

Ethnohistory Field School Report 2015

“So that’s how I remember it”: The Geography of Memory at Matsqui Main Indian Reserve No. 2

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The Ethnohistory Field School is a collaboration of the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, Stó:lō Nation & Stó:lō Tribal Council, and the History Departments of the University of Victoria and University of Saskatchewan.



Participants:

Mary Malloway, Joan Silver, Chief Alice McKay,
Stan Morgan, Brian “Hobo” Tommy, Louis Julian

Introduction

“So that’s how I remember it.” We were sitting in the office of the Matsqui Band Council and Chief Alice McKay had just finished telling me about a hill near the house where she grew up. She and her sisters used to slide down the hill, despite their mother’s warning that it was the site of an old cemetery: “We used to get it wet and we’d come down on our bums cause it was like clay. It was fun. Mom used to say, ‘You guys are going to run into some bones one of these times.’” Several decades later, in the 1990s, the hill was bulldozed by a group of men contracted to do work on the Matsqui reserve. “That really bothers me,” Alice sighed, “because I think that’s kind of, I don’t know, we have a lot of spirits here. And I seem to think that’s [...] because that was taken down the way it was. They didn’t know. They just bulldozed it over.” Later, Alice took me to see the site of the old cemetery. What had once been a hill was now a flat surface, already covered with grass and thin coniferous trees.

As the story of the old hill suggests, Matsqui Indian Reserve #2 (known as “Matsqui Main”) has undergone numerous changes since Alice and her sisters were children: dykes improved, and people gradually moved to lower ground; swathes of trees were logged, including cedar, cottonwood, hemlock, and maple; sand and gravel extraction leveled hills, and removed nineteenth century fruit orchards. These changes underscore the importance of recording and preserving memories of the reserve, so that future generations may know both the Matsqui that is and the Matsqui that was. To that end, I was invited to Matsqui Main—a triangle of land on the Fraser River in British

Columbia, just west of the Mission Bridge—to meet with older members of the community.

The Matsqui are a Stó:lō First Nation, whose traditional territory stretches along the Fraser River from Crescent Island to Sumas Mountain, and southward beyond the Canada-United States border.¹ Through the 2015 Stó:lō Ethnohistory Fieldschool, a fellow student and I recorded five interviews at the Matsqui Band Council office with Mary Malloway, Joan Silver, and Chief Alice McKay. On a sixth occasion, we recorded Alice and Joan—along with Elders Stan Morgan (Alice’s husband) and Brian “Hobo” Tommy, and Councilor Louis Julian—as they led us on a walking tour of the reserve. Stan, Brian, and Louis, each of whom also grew up at Matsqui, led myself and another group of students on a second walk the day after, which was also recorded. The goal of these interviews was to “map” these individuals’ memories of the reserve, and of the people that used to live there. The number of interviews attests to the generosity of the participants, each of which contributed a substantial amount of time, energy, and knowledge towards the project.

Over the past several decades, increasing scholarly attention has been given to “place” as an object of study and framework of analysis. Anthropologist Miriam Kahn describes how places “capture the complex emotional, behavioral, and moral relationships between people and their territory.”² Ethnographers and human geographers have developed methods of “memory mapping” in order to explore the ways in which humans

¹ Keith Carlson, Stephanie Danyluk, Andrew Dunlop, et al., “‘For We Are the Real Owners of the Land from Time Immemorial as God Create Us Indians in this Territory’: Historical Land Use, Territory, and Aboriginal Title of the Matsqui People,” 2015, 5.

² Miriam Kahn, “Your Place and Mine: Sharing Emotional Landscapes in Wamira, Papua New Guinea,” in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Field and Keith Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), 168.

find meaning in the spaces they inhabit.³ Their work suggests that the process of mapping memories of a place can perform important pedagogical work and facilitate the ability of a community to “retrieve the past from a place.”⁴ The stakes of such work are especially pronounced given the historical role cartography has played in displacing and erasing evidence of Indigenous peoples in settler societies.⁵ More recently, Indigenous groups like the Nisga’a and Wet’suwet’wen in BC have emerged at the forefront of mapping their knowledge and memories of their ancestral lands.⁶

In some respects, the story of the old hill recounted above helps to chart the various layers of memory present at Matsqui. Previous generations have passed their memories on to living descendants, just as Alice’s mom told her about the old cemetery. Living Matsqui Elders remember the way the reserve was when they were children, as Alice remembers playing on a hill that is no longer there. And there are more recent memories of changes at Matsqui, like workers leveling a hill for reasons unremembered. Then there is the reserve as it appears today, having undergone changes in topography, ecology, and in residential development. In addition to these living memories and impressions, parts of Matsqui’s history can also be traced through archival documents and archaeological assessments. Each of these layers contributes to our understanding of

³ See, for example, Roger Downs and David Stea, *Maps in Minds: Reflections on Cognitive Mapping* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977), 6; Stephen Daniels et al., “Introduction: Envisioning Landscapes, Making Worlds,” in *Envisioning Landscapes, Making Worlds: Geography and the Humanities*, ed. Stephen Daniels et al (New York: Routledge, 2011), xxvi; Catriona Jardine Brown, “In living memory: Mapping the landscape of Greenham and Crookham Commons,” *Memory Studies* Vol. 5, No. 4 (October 2012), 427.

⁴ See, for example, Charmaine McEachern, “Mapping the Memories: Politics, Place and Identity in the District Six Museum, Cape Town,” *Social Identities* Vol. 4, No. 3 (October 1998), 499-521. William Turkel, *The Archive of Place: Unearthing the pasts of the Chilcotin Plateau* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), xxiii.

⁵ See, for example, Rob Sullivan, *Geography Speaks: Performative Aspects of Geography* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 89-90.

⁶ Doug Aberley, “Eye Memory: The Inspiration of Aboriginal Mapping,” in *Boundaries of Home: Mapping for Local Empowerment* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 1993), 14-15.

Matsqui's past, and all are considered below. The majority of this report, however, focuses the living memories of Matsqui people—Mary, Joan, Alice, Stan, Brian, and Louis—which together help constitute a rich, multilayered geography of memory at Matsqui Main.

This report begins by briefly establishing a background context to these memories, first by introducing the Matsqui, and then by providing a historical background drawn from archival, archaeological, and secondary sources. Because Mary, Joan, and Alice were the primary participants in this research, the opening pages also provide some basic biographical details regarding these individuals and their parents, Martin and Flora Julian. The largest portion of this report focuses on childhood memories of Matsqui Main, organized geographically according to corresponding locations on the reserve. In order to emphasize the voices of the people we met at Matsqui, the interpretive element generally expected in a scholarly paper has been confined to select portions of this report. One of the objects of this project is to show how memories help to constitute a rich sense of place at Matsqui, and here the memories themselves speak louder than academic commentary. Several of the individuals we met over the course of the project also spoke frankly about the importance of preserving their memories of the reserve for the benefit of future generations. The report concludes by engaging the Elders' perspectives on the importance of memory transmission, and by suggesting that sharing place-based memories is a vital step toward cultural reclamation at Matsqui.

Context

The Matsqui are a Stó:lō First Nation. As such, they are closely affiliated with the other Halq'eméylem-speaking, Coast Salish nations whose territories encompass the

Fraser Valley and lower Fraser Canyon in British Columbia. The Matsqui are also closely related to the Nooksack people in Washington, and are notable as one of only two Stó:lō communities that were historically bilingual in the Halq'eméylem and Nooksack languages (along with the Chilliwack).⁷ This detail has much to do with the nature of Matsqui territory, which features a system of trails, streams, and lakes that connect the Fraser River to the Nooksack River in Washington. The word “Matsqui” (Máthxwi) itself may be derived from má:th, a root plant that grew in the large, easily traveled marshes that were once abundant in the Matsqui Prairie area.⁸

In 1782, the smallpox epidemic spread through Stó:lō territory, and its survivors eventually consolidated their numbers in those settlements that were more rich with resources and more easily defended against coastal raiders.⁹ In 1808, when Simon Fraser traveled down the river that now bears his name, he recorded a village that may have been located at Matsqui. Estimating the population to be about 200 people, Fraser also took note of massive longhouse, “640 feet long by 60 broad [...] under one roof.”¹⁰ Near the end of the nineteenth century, anthropologist Franz Boas recorded the name of a village on Matsqui Main, “Ma'mak'ume [Mómeqwem],” and noted that this was one of two Matsqui villages.¹¹ In 1952, Walter Kenyon, a student from the University of British Columbia, conducted some archaeological work on the reserve. He recorded a village site on the reserve “slightly to the west of the Gifford Slough.” According to an informant

⁷ Ibid., 48.

⁸ Ibid., 18.

⁹ Ibid., 38.

¹⁰ Simon Fraser, *The Letters and Journals of Simon Fraser, 1806-1808*, ed. W. Kaye Lamb (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2007), 123.

¹¹ Ibid., 31.

(“Mrs. E. Edwards”) the village had been completely eroded away many years ago, and Kenyon’s own examination supported this conclusion.¹²

The 1858 gold rush ushered in considerable changes to Matsqui territory, when enormous numbers of prospectors traveled through the region en route to the Fraser Canyon. These, in turn, precipitated a more active role from the British colonial authorities. In 1860, surveyor William McColl established a reserve for the Matsqui at Mόμεqwem. Amounting to 9600 acres, the Matsqui reserve was the largest reserve ever to be established in south, coastal British Columbia.¹³ Within a decade, however, shifts in colonial policy worked to drastically reduce the size of reserves across the colony, and in 1867 the Matsqui reserve was reduced to 80 acres, just 8% of the original allotment.¹⁴ In 1877, an American named Ellis Luther Derby began illegally constructing a dyke on the Matsqui reserve.¹⁵ Because the Matsqui relied on seasonal flooding to access important hunting and gathering sites, the imposition of the dyke on the reserve significantly disrupted their ability to access key parts of their traditional territory.¹⁶ Nonetheless, in 1879 the Joint Indian Reserve Commission conceded that Derby would be able to “keep the Dyke which goes through the Reserve fenced.”¹⁷

By the late nineteenth century, the nearby construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (1885) and a spur line to Washington (1892) had opened new agricultural

¹² Walter Kenyon, “An Archaeological Survey of the Lower Fraser from Chilliwack to the Gulf of George,” (BA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1953), 25.

¹³ Carlson et al., “For We Are the Real Owners of this Land,” 65.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁵ Joint Indian Reserve Commission, *Minutes of Decision, Correspondence, and Sketches*, Vol. 1, March 1878 to January 1879, 368 [online] <http://jirc.ubcic.bc.ca/node/19>, accessed July 7, 2015; Thomas Perry, “Land Use of Matsqui Prairie Region of the Lower Fraser Valley in Southwestern British Columbia, 1858-1892” (MA Thesis, Western Washington University, 1984), 64.

¹⁶ Carlson et al., “For We Are the Real Owners of this Land,” 77-78.

¹⁷ Gilbert Sproat, “Memorandum enclosed in letter GM Sprout to the [?] Derby Hivard 8th May 1879, showing approximately the lands required for Indians,” in Joint Indian Reserve Commission, *Minutes of Decision, Correspondence, and Sketches*, Vol. 2, February 1879 to September 1879, 227 [online] <http://jirc.ubcic.bc.ca/node/20>, accessed July 7, 2015.

markets to the east and to the south. Around this period, the Matsqui—whose historic economy was by now severely disrupted—adopted agricultural and horticultural activities on their reserve—keeping cattle, sowing crops, and planting orchards—alongside historic practices like fishing.¹⁸

By the early twentieth century, the government had expropriated significant portions of Matsqui Main for the BC Electric Railway (1910), Canadian National Railway (1915), and Glenmore Road.¹⁹ When the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission on Indian Affairs came to Matsqui in 1915, they recorded a population of forty people living in eleven homes.²⁰ The following year, the Indian Agent responsible for Matsqui reported that the population—now thirty-six—was rapidly decreasing due to tuberculosis.²¹ The commission also received a testimony from Chief Charlie Matsqui. Chief Matsqui protested that the borders of his reserve had been significantly curtailed since 1860, and impinged upon by the BC Electric and CNR Railways, without due compensation.²² The Chief's stirring testimony is worth quoting at length:

Our forefathers have been stopping here and that is the reason we have been living here from time immemorial. I used to hear my grandfather talking about how long he had been here in this province, that is the reason I think that I am the right owner of this Reserve. I did not come here from another country or from other nations - I was always here and always will be. [...] For we are the real owners of the land from time immemorial as God create us Indians in this territory, so

¹⁸ Perry, "Land Use of Matsqui Prairie," 83-84; Carlson et al., "For We Are the Real Owners of this Land," 88.

¹⁹ Carlson et al., "For We Are the Real Owners of this Land," 87.

²⁰ Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of BC, "Meeting with the Matsqui Band or Tribe of Indians on Monday. January 11th, 1915," *New Westminster Agency Testimonials, 1913-1916*, 143, 146 [online] <http://gsdl.ubcic.bc.ca/cgi-bin/library.cgi?site=localhost&a=p&p=about&c=newwestm&l=en&w=utf-8>, accessed July 7, 2015.

²¹ Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of BC, "Meeting with Agent Peter Byrne of the New Westminster Agency at the Board Room, Victoria, on Tuesday, January 25th, 1916, as to the Reserves in his Agency," *New Westminster Agency Testimonials, 1913-1916*, 562 [online] <http://gsdl.ubcic.bc.ca/cgi-bin/library.cgi?site=localhost&a=p&p=about&c=newwestm&l=en&w=utf-8>, accessed July 7, 2015.

²² Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of BC, "Meeting with the Matsqui Band or Tribe," 141.

as God created the white people and other nations in their own territories in Europe; therefore we claim a permanent compensation for the enormous body of land known as the Province of British Columbia.²³

Charlie Matsqui's testimony stands today as an enduring witness to the resilience of the Matsqui amidst the changing colonial world around them.

In his study of the Indian Reserve system in British Columbia, geographer Cole Harris describes the reserve boundary as “the primal line on the land of British Columbia.”²⁴ While this is a useful way to conceive the geographic development of the province, it does not capture the intimate, lived experiences that many Indigenous people experience on reserve. The unilateral shrinking of reserve sizes, like the one experienced at Matsqui in 1867, often had devastating consequence for Indigenous communities. Nonetheless, in listening the childhood memories of the Matsqui it quickly becomes apparent that for those who lived there, Matsqui Main was far more than the sum of its acres.

The Julian Family

Mary Malloway, Joan Silver, and Alice McKay were raised at Matsqui by Martin and Flora Julian, the biological parents of Mary and Joan and the maternal grandparents of Alice. Martin, born at Squah on September 3, 1897, was the descendent of Chief Charlie Matsqui, and spent most of his life living at Matsqui.²⁵ Before meeting Flora, Martin stayed in Nooksack with his first wife, Rose Antone, with whom he had a child, Harriet. Flora, born March 8, 1905, also had child with a previous partner. He died at the age of eleven, perhaps while attending St. Mary's Indian Residential School in Mission.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), xviii.

²⁵ Charlie Matsqui was either Martin's grandfather or great-grandfather.

Martin and Flora met while working at a hop yard together—probably at the present site of the Husky Gas in Sardis—and Martin eventually brought Flora to live with him at Matsqui. Their first child, Vera, was born June 28, 1930. Mary arrived March 3, 1938, while Joan was born September 3, 1942. Martin and Flora had eight children together, including three brothers and five sisters. They also raised Alice, Vera’s daughter, who was born February 16, 1949. Although Martin and Flora were Alice’s biological grandparents, she knew them as Mom and Daddy.

Martin often logged for work. When the camps closed down, or when it got too hot, he worked various jobs in order to provide for the family. Martin farmed, worked odd jobs, picked cottonwood buds, planted trees at Kilgard, and worked in raspberry and strawberry fields on Bainbridge Island in Washington. Back at Matsqui, Martin milked cows, did the haying in the field across from the Julian house, hauled logs down the hill and ran cedar planks down the creek, did chores for his brother Jim, harvested Cascara bark with Flora on Matsqui Island, and planted trees on the island for the Scott Tissue Company. “I remember he used to work over there [on the island],” recalls Alice, “and I remember Mom used to always tell me, ‘It’s just about four o’ clock. Daddy’s gonna be coming.’ [...] Daddy used to come down the dyke and I used to run down the dyke to meet him.”²⁶ Martin also fished “almost every day,” according to Joan, “and he would check his net [...] at least three times a day, sometimes more depending on how the fish were running.”²⁷ Every family on the reserve had their own smokehouse, and Martin and Flora would smoke the fish he caught. “Those were busy times,” Joan recalls, “I remember my mom and dad going out and getting sticks to hang the fish on [...] they

²⁶ Alice McKay, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 14, 2015.

²⁷ Joan Silver, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 14, 2015.

always had to have the fire going, so 24/7.”²⁸ As Joan’s comments suggest, Flora and Martin often worked together, from picking berries in Washington to harvesting Cascara bark on Matsqui Island. Flora also performed the household chores. Alice remembers that there would always be snacks ready for the children when they came home from school: “We’d have bannock and tea and that was so good.”²⁹ “That’s the one thing we could rely on,” Joanie added, “Mom was always there and she always had us a snack.”³⁰

Martin and Flora both spoke Halq’eméylem, but chose not to teach the language to their children. This decision had much to do with the effects of residential school in the community, according to Mary: “They didn’t want to teach it because, you know, when we went to residential school they didn’t want us to speak. And a lot of people did the same thing. They didn’t teach their kids the language, because [...] whenever they were caught speaking the language in school they were strapped.”³¹ Martin never attended residential school, but Flora was at St. Mary’s during her youth. Their decision not to pass on their language likely reflects a concern for the children, most of which were also sent to residential school. Mary went to St. Mary’s from 1948 to 1953, and Alice attended from September 1962 to December 1963. Both left Matsqui after quitting residential school in order to find work. Joan never went to residential school. Instead, she went to various public schools near Matsqui, and spent one year going to school on Bainbridge Island. She quit school in Grade Nine and also left Matsqui to find work.

A Geography of Memory

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Alice McKay, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 14, 2015.

³⁰ Joan Silver, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 14, 2015.

³¹ Mary Malloway, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 14, 2015.

During one of our conversations, Joan told me how she was sometimes lonely growing up because her sisters were at residential school or had moved away from the reserve. “I guess that’s why I just wandered all the time,” she mused.³² In keeping with Joan’s childhood wanderings, I have decided to use a somewhat similar walking route as a framework for the remainder of this report (see Fig. 1, below). By organizing memories of the reserve in this way, I hope this report can be of use to anyone who cares read the report at the reserve itself, following along in person as they do so. To this end, I have included compass coordinates that correspond with different locations throughout the



³² Joan Silver, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 26, 2015.

Fig. 1. Satellite image of Matsqui Main reserve, showing itinerary of report in red. (“Matsqui Main Indian Reserve,” 49°06’30.18”N, 122°20’48.49”W. *Google Earth*. August 4, 2007. Accessed July 7, 2015.)
reserve.³³ These were recorded retrospectively, however, and should only be considered approximations. The path begins at the site of the current cemetery, and winds downhill and across the tracks to the former site of the Julian home. From there a road extends uphill towards the old orchards where it connects with the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) Trail. Turning right, the GVRD Trail winds downhill alongside the Fraser River. The itinerary presented here follows the trail past the creek, and ends where it meets the dyke road.

The Cemetery (49° 6’19.20”N, 122°21’9.74”W)

The current Matsqui cemetery sits on top of a hill at the end of a winding road (see Fig. 2, below).³⁴ There is a large, open field outside the fenced perimeter, which is used for parking and community services. The area inside the cemetery’s fenced perimeter is also cleared, aside from the odd tree. This is the site where Martin and Flora Julian are buried, and Alice notes that there are also a number of people buried “from way before, way before my time. [...] Some there’s just iron, iron crosses there but no names on them.”³⁵ Alice and her sisters didn’t spend much time at the cemetery when they were children, as their parents discouraged them from doing so. “I don’t even remember ever being up here,” Alice said, “I don’t think Mom and them let us come up.” Her husband Stan nodded in agreement: “No, I remember back then it was forbidden for children to

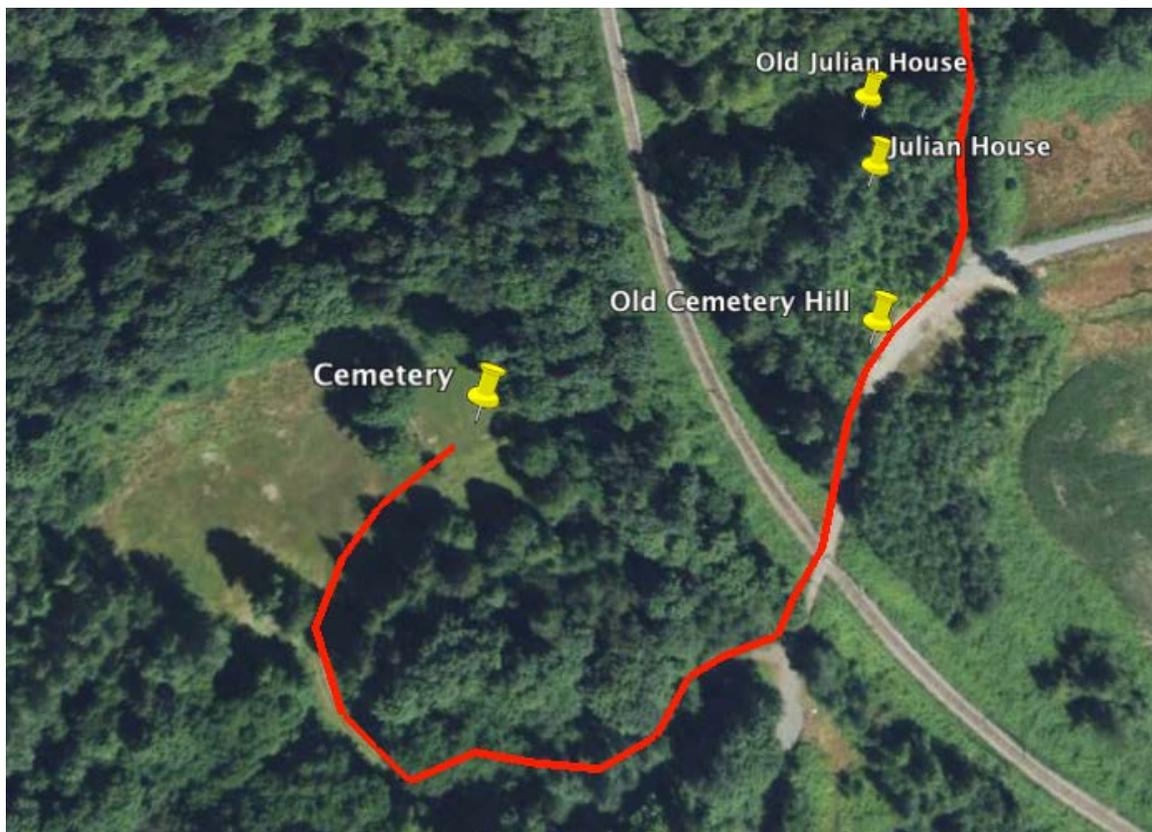
³³ These coordinates may also be copied and pasted directly onto Google Maps for anyone who wishes to see the locations from a bird’s eye perspective.

³⁴ The current cemetery should not be confused with the old hill (discussed below) where the Julian children used to play despite Flora’s warning that there were graves there.

³⁵ Alice McKay, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 15, 2015.

enter the cemetery or even be near it. Times changed now though.”³⁶ Agnes and Jimmy James also lived up the hill towards the cemetery, where Joan remembers them having the only manmade well on the reserve: “It was really neat. You could like peer over and you get kind of dizzy looking down.”³⁷

In the early 1970s, the chief of Matsqui hired someone to work around the location of the cemetery. Alice recalls that the worker was in a Cat bulldozer clearing the area at the base of the cemetery when he went over the side of the hill, damaging the retaining wall: “That got messed up and then some of the graves started sliding over. [...] It made it slide so they lost a couple of graves.”³⁸ In 1980, when Alice and Stan returned to the reserve, the cemetery was still densely covered with brush: “You couldn’t even see the



³⁶ Alice McKay and Stan Morgan, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 28, 2015.

³⁷ Joan Silver, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 26, 2015.

³⁸ Alice McKay, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 28, 2015.

Fig. 2. Satellite image showing location of the current cemetery, and approximate locations of the old cemetery hill and old and new Julian houses. (“Matsqui Main Indian Reserve,” 49°06’30.18”N, 122°20’48.49”W. *Google Earth*. August 4, 2007. Accessed July 7, 2015.)

cemetery. There was blackberries and alder trees and everything in here.” Martin had passed away in 1978, and Stan and Alice would come to his grave to leave flowers. They began clearing the area around his grave and kept going until they had cleared the whole area, leaving only a few, young trees at the point where the older part of the cemetery meets the more recent extension. “I always feel good when I see these trees... That’s a marker since the early eighties. They’ve grown that much.”³⁹

The Old Cemetery Hill (49° 6'20.41"N, 122°21'4.37"W)

If one turns left after descending the cemetery hill, one soon crosses over the old BC Electric Railway to join the dyke road. To the south of the dyke is an open field that spreads out towards the present residential development at Martin Lane (named for Martin Julian). To the north there is a small, level area at the base of a tree-covered hill. “This is where the old cemetery used to be,” Alice told me as we walked past together. Joan nodded, “The whole thing there was a hillside.”⁴⁰ When the hill got wet the Julian children would amuse themselves by sliding down the claybank sides, despite Flora’s warning that there were people buried in the hill. Joan laughed as she recalled her mother’s voice, ““You guys are going to run into some bones one of these times.””⁴¹ Across the road, not far from the old cemetery hill, was the barn where the James’ kept

³⁹ Alice McKay, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 28, 2015.

⁴⁰ Alice McKay and Joan Silver, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 28, 2015.

⁴¹ Joan Silver, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 28, 2015.

their cows. “I think it was just down there,” said Joan, “Because we used to be able to climb into the hayloft from here, from this side of the hill.”⁴²

The site of the old cemetery hill was leveled during the early 1990s when the chief of the day had asked someone to do some work in the area. Nobody I spoke with could recall the nature of the work, but several individuals expressed regret that the graves Flora had told them about had been so forcefully disrupted. “It was really hard,” Alice told me.

I keep talking about the cemetery that was there. That really bothers me because that’s what my mom used to tell me about that cemetery, it was there. And I know nobody knew, I know nobody did it intentionally. [...] It’s really sad about that because I think that’s, kind of, I don’t know, we have a lot of spirits here. And I seem to think that’s got a lot of do it because that was taken down the way it was. They didn’t know. They just bulldozed it over.

Martin and Flora’s House (49° 6'22.22"N, 122°21'4.26"W)

Just past the site of the old cemetery hill there is a dirt road that splits off from the dyke and runs uphill. There is a creek that runs beneath the road a short ways down, which marks the site where Martin and Flora once lived with their children. When Mary was born, Martin and Flora were living in a house on the farther side of the creek, closer to the hill. Mary remembers that the house was small and already quite old. Behind the house was a cellar where the family kept potatoes, and apples that would “stay so nice and crisp all winter.”⁴³ The family moved into a new house on the other side of the creek when Mary was three or four years old. According to Mary, it wasn’t much bigger than the previous house: “When they gave him the new house it was only two bedrooms. A little front room and the kitchen [...] and they had another bedroom in the back.”⁴⁴ The

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Mary Malloway, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 15, 2015.

⁴⁴ Mary Malloway, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 24, 2015.

new house had electricity, but still no plumbing. Instead the family had an outhouse, and a tap outside the door. “We didn’t mind it,” Mary told me, “We didn’t know what other people had.”⁴⁵

The family had a milk cow that was given to them by Martin’s aunt and they would store their milk in the cool creek next to their house. Joan recalls the excitement when their family was able to afford their first icebox: “This man comes on this truck [...] and we were all staring at him as he brings it in. Carrying it. And the ice is steaming because it’s so cold. He puts it in the icebox and we were so excited to have some of our food cool.” Beyond the house there was a old, makeshift log bridge that stretched across the creek, but Mary recalls that “It wasn’t even a complete bridge when I was there [...] It was broken up pretty bad.”⁴⁶ Although the family had a tap outside their door, Joan and her sisters noted that they would sometimes drink from the creek, before a garbage dump upstream was created that polluted it. “The landfill up above on Olund Road [...] ruined our water,” Alice explained, “but we used to drink out of the creek.”⁴⁷

Mary doesn’t recall when the Julians’ first home was torn down, but the house is still visible in a 1948 aerial photo of the reserve (see Fig. 6, below). Joan remembers her mom and dad putting the cascara bark they collected into burlap sacks and setting it out to dry on the roof of “an older house just next door, a few feet away.”⁴⁸ Joan would have been born around the time the family moved, and it’s probable that the house she remembers was the family’s first home. Martin and Flora moved out of their second home in the early 1970s. Alice remembers that a new home was built closer to Glenmore Road,

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Mary Malloway, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 26, 2015.

⁴⁷ Alice McKay, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 26, 2015.

⁴⁸ Joan Silver, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 14, 2015.

and they were given the option of moving: “Mom wanted to move—the house was getting so old, eh—but [...] Daddy said, ‘I’m not moving, I’m not moving. Mom you can move, I’m not moving.’ And when it was time to move Daddy moved [*laughter*]. He wasn’t a whole person without mom.”

The second Julian house burned down in the late 1970s, and the site is now covered with thick brush. The creek, meanwhile, has also changed. Alice remembers there being a curve further up the creek, but this has since moved down towards the road.⁴⁹

The Orchards (49° 6'27.91"N, 122°21'2.40"W to 49° 6'38.88"N, 122°21'1.07"W)

“I had the greatest childhood,” Joanie told me. “I was allowed to run free and come home. Meals weren’t really a set time and so I was able to wander all over the reserve and whenever I was hungry I would come home and have my meal and my Mom would let me just wander around again”⁵⁰ While talking with Mary, Joan, and Alice, it sometimes seemed as though the entire reserve had been a playground. One of the places where they spent the most time exploring was the hill behind their house. By following the old road a short ways up the hill, the children would soon be arrive at the first of several orchards. These stretched about 400 meters back in the area where the dirt road is today, and extend to just past the point where the road meets the GVRD Trail (see Fig. 3, below). Joan recalls her mom telling her that their ancestors first received their fruit trees by bartering with the government for land.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Alice McKay, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 28, 2015.

⁵⁰ Joan Silver, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 26, 2015.

⁵¹ Joan Silver, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 28, 2015. Joan also thought it was possible that Agnes and Uncle Jim may have gotten their cows in the same way.⁵¹

“There used to be green gage trees in here,” Alice remembered, “and this used to be where the old orchard used to be. The first orchard.”⁵² Mary remembers other fruit as well: “we had lots of apples up there. Apples and pears and grapes and nuts and they had these great big cooking apples.”⁵³ The children would often come to the orchard to pick fruit, and even Matsqui’s infamous mosquitos couldn’t keep them away. “It was so infested with all the mosquitos. We used to see swarms and swarms of them,” said Joan, “but we’d fight the mosquitos to go up and eat fruit. Cherries mostly.”⁵⁴ In the winter, children from the reserve would come up the hill for sleigh rides pulled by Stubby the horse. Mary remembers coming up the hill with other children to build a bonfire and sleigh ride, even at night: “We used to have so much fun. [...] We used to play, play, play.”⁵⁵

Beyond the first orchard stood several houses (discussed in the next section), and beyond those lay a second orchard, where there were a number of Gravenstein apple trees—the big cooking apples Mary and others remember—as well as pears. When I

⁵² Alice McKay, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 28, 2015.

⁵³ Mary Malloway, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 14, 2015.

⁵⁴ Joan Silver, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 26, 2015.

⁵⁵ Mary Malloway, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 14, 2015.



Fig. 3. Satellite image showing the approximate range of the Matsqui orchards, the location of the old orchard, and possible locations of several houses on the hill. (“Matsqui Main Indian Reserve,” 49°06’30.18”N, 122°20’48.49”W. *Google Earth*. August 4, 2007. Accessed July 7, 2015.)

walked through the area with Stan Morgan and Brian Tommy, they recalled that the farmers would bring their cows to the orchard to graze and keep the brush down. “We used to always chase them around on the reserve there,” Brian told me. “When the fruit got ripe and fell down to the ground the cows’d come up there and eat all the rotten stuff, eh. And then they’d get drunk! [laughs] And then they’d come round and see us and they’d start chasing us!”⁵⁶ Stan remembers his sisters coming to the same area to pick blackberries for jam, and salmonberries that grew all over the side of the hill, all the way down to the river.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Brian Tommy, interview with the author, Keith Carlson, Colin Osmond, and Daniel Palmer, May 29, 2015.

⁵⁷ Stan Morgan, interview with the author, Keith Carlson, Colin Osmond, and Daniel Palmer, May 29, 2015.

A third orchard lay on the far side of the BC Electric Railway, which Stan believes was once connected to the others. “On the other side of the tracks I was thinking there used to be a continuation, you know of the orchard. They used to call it the ‘Old Orchard’ way back.”⁵⁸ As Matsqui’s orchards were planted in the late-nineteenth century, Stan’s comments imply that portions of the orchards would have been expropriated and leveled for the construction of the BC Electric Railway.

One of the most dramatic changes to Matsqui’s landscape occurred in 1995 and 1996, when the band leased out large parts of the hill to gravel and sand extraction. “It was quite a high hill,” Alice remembered. “They took quite a bit out. [...] But we had to put a stop to it because they were taking that hill right out. We didn’t want to lose our hill [*laugh*].”⁵⁹ Today the area where excavation took place stands out from the older, coniferous woods beyond it. Where there used to be a hill, there is now a large, level area covered with grass and thin deciduous trees. The extent of the excavation can be appreciated by looking at contemporary satellite photos, which reveal a large, relatively thin patch of trees (see Fig. 3, above). Still, a number of fruit trees—including cherry, apple, and pear—are still visible from the dirt road and the GVRD Trail, witnesses to the early agricultural history of Matsqui Main.

The Houses on the Hill (49° 6'36.72"N, 122°21'1.21"W)

Between two of the orchards—the one Alice called the “first orchard,” and the one where the big, cooking apples used to grow—stood two houses, which were already dilapidated by the time Martin and Flora were raising their family. “They were just frames when I was a kid,” Stan remembers. “Everybody moved out but the walls were

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Alice McKay, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 19, 2015.

deteriorating.”⁶⁰ Mary described these homes as large, two-storey homes that looked “like a square box.”⁶¹ Alice recalled that behind one of the houses was another cellar, and her mother would store potatoes there as well.⁶² Stan mentioned another two houses near the gate where the present dirt road meets the GVRD Trail, and Joan referred to an additional house across the tracks, near the Old Orchard, which was captured on a 1938 aerial photo (see Fig. 4, below). Mary remembers her grandmother living in one these houses before she moved down the hill closer to Martin and Flora, and that the community used to have dances at her house. She also recalls hearing that there was another old cemetery just behind her grandmother’s first house. According to Mary, this was confirmed later in life when she accidentally walked over a grave in the area before going to a longhouse: “When I went into the longhouse my leg just seized up. And Helen Joe looked at me. She

⁶⁰ Stan Morgan, interview with the author, Keith Carlson, Colin Osmond, and Daniel Palmer, May 29, 2015.

⁶¹ Mary Malloway, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 26, 2015.

⁶² Mary Malloway, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 14, 2015.

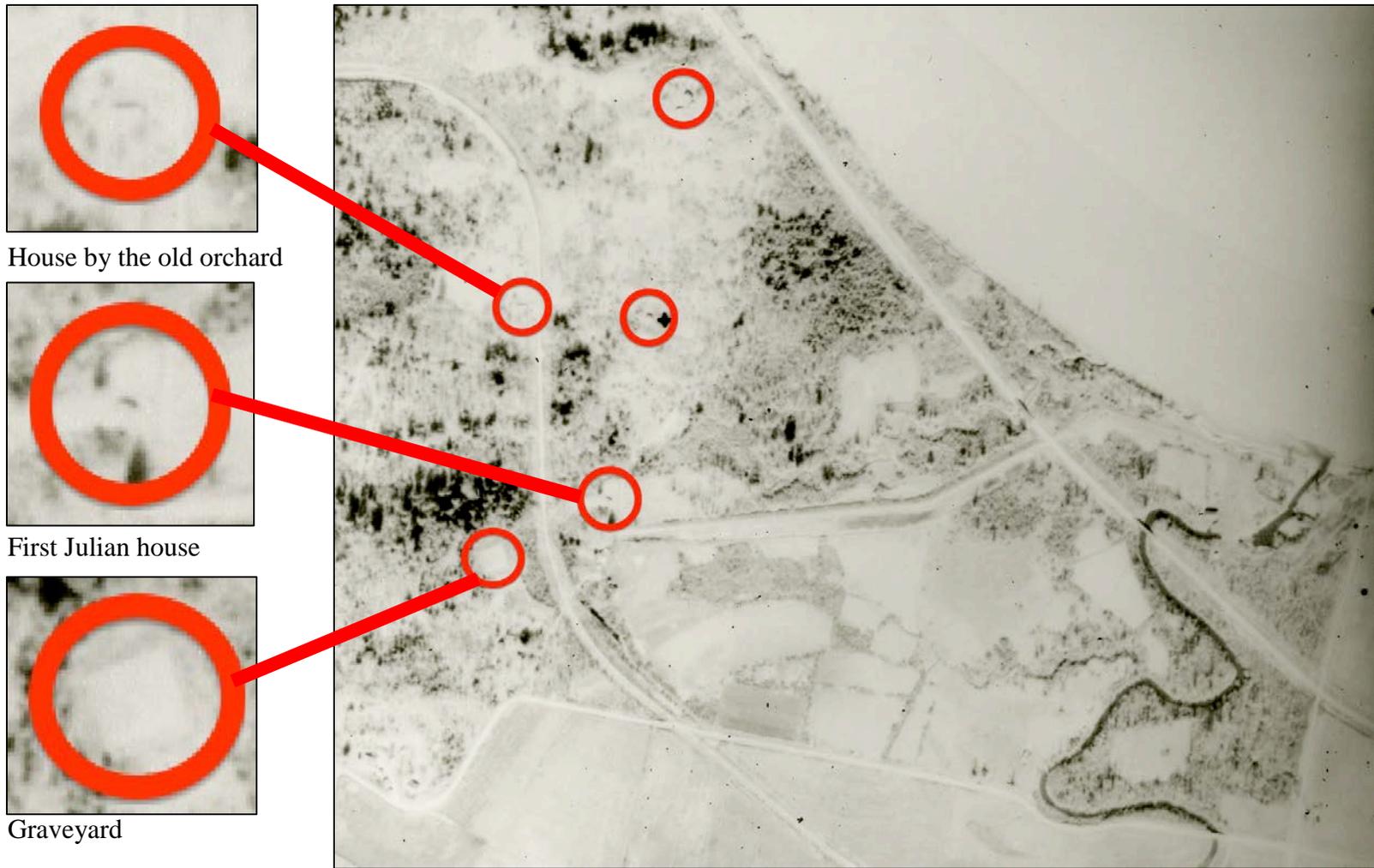


Fig. 4. Aerial photo of Matsqui Main taken in 1938, showing blowouts of the house by the old orchard, the first Julian house, and the graveyard. Other circles indicate possible house locations.

said ‘You walked over a grave.’ And I said, ‘Yeah I did.’”⁶³

Louis Julian and Stan both mused that the community had probably built their homes on the top of the hill in order to tend to their orchards and avoid the Fraser’s seasonal flooding.⁶⁴ A local history of the area dating from 1958 supports this hunch, suggesting that priests had encouraged the Matsqui to move to higher ground in order to avoid flooding damages to their orchards and houses.⁶⁵ Given that the orchards were no longer harvested commercially while Martin and Flora were raising the children, it is probable that more homes were built on lower ground as dykes in the area improved, as seems to have been the case with Mary’s grandmother.

The Greater Vancouver Regional District Trail

The next portion of Matsqui Main explored here follows a more recent landscape: the Greater Vancouver Regional District Trail. The trail runs alongside the Fraser River, and corresponds roughly to the base of the ridge below the old orchards. There is a gate where the dirt road meets the GVRD Trail. If one turns right at this juncture one will encounter a number of sites that were mentioned by the Matsqui Elders: an old spring at the base of the ridge (49° 6'32.88"N, 122°20'51.87"W); the mouth of the creek that ran by Martin and Flora’s house (49° 6'28.39"N, 122°20'42.74"W); and the dyke (49° 6'27.53"N, 122°20'39.08"W) (see Fig. 5, below). Each of these is discussed in turn below.

A few dozen meters down the GVRD Trail from the gate, there is a second, smaller gate where a path leads down to the Fraser. “This is how far we used to pack fish from,” Stan said, looking out towards the water: “The river all the way to the other track.

⁶³ Mary Malloway, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 26, 2015.

⁶⁴ Louis Julian and Stan Morgan, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 28, 2015.

⁶⁵ L. J. Kettle, *Where the Trails Meet* (Abbotsford, BC: Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford Centennial Society, 1958), 34.

[...] Fishing spot was just down there past the white thing there. Everybody used to fish here. Lots of fish. The old trail used to run from here all the way along the ridge.”⁶⁶ If one followed the path along the ridge, one would encounter a natural spring. As Stan pointed out, the same spring can be seen today from the GVRD Trail, at the base of the ridge on the right side of the path: “This is where the old spring is. Right there. They used to dig a hole there. There was a hole where they used to have a dipper hanging off the tree there. Everybody’d have a drink when on the trail when we still walked to the river.”⁶⁷ According to Stan, anybody walking down the path would always stop to have a drink, including the occasional non-Indigenous person walking down to the river to fish.⁶⁸

Proceeding down the path, one eventually crosses the same creek that runs next to



Fig. 5. Satellite image showing the approximate location of the spring, the mouth of the creek, and the point where the GVRD Trail meets the dyke road. (“Matsqui Main Indian Reserve,” 49°06’30.18”N, 122°20’48.49”W. *Google Earth*. August 4, 2007. Accessed July 7, 2015.)

⁶⁶ Stan Morgan, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 28, 2015.

⁶⁷ Stan Morgan, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 28, 2015.

⁶⁸ Stan Morgan, interview with the author, Keith Carlson, Colin Osmond, and Daniel Palmer, May 29, 2015.

the site of Martin and Flora's house. The creek would sometimes back up, and the children on the reserve would swim in the pond that would emerge upstream. ("Bare naked!" Brian laughed.)⁶⁹ Alice remembers swimming near the tunnel where the creek flows under the railroad tracks ("And it was cold, freezing cold").⁷⁰ She and sisters used to fish in the same area, using homemade fishing rods to catch the tiny minnows that swam in the creek.⁷¹

Brian remembers the area between the creek and the dyke as being quite swampy, but he and some of the other men came to the area to log in the 1960s: "This is where we'd pull out all the pulp tree, eh. We used to pull it right across the pond [...] and pile it up along the dyke there and then someone would come and take it up for Scott Tissue."⁷² Today the area is thick with brush. "Now these trees are big again," Stan observed, "Really grown. Sixty years, eh?"⁷³ Further down the GVRD Trail, just before arriving at the dyke, one passes the former site of yet another apple orchard.⁷⁴

As mentioned above, the dyke was built up over time and may have been a factor in encouraging the people of Matsqui to move to lower ground. Even after such improvements were implemented, the Fraser River's seasonally flooding could prove too much for the dyke. The 1948 Flood (see Fig. 6, below) remains well-remembered among those who experienced it, and several people from Matsqui shared their memories of it. Joan remembers the dyke commissioner coming to the reserve to tell people to evacuate:

⁶⁹ Brian Tommy, interview with the author, Keith Carlson, Colin Osmond, and Daniel Palmer, May 29, 2015.

⁷⁰ Alice McKay, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 26, 2015.

⁷¹ Alice McKay, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 26, 2015.

⁷² Brian Tommy, interview with the author, Keith Carlson, Colin Osmond, and Daniel Palmer, May 29, 2015.

⁷³ Stan Morgan, interview with the author, Keith Carlson, Colin Osmond, and Daniel Palmer, May 29, 2015.

⁷⁴ Ibid.



Houses between orchards



Old and new Julian houses



Barn by old cemetery hill

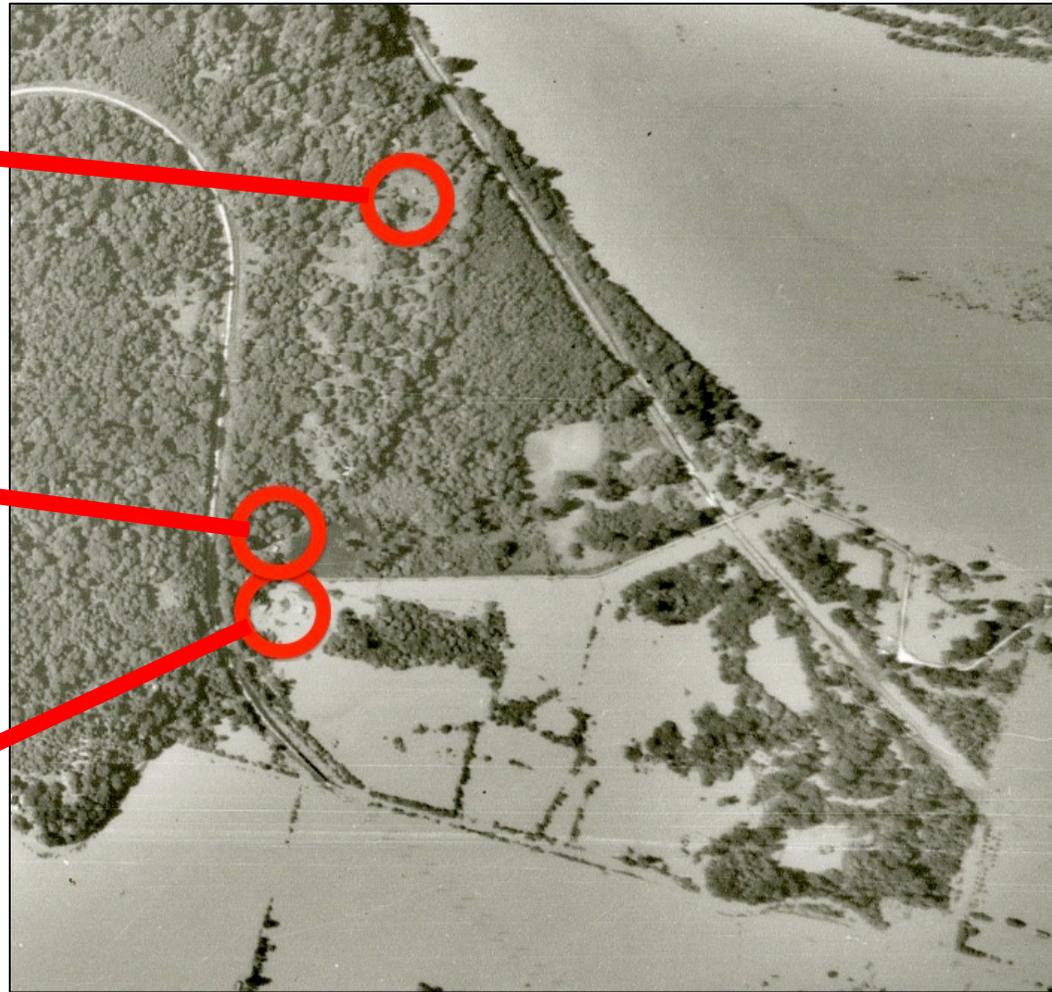


Fig. 6. Aerial photo taken during the 1948 Flood, showing blowouts of the barn by the old cemetery hill, the new Julian house (just below the first one), and two houses between the orchards.

“‘You had to evacuate, pack whatever you can and you have to hit higher ground,’ he said.”⁷⁵ According to Joan, the dyke at Matsqui broke close to the point where it now meets the GVRD Trail, “‘over about where the new houses are now that have recently been built.’”⁷⁶ The dramatic nature of the flood merits quoting Joan’s memories at length:

I remember seeing my Aunt Helen’s house [...] I don’t know how many days it was. All you could see was [...] their chimney [...] I remember the cows [...] When the dyke broke, they all went crazy. And they went running up the hill, some went up the hill past where our house was. Some thought they had to go to the barn, and then the barn was already flooded, and so they were trying to step on these big long logs and I remember watching them cause my Dad, they were chasing them, and of course some of them thought they were going to get milked so that’s where they were headed and they were trying to get into the barn and they were just balling. Going crazy. Because when they stepped on the plank, of course, it sunk hey? [...] And some of them, I think a few of them they had to be killed because they went crazy. [...] ⁷⁷

At first the family went to stay with Martin’s aunt, but they later left for Bainbridge Island and stayed there the remainder of the summer. When they returned to the reserve, Joan remembers seeing houses with dirty watermarks reaching halfway up the walls: “I remember a lot of work. That all had to be scrubbed and cleaned out.”⁷⁸ According to Stan, the flood left more than watermarks in some of the houses on lower ground:

Louis’ uncle Merle Julian [said that] after the water went down they came back to clean up. [...] All you could see was snakes all over. They all came with high water. [...] Wherever they dug they found eels, in their houses, eels right in the dirt and everything, in the sand [*laughs*]. All kinds of fish, he said. Everything come in with the water, right? Said it took them a long time.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Joan Silver, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 14, 2015.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Stan Morgan, interview with the author, Keith Carlson, Colin Osmond, and Daniel Palmer, May 29, 2015.

Despite the intensity of the flood, no one on the reserve received new homes after the flood. “Just moved into our old [ones],” Mary recalled, laughing.

The dyke functioned to some extent as a boundary to the childhood wanderings of Mary, Joan, and Alice. Once, while examining an old aerial photo of the reserve, Alice pointed towards the wooded area on the hill: “I think most of my life was on this side,” she said. “We very rarely came out here to where we are now,” she added, referring to the Matsqui Band Council office. Mary nodded: “Yeah, we were never out here.” This makes some sense, when considered from the perspective of a child. The forest trails offered many places to explore: old orchards filled with cherries, apples, pears, and plums; cool springs with crystal water; minnow-filled creeks and mountain-fed swimming holes; abandoned houses where ancestors once lived; wintery roads that were perfect for sleigh riding. Although the children did play and spend time in the field beyond the dyke, this was primarily place of work, where animals grazed and adults like Martin could be found haying. The geography of memory that Mary, Joan, and Alice presented to me was, to large extent, a geography of childhood dearly remembered.

Conclusion

The Elders at Matsqui experienced their childhoods during a period in history when federal policy concentrated on assimilating Indigenous peoples into settler society. One of the goals of such policies was to interrupt the transmission of cultural knowledge between generations, and the residential school system was established in part to achieve this end. The long-term consequences of institutions like St. Mary’s are still felt at Matsqui, and alongside memories of childhood, there are memories of absence. Martin and Flora appear to have made a conscious decision to not teach Halq’eméylem to their

children, most of which would eventually attend St. Mary's. "We didn't have any culture whatsoever on our reserve," Mary told us at one point during our conversation, "The only thing I seen when walking from school just down here and my Aunt Alice was doing a [spiritual] burning [for the ancestor spirits]. Right in front of our house. They told us to keep walking. Don't go in there."⁸⁰ Alice explained elaborated further: "the residential schools had a lot to do with it, right? [...] They stripped our family of so much. And taught them so much bad that I just don't think anybody was... you know, anybody was... Now we're learning, we're trying to learn it, trying to make sure that younger kids are learning, but it was like we missed—Auntie's generation, my generation—our culture."⁸¹ Given this difficult past, some of the most touching moments during our discussions were when Mary, Joan, and Alice reflected on moments of cultural rediscovery, going to a longhouse ceremony for the first time, or watching younger generations speak Halq'eméylem, drum, and dance.

The transmission of memory and historical knowledge seems to follow a similar trajectory. The older generations at Matsqui may have been reluctant to pass along certain types of knowledge their children, given the treatment such knowledge received in settler society. "I think we missed the boat," Alice told us:

Like I was saying, no one told us anything. We missed that. I was lucky with Mom because Mom did tell me some things [...] but I wasn't smart enough to sit down and share that with my kids. I didn't think it was that important. It was important to me that she told me and I loved her telling me, but I didn't think far enough to pass it down. And now I wish I would've.⁸²

⁸⁰ Mary Malloway, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 15, 2015.

⁸¹ Alice McKay, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 15, 2015.

⁸² Alice McKay, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 26, 2015.

Given the interruption of intergenerational knowledge and memories that has taken place within many Indigenous communities, it is critical that the lived memories of contemporary Elders be shared with younger generations. Part of the process of cultural reclamation expressed by Alice was her desire to share her memories of Matsqui with her grandchildren:

I'm trying to explain to them and get them in the mood to sit down and listen to it. What used to be. [...] I want to find a way to make them be interested because I really think it's important because [...] that's us. That's us. [...] I think it's really important for people if they really want to know Matsqui, they have to know everything about what went on here. [...] I think it's really important for our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren to hear it and to share it. Because one day we're not going to be here anymore. And I would like for this to be still talked about.⁸³

In repeating the phrase “that’s us,” Alice’s comments emphasize that the memories she and others have of Matsqui are a constitutive part of the community’s identity. When asked what she would like to pass on to her family, Joan’s response echoed Alice’s comments: “To be proud that they’re Native and to know their culture and their background history, their ancestors. Because that’s something I never grew up with was culture.”⁸⁴ Perhaps because their Elders were discouraged from passing on aspects of their culture and history, Mary, Joan, and Alice appear particularly invested in sharing their own memories with younger generations. In this context, remembering that a level area was once a hill, or that a hill was once a cemetery, means preserving the unique geography of memory that makes Matsqui richer than the sum of its acres.

⁸³ Alice McKay, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 26, 2015.

⁸⁴ Joan Silver, interview with the author and Tenille Campbell, May 26, 2015.

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