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Becoming Xwiyálemot: Traditional Knowledge and Colonial Experiences in the Life of a Stó:lō Elder

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Enter the Skunk

Ask anyone in Stó:lō territory about Xwiyálemot, Matilda "Tillie" Gutierrez, and they will probably tell you about her Skunk story. As one of the last fluent Halq'emeylem speakers, Tillie was instrumental in preserving her language. In the 1970's she began interviewing and recording her elders in Halq'emeylem and English and was herself interviewed numerous times for her knowledge of Halq'emeylem place names and Stó:lō history. In the transcript and tapes of these interviews - the primary sources of my research - the Skunk story comes up often. From all accounts, Tillie was an incredibly gifted storyteller. When her children tell the story, they mimic how their mother would jump up and down and throw her arms around as she preformed it. We certainly lose that animation when the story appears in writing, but I believe it's worth quoting in full:

> Skunk's weapon is yellow, he was very proud of this weapon, Crane's weapon is white and he is very proud of it also. Skunk and Crane got jealous of each other's weapon, and they decided to have a duel.
> So they did not know how they were going to fight. Skunk decide to have a boxing match, but Crane wanted to have an airplane spin duel, so they kept on until they reached the water, and Skunk got drowned and floated down the river, and got stuck over a jam of logs and there a couple of girls came along and found him, and they figured that it would be a good idea to make a football out of his weapon, and so they did.
> Poor Skunk comes to and found his weapon bag was gone. So he sat by the riverbank and waited, and when the first object came in sight, he hollered at it, but no answer came. He saw that it was just a log and he said to himself, that was not a very good friend. So he waited some more, and he said to himself, when another object was to come he would holler louder. So when he saw something drifting from up the river, he hollered and hollered, but this time he got an answer, by someone just holler back. Hooo! He felt a little better, and he waited, and he waited again, this time a little longer, and then here comes another thing drifting down the river, this time it looked like the real thing, it looked like a canoe, so he let out a big holler. This time he got his answer he has been looking for, the captain of the canoe told him that the boys were playing football with Skunk's weapon bag, and he thanked the captain of the canoe and said that was a good friend, then he ran off for the place where the boys were playing ball, and he sat very patiently at the end of the field, and when the ball came towards his way, he got a hold of it, and started to run, then the boys started chasing him, but Skunk

> wasn't quite a fast runner, as he was running he was putting his weapon bag on, he sprayed and the boys got all that yellow strong stuff in his eyes, and Skunk got away, and how to this very day the human race have a great respect for him.[1]

Matilda Gutierrez passed away on January 16, 2011. I never had the opportunity to meet her or hear her Skunk story in person. Yet the story was mentioned in so many interviews about Tillie and in the archived interviews with her, that I started to think of it as a metonym for Tillie herself; a sort of stand in for this incredible woman I could never meet.

Because the Skunk story came up so often, I decided to look at what the many significances of this story could be. When first comparing Tillie's many versions of Skunk story, I was struck by just how much intellectual labor must go into storytelling - especially in Tillie's case. For centuries Stó:lō cultural knowledge had been passed down from elders to the future generations, but colonialism had interrupted that ancient chain of succession. As a young girl, Tillie was taught by her grandparents and parents about Stó:lō culture and protocols. She learned about X:als' transformations, and about Skunk and other animals by hearing the stories told over and over again. Yet for a large portion of her adult life, Tillie stopped speaking Halq'emeylem and was disconnected from her cultural roots, as she struggled to overcome the culture of forgetfulness imposed at residential school and through the assimilative policies of colonialism, as well as her own struggles with alcoholism.

Though Tillie heard the Skunk story countless times growing up, she had to research and relearn it as an adult. The version quoted above is the only written rendition

[1] Gutierrez, Tillie, "The Duel of Skunk and Crane" Appendix in Point, Stephen, "The Skulkayn Indian Heritage Project Progress Report," May 2, 1972. Coqualeetza Training and Education Centre Archives (hereafter CTECA), Skulkayn Heritage Project (hereafter SHP), Box 2, Skulkayn Heritage Project Administrative File.

that Tillie penned herself. She wrote it in 1972, while working as a field interpreter for the Skulkayn Heritage Project. In the note that accompanies the story, she explains:

> In this story when boys are mentioned it means coyote and wolf and many other animals and the girls were birds, one of them was the humming bird and I do not know the other bird and you will notice I did not know where they were playing ball. We still have some more researching to do on this story.[2]

As this commentary implies, Tillie was in the midst of researching the Skunk story. Though she had originally heard it from her paternal grandmother Mary Jackson (née Sam), she was reacquainted with the story as an adult. Working for Skulkayn provided Tillie with the opportunity to ask her elders about the story's meanings and to fill in the gaps of her memory. Also as part of her assignment, Tillie wrote the story in Halq'emeylem, using an early version of the orthography developed for the Skulkayn project. By her late middle age, Tillie had regained her fluency in Halq'emeylem and remembered the stories and traditions of her childhood, while also learning some new ones.

The more I learned about Tillie, the more it seemed that the narrative arc of Skunk story paralleled Tillie's own life. Born at the beginning of the 20th Century and living over a decade into the 21st, Tillie's life history bends and blends into the history of S'ólh Téméxw. As a child, Tillie was immersed in the Halq'emeylem speaking world, witnessed its near dissolution at the hands of colonialism, then participated in its revival as an adult. Though Tillie did not start off as a braggart like Skunk, she too had some remarkable gifts, which she had to struggle to maintain and pass-on.

In this paper, I focus on these Skunk-like moments of learning and re-learning in Matilda Gutierrez's life. I decided very early on in my research that I would not try to

[2] Gutierrez, "The Duel of Skunk and Crane," CTECA, SHP, Box 2.

'understand' Tillie. Coming as I am from a very different historical and cultural context as her, I am neither equipped nor entitled to derive a particular meaning or message from Tillie's life. Perhaps if she were here to speak for herself, or to answer my questions, I could be bolder. Short of that, I would be remiss to assume that archival materials could some how encompass the complexity and intimacy of Tillie's - or any person's - lived experience.[3] So I've aspired to a far less daunting task. Using archival interviews, and with the insight and guidance of Tillie's family, I hope to highlight and contextualize some specific educational moments in Tillie's life.

Through archives and in conversations with Tillie's family, it became clear that Tillie was involved in a life-long process of learning. In particular, I got a sense of two significant educational phases in Tillie's life: her childhood, and her time working as a field interpreter and advisor for cultural preservation initiatives like the Skulkayn Heritage Project. In this essay, I try to show how and when Tillie acquired, and then re-acquired, the knowledge and skills that made her such a valued and respected elder.

In this first section, I hope to give a sense of the socio-historical context of Tillie's early life when she was first chosen and trained as a knowledge bearer and storyteller.

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Origins

Tillie's mother, Lucy Jackson, was the daughter of a Nl'akapamux women from the nearby village of Spuzzum, and a Stó:lō man named Sosap, also known as Joe Aleck. When Lucy was a young girl, her mother passed away and her father moved the family to

[3] For more on my methodology in this paper, see Appendix 1.

the village of Peqwechô:lthel at American Bar.[4] When Lucy was 13 or 15 years old, she married Dominic "Tom" Jackson and moved downriver to Chawathil Reserve, then known as Cats Landing.[5]

Tillie's grandfather, Kwipilem, Louie Jackson, had built his house on the Jackson family's farmland at the back of Chawathil reserve. This land had originally belonged to Tillie's great-great-grandfather, Atwel. Though we do not know exactly when Atwel moved to Chawathil, it is likely that he was one of the first residents of the reserve. As Keith Carlson explains, in the mid to late 19th Century, the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) subscribed to a stadial theory of social evolution, believing that permanent residency and agriculture were the surest ways to 'civilize' and assimilate the 'Indians' to Western culture. Following this policy, the colonial governments encouraged and pressured Aboriginal people from the lower Fraser Canyon to settle in the fertile Fraser Valley, an area that had been relatively de-populated after the small pox epidemics of the late 18th century.[6] Tillie's account of her family's settlement seems to confirm Carlson's timeline:

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[4] Lucy's mother died after her canoe tipped in the Coquihalla River. While living at American Bar, Sosap remarried and had another daughter. Lucy's half sister, Amelia Douglas, was significantly younger and would become one of Tillie's good friends and a fellow field worker at Skulkayn Heritage project. See Matilda Gutierrez, Interviewed by Sonny McHalsie, Randel Paul and Richard Daly, September 20, 1988, Chawathil, B.C., Interview GM88-37-39, transcript, Stó:lō Nation Archives (hereafter SNA).

[5] Because the "D" in Dominic's name was unfamiliar to Halq'emeylem speakers, Dominic was often referred to as Tom or Tomilic. Sonny McHalsie suggests that it is likely that Dominic was a name given to him by a priest or DIA agent at a time when Stó:lō people were not choosing their own English names. (Personal Correspondence with Sonny McHalsie, 23 August, 2013.)

[6] Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism.* (Toronto, 2010), 149-150. See also 313 *n.85.*

> The European settlers when they came they told us to survey our lands […] whatever we mark is going to be belonging to the reserve. So he [Atwel] came and he surveyed this property all along from Peter Pete right around the back here right down to Peter Joe's place.[7]

If Atwel started to farm his land during this period of agrarian reserve creation, he likely moved sometime between 1858, when Chawathil settlement first occurred, and 1878, when the area was officially designated as a reserve.[8] Over time, the family traded off pieces of their land to other Chawathil farmers.[9]

Matilda Gutierrez was born December 24, 1921. She and her brothers Edward and David were raised on the Chawathil family farm by their parents and the Jackson grandparents. As a young girl, Tillie worked with her grandparents, weeding and watering the gardens.[10] From Tillie's accounts, the Jacksons were prodigious farmers. In addition to growing vegetables, fruit, and hay, they also kept cows and other livestock. Since they had two horses and their own plow, the Jacksons were relatively well off, though they also shared and traded with other families, especially during the harder

[7] Matilda Gutierrez, Interviewed by Sonny McHalsie, Randel Paul, and Richard Daly, September 20, 1988, Chawathil, B.C., Interview GM88-37-39
[8] Carlson, *The Power of Place*, 149-150. See also 313 *n.85.*
[9] Matilda Gutierrez, Interview with Kevin Washbrook, May 21, 1994, Chawathil, B.C., Interview GT94-1,2, transcript, SNA.
[10] Ibid.

winter seasons.[11] "We never seemed to have went hungry," Tillie recalled, even during the "hungry 30s," which Tillie felt had been quite wrongly named.[12]

Though Tillie's family were successful subsistence farmers, the DIA's assimilative project could not really be claimed as a complete success, as the Jacksons maintained many of their traditional economic, social, and spiritual practices - often alongside or in combination with so-called 'civilized' Western practices. In addition to farming, the Jacksons engaged in some forms of wage labour, such as hop picking and some small fur trading,[13] as well as more traditional subsistence practices, such as hunting and fishing. This combination of the traditional and the modern is what John Lutz has called the 'moditional economy.' By working with one foot in the modern Western economy, while keeping one foot firmly planted in traditional forms of work and subsistence, Stó:lō families like Tillie's were able to both adapt to the rapidly changing world and maintain key tenants of their Stó:lō culture and identity.[14]

[11] As Carlson notes, following observations made by Sarah Carter about the Canadian Prairies, the DIA promoted subsistence agriculture but did not intend for Aboriginal farmers to compete with white farmers. According to Tillie, it was a real hindrance for Chawathil farmers who had to share a single DIA allotted plow amongst themselves. During the time-sensitive growing season, negotiating the use of such equipment created much strife on the reserve. See Matilda Gutierrez, Interview with Kevin Washbrook, May 21, 1994, Chawathil, B.C., Interview GT94-1,2, transcript, SNA.

[12] Matilda Gutierrez, Interview with Kevin Washbrook, May 21, 1994, Chawathil, B.C., Interview GT94-1,2, transcript, SNA.

[13] Tillie recalls using her slingshot to shoot squirrels, which her grandfather would then skin and stretch to sell to Whittaker's fur company for 50 cents a pelt. See Matilda and Alan Gutierrez, Interview by Patricia John and Sally Hope, February 9, 1996, Sardis, B.C., Interview GTA-ii-1996, SNA.

[14] John S Lutz, *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal White Relations.* (Vancouver, 2008), 9. .

Growing up at Íyém

Fishing was of particular importance for Tillie's family - not only for subsistence but for spiritual and cultural survival as well. With the creation of a downriver reserve system that favored agrarian life, the families with hereditary claims to the fishing spots in the lower Canyon were flung to disparate parts of the territory.[15] Thus, the return to the traditional fishing sites in fishing season was not only economically important, it provided these families with the opportunity to strengthen ties to their extended kin networks and exchange important cultural knowledge.

The Jacksons' ancestral fishing spot was at Íyém in the lower Fraser Canyon, just upriver from the present-day town of Yale. At this spot, where the river narrows, fast waters and jutting rocks create numerous back eddies where salmon can rest while making their spawning journey upstream. These spots are ideal for dip-netting fishing, and on a good day, a fisher can catch upwards of three hundred fish in a single hour.[16]

The Canyon also provides the ideal conditions for wind drying salmon.[17] "Those were the great old days," Tillie explains, "see from July the flies were less. July all the month of July we're fishing everyday, my granny's up there butchering everyday." With the Canyon's combination of heat and wind, the butchered salmon could be left to dry on racks by the riverbank. Using this method, fish that was caught in July could be preserved for several months.

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[15] 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.* Ed. Ted Binnema and Susan Neylan (Vancouver, 2007), 151.
[16] Ibid, 147.
[17] This, more than anything, made the area a particularly coveted one. (Interview with Sonny McHalsie, May 20, 2013. *See* also, Carlon, "Innovation," 150).

It was during these summer months that Tillie got to know her future husband, Alan "Al" Gutierrez. Al's grandfather, August Billy, was a high status man, who carried the prestigious name Swolésiya, which he later gave to Alan. Billy Swolésiya was either the son or grandson of Atwell, making Tillie and Al third cousins. During the summer months, the Billys and the Jacksons fished side by side at Íyém, even sharing a kitchen to process their fish. In one interview, Tillie explains that her marriage to Al "was more like fixed marriage […] My dad and my granddad picked him for my husband."[18] Stó:lō Nation Cultural Advisor and descendent of the Íyém fishing families, Sonny McHalsie, thinks that the marriage was likely arranged to resolve family conflicts. The Jacksons were one of many high-status families who fished at Íyém. These families, which included the Skits, the Dennises, the Stewarts, and the Jones, were likely related, as they all traced their ancestry back to Greenwood Island. When, as Carlson explains, potlatch prohibitions and other government interventions circumvented traditional systems of property distribution, conflicting claims were made to the much-coveted Canyon fishing sites. Al and Tillie's engagement would have eased these tensions by insuring that both sides of the family continued to share the right to fish there.[19]

Keeping the Stories

As Tillie recalls, much of her cultural education also took place at Íyém. She learned from the many family and friends who gathered there each year to share in the

[18] Elsewhere, Tillie explains that Al's father, Frances Gutierrez, had objected to the marriage because he thought that Al and Tillie were too closely related. GT-88-37,38,39 Mohs, Paul, McHalisie, and Daily. *See* also Matilda and Alan Gutierrez, Interview with Liam Haggarty and Heather Watson, May 26, 2005, Chawathil, SNA.
[19] Interview with Sonny McHalsie, May 20, 2013. *See* also, Carlson, "Innovation," 168.

season's feast. Each different aspect of the fishing process involved sharing and socializing. While salmon fillets were put on racks to dry, other parts of the fish were consumed immediately: "Roast the heads and the heart, the eggs and the backbone. Then they call each other and everybody come up. And they would come even from Aseláw, but they had to walk to the cable and then walk this way, to Íyém, just to have fun."[20]

It was at Íyém that Tillie first heard about Skunk and learned the stories and place names of the Stó:lō landscape: "I was all ears, that's why my ears are big maybe. And I'd be sitting there listening to them. They know I'm listening so they talk loud, they want the child to hear. And they talk and talk." [21] At Íyém Tillie learned from her relations, and they in turn observed her -- foreseeing the woman she would become and making decisions about the direction to guide her in. Perhaps, Tillie's relations noticed her big ears, because at age 13, as she made the transition from girl to womanhood, she was chosen by her grandfather Louie Jackson as "the one that's going to be teaching the young people that's coming behind you."[22]

In her interviews, Tillie often describes the ceremony that was performed at Th'exelís, not far from Íyém to mark her passage into womanhood. Her grandfathers took her to the bank of the river where X:als had sat when he did battle with the shxwlá:m called Xéylxel(e)mòs:

> Puberty age, when I turned 13 and they initiated me to that rock up there, the reason why they done that, my grandfathers, they both sang, they held their hands on my head like this and they sang that song that [my son] David sings today. They sang that song, and when they did that, they made me sit where he sat, put

[20] I'm not sure what the cable is that Tillie refers to here, but I suspect she is talking about a cable car that crossed the river. Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Sonny McHalsie, Randel Paul and Richard Daly, September 20, 1988, Chawathil, B.C., Interview GM88-37-39, transcript, SNA.

> my feet where his feet were, put my hands on where he made the marks, then they put their hands, and they sang that song…it's a welcome song ok? So they had to welcome the spirits to come in me, to strengthen me, when they were initiating me to that place. When they finished that song, they sat down and they talked to me.[23]

In addition to being chosen as keeper of stories, Tillie suggests that she was also given the gift of storytelling:

> You can attract people there's a way of attracting people you know. Crowds could be all like this and when I got to tell that story everybody turned around…I guess to listen to that story. And that's the power that was given to me with that sitting up there.[24]

Through her family's connections at Íyém, Tillie learned from elders who lived all across S'ólh Téméxw, and even some elders from outside Stó:lō territory.[25] As she explains, the importance of this knowledge and the role she was being given did not dawn on Tillie until she was much older.

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[23] Th'exelís, the place that Tillie refers to, is a cliff on the north bank of the river. There are grooves in the rock where it is said that X:als sat when doing battle with a shxwlá:m called Xéylxel(e)mòs. X:als made scratch marks on either side of him to create thunder, while gritting his teeth to create the winds that make the water so turbulent. When X:als vanquished his enemy, he turned him into a small island, what is today called Lady Franklin Rock. It is said that Xéylxel(e)mòs possessed a magical third eye, which is embedded in the south-facing side of the rock, facing the former village-site of Xelhalh. See Matilda and Alan Gutierrez, Interviewed with Patricia John and Sally Hope, February 9, 1996, Sardis, B.C., Interview GTA-ii-1996, SNA.

[24] Sonny McHalsie, Randel Paul and Richard Daly, September 20, 1988, Chawathil, B.C., Interview GM88-37-39.

[25] In interviews, Tillie often references elders who she has learned from. There is one story that Tillie often tells about the twisted trees on Thompson River, just above where the Thompson and Fraser meet, which she learned from a Nlaka'pamux man named Nathan Spinx. (Sonny McHalsie, May 20, 2013) It is also clear from the way that Tillie talks about her work with the Skulkayn Heritage Project that she saw her interviews with elders in that context as connected to her puberty right.

Despite this special appointment, Tillie stopped telling stories for a large portion of her adult life. Though she grew up with strong Stó:lō traditions in a Halq'emeylem speaking community, she was also subject to the cultural suppression and assimilative forces of colonialism. In these next sections, I look at how these forces interrupted Tillie's cultural education and contributed to her early life struggles.

Residential School

In the archived interviews I had access to, Tillie is primarily being interviewed for her knowledge of Halq'emeylem and traditional Stó:lō culture. The biographical details that come through in these interviews pertain to the times in her life when she was most immersed in the Halq'emeylem worldview. However, Tillie alludes to the different times in her life when she could not access the spiritual and emotional strength that she had long derived from her culture.

At a young age, Tillie started attending Kamloops Residential School.[26] One of her older brothers had gone to St.Mary's Residential School in Mission, but had run away after being sexually abused by a preacher there.[27] In interviews, Tillie does not often talk about her experiences at Kamloops. She does give a sense of the dower atmosphere at the school, noting that the food was alien and nearly inedible, and that the door to the children's playroom was always locked. In one interview, she describes the Catholic nuns

[26] There were Methodists schools closer by, but Tillie like most Chawathil residents, was a practicing Catholic. The Katz Landing Church was a Catholic Church. Many Chawathil band members – like the majority of Aboriginal people from interior B.C. – were baptized as Catholics because that was the denomination of most missionaries and residential schools in the area. Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal People and Politics: The Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989,* (Vancouver, 1990), 125-126.
[27]This is perhaps why Tillie was sent to a school farther away.

as "shoving this religion down my throat."[28] She also mentions that students were often whipped or beaten for speaking Halq'eymelem, though she did not herself suffer any blows.[29]As Tillie explains, she had had Halq'emeylem speaking teachers at Kamloops who helped her adjust to the school's atmosphere and evade the strap: "I had teachers that were already there that spoke our language, and they taught me not to talk my language while I was there. So I didn't speak my language, I try my best to learn the English after that, when I did learn I got along pretty good in school.[30]

In this and other recollections, the picture that Tillie paints of her time at Kamloops is surprisingly ambivalent. Though she admits in many interviews that conditions were horrible at the school, Tillie seems to have valued the skills she acquired there. Tillie's granddaughter Joanne was always surprised by how positively her grandma spoke about residential school: "She kept going, 'it was a good thing because I learned how to clean house there, and how to make a bed, and how to cook and do dishes.'" Joanne had indirectly heard stories about the abuse that Tillie and other elders had experienced at residential school, but she took her grandmother's upbeat memories as a testament to her resiliency. [31] Indeed, it seems that the skills Tillie learned at residential school did in some ways help her support her family and engage with the colonized

[28] Matilda Gutierrez, Interview with Kevin Washbrook, May 21, 1994, Chawathil, B.C., Interview GT94-1,2, transcript, SNA

[29] In Paige Raibmon's interviews with former residential school students, it seems that many Roman Catholic schools, and Kamloops in particular, had a more pervasive religious atmosphere than residential schools of other denominations. See Raibmon, Paige, "'A New Understanding of Things Indian': *George Raley's Negotiation of the Residential School Experience*" (BC Studies, no. 116, Summer 1996), 81.

[30] Matilda Gutierrez, Interview with Kevin Washbrook, May 21, 1994, Chawathil, B.C., Interview GT94-1,2, transcript, SNA.

[31] Interview with Joanne Hugh, May 22, 2013.

world. On one occasion, for example, Tillie was able to write a letter to the Indian agent on behalf of her grandfather, requesting some blankets.[32]

Yet, to emphasize Tillie's resilience is not to underestimate the negative impact that residential school had on her. In one interview that Tillie conducted with Dave Johnnie for the Skulkayn Heritage Project, they discuss how and when they both lost their Indian culture. Johnnie, who did not go to school, says that he lost his language by working with white people and only speaking English, while Tillie attributes her loss of culture to the assimilative forces of residential school: "Well [the language] was taken away I think through the residential schools that's how I lost my Indian culture the way we use to live long ago taken away from us."[33] Though Tillie did not suffer from the same physical abuse experienced by some other First Nations people, she was subject to cultural and linguistic suppression of the Canadian residential schools system. It would be hard to speculate what factors exactly led to the period of alcoholism and depression that Tillie endured as an adult. Certainly, residential school came with an emotional and psychic toll for Tillie and other Sto:lo people of her generation who were taught that they should be ashamed of heritage. Though the academic and domestic skills she acquired helped Tillie find work and support her family as an adult, it would take the better half of her adult life before Tillie felt confident speaking Halq'emeylem again.

[32] Matilda Gutierrez, Interview with Kevin Washbrook, May 21, 1994, Chawathil, B.C., Interview GT94-1,2, transcript, SNA.
[33] Dave Johnnie, Interview with Tillie Gutierrez and Amelia Douglas, June 23, 1972, Tape L# 35, transcript, CETCA.

Early Adulthood

Though Tillie was alienated from the traditional elements of Sto:lo life, such as her language and her ancestral fishing site, her experience was not untypical for Aboriginal people living in Canada in the mid-20th Century. When Tillie and Al were married in 1939, Tillie lost her Indian status. Al's mother, Mary Madeleine Billy, had lost her status when she married Frances "Frisco" Gutierrez, the son of a Mexican train packer and a N'aklapmux women. The Indian Agent at Union Bar had offered to give Frances Indian status if he changed his name to Billy, but Frances did not want to deny his father name. Al's grandfather even tried to adopt him in order to give him status, but that did not work either.[34] Before Bill-31 was implemented in 1985 to rectify gender inequality in the Indian Act, the Act stipulated that any Aboriginal women who married a non-status man would also lose her status.[35] The fact that Al carried one of the oldest Halq'emeylem names and came from a high-status family had no significance to the DIA. Thus, the same policy which had stripped Alan's grandmother of her Indian status when she married Frances Gutierrez in 1875, worked again to deny Tillie Indian status in 1939.

In their first few years of marriage, Tillie and Al moved around, staying with family at Union Bar and Chawathil before settling in Hope.[36] From 1940 to 1965, Tillie

[34] Matilda and Alan Gutierrez, interview with Gordon Mohs and Sonny McHalsie, March 16,1989, Hope B.C., Interview GA 89-SR5, SNA.
[35] Erin Hanson, "Bill C-31" Indigenous Foundations, http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/the-indian-act/bill-c-31.html (accessed July 4, 2013)
[36] Matilda and Alan Gutierrez, interview with Gordon Mohs and Sonny McHalsie, March 16,1989, Hope B.C., Interview GA 89-SR5, SNA.

gave birth to 14 children, 11 of whom survived past the age of 10.[37] During those years, Tillie stayed home to look after the children, while Al worked as a logger. According to Geraldine Gutierrez, Al's income was enough to support the family, but just barely.[38]

Through these years, both Al and Tillie struggled with alcoholism. In their granddaughter Joanne's analysis, these struggles were very much connected to the unprocessed traumas of colonialism and residential school. When Tillie's grandfather died in 1941, the family stopped going to their fishing site. They tried to return when Tillie's children where growing up, but were chased off by the new occupants and didn't want to start a fight.[39] When Tillie's father passed away, Tillie was not eligible for the Certificate of Possession (CP) for her father's sizeable farmland because she was no longer a member of the Chawathil band.[40] Now that they were living off reserve, the Gutierrez family was more isolated from the support of their extended social networks. Tillie's mother Lucy helped raise the children, but the social institutions that Tillie and Al had been raised in were now all but gone. It is around this same time that Tillie stopped speaking Halq'emeylem: "I lost it, I lost my language sort of. Sealed me up like, and I couldn't speak my language for long time."[41]

In interviews, Tillie talks about these years in very little detail. She describes them only as the dark times of adversity that she and Al managed to overcome. From

[37] Tillie was also known for taking in nieces, nephews, and other children in need of help. Birdie Pettis of Union Bar stayed with the Gutierrez family when she ran away from home, as did Sonny McHalsie's mother. (Interview with Sonny McHalsie, May 20, 2013)
[38] Interview with Geraldine Gutierrez, May 26, 2013.
[39] Matilda Gutierrez, Interview with Sonny McHalsie and Randel Paul, September 7,1989, Yale, B.C., Interview GM89-7, transcript, SNA.
[40] Interview with Joanne Hugh, May 22, 2013.
[41] Sonny McHalsie, Randel Paul and Richard Daly, September 20, 1988, Chawathil, B.C., Interview GM88-37-39.

Tillie's granddaughter Joanne, I learned that some of Tillie's younger children were taken into foster care during the '60's Scoop,' when thousands of Aboriginal children were taken from their homes and put into foster care and child welfare institutions.[42] According to Tillie's granddaughter Joanne, at the pinnacle of these hard times, Tillie and Al got into a violent altercation in which it seemed like Al might have been on the verge of killing Tillie. In self-defense, she grabbed a .22 rifle and shot off his arm. Though Tillie and Al remained together after this fight, the event was incredibly traumatizing for the family.[43]

While in jail for this incident, both Tillie and Al got involved with Alcoholics Anonymous and went on what Joanne describes as the 'AA Crusade': "They were the first ones set up the AA meetings in the different communities to get our people to put down the bottle and to start grabbing on to the language, the culture, the medicine, that real cultural revival."[44]

It came as a surprise to learn from Joanne and others that a Christianized program like AA had in some ways helped to galvanize the Stó:lō cultural revival. It seems antithetical that Christianity, which Tillie describes as having been "shoved down her throat" at residential school, could also be a source of healing for her later in her life. However, from the ways in which Tillie talked about AA, it seemed as if she was able to experience AA Christianity as a distinct form of religiosity, different from the residential school Catholicism. The most important feature of the AA spirituality was that Tillie was

[42] Erin Hanson, "The Sixties Scoop and Aboriginal Child Welfare," Indigenous Foundations, http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/sixties-scoop.html (accessed July 4, 2013).
[43] Interview with Joanne Hugh, May 22, 2013.
[44] Ibid.

better able to reconcile it with her Indigenous identity and spirituality. As this next section will show, Tillie and Al's newfound sobriety coincided with a time of great change and healing in Stó:lō territory and for First Nations across Canada.

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Red Power and the Stó:lō Cultural Revival

Starting in the 1960s, Aboriginal people began to mobilize across North America in what is called the 'Red Power' movement. Though Red Power is often considered a direct response the assimilative policy proposals of the 1969 White Paper, First Nations on both sides of the Canada-US border had already begun to examine the issue in their communities before 1969. Red Power activist and former Skowkale chief Bob Hall describes the movement as being driven by the desire to address the marginalization of Canada's Aboriginal peoples:

> We got together to create a movement to expose the problem that our people were having with education because you know, we were having a 75% drop out rate then. And then to compound that, there was 70% of people in jail were our people. So we went out to begin to expose that injustice and to understand you know, why it had taken place. Where our social dysfunctions were so bad, you know, and there were so many of our people on skid row.[45]

For Hall and many Red Power activists, the diagnosis was that these ills were directly related to cultural suppression under colonialism, which had alienated Aboriginal people from their core social institutions and systems of governance. Though much of the Red Power anger was directed at the systemic racism and assimilative policies of the Canadian government, Aboriginal people in the Fraser Valley and across Canada were also starting to turn inwards, asking questions about what it meant to be Aboriginal.[46]

[45] Interview with Bob Hall, May 31, 2013.
[46] Ibid.

Many young adults like Hall first became involved with Red Power on campuses and in urban centers, steeped in the context of other 1960s social movements.[47] However, for Tillie and many of the adults of her generation, Red Power started with healing at home. "From what I heard," Joanne explained, "there were AA meetings, things like that happening all throughout the territory and they would rotate it through different band halls."[48] Just as fishing sites and hop yard gatherings had brought Stó:lō people closer with their extended social networks in the past, these meetings provided an opportunity for Stó:lō people to exchange knowledge and talk about the ills in their communities.[49] Indeed, many Stó:lō people felt that community health was inextricably linked to cultural and spiritual wellbeing. As Tillie herself wrote in 1972: "The heritage of the Indian is the mainline of the Indian's life. Without it you see it now."[50]

The Skulkayn Heritage Project

As people began to realize, the stories and traditions that were so integral to community wellness were fading from living memory with the last generation of fluent Halq'emeylem speakers. If the Stó:lō people were going to thrive, they needed to recover

[47] Bryan Palmer, "'Indians of All Tribes': The Birth of Red Power," *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties.* Ed. Campbell, Lara, Dominique Clement, Gregory Kealey (Toronto, 2012), 193.
[48] Interview with Joanne Hugh, May 22, 2013.
[49] Though it may come as a surprise to learn from Joanne and others that a Christianized program like AA had in some ways helped to galvanize the Stó:lō cultural revival, the AA meeting served an important and very traditional social purpose. As Brent Galloway notes, the revival of the winter dance, the introduction of the Shaker Religion, and the growth of AA program, all helped to build confidence and support the cultural and linguistic resurgence in Stó:lō territory. *See* Galloway, Brent, "The Upriver Language Program at Coqualeetza." *Human Organization* 47: 4 (Winter 1988), 293.
[50] Gutierrez, Tillie, Field notes, 1972, CETCA. SHP Box 2, Tillie Gutierrez file.

those traditions before it was too late.[51] It was with this end in mind that the Skulkayn Heritage Project was initiated in 1971. Following up on the concerns of his elders, Chief Gordon Hall of Skowkale band instructed his son Bob Hall to initiate a history and language program. Hall explains that he applied for a federal grant and received about $100, 000 to start the Skulkayn Heritage project.[52] The Skowkale band quickly constructed a log cabin to function as project headquarters, and hired Stephen Point to manage the language program.

Though the program's primary and most explicit objective was to revive and preserve the Halq'emeylem language and worldview, this aim was very much tied up

[51] Since the late 1960s, cultural preservation initiatives in the Fraser Valley had been highly politicized, as they were tied up with the reclamation of Coqualeetza, the former site of residential school and tuberculosis hospital in Sardis, B.C. Starting in 1968, the Stó:lō began to lobby for control of Coqualeetza, when it was discovered that the hospital operating there was going to be closed down, and the facilities turned over to the Department of Defense. With the support of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, and several other North American Aboriginal Associations, the 24 bands of what was then called the East Fraser District, were mandated to operate a cultural education centre on the site, as part of a wider land claims strategy for the whole of British Columbia.[51] After much controversy, the Stó:lō were granted access to the former Nurse's Residence at Coqualeetza, which became the central office for the Coqualeetza Education and Training Center. The Stó:lō Chiefs continued to lobby for Coqualeetza to be made into an Indian Reserve, held in common by all 24 Stó:lō bands. However, the federal government was reluctant to meet the Stó:lō's demands. On several occasions, the Stó:lō took direct action, staging marches, protests, and two occupations in Coqualeetza buildings. The second occupation, known commonly among the Stó:lō as the "elder's occupation" lasted 24 hours and received significant media attention. It's not absolutely clear if Tillie was there herself, but her son Martin certainly was, and her daughter Edna was taken into custody there with 26 others.[51] Though the federal government has never officially given Coqualeetza reserve status, the property is now one of the main headquarters of Stó:lō administration and governance. Stó:lō people often agree that this accomplishment can largely be attributed to the direct action of the 1970s. See McDowell, Melissa, "'This is Stó:lō Indian Land': The Struggle for Control of Coqualeetza, 1968-1976," SNA, 2002.

[52] Interview with Stephen Point, May 31, 2013.

with the social justice politics of Red Power. As the preamble to the project's proposal explains:

> For many years our people have been a sleeping people. While we sleep in ignorance, our land is taken away, our language and culture squashed in this area and our way of life altered […] These children today will be the adults of tomorrow; can we afford to pass on our problems to them? No! We must somehow solve our difficulties ourselves for our children tomorrow…How can we resolve other problems facing the children and adults today. First we must know and understand these problems. It is the feeling of our project that "Native Identity" is the greatest dilemma that our people of all ages confront each day. What is "Native Identity"? "Native Identity is a feeling of pride, a knowledge of your language; and a knowledge of your cultural heritage. All difficulties faced by the Indians are some way related to the "Native Identity." How can we re-instate this "Native Identity into the minds of our people today and tomorrow? How can we re-enstate [sic] the pride back in the hearts of our people?; how can we re-enstate the dead language of our Helkomelem tribes?; how can we bring back our culture to the foreground of our way of life from the generations to come?[53]

Though the Red Power movement is often characterized as having developed a critique of colonialism based on pan-Aboriginal politically unity and direct action, it is also important to note that for people of the Fraser Valley, Red Power meant re-discovering the particularities of their culture. According to Hall, it was only with the insights from the research done through Skulkayn and similar projects, that the Fraser Valley People started to identify as Stó:lō:

> Like we have 85 villages right here in the Valley between Langley and Hope. We didn't know that we were Stó:lō people. We always called ourselves Fraser East District, that was the name Indian Affairs gave us. Or we would just say Skowkale. We didn't know that we were part of a greater tribal entity. But that was when we all started to learn about our extended family, with the help of people like Tillie […] That was when they said that, the interpretation of the word that came out was people of the river, and that's where the name Stó:lō evolved from, the name Stó:lō came through. And that's what we started telling people, we are Stó:lō. We're not Coast Salish we are Stó:lō, people of the river.[54]

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[53] "Introduction to the Skulkayn Heritage Project," 1972. CTECA, SHP Box 2, Skulkayn Heritage Project Administrative File.
[54] Interview with Bob Hall, May 31, 2013.

Whatever this newfound Stó:lō identity consisted of, it was closely tied to the upper river Halq'emeylem dialect. As people had long been aware, there was an obvious continuity among the spiritual, cultural, economic, and social traditions of the Halq'emeylem speaking people who lived along the Fraser River from Langley up into the Canyon area. Yet, by highlighting this continuity and writing a collective history for the Halq'emeylem speaking people of the Fraser Valley, Skulkayn was also trying to lay new ground for political unity and collective action.

Though it was based out of Skowkale reserve, the Skulkayn Heritage Project reached much further than that. Their goal was to interview and record as many elders as possible from across the Fraser Valley. However, as Stephen Point explains, many elders were reluctant to share their culture knowledge:

> This was the early 70s […] we were coming off a period of time, the Indian Act was changed in […] the late 1800s, the Indian act was amended, you couldn't have a potlatch…and so a lot of the people were arrested during that time, and so they used to only have cultural gatherings in the kind of hush hush, they'd be in the bush somewhere, on the ground, and so, there was a bit of a stigma I think, to talking about your language, to talking about your culture, you grew up with that secrecy environment. I know that a lot of parents felt that they didn't want to burden their kids with what they went through so they wouldn't talk their language to them. And they thought that they would do better in school and that they wouldn't be discriminated against. There was a lot of that mental attitude about it. […] In those days you had a lot of elders, they were still leery of talking about things.[55]

The primary goal of the Skulkayn heritage project was to banish the ambivalence that so many Stó:lō people felt towards their history, and to rebuild the generational connections and cultural institutions that had been ravaged by colonialism. Not only did this entail reviving the language and the culture, it also meant reactivating extended social networks

[55] Interview with Stephen Point, May 31, 2013.

and traditional pedagogical models.[56]It was in making these connections that Tillie and the elders of her generation proved invaluable.

In 1972, Tillie and Amelia Douglas were hired on honorarium to work as field interpreters for Skulkayn, providing the linguistic link that Point describes as having been crucial to the success of the project:

> These old, old elders couldn't speak English most of them. And so the medium elders would go and talk to them and collect stories and so, the beauty of that was that up until then the elders had been interviewed by trained anthropologists or historians, people like Oliver Wells who were just interested in history but they would always ask just sort of random questions like what colour is the sky? What is this bird called? Do the Indians eat meat? So the answer would be really brief and to the point. And sometimes the answers wasn't accurate because they wouldn't understand the question because you've got a whole different culture asking this culture, there's just a lot of cultural gap…. So the continuity you get is aboriginal people asking in their own language and getting answers in the context of the dialogue which was grammatically correct, linguistically correct […] So they were being interviewed for the very first time in their own language.[57]

What was so unique about the Skulkayn project was that it was one of the first Aboriginal-run programs to draw on both traditional knowledge and pedagogy as well as utilizing the methodologies and resources of Western academia. The Stó:lō language and culture had long been studied by anthropologists and linguists and with Skulkayn, those findings were finally making a homecoming. Having spent time in residential school, both Tillie and Amelia could read and write in English, and so were able to work with the academic materials and record data, but they could also speak Halq'emeylem and were familiar with the cultural and social protocols that the elders were accustomed to. Thus, as field interpreters, they played a crucial role in bridging the divide between the Halq'emeylem elders and the younger project coordinators.

[56]While also borrowing - and claiming - some methodological features from the disciplines of anthropology, linguistics, and history.
[57] Interview with Stephen Point, May 31, 2013.

However, it had been decades since Tillie was immersed in a community of fluent Halq'emeylem speakers, and the language no longer came naturally to her. There was also the added challenge of having to negotiate multiple dialects from all parts of the Valley. This could be frustrating and Tillie often comments on the difficulties of this work in her field notes. On April 10, 1972 she writes, "Now Amelia and I have a new experience where we have to respect other people in our language. We still understand each other," and on April 11: "Again Amelia and I had the experience of different pronunciation."[58] On top of that, Tillie and the other elders employed by Skulkayn were figuring out how to write what had until then been an orally transmitted language; Tillie was not only re-familiarizing herself with the language, she was learning it anew.

Reenter the Skunk

Writing Skunk Story was one of Tillie's first assignments for Skulkayn. As Tillie explains, it took her and Amelia over two weeks to research the story and then to sound out the Halq'emeylem and write it down. After bringing the Halq'emeylem version to her elders for revision on April 14 1972 Tillie writes, "The old people got a big kick out of it because there was lots of mistakes in my Indian words. Anyway I enjoyed their criticism because they were so nice about it."[59] Like Skunk himself, Tillie was trying to reacquire her power, with the help of some 'good friends.'

[58] "Tillie Gutierrez's Work Schedule," April 7 - 19, 1972, CETCA. SHP Box 2, Tillie Gutierrez file.
[59] Gutierrez, Tillie, Unpublished Fieldnotes, April 14, 1972, CETCA. SHP Box 2, Tillie Gutierrez file.

Despite the challenges of the work, Tillie often writes in her field notes about how inspiring she finds the project. After one successful visit to Kamloops on July 16, 1972, Tillie wrote:

> I love my Indian people and I have to mix in with them in order to find out how I have to be with each and every one of them. I am proud to be an Indian and I am glad that I am working with Skulkayn Indian Heritage Project, They are all wonderful young people. Speaking of grass roots! This is it!"

Working for Skulkayn allowed Tillie to re-connect with elders she had learned from as a child, such as Dolly Felix, Joe and Adeline Lorenzetto, Susan and Cindy Jimmy, and Margaret Emory. Through these meetings Tillie was reacquainted with long-forgotten aspects of her culture, while adding some new stories to her repertoire.

Tillie and the other field workers seemed to conceive of their cultural preservation work as strengthening their bond to the wider community. In a letter written by the Tillie and the other 'middle elders' employed at Skulkayn, they explain: "the four of us, Wilfred Tommy, Tim Point, Amelia Douglas and Tillie Gutierrez, we feel that the Skulkayn Project made us feel responsible towards our older members of our Indian people and also our younger generation." [60] Clearly a connection to the language was not the only thing that the project had managed to build.

After Skulkayn

In 1973 the Skulkayn Heritage project was renamed the Stalo Heritage Project - an indication that the coordinators saw their work as part of a larger nation-building

[60] Wilfred Tommy, Tim Point, Amelia Douglas and Tillie Gutierrez**,** "Skulkayn Heritage Project," May 9, 1972. CETCA. SHP Box 2, Tillie Gutierrez file.

project. The program continued to receive funding until the summer of 1974, at which point their archives were transferred to the Coqualeetza Education Training Centre.[61] Now under the auspices of the Coqualeetza Center, Tillie continued to participate in the weekly elders meetings.[62] She also continued her work with other elders and linguist Brent Galloway in developing a Halq'emeylem dictionary. After much research, the Skulkayn project had decided to adopt Randy Bouchard's orthography, and Coqualeetza was now using this writing system to create Halq'emeylem teaching curriculums for both adults and children. In addition to this expanding language program, Coqualeetza also hosted and initiated a diversity of other programs, including Elders Gatherings, a traditional summer Fish Camp, and basket weaving. They also expanded operations to include a library, a media center and a land claims department, which carried out extensive studies on traditional place names and land use.[63]

With the founding of Stó:lō Nation Canada and the Stó:lō Tribal Council, support and funding for cultural revival projects grew through both the Coqualeetza Education and Training Center and later through the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre. From the mid 1980's, Tillie shifted from being someone who interviewed older elders to a senior elder who was herself sought out by a new generation of researchers. Tillie's familiarity with traditional medicines, Halq'emeylem stories, and place names made her an invaluable source of Stó:lō knowledge and she was interviewed countless times. Because of her connection to Iyem, Tillie was particularly knowledgeable about the Fraser Canyon area. In one of the most significant interviews, undertaken with Sonny

[61] McDowell, "'This is Stó:lō Indian Land'," 34.
[62] The Coqualeetza elders group continues to run to this day.
[63] Galloway, "The Upriver Language Program at Coqualeetza," 295-96.

McHalsie for the 1988 Twin Tracking case,[64] Tillie recalls a chiefs' meeting that took place at Iyem in which the phrase "*S'ólh Téméxw te íkw'élò. Xólhmet te mekw' stám ít kwelát"* was uttered.[65] This phrase, which means, "This is our land. We have to look after everything that belongs to us" is now the motto of the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre. It has been taken by the Stó:lō as both an oral record of aboriginal title and a reminder of their deep connection and responsibility to the land. Not only did Tillie's teachings strengthen the Stó:lō's claim to their ancestral lands, they strengthened the confidence and cultural knowledge of Stó:lō people across the territory. Through her work as a field interpreter, and then later as an elder-advisor, Tillie played a big role in this important work.

Outside of her work as a cultural advisor, Tillie carried the ethos of Skulkayn and Red Power into her community in several different ways. She was an activist for Aboriginal Rights and Title, participating in many demonstrations, including the

[64] Starting in 1984, the Stó:lō joined other First Nations in the Fraser Valley area to protest CN's proposed track expansion. The expansion, which was going to be carried through without sufficient archeological inspections, would have jeopardized several sacred Stó:lō heritage sites. Ultimately, the Stó:lō's protests were heard and the project was abandoned. Since then, the Stó:lō have employed a full-time cultural advisor and archaelogist through the SRRMC and, according to Klassen, "provide the current standard for First Nation involvement in heritage stewardship in British Columbia." Michael Klassen, "Indigenous Heritage Stewardship and the Transformation of Archaeological Practice: Two Case Studies from the Mid-Fraser Region of British Columbia." Simon Fraser University (PHD Thesis, 2013) 75-76.

[65] Unfortunately neither the transcript nor the tape recording of this interview could be found in the Stó:lō Nation archives, but Sonny remembered the interview and emphasized its importance. Interview with Sonny McHalsie, May 20, 2013.

Constitution Express protest to Ottawa in 1980.[66] Tillie was also somewhat of a watchdog in Stó:lō territory, known for 'balling out' politicians if it seemed like they did not have their people's best interests at heart.[67]

While Tillie was working as a field interpreter, she also started training to become a certified drug and alcohol addictions counselor. From 1972 to 1982, Tillie worked throughout the Valley helping other Aboriginal people struggling with addictions. Geraldine Gutierrez remembers that Tillie found this work to be incredibly empowering, since it gave her a sense of spiritual strength and community connection. Moreover, Tillie's late in life career gave her an independent income that allowed her to be more mobile. According to Geraldine:

> She was 50 when she finally got her own independence […] And she worked and she got a car and took herself, and she would leave Dad behind eh? (Laughs) They would go on, her and David and Delores, and Ella, they'd be gone.[68]

This newfound independence allowed Tillie to pursue her love of slahal - a passion that runs deep in the Gutierrez family. Next to Skunk story, slahal seems to be the topic that comes up most often in conversations about Tillie. As Bob Hall recalls,

> As the kids got older Tillie got involved in the bone game, she was a great gambler. And then she made a team of her own family because there was so many of them. And I know she won a number of tournaments down in the states.[69]

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[66] The Constitution Express was organized by the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs in 1980/81. Two trains carrying over 1000 activists traveled to Ottawa to protest the exclusion of Aboriginal people from the on-going patriation process. The protesters aimed to shed more light on how the proposed Constitution, put forth by the Trudeau government, made no recognition of Aboriginal rights and title. Erin Hanson, "Constitution Express," http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/community-politics/constitution-express.html, (accessed July 4, 2013).

[67] This came up in several interviews including Bob Hall (May 31, 2013), Stephen Point (May 31, 2013), and Geraldine Gutierrez (May 26, 2013).

[68] Interview with Geraldine Gutierrez and Joanne Hugh, May 26, 2013.

[69] Interview with Bob Hall, May 31, 2013.

Around the time that Tillie began to work with cultural preservation initiatives like Skulkayn, she also started working to ensure that her own family felt connected to their heritage. Tillie granddaughter Joanne remembers that playing slahal was a big part of the cultural education she received from her grandmother[70]

However, like many Stó:lō people, Tillie had to re-learn the value of her own cultural knowledge. Tillie's youngest son David Gutierrez did not even know his mother was a storyteller until he was in high school. The first story he did hear of hers was (of course) the Skunk Story. However, it was not actually from his mother first hand:

> When I first started getting into storytelling was when Stephen [Point] came to my high school and he was working with the Native Ed. at that time with the Chilliwack area, but he just happened to be in Hope there. And he come into our classroom: 'I'm going to share a story, a first nations story.' So I sat there, and did my best to kind of listen to him and he told the story about I think it was Skunk and spring salmon. 'You know, I like that story, that's a neat story, where do you hear stories like that?' And he looks at me and he smiles 'you know, it's funny you don't know that story?' and I says 'why?' [He says] 'Cause it was auntie, your mom who told me that story.' Boy I'm telling when I got off the school bus I marched right in to our house and I was like 'Mom, What's going on here, I heard one of your stories today and I've never ever heard it before.' And she goes, 'oh ok, well which one is it?' I says, 'the one about Skunk and Salmon. She goes 'ok, sit down' and she sat me down and told me the story, that was the first story I heard from my mom. And ah she shared it with me. And I said 'you know Mom, I didn't know you knew stories about who our people were and our animals and stuff.'[71]

David asked if he could learn more and Tillie began to teach him what she knew. Once she did start sharing more of her knowledge with her family, she did so with great gusto. As Joanne remembers, she and the other grandchildren were made to sit around every Sunday at family potlucks to listen to their elders, just as Tillie had done when she was a child:

[70] Interview with Joanne Hugh, May 22, 2013.
[71] Interview with David Gutierrez, May 27, 2013.

> And we would have a big potluck at my mom and dad's house. And a lot of my relatives would come, just whoever could make it came. And all of us kids would sit at Grandma and Grandpa's feet. And they would tell stories and they would tell us about the different teachings, like about sxwó:yxwey [...] about the songs, the language also too. And listening was very important and at the time when I was growing up, this would happen quite a lot on Sunday, they would give us those teachings, I would sit there and I think I told you early I would be like, when am I going to be able to be done and go and play, but my Dad said to me, he said, babe when you're ready all this knowledge is going to be there for you. It'll all come back to you. And what they were doing there, they were planting the seeds.[72]

Tillie was not simply telling stories and playing slahal, she was bringing her family together using traditional Stó:lō social practices to instill in her family a Stó:lō pride and identity. As Joanne explained, these Sunday potlucks always included an AA-style session, where family members could stand up and talk about their struggles with alcohol, addiction, or depression. After going through her own troubles and healing process, Tillie was sharing the same tools that had helped her with her family. For her, it seemed, the preservation of the culture came hand in hand with the health of her family and the community.

Xwiyálemot's Future

In 1994, when Joanne turned 21, she was chosen by her grandmother to carry the name Xwiyálemot:

> This was after a few stints I had had speaking or doing things with my work, and working under really awesome elders like Pat Charlie, Shirley Julian, Helen Joe, Mary Malloway. Grandma saw how I conducted myself, how I spoke, I respected the elders, I went on several elders trips, when they went places, and just from probably watching me and she just told me when I was 21, I'm going to give you my Indian name, I want you to be the next Xwiyelemot, and now your training starts.[73]

[72] Interview with Joanne Hugh, May 22, 2013.
[73] Interview with Joanne Hugh, May 22, 2013

Becoming Xwiyálemot involved an extensive 6-month training process during which Joanne was taken by her grandma to speak with other elders and taught traditional crafts and skills so that she could make all the food and gifts for her own naming ceremony.

There is some confusion as to whether or not Tillie's story keeping role was attached to her traditional name. At age 2, Tillie was given the name Xwiyálemot, which means "very strong standing person."[74] As Anastasia Tataryn explains, a Stó:lō person typically receives their ancestral name as they pass from child to adulthood.[75] However, in Tillie's case, her family was anxious to see the name used. Xwiyálemot had last belonged to Tillie's paternal great-grandmother, but had not been carried for some time. In order to maintain their claim to the history and ancestry associated with the name, the family needed to put Xwiyálemot to use again. In the same fashion, Tillie passed the name to her granddaughter in order to keep this ancestral connection alive.

Like Tillie herself, Joanne must have shown a special gift; her keen interest in the language and culture and her dedication to her community made her standout as a worthy carrier of the name. However, Joanne explains, she did not realize the significance of what was being given to her until she was much older:

> I don't think I really realized what the hell it was. You know what I mean? I just thought oh that's kind of cool, I'm getting an Indian name, neat. And yes its great, but it has great responsibility, and that's the part for me right now […] Now I'm trying to embrace that part of me, that now I feel stronger to try and truly be that

[74] It is interesting to note that Tillie cites Dolly Felix as the elder who explained the meaning of Xwiyálemot to her. Felix was a participant in the Skulkayn Heritage project, so it is possible that Tillie did not know what the name meant, or had to relearn it's meaning when she was an adult. See Matilda Gutierrez, Interviewed by Sonny McHalsie, Randel Paul and Richard Daly, September 20, 1988, Chawathil, B.C., Interview GM88-37-39, transcript, Stó:lō Nation Archives (hereafter SNA).
[75] Tataryn, Anastasi, "What *is* in a Name?" *University of Fraser Valley Research Review* 2:2 (2009), 59.

> responsibility to the name, which is a rights fighter, a healer, and a person who helps make sure that all of our Stó:lō people belong, and know where they belong.[76]

Just like Tillie, who, at her own puberty ceremony explains that she "didn't know what it was all about," Joanne found that it took some time before she understood the significance of her name, and she feels that she is still discovering how she is supposed to use the name.

Perhaps there is something about the power of the Xwiyálemot women that ripens late in life. When Tillie tells the story of her puberty rights ceremony, she describes the elder's teachings as a form of empowerment: "each elder gave me strength, like I'm doing now, I'm giving you the stories."[77] It is interesting that in her recollections here, Tillie equates strength with stories. If indeed the strength of Xwiyálemot comes from what she knows, then the gift that was being passed to her was something that had to be accumulated overtime. Joanne is turning 40 this year. Tillie, by comparison, was 50 years old when she came into her role as a cultural leader and community advocate. Maybe it takes those first few decades of learning and growth to figure out how to use the strength that come with the name.

Like the Skunk in her stories, Xwiyálemot had to mature into her name. After reading Tillie's interviews and spending time with her family, the Skunk Story still seems to embody Tillie's life and spirit. When I hear the story now, I hear it in Tillie's voice; infused with the layers of meaning and experience that she brings to it. I hear the story of a language nearly lost, a history nearly forgotten, and the tremendous effort made by

[76] Interview with Joanne Hugh, May 22, 2013.
[77] Matilda and Alan Gutierrez, Interviewed with Patricia John and Sally Hope, February 9, 1996, Sardis, B.C., Interview GTA-ii-1996, SNA.

elders like Tillie to reverse the amnesias of colonialism and bring pride to Stó:lō communties. Tillie was engaged in a life-long process of learning and she will be remembered for her dedicated work as a cultural advisor and Stó:lō advocate.

In the Halq'emeylem dictionary Tillie helped to produce, it says that the name Xwiyálemot stems from the word xwayólem, meaning "*gift one really makes use of.*"[78] This strikes me as unbelievably appropriate for Tillie. If indeed stories are a form of power, then Tillie's gift was in managing to regain and to share her strength with others. Through her work in the Stó:lō community, and particularly through her participation in cultural preservation initiatives like Skulkayn and Coqualeetza, Tillie has spread her power - not only to her family but to all future Stó:lō generations.

Joanne has identified Tillie's great-granddaughter Gracie Gutierrez as the next Xwiyálemot. Gracie has shown an aptitude for learning Halq'emeylem, and according to Joanne, she "has that little bit of bossiness" that all Xwiyálemots need.[79] Thanks to the work of Tillie and other elders, Gracie has been learning Halq'emeylem since she was four years old, using curriculum that Tillie helped to produce. Also thanks to her grandmother, she was born into a world in which having pride in one's Stó:lō identity has become the norm, and not the exception.

[78] Galloway, "Upriver Halkomelem Dictionary," 923.
[79] Interview with Joanne Hugh and Geraldine Gutierrez, May 26, 2013.

APPENDIX 1 - Theoretical Approaches and Methodological Problems

In this paper, I draw on the large and growing body of what is called 'life-history' literature. Unlike traditional Western biographies, these works tend to be collaborative result of an encounter between an interviewer and a subject - two people who often come from different cultural backgrounds.[80] Unlike traditional ethnographies, life histories blend personal narratives with collective ones, aligning and giving equal importance to both private and public histories. As Margaret Blackman notes, the life-history format provides a "personalized, longitudinal view" of cultural change over time and is for this reason, especially well suited to the discipline of ethno-history.[81] Because the subject has so much input in these "told-to" narratives, the end product often ends up being suited for a wider audience than most academic works, and can be a useful resource for the community being profiled.

As a student of what Carlson, Lutz and Schaepe call the 'new ethnohistory,' it is my intention to conduct research in collaboration with Stó:lō people, and to ultimately produce work that will contribute something to the Stó:lō community, which has been so generous with me.[82] However, since Matilda Gutierrez passed away in 2011, two years before I began my research in S'ólh Téméxw, I never had the privilege of speaking with her first-hand and so I can neither consult nor collaborate with Tillie.[83] Thus, in

[80] Cruikshank, *Life Lived Like a Story*, x
[81] Blackman, *During My Time: Florence Edenshaw Davidson A Haida Woman.* (Seattle and London, 1982), 4.
[82] Keith Carlson, John Lutz, and David Schaepe, "Turning the Page: Ethnohistory from a New Generation" University of the Fraser Valley Research Review 2:2,
[83] While conducting research for this project, I received consent and support from Tillie's family. They are certainly the audience I have in mind while writing this paper. I am particular indebted to Tillie's granddaughter, Joanne Hugh, who presently carries Tillie's ancestral name and who's help made this project possible.

some ways, this paper straddles the line between collaborative life-histories and more traditional historical biographies, which depend solely on archival sources. Tillie was interviewed dozens of times from the mid-1980 to the mid-2000s, and I was able to access most of these interviews through the Stó:lō Nation archives. I also received access to the Coqualeetza Education and Training Centre archives, where I was able to read transcripts of interviews that Tillie had conducted with her elders when working as an interpreter for the Skulkayn heritage project. Though these sources have provided me with invaluable information on Tillie, there are certain problems that arise when trying to write a life history based on written sources.

As Julie Cruikshank and others have argued, "meanings do not inhere in a story but are created in the everyday situations in which they are told."[84] That is, a stories' significance is derived in large part from its context, and will have different meanings depending on where it is told and who is listening. When Tillie is telling skunk story to her grandchildren, for example, it has a very different meaning then when she is using it to "ball-out" a Chief or some other public figure - as she often did.[85]

Written transcripts of oral interviews tend to flatten the social context of the speech, making it harder to interpret the tone of the interviews, and in turn making it harder to ascertain what the speaker's intentions were in telling a particular story. In an attempt to counteract this petrifaction of orality that occurs when interviews are transcribed, I will attempt as much as possible to understand the historical and social

[84] Julie Cruikshank, *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory,* (Vancouver, 1998), xv.
[85] Matilda and Alan Gutierrez, interview with Gordon Mohs and Sonny McHalsie, March 16,1989, Hope B.C., Interview GA 89-SR5, SNA.

contexts in which a story was told, taking into consideration where and when an interview took place, and who was present there.

Similarly, the snippets of Tillie's life that I have been able to glean come from interviews in which she is being asked about specific subjects, such as place names, fishing spots, or traditional foods and medicines. Following the practice of oral footnoting, Tillie often refers to the people and places in which she received such knowledge, making it possible to collect some biographical details from particular times in her life. However, there are significant portions of Tillie's life that remain in the shadows of these interviews. If, as Cruikshank and others have argued, narrative is one of the tools that we as human beings use to make sense of the world and of our experiences, I am certain that what I cobble together out of these snippets and details will look significantly different from what might have been had Tillie been here to tell her own life story. Thus, instead of trying to construct a singular narrative, with the intent of assigning meaning to her life, I aspire to a less daunting task. Using archival interviews, and with the insight and guidance of Tillie's family, I hope to highlight and contextualize some specific moments in Tillie's life. In particular, I try to show how and when Tillie acquired, and then re-acquired, the knowledge and skills that made her such a valued and respected elder.

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