

**On Experiencing Place: A Biography of a Stó:l̓ Family's  
Fishing Site in the Fraser River Canyon in British Columbia**

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## **On Experiencing Place: A Biography of a Stó:lō Family's Fishing Site in the Fraser River Canyon in British Columbia.**

For generations across this country, indigenous groups have used their physical environment as a major component in the creation of tradition and culture. The Stó:lō people of Fraser Valley and the lower Fraser Canyon in southern British Columbia are no exception. Fishing has been, and continues to be, the cornerstone of Stó:lō identity. Historian Keith Carlson describes the Coast Salish territory as, “a four-pointed star, with each of the four main points being one of the four major open water systems – the Strait of Georgia, Puget Sound, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the Fraser River. Within the boundaries created by the star's four points relatively fluid movements of people, and therefore ideas and goods, occurred. This helped to foster a sense of collective identity by forging far-reaching alliances, which allowed for greater access to goods and supplies.”<sup>1</sup>

Although there is no doubting the significance these water systems hold to the Stó:lō; their relationship with the rivers have changed in recent years. Access to those waterways is limited, and since contact with European settlers, this crucial feature of Stó:lō culture has been seriously affected. Heavy regulations, bans, new technology, the reserve system, and environment manipulations have impacted Stó:lō fishing practices and how fishing sites are recognized by Stó:lō people. This is perceived to have unraveled the relationship between Stó:lō people and their main subsistence; the salmon. Sonny McHalsie states that people have lost the

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<sup>1</sup> Carlson Keith, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism*, (Toronto: U of T Press, 2010), p. 26.

ability to connect with, and experience place; and in order to slowly regain culture the Stó:lō people must reconnect with the earth.<sup>2</sup>

This paper is a response to McHalsie's observations. It is a biography of the Pete family fishing site: a place where land meets water, and the Sto:lo engage with the core of what it means to be "people of the river." Here, place is anchored in stories and it is those stories that help to create connections with land and its resources. Place-based stories foster both collective and individual identities. The Pete family's presence at the fish camp is, on one hand, an expression of their Stó:lōness and, on the other hand, an expression of their personal and familial connection to place.

This paper is an attempt to literally breathe life into the Pete's fishing site by understanding it as a true living force; a member of the family that deserves tenure and title. The site itself acts as a metaphor for historical and familial interactions that happen both at and in reference to the site. Anthropologist Keith Basso describes place-making as "retrospective worldbuilding;" an expression of cultural activity that is "a universal tool of the historical imagination." Basso goes on to suggest that, "instances of place-making [or retrospective worldbuilding] consist in an adventitious fleshing out of historical material that culminates in a posited state of affairs, a particular universe of objects and events – in short, a *place-world* – wherein portions of the past are brought into being."<sup>3</sup> And so the place-world of the Pete family fishing camp becomes a metaphor for the family's historical consciousness that is influenced by the past and present, constantly in-flux but always a place of continuity. The Pete's fish camp is

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<sup>2</sup> Sonny McHalsie, *We Have to Take Care of Everything That Belongs to Us*," in *Be of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish*, edited by Bruce Granville Miller, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007, p. 82-83.

<sup>3</sup> Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), pg. 5.

a place where history, culture, and identity intersect to distinguish how the family perceives their site and the different sentiments that infuse it with meaning.

This paper is an effort to highlight the importance and complexity of a specific place-world with the voices of those who are connected to the site. Furthermore, this paper will respond to recent concerns about mapping in relation to indigenous fishing rights in the province of British Columbia. Concerns have arisen regarding the nature of mapping and what it seeks to convey to its audience and, specifically, what knowledge, information and/or stories are lost with contemporary historical and physical mapping methodologies. The Pete family's site has not one but many roles for the family, making it a multifarious space infused with family and local history, culture, and tradition. By highlighting the nature of the fishing site – not just its physical location – non-Stó:lō people can take a step away from a mentality that perpetuates colonial processes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by transcending their own cultural assumptions and engaging in a transformative cross-cultural dialogue that incorporates indigenous perspectives and culture.

The central actor of this paper is the actual fishing site that is currently utilized by Rita Pete and her family. Rita Pete is an elderly fisherwoman that has been fishing her entire life in the Fraser River canyon. Today, her daughter Jeanie fishes at her site with her younger children and husband. Her son Richard occupies the fishing site directly beside her and continues to use Rita's dry-rack today.

The story of this place-world will be told by the voices of the family that have been actively engaged with the site for nearly 70 years, when they first acquired this specific fish camp. I recognize that this is only one perspective of the site and that there might exist several

more, but the purpose of this paper is to provide a type of genealogy of the site and so I interviewed those that are most familiar with the area.

**“I’ve had it so long, they can’t take it away from me”:  
Acquisition and Ownership**

Prior to fishing at her current site, Rita Pete’s family used to fish just north of Yale, British Columbia (B.C.), near Bell Crossing where Siwash Creek runs into the mighty Fraser River. The family had a multi-level dry-rack there, which was destroyed by a rockslide that forced the family to move to a different site to fish.<sup>4</sup> Rita’s current site was acquired close to 50 years ago from Oscar Dennis Peters, Rita Pete’s mother’s first cousin. Peter Dennis, Oscar’s older brother, had a wooden leg and, as such, was not capable of combating the steep bluffs and rocky landscape. Oscar Dennis Peters himself, Rita stated, became so overweight that neither brother could participate in the fishing activities at the site. Peter asked Oscar to offer the site to an individual that could negotiate the terrain a little more effectively, which is why he eventually chose to give the site to Rita Pete’s mother, Lillian in the 1980s.<sup>5</sup>

It’s worth mentioning that the acquisition of this particular fishing site has been disputed. Descendants from Oscar Dennis Peters have argued that an individual cannot give away something that belongs to an entire family.<sup>6</sup> Such disputes have caused some disruption for the family as members of the Peters family have challenged the Pete family’s presence at the site. Descendants from Oscar Dennis Peters, particularly his nieces and nephews, began to challenge Rita Pete beginning 15 years ago when they realized that her site previously belonged to their

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<sup>4</sup> Rita Pete interview by Mandy Fehr and Katya MacDonald.

<sup>5</sup> Rita Pete interview by Whitney Bajric, May 26, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Sonny McHalsie interview.

uncle. This suggests that the historical consciousness of individuals and families are shaped by ancestral lineages that provide the foundation to claims to spaces. As time passes and families grow, overlapping networks of identity further complicate claims to these spaces. Not only has Rita Pete's claim to the fishing site been challenged by ancestral claims, individuals that have been invited to fish and family members of her past marriages have attempted to make claims to her site as well. People from inside and outside of the family recognize the fishing site but clearly understand it in very distinctive ways.

Despite the variety of claims to her fishing site, Rita has maintained authority of the area. She recalls being active at the site when she was a young girl, around 10 years old. Rita's mother and Oscar Dennis Peters had a close relationship, and Lillian used to help Oscar as he had difficulties getting to the actual fishing area. Rita stated, "I was there when my uncle [Oscar Dennis Peters] gave it to my mom... I says it was given to mom because she used to help him a lot; he used to go visit us at the house, him and his wife. So I don't think they [the Peters' family members] can win it back after all these years."<sup>7</sup> Rita's claim to the site is not based on ancestral ties, but on her mother's close relationship to Oscar Dennis Peters *and* the amount of time that has passed since she became active within the space.

It is apparent that Rita's authority is also planted in the true utilization of the space – both how often it is used and *how* it is used. Rita emphasized how long she has been fishing there but also how often she fishes and her commitment to the craft. Legitimacy, for her, is in part derived from the idea that she makes use of the space for the duration of fishing season and that she appropriately handles the fish once they have been caught. There is a traditional way to dry fish to ensure that it is preserved properly and tastes as it should. Expressing her extensive experience

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<sup>7</sup> Rita Pete interview by Mandy Fehr and Katya MacDonald.

with wind drying, Rita stated that her father gave her the site because “[she was] drying salmon all the time.”<sup>8</sup> Her experience within the area and the various fishing processes is supplemented by her ability to use and pass on traditional methods of wind drying salmon to younger generations; Rita’s grandchildren help her to catch, cut and hang the salmon.<sup>9</sup> Jeanie, Rita’s daughter, stated that fishing and wind drying, “seem to be a dying art where none of the youth want to work that hard... it is a lot of dedication, it is hard work.”<sup>10</sup> Authenticity and commitment then are important aspects to the Pete family’s authority over the fishing camp.

In their claim of authority over the fish camp, Rita Pete and her family see the foundation of their claim as being principally rooted in the past *and* the tradition. The fact that they have been using the space for so long and doing so in a traditional manner gives them the right to be there. Keith Carlson has discussed the problem of time within the Stó:lō community and has suggested that the process of identity formation associated with conflict resolution that emerged with changing circumstances, caused certain collective social structures – like authority over fishing sites – to be challenged.<sup>11</sup> For some outside of the family, the manner in which Rita Pete’s mother acquired the site conflicts with traditional Stó:lō worldview and protocol in the sense that individuals cannot give away family-owned places.<sup>12</sup> But Rita Pete challenges such a notion in a way that aligns with more contemporary social structures; structures outlined in the 68 Salmon Fishery Regulation and an 1884 federal law that prevented traditional Stó:lō protocols regarding fishing site transfers to take place. This began the evolution of fishery ownership from

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Rita Pete was recently shown on CBC News showing her grandchildren how to cut and dry salmon.

<sup>10</sup> Jeanie Kay-Moreno interview.

<sup>11</sup> Carlson Keith, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> Sonny McHalsie, *We Have to Take Care of Everything That Belongs to Us*, p. 83.

family-owned sites to individual ownership. Such colonial intervention worked to destabilize traditional protocols when it came to place authority. The Pete family's claim to the area, therefore, is rooted in both traditional fishing practices *and* contemporary ownership protocols, merging principles of history, tradition and contemporary society.

**“Changes Affect the Feel of a Place”:  
A Social-Spatial Analysis of the Fish Camp**

Fishing for the Pete family helps to maintain their connection to Stó:lō culture and history. With that said, the fishing site is far more than just historical or cultural in nature - it is a part of their family; a space where generations and memories live on. The significance of such a place does not exist on its own but instead, is created by those who experience it. This relationship is active and changes in the physical can have an impact on emotional perceptions as well. The family speaks of the site as a home with different areas representing spaces within a house: upstairs, downstairs, and the main floor. Such sentiments highlight the social dynamic of the site and exemplify its symbolic representation. This section of the paper will discuss the physical composition of the site and describe the various areas that are utilized by the Pete family. The physical site has seen changes through the years; both naturally occurring and man-made. Some of these changes, which will be elaborated on below, began as benign environmental features or systems to make the fishing process easier. However, through time and changes in the family's social dynamic, the perceptions and meaning around these elements was altered to the point that they've become mnemonic devices that represent the family's long history at the site. Keith Basso has stated that, "...senses of place, while always informed by local bodies of knowledge, are finally the possessions of particular individuals. People, not

cultures, sense places.”<sup>13</sup> Here, the physical composition of the Pete’s family fishing camp will be discussed in relation to the family’s interwoven layers of meaning embedded within the landscape.

According to the family, their fishing site stretches out beyond the main area used for fishing. Downstream from camp is an area where the family deposits the remains of the salmon once they have been filleted for drying, which would typically include the heads and unusable entrails. Near this place is a communal creek that provides the family with fresh water for provisions and for the wind drying process. Rita’s daughter, Jeanie, recalls playing in this area as a child. When she was little, children would swim from the mainland to a large rock situated in the centre of the Fraser River. A few years ago, in an effort to create a more direct passageway for fish, the government removed sections of the river’s edge. This altered the flow of the river, making it much swifter and unsafe for children to make that swim.<sup>14</sup> Although a communal area, this space is utilized for practical and more leisurely purposes but, nonetheless, is still considered an extension of the Pete’s fishing site.

The area in-between the fish camp and the communal creek is rocky, steep, and heavily treed terrain. The interior of this area is not a space largely utilized by the family, however the children have certainly made use of these treed areas near the old Trans-Canada highway. Here, the kids spend their time picking thimbleberries, hazelnuts, briars, blackcaps and other local, indigenous plants.<sup>15</sup> Jeanie recalls how she used the area as a child:

When I was growing up we would play all along here [near the old Trans-Canada highway]  
- we would come back and get in trouble. We would pick berries all along here and go

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<sup>13</sup> Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, xv-xvi.

<sup>14</sup> Jeanie Kay-Moreno interview.

<sup>15</sup> Jeanie Kay-Moreno interview.

down this way and there's thimbleberries, blackberries and blackcaps that could be picked. In the morning us kids would go out and pick berries and bring them back and Mom would make pancakes and we would get her to stick the berries in the pancakes and have them for breakfast.

In sharing this story, Jeanie demonstrates the very real, human connection that she has to the fish camp place-world. But Jeanie's warm childhood memories were directly followed by more melancholy ones. She shared some tragic accidents that happened over the years in this particular area where they used to play; for example, a young woman fell asleep with a lit cigarette in her hand that started a major fire in the area, burning many of the trees. Down by the water, a friend of the family's fell into the river and drowned. Indeed, such memories – happy and tragic – insinuate the enigmatic nature of place-worlds; a variety of emotions and memories are embedded in the landscape that give it meaning and significance. Anthropologist Crisca Bierwert has suggested that the way in which we know a particular place should be understood as existing on a continuum.<sup>16</sup> As we go through life, changes or shifts impact previous understandings of place by adding new levels of perception that may alter or transform its significance. Jeanie's recollections of her childhood combined with more recent accidents colour her perception of the fishing site.

Upriver of the Pete's fish camp is another outside area that is considered part of the fish camp – the I:yem cemetery. The cemetery is not near the site but the family takes on the upkeep and responsibility of the cemetery and, as such, it shapes their perception of the fishing site. Rita and Jeanie stated that the family has an annual burning to honour the spirits and to ask for a safe and successful fishing season. Examples of spirits that frequent this area are older generations that come in canoes, Chinese workers from when the railroad was being built, and a young white

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<sup>16</sup> Crisca Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar, Living by the River: Coast Salish Figures of Power*, (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1999), p. 44.

female that was murdered and then buried in the area. The spiritual presence of the cemetery affects how the Pete family interprets the fish camp. The use of burnings, a local cultural ceremony, highlights that idea that collective and personal identities shape how place is imagined in one's historical consciousness. Through the burning, the family is able to express their Stó:lō-ness within a space that is also imbued with personal significance.

Rita and her son Richard also spoke of a family of spirits that they had seen across the river some years ago. The family of "spooks", as Rita referred to them, remained there for a few weeks, playing in the river and resting on the rocks and under the trees. After sharing this story, Rita began to discuss the spiritual presence within their own site, specifically her daughter's ability to sense spirits as a child and her young grandson's ability to engage with the spirit world. Rita noted that her daughter could have been an Indian doctor but has since become spiritually unreceptive as a result of an unhealthy lifestyle.

Indeed, fish camp and the I:yem cemetery are imbued with spiritual significance that infiltrates the manner in which they interpret and conceptualize the space. Bierwert suggests that when discussing place within Stó:lō culture, we must consider, "the idea that Salish people see power as being within a place, not only inscribed upon it. The central idea is that place offers meaning to social practice...it is not only interpreted."<sup>17</sup> The family's engagement with the cemetery and their acknowledgement of the spirits present within their fish camp suggests that the Pete family does indeed acknowledge the power that exudes from the place of their fishing site. It seems as though the family values the fish camp as it helps individuals to be culturally grounded, which includes being cognizant of the inanimate and spiritual power that exists within the area.

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<sup>17</sup> Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, p. 39.

Within the family's actual fishing site there are three specific areas that are utilized the most by the family: the fishing location, the dry-rack area and the camp area. The areas between these locations are mostly rocky and filled with trees and various plants. The site is very steep and so navigating through it can be difficult and dangerous at times. Over the years, the family has made some impact on these areas by cutting down trees for practical purposes; notably gaining the ability to see any approaching wildlife. Natural changes as well, like decay, have caused physical changes within the site and the variety of plants that exist in the area.

Aboriginal fishing techniques in the Fraser River canyon have adapted over time as a result of changing technologies and government legislation that has banned certain traditional Native fishing methods, like dip netting. Although dip netting is no longer a common fishing method, members of the Pete family continue to practice this technique and teach it to younger generations of the family. Unable to dip net at their fishing site, the family utilizes an area north of their camp, near the aforementioned communal creek. When Jeanie met her husband he was not engaged with traditional Stó:lō culture and had little knowledge about how to fish in the Fraser River canyon. Jeanie said "he wasn't strong in tradition and he used to always be really resistant to coming up here and it took him learning a lot about traditions and...he took for granted what we were doing and now he honours us and goes with us there and fishes with us."<sup>18</sup> For Jeanie, it was important that her husband understood the significance of fishing for the family; fishing is a past tradition and something that she intends to maintain for present and future generations. Jeanie suggested that Rita also wants to see the values and traditions of fishing passed on; "my mom tries to keep on teaching those that want to learn [the traditions] and

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<sup>18</sup> Jeanie Kay-Moreno interview.

will bring up people and give people their share of work."<sup>19</sup> An important aspect of the fishing site is ensuring that young people have the opportunity to learn traditional Stó:lō fishing practices.

What helps make the site particularly effective for fishing is the presence of a large eddy where salmon swimming upstream will stop and rest. The family spreads two large 100-foot-wide nets that are each attached to a pulley system on either side of the bay. These large nets patiently capture the resting salmon. Rita stated that the family made the switch to large nets from dip netting because it was easier and more permanent, making it less susceptible to theft.<sup>20</sup> Although easier than the alternative, the large net technique requires two individuals per net so it's still considered fairly labour-intensive. The family has received help from a group of boys from the nearby Chawathil community who were paid by the band in return for help catching and packing fish.<sup>21</sup> This mutually beneficial arrangement gave the family enough support to catch fish and also helped to engage youth with traditional fishing practices and provide them with a financial incentive. Such a relationship would indeed help to foster a stronger sense of collective identity for those youth and the family.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Rita Pete interview, May 24, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 1.1: This is a picture of the eddy, where salmon will stop to rest as they travel upstream. You can see that the water in the eddy is much calmer than the river.**

Once the salmon have been caught they are transferred to the drying rack which itself has changed over the years. Rita Pete's mother originally had the dry-rack closer to the water, and there are still remnants of the cleared area where it used to sit. Rita and her family eventually moved the dry-rack further up the mountain, where better wind-drying conditions exist. Higher up there is more wind, which helps to protect the fish from flies and the sun is stronger, which helps to dry the salmon faster. Since they have moved up the mountain there have been two dry-racks. The first one was slightly smaller and was eventually burnt down. As a result, a second larger, multi-level dry-rack was built with a floor being added later on. Rita and Jeanie both discussed a pulley that was made by Rita's husband who passed away about 14 years ago. The pulley was designed to allow for freshly caught fish to be pulled up to the dry-rack in a bucket so

that it could be beheaded and drained quickly to begin the wind drying process more efficiently. Unfortunately it doesn't operate like it used to so today, the family has to catch the fish, cut off their heads, place them upside down in a bucket to drain their blood and then pack and carry them up the hill to the dry-rack. The steep, rocky terrain of the site makes this process difficult and time-consuming. At the dry-rack, Rita's grandchildren enjoying helping her filet and hang the fish; Rita boasted that one of her youngest granddaughters always enjoys filleting the biggest catches of the day.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the dry-rack area is important space within the fishing camp. Here, Rita is able to pass on traditional filleting and wind drying techniques; an opportunity to demonstrate and express the family's Stó:lō roots to the youth. Furthermore, it is an area where the family can interact with each other and create and strengthen personal connections. Several stories were shared with me that had Rita, her son, and her granddaughter laughing and excited. From bear encounters to broken legs, it is clear that the dry-rack area is a place where traditions and familial combine to create a unique connection with the space.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 1.2 (above): Rita begins the wind drying process. Behind her is where the pulley would bring up the fishing from the river. A young family member watches from behind. Figure 1.3 (below): A more recent photo of Rita filleting a freshly caught salmon.**



The campsite, or the main floor, is an important part of the site as well. The family's living quarters are situated on a cleared flat area half way up the mountain, between the dry-rack and the fishing area.<sup>23</sup> There are remnants of an old long house platform that has served as the foundation for subsequent dwellings. During the summer months, the family spends a significant amount of time at the site in order to be able to maximize fishing time and to keep an eye on drying fish, as it can be susceptible to theft and/or disturbances by animals. During peak catching times during the summer months, members of the family contribute not only to catching and

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<sup>23</sup> Sonny McHalsie interview.

drying fish but to smoking and canning the salmon as well. These processes take place in the camping area where there is adequate space for canning and where it is possible to set up multiple propane stoves for smoking the salmon.<sup>24</sup> Wind drying, smoking and canning salmon ensured that the family would have access to salmon for the entirety of the winter season.



**Figure 1.4 (above): The family travels from the dry-rack down to the camp area. This image demonstrates the steep, rocky terrain. Figure 1.5 (below): The interior of the cabin's main living area.**

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<sup>24</sup> Rita Pete interview, May 24, 2015.



The camping area, or the main floor, is also where the family sets up camp for fishing season. They have put significant efforts into building and maintaining a comfortable living space to enjoy for the summer months. Rita's husband built the family a large cabin roughly two decades ago. This cabin had three bedrooms, a kitchen, living room, fridge and a generator. Jeanie recalls the times that her and her siblings spent at the cabin watching T.V., eating popcorn, having family dinners and celebrating birthdays. After a hard day of labouring, this was the space where the family could relax. Unfortunately, after the passing of Rita's husband, the cabin was the subject of arson and burnt to the ground. The family attempted to re-build it after the fire, but the materials were subsequently stolen from the site. In discussing this, Jeanie states,

That was actually some of the best times that I recall, and then after it burnt down it was harder to...be there with so much burnt area and you couldn't help but feel heartbroken. So my brother, he tried to re-build it and built the foundation about two years ago,

maybe three, four years ago. He tried to build a room for her [Rita] in the shade and then on the other end he had two other rooms that you could stick a queen sized bed in and we were going to add on to it, and then these vandals stole all the lumber...everything. And so my mom has been really heartbroken because, you know, her husband made her that cabin to be comfortable in.<sup>25</sup>

Rita's frustration with the amount of theft that has taken place within their fishing site has forced her to take more significant precautions. In the future, to avoid continued vandalism she plans to acquire a trailer for the site that can come and go with the family. Today, little remains in the camping area except for some debris and remaining ruin. This area in particular is deeply imbued with emotional personal connections that largely revolve around Rita's husband's presence.



**Figure 1.6: This is what remains of the cabin today.**

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<sup>25</sup> Jeanie Kay-Moreno interview.

The site then is, in a way, a memorial for her late-husband. The embeddedness of Harry's memory within the landscape of the fish site has created a sense of urgency to maintain the family's fishing practice. Jeanie stated:

My dad he knew how to get the family together, he was our go-to person and knew how to get the boys in shape and he knew what was required and how to get it done... The first few years it was hard because he never groomed anyone to take it over so my mom was very stressed after my dad died – really stressed. So I had to recognize that being with her all the time that I had to start taking that on and being the person, I had to recognize that my role [was] vital.<sup>26</sup>

Since her father's death, Jeanie has spent the summer months with Rita, learning how to care for the site and teaching her own family traditional methods and techniques for catching and preserving the fish. Upholding and continuing traditions is not confined to the fishing site, however. Dried, smoked, and canned salmon are taken into the community where tradition and culture are shared amongst local community members in various ways.

The fishing site extends beyond the physical location where fish are caught; it filters into the local community, bringing the fish camp to the people. For example, Rita stated, "I used to sell the backbones [to older ladies in Chilliwack] for .50 cents. They didn't like taking Tylenol so they'd boil the bones for two hours and then they'd get soft and they could chew them. And that's what they used for calcium." Older community members that do not have the ability to access to the river themselves must rely on individuals like Rita to supply them with the means to carry out some of their traditions.

There are individuals and families without direct access to fishing and, as such, are unable to engage with an important aspect of Stó:lō culture. Rita emphasized the importance of redistributing preserved salmon to those without access:

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

I like selling fish because when people don't get it people have to go out to buy it. People say "You got any fish? We will pay you good money!" and I say "it doesn't matter if you pay me good money, I just want a few dollars!"<sup>27</sup>

But not everyone sells salmon in a reputable manner. Rita stated "them Lillooet people they want all the money they can get. Ten little pieces they sell for ten dollars a bag!"<sup>28</sup> Such a comparison suggests that, for Rita, redistributing an important resource like salmon for an economic incentive is acceptable insofar as one does not abuse the process. Historian Keith Carlson has suggested that "innovation" and "tradition" need not be separated; often the two concepts go hand in hand.<sup>29</sup> Here, fishing to maintain and share cultural values is linked to fishing for economic reasons.

Outside of the fish camp, salmon has had a significant impact on a personal, familial level, which has reaffirmed the importance and power of place for the Pete family. Jeanie stated,

When my daughter went through leukemia – she was four years old - she wasn't eating, but the one things we could get her to eat was dried fish and so she ate that like crazy...it definitely forced to acknowledge the power and strength of what's being taught.<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, fishing is not only a traditional practice, but salmon forges its own ideology for the Stó:lō people; an identity even powerful enough to heal. And so, as Crisca Bierwert reminds us, within a Stó:lō worldview, power comes from within a place – it is not something that is ascribed.

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<sup>27</sup> Rita Pete interview, May 24, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, "Innovation, Tradition, Colonialism and Aboriginal Fishing Conflicts in the Lower Fraser Canyon, *New Histories for Old: Changing Perspectives on Canada's Native Pasts*, Eds. Ted Binnema and Susan Neylan, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), p. 147.

<sup>30</sup> Jeanie Kay-Moreno interview.

Indeed, the Pete's family fishing site is a place imbued with tradition and culture that is both maintained and shared. The family has genuinely experienced the place-world of their fishing site so much so, in fact, they have become apart of the space and the space apart of them. Here they are able to express their Stó:lō –ness by practicing traditional fishing methods, interacting with and caring for the spirit world, sharing their wealth of salmon with those without direct access to it and, more broadly, to pass on culturally valuable knowledge to youth. At fish camp they are able to foster and nurture a Stó:lō collective identity, maintaining ties to the past as they ground themselves in the present.

As this document has conceptualized, the fishing site represents much more than merely a cultural and historical space. Here, the family is able to develop and strengthen their own familial bonds every summer as they work together to ensure enough salmon is caught and prepared for the entire family. Childhood memories of playing in the trees and celebrating birthdays, for example, support, foster and develop the relationships amongst the family members. These connections are constantly growing and changing as family members come and leave, which shifts how the fish camp is perceived. With this said, Rita's childhood memories mirror the details of her daughter Jeanie's; and Jeanie's memories are akin to those of her daughter as well, illustrating that there is indeed continuity in change. The intergenerational dynamic that is present at the Pete's site indicates the power of fish camp within the family and its ability to continually bring them together. The stories told by the Pete family about their fish camp suggest that there is a social life to place. As they experience such a place, its social life transforms to account for changes in social dynamics. As family members pass on or as new members are added, how the family understands and values this place will change.

Stories about the site, then, act as a metaphor for the juncture between history, culture, and identity. The stories shared were of varying structure – joy, pain, and anger – suggesting the enigmatic essence of the Pete fishing site. As Keith Basso reminds us, “...place-making is a way of constructing the past...it is also a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities. We *are*, in a sense, the place-worlds that we imagine.”<sup>31</sup> The manner in which the Pete family perceives their fishing site is connected to history and culture, family connections that occur within the place, and individual connections to the place. The fish camp is, indeed, a multifarious place with many layers of meaning embedded within its setting.

Such a realization becomes problematic when current mapping technologies are considered. Marking fishing sites on a map fails to acknowledge the significance of such spaces and their intricate genealogies. It fails to recognize the emotional and social dynamics that exist within the physical site itself. Such elements ought to be incorporated into contemporary mapping projects in order to nurture the decolonization process in a way that will create space for indigenous voices and perspectives within colonial mapping techniques. Historian Cole Harris suggests “...maps [from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in British Columbia] conceptualized space in Eurocentric terms, situating it within a culture of vision, measurement, and management. Employing a detached vertical perspective, this cartography rendered space as a plan – as a surface.”<sup>32</sup> I would argue that today, mapping maintains many similar colonial elements. The Stó:lō see power within place and so if we can begin to listen to the stories of a particular place, we can begin to understand it as having its own history as

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<sup>31</sup> Basso, “Wisdom Sits in Places”, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Cole Harris, “How did Colonialism Dispossess? Comments from an Edge of an Empire,” *Annales of the Association of American Geographers* 94, no. 1 (2004): p. 175.

opposed to a space that humans have merely acted on. In doing this, perhaps a platform for cross-cultural dialogue can be created that will help enable non-Stó:lō people to transcend their own mentalities and see place from an entirely different perspective.

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