects were saying or think for them. So people wanted to talk and talk and talk and talk.

LP: That seems to me one of the dangers is that as a filmmaker people expect you to be the spokesperson for the community when it's a community endeavour.

Evan: Yeah that's right. I'm only one person. The community doesn't speak for me. I don't speak for the community. And I certainly don't speak for my subjects. They're able to do that for themselves. But I'm pretty good at deflecting and saying I'm not the one you should be asking or I'm only the filmmaker.

Revitalizing Territorial Ties through Fourth World Cinema

Nuh Nohome manages the Sliammon Salmonid Enhancement project and has long been committed to revitalizing salmon runs at Toh Kwon_non. He is one of only a few community members who actively utilize Tla'amin territory. From the first time I spoke to him at a meeting in the Treaty Office in August 2003, Nuh Nohome stressed the importance of using and occupying the land as an expression of Tla'amin rights to their traditional territory. He explains how the video – which explores the elders' memories of Toh Kwon_non – helped them reconnect to their territory by reviving memories of a place they all cherished. Although unable to occupy it in a physical sense, the video became a powerful tool for affirming their spiritual and emotional ties to Toh Kwon_non. He also sees it as an important tool in the political struggle for recognition of Tla'amin's rights to Toh Kwon_non.

Nuh Nohome creates a vibrant oral document that is a powerful symbol of the endurance of memory and story in Tla'amin society. He acknowledges Tla'amin storytelling practices when he explains the project was intended only for community members out of respect for the elders; respect underlies the storytelling methodology and gives meaning to Fourth World Cinema as it structures the filmmakers' intent around core cultural values. Like Evan, he bases the project in the personal and extends it to the political arena. He describes the video as a tool for educating the community and talks about how he's still educating himself about Tla'amin's six reserves. He also sees the benefit of using videos like the one on Toh Kwon_non as a persuasive tool to show politicos that Tla'amin occupation of their lands is based on historical usage that continues to the present day.

I asked Nuh Nohome why he chose the film medium to record elders' stories, and why it was intended only for a community audience. His answers reveal a Fourth World Cinema approach in that he wanted to explore what could be done about protecting and preserving important places in their territory but knew it had to be done in a sacred, respectful manner. The physical landscape at Toh Kwon_non came alive in the minds of the elders enabling Nuh Nohome to establish the sacredness of place. On this spiritual foundation, he was able to look at the urgency and necessity of revitalizing ties to Tla'amin lands, a perspective all the more powerful because he practices what he preaches by living and working on the land. By transferring their stories to video, Nuh Nohome created a living record that grounds itself in community but with potential to create change on a much larger scale.

Interview with Nuh Nohome (Lee George)[174]

LP: Why did you want to make this particular video?

LG: The particular video we've done with the elders is basically to bring insight to their group as to the different changes over time in the Theodosia area when it comes to declining salmon stocks, logging and contracting that's been taken place up there over the last little while. Bringing that to light and, you know, just envision the things that are changing every day compared to how it used to be when they used to live there. So we brought that forward to them and we wanted to hear their side as to how it used to be, the abundant salmon that were there one time and the beautiful trees they utilized for making baskets and all those things. They wanted to just get enlightened as to how it used to be versus what we see as workers going in there every day. So what we did was we basically sat together with another gentleman from Marine Visions Consulting [Mark Biagi] who's a biologist and come up with the idea of getting some elders together and having their participation and just give us an oral history on how it used to be and basically us telling them how it is now type of thing. So it was a mutual thing between me and a partner of mine doing some work in the Theodosia rehabilitating salmon stocks and to date the video hasn't been really shown to anybody else other than yourself and a small number of the elders group and people of treaty.

[174] Nuh Nohome (Lee George), telephone interview by author, tape recording, Coast Salish territory, 20 February 2004.

LP: How did the community respond when they watched the video. I guess it was only the elders that really watched it.

LG: They're not really too keen to be on camera. You know a couple of those ladies there were really shy about talking in front of someone else other than someone from their own community that they're familiar with, speaking their own language and having someone narrate what they're saying. So they're a little bit shy there, but after we started talking about the Theodosia and the reserve, they just became alive. They were revived and they picture in their mind how it used to be and it brought back their old memories and their customs again. So it was really good. After a while the camera, like it wasn't there and they were just opening up and they're expressing their feelings and how things are there. So it was really, really a nice thing and it was really emotional to hear some of their stories as well.

LP: How many elders did you interview?

LG: I believe there was about seven of them. Some of them, actually one of the ladies was the last person basically to go out and live at some of the fish camps. She was present. She had a lot of history which took place and how the changes were from the time that she was there. A lot of shared information there and amongst themselves. So they went up there actually after the video through treaty and they were just totally floored as to what's happened up there and the changes. The reserve no longer there, we got impacts with water slides through the reserve and declining salmon stocks and you know all of that stuff that is just shaking for them. So they were really, really in a situation where they're going oh my God, these things are happening every day. We appreciate the hatchery coming forward with this kind of information for us and we hope you're going to try and set things right. Which I've been trying to do, to be a role model for the community to meet with various agencies and levels of government trying to bring those concerns across and get things done, back the way they were at one time.

LP: And when did you make that?

LG: That was about almost two years ago now. Things have changed up there since then as well. Yeah, more logging, another landslide. There's another one in Sliammon's land selection, through treaty.

LP: So they haven't changed necessarily for the better.

LG: There's really no change there. They're still pillaging as usual and not looking at all the stakeholders involved when it comes to salmon for everybody, you know, those kinds of things. There's a lot of people, well rate payers here, there's a lot of people that are concerned of all the things that are going on up there. You know, that book's been shut for a while and we need to open it and re-

visit some of the concerns on not just Sliammon's part but the municipality as well.

LP: Why was it important that this video just be for the community and for the elders?

LG: Well, just to listen to what they had to say and being respectful. We basically verbally discussed this with them, that the information would be shared within the group with the elders. If they felt comfortable with letting us use it for treaty or any other thing, we never really had that conversation. Right now it's just a mutual agreement that we use it wherever it needs to be used and we use it as a, how do you say, a landmark of history. As to having all the elders present to discuss some of the six reserves that Sliammon owns. That's just one little documentary just on the Theo. I'd like to hear one from Okeover and that one over on Cortes, Harwood and everywhere else for that matter, just to listen to the explanations on those kind of things. I'm still educating myself on the history of these six reserves.

LP: One of the things that came out strongly for me in doing interviews with other elders was the real desire to return there and go back to those places. Even after so many years they still keep these things very much alive. Do you see that being passed on?

LG: I'm a strong advocate when it comes to that, about utilizing our territory, using the fish camps again, having basically wellness retreats for men and women in our community to go and visit these sites, stay there for the week and just pick up as to where it was left off a long time ago and start living traditionally once more. To get a better feel and understanding of being an Aboriginal person, not just in title but in actual culture and spirit. Those kinds of things I'm advocating, you know, bringing kids out and teaching them the traditional gathering of food like clams and deer hunting and those kinds of things. Gathering food and things like that for the winter off of those particular areas is something that's beneficial and it'll be a useful tool for them when their children grow up. That history is not just oral, it's actually lived and it's written. So it is important that these kids do learn these things, every day changes in life. We're role models for our kids and they basically learn everything that's been taught out to us as parents.

LP: How do you think the elders felt about the video when they saw it, when they sat there and watched it later on?

LG: Actually I wasn't there at the presentation. I think you might've saw it. You probably saw more of an expression from them than I had. I didn't actually sit there with them to watch the video to see what the response was going to be. I'd like to sit down and look at that, re-visit it and talk to them again like I was mentioning doing the other reserves as well. We have that history with treaty

which we don't have a library of. We have oral history, not documented history of the elders talking about it.

LP: You're saying you want to deal with other areas. Do you think it would be good for other communities who are looking at similar issues?

LG: Yes, I think it would be a good focal point for every native community to do something like this. So that it's not just hearsay that your people lived here at one time and these are the areas that we used. We're actually practicing it and we're preaching it and to get everybody involved in the community to participate in it would be really, really strong and bringing the community back together again. Because everybody's family represented each one of these different six native communities where everyone lived in hand-in-hand and helped one another at one time. Those days are basically almost come and gone. There's still only a few of us that do utilize these areas so that we can benefit from the resources that are there, back home to our one community here again.

LP: Why did you want to document this with video?

LG: It was basically to look at trying to stop the things that are happening up there in our reserve in regards to fish. You know fish is a big part of Sliammon's culture and we've basically been overlooked when it comes to the contracting and the logging and the people responsible for the landslides and those kinds of things. People not really taking notice that we did have an Aboriginal community there at one time. Bringing that forward and a video with the elders present, it would have more leverage when we take our concerns to different levels of government, say hey we have used this area. You need to watch this video and listen and learn, on how this place was once used and what you're doing to it. I think that's why the video was done and we're going to use that to bring things across to, say for example, permits to enhance fish in the Theodosia. Basically take the video and show it as explanatory information session with them on how the elders saw it at one time versus how it is now type of thing. We haven't used the video yet for anything like that but it would be a strong tool not just for Theo but for the other reserves that I was mentioning earlier.

LP: It's important to have people from within the community making these documentaries. Do you think it would have the same impact, or reception, being made by someone outside the community?

LG: I think our own community is capable of doing our own documentaries, with technical assistance here and there, so our elders here are comfortable with who they're working with. I think you'll get a little more insight, rather than have them hold back and hold information from you. But once you start talking about the old days, about them growing up…they're just more than eager to share their stories with you. They carry a lot of history and memories of these stories growing up. Today, I'm getting up in age and I share these same stories with my kids so the

> oral history is there. Once you get the elders opening up, even middle-aged people that have heard the stories as well. You hear the same stories from the younger people too. It's really neat.
>
> LP: Is there anything else you wanted to add about the video or about the process of making it?
>
> LG: I was talking to my guys here in our fisheries department when it comes to creating documentaries for these kinds of things, to look at it from the ground, similar to how the treaty video was done, and just walking through the river and some of the cut blocks up in these areas and just doing an explanation on what's happening here and have the elders in the background talking about how it used to be, those kinds of things. And then basically have the elders narrating the documentary. Not just in Theodosia, like I was saying, but in Sliammon how it used to be and how the settlers come in and claimed land and surveyed it and put us on reserve. How that was done, just a narration of all those things that have taken place over the last couple of hundred years on the six reserves. That I think would be a really, really powerful tool to use for Sliammon in final stages of agreement for treaty.

Creating Indigenous Cinematic Space

These interviews emphasize the importance of developing critical thinking around indigenous filmmaking. I argue that indigenous filmmakers can take up the tools that have narrowly defined indigenous peoples and expand the frame by locating it firmly within the community.[175] Both filmmakers recognize that stories need to be told by the people, for the people. As Nuh Nohome says, "I think our own community is capable of doing our own documentaries, with technical assistance here and there, so our elders here are comfortable with who they're working with." Seeing their own stories on the screen is empowering to indigenous peoples because they see their realities reflected back in a medium that has denied them dignity and respect as unique nations. I would venture that Evan's documentary, which screened in Tla'amin a month before the community voted on whether or not to accept a treaty agreement-in-principle, had a persuasive effect on

community members who viewed the film. For the first time, they saw on screen how their traditional territories were expropriated and how a complex legislative framework was used to subjugate Tla'amin peoples. Community members voted in favour of the agreement and from their perspective moved one step closer to affirming their cultural and political rights.

In storytelling traditions, there is rarely one version of a story, with all other versions being false or wrong. Stories are fluid and, like cultural keystones, act along a continuum of influence over time that responds to individual and/or community needs. Evan's documentary filled the need for a story about post-contact Tla'amin life. He also reflected a critical component of storytelling by including diverse perspectives about the treaty process; in other words he presented differing versions of the story. My discussions with Evan and Nuh Nohome illustrate such core cultural values and underlie what I describe as Fourth World Cinema. There is a sense of sacredness in both the process ("we worked very much in a traditional, respectful manner," says Evan) and the product (the film affirms Tla'amin cultural/political rights). Nuh Nohome spoke about the impact of reviving memories of Toh Kwon_non, how it "brought back their customs again." The distance between their former physical occupation of Toh Kwon_non and inner emotional life compresses into what can only be described as sacred.

Barclay conjures an apt metaphor to describe the confluence of First and Fourth World Cinema in his discussion of the film *Mutiny on the Bounty*:

> The Bounty mythology only works if the Indigenous world is kept ashore and the camera does most of its work on the deck, where white imperial men scheme their schemes. The camera, cut loose from First Cinema constraints and in the hands of

---

[175] I intend to be expansive in my use of the term "community," not only referring to reserve-based communities but urban communities, rural non-reserve communities, communities of interest such as those around Friendship Centres in urban areas in Canada, etc.

> the natives, does not work anything like as well away from the ship's deck (as the ship men see it), because allowing the camera to operate ashore under God knows whose direction would defeat the purpose of those in control of the First Cinema camera, whose more or less exclusive intention has been, over one hundred years of cinema, to show actions and relationships within Western societies and Western ideological landscapes.[176]

Fourth World Cinema entails a shift in perspective that is both ideological and physical; former inhabitants of a western cinematic space assume control of the apparatus and immediately shift the camera's gaze. Rather than return the gaze of "First Cinema," indigenous filmmakers usually focus on their own communities. For, as Masayesva asks, "what is left of our sovereignty if we allow non-community members to record, learn, speak and express our Selves? What has become of our communities if we encourage outsiders to determine our priorities and what is important to our communities? Is it not better that we do it ourselves?"[177] Evan had no intention of becoming a documentary filmmaker but he seized the opportunity to reclaim Tla'amin history and knowledge:

> I'm definitely interested in my people because certainly my whole career has been about aboriginal subjects and aboriginal stories, presenting our voice as truthfully as possible and knowing that our voice, our images of ourselves, are far more important than others misconceptions or attitudes of who we are.

Nuh Nohome's video speaks powerfully to this process of identity construction. The interviews are gentle and engaging and the elders frequently laugh with each other throughout the video. It has a simple, uncluttered visual style, a typical "talking head" approach. However, it is obvious the elders take much delight in talking about the subject matter. Some speak Tla'amin to describe the lands they occupied, the foods they gathered and the ceremonies in which they engaged. They "just became alive":

---

[176] Barclay, U of Auckland lecture, Sept. 17 2002.
[177] Victor Masayesva Jr., "It shall not end anywhere," *Talking on the Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts* eds. Laura J. Murray and Keren Rice (Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1999), 94.

> They were revived and they picture in their mind how it used to be and it brought back their old memories and their customs again. So it was really good. After a while the camera, like it wasn't there and they were just opening up and they're expressing their feelings and how things are there. So it was really, really a nice thing and it was really emotional to hear some of their stories as well.

The tape is virtually unedited and the viewer visualizes the elders' stories with few distractions. Nuh Nohome suggests that future videos incorporate footage of the land with elders providing voiceover narration. Perhaps this better reflects a community vision; the focus is not on the individual but on land and its meaning to the community. In creating a video for community purposes, the producers create an intimacy that, like Evan's project, would have been difficult if not impossible to achieve if attempted by outsiders. Though created with the assistance of outsiders, the projects' success hinged on Tla'amin involvement at all levels of production.

Privileging Community Voice

Until the 1970s, western cinematic theory centered on the "auteur" – the film's director whose style and practice of filmmaking could be discerned[178] – and virtually ignored the cultural, political and economic contexts within which films were made. In spite of later critiques, mainstream cinema retained its conservative tendencies. For many years, Hollywood created films depicting indigenous peoples that "allowed filmmakers to figuratively reconstruct native culture(s) in accordance with their own biases, preconceptions or sense of expediency and convenience."[179] The western aesthetic in cinema ruptured spirituality, beauty and ethics and created a cultural vacuum that failed to depict everyday life in indigenous communities.

---

[178] Such filmmakers include, for example, Jean-Luc Godard, Orson Welles and Wim Wenders.
[179] Ward Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of American Indians* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 175.

Participation of indigenous communities in film projects diminishes the gap between producer and audience creating a sense of responsibility that goes beyond what Meadows calls the situation in "so-called postmodern culture" where the audience impact on programming is virtually nonexistent.[180] Articulating a Tla'amin identity not only invigorates the elders but also serves an important intergenerational function. The video becomes a living record of Tla'amin occupation of the land, a rendering of their own unique history and knowledge. Youth who might not otherwise have access to such information become aware of their history and perhaps inspired to action. Nuh Nohome acknowledges the power of creating such a tool to support physical occupation of the land:

> To get a better feel and understanding of being an Aboriginal person, not just in title but in actual culture and spirit. Those kinds of things I'm advocating, you know, bringing kids out and teaching them the traditional gathering of food like clams and deer hunting and those kinds of things. Gathering food and things like that for the winter off of those particular areas is something that's beneficial and it'll be a useful tool for them when their children grow up. That history is not just oral, it's actually lived and it's written. So it is important that these kids do learn these things, every day changes in life.

Theorists like Ruby argue that the costs of exposing youth to their culture in this manner may be too high: "Gaining access to the means of producing your own image may cost you the cultural identity you sought to cultivate in your film. Since the formal attributes and social practice of image producing were invented in a middle-class Western world, all those who acquire the technical skills may also acquire the world view in the process."[181] A new generation of educated, politically conscious filmmakers, however, is challenging the dominant stereotypes of the "Hollywood Indian" and reconstructing them

[180] Michael Meadows, "Re-claiming a Cultural Identity: Indigenous Media Production in Australia and Canada," *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture* 8.2 (1994), 11.
[181] Ruby, 58.

from an indigenous point of view. The forces of “cultural centralization” that Ruby wrote about a decade ago in reference to the film and television industry have become less potent with the advent of digital and video technology. As indigenous media producers reclaim their identities from the mass media – and gain greater access to broadcast technologies – a body of work emerges that is both empowering and beneficial.

Film and video projects created within indigenous communities for the purposes of examining issues of concern to community members are capable of effecting change at the production level and in the final product. Community members receive training in technical areas of media production which benefits the individual by instilling confidence in her abilities and increases the skill level necessary for ensuring community control over future projects. As in Nuh Nohome’s video, the interview process becomes an opportunity for elders to revitalize their connection to Toh Kwon_non, to re-create that unshakable sense of place kept alive in the community’s collective memory. In other words, the process renews personal and historical ties and strengthens social relations by encouraging particular discourses.

Few fictional films have emerged from Fourth World Cinema. However, its conceptual framework has been developing over many generations. Documentary film projects – which are generally easier to finance than feature films – that utilize a Fourth World framework are increasingly emerging and it is a matter of time before the two converge. It helps that projects undertaken in the community are able to overcome the whims of a limited distribution system that still favours simple and familiar messages. With community support, broadcast-quality productions – like Evan’s film – can now bring indigenous perspectives to a much wider audience. Communities can also challenge

the structure that continues to wield control over image production by creating space for self-definition. It is a democratizing movement with power to effect meaningful change when placed within a framework that reflects indigenous ways of viewing the world. This approach to film and videomaking privileges community members as the audience and thus becomes a tool for education grounded in an indigenous epistemology. Fourth World Cinema can only emerge when filmmakers commit themselves to indigenous-created structures, however these might look for our individual nations, and reject the power relations inherent in patterns of First World Cinema.

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION

Mapping with Stories

A critical element in establishing a colonial discourse is the ability to create a history – a (European) presence on the land that describes a chronology of events and a catalogue of influential people. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes how the modern industrial state became the point of contrast between the pre-modern and the modern. From this point of view, history begins with the emergence of the rational individual and modern industrialized society.[182] Such perspectives relegate indigenous histories to the category of "prehistory" denying them the legitimacy and authority of colonial narratives. Take, for example, the following passage from a 1964 speech by then CEO of MacMillan, Bloedel and Powell River Limited J.V. Clyne:

> We are the beneficiaries of a peculiar geological accident that turned the Northwest portion of this continent into one of the world's richest sources of merchantable timber. While British Columbians to a man are aware of the dominating role that the forest plays in our lives, it is interesting to look back and to remember that it was not always so. The first Europeans to reach our shores – the English, the Spaniards and the Russians – looked on these dark stands of forest not as wealth, but as obstacles in the path of their search for furs and gold. And this view held for more than a century.[183]

Both perspectives, forest as obstacle and later "merchantable timber," sharply contrast with the purposeful stories that guide Tla'amin's resource management philosophies. The forest indeed played a prominent role in the lives of Tla'amin peoples, and like the waters and the sky, they are imbued with meaning that defines Tla'amin as unique peoples with particular values and traditions.

---

[182] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 32.

[183] J.V. Clyne, *"What's Past is Prologue": The History of the MacMillan, Bloedel and Powell River Limited* (New York: The Newcomen Society in North America, 1965), 10.

I've attempted in this research project to show how a storytelling methodology can be used to explore the idea that certain species exist as cultural keystones. I've extended that methodology to examine how issues like dispossession of ancestral lands can be examined through the storytelling medium of film and video. I found that species like salmon and cedar can be described as keystones, that they continue to play an active role in Tla'amin's connection to the land, their history and ceremonial life. They exist in stories and place names that are located throughout Tla'amin territory, and find expression in ceremonies like ones that mark the return of the season's first salmon. These indicators describe meaning of place for Tla'amin peoples. Toh Kwon_non is one place in a vast, interconnected web of areas occupied by Tla'amin. By applying an ecological concept to a specific area, I hope to contribute to a greater understanding of the importance of place to indigenous peoples.

Fourth World Cinema is a concept closely aligned with traditional storytelling methods. Through interviews with two Tla'amin filmmakers I wanted to illustrate how cultural teachings are finding renewed expression in new forms of media, and how such technology is not antithetical to traditional practices but rather complements efforts to resist colonial narratives. My discussions with the filmmakers demonstrate their commitment to Fourth World Cinema approaches that benefit indigenous peoples. They want to empower Tla'amin people by reflecting the community's stories, an act empowering because it involves community members at all levels of production. Fourth World Cinema does not simply strive to present surface elements traditionally thought of as indigenous, but is grounded by reverence for the sacred, a term that traverses history, culture, politics and the environment and demands a holistic approach to filmmaking.

Nuh Nohome's relationship to the elders in his film, for example, is rooted in the same respect and reverence he shows in his work revitalizing salmon runs.

Laura Roddan, research co-ordinator for the Sliammon Treaty Society, wrote about difficulties the society encountered in mapping information for the Traditional Use Study (TUS):

> The researchers found that there were quite a few of the elders that couldn't relate to a 2-dimensional map, a piece of paper. They would remember a mountain, an inlet – they knew exactly where it was and if you went there in a boat, they would find it. But on map it just didn't mean anything.[184]

Laura describes a common point of departure between western perceptions of the environment and indigenous ways of viewing the natural world. Geographers based in western traditions compartmentalize landscape in two dimensions which fails to capture the multi-dimensional aspects of ancient occupation. Indigenous place names, for example, often describe historical events that occurred there or allude to the presence of resources highly valued by peoples who occupied the area. Only those with extensive knowledge of the land would understand such nuances and how upsetting the balance of life within those ecosystems would upset the balance of life for indigenous peoples.

Indigenous perceptions are grounded in active utilization of territory and expressed in stories, songs and ceremonies that celebrate their history, culture and society. Maps can only accompany us partway on the journey to understanding significance of place. By examining the criteria mentioned above, we understand more fully importance of place and, consequently, the impact on peoples who are dislocated from their ancestral homelands. Involuntary relocation has deep and lasting consequences for indigenous peoples who have lived on and used their territories for centuries:

> As people are wrenched from their homelands against their will, psychological stress arises from the trauma of moving, guilt at the impotence of resistance, grief at the loss of a home and anxiety for the future. Socio-cultural stress arises from the failure to pay attention to the need for communities to remain together, the lack of economic sustainability after resettlement and the disruption of cultural activities as a result of dislocation or interference by outside interests.[185]

These impacts can be seen in the initial resistance of some elders to participate in the TUS:

> There was a lot of elders who couldn't understand why young people were coming and so interested in talking about things that happened in the past. Because a lot of this was things that weren't talked about anymore. They've been put away. There were a lot of negative feelings around the past: the residential school system, disease, devastating loss of population through disease, racism, a lack of really pride in the culture.[186]

Laura goes on to say that most elders did eventually participate once they better understood the information would be used to help Tla'amin manage and protect areas in their territory. Healing the rupture caused by economic exploitation of their lands and alienation from their homelands is an on-going project for Tla'amin. It is being achieved through reclamation of language, reviving ceremonies and traditions, reclaiming Tla'amin place names, and repeating stories that have been passed down for countless generations. One of the elders I interviewed, Agnes McGee, can count on one hand the number of community members who have shown an active interest in Tla'amin history and culture. However, Mary George, whom I interviewed with Agnes, remains hopeful that the knowledge they transmit now will be carried into the future: "It's kinda hard, especially the young ones…they're the ones that are gonna be lost, don't understand. At

---

[184] Presentation to GIS '99 – First Nations GIS Conference by Laura Roddan, March 3-4, 1999, Vancouver, B.C., The Aboriginal Mapping Network (http://www.nativemaps.org/conferences/GIS99/sliammon.html).
[185] Andrew Gray, "Indigenous Resistance to Involuntary Relocation," *Understanding Impoverishment: The Consequences of Development-Induced Displacement*, Ed. Chris McDowell (Providence, RI: Benghahn Books, 1996), 105.
[186] GIS '99 presentation.

least [those who talk to the elders] catch onto us. They listen to us. And they'll know all about Toh Kwon_non and pass it along to their kids."[187]

Implications for Future Research

I used storytelling as a methodology to examine issues of dislocation and alienation. Mary describes how lost Tla'amin youth will be without the knowledge, without the stories. Storytelling from an indigenous perspective anchors participants in their culture. It provides access to thousands of years of knowledge and experience. In the context of the telling, stories enable listeners to construct their own identity while being part of a greater community educative process. They are cultural maps that help listeners generate meaning from their experiences and which guide them in a world frequently hostile to indigenous perspectives. In film and video storytelling, this process is distinguished from non-indigenous storytelling by its emphasis on a holistic approach to filmmaking. Indigenous filmmakers engage in a process that is both personal and political. They want to present their own stories, although it is not necessary to tell only indigenous stories if one is an indigenous filmmaker. The history of indigenous peoples and film necessitates a reclamation of indigenous representation and for many indigenous filmmakers, this means telling our own stories. To again quote Hopi filmmaker Victor Masayesva, an indigenous film aesthetic begins in the sacred and, like the center spoke on a bicycle, it is the point from which economic, political, historical and spiritual matters are discussed.

Film and video projects are being carried out in many indigenous communities throughout Turtle Island. My examination of Tla'amin's efforts is not necessarily to discuss their uniqueness in this regard, but to offer a sustained discussion of how such

[187] Mary George, interview by author, tape recording, Tla'amin, 27 August 2003.

projects can be used as a tool in re-asserting ownership and control over lands and resources. They can also be used to advocate for political rights that have been abrogated by the state as I will be doing in an upcoming film project. I intend to take a Fourth World approach in looking at Canada/US border crossing issues from indigenous perspectives. I will honour their voices by developing relationships of trust with the subjects and finding space for a multiplicity of perspectives.

Promoting concrete political change may seem like an insuperable goal but the strength of Fourth World Cinema lies in how its methodologies complement concurrent efforts to realize social, cultural and political goals. Communities must develop the capacity to counter colonial narratives that deny them a role in the history books. This means taking historical knowledge found in stories, songs, and place names and rendering them in ways that are meaningful to indigenous communities. Rendering the information involves careful mediation between researcher and community. As the experience of researchers conducting the TUS in Tla'amin demonstrates, even community members must be cognizant of how colonialism has engendered widespread distrust amongst indigenous communities towards those engaged in research projects.

Ideally, indigenous filmmakers would make films within their communities, in their own languages, and recruiting talent from within their nations. Projects would then be grounded in common historical and social experiences. Filmmakers like Zacharias Kunuk have done just that and propelled Fourth World Cinema forward with seminal films like *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)*, filmed with an all-Inuit cast entirely in Inuktitut. Fourth World Cinema is not quite at the point where the ideal can be fully realized. While we work towards the full blossoming of Fourth World Cinema, filmmakers can continue

to produce films that demonstrate honour, respect and a sense of the sacred, and which promote cultural and political regeneration. These goals can be achieved in collaboration with people from many nations, and are certainly ones I will pursue in my own film projects.

Fourth World Cinema, as some suggest, is not simply borne out of a lack of project funds. While Nuu Nohome's project was low budget, Evan Adams' documentary received funding from the National Film Board and British Columbia Arts Council. Like cinema of the so-called Third World, it is a cultural and political response to colonialism, but unlike Third World Cinema, it does not define itself at a distance from its colonizers, for they have never left. Fourth World Cinema is a strategy for resisting attempts to wrap indigenous nations into the folds of multiculturalism, and thus deny them opportunities for self-definition. Like other forms of storytelling, Fourth World Cinema has an intergenerational component, described in the previous chapter, that facilitates indigenous educational practices. This is not incidental to the filmmaking process but a conscious effort by indigenous filmmakers to collapse the distance between themselves and the audience, to create meaning in their projects and have meaningful outcomes for explorations in which they are personally invested. I believe that a Fourth World Cinema methodology becomes increasingly relevant as indigenous peoples, especially youth, seek alternatives to a market saturated with images that do not reflect their realities. Fourth World Cinema provides space for self-identification and exploration of complex issues that tend to be simplified or ignored in mainstream media.

Conclusion

The great feast at the end of the story in chapter two demonstrates how community members show compassion for one another, and also how greed brings shame and ostracism in a community that requires cooperation and sharing to function properly. In its land and resource management strategy, the treaty society writes about "legends and place names that describe every geographical feature in the territory and how they came to be that way. The land bears witness to our use and occupation over thousands of years."[188] Tla'amin's guiding principles, *Ta'ow* in their language, are embedded in stories and place names that inform present-day land use and resource policies. In looking at how such things as forced relocations and destruction of salmon runs impacted indigenous peoples, it is impossible to ignore stories that form a critical part of sophisticated resource management systems. They should not only be sought out in books, but heard aloud in communities, at meetings and disseminated as critical teachings.

They describe cultural systems that are intimately linked to the natural world, a separation that, from increasingly diverse perspectives and certainly indigenous ones, is wholly artificial. Recognition of the intersection between culture and environment is necessary for ensuring the cultural, economic and physical well being of indigenous peoples. Acknowledging this intersection, what has been termed the "ethnosphere," also promotes the importance of traditional knowledge and its role in encouraging environmentally sound and sustainable development. Perhaps the day will come when resource companies take heed of warnings from indigenous peoples and other leading

---

[188] Sliammon Treaty Society, *Hojit tah gijeh eht Yeqet stu xwet (Land and Resources Management Plan)*, March 2003, 4.

thinkers in the scientific, technological and environmental communities. Perhaps they will acknowledge their role in damaging the very cultural systems that now inform international thinking on environmental sustainability. Until then, indigenous peoples continue to practice their storytelling traditions, and in so doing pass on their strategies of resistance to the next generation.

REFERENCES

Barclay, Barry. "*Fourth Cinema.*" Lecture to Auckland University Film and Media Studies Department. Auckland, New Zealand. 17 Sept. 2002.

Barnett, Homer G. *The Coast Salish of British Columbia*. Eugene: U. Of Oregon Press, 1955.

Basso, Keith H. *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico Press, 1996.

Bierhorst, John. *The Way of the Earth: Native America and the Environment*. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1994.

Bradley, Ken and Karen Southern. *Powell River's Railway Era: An Account of the Eighteen Railways Operating at Various Times in the Area from the Middle 1890's until 1954*. Victoria: BC Railway Historical Association, 2000.

British Columbia Archives. *Letter from Peter O'Reilly to Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works*. 15 Dec. 1888. GR-2982, box 4, file 15.

Canada. Royal Commission on Indian Lands and Indian Affairs. *Meeting with the Sliam-mon Band or Tribe of Indians at their Sliam-mon Indian Reserve*. 19 Feb. 1915.

Churchill, Ward. *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of American Indians*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998.

Clyne, J.V. *"What's Past is Prologue": The History of the Macmillan, Bloedel and Powell River Limited*. New York: The Newcomen Society in North America, 1965.

Colorado, Pam. "Bridging Native and Western Science." *Convergence* 21.2/3 (1988) : 49-68.

Cowie (Anderson), Ingrid. *Rusty Nails and Ration Books: Great Depression & WWII Memories, 1929-1945*. Ed. Barbara Ann Lambert. Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2002.

Daes, Erica-Irene A. *Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous Peoples and Their Relationship to Land*. Final Working Paper Prepared by the Special Rapporteur, Mrs. Erica-Irene A. Daes. Commission on Human Rights. 11 June 200 (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2000/25).

Declaration of the Lillooet [St'at'imc] Tribe. Spences Bridge, B.C. 10 May 1911.

Deloria Jr., Vine. *Red Earth, White Lies*. Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997.

Fisher, Robin. *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992.

Garibaldi, Ann and Nancy J. Turner. "Cultural Keystone Species: Implications for Ecological Conservation and Restoration." *Conservation Ecology* (submitted fall, 2003).

Gray, Andrew. *Understanding Impoverishment: The Consequences of Development-Induced Displacement*. Ed. Chris McDowell. Providence, RI: Benghahn Books, 1996.

Harris, Cole. *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997.

Hayward, Susan. *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Hertlein, Luke. "Lake Winnipeg Regulation Churchill-Nelson River Diversion Project in the Crees of Northern Manitoba, Canada." *Contributing Paper to the World Commission on Dams*. Dec. 1999 : 1-17.

Holm, Tom, J. Diane Pearson, and Ben Chavis. "Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies." *Wicazo Sa Review* (Spring 2003) : 7-24.

Hume, Stephen. "Science Chases Legends to Secret of Clam Gardens." *The Vancouver Sun,* 25 Oct. 2003, C7.

Imhof, Aviva, Susanne Wong and Peter Bosshard. *Citizens' Guide to the World Commission on Dams*. International Rivers Network, 2002.

Kennedy, Dorothy, and Randy Bouchard. *Sliammon Life, Sliammon Lands*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1983.

-------. *Utilization of Fishes, Beach Foods, and Marine Animals by the Tl'uhus Indian People of British Columbia*. Victoria: BC Indian Language Project, 1974.

Leuthold, Steven. *Indigenous Aesthetics: Native Art, Media and Identity*. Austin: U of Texas Press, 1998.

Loo, Tina. *Historical Perspectives on Law and Society in Canada*. Eds. Tina Loo and Lorna R. McLean. Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994).

Lundie, J.A. *Powell River's First 50 Years*. Powell River: Powell River News Ltd., 1960.

Mann, Charles C. "1491." *The Atlantic Monthly* (Mar. 2002) : 41-53.

Manuel, George and Michael Posluns. *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*. New York: The Free Press, 1974.

McCully, Patrick. "After the Deluge: The Urgent Need for Reparations for Dam Victims." *Cultural Survival Quarterly* (Fall 1999) : 33-36.

Meadows, Michael. "Re-claiming a Cultural Identity: Indigenous Media Production in Australia and Canada." *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture* 8.2 (1994) : 1-17.

Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. *Theodosia River Integrated Watershed Restoration Project*. 31 Mar. 1998 : 1-39.

Mobley, Carla. *Mysterious Powell Lake: A Collection of Historical Tales*. Surrey: Hancock House Publishers, 1984.

Murray, Laura J, and Keren Rice, eds. *Talking on the Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts*. Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1999.

Nasady, Paul. "The Politics of TEK: Power and the "Integration" of Knowledge." *Arctic Anthropology* 36.1-2 (1999) : 1-18.

Ortiz, Simon J. "The Language We Know." *I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers*. Eds. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat. Lincoln: U. of Nebraska Press, 1987.

Power, Mary E., et al. "Challenges in the Quest for Keystones." *BioScience* 46.8 (Sept. 1996) : 609-620.

Ruby, Jay. "Speaking For, Speaking About, Speaking With, or Speaking Alongside: An Anthropological and Documentary Dilemma." *Journal of Film and Video* 44.1-2 (Spring-Summer 1992) : 42-66.

Sliammon Treaty Society Research Department. *Brief Timeline of Sliammon Post Contact Impact Events (Draft).*

-------. *Hojit tah gijeh eht Yeqet stu xwet (Land and Resources Management Plan)*. March 2003.

-------. *Sliammon (Tla'?amin) Place Names*. Sept. 1999.

-------. *Traditional Use Study*. Theodosia.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. New York: Zed Books, 1999.

Stone, Richard. "Taking a New Look at Life Through a Functional Lens." *Science* 269 (21 July 1995) : 316-17.

Turner, Nancy J., Marianne Boelscher, and Ronald Ignace. "Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Wisdom of Aboriginal Peoples in British Columbia." *Ecological Applications* 10.5 (2000) : 1275-1287.

Weist, Katherine. "For the Public Good: Native Americans, Hydroelectric Dams, and the Iron Triangle." *Trusteeship in Change: Toward Tribal Autonomy in Resource Management*. Ed. Richmond L. Clow. University Press of Colorado, 2001.

Whitt, Laurie Anne. *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity*. Compiled by Darrel Addison Posey and Oxford Centre for the Environment, Ethics and Society. United Nations Environment Programme, 1999.

Websites

Angelo, Mark. Theodosia Press Conference. 28 Feb. 2000 (http://www.theodosia.bcit.bc.ca/news.html).

Bronstetter, Dave. Daybreak. CBC Radio Montreal (http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/media/kinginterviewpro.ram).

Health Canada. Emergency Preparedness: Smallpox (http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/epr/smallpox.html).

Outdoor Recreation Council of BC. Taku and Theodosia Most Endangered Rivers of 1999. 7 April 1999 (http://www.orc.bc.ca).

Roddan, Laura. Presentation to GIS '99 – First Nations GIS Conference. Vancouver, 3-4 Mar. 1999 (http://www.nativemaps.org/conferences/GIS99/sliammon.html).

Sliammon Treaty Society. Sliammon Time-line (http://www.sliammontreaty.com/governancetimeline.html).

-------. Kla ah men: As Far Back as the Story Goes (http://www.sliammontreaty.com/film_site/synopsis.htm).

Walz, Laura. "Sliammon Hopes Salmon Will Return After Modifying a 1950's Era Dam." Powell River Peak Online. 23 Sept. 2003 (http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?brd=1998).

World Commission on Dams. Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision-making (http://www.dams.org).

Personal Interviews

Adams, Evan. Telephone interview by author. Tape recording. Coast Salish Territory, 23 Feb. 2004.

George, Lee (Nuu Nohome). Telephone interview by author. Tape recording. Coast Salish Territory, 20 Feb. 2004.

George, Mary, and Agnes McGee. Interview by author. Tape recording. Tla'amin, 3 Sept. 2003.

Louie, Rose. Interview by author. Tape recording. Tla'amin, 5 Sept. 2003.

Paul, Elsie. Interview by author. Tape recording. Tla'amin, 27 Aug. 2003.

Paul, Joe (Dave). Interview by author. Tape recording. Tla'amin, 27 Aug. 2003.

Paul, Walter (She peh the es). Interview by author. Tape recording. Tla'amin, 27 Aug. 2003.

VITA

Surname: Patrick	Given Names: Lyana Marie

Place of Birth: New Westminster, British Columbia, Canada

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	1992 to 1997
University of Victoria	2000 to 2004

Degrees Awarded:

B.A. University of Victoria	1997

Honours and Awards:

Canada/US Fulbright Scholarship	2004

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENCE

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis to the users of the University of Victoria Library and to make single copies only for the users or in response to a request from the library of any university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the university designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain by the University of Victoria shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis:

Storytelling in the Fourth World: Explorations in Meaning of Place and Resistance to Dispossession

Author ____________________

Lyana Marie Patrick
September, 2004