

**ISLANDS OF RESISTANCE: CHALLENGING HEGEMONY FROM
THE JOHNSTONE STRAIT TO THE SALISH SEA**

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to the memory of Barb Cranmer, Twyla Roscovitch, and Dazy Drake, three women who made enormous contributions to their communities, and to this thesis. You are greatly missed.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how three unique, isolated maritime communities located off the coast of British Columbia, Canada have responded to significant obstacles. Over a century ago, disillusioned Finnish immigrants responded to the lethal conditions of the coal mines they laboured in by creating Sointula, a socialist utopia. The ‘N̄amgis First Nation in Alert Bay, a group of the Kwakw̄ak̄a’wakw peoples, have recently developed a land-based fish farm, Kuterra, in response to an ocean-based fish farming industry that threatens the wild salmon they have survived on since time immemorial. Lasqueti Island residents have responded to exclusion from access to traditional power sources by implementing self-generating, renewable energy into their off-grid community. Through contemporary and historic analysis, a common theme emerges that explains what unites these three disparate cultural communities in response to impediments faced: “Your neighbours are your insurance.”

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGM	Annual General Meeting
BC	British Columbia
BCH	British Columbia Hydro
DFO	Department of Fisheries and Oceans
DIA	Department of Indian Affairs
FINN	Friends in Need Now
FO	Finnish Organization
FSOC	Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada
HBC	Hudson's Bay Company
LCA	Lasqueti Community Association
LIAS	Lasqueti Internet Access Society
LIRA	Lasqueti Island Ratepayers Association
NDP	New Democratic Party
NERP	Nimkish Ecological Restoration Program
NIDA	Nimkish Integrated Development Approach
PRV	piscine reovirus
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RSS	Residential School System
SARA	Species at Risk Act
SCC	Supreme Court of Canada
SFU	Simon Fraser University
SI	Symbolic Interactionism
SLAPP	Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UBC	University of British Columbia
UFAWU	United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores, examines, and analyzes three unique maritime communities located off Canada's west coast in the province of British Columbia. All have faced significant obstacles in their development, and constructed creative, pragmatic, unique solutions in response. How had these relatively small, isolated communities overcome political, economic, institutional, environmental and social adversity, and evolved into the vibrant cultures they are today? I investigate each community from historic, cultural, theoretical, and fieldwork perspectives, which leads to the conclusion that, "your neighbours are your insurance," a statement I heard during my fieldwork. I argue that the success of these communities is a result of cultivated social relations and networks, in which neighbours can be counted upon to provide protection against socioeconomic, environmental, institutional, and structural obstacles.

Sointula, a settlement located on Malcolm Island off the coast of northern Vancouver Island, was founded over one hundred years ago by Finnish emigres attempting to create a socialist utopia, a place where all would work in harmony to provide for the betterment of the community. After the effects of the Industrial Revolution had spread into Finland, many fled their homeland in search of work, prosperity, and a better future than the one confronting them. Some found their way to the Vancouver Island coal mines of industrial magnate James Dunsmuir, toiling for subsistence wages in a bleak, dangerous environment. A small group of those Finns made the radical decision to form a commune, the Kalevan Kansa Colonization Company. The group secured a tract of land from the provincial government to operate from, which they dubbed Sointula, a Finnish phrase that translated to 'place of harmony'. Sointula was an iconoclastic piece of Canada's history not well known, and though this attempt at communitarianism ultimately failed, the remnants of the experiment are still visible today, expressed through its people, its symbols, and its social relations.

Alert Bay, a village on Cormorant Island, less than 10 km away from Malcolm Island, is a home of the ‘N̄amgis First Nation, a group of the Kwakw̄aka’wakw peoples. Two Caucasian entrepreneurs brought colonial settlement here in 1870 by building a salmon saltery, though the ‘N̄amgis had been utilizing ‘Ȳalis for cultural purposes since time immemorial. The town grew to become a major economic centre, and also the primary centre for all manners of Indigenous administration for the central coast region of British Columbia. The first Potlatch Trial convened in Alert Bay in 1922, and one of Western Canada’s most notorious residential schools, St. Michael’s Indian Residential School, opened here in 1929.

Salmon has been a crucial component of the Kwakw̄aka’wakw diet, economy, and identity since time immemorial. Though once abundant in the region, the fish stock’s population has been in decline for decades. In the mid 1980s, a technological saviour emerged to mitigate the decline, the implementation of industrial-size, open-pen fish farms throughout the area’s oceanic waters. The innovation has not proven especially successful, as scientific evidence points toward the farms as likely increasing salmon declines, rather than reducing them. The ecological impact of numerous fish farms in the region’s waters precipitated the ‘N̄amgis to develop Kuterra, a closed-pen, inland fish farming operation, which challenges the established, yet environmentally-deleterious, open-ocean model of aquaculture.

Lasqueti Island, located about 300 km south of Malcolm and Cormorant Islands, is another iconoclastic BC coastal community. Though Lasqueti has a historic reputation of being populated by Vietnam War draft-dodging, back-to-the-landers who took up marijuana cultivation, it has metamorphosed into an off-grid community that generates its own renewable energy, a profound development. Inability to access traditionally-delivered energy infrastructure forced the community to construct its own solutions to power needs, which built upon the already-existing foundations of a self-sustaining culture.

These settlements and their respective developments have been temporally situated to represent three distinct periods of resistance: Sointula a response to past worker exploitation, Kuterra a response to the present problem of open-ocean fish farms, and Lasqueti a vision of future energy self-sufficiency. My examination of these communities, from their histories, peoples, environments, institutions, organizations, and social relations, unearthed an abundance of data, information which may help inform other resistance groups seeking to find strategies to combat the myriad of economic, political, social, environmental, and spiritual problems facing our communities, country, and planet: Rising levels of inequality, climate change, social anomie, and perpetual wars are but a few examples.

This thesis is a journey of discovery. It is an ethnographic study that provides an interpretive perspective of these communities. The first chapter outlines the theory and methods utilized to undertake this journey, and also includes literature reviewed in advance of, and during, this journey. The next three chapters each offer a historical narrative of a community, followed by a description of my fieldwork in each place, which provides the reader with understanding and insight into the genesis, evolution, and current status of each place, often set against broader national and international events. The final chapter gives an interpretation of my observations.

Each of these communities have constructed their own creative, pragmatic solutions to problems that emerged, rather than relied upon external authority to provide answers. As a society made up of many communities, too often we are implored to solve dilemmas by following advice handed down by media, institutional bodies, economic and political actors and groups, and abstract ideologies, which do not necessarily have our best interests in mind. By finding solutions within our communities, we might generate more equitable, sustainable, practical, and democratic outcomes to the problems we encounter.

Notes on Terminology

The vocabulary employed throughout this thesis needs some clarification and explanation. Words often convey symbolic meanings that exceed their definitional constraints, and can be used to ‘weaponize’ discourse. I have chosen my terms of reference carefully to be as respectful as possible to the communities of my research.

First Nations is my preferred choice of term to describe the people who have been in the land currently designated as Canada since time immemorial. It is simple, succinct, and reflects, in a generally unambiguous phrase, the place that this ethnicity occupies in our national lexicon. At other times, generally to reflect the time period being referred to, I use Indian, Native, Aboriginal, or Indigenous. For the purposes of this paper, all reference the First Peoples of what is now known as Canada. To use the term Indigenous exclusively makes for redundant reading, overlooks the nuance contained in many situations, and obfuscates important historical semantics. Dara Culhane-Speck’s ethnographic narrative about Alert Bay, *An Error in Judgement: The Politics of Medical Care in an Indian/White Community*, paraphrases my objective more accurately: “...I have tried to *reflect* this everyday use pattern in the text, while not intending to *reinforce* the negative connotations which are connected with the term ‘Indian’.”¹ Offence is not my intent.

The term *Kwakiutl*, or *Kwagu’l*, also needs some clarification. Franz Boas, the father of American Anthropology, began a long, pioneering career of intermittent fieldwork in the region in 1885 that lasted until 1930. Boas misapplied the title of one Kwakwaka’wakw group to represent the entire group of Kwak’wala-speaking people, which currently comprises seventeen communities.² Boas’ work never acknowledged this mistake, and his body of published materials documenting and detailing ‘Kwakiutl’ society still contains this erroneous description. Post-colonial reclamation efforts and the pursuit of ethnic identity reconfigured much colonial

terminology, and Kwak'wala-speaking people now refer to themselves as Kwakwaka'wakw. The Kwakiutl community, however, continue to use the early designation as their own, which creates some confusion. In every instance in this paper Kwakiutl refers to the colonial designation of the Kwakwaka'wakw peoples, and not the specific group who use it in the post-colonial period. The 'Namgis, another Kwakwaka'wakw community and the primary focus of this research, were previously known as the Nimpkish in colonial terminology.

The Kwak'wala language itself is in ongoing transition, with new forms of orthographies developing as linguists become more adept in the language's nuances. There are numerous ways others represent many Kwak'wala words, and phonetics such as glottalized stops and inflection are beyond anglicized language conventions. Authentic linguistic representation exceeds the focus of this thesis, though offence to the Kwakwaka'wakw peoples and those fluent in the Kwak'wala language, of which there are fewer than 200 left on the planet, is not the intent of this exclusion, but rather reflects my own scholastic limitations.

These three communities and the physical spaces they occupy also need some clarification. Sointula is an unincorporated town located on Malcolm Island. For the purposes of this paper, all people living on Malcolm Island are considered Sointulans, and these terms are used interchangeably. Alert Bay is a settlement on Cormorant Island consisting of a non-Indigenous, incorporated town, and Alert Bay Indian Reserves 1 and 1A. The Kwak'wala title of the island is 'Yalis, though that description is seldom used in everyday discourse. For the purposes of this paper, Alert Bay refers to the First Nations community located on Cormorant Island unless otherwise noted, (i.e. *non*-Indigenous Alert Bay) reflecting the self-identification of the Kwakwaka'wakw who live there. Lasqueti, the social community, and Lasqueti Island, the physical space, are also used interchangeably.

Theory

To understand how each of these communities was established, how they evolved, and how they were shaped by both internal and external factors, an examination of their economies is necessary. Political economic theory provides a broad starting point for this examination, which leads to a more specific explanatory framework of hegemony. These concepts are defined and explained in this chapter; in the individual chapters pertaining to each community, these concepts are applied to analyse each culture and to explain the difficulties each faced as they built and maintained their respective identities. The sociological perspective of symbolic interactionism is also defined and explained in this chapter as a theory of social behaviour that emphasizes linguistic or gestural communication and its subjective understanding, especially the role of language. Symbolic interactionism deeply informed my fieldwork.

Political economy refers to the interdisciplinary study that draws upon economics, sociology, anthropology and political science to explain how political institutions, the political environment, and the economic system influence each other. It is the study of the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources. For the purposes of this thesis, the social relations evolving out of capitalism—an economic system based upon private ownership—will be the focus, drawing from the theories of Karl Marx. These relations are exercised between two distinct social classes: Those who control the resources, the *propertied*, and those who are controlled, the *property-less*. The former dominates the latter. A more general and ambitious definition is the study of control and survival in social life. Though Marx produced the most comprehensive and thorough critique of capitalism, his analysis neglects to acknowledge the intersectional marginalization of racialized people and women, who were not considered citizens at the time Marx wrote, and who could not vote or own property. Political economy focuses on the oppression of workers and the

mobilization of workers who were almost exclusively white and male in Marx's world. Given Marx's extensive body of work, my research borrows only a handful of aspects of his political economic theory.

Marx' analysis of political economy began in the middle of the 19th century, as he witnessed the toll the Industrial Revolution left upon western Europe, particularly on its working class. Drawing upon a historical analysis of modes of production, Marx argued that history was an endless cycle of class struggle in which the propertied class had dominated and would continue to dominate the non-propertied class, despite the latter's overwhelming numbers. Though capitalism had produced technological innovation, globalized trade, and unparalleled wealth, the benefits of these processes were unequally distributed among those classes. Capitalism is a profit-driven organizational system that subordinates the needs, desires, and decision-making capacity of the non-propertied majority to the authority of profitability, which is determined by a small, select group. This structural lopsidedness produces and reproduces inequality, as those who control the resources control virtually every other facet of production, particularly the distribution of profits. This system concentrates social, economic, and political power into the hands of a minority, who enjoy inordinate control over the majority through these arrangements. The structure of capitalism was not fundamentally different from previous systems of feudalism, or slavery. "The distinction between capitalist and land-rentier, like that between the tiller of the soil and the factory-worker, disappears and that the whole of society must fall into two classes – the property-owners and the propertyless workers."³ Marx developed a set of theories to explain why this continued to occur.

At the core of each system was its economic structure, the basis of society, which underlies everything else. Marx identified two components of this structure, the "material forces of production," the labour and means of production, and the "relations of production," or the

social and political arrangements that regulate production and distribution. From these structures rises the superstructure, which consists of legal and political “forms of social consciousness” such as politics, law, media, education, religion, and culture, that both maintain and shape the structure. “The mode of production of material life determines the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.”⁴

One of Marx’s most profound observations was the development of specialized labour in the capitalist system. Specialized labour, used in concert with technological innovation, produced historical profits for those who controlled the means of production. Such specialized labour, however, was expendable, as one was easily displaced from their employment if technological innovation took the place of their labour, if market conditions changed, or if a worker agreed to sell their labour for a lesser amount, and thereby increase capitalist profit. Marx explains: “...the labourer lives merely to increase capital, and is allowed to live only in so far as the interest of the ruling class requires it.”⁵ In the desperate environment of Industrial Revolution-era Europe, identified in Sointula’s history, the labour class often found themselves in a race to the bottom from this arrangement as competition for employment continually eroded the price paid for one’s labour, which precipitated Europe’s massive exodus. The capitalist had no moral imperative to pay labour any higher wage than their minimal subsistence required, and, in fact, had a compelling reason not to, as higher wages negatively affected profit, the sole goal of capitalism.

Marx believed capitalism estranged the wage-worker from what they produced, as they would never be able to partake in the usage of their production, nor be able to realize the full value of their labour. As Marx put it, “every enterprise engaged in commodity production becomes at the same time an enterprise exploiting labour-power.”⁶ The wage-worker, whom Marx referred to as the proletariat, had but one thing to sell, their time, which produced

something of greater value for those who controlled the means of production, whom Marx referred to as the bourgeoisie. The life of the worker depends on things that he has created but that are not his, so that instead of finding his rightful existence through labour, he loses it in a world of things external to him. The bourgeoisie sold the wage-worker's production for a surplus value, eternally trapping the worker in a lopsided exchange in which they would never be able to fully partake in the fruit of their labour. The difference in this exchange was surplus value—the profit of the capitalist—which accumulated while the worker was trapped in a cycle of subsistence tending to material needs. From surplus value, those who owned and controlled the means of production controlled the relations of production and the superstructure. As long as this structure of organization remained, the worker was unlikely to ever break free from his exploitation. Workers had to develop a class consciousness, which Marx described as an awareness of one's socioeconomic position relative to others, to bring an understanding of the collective interests of their class within the given socioeconomic and political orders.

Workers were unable to develop this class consciousness because capitalism was rooted in class conflict—a false consciousness—that produced a view of oneself as an individual in competition with others of one's rank, rather than as part of a group with unified experiences, struggles, and interests. Severing the individual from their social class ensured the masses were never likely to unify and produce any change in the material relations. False consciousness was a significant problem, as it encouraged workers to think and act in ways that were at odds with their economic, social, and political self-interests. It developed from an ideology, or dominant worldview, in which the values of those that control the system were perpetuated by social institutions of the superstructure, so that those values became everyone's values.

Cultural hegemony is a concept developed by political philosopher Antonio Gramsci during his incarceration by Italy's Fascist party from the late 1920s to the mid 1930s. Building

on Marx's concept of false consciousness, Gramsci examined the social relationship between power and ideology. He posited that the ruling class intentionally manipulate the value systems and mores of a society to make that view the world view. This enables a governing power to win legitimacy and popular consent from the disempowered without the use of explicit coercion, violence or military power. The goal of hegemony is domination, which justifies the status quo as natural and inevitable, perpetual, and beneficial for everyone, rather than a social state-of-being created by people with a vested interest in particular social, economic, and political orders.⁷ Hegemony was grounded in the actions of government and business, and perpetuated through a variety of institutional supporters—Marx's superstructure—such as the media, the church, and the educational system.

Gramsci recognized that for hegemony to persist, an equilibrium between consent and coercion had to be maintained through a variety of actors and institutions. Culture is the repository of consciousness, and it perpetuates hegemony through subtle, barely perceptible means, rather than through direct coercion. Hegemony reflected values that lie largely in the uncontested realm, where consent is not the result of domination, but rather the result of individuals internalizing and actively creating society in accordance with hegemonic principles.⁸

One of hegemony's essential components is the concept of common sense. Common sense is what everyone knows so intuitively that it does not even need to be spoken aloud. Ideas are given complete universality in the domain of common sense, and most everyone agrees fully to their assertions. A common understanding, thus, becomes a dominant idea. Common sense is problematic, since it excludes any other possibilities, or subsequent outcomes. Political theorist Chantal Mouffe asserts, "Things could always be otherwise and every order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities. Any order is always the expression of a particular configuration of power relations. What is at a given moment accepted as the 'natural' order, jointly with the

common sense that accompanies it, is the result of sedimented hegemonic practices.”⁹

Sedimented hegemonic practices appear in the histories of all three communities explored throughout this research: The unquestionable industrial capitalism of Dunsmuir’s collieries which precipitated the foundation of the Kalevan Kansa, the unquestionable pursuit of progress that justified sending Indigenous children to residential schools, and the unquestionable patriotism that conscripted young American men into the Vietnam War.

Though Gramsci could not have conceived of the interconnected, globalized world we live in today, his ideas still possess merit. The strength that Gramsci’s concept of hegemony brings to this thesis, particularly related to the ideas of ‘common sense’ and ‘natural’, cannot be understated.

For the purposes of this paper, hegemony is used to describe the ethos of a capitalist economic system in which the pursuit of profit underscores virtually every political, economic and social decision-making process. Hegemony is an unstated cultural understanding that sees the pursuit of individual profit as society’s primary function, and that all activity should be organized toward fulfilling this objective. Hegemony supposes that free markets provide the solution to all of humanity’s problems, which discourages citizens from questioning free market legitimacy. Progress is only achievable by adhering to this ideology, regardless of any consequences to the environment, social relations, international relations, or legitimacy.

Hegemony is an asymmetrical power structure that I use in my research to critique social conformity, residential schools, the industrial capitalism of coal mines and fish farms, and state-delivered energy transmission. It underpins all of these situations, and suggests approaching politics, economics, and social interaction from a perspective that values alternate knowledge systems. These lines of thought are useful in the examination of the foundations of each of the communities researched throughout this paper. Dunsmuir’s Collieries exploited natural resources

and enlisted Finnish-born labourers to facilitate this dangerous, often lethal, work. As the Dunsmuir family continued to accumulate massive amounts of capital, the labourers put their lives on the line for three dollars a day. If a labourer was killed or dismembered performing their work, there was no compensation for that loss provided to the worker's family, no sanction was imposed upon the employer for the conditions of the workplace, and there were plenty more desperate workers ready to take the place of a deceased one. Capitalism was the order of the day, with little institutional restraint to impede it. Accumulating capital was more important than the lives of Finnish immigrants, the relations of production between industry and government which Marx wrote of. To transcend this situation, one had to institute an entirely different structure of economic and social relations.

Alert Bay's foundation and evolution traces a similar path between these relations of production which also unveil institutions of the superstructure. Wesley Spencer and Aulden Huson leased Cormorant Island from the government in 1870 to start up a saltery. Faced with a labour shortage, they invoked Reverend Hall in Tsax̄is to help overcome their problem, building him a new church in the process. Schools were built almost immediately upon the arrival of permanent Indigenous residents to provide industrial education to a future labour force. There is little doubt that religion and education worked hand-in-hand to reproduce capitalist order in Alert Bay.

The genesis of present-day Lasqueti, however, requires some deeper analysis. Hegemony provides linkage between draft-dodgers and back-to-the-landers for this particular culture. Young men were being conscripted into the US Army to fight an existential threat—communism—that had been implanted into American consciousness. If you believed in the American way of life, you were compelled to defend it with your life. Modern technology was also part of this consciousness, though in a less-perceptible way. While one enjoyed the benefits

of modernity, these benefits had been manufactured from a free market economy, which was synonymous with the state's political and economic objectives. Thus, participation in modernity meant one implicitly accepted the state's role in providing it. Defending the state against existential threats included defense of a free market economy. The common sense that legitimized American imperialism was not much different than the common sense of home electricity. Draft-dodgers and back-to-the-landers, as well as Finnish utopian socialists, potlatch participants during the time of its prohibition, and Kuterra, were all examples of counter-hegemony, contestations of the capitalist order.

Political economy and hegemony are useful lenses through which to examine social structures, but they fall short of in-depth insights into social relations. Indeed, the theories of Marx and Gramsci are useful for explaining macro systems, but they fail to incorporate individual agency in the process of consciousness-making. Symbolic interactionism emerged from the University of Chicago School of Sociology to fill that gap.

Howard Becker's, *Outsiders*, is a pioneering sociological study that researched marijuana smokers in the Chicago Jazz scene of the mid-20th century, written during his work at the school. Becker was able to access this burgeoning subculture through his own work as a jazz musician which uncovered significant social meaning through the act of marijuana smoking. He discovered marijuana users were not simply biologically-predetermined 'deviants' that authorities labelled them to be, but rather, they were functioning, productive members of the community who had *learned* deviance. Becker's participant-observation technique, in which a researcher not only observes but actively engages in the activities of participants, allowed him to interview users about their activity, and their responses provided him an alternate explanation for the foundations of deviance. Participant-observation offered an authentic and practical investigative tool useful for my fieldwork. Empirical research, in which information is mined

from an insider's vantage point through both direct and indirect observation and experience, complemented the macro-system analysis offered by Gramsci and Marx.

Becker was a colleague of Herbert Blumer at the Chicago school, who is credited with the foundation of Symbolic Interactionism (SI). This theory, or perspective, suggests that individuals create social reality through collective and individual action, and that humans are constituted by symbolic or cultural elements rather than by biological forces or instincts, applying Franz Boas' theories of culture to human nature and the self.¹⁰ Symbolic interactionism has three guiding premises:

- 1) People act towards things based on personal meanings.
- 2) These meanings derive from their interactions with others.
- 3) These meanings are handled in, and sustained or altered through, the interpretive process that people use as they deal with the things they encounter.¹¹

SI proffers that society consists of unique creatures interacting symbolically, and that people are self-reflexive beings who actively shape their own behaviour while acting purposively in, and towards, situations. Interactionists believe it is essential to get inside people's worlds of understanding and experience these worlds as they do, specifically through empirical fieldwork, to comprehend their motives, meanings, and actions. Social interaction occurs on multiple levels of interpretation in even the simplest conversation. As one person speaks, the other listens. The person speaking, however, is not exclusively engaged in a one-way discussion, they are taking in the listener's reactions to what is being said. Such observations create a new synthesis of understanding through a separate, internal dialogue within the speaker as they attempt to make meaning out of what they encounter. From these dialogues, we create meaning. These meanings are not rigid, universal, or permanent, but rather constantly evolve. The role of the ethnographer is to understand this process and the changes it produces, rather than simply pronounce a

conclusion. Our words, gestures, and appearances are all imbued with multiple, shifting meanings, endlessly open to re-evaluation. Interactionists argue that society is organized through this ongoing process. To develop an insider's perspective, interactionists empathize with or take the role of the individuals or groups they study. They do so by observing and interacting with these individuals or groups in their natural social setting, in a process described as 'doing things together'.

The mind is inextricably social, rather than some prior entity. It is a process, and it only appears through symbolic interaction. The mind selects stimuli rather than just responding to them: it adjusts, but it is not primarily cognitive (conscious or reflexive) and acts more from a sense of inhibition, or hesitation, pausing for thought and offering imaginative variation. It does not just release drives. It is activated from the perception of problems, and it attempts imaginative solutions to those problems, leading to reflexivity and abstract thinking. Problems themselves are socially selected, as are perspectives on them, so the mind is constantly adjusting and checking social consensus, which provides it with a social function too. Social life therefore provides the internal dialogue between 'I' and 'me'.¹²

This perspective does not just concern itself with the individual or with society, but rather "with the joint acts through which lives are organized and societies assembled."¹³ Actions are not individual, rather, actions are always joint, with the mutual response and adjustment of the actor and others considered. The self is what emerges, not just from the individual, but with how others see the person, and how the person responds to and develops his or her own responses. It is a perspective that can only be accessed from the social sphere. Because people possess minds, they can invent, discover, initiate, and construct new realities and lines of action. They do not simply 'react' to stimuli or biological impulses; rather they are active and self-conscious agents who use symbols to create objects, designate meanings, define situations and plan responses.¹⁴ Concepts central to SI are symbols, meanings, interaction, and identity.

Symbols are abstractions we use which allow us to transcend our immediate environments and to have experiences that are not rooted in the here-and-now. They enable us to remember, imagine, plan, and have vicarious experiences.¹⁵ Interactionists believe it is through the process

of communication, or symbolic interaction, that we learn, create, and transmit culture.¹⁶ Symbols produce a prototype that allows us to categorize our experiences and place them within a larger frame of reference. We then formulate lines of action within and through this process that enable us to transform objects, events, and people we encounter into social objects. These names, or symbolic categories, we attribute to things represent knowledge, communication, and action.¹⁷

A crucial foundation for SI was its application of George Herbert Mead's theory of the self. Mead categorized the difference between the 'I' and the 'me,' which he saw as a social process. One must participate in different social positions within society, called role taking, before they could use that experience to become self-conscious. The 'I' thinks, sees, and names, and can never be scrutinized or it becomes a 'me.' The 'me' is self-made, visible, audible, and objective. Human action takes place always in a situation that confronts the actor, and the actor acts on the basis of defining this situation that confronts him.¹⁸ Social interaction forms human conduct, rather than acts as a setting for the expression or release of it, a response to stimuli rather than a reaction to it. One has to fit their own line of activity into the actions of others. *Symbols, Selves, and Social Reality*, provides a good example upon a student's reaction to the announcement of a surprise quiz. While the 'I' might react "I'm not taking a stupid quiz, I'm leaving!", the 'me' intervenes to ask questions such as, "what will happen to me if I leave? What would the professor and my classmates think of me?"¹⁹ This is the essence of symbolic interaction, defining our self-conceptions through ways others see or define us.

Becker notes a deep suspicion of abstract sociological theorizing taking the place of that which arises in a network of relations,²⁰ and believes the presentation of stories is more important than theorizing.²¹ SI prioritizes creating and drawing from knowledge that may be dismissed or overlooked by dominant social powers, emphasizing knowledge significant to the less powerful, which underscores my use of it as a research tool to understand community

histories and fieldwork. SI examines the empirical world, and brings theory into alignment with it. Becker describes the approach given him in graduate school by sociology professor Everett C. Hughes over fifty years ago:

He didn't teach his students his "theory", partly because he didn't have one. He had something better: ideas you could use to shape an investigation and then later report of its results. And ways of working that were better than "methods" out of a cookbook: how to think about what you were learning in your research and use that to shape the next steps you took.²²

SI offers a perspective that looks at social relations to explain how a society organizes itself. In particular, SI allows us to examine how we are in a continual process of negotiating the meaning of the things, events, ideas and other people in our environment. It is based upon the pragmatist tradition in which there are no fundamental or foundational truths, but rather a plurality of shifting truths grounded in concrete experiences and language, in which truth is appraised in terms of its consequences.²³ It does not look at the question of *what* happened, but rather *how* something had happened. To summarize, Becker was not so much interested in *why* people smoked marijuana, but rather *how* they had become marijuana users, unveiling an entire set of community relations that included rule makers, rule enforcers, rule followers, and rule breakers. This theoretical approach guided my understanding of each community before embarking upon fieldwork, and was utilized throughout it.

Though a variety of approaches offer insight into social relations—to name a few, critical race theory, kinship theory, or anarchism—theories of political economy, hegemony, and symbolic interaction offer a wealth of rich insights into the histories of Sointula, Alert Bay, and Lasqueti.

Critical race and gender theory examine society and culture as they relate to categorizations of race, sex, law, and power. It sees race as a socially-constructed concept that functions as a means to maintain the interests of the white population that constructed it,

particularly through the mechanisms of the legal system.²⁴ Though law has undoubtedly favoured the maintenance of a white supremacist power structure in our society, this perspective runs the risk of reducing people into rigid binaries of privilege and oppression. The absolutism of this dichotomy erases the effect that class plays in structuring society, which is the very situation that Marx identified as false consciousness. Critical race theory risks reducing Finnish miners, who were literally dying to earn three dollars a day, to their identities as white men without attending to the fact that they were also exploited immigrant labourers. Certainly, Finnish miners enjoyed a level of privilege resulting from their so-called race and their gender, however their terrible working conditions and hardships as a labouring class should not be overlooked. Similarly, Caucasian-American draft-dodgers who self-exiled from their homes and families surely enjoyed levels of privilege due to their position in the world, but they were also pawns of imperialism. While both of these groups undoubtedly enjoyed advantages over non-Caucasian men and all women, those who controlled the levers of power likely viewed these groups as *exploitable labourers* as much as they did white men.

I have chosen to celebrate the accomplishments each community made toward gender and racial parity throughout this thesis. These accomplishments provide tangible evidence of gendered and racialized advancement that abstract academic theorizing often falls short of. The Kalevan Kansa made gender equality a feature of their society long before Canada acknowledged women as persons. The mural used as the Sointula Museum's logo (Figure 3), which depicts a woman leading two men to freedom, confirms this idea persisted after the colony's dissolution. Kwakwaka'wakw matriarch Granny Cook contested the treatment of young girls in her community in the early part of the 20th century, which brought shame to her family. *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las: Jane Constance Cook and the Politics of Memory, Church, and Custom*, written by her descendants, rehabilitated her character. Granny 'Axu' Alfred, another

Kwakwaka'wakw matriarch, was memorialized in the biography *Paddling to Where I Stand: Agnes Alfred, Qwiqwasutinuxw Noblewoman*, written by her granddaughter Daisy Sewid-Smith. Diane 'Honey Alfred' Jacobson, another of Axu's granddaughters, wrote two coming-of-age narratives, *My Life in a Kwagu'l Big House*, and, *My Life with the Salmon*. All of these books are included in the literature review, as are a sampling of Barbara Cranmer's Kwakwaka'wakw documentaries. The women of Lasqueti erased the gendered identity of draft-dodger by assuming the autonym 'bush hippie.' One of them proudly hunted and skinned sheep, repositioning the traditional gender role binary of hunter or gatherer. Another's invitation to visit provided the answer to my thesis question. These examples of gender parity richly supplement this paper.

Literature Review

Franz Boas' *Kwakiutl Ethnography*, compiled from his field work trips to the region from 1885 to 1930, was an obvious starting point for my literature review. Boas produced an exhaustive body of scholarship over the nearly half a century he spent studying and documenting the group he erroneously dubbed the Kwakiutl. Boasian anthropology united four subfields of anthropology: cultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology, physical anthropology, and archaeology. It sees culture as malleable and perpetuated through social learning, rather than based upon biological characteristics and predispositions. *Kwakiutl Ethnography* examines social and economic organization, religion, art, and language, a systematized approach that became the virtual genesis of the Chicago School of Sociology, whose alumnae include George Herbert Mead, his student Herbert Blumer, and Howard Becker, all referenced in this paper. Boas' most important contribution to the social sciences was the repositioning of Indigenous peoples from savages on a social evolution scale to cultured and civilized peoples. Despite his profound, meticulous academic work, Boas' legacy is not unassailable.

Boas was engaged in salvage ethnography, a romantic representation of Indigeneity from a colonial gaze as the original culture heads toward extinction. Ronald Hawker describes it more cogently: “Since colonized societies and the objects they produced were necessarily destroyed by the process of colonization, it was the duty of those at the forefront of modernity’s intrusion into the societies of the “less advanced” to vigorously record what colonialism displaced.”²⁵ *Kwakiutl Ethnography* offers a remarkable example of salvage ethnography that resonated into the 21st century.

Boas was, understandably, fascinated by Kwakiutl culture, particularly the social organization of the potlatch system, discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Colonizing authorities believed the potlatch impeded progress, which led them to prohibit its practice. They justified the ban by enlisting the Indigenous support of Jane Constance Cook, *Ga’axsta’las*, an Alert Bay matriarch of considerable influence. Boas, by contrast, supported the system and used his position of academic influence to belittle her when he reproduced a community comment that “she talked our [Kwak’wala] language just like a baby.” It is doubtful Boas could have even recognized such a language trait, but this single statement has been endlessly repeated in academic literature. In the preface to *Kwakiutl Ethnography*, anthropologist Helen Codere exaggerates the slight, ostensibly from other comments heard in the community:

She describes “Mrs. Stephen Cook” as “a formidable super-missionized woman who was a matriarch of a large household, lay preacher and interpreter of the Bible, and a person of great influence among the Indian women of Alert Bay. She was dead set against all Indian ways, none of which she knew much about.”²⁶

Ga’axsta’las’ support of the potlatch ban was not an endorsement of colonialism or the superiority of settler culture, although it has historically been exploited to perform that exact function. The decimation of Indigenous populations that followed colonial incursion drastically reduced the available pool of community members to fill high-ranking potlatch positions, which created a massive shift in social relations. This produced a frenzied rivalry among Chiefs in

potlatch competition to fill these positions, which resulted in young women being subjected to multiple, arranged “sham” marriages to facilitate social cohesion and property relations.²⁷ Ga’axsta’las, often referred to as Granny Cook in literature, criticized the effect these developments had on the community’s young women, a truly pioneering feminist perspective. Her opinion, unfortunately, was manipulated by colonizers to promote a different agenda. Boas, so enamoured by his salvage ethnography that Indigenous population annihilation does not get mentioned in *Kwakiutl Ethnography*, had yet another agenda. His and Codere’s stigmatization of Ga’axsta’las was not fully lifted until a May 2007 potlatch at Alert Bay’s Big House revived a family that, “had been quiet for ninety years - since their ancestor had let go of her position in the potlatch.”²⁸ Boas’ maligning of Ga’axsta’las had a profound impact on the social relations of the community, and affected the legitimacy of academic inquiry into the community. Fortunately, her kin were able to resurrect her image by publishing their own account of her life.

Standing Up with Ga’axsta’las recounts the extraordinary life and difficult times of the Kwakwaka’wakw woman known by the Anglo-Saxon name Jane Constance Cook. A meticulously researched chronicle told from the perspective of her descendants, the book is a collaborative ethnography between University of British Columbia Anthropology Professor Leslie A. Robertson and the Kwagu’l Gixsam clan. Jane, the product of a First Nations mother and British sailor, was educated by Reverend Alfred Hall in Tsax̄is (Fort Rupert). She accompanied Hall to ‘Yal̄is (Alert Bay) after Huson and Spencer built him the new mission house that precipitated settlement in the village, referred to in Chapter 3. She met Stephen Cook there, also the product of a biracial union and educated by the church. When they married, Reverend Hall indicated he would not perform the Christian ceremony unless the couple renounced the potlatch system, in which they had high status.²⁹ The couple had sixteen children in the fishing village, where they also ran the store, a salmon saltery, and the net loft. Both

Stephen and Jane participated in political organizations such as the Native Brotherhood and the Anglican Women's Auxiliary, which Jane presided over for thirty years.³⁰ Despite abdicating their traditional, high-ranking status, the Cook family were prominent members of the community and culture. Jane was called upon often for translation services, first utilized as an interpreter for the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission in 1914,³¹ and later for the potlatch trials in 1922,³² providing a critical link between First Nations and settler cultures during that tumultuous era. Ga'axsta'las was born in 1870 and died in 1951, her death ironically occurring in the year the potlatch ban was lifted, and also when First Nations women gained the right to vote and hold office in First Nations elections.³³ *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las* led me to question academic authority, and the effect its pronouncements had in creating unnecessary division in a community struggling to assert and protect its identity. Given the problematic history of scholars approaching anthropology from a colonial perspective, it was important for me to review research from Indigenous communities and recognize oral histories as valid sources. It led to another kinship-written biography of a Kwakwaka'wakw knowledge keeper, *Paddling to Where I Stand: Agnes Alfred, Qwiqwasutinuxw Noblewoman*.

Paddling to Where I Stand, is the oral history memoirs of Granny Agnes 'Axu' Alfred, as told to her granddaughter, Daisy Sewid-Smith. It is a transcription of taped conversations between the two, which often includes anthropological scholar Martine Reid, who edited the historical narrative. Sewid-Smith also compiled and published, *Prosecution or Persecution*, which documented the passing and enforcement of potlatch prohibition laws. Reid was married to renowned First Nations artist Bill Reid from 1981 until his death in 1998.

Granny Axu was born in 1889, and died in 1992, a period of great change for her people. For an example, she was one of those imprisoned for attending the Cranmer potlatch, detailed in Chapter 3.³⁴ Her life is recounted in meticulous detail, providing context, evidence of the

tumultuous change her culture was undergoing, and explanations of the nuance contained within such change. Though she did not speak English and had little Western education, Axu was a gifted storyteller, and was one of few individuals left still fluent in Kwak'wala.³⁵ The co-authors rarely interrupt Granny Axu's stream-of-consciousness as it flows from past to present, between traditional and modern lifeways, and across the entire Kwakwaka'wakw territory. *Paddling to Where I Stand* offers a breath-taking, vivid, enriching cultural journey from the perspective of a privileged noblewoman who lived through it. Granny Axu's wide-ranging, extensive memories provide an abundance of relevant cultural and historic information not easily categorized by abstract academic theory.

Daisy Sewid-Smith's father, Chief James Sewid, is the subject of an earlier stream-of-consciousness narrative, *Guests Never Leave Hungry: The Autobiography of James Sewid, a Kwakiutl Indian*, transcribed by renowned anthropologist James Spradley. Its nearly 300 pages were compiled almost exclusively from tape recorded conversations between the two. This informed my approach to fieldwork, particularly in its ability to generate authentic, extensive and spontaneous recollections of importance. Sewid leaves readers with a multitude of information to comprehend, on a variety of social, cultural, economic and colonial levels. The oral histories provided by Sewid, Granny Axu, and Granny Cook offer a useful tool to assess profound social change.

Oral culture had transformed the content of history by opening up new areas of inquiry, by challenging some of the assumptions and accepted judgments of historians, and by bringing recognition to substantial groups of people who had been ignored. It changed the process of writing history by breaking through the boundaries between the educational institution and the world, and between the professional and the ordinary public.³⁶ The recognition of oral history as a legitimate knowledge source gave a voice to the marginalized, traditionally excluded from

discussion unless their perspective buoyed the ideas of the dominant class. Those voices became progressively louder as oral history gained value as a knowledge system, and the dominant class came under increasing scrutiny. Self-told community narratives allowed me to explore life as it was lived, rather than categorize experiences within academic theory. The opening chapter of Howard Becker's *Telling About Society*, expresses my position more directly:

My own professional colleagues – sociologists and other social scientists – like to talk as though they have a monopoly on creating such representations, as though the knowledge of society they produce is the only “real” knowledge about that subject. That’s not true. And they like to make the equally silly claim that the ways they have of telling about society are the best ways to do that job or the only way it can be done properly, or that their ways of doing the job guard against all sorts of terrible mistakes we would otherwise make.³⁷

Fishing is an activity all three communities have in common, and books about it inform much of this thesis. Homer Stevens, *A Life in Fishing*, traces his journey from thirteen-year-old gillnetter to president of the United Fish and Allied Workers Union (UFAWU). *Salmon Wars: The Battle for the West Coast Salmon Fishery* provides an abundance of historical information about the fishing industry from the perspective of fishermen, in particular the political economic dimensions of Canada and the United States sharing this resource. Hugh W. McKervill's, *The Salmon People*, compiles a number of fishing stories from BC communities, often located within specific historical contexts. Of particular interest is the story, “The Case of Bill Cook and his People,” which tells of a Nimpkish fisherman paralyzed by an accident on his boat. He successfully rehabilitates his body, and modifies his boat, to resume his profession, albeit from a wheelchair, in the early 1960s. Bill Cook's kinship relations, mother Jane and nephew Chris, are discussed in the Alert Bay chapter.

The narratives in *The Salmon People* led to another oral history account of the fishing industry. Sointulan fisherman Bruce Burrows' self-published book, *Blood on the Decks, Scales on the Rail: Thoughts of a Working Fisherman*, chronicles the fishing industry's descent through

two of its most tumultuous years, 1994 and 1995, through this collection of columns Burrows wrote for the North Island Gazette newspaper. His perspective came from an economic class seldom given space in corporate media: the worker whose livelihood is acutely affected by decisions beyond his control. Burrows uses his acerbic wit to address the very serious issue of economic decline, and his authenticity to unveil the enigmatic, and often comical, life of a fisherman. His unapologetic representation of working-class interests was inspiring, a voice that spoke from, for, and to people that made their living through manual labour. A fellow fisherman that “showed up at the Port Alberni hospital with part of one finger in his pocket,” demonstrates the physical toll of working in Canada’s most dangerous occupation,³⁸ though Burrows counters this with humour. “That’s why fishermen, like carpenters, always congregate in large groups in a pub. It might take eight or nine guys to order enough beer for six people.”³⁹ I met up with Bruce during my fieldwork, who was living aboard his boat moored at Sointula’s north dock.

Two other oral histories came from another of Granny Axu’s kinfolk, ‘Namgis knowledge keeper, author, historian, athlete, and cultural promoter Diane Jacobson, better known by her nickname and maiden surname, Honey Alfred. Her first autobiographical narrative, *My Life in a Kwagu’l Big House*, recounts growing up in grandmother Axu’s Alert Bay Big House alongside a number of extended relations in the 1960s and 1970s. I was struck by the book’s historical relevance, effortless authenticity, and easily-relatable style. Honey’s second book, *My Life with the Salmon*, was also a coming-of-age narrative, beginning approximately where *Kwagu’l* finished, as Honey leaves the Big House of her youth and enters adulthood. My Alert Bay host gifted me a copy of *Salmon*, and provided me with contact information for Honey, whom I met shortly after I arrived in Alert Bay. We met up in the kitchen where I was staying, where she reflected on her books, her culture, and her current work for the band. The richness with which she wrote of, as well as personally described, the ties she had to her culture, kinship, and land,

led to my reconfiguration of the idea of privilege being the sole domain of white men, one that exceeded colonial definitions of private property ownership and suffrage.

This conception of privilege was solidified after watching oral history documentaries written, directed and produced by 'Namgis filmmaker Barbara Cranmer. *Laxwesa Wa: The Strength of the River* explores the rich fishing traditions of the Sto:lo, Heiltsuk, and 'Namgis as they attempt to build a sustainable fishery for the future. *Qatuwas: People Gathering Together* chronicles the journey of thirty First Nations, paddling across ancient waterways in traditional canoes, that met up in a historic gathering of three thousand people at Bella Bella in 1993. *T'liina: The Rendering of Wealth* follows the Kwakwaka'wakw on their annual springtime trip to Knight Inlet (see Appendix 1), where they harvest the oil of eulachon fish, an activity central to their culture and economy since time immemorial. I was gifted Barb's most recent production, *I'Tustogalis: Rising Up Together - Our Voices, Our Stories*, which documents the February 2015 razing of Alert Bay's St. Michael's Indian Residential School. The film intersperses the demolition with interviews of St. Michaels' survivors, now elders, as they recount the abuse and horrors they endured at the school. With the exception of *I'Tustogalis*, all proudly affirm cultural identity, demonstrating that privilege exists beyond colonial property rights regimes and academic binaries.

In addition to *Outsiders*, Howard Becker wrote a number of other books offering advice to fieldworkers that helped inform this thesis. *Telling About Society* explores the variety of ways, some often unconventional, that knowledge about society can be shared and interpreted through different forms of telling. Films, fiction, maps, and even mathematical models offer different analytical tools, all of which are useful – for some purpose. This approach to community research aligned with my intention of inductively developing a theory to connect these three cultures. Symbolic interactionism, with its insistence on a plurality of shifting truths, allowed for

subjectivity, while rigid theory did not. *Tricks of the Trade* offers technical advice to researchers on how to organize their data through the creation of imagery, methods of sampling, development of concepts, and use of logic, to generate ideas not previously considered. As in all of Becker's work, the presumptive authority of standardized sociological theory is critiqued as insufficient for understanding real-life experience. His teacher and, later, research partner, C. Everett Hughes, had a theoretically-informed way of working, rather than a theory "designed to provide all the conceptual boxes into which the world had to fit."⁴⁰ This advice assisted me as I attempted to make meaning out of three ethnically-diverse cultures that had solved a variety of problems, in different temporal locations, with shifting identities. My fieldwork allowed me to investigate what people are actually doing, and investigate theoretical problems from empirically-derived data.

Methods

In addition to theory and literature, I made fieldwork trips to each community. The initial trips lasted four to six weeks, observing their physical, social, cultural and spiritual environments, with a goal of constructing an explanation that connected these three seemingly-diverse cultures. The cultures of Sointula and Alert Bay so interested me that I made a return trip to each, thanks to the generosity and hospitality of community members who provided me with accommodations. My fieldwork began in Sointula in February, and moved to Alert Bay in March. I consciously chose these start dates to avoid the tourist season. I wanted to investigate how each place interacted when not in the role of host. People act differently toward visiting tourists than they do toward fellow community members, and this situation was avoided by researching in the off-season, when hospitality was not the primary economic generator. I went to Lasqueti for the month of May, just as many of the island's seasonal residents were returning.

June and July were spent in Alert Bay and Sointula, when these communities were in the midst of their tourist and fishing seasons.

Data gathering for fieldwork was empirically driven, and came from a variety of sources far too numerous to list. I explored each island's environment as much as possible, and spoke to many community members along my journeys. I went to their community events, frequented their stores, libraries, and informal gathering locations, visited their institutions, and conversed with many contacts as I gathered data, applying a naturalistic observation approach to the study of human group life and human conduct in which participants are observed in their natural habitat without any manipulation by the observer. I wanted my research to reveal a conclusion, rather than reach a conclusion guided by my research, an approach of inductive reasoning that enabled an answer to emerge organically, and indiscriminately.

Empirical observations were recorded through field notes, photographs, and audio recordings. At the end of each day, I reflected on my social interactions and mined my notes for themes. Symbolic interaction was more a perspective than a theory, and the Individualized Multidisciplinary designation of my graduate studies allowed me to investigate limitless possibilities.

Snowball sampling was another data generation method. Snowballing involves asking existing research participants to suggest other acquaintances from their community for future recruitment. The research data thus grows like a snowball as it gathers information useful to the researcher, a commonly used technique of fieldwork grounded in community social networks. Snowballing led to many people, in all of the communities, who contributed to, and verified, key understandings of community expression and meaning. Due to obligations I made to my university's Ethics Board that approved this research, all community members cited in this thesis

are given pseudonyms or generic descriptions. The exception to this is notable people – authors, filmmakers, artists, politicians – that I quote from publicly-available documents.

I was trained in the research method of qualitative interviewing - formal interviews done in a structured setting - during graduate school. Though apprehensive about introducing an observer-manipulation technique into the informality of empirical research, I was also aware that this approach gave me consistent and measurable responses across all three communities. I was vetted and approved to do these interviews by my school's Ethics Review Board, and conditions for that approval were that I guarantee the anonymity of interview subjects and also have them sign waivers indicating they consented to participate. Qualitative research helped me uncover individual meanings and cultural reference points, rather than produce generic data to be quantified.

I completed thirteen qualitative interviews across the three communities, consisting of seven females and six males whom I met in a variety of settings. Some picked me up walking along the road, others I encountered in public settings like the library, other internet-access locations, health services clinics, and through social relations I cultivated during my stays in each place. Participant ages ranged from mid-twenties to post-retirement, and the duration of their time lived in a specific community spanned from less than a year to an entire life time. Rather than recruit my interviewees from recognized local historians and notable public figures – many of whom were suggested by the respective communities – I sought out community members without a public persona, although all were well-known in their own communities, and, in some cases, significantly recognized beyond them. My impetus for recruitment generally arose from a statement the friend made during our encounter which compelled further investigation: One stated she had “found home” as soon as she got off the ferry a few years earlier. Another commented on my toque at the local store after, first, recognizing its political symbolism, and,

further, offering a critique that caused me to rethink my endorsement. Yet another spoke of “not having an email address”, which intrigued me. Each interview took from a half-hour to over an hour to complete, which were recorded on a portable device I had purchased for this purpose. I listened to the recordings soon after the interviews took place, specifically when my living circumstances permitted, transcribing segments and identifying themes that emerged. Co-habitation and limited access to electricity were some of these circumstances.

My initial plan was to use this data as a central investigative tool, but I realized they did not produce the same rich, nuanced and authentic meaning that informal, undirected, participant-observation had. I recognized respondents deliberated before furnishing answers, as though they were filtering them to be something an academic might be interested in hearing, rather than reacting spontaneously, like they had in the public sphere when we had originally met. In the community, I was in their classroom. After I got them to sign a mandatory consent form, turned on the recording device, and proceeded to direct our interaction from an Ethics Board-approved questionnaire, I realized they were in my classroom, which affected their responses. That is not to say that these interviews were bereft of interesting insights and information, but rather that they were not of as much value as other methods I utilized, such as unstructured interviews, empirical observation, and generalized ethnographic fieldwork. The interviews produced some interesting findings.

My questionnaire consisted of approximately fifteen questions (see Appendix 3), primarily interested in eliciting opinions rather than looking for right-or-wrong answers. The aggregate material gathered would have filled another thesis-length paper had qualitative interviewing been my primary research tool. Fieldwork, however, was about discovery and flexibility, among other things, which served me well throughout my research journey. Situations arose that I had to respond to, the essence of symbolic interaction. The unpredictable arrival of

fishery openings, for example, affected interview appointments, as did my limited access to electricity and the internet on Lasqueti. I would not have been able to gain a comparable understanding of these communities had I limited myself to rigid standards, formal research methods, or predetermined conclusions. My analysis of qualitative interviews is included in this section as they are not community-specific, and fit into broader categorization that encompass all three cultures.

I was puzzled to learn that both Sointula and Alert Bay respondents almost uniformly considered the ferry to simultaneously be both the best and worst thing about living on an island, an opinion Lasquetians, surprisingly, did not share. Lasquetians were much more reliant upon their ferry than those in the other two communities, which had their own grocery stores, washing machines, and often their own boats. Lasqueti's privately-run, foot-passenger ferry was less predictable than the BC Ferry that serviced the other communities, as it did not run every day, had a walk-on passenger capacity, and was much more susceptible to cancellation due to inclement weather. The community most dependent on the ferry was the only one that did not consider it the best and worst thing about living on an island. I also considered whether this inconsistency was related to the fact that BC Ferries was a government-run enterprise, whereas the Lasqueti ferry was operated by a private company partially subsidized by government money. People seemed more apt to castigate a government-run operation than one from the private sector.

I noticed when listening to these interviews, beyond the content of respondents' answers, the extraneous activities and commentary occurring within the interview sessions apart from the questions. One of my first interviews got briefly sidetracked after the respondent's spouse began to detail recently completed modifications to their kitchen, identifying the species of wood used for the construction and where it had been salvaged from prior to being repurposed into their

home. I recalled being slightly annoyed toward the interruption at the time, trying to finish my assignment but getting distracted by unrelated information. Upon listening to the transcript, I realized that such details were quite relevant to my research, and, in fact, an essential component of my work rather than an impediment to it. The couple were expressing an improvement to their home, which they had recently purchased, constructed with material salvaged from the local community. The history of the wood added to the history of their house, their relationship, and their connection with the community. This revelation helped me realize that a rigid, structured approach to information gathering was not necessarily the most fruitful, accurate, or authentic one.

Similar expressions of authenticity occurred often in my interviews. “What can one find here that they cannot find anywhere else?”, was a question that briefly stumped another respondent, at which point we moved on to the next one. After this interview concluded and I conversed with another member of the household, an answer to the earlier question struck my respondent. Rather than simply state her answer, she went out to her shed and retrieved a few jars of homemade salal and salmonberry jams. “You can’t find this anywhere else,” she stated as she gifted me the jams. The fruit the jams were preserved from was unique to the region, and jarring them had been, and remained, a traditional activity in the community. Roadside pantries sold jars on an honour system, which produced supplemental income for the woman. Authenticity was something expressed by a hand-written ‘homemade jam’ roadside sign and repurposed community resources.

Another extraneous expression occurred during an interview conducted from my living quarters at the time. As my friend is in the process of answering a question she stops to ask, “how did YOU get in here?” There was no one else in the room beside us, so I was confused by her query. A bug had flown onto the table we sat at, which she offered existential reassurance to

(“you’re not supposed to be in here”) before picking it up and setting it free outside. Beyond her profound reverence for all creatures great and small, it was her addressing the bug in the first person that struck me as profound, emphasizing a sanctity for every form of life reminiscent to the Kwakwaka’wakw that say a prayer for the salmon which has sacrificed its life to feed others (see Note 158). Both examples highlight the symbolic interactionist perspective of prior meaning-making guiding present actions.

At the conclusion of the interview from my living quarters I offered to share my completed thesis with the respondent, as I did for all of my qualitative interview participants. In every other instance this was met with enthusiasm followed by the respondent furnishing an email address to send the document to. This friend, however, did not have an email address, nor had power where she lived, which she indicated during the interview. I realized I would have to mail her a printed copy of my work, and, rather than feeling taxed by the request, relished the thought of her reading my printed-paper thesis by candlelight or headlamp, emphasizing the SI premise of meaning being altered through the interpretive process that people use as they deal with the things they encounter

Another good example of symbolic interactionism occurred during an interview in response to the community events question. My friend recounted deciding to attend an evening memorial service held for a recently-passed community member after working all day. Initially, she had opted to forego the event due to fatigue, despite feeling an obligation to attend, which she stated to a fellow community member who had telephoned shortly before the service. The person on the telephone asked whether she would feel the same if it was her being memorialized. My friend contemplated this, which caused her to change her mind about attending. SI suggests we assume the role of others in our social relations, which allows one to reflect on and make meaning of a situation before deciding on a course of action.

Qualitative interviews were one of many tools I utilized to gain insight into community meaning for my research. The perception of my classroom, however, and the transference of place and authority that accompanied that, made me feel the structured interviews were not the most reliable source of information, rendering them less useful than other techniques of information-gathering.

Anthropology is the study of humans and human behaviour, and societies in the past and present. It is the science of humankind studied from cultural, linguistic, social, archaeological and physical sub-fields. Ethnography is a detailed narrative description of the way of life, considered in its entirety, of some social unit, archetypically, but not necessarily a small tribal group.⁴¹ Ethnographers rely upon a community's informants to present a native point of view and, by integrating into the group being studied, believe participant-observation an optimal approach to community studies. Ethnography is the research design of cultural anthropology, as well as the text generated from anthropological fieldwork. While anthropology looks at culture on a macro level, ethnography is more concerned with examining the micro level, focusing on how small social groups solve problems. This thesis examines both micro and macro levels of social relations.

Notes:

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². "The Kwakwaka'wakw Tribes," U'mista Cultural Centre, accessed July 09, 2019, <https://www.umista.ca/pages/kwakwakawakw-tribes>. Note: This is a fluid, rather than absolute, number. Some groups died off, and others amalgamated, as noted in this link's section 'The Kwak'wala Speaking Peoples'.

³. Karl Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 70.

⁴. Karl Marx, "Preface," *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1859), para. 6, accessed July 30, 2019, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>.

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7. Nicki Lisa Cole, "How the Ruling Class Maintains Power Using Ideas and Norms," *ThoughtCo.*, n.d., accessed July 3, 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/cultural-hegemony-3026121>.
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15. Jodi O'Brien and Peter Kollock, *The Production of Reality*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1997), 55.
16. Sandstrom, *Symbols, Selves, and Social Reality*, 37.
17. Sandstrom, *Symbols, Selves, and Social Reality*, 38.
18. Herbert Blumer, "Forward," *Violent Criminal Acts and Actors Revisited*, ed. L. Athens (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 4.

- ¹⁹. Sandstrom, *Symbols, Selves, and Social Reality*, 73.
- ²⁰. Howard Becker, *Tricks of the Trade*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 3-4.
- ²¹. Howard Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 106.
- ²². Howard Becker, "Everett C. Hughes, Great Teacher," Howie's Home Page, n.d., accessed July 28, 2019, http://www.howardsbecker.com/articles/everett_c_hughes.html.
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- ²⁵ . Ronald Hawker, *Tales of Ghosts: First Nations Art in BC 1922-61* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 26.
- ²⁶. Franz Boas, *Kwakiutl Ethnography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 35.
- ²⁷. Leslie A. Robertson and the Kwaguł Gixsam clan, *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las: Jane Constance Cook and the Politics of Memory, Church, and Custom* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 77-78. "Women spoke about being married two, three, and even four times...They were marriages arranged by the daughter's father to enable the transfer of positions and privileges to a chosen successor."
- ²⁸. Robertson et al., *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las*, 2. Note: "...ninety years since their ancestor had let go of her position in the potlatch' does not align with Ga'axsta'las renouncement upon her marriage in 1888, and the 2007 date of the potlatch. I found no other information that resolved this apparent conflict of historical dates.
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- ³⁰. Robertson et al., *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las*, 5.
- ³¹. Robertson et al., *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las*, 213.
- ³². Robertson et al., *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las*, 49.
- ³³. *Indian Act*, SC 1951, c. 29, accessed on August 7, 2019, <http://publications.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/BP/bp410-e.htm#4tx>.

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- ³⁷ . Howard Becker, *Telling About Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 6.
- ³⁸ . Senate of Canada , “When Every Minute Counts”, *Report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans* November 2018, 42.
[https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/POFO/reports/MaritimeSARReport_e\(forweb\)_e.pdf](https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/POFO/reports/MaritimeSARReport_e(forweb)_e.pdf).
- ³⁹ . Bruce Burrows, *Blood on the Decks, Scales on the Rails: Thoughts of a Working Fisherman, Complete and Revised* (Sointula, BC: self-published, 1995. Second edition, 2015), 45.
- ⁴⁰ . Howard Becker, *Tricks of the Trade*, 3.
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CHAPTER 2: SOINTULA – PLACE OF HARMONY

The Kalevan Kansa Colonization Company's arrival onto the shores of Malcolm Island opens this chapter, as it commemorates the end of an extensive journey, while ushering in an entirely new one. The first half of this chapter chronicles the political economic conditions of the Finnish emigres that led to the founding of the commune, and outlines its leadership, organization, structure, performance, and demise. I have devoted a considerable amount of space to the colony's history, as there have been few Canadian socialist utopian experiments to compare the Kalevan Kansa against, and almost none without religious foundation, making Sointula somewhat unique.⁴² Upon the colony's dissolution, new organizations, institutions, and ideas emerged to address problems faced by those who remained on Malcolm Island, demonstrating the critical role that individual agency plays in shaping a community. Most of the historical information is taken from *Practical Dreamers: Communitarianism and Co-operatives on Malcolm Island*, and *Sointula: Island Utopia*. It is important to recognize that all communities have not evolved from capitalism's script for success, which insists free markets solve all problems. Even in failure, the Kalevan Kansa planted seeds of alternative approaches to problem-solving, realized through collective actions such as the formation of the Co-op Store and fishing unions, and individual actions like boatbuilding and the invention of the drum roller. Social relations produced solutions to community impediments that free markets had not been able to solve.

My fieldwork is detailed in the second part of the chapter, providing evidence that communitarianism continues to be a major expression of Sointulan identity. I find meaning through the actions of its members, their symbols, organizations, and expressions, which offers insight into contemporary problem-solving. Neighbours have generally been a source of protection in Sointula.

Genesis

On December 15th, 1901, the first four settlers from the Kalevan Kansa Colonization Company arrived on the rugged and isolated shores of unceded Malcolm Island, an uninhabited land mass located off the eastern shores of northern Vancouver Island (see Appendix 2). The landing heralded a profound step in the journey of the expatriate Finns, who had earlier secured possession of the island from the provincial government. It was a place from which they would create a socialist utopia, where all would work in harmony to produce a common good. The means of production and the prosperity it produced would be placed into the hands of the community, rather than in the pockets of capitalists who had historically exploited the immigrant workers.⁴³ Both men and women were free to arrange their own affairs at the colony, and reap the fruit of their labour. This new home was dubbed *Sointula*, which meant ‘place of harmony’ in their mother tongue. Inspired by the epic Finnish poem, *The Kalevala*, which depicts life and work in an idyllic, rural vision of individualistic self-conception, striving for justice and a better life in the face of adversity, the settlers had found their promised land. The completion of this journey, however, began an even greater one: How to build an isolated, self-sustaining community from scratch.

The voyage had set sail nine days earlier from the central Vancouver Island mining town of Nanaimo (see Appendix 1). Powered by wind and oars, the almost 300 km trip took much longer than originally scheduled as the crew faced many obstacles along the journey, eerily foreshadowing what the colony would experience over the next four years.

The Kalevan Kansa’s journey began in Finland as the effects of the Industrial Revolution rippled into the periphery states of Europe, which led to the migration of hundreds of thousands of people to North America. After Finland industrialized in the 1860s, rural peasants flooded the labour market and created a new social class, the migrant worker, who were especially

vulnerable to financial depression and famine.⁴⁴ Finland's neighbour to the east, an increasingly authoritarian Russian Empire, introduced an Act which effectively annulled the Finnish Constitution and allowed for the conscription of Finns into the Russian Army.⁴⁵ The predicament of the migrant workers was further exacerbated by a Lutheran Church which was reluctant to educate in Finn, or even ascribe to universal education. A homeland that offered few prospects, contrasted with a New World that promised boundless opportunities, created a massive, historical emigration.

Many of the first waves of Finnish immigrants found employment building the Canadian Pacific Railway. The dangerous and low-paid work, coupled with the Finns inability to speak English, made fertile ground for worker exploitation. Upon the railway's completion in 1886, those jobs disappeared. Having few other options, many of the emigres found their way to the mines of industrialist James Dunsmuir's Collieries on Vancouver Island,⁴⁶ where similar circumstances of lethal work and economic desperation were once again met.

Many of the Finns were hired to push tram cars loaded with ore for \$3.00 a day. During their ten-to-twelve hour shift they worked underground in perpetual darkness, with the constant threat of fire, cave-ins and death from afterdamp, the lethal gas created when coal dust explodes. Between 1899 and 1908, twenty-three men died for every million tons of coal produced in British Columbia. 'To know the toil and burdensomeness of descending into the bottomless jaws, never knowing whether one will surface alive, dead, or badly injured to live the rest of one's life a cripple at the mercy of others', was founding colony member Matti Halminen's description of working in the mines.⁴⁷

Life outside the mines was not much better. Scraps of discarded materials were thrown together and called 'home,' quickly dismantled and carried by hand to a new location after the current mine was exhausted and a new one found. Drinking and fighting were commonplace, which Dunsmuir complemented by allowing two breweries to make wagon deliveries to camp each day, and letting the miners charge purchases against their monthly paycheque.⁴⁸ The false consciousness of the workers produced widespread alcohol abuse, violence, and community disharmony, as they fought with each other, rather than together against an unjust system. Two

Finnish temperance groups emerged from this situation, *Lannen Rusko* in 1890, and *Allotar* in 1891, which provided the genesis of the Sointula experiment.⁴⁹ The groups led to a spiritual awakening for the Finns, and they began to discuss ways in which to improve their working and living conditions. The promised prosperity of New World had never materialized, but merely continued to render the Finns at the mercy of capitalist domination, just as they had been in the mother country, and just as Karl Marx had predicted. This repeated cycle could not be overcome unless an entirely new system of social organization was adopted and implemented. A group of twenty Finnish miners interested in socialism decided to form a utopian community,⁵⁰ setting in motion a counter-hegemonic resistance that exists to the present.

Leadership

The aspiring community needed leadership. Matti Kurikka was a charismatic, eloquent, and handsome journalist and playwright who had established himself as editor of the working-class newspaper *Tyomies*, in the Finnish capital of Helsinki, by the end of the 19th century. His columns advocated for workers' and women's rights and were openly critical of the tyranny of the Lutheran Church. A narrow loss in 1899 to become leader of the Finnish Socialist Federation convinced him his ideas would never find a home in Finland, and he left the country soon after for Queensland, Australia, where he hoped to form a utopian commune.⁵¹ One of his final essays in *Tyomies* proclaimed:

We shall discover the historical salvation of our people through emigration. In Finland the working class may eat only raw herring and drink skimmed milk....it is not worthwhile for working people to remain. I intend to move from the contamination and slander of Helsinki to a place where I may feel direct contact with nature.⁵²

Kurikka's ideas resonated within the Finnish working class, and subsequent public meetings attracted over 800 people. He successfully recruited 180 fellow passengers for his trip to Australia in the summer of 1899, with over half firmly committed to his ideas.⁵³ Those not as committed were taking advantage of the Australian government's offer of free passage

mentioned by Kurikka in the public meetings. Despite his enthusiasm, the reality of the exodus soon became clear: “The Australians see the Finlanders as a source of cheap labour and a half-barbarous people,” he wrote his daughter Aili, a notion shared by many of the other emigres, who felt they were being cheated on their pay, and held Kurikka, as leader, responsible.⁵⁴ Exploitation of migrant labour was not limited to Finland, rail line construction, or Dunsmuir Collieries, but rather seemed to infect workers wherever they went.

Kurikka’s devotees soon abandoned him and found jobs elsewhere, leaving the utopian community no larger than 10 tents pitched near a remote rail line.⁵⁵ He was working in a factory producing railway ties when a letter arrived from Matti Halminen in Nanaimo, asking for his leadership. Though he had lost the attention of his transplanted followers in Australia, pamphlets he had published that urged Finns everywhere to join his commune had found their way to Canada. A destitute Kurikka responded to Halminen’s request almost immediately:

I was lying exhausted in bed when your letter came. I have received two letters from Finland, both urging me to return to my homeland and accompanied by a promise to pay passage and expenses. As you know, I can no longer conceive of travelling to a Finland dominated by a Russian pirate government, except in the company of cannons and Mauser rifles. I'm ready to leave Australia and to come to you. If you could send me travelling expenses, I would give myself solely to the founding of the commune. My hands are as calloused as anyone's and I'm prepared to do work of any kind. I want to be with you to plant the seed of betterment from which bountiful crops will grow for the joy of mankind and the glory of Finland.⁵⁶

The Finns in Nanaimo gathered the requested \$125 passage fare, and Kurikka arrived there in the fall of 1900. The following spring, Kurikka and Halminen went to the provincial capital in Victoria to scout potential Crown Land available for their experimental settlement. Despite never having seen the site, they secured Malcolm Island: 28,000 acres of isolated rock located 185 nautical miles north of Vancouver. It was remote, had bountiful rain forests, and a moderate, maritime climate to support agriculture.

The agreement Kurikka and Halminen signed with the provincial government stated that ownership of the island would be transferred to the Kalevan Kansa after seven years, provided that 350 settlers had built homes on the island and made improvements to the land in the amount of \$2.50 per acre. It also required the colonists become British subjects, educate their children in English, and build their own wharves, bridges, roads, and public buildings.⁵⁷ Unlike the Kwak'wala-speaking school children in nearby Alert Bay, there were no restrictions on, or punishment for, Sointulan students speaking in their mother tongue. The Finnish settlers also had the right to own real property, such as a home and land, which the Indigenous peoples of Alert Bay did not.

The colony would be granted ownership of the island and community infrastructure once it fulfilled these seemingly-attainable conditions, and, once achieved, the government pledged to grant them additional property similar in size to Malcolm Island.⁵⁸ Procurement of the space inspired Kurikka to write:

We now have an island rich in natural beauty, blessed with a good climate, and near prosperous shipping routes. There we will create our own country, bringing all Finns to live within its shelter... . We will be self-sufficient and produce everything we need. Unemployment and sickness will evaporate into the past and strikes and poverty will become unknown. It only depends on us to break free from the feet of the capitalists and to become equals. Only then will the characteristics of our nationality have an opportunity to blossom and prosper!⁵⁹

The Kalevan Kansa Colonization Company was formed as a joint stock company to raise capital for the commune. Anybody who wanted to join the colony was offered one of 500 individual membership shares, which each cost \$200. For those without sufficient capital to buy a share, a down payment of \$50 was asked. As a last resort, one could pay for their share entirely with labour.⁶⁰ In reality, it appears no one was ever turned away. Growing the membership was a more important goal than solvency, and a lack of financial resources did not disqualify one from joining the community.

Organization

After arriving in Nanaimo, Kurikka recognized his radical ideas needed some balance, a counterweight which could put into practice his lofty ambitions. His idealism needed a pragmatic approach to address the practical needs of the community, and he also needed someone who could look after Kalevan Kansa when he was away recruiting. He penned an invitation to an old friend from his university days, Austin Makela, who had helped temper his extreme nature in the late 1890s, when both wrote for *Tyomies*.⁶¹ Makela responded to the invitation almost immediately, and arrived in Nanaimo with his wife, Elli, soon after, where he was quickly appointed Acting Secretary of the Kalevan and also made a joint editor of *Aika*, the newspaper created to promote Sointula. Makela was a member of the second Kalevan Kansa party to reach Malcolm Island's shores, arriving in January 1902.⁶² After surveying the island, he reported in *Aika* that it was, "... favourable and that there was no reason why they shouldn't be able to have a comfortable home on their own piece of land in the near future, providing they would all work hard and in unity."⁶³ Colony members began arriving soon after. Kaisa Riksman offered this description:

They were going to share everything. Everyone would be working for the common good. No one owned anything separately and individually. They planned to farm and log, and all the proceeds would be divided equally.... Especially, they emphasized that women should have equal rights with men. At that time women had no property rights, they had no rights whatsoever in wages, so this was one thing applied here. The women had a dollar a day wages, as the men did, and they had a right to speak at meetings, and they had a right to vote. And they had to work. Everyone had to work.⁶⁴

The vision and distant goal of the ethically just society that is utopian socialism had recognized, perhaps for the first time, the rights and contributions of its membership who were women. At the time, as the above passage notes, women did not have the right to vote in the Canadian elections and were not even legally recognized as persons at the time. Sointula was a model of

increasingly just gender relations within the national society; it was a community where women were recognized as equals to men as every citizen worked toward a common good.

Work was organized into three primary industries: Fishing, logging, and agriculture. Each work group would have a supervisor elected who represented the Board of Directors. Each leader was to be responsible for the tools and materials used by their group. All complaints regarding the leader were to be made to the supervisor, or if necessary, to the Board. If all the members of a group were dissatisfied with its leader a new one would be elected. An eight-hour day in all branches of work was decided upon, although the then-prevalent nine-hour day was favoured by many.⁶⁵ Women discussed and planned their work at their own meetings.⁶⁶ Kurrika's recruitment lecture explained,

...every aspect of the commune, from meals to child rearing, would be handled on a cooperative basis. Men and women would be employed at an equal wage, with meals and clothing supplied by the company and considered part of the pay. Members would require little in the way of money, as the company would look after most of their needs. The Kalevan Kansa would also take care of children, the sick and the elderly. Children would be admitted to the commune free of charge, with the understanding that when they were grown they would work for the colony and look after the older generation.⁶⁷

The cooperative basis cited here underscores a vision of working together to produce a desirable outcome for all involved, activating a threatening counter-ideology to the dominant capitalist model of exploitation of the many for the benefit of few. Sointula's inclusion of women represented a profound break from hegemony.

Recruitment efforts began to pay off. In June 1902, the membership was 127.⁶⁸ At the beginning of 1903, it had grown to 193, consisting of 87 men, 39 women, and 67 children. By the end of that year, 100 men, 50 women and 88 children - ten of them born in Sointula - brought the population to 238 people.⁶⁹ Kurikka's bold vision of social organization resonated across North America's Finnish working-class diaspora. They had heard him speak, and read about Sointula in *Aika*, before deciding to exercise agency and join the fledgling commune.

Obstacles

If enthusiasm, commitment, hard work, resilience, and perseverance were the only characteristics required for success, the Kalevan Kansa might have enjoyed a long history. “If we had possessed as much wisdom and practical experience as we had sacrifice and vigor, we might have done better,” lamented colony founder Matti Halminen.⁷⁰ The logistical problem of their remoteness from markets, a lack of familiarity with technology, and difficulty with the English language presented significant obstacles for their industry. The result of these obstacles contributed to the community’s biggest problem, a lack of money, which had beset them almost immediately. Austin Makela described the dilemma:

Proudly though we turned our backs to the capitalistic world we were nonetheless dependent upon it in every way. The first boatload of goods brought to the island was bought on credit. We were always in the same predicament: purchases had to be made first, payments dragged ever further and further behind.⁷¹

Whether they agreed with it or not, the colony was trapped in a capitalist, free market system from its onset, forced to rely upon the system for its very survival. Efforts to address this problem took many forms, often producing tragic, disastrous results.

The Kalevan Kansa decided to build a three-story communal house. It was constructed in a few weeks in late 1902, and housed twenty-eight sleeping rooms, a meeting room, a tailor’s shop, Kurikka’s office and sleeping quarters, and a mortar baking oven, which also dispersed heat to the rest of the building.⁷² In haste, little consideration had been given to the freshly harvested wood used to construct the building, which had not been given a proper amount of time to season. The wood boards soon shrank, and left large cracks in the walls and floors, fissures which proved to be fatal. On the night of January 29, 1903, the community house caught on fire and burned to the ground, taking the lives of eight children, two women and one man. Though the tragedy undoubtedly devastated the community, it did not signal its demise. After the inferno many left, but many also stayed, committed to their socialist ideals and undeterred by the

tragedy. Three weeks after the fire, ninety-three colony members conducted their Annual General Meeting (AGM) in a partially-built log *sauna*. Treasurer August Oberg reported a balance of income and expenses, approximately \$20,000 each, with outstanding loans that amounted to a \$60,000 deficit for the colony, since nearly all of the capital equipment had been purchased on credit.⁷³ Despite the tragic circumstances and grim financial report, those remained were resolute, exercising individual and group agency, and willing to make any sacrifice necessary to build and support the community and its aspirations.

In the spring of 1904, Kurikka put forth a bid of \$3,000 to construct the Seymour and Capilano Bridges in North Vancouver using Sointula's lumber and manpower. Although the bid appeared to be ridiculously low, Kurikka convinced the membership that the possibility of future contracts in the Vancouver area, potentially worth tens of thousands of dollars, would compensate for any losses incurred undertaking the project.⁷⁴ To clinch the argument, he announced that the financial affairs of the colony were so dire that all supplies, even food, would end if the agreement was not signed and approved.⁷⁵ The membership reluctantly endorsed the bid, and shortly after, the colony sent its men away to build the bridges. Disastrous consequences soon followed. Over one hundred of the colony's members worked without wages and on their own board for over four months, and hundreds of thousands of feet of Malcolm Island's best timber was sacrificed to complete construction of the bridges. Kurikka had urged the men to go on strike, but at that point few listened to him anymore.⁷⁶

The disgruntled workers returned to Sointula, ready to voice outrage at their predicament, by which time another controversy had erupted. Kurikka's recently-penned columns in *Aika* urged, "Kalevan Kansa men to declare only the rights of love, not the chains of marriage," and advised the women that, "they need not be ashamed of motherhood outside of marriage."⁷⁷ These issues succeeded in alienating a large number of remaining Kalevan members, and deepened a

rift between Kurikka and Makela that had been simmering since the fire. A raucous meeting at the end of September 1904 addressed these issues, with sides forming around both leaders. It concluded with Kurikka's resignation from the Kalevan Kansa, and he left Sointula soon after, along with approximately half of the remaining membership, never to return.⁷⁸

The final meeting of The Kalevan Kansa Colonization Co. was held on May 27, 1905. Thirty-six shareholders remained, who voted to dissolve the company and divide the few remaining assets. Each colony resident – a share granted membership to an entire family - received ten pounds of flour, one pound of pork, a few fish, a plate, a cup, and a saucer.⁷⁹ Austin Makela's earlier, extremely fortuitous suggestion to rent eighty-acre lots to interested Kalevan Kansa members, as a means to secure their land if the agreement with the government collapsed, was heeded by nearly every family left on the island.⁸⁰ Provincial archivist Gordon Fish outlines the bittersweet future they faced:

Slightly more than 100 people remained at Sointula. They now had their own parcels of land, for which they had paid \$1 an acre, some basic foodstuffs, and very little else. At least there were no more debts to pay; they were making a fresh start, and they had their own resourcefulness.⁸¹

Though the aspirations of creating a worker's utopia had incinerated in a miasma of tragedy, mismanagement, and overwhelming debt, the remaining colony members had salvaged some assets from the charred remains: A piece of property, a peace of mind, and a supporting cast of like-minded community members who would help each other persevere through difficult times. Hard work, resilience, and determination translate to the Finnish word *sisu*, adopted by the local culture for a term of self-identification.

Post-Utopia - Cooperation

The commune's dissolution forced Sointulans to create new cultural institutions to meet both practical and ideological needs. The Sointula Cooperative Store was formed by twenty-six founders in 1909, three of whom were women.⁸² It was intended to, "protect Sointula from total

dependence on the capitalist system,”⁸³ and to this day, remains the most important political and social institution in the community, proudly hailing itself as “western Canada’s oldest co-op.”⁸⁴ Though difficult to express the enormity of the store’s role over the course of the last century, its longevity alone attests to the successful merging of existential principles the original colony’s remaining members had integrated into action. The co-op’s founders rejected the assumption that only a free market system was capable of fulfilling a populace’s needs after they decided the store not charge more than a five percent markup over the landed cost of a good.⁸⁵ The role of agency in fulfillment of community goals had not left the island with the Kalevan Kansa. Entrepreneurial success was not prioritized over people’s needs.

Delivering affordable necessities was one of the co-op’s many roles. The store’s bulk, collective buying power, utilized to reduce shipping costs and bring in goods affordably, was leveraged to export Sointula goods, providing a crucial economic benefit to those who had products to sell to the outside world.⁸⁶ Fishing, agriculture and logging continued to be the island’s main industries after the commune’s demise, and the co-op’s shipping rates helped make these endeavours viable, as prohibitive transportation costs had previously derailed them from profitability. These exports produced much-needed revenue for farmers, loggers and fishermen, who were able to sell their goods to the store, which then sold and shipped them to the outside world. This created a local economy and also helped ensure the store’s success.⁸⁷ Other roles the Co-op Store assumed at various times were to house a regular medical and dental clinic, use its vault as a bank, fund the local library, and send the Co-op truck out to haul gravel and fix roads, among other things.⁸⁸

One of the co-op’s more important functions was not a fixed activity, but rather its role as an unofficial meeting place, a social space where one was free to articulate, in either Finn or English, and be met with a captive audience. The building that provided for the community’s

material needs also furnished a space from which to address its spiritual, political, and social needs. For the first time since the Kalevan Kansa, the Finns had a central organization to which virtually everyone belonged. “The Co-op did everything here. It took the place of local government and for years it basically ran the community,” stated Urho Tynjala, a child from the colony whose family had decided to stay.⁸⁹ The Co-op store continues to be the backbone of the community, its primary place of social interaction, and has survived despite its rejection of capitalist, free-market imperatives.

Fishing

The role of fishing in Sointula, as a source for both food security and the town’s dominant industry for over a century, cannot be underestimated. The Finns thrived on fishing the variety of species available in the local waters, which included salmon, halibut, cod, and herring, and had found an occupation in which their capacity for hard work was more important than money, training, or fluency in a second language. Being on the open water was a much more tolerable work environment than being underground in the coal mines, and one had a greater degree of agency operating their fishing boat than they did pushing a tram car. “Without fishing we would have been practically starving, we wouldn’t have anything,” stated Alfred Williams, a Sointula fisherman (note: This term includes women fishers, many of whom also use it for self-identification), “everything we have here comes from fish.”⁹⁰ Gruelling work and isolation were conditions the Finns adapted to. The bigger obstacles were negotiating the prices canneries paid for fish, as well as having few options available outside of renting cannery boats and equipment,⁹¹ a lopsided cycle of economic dependence reminiscent of working in the collieries. The Sointulans responded to these problems by forming their own organizations and industries.

The United Fishermen of BC was organized in Sointula in 1917, “...to protect fishermen against exploitation by cannery owners, to secure better prices for their catch, to protest against

restrictions which now inconvenience fishermen, and to provide better working conditions.”⁹²

That year, at the height of the First World War, Finnish, Japanese, and Indian fishermen stopped fishing after the canneries refused to pay any more than 15 cents a fish.⁹³ They eventually negotiated a raise in the price of fish, and though it was less than what they wanted, the action set an example of a united front fighting back against the powerful canneries. In 1936, at the height of the Depression, canneries again slashed prices to the point where most fishermen, English-speaking and foreign-speaking, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, were losing money rather than making it.⁹⁴ British Columbia’s coastal anglers again went on strike, which included a coordinated effort by Alert Bay’s First Nations fishermen, covered in the next chapter. North Vancouver Island fisherman Lester Peterson recalled,

The 1936 strike was a good example of Finnish influence. Never before had there been such a united show of fishermen. We just sat and watched the fish go by....The leaders who held us together during the Great Strike were the Sointula fishermen.⁹⁵

Although the entire 1936 fishing season was sacrificed for the strike, in the following year canneries agreed to pay for fish by the pound and allowed fishermen a choice of either seven cents a pound or forty cents a fish.⁹⁶ Spurred by the strike’s success, and with hopes of uniting the disparate membership, the most powerful and effective of all BC fishermen unions formed in 1945, the United Fish and Allied Workers Union (UFAWU), which almost single-handedly improved Sointula’s economy. In 1951, the union secured a \$35 to \$50 a month raise for its shore workers, as well as a 25%-36% increase in salmon prices for its fishermen.⁹⁷ Apart from being expelled from the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada during the red-baiting 1950s,⁹⁸ and refused admittance to the Canadian Labour Congress until 1973,⁹⁹ the UFAWU continued to be a strong influence in the community. Declining membership caused it to merge with the Canadian Auto Workers in 1996.¹⁰⁰ The UFAWU flag continues to fly on many Sointulan boat masts.

Fishing also initiated secondary industries in Sointula such as boat building and refitting, that initiated employment opportunities to the community and also demonstrated its philosophical commitment to self-reliance, a defining characteristic of the post-colony descendants. One could build and service their own boat, and enjoy a level of movement and freedom on the open ocean that the claustrophobic jaws of the mine did not offer. “Since fishing and processing technology and techniques are continually improving, a firm belief in the value of collective action combined with the application of individual skill was an important feature of Sointula life for many years,” Sointulan fisher Alfred Williams stated,¹⁰¹ highlighting how individual agency contributes to collective action.

John Anderson moved to Sointula in 1911, and established the first of Malcolm Island’s many boat yards in 1918. By 1951, Anderson Marine Ways had built over 600 vessels.¹⁰² In 1936, Sointula gillnetter Laurie Jarvis modified the rear end system of a Model A Ford to invent the gillnet drum,¹⁰³ which revolutionized the fishing industry by replacing the back-breaking work of hauling in nets by hand with mechanical technology. Though the invention did not make Jarvis rich, as it was too easy to produce for him to maintain an effective patent, the gillnet drum is still widely used in the fishing industry, and demonstrates Sointulan’s strong independent streak and inventiveness in overcoming obstacles. It also provides strong evidence of the SI link between individual agency and collective good.

Declining fish returns, especially that of the prized sockeye salmon, became evident in the 1980s, but it was not until 1992 that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) closed the entire South Coast sockeye salmon fishery due to the drastic shortfall in the spawning escapement.¹⁰⁴ Two separate years in the early 1990s saw BC fishermen land in excess of \$250 million worth of salmon, but by 1995 that figure had plummeted to \$100 million, and has been in a steady decline ever since, with few years peaking above \$50 million.¹⁰⁵ It is impossible to

gauge the effect of the industry's collapse on numerous fishing towns along the Pacific coast, both Native and non-Native, and exceeds the scope of this thesis.

Statistical information identifies the unemployment rate in Sointula's Mount Waddington Regional District increased, from 9% to 21%, between the years 1996 and 2011.¹⁰⁶ The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) initially addressed the problem of declining salmon returns in 1996 by implementing its Mifflin Plan, subtitled the Pacific Salmon Fleet Restructuring Program, which attempted to minimize economic damage by instituting various licensing schemes and buy-back programs on vessel owners, with an eventual goal of a fleet reduction. It also hoped to transition non-vessel owning workers away from the fishing industry. The effect of the plan's intentions has been controversial, to put it mildly, and is also beyond the scope of this thesis, but interested readers are directed to Dennis Brown's, *Salmon Wars: The Battle for the West Coast Salmon Fishery*, for further analysis. Sointula lost its last two fish processing plants in the aftermath of the industry's collapse, and the town's remaining fleet consists of, "a handful of gillnetters, no trawlers, and one seiner that hasn't fished in years."¹⁰⁷ The economic hardship fishermen and shore workers experienced from the collapse was also felt in secondary and tertiary enterprises, such as boat building, the Co-op store, and drinking establishments.

Historical Context

Sointula's commitment to self-reliant communitarianism and socialist principles remained relatively static from the original settlers through to the 21st century. The Canadian government's perception of their philosophy, however, was affected by two World Wars and the Great Depression. The Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada (FSOC) formed in 1911 and established a Sointula local later that year.¹⁰⁸ The group's blend of socialism and cultural promotion likely fulfilled a quasi-religious role in the lives of the secular Finns, servicing both

social and spiritual needs of the community, and it met at the community auditorium, which they renamed the Finnish Organization (FO) Hall, a building still in use today. In the wake of Russia's 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the Canadian government declared the FSOC illegal on September 25, 1918.¹⁰⁹ The group reappeared a year later under the new banner of The Finnish Organization of Canada, who were affiliated with the Communist Party of Canada, creating a situation where virtually everyone in Sointula was a member of the Communist Party.¹¹⁰ Group identity conflicted with national political economy.

World War II produced similar fears, and in August of 1940 the Canadian government again banned the FO.¹¹¹ WWII also presented the Sointulans with conflicting loyalties. An expansionist Soviet Union had tried to persuade Finland to cede part of its territory to create a buffer zone between Russia and Nazi Germany. Rather than capitulate to its giant neighbour, Finland fought back, which sparked the Winter War of 1939-40. Though Sointulans were loyal to their homeland and had historically despised the Russians, they also had a competing allegiance to the idea of world-wide socialism, promoted by Russia leader Joseph Stalin, who urged all Communist Finns to "help him build a strong socialist Karelia",¹¹² the Finnish border area Russia was attempting to annex. A culturally-shifting Sointula had to navigate its way through these philosophical differences, and debate at the Co-op Store became so boisterous that chairs inside the shop, where such discussions often took place, had to be removed.¹¹³ providing a good example of SI's 'plurality of shifting truths, grounded in concrete experiences and language, in which truth is appraised in terms of its consequences'.

A minor population explosion that occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s came from a new cultural group, American draft dodgers. Expatriates fleeing conscription from US military service in the Vietnam War, and others from the American hippie movement, began to spread word of the isolated community off the coast of northern Vancouver Island,¹¹⁴ similar to what

precipitated Lasqueti Island's population influx, which is detailed in that community's history. Also, quite similar to Lasqueti, Sointula had no churches, policemen, or politicians, which placed those two communities in stark contrast to Alert Bay, which has historically had all three. Though exact numbers of Sointula's Vietnam War-era immigration are difficult to quantify, the cultural shift that appears to have taken place is emblematic of the adaptive nature of the practical dreamers who brought settlement to Sointula. Though the hippies and Sointulans had profound differences like ethnic background, exposure to modernity, and even something as innocuous as appearance, they shared common qualities of self-reliance, communitarianism, and a distrust of authority. These are shared cultural characteristics across all three communities of my research, despite the presence of local institutional authority in Alert Bay.

Journey Begins – Sointula Fieldwork

After spending most of the day commuting from Vancouver, I arrived in Sointula on a Saturday night in February. It had gotten dark and started to rain by the time I disembarked from the BC Ferry that had taken me from Port McNeill to Malcolm Island, and I was pleasantly surprised when my lodging hosts picked me up as I trudged along dark, slippery, unfamiliar roads toting my assorted cargo. These hosts provided me with transportation, information, and hospitality almost immediately upon my arrival in Sointula, efforts which never dissipated over the course of multiple stays in the town. I officially commenced fieldwork a few days later with a simple walk into town.

The walk into town provided a rich perspective, offering clues of the community's cultural heritage. Homes were often painted in bright aquatic colours, and their grounds were generally well kept, though they also showed evidence of multiple use of property, such as chicken coops on front lawns and horse stables. Saunas, flags of Finland, and Finnish words and slogans evoked the town's history, as did references to its fishing heritage, expressed through

cork-line property fences and repurposed herring nets used as fruit tree protection. Though these walks into town were intended for research data generation, they were often cut short by a community expression I could not have foreseen: locals' generous offers of transportation. My curtailed walks unveiled a key aspect of the town's culture and the symbolically negotiated meaning of its residents.

Community Expression

Indeed, I did not make it very far on that initial walk before I was offered an unsolicited ride, the first of dozens of transportation offers I received in Sointula. The offer of a ride to a stranger walking down the street was so commonplace that I came to understand it as a community expression. The 'unsolicited' part was essential. Motorists routinely pick up travellers actively soliciting a ride, expressed through the symbolic gesture of raising one's thumb toward approaching cars, referred to as a "hitchhiking" or "thumbing." Walking was a passive action that did not make an explicit request which warranted a response. The driver of a passing car had to initiate any interaction we might have. I had to walk the entire distance less than a handful of times in the dozens of trips made into, and back from, town, and not once did I actively solicit a driver's offer.

This community expression was not limited to offering rides, but also extended to the action of waving at pedestrians and passing cars, a behaviour exercised with near uniformity in Sointula. Everybody waved at everybody else, even when you did not know the other person. Waving was a near-effortless, friendly gesture that expressed inclusion and warmth. Its reciprocity, waving back, affirmed these notions, while its absence identified indifference, or perhaps even hostility. Eager to fit into the community, I quickly adopted the gesture, anxious to earn my place as an insider to the local culture. Later, I replicated the gesture in the other

communities of my research, using it as a barometer to gauge friendliness toward unrecognized visitors.

The continual offers of transportation provided a key piece of evidence for understanding Sointula through a symbolic interaction lens. This revelation arose in a conversation with one of the many friends I made in Sointula, Bernie, who was about the same age as I and had lived there nearly his entire life. I expressed how cordial and friendly town residents were, always waving and consistently offering a ride, actions which had provided insight into the community simply by engaging in my daily chores. I was grateful, enriched, and ultimately transported to my destination. “It’s not entirely altruistic,” my friend cautioned, “those people are just as interested in checking you out as you are them.” He was probably right, having likely done it himself many times, and this perspective helped balance the perception of the role I played in the community. My own meanings were altered through the duration of an offered ride, as were the meanings of those who offered the ride, as we exchanged conversation between ourselves, and within ourselves.

Engaging with Community

I first encountered Bernie during a hike early in my stay, but we did not officially meet until a few days after that. I was hiking along the shoreline to get a different perspective on the town, and had made note of the incoming tides to avoid getting stranded in a bad spot.

After hiking for about an hour, I turned around, since the receding sunlight became a more immediate concern than the tide. I was almost back to my lodgings when I encountered a small group of people along the shoreline of an ocean-front property. To my right were a young woman and a little girl, perhaps her child, joyfully playing near the water. I heard the child’s glee and the woman’s encouragement as I neared them. To my left I saw - and heard - a man chopping wood. He wore shorts, but it was his upper torso that caught my attention as it

vigorously brought the axe down on the logs, each swing punctuated by a loud grunt. The Sointula Finns were cut from a genetic stock that had toiled laying down rail lines, pushing tram cars in the mines, felling old-growth timber without mechanical help, and manually hauling in fishnets before Laurie Jarvis invented the drum roller. I remembered reading about Finnish marksman Simo Hayha,¹¹⁵ warfare's most feared and prolific sniper, and did not want any trouble with a Finn brandishing an axe. The incoming tide created a fork in my path: One direction led toward the man chopping wood, the other toward the girls. Instinctively, I chose the direction of the gleeful shouts. Little did I realize this man would become a central figure in my thesis, a proud father and grandfather, life-long fisherman, cultural historian, union activist, and veritable working-class hero that provided me with an abundance of research avenues and materials. He later allowed me to stay in his home as I began to write this thesis. The child playing in the water was his granddaughter, the woman accompanying her his daughter, Betty. I nodded to the woman as I passed, neither of us realizing we had been communicating through email over the previous weeks.

A few days later, I was walking toward town and heard the familiar sound of a car slowing down as it neared me. Once the vehicle reached me, I looked over at the driver and realized she was the same woman I had seen on the shoreline. "You're Ron, right?" she asked through the open passenger window, an anxious dog trying to escape her lap. "Yes," I responded, "and you must be Betty." "Yeah," she confirmed, "I should have realized it was you down at the water the other day. Need a ride? I'm just heading into town to meet my friend Cathy, who's over from Alert Bay getting a boat inspection."

Though I did not realize it at the time, this chance encounter would have a profound effect on the trajectory of my fieldwork, and likely my entire worldview. The groundwork I had done preparing for my fieldwork would pay off with this fortuitous encounter. SI offered an ideal

framework for examining this, with its emphasis on past social relations affecting present action. I had made contact with Betty through a person I met during my graduate school year in Lethbridge. When I met Betty, many months later in Sointula, she introduced me to her friend Cathy, who became a crucial conduit into the Alert Bay community. Cathy gave me advice on whom to contact in the ‘N̄amgis band office to get the permission that was necessary to do research, and later provided a pivotal entry into Kwakwaka’wakw culture, unveiling an entire society I was woefully unaware of. It was difficult to fathom how much impact a random bus stop introduction in Lethbridge – six months earlier and 1600 km away – had on my education.

Symbols of Resistance

My regular excursions into Sointula provided an abundant amount of data to observe, record, and analyze. A good example of community expression was unveiled by these trips, a bumper sticker which appeared on many parked cars and vehicles driving past. It was an artistic rendition of a wild salmon skeleton, underlined by the phrase, “Backbone of the BC Coast.” This was a symbolic reference to the importance of wild salmon to the coastal economy, and its popularity was obviously a source of community identity. A veiled critique of fish farms was contained within the drawing, emphasizing the wild salmon’s identifiable mouth, a feature the domesticated Atlantic species lacked. The problems of the fish farming industry are discussed in greater depth in the Kuterra subheading of the Alert Bay chapter.



Fig. 1. Ronald Howe, *Anissa Reed's iconic bumper sticker design*, February 2017, photograph, Sointula, British Columbia.

It was undoubtedly Sointula's most popular bumper sticker, and its simplistic, comprehensive message conveyed a meaning shared in both fishing-based communities of Alert Bay and Sointula. A variation of the sticker showed the same fish rendition, but had changed the 'Backbone' phrase to "Born to be Wild," which addressed the problems of domestic fish farming more directly. Both came from local artist Anissa Reed's extensive clothing line, which included hats, hoodies, t-shirts, scarves, and jewellery. Reed had been able to expand her self-created hobby into a business, the Wild Lil' Gift Shop, that operated out of a trailer in Sointula's north dock parking lot.

The image of the skeletal fish referred to both the collapse of the wild fishing industry, as well as the problems created by its assumed replacement, industrial fish farms, which appeared to be contributing to the collapse. 'Backbone' identified the wild salmon's physical structure, but also, symbolically, identified the economic base fishing had historically provided to coastal communities. The sticker conveyed multiple, congruent expressions calling attention to the

massive job losses the wild fishing industry had endured, as well as opposition to the farmed industry, two symbolically-negotiated meanings. It was also an expression of identity, individually for fishers, and collectively for the community.

When the fish farming industry began its incursion onto the coastal maritime environment in the mid 1980s, many communities near the farms, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, had expressed support for the emerging industry, desperate to replace the massive job losses caused by declining salmon returns.¹¹⁶ That sentiment had changed over time, as the new industry had failed to provide the economic fix earlier promised, which left many in doubt as to its necessity.¹¹⁷ Additionally, scientific evidence consistently pointed toward the arrival of fish farms as a contributor to declining fish stocks, rather than a saviour of them. The change in the perception of fish farming provides another good example for SI analysis, one which recognizes a ‘plurality of shifting truths, grounded in concrete experiences and language, in which truth is appraised in terms of its consequences.’

Anissa succeeded in mixing art and commerce to bring attention to the plight of the wild fishing industry, and also created both a brand, and community identification, highlighting symbolic interactionism’s aim of looking at the process of social change. Witnessing the decline of the fishing industry and its effect upon her community, Anissa designed her attention-grabbing bumper sticker to direct attention toward those job losses. The community adopted the sticker as an identity marker, conspicuously displaying it on their automobiles to create, reproduce, and amplify its message. Seeing other community members diffuse this negotiated meaning undoubtedly contributed to its broader popularity, which, in turn, contributed to social change. The single act of Anissa’s agency fit together with other community actions to publicize economic and environmental hardship.

Both Anissa and her daughter, Freyja, faced the intimidation tactics of the Norwegian multinational fish farming company, Marine Harvest, who, along with fellow Norwegian conglomerate Cermaq, held most of the fish farming leases in nearby Broughton Archipelago.¹¹⁸ Marine Harvest's growing negative public perception in the region compelled it to engage in brand rehabilitation. One example of this involved its sponsorship of local athletic teams, offering a good example of hegemony's influence through 'subtle, barely perceptible means.' Corporations like Marine Harvest hoped to improve the community's assessment of their business practices by underwriting youth athletics, so that opposition to their industry was negated by their financial contributions toward local sports organizations.

The Upper Island Riptide belong to the Vancouver Island Premier Soccer League, fielding rosters of both boys and girls under-18 teams. In 2015, the Riptide entered into an extensive sponsorship agreement with Marine Harvest that saw the company's logo displayed on every player's jersey, and its name connected with any mention of the club.¹¹⁹ By 2018, the club was officially recognized as the Marine Harvest Riptide.

Anissa moved from Sointula to the Vancouver Island town of Comox to enable her 14-year old daughter Freyja, a promising goalkeeper, to play for the Riptide.¹²⁰ The Riptide inked their deal with Marine Harvest after Freyja had made the club, which upset both women. Anissa expressed her frustration through art designs and social media, while Freyja removed the corporate logo from her jersey.¹²¹ Riptide management felt the actions of both women were inappropriate, and met with the pair to dissuade them from speaking out. Neither capitulated, and teenage Freyja was subsequently kicked off the team. She found a new team to play for in the Vancouver suburb of Langley, and relocated there with support from a trust fund put together by the UFAWU.¹²² The Reed's story was inspiring, but probably not well known beyond Sointula,

as Marine Harvest had managed to contain their corporate power intimidation tactics from widespread attention.

Environmental Stewards

Marine biologist Alexandra Morton was another person that had endured Marine Harvest's intimidation tactics. Morton lived on Malcolm Island in an off-grid dwelling at Mitchell Bay, about 15 km east of Sointula's town limit. She was, and continues to be, a tireless opponent of the fish farming industry and its practices, and has waged a protracted public and legal battle against the conglomerates who run it, and the authorities tasked with overseeing it. Dozens of her published academic research papers identify the presence of piscine reovirus (PRV) on wild salmon stocks, which she provides evidence of having been transmitted onto the fish from farmed salmon. Her research has been endlessly scrutinized and publicly dismissed by a consortium of DFO and corporate interests, which compelled her to sue both the federal agency and Marine Harvest for "failing to screen farm salmon for PRV before they are transferred into ocean pens." The 'Namgis of Alert Bay are also involved in lawsuits against both groups, with the slightly altered charge, "[to] stop the transfer of PRV-infected farm fish into their territory."¹²³ Morton's work has been the subject of two documentaries, Sointulan Twyla Roscovitch's, *Salmon Confidential*, and Scott Renyard's, *The Pristine Coast*, and also earned her the nickname "the Jane Goodall of Canada's west coast."

Morton's initial field of study was gathering data on whales that swam by her previous home in the Broughton Archipelago marine community of Echo Bay (see Appendix 2). After the fish farming industry had established itself in the area, she began to notice that whales did not return with the same frequency as they previously had. Local fishers told her the new industry's presence affected their catches. Though initially receptive to the idea of fish farms and the jobs that they promised,¹²⁴ Morton began to recognize a host of other issues accompanying their

arrival. In addition to the absence of whales and burden on local fishers, toxic algae bloom, disease outbreaks, and sea lice infestation were also appearing with more frequency, and many of her neighbour's float homes were displaced to make room for the industry.¹²⁵ Morton began amassing evidence of the biological problems, which she felt would compel the DFO to take another look at fish farming. The DFO consistently dismissed her evidence, and when she tried to provide more to them by simply retrieving infected smolts off the end of her dock, they informed her that she was under investigation for collecting samples without a scientific licence, and could be fined \$500,000 and sentenced to two years in prison.¹²⁶ Marine Harvest kept track of Morton's activities and eventually levelled a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP) on her.¹²⁷ Undeterred, she continued her scientific investigation and subsequent campaign against the fish farm industry, eventually joining forces with the 'N̄amgis to try to put an end to the ecological destruction. As in the past, what impacts one community impacts the other. Morton notes that there are only 8 people left in Echo Bay distributed among 27 Norwegian-owned feedlots in the area.¹²⁸ The hegemonic assumption that all industry is beneficial to society, regardless of ecological footprint, continues to be challenged by Alexandra Morton, the 'N̄amgis, and their growing body of supporters, and has galvanized the relationship between Sointula and coastal First Nations.

Bere Point Regional Park offers visitors camping and a long sandy beach on Malcolm Island's sparsely populated north side, but its main attraction are Northern Resident Orca whales that perennially return here to rub themselves against rocks off the shoreline, sometimes in as little as six feet of water. This phenomenon has come to the attention of marine biologists, most notably Troy Bright, who has lived on the beach and studied the mammals since 1997. Bright is a volunteer who possesses a DFO-issued research license that allows him to reside in the park. A beach hydrophone enables Troy to eavesdrop on the local aquatic life, from which he is able to

recognize every member of the dwindling mammal population by ear; the hydrophone has also helped Troy amass over twenty years of research data on their rubbing activity.¹²⁹ Though the Northern Resident Orca population counts 309, their Southern Resident counterparts are recognized as a threatened species, with only 74 members remaining.¹³⁰ The community promotes the park as a tourist destination and formed the group “Friends of the Wild Side,” to enhance ecological preservation and sustainability. The local drinking establishment is called the Whale’s Rub Pub. Preservation of the environment has always been at the forefront of Sointulan identity, from Kurikka’s declaration that Rough Bay be free of animal killing,¹³¹ to the present, where wandering dogs and cats have the right of way on Sointula’s streets.¹³² Neighbours were not only the people who lived next door, they were also the flora and fauna you shared the ecosystem with.

Fishermen

As noted earlier, fishing dominated Sointula’s economy for over a century, and was almost solely responsible for both survival and prosperity over that entire period. Drastic reductions in returning salmon through the 1970s and 1980s precipitated the industry’s virtual collapse by the mid-1990s, which created a seismic shift in the community’s economic base. Lack of fishing opportunities and government-offered buy-back incentives caused many to flee the industry, which undoubtedly affected local secondary industries such as boatbuilding and retrofitting, canneries, and other fish processing.

Sointula has two separate port facilities, referred to simply as the ‘south dock’, and its more recently constructed counterpart, the ‘north dock’. Both are community hubs, and together house in excess of 100 boats of various sizes and designs, and in varying states of disrepair. Some boats have people living on them, while others appear abandoned. Although fishing still enjoys relative economic and cultural primacy, its collapse has resonated in Sointula, and the

community has reconciled itself to the fact that tourism is its obvious, and most sustainable, direction for economic survival.

The north dock is operated by the Malcolm Island Lions Club, and at the entrance of its parking lot sits a large anchor on top of a cement block, set next to a stone memorial, with both displaying engraved commemorative plates (see Fig. 2). A Sointulan fishing boat trawling on the west side of Vancouver Island near Estevan Point (see Appendix 1), hauled up the anchor some years back, and a community member recounted its story to me. Curious about their unexpected catch, the crew took the anchor back to port with them, leaving it unattended on an American dock for months. Forensic archaeologists eventually enlisted to date the find determined it had originated from the period of 1750-1800,¹³³ and had likely been lost from one of British explorer James Cook's ships that landed at Nootka Sound in 1778. The anchor was subsequently returned to those that had found it, who decided to use the historical artefact to memorialize the thirty-one Sointula fishermen who had perished at sea since 1932, whose names are engraved on the anchor plates. Tragedy was always on the horizon in maritime environs, and Sointula was no exception. In particular, the 1966 Seymour Narrows capsizing of the *Ocean Star*, a seventy-two-foot herring seiner, devastated the community, as five of the seven fishermen who perished on that boat were from Sointula.¹³⁴ The memorial illuminates the symbolic relations to tragedy and obstacles that have come to define Sointula.

As the story of the anchor was recounted to me, it had initially aroused a strong sense of adventure, perhaps helping understand the oft-repeated mantra I heard that fishing “was a way of life,” not merely something one does, but rather something that one is. This identity had a meaning which exceeded one's mere vocation. My adventurousness was quickly replaced by terror as the community member continued to tell me about a life in fishing: “Yeah, sometimes you drag up something interesting like that. Other times, you might pull up a bomb.” I shuddered

as I considered that predicament, being hundreds of kilometres away from land and finding an explosive mixed in with your catch.



Fig. 2. Ronald Howe, *Memorial to Sointula fishermen*, February 2017, photograph, Sointula, British Columbia.

Symbolic Interaction

Symbolic interaction offers a useful framework for understanding many of the community's organizations and institutions. It suggests we assume the role of others in our social relations, allowing one to reflect on and make meaning of a situation before deciding on a course of action. That action is modified from past experience, the present situation, and a future, perceived outcome. SI is interested in examining this process from the perspective of all actors, from all temporal locations, to see how all of the actions 'fit together' to produce a result.

The Lions Club also administered the Friends in Need Now (FINN) fund, an organization that had formed to provide local residents a safety net to address a temporary crisis, people who were perhaps too proud to ask for assistance. A community member would pen a letter to the FINN fund after seeing a neighbour facing a difficult financial crisis. After the information was

verified, an unexpected cheque was sent to the person in need, with no further questions asked. The recipient was never publicly identified, nor had any idea who had acted on their behalf. The FINN fund and its structure was recounted to me by many community members I spoke with.

Symbolic interactionism examines the different roles of the actors involved and the various meanings they give to their actions to understand how all of the pieces fit together to produce a result, rather than merely focussing on the outcome. How did the community member arrive at the conclusion that their neighbour was facing difficulty? Was that meaning derived from something said, something seen, something perceived, or perhaps some combination of all of these factors? Did the struggling neighbour make a bad decision, or was their crisis caused by something beyond their control? Did it matter either way? How had the FINN fund assessors arrived at the organization, and how did they determine what was a valid crisis? Who contributed to the fund, and what was their motivation for doing so? A multitude of people, endowed with a host of situational meanings, produced each unanticipated FINN fund cheque. The anonymity of recipients, for example, demonstrated the community's symbolically-negotiated meaning. The shielding of information allowed recipients to maintain a sense of dignity, rather than being stigmatized as non-contributing community members. The organizational structure, administrators, contributors, concerned neighbours, and recipients all worked together to produce the FINN fund's outcome.

Community Institutions



Fig. 3. Ronald Howe, *Lady Liberty leading the workers to freedom*, February 2017, photograph of mural, Sointula Museum, Sointula, British Columbia.

The Sointula Museum, one of the town's major institutions, took up two floors of an old schoolhouse building, which also housed the library, a Senior's centre, and the Sointula Thrift Store. The building's waterfront property also furnished a children's playground and tennis courts. The museum is one of the most interesting I have ever visited, especially in light of the fact that it is overseen and operated almost exclusively by volunteer labour. Pictures, paintings, books, musical instruments, looms, boat models, and corporal punishment log books are just a few of the items on display in the main room. In particular, the iconic mural located just inside the museum's entrance, also used as its logo (see Fig.3), is a striking piece of art. A woman dominates the industrialized landscape behind her, raising the broken chains which had shackled the two men at her feet. One man is being led by her while the other raises a red flag. It was originally painted for use as the background in an FO Hall play, rather than as a stand-alone art piece.

The back room on the main floor housed an exhaustive supply of community records, newspaper articles, more books, sewing machines, clothing, and hand-wringer washers, among other items. The lower level of the museum is described as ‘the boy’s room,’ by volunteer staff. Logging and fishing equipment from the past abound, as do displays devoted to Sointula’s temperance past and various labour flags. Admission to this warehouse of Sointula’s history is “pay as you can.”

Across the hall from the museum’s entrance is the Sointula Public Library. It is only open four days a week, and is a primary public gathering place for young and old alike. Though book reading was essentially an individual activity, the knowledge gleaned from literature was a creator of community. The original Finnish settlers were generally well-educated and placed a significant value on education. By the early 1900s, Sointula had the largest Finnish language library in Canada.¹³⁵ The community had maintained its belief in the virtue of education and literature, and I found multiple expressions of that.

Bernie implored me to read, *A Ripple, A Wave: The Story of Union Organization in the BC Fishing Industry*, written by George North and released by the Fisherman Publishing Society in 1974. I borrowed the copy on his bookshelf, which gave an unequivocally working-class perspective on the formation of unions that organized to address fishermen grievances. It was reminiscent of Bruce Burrows’ *Blood on the Decks, Scales on the Rail* for its unapologetic voice from the left of the political spectrum, another book Bernie had recommended. There were two bookcases in the central living area of Bernie’s house that contained a wide range of subject matters, from fishing to politics to history to sports biography, attesting to a broad scope of knowledge-making material. The Whale’s Rub Pub also had a room devoted to books, a rarity in the thousands of drinking establishments across Canada. Community institutions provided community protection.

Community Immersion

A friend suggested I attend an informal gathering a group of long-time residents held each week in a local retail space. I joined them for one of these gatherings, which turned into another afternoon of fruitful Sointula fieldwork. As I listened to the friends discuss and debate a variety of topics, it became clear that they did not all agree with each other or share a common, monolithic perspective. The group was perhaps a generation older than I, and their stories and insights were contentious, informative, and refreshing. Afterward, one attendee offered me a reminiscent-filled ride home. Earlier, I had heard her recall time she spent working in a cannery as a youth, which she placed as “about sixty years ago.” Though her utterance was barely audible above the rest of the discussion, I was in awe as I quickly calculated her minimum age. I could hardly believe how old she must have been, as she certainly did not appear it, either physically or in spirit. I appreciated her hospitality when she offered me transportation back to my lodgings, not knowing that the ride itself would become another expression of community identity.

On that ride, outside the public realm of her social circle, I came to understand the depth of Sointula culture. Knowing I was interested in the history of the town, she gave me a detailed history of the residents of nearly every single house along that route, which must have numbered around fifty. She knew that history so well that it seemed as though she slowed down her driving to finish up the narrative of one house before moving on to the next, chronicling each dwelling with little hesitation as though she were recounting her own family tree. Neighbours were not merely insurance; they were a key component of community identity, recounting from memory lived, historical details often not accessible from written sources. Authenticity is community protection.

I made my first visit to Bernie and Betty’s house about a week after our encounter at the shoreline. We spent the afternoon talking about a number of wide-ranging subjects, but it was the

send-off I received that provided the significant symbolic meaning I was in search of. “Come back any time, the door is always open.” This statement was not a simple, overused cliché, it was heartfelt, authentic, and factually correct. I recalled Betty chuckling when she answered my knock at their door earlier that day. “You’ve probably been knocking all this time,” she correctly guessed. “This is Sointula, you don’t need to knock.”

“The door is always open,” and, “the keys are in the ignition,” were two phrases one heard often in Sointula. Bernie’s house and surrounding property had plenty of material possessions which could be stolen, yet he was adamant that security was not a concern. “If they want my TV, they are going to get it. Why sacrifice a window or door that will take me hundreds of dollars to fix, just to slow them down?” Such wisdom was absent in the urban environments I had spent my entire life in, where community members are conditioned to feel constantly under attack, specifically when our material possessions might be threatened. That fear was hegemony at work, which justified state interference and control in our lives.

Neighbours

I was resting in the library’s parking lot when an older fellow came out of the building and shouted something toward me. Initially, I thought I may have met him previously, and did not want to appear aloof or rude, so I walked over to talk with him. I realized that we had not met before, but his response to my introduction intrigued me, which I recall had something to do with rate-hikes recently imposed by local hydro. He introduced himself as Steven, a retiree who had lived in Sointula for decades, and described himself as a ‘newcomer’, a label given to any community member who did not have roots going back to the original Kalevan Kansa, regardless of how long they had resided in town. He invited me back to his home to continue our conversation, but I cited the Co-op store’s closing in a few hours as problematic, as I needed some groceries to tide me through the next few days. “Oh, don’t worry about that,” he quickly

dismissed, “you can just borrow my car.” I stopped to reflect on his offer: I had met him no more than ten minutes earlier in a random encounter outside of the public library, and he had just offered to lend me his vehicle. There was no way I should pass up an opportunity to continue our interaction.

I spent a delightful afternoon with Steven. Though his memory had started to deteriorate, which he regularly apologized for, he was spry, witty, and deeply insightful, often unpeeling the political dimensions of local controversies from unexpected locations. I borrowed his vehicle to shop at the Co-op before it closed and picked him up some beer in addition to my groceries. The vehicle was an older model and barely held together, but it ran fine, and I was grateful to be extended his generosity. As I left later that day after dropping off his beer, he had instructed that I write my name and phone number down on a piece of paper. It was a phone message I received from him a few days later that really instilled the strong sense of community I witnessed throughout my time in Sointula. “I’ve got a bone to pick with you, Ron Howe,” the message began, which made me wonder what evoked his consternation. It continued, “I jumped into my car this morning and it had a full tank of gas in it. I certainly don’t lend things out with the expectation to profit from it, and neither should you.” Though delighted to be blamed for filling up his gas tank, I could not take credit for something I did not do. I visited him a few days later to set the record straight, and ascertained it was probably another neighbour who had filled up his tank, as I was not the only person to whom he lent his vehicle. I wondered what it was like to live in a town where you lent your vehicle out so often, you had to speculate as to who had filled up its gas tank.

Conclusions

At the beginning of the 1930s, Sointula’s population was 450, which had grown to 570 residents by the late 1950s,¹³⁶ and by 1969 reached 700.¹³⁷ The Co-op Store brought electricity to

the island in 1950 and televisions arrived in 1953.¹³⁸ The Union Steamship that sailed out of Vancouver was both Sointula and Alert Bay's main link to the outside world for over 50 years, until it ceased passenger operations in 1958.¹³⁹ It was replaced by a cumbersome ferry that ran out of Kelsey Bay on Vancouver Island (see Appendix 1), where cars were loaded onto the boat by crane.¹⁴⁰ The island's Highway 19 was extended to the community of Port Hardy in 1978, at which point BC Ferries began to provide service to Sointula and nearby Alert Bay from the town of Port McNeill.

The 2016 census lists 744 people residing on Malcolm Island,¹⁴¹ with 517 of them living within Sointula.¹⁴² Though it represents a 10% decline from the 2011 census, the community has persevered through difficult times, which its history verifies. The population demographics, however, foreshadow a grim future. The average age of a resident is 53.1 years, thirty percent of the population is over 65, and less than 10% of the population is under the age of 14.¹⁴³ Without a fishing industry or other employment for the young to enter into, these numbers are bound to get worse unless tourism can replace the economic base that fishing once provided.

The community's strength, forged through over a century of adhering to co-operative principles, places people at the forefront of progress rather than industry. Original colony resident Arvo Tynjala offered this description: "In Sointula it was a different thing. The people went there first, and then started wondering what they were going to build. They went on their own, and then started building the community."¹⁴⁴ Symbolic interaction demonstrates how that community was built: Not by industry or government, but rather by people who had organized and formed the Kalevan Kansa Colonization Company, The Sointula Co-op Store, the UFAWU, the Lions Club, and Friends of the Wild Side. Matti Halminen, Laurie Jarvis, Anissa Reed, Troy Bright, and Alexandra Morton, were a small sampling of the people who had created social reality in Sointula through collective and individual action.

Fishing had been the community's economic backbone for nearly a century until declining fish stocks forced residents to find new employment opportunities. When an industry leaves town, it is often presumed that its people soon follow. Industry, however, is not the sole determinant of social organization, community relations can also play a significant role. Though many left Sointula in the aftermath of its economic downturn, many stayed. Sointula offered an existing, evolving alternative to corporate domination. The maintenance and assertion of cultural identity, despite overwhelming obstacles, is a theme which resurfaces in the neighbouring community of Alert Bay.

Sointula was founded on the idea that people working together could produce a better life than the ruthless jaws of capitalism had produced. Hegemony enshrined into our national consciousness that capitalism was the only economic system worth pursuing, but a handful of Finns from a century ago challenged that assumption. Sointula was, and continues to be, that challenge.

Notes:

⁴². See: Gordon Fish, *Dreams of Freedom: Bella Coola, Cape Scott, Sointula* and Andrew Scott, *The Promise of Paradise: Utopian Communities in British Columbia*.

⁴³. Paula Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1995), 25. "Once again workers were expected to move at their own expense, and this time to purchase building lots from [mine owner] Dunsmuir."

⁴⁴. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 22.

⁴⁵. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 6.

⁴⁶. Andrew Scott, *The Promise of Paradise: Utopian Communities in British Columbia* (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1997), 88.

⁴⁷. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 23-4.

⁴⁸. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 24.

49. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 12.
50. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 25.
51. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 13.
52. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 32.
53. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 32.
54. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 33.
55. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 33.
56. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 33-4.
57. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 43.
58. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 43.
59. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 43.
60. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 36.
61. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 19.
62. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 50.
63. Aili Anderson, *History of Sointula* (Sointula, BC: Sointula Centennial Committee, 1958), 9.
64. Gordon Fish, *Dreams of Freedom: Bella Coola, Cape Scott, Sointula* (Victoria, BC: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Sound and Moving Image Division, 1982), 34-35.
65. Anderson, *History of Sointula*, 11.
66. Anderson, *History of Sointula*, 12.
67. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 37.
68. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 55.
69. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 81-2.
70. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 108.

- ⁷¹. Fish, *Dreams of Freedom*, 40.
- ⁷². Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 62.
- ⁷³. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 81-2.
- ⁷⁴. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 33.
- ⁷⁵. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 89.
- ⁷⁶. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 96.
- ⁷⁷. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 91-2.
- ⁷⁸. Wild, *Sointula, Island Utopia*, 99.
- ⁷⁹. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 105-6.
- ⁸⁰. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 104.
- ⁸¹. Fish, *Dreams of Freedom*, 67.
- ⁸². “Roll of Honour – First Members of the Sointula Co-op Store, Dec 1st, 1909,” painted placard in Sointula Museum.
- ⁸³. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 151.
- ⁸⁴. “Hotel and Liquor,” Sointula Resource Centre Society, May 7, 2016, accessed July 2, 2019, <https://www.sointulainfo.ca/island-directory/hotel-and-liquor/>.
- ⁸⁵. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 40.
- ⁸⁶. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 40.
- ⁸⁷. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 41.
- ⁸⁸. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 43.
- ⁸⁹. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 151-2.
- ⁹⁰. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 55.
- ⁹¹. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 55.
- ⁹². Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 134

- ⁹³. Fish, *Dreams of Freedom*, 70-1.
- ⁹⁴. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 137.
- ⁹⁵. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 137.
- ⁹⁶. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 137.
- ⁹⁷. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 108.
- ⁹⁸. Homer Stevens and Rolf Knight, *A Life in Fishing* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1992), 95.
- ⁹⁹. Stevens and Knight, *A Life in Fishing*, 208.
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- ¹⁰¹. Fish, *Dreams of Freedom*, 71-2.
- ¹⁰². Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 119.
- ¹⁰³. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 56.
- ¹⁰⁴. Dennis Brown, *Salmon Wars: The Battle for the West Coast Fishery* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2005), 73. See also: Peter Pearse, *Turning the Tide: A New Policy for Canada’s Pacific Fisheries* (Vancouver, BC: The Royal Commission, 1982) and Peter Pearse with Peter Larkin, *Managing Salmon in the Fraser River: Report to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans on the Fraser River Salmon Investigation* (Vancouver: DFO, 1992).
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- ¹⁰⁶. Malcolm Island, *Preliminary Community Economic Profile* (Malcolm Island, Jan 2014), 7.
- ¹⁰⁷. Canada, House of Commons, *Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans – FOPO-96*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament (Ottawa: House of Commons, April 24, 2018). Accessed June 23, 2019, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/FOPO/meeting-96/evidence>.
- ¹⁰⁸. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 67.
- ¹⁰⁹. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 72-3.
- ¹¹⁰. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 129.
- ¹¹¹. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 90.

- ¹¹². Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 140.
- ¹¹³. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 89.
- ¹¹⁴. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 129-130.
- ¹¹⁵. Tapio Saarelainen, "The World's Deadliest Sniper: Simo Heyha," *History Extra*, July 9, 2018, <https://www.historyextra.com/period/second-world-war/worlds-deadliest-sniper-simo-hayha-finnish-white-death-winter-war/>
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- ¹³⁷. Anderson, *History of Sointula*, 19.
- ¹³⁸. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 118.
- ¹³⁹. Wild, *Sointula: Island Utopia*, 177.

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¹⁴⁴. Fish, *Dreams of Freedom*, 79.

CHAPTER 3: ALERT BAY - GILAKAS'LA

We want to know whether you have come to stop our dances and feasts, as the missionaries and agents who live among our neighbors try to do. We do not want to have anyone here who will interfere with our customs. We were told that a man-of-war would come if we should continue to do as our grandfathers and great-grandfathers have done. But we do not mind such words. Is this the white man's land?

We are told it is the Queen's land, but no! It is mine. Where was the Queen when our God gave this land to my grandfather and told him, "This will be thine?" My father owned the land and was a mighty Chief; now it is mine. And when your man-of-war comes, let him destroy our houses. Do you see yon trees? Do you see yon woods? We shall cut them down and build new houses and live as our fathers did. We will dance when our laws command us to dance, and we will feast when our hearts desire to feast. Do we ask the white man, "Do as the Indian does?" It is a strict law that bids us dance. It is a strict law that bids us distribute our property among our friends and neighbors. It is a good law. Let the white man observe his law; we shall observe ours. And now, if you come to forbid us dance, be gone.

If not, you will be welcome to us.

O'waxalagalis, Chief of the Kwagu'ł "Fort Rupert Tribes",
to Franz Boas, October 7, 1886.¹⁴⁵

The epigraph that begins this chapter emphasizes the clash of cultures that occurred following the arrival of European colonialism on Indigenous North American land, and the disruption of social relations this meeting manifested. The existing social, economic, and spiritual system of the Kwakwaka'wakw is detailed, particularly their relationship to the land and art, expressed through the potlatch. Colonialism's incursion into Alert Bay, through industry, legal prohibitions, education, and religion, drastically alters the decimated, yet materially wealthy local culture, which finds ways to adapt to these situations while continuing to assert its cultural identity.

My fieldwork explored the community of Alert Bay through its identity and social relations, through the generosity it extended to me, and through the actions of its members. I met many knowledge keepers, participated in its social events, and found an inclusive community that proudly affirmed itself. The 'Namgis development of Kuterra, a ground-breaking system of

aquaculture, was a stunning accomplishment, adding to a long list of counter-hegemonic expression that seemed to be a cultural feature.

The historic and contemporary culture of the ‘N̄amgis First Nation and Kwakw̄aka’wakw peoples offer compelling testimony of a group that had endured population decimation, colonialism, discrimination, and environmental degradation through the determined efforts of its members. Sointula demonstrated the effect a group of twenty socialists had on the next hundred years of the town’s development. Alert Bay unveiled a long history of past resistance that led to Kuterra, a response to the present problem of fish farms in their territory. By enlisting neighbours – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous – to help overcome obstacles, the ‘N̄amgis have forged a path toward reconciliation that should be inspirational for all Canadians.

First Contact

The year 1492 is historically acknowledged as the date of first contact between Europeans and the Indigenous populations of the continent now known as North America. Explorer Christopher Columbus arrived on the shores of present-day Bahamas Islands in the Caribbean Sea, and though he never set foot on the land mass that would be christened North America, he has been credited with its discovery, initiating the permanent European colonization of the Americas. His expedition’s purpose, underwritten by the Spanish monarchy for whom he was sailing, was to find a western passage to the land presently known as India. In return for financing the journey, Columbus was expected to claim land he ‘discovered’ as private property belonging to the Spanish empire, for which he was promised a percentage of any profits that accrued from these discoveries. His trip inexorably altered human relations and societies from that moment forward.

It took three hundred years after Columbus’ journey for European contact to reach the Pacific Ocean coast of the continent, where many First Nations have lived since time

immemorial. Archaeologists confirm that to be at least 11,000 years.¹⁴⁶ Many of the continent's Indigenous people currently call it Turtle Island, as increasingly do non-Indigenous people. A portion of the continent's western shores and islands off its coast demarcate the western boundary of the Canadian province of British Columbia. The Indigenous people who live among these shores are members of a cultural complex known as the Northwest Coast, which has fluid, rather than rigidly defined, geographic boundaries, that extend from a northern point of the Alaska Panhandle to Northern California in the south, with natural boundaries of the Coastal Mountain Range to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west.

British Royal Navy Captain George Vancouver arrived at Whulk (*Xwalkw*) in 1792 (see Appendix 2), a settlement located at the mouth of the Nimpkish River (*Gwa'ni*), where he met the peoples dubbed the *Nimpkish* by European explorers, though the group later adopted the more orthographically-accurate autonym of '*Namgis*. The encounter commemorates the first contact between Caucasian Europeans and Indigenous occupants on Vancouver Island's eastern shore, though it seems likely Russian traders from Asia had previously visited the area. British and Spanish explorers landed at Nootka Sound, on the island's western shore, in the 1770s, referenced in the previous chapter regarding the discovery of the anchor memorial. The European colonists traded with the local *Nootka* peoples - who have since adopted the autonym *Nuu-chah-nulth* - who were neighbours and trading partners with the Nimpkish and would have likely shared information about the arrival of white men that possessed superior sailing vessels, technology, and armaments.

The '*Namgis* are one group of the *Kwakwaka'wakw*, or Kwak'wala-speaking people, one of BC's 30 to 40 major First Nations ethnic groups, who have an identity based upon shared territory, economy, language, and culture.¹⁴⁷ These ethnic groups constitute British Columbia's approximately 200 First Nations, representing a sizable portion of Canada's 672 recognized First

Nations. Kwak'wala is one of several languages within the Wakashan language family, which is spoken in a variety of local dialects. Wakashan languages are rooted in and communicated throughout the geographic area of Vancouver Island, the British Columbia mainland parallel to the island, and a small area of the Olympic Peninsula in upper Washington State.¹⁴⁸ Placement within the difficult to traverse Coastal Mountain Range and the vast, rugged Pacific Ocean allowed extensive Northwest Coast Indigenous groups to develop cultures that shared common conceptions of origins, kinship relations, commerce, art, and political institutions. The environmental impediments appear to have protected the cultures from European encroachment for three hundred years after Columbus' landing. Their arrival drastically altered the existing cultural connections, as Indigenous inhabitants were introduced to the devastating effects of disease, alcohol, and firearms. Settler culture also introduced an entirely new form of social organization, based upon the private ownership of land and resources, known as capitalism.

Disease spread across Turtle Island into areas not yet reached by Europeans, decimating the Kwakwaka'wakw both directly and indirectly, as they and their Indigenous neighbours had little natural immunity to smallpox, tuberculosis, scarlet fever, influenza and measles. All Indigenous peoples suffered tremendous loss. In the area now known as British Columbia, an estimated mid-1770s Indigenous population of 200,000 was annihilated to about 100,000 people by 1835.¹⁴⁹ There were around 10,000 Kwakiutl in 1835,¹⁵⁰ but they had plummeted to less than 3,000 by 1880,¹⁵¹ and reached their lowest count in 1929, reduced to only 1,834 members.¹⁵² Today, 3,670 people self-identify as having Kwakwaka'wakw ancestry.¹⁵³ In *The Indian History of British Columbia, Vol. 1: The Impact of the White Man*, anthropologist Wilson Duff wrote:

Following upon the first gold excitement in 1858, it became the habit of many northern coastal tribes to visit Victoria in large numbers and at times, more than 2000 'Hydahs', 'Stickeens', 'Chimseans', 'Bella Bellas', 'Fort Ruperts', and so on were camped on the outskirts of the settlement. That was the situation in April, 1862, when a white man with smallpox arrived from San Francisco. Before long, despite dire warnings in the Colonist, the disease reached the camps of the Indians and they began to die in fearful numbers.

Alarmed, the authorities burned up the camps and forced the Indians to leave. They started up the Coast for home, taking the disease with them, leaving the infection at every place they touched. The epidemic spread like a forest fire up the coast and into the Interior.¹⁵⁴

Extrapolating from the mortality statistics detailed above, the Kwakwaka'wakw lost over 80% of their population within 150 years of first contact. Disease spread faster than colonization, and a sizable portion of the population would have perished before European-written records were kept. Though the devastation caused by such a massive population loss is impossible to quantify, the “greatest human catastrophe in history, far exceeded even the disaster of the Black Death in medieval Europe,”¹⁵⁵ completely upended existing social organization. Traditional kinship structures were impossible to maintain when four out of five members no longer existed.

Social Organization

The Northwest Coast peoples organized themselves into specific houses, called *numaym* or *'na'mima* in Kwak'wala, with from 2 to as many as 10 related, extended families sharing a communal longhouse built of cedar planks. The leader of each house was the chief, a hereditary position. Each house owned, in the interest of all its members, terrestrial and aquatic rights to fishing, hunting, and gathering locations, as well as songs, dances, crests, and stories. There was no individual property ownership, nor private land holdings that could be sold for profit. The house, under the direction of the chief, assigned status, organized subsistence activities, and regulated relations with other groups. As each house had its own chief, there was no single authority for a village or nation. Decisions affecting the community would have ideally been based on consensus among those chiefs.¹⁵⁶ The *numaym* constitutes the most basic group of Kwakwaka'wakw society.

A key component for understanding the culture of Northwest Coast Indigenous peoples is the relationship they have with nature. 'Na'mima origin stories tell of a species from the natural, and often supernatural world, that learns a particular lesson, which causes the creature to take the

human form of an ancestor. From these stories, one develops an identity that is a part of nature, rather than its owner, or conqueror. This symbiotic relationship with nature ensures that respect is given to one's ancestors, which extends to everything in the natural environment. The Kwakwaka'wakw believe their values, traditions, and the natural world are all gifts from the supernatural realm, which implores that they live in harmony with nature and all that it contains. A prayer is given for the salmon who has sacrificed its life to provide food.¹⁵⁷ Fish carcasses, bones, and sea shells are returned to the water, from whence they came, to ensure their progeny return to feed future generations.¹⁵⁸ This symbolic form of respect, towards both the environment and the resources it produces, was in stark contrast to the mindset that arrived with European colonizers, who believed that human beings were the central and most significant entities in the world, separate from and superior to nature, a concept known as anthropocentrism.¹⁵⁹

The abundance of trees in the Northwest Coast are a component of the natural world, a material resource utilized by inhabitants for many purposes. The environment is dominated by thick forests, offering a variety of species - particularly cedar - used to construct longhouses and seafaring vessels. Smaller items like ceremonial masks, storage boxes, and serving vessels, are also made from this resource. Ceremonial hats and clothing are made from harvested bark, and blankets are woven from its fibres. Trees also provide the material for constructing totem poles, a central feature of the Northwest Coast identity and its most recognizable expression.

The iconic art form of totems come from a geographically-extensive civilization that developed numerous forms of symbolic representation. Sculptors created canoes, masks, rattles, treasure boxes, feasting dishes, totem poles, house poles, and mortuary poles. The totem's high emphasis on realism makes it spectacular from an aesthetic perspective, but it is the history embedded in each creation that reveals its deep cultural importance. Each figure on a totem traces the journey of one's 'na'mima, with symbols representing past family events, ancestors,

myths, heraldic crests, and other important privileges.¹⁶⁰ Every symbol has an oral history, inexorably linking it to a record of the past, and these symbols are also featured on clothing, jewellery, storage boxes, and tools. These histories were documented at a ceremony known as the potlatch.

The Potlatch

Coastal Indigenous groups had established extensive trading, cultural, kinship, and property relations for millennia before the arrival of Europeans. The natural fertility of the environment, rich in seafood, game and greenery, combined with the ease of sea travel, generated a dynamic and gifted civilization. Trading routes on land, known as grease trails, also served as conduits between nations. The absence of nomadic foraging allowed for place permanence, from which emerged group identities deeply connected to the land. Fish, particularly salmon, and other game were harvested and preserved in seasonal periods of abundance, which provided a steady supply of nutrition through times of scarcity. Berries and root vegetables were plentiful and also were preserved for later use when other food resources were not readily available. Those periods of scarcity, generally the winter months, provided a common period of rest for communities within the region, and allowed for the development of significant culture and cultural institutions, most notably that which is known as the *potlatch*.

The potlatch celebration was, and remains, a significant element of Northwest Coast culture. These elaborate and complex gatherings involved years of preparation, as neighbouring communities were sent invitations and the host undertook the massive planning involved. Large celebrations, held in Big Houses built to accommodate many people, validated socially and politically meaningful events, such as a person's formal assumption of the role of chief. Feasting, dancing, singing, public speaking, and theatre, were used to legitimize political announcements, activities which could last a few weeks or more.¹⁶¹ Neighbouring communities were fed and

entertained, which also acted as a means to establish and maintain economic, political, and social relationships among large geographic areas of the Northwest Coast. The unique history of one's particular 'na'mima was performed in clan regalia through dances and songs, all of which had exclusive ownership. History was both established and maintained through the ceremony, embedding a form of social cohesion that extended to property relations, trade, and dispute resolution. At the conclusion of the ceremony, guests were given gifts such as food, blankets, handicrafts, and currency, in appreciation for their witnessing the event. The acceptance of these gifts served as a validation of the announcements.¹⁶² The ceremony was also a competition, and other communities that contemplated hosting their own potlatch were obligated to either throw a larger potlatch than the previous one had been, and give away more, or they would lose status. The potlatch was, and remains, a spiritual belief system which grounds social relationships in complex social hierarchies that marked status through generosity and competition. The event was not used to show how much one had, but rather to show how much one could give away. Gift-giving performed roles of affirming a family's wealth, providing resources to neighbouring communities, and resolving disputes by fighting with property instead of weapons.¹⁶³ Sointula's post-colony de facto leader Austin Makela believed Aboriginals to be "natural socialists" because they gave so much away at potlatches,¹⁶⁴ underscoring the mutual social goal of both communities, which contrasted to the aims of capitalism. Northwest Coast peoples have been each other's insurance since time immemorial, demonstrated by Chief O'waxalagalis' epigraph that opens this chapter.

The Indian Act of 1876 brought virtually every aspect of Native life under government supervision. Confinement to reserves under the direct surveillance of government agents, compulsory education by missionaries, and the prohibition of alcohol, were all introduced under the legislation.¹⁶⁵ The Act was amended in 1884 to include prohibition of the potlatch.

Every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating the Indian festival known as the "Potlatch" or in the Indian dance known as the "Tamanawas" is guilty of a misdemeanour, and liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than six nor less than two months in any gaol or other place of confinement; and every Indian or persons who encourages... an Indian to get up such a festival... shall be liable to the same punishment.¹⁶⁶

The potlatch system had been practised for centuries before the arrival of settler culture, and the ban stopped few First Nations from continuing their tradition. Though authorities were ignorant of its deep cultural importance, they rarely interfered with those engaged in the activity, irrespective of colonial law. This changed in late 1921, when the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) raided Nimpkish Chief Dan Cranmer's potlatch, the first time the prohibition was enforced.¹⁶⁷

Cranmer's six-day long potlatch, reputedly the biggest ever thrown on the Northwest Coast, began on Christmas Day at Mamalilikulla on Village Island (see Appendix 2), a Kwakwaka'wakw settlement about 40 km east of Alert Bay. An informant disclosed the location to authorities, who proceeded to arrest forty-five participants for the offences "making speeches," "dancing," "arranging articles to be given away," and "carrying gifts to recipients."¹⁶⁸ Offenders were taken to Alert Bay, and held and tried at the native day school, which served as both a makeshift jail and courthouse.¹⁶⁹ Facing the threat of prison time, those arrested were ordered to turn over their village's entire potlatch paraphernalia collection, accompanied by a promise to never again engage in the activity, in order to be set free. Three Kwakiutl villages (Cape Mudge, Village Island, Alert Bay) complied with the order, and surrendered masks, screens, coppers, and other cultural materials, while other Kwakiutl nations (Fort Rupert, Kingcome, New Vancouver, Turnour Island, and others) did not comply. Twenty-two participants were convicted and given suspended sentences, three were remanded, and twenty men and women were sent to Oakalla Prison, just outside of Vancouver, for sentences of two to six months.¹⁷⁰ The confiscated materials took up 300 cubic feet of Alert Bay Indian Agent

William Halliday's wood shed and required years to be inventoried, if they were recorded at all, as he began to sell items almost immediately.¹⁷¹ Halliday opined the potlatch prohibition was about progress, a concept defined by Eurocentric standards.

The law against the potlatch has been passed because it has been that where the potlatch exists there has been no progress and the Government wants to see the Indians advance so that they are on the same footing as the white man, and this cannot be as long as the potlatch continues.¹⁷²

Community wealth redistribution was an affront to capitalism, which insisted progress could only be achieved if wealth was concentrated, accumulated, and unequally distributed. It is no surprise that the prohibition's first enforcement was levelled against the materially-wealthy Kwakiutl peoples. The state's show of force upon the potlatch hosted by one of the Indigenous group's most successful families served as an example to other potlatchers.

Settlement

Alert Bay, known as '*Yalis* in Kwak'waka, is a mixed ethnicity settlement located on unceded Cormorant Island (see Appendix 2), about 4 km across the water from where George Vancouver had first met the Nimpkish at Whulk. The island was used seasonally and as a burial ground¹⁷³ prior to the arrival of settler entrepreneurs Wesley Spencer and Aulden Huson in 1870. The pair leased the island from the Colony of Vancouver Island government, as British Columbia did not join Canadian Confederation until 1871, and built a small saltery at Alert Bay to process salmon.¹⁷⁴ Their employees came from a local Indigenous population that seemed indifferent to the paid-labour economy. Hired help often left abruptly to attend to kinship obligations like seasonal 'na'mima work parties and potlatches, rather than adhere to the wage-labour system, which exasperated the entrepreneurs. A workforce located closer to the saltery would solve this problem, which prompted Spencer and Huson to persuade Reverend Alfred James Hall to move his Anglican Mission from nearby Fort Rupert (*Tsaxis* – see Appendix 2) to Alert Bay. In return, the pair built a new mission house for Hall in Alert Bay, where he taught

First Nations boys and girls after moving there with his family in 1878.¹⁷⁵ Industry and religion have always enjoyed a symbiotic relationship in capitalism, unveiling the material relations of Marxian superstructure. The offer of spiritual salvation through obedience to a higher power intersects well with the goals of obedience to a profit-driven capitalist system and the invisible hand that guides it.

Alert Bay quickly grew to become the economic centre of the region, as well as the central location to handle all manner of Indigenous Administration for the Pacific coast north of Vancouver. The Kwakiutl Agency of the Department of Indian Affairs established its administrative headquarters at Alert Bay in 1890, and the British Columbia Provincial Police stationed their first full-time constable soon after.¹⁷⁶ Within a generation of Spencer and Huson's arrival, capitalism had etched its permanence onto the Nimpkish culture.

Progress was again the objective of a new form of cultural control that emerged in this era, the Residential School System (RSS). With colonizing authorities now located within their community, the Kwakwaka'wakw peoples endured the same oppressive intrusions as Indigenous peoples throughout Canada. Enforced removal of children to residential schools began in 1920 after Duncan Campbell-Scott, deputy superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), amended the Indian Act to make school attendance compulsory for Indian children aged 7 through 15.¹⁷⁷ Children were taken from parents across large swaths of Indigenous regions and sent to religiously-administered Residential Schools, where the children would learn the skills necessary for successful assimilation into the dominant culture. The key aspirations for the collusion of state, church, and industry was to create a labour force with minimal skills to serve local industry, a good example of the convergence of Marx' structure and superstructure. Other religious denominations followed Reverend Hall's arrival in Alert Bay, which included the United Church in 1913, another Anglican chapel in 1925, and the Catholic Assumption Chapel in

1943.¹⁷⁸ The new policy also attempted to break the link between child and parent, and between culture and identity. Scott offered this synopsis of progress:

I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone....Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department, that is the whole object of this Bill.¹⁷⁹

The St. Michael's Indian Residential School opened at Alert Bay in 1929, and was operated by the Anglican Church. It housed up to 200 children at a time, taken in from hundreds of miles of Pacific Coast, and was one of the largest residential schools in western Canada.¹⁸⁰

The institution remained open until 1975, traumatizing generations of Kwakwaka'wakw, Haida, Tlingit, Tsimshian, Nisga'a, Gitksan, Nuu-chah-nulth, Haisla, Heiltsuk, Salish, Nuxalk, and undoubtedly many more, over the course of its existence. Though the extent of this trauma is impossible to quantify, Barb Cranmer's documentary on the school's demolition, *I'tustogalis: Rising Up Together – Our Voices, Our Stories. Demolition Ceremony of the St. Michael's Residential School, February 18th, 2015*, provides a definitive assessment. Survivors of the school recount the horrors and abuse they suffered at the institution, and the intergenerational trauma those experiences left on the entire culture, interspersed with episodes of a wrecking ball razing the structure.

Depression and War

Community life and identity were deeply affected by enforcement of the potlatch ban and residential school attendance, but global events also influenced Kwakwaka'wakw culture. The crash of the stock market in 1929 led to the next decade's Great Depression. By 1933, thirty percent of Canada's labour force was out of work, and one in five Canadians was dependent upon government relief to survive.¹⁸¹ While many Canadians relied upon this relief to feed their families, the abundance of fish in the Northwest Coast provided food security that likely spared

many from starvation. The Kwakwaka'wakw have harvested seafood resources to sustain their people since time immemorial. They have always fished, and fishing has always been a part of their economy. After the saltery and other canneries arrived, they had been able to leverage their prowess at sea into a place at the capitalist dinner table, which made Alert Bay a primary hub of both settler and Indigenous political economy. The material goods given away at Dan Cranmer's 1921 potlatch,¹⁸² and James Sewid's record-setting 1942 haul (see next paragraph) attest to this. From this historical perspective, the emergence of a coordinated, multicultural resistance to the price canneries paid for fish demonstrates a profound merging of class consciousness. As the Sointulan-led 1936 Fisherman's Strike went into effect up the coast at River's Inlet (see previous chapter), a parallel action took place in Alert Bay as its Indigenous fishermen also threatened to forego their season by refusing to fish until the price of their catch was raised. After the canneries prohibited local grocers from selling food to picketers, and amid reports of scab white fishers, the Alert Bay First Nations fishermen came to view the strike as a betrayal of their interests, and not only returned to work, but also organized the Native Fisherman's Association to better serve their interests.¹⁸³ Nonetheless, a united front consisting of English Canadian, Native, Finnish, Chinese, and Japanese fishermen struck fear into cannery management, who agreed to a new pricing formula in the following year.¹⁸⁴

The need for canned salmon on the front lines of World War II contributed to very good fish prices, which produced some of the highest grossing seasons fishermen had ever seen. Kwakiutl fisherman James Sewid pulled in 100,000 fish in 1942 - his record for a year - which gave him a crew share of almost \$4,000. "As soon as the fishing season was over and we had been paid off, Robby and I went into the manager and paid off our agreements on the Frank A.M....We were the first Indian skippers working for that cannery to completely pay off our boat."¹⁸⁵ Sewid was either exempted or deferred from military service - the literature is not clear

which - after the cannery he fished for had written a letter on his behalf that cited his fishing skills to be a greater contribution to Canada's war effort than his combat skills might have been.¹⁸⁶ The cannery also benefited from this arrangement.

Post-Colonial Era - Institutions

By the early 1970s, peoples living on-reserve in 'Yalis had identified a number of critical issues that were obstacles toward objectives of self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and self-government. Band-member employment opportunities were short-term, and ownership in local industry non-existent. "There are no major businesses or services owned by band members [on Cormorant Island], in spite of the fact that over half the population is Indian."¹⁸⁷ Medical services, education, and policing were overseen by Boards of Directors, absent any representation from the culture over which they governed. The band devised a comprehensive, long-term strategy to address these issues in 1975 by releasing the Nimpkish Integrated Development Approach (NIDA).

The Nimpkish people have been governed totally by the DIA for generations and this type of colonialism has been shown in many areas of the world to have been the antithesis of development. ...Indian people have not become involved, participating, and informed members of their own community government.¹⁸⁸

NIDA's policy goals sought to improve education, culture, and economic development through a five-year planning strategy, which represented "a major departure from the week-to-week and month-to-month orientation of the past."¹⁸⁹ Despite the fact that fishing produced great prosperity for individuals, the community still lacked self-directed development in the post-colonial era. Two specific initiatives in the policy, the creation of the U'mista Cultural Centre, and the creation of the Gwa'ni Hatchery, had profound, enduring effects.

The Kwak'wala term *u'mista* translates to "the return of something important."¹⁹⁰ Objects seized at the Cranmer Potlatch, and others confiscated in its aftermath, had surfaced in museums and private collections all over the world. Efforts to repatriate these items began in the late

1960s, which led to the National Museums Corporation of Canada's Board of Trustees. The board agreed to return the part of the Potlatch Collection they held, conditional upon the construction of museums in Kwakwaka'wakw settlements at Cape Mudge (Quadra Island) and Alert Bay.¹⁹¹ The NIDA policy responded to the offer by building the U'mista Cultural Centre, which opened in the shadow of St. Michael's Residential School in 1980 and remains today an extraordinary symbol of community cooperation.

After St. Michael's closed in 1975, the building's ownership was transferred from the government to the band, which presented both challenges and opportunities. Some felt the building should be demolished, in hopes of symbolically erasing the damage that its nearly half-century of operation had inflicted upon most every Indigenous Coastal community within hundreds of miles. The government was eager to do this, offering a sole operational payout of \$50,000 for the demolition, and nothing for continued operation.¹⁹² Others believed it more practical to utilize the existing resource - despite its history - into something positive for the local community, perhaps as a symbolic expression of the resilience and pragmatism that characterized the Kwakwaka'wakw culture and, indeed, all Indigenous communities that had endured colonization.

The band, still recognized as the Nimpkish at the time, moved its administration into the newly acquired, yet-deteriorating building, and began to utilize other areas of the structure for educational purposes. The NIDA report identified the fishing industry's decline, and suggested the need to either upgrade skills for those who wished to remain in it, or to retrain those for whom there were no longer jobs. Aquaculture courses were taught at the school to improve the community's vocational skills.

The Gwa'ni Hatchery began as a band-partnered initiative in 1978 in response to the cultural and economic loss caused by declining salmon returns. Its mandate was to enhance

productivity of Nimpkish stocks, generate harvestable surpluses, and participate in stock management.¹⁹³ The decimation of salmon stocks eerily mirrored the decimation of Indigenous populations following the arrival of settler culture. In 1958, one-hundred and thirty thousand sockeye salmon had been taken from the Nimpkish River, but by 2000, that catch had plummeted to just 10,000 fish.¹⁹⁴

‘Nāmgis author, historian, knowledge keeper, and cultural teacher Diane ‘Honey Alfred’ Jacobson, cited in the Literature Review section, took one of the aquaculture courses offered at the former residential school, which led her to regular employment opportunities in the field, and also provides much of the substance of her 2011 book, *My Life with the Salmon*. The Gwa’ni Hatchery is still in operation, and the knowledge and experience gained from this project undoubtedly contributed to one of the ‘Nāmgis’ boldest projects, the Kuterra fish farm.

Kuterra

As BC’s coastal fishery continued to collapse, a technological saviour emerged that promised to accommodate the massive job losses the industry was experiencing: open-pen fish farms. By transitioning workers from crew positions on boats to jobs on fish farm feedlots, it was believed that fish farming would fill the massive hole left in the coastal economy. Rather than competing fishers out on the water chasing fewer and fewer fish, workers could find employment at stationary aquatic farms that hatched, reared, monitored, and harvested salmon year-round in large, ocean-contained open pens. The farms also proposed to protect the wild stocks, as a domesticated, reliable, secondary source of salmon would relieve the stress on the wild population. Steady, predictable harvests, steady employment, stock rehabilitation, and a growing new industry in a lagging economy all contributed to a resounding endorsement of these new technologies, which were backed by governments, corporate media, and lobbying groups. The BC Salmon Farmers Association formed in 1984, a group that advocates and lobbies for the

handful of fish-farming conglomerates, offering a good example of the capitalist superstructure identified in Marxian analysis.¹⁹⁵

These promises never materialized, for a number of reasons. Fish farms require minimal supervision, therefore only a handful of employees are required to supervise 500,000 to 700,000 fish housed in an area approximately the size of four football fields roughly thirty feet deep.¹⁹⁶ The minimal number of workers needed came nowhere close to accommodating the jobs lost in fishing. Feeding so many fish in such a small containment area is done efficiently, but the waste created from this setup concentrates in areas beneath and around the pens, as do antibiotic wastes used to control disease in the pens. Ocean currents were expected to act as a perpetual, natural, cost-free waste management system, but this has not proven accurate.¹⁹⁷

The five Pacific species of salmon (Chinook, Coho, Sockeye, Pink, and Chum) were not as reliable for industrial-scale fish farming as their Atlantic counterparts, which grow quicker and larger, and are much more docile.¹⁹⁸ Fish farms are generally located on wild salmon migration routes to both mimic an environment that produces healthy fish, as well as take advantage of a cost-free waste management system, which virtually ensures the Atlantic and Pacific species intermingle. The farmed fish transmit the piscine reovirus (PRV) onto the wild fish, a viral signature Sointula biologist Alexandra Morton, discussed in the previous chapter, consistently found evidence of. Local fishermen provided her with evidence the Atlantic were breaching their pens.¹⁹⁹ Far from being the saviour to dwindling salmon returns, fish farms are likely contributing to them.

These factors precipitated the development of Kuterra, an inland, closed-pen facility that properly disposes of its waste materials, raises fish without the use of antibiotics, does not infect passing schools of wild salmon, nor introduce an invasive species into a natural habitat.

Although the Kuterra salmon are not nearly as profitable a commodity as their open-pen

counterparts, they are clearly not as costly to the environment. Moreover, the facility fosters community by providing jobs. The transition of fish farms from the open ocean to a closed-containment, inland facility commemorates a profound development in the aquaculture industry, and challenges the assumption that a business cannot both be profitable and take care of its surrounding environment. The spiritual worldview of the Kwakwaka'wakw understands species in the natural world to be not merely neighbours, but ancestors, worthy of both prayer and protection.

Kuterra combines the Kwak'waka word for salmon, *kutala*, with the Latin word for land, *terra*. The 'Namgis developed *Kuterra* as a response to the fish farming industry's incursion into the territorial waters that they have fished since time immemorial. It is North America's first commercial, closed-pen Atlantic salmon fish farm, and is fully owned by the 'Namgis.²⁰⁰ The new facility was built just outside of Port McNeill in 2011, and the first smolts entered its tanks in March 2013.²⁰¹ *Kuterra*, with its facility located on land, separate from the open ocean, provides a profound alternative to traditional fish farming and the environmental degradation it produces. It represents a shift from the profit-driven motive of capitalist industry as well as the power that arises when communities act together.

The political division of Cormorant Island has evolved since Spencer and Huson first arrived in 1870. At present, the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities are delineated by an imperceptible line, which apportions the four kilometres by one-kilometre island as approximately one-third Indigenous territory, and two-thirds non-Indigenous territory. Alert Bay Indian Reserve's 1 and 1A are on one side of this line, and the incorporated village of Alert Bay is on the other, though each appear to have enclaves within the other's area. 'Namgis lands have never been ceded to any entity, government, or outside agent; they have owned and managed these lands for thousands of years.²⁰² The 'Namgis are currently at Stage 4 of the treaty process,

‘Agreement in Principle’, though it appears negotiations are stalled as Stage 3 was completed in 2000.²⁰³ There are about 500 ‘Namgis living in Alert Bay today, around 250 other Kwakwak’wakw peoples living within the Whe-la-la-u Area Council enclave, and about 500 non-Indigenous residents that live in the incorporated township.²⁰⁴ Settler and Indigenous folk have lived side-by-side in ‘Yalis for about 150 years.

Journey Continues – Alert Bay Fieldwork

In advance of doing fieldwork on-reserve in Alert Bay, I had sent emails to the band office hoping to secure the consent that was necessary to do First Nations research, but had not received back any responses. I decided a personal visit to the band office once I was in Sointula might facilitate the process. In Sointula, Betty had introduced me to her friend, Cathy, who was from Alert Bay and gave me advice on whom to contact in the band office. I took the BC Ferry from Sointula to Alert Bay one afternoon in hopes of ascertaining how the next leg of my fieldwork might unfold, familiarize myself with the town, and perhaps find leads on where I might stay once I secured permission to do research, as my uncertainty surrounding the band consent process had preclude me from making lodging arrangements.

Unceded Territory

I boarded the Quadra Queen II in Sointula on a weekday morning in early March, joining perhaps a dozen other people on their way to Port McNeill. The ferry has a *sisiutl*, the mythical two-headed serpent of Kwakwak’wakw folklore, painted just below its bridge.



Fig. 4. Ronald Howe, *Sisiutl emblem on BC Ferry*, March 2017, photograph, Alert Bay, British Columbia.

Sisiutl symbolizes the duality of humanity. Its powers can overturn boats and deal death or bestow strength and protect communities.²⁰⁵ The design is a vignette of Alert Bay's First Nations community, whose artistic forms and symbolic representations permeate virtually every aspect of their lives. Art is not simply an expression of Kwakwaka'wakw culture, it is their culture.

The sailing to Port McNeill takes about a half-hour, and almost all passengers disembark after it docks. A BC Ferry worker then canvasses the passenger deck and asks whether you are a 'turnaround' heading to Alert Bay. A new set of passengers and cars are loaded onto the ship, and this sailing takes about 45 minutes. Since fares are only collected at the Port McNeill terminal, travelling between the neighbouring communities of Sointula and Alert Bay is free.

This second leg of the boat ride was unfamiliar to me at the time, and I made note of the new group of passengers that boarded. A middle-aged, First Nations man carried an unfinished carved paddle, which he provided the cultural meaning of to a non-Indigenous couple that asked

him about it. Children were watched by guardians that appeared more likely to be their grandparents than parents. I had been given a rather coarse, deeply symbolic assessment of Cormorant Island's political division in Sointula: "When you get off the ferry, 'white is right'." A picture I had seen in Dara Culhane Speck's *An Error in Judgment: The Politics of Medical Care in an Indian/White Community* offered a different perspective: A sign posted at the Alert Bay ferry terminal in the 1970s identified "Nimpkish Land", with an arrow pointing into Cormorant Island, and "Stolen Nimpkish Land", with an arrow pointing toward Vancouver Island.²⁰⁶ I contemplated where a non-Native, middle-aged academic might fit in to such divisions.

Coming off the ferry I turned right, toward the town's commercial hub. A short walk along Fir St. took me into the unceded, incorporated municipality of Alert Bay, where the majority of the island's businesses, the RCMP detachment, municipal building, library, post office, and the original 'Namgis burial ground were located. Street signs were posted in both English and Kwak'wala, and a Killer Whale painted in the Northwest Coast style adorned the storefront of the BC Liquor Store, exemplifying the everyday-type intermingling of language and culture.

Past the hub of the downtown core's commercial activity, Fir St. entered an area of abandoned industrial and commercial buildings that provided compelling testimony of the fishing industry's collapse, and the deindustrialization which followed in its wake. The Nimpkish Hotel had enjoyed a legendary reputation amongst cash-flush fishermen and local servers since it had opened on the town's foreshore in the 1920s, though now it appeared idle, overrun by wild vegetation that sprouted up from the planks of its seaside deck. Alert Bay Shipyards had once been a thriving local business, but no longer appeared to be operating, judging from its dusty storefront windows and absence of activity. The population of the incorporated town peaked in

1961, when it had 825 residents. By 1986, that had diminished to 679 people, and by 2011, dwindled to 435.²⁰⁷ Alert Bay was a good example of the aftermath of a resource-extraction town.

I walked back to the ferry dock and went left, into reserve land. A carved *sisiutl* resting atop two ten-foot high posts greets ferry passengers, with a sign hung underneath to welcome visitors in Kwak'waka, “*Gilakas'la*.” The threshold gave an immediate impression of the people who reside there, which beckoned my entry into the fascinating and enduring culture of the Kwakwaka'wakw.



Fig. 5. Ronald Howe, *Sisiutl carving at Alert Bay ferry terminal*, March 2017, photograph, Alert Bay, British Columbia.

Fir St. became Front St. as it entered First Nations territory, and the concentration of commercial buildings was replaced by residential houses built on spacious lots. The boundary that separated 'Yalis' reserve land from unceded Alert Bay municipal land showed up on maps, but was imperceptible on land from a sign, fence, or other obvious delineation. The best

indication of the division came from cultural symbols like front yard totems and family emblems painted on garages.

Next to the ferry terminal on Front St. was a marina packed with sailing vessels that ranged in size and utility from small punts and skiffs to large purse seiners and sailboats. It was accessed from a boardwalk that ran alongside both Front and Fir Streets on the town's foreshore. The boardwalk literally directed visitors into the door of the Cranmer family's Culture Shock Interactive Gallery, which sold clothing, jewellery, coffee cups, and other goods emblazoned with Kwakwaka'wakw designs. The store had a seaside patio that offered visitors hot beverages to drink while they marvelled at the picturesque landscape. Inside, shoppers could buy a cedar box set that contained five of Barb Cranmer's award-winning Kwakwaka'wakw documentaries.

Past Culture Shock, the boardwalk continued and went by an abandoned net loft and an old fish buying station. The aged, crumbling buildings were followed by more recently constructed covered rest areas with carved masks above their entrances, offering pedestrians a panoramic view of the spectacular land and seascapes.



Fig. 6. Ronald Howe, *Alert Bay boardwalk rest area*, March 2017, photograph, Alert Bay, British Columbia.

The boardwalk ended just before it reached the Indian dock and U'mista Cultural Centre, where Front St. took a right turn up a steep hill to become Park St. A left turn on the ascent led to the gas station, hospital, dental office, and the 'N̄amgis Treatment Centre. St. Michael's Indian Residential School had occupied space beside the gas station, but now was just a large, open area with a plaque that described the school's grim legacy.

Further up Park St. was the Whe-la-la-u Reserve area and another 'N̄amgis burial ground. Departed Kwakw̄ak̄'wakw ancestors were commemorated by both totem and headstone, and family members were often entombed in the same vicinity. The street levelled off at an area where there were soccer fields, the world's tallest totem pole,²⁰⁸ and the 'N̄amgis Big House (*Gukwdzi*), the community's primary cultural gathering place. *Gukwdzi*'s enormous, highly realistic facade cast an imposing gaze that was impossible to ignore.



Fig. 7. Ronald Howe, *Gukwdzi - 'Namgis Big House*, March 2017, photograph, Alert Bay, British Columbia.

Broughton St., which led to the band office, forked off of Park St. to the right. Houses along the route displayed cultural landmarks like house totems, wood carvings of fish, traditional chairs, and a war canoe. About thirty minutes of walking through this fascinating excursion deposited me at the band office, nestled amongst other public buildings in the vicinity that included the Lawrence Ambers Recreational Centre, the T'lisalagi'lakw Elementary School, and a secondary 'Namgis administration building.

Permission

I spoke to the staff member Cathy had advised, who provided me with the form I needed to fill out to gain fieldwork clearance. It took me about half an hour, and I returned to the staff member's office to submit it. She looked over the document, nodding and seemingly receptive to what I had written. "I meet with the Chief either this Thursday or next," she advised, "but I should be able to let you know about your clearance shortly after that, it seems like you have everything in order." Her statement surprised me, as I had anticipated extensive administrative

bureaucracy and had not considered the process could progress so quickly. My surprise did not stop there. After reading the completed form, she looked up to address me directly. “Oh, and where will you be staying when you are here?” I explained that my uncertainty about this process had preclude me from making inquiries about accommodations, and that any arrangements beyond gaining consent to do research, and for what time period that consent applied to, were pointless until I navigated this initial hurdle. At worst, I told her, I could likely stay on in Sointula, and commute over every day, if I did not find lodgings before my Alert Bay fieldwork research period commenced, which suddenly appeared to be much sooner than I had earlier thought possible. Her response astonished me. “Another staff member is looking for someone to watch over their house for a few weeks when they are out of town attending a family event. Would you be interested in that?” I could hardly believe my ears. “Yes, quite,” I enthusiastically replied. I could hardly believe my randomly-timed visit lucked into such a windfall.

We exchanged email addresses and telephone numbers before parting, and she promised to let me know about my clearance as soon as she had any further information. I walked back down to the ferry dock and reflected on the developments of the last few hours. I had dropped into the band office, apprehensive and without an appointment, resolved to the fact that gaining permission to do research on the reserve was going to take a long time, which was likely to disrupt my fieldwork intentions. I met with the staff member Cathy advised, who got my approval process underway, given concrete timelines for when I might expect that to be completed, and, remarkably, offered me a place to stay. Within two weeks, the staff member secured my research clearance, arranged accommodations for me, and forwarded introductions to the people at U'mista, Kuterra, the Gwa'ni Hatchery, and local historians. The generosity and hospitality extended to me before I even arrived for fieldwork in 'Y_ulis was astonishing, and did

not dissipate throughout the course of two stays. The amount of information I had access to was overwhelming.

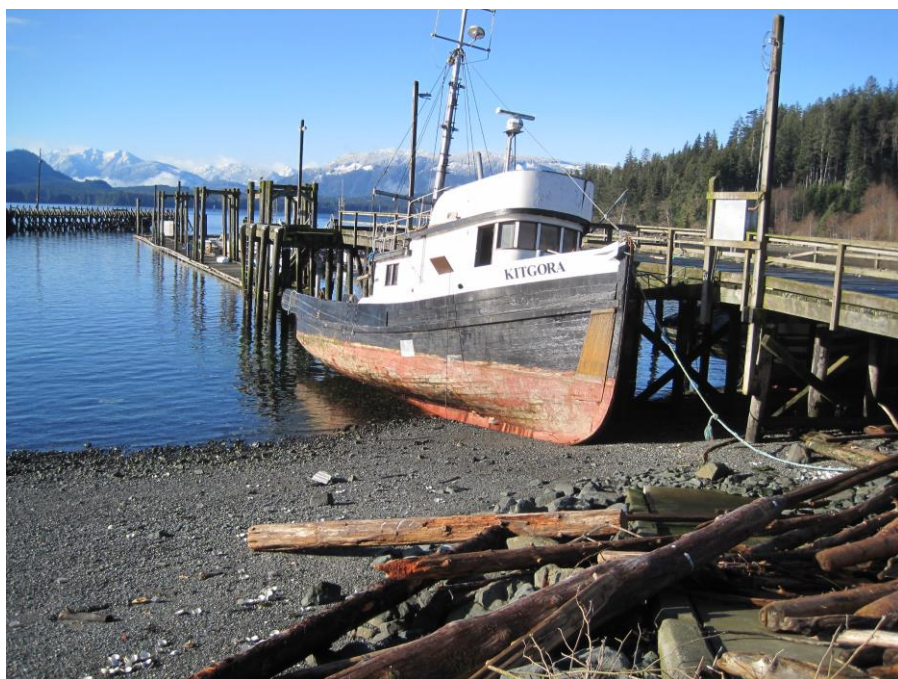


Fig. 8. Ronald Howe, *Kitgora beached at Alert Bay Indian dock*, March 2017, photograph, Alert Bay, British Columbia.

Kitchen of Research

I answered a knock on the door of my lodgings on a quiet Saturday night to greet an unexpected visitor. She carried a box brought up from her car parked in the driveway, and asked whether I could give her a hand bringing more boxes into the house, which we proceeded to do. As we engaged in this, I noticed “Barb C.” written on top of each box we toted, and could hardly believe my good fortune. “Are you... Barb Cranmer?” I asked her, scarcely believing one of Canada’s most important filmmakers was standing next to me in the kitchen. “Yes, I am. And you are?” I nervously explained who I was and what I was doing there before telling her how special I thought her films were, which are reviewed in the Literature section.

Barb and I talked for quite some time that evening, and as she left, extended an open invitation to drop by Culture Shock for any further inquiries I might have. Fieldwork promised all sorts of surprises and adventures, and this one ranked pretty high: An award-winning First Nation's documentarian knocking on your door was not something that happened every day. I dropped in to see her at Culture Shock many times over the ensuing months.

I met Bruce Alfred at a private celebration I was invited to attend, who had grown up in Granny Axu's Big House alongside his kinfolk. I had read about him in Honey Alfred's *My Life in a Kwagu'l Big House*, though I did not realize it at the time of our meeting. Bruce is a renown Kwakwaka'wakw artist, a master of the bentwood box technique, who began his artistic career in the 1970s as an apprentice to acclaimed master carver Doug Cranmer,²⁰⁹ potlatch host Dan Cranmer's son. Though past retirement age, Bruce continued performing an active role in the community that went far beyond his artistic contributions. He raised his granddaughter, drove relief for the school bus, and was always available to answer any questions I had. He had also coached soccer previously, and been instrumental in turning the local Cormorants into a highly respected club that earned an invitation to compete in England. Bruce is a Kwakwaka'wakw knowledge keeper who never hesitated to share the wealth of information he possessed, about virtually every aspect of the community, for which I was grateful. Kinship runs deep in Alert Bay, and it appeared many of its Indigenous residents were related through both family ties and or marriage.

Carving Shed: Cultural Incubator

I was invited to the carving shed that Bruce and his fellow artists worked out of one afternoon. It was a double-wide trailer that teemed with a dizzying amount of works-in-progress, in a multitude of forms, that I was humbled to be witness to. The Alert Bay carving community had lost its most well-known member, Beau Dick, a few weeks earlier.

Beau Dick was a Kwakwaka'wakw artist, activist, and hereditary chief whose life cast an enormous shadow that stretched far beyond the communities of Alert Bay and Kingcome Inlet, who both claimed him as a son.²¹⁰ His passing coincided with my arrival in Alert Bay, and I was privileged to attend his celebration of life alongside a standing-room only crowd at the Lawrence Ambers Recreational Centre. Beau was born in 1955, and moved with his family to Vancouver when he was six, which provided crucial, early-age contrasts to him of urban life as compared to that of life on an isolated reserve, and of an Aboriginal life compared to that of a non-Aboriginal. Both his father and grandfather were carvers who exposed him to the Northwest Coast art forms at an early age. He began his apprenticeship at age seventeen under the tutelage of Tony Hunt, a member of a renowned Kwakwaka'wakw family, and later, like Bruce Alfred, also apprenticed under Doug Cranmer. This line of artist and apprentice that preceded Beau also included noted Kwakwaka'wakw carver Mungo Martin and Haida artist Bill Reid, among many others, and continued under his mentorship as artist-in-residence at the UBC Department of Art History from 2013 until his passing in 2017.²¹¹

Transformation is a fundamental belief held by the Kwakwaka'wakw, and all First Nations on the Northwest Coast, in which humans and animals are not only capable of communicating with each other, but can also exchange physical forms.²¹² Transformation is artistically recreated through the Transformation Mask, the physical manifestation of the concept of changing from one state of being to another. A costumed dancer wears the mask during traditional ceremonies, often a bird with a long beak. When the dancer opens the beak by pulling on strings attached to the sides of the mask, it unveils a human inside, a representation of the dancer's ancestor. Beau was a master of this form, among many others, and a creation he made for Vancouver's Expo '86 currently hangs in the Canadian Museum of History.²¹³

Beau's experimentation with numerous artistic forms included expressions of political activism. He led and executed a copper-breaking ceremony, traditionally used to shame rivals, from Alert Bay to the provincial legislature in Victoria in 2013, and made a similar excursion to Ottawa in 2014 to shame federal politicians.²¹⁴ One of his most stunning pieces, "Ghost Confined to the Chair", intersperses an old, worn chair Beau salvaged in Alert Bay, a copy of the Indian Act on the chair's seat, and one of his ghost mask carvings, which acts as a paperweight to the Act.²¹⁵

Beau Dick was a behemoth in the Northwest Coast art community, and his unexpected death a few weeks earlier cast a pall over the handful of carvers inside the shed that day. A slogan written in black magic marker on a wall in the shed caught my attention, summarizing in six lines what Beau, Bruce, and the rest of the artists were engaged in:

Work for the CAUSE
Not for APPLAUSE
Live life to EXPRESS
Not to IMPRESS
Don't strive to make your presence NOTICED
Just make your PRESENCE felt!

Beau's presence was unmistakably felt. Within two years of his death, his legacy was affirmed by the release of motion picture, *Maker of Monsters: The Extraordinary Life of Beau Dick*, and the publication of two books, *Beau Dick: Revolutionary Spirit*, by Darrin Martens, and *Beau Dick: Devoured by Consumerism*, by Latiesha Fazakas. Haisla First Nation hip hop duo Snotty Nose Rez Kids has sampled a Beau speech about the copper-breaking for their 2017 song, *Skoden*.

AGM

The 'N_am_igis AGM took place over two days at the Lawrence Ambers Recreation Centre. The meeting included progress reports from band-affiliated companies Orca Sand and Gravel, Kokish Power, and Kuterra, which I was particularly interested in. Cathy brought me to the event, and we sat at a table with her granny and her granny's friend, seated among perhaps a few hundred others scattered throughout the cavernous gym. I had seen both women at many other community events I attended, the sheer volume of their activities defying their chronological years. At the AGM, both had hand-held devices sitting on the table in front of them, intermittently checking audible notifications and posting their own communication. Though it seemed odd to watch elders engaged in the new technology, what struck me as profound was what they did once they finished listening, talking, reading or typing: They returned to their knitting, as though idle hands were something to be avoided. The synthesis of traditional culture and modernity has a long history in Kwakwaka'wakw territory. HBC fur trader Robert Hunt and Tlingit Chief's daughter Mary Ebbetts were married at Fort Rupert around 1850. Their union produced 11 children, which included Franz Boas' long-time collaborator George Hunt. Boas brought a Kwakiutl contingent to the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. Edward Curtis' 1914 silent film, *In the Land of the Head Hunters*, featured an entirely Kwakiutl cast.

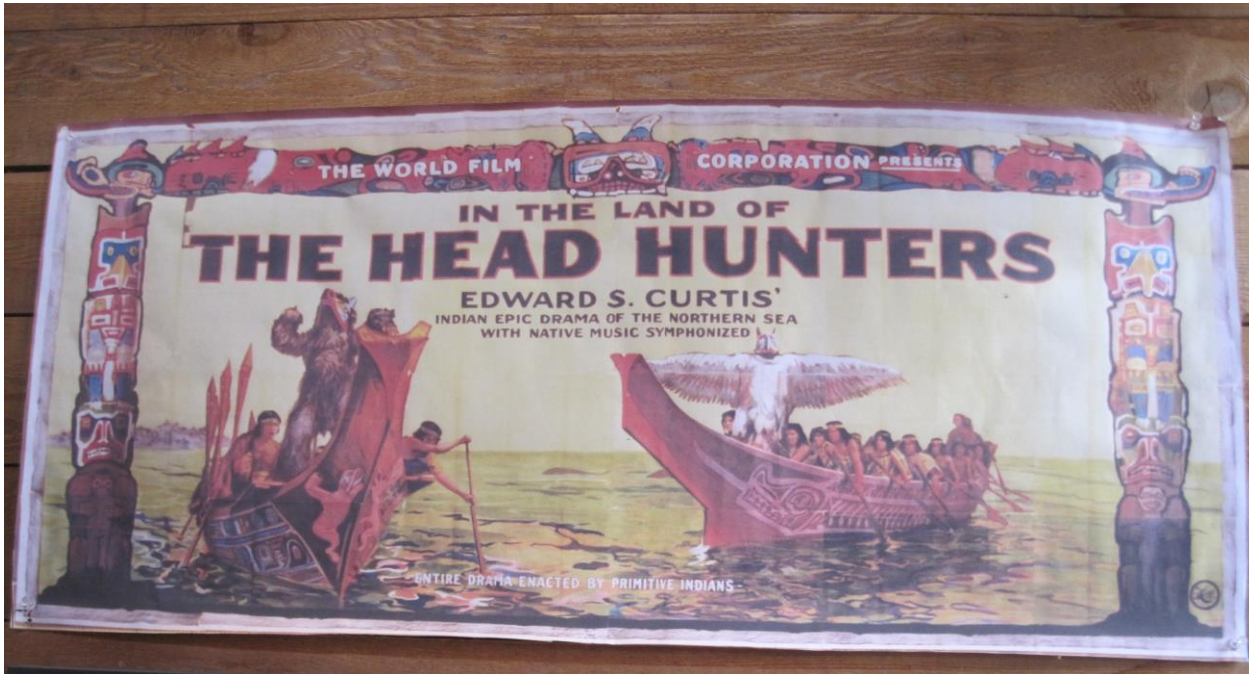


Fig. 9. Ronald Howe, Poster for Edward Curtis' 1914 film *In the Land of the Head Hunters*, April 2017. From display at U'mista Cultural Centre, Alert Bay, British Columbia.

Modernity's incursion on Indigenous culture often produced much less favourable results. As noted earlier in this chapter, the Indian Act of 1876 brought virtually every aspect of Native life under government supervision. Traditional harvesting technology was outlawed in 1888, after the federal Fisheries Act decreed that "Indians shall, at all times, have liberty to fish for the purpose of providing food for themselves but not for sale, barter or traffic, by any means other than with drift nets, or spearing."²¹⁶ By 1890, they needed a license to do even that,²¹⁷ and by 1894 were required to get formal permission to fish.²¹⁸ Laws introduced in 1910 required Natives to get a permit for gear types, fishing areas, and times.²¹⁹ Fish farming was but the most recent example of a long legacy of colonial incursion into Indigenous culture. Kuterra was the 'N̄amgis response to this incursion, though not their only one, as I soon learned.

I met Ernest Alfred at the AGM, who was wearing a "No Tankers" t-shirt. It expressed his opposition to the Northern Gateway pipeline project, which proposed to transport diluted bitumen from northern Alberta's Athabasca oil sands to a port terminal located at Kitimat, in

northern BC, a home of the Haisla First Nation. Once there, the bitumen was to be loaded onto supertankers destined for Asian markets. An oil spill from a supertanker would decimate BC's pristine coastal waters.

Ernest was a well-known community activist, hereditary 'Namgis chief, school teacher, and tireless cultural advocate. Shortly after the AGM, he initiated an epic battle against fish-farming conglomerate Marine Harvest by commencing a 284-day long occupation of their Swanson Island fish farm site,²²⁰ which he contends operates without permission in unceded 'Namgis territory. The alarm bells warning of fish farming's impact on the coastal ecosystem had been sounded by many First Nations, fishermen, coastal non-Indigenous communities, Alexandra Morton, environmental protection groups, and others, but had consistently fallen on deaf ears at provincial and federal government regulatory agencies. Ernest opted for this radical response after being exasperated by governmental inaction on the consequences of the fish farming industry while simultaneously trying to educate his students about ecological stewardship. He and a handful of other local activists began occupations of the Swanson Island and Midsummer Island fish farming sites to both monitor and publicize the environmental degradation taking place in the unceded waters of the Broughton Archipelago, and had the support of the 'Namgis elected and ancestral leadership, as well as many other Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations.²²¹ Marine Harvest levelled injunctions against the occupation, made jurisdictional claim challenges, and employed other legal manoeuvres to quell any negative attention on the fish farming industry. I sat in on the courtroom hearings, participated in protests, and continued to monitor the activities of Ernest and the occupiers, through mainstream and social media, over the ensuing months, but witnessed his repeated disappointment when these actions produced meaningless results. Opposition to fish farming and crude oil tanker traffic on BC's coast are quite similar, as both contest the assumption that corporate profit trumps any consideration of

ecological impact. Ernest and the occupiers were the embodiment of one's neighbours being insurance.

My initial plan was to spend four to six weeks doing research in each community, but this had not been long enough to fully assess the volume of history and culture I was exposed to. I arranged to return to Alert Bay for June Sports, the community's annual marquee event. As I prepared to leave after that initial stay, my host, in another act of the continuous generosity and hospitality that came to define my experiences in 'Yalis, arranged for me to catch a ride to Nanaimo with Chris Cook Jr. and his spouse, who were headed in that direction. I had just read *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las: Jane Constance Cook and the Politics of Memory, Church, and Custom* (discussed in the Literature Review section), which drew me back into historic colonial intrusion and its long reach into today's social relations. Ga'axsta'las was Chris' grandmother.

Although well into his seventies, Chris continued to assert and affirm his cultural identity by commercially fishing, one of five people in his community still employed in the industry.²²² A picture in *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las* shows more fishermen amongst Chris's dad and uncles in Alert Bay in 1948, each skipping their own boat.²²³ Chris was the elected Chief when the NIDA report came out in 1975, and I had seen an "ELECT CHRIS COOK" campaign sign on a house near the band office. The Cook family had an enormous legacy in the community, one which was tarnished by a single, careless quote from Franz Boas. The stigma of Boas' pronouncement lingered for decades until the family set the record straight with the publication of *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las*.

Gambling

I returned to Alert Bay on a Thursday afternoon, just in time to witness the Salmon Prince and Princess Pageant that kicked off June Sports, another expression of local and regional cultural identity. The event was in its 59th year, which featured both Indigenous and non-

Indigenous soccer clubs competing in men's and ladies' tournaments, and cultural celebrations like the pageant. It was, and for decades had been, the busiest weekend of the summer on Cormorant Island. Favourites in the men's tournament were the Alert Bay Cormorants and Kingcome Inlet Wolves, who competed against teams from other First Nations, as well as against non-Indigenous clubs representing Port McNeill and the Baha'i faith. A squad from Vancouver's Downtown Street Soccer League, made up of players currently, and formerly, homeless, also participated. Inclusion was an objective organizers pursued, using sport and competition as an excuse to create community and break down cultural and socioeconomic barriers. Cultural promotion was another objective, exemplified by witnessing Bruce Alfred's granddaughter get crowned Salmon Princess in the Big House, accompanied by her papa's enormous pride.



Fig. 10. Ronald Howe, *Downtown Eastside Street Soccer League Team*, June 2017, photograph, Alert Bay, British Columbia.

I volunteered to help run a booth at June Sports that sold tickets for the Temperature's Rising 50/50 draw, which raised seed money for the following year's tournament. It provided a good opportunity for me to give something back to the community that had given so much to me, and also offered a participant-observation method of data collection. The booth was located just off the sideline of the main soccer field - a hub of activity - and ticket-buyers were often lined up. The draw's popularity exceeded my expectations, which compelled me to reflect on the broader institution of gambling within the community. It was one of many gambling-type activities organized in Alert Bay. Local billboards often communicated similar chance-type fundraisers to help out a community member facing medical and/or financial hardship, or student groups raising money for an activity, situations that those in other rural communities know well. Bingo was a weekly gathering at the community hall that raised money for the local soccer team. Cash was generally the sales incentive, though culturally-themed prizes such as eulachon grease or locally-crafted jewellery were also offered. As I looked at the raffle booth lineups and made note of the frequency of billboard fundraisers, I wondered if winning explained their popularity, like it did in the dominant society's gambling institutions of lotteries, sports betting, and casinos. Rather, it seemed that the motive, or perhaps even obligation, was to support one's community.

These gambling activities were so ubiquitous in Alert Bay that I began to question stereotypes regarding gambling addiction among First Nations people.²²⁴ My examination of the institution of gambling in the community reflected a deep, ongoing commitment to community welfare that was symbolically similar to the social relations of the potlatch system, rather than a characteristic of addictive behaviour.

I looked at the issue of gambling from a perspective apart from the issue of addictive behaviour. As I volunteered at the Temperature's Rising booth, I noticed many ticket-buyers returning on subsequent days, often putting the names of other family member's names on the

ticket stubs. I did not believe all of these people were gambling addicts, which obliged me to look beyond their behaviour, and instead focus on the result of their actions. A prize winner was likely to be someone from the local community, and the profits of the event also went back to the community. Temperature Rising sold around 5,000 \$1 tickets over the course of three days. Half of that money went to the winner, while the other half went toward the next tournament's organization, which meant all money raised probably stayed in the community. Local fundraisers produced a similar result. Neighbours were your insurance, even when they partook in games of chance.

My synopsis is not meant to imply that the community does not engage in institutionalized gambling such as lotteries, in which virtually all money spent leaves the community. Lottery playing was as popular in Alert Bay as anywhere else, but by looking at the result rather than the behaviour, I was able to extrapolate significant meaning from a remarkable story my host recounted.

The 'Namgis Band Administration had experienced a catastrophic layoff a few years earlier in which a significant percentage of the staff had been abruptly let go. Satch Speck, who had worked for the bands for decades, was one of those affected. Satch, like many Canadians, played the lotteries, though he claimed to not be a regular buyer. He purchased a ticket "on a whim" from the Alert Bay Drug Store, and had forgotten about it until someone told him the lottery's \$3.5 million winning ticket had been sold there.²²⁵ After checking the ticket, he was in disbelief that it was the winner, as was his wife, who insisted, over the phone, that he was pulling her leg. It was not winning the lottery that made Satch's story unique, but rather what he did with the prize money: He went into the local financial institution that held the mortgages of a number of family members, and paid off their outstanding debts, in true potlatch fashion. After all, it was not how much one had, but rather how much one could give away.

I had arrived in Alert Bay with a minimal amount of knowledge of the ‘Namgis and the Kwakwaka’wakw beyond Kuterra. I found a culture that was open rather than hidden, and embraced, rather than dismissed or discarded. Canada was in a transformational process as it began to accept and admit to its horrific colonial legacy, but over the course of my research in Alert Bay, a transformation had occurred within me. I learned about the potlatch, a socioeconomic, sociopolitical, and sociocultural system that redistributes wealth through generosity and competition, which appeared to be superior to the capitalist system, where wealth concentration was both expected, and applauded. I had been able to immerse myself into a fascinating culture, and recognized the many ways it had, and would continue to, express itself. Reconciliation had replaced persecution, repatriation had replaced theft, and closed pen fish farms had begun to replace those in the ocean. Progress seldom moved linearly. Some cultures were seed planters, while others were trailblazers. Some were both, a common theme across Sointula, Alert Bay, and Lasqueti.

Colonialism had transformed the Kwakwaka’wakw, though not necessarily in a positive way. Repeated outbreaks of disease that arrived with settler culture decimated their society, killing off at least 80% of the population. Those who survived had their land taken and were forced onto reserves. Their children were taken from them and forced into residential schools. They were prohibited from practicing their cultural system, and had laws enacted against them on when, where, and how they could fish. Despite these impediments, the Kwakwaka’wakw endured such transformation, and accepted capitalism into their society, yet continued resisting cultural annihilation. Potlatches went underground during the ban, and were publicly revived once the prohibition was lifted. U’mista continues its endless search for confiscated treasures. Though Kuterra represents a new approach to aquaculture, its message of resistance is a response familiar to the ‘Namgis and all Kwak’wala-speaking peoples.

Despite the effects of colonialism, this culture has continually found new ways to move forward. The 'N̓am̓gis created U'mista to assist recovery of treasures stolen from them, organized unions to protect their fishers, built Kuterra to protect their salmon, and activated a resistance movement to challenge the presence of fish farms in their territory. Though often at the forefront of counter-hegemony, they were not alone in challenging the common sense of capitalism.

Notes:

¹⁴⁵. Franz Boas, "The Indians of British Columbia," *Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York* 28 (New York: American Geographical Society, 1896), 232, doi: 10.2307/196801.

¹⁴⁶. Robert J. Muckle, *The First Nations of British Columbia: An Anthropological Overview (Third Edition)* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 32.

¹⁴⁷. Muckle, *The First Nations of British Columbia*, 25.

¹⁴⁸. "The Wakashan Languages", University of Washington, 2010, Seattle, accessed July 9, 2019, <https://depts.washington.edu/wl12/languages.html>.

¹⁴⁹. Muckle, *The First Nations of British Columbia*, 76.

¹⁵⁰. James Sewid, *Guests Never Leave Hungry: The Autobiography of James Sewid, a Kwakiutl Indian*, edited by James P. Spradley (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 7.

¹⁵¹. Sewid, *Guests Never Leave Hungry*, 12.

¹⁵². Dara Culhane-Speck, *An Error in Judgement: The Politics of Medical Care in an Indian/White Community* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1987), 82.

¹⁵³. Statistics Canada, "Aboriginal Population Profile. 2016 Census," Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-510-X2016001, Ottawa, released July 18, 2018, accessed July 9, 2019, <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/abpopprof/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

¹⁵⁴. Wilson Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia, Vol. 1: The Impact of the White Man* (Victoria, BC: Province of BC, Ministry of Provincial Secretary, Memoir No. 5, 1965), 42. See also: Tom Swanky, *A Missing Genocide and the Demonization of its Heroes* (BC: Dragon Heart, 2014) and *The Smallpox War in Nuxalk Territory* (BC: Dragon Heart, 2016).

¹⁵⁵. "Population history of American Indigenous peoples," McGill University, n.d., Montreal, accessed June 30, 2019,

https://www.cs.mcgill.ca/~rwest/wikispeedia/wpcd/wp/p/Population_history_of_American_indigenous_peoples.htm.

¹⁵⁶. Muckle, *The First Nations of British Columbia*, 65.

¹⁵⁷. Franz Boas, *The Religion of the Kwakiutl Indians, Part II – Translations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), 207.

¹⁵⁸. Diane Jacobson, *My Life with the Salmon* (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 2011), 163.

¹⁵⁹. Sarah E. Boslaugh, “Anthropocentrism”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, January 11, 2016, accessed July 9, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/anthropocentrism>.

¹⁶⁰. Ronald W. Hawker, *Yakuglas’ Legacy: The Art and Times of Charlie James* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 120.

¹⁶¹. Muckle, *The First Nations of British Columbia*, 71-2.

¹⁶². Muckle, *The First Nations of British Columbia*, 72.

¹⁶³. Helen Codere, *Fighting with Property: A Study of Kwakiutl Potlatching and Warfare, 1792-1930* (New York: J.J. Augustin, 1950), 118-25.

¹⁶⁴. Wilson, *Practical Dreamers*, 100.

¹⁶⁵. Robert P.C. Joseph, “21 Things You May Not Have Known About the Indian Act” (blog post), Indigenous Corporate Training Inc, 2015, accessed July 30, 2019, <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/21-things-you-may-not-have-known-about-the-indian-act->. Note: This blog was turned into a book in 2018. Joseph’s father, Chief Dr. Robert “Bobby Jo” Joseph, is a revered Kwakwaka’wakw knowledge keeper, the Ambassador for Reconciliation Canada, and one of the residential school survivors interviewed in Barb Cranmer’s *I’Tustogalis: Rising Up Together*.

¹⁶⁶. Canada, *Indian Act*, SC 1884 c.27, s.3, “An Act Further to Amend ‘The Indian Act’, 1880.”

¹⁶⁷. Daisy Sewid-Smith, *Prosecution or Persecution* (Cape Mudge, BC: Nu-Yum-Baleess Society, 1979), 1-2.

¹⁶⁸. “The History of the Potlatch Collection,” U’mista Cultural Centre, accessed July 30, 2019, <https://www.umista.ca/pages/collection-history>.

¹⁶⁹. Sewid, *Guests Never Leave Hungry*, 54-5. “The kids in the Anglican residential school lived right there all the time, but those kids who were living at home in Alert Bay village would go to the day school.” (p. 46).

¹⁷⁰. “The History of the Potlatch Collection,” U’mista Cultural Centre, accessed July 30, 2019, <https://www.umista.ca/pages/collection-history>.

¹⁷¹. Sewid-Smith, *Prosecution or Persecution*, 75. For more information, see Ronald W. Hawker, *Yakuglas’ Legacy: The Art and Times of Charlie James* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 20. Hawker notes that Halliday put the objects on exhibit at the Alert Bay parish hall and charged twenty-five cents for admission.

¹⁷². Sewid-Smith, *Prosecution or Persecution*, 16.

¹⁷³. Village of Alert Bay, *Visitor’s Information* (Alert Bay, BC: Village of Alert Bay, n.d.), 14.

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¹⁷⁶. Speck, *An Error in Judgement*, 79.

¹⁷⁷. Canada, *Indian Act*, 1920, c.50, s.1, 1927. The Indian Act was amended in 1920 to require compulsory school attendance “for children of Indian blood under the age of sixteen,” which was originally enacted in *Indian Act*, Revised Statutes, c. 43, s.1, 1884. The later amendment prescribed consequences to those who failed to comply.

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¹⁸¹. James Struthers, “The Great Depression in Canada”, *The Canadian Encyclopaedia*, July 11, 2013, accessed July 2, 2019, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/great-depression>.

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CHAPTER 4: LASQUETI – BUSH HIPPIES

Lasqueti Island was a much more self-isolated community than either Sointula or Alert Bay. The rejection of military conscription brought settlers here, who soon found themselves excluded from access to electricity and the many features of modernity it provided. Residents were obligated to find new ways to harness energy, and began experimenting with alternative methods of power generation. They succeeded in developing alternatives, and became victims of their own progress as the island evolved from backwoods, draft-dodger outpost to off-grid utopia. This attracted the attention of a privileged socioeconomic class that began to buy up available properties, profoundly altering the existing housing market. The newcomers only lived on the island seasonally, fundamentally disrupting the local economy. The self-reliant pioneers that built the community found themselves alienated from their labour, increasingly displaced by a propertied-class.

Lasqueti highlighted what a group of marginalized individuals working together had accomplished, but also showed what it meant to become a victim of your own success. Social relations deteriorated with skyrocketing housing prices and a seasonal economy, offering a vision of what post-utopia might look like. My fieldwork found multiple examples of this transgression, which dampened Lasqueti's reputation as a community of environmental stewards. Many of the people I met recognized this occurring, yet they felt near-powerless to do anything about it. Capitalism estranged us from each other.

Lasqueti Island (see Appendix 1) is an isolated, rugged land mass located off the coast of British Columbia approximately twenty-one km long and five km wide. "The Rock", as its approximately 400 residents commonly refer to it, is nineteen km of treacherous water away from the central Vancouver Island town of Parksville (see Appendix 1) in the northern area of the Salish Sea, the international body of water that connects cities Seattle, Tacoma, Victoria,

Nanaimo, Campbell River, and Vancouver (see Appendix 1). Lasqueti has spatially developed in contrast to those with whom it shares the ecosystem by mandating that individual properties be a minimum of ten acres, to address future population density problems.²²⁶ In another striking contrast to settlement in the region, it is not connected to an electrical grid, which has forced residents to implement their own methods of power generation. While modernity is characterized by access to amenities, Lasqueti is distinguished by their absence. No power or gas lines run to Lasqueti, indoor septic disposal is rare,²²⁷ and automobiles cannot be driven onto the island's foot-passenger ferry. Whether the absence of amenities is a conscious, ideological choice, or simply the evolution of a community of like-minded individuals whose priorities do not include things many take for granted, is open for debate. Lasqueti's off-grid status is the most recent expression of the community's half-century long history of counter-hegemony, which started when American draft-dodgers and counter-culture hippies began arriving on its shores.

Origins and Early History

The *Tla'amin* (Sliammon) First Nation, one of BC's handful of Treaty First Nations,²²⁸ identify Lasqueti as "*Xwe'etay*,"²²⁹ an ancestral home. Archaeological evidence confirms First Nations have utilized Lasqueti for at least eight thousand years, with some sites continuously inhabited for over a thousand years.²³⁰ The island provided protein sources such as deer, seabirds, sea mammals, fish, and shellfish, and edible plants like salmonberries, huckleberries, salal berries, and wild crab apples. Trees from its abundant forests were used for boat and house building.

The first Europeans to explore the region arrived in 1791 on two ships sailing under the Spanish flag, captain Jose Maria Narvaez' schooner *Santa Saturnina*, and Francisco de Eliza's packet boat *San Carlos*. The pair charted the northern waters of the Strait of Georgia, in which Eliza outlined the land mass he dubbed "Lasqueti." George Vancouver, sailing for colonial rival

Britain in the following year, accepted Eliza's place name, and the slight variation "Lasqueti" remains in use to the present.²³¹ Empires shared navigational charts, and fought over lands each claimed to have discovered, without ever questioning the Eurocentric conception of private property.

The island remained untouched by colonial incursion for nearly a century following Vancouver's arrival, similar to Kwakwaka'wakw territory after his arrival at Whulk. J.O.W. Carey began mapping out sections and quarter sections for settlement in 1875 while surveying for coal and other minerals for the British Royal Navy. He recommended the island be used for sheep farming, projecting it would be able to support ten thousand animals.²³² Flocks of feral sheep, an invasive species, continue to roam Lasqueti Island to the present day.

The Rat Portage Lumber Company, one of Lasqueti's earliest enterprises, operated out of Boat Cove on the island's south side. Though the company enjoyed some initial success, it ceased operations in 1911 after logging all of the island's old growth trees.²³³ The loss of that economic base was soon supplanted by Canada's entry into World War I in 1914, which inflated the price of salmon, a portable source of nutrition needed on the front lines. The increased price of fish created new employment opportunities on Lasqueti, just as it had in both Sointula and Alert Bay during times of conflict. A cannery built at False Bay in 1915 tripled in size during the war, and Lasqueti's population surpassed one hundred people, which included twenty students enrolled at the Centre Road school.²³⁴ The local labour force was unable to accommodate the expansion, forcing the cannery to introduce immigrant workers to the island. World War I ended in late 1918, which also ended the enterprise. It is unclear what happened to those immigrant labourers.

The cannery closure did not significantly affect Lasqueti's population, and new settlers continued to arrive in the post-war period. By the late 1920s, the isolated homesteaders had some

of their first modern amenities when telephones, radios, and automobiles appeared on the island.²³⁵ The Depression of the 1930s delivered a severe economic contraction, yet Lasqueti's population continued to grow, surpassing three hundred people by 1940. "Hard times drew people together, and many preferred to weather them in a tight community rather than an anonymous city," *Accidental Eden: Hippie Days on Lasqueti Island* co-author Douglas Hamilton observed.²³⁶ When difficult times arrive, we count upon our neighbours to help us get through them, rather than rely upon a government and their failed institutions to provide solutions.

The post-war economic boom that followed World War II significantly increased the price of lumber, precipitating a new influx of settlement on Lasqueti. There were fourteen active logging operations on the island by the early 1950s, felling trees with more efficient technology than had been used in the past, and hauling out the cut lumber on higher capacity trucks, across improved roads.²³⁷ The boom period ended on Lasqueti in 1958 after the new technological efficiency, coupled with an insatiable need for corporate profit, had again near-completely logged the island. Most of the homesteads, gravel roads, orchards and farmers' fields were deserted within a few years, and by the mid-1960s the population had dwindled to "barely seventy."²³⁸

Ramshackle houses were available for the asking – rent-free, although the roofs leaked and chimneys smoked. Logged-over landscapes went for fifty dollars an acre or less, but few cared to buy. Who would ever want to live on this island of stumps, muddy logging roads, and broken timber?²³⁹

The saga of extracting resources to the point of exhaustion is ubiquitous throughout British Columbia's history, leaving countless ghost towns, clear-cut landscapes, and industrial footprints strewn throughout the province. Lasqueti, however, was about to undergo a dramatic transformation.

Patriotism and Modernity

The 1960s were a tumultuous era in Western democracy, particularly in the United States. The invisible hand of unregulated free market capitalism in the decades following WWII had created unparalleled financial prosperity, and dramatically improved people's material lives, particularly through market-delivered technological innovation. These economic and technological benefits, however, did not necessarily improve the social conditions of a large percentage of the citizenry, as women and minorities continued to face historic, institutionalized discrimination as compared to male Caucasians. The Allied Forces' World War II victory over tyranny and dictatorship hailed a march toward a more democratic, egalitarian society, but that goal continued to exclude a significant portion of the population. This exclusion had resonated into the public consciousness by the mid 1960s, as highly-visible protests demanded equal rights for women and minorities.

America was also mired in the Vietnam War at the time, with casualties reported daily in newspapers, and broadcast nightly on televised news. The heightened media attention contributed to a considerable change in the public perception of American militarism, which was seldom questioned prior to the advent of nightly, televised news. Anti-war protests found common ground with those seeking equality, as all resisted the status quo of American society. The anti-war movement created a decline of volunteers needed to fight the conflict, which precipitated a shift in the country's recruitment policy. In 1969, the Selective Service National Headquarters instituted a new lottery system in which all males, in the window of time that existed from 29 days before their 18th birthday to 30 days after it, were required to register for the draft.²⁴⁰ Many avoided this by becoming draft-dodgers, with Canada a favoured destination given its close proximity to America, similar culture, and, importantly, its implicit acceptance of

fugitive emigres. Those who made this journey often brought wives and children, creating a massive exodus to large Canadian cities such as Vancouver and Toronto.²⁴¹

Urban environments, however, often reproduced the inegalitarian economic system and values that accompanied it. One was still a renter, employee, and cog in the system, regardless of who was in charge. Obedience to military objectives was a single symptom of a larger, more systemic problem of hegemonic servitude. To be truly free of such a system, one needed to sacrifice their dependence upon it. Lasqueti Island, with few of the trappings of modernity, became an attractive destination for draft-dodgers, as well as others who found their way there for many of the same reasons. The community became a refuge for both draft-dodgers and a back-to-the-land movement, which embraced an ideology that the environment was central to human existence, a force to be respected and integrated into one's life. Followers view humankind as a part of the environment, much the same as the Kwakwaka'wakw, rather than its exploiter and eventual conqueror, like anthropocentric capitalism does.²⁴² "Country life was idealized – peace, simplicity, living in balance with nature and spending as little money as possible trumped career, wealth, education, class and all the other trappings of conventional North American life,"²⁴³ wrote *Accidental Eden* co-author Douglas Hamilton of the settlers rejection of hegemony.

Lasqueti Island, far removed from modernity, conscription, discrimination, police, religion and the political establishment, became a sanctuary for the counter-culture. Though it offered little in the way of modern amenities, that was more than made up for with serenity, self-reliance, and creativity. Charting one's own path in life took precedence over material comfort. Douglas Hamilton described the philosophy,

People were disgusted with the futility of it all and looked to life in the country as a way of changing society by example rather than by confrontation. We all felt that we were somehow altering our first-world pattern of life into something that made a lot more sense, ecologically, psychically, financially, and socially.²⁴⁴

Draft-dodgers were a part of this new culture rather than its defining feature. Similar to the situation Kalevan Kansa members faced after the commune dissolved, newly-arrived Lasquetians had little more than a parcel of land and a shelter, potential resources, enthusiasm, and an ideological commitment to doing things in a new way. Kurikka had carved a path on Malcolm Island around seventy years earlier. The Kwakwaka'wakw had carved grease trails that brought goods for potlatching and community distribution sometime in the previous millennia. Now it was the Lasquetians turn.

Word about life on Lasqueti soon spread across Canada and down the American coast as far as California, increasing the island's population from fewer than 100 residents to over 150 between the years 1967-68 to 1970-71.²⁴⁵ As the community grew, it found new ideas, and new approaches, to overcoming traditional environmental, political, and social obstacles. It needs to be stressed that the influx of new people were not all draft-dodgers or back-to-the-landers. Some were both, and some neither, but monolithic pronouncements of the 'other' was, and continues to be, an effective strategy employed to exclude social groups to the margins of society, a method of inculcating hegemony familiar to the Sointula socialists and the colonized Kwakwaka'wakw. Though Lasqueti offered an alternative to dependence on modernity to fulfill all human need, and sanctuary from authority, that freedom came with a price. The cost was not the price of land, which could be obtained relatively cheaply. The cost was not having much else. One found an alternative to individualistic post-industrial capitalism on Lasqueti that was remarkably similar to the Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch system and the co-operative ideology espoused in Sointula.

Resistance

A good example of a community resisting, and eventually overcoming, a hegemonic imperative, is illustrated through Lasqueti's opposition to the BC Hydro (BCH) Cheekye-Dunsmuir Power Project Extension. BCH, a government-monopoly, public utility provider that

connects nearly all of the province's residents to the electrical grid, was planning to run a new power transmission line from coastal mainland BC to a substation near the Vancouver Island town of Qualicum Beach in the mid 1970s. One of its proposed routes ran directly across Lasqueti, which would leave an enormous environmental impact on the community, as the line's right-of-way clear-cut a path hundreds of metres wide through fishing grounds, homesteads, orchards, and farmer's fields. The proposal did not include any new energy transmission lines running to the island, which meant Lasqueti's habitat was expected to absorb the costs of the project without the community realizing any of its benefits. Hydro planners assumed Lasquetians would capitulate to the dictates of progress for nothing in return, and made virtually no assessment of the environmental consequences of the project. They did not expect a well-organized resistance, determined to protect its land and interests, when their nine-person delegation met with the community at False Bay School on January 27, 1978.²⁴⁶ BCH faced a committee of interrogators representing the Lasqueti Defence Fund, a CBC news crew and other media outlets, and a court reporter transcribing the proceedings. This began a dispute between BCH and Lasquetians that lasted a number of years, but failed to produce the consent planners felt was necessary to proceed with the project. In the end, it was likely budgetary or technical issues that prevented the line's construction,²⁴⁷ but the resistance provides a firm example of community activism successfully rejecting the implied common sense of hegemonic progress.

Lasqueti resident Guy Immega recalled:

The fight with BCH unified the Lasqueti community. We worked together, trusted each other, got to know our strengths. This has made Lasqueti much more powerful. We led the Islands Trust initiative. We succeeded in pushing Jedediah Island into marine park status. Recently, we established a successful island Internet system (LIAS). All this and more resulted from the BCH conflict, because we knew the power of working together.²⁴⁸

Guy Immega's observation offers evidence of SI's theoretical process of individual agency contributing to collective action when applied to real-world situations. The community

rallied together to resist the BCH intrusion into their community, enlisting a local engineer with insider knowledge of hydro projects, replicating formal court proceedings with a defense team and court transcriber, and calling in outside media sources.²⁴⁹ Lasqueti's arts community also became involved by producing a play about the conflict, *Powermania*.²⁵⁰ All of these actors 'fit together' to produce the result, which snowballed into other community initiatives. From this framework, it is easy to understand Lasqueti's evolution into an off-grid community. Residents explored alternative energy production, and shared information about the pros and cons of different systems, rather than rely upon an outside authority to provide solutions.

Lasqueti's population has remained relatively static over the last forty years. About four hundred people live there today, which is about the same as the population in the mid 1970s. Community member's attachment to each other, and their coordinated responses to address the multitude of obstacles they face, has, however, grown. Access to electricity is an expectation most Canadian share, but one that does not exist on Lasqueti, which has forced residents to develop their own systems of power generation. Through trial and error, Lasquetians came up with practical, implementable, and affordable solutions to this dilemma, knowledge which they shared with their neighbours and children. Solar, wind, and hydroelectric power are harnessed to produce self-sustaining, renewable energy, in contrast to the burning of fossil fuels that many Canadians rely upon to produce power. Though Lasqueti has been off-grid throughout its entire existence, technological innovation now allows residents the ability to bring self-generated power into their lives and homes, making it one of Canada's few communities that predominantly produces its own renewable energy. By taking an active role in building their community, Lasquetians accomplished a stunning breakthrough in solving a traditional problem. Individuals are not merely passive spectators to change, they are active architects forging the

future. In short, Lasquetians have taken individualistic self-reliance to a new place, and broken free of technological modernity's hegemonic shackles in the process.

Final Destination – Lasqueti Fieldwork

“It's very much like family,” the woman says while kneading dough at the bakery.
“You may love them to death, but you don't necessarily like them very much.”²⁵¹

I arrived on Lasqueti in early May, just as many of its seasonal residents returned after spending the winter in warmer, drier climates that had access to electricity. Though much closer to my Vancouver home than Sointula and Alert Bay, Lasqueti's contrasts to those communities made it appear much further. The first difference was the ferry I boarded at French Creek, in the Vancouver Island town of Parksville (see Appendix 1), that deposited me at Lasqueti's False Bay.

The Centurion VII is a privately-run, government subsidized foot-passenger ferry, the only publicly-available transportation to get to the island. It can carry up to 60 passengers, and transports nearly every bit of the island's cargo,²⁵² which makes it a lifeline to the community. The boat does not run everyday, and sailings often get cancelled due to rough sea conditions. The finite walk-on capacity, coupled with both the sporadic and scheduled service interruptions, can often disrupt travel schedules and leave passengers stranded on either side. Visitors are implored to arrive at departure points early, which residents are already aware of. On BC Ferries, there was always room for foot-passengers provided they showed up ten minutes before a scheduled sailing.

Food security was another factor that differentiated Lasqueti from the other communities. There was little available on the island beyond non-perishable provisions, serviced meals at the local hotel or coffee shop if they were open, roadside produce stands, or feral sheep for people adept at hunting and skinning.²⁵³ On my commute to French Creek, I was obligated to stop and

buy groceries. Transporting a few weeks' worth of food significantly impeded my mobility. By contrast, there were grocery stores in both Alert Bay and Sointula. Food and transportation options considerably impacted my fieldwork before it began, highlighting the pervasiveness of obstacles encountered by these off-grid community residents.

Public Space

Many of these obstacles had been addressed in the past, and a good example was Lasqueti's Free Store, which offered an alternative to post-industrial capitalism. The shop – if it can be called one, as no money exchanged hands when procuring material goods – was an outgrowth of the island's recycling depot. Unable to keep up with the demands of an ever-increasing inventory of abandoned, yet usable items, the community built a structure to house all of its unwanted wares. It was so chock-full of books, clothes, and other household items that its deck was utilized to handle excess inventory (see Fig. 11, below). The store was open eight hours a week in the summer – half that in the winter – and operated by a part-time, paid staff. A trip to the Free Store could clothe an entire family and furnish a home, though appliances and electronics were not accepted for recycling.²⁵⁴



Fig. 11. Ronald Howe, *Free Store Research Hub*, May 2017, photograph, Lasqueti Island, British Columbia.

Internet connectivity was available from the deck of the Lasqueti Free Store. The Lasqueti Internet Access Society, a non-profit, volunteer-run organization, had established the service in 2007.²⁵⁵ The store was close to my lodgings, and a trip there was incorporated into my daily routine to take advantage of the one-hour of time guests were allotted on the internet. During that hour, community members often came by to check out latest arrivals of clothing and books on the deck, and we generally communicated with each other, which made the Free Store's deck a hub of my research.

Unlike Sointula and Alert Bay, Lasqueti did not have a traditional public library, but rather had a 'free library' quite similar to the Lasqueti Free Store. It was a small, unsupervised room located within the always-unlocked Community Hall, which meant one did not need a library card to borrow any of the thousands of books, nor worry about the library being closed. I found some useful material on the shelves, and did not have to worry about incurring fines for bringing books back late. Libraries are critical public spaces of knowledge and community building that transcend their physical locations to provide information about the broader society.

Public space emerged as a Lasqueti research theme from my frequent walks to the ferry dock at False Bay. The number of abandoned automobiles that took up public space, on road shoulders leading up to the dock and in parking lots around it, was astounding. Dozens of dust-laden vehicles had smashed windows, flattened tires, and vegetation growing underneath them, indicating that they had sat in the same spot for years, or at the very least been neglected for a few seasons. This highlighted the transition of an idealized, pro-environment community into one of individualized attachment to convenience and private ownership. Though both visitors and residents alike were implored to "pack-out" anything they "pack[ed]-on"²⁵⁶ to the island, the directive appeared to have eluded many inhabitants. There were few consequences to roadside

vehicle disposal. The Lasqueti Tenants Association had previously made efforts to locate owners, but tracking down information on, making contact with, and, most importantly, assuming financial liability to, past residents was problematic.²⁵⁷ A police constable had once been stationed on the island, but when that service was terminated, it took with it any mechanism of formal rule enforcement. A local company had stepped up to address the problem by barging abandoned automobiles - free of charge - to a local salvage yard, but after its drop-off area became overrun, management was forced to discontinue the service. Since that time, even fewer cars left the island, precipitating the current situation on the roadside. It was easier to leave your vehicle on the side of the road and take off the license plates - if it had any - than to incur the time, energy, and expense of proper disposal. Noticing others do this invariably led more to adopt the strategy, a textbook example of symbolic interaction. Abandoned cars were not merely an eyesore within an otherwise ecologically-minded community, the toxic liquids they leached into the earth created environmental hazards like groundwater contamination. This use of public space pointed toward a dystopian evolution in social relations. The offsetting of waste management costs onto the public commons was similar to the business model of open-pen fish farming identified in the previous chapter, only it was individual irresponsibility rather than corporate irresponsibility. In contrast to both Sointula and Alert Bay, which used public space as an invitation to explore their communities, Lasqueti seemed incapable of solving a fundamental issue of ecological hygiene, despite their iconic status as environmental stewards.

This inconsistency led toward my examination of the meaning of other public space on Lasqueti, specifically access to public beaches. I developed a research model in which I would find a point on my Lasqueti map where a road ended at the waterline, and then travel there to see if it was the public space I believed it to be. When I reached these points, more often than not I was stymied by a “No Trespassing” or “Private Road” sign impeding access to the water.

Though suspicious of such claims, an adherence to a fundamental academic principle of lawful research, along with a respectful apprehension of private property, forced me to abandon any further investigation. Out of the dozen or so places I expected to be public beach areas, I was able to access only two or three.

Exclusionary signs were prolific on Lasqueti, and often more foreboding than the ones I encountered in my public beach access study. One I came across at a road's end threatened, "Trespassers Will Be Shot. Survivors Will Be Shot Again." "Guard Dogs on Duty" was another claim I could not ignore. It seemed ridiculous, and perhaps a tad paranoid, that residents living in such an isolated, serene setting, where one was almost certain to know who their neighbour was, expressed such fear and anxiety. These meanings appeared to underscore a hostile, suspicious citizenry, though I certainly do not ascribe these qualities to all, or even a majority of, residents. Community members told me many of the spaces proclaiming to be private were not, but rather inaccurate demarcations erected to artificially extend one's private property, a method to limit public incursion. I had not seen anything comparable in either Sointula or Alert Bay. An explanation for this exclusionary behaviour appeared on the message board of the island's website,²⁵⁸ which furnished much of the following paragraph's information.

The only public, deep-water access point on Lasqueti's north shore is at Tucker Bay. The Union Steamship that sailed to Sointula and Alert Bay until 1958 (see Sointula chapter) used to dock here.²⁵⁹ In 2014, the property surrounding the access road and dock at Tucker Bay was bought by a group called Tucker Bay Holdings, who believed their purchase included the access road to the water. They decided to contest public use of the docking facility by erecting signs that forbade entry, and by laying a string of boulders across the road to prevent residents from using the area or its wharf. The port had serviced the island for decades before the False Bay dock was constructed, which residents contend clearly establishes it as a public road. "Existing rights of

way that provide public access to water are to be retained for public use,” cited residents on the message board, which paraphrased the objective of my beach access study plan. Tucker Bay Holdings countered that when they had surveyed the property through the provincial ministry and asked about public access regulations, they were assured they held full property rights. The Lasqueti Island Ratepayers Association (LIRA) contend that existing rights set out in provincial law still apply to Tucker Bay, and that the provincial ministry are in contravention of their own rules by allowing the holding company to pursue a belief of private property.²⁶⁰ The ministry appears to affirm both positions, and no resolution, to my knowledge, has been reached. The controversy is illuminated by my friend’s characterization of Lasqueti politics: “There are basically the same two sides to almost every dispute here. One side believes the community has rules in place that must be adhered to and enforced. The other side says, ‘This is my land, and I’m going to do with it whatever the fuck I want’.” Though his observation simplifies some of the deeper divisions within the community, it manifests a fundamental dispute that emerges when public interest collides with private property rights.

Transformation

Basic human necessities of food, water, and shelter have always been more difficult to access on Lasqueti as compared to Canada’s urban communities. Sanctuary, tranquility, and isolation came with a significant cost: The near-limitless access to modern convenience that most Canadians enjoyed through grid-delivered energy. As Lasqueti developed strategies to overcome this obstacle, it emerged as a very desirable place to live, which significantly affected property values. A local resident that arrived on Lasqueti as a child in the early 1970s explained this dynamic to me. “At one time you could get cheap land on Lasqueti, but the trade-off was that everything else was expensive. Now you can’t even get cheap land,” he explained to me as he effortlessly changed his infant’s cloth diaper without so much as a pause in our conversation.

Official statistics for the inflation of property values have proven elusive, so his observation, along with my cognizance of elaborate, expensive off-grid homes, will have to suffice for veracity.

Lasqueti's first wave of hippies do not appear to have been interested in owning property. Squatting on an abandoned lot or renting an abandoned property on very favourable terms (see Note 239) dislodged residents from the primary expense of shelter. Though many left after the Lasqueti's lustre was dampened by the reality of the difficult winter life, some stayed on and persevered, reminiscent of the Kalevan Kansa settlers who had not left with Kurikka. They started raising families, and began to address the problem of living in a community without access to grid-delivered electricity. That culture found ways to harness its available power, both literally and symbolically. By the early 2000s, Lasqueti had transformed itself from a hippie outpost of draft-dodging marijuana cultivators into an off-grid community, which precipitated a new influx of idealistic settlers, who had more abundant financial resources than their predecessors. They started to buy available property, initiating an overinflated housing market that generated predictable results as long-time island residents began to cash in. After all, who could be upset that their property's value had doubled inside the space of a few years?

This process continued unabated, and fundamentally changed the complexion of the community. Communitarianism, once a hallmark of Lasqueti culture, had been supplanted by possessive individualism, a state of being in which an individual is conceived as the sole proprietor of his or her own skills, and owes nothing to society for them.²⁶¹ The social cohesion that facilitated Lasqueti's homegrown energy production had been lost to market forces. The contrast between the island's established residents and its newer arrivals was exemplified by a dispute that arose at the community's Annual General Meeting.

AGM

The Lasqueti Community Association (LCA) held its AGM at the Community Hall during my stay. The 30 or 35 people in attendance discussed local parking, water wells, the elementary school, and a pending referendum on the future of the Community Hall. Most of the meeting time, however, was spent debating a new rule under consideration to qualify for a ‘Green Parking Pass,’ which symbolized the community’s competing visions. This AGM was quite a bit different than the one I had attended in Alert Bay, as it was much smaller, more informal, and had virtually no children or corporate spokespersons present.

Parksville’s French Creek Marina, the drop-off point for the Centurion ferry, serviced several businesses and private boat wharfs in addition to the ferry traffic, and was a hub of activity, particularly in the summer. Many Lasquetians kept a vehicle in the marina’s parking lot for practicality and convenience. As the number of resident vehicles increased over time, the facility found itself having difficulty accommodating the added traffic. This was resolved after the harbour authority and the LCA reached an agreement to issue Green Parking Passes to Lasqueti residents. Pass holders were granted a reserved parking spot close to the Centurion’s loading dock that enabled them to avoid walking a considerable distance to the public parking area, a positive outcome for Lasqueti’s aging population, particularly those with mobility issues. An honour system had been implemented to allocate parking spots, but its misuse obliged the LCA – who had exclusive control over issuance – to apply criteria for qualification. A new rule under consideration required pass holders to live on Lasqueti for a minimum of six months per year to qualify, which was met with consternation by many who left the island during the winter months that felt it was discriminatory.

The debate highlighted a fundamental division within the community, which can be summarized by a refrain I frequently heard during my research: “You aren’t really a Lasquetian

until you've spent a winter here." In the summer, Lasqueti was an idyllic place. There were plenty of activities going on, and one was free to explore whatever struck their fancy, with few impediments on ambition or creativity. Such freedom made permanent residency quite seductive. The community's complexion dramatically changed after Labour Day, however, when urbanites returned to their jobs in the cities, and those who could afford it travelled south in search of a warmer climate. Some estimated that over half the island's residents left during the winter months, a significant displacement for a community of 400 people. Remaining residents faced six months of solitude, shortages, sporadic ferry cancellations, and struggled to ensure basic survival. Household duty-sharing was essential on Lasqueti, and many informal partnerships evolved from these struggles. It was much more difficult to live on Lasqueti year-round than it was for four summer months.

Seasonal residents felt the new parking pass policy discriminated against them for having the means to leave the island during the undesirable seasons, but also symbolically pointed to a deeper malaise concerning authenticity and class. Were all Lasqueti taxpayers treated equally, or was a special status given to those who could tough it out for the duration of the winter? Should community members be punished for having the means to afford more than one home? The debate concluded with the passing of the new motion, as a critical mass of opposition had not arrived this early in the season. In practice, it made little sense to give a parking pass to someone that needed it for a few months, at the expense of a full-time resident who needed it year-round.

Bush Hippies

I made friendships with many of Lasqueti's long-time residents, a demographic of self-reliant, anti-authoritarian, back-to-the land retirement-age settlers that dubbed themselves bush hippies. The cohort did not define themselves by the draft-dodger narrative, but had constructed a new term of self-identification that included women. One of those women, Diane, invited me to

the home she and her partner had built inside one of the island's land co-ops. The multitude of living situations accessible on Lasqueti included renting, private property ownership, land co-operatives, seasonal and familial time-sharing, and something called the Workers Peoples Paradise, pictured below. I did not meet any squatters, and was unsure whether any remained.



Fig. 12. Ronald Howe, *Lasqueti Workers Paradise*, May 2017, photograph, Lasqueti Island, British Columbia.

I met up with Diane and her partner on a warm spring day at their isolated property, one of 32 in the co-operative venture that originated in the 1970s. Bullfrogs croaked from a nearby lake and eagles squawked overhead, components of the natural soundtrack that echoed through the thickly wooded terrain surrounding their house. They told me that during mating season the bullfrog sounds became almost unbearable. Most of the arable space around their house grew vegetables, herbs, and flowers. Neighbours were inaudible and beyond visual range.

We spoke about a number of subjects, which included their co-op, skyrocketing local property values, the flora, the fauna, the people, and the government. Of particular note was the governance structure of the co-op. Decisions were made by absolute consensus, which their

operating agreement defined to be every single member less two, as a couple could veto any potential censure. It took years for a new member to be admitted, as every stakeholder in the co-op had to give their assent, which also set a high bar for membership removal. Few organizations had such a thorough, democratized structure.

In a discussion about the local housing situation, Diane elucidated a meaning that was a unifying theme across all three of the communities of my research. Lasqueti's evolution from cheap, self-constructed shelters to modified off-grid properties worth hundreds of thousands of dollars had produced many unforeseen outcomes. One involved financial regulation. I wondered how an owner insured their house when it did not meet building codes required by financial institution underwriters. "For most of us, that type of insurance isn't an option," Diane responded, "on Lasqueti, your neighbours are your insurance." Her statement resonated with me. Though insurance generally meant financial compensation for a loss, that was not what her pronouncement implied. It addressed a secondary meaning of insurance, which was protection. All of these communities had protected their neighbours when hardship arrived. My research validated her statement, discussed in the following chapter, Reflections.

Opposition to war and a disdain for the status quo had brought the bush hippie settlers to Lasqueti a half-century ago. That cohort had forged a new community out of the island's unforgiving environment from little more than resilience, creativity, communitarianism, and a commitment to doing things in a new way. They had successfully resisted BC Hydro's incursion into their community, and eventually found ways to harness and produce their own energy. Logging had been the island's early economic base until that resource had been completely plundered, twice. Fishing had also supplanted the local economy until it collapsed. Marijuana cultivation followed, and may have been the primary generator of the local economy for a period of time. This varied socioeconomic history contributed to a self-reliant citizenry that recognized

its obstacles to progress, which it proceeded to address. Through trial-and-error, they found success in developing their own power systems, and belatedly joined modern society in the process. They implemented a home-grown solution instead of relying upon an hegemonic common-sense prescription, which they had been excluded from. Modernity's benefits could be enjoyed without submitting to the state that provided them, which had a transformative effect on the community. Some with financial means saw it an extremely desirable place to live, and began to buy up properties, creating a speculation-induced housing bubble. These new settlers only lived there seasonally, creating a lopsided burden on the community's full-time residents. Prosperity replaced the need to rely on others, and adversity is no longer approached as a collective unit. Lasqueti was settled by people with a counter-hegemonic mindset, but that ideology was being subsumed by the forces of capitalism and concentrated wealth.

Notes:

²²⁶. J.L. Weller, "Living on 'Scenery and Fresh Air': Land-use Planning and Environmental Regulation in the Gulf Islands," *BC Studies* no.193, Spring 2017, 100-1.

²²⁷. Douglas L. Hamilton and Darlene Olesko, *Accidental Eden: Hippie Days on Lasqueti Island* (Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin Press, 2014), 66. "The island had (and still has) no public water system, sewer outlets holding tanks or processing stations, and only a handful of composting toilets."

²²⁸. "Final Agreement", Tla'amin Nation, 2017, accessed July 3, 2019, <http://www.tlaaminnation.com/final-agreement/>.

²²⁹. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 25.

²³⁰. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 24.

²³¹. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 26.

²³². Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 26.

²³³. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 26.

²³⁴. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 26-7.

- ²³⁵. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 27.
- ²³⁶. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 28.
- ²³⁷. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 30.
- ²³⁸. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 19.
- ²³⁹. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 19.
- ²⁴⁰. 91st U.S. Congress, “AN ACT To amend the Military Selective Service Act of 1967...” (pdf), United States Government Printing Office. (Pub.L. 91–124, 83 Stat. 220, enacted November 26, 1969), accessed July 8, 2019, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-83/pdf/STATUTE-83-Pg220.pdf>.
- ²⁴¹. Sharon Weaver, “First Encounters: 1970s Back-to-the-land Cape Breton, NS and Denman, Hornby and Lasqueti Islands, BC,” *Oral History Forum d’histoire orale* 30, (2010), 2, accessed June 26, 2019, <http://www.oralhistoryforum.ca/index.php/ohf/article/viewFile/387/458>.
- ²⁴². Paul M. Sweezy, “Capitalism and the Environment,” *Monthly Review*, June 30, 2014, <https://monthlyreview.org/2004/10/01/capitalism-and-the-environment/>. “As far as the natural environment is concerned, capitalism perceives it not as something to be cherished and enjoyed but as a means to the paramount ends of profit-making and still more capital accumulation.”
- ²⁴³. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 20.
- ²⁴⁴. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 21.
- ²⁴⁵. Sharon Weaver, “First Encounters: 1970s Back-to-the-land Cape Breton, NS and Denman, Hornby and Lasqueti Islands, BC,” *Oral History Forum d’histoire orale* 30, (2010), 2, accessed June 26, 2019, <http://www.oralhistoryforum.ca/index.php/ohf/article/viewFile/387/458>. See also John Hagan, *Northern Passage: American Vietnam War Resisters in Canada* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001) and James Dickerson, *North to Canada: Men and Women Against the Vietnam War* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1999).
- ²⁴⁶. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 78.
- ²⁴⁷. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 81.
- ²⁴⁸. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 82.
- ²⁴⁹. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 78.
- ²⁵⁰. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 83-5.

- ²⁵¹. Jack Knox, “Their Home, Their Way: Lasqueti Island is Home to 350 Souls. To some, it's Nirvana,” *Times - Colonist*, Jul 27, 2003, accessed July 3, 2019, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.uleth.ca/docview/347914220?accountid=12063>.
- ²⁵². Jack Knox, “Their Home, Their Way: Lasqueti Island is Home to 350 Souls. to some, it's Nirvana,” *Times - Colonist*, Jul 27, 2003, accessed July 3, 2019, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.uleth.ca/docview/347914220?accountid=12063>.
- ²⁵³. Hamilton and Olesko, *Accidental Eden*, 181. “I soon met Ed Harper and he taught me so much, like how to shoot and skin a sheep, and how to make beer and wine.” – Dazy Drake.
- ²⁵⁴. “Free Store”, Lasqueti Internet Access Society, 2006-2019, accessed July 9, 2019, <https://lasqueti.ca/services/freestore>, “if it has a cord, or runs on batteries, we don’t take it!”
- ²⁵⁵. “Lasqueti Internet Access Society (LIAS),” Lasqueti Internet Access Society, 2006-2019, accessed July 9, 2019, <https://lasqueti.ca/services/lias#Background>.
- ²⁵⁶. “So You Want to Come Visit, Eh?” Lasqueti Internet Access Society, 2006-2019, accessed June 30, 2019, <https://lasqueti.ca/island-info/how-to-visit>.
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- ²⁶⁰. J.R. Rardon, “Thursday Spotlight: Lasqueti Island Residents Battling for Access to Historic Bay (with Video),” *Parksville Qualicum Beach News*, January 26, 2017, accessed June 30, 2019, <https://www.pqbnews.com/news/thursday-spotlight-lasqueti-island-residents-battling-for-access-to-historic-bay-with-video/>.
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METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Diane's observation that 'your neighbours are your insurance' struck me as profound, and compelled me to apply the statement's meaning across all three communities I studied. Insurance was financial compensation for a loss, but it was also protection. Insurance against the loss of health, for example, had witnessed some remarkable accomplishments on Lasqueti. The Lasqueti Last Resort Society started in 2002 to, "...provide seniors with an alternative to leaving the island when the daily demands of living on a semi-remote island became too difficult."²⁶² The group built an off-grid retirement home and the Judith Fisher Health Centre after raising an astounding \$550,000 from the island's 400 residents.²⁶³ The society planned to meet the needs of Lasqueti's aging bush hippie population by expanding the retirement cottage units from one to six.²⁶⁴ Lasqueti resident Graham Allan's health needs produced a similar fundraising effort. Allan was a prime candidate for an insulin pump to remedy his deteriorating type-1 diabetes, but the device's \$12,000 price tag and \$16,000 supply costs exceeded his finances and were not covered by the provincial PharmaCare plan. A 2015 Lasqueti online auction and crowd-funding page raised the \$28,000 he needed for his life-saving materials.²⁶⁵ Both examples offer incontrovertible evidence of one's neighbours being their insurance.

Sointula was created from the situation faced by ex-pat Finnish miners and their families over a century ago. It was protection against obstacles to survival, and hardships often encountered in a capitalist, profit-driven system. Community members had historically organized to fight back against free-market imperatives. After the Kalevan Kansa dissolved, Sointulans organized, ran, and relied upon the Co-op Store. Sointulans organized unions to resist the economic domination held over them by canneries. The FINN fund was an obvious expression of neighbours being insurance, particularly with its maintenance of public dignity. By helping

address financial crisis without an oft-accompanying community shaming of recipients in need of relief broke from a traditional capitalist model of social control that insisted hardship was the fault of the individual. Environmental stewardship was another form of protection, expressed through opposition to fish farms, gathering data on Northern Resident Orcas, and even through the seemingly-innocuous action of extending the right-of-way to dogs and cats on Sointula streets.

The Kwakwaka'wakw have practiced the potlatch system, an institutional organization that promoted social cohesion through generosity and competition, since time immemorial. Neighbouring groups were invited to festivities that both created and reaffirmed cultural, social and economic relations. At the conclusion of the event, attendees were gifted resources that protected them from periods of food scarcity. This system was so successful that Northwest Coast First Nations considered it law, as expounded by Chief O'waxalagalis in the opening of the Alert Bay chapter. Those sentiments were not lost through the tumultuous era of colonialism, and the philosophy of community welfare continued to be practised in Alert Bay through community fundraising efforts and the actions of individuals like Satch following his lottery win. First Nations fishermen fed their communities, and had a constitutionally-affirmed right to do so. Neighbours Ernest Alfred and Alexandra Morton collaborated in opposition to the fish farming industry, and had the support of their communities, who stood firmly behind their position. As that opposition gained momentum, other First Nations individuals and communities, and non-Indigenous groups and individuals, joined their movement. The inertia of this movement caused the provincial government to inspect the industry closer. Sustainability and job creation did not mean much if an entire ecosystem was being destroyed for corporate profit. The necessity of fish farming, at the expense of the environment, had changed both communities' perception of the industry, providing a good example of SI's plurality of shifting truths. They had responded by

developing Kuterra, and by sporting Anissa Reed-designed bumper stickers on their automobiles. Commerce was not an exclusive domain belonging to profit-seeking capitalists, but rather could be used to effect social change.

My fieldwork on Lasqueti had not revealed the same level of community inclusion that I had experienced in both Sointula and Alert Bay, though I had found plenty of warm, friendly, and interesting people. The community seemed often reluctant to engage with outsiders, in striking contrast to my fieldwork experience in the other two communities, where I had been readily and uncritically accepted. Lasqueti's off-grid community was a profound accomplishment, but residents appeared conflicted as to whether they wanted to exalt their success, or keep it a secret. An economic chasm had developed on Lasqueti between those with means and those without. This was expressed through its skyrocketing housing market, and threatened to undermine all that the community had accomplished with off-grid power production. It was a post-utopia, where one was able to enjoy many of modernity's benefits without acceding to mainstream society. Post-utopia was a desirable place to invest for those that possessed means, but that did not necessarily make it the most desirable place to live. The community had been so successful overcoming the traditional obstacle of energy generation that they had attracted a new class of individuals, one that did not necessarily share their communitarian values. Many recognized this dilemma, but had little ability to impede the economic and social transformation of their community.

Sointula was still working toward utopia, and the 'Namgis in Alert Bay had accomplished a stunning breakthrough in aquaculture innovation with Kuterra, although financial instability threatened its continued operation. Lasqueti had brought power into their homes, but this success had generated an unforeseen consequence.

Reconciliation

The 'Namgis First Nation endured a devastating history of disease, genocidal colonial policies, and institutionalized racism. This is not to minimize the difficulties faced by the Finnish miners who found their way to Sointula, or the back-to-the-land draft-dodgers that settled on Lasqueti, but rather acknowledges the systemic assault First Nations culture throughout Turtle Island have suffered, for centuries. The Canadian government had never taken Finnish children away from their parents, nor prohibited Lasquetians from consuming alcohol. Neither had been jailed for participating in cultural events.

The Truth and Reconciliation report addresses the need for Canadians to educate themselves about Indigenous history. I had gone to 'Yalis woefully unaware of its history, culture, and social relationships, and had learned about a fascinating, enduring civilization. I trust that I have given an objective account of that learning process, though cognizant that I have only scratched the surface of this history. I felt I succeeded in educating myself, and hoped that my portrayal of the community did not offend. Canada's Indigenous history was far from complete, and likely would never be as new archaeological evidence was uncovered and interpreted, and new systems of traditional knowledge became academically and legally legitimized. Historical sources had to be understood through a multitude of lenses, which included authenticity, colonial narrative, and capitalist promotion. These various lenses produced results that were anything but definitive.

Most Canadians are woefully unaware of First Nations history, people, and culture.²⁶⁶ Canadian students have historically been indoctrinated by an educational system which promoted the idea that the country's Indigenous inhabitants are a "vanishing culture,"²⁶⁷ possessing antiquated ways that are inferior to mainstream, modern society. They are the *other*, set in contrast to the hegemonic "universal human being," who is white, middle class, heterosexual,

able-bodied, and male.²⁶⁸ Education is a primary institutional conduit used to instill othering. My experience in the Canadian education system had taught me very little about the Doctrine of Discovery that legitimized colonial theft, unceded territory, or group relations on Turtle Island before the appearance of settler culture. I knew even less about the potlatch, the totem pole, sisiutl, eulachon grease, coppers, masks, or countless other cultural expressions of the Kwakwaka'wakw. A goal of this thesis, though implicit, is to respectfully contribute to the ongoing process of reconciliation by educating myself and others about the Kwakwaka'wakw.

Interpretations

I explored these three communities through historic, political economic, hegemonic, and symbolic interactionist lenses, which produced an abundance of data that far exceeded the relatively sparse length-standard of theses in my discipline. The data I was able to amass could be interpreted in any number of ways, and undoubtedly some readers will take exception to the perspective I have chosen. My fieldwork cannot be replicated, nor my approach to this entire area of study easily categorized and distilled.

I chose to look at remote communities within the context of political economy to help explain how they arrived at their current configurations. Hegemony, the leadership or dominance of one social group over others, is a useful tool for explicating these understandings, as all have been forced to respond to situations imposed upon them from external forces that insist the 'common sense' of the status quo provides their only route to prosperity. The Kalevan Kansa rejected the assumption that making James Dunsmuir wealthier would solve their problems, and the Kwakwaka'wakw rejected the assumption that the potlatch ban, residential schools, or fish farms would solve their economic, cultural, and environmental problems. Lasqueti's early settlers rejected the assumption that sacrificing your life for imperialism was expected, or that dependence on a power grid was a necessary condition of human progress. Hegemony did not

want us to believe there was any other way to progress than exercising obedience to industry and profit accumulation. Profitability is the dominant paradigm of capitalist society, and anything that interfered with that belief, such as cultural and environmental degradation, was often denied, overlooked, obfuscated and demonized.

In December 2018, the anti-fish farm movement scored an enormous victory when the BC government, the federal DFO, fish farming conglomerates, and fish farm opponents reached an agreement to phase fish farms out of the Broughton Archipelago over the next five years. The current 17 fish farms in the region will be pared down to seven by 2022, and those that remain will need explicit consent from First Nations to continue operations.²⁶⁹

Symbolic interaction provides an explanation for this outcome. Alexandra Morton began to recognize the environmental impact of fish farms in 1989 while working as a marine biologist studying whales at Echo Bay in the Broughton Archipelago, which local commercial and sport fishers had confirmed.²⁷⁰ She gathered evidence of biological problems created by the industry, and began publishing peer-reviewed academic papers that identified the presence of piscine reovirus. Morton moved from Echo Bay to an off-grid home at Malcolm Island's Mitchell Bay in 2007. She found a community of fishers and environmentalists in her new community that shared her concerns, and one well-versed in resisting the dictates of hegemony. Anissa Reed, a member of that community, began marketing bumper stickers and t-shirts that supported the wild fishing industry and opposed its domestic replacement. Others in the community joined the movement by wearing her shirts and putting the stickers on their vehicles. Another member of the community made a documentary film about Alexandra. Getting this message of resistance into the public domain took a variety of forms.

About seven km across the water from Mitchell Bay is Cormorant Island, home of the 'Namgis First Nation and the non-Indigenous incorporated community of Alert Bay. They also

began to recognize the ecological consequences of open-pen fish farming from anecdotal evidence gathered from fishermen. Their Kwakwaka'wakw neighbours, Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw First Nation at Kingcome Inlet in the Broughton Archipelago, had been protesting the fish farms for decades.²⁷¹ These communities joined forces in their opposition to the fish farming industry, and all made contributions to the moratorium on fish farms, illuminating the community relationships that SI sees as essential for understanding how society organizes itself. The meaning of fish farms had changed over time, and all of the communities had credit in changing that perception.

I had set out to understand how small, local cultures had overcome obstacles in their communities with pragmatic, profound solutions. The Finnish community labouring in the Dunsmuir Collieries recognized that industrial capitalism was killing them, but there were few alternatives available. A handful of those miners decided a new approach to social organization was necessary, and the seeds their experiment planted still flower in Sointula. The Kwakwaka'wakw recognized the potlatch ban as an assault on their culture, and continued to practice it, despite the prohibition. Such resistance, thus, was nothing new when they developed Kuterra, despite the insistence it was economically unsustainable. Capitalism believed you could put a price on the environment and cultural identity, but the 'Namgis did not share this idea. Lasqueti's resistance followed a similar pathway. Draft-dodging, back-to-the-land bush hippies had rejected sacrificing their lives to the state and its questionable objectives. They moved to a new state, yet still found themselves excluded from access to power. Their development of home-grown energy systems was both pragmatic, and defiant. All three communities had exposed deficiencies in the capitalist system. A dead miner could no longer provide for his family, though his economically-desperate replacement would continue to amass profit for the mine owner. A dying ecosystem no longer produced food for a community, but it could still be

used as a waste dumping ground to produce corporate profit, and even provide a handful of desperately-needed local jobs. Endless fossil fuel combustion threatened the planet's future, and as long as corporate profit remained the dominant social paradigm, there was little to impede that destruction unless we developed renewable energy sources. The solutions to these dilemmas had come from small groups and individuals, rather than from powerful, dominant authorities with profit-driven agendas.

I observed, recorded and analyzed how people lived in these communities to see how they had been able to resist the dictates of hegemony, and whether their respective resistance had common features. Through people, actions, and symbolic interaction I found a unifying, meaning-making characteristic: Neighbours are your insurance. In Sointula, those neighbours had picked me up without solicitation, unveiling a strong element of community identity. That identity was expressed by the abundance of 'Backbone of the BC Coast' bumper stickers on automobiles. In Alert Bay, I found inclusion and community identity from the moment I entered the 'N̄amgis Band Office, unannounced. I left the office a few hours later with accommodations, community contacts, and the process for band research consent underway. The community opened its doors to me, which allowed me to see its culture, events, politics, and people. I learned that an activity as rudimentary as gambling imbued far more meaning than a simple characterization as destructive, addictive behaviour. Lasqueti, however, had not shown me the same level of near-universal community inclusion that I experienced in both Sointula and Alert Bay. Open doors were replaced by 'Private Road' signs, public space controversies, and unchecked automotive pollution. The original settlers from the hippie generation were still around, and welcomed my presence, but another demographic had arrived since then, wealthier and possessively individualistic, and its expressions of occupation were abundant. Though I had occasionally been able to bridge this chasm, and found some fascinating community members in

the process, this evolution did not bode well for the future, as new settlers would invariably displace the old.

My research demonstrated that small, intimate communities had resisted hegemony in the past and the present, and would continue to do so in the future. Unrestricted capitalism was hegemony's goal, and anything that interfered with that objective was quickly denigrated through corporate media, political leaders, and a public consciousness too often distracted to question authority. These three communities, however, had dissented, and their results had not produced the disastrous consequences hegemony promised. Kurikka and the Kalevan Kansa's idealistic socialism did not succeed in the Sointula colony, but that one failure did not negate the community's embracing of co-operation to solve problems. Open-pen fish farms had not provided the economic fix promised by the government and fish farming industry. Far from solving economic and environmental problems, the industry was almost certainly exacerbating them. This did not necessarily mean fish farming could not be sustainably done, which Kuterra was in the process of proving. Lasqueti's lack of access to traditional power sources did not make residents antagonistic to progress, but rather forced them to construct their own solutions. Self-reliance is anathema to hegemony, which wants us to depend upon it for our every need. Our dependence on authority to provide us with solutions renders us complacent cogs in the capitalist system, precisely what it wants us to be.

Notes:

²⁶². "About," Judith Fisher Centre, n.d., accessed June 30, 2019, <https://www.judithfishercentre.com/about.html>.

²⁶³. Staff Writer, "Lasqueti Island's Judith Fisher Centre Continues to Expand Services," *Parksville - Qualicum News*, Jun 30, 2016, accessed July 3, 2019, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.uleth.ca/docview/1800727620?accountid=12063>.

²⁶⁴. Lissa Alexander, “Work continues on Lasqueti Island health centre,” *BC Local News*, June 12, 2014, <https://www.bclocalnews.com/news/work-continues-on-lasqueti-island-health-centre/>.

²⁶⁵. Nick Eagland, “‘Amazing Community’ Rallies to Buy Man Insulin Pump,” *The Province*, Feb 8, 2015, accessed July 3, 2019, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.uleth.ca/docview/1652318206?accountid=12063>.

²⁶⁶. Truth and Reconciliation, *Final Report*, 8. “Too many Canadians still do not know the history of Aboriginal peoples’ contributions to Canada, or understand that by virtue of the historical and modern Treaties negotiated by our government, we are all Treaty people.” See also: Aaron Hutchins, “Trudeau's Rhetoric on First Nations Not Matched by Canadian Attitudes: Poll,” *Macleans*, August 14, 2018, <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/on-first-nations-issues-theres-a-giant-gap-between-trudeaus-rhetoric-and-what-canadians-really-think/>.

²⁶⁷. The ‘vanishing’ or ‘invisible’ culture, was a crucial assumption to support the Doctrine of Discovery. Leslie Dawn explores the promotion of Group of Seven landscapes which explicitly exclude any life forms, an ‘empty landscape’, in *National Visions, National Blindness*. Chief James Sewid is featured in the 1955 National Film Board documentary, *No Longer Vanishing*. Ruth Benedict, in her 1934 anthropological template, *Patterns of Culture*, identifies her data was partially compiled of, “...the memories of old men who once took part in what is now a vanished civilization.” (p.175)

²⁶⁸. Dr. Zuleyka Zevallos, “What Is Otherness?” *The Other Sociologist*, n.d., accessed on June 15, 2019, <https://othersociologist.com/otherness-resources/>.

²⁶⁹. Les Leyne, “Fish-Farm Foes Score Major Victory; Companies Agree to Shut Down Operations in Broughton Archipelago within Five Years,” *Times - Colonist*, Dec 15, 2018, accessed June 30, 2019, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.uleth.ca/docview/2156740902?accountid=12063>.

²⁷⁰. Amy Smart, “B.C. Fish Farms: A Tangled Net,” *Times Colonist*, December 4, 2017, accessed July 1, 2019, <https://www.timescolonist.com/islander/b-c-fish-farms-a-tangled-net-1.23111384>.

²⁷¹. Emilee Gilpin, “Salmon Showdown: Fish Farm Occupiers Summoned to Court,” *National Observer*, October 19, 2017, accessed June 30, 2019, <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2017/10/17/news/salmon-showdown-fish-farm-occupiers-summoned-court>.

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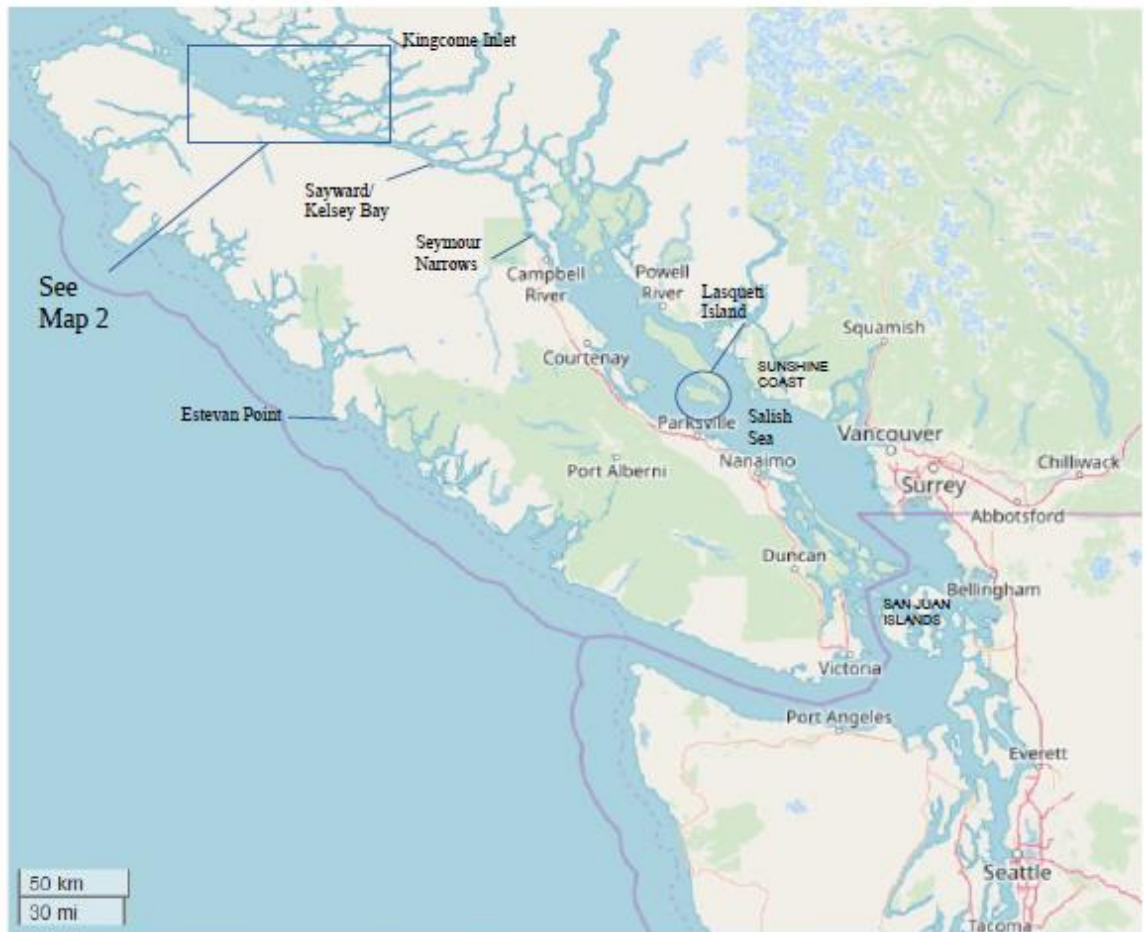
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APPENDIX 1



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Map of Vancouver Island and Salish Sea Area

APPENDIX 2



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Map of Broughton Archipelago Area

APPENDIX 3

Interview Questions

Why do you live where you do? (Probes)

Please share with me how long you have lived in this community?

If (“Always”) please describe your lineage (ancestors) that preceded you here.

If (“years”) please describe where you came from, and at what point in your life you moved here.

What does this community have that one could not find anywhere else?

Is this community unique in the region? How is it different from other places? (Probes)

Do you know of any moments in history that set your community apart from others in the region?

What role, or roles, do you see yourself having in this community?

Could you explain how governance is carried out municipally? Who is your government voice on the local level? Is local government accessible? Is it responsive?

Is gender an issue in this community? Can you think of any role/vocation that hasn’t been carried out by both men and women?

What role does art play in the community? Could you describe a significant piece of art found in your community, and what it means to you? Is there a specific music, or songs, which hold community meaning?

Does education have a prominent function in your community? Why or why not?

What is the role of oral history in your community?

What employment opportunities are available here? How much do environmental variables affect those opportunities?

What sort of activities and social institutions are available to community members in their free time? Are these unique? Do they deviate from ‘traditional’ cultural norms?

Do you have annual Festivals? Can you recall any significant ‘one-time’ events, or celebrations? Please describe them.

What do you value the most that costs the least?

What is/are the biggest impediment(s) to living on an island? What is/are the biggest advantage(s)?

What is the Salish Sea?

What is Cascadia?