

Ethnohistory Field School Report

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'A Meeting of the Minds': Stó:lō Political History, 1969-1989

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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.



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- 1969** The federal government introduces the white paper.
- The Union of BC Indian Chiefs is created in response to the white paper. The Stó:lō participate in the Union through the Fraser East District Council.
- 1970** The Chilliwack Area Indian Council is created.
- 1975** The Fraser East District Council drafts the Stó:lō Declaration, which asserts Stó:lō rights and title.
- 1980** Steven Point proposes the amalgamation of the four existing Stó:lō organizations: the Fraser East District Council (now being referred to as Stó:lō Nation), the Chilliwack Area Indian Council, Stó:lō Housing, and the Coqualeetza Cultural Education Centre.
- 1985** As a result of conflict over the proposed amalgamation, all of the members of the Stó:lō Nation executive lose their seats in an election.
- Stó:lō Tribal Council is formed by eleven bands, including those represented by the defeated executive.
- Stó:lō Nation Society is formed by the remaining bands.
- 1989** Stó:lō Nation Society merges with the Chilliwack Area Indian Council to form Stó:lō Nation Canada.

Introduction

Recent Stó:lō political history is well known, at least within Stó:lō territory. In 1994, Stó:lō Nation Canada and Stó:lō Tribal Council united to create Stó:lō Nation Society, representing twenty-one of the twenty-four Stó:lō bands. Ten years later, eight bands left Stó:lō Nation Society to form a new Stó:lō Tribal Council.¹ Events that occurred before 1994 are less fully understood. Where did Stó:lō Nation Canada and Stó:lō Tribal Council come from? What were the organizations that preceded them? In this paper, I will focus on the growth of Stó:lō political organizations, beginning with the white paper in 1969 and concluding with the creation of Stó:lō Nation Canada and Stó:lō Tribal Council. I will explain how political organizations began to represent the Stó:lō in negotiations with the government, and how they took over the delivery of social services from Indian Affairs. In the end, I argue that despite the amalgamations and splits, important gains have been made since 1969. The Stó:lō now have a stronger political voice when dealing with the government, and many services that were once provided by government agencies are in Stó:lō hands.

The first section of this paper discusses colonialism, the Indian Act, and its impact on the Stó:lō. It also explores Stó:lō ideas of collective identity, and how different loyalties to family, band, tribe, and nation can conflict with each other or support each other. I think that these issues provide an important context for considering Stó:lō political history. The second section begins in 1969, with the federal white paper that proposed to eliminate the Indian Act and assimilate the First Nations into Canadian society. I focus on two Stó:lō organizations that were created in reaction to the white paper: the Fraser East District Council and the Chilliwack Area Indian Council. I consider why these organizations were created, how they functioned, and where they

¹ “Our History: Organizational History of Stó:lō Nation,” <http://www.stolonation.bc.ca/about-us/our-history.htm> (accessed 22 June 2011).

got their funding. The third section discusses the effort to amalgamate all of the Stó:lō political and service-delivery organizations in the early 1980s, and how it ultimately failed. I conclude with the creation of the Stó:lō Tribal Council and Stó:lō Nation Canada in reaction to this failure. I argue that despite the controversies and personality conflicts, the Stó:lō made important gains in this period.

This paper covers controversial events. Some of the things I talk about are still sources of bitterness and conflict. What I have written is an attempt to understand the past, based on research that was limited by a short time frame. Inevitably, I did not have a chance to talk to everyone who was involved in the events that I discuss. Take my work as starting point, rather than a final answer.

Colonialism and Stó:lō Collective Identity

‘Cause we were basically colonized. Told what to do, when to do it, and how to do it, and where to do it. ‘Go on your reserve and stay there.’ Because that was the way things were before, right. You weren’t allowed to leave the reserve unless you had permission to do so. You know, that’s what happened. I don’t know how long that lasted, but that’s the way it was, way in the distant past. – Grand Chief Clarence Pennier²

All of the events described in this paper occurred within the context of colonialism, and of a Stó:lō struggle to regain their rights and their territory. As Keith Carlson says in his book, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, “Coast Salish people have been remarkably resilient in asserting their own identities on their own terms, while rejecting the neat cultural and political boxes others have attempted to put them in.”³ While Stó:lō people may have rejected these colonial ‘boxes,’ they still had to deal with them. They were not helpless victims of colonialism.

² Clarence Pennier, interview by Martin Hoffman, SRRMC Building, May 17, 2011.

³ Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 12.

Far from it. Nonetheless, to effectively resist colonial government, they had to adapt to the changing world they found themselves in.

After British Columbia became part of Canada, the First Nations were governed under the federal Indian Act. In his book, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, Paul Tennant argues that the Indian Act divided First Nations communities and families by allowing only status Indians to live on reserves. By dividing larger tribal groups into Indian Act bands, it also made it more difficult for the First Nations to govern themselves. The Act was intended to encourage the First Nations to assimilate: “It assumed that able and competent Indians would desire to leave their reserves, to live and work among non-Indians, to have the federal franchise (which was denied to registered Indians), and to become, in a phrase popular among federal officials, ‘full British subjects.’”⁴

For the Stó:lō, who did not want to be assimilated, and wanted to maintain their own government and their way of life, the Indian Act caused enormous hardship. According to Lester Ned, the Act was intended to destroy the Stó:lō government: “It was there to tear this government apart, and I believe there was six main tribes or native organizations in the valley here. And then Ottawa divided that up, I believe there’s twenty-four bands now.”⁵ Through the Act, government also confined the Stó:lō, who had traditionally migrated seasonally from one place to another, to small reserves. As Lester Ned told me, this caused hardship: “the reserves, the twenty-four are very small. (...) It’s tough to make a living. And you’ve got no equity on it, or you can’t borrow on it, it’s Crown land, that’s another part of the Indian Act. So you’ve got

⁴ Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1990), 45.

⁵ Lester Ned, interview by Martin Hoffman, Private Home, Sumas Reserve, May 13, 2011.

this rope around your neck before you even get out of bed.”⁶ He explained that families would sometimes be split between three or four bands.

Many of the people I interviewed felt that the system of Indian Act bands had broken apart older political units, and that it did not correctly represent Stó:lō history or traditions. Joe Hall told me that: “I think the fact that the Indian Act came in and created all these Indian Act bands and basically fragmented the tribes, really is becoming more and more known.”⁷ For him, his membership in the Chilliwack tribe seemed to be at least as important as his membership in the Tzeachten band or in the larger Stó:lō community:

I always thought that Tzeachten, well, I thought we were always a band, that we’re the Tzeachten people. No, that actually was the area where our village was, there, it’s a geographical – of the fish weir. All of them have names, but we’re all Chilliwack tribe, like our Chilliwack group, you know, the seven Indian Act bands that make up the seven villages were all given Indian Act band status, quasi-government operations, and were all part of the Stó:lō, but were all more so part of the Coast Salish.⁸

According to him, Tzeachten describes the location of a village site, while Chilliwack refers to a larger tribe sharing a common culture. Stó:lō, on the other hand, is a more general geographic term:

The Stó:lō is – are not like a tribe, it’s actually a geographical description of the people. So we’re all referred to as Stó:lō people, the people of the river, but the Stó:lō – Stó:lō actually goes all the way down to the mouth of the Fraser. Some people will still refer to the Musqueam and the Coquitlam as Stó:lō.⁹

As these quotes make clear, Stó:lō collective identities are complex and overlapping. Individuals belong to families, to bands, to tribes, and to the larger Stó:lō nation. Depending on the individual, and on the circumstances, any one of these may be more important than any other. These loyalties may conflict with each other, or they may reinforce each other.

⁶ Lester Ned, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁷ Joe Hall, interview by Martin Hoffman, Stó:lō Nation Government House, May 5, 2011.

⁸ Joe Hall, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁹ Joe Hall, interview by Martin Hoffman.

It would be impossible to discuss Stó:lō politics without also talking about collective identity. Historically, a feeling of common identity has drawn people together in organizations that represent all twenty-four Stó:lō bands. However, some of the people I talked to felt that the breakup of these organizations was the product of other identities. Joe Hall suggested that some of the disagreements within Stó:lō political organizations was the result of cultural differences between tribes:

some of the splits and everything could – I think, myself, could be attributed to the fact that you’re asking several different tribes to, mixed tribes, to get along, and work together well. You know, just like countries don’t get along, you know it’s the same thing with the tribal groups, albeit they’re Halq’emeylem speaking, they’re not all the same people, they have different interests and different objectives.¹⁰

Doug Kelly made a similar point to explain why certain bands joined together to form Stó:lō Tribal Council in 1985:

There are certain communities that have always gotten along really well. Now whether that’s because I have family here and family there, or what, probably a big part of it, but most of us have family in several other Stó:lō villages. I have family in Sumas, I have family in Chehalis, I have family in Squiala, I have family in Skwah, I have family in Tzeachten, Scowkale, Leq’a:mel, you know, dig deep enough I can probably find others, but those are the ones that immediately come to mind. So there’s all of these connections. And so, Cheam, Sumas, Soowahlie, Scowlitz, Kwantlen, have always gotten along really well. So it’s no surprise that we created the same organization.¹¹

While Joe Hall was referring to relations between tribes, and Doug Kelly to relations between bands, their basic message is the same. While all of the Stó:lō share a language and a culture, they are not all the same. Some communities get along well together, and some do not. As Doug Kelly’s comments make clear, family connections also play a role in relations between larger groups.

¹⁰ Joe Hall, interview by Martin Hoffman.

¹¹ Douglas Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman and Ben Clinton-Baker, Stó:lō Tribal Council Building, Seabird Island Reserve, May 16, 2011.

To further complicate matters, many communities and families migrated from one place to another within the recent past. The Indian Act band system fixed communities in place and divided families, but the historical links remain. However, these ties are contested, and depending on the context, people may choose to recognize some and deny others. According to Lester Ned, people need to remember these historical connections:

They just can't say that they dropped out of the sky, and, 'this is where I'm at.' They originated from somewhere. And even people within Stó:lō territory originated maybe from another community, before it was split up. For example, the Stl'atl'imx people where I work at, Chehalis is very close. So these are the things that – they're originally related, whether they want to be or not. And they just can't say that, 'I'm here because God put me here and I own all this.' Somebody else owned it at some other time.¹²

Of course, these questions usually become relevant when resources or power are at stake. Doug Kelly's discussion of treaty negotiations at different levels provides an excellent example of how the tension between different collective identities can play out.

Responding to a question from Byron Plant in 2002, Doug Kelly explained his views on the different roles and rights of the band, tribe, and nation in negotiations between the Stó:lō and the government:

For example, in 1864, William McColl, under the instructions of Governor James Douglas, established several reserves in the Fraser Valley. Soowahlie was one of them, and our reserve initially was four thousand acres. It's now eleven hundred and forty. There are some people that believe that the Chilliwack tribe should have all of that land. Well, that's not Soowahlie's belief. Soowahlie says that we were a village, we had our own leadership, and we were allocated a land base. We want that land base back. We're not saying that it's sufficient to meet our needs, but we do want additional land and resources being made available through the treaty, what we also want is all this specific land. Canada did not properly reduce our original reserve allocation. They did not properly have our village agree or surrender that land, that's why it's the subject of a court case. So there are going to be times that issues should be best dealt with by the individual community and the band, there are times that it's best dealt with by the tribe, and there are times

¹² Lester Ned, interview by Martin Hoffman.

that it's best dealt with at a national level, and we have not yet addressed those issues at our treaty table or at our caucus.¹³

As these remarks make clear, the interests of the band, tribe, and nation conflict as often as they coincide. Should the Chilliwack tribe own any land given back to Soowahlie, or should the Soowahlie band own it? Is it more important to be Stó:lō, to be Chilliwack, or to be from Soowahlie? These questions do not have easy answers, and the answer will always depend on an individual's interpretations of history.

I chose this section to begin this paper not because I can answer any of these questions, but because I think that the questions themselves are something the reader should keep in mind. Perhaps it is less important to have an answer for them than to be aware that the answers are never self-evident, and that different people, at different times, in different circumstances, have answered them differently. This section may seem abstract in comparison to the political history that follows, but colonialism and questions of Stó:lō collective identity provide the context for considering Stó:lō political organizations and what they tried to achieve.

The White Paper and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs

Among British Columbia Indians 1969 is remembered not only as the year of the federal white paper, but also as the year in which the 'big organizations' were formed. Status Indians created a new province-wide organization to resume pursuit of the land claim that had been interrupted by the collapse of the Allied Tribes and the outlawing of claims activity in 1927. – Paul Tennant¹⁴

The following sections will discuss the creation of two Stó:lō organizations: the Fraser East District Council and the Chilliwack Area Indian Council. While there were other Stó:lō organizations active at the time, it was these two that evolved into Stó:lō Tribal Council and Stó:lō Nation Canada. The Fraser East District Council was primarily a political organization,

¹³ Douglas Kelly, interview by Byron Plant, Soowahlie Band Office, May 30, 2002.

¹⁴ Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, 151.

while the Chilliwack Area Indian Council focused on delivering social services. Between them, they provided many of the services and fulfilled many of the roles that later Stó:lō organizations have. I have chosen to begin the story of both these organizations in 1969, with the federal white paper. While there was certainly Stó:lō political activism before then, both the Fraser East District Council and the Chilliwack Area Indian Council were created in response to the white paper and the events that surrounded it.

Between July 1968 and May 1969, Pierre Trudeau's Liberal government conducted an elaborate process to consult the First Nations on amendments to the Indian Act. A booklet which summarized the Act and asked a series of questions on how it could be amended was mailed to status Indian families, band councils, and First Nations political organizations. Each band was asked to meet and discuss the questions, and elect a delegate to a zone meeting. Each zone meeting sent one delegate to a national consultation meeting in Ottawa. At the national meeting, the delegates from British Columbia argued that the government needed to recognize that they had never surrendered or sold their land. According to Paul Tennant, they, "played the leading part in diverting the meeting from the department's object of discussing the Indian Act to the Indian concern to resolve the questions of land claims and aboriginal rights."¹⁵ Amongst themselves, they talked about forming an organization to represent all British Columbia Indians.¹⁶

In June of 1969, Jean Chretien, the Minister of Indian Affairs, issued the "Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy." The white paper, as it came to be called, proposed the abolition of the Indian Act. It had clearly been prepared before the national consultation meeting in Ottawa, and it did not take the wishes of the First Nations into consideration. It

¹⁵ Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, 145.

¹⁶ Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, 147-149.

marked the beginning of a new chapter in First Nations politics in BC, and led to the creation of a new province-wide organization, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.¹⁷

The people I interviewed, and those interviewed earlier by Byron Plant, thought of the white paper as an attempt to destroy the First Nations as a separate culture. They also recalled that it led to increased political activity, including the creation of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. Grand Chief Clarence Pennier remembered both the consultation process and the white paper:

You know the government did come around, and they held the so-called ‘consultation meetings,’ right? And then they talked about what it is they – their visions were I guess. Then they came out with the white paper policy. And, you know, their goal was to eliminate us as a special people. They were going to make us like other Canadians, and we would own the land, you know, lose the land like anybody else does, because that’s not how we were raised, you know, in terms of looking after land and paying taxes and all that kind of stuff. (...) But I guess yeah, it would be after the white paper policy, that’s when things started happening more politically, meeting together.¹⁸

Doug Kelly described the intent of the white paper in similar terms, and linked it directly to the creation of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs:

Well, in 1969, under a federal Liberal government, Jean Chretien, the current Prime Minister of Canada, was then the Minister of Indian Affairs, and Pierre Trudeau was the Prime Minister. Jean Chretien – they announced what was called the white paper policy. What they announced was their intention to eliminate the Indian Act, and to assimilate all Indians into broader mainstream society. So therefore, they’d eliminate reserves, they’d eliminate... us. That federal policy announcement brought Chiefs together, and resulted in the creation of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and its whole purpose was to begin to advance our interests – our survival. To fight the Minister of Indian Affairs on his intent to assimilate our people.¹⁹

What comes through clearly in both of these passages is how profoundly threatening the white paper was to the Stó:lō. They saw it as an attempt to destroy their culture and their people.

Clarence Pennier’s comment that, “we would own the land, you know, lose the land like

¹⁷ Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, 149-150.

¹⁸ Clarence Pennier, interview by Martin Hoffman.

¹⁹ Douglas Kelly, interview by Byron Plant.

anybody else does,” suggests that there was a fear that if reserves were converted into private property they would be sold off or confiscated when people could not make their mortgage payments. As Doug Kelly explained, to the Stó:lō this was a fight for their survival.

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs was created at a province-wide First Nations conference in Kamloops in 1969. It was intended to represent all of the status Indians in the province, although, as the name suggests, membership in the Union was restricted to Chiefs. As Doug Kelly’s comments indicate, its main purpose was advocate for the rights and interests of the BC First Nations, particularly with regard to the land question.²⁰ Paul Tennant comments that, “For all aboriginal peoples in British Columbia the 1969-1971 was a time of unprecedented political development.”²¹ This was certainly true in Stó:lō territory, where the events surrounding the white paper and the creation of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs led to the birth of two new organizations: the Fraser East District Council, later known as Stó:lō Nation, and the Chilliwack Area Indian Council.

The Fraser East District Council

I know we used to be called the Fraser East District Council in our early days, because we were basically following Indian Affairs processes. They called us the Fraser East District out here in the valley. There was a Vancouver District of course, which had the other bands down that way, so that’s why we were called the Fraser East District Council, and we were meeting with the department on programs and services, trying to improve it in our communities, and trying to get involved politically with the different nations throughout this province. – Grand Chief Clarence Pennier²²

By the mid-1960s, Indian Affairs officials were required to hold meetings of Chiefs in an attempt to keep in touch with First Nations politics. These meetings came to be known as “district councils,” with each group of Chiefs representing one of the districts into which the

²⁰ Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, 156

²¹ Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, 163.

²² Clarence Pennier, interview with Martin Hoffman.

Department of Indian Affairs had divided the province.²³ The Fraser East District was made up of the twenty-four bands along the Fraser River from Langley to Yale. In an interview with Byron Plant, Grand Chief Steven Point explained the function of the district councils as follows: “when the DIA, when they wanted to consult with Indians about changes, policy development they would meet with the Indians and call them together to a meeting. Then the Indian agent would meet with everybody and set the agenda and set the time.” By 1974, when he was first elected to council, these meetings had also become a space for the Chiefs to meet with each other and discuss issues of concern to them: “There began a practice of this, bands coming together afterwards to sort of discuss their own stuff. ‘Well what are we going to do about fishing rights? What are we going to do about, you know, what’s happening, you know.’”²⁴

When the Union of BC Indian Chiefs was formed, it relied on the same district boundaries established by the Department of Indian Affairs. The district councils took on a dual identity, dealing with Indian Affairs as well as the Union of Chiefs. As Steven Point remembers: “the East Fraser District Council, by the time I had come on the scene, had two identities. One with the DIA and one with the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs. So that was that. That was the way it worked. The political side was with the Union and the sort of the bureaucratic side was with the Indian Affairs.”²⁵ This helps to explain a contradiction that had puzzled me during the research for this paper. Some people remembered the Fraser East District Council as a creation of Indian Affairs, and some as a part of the Union of Chiefs. Ed Kelly, for instance, told Byron Plant that, “it wasn’t the DIA, it was the Union of BC Chiefs,” that drew the boundaries for the Fraser East District.²⁶ On the other hand, Doug Kelly explained to me that: “the Department of Indian

²³ Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, 133.

²⁴ Steven Point, interview by Byron Plant, Scowlitz, June 3, 2002.

²⁵ Steven Point, interview by Byron Plant.

²⁶ Ed Kelly, interview by Byron Plant, Tzeachten, June 5, 2002.

Affairs also had us organized as the Fraser East District Council, and that was mainly to provide direction to the Department of Indian Affairs on how it dealt with things like allocation of capital, or housing, and other kinds of projects.”²⁷ It seems that the District Council played both these roles.

Ed Kelly was involved with the Fraser East District Council in the early 1970s, when the Union of BC Indian Chiefs was still in its early days. As Chief of Tzeachten, he was elected as the spokesman for the Fraser East District to Union of Chiefs, and to National Indian Brotherhood. He explained that political issues would be discussed at regional meetings that brought representative of all of the districts together: “the political issues would come before all the regions at a regional meeting, and we’d all voice our opinions and, you know, pass the resolutions, and then the head politicians would have to deal with it from there.”²⁸ Issues of national importance would be dealt with in the meetings of National Indian Brotherhood: “from the Union of Chiefs then we’d go down to the National Indian Brotherhood meetings, and they were into, you know, the problems at the national level, which are usually problems that are felt in each and every province, but in just a little different way in each province.”²⁹

Kelly recalled that the Fraser East and Fraser West Districts cooperated closely with each other, because all of the bands involved were Coast Salish. He worked closely some of the major figures of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, including Delbert Guerin and Grand Chief Joe Mathias, and took over as chairman of the Union of Chiefs after Joe Mathias decided to resign from the position.³⁰ He remembered a few of the issues that the Union was dealing with at the time:

²⁷ Douglas Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

²⁸ Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman, Private Home, Sardis, BC, May 17, 2011.

²⁹ Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

³⁰ Ed Kelly, interview by Byron Plant.

Well, land claims, you know, it always goes back to land claims, heavens, that's been going on for I don't know how long, and I don't think we'll ever see it settled in my lifetime. And then there was a lot of, uh...you know, the Métis association wanted to be recognized and involved with the Union of Chiefs. And at that point in time, you know, the Union of Chiefs were status Indians, and not Métis. And that – there was, you know, that caused hard feelings, you know, by the Métis, not so much, you know, we stood our ground.³¹

At this point, the Fraser East District Council seems to have focused on participating in the Union of Chiefs. As time went by, it became a more explicitly Stó:lō organization. Eventually, its political functions were taken over by Stó:lō Tribal Council and Stó:lō Nation Canada, organizations that were not formally part of the Union of Chiefs at all.

Clarence Pennier also worked with the Fraser East District Council in the 1970s, although he seems to have begun his career a few years later than Ed Kelly. At that time the District Council had a six-person executive that dealt with the issues raised by the larger membership, which consisted of representatives of each of the twenty-four bands. He recalled that one of the most significant developments of those years was the formulation of the Stó:lō Declaration in 1975:

one of the highlights in terms of the early days of the Fraser East District Council was 1975, when the Chiefs, through the work of Reuben Ware, who was working for Coqualeetza at the time, adopted the Stó:lō Declaration, which made a declaration over our Stó:lō territory for lands, water, resources, and all, and everything contained within our territory, and stating that we never sold, ceded, or treated with Canada.³²

He explained that the District Council brought the Declaration to the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and it was adopted by the Union. At that point, according to him, the District Council was still aligned very closely with the Union of Chiefs, with whom they worked in an attempt to resolve the land question.

³¹ Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

³² Clarence Pennier, interview by Martin Hoffman.

Over time, the Fraser East District Council evolved as a political organization. According to Doug Kelly, by the early 1980s it had taken on a number of different roles: “So at that time, in 1983, I’d been Chief all of a month, and I went to a meeting of what was sometimes called the Fraser East District Council, sometimes called the Stó:lō Nation, and sometimes called the Stó:lō Resource Centre. It kinda had multiple identities.”³³ He explained that in the late 1970s or early 1980s there was an increased recognition of cultural differences between different First Nations groups:

there was a growing realization, in part through the Union, in part through the Native Indian Brotherhood, which was the national organization at that time, that we weren’t all the same. That we’re not pan-North-American Indians, that we have differences in language, we have differences between cultures, and that’s valuable.³⁴

According to him, the idea of Stó:lō Nation originated in this period. That is not to say that there was no understanding of a common Stó:lō culture before this point. Keith Carlson argues that the various tribes of the Fraser River considered themselves to be part of a larger Stó:lō collective well before contact.³⁵ However, this period could mark the origin of a particular understanding of the Stó:lō nation, as comprising the twenty-four bands represented by the Fraser East District Council.

On the other hand, Ed Kelly remembered things somewhat differently. According to him, the Union of Chiefs followed preexisting national borders when they created the Fraser East District: “when they were dividing up the British Columbia area, that formed the constituency boundaries, and I think most of those were based on the various nations. I can’t think in my mind where the Union had a – had two or three different nations in the same constituency.”³⁶ Whether

³³ Douglas Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

³⁴ Douglas Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

³⁵ Carlson, *The Power of Place*, 38-57.

³⁶ Ed Kelly, interview by Byron Plant.

the Fraser East District created the modern understanding of Stó:lō nation or was formed based on it, it is clear that by this time the twenty-four bands represented by the District Council considered themselves to be part of a single nation.

Over time, Doug Kelly explained, the Fraser East District Council began to be referred to instead as the Stó:lō Nation. He could not remember exactly when this happened, but it seems to have been some time in the early 1980s.³⁷ In 1983, the Stó:lō Nation Resource Centre was created to do research to carry out political research. It received enough funding to employ three staff: an office manager, Wayne Bob, a land-claims researcher, Clarence Pennier, and a secretary, Eileen Williams. The Resource Centre reported to the six members of the Stó:lō Nation (or Fraser East District Council) executive.³⁸ At that time, the executive consisted of Grand Chief Sam Douglas of Cheam, Grand Chief Lester Ned of Sumas, Grand Chief Archie Charles of Seabird Island, Grand Chief Ron John of Chawathil, Chief Bill Williams of Chehalis, and Chief Doug Kelly of Soowahlie.³⁹

The Chilliwack Area Indian Council

That leadership produced the will to work together, and they created the Chilliwack Area Indian Council, which went well beyond the Chilliwack area, it went up right into the Fraser canyon, it included essentially all of the bands that are known as part of the Stó:lō Nation today [2002], and they took on the responsibility to deliver those services that were once delivered by the Department on Indian Affairs in their office in Chilliwack. So that's really where we started to take on more responsibility for administering our own programs and our own services. – Doug Kelly⁴⁰

³⁷ Douglas Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

³⁸ Douglas Kelly, interview by Byron Plant.

³⁹ Douglas Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁴⁰ Douglas Kelly, interview by Byron Plant.

The Chilliwack Area Indian Council was created on July 21, 1970.⁴¹ While the Fraser East District Council (later Stó:lō Nation) was primarily a political organization, the Chilliwack Area Indian Council focused on delivering and administering social services. Over time, the Indian Council took over many of the services that had been provided by Indian Affairs. It assisted bands with administration, provided welfare, built houses on reserves, and employed home-school coordinators. It was the first Stó:lō organization to provide these services, which have largely continued to be administered by Stó:lō organizations ever since.

There is some disagreement over how much the creation of the Chilliwack Area Indian Council was influenced by the white paper. According to Herb Joe, “the CAIC was part of a knee-jerk reaction to the white paper policy of 1969.”⁴² On the other hand, Ed Kelly explained that many of the bands weren’t aware of the implications of the white paper:

there was concern about it, but in those days most of the bands were ill-informed. You know, they wouldn’t be getting the information out from any source to speak of. And the other – you know, the Area Council also served as a valuable source of communication and information. You know, you mention the white paper, nobody knew what – you know, what is that? Is it something you write on, or is it hanging on a roll in the bathroom, or what?⁴³

Both Doug Kelly and Steven Point said that the Chilliwack Area Indian Council was created in response to the government’s attempt to close the Indian Affairs district office for the Fraser East District, which had been located in Chilliwack.⁴⁴ As Steven Point explained it:

in those days Indian Affairs ran everything. They built your houses, they built your roads, you couldn’t do anything without Indian Affairs. They ran your meetings. Then, I forget what year it was, Indian Affairs began to cut back services. They began to shut down district offices because every district that they had, Fraser East was a district, right, they had a district office. So there was

⁴¹ Phil Hall, “The Role that the CAIC Society Plays in the Stó:lō Nation,” *Stó:lō Nation News* 7, no. 69 (February 1982): 1.

⁴² Herb Joe, interview by Melissa McDowell, Javatopia, Chilliwack, BC, June 5, 2002.

⁴³ Ed Kelly, interview by Byron Plant.

⁴⁴ Steven Point and Douglas Kelly, interviews by Byron Plant.

something like twenty-one or twenty-two of these districts in all of B.C. and each one of them had a district office with a district supervisor, superintendent, someone who ran that office with a staff and they provided the nurse, the person who would do inoculations, and someone who would pay the schools to educate the Indians, all that sort of stuff. These are the people that interfaced with government in order for them to look after the Indians. But then government began to shut down these offices.⁴⁵

The events surrounding the introduction of the white paper clearly played into the creation of the Area Council. However, all of the people who participated directly in its creation did so for their own reasons. Some may have been more concerned with the white paper than others. Of the people who took part in the discussions that led to the formation of the Area Council, I was only able to speak to Ed Kelly.

According to Kelly, it was he who originally thought of organizing the Area Council because the bands in the Chilliwack area were too small to get much attention from Indian Affairs on their own:

Up until the 1970s the Chilliwack nine bands, we're all small bands here, compared to say Musqueam or Squamish, or you know, the other large reserves. So whenever we had a problem, we'd contact Indian Affairs, and it would just be like water off a duck's back, because we were so small, nobody would listen to us. So I got the idea that, you know, if we joined together as a group and formed a joint council between the Chilliwack nine bands, then we've got a little bit of strength to go and talk to Indian Affairs.⁴⁶

Ed Kelly spoke to Grand Chief Richard Malloway of Yakwekwioose, who eventually agreed to the idea. They spoke to Chief Gordon Hall of Scowkale, who also agreed to bring his band in. From there, they visited the rest of the Chilliwack nine bands. All except Skwah joined.⁴⁷

Almost immediately, other Stó:lō bands heard about the proposal to create a Chilliwack Area Indian Council and wanted to join as well. Ed Kelly recalled that:

⁴⁵ Steven Point, interview by Byron Plant.

⁴⁶ Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁴⁷ Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

I don't know how the word got out, but it got out to the rest of the bands in Stó:lō Nation, and pretty soon we were getting calls in from them, and – wanting to join up. So we had a meeting at Tzeachten hall, and several bands showed up that hadn't even contacted us yet. So that was basically the start of the Chilliwack Area Indian Council, and we called it the Chilliwack Area Indian Council just for want of a name. And – but in essence, it was Stó:lō Nation that we ended up with, cause we had all the bands right from Langley right through to Yale, and including Yale, with the exception of Skwah.⁴⁸

Except for Skwah, which remained independent, the Chilliwack Area Indian Council represented the same bands that were members of the Fraser East District Council. Its constitution states that it was intended to work in cooperation with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs to represent the twenty-four bands from Langley to Yale and to improve the living conditions of their members.⁴⁹

The initial funding for the Chilliwack Area Indian Council was provided by a First Citizen's Fund grant. With that money, the organization set up a small office above the Chilliwack post office, in space provided by Indian Affairs.⁵⁰ Its first interim executive was made up of Grand Chief Richard Malloway, Grand Chief Sam Douglas, and Chief Gordon Hall.⁵¹ Ed Kelly was appointed as the first administrator of the Area Council, with Gordon Hall as his assistant. Quite quickly, they received more government funding, and the member bands began to contribute a part of their administration grants. With the additional funds, they were able to buy a trailer and set it up behind the old Tzeachten hall.⁵² Steven Point, who began to work for the Area Council in 1973, remembered the trailer that served as an office: “We had a trailer, we had everything in it. I remember we had an old Telex machine in it. An old stenograph

⁴⁸ Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁴⁹ “Chilliwack Area Indian Council Constitution,” Unpublished Material, Stó:lō Nation Archives.

⁵⁰ Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁵¹ Ed Kelly, interview by Byron Plant.

⁵² Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

machine to make copies, everything like that. It was the first real band office in the whole Chilliwack area actually.”⁵³

With some funding and infrastructure in place, the Chilliwack Area Indian Council began to take over service-delivery from Indian Affairs. According to Ed Kelly, the Area Council provided four main services to its member bands: administration, welfare, housing, and the home-school coordinator program.⁵⁴ By combining their resources, the member bands were able to provide services that they could not have administered on their own. As Doug Kelly explained:

At that time many of the bands were far too small, like Soowahlie at that time might have had twelve households, and now we have seventy, or seventy-two, something like that. So just in that thirty, forty years we’ve grown several times over. So you see that our band would not have been able to deliver those services at that point in time, but by pooling our efforts we were able to do that.⁵⁵

This was the first time that these programs had been provided and run by a Stó:lō organization instead of the Department of Indian Affairs. Most of them have remained under Stó:lō control ever since. As Doug Kelly noted: “that’s really where we started to take on more responsibility for administering our own programs and our own services.”⁵⁶

The Area Council provided administrative support and advice for bands in dealing with the federal and provincial governments. Ed Kelly described his own role as administrator: “I helped bands set up their administration programs and their – you know, submit their administration grants and so on, and provided them with information on what other grants or funding sources may be available to them for various programs.” He also helped to renegotiate the terms on which reserve land was leased. As he explained:

⁵³ Steven Point, interview by Byron Plant.

⁵⁴ Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁵⁵ Douglas Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁵⁶ Douglas Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

in those days the leasing of reserve land was done by primarily non-Indian farmers, and the land was being leased out by Indian Affairs for a dollar an acre. And so I started checking with local real estate, and finding out, you know, what is the going rate on lease lands around the Chilliwack area for agricultural purposes? And it was substantially higher, you know, we were looking at forty-five, sixty, eighty dollars an acre.⁵⁷

He advised the bands involved of how much their land was worth, and suggested that they raise the rates as the leases came up for renewal.⁵⁸

At the time, the Chiefs were not satisfied with how the welfare program was being run by Indian Affairs. It became one of the first programs to be taken over by the Chilliwack Area Indian Council. According to Ed Kelly, “the welfare program was being handled in a horrendous manner by the Department of Indian Affairs, and they wasted no time in approving us to take it over, because they wanted out from underneath that in the worst way.”⁵⁹ The welfare program seems to have been one of the most complicated and difficult to administer of all the services provided by the Area Council. Ed Kelly recalled that preparing the budgets was tricky, and that they often had to ask for supplementary funding to cover unexpected costs.⁶⁰ Even the basic tasks involved in the distribution of welfare could be tedious and labour intensive:

In doing the welfare cheques, you’ll notice my signature on the consent form. That came about as a result of us doing these huge quantities of welfare cheques each month. And in those days we didn’t have any machines to sign them for us, or any means of having them signed for us, and we all had to sign them all by hand. And Grand Chief Richard Malloway would spend almost two days there, ‘cause he wrote real slow and careful, and almost two days – and same with Petey Peters. And me, and either one of them and myself, so they opted to take turns to come in.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁵⁸ Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁵⁹ Ed Kelly, interview by Byron Plant.

⁶⁰ Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁶¹ Ed Kelly, interview by Byron Plant.

Despite these difficulties, operating with a small budget and a staff of fewer than ten people, the Area Council nonetheless managed to oversee the welfare program for all of their member bands.

The Area Council also took over the education program, and hired two home-school coordinators to deal with some of the problems that Stó:lō children were facing in the school system. At the time, Ed Kelly explained, “a lot of kids were dropping out of school, and were wanting to drop out of school. And then some of the young kids, too, were having problems, you know, getting in – getting so they could mingle with the kids off reserve.”⁶² The home-school coordinators met with students and provided what support they could: “it was the home-school coordinators’ job, as councilors, to go in and see what they could do, and see how they could help.”⁶³

The Area Council took over the housing program from Indian Affairs, and began to put up houses on reserves. Ed Kelly remembered that, “we built a lot of houses on the various reserves, and I’d go out and personally inspect them. My only experience, so to speak, was the fact that I helped build my own house, along with the carpenter, just the two of us.”⁶⁴ By this point, what the Area Council was doing was causing concern in Indian Affairs. They had taken over so many programs that the officials who had previously administered these services began to fear for their jobs. According to Ed Kelly: “we were starting to get a lot of concern from those within Indian Affairs, that had fears that with what we were taking over and doing ourselves, would be costing them their jobs, because now we were doing what they used to do.”⁶⁵ In the

⁶² Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁶³ Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁶⁴ Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁶⁵ Ed Kelly, interview by Byron Plant.

end, though, few of them were actually laid off, although there was much less work for them to do:

And I think in a period of time Indian Affairs did downsize slightly, but as with all bureaucratic organizations, they did kind of a make-work project for them, and found them something else for them to do. We could walk around Indian Affairs and there'd be people sitting at a desk just as clean as that coffee table. And telephone on their desk, and telephone's not ringing, they're just sitting there with nothing to do. So, I guess perhaps the unions in those days had something to do with that as well.⁶⁶

While Indian Affairs stagnated, the Chilliwack Area Indian Council was expanding. The new programs brought in more funding and required more staff.

In the early 1970s, after taking over the services described above, the Area Council had a staff of eight. Ed Kelly served as the organizations' administrator, and Herb Joe had replaced Gordon Hall as his assistant.⁶⁷ There were two home-school coordinators, Kathleen Malloway and Percy Roberts, and two social workers to run the welfare program. Finally, the organization employed an accountant and a receptionist.⁶⁸ All of the staff were First Nations people, and most were from local reserves. The executive for the Area Council at that point was made up of Grand Chief Richard Malloway, Grand Chief Petey Peters, and Grand Chief Sam Douglas. Its budget had grown from ten thousand dollars to more than one hundred thousand with the addition of the new programs.⁶⁹

In 1975, Ed Kelly resigned from his position as administrator of the Area Council. As he explained it, there was a small but vocal Stó:lō opposition to the Area Council which was making it difficult to carry on its operations:

There was a couple of individuals, I won't name them, you know, people will know who they are and they will know who they are, that did their utmost to, you

⁶⁶ Ed Kelly, interview by Byron Plant.

⁶⁷ Ed Kelly, interview by Byron Plant.

⁶⁸ Ed Kelly, interview by Byron Plant.

⁶⁹ Ed Kelly, interview by Byron Plant.

know, rock the boat and get the – more or less put the Area Council down. And they seemed to be more after me than they were the Area Council. So we were formed, actually formed in 1971, and by 1975 I figured, you know, these guys seem to be more after me than the Area Council, and I'd like to see it survive. So I stepped down as administrator.⁷⁰

While the Area Council continued, I was not able to interview anyone who worked for the organization in its later years, so I do not have the kind of detailed information about its later history that I have about its creation.

Amalgamation

The[re] was Chilliwack Area Indian Council that looked after administration stuff, Stó:lō Nation Canada that looked after political stuff, and Stó:lō Housing that looked after housing and Coqualeetza Cultural Centre that looked after education and cultural stuff. Virtually all the same people. Until one day, they had a big fight. – Mark Point⁷¹

By the early 1980s, there were four main Stó:lō political and service delivery organizations: Stó:lō Nation, the Chilliwack Area Indian Council, Coqualeetza Cultural Centre, and Stó:lō Housing.⁷² I have chosen to discuss the first two in greater detail for two reasons. In the first place, they are the organizations about which I know the most. I did not interview anyone about Coqualeetza, and I do not have a detailed understanding of how and why it was created, and how it functioned. Similarly, I have been able to find out comparatively little about Stó:lō Housing. More importantly, Stó:lō Nation and the Chilliwack Area Indian Council seem to have been the major precursors to Stó:lō Nation Canada and Stó:lō Tribal Council. Coqualeetza was always a separate organization, and remains so today. As Clarence Pennier explained: “We all basically left Coqualeetza alone as a separate entity, it was set up with its own constitution and bylaws. And it was supported by, um, probably around twenty-eight or twenty-

⁷⁰ Ed Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁷¹ Mark Point, interview by Melissa McDowell, Coqualeetza, May 30, 2002.

⁷² Douglas Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

six bands when it was established, so there was some outside of our territory, so that's why it was more or less left alone."⁷³ From what I can tell, Stó:lō Housing existed for a relatively brief period, and did not play a major role in creating later organizations.

In August 1980, at a meeting of the Fraser East District Council, Steven Point proposed that the four organizations described above be amalgamated to create a single, unified Stó:lō organization. A document produced by Bill Mussel for Stó:lō Nation described the intention behind this proposal: "The idea behind the motion to amalgamate our Organizations was 'How we could provide a better service to our People – by working together, avoiding duplication of services, making best use of the dollars available and most importantly to be more accountable to the Chiefs and the People of the Stó:lō Nation.'"⁷⁴ Doug Kelly, who was serving on the Stó:lō Nation executive when amalgamation was being considered, described Steven Point's reasons for proposing it:

At that time, Steven was a member of the Coqualeetza board, he was a board director for the Chilliwack Area Indian Council, he was also in Stó:lō Housing, and he may have been on the executive for Stó:lō Nation as well, before I got there. And Steven was getting a little weary. He worked during the day, and then did his job as Chief of his community and all of his other responsibilities in the afternoon and evening, so every week he was attending meetings. And so he got to the point where he said, 'all my free time is going to all of these different boards. Why don't we create one organization, with one leadership structure, and we can meet once, and provide direction once, to all of these various institutions and organizations that serve the same people?'"⁷⁵

A report on amalgamation prepared by Eileen Williams for Coqualeetza said something similar: "As can be seen our people are spreading themselves pretty thin by being on two or more Executive Committees. With the amalgamated process there would be one

⁷³ Clarence Pennier, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁷⁴ Bill Mussel Jr., Manager/Planner, Stó:lō Nation, "The Amalgamation of our Organizations," Unpublished Material, Stó:lō Nation Archives.

⁷⁵ Doug Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

governing body for all organizations. With the one governing body, communication to the bands would be greatly intensified.”⁷⁶

At the same time, government funding was coming into place for tribal councils. Steven Point remembered that the distribution of this funding was the cause of much of the later controversy:

what happened was that the government started making money available for tribal councils. And so when that started happening, there's voting elections happening, I forget how it all went. We had one organization at one point that was getting this money, that was going to get this money and right at the very beginning when that money came down, the two, some people knew about it, some people didn't, anyways, a split occurred.⁷⁷

The discussions over amalgamation and the creation of a tribal council took place at the same time and involved many of the same people. In the end, two tribal councils were formed instead of one: Stó:lō Nation Canada and Stó:lō Tribal Council.

Steven Point remembered that a single tribal council was initially formed, although a split occurred shortly afterward. Frank Malloway recalled something similar. According to him, it was created because it was difficult to get enough of the member bands together to make decisions:

you know when you have twenty-four bands or twenty-three bands that belong to an organization, before you get any business done, you know, you have to have a quorum. The quorum was, uh, twelve, I guess. Twelve, or eleven, or whatever. And they never could get that many, sometimes, in important meetings, you know. They didn't get enough people to pass the motion. We weren't a society. We were just sort of an ad hoc committee, I guess. And one of the Chiefs suggested that we should designate a few of the Chiefs to form, or sit on, a committee or something like that. So they called a meeting for Agassiz, and I think it was in the community hall. Agassiz... They made recommendations there, that they form a little tribal council because tribal council funding was coming into place at that time, before there was no funding for a council.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Eileen Williams, “Amalgamation Report,” October 24, 1984, Unpublished Material, Stó:lō Nation Archives.

⁷⁷ Steven Point, interview by Byron Plant.

⁷⁸ Frank Malloway, interview by Martin Hoffman.

At this point, however, the tribal council was still fairly informal. Many of the people in favour of amalgamation were also in favour of creating a more organized tribal council. Both proposals seem to have been part of an attempt to create a unified political body to represent the Stó:lō.

At a meeting in 1985 at St. Mary's, the discussion focused on this issue. A number of Chiefs explained the advantages they saw in amalgamation and the creation of a formal tribal council. Wayne Bob said that:

unfortunately in this area we're one of the very very few tribal councils in B.C. that have not got an organized tribal council and I know that it has been discussed for the past ten, fifteen years as to the need for one, but there seems to be sort of a lack of really commitment to say, yes, we want to be organized.⁷⁹

Bill Williams explained that there were significant financial advantages in amalgamation.

According to him, more organized tribal councils were receiving much more money from the government than the Stó:lō organizations:

I just wanted to mention a couple of things that keep me interested in the importance of amalgamation and the information that Clarence Pennier is getting to the bands on our national budget about some of the dollars, especially on a per capita, that are going to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and provinces like that is so horrendously high compared to British Columbia. And the bands that we have compared to those small provinces, you know, there's, it's a hundred times over per capita basis and another example closer to home is the central interior tribal council compared to our executive, I think they're on a monthly honorarium around \$700 or \$600 wh[e]re our executive members receive \$50 a month. And yet we tried to carry on a lot of the work that is required and important to the people and I think some of the results that I could see are projecting amalgamation would be, it will develop unity among all of the people and involved in our nation. If it ever happened, it be an increase in funding and programs into all bands, naturally increase employment according to the needs of the people when structured.⁸⁰

Sam Douglas described some flaws in the current system that he believed would be fixed by a reorganization:

⁷⁹ "Transcript of the Meeting of the Stó:lō Nation Chiefs and Councilors, St. Mary's Mission, January 9, 1985," page 22, Unpublished Material, Stó:lō Nation Archives.

⁸⁰ "Transcript of the Meeting of the Stó:lō Nation Chiefs and Councilors, St. Mary's Mission, January 9, 1985," page 52-53, Unpublished Material, Stó:lō Nation Archives.

Many of these organizations are not accountable to member bands and they [do] not even have a mandate that would prove acceptable to member bands. There has been a lack of reporting procedures and accountability in some organizations. Often the mandates are unclear or they overlap in more than one of the organizations.⁸¹

Clearly, there were good reasons to amalgamate, and to form a more formal tribal council to represent the Stó:lō bands. However, there was also considerable resistance on the part of some bands and organizations to the way this reorganization was being done.

According to Doug Kelly, who was at this time trying to implement the reorganization as a member of the Stó:lō executive, some of the employees of the existing Stó:lō organizations were afraid that they would lose their jobs or their influence:

as soon as we started talking about organizational renewal and change, a number of things started to happen. First, each of the managers were afraid for their job, 'cause that's what happens when you start change reporting structures, reporting accountabilities, people immediately become fearful of their own employment. (...) That was one dynamic. The second was, is there were already board members that were – held leadership jobs, they were also afraid that they were going to lose their role as a leader of a particular organization.⁸²

The Stó:lō Nation executive contracted a consultant named Don Moses to prepare a plan for the reorganization. His proposal was met with immediate resistance. According to Doug Kelly: “we started working with the managers and the boards and right away there was instant, ‘No damn way. Who in the hell do you think you guys are?’ There was immediate strong, vocal, opposition to what we were proposing to do.”⁸³

While I was not able to interview anyone who was employed at one of the other organizations during this period, I did find a number of contemporary letters and documents in the archives. They suggest that there was more to the resistance to amalgamation than fear of

⁸¹ “Transcript of the Meeting of the Stó:lō Nation Chiefs and Councilors, St. Mary’s Mission, January 9, 1985,” page 46, Unpublished Material, Stó:lō Nation Archives.

⁸² Douglas Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁸³ Douglas Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

losing jobs. A letter from the executive of the Chilliwack Area Indian Council to Bill Williams, who was then the Chairman of the Stó:lō Nation executive, reveals some of their concerns:

We have one major complaint about the Moses report and that is that it was compiled without consulting our Chilliwack Area Indian Council. Granted, Mr. Moses did make one telephone call to our administrator, but we certainly do not consider one phone call as being involved in a serious consultation process. We feel that there are some very serious omissions in the Moses Report that would more fully express our position in terms of amalgamation.⁸⁴

I was not able to find similar correspondence from Coqualeetza or Stó:lō Housing, so I cannot say to what extent they opposed amalgamation, or why they did so.

There was also resistance from individual bands. A letter from Bill Mussel, in his role as Chairman of the Skwah Band's planning committee, to Clarence Pennier reveals some of these. In particular, Skwah Band seems to have felt that amalgamation was being done without enough thought and for the wrong reasons:

The Planning Committee understands that the request made to them is founded in the fact that the Department of Indian Affairs wants this to happen, not necessarily because it could better meet the development and maintenance needs of the Stó:lō people. This understanding may not be fully correct but for discussion purposes will be assumed to have substance.⁸⁵

To them, this reflected a broader problem with Stó:lō political and service delivery organizations:

It seems that most of the Stó:lō organizations are inclined, and with good reason, to be responsive to the needs of the people as they are defined by DIA (or other governmental departments), not by the people themselves. Where the needs of the majority of the people happen to fit with the needs as identified by government, there is a good chance to be responsive and perhaps effective. Unfortunately, this seldom is possible, especially in a developmental mode. A good example is the social assistance program.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ "Letter to Bill Williams, Chairman of Stó:lō Nation, from the Executive of the Chilliwack Area Indian Council, November 13, 1984," Unpublished Material, Stó:lō Nation Archives.

⁸⁵ "Letter to Clarence Pennier, District Representative, District Chiefs, from Bill Mussel, Chairperson, Planning Committee, Skwah Indian Band," Unpublished Material, Stó:lō Nation Archives.

⁸⁶ "Letter to Clarence Pennier, District Representative, District Chiefs, from Bill Mussel, Chairperson, Planning Committee, Skwah Indian Band," Unpublished Material, Stó:lō Nation Archives.

They concluded that, in their view:

it would be inappropriate to develop amalgamation plans without first knowing the whys of the proposal. Is it because the existing organizations are not being responsive and effective? Is it because there are beliefs that the limited budgets can bring better results under a new organizational format? Are there other reasons?⁸⁷

While such feelings were not universal, Skwah was not alone in opposing amalgamation. A letter from Cecil Malloway, as Chief of Tzeachten Band, to Bill Williams states that: “If amalgamation is to continue in its present form, we are prepared to withdraw our support of the Stó:lō Nation, and ‘go our own way’ as stated in your Amalgamation report.”⁸⁸ In 1985, the widespread opposition to the proposed reorganization came to a head in the election for the Stó:lō Nation executive.

A document entitled “Direction of the Stó:lō Tribes” declared that: “The majority of bands have opposed amalgamation of the Stó:lō Nation,” and that the executive had refused to listen to these concerns. Therefore, it called for an immediate election: “Be it resolved that the above bands recommend the election of a new Executive Committee by open nomination and voting done by secret ballots. There will be six elected and one elected chairperson.”⁸⁹ The document includes spaces for representatives of all twenty-four Stó:lō bands to sign, but the copy I examined is blank. While this is not unusual for archived copies, it makes it impossible to tell how many bands actually opposed the proposed reorganization. However, an election certainly did take place, and nearly all of the Stó:lō Nation executive lost their seats.

⁸⁷ “Letter to Clarence Pennier, District Representative, District Chiefs, from Bill Mussel, Chairperson, Planning Committee, Skwah Indian Band,” Unpublished Material, Stó:lō Nation Archives.

⁸⁸ “Letter to Bill Williams, Chairman of Stó:lō Nation, from Chief Cecil Malloway of Tzeachten Band,” Unpublished Material, Stó:lō Nation Archives.

⁸⁹ “Direction of the Stó:lō Tribes,” Unpublished Material, Stó:lō Nation Archives.

All of the people I spoke to about this topic remembered this election as a dramatic change of leadership. Clarence Pennier recalled that:

we ended up having some difficulties amongst our Chiefs, you know there was a new regime coming in to, coming to Chieftainships, younger people were emerging as Chiefs. And that led to an annual general meeting, I guess that would have been about 1984, 1985. And, there was an executive in place, six person executive in place at the time, and um... So we were going through elections for that, those executive members and it ended up that there was a couple of different factions within the Stó:lō, so the executive was replaced by a different group.⁹⁰

Frank Malloway also remembered that the demand for an election came from the younger members:

The people called a meeting, young people at St. Mary's, and they demanded an election. And at that time we had portfolio holders, fisheries and other ones too, I forgot what they were all, what all the portfolios we had. But they kinda stacked the vote, because these young guys that were demanding a meeting brought all kinda support, and they were mostly youth. You know, they kinda told these youth that the Chiefs weren't working properly, and they were gonna demand an election. So Bill Williams was confident that he would win his seat, so he agreed to have elections that night.⁹¹

The results of the election were decisive. Almost the entire Stó:lō Nation executive were defeated. Doug Kelly, who was a member of the outgoing executive, recalled that:

when we went to the election for the Stó:lō Nation executive in March/ April of 1985, every one of us except for Bill Williams was not reelected. Every one of us sought reelection, not one of us was reelected. The only one that was reelected was the late Bill Williams of Chehalis. We were replaced by other Chiefs, of other Stó:lō bands, some of which had positions on those other boards of directors, some of which had not been involved at all.⁹²

This election led to a split within Stó:lō Nation and the eventual creation of two new organizations: Stó:lō Tribal Council and Stó:lō Nation Canada.

⁹⁰ Clarence Pennier, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁹¹ Frank Malloway, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁹² Douglas Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

Conclusion

The results of the election led directly to the creation of the Stó:lō Tribal Council. Doug Kelly explained that a group of Chiefs from eleven different communities met about a month after the election. Those present included Chief Sam Douglas of Cheam, Chief Doug Kelly of Soowahlie, Chief Bill Williams of Chehalis, Chief Clarence Pennier of Scowlitz, Grand Chief Richard Malloway of Yakweakioose, Chief Joe Gabriel of Kwantlen, Chief Rob Jimmy of Squiala, and Chief Lester Ned of Sumas. Either Verna or James Murphy was there as Chief of Popkum, and either Dennis George or Audrey Kelly as Chief of Shxw'ow'hamel.⁹³ There would also have been one more Chief present, but I have not been able to determine who they were or which community they represented. According to Doug Kelly:

we met, and we talked about the outcome of that election, a month before. And we talked about how, instead of bringing our organizations together, how we in essence divided them, and how the outcome wasn't quite what we were looking to achieve. So we decided that, as the block of eleven communities, that we were going to create our own institution. If we weren't going to be able to pull one together, then we would create one. One organization that would look after all of our services for eleven communities.⁹⁴

The remaining communities formed an organization called Stó:lō Nation Society, which was incorporated on September 23rd, 1985.⁹⁵ Stó:lō Nation Society merged with the Chilliwack Area Indian Council in 1989 to create Stó:lō Nation Canada. According to Steven Point, by this point only the Stó:lō Nation Society bands were members of the Area Council, since Stó:lō Tribal Council had begun to provide their own services: “I think they amalgamated the old Area Council into it afterwards, because the Area Council, a lot of the big bands had pulled out of it.

⁹³ Douglas Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁹⁴ Douglas Kelly, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁹⁵ “Stó:lō Nation Society Certificate of Incorporation,” Unpublished Material, Stó:lō Nation Archives.

All that was left was those bands that had formed the Stó:lō Nation Canada.”⁹⁶ The new organization was incorporated on February 7th, 1989.⁹⁷

What happened between 1969 and 1989? What changed, what stayed the same, and what was accomplished? In the first place, during this period a new kind of Stó:lō organization came into being. The Fraser East District Council began to represent the Stó:lō politically, and negotiate with the federal and provincial governments on land rights, fisheries management, and many other issues. The Chilliwack Area Indian Council took over the delivery of social services from Indian Affairs. Both organizations represented all, or nearly all, of the twenty-four bands between Langley and Yale. In 1985, when Stó:lō Tribal Council was created, it continued to provide political representation and service delivery to its members. Stó:lō Nation Canada did the same.

According to Grand Chief Clarence Pennier, the essential aims of the Stó:lō have remained the same from 1969 until the present day:

I guess the thing to recognize, out of all of these different morphings into different tribal councils or going back to the nation, the objective remained the same, right. We want a resolution to the land question. You know, who owns the land? We say we own the land, the province and Canada say they own it.⁹⁸

The struggle for recognition of their rights and title has occupied all Stó:lō political organizations from the creation of the East Fraser District Council. Lester Ned touched on another point of continuity when he said that, “as these organizations see it we’re here to assist bands to stand on their own two feet.”⁹⁹ According to him, nothing will change until each band can support itself without depending on Indian Affairs:

⁹⁶ Steven Point, interview by Byron Plant.

⁹⁷ “Stó:lō Nation Canada Certificate of Incorporation,” Unpublished Material, Stó:lō Nation Archives.

⁹⁸ Clarence Pennier, interview by Martin Hoffman.

⁹⁹ Lester Ned, interview by Martin Hoffman.

Until that philosophy is worked, and done, then nothing's going to change, because the whole Indian Affairs thing is to keep Native people stupid, and we've got them under our arms, and as long as we've got them in that scenario then we tell them where to go, we lead them around by the nose, and we give them a little pittance of dollars there to operate, and that's where they're at. And until each band stands on its own two feet I don't think they're going to go anywhere.¹⁰⁰

Self-sufficiency, self-government, and the recognition of rights and title are all related goals, and they have occupied Stó:lō political organizations since the beginning of the period I studied. In those areas, the Stó:lō made significant gains. Between 1969 and 1989, Stó:lō political organizations grew dramatically in terms of influence, funding, and services delivered.

Along with this growth came conflict, which eventually led to the split in 1985. Frank Malloway recalled how influential the Stó:lō organizations were when they represented almost all of the bands between Langley and Yale: "people used to always say, you know, when we would go to provincial or national meetings and they see the Stó:lō Nation people come in they tremble, you know, because we had so many votes."¹⁰¹ He wanted people to know how the Stó:lō were respected in those days: "that's how strong they said we used to be, we'd walk in people would acknowledge us."¹⁰² That moment of unity may have passed, but it is important to remember that it once existed.

¹⁰⁰ Lester Ned, interview by Martin Hoffman.

¹⁰¹ Frank Malloway, interview by Martin Hoffman.

¹⁰² Frank Malloway, interview by Martin Hoffman.

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