

The Archive of Place

*Environment and the Contested Past
of a North American Plateau*



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by

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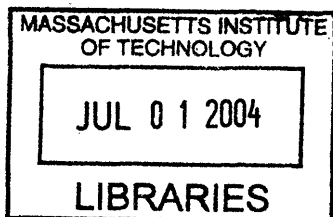
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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the role that the interpretation of material evidence plays in historical consciousness and social memory. It consists of three case studies from the Chilcotin Plateau in the west-central part of present-day British Columbia. In each, a conflict in the mid-1990s over the nature of the past and its relevance for the present allowed underlying stories to emerge. As different groups struggled to control the fate of the region and its resources, they invoked very different understandings of its past, understandings based in part on the material traces that they found there. Taken together, the case studies illustrate the fact that there is an extensive division of interpretive labor when it comes to the material evidence of the past. Like other kinds of labor, this interpretation takes part in a political economy. Studies of material evidence are done to further the interests of individuals or groups, are valued and exchanged with one another, and are important in the delineation of property rights, the enforcement of laws and the justification of ideologies. What emerges is not an authoritative or univocal environmental history of a place, but rather a contest to find a past which will be usable in the present and future. The constant interpretation of material evidence allows people to situate themselves with respect to place, time and other people.

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Preface

The Archive of Place is about the ways in which people interpret material traces to reconstruct past events, the conditions under which such interpretation takes place, and the role that it plays in historical consciousness and social memory. It consists of three case studies from the Chilcotin plateau in the west-central part of present-day British Columbia (Figure 1). In each, a conflict in the mid-1990s over the meaning of the past for the present provided the occasion for underlying stories to surface. As different groups struggled to control the fate of the region and its resources, they invoked very different understandings of its past to justify their actions. In many cases, their historical beliefs were due, directly or indirectly, to physical evidence found in the place itself.

Material traces of past events are commonplace: seeing a footprint in the mud we may infer that someone walked by after the last rainfall, when the ground was soft. We readily distinguish the tracks of a child from those of an adult, human tracks from those made by other animals, or bicycle tracks from those of motorcycles or cars. In certain settings it becomes important to be able to infer more from tracks, and some people specialize in these more intensive kinds of reading. Hunters or wildlife biologists, for example, can readily distinguish the characteristically round hoofprints and tell-tale dew claw marks of a caribou from the more pointed and elongate tracks of a moose.¹ Forensic investigators can determine the size of a shoe and its manufacturer from footprints, and can make reliable predictions about the weight, height and gait of the wearer as well.²

But tracks are not the only material trace of the past; in fact, every single aspect of our environment bears some physical or causal connection to past events. Every *thing* has a history, and our ability to reconstruct the past of anything is limited only by the knowledge that we bring to bear and by our ability to detect or discriminate or identify or measure the trace. A shoeprint that has been contaminated with blood may be invisible to the naked eye. If sprayed with a chemical reagent called luminol, it will glow in the dark. The blood itself may be matched to a particular animal by the proteins that it contains. If

¹ Shackleton, *Hoofed Mammals*, 68.

² Nickell and Fischer, *Crime Science*, 150-154.

human, it can be matched to a group of people by antigen-antibody reactions (the ABO system of blood groups), or matched to a particular individual by DNA.³ What is made of such evidence, however, is rarely straightforward. Different people may have a stake in the outcome and this is reflected in the conclusions that they draw. In a sense, the idea that different interpreters will draw different conclusions from the same material evidence is merely a corollary of the historian's methodological dictum that one should, as E. H. Carr put it, "Study the historian before you begin to study the facts."⁴

The first part of *The Archive of Place*, "Deep Time in the Present," focuses on a case where contemporary "stakeholders" invoked the interpretation of different material traces of the past while arguing over the fate of a copper-gold porphyry deposit and a nearby lake. In the 1990s, a mining company and other proponents of an open-pit mine found themselves in conflict with other companies over mining claims, with the government and anglers over fisheries, with environmentalists over conservation, and with the First Nations[†] over land claims. As the value of the potential mine increased, each of these groups tried to determine the future of the region, in part by reconstructing its past. The only way for the mining companies to find out how much the mine might be worth was to reconstruct the geological history of the ore deposit. The post-glacial history of the lake and its population of rainbow trout became important for individuals and groups who wished to preserve a natural fishery. The ecological history of the region guided environmental groups in their decisions about which areas they should fight the hardest to conserve. Archaeological studies corroborated the traditional patterns of First Nations land use, which played an important role in the legal case for native[†] land claims. For each of these stakeholders, the key to the Chilcotin past lay in physical evidence found in the place itself, evidence that typically had to be gathered and interpreted by

³ Nickell and Fischer, *Crime Science*.

⁴ Carr, *What is History?* 26. Recognizing that every act of interpretation is biased in some way or other doesn't necessarily commit one to a version of empiricism where the facts can be made to speak objectively for themselves, or, conversely, to a version of postmodernism where there is no ground to make any judgment of bias. Cf. Jenkins, *Re-thinking History*, 44-47. What is called for instead is the recognition "that history only balances possibilities against probabilities." Muir, "Observing Trifles," xiv.

[†] Terms that are defined in the glossary are marked with a dagger (†).

specialists from many different disciplines. Since these studies cost something (and often they were very expensive), they were only undertaken by groups that expected to see some benefit in return. Much of the argument of the first part of *The Archive of Place* focuses on the ways that the reconstruction of the past from physical evidence was used to bolster claims about property rights, and thus formed a key element of the region's political economy.

There are further dimensions to the relationship between material traces and historical consciousness, however, and the idea that every place is an archive of these traces becomes progressively complicated over the course of the book. The second part, "The Horizon of Experience," is concerned with the creation of a heritage trail to commemorate the accomplishments of the eighteenth-century explorer Alexander Mackenzie. In 1793, an expedition led by Mackenzie skirted around the northern edge of the Chilcotin and ended at the Pacific Ocean. Mackenzie and some of his men became the first non-natives[†] to make the voyage across the continent north of Mexico. When some groups tried to celebrate and re-enact the voyage on its bicentennial, there was conflict over the role that the explorer did, or should, play in history. To Canadian nationalists, the accomplishments of Mackenzie had been inexplicably overlooked, and those of Lewis and Clark celebrated excessively; they felt that it was time to rectify this historiographical oversight and relegate the American explorers to the category of "also-rans" in a race across the continent.⁵ To federalists, who feared that the Québécois[†] might be about to split the country apart with their demands for separation, Mackenzie was a symbol of Canadian unity, one of the reasons why the country stretched from sea to sea. But the Mackenzie story also contained many elements that called for revision. Two members of the expedition were native guides from the east, and Mackenzie and his men made constant use of other native guides and informants, and followed a longstanding network of native trails the whole way.⁶ The First Nations took a variety of positions on

⁵ Stephen Hume, "Canadian Explorers Blazed a Trail; Lewis and Clark Also-Rans," *Edmonton Journal*, 18 May 2003.

⁶ There is also at least one native person who may have made such a journey before the much better publicized voyages of Mackenzie and Lewis and Clark. Around 1700, a Yazoo Indian named Moncacht-

Mackenzie, the most extreme being that he was a harbinger of genocide. In this, they were joined by some politicians on the left, who saw the opportunity to advance a program of democratic socialism.

The debate about the meanings of the explorer for Canadian history, identity and unity, was supported by attempts to reconstruct the route that Mackenzie followed from his surveying notes, from maps and artifacts, and especially from physical evidence found on the trails themselves. Federal and provincial governments, NGOs, and First Nations commissioned studies of the system of overland trails in a struggle to define a particular place and its role in history. One of the outcomes of these studies was a new appreciation for the fact that this system of trails had underlain networks of trade and exchange that made the Chilcotin “coextensive with the disk of the world” over its long period of human occupation.⁷ The accomplishments of a few centuries were thus confronted with those of nine millennia. The argument in the second part focuses on the ways that historical consciousness and social memory depend on the materiality of landscape. The sheer profusion of physical evidence for the past to be found in any place makes it impossible for an individual or group to limit the stories that landscape can tell.

In the historiography of British Columbia, the Chilcotin has often been portrayed as a landscape of darkness, resistance and violence, and the Tsilhqot’ins[†], the native people who live there, as essentially truculent. The third part of *The Archive of Place*, “Shadowed Ground,” explores the ways that a place becomes a repository not only of the material traces of its past but also of particular ideologies. It begins with a discussion of reburial. When a native cemetery was accidentally unearthed during construction in the 1970s, the human remains were unceremoniously dumped with waste from the building site. When some presumably native bones were discovered in a similar situation in the

Apé left his home on the lower Mississippi River in search of the origins of his people. He traveled first to the northeast, where he encountered tidewater and saw the Niagara Falls. After returning home, he decided to travel to the northwest, and followed the Mississippi, Missouri and Columbia Rivers to the Pacific. He later told his story to the French, who published versions of it in the 1750s. See Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire*, vol. 3, chs. 6-8; Carver & Montucla, *Voyage*, 404-405, CIHM 90454; Kolbet, “Narratives”; Byram & Lewis, “Ourigan.”

⁷ This phrase was used by Wallace Stegner to describe another North American place in *Wolf Willow*, 6.

1990s, however, their ultimate fate became a matter of widespread dispute and negotiation for seventeen months. Reburial is one way that people attempt to physically correct their historical relationship with a place and with their ancestors, an attempt, if you will, to rewrite the archive of place. The change in attitudes toward reburial in the late 20th century signalled a radical revision of long held ideas about Chilcotin history and a dismantling of retroactive historical justification for contemporary racism.

The third part of *The Archive of Place* traces the history of the region from the time of Mackenzie and the fur trade to the 1990s. In the late 1850s, there was a massive influx of non-native people into the interior in search of gold and attendant profits, and a British colony was created. Although the newcomers had very little knowledge of the past of the place or its native occupants, they were largely responsible for creating its archival record. One of the first challenges that they faced, to the authority of their government and to their identity as colonial subjects, was a series of killings in and at the edges of the Chilcotin. This became a defining moment in subsequent historiography. The events of the Chilcotin War (as it came to be known) colored the ways that the Chilcotin was imagined for the next century, feeding into a frontier myth which portrayed the actions of Eurocanadian[†] settlers as having a civilizing and beneficent effect on native people. By the 1970s, the hegemony of this colonial view was beginning to break up. The death of a Tsilhqot'in man during an encounter with the police became a flashpoint for reform of the relationship between the justice system and aboriginal people. In the 1990s, a government commission was established to investigate the ways that natives had been treated by the police, Crown prosecutors, probation officers and counselors of the family courts. This provided a forum in which many of the cherished interpretations of British Columbian history, both popular and scholarly, could be called into question.

Together, the three parts of *The Archive of Place* trace the end, roughly between the 1970s and the 1990s, of a complex of ideas that governed relationships between native and non-native people. From the mid-19th century to the 1970s, prevailing views of native people denied their agency in a wide variety of social, legal, political and

economic contexts. A common assumption was that aboriginal rights in British Columbia were extinguished by the establishment of colonial government or the subsequent regulatory activities of its successors. Where native rights were acknowledged to exist, they were held to be usufructuary and not to include title to the land. Historically, native people were portrayed as a part of nature, discovered by non-native explorers and tamed by the settlers that came in their wake. In contemporary portraits they were often brutalized. By the 1990s, native people and their supporters had disrupted the status quo. Aboriginal title was a legal fact, although one whose ramifications were unclear. Native people were agents in a revised history and a force to be reckoned with in contemporary politics. Although the details of the story are specific to this place, in many ways it parallels simultaneous changes elsewhere in the world.⁸

The focus on a particular place, on the physical traces of its past, and on the different ways that the past has been reconstructed and fought over, makes it possible to build on the strengths of intersecting historiographic traditions like environmental history, the history of science, and ethnohistory. *The Archive of Place* is both an environmental history and a historical study of the quotidian practices that are analogous to doing environmental history. It takes as its subject the ways that people retrieve the past from a place, and the reasons they choose to learn some things and not others. By historicizing this activity, however, it forces the recognition that the environmental sciences may provide a wealth of historical information, but they do not provide a unitary or authoritative account against which all other accounts must be judged. In this way, the narrative tries to pull the concerns of environmental history more into the mainstream of historical revision. As a history of science, the emphasis is on work in the field, on the situations where the products of science are not judged in a rarefied world of theory, but rather in settings where, for example, people who want to dig mines come face to face

⁸ Cf. Paul St. Pierre, "Nothing happens in Chilcotin that doesn't happen everywhere else, but here there is always that slight alteration of the perspective, the color, the tone, and the shape of ordinary events are slightly and subtly changed; Chilcotin people march to a different drum." *Vancouver Sun*, 28 Mar 1978, BCA D19-027. The author of hundreds of humorous stories and articles about the Chilcotin, St. Pierre has done as much as anyone to create a popular view of the region as a mythic frontier.

with others who would rather cut trees, graze cattle, fish, or simply admire the beauty of nature. The work also draws on the literature of ethnohistory, which has redirected attention to indigenous[†] people and to the ways that they have been excluded from narratives and representations of the past. Indigenous people do play a significant role in each of the contests described here, but ethnological concepts and categories are given no more claim to final authority than any other kind of knowledge.

One central idea in this work is that of *clues*, drawn in large part from Carlo Ginzburg's essay of the same name and reworked.⁹ This is evident in the subject matter: the ways that historians and other interpreters use latent or seemingly insignificant traces to draw wide ranging conclusions about an external and knowable (but opaque) reality. It is perhaps less obvious, but no less important, that the narrative is also shaped by the application of what Ginzburg called the "evidential paradigm," in that it focuses on individual cases precisely because they are individual, manipulates scale as an experimental technique, and uses abduction[†] to infer causes from their effects.¹⁰ *The Archive of Place* explores the ways in which usable pasts are drawn from the material substance of a particular place, typically under conditions of conflict. As with any historiographic encounter, these pasts are never fixed, depending instead on the interests, biases and abilities of their historians. Taken in conjunction, these stories about the past characterize the people living in a particular place at a particular moment, their aspirations and anxieties, their image of who they are and where they came from, their sense of being exactly where and when they are. That moment—that binding of history and memory and landscape—constitutes the present. The physical traces of the past lay all around, manifest to a greater or lesser degree, ready to be incorporated into what comes next.

⁹ Ginzburg, "Clues."

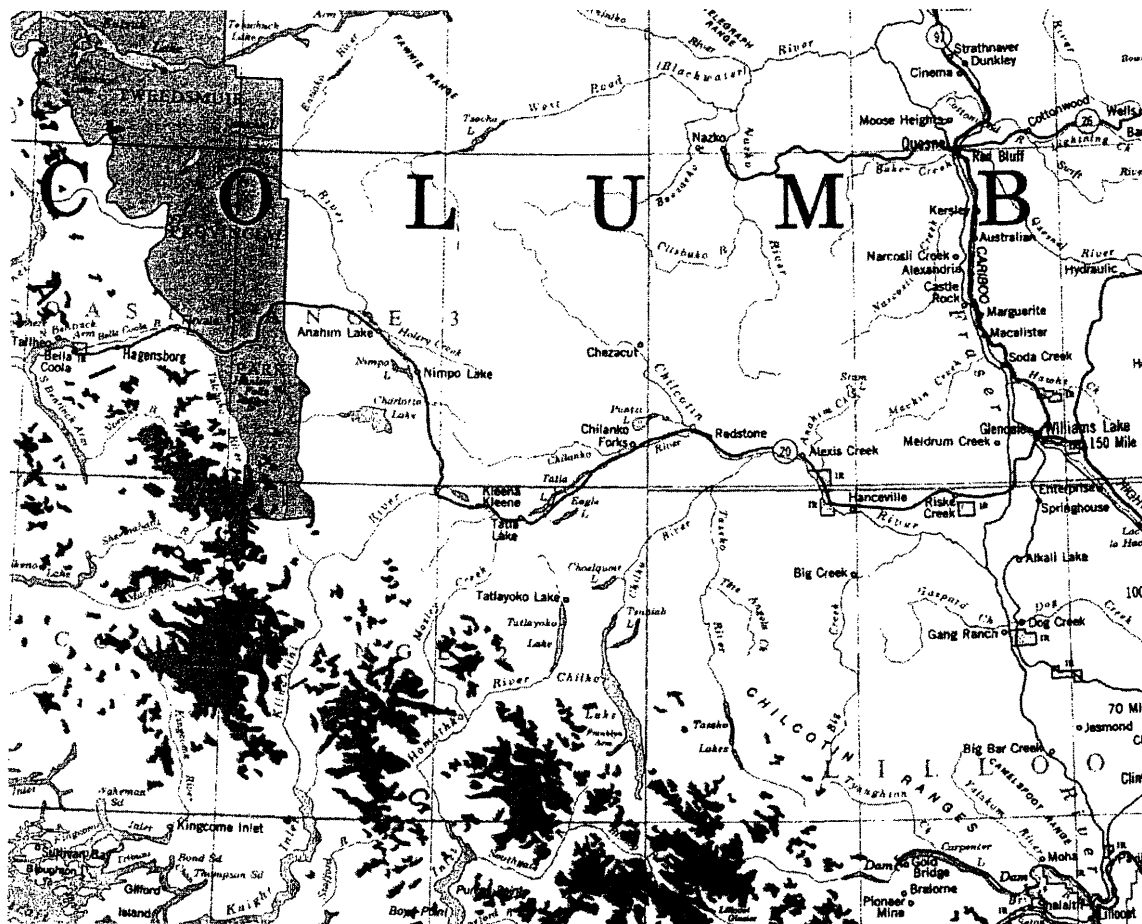
¹⁰ Ginzburg, "Clues"; Muir, "Observing Trifles"; Ginzburg & Pontì, "Name and Game"; Levi, "On Microhistory"; Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much."

Figure 1: Map showing location of the Chilcotin¹¹



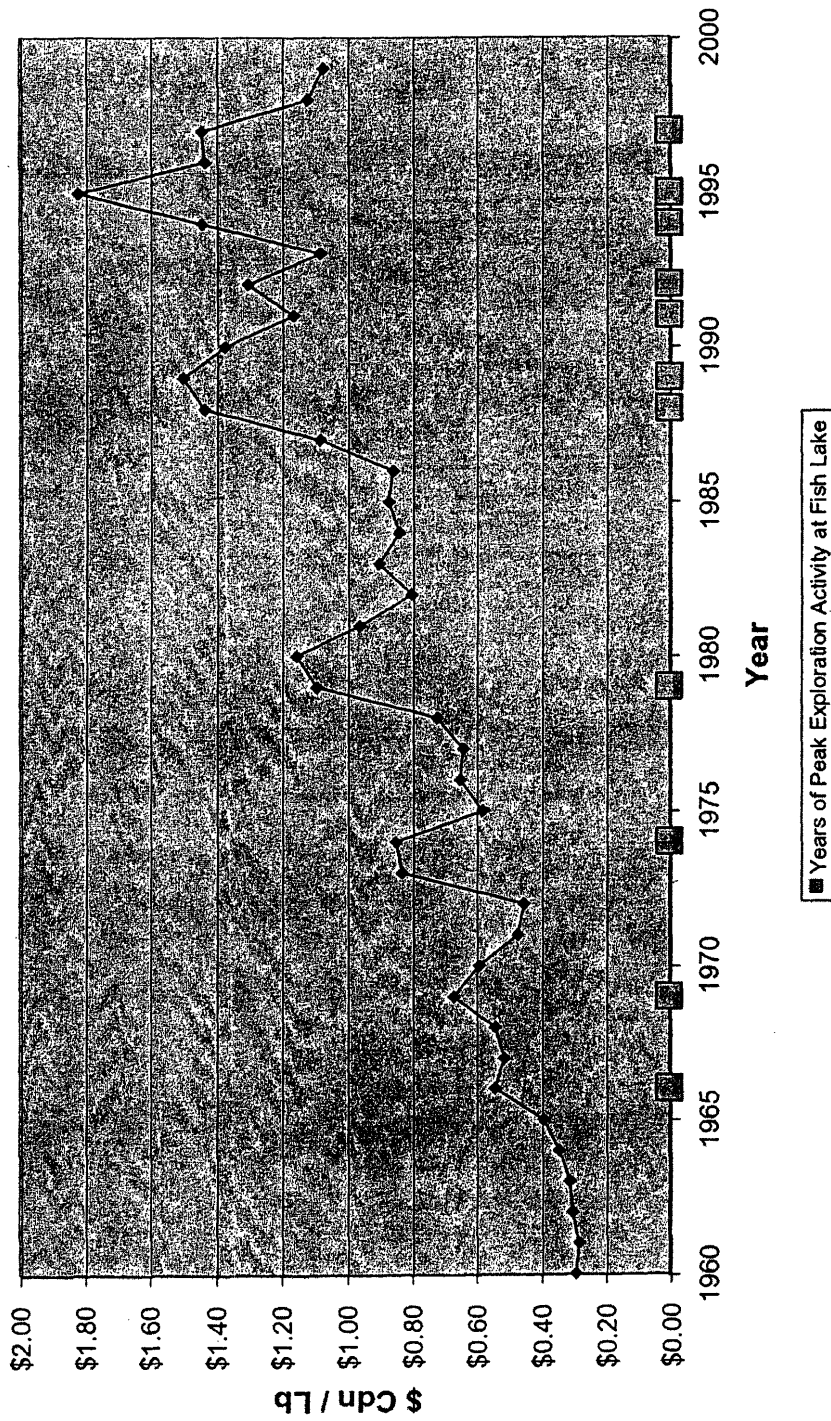
¹¹ Drawn from ESRI base data.

Figure 2: The Chilcotin¹²



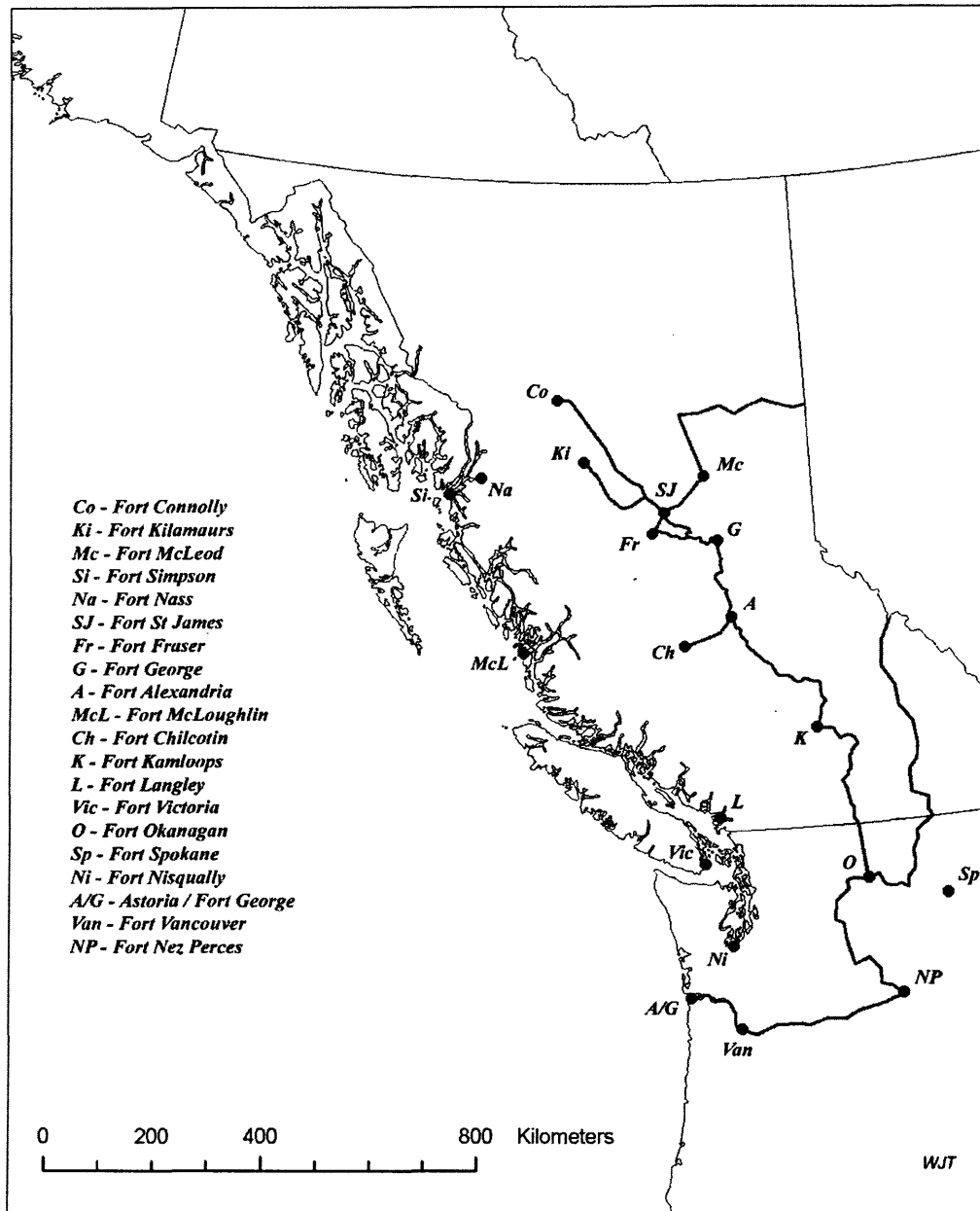
¹² Drawn with Softmap British Columbia Topo 50.

Figure 3: Copper Prices and Exploration at Fish Lake¹³



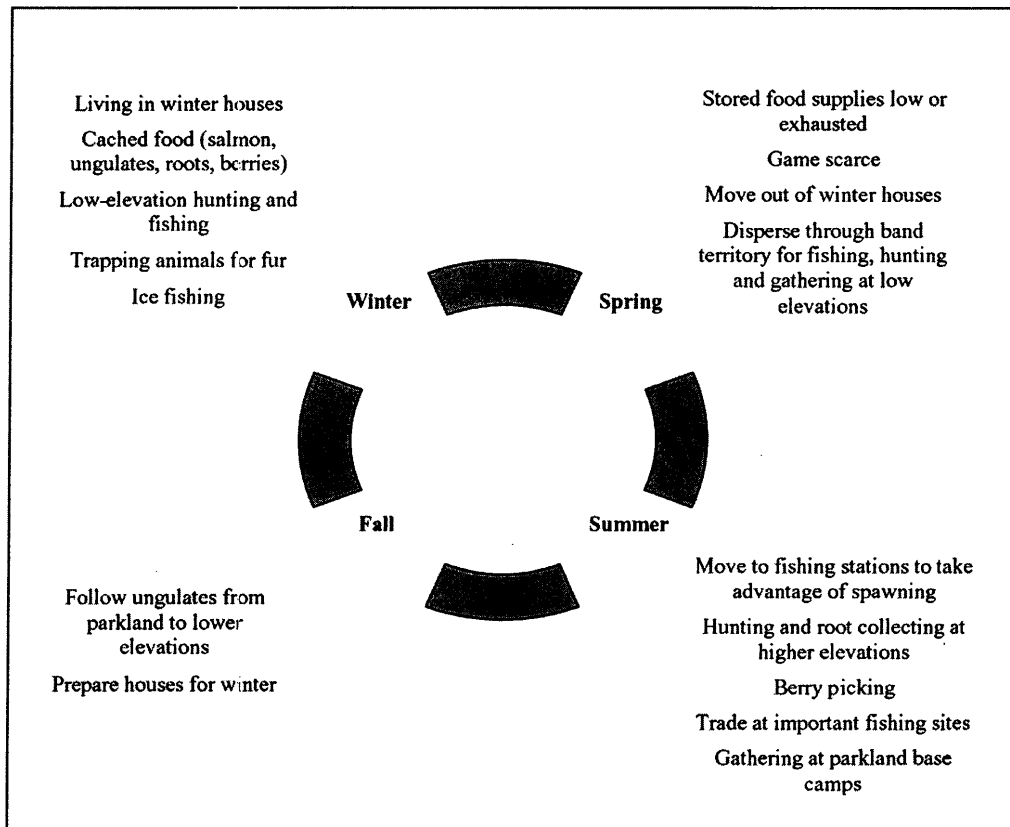
¹³ Copper price data from BC Ministry of Energy and Mines, "BC Producer Prices."

Figure 4: Fur Trade Forts and Brigade Routes¹⁴



¹⁴ Redrawn from Gibson, *Lifeline*, Maps 1-5; Harris, "Strategies of Power," Figure 2.2; Ray, "HBC and Native People," Figure 1.

Figure 5: Seasonal Subsistence Round for Tsilhqot'ins and Their Neighbors¹⁵



¹⁵ Drawn from information in Alexander, "Cultural Heritage Overview," 55-60.

Figure 6: Tsilhqot'ins and Their Neighbors on the Grease Trails

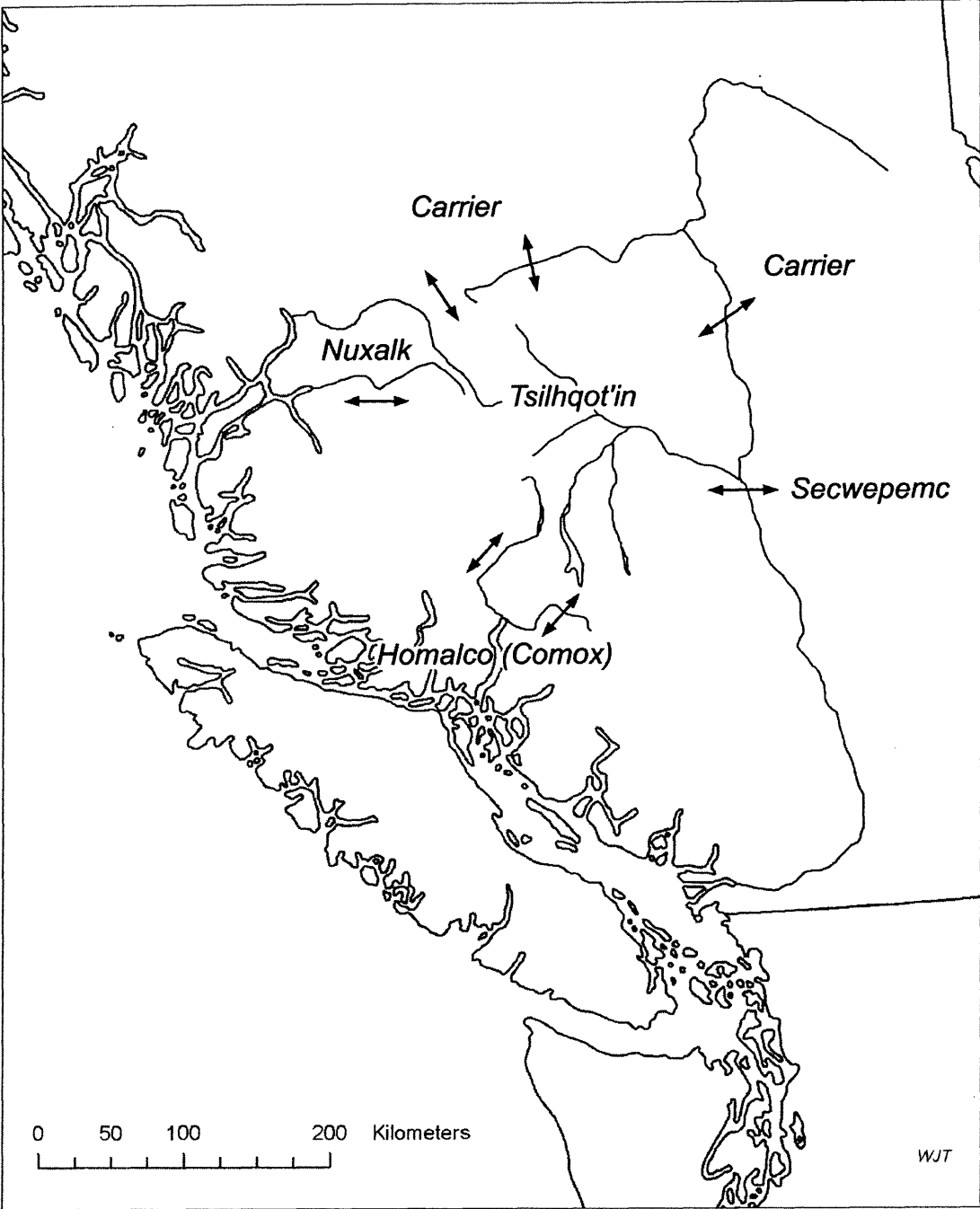


Figure 7: Routes to the Cariboo

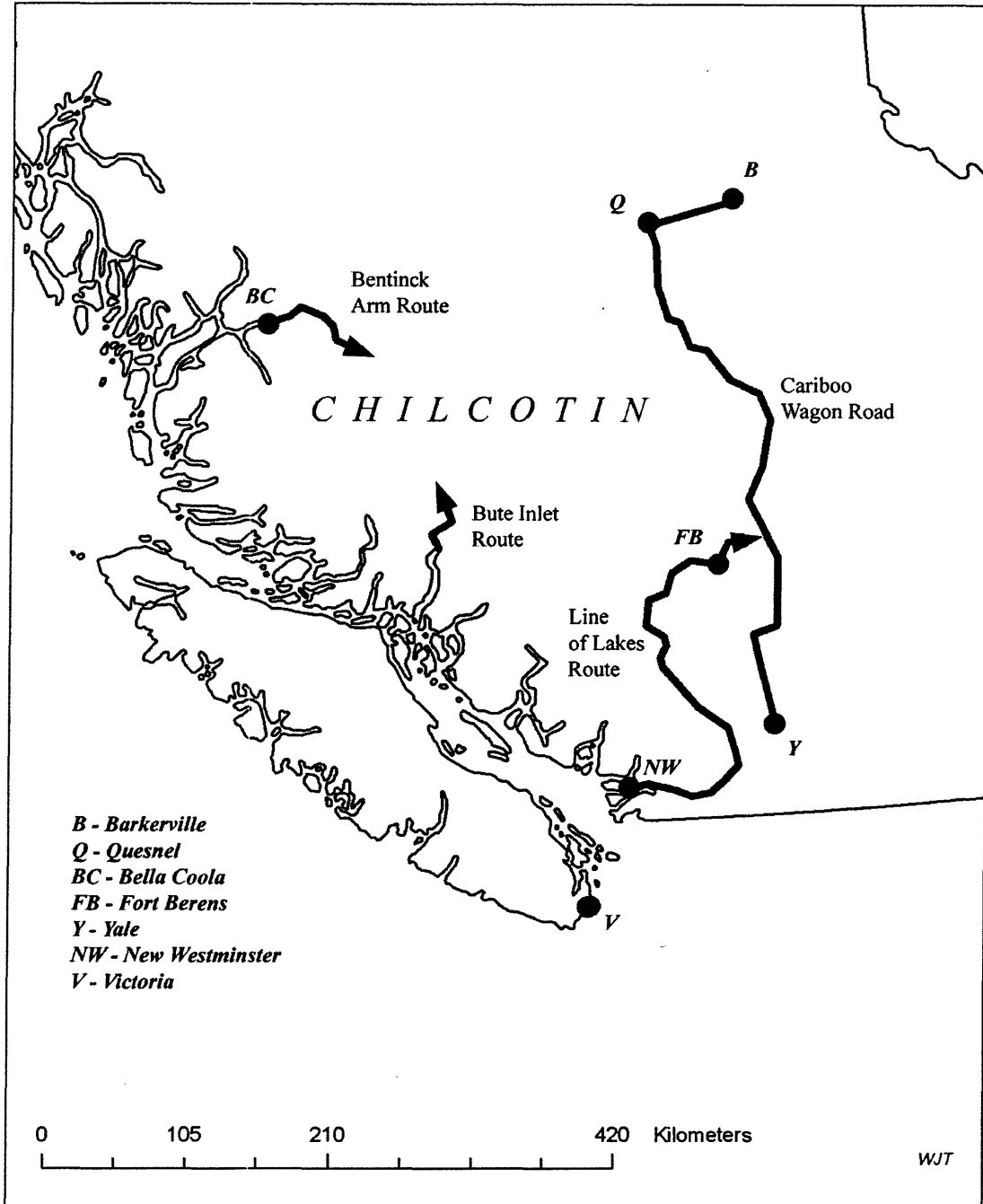
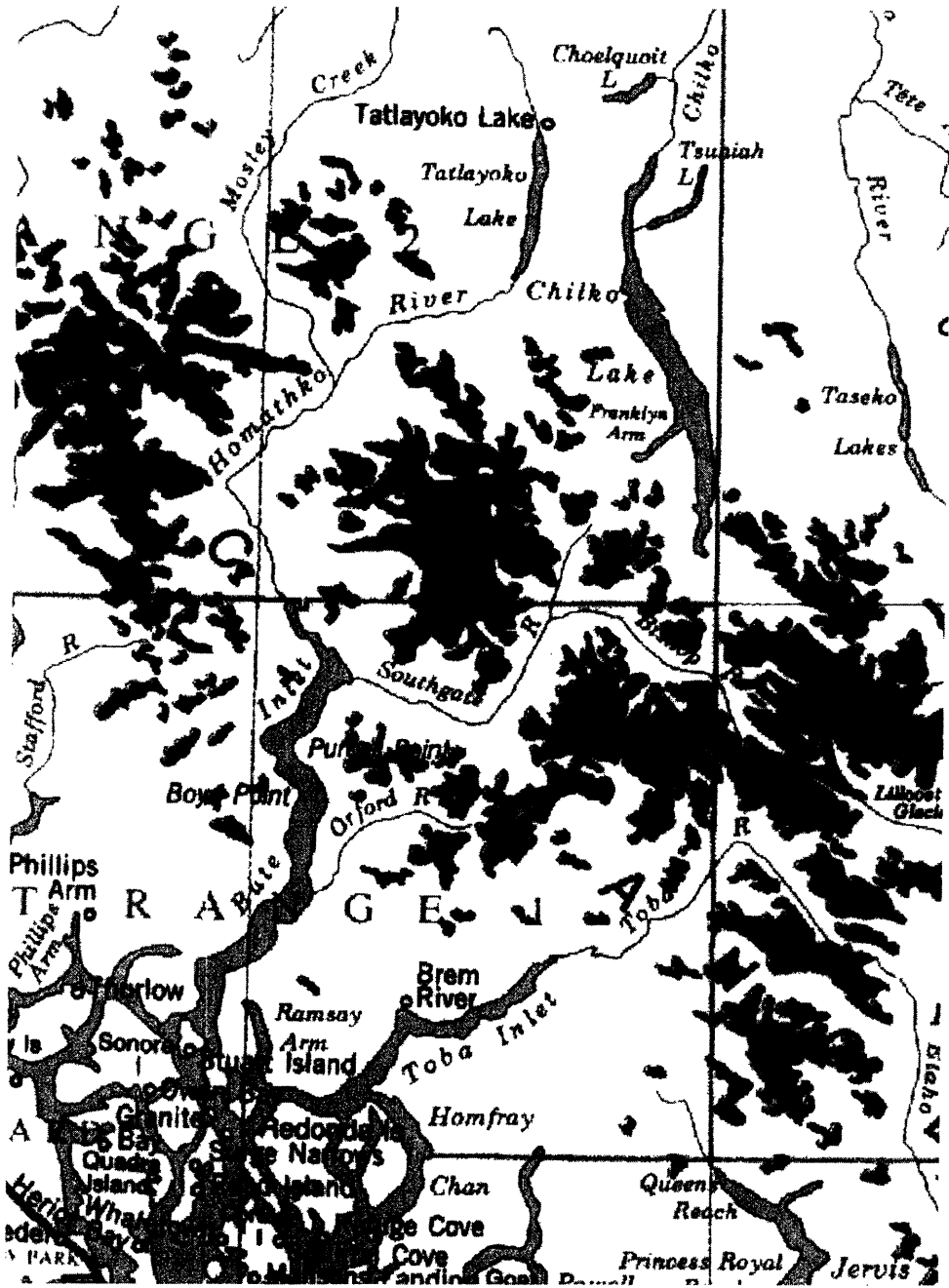


Figure 8: The Cariboo¹⁶



¹⁶ Drawn with Sofmap British Columbia Topo 50.

Figure 9: Bute Inlet¹⁷



¹⁷ Drawn with Softmap British Columbia Topo 50.

Chronology I: Glacial Time¹⁸

Archaeological Period	Climatic Period	Paleoclimate	Uncalibrated ¹⁴ C Dates	Events in Central British Columbia
Late	Neoglaciation	Warm / Dry	5000 BP – Present	200 BP. Eurocanadian fur traders. 640–130 BP. Little Ice Age. 1000 BP. Abandonment of southern interior pit house winter villages. 1300 BP. Eruption of White River volcano; Athapaskan migration? 1800 BP. Little Climatic Optimum. 2350 BP. Mt Meager eruption. 2500 BP. Intensified plant-food collection; Use of earthen ovens. 3500 BP. Intensified fishing; Storage of surplus salmon; Export of nephrite products. 4000 BP. First house pits; area of grasslands reduced.
		Slightly Cooler / Wetter		
Middle	Hypsithermal	Slightly Warmer / Drier	10000 – 6000 BP	5500 BP. Increasing importance of salmon. 6000 BP. Stone boiling to cook food. 8–7000 BP. Increasing moisture; Trees expand downslope. 9–8000 BP. Obsidian quarried in Chilcotin; Indigenous trade networks; grasslands at maximum extent. 9000 BP. Human occupation at Namu. 10–9000 BP. Summer solar radiation peaks.
		Warmer / Drier		
Early	Wisconsin Glaciation	Cool / Moist	30000 – 11000 BP	11–10000 BP. Aspen and pine forests in uplands. 11500 BP. Pioneer grasslands in south-central interior. 13000 BP. Suitable human habitat on Northwest Coast. 18000 BP. Peak of glaciation; Beringia occupied.
		Cold		

¹⁸Periodization is adapted from Pielou, *After the Ice Age*; Hebda, “Interior Grasslands”; Fladmark, *BC Prehistory*; Stryd & Rousseau, “Early Prehistory.”

Chronology II: Geological Time¹⁹

Erathem	System	Series	Geochronometry Ma BP	Events in Central British Columbia
Cenozoic	Quaternary	Holocene	0.1 – Present	9000 BP. Latest date for beginning of human occupation. 30000 – 9000 BP. Last major glaciation (Wisconsinin).
		Pleistocene	1.6 – 0.1	1.6 – 0.1 Ma BP. Period of Ice Ages; Major rivers acquire present courses.
	Neogene	Pliocene	5.3 – 1.6	5.3 – 3.3 Ma BP. Uplift.
		Miocene	23 – 5.3	23 – 1.6 Ma BP. Basalt flows; Shield volcanoes formed.
	Paleogene	Oligocene	36.5 – 23	53 – 36.5 Ma BP. Period of volcanism; Adaptive radiation of mammals, birds, fish, insects, flowering plants.
		Eocene	53 – 36.5	
		Paleocene	65 – 53	
Mesozoic	Cretaceous		135 – 65	65 Ma BP. Extinction of dinosaurs. 80 Ma BP. Fish Lake deposit formed. 83.5 – 46.5 Ma BP. Yalakom Fault. 100 Ma BP. Cascade terranes thrust over Cache Creek and Stikinia; Rise of flowering plants.
	Jurassic		205 – 135	152 – 95 Ma BP. Wrangellia and Alexander terrane dock; Coast Range built; Uplift. 180 Ma BP. Stikinia thrust under Cache Creek terrane.
	Triassic		250 – 205	
Paleozoic	Permian		290 – 250	250 Ma BP. Mass extinctions.

¹⁹ Dates are expressed in millions of years before present (Ma BP), except where otherwise indicated. Divisions of geological time are from the global rock-stratigraphic chart, *OCE*, Appendix 1a.

Part I: Deep Time in the Present

Chapter 1: Fish Lake

As you leave Williams Lake, heading west on Highway 20, you pass the stampede grounds, the sawmill and lumber yards of Lignum, a small alpaca farm, a few trailer courts and houses here and there. It doesn't take long to get past the outskirts of town to land that shows less of the imprint of human activity. The highway passes under overhead powerlines and swings south to parallel the Fraser River. Stands of Douglas-fir, lodgepole and ponderosa pine give way at lower elevations to grassland, and much of this is irrigated for hay by local cattle ranchers, particularly on the benches above the river. The highway drops a bit to the Sheep Creek bridge, and then you begin to slowly climb the hill on the opposite side of the river via a series of switchbacks. At the end of each, there is a steep gravel "runaway lane." These are there so that truckers hauling logs down the hill have somewhere to turn if their brakes fail. At 760 meters above sea level, you reach the top of the hill, and the Chilcotin plateau opens out in front of you. The land has just enough relief that you can almost always see the shadows of clouds moving slowly over the earth.

The Chilcotin is a long way from the part of British Columbia where most people live, the metropolitan region around Vancouver and Victoria; it's a long way from the leisure-centered urban society that has given BC a reputation throughout Canada as "lotus land."²⁰ Newcomers to the Chilcotin have often written about the journey west on Highway 20 as if it were possible to travel back in time by following the road (Figure 2).²¹ The landmarks that most North Americans have come to take for granted, like supermarkets and fast food restaurants, are simply not there. Most of the Chilcotin plateau is out of the range of cell phone service. The only stores to be found, general stores, are few and far between. In those stores you can buy kerosene lamps, horseshoes,

²⁰ *EBC*, s. v., "lotus land," 427.

²¹ See, for example, Foltz, *Voyagers*, 13, 162.

washboards, nails, deer- and moose-hide moccasins made by native people, coils of rope, haywire, saddles and chaps. Caught up in the novelty of the wares, perhaps it is easy for a traveler to overlook the electricity and refrigeration.²²

If you follow the highway across the plateau and through the Coast Mountains to Bella Coola on the Pacific Ocean, you will travel along “three hundred miles of back road to nowhere much.”²³ You will pass the occasional logging truck or recreational vehicle, and less frequently, the kind of battered pickup truck favored by locals. About halfway, the pavement ends, and most of the rest is gravel. If you make it to the far edge of the plateau, you face “The Hill.” For ten kilometers, the road drops through a series of hairpin curves at an eighteen percent grade, often narrowing to one lane. People who make regular trips down The Hill advocate traveling with doors unlocked and seatbelts off so you can jump clear if the vehicle starts to go over the edge. It sounds like hyperbole, but even in the dark you can see the cars that have gone over.²⁴ Not everyone makes it to The Hill. Flat tires and blowouts are common, as you negotiate “mudbogs,” “fun rollers,” “washboard road,” and “loonshit.” About this last, Paul St. Pierre, ex-Member of Parliament (MP)[†] and local humorist, wrote, “Loonshit was a gumbo; it was undetectable when dry but when thoroughly soaked in water a patch of it took on the character of molasses mixed with glue. All men encountered loonshit sooner or later in that country and all but the strongest wept when they did.”²⁵

Behind the obviously untrue claim that a trip into the Chilcotin is a trip into the past lies a deeper truth. The sense that people have of occupying a particular place in time is supported by their lived experience in a world of familiar artifacts and landmarks.²⁶ Things that you find in Williams Lake, like a Tim Hortons donut shop or a

²² Gerry Bracewell, “You Want It They Have It: Long and Colorful History in West Chilcotin Country Stores,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 10 Jun 1980, BCA D19/027.

²³ French, *The Road Runs West*, ix.

²⁴ Betty Funke, “Chilcotin Country ... Its No Sunday Drive,” *Colonist Magazine* (Victoria), 17 Feb 1980; Isobel Nanton, “Chilcotin: BC’s Last Western Frontier,” *Hamilton Spectator* (Ontario), 7 Nov 1998; Brett Johnson, “Rewards are Great on ‘Freedom Road’: Going over the Hill is a Rite of Passage in BC,” *Ventura County Star* (California), 30 Jun 2000.

²⁵ St. Pierre, *Smith and Other Events*, 18. See also *EBC*, s.v., “St. Pierre, Paul,” 621.

²⁶ Lowenthal writes, “Memory and history both derive and gain emphasis from physical remains. Tangible survivals provide a vivid immediacy that helps to assure us there really was a past. Physical remains have

working cell phone, are traces of the recent past. If time travel really were possible, you could use the existence of a Tim Hortons in your vicinity to figure out *when* you were: sometime after the franchise was established in the mid 1960s. Other landmarks and artifacts could be used to refine your estimate. Are people smoking? Eating burgers out of styrofoam cartons? Listening to Anne Murray or The Tragically Hip? Wearing mullet haircuts? Driving hybrid electric cars? Of course, most people don't need to see a hybrid car to know that Y2K has come and gone. But the very substance of a place is composed of stuff from the past and of legible traces of past events. These constantly cue memory, and provide a sense of history. Without these obvious connections between a place and the present moment, history and memory cease to be grounded, and it becomes possible to imagine or pretend that this is some other time.

The tourist returns home after a few weeks in the Chilcotin, but what about the people who live there? They have a stake in its future. Many of them depend for their livelihoods on grazing cattle, on logging, on mining, on guiding and outfitting rich foreigners who want to take home a moose. More and more frequently now, many of them also cater to eco-tourists, and advertise their lodges with words like "harmony" and "healing." Despite the newcomer's perception that these people are living in the past, they are not. But the landscape is familiar to them, and each bend in the road takes on the shading of memory, of stories heard and remembered or half-remembered. That's the place where the truck broke down a few winters ago, they're clearcutting the hill on the other side of that lake, isn't that the place where that Indian guy got killed in the seventies? To the people who live in the Chilcotin, as with people anywhere, the landscape holds much of their past, and they have a stake in that too.

A Division of Interpretive Labor

To say that a place is full of traces of its past is not to say that those traces are obvious, or easily read. Much of the physical evidence of the past is muddled, latent,

their limitations as informants, to be sure: they are themselves mute, requiring interpretation; their continual but differential erosion and demolition skews the record; and their substantial survival conjures up a past more static than could have been the case. But however depleted by time and use, relics remain essential bridges between then and now." *Past is a Foreign Country*, xxiii.

difficult to decipher. Often it requires experience or special training or expensive equipment. As a consequence, there is a division of interpretive labor in cases where it is important to reconstruct the past from its material traces. Take zoogeographers, who specialize in figuring out where populations of animals have come from and why they have the geographic distributions that they now do. They can tell you, for example, that moose entered what is now British Columbia about ten thousand years ago from the north, after the ice sheets of the last ice age melted, and that they competed successfully against the slightly larger stag-moose for habitat. The latter are now extinct.²⁷ The records of the fur trade show that moose were hunted by indigenous people in the Chilcotin in the 1830s.²⁸ Then, for some reason, the moose may have disappeared in the central interior of the province until the 1900s. They began to reappear in numbers in the early 20th century.

At this point, the reconstruction of the history of past distributions of moose becomes entangled with the threads of memory, oral tradition and folklore. One account suggests that moose first appeared around Charlotte Lake at the edge of the Coast Mountains in 1914 and soon became so bold and numerous that ranchers had to arm themselves for protection during the rutting and calving seasons.²⁹ Another, more fanciful, version of “how the moose first came to the Chilcotin” says that an Indian man hunting around Riske Creek on the eastern edge of the plateau in 1916 saw an animal that he had never seen before and shot it. The oldest member of his group, “reckoned to be 106 years old,” couldn’t identify the animal and the riddle was finally solved by an Englishman at the trading post, who had seen moose in northeastern British Columbia at the turn of the century.³⁰ In 1931, the zoologist Ian McTaggart Cowan was told that moose had only arrived in the Chilcotin in the mid 1920s and that there was no word for the animal in the Tsilhqot’in language. Other evidence, however, suggests that the animals may have been present in the Chilcotin the whole time, but that their numbers

²⁷ Pielou, *After the Ice Age*, 111, 125, 263; Harington, “Quaternary Animals.”

²⁸ HBCA B-37/a/1-2, Fort Chilcotin Post Journals and Correspondence, William McBean, 30 Oct 1837.

²⁹ Hobson, *Grass beyond the Mountains*, 43.

³⁰ Collier, *Three against the Wilderness*, 146-149.

were much lower.³¹ By the 1950s they were so plentiful in the area that groups of them spent the winters at local ranches, feeding with the cattle and becoming tame enough to pet.³² As with any kind of history, this story about what happened in the past emerges from conflicting accounts and evidence that can be read in more than one way. There is no univocal story about how moose came to be in the Chilcotin.

The work of zoogeographers depends on the work of other interpretive specialists, who reconstruct the history of different aspects of the environment. Paleobotanists, for example, have determined what the past vegetation of the region was like. Around fifteen thousand years ago, plant life began to return to recently deglaciated land in the wake of the melting ice sheets (Chronology I). The coastal lowlands were free of ice relatively early. They were initially vegetated by willow and soap berry, later by lodgepole pine. Over the course of the next two millennia, alder, true fir, spruce and ferns also moved into the area. The interior was still dry and cold, covered with ice in many places. Cattails, sedges and bulrushes moved rapidly into moist deglaciated land from the south, to be replaced gradually by aspens and pines. The uplands were more sparsely covered with sage and perennial herbs.³³ Since different plants thrive or decline in different climates, vegetation is one clue to what the prevailing conditions might have been like at a given time. Paleoclimatologists thus have much to learn from paleobotanists, and vice versa.

Between nine and ten thousand years ago, summer solar radiation peaked at levels 8 to 15% greater than today, while winter solar radiation was about 10% less. This heated the center of the North American continent, and increased the contrast between land and ocean temperatures in the summer. This, in turn, affected the way that atmospheric and oceanic circulation redistributed heat from the Equator (which always receives more solar energy) to the poles. The East Pacific subtropical high-pressure system expanded, resulting in summer drought in what is now British Columbia. In the

³¹ Hatter, "Moose"; Cowan & Guiget, *Mammals of BC*, 376-381; Spalding, "Early History"; Nagorsen, *Mammals of BC*, 98-99; Shackleton, *Hoofed Mammals of BC*, 120-135.

³² Henry, "The Moose Came Back Again."

³³ Mathews, "Late Quaternary Environmental History," 147-152; Hebda, "Interior Grasslands."

interior, vast areas of steppe grassland developed, spreading as far north as Pantage Lake (near the Blackwater River on Figure 2), and extending to elevations over fifteen hundred meters. These grasslands were zoned by altitude, with sage in the valleys and on the lower slopes, and grasses and forbs at higher elevations.³⁴ Plants from the Prairie and the Great Basin were able to spread as far north as central Yukon. By about four thousand years ago, the climate was again becoming cooler and wetter. Interior grasslands retreated, to be replaced by forests of pine and alder.³⁵ Today, grasses give way to trees at elevations around seven hundred to a thousand meters, and the northernmost edge of the grasslands ends right where you cross the Sheep Creek bridge on your way into the Chilcotin.³⁶

The landscape that we are most familiar with, the built environment of highways and houses and fences and irrigated fields, is the most recent addition to any place. Often, more seemingly natural features of the landscape, like rivers and forests, are also relatively recent. Beneath the surface of this familiar environment are layers or strata that are older, often much older, and there are glaciologists and geologists to reconstruct their history (Chronology II). In British Columbia, much of the lay of the land is due to the events of the last ice age, the Wisconsin, which began with a cooling of the yearly average climate about twenty-five to thirty thousand years ago. Ice sheets spread across as much as a third of the world's surface, including what is now Canada and the northern United States and much of Northern Europe.³⁷ At first, the ice accumulated as small glaciers on mountains and in alpine valleys. Each of these ice streams flowed separately, sculpting characteristic landforms by erosion.³⁸ In the Chilcotin, many of these can be seen around the Fraser river in the area east of Taseko Lake. The Churn Creek valley near Gang Ranch, for example, is U-shaped in cross-section, showing that it is a glacial

³⁴ Kutzbach, "Model Simulations"; Hebda, "Interior Grasslands"; *OCE*, s.v., "climate models," 131-133.

³⁵ Hebda, "Interior Grasslands."

³⁶ BC Ministry of Forests, Research Branch, "Biogeoclimatic Zones of BC," Map, 1:2,000,000, Victoria, BC, 1999; Idem, "Ecology of the Bunchgrass Zone"; Idem, "Ecology of the Interior Douglas-fir Zone"; Meidinger & Pojar, *Ecosystems of BC*.

³⁷ Imbrie & Imbrie, *Ice Ages*; Roberts, *Holocene*, 42-61; Pielou, *After the Ice Age*.

³⁸ Davis & Mathews, "Four Phases of Glaciation," 404-406.

trough that was created by the action of moving ice, and not by flowing water, which creates valleys that are V-shaped instead. The amphitheater-shaped depressions on Yalakom and Hogback Mountains, known as cirques, are also characteristic of early stage glaciation, and were formed as slowly moving glacial ice carried away the rock broken by the action of frost. In places in the Coast Mountains to the west, the steep walls of three or more cirques intersect to form a horn, a high pyramidal peak. The newly formed ice in alpine valleys also blocked drainage, allowing proglacial lakes to form. In the Camelsfoot Range, what is now the Fraser river was dammed and a glacial lake formed in the valleys of the river and its major tributaries.³⁹ The ice continued to accumulate, overriding glacial lakes and rising to the point where individual glaciers coalesced and the thickness of the ice exceeded the local relief. As the ice accumulated, the movement of the sheet was governed less by the topography of the land and more by variations in climate. The lower mountains east of Taseko Lake have typically rounded and domed summits where they were overridden by the ice sheet. Higher serrate peaks in a few places emerged from the ice as so-called nunataks, surrounded but not overridden. For a few hardy species, these nunataks served as refuges to live through the glaciation. Everywhere else, life was swept away by the advancing ice.⁴⁰ At their maximum, the ice sheets of the last glaciation were massive, so huge that they spread under their own weight and depressed the surface of the land relative to sea level. Thousands of years after the ice melted, the land was still rebounding.⁴¹ The ice sheets were also dynamic, fed by snow that fell over their interiors, and reduced by melting along their margins. Over the ocean, blocks of ice would occasionally calve from the sheet.⁴² As the climate warmed, the peripheries of the ice sheets melted. Areas in the center of the ice downwasted, allowing the uplands to emerge first, dividing the sheet again into separate glaciers in valleys. Proglacial lakes formed, as stagnant ice blocked drainage and

³⁹ Huntley & Broster, "Glacial Lake Camelsfoot"; Holland, *Landforms*; Keser, *Interpretation of Landforms*.

⁴⁰ Davis & Mathews, "Four Phases of Glaciation"; Holland, *Landforms*, 42-43; Clague & Luternauer, "Late Quaternary Sedimentary Environments," 5-6; Pielou, *After the Ice Age*, 30-38.

⁴¹ Clague et al., "Late Quaternary Sea Levels"; Clague & James, "History and Isostatic Effects."

⁴² Mayewski, Denton & Hughes, "Late Wisconsin Ice Sheets," 138.

meltwater accumulated. Life returned, from the nunataks and from refuges beyond the edges of the ice sheets.⁴³

The Mosaic of Suspect Terranes

On the time scales that geologists typically think in terms of, the events of the past ten or twenty thousand years are very recent. Below the built environment, and the trees, grass, soil and glacial till, lie rock strata that are really old. Often, the deeper you go, the older the strata you will find, and people sometimes speak in terms of “time depth” or “deep time.” As with other parts of the Chilcotin landscape, there are specialists to reconstruct the events of the very long-term past, and they have written accounts of how the Chilcotin itself was created. These are no more certain or uncontested than any other stories about the past of this place, but much of the controversy can be glossed over in the interests of getting a thumbnail sketch of the events of deep time, to serve as a background for the case study that follows.

At the end of the Permian period, two hundred fifty million years ago, this place did not exist (Chronology II). At the time, almost all of the world’s continental crust was clumped in a single mass, known as Pangaea. The portion of the ancestral continent that would become North America did not extend as far west as it does today. Instead, somewhere east of where the Rocky Mountains now are, it gradually sloped into a continental shelf under the sea. For more than a billion years, long periods of erosion had led to the slow downwasting of the continent, depositing layer after layer of sediment on the shelf and exposing the “basement” rocks of the continental shield.⁴⁴ Marine life was abundant, particularly in the warm, shallow waters over the continental shelf.⁴⁵ By this time, plants had been living on land for 150 million years, drawing carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and building some of the carbon into their tissues. In the atmosphere, carbon dioxide absorbed some of the sun’s energy that was reflected from the earth and thus contributed to global warming. As the plants died, however, plant debris

⁴³ Clague & Luternauer, “Late Quaternary Sedimentary Environments,” 5-6; Pielou, *After the Ice Age*.

⁴⁴ Coney, Jones & Monger, “Cordilleran,” 329; Gabrielse & Yorath, “DNAG #4,” 71; Monger, “Origin and Evolution,” 38-40; Cannings & Cannings, *Geology of BC*, 11-12; McPhee, *Annals*, 27.

⁴⁵ *OCE*, s.v., “Carboniferous,” 98-101.

accumulated, forming peats and eventually coal, which trapped carbon. This slow buildup of organic material eventually reduced the overall amount of atmospheric carbon dioxide.⁴⁶ This, in turn, initiated a shift in global temperature from generally hot and humid conditions to generally cold and arid ones.⁴⁷ As the Permian drew to a close, massive ice sheets accumulated around the south pole of Pangaea, drawing down the global sea level and exposing the continental shelf. This put an end to most marine life. Corals, foraminifera, trilobites, brachiopods, bryozoans, crinoids, ammonoids—all were eradicated, or nearly so, by the most severe extinction event of the past 570 million years. Somewhere between ninety and ninety-five percent of marine invertebrates perished, and half of the vascular plants.⁴⁸

By the late Triassic, 230 million years ago, the eastern margin of the Pacific Ocean had become a subduction zone.⁴⁹ In plate tectonics (the framework that is now used to envision the dynamics of the earth's crustal structure) rigid plates float on fluid rock known as the mantle, sliding alongside one another, and deforming when they collide.⁵⁰ The oceans, like the continents, are plates, but oceanic plates are stronger and denser than continental plates. When the two converge, the oceanic plate bends, sliding beneath the continental plate, which crumples above it. This process is known as subduction and is accompanied by two characteristic assemblages of rock. At the point where the oceanic plate meets the continental crust, pieces of the ocean floor are scraped off into what is known as the subduction complex. One to two hundred kilometers away from this point on the overriding plate, magma, molten rock, rises through the continental crust to form another assemblage, a volcanic arc.⁵¹

⁴⁶ *OCE*, s.v., "carbon cycles," 94-96; s.v., "coal," 135-139.

⁴⁷ *OCE*, s.v., "enhanced greenhouse effect," 311-313.

⁴⁸ *OCE*, s.v., "extinctions and mass extinctions," 337-340; s.v., "Permian," 807-808.

⁴⁹ Coney, Jones & Monger, "Cordilleran," 329; Monger, "Origin and Evolution," 40-41; *OCE*, s.v., "subduction zones," 1016-1018.

⁵⁰ *OCE*, s.v., "plate tectonics, principles," 828-831; s.v., "mantle convection, plumes, viscosity, and dynamics," 649.

⁵¹ *OCE*, s.v., "convergent plate margins," 175; s.v., "subduction zones," 1016-1018; Monger, "Origin and Evolution," 30-33.

Starting in the middle of the Jurassic, about 180 million years ago, Pangaea began to break up. The North American continental fragment moved northwest, the oceanic plate subducting beneath it. During subduction, the continental mainland swept into island arcs on the oceanic plate, and these pieces of crust accreted against the mainland. The western edge of North America became a vast mosaic of accumulated pieces of crust, known as terranes, each with a geological history that was different than that of the continental core.⁵² The subduction of the oceanic plate under North America also built the Cordillera, the massive collection of mountain ranges that run along the western edge of the continent. On a regional scale, the crust folded and faulted. In what is now central British Columbia, a subduction complex called the Cache Creek terrane was uplifted during this mountain building, bringing pieces of oceanic crust and fossils of extinct foraminifera to the surface. The identification of these marine protozoa provided geologists with the first evidence that the mountains of western Canada were composed of “exotic” or “suspect” terranes.⁵³ Stikinia, another terrane that was once a volcanic island arc, accreted to the west of the Cache Creek terrane. The central portion of British Columbia continued to be uplifted as further terranes, the Alexander and Wrangellia, docked to the west.⁵⁴ Since that time, the western edge of the Americas has been one of the most tectonically active places in the world.⁵⁵ Accretion of terranes and mountain building was accompanied by strong metamorphism: changes in temperature and pressure caused the rocks to recrystallize. It was also accompanied by granitic intrusion, massive flows of magma that cooled beneath the surface to form enormous bodies of granite.⁵⁶ The overall result was a broad, plateau-like region in the central part of what is now

⁵² Coney, Jones & Monger, “Cordilleran,” 329; Gabrielse & Yorath, “DNAG #4,” 71-72.

⁵³ White, “Cordilleran Tectonics,” 70-72; Coney, Jones & Monger, “Cordilleran,” 329-330; Gabrielse & Yorath, “DNAG #4,” 75; *OCE*, s.v., “mountain-building (orogenesis),” 707.

⁵⁴ Monger, “Upper Paleozoic Rocks”; Coney, Jones & Monger, “Cordilleran,” 329-330; Gabrielse & Yorath, “DNAG #4,” 83; Monger, “Origin and Evolution”; Cannings & Cannings, *Geology of BC*, 15-22.

⁵⁵ *OCE*, s.v., “Jurassic,” 572.

⁵⁶ White, “Cordilleran Tectonics,” 78; Holland, *Landforms*, 21-22; *OCE*, s.v., “metamorphism, metamorphic facies, and metamorphic rocks,” 671-675.

British Columbia, bounded on the west by rugged Coast Mountains rising in a sharply defined front, and on the east by high ranges rising into the Rocky Mountains.⁵⁷

In the Cretaceous, beginning about 135 million years ago, climates became more seasonal and varied than they had been earlier. Fossil plants from the time are more clearly distinguishable into variants from low and high latitudes, suggesting a sharper temperature gradient. Angiosperms, flowering plants, appeared for the first time in the form of broad-leaved trees and shrubs, and spread rapidly. Within about fifty million years they dominated many of the floras of the world; today angiosperms make up most of the world's vegetation. Sediments formed during the Cretaceous show evidence of Milankovitch cycles[†], probably indicating short-term fluctuations of climate.⁵⁸ The Cretaceous was also a time when many different forms of life, both terrestrial and marine, progressively disappeared, for reasons that are still debated. Some combination of factors including climate change, cosmic radiation, extensive volcanic activity and the impact of a massive asteroid were responsible for another mass extinction event, the best-known victims being, of course, the dinosaurs that vanished about sixty-five million years ago.⁵⁹

The extinction of the dinosaurs left new ecological niches in North America, and these were rapidly colonized by diversifying mammals, birds, fish, insects and flowering plants.⁶⁰ It took about a half a million years for the placental animals to begin to diversify, but after that, the process took off. The most spectacular radiation occurred among the ancient hoofed mammals, which developed fifty new genera every million years, filling the continent with a diverse collection of animals.⁶¹ In what is now British Columbia, coastal mammals included small whales and a large, four-footed amphibian, the desmostylid, which probably occupied much the same niche that walruses and seals do now. A creature the size of an otter, but more closely related to bears, lived along the

⁵⁷ Holland, *Landforms*; Monger, "Origin and Evolution," 43.

⁵⁸ Basinger & McIver, "Plant Life"; *OCE*, s.v., "Cretaceous," 187-189. Terms marked with a superscript dagger are defined in the glossary in Appendix 2.

⁵⁹ *OCE*, s.v., "Cretaceous," 187-189; s.v., "extinctions and mass extinctions," 337-340.

⁶⁰ Flannery's *Eternal Frontier*, which begins with the extinction of the dinosaurs, is a good overview of some of the animals which colonized North America over the past sixty-five million years.

⁶¹ Maas & Krause, "Mammalian Turnover."

shore eating mollusks. In the interior, huge herbivores known as titanotheres lived in herds. About two meters at the shoulder, they had humped backs and a pair of blade-like horns at the ends of their snouts. Smaller mammals included rodents, rabbits, rabbit-sized deer-like animals, and marsupials.⁶²

During the Eocene, beginning fifty-three million years ago, the oceanic and continental plates along the edge of what is now British Columbia ceased to converge with subduction, and began to slide past one another in a transform fault. This ended the collision of terranes. Tectonic forces continued to pull the continental crust northward, and the crust relaxed now that it was no longer being compressed. This led to extensive volcanic activity in the interior.⁶³ Lava flowed into low lying areas, damming rivers and creating plateaus where lakes formed. Assemblages of fish, insects and plants were preserved in the sediments of these lakes, allowing their ecology to be reconstructed in some detail. The dawn redwood, a broad-leafed, deciduous conifer, grew in low wet areas. Bundles of its needles and leafy twigs often fell into the shallow waters at the edge of Eocene lakes. Soft-shelled turtles, juvenile suckers, trout-perches and salmonids swam amongst water lilies, loosestrife, and water plantain, pursued by predatory bowfins. Larger fish, like trout and adult suckers, lived in deeper waters. In some fossil deposits the fish bones are partially dissolved, as if they passed through the digestive system of a bird or other predator.⁶⁴ The plants in the interior thrived in a temperate climate, suggesting that the area was cooler than the warm temperate to subtropical conditions that prevailed at the time in what is now the western United States.⁶⁵ Conditions in the interior also became more distinct from those in the Coast Mountains to the west, which were gradually being uplifted. This was, in part, a consequence of the relaxation of the crust, which allowed it to become hotter and more buoyant.⁶⁶

⁶² McAnally, "Paleogene Mammals."

⁶³ Monger, "Origin and Evolution"; Cannings & Cannings, *Geology of BC*, 30.

⁶⁴ Cavender, "Review"; Wilson, "Fishes"; Wilson, "Insects"; Stockey & Wehr, "Flowering Plants"; Basinger, McIver & Wehr, "Eocene Conifers."

⁶⁵ Rouse & Mathews, "Radioactive Dating," 1079.

⁶⁶ Holland, *Landforms*, 14-15, 22, 38; *OCE*, s.v., "subsidence and uplift," 1020.

By about twenty-three million years ago, at the beginning of the Miocene, the central part of what is now British Columbia had a moderate relief of 500 to 650 meters, with lower lying areas filled in by flat or gently dipping lavas and sediments. In places, erosion had cut channels of up to a few hundred meters in depth, and these had been gradually filling with sediment from erosion.⁶⁷ Lava erupting from vents and fissures in the middle and late Miocene covered the interior with more than 25,000 square kilometers of flat-lying basalts, creating the vast interior plateau of which the Chilcotin is a part. These lava flows formed the characteristic landform of the Chilcotin today—a gently rolling plateau bounded on one side by a steep, rocky cliff and on the other by a deeply-incised valley.⁶⁸ In the same period, the continental crust moved slowly westward over a particularly hot plume rising from the mantle. Lava flowing out onto the surface above this “hot spot” built up a broad, round volcano. As the crust moved, the volcano was carried to the west, and a newer one formed to the east. In this way, a series of volcanic ranges formed a trail across the Chilcotin, first the Rainbow Range, then the Ilgachuz and Itcha ranges, and finally some recent volcanoes near Nazko.⁶⁹ The Miocene climate of the Chilcotin was cool temperate, closer to the modern climate than Eocene climates had been, but still warmer and wetter than it is today. Overall, the flora was similar to the oak-hickory-beech-elm forests that are now found east of the Mississippi River. Conifers grew in the uplands. The warmer, wetter conditions in the interior suggest that the Coast Mountains did not yet form the extensive rain shadow that they do today. This is confirmed by studies which show that the land surface of the Coast Mountains has risen more than two kilometers in the past ten million years.⁷⁰

In the Quaternary, the last 1.6 million years, human beings evolved in Africa. The Quaternary has been a time of major climatic alterations and ice ages. During successive episodes of glaciation, the upper half of North America was repeatedly buried

⁶⁷ Rouse & Mathews, “Radioactive Dating”; Holland, *Landforms*, 22-23; Mathews, “Neogene Chilcotin.”

⁶⁸ Mathews, “Neogene Chilcotin.”

⁶⁹ Bevier, Armstrong & Souther, “Miocene Peralkaline Volcanism”; Souther, “Western Anahim Belt”; Gabrielse & Yorath, “DNAG #4,” 81; Cannings & Cannings, *Geology of BC*, 30-31; *OCE*, s.v., “plate tectonics, principles,” 831.

⁷⁰ Mathews & Rouse, “Late Tertiary Volcanic”; Mathews, “Neogene Chilcotin.”

by massive ice sheets, each scouring away most of the evidence left by the landforms, flora and fauna of the preceding period. Each time, plants and animals recolonized the area after the ice retreated. The Wisconsin glaciation that ended about ten thousand years ago was only the latest in series of more than twenty such shifts in climate that have occurred in the last two and half million years.⁷¹ It was different from the preceding glaciations in one respect, however. When the plants and animals returned to North America, human beings were among the colonists for the first time.⁷²

Airborne Surveys

The reason that the geological history of the Chilcotin is known in such detail is because people have found it worth their while to reconstruct it. The Chilcotin economy depends primarily on resource extraction, and this invariably leads to a struggle among contemporary stakeholders, because the choice to exploit one kind of resource often precludes the development of others. There is usually a lot of money at stake, and efficient exploitation of the resource, be it a mineral deposit, forest, fishery, grassland or potential hydroelectric dam, depends on having as complete a knowledge as possible of its attributes. This is where the division of interpretive labor comes in. Geologists, zoogeographers and other kinds of specialists are needed to determine whether or not a given resource has the attributes which will make it lucrative and cost effective to extract. Exploitation and exploration go hand in hand. This interpretive labor often involves the reconstruction of the history of the resource: in order to determine what something is or what attributes it has, it often helps to figure out where it came from. Underlying stories thus emerge in the contest over the fate of the land and its resources, as stakeholders search for a usable past, one that will justify their actions. This can be seen in the case study that follows. It is a study of the role of the division of interpretive labor in the political economy of resource extraction, a particular moment in the ever-changing play between the Chilcotin landscape, its stakeholders and the stories they tell about its past.

⁷¹ OCE, s.v., "ice-age theories," 527-529; s.v., "ice ages," 529-530; Pielou, *After the Ice Age*.

⁷² Fladmark, *BC Prehistory*; Carlson & Dalla Bona, eds. *Early Human Occupation in BC*.

One day in the Indian summer of 1993, a small twin-prop plane flew over Redstone heading due west. An observer on the ground might have first noticed the long stinger attached to the plane's fuselage. Even more unusual perhaps was the way that the plane was flying: low, but always the same distance from the ground. In the days that followed there were more flights, always east to west, always at the same, precise altitude. Successive flight paths were shifted north or south by exactly eight hundred meters.⁷³ If you were there in Redstone—when the drone of the airplane overrode the snapping of grasshoppers, the rustle of wind in the grass, the rumble of big rigs on Highway 20—you might have concluded that someone was systematically scanning the Chilcotin plateau. You would have been right.

The flights were funded by the Geological Survey of Canada, the BC Geological Survey and some interests in the private sector as part of an effort to assess mineral potential in the region. Much of the plateau is covered by forests, glacial drift and lava flows that obstruct prospecting.⁷⁴ By taking to the air with extremely sensitive magnetic detectors, the surveyors were able to map the boundaries of obscured geological features, to see through, as it were, the trees, glacial deposits and lava to the subsurface below. They were taking advantage of the fact that the earth's magnetic field varies in a measurable way from place to place. After measuring the total magnetic field and subtracting out the components generated inside and outside the earth, they were left with what are called magnetic anomalies, deviations from the background. These anomalies depended in part on the presence of magnetic minerals in the rock below.⁷⁵

The minerals to be found in rock bear many traces of the conditions of their origin. For example, both igneous and metamorphic rocks can be created in great heat, the former as molten rock cools, the latter when some pre-existing rock is subject to heat or pressure (or both).⁷⁶ As the temperature of hot rock falls below a certain point,

⁷³ Teskey et al, "High-Res," 221-222.

⁷⁴ Teskey et al, "High-Res," 221; Diakow, van der Heyden & Metcalfe, "Introduction," 1.

⁷⁵ *OCE*, s.v., "aeromagnetic surveying," 6-7; s. v., "geomagnetic measurement: techniques and surveys," 417-420.

⁷⁶ *OCE*, s.v., "rock," 902-903.

molecules of ferromagnetic materials such as magnetite (Fe_3O_4) and hematite (Fe_2O_3) align with the earth's magnetic field, preserving a record of the field's direction in the substance of the mineral.⁷⁷ This is known as remanent magnetization.⁷⁸ The principle is similar to an ordinary audio tape: the magnetic record persists in the rocks and can be read with the right instrumentation. The "playback" is more complicated than a tape recorder, however, especially if you want to read the magnetic record from about three hundred meters above. To detect the minute magnetic fluctuations of rock from a low-flying airplane, the geological surveyors used an instrument known as an optically-pumped magnetometer. In this device, polarized light from a cesium vapor lamp is passed through a low pressure cell of cesium vapor and measured with a photocell. The system is exquisitely sensitive to magnetic fields.⁷⁹

Aeromagnetic surveying provided a rapid means of mapping features of geological interest across the plateau.⁸⁰ For example, two faults lying to the southwest of Redstone, the Yalakom and Tchaikazan, showed up clearly as magnetic anomalies.⁸¹ Faults are fractures in the earth's crust, places where the energy generated by the movement of the massive plates that comprise the surface of the earth displace the edges of the crust with respect to one another.⁸² When you stand on one side of the Yalakom fault system, corresponding rocks on the other side have been displaced to the right by more than one hundred kilometers.⁸³ In fact, the existence of the Yalakom fault was well-known before the aeromagnetic survey took place. Topographical features in the area are aligned along the fault and the lineament[†] can be seen in aerial photographs.⁸⁴

⁷⁷ OCE, s.v., "Curie temperature," 202-203; s.v., "geomagnetic measurement: techniques and surveys," 417-420; Chesterman, *Field Guide*, s.v., "hematite," 397-398; s.v., "magnetite," 417-418.

⁷⁸ OCE, s.v., "palaeomagnetism: techniques and remanent magnetization," 783-786.

⁷⁹ Teskey et al, "High-Res," 221; Bartington, "Sensors," 2/4; Foner, "Review"; Stuart, "Earth's Field."

⁸⁰ The Chilcotin plateau was one of the last blank spots on the 1992 magnetic anomaly map of Canada. See Figure 6a in Teskey et al, "Aeromagnetic Survey Program," 252.

⁸¹ Teskey et al, "High-Res," 222.

⁸² OCE, s.v. "faults and faulting," 342.

⁸³ Technically, the Yalakom is therefore a "dextral strike-slip fault system." Umhoefer & Tipper, "Stratigraphy," 6; Schiarizza et al, "Yalakom River Area," 64.

⁸⁴ Holland cites air photo BC 498:41 in *Landforms of BC*, 123.

Radiometric dating[†] from another 1993 survey also corroborated the presence of the Yalakom fault. To the southwest of the fracture the rocks are igneous, and can be dated to the late Triassic period; they originated a little over two hundred million years before present (212-208 Ma BP). To the northeast, the rocks are metamorphic and date from the middle to late Jurassic at the earliest, perhaps 160 Ma BP. The sides of the fault were sliding with respect to each other even more recently, for a period of about thirty-seven million years (83.5-46.5 Ma BP), cutting all rock units older than about 65 million years.⁸⁵ In order to date the rocks in the area of the Yalakom fault, survey geologists took samples of a mineral called zircon. When zircon is created it does not contain any lead but it does contain the unstable uranium isotope ²³⁸U. As zircon ages, the unstable uranium isotopes decay into stable lead isotopes (²⁰⁶Pb). Since the rate of radioactive decay is accurately known, the geologists could use the concentrations of uranium and lead isotopes in zircon samples to date the rocks containing the mineral.⁸⁶

Magnetic and radioactive properties of particular minerals are just two of the non-obvious ways that any place stores a record of past events. They are unwritten sources that can be used to reconstruct a history of rocks, of their creation and perturbation by subsequent geological processes. Geological exploration is done for many reasons, of course, one of the most common being the potential for profit. For example, when the fledgling aeromagnetic program of the Geological Survey of Canada discovered a massive magnetite body in 1949 (in an area of Ontario that had previously been thought not to contain valuable minerals), profits from the resulting mine “more than covered the cost of the entire aeromagnetic program” to 1993.⁸⁷

To an expert in magnetometry, the fact that the Chilcotin survey was flown at an altitude of 305 meters would immediately suggest that the motivation for the flights was primarily commercial. Flights around this altitude are ideal for detecting magnetic

⁸⁵ Mustard & van der Heyden, “Tatla Lake,” 104-107; Schiarizza & Riddell, “Geology of Tatlayoko Lake,” 88-89; Umhoefer & Tipper, “Stratigraphy,” 6.

⁸⁶ Mustard & van der Heyden, “Tatla Lake,” 111; *OCE*, s.v. “isotopic dating,” 562-566.

⁸⁷ Teskey et al, “Aeromagnetic Survey Program,” 244-245.

fluctuations caused by mineral or ore deposits.⁸⁸ Presentation of the 1993 survey data emphasized geological features that might be of economic significance. To the south of Redstone near the Yalakom fault, geologists found a “significant gold anomaly” in the glacial drift lying along the edge of an aeromagnetic anomaly, one of a number of “mapped and possibly unmapped features which [might] be important loci for mineral deposits.”⁸⁹ Four kilometers north of Yalakom Fault, also lying on the flank of a magnetic anomaly, was Fish Lake, a porphyry copper-gold deposit that the surveyors (and the general public) were already well-aware of.⁹⁰

In fact, another airborne survey of 1993 centered on the region around Fish Lake. An environmental consulting company was contracted to do a “helicopter-mounted reconnaissance-level survey.” Over the space of three days in May, the survey crew flew the helicopter along the lines of a grid measuring about thirty by fifty kilometers. Every 2.5 kilometers the helicopter dipped down and the person doing the sampling (securely attached to the hovering helicopter by a couple of safety lines) leaned out to snip off one of the pine tree tops. These samples were passed on to the Geological Survey of Canada in Ottawa. There, biogeochemists first dried the plant tissues and then burned them and tested the ash for concentrations of various metals like copper and gold. Finally, these concentrations were plotted on a map showing where each sample was obtained. The logic of the study was to use the trees to amplify the geochemical signature of the substrate they were growing on. As the pines grew, they extended their roots deep into the soil, the glacial drift and, in places, the bedrock. Drawing water and nutrients up through this root system, they also extracted materials that they didn’t need for growth (like copper and gold), and these became concentrated in the tree tops, twig ends and bark. Concentrations of metal in the trees could thus serve as a sign of concentrations of metal in the ground below.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Stuart, “Earth’s Field,” 807-808.

⁸⁹ Teskey et al, “High-Res,” 223.

⁹⁰ Teskey et al, “High-Res,” 223; Schiarizza & Riddell, “Geology of Tatlayoko Lake,” 97; Taseko Mines Limited, “Form 20-F (for US Securities and Exchange Commission),” 17 Feb 1998, SEDAR.

⁹¹ Dunn, “Biogeochemical Surveys.”

The Fish Lake Porphyry Deposit

It is not possible to completely know the three-dimensional structure of the earth's crust, so geologists have to infer the structure from surface characteristics, outcrops, core samples, measurements of gravity, radioactivity and magnetism, and whatever else is known or surmised about the geological history of the region.⁹² Specimens of porphyry taken from the Fish Lake area were readily identified because they consisted of a fine grained groundmass speckled with large, distinct crystals. Most of the crystals were copper and gold; some were molybdenum, silver and zinc.⁹³ Each of the metals was an important commodity, and if there was enough copper and gold in the Fish Lake deposit it might be profitable to mine it. Preliminary exploration suggested that the deposit was a large ovaloid. By 1992, it had been measured to be almost a cubic kilometer: 853 meters north-south by 1,310 meters east-west by 823 meters deep. The full extent of it is still not known. There is a possibility that the deposit extends further to the north, west or southwest.⁹⁴

Companies that wish to extract the commodities in porphyry deposits have to first make an effort to reconstruct the history of those deposits. In general, porphyry deposits are created in places where two of the earth's tectonic plates are colliding, and a slab of dense oceanic crust is subducted. As the subducted slab descends, the temperature and pressure increase, causing it to melt. The surface crust of the oceanic slab contains water which is released into the overlying crust. This released water lowers the melting temperature of the overlying material, and magma is formed, and rises. Sometimes the magma makes it to the surface, and is erupted as lava from a volcano. If the magma cools and crystallizes before reaching the surface, however, the resulting body of igneous rock is known as a pluton. Porphyries are closely associated with plutons, and thought to occur under the following conditions. When the magma is created by the subduction of oceanic crust and begins to rise, the pressure drops. This reduction in pressure causes the dissolved water in the magma to separate. At the same time, the magma also begins to

⁹² *OCE*, s.v., "geological maps and map-making," 408-410; cf. Rudwick, "Emergence."

⁹³ BC Department of Mines and Petroleum Resources, *Identification*, 9; Chesterman, *Field Guide*, 598.

⁹⁴ MINFILE 0920 041.

form the crystals that will later be found in the porphyry. The separation of the water further cools the magma, which speeds crystallization and forces more water from the magma. Since the outer surface of the body cools more rapidly than the interior, a carapace is created around the magma. Pressure builds up in this carapace, eventually shattering it, allowing hot fluids to be released upwards to circulate around the solidified porphyry and surrounding host rock. The process continues cyclically until the entire body has solidified. As the magma crystallizes, trace metals are forced out along with the water and become concentrated in it. They are typically found in a zone around the intrusive body.⁹⁵ The Fish Lake porphyry was created in the Late Cretaceous (around 80 Ma BP[†]), when the terranes that make up central British Columbia had already docked, and the accretion of Wrangellia and the Alexander terrane further to the west caused uplift, faulting, metamorphism and granitic intrusion in the Coast Range. Near Fish Lake, movement at the Yalakom fault was accompanied by volcanism and the emplacement of plutonic bodies into older marine sedimentary rocks and non-marine volcanic rocks. Subsequently covered by Miocene lava flows (23-5.3 Ma BP), the Fish Lake deposit was exposed as those lavas eroded.⁹⁶

In the second half of the 20th century, porphyry deposits were an important source of ore in a province where mining had always played a central role in economic growth. Mining led to the first large influx of non-native people during the Fraser and Cariboo gold rushes of the late 1850s and early 1860s, and to the creation of a British colony on the mainland west of the Rocky Mountains.⁹⁷ Most of the readily accessible deposits of gold were exhausted by the 1880s and prospectors turned their attention to the corridors created by the newly-completed Canadian Pacific Railroad. Over the next few decades, silver, lead, zinc and copper were discovered in various places, and mines and smelters were opened. Rising demand in world markets propelled mining booms. When the

⁹⁵ *OCE*, s.v., “hydrothermal solutions,” 521-522; s.v., “plutonic rocks,” 837; s.v., “porphyry copper deposits,” 844-846; s.v., “subduction zones,” 1016-1018, s.v., “volcanoes and volcanic rock,” 1088-1092.

⁹⁶ Wolfhard, “Fish Lake”; MINFILE 0920 041; Monger, “Origin and Evolution”; Schiarizza & Riddell, “Geology of Tatlayoko Lake,” 88-89, 93-95; McMillan, “Porphyry Deposits.”

⁹⁷ Elliot, *Barkerville*; Sterne, *Fraser Gold*; Barman, *West*. The gold rush period is discussed in more detail in Part III below.

demand for a particular mineral dropped, the mines closed, leaving ghost towns. This pattern of boom and bust recurred throughout the 20th century. Production of silver, lead, zinc and copper increased into the 1930s while gold production declined. High production of lead and copper gave way in the 1940s and 50s to high production of lead and zinc. Ready capital and new mining technology were put to work after World War II to satisfy a high demand for industrial minerals. Mining efforts were now directed at lower grade ores (such as porphyry deposits), and open pits replaced underground mines. These new forms of production entailed new economic arrangements: increasingly, the minerals were shipped overseas under long-term contractual arrangements. Copper became valuable again in the 1960s and remained so through the 80s, a period which also saw the increasing value of metallurgical coal, used for steel, primarily in the manufacture of Japanese automobiles. Coal production led the mining output of British Columbia in the 1990s, followed by silver, copper, and building materials like sand, gravel and the burned lime and clay used for cement. Throughout most of the 20th century, mining was the second most important industry in British Columbia after forestry.⁹⁸

Economic cycles influenced mining activity at many different temporal scales, including both longer-term expansion and collapse of whole industries, and shorter-term periods of exploration and neglect in specific regions. A close look at prospecting activity at Fish Lake reveals something of the mutual contextualization and mutual determination of exploration and exploitation. In the early 1930s, gold production increased in both volume and value in British Columbia. Two prospectors following “Indian pack-trails” located the debris from ore, known as “float,” and followed it to a gold-bearing zone near Fish Lake.⁹⁹ In the late 1950s, another prospector investigated gold-silver-copper zones northeast of the Fish Lake deposit.¹⁰⁰ The potential for copper porphyry in the area was recognized in 1960 by a geologist for the Phelps Dodge

⁹⁸ Harris, “Mineral Development,” 261-267.

⁹⁹ O’Grady, “Western Mineral Survey District,” F28.

¹⁰⁰ Taseko Mines Limited, “Form 20-F,” 1998.

Corporation.¹⁰¹ At the time, however, yearly average producer prices for copper were hovering around thirty cents Canadian per pound, and the results from drilling studies were not encouraging.¹⁰² Phelps Dodge let their claim lapse. When the price of copper jumped to fifty-four cents per pound in 1966, Taseko Mines Limited was able to restake the claim that Phelps Dodge had held.¹⁰³ New mineral exploration in the Fish Lake area was undertaken every time the price for copper rose, and it stopped every time the price fell (Figure 3). Between 1966 and 1969 the price rose to sixty-seven cents per pound. In 1969, Taseko Mines drilled some holes in areas where the ore was not exposed and discovered better grade copper than Phelps Dodge had. Taseko Mines optioned the property to the Nittetsu Mining Company of Tokyo.¹⁰⁴ In 1970 Nittetsu submitted a report to the BC Department of Mines and Petroleum Resources on induced polarization[†] studies in the region.¹⁰⁵

The price of copper fell abruptly from 1969 to 1972, and no surveying was done during this time. Between 1972 and 1974, the price of copper again jumped, this time from forty-five to eighty-five cents a pound.¹⁰⁶ As the price of copper was rising, Taseko Mines optioned the property to the Houston-based Quintana Minerals Corporation.¹⁰⁷ In 1974 Quintana submitted the results of a drilling study to the provincial government.¹⁰⁸ Over the next few years, Quintana continued to do drilling studies in the area.¹⁰⁹ The price of copper fell to fifty-eight cents per pound in 1975 and then began to rise again, hitting \$1.09 by 1979.¹¹⁰ That year, Cominco Limited acquired from Taseko Mines the

¹⁰¹ Wolfhard, "Fish Lake."

¹⁰² Unless otherwise noted, all prices are in Canadian currency.

¹⁰³ BC Ministry of Energy and Mines, "BC Producer Prices"; MINFILE 0920 041.

¹⁰⁴ Wolfhard, "Fish Lake."

¹⁰⁵ BC Ministry of Energy and Mines, "BC Producer Prices"; ARIS 02483. Note that the ministry responsible for mining and geological surveying in BC changed its name many times. It was established in 1899 as the Department of Mines, and subsequently became the Department of Mines and Petroleum Resources (1960), the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum Resources (1976), and the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources (1978). It was disestablished in 1996, with most of functions absorbed by a new Ministry of Employment and Investment. In 1998 the Ministry of Energy and Mines regained its independence. It continues to go by that name at present. BCAUL.

¹⁰⁶ BC Ministry of Energy and Mines, "BC Producer Prices."

¹⁰⁷ Wolfhard, "Fish Lake."

¹⁰⁸ ARIS 04966.

¹⁰⁹ McMillan, "Taseko Lakes Area."

¹¹⁰ BC Ministry of Energy and Mines, "BC Producer Prices."

option of earning eighty percent interest in the Fish Lake property if they developed it. Cominco had an engineering firm do an economic evaluation and drilled 168 holes for sampling.¹¹¹ When the price of copper fell from a high of \$1.15 per pound in 1980, dropping to eighty cents per pound in 1982 and remaining relatively low through 1986, no surveys were made. Frustrated with the lack of progress at Fish Lake, Taseko Mines tried to terminate their agreement with Cominco in 1985.¹¹² Between 1986 and 1989, the price of copper rose from eighty-six cents per pound to \$1.50, setting off a flurry of surveying activity.¹¹³ Cominco won a 1988 lawsuit against Taseko Mines, and when the price of copper peaked the following year, they submitted a report to the ministry on almost six hundred samples that were drilled from twelve holes and assayed for gold and copper.¹¹⁴ The following year (as the price of copper was already falling) Taseko Mines submitted a report on the assay of 3,466 samples for gold and copper.¹¹⁵

High mineral prices also stimulated government surveying. In 1989, the BC Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources reported that there was a renewed interest in copper exploration projects triggered by record copper prices. The field program of the Geological Survey Branch expanded, with forty-two concurrent geological and geochemical mapping projects in the province.¹¹⁶ A team of seven geologists, led by Dr. Cathie Hickson, was dispatched to survey the Chilcotin-Nechako basin and to compose a geological history of the region. "We're not here prospecting," she said, "We're providing the groundwork for (resource) companies to come and look harder."¹¹⁷ By 1991, as Hickson's team was surveying near Fish Lake, demand for minerals had slowed and metal prices were consequently dropping. The relative strength of the Canadian dollar also reduced exports, at a time when foreign sales accounted for eighty percent of a provincial industry producing more than \$1.5 billion Canadian. In

¹¹¹ John Schreiner, "'Sleeping' BC Mining Firm Roused," *Financial Post* (Toronto), 10 Jun 1991.

¹¹² Schreiner, "'Sleeping'"; Taseko Mines Limited, "Form 20-F," 1998.

¹¹³ BC Ministry of Energy and Mines, "BC Producer Prices."

¹¹⁴ Schreiner, "'Sleeping'"; ARIS 19378.

¹¹⁵ ARIS 22060.

¹¹⁶ BC Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, *Annual Report 1988/89*, 19, 22.

¹¹⁷ "Geological History Mapped," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 1991, CCA-M. The parentheses are in the original quotation.

this context, the ministry stressed the exploration of “several promising deposits,” including large open pit copper-gold properties in the central interior of the province. The Geological Survey Branch focused on planning for the next decade, starting new field studies and mapping projects in “hot” regions with copper-gold porphyry deposits.¹¹⁸

The Delineation of Property Rights

It probably comes as no surprise that exploration for particular minerals is closely tied to the value of those minerals. The fact that geological knowledge is accumulated in fits and starts that are closely coupled to economic cycles shows that, in this case at least, “history matters,” that this interpretation of material traces must be historicized. The explanation that prospecting is stimulated by the increasing value of mineral resources still begs the question of *why*. Why should individuals or institutions be motivated to learn more about particular entities or places as their value increases? When geological surveyors painstakingly recorded and studied magnetic fluctuations, dated and assayed samples, mapped outcroppings, and did a hundred other scientific things besides, there is no question that they added to our knowledge of the geology of the Chilcotin. This activity was expensive, however, and it is still necessary to explain why it was undertaken at all.

One way of explaining the activity of surveying comes from an economic theory of property rights.¹¹⁹ According to this account, entities have a number of attributes which can never be completely measured or known. The copper content of the Fish Lake deposit, for example, was inferred from samples, but could not be known with certainty. Since it is costly to measure the attributes of an entity, it is impossible to fully delineate property rights, and there is always the danger that property may be appropriated by others. In the 1980s, Cominco and Taseko Mines both owned rights to the property at Fish Lake. As the value of copper rose, both companies were willing to spend money to obtain more information about the attributes of the property. If either had been unwilling

¹¹⁸ BC Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, *Annual Report 1990/91*, 42-43, 47-48, 55.

¹¹⁹ Barzel, *Economic Analysis*.

to spend the money, the other company would have been in a position to exploit the advantage that their additional information gave them. They could, for example, have sold their rights in the property for more than they were worth, or bought rights at a discount. In fact, some of the rights to the property were in the public domain. Any individual or institution that was willing and able to allocate enough resources to learn more about the property than Cominco or Taseko Mines would have had the advantage. Under this theory, rather than being constant, property rights are a function of the resources that people commit to protect them, the resources others spend to capture them, and the resources that the government allocates to protect a given distribution of rights.¹²⁰ Not all scientific activity or geological surveying is undertaken to defend or capture property rights, but this perspective helps explain the conflict over the Fish Lake deposit.

Taseko Mines appealed the court's 1988 decision in favor of Cominco, but they lost the appeal in 1990. Although they served Cominco with another termination notice, they feared that the Fish Lake property would remain tied up in the courts indefinitely, and decided to bring in some outside help. Robert Hunter and Robert Dickenson, along with two colleagues, were allowed to take 51% control of the company in return for investing \$1 million Canadian each. The previous year, Hunter and Dickenson had sold a junior mining concern with an interest in a property at Mount Milligan in northern British Columbia to a senior company for \$180 million. The founders of Taseko Mines hoped that they would be able to do something similar with their own company. Hunter and Dickenson entered into a new agreement with Cominco, and Taseko Mine's stock, which had traded around a dollar for the previous decade, went to four dollars.¹²¹ The increased stock price reflected the new confidence that investors had in the company, and this confidence reflected, in turn, the value of clarifying legal property rights. Neither

¹²⁰ Note that this theory is concerned only with describing property rights in an economic sense. There are obvious discrepancies with legal and moral conceptions of property rights.

¹²¹ Schreiner, "Sleeping"; Taseko Mines Limited, "Form 20-F," 1998. The agreement allowed Taseko Mines to develop or sell Fish Lake in a minimum of three years or to be taken over by Cominco. Under the terms of the new contract, Cominco stood to make between \$20 million and \$48 million if Taseko Mines was successful. If Taseko Mines failed, Cominco would get the Fish Lake property in 1994, "with Taseko retaining a 20% net profits interest and a right of first refusal, should Cominco then offer Fish Lake for sale."

Cominco nor Taseko Mines would have been willing to enter into a new agreement without the added information about the property that geological exploration had given them.

In 1991, Taseko Mines estimated that it had between 342 million and 500 million tons of ore, or the equivalent of 1.9 billion pounds of copper and 5.1 million ounces of gold.¹²² Company officials were optimistic: the price of copper seemed to be going up and their drilling program showed that there was more subsurface ore than they had estimated based on studies of the surface. By September 1991, 168 holes had been drilled into the porphyry at Fish Lake, and Taseko Mines estimated that there might be as much as 600 million tons of mineable ore and 3.4 billion pounds of copper. This would be enough to keep the mine in operation for twenty-five to thirty years. Jeff Franzen, the company director, said, "That makes it probably the largest undeveloped copper deposit in North America."¹²³ In December, Taseko Mines reported on a four-month-long, \$350,000 project to assess the mining characteristics of the Fish Lake deposit, including its environmental aspects. The engineering consulting firm that they employed concluded that the low sulphide and high carbonate content of the ore and waste products would not lead to acid mine drainage in the tailings or waste dump areas of the mine.¹²⁴ When Franzen was asked whether the mine might conflict with a proposal for a park near Chilko Lake, he thought not; the proposed park would be on the west side of the Taseko River, and the proposed mine on the east side.¹²⁵ The fate of the proposed park would eventually become bound up with the fate of Fish Lake, however, although perhaps not in a manner which the Taseko Mines management could have foreseen.

The Chilko Lake Park Proposal

By the 1990s, there had been pressure for a park near Chilko Lake for about sixty years. It was triggered by an earlier proposal to use the lake for hydroelectric power. In the early 1920s, Richard Preston Bishop did exploratory surveys for the provincial

¹²² Schreiner, "Sleeping."

¹²³ "Exploration Firm Hoping for a Big Find," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 17 Sep 1991, CCA-M.

¹²⁴ "Fish Lake Results," *Mining Magazine*, Dec 1991, 115.

¹²⁵ "Exploration Firm Hoping for a Big Find."

government in the Chilko Lake region, trying to determine the relative difference in elevation between the lake and Bute Inlet on the Pacific Ocean. In his 1922 report to the Surveyor-General, Bishop suggested that a tunnel connecting Chilko Lake through the Coast Range to the sea might be used to generate hydroelectric power.¹²⁶ Seven years later, a Water Rights Branch surveyor in the Department of Lands was sent to Chilko Lake to search for locations to build the tunnel.¹²⁷ The *New York Times* later reported that British Columbia held the potential for the greatest water power in Canada, with a possible development of 1.2 million horsepower from a Taseko Chilko Homathko project which would reroute the water from Chilko Lake west into the ocean via the Homathko River and Bute Inlet, from its current course east into the Chilko, Chilcotin, and Fraser Rivers.¹²⁸ If such a tunnel were built, it would follow a route that businessmen in the 19th century had imagined using for a road to connect the coast and interior.¹²⁹ The hydroelectric project was opposed by a group of people whose livelihood depended on another of British Columbia's natural resources, the salmon run. Diverting the water from Chilko Lake would destroy a fair amount of the province's productive spawning ground.¹³⁰

In 1924, the Geological Survey of Canada sent an expedition to Chilko Lake, led by Victor Dolmage, a hardrock mining geologist and chief of the BC division of the federal survey. Bishop accompanied the team to do topographic mapping. In his published report Dolmage wrote, "This large stretch of country, though only 140 miles from Vancouver, as the crow flies, is for the most part uninhabited and to some extent not even explored." He mentioned a number of ranching families in the area, a few prospectors and a few trappers, and "several families of Indians in Nemaia valley." Although "it would be difficult to imagine a more delightful camping ground than the

¹²⁶ Corporation of BC Land Surveyors, "Richard Preston Bishop," 47, AKR 5-52; Dolmage, "Chilko Lake."

¹²⁷ BCA MS1977; MINFILE 092N.

¹²⁸ "Huge Power Source is Found in Canada: Engineers Say Potential British Columbia Developments Would Surpass Those on St. Lawrence," *New York Times*, 28 Jul 1930.

¹²⁹ The reasons that this road was never built are discussed in Part III below.

¹³⁰ Hutchinson, *Fraser*, 340-341.

shores of Chilko Lake,” Dolmage thought that gold could be profitably produced in the area and that its geology suggested that more mineral deposits would be found.¹³¹ A decade later, the Vancouver Natural History Society evidently agreed with Dolmage’s assessment of the scenic value of the region, and proposed that Chilko Lake be turned into a park.¹³² Dolmage, now in private practice, wrote, “Mining men view with alarm the number of requests pressed upon our government to set aside large sections of the province for park reserves.” He was concerned with park advocates who pitted tourism against mining, arguing that “a mine tucked away in the hills will not mar the beauty of more than a few acres” (this was before the heyday of open pit mining) and that mining was a better influence on citizenship besides. He found the idea of using “guests as a source of revenue ... a bit repulsive” and argued that the tipping system of tourism might turn Canadians into “a nation of porters.”¹³³

The park at Chilko Lake remained no more than a proposal for half a century. In 1976, an interagency committee of the provincial government published a report called the *Chilcotin Wilderness Park Study*, in which they recommended that Chilko Lake be designated a Class A Park.¹³⁴ Under the terms of the Park Act of 1965, a Class A Park was crown land that was protected from any use of land or natural resources that did not “preserve or maintain the recreational values of the park involved.”¹³⁵ (When British Columbia entered the Canadian Confederation[†] in 1871, all lands not legally transferred to private owners became the property of the province, known as crown land.) The following year, the government studied plans for a proposed two-million-acre park around Chilko and Taseko Lakes. Establishment of such a park would put an end to the proposed hydroelectric power project. It would also interfere with mining properties and native land claims.¹³⁶ In 1982, a team put together by the Ministry of Lands, Parks and

¹³¹ Dolmage, “Chilko Lake”; VanDine, Nasmith & Ripley, “Emergence.”

¹³² Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC, “Chilcotin Wild and Gentle,” SPAM 21676.

¹³³ Dolmage, “First Things First.”

¹³⁴ Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC, “Chilcotin Wild and Gentle,” SPAM 21676.

¹³⁵ British Columbia, *Revised Statutes of BC*, 1996, c. 344, “Park Act,” 8 (2).

¹³⁶ Moira Farrow, “Chilcotin Park Plans Studied by Government,” *Vancouver Sun*, 18 Jan 1977, BCA D19/027.

Housing concluded that “protection and special management of the natural features and values [of Chilko Lake was] more important than optimizing the development of all resource values in the area.”¹³⁷ In 1991, a Chilko Lake Study Team was assembled to investigate, chaired by three representatives, one each from BC Parks, the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, and the Nemiah Valley Indian Band.¹³⁸ After fifty-four years, a park had still not been established.

Geological surveyors and prospectors had been working in the region intermittently since the days of Richard Preston Bishop and Victor Dolmage. In a 1987 report on geological fieldwork near Chilko Lake, Graeme McLaren suggested that the varied geology of the area offered potential for new mineral discoveries of a number of different kinds. This was due to the variety of ore-forming environments which had arisen during the geological history of the region. The proportion of elements that make up any part of the earth’s crust are fixed when the crust is in a crystalline state. When there is magma or fluid, however, material can be dissolved and transported. Changes in temperature, pressure, or chemical environment cause the material to precipitate, forming mineral deposits. At a depth of at least a few kilometers and temperatures ranging from 400 to 600° C these deposits are usually porphyries, but in carbonate rocks adjacent to porphyry deposits, another kind of mineralization can occur, leading to what are known as skarn deposits. Closer to the surface, and at lower temperatures, vein deposits can form when rising fluids carry precious and base metals into faults and fractures in the surrounding rock. McLaren noted that all three kinds of mineral deposit (porphyry, skarn and vein) were represented in the region of Chilko Lake. Copper-bearing skarn deposits on the western side of the lake had been known since the 1920s. More recently, veins of mercury, copper and arsenic had also been discovered near the lake. Northwest of the lake, other veins were found to contain gold, silver, antimony and arsenic. McLaren recommended that “further mapping and prospecting of structural zones and related

¹³⁷ Quoted in Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC, “Chilcotin Wild and Gentle,” SPAM 21676.

¹³⁸ BC Parks, Cariboo District, *Ts’il?os Provincial Park Master Plan*.

intrusives [was] warranted in the Chilko Lake region.”¹³⁹ In 1990, as the proposed park began to look more likely, the provincial Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources published a 117 page assessment by McLaren of the mineral resources of the Chilko Lake planning area.¹⁴⁰

Other stakeholders had different ideas about what should be done with Chilko Lake. The Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC, in an “Educational Report” of 1991, complained that the status of the proposed park was “still in limbo while mineral exploration continue[d] with little regulation.” The report described the region as one of “gentle” wilderness, ideal for hiking or horse-back touring. Chilko Lake was described as a “jewel” in the Chilcotin, its spectacular scenery a draw for people interested in camping, fishing, hunting, mountaineering and skiing. The Chilko River, draining the lake to the north, was noted to be a world-class rafting lake and the site of an important salmon run.¹⁴¹ The environmental group complained that mineral exploration roads had been constructed without regard for traditional trails or the adverse effect on wildlife populations, and that an open pit mine might be located at the trail head in the Tchaikazan Valley. They recommended that the best way to manage the area—until such time as the federal government settled the land claims of the Nemiah Indian Band—was to establish a Class A park. This park “should be managed as a roadless area with the aim of preserving wilderness and the visual and aesthetic integrity of the mountain ranges and valleys. At the same time, traditional resource use activities, including native trap lines, hunting and guide-outfitting, should be permitted to continue, provided these do not threaten the viability of wildlife populations nor conflict excessively with other recreational users.”¹⁴² Depending on how park boundaries were drawn, it might or might not include Fish Lake.

¹³⁹ McLaren, “Geology and Mineral Potential”; *OCE*, s.v., “elemental associations and ore minerals and allied deposits,” 304-308.

¹⁴⁰ McLaren, *Mineral Resource Assessment*.

¹⁴¹ Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC, “Chilcotin Wild and Gentle,” SPAM 21676. Chilko Lake is described in similar terms by one of its recreational users in Julie Taub, “The Raw Beauty of BC,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 29 Aug 1992.

¹⁴² Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC, “Chilcotin Wild and Gentle,” SPAM 21676.

Information Costs

In 1992, the annual average producer price for copper rose from \$1.16 to \$1.30 per pound. Not only was the value of copper rising, but the costs of acquiring information about the area near Fish Lake were falling with each study of the region. In their efforts to defend their own property rights and to secure capital from investors, companies like Taseko Mines were forced to release information for which they had paid a great deal. The government also spent money to learn more about Fish Lake in its efforts to generate revenue and to protect a particular regime of property rights. The information produced by the government and by the mining companies was available to the public at a very low relative cost. As a consequence, other companies entered the fray. In 1992, a corporation called Pioneer Metals conducted an induced polarization[†] study of their own property adjoining Fish Lake to the north. They found a magnetically anomalous zone covering more than a kilometer. Assays of samples taken from this zone yielded a significant proportion of copper. Encouraged by these results, Pioneer Metals proposed to follow up with “systematic geophysical, geochemical and geological surveys followed by diamond drilling.”¹⁴³ Thirty-two kilometers to the north of Fish Lake, the Verdstone Gold Corporation was also exploring for gold and copper by digging trenches.¹⁴⁴ By April of the following year, they were able to report promising results.¹⁴⁵

Elsewhere in the province, the feasibility of porphyry mining was called into question when the mining company Placer Dome decided not to go ahead with a copper-gold porphyry project at Mount Milligan because the expected return of the project was not high enough to cover capital investment. Initial cost estimates for Mount Milligan had failed to take into account the environmental problems raised by the disposal of

¹⁴³ BC Ministry of Energy and Mines, “BC Producer Prices”; Oscar Rojo, “Pioneer Metals Starts with Clean Slate,” *Toronto Star*, 3 Jan 1992; Pioneer Metals Corporation, “Pioneer Metals Corporation Completes Restructuring,” *Canada NewsWire*, 2 Jan 1992; quotation from Idem, “Pioneer Metals Corporation Announces Induced Polarization Anomaly Discovered on Task Claims Adjoining Taseko Mines’ Fish Lake Property – Amended News Release,” *Canada NewsWire*, 1 Dec 1992.

¹⁴⁴ “Gold Values Intersected at Newton,” *Northern Miner*, 27 Jan 1992; “Trenching on Newton Hill,” *Mining Magazine*, Feb 1992.

¹⁴⁵ Verdstone Gold Corporation, “Encouraging Diamond Drill Results Received on Newton Hill Property,” *Canada NewsWire*, 6 Apr 1992.

tailings. Taseko Mines was still exploring at Fish Lake, however, planning to raise \$10 million for a new program of drilling.¹⁴⁶ In March 1992, Robert Hunter, the chairman of the company, announced that they had begun trading on the NASDAQ and that three rigs were drilling “to delineate the ultimate size of the Fish Lake gold-copper deposit.” Taseko Mines was considering adding additional drills, and planned to release assay results as the studies were completed. Besides the drilling, the company also planned to set up a pilot plant for metallurgical work and to begin the process of obtaining environmental permits. Once they had all of the necessary information in hand they could evaluate the proposed mine for its economic feasibility.¹⁴⁷ In June, Taseko Mines announced that drilling at Fish Lake had shown that the deposit was at least twice the size they had estimated earlier and “remained open to extension in all directions.”¹⁴⁸ The story was picked up by the *Northern Miner* (“North America’s Mining Newspaper”) a week later, who added that “Taseko hopes to find a buyer.”¹⁴⁹ By the end of the month, the company had completed final closing of its private placement, that is, it had sold its stock to a small number of private investors and was no longer open to new investment. It had raised \$7.24 million, and was moving a fourth drill rig to Fish Lake.¹⁵⁰ Drilling continued through the summer and fall, and Taseko Mines announced that “it is clear that the Fish Lake deposit ranks among the largest deposits of its kind in the world.”¹⁵¹ Over the summer, Taseko Mines also began to collect information about the site that would later help them to plan a mine. They set up a meteorological station to record temperature, precipitation, and accumulation of snowfall and snowpack.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ “Mount Milligan Decision Threatens Property Market (Placer Dome Writes Off BC Gold Project),” *Northern Miner*, 17 Feb 1992.

¹⁴⁷ Taseko Mines Limited, “\$7.14 Million Financing Obtained – Fish Lake Program Begins,” *Canada NewsWire*, 9 Mar 1992; quotation from Idem, “Taseko Begins Trading on NASDAQ with Symbol TKO:CF,” *Canada NewsWire*, 25 Mar 1992.

¹⁴⁸ Taseko Mines Limited, “Taseko Mines Limited Deposit Width Doubles – Drilling Continues at Fish Lake,” *Canada NewsWire*, 9 Jun 1992.

¹⁴⁹ “Taseko’s Drilling Doubles Width of Fish Lake Deposit,” *Northern Miner*, 15 Jun 1992.

¹⁵⁰ Taseko Mines Limited, “Taseko Mines Limited Announces Final Closing of Private Placement,” *Canada NewsWire*, 23 Jun 1992.

¹⁵¹ Taseko Mines Limited, “Drilling Continues to Delineate Immense Gold-Copper Deposit,” *Canada NewsWire*, 17 Jul 1992.

¹⁵² Taseko Mines Limited, “Form 20-F,” 1998.

Members of the public were invited to visit Taseko Mine's Fish Lake exploration site in July of that year. Company representatives were on hand to answer questions about environmental and financial impacts, and to explain the processes of exploration and mining. The visitors were allowed to see the drill at work removing core samples, and to pore over the samples in wooden boxes at a sorting table. People sat in the sun at picnic tables, ate barbecue and drank soda. They were told that Taseko Mines was spending \$800,000 per month to test the samples, and that the mine, if built, would employ six hundred people for two years in its construction, and employ four hundred directly in its operation. It would run for fifteen years and provide another eight hundred jobs indirectly.¹⁵³ The company circulated a questionnaire to gauge the mood of the attendees. Fifty of the hundred-seventy-five people present filled one out. Eighty-six percent of them claimed to be in favor of the mine. Fourteen percent were undecided "and no one was opposed."¹⁵⁴

The company's decision to bring the public to the Fish Lake site and to emphasize the potential for employment that the mine offered seems relatively straightforward. After all, in a province where economic survival depended on the exploitation of natural resources, the public might be expected to cheer more than a thousand new jobs ... especially relatively high-paying, unionized jobs. But why should Taseko Mines (or any other resource company for that matter) care what the general public thought about Fish Lake? This move in the company's public relations campaign signalled their awareness that at least some of the rights to Fish Lake were in the public domain. The fate of the region would not be determined solely by those with legal title, but rather as the outcome of a contest of stakeholders. Scientific study would play a key role in this struggle, as institutions sent representatives to consult the archive of place, to find information that might increase their chances of capturing some of the rights to Fish Lake that had not yet been delineated.

¹⁵³ "Public Visits New Minesite," *Williams Lake Tribune*, Jul 1991, CCA-M.

¹⁵⁴ "Drilling Continues to Delineate Immense Gold-Copper Deposit."

By late 1992, Taseko Mines estimated that the deposit contained 5.6 billion pounds of copper and 14.8 million ounces of gold, and was claiming that Fish Lake would “significantly add to the rebuilding of Canada’s rapidly depleting metal reserve inventory.” They were also predicting that all but two of British Columbia’s open pit mines would close by the year 2000, as ore reserves were depleted.¹⁵⁵ In the beginning of the new year, the *Northern Miner* reported on ongoing exploration projects in British Columbia, including Fish Lake.¹⁵⁶ By March, Taseko Mines had brought in two independent engineering firms to study the mineable reserves of the deposit and the metallurgical properties of samples taken from it. They reported the production cost for progressively deeper pit designs. For example, 164 million tons of ore could be processed at a ratio of 0.8 units of waste to one unit of ore, yielding a production cost of less than fifteen cents per pound. Processing 446 million tons of ore could be done at a waste:ore ratio of 1.16:1 at twenty-seven cents per pound. And so on, up to 895 million tons at a waste:ore ratio of 2.11:1 and a production cost of less than forty-one cents per pound. At the time, the average production cost per pound in North American open pit copper mines was in the range of fifty to sixty cents (in Canadian currency). The results were better than Taseko Mines had predicted; the deposit was now thought to contain 6.2 billion pounds of copper and 17.3 million ounces of gold. The metallurgical testwork also yielded significantly better results than Taseko Mines had reported to date. The company now thought the deposit was “capable of sustaining a world class mine for 30 to 40 years.” They planned to hire another consulting firm to conduct a prefeasibility study of the project and to enter into the formal process of obtaining mine production permits from the province of British Columbia.¹⁵⁷ This would be complicated by the fact that the province had recently adopted the goal of sustainable development.

¹⁵⁵ Quotation from Taseko Mines Limited, “Taseko Mines Limited – Drilling Continues – Reserve Calculation Commences for Giant Gold-Copper Deposit,” *Canada NewsWire*, 15 Sep 1992. See also “Fish Lake Update,” *Mining Journal*, 16 Oct 1992; Taseko Mines Limited, “Taseko Warrants Exercised to Raise an Additional \$7.24 Million,” *Canada NewsWire*, 19 Oct 1992; Idem, “Taseko Mines – Rebuilding Canada’s Mineral Inventory,” *Canada NewsWire*, 18 Nov 1992.

¹⁵⁶ “New BC Mining Projects in Works,” *Northern Miner*, 25 Jan 1993.

¹⁵⁷ Taseko Mines Limited, “Independent Engineering Studies Confirm Copper-Gold Deposit as World Class,” *Canada NewsWire*, 10 Mar 1993.

Sustainable Development and CORE

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development released a report entitled *Our Common Future*, which defined sustainable development as “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”¹⁵⁸ This agenda was adopted internationally, and served as one of the contexts for mining-related activities in British Columbia in the early 1990s.¹⁵⁹ The New Democratic Party provincial government, elected under Mike Harcourt in 1991, was committed to significant environmental reform, but faced the problem of acquiring and deploying information about natural resource use in the province. Their goal was to enforce an allocation of property rights that was congruent with their program of democratic socialism. In order to balance the interests of stakeholders (including its own), the government needed to be able to integrate information about different resource entities, and this process was greatly facilitated by standardization.

Economic historians have long recognized the fact that standardization reduces the costs of doing business, or to put it another way, it lowers transaction costs.¹⁶⁰ In this case, standardization simultaneously lowered transaction costs, allowing new stakeholders to enter the contest over Fish Lake, and created a “market” in which information from different stakeholders (including the results of scientific studies) could be assigned relative value and exchanged. Historians of science have argued that standardization also plays an important epistemological role by facilitating the spread of techniques from the settings where they are initially developed. This allows things that first work in one particular laboratory or setting to work in the outside world, and thus

¹⁵⁸ World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, 43. This report is also referred to as the “Brundtland Report,” after the chairperson of the commission, Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, then Prime Minister of Norway.

¹⁵⁹ One measure of the interest in sustainable development was the Canadian Wilderness Charter, created by the World Wildlife Fund for its national Endangered Spaces campaign in 1989. Five years later, the charter had been signed by half a million people (the Canadian population at the time was a bit under 27.3 million). “WWF Hails Chilko Lake Park as Model for Establishment of New Protected Areas,” *Canada NewsWire*, 13 Jan 1994.

¹⁶⁰ North, *Institutions*; Pomerantz & Topik, *World Trade Created*, Ch. 6. For an important critique of the state’s use of standardization see Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

appear to be universally true or valid.¹⁶¹ Here we see the interplay of both epistemological and economic factors, the perceived truth of particular statements about the Chilcotin being due, in part, to their commodification as they enter into economic exchanges.

In 1991, the government established the Resources Inventory Committee, after the Forest Resources Commission recommended making an inventory of all renewable forest resources using systems that were standardized and compatible. Task forces working in a number of areas—aquatic ecosystems, atmosphere, coastal areas, culture, land use, earth sciences and terrestrial ecosystems—tried to develop procedures and standards that would allow cost-effective data collection and exchange. The committee members were drawn from provincial, federal, private sector and native agencies. In early 1992, the province announced major funding to implement the Resources Inventory Committee integration standards throughout the government. Participating ministries included Aboriginal Affairs; Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources; Environment, Lands and Parks; Forests and Tourism. Seeing the opportunity to shape the terms of contests over natural resources and land use, environmental NGOs encouraged their members to volunteer for task forces that were developing standards and methodologies.¹⁶²

Starting in 1992, the province adopted a new strategic land use planning framework for crown land that tried to balance the interests of various stakeholders in a process of shared decision making based on the collection of standardized data. An independent commission was established, the Commission on Resources and the Environment (CORE) to incorporate sustainability, an ethic of land use, a process for conflict resolution, planning at the regional level and community consensus. The Cariboo-Chilcotin, long a site of intense land use conflicts, was chosen as one of three regions to undergo the CORE planning process.¹⁶³ By the spring of 1993, the provincial

¹⁶¹ See, for example, Latour, *Science in Action*; Fujimura, "Crafting Science"; O'Connell, "Metrology."

¹⁶² Bruce Batchelor, "The Resource Inventory Committee," *BC Environmental Report* 4, no. 1 (1993):19.

¹⁶³ Roseland, Day & Penrose, "Shared Decision Making"; Wood, Corpé & Jackson, "Land Use Planning."

Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources was expressing its concern about the future of the mining industry and the reduction in funding for geological exploration. The Ministry was determined to participate in the CORE process. The problem, however, was that geologists could not predict where the next mineable deposit would be found, at least not with fine enough resolution to set aside the lands for mining in a strategic planning framework. The best that could be done was to indicate areas with high degrees of mineralization and to try to get other stakeholders to accept exploration and prospecting activities that had little environmental impact. One of the priorities of the Ministry was to continue to fund exploration so that the results could be used as inputs to the CORE process.¹⁶⁴

Around the same time, spring 1993, a dozen environmental groups, including the BC Wildlife Federation, the Sierra Club, and the World Wildlife Fund Canada, joined forces to create an umbrella organization which they called the Environmental Mining Council of BC. The new organization indicated an interest in working with companies in the mining sector to negotiate projects that would be economically viable and yet maintain the quality of the environment. The director of the Environmental Mining Council said that by forming the council, they hoped to “avoid the hostility and turmoil that has paralysed forestry/environmental interactions in this province for years.” The new president of the Mining Association of BC, was skeptical, but willing to talk to anyone who promoted both mining and environmental protection. The Environmental Mining Council suggested that it would be a good idea to start with a test case in the pre-development stage, to see if environmental and mining groups could cooperate. The project that they had in mind was Fish Lake.¹⁶⁵

An Uphill Battle

In 1993, things became more difficult for Taseko Mines. The Fish Lake deposit was valued at \$182 million and buyers continued to express interest in it.¹⁶⁶ An

¹⁶⁴ “Victoria Now Recognizing Mining Industry Problems,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 8 Apr 1993, CCA-M.

¹⁶⁵ Rod Nutt, “Peace Proposal Offers Fitness Plan,” *Vancouver Sun*, 11 Mar 1993.

¹⁶⁶ “Taseko Advances Fish Lake Project,” *Northern Miner*, 12 Apr 1993.

independent firm concluded that the project would be economically viable and that Taseko Mines should proceed to detailed prefeasibility planning.¹⁶⁷ Despite the news, Taseko Mines' shares fell as the price of copper slumped, and analysts predicted that such a low grade deposit as Fish Lake would not be developed until the price of metals rose. Capital costs to start a mine at Fish Lake were estimated to exceed \$600 million Canadian. Analysts also pointed out the fact that Taseko Mines chairman Robert Hunter had been involved in the sale of Mount Milligan, another low-grade copper-gold deposit which had later been written off by the company that purchased it because a mine there turned out to be economically infeasible.¹⁶⁸ Weak copper prices forced other mines in the area to temporarily suspend operations, like Gibraltar Mines, thirty-two kilometers north of Williams Lake.¹⁶⁹ The city of Williams Lake, crucially dependent on logging, ranching and mining, urged the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources to take on Fish Lake as a model project, a "cooperative partnership between the provincial government and the mining industry." City councilors thought the Ministry should try to speed up the regulatory process.¹⁷⁰ Companies outside British Columbia were wary of working in the province, due to "the uncertainty of tenure, compensation, and high taxation." Funding for geological exploration fell.¹⁷¹

Taseko Mines did not have the luxury of pulling support from the Fish Lake project when the going got tough. They continued to do mine planning and environmental baseline studies throughout the year. Most worried about potential acid rock drainage from the mine, they did extensive testing to show that that would not be a problem at Fish Lake and promised to continue testing throughout the project. They noted that, "Alterations to the geography and topography of the mine development area

¹⁶⁷ Taseko Mines Limited, "Taseko Mines Limited Quality – Long Life – Low Cost Deposit Confirmed," *Canada NewsWire*, 3 May 1993; "Fish Lake Found Viable," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 13 May 1993, CCA-M.

¹⁶⁸ Peter Kennedy, "Taseko News Dampened by Low Copper Price," *Financial Post* (Toronto), 5 May 1993; "Copper Price Dips," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 6 May 1993, CCA-M; "Fish Lake Doubts," *Mining Journal*, 14 May 1993.

¹⁶⁹ "Copper Prices Stalls Mining," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 25 May 1993, CCA-M.

¹⁷⁰ "Use Taseko as Model – City," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 27 May 1993, CCA-M.

¹⁷¹ "BC Exploration in a Trough," *Northern Miner*, 31 May 1993.

would occur with the development of a large open pit mine of the scale proposed. However, a Reclamation and Abandonment Plan to be developed with and approved by the provincial government before commencement of production will address the reclamation of the areas of development to the most natural state possible.”¹⁷² In late August, the company filed the Pre-Application for a Mine Development Certificate with the province. This document, the first of two in the mine permitting process, reviewed technical, environmental and socio-economic aspects of the proposed mine. It would be used by government agencies to determine what information they needed in the second document, the application for a mine development certificate. Taseko Mines also redoubled their efforts to enroll the support of various other stakeholders. They discussed the project with representatives of First Nations groups, and showed them around the site. They also showed the site to senior representatives of the major environmental groups in British Columbia: the BC Wildlife Federation, BC Endangered Spaces World Wildlife Fund, the East Kootenay Environmental Society, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, and Earthlife Canada. They continued to court their allies in the city of Williams Lake.¹⁷³ In September, the company announced that they had awarded a contract to Kilborn Engineering Pacific Limited, to do a detailed prefeasibility study, which they expected by year end. The study would evaluate all aspects of the project, “including geology, ore reserves, mining, metallurgy, processing, concentrate handling, tailings disposal, infrastructure, ancillary facilities and environmental requirements.”¹⁷⁴

Sensitivity to the environment was increasingly required of resource companies. In September 1993, the World Wildlife Fund reported that British Columbia had “earned a grade of ‘B+’ for its wilderness protection efforts in the Fourth Annual Endangered Spaces Progress Report.” Apparently the province had learned its lessons well over the

¹⁷² Taseko Mines Limited, “Taseko Mines Limited Announces Giant Fish Lake Gold-Copper Deposit Enters Mine Development Permitting Process,” *Canada NewsWire*, 25 Aug 1993.

¹⁷³ MINFILE 0920 041; “Taseko Filings,” *Financial Post*, 26 Aug 1993; “Taseko Mines Progressing,” *Weekender*, 29 Aug 1993, CCA-M; “Taseko Mines Project Progressing,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 31 Aug 1993, CCA-M.

¹⁷⁴ Taseko Mines Limited, “Taseko Mines Limited Announces Contract Awarded for Detailed Prefeasibility Study,” *Canada NewsWire*, 13 Sep 1993.

preceding year, since its grade was up from a “B-.” Nevertheless, the World Wildlife Fund took a stern tone, warning British Columbia (and the other provinces, even more truant) that Canadian wilderness was “disappearing at a rate of one acre every 15 seconds.”¹⁷⁵ Unfortunately, they didn’t specify how much of Canada actually consisted of “wilderness,” so it was difficult to determine when it would all be gone—by the year 3062 in any event.¹⁷⁶ The British Columbia government signalled its willingness to work with the environmental group by targeting unprotected natural regions for safeguarding through the CORE process.¹⁷⁷ In the regional implementation of CORE, the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land Use Strategy, a draft proposal for a park around Chilko Lake was approved by consensus for integration into strategic land use discussions. The draft divided the area into two zones: the first consisted of 230,000 protected hectares around Chilko Lake, the second of a 45,000 hectare transition zone running east of Chilko to provincial forest.¹⁷⁸ Heartened by the outcome of the regional CORE process, the World Wildlife Fund specified a three item “Action Agenda” for the province of British Columbia to work on in 1994. One of the action items was the preservation of the Chilko Lake area.¹⁷⁹

Taseko Mines continued to work on the Fish Lake project as 1993 drew to a close. At the beginning of November they reported that they expected to have their mine development certificate by the end of the following year. Once they had the certificate in

¹⁷⁵ “BC Endangered Spaces Local Action Projects Underway,” *BC Environmental Report* 3, no. 2 (1992): 4; “BC Improves on National Wilderness Report Card,” *Canada NewsWire*, 30 Sep 1993. Because of a clearcutting decision on Vancouver Island, the Western Canada Wilderness Committee thought a grade of B+ was too high for the province and protested it. “World Wildlife Fund’s Endangered Spaces Campaign Update,” *BC Environmental Report* 4, no. 4 (1993): 16.

¹⁷⁶ To see this, take the land area of Canada (9,093,507 square kilometers) and multiply by 247 to get the number of acres of Canadian land (over 2.2 billion). This is the most ‘wilderness’ that there could be in Canada. The rate of disappearance is given at 4 acres per minute, or 2,102,400 acres per year. Dividing the acres of land by the rate of disappearance gives the number of years it will take to disappear, about 1069. Add that number to 1993 to get the year 3062. The figure for the land area of Canada comes from Natural Resources Canada, *Atlas of Canada*.

¹⁷⁷ Susan Rautio, “Endangered Spaces Campaign Update,” *BC Environmental Report* 3, no. 3 (1992): 19; “A Guide to the Protected Areas Strategy,” *BC Environmental Report* 3, no. 3 (1992): 21; “World Wildlife Fund Report Reveals Temperate Forest Severely Threatened,” *BC Environmental Report* 3, no. 4 (1992): 29.

¹⁷⁸ Dave Neads, “Chilko Lake Park Now One Step Closer to Reality,” *BC Environmental Report* 4, no. 2 (1993): 29; BC Parks, Cariboo District, *Ts’il’os Provincial Park Master Plan*.

¹⁷⁹ “BC Improves.”

hand, they could find a senior mining firm to form a partnership with. The earliest that construction could begin would be late 1995. At a public review, Taseko Mines told the city that the mine at Fish Lake would employ 375 people directly and provide 400 indirect jobs. This was down a bit from the earlier numbers of 400 direct and 800 indirect jobs, but would still be a very welcome boost to the city's economy. A new road was planned which would allow company employees to be bused to the site from Williams Lake rather than living in mining camps. They would work "four-in and four-out." Ore concentrate would be trucked in containers to Williams Lake and shipped by rail to Vancouver.¹⁸⁰ In December, Taseko Mines announced an agreement with Cominco that would allow Taseko the exclusive right to purchase Cominco's residual interest in the Fish Lake project. The agreement called for a \$20 million Canadian payment to be made to Cominco by May 31, 1995. Cominco would retain five percent of the net proceeds from the working mine, up to \$5 million. Taseko Mines expected the agreement to improve their negotiating position with senior mining companies in their search for a partner.¹⁸¹ From Cominco's point of view, the new agreement increased the likelihood that Cominco would see at least some money from their interest in Fish Lake. Robert Stone, chief financial officer at Cominco, said about Taseko Mines, "This deal reflects their optimism about the potential of the resource." He didn't say whether Cominco shared that optimism. At the time, Taseko Mines had spent \$14 million on exploration and were hoping to find a partner to share development costs estimated at \$390 million.¹⁸²

In the Clear?

The following year, 1994, turned out to be a much better one for Taseko Mines than the previous one had been. It was an optimistic time, a time when many uncertainties for the company were resolved, beginning with the impact that the Chilko

¹⁸⁰ "Taseko Mines Project Closer," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 9 Nov 1993, CCA-M.

¹⁸¹ Taseko Mines Limited, "Taseko Acquires Right to Purchase Cominco's Remaining Interest in Fish Lake Property," *Canada NewsWire*, 15 Dec 1993.

¹⁸² Peter Kennedy, "Taseko, Cominco Alter Pact on Fish Lake Find," *Financial Post* (Toronto), 17 Dec 1993; "Taseko Mines Has Solidified Hold on Fish Lake Property," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 21 Dec 1993, CCA-M.

Lake park proposal would have on the Fish Lake property. On January 13, 1994, premier Mike Harcourt announced the creation of British Columbia's fifth largest park, the 233,240 hectare Ts'il?os Park surrounding Chilko Lake.¹⁸³ Crown land inside the park's boundaries was permanently designated Class A parkland. The park was the third major preserve that the Harcourt government had created, part of a plan to double the amount of protected area in British Columbia from six percent to twelve percent by the year 2000. Enthusiasts compared the scenery of the park to Nepal, to the Peruvian Andes, and, closer to home, to Lake Louise in the Rocky Mountains, Canada's first national park and a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1984. The World Wildlife Fund pointed to the park as a successful example of conservation based on consensus, and praised the provincial government for their vision in balancing the needs and interests of people living in the region with those of future generations. Creation of the park had advanced the goal of maintaining biodiversity by protecting some part of each of the province's different natural regions. It had also contributed to the conservation of California Bighorn sheep, mountain goats, grizzly bears, bald eagles and sockeye salmon. The Taseko Management Zone, fifty thousand hectares of land adjacent to the park, had been allocated to be used for forestry, mining and ranching in ways that complemented the park. The Fish Lake deposit lay in this zone.¹⁸⁴

In March 1994, Taseko Mines completed their transaction with Cominco, and now owned one hundred percent of the Fish Lake property. The prefeasibility studies conducted by Kilborn Engineering Pacific were nearing completion. The projected mine would have a life of thirty-one years and a mine strip ratio of 1.57 units of waste to 1 unit of ore. It would produce 3.5 billion pounds of copper and 9.4 million ounces of gold, milling at a rate of 66,000 tons per day in a pit that would eventually be more than two

¹⁸³ The question mark in Tsilhqot'in words is used to denote a glottal stop.

¹⁸⁴ "WWF Hails Chilko Lake Park as Model for Establishment of New Protected Areas," *Canada NewsWire*, 13 January 1994; "Wilderness Park Created," *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), 18 Jan 1994; "Ts'yl-os Park, BC's Newest," *BC Environmental Report* 5, no. 1 (1994): 23; BC Parks, Cariboo District, *Ts'il?os Provincial Park Master Plan*.

kilometers in diameter.¹⁸⁵ As spring rolled into summer, things started to look better for miners in British Columbia, at least from the perspective of the Ministry in Victoria. The Mines Minister reported that exploration spending had increased by twenty percent. There was a new \$13.5 million provincial government program called Explore BC that provided up to \$10,000 financial assistance to prospectors working in the province over the summer. By late May, more than one hundred applications had been sent in for Explore BC funding. The new provincial budget included a \$100 million program to revitalize the mining industry over the next five years.¹⁸⁶

The view from the ground was less rosy. Don Carter, former president of the Cariboo Mining Association, was reported to be “mad as hell” at the bureaucracy and “exorbitant” taxes that made life difficult for individual miners. “When I first came here, you could file a notice to work a site and then work on it. There were no problems. Over the years the government has pandered to the mostly city-dwelling voting public. They don’t seem to realize that mining brings in huge amounts of tax revenue for them.” Many of the changes that were occurring in the political economy of mining and mineral exploration in the 1990s simultaneously raised transaction costs for individual stakeholders with few resources, while lowering them for institutional stakeholders with many resources. In a single day on his placer operation, Don Carter was faced with seven inspectors representing government ministries in charge of environment, fisheries, worker’s compensation, and water quality. From Carter’s perspective, dealing with each of the inspectors took time that could have been more profitably spent mining. From the perspective of the ministries, however, the newly integrated and standardized system of data collection meant that the information gathered by one ministry was available to all. The cost for a governmental institution to enter the contest for the future of a particular region was greatly reduced.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Taseko Mines Limited, “Taseko Completes \$25 Million Buyout of Fish Lake Gold-Copper Deposit,” *Canada NewsWire*, 7 Mar 1993; “Mine Land Secure,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 10 Mar 1994, CCA-M.

¹⁸⁶ “Mining Mood Gets Better,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 24 May 1994, CCA-M; BC Ministry of Energy and Mines, “Upswing in the BC Mining Scene.”

¹⁸⁷ Judy Smith, “Victoria Making Mining Nearly Impossible,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 24 May 1994, CCA-M.

Larger mining companies could readily deal with the “bureaucracy” that entangled individual miners. Pioneer Metals Corporation, for example, who had found a magnetic anomaly on their property adjoining the Fish Lake deposit and performed some encouraging assays, followed up with a program of exploration. In November 1993 they reported anomalous concentrations of gold and copper in the soil, noting that their property had “the same geophysical and geochemical signature as Taseko Mines’ Fish Lake deposit and [was] underlain by a portion of the same Eocene [53 – 36.5 Ma BP] quartz diorite intrusion.” The physical evidence pointed to the same kind of mineralization as had already been discovered at Fish Lake.¹⁸⁸ In March of the following year the company began a three hole diamond drilling program on the property.¹⁸⁹ By May, Pioneer Metals could report that they had discovered “a large sulphide system with rock alteration and geochemical anomalies which are typical porphyry gold-copper deposit indicators.” They suspected that they had discovered an extension of the Fish Lake deposit that had been shifted north by a fault. Although assays from the drilled samples did not contain enough precious metal to be considered ore, the company was encouraged by the results and decided to continue drilling and to begin other kinds of exploration, including more induced polarization studies, magnetometer and very-low-frequency electromagnetic surveys, and petrographic analysis[†].¹⁹⁰ In September, Pioneer Mines could report that petrographic analysis of core samples from the property confirmed the presence of a copper-gold porphyry. Two new very strong magnetic anomalies had been discovered by the magnetometer survey, and were to be the focus for the next stage of drilling.¹⁹¹ The company was planning to spend \$100,000 to \$150,000 on the drilling, beginning in April 1995.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Pioneer Metals Corporation, “Pioneer Metals Corporation Advises Shareholders,” *Canada NewsWire*, 25 Nov 1993.

¹⁸⁹ Pioneer Metals Corporation, “Pioneer Metals Corporation Update,” *Canada NewsWire*, 17 Mar 1994.

¹⁹⁰ Pioneer Metals Corporation, “Pioneer Metals – Drilling Results,” *Canada NewsWire*, 4 May 1994.

¹⁹¹ Pioneer Metals Corporation, “Pioneer Metals Corp. Announces Results,” *Canada NewsWire*, 30 Sep 1994.

¹⁹² “Pioneer Metals Plans Drilling, Restructures (BC),” *Northern Miner*, 17 Oct 1994.

The fall of 1994 was an optimistic time for mining and mineral exploration in British Columbia. Improved copper and gold prices allowed existing mines to reopen and Mine Development Certificates were issued for a number of new projects. Exploration expenditures were estimated to be \$85 million for the year, mostly concentrated on areas where mineral resources were known to exist and where the geoscience results indicated the probable discovery of more. The BC Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources predicted that the annual solid mineral production in the province would be valued at \$2.56 billion, a ten percent increase from the previous year. Of that, copper production would account for thirty-one percent, about \$792 million. The ministry credited the new Explore BC program in part with the rebound in exploration expenditures. They concluded by saying, "The development of a number of copper porphyries are advancing, reaffirming that B. C. is a good place to locate large copper deposits. The province is well poised to benefit from the increases in copper prices, an excellent geoscience database, a favourable government attitude to resource development, a stable economy, and a highly skilled and flexible work force."¹⁹³

The Lake and the Rainbow Trout

In the meantime, Taseko Mines faced new opposition over the Fish Lake proposal. In the summer of 1994, the company estimated that it would require about eight months to find a senior mining company to take the Fish Lake deposit to production.¹⁹⁴ They were planning to submit their application for the Mine Development Certificate by the fall and to start the mine in the second half of 1997.¹⁹⁵ That July, however, the BC Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks objected to the proposal.¹⁹⁶ One aspect of the Fish Lake plan that had received almost no publicity to date was the fact that it called for the drainage of Fish Lake itself. The former lake site and the river that drained into it would be used to dump 1,709 million metric tons of waste rock and

¹⁹³ BC Ministry of Energy and Mines, "Upswing in the BC Mining Scene."

¹⁹⁴ Bill Phillips, "Fish Lake Looks Good," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 24 May 1994, CCA-M.

¹⁹⁵ "Kilborn Studies Confirm Major Gold-Copper Mine at Fish Lake," *Canada NewsWire*, 6 Jul 1994; "Taseko Fleshes Out Fish Lake Option (BC)," *Northern Miner*, 25 Jul 1994.

¹⁹⁶ Letter from Toby Vigod, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, to Bruce McRae, Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, 25 July 1994. Cited in *DuT*.

793 million metric tons of tailings.¹⁹⁷ The provincial fisheries ministry noted that the mine plan included no way to mitigate impacts on the lake and that it was “unlikely that the unique characteristics of the Fish Lake ecosystem could ever be replaced through remediation efforts at the site following mine closure.” Furthermore, the lake was home to a self-sustaining population of unique rainbow trout.¹⁹⁸ Under the federal law of the time, it was also illegal to “carry on any work or undertaking that results in the harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat.”¹⁹⁹ The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans interpreted this statute to mean that any fish habitat loss must be balanced by the creation of other habitat, so that there would be no net loss. The department concluded that the Fish Lake “proposal, implemented according to the current mine plan, would result in the permanent loss of fish habitat, resulting in the loss of a wild rainbow trout stock” and that there seemed to be no viable habitat compensation plan.²⁰⁰

The Liberal Party critic for energy and mines, Don Jarvis, faulted the provincial government’s consensus-based mine-permitting process, saying that it was too slow. “The development process is too onerous. There are little bureaucrats all over the place. It’s costing us too much money. Typical bureaucrats only make a decision when 10 other people agree with them.” Jarvis thought that Taseko Mines should be able to fill in the “puddle” and relocate the indigenous trout to nearby streams. Mike Harcourt, the New Democratic Party premier, disagreed. He said that there would be a new, streamlined permitting process in 1995, one that had been developed in consultation with representatives of both the mining industry and environmental groups. He noted that the provincial government had approved incentives for mineral exploration.²⁰¹ From the perspective of Taseko Mines, the real problem lay with the federal fisheries department,

¹⁹⁷ Letter from Lee Nikl, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, to Stephen Sheehan, Environment Canada, 19 Nov 1993. Cited in *DuT*.

¹⁹⁸ Vigod to McRae.

¹⁹⁹ Canada, *Statutes of Canada*, R. S. 1985, c. F-14, “Fisheries Act,” 35 (1).

²⁰⁰ Nikl to Sheehan.

²⁰¹ Quotation from “Mining Critic Blasts Process,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 1 Nov 1994, CCA-M; see also “Mining Projects Get Thumbs Up,” *Williams Lake Advocate*, 2 Nov 1994, CCA-M.

who did not recognize the CORE process. According to the company, the people of the Cariboo-Chilcotin recognized mining as an acceptable use of the Fish Lake area, but the “feds” in Ottawa did not. “Any fish habitat we impact, we will replace or enhance elsewhere. We will eliminate Fish Creek and take a creek that has no fish value and enhance it. We have spent time and money looking at other spots that don’t have fish and we will make them viable fishing spots.” The Member of Parliament[†] for the Cariboo-Chilcotin, Philip Mayfield, agreed with the company, saying, “We must be good stewards of the resource, but there has to be a solution where we can get the minerals out.”²⁰² By this time, Taseko Mines had already expected to have a mine development certificate in hand. Now things weren’t looking so good.

In January 1995, the province decided to pull the plug on Alcan Aluminum’s \$1.3 billion Kemano II power project on the Nechako River in northern BC, citing its potential damage to salmon fisheries. The effect on investment was immediate. Spending by resource companies “cratered,” analysts said, because the companies no longer felt that titles were secure in the province. Although Kemano II was not a mining project as such, the province’s decision was expected to jeopardize investment in copper-gold properties like Taseko Mines’ Fish Lake.²⁰³ In March, resource companies banded together to form the BC Coalition of Coalitions to fight “preservationist pressures on our resource industries and resource communities.” The Victoria headquarters of the coalition were to serve as a base of operations, “as a centre for communications, networking, media work, [and] arranging meetings with government.”²⁰⁴ The effect of such a center would be to lower transaction costs for resource companies. It would now be easier for them to get access to British Columbia politicians, to enroll the support of the public, and to share mining-related information.

²⁰² “Fish Concerns Impact Mine,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 1 Dec 1994, CCA-M.

²⁰³ Peter Kennedy & John Schreiner, “Resource Firms Slam BC: Province’s Decision to Cancel \$1.3-Billion Alcan Project Leaves Many Resource Companies Re-Evaluating Plans for Major Investments,” *Financial Post* (Toronto), 25 Jan 1995; Ross Howard, “BC Liable for Dam Compensation, Ottawa Says,” *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 25 Jan 1995; Greg McDade, “Fair Compensation for Alcan?” *BC Environmental Report* 6, no.1 (1995): 18.

²⁰⁴ “Brown Coalition of Coalitions,” *BC Environmental Report* 6, no. 4 (1995): 10.

The mining industry's Coalition of Coalitions seemed to be something of a rearguard action. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of Earth Day the following month, the province was awarded a grade of "A-" by the World Wildlife Fund. Among other things, the environmental group cited the establishment of Ts'il?os Park in its commendation of the British Columbia government.²⁰⁵ Resource companies in general, and Taseko Mines in particular, waited warily to see what the outcome would be. Taseko Mines had proposed a number of plans to compensate for the loss of Fish Lake, which they said only accounted for 0.08 percent of the angling in the area. They offered to stock other barren lakes with the rainbow trout from Fish Lake. They offered to provide a heritage fund to enhance fisheries. They offered to buy a private lake and put it into the public domain. There was no way, however, that they could proceed with the mine without draining Fish Lake. Ross Banner, the contract project director, said, "We've spent \$41 million on studies. Some environmental group from California can call up and scuttle those millions of dollars for a \$1.25 phone call." Still the company waited. To Taseko Mines, the province's decision should have been clear. The Fish Lake project would provide \$82 million of revenue for the province each year that the mine was in production.²⁰⁶ Taseko Mines continued to look for a buyer for the project.²⁰⁷

One group of stakeholders that became more proactive as a result of the greening of British Columbia politics was the Environmental Mining Council of BC, the network of environmental groups that had suggested collaborating on Fish Lake with the mining industry in 1993. They were concerned that rising mineral commodity prices would lead to an increase in exploration and the opening or expansion of large open pit operations. Among other things, the Environmental Mining Council stressed acid mine drainage, habitat destruction and the need for environmentally sensitive geological exploration. They organized an intensive weekend training session to teach members of aboriginal,

²⁰⁵ "BC Gets Canada's Top Grade for Wilderness Protection," *Canada NewsWire*, 19 Apr 1995.

²⁰⁶ Quotation from Bill Phillips, "Taseko Mines Plays Waiting Game," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 30 May 1995, CCA-M; See also Bal Russell, [Title Missing], *Williams Lake Advocate*, Jul 1995, CCA-M.

²⁰⁷ Bloomberg Business News, "TSE Logs Another Gain," *Gazette (Montreal)*, 30 May 1995; Dow Jones, "Taseko Shops Fish Lake Deposit," *Financial Post (Toronto)*, 30 May 1995.

community and environmental NGOs how to deal with “strategic, legal, and technical problems faced by citizens concerned about mining-related eco-impacts.”²⁰⁸ Participants at the seminar included members from twenty environmental groups, six First Nations and two major mining unions. One of the outcomes of the meeting was the decision to create “an active network for sharing good information on technical issues, company track records, and larger policy and legal questions.”²⁰⁹ Like the provincial government’s efforts to create a standardized data repository and the mining industry’s Coalition of Coalitions, creation of such a network would greatly lower transaction costs for the environmentalists. Mining interests, colloquially the “browns,” responded to this new green threat with a public relations campaign. The Mining Association of BC and the BC Chamber of Mines spent somewhere between one-half and one million dollars on radio and TV ads, a database of 30,000 people to target directly, and a *Voter’s Guide to Mining Issues* to send each of them. The *Voter’s Guide* rejected the stance that the Environmental Mining Council had taken, namely that mining and mineral exploration could be done in an environmentally sensitive way. Instead, the guide asked, “Which is more important, economic development or environmental protection?” “Should we maintain strict protection of wilderness areas that could hurt our chances for economic growth and jobs?”²¹⁰

The Environmental Assessment Acts

On June 30, 1995, the provincial government introduced a new Environmental Assessment Act. Prior to this date, a new mining project required only the Mine Development Certificate covered by the Mine Development Assessment Act. Now there was a standardized process to review the environmental impact of all major projects involving “energy, mining, water management, waste disposal, food processing, transportation [or] tourism.” The only thing excluded was forestry. The process was designed to entail more stages of review for more complicated projects. A simple project

²⁰⁸ “The Environmental Mining Council,” *BC Environmental Report* 6, no. 1 (1995): 14.

²⁰⁹ Alan Young, “The Environmental Effects of Mining,” *BC Environmental Report* 6, no. 2 (1995): 27.

²¹⁰ Alan Young, “Where is the Modern in Modern Mining?” *BC Environmental Report* 6, no. 3 (1995): 35.

could be jointly approved after application by the minister of Environment, Lands and Parks and the minister for the department responsible for the project domain (for example Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources.) A more complicated project might require a project report that could then be jointly approved by the two ministers. A still more complicated project would have to undergo a public hearing and be submitted to the cabinet for decision. The project could, of course, also be rejected at each of the three stages.²¹¹ The Fish Lake project had not yet received a development certificate when the new law came into effect, so it was moved into the new review process.²¹² Internal e-mail from the Environmental Assessment Office suggests that officials there sided with Taseko Mines in the matter of the troublesome trout. “The technical fisheries staff on both sides have already made their views known—they consider the project unacceptable ... In my view, the only way to move the project is to set up the project committee and get on with it.”²¹³ From the perspective of the Environmental Assessment Office, the project was going ahead. From the perspective of the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, it was not. According to federal biologist Lee Nikl, the department had made a “definitive answer technically; anything beyond that [was] political.” The provincial Environment Minister hoped to have things both ways. While members of his own ministry opposed the project, he blamed the delay on the federal department.²¹⁴ Taseko Mines apparently felt that the project would eventually go ahead. They retained Toronto Dominion Securities to help them introduce the project “to a select group of growth oriented senior international mining companies for financing and acquisition.”²¹⁵

At the end of July, the project director at the Environmental Assessment Office said that he expected to form a project committee for Fish Lake to write the report for the first stage of the review process. Based on that report, it was possible the ministers

²¹¹ Harris, “Mineral Development,” 270-273.

²¹² BC Ministry of Energy and Mines, “BC Mineral Exploration Review 1996 – Advanced Exploration and Development.” See also the dates that various application documents for the project were posted to e-PIC.

²¹³ E-mail from Doug Dryden to Norm Ringstad, Environmental Assessment Office, 24 Jul 1995. Cited in *DuT*.

²¹⁴ Bal Russell, [Title Missing], *Williams Lake Advocate*, Jul 1995, CCA-M.

²¹⁵ Taseko Mines Limited, “Taseko Mines Ltd. Retains Toronto Dominion Securities as Financial Advisor,” *Canada NewsWire*, 6 Jul 1995.

would jointly decide to accept the project. Taseko Mines thought that it was about time their proposal was approved ... “We’ve really had an erosion of share value.” The project committee would consist of representatives from provincial agencies, local government, federal government and the First Nations. The committee would have to deal with a number of different stakeholders taking very different positions. They still had to respond to the provincial fisheries ministry and federal fisheries department who objected both to destroying the lake and to moving the fish. They had to deal with the BC Wildlife Federation, who opposed the project but might be brought on board if the compensation package were right, say, the purchase of a private lake to be brought into the public domain. They had to deal with David Zirnheld, the Cariboo-South Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA)[†], who favored moving the fish to a similar lake. After all, Zirnheld said, “No one is going to pretend that an advanced civilization is going to leave everything as it is. You don’t get a chance at a mine every day. There are thousands of lakes in the Chilcotin.” The city of Williams Lake was happy with the proposal as it stood. The local Tsilhqot’in[†] group, the Nemiah Indian Band, claimed the land around Fish Lake, and their concerns still had not been dealt with. The project committee had its work cut out for it.²¹⁶

At the end of September, the federal government decided that the Fish Lake project fell under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act as well as the provincial one.²¹⁷ This decision meant that the objections of the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans gained new weight. According to the department, the habitat at Fish Lake fell into the “Class One” category. It provided the fish with places to spawn, feed and winter. Ordinarily, such habitat could not be destroyed in return for compensation unless the department exercised its own discretion, and, in the words of one of the department officials, “there are no reasonable grounds for applying

²¹⁶ Bal Russell, “Mine’s Impact under Review,” *Williams Lake Advocate*, 19 Jul 1995, CCA-M. Here ‘Chilcotin’ is used to denote the region. The indigenous people for whom the region is named are referred to as ‘Tsilhqot’in’ in keeping with their wishes.

²¹⁷ *DuT*, 58.

discretion in this case.”²¹⁸ The department was wary of setting a precedent that would make it more difficult to manage fish habitat in the future. Without approval from the department, the project could not pass the Canadian review process and thus would be stopped. On October 19, the department wrote to the provincial ministry to tell them that it did not intend to authorize the Fish Lake project.²¹⁹

The rainbow trout in Fish Lake were rapidly becoming more valuable, and as a consequence, various stakeholders began to spend money to learn more about the attributes of the fish and their habitat. Taseko Mines began studying the Nuntsi lakes, forty kilometers to the north of Fish Lake, as a potential habitat to move the rainbow trout to. The Nuntsi lakes were isolated from Taseko River by a waterfall, which served as a barrier to fish migration. This was also the case at Fish Lake. The company tested the pH of the Nuntsi lakes (the degree to which they were acidic or alkaline), their electrical conductivity, water chemistry and biological productivity. In all of these respects, the company argued, some of the Nuntsi lakes were like Fish Lake, and the rainbow trout should thrive there.²²⁰ The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans did not find Taseko’s arguments persuasive, and refused to put the project back on the table unless the province were to revise its own evaluation of the value of the fishery and habitat at Fish Lake.²²¹ This move upped the ante for the provincial ministry. The situation for the provincial government was complicated. The popularity of the New Democratic Party had recently fallen, and premier Mike Harcourt resigned in November 1995 over a political scandal. Environmental groups directed their efforts toward the federal government. In a press conference, Nobel laureate and UBC professor Michael Smith presented a letter to the federal government urging the protection of habitat as the key way to maintain biological diversity. The letter was co-signed by two hundred Canadian scientists, including such luminaries as E. C. Pielou and David Suzuki.²²² At the time,

²¹⁸ Letter from D. Griggs, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, to D. J. Copeland, Taseko Mines, 10 Jul 1996. Cited in *DuT*, 59.

²¹⁹ *DuT*, 58.

²²⁰ Russell, “Mine’s Impact under Review.”

²²¹ *DuT*, 59.

²²² “Scientists Call for Action on Endangered Species,” *BC Environmental Report* 6, no. 4 (1995): 10.

British Columbian scientists were also making a similar argument in the scientific literature.²²³

This gave the management of Taseko Mines a new idea. Suppose that they could show that the rainbow trout had been introduced to the lake in the 20th century as part of a stocking plan? That would greatly reduce the putative contribution that the fish were making to the biodiversity of the province. It didn't matter that the archives of the provincial Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks did not have any record of Fish Lake ever having been stocked. Taseko Mines would put their faith in the archive of place instead. They hired Triton Environmental Consultants to do a genetic study of the rainbow trout in Fish Lake.²²⁴

²²³ See, for example, Sinclair et al, "Biodiversity and the Need for Habitat Renewal."

²²⁴ *DuT*, 59.

Chapter 2: Prosperity Gold

In November 1995, Taseko Mines decided that the last thing they wanted the Fish Lake deposit to be associated with in peoples' minds was fish, so they officially changed the name of their property to Prosperity Gold.²²⁵ They awaited the results of the trout genetics study that they had commissioned. The provincial Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks did not like the new direction that Taseko Mines was taking. They argued that the genetic techniques were limited, and that even if the company were to find no genetic difference between Fish Lake trout and other trout in the province, this did not make the fish "expendable or replaceable." Furthermore, the genetic uniqueness of the fish was only one factor that made the lake significant. According to the ministry, the lake was a "pristine and isolated system" that provided "unique fishing opportunities."²²⁶

In the autumn of 1996 Taseko Mines received some unpleasant news from Triton Environmental Consultants. The results of the study showed that the population of rainbow trout in Fish Lake had "very unusual" genetic characteristics, and that it was "a group of unique origin."²²⁷ Since the trout had evidently not been put in the lake by human beings in the 20th century, where had they come from? Fourteen thousand years earlier, the area near Fish Lake was buried under six hundred meters of ice, hardly a suitable habitat for trout.²²⁸ After the ice sheets melted, trout returned to what is now British Columbia from two directions. One group migrated from the south and the east, the other from Beringia, the land bridge that connected northeastern Asia and northwestern North America during the last glaciation. Zoogeographers inferred that the trout came from two different directions by studying the distribution of a nematode parasite which attacks the swim bladders of lake trout. The range of the parasite is limited to basins in the northwestern part of the continent, suggesting that populations of

²²⁵ *DuT*, 60 fn. 1.

²²⁶ E-mail from Susan Pollard, fish geneticist, to Ted Down, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, 6 Jun 1996. Cited in *DuT*.

²²⁷ Susan Pollard, "re: Review of Chilcotin Rainbow Trout Genetics Study (R. Leary and G. Sage) and Attached Letter from Triton (B. Ford)," 6 Sep 1996. Cited in *DuT*.

²²⁸ Huntley, "Late Wisconsin Glaciation."

trout that migrated into North America from Beringia have never been in contact with populations of trout that migrated from the south and east (otherwise the parasite would have spread to the latter groups).²²⁹ The trout in Fish Lake had come from the south and east. Since fish cannot travel overland, at one time there must have been an all-water route that allowed the trout to reach Fish Lake. By the 20th century, this route was no longer in evidence; a waterfall between Fish Lake and the Taseko River blocked fish migration. So how had the fish gotten into the lake? The most likely explanation was that they had traveled through a series of lakes and streams that formed as the ice sheets melted and then later disappeared. Residual ice left during melting dammed the flow of meltwater and diverted it along new channels. Temporary lakes formed along the edges of the ice sheets, too, some lasting centuries. The topology of these proglacial lakes and streams changed constantly, connecting some drainage basins for a time, and then separating them. At some point during this process, the trout were able to move into the area that would later become Fish Lake. When the ice had finally melted and current drainage patterns were established, the trout could no longer leave. They were genetically isolated from other trout populations in the watershed.²³⁰

The Tsilhqot'ins

The fact that the Fish Lake trout were genetically unique wasn't the only bad news Taseko Mines received that year. In January, they found out that the Tsilhqot'in elders, band chiefs and councilors had met at the Stone reserve and voted unanimously to oppose the mining project. According to Joe Alphonse, fisheries director for the Tsilhqot'in National Government[†], the Tsilhqot'in people had the same objection to the project as the federal and provincial fisheries personnel: there would be no way to compensate for the loss of the lake, or to replace it once it was gone. They were also concerned with the impact that the mine would have on drinking water from the Taseko and Chilko rivers, on salmon habitat, and on the deer and moose populations that would

²²⁹ Pielou, *After the Ice Age*, 70.

²³⁰ Tipper, *Glacial Geomorphology*; McPhail & Lindsey, "Zoogeography"; Briggs, "Introduction"; Huntley & Broster, "Late Wisconsinan Deglacial History"; Brink, "Glacial Lakes."

suffer from the increased access allowed by new roads into the area. In a press release, the Tsilhqot'in National Government said that "it was in their best interest to protect what they consider[ed] to be their land, and that they [had] sole jurisdiction over the area in question." Needless to say, the other stakeholders did not want to recognize the sole authority of the Tsilhqot'in people. David Zirnhelt, the Member of the Legislative Assembly, responded by saying, "Our position is there is no veto by First Nations, and their rights will be considered as with all resource developments."²³¹ At the time, the government did not have any treaties in place with the Tsilhqot'ins.

The First Nations, as Canadian indigenous people called themselves in the late 20th century, were the descendents of the people who had entered what is now British Columbia more than ten thousand years earlier.²³² In western Canada, their political relationship to various governments was shaped by terms that had originally been set by the British. When the British settled with the French in 1763 at the conclusion of the French and Indian Wars (also known as the Seven Years' War), France renounced claim to any territory in North America that lay east of the Mississippi River.²³³ The British Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763 declared that the lands to the west of the Appalachian highlands were to be an Indian Territory, reserved for the use of the indigenous people who occupied them. The Proclamation also set the terms by which these lands could be alienated from aboriginal people. In a formal council, representatives of the Crown and of the Indian groups concerned would agree on the terms of a land sale and record these terms in a treaty. West of the Rocky Mountains, however, only a few land cession agreements had been made between the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and aboriginal people before British Columbia joined the Canadian Confederation[†] in 1871. Five years later, the federal government turned over to the provincial government the task of settling native land claims and creating reserves. The new province did not recognize aboriginal title, however, and saw no need to extinguish

²³¹ Bal Russell, "Elders Oppose Mine," *Williams Lake Advocate*, 17 Jan 1996, CCA-M; quotations from Jim Swanson, "T. N. G. Rejects Taseko," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 23 Jan 1996, CCA-M.

²³² Fladmark, *BC Prehistory*.

²³³ Jacobs, "British Indian Policies," 10.

it with treaties. Aboriginal demand for treaties intensified to such a point that the federal government decided in 1927 to make it illegal to raise funds for land claims. This quelled the demands for native title until the restriction was lifted in 1951. With the exception of the northeastern corner of the province, in the mid-1990s there were still no treaties in place for British Columbia.²³⁴

The Tsilhqot'ins were descendents of people who had been living on the plateau that bore their name for millennia. Every Eurocanadian trader, surveyor, missionary, and miner that entered the region had to interact with them in one way or another.²³⁵ Because there were so few non-native settlers in the area, particularly on the edges of the plateau, the traditional Tsilhqot'in way of life changed gradually, the people incorporating new ideas and practices as they always had. Things began to change more rapidly beginning in the 1950s. For one thing, the politically conservative Social Credit provincial government that ran the province for more than thirty years (1952-72, 1975-86) focused on expanding the use of natural resources in the province. This was a period of extensive highway construction and the rapid expansion of local air transportation. Massive hydroelectric developments provided a surplus of power; their construction could only be justified by the further construction of mines, smelters, pulp and paper mills, and cement works to consume the power. In the words of W. A. C. Bennett, premier of the province for two decades after 1952, British Columbia was "the last economic frontier of North America."²³⁶ The Tsilhqot'ins were increasingly faced with outsiders who came to hunt, fish, camp, log, prospect, ranch and go four-wheeling.²³⁷

On August 23, 1989, the Xení Gwet'in, the Tsilhqot'in people of Nemiah Valley, made the following declaration.

²³⁴ Surtees, "Canadian Indian Treaties"; Sanders, "Government Indian Agencies"; BC Treaty Commission, "Why Treaties?"

²³⁵ See, for example, Cox, *Adventures*, CIHM 33317; Palmer, *Report*, BCA D12; Morice, *History of the Northern Interior*; Dolmage, "Chilko Lake."

²³⁶ Barman, *West*, 280-283. Bennett quoted on 283.

²³⁷ Lane, "Chilcotin," 412.

We, the Tsilhqot'in people of Xení, known as the Nemiah Valley Indian Band, declare that the lands ... which form part of our traditional territory, are, and shall henceforth be known as: *Nemiah Aboriginal Wilderness Preserve*.

Let it be known that within the Nemiah Aboriginal Wilderness Preserve:

1. There shall be no commercial logging. Only local cutting of trees for our own needs, i.e., firewood, housing, fencing, native uses, etc.
2. There shall be no mining or mining explorations.
3. There shall be no commercial road building.
4. All-terrain vehicles and skidoos shall only be permitted for trapping purposes.
5. There shall be no flooding or dam construction on Chilko, Taseko, and Tatlayoko Lakes.
6. This is the spiritual and economic homeland of our people. We will continue in perpetuity: a) to have and exercise our traditional rights of hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, and natural resources; b) to carry on our traditional ranching way of life; c) to practise our traditional native medicine, religion, sacred, and spiritual ways.
7. That we are prepared to SHARE our Nemiah Aboriginal Wilderness Preserve with non-natives in the following ways: a) with our permission visitors may come and view and photograph our beautiful land; b) we will issue permits, subject to our conservation rules, for hunting and fishing within our Preserve; c) the respectful use of our Preserve by canoeists, hikers, light campers, and other visitors is encouraged, subject to our system of permits.
8. We are prepared to enforce and defend our Aboriginal rights in any way we are able.²³⁸

The Nemiah Declaration was supported by a number of environmental groups, including the Western Canada Wilderness Committee and the Federation of Mountain Clubs of British Columbia.²³⁹ It played a key role in the process that eventually resulted in the creation of Ts'il?os Park at the beginning of 1994. The name of the new park, Ts'il?os, was the traditional Xení Gwet'in name for the mountain that had been renamed Mount Tatlow, after a provincial minister of finance who was thrown from his horse and

²³⁸ Glavin, *Nemiah*, 4-5. For an analysis of the bilingual Tsilhqot'in / English document, see Dinwoodie, *Reserve Memories*, Ch. 4.

²³⁹ Glavin, *Nemiah*, 12; Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC, "Chilcotin Wild and Gentle," SPAM 21676.

killed in 1910.²⁴⁰ The fact that the park was given a Tsilhqot'in name rather than an English one, signalled both the changing sensibility of the 1990s, and the role of the Xeni Gwet'in in the management of the park itself. The plan for the park specified that the Xeni Gwet'in would be "important players in the management of the park and their traditional home." Culturally significant sites in the park would be identified by archaeological and heritage studies so that they could be protected. Furthermore, creation of the park did not prejudice any aboriginal rights or title that the Xeni Gwet'in might have. Tsilhqot'in naming extended even to some of the management structures of the park. The subcommittee composed of Xeni representatives and members from the provincial ministry of parks was called Ts'il?os Gwa Najegwaghaten, a Tsilhqot'in phrase meaning "People working together for Ts'il?os." Xeni elders worked with representatives on this committee to guide the direction of the park.²⁴¹ Unlike the original Nemiah Aboriginal Wilderness Preserve, however, Ts'il?os park did not include Fish Lake within its boundaries.

The Polarization of Stakeholder Positions

Taseko Mines worked through 1996 to move the Prosperity Gold project forward. In March they secured \$5,375,000 from corporate and individual investors to collect baseline data required under the provincial and federal environmental assessment acts. They also continued to delineate the ore body with new drilling studies.²⁴² The mining industry as a whole was chafing under the provincial leadership of the New Democratic Party, and since an election was anticipated, were planning to take political action. In the previous four years, the number of jobs in mining had dropped from fourteen thousand to ten thousand and annual exploration expenditures were reported to be down from more than one hundred million dollars to about fifty million. Considering that the mining industry was the second largest in British Columbia, with gross revenues over three

²⁴⁰ BCPN; BC Parks, Cariboo District, *Ts'il?os Provincial Park Master Plan*. Dinwoodie analyses the conflict that surrounded the choice of the name of the park in *Reserve Memories*.

²⁴¹ BC Parks, Cariboo District, *Ts'il?os Provincial Park Master Plan*.

²⁴² "Taseko Completes Financing," *Canada NewsWire*, 5 Mar 1996; "Taseko Deal is Finalized," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 21 Mar 1996, CCA-M.

billion dollars, industry representatives thought it was about time that voters started asking their candidates what they would be willing to do for mining in the province.²⁴³

Perhaps because a regime change was anticipated in the provincial government, 1996 was a time of polarization for the stakeholders in Fish Lake. Anglers were convinced that the mine was “inevitable” and determined to get funding “to enhance or bring into production as many barren lakes as possible” for sport fishing.²⁴⁴ The Mining Association of British Columbia solidified the industry’s hold on the city of Williams Lake by naming it the “Mining Community of the Year.” The city was commended for “supporting responsible mineral exploration and mining development.” In a news release, the association president said, “Political and business leaders in Williams Lake have been extremely supportive of the Prosperity Project ... but it won’t just be the people of Williams Lake who benefit from a project as significant as Prosperity—it’ll be the whole province.”²⁴⁵ Taseko Mines attempted to win the favor of the federal fisheries department with a new plan to create fish habitat in nearby Wasp Lake and Big Onion Lake. Their idea was to connect the two lakes to the Taseko River and create stream channels that would support spawning for rainbow trout.²⁴⁶ But the Department of Fisheries and Oceans wasn’t swayed. They held to their original position that there could be no compensation for loss of Class One habitat. They added, rather unhelpfully, that they would consider mine plans that did not impact Fish Lake. Taseko Mines complained that the federal department was unwilling to consider the data the company had collected and that the department’s behavior didn’t “seem democratic.” The chief of the federal department’s habitat management for the Fraser River watershed replied by saying that “the ultimate decision [would] always lay with the federal government.” The federal and provincial governments were meanwhile trying to strengthen their own position by combining their two different environmental assessment processes into one.

²⁴³ “Mining Faces Some Critical Issues,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 7 Mar 1996, CCA-M.

²⁴⁴ Don Robertson, “Time to Make Deal with Taseko Mines,” *Williams Lake Advocate*, 3 Apr 1996, CCA-M.

²⁴⁵ “Lakecity is B.C.’s Mining Capital,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 14 May 1996.

²⁴⁶ Bill Phillips, “Taseko Goes for Gold at Fish Lake Location,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 25 Jul 1996, CCA-M.

News about Fish Lake had become more polarized, too. One reporter described the conflict as being “between fish and jobs.”²⁴⁷

As lines were being drawn, the opposition of the Tsilhqot’in people to the Prosperity project sharpened. At the end of July, Chief Roger William of the Xenigwet’in said that the band might be willing to deal with Taseko Mines if the traditional lifestyle of the Xenigwet’in was not threatened and they received some share of the expected prosperity. They wanted “jobs, royalties, and a say in the mine’s management.” Since the project might affect other Tsilhqot’in groups, however, an agreement had to be reached with the Tsilhqot’in National Government.²⁴⁸ At the end of August, the Tsilhqot’in National Government repeated their earlier objections to the project. In addition to the impact on traditional hunting and fishing and the pollution of their drinking water, they cited other concerns. The influx of miners and support personnel would cause “devastating” social problems for the band. The rainbow trout in Fish Lake were not only genetically unique; since the lake was one of the few in the province that had not been stocked, the fish were native to the lake in the same way that the Tsilhqot’in people were native to the Chilcotin. The Tsilhqot’in National Government felt that traditional use studies that had been done in the area were “laughable,” and began to conduct their own.²⁴⁹ At the end of the month, the Tsilhqot’in National Government sent a letter to Taseko Mines expressing their demands. The company was ordered to vacate the Fish Lake area by September 30. “You are to restore the area to its condition before your illegal explorations were begun. You are to pack up and leave.” Taseko Mines tried to schedule a conference with the Tsilhqot’in National Government but they refused to meet.²⁵⁰ The Tsilhqot’in leaders said that they had a “solemn duty” to protect the wildlife of the area, and that they did not recognize claims or exploration permits issued by the

²⁴⁷ Jessica Whiteside, “Miners Fishing for Gold: But DFO Isn’t Biting,” *Williams Lake Advocate*, 31 Jul 1996, CCA-M; “Feds ‘Refuse’ to Look at Project,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 6 Aug 1996, CCA-M. Quotations from Taseko Mines management and the federal department representative are taken from the latter article; the reporter’s quotation is from the former.

²⁴⁸ “Natives Seek Trust with Company,” *Williams Lake Advocate*, 31 Jul 1996, CCA-M.

²⁴⁹ “Mine ‘Will Bring Problems,’” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 30 Aug 1996, CCA-M.

²⁵⁰ “Chiefs Want Taseko Gone,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 5 Sep 1996, CCA-M.

British Columbia government.²⁵¹ As the end of the month drew near, the Tsilhqot'in chiefs stated that no mine could be developed until a treaty was in place between the federal government and the Tsilhqot'in National Government. As the legal basis for their demands they cited the landmark cases of *Sparrow* and *Delgamuukw*.²⁵²

Sparrow and Delgamuukw

On May 26, 1984, Mr. Sparrow, a member of the Musqueam Indian Band of lower mainland British Columbia, was charged under section 61(1) of the *Fisheries Act*. He was using a drift-net that was forty-five fathoms in length, even though the band's food fishing license (issued by the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans) limited drift-nets to twenty-five fathoms. Sparrow admitted to using the long net but claimed that he was exercising his aboriginal right to fish and that the net length restriction was inconsistent with section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act* of 1982, which stated that "The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed." The provincial judge who first heard the case ruled that the aboriginal right to fish was governed by the *Fisheries Act* and that a person could not claim an aboriginal right which was not based on a treaty. Since the Musqueam did not have a treaty, Sparrow was appealing to a right exercised by the Musqueam people before Europeans came to North America. According to the Crown, however, that right no longer existed because of "extinguishment by regulation," and Sparrow was convicted of the offence. An appeal to the County Court of Vancouver was rejected on grounds similar to those invoked by the provincial court. Sparrow appealed again, this time in the British Columbia Court of Appeal. The Court of Appeal overturned the ruling that the aboriginal right was extinguished by regulation and found that "the aboriginal right which the Musqueam had was, subject to conservation measures, the right to take fish for food and for the ceremonial purposes of the band. ... It has never been a fixed right, and it has always taken its form from the circumstances in which it has existed. If the interests of the Indians and other Canadians in the fishery are to be protected then reasonable

²⁵¹ "Natives Make Moose Priority over Mining," *Vancouver Sun*, 9 Sep 1996.

²⁵² "Deadline near for Prosperity," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 26 Sep 1996, CCA-M.

regulations to ensure the proper management and conservation of the resource must be continued.” In the judgment of the Court of Appeal, the conviction of Mr. Sparrow could not stand, since it was based on an erroneous view of the law, but the facts were insufficient for an acquittal. The case went on to the Supreme Court of Canada, where it was the first to deal with section 35 of the *Constitution Act*. In its decision, the Supreme Court rejected two extreme positions. The first was the Crown’s claim that all aboriginal rights and treaties were subject to regulation. The second was Sparrow’s claim that aboriginal rights could only be regulated by the First Nations themselves. On May 31, 1990, the Supreme Court unanimously decided to overturn the original conviction of Mr. Sparrow. The Attorney General of Canada chose not to hold a new trial, and Sparrow’s involvement ended. The importance of the case lay in the Supreme Court’s ruling that section 35 of the Constitution limited the federal government’s ability to put into effect laws or policies that might infringe on aboriginal rights. “The government is required to bear the burden of justifying any legislation that has some negative effect on any aboriginal right protected under section 35(1).” The Supreme Court held that the government needed to reconcile “federal powers with federal duties.”²⁵³

The *Delgamuukw* case also began in 1984. The Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en First Nations of northwestern British Columbia were frustrated with the province, which held the title to crown land in their traditional territories but would not participate in the federal land claims process. The Gitksan and the Wet’suwet’en took the province to court, claiming ownership of the land and jurisdiction over 133 individual territories, covering a total of fifty-eight thousand square kilometers. The defense of the province was that the colonial government of British Columbia had extinguished all aboriginal land rights by law before the province joined the Confederation[†] in 1871. The First Nations lost the case and appealed. The Court of Appeal unanimously decided that aboriginal interests in the land had not been extinguished by the colonial government. The case went to the Supreme Court of British Columbia. There, the province argued

²⁵³ *Sparrow v. The Queen*, 1 S.C.R. 1075 (Supreme Court of Canada, 1990); Hudson, “Fiduciary Obligations.”

that aboriginal title was not a right to the land, but a right to pursue traditional activities. In the judgment of the Honourable Chief Justice Alan McEachern, aboriginal interests in the land “were rights to live in their villages and to occupy adjacent lands for the purpose of gathering the products of the lands and waters for ceremonial purposes. These aboriginal interests did not include ownership of or jurisdiction over the territory.” McEachern’s blunt dismissal of the First Nations’ claims to ownership and jurisdiction meant that the case would surely go to the Supreme Court of Canada. McEachern also ruled, however, that the unilateral extinguishment of aboriginal title created “a legally enforceable fiduciary, a trust-like duty or obligation upon the Crown to ensure there will be no arbitrary interference with aboriginal subsistence practices.”²⁵⁴

The Question of Tsilhqot’in Title

To the Tsilhqot’ins, the implications of *Sparrow* and *Delgamuukw* were that both the federal and the provincial governments had a duty to see that their traditional interests in, and uses of, Fish Lake were protected. The tenure of the provincial New Democratic Party, the mainstream political party most likely to side with the First Nations, was uncertain. It was also not clear what would happen when *Delgamuukw* went to the Supreme Court of Canada. If aboriginal people were found to have a right to the land, and not merely to traditional activities of hunting, fishing and gathering, then the Tsilhqot’ins’ legal position would be greatly strengthened.

At the end of 1996, the New Democratic Party was trailing the Liberal Party opposition in provincial opinion polls. Glen Clark, who had been elected leader of the party after Mike Harcourt resigned, decided to call a general election anyway. The New Democratic Party won again, and Glen Clark became the new premier of British Columbia. There wouldn’t be a regime change just yet. Taseko Mines redoubled their efforts at Fish Lake. In February 1997, they announced that “excellent results” were coming in from their \$13.5 million work programs ongoing at the Prosperity site. They

²⁵⁴ *Delgamuukw v. The Queen*, B. C. S. C., Smithers Registry 0843 (Supreme Court of BC, 1991); Cassidy, ed. *Aboriginal Title; Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, 3 S. C. R. 1010 (Supreme Court of Canada, 1997); BC Treaty Commission, “A Lay Person’s Guide to Delgamuukw”; Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, “Fact Sheet: Aboriginal Rights in BC.”

were re-drilling to confirm that the ore reserve contained the amount of gold and copper that earlier studies had predicted. Other teams worked on the engineering aspects of the mine. How should the pit be excavated? Where would site facilities like rock dumps and tailings impoundments be located? How should they design the mill? They constructed pilot plants and did environmental and socioeconomic projections. All told, fifty people were employed at the site, working full time on a mine that did not yet exist.²⁵⁵ It was the largest exploration program in the province that year.²⁵⁶ In their annual report, Taseko Mines predicted that the Prosperity Mine-Mill complex would produce a thousand new jobs for local and First Nations people, giving communities in the Cariboo-Chilcotin more stability and a higher standard of living. They emphasized the fact that they would be producing two different metals and that revenues would be more insulated from a sudden fall in producer price for either of them. Furthermore, “detailed cost engineering” showed that cash costs of metal production at Prosperity would rank “within the lowest quartile of the world’s producers of gold or copper.” They also noted that they had been making field surveys and continuously monitoring the climate, physiography, water, fisheries, vegetation and wildlife in the area for five years, to facilitate the process of environmental assessment. The annual report emphasized Taseko’s role in building consensus among stakeholders. They hoped that Prosperity would “set a new standard for the mining industry in the realm of open, informed decision making that respects environmental, economic and social concerns.” There was no mention in the annual report of what, if anything, could stall the project or stop it altogether. As far as the company was concerned, the Prosperity complex would eventually be built, and British Columbia would be better for it.²⁵⁷

At the time, environmental groups expressed concern with the provincial environmental assessment process, although they thought that it was a great improvement over earlier processes. Their primary objection was to the vaguely-specified requirement

²⁵⁵ “Taseko Mines Limited – Feasibility Program Confirming a Large, High Quality Gold-Copper Mine,” *Canada NewsWire*, 6 Feb 1997.

²⁵⁶ MINFILE 0920 041.

²⁵⁷ Taseko Mines Limited, “Annual Report 1996: The Road to Prosperity,” 14 Feb 1997, SEDAR.

that the public be consulted. The standard approach taken by resource companies was simply to hold an occasional “open house.” According to an environmental caucus that reviewed the process, “The walk-through sessions which typif[ied] the open house format [were] more a corporate public relations tool than an effective means of delivering information to the public or garnering substantive public feedback.” They thought that it would be better to force the resource companies to hold structured community meetings where they would actually get feedback. Furthermore, for public input to be meaningful, there needed to be a source of funding for people who wished to intervene in the assessment process.²⁵⁸ Taseko Mines had spent a lot of money on the Prosperity project by this point: \$28.7 million to acquire the rights, and \$20.3 million on exploration and development.²⁵⁹ The total, \$49 million, was far more than could be matched by concerned citizens, First Nations, local environmentalists, anglers or other groups that might not want to see the mine go ahead. In the public perception of the environmental assessment process it was not possible to recommend against a project, only to approve it or mitigate its effects. The environmental caucus saw this as a failing in the assessment process; the public should know that a project could be rejected and that the provincial Environmental Assessment Office was not biased toward developers.

The environmentalists were probably right to be concerned about the public’s ability to veto the Prosperity project. In June 1997, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans contacted the provincial ministry to let them know that they were willing to become involved again in the environmental review of the project. Taseko Mines felt that things were “finally back on track” and that they would be “afforded due process.” Bruce Jenkins, the company’s director of environmental affairs dismissed the loss of the rainbow trout in Fish Lake by appealing to the economic value of sport fishing there, which was estimated to bring in about twenty thousand dollars a year. In the first four years of construction, the resource company would spend about \$860 million. “You

²⁵⁸ BC Environmental Network. Environmental Assessment Caucus, “Comments on the Implementation of the BC Environmental Assessment Process,” 12 May 1997.

²⁵⁹ Taseko Mines Limited, “Annual Report 1996: The Road to Prosperity,” 14 Feb 1997, SEDAR.

don't have to be a rocket scientist to realize from an economic standpoint this is a no-brainer decision," he said. If he knew of other standpoints besides the economic one, he refrained from mentioning them. The company planned to open a store-front office in Williams Lake to "inform" the public of their proposal.²⁶⁰ In September, Taseko Mines opened their Prosperity Project community office. People began "drifting into" the office hours before it officially opened. Bruce Jenkins said that the strong response to the opening of the office signalled a strong community interest in the project. In the office, visitors could view three different versions of the proposed mine, and give their input. If they were unable to visit the office in person, they could mail in letters or send faxes. If they had questions that couldn't be answered by office personnel, Taseko Mines offered to bring in people who could answer the questions. The company stressed the novelty of giving the public a say in the design of a mining project. At the time mine proposals were being evaluated by a new joint provincial-federal environmental assessment process.²⁶¹

In the fall of 1997, gold prices were near a twelve-year low and shares in gold mining concerns were doing poorly. Taseko Mines continued to work on the Prosperity project, which consisted of 196 mineral claims and nine placer claims covering about eighty-five square kilometers. The company was finalizing a computer model of the geology of the copper-gold porphyry at Fish Lake, based on 123,414 meters of drilling in 248 holes. Fifty metric tons of sample ore from the deposit had been put through a pilot mill to confirm the recovery of gold and copper and to use for environmental analyses. The company was also working on environmental and socioeconomic studies to present to the government and to local stakeholders. Bulk commodities for the mine would be shipped from Vancouver to Williams Lake by rail and trucked to the site. Copper concentrates would go in the opposite direction. Personnel, goods and services would come from the city of Williams Lake. A standard powerline would connect the mine to

²⁶⁰ "Mine to Get Another Look," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 3 Jul 1997, CCA-M.

²⁶¹ "Taseko Invites Input," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 9 Sep 1997, CCA-M; Daniel Wall, "Prosperity One Step Closer," *Williams Lake Advocate*, 16 Sep 1997, CCA-M.

existing high voltage transmission lines 124 kilometers to the east. A natural gas pipeline could also be constructed to connect the site to an existing pipeline ninety kilometers to the northeast. At the time the company was considering three alternatives for the open pit mine, two for the storage of waste rock, and three for the storage of tailings.²⁶² One of the proposals would protect Fish Lake at the cost of affecting two watersheds and leaving much of the ore in the ground. Another would also affect two watersheds but would attempt to preserve about two-thirds of the lake with a dam. The third would fill in Fish Lake, but its impact would be limited to one watershed. According to Dennis Deans, the company's manager of aboriginal and government affairs, Fish Lake wasn't that good for fishing, because the fish were "small and sometimes contaminated." In October, the company announced that they hoped to be producing ore by the middle of 2001.²⁶³ Throughout the winter they offered information seminars at their community office in Williams Lake, explaining development options, water quality and fisheries to visitors in front of posters which were titled, "The Road to Prosperity."²⁶⁴

One of the attendees of the first Taseko Mines information seminar was Chief Roger William of the Xeni Gwet'in. He told the others that the project did not have the approval of the Xeni Gwet'in or of the Tsilhqot'in National Government, and that they could not allow it to go ahead. "If any mine extraction is going to be done, it is going to be by natives out there," William told the meeting. Since the Tsilhqot'ins did not yet have a treaty with the government, they felt that the land was still theirs; they couldn't be given jobs by the company in compensation. They had more troubling concerns, however. Members of the Secwepemc First Nation (better known as Shuswap) had been asked to participate in the decision-making process, in an area which the Tsilhqot'ins

²⁶² Taseko Mines Limited, "Taseko Mines Limited – Major Project Milestones Nearing Completion for Prosperity," 24 Sep 1997, SEDAR; Taseko Mines Limited, "Taseko Mines Limited – Excellent Results Received from Prosperity Pilot Plant Program," 17 Nov 1997, SEDAR; Taseko Mines Limited, "Form 20-F (for US Securities and Exchange Commission)," 17 Feb 1998, SEDAR.

²⁶³ "Ore in 2001," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 7 Oct 1997, CCA-M; Deans quotation from "Mine Locations Studied," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 20 Nov 1997, CCA-M.

²⁶⁴ "Public Update on Mine," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 6 Nov 1997, CCA-M; "Taseko Mines Puts on Public Info Sessions," *Williams Lake Advocate*, 11 Nov 1997, CCA-M; "Taseko Hosts Open House," *Williams Lake Advocate*, 2 Dec 1997, CCA-M; "Seminar Set," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 9 Dec 1997, CCA-M.

considered to be their own traditional territory. There were many economies of scale in the contest of stakeholders over Fish Lake. If the interests of the First Nations could be divided, their concerns would be much easier to evade.²⁶⁵

By the end of 1997, however, Taseko Mines faced the one thing that could surely halt the Prosperity project indefinitely. Not the claims of rival mining concerns, or the heel dragging of the feds, or the provincial government's apparent need to coddle environmentalists, or the environmentalists' desire to preserve rainbow trout, or the anglers' wish to catch and release them, or even the First Nations' belief that they were the sole owners and proprietors of the land. No, none of those things. Instead, by the end of 1997, it was clear that the economies of Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Korea and Japan had all suffered sharp downturns. The demand for copper and gold dropped, and producer prices fell with it. Mines around the province were revising profit margins, downsizing, closing. As the Asian markets changed for the worse, the provincial economy did too.²⁶⁶ Worldwide, the falling price of gold threatened the economic feasibility of forty percent of all gold mines.²⁶⁷

At the end of 1997, the situation of resource companies with respect to the rights of the First Nations also changed significantly. In the case of *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that aboriginal title did exist in British Columbia after all, and that it was a right to the land, not merely to traditional practices of hunting, fishing or gathering. In cases where the First Nations held the title to land, they could exclude others from it, use it for pleasure or business, and extract resources. This meant, for example, that First Nations could engage in mining, even if that had never been a traditional activity. The judgment was the most important decision yet made on aboriginal title in Canada. It held that aboriginal title was a communal right, and not an individual one, so that decisions about the land had to be made by the whole community.

²⁶⁵ "First Nations Oppose Taseko," *Williams Lake Advocate*, 18 Nov 1997, CCA-M; "Natives Oppose Taseko Project," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 20 Nov 1997, CCA-M.

²⁶⁶ "Prices Hurting Mines," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 18 Dec 1997, CCA-M; Harris, "Mineral Development," 261-262.

²⁶⁷ Environmental Mining Council of BC, "More Precious than Gold," 16.

Lands covered by aboriginal title could only be sold to the federal government. They could not be used in ways which were irreconcilable with the First Nation's continuing relationship to the land. Like other aboriginal rights, aboriginal title was protected under section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982, the highest authority in Canada. Since aboriginal title was a constitutional right, the government had to meet stringent constitutional tests in order to justify infringement of aboriginal title. It had to consult with the aboriginal group before acting and might have to pay them compensation afterwards.²⁶⁸ The key question after the Supreme Court's ruling in *Delgamuukw* was which lands in British Columbia were covered by aboriginal title. At the end of 1997, nobody knew the answer to that question. It would either be fought in the courts, one case at a time, or negotiated in treaties.

The Tsilhqot'in National Government acted on the *Delgamuukw* decision immediately. They sent a letter to the provincial government citing the case as justification for a demand that British Columbia "cease and desist from further processing of land-related tenure application and all processes involved with alienating lands and water" in Tsilhqot'in territory. Their immediate target was the forest industry, which had, between 1984 and 1994, generated nearly half a billion dollars in revenue for the provincial government in the Cariboo forest region alone. Much of the traditional territory of the Tsilhqot'in people lay within this area. The Tsilhqot'ins also indicated that they would hold provincial employees "professionally and privately accountable" for any unilateral or arbitrary transactions. The proximate cause of the letter was an attempt by a local rancher to buy some unsurveyed crown land to use for a hay field. The Tsilhqot'in tribal council said that they were not interested in blocking the rancher; in fact, they thought that he would be better provided for by the Tsilhqot'ins than he was by the provincial government. The tone of the letter was firm. It said, "In the past it has been the fiduciary obligation of Crown Government to act in the interests of the Indian people of Canada. Now it is also a legal requirement. Please avoid unnecessary

²⁶⁸ *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, 3 S. C. R. 1010 (Supreme Court of Canada, 1997); BC Treaty Commission, "A Lay Person's Guide to *Delgamuukw*."

unpleasantness by taking both of these responsibilities seriously.” The reporter who covered the story for the *Vancouver Sun*, one of the province’s two major daily newspapers, took the threat of “unpleasantness” as an allusion to the Chilcotin War of 1864. “Considered among the toughest and most militant of BC’s aboriginal nations,” he wrote, “the Tsilhqot’in are one of the few native Indian groups in Canadian history to actually fight a war in defence of their territorial sovereignty.”²⁶⁹

Plans for the Mine / Mill Complex

The Tsilhqot’ins thought that the Prosperity project should not go forward until they had resolved their dispute with the Secwepemc over the boundaries of traditional territory.²⁷⁰ Whether or not Taseko Mines thought the Tsilhqot’in National Government had the ability to stop the project at Fish Lake is unclear. In their report to the US Securities and Exchange Commission, the company wrote, “Although work to date is encouraging, there can be no assurance that a commercially mineable ore body exists on the Registrant’s Prosperity Property.” In order for commercial mining to proceed, the company needed to complete “a comprehensive feasibility study, possibly further associated exploration and other work that conclude[d] that a potential mine [was] likely to be economic.” They would also need “significant capital funding and the required mine permits.”²⁷¹

In any event, the company continued to perform socioeconomic and environmental studies.²⁷² Recalling their earlier misstep with the rainbow trout, they commissioned an independent environmental consulting company called Madrone to study the wildlife and vegetation around Fish Lake. The Madrone consultants were to determine which, if any, of the local species were on the provincial red (“endangered”) or blue (“vulnerable”) lists. The Madrone biologists made maps of vegetation from air photos and double checked them on the ground. Douglas-fir grew on the south-facing

²⁶⁹ Stephen Hume, “Crown Land Lawsuits Loom,” *Vancouver Sun*, 17 Jan 1998. The Chilcotin War is discussed in more detail in Part III.

²⁷⁰ “TNG Responds to Mine Review,” *Williams Lake Advocate*, 10 Feb 1998, CCA-M.

²⁷¹ Taseko Mines Limited, “Form 20-F,” 1998.

²⁷² “Proposed Mine Could Impact Area,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 20 Jan 1998, CCA-M.

slopes, at least in places where it had not been clearcut by loggers. In well-drained gravels, the predominant tree was the lodgepole pine, in poorly-drained glacial till, spruce. The biologists flipped over logs to find salamanders, scooped up frogs' eggs in nets, used audio detectors to locate bats and fine mesh to trap them. The bats "all had really sharp teeth." They scouted the wetlands for migrating birds, and counted beaver and muskrat in the winter. Mule deer and mountain goats were not common in the area. Cougars and caribou were not encountered at all. The Madrone consultants found no endangered or vulnerable reptiles or amphibians, and few mammals of any kind. They did find two blue-listed birds in the area during their fall migrations, the great blue heron and the red-necked phalarope. In addition they also found a comparatively rare plant, the Lodgepole pine-trapper's teacrowberry.²⁷³ The results of the environmental studies were released at another of Taseko Mines' information seminars, along with a draft report of the Prosperity project specifications.²⁷⁴

As part of the joint federal-provincial environmental review, Taseko Mines was required to release a report on the project to the public. At the end of February 1998, the company presented a synopsis of the report to about a hundred people in Williams Lake, and made copies available at the public library and on the internet. The public had about three weeks to respond. At the time, various environmental groups were working on initiatives to make it easier for members of the public to oppose mining projects. The Sierra Legal Defence Fund would soon release its sixty-six page report, *Digging Up Trouble: The Legacy of Mining in British Columbia*. In that report, the section on the Prosperity project was subtitled "Development at Any Cost." The Environmental Mining Council of BC was working on a database and geographic information system (GIS) to help the public "track mining companies, projects, organizations, and impacts on an

²⁷³ Sven McGirr, "Taseko Undertakes Study," *Williams Lake Advocate*, 3 Feb 1998, CCA-M; "Wildlife Inventory near Finish," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 5 Feb 1998, CCA-M; Taseko Mines Limited, "Form 20-F," 1998; Meidinger & Pojar, eds. *Ecosystems of BC*; Parish, Coupé & Lloyd, eds. *Plants of Southern Interior BC*.

²⁷⁴ Daniel Wall, "Taseko Mines Gathers Input," *Williams Lake Advocate*, 10 Feb 1998, CCA-M; "Open House on Proposed Mine," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 24 Feb 1998, CCA-M; "Taseko Looking for Input on Mine Project," *Williams Lake Advocate*, 24 Feb 1998, CCA-M.

international basis.”²⁷⁵ In Williams Lake, however, the public were told that the purpose of the review was to “comment on whether the document is fair and reasonable to Taseko.” The city’s Chamber of Commerce was worried that the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans would block the project. Ken Wilson, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, said that they had some doubts that Fish Lake was actually a Class One habitat, as the federal department claimed. Some people were saying that the rainbow trout from Fish Lake had lice on them, and thus weren’t suitable for eating. The chamber was soliciting its members to use the public review process as a lobby in favor of the mine.²⁷⁶

The Environmental Assessment Office received a lot of letters from the public about the project in March 1998. A handful of individuals seemed to be against it, as was the Tatlayoko Think Tank, a husband and wife advocacy team operating out of the tiny Chilcotin community of Tatlayoko Lake. One guide-outfitter expressed his concern with the mine. Most individuals wrote in support of the project, however, and against the stance that the federal fisheries department was taking. One person was in favor of a mine but didn’t like the company’s preferred development option. One was in favor of a mine but wanted the rainbow trout to be relocated to another body of water. The Alexis Creek Community Club wanted a mine, as did the Williams Lake Downtown Business Association. Local businesses like Jerry’s Auto Centre, Highlands Irrigation, and Western Equipment Limited also wanted to see the proposal go ahead. A representative from the Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers of Canada wanted to meet with the federal fisheries minister and his departmental personnel.²⁷⁷ By the end of the public review period, the federal department appeared to be softening. A representative said that the department was willing to consider options that did not involve draining Fish Lake, and that even if the federal government did oppose the project, it would still be possible for

²⁷⁵ *DuT*; Environmental Mining Council of BC, “Annual Report 1997,” Victoria, BC.

²⁷⁶ “Draft Report Viewed,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 3 Mar 1998, CCA-M; quotation from “Lobby for Mine,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 5 Mar 1998, CCA-M; “Doors Closed in Review,” *Williams Lake Tribune*, 5 Mar 1998, CCA-M.

²⁷⁷ Public Comments/Submissions, e-PIC.

the federal minister to set up an independent panel to review the decision.²⁷⁸ This wasn't good enough for Williams Lake. The mayor wrote to the Environmental Assessment Office to indicate the city's support for the project.²⁷⁹ The city council also sent letters to the Premier and the federal fisheries minister to put pressure on the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans to "take an open approach." The position of the city's Chamber of Commerce was that the role of environmental review was "not to judge whether mining [was] an appropriate activity for this area, but to ensure the mine design and mining methods used [would] minimize environmental impact."²⁸⁰ Despite the hope of environmental groups that the project would be halted at this point, the federal-provincial environmental review committee reached the decision that Taseko Mines and the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans could agree to disagree. Everyone would save face, and an independent study of the impact on fish habitat would be conducted. In the meantime, the mine review could go on. The final decision would lie with the federal and provincial ministers.²⁸¹ In the aftermath of the environmental review process, the president of the British Columbia Mining Association blamed the federal government for driving away investment when the province could really use an "economic boost."²⁸²

In the spring of 1999, Taseko Mines released a project development plan for Prosperity to the public. The company had started with ninety-five "reasonable" alternatives and determined that five of these were technically feasible for the Fish Lake site. Each of the five development plans specified where mine facilities would be located and how they would be built, where transmission lines and access roads would go, and plans for operating the mine and managing the local environment. The company first settled on the best ways of providing access and power to the site. After discussions with

²⁷⁸ "Taseko Review Still Open," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 19 Mar 1998, CCA-M.

²⁷⁹ Local Government Comments/Submissions, e-PIC.

²⁸⁰ Daniel Wall, "Taseko Mine Hearings Biased Says Councillor," *Williams Lake Advocate*, 24 Mar 1998, CCA-M; "Chamber Calls for Open Hearings," *Williams Lake Advocate*, 24 Mar 1998, CCA-M.

²⁸¹ "Mine Plan at Fish Lake Seen as Stumbling Block," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 7 Apr 1998, CCA-M; "Mine Review Goes On," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 16 Apr 1998, CCA-M; Sven McGirr, "Taseko Gets Good News," *Williams Lake Advocate*, 21 Apr 1998, CCA-M.

²⁸² "Rare Chance at Economic Upswing," *Advisor*, 25 Nov 1998, CCA-M; "Mine Boss Lays Blame," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 26 Nov 1998, CCA-M.

local stakeholders, Taseko Mines chose an access road which would approach from the north, building on the existing Whitewater Road and Highway 20. There were eleven possible corridors for the 230-kilovolt transmission line that the mine and mill complex would require. The one that was chosen, connecting the site with a new switching station near Dog Creek to the northeast, was the shortest, and it avoided First Nations settlements and protected areas. The access road and transmission line were common to each of the five development options. The first option located tailings and waste rock storage to the north of Fish Lake, mitigating the effects on the lake, but affecting fish habitat in Tete Angela Creek to the north. The second option would also have an impact on Tete Angela Creek, but it would involve the partial loss of Fish Lake, too. Its main advantage over the first option was that it allowed more ore to be extracted. The third option was Taseko's original plan. Fish Lake would be eliminated, but the waste rock and tailings could be stored in such a way that no other watershed would be affected. The fourth and fifth options were provided by the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Both limited the impact to one watershed but mitigated the effect on Fish Lake. They differed mainly in the amount of ore that could be extracted.²⁸³

In all cases, the design of the mine and mill complex would be conventional. Ore would be blasted from the edges of an open pit and loaded onto trucks. The trucks would haul the ore to a facility where the rock could be crushed, and carried on a conveyor belt to a device known as a SAG (semi-autogenous grinding) mill. In the SAG mill, the crushed rock would be mixed with water and ground to small pebbles. The pebbles, in turn, would be fed into a ball mill where they would be ground into a fine sand. This mixture of sand and water, known as a slurry, would be pumped into tanks and chemical reagents added so that sulphide minerals floated to the top. Since gold and copper are bound to sulphide minerals, this step would concentrate the gold and copper at the top of the tanks as the waste rock sank to the bottom. Tailings, the mixture of waste rock, water

²⁸³ Taseko Mines Limited, "Prosperity Project Update," *Weekender*, 28 Mar 1999, CCA-M; Taseko Mines Limited, "Form 20-F (for US Securities and Exchange Commission)," 17 Feb 1999, SEDAR; Prosperity Project Committee, "Prosperity Gold-Copper Project: Project Report Specifications," Apr 1998, e-PIC.

and chemicals, would be pumped through pipes or ditches to an impoundment pond surrounded by earthen dams. Further flotation steps would increase the concentration of precious metals. A final, dewatering step would force remaining water out of the concentrate, which could then be trucked to Williams Lake and shipped by rail to the coast.²⁸⁴ Such a complex would have extensive power requirements, estimated at as much as sixteen percent of the total operating costs of the mine over its lifetime. The cost of power was one of the key factors in the profitability of existing mines in the province, and there had been bitter complaints the previous year that Americans could buy power from BC Hydro at a cheaper rate than could the Gibraltar mine near Williams Lake. In December 1998, the British Columbia government and Taseko Mines signed an agreement that would provide electrical power to the Prosperity project at a reduced rate. The agreement was part of a provincial initiative called "Power for Jobs," which used surplus hydroelectric power to "encourage investment, job creation and regional economic development." The program was administered by the BC Ministry of Energy and Mines. Taseko Management took the agreement as a sign that "the government had clearly indicated its willingness to work in partnership with mining companies to attract quantum growth in BC investment." At the time, the company was also meeting with representatives from concentrate buyers, the wharves in Vancouver, and BC Rail to discuss shipping costs.²⁸⁵

Taseko Mines explained to the public that they used a process called Multiple Account Evaluation to help decide which would be the best of the available development options. Based on this process, they were able to rule out the first, second and fifth options. The first and fifth options left almost twenty percent of the ore in the ground. The first and second options affected more than one watershed. The company was left with two real contenders: their original plan, and one of the proposals put forth by the

²⁸⁴ Taseko Mines Limited, "Form 20-F," 1999.

²⁸⁵ "Power Cheaper in the States," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 17 Mar 1998, CCA-M; quotation from "Taseko Mines and BC Government Sign Cooperative Resource Development Protocol," 15 Dec 1998, SEDAR; Ken Fisher, "Power Agreement Will Help Prosperity Project Proposal," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 31 Dec 1998, CCA-M.

federal fisheries department. Comparing the two, they determined that their plan was better than the feds'. For one thing, it was safer. It also had a less risky habitat compensation plan than the federal one, which required the fish to "be physically moved from lake to stream and back again every year for at least 60 years." The Taseko plan would provide better recreational fishing during operations and after Prosperity closed. It was more financially sound, better for the community, and less likely to close prematurely when metal prices dropped.²⁸⁶ By April 1999, the federal fisheries department had a new set of guidelines for the compensation of lost fish habitat. Taseko Mines was trying to figure out what the impact on their Prosperity project would be. Other than compensation for the rainbow trout, the only outstanding issues left for the company to deal with were the claims of the Tsilhqot'in people. Chief Roger William of the Xeni Gwet'in had begun to participate in the Prosperity project meetings, even though the Tsilhqot'in National Government was still opposed to the mine. His band was concerned with logging in the area and with employment. While the chair of the Tsilhqot'in National Government was asking Taseko Mines, "What part of 'no' don't you understand?", Chief William was quoted as saying, "If all our concerns can be met and we can all work together why not?"²⁸⁷ The following month, Taseko Mines announced that they had chosen their original design of the five options. The review process, they said, made them more confident of their decision.²⁸⁸ The company had not ceased from exploration, and the end of their exploring, apparently, was to arrive where they had started.

The External Costs of Mining

The fact that a proposed mine could create such controversy was due, in part, to the external costs of mining: the social and environmental costs that would be paid by everyone, and not borne solely by the mining companies. These costs were a factor in

²⁸⁶ Taseko Mines Limited, "Prosperity Project Update"; Taseko Mines Limited, "Form 20-F," 1999.

²⁸⁷ "New Compensation Guidelines Are Concern for Taseko Mines," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 6 Apr 1999, CCA-M; "William on Committee," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 6 Apr 1999, CCA-M; Roger William, "Taseko Story is Clarified," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 22 Apr 1999, CCA-M.

²⁸⁸ Louisa Chapman, "Prosperity Project Option Identified," *Mining Week*, 11 May 1999, CCA-M.

any large-scale resource extraction industry, and not specific to the Fish Lake project. Nevertheless, it is important to understand what was at stake for people who did not stand to make money directly from the mine. The external costs of mining were incurred at every stage of the process, from preliminary exploration to management of the site after the mine closed. The impacts from mining exploration were funneled in such a way that many large areas were mildly affected while fewer and smaller regions came under increasing pressure. Preliminary airborne and ground-based surveying focused on geochemical and geophysical properties of vast regions (like the 1993 airborne surveys of the interior plateau). Other than the disruptive noise from low-flying aircraft, this kind of surveying was relatively benign. Preliminary surveying could lead to legal alienation of the land from other measures which might protect it, however. More advanced exploration was reserved for a few areas that seemed particularly promising. In those places, claims were staked, vegetation and surface soils stripped, lines cut and roads built, trenches dug and holes drilled, samples extracted for bulk testing. Local habitat was disrupted and the new roads gave more hunters and anglers access to wildlife. The runoff from thousands of kilometers of poorly built roads loaded streams with sediment and killed fish and other aquatic organisms. Fuel and oil leaked out of equipment. Spawning was disrupted at stream crossings, and roads tended to be arrayed in a grid, rather than following contours or circumnavigating ecologically sensitive regions.

Fewer places still were subject to even more intensive scrutiny. In those places, the overburden (the vegetation and soil above the bedrock) was dug, blasted or bulldozed out of the way so that extensive drilling could be done to delineate the ore reserves below. Occasionally the drills hit reservoirs of natural fluids, like brine or natural gas, which were brought to the surface and washed into local streams. The noise of blasting and the operation of heavy equipment was loud and prolonged. Exploration camps were set up, concentrating garbage and human waste. If there was a major discovery, exploration rushes were still a possibility. When diamonds were discovered in the Barren Lands of the North West Territories in the mid-1990s, for example, twenty million hectares were rapidly staked by mining concerns.

A handful of the most promising sites, like the copper-gold porphyry at Fish Lake, were deemed worthy of a new mine. In those places, development further concentrated the impact of mining. The construction of “all-weather” roads that had some chance of being used year round allowed more access to more people. More access meant the interruption of animal migration routes, interference with mating and calving, and the depletion of traditional First Nations hunting or trapping grounds. The compaction of roads disrupted the flow of groundwater, and runoff from road surfaces increased erosion, flooding, pollution and the siltation of spawning beds. Although supporters of mining liked to claim that mines were temporary and had a small ecological footprint, this was not strictly true. The mine itself was merely a node in a network that included transportation routes, the infrastructure needed to generate and deliver energy, piles of waste rock and ponds for tailings, and mills, smelters and refineries.

The most significant long-term environmental impact of a new mine was the creation of waste rock and its potential for polluting fresh water through a process called “acid mine drainage.” Waste rock and tailings accumulated as ore was extracted, crushed, ground, and passed through various flotation steps. Technological advances in mining multiplied this waste because it became more profitable to mine low grade ore. In Canada, the average grade of copper being mined was under one percent. (The grade of the Prosperity deposit was 0.22 percent.) This meant that more than ninety-nine metric tons of waste rock were produced for each metric ton of copper. The waste rock contained acid-generating sulphides and heavy metals. Stored above ground, the sulphides were exposed to air and water, and reacted with them to form sulphuric acid. Sometimes when the water became acidic enough, a naturally occurring bacterium known as *Thiobacillus ferrooxidans* found a habitat to its liking, and began oxidizing the sulphides to sulphuric acid, too. This greatly accelerated a process that was otherwise fairly slow. Acid production could go on for decades or centuries, seeping into the water and polluting it. Other heavy metals in the waste rock could also leach out when the rock came into contact with water, particularly with acidic water. Arsenic, cadmium, cobalt, copper, lead, silver, and zinc could all accumulate in plants and animals. If the amount of

metal was “sub-lethal,” not enough to kill the organism, then it would be passed up the food chain to the next consumer, which concentrated an exponentially greater amount of it. Acid mine drainage was one of the potential problems with a mine/mill complex at Fish Lake. The province of British Columbia had regulations to prevent pollution from mining and to manage the impact of mine waste. Unfortunately, provincial and federal budgets were too limited to effectively monitor and enforce compliance with the law. Waste management and violation of water quality was an ongoing problem at many mines. The fact that the industry wanted to “deregulate” mining worried environmental groups. How could the industry be held accountable for its waste?

Since minerals are a non-renewable resource, when the ore gave out, the mine shut down. The local community suffered most from the boom and bust of mining activity. The workforce was often brought in from outside the community, especially for the highest-paying, highly skilled jobs. Housing shortages often resulted from the influx of people. When metal prices dropped, workers were laid off. Mine closure could turn a vibrant community into a ghost town. It had happened repeatedly in the province in the past 150 years. Miners suffered from high occupational hazards; some people thought an increase in lung cancer was due to arsenic emitted from copper smelters. When the mine was finally closed and the disturbed areas reseeded or replanted with vegetation, the new growth would sometimes fail. Often the costs of cleanup were passed on to the taxpayers.²⁸⁹

At the turn of the millennium, many people were cautious of incurring the long-term costs of large-scale resource development. John Turner, the country’s former prime minister and the legal representative for the World Wildlife Fund in Canada, said in 1997, “The geography and wildness of this land has shaped us all, it is part of what it means to be Canadian and it must not be lost in a reckless rush for industrial resources.”²⁹⁰ Ironically, the very thing that Victor Dolmage once thought could preserve Canadian

²⁸⁹ Environmental Mining Council of BC, “Acid Mine Drainage”; Idem, “Mining in Remote Areas”; Idem, “More Precious than Gold”; Idem, “Undermining the Law”; Pielou, *Fresh Water*; Taseko Mines Limited, “Form 20-F,” 1999.

²⁹⁰ “WWF Canada Withdraws Court Action on BHP Diamond Mine,” *Canada NewsWire*, 13 Jan 1997.

identity, mining, was now thought to be endangering it. But in a way, both Dolmage and Turner were right. Fifty-two kilometers north of Vancouver, at Britannia Beach on Howe Sound, the Britannia Mining and Smelting Company operated a copper mine from 1904 to 1974. The mine's fortunes rose and fell with the price of copper. By 1929 it was the largest copper producer in the British Commonwealth. Thirty years later it had seven employees and went into liquidation. After another surge of activity, the mine was finally closed in 1974, and turned into the British Columbia Museum of Mining the following year. Over its seventy-year lifetime, the mine employed 60,000 people. Now visitors are led on tours by interpreters dressed as miners, and the museum pays its way by collecting fees for admission, and by selling rock kits, and fragments of mammoth tusk, and dinosaur eggs. Part of "Hollywood North," the site has been repeatedly filmed as a set for TV shows like the *X-Files*, and for more than thirty motion pictures to date.²⁹¹ British Columbia may not have become a land of porters as Dolmage feared, but it has become the kind of place where it is possible to play a miner on TV, rather than actually being one. The companies that owned and operated the mine are long gone, contributing almost nothing to clean-up of the site. An underwater pipe now discharges acid mine drainage into Howe Sound, putting up to a metric ton of copper a day into the ocean. Bivalves have elevated copper and zinc levels up to eighteen kilometers away. The Britannia mine site is now "the largest point source of heavy metal pollution on the North American continent," a "legal no-man's land." If it is ever cleaned up, it will almost surely be at the taxpayers' expense.²⁹²

The Decision

And what of the proposed mine at Fish Lake? In the provincial election of May 2001, the New Democratic Party was defeated by the Liberal Party under Gordon Campbell, who campaigned on a platform of tax cuts. That summer, the provincial government began its program to "rethink government." In future, programs or services would have to pass three tests. First, did they serve a "compelling public interest?"

²⁹¹ The website for the museum is <http://www.bcmuseumofmining.org/>.

²⁹² *DuT*, 2-3, 24-26.

Second, were they affordable? Third, did they reflect “a legitimate and essential role for the provincial government?” Environmental groups were worried. Acts that governed water purity, standards for food storage and production, waste disposal, disease control, pollution, air and water emissions, protection of fish and wildlife, and cleanup of contaminated sites would all come under review. Budget cuts were announced for the ministries responsible for water, land and air protection, sustainable resource management, and forestry. A quarter to a third of the jobs in each of those ministries were eliminated.²⁹³ The political climate seemed to be favorable for a new mine. At the end of December 2002, the executive director of the Environmental Assessment Office ordered Taseko Mines to produce additional information about the Prosperity project by April 30, 2004 in order to obtain an environmental assessment certificate.²⁹⁴ Would the company finally construct the mine/mill complex at Fish Lake?

On February 17, 2003, Taseko Mines released its Annual Information Form to the Canadian Securities Administrators. After a lengthy description of the Prosperity project, its location, access and infrastructure, history of exploration and drilling, title settlements, geology, history of sampling, pre-feasibility work, and detailed engineering work, the report got to the bottom line, the economics of operating a hypothetical mine at Fish Lake. Using long-term average price projections, the company determined the pre-tax discounted cash flow rate of return (DCFRROR) for the project and tested its sensitivity to unforeseen changes. The DCFRROR would be most sensitive to changes in the US/Canadian exchange rate, but it would also be sensitive to gold and copper variables and to changes in operating cost. Taseko Mines concluded that “These rates of return are not sufficient to justify construction of a mine at the Prosperity Project given current copper and gold prices.” The company would focus its energies instead on a project with “some likelihood for near term feasibility.”²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Sierra Legal Defence Fund, “False Economy.”

²⁹⁴ Sheila Wynn, “Transition Order #02-12,” 30 Dec 2002, e-PIC.

²⁹⁵ Taseko Mines Limited, “Annual Information Form,” 17 Feb 2003, SEDAR.

Conclusion: The Interpretation of Indexical Signs

Every place is an archive, one that bears material traces of the past in the very substance of the place. These traces can take many forms. The chemical composition of rock, the orientation of magnetic particles, the layers of sediment or strata, the radioactive decay of various elements, the geographical relationship of volcanic arcs to pieces of oceanic crust, the co-occurrence of particular fossils, the genes of plants and animals, the dissolution of bone surfaces, the acidity or alkalinity of a liquid, the concentrations of metal in living tissue, the presence of roads or bore holes or piles of waste rock ... with the appropriate knowledge, each of these kinds of physical evidence can be used to make inferences about the past.

In the terminology of C. S. Peirce, each of these is an “indexical sign,” something that signifies something else by virtue of a causal or physical connection between the two.²⁹⁶ When Robinson Crusoe “was exceedingly surpriz’d with the Print of a Man’s naked Foot on the Shore,” it was because he was able to infer the activity of other human beings on an island he thought uninhabited.²⁹⁷ The footprint served as an “index” of human presence in that place in the recent past. If Crusoe hadn’t been there to see the footprint, it would still be there but it wouldn’t signify anything. In order to function as an indexical sign, there had to be an interpreter to infer or observe the connection between the material trace and the events which gave rise to it. Since those events necessarily occurred in the past, every time that Crusoe interpreted an indexical sign, he became conscious of some small part of the history of the island. When he saw one of the signs of his own activity, such as the stumps of the trees he cut down, he was simultaneously conscious of the present landscape, his memory of altering it, and the history of that place, of which he was a part. As Crusoe explored the island, he continually made use of this very human ability to decipher indexical signs and to reconstruct the past. When he returned to a heap of grapes that he had gathered earlier, for example, he “found them all spread about, trod to Pieces; and dragg’d about some

²⁹⁶ Peirce, “Logic as Semiotic,” 105-106.

²⁹⁷ Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 112.

here, some there, and Abundance eaten and devour'd: By this [he] concluded, there were some wild Creatures therabouts, which had done this; but what they were, [he] knew not."²⁹⁸ The limits of Crusoe's knowledge limited the inferences that he could make about the past of his island.

As Marx noted in *Capital*, Crusoe, "like a good Englishman," kept a set of account books to keep track of the labor required to produce various kinds of useful product. Political economists were fond of stories like *Robinson Crusoe*, Marx argued, because the relations between Crusoe's labor and the use-value of various products was "simple and transparent."²⁹⁹ The story could serve as a basis for the study of political economy. What would happen as more people were added to the island and they became dependent upon one another? Division of labor had obvious economic advantages, but it raised many questions that Crusoe did not have to face. How would labor be valued relative to other inputs? How would goods and services be exchanged? How would property rights be allocated?

The addition of more people to Crusoe's island would also allow a division of interpretive labor to arise. It would now be possible for different individuals to specialize in the interpretation of particular kinds of indexical signs. One person might excel in the interpretation of medical symptoms: pains, rashes, pulses. Another might be able to track animals by their spoor, by broken branches, prints, tufts of fur, piles of dung and drops of blood.³⁰⁰ This division of labor would also raise questions of political economy. How would various acts of interpretation be valued or exchanged? Who would pay for them? What role would they play in the delineation of property rights?

Most of the indexical signs that played a role in the contest over the fate of Fish Lake were abstruse, and required the services of highly trained specialists, mostly scientists, to decipher them. The act of producing representations of these material traces was not free: it cost something to take an aerial photograph, make a topographic map,

²⁹⁸ Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 74.

²⁹⁹ Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, 169-172.

³⁰⁰ Ginzburg, "Clues."

draw a stratigraphic column, plot the variations of a magnetic field. It cost something to circulate the representations, to accumulate them, to consume them. Every time someone looked at one of the representations, interpreted it, explained it to someone else, made a copy of it, moved it from one place to another, put it into storage or retrieved it, it cost something.³⁰¹ This activity was paid for by various stakeholders, and was valued relative to other kinds of work. The interpretation of physical evidence played every bit as much of a role in the political economy of the struggle over Fish Lake as did any other kind of work.

In retrospect, perhaps it isn't surprising that Taseko Mines managed to overcome the interests of the opposing stakeholders and to go as far as they wanted with their original mine design. Between 1990 and 1995, the company spent more than \$40 million on the exploration of this one little place in the middle of nowhere. To put that figure into perspective, it is about two-thirds as much as the total amount spent on earth sciences over the same period by the main funding body for academic science and engineering in Canada.³⁰² Taseko Mines was willing and able to commit far more resources than any of the other stakeholders with an interest in Fish Lake. And yet, this huge outlay did not make the company completely invincible. As the Taseko Mines project director bitterly noted in 1995, "We've spent \$41 million on studies. Some environmental group from California can call up and scuttle those millions of dollars for a \$1.25 phone call."³⁰³ There was obviously an economics at work, but not a simple-minded accounting of red and black ink, or of the "bottom line." In some ways, the story was similar to that of another struggle of 1995, the proposed fiftieth-anniversary exhibit at the Smithsonian that was going to juxtapose the *Enola Gay* and the ground-level effects of atomic bombing in Japan. After a very different conflict of stakeholders, that exhibit was scrapped. As John Dower later wrote

³⁰¹ Cf. Latour, *Science in Action*; see also Idem, "Visualization and Cognition."

³⁰² Canada. National Science and Engineering Research Council, "Discovery Grants Awarded by Grant Selection Committee," 2002. <http://www.nserc.ca/about/stats/2001-2002/en/tables/table_42e.htm>

³⁰³ Bill Phillips, "Taseko Mines Plays Waiting Game," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 30 May 1995, CCA-M.

Refurbished and sparkling again after forty-four thousand hours of restoration work and the expenditure of \$1 million (more time and money than the Smithsonian had ever lavished on a single object), the fuselage would dominate any exhibition in which it was placed. Or so it was assumed. In fact, it soon became clear that this would not be the case. On the contrary, the icons of the narrative of victimization—small objects intimately associated with individuals killed by the atomic bombs—threatened to overpower the great Superfortress in the eyes of visitors to the exhibition. ... Critics responded with alarm not to the artifacts themselves, but to mere descriptions of them in the museum's draft proposal, and nothing upset them more than the proposed inclusion of a school-girl's lunch box. This most humble of artifacts, containing carbonized rice and peas, had belonged to a seventh-grade student whose corpse was never found. To those who cherished heroic narrative, it quickly became obvious that, for many visitors, this pathetic little container from near ground zero might carry far more emotional weight than the gigantic fuselage in the preceding room.³⁰⁴

Although the historiographical and emotional stakes in Fish Lake were nothing like those of the Smithsonian exhibit, it was still the case that the millions of dollars that Taseko Mines had already spent, and the billions that the potential mine might generate, were very nearly balanced in value by some trout. Clearly there was a strange economy at work.

But why should there even be a struggle of stakeholders in the first place? In the case of Fish Lake, debate continually focused on what economists call "social costs." When the actions of one economic actor impose costs on another, who should pay? In an influential paper, Ronald Coase argued that if transaction costs are zero (the assumption of standard economic theory) then, irrespective of the initial assignment of rights, the parties will negotiate an arrangement that maximizes wealth. According to Coase, what are traded on the market are not physical entities, like many economists assume, but rather rights to perform certain actions. Here is a schematic example. Suppose that a mine is built which will cause \$1 million damage to a sport fishery downstream. The damage can be prevented if the mining company spends \$800,000 on a tailings impoundment. Suppose further that the managers of the fishery can also prevent the

³⁰⁴ Dower, "Three Narratives of Our Humanity," 90.

damage by diverting one of the streams at a cost of \$200,000. It is clearly most efficient for the damage to be prevented by the managers of the fishery. The mining company will be willing to pay the fishery any amount up to \$800,000 to divert the stream. The fishery will be willing to take any amount over \$200,000 to do so. So says the Coase Theorem. In the world of zero transaction costs, the company will build their mine and not bother with an expensive tailings impoundment. The managers of the fishery will divert the stream to prevent damage to their fish, and will receive some amount of compensation between \$200,000 and \$800,000 from the mining company to do so. Coase's point, however, was that transaction costs are never zero. We should study the real world instead, where we can't know the future effects of our actions, where it always costs something to learn about the past or the present (and we can't know everything), and where it also costs to enter into legal arrangements or to make exchanges.³⁰⁵

These real world costs arose time and again in the struggle over the fate of Fish Lake. None of the stakeholders had any knowledge of the relevant future costs of their actions. How much would habitat destruction cost in the long run? What would be the future value of a genetically unique population of rainbow trout? What would biodiversity be worth in the future? What would copper be worth in the future? How much would it cost Taseko Mines if the Tsilhqot'ins gained the rights to the land? How much would it cost the Tsilhqot'ins if Taseko Mines built the mine? How much environmental damage would the mine cause in the form of acid mine drainage? What would be the impact on other important resource industries in the area like forestry, salmon fishing, and ranching? What would be the impact on tourism? None of the stakeholders had complete knowledge of the attributes of any of the entities involved either. How big was the ore body? Where did it lay? What was its grade of copper and gold? Were there other, richer, undiscovered bodies of ore in the vicinity? Were the

³⁰⁵ The original paper is Coase, "Problem of Social Cost". For explorations of the idea, see Barzel, *Economic Analysis*; Coase, "Institutional Structure"; Mercurio and Medema, "Chicago Law and Economics," Ch. 2 in *Economics and the Law*; Furubotn and Richter, "Absolute Property Rights: Ownership of Physical Objects," Ch. 3 in *Institutions and Economic Theory*.

rainbow trout the only genetically unique species that would be disturbed by a mine?
Were there archaeological sites that would have to be protected?

The fact that people are constantly confronted with the bounds of their knowledge and of their ability to figure things out, means that they have to have some way of deciding what to learn and when to learn it. As in the case of Fish Lake, these decisions are sometimes motivated by the increasing value of a place, or the entities in it, or the attributes of the place and its entities. Then, information costs are incurred as a way of gaining rights, or of keeping them from being seized by other stakeholders. There were many examples of this in the struggle over Fish Lake. Stakeholders learned more about the porphyry as copper and gold prices increased. They discovered an attribute of a population of rainbow trout while attempting to show that the fish did not have the attribute. (This shows, incidentally, that the relationship goes both ways, that increasing knowledge can sometimes increase value.) The stakeholders learned more about nearby fish habitats as the value of the trout increased. They learned more about the attributes of other species in the vicinity, too.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of environmental history is that it starts from the premise that human actions and environmental constraints are mutually determining and historically specific.³⁰⁶ The key environmental entities in the struggle over Fish Lake, the porphyry and the rainbow trout, both had natural histories of their own. This meant that their valuable attributes were contingent on the sequence of events that led to them being in the Chilcotin in the late 20th century. To know those attributes, it was first necessary for people to reconstruct the histories of the ore deposit and the fish. The natural history of the porphyry unfolded in geological time, and had to be reconstructed by geologists. The natural history of the population of rainbow trout unfolded in glacial time, and had to be reconstructed by glaciologists, zoogeographers and geneticists. Human activity around Fish Lake unfolded on a number of time scales, and this history also played a role in the contest. Archaeologists reconstructed millennia

³⁰⁶ Indeed, this is often taken to be the definition of the discipline. See, for example, White, *Land Use*, 5-7, and Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 13-14.

of aboriginal life before written records, and corroborated this with the oral traditions of the First Nations. Understanding this so-called prehistory was crucial to the establishment of aboriginal rights in cases like *Sparrow* and *Delgamuukw*.³⁰⁷ Over much shorter periods, the history of mining, ranching, logging, fishing, and recreation also shaped people's opinions about proper and improper uses of the area.

By focusing on the contest of stakeholders in a particular place and adopting their temporal frames of reference, it becomes possible to see things that might have been obscured if the analysis was limited to a single time scale.³⁰⁸ As the lines between natural history, prehistory and history blurred, the nuances of place became more clear. Places are always intensely particular, and this shapes the lives of the people who dwell there: "no one lives in the world in general."³⁰⁹ The particular struggle over Fish Lake was unique to a particular place at a particular moment. But the more general point is true of every place. The constant interpretation of indexical signs enters into the flow of activity by which people make sense of the past, of the world, of their place in it, and of their relationships to one another.

³⁰⁷ The activities of archaeologists and the oral traditions of the First Nations are the subject of Part II.

³⁰⁸ This adjustment of scale as an analytical procedure is one characteristic of microhistory. See Levi, "On Microhistory."

³⁰⁹ Feld & Basso, eds. *Senses of Place*. The quotation is from Clifford Geertz, 262.

Part II: The Horizon of Experience

Chapter 3: Mackenzie

Four stones that can still be seen near the Chilcotin River are all that remain of Lendix'tcux (Dog-Husband) and his sons. To Tsilhqot'in people with the knowledge to interpret them, these stones are material testimony to the doings of the transformers, animal/supernatural beings who changed themselves and the country during myth time. Evidence for the power of transformers like Lendix'tcux are everywhere in the Chilcotin landscape.³¹⁰ To the south near Konni Lake, a husband and wife named Ts'il?os and ?Eniyud once lived with their six children. One day, after fighting with her husband, ?Eniyud threw her baby onto his lap. Ts'il?os, the baby, and two of the children turned into rock. They can still be seen above Xeni Lake today. ?Eniyud and her three remaining children headed toward Tatlayoko valley, planting wild potatoes along the way. Patches of these potatoes are still there, and on the far side of Tatlayoko Lake, one can see ?Eniyud, who also turned to stone. According to Xeni Gwet'in elders, both Ts'il?os and ?Eniyud are able to change the weather, and must be treated with respect.³¹¹ The Chilcotin sky reminds the elders of three young men who gave their blind grandmother a piece of rotten wood to eat, telling her that it was caribou liver. For their lack of respect the men were turned into stars, as were the moose they hunted and the dogs that accompanied them. The old woman herself became the morning star, searching for her grandsons with a lamp.³¹² These traces in the landscape both cue memory of the doings of myth time and provide evidence for the perceived truth of the stories. The stories themselves are entertaining, to be sure, but they also teach lessons about nature, proper behavior and morality.³¹³

³¹⁰ Farrand, "Traditions"; Lane, "Cultural Relations." Dinwoodie gives the transformer's name as "Lhin Desch'osh" and translates it as "being a little dog." See *Reserve Memories*, 93. Stories about a dog husband are not unique to the Tsilhqot'in, but are relatively common throughout northwestern North America. Lévi-Strauss, *Story of Lynx*, Ch. 14.

³¹¹ BC Parks, Cariboo District. "Ts'il?os Provincial Park Master Plan."

³¹² Farrand, "Traditions." For more about transformers and myth time in the oral traditions of interior people, see Laforet & York, *Spuzzum*; Hanna & Henry eds., *Our Tellings*.

³¹³ Cf. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*; Brody, *Maps and Dreams*; Hanna & Henry, eds. *Our Tellings*.

Places are multivocal. They remind the heirs of a different tradition of different stories. At Chezacut, for example, there is a massive tractor-style steam engine, now long disused and sinking slowly into the earth. It was made in Ontario in the early 20th century by the Sawyer Massey company and marketed in a way that would play on the nationalism of rural customers: “Made in Canada for Canadians.”³¹⁴ Arthur Knoll brought the engine into the country under its own steam by way of Ashcroft and the Gang Ranch. It required a licensed steam engineer to operate it, and it was fueled by a native man who hauled firewood alongside with a team and wagon. When Felix Scallon wanted to build a bridge and farmhouse at Big Creek, he borrowed the engine to power a sawmill, and hired an engineer to run it.³¹⁵ The doings of the pioneers have taken on an epic quality for some of their descendents, and the tumbledown Russell fences and collapsed log cabins serve as reminders of a time when ordinary people were more heroic and the country was wilder.³¹⁶ To someone who knows the history of ranching in the Chilcotin, a cow branded with a chevron is an instant reminder of Norman Lee, who tried to provision the miners of the Klondike gold rush.³¹⁷ In 1898, Lee set out from Hanceville with two hundred head of cattle, drove them almost two thousand kilometers north and butchered them at Teslin Lake, only to lose all of the meat while rafting across the lake in a storm. Nine months after setting out, he arrived in Vancouver “with a roll of blankets, a dog, and one dollar.”³¹⁸ A visitor who doesn’t recognize the chevron brand, or doesn’t know the story, will find a short summary on a roadside plaque erected near Lee’s Ranch by the government during the provincial centennial in 1967.³¹⁹

³¹⁴ Klingender, “Tractors.”

³¹⁵ George, comp. *History and Legends*, 5; Bonner, Bliss & Litterick, *Chilcotin*, 213, 242 (picture), 320.

³¹⁶ For the material culture of log buildings and fences in interior British Columbia, see Clemson, *Living with Logs*; Idem, “Pioneer Fences.”

³¹⁷ For an account of the cattle drive, see Lee, *Klondike Cattle Drive*. Lee’s brand is illustrated on 23. Cattle brands are read in an analogous fashion to heraldic devices. A character that looks like the top half of a diamond is known as a “rafter,” and one rafter above another as a “chevron.” Blacklaws & French, *Ranchland*, 30; Ownership Identification Incorporated, “How to Read a Brand,” <http://www.ownership-id.com/article_reading_brands.php>.

³¹⁸ Lee, *Klondike Cattle Drive*, 57.

³¹⁹ For a photograph of the plaque, see Bonner, Bliss & Litterick, *Chilcotin*, 137.

Because the material traces of past events are everywhere in the landscape, and because they are read differently by different people, it is inevitable that disagreements will arise about the nature and role of the past in present places. Despite a professed respect for indigenous oral tradition, for example, archaeologists insist that human beings first came to the Americas after the last glaciation, and that they have not always been here, as native creationist accounts maintain. Saying that “in all our minds ‘eternity’ and 11,000 years are essentially the same” doesn’t satisfy believers in oral tradition any more than it satisfies archaeologists.³²⁰ And the activities of Norman Lee are probably of less interest to a professional historian for their depiction of pioneer spirit than as an illustration of the ways that the ranching industry tried to capture the economic benefits of the Cariboo and Klondike gold rushes.³²¹

The groundedness of history and memory occasionally pits the interpretations of native elders, archaeologists, pioneers and historians against one another, particularly when the stakes appear to be high. In the case study that follows, attempts to dedicate a route in the Chilcotin to the honor of an explorer, a cherished symbol of Canadian unity and national identity, led to conflict among stakeholders who found evidence for very different pasts in the same place. People who were used to supporting their arguments by appealing to representational evidence—to the kind of evidence that is typically kept in repositories of cultural heritage like archives and libraries—found themselves at a disadvantage when using the material evidence of place. Material traces are more varied and opaque than most representations, their use limited only by the costs of specialization and the bounds of rationality. They are also fundamentally tied to particular places, giving the interpretive advantage to people who physically occupy those places. The

³²⁰ This is the stance taken by one archaeologist. See Fladmark, *BC Prehistory*, 11. In another approach to the same problem, the ethnographer Elizabeth Furniss writes, “Disagreements and debates have arisen about which version of history, Native or archaeological, is ‘true.’ However, neither theory is either ‘true; or ‘false.’ The archaeologists’ and Natives’ views of Native peoples’ origins are simply two different ways of looking at history, differences that are based in the varying ways that Natives and non-Natives look at the world and make sense of their experiences.” Furniss, “Early Culture of the Southern Carrier,” 7.

³²¹ Lutz, “Interlude or Industry?”; Blacklaws & French, *Ranchland*.

following case study also illustrates a new truth to Mackenzie King's claim that "If some countries have too much history, then we have too much geography."³²²

A Moment of Indecision

On June 23, 1793, "after a restless night" in an Indian village on the banks of the Tacoutche Tesse river (now known as the Fraser), Alexander Mackenzie met again with a group of Indian people to see if he could learn more about the routes to the Pacific ocean. The previous day they had shown him trade goods that they obtained from their native neighbors to the west: a long-bladed knife with a horn handle; brass, copper, beads and trinkets; and an eighteen-inch bar of iron. Sharpened at one end and bound to a wooden handle, the iron could be used as an axe until it wore out. They would then recycle it into points for arrows and spikes. The pieces of brass and copper might also be used for arrowheads, but they were more likely to be fashioned into collars, armbands and bracelets. Studying the trade goods, Mackenzie concluded that they had originally come from non-native traders operating on the coast.³²³ It was the "favorite project of [his] own ambition" to "penetrate across the continent of America," to "add new countries to the realms of British commerce."³²⁴ The fur trading concern that he represented, the North West Company (NWC) of Montreal, was also determined to tap into native trade routes and to establish an overland route to the China market. Only by doing so, could they hope to remain competitive against the London-based Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and the American Fur Company of John Jacob Astor.³²⁵

³²² William Lyon Mackenzie King, speech to the Canadian House of Commons, 18 Jun 1936. Some might argue that we don't have enough geography: at the recent unveiling of the new Canadian Broadcasting Corporation building in Ottawa, people were surprised to find that a map etched in the granite floor of the lobby had erased the Queen Charlotte Islands, turned Vancouver Island into a peninsula that was truncated at the 49th parallel, and included "what appear[ed] to be a new province: Alaska." The CBC denied responsibility for the map, claiming that they were only tenants of the building. The Corporation who owned the building said they wouldn't be changing the lobby floor because it wasn't actually a map, but 'a piece of art.' Zev Singer, "O Canada: CBC Erases Our Native Land," *Vancouver Sun*, 14 Nov 2003.

³²³ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 159-169; Scholefield, "Sir Alexander Mackenzie," ch. 9 of *BC from the Earliest Times*, 199-233; Walter Sheppe, "Mackenzie's Route," appendix 2 of Mackenzie, *Journal*, 314-336.

³²⁴ Mackenzie, *Voyages*, iv, CIHM 33950.

³²⁵ Gough, *Distant Dominion*, 135-145; Gough, *First across the Continent*, 171-172.

Mackenzie weighed the advantages and drawbacks of various routes to saltwater. He had been traveling down the Tacoutche Tesse with nine men and a dog for five days, but the Indians warned him that there were many dangerous rapids and waterfalls downstream.³²⁶ In six places it was impossible to travel by water at all; in others, goods had to be portaged long distances through very rugged terrain. There were at least three different native nations along the river, each speaking a different language.³²⁷ Mackenzie was discouraged. He was certain that the Tacoutche Tesse was the “River of the West” that emptied into the Pacific Ocean around 46° north latitude. If it had been possible to travel down the river easily, then the North West Company would have found its route to the China market.³²⁸ But in the opinion of his men, “it would be absolute madness to attempt a passage through so many savage and barbarous nations.” Their provisions were precariously low, their ammunition nearly expended. If the river did debouch so far south, then the distance yet to travel was great. The return trip would be delayed by the difficulties of traveling upstream and possibly by the opposition of the native people. On the other hand, it was also possible to reach the ocean by traveling westward overland, but then the party would have to backtrack up the river for a few days. Mackenzie was hesitant to make this “retrograde motion [which] could not fail to cool the ardor, slacken the zeal, and weaken the confidence of those, who [had] no greater inducement in the undertaking, than to follow the conductor of it.”³²⁹

Where exactly was he? At noon the previous day he had tried to take a reading with his sextant, but the angle of the altitude of the sun was too high for his instrument.³³⁰ Instead, he asked one of the native men to sketch the surrounding countryside on a large piece of bark, and the man did so, occasionally consulting with the others. If Mackenzie

³²⁶ Gough, *First across the Continent*, 123.

³²⁷ The aboriginal groups along the river were Secwepemc (Shuswap), Stl’atl’imx (Lillooet), and Nlaka’pamux (Thompson). See Kinkade et al., “Languages.”

³²⁸ For the state of geographical knowledge in Mackenzie’s time, see Goetzmann & Williams, *Atlas*; Hayes, *Historical Atlas* and Ruggles, *A Country So Interesting*. The Tacoutche Tesse did not turn out to be the river that we now know as the Columbia, but rather the one that we call the Fraser. Its mouth is a little north of the 49th parallel.

³²⁹ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 163, 164.

³³⁰ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 160; Swannell, “Mackenzie’s Expedition.”

chose the route to the west, his informants now told him, it was only about seven days travel from the Tacoutche Tesse to “the lake whose water is nauseous.” When they finished reiterating what they had told him the previous day, one of the native men asked him why he needed to ask these questions about the country. Didn’t white men know everything in the world? Mackenzie hesitated. As he later remembered it, “At length, however, I replied, that we certainly were acquainted with the principal circumstances of every part of the world; that I knew where the sea was, and where I myself then was, but that I did not exactly understand what obstacles might interrupt me in getting to it; with which he and his relations must be well acquainted, as they had so frequently surmounted them.” Mackenzie thought that this explanation had “fortunately preserved the impression in their minds, of the superiority of white people over themselves.”³³¹

Whether or not the aboriginal people felt any such thing about the newcomers is debatable; irony would not have survived the laborious processes of translation that allowed Mackenzie to understand his informants. However misguided his explanation though, he did gesture toward a basic difference between his approach to geography and that of the natives, one that has become important in the historiography of science.³³² It is clear that the Indian people were every bit as capable of thinking in terms of maps and of talking about navigation as was Mackenzie. They, too, could visualize space and project it onto a small, flat surface.³³³ There was a crucial difference, however, in the ways that natives and newcomers regarded maps. For the Indian people on the Tacoutche Tesse, the creation of the map was an incidental event in their evolving relationship with a potential trade partner. Mackenzie himself had told them that they would receive great

³³¹ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 166. Gough says “much of what he said can be classified as bluster,” *First across the Continent*, 139.

³³² The analysis of the encounter between Mackenzie and the aboriginal people closely follows Latour’s analysis of the meeting between La Pérouse and the Chinese of Sakhalin, in his “Visualization and Cognition,” 3-4 and in ch. 6 of *Science in Action*. In general, Latour is concerned with what he calls “mobilization” of representations in the attempt to convince others of the truth of scientific claims. Here the emphasis is not on truth or rhetoric per se, but on the wider political economy of the interpretation of the physical evidence to be found in a particular place.

³³³ For aboriginal mapmaking abilities and the importance of aboriginal maps to the newcomers, see Lewis, “Indian Maps”; D. Wayne Moodie, “Indian Maps,” plate 59 of Harris, ed. *Historical Atlas*; Ruggles, *A Country So Interesting*; Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground*.

advantages from the successful completion of his mission. To the natives, the map itself was disposable. The information that it summarized was a paltry fragment of the knowledge that each carried in his or her head.³³⁴ For Mackenzie, however, the map was the sole purpose of his expedition. Before setting out, he had met the Hudson's Bay Company surveyor Philip Turnor and been convinced by him that he was not yet sufficiently well prepared to make his voyage of discovery. He did not know enough about making astronomical observations to be able to accurately determine where he was. In order to remedy this defect, Mackenzie spent a winter in England, acquiring the necessary books and instruments for surveying, and learning astronomy and navigation. As he made his way across the continent, he used a compass to continually estimate the bearing of his course and recorded the distances traveled. He used a telescope to observe the moons of Jupiter, and thus to determine his longitude. The one thing that Mackenzie most wanted to take back to Montreal was a map of his route.³³⁵

Maps

Simply to say that Mackenzie wanted to return with a map obscures many details which will turn out to be crucial in understanding what was at stake. The production and use of maps by Mackenzie and his contemporaries depended upon many other techniques that had been developed over long periods of time and integrated into functional and commercial networks. His meticulous journal keeping, for example, depended upon his ability to write words and numbers and on the abilities of others to produce pens, papers, and inks. The practice of journal keeping was something that was inculcated into all of the fur traders, as was the ability to keep financial accounts.³³⁶ Mackenzie's surveying depended on his mastery of trigonometry, and on his use of compass, clock, telescope, and sextant. In order to determine the latitude of his present position, he had to know

³³⁴ Cf. Ridington, "Technology, World View and Adaptive Strategy in a Northern Hunting Society," in *Little Bit Know Something*, 84-99; Brody, *Maps and Dreams*; Basso, *Wisdom*.

³³⁵ For Mackenzie's training in surveying, see Gough, *First across the Continent*, 99-102, and Swannell, "Mackenzie's Expedition."

³³⁶ For the practices of reading, writing and calculating among the fur traders, see Ray and Freeman, "The Early Hudson's Bay Company Account Books," ch. 9 in *Give us Good Measure*, 81-119; Payne & Thomas, "Literacy."

first how to use a clock to find out what time it was, how to keep track of what day it was, and how to use a sextant to measure the angle between the horizon and the sun. With that information, he could then determine his position using a precompiled table. Determining longitude was still more difficult, as Mackenzie had to be able to see when the planet Jupiter eclipsed its moons. Published tables called ephemerides showed the times when each of the various moons appeared from behind the orb of the planet, so the whole system could serve as a kind of celestial clock. Comparing the local time when such an astronomical event occurred, with the time that it occurred at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, allowed Mackenzie to calculate the east-west distance between the two meridians. Of little use on a tossing ship, the method was the mainstay of eighteenth-century explorers who traveled by land.³³⁷ The construction of scientific instruments, the production of ephemerides, and the printing of tables and charts, in turn, depended on other constellations of technique. The combined power of all of these techniques could be brought to bear on the problem of generating a representation of the route to the Pacific which would be usable in non-local contexts. The form of choice was the map. It was small, lightweight and flat, readily transported, and easily reproduced. It could be combined with a written text, superimposed on other kinds of representation, manipulated by geometrical transformations, and scaled at will. Most important of all, the information that it contained did not change when it was moved.³³⁸

Maps are the product of a particular milieu: they embody the biases, values and preoccupations of their creators.³³⁹ Despite Mackenzie's daily activities of sighting, measuring, annotating, and inscribing, the fact remains that his map and those of other "voyages of discovery" were significantly based on indigenous geographical knowledge, and that he and his contemporaries had a crucial reliance on native guides. The biases of the explorers can be seen in what was left out of their maps. Places they had not visited were represented as blank spaces, hiding a fully-populated, pre-existing world of human

³³⁷ For an introduction to the details of celestial navigation in Mackenzie's time, see Mentzer, "Jupiter's Moons" and Sorrenson, "Ship as a Scientific Instrument."

³³⁸ That is to say that maps are what Latour calls "immutable mobiles."

³³⁹ Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps*.

activity. A profusion of indigenous toponyms and landmarks were almost entirely left out of their sketches, to be replaced with a scattering of place names that celebrated the events of their journey, or the names of their colleagues and patrons. In this way, they began to sever the bonds that connected indigenous memory to landscape, and thus to undermine histories of place at variance with their own. As these first maps were redrawn and reworked in urban centers, the names of various native “tribes” were sometimes marked in the blank spaces, reifying the explorers’ shallow conceptions (or misconceptions) of human groups as cultural entities that had always inhabited that spot and no other, and suggesting that without the gumption of Eurocanadian explorers to tie them all together, these people may well have never met one another or done anything of significance.³⁴⁰

Besides Mackenzie and his men, there were many other people in the village alongside the Tacoutche Tesse that day. One of them was a woman, who had surprised the explorers by speaking a few words of the Knisteneaux (Cree) language, which was also spoken by the native interpreters that accompanied Mackenzie. She was a Sekani, from the western side of the Rocky Mountains, who had been captured by Cree raiders and taken across the mountains to the east. After a summer with them, she managed to escape, and cross back over the mountains on her own. At that point, she had been captured again, this time by a war-party of Carriers from the Tacoutche Tesse, and now lived with them on its banks. As a result of being buffeted around like this, she spoke Sekani, Cree and Carrier, and thus could translate from Carrier to Cree. Mackenzie’s interpreters could then translate the Cree into English for him. Four of the people at village were Secwepemc men from downriver, who had been living with the Carriers for some time. There was also Sekani man there. When Mackenzie questioned one of the Secwepemc men about the route down the Tacoutche Tesse, his questions had to be translated from English to Cree, Cree to Carrier, and perhaps Carrier to Secwepemc, and then the answers had to make the return trip. There were also side conversations, as Mackenzie’s informant “frequently appeal[ed] to, and sometimes ask[ed] the advice of,

³⁴⁰ Harley, “Rereading Maps”; Brealey, “Mapping Them ‘Out.’”

those around him.” No doubt, these involved further translations into and out of other languages like Sekani, Tsilhqot’in, Stl’atl’imx and French.³⁴¹ This was obviously not a static world of tribes, each in their own traditional territory, but a world in flux, a place where people could travel and dwell among near and distant neighbors (willingly or not), and where multi-lingualism was the norm and not the exception. The arrival of Mackenzie’s party did not signal a moment of “Contact” with a superior and somewhat alien race, that would forever divide time into “before” and “after.” In fact, Mackenzie wrote, “One very old man observed, that as long as he could remember, he was told of white people to the Southward.”³⁴² Mackenzie and his men were instead something very familiar: delegates from a distant people who wanted to take part in a trade system that had been flourishing for far longer than anyone could remember. The end result of Mackenzie’s deliberation was to do what his native informants suggested. He planned to retrace his steps up the river and follow a Carrier guide west along Indian trails across the plateau.

Having made his decision, Mackenzie had his name and the date inscribed into the trunk of a tree by his lieutenant Alexander MacKay.³⁴³ The party then headed back up the Tacoutche Tesse. Along the way, their canoe was damaged when it collided with a stump in the river, and they had to camp for four days and build another. Mackenzie found it necessary to upbraid his men for their apparent lack of enthusiasm.³⁴⁴ By July 2, they were approaching the point where they would leave the river. They were “most cruelly tormented by flies, particularly the sand fly,” which Mackenzie was “disposed to consider the most tormenting insect of its size in nature.” Despite the unrest among the men, Mackenzie was also forced to put them on short rations, “a regulation particularly offensive to a Canadian voyager.” One of their daily meals consisted of dried fish roe, pounded and boiled with a little flour and grain. Spirits lifted when the new canoe was

³⁴¹ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 160-161.

³⁴² Mackenzie, *Journal*, 162.

³⁴³ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 169; Morrison, “MacKay, Alexander,” DCBO.

³⁴⁴ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 179-180.

finished, and Mackenzie added to the good feeling by giving the men a dram each.³⁴⁵ On the 3rd, they found a river which Mackenzie named the “West Road,” as it appeared to match the description that he had been given of the route to the coast. His men found a “good beaten path” leading up the hill to the west. It was near this path that he met his Carrier guide.³⁴⁶

The Problem of “Ground Truth”

The interior plateau that Mackenzie crossed in the summer of 1793 has since been explored by people who were interested, for various reasons, in reconstructing his route, in determining where he actually walked. In so doing, they faced what people who work in remote sensing call the problem of “ground truth.” Since the process of representing a place always necessitates a loss of information, the representation—be it a verbal description, itinerary, photograph, map, air photo, satellite image or whatever—may or may not be calibrated with the place that it depicts in a meaningful way. In many places along the overland route, Mackenzie’s maps and descriptions were simply not adequate to the task of finding the exact route by which he had traveled. In a sense, ground truth is the inverse problem of mapping. When Mackenzie created his maps and descriptions he abstracted away from the richness of place to create representations that could be used in non-local contexts. These new representations greatly lowered some information costs for their users. It was now possible to gain some idea of the lay of the land in a distant place without actually visiting it, possible to compare representations and to combine them to gain more information. This process can be seen in the successive revisions of Aaron Arrowsmith’s map of America. The edition of 1790 shows a relatively detailed section of the Northwest Coast around the Queen Charlotte Islands, based on the observations of Captain James Cook. The interior west of the Rocky Mountains is completely blank. Since Cook did not discover Georgia Strait, Nootka Sound is depicted

³⁴⁵ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 183.

³⁴⁶ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 185-186.

as being on the mainland.³⁴⁷ The version of Arrowsmith's map updated to 1802 includes Captain George Vancouver's discovery of the island now named for him, and Mackenzie's track to the Pacific Ocean.³⁴⁸ Later editions include information gathered by Simon Fraser, David Thompson, and Lewis and Clark.³⁴⁹ Symbolically, maps like Arrowsmith's could be used by the British and by chartered companies to assert sovereignty over new territory in a way that was understood by other imperial powers.³⁵⁰ But the maps themselves were not usable on the ground in the region they represented. They were too small-scale and omitted too much detail. In trying to work from the maps back to the places that they depicted, the people who were attempting to recreate Mackenzie's route faced steeply rising information costs. Maps are easily transported, places are not. In order to check a place against representations of it, they needed to visit the place itself. If they were in a place that didn't line up with the map, their only recourse was to move around and hope that they found a place that did. They could never be certain that they had arrived at a particular landmark, so they had to proceed by inference.

The first sustained attempts to find signs of Mackenzie's route were undertaken in the 1870s by George Mercer Dawson and Sandford Fleming. Dawson joined the Geological Survey of Canada in 1875 and began surveying the Chilcotin that year as part of the survey's mandate to develop detailed geological knowledge of the whole country. British Columbia had been surveyed by geologists before, but not systematically over large areas. Without retracing Mackenzie's overland route, Dawson crossed it many times and roughly followed most of it. In August he traveled south along the west bank of the Fraser River from Soda Creek to Riske Creek and then west along the northern

³⁴⁷ Aaron Arrowsmith, *Chart of the World on Mercator's Projection, Exhibiting All the New Discoveries to the Present Time ...* (London: A. Arrowsmith, 1790), BCA CM/X12. The Northwest Coast portion of this map is reproduced in Hayes, *Historical Atlas*, 57.

³⁴⁸ See also Aaron Arrowsmith, [Untitled map], 1794, updated to 1798, BCA. A portion of this map is reproduced in Hayes, *Historical Atlas*, 97.

³⁴⁹ Farley, "Historical Cartography of BC"; Ruggles, *A Country So Interesting*. See also Verner, "The Arrowsmith Firm." Portions of the 1801 and 1824 versions depicting Mackenzie's route are reproduced in Brealy, "Mapping Them 'Out.'"

³⁵⁰ Brealey, "Mapping Them 'Out.'"

bank of the Chilcotin and Chilanko Rivers to the mouth of the Homathko. In September he visited Tatla and Tatlayoko Lakes, then turned north to pick up the Nazko River and follow it downstream to the West Road River, also known as the Blackwater River. The following year, he left Quesnel in May, traveling northwest along the Telegraph Trail with a pack-train until they hit the Euchiniko River and then followed the river west and south to hit the West Road River. In June he followed the West Road River to Eliguk and Gatcho Lakes. In July he explored the Dean River, Tanya Lakes and the upper end of the Bella Coola valley. He then returned past the Ilgachuz Range to the West Road River. By August he was on the Entiako River heading north towards its junction with the Nechako River.³⁵¹

Sandford Fleming was the Engineer in Chief of the Canadian Pacific Railway, charged with task of finding the best route for a cross-continental railroad. The survey began working in British Columbia on July 21, 1871, the day that the province joined the Dominion of Canada.³⁵² In 1872, the survey found a possible route through the Chilcotin, crossing the Fraser River near Lac La Hache and following the Chilcotin and Chilanko Rivers to the Homathko and from there to Bute Inlet. Additional surveying in 1874 showed that it would be easier to cross the Fraser near Williams Lake instead. In 1875, they surveyed the Nazko Valley, looking for a route from Fort George to Bute Inlet. By 1877, Fleming's team was able to suggest four different potential routes for a railroad through the Chilcotin. None of these followed Mackenzie's route exactly, but all crossed it at various points.³⁵³ Later surveyors took up the challenge of locating parts of Mackenzie's route, building on the findings of their predecessors. In the 1920s, parts of the route were explored by British Columbia land surveyors Frank C. Swannell and Captain Richard Preston Bishop.³⁵⁴ In the 1950s, Walter Sheppe, an editor of Mackenzie's *Journal*, also traveled over part of the route.³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ Cole & Lockner, eds. *Journals of George M. Dawson*, 1:32-40.

³⁵² Fleming, *Report on Surveys*, 13.

³⁵³ Fleming, *Report on Surveys*, 12-35.

³⁵⁴ Bishop, *Mackenzie's Rock*; Swannell, "Mackenzie's Expedition"; Idem, "On Mackenzie's Trail"; Parks Canada, "Preliminary Development Concept," note 14, CCA-G.

³⁵⁵ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 319-336.

The interest in Mackenzie's actual route increased as the bicentennial of his expedition approached and people began to propose different ways of commemorating his accomplishments. The parks departments of both the provincial and federal governments were interested in setting aside "linear historic or naturally attractive routes" for conservation and recreation, and the Mackenzie trail was thought to have particularly high potential. Despite the fact that it had often been proposed as a natural location for a major transportation corridor, most of the region had never been developed. There were few roads anywhere in the area, and no railroads. In a preliminary report on the possibility of such a commemorative park, the federal parks department suggested that about eighty percent of the route could be traced, and that the rest could be chosen based upon the scenery and the practicality of development.³⁵⁶

The plan drew many supporters from across the province. One of the most energetic was John Woodworth, a retired architect from Kelowna who was the executive secretary of the Alexander Mackenzie Trail Association.³⁵⁷ The association, which grew from a tiny group of volunteers in the 1970s to two hundred fifty members by the 1990s, was dedicated to creating a cross-continental heritage route in honor of Mackenzie's journey. Woodworth thought Mackenzie was "absolutely tremendous," and that the people who had followed him and occupied the land should thank the explorer for existence of Canada. When he heard native groups refer disparagingly to Mackenzie as a "tourist" in their lands, he became "teed off," despite his "enormous respect" for native people. After all, Woodworth asked, who else but Mackenzie could have traveled through the country he did and survived?³⁵⁸ Two other supporters of the trail were Hälle and Linda Flygare, who became friends and colleagues of Woodworth. Hälle Flygare was a Swedish forester who had first come to Canada on a student exchange program and spent a summer in the region of Mackenzie's overland route. He later returned, married,

³⁵⁶ Parks Canada, "Preliminary Development Concept," 3, 5, CCA-G.

³⁵⁷ "Seven Year Lobby Effort Pays Off," *Central Okanagan Capital News*, 22 Nov 1980, BCA D19-002.

³⁵⁸ Brian Bergman, "A River of Destiny: Mackenzie's Arctic Voyage Still Disturbs Natives," *Maclean's*, 6 Jul 1992.

and became a citizen.³⁵⁹ From 1975 to 1982, Parks Canada awarded summer contracts to the Flygares to recreate the trail from Mackenzie's notes and maps and from whatever could be learned from the landscape.

In 1981, John Woodworth and Hälle Flygare co-authored a trail guide based, in part, on the Flygares' work. It was published and distributed by the Alexander Mackenzie Trail Association, and was popular enough to warrant an enlarged and updated second edition in 1987.³⁶⁰ Armed with the guide, hikers could now attempt to retrace Mackenzie's steps. Thanks to it, they would know enough to bring insect repellent and mosquito netting, and thus wouldn't be tormented as Mackenzie and his men had been by the ubiquitous insects.³⁶¹ Any illusion of following in the explorer's exact footsteps would soon be dispelled, however. Twenty-four of the first thirty-one kilometers of the trail followed gravel logging roads that were too dusty to be easily walked. Hikers were encouraged to travel that section in an automobile instead. The corresponding text in the guide said, "Are there original trail sections remaining among the clear cuts and skid roads? Exactly where did they leave the Fraser? At this date (1987) we do not know."³⁶²

Guides Don't Carry

On July 4, 1793, Mackenzie prepared to strike out overland. He sent MacKay and one of the Indian men who had come with the expedition from the east to make two hidden caches. In the first, they buried a ninety pound bag of pemmican (a foodstuff made from dried buffalo meat and grease), two bags of wild rice, and a keg of gunpowder. In the second, they put some trade goods and two bags of maize. The party had to leave their new canoe, so they also built a platform under the shade of some trees to store it until their return, and they made a box to protect whatever else they couldn't carry with them to the sea. Then they shouldered their loads. What Mackenzie has to say

³⁵⁹ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 191; Woodworth, "Show Us."

³⁶⁰ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*.

³⁶¹ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 19.

³⁶² Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 37. Walter Sheppe could not find the beginning of Mackenzie's trail in 1959 either. See Mackenzie, *Journal*, 333.

on the subject is interesting because it gives a rare glimpse of the social world of the Indian trails. Each of the Canadians, he says, had a ninety pound load, plus a gun and some ammunition. Mackenzie and MacKay carried about seventy pounds each, plus arms and ammunition, and Mackenzie also had his unwieldy telescope to contend with. The Indian men that accompanied the party from the east had about forty-five pounds each, besides their guns, “with which they were very much dissatisfied, and if they dared would have instantly left us. They had hitherto been very much indulged, but the moment was now arrived when indulgence was no longer practicable.” A day into the journey, Mackenzie wrote, “One of my men had a violent pain in his knee, and I asked the guides to take a share of his burden, as they had nothing to carry but their beaver robes, and bows and arrows, but they could not be made to understand a word of my request.”³⁶³ Status was evidently inversely proportional to the size of one’s burden, something that must have been clear to everyone. Like all new trade partners, Mackenzie would have to learn not to make inappropriate requests of his hosts. When he did, the uncertainties of translation could be used to avoid giving or taking offence. Mackenzie apparently didn’t press the matter.

In the first few days on the “well-beaten path,” Mackenzie saw many signs of the extensive trade between the coast and the interior. On the evening of July 4, his party encountered four native men coming from the west. One of them was carrying a lance that he had bartered from natives on the coast. They, in turn, had obtained it from non-native traders. At the Indians’ camp, Mackenzie saw a strip of sea otter fur, for which he traded some beads and a brass cross. He also saw many European items, including halfpence from Britain and the State of Massachusetts Bay which were hanging from the children’s ears as ornaments.³⁶⁴ It is not surprising that European trade goods had reached the interior by this time. In 1778, Captain Cook anchored in Nootka Sound on the west coast of what is now Vancouver Island for about a month.³⁶⁵ His men traded

³⁶³ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 186-188. In the fur trade, bales of fur and goods, known as “pièces,” were uniformly ninety pounds. See Nute, *Voyageur*, 38; Ross, *Beyond the River and the Bay*, 56.

³⁶⁴ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 188-190.

³⁶⁵ Edwards, ed., *Journals of Captain Cook*, 538-547.

scraps of iron and other metals for sea otter pelts, which they later sold in Canton at a profit of eighteen hundred percent. When Cook's journals were published in the 1780s, there was an international rush to exploit this new resource. From 1786 to 1790, more than a half a dozen ships, mostly British and American, traded on the coast and hunted sea otter each year. In 1791, there were thirteen ships, twenty-one the following year, and thirteen again the year of Mackenzie's voyage. This maritime fur trade shuffled the human geography of the coast, as aboriginal groups vied for regions with as yet untapped populations of sea otters, or with the strategic potential to support a lucrative position as middlemen in the trade.³⁶⁶

The maritime fur trade was traditionally portrayed by historians as a kind of "looting," where native people were cheated out of their furs and art objects, receiving beads and trinkets in return.³⁶⁷ More recent scholarship has called this portrayal into question. The journals of the maritime traders often praised native traders for their skill at bargaining and their ability to get the better end of a deal, a lesson that some of the newcomers learned to their own cost.³⁶⁸ That the indigenous people should have such skills is to be expected. The networks of trade long predated the arrival of the newcomers, connecting peoples along the coast from what is now Alaska to California, and reaching far inland everywhere the barrier of the coastal mountain ranges was breached.³⁶⁹ The products of native trade included

Mountain-goat hair 'blankets' (ceremonial robes), ermine skins, copper plates, and spruceroot baskets from the Tlingits; dugout cedar canoes from the Haidas; mountain-goat horn spoons, raven rattles, dance headdresses, and oolachen ... and their oil (*ssak*, or shrowton) from the Tsimshians; mountain-goat hair and horn from the Bella Coolas, the best hunters on the coast of that animal; yellow cedarbark robes and wooden utensils from the Kwakiutls; dugout cedar canoes, shark's teeth, and dentalia shells (*Dentalium Indianorum*, or *pretiosum*) from the Nootkas; dog-hair

³⁶⁶ Gibson, *Otter Skins*; Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 1-23.

³⁶⁷ The quote is from Howay, "Outline Sketch," 14.

³⁶⁸ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, Ch. 1; Gibson, *Otter Skins*, Ch. 6.

³⁶⁹ No one has made a really good map of the trade routes and products of the interior native trails yet, but the complexity of the system can be inferred from some of the related maps which appear in the *Handbook of North American Indians* and the *Historical Atlas of Canada*.

blankets and slaves from the Coast Salishes; elk hides and slaves from the Chinooks; and tobacco, woodpecker scalps, and Monterey (abalone) 'ear shells' (*Haliotis cracherodii*) from the Yuroks.³⁷⁰

And those were merely some of the products traded up and down the coast. From the interior came obsidian, furs, moose and deer hide, dried soapberries, blueberries, and Saskatoon berries, amber and jet, groundhog skin blankets, jade adze blades and stone clubs, grizzly bear claws and skin, buffalo robes, rabbit-skin robes, camas[†], and baskets. These were traded in return for coastal products like dried salmon, sea-lion whiskers, teeth and skins, dried seaweed, dried and smoked shellfish, dried seal and sea-lion meat, dried halibut and cod, tobacco, clubs made from the jaw of the killer-whale, armor, shell tools for woodworking, wood carvings, and the ubiquitous grease of the candlefish.³⁷¹ To this trade, the newcomers brought iron chisels, guns, powder, ball and shot, blankets, alcohol and tobacco, copper and brass kettles and pots, cloth, sheets of copper, brass wire, knives, buttons, rice and molasses, and even feather caps and cloaks from Hawaii. The trade changed constantly with the vagaries of supply and demand, and of fashion, too.³⁷² There is evidence that many of the native art objects and artifacts that the newcomers took home with them were created specifically for the trade, like masks of labret-wearing women, wooden canoe models and woven imitations of sailor's caps.³⁷³

Another way that the newcomers changed the native trade networks was by introducing viral diseases such as smallpox, measles, influenza and mumps, diseases that required concentrated populations of hundreds of thousands of people to become endemic[†]. With fewer people, the diseases died out until they were reintroduced from a reservoir elsewhere, at which point they spread epidemically. This is not to say that the area that is now British Columbia was a disease-free paradise before the coming of non-native traders. It is clear to epidemiologists that human beings brought many ailments

³⁷⁰ Gibson, *Otter Skins*, 9. For the role of slavery in the political economy of the Northwest Coast, see Donald, *Aboriginal Slavery*.

³⁷¹ Harris ed., *Historical Atlas*, plate 13; Gibson, *Otter Skins*, 10.

³⁷² Gibson, *Otter Skins*, Ch. 8. The Hawaiian feather caps and cloaks are mentioned in Malloy, *Souvenirs*, 48. For some studies that address changing supply, demand and fashions in the fur trade, see Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*; Idem, "Indians as Consumers"; and the papers in Krech, ed. *Subarctic Fur Trade*.

³⁷³ Malloy, *Souvenirs*.

with them to the New World when they arrived after the last glaciation. Indigenous people suffered from food poisoning, fungal diseases, intestinal parasites, gastroenteritis, hepatitis and encephalitis, tuberculosis, and infections caused by treponemal[†] spirochetes.³⁷⁴ But the long separation between the Old and New Worlds meant that the crowd diseases which had become commonplace in Eurasia and Africa were particularly lethal when introduced to native American populations. These diseases often spread much faster than their non-native hosts.³⁷⁵ In northwestern North America, there is some archaeological evidence that is consistent with a smallpox epidemic of the 1520s, which may have caused a significant decline in the native populations of the middle Columbia River, although other explanations are possible. In the late 1700s, there is ample contemporary documentation of smallpox outbreaks along the coast from Sitka (in the panhandle of present-day Alaska) to what is now Washington state, and inland throughout the Columbia River basin.³⁷⁶

On July 6, 1793, Mackenzie and his men encountered a party of native people eating “green berries and dried fish” who “had a very sickly appearance, which might have been the consequence of disease, or that indolence which is so natural to them, or both.”³⁷⁷ The people may indeed have been recovering from some illness; as to the charge of indolence, it is possible that Mackenzie was still irritated by his guides’ unwillingness to bear loads for him. The fur traders often accused native people of being indolent. The word was “freighted with cultural meaning ... often framed in terms of inherited ideas about the moral propriety of hard work,” but also often used to signal the preference that some native groups had for fishing over hunting.³⁷⁸ The same day that Mackenzie described the natives as indolent, he also noted (apparently without seeing the irony) that “Age seemed to be an object of great veneration among these people, for they

³⁷⁴ Kiple ed., *Cambridge World History of Human Disease*; Boyd, *Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence*.

³⁷⁵ Crosby, “Virgin Soil Epidemics”; Idem, *Ecological Imperialism*.

³⁷⁶ Boyd, *Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence*, Ch. 2; Boyd, “Demographic History.”

³⁷⁷ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 193-194.

³⁷⁸ Vibert, *Traders’ Tales*, 120-131. The quote is from 120.

carried an old woman by turns on their backs who was quite blind and infirm, from the very advanced period of her life.”³⁷⁹

Palimpsests

In the area where Mackenzie was on July 6, 1793, there is now a BC Forest Service campground near the Blackwater Bridge. Visitors can park in a convenient parking lot and follow well-flagged walking trails along the sixty-meter-deep canyon to a picnic spot. The campsite doesn't provide running water or electricity, but there are basic sanitary facilities, picnic tables and fire rings. Those who prefer to fish or try their hand at rafting may do so. The Forest Service guide suggests that hikers should visit the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail which begins two kilometers north of the campsite: “it is a challenging hike for experienced hikers, and often done on horseback because it is so long. But you can certainly enjoy hiking the first stretch, and getting a taste of Canada's rich history as you imagine Mackenzie and his native guides forging this great landscape.”³⁸⁰ The authors of the guide surely intended the word “forging” to be taken in the sense of creating something new or pressing ahead in the face of difficulties, but its alternate reading, of counterfeiting, invention or deception, will turn out to be particularly apposite.

The landscape near the trail head is layered with traces of the years between Mackenzie's time and our own. Crossing beneath the logging and forest service roads of the late 20th century are the older wagon roads. One, built by the Russian-born trader Paul Krestenuk in the 1920s, runs to the west and was used to haul goods to interior trading posts by wagon in the summer and by sleigh in wintertime. It intersects with a north-south wagon road that was built in 1910 to connect Quesnel and Prince George.³⁸¹ When the Flygares were searching for Mackenzie's route in the 1980s, they used a 1909 map entitled “Traverse of the Cluskus Lake Trail,” and found one of the square axe-hewn

³⁷⁹ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 193.

³⁸⁰ BC Forest Service, “Hiking Trails: Blackwater Canyon.”

³⁸¹ Hobson, *Grass beyond the Mountains*, 127; Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 21, 58; Birchwater, *Ulkatcho*, 21; Woodworth, “Show Us.”

mileposts from that survey.³⁸² A decade or two before the wagon roads were built, this spot saw even more activity. The Dominion Telegraph line was pushed through here in 1898 north to Atlin and eventually the Yukon. It provided news of the Klondike Gold Rush to the outside world when the circuit was completed in September 1901.³⁸³ The telegraph trail itself was used by some of the people on their way to the gold fields, including Norman Lee on his Klondike cattle drive. When the cowboys reached the telegraph trail, Lee wrote

So far we had been travelling alone, but now that we were on the main road to the golden north, we were surprised to see the crowds of Pilgrims flocking north. Every half hour, one or more packtrains would go on up the trail. All kinds and varieties of horses, all sorts and conditions of men. They were evidently prepared for war, as hardly a man passed but was hung all over with six shooters and bowie knives. The trail was much better than we had had before, being cut out eight feet wide and as straight as an arrow for miles.³⁸⁴

A quarter of a century before the Klondike gold rush, this was also a crossroads of sorts. George Dawson camped here at the end of September in 1875. The Canadian Pacific Railway Survey was working in the area, and Dawson moved from one of their camps to another, accompanied by a packer and an Indian guide named Fanny. Along the way he met up with Indian families who were camping nearby, dined with survey personnel and tried his hand at fishing. The trails he followed were in use, although overgrown in places. In one spot, his "Mule overturned & mired in getting up the river bank ... but no serious consequences."³⁸⁵ Dawson camped in the same spot the following year, and once again was surrounded by activity. The British Columbia surveyor Edgar

³⁸² Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 42, 44.

³⁸³ "Telegraph Line to the Yukon," *New York Times*, 10 Aug 1897; *New York Times*, 7 Mar 1899; "Telegraph Line to Dawson," *Canadian Telegraphic*, 18 Mar 1899; "Yukon Telegraph Circuit Completed," *Canadian Telegraphic*, 25 Sep 1901; Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 29.

³⁸⁴ Lee, *Klondike Cattle Drive*, 4.

³⁸⁵ Cole & Lockner, eds. *Journals of George M. Dawson*, 1:92. See also Marcus Smith, "Report on the Surveys in British Columbia during the Year 1875," in Fleming, *Report on Surveys*, Appendix I, 162-176. Dr. Alfred R. C. Selwyn, director of the Geological Survey and Dawson's superior, also visited Blackwater Bridge that year, and made some photographs of the bridge and the canyon. See LAC PA-051022, PA-037525, and PA-037524.

Dewdney was camped nearby. Packtrains were going to and from Quesnel. Dawson found a native man trapping who “explained the country to [him]” but who was reluctant to act as his guide. He noted in his journal that Mackenzie had camped in the same area that he was exploring.³⁸⁶ A decade before Dawson and the railway surveyors arrived, the Collins Overland Telegraph Company pushed the first telegraph line through this spot, in an attempt to connect North America to Europe via the Bering Strait and Siberia. They managed to lay 650 kilometers of cable before news of a successful trans-Atlantic link caused the project to be abandoned in 1866.³⁸⁷

In some places, these traces of the past have been effaced by later activities like clearcutting and road building.³⁸⁸ But where the earlier routes can be discerned, they are now protected as heritage sites. The significance of such protection is that it signals a judgment of relative value: the fact that this place was used in a certain way in the past trumps any potential use in the present, and, for the time being at least, the place is protected from future use, too. Typically, such protection is highly contested when it is conferred and subject to repeated attack thereafter. For now parts of the Dominion and Collins telegraph trails are protected. The Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail is protected. In places on the Mackenzie trail, there are wooden guardrails to prevent hikers from going off the path and damaging an even older trail system, the so-called moccasin trails which Mackenzie probably really followed.³⁸⁹ These trails are protected too. In their trail guide, Woodworth and Flygare wrote, “It is a startling experience on the sandy pine needled forest floor to see a gentle indentation, 2 to 3 inches deep and 16 to 24 inches wide snaking along through windfalls, occasionally butting into a hundred year old tree trunk and emerging intact on the other side, often crisscrossed with game trails and at times buried in timber.”³⁹⁰ These older trails tend to follow the esker[†] gravel

³⁸⁶ Cole & Lockner, eds. *Journals of George M. Dawson*, 1:200-202. Quote is from 202.

³⁸⁷ Barman, *West beyond the West*, 86-87.

³⁸⁸ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 53.

³⁸⁹ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 46-47.

³⁹⁰ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 55.

banks which determined the river's course and to pass through grassy areas where depressions often mark former settlements overlooking the river bottom.³⁹¹

It is not always possible to tell where Mackenzie was at various points along his route, but some of his landmarks are easily recognized today. On July 8, Mackenzie wrote, "In this part of our journey we were surprised with the appearance of several regular basons [basins], some of them furnished with water, and the others empty; their slope from the edge to the bottom formed an angle of about forty-five degrees, and their perpendicular depth was about twelve feet. Those that contained water, discovered gravel near their edges, while the empty ones were covered with grass and herbs, among which we discovered mustard and mint."³⁹² Mackenzie's "basons" are probably the glacial kettles at the foot of Titetown Lake, which formed when isolated blocks of ice left by the retreating ice sheet melted. Two of these are to the north of the wagon road, and two to the south.³⁹³ In places where Mackenzie's exact route could not be determined, the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail tends to follow the old wagon roads, which for the convenience of their users passed directly through Indian Reserves and alongside ranch houses. Now that the wagon road has become a heritage trail, the trail guides remind hikers and horseback riders to respect the privacy and property of landowners along the route.³⁹⁴ In the mid-1970s, a Parks Canada team estimated that the permanent population of the trail between its head near the Blackwater Bridge and where it entered the Coast Mountain range in Tweedsmuir Park was about thirty people. In the summer, the itinerant population was much higher. Many of the ranches along the way were changing with the times, and "turn[ing] their bunkhouses into tourist accommodations."³⁹⁵

³⁹¹ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 57-60; Parks Canada, "Preliminary Development Concept," 18, CCA-G.

³⁹² Mackenzie, *Journal*, 196.

³⁹³ Woodworth, "Show Us"; NTS 093G05; Pielou, *After the Ice Age*, 23, 109; Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 63.

³⁹⁴ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 21, 58.

³⁹⁵ Parks Canada, "Preliminary Development Concept," 20, CCA-G.

“YOU ARE LEAVING CIVILIZATION”

... or at least that's what it says in the Woodworth and Flygare guide when you hit 82.68 kilometers from the head of the trail. The guide warns that “It was no picnic for Alexander Mackenzie and you may well share his sentiments.”³⁹⁶ When Mackenzie traveled through here, he and his men were feeling the effects of short rations. On July 8, 1793, he wrote, “We now proceeded along a very uneven country, the upper parts of which were covered with poplars, a little under-wood, and plenty of grass: the intervening vallies were watered with rivulets. From these circumstances, and the general appearance of vegetation, I could not account for the apparent absence of animals of every kind.”³⁹⁷ The following day, still finding the country “destitute of game,” Mackenzie sent off his native guides and all his men but two, and then cached another bag of pemmican by burying it under the ashes of their fire, to hide the disturbed ground from human eyes and the scent of his men from non-human scavengers. That day his party was able to kill two eagles and three grouse and to catch a few small fish.³⁹⁸

One of the management plans for the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail says, “Part of the unique provincial and national significance of the trail is the opportunity to re-live the travels of natives and early adventurers in an environment much the same as it was when they travelled this forest trail,” and the hiker today may see some of the same kinds of animals that lived in the region when Mackenzie was there.³⁹⁹ The fauna is characteristic of an intermediate zone between the boreal forests to the north and the warm, dry forests and grasslands to the south. Moose are well-adapted to the region's severe winters, as are small mammals like the snowshoe hare, which can travel on top of the snow, and the deer mouse, which can burrow into it. The sub-boreal forests provide habitat and prey for black bears, wolves, lynxes, fishers, martens and ermine.⁴⁰⁰ Along

³⁹⁶ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 64.

³⁹⁷ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 196.

³⁹⁸ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 197.

³⁹⁹ Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail Coordinating Committee, “Management Plan,” 28.

⁴⁰⁰ BC Ministry of Forests, Research Branch, “Biogeoclimatic Zones of BC,” Map, 1:2,000,000, Victoria, BC, 1999; Idem, “Ecology of the Sub-Boreal Spruce Zone”; Idem, “Ecology of the Engelmann Spruce – Subalpine Fir Zone”; Idem, “Ecology of the Sub-Boreal Pine – Spruce Zone”; Meidinger & Pojar, *Ecosystems of BC*.

the rivers and streams one can see beaver dams; occasionally they flood the trail.⁴⁰¹ But today's traveler is much more likely to encounter mammals that were not there in Mackenzie's time: the ubiquitous domestic cattle and horses that graze in the meadows along the trail and on the forest floor.⁴⁰²

The presence of recently-introduced species may bother a sensitive hiker who is trying to experience what Mackenzie experienced in this place, but they probably won't be nearly as distracting as the constant signs of recent human presence. At 95.42 kilometers, there is an old truck wreck. At 97.29 kilometers, there is a gate built by a volunteer who used to aid travelers by using his radio-phone to call bush pilots or medic choppers, drive canoeists around falls in his jeep, and serve pie and coffee. He moved away in the 1980s.⁴⁰³ Just a few kilometers further along the trail is the Crystal Springs campsite (109.84 km), which advertises the "Best Darn Water in the Whole Damn Country."⁴⁰⁴ Carry on about the same distance (122.42 km) and you come to a hay meadow, barn and the remains of a bridge for the wagon road.⁴⁰⁵ Now it is just a bit further down the trail to the Euchiniko Lakes Ranch (125 km), which is a big-game and fishing camp with a radio phone, and which has cabins with beds, woodstove and cooking utensils.⁴⁰⁶ At 134.12 kilometers, an old sign tells you that you are on the "Mackenzie Grease Trail." There is an old corral at 135 kilometers.⁴⁰⁷

For a person who is trying to follow in Mackenzie's footsteps, to re-enact his voyage of discovery, these constant reminders of past human activity might seem to make the experience disappointingly unlike Mackenzie's. But that isn't the case. From his journals it is clear that Mackenzie was constantly encountering the signs of a fully inhabited world, not an empty one. On July 8, Mackenzie wrote that his guide, cheerful but "not altogether so intelligible as his predecessors in [their] service," told him that he

⁴⁰¹ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 91.

⁴⁰² Parks Canada, "Preliminary Development Concept," 17, CCA-G. The introduction of horses and cattle to the region is discussed below in Part III.

⁴⁰³ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 66-67.

⁴⁰⁴ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 72.

⁴⁰⁵ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 74.

⁴⁰⁶ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 75.

⁴⁰⁷ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 79.

was going to meet nine members of a group of Carrier people who lived on the north side of the West Road River. On the 9th, Mackenzie's party came to a spot where the water narrowed. It was evidently a well-used ford, because they found a small raft there, which they used to cross the water the next day.⁴⁰⁸ Continuing, they soon came to "two houses that occupied a most delightful situation, and as they contained their necessary furniture, it seemed probable that their owners intended shortly to return. Near them were several graves or tombs, to which the natives are particularly attentive, and never suffer any herbage to grow upon them."⁴⁰⁹ A half an hour further down the trail, Mackenzie and his men came to two huts that were occupied by people who were fishing. There were thirteen men there, "cleanly, healthy, and agreeable in their appearance." Mackenzie's guide had "secure[d] a good reception" for him and he learned from them that they all had been to the coast, although they disagreed on the length of time the journey took. The guide and one of Mackenzie's interpreters took him to visit some more huts a mile away. He was given some boiled trout, about which he wrote, "The fish would have been excellent if it had not tasted of the kettle, which was made of the bark of the white spruce, and of the dried grass with which it was boiled." Mackenzie's guide was going no further along the trail, so Mackenzie engaged two of his new hosts to take him further, giving some "trifles" to their wives and children. Returning to his men, they took a different route and he saw two more buildings, and some structures "about fifteen feet from the ground, which appeared to [him] to be intended as magazines for winter provisions."⁴¹⁰

That night Mackenzie was bothered first by flies and then by rain; the next morning they had to make their way through a "morass." The country that they were crossing "had been laid waste by fire, and the fallen trees added to the pain and perplexity of [their] way."⁴¹¹ A hiker traveling through the same area today will see the signs of

⁴⁰⁸ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 196-198.

⁴⁰⁹ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 198.

⁴¹⁰ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 199.

⁴¹¹ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 199.

more recent forest fires.⁴¹² Fire plays a cyclical and crucial role in the ecology of the region. Often started by lightning (and occasionally by people), afterwards the burnt ground is colonized by fireweed and shrubs like willows and thimble-berry. These plants are succeeded by deciduous trees that can sprout from the base of the trunk, like birch, or from underground roots, like aspen. The deciduous forest may persist for a long while, but it cannot remain indefinitely because lodgepole pine seedlings are already growing on the forest floor. This is because the lodgepole pine is adapted to this fire regime; its cones open when heated, dropping the seeds where they will eventually grow into the next coniferous stand, succeeding the deciduous trees. As this coniferous stand ages, its canopy thins naturally, providing habitats for other kinds of vegetation, like pinegrass, kinnikinnick and lichens. Since fires occur frequently, the forest is a mosaic of patches of different age.⁴¹³ As a result it is also a mosaic of habitats, and native people regularly used fire as a tool to create habitats for the plant and animal species that they wanted to harvest. Different patterns of burning were used to create different landscapes: to make meadows and open forests, and clear trap lines and trails. Burning created places for ungulates to browse and forage, increased the production of berries and roots, and decreased the likelihood of unexpected fires near settlements. The practice of indigenous burning is well documented throughout northwestern North America, although the specifics are not presently known for the interior of what is now British Columbia.⁴¹⁴

It is not clear whether the fire which impeded Mackenzie's progress on July 11 was intentionally set or not, but he saw clear signs of human activity along the trail for the next few days, including many recent tracks made by other people.⁴¹⁵ Signs of human activity are ubiquitous along the same stretch of the trail today. At 171.94 kilometers, "E.B. and J.D." memorialized their union by carving their initials into a tree.

⁴¹² At 176.9 and 213-223 kilometers. Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 97, 111.

⁴¹³ Pielou, *World of the Northern Evergreens*, 116-123; BC Ministry of Forests, Research Branch, "Ecology of the Sub-Boreal Spruce Zone"; Idem, "Ecology of the Sub-Boreal Pine – Spruce Zone."

⁴¹⁴ Wong, "Natural Disturbance Regimes"; Applied Ecosystem Management, "Characterising Fire Regimes"; Iverson et al, "Past Fire Regimes"; Lewis & Ferguson, "Yards, Corridors and Mosaics"; Pyne, *Fire in America*.

⁴¹⁵ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 200-201.

Nearby is the Mackenzie Trail Lodge airstrip (175 km), which caters to fly-in fishermen in the summer. On a tree near the airstrip are more signs: “Anahim Lake BC, 100 mi around the mountain. Anahim Lake BC, 60 miles cross the mountain. Bella Coola BC, 191 miles.”⁴¹⁶ It is not much further along the trail to the Pan Phillips Fishing Resort at 192 kilometers. The resort features a radiophone, boats, cabins, and, luxury of luxuries, toilets and running water.⁴¹⁷ There is also another airstrip, with signs that say “Pan Phillips *International* Air Port, World Flights Arranged!” and “Dogpatch Delivery, Weekly Service, Honeymoon Trips Arranged.”⁴¹⁸ Despite the exaggeration of the signs, it is possible to arrange flights into the region in a number of places, not only where there are bush airstrips, but also via floatplane to many of the lakes. From a floatplane, the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail may look like “nature’s time machine”; from the ground, however, “one memory of civilization that will stay with you ... is the regular buzz of floatplanes overhead.”⁴¹⁹

The Pan Phillips Fishing Resort was a natural outgrowth of a ranching venture. Working on a Wyoming ranch in the mid-1930s, Richmond Hobson came home late one night from a poker game to find Floyd (Panhandle) Phillips sitting on the bunkhouse floor amidst maps and papers. Phillips called Hobson over and said, “This detail map here has a big blank space on it.” Hobson asked him if it was a map to a gold mine. “Those maps show all there is known of the south tip of a country as big as Wyoming with Montana thrown in,” Phillips told him. “There’s reports of a grass country in there some place that reaches as far as the eye can see. Yeah—that’s my gold mine. Grass! Free grass reachin’ north into unknown country. Land—lots of it—untouched—just waitin’ for hungry cows, and some buckaroos that can ride and have guts enough to put her over.”⁴²⁰ (At least that’s how the conversation went in the book Hobson published fifteen years later.) Phillips and Hobson headed north to create a Texas-style ranch along the

⁴¹⁶ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 94-96.

⁴¹⁷ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 101.

⁴¹⁸ Brown & Brown, *Legend of Pan Phillips*, [cover photograph].

⁴¹⁹ The view from the floatplane comes from Stienstra, “Floatplane Venture”; the view from the ground comes from Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 16.

⁴²⁰ Hobson, *Grass beyond the Mountains*, 15-16.

Blackwater River. Unlike the plateau farther south, however, most of the Blackwater drainage is marginal for cattle ranching. The main problem that every rancher faces in the Chilcotin is providing enough food to carry the livestock through the portion of winter when they can't forage. The greatest cost incurred in cattle ranching is thus the cost of putting up hay for winter feeding. Near the Gang Ranch, the winter feeding period is about a month. Near the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail, it can be about six months. When demand for beef falls, the ranches with longer winter feeding periods have to turn to other sources of income, like logging or tourism, or go out of business.⁴²¹ Blank spots on the map notwithstanding, Hobson and Phillips soon found themselves with very marginal ranchland indeed, and had to look for supplementary sources of income. Pan Phillips was a tireless supporter of the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail, campaigning for it right up until his death in 1983. The aging sod- and shake-roof structures of his Home Ranch, eight kilometers north of the trail, are now a popular side trip for hikers interested in the history of the area's ranches.⁴²²

To Mackenzie's Rock

Past the Pan Phillips Fishing Resort, at 197.78 and again at 199.24 kilometers, today's hiker comes across "cat tracks" meandering through the woods, trails of wreckage left by a Caterpillar tractor with a bulldozer front-end and a tank-like track. Woodworth and Flygare note that "as a bushwhacking tool ... it's a great but messy way to go. By standing on the cab you can almost see forever."⁴²³ From the tracks it can't be determined whether the operator was headed any place in particular, just bulldozing for the fun of it or lost. At this point the trail guide signals bewilderment—in the archaic sense of the word: feeling lost in the wilderness—by showing a photograph of Hälle Flygare and a native man looking at a map. The caption reads, "Peter Alexis shows

⁴²¹ BC Department of Lands, "Grazing Possibilities of BC"; Weir, "Winter Feeding Period"; BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food, "Agriculture in the Cariboo-Chilcotin"; Campbell & Bawtree, eds. *Rangeland Handbook for BC*; Blacklaws & French, *Ranchland*.

⁴²² Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 103-106; Brown & Brown, *Legend of Pan Phillips*; Hobson, *Grass beyond the Mountains*.

⁴²³ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 97, 106-107.

Halle Flygare the way on the Upper Blackwater—just as Peter’s ancestors showed Mackenzie.”⁴²⁴

Oddly enough, Mackenzie seems to have become somewhat lost near this spot, too, or at least to have taken a direction which has puzzled everyone who has subsequently tried to recreate his route. On July 12, 1793, Mackenzie wrote that his guides had threatened to leave his party and he had to give them gifts so that they would remain with him until he could secure the services of new guides.⁴²⁵ By his description, it seems as if he had just passed Tsetzi Lake and the main native trail leading to Bella Coola via Anahim Lake and the Hotnarko, Atnarko and Bella Coola Rivers.⁴²⁶ It is possible that his guides weren’t threatening to leave him so much as trying to point out that he was missing the sensible way to the coast. For whatever reason, Mackenzie passed by the main trail south and carried on to the west towards Ulgako Creek and Eliguk Lake. That evening he camped without his local guides and had to reassure his men that they “could not be at a great distance from the sea, and that there were but few natives to pass, till [they] should arrive among those, who being accustomed to visit the sea coast, and, having seen white people, would be disposed to treat [them] with kindness.” Mackenzie probably felt less confident about his “dubious journey” than he let on. The following day, he used somewhat more drastic measures to obtain the aid of new guides. Coming to a house on Ulgako creek in the early morning, he went right up to it without warning, whereupon “the women and children uttered the most horrid shrieks, and the only man who appeared to be with them, escaped out of a back door.” Mackenzie was able to detain the women and children. “It is impossible to describe the distress and alarm of these poor people, who believing that they were attacked by enemies, expected an immediate massacre...” Eventually Mackenzie was able to calm his captives enough so that his interpreters could speak with them. He learned that most

⁴²⁴ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 108.

⁴²⁵ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 201.

⁴²⁶ Dawson, “Report on Explorations [1877],” 25; Canada, Energy Mines and Resources, “Bella Coola,” NTS 93D [Map], 1:250,000, 2nd ed., 1989; Canada, Natural Resources, “Anahim Lake,” NTS 93C [Map], 1:250,000, 3rd ed., 1989; Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail Coordinating Committee, “Management Plan”; Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 9.

of the native group had left three days earlier on a trading journey. He told her that he wished “that the man might be induced to return, and conduct [Mackenzie and his men] in the road to the sea.” Eventually he was able to gain the services not only of the man, but of his father and brother too. That evening Mackenzie and his men “retired to rest, with sensations very different from those with which [they] had risen in the morning.”⁴²⁷

The following day, Mackenzie’s party traveled past Eliguk Lake and crossed Ulgako Creek to head over a low mountain to Gatcho Lake. From the mountain he could see “a considerable river” (now known as the Dean) to the southeast. Although he did not know it, he was standing on a divide which separates the drainages of three rivers: the West Road, flowing east to the Fraser, the Nechako, flowing northeast to the Fraser, and the Dean, flowing west to the Pacific. That evening, he crossed the Dean river and, once again, missed two main routes to the coast. One obvious trail led west, directly downriver. The other went upriver to Anahim Lake, and from there to the sea. Instead of taking either of these trails, Mackenzie’s party went due south towards the mountains. On July 15, they met up with another group of interior natives heading toward the coast to trade. Mackenzie found these people very agreeable, but they were traveling too slowly for him and ultimately decided to go in a direction that Mackenzie thought was too different from his own (i.e., they decided to follow the Dean river downstream.) Thinking that he was determined to cross the mountains, they pointed a pass out to him, and then parted company.⁴²⁸

On July 17, Mackenzie and his men climbed a mountain and found themselves surrounded by snow that had drifted into the pass. It was so compact that they didn’t sink into it, but they did see the tracks of a herd of caribou, and the native guides and his hunters went in pursuit. The wind picked up “into a tempest” and it began to snow, hail and rain. Mackenzie—who four years earlier had made a three thousand mile canoe voyage from Lake Athabasca to the Arctic ocean and back—called the weather “as

⁴²⁷ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 202-205.

⁴²⁸ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 205-211; Gough, *First across the Continent*, 141; Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 9.

distressing as any [he] had ever experienced,” and the men took what shelter they could on the leeward side of a huge rock. The hunters did succeed in killing one doe, which the men insisted on taking with them, even though Mackenzie wanted to cache half of the meat. They continued their march toward a mountain which Mackenzie described as “stupendous,” and which is now known by that name. As they trudged forward, Stupendous Mountain “appeared to withdraw.” Eventually, they reached the edge of the Bella Coola gorge, a series of timbered precipices stepping a thousand meters down to the river.⁴²⁹ For the hiker intent on re-enacting Mackenzie’s voyage, the trip through what is now known as Mackenzie’s pass is the most dangerous part. To guide hikers there are a series of cairns, piles of rock one meter in height with a 2.3 meter wooden pole sticking out of the top of each, but the sight of these can be obscured by bad weather. The last radiophone heading west is almost ninety kilometers back up the trail. There is no way to go but forward, steadily descending for fifteen kilometers after the pass. At that point there is a junction of three trails, and it is not known which Mackenzie used to reach the Bella Coola valley.⁴³⁰

Once he descended into the valley, Mackenzie was near the ocean. The alder and cedar trees were the largest he had ever seen. The berries were ripe and he and his men were “sensible of an entire change in the climate.” He was given a warm reception at a native village that evening, which he later named “Friendly Village.” Over the course of the next three days, Mackenzie’s party made their way downstream. On July 20 he wrote, “At about eight we got out of the river, which discharges itself by various channels into an arm of the sea. The tide was out, and had left a large space covered with seaweed. The surrounding hills were involved in fog.” The men saw sea-otters, porpoises, eagles, gulls and ducks. They explored the coast for a few days, frequently meeting native groups, and then prepared to return. In his journal Mackenzie wrote, “I now mixed up some vermilion in melted grease, and inscribed, in large characters, on the South-East face of the rock on which we slept last night, this brief memorial—‘Alexander

⁴²⁹ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 212-213; Gough, *First across the Continent*, 143.

⁴³⁰ Woodworth and Flygare, *In the Steps*, 21, 124, 157, 162.

Mackenzie, from Canada, by land, the twenty-second of July, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three.”⁴³¹

‘A Mari usque ad Mare’

In the summer of 1923, Captain Richard Preston Bishop of the British Columbia Land Department, who was working in the vicinity of Bella Coola, was asked to try to locate Mackenzie’s Rock. Its position had been unknown since the last recorded sighting of it in 1836, when Mackenzie’s vermilion marking was described as “partly decipherable.” There were a number of factors which made Bishop’s relocation of the rock a matter of inference. For one thing, given the equipment at his disposal and the constraints under which he was working, the latitude that Mackenzie gave for the rock’s position was estimated to be accurate to about a mile and a half north or south. Bishop was searching for the proverbial needle in a haystack, trying to locate a rock along a three-mile stretch of rocky shore. For another thing, there were at least three discrepancies between the text of Mackenzie’s *Voyage* and the footnotes which he added later. In one place, the most likely course is four miles long, but Mackenzie gave the distance as one fourth of a mile. In another place, something that is identified as an island (and looks like one from the sea), is actually a peninsula. The final discrepancy, and the most troubling, is that the distance that Mackenzie gave along the shore to the location of the rock is quite a bit less than the distance to the rock that Bishop decided is the most likely candidate. Bishop explained this difference by suggesting that Mackenzie forgot to record one of his courses. Having potentially located the rock, Bishop proceeded to check it against the other constraints that were known from Mackenzie’s journal. The rock had to be near an abandoned native village, have a sheer face on the southeast side, be easily defended, have a southerly exposure of at least three miles, and be about three miles southwest of a cove. Having found such a rock, Bishop suggested that it was Mackenzie’s Rock, and his identification was accepted by the provincial Land

⁴³¹ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 213-239.

Department, the British Columbia Historical Association, and the Canadian Historic Sites and Monuments Board.⁴³²

A more permanent version of Mackenzie's message was chiseled into the face of the rock that Bishop identified. On August 26, 1927, the Canadian government unveiled a 40-foot obelisk above the rock and an inscribed plaque which reads, "This rock is the western terminus of the first journey across the continent of North America. It was made by Alexander Mackenzie of the North West Company, who, with his nine companions, arrived at this spot on the 21st July, 1793. Mackenzie, by observations, ascertained his position, spent the night here, and, after writing on the southeast face the words now cut therein, retraced his course to Lake Athabaska. This transcontinental journey preceded by more than ten years that of Lewis and Clark."⁴³³ On the occasion, the prime minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, sent a letter praising Mackenzie's "courage, devotion and endurance," and said that the explorer held "an exalted place in world history."⁴³⁴

When John Woodworth began campaigning for the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail as the bicentennial of the voyage approached, he invoked Mackenzie's Rock as a symbol of Canadian history and national identity. Canadians of his generation had grown up with photographs of the rock (the 1927 version), in their history textbooks, and had dutifully memorized the inscription. He also cited another symbol that had been created in the aftermath of the Great War, the Canadian Coat of Arms. Proclaimed by King George V in November 1921, its Latin motto read "A mari usque ad mare," from sea to sea.⁴³⁵ Woodworth held up Mackenzie's voyage as a defining moment in the creation of a country which stretched across the continent, and he felt that by

⁴³² Bishop, *Mackenzie's Rock*. For an example of the uncertainty about the exact location of the rock in the early 20th century, see Walbran, *BC Coast Names*, s.v., "Cascade Inlet," 84-85.

⁴³³ Long, "Historic Sites and Monuments Board"; Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 6 [photo]. For another call for the creation of such a monument, see Wade, *Mackenzie of Canada*.

⁴³⁴ For the Mackenzie monument, see letter from B. F. Jacobsen to Judge Howay, 6 Apr 1926, AKR Box 3, File 37, Xerox 213; Gough, *First across the Continent*, 153-54. There are photographs of Mackenzie Rock in Gough, *First across the Continent*, 38 and in the BC Archives in Victoria. See BCA A-02313 (ca 1927); NA-04372 (1930); NA-13124 (1952); and I-05474 through I-05478 (1980).

⁴³⁵ Woodworth, "Show Us." For the Canadian coat of arms see Canada, Canadian Heritage, "Ceremonial and Canadian Symbols Promotion."

commemorating Mackenzie's accomplishments he could further the cause of Canadian unity.⁴³⁶

In the political climate of the early 1990s, Canada's unity was very much in question. The governing party of Quebec, the Parti Québécois, had originally come to power in 1976 on a platform which held that the province should negotiate for its independence from Canada. A 1980 referendum on the question of separation was rejected by 60% of the province's voters, and the party was defeated five years later. Although the Canadian constitution was repatriated from Britain in 1982, it was done without the support of the province of Quebec. Subsequent attempts to resolve constitutional problems at Meech Lake (1987) and Charlottetown (1992) failed to strike a balance that separatists and federalists could agree on. The Parti Québécois returned to power in 1994 and again sponsored a separatist referendum.⁴³⁷ In parts of Canada that were predominately anglophone, like British Columbia, there was a sense that the future of the country lay in the hands of the separatists. Popular federalist sentiment found a variety of outlets, from active campaigning to the spread of bumper-stickers reading "My Canada includes Quebec/Mon Canada inclut le Québec." Woodworth's association can be seen as one expression of this feeling. Renamed the Alexander Mackenzie Voyageur Route Association and dedicated to "the cause of Canadian unity," they began by petitioning each of the six provinces, from Quebec west to British Columbia, to formally proclaim the existence of a Mackenzie heritage trail within their own borders. That accomplished, they then turned to the federal government for recognition of the trail as a whole. On Heritage Day in 1995, the prime minister Jean Chrétien (himself a Québécois but opposed to separation) issued an official federal proclamation confirming the existence of a "sea to sea" route that Canadians should celebrate and protect.⁴³⁸ Events in

⁴³⁶ Woodworth, "Show Us."

⁴³⁷ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, s.v. "Canada," Accessed 27 Aug 2003. <<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article?eu=119752>>.

⁴³⁸ The quote comes from the organization's website <<http://www.amvr.org>>. See also "John Woodworth to Receive Gabrielle Leger Award," *Canada NewsWire*, 18 Sep 1995; "Perseverance Pays Off for Heritage-Award Winner," *Canadian Press Newswire*, 8 Oct 1995. Heritage Day is the third Monday in February, and thus was February 20 in 1995. See Heritage Canada, "Heritage Day."

Quebec, however, gathered momentum. In June 1995, the Parti Québécois put forth a draft bill on sovereignty and in September set a referendum date for the end of the following month. People on both sides followed the vote anxiously. On October 31, a record 93.5% of Quebec voters turned out, and the bill was defeated 50.6% to 49.4%.⁴³⁹ It is impossible to say whether or not the commemoration of Alexander Mackenzie played any significant role in the defeat of the referendum. In the fall of 1995, however, John Woodworth received the country's highest award for heritage conservation. "You have to know which doors to knock on," he said, "If you've got a good cause and a feasible kind of thing, then keep phoning and phoning."⁴⁴⁰

The efforts of John Woodworth and his colleagues to create the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail united the country in a particular way. The trail was a static geographic entity that could be represented on maps as a line connecting the provinces from sea to sea, a line that crucially included Quebec. But the creation of the trail also made possible a different kind of national unification, a more dynamic and performative one. Commemorators could now re-enact Mackenzie's voyage by traveling along the trail in his footsteps. In crossing the Great Divide, they would be symbolically tying the country together. Many of these re-enactments were timed to coincide with the bicentennial of Mackenzie's voyage and none was more ambitious than the one mounted by Lakehead University in Ontario. A group of forty students from the Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism school spent four summers paddling 15,840 kilometers in a \$5 million re-enactment of Mackenzie's expeditions. They were supported both by the Alexander Mackenzie Trail Association, for whom they were marking the route, and by the One Step Beyond Adventure Group, whose mission was to get Canadians to adopt the adventuresome spirit of the pioneers. The students trained in canoes in the Olympic pool at their university. En route, they camped outdoors—"No showers, no Holiday Inns"—and dressed in period costumes to do an educational "fur trade road show" at nearby

⁴³⁹ David Crary, "By a Whisker Canada Survives, but Quebec Faces Divisive Days," Associated Press, 31 Oct 1995.

⁴⁴⁰ "Perseverance Pays Off."

schools. They were accompanied by a coast guard boat and a supply van. The first two years, they put on historical pageants in various Canadian communities, “a lively half-hour dramatic presentation with much audience participation” and then allowed the public to tour their encampment and look at various “authentic artifacts” from the fur trade. The following three years they paddled from Montreal to Winnipeg (1991), Winnipeg to Peace River (1992), and Peace River to Bella Coola (1993), timing their arrival at the Pacific to coincide with the two hundredth anniversary of Mackenzie’s arrival there.⁴⁴¹

So Much for the Oolichan Festival

The British Columbian and federal governments pledged more than a million dollars to support the Lakehead student expedition and other Mackenzie bicentennial celebrations, drawing criticism from politicians on the left. Ray Skelly, for example, a New Democratic Party MP[†] from British Columbia, objected in a speech to the House of Commons on the grounds that Mackenzie and his followers had stolen Indian land, resources, and artifacts and destroyed native society. “What is there to celebrate in genocide?” he asked. This, in turn, raised the ire of people with a more conservative perspective on the past, such as Pierre Berton, one of Canada’s leading popular historians. “Of course, it is proper that history record the errors, stupidities and cruelties of the past, as well as its triumphs,” he wrote. “Mackenzie’s remarkable feat, no matter what the implications, deserves to be remembered and celebrated. I, for one, propose to help celebrate it. I certainly have no intention of letting Ray Skelly lay a guilt trip on me.” But Skelly’s objection was a portent of those to come.⁴⁴²

At the terminus of Mackenzie’s voyage, the town of Bella Coola was planning a five-day Oolichan Festival to welcome the Lakehead student expedition and other bicentennial celebrants.⁴⁴³ Some of the celebrations bore a more tenuous connection to Mackenzie’s accomplishments than others. The Rich Hobson Frontier Cattle Drive re-

⁴⁴¹ Tracey Tyler, “Forty Students to Relive Adventures of Explorer,” *Toronto Star*, 19 Feb 1988; Lynn Hancock, “Bicentennial Recreates Voyages of Mackenzie,” *Toronto Star*, 8 Jul 1989.

⁴⁴² Pierre Berton, “May We Only Celebrate History’s Nice Guys?” *Toronto Star*, 16 Nov 1991.

⁴⁴³ “Column One,” *Vancouver Sun*, 10 Apr 1993.

enactment, for example, involved 220 people who had each paid \$650 to drive a herd of cattle in a big circle that transected the heritage trail. Timed to coincide with the Mackenzie celebrations, the cattle drive was really intended to honor the pioneering accomplishments of Rich Hobson and Pan Phillips, and included a pageant of their life and times, “campfire cowboy serenades and poetry,” and rodeos and bronco-busting.⁴⁴⁴ The centerpiece of the Oolichan festival was intended to be the overland arrival of the Lakehead students.

The student expedition ran into trouble, however, when they reached Alexandria, the place where Mackenzie had his moment of indecision before deciding to turn west. There, student brigade organizers were told by several Indian bands that the “second coming of Mackenzie [was] not welcome.”⁴⁴⁵ This assimilation of Mackenzie and Christ encapsulated a number of grievances that interior First Nations people had against non-native colonists. For one thing, it raised the legacy of the Durieu system, where Catholic missionaries had created Indian states under the hierarchical authority of the Bishop, local missionary, chiefs, watchmen and policemen, and the subsequent incarceration of native children in residential schools, often against the will of their families.⁴⁴⁶ It also signalled an awareness that the temporal frame of reference that had come to be used in the Chilcotin after Mackenzie’s voyage marked time with respect to the incarnation of a deity on the other side of the world, rather than to the actions of Dog-Husband or one of the other transformers in myth time. And it reflected the irony of the fact that the place of Mackenzie’s indecision should come to be named Alexandria in his honor, and the hundred-odd Tsilhqot’ins who lived there, the Alexandria band.⁴⁴⁷ For three weeks, the students waited uncertainly for a resolution of the situation, going on day hikes to pass the time. Eventually, the overland portion of their journey was cancelled, and they

⁴⁴⁴ Bev Christensen, “BC Cattle Drive Will Be Rugged for Horses, Riders,” *Calgary Herald*, 4 Apr 1992. This is now an annual event.

⁴⁴⁵ Jerry Macdonald, “Second Coming of Mackenzie a Dream Come True,” *Vancouver Sun*, 24 Jul 1993.

⁴⁴⁶ Whitehead, *Cariboo Mission*; Idem, *Now You Are My Brother*; Idem, ed. *They Call Me Father*; Mulhall, *Will to Power*; Miller, “Reading Photographs”; Furniss, *Victims of Benevolence*. This is further discussed in Part III below.

⁴⁴⁷ *BCPN*, 4; FNP, “Alexandria.”

climbed into vans to make the trip on Highway 20 instead.⁴⁴⁸ Upon reaching saltwater, they were again able to put their canoes in the water to make the final stretch of the voyage to Mackenzie's Rock.

The celebrations in Bella Coola failed to live up to the expectations of many of the participants.⁴⁴⁹ Although the students were welcomed by the Nuxalk people, there was still concern that other First Nations might block the ceremonies. Andy Siwallace, a Nuxalk hereditary chief, tied an eagle feather in the hair of Dwayne Smith, the young man who played Mackenzie on the voyage, and told him, "You are a welcome sight. You followed in Mackenzie's footsteps from beginning to end, and we are proud of you for doing this. While you are here, you will be living in peace with us." Another hereditary chief told the students, "There are always problems with history and there are always problems with our own people, too. But there's nothing we can't do if we talk together ... because times change. We speak from our hearts, not from our mouths. Be yourselves ... and stand firm in what you believe."⁴⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the organizers decided that it might insult the native elders if the students were to sing the national anthem "O Canada" at Mackenzie's Rock, and tried to cancel that part of the performance. On hearing the news, a local canoeist started screaming at them. "What in the hell is this country coming to if we can't even sing our national anthem at an historic event like this? What have these kids come all this way for?" In the end, some of the students sang the anthem quietly and some didn't, and the singing was drowned out by the noise of the outboard motors on the boats ferrying most of the celebrants back to shore.⁴⁵¹ Reflecting on the experience, Dwayne Smith concluded, "Mackenzie had a vision 200 years ago as to what he thought this country could be like, and we are supporting that vision today of a commitment among the various cultures which make up this country."⁴⁵² The accomplishments of other celebrants at the Oolichan Festival were

⁴⁴⁸ Jerry Macdonald, "True Patriot Shove," *Vancouver Sun*, 11 Aug 1993.

⁴⁴⁹ A sadly familiar outcome in the history of Canadian commemoration. For other examples, see Pope, *Many Landfalls*; Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists*.

⁴⁵⁰ Macdonald, "Second Coming."

⁴⁵¹ Macdonald, "True Patriot Shove."

⁴⁵² Macdonald, "Second Coming."

overlooked altogether. A group of Albertan teenagers who had hiked the overland trail from Alexandria were forgotten, as were descendants of Mackenzie who had come over from Scotland, and the captain and crew of the Royal Canadian Naval vessel the HMCS *Mackenzie*, making her last voyage ever. Most poignant of all, perhaps, was an 83-year-old Scot who had retraced Mackenzie's steps by himself over the previous four years, faced down storms and white water, been bitten and mugged, and ended up standing on the sidelines holding his Scottish terrier.⁴⁵³

No federal politicians attended the Oolichan Festival in Bella Coola, even though it was an election year. Despite a show of support for the celebrations in the provincial Legislative Assembly in Victoria, and funding from both the provincial and federal governments, the commitment from the country's politicians seemed lukewarm and ambivalent. The same uncertainty had been seen in the previous year's re-enactments and celebrations of George Vancouver's exploration of the British Columbia coast. Mike Harcourt, the New Democratic Party premier, said that the province had no reason to celebrate the bicentennial of Vancouver's arrival, but his government helped to sponsor a "Wake of the Explorers" re-enactment, and government staff members occupied the captain's chairs of boats in the festival.⁴⁵⁴ One reason for the mixed signals was that the Columbian Quincentennial of 1992 had been the occasion of such ideological conflict that no-one wanted to commit themselves too strongly to either side of what might become a polarized debate between supporters of the First Nations and apologists for colonization. But there were deeper questions of Canadian national identity at stake, and uncertainties about the historical role of Mackenzie's voyage brought a paradox into sharp relief.

The Suspect Terrain of the Cultural Mosaic

The English version of the national anthem celebrates Canada as "our home and native land," but in a nation created primarily from immigrant settlers and their

⁴⁵³ Macdonald, "True Patriot Shove."

⁴⁵⁴ British Columbia, Legislative Assembly, *Official Report of the Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, Vol. 10, No. 12, 28 May 1993, 6603-6605; Anonymous, "After the Re-enactments."

descendents, it has always been difficult for Canadians to draw a line between natives and newcomers.⁴⁵⁵ When the Historic Sites and Monuments Board was created in 1919, they held a nationwide competition to find the best design for a standard tablet to be placed on monuments such as the one at Mackenzie's Rock. The winning design was created by a sculptor named Major Ernest Forbery, and made much use of botanical emblems. The border consisted of pine cones and needles to symbolize the northern climate. Maple leaves below a crown signified Canada, a British dominion and member of the Empire. Other plants signified the "principal races from which Canadians are descended": the rose (English), thistle (Scottish), shamrock (Irish), lily (French) and leek (Welsh). The absence of any emblem to represent indigenous people was not thought significant enough to warrant comment when M. H. Long gave a presidential address on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board to the Canadian Historical Association in 1954.⁴⁵⁶ But sensibilities were changing, due in part to the determination of French-Canadians not to be assimilated into anglophone society. The viability of the Canadian confederation depended on recognizing the coexistence of "two nations," and "given the basic and necessary commitment to dualism in Canada, it is not surprising that the representatives of other ethnic groups should also aspire to the preservation of their languages and cultures as a constitutional right."⁴⁵⁷ When the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* was framed in 1982 as part of the Constitution, article 27 stated, "This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians." The accompanying commentary noted that "Canadians are proud that this country has not become a melting pot, but has maintained its multicultural character."⁴⁵⁸ In 1996, for the first time, the census allowed people to write their own ethnic origins into four blank spaces, rather than

⁴⁵⁵ The (original) French version of the national anthem, whose corresponding verse is "terre de nos aïeux" (literally "land of our forefathers / ancestors") doesn't have the same connotations of naturalness, innateness, or indigenoussness of "native land." For the history of the national anthem see Canada, Canadian Heritage, "Ceremonial and Canadian Symbols Promotion."

⁴⁵⁶ Long, "Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada." The "principal races" quote comes from a description of the tablet in Bishop, *Mackenzie's Rock*, 31.

⁴⁵⁷ Richmond, "Immigration," 7.

⁴⁵⁸ Canada, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, 1982, 29-30.

picking from pre-given categories, like “Irish” or “French.” The most common response to the question of ethnic origins on the 1996 census was “Canadian,” which meant that the 1996 data could not be meaningfully compared with earlier censuses that had tried to block that response. The freedom to choose one’s own ethnic categories also led to a multiplication of composites, like “East Indian and Portuguese,” “Irish, French, Canadian and Métis,” and so on.⁴⁵⁹ This recognition of the multiplicity of ancestral roots reflected Canada’s ideology of the “cultural mosaic,” which respected the diverse historical cultural identities of immigrants.

While the cultural mosaic was a source of great pride to Canadians, it forced them to adopt a historical relativism that engendered fears that they were not as patriotic as their American neighbors. Questions about the historical importance of Mackenzie brought these fears to the fore, especially when he was compared, implicitly or explicitly, to Lewis and Clark. One of the reasons why Bishop was motivated to locate Mackenzie’s Rock in the 1920s was that he was concerned that people did not know that Mackenzie had made the first crossing of the continent and that both Thomas Jefferson and Meriwether Lewis had read Mackenzie’s *Voyages* and been inspired by it. “All good Canadians are well aware of this,” he said in a speech in Victoria, “but the fact is apparently by no means universally recognized. Fiske, in ‘The Discovery of America,’ solemnly announces that the continent was first crossed by Lewis and Clark, whose expeditions reached the Columbia some twelve years later ... It is hard to understand how so learned and impartial an historian as Fiske should make such a mistake; possibly his sources of information were influenced by some of the disputes which arose in connection with the various international boundary questions in this part of the world.”⁴⁶⁰ If he had lived to see it, Bishop would have no doubt been disappointed to read the claim made by the American popular historian Stephen Ambrose in 1996 in *Newsweek* that Lewis was “the first white man to cross the Continental Divide.” Bishop’s intellectual

⁴⁵⁹ Leacy, ed. *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Section A: *Population and Migration*, A125-163, “Origins of the Population, Census Dates, 1871 to 1971,” Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1999, 11-516-XIE; Statistics Canada, “1996 Census: Ethnic Origin, Visible Minorities,” 17 Feb 1998.

⁴⁶⁰ Bishop, *Mackenzie’s Rock*, 8-9.

heir, John Woodworth, wrote in to the magazine to correct Ambrose, noting that “an earlier claim was painted on a rock near Bella Coola, B.C.” In reply, the editors said that “Mr. Ambrose’s article reflects U.S. history,” and that he was referring to United States territory.⁴⁶¹ The Lakehead student re-enactment of the Mackenzie voyage only served to confirm fears about Canadian patriotism. En route, the students were consistently misidentified by Canadian schoolchildren as “Abe Lincoln,” “Daniel Boone,” and “Davy Crockett,” something that horrified patriotic commentators.⁴⁶² As the celebration of the Lewis and Clark bicentennial began in 2003, some Canadian comparisons of the relative accomplishments of Mackenzie vis-à-vis Lewis and Clark became more extreme.⁴⁶³ In an article that ran in newspapers in a number of major Canadian cities, the *Vancouver Sun* columnist Stephen Hume claimed that the “lionized” American explorers were the “also-rans” of continental exploration and that their “exploits pale[d] by comparison” with those of Samuel Hearne, Alexander Mackenzie, David Thompson and Simon Fraser.⁴⁶⁴ Such views were, of course, considerably less nuanced than those presented in the historical literature of either Canada or the United States, but they probably struck a chord in many of their readers.

In trying to memorialize Alexander Mackenzie, Canadians faced the question of how to celebrate the historical accomplishments of a particular individual or group in the country’s cultural mosaic while not alienating the others. The answer that they settled on was to dedicate a place in his honor, in this case the heritage trail. Such a form of commemoration had many advantages. The trail bore an obvious physical relation to Mackenzie’s expedition, serving as an indexical sign of the voyage. In the face of political separatism it was used symbolically to unite the country in both static

⁴⁶¹ John Woodworth, “Across the Great Divide,” *Newsweek*, 28 Oct 1996.

⁴⁶² Macdonald, “True Patriot Shove.”

⁴⁶³ The years 2003-2006 were officially designated the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial by U.S. President George W. Bush on July 1, 2002.

⁴⁶⁴ Donald Jones, “He Was the First to Cross the Rockies to the Pacific,” *Toronto Star*, 10 Jun 1989; Cole, “On the Trail”; Stephen Hume, “Lionized US Explorers Were Also-Rans at Charting the Continent,” *Vancouver Sun*, 10 May 2003; Idem “Canadian Explorers Blazed a Trail: Lewis and Clark Also-Rans,” *Edmonton Journal*, 18 May 2003; Idem, “Lewis and Clark Were Latecomers,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 May 2003.

representations and dynamic performances. It served to remind American patriots about Mackenzie's precedence in continental crossing and to attract tourists in search of adventure or outdoor recreation. Besides the tourists' dollars, people who lived along the trail gained a sense of pride in the historical importance of their region. By choosing to dedicate such a place, however, the proponents of the heritage trail also raised new problems. For one thing, it was impossible to know exactly where Mackenzie had traveled. In marking out *the* Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail, the trail's designers occasionally had to resign themselves to guessing which of a number of possible routes the explorer probably took, and thus were faced with the uncomfortable knowledge that they were reifying something that they could not be certain of.⁴⁶⁵ A more political problem raised by the heritage trail was that connections between history and landscape are multivalent and difficult to read. Places don't speak for themselves about their past; rather their pasts emerge from the interpretive activities of many people. Having dedicated the heritage trail to Mackenzie, its proponents found that its historical meaning remained open and contested.

⁴⁶⁵ "Alterations to the past ... affect those who make them. They run counter to desires for a fixed and stable heritage and undermine our role as its continuators." Lowenthal, *Past is a Foreign Country*, xxiv.

Chapter 4: Grease Trails

In 1993, the Ulkatcho Indian Band of Anahim Lake published a booklet entitled *Ulkatcho: Stories of the Grease Trail*. Timed to coincide with the Mackenzie bicentennial, and funded in part by the Ministry of Government Services'† Sea to Sea project, the book presented a First Nations perspective on the trail network, with stories told by Ulkatcho and Nuxalk elders in sidebars. "For the past 200 years," it began, "native people of British Columbia have found themselves in the unfortunate position of having been 'discovered' by Europeans." People of European background downplayed the activities of natives, and "in order to take over the land, the importance of the land to native people ha[d] been ignored. In its place, the accomplishments of 'white' people ha[d] been emphasized." The introduction to the booklet went on to state that the history that people were taught in school was not necessarily correct, and stories could be told from different points of view. The grease trail† had been an integral part of Nuxalk and southern Carrier culture and history before the newcomers arrived, and its use went back thousands of years. Mackenzie's accomplishments, while noteworthy, had been allowed to eclipse those of native people. "Mackenzie, after all, only walked down the trail once." The Ulkatcho elder Henry Jack was quoted as saying, "This has always been our trail. I used to climb that tree across the trail from my father's cabin when I was a boy. I still trap along the trail today. My grandfather Baptiste Stillas, used this trail all his life. You can still see the stumps of the trees he cut to build his barn, long before I was born. Now they want to give this trail to Mackenzie..."⁴⁶⁶

For the people of Ulkatcho, as for their native neighbors throughout the Chilcotin, memory is everywhere anchored in the landscape, along the grease trails and rivers, of course, but also in the meadows and forests between. For them, there is not a single trail that connects the Fraser with the coast, or that unites provinces east and west; rather there is a dense, lived mesh of trails, and a cyclicity and seasonality of travel. Traditional native calendars in the interior started in the winter, in the moon named for

⁴⁶⁶ Birchwater, *Ulkatcho*, 1.

ice. In the grasslands along the Fraser River, the deer began to rut, the males circling one another warily before locking antlers in a contest to determine which of them would mate. For people across the interior plateau, this was a time to enter subterranean houses. Deer and other animals like sheep, elk, hare and grouse, were hunted as weather permitted, to supplement caches of stored food. Some interior groups wintered with friends and kin on the coast in villages like Bella Coola; for the rest, the following moon was a time to stay at home, a time of the first real cold. Occasionally it was possible to ice fish the lakes for whitefish, trout and suckers, but more frequently diets consisted of dried salmon and meat, roots and berries. The sun turned in midwinter, the time of the big moon, and animals like mink, marten, weasel, fisher, rabbits, lynx, coyote and fox were trapped for their plush winter coats. It was a good time to sew buckskin and to visit. By the following moon, food stores were running low. Along the Fraser near Lillooet, the snow would already be disappearing in the chinook winds and a few spring roots could be dug. Farther north and west the snow crusted over and began to darken with wind-blown debris. This made travel easier, and it became possible to run down game on foot, as hooves broke through the crust when snowshoes did not. With the beginning of spring, bears came out of hibernation and by the end of the moon most of the people had emerged from their winter houses, too. People began to disperse throughout band territories to hunt and to fish in the lakes. The snow was melting from the high ground, the grass growing in the valleys. By the beginning of summer, most families had moved to lake fishing stations to catch and dry trout, whitefish and suckers. It was a time to dig potatoes, wild onions, tiger-lily bulbs, and shoots of balsamroot and cow-parsnip. The summer moons were a time for berrying: strawberries and soapberries and saskatoons gathered beside rivers and lakes. The summer also marked the beginning of the spring salmon run for some, and for others a time to hunt waterfowl, mountain goats, and the other ungulates had grown fat on mountain pastures. The salmon runs occupied most people's time until the moon of the sockeye salmon and for some groups the rest of the autumn as well. Others went hunting in the fall moons, and gathered pine seeds near higher-elevation base camps. For each of these activities, and for countless others, there

was a trip to be made along particular trails: from Ulkatcho to Bella Coola in time for the berry harvest; from Nazko to Anahim Lake to collect obsidian; from Nemiah to Tanya Lakes to smoke salmon. And whenever and wherever people gathered, there were opportunities to trade, to teach or learn new skills, to discuss ideas, share news, tell stories, joke, flirt, and play the gambling game lahal.⁴⁶⁷

This is not to suggest that there was anything like a unified native perspective on the grease trails. For one thing, coastal groups were more sedentary than those in the interior, stockpiled greater surpluses and used the surplus to support social and cultural elaboration. Different native groups were further differentiated by language, ideology, religious and ceremonial practices, traditions, geographical position, access to natural resources, and so on. But there was a longstanding system of understandings, ways to negotiate with others who were not kin or did not speak the same languages, shared ideas about travel, trade and usufruct rights, and, for those in the interior, similar ecological adaptations developed in response to similar environments.

“Native people have been living here 10,000 years.” The chief of Nazko said. “There’s a lot of history here. Especially around Nazko, Kluskus and Ulkatcho, where archaeologists have dug up old village sites that are very old.”⁴⁶⁸ One of the suggestions made by the *Ulkatcho* booklet was that the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail should be renamed. As things stood, there were signs along the route that said “Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail” in large letters, with “Nuxalk-Carrier Route” in a smaller font below. Instead, they felt that the trail network should be labeled with signs that said “Nuxalk-Carrier Grease Trail” in large letters. One of the many grease trails could then also have signs which were subtitled “Alexander Mackenzie Route.” “Native people, after all, are not opposed to recognizing the accomplishments of others. They believe,

⁴⁶⁷ Lane, *Cultural Relations*, 219; Birchwater, *Ulkatcho*; Idem, *Ulkatchot'en*; Alexander, “Cultural Heritage Overview,” 55-60, 219.

⁴⁶⁸ Quoted in Birchwater, *Ulkatcho*, 5. As the quote indicates, native people differ in the extent to which they espouse creationist views, as do non-natives.

however, that such recognition should not come at the expense of proper respect for their own culture and heritage.”⁴⁶⁹

The First Settlers

If one takes the really long-term perspective, the time that we live in is doubly unlikely. Glacial ages—like the Quaternary, the last million-and-a-half odd years—have been infrequent in the history of the earth, and interglacial periods (like the one that peaked about ten thousand years ago) occur infrequently during glacial ages (Chronology II).⁴⁷⁰ This unusual sequence of climatic conditions, ten millennia of warmth following a major glaciation, was what allowed human beings to come to the Americas (Chronology I). At the peak of the last glaciation, mean sea level was about 120 meters lower than it is today, allowing the emergence of coastal features that are now shallowly submerged.⁴⁷¹ The most important of these, at least in terms of human history, was Beringia, the continental shelf that connects Siberia and Alaska. This was the route by which the ancestors of the aboriginal people entered the Americas. The time of arrival is disputed. Human skeletal remains from the Americas have not been reliably dated to be older than twelve thousand years before present (BP), and most archaeologists believe that is when people first came, towards the end of the last glaciation.⁴⁷²

The traditional view was of Asian mammoth hunters who followed their prey across Beringia and southward into central Canada, probably through an “ice-free corridor” into the interior. The earliest that such a corridor could have been clear would have been about 11000 BP. People then filled the Americas over the next thousand years

⁴⁶⁹ Birchwater, *Ulkatcho*, 2.

⁴⁷⁰ Pielou, *After the Ice Age*, 12.

⁴⁷¹ Emery & Garrison, “Sea Levels.”

⁴⁷² A note on dating. In the literature, dates expressed in “thousands of years before present” are assumed, by convention, to be uncalibrated radiocarbon dates (¹⁴C dates) unless otherwise stated. These dates cannot be assumed to be “calendar years before present” until they are calibrated by cross-dating them with a reliable indicator of elapsed calendar years, like the tree rings of bristlecone pines. Here, the date cited is the one given by the author. In cases where it was necessary to determine a calibrated date range for an individual uncalibrated date, the 95% confidence interval was calculated with OxCal. Calibrated date ranges given for uncalibrated date ranges are the upper and lower ends of the 95% confidence intervals for the upper and lower individual dates, respectively. University of Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit, OxCal v3.5. For more on dating, see Michels, “Dating Methods”; Roberts, *Holocene*; Rapp & Hill, *Geoarchaeology*; Dincauze, *Environmental Archaeology*.

by radiating from the central and southward axis of migration.⁴⁷³ This view has recently been challenged on a number of points. For one thing, it ignores the fact that the Northwest Coast was deglaciated well before the interior, and would have provided a suitable habitat for human beings by 13000 BP. Furthermore, it assumes that the first colonists depended more upon their technological skills and knowledge of animal behavior than upon a knowledge of geography, and thus that they followed the animals from region to region. This is not true of present-day foraging groups, which tend to be confined by their particular geography and by neighboring peoples. Instead, some researchers now argue that it is important to think of the colonization in more ecological terms. In the Americas, major physiographical regions and large environmental zones, known as “biomes,” tend to run north-south. The traditional view of unidirectional migration would have the first colonists travel through a physiographic obstacle course and cross-cut a series of environments. In the newer model, people migrated in a number of directions at once, settling within biomes instead of moving through them.⁴⁷⁴

Beginning as early as 14000 BP, people may have worked their way down “a chain of sea level refugia”[†] along the southern margin of Beringia and the Pacific coast of the Americas.⁴⁷⁵ There they would have been able to easily exploit rich and predictable marine and intertidal resources, like anadromous[†] fish and shellfish. This economic adaptation, called “generalized foraging,” was well-suited to colonization.⁴⁷⁶ It didn’t require the same rapid movement as the hunting of large mammals, and didn’t make the whole group dependent upon the success of a few strong adults. Archaeological evidence

⁴⁷³ See, for example, Clark, *Western Subarctic Prehistory*. In this view, “the coast was envisioned as too rugged for Early Man to traverse, and too marginal in terms of subsistence for him to have survived. Everyone knew that early people were supposed to eat elephants and bison, and this steep, rocky, forested region was never elephant nor bison country. The arts of fishing, watercraft and navigation were considered to be too advanced for early migrants.” Carlson, “Early Period,” 211.

⁴⁷⁴ Dixon, “Human Colonization.”

⁴⁷⁵ This alternative was first suggested by a number of archaeologists around 1960, but not taken seriously until the late 1970s. The quote comes from an influential paper by Fladmark, “Routes,” 64.

⁴⁷⁶ The locus classicus of this model is Lee and DeVore, eds. *Man the Hunter*. See also Isaac, “Economy, Ecology and Analogy.” Kelly, in *The Foraging Spectrum*, argues that the most serious critique of the model comes from the fact that “living foragers are not isolated from the world system,” 23. The first colonists of the Americas probably were relatively isolated from the Old World, although not from one another.

from other parts of the world shows that human beings were able to build watercraft and navigate them near ocean shores by this time. Subsequent movement from the coastal zone into the western cordillera probably occurred more slowly, as people moved inland along rivers and adapted to interior conditions. In some places, more emphasis may have been put on the harvesting and processing of plants and seeds. In others, hunting probably became more important. The eastern coastal zone of the Americas, reached by crossing the isthmus in central America and/or by rounding Cape Horn, offered other possibilities for ecological adaptation. In this model, the interior plains of North America may have been colonized relatively late, and the archaeological evidence there for mammoth predation might be a relatively unique adaptation. "In other words, the spectacular and well publicized Clovis kill sites may be the least typical and the least useful sites for interpreting the peopling of the Americas and early New World adaptations." The high arctic, the extreme north east of North America and Greenland, was not accessible to human colonization until about five thousand years ago, and thus was colonized last.⁴⁷⁷

The first human occupants probably moved into what is now British Columbia around 13000 BP. For the past two thousand years, the climate had been improving, the edges of the ice sheets retreating, and vegetation was returning to the recently deglaciated land. In the wake of the retreating ice, freshly exposed land was unstable, and slides and floods must have been common. The increased erosion muddied streams and lakes, made poor habitat for aquatic insects and minnows that served as fish food, and thus poor spawning grounds for salmon and trout. As plant life became established, erosion decreased, and the sediment load in streams and rivers dropped. New salmon runs could become established within a few centuries, providing one source of food for human inhabitants.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁷ Dixon, "Human Colonization." For the late colonization of the high arctic, see McGhee, *Ancient People of the Arctic*.

⁴⁷⁸ Mathews, "Late Quaternary Environmental History," 147-152; Fladmark, *BC Prehistory*; Cannings & Cannings, *Geology of BC*, 65; Hebda, "Interior Grasslands"; Carl, Clemens & Lindsey, "The Salmon, Trout, and Char—Family Salmonidae," in *Fresh-Water Fishes*, 52-83.

Obsidian

At many points along the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail one can find small chips of obsidian, a black volcanic glass. There is some in the mouth of an occasionally dry stream bed at 244.44 kilometers, for example, and some more at 289.51 kilometers.⁴⁷⁹ The sites where obsidian is found are not limited to the portion of the grease trails that Mackenzie followed, but are located throughout the trail network. The rock was brought to those places by people and used to fashion stone tools—like blades, projectile points, awls and scrapers—leaving the chips as detritus. Geologically, obsidian arises when a silica-rich magma cools rapidly on the earth's surface.⁴⁸⁰ There are only a handful of places in present-day British Columbia that are sources of obsidian. In every other place where obsidian is found, it is a sign of past human activity. When George Dawson was surveying near the Euchiniko Lakes in 1876, native people told him that there was a high mountain up the Blackwater river where obsidian could be obtained, which he later identified as Anahim peak.⁴⁸¹

In the early 1970s, archaeologists became interested in the possibility of using new technologies to substantiate native oral traditions about the source of the obsidian used in various artifacts.⁴⁸² Two of these techniques, known as neutron activation analysis[†] and X-ray fluorescence spectrometry[†], allowed archaeologists to determine the concentrations of various trace elements in samples of obsidian. Since different samples of the rock contain different trace elements, the particular distribution of elements serves as a kind of “fingerprint,” by which a given sample can be matched to its source.⁴⁸³ A pilot study of artifacts from present-day British Columbia showed that the obsidian used in their manufacture came from a number of distinct sources. Thirty-two of the artifacts were made from obsidian found on the south slope of Tsitsutl Peak in the Rainbow Range and in river gravel downstream along the banks of the Dean River. The artifacts themselves were distributed in a rough ellipse centered on the source, with a 350

⁴⁷⁹ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 131, 149.

⁴⁸⁰ Chesterman, *Field Guide*, s.v., “Obsidian,” 690-691.

⁴⁸¹ Cole & Lockner, eds. *Journals of George M. Dawson*, 1:206-207, 214.

⁴⁸² Wilmeth, “Distribution.”

⁴⁸³ Cann, Dixon & Renfrew, “Obsidian Analysis”; Rapp & Hill, *Geoarchaeology*, 137-138, 148-149.

kilometer axis stretching from Namu on the coast in the southwest to the confluence of the Stuart and Nechako Rivers in the northeast. Other groups of artifacts were traced to obsidian sources near Anahim Peak and to various lava flows at Mount Edziza in northern British Columbia. The source of the material used in the artifacts was only part of the story; the date that each was created was another part. In some cases, the date could be inferred from the dates of surrounding material or from the morphology of the artifact itself.⁴⁸⁴ In others, a technique known as obsidian hydration[†] was used to date the samples by determining how much water they had absorbed over time.⁴⁸⁵

One of the findings of the archaeologists was, not surprisingly, that people tended to rely on nearby sources of obsidian rather than distant ones. Creating a map of the distribution of obsidian artifacts, they discovered a boundary in the Skeena River drainage between obsidian derived from Mt. Edziza to the north, and that derived from the Rainbow Mountains and Anahim Peak to the south, which the archaeologists thought was “certainly of cultural significance,” and which was reflected in a traditional boundary between Gitxsans and Carriers.⁴⁸⁶ Their preferred explanation for the widespread distribution of obsidian from the Rainbow Mountains was that it was due to reciprocal trade: the raw material or finished artifacts were exchanged for other more perishable or intangible things that did not leave traces in the archaeological record. These may have included meat, fish, oil, tubers, seeds, berries, furs, hides, nets, shells or feathers. And where there is evidence for trade, one can also imagine the exchange of parasites and infections, rituals and stories, slaves and spouses. In support of the trading hypothesis they noted that there was good ethnographic evidence for it. Mackenzie’s native guides, for example, were familiar with neighboring peoples and adjacent regions, “an indication of at least minimal interaction.” An alternative explanation for the distribution of obsidian was that it was part of an “open procurement system,” whereby each group that wanted to make use of the resource had free access to it. This explanation was not

⁴⁸⁴ See, for example, Hutchings, “Namu Obsidian Industry.”

⁴⁸⁵ Wilmeth, “Distribution.”

⁴⁸⁶ Wilmeth, “Distribution,” 41. See also G. F. MacDonald’s comment on 46.

deemed as likely as the former, because unequivocal ethnographic evidence for open procurement was difficult to find. Furthermore, the position of the Ulkatcho and Eliguk Lake village sites at the north end of the Dean River valley would have given their occupants some control over access to the obsidian there, and the location of the Anahim Lake village would have provided an analogous advantage at the south end of the valley.⁴⁸⁷ A third possibility, suggested by native oral tradition, was that the sources of obsidian were controlled but that outsiders were allowed access to them. In 1967, an archaeologist was told by Thomas Squinas that “Indians would let you go up and get a little *bes* [obsidian] but not much. ... If you stayed too long Indian would run you off. ... Anybody could go for *bes* to make stone tools. You didn’t have to pay.”⁴⁸⁸

Archaeologists worked in the 1970s and 1980s to clarify the location of obsidian sources and greatly extend the database of samples. Small outcrops of obsidian were found in Mackenzie Pass, surrounded by flaking detritus showing that the sites had a long history of human use, and a number of longstanding quarries and flaking stations were also located along a stream feeding into the Dean River.⁴⁸⁹ By the early 1990s, thirteen hundred obsidian artifacts had been tested from 180 archaeological sites in British Columbia and adjacent areas. The picture that emerged from the distribution of these artifacts in space and time attested to millennia of human activity. The earliest known piece of obsidian was found at Namu and dated to about 9500 BP. It came from the area of Anahim Peak, 160 kilometers to the east. Two other obsidian pieces at Namu, dated between 9000 and 8000 BP also came from the Chilcotin: one from Anahim Peak and one from Mackenzie Pass. One of the implications of this finding was that a portion of the so-called Alexander Mackenzie trail—the part from Mackenzie Pass to the ocean—

⁴⁸⁷ Paul F. Donahue’s comments in Wilmeth, “Distribution,” 44. There is also some evidence that the Tsihqot’in, Ulkatcho Carrier and Kluskus Carrier fought one another for control of obsidian sources in relatively recent times. See Alexander, “Cultural Heritage Overview,” 105.

⁴⁸⁸ Squinas to Clark Davis, quoted in Wilmeth, “Distribution,” 49. Thomas Squinas was an Ulkatcho elder who had been a cowboy on Arthur Knoll’s 1939 cattle drive from Chezacut to Bella Coola that followed grease trails through the coast mountains. He later helped Lester Dorsey to blaze the route that Highway 20 now takes from Anahim Lake through Heckman Pass. Bonner, Bliss & Litterick, *Chilcotin*, 324-325; French, *Road Runs West*, 187.

⁴⁸⁹ Apland, “Reconnaissance.”

had been traversed by human beings as the ice sheets were retreating, a full ten thousand years before Mackenzie arrived. There was also evidence of similar activity in what is now Alaska, northern British Columbia, and Oregon. In the north, obsidian from Mount Edziza was taken west down the Stikine River and then north and south along the coast. In the south, obsidian from sources in Oregon were being transported up the Columbia River and along the Pacific coast. "From this perspective, obsidian trade started in all regions of the Northwest by 9,000 years ago." Since the sources for the material were few, the routes by which it had to be transported tended to be long. The distributions of artifacts from all of the major sources of obsidian overlapped by 6000 to 4000 BP, indicating that people were in contact over long distances. The origins of regional cultural complexes also date from this period, showing that none of the human groups was acting in a vacuum. Each was in full communication with their neighbors, and had, no doubt, murkier knowledge of more distant peoples in the network. Since the obsidian had to travel great distances across linguistic and ethnic boundaries, reciprocal trade seems like the most obvious explanation for its spread (rather than open procurement). By 4000 to 3000 BP, obsidian from Anahim had reached present-day Alberta.⁴⁹⁰

The Indians' New World

The Ice Age ended about ten thousand years ago, and was followed by a climatic optimum known as the hypsithermal, the warmest interval in the interglacial period that we live in.⁴⁹¹ For human groups in the New World, this was a time of efflorescence, a time when people who lived in areas with a poor-to-moderate resource base diversified their exploitation, and when people who lived in resource-rich areas specialized in the habitual exploitation of a few key resources.⁴⁹² Namu, on the central coast west of the Chilcotin, was an area of very rich marine resources. Before 6000 BP, the people at

⁴⁹⁰ Carlson, "Trade and Exchange." Quote from 318.

⁴⁹¹ The Holocene period including the postglacial climatic optimum goes by many names, including "the hypsithermal," "the altithermal," and "the xerothermic." In keeping with the earlier literature on British Columbian prehistory, "hypsithermal" is used here, to denote the period between about 10500–10000 BP and 7000–6000 BP. This usage is consistent with Pielou, *After the Ice Age*; Hebda, "Postglacial History"; Rousseau, "Early Prehistoric Occupation"; Stryd & Rousseau, "Early Prehistory"; and other authors. It differs from the dates given by Deevey & Flint in "Hypsithermal," which are 9500–2500 BP.

⁴⁹² Hayden, "Research and Development."

Namu were fashioning tools by flaking stone. They created scrapers, points and knives, and small stone sinkers for nets or lines. They also made some objects by grinding and pecking stone, showing that they were familiar with a wide range of lithic techniques. Artifacts created over the next thousand years include long, delicate microblades fashioned from Chilcotin obsidian, which could be hafted to create spears and harpoons. The people at Namu also created a number of tools which were probably used for woodworking: gravers and drills for light work, and pebble choppers, rasps and scrapers for heavy-duty construction. Cedar pollen does not appear in the palynological[†] record until 6000 BP, so other woods must have been used for boat and house frameworks. Bone tools also appear in the archaeological record around this time. Most of them were created to help with fishing, but there are also harpoons for hunting sea mammals, bone needles for sewing skin clothing, and beaver incisors that were used as chisels. By comparing the artifacts at Namu with contemporaneous ones from elsewhere in northwestern North America, archaeologists have concluded that the people of Namu were in regular contact with peoples in the north, from whom they learned to make microblades, and with peoples in the south, who developed a technology of pebble tools.⁴⁹³ And, of course, there was also regular trade with the interior.

By about 8000 BP, people living in the Chilcotin had also learned to fashion microblades from obsidian. From their neighbors in the southern interior, they learned to make and use simple basalt scrapers, leaf-shaped knives and projectile points, and wide range of tools from cobbles. These cobble tools could be used to drive stakes, pulverize bone, peck or grind stone, chop things, shape bone and wood, and process hides and pulpy foods.⁴⁹⁴ As with obsidian, the other stones used to make tools were not uniformly available, but had to be quarried in a few favorable locations. Large basalt quarries were located to the east of the Fraser River in the Arrowstone Range. A glassy basalt could

⁴⁹³ Carlson, "Early Period"; Carlson, "Early Namu"; Cannon, "Early Namu Archaeofauna"; Fladmark, *BC Prehistory*; Pokotylo, *Blood from Stone*; Whittaker, *Flintknapping*. Microblades were in use earlier in Asia, and evidently spread down the Beringian and Northwest coasts.

⁴⁹⁴ Harris, ed. *Historical Atlas*, 2, plates 4, 6, 14; Borden, "Late Pleistocene Pebble Tool Industry"; Carlson, "C. E. Borden's Archaeological Legacy."

also be obtained at Beece Creek near Taseko Lake, at the Baezeko River north of Chezacut, and near Pantage Lake. Basalt was “typically found as cobbles in fluvial deposits along the creeks and in the glacial drift and till on the valley slopes.” Chert came from outcrops near Puntzi Lake and along the lower Blackwater River. Other rocks and minerals were quarried farther away, but well known in the Chilcotin: jade and nephrite from the lower Fraser, steatite, ochre for paints and dyes, copper for bracelets and jewelry.⁴⁹⁵

Interior peoples continually diversified their resource base for subsistence[†] in this period, leaving many traces of their innovations.⁴⁹⁶ For one thing, they made more use of small animals like rabbits, birds and rodents, whose bones began to appear in faunal assemblages[†].⁴⁹⁷ Their ground-stone tools could be used to mash seeds, to convert inedible cartilage and small bones into edible pulp, and to process plant starches for leaching.⁴⁹⁸ Their constantly improving fishing technologies allowed them to gradually exploit more of the plentiful salmon in the rivers and lakes. One kind of evidence for this comes from the remains of a hapless fellow now known as Gore Creek man, who was trapped in mud and drowned near Kamloops about 8000 BP. An analysis of the stable isotope ratios[†] in his skeleton suggests that he ate mostly meat (probably deer), but that eight to ten percent of his dietary protein came from marine fish like salmon and steelhead.⁴⁹⁹ People also began to exploit freshwater shellfish like mussels in a few places where they were abundant.⁵⁰⁰ Another technology that was developed in this period, to judge from the increase in fire-cracked rocks, was the widespread boiling of foods, which would have reduced food poisoning by killing harmful bacteria. It also “could have rendered edible many plants containing toxins and could have been used to

⁴⁹⁵ Alexander, “Cultural Heritage Overview,” 105-106.

⁴⁹⁶ Hayden, “Research and Development,” 519-520.

⁴⁹⁷ Rousseau, “Early Prehistoric,” 166; Stryd & Rousseau, “Early Prehistory,” 184, 187-188, 198; Driver, “Zooarchaeology”; Sanger, “7,000 Years”; Idem, “Prehistory.”

⁴⁹⁸ Hayden, “Research and Development,” 519.

⁴⁹⁹ Cybulski et al, “Early Human Skeleton”; Stryd & Rousseau, “Early Prehistory,” 184.

⁵⁰⁰ Hayden, “Research and Development,” 519; Stryd & Rousseau, “Early Prehistory,” 186, 196; Alexander, “Cultural Heritage Overview,” 80.

extract otherwise unavailable fats, marrow, bits of meat, and other tissue from animals, as well as ... reduce calorie loss from charring.”⁵⁰¹

Lacking utensils which could be placed directly into the fire, early peoples developed an alternative which was still in use more than six millennia later, when Mackenzie followed the grease trails. On July 16, 1793, one of his native hosts offered to “boil a kettle of fish roes.” Mackenzie wrote, “He took the roes out of a bag, and having bruised them between two stones, put them in water to soak. His wife then took a handful of dry grass in her hand, with which she squeezed them through her fingers; in the mean time her husband was employed in gathering wood to make a fire, for the purpose of heating stones. When she had finished her operation, she filled a watape kettle [i.e., one made by weaving the fine roots of the spruce tree⁵⁰²] nearly full of water, and poured the roes into it. When the stones were sufficiently heated, some of them were put into the kettle, and others were thrown in from time to time, till the water was in a state of boiling; the woman also continued stirring the contents of the kettle, till they were brought to a thick consistency; the stones were then taken out, and the whole was seasoned with about a pint of strong rancid oil.”⁵⁰³ On the grease trail in 1876, the geological surveyor George Dawson also “Saw the Indian women boiling up fish heads in pots about a foot square, made of wood about 3/8 inch, ingenuously bent round. The boiling accomplished by dropping heated stones into the pot, a pair of tongs composed of a couple of long sticks tied together, being used for lifting them.”⁵⁰⁴ In order for stone boiling to be possible, interior peoples had to know how to make watertight containers, and those containers must have been flammable ... or they would have been placed directly in the fire and stone boiling would not have been necessary. This implies that interior peoples knew how to make such baskets of wood, hide, or woven bark or fiber. This, in turn, implies that they also knew how to make cordage by braiding animal and vegetable fibers, which could be used for snares, fish-lines and nets as well as cooking

⁵⁰¹ Hayden, “Research and Development,” 520.

⁵⁰² Turner, *Plant Technology*, 85-86.

⁵⁰³ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 210. See also Smith, “Semi-Subterranean House Site.”

⁵⁰⁴ Cole & Lockner, eds. *Journals of George M. Dawson*, 1:212.

utensils.⁵⁰⁵ Unfortunately few of these materials left durable traces in the archaeological record, but the cracked and discolored rocks that were used for stone boiling were found beside hearths in sites more than six thousand years old.

On June 21, 1793, as Mackenzie was approaching, for the first time, the place that would later be named Alexandria in his honor, he was told by native people about their neighbors “who lived in large subterraneous recesses.” Over the next few days, as he and his men followed the grease trail, they became more familiar with a particular kind of house, “the roof of which alone appeared above ground.”⁵⁰⁶ Today the remains of these houses appear in many places along the grease trails, usually as circular depressions. On Mackenzie’s route, for example, there are house pits at 32.76 kilometers and more at 147.80 kilometers, protected now as heritage sites.⁵⁰⁷ In fact, these sites are found throughout the interior, the traces of a shift in settlement that began about four thousand years earlier.⁵⁰⁸ House pits at Punchaw Lake date from 3980 BP, at Tezli on the Blackwater River from 3850 BP, at Nakwantlun near Anahim Lake from 3500 BP, at Nataalkuz Lake on the headwaters of the Nechako River from 2415 BP.⁵⁰⁹ At the time, the climate was becoming cooler and wetter, and interior grasslands retreated, to be replaced by forests of pine, Douglas fir and alder.⁵¹⁰ People in the interior began to build a new kind of house along the rivers and creeks, a pit house in the style of their southern neighbors on the Columbia plateau and what is now northern California. Unlike earlier shelters, which were probably lightweight and portable—perhaps tents or conical huts covered with hides, slabs of bark or woven mats—these new pit houses were permanent. They typically consisted of a circular pit, about eight to ten meters in circumference and a meter and half deep. Four posts against the wall inside the pit were used to support rafters, which rose to a square hatchway. A pyramidal roof was built of logs, poles and

⁵⁰⁵ Stryd & Rousseau, “Early Prehistory,” 191; Fladmark, *BC Prehistory*.

⁵⁰⁶ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 155, 156.

⁵⁰⁷ Woodworth & Flygare, *In the Steps*, 46-47, 87.

⁵⁰⁸ The most intensively studied house pit village site in the interior is at Keatley Creek, about 20 kilometers up the Fraser river from Lillooet, which contains over 115 house pit depressions. See Hayden, ed. *Complex Culture*; Idem, ed. *Ancient Past*, 2 vols; Hayden & Ryder, “Prehistoric Cultural Collapse.”

⁵⁰⁹ Carlson, “Later Prehistory,” 225. For Tezli, see Donahue, “4500 Years.”

⁵¹⁰ Hebda, “Postglacial History”; Idem, “BC Vegetation.”

bark, then covered with earth and sod. A single notched pole projected at an angle through the hatchway, serving as a ladder so that people could go in and out. The hearth was centrally located. Smoke escaped from the hatchway, which also acted as a skylight. On the edges of the hearth there were places for sleeping and for indoor work and recreation.⁵¹¹

Surplus, and What That Entailed

Adoption of pit houses coincided with a change in the ecological adaptations of people in the interior. They now lived in semi-permanent winter villages, located beside the salmon streams which were fished in spring and fall. The stable isotope ratios of human skeletons found in the southern interior near Clinton and dated 4950 BP show that thirty-seven to thirty-eight percent of the protein in peoples' diet came from marine sources, and the amount was increasing: later skeletons from the area have values ranging from forty to sixty percent. Other evidence for the heightened dependence on marine protein comes from the numbers of notched pebbles that are found in interior sites and that were used as net sinkers. Much greater numbers of freshwater molluscs also appear in shell middens from the time. The shift from mobile camps to semi-sedentary pit house villages may have been due, in part, to the cooler, wetter climate. The climate change may also have increased the number of salmon that could be harvested in the Fraser River and its tributaries.⁵¹² The new emphasis on marine protein in the diet was important not only because it forced native groups into a more sedentary way of life, but because it committed them to a resource that fluctuated dramatically for reasons outside their control. In good years, the number of salmon available at a given point on the river

⁵¹¹ Teit, "Thompson Indians"; Smith, "House Types"; Fladmark, *BC Prehistory*, 124-129; Ames & Maschner, *Peoples of the Northwest Coast*, 151-152, 155-157.

⁵¹² Carlson, "Later Prehistory"; Richards & Rousseau, *Late Prehistoric Cultural Horizons*. There is also archaeological evidence for the keeping of domestic dogs at interior pit house sites. Stryd & Rousseau, "Early Prehistory," 196. Dogs were common among indigenous peoples of the interior when they were observed by newcomers in the 18th and 19th centuries, and their ancestors probably accompanied the first human groups to enter the Americas. Schwartz, *History of Dogs*.

might be a hundred times greater than the number available when the run failed, which happened every four years or so.⁵¹³

Because of the life cycle of the salmon, the wealth of this resource was not uniformly distributed, but rather decreased as one traveled upstream. Pacific salmon lay their eggs in the gravel beds of freshwater rivers or lakes, where the fry hatch and live for a year or two (depending on the species). They then migrate to saltwater, and spend their adult lives in the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea. Sometime between the late summer and early winter of their fourth or fifth or sixth year (again, depending on the species), they return to their natal breeding grounds to spawn. No one is sure exactly how they find the place where they came into the world, although scientists do know that they can't find it if their noses are plugged. Occasionally a few stray into the wrong spot, which enables salmon to colonize new spawning grounds and maintains their genetic diversity. Before they enter freshwater, Pacific salmon stop feeding, and as a consequence become leaner the farther upstream they have to travel. They spawn, defend their nests, and die.⁵¹⁴

For human beings who depended on the salmon runs for subsistence or surplus, there was a spatial gradient in resource wealth. Farther up the river system the runs were smaller in size and of shorter duration, and they peaked later in the year.⁵¹⁵ One consequence of this gradient was that certain favored spots became seasonal focal points for the human harvest and—in recent times for certain and in the more distant past in all likelihood—sites where native people worked to delineate property rights.⁵¹⁶ The important role played by these places in the native economy can be inferred from the massive aboriginal 'trade fairs' that 18th and 19th century observers witnessed at The

⁵¹³ Alexander, "Cultural Heritage Overview," 68.

⁵¹⁴ Carl, Clemens & Lindsey, *Freshwater Fishes of BC*, 52-83; Cannings & Cannings, *BC: A Natural History*, 256-260; Wood & Corpé, "Fisheries."

⁵¹⁵ Alexander, "Cultural Heritage Overview," 68-69.

⁵¹⁶ For an important and influential study of the role that this energy gradient played in the environmental history of the nearby Columbia River, see White, *Organic Machine*. The legal aspects of salmon capture are the subject of Harris, *Fish, Law and Colonialism*. About pit house village sites in the southern interior, Hayden & Ryder note, "The Lillooet sites were not only situated in an optimal area for procuring, drying, and trading salmon, but they were also strategically situated geographically to control the major southern trade routes from the coast to the interior." "Prehistoric Cultural Collapse," 55.

Dalles on the lower Columbia River and at the mouth of the Nass River. People circulated through these points with novel goods and new ideas, timing their arrival to the seasonal harvest of salmon and other fish. Disc-shaped beads of coastal shells would later be found on the Peace River in northeastern British Columbia, Oregon obsidian in Lillooet, and turquoise from the Southwest or Great Basin in the Okanagan Valley.⁵¹⁷

Archaeologists argue that by 3500 BP the differential access to salmon allowed cultures in the southern interior (on the plateau south of present-day Williams Lake and east of Lillooet) to begin to accumulate large surpluses and thus to develop a number of institutions that resembled those of the northwest coast. Counterparts to these institutions did not develop in the northern interior where the subsistence[†] base was more marginal. The pit houses in the southern interior were large enough to have hearths for a number of families, and had bark-lined pits to store surplus salmon. Woodworking tools included wedges, nephrite chisels, and small adze blades which could be fitted to wooden handles and used to split, smooth and facet wood. These adze blades were among a number of products made from ground nephrite and steatite that were exported to the coast. Other exports included sculptures made from the same material. Some people wore bone bracelets, pendants or beads, or marine shells obtained from their coastal trading partners. They began to bury their loved ones with more elaborate grave goods. The surplus of salmon was, archaeologists believe, at the root of the cultural elaboration that followed. Dried salmon provided subsistence during lean times, allowing people to become semi-sedentary. Once they had a permanent home base, they could accumulate more goods than they could carry.⁵¹⁸ They could also have more children, with all of the corporate advantages that accrued from living in larger populations: increased disease resistance for the survivors, widespread division of labor, people who specialized in violence.⁵¹⁹ The

⁵¹⁷ Fladmark, *BC Prehistory*, 51-53, 137-139; Harris, ed. *Historical Atlas*, 3, plates 4, 7.

⁵¹⁸ Carlson, "Later Prehistory," 226; Fladmark, *BC Prehistory*, 51-53, 137-139.

⁵¹⁹ The relative advantages of a larger, sedentary population over the smaller populations of their nomadic neighbors have been explored in a number of works. For a few examples, see McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*; Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*; Brody, *Other Side of Eden*; McNeill & McNeill, *Human Web*; Redman, *Human Impact*. The advantages of a sedentary population should not be confused with those of the individuals who make it up; they are often worse off than they would be living as nomads.

surplus of salmon could be redistributed, fueling an increase in trade and creating status hierarchies. The rise of chiefs, gave rise, in turn, to competition, displays of wealth, raiding and slavery, and ever finer gradations of social rank.⁵²⁰ Obsidian, relatively common in earlier times, is not often found in these later pit house village sites of the southern interior. “Its near absence is possibly an indicator of hostile relationships between the mid Fraser and the obsidian sources of the Rainbow Mountains.”⁵²¹

Around this time, people in the interior also began to make more intensive use of plant foods such as spring beauty (also known as mountain potato or Indian potato), bitter-root, wild onions, tiger lily and balsamroot. These were collected in the spring with digging sticks and roasted in large, earthen baking pits. Not only did they taste better that way, but they could also be more easily stored.⁵²² Because the roots themselves did not survive in the archaeological record, their use has to be inferred from artifacts which do, like the earth ovens and digging sticks. Nevertheless, their importance in the subsistence of interior peoples should not be underestimated. Ethnobiologists estimate that some interior groups obtained more than half of their food energy from vegetal foods like starchy roots and bulbs. These foods were recognized in celebrations and narratives and thus “women’s economic product was not symbolically discounted in the Plateau.”⁵²³ Ethnographic evidence also suggests that this increased use of plants may have been facilitated by various burning practices. According to Stl’atl’imx elders, hillsides were burned when they got too bushy to support plants with roots or edible berries (like Saskatoon berries, gooseberries, huckleberries, blackcaps, blueberries and raspberries). This burning was done in rotation: one hill was burned while another was harvested. After about three years, the burned hill would begin to produce large berry crops for a few years. When the plants got too old, the hillside was burned again.⁵²⁴

⁵²⁰ Carlson, “Later Prehistory,” 218-219.

⁵²¹ Carlson, “Later Prehistory,” 226.

⁵²² Turner, *Plant Technology*; Hebda, “Interior Grasslands”; Turner, *Food Plants*. The spring beauty (*Claytonia lanceolata* Pursh) is not the same plant as the one domesticated in the Andes (*Solanum tuberosum*) and now eaten worldwide.

⁵²³ Hunn, Turner & French, “Ethnobiology,” 526.

⁵²⁴ Turner, “Burning Mountain Sides.”

Although native peoples made use of a variety of plant cultivation techniques, including transplanting, selective harvesting, weeding, pruning, turning of the soil and burning, these activities were often de-emphasized in traditional ethnographic accounts, which tried to portray native ways of life according to pre-established ideas of what constituted agriculture and what did not. This view, that native peoples of what is now British Columbia did not cultivate plants, is currently being revised.⁵²⁵

Athapaskans

The world of the interior peoples was a geologically unsettled one. In 2350 BP, the volcanic complex at Mount Meager erupted, sixty kilometers south of Taseko Lakes. Prevailing winds carried the tephra, the airborne dust, ash and pumice, to the east, blanketing the villages and trade routes of the southern interior. On slopes near the volcano, the deposit was up to eighty meters thick. Lava and ash temporarily dammed the headwaters of Lillooet River; when the dam collapsed, a billion cubic meters of water were released, flooding the Lillooet valley. Today, a stratum of the Mount Meager tephra can be found as far away as Alberta, 530 kilometers to the east of the vent.⁵²⁶

The interior volcanism was related to the subduction of an oceanic plate beneath North America off the coast to the west. As a result, the coast had been periodically hit by earthquakes and tsunamis for millennia. When these occurred, they frequently led to the abandonment of coastal villages, and the survivors may have sought help from their inland trading partners. Indigenous coastal people from northern California to central British Columbia have ceremonies and oral traditions relating to seismic events. According to the Nuxalks, the western neighbors of the Tsilhqot'ins, a giant supernatural being held the earth in ropes. When he adjusted his grip, or when the rope slipped in his hands, the Nuxalks could feel the tremors, and performed a ceremonial earthquake dance.⁵²⁷ We don't know how the survivors responded to the Mount Meager eruption,

⁵²⁵ Deur, "Domesticated Landscape"; Gottesfield-Johnson, *Plants That We Use*; Idem, "Aboriginal Burning"; Turner, Thompson, Thompson & York, *Thompson Ethnobotany*, 25-28; Turner, *Food Plants*, 19-31; Parish, Coupé & Lloyd, *Plants of Southern Interior BC*, 22.

⁵²⁶ Hickson, Russell & Stasiuk, "Volcanology."

⁵²⁷ McMillan & Hutchinson, "When the Mountain Dwarfs Danced."

but news and stories of it must have circulated far and wide along the trails of trade and communication.

Some scholars believe that another volcanic eruption was to have a much more recognizable impact on the Chilkotin. Around 1250 BP, the Mount Bona volcano in the St. Elias Mountains of what is now eastern Alaska ejected more than twenty-five cubic kilometers of tephra into the air. (By comparison, the better-known Krakatau eruption of 1883 ejected about twenty-one cubic kilometers of tephra.)⁵²⁸ The Mount Bona tephra fell to the east, mostly in what is now the Yukon, over a “lobe” measuring about 250,000 square kilometers. The effects were drastic. Thunder, lightening and torrential rain accompanied the tephra cloud, which darkened the land for days. Sulphuric acid damaged eyes, skin and clothing. Ash fouled water supplies and suffocated and starved salmon and trout. Noxious gasses poisoned vegetation downwind. Evidence suggests that the eruption occurred in the early winter, a time when daylight was limited and food already in short supply. The short-term psychological effects on the survivors must have been devastating. Over the longer term, the carrying capacity of the land was significantly reduced, and it had to be evacuated by its human occupants.

Some people believe that this disaster was responsible for a sudden southward migration of Northern Athapaskan people into what is now the northern half of British Columbia.⁵²⁹ Today’s Tsilhqot’ins and Carriers—as well as the Wet’suwet’ens, Sekanis, Tahltans, Kaskas, Dunne-zas, and Dene-thahs—all speak Northern Athapaskan languages.⁵³⁰ This hypothesis of rapid and late migration faces many objections, however. For one thing, the area that was covered by the tephra was reoccupied after a short time. There is no difference between the artifacts left by these later occupants and those left by the former occupants, and thus no archaeological evidence to suggest that

⁵²⁸ Siebert & Simkin, *Volcanoes of the World*.

⁵²⁹ Workman, “Significance.” There are speakers of Athapaskan languages on the southern Oregon and northern California coasts, and also in the American southwest (e.g., the Navajos and Apaches). Under the hypothesis of Workman and others, these groups represent the southernmost limit of Athapaskan migration triggered by the volcanic eruption.

⁵³⁰ Krauss & Golla, “Northern Athapaskan Languages.” Linguistic evidence suggests that these languages did not begin to diverge from their Proto-Athapaskan ancestor until sometime after about 2500 BP.

the two occupying groups were different.⁵³¹ Furthermore, attempts to find characteristic artifacts in the archaeological record that could signal the replacement of earlier southern peoples by a wave of Athapaskan migrants have not been very successful.⁵³² Instead, the interior plateaus from Babine Lake to the northern edge of the Great Basin (in what is now eastern Oregon and southern Idaho) show a continuity of cultural elements. Indigenous people in this vast region relied on extensive trade, were spatially and ecologically oriented around rivers, built winter villages of pit houses and practiced seasonal subsistence rounds[†], made variable projectile points, worked wood and created cords by twining. This continuity predated any possible replacement of interior peoples by millennia.⁵³³

An alternative to the rapid replacement hypothesis emphasizes the long-term and gradual movement of people, ideas, words, techniques and things through a longstanding network of communication and exchange. At first, speakers of Athapaskan languages were merely new faces on the trails that tied this system together, but over time, the prevailing ethos gradually took on more and more of their way of looking at the world. Linguists who study Northern Athapaskan languages argue that

Athapaskan linguistic relationships, especially in the subarctic area, cannot adequately be described in terms of discrete family-tree branches. This is because intergroup communication has ordinarily been constant, and no Northern Athapaskan language or dialect was ever completely isolated from the others for long. ... Whatever the language boundaries, the network of communication in the Northern Athapaskan dialect complex is open-ended. It is probably worth noting that, even in 1980, perhaps most Northern Athapaskans live with only other Athapaskan speakers as neighbors and rarely hear a native language that is not Athapaskan. People from adjacent communities usually expect to be able to understand one another's speech, if not immediately, then surely after some practice. Local dialects and languages are important as symbols of social identity, but the native expectation that these differences, even across relatively vast distances, will not be barriers to communication gives the Northern

⁵³¹ Clark, *Western Subarctic Prehistory*, 63-64.

⁵³² Fladmark, *BC Prehistory*, 133. For a general critique of anthropological studies of cultural distributions that presuppose migration, see Adams, Van Gerven & Levy, "Retreat."

⁵³³ Donahue, "Concerning Athapaskan Prehistory."

Athapaskan speaker a distinctively open and flexible perception of his social world.⁵³⁴

Whatever the reason that indigenous people in the Chilcotin came to speak Athapaskan languages, the Tsilhqot'ins and Carriers themselves have no traditions of migration.⁵³⁵

Around 1000 BP, the southern interior winter villages of Pavilion, Fountain, Seton and Lillooet, which had had populations of five hundred to a thousand people each, were abruptly abandoned. The village sites were never really reoccupied. Archaeologists have proposed a number of possible explanations for the apparent cultural collapse of the southern interior sites. Perhaps epidemic diseases were introduced by trading partners on the Plains and found a receptive habitat in the dense settlements along the Fraser River. Perhaps the largest villages were destroyed during intergroup warfare, or an interruption of the trade routes caused economic collapse. Alternately, the sites may have been abandoned because the salmon runs were disrupted in some way. To select among these hypotheses, archaeologists sought further evidence in the sites themselves. The radiocarbon dates of burned beams found on the floors of the last occupied pit houses in different village sites were identical, 1080 ± 70 BP. Given the earliness of the date, the abandonment of the winter villages was probably not precipitated by diseases introduced from the Old World. There was evidence that each of the pit houses had been burned, which might seem to signal a violent end; but there was no evidence of killing, no unburied skeletons or human bones. There were no unused food stores or valuable items which might have been abandoned. Instead, the pits seem to have been deliberately filled by their occupants prior to departure, and the burning was another sign of this. Around the turn of the 20th century, pit houses were burned when the people moved out, to kill the rodents and vermin that had moved into them. The people who inhabited the southern

⁵³⁴ Krauss & Golla, "Northern Athapaskan Languages," 68-69. The spread of a dialect complex across such a large area may have facilitated trade by lowering transaction costs. For such "trade diasporas," see Pomeranz & Topik, *World That Trade Created*.

⁵³⁵ Lane, "Chilcotin," 402; Furniss, "Early Culture of Southern Carrier," 7.

interior winter villages evidently chose to abandon them about a thousand years ago, but why?

The most likely answer was found in the sequence of fluvial sediments[†] underlying step-like river terraces near the present-day town of Lillooet. There, geologists expected to find a layer of gravel in the main channel of the watercourse, overlain by progressively finer sediments. Near the shallow edges of the river, where the water moved slowly, should have been thin banks of silt and fine sand, deposited during floods, and capped with an uppermost layer of windblown silt. Instead, they found that the expected sequence was interrupted: in two places, a layer of relatively coarse gravel rested upon lower layers of finer gravel, sand and silt, suggesting that long term degradation was punctuated by brief intervals of aggradation.[†] What this meant was that at least twice in the past the river had been temporarily blocked by landslides downstream. These blockages had dammed the river, forming a temporary lake in which sediments accumulated. When the landslide dams eroded, the river resumed its course, leaving the aggraded gravels as terraces. Charcoal that was buried under these relatively coarse sediments dates to the time just before the southern interior winter villages were abandoned. If landslides did temporarily dam the Fraser around 1000 BP, then they “would have blocked all or large parts of the salmon runs, thereby destroying the economic foundations of trade, not to mention subsistence, for the vast majority of people. Indeed, after depletion of all stored food, it is necessary to postulate large-scale migration out of the area and possibly severe starvation for large numbers of people, similar to the early twentieth-century occurrence when commercial fishing and canning at the mouth of the Fraser River drastically reduced salmon runs upstream.”⁵³⁶

The Grease

On July 16, 1793, Mackenzie tried a dish that a native woman had prepared for him and “seasoned with about a pint of strong rancid oil. The smell of this curious dish was sufficient to sicken me without tasting it, but the hunger of my people surmounted

⁵³⁶ Hayden & Ryder, “Prehistoric Cultural Collapse.” Quote is from 61. For an archaeological overview of human-environmental relations see Redman, *Human Impact*.

the nauseous meal.”⁵³⁷ Later commentators, tasting Mackenzie’s “stinking oil” for the first time as adults, tended to agree with his assessment of its smell and taste. In the 1950s, Lyn Harrington described it as “malodorous,” looking “remarkably like grapefruit juice, yellow and a little murky. The pungent reek is lessened in processing, though it is still too much for white palates.”⁵³⁸ Terry Glavin described his first taste in the 1980s saying “It was indescribable, true enough, but after a moment or two it didn’t seem anything near as horrible as I’d been led to expect...”⁵³⁹ People who grew up eating the oil did not find it horrible, of course, and could often tell by the taste where it had come from and who made it. The oil was the most distinctive product of native trade between the coast and the interior, and the ways that the newcomers perceived it were symptomatic of their ultimate inability to remake the system of grease trails to suit themselves.⁵⁴⁰

The oil, the grease of the oolichan[†] fish, was what gave the grease trails their name. The oolichan is a smelt, a small anadromous fish that spawns in large numbers in rivers along the Pacific coast in the spring. In what is now British Columbia, the most important oolichan fishery was in the lower reaches of the Nass River. There, and at other rivers along the coast, great numbers of the fish were caught after people performed the ceremonies to communicate their respect to the oolichan.⁵⁴¹ One method, the most elaborate, involved staking a long purse-like net in a shallow spot facing upstream where the tide fell swiftly, carrying large numbers of fish into the net. When full, the net was emptied into a canoe and reset in time for the next tide. The oolichan could also be caught from canoes using dip nets and herring rakes, long slim sticks with a comb of bone points along the edge of one end. Standing in a canoe, the rake was swept through the water like a paddle, impaling numbers of the fish which could then be shaken loose

⁵³⁷ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 210.

⁵³⁸ Harrington, “On the Trail,” 41, 44.

⁵³⁹ Glavin, *This Ragged Place*, 202.

⁵⁴⁰ Birchwater, *Ulkatcho*, 7. This is one part of an argument that is developed in more detail in Part III.

⁵⁴¹ Birchwater, *Ulkatcho*, 6.

into the bottom of the boat, something which greatly impressed the first Europeans to visit the coast.⁵⁴²

Some of the oolichan were dried in the sunlight or smoked over an open fire in communal houses. They were first strung up by the gills in rows on cedar cords or thin sticks, and then hung from racks.⁵⁴³ The accounts left by the non-native traders show that oolichan were fished in very large numbers, and must have served as a source of wealth for the native groups that controlled key fishing grounds. The Hudson's Bay Company trader P. N. Compton, for example, stationed at Fort Simpson near the mouth of the Nass River around 1859, later recalled seeing "an extent of four or five miles each side of the river, lined with oolahans which were being dried on posts, by the Indians."⁵⁴⁴ The dried fish could be kept for years and carried as a lightweight food source on overland journeys. They were nutritious, rich in iodine, in the fat soluble vitamins A, E and K, and full of oil.⁵⁴⁵ They were so oily, in fact, that they could be threaded with rush pith or cedar wicks and lit on fire like candles.

The vast majority of the oolichan that were caught were not dried, however, but used to make the highly-prized grease.⁵⁴⁶ The fish were first put for a few weeks into large bins or pits lined with evergreen boughs (known in some native communities as "stink boxes").⁵⁴⁷ There the fish decomposed, making it easier to separate the oil. The young anthropologist T. F. McIlwraith, who did his fieldwork at Bella Coola in the early 1920s, noted that this was prolonged "until the disgusting smell has penetrated for miles, proving that putrefaction is well advanced."⁵⁴⁸ The decaying fish were then moved to large wooden cooking boxes and covered with water. Hot stones were added to bring the mixture to a simmer and planks laid on top, to help press out the grease. The mixture

⁵⁴² Harrington, "On the Trail"; Gunther, *Indian Life*, 34-36; Stewart, *Indian Fishing*; Sutherland, "Oolichan Fishery"; Byram & Lewis, "Ourigan."

⁵⁴³ Harrington, "On the Trail," 42.

⁵⁴⁴ P. N. Compton, "Forts and Fort Life in New Caledonia under the Hudson's Bay Company Regime," AKR Box 4, File 49, Xerox 339. Original in the Public Archives of Canada, MG29 B.35, Vol. 4.

⁵⁴⁵ Kuhnlein et al., "Ooligan Grease."

⁵⁴⁶ Harrington, "On the Trail," 42; Sutherland, "Oolichan Fishery," 9.

⁵⁴⁷ Birchwater, *Ulkatcho*, 6.

⁵⁴⁸ McIlwraith, *Bella Coola Indians*, 2:537.

might be stirred occasionally or constantly, according to the style of the person making the grease.⁵⁴⁹ As the grease rose to the surface, it was skimmed off and ladled into watertight wooden storage boxes which could be transported along the grease trails. The grease that was going to be used locally was also kept in the stomachs or bladders of seal, mountain goat or deer. The remainder of the fish might be wrapped in a porous mat to get a second pressing by hand, then made into fish cakes or fed to the dogs.⁵⁵⁰

The farther up the Pacific Coast one goes, the oilier the oolichans become, and runs are concentrated on glacier-fed rivers with distinct spring freshets.⁵⁵¹ As was the case with salmon, human interaction with this natural gradient resulted in seasonal focal points in native political economy. Indigenous groups that controlled access to the oolichan runs were able to monopolize a source of power, wealth and prestige in the form of grease.⁵⁵² At first, non-native traders were bothered by the fact that some coastal natives spent so much time on the oolichan fishery when they could have been hunting for furs. The traders soon realized that the grease was a valuable product in itself, and moved to capture some of the wealth, trading it up and down the coast. At Fort Simpson in 1840, a native trader could receive fourteen gallons of grease from the HBC for one beaver skin.⁵⁵³ In fact, many of the interior furs that made their way to the coast were paid for with grease; if the company could have gained control of the grease trade they would have had more control over trading in the interior. As it was, they never managed to establish a monopoly in the interior because the natives living there could do business with coastal groups instead of with the company.⁵⁵⁴

The Tsimshians, who fished the run at the mouth of the Nass River, operated what the Hudson's Bay Company Governor George Simpson called "the grand mart of the

⁵⁴⁹ Birchwater, *Ulkatcho*, 7.

⁵⁵⁰ Harrington, "On the Trail," 42-43; Sutherland, "Oolichan Fishery," 9.

⁵⁵¹ For the gradient in oiliness, see Swan, "Surf-smelt," and for the importance of spring freshets, Sutherland, "Oolichan Fishery," 8.

⁵⁵² Mackie, *Trading beyond the Mountains*, 127.

⁵⁵³ Gibson, *Otter Skins*, 231-233; Mackie, *Trading beyond the Mountains*, 132-133, 242-243, 287.

⁵⁵⁴ This is discussed in more detail below in Part III.

Coast.”⁵⁵⁵ The Tsimshians put grease in kerfed[†] cedar boxes and packed it upriver from the lower Nass, where it was traded for obsidian and animal products like moose hide, sheep and goat horn, goat wool and furs. At two places on the upper Nass, the Kitwanga and Cranberry Rivers, grease was carried into the drainage of the Skeena River, and from there east along the Bulkley and Babine Rivers.⁵⁵⁶ Oolichan runs in the Kitimat, Kildala, Kemano and Kitlope Rivers provided surplus grease for the Haislas, who carried it up the Kitimat River to the Skeena and into the interior. They also exported directly east, from Kemano to Tahtsa Lake, and from thence to the François, Ootsa, Whitesail and Eutsuk Lakes and the Nechako River.⁵⁵⁷ Frank Swannell, who did land surveys in the Nechako Valley from 1909 to 1912, found coast-made cedar boxes at François Lake, “still redolent of the grease.”⁵⁵⁸ The Haislas also had an overland trail from the Kitlope River south to Nuxalk villages.⁵⁵⁹ The Nuxalks themselves fished the oolichan runs in the Bella Coola, Klinaklini, Kimsquit and Dean Rivers to create surplus grease which they could trade with their interior partners. From Kimsquit village on the Dean Channel, there were two trails into the interior, from Bella Coola, five. As the grease was packed up the mountains on people’s backs it occasionally spilled, staining the rocks along the way.⁵⁶⁰

Ulkatcho and the Culla Culla Potlatch House

In the summer of 1926, a small party led by the surveyor Frank Swannell set out from Bella Coola to retrace (in reverse) Mackenzie’s trip on the grease trail to Ulkatcho village. Along the way, “a whole mob of Ulkatcho Indians passed with sixty horses,” and Swannell began to muse about the past of the trail. “One wonders for how many years,” he wrote, “perhaps hundreds, this annual trek has been made.”⁵⁶¹ From his reading,

⁵⁵⁵ Letter from George Simpson to William Smith, 17 Nov 1828, reprinted in Merk, ed. *Fur Trade and Empire*, 300. See also Halpin & Seguin, “Tsimshian Peoples.”

⁵⁵⁶ George F. Macdonald, Gary Coupland & David Archer, “The Coast Tsimshian, ca 1750,” plate 13 of Harris, ed. *Historical Atlas*.

⁵⁵⁷ Harrington, “On the Trail,” 43.

⁵⁵⁸ Swannell’s quote is from “On Mackenzie’s Trail,” 12; for his surveying activities see “Frank Cyril Swannell,” *Annual Report* (Corporation of BC Land Surveyors, 1970), 117-119, 162-165, AKR Box 6, File 54, Xerox 554.

⁵⁵⁹ Hamori-Torok, “Haisla.”

⁵⁶⁰ Birchwater, *Ulkatcho*, 6, 9.

⁵⁶¹ Swannell, “On Mackenzie’s Trail,” 12, 13.

Swannell knew that George Dawson had had a similar encounter near the same place fifty years earlier. On July 7, 1876, Dawson wrote “Travelled on ... to Crossing place of Salmon R. Found there a whole tribe of Indians on their way to Salmon House for the Annual fishery there. Men women children dogs, & a few horses.” That same day, Dawson wrote, “Saw a very old Indian who remembers seeing the first white men who penetrated this part of the country. Says 4 white men, with one gun (then a novelty to the Indians) Came from E walking, & got two Indians from near Il-gatcheo L to go on with them. The Indians returned but the white men went on to the Sea by the Bella Coola Trail. (Can they be identified as any of the first explorers).”⁵⁶² Dawson was thinking of Mackenzie, of course. From his own reading he knew that Mackenzie had had a similar encounter on July 15, 1793, when his party met a travelling group of five families. “Every man, woman and child,” Mackenzie wrote, “carried a proportionate burden, consisting of beaver coating and parchment, as well as skins of the otter, the marten, the bear, the lynx, and dressed moose-skins. The last they procure from the Rocky Mountain Indians. According to their account, the people of the sea coast prefer them to any other article. Several of their relations and friends, they said, were already gone, as well provided as themselves, to barter with the people of the coast; who barter them in their turn, except the dressed leather, with white people who, as they had been informed, arrive there in large canoes.”⁵⁶³

The focal point of all this activity, Ulkatcho, was a site that had been strategically positioned to control sources of obsidian. Archaeologists found evidence there for early occupation in the form of stone tools: microblades and the core they had been struck from, a drill, a projectile point and a biface (a chert tool that had been worked on both sides.) The site had taken on new strategic significance in the late 18th century as the balance of trading on the grease trails shifted to accommodate the maritime fur trade. At that time, a coastal-style longhouse later known as Culla Culla House was constructed

⁵⁶² Cole & Lockner, eds. *Journals of George M. Dawson*, 1:223.

⁵⁶³ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 207-208.

there.⁵⁶⁴ It must have been relatively new when Mackenzie described it on July 14, 1793.⁵⁶⁵ The building materials were, he wrote, well “prepared and finished. The timber was squared on two sides, and the bark taken off the two others; the ridge pole was also shaped in the same manner, extending about eight or ten feet beyond the gable end, and supporting a shed over the door; the end of it was carved into the similitude of a snake’s head. Several hieroglyphics and figures of a similar workmanship, and painted with red earth, decorated the interior of the building. The inhabitants had left the house but a short time, and there were several bags or bundles in it, which I did not suffer to be disturbed.”⁵⁶⁶ When George Dawson explored the building in the summer of 1876 and photographed it, he thought that it “bore the marks of considerable antiquity.”⁵⁶⁷ In his journal he wrote, “Gotcheo L., a Celebrated resort of the Indians, a building of their’s existing here Known as the Culla-Culla House, or Bird House, a large Crow Carved in wood, rather neatly, & painted black, adorning one gable. The Indians tell me that the [abode?] made by Bella Coola Indians, the natives here not understanding painting & decoration so well. A curious instance of mingling of customs of two now friendly tribes. A door in each end of this Shape that at the west end being surmounted at each side by a painted colossal figure resembling a bear, more than anything else ... The inner side of the East end covered with a corresponding picture, but this time of two gigantic birds touching their bills above the door. Also in the same style. Both in red paint. Various other designs on the inner walls, some evidently secondary & added fancifully by poor artists. Among most conspicuous a red hand with claws. The Carved figure of a blackbird already mentioned stands on the head of a long snouted monster with a good row of teeth on each side, which the projecting end of the roof tree.”⁵⁶⁸ As with any site that is regularly occupied and used by people, Culla Culla House changed over time. When Dawson visited it, he noted that it had been “repaired for a great *potlatch* this

⁵⁶⁴ Donahue, “Ulkatcho”; Clark, “Prehistory,” 126. The name “Culla Culla” comes from Chinook Jargon, and means “bird.” Gibbs, *Dictionary*, 7.

⁵⁶⁵ Cole & Lockner suggest that the house was constructed between 1780 and 1790. See n. 606 in *Journals of George M. Dawson*, 1:213.

⁵⁶⁶ Mackenzie, *Journal*, 205.

⁵⁶⁷ Dawson, “Report [1877],” 27.

⁵⁶⁸ Cole & Lockner, eds. *Journals of George M. Dawson*, 1:213.

summer.”⁵⁶⁹ In Mackenzie’s time the house had also been used for potlatching, but the institution as practiced on the coast and in the interior was no more static than anything else that people have a hand in.

“Potlatch” is typically taken to refer to a kind of gift exchange, and is perhaps the most contested term in the discourse about the aboriginal peoples of the Northwest Coast and their neighbors. In a recent dictionary of anthropology, the definition describes it as “a competitive gift exchange in which contenders for social rank organize elaborate feasts that include large distributions of possessions, and sometimes their destruction, in order to enhance the giver’s prestige. Rivals were expected to respond by even more elaborate ceremonies or face humiliation.”⁵⁷⁰ Different interpreters don’t agree with the emphasis on one-upmanship. Here is another definition of the potlatch:

The occasion at which a traditional name, rank or hereditary privilege was claimed through dances, speeches and the distribution of property to those invited. The group hosting the potlatch displayed certain of its hereditary possessions, which included songs, dances and masks, recited the origin of these rights and the history of their transmission, and bestowed the new rank and name upon the member now entitled to use them. The ceremony was completed by distributing gifts, really payments, to the guests. The guest group, by witnessing the claims made, validated and sanctioned the status displayed and claimed. This was vital; the claims had to be publicly witnessed to be valid. At the same time there was reciprocity to the ceremony. The guests were confirmed in their own status by the order in which they received their gifts, by the amount presented to them and often by the seating arrangements.⁵⁷¹

Ever since the institution was described by Franz Boas in the 1890s, anthropologists have sought to explain it by appealing to its history, its place in social, economic and political order, its ecological function and its symbolic meanings.⁵⁷² The

⁵⁶⁹ Dawson, “Report on Explorations [1877],” 27. The word “potlatch” also comes, proximally at least, from Chinook Jargon, and is usually translated as “a gift; to give.” It originated in the language of the Nuu-chah-nulth [Nootka] of the west coast of what is now Vancouver Island. Gibbs, *Dictionary*, 21.

⁵⁷⁰ Barfield, ed. *Dictionary of Anthropology*, q.v., “potlatch,” 372.

⁵⁷¹ Cole & Lockner, *Iron Hand*, 5.

⁵⁷² See, for example, Codere, *Fighting with Property*; Mauss, *The Gift*; Rosman & Rubel, *Feasting with Mine Enemy*; Drucker & Heizer, *To Make My Name Good*; Kan, *Symbolic Immortality*.

task of interpreting the potlatch is complicated by the fact that “potlatch” is not what Clifford Geertz would call an “experience-near” concept, one that represented the “native’s point of view” or that came naturally to people who participated in the institution.⁵⁷³ Instead, it was used by native people only when discussing the practice with outsiders.⁵⁷⁴ Interpretation is further complicated by the fact that the Canadian government outlawed the practice in 1885, and attempts to define the potlatch so that laws could be enforced (or opposed), multiplied the number of different meanings and the shadings of each.⁵⁷⁵

The past of the potlatch house at Ulkatcho is characterized by the same indeterminacy as the past practices of potlatching. Archaeologists have failed to establish the exact relationship between newer and older material elements. The stone tools that were found there, the core and microblades, are thought to date from more than fifteen hundred years ago. The problem is that they were found in the upper ten centimeters of the site, whereas objects that are obviously of European manufacture, such as fragments of glass bottles, metal buttons and a painted clay pipe, were found as deep as eighteen centimeters below the surface. The most likely explanation is that some later human activity (like digging or construction) or non-human process (like erosion, transport and redeposition) mixed the artifacts from earlier and later deposits.⁵⁷⁶ When such disruption has not occurred, archaeologists sometimes speak of “horizons,” a technical term that they use to denote the widespread spatial distribution of something with limited temporal extent.⁵⁷⁷ As a particular kind of artifact, for example, is used and then falls out of fashion, a layer where such artifacts can be found is gradually covered with more recent

⁵⁷³ Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, 57. Geertz adapted the terminology of “experience-near” and “experience-distant” concepts from the psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut.

⁵⁷⁴ Cole & Lockner, *Iron Hand*, 6.

⁵⁷⁵ Cole & Lockner, *Iron Hand*. In a recent analysis that draws heavily on Heidegger and Derrida, Christopher Bracken suggests that the potlatch was a fiction invented by the colonial officials to use against indigenous people, and that it is more informative on the subject of colonial anxieties about property than it is about native life. Bracken, *Potlatch Papers*.

⁵⁷⁶ Donahue, “Ulkatcho.”

⁵⁷⁷ Sometimes usage of the term is limited to cultural traits or complexes of traits, as in Willey & Phillips, *Method and Theory*, 33; at other times it is taken to include a whole culture, as in Richards & Rousseau, *Late Prehistoric Cultural Horizons*.

deposits. Thus, horizons often correspond to surface and subsurface layers that can be seen or imagined in cross-section as one digs into a site.⁵⁷⁸ This metaphor of horizons, however, as archaeologists well know, hides the complexity of the processes whereby objects “move through a trajectory from being part of a living, dynamic context to being a static accumulation or assemblage of materials.” Artifacts and ecofacts[†], deposited while people dwell in a place, may eventually be buried or may remain on the surface. Their nature and distribution may provide clues to human activity, or may reflect later physical and chemical changes, due to weathering, erosion, compaction, soil formation and many other processes.⁵⁷⁹

Human activity at Ulkatcho predated the rise of the maritime fur trade in sea otter pelts in the late 18th century, and continued long after the sea otters were pushed toward extinction and the trade collapsed. In the early 19th century, people at Ulkatcho adjusted their seasonal rounds to take advantage of new demand for the fur of animals like beaver, muskrat and lynx at the North West Company (later Hudson’s Bay Company) forts at Fraser Lake, Fort George, Alexandria and Fort Chilcotin. After the middle of the 19th century, they took jobs as guides and packers during the gold rush, and turned to cowboying when the gold rush ended. Some time in the decade after George Dawson visited in 1876, they built newer buildings to the north of Culla Culla house. The village was abandoned in 1945, when most of the Carriers of Ulkatcho moved to Anahim Lake. The remains of many of the buildings are still there: people’s homes and stores, including Paul Krestenuk’s, an old church and a newer one, a house for the priest, a schoolhouse, barns, sheds, and out-houses.⁵⁸⁰ Ulkatcho elders remember life in the village: the summertime arrival of packhorses loaded with groceries that were traded for furs; the women cutting boards for the new church with a whip saw; helping parents to hunt groundhogs and tan their hides for blankets, and the good taste of their thick back fat, especially when smoked; going to the village school during the Second World War; the

⁵⁷⁸ And thus the term “horizon” is also used to denote distinct layers of soil. Rapp & Hill, *Geoarchaeology*, 30-38, 50-85; Dincauze, *Environmental Archaeology*, 282-288.

⁵⁷⁹ Rapp & Hill, *Geoarchaeology*, 50-52. Quote is from 50.

⁵⁸⁰ Donahue, “Ulkatcho,” 155-158; Blacklaws, *Mackenzie Grease Trail Heritage Inventory*, CCA-G.

sleighs that were used to move mowing machines, hay rakes and cookstoves along winter trails; and the visits of surveyors, fur traders, missionaries, government agents, ranchers and an ethnographer.⁵⁸¹

Conclusion: Ground Truth on the Grease Trail

In February 1985, the provincial and federal governments signed an agreement to establish, protect and develop the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail co-operatively. In the foreword to the document, the authors noted that the trail was intended to “accord recognition to one of the most significant feats of exploration in the world, one that had profound impact on the political and economic axis of North America.” In the historical background to the agreement they emphasized Mackenzie’s precedence over Lewis and Clark, and the importance of his voyage for the later establishment of the Canada-US border at the 49th parallel. The document was complicated by the recognition, however, that there were actually a number of “important cultural resources” in the trail corridor: aboriginal trade routes that had been used for millennia, dense concentrations of archaeological sites, other sites that were highly significant to contemporary aboriginal people, historic trails and wagon roads, historic and contemporary settlement at Bella Coola, and an existing ranching community in the Blackwater valley. Furthermore, conservation of a trail raised problems of multiple jurisdiction, rights of access and co-ordination amongst various interests.

A number of basic divisions arose in the contest of stakeholders over the fate of the proposed trail. There was national support for a heritage trail, and the idea was favored by some regional businesses as a means of increasing tourism and stimulating the economy, but local residents (including native people on reserves) feared disruption. Already, there was an increase in uncontrolled use of all-terrain-vehicles on the trail, and frequent reports of vandalism, poaching, “wildlife harassment” and environmental damage. Increased recreational use of horses could only decrease the limited natural fodder available to residents. Other businesses, whose continued financial health

⁵⁸¹ Birchwater, *Ulkatcho*. The ethnographer was Irving Goldman, who did fieldwork at Ulkatcho village in 1935. See Goldman, “Alkatcho Carrier”; McLellan, “History of Research.”

depended upon extracting natural resources, were concerned that protection of the trail would interfere with logging, mining, hydroelectric development, and so on. Logging operations, for example, would now have to include trail managers in decisions about road construction, harvesting, insect and fire control, and “viewshed management.” The federal and provincial governments had mandates to protect the archaeological sites, and thus welcomed the trail for the protection that it might afford against the inroads of resource companies, but any such victory could ultimately be Pyrrhic, because having more people on the trail would surely increase the potential for site disturbance. Sport anglers and native residents were concerned with the decrease in natural fish stocks, and parks personnel noted that some species, such as the oolichan and sockeye salmon, had “potential for interpretation” (that is, presumably, that exhibiting the uses to which they were put in the past might preclude some possible uses in the present.) Environmentalists were concerned with the adverse impact on flora and fauna generally, and everyone acknowledged the “higher probability for bear-human confrontations.” As everywhere else in British Columbia, the legal situation with respect to native land claims was not clear.⁵⁸²

To try to bring some semblance of order to the welter of readings and experiences that people had of the trail, the federal-provincial agreement suggested four interpretive themes centered on Mackenzie. The first was the man himself, first to cross the Rocky Mountains and the whole continent, first to survey what is now British Columbia, impetus to the expansion of the fur trade and to the activities of later explorers like Simon Fraser and David Thompson. The second theme was native prehistory and ethnology, as

⁵⁸² Parks Canada & BC Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing, “Canada – BC Agreement.” The potential for human-bear interaction in the interior is pretty high wherever there are humans. Local papers like the Williams Lake *Tribune* publish accounts of bear maulings, warnings and sightings and the provincial environment and parks ministry created a “Bear Information Kit” for the public. CCA-E. To take a single mishap as an example, Russell Walker, a science teacher at Sir Alexander Mackenzie High School in Bella Coola, was mountain biking on a logging road in the summer of 2001 when he encountered a grizzly bear sow and her cubs. “I could hear it crunching away, biting me,” he later told reporters from his hospital bed, as they inspected the damage to the back of his head and neck. Somehow Walker managed to stop screaming and go limp long enough for the bear and her cubs to leave, then mount his bike for the seven kilometer ride back to the main road. Frank Luba, “‘She Was Big and Mangy’: Mountain Biker Jumped by Mother Bear Guarding Cubs,” *Province* (Vancouver), 4 Jun 2001.

seen through the lens of Mackenzie's journal, "one of the first and finest European accounts of early B.C.'s native culture." The importance of Mackenzie's native guides was also to be stressed, but only insofar as they played a role in his accomplishment. The third theme was natural history. Again, Mackenzie's journal played a key role, as "a benchmark for evaluating and interpreting today's landscape." Under the theme of natural history the authors of the agreement included the trade routes themselves, as if their layout were solely a function of the sources of various natural resources and not of human agency. The final theme was "post-contact history," framed in terms of the traders, surveyors and missionaries who followed Mackenzie, and the present-day inhabitants who exhibited his virtues of independence and self-reliance.⁵⁸³ When the creators of the heritage trail relegated the historical activities of native people to supporting roles for non-native colonists in their interpretive themes, they virtually guaranteed that the site would become the focus of discontent. The idea that native people were a part of nature, waiting to be discovered by Mackenzie and civilized by those who followed him, was already in general disfavor when the document was written. The studies of sites along the trail done by government archaeologists directly contradicted any such notion, showing that the system of grease trails had been evolving for nine or ten thousand years.

The interpretive themes of the heritage trail failed to cohere as people fought over the meaning of the trail's past in the present, because the use of place to support a particular view of the past raises difficulties that are rarely encountered in the use of other repositories of cultural heritage.⁵⁸⁴ As people create representations—maps, written descriptions, photographs, and so on—they create something more abstract than the referent, the thing represented. Representations are fundamentally non-local; they can be easily transported without losing congruence with the referent or with one another. Representations can be duplicated, combined, exchanged, accumulated. To use the

⁵⁸³ Parks Canada & BC Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing, "Canada – BC Agreement."

⁵⁸⁴ These remarks pertain more to archives and libraries than to museums, but one of the problematics of the museum is the effort to treat material entities as representations.

language of economics, transaction costs are greatly reduced if one can deal with a representation of something rather than the thing itself. This has important ramifications for the ways that people understand the past. When historical consciousness is based on representations, then the fight for a usable past occurs in the realm of discourse. There are serious issues of epistemology, power and bias, to be sure, but the problems are well-known.⁵⁸⁵ Furthermore, the importance of facts and events in discourse lies in their particularity. They are individually unique but can be comprehensibly related to the bigger picture, to shared concerns or common experience.⁵⁸⁶ The idea of Alexander Mackenzie as a symbol of national unity and Canadian identity was very much based on representations: on his journal, on the motto of the Canadian Coat of Arms, on the map of his journey, on his message painted on a rock and on the handsome portrait of him hanging in the National Gallery in Ottawa.⁵⁸⁷

When the shift was made from the symbol of Mackenzie to a trail dedicated in his honor, historical consciousness was grounded in place, and the struggle for a usable past quickly became mired. The immutability and abstractness of maps was a liability in the search for ground truth. The creators of the heritage trail were forced to admit that they often did not know where Mackenzie had actually walked and had to simply choose a route themselves. Every use of the trail (rather than of a representation) was subject to steeply rising transaction costs. To the extent that collective memory was anchored in material surroundings, the definite advantage in interpretation went to the people who

⁵⁸⁵ For a few of the differing perspectives on these questions, see Bloch, *Historian's Craft*; Carr, *What is History?*; Elton, *Practice of History*; Thompson, *Poverty of Theory*; Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies*; Jenkins, *Re-thinking History*.

⁵⁸⁶ Elton, *Practice of History*, 11-12. Caroline Walker Bynum says that "surely what characterizes historians above all else is the capacity to be shocked by the singularity of events in a way that stimulates the search for 'significance.'" Bynum, "Wonder."

⁵⁸⁷ Another painting of Mackenzie writing on the rock was recently the subject of dispute at Simon Fraser University where it was hanging on a wall in the Academic Quadrangle. Members of the university's First Nations Student Association complained that it "falsely depict[ed] early European encounters with First Nations people," and requested that it be replaced with aboriginal art. The university administrators removed the painting but later decided to display it "in the proper context," and asked SFU historian Tina Loo for advice on how to do that. Rick Oulette, "First Things First," *SFU Peak*, 4 Nov 2003; Ian Rocksborough-Smith, "Controversial Paintings to be Replaced," *SFU Peak*, 13 Jan 2003. My thanks to Forrest D. Pass for bringing this to my attention.

dwelt there.⁵⁸⁸ Moves made in the realm of discourse could be confronted with situated action. When the Lakehead students attempted to re-enact the Mackenzie expedition for nationalist reasons, their anachronistic endeavor bogged down in the present, where occupants of the region were unwilling to let them pass.⁵⁸⁹ From the time of Mackenzie and before, everyone who travelled the grease trails was surrounded with the ubiquitous indexical signs of past human activity. There are no untainted passages through a place: you always leave something of yourself, and you always take something with you.⁵⁹⁰ And as there can be no untainted passages, there can be no pristine places either. What there are instead are muddy places, lived places, places filled with the tracks of those who have gone before.

⁵⁸⁸ For collective memory see Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*; Connerton, *How Societies Remember*.

⁵⁸⁹ For re-enactments, see Lowenthal, *Past Is a Foreign Country*, 295-301.

⁵⁹⁰ In the forensic sciences, this idea is known as Locard's Exchange Principle, formulated by one of the early students of criminalistics who was also, not surprisingly, a devotee of Sherlock Holmes. Nickell & Fischer, *Crime Science*, 9-10.

Part III: Shadowed Ground

Chapter 5: Converging towards “Banshee”

Edward S. Casey has argued that from a phenomenological standpoint “*places gather.*” What he means by this aphorism is that places not only amass animate and inanimate entities, holding them in a particular configuration, but that “Places also gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts. Think only of what it means to go back to a place you know, finding it full of memories and expectations, old things and new things, the familiar and the strange, and much more besides. What else is capable of this massively diversified holding action?”⁵⁹¹

This gathering aspect of the archive of place is the subject of the case study that follows. In the decades after Mackenzie’s voyage, the traders of the Hudson’s Bay Company moved into the northern interior of what is now British Columbia in an effort to monopolize the trade of the grease trails. In this they were only partly successful. They were never able to monopolize the maritime trade and interior natives could take their furs to the coast if they didn’t like the terms offered at interior trading posts. Furthermore, non-natives were greatly outnumbered by native people before the mid-19th century, and thus had to step relatively lightly. During the fur trade, the Chilcotin gathered experiences, memories, stories and customs that were largely an outgrowth of the grease trail system. The status quo ended abruptly in the gold rush of the late 1850s, when beleaguered native groups were confronted by tens of thousands of newcomers and control of the region passed from the HBC to a new colonial government. One of the first challenges to colonial authority was a series of killings now known as the Chilcotin War.⁵⁹² This war led people to reimagine the past of the Chilcotin and its role in the

⁵⁹¹ Casey, “How to Get from Space to Place,” 24, 25.

⁵⁹² This event is known variously as the Bute Inlet or Waddington Massacre, the Chilcotin Uprising or the Chilcotin War. In choosing whether to call an event a “massacre” or a “battle,” or an “uprising” or a “war,” one necessarily takes a stance on what happened. Reid, *Patterns of Vengeance*, 26. Here the term “Chilcotin War” is used because it was apparently the way that the perpetrators thought of their actions; after they were captured, they told the missionary R. C. Lundin Brown that ‘they meant war, not murder.’ Brown, *Klatsassan*, 100.

present. In mid-to-late nineteenth-century accounts, the Chilcotin was portrayed as a landscape of resistance, violence and tragedy; it gathered a new set of stories, a reputation for darkness.⁵⁹³ In building on this version of the Chilcotin past, people recast the social relations between them into the (fantastic) form of a relationship between human being and nature, charging the landscape with affect.⁵⁹⁴ This affective loading of place, affected, in turn, those who dwelt there, palling the Tsilhqot'in people.⁵⁹⁵ This view of Chilcotin history persisted until the 1970s, when the tragic death of a Tsilhqot'in man named Fred Quilt led people to reimagine the past of the place and its occupants. Over the next two decades, the colonial view came under attack from a variety of perspectives and rapidly disintegrated.

The colonial story of the Chilcotin is about the rise of modern racism and its retroactive historical justification. It has many parallels elsewhere, as does the postcolonial revision and dismantling of the story. The details, however, are specific to this place, with its boom-and-bust cycles of resource extraction, its fraught relations between natives and non-natives and its distinctly Canadian setting.

Human Remains

When native remains were accidentally disinterred in the early 1970s, they were treated very differently than those uncovered in an analogous situation two decades later.

⁵⁹³ For a study of the ways that people negotiate the interplay of the meanings of violent or tragic events and the places where they occurred, see Foote, *Shadowed Ground*.

⁵⁹⁴ This is analogous to Marx's idea of commodity fetishism, "nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things." See Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, 163-177; quote on 165. For a tangentially related argument, see Vanderbilt, who writes, "It is tempting to conclude that Americans have become alienated from place, just as Marx said workers had become alienated from their labor. What does land mean, anyway, when we do not have to live off it? In an era of lifestyle marketing and brand-name identity, we now want *place* to confer similar ready-made associations ... In this light, the case of Disney's Main Street ... represents a recent stage of place fetishism. Disney's parks, much like Colonial Williamsburg or Henry Ford's Greenfield Village, are bastions of nostalgia that say much about the present ..." Vanderbilt, "It's a Mall World After All," 5. In contrast, the concern here is with land that some of the stakeholders *are* living off, and the historical processes by which a particular place became fetishized in a particular way.

⁵⁹⁵ Again, the analogy is to Marx's "personification of things and reification of persons." *Capital*, Vol. 1, 209. See also Rubin, who writes, "The impact of society on the individual is carried out through the social form of things. This objectification, or 'reification,' of the production relations among people in the social form of things, gives the economic system greater durability, stability and regularity. The result is the 'crystallization' of production relations among people." *Essays*, Ch. 3.

This difference in treatment was one expression of the late-twentieth-century change in attitude that is the subject of this case study. In early 1974, as the new Boitanio Mall was being constructed in Williams Lake, a rumor began circulating through local pubs. Excavators working on the project had unearthed human bones; nobody was sure exactly how many. Williams Lake residents alerted the provincial Archaeological Sites Advisory Board, who managed to stop work in what is now the mall parking lot long enough to excavate two mounds. According to the provincial archaeologist, Boitanio Mall is probably located on a burial site. A number of house pits had been destroyed already in the construction; what remained were two areas that were used for storing food and working stone. After a brief salvage operation, these too were paved over. The human remains were never recovered, having been unceremoniously dumped with other excavated material near the Tastee Freeze.⁵⁹⁶

Twenty years later, such an outcome would have been impossible. On September 12, 1996, workers from United Concrete and Gravel found the remains of eight bodies including that of a small child while clearing land for a rancher's hayfield south of the Sheep Creek Bridge. The workers stopped immediately. Their manager later told a *Williams Lake Tribune* reporter, "I've been digging here for 30 years. It happens quite often."⁵⁹⁷

The Tsilhqot'in National Government[†] found out about the discovery a few weeks later and responded with some irritation. "It would be like me taking a backhoe into a graveyard in Williams Lake and putting up a high rise," Ray Hance, the deputy national chief said. "As far as I'm concerned this has to stop right now." Hance immediately called the provincial archaeology branch in Victoria claiming that workers had continued digging for three days after the skeletons were found. The provincial archaeology branch denied this, however. Hance wanted to take legal action to establish a precedent, but it wasn't clear against whom. "It's an issue that we as Tsilhqot'in people can't ignore.

⁵⁹⁶ "Local Sites Had a Story to Tell," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 24 Aug 1976, CCA-A.

⁵⁹⁷ Jonathan Desbarats, "Burial Site Discovered Near Bridge," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 17 Oct 1996, CCA-A.

This is going on too much. It happens every time a road is built, every time logging goes on.”⁵⁹⁸

The provincial archaeologists claimed that the bones were probably several hundred years old, and planned to use pieces of manufactured copper found at the site to date them precisely. Ray Hance, however, thought they might be as recent as seventy years old. According to Tsilhqot’in oral tradition, the site where they were found was once used for sturgeon fishing and as an alternate burial ground for people who died en route from Williams Lake to the reserves. The bones were moved to the Williams Lake morgue until a decision could be made about their final resting place.⁵⁹⁹ As indexical signs of past human activity, the bones were still indeterminate enough to be put to different uses by different stakeholders. To the archaeologists, they represented a prehistoric find; to the Tsilhqot’ins, a link with a much more immediate past. Both views had consequences for action in the present.

The following June, a Liberal MLA[†] was stripped of his post amidst allegations of conflict of interest, after he contacted the archaeology branch of the Ministry of Culture to ask about land owned by the Thompson Land and Cattle Company. Part of the land in question was the site of the burial ground, and the owner of the ranch was the MLA’s father-in-law Neil MacDonald. MacDonald defended the politician’s actions, saying that he was trying to forestall a New Democratic Party-supported “attack on private land” rather than lobbying on behalf of an in-law. MacDonald complained that ranching was not very lucrative and that he could not afford to pay for an archaeological assessment every time he needed to clear some of his land. This was the second time that he had been stopped because his land was thought to contain artifacts. “The thing that bothers me, and should bother everyone,” MacDonald said, “is where is it going to end? ... Can any private land owner be disposed of his or her land and home by the mere allegation by someone that it is sacred land or an archaeological site?” Once again, indeterminate material traces were invoked to support opposing points of view. Near where the bodies

⁵⁹⁸ Desbarats, “Burial Site.”

⁵⁹⁹ Desbarats, “Burial Site.”

had been found there was an area of soil darkened with charcoal. To the Tsilhqot'in National Government it was a sign of indigenous activity, but MacDonald said that it was simply the remains of slash burning from when the land was originally cleared.⁶⁰⁰

In October 1997, the Tsilhqot'ins took a very significant step to try to establish the terms on which all present and future conflicts would be negotiated. At an assembly of more than 500 Tsilhqot'ins at Tl'esqox (Toosey), Chief Ervin Charleyboy read the Tsilhqot'in Sovereignty Declaration to the federal minister of Indian Affairs. The declaration began with traditional territory, positioning the Tsilhqot'ins with respect to their native neighbors and establishing their claims by appealing to native language names. "Our mountains and valleys, lakes, rivers and creeks all carry names given to them by the Tsilhqot'in people: Anahim, Niut and Itcha; Tsilhqox, Taseko and Chilanko; Tatla, Nemiah and Toosey. Our territory is that which is named in our language. All living things in our country—animals, birds, insects, amphibians, reptiles, worms and flies, fish, trees, shrubs, flowers and other plants—also bear the names given to them in the language of the Tsilhqot'in." The declaration went on to trace the affinity of the Tsilhqot'ins with the Dene (Athapaskan) nation and then to oppose the "history of illegal colonization of our Nation."

The first white men to enter our country did so only with our permission and when we told them to leave they left. When men settled in our country without permission, we drove them out. When the Queen of England extended to our nation the protection of her law, by including our territory in the colony of British Columbia in 1858, she did so without our knowledge or consent. When the colony joined the Dominion of Canada in 1871 it was done without our knowledge or consent. Since that time, whilst our people were suffering from the effects of European diseases, our country has been invaded and despoiled. Our people have been deceived, impoverished, oppressed, exploited, imprisoned and maligned. Our sovereignty has been encroached upon and our jurisdiction ignored. Yet we have survived and once again we thrive.⁶⁰¹

⁶⁰⁰ "'Land Attack' Irks Rancher," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 1 Jul 1997, CCA-A.

⁶⁰¹ *TSD*.

The next three points of the declaration accused the federal and provincial governments of “repeated and shameless violation of their own laws and of international agreements and covenants,” asserted Tsilhqot’in jurisdiction over its own territory and people and insisted on the “right to decolonize,” and offered to negotiate a Tsilhqot’in constitution that would set the terms of union with Canada. They also asked the United Nations to monitor the situation, “because Canada has stolen our lands and continues to have an interest in maintaining control over them. It is difficult to ask a thief to sit in judgement on his theft.” The declaration then recognized non-status Tsilhqot’ins as Tsilhqot’in citizens, decried the inadequacy and illegality of the reserve system, and declared that federal and provincial laws would cease to hold in Tsilhqot’in country after a future date to be set. It asked for the recognition of British Columbians, other Canadians and people around the world. The final point of the declaration was respect.

To those people who have settled amongst us in our country the Tsilhqot’in Nation declares that we bear no enmity towards you, as long as you respect us: it is the policies of the governments, the courts and the churches of Canada that have done us so much harm and that now must change. We do not blame you; we ask you to understand that change must now take place for all our children. We govern according to principles of consent. We ask you to understand that what we are saying is not unique or peculiar to the Tsilhqot’in—it is happening throughout the Americas. The period or era of colonization is passing; the Fourth World is emerging.⁶⁰²

The declaration signalled the resolve of the Tsilhqot’ins to do things on their own terms, and this was reflected in their subsequent actions with respect to Neil MacDonald. On October 14, Ray Hance said that the whole plateau near the Sheep Creek Bridge should be declared a sacred site, including the hayfield and gravel piles. He said that his people couldn’t wait any longer for a decision, so they were going to go and rebury the skeletons regardless of Macdonald’s wishes. “We’re not prepared to put up with any more B. S. At the same time, we feel bad for Mr. MacDonald who has lost the use of his land. We don’t want to see anyone displaced from their livelihood.” The BC

⁶⁰² TSD.

Cattlemen's Association responded with alarm. In a letter to the premier of British Columbia, the BCCA president wrote, "We view this matter with extreme importance and suggest, at the very least, it is not being addressed with the seriousness or with the expediency it deserves. [The situation] could escalate with dire consequences." At that point MacDonald said that he had received "six absolute zero letters from Victoria. They fill a couple of pages and don't say anything."⁶⁰³

At the end of the month, the local MLA David Zirnhelt released a backgrounder saying that the province would begin negotiating with Neil MacDonald to buy his land or give him compensation of some sort. Zirnhelt's political opponents accused him of potentially creating a standoff between the Tsilhqot'ins and MacDonald by his failure to take action.⁶⁰⁴ In mid-November, MacDonald responded to the Tsilhqot'ins' threat to rebury the bones on his land saying, "I'll be there and I'll stop them. I'm tired of people trespassing. I'm going to make sure they don't have access to my land. No one does. It's my land." Ervin Charleyboy responded by saying, "If Neil is saying 'over my dead body,' things might get ugly. We're prepared for anything. If that's the route they want to take, so be it. We're tired of the B. S. the government has put us through." The Tsilhqot'ins claimed land west of the Fraser as their traditional territory, so it was, according to them, the government that was guilty of trespass. For the first time, however, Charleyboy acknowledged another potential problem. "The origin of the bones has yet to be determined. They might be Shuswap [i.e., Secwepemc] bones."⁶⁰⁵ As was the case with the rainbow trout at Fish Lake, the increasing value of the bones provided opportunities for other stakeholders to claim rights that were still in the public domain. It was likely that the archaeologists would be willing to argue that the bones were those of native people. It was less likely, however, that they would commit themselves to distinguishing between different native groups. The Secwepemc thus had an opportunity

⁶⁰³ "Bones to be Reburied," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 14 Oct 1997, CCA-A.

⁶⁰⁴ "Talks to Start Soon," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 28 Oct 1997, CCA-A.

⁶⁰⁵ Doug Sabiston, "Chilcotin Confrontation Looms," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 11 Nov 1997, CCA-A.

to claim the skeletons, to use them to support their own version of the past, and to buttress their own land claims in the present.

Zirnhelt blocked the Tsilhqot'ins' plan to rebury the bones by refusing to release them until all parties were in agreement. MacDonald had granted permission for provincial archaeologists to do research on his land, come up with a plan to rebury the remains and protect any others that might still be at the site. Even though they did not have custody of the bones, the Tsilhqot'ins gathered at the site. There they met with the archaeologists to learn about how the site would be stabilized. "Because the Tsilhqot'ins and the Shuswap Indians are in disagreement about the origins of the bones, chiefs and representatives from both nations talked in front of MacDonald's property, before walking to the site. The media was asked to stay away from the group as they spoke."⁶⁰⁶ If the two native groups could find some common ground it would be more difficult for other stakeholders to use a strategy of divide and conquer.

In November, the Tsilhqot'ins and the Secwepemcs "verbally agreed to rebury the ancestral remains on rancher Neil MacDonald's property in a partnership." MacDonald had reversed his own position to give the native groups his blessing; he was even thinking of attending the burial ceremonies. "Everything is going to be done with my knowledge and cooperation," he told the *Tribune*. "I never really did change my mind. We discussed it and came up with a solution, and now we have mutual respect and understanding between all of us." Zirnhelt refused to release the bones until there was a written agreement between the Tsilhqot'ins and the Secwepemcs.⁶⁰⁷ In retrospect, this turned out to be a wise plan, as talks between the two native groups stalled over dispute about whose land it was, or what the reburial ceremonies were going to be. Each of the native negotiators took the matter back to their own community to get direction. The dispute was complicated by the fact that the Tsilhqot'ins were not participating in the BC Treaty Commission process, and the Commission had taken the Secwepemcs' word for

⁶⁰⁶ Doug Sabiston, "Dispute Bones to Stay Put for Now," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 13 Nov 1997, CCA-A.

⁶⁰⁷ "Tentative Agreement on Bone Reburial," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 18 Nov 1997, CCA-A.

where territorial boundaries lay.⁶⁰⁸ Zirnheld objected to the idea that the treaty process was to blame for the dispute.⁶⁰⁹

In late December, the skeletons were finally reburied in a traditional ceremony. The Tsilhqot'ins said that there was never a question that the resolution would be peaceful, but "There was always a problem with jurisdictional interests here that everybody had to defend. Sadly the ultimate victims of this were the remains of the ancestors."⁶¹⁰ But history is never about the ancestors per se, but about the relationship between their time and the present in a given place. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, the history of the Chilcotin and the accepted view of its native people underwent a sea change. People in the 1970s would have been no more able to imagine the dispute that erupted over the Sheep Creek bones than those in the 1990s could imagine treating the Boitanio bones like construction waste. To explain how such a change in historical consciousness could occur, it is first necessary to see how the traditional account of Chilcotin history arose.

Did the Tsilhqot'ins Really "Opt Out" of the Fur Trade?

From the mid-19th century through much of the 20th, the traditional view of Chilcotin history assumed that the Tsilhqot'in people violently resisted all non-native encroachment, both before and after the gold rush. One popular history of the Chilcotin War, written in the 1970s, claimed that "the Hudson's Bay Company had not been able to induce them [i.e., the Tsilhqot'ins] to enter the fur trade."⁶¹¹ Similarly, in the influential *Contact and Conflict*, a book that otherwise did much to bring native people into BC historiography as agents, Robin Fisher wrote "Some [native peoples] preferred not to be involved in the trade and found it possible to exercise that choice." As an example, he used the Tsilhqot'ins, who he claimed "had opted out of the fur trade."⁶¹² The Tsilhqot'ins may have chosen to limit trade with non-native people at interior posts, but

⁶⁰⁸ "Agreement Gone Sour," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 20 Nov 1997, CCA-A.

⁶⁰⁹ Daniel Wall, "Talks Continue on Burial Site," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 6 Jan 1998, CCA-A.

⁶¹⁰ Ken Fisher, "Skeletons Finally Put to Rest," *Williams Lake Tribune*, 6 Jan 1998, CCA-A.

⁶¹¹ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 8.

⁶¹² Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 35. The first edition was published in 1977.

this does not mean that they didn't participate in the fur trade, or that they were exercising some kind of violent resistance against non-native incursions into their territory. Instead, they chose to trade with other native people. The story of the Chilcotin during the fur trade should be seen as a failed bid on the part of the Hudson's Bay Company to change the spatial ecology[†] of the region.

After Mackenzie's voyage, the North West Company (NWC) extended its trade network across the Rocky Mountains and established a series of posts in what they called "New Caledonia," now the northern interior of British Columbia (Figure 4). From Hudson's Hope (Rocky Mountain Portage) on the Peace River, a party led by Simon Fraser moved southwest to establish a post at McLeod's Lake in 1805. The following year, they established posts at Stuart's Lake (which became the center of operations in New Caledonia and was later renamed to Fort St James) and Fraser Lake. In 1807, they established Fort George (now Prince George).⁶¹³ This last post served as a support base from which Fraser set out to explore the Tacoutche Tesse River, which both he and Alexander Mackenzie thought was the Columbia. In 1808, Fraser took a party of twenty-one NWC employees and two native guides down the river in four canoes, reaching tide water in July. The river turned out not to be the Columbia—it is now known as the Fraser—and, as both Mackenzie's and Fraser's native informants had said, was nearly impassable due to rapids and canyons. The fur traders would need to find a different way to transport goods to and from the coast.⁶¹⁴

In 1812, the NWC asked John Stuart to establish a route from the post at Stuart's Lake to the Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean. If such a route could be found, the company could ship their trade goods for New Caledonia to the Pacific Coast, and send their furs directly from there to the China market, instead of laboriously transporting the goods and furs overland between New Caledonia and Montreal. The following summer Stuart took nine men in two canoes and descended the Stuart River to Fort George, where it joined the Fraser. They continued down the Fraser to the point just above the first bad

⁶¹³ Lamb, "Fraser, Simon," DCBO; Ray, "The HBC and Native People."

⁶¹⁴ Fraser, "Journal"; Lamb, "Fraser, Simon," DCBO.

rapids, the place where Mackenzie had stopped and set out overland. From here, Stuart and his men also set out overland, on horseback, south to Fort Kamloops and then to Fort Okanagan, where they could continue to the ocean in canoes. Having established the route, the NWC used it once the following year then abandoned it because trade goods from the coast could not be distributed to New Caledonia posts before freeze-up. In 1820, they decided to try again, working over the next few years to make the route “not only practicable but perfectly established.”⁶¹⁵

In September 1821, Fort Alexandria was established above the first rapids on the Fraser River and began operation under the management of George McDougall. The following month, three Tsilhqot’ins came to the new post at Alexandria and asked McDougall to “pay them a visit in the winter.”⁶¹⁶ They returned home and began collecting furs for the company. In November, McDougall received a letter from John Stuart, his superior at Stuart Lake, informing him that the North West Company, which he worked for, had merged with the Hudson’s Bay Company. Stuart asked McDougall to leave his post in the hands of a colleague and make “a trading excursion to the Chilkootins.” The following January, McDougall set out into the Chilcotin with fourteen men. The roads were bad and the snow was deep. The first Tsilhqot’in families that they met had hardly enough salmon to share, and had made all of their beaver pelts into robes which they were wearing. The traders continued on to the next settlement, “two ground Lodges containing 9 or 10 families.” There were a few furs in the lodges, and enough new beaver robes that McDougall suspected that other nearby Tsilhqot’ins might have some surplus furs to trade. He camped with his men and sent a native messenger to round up some locals to trade with. Some more Tsilhqot’ins arrived with a few furs, “and they very candidly told us, they had killed a number of Beaver in the Fall, purposely to trade with us, but finding we did not come and the cold weather coming on, they made all the Beaver they had into Robes.” The Tsilhqot’ins expressed their willingness to trade

⁶¹⁵ Gibson, *Lifeline*, 3-18. The quote is from John Stuart, 15.

⁶¹⁶ George McDougall, 18 Jan 1822, B.188/b/1, fo. 34-34d, quoted in HBCA-FC. There is also a copy of the HBCA’s post history for Fort Chilcotin in the BC Archives, MM/C43.

their robes if McDougall could give them something else “with which they could cover themselves.” He didn’t have anything that would fit the bill, however, so he returned to Fort Alexandria with a meager thirty-seven pounds of furs and skins. “It is by far the poorest trip of its kind I ever made,” he wrote to Stuart.⁶¹⁷

McDougall seems to have had trouble evaluating the potential of the region to support a fur trading post. Despite the poor returns, he thought highly of the Tsilhqot’ins, “certainly a fine brave looking set of Indians.” He also thought that their winter clothing showed that the territory was rich in furs: “the Men being generally well and warmly clad, with good Chevreux, Elk, as well as some Carriboux Skins as Blankets, with good Leggings of excellent Leather, their Women, those we seen as well the Children are in general covered with good Beaver Robes, we did not see a Single Indian Man or Woman bare legged, nor with any thing of a shabby covering on their backs ...” The Tsilhqot’ins, for their part, were very interested in the traders’ iron work, especially their traps. The account that they gave of their country was encouraging. In season there were plenty of beaver, fish, moose and caribou. “In short if a person could believe them, their Lands abound with Milk & honey.” After determining that there were about 131 Tsilhqot’in families to trade with, McDougall recommended that a post be established in the Chilcotin. McDougall thought the Tsilhqot’ins might also buy ammunition, since they already purchased guns from native people near the coast.⁶¹⁸

The following year, the Northern council of the HBC decided to establish a post in the Chilcotin.⁶¹⁹ Their plans were delayed, however, by the killings of some company men at Fort George and Fort St John in 1823 and 1824.⁶²⁰ These deaths had nothing to do with the Tsilhqot’in people, but John Stuart decided to concentrate his forces at posts that were already established rather than splitting his men up to build new posts. In 1825,

⁶¹⁷ George McDougall, 18 Jan 1822, B.188/b/1, fo. 34-34d, quoted in HBCA-FC.

⁶¹⁸ George McDougall, 18 Jan 1822, B.188/b/1, fo. 34-34d, quoted in HBCA-FC. Joseph McGillivray described the Tsilhqot’ins that he met on the same trip as “cleanly in their persons, and remarkably hospitable.” See Cox, *Adventures*, 322.

⁶¹⁹ Fleming, ed. *Minutes of Council*, 45.

⁶²⁰ These were, coincidentally, the killings that James Douglas was avenging when he ran afoul of the Carriers in 1828. Reid, *Patterns of Vengeance*, 129.

Stuart was succeeded by William Connolly. In the winter, Connolly made a trip to the Chilcotin to re-assess the prospects for a new post and returned with six packs of beaver. Although he thought that a Chilcotin post might be advantageous to the company in the future, he hesitated to build one because the Tsilhqot'ins and the Carriers were embroiled in "disputes of a most serious nature."⁶²¹ These were triggered by a quarrel among hunters, but the more general issue seems to have been the Carriers using their geographic advantage to take over a lucrative position as middlemen and edge the Tsilhqot'ins out of direct trade with the HBC. At this point it had been five years since the Tsilhqot'ins had requested a post in their own territory.

The trouble started in March 1826, when four Carrier men went hunting in Tsilhqot'in territory. There was a dispute of some sort, and three of the men were killed by Tsilhqot'ins, while one escaped to return, seriously injured, to Fort Alexandria. The HBC traders prevented the Carriers from executing a Tsilhqot'in man at the fort in retaliation. Although the man escaped, he was later killed by a Carrier anyway. The Carriers went skirmishing and lost three more men as a consequence. They then attacked a Tsilhqot'in village and returned to Fort Alexandria in June with five prisoners and the scalps of twelve men, women and children they had killed. A party of Tsilhqot'ins, meanwhile, showed up at Fort Alexandria and killed one Carrier man, perhaps in retaliation for the skirmishing—at the time they didn't know yet that the Carriers had attacked one of their villages. A few weeks later, twenty-seven Tsilhqot'ins appeared on the bank of the river opposite the fort. Their leader made a speech of some kind, but it was a very windy day, and the traders and Carriers at the Fort couldn't hear what he said. The Tsilhqot'ins left without attacking, and without harming any of the company personnel they encountered. It's impossible to know whether or not things would have turned out differently if this message had been received. In September, about eighty Tsilhqot'ins attacked Fort Alexandria. The Carriers were protected by the palisades of the fort and suffered few casualties. The Tsilhqot'ins, however, were attacking from an exposed position and many were killed or wounded. The HBC officers were afraid that

⁶²¹ William Connolly, D.4/119, fo. 65-65d, quoted in HBCA-FC.

they would be successful, however, and decided to arm the Carriers at the fort. A Tsilhqot'in woman who lived at Fort Alexandria, seeing that the HBC was giving arms and ammunition to the Carriers, slipped away to warn her fellows. The Tsilhqot'ins decided to retreat, but they swore vengeance on the HBC traders "and threatened to cut off all white men that might thereafter fall their way." In 1827, one of the HBC men wrote, "No friendly overture has been since made by either tribe; and although we sent word repeatedly to the Chilcotins that we should feel happy in bringing about a reconciliation, we have not as yet received an answer, and none of them have been seen in our neighborhood since Sept. 1826."⁶²²

Despite the fact that the Tsilhqot'ins had a grievance not only against the Carriers, but the HBC as well, the company decided in 1827 that it would proceed with building a post in the Chilcotin. Their timing couldn't have been worse. That year, the salmon run completely failed and other important food resources, like berries, were also in short supply. The traders at Fort Alexandria sent to Kamloops for twenty-five hundred salmon and obtained an additional fifteen hundred from William Connolly. With these, and thirty-five kegs of potatoes, they managed to keep from starving.⁶²³ The Tsilhqot'ins didn't have the luxury of ordering food when their own ran out. They had to resort to eating emergency foods like Black Tree lichen, and, when possible, to taking refuge with kin and trading partners on the coast.⁶²⁴ The famine further delayed the establishment of a post in the Chilcotin. In 1829, Connolly made yet another trip to the Chilcotin.

I saw nearly the whole of the Inhabitants whom I found greatly reduced in numbers since my visit in 1825, and in a state of the utmost indigence. The information I received from them on this occasion in regard to the resources of their country varied materially from that which they had formerly given. And, indeed, their appearance was sufficient to convince me that I had in that particular been deceived, they now acknowledged

⁶²² For the disputes between Tsilhqot'ins and Carriers in the 1820s see Joseph McGillivray's account in Cox, *Adventures*, 321-322. Quotes from 322. See also HBCA-FC; Lane, "Chilcotin," 410-411; McClellan, "Intercultural Relations," 388; Reedy-Maschner & Maschner, "Marauding Middlemen," 721-722. For intercultural aspects of the law of vengeance, see Reid, *Patterns of Vengeance*.

⁶²³ McGillivray in Cox, *Adventures*, 316-331.

⁶²⁴ For emergency plant foods in the interior, see Turner, *Food Plants*, 28, 33-36; Parish, Coupé & Lloyd, eds. *Plants*, 20, 439.

that their resources for subsistence were so extremely scanty and precarious that when salmon failed, which happens commonly three years out of four, they were reduced to the necessity of deserting their lands and of flying for relief to some other quarter near the sea coast ...

Connolly suggested that a fort would be of little use in a region where the occupants frequently had to migrate, and that “the surest plan by which to draw from the Chilcotins all the benefit of which their country is susceptible, will be by attending to them by the means of Derouins and by endeavouring to make them resume the intercourse which they formerly held with Alexandria...”⁶²⁵ If the company could put this plan into effect, they would remake the spatial ecology of the region by encouraging the Tsilhqot’ins to become sedentary.

As the fur traders extended their reach across the continent, they faced the constant problem of provisioning men who were too busy with the tasks of trade and transport to be able to feed themselves. Because of the long winter, northern rivers were only clear for canoe travel a short part of the year, and the distances that had to be covered were immense. There was no time for the men to hunt or gather food en route. Furthermore, when posts were established, the occupants quickly depleted the resources in their immediate vicinity, and most posts were located in areas where agriculture was very limited. To solve the logistical problems, the fur trading companies had to develop elaborate food supply networks.⁶²⁶ The long voyages made from a post to collect supplies—which is what Connolly had in mind for the Chilcotin—were known as “dérouines.”⁶²⁷

This was a complicated business. Every move that the Hudson’s Bay Company made could significantly alter the human geography and ecology of a region. Encouraging a group of natives to hunt and trap instead of pursuing subsistence activities meant that those people had to be brought into the provisioning network, too. The logic of killing animals for the market meant that some were driven towards local extinction,

⁶²⁵ William Connolly, 4 Mar 1830, D.4/123, fos. 80d-81d, quoted in HBCA-FC.

⁶²⁶ Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 126-132.

⁶²⁷ Nute, *Voyageur*, 92-93.

which rapidly altered food webs and natural population cycles.⁶²⁸ Unable to explain the ecological changes that they observed, some of the traders saw the working of God's will. Reflecting on his experiences at Fort Alexandria in 1834, for example, John McLean wrote, "I have already observed that the salmon fail periodically, and the natives would consequently be reduced to the utmost distress, did not the goodness of Providence furnish them with a substitute. Rabbits are sent to supply the place of the salmon; and, singular as it may appear, these animals increase in number as the salmon decrease, until they swarm all over the country. When the salmon return, they gradually disappear, being destroyed or driven away by their greatest enemy, the lynx, which first appear in smaller, then in greater numbers;—both they and their prey disappear together. As to the *cause* that induces those animals to appear and disappear in this manner, I cannot take upon myself to explain."⁶²⁹ Furthermore, by concentrating on the beaver, the trappers removed an animal whose activity created the ponds and lakes that provided habitat for many other species.

The human consequences were every bit as complicated. There were new opportunities for native groups to enter the provisioning trade, but the exchange of food, especially meat, seems to have had different cultural entailments for different peoples, providing more room for misunderstandings to arise.⁶³⁰ It also seems that natives and newcomers had differing perspectives on scarcity and surplus, and it is often hard in retrospect to determine where on a continuum of want a particular group actually lay.⁶³¹ Faced with "starvation" in eastern James Bay in 1745, the Crees near the HBC's Eastmain House preferred not to trade their furs for oatmeal, expecting to be able to claim the food freely instead.⁶³² Faced with "starvation" at Kamloops in the winter of 1829, some of the natives actually died.⁶³³

⁶²⁸ For the interrelation of the fur trade and the fur cycle, see Cowan, "Fur Trade."

⁶²⁹ McLean, *Notes of Twenty-Five Year's Service*, 253-254.

⁶³⁰ For the provisioning trade, see Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 126-132. For some of the intercultural misunderstandings occasioned by trades in food, see Vibert, *Traders' Tales*, 119-204; Colpitts, *Game in the Garden*, 14-37.

⁶³¹ Ray, "Periodic Shortages."

⁶³² Francis & Morantz, *Partners*, 93-94.

⁶³³ Vibert, *Traders' Tales*, 186-187.

Arthur Ray has argued that the cumulative impact of the fur trade was to change the spatial ecology of a given region in the following way. Before the arrival of the newcomers, indigenous groups moved to take advantage of seasonal surpluses. These seasonal subsistence rounds[†] (Figure 5) are well-documented for the Carriers, Tsilhqot'ins and other peoples of the interior (as well as for much of the rest of the continent). When the company established trading posts, however, the food surpluses became concentrated at the nodes of a network that the company controlled while local resources became depleted. Native groups were encouraged to settle near the posts and to turn to the company when they faced privation.⁶³⁴ This is what Connolly had in mind for the Tsilhqot'ins.

Fort Chilcotin

On October 1, 1829, Connolly wrote to George McDougall ordering him to take nine men and found a post “at the first point of woods you come to after falling on the Chilcotin River.” Eight years after their first trip to Alexandria to request their own post, the misunderstandings between the Tsilhqot'ins and Carriers had finally been cleared up, and the salmon run had been plentiful that year. McDougall had more knowledge of individual Tsilhqot'ins than his colleagues, and thus was the ideal person to become the first post manager. Connolly apologized for not being able to provide “a more efficient Interpreter ... than Baptiste Bouché Junr., but as he speaks the language perfectly supported by you I trust that he will answer tolerably well...”⁶³⁵ McDougall wrote back to say that he would do as Connolly asked, but was unable “to prevail on any Indian of this place [i.e., Alexandria] to go to the chil cotin country.”⁶³⁶

On arriving at the designated spot on the Chilcotin River, McDougall could not find any trees that were suitable for building, and very little fuel for fires. He moved instead to “a cluster of small poplars” where he intended to build the winter huts for his men. (This was in the vicinity of present-day Redstone.) He “would look round for a

⁶³⁴ Ray, “Periodic Shortages.”

⁶³⁵ William Connolly, 1 Oct 1829, B.188/b/7, fos. 6d-9d, quoted in HBCA-FC.

⁶³⁶ George McDougall, 10 Oct 1829, B.188/b/7, fos. 24d-25, quoted in HBCA-FC.

more convenient place” later, if the company decided to keep its establishment in the area. McDougall was confronted with the Tsilhqot’ins’ seasonal subsistence activities right away. The “principal men are all off to the interior with their families,” he wrote, “some to hunt Beaver, but the most of them to their root Grounds ... the Indians of the lake are off to the mountains, but they are expected back in the fall, as the most of their families have remained to gather roots...” McDougall planned to obtain salmon for the subsistence of his own men, but was uncertain how much he could get; he was glad that he had brought supplies from Alexandria.⁶³⁷

By the end of January the following year, it was clear to Connolly that “few if any” of the Tsilhqot’ins had actually hunted for beaver over the winter, and that it was unlikely that they would start doing so since the task was becoming more difficult as spring approached. “From these premises the natural conclusion is that no advantage can accrue from the Chilcotin Establishment during the winter, and not deeming it safe to continue it for the summer no manner of injury can therefore arise from withdrawing it as soon as possible ...” Connolly was afraid that the traders did not know the Tsilhqot’ins well enough to trust them if there was to be no trade during the summer. The returns from the post that winter were a meager eight packs of beaver skins that had been hunted before the onset of cold weather, and thus were sparsely furred.⁶³⁸ Although McDougall seems to have acquitted himself well enough, Connolly’s successor Peter Warren Dease suggested the following year that the problems at the Chilcotin post were due to the fact that there was “a deficiency of Gentlemen required for the management of the Posts in the district.” “The post has been for the Winter under the management of one of the common Servants, who could not be supposed to possess that influence or authority, nor command that respect among them necessary to incite them to industry as a Gentleman would, indeed in general they would entertain rather a contemptible opinion for common Servants, the scantiness of Returns from there will sufficiently shew this...” He went on

⁶³⁷ George McDougall, 13 Oct 1829, B.188/b/7, fos. 25d-26, quoted in HBCA-FC.

⁶³⁸ William Connolly, 28 Jan 1830, B.188/b/7, fos. 19-20; see also William Connolly, 4 Mar 1830, D.4/123, fo. 81d; both quoted in HBCA-FC.

to acknowledge that “other causes may have operated partly in producing the unfavorable result of the Season, scarcity of Salmon and means of subsistence during Winter has obliged them to leave their own Lands and resort to the neighbouring Tribes (whose means are not so limited) to escape the horrors of Famine...”⁶³⁹

Over the next few years the company maintained contact with the Tsilhqot’ins, but did not try to re-occupy their post in the Chilcotin. Dease was careful to “give them some encouragement to work in the Expectations of having again the Post established of which they appear to be very desirous.”⁶⁴⁰ The Tsilhqot’ins may have been getting tired of being strung along, however. When one company man and an interpreter was sent from Fort Alexandria in September 1831, they “met a very rough reception, [the Tsilhqot’ins] behaved with much insolence and used some Menaces toward them.”⁶⁴¹ Apparently the Tsilhqot’ins didn’t think that the company was serious about trading with them. When an HBC man reported from the Chilcotin at the end of December, most of the beaver pelts had already been converted into winter robes, and the Tsilhqot’ins weren’t willing to part with them.⁶⁴²

The archival record is fragmentary, but by 1834 the company seems to have finally re-occupied Fort Chilcotin, now under the charge of the clerk William Fletcher Lane.⁶⁴³ The returns were reasonable, but the post had to be abandoned again sometime between 1835 and 1836 as conflict flared up again between the Tsilhqot’ins and the Carriers.⁶⁴⁴ During this time the Tsilhqot’ins may have been moving to the northwest to establish more direct trading links with the Nuxalks.⁶⁴⁵ By 1837, Fort Chilcotin was back

⁶³⁹ Peter Warren Dease, 19 Apr 1831, D.4/125, fo. 24-24d, quoted in HBCA-FC.

⁶⁴⁰ Peter Warren Dease, 14 May 1831, B.188/a/125, fo. 24-24d, quoted in HBCA-FC.

⁶⁴¹ Peter Warren Dease, 9 Oct 1831, B.188/a/125, fo. 24-24d, quoted in HBCA-FC.

⁶⁴² Peter Warren Dease, 23 Feb 1832, B.188/a/125, fo. 24-24d, quoted in HBCA-FC.

⁶⁴³ B.188/a/5, B.5/a/3, and B.239/k/2, all cited in HBCA-FC. George Simpson, the governor of the HBC, was confident that “there is a prospect of this country becoming more productive than it has heretofore been, from the growing industry of that tribe, who, until lately, could not be induced to exert themselves in hunting ...” George Simpson to the Governor and Committee, 21 Jul 1834, D.4/100, fo. 9, quoted in HBCA-FC.

⁶⁴⁴ George Simpson to Peter Skene Ogden, 27 Jun 1836, D.4/22, fo. 36, quoted in HBCA-FC.

⁶⁴⁵ Lane, “Chilcotin,” 411.

in business under the management of John McIntosh, who was soon replaced by the clerk William McBean.⁶⁴⁶

McBean's post journal for the years 1837 to 1840 is the only surviving account of daily life at Fort Chilcotin, and it, too, is fragmentary. Much of it is concerned with the company men's daily subsistence activities. On October 26, 1837, McBean wrote, "As it is not likely the Bull will get any fater than he is from the cold setting in – I have shot him to day, which job occupied my two men all day."⁶⁴⁷ The following day they spent searching for their horses, an activity that would be very familiar to Chilcotin residents of subsequent generations.⁶⁴⁸ Throughout the week, they continued to bring home bundles of hay for their livestock. By October 31 they had accumulated 392 bundles at the post.⁶⁴⁹ During the coming winter there would be almost no range for their animals and they would have to feed them hay instead. Since this winter feeding period was about four months long in the vicinity of the Chilcotin post, caring for the animals put a considerable strain on the time and energy of the men. There was little margin for error. The men would run into trouble if they tried to keep too many animals or too few.⁶⁵⁰

At the time, horses were relatively new in the Chilcotin. Mackenzie didn't see any in 1793, and surely would have ridden most of the way to the coast instead of walking if he could have. Simon Fraser, on the other hand, did see horses in the area in 1808, although they were scarce enough that he had difficulty obtaining them to assist with his portages. In the 1820s, the HBC perfected the brigade that they had inherited from the NWC. Each spring, furs were shipped out of the interior from the post at Stuart's Lake (also known as Fort St. James) to Alexandria by canoes, packed from Alexandria to Okanagan by horses, and transported from Okanagan to Fort Vancouver on boats. In the summer the traders carried trade goods into the interior in the opposite direction (Figure 4). The southbound brigade required a large supply of horses and feed

⁶⁴⁶ B.5/a/4, cited in HBCA-FC. See also B.37/a/1, fo. 3.

⁶⁴⁷ HBCA B.37/a/1, fo. 1.

⁶⁴⁸ See, for example, St. Pierre, "Looking for Horses" and "Looking for Horses Again," *Tell Me a Good Lie*, 114-119.

⁶⁴⁹ HBCA B.37/a/1, fo. 1d.

⁶⁵⁰ Weir, "Winter Feeding Period."

at Alexandria. Further posts along the trail to Fort Okanagan also had fresh horses, hay fields, corrals and “horse keepers,” and some of these posts would form the nuclei of gold-rush-era ranches. McBean’s mention of the bull shows that the interior posts also had some cattle by the 1820s. The HBC would go on to introduce them by the thousands in the 1840s, as the company strove to make interior posts self-sufficient.⁶⁵¹ By committing to the use of horses for the brigade, however, the company also bound itself to the animal’s biology. As the environmental historian Elliot West noted in a related context, “People tame and direct an animal’s power, but they are really using the animal’s ability to acquire energy. It follows that an owner must pay at least as much attention to that energy source—to the animal’s food—as he does to the creature itself. The crucial relationship, in short, is not so much between people and their animals. It is between people and the things their animals eat.”⁶⁵²

Besides gathering hay for winter feed, the men at Fort Chilcotin also had to spend a lot of time cutting firewood, and this was noted in the post journal on the 2nd and 3rd of November and off and on thereafter through the winter. In the 20th century, January mean daily temperatures in the Chilcotin were around –11.5° C (11.3° F) with occasional cold snaps to –40° or lower. The temperatures that McBean and his men faced, although not recorded, would have been a bit colder since many of the glaciers in the province were nearing their maximum recent extent at the time.⁶⁵³ A surviving letter to McBean from Alexander Fisher hints at some interpersonal difficulties at the Chilcotin post without providing enough information to figure out exactly what was going on: Allow, one of the Tsilhqot’in chiefs, was proving to be a bit of a “scamp”; Baptiste LaPierre, one of the company men, was involved in a quarrel with the Tsilhqot’ins; “contrary to Rules and Regulations,” McBean’s predecessor John McIntosh had taken furs without paying for them; and Fisher advised McBean “if under existing circumstances (the Natives’ feelings not too friendly towards you) that it should happen on a Barter that an indifferent

⁶⁵¹ Gibson, *Lifeline*; Campbell & Bawtree, eds. *Rangeland Handbook*; Blacklaws & French, *Ranchland*.

⁶⁵² West, *Contested Plains*, 50-51.

⁶⁵³ Tuller, “Climate.” “Forty below” is the same point on both Celsius and Fahrenheit scales, and a common Canadian idiom for “really cold.”

skin is presented you to make up a payment of a Gun, Blankt. or any large article of Trade for them to purchase I would not hesitate to take it for the present, but I would tell them that it was good for nothing & even say that in future, you will not take any of such kind, that you sell at a Cheap Tariff, in comparison to ... Alexa. that your Goods are good and what they give out to be so also &c.”⁶⁵⁴ Apparently, McBean had his hands full trying to make sure that his men would survive the winter, smoothing over misunderstandings, and trying to convince the Tsilhqot’ins that they should not take their business elsewhere.

On November 7, 1837, McBean noted that the weather remained fine, but continued, “I regret I have not men at my disposal to take advantage of the favourable Weather and to build the men’s House while the Ground is not too much froze.” Instead he came down with a severe cold the next day, and his men made “an Indian lodge into the square of the Ft. to shelter themselves from the cold & inclemency of the weather.” The men continued to haul hay. On the 10th, McBean wrote, “At sundown this day Mrs Jane McBean was brought forth to bed of a male child (John) – she took ill last night.” The next day saw the first snowfall of the winter. By the 14th they had finished bringing in the hay, and McBean had cause to worry. “This ... forms a total of 605 [bundles] add to which 50 close by not yet hauled is all the stock we have to feed two Milch Cows, one Calf & a Bull and now & then a horse – 1000 bundles is the less quantity that ought to have been made – The Hay Business has been done in a careless way – some of it must have been stowed in a green state as a great deal of it is spoiled & will not do for the Cattle.”⁶⁵⁵ On November 28, the men had to insulate their “Indian lodge” with hay and earth to keep it warm. McBean was concerned because one of his men had been having “sensual intercourse” with another man’s wife in the fort. “There has been too much dirty work carried on at this Post for some years passed,” he wrote, “and to put a stop to it

⁶⁵⁴ HBCA B.37/a/1, fo. 2d.

⁶⁵⁵ HBCA B.37/a/1, fos. 3d-4.

& teach others to break Rules & Regulations of the Co. this man ought to be made an example of & should be fined according to his disent.”⁶⁵⁶

The Tsilhqot’ins were taking their trade elsewhere, and this gradually dawned on the HBC traders, although they misinterpreted the signals at first. On December 22, 1838, Allow tried to visit McBean, but the trader had Baptiste show him to the “Indian lodge” instead, “telling him I did not wish to be disturbed – particularly as he had no Furs to trade & only wished to pass away his time. He expected I would give him tobacco, however I was too busy to think of that ... He set off quite displeased and this day an Indian was sent to me by his order to apprise me that he had forbidden all the Indians to hunt and that he expected we would be off from his Lands immediately so that they might have the pleasure of burning the Fort – stating that the whites did them no good – Could not smoke when they wished – that the Ft. abt. this time was always destitute of Trading goods – that we rejected their bad Furs and sold at a high Tarriff.” Instead of apologizing, McBean responded with a bit of bravado, sending word to Allow that the Tsilhqot’ins were free to trade or not, but that “I despised his menaces and would not quit my Fort until I had received Instructions to that effect from a Chief whose shoes he was not worthy to pick up.”⁶⁵⁷

McBean was then left to repent at leisure. On Christmas Day, 1838, he wrote, “Every thing quiet and not an Indian comes to the Fort. Three have passed on their way to Long Lake seeming in a great hurry and not stopping to the Ft. – a conduct very unusual – I begin to think they meditate a blow upon the Fort – and I am badly provided to receive them as my Fort is not fortified and destitute of a single Bastion ...” The men spent the next few days moving the pickets closer together, putting more pickets up around the Bastion and cutting port holes, creating a second “rough but Ball proof” Bastion to defend the back of the fort, and so on.⁶⁵⁸ There was no attack, however. Allow’s speech to McBean is sometimes cited as evidence that the Tsilhqot’ins were not

⁶⁵⁶ HBCA B.37/a/1, fo. 5. McBean’s wife and child survived. See B.37/a/2, fo. 5.

⁶⁵⁷ HBCA B.37/a/1, fo. 7.

⁶⁵⁸ HBCA B.37/a/1, fo. 7d.

interested in trade with the HBC.⁶⁵⁹ This is belied by the fact that Allow settled his accounts with the company on January 16 and told McBean that “the natives are peaceable & well disposed towards the Fort.”

In May 1839, McBean heard rumors of trouble among the Tsilhqot’ins and their neighbors, and again feared that Fort Chilcotin would be attacked.⁶⁶⁰ It wasn’t. When the HBC men tried to create a “barrière” in July to harvest salmon for the fort, to “no small astonishment of the Indians,” the Tsilhqot’ins responded by deliberately blocking the river downstream, so that the HBC men could not get the fish.⁶⁶¹ In native law, the right to fish at a particular site was usually owned either by individuals or by residence-groups.⁶⁶² It was too much for the HBC men to expect that they should be able to consume such a valuable resource in the Chilcotin, particularly as the local native people were not obtaining any benefit from their presence and were not being paid for the salmon. The following summer McBean brought dried fish with him from Alexandria. Writing back to his superior, he noted, “Having now obtained the first object (food) I wish next to secure the sundry Furs which the Chilcotins have abt. them, & which from the scarcity of Goods I have not been able to trade previous to their disposing them shortly to the Atnahyews – a Tribe whom they are in the habit of visiting & trading with annually.”⁶⁶³

Understandings and Misunderstandings

Sometime around 1840 or 1841, William McBean was transferred and Donald McLean took his position as the manager of the Chilcotin post. The archival record for McLean’s tenure at Fort Chilcotin is scanty, but McLean would later make a name for himself in the HBC for going farther than circumstances warranted. At Quesnel in 1848,

⁶⁵⁹ See, e.g., Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 35.

⁶⁶⁰ HBCA B.37/a/2, fo. 2.

⁶⁶¹ HBCA B.37/a/2, fo. 4.

⁶⁶² Alexander, *Cultural Heritage Overview*, 68-75; Harris, *Fish, Law and Colonialism*, 18-27.

⁶⁶³ William McBean to John Tod, 20 June 1840, B.37/a/2, fos. 28d-29, quoted in HBCA-FC. There isn’t an entry for “Atnahyews” in the indices of the relevant volumes of the *Handbook of North American Indians*, so it is not clear which native group this was. Both Alexander Mackenzie and Simon Fraser learned to call the Secwepemcs “Atnahs,” from the Carrier word for “foreigner”; this may be who was meant. Ignace, “Shuswap,” 216.

for example, McLean was sent to arrest a native manslayer, and, failing to find the man, killed his uncle instead. Such a response may have been acceptable under native law, but the fact that two other relatives of the manslayer were also killed, a man and a baby, was not. McLean's view of the matter was that "The black, ungrateful, blood-thirsty, treacherous, and cowardly scoundrels should have prompt justice for it; hang first, and then call a jury to find them guilty or not guilty."⁶⁶⁴

From the beginning, McLean was not impressed with Fort Chilcotin. "The keeping up such a paltry Establishment is in my humble opinion a dead loss to the H[onorable] HB. Co. and risking the lives of people placed at it – who are little better than slaves to the Indians, being unable to keep them in check ..."⁶⁶⁵ McLean thought that the company should focus its energies on trade at Kluskus instead. This was a sign that the HBC was maneuvering to try to cut off the Tsilhqot'ins from trading with the coast. There are references to a sporadic *dérouine* trade to Kluskus in the journals of Fort Alexandria and Fort Chilcotin as early as 1837. At the beginning of 1843, Alexander Caulfield Anderson, then in charge of Fort Alexandria, wrote to HBC governor George Simpson to outline the strategy behind such a move.

I shall now ... direct your attention to a project generally approved of by those acquainted with the circumstances ... It is the transfer of the outpost of this establishment [i.e., Alexandria] from the Chilcotins to Tluz-cuz, a lake situated three days march to the Northward of the former, and equally accessible though a trifle more distant, from hence, than the present position at Chilcotins. The objects it is proposed to attain by this measure are first the interception of a good many Beaver that find their way through that channel to the Sea Coast, from the Nas-cotin [Carrier] villages attached to Fort George and Alexandria ... At present the bulk of the returns ostensible yielded by the Chilcotins are procured at Tluz-cuz by drouine parties sent thither ... As for the furs traded directly at the Chilcotin post ... they could be procured by sending occasionally from this place ... To maintain the [Chilcotin] post, owing to the evil disposition of the Chilcotin Indians ... an officer and at least two men are necessary; a number that would suffice at Tluz-cuz, where the natives, on

⁶⁶⁴ Balf, "McLean, Donald," DCBO; Reid, *Patterns of Vengeance*, 116-117. McLean's quote comes from his biography in DCBO.

⁶⁶⁵ B.5/a/5, quoted in HBCA-FC.

the contrary, are well disposed, industrious, and extremely urgent that we should settle among them.

Anderson went on to note that Kluskus was “the nucleus where all the surrounding roads unite, being directly on the track followed by Sir Alex McKenzie.”⁶⁶⁶ Fort Chilcotin was maintained until 1844, however, with McLean still in charge.⁶⁶⁷ After the company had withdrawn, Anderson wrote to Simpson to tell him that “The Chilcotin trade (a mere trifle in itself) is not decreased, but on the other hand slightly improved, since the withdrawal of the Establishment.”⁶⁶⁸ At least the Tsilhqot’ins didn’t have to worry about the HBC men taking their salmon any more.

Far from “opting out” of the fur trade, the Tsilhqot’ins did everything in their power to be a part of it. They were willing to fight with the Carriers for direct access to the HBC traders. They repeatedly expressed an interest in having a post of their own. When the company failed to establish a post year after year, brought goods that the Tsilhqot’ins thought were inferior, charged high tariffs, and depreciated the furs that natives brought in to trade ... even then some of the Tsilhqot’ins persisted in dealing with the company men at the post. When the HBC traders did something outside the bounds of propriety, treating important Tsilhqot’ins with a complete lack of respect, say, or trying to capture their most valuable and unpredictable food source, then the Tsilhqot’ins were forced to take their business elsewhere. The HBC’s ideal scenario would have been for the Tsilhqot’ins to live around a post in the Chilcotin and spend all of their time harvesting fur-bearing animals in return for company-provided food and sundries. This strategy worked best in places where the HBC could establish a monopoly. In the Chilcotin, however, native people had access to the system of grease trails which connected them to the extensive maritime trade. The Tsilhqot’ins could get better terms from other native people in other places, from the Carriers and Nuxalk at Ulkatcho and Kluskus, from the Nuxalk at Bella Coola, from the Homalco on the Southgate and

⁶⁶⁶ Alexander Caulfield Anderson to George Simpson, 21 Jan 1843, D.5/8, fo. 40-40d, quoted in HBCA-FC.

⁶⁶⁷ HBCA-FC.

⁶⁶⁸ Alexander Caulfield Anderson to George Simpson, 13 Feb 1845, D.5/13, fo. 129, quoted in HBCA-FC.

Homathko Rivers, from the Secwepemc along the Fraser River (Figure 6).⁶⁶⁹ The HBC moved to intercept this trade by focusing their attention on Kluskus, but ultimately failed there too. Like the traders' failed attempt to take over the trade in oolichan grease on the coast, the bid to make the Tsilhqot'ins dependent on déroutines signalled a basic misunderstanding of spatial ecology, particularly in the places where interior and coastal groups met one another.

The company's inability to dictate the terms of trade in the Chilcotin was one indicator of the extent to which the land-based fur trade represented a continuation of the grease trail system rather than a replacement of it. The widespread use of interpreters was another sign that, to a large extent, interaction still revolved around native people. At the time of the arrival of the newcomers in the late 18th century, the native peoples of British Columbia spoke more than twenty-five different languages from six different language families.⁶⁷⁰ There is no conclusive evidence for the existence of a trading pidgin in interior BC before the arrival of the newcomers.⁶⁷¹ Thus, given the state of linguistic diversity, native peoples must have relied upon bilingual or multilingual interpreters for the purposes of exchange with neighboring groups. When fur traders arrived in the interior, they too had to rely on the use of interpreters to conduct business, and the fur trade journals are full of references to them. Alexander Mackenzie and Simon Fraser, for example, both mentioned using interpreters.⁶⁷² Daniel Williams Harmon spoke of being accompanied by his interpreter Baptiste Bouché on a number of occasions.⁶⁷³ George Simpson mentioned interpreters for particular languages and interpreters in the service of particular traders.⁶⁷⁴ Interpreters were also used on the brigade. William Connolly's journal of the brigade mentions the interpreters Waccan Bouché and Baptiste Lolo. Peter Warren Dease's journal of the brigade mentions the

⁶⁶⁹ For the position of the Tsilhqot'ins vis-à-vis their aboriginal neighbors, see Lane, "Cultural Relations."

⁶⁷⁰ UBC Museum of Anthropology, *First Nations Languages of BC* [map]; Thompson & Kinkade, "Languages"; Krauss & Golla, "Northern Athapaskan Languages"; Kinkade et al, "Languages."

⁶⁷¹ Turkel, "Chinook Jargon."

⁶⁷² Mackenzie *Journal*, 153, 154, 160 (and for his attempt to collect native vocabularies, 164-165); Fraser, "Journal," 159, 160, 162, 169.

⁶⁷³ Lamb, ed. *Sixteen Years*, 30 Jan and 18 Mar 1811, 137, 23 Jan 1813, 155, 30 Sep 1815, 180.

⁶⁷⁴ Merk, ed. *Fur Trade*, 27, 47 (for the Blackfoot language), 127, 137 (for "Mr. Deases Interpreter").

interpreters Baptiste Lolo, Wastayap Campbell, Alexis Belanger, Joseph Porteur, J. Baptiste Lapierre, J. Baptiste D. Bouche “fils,” and J. Baptiste Boucher.⁶⁷⁵ Because interpreters were readily available, there was no reason for a pidgin language to arise during the fur trade period in the interior.⁶⁷⁶ What this means is that up until the mid-19th century, newcomers to what is now interior BC were everywhere tapped into a vast multilingual network of communication and exchange. The predominately indigenous people, ideas, words, techniques and things that circulated through this network established the terms in which everyone negotiated much of their existence, including the nature of the past in particular places and its bearing on the present. Some of the non-native traders may not have shared the respect for indigenous knowledge that many people profess in the 21st century, but they never lost an opportunity to avail themselves of it. Furthermore, many of the newcomers married into native families, and maintained very close ties to indigenous communities.⁶⁷⁷

Another sign of native influence in the fur trade was the set of understandings that surrounded retaliatory vengeance. The fur trading companies were certainly capable of exacting swift, certain and brutal vengeance when one of their own was killed. Often this vengeance took the form of summary execution. The legal historian John Phillip Reid has argued that this policy was adapted from North American Indian law, whether the traders acknowledged it or not, and was thus understandable to the native people.⁶⁷⁸ When the fur traders transgressed the boundaries of accepted behavior, however, they had to step very lightly indeed to avoid catastrophe. When some company men were killed by natives at Fort George in 1823, the Carriers “warned the traders that, should any wholesale killing of Indians occur, they would retaliate and would not leave a white man alive in western Caledonia.”⁶⁷⁹ In 1828, James Douglas entered a Carrier village near

⁶⁷⁵ Gibson, *Lifeline*, Appendix 1, 207, 222 (Connolly), Appendix 2, 230-31 (Dease).

⁶⁷⁶ Turkel, “Chinook Jargon.”

⁶⁷⁷ Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*; Brown, *Strangers in Blood*.

⁶⁷⁸ Reid, *Patterns of Vengeance*. Reid also argues that since the HBC had a monopoly (after 1821) they were able to use the Indians’ dependence on them to avoid direct conflict by simply withdrawing the source of trade, 152-153. This was not true in the Chilcotin, as will be shown below.

⁶⁷⁹ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 37.

Fort St James with two accomplices and killed a native man to avenge the earlier murder of a fur trader. Douglas, in turn, was nearly killed by the Carriers, not because he had killed the man, but because the man that he killed was a guest in their village. Douglas's life was spared only by the intervention of native people.⁶⁸⁰

Priests and the Prophet Dance

Native people in the Chilcotin were first exposed to elements of Christian thought during the fur trade, not as the passive recipients of proselytism but rather as the active creators of a new system of ideas. As with other cultural innovations of the time—in bartering, domestic arrangements, linguistic practices and intergroup violence—this process was shaped by the workings of the grease trails. In the late 18th century, a syncretic religious movement known as the Prophet Dance arose among the native peoples who lived on the vast plateau to the southeast of the Tsilhqot'ins. Prophetic figures emerged in Nez Perce, Umatilla, Spokane, Yakima, Kootenai and other groups living in what is now eastern Washington state, northeastern Oregon, northern Idaho, western Montana and southeastern BC.⁶⁸¹ A common interpretation of the movement is that it was a response to crisis: “The conjunction of sickness with the coming of horses, guns, climatic deterioration, and near constant war put an unbearable strain on the Plateau world.”⁶⁸² The Prophet Dance spread “with amazing rapidity” along the grease trails of the interior, reaching the Tsilhqot'ins and Carriers in the 1830s. John McLean, an HBC trader, described the cult as “a sort of religion, whose groundwork seemed to be Christianity, accompanied with some of the heathen ceremonies of the natives.” It was embraced at Fort Alexandria and Fort St James in 1834. McLean bemoaned the fact that there were no missionaries to satisfy the Carriers' request to be instructed in Christianity and feared that their conversion would be difficult. “As to the doctrines of our holy

⁶⁸⁰ There are a wide range of stories about this event, both written and oral. In some, Douglas was saved by the women of the post, in others by the interpreter's native wife or by his own wife, who was the métis daughter of another fur trader and a Cree woman. See Klippenstein, “Challenge”; Reid, *Patterns of Vengeance*, 90-91, 98, 112, 129.

⁶⁸¹ The anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber considered the Tsilhqot'ins to be a part of the plateau culture area rather than the subarctic. This can be taken as a sign of their close ties to the peoples of the plateau.

⁶⁸² Walker & Schuster, “Religious Movements”; Miller, *Prophetic Worlds*. Quote is from Miller, 35.

religion, their minds were too gross to comprehend, and their manners too corrupt to be influenced by them.’⁶⁸³ In fact, the Carriers were not waiting for the traders to “give” them Christianity as McLean understood it; they were creating a form of religious life that suited their changing world. Prophets were active among the Carriers from the mid 1830s until at least the 1870s.⁶⁸⁴

Catholic missionaries began working on the fringes of the Tsilhqot’ins’ world in the 1840s. In 1842, Modeste Demers left his base at Fort Vancouver and traveled north with the HBC brigade to Fort Alexandria. He found the travel difficult: “There is a feverish atmosphere, an oppressive sun, a choking dust, a hill to climb, a ravine to cross.” He spent the winter at Alexandria and had a small chapel built there. Writing to his bishop in Quebec, he said, “I have the consolation of being able to hope that the divine mercy which called me from the shores of the St. Lawrence to the midst of these immense solitudes will well know how to ‘change stones into children of Abraham.’” His chapel was initially windowless, but after preaching outside in mid-winter a few times, he was able to get some animal parchment to make windows, “and there we were, comfortable, very comfortable. However, O vexatious disappointment, don’t we see some miserable starved dogs begin to eat our windows? We had to set traps and catch several guilty ones to put a stop to the scandal.”⁶⁸⁵ While stationed at Alexandria, Demers also visited the Carriers at Fort George and Fort St James, traveling again with the traders of the HBC. Most historical accounts of the Oblates suggest that Demers did not visit the Tsilhqot’ins, but the post journal for Fort Alexandria has the following entries for October 6, 1842: “... After Breakfast, The Revd. Dumars accompanied by Antoine Gregoire Thaniere Laird and several Indians started for the Chilcotins ...”, and October 27: “... Mr. Dumers arrived from the Chilcotins ...”⁶⁸⁶ Even if Demers did not visit the Tsilhqot’ins, some of them must have heard his preaching at Fort Alexandria or

⁶⁸³ McLean, *Notes 25 Years*, 263-264.

⁶⁸⁴ Tobey, “Carrier,” 429; Jenness, *Carrier Indians*.

⁶⁸⁵ Demers, Letter to the Bishop of Quebec, 20 Dec 1842, reprinted in Quebec Mission, *Notices and Voyages*, 152-165.

⁶⁸⁶ Quoted in HBCA-FC.

to the Secwepemc near where the city of Williams Lake is now. At Demers's request, the Secwepemc also built a small chapel and a house for the priest. Demers taught them prayers and hymns which they taught their children; one of them was able to surprise an Oblate missionary many years later by singing the hymns he had learned as a child.⁶⁸⁷

In 1845, the Jesuit priest John Nobili arrived in the area and stayed for a couple of years. Nobili did visit the Tsilhqot'ins, and, despite being "of a very modest stature" and perhaps "handicapped by a rather timid disposition" did make an impression on them. One of Nobili's successors, the Oblate priest Adrian Gabriel Morice, mistakenly believed that the Prophet Dance arose after Demers and Nobili left the country, thanks to "the devil [who] was to ape their ministrations and thereby bear an indirect testimony to the worth of their efforts."⁶⁸⁸ Nobili may not have started the Prophet Dance among the Tsilhqot'ins but his influence was still discernable sixteen years later, when a Protestant missionary named R. C. Lundin Brown went to preach to a group of them near Fort Alexandria in 1861. Brown spoke in French, which was translated into Chinook Jargon, and then into Tsilhqot'in. The Tsilhqot'ins listened to him "in that attitude of deep attention which marks an Indian audience." One man, a Tsilhqot'in named Klatsassin, seemed more attentive than the rest, never taking his eyes off the missionary. At the conclusion of Brown's sermon, Klatsassin went up to him and began to search his clothing. Brown "hardly relished this," but asked him calmly what he wanted.

Upon this he pulled out of his bosom a crucifix, which was tied round his neck. He said he wanted to see whether I wore one. He wanted in fact to see whether I had what he had been taught to recognize as the mark of the true priest. ... Those missionaries had, it appeared, given the Indians a token whereby they should distinguish the true shepherd, the Roman priest, from the devouring wolf, him of the Anglican faith, this sign, the

⁶⁸⁷ Quebec Mission, *Notices and Voyages*, 139; Whitehead, *Cariboo Mission*; Usher, "Demers, Modeste," DCBO.

⁶⁸⁸ Girard, "Nobili, John," DCBO; Morice, *History*, 236-238. The judgments of Nobili's stature and character are Morice's, 237; his quote about the Prophet Dance is on 238. Adrian Morice didn't believe that Nobili actually visited the Tsilhqot'ins. He thought instead that the missionary had meant to say that he visited the Babines. Morice, *History*, 335, n. 1. Howay, who accepted Nobili's claim that he did visit the Tsilhqot'ins, describes Nobili's twelve day visit as follows. "Those were busy days. His time was fully occupied as he relates converting, marrying, baptising, blessing, burying, and abolishing polygamy everywhere." *BC from Earliest Times*, Vol. 2, 609.

wearing of a crucifix. ... I had *no* crucifix, I was accordingly in danger of rejection as a false priest. I told him, however, that I was a “King George” or English priest, not exactly like those he know about: and that the King George priest wore no crucifix about his neck, but carried it inside his heart.⁶⁸⁹

The Lotos-Eaters

The fur trade was a continuation of the grease trail system, in part, because native peoples greatly outnumbered the newcomers. During the heyday of the maritime and land-based trades—roughly from the 1770s to the 1850s—the resident non-native population of BC never went above a thousand people. In 1824, HBC Governor George Simpson wrote that there were a total of 151 officers and men in the Columbia district (which included both BC and present-day Washington and Oregon).⁶⁹⁰ The historian Jean Barman estimated that at the time of the first census of Victoria (1855), there were about 700 non-natives on Vancouver Island and the Puget Sound, with “handfuls” of people scattered at posts throughout the interior.⁶⁹¹ Native populations, on the other hand, are estimated to have been on the order of seventy to a hundred thousand persons. Robert Boyd, for example, said that the pre-contact population of the Northwest Coast was at least 180,000 persons, and Wilson Duff put the native population of British Columbia at 70,000 in 1835.⁶⁹² In this context, the exact numbers aren’t crucial. Until the 1850s, newcomers were outnumbered by natives in the ratio of seventy or a hundred to one.

During the fur trade period, distant governments slowly negotiated who would be controlling the region. In 1818, the US and Britain agreed to a border along the 49th parallel between their respective territories east of the Rocky Mountains. Ownership of the territory west of the mountains, from what is now Oregon to the Alaskan panhandle, remained unclear. In subsequent decades, Americans embraced the idea that it was their

⁶⁸⁹ Brown, *Klatsassan*, 5-7; Whitehead, *Cariboo Mission*, 35. “King George” was Chinook Jargon for British.

⁶⁹⁰ Merk, ed. *Fur Trade and Empire*, 66.

⁶⁹¹ Barman, *West beyond the West*, 61.

⁶⁹² Boyd, *Spirit of Pestilence*, 3; Duff, *Indian History*, Table 3, 55.

“manifest destiny” to control the continent from sea to sea, and in 1838 called for the military occupation of the land west of the Rockies and north to 54°40'. If this plan had succeeded, much of what is now interior BC would have been part of the US. On the other hand, the Hudson’s Bay Company had posts throughout the region, with a center of Pacific Slope operations at Fort Vancouver near the mouth of the Columbia River. The British thus claimed that the border should be extended along the 49th parallel as far as the Columbia river, then follow the river to the sea. If this plan had come to fruition, what is now western Washington State would have been part of Canada. The ultimate result was a compromise: in 1846 the Treaty of Washington stipulated the extension of the border along the 49th parallel to the Pacific ocean, resulting in an American Oregon Territory south of the border, and in British possessions under the stewardship of the HBC to the north.⁶⁹³

Negotiations between the US and Britain for control of the Oregon country and New Caledonia proceeded at a relatively leisurely pace because few non-natives entered the area before the 1840s. Gold was discovered in California in 1848, however, triggering a rush of settlement in Oregon. By 1850, there were an estimated 13,000 non-native settlers there.⁶⁹⁴ That year, gold was discovered in the Queen Charlotte Islands, and on the British Columbian mainland shortly thereafter. The Hudson’s Bay Company tried to keep the discovery under wraps because they feared an influx of American miners and the eventual annexation of the area by the US. They were successful until 1858. That spring, as many as thirty thousand people may have headed for the lower Fraser River, most traveling through Victoria.⁶⁹⁵

The massive influx of people suddenly and permanently altered the demographic composition of what is now British Columbia. It coincided with the rapid decline of many indigenous populations from introduced epidemic diseases. Robert Boyd argues that the indigenous population of the Northwest Coast fell from over one hundred

⁶⁹³ Hayes, *Historical Atlas*; Barman, *West beyond the West*, 47-49.

⁶⁹⁴ Johansen, *Empire of the Columbia*, 151.

⁶⁹⁵ Barman, *West beyond the West*, 52-54, 63-66.

thousand in 1800 to less than sixty thousand in the 1850s. A smallpox epidemic in 1862-63 further reduced Northwest Coast aboriginal populations to less than forty thousand.⁶⁹⁶ Thus, by the mid-1860s, the ratio of native to newcomer had fallen from seventy or a hundred to one to two to one or less. This demographic shift had important consequences for the ways that people in the 1850s and 60s imagined the past of what is now British Columbia.

The experience of the newcomers who arrived in the late 1850s was very different from the experience of the non-native fur traders a generation earlier. Practically every other person that the gold rushers encountered had also just arrived in the area. For each non-native person who had been there during the fur trade and remembered the past of the place and its occupants—remembered the grease trail system, in other words—there were now twenty or thirty other non-native people who did not. Even if these recently-arrived newcomers had wanted to use fluent interpreters when they encountered native groups, there would not have been nearly enough bilingual speakers to go around. Under the circumstances, communication between newcomers and natives became sporadic and rudimentary, limited to whatever could be expressed in Chinook Jargon, a newly-adopted pidgin tongue.⁶⁹⁷ The circumstances under which the newcomers sought out native people were correspondingly limited: they were often in search of mining or packing labor, food or sex, souls to save. During the gold rush, the newcomers spoke mostly to one another, and their view of the present and future was very much shaped by their shared experiences elsewhere, in the gold fields of California and Australia or in the distant marches of the British Empire. New networks of communication and exchange were extended along old routes, superimposed on older networks with few points of contact.

One measure of the insularity of this newer system was the coverage of the press which sprang up to cover the news and doings of the gold rush. Papers like the *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, the *Daily British Colonist* (also of Victoria) and the *British Columbian*

⁶⁹⁶ Boyd, "Demographic History, 1774-1874" 135-148.

⁶⁹⁷ Turkel, "Chinook Jargon."

of New Westminster printed reports from the goldfields, stories and announcements about prominent local businessmen, and arrival and departure times for steamers. On June 5, 1861, the *Daily Colonist* noted the arrival of the steamer Eliza Anderson from Puget Sound in Washington Territory carrying US mail. There had been a chance that the mail would be delayed by “Indian savages” in Washington: “The laying up of the Anderson would be a great misfortune to our people as well as to residents on the Sound. It is the only regular communication that we now possess with the outer world, and if we were to lose that, we should be almost as isolated from the rest of mankind as Alexander Selkirk on his island of Juan Fernandez.”⁶⁹⁸ To the extent that native people occupied any space in the newspapers, it was in the third person, as in a letter to the editor of the *British Columbian* that opposed the “repeal of the Indian Liquor Law” which forbade selling or giving alcohol to natives.⁶⁹⁹

Routes to the Gold Fields

Two newly-created local metropolises, Victoria and New Westminster struggled for control of the interior hinterland during the gold rush.⁷⁰⁰ Victoria had been founded by the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1843, as Fort Vancouver was becoming more difficult to use for fur trading operations. The number of American settlers entering Oregon was increasing every year, and it seemed likely that the US would gain control of the territory around the lower Columbia River. New Westminster, on the mainland at the mouth of the Fraser River, had been established in 1859 to serve as the capital of the colony of British Columbia. (Vancouver Island and British Columbia were separate colonies from

⁶⁹⁸ “The ‘Eliza Anderson’” and “Arrival of the Eliza Anderson,” *Daily Colonist*, 5 Jun 1861. Alexander Selkirk (1676-1721) was a Scottish sailor who quarreled with the captain of his ship during a privateering voyage and was marooned on an uninhabited island in 1704. He was rescued in 1709 and published accounts of his life provided some of the impetus for Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. See the readings by Dampier, Cooke, Rogers and Steele in the Norton Critical Edition of *Robinson Crusoe*, 227-238, and the commentary by James Sutherland, 344-357.

⁶⁹⁹ Letter from Ephraim Evans to the editor, *British Columbian*, 20 Aug 1861.

⁷⁰⁰ The importance of metropolis and hinterland for environmental history was brought to prominence by Cronon in *Nature’s Metropolis*. As Cronon himself noted, however, the idea had long played a role in the historiography of Canada. See, e.g., Masters, “Toronto vs. Montreal”; Careless, “Toronto *Globe*”; Idem, “Frontierism”; Idem, *Frontier and Metropolis*.

1859 until they joined in 1866.)⁷⁰¹ The creation of New Westminster coincided with a shift in the focus of gold rush activity, with prospectors moving up the Fraser and beginning to explore the Thompson River. The following year, the *British Columbian* printed reports of fabulous strikes in the Cariboo (Figures 7, 8 & 9). By 1863, there were estimated to be more than ten thousand people in the boom town of Barkerville, fifty kilometers east of Quesnel.⁷⁰² The gold fields of the Cariboo were far removed from coastal shipping. To avoid paying exorbitant costs for food, clothing, mining equipment and sundry items, the gold rushers had to have their “outfits” packed instead. James Douglas, the governor of both colonies, concentrated on establishing an efficient transportation system. The most ambitious and successful project, the Cariboo Wagon Road, linked Yale, at the head of steamboat navigation on the Fraser, with Barkerville. When it was completed in 1865, the road was over six hundred kilometers long and had cost the government more than a million dollars to construct.⁷⁰³

When the focus of prospecting and mining shifted to the Cariboo, the majority of gold rushers departed from New Westminster on a steamer up the Fraser River. In order to avoid the worst of the Fraser Canyon, between Yale and Fort Berens, they took a route known as the “line of lakes.” The experiences of the Englishman W. Champness and his nephew provide an example. Leaving the Fraser River at Carnarvon, they traveled up the Harrison River to Harrison Lake, then to Douglas, Lillooet Lake, Anderson River, Anderson Lake, Seton Lake and finally Fort Berens in the Fraser Canyon. The site of Fort Berens was “Mile 0” of the Cariboo Wagon Road. In 1862, the wagon road from Lillooet to Alexandria was under construction, but wouldn’t be completed until the following year.

At Lillooet, Champness joined a party of twenty men, who “determined to lay in a large stock of flour, bacon, and beans, and engage a team of seven horses.” They “further hired the services of an experienced California packer, who undertook to accompany

⁷⁰¹ Scholefield, *BC from Earliest Times*, Ch. 14; Galbraith, *HBC as Imperial Factor*, 222-223; Rich, *History of HBC*, 2:749; Howay, *BC from Earliest Times*, 65-68.

⁷⁰² Barman, *West beyond the West*, 72-73.

⁷⁰³ Smith, *James Douglas*, 96-100; Elliot, *Barkerville*, 112-125; Barman, *West beyond the West*, 78-79.

[them] and securely pack [their] supplies on the beasts from time to time, at a uniform charge of thirty cents (fifteen pence) per pound on the whole weight of baggage.” From Lillooet, they took the Brigade Route, across the mountains to the Thompson River, then up past Loon Lake, Green Lake, Lac la Hache and Williams Lake. The scenery was “wild” and “magnificent,” the travel slow and dangerous, the insects so numerous that their “animals would doubtless have been driven stark mad had [they] stayed long there at that time of year.” The native people, too, whom Champness occasionally encountered, were portrayed in broad-brush and conventional terms, suggesting that he had little experience with native individuals. “The native races of British Columbia exist in a condition of even greater squalor and degradation than the other aboriginal tribes of the Far West. Many of them inhabit holes and caves; others move about and erect temporary tents or huts of bark. ... They are exceedingly filthy in their mode of life, swarm with vermin, are very licentious, superstitious and cruel.” After leaving Williams Lake, the trail became worse. The party’s “horses were often plunged up to the belly in swamps and mud.” “British Columbia,” Champness observed, “is truly a horse-killing country.”⁷⁰⁴

From the city of Victoria’s point of view, an ideal route to the gold fields would be one that bypassed the lower mainland and New Westminster altogether. With any luck, once discovered, such a route would be shorter than the line of lakes. One possibility was to sail from Victoria to Bentinck Arm and head east overland from Bella Coola. On July 24, 1861, Ranald Macdonald and John G. Barnston wrote to Governor Douglas informing him about their attempts to find such a route. Leaving Alexandria, they crossed “an elevated table land ... studded in every direction with lakes and meadows,” finding plenty of feed for their riding and pack animals. In a few places, there were “some swamps which would have to be corduroyed” and some fallen timber that could be cleared with little difficulty. The only part of the road that was not level or

⁷⁰⁴ Champness, *To Cariboo*. Fort Berens was a short lived HBC post on the opposite bank of the Fraser River from Lillooet. *BCPN*. Part of the route the Champness followed had been surveyed by Lt. Palmer in 1859. For the construction of the wagon roads, see Howay, *BC from Earliest Times*, 87-107.

easily traveled was a slide going into the Bella Coola valley. The native people informed Macdonald and Barnston that there were alternate routes through the coast range which they used to travel between Bella Coola and Fraser's Lake and Fort George. Macdonald and Barnston concluded, "we are firmly convinced that if the Upper Frazer turns out to be the rich mining country that is expected, goods and provisions can be laid down by this route for as low a figure at any point of the Frazer above Alexandria, as they can now be had for at Williams Lake." This wasn't idle speculation. Ranald Macdonald, who was the métis son of HBC trader Archibald McDonald, had been born at Fort George (Astoria) in 1824 and raised at various posts in the HBC's Columbia district. After traveling widely, he came to BC in 1858 and established a packing business running between Little Harrison Lake and the Fraser gold fields. He and Barnston later tried to establish the Bentinck Arm and Fraser River Road Company to pack goods along the trail they had scouted, but the company collapsed for financial reasons.⁷⁰⁵

Victoria newspapers continued to print new information about the Bentinck Arm route. In October, the *British Colonist* published a letter by Captain Cavendish Venables, who suggested that a long lake crossed the interior plateau tending in a southwest direction. If it were possible to reach the plateau by an inlet south of Bentinck Arm, it might be possible to use this lake for shipping to the Cariboo.⁷⁰⁶ Although the Bentinck Arm route was regularly served by native packers, it could be unreliable. On July 22, 1862, the *British Colonist* published a piece about the "destitution and suffering" of some gold rushers who had attempted to use the route. One party had gotten through, albeit short on provisions, in fifteen days. The second group, however, ran into trouble trying to get out of the Bella Coola Valley. The story was related to the newspaper "in harrowing terms" by a Mr. F. Poole, an English geologist. "At the Slide the Indians refused to pack further, and the provisions were nearly all left there, the miners depending on obtaining supplies of fish and game from the interior Indians. After

⁷⁰⁵ Ranald Macdonald and John G. Barnston, [Letter to James Douglas from Bonaparte River, Reporting on a Trip from Alexandria to North Bentinck Arm, 24 Jul 1861], Howay Papers 21-18, AKR Box 3, File 61, Xerox 237. Wallace, "Macdonald, Ranald," DCBO.

⁷⁰⁶ "Route from Alexandria to North Bentinck Arm," *British Colonist*, 28 Oct 1861.

leaving the Slide, two Canadians (brothers) named Linn, fell sick of the small pox and were left ... to the tender mercies of the savages. At Chilcooten Lake, two more Canadians ... fell sick of the same complaint and were left with the Chilcooten Indians. All these cases gave evidence of the disease in its worst or confluent form.” The men who did not succumb to smallpox ran short of food. The newspaper went on to note that “few of the party had ever undergone privation or suffering in any form, and on these the hardship and privation endured bore most heavily.” Some of the men managed to feed themselves with berries and small game, and on reaching Alexandria “hired Indians to ... pack provisions to the starving men on the trail.” No one at the Fort seemed to care about the stragglers (or perhaps they didn’t share Poole’s estimation of their danger), but the packers did what they could to relieve them. Poole, who imagined “that some of the party left behind perished for want of food,” would “not advise any person to go that way until a proper trail [had] been constructed.”⁷⁰⁷

The colonial government was interested enough in a proper trail from Bella Coola to Alexandria that they sent Lieutenant Henry Spencer Palmer, a subaltern in the Royal Engineers, to survey the route in the summer of 1862. The twenty-four-year old Palmer’s letters back to Colonel Moody, the detachment commander, were casual and chatty.⁷⁰⁸ “And a lively journey it is!” he wrote on July 16. “Slow work but I’m doing my best. The trail is of the vilest, simply an Indian Track, and much work to be done to get horses through. Swamps & brush of the thickest kind I ever saw hourly impede our progress & the streams, which are now very high, give us much trouble ... the evil must come to an end soon, & I am really inclined to believe that, once past the slide, I can push on rapidly.” He didn’t think highly of the Nuxalks, calling them “the most extortionate, inconsistent, thieving rascals [he] ever saw,” and he praised the man who had had the

⁷⁰⁷ “Important from the Coast Route—Destitution and Suffering,” *British Colonist*, 22 Jul 1862.

Apparently the “tender mercies of the savages” were tender after all. In January of the following year, a Canadian named Linn was alive and well, cutting hay in the Chilcotin for the packer Mr. Hood. See “The Bentinck Arm Route,” *British Colonist*, 3 Jan 1863. That begs the question, however, of why the native people were willing to take care of people suffering from smallpox in the first place.

⁷⁰⁸ For Palmer and Moody, see Woodward, “Palmer, Henry Spencer,” DCBO, and Ormsby, “Moody, Richard Clement,” DCBO, respectively. See also Woodward, “Influence.”

discernment to name Bella Coola “Rascal’s Village”; apparently he didn’t know at the time that the appellation was due to Alexander Mackenzie.

Tension between Palmer’s party and the Nuxalks was heightened by the smallpox epidemic that was killing so many native people in the area at the time. Palmer got the idea that the Indians thought he was using his sextant to have a “cloche nanitch” at “sochally tihe”—Chinook Jargon for “a good look at God”—to see whether the smallpox was going to be bad. After a misunderstanding one evening, Palmer and his men found themselves brandishing revolvers at some of the Nuxalks, who responded with a display of superior firepower. Palmer holstered his revolver and managed to talk his way out of the situation in Chinook Jargon, telling them that his “tumtum” (heart) was good. A few gifts cleared up any remaining bad feeling. “The man who was at the head of the row, is now taking my things up the river in his canoe. We are perfectly at their mercy & they extort what they like or leave your things on the bank.” On July 24, Palmer’s party arrived at the “Great Slide” near the junction of the Atnarko and Talchako Rivers and he decided that he would not be able to get up out of the valley with horses. He engaged some natives to pack for him, and they angered him by stealing his beans, pannikins and pepper. He wanted to horsewhip them, but his better judgment prevailed—he was “utterly in their power”—and so he resorted to “coaxing” and “wheedling” instead.⁷⁰⁹

According to Governor Douglas (who was not favorably inclined toward the Royal Engineers), Palmer had performed with “great credit to himself and [had] done good service in fixing points and distances in the Upper Country.” Arthur Johnstone Blackwood, the senior clerk for the North American Department at the Colonial Office described Palmer as “exceedingly clever ... on the spot & faute de mieux,” a possible

⁷⁰⁹ Henry Spencer Palmer, [Letters of 17 July and 13 Aug 1862 to Col. Moody]. AKR Box 2, File 25, Xerox 125. For the Chinook Jargon, see Gibbs, *Dictionary*, 10, 18, 28. The expression “kloshe nanitsh” is given the imperative meaning of “look out!” or “take care!” by Gibbs. Palmer’s use of the same phrase for the English “a good look,” which is a literal translation, may be a sign that he wasn’t fluent in the jargon. On the other hand, since constant improvisation is necessary in the use of a pidgin language, this may be a sign of his fluency. Certainly he expected Moody to understand what he meant. A considerably revised version of Palmer’s account was published the following year in New Westminster. See Palmer, *Report*, BCA Library NW971.MP174re.

successor to Colonel Moody. But the detachment of Royal Engineers were disbanded in July 1863, and Palmer left British Columbia for good in the autumn.⁷¹⁰

Waddington's Scheme

The *British Colonist* continued to publish reports about the Bentinck Arm route, but there were other ways of bypassing the lower mainland.⁷¹¹ One was to sail from Victoria up Bute Inlet and then follow either the Homathko or Southgate River through the coast mountains into the Chilcotin (Figure 9). On June 5, 1861, the *Daily Colonist* ran a short piece about a meeting that was held the previous evening in one of the rooms of the Industrial Exhibition Committee, to consider a project to explore a route from the head of Bute Inlet to the Cariboo gold fields. At the meeting, Alfred Waddington "made a few remarks setting out the vast benefits which would accrue to Victoria, and explained the line of country proposed to be explored."⁷¹² The fifty-seven year old Waddington was a veteran of the California gold rush, where he had been a partner in a wholesale grocery firm in San Francisco. In 1858, he opened a branch of the firm in Victoria to provision the BC gold rush, and soon became "an ardent partisan of Victoria in its rivalry with New Westminster."⁷¹³ The meeting ended with the appointment of a committee to evaluate the "scheme," consisting of Waddington; J. D. Pemberton, former HBC man and surveyor general of Vancouver Island; J. W. McKay, chief trader at the HBC Thompson's River Post (Kamloops) and a man with extensive surveying and retail provisioning experience; Amor De Cosmos, journalist, politician and veteran of the California gold rush; J. W. Trutch, engineer, surveyor and California gold rush veteran; A. C. Anderson, ex-chief trader for the HBC and postmaster of Victoria; R. Burnaby, a civil servant recently arrived from Her Majesty's Customs Office in London, and founder

⁷¹⁰ Douglas, Letter to the Duke of Newcastle, 13 Nov 1863; and Arthur Johnstone Blackwood both quoted by Woodward in "Palmer, Henry Spencer," DCBO.

⁷¹¹ "Four Days Later from Bentinck Arm," *British Colonist*, 27 Aug 1862; "The Bentinck Arm Route," *British Colonist*, 3 Jan 1863.

⁷¹² "Coast Route Meeting," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 5 Jun 1861.

⁷¹³ Lamb, "Waddington, Alfred Penderell," DCBO.

of a firm of commission merchants; and P. M. Backus.⁷¹⁴ About \$200 was raised for the venture at the next meeting, by subscription.⁷¹⁵

On August 20, about 250 people met in Victoria to hear a report from Major William Downie, who had been commissioned by Governor Douglas to explore Bute Inlet. Sharing the stage with the speaker were two maps, one of the area surrounding Bute Inlet and the other of Bella Coola and the Chilcotin. Downie and his partner, a Mr. McDonald, had traveled up the “Hermatsker River” (i.e., the Homathko) that empties into Bute Inlet, and turned up a small tributary, which they named after Waddington. The head of this stream was blocked by a massive ice field, which they also named after Waddington. Unable to climb the glacier, they returned to the Homathko and continued up it for two more days, eventually reaching a point where waterfalls blocked further progress. They gave up on Bute Inlet and tried taking the North Bentinck Arm to the Bella Coola River, reasoning that it would be passable since a tribe of interior Indians came down it every summer to fish for salmon. There they found “perpendicular” mountains on every side of the Bella Coola Valley. “The travelling was very dangerous, but Major Downie’s partner was more like a goat than a man, and a jump of fifteen or twenty feet was nothing to him.” They finally lost the river in “an aperture in the mountains, at a point by all odds the most miserable he had seen in British Columbia. The mountains ran straight up and down—not even a bear trail was visible—and where a bear can’t get along there’s a poor show for a wagon road.” Downie and McDonald backtracked again, this time to try another river by which the Lillooet Indians traveled to the coast every year, but were again blocked by canyons and falls. Downie thought the

⁷¹⁴ For Pemberton, see Smith, ed. “Journal of Arthur Thomas Bushby,” 190 and Mackie, “Pemberton, Joseph Despard,” DCBO; for McKay, see Mackie, “McKay (Mackay), Joseph William,” DCBO; for De Cosmos (who had changed his name in California in 1854 from William Alexander Smith), see McDonald & Ralston, “De Cosmos, Amor,” DCBO; for Trutch, see Fisher, “Trutch, Sir Joseph William,” DCBO; for Anderson, see Lamb, “Anderson, Alexander Caulfield,” DCBO; for Burnaby, see Smith, ed. “Journal of Arthur Thomas Bushby,” 164-165 and Wolfenden, “Burnaby, Robert,” DCBO. Phillip Mayer Backus (d. 1881) shows up in a few documents in the BC Archives, but does not have an entry in the DCBO, and his name does not appear in the index of the BCAUL. All of the members of the committee subsequently had places in BC named after them, even Backus. In 1985 the Water Rights Branch chose his name for a small creek in the Cassiar land district “in the absence of any known local name.” BCGNIS. See also Walbran, *BC Coast Names*; BCPN and CGNDB.

⁷¹⁵ “Coast Route Meeting.” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 11 Jun 1861.

country was “too rough for cheap packing, or any packing at all.” At the meeting, Downie also quelled a rumor of gold discoveries on Bute Inlet. “He had got some *black sand*, but he did not believe there was gold enough on the whole coast of British Columbia to pay a man a dollar a day.”⁷¹⁶ This would have sounded pretty bad to his listeners; that summer, native packers were being paid \$50 per day in the Cariboo, and individual miners reported earning \$20 to \$100 per day.⁷¹⁷ Ever alert to the possibility of other kinds of profit, Downie’s audience questioned him on the resources of Bute Inlet: timber (spruce), soil (too light for farming), weather (rainy), and salmon (plenty). The Major’s conclusion was that “money invested anywhere else on the coast would pay better than if put in at Bute.” The audience took up a collection to defray Downie’s expenses. “The Major remarked that for himself he asked nothing; but he thought the expenses of his partner and the Indians should be paid.” The meeting ended with three cheers for Major Downie.⁷¹⁸

The failure of Downie and McDonald to find a passable route to the interior from Bute Inlet did not discourage Waddington. On Oct 1, the *British Colonist* reported that Waddington had returned to Victoria, leaving a party of five explorers on the Price River heading into level country. “The Indians were found to be very friendly and obliging and declared that a practicable trail to the interior really existed. They gave the party every assistance.” Waddington seemed convinced that his enterprise would be ultimately successful, although he was reluctant to discuss the details of the expedition.⁷¹⁹ More news of the Bute Inlet Route was printed on December 21, when one of Waddington’s surveying parties returned after two months in the field. At the request of the HBC, the seven-man party had been led by the civil engineer Robert Homfray.⁷²⁰ The loss of the party’s canoe in one of the rapids of the Price River had meant that they “had to endure the greatest suffering and privation on their return, and their lives were in jeopardy for

⁷¹⁶ “Major Downie’s Meeting,” *British Colonist*, 20 Aug 1861; see also Mole, “Homathco.”

⁷¹⁷ Anonymous, *Cariboo*, 51-53.

⁷¹⁸ “Major Downie’s Meeting.”

⁷¹⁹ “Return of the ‘Henrietta’ from Bute Inlet,” *British Colonist*, 1 Oct 1861.

⁷²⁰ Mole, “Homathco.”

more than a fortnight.” They improvised rafts after they failed to make their own canoe using the tools they had managed to save: two axes, and a spade which they cut into three adze blades. “Finally, when reduced to their last meal, they were rescued from what seemed certain death, by the Indians of Desolation Sound. These Indians Mr. Waddington had made the acquaintance of, some two months before, while on the steamer *Henrietta*, and on learning that the party had been sent by the ‘old tyhee from Victoria’ (as they called him) showed every kindness, took the party to their lodges on Desolation Sound, fed and kept them, and finally brought them in canoes to Victoria.” The article also reported that the Bute Inlet Route was practicable. Price River could be navigated by light-draught steamboats for forty miles, and by boats and canoes for fifty-two, at which point there was an easy portage of about 350 yards. The distance from the head of steam navigation to Big Lake was reported to be sixty miles, and the lake itself thirty miles long. “The distance from the lake, according to Indian report, [was] five days to Alexandria. The natives say that there is not a single mountain or swamp between the cañon and Fraser River, and claim to make trading trips to Alexandria twice a year and back by this route.” The author of the newspaper article attributed the mishaps of the surveying party to the fact that they started out too late in the season, but noted that the subscribers appeared “to feel perfectly satisfied with the results.”⁷²¹

Waddington received a charter for a wagon road at the head of Bute Inlet in March 1862 and his men began construction immediately. By May, they had “completed about a mile of the trail and built ten bridges and two store-houses.” They had some difficulty with the Kwakwaka’wakws, but eventually secured their cooperation by promising them presents from the “Victoria tyhee” Waddington. While the men worked, the Kwakwaka’wakws fished for oolichan. Hearing that Waddington’s men were at the head of the inlet, parties of Tsilhqot’ins from Chilko Lake and from Alexandria brought furs to trade with them, “but on obtaining information that the Euclutaus [i.e.,

⁷²¹ “The Bute Inlet Surveying Party,” *British Colonist*, 21 Dec 1861. “Tyee” is Chinook Jargon for “chief.” Gibbs, *Dictionary*, 28.

Kwakwaka'wakws] were there, they retreated immediately and could not be prevailed on to return."⁷²²

By May, Waddington's men were already at work on the construction of the wagon road from Bute Inlet, and a surveying party in his employ led by Herman Otto Tiedemann forged ahead to Alexandria, or attempted to anyway. The party met with mishaps from the start. They were abandoned by their native guides at the mouth of the Homathko, and not knowing the trail, tried to follow along the river. In places they were reduced to crawling along the edges of the granite walls on hands and knees, eight hundred feet above the river. On the other side of Homathko canyon, they lost some of their provisions fording a creek, and thereafter subsisted on berries, fir bark and whatever miners and Indians in the Chilcotin were willing to give them. Tiedemann left the rest of his party at Puntzi Lake and continued on alone to Alexandria, where he wrote to Waddington. By his own account he was "reduced to a skeleton, unable to walk." But he thought that it would be possible to build a road through the Homathko canyon if an elevated roadbed was supported on beams drilled into the canyon walls.⁷²³ Other people did not think so highly of Tiedemann's abilities. Lieutenant Palmer, for example, thought Tiedemann had "no business to be mapping when there [were] R.E.'s in the country." He also described him as a "humbug" who seemed "to oscillate between a desire to 'blow' about The Bute route and get up an excitement, and a desire to keep it dark and speculate pretty largely on his own account," someone who told "no two persons the same story."⁷²⁴

In August, Waddington wrote a long letter to the editor of the *British Colonist* extolling the Bute Inlet route, "which must eventually become the shortest, cheapest and easiest line of communication with the northern mines."⁷²⁵ One evening at the end of the month, about 300 people gathered to hear him speak and to see a map of his proposal.

⁷²² "Bute Inlet," *British Colonist*, 7 May 1862. For the identity of the "Euclutaus" see Codere, "Kwakiutl."

⁷²³ Liscombe, "Tiedemann, Hermann Otto," DCBO; Mole, "Homathco." The Tiedemann quote is reprinted in both sources. See also "The Bute Inlet Explorers," *British Colonist*, 25 Jul 1862.

⁷²⁴ Palmer's quotes about Tiedemann are from Swannell, "Lieutenant Palmer."

⁷²⁵ Alfred Waddington, "The Bute Inlet Route," *British Colonist*, 1 Aug 1862.

“Mr. Waddington came forward amid great applause and told how he was laughed and sneered at when he first stated his belief in the existence of a pass through the Cascade Mountains by which a practicable road could be made to the mines.” At the meeting, the plateau was described as “a country more like our English parks than a wild stretch of land.” Waddington proposed to form a company to build the difficult portion of the road, and to issue 500 shares at \$100 each. “For the trouble and expense which he had been to so far, all he asked was 2 per cent on the entire amount of stock taken, and to show the confidence which he felt in the undertaking, he would put his name down for \$5000.” After Waddington was done speaking, “Mr. C. B. Young, being called for, came forward and condemned the Bentinck Arm route, and advocated that *via* Bute Inlet, and to show his earnestness and faith in the latter, subscribed for several shares, and invited others to do the same.”⁷²⁶ Two days later the *Colonist* reported that 125 shares of the Bute Inlet Road Company had been taken up already.⁷²⁷

In November, the workmen’s term of employment ended for the year. The Bute Inlet trail was reported to be ready for travel thirty miles up from the mouth of the Homathko River. A messenger had left Waddington farther up at the mouth of the main obstacle in the Homathko canyon at the end of October. “Mr. Waddington determined to push through as far as possible this season,” the *Colonist* reported. “None of the party have as yet gone through the pass, but the Indians travel through it continually, and represent it as presenting no extraordinary difficulties. An Indian woman and two children who started in the morning came through by three o’clock p.m.” By that point in the trail, there were thirty to forty separate bridges, “all built so as to be above high water mark.” The report went on to add that “The Indians are very quiet and friendly, and have been of great assistance to the party in packing.”⁷²⁸

In the spring and summer of 1863, Waddington suffered some setbacks. Not only was his gout bothering him, but “heavy freshets had destroyed three bridges” (the bridges

⁷²⁶ “The Bute Inlet Meeting,” *British Colonist*, 27 Aug 1862.

⁷²⁷ “Bute Inlet Stock,” *British Colonist*, 29 Aug 1862.

⁷²⁸ “Arrival from Bute Inlet,” *British Colonist*, 7 Nov 1862.

that had supposedly been built above the high water mark.) These had to be rebuilt before his men could pack supplies through to the end where new construction was to be done. The native packers that they engaged had quit after each earning a blanket, leaving the packing labor to Waddington's men. Furthermore, although his party had managed to overcome "some considerable obstacles" and had gotten more than half of the way into the Homathko canyon, "there was still one solid obstruction which would require a good deal of blasting." Waddington still had hopes of getting through the canyon before he left for the year.⁷²⁹

⁷²⁹ "Latest from Bute Inlet," *British Colonist*, 6 Jul 1863.

Chapter 6: Chilcotin War

On May 5, 1864, the artist Frederick Whymper abruptly returned from Bute Inlet, where he had been sketching Waddington's road to create more publicity for the enterprise. Early on the morning of April 30, he had been awakened by friendly Indians telling him that Tim Smith, the man in charge of the ferry across the Homathko River on the Bute Inlet road, "had been murdered by the Chilcotens for refusing to give away the provisions and other property in his care."⁷³⁰ For almost a week, the rumored death of the ferryman circulated through Victoria. On the 11th, the steamer *Emily Harris* arrived in the city with more news, and the following day the *British Colonist* published an account of "the most startling thing of the kind that has yet taken place in either colony," the killing of not only Smith, but thirteen of Waddington's other men by natives. "Sixteen able bodied Indians, who had been accustomed to pack for the workmen, accompanied by a number of youths, steal upon twelve of the sleeping white men, and with gun, and knife, and axe, fire and cut and hack at their surprised and helpless victims. Three of the men escaped with their lives, though not entirely unscathed, two having been severely wounded. The other portion of the wagon-road party, four in number, were making preparations to commence the day's work, when they were ruthlessly shot down and savagely mutilated." The *Colonist* called the killing a "treacherous massacre," said there was something "almost fiendish" about the way that it was perpetrated, and attributed its cause to "plunder." "The Indians have been hitherto treated in the kindest manner, and ... there was not the slightest indication of ill feeling amongst them prior to this murderous attack." The paper was willing to concede that there may have been some outstanding grievances. "There have been rumors—but they are only rumors—that the Indians had on a former occasion some quarrel with the foreman of the party, Mr. Brewster. Whether this be true or not we have no means of deciding; but it would not,

⁷³⁰ Hewlett, "Chilcotin Uprising of 1864"; Hayman, "Whymper, Frederick," DCBO. Quote from Frederick Whymper, *Travel and Adventure in the Territory of Alaska ... and in Various other Parts of the North Pacific* (London: John Murray, 1868), 29 quoted in Hewlett. Whymper's use of the term "murder" presupposed that the killings were unlawful. Reid, *Patterns of Vengeance*, 24.

under any circumstance, palliate in the slightest degree the treacherous atrocity of these savages.”⁷³¹

The *Colonist* used the occasion to editorialize about “the growing insecurity of the white man’s life amongst the northern savages. What between the reckless indifference to Indian life, amounting to inhumanity, of one portion of our population, and the maudlin sympathy, amounting to the encouragement of crime, of another, the Indian is actually forced into disregarding the law. When we add to these mischievous extremes, the notorious bad faith of our own Government with the Indian tribes, the great wonder is that a general warfare with the savages has not broken out long ago.” That serious difficulties had been avoided to date was to the credit of Roman Catholic priests working “in the cause of civilization.” The *Colonist* also called for parties of volunteers to apprehend the killers and bring them to justice by converging on them from Bute Inlet and Bentinck Arm. “It is understood that upwards of a hundred and fifty men will be organized in Victoria at once, ready to act under the proper authorities” to set “an example—a terrible example,” to keep “the savages in entire subjection.”⁷³²

The story that emerged over the course of the next year, in newspaper accounts, letters and court records, was as follows. On the morning of April 29, the Tsilhqot’in Klatsassin, accompanied by his two sons and some other native men and women, found Tim Smith at the ferry site. Klatsassin shot Smith, and the man’s body was thrown into the river, never to be recovered. The place where Smith died was later identified by a pool of blood and a bullet lodged in a tree. The Tsilhqot’ins then took some of the goods from the stores—including two kegs of gunpowder and thirty pounds of balls—hid some and destroyed the rest. They also chopped up the ferry skiff and cast the scow adrift, leaving a cable across the river. By doing this, they strategically cut off the main route by which the non-natives upriver might reach the coast. They then continued on up the river. About a mile above the ferry, Klatsassin’s party met a Tsilhqot’in named Telloot (who had been assisting Frederick Whympier) and a Comox known as Squinteye coming

⁷³¹ “The Last Indian Atrocity,” *British Colonist*, 12 May 1864.

⁷³² “The Last Indian Atrocity.”

down the river from the main road-camp a half a dozen miles up. Klatsassin told the men he had killed Tim Smith. There was an argument. Telloot joined Klatsassin's party, while Squinteye hurried down to the river's mouth to warn Whympier. Klatsassin and his companions continued to the main camp, where they joined the other Tsilhqot'ins working there. Apparently they joked around with the workmen after the evening meal, and then sang for part of the night.⁷³³

At about dawn, the Tsilhqot'ins attacked the twelve workmen at the main camp as they were sleeping, pulling down the tents to trap them, then shooting, stabbing and clubbing them. Nine of the non-native men were killed, three escaped. The Tsilhqot'ins continued on about two miles up river to the advance camp. The four men who were working there had already risen when the Tsilhqot'ins arrived, and they found only a Comox teen named George, who was cleaning up after the men's breakfast. George later told the court that there were six or seven Tsilhqot'ins and one of their slaves; all had guns except the slave and one other. The Tsilhqot'ins went up the trail and shot the four workmen from the advance camp. The bloody footprints of one led to the river's edge, where he may have jumped in. Three of the bodies were later found. One was Brewster, the foreman who had been rumored to have quarreled with the Tsilhqot'ins. He had been shot, his head smashed in and his corpse mutilated. Neither of the other bodies had been mutilated. The slave, who knew George, told him to run away. Heading back down the trail, George encountered another party of Tsilhqot'ins, including Klatsassin, his son Piel (or Pierre), and Telloot. The women in the party were carrying heavy loads on their backs. George continued to the main camp, where he saw the corpses of the killed workmen, and the ferry site, where he saw two of the workmen who had escaped from the killing at the main camp. They called to him but he ignored them, jumped into the river and swam across, carrying the news down the inlet. The following day, the two workmen were joined at the ferry site by the third survivor, who had been a sailor. He fixed a loop to the cable across the river and they were able to make it to the far bank.

⁷³³ Hewlett, "Chilcotin Uprising of 1864."

An hour later, they were rescued there by two French-Canadian packers and five Indians from Bute Inlet who had heard about the killings.⁷³⁴

Klatsassin and the other Tsilhqot'ins traveled into the interior and headed toward Anahim Lake, possibly to intercept another of Waddington's parties that was travelling via Bentinck Arm to work on the upper end of the Bute Inlet Road. One of the members of that party, a man named McDougall, had a Tsilhqot'in common-law wife named Klymteza. She heard of the planned attack on Waddington's men while she was visiting her kin at Anahim Lake, and warned them. They dug some defensive earthworks and waited for two days, then tried to retreat to the coast. The Tsilhqot'ins ambushed them on the path killing three of the men and possibly Klymteza. Five of Waddington's men escaped from the ambush, although four were wounded.⁷³⁵ Some time after the killings at Anahim Lake, a settler named Manning was killed at Puntzi Lake by a Tsilhqot'in named Tahpit. Although Manning thought himself on good terms with the Tsilhqot'ins, he had earlier driven them off the land which he was occupying. Manning's body, when it was later found, had also been mutilated.⁷³⁶

The Response

The new governor of British Columbia, Frederick Seymour, had only been in the colony for two weeks when Waddington's men were killed on the Homathko River. Seymour took immediate action. He wrote to the senior officer of the Royal Navy at Esquimalt, requesting assistance. He also had a letter sent to the Gold Commissioner in the Cariboo, William G. Cox, asking him to send an expedition from Alexandria to try to force the surrender of those responsible for the killings.⁷³⁷ On May 15, Seymour sent Chartres Brew, the Police Magistrate, with twenty-eight special constables to Bute Inlet. There they found evidence of the killing of Waddington's men, including the bodies of

⁷³⁴ Hewlett, "Chilcotin Uprising of 1864."

⁷³⁵ Hewlett, "Chilcotin Uprising of 1864"; Admiral Kingcome to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 21 Jun 1864, AKR Box 4, File 18, Xerox 307 [Copied from Public Record Office ADM 1/5878, x/8688].

⁷³⁶ Hewlett, "Chilcotin Uprising of 1864."

⁷³⁷ Hewlett, "Chilcotin Uprising of 1864"; Newell, "Cox, William George," DCBO.

Brewster and two others at the advance camp.⁷³⁸ Ten days later, the *British Columbian* of New Westminster posted a \$250 reward from the Colonial Secretary “for the apprehension and conviction of every Indian or other person concerned as principal or accessory before the fact, to the murder of any of the fourteen Europeans” killed on the Homathko River.⁷³⁹ Seymour visited Bute Inlet himself between May 26 and May 31, on the Royal Navy gunboat HMS *Forward*.⁷⁴⁰ On May 28, the *British Columbian* published Chartres Brew’s list of twelve “Supposed Murders”: Klatsassin, two young men, Telloot, Telloot’s sons-in-law Jack and George, “Indian slave Chraychamum, or Bob,” two “stout young men” named Lowws and Cushen, an Indian man with two scars on his face, an older Indian man, and one “with a very wide mouth, black moustache, and a ring in the nose.” The paper also carried news of “Another Indian Massacre,” the killings of Waddington’s men near Anahim Lake and of Manning at Puntzi Lake.⁷⁴¹

Even in the commotion after the killings, New Westminster and Victoria continued to vie for the public perception of various routes to the gold fields. On June 1, the *British Columbian* ran an article criticizing the Bute Inlet Route. “We would not deem it worth our while to devote any more space to the discussion of the merits of a route which may now be considered defunct, were it not that a Victoria contemporary has provoked it by the insertion of the following paragraph:—‘The *Forward* had no difficulty in steaming up to the town site, and lay at the wharf during the whole time of the visit, although drawing nine feet six inches of water.’” The article went on to dispute the draft of the gunboat (which it claimed was seven feet) and emphasized the difficulty the ship had navigating the river in flood tide, and the fact that it had been stuck when the tide went out. Two Royal Engineers who had seen Waddington’s road “declared it to be utterly unworthy” to be called a trail. “They found a total absence of feed for animals,

⁷³⁸ Chartres Brew, Letter to Colonial Secretary, 23 May 1864, Colonial Correspondence: Originals, 1857-1872, BCA GR1372, File 193; Ormsby, “Brew, Chartres,” DCBO; “News from the Bute Expedition,” *British Columbian*, 28 May 1864.

⁷³⁹ “Proclamation: Bute Inlet Massacre!” *British Columbian*, 25 May 1864. The same proclamation also appeared in the edition of 1 Jun 1864.

⁷⁴⁰ See Gough, *Gunboat Frontier*, for the role of the Royal Navy in the constitution of colonial authority.

⁷⁴¹ “Another Indian Massacre,” *British Columbian*, 28 May 1864.

and upon several parts of the trail they were obliged to wade through water up to the loins.” As they did so, marks on nearby trees showed them that the water level was comparatively low. “What Mr. Waddington dignifies with the name of bridges they describe as the most inadequate and trumpery crossings, constructed in the most unworkmanlike and temporary manner, and even now falling into ruin.” Waddington himself came in for the worst criticism. “The extraordinary course, pursued by Mr. Waddington respecting this route can only be accounted for on the ground of monomania; and we would feel disposed to spare the old gentleman’s feelings at the present moment, were there not too much system perceptible in his madness. The fact of his having pressed his imaginary claim on the Government for indemnification when he came up to report the massacre of his men did not say much for the depth or delicacy of his feelings, while his manoeuvres to try and induce the Government to purchase the road from him says less for his modesty.” The article held Waddington responsible for being instrumental in the death of his workmen, and for starving the Indians in his employ, and concluded, “Indemnify him, indeed! It would be more like the thing to hold him responsible for the expense he has been the means of entailing upon the Government.”⁷⁴²

Governor Seymour’s plan was to send three expeditions against the Tsilhqot’ins, from Alexandria, Bentinck Arm and Bute Inlet, “all to converge towards Banshee [i.e., Puntzi Lake].” The Bute Inlet expedition failed “owing to the natural difficulties of the country, and ... returned after having afforded decent burial to such of the corpses of the murdered men as were found, and making a demonstration of force on the spot where the death struggles of the White men took place.”⁷⁴³ The expedition from Alexandria, led by Cox, started out at fifty men and an Indian boy, and gathered another dozen or so volunteers en route.⁷⁴⁴ Seymour thought Cox’s party had the best chance of capturing those responsible for the killing, but worried that “the expense [would] be something awful,” because the men had to be recruited in the Cariboo, where mining activity was in

⁷⁴² “The Bute Inlet Route,” *British Columbian*, 1 Jun 1864.

⁷⁴³ Governor Frederick Seymour to Admiral Kingcome, 1 Jun 1864, AKR Box 4, File 18, Xerox 307 [Copied from Public Record Office ADM 1/5878, x/8688].

⁷⁴⁴ Hewlett, “Chilcotin Uprising of 1864.”

full swing.⁷⁴⁵ Seymour's main concern was that non-native access to the Cariboo would be blocked by an Indian war, which would spell financial ruin for the colony. "Each day that the Chilcotens continue to range the country loaded with the spoils of the murdered white men increases the probability of an extensive rebellion." Of secondary concern were the handful of English settlers in Bentinck Arm, "scattered without defence."⁷⁴⁶ As prompt as Seymour's actions were, things seemed to be moving too slowly for some. On June 1, the *British Colonist* called for citizens to take matters into their own hands. One hundred and twenty nine men stood up for vigilante justice at a public meeting in Victoria that evening, spurred on by people like Amor de Cosmos, one of the backers of Waddington's scheme.⁷⁴⁷

Cox's team arrived at Puntzi Lake on June 12 and found Manning's corpse. The following day some of his men were fired upon by natives, and one was injured. They took refuge in a hastily-constructed fort. A week later, Cox wrote to the colonial secretary in New Westminster to tell him that he had been so far unable to obtain the services of the Tsilhqot'in chief Alexis, whom he had been hoping to use as a guide. Alexis and his family had apparently fled, fearing rumors that Cox's party had come to exterminate all of the natives, regardless of their disposition.⁷⁴⁸ Alexis did meet with Donald McLean at Chilcotin Forks, however, and told him that the men responsible for the killings "were lurking about the Country ranging between Bute Inlet" and Puntzi Lake.⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁵ Governor Frederick Seymour to Sir Frederic Rogers, 1 Jun 1864, AKR Box 4, File 18, Xerox 307 [Copied from Public Record Office ADM 1/5878, x/8688].

⁷⁴⁶ Seymour to Kingcome, 1 Jun 1864.

⁷⁴⁷ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 108-109.

⁷⁴⁸ Reid has argued that the concept of collective liability (rather than individual personal guilt) was central to most North American Indian law. It was thus perfectly reasonable for Alexis and his family to expect Cox's men to kill them if they couldn't find Klatsassin and his comrades. Reid has also argued that the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company often incorporated the idea of collective liability into their own practices when dealing with native people. Thus the Tsilhqot'ins may well have been basing their responses on their own history of interaction with non-natives during the fur trade. Reid, *Patterns of Vengeance*.

⁷⁴⁹ William George Cox to Colonial Secretary, 19 Jun 1864, AKR Box 4, File 18, Xerox 307 [Copied from Public Record Office ADM 1/5878, x/8688]; Hewlett, "Chilcotin Uprising of 1864."

Meanwhile, having failed to enter the Chilcotin via Bute Inlet, Chartres Brew took Seymour and a party of forty volunteers to Bentinck Arm on the HMS *Sutlej*. On June 15, the Custom House Officer at Bella Coola wrote to the *British Colonist* with news of the killing of Waddington's men near Anahim Lake.⁷⁵⁰ On June 20, Brew's party set out for the interior from Bella Coola. Going up the "Great Slide" they captured a Tsilhqot'in man who was shouting in the bushes near the path. They continued on to Anahim Lake, finding it deserted, and a little farther down the trail found the remains of the three members of Waddington's party that had been killed. Picking up the fresh trail of some Tsilhqot'in families, some of Brew's men followed them for many days, guided by the Tsilhqot'in man who they had captured on the Great Slide. Along the way, he deserted them, leaving them to make their way back without aid (and leading later commentators to suggest that he may arranged to be "captured" so he could lead the party away from his kin.)

Brew and the rest of his group continued on to Puntzi Lake, where they joined Cox's men. There, they took his position, while Cox led a group of men to Tatla Lake in search of the Tsilhqot'ins who had done the killing. Donald McLean, who had gone with Cox, was shot by a native sniper on July 17.⁷⁵¹ As with Brewster and Manning, there was rumor that the Tsilhqot'ins held unsettled grievances against McLean, dating from his tenure at Fort Chilcotin. On July 20, Cox's men returned to Puntzi Lake, having seen signs of the Tsilhqot'ins but not having been able to catch any of them. Cox suggested to Seymour that they wait for winter, when starvation might force the Tsilhqot'ins to give up. Seymour was afraid that would look like a defeat, however, and planned to use his men to search the country. Things were still undecided when the Tsilhqot'in chief Alexis arrived. Seymour expressed his opinion that Manning should not have been allowed to be killed in Alexis's territory, but Alexis told him that the men under Klatsassin and Telloot were free to make war on the newcomers since they had renounced any

⁷⁵⁰ A. H. Wallace, "Letter from Bentinck Arm," *British Colonist*, 27 Jun 1864. See also A. H. Wallace, "The Bentinck Arm Tragedy," *British Colonist*, 15 Jul 1864.

⁷⁵¹ Balf, "McLean, Donald," DCBO.

connection with him.⁷⁵² Seymour left the Chilcotin, travelling to the Cariboo before returning to New Westminster. On August 8, Brew and his men left Puntzi for Tatlayoko, but again failed to make any contact with the Tsilhqot'ins near the Homathko River. Two days later, Tahpit's son came to Puntzi Lake to negotiate the voluntary surrender of Klatsassin, Telloot and six others.⁷⁵³

Colonial Identity and Historical Consciousness

Klatsassin and seven of his followers came peacefully to Cox's camp on August 16, 1864. Except for their knives, they were unarmed, and apparently believed that Cox had promised that they would remain free and be allowed to meet with Governor Seymour. They discovered that this was not to be the case when they were seized and put in irons. There had obviously been a misunderstanding of some sort; whether or not they had been intentionally deceived is not clear now. They were taken to Quesnel, where six of them were tried before Chief Justice Matthew Baillie Begbie at the end of September. Five, including Klatsassin, were found guilty, and Begbie sentenced them to be hanged. On October 2, the protestant missionary R. C. Lundin Brown arrived in Quesnel, and was given permission to minister to the condemned men. They were executed on October 26.⁷⁵⁴ The following year, another of the Tsilhqot'ins involved in the war tried to make peace with the colonists. He brought hundreds of dollars' worth of furs to Bella Coola to make compensation for the killings. He, too, was seized, tried and executed. A relative of his, who was seized along with him, was eventually pardoned, the only one of the natives to receive clemency.⁷⁵⁵

The colonial perception of, and response to, the Chilcotin War was shaped by people who had little prior experience in the region: Waddington, Cox, Brew and Begbie

⁷⁵² This shows that Seymour's idea of the authority of a Tsilhqot'in chief did not match the Tsilhqot'ins' ideas.

⁷⁵³ Hewlett, "Chilcotin Uprising of 1864"; "News from the Chilacoten Country!" *British Columbian*, 6 Aug 1864.

⁷⁵⁴ Brown, *Klatsassin*; Hewlett, "Chilcotin Uprising of 1864."

⁷⁵⁵ Hewlett, "Chilcotin Uprising of 1864." For a discussion of the role of compensation in Indian law, see Reid, *Patterns of Vengeance*.

had all arrived in the colony in 1858, and Seymour in 1864.⁷⁵⁶ They attempted to make up for their lack of knowledge by consulting people who had been involved with the fur trade. One of these was a sixty-nine-year-old retired trader named John Tod. He had been with the HBC since 1811, and from 1823 was stationed at posts throughout the Columbia district, serving at Forts George, McLeod, Vancouver, Alexandria, Kamloops, Nisqually and Victoria.⁷⁵⁷ On June 1, 1864, he wrote to a fellow former trader about the fact that the governor, Royal Navy officers and other colonial authorities were continually visiting his house “to consult ‘the old Settler’ as to the course to be pursued for the capture and punishment of the murderers.” The difference between the understandings of the old and new regimes, however, seems to have been too great to be easily bridged. Tod viewed the colonial response as overkill.

Meantime volunteers are being mustered by hundreds – Arms & ammunition collecting in prodigious quantities – even the gigantic Armstrong gun is talked of – all for the punishment of a small, but certainly determined, band, which, as You undoubtedly well remember, would have been undertaken in our time with the flintlock gun alone, and a mere handful of Fur Traders – To one and all of these gentlemen it seems altogether incomprehensible, how the Company’s officers, in former times, always few in number – often alone and single handed – widely scattered over a country, in extent, nearly equal to Europe itself, should Yet have been able to Keep its numerous and lawless tribes of Savages in such complete subjection as they generally did – I tell them that our Sway, Such as it was, rested on a moral foundation, but tho’ partaking of that character chiefly it by no means excluded a proper degree of severity, the moment it became necessary⁷⁵⁸

Of course, the ‘sway’ that Tod remembered the fur traders exercising was more a matter of negotiation and compromise on the ground than he put it, and the subjection was mutual. For their part, the colonial authorities probably viewed Tod’s advice as

⁷⁵⁶ Lamb, “Waddington, Alfred Pendrell,” DCBO; Newell, “Cox, William George,” DCBO; Ormsby, “Brew, Chartres,” DCBO; Idem, “Seymour, Frederick,” DCBO; Williams, “Begbie, Sir Matthew Baillie,” DCBO.

⁷⁵⁷ Wolfenden, “Tod, John,” DCBO.

⁷⁵⁸ John Tod, Letter to Edward Ermatinger, 1 Jun 1864, AKR Box 9, File 6.

impractical. They agreed that the response must be severe, but it could not be dispensed summarily. It had to be lawful.

The historian Tina Loo has argued that the Chilcotin War was used by non-natives as an occasion to form a colonial identity in which “a liberal notion of law—the idea of equality and equal treatment before the law—was central...” “For in discussing what happened at Bute Inlet, why it happened, and what they should do about it, European British Columbians revealed as much about who they thought they were as they did of the event and its perpetrators.” In describing the violence of the killings and the destruction of property, colonial accounts portrayed the activity of the Tsilhqot’ins as irrational and savage, defining themselves as civilized by contrast. The natives were said to have been ‘impelled’ to kill, suggesting that passion was not governed by reason in their essential nature. The frequently repeated claim that all had been well between native and newcomer only served to underscore the putative irrationality of the killings. Much was made of the Tsilhqot’ins’ alleged cannibalism and their physical appearance. The natives (for colonial accounts readily generalized from a few individuals to all native people) were also portrayed as superstitious instead of religious, covetous instead of generous, profligate instead of thrifty, fickle instead of constant. In setting up such an opposition between the supposed characteristics of native and newcomer, the colonists were drawing on traits that had long been used to separate the civilized from the savage in western thought.⁷⁵⁹

Loo argues that in deciding on an appropriate response to the killings, the colonists also drew on what they knew, or thought they knew, but “it was the American rather than the Indian who served as the foil against which they structured their identity and their actions.” Americans, especially those who lived in the west, were perceived as lawless, reckless and degraded, assimilated to the native people by a process that Begbie

⁷⁵⁹ Loo, “Bute Inlet Stories.” Quotes from 134-135. She cites the *Colonist* for use of the term ‘impelled.’ Of course, as Loo notes, these characterizations were not fixed. “In emphasizing the Indians’ otherness they became self-conscious and reflective about their own behaviour, and discovered, quite to their dismay, that despite their best efforts to distance themselves from the Indians the gulf between them was not as wide as they wished.” 147.

and his fellows called ‘californization.’ The colonists believed that “meting out justice according to the law was what separated British Columbians from Americans, and a failure to do so would surely mark the beginnings of ‘californization,’ and a descent into savagery.” But that standard posed a problem. Since everyone was equal under the rule of law, the carefully drawn distinctions between the civilized and the savage were undermined. Loo concludes that stories about the Chilcotin War “illustrated a constant tension between two different conceptions of justice in liberal societies: one rooted in a recognition of differences (themselves constructed in part by liberalism) and in acting upon them, and the other premised on overlooking those differences as insignificant and treating everyone similarly in accordance with liberalism’s universalist tendencies. Despite the peculiarities of this particular nineteenth-century manifestation, it is a tension yet to be resolved.”⁷⁶⁰

The colonists were not only forming a new identity in the second half of the 19th century, but also a new historical consciousness, one based primarily on documents instead of direct experience or oral tradition. The newspapers of the gold rush period and the letters of colonial authorities comprise the bulk of early written material from what is now British Columbia. The Chilcotin War looms in these sources, perfect fodder for a press that thrived on sensationalism and one of the first real challenges to the authority of the colonial government. Given the importance of the event in the ways that colonists differentiated themselves from (imagined) Indians and Americans, its subsequent prominence in the early histories of the province was guaranteed. Furthermore, since almost all of the documents expressed the colonists’ view of the situation, the portrayal of the event was certain to be skewed in that direction.⁷⁶¹

⁷⁶⁰ Loo, “Bute Inlet Stories.” Quotes from 150, 151, 156. For ‘californization’ see M. B. Begbie, letter to Governor Douglas, 18 May 1859, BCA GR1372, reel B1307, item 142b.

⁷⁶¹ Cf. Lepore, “If war is, at least in part, a contest for meaning, can it ever be a fair fight when only one side has access to those perfect instruments of empire, pens, paper, and printing presses?” *Name of War*, xxi.

The Contexts of Archival Formation

In the aftermath of the Chilcotin War, the mutual understandings of the fur trade, such as they were, no longer held. The Tsilhqot'ins had been accustomed to a certain way of doing things; the rules of the game had now been changed without notice. Klatsassin and his accomplices were treated as subjects of the colonial government rather than as independent agents. They still faced retaliatory execution, but now had to be tried first. Compensation for killing was no longer an option, as the Tsilhqot'in man who turned himself in at Bella Coola discovered. Native people were now expected to conform to a new place in society, to submit to a new rule of law. For those interior natives who were not directly involved in the Chilcotin War, the first sustained negotiations with the colonial authorities revolved around land.

In the 1860s, Indian land policy in the colony was set by Joseph Trutch. Trutch neither recognized aboriginal title nor believed that natives should have the right to use good arable or grazing land. He thus took steps to minimize the extent of Indian reserves while increasing the amount of land a non-native settler could acquire.⁷⁶² In 1867, the Dominion of Canada was established, and the British North America Act charged the federal government with responsibility for native people and the lands reserved for them.⁷⁶³ When British Columbia entered Confederation[†] four years later, aboriginal people still outnumbered non-natives in the province by a ratio of about two to one, and the federal minister of public works saw the continuing importance of BC natives "in the capacity of guides, porters and labourers."⁷⁶⁴ The Tsilhqot'ins probably would not have accepted this characterization of their place in the new system. Their thoughts in 1872, however, were turned to land. They were afraid that they were going to be moved to small reserves and their land taken without compensation. Given Trutch's policies, this was a reasonable fear. Nevertheless, in a letter to Ottawa, Trutch denied that this was his intent.⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶² Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 164-166; Idem, "Trutch, Sir Joseph William," DCBO.

⁷⁶³ Surtees, "Canadian," 89; Sanders, "Government," 276.

⁷⁶⁴ Lutz, "After the Fur Trade." The federal minister is quoted on 71.

⁷⁶⁵ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 184-185.

In the summer of 1872, three Tsilhqot'in chiefs met with Peter O'Reilly, a county court judge.⁷⁶⁶ O'Reilly assured the Tsilhqot'ins that they would be protected from disturbance, that they could keep their houses, hunting and fishing grounds, and that the Dominion government would provide them with education and assistance in agricultural development. The Tsilhqot'ins had recently quarreled with a man named John Salmon who pre-empted land in their midst. This concerned O'Reilly, and he advised the government not to allow further pre-emption in the Chilcotin until the reserves had been laid out. He was afraid that future confrontations might be more serious.⁷⁶⁷ In October, Israel Wood Powell was appointed to be the provincial superintendent of Indian affairs. Unlike his predecessor Trutch, Powell was a proponent of giving native people land and water rights so that they could establish an economic base and eventually be assimilated into non-native society.⁷⁶⁸

One of the first things that was brought to Powell's attention was "the position of the Chilcoaten Reserve, and the desirability of some steps being at once taken to map out the Indian Reservations and throw the country open to intending settlers." The provincial government was hampered in this plan by their lack of detailed knowledge of the land lying between Bute Inlet and Alexandria. The reports of those people who did have some familiarity with the region "differ[ed] materially as to the wants of the Indians."⁷⁶⁹ Powell wrote to Victoria to ask for instructions regarding a reserve for the Tsilhqot'ins.⁷⁷⁰ In the meantime, the situation worsened. On January 11, 1874, Powell sent a telegram about the Tsilhqot'ins to the federal minister of the interior: "Reported Indian troubles exaggerated – great discontent however existing – revolt considered in council but overruled for present – cause apprehend injustice regarding lands have promised ..."⁷⁷¹

⁷⁶⁶ For a manuscript account of O'Reilly's trip to the Chilcotin via Bute Inlet, see BCA A/E/Or3/Or3.1.

⁷⁶⁷ George Walkem, Letter to Powell, 5 Dec 1872, RG 10, Vol 3583, File 1102. See also Williams, "O'Reilly, Peter," DCBO.

⁷⁶⁸ Lutz, "Powell, Israel Wood," DCBO.

⁷⁶⁹ Walkem, Letter to Powell, 5 Dec 1872. See also Powell, 15 Jan 1873, BCA GR0868, Original 32/73; and Foster, "Walkem, George Anthony," DCBO.

⁷⁷⁰ Powell, Letter, BCA GR0983, File 2, Original 430/72. See also Powell, Letter to Walkem, Dec 1872, RG 10, Vol 3583, File 1102.

⁷⁷¹ RG 10, Vol 3583, File 1102.

Native groups elsewhere in the interior also complained of injustices done to them. At Kamloops, for example, which Powell visited in the summer of 1874, the Indians did not have enough land to graze their stock, although white settlers were allowed to lease thousands of acres around them for the same purpose.⁷⁷² In 1883, ranchers wrote to Powell, “We inhabitants of Chilcotin, beg your attention with regard to the Indians resident here. There is existing a state of lawlessness among them that makes it all but impossible for us to remain in our places, owing to their depredations.” About two dozen of their cattle had been killed by the Tsilhqot’ins. Powell wrote back to tell them that he would do what he could, but that the local magistrate “should invest one or two men with a commission” as a justice of the peace.⁷⁷³

The Tsilhqot’ins faced increasing pressure from non-native settlement and recreational hunting in the 20th century. In 1904, some land speculators staked the area around Redstone, and local ranchers wrote to the Department of Lands and Works on behalf of the Tsilhqot’ins.⁷⁷⁴ A reply to one of them said, in part, “Dear Sir, I am pleased to be able to inform you that I have succeeded in obtaining for the Indians at Redstone flat the land contiguous to their village ... you can inform Charley Boy, only make him understand that they are not going to get the whole country side.”⁷⁷⁵ The provincial government published pamphlets informing “intending Pre-emptors” how to pre-empt land, how to purchase and lease Crown Land, where the best possibilities for grazing and irrigation were, and what the various regions of the Chilcotin plateau were like.⁷⁷⁶ The

⁷⁷² Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 185. The dissatisfaction of the native people around Kamloops and in the Okanagan to the southeast came to a head in 1877, when many settlers in the area believed that another Indian war was in the offing. The Indian reserve commissioners and the local Catholic missionary managed to defuse the situation, however. See 191-194. Ironically, the area was subsequently terrorized by the notorious McLean Gang of outlaws, led by some of the sons of the same Donald McLean who had been killed in the Chilcotin War. Balf, “McLean, Allen,” DCBO; Idem, “McLean, Donald,” DCBO.

⁷⁷³ L. W. Riske, Samuel Withrow, Silas Fields, Benjamin F. English, and Donald McIntyre to J. W. Powell, 19 Mar 1883, BCA GR0429, Box 1, File 12.

⁷⁷⁴ See 1957 typescript by Edward Penrose Lee in BCA MS0364, Box 10, File 12.

⁷⁷⁵ BCA C/D/30.7/R24.

⁷⁷⁶ See, for example, BC Department of Lands, “How to Pre-empt Land,” Land Series Bulletin 1, 1918; BC Department of Lands, “Some Questions and Answers Regarding British Columbia Canada,” Land Series Bulletin 2, 1920; BC Bureau of Provincial Information, “BC Land Recording Divisions, North and Central Interior,” Land Series Bulletin 3, 1928; BC Department of Lands, “Grazing Possibilities of British Columbia,” Land Series Bulletin 4, 1924; BC Bureau of Provincial Information, “Purchase and Lease of Crown Lands,” Land Series Bulletin 10, 1925; BC Department of Lands, “Tatla, Chilko, and Anahim

provincial game warden's correspondence of the early 1900s included complaints made by recreational big game hunters about animals killed by the Tsilhqot'ins for subsistence. A group writing from a hotel in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1908 said, "We have just returned from a hunting trip in the Lillooet district ... There are indications that the Chilcotins have been hunting sheep in that section which is a great pity."⁷⁷⁷ In his annual report of the same year, the provincial game warden repeatedly decried native hunting: "Now that the raids of the Chilcotin Indians are more or less checked by the district having been patrolled by a Deputy Game Warden, matters are in a much more prosperous state"; "From the Caribou country of Chilcotin come disastrous reports of the slaughter of Caribou by the Indians; it is said that the Ootsa Lake Indians, having cleared out the game to the north in their own country, last fall practically denuded the Itcha Mountain district to the south"; "The Chilcotin Indians were ravaging the famous Bridge River country every summer; deer by the thousand and numbers of sheep and goat fell beneath their rifles, male female and young without mercy or thought of the future."⁷⁷⁸

The Tsilhqot'ins' shift to life in reserves was, in part, both precipitated and facilitated in the 1870s and 80s by Catholic priests of a French order, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who returned to the Chilcotin towards the end of the gold rush. The Oblate priest Leon Fouquet tried to find the Tsilhqot'ins in 1864 but was unable to do so.⁷⁷⁹ His colleague James Maria McGuckin met with Tsilhqot'ins and Carriers at Fort Alexandria in 1867 and visited the Tsilhqot'ins in the winter of 1870. "The weather was very cold, the trail very bad, having on it a good deal of fallen lumber besides from 6 to 15 inches of snow all the way both going and returning. At night it froze so hard that the trees were splitting with the cold." Although the Tsilhqot'ins were evidently very poor, having "no houses, no provisions and the majority very nearly no clothing," McGuckin didn't

Lakes; Chilanko, Chilcotin, Euchiniko, Dean, Bellakula and Toba Rivers and Vicinities," Land Series Bulletin 22, 1919. Copies of all are in UBC Koerner Library, Microfilm AW1.R7550. See also BC Department of Lands, "The Chilcotin Plateau," Land Series Bulletin 34, 1921, SPAM 6821.

⁷⁷⁷ Wm. Drayton, Jr., C. H. Clark, and Norman S. Mackie, Hotel Ryan, St. Paul, Minnesota, to A. Bryan Williams, 23 Sep 1907, BCA GR0446.

⁷⁷⁸ BCA GR0446. Quotations from pages 7, 8, 14

⁷⁷⁹ Mulhall, *Will to Power*, 19. Morice believed that Fouquet did visit the Tsilhqot'ins and was the first Catholic missionary to do so. Morice, *History*, 335, n. 1.

interpret this poverty as a sign of sanctity but rather one of savagery. Nevertheless, he was pleased with his visit to the “terrible Chilcotin.” They hadn’t killed him, as he feared they might, and he was able to baptize “18 children and one old woman.”⁷⁸⁰

McGuckin returned again in 1873 to lay the groundwork for converting the Tsilhqot’ins to Catholicism. One of the things that he did was to appoint a “captain” and “watchman” for each of the Tsilhqot’in chiefs. These roles were part of an evolving system of governance that is now known as the Durieu system, named after Paul Durieu, the bishop who directed the work of the Oblate missionaries from the 1870s onward. In the Durieu system, the captain was the chief’s deputy. He administered public punishment (usually whipping) for activities that the missionaries wanted to suppress, like adultery, the consumption of alcohol or participation in traditional feasting. The watchman’s job was to discover and apprehend suspected sinners. In creating these roles, the missionaries also created a new role for the chief, subject to the missionary in a semitheocratic hierarchy.⁷⁸¹ A new priest, Frédéric Guertin, was assigned to the Tsilhqot’ins. Unfortunately Guertin was intimidated by the Tsilhqot’ins and unable to learn their language. He wanted them to plant crops (something which he doesn’t seem to have realized was not possible) but they didn’t have seed or equipment. He attributed their widespread mortality to the fact that they ate too much dried salmon and didn’t exercise enough. The only adult baptisms he performed were for people on their deathbeds.⁷⁸²

In 1883, the Tsilhqot’ins were assigned a new missionary, Adrian Morice. Morice was much more determined and forceful than Guertin had been. His new charges were soon calling him “the young priest with strong words.” By conversing with a Tsilhqot’in woman in Chinook Jargon, Morice was able to learn enough of the Tsilhqot’in language over his first winter to compile a six-thousand-word vocabulary, a rudimentary grammar and Catholic catechism, prayers and hymns. The Tsilhqot’ins saw

⁷⁸⁰ Whitehead, *Cariboo Mission*, 46-47, 51-52. McGuckin is quoted in Whitehead on 51, 52.

⁷⁸¹ Mulhall, *Will to Power*, 19; Gresko, “Durieu, Paul,” DCBO; Duff, *Indian History*, 134; Lemert, “Life and Death”; Lane, “Chilcotin,” 411-412.

⁷⁸² Mulhall, *Will to Power*, 20.

his usefulness as a cultural broker. Two Chinese men had recently been killed by them, and they asked Morice to write to the Queen to intercede for them.⁷⁸³ He promised to write to Israel Wood Powell, the superintendent of Indian affairs, if it turned out to be necessary. In 1883 and 84, Morice made long trips through the Chilcotin, setting up the Durieu apparatus where possible. He was unable to get along with his superiors, however, and was re-assigned to the Fort St James area in 1885.⁷⁸⁴ The Durieu system was to have a long life in the Chilcotin. It was also used by Morice's successor, François Marie Thomas, who was assigned to the region in 1897 and worked there for sixty years. The last Durieu courts were held at Redstone in 1940.⁷⁸⁵ In addition to setting up a new political structure, Morice and the other Oblate priests were responsible for concentrating the Tsilhqot'ins into villages and for pre-empting land on their behalf.⁷⁸⁶

The provincial government also took steps that changed native society. The 1880 revision of the Indian Act allowed federal officials to replace traditional leaders with individuals they thought were more appropriate. They also redefined native social structures by inventing a new category called "status." One was either a status Indian, allowed to live on the reserve and receive government services, or one was not. Since status was given to native men, their wives and children, many non-native women automatically acquired status, while those native women who married non-status men lost it. Métis children of the former families were status, whereas those of the latter were denied the right to acquire it.⁷⁸⁷

The First Histories

The first historical accounts of the Tsilhqot'ins were written after the Chilcotin War, as non-native settlement was encroaching on their territory, the Church and state were working to restructure their political, domestic and religious life, and the continued

⁷⁸³ The story of the killings can be reconstructed from the Attorney General's correspondence, BCA GR0429.

⁷⁸⁴ Mulhall, *Will to Power*, 21-33.

⁷⁸⁵ Whitehead, *Now You Are My Brother*, 26-39; Idem, *Cariboo Mission*, 131.

⁷⁸⁶ Lane, "Chilcotin," 411-412; Alexander, "Cultural Heritage Overview," 42.

⁷⁸⁷ Barman, *West beyond the West*, 159-160.

pressure of disease and poverty pushed their numbers toward an all-time low. R. C. Lundin Brown's *Klatsassan, and Other Reminiscences of Missionary Life in British Columbia* was published in London in 1873 by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Brown retailed the stereotypes that had filled the newspapers of the previous decade. The Tsilhqot'ins "like all the British Columbia Indians, [were] in a state of decadence." "A set of men and women more squalid and repulsive," he wrote, "I have rarely beheld. Dark faces, with big mouths, high cheek-bones, ferocious black eyes, narrow foreheads, long tangled hair black as night; their thin and sinewy frames with little on them save dirt and a piece of blanket or deer-skin..."⁷⁸⁸ In the first few pages of his account, Brown also gloried in the power that he imagined that writing gave him and other non-natives over the Tsilhqot'ins. He attributed the war to a misguided member of Waddington's crew who, he said, on finding that some flour had been stolen, wrote down the names of some Tsilhqot'ins and then told them that sickness would come to their country and kill them all. Brown went on:

The Indians were much alarmed and distressed by these proceedings. They have, be it observed, a very special horror of having their names written down. They look upon paper as a very awful thing, they tremble to see the working of a pen. Writing is, they imagine, a dread mystery. By it the mighty whites seem to carry on intercourse with unseen powers. When they are writing, there's no telling what they may be doing. They may be bidding a pestilence come over the land, or ordering the rain to stay in the west, or giving directions for the salmon to remain in the ocean. Especially is the Indian appalled when he sees his own *name* put on paper. To him the name is not distinct from the person who owns it. If his name is written down, he is written down: if his name is passed over to the demons which people his hierarchy, he is sure to be bewitched and given as prey into the teeth of his invisible foes.⁷⁸⁹

This seems much more likely to have been Brown's fantasy than that of the Tsilhqot'ins. By the time that he met them in the 1860s they had already had more than forty years of

⁷⁸⁸ Brown, *Klatsassan*, 3, 4.

⁷⁸⁹ Brown, *Klatsassan*, 10.

experience with the newcomers writing things down. Surely if it were possible to work magic by writing, the Tsilhqot'ins would have seen evidence of it by then.

After retelling the events of the Chilcotin War, Brown described ministering to the condemned Tsilhqot'in men in the days leading up to their execution. Towards the end of his account, there is a long description of the conversation on their last night, which Brown remembered to be mostly about the future. The assimilationist picture that Brown painted for the men was evidently the best future he could imagine; we will never know what they made of it, because we have only his word for their response. In the future, "Indian children would be educated and taught to understand the mysteries of reading and writing." Families would settle down to till the soil and build houses. They would wear "respectable clothing" and each household would be headed by a patriarch "having but one wife, as the Lord had ordained." Their spiritual life would be led by Indian priests. They would live in peace with other Indians and with the whites. "For the whites would not leave the land. No they had been sent here by the Great Lord of all!" Although the Indians and the fur traders had made "small account" of the land, "the Highest, the Maker of all, had other purposes for [it]. ... No doubt it was painful for them to see it in the hands of strangers, but it was for the good of mankind, and for the greater glory of the land itself." God had put the gold and silver in the rocks for the British to find. They would put steamboats on every body of water and build a railway to the Atlantic. "And thus the will of the Most High would be accomplished."⁷⁹⁰ In Brown's view, the Tsilhqot'ins' past was unimportant except for the brief moment in which they temporarily opposed the will of God. Their future, too, was non-existent; they were truly a people without history.

Adrian Morice's *History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia* was published in London in 1906, after he had spent two years with the Tsilhqot'ins and nineteen with the Carriers. Unlike Brown, Morice acknowledged the existence of an indigenous history that predated the arrival of the newcomers. He began with a physical

⁷⁹⁰ Brown, *Klatsassan*, 114-117.

description of the extent of the country, its vegetation, lakes and rivers, fish and fauna. “These, from time immemorial, have been trapped or chased by the American representatives of the human species who call themselves *Déné* (men), and are divided into four main tribes.” He went on to describe the physiognomy of each of the groups, in more neutral terms than were usually deployed by his contemporaries: “the Sekanis, for instance, are slender and bony, with fairly delicate features, very small eyes, and thin lips. The Carriers are stouter and more heavily built, with coarser traits, thicker lips, and quite large eyes. The Babines and Chilcotins are shorter than the Carriers, with broader shoulders and, the former at least, with even thicker lips and flattish faces. ... They have all very black and straight hair, dark eyes, small hands and feet, and a complexion of a swarthy brown ...” He then turned his attention to their social structure, noting that “none of them originally had any village chiefs in our sense of the word.” Instead, they were governed by the older members of related families and, in some cases, by hereditary clan leaders. Morice also noted that the Dene held religious beliefs: about a future world, about spirits, about the power of shamans, about the proper treatment of the dead.⁷⁹¹

When discussing the respective characters of the four “tribes” of Dene, however, a curious asymmetry crept into Morice’s account. Here is an example: “The Sekanis are the most honest and moral; the Carriers are the proudest and most progressive; the Chilcotins are violent and none too scrupulous, while for loquacity and conservativeness the Babines have few superiors.”⁷⁹² Throughout the *History*, Morice described the Tsilhqot’ins in distinctly negative terms.⁷⁹³ One might argue that his assessment was based on his experience of the Tsilhqot’in people the early 1880s. But this interpretation is not supported by Morice’s own writings on the subject, which changed over time. In 1883, Morice wrote a long letter about the Tsilhqot’ins to the *Missions de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie-Immaculée*, published in Paris. “He

⁷⁹¹ Morice, *History*, 4-6. “Dene” is the name by which anthropologists and refer to Canadian Athapaskans, and the name by which many refer to themselves. Gillespie, “Territorial Groups,” 168.

⁷⁹² Morice, *History*, 7.

⁷⁹³ In one place, for example, he describes another indigenous group as “possibly less bloodthirsty than the Chilcotins, [but] even more noisy and restless.” Morice, *History*, 209.

included a list of their violent deeds, but he was careful to explain that in murdering certain whites, the Indians were simply defending their land, the honour of their women, and their dignity.”⁷⁹⁴ In 1889, after Morice had been living with the Carriers for four years, he was still able to put a somewhat positive gloss on the Tsilhqot’in character as he perceived it. “[W]ere I required to particularize in two words the ethnic peculiarities of each tribe, I would state that the Chilhqotins are the most violent and manly of the whole group; the Carriers, the proudest and most accessible to progressive ideas; the Sékanais, the most superstitious and naïve.”⁷⁹⁵ As Morice remembered the Tsilhqot’ins during successive episodes in his life, the events of the Chilcotin War took on an unwarranted significance, coloring all else.

In the second chapter of the *History*, Morice turned to a chronological account beginning in 1660 with the birth of the Carrier nobleman Na’kwoel, who, around 1730 became the first of the Dene to acquire an iron axe or adze. In a footnote, Morice noted that the prevalence of iron goods among the Dene when they were first contacted by Alexander Mackenzie and Simon Fraser showed “the ease with which such goods travelled in pre-European times.” The Tsilhqot’ins made their first appearance in the *History* in 1745 as the perpetrators of “a most melancholy event, which was to cause a permanent change in the ethnographical map of the country.” Wanting “to avenge ... the death of one of their notables,” the Tsilhqot’ins descended on the Carrier village Chinlac, at the confluence of the Stuart and Nechako Rivers, and “practically annihilated the whole population...” Morice dwelt on the horror of the scene, the pools of blood, and two poles bearing “the bodies of the children ripped open and spitted through the out-turned ribs in exactly the same way as salmon drying in the sun.” For the principal chief of the Carrier village, who had survived the attack, there was no alternative but to exact

⁷⁹⁴ Mullhall, *Will to Power*, 25. This is the same argument that Morice makes when he discusses the specific details of the Chilcotin War in the *History*, 313-320. His more negative assessment arises in the contexts where he makes generalizations about the Tsilhqot’in people as a whole.

⁷⁹⁵ Morice, “Western Denes,” 118.

“the vengeance due to such an unprovoked crime,” and, after more killing, “the affront to the Carrier tribe was thus washed out in blood.”⁷⁹⁶

The next time the Tsilhqot’ins entered the *History* was in 1808, when Simon Fraser, descending the river that now bears his name, noted the presence of a group of Denes who lived on the western side of the river, and called themselves “Chilk-hodins.” “About sixty Indians were present on this occasion,” he wrote, “and as many more were on the opposite shore bawling to send for them, but, as their presence could be of no service to us, we thought it more advisable to dispense with their company as much as possible.”⁷⁹⁷ Around 1830, they made an appearance again, when the Hudson’s Bay Company established Fort Chilcotin “on a tributary of the Chilcotin River, which, after many trials and varying fortunes, had to be abandoned, owing to its isolation and consequent expensiveness, but especially on account of the troublesome disposition of the natives who frequented it.” Morice took the Californian historian Hubert Howe Bancroft to task for suggesting that Fort Chilcotin was founded around the same time as Fort Alexandria (1821). “To anyone familiar with the geography of the country and the innate restiveness of the Chilcotin Indians, such a statement calls for confirmation.”⁷⁹⁸ Later Morice described the Chilcotin in the mid-1830s as in a “chronic state of disaffection.”⁷⁹⁹

⁷⁹⁶ Morice, *History*, 9, 14, 16, 19. Considering that Morice earlier noted that the Tsilhqot’ins were seeking vengeance for a death, it doesn’t seem fair of him to call the killings at Chinlac “an unprovoked crime.” Morice’s account was based on Carrier oral tradition, in particular, on a version that he heard from the daughter of the principal chief of Chinlac when she was about ninety years old. Subsequent accounts have been based on Morice’s. A magazine article published in 1986 described the Tsilhqot’ins as “hostile” and “murderous,” expanded on Morice’s description of the devastation at Chinlac by adding some imagined details (“the only signs of life were the scavenging ravens and jays”) and crucially attributed the abuse of a young woman to the Tsilhqot’ins, when she was, in fact, a captive of the Carriers. Wright, “Chinlac Massacre.” The archaeologist Charles Borden, who excavated Chinlac in the early 1950s, noted that “According to information obtained by Morice, Chinlac was abandoned after most of its inhabitants were massacred by a band of raiding Chilcotin Indians. He estimates that the attack occurred about 1745. But the presence of contact goods suggests that the village was abandoned nearer the end of the 18th century; i.e., after the fur trade had become well established on the Coast.” Borden, “Results,” 34.

⁷⁹⁷ Fraser, *Journal*, Vol. 1, 165; Morice, *History*, 76.

⁷⁹⁸ Morice, *History*, 123-124. Morice “was no admirer of H. H. Bancroft.” Sage, “Some Early Historians.”

⁷⁹⁹ Morice, *History*, 193.

In fact, practically the only time the Tsilhqot'ins entered Morice's *History* was to make trouble. Not only at Chinlac in 1745, and at Fort Chilcotin in the 1830s, but also during the Chilcotin War: "We have had more than once to refer to the turbulent character of the Chilcotin Indians. So late as 1864, their appearance and costume did not betray much contact with representatives of European civilization, and in the absence of all missionary influence their inner self had undoubtedly remained even more refractory to humane ideas." The last time they showed up in the *History* was at Alexandria in 1868 where they heard a Catholic Bishop preaching and "profited not a little."⁸⁰⁰

Morice's depiction of the Tsilhqot'in people as resistant to non-native "civilization" was echoed in most twentieth-century accounts. For example, in *British Columbia from the Earliest Times to the Present* (1914), F. W. Howay argued that after the initial killings at Bute Inlet, "the assassins now became promoted to the dignity of insurgents by the adhesion of the whole Chilcotin tribe ... It was reported that the Indians were combined for the purpose of killing every white man they met." Later, according to Howay, when the Tsilhqot'ins saw that the Government did not intend to kill them indiscriminately, but rather "to impress the Indian mind with the superiority of British law in this very respect that only the guilty can be punished ... the great chiefs became ranged on the side of law and order and engaged to assist in securing those murderers who were still at large."⁸⁰¹

Place Fetishism

The first histories of British Columbia were written after the Chilcotin War, and the war colored the imagination of events that had nothing to do with it. The Tsilhqot'in people became troublesome, restless and violent in the retelling, responsible for atrocities at Chinlac in the late 18th century, responsible for the failure of Fort Chilcotin in the nineteenth. The Chilcotin, in turn, became a landscape of resistance, violence and tragedy. This reification of human characteristics in place required a kind of

⁸⁰⁰ Morice, *History*, 314, 338.

⁸⁰¹ Howay, *BC from Earliest Times*, Vol. 2, 181, 188.

forgetting.⁸⁰² To the extent that there was a dominant mode of historical consciousness about the Chilcotin for most of the 20th century, it was based on the myth of the frontier, on the imagined discovery of a near empty land, the brief conflict with its wild inhabitants, its peopling by the settlers, and the subsequent establishment of colonial society.⁸⁰³ Historical details that did not accord with the myth had to be reworked.

The wildness of the Tsilhqot'ins, for example, now governed the imagination of their every encounter. In local histories, the unearthing of an occasional stone tool became a sign of "earlier Indian skirmishes and wars." These might be imagined in detail, as in the following: "Once in the early 1880s, the Bella Coola Indians intended to attack the Chilcotins and advanced down the valley from Puntzee. The Chilcotins being prewarned by their scout were prepared. They were in ambush above the cliff now known as Battle Bluff and rolled huge rocks down on the enemy, killing many and driving them from the valley."⁸⁰⁴ What the Nuxalk were doing at Puntzi or what they had against the Tsilhqot'ins is anyone's guess. The story is given without any supporting evidence, and if it weren't incredible enough, there are two other Battle Mountains in the province that were supposedly named after Tsilhqot'in altercations. One in Wells Gray Park (well east of Williams Lake) memorializes a battle between the Tsilhqot'ins and Secwepemc around 1875 over caribou hunting grounds. The other, west of Alexis Creek, was noted by George Dawson in the 1870s and described by the ethnographer James Teit: there are a number of boulders below the mountain "which, according to tradition, are the transformed bodies of Alexandria warriors who strayed over a cliff in the dark while on the way to attack a camp of Chilcotin who lived in the vicinity."⁸⁰⁵

The imagined former prevalence of inter-Indian wars was used both to justify the subsequent actions of the colonial government in the Chilcotin War, and to rhetorically depopulate the Chilcotin, to make it into an empty land awaiting settlement. The fact that

⁸⁰² Cf Adorno & Horkheimer, "all reification is a forgetting," *Dialectic*, 230.

⁸⁰³ Furniss, *Burden of History*. For an interesting argument about the role of colonial photography in the creation of such a mythical frontier, see Williams, *Framing the West*.

⁸⁰⁴ George, comp. *History and Legends*, 36.

⁸⁰⁵ Teit, *The Shuswap*, quoted in *BPCN*, 15.

the land policy of the colonial government had actively dispossessed native people played no role in the myth. Instead, the myth required the land to be empty, and the logic of this requirement transposed the imagined violence of the Tsilhqot'in people to the place itself. The beginnings of this transposition can be seen in the writings of the settlers of the 1920s and 30s. Rich Hobson, who came with Pan Phillips to establish a cattle empire, wrote, "The Anahim Lake country, its sullen forests recently echoing the shots of explorers who had fought and died there, is a dark and forbidding land, jealously guarding its immense boundaries from men creeping north and west from the rim of civilization." And this: "A strange hollow loneliness seemed to reach up out of the vastness of the jackpines ... An eerie, empty, lifeless land of monotonous sameness; uninspiring, unspectacular, colorless, exuding a sinister feeling of complete isolation from the living. A land that breathes no spirit of a past life, and gives little hope of a future one."⁸⁰⁶ To Eric Collier, who titled his book *Three Against the Wilderness*, it was the "strange untamed" country where he and his métis wife and son "tasted all of summer's searing heat and winter's penetrating hostility, our only neighbours the moose, bears, timber wolves and other wild life of the muskegs and forest; some of whom seemed ever ready to dispute our right to be there at all. There we learned to accept the mosquitoes and deer flies that often drove us, our work horses, and saddle stock almost crazy with their persistent thirst for blood..."⁸⁰⁷

By the early 1950s, the mythic Chilcotin frontier was well established, the stuff of Sunday newspaper supplements in the lower mainland, and of special editions of Williams Lake newspapers published in the summer for tourists. "Four purple mountain ranges stand guard over this strange corner of B. C. called the Anahim," one *Vancouver Sun* article read, "which is the land of fifty years ago ... the last frontier of the West." Inspired, no doubt, by Hollywood westerns and the primetime parade of the Cisco Kid, Lone Ranger, Roy Rogers, Wild Bill Hickok and Hopalong Cassidy across the TV screen, the author imagined Chilcotin cowboys "riding through the last scene of the

⁸⁰⁶ Hobson, *Grass beyond the Mountains*, 35, 124.

⁸⁰⁷ Collier, *Three Against the Wilderness*, 3.

almost-forgotten picture of free grass and open range.”⁸⁰⁸ Another article described the Tsilhqot’ins riding on horseback or in wagons from the Anahim reserve to Pigeon’s store at Alexis Creek to see movies on Saturday night. ‘The Indians sure love cowboy pictures and if there is no wild west picture they just won’t come,’ said a woman who worked in the store, ‘Jungle and Tarzan pictures go over good also.’ This was a clear sign to the author that Alexis Creek was “the nerve centre of a great cattle country that is still the wild and woolly west.” “The wild west comes to life again,” he wrote, “both on the screen and among the audience.”⁸⁰⁹ The idea that the Tsilhqot’ins may have enjoyed westerns in the same way that everyone else did in the 1950s, as escapist fantasy, doesn’t seem to have occurred to him. The on-screen antics of John Wayne and Ronald Reagan had very little to do with the day-to-day work of cowboys in the Chilcotin, Tsilhqot’in or otherwise.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers at Alexis Creek were also caught up in the region’s mythic past. When a local construction company unearthed the remains of three human bodies in a gravel bar in October 1951, one in a “well preserved sawed lumber box,” the investigating officer imagined that the people had died during the Chilcotin war. He questioned “all the early settlers” and “old Indians,” but none knew of a burial ground in the area. “There is no doubt there was a large encampment of Indians on the Hudson Bay Flat at that time,” he wrote in his report, “and if these graves are of persons who died at that time, the Indians would refuse to reveal any information about them.” On the strength of that hunch, the detachment forwarded the report to the BC Archives, “in the event that the Historical Society may be interested.”⁸¹⁰

In 1957, the Chilcotin rancher Edward Penrose Lee wrote

Several times this summer there have been people come from as far away as California looking for ranches. They had heard whether from real estate firms, government brochures, or from some of the people who write

⁸⁰⁸ “Mountain Ranges Guard Isolated Anahim Country,” *Vancouver Sun*, 19 Oct 1953, BCA D19-003.

⁸⁰⁹ Richard Andre Ramme, “Cow-Town People,” *Vancouver Sun Magazine Supplement*, 27 Jan 1951, BCA D19-002.

⁸¹⁰ Copy of RCMP Division file 51-X-16, forwarded to Archives on 30 Oct 1951, BCA D19-002.

books, that are more optimistic than accurate of the large open spaces waiting for settlement, and thought all they had to do was take up a good large piece of land and go into the cow business. One of them even confessed that he had no money. I don't know how good he was with a rope and branding iron.

I can sympathize with them and should like to put them wise. The Chilcotin is an old settled country. I have been in it for close onto seventy years and it has gradually been filled up with stockraisers and there is no vacant land suitable for this purpose any more and the people living in the country know when they are well-off and aim to stay put. ... To proceed with the cow business—it should be born in mind that you have to irrigate to grow things and even if there were any vacant land, \$10,000 goes nowhere in starting up a cattle ranch. I think the cattle industry has seen its best days in this section and is now on the wane. Labour is almost unprocurable and the Indians on whom we depended to a large extent, now get jobs at \$1.50 or so an hour, which is quite beyond the means of the stockraiser. As far as the small man is concerned, who wants to keep a few milk cows and grow a garden, this most emphatically is no place for it.⁸¹¹

Such practical advice did nothing to stem the tide of articles about the Chilcotin, the “Big Country,” “a wild, untamed land,” a place where some Indians lived “so far out in the wilderness they have never set eyes upon a white man.” One piece, written in 1970, concluded that “as you drive the dusty miles along the Chilcotin Road you know that despite man's mania for raping virgin land, this is a land that will never be tamed, and where people will remain just as they are today: rugged, individualistic, proud—and free.”⁸¹² But the darker side of the mythic frontier was about to come to the nation's attention.

The Death of Fred Quilt

In 1972, *Rolling Stone* reporter Tim Cahill went to Alexis Creek to cover the story of the death of a Tsilhqot'in man named Fred Quilt. Cahill, who would later make a

⁸¹¹ EP Lee, “Out of the Horse's Mouth,” BCA MS0364, Box 10, File 12.

⁸¹² “Ancient Way of Life Continues on Isolated B. C. Reserve,” *Kelowna Courier*, 15 Oct 1959, BCA D19-003; “Taming the Chilcotin,” *Cariboo Nugget* 1 (3), Jul 1968 [special edition published by *News of WL and Cariboo*], BCA microfilmed newspapers; *Big Country Adventurer* (Williams Lake), 1 (1), 1 Jun 1970, BCA MS0364, Box 10, File 13; “The Big Country,” special edition of the *Williams Lake Tribune*, Summer 1970, BCA MS0364, Box 10, File 9. “Raping” quote from 21. Some of the prose in these articles is more purple than the mountains guarding Anahim.

name for himself as an adventure travel writer, evidently felt that the story of Quilt was very much the story of a place. “For months, the corpse of Fred Quilt’s burnt out pickup truck has rusted in this Canadian meadow,” his piece began. “Ravens perch on the cab to scan the grasses or haggle loudly among themselves. The hundred or so white folks who live down at Alexis Creek don’t care to see the truck, and they bounce their cars over this section of the road with a quick burst of speed. Local Indians shun it like bad medicine—shun it as if it were the ghost of one gloomy, frozen twilight last November.” Later in the article: “Alexis Creek is set dead in the cold green heart of British Columbia.” And to describe Quilt’s home, the Stone reserve: “The roads on Anahim are gravel, but the few lanes on the Stone reserve are mud and dirt. Now, in the dry season, wind-driven dust covers everything and everyone. The cabins, the people, the few cars are all the color of dust.”⁸¹³ The residents of Stone reserve, Cahill wrote, “do not dare to speak a dead man’s name for fear that this will bring him back from the dead. Those who travel with the dead, they say, will join them the next day.” Fred Quilt’s adopted son Robin, present during the events that led to his father’s death, reportedly heard Quilt calling his name one night as he walked by the graveyard where the body was buried. “For three days and three nights he hid in the woods. Now, he never walks by the burial ground, nor does he visit his father’s grave.”⁸¹⁴

Fred Quilt, the 55-year-old man whose death was causing such unrest in 1972, had had a hard life. He lived on the reserve in a small cabin covered with tar and shingles, eking out a living by raising a few head of his own cattle, and by cutting hay and building fences for local ranchers. Making less than \$2,000 a year, he managed to support his wife Christine and four adopted children. His pickup truck, one of a handful on the Stone reserve, was used both for his own work and for community errands, and was his family’s most important possession. Quilt drank from time to time and had gotten into his share of altercations. He had twice been admitted to the hospital in

⁸¹³ Cahill, “Death,” 45.

⁸¹⁴ Cahill, “Death,” 46.

Williams Lake, once for a concussion that he got in a fight, and once for a gunshot wound in the leg.

On November 30, 1971, Fred, Christine, his adopted son Robin, Christine's sister Agnes (who was Robin's biological mother), and a friend named Isaac Meyers drove to Anahim reserve for the wake of a little girl. The afternoon was overcast and below freezing. The mourners stood around a large bonfire, drinking and playing the gambling game lahal, as was customary.⁸¹⁵ At the end of the evening, Fred, Christine, Robin and Agnes left in the pickup. At some point, they stopped on the road, or possibly beside it, for reasons that are not clear. Leslie Roberts, a public health nurse, found the Quilt's truck in the road around 5:30 or 5:45 as it was getting dark. She went up to the passenger door and found Agnes, whom she knew, singing very cheerfully. A passing truck driver stopped and helped Roberts turn on the red warning flasher on her flashlight, which she then left 10 or 12 feet behind the Quilt's truck. The truck driver left, and Roberts went to Alexis Creek, where she reported the incident to the RCMP.⁸¹⁶ At 7pm, a resident of Vancouver who was driving on Highway 20 came across a flashlight beside the road with a red warning signal on. A quarter of a mile further he found a truck stopped on the wrong side of the road with four natives in it. Twice he asked them in a loud voice if there was any trouble and they needed help. He got no response. When he played his flashlight over the driver's face, he could see the man's eyes rolling. He drove to Alexis Creek and stopped someone on the street, asking them to tell the police about the incident.⁸¹⁷

Eyewitnesses disagreed about what happened next. Two RCMP constables later testified that they were having dinner when they received a phone call from their commanding officer. He told them that there was a truck blocking the road, possibly full

⁸¹⁵ Jes Odam, "Second Fred Quilt Inquest Opens," *Vancouver Sun*, 18 Jul 1972, BCA MS0364, Box 10, File 8; Dave Stockand, "Death and Game Show Gap in Indian-White Relations," *Vancouver Sun*, 21 Jul 1972, BCA MS0364, Box 10, File 8.

⁸¹⁶ Jes Odam, "Mountie's Report Refused Quilt Jury," *Vancouver Sun*, 21 Jul 1972, BCA MS0364, Box 10, File 8; Jes Odam, "Nurse Told by Quilt That Police Kicked Him," *Vancouver Sun*, 25 Jul 1972, BCA MS0364, Box 10, File 8.

⁸¹⁷ Jes Odam, "Doctor Disputes Quilt Autopsy Finding," *Vancouver Sun*, 22 Jul 1972, BCA MS0364 Box 10, File 8.

of drunken Indians. Although only one of the policemen was on duty, the other agreed to accompany him in case of trouble. They found the Quilt's truck blocking the road, everyone in it asleep or passed out, the hood of the vehicle cold to the touch. When the first constable opened the door, he couldn't find any keys in the ignition. There was a strong smell of vanilla in the cab. Quilt slumped out onto the ground, and the policeman asked his colleague to take him to the RCMP vehicle. The other constable lifted Quilt up by grabbing him under the arms from behind and leaned him against the truck. Quilt grabbed the box of his own truck, apparently resisting the constable's effort to get him over to the police truck. When the constable pulled on him, the two men fell and Quilt landed on his stomach. The constable assisted him to the police vehicle, getting vomit all over his hands and jacket.⁸¹⁸ The two Mounties took the other Quilts to their vehicle. Agnes 'was swearing and cursing and quite belligerent about the whole thing. Most of it was in Chilcotin and [they] didn't understand it.' They tried to push the Quilt's truck off the road, but the shift lever seemed to be jammed and they couldn't get it into neutral. They drove the Indians to Anahim, Christine thanking them for the ride as she got out, and then returned to Alexis Creek. On the way back, they decided that the Quilt's truck was still in a potentially dangerous position, so they set up some flares to prevent an accident, and went for towing cables. At Alexis Creek, they washed up, the off-duty policeman got into uniform, and they returned to Quilt's truck. They found that someone had moved it off the road and set it on fire. There was quite a bit of traffic on the road, and a car full of people watching the truck burn told them that they had found it like that a few minutes earlier. In the past two years, four cars had been burned on Highway 20 in that area.⁸¹⁹

The Quilts' account of the event was very different. While they were sleeping in their vehicle beside the road, the RCMP parked behind their truck. A uniformed policeman pulled Quilt from his truck and threw him on the ground. Another man, out of

⁸¹⁸ Jes Odam, "Fred Quilt Fell Twice on Road, Mountie Tells Inquest Jury," *Vancouver Sun*, 26 Jul 1972, BCA MS0364 Box 10, File 8.

⁸¹⁹ Odam, "Mountie's Report"; Jes Odam, "Mountie Denies Anyone Jumped on Fred Quilt," *Vancouver Sun*, 20 Jul 1972, BCA MS0364, Box 10, File 8.

uniform, began screaming obscenities and then “jumped up and down” on Fred Quilt several times, on his head, chest and groin. The man was wearing heavy cowboy boots with sharp heels. The Quilts were put in the police vehicle and driven back to Anahim. There, bleeding from a head wound and doubled over in agony, Fred Quilt was rolled out of the RCMP vehicle into the snow in front of the church. Laughing, the Mounties drove off. One of the Indian families in Anahim helped get Fred Quilt indoors, while Christine returned to get the truck with another man. They found it in flames 35 feet from where they had left it, with the wrapper of a highway flare lying on the road.⁸²⁰ Meanwhile, Fred Quilt kept asking his son Robin, “Why didn’t the police just kill me there?” A local nurse, a nun, was summoned, and Quilt told her that the police had “kicked” him. She wrapped his abdomen in an elastic bandage. Christine, returning from the truck, went to the Catholic priest and told him that the police had “jumped” on Fred Quilt. She asked him to call the provincial judge in Redstone, but the judge was not available. The following morning, Christine called Leslie Roberts, the Alexis Creek public health nurse. Quilt told her that the police had “jumped up and down” on him.⁸²¹ She called for an ambulance, which arrived that evening around 6 pm. Quilt refused to ride in it, as it was carrying a dead Indian child to Williams Lake for an autopsy and he was unable to sit up.⁸²² The following day, the ambulance returned for Quilt around 1 pm and took him to the hospital in Williams Lake. He was pronounced dead at 4:20 pm on November 30, about 48 hours after the encounter with the policemen.⁸²³

An Inquest, and Another

Dave Stockand, the only reporter to show up at a Vancouver press conference convened by an native group called the Fred Quilt Committee, found that its members had “taken affidavits from witnesses, drawn maps, and prepared what amounted to a legal brief.” Impressed, he wrote up the story from the Indians’ point-of-view. It appeared

⁸²⁰ Jes Odam, “Bloodstained Shirt Shown to Quilt Inquest Jury,” *Vancouver Sun*, 19 Jul 1972, BCA MS0364, Box 10, File 8.

⁸²¹ Odam, “Nurse Told.”

⁸²² Odam, “Bloodstained Shirt.”

⁸²³ Nate Smith, “Quilt Failed Rapidly Driver Tells Inquest,” *Vancouver Sun*, n.d., BCA MS0364, Box 10, File 8.

with a major headline on the front page of the Saturday edition of the *Vancouver Sun*. The following year he told Tim Cahill, "I'm still bloody astounded by the story. What separates Quilt from any number of other similar Indian injustices is that it wouldn't bloody go away. It's taken major coverage for nearly nine months and it's still going on." As the controversy gained momentum, the Fred Quilt Committee gathered evidence of other injustices toward native people. In the winter that Quilt died: a man was thrown out of a pub far from his home and froze to death, but no charges were laid; the autopsy of another man, hit by a train, revealed that he was dead on the tracks before the train came, but police didn't investigate; farther north, another Indian man was thrown out of a bar, his back broken, and he, too, froze to death, but no charges were laid; and a baby froze to death in a house after the oil dealer refused to extend credit to an Indian family, but no charges were laid.⁸²⁴ A couple of years earlier, a native girl had been found naked and dead at a garbage dump near Lac La Hache after a night in the company of three white boys. One was acquitted on reduced charges of manslaughter, the other two were each sentenced to a year of jail time each. The perceived inadequacy of the sentencing led to an outcry.⁸²⁵

In mid-January 1972, a coroner's inquest into the death of Fred Quilt was held in Williams Lake. The coroner, who was also manager of the local medical clinic, justice of the peace, and ex-RCMP officer, supervised the selection of the jury. Jury members were chosen by the Williams Lake RCMP detachment. One of the jurors lived in a house with two members of the RCMP; another, the jury foreman, was an auxiliary RCMP officer himself. The rest of the jury were also white and male. The two Mounties involved in the incident were subpoenaed, and had their expenses covered by the government. The investigation was headed by a friend of theirs, a senior RCMP officer. Although there were native witnesses to the events, only non-native witnesses were interviewed by the

⁸²⁴ The first quote is Cahill's, the second Stockand's. Both from Cahill, "Death," 48.

⁸²⁵ "Laker Acquitted, Two Fined," *The News of Williams Lake and the Cariboo*, 20 Sep 1967; Harold Box, "Appeal Rose Roper Case," *News of WL and Cariboo*, 4 Oct 1967; Fr. Leo Casey, OMI, "An Open Letter to Rosemary Roper," *News of WL and Cariboo*, 13 Mar 1968; "Croft, Wilson Sentenced on Assault Charges," *News of WL and Cariboo*, 2 Apr 1968. All in BCA microfilmed newspaper collection.

police. No native witnesses were subpoenaed. The ones who attended the inquest, including Fred's wife Christine, had to hitchhike into town and pay their own way.

When Christine took the stand, her story was so different from that of the Mounties that the coroner asked her if she knew what it meant to tell the truth. She was examined by Gunnar Eggertson, who represented the RCMP and the Department of Justice. Eggertson repeatedly tried to force Christine to make eye contact with him and asked her if someone had put words into her mouth. Most of the Indians couldn't speak English, and some had never been to Williams Lake. Matters were complicated by people in the courtroom bursting into laughter during native testimony. The testimony of the surgeon who performed the autopsy was treated with more respect but with apparent incomprehension. Dr. Han Choo Lee testified that Quilt's bowel had probably been transected by a kick, certainly by a sharp external blow of some sort that occurred around the time that the Quilts encountered the Mounties. He had to tear a piece of paper in half to demonstrate to the court what a "transection" was. After three and a half hours the jury returned a verdict of accidental death by peritonitis and absolved the Mounties of blame. An hour of their deliberation was taken up with an argument over the correct spelling of "peritonitis."⁸²⁶

After the first inquest there was a "series of protests and demonstrations."⁸²⁷ By late January, the Provincial Attorney General was receiving regular telegrams—from the Fred Quilt Committee and Indian leaders, the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union, the Canadian Public Employees Union Local 1004, the Native Indian Committee of the BC Conference of United Churches, and so on—calling for an investigation into the inquest and for the possibility of charges being laid against the police officer involved in the incident. The Fred Quilt Committee, orchestrating the campaign, made sure that copies of the telegrams were sent to Dave Stockand, and he published a *Sun* article headlined "Demands Grow for Inquest Probe."⁸²⁸ Questions were raised in the Provincial

⁸²⁶ Cahill, "Death"; Glavin, "Last Day in Alexis Creek" in *This Ragged Place*, 122-169.

⁸²⁷ Jes Odam, "New Quilt Inquest Opens in Kamloops," *Vancouver Sun*, 17 Jul 1972, BCA MS0364, Box 10, File 8.

⁸²⁸ Cahill, "Death," 50.

Legislative Assembly. Ernie LeCours, Social Credit MLA[†] for Richmond (who would later be known as a “self-styled maverick” and someone “who fought very hard for the little men and little women of the Province”) took the opportunity on January 21 to push for an Indian court case-worker program. Referring facetiously to Quilt as “the gentleman who was the victim of an accident recently in the Cariboo country ... who happened to be an Indian,” LeCours said, “in view of my past experience with some members of police forces—and I say some members and I emphasize a small number of them—I am very suspicious of what takes place at times, especially on dark roads at night. I urge the Hon. Attorney General to make every effort to investigate this case very thoroughly and ensure that justice is done.”⁸²⁹ The following day, a *Sun* editorial called for an investigation by the Attorney General. On January 27, W. L. Hartley, MLA for Yale-Lillooet, raised the matter again in the legislative assembly, suggesting that there had been “either a gross miscarriage of justice or a gross misinterpretation by the Press of what ha[d] gone on.” Hartley went on to say that he had been contacted by “various native organizations,” as had the Attorney General. The history of Canada and of the province, he argued, had given native people reason to question the non-natives’ sense of justice. It was time to “make it abundantly clear that all Canadians will stand equal before the law.” Hartley, too, called for a program of government-funded Indian case-workers for the courts and asked that the Attorney General order the chief coroner to review the Fred Quilt case and the subsequent inquest. “I think this is a fair question and it’s something the Attorney General could stand up and be prepared to deal with now—not six months from now when all the damage of innuendo and rumour has gone on through the media for weeks and weeks.”⁸³⁰

The Attorney General responded to the growing pressure by asking Glen McDonald, the chief coroner, to review the evidence. Some felt that this was a stalling tactic; as a hopeful for the premiership of the province, the Attorney General was not

⁸²⁹ Official Report of the Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard), 3rd Session, 29th Parliament, 12-13, 21 Jan 1972. For LeCours’s stance as a maverick MLA, see Hansard 4th Sess, 32nd Parl, 8363, 22 Jun 1982; and for his defence of underdogs, Hansard 2nd Sess, 30th Parl, 260, 6 Feb 1973.

⁸³⁰ Hansard 3rd Sess, 29th Parl, 105-106, 27 Jan 1972.

about to endanger his chances by doing anything as unpopular as investigating the RCMP.⁸³¹ MLAs continued to raise troubling questions. On February 14, L. Nimsick (Kootenay) asked what progress had been made in the Quilt investigation. “What about the transcript that was taken on the evidence at this review? Why is it not made public? Why is it not released? I think it should be released unless there’s something that’s being hid.” It wasn’t only the native people of BC and the rest of the country who had to be satisfied on the matter, Nimsick said, but “a lot of other people throughout the province” as well.⁸³² The Attorney General began receiving telegrams again, from the BC Social Workers Union and the BC Civil Liberties Union, for example. The latter told him that they did “not intend to let [the] matter drop into oblivion.”⁸³³ The Legal Committee of the Human Rights Council of BC reviewed the transcript of the original inquest and found it wanting. In a report issued by the chairman, the coroner’s attitude was described as one of “paternal racism,” and the testimony of the Mounties as “unusually sparse and lack[ing] detail.”⁸³⁴ A July article in *Maclean’s*, Canada’s national news magazine, described cases where members of the RCMP had falsified evidence, perjured themselves, ignored the rights of suspects and met bureaucratic quotas by targeting native people.⁸³⁵

The BC Supreme Court quashed the proceedings and findings of the first inquest because of the association between the RCMP and the coroner’s jury.⁸³⁶ In July, the Attorney General finally called for another inquest, one that would have what he called “the appearance of impartiality.” The venue was moved from Williams Lake to the larger town of Kamloops (then with a population around 40,000). A judge was put in charge of the proceedings, and he set up a lottery system for jury selection that ensured that there would be two native people and four non-natives; as it happened there were

⁸³¹ Cahill, “Death.”

⁸³² Hansard 3rd Sess, 29th Parl, 483, 14 Feb 1972.

⁸³³ Cahill, “Death,” 50.

⁸³⁴ Cahill, “Death,” 52.

⁸³⁵ Cahill, “Death,” 45.

⁸³⁶ “BC Indian Death Still Unresolved,” *Canadian News Facts* 6, no. 14 (1972): 864.

also two women on the jury.⁸³⁷ The Quilt estate chose Harry Rankin to be their lawyer.⁸³⁸ Rankin was an alderman in the city of Vancouver, known by his supporters as the “People’s Champion,” and rebuked by opponents for his close ties to the Communist Party. He had a long track record of fighting for unpopular civil rights cases.⁸³⁹ Before the second inquest he told a group of native people that fighting the Fred Quilt case all the way would make their lives “a hundred times easier.” “Brutal racist police will realize they can’t move you as easily. They know you’ll be watching.”⁸⁴⁰ Over a hundred members of the public attended the inquest, some wearing small placards around their necks that read, “Fred Quilt is Dead—Why?”⁸⁴¹ Outside the Kamloops courthouse, fifty to sixty members of the Fred Quilt Committee kept a peaceful vigil.⁸⁴²

At the inquest, RCMP Corporal Robert Holland entered forty color photographs of Fred Quilt’s body into evidence, taken the night that he died. “Holland said the photographs showed some marks which he did not notice on the body when he took them and added he has come across this in previous cases. Holland: ‘There is a tendency to pick up certain things on film which at the time are not visible to the naked eye.’” When asked why he didn’t order that the Quilt’s truck be impounded so that the cause of the fire could be determined, Holland explained that that was the duty of the investigating officer. The cowboy boots worn by the officer who was alleged to have jumped on Quilt were also entered into evidence, although they had been worn after the event and thus had no forensic value. Holland agreed with Rankin that the boots should have been tested for shirt fibres or other evidence, but that it was again not his responsibility at the time, and too late to do so by the time that they came into his possession.⁸⁴³ The officer who responded to the scene was asked why he didn’t push the Quilt’s truck off the road with

⁸³⁷ Odam, “New Quilt Inquest.”

⁸³⁸ Cahill, “Death,” 52; “BC Indian Death.”

⁸³⁹ Doug Ward, “‘People’s Champion’ a Fighter to the End,” *Vancouver Sun*, 27 Feb 2002; Allen Garr, “Harry Left Huge Imprint,” *Vancouver Courier*, 11 Mar 2002.

⁸⁴⁰ “Indians Urged to Strive for Better Place in Life,” *Vancouver Sun*, 17 Jul 1972, BCA MS0364, Box 10, File 8.

⁸⁴¹ Odam, “New Quilt Inquest.”

⁸⁴² “Indians Urged”; Dave Stockand, “2 MPs Rapped by Indians,” *Vancouver Sun*, 18 Jul 1972, BCA MS0364, Box 10, File 8.

⁸⁴³ Odam, “Second Fred Quilt Inquest.”

the RCMP vehicle (against policy), and why he had to return to Alexis Creek for towing equipment (because the winch on the police truck had recently broken and someone borrowed the towing cables from it a few days before.) Rankin then asked him why he didn't impound the Quilt's truck. 'For what?' he asked. 'Possibly bloodstains, possibly vomit, possibly alcohol, possibly fingerprints, possibly anything,' Rankin replied.⁸⁴⁴

The jury asked to see the original police report for the incident, but the RCMP refused, saying that it wasn't their policy to produce documents. This brought opposition from the Quilt's attorney, from the representative of the provincial attorney general, and from the judge presiding over the inquest, who told them, 'This is not some secret document.'⁸⁴⁵ The RCMP eventually produced the report. "[Leslie Roberts] to office, advising that there was a pickup truck with a load of drunks in it smack in the middle of the road at the above location," it read. "Patrolled to scene, where the vehicle, belonging to Christine Quilt, was found right in the middle of the road with the four occupants extremely intoxicated on vanilla." The remainder was quite brief, a sketch of what the RCMP officers had already testified, with no information about a possible injury to Fred Quilt. At the inquest the police testified that they didn't know that there were any allegations against them until notified by the Williams Lake coroner a few days after Quilt's death.⁸⁴⁶

The RCMP were again represented by Gunnar Eggertson at the second inquest. The natives nicknamed him "Gopher" for repeatedly springing to his feet, shouting "objection," and sitting just as quickly.⁸⁴⁷ The strategy of the RCMP team was first, to question the autopsy results, and second, to impugn Christine Quilt's testimony and character. To the former end, they called the former head of pathology at Vancouver General and St. Paul's Hospitals. He testified that the force required to transect a bowel was too great to have been applied externally and that Dr. Lee must have accidentally

⁸⁴⁴ Odam, "Mountie Denies Anyone Jumped on Fred Quilt."

⁸⁴⁵ Odam, "Mountie's Report."

⁸⁴⁶ Jes Odam, "Quilt Family Put Up a 'Wall of Silence' to Police after Death," *Vancouver Sun*, 28 Jul 1972, BCA MS0364, Box 10, File 8.

⁸⁴⁷ Cahill, "Death."

severed the bowel himself during a hasty autopsy. He said that Lee should have been suspicious of his own diagnosis and tried to confirm it by taking a section of the gastrointestinal tract for microscopic examination. There was no other case in the medical literature where the small bowel was severed closer than fifteen centimeters to the point where it enters the large bowel, but Lee claimed Quilt's small bowel had been severed within five centimeters of the large bowel. The pathologist also expressed his disbelief that a Mountie would jump up and down on a supine person. A diagnostic radiologist testified that the X-rays taken just before Quilt's death were not consistent with Dr. Lee's conclusions. A third physician claimed that Lee's autopsy had a number of features which didn't 'fit in with the usual and accepted practice': no bruises or distinctive marks were mentioned, no tissue was taken from the lung to confirm or deny pneumonia, no tissue was taken from the bowel, no injuries to other organs were mentioned, although they certainly would have been expected if Quilt had died from a transection of the bowel. He also testified that peritonitis was usually caused by appendicitis, the implication being that Quilt contracted the condition around the time that he was being moved to the RCMP vehicle and died of it two days later.⁸⁴⁸ To undermine Christine Quilt's testimony, the RCMP lawyers asked her if she bought artificial vanilla extract (an inexpensive and disreputable means of getting drunk), which she denied doing.⁸⁴⁹ They then brought in the owner of the local general store, whose credit receipts showed that Christine had, in fact, bought 17 bottles of vanilla extract between November 5 and December 21, three of them on the day of the incident.⁸⁵⁰

The jury were doubtful enough about what had actually happened to return an open verdict. On August 3, they found that Quilt's death was due to "unnatural causes," injuries sustained during his encounter with the RCMP which perforated his small bowel and led to his subsequent death by peritonitis. They refused to attribute blame for Quilt's death to anyone, however, citing his failure to avail himself of ambulance service and

⁸⁴⁸ Odam, "Mountie's Report"; Odam, "Doctor Disputes"; Odam, "Nurse Told."

⁸⁴⁹ Odam, "Second Fred Quilt Inquest."

⁸⁵⁰ Odam, "Bloodstained Shirt."

medical help as a contributing factor.⁸⁵¹ As a consequence, criminal charges were not laid against the police officers in question, and the matter petered out without really being laid to rest.

Looking Back at the War

The 1970s were a time of renewed interest in the Chilcotin War, “the best documented instance of conflict between Indians and whites in British Columbia.”⁸⁵² In 1972, Edward S. Hewlett finished a master’s thesis on the event at the University of British Columbia; the same year, the magazine *Canadian Frontier* published a short article by Garnet Basque. A revised version of Hewlett’s thesis was published in the journal *BC Studies* in 1973, and remains the most complete and authoritative account in the literature. The magazine *Canada West* ran a short article in 1976, and two years later Mel Rothenburger’s popular history *The Chilcotin War* was published.⁸⁵³

The Chilcotin War was the only book-length treatment of the event, and was used as a history text in some interior schools.⁸⁵⁴ In his introduction to the book, Rothenburger suggested that “modern Indian-White confrontations” in Canada were due to a history of “improper or non-existent Indian policy perpetrated through the decades.” The Chilcotin War was symptomatic of that deficiency, and “by coincidence it was the Chilcotins who became the accidental cause of the intensification of efforts by modern B.C. Indians to regain what they consider[ed] to be their rights.” The accidental cause that he had in mind was, of course, the death of Fred Quilt. While Rothenburger seemed to accept the exoneration of the policemen from purposely inflicting the injuries that caused Quilt’s death, he also implied that a better knowledge of the past could illuminate such modern problems.⁸⁵⁵ The aftermath of Fred Quilt’s death provided people with an occasion to think about the meanings of the Chilcotin War for the present.

⁸⁵¹ “BC Indian Death”; Cahill, “Death.”

⁸⁵² Hewlett, “Chilcotin Uprising of 1864,” 51.

⁸⁵³ Basque, “Waddington Massacre,” BCA Library NW971.C225 v. 1; Hewlett, “Chilcotin Uprising: A Study”; Idem, “Chilcotin Uprising of 1864”; Barlee, “Chilcotin War,” BCA Library NW971K.C212 v. 6; Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*.

⁸⁵⁴ Williams, *High Slack*, 107; Furniss, *Burden of History*, 64.

⁸⁵⁵ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 7-8.

Rothenburger was the great-great-grandson of Donald McLean, the former HBC trader who was killed in the conflict. *The Chilcotin War* was a somewhat lurid account of “the true story of a defiant chief’s fight to save his land from white civilization,” which promised to relate “the terrifying events of one of the bloodiest chapters in British Columbia’s history.”⁸⁵⁶ The painting commissioned for the cover of the book showed the bloodiest scene of the conflict, when twelve non-native men were killed in their sleep on the morning of April 30, 1864. In the painting, there are six white tents standing three to either side of a clearing in the woods at dawn. The central figure of the image is a screaming Indian man in motion, one leg upraised. Over his shoulder he is swinging a double-bladed axe with both hands; he also has an unsheathed Bowie knife tucked into his belt. Directly in the path of the axe is a blond man, just emerging from his tent. He, too, appears to be screaming (but with fear, rather than blood lust) and has an arm raised defensively. The background of the image (against which the axe stands out) is a row of tall conifers, and in the foreground directly beneath the axe there is a single stump. Taken together, the trees and stump provide a context in which the use of the axe as a tool appears to be natural, and as a weapon, unnatural. Behind the attacking Indian there is another man, perhaps egging him on. He is brandishing a Bowie knife in one hand and raising a rifle overhead with the other. In the background, Indian men are firing into the other tents with rifles. Most are standing; one is down on one knee aiming. Given how little we know about the exact details of that day, most had to be imagined by the artist. Some of the clothing of the Indians seems more appropriate to the native cultures of the prairies than to those of interior BC. One thing that we do know from the accounts of those non-native men who escaped the killing is that the tents were pulled down over the sleepers to trap them long enough so that they could be clubbed, stabbed or shot. For the attackers, who wished to sustain as few casualties as possible, this was an eminently practical move. The artist chose not to represent it, however. Perhaps he felt that the

⁸⁵⁶ Both quotes are from the cover of the 1978 edition published by Mr. Paperback of Langley, BC. This edition seems to have been the most widely distributed: a WorldCat search (3 Dec 2003) showed that 32 libraries in the US and Canada hold a copy of the Mr. Paperback edition. There was also a 1976 edition published in Kamloops, BC by Ryan, Mclean Alaric; the only publicly held copy of the earlier edition seems to be in the National Library of Canada.

resulting image would be too hard to interpret, or that the deaths of the non-native men would seem too ignominious.⁸⁵⁷

In many ways, *The Chilcotin War* fit a pattern identified by Margaret Atwood in her 1972 book *Survival*. She argued that Canadian poems and stories dwell on survival and obstacles to survival; 'Nature' is a force that maims and kills; winter is the only true season; protagonists often freeze to death, or drown, or go crazy in the bush; and even when they don't, they can find themselves in situations where life itself becomes a threat to life. Canadian stories are often stories about victims.⁸⁵⁸ Rothenburger not only exaggerated and reworked traditional accounts of the killings to bring them more into line with the frontier myth, but also perpetuated the fetishization of the Chilcotin as shadowed ground. Although *The Chilcotin War* was framed as a study of conflict between peoples, it retailed many of the familiar tropes of people victimized by hostile nature. In Rothenburger's retelling, the Indians were slaves to their essential character, and thus coded as wild, uncivilized. This was nature in the guise of a determinant: the nature of the "haggard-looking" Tsilhqot'ins could be read in "a certain latent ferocity in their appearance" and the fact that "the squaws had flattish foreheads purposely deformed in infancy." Both sexes "often smeared their faces and bodies with a sort of sooty grease," went about "in various states of nudity," and had "tangled black hair."⁸⁵⁹ Throughout the book they lived up to their savage portrayal, making "animal-like gasping whoops," "mutilating ... corpses and celebrating on the plunder," and practicing cannibalism.⁸⁶⁰ On one Sunday several of them were discovered "roaring drunk, screaming, stumbling

⁸⁵⁷ The painting is attributed to "Manitoba artist Terry McLean." A Google search (3 Dec 2003) turned up a painter of the same name in Virden, Manitoba who is renowned for his paintings of wildlife and historical scenes. It is not clear if Terry McLean is any relation to Donald McLean or Mel Rothenburger, and it is probably a coincidence that he has also been painting scenes of North West Mounted Police and RCMP history for more than three decades. One of his paintings was unveiled at RCMP headquarters in Winnipeg in 1982; another was used for the 1993 RCMP Christmas card. <<http://home3.inet.tele.dk/keb/fa-can3.htm>>

⁸⁵⁸ Atwood, *Survival*. For more about the reception of this book and its central thesis, see Jay Walz, "Canadian Writers Debate Nationalism," *New York Times*, 24 Apr 1973; W. J. Keith, "One More Attempt to Define CanLit," *Toronto Star*, 7 Apr 1990; Philip Marchand, "Atwood Moils for Gold in Essays," *Toronto Star*, 24 Feb 1996; Andy Lamey, "The Wacousta Syndrome," *New Republic*, 24 Jun 1996; Margaret Atwood, "Survival, Then and Now," *Maclean's*, 1 Jul 1999.

⁸⁵⁹ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 18.

⁸⁶⁰ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 48, 50, 55.

around, and generally getting out of hand” after drinking adulterated whiskey, a concoction that was “enough to drive any poor Indian foolish enough to drink it mad for a few hours, or kill him.”⁸⁶¹

The “whites” were not wild, and thus did not have an essential character as such. Rothenburger made no corresponding attempt to portray their physiognomy as a group, although he did describe some non-native individuals.⁸⁶² His forebear Donald McLean, for example, was “tall, muscular, and handsome with long curly hair, mustache and bushy sideburns.” In keeping with such a noble mien, McLean was also “a devoted family man and an efficient administrator,” a man with “a reputation for his fairness and wide knowledge of English law,” “a fine citizen and a gentleman,” intelligent, aggressive, tough, “confident,” “ever wary,” “highly respected,” and ultimately a “fallen hero.”⁸⁶³ In situations where the actions of non-native people threatened their own lives, it was the result of individual foible: someone “accidentally setting off a forest fire on a small island,” a fellow who accidentally shot his compatriot through the wrist, or another “unfortunate victim” who accidentally shot himself through the leg.⁸⁶⁴ Or this: “Back at camp three of the volunteers were sitting on their haunches peering intently at the ground. One of them had a magnifying glass in his hand, playing it on some of the spilled gunpowder. Suddenly there was a blast and the three men were knocked over on their backs. Except for a few burned whiskers they weren’t hurt...”⁸⁶⁵

In *The Chilcotin War*, nature also acted as a direct cause: a hostile and often anthropomorphized landscape presented obstacles that could kill the unwary and the unprepared. The terrain was “treacherous,” a “mountain suddenly closed in,” a “river

⁸⁶¹ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 20. This willingness to generalize about native people, to attribute individual characteristics to the whole group, also characterized contemporary accounts of the event. See Loo, “Bute Inlet Stories,” 140.

⁸⁶² For the historian’s duty to “make a special effort to achieve parity of treatment” when “study[ing] the clash of two societies,” see Axtell, “A Moral History of Indian-White Relations Revisited,” and “Forked Tongues: Moral Judgments in Indian History” in *After Columbus*. Quotes from the former, 24.

⁸⁶³ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 129, 155-158. In Rothenburger’s defence, an earlier book of his was about some of his more disreputable ancestors, the sons of Donald McLean who became outlaws.

⁸⁶⁴ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 58, 145, 157.

⁸⁶⁵ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 70-71.

weaved drunkenly back and forth between the mountain ridges.”⁸⁶⁶ “The snow-streaked walls of rock reached upward like gothic buttresses,” “magnificent obstacles of Nature” impeding the work of Waddington, who wanted to build a road into the interior, to “break the back of the Cascade range.”⁸⁶⁷ Forests were “thick timber strewn with windfalls and prickly thickets.”⁸⁶⁸ A recent burn was “dead land,” an “eery” “black swath of burned out forest.”⁸⁶⁹ The upland plateau had “stunted firs, sparser brush and grass grasping sandy soil.”⁸⁷⁰ In the lowlands one might find a “swampy delta,” “quagmire,” or “a swamp, where the volunteers thrashed around up to their thighs in mud and water, and horses became mired.”⁸⁷¹ Weather could endanger life, as snow loads caused makeshift bridges to collapse, and the flooding that followed days of heavy rain stranded people, made river crossings dangerous and raised the specter of death by drowning.⁸⁷² Disease, also, took its toll, as non-natives suffered from repeated outbreaks of dysentery, and a smallpox epidemic decimated native populations. Rothenburger imagined the horror of the non-natives encountering Indian villages hit by smallpox: the smell of decaying corpses, the wolves eating the unburied dead, the starvation that followed for survivors. Taking a page directly from his nineteenth-century sources, Rothenburger blamed smallpox for the “degeneration” of the Bella Coola Indians.⁸⁷³

Faced with such a hostile land, people in *The Chilcotin War* did not fare well. A surveying party was lost in the woods, abandoned by a guide “that left the hapless party to its own resources. After 23 days in the mountains, they made it back ... living skeletons. In the last few days before reaching safety, the only food they had had was a wood rat and an old leather purse which they cooked. One of the men was so weak he could barely stand, and had he not been packed on the back of a Chilcotin Indian the last

⁸⁶⁶ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 14, 53, 21, 142.

⁸⁶⁷ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 15-16.

⁸⁶⁸ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 43, see also 131, 133.

⁸⁶⁹ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 131. See also 150.

⁸⁷⁰ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 147.

⁸⁷¹ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 142, 143, 149.

⁸⁷² Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 21, 25-26, 68, 147.

⁸⁷³ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 22, 158 (dysentery), 30-33, 47, 121-122 (smallpox), 148 (more wolf-eaten bodies).

several miles he probably would not have survived.”⁸⁷⁴ Indian laborers also faced starvation in the spring—or at least that’s how it seemed to non-native observers—and the non-natives eventually had the idea of waiting for winter to starve their native opponents into submission.⁸⁷⁵ Such a notion was consonant with the garrison mentality displayed by Rothenburger’s protagonists as they, for example, dug protective earthworks to hole up in, or barricaded themselves in a store for weeks.⁸⁷⁶ They were dogged by suicide, both apparent and attempted.⁸⁷⁷

Life after Oka

The Chilcotin War was one expression of a point of view that was already coming under attack in the late 1970s. A decade earlier Pierre Trudeau had become the prime minister by campaigning for a “just society” and had named Len Marchand, an Okanagan man from Kamloops, as the first native federal cabinet[†] minister. The National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) was formed at the same time to resolve natives’ problems in the context of Indian culture. One of the ideas that the NIB promoted was that aboriginal peoples constituted a potential “fourth world” which would take its place alongside the other three. In 1969, the Trudeau government released a white paper which suggested the abolition of native rights and treaties and the integration of native people into the just society. On this view, aboriginal people would simply be one ethnic group among many in Canada’s multicultural make-up. Native leaders objected, and the paper was withdrawn the following year. The federal government established an Indian Claims Commission to deal with native land claims.

British Columbian politics also swung briefly to the left, with a New Democratic Party government in power from 1972 to 1975. The Fred Quilt case thus came to national attention during a period in which native people were working to assert their political agency, and non-native people in government positions were relatively receptive

⁸⁷⁴ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 23-24. For another man lost in the bush, wandering around without food, see 125.

⁸⁷⁵ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 37, 40, 159.

⁸⁷⁶ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 91-92, 141.

⁸⁷⁷ Rothenburger, *Chilcotin War*, 72, 156.

to their plight. In 1975, the Dene of the North West Territories declared their right to be regarded by themselves and the rest of the world as a nation. The Dene Declaration would serve as a model for other similar declarations in years to come, including the Tsilhqot'in Sovereignty Declaration of 1997. The numbers of native and métis people were climbing; in 1982 there would be more than 75,000 in BC.

The Canadian Constitution was repatriated from Britain in 1982, recognizing existing aboriginal rights and treaties. The same year, the National Indian Brotherhood was reorganized into the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), giving native self-government new impetus. Some BC interior native groups worked hard to address problems of alcoholism in their communities, and many pressed for land claims. For the time being, the province refused to acknowledge their own role in the land claims process, however, bringing things to a stalemate. In 1985, an amendment to the Indian act known as Bill C-31 allowed native women who had married non-native men to regain their status, and status for some of their children. Native people continued to play a more prominent role in questions of land use. The role of the Xeni Gwet'in Tsilhqot'ins in the establishment of Ts'il'os park was one example of the changing sensibility, as was the Supreme Court decision in *Sparrow*.⁸⁷⁸ As the 1980s came to a close, a new crisis would lead some non-natives in BC to rethink their historical relationship with native people. In a sense, they were retracing the steps that their ancestors had taken, re-imagining the Indian "other" as a way of forming a new, postcolonial identity and a new sense of the shared past of natives and non-natives.

In the winter of 1989-90, the Quebec town of Oka planned to extend its nine-hole golf course to eighteen holes by cutting a fairway into a stand of trees that the Mohawks in the adjacent community of Kanasatake claimed as sacred ground. The legal status of the land (which included a cemetery) had been in dispute for almost forty years, but the town had finally cleared the obstacles to development. Or so they thought. In March, the Mohawks set up a barricade across the access road and then strung barbed wire through

⁸⁷⁸ Barman, *West beyond the West*; Wood, ed. *BC: Pacific Province*.

the trees. Masked men began to patrol with rifles. The town responded by getting a court order at the end of June to have the barricade removed. The Mohawks dug in, however, and on July 11 shot a police officer. Within a few hours there were about a thousand police officers on the other side of the barricade. They sandbagged the Mohawks in and took steps to cut off their food, water and electricity. The confrontation was now the subject of live television coverage across the nation. The fact that many of the Mohawks were non-combatants, and that some were children or elders, triggered a wave of support for them. Kahnawake, a larger neighboring Mohawk community, blockaded itself, too, shutting down two major highways and a commuter route into Montreal. The presence of TV reporters behind the barricades meant that the Mohawks' point of view was being broadcast nationally. By mid-August, there was a plan to begin negotiations under the supervision of an international team of observers. In the meantime, anti-Mohawk demonstrators began throwing fire bombs and rocks at the police because they were frustrated with the road closures. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces, about fourteen hundred in all, replaced the local police, Quebec Provincial Police and RCMP, bringing armored personnel carriers and heavy weapons with them. When negotiations broke down, the army announced plans to forcibly remove the barricades. The Mohawks began negotiating with the army and reached an agreement to clear the commuter route. The towns remained blockaded, so the army began using low-flying helicopters and searchlights at night. Media coverage was not sympathetic to this "psychological warfare," or to the seizure of film and videotape and the interrogation of reporters. At the end of September, the Mohawks surrendered.⁸⁷⁹ When it became clear the following year that the cost of the seventy-eight day standoff was over \$200 million, commentators noted that the figure was about ten times the amount the federal government budgeted annually for land claims.⁸⁸⁰

There was a growing perception that native people were being mistreated by the justice system. A newspaper article printed in Ottawa and Calgary in August 1991

⁸⁷⁹ CBC Newsworld Flashback 1990, <<http://newsworld.cbc.ca/flashback/1990/>>

⁸⁸⁰ "The High Cost of Oka," *Edmonton Journal*, 6 May 1991.

presented five troubling case studies to the public. Leo Lachance was shot by the owner of a gun store / pawn shop in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan as he walked out the door. The store owner later pled guilty to manslaughter and received a four year sentence, a much shorter term than native people were getting for comparable crimes. The judge claimed that the fact that the store owner was also the president of the local neo-Nazi group had nothing to do with the killing. Minnie Sutherland was hit by a car and a passerby asked a police officer to call an ambulance. Thinking that she was a “lying drunk,” the policeman refused. Minnie died in the Ottawa General Hospital ten days later with a skull fracture. J. J. Harper, wrongly identified as a car thief, was shot in the chest by a Winnipeg police officer. The internal review cleared the police officer of wrongdoing, but the case went on to become a prominent part of Manitoba’s aboriginal justice inquiry. In Sydney, Nova Scotia, Donald Marshall served eleven years for a murder he didn’t commit. A royal commission later concluded that he was the prime suspect in the case because he was an Indian. The fifth case mentioned in the article was Fred Quilt.⁸⁸¹

Justice Inquiry and Reparations

Responding to complaints about the treatment of native people by the justice system in BC, the Attorney General asked Judge Anthony Sarich to look into the matter and see if a full inquiry was warranted. After meeting with native representatives in the Cariboo-Chilcotin and hearing a number of “disturbing allegations,” Sarich advised the Attorney General that such an inquiry should be made. On October 1, 1992, the Cariboo-Chilcotin Justice Inquiry was formalized, and Sarich was made commissioner.⁸⁸² In the first phase of the inquiry, the Commission would hear complaints from the native people in the area. In the second, they would ask for written and oral submissions from both native and non-native people evaluating the complaints from the first phase and proposing solutions where possible. It soon became clear to Sarich that he could not hold

⁸⁸¹ “Natives and the Justice System: Shortcomings Revealed in the Cases of Five Natives,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 3 Aug 1991; “Native Justice: Case Histories Leave Many Questions Unanswered,” *Calgary Herald*, 11 Aug 1991.

⁸⁸² *CCJ*, 5.

the hearings in an urban courthouse. “The Commission had to go out to the people, and this it did.” He found that many of his informants were fearful of testifying, cynical about the power of the Commission to do anything, or hesitant to expose “some of their own people in compromising situations.”⁸⁸³ “Once underway, the hearings were attended by all community members at the site of the hearings, from toddlers in ‘jolly jumpers’ to elders who needed assistance in and out of the premises. Even a stray dog would come in from time to time to check out the proceedings and perhaps get a scratch or two behind the ear. Nearly every witness who came forward testified in front of the residents of his or her own community and knew that what he or she said would live with him or her.”

In addition to the complaints against police conduct, remote and obdurate bureaucracy and the frightening and incomprehensible justice process, the people brought up the issues of land claims, resource management and control of their own lives. They also referred to two other matters of much significance to them. One was the effect the residential school near Williams Lake—known locally as the Mission— had on generations of natives since the turn of the twentieth century. While some of the people were neutral or even stated that their experience at that school was beneficial, by far the majority condemned the school and their experiences in it with a passion. The effect of that school, its programs and some of its instructors has cast a shadow that still darkens the present.

In the Chilcotin, the other matter was the controversial, so-called Chilcotin War. In every village, the people maintained that the chiefs who were hanged at Quesnel Mouth in 1864 as murderers were, in fact, leaders of a war party defending their land and their people. Much has been written but little is known with any certainty of the facts that led to the trial of those chiefs before Judge Matthew B. Begbie. The people of the Chilcotin have long memories. They hold the memory of those chiefs in high esteem and cite the effect of smallpox on their ancestors, the incursions onto their land, and the treatment of their people by the road builders hired by Alfred Penderill Waddington as justification for the war. Many natives consider the trial and subsequent hanging as a political event in a deliberate process of colonization.⁸⁸⁴

The vast majority of the complaints that the Commission heard in the first phase of the inquiry were directed at the police. In rural, unincorporated areas the police

⁸⁸³ *CCJI*, 6. Quotes on 7.

⁸⁸⁴ *CCJI*, 8.

answered to no-one except the Attorney General, and personnel were transferred as frequently as every two years, making it difficult for officers to form any attachment to the community they were serving. Since the RCMP was a federal force, it could not be disciplined by provincial authorities, and the organization also had a policy of refusing to reveal what kind of discipline it imposed on its officers, if any. “The estrangement from the communities, the structure of the force, its policies and training [had] helped to create a dehumanizing relationship between natives and the police.” Added to that was fact that the police officers tended to share the negative attitudes of the non-native communities from which they were drawn, the common-sense racism that postulated the inferiority and dependence of native people.⁸⁸⁵

The Sarich Commission categorized the 179 complaints that they heard into recurring patterns of conduct: inappropriate reactions, abuse of authority, invasion of privacy, use of excessive force, lack of communication. Sometimes the police treated native people with indifference, arrogance or disrespect. Sometimes the police failed to react when they could have, especially when dealing with missing or lost individuals. There were many cases where they clearly abused their authority. In one instance, a native man was stopped on the Sheep Creek Bridge on the suspicion that he had stolen the bicycle that he was riding. The officer handcuffed him to the bridge and then responded to another call, leaving him there for over an hour. The bicycle was not stolen. Another man claimed to have been held in custody for three days on suspicion of theft; there were no police records of the event. There were many cases where the police invaded the privacy of native people, as when an officer entered a native man’s home without a warrant and awakened him by putting a gun to his head. The police were also accused of using excessive force, both at the time of arrest and later in detention cells. In many incidents, they refused to provide information to native people, through apparent insensitivity or indifference. To mitigate the findings somewhat, Sarich observed that “in

⁸⁸⁵ *CCJ*, 10-13. Quote on 12-13.

many instances, the police become the flash point for reaction to repeated humiliation and rejection of the native people by other segments of non-native society.”⁸⁸⁶

The Commission also identified a “cultural lacuna” between the Canadian court process, with its “concepts of guilt and innocence, standards of proof and examination and cross-examination of witnesses,” and the consensus-based system of conflict resolution in native communities. This was problematic because “in a great number of cases that came before the inquiry the complainants stated that they did not understand what happened in court.”⁸⁸⁷ One of the more poignant examples in the Commission’s report—and one that would later affect their recommendations—was “Incident #096”: “Elderly woman escorted through court building in handcuffs & terrified because of lack of comprehension of process and irrational fear of hanging.”⁸⁸⁸ The submission that Judge Cunliffe Barnett made to the Commission after practicing for more than twenty years at Alexis Creek cast the woman’s “irrational” fear in a different light. “I believe when a Chilcotin person appears before a court in 1993,” he said, “the judge encounters the ghost of Begbie J. He bent the rules to permit the judicial execution of men who were not criminals. It is very difficult for a Chilcotin person to have faith in our justice system.”⁸⁸⁹

The key problem that Sarich faced was what to do about the allegations against the police. Early in the proceedings he discovered that native people would be intimidated by having to testify in front of the officers concerned, so he followed an alternate procedure. “Officers whose conduct could have constituted a criminal act were informed of as much detail as was available of the complaint made against them and were invited rather than compelled to come before the Commission to answer. If the officers failed to come forward, I felt free to draw whatever inferences were appropriate from their failure to testify. Once this procedure was set, only one of a considerable number of invited officers gave evidence.” The upshot of this was that the native complaints

⁸⁸⁶ *CCJI*, 18-25.

⁸⁸⁷ *CCJI*, 13, 14.

⁸⁸⁸ *CCJI*, 56.

⁸⁸⁹ Barnett is quoted in Glavin, *This Ragged Place*, 163.

remained, for the most part, unanswered. Sarich noted that “the purpose of the inquiry was not to establish with the certainty of a criminal trial the truth of allegations made by the native people, but to determine why they made those allegations.”⁸⁹⁰

Conclusion: Remembering and Forgetting

The Sarich Commission made a number of recommendations: to begin negotiations over land claims and the preservation of natural resources; to set up a treatment center for alcohol abuse in consultation with native people; to monitor security guards more carefully; to provide interpreters; to train emergency and forensic personnel in cultural concerns and the imperatives of native people; to provide financial support for programs like the native law center; to create native police forces for communities that wanted them; to train peacekeepers to work in particular societies; to integrate the RCMP into the communities that they served; to use surveillance cameras to monitor police activities; to establish a public process for complaints against the RCMP; to have court officers like justices of the peace drawn from each native community; and so on.⁸⁹¹

One of the recommendations of the Sarich Commission was novel, however, in that it directly addressed the negotiation of historical consciousness, and the present-day perception of the Chilcotin War. “Many natives still feel that the trial and hangings were more a showpiece to impress the natives than an honest search for the truth. Whatever the correct version, that episode of history has left a wound in the body of Chilcotin society. It is time to heal that wound.” Sarich recommended that Victoria grant a posthumous pardon to the Tsilhqot’in men who were executed, locate their remains and rebury them and erect a suitable memorial.⁸⁹²

In 1993, the UBC Museum of Anthropology asked artist Judith Williams to create an exhibit that would be, in part, about the Chilcotin War. The following year, the museum put on “High Slack,” which allowed visitors to go from one station to another “from which one could look at the native/white/landscape concurrence from different

⁸⁹⁰ *CCJI*, 15, 16.

⁸⁹¹ *CCJI*, 29-41.

⁸⁹² *CCJI*, 30.

viewpoints.” Williams intended the exhibit to explore “the issue of parallel realities,” and wanted to provide the descendants of the Tsilhqot’ins with a chance to comment on her portrayal of history. Together with the curator of the museum and a colleague, Williams organized a symposium at the UBC First Nations House of Learning on the Chilcotin War and the Cariboo-Chilcotin Justice Inquiry. One hundred fifty people gathered for the meeting on November 19, 1994. There, the Tsilhqot’in chief Thomas Billyboy told the participants that “the names of people involved in the war are in, and of, the land, come about through people’s lives, and were themselves powerful.” Judge Cunliffe Barnett recommended that the hanged men be pardoned. The Attorney General’s representative argued that it was not clear which level of government should be making the apology. “Members of the audience told him they wanted the graves, now under a hospital parking lot, marked, that they wanted a full pardon from the minister of justice, and their own police force. They suggested that the Sarich inquiry was just a big show.” Towards the end of the day another speaker rose to provide a dissenting opinion. “My name is Mel Rothenburger,” he said. “There is a lot of talk about apologies, and I want to know, who will apologize for the shooting of my grandfather in the back?” The reception was frosty. Williams had named the exhibit to refer to the time when the tide has risen to its highest point, but not yet begun to ebb, and she meant it “as a metaphor for a pause in ideological currents, a time to collect ourselves and perceive, not just what we have been taught to see and know, but to imagine what might be if our socially-acquired filters evaporated.”⁸⁹³ No one would be apologizing for Donald McLean’s death any time soon.

In August the following year, a group of aboriginal activists and sympathizers seized land overlooking Gustafsen Lake west of 100 Mile House, claiming its spiritual importance for their sundance ceremonies. The land was legally owned by a local rancher named Lyall James. In the late 1980s, James had allowed Percy Rosette, a Secwepemc man “who lived on the fringes of his community, the village of Alkali Lake,”

⁸⁹³ Williams, *High Slack*, 104-107. Rothenburger quoted on 106-107. The High Slack exhibit was on display at the museum from 21 Jun 1994 to 3 Jan 1995.

to use the land for summer ceremonies, provided that he and his followers did not build any permanent structures. The nineteenth-century sundance tradition that Rosette practiced had been revived in the mid-1970s as native communities struggled to combat social problems such as alcoholism. The Alkali Lake reserve had served as a national inspiration by becoming one of the first “dry” native communities, and Rosette seems to have become interested in the sundance tradition around this time. The first sundance ceremonies were conducted at Gustafsen Lake in the summer of 1988. By 1990, the larger North American community of sundance practitioners had come to regard Gustafsen Lake as a power site. Peaceful celebrations were conducted there every year until 1994. During this time, Rosette and his followers took to warning local hunters and anglers of the danger of being in proximity to such a sacred place, something that doesn’t seem to have been received particularly well by local non-natives. At the time, Rosette was also distancing himself from local native leadership.

In 1995, the sundancers fenced off a couple of square kilometers of the land, breaking the agreement with Lyall James. James obtained an eviction notice, but instead of waiting for the RCMP to serve it, decided to try to evict them with the aid of some of his cowboys. Rumors of an Oka-like standoff spread. The sundancers began calling themselves the “Defenders of the Shuswap Nation,” although it is not clear how many of them had any affiliation with the Secwepemcs. They were joined by a number of non-native activists. Eventually matters escalated into an armed confrontation with the RCMP. Fortunately no-one was killed, and the final “defenders” surrendered in mid-September. After Oka, armed conflicts with non-natives and the government had become a conceivable strategy, although a seemingly ineffective one. Eighteen people were later charged with a variety of offences, resulting in 21 convictions and 39 acquittals. The maximum prison term received by those convicted was 4 ½ years.⁸⁹⁴ The standoff at Gustafsen Lake served mainly to dramatize the tense relations between natives and non-

⁸⁹⁴ Glavin, “The Circus Comes to Gustafsen Lake” in *This Ragged Place*; Switlo, *Gustafsen Lake*; EBC, s.v., “Gustafsen Lake,” 309. The quote is from Glavin, 109.

natives during a time when they were renegotiating their relationships with one another. The future, as always, remained unknowable.

The first histories of what is now British Columbia were written in the aftermath of the Chilcotin War, written by people who had little knowledge of what had happened there before the arrival of the newcomers. For the most part, the authors of these texts were concerned to legitimate their own presence and authority. Many of them had little direct experience of native people, and drew on the common-sense understandings of the day instead. Subsequent authors, emphasizing the archival record, tended to repeat earlier claims, or to look for evidence of their truth in other settings. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as the native people of the interior suffered the effects of introduced diseases, disruption of traditional lifeways, resettlement, and so on, their presence as actors in historical accounts was gradually erased, and the place itself, the landscape, took on the negative characteristics attributed to them. With the growth of interest in aboriginal history in the 1960s and 1970s, the native people were put back into the story, but some earlier misconceptions were retained. One of these misconceptions, that the Tsilhqot'ins had opted out of the fur trade as a form of resistance, is not supported by the archival record, but rather reflects earlier prejudices.

Between the 1970s and the 1990s, this longstanding view of BC's past, the "colonial" view, began to break up. The position occupied by the Tsilhqot'ins around the time of Fred Quilt's death, and the position that they occupied after the justice inquiry two decades later were very different. From the 1990s on, they had far more perceived power to oppose the activities of the government and of large corporations. A series of landmark legal decisions gave them wide-ranging power in disputes over land claims. Prominent non-native people were willing to acknowledge the past damages inflicted on native people by the government and religious organizations, and to try to redress the wrongs. Although they were still treated as inferior in many settings, interior native people were taken with a new measure of respect. This change could be seen in many settings: in 1974, native remains were unceremoniously dumped with construction waste;

in 1996, their accidental exhumation triggered two years of negotiation among a variety of stakeholders. When the Sheep Creek bones were finally laid to rest, it was an occasion for living Tsilhqot'in and Secwepemcs to re-establish connections with their ancestors and with the land where they were buried.⁸⁹⁵

In response to the Sarich Commission's report, the Attorney General eventually issued an apology for the hangings of the Tsilhqot'in men and announced funding for an archaeological excavation to ensure that the men's bodies were properly buried.⁸⁹⁶ On October 26, 1999, one-hundred-thirty-five years to the day after the hanging of Klatsassin and his collaborators, the Tsilhqot'in Ervin Charleyboy unveiled a plaque on the lawn of the hospital in Quesnel. In both English and Tsilhqot'in it bears Klatsassin's last words: "We meant war, not murder!" Speaking at the event, Charleyboy said, "It's good to look to the past to be proud of who we are today. Then we need to forget about the past and look forward to where we are going, to lead our people." Old narratives of the past might be forgotten, but every trail into the future leads back into this place, into an archive that continually accumulates the traces of its past. Where the people in the Chilcotin end up will depend, in part, on how they read the signs along the trail.

⁸⁹⁵ Cf. Pryce, *Keeping the Lakes' Way*, '11, 94-95, 106.

⁸⁹⁶ Canada, Human Rights Program, "Thirteenth and Fourteenth Report on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Covering the Period Jun 1993 to May 1997." (Victoria, BC, 2001), Part IV, Article 5.

Afterword

In his collection of short stories about the Chilcotin, *Smith and Other Events*, Paul St. Pierre tells about ten-year-old Sherwood, who rode out by himself on a big bay horse and failed to return home to the ranch by supper time.⁸⁹⁷ His mother Norah is worried: the beans boil over on the woodstove, and she goes repeatedly to the door as midnight approaches. Smith, his father, pretends less concern. They finally decide to go in search of Sherwood when his saddle horse returns without him, but at that point the boy walks up whistling, with his chaps over his shoulder. Over a plate of beans, Norah tells Sherwood she was worried. Smith admits he was surprised when the horse came home before the boy. Sherwood tells them that his horse startled, and he went over its head.

Smith wanted to hear more. Sherwood, sensing this, took his time in answering. ...

“I was trottin’ old Bud and he never saw the bear until we was almost on top of him. So when he stopped, I kept goin’, right over his head.”

“... Yeah ...”

“Old Bud, he went one way. The bear went ‘woof’ and he went the other way.”

“What did you do, Sherwood?” said Norah.

Sherwood considered his answer before delivering it. “I just sat there in the trail feelin’ lonely,” he said.

The original idea for *The Archive of Place* was to narrate the environmental history of one place over the past 300 million years, a place in the middle of nowhere, a place with a very shallow archival record. The story was to consist of three parts covering vastly different timescales: the geological, the glacial, and the recent past, and these parts were meant to correspond loosely to natural history, prehistory and recorded history. If we take the bear, the horse, and the boy as metonyms, St. Pierre’s anecdote shows the problem with such a tripartite division: the three really belong together in a single story.

⁸⁹⁷ St. Pierre, *Smith and Other Events*, 71.

Here, the different time scales and different approaches to the past have been kept together as much as possible. The account of the collision of terranes and eruption of lavas that created the Chilcotin was narrated as part of the story about modern-day prospectors in search of mineral wealth deposited millions of years earlier. Likewise, the account of the paleo-Indians crossing into the Americas and creating extensive networks of exchange well before the domestication of the horse was juxtaposed with accounts of people in the 20th century negotiating some of the same trails on horseback, and negotiating the meaning of the trails in time frames long and short.⁸⁹⁸ So, too, the account of the historical activities of ranchers and natives was part and parcel of the story of their modern descendents' attempts to recreate a shared past more in line with changing sensibilities.

The decision to try and keep these stories together was based on a consideration of the historical actors in the late twentieth century. These people were willing to invest a lot of time, energy and other resources in various attempts to recover the Chilcotin past from the traces that they found there. As with any historical endeavor, the most basic question that can be posed is, "so what?" Why did they care about figuring out what had happened eighty million years ago, or ten thousand or one hundred thirty-five? Again, as with any historical endeavor, the answer was to be found in the present. These people were in search of usable past.

The narrative of *The Archive of Place* still ended up in three parts, but the final structure was based on observed effects and inferred causes rather than on scale or historiographical approach. In the first part, it was clear that people were willing to learn more about an out-of-the-way place as its relative value increased. But why should that be the case? By inference, because they were attempting to delineate property rights. In the second part, an attempt to commemorate the activities of an eighteenth-century explorer fizzled. Why? Again, by inference, because the commemorators ran into the problem of ground truth while trying to use place itself as a warrant for historical belief.

⁸⁹⁸ The horse was domesticated around 4000 BC in the Ukraine. Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*.

In the third part, commonsense racism and an imagined landscape of violence were traced to a historiographic tradition of retroactive justification and a contemporaneous process of place fetishism.

Over the course of the work, the idea of place as archive becomes progressively more complex. The first part is relatively direct: people recover material traces of the past from the place to buttress particular points of view. In the second part, material traces play a more ambiguous role. Representations always underdetermine the things represented, and any attempt to make things more concrete invariably leads to unexpected difficulties. In the third part, the archival nature of place is phenomenological. Places gather stories, attitudes, opinions and practices in a way that is not accessible to instrumentation. The different ways that a place is imagined do as much to shape the understanding of what happened there in the past as any physical trace ever could.

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Glossary

Abduction / Abductive inference. Inference to the best explanation for a given set of observations. In 1878, C. S. Peirce distinguished between three kinds of reasoning using a beanbag as an example: (1) Deduction—All the beans from this bag are white, and these beans are from this bag, therefore these beans are white; (2) Induction—These beans are from this bag, and these beans are white, therefore all the beans from this bag are white; (3) Abduction—All the beans from this bag are white, and these beans are white, therefore these beans are from this bag.⁸⁹⁹

Aboriginal. See **Native**.

Aggradation and degradation. When landforms are built up by the deposit of sediments (or cut down by their removal).⁹⁰⁰

Anadromous. Fish (like many salmonids) that live in the sea for the greater portion of their lives, and enter saltwater only to spawn.⁹⁰¹

Borden number. A system of unique locational identifiers for archaeological sites in Canada, created by Charles E. Borden in the 1950s. In the system, each site receives a four letter designation specifying its latitude and longitude with respect to National Topographic Series 1:50,000 maps, and a number indicating the order in which the site was found.⁹⁰²

BP. Before present.

Cabinet. The government executive in Canadian governments is called the cabinet. Ministers in the cabinet are usually responsible for particular departments.

Camas. A “herbaceous perennial with glutinous bulbs about the size of daffodil bulbs.” A staple food for native people of the Northwest Coast and their trading partners. *Camassia quamash* (Pursh) Greene.⁹⁰³

⁸⁹⁹ Hartshorne, Weiss & Burks, eds. *Collected Papers of C. S. Peirce*, Vol. 2, 623-625; Eco & Sebeok, eds. *Sign of Three*.

⁹⁰⁰ Rapp & Hill, *Geoarchaeology*, 61, 237.

⁹⁰¹ Carl, Clemens & Lindsey, *Fresh-water Fishes of BC*, 52.

⁹⁰² Borden, “Uniform Site Designation Scheme.”

⁹⁰³ Turner, *Food Plants*, 66.

Confederation. Used to refer to the date that the Dominion of Canada was created, 1 July 1867. Also used to refer to the federal union of provinces and territories that had joined by a particular date. BC joined Confederation in 1871. Newfoundland was the last province to enter Confederation in 1949.

Culture area. “A geographic region in which a common set of traits ... is found shared among a number of societies.”⁹⁰⁴

Ecofacts. Organic and environmental remains (such as seeds, grains and pollen of plants, egg shells, animal skeletons) that are non-artifactual but which have been found alongside evidence of human activity in archaeological sites and which are presumed to have cultural relevance.

Endemic / epidemic. An endemic disease is one that is always present in a given population to a greater or lesser degree. It is typically contracted in childhood, after which survivors are immune to reinfection. An epidemic disease prevails widely for a short time, and then dies out until it is reintroduced.⁹⁰⁵

Esker. A long body of sand and gravel deposited by water flowing under a glacier. When the glacier melts, a snakelike ridge remains.⁹⁰⁶

Eurocanadian. See **Non-native**.

Faunal assemblage. The collection of animals bones found at an archaeological site; used to support inferences about paleoenvironments, diet, subsistence strategies, and resource acquisition and exploitation.⁹⁰⁷

First Nations. Now the preferred term for the indigenous people of Canada; it is taken to cover Indian people, Métis (the descendents of Indian and non-aboriginal people), and Inuit (the indigenous people of Canada’s arctic.) To avoid anachronism it is only used here to refer to present-day indigenous people. See **Native**.

Fluvial sediments. Sediments transported and deposited by a stream or running water. Depending on the slope of the watercourse, the amount and frequency of discharge, and

⁹⁰⁴ Barfield, ed. *Dictionary of Anthropology*, s.v., “culture area,” 103.

⁹⁰⁵ McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*; Kiple, “Ecology of Disease.”

⁹⁰⁶ *OCE*, s.v., “glacial landforms,” 441-448.

⁹⁰⁷ Dincauze, *Environmental Archaeology*, Ch. 15; Rapp & Hill, *Geoarchaeology*, 96-103.

the amount and size of the sediment load, a river channel may take various forms: straight, meandering, braided, or anastomosing. (This last is characterized by channels which occasionally intersect, creating islands between them.) Each of these kinds of river channels deposits sediments in a predictable geometry.⁹⁰⁸

Grease trails. In British Columbia, trails that were used for trade between the aboriginal groups of the coast and the neighboring interior.

Hematite. Iron oxide (Fe₂O₃). When powdered, it is a vivid red color (hence its name, “bloodlike”) and is often used as a pigment.⁹⁰⁹

Indian. See **Native**.

Indigenous. See **Native**.

Induced polarization. A kind of surveying that relies on the same principles as an ordinary metal detector. A varying electrical current is created, producing a fluctuating magnetic field. This field is passed over a region which contains hidden conductive materials. The magnetic field induces currents in the conductive materials, and those induced currents produce secondary magnetic fields. The secondary magnetic fields can then be detected, providing information about the hidden materials.⁹¹⁰

Kerfed boxes. Also known as bent-wood boxes, these were made by many indigenous groups of the Northwest Coast. “The box maker started with a wide, thin board split from a cedar log. He cut three transverse kerfs (grooves), spaced according to the box’s ultimate dimensions. To soften the wood for bending, he steamed it over a fire covered with wet moss or seaweed, or soaked it in a creek for several days, weighing it down with rocks. When the board was pliable enough, he bent it carefully along the kerfs to make a square or rectangular box, and pegged or sewed the ends together, usually with spruce or cedar root. The box maker then attached a flanged board to the bottom with pegs and sewed it tightly enough to make the box watertight. Finally, he fitted the box with a lid.

⁹⁰⁸ OCE, s.v., “fluvial sediments,” 355-357; Rapp & Hill, *Geoarchaeology*, 59-64.

⁹⁰⁹ Chesterman, *Field Guide*, s.v., “hematite,” 397-398.

⁹¹⁰ OCE, s.v., “electromagnetic methods in applied geophysics,” 303-304.

Bent-wood boxes were used for boiling or steaming food, or for storing berries, fish, oil and other products.”⁹¹¹

Lineament. A large scale linear feature, such as a fault, that controls the alignment of valleys, ridges and other topographic features for long distances. Lineaments can extend for more than a thousand kilometers, and be tens or hundreds of kilometers wide. There are more than twenty major lineaments in British Columbia.⁹¹²

Milankovitch cycles. Over time, the earth’s orbit around the sun is thought to change in eccentricity (the degree to which the orbit is circular or elliptical), inclination (the angle at which the earth’s axis is tilted from the plane of the orbit), and the precession of the equinoxes (a “wobble” in the earth’s axis of rotation). The combined effect of these orbital changes causes different parts of the earth to receive different amounts of solar energy over time, and thus leads to climatic fluctuation.⁹¹³

Native. Used interchangeably with **Indian**, **aboriginal** and **indigenous** to refer to the descendents of the original inhabitants of the Americas. See **First Nations**.

Neutron activation analysis. A kind of analysis used to determine trace-element concentrations in a sample of rock. The sample is bombarded with slow neutrons in a nuclear reactor which causes unstable compounds to form and emit gamma rays. These rays are measured with a spectrometer to determine the concentration of elements in the sample.⁹¹⁴

Non-native. Used to refer to the newcomers to what is now British Columbia in preference to the term “white.” Non-native newcomers included people of European, Asian and African descent. Occasionally, people who were native to another part of the Americas (such as the northern prairies or the St. Lawrence valley) were newcomers in what is now British Columbia.

Obsidian hydration. As a sample of obsidian absorbs water it forms a hydration ‘rind.’ The thickness of the rind can be used to determine the age of the sample, assuming that obsidian hydrates at a given rate. If the rock is fractured and a new surface is exposed

⁹¹¹ Turner, *Plant Technology*, 73-74.

⁹¹² Holland, *Landforms of BC*, 120-125; *OCE*, s.v., “lineaments,” 608.

⁹¹³ *OCE*, s.v., “Milankovich cycles and climate change,” 687-690; Imbrie & Imbrie, *Ice Ages*.

⁹¹⁴ Rapp & Hill, *Geoarchaeology*, 148-149.

(e.g., when the material is flaked to create a stone tool), then that fresh exposure can also be dated.⁹¹⁵

Oolichan. (Spelled in a variety of ways: eulachon, hoolican, oolican, ooligan, uthlecan, etc., and also known as candlefish and shrow.) The small **anadromous** smelt *Thaleichthys pacificus* which enters river mouths from San Francisco Bay, California to Bristol Bay, Alaska in large numbers every spring to spawn.⁹¹⁶ See also **Grease trail.**

Member of Parliament (MP). A person elected to one of the seats of the Canadian House of Commons to participate in the creation of federal law, monitor the government, and represent constituents in his or her riding.

Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). A person elected to one of the seats of the provincial Legislative Assembly, to create provincial law and represent constituents in his or her riding.

Ministry of Government Services. Generally responsible in British Columbia for managing access to government information; jurisdiction includes government communications, freedom of information, the Queen's printer, and provincial records and archives. Now renamed to the Ministry of Management Services.

Palynology. The study of pollen, spores and other microbotanical remains that have been preserved in the layers of sediment at the bottom of lakes and ponds, in peat deposits, rock strata and in the annual accumulation of ice on glaciers. The dates and distribution of such material allow palynologists to reconstruct past environments.⁹¹⁷

Petrographic analysis. A kind of analysis for determining the mineral components of a rock sample. A microscope is used to examine sections of rock that are very thin, about thirty micrometers or forty percent of the width of a hair, and transparent. As polarized light is passed through the rock section, various colors appear and the refractive index

⁹¹⁵ Rapp & Hill, *Geoarchaeology*, 162-163; Dincauze, *Environmental Archaeology*, 105-106.

⁹¹⁶ Carl, Clemens & Lindsey, *Fresh-water Fishes of BC*, 34-37.

⁹¹⁷ Dincauze, *Environmental Archaeology*, 343-365; Roberts, *Holocene*, 22-30; Alley, *Two-Mile Time Machine*, 71-75.

can be measured. (The refractive index is a measure of how light is bent when it passes from one medium, the air, into another, the rock.)⁹¹⁸

Québécois. “A francophone native or inhabitant of Quebec.”⁹¹⁹

Radiometric dating. Chemical elements (like uranium or lead) can exist in more than one form, known as the isotopes of that element. Unstable isotopes are said to be radioactive: they are subject to decay whereby they become the isotope of another element, emitting radiation in the process. Since the rate of decay is accurately known, the age of a sample can be inferred from the relative concentrations of unstable and stable isotopes in the material.⁹²⁰

Refugia. A location that escaped the changes undergone in the surrounding area, thus allowing for the survival of species which became extinct elsewhere.

Reserve. In Canada, “an area of land set aside for the use of a specific group of Aboriginal people.”⁹²¹

Spatial ecology. The study of “the fundamental effects of space on the dynamics of individual species and on the structure, dynamics, diversity, and stability of multispecies communities.”⁹²²

Stable isotope ratios. The tissues of living plants and animals are composed of elements like carbon, nitrogen and hydrogen, which naturally occur in more than one form, known as the isotopes of those elements. Carbon has three isotopes, two of which, ¹²C and ¹³C, are stable. (¹⁴C is unstable and is used in **radiometric dating**). These stable isotopes of carbon are incorporated into plant tissues from atmospheric carbon dioxide during photosynthesis. Different plants have different biochemical pathways for photosynthesis, and this causes them to make use of different amounts of ¹²C and ¹³C. When plants are eaten by humans and other animals, this carbon is incorporated into their own tissues, including bone. It is thus possible to analyze human remains to determine what kinds of

⁹¹⁸ *OCE*, s.v., “petrology, petrography, petrogenesis,” 818-819.

⁹¹⁹ *COD*, s.v., “Québécois,” 1182.

⁹²⁰ *OCE*, s.v., “isotopic dating,” 562-566.

⁹²¹ *COD*, s.v., “reserve,” 1226.

⁹²² David Tilman & Peter Kareiva, eds. *Spatial Ecology: The Role of Space in Population Dynamics and Interspecific Interactions* (Princeton: Princeton, 1997).

plants a particular group of people ate. Nitrogen isotope ratios in bone can also be used to infer prehistoric (or nonhuman) diets because different kinds of plants obtain nitrogen in different ways. Some plants derive their nitrogen from decayed plant matter in the soil; others can fix nitrogen directly from the atmosphere. These different strategies result in different ratios of the nitrogen isotopes ^{14}N and ^{15}N . Nitrogen isotope ratios are particularly useful for distinguishing marine- versus terrestrial-based diets.⁹²³

Subsistence round. Systematic movement to take advantage of resources that fluctuate seasonally.⁹²⁴

Treponemal spirochetes. Bacteria responsible for a variety of non-sexually transmitted infections (such as bejel, yaws and pinta) and for the sexually-transmitted disease syphilis.⁹²⁵

Tsilhqot'in. Indigenous people of the Chilcotin, who speak a Northern Athapaskan language and share cultural attributes with native groups of the Sub-Arctic and Plateau culture areas.⁹²⁶

Tsilhqot'in National Government. Tribal council of Alexandria, Alexis Creek, Stone, Tl'etinqox-t'in and Xenigwet'in First Nations.⁹²⁷

Very low frequency electromagnetic mapping. This kind of surveying relies on electromagnetic induction, the same principal as used in **induced polarization**. The use of very low frequencies allows the instrument to penetrate the ground to depths greater than a few tens of meters, revealing information about the size, shape, orientation and conductivity of subsurface features.⁹²⁸

X-ray fluorescence spectrometry. A technique for determining the concentration of trace elements in a sample by passing an x-ray through it. The irradiated sample emits a fluorescent spectrum which is characteristic of the elements that it contains.⁹²⁹

⁹²³ Larsen, *Skeletons*, 37-39; Chisholm, Nelson & Schwarz, "Stable-Carbon Isotope Ratios."

⁹²⁴ Kelly, *Foraging Spectrum*.

⁹²⁵ *Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy*, 17th ed., Sect. 13, Chs. 157, 164.

⁹²⁶ Lane, "Chilcotin."

⁹²⁷ FNP.

⁹²⁸ OCE, s.v., "controlled-source electromagnetic mapping," 171-173.

⁹²⁹ Rapp & Hill, *Geoarchaeology*, 149.

Abbreviations

AKR	University of BC Special Collections. Philip and Helen Akrigg Fonds.
ARIS	BC Ministry of Energy and Mines, Geological Survey Branch. Assessment Report Indexing System.
BCA	BC Archives, Victoria, BC.
	D19 Vertical Files, 1851-1982.
	GR0429 BC Attorney General. Originals, 1872-1937.
	GR0446 BC Provincial Game Warden. Originals, 1905-1922.
	GR0868 BC Department of Lands and Works. Originals, 1871-1883.
	GR0983 BC Department of Lands and Works. Originals, 1871-1872.
	GR1372 BC Colonial Correspondence. Originals, 1857-1872.
	MS0364 Orchard, Imbert, 1910-. Broadcaster. Originals, 1961-1972.
	MS1977 Farrow, Richard Charles, 1892-1950. Surveyor. Originals, 1929.
BCAUL	BC Archival Information Network. BC Archival Union List.
BCGNIS	BC Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management. BC Geographical Names Information System.
<i>BCPN</i>	G. P. V. Akrigg and Helen B. Akrigg. <i>BC Place Names</i> , 3 rd ed. Vancouver: University of BC, 1997.
CCA	Cariboo-Chilcotin Archives, Williams Lake, BC.
	CCA-A Vertical file: Archaeology
	CCA-E Box: Environment.
	CCA-G Box: Mackenzie Grease Trail.
	CCA-M Vertical files: Fish Lake, Gold/Copper Mining, Mining, Taseko, Prosperity.
<i>CCJI</i>	Cariboo-Chilcotin Justice Inquiry. <i>Report on the Cariboo-Chilcotin Justice Inquiry</i> . Commissioner Anthony Sarich. Victoria, BC, 1993.
CGNDB	Natural Resources Canada. Canadian Geographical Names Database.
CIHM	Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions.
<i>COD</i>	<i>Canadian Oxford Dictionary</i> . Don Mills, ON: Oxford, 2001.
DCBO	National Archives of Canada and National Library of Canada. Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online.
<i>DuT</i>	Sierra Legal Defence Fund. <i>Digging Up Trouble: The Legacy of Mining in BC</i> . Vancouver, BC: Sierra Legal Defence Fund, 1998.
<i>EBC</i>	Francis, Daniel, ed. <i>Encyclopedia of British Columbia</i> . Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2000.

e-PIC	BC Environmental Assessment Office. Electronic Project Information Centre.
FNP	Canada. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. First Nation Profiles.
HBCA	Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg, MB. B.37/a/1-2 Fort Chilocotin post journals, 1837-40 HBCA-FA Fort Alexandria post history and search file. HBCA-FC Fort Chilocotin post history and search file.
LAC	Library and Archives of Canada, Ottawa, ON.
MINFILE	BC Ministry of Energy and Mines, Geological Survey Branch. Mineral Inventory Database.
NTS	National Topographic System [Map].
OCE	Paul L. Hancock and Brian J. Skinner, eds. <i>The Oxford Companion to the Earth</i> . Oxford: Oxford, 2000.
OCHMS	Heilbron, J. L., ed. <i>The Oxford Companion to the History of Modern Science</i> . Oxford: Oxford, 2003.
RG 10	Public Archives of Canada. Archival Records from Department of Indian Affairs.
SEDAR	Canadian Securities Administrators and Canadian Depository for Securities. System for Electronic Document Analysis and Retrieval.
SPAM	University of BC Special Collections. Pamphlet Collection. (The UBC library refers to this collection as "SPAM" so that abbreviation was adopted here.)
TSD	<i>Tsilhqot'in Sovereignty Declaration</i> , October 1997.

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