Soo Ts'yawh 'Ilho Zah Ts'inli "We Are All One"
Tl'azt'en Nation's Ancestral History of Yeko

by

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Abstract

This research is a community-based oral history project under the Tl'azt'en Nation/University of Northern British Columbia Community University Research Alliance (CURA) and focuses on the area around *Yeko* [Cunningham Lake]. Tl'azt'en Nation is located in North Central British Columbia, approximately 65 km north of Fort St. James. The Tl'azt'enne self identify as *Dakelhne*. Conducting this research into the history and significance of *Yeko,* with members of the Tl'azt'en Nation Elders Society, ensures that Tl'azt'tenne can pass on this important history about their land and culture to the next generation. The information gathered was documented using written, audio, and video techniques, according to the wishes of the Elders/experts. Archival research of written sources has also been used to supplement the oral history. Three general themes emerged throughout the research: Importance of Community, Learning of Traditions, and Treaty. Each of the Elders discussed how close-knit the communities were in the past.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to those of you who have influenced my approach to this research and who have encouraged me to continue on this path. First, I must express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Ross Hoffman, for teaching me so many valuable lessons and for always making me feel like less of a stranger in this discipline. I am most fortunate that I was afforded the opportunity and pleasure to know and to work under the supervision of an individual who demonstrates relentless commitment and dedication to his students. Ross not only supported my ideas, inspired my interest in doing research, and encouraged me through the ups and downs of this project; but most of all, was a great friend. Thank you seems too little.

I would like to thank the Elders for contributing to this research. Without their kindness, openness and willingness to allow me access to both their community, and their inner thoughts and feelings, this study would have an entirely different character. I thank you for your trust and candor and for allowing me to have what can only be described as a once in a lifetime experience. Specifically, I must thank Simon John who introducing me to his people's history and who took a chance on my ability to do justice to this important and fascinating topic. It has truly been life changing. This thesis would not have happened without the dedication and hard work of Theresa Austin, who spent countless hours transcribing, translating, and verifying the *Dakelh*. Thank you Beverly John for keeping my work in check, and for organizing all aspects of the community work.

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1.0 Introduction

Prologue

The 4x4 bumped and banged as we slowly made our way down the deactivated forest road. This was my second time travelling to this place; the first trip, three weeks earlier was much more muddy, although now the mosquitoes were far worse. I sprayed myself down with repellent and then offered some to my companions. My thoughts quickly drifted to those living here long ago... how could they have survived without bug spray? The first trip had only brought me to the edge of this new landscape; new only in terms of my experience as I would soon learn this place was truly ancient. That first trip we explored the periphery, walking briefly through a meadow and along the adjacent lakeshore. Thinking back on the idea of periphery as I write this, I feel as though this whole project has brought me to the edge of a way of knowing and being strangely at odds with my own, while at the same time not. This second trip was deeper, both in terms of our travel within the territory as well as for me personally. I could barely hold back my excitement as we neared the end of the road. Because I had grown up mostly in the city, this road had provided my first "offroading" experience, and I liked it. The condition of the road added to the sense I felt of exploring; not in any true sense as people from the community still fish and hunt here regularly, but I felt as though I were travelling into the great unknown. With each bump and bang, I was learning more of their territory.

We boarded Ralph Joseph's aluminium boat and were soon cruising down the lake. As I scanned the wilderness around me, my senses heightened as I took in my surroundings: new sites, smells, and even tastes as we hit a wave, sending a splash of cool water into my partially open mouth. I was experiencing the place I had heard and

read so much about... *Yeko*. I closed my eyes for a moment and was overwhelmed by a sense of wonder tied to this place and its importance, not just now but throughout history. We will get to that later. First we must go back to the point where I started.

The Beginning Of This Project

"We have to talk about what we know... the way we know it" (Alfred Joseph:3 Oct. 2008). These words echo the desire of Tl'azt'en Nation to record the knowledge of their Elders. It is because of this desire that I have been given the incredible opportunity to participate in a community based oral history project under the Tl'azt'en Nation / University of Northern British Columbia Community University Research Alliance (CURA).[1] This thesis is a fairly involved answer to a seemingly simple question: *How should we preserve memory of the past?* Along the way, it tries to examine how what may appear to be a fairly simple question is in fact rather complicated. As a society we seem to have arrived at a place where traditional forms of knowledge have been replaced by much confusion and ignorance. Somehow this most basic form of storing knowledge—passing down one's history—has come to require expert help. We have moved to a point where we know very little of where we come from and how we have come to occupy our present situations. While there are whole schools of study dedicated to genealogy and preserving the past (History), we do very little of it ourselves (on a personal or familial level).

This study was community driven and has involved the collection of knowledge that pertains to Yekooche and Tl'azt'en Nation's ancestral home of *Yeko* (Cunningham

[1] This project was titled "Partnering for Sustainable Resource Management" and was funded by CURA. I will refer to this specific project throughout this thesis as CURA project.

Lake). The information collected includes oral history related to life and settlement around *Yeko* and specifically the village site of *Yekoozdli*.

Growing up, oral traditions held an important place in my family, most often spoken by my father. Invariably, this almost always took place around the campfire. I was a cub scout and my dad was the Akela, or head leader of our pack. We always looked forward to my dad's stories on our numerous trips. Whether they were personal experiences, ghost stories, lessons, or all of the above, everyone went away with something to think about. As children, my brother and I spent a great deal of time at our cabin with dad, during which he would often teach us about life and our family history while roasting marshmallows around the fire.

My first experience with oral history in an Indigenous context came while I was a volunteer at a University function. Dr. Heather Harris, a professor in the UNBC First Nation Studies program at the time, entertained a group of new students with some storytelling. It was during this talk that she located herself and traced back her Indigenous ancestry for hundreds of years, as well as her European heritage to the 1700s, when her great grandmother was the country wife of a Hudson's Bay company clerk. Admittedly, at first I was sceptical of her claims, but as she continued to speak my cynicism and myopic assumptions gave way to a deep sense of wonder. I was amazed that she could follow both sides of her lineage back that far; something I could not come close to with my own family, and certainly not without giving it much thought. Oral history, one of the most ancient and venerated staples of human culture, has all but disappeared in western

societies, supplanted by ink and paper and an ideal that the written word is authoritative. Julie Cruikshank described the capacity of the oral tradition[2] when she wrote:

> Aboriginal oral tradition differs from western science and history, but both are organized systems of knowledge that take many years to learn. Oral tradition seems to present one way to challenge hegemonic history. It survives not by being frozen on the printed page but by repeated retellings. Each narrative contains more than one message. The listener is part of the storytelling event too, and a good listener is expected to bring different life experiences to the story each time he or she hears it and to learn different things from it at each hearing. Rather than trying to spell out everything one needs to know, it compels the listener to think about ordinary experience in new ways. Storytelling is possibly the oldest and most valued of the arts and encompasses a kind of truth that goes beyond the restricted frameworks of positivism, empiricism, and "common sense" (Cruikshank quoted in Calliou, 2004, 78).

Cruikshank's insight is rather profound. While this thesis contains extracts of Tl'azt'en's oral tradition, it is really shaped by my experiences and the simple things I learned. My hope is that this work will inspire those who read it to reflect upon it and broaden their understandings and experience of the past. If one were only to gleam one thing from Cruikshank's quote, as well as my research, may it be to listen. I have tried to listen well and have learned a great deal as a result; I have learned about life, respect, and the history and traditions of the *Dakelh* people, for which I am truly grateful.

While oral history is facing challenges in being maintained in Indigenous communities, there has been a renewed push for preservation alongside the legitimization of this knowledge form within the Canadian legal system. The 1997 *Delgamuukw* decision stated that the oral histories of Aboriginal peoples must be given equal consideration and weight to other forms of evidence (*Delgamukw vs British Columbia).* Chief Justice Lamer maintained it was necessary to "adapt the laws of evidence so that the Aboriginal perspective on their practices, customs and traditions and on their

[2] Oral History refers to the transmission of historical information where as the oral tradition is broader in scope and is multifaceted. It includes many cultural aspects.

relationship with the land, are given due weight by the courts" (*Delgamuukw vs British Columbia*, quoted in Calliou 2004:75).

Coming up with a title for this thesis was difficult. I wanted to honour the Elders and respect the importance of names as well as recognize the *Dakelh* language. The title *Soo Ts'yawh 'Ilho Zah Ts'inli* or "we are all one" was a written statement I came across by an Elder during my research in the Tl'az'ten Treaty Office. It fits the struggles of the *Dakelh* people in terms of the current political division (which will be explained later) and recognizes the common lineage out of the Cunningham Lake area, as these are central tenets of the Elders.[3]

During an Elder's meeting on language and culture I attended in Tache on 14 May 2008, Grand Chief Edward John said, "we are all Elders in training." This struck me as quite thought provoking. Even as a young man, how am I preparing myself to teach or lead younger generations? I hope the lessons that form the learning journey presented in these pages will be of assistance to Tl'azt'en Nation, and that in some small way the information I have gathered and the stories I have recorded will help educate a new generation of Tl'azt'en Elders to effectively lead their people, and continue to perpetuate their language and culture. Thomas King once wrote, "For native storytellers, there is generally a proper time and place to tell a story" (King 2003:154). According to the Elders, for this story the time is now.

[3] Although the people of present day Yekooche and Tache share a common relationship to *Yeko*, since the communities have split there remains a difference of opinion among some as to whose territory it is. Please see page 42 for a further discussion of this.

Locating Myself

My interest in Indigenous peoples and culture was developed at an early age. While I was in grade four, I was introduced to First Nations people for the first time while studying the Haida and Inuit peoples during Social Studies. Throughout the unit on the Haida, we learned many details about their culture. Even though many of the particulars I was taught at that time I have since learned are incorrect, an experience I had during that unit affected me greatly and I have carried it with me ever since.

The incident I am referring to occurred when I learned about Haida spirituality and Shamanism. The students were broken into groups and asked to mimic the healing ceremony. I had several issues with this activity when it took place. First, it is important to note that I went to a Christian school, and in this sense the ceremony was being mocked. I did not appreciate this, as I could not help but think about 'ceremonies' I performed as part of my belief system. The two that came to mind for me were saying grace before dinner, and praying before I went to sleep at night. I knew I would not have been comfortable with someone mocking these activities and could see how someone could if they did not understand the intended meaning behind the actions. The shamanic ceremony was being mocked in the sense that it was being presented as ridiculous and without merit. Several students who were also uncomfortable with the activity had different reasons. They described it as 'satanic' and felt by participating they might go to hell. I appreciated their dislike in the activity, although I disagreed with their reasoning. This was heavy stuff in our classroom. I remembered thinking that it would be so much better to have a Haida person come in and teach us. From that experience I carried with me a yearning to understand things. I knew that I had no knowledge of this fascinating

culture that was presented to me, and it was even clearer that my teacher knew nothing as well. Something that is not understood should not be mocked, nor should it be disregarded. It is with this attitude that I have approached my work as a student of First Nation Studies.

In *No Man is an Island* where Thomas Merton wrote, "We make ourselves real by telling the truth." He goes on further to say, "Man can hardly forget that he needs to know the truth, for the instinct to know is too strong in us to be destroyed." (Merton 2005:198). I have always felt that I have needed to know the truth. This search for truth is what led me to First Nations Studies as a discipline. Where history focused on the writings and records of the colonizer, First Nations Studies seeks to present research from an Aboriginal perspective. I hope to 'tell the truth'[4] by presenting Tl'az'ten's perspective as much as possible and by listening to the Elders whose voices I recorded. When discussing both my education as well as my research, one of the most influential pieces that continues to shape my journey is Neil Postman's short essay, *My Graduation Speech*,[5] which I also studied in Secondary School. In this work, Postman describes two conflicting ideas: that of the Athenian, and that of the Visigoth. Since reading this work I have strived to support the Athenian way. Postman writes:

> To be an Athenian is to hold knowledge and, especially the quest for knowledge in high esteem. To contemplate, to reason, to experiment, to question—these are, to an Athenian, the most exalted activities a person can perform...
>
> To be an Athenian is to cherish language because you believe it to be humankind's most precious gift. In their use of language, Athenians strive for grace, precision, and variety. And they admire those who can achieve such skill...

[4] By truth I mean something balanced and grounded both in historical reality as well as the lived experience of the Elders I want to tell their truth

[5] While I am now able to question some of the historical accuracy of this dichotomy, the metaphorical distinction is still of great value See Roger Collins *Visigothic Spain 409-711* 2004

> To be an Athenian is to understand that the thread which holds civilized society together is thin and vulnerable; therefore, Athenians place great value on tradition, social restraint, and continuity. To an Athenian, bad manners are acts of violence against the social order...
>
> To be an Athenian is to take an interest in public affairs and the improvement of public behaviour. Indeed, the ancient Athenians had a word for people who did not. The word was *idiotes*, from which we get our word "idiot"... (Postman 1992:187-188).

Working on this project, I have seen the Athenian way practiced daily. Simon John, the community member I worked with closely on this project personifies this idea. For him, it is not inspired by the ancient Greeks; it was handed down from his Elders. Simon is on a quest for knowledge. He hopes to uncover the past of his people and record the wisdom and stories of the Elders before it is lost. Simon explains:

> We need to reconnect our self and our people with the land... Our Elders don't get around as much as they used to. It's harder for them to go out and teach us but there's not enough young people willing to learn. If they don't learn now it's going to be forgotten (Simon John:13 March 2008).[6]

The Elders recognize Simon's passion and call him *goozih* [Whisky Jack], meaning curious. Simon passionately pursues this work even without remuneration because the importance runs deep, and the reward is assisting his people. Simon hopes to revive cultural practice amongst the youth, focusing on language, tradition, and rebuilding a sense of community. He explains:

> It's been sort of a vision for me to find out where our ancestors came from long ago... *'Uda' whuk'una nenats'oodilh* is let's go back to long time ago. [This] is what we're trying to do. With our Elders who are still alive we need to teach the young people the history—this is part of it—our history of where our ancestors came from, where they used to live and what they used to do—that's what we're aiming at, so you young people, you'd know where you come from that's the whole thing behind this. And with all of this we're going to start doing traditional camps... wherever they used to gather to do medicine, berries, get ready for winter, do cache pits...You know through government and like treaties and stuff like that, it tore families apart and you know that's not right. You know, *'uda' whuk'una,* they say, people used to work

[6] Interview with Leona Shaw.

> together, *la hut'en 'inle'* they call that. Every way, they used to travel from Middle River right to Babine, just to make fish. There was a reason behind that, you know, nowadays you don't see that. You don't see people helping one another any more so we need to go back there and learn as much as we can from them while we got a chance 'cause our grandchildren will not survive the next ten years, I know it for a fact, if we don't change (Simon John:5 June 2008).

Each of the Elders I have met has spoken about the lack of interest of the youth. It is recognized that they are the future and must themselves become the knowledge holders of the community or the wisdom will become lost. Alfred Joseph explains, "You know all these things... our Elders left it for us to learn by it. And we're going to have to teach it and we're going have to teach it hard to make our younger ones understand it (Alfred Joseph:5 June 2008).

I do not consider myself an expert on *Dakelh* culture. As someone coming into the community doing research for my Masters degree, I see myself as an ally and assistant for the community. The Elders have been very gracious with a *nedo*[7] [*Dakelh* term for white man] who knows very little. In this sense I consider myself very much a student, both of the university and the community in which I conducted this research. Therefore, it is important for me to provide a cultural inventory of myself, in the spirit of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (Said 1978:25): I am a non-Indigenous outsider. My belief system is strongly influenced by the Christian tradition in which I was raised. My father is of Germanic descent, and his family comes from the rural inter-lake district of Manitoba. They were immigrant farmers. My mother is Danish and English. I was raised in the urban centre of Vancouver and come from a middle class background. I am also an

[7] I use *nedo* here only because it is what I was called by each of the Elders. *Nedo* was coined by Father Morice as the term for white man. The literal translation is *ne* – us and *do* – higher/above or "one above us". This is a supposition of superiority I do not subscribe to, nor agree with in any way.

academic in that I have earned a degree in History, and conducted this research that will be used for my First Nation Studies MA. I am a product of the Western education system. In some way I suppose my interest in community history came in part from my grandmother. Although I never knew her well, she had worked on a community history project with other seniors and published a book in 1974 which outlined the settlement of immigrant farmers in their region of Manitoba. I always enjoyed reading this book as a child, and the stories and recollections it contains are some of the only aspects I know of my grandparents' life and the generations of my family before them. Through this book, I learned that my great great grandfather worked for a railroad survey crew travelling from Ontario to British Columbia. I can only wonder if he travelled through the territory around Ft. St. James and bore witness to some of the history I now study. I have pursued this work because not only do I have a keen interest in it, I am convinced it has tremendous value.

Research Community

Tl'azt'en Nation Community Profile

Tl'azt'en Nation is located in North Central British Columbia, approximately 65 km north of Fort St. James. Translated, the word *Tl'azt'en* means "people by the edge of the bay" (Tl'azt'en 2006). However, it is translated as "people of the bottom or end of the lake" by Father Morice[8] (Morice 1893:26). The Tl'azt'enne self identify as *Dakelhne*, but are also known as 'Carrier.' The *Dakelh* language is the traditional language of Tl'azt'en Nation and is a part of the Athapaskan Language family (Tl'azt'en 2006). Daniel

[8] Father Morice wrote extensively on the Dakelh people. However, his work is sharply slanted in that he was working to 'civilize' and change their culture. Morice was highly egotistical, frequently contradictory, and heavily biased in his writing. Unfortunately, his works represent some of the only records available of missing HBC documents (some even suggest they were destroyed by him).

Williams Harmon, who was one of the first fur traders to live in the area, referred to the people as "Tacullies" which he interpreted as, "people who go on the water" (Harmon 1911:242). The term 'Carrier' is taken from the French word *porteur*, which in turn is a translation from the neighbouring *Sekanais* term *Aghelh Ne* that means "ones who pack." This term was originally adopted to describe how Carrier people traditionally transported goods (Hall 1992:4). The meaning of *Dakelh* is said to be "on water travel" which equates to a modern spelling with Harmon's definition. Father Morice attributes the Carrier name to the practice of widows who carried the cremated remains of a deceased warrior (Morice 1971:6).

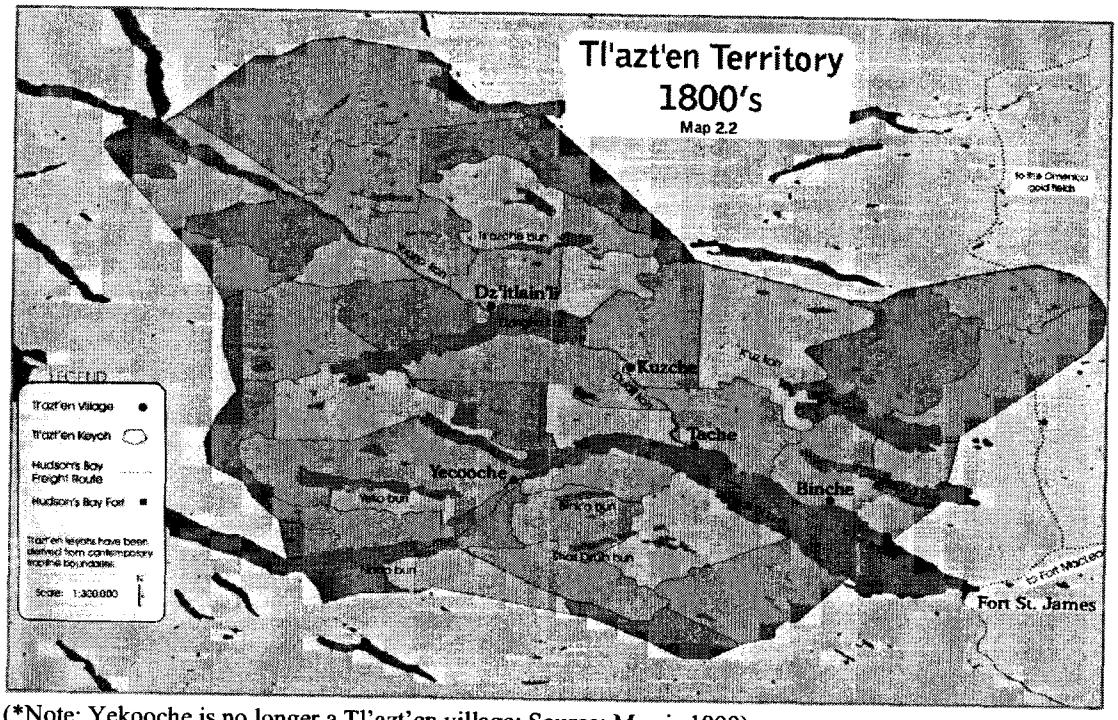
Since time immemorial, the Tl'azt'enne have been located in central British Columbia. Tl'azt'en Nation is situated just north of present day Fort St. James in the forested uplands at the confluence of the Nechako Plateau and the Omenica Mountains. Their traditional territory is centered on Stuart [*Nak'al bun*] and Trembleur Lakes (Morris 1999:30). Tl'azt'en's roughly 652,000 hectares of traditional territory has sustained and provided for countless generations; their means of food, clothing, and shelter were found all around them. Justa Monk recounts "unlike some of the Carrier bands that had to travel many miles from their villages to reach their hunting territory and their traplines, our traditional hunting grounds were all around us. The animals—moose, deer, bear, marten, lynx, coyote—were just outside our door" (quoted in Moran 1994:35).[9]

Historic events, such as the establishment of Fort St. James as a trading post in 1806 had a fundamental influence on Tl'azt'en Nation and their traditional way of life (Moran 1994). Fort St. James brought many profound changes to Tl'azt'en Nation, from the introduction of tea and sugar into the Tl'azt'en diet to the monthly publication known

[9] This was also reiterated during my interview with Justa Monk 24 Oct 2008.

as "The Paper that Relates", or *Test'les nauhwelnek,* by Father Morice in 1891 (Johnnie and O'Hara 1992; Moran 1994). According to Lizette Hall, the fur trade dramatically changed the practice of hunting from a primary source of subsistence to a means of acquiring trade goods in exchange for furs (Hall 1992:70). Although my research suggests that for many the subsistence remained the same. The *Dakelh* people merely had new goods available that fit within longstanding trade relations with neighbouring groups. For those that did experience a shift away from subsistence hunting, the change occurred slowly.

Figure 1 Tl'azt'en Nation Traditional Territory 1800s



(*Note: Yekooche is no longer a Tl'azt'en village; Source: Morris 1999)

Tache was never a permanent settlement historically;[10] it was used as a rest stop during travel, and was a seasonal fish camp. This changed slowly as social and cultural impacts caused by the arrival of Europeans, encouraged the *Dakelh* people to settle in

[10] Although there was a permanent settlement known as Tachy on Babine Lake.

permanent locales. Tache grew rapidly as *Dakelh* were encouraged to settle closer to Fort St. James for the purpose of sending their children to Residential School, first in Fort St. James, and then to Lejac Residential School, located outside of Fort Fraser.

Over the past 50 years, Tl'azt'en Nation has seen many significant changes as a result of the hard work of dedicated community leaders, such as John Alexis, Justa Monk, Pierre John, Ed John, Eugene Joseph and Harry Pierre. Some of these developments include the installation of electricity and the water and sewage system. In the 1960s, the government provided funding for a road from Fort St. James to Tache (Moran 1994). The direct access that this road offered was the first of its kind on Tl'azt'en territory; as Justa Monk explains, "when the road was built everything changed" (Moran 1994:20). While accessibility was seen as a great benefit to Tl'azt'en Nation it came at a cost. Justa recounts the wonderful sense of community before the existence of the road and how during the winter people would travel between Tache and Fort St. James in large groups with ten or more teams of horses. In the summer, travel was by boat and people stopped to have tea and visit in the various communities on their way into Fort St. James (Moran 1994:18-20).

Today, Tl'azt'en Nation has a total population of approximately 1600 people, with 500 members living off reserve. Tl'azt'en Nation is now comprised of four villages identified as *Tache* [Tachie], *Binche* [Pinchi], *Dzitl'ainli* [Middle River], and *K'uzche* [Grand Rapids] (Moran 1994). The largest village, Tache, is located on the shores of *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake] and is where Tl'azt'en Nation's elementary school, health centre, and administrative offices are located. The Tl'azt'en Natural Resource/Treaty Office is the administrative department that oversees issues related to resource

management. Traditionally, natural resources were managed solely through local governance systems such as *balhats* [potlatch], *keyoh* [family territories] and the clan system (Brown 2002, Hudson 1983, Morris & Fondahl 2002,).

The Tl'azt'en Nation traditional governance uses the Hereditary Clan System. Today there are three clans. However, examining the Clans historically is difficult, as anthropologists seem to disagree as to how many clans existed. This is due to the effects of epidemics: rapidly diminished populations permanently altered the clan system. Hall explains that the *Dakelh* in this area were comprised originally of two clans, *Lhts'umusyoo* [beaver] and *Lesillyoo* [frog]. A third clan was added in the 1950s when an extended family moved in from Takla Lake. This clan is *Lohjuboo* [bear/wolf] (Hall 1992:5, Austen 2009). I think the two clans as explained by Hall is due to a smaller population requiring fewer clans[11] and may not be historically precise. Hudson notes four clans including, *Granton* [grouse] (Hudson 190). Morice (1893:203) also lists four gens or matrilineal descent groups, each with their own totem: Grouse, Beaver, Toad, and Grizzly Bear. According to him, the Grouse clan was the most powerful, and the Beaver and Toad clans were a cohesive group offering "mutual consideration and protection" (Morice 1893:204).

Clan membership was matrilineal and marriage within a clan was forbidden (Hall 1992). The land was divided into *keyoh* through the clan system. Within the *keyoh* structure, families had access to a variety of resources and were set up as stewards of their territory. The family head controlled the hunting, fishing, and gathering on the *keyoh* (Carrier Sekani Tribal Council 1998). Justa Monk stated, "every family had its

[11] Several waves of epidemics had enormous effect on population levels. As such, two clans were probably all that remained after significant population decline.

territory—its reef or sand bar for fishing, its area for hunting and trapping, its meadow for hay"[12] (Moran 1994:33). This reaffirms how effective Tl'azt'en traditional management systems were in sustaining the Tl'azt'enne. Historical accounts of Tl'azt'en Nation during the 1800s reveal that they had "clear control of resources at the local level" during the fur trade era (Hudson 1983:85).

The territory and people of Tl'azt'en Nation have been significantly affected by many industrial developments including the establishment of a mercury mine on Pinchi Lake in the 1940's, the development of the forestry industry since the 1940's and the construction of a railroad line by the Pacific Great Eastern Railway company (PGE) in the 1970's (Morris & Fondahl 2002). In the face of the broad scale changes these developments have brought, Tl'azt'en Nation is striving to maintain their cultural identity.

The Tl'azt'en Elders Society is a registered non-profit society that brings Elders and community members together to foster the transmission of language and culture. Their mission is to "provide leadership by demonstrating traditional ways of doing things. The Tl'azt'en Elders Society is committed to working towards unity, respect and love for our people, land and animals through stories, gatherings and traditional teachings. We are the knowledge holders and mentors to set footprints for many generations" (Banner located in the Tl'azt'en Elder Center).[13] Tl'azt'en Elders are working hard to revitalize the *Dakelh* language and culture among the youth in order to promote healing and foster a larger sense of community. Helen Johnnie explains:

> All this we're trying to get the language back and the culture for the students, whose growing up. After, us, we're gone, nobody is going to talk to them and nobody is

[12] Hay was needed after the *Dakelh* began to keep horses and cows.
[13] Both the building and banner were destroyed by fire in 2009.

going to teach them what to do. What we been doing long ago (Helen Johnnie:5 June 2008).[14]

Yekooche Community Profile

The *Yekoochet'en* [people of Yekooche] have lived in the *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake] area for thousands of years, situated in a rich area encompassing the Skeena and Fraser watersheds. The *Yekoochet'en,* also known as the Portage Band, shared their resources and knowledge with the Hudson's Bay Company, allowing them to establish a lucrative fishery on *Yeko Bun* [Cunningham Lake] and to freight goods between Stuart and Babine Lakes. The *Yekoozdli* village site at the mouth of the creek was the original settlement of the Portage band. It was the site of a fish weir and a productive whitefish fishery. The *Yekoochet'en* gradually settled at their current location at the head of *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake] in the 1880s. The current village is known as Yekooche or Portage. Many continued to maintain cabins and smokehouses at *Yeko.*

After contact, the *Yekoochet'en* saw their rights and way of life consistently eroded as non-indigenous trappers, prospectors and resource companies were given access to their traditional lands. During this time many children were removed from the village at Portage and sent to residential schools, where they were prevented from using their own language or practicing their cultural beliefs. In 1959, for the purposes of settling reserve land disputes, the Federal Government amalgamated the communities of *Tache, Pinche, Yekooche, Kuzche,* and *Dzitl'ainli* into one large Band called the Stuart-Trembleur Lakes Band. In 1987, the Stuart-Trembleur Lakes Band changed their name to Tl'azt'en Nation (www.yekooche.com).

[14] I am leaving the Elders words untouched unless clarification or context is needed; as such, their grammar and vernacular remain unmarked by [sic]. Some punctuation has been added in order to improve flow for the reader.

In 1994, the Yekooche Band separated from Tl'azt'en Nation to form a distinct band known as the Yekooche First Nation (www.yekooche.com). After the communities split, many Yekooche Elders remained in Tache.

Research Purpose and Objectives

There is an old saying, "you cannot tell where you are going, unless you know where you have been" (Unknown). This profound advice has been fundamental not only personally, but succinctly describes the *raison d'être* for this project. My research has developed a community-based documented history that records Tl'az'ten Nation's settlement at *Yeko* (Cunningham Lake). In order to preserve this area and the knowledge pertaining to these sites, it was important to document the stories and experiences of the Elders. The documented information about the land and settlement may be used further for educational purposes as well as for the restoration and protection of these important areas. Upon the conclusion of the research, Yekooche and Tl'azt'en Nation agreed to participate in an archaeological dig of the area to "ground truth" the oral and written record. Unfortunately, Yekooche later declined involvement and Tl'azt'en Nation changed the location to another village site (*Binche*).

Through my thesis, I hope to be able to take the reader on a journey through the territory and present the power that comes from stories and lessons when the Elders go out on the land. The Tl'azt'enne are also interested in using this research to build excitement among the youth, and to perhaps begin to take them out to the sites with Elders, where they can be taught the stories. My goal was to produce an excellent piece of Indigenous research,[15] centred on a First Nations perspective and worldview. As a

[15] By Indigenous research I mean presenting an aboriginal perspective as much as possible.

non-Indigenous outsider, I tried my best to be as open as possible to understanding new perspectives and ways of knowing. In this sense I aspired to carry out my research in ways that were respectful to the community and to each individual with whom I came into contact. I focused on building relationships and recognized that how I brought myself to the community would dictate how they in turn would respond to me.

To develop a community-based documented history of *Yeko*, I partnered with members of both Tl'azt'en Nation and Yekooche Nation to record the oral stories they were willing to share. I employed qualitative methods, such as an Elder retreat, focus groups, open-ended conversational interviews, as well as referring to archival and published sources that document their history. Information was obtained only with permission of Elders. In contrast to previous written historical accounts of Indigenous people, my research has strived to focus on the Tl'azt'en perspective, and draw knowledge from the community, using archival research and published sources only to complement the oral testimony. Alfred Joseph explains, "I'm sixty-nine years old, many of us Elders we won't last very much longer and we're all worried of how to convey this... put it in book so that it can be taught in school, even in university" (Alfred Joseph:5 June 2008). As Willie Mattess stated to me:

> We got to make at least one book the way people gonna understand it. We make one book, we're on the way—what I want to see is, why I'm here is, I want to see these young people control everything. That's what I want to see, it's not my future, it's those people like you—your future. Right now there is nowhere to turn to, nothing (Willie Mattess:26 January 2009).

This document will be made available to community members as well as the community school in order to educate Tl'azt'en youth about their past. Additionally almost all facets

of my research have focused on capacity building with members of Tl'azt'en Nation. This will be touched on further.

Locating the Research

I have been greatly assisted by the Tl'azt'en Nation UNBC Community University Research Alliance (CURA) project protocols (which were invaluable in helping me to carry out this research in a respectful way), as well as the Tl'azt'ten Nation Guidelines for Research within Tl'azt'en Territory (1997), developed before the CURA project. I also had several community members working alongside me during the research. I have framed my project as an oral history. It is Indigenous research in that I hope a First Nations perspective is presented through the oral stories. These are augmented using archival research and an academic perspective. This is also participatory research in that the community was the driving force behind the project, and approached me about doing the research. They have been involved from the beginning to the end. They were directing the research, and it is theirs. I was not in control.

This project involved producing a written history for Tl'azt'en Nation to be used as an educational tool to teach the community about their past.[16] Early settlement sites in their area have been given very little critical attention to date. In fact, this project is one of the first to document the location of such sites, and record the stories Elders share around these places. The project focuses on the area around *Yeko* [Cunningham Lake], which is where most of the Tl'azt'enne were settled before the arrival of the fur trade.

[16] The goal of this thesis was not to theorize nor follow a western theoretical construct due to the indigenous community-driven nature of this work.

CURA is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). It is a partnership between Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC. The goals of the partnership are as follows:

> The purpose of the Tl'azt'en Nation-UNBC CURA project is to enhance the capacity of Tl'azt'en Nation to effectively engage in culturally and ecologically sustainable natural resource management, and to enhance the capacity of UNBC researchers and their students to effectively contribute to First Nation community needs through collaborative research (http://cura.unbc.ca).

It is an equal partnership that benefits both Tl'azt'ten and UNBC. The objectives of the partnership provide an excellent means of fostering mutually beneficial relationships, and demonstrates what can be done in relation to some of the issues FNST programs face in terms of incorporating Indigenous knowledge holders into the academy. The objectives are:

- To strengthen the cultural development of the Tl'azt'en community by capturing resources and expertise to promote the transfer of TEK from older to younger generations.
- To enhance the social and economic potential of the Tl'azt'en community by providing the expertise to facilitate the development of alternative, culturally appropriate environmental/science curricula for Tl'azt'en youth; and by providing a map to ecotourism development, informed by robust research and Tl'azt'en values.
- To provide graduate training experience with First Nations partners that will foster knowledge of cross-cultural research requirements and experience in community-relevant research.
- To provide training and enhance research capacity among Tl'azt'enne in areas important to integrated natural resource management.
- To improve First Nations content across the curricula of UNBC's academic programs.
- To ensure research results are available to regional, national and international audiences; and
- To enhance the potential of UNBC and Tl'azt'en Nation to develop and strengthen their partnerships (http://cura.unbc.ca).

The research objectives of the CURA Project further Indigenous research by helping researchers carry out their work in a respectful manner.

The CURA project has four different knowledge streams: Ecotourism, Improved Partnerships, Science and Environmental Education, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge. This research fits within the Tl'azt'en Ecological Knowledge Stream. The research stream, 'Perpetuation of Tl'azt'en Ecological Knowledge' has been researching methods of recording traditional knowledge, that will allow Tl'azt'en Nation to record and perpetuate their Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and provide training to community members to continue this work on their own. This project will serve to further Tl'azt'en's goals in "developing curriculum material to enhance educational objectives" (cura.unbc.ca). This goal has also been an important part of my research, as I was expected to give something back to the community for their use. My community product is a written document of their history that combines Tl'azt'en and Yekooche oral history, with the written historical record that can be used in the schools.[17] The specific goals of the TEK stream are "to gather information on medicinal uses of plants, traditional Tl'azt'en place names, and Aboriginal perspectives on forest health. This information will enhance the knowledge of UNBC researchers, and provide valuable resources for Tl'azt'en Nation" (http://cura.unbc.ca). It is expected under this stream that researchers will "learn interview methods, and develop and practice interview protocols with TEK experts" (http://cura.unbc.ca). This is an extremely important part of being respectful, and carrying out Indigenous research. It will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

[17] Additionally, I helped facilitate an archaeological dig, and completed a volunteer internship with the Tl'azt'en Elders Society. During this internship I helped create an archive and database of their materials, and assisted with digitizing their collection.

Themes Within My Research

What I try to do in this thesis is approach the question *How should we preserve memory of the past?* in some ways as an ethnographer might, using the long lens of First Nation Studies and History, as well as the shorter, more intimate lens of my personal experience. As I went through this process and sat with the Elders I began some deeper reflection. What we remember represents a profound engagement with the natural world. It is deeply rooted in place. Daily, our interactions turn memory into culture, transforming the past into our traditions and shaping our way of life. The very notion of memory seems increasingly obscure. I realized the straightforward question "Why should we remember?" could not be answered without first addressing two other even more straightforward questions: What are we remembering? And where did it come from? These are questions I will be exploring further.

Language plays an important role in this research. As a *nedo* and non *Dakelh* speaker (like many of the youth), I include both English and *Dakelh* where spoken by the Elders. Judge L. Shaw writes:

> Language is not only the medium, by which all our thoughts, feelings, emotions, and ideas are obtained from and communicated to others, but language is the instrument by which the mind itself acts. This is so true, that we think in words, we cannot reason or reflect, except by words. They are the very material on which the mind works, and the implements with which it works (quoted in Postman and Weingartner 1971:128).

Language is not only a means of communication but words themselves are thoughts. Thus, "[w]e cannot think without words" (Rauser 2008). This is insightful because, for many of the Elders, thinking about their culture and traditions required *Dakelh*.[18] I hope

[18] The Elders were free to participate in both English and *Dakelh* depending on what they were most comfortable with. As a result, one interview was completed entirely in Dakelh, and one entirely in English. The rest were completed with the Elders switching between the two languages.

that including pieces of *Dakelh* throughout this thesis will serve the community by not only improving their ability to communicate in *Dakelh* but also to reason and reflect and become more engaged in their world around them.

This journey has been a long one for me; not only personally, as my passion and choices have brought me to this place, but also in terms of this research (which took two and a half years). Sometimes things were tough and the trail was steep, but with Simon John as a guide through the community work and Dr. Ross Hoffman directing me through the academic landscape, I eventually arrived at my final destination. Throughout this personal journey I have travelled extensively but invariably found myself in almost the exact same place: sitting around a campfire. The campfire has served as a gathering since time immemorial. It is a place for kinship ties and connections. It encourages one to learn, reflect and distil knowledge, perpetuating the oral tradition that is deeply rooted in place. As a metaphor it fits both my upbringing as well as *Dakelh* culture. In this sense, the campfire bridges both cultural and generational divides. It is here (at the campfire) where we will conclude our journey together at the end of this thesis.

This thesis unfolds in the following manner: Chapter 2 examines my methodological approach and perspective, while also reviewing the literature on the various subjects. Chapter 3 presents a chronological account of the history of Yeko as I have learned it. Chapter 4 looks at some of the present challenges faced by Tl'azt'en Nation, suggestions for further research, as well as my conclusions.

2.0 Methodological Approach and Perspective

Introduction

There is an African proverb that states, "Every time an Elder dies, it is like a library has burned down" (Calliou, 2004:73). It is out of this realization that my oral history research project was born. This chapter illuminates the theoretical and epistemological predisposition guiding this research and analysis. Primarily, the aim of this chapter is to settle on a perspective that is informed by both the academic discourse as well as Aboriginal traditions.

Oral History and Oral Tradition

Oral history is concerned with how people construct or make sense of both their experience as well as their past. Judy Larmour defines oral history as:

> Oral history records personal reminiscences that are of historical significance, focusing on impressions, attitudes, feelings and description, rather than facts. Oral history allows us to gather information about everyday things, daily routines of work and living that are not usually recorded, and the experiences and perspective of those whose opinions are not often found in written documents (Larmour quoted in Calliou 2004:80).

In this way the knowledge presented in this thesis seeks to supplement, complement, and contrast written history by adding the Tl'azt'en perspective. In this sense I have relied on the Elders for direction and guidance. As Joseph Couture writes, Elders "as carriers of oral tradition, are the exemplars, the standing reference points;" they have much to teach about perception, understanding, and ways of knowing (Couture 1991:61).

While parts of this thesis are certainly oral history, much of the content is larger in scale. Linda Smith, discussing contested histories writes:

> For Indigenous peoples, the critique of history is not unfamiliar... contested stories and multiple discourses about the past, by different communities... is very much a part of the fabric of communities that value oral ways of knowing. These contested accounts are stored within genealogies, within the landscape, within weavings and carvings, even within the personal names that many people carried. The means by which these histories were stored was through their systems of knowledge. Many of these systems have since been reclassified as oral traditions rather than histories (Smith 1999:33).

Is "oral tradition" less valid than Western history? I consider that "oral tradition" is valid because it is respectful of the breadth of knowledge contained by the traditional knowledge systems, which goes far beyond just history in scope.

I have also been deeply influenced by Michael Blackstock's thesis *Gyetim Gan: Faces in the Forest*, in which he sets out to write his thesis in a style, "similar to those of Hugh Brody and Greg Sarris which appeals to the curious and contributes to reaffirming First Nations history and world views" (Blackstock 1996:4). Brody describes his work in *Maps and Dreams*:

> It is a book of anecdotes as well as a research report, its structure being the result of an attempt to meet two different needs. The problem is one of audience; or an awkward tension between a wish to maintain a sense of universal concern without losing a feeling for a particular place. For writings that grow out of resistance to colonialism, this problem can be overwhelming. There is a need for scientific detail, evidence that must stand the test of scrutiny... (Brody 1988:xxiii).

Being non-Indigenous, I cannot bring my own First Nations perspective, but that aspect comes out of the oral history, through the Elders. My approach is multifaceted in terms of combining archival research, oral history, published sources and my own academic knowledge. This work combines western academic perspectives in a complementary way to the First Nations ways of knowing.[19] The goal is to benefit the community with the results, and enable them to move forward and pursue what will hopefully someday lead to an archaeological validation of what I record.

[19] Through the use of both written and oral history.

Another aspect that informed my work is the theoretical framework Blackstock developed for his thesis, a perspective that he calls "ego-edgism," which is defined as "a personal perspective or world view, in which one's ego is equal, but different among others." He goes on to describe how this enables him to present a balance between First Nations and academic ways of knowing:

> My ego is not central to this thesis: my ego is on the edge as I guide the reader to listen to Elders as local experts share their knowledge of tree art. Ego-edgism can be visualized by thinking of a group of people from First Nations and non First Nations cultures sitting around the edge of a circle sharing knowledge as respected equals (Blackstock 1996:6).

Ego-edgism is a forum for sharing knowledge; a two-way exchange (Blackstock 1996:6-7).

Another perspective that comes into play throughout my thesis is storytelling. Leroy Little Bear explains: "Anyone can participate in educating a child because education is a collective responsibility. Storytelling is a very important part of the educational process. It is through stories that customs and values are taught and shared" (Little Bear 2000:81). Robin Riddington describes the development of his writings: "Rather than use a style that mostly reflects the experience of scholars within academic anthropology, I searched for a language of translation that would do justice to the Indian style of teaching through which I gained my knowledge of their culture and their experience. That language, I discovered, is one of storytelling" (Riddington 1990, xiii). With my previous experience, as well as my current work with Elders, this perspective fit well. Some of my most profound learning has come from sitting quietly and listening. Each story bursting with knowledge—and filled with deeper meaning, had specific lessons to be learned, whether I picked them up at the time or understood them in the

future. Stories contain elements of the past and suggestions for the future. Riddington contends that:

> A group of people bonded together by ties of kinship and generalized reciprocity were expected to be in possession of all the knowledge required to bring about the life-sustaining potential of their environment. They considered their own mental powers to be the most significant carrying devices available to them. These mental powers were guided and informed by their stories and training techniques (Riddington 1990:95).

This concept fits well with the goals of Tl'azt'en Elders to bring back language, culture, and traditional knowledge on the land. My research is part of this process for the Tl'azt'enne. Ted Chamberlin and Hugh Brody contend, "The stories we live by define our relationship to the natural and supernatural worlds, to place, to the past, and to each other. They give us a sense of who we are, and where we belong" (Brody and Chamberlin 1993:1). This describes the same passion the Elders brought to this project. The Elders see understanding the past as a way to improve the future.

Jo-ann Archibald explains that, "It is important to preserve oral traditions, but perhaps even more important to let them preserve us. Oral traditions support us when we are challenged, and can show us the way if we let them" (Quoted in Lawson 2001:11). During this research I was not only revealed Tl'azt'en ways of being and knowing while connecting with the Elders and community, but came to understand my responsibility to these connections. At the start of my interview with Willie Mattess he told me to wait, and began discussing the problem of errors in almost everything written about his people. He went on to say, "Got to make one book at least the right way and get to see that while we're alive... because that one book is done right." When I discussed my consent form and asked about using his name and quotes in my material he responded, "not unless you really complete your book. Then if you want my signature on it, I'll put my signature"

(Willie Mattess:26 January 2009). Willy is very much a guardian of his community, and I appreciate that he held me accountable to complete this work, and do it well.

Joyce Schneider explains, that "Many First Nations see education and its western trappings of research and documentation as tools to be utilized in establishing [their] own [Indigenous] ways of knowing as valid and acceptable in mainstream society through the documentation of the oral histories and traditional knowledge of [their] Nations (Schneider 2007:18). It does concern me that while I am writing and documenting at the request of the Elders, some would consider this the weakening of the oral tradition and the traditional transmission process for such knowledge. Every story has a context, a time and place in which it is meant to be told. By writing it down, this context is removed. Thomas King explains, "The printed word, after all, once set on a page, has no master, no voice, no sense of time or place" (King 2003:154). Elsie Mather, a Yup'ik educator and language teacher, adds: "We are living in the age of literacy. We write everything down, and expect everyone to be able to read" (Mather, 1995:90 quoted in Schneider 2007:25). So why write down the oral traditions? Mather goes further to explain, "The desire to preserve and perpetuate oral traditions is ambiguously linked with the process of writing them down" and admits she is trying to "come to grips with the 'necessary monster' of literacy in relation to the transmission of her Yup'ik Eskimo language and cultural ideals" (Mather quoted in Schneider 2007:25). Writing down the oral traditions is really a necessary evil. It is often the only means of preservation in communities where they are being lost. In a chapter entitled *The Medium is the Metaphor*, Postman (1985) argues that it is not the message communicated through a particular medium that is significant, it is the medium used that makes the difference (Postman 1985:10). For example, in an oral-

based society people valued memorization as the highest truth; yet, in a print-based epistemology, this is "merely charming" and "functionally irrelevant" (Postman, 1985:25). Therefore, each new medium leads to a new discourse and a new way of knowing and being.

Context is important in understanding the oral tradition. Meaning is created in the context and includes the storyteller, the audience, the time, and the place. In order to fully understand the story one must be "experienced and perceived in that context" (Couture 1991:54). By spending time with the Elders I hoped to accomplish this in some part but also recognize many of the Elders' lessons require deeper knowledge and contemplation, which can be understood slowly as "the business of a lifetime" (Ibid). King contends, "when Native stories began appearing in print, concern arose that the context in which these stories had existed was in danger of being destroyed and the stories themselves were being compromised" (King, 2002:153-54). Writing down the oral traditions does not preserve their integrity fully; their nuances and deeper meanings are lost. In order to preserve them one must engage the oral tradition and participate in the relationships, reflect, remember, and pass it on. Indeed, participation in the oral tradition carries with it substantial responsibility. As noted above, listening is only a small part of the process. Specifically, relationships must be developed and maintained with knowledge holders. Once a story has been imparted, the listener is charged not only to remember it, but to also ponder it. Subsequently, only then is it to be retold. Stacy Michelle Rasmus explains, "Oral history in context was intended to be a very intimate process where it sustains the humanness of things or the humanness of interactions among people" (Rasmus 2002:293). This is what made my time on the land so powerful; I was hearing the history

in context. Context is clearly important: "Oral traditions... have social histories, and they acquire meaning in the situations in which they are used, in interactions between narrators and listeners" (Cruikshank & Sidney 1995:70). This interaction cannot take place between a reader and a book; there is no connection between purpose, time, or place. The writer and/or reader cannot adapt to a range of circumstances on the page. I acknowledge these limitations with this work. Listening to the same story more than once provided the opportunity to reflect both on the nuances of the tellers and the details they shared, but also how the occasion or location shaped the story as well.

My main purpose is to conceive a history not based solely on written documents but one that gives equal weight to the oral tradition. Kulchyski writes, "Where Native Studies engages in historical scholarship, it does so with a much greater recognition of the importance of the oral record, of the testimonies of Aboriginal people whether recorded on archival documents or recorded by the historian" (Kulchyski 2000:21). To this end, the idea of myth has been one I have needed to wrestle with. The writings of Claude Levi-Strauss have been instrumental in this regard. Levi-Strauss describes mythology:

> [A] myth always refers to events alleged to have taken place in time: before the world was created, or in its final stages—anyway, long ago. But what gives the myth an operative value is that the specific pattern described is everlasting; it explains the present and the past as well as the future (Aural History 1977:3).

In his Massey Lecture presented in 1977, he states:

> The problem is: where does mythology end and where does history start? In the case, entirely new to us, of a history without archives, there being of course no written documents, there is only a verbal tradition, which is claimed to be history at the same time (Levi-Strauss 2008:303).

Further, "What we discover... is that the opposition—the simple opposition between mythology and history which we are accustomed to make—is not at all a clear-cut one, and that there is an intermediary level" (ibid 305).

> This blurred distinction is where I hope to locate this work both—historic and mythic. Levi-Strauss defines the purpose of myth: "that for societies without writing and without archives the aim of mythology is to ensure that as closely as possible—the future will remain faithful to the present and to the past." (ibid 307). It is in this hope that the Elders share their knowledge, to encourage the continuation of their ways of knowing and being, and that their way of seeing reality may continue.

Through this research I present and incorporate the multiple perspectives that I have discussed, but most importantly I hope to have carried out this research in a manner that gives back to the community, opens a dialogue creating a two-way exchange of ideas, and not just as a benefit to those whose work lies within an academic context. While there were some challenges involved in this research project, ultimately I think the goal of the Elders as well as their willingness to be involved attest to the substance and the value of the work.

There is a scarcity of knowledge on the subject I am exploring. Only a few of the Elders can recall the stories and locations their people once inhabited. Conducting this research into the history and significance of the dwelling sites ensures that Tl'azt'tenne can pass on this important history about their land and culture to the next generation. The Tl'azt'enne have a deep cultural, emotional, spiritual, and economic connection to the land. Many Indigenous groups whose culture and lives depend on the land share a similar perspective. Hugh Brody touches on this in *The Other Side of Eden.* For the Inuit, "to know this particular territory is to prosper; neither the land nor the knowledge of the land can be replaced. A territory is made perfect by knowledge" (Brody 2000:35).

The Oral Tradition According to the Elders

> We Indians, we live by unwritten law, we don't carry around a whole bunch of books—we carry it in our heads for survival (Alfred Joseph:5 June 2008).

This project came from a desire of the Elders to record their history in order to help revitalize their language and culture. Pierre John imparted this desire when he said, "We gotta try to teach them what we know, how we survive, where we survive, what we survive on and to teach them to depend on them self because if we're gone they got nobody to depend on, they can't depend on us anymore" (Pierre John:18 September 2008). Henry Abel Joseph explained many Elders feelings when he shared the following:

> Like Auntie Margaret was telling me the other day 'there isn't enough working together, there's too much bickering, there's too much hard feelings. This place is gonna wither away', that's what Auntie Margaret told me just two days ago. We're going to disappear out of here, there's going to be *nedos* living everywhere in log houses and doing what we're supposed to do. We can't handle that, we can't have our language die and we can't have our children go and die in the streets and we can't have our children not knowing their own identity, we can't have our children not know their language, we can't have our children not go to the garden and eat a healthy diet for them, we can't have our children [not] use an education, look at how empty this three million dollar school is. We ought to have this place teaching those things, teaching about the culture and the language. We ought to have up to grade ten teaching / learning our language. It's our fault, what we don't have here, it's all our fault. It's up to us to get organized and do what we must. Like Alfred is always pointing out we can't run to the band office and say somebody kick in my door, I need a door knob. Alfred's advice is go on back and fix his own door (Henry Abel Joseph:5 June 2008).

The Elders are concerned about the accuracy of their knowledge: "All of us must be right, there is no room for error we have to watch when we do work like this—information must be accurate" (Alfred Joseph:5 June 2008). As Alfred Joseph told me on another occasion:

> This is the way I knew it, and the way I see it. Some things are proven facts, based on facts of what I seen and heard and did. Most of it, like Pierre too, he warn me, he said 'tell it like you know it', say 'don't try to guess around or anything'…" (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

Pierre John recalls the guidance of his Grandfather, *Soo khuni be no'ulhyasduk-i dahts'o de* [If you listen to my advice] *'et le ndai la noh la be nohni ch'oh noh la be 'ulh'en-i* [what you make with your hands] *'i beh botihnalh, ne'ulhni da' 'utsiyan* [you will live by that, Grandfather told us] (Pierre John:18 September 2008). The Elders believe their survival is linked to their knowledge and way of life handed down from their ancestors. Pierre explains:

> Ya', that's what I mean. Like you're telling me what you know but I live the way I believe, you know. That's every person in the world, the whole world, you know, they don't live like one another—all different. Like this *nedo* [white person referring to Chris Gall] here he live way different from me. In certain ways, maybe some ways we live the same way but in other way he don't live my way. Every person, lil bit wrong—never be the same. That's why, you know, when we're telling story—sometimes what I know I tell story but I... just tell what I see and what I hear, maybe I lie by whoever is telling me, I don't know. But what I hear and what I see is what I talk about and I believe it. See, like my grandpa, he talk to me when I was nine year old, I say I remember it, just like he talk to me this morning. You see because what he told me, I believe in it and today I realize it, that's why I live. You see I believe him, what he tell me and I take his word and I live this long. If I didn't believe him and I didn't take his word, I'll be down (Pierre John:18 September 2008).

Alfred Joseph adds, "All that knowledge, we tell you this, 'cause we're getting old we don't want to carry it to the grave with us. Even the things we don't need, we feel we have to tell you we still tell it to the young kids that listen. Me, I speak mostly in English for the benefit of these lil ones" (Alfred Joseph:18 September 2008). It important to preserve this knowledge so that it gets passed on but also continually retold. All we have to guide us in this present is the accumulated thought and experience of those who have lived before us. History is a living breathing narrative. This work is both history and story. As Thomas King wrote, "the truth about stories is that's all we are" (King 2004:2).

This is in part my story of the past as told to me by the Elders. I have wrestled with this, as it is their story; however I am the one picking and choosing what to include.

Space does not permit the transcription of the vast amount of knowledge that was shared, but as Alfred Joseph advised me, "so what we tell you, you can decide what you could use and what not to use. This is what us, we live by, we listen to somebody else's advice and [choose] how we live" (Alfred Joseph:18 September 2008). At a later date he added, "put it in a more intelligent manner like university, you have to put it in more detail, more light" (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008). I have tried to do just that.

The Community-Based Nature Of This Research

Native studies is "...the righting of names as much as the writing of names" as well as a dialogue where people can find a middle ground (Kulchyski 2000:13-15). In this research this applies both to the names of Elders who were interviewed as well as place names as much as possible. I want to give voice to the names of Tl'azt'en Elders and to the Tl'azt'en territory as well as recognize the contributions and knowledge of individuals that have been ignored in other places. Additionally, I am hoping to find a middle ground between the oral tradition and the tendency of the historical documents to be racially motivated and denigrating, while still offering value to the community.

This is community-based research in that I was approached by the community themselves to carry out this project and they have been involved throughout. As Graham Hingangoroa Smith suggests, "Indigenous peoples must set the agenda for change themselves" (Smith 2000:210). I am very honoured to have been given this privilege and opportunity, and I come to it with a deep sense of responsibility. Shiu-Thorton (2003) describes community-based, participatory research as:

> A research approach that involves community members/partners in all phases of research. It seeks a collaborative approach that is equitable for all participants engaged in the research process, from the inception of the

> proposed research to the dissemination and publication of research findings. It is grounded in the conscious recognition that historically, and particularly within ethnic minority communities, research has been done on (in contrast to with) communities of color by predominantly white researchers (quoted in Fondahl et al. 2009:2-3).

The community requested an oral history project that is backed up by archival research, and eventually they hope to conduct an archaeological study of the area. The inspiration for this project came from several Elders in the community who spoke extensively with Simon John, the former Language and Culture Coordinator. They wanted to locate and record their early dwelling sites, and the oral stories associated with those places, before the knowledge was completely lost. The main area of interest they wanted to focus on is the place known as *Yeko*. The problem that the community faces is that there are only a handful of people left who remember these places and the stories, and they are aging. This project was directed by the Elders themselves who wanted their knowledge recorded before it is lost. This is important because I know from visits in the community that the Elders were feeling stretched by the CURA project and on the one hand, were reluctant to have more research and interviews conducted. However, they were very excited by this project and were the ones pushing for it to take place. It was hoped this project would lead to an archaeological dig. Although a dig took place, as mentioned earlier the location was changed at the last minute.

Our plan for research with the Elders initially involved a trip out onto the land with them for about a week to record the places and the knowledge surrounding them. The community was pushing for this to take place very quickly, and wanted the trip onto the land scheduled for mid June 2008. The reasoning behind it was to visit the sites before all the leaves came out, and made things less visible. The week-long camp did not

take place due to several deaths in the community, as well as the political situation with Yekooche, which will be discussed later.

As was discussed earlier, context is very important. Harold Adams Innis, considered Canada's pre-eminent fur trade historian, believed that the context needed to be experienced as much as possible. Robin W. Winks in the forward for a 1962 reprint of *The Fur Trade in Canada* wrote that, "Nor did Innis make the mistake, common in 1930 and increasingly common since, of thinking that history could be written exclusively from archives and libraries, from one's study, comfortable and essentially untravelled. Like Parkman and Trevelyan before him, he realized that he must see the country of which he wrote" (Innis 2001:xxix). Innis famously travelled in an eighteen-foot canvas-covered Hudson Bay canoe to the Mackenzie River basin (Innis xxix) in order to experience a part of the fur trade. During my research I made three trips to *Yeko*. The first trip was to assess the condition of roads and to discuss where to hold our camp. Our second trip on 19 June 2008 consisted of preliminary reconnaissance during which we were able to find plenty of physical evidence of past settlement, including cache pits, house pits, and even grave markers. The third trip onto the territory consisted of a day camp with several Elders and community members. There is something very deep and powerful about hearing the Elders' stories out on the territory. I spent the day listening closely while sitting around a roaring fire enjoying moose meat stew and bannock. This was an incredible experience.

The research project included four main phases: the initiation phase, the data collection phase, the data analysis phase, and the presentation or knowledge translation phase. The initiation phase occurred in the summer of 2008. During this phase, as much

time as possible was spent in the study community in order to learn about their culture and to build relationships. This included some background research in the Tl'azt'en Nation archives, as well as attendance at Language and Culture meetings, Elders Meetings, and assisting another CURA researcher (Deanna Yim) at two community events. Initially, this time was not structured, in order to allow myself to become more aware of the surroundings and—more importantly—allow the community to become comfortable with me. On 26 June 2008 a community meeting took place. All interested community members were invited and encouraged to attend. The objectives, methods, relevance, and outcomes of the study, as well as benefits to the community, were discussed. There was time for the community members to give feedback and ask questions. This meeting was also used to determine if there were any other issues related to the study that the community felt needed to be addressed. One of the concerns that came up was a discussion of the political issue that had developed with Yekooche relative to the treaty process that was ongoing.[20] As a result of these discussions it was decided not to hold a week-long camp with Elders or conduct formal interviews on the territory (the information that was gathered on the territory was collected informally).

During the initial phase, a support group consisting of knowledgeable and respected community members was established to guide the research. These members aided in the identification of important stories and pieces of history to the community. The specific information sought, determined the timing of the rest of the project. Initially, several knowledgeable Elders were not well, and had to be interviewed at a later date. During this phase, community members were selected to act as experts and guides in the

[20] See pages 5 and 42.

field phase of the project. Methods of compensation for their time and expertise were determined before the fieldwork began.[21]

Working With The Research Participants

Participants include Elders of Yekooche and Tl'azt'en Nation. The participants were selected through a process involving peer nomination. Beverly John and Simon John aided in this process, through discussions with their Elders. The research participants were selected according to the following criteria:

a) They must be a member of Yekooche or Tl'azt'en Nation;

b) They must be knowledgeable: identified by peers as an 'expert' by having a deep knowledge of the research site; and

c) They must have recognized authority: identified as an 'expert' by a minimum of two Tl'azt'en community members.

Each of the participants that were approached by Bev and Simon agreed to participate.

The data collection phase began during the summer of 2008. During the course of this work eight Elders were formally interviewed one-on-one. These interviews ranged from roughly one to two hours in length, and semi-structured interviewing techniques were used. Additionally, the Elder's Camp was a group setting that included the participation of other knowledge holders from both communities.[22] Simon John and Beverly John (Tl'azt'en Nation CURA Research Coordinator) helped develop the interview questions with the community (I created an initial question set that was modified by the community).[23] Simon was also present during interviews to aid in the translation process. During the interview with William Joseph, Pierre John (another Elder

[21] This followed the guidelines already established by the CURA Project.
[22] For a complete list of participants see Appendix 1.
[23] See Appendix 2.

and research participant) stepped in for Simon as translator and research assistant.[24] The research participants were free to choose an interview location they were comfortable with. Interviews took place in the Education Center, the Elders Center, the John Prince Research Forest office, or in the participants home. One interview was conducted in a hotel room in Prince George. The information gathered in the field was documented using written, audio, and video techniques, according to the wishes of the Elders/experts. This material is stored in the Tl'azt'en Nation Treaty Office Archives. Interviews were transcribed/translated by Theresa Austin, a language expert in the community. Upon the completion of the transcription/translation process, all interviews were verified by the research participants.

One of the small ways I tried to say thank-you to the Elders was by bringing Timbits (doughnut holes) each time I came to the community. The Elders seemed to enjoy and get a good laugh from my *Nedo Bannock.*

All participants involved in the project received an honorarium, as recommended by the community researcher or community research coordinator. It is practice to give honorariums and a small gift for participating in CURA research.

Throughout the research process transcripts were provided to participants for verification and feedback. One way of achieving community validation was having community member Simon John on my thesis committee. At the end of the project, participants verified the research and a community presentation for any interested community members was planned. The community members were invited to the thesis defense. Materials such as project updates, photographs, and presentations were made available on the CURA website, http://cura.unbc.ca as per the individual consent forms.

[24] Simon had another meeting to attend.

Archival research of written sources has also been used alongside the oral history. This involves Department of Indian Affairs documents, Hudson's Bay Company archival material, and the journals of early visitors to the region. My methodology for reviewing the archival material was exhaustive; I started at the beginning and read thousands of pages of material, looking for any mention of *Yeko.* During the data analysis phase, the information collected from the Elders and from the written record was analyzed in order to develop a rich historical narrative of the area around *Yeko.*

Besides the CURA protocols I did my best to incorporate the following of Atkinson's twelve principles into all aspects of my work:

Table 1

Principles guiding Indigenous research

- Aboriginal people themselves approve the research and the research methods;
- A knowledge and consideration of community and the diversity and unique nature that each individual brings to community;
- Ways of relating and acting within community with an understanding of the principles of reciprocity and responsibility;
- Research participants must feel safe and be safe, including respecting issues of confidentiality;
- A non-intrusive observation, or quietly aware watching;
- A deep listening and hearing with more than the ears;
- A reflective non-judgmental consideration of what is being seen and heard;
- Having learnt from the listening a purposeful plan to act with actions informed by learning, wisdom, and acquired knowledge;
- Responsibility to act with fidelity in relationship to what has been heard, observed and learnt;
- Listening and observing the self as well as in relationship to others;
- Acknowledgement that the researcher brings to the research his or her subjective self.

(Atkinson 2001:10)

Respect is hopefully evident in all facets of my work, and my thesis. Incorporating most of Atkinson's *Principles guiding Indigenous research* furthered to deepen reciprocity in my work.

The nature of this research meant it involved a community and Elders who needed to be shown the utmost regard for their ways of knowing, and the stories they shared with me as an outsider. I began studying the Carrier language in order to show some respect, and deepen my own understanding. In addition to this respect, I will provide the community with a community booklet of the research results, to make results easily accessible to a large cross-section of the population.

It was very exciting to see how this project developed and unfolded. Looking back I feel as though I have been able to integrate both academic research and Indigenous knowledge, and develop a document that is useful to the community. As someone who wants to go on further to study Law and to work with land claims, perhaps this documentation can provide proof needed for the *Tl'azt'tenne* and *Yekoochet'enne* to protect more of their territory. I see the benefit of Indigenous research for the specific communities, as well as academia as a whole, when it is done correctly with one's heart in the right place. Paul Thompson describes the essential qualities an interviewer must possess: "an interest and respect for people as individuals, and flexibility in response to them; an ability to show understanding and sympathy for their point of view; and, above all, a willingness to sit quietly and listen" (Thompson 1978:165).

Research Challenges

Historical

Overall this was a very positive experience. However, there were instances at the beginning when conducting my research where I experienced first hand the lack of trust and cynicism that can greet an outsider when coming into the community. This is due to a

long history fraught with exploitive research (Smith 1999). My presence was met with anger on more than one occasion. Harsh tones, angry stares, and the word *nedo* were clearly indicative of the fact that I was the topic being discussed in *Dakelh*. While I'm glad members were fervent in their desire to protect both their knowledge and community, what impressed me most is the speed in which attitudes changed. After speaking from the heart about this research and my place as a non-Aboriginal student in First Nations Studies, people were much more friendly and welcoming. The positive reception increased as I got to know community members and spent time with them.

Political

It is important to recognize the political context in which this research is taking place. As is common in British Columbia, Tl'azt'en Nation as well as Yekooche are involved in the B.C. Treaty Process. In 1994 Yekooche broke away from Tl'azt'en Nation in order to enter into their own separate treaty negotiations. Yekooche is currently in stage five of British Columbia's six stage treaty process. Tl'azt'en Nation is in stage four. My research project originally proposed including Yekooche and Tl'azt'en Nations, the goal being to foster understanding and have the two Nations work together. We held an information session in Yekooche on 5 June 2008. After some initial concerns our meeting seemed to end well. However, an email was soon sent out from the Yekooche Treaty Team requiring my research to cease. Later, Yekooche Nation chose not to officially participate in this research project. However, they granted members permission to participate on an individual level if they chose. While this project is not about land

claims, it is about a traditional site, and therefore was initially perceived as potentially being a contentious issue within the treaty process.

This issue surrounding land came up with each Elder I interviewed. The Elders speak of how Yekooche and Tl'azt'en are related. People from the village of Yekooche have lived in the Tl'azt'en village of Tache and vice versa. My preliminary genealogical research supports this. The issue according to the Elders is the European names given to people at baptism. Some had their first and last names reversed or were given new names. The result is that many people in both Nations are unaware of who they are related to and where they come from. The people of Yekooche and Tl'azt'en are deeply related. Yet today many members of each Nation see themselves as separate because they do not understand the historical relationships as broadly as the Elders. Two of the Elders who supported this project, William Joseph and Alfred Joseph, live in the Village of Yekooche. This is important, because as an Elder stated during a meeting I attended (quoting Sarris), "one party's story is no more the whole story than a cup of water is the river" (Sarris 1993:40).

Institutional

The largest institutional challenge thus far has been around the academic timeline. My research project has not progressed in a typical linear fashion. I was already engaged and doing it before having completed my proposal. The community was pushing for me to begin my work right away, and my thesis committee agreed with the timeline. I completed my Research Ethics Board application in a matter of days in order to begin this work right away. I then had to go back and fill in some of the pieces, an example

being my proposal defense in November 2008, as opposed to being prior to the start of my research. Temporally, conducting research in an Indigenous community can take longer as it has in this case. While the proposed time for a Master's degree is usually two to three years, community research requires building relationships and trust. As Willie Mattess frankly put it, "No, I don't think you want to know everything just right now, just because you're here" (Willie Mattess:26 January 2009). Likewise, Alfred Joseph questioned me at the beginning, "Why should I tell you something that is part of me if you do not believe what I am or who I am?" (Alfred Joseph:5 June 2008).[25] This supports Burgess' findings that access is "negotiated and renegotiated throughout the research process"; it is "based on sets of relationships between the researcher and the researched, established throughout a project" (Burgess 1991:43). It is also necessary to conduct a community verification of results. I have taken the long way around in completing this thesis because it is important to do things well. Many of the Elders cautioned me on taking shortcuts and while they were talking literally about my life, I think it applies to this research as well: "Don't try to go shortcut, walk around, right around, it don't matter if you think you got chance... if you go shortcut, that's your life it's gonna be that short" (Willie Mattess:26 January 2009). Thankfully I have come to this community at the tail end of the UNBC CURA project (2004-2009). This gave me the benefit of established protocols, familiarity with the research process, as well as developed relationships with Elders and community members.

[25] After I established a relationship with Alfred he became a strong supporter of this project.

Geographical

Distance posed another challenge to research. Driving from Prince George to Tache can take anywhere from three to four hours depending on road conditions. On going communication is hindered, and travel can be time consuming and tedious. Email, telephone, and post were incredibly helpful at bridging that gap and staying as in touch as much possible. Having a research assistant working in Fort St. James doing translation required the mailing of interview recordings and transcripts back and forth, which added a delay to the process. Additionally, upon the conclusion of the field research I relocated to Vancouver, which further increased both the distance and disconnect.

Cultural

Cultural understanding and learning has been an important part of this project. One asks a lot of the community in collaborative work. There are labour, social and cultural factors involved. I have come to appreciate while conducting this research that the needs of the community come before any schedule with the researcher. Once I had passed the ethics review, my research was delayed due to the ice breaking late. Because of the late spring, berry season was late the first year, which also delayed the start of my interviews. There were then several deaths in the community during which all work shut down and the people came together in support of each other during these very difficult times. Interviews were cancelled several times due to personal and community events.

Elders also had the opportunity to respond to my interview in *Dakelh* which meant extra time was required for the transcription and translation to English. Research

needs to be not only culturally relevant, it needs to support and enrich the Nation as well. As one Native American leader and academic articulates:

> We, as tribal people, want research and scholarship that preserves, maintains, and restores our traditions and cultural practices. We want to restore our homelands; revitalize our traditional religious practices; regain our health; and cultivate our economic, social and governing systems. Our research can help us maintain our sovereignty and preserve our nationhood (Crazy Bull quoted in Fondahl et al. 2009:3).

Being part of the CURA project has enabled my research to be more culturally appropriate and beneficial than I ever expected. At the same time I have worked hard to do what I was asked when the moment arose, whether it was giving a community member or Elder a ride to or from a meeting or town, attending a last minute meeting, or delivering items between organizations and communities. It has been a privilege to work along side a group of patient and helpful Elders and community members.

3.0 History As A Living Narrative:

In *History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia,* Father A.G. Morice wrote of the period between 1856-62, when the wave of settlement to the region began to affect the Indigenous population. He described it as "the approach of a new era, when a contest would be established between their own forces and those of the incoming civilization which would leave them vanquished, demoralized, and verging on their ruin, both moral and material" (Morice 1971:291). Colonization is a contentious issue: a mistake to some, a triumph to others, wilfully ignored by many. This is not that story, but quite the opposite. This story is about survival—both of a language and a culture, and more specifically, real people. It is the story of community and cooperation, and finally of adaptation to changing circumstance. While this is in part a story of the *Dakelhne*, it is also about the outside forces acting upon them. I utilize the words of the Elders as much as possible that they may tell their own story.

Canada's role as a supplier of resources has shaped the way we think of Canadian history and identity. This is explained in the Staples Thesis presented by Harold A. Innis in 1930:

> The most promising source of early trade was found in the abundance of fish, especially cod... In the interior, trade with the Indians offered the largest returns in... furs and especially beaver... With the disappearance of beaver... lumber became the product which brought the largest returns... The lumber industry has been supplemented by the ... pulp and paper industry... and later minerals—gold, nickel, and other metals—have followed the inroads of machine industry (Innis 2001:384-385).

This concept recapitulates much of Tl'azt'en Nations history with the fur trade, followed by a shift to lumber and mineral exploration.

Rachel Carson wrote in Silent Spring, "The history of life on earth has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings" (Carson 2002:5). In this sense, this thesis is the study of the changing relationships between humans and the environment, often labelled environmental history, which seeks to explain why the past unfolded as it did, and why present society has developed as it has. This view of the past provides guidance and insight for dealing with the environments in which we find ourselves today. The *Dakelh* people (until very recently) maintained a subsistence lifestyle, similar in many ways to their hunter-gatherer ancestors. They were nomadic. As Alfred Joseph recalled,

> Mostly I grew up all over the place anyway, I move around. In them days, in my time a lot of people moved, they used to have campsites there, on-reserve camps, house, log house. That's where we used to stay in the winter but in the summer we all went out making fish, dry meat and stuff like that, that's the way we use to live. That's where all these traditional stuff told by the old people [came from]" (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

Toponomy

Yeko [Cunningham Lake] is located between the east end of *Nado Bun* [Babine Lake] and the west end of *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake] outside of Fort St. James in British Columbia. According to the British Columbia Geographical Names Office, the name Cunningham was adopted on 15 July 1936, having previously appeared on maps created in 1912, 1913, and 1916. The lake is identified as "Little Lake" on A.G. Morice's 1907 map Northern Interior of British Columbia (BCGNIS and Morice 1971). The Hudson Bay Journal records the name as Yokogh, Jokoh, Petit Lac or Little Lake. Hudson (206) notes the following examples from the HBC Journals:

1825: "Two of the Yokogh Indians came in with 990 salmon"
1825: "Pinchi and Yokogh Indians traded 2620 salmon."
1831: "Most of the Yokogh and Pinchee Indians returned to their camps."
(HBCA B.188/a/17, fo. 34)
1834: "Indians at Little Lake of Babine Portage." (HBCA D.4/126, fo. 37d)
1840: "From the Portage Indians we learn they have a good stock of White Fish."
(HBCA B.188/a/19, fo. 13d)

More recently the lake is referred to as *Yeko* by the Tl'azt'enne. It was suggested that this name could be a bastardization by the early fur traders of the *Dakelh* word *'ukoh* meaning creek, due to the old village site[*Yekoozdli*] next to the creek. According to two of the Elders, the oldest known name for Cunningham is *Tadulh,* but it is no longer known what this means (Willie Mattess:26 January 2009, and Catherine Morris:26 January 2009).

According to Justa Monk *Yeko* refers to the western portion of Cunningham Lake and *Yekoozdli* the eastern half (Justa Monk:24 October 2008). Pierre John explains:

> My grandparents must know what *Yeko* means, it's name after something but we don't know—we don't know what is *Yeko*. Our grandparents or their grandparents, maybe they know what's name after—it's name after something but us, we don't know. But *Yekoozdli* is name after *Yeko,* I know that. *Yeko* Lake it goes out of the lake that's why they call it *Yekoozdli, 'ukoh hahon'a*, [river outlet]. *Yeko* water, you see, runs out and then Portage is name after *Yeko*. *Yeko* Lake's creek go down and it come out in Portage that's why they call it *Yekooche. Yekooche too k'oot che, Yeko took'eche whe hutni.* [*Yeko* is the outlet of the lake is what they are saying] *'et Yekoozdli ndi Yeko tizdli 'i be huhoozi* [then Yekoozdli is the outlet of Yeko, this outlet of Yeko is what they named it after] (Pierre John:18 September 2008).

Dli is a suffix meaning outlet of lake. William Joseph adds:

> *Yeko* what you're speaking about *Yeko* and *Yekoozdli* and that's just the first end of *Yekoozdli*, *Yekoozdli* and *Yeko* is just part of it and they call the rest *Tat Tl'oh* [Three Bays]. *Tatl'oh* [Three Bays] is way at the end. They call that *Tatl'oh* [Three Bays] because there's three bays in it. *Ta* means three, there's three bays in there and they call it *Tatl'oh* [Three Bays] so that's the way it is (William Joseph:2 October 2008).

Besides *Yekoozdli* there are three other important locations at *Yeko*: *Tadulh* [also given as a name for the whole lake] located at the narrows, which contains lots of cache pits and a few suspected pit houses, as well as two islands *Noo Tsul* (smaller of the two) and *Noo*

Tsula (between the narrows). Lastly, there is Scooby Island called *Ts'oo Noo* [spruce island] in *Dakelh* (26 June 2008).[26]

Pre Contact

Human inhabitation in this region is ancient. Simon John tells me there are more Culturally Modified Trees (CMT's) in central BC than anywhere else, which he suggests points to some of the highest levels of human population. The high concentration of CMT's is consistent with Norcan's archeological survey that found hundreds of cambium stripped CMTs around Cunningham Lake (Norcan 2000:13). Many Elders shared the story *Nilhts'ik'ani* [The Power of the Wind] (below). It is what I believe to be the oldest story I was told of *Yeko*. It links occupation in the area to time immemorial and was told to me by Elders who wanted to tell the whole story. The Elders' experience with this place goes far beyond their lifetime. The oral history ties them anciently to this place. Pierre John explained:

> Why I'm telling this story, it's not only our nation generation's been living there. There were people there, way, way before our time, maybe thousand, two thousand years. This is fairytale story but it's true story, that's why I just want to tell this part of the story... I know you're thinking just our nation, our generation been living there but not so. There been people there many years—many thousand years—and this is true story too (Pierre John:26 June 2008).

I was told this particular event ushered in the advent of the Potlatch. Justa Monk explained, "how potlatch started long ago is because there was war about land—our land—people were warring about it and there was too much bloodshed and that's when potlatch started. They start putting peace amongst themselves" (Justa Monk:24 October 2008). The potlatch was a means to settle disputes publicly.

[26] A map is not included in order to help preserve these cultural sites.

The Story of *Nilhts'ik'ani* [The Power of the Wind]

Told by Michel Morris and transcribed by his son George Morris

Once the people of *K'uzche* which is now called Grand Rapids came in force to annihilate the people of *Yekoozdli* this end of Cunningham Lake which was called *Yeko*.

They killed all but two infant boys and one old lady that was away, she returned to find everyone dead except for the two babies. She made up her mind to raise these two baby boys to be great medicine men and have them avenge the massacre.

The babies were in cradles; she put an eagle feather in one cradle and a plant called wind arrow in the other cradle. She put one on a hill behind her camp, the hill was called Jumping Owl Hill and the other cradle on Swan Shout Hill, which was a half a mile away. Each night the Old Lady would change them one to the other, when the boys grew older they changed places by themselves, that way they grew to manhood. In the olden days that was the procedure to becoming a Medicine Man.

So one day they said, "Let's try our strengths and make granny younger, She will tell us how our people were killed, then we can avenge them." They took the Old Lady and pulled her under an old stump which was standing by the road side, the roots made it stick up, making a hollow where they pushed her through. When she came out on the other side she was given strength again.[27]

She told them about the massacre and how she found all their people dead, except for them. She told them to go down to Stuart Lake and cross it and showed them where the people that had killed their parents lived.

So they started on their journey, when they got to the lake, the one who had the eagle feathers threw one into the lake, instantly it turned into a canoe. With this canoe they crossed the lake and then went over the mountains to *K'uzche*.

The eagle man made himself into a large eagle and he started to fly back and forth in front of the village. Everyone in the village came outside to watch, including the Head man.[28] All of a sudden Eagle man swooped down and grabbed Head man and started to fly away with him, someone caught his legs and someone else caught his legs until the whole village were hanging on to each other. While that was happening a man called Small Spruce was running around everywhere like he was crazy, in the end he too caught the last man's legs and hung on to the ground. Eagle man flew round and round and heaved up, but Small Spruce hung on and broke all the people free and saved them from being taken away. Eagle man only had Head Man whom he started to pound on the water in front of the village. When he had smashed him up Eagle Man threw Head Man into the river to become a rock which people floating down the river would drift onto. "*K'e ts'eluk 'onle*'" he said. "You will be a rock people will land on."

Now, everybody assembled at the village, one old lady said "Could Wind man sing for us?" She had a log raft tied to her back. She did this because she knew the man's power and thought the weight would save her. The Wind arrow man just moved his head a little and a gust of wind started to sing and dance, a great wind came and blew the whole Village up in the air and away, including the old lady with the logs on her back. This is how the brothers avenged their people of *Yekoozdli*...

[27] According to some of the Elders it was a spruce tree.

[28] Also called *Duneza'* or Nobleman (Willie Mattess 26 January 2009).

Now these two men who had caused such a great havoc said, "Now our work is done, let's go back to granny." They found her beside the road near *Yekoozdli* with blood foaming out of her mouth, she was pulling so hard for them as they did their work. Eagle man and Wind Arrow man took the old lady and pushed her through the magic stump and she became alive and strong again.

(Unpublished Morris Family Document n.d.)

Legends such as this one were often very long, and the telling would span three or four evenings (Willie Mattess:26 January 2009). Some of the Elders told *Nilhts'ik'ani* about *Bisk'i* (Seagull) not *Tsibalyan* (Bald Eagle). When Alfred Joseph told the story to me, the ending was a foretelling of things to come:

> They went back and they form the hatchery, they put that old lady back to life and then they went over, she told them at *Yekoozdli* said 'My time is almost over anyway, now I know you use your power right but' [s]he[29] said, 'this is the only, the one and only revenge you'll ever have'. Said 'from this day on, there'll be no more warfare, don't kill nobody. Hunt, and become traders, there's going to be people coming in, it's going to be thoroughfare—road through here. You become traders from here on, from this day on. From that point on, they, that old lady died and they become traders. That's how Yekooche first came into being, at that time, stayed into being. That's the way I know it, it's a legend (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

According to Pierre John the boys killed the old woman, and the blood coming out of her mouth created the creek at *Yekoozdli*. I am told this water still has a reddish colour in the spring (Pierre John:2 October 2008). William Joseph stated the same, but said the old woman died of exhaustion (William Joseph: unpublished family document n.d.). The Yekoochet'en have adopted the phrase *Nilhts'ik'ani* [The Power of the Wind] as their motto based on this legend. The community remains today because of the Power of the Wind, drawing strength from their past.

[29] There are numerous places throughout this thesis where the Elder's switch back and forth between he and she while telling a story. I am told that this is due to the fact that long ago there was not a distinction between male and female in Dakelh.

There is a large burial ground at *Yekoozdli* but it is no longer known how old it is or why it is there. Pierre remembers his father, Michel Jan, talking about it being older than him (Jan was born in 1901).

Traditional Life of the People (1800s)

The Tl'azt'enne utilized the resources of several watersheds: the head of *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake], the head of *Nado Bun* [Babine Lake] and adjacent river valley, and the *Yeko* [Cunningham Lake] basin, which drains into *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake].The people at *Yeko* also shared the resources of *Nado Bun* [Babine Lake]. The Babine name was derived from a practice of "letting their women wear, from the time of their puberty, a labret or plug of bone or hardwood, perhaps half an inch and more in diameter, between the teeth and the lower lip;" thus the early French fur traders called them Babines, which can be translated as 'Lippy People' (Morice 1971:6-7). Father Morice described the population living near Yeko around 1800 to consist of a few small bands of fisherman subsisting mostly on white fish (Morice 1971:66). Each band was essentially a family unit. Morice's account of small bands of hunter gatherers is consistent with Daniel Williams Harmon's Journal,[30] in which he records traveling through the region and finding one or two small camps of people every day (Harmon 2006:156). As well, an Elder during Hudson's research recalled:

> In most of the villages, everyone comes from one family. For example, in Grand Rapids it used to be the Austin family, Trembleur Lake used to be the Anatole family, and Portage used to [be] Pius and Johnco [Jan Cho now known as John] family (Hudson 183).

[30] Harmon was a fur trader stationed in New Caledonia from 1810 to 1819 serving mostly at Fort St. James. He pioneered agriculture in the region (Dictionary Canadian Biography Online).

Several of the modern day villages are settlements at the fishing grounds of a particular family's territory. Evidently, settlement occurred most often at fish camps due to the fact that resources ranked in importance were fish, game, and berries.

Dakelh subsistence in the summer and fall involved fishing camps to catch salmon. Camps consisted of several families who shared the same fishing location. Berry gathering was also carried out at this time of year. Although the *Dakelh* people were mostly dependant on fishing for their sustenance, hunting played a very important supplemental dietary role. Game was hunted in the winter and spring: caribou, elk, deer, and bear. Ground hog (marmot), beaver, muskrat, lynx, and rabbit were used for furs and food. Cambium from pine trees was also collected as food, especially in the Spring and when food was scarce. Hudson notes that caribou were hunted in small numbers until 1851 when references no longer appear in the journals (Hudson 1983:65).

Fish

As is still the case today, salmon were very important to the people. The importance of fish and its high regard is illustrated in the following cautionary tale told by Pierre John:

> Ya', that's why they say salmon is the worst thing to fool around with or play around with it, never throw it even a lil ways, salmon, meat or anything, bones. Say long time ago, long time ago, this is a fairytale story, they say one orphan girl... [s]he dance around in the smokehouse and [s]he see them salmon backbone... hanging around. That backbone it stuck to her hair... so [s]he take that thing and then [s]he throw that salmon bone out. They say all that salmon what they got hanging up some dry and some, you know, fresh, they got it hang up in the smokehouse. [S]he said they all... come back alive and they went back to the river just because [s]he throw that salmon backbone out. [S]he say why it stuck to her hair while [s]he was dancing, that's why [s]he throw it out, that's what happen and that's a true story too, that one. All that salmon come back alive and went back in the river and then, they say, after it happen that they say they had starvation too. Just because of that. That's what they say; they

> said don't fool around with any kind of Indian food no matter what, don't fool around with it. Always have respect for native food, like Indian food like meat, fish and any kind, all kinds of fish—don't fool around with it—they used to tell us. They tell us this story and why it's danger to fool around with food; they tell us this story and they tell us that's why they don't have to fool around with anything like that (Pierre John:18 September 2008).

When salmon first came up the river their arrival was celebrated: "[a]s soon as one is caught, the Natives always make a feast, to express their joy at the arrival of these fish. The person, who first sees a salmon in the river exclaims, Tâ-loe nas-lay!... (salmon has arrived)... and is uttered with animation, by every person in the village" (Harmon 1957:137). The first salmon ceremony celebrated the arrival of the salmon and was a ritual to encourage a plentiful fishing season, and more importantly, was a means to encourage their return in subsequent years. The first fish caught was eaten by the people, after which the carcass was returned to the water. Salmon was an important resource shared between neighbouring groups. Hudson reasons convincingly, as is shown in the historical documents, that while resources were controlled at the clan level, resources were shared between groups when necessary. The most productive means of catching fish were fish weirs; however their use was limited to only a few locations. Harmon provides a vivid description of a fish weir in operation from his journal, dated 2 September 1811:

> Monday. We now have Salmon in abundance which the Natives take in the following manner: —They make a Dam across the River and at certain places leave spaces, where they put a kind of long Basket Net, which generally is about fifteen feet in circumference & fifteen or twenty in length, one end of which is made like a wire Mouse Trap, & into that the Salmon enter, but when once in cannot go out, till the Basket is taken ashore, when they open a Door made for that purpose & turn them out, and in one of those Baskets they often will take four or five hundred Salmon that will weigh from five to seven pounds each—but the Natives often Spear them as they come up the River, however this way is attended with much more labour for a person must be accustomed to Spear two or three hundred in a Day. Just as they are taken out of the water they are good eating, but when cured as these Indians are wont to do by drying them in the Sun, they are not at all palatable, but the wretched Natives when

> they have a plenty of them appear to be contented & even happy… (Harmon 1957:126-127).

Fish were also caught with nets. Traditionally, fishnets were made one of two ways: Long ago, rabbit guts were used as they were said to be "strong enough to hold fish in the water and stay together" (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008). Many rabbits needed to be killed in order to construct a net, but since they were eaten and their fur was used to make a variety of goods this was not a problem. Nets were also constructed of *K'altai* [inner bark of willow used as cord/rope]. This was an effective net that was still used into the 1900s after twine was available. *K'altai* had to be stored in water as it would fall apart if it dried (Willie Mattess:26 January 2009; Catherine Morris:26 January 2009; William Joseph:2 October 2008).

The fish that were caught were put in the smokehouse:

> [A] smokehouse was built to preserve the fish that we knew would be hauled in. The smokehouse was made from poles set in place to support each other, and birch bark which was twisted and used instead of nails to hold the poles together. The roof was a piece of bark held in place over the top. The fish were cleaned and smoked right there, ready to be brought back to Portage and give us nourishment to see us through the long winter months. Some families lived in their smokehouses, but we never did. Char is a fat fish and it drips a lot of grease on to the smoking logs making it hard to stay in close quarters when it is being dried. But what fish those char were—ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five pounds of firm, delicious meat (Moran 1994:33-34).

Shelter

The *Dakelh* lived for part of the year in pit houses called *yun tl'ah yoh* [underground dwelling] (Justa Monk:24 October 2008). Several of the Elders recalled their great grandparents speaking about them saying that the roofs were made with branches or spruce boughs and they were dug into the ground (Catherine Morris:26

January 2009; Pierre John:2 October 2008). Evidence of such dwellings can still be found around Yeko. Daniel Harmon provides a detailed description from the early 1800s:

> During the winter months many of the Carriers make their dwellings in the earth, in the following manner. They dig a hole in the ground to the depth of about two feet, from the opposite sides of which, they erect two considerable sticks, to support a ridge-pole. They then lay poles from the margin of the hole to the ridge-pole, until they have completely enclosed the dwelling, excepting a hole which is left near the top, which serves the double purpose of a door by which they enter, and leave the hut, upon an upright post, in which, notches are cut; and an opening for the smoke to pass off. The poles are made tight, by stopping the interstices with hay, or by covering them with bark; and dirt is then thrown over them, to a considerable thickness (Harmon 1911:263).

Dai Whuzdli': Starvation Time

Starvation was frequent in the 1800s and the HBC Journals of both Fort St James and Fort Babine are full of references to lack of food. Large game were few during this period and moose did not arrive in the territory until the 1900s (Hudson 1983:166), although I did find one reference to a moose in the 1825 Babine Journal (most likely referring to a moose deer or caribou).[31] The people lived almost exclusively on salmon that is said to have frequently failed (berries and game were largely supplemental). John Stuart, in a letter dated 25 April 1815, writes of New Caledonia that "The salmon failed with us last season. This generally occurs every second year, and completely so every fourth year, at which period the natives starve in every direction. They are of a lazy, indolent disposition,[32] and as a livelihood is rather easily procured, seldom give themselves much trouble in hunting the beaver or any animal of the fur kind. We have no

[31] For a much more thorough description of the arrival of moose see Domenico Santomauro (2009). The Distribution of Woodland Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) and Moose (*Alces alces*) in the Fort St. James Region of Northern British Columbia, 1800-1950. Unpublished Masters Thesis, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Studies, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George.

[32] This description depicts the language of the time and while useful, it reveals the judgemental and Eurocentric attitudes of many fur traders. Comments such as this are largely contradictory with many examples throughout the journals; the *Dakelh* had to work extremely hard in order to survive.

buffalo or deer, except the caribou (reindeer); and not many even of those; so that, properly speaking, we may say that water alone supplies the people of New Caledonia with food" (Morice 1971:95). Harmon made a similar observation regarding the yearly variances of Salmon in 1811: "We have but few Salmon here this year indeed it is only every other Season that they do come plentifully up this River, but what the cause is that they are more plentiful one year than another I am not able to determine (Harmon 1911:151-152).

It seems the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) men were often cynical of the salmon runs after a few years of shortages. The following entries provide a picture of the salmon yields and timing in 1825:

> 30 August 1825
> I learnt also that only one band of Salmon made their appearance in Stuarts Lake—since which time none has been seen—consequently both our people & the Indians in that quarter are starving (HBCA B11 a 3 1825).
>
> 25 September 1825
> The Salmon of this year appear to be much inferior in quality to those of last season—neither have they been so abundant. Consequently a scarcity may be apprehended, should we be obliged to supply the other Establishments as on former occasions (HBCA B11 a 3 1825).

The fact that the Babine Fort supplied others during scarce times, demonstrates the consistent nature of salmon in that water shed. During some years (such as 1825) late runs provided both surprise and relief. This illustrates both the reality of food shortages and the fickle nature of the salmon runs, especially in the *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake] system:[33]

> 8 October 1825
> There are now upwards of 20,000 Salmon in Store—and there is reason to suppose that we may procure as many more so that our apprehensions of a scarcity were rather

[33] While the *Dakelh* were aware of the four year cycle of the salmon, the *Nak'al Bun* system was still inconsistent when compared to *Nado Bun*.

premature (HBCA B11 a 3 1825).

15 October 1825
There are this day in Store 29533 Salmon (HBCA B11 a 3 1825).

2 November 1825
There is every appearance of the Salmon Trade being finished—the quantity traded is 44000—which is a great deal more than was expected at the beginning of the season. The quantity now in Store is 42000... (HBCA B11 a 3 1825).

George Morris' perspective on famine was shaped by a story his father used to tell him. It takes place long ago but was said to have been retold frequently by Elders during the Great Depression about an earlier time when food was scarce. This story speaks to the deep relationship and morality between the availability of food and reciprocity.

Legend About Famine from Michel Morris:

This is a story about how life was in the olden days, when men had to depend on their hunting skills or starve.

There was this couple that left their party to try to make it on their own. As they were wandering around, the man told his wife to make camp and he was going to hunt and kill something to eat. As the woman was digging a place to make camp, she discovered a bear in a den under a fallen stump. She quickly killed the bear and somehow she dressed it and hid it under the spruce boughs she had laid for the floor of their camp. She had put a tee pee like frame and put spruce boughs on the outside to complete the shelter. It was like their house, only it was made out of willows, poles and boughs, with a fireplace in the center to cook, and she prepared a place to sleep also; it was quite large.

In the evening her husband came back empty handed, he had no luck this day. Early the next morning he went out again to hunt. While he was gone, she was feasting on the bear that she had hidden away. This went on day after day, he would go hunting and she would eat while he was gone. Sometimes he would kill a squirrel. This went on all winter, but the wife did not share the bear meat with him. He was getting weaker and still he tried, in the spring he was so weak he could not go to hunt anymore.

His brother-in-law came in the spring to see how they were doing and as he entered their camp he said, "Already my brother-in-law has a bear head hanging, you must have got a bear." It was a custom to cook the bear head and get all the meat off and hang the skull some distance from the camp, the woman must have hung the skull. The man said, "I could not possibly hang a head, I am almost starved." Then the wife said, "There is a bit of meat left, shall I cook it for him?" The man told her, "If you have any, do that, I do not know of any." When she put the cooked meat in front of her brother, he just pushed it aside and took some things out of his pack and made some soup for his brother-in-law. He stayed with them and took care of him with what he had, when his

brother-in-law was strong enough to hunt again, he left them.

The man never said anything to his wife, he just kept hunting, and one day he found and killed a bear in a den. He skinned the bear and took the gall out and spread it all over the fat on the hide. He took the meat and hide back to their camp. He built a big fire and roasted the meat and spread the hide around the fire, holding it open with sticks, as the fat melted it was dripping into containers he placed underneath the hide.

The woman said, "Can I lick the grease?" He said, "Go ahead, you are going to eat it all, that is the only way I will forgive you." She just licked a little bit and told him, "I've had enough." He told her, "I'm going to kill you with this club, if you don't lick it all up." He showed her the big club. She kept on licking the grease until she fell into the grease. He pushed her into the fire and threw all the fat and grease and everything from the camp into the fire and burned her. He went back to his in laws and told them how he had killed her, and he told them, "Do whatever you want with me, that is why I came back to you."

"No!!" said his father-in-law, "You did well, she was no good." His three brother-in-laws said, "You are welcome to stay and hunt with us," so he stayed with them for two winters and hunted with them. One day his brother-in-laws told him, "We know of a good place where there are lots of beavers, come with us and we will kill some, we will leave early in the morning." So they went to bed early and the next morning they were ready to leave, the brothers started leaving and he was going to follow them but his father-in-law called to him and said, "There will only be three survivors from the beaver hunt, what do you want to go with them for?" He thought of it and said, "Then why am I going?" He put away his pack, and his bow and arrows and stayed. The brothers left without him and were gone for a while. They were successful and got a lot of beaver, they put up a feast, and after they had eaten, they told their brother-in-law, "We had made up our minds and were going to avenge our sister, but you took our father's advice and stayed, now we are going to let you go, you will die of your own sickness." So that is how it ended. It was a custom for the widower to stay with the in-laws for some time after the death of the woman, it so happens that if the father-in-law has marriageable daughters for him, he could stay and marry again. In this case, he left.

Since the threat of shortage was constant, the HBC stockpiled resources as a safeguard. In 1841 Peter S Ogden applied to Babine for thirty thousand salmon (Morice 1971:186), which illuminates the vast stores of the HBC and again the consistent, stable nature of the Babine Lake system.

Spiritual Beliefs and Practices

The people of Tl'azt'ten Nation are quite spiritual, and very heavily influenced by Christianity. This spirituality is a part of life, not a separate entity. Life involves the spirit world. Christianity came to the area in the 19th century. Father Demers (in 1842) was the first priest to visit Fort St James. The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a religious order of priests and brothers that originated in France, were given responsibility for the mission of the Catholic Church on the mainland of British Columbia in 1861, and Father Adrien-Gabriel Morice OMI was stationed at *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake] in 1885 (Prince George Diocese). Marriage values changed with the arrival of the priests, who did not approve of the polygamous relationships they found. The following story was shared regarding the arrival of the first priest:

> When Europeans, the priest first came to Fort St James, some of those Indians had three wives, it depends on how good hunter you were. When this priest came, he told them you cannot have three wives, it's against the law, against God's law. This old guy he sat there four days, he loved his wives, he loved the oldest one the most. And ah, three or four days he thought about it, he say 'Okay, I'll be converted to catholic ways, and you, you priest, you choose which wife I should have and we'll get married in the church. All the rest, I'll let them go, just like you said... (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

Traditional medicine was tremendously powerful. Unlike the priests, who saw it as evil, to the *Dakelh* it was neutral—neither good nor evil. Traditional medicine was most often used positively to heal an affliction. Conversely, it could be used to harm others as is illustrated in the following story of revenge:

> So on this traditional medicine, or witch crafting, like anything you... it's got to contain your sweat, like what you wore, dirty clothes, things like that, that's what's needed, eh, in a ceremony like that. Now they could use it for evil purposes or good purposes... Like if you want to get even with somebody, that's why they say *nanye hudotso junih* [don't let them hear you], you know what I mean? You watch your language. Now these two guys [brothers] were... young, they kill somebody in the reserve, eh, Fort St James, there, that traditional trail overlap. That old guy was on the

> [pointing to the side], setting rabbit snares on the side of the road, these two young guys were coming by, said 'oh remember a year ago we kill that young guy, sure scream for mercy. Said 'Yah', said 'we had a lot of fun killing that guy'. They were saying, both talking, that old guy heard them, it was there, his son that they killed, eh. So he ran ahead of them, back to camp and he cook moose meat with *Kanih,* them red berries. Those two they love to eat that stuff, he made soup, stew out of it, those two they ate as much as they can, and half way home they start throwing up. They throw up that stuff and blood eh, and they died on the trail. See, he poisoned them for revenge. This is why they say *nanye 'udotso junih* [don't let them hear you], you know what I mean? You make somebody mad enough to do you in. That's one way to do it. Now you want to know how he killed them, how he poison them? You know moose hair, it's hollow, you cut it up, make really tiny pieces, you cut it up and you can't see it or taste it in the stew. When you eat that you know it screws up your digestive system, it makes you bleed from the inside. You see, now, why would they tell me to do those kinds of things. Why did they tell me that? You know, things like that it makes you think, eh, like a disciplinary procedure to make you a good man. But this is how he did it (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

Father Morice observed many rituals around hunting and its success including the practice of putting the skulls of bears up in a tree, as was described in the preceding legend. However, he was not given a reason for this custom (Morice 1893:108). Hunting bears was entrenched in ritual. As Morice illustrated:

> As soon as a Carrier had made up his mind to try his chances at bear snaring, he separated *a thoro* [from bed] for a full month previous to the setting of his snares. During all that time, he could not drink from the same vessel as his wife, but had to use a special birch bark drinking cup. The second half of the penitential month was employed in preparing his snares. The omission of these observances was believed to cause the escape of the game after it had been snared. To further allure it into the snares he was making, the hunter used to eat the root of a species of heracleum (*tsélép* in Carrier) of which the black bear is said to be especially fond. Sometimes he would chew and squirt it up with water, exclaiming at the same time; *Nyûstluh!* May I snare you! (Morice 1893:107).

Once a hunter had snared an animal it could not "pass a night in its entirety, but must have some limb, hind or fore paws, cut off, as a means of pacifying its fellows irritated by its killing" (Morice 1893:107).

The *Dakelh* people had other formal procedures relative to their spiritual beliefs that were deeply entrenched in hunting and trapping. The fact that survival hinged on the

ability to obtain food necessitated the strict observance of procedures that their experience had shown to work. It had enabled their survival thus far, and maintaining these customs would ensure the survival of future generations. Morice explained:

> Speaking of the meat of snared animals, I cannot help remarking that young women having their menses could not eat of their head, heart or hind part without exposing themselves to a premature death through a kind of rabies which was sure to attack them in after years. This infirmity led them to keep tearing off the flesh of their arms with their teeth. If perchance they were favored with a lucid moment, they improved it by making their confession to the shaman. "When young, I ate of the head, etc., of an animal" they would say. Thereupon the medicine man would suck from the body of the patient what was represented as the tabooed morsel unlawfully swallowed, and forsooth the woman was cured!
>
> The heart even of water-fowls was forbidden to similarly circumstanced young women, who had also to abstain from cutting up the grebes which among the Carriers, are caught each spring in such large numbers. These fowl are full of blood, and their being manipulated by such persons would communicate to the latter either haemorrhage[sic] or unnaturally prolonged menses.
>
> If in the woods with his wife, the hunter would also prefer to see her tear herself up in the bush and thorns, to let her pass in the narrow trail wherein he may have deposited his snares preparatory to setting them. Should she as much as step over without touching them, her mate would certainly consider any further attempt at capturing game as futile and useless.
>
> If the Carrier was to use traps instead of snares, the observances preparatory to setting them varied somewhat. When martens were the intended game, the period of abstinence from sexual intercourse[34] was shortened to ten days or thereabouts, during which the trapper slept by the fireside pressing down a little stick over his neck. This, of course, could not fail to cause the fall-stick of his traps to drop on the neck of the coveted game! The chewing and squirting up the heracleum root were observed in this as in the former case. The deprecatory formula was merely changed into *Nyûskuh!* May I entrap you!
>
> When successful, the trapper had to be very careful that no dog touches his prey, which, to avert such a misfortune, he had to hang up a peg in the lodge as soon as this was practicable. Contact with a dog would certainly indispose the game's fellow martens against the traps of the hunter responsible for such a slight.
>
> No superstitious practice appears to have been followed as a preparation to beaver hunting, save that to ensure a larger catch, one-half of each trap was daubed with red

[34] None of the Elder's can recall being taught to abstain as described by Morice. As such, this practice was either not passed down to them, or was practiced by one of the Tl'azt'en neighbours.

> ochre. But nobody who does not care to condemn himself to useless efforts at securing any further supply of the game must be unguarded enough to swallow the little patella bone of the beaver. In like manner, if after having captured a beaver, a Carrier has the carelessness to let one of his dogs get at that bone, he may as well resign himself to return home empty handed. During the whole beaver trapping season, his first capture will infallibly be his last (Morice 1893:107-108).

Beyond these customs I was also warned: "*be'duzilhghi ... junih*" [don't eat what is killed]. One is forbidden from eating a dead animal that was not killed by a human, whether through natural causes; or by another animal, no matter how hungry you are. You must leave it. "Now, that's unwritten law... It just comes natural to live what we know and learn, we survive this long" (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

Fur Trade

The fur trade would prove to be a life altering force amongst the *Dakelh*. Not only did it generate resource depletion, it ushered in a profound shift in the way of life of the people. This section is comprised mostly of information gleaned from the Hudson's Bay Company Journals. At the start of the 1800s, trading posts had not yet been established in the Pacific coast drainage basin, although voyages to this region by Captain James Cook showed its potential. After the HBC (then the North West Company) amalgamated with the XY Company[35] in 1804, new trade territories were required due to the large number of partners. Additional pressure came from the Lewis and Clark expedition, which revealed the possibility of American expansion. Trade expanded in the northwest from the Peace River district down the Finlay River. In 1805, Simon Fraser established Fort McLeod on McLeod Lake, and in 1806, posts were built on *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake] (Fort St James) and Fraser Lake (Fort Fraser). Fort George was established in 1807 at the

[35] A company formed by former employees of the North West Company known by the XY markings on their bales of fur.

confluence of the Nechako and Fraser Rivers. The establishment of four forts in three years within the same region shows just how rapidly the fur trade developed in northern British Columbia. The HBC and North West Company merged on 26 March 1821, continuing operations under the HBC banner. In 1822, Fort Kilmaurs was erected on the northern bank of *Nado Bun* [Lake Babine] near the village now known as Old Fort (Morice 1971:125). Fort Kilmaurs was developed in part to provide the HBC with access to Babine salmon as the Fraser River run was almost a complete failure in 1822 (HBCA b.188/b/2 Letter from Stuart to McIntosh, 5 January 1823).

In 1836, Fort Kilmaurs was moved to the northern end of *Nado Bun* [Babine Lake] to attract the trade of Babine Indians who were going elsewhere (trading with the Tsimshian from the coast or during yearly trade gatherings at Hagwilget that attracted thousands of people from most of the northwest nations). The 1825 Journal illustrates this:

> [The Indians] are particularly troublesome—they complain bitterly of the trouble of working the Beaver—of the distance they have to bring it—and, after all, of not being able to procure their necessaries for it. Some say they will hunt no longer since they are so poorly encouraged—and others—that for the future they will traffic with the Indians of the Sea Coast who, they [maintain], have abundance of Leather + other Goods much better and cheaper than ours (HBCA B11/a/3 1825).

Additionally, the move brought the fort closer to the salmon fishery. It was renamed Fort Babine. At the time the village at Fort Kilmaurs (now known as Old Fort) contained one hundred and fifty people (Morice 1971:209 and 195). Fort Babine was described in the 1891 Report as "[s]ituated on the eastern shore of the river immediately at the outlet of Babine Lake, and adjoining the Indian Village of Babineville.[36] The position is central for

[36] Known as *Wit'at* to the Babine.

the trade of the surrounding country and beside one of the best Salmon fisheries in the country" (HBCA B11/e/4 1891).

Importance of Yeko during the Fur Trade

William Brown wrote in his District Report (from 1822-1823) how trade occurred prior to the establishment of a fort on *Nado Bun* [Lake Babine]: "[T]he greatest part of the Babines of the Lake traded their Furs with the Indians of the Portage [Yeko], and Fond [d]u Lac of Nakaselay[sic] unless when people came from St James in the winter to trade with them" (HBCA B11/e/1 fo 1). The North West Company had only extended its reach as far as Fort St. James. As Arthur Ray argued:

> This gave the Stuart Lake Carrier a chance to establish their own trading networks in that quarter. They seized the opportunity and by 1820 the Stuart Lake Carrier were preventing the Babine and Wet'suwet'en from crossing the portage between Stuart and Babine Lakes for the purpose of trading at Fort St. James, rather the Stuart Lake Carrier made trading trips to the Babine. Besides carrying the Hudson's Bay Company goes [sic goods] to them, the Stuart Lake Carrier took deer and moose hides, venison and furs for the purpose of trading and gambling (No. 0843 Smithers Registry March 23 1989 Vol 205:13602).

The development of a fort on Babine profoundly impacted *Yeko,* as its inhabitants were no longer trading middlemen. The Babines could now trade directly with the Company. Trading expeditions over the Portage were a normal occurrence showing ties between the communities. As illustrated by Ray's testimony as well as numerous cases within the HBC Journals, a common social activity when these groups got together was gambling. The following example illustrates this:

> 6 June 1825
> At an early hour Mr. Ross, Vandal, and Fanny/the latter to act as Interpreter/started to visit the Indians along the North side of the Lake towards the Portage—and see that none of the St. James are there to engage them at play so as to prevent them from hunting and at the same time most probably to strip them of the few furs they may have as they did last fall (HBCA B11/a/3 1825).

The negative reaction (of Brown) towards gambling from Fort Kilmaurs was due to the fact that gambling provided distraction from hunting; primarily, Brown did not want the furs to go with the Fort St. James Indians[37] back to that Fort for trade.

Hudson noted the earliest detailed report on the village at *Yeko* appeared in 1824: "The fifth and last village of residence is Lqoqoh, situated nigh the Babine lake about 70 miles from this place (Fort St. James) and contains 6 married men, 6 married women, 2 widows, 3 young or marriageable men and 8 infants" (Hudson:unpublished community document n.d.).

Whitefish were an important source of food, second only to salmon. However, whitefish were essential during years the salmon failed as a hedge against starvation. Harmon discussed the catching of Whitefish:

> 16 June 1811
> Sunday. Our Indians who about the middle of April (as I am informed they are wont to do every year about that Season) left their Village to go and live upon fish that they take out of the small Lakes [like *Yeko*] no great distance from this now begin to come in as they say the season has arrived that they cannot take fish at those places. Therefore they are going to other Lakes to fish. The Nets they make use of are made of the inner Bark of the Willow Tree or Nettles which answer full as well for fishing as those we have made of Twine or Thread. A number of Indians arrived from the other end of this Lake Six Canoes and among them were two the father and Son belonging to a Tribe who call themselves [Nataotens],[38] and are the first of that nation ever saw here (Harmon 1957:124-125).

This again illustrates people from around *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake] fishing with those from Babine. The fact that this was the first time Harmon had met a Babine suggests those living at *Yeko* were true middlemen controlling the trade at Babine with goods from Fort St. James. Later this same year Harmon recorded fisherman catching 7000 whitefish in nine nets (Ibid 131). This hints at the abundance of these fish as a resource. The year

[37] Indian is used here when talking historically as it was the term used at the time.
[38] Nataotens were those from Lake Babine

1815 was particularly bad for salmon. Harmon observed needing to purchase salmon from many neighbouring areas for sustenance as well as whitefish again allowing the region to endure hardship (Ibid 157). Whitefish were clearly important to the *Dakelh* people, and were also valuable to the Hudson's Bay Company, which was trying to operate effectively in the region. The HBC initially built a fishery at Beaver Creek, although returns were very inconsistent. The original fishery was not sufficient for their needs as demonstrated by the poor catch over two days (shown below). James Douglas who became a clerk at *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake], was given the task of creating a second fishery in the region at Yeko in 1827, where fish were known to be abundant. Morice quoted this event from the Journals:

> Saturday, 10th November, 1827. Received from the [old] fishery fifty-nine whitefish, the produce of two nights. Clermont brought over the greater part of the nets… Tomorrow Mr. Douglas, with two fishermen, Bichon and Clermont, and two men to assist them, will proceed to Yokogh to establish the fishery there. This gentleman will not only superintend the fishery, but will also collect the fish which the Indians may have to dispose of immediately, for which purpose he is provided with leather and other articles of trade.
>
> Sunday, 11th. Mr. Douglas, with five men, set out for the fishery of Yokogh. They are well provided with nets, having eight of small thread, three of willow, and four of Holland twine… Most of the dogs are also sent to the fishery.
>
> Wednesday, 14th. Vadeboncoeur came from the fishery and informed me that these two days back they had not taken a sufficiency for their consumption. I ordered them to come across tomorrow to prepare to go and join Mr. Douglas at the other fishery [*Yeko*] (Morice 1971:131-132).

As revealed above, the HBC moved their fishing operations to *Yeko* in order to capitalize on the abundance of fish. *Yeko* was known to be highly productive for some time, as noted two years earlier on 20 July 1825, "Received from Mr. Gale 800 small fish traded by him from the Indians of the Portage" (HBCA B11/a/3 1825). Later, two years after the establishment of the fishery, the wealth of fish found in that lake was still obvious:

> In the small River issuing from the Lake of Yokugh the Salmon are so numerous that almost any quantity could be killed with no other implement than a sharpened stick (HBCA B188/a/14 1829).

Another example Hudson quoted was HBC men returning to Fort St James from *Yeko* with 12,000 whitefish: "Several Fraser lake Indians were there... it being the only place where they can get any fish to save themselves from famine" (17 December 1831, HBCA B 188/a/17 fo 33, quoted in Hudson 207). This example also illustrates the importance of *Yeko* to the entire region, since it drew people from Fraser Lake. The fish caught at *Yeko* were not just consumed by the people who lived there and by the HBC populace; they fed other nations. Some years later, Horetzky provided a detailed picture of the fishing he happened upon at *Yeko*:

> [W]e came upon a large camp of Indians who were catching the finest trout and whitefish I ever saw. They had thousands of them hung up on poles to dry. Their encampment was the perfect picture. What with the primitive and open lodges, the long rows of fish in the successive stages of desiccation, the half naked children sprawling about in the snow, the dogs too fat and lazy to move, and the numerous dugouts or canoes hauled up on the beach. This lake was encircled by high hills, and the portion of it which we had just come over, was hard and fast for the winter; while just here it was perfectly open and free from ice. We camped here for the purpose of getting one of those Indians to guide us to "Gus Wright's trail," which I was desirous of reaching by a short-cut over the mountains (Horetzky 1874:86-87, based on observations in December, 1872).

The Portage Between *Nak'al Bun* and *Nado Bun*

Yeko was incredibly important to the HBC not only for the fishery established there in 1827, but as a thoroughfare between Stuart and Babine Lakes for transporting trade goods, as well as the salmon and furs that were received as payment. An important part of the history of this place was the construction of a wagon road for transportation from *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake] to *Nado Bun* [Babine Lake] that passed by *Yeko*. The road was constructed in the 1820s for hauling salmon from *Nado Bun* [Babine Lake] to Fort

St. James in order to reduce dependence on the *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake] salmon. As was mentioned earlier, that run was prone to failure. Father Morice described this road: "After a number of years only, ten miles of such public highway were built by the traders of the H.B.Co. between lakes Babine and Stuart, to cart the pelts and dried salmon from the post on the former to that of Fort St. James, on the latter" (Morice 1930:41). Notably absent from this description is the involvement of aboriginal labour during the construction of the road, as is suggested by the historical record. The following account is reproduced from October of the 1822 Babine Journal. It notes the journey of William Brown and other employees out to establish Fort Kilmaurs, and the travel through Portage and Yeko as well as the interaction with its inhabitants. This narrative is reproduced here in order to provide a glimpse of what travel, trade, and the geography were really like. On the second day of the voyage, as they arrived at the portage to *Yeko,* travel was extremely arduous. The journal entry for that day illustrates how daunting travel was prior to the road:

> 14 October 1822:
> Weather clear and cold. Renewed our Voyage at 2 am, at Daybreak were within half a mile of the Entrance of the River... There we found very little ice but the water so shallow, that after carrying part of the cargo perhaps a mile and dragging the canoes were under the necessity of taking out half of the cargo and even then we found a great deal of difficulty and wood to cut before we were able to haul the canoes up with the remainder. On reaching the end of the Portage procured wooden canoes from the Indians and sent down for the cargo left below, but it was after day set before the last man got to the Encampment though the river is not above two miles and a half in length. Was it perfectly cleared of wind fallen wood and damned in three or four places it would be navigable this distance and perhaps further, but it would cost a good deal of labour.

Because of the slow progress over such a short distance, it is clear to Brown that improvements must be made. The entry for the next day conveys the condition of the Portage:

15 October 1822:
Weather still clear and pleasant. In the morning managed 15 male and female Indians with straps and part with shoes to assist us to carry on the portage. Commenced carrying at sun rise and it was nearly sunset when the last of our people reached the Little Lake [Yeko]. The distance I calculate to be about 4 Miles, and the road would be good if well cleaned—But at present it is so entangled with wind fallen wood that it forces the people greatly to pay with their loads. And we have a great deal to carry owing to us having so much provisions...

Following the description of the Portage, Brown depicted the interaction between the Company men and the Indians. They traded supplies and hired some of the Indians[39] to carry goods (which was common to do) as well as clear a road:

Found a few Indians at the small lake [Yeko]—who have a great many of the smallest kind of Whitefish which are common in most of the lakes of New Caledonia. Trade from them a sufficiency for the Men's supper and breakfast. Spoke to them for a considerable time in advising them to be industrious and lay up a considerable stock of provisions of every kind, which either us or the people of St. James will trade from them in the course of the winter. Also to impress upon their men the advantages they will derive from being kind to any of our people who may pass this way. Gave them to understand that I would pay them handsomely if they should clear the track all between this and the place where we debarked in the small River. This they promise to do.

Later in this same journal entry, Brown provides us with a notable incident between the Indians and the traders, illustrating the cunning nature of the Indigenous population as well as the delicate nature of the trade relationship at times:

Sometime after we had gone to bed we were alarmed by the barking of the Dogs and bawling of the Indians. Ran out with our arms when it appears from their account "That some Indians were approaching the baggage to steal. Whom they suspect had followed us from Tachy [On Stuart Lake] for that purpose. That the blame might fall upon those whom we had employed to clear upon the Portage [Those from Yeko]." A short time after we again heard a rustling move amongst the leafs and willows, Approached the place and fired. But nothing appearing we returned to the Camp and placed two men on watch in the branches behind with orders that if any person approached the Baggage to endeavour to lay hold of them but if this could not be effected to fire. It being necessary to adopt strict measures in the extent for if the Indians succeed in stealing this year they will make it a point to attempt it as often as we pass here.

That evening there was no further incident although this illustrates the mentality of the traders as well as the system of justice on the frontier. Life was cheap, especially that of the *Dakelh*. The next two days were spent clearing a path to carry the canoes:

> 16 October 1822:
> ...Waccan[40] also took his departure with two men and 8 Indians to clear part of the track on the other side of Little Lake [Yeko]. This they did to the top of the hill on this side of the height of land. I walked about half of the portage to ascertain the best place for opening the road to avoid the Hills and the other impediments. When I was sorry to find there was a great deal more wood to cut than what I was to suppose from the view that I had of it last winter. The most of what is lying down was then covered with snow. The Indians have nearly furnished us with a sufficiency of small fish which they took in great numbers in their [?]

This work continued for a couple of more days. Clearing was again difficult and slow to complete. The new road deviated from the "Indian path" (under Brown's direction) in order to avoid a section of hills. This would make travel easier for carrying goods as well as for pack trains. Eventually the road neared completion:

> 20 October 1822:
> At day break sent off Waccan with ten men and ten Indians to clear the road from our encampment to the lake which may be a distance of three miles. A short time after joined them myself and [?] till the whole was [completed] which was about 4 P.M. This Portage has cost a great deal of labour and some expenses, but there are not a portage hence seen in the countries of any thing near the same length which is as well cleared as it is from the Little Lake to the Babine Lake (HBCA B11/a/1 1822).

This road would simplify transport and eventually reduce the price paid for salmon.

During the fur trade beaver skins, or made beaver, were the standard currency to which the price of all other goods was relative. The price was not a fixed amount but

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[40] Waccan or Jean Baptiste Boucher was the interpreter at Fort St. James. He comes up frequently in Journal entries and seems to have been well respected by both "Indians" and "Whites." Waccan was a French-Cree half-breed who arrived at Stuart Lake in 1806 with Simon Fraser. He is credited as the first non aboriginal (half-breed at the time was considered non aboriginal) to take a Dakelh wife (although the union was short lived). Morice describes Waccan as "the Company's gendarme and chief executioner in New Caledonia; he was the official avenger of the killed, the policeman who was dispatched to the villages in order to stir up the natives and send them hunting, or to put a stop to the endless gambling parties, which prevented them exerting themselves on behalf of the white traders" (Morice 1971:253). Waccan lived in the area until his death in 1850.

varied from approximately 25 to 50 cents (Innis 318-319). Peter Skene Ogden notes this sometime around 1835:

> Salmon are bartered at the rate of 90 for one Beaver and are paid for in the most valuable goods the Carriers know too well their own interest to take any other, formerly at this place 60 were equal to a skin as an inducement to them to track more and to save transportation in the winter with dogs no doubt then a good plan but as the cause no longer exists as the introduction of Carts in the Babine Portage and Boats have removed it consequently the facility of transport being so great and finding we can obtain our [supplies] independent of them, they now willingly when [they have] any to dispose of part with them at 90 per made Beaver, at Frasers Lake, the West end of this Lake and the Babine Posts the tariff is the same, a difference in a tariff when the Natives are constantly in the habit of meeting causes discontent and this also was another cause of my altering it here, these in regard to Traps and Salmon are the only changes (Ogden 1937:49-50).

This road would have a profound effect on the region as will be shown through increased trade, and as a vital transportation route.

Trade Goods

The *Dakelh* were very astute and skilled traders as evidenced in the HBC Journals. They demanded high quality goods and were highly practical in their selections. If a fort did not possess what they were looking for they would not settle for other goods but would travel several days to a neighboring fort. Additionally, the *Dakelh* monitored prices between forts to ensure they were getting the best deal. Discussion of the quality of trade goods was frequent at times. A good example is Steel traps that were traded to many trappers in 1825:

> 6 June 1825
> Penunsun and his brother ascribe their doing nothing to the badness of the Steel traps I gave them in the Spring—and I am sorry to find that every one who has received these traps (at least whom I have seen complain of them) it would seem the jaws are too high and the Springs too weak. These reports will prevent us from selling any more of them (HBCA B11/a/3 1825).

> 9 July 1825
> Arrived Cahelle from his hunting ground near the Portage. Received from him 8 Large & 5 sm. Beaver and 2 [?]. We had looked for greater things from this Indian as being one of our best hunters. The reason given he gives for his want of [?] is the insufficiency of the steel traps which he got from us in the Spring. There is indeed a general complaint against the traps that came in last fall. They are certainly bad (HBCA B11/a/3 1825).

Clearly the Indians had a vested interest in the quality of goods as it affected both their ability to earn wages for furs as well as procure food.

One of the most prominent trade goods, leather, was scarce in the region—as was noted by Peter Skene Ogden (Ogden 1937:49). It was in high demand from the *Dakelh* people for both clothing and funeral ceremony, since moose and their hides had not yet entered the region. This was discussed by Arthur J. Ray during his testimony for *Delgamuukw*. Here is the Examination on 21 March 1989 quoting pg. 51 of Ray's report:

> Beginning in a weak bargaining position, the Hudson's Bay Company needed to find a commodity it could bring into the area that was either unavailable to the coast Tsimshian or prohibitively expensive for them to acquire. This item proved to be leather, particularly high quality moose hides. The Hudson's Bay Company obtained these hides from trading districts located east of the Rocky Mountains, particularly the Athabasca-MacKenzie area. (No. 0843 Smithers Registry:21 March 1989)

Ray went on to explain that different groups had vastly different uses for the leather. The Babine and Wet'suwet'en to the west [two closely related groups] desired high quality leather for funeral ceremonies, whereas the *Dakelh* used leather mainly for clothing. Thus, there was high value on it being imported by the HBC due to lack of availability locally (Ibid 13630). This is shown clearly in the Journals:

> 19 June 1825
> Our Indians grumble hard at the scarcity of Leather and we find it a very difficult task to satisfy them without it—for leather being their principal demand, they are not fond of giving their furs in exchange for articles they have no use for or do not immediately want (HBCA B11/a/3 1825).

A few days later a group left Fort Babine for Fort St. James to trade for cloth due to the

lack of leather in the region (HBCA B11/a/3 1825). The frustration of another trader later that summer is unmistakable, as is his tenacity:

> 12 July 1825
> Hou-chete-ta-kie came here to day with a quantity of Beaver which he wished to barter for Leather but finding he could obtain none he bundled up his furs & marched off with them in high decision." HBCA B11/a/3 1825

Morice quoted the Journal of 5 November 1827 describing a shipment of leather:

> This morning Waccan, accompanied by five men, left this place in a large canoe for the Babine Portage; they have, as load, leather intended for the Babine country. The object of sending Waccan is to prevent any waste of salmon whilst the people are carrying it across the portage... (Morice 254).

This quote illustrates the high demand for leather given that it is the sole good described, while at the same time illustrating the command that Waccan had over employees.

The records indicate women also went to the forts to trade. Trading was not limited only to men:

> 3 August 1825
> Arrived some Indian women from below = received from them a quantity of Berries & 200 dry salmon. They inform us that the Large Salmon have already made their appearance below & that the Indians kill numbers of them—& they suppose the small Salmon are at no great distance—for they have already killed one. It is to be hoped this news may be true—for we would now have no objection to feast on fresh instead of dry Salmon (HBCA B11/a/3 1825).

> 16 October 1825
> Chilclues wife brought 20 Ps Pine Bark—gave her in Debt 15 M Strands (HBCA B11/a/3 1825).

As is implied by the latter example, bark was often traded by the *Dakelh*, as were dogs and medicine (HBCA B11/a/3 1825).

Beyond strictly trading, the HBC also lent items to hunters with good rapport to encourage greater returns:

> 1 November 1825
> After a good deal of trouble I got Sun-nec-ah off for the Small Lake—I was obliged

to [lend him] a wooden Canoe & a Net to work Whitefish (HBCA B11/a/3 1825).

While relations were mostly cooperative, there are examples throughout the journals that do shed light on some conflict, showing that tension between neighbouring groups is old. Morice quoted a letter from Peter Warren Dease, dated July 1831, that describes a party of six Babines arriving at the portage between Babine and *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake] to kill some of the Indians there. They stabbed one man and then were appeased with gifts. Dease commented at the end that "On hearing this it gave me satisfaction, for had they succeeded in their horrid intentions it would have prevented many from hunting"[41] (Morice 1971:165-166). *Yeko* remained strategic even after Fort Babine was built. However, its prominence would be preserved as a transportation route both over-land and on water, and continue as a productive fishing locale.

> 30 October 1825
> Gave Sunecah the [?] laid up for him; he is going to join his father who left this a few days ago. I am apprehensive they will not go to the small Lake where they generally work the W[hite] fish on account of the murder committed by that camp [?] at Frasers Lake—they are to remain about Tatchy [on Babine]—No Whitefish can be expected from that party nor do I think their fall hunts will be so good as if they had gone to the Small Lake (HBCA B11/a/3 1825).

The above quote shows how lucrative Yeko was as a hunting and fishing ground, and relates the conflict that did occur at times between groups [this time from Fraser Lake]. Additionally, it confirms that Babines did go to *Yeko* for fish, something Hudson was unable to demonstrate.[42]

Because of the increase in trade, warehouses were built in 1887 to house goods on both ends of the portage. This was due to an increase in traffic once the HBC began transporting goods to Hazelton by paddle wheeler—up the Skeena River from the Pacific

[41] Clearly this illustrates the self interest of the HBC employees.
[42] Hudson did not examine the Fort Babine Journals, only Fort St. James.

Coast—then moving them to Fort St. James via *Nado Bun* [Babine Lake] and subsequently across *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake]:

> Warehouse at S.E. end of Portage between Stuart and Babine Lakes for storing goods in transit; log, with shake roof; built in 1887; cost $225.00 (HBCA B188/e/7 1891).
>
> Warehouse at N.W. end of Portage; log and bark roof; built in 1887; cost $60.00. The water being too shallow for the boat toget[sic] close to the shore with a cargo, a new store was being built, and the road extended about 300 yards along the Lake shore where the water is much deeper. The building was to be 26x20; log, with shake roof. The work was being done by Servants employed on the Portage as time permitted (HBCA B188/e/7 1891).

Goods were freighted by a boat on each lake:

> The freight is carried from Babine Post to the Eastern end of the Lake, about 100 miles, by an open boat with a capacity of about 15,000 lbs., manned by from 7 to 9 men; thence across the Portage by wagon to Stuart's Lake, 8 miles. From the [Western end] of Stuart's Lake to the Post at the Eastern end, about 50 miles; it is carried on board a decked boat of about 25,000 lbs capacity, manned by 5 men. Last year it was suggested that in replacing the boats which are rotten and unsafe for further service, two decked centreboard boats of about 15 tons capacity each should be build, which, with two masts and fore and aft rig, could be handled by two men. The capacity of each being [?] equal to two trips of the pack-train would allow the same men to make the round trip with both boats and reduce the cost of Lake transport very considerably (HBCA B188/e/7 1891).

Work on the boats and pack trains provided employment to *Dakelh* men.

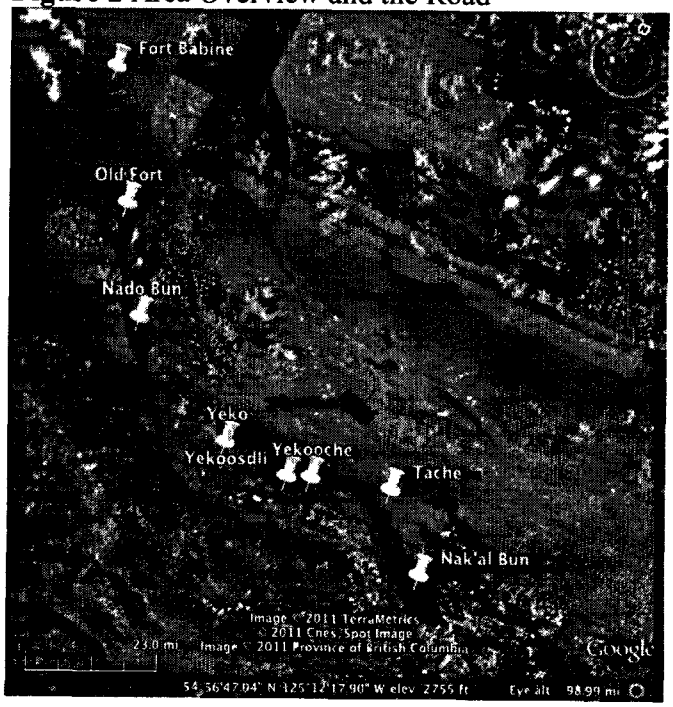
The fur trade continued on into the 1900s where it began slowly declining. Some people were able to continue employment with the HBC transporting goods. The HBC also kept horses in the area. The 1891 report notes that five horses were used for work on Babine Portage (HBCA B188/e/7 fo 7). Donald Todd worked for the HBC: "Laborer; 25 years of age; 3 years service; was reengaged on 1st June, 1890, for 3 years; wages $40 (HBCA B188/e/7 1891). "D. Todd and J. Bull got here with the horses from the Portage" (19 Sept 1896, HBCA B188/a/23 fo 56d).

The fur trade and subsequent contact with Europeans helped usher in many gradual changes in customs and way of life, most notably through the arrival of missionaries to the region. Printed in 1895, the following describes the condition of the *Dakelh* people (part of a glowing review of the person and work of Father Morice): "Of course, their manner of life is not that of the civilized man, for their employment remains unchanged, and they still hunt and fish like other Indians; but they have been given many of the advantages of civilization, and none of its evils" (Somerset 1895:227-228).

Evidence and remnants of the fur trade can still be found out in the bush. Alfred Joseph remembers one such example from when he was a teenager:

> Up a certain river from Babine, certain river, three days walk up, up that river, I been up there when I was 16-17 years old. I been up there and I been to every camp, and when at that time, that must have been in the fifties, ah, those traps were hung on a limb. Traps, about 30 traps in a bundle, they hang it there my dad. It was up, forty feet up the tree, when I was there. [inaudible] that's their traps, that's how long we never been here, he told me, you know. That's a long time (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

Figure 2 Area Overview and the Road



A Shift in Settlement: The Story of Adam and Rosa

Settlement shifted from *Yeko* to the present site of Portage sometime around the 1880s (Hudson 1983:206). I was told at the beginning of this project that the Tl'azt'tenne were relocated from seasonal areas by the missionaries, so that they would be easier to "work with;" however, while this was the case with permanent settlement in Tache with the advent of residential school, this is not supported by the historical evidence for Portage. As the story goes, Adam[43] was the first person to move from *Yekoozdli* to Portage with Rosa, a woman he took as a wife:

> Adam was the first man to be here in Yekooche. He built a smoke house right near the bridge. All the people from elsewhere come and land there, like from Fort St. James, and Tachie. They leave their canoes or whatever they are using in the creek and start walking, packing their belongings with them to head for Babine Lake to make their salmon. For winter supplies, like dry salmon, dry meat, and berries; everything they need for the winter they make it while they are across there. After they are finished there, by wagon they bring their canoe or boat with all the supplies for the winter and load on the wagon and come back here. They then go back on their journey to Fort St. James or Tachie. They didn't use boat motors, they had to paddle all the way. I got this story from my grandfather and grandmother...my father told—lately people start coming in and started to clear land for where they are going to put log buildings, the people keep coming and build their log houses and that's how this became a village or reserve (William Joseph:unpublished community document n.d.).

This is considered to be a love story in that Adam and Rosa got together and moved to Portage (Agnes Joseph:8,9,11 March 1999 TUS#41).

After Adam, others moved to Portage:

> Jan Cho they call him, he's the first guy to build house [Adam built a smoke house]. They get married in Fort, Jan Cho is from north, they get married in Fort then they stay in Fort for one year then they move to Portage and the first man to build two-story high log building. Then next Pius next to him where Willyam Joseph[44] got house now that's where he build log house. Then the next one Basil they call him, there's some of his grandchildren they're still around yet, him, he build house there and he give it to his son Zaa Basil. Zaa Basil, he sold that house to *Dogun*, [Duncan]

[43] None of the Elders were able to tell me who Adam was.
[44] Willyam is the *Dakelh* pronunciation of William.

> my brother-in-law, that's where he raise up his kids in there. Just three houses in Portage (Willie Mattess:26 January 2009).

Soon the population base shifted down the creek from Yeko to Portage on *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake]. While the Cunningham Lake fishery remained important, the population began to shift in the late 1800s to a location at the outlet of the creek draining the lake, near the wagon road crossing from *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake] to *Nado Bun* [Babine Lake]. This fact sets Portage (Yekooche) apart from all of the other Tl'azt'en villages which lie along the migration route of sockeye salmon, "which hugs the north shore of Stuart Lake, and passes up the Tachie River" (Hudson 169). Villages were practically located close to primary resources. This reiterates the importance of salmon as a food source while presenting the praxis of location. Additionally, this suggests as well how much colonization could substantially change people's settlement behaviour. For the first time *Dakelh* in the region were locating off of a salmon route. However, due to the fact that the road was an important trade route it can be concluded that movement shifted from one source of goods (or resource) to another. Thus, the choice of a new location was not so much a departure from tradition; it was merely a modern reiteration of the same settlement pattern.

Farming

Farming was brought to the area by the Hudson's Bay Company in order to grow food for their employees. The HBC Journal indicates that in this region barley was a never failing crop, oats were successful occasionally, and the following vegetables grew very well: potatoes, turnips, onions, and carrots (HBCA B1/188/e fo 7). In 1825 the HBC

maintained a meadow at *Yeko*, using the cut grass as feed (HBCA B11/a/3).[45] Farming was adopted early on by the *Dakelh*.[46] George M Dawson describes the settlement and the adoption of agriculture by the aboriginal population on 4 July 1879:

> An Indian on the portage between the two lakes cultivates a little patch of land, and though very poorly attended to, he had a fine looking crop of potatoes and a little field of barley—the latter about three feet high with the ear just appearing—at the date of our visit [July 4th]. He also keeps some cattle here, cutting hay for them in swamps about the river mouth (Dawson 1881:29b).

Hudson cites Gordon who made a similar observation a day prior on July 3, 1879:

> A wagon-road, fit for ox carts, connects the two lakes, and the country on either side affords good pasture. We were surprised to find, at the head of Steward (Stuart) Lake, a well-stocked farm, owned and worked by the Indian 'tyhee', or chief, who raised excellent cattle, as well as good crops of hay and vegetables, lives in a cottage, and wears an air of respectability (Gordon 1880:117 cited in Hudson 207).

1900s

Seasonal rounds, followed by a gradual shift to wage labour, predominantly characterized the early portion of the twentieth century. In 1908, a fish hatchery was built along the creek that drains into *Yeko,* which provided a new source of wage labour for some of the villagers until it closed in 1930. Hudson states this encouraged *Dakelh* to move to Portage from elsewhere (Hudson 209). Beyond offering a few people employment, I was told the hatchery purchased fish eggs from the *Dakelhne:*

> Fish eggs they put it in creek, they dig a hole and they put fish eggs in there, salmon eggs, they keep it cold. In 1920 when fisheries they used to buy the fish eggs back they buy enough and what was left they put it in creek. Right today they're still buried yet there from 1920, they're still fresh yet, right today, we leave them like that. I don't know why we do it but it's there yet in one of them creeks on the way to

[45] Vandal who was sent to cut the grass was later described by Brown as "misemploying his time" after it was discovered he did little work while no one was watching. While he was eventually removed from this duty, it is interesting how uncritical Brown is towards this, given his often colourful chastisement of the Indians.

[46] Farming was encouraged by the government who promised assistance to those who gave up fishing for farming. After the weirs were destroyed the government ended payments. This matter is unsettled and currently being fought in court.

> Babine... It's pretty hard to perceive how them old timers figure those things out (Alfred Joseph:18 September 2008).

With the settlement moved to Portage, *Yeko* became primarily a fishing, hunting, and trapping area. Hudson asserts that from the early 1900s to the 1940s, numerous families from throughout the watershed came to Cunningham for whitefish (Hudson 1983:173). This is corroborated by the Elders I interviewed. The fish that were caught here were char [*bit*], whitefish [*lhoh*], suckers, ling fish, and kokanee. The Babine Journal of 16 July 1922 records two HBC employees fishing at Yeko: "We met Mr. Aslin at the entrance to the small Lake, he very kindly towed us down with his Gas boat, to the other end of the Lake, where fishing was very good he said" (HBCA B11/a/10).

Important Impacts on Yeko

Three major events had a profound impact on *Yeko* during the early 1900s. These include the arrival of moose in the territory, the landslide at Hells Gate, and the completion of the Grand Trunk Railroad. Moose migrated into the territory during this period and would become a staple food source for the *Dakelh* people. Willie discussed the arrival of moose:

> The first moose this side Pinche, it went across on the ice, winter time. They seen his tracks so three, four of them start following that moose. Way other side Grizzly Mountain, my dad, he was one of them too. They catch it up and they kill it, by the time they start skinning it, its just all just like blood shot all over his body, he run too far... After that moose start coming then the caribou disappear (Willie Mattess:26 January 2009).

Hudson asserts that the collapse of the sockeye salmon fishery in *Nak'al Bun* [Stuart Lake] in 1913 was the impetus for a population surge in Portage, as people travelled to *Nado Bun* [Babine Lake] for salmon (Hudson 209). Blasting in the Fraser

Canyon at Hells Gate in 1913 caused a landslide that wiped out millions of spawning salmon. This would damage the Fraser River salmon runs for over 30 years and leave a permanent mark since the run has never fully recovered. While indeed this was the case, it is important to note that *Dakelh* did travel to Babine prior to the landslide. Nonetheless, as evidenced by the HBC Babine Journal, it seems this was mostly for trade and for fishing in Babine during poor runs in the Stewart system. Undoubtedly, there was already a dependence on Babine salmon throughout the region, which as noted earlier, was much less prone to failure and more nutritious—as discussed by the Elders (and noted by Meggs 1995:74). The landslide merely increased this reliance.

The Grand Trunk Railway that terminates in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, was built from 1905-1914. Hudson concludes that in 1914 with the completion of the Grand Trunk Railway, Portage's importance to the fur trade ended (Hudson 208). This was due to the railroad now running from Winnipeg to Prince Rupert. In the Nechako region the railroad bypassed *Yeko*, eliminating much of its utility and establishing it as a hinterland. This meant the traditional trails and routes were no longer used by the HBC, and rail dislodged water as the pre-eminent mode of transporting trade goods in the region. The railroad provided transportation that was cheaper, easier, and quicker. To some degree, this new found relative isolation was a stroke of luck for those who continued to inhabit *Yeko*. They would be spared of an impending catastrophe.

1918 Flu Epidemic

The Spanish influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 was a global disaster that killed more people than World War I (WWI). More people died of influenza in the pandemic

than during the four years of the Black Death (Bubonic Plague from 1347 to 1351). It is estimated between 20 and 40 million people worldwide lost their lives to the flu (virus.stanford.edu/uda/). Interestingly, this pandemic had no effect on those living on *Yeko* or at *Yekoozdli*. As Justa Monk pointed out, no one died in *Yekoozdli* because people did not come from outside (Justa Monk:24 October 2008). This represents a profound change over a short period of time. A prime location, central during the fur trade, was all but forgotten by the outside world. Justa remarked that, "Nobody got sick and nobody died but people that went to Tache and Pinche and place like that, people died of this flu 1918. So, apparently it [*Yeko*] was pretty isolated." This was not the case in the neighbouring communities. People living in Fort St. James, Tache, Pinche, Trembleur Lake, and persons with traplines in those areas were hit hard by influenza. It was noted some were buried in mass graves, and many others were buried in unmarked graves out in their Keyoh (Justa Monk:24 October 2008). In *Sai'kuz* [Stoney Creek] (close to the settlement of Vanderhoof), one third of the population was lost and at Fort St. James 14 people died and were buried in a single day (Whitehead 1988:173). Justa recalled many Elders speaking of how busy they were dealing with the bodies of their relatives during the outbreak. Those at *Yeko* and Portage escaped this fate due to their isolation, as well as to their ability to survive off of the land, not needing food from elsewhere. Justa estimates that several of his aunts who lived in Yeko during the flu made it to over 106 years of age (Justa Monk:24 October 2008).

1920s and 30s

Life during the 1920s and 30s seems to have centered around trapping, fishing, haying, trade, employment working on pack trains transporting mining supplies, or at the

fishery. One of the most significant changes for the *Dakelh* during this period revolved around residential schooling.

Indian Residential Schools

Many of the Elders recall attending Lejac Indian Residential School during this period, which was opened in 1922 at Fraser Lake to replace the school at Fort St. James (opened in 1917). Alfred Joseph recalls being warned before he went to school by Isaac Jan, "you gonna go to school pretty soon so you gonna have two worlds; don't forget where you come from, he told me, and learn as much as you can" (Alfred Joseph:18 September 2008). The residential school system consisted of boarding schools run in a partnership between the Canadian Government and the major churches of the day. The goal was to remove children from the 'negative' influences of their community and eradicate their language and culture. By "taking the Indian out of the child" it was hoped successive generations would become a part of mainstream society. Alfred Joseph shared some recollections from his time at Lejac:

> When I first entered Lejac in 1945 and Charles Joseph was taking care of me 'cause he's the only one, I mean he's allowed to talk Indian to me and teach me how to speak the English language. And before meals we're supposed to wash our hands and our face so I went in the washroom. That's the first time I ever seen a toilet bowl there was water in it so I wash my face. He tell me "No, that's for pooping, over there" I have to turn on the tap, geez, I was fascinated by those things—hot and cold running water, holy smoke. You know I wash my face in the toilet bowl. I wasn't stupid you know but I never seen those things in my life (laughs) when I first entered Lejac. And I used to get punished all the time for speaking Indian so we whispered, eh? When nobody is listening, as fast as you could he taught me Indian/English words, you know, just simple things. He told me, above all, never lift your hand up if there's questions being asked—don't ever do that. So all those things, I learn how to bypass all those things and learn the English language as possible. Out in the yard, some boys quizzing me all the time how to say/speak English, eh? So that's how I did that in 1945, 1946, and 1947. Used to go from Fort St. James, used to go behind the bus, I mean the logging truck, right from Fort to Lejac. It was dirt road in them days.

> Gee, by the time we got home or Lejac, Vanderhoof they used to let us get off the truck and go down the river and drink some water, wash all that dust down. Just covered from head-to-toe with dust, when we got to Lejac we took a shower right away and we got de-liced eh? You know they put some of that stuff on it and then they give us cod liver oil everyday, one spoon each (Alfred Joseph:18 September 2008).

When Lejac was built, children were shipped from the communities to Fraser Lake and were no longer close to home. This meant the *Dakelh* were separated from their children for months at a time, which contributed to a breakdown of family (representing a major cultural shift). Because children were away for most of the year (they returned home for Christmas and two months in the summer) they lost of subsistence skills as well as the oral tradition. Children were simply not around to learn traditional skills. Lejac was closed in 1976, and the buildings were later demolished.

Subsistence in the 1930s

The *Dakelh* survived well during the Great Depression due to their self-sufficiency. Pierre John recalls growing up around *Yeko* during this time and the effect it had on his people:

> But this Depression we grow up on during the 30's—that was pretty tough but we had all the Indian food we want. Like I say they have their own gardens, their own hay meadows, they had cattles, they had horses and we had all the Indian food we want. We didn't suffer during those Depression, like that's why I say we had better time than today. You see, like in lots of ways we had better life than today because we live off the bush, eh? (Pierre John:18 September 2008).

Most of the Elders I interviewed grew up in the 1930s.[47] This section represents their life and how they survived. This is lived experience. Even today a few Tl'azt'en and Yekooche follow a similar subsistence pattern to the one Marianne Joseph recalls from

[47] This period represents a substantial part of their childhood or teenage years.

the 1930s:

> I was married when I was 17 or 18 years old. I came here from Grand Rapids (Kuzche). We really did suffer a lot,[48] it was depression time, no government hand out. We used to go hunting and fishing in Cunningham, called Yoko [Yeko]. We used to dry our fish and meat, and store it away for the winter. After this is done we go to Babine Portage [*Nantl'at*]... where we get ready for salmon. We make the salmon, and sometimes we make a good catch. We have to dry the salmon and pack it up to bring back to Yekooche for the winter. After we finish the salmon in *Nantl'at* we got to 15 Mile Creek [*Talhdiche*]... where we set nets for salmon. While we are there the men go across to the place on the other side of the lake, what we call *duje k'et* [huckleberry patch]. They killed their moose and bear which they had to pack back and we the women skin it and dry it. They also brought some huckleberries too. Then when we finish there, we pack everything up and bring it by boat to the landing, of course we had to paddle, not sit and relax. At the landing, there was a team of horses waiting, so we would just load up all the salmon on the wagon and bring it back to Yekooche (Portage) and put it away for the winter.
>
> After this, we go to Cunningham Lake, what we call Yoko [Yeko]. There we make whitefish and moose and dry it too. After we finish in Cunningham Lake, we bring back the things we dried and put it away for the winter. After this is done, we... make some dried char... We did this just off of the land, we never use to go to the store and buy meat over the counter. In winter they use kill moose and freeze it naturally. We used to freeze fresh whitefish and char from Yoko [Yeko]... We used to leave frozen meat and fish in warehouses so we would be well prepared for winter. We pick berries such as, blueberries, blackberries, huckleberries, and raspberries up on the hill behind Jan's house... On Whitefish Lake [*Bilhk'a*] we use to pick up blackberries... also to North Arm we used [to] land here and there and pick huckleberries and *alos* behind the big island, we pick raspberries and soapberries. Anywhere we camp for fishing and hunting we always think of Indian medicine and make some anywhere we went and fix it to dry and put away for winter use. Now all the shrubs whatever we use to get it is all cleared. It is really bad now (Marianne Joseph:unpublished community document n.d.).

Many different types of plants were gathered for medicinal purposes: "We used to make Indian Medicine with the back of the balsam, and this was used for colds; also red willows for wounds, and poplar for cuts or colds. Any kind of sickness, the medicine is there for us to use. We never use[d] to run to the doctor to get medicine" (Jan Joseph: unpublished community document n.d.). Furthermore, a person cannot just pick plants

[48] All of the Elders said life was not easy during the depression but through hard work they had enough to eat.

and make medicine, "you just don't run in the bush and get Indian medicine. You got to dream about it and then you know the right kind to get, the medicine the right strong enough to cure you. You cannot just make it any old way just because you know how (Alfred Joseph:18 September 2008).

William Joseph instructed me with a cautionary tale from his youth on the importance of not wasting food from a trip with his Grandfather to check a bear snare:

> [O]nce in Portage, he went up to Whitefish Lake, that big mountain there he had snare for bear... He catch one, gee, something like real rotten, too much strong sun on it, just rotten that he put it down and he start skinning it. Gee, I close my nose like that and stand beside 'um, he get mad at me he tell me "help me. After me, if you get hungry you get worse than this one" so I start skinning it, so then after we pack it the whole thing back to the house... the next morning I go visit 'um. He had it beside the stove, I didn't know it was that one—he cook the ribs of it—he tell me go ahead and eat it so I take lil piece out and I start eating it, [I] never taste nothing... [Y]esterday that's the one you didn't want to skin it that's the one now you're eating it, he tell me. See that's the way they go, long time ago they don't live on pork chops or number one [Chinese food] or Friday special (William Joseph:18 September 2008).

William's grandfather taught him to be prepared for the worst: "Grandpa talked to us and told us that some day when you are way out in the bush, you'll try and eat anything, even your bait in your trap you'll eat, so start learning now what you are going to do... we never say, 'this is spoiled and throw it away'" (William Joseph:unpublished community document n.d.).

To make sure there was enough food to last the winter a precise inventory was needed. Willie explained how they packaged salmon:

> [W]hat they used to do is they count the salmon, they pile it up put it together and they count it for winter and they tie it—they tie it with *'uzus tl'oolh* [moose skin rope] skin they used to make rope out of it—with that one they tie it for one winter, like one they tie up, that's November until December then January they tie up another one for January, February and March, they got to have about three like that to go all winter, they count it (Willie Mattess:26 January 2009).

Beyond smoking and drying fish, they were also frozen naturally in birch bark containers (Sophie Monk:3 October 2008, Helen Johnnie:3 October 2008). Alfred Joseph explains:

> They use to freeze whitefish, forty in a basket, birch bark container about that long [three feet], about that deep [six inches]. Forty, they put cover on it, they freeze it in late fall, October when it's cold, they freeze it. Them days no freezer, my time anyway. In the winter we chop up one at a time, two, depends on how much people there, and we eat it like that. Why, you warm it up on the stove you know, the skin gets thawed out, then you cut it and you just peel it off. Just plain fish, roast it with *'uchanyoo* [stomach lining from bear or moose], things like that. That's the way we use to do it (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

Food was stored in *tsak'et* [ground cellar] in raised caches called *tsachun* [cache in the form of a small cabin raised on posts]. These caches were raised to keep food away from rodents and other animals. Pierre John reminisced, "how small it look but they put away food, every kind of food in there for all winter and it last right to spring" (Pierre John:18 September 2008). Many of the Elders remember their parents cutting cans[49] and putting them around the upright posts so mice would not climb them. These buildings held a whole winter's worth of food:

> [M]y grandmother... she used to make dry berries, that *tsachun* [cache in the form of a small cabin raised on posts] is eight-by-eight by eight high. It used to be full of them, you know, *telh* [a narrow and deep birch bark container] they call it, birch bark containers, some real big ones just full of dry berries and dry goods, eh. You know just right to the ceiling, you know what I mean? (Alfred Joseph:18 September 2008).

Food was divided for each of the winter months. If a supply was used before the end of the month, one was forbidden from starting on the next month's food. This ensured the family would make it through the winter.

William and Pierre recalled learning and being able to earn money as children. They were taught to use a bow and arrow to shoot rabbit and squirrel. They were also shown how to make small *gooh* [deadfall trap], which they used to catch weasel. They

[49] Four gallon gasoline cans were cut and used.

were taught these things on the land as kids so they could practice for when they were older. Practice was important, as Willie stated, "Cause that's the food that they're hunting, that's what we eat and they wouldn't fool around with it. They won't let me mess around with it" (Willie Mattess:26 January 2009). The furs were sold for five cents and up. As Pierre recalled, "squirrel—five cents each. We got to kill three squirrel, good squirrel to buy one package snuff—it was fifteen cents. Now eleven fifty for snuff." Weasels were sold for five cents up to fifty cents depending on the size (William Joseph:2 October 2008).[50]

The topic of food was important to the Elders, and came up often in regards to this period, not only because survival was contingent on nourishment, but because plants and animals provided an inextricable connection between the Tl'azt'enne and the land. As well it is a sacred connection that the Elders hope to strengthen and renew among the Tl'azt'enne. Here, William Joseph conveyed the following wisdom with regard to providing food for his family:

> You got to really sweat to grow our kids up long time ago, there were no allowance, no SA, no pension, no nothing. Gotta get everything out of the bush to live on. That's the way we grow our children up, all of us, Pierre, all the Elders. That's how we raise all our children. Now they're all big and I hope they understand what we doing. We want them to do the same thing, one of these days it's going to come and happen again. They'll end back the same way, if they don't know they wouldn't last long. They got to learn right now to live and breathe. That's the only way they gonna make it, no other way. They got to come and listen to the Elders, see what they say, not running around out in the bush... or laughing around... They got to... sit down and listen that's what we used to do (William Joseph:18 September 2008).

Each of the Elders imparted knowledge of food production and gathering techniques from their own lives, as well as that which was passed down from their Elders.

[50] Pierre made this statement during William Josephs Interview and thus it is part of his transcript.

During his interview, William Joseph talked frequently about what his family needed to do to survive, and how they had to be creative. They used swamp hay or moose hair in a gunny-sac for a mattress while some used bear skins. Rabbit skins were cut into strips and woven together into a blanket called *gus tl'oo*. William wore moccasin and rabbit skins for socks: "We run on the ice, sixty below, just run over it and never say we're cold... summer time we don't use nothing, just bare-footed we run around, just like we use fifty dollar Oxford [laughs]" (William Joseph:2 October 2008). For other clothing they were just as resourceful:

> At that time we didn't know about socks or any kind of clothing. My mother... used to make shirts out of flour and sugar sacks. It was really poor days, we were in the depression days where there was no money coming from the governments, no allowance, nothing (William Joseph:unpublished community document n.d.).

Clothing was always patched and fixed, and handed down from older siblings. Catherine described how sacs ended up being used for clothing. Sugar and oats came in cloth bags in which they put ashes from the fire in the bags and boiled them to make a kind of soap. This removed the writing on the bags, which were then used to make shirts (Catherine Morris:26 January 2009). Moose hides were used to make coats and pants:

> They use that back strap of that moose, that one they use it for thread, they sew things together, pants and things, shirt. That's what they use, they had no thread, no needle, no nothing. Some they use bone, they make it real narrow and sharp, they make a hole and put it through. That's how they sew it (William Joseph:18 September 2008).

John Joseph describes this way of living:

> We go to Cunningham Lake, pack our stuff with the kids and all we use is a big boat to camp where we are going hunting. By paddling, we go hunting for moose. It was really hard at that time, and windy too. When we went hunting for moose, we didn't have motors at that time, and we had to do this to make our winter supplies. Now-a-days, this young generation, what will they do? We did a lot of things by man power, no machinery, no engines whatsoever. After we have finish all that we had to do, dry the meat and fish. We then paddle back on the loaded boat with our supplies and land back at the landing and get a team of horses, or if the horses are not there we pack

everything on our back. That was the way, we worked hard…

… I use to make hay for the cows and horses in the winter. We built a barn for the hay, and just put the hay in there. We never use to have any machinery, all done by manpower. When we got short of hay, there was always someone to help. We did really suffer a lot.

We never use to say let's have some coffee, but we had our own Indian Tea with cow milk, it was good tasting, and we would never run short of tea. (John Joseph:unpublished community document n.d.)

The Elders all spoke of how hard their parents worked to provide food for the family, which they had to follow as they grew up. In spite of the hardships, life was good: "Everything they make enough for all winter, that's how this survival go—year after year the same thing… You know I think them days we had better times than today" (Pierre John:18 September 2008).

Additional Stories of Yeko That Persist Today

Pius Cho

Pius Pierre, known as Pius Cho (meaning well respected), is remembered as a great man by the Tl'azt'enne, as his name suggests. William Joseph noted, "*Pius Cho za da' ookw'ane'eduyaih* [Pius was the only one who fought for his land] (William Joseph:2 October 2008). The area surrounding *Yeko* was his trapline, and he is remembered as someone who took good care of the territory. He built a cabin and smokehouse by the lake and brought many people out with him to hunt and fish. Catherine Morris noted that Pius had a very large dugout canoe he made out of a cottonwood. He also had a house and barn at *Yekoo̲zdli* for haying.

The Moose That Would Not Give Up (Told by Duncan Joseph, Collected and Edited by Verona Manderson)

This is a true story that happened many years ago. We were working in the bush, hunting and fishing for winter food. It was bull moose hunting season. We were three families working together. There was old Pius with his wife Caroline and their three grandchildren, Peter, Silver Basil, and Armond Haskil [sic]. There was myself, Duncan, with my wife Agnes and our two children, Dorothy and Patrick. Finally, there was Michael Morrice [sic] and his wife Catherine. It was September 12, 1937 and we were camped at Cunningham Lake fishing camp.

The next morning, September 13, we set out for bull moose hunting. We went up the mountainside, two in a team. Armond and I got in close to a big bull moose and a young one. I shot twice at the big bull and then I shot the young bull. When Peter and Silver Basil heard the shots, they came running over to help us skin the moose. We took just a little meat in our bags because it was getting late. Those were the first moose we got on that first day.

Old Pius had taken the canoe further on to where we make it back to shore. Then later that evening, he and Peter went by dugout to the next bay to look for moose. Michael, Armond, and I went out to Little Lake. Silver stayed behind at the camp. Before long, we heard shooting back at Cunningham Lake. We counted seventeen shots. Soon we spotted two big bull moose. We shot at them and we wounded one. Then did we ever start running! Michael went after the wounded moose and Armond and I ran after the other. Michael caught up to the wounded moose, but Armond and I had no luck.

By then, it was getting very late, so we went back to the lake. As we came near the camp, we could hear men's voices. We had supposed that Silver would still be there alone. We said to each other, "They made all the shooting but maybe they got nothing." Peter came out while we were landing and said, "We got one big bull. Grandpa wants you to help skin it. The other moose was wounded but it got away." So we went back with him to skin the moose. We did not take the meat because it was dark. Old man Pius said, "We'll get all the meat tomorrow and track down the wounded moose too. I am sure it was wounded. I don't think it went too far because it got shot, but not in the right spot." So we went back to the camp for the night.

Early next morning Pius was up and made the campfire. He cooked breakfast, then called the boys and said, "It's a beautiful day! Hurry it up, boys. You have to gather all the meat today. But first, we have to get the moose we wounded last night!" Soon we were all ready. Pius said, "Boys, I had a very bad dream last night. So be very careful today." Then we started out to look for the moose. Old Pius, Michael Morrice, Peter and Armond followed after the wounded moose. Silver Basil came with me to cut up the moose that was half done. A little while later we heard a shot, so we knew the moose they were after was still alive. We were busy cutting up the meat when I heard someone coming. I said, "What do you want?" It was the young boys. One said, "Grandpa wants the axe. He shot the wounded moose on the back of the head, but its's not dead yet. So, he's going to chop off the head to save the shells." So I handed them the axe and they left.

It was just a very short time later when we heard a man moaning and calling for help, "Come over, hurry! Come quick!" I grabbed my gun and started off, running as fast

as I could. Then I saw the moose, still standing. I shot at it, but it didn't drop. Then I saw Michael, standing by old Pius. He had been standing there by Pius, watching for the boys who were coming with the axe when the moose suddenly jumped up and horned Pius in the belly. Michael and the boys were still standing by old Pius. When I got to them, we took off old Pius' cartridge belt and saw that his guts were out. I pressed them back in and bandaged him up with handkerchiefs.

While I was with old Pius, who was very ill, Michael and the boys went to see if the moose was still nearby. Yes, the moose was still standing on the shore where it had been shot last evening when they first shot at it. They fired five more shots. Then, finally, the moose died. We packed Pius to the shore near to the dugout, made a fire,, and laid Pius close beside the fire to warm up. It's a little cool in early September. Old Pius said, "Skin the moose that hurt me." We worked very fast. Then off we went again with Pius, hurrying, because it was such a serious case.

We paddled very carefully. It was a very nice day. A calm day. We had to travel about three miles to get back to the main camp where old Pius' wife and our families were. When we landed, the boys called for Caroline, old Pius' wife, to come to the dugout. "What happened?" she asked, and we told her all about it. Then I set out for the other end of Cunningham Lake. From there I walked five miles to Portage where old Chief John lived. I brought the message to him, telling him what had happened to his brother Pius. Chief John said, "No wonder. You just left yesterday and I knew something was wrong." It took a little time to find a gas and motor boat. Then I went to Tache to pass on the message to Pius' only son, his brother, and his friends. I told them what had happened and they all got ready right away and we all travelled back to Portage. From there we went on to Cunningham Lake where old Pius was still waiting.

That was on 15 September. And next day we started out to bring Pius by boat and to Portage by canoe stretcher. We brought him back to Portage. Doctor and Priest were waiting for him. They took him right out by boat to Fort St. James and there on by car to Prince George hospital and there old Pius Pass away on 20 September 1937. He was a great man, a good bushman too. He looked after the church, and rang the bell and said the prayers.

One Elder explained to me that shortly before this happened to Pius, he had a black dog that would not stop barking at him one morning when he was in a hurry. The dog kept following him around barking, so finally, to make it stop, he grabbed his pitchfork and stabbed it in the stomach. The dogs intestines were left hanging out and it was put down. It is said this is why the moose did what it did to Pius that day (Catherine Morris:26 January 2009).

Pius Cho was critically wounded by the moose. It was noted that, "'in a flash', it pick him up in his horn and he dance with him in circles. Had him by the stomach and

real big fir tree, rotten fir tree, he ram him into it… Spin him around, and ram him into tree and that was it" (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008). Those who were shown the inside of his stomach said the whole thing looked like ground meat. Pierre John remembers seeing Pius after the accident:

> I was just little kid, *ookwadusyin 'ink'e nus'en* [I was standing at the doorway looking at him] *'et da' nja dusulh'en* [and he was gesturing to me to come] *'inka oowunusya sla yilhchoot* [and I went to him and he took my hand] and he put it on that place. *Sa' da 'et duyalhdzin* [He kept it like that for a long time] *'Awet gak 'ankw'us 'on 'at nalhunyuts'izt'el* [I will not see you again] *whuzun'a sizghi 'ust'oh", sulhni da'* [this is the way I will go, he told me]. *Sk'ents'i' 'inle* [he loved me], *buba benawsdzi 'inka da' sk'ents'i' 'inle'* [I was named after his father that's why he loved me]. *'En* Burns Lake *ts'e nuhudulh 'ink'ez* [when he goes to] Fort *ts'e* Christmas *whutso* [before], box *soo dizbun* [filled to the brim], sweets and fire crackers, *'et dunt'i-i* [things like that], *'i da' sba yookuk* [he used to buy for me] *'et nyan skahuyih* [and he calls me from across the creek] *'et ookwusyaih* [and I would go and get it]. Every year they used to do that to me (Pierre John:2 October 2008).

This story illustrates how strong and resilient the Tl'azt'enne are. Pius, who was badly wounded, survived for over a week. Several Elders have pointed out that Pius was a dreamer; this being the only possible way for him to survive. This story also lives on in memory as a tool to teach generosity, respect for domestic animals, and respect for nature. Living in harmony with the natural world was central to the people's dependence on animals for survival. If one were to upset that balance, justice would occur. As Catherine Morris observed, "*Gee, honujut whe whunul'en ts'e 'uja 'inle'"* [that was a very powerful thing that happen to him] (Catherine Morris:26 January 2009).

Jan Cho: Pius Cho's Brother

Jan Cho [well-respected John] is held in high regard by the community to this day. He was a community leader, cultural teacher, and mentor to many of today's Elders. Although remembered as a small man, he seems to have been larger than life (Sophie

Monk:3 October 2008). Pierre and several of the Elders spent much of their time with him growing up, learning their traditional ways. Alfred Joseph remembers *Jan Cho* fondly from when he was a child:

> Well the way *Jan Cho* [well-respected John] and *Galolen* [Caroline], the way I remember them in 1942… they had grizzly bear skin for mattress and one on top for blanket. When I used to go to visit them, used to play around on that, my mother told me "You shouldn't do that—*me whe'hoont'oh* [something deserving of respect or fear]—you not suppose to do that, old people said. Then *Galolen* [Caroline] said "*'Oh whute 'ut'en, tsoodun unt'oh* [Just let him do what he's doing, he is a child]." I used to love to play on that grizzly bear hide, nice and soft, thick, and it was as flexible as blanket, Hudson Bay blanket, *et da' et dunt'oh,* [that's how it felt].
>
> [E]very month he get pension, used to get box and in that box he gets peas, beans, you know dry beans and dry goods and flour – lil bit of flour and saccharine, they call it sugar, liquid sugar. All that she used to get every month, she used to pick just enough for themselves and all the rest it was my duty to go all around the reserve and give them one cup each and one drop of saccharine in their tea. And them days – no sugar, sugar was hard to get during the war and used to call me *Ampez sulhni da'* [she called me Ampez]… Alfred is my name and use half my name and half peas, she used to call me Ampez. You know for that specific reason… [I] [r]emember them for that.
>
> She was blind and she had a stove about four feet long, cast iron stove… she used to feed the fire herself and cook on that stove herself for Jan, on that stove by feel—cook like that. All those things I was fascinated by it as a child. She had silvertip grey hair, silvertip, so old eh? That's the reason why I remember it then. And that's why I name one of my daughter Caroline and the other one, my son… Isaac Jan. That's why I name them after them (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

Although Jan Cho passed away before Justa Monk was born, Justa was taught much about his grandfather growing up:

> I understand my grandpa had seven different gardens, [in] seven different areas, and stuff. They lived off the land, they lived off the water and everything, fish and wildlife… They enjoyed their living from what mom told me that there was really no harsh feeling among people as I see today. They really had unity, they had love and respect for one another, and things like that… But then the five brothers that own it [*Yeko*] they had to… cooperate with one another and stuff, because they are all there with their family and making a living so. According to mom, grandpa was the head person there, like *Dayi Cho* [Big Chief] they call them, and I guess he was more of in charge of everything from what mom told me about it (Justa Monk:24 October 2008).

Justa fondly stated, "I wish to hell I could have seen my grandpa, I heard he was quite a man—*Jan Cho* (Justa Monk:24 October 2008).

Old Joe Hanson

Stories abound about Old Joe Hanson, a powerful medicine man. It is said that he received his powers after helping a moose in Babine Portage:

> *Yak'in'a* [Place name—A Hill Up Into The Clouds] they call it, there's a hill go up like that and straight down cliff—not really high. One day he was sitting up there the end of that cliff he see cow-moose down below—he's having lil one, he say it cry like woman... He went down there and he help 'um pull that lil one out, take out his shirt and he wipe 'um and he hang up that shirt, next day he went to check on them, no moose around but his shirt was hanging there—just like brand new. That's where he start... (Willie Mattess:26 January 2009).[51]

After this incident Old Joe Hanson became a powerful healer. Willie Mattess recalled the time Joe healed his brother-in-law:

> My brother-in-law he swallow bone, sharp, about that long, he swallow it and it get stuck and he throw up blood and foam so Zaa William he went to Babine Portage to get Joe Hanson... He tell them to give 'um water—half—they give 'um water. He [Joe] drank some himself, he make Francis drink some. He put it back down, Francis, lil while after he start to throw up—he just get about that high just foam and blood. That guy, that old Joe he just put his hand in there and he feel around and he take that bone out—give it back to him—this [is] the one do that to you (Willie Mattess:26 January 2009).

Beyond being a powerful healer, Old Joe is the only person Alfred can recall ever talking about sweat lodges. These sweats took place out in Babine in secret as it was against the law. According to Old Joe Hanson, the intense heat gave him visions. He is remembered as a very powerful man who used to win competitions testing stamina and endurance. Alfred recalls, "*Si 'uk'enus_'uztus 'inle' ni da' Old Joe Hanson,* [I am the most powerful, Old Joe Hanson used to say]" (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

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[51] Justa Monk told the same story in his interview as well.

Joe Hanson was also a wise teacher. He taught today's Elders, when they were children, about life long ago. Justa Monk remembers being taught stories:

> I remember Old Joe Hanson from Babine Portage, he use to come and stay with mom in the winter and he'll sit, he'll make his bed on the floor. Nobody touch his bed, nobody touch his bed roll, I was the only guy that got away with it... 'cause he was a, what you call this, doctor [medicine man]. I remember him healing up my dad and things like that but... when he sits beside the stove, the heater stove and keep his back warm and smoke, start lighting his pipe, my mom said get on the bed, stay behind me your grandpa is going to talk. And that's the thing he taught me and I had to sit there and listen to the old guy talking and he use to talk about way longer time, even before mom and dad... it's really hard to remember because you know, you are paying attention, you're young, and I was pretty restless, I always wanted to play and stuff but when it comes to story telling I had to park my ass pretty quick (Justa Monk:24 October 2008).

Alfred Joseph could recollect being taught by Old Joe about hunting:

> [B]ack strap of a moose, went behind on a back of a bow, to give it a maximum strength, pulling power. Old Joe Hanson showed me and told me that. Said when he was young, he use to kill moose with that. You got to stay down wind of the moose and get at least twenty feet away and shoot him through the rib cage, through the heart. That thing is made out of stick they call it *tsetselh ti* [axe handle] You burn it until it becomes rock hard, steel hard, and you propel that it's just short stuff, short you propel that so hard it goes right through the rib, through the rib cage. Now to do that kind of thing takes a lot of dedication and you're always taking a chance (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

Alfred discussed how Old Joe used bow and arrow in his lifetime, but Alfred's Great Grandfather (who was younger) used a muzzle loader: "from Old Joe to my grandfather... on my dad's side, you see there's two different eras: bow and arrow to *bizigab* [muzzle-loading musket] (Alfred Joseph:18 September 2008).

Falling Through The Ice

William Joseph told of a winter when he fell through the ice at *Yeko*:

> And in Cunningham Lake we just about drown there... right in the centre we went through the ice, three of us: Charles Joseph, Isaac John and me. Nobody around just three of us, we were trying to make short cut and we went [through] right in the

> centre... and we stayed there about two hours... Isaac he show us rosary. He show it to us and he tell us we're all dead now. You better pray and where we gonna go and pray to him. There, I look back, Charles was on the ice, there, me too, I went on the ice. That's how we get saved. Now, they're both gone already but me just myself, I'm still alive... About two or three hours we stayed in the water, north wind blowing with the snow, holy, talk about cold (William Joseph:2 October 2008).

Pierre Added:

> The old man he's talking about he crawl about half a mile from where they went through the ice, he crawl to the shore then he crawl to the bush where he can find big spruce tree standing. Just that one tree standing in the bush, he see it, that's what he crawl to. Then with his hand he make hole... and he sleep in there when we get there—he was still alive. Like he said they stayed there for about two or three hours—north wind blowing with snow too, cold, when we got there. That time, we make real big fire, take out all his clothes, wipe him up real good and put on dry clothes (William Joseph:2 October 2008).

Don't walk on the ice

Helen remembers being told not to walk on the ice in the spring:

> ... the stories of my mom was telling us when in the spring time, when they were up there in *Yeko,* in the springtime when they went up there on the ice and then ah, my mom she said ah, don't go on the ice when is, when is starting to turn black on the side of it. It turning black when is, don't go on the ice, he said once they did, she said, when they get there, they get there in the morning it's frozen and it was real nice on the ice, real and they went on the ice and they went on the island and they were playing there she said when they were small. And they said, ah they drag each other with a sleigh or toboggan or something and she said the next morning they woke up the ice was all gone. That's why [they] tell us not to go on the ice when it's turning. They just walk on it, they get there, next morning they were playing around on the ice but the next morning it was gone (Helen Johnnie:3 October 2008).

1940s

One of the most substantial changes during this decade was the development of a mine at Pinchi Lake. In 1938 a mercury claim was staked at Pinchi Lake and the mine operated from 1940 to 1944, as the only mercury producer in the country at the time. It

reopened in 1967 and operated until 1975 (Norcan 2000:6). Up until this point seasonal rounds remained unchanged:

> We then go to Cunningham Lake to make our supplies for haying time. We go there in May and come back in August to start on the hay. After we finish with the hay then we go back to Cunningham Lake, we call Yeko, for hunting and fishing for making our winter food like dry meat and dry fish. We stay up there until late fall around November, by then we make enough so we paddle back to the landing with all what we made fish and meat. We never use wagon with horses, we pack everything [on] our back to Yekooche, Portage (William Joseph:unpublished community document n.d.).

After the mine opened seasonal rounds were interrupted by work for the mine. Hudson notes that the mine opening in 1940 coincides with a period of low fur prices, making trapping uneconomical, and wage labour that much more appealing (Hudson 1983:210). Hudson contends that while a break in the pattern of subsistence did occur, the money earned as wages was used to support families (although it was insufficient) or even towards the purchase of the rights to a trapline. As such, the wage economy provided a means to an end, in once sense, enabling the continuation of Tl'azt'en traditional subsistence, and in another, requiring it (Hudson 1983:210-211). As Pierre explained, "Before then we just do nothing but trapping but most winter we don't make nothing depending on the luck. So we got to work steady wherever we can" (Pierre John:2 October 2008).

Because of hard times most *Dakelh* in the region ended up working up in Pinche: "When Pinche Lake [mine] started, there was no work around, so Margaret and myself went down and loaded up. We didn't know where to go, so we found a trail and we took the path and we were in Pinche Lake" (John (Jan) Joseph:unpublished community document n.d.). Hudson notes that during this period only a few people remained living in Portage (those with no jobs) (Hudson 1983:212). Work for the *Dakelh* primarily

involved cutting wood called flip-flop for the steam ships[52]: "Four feet by four feet high by eight feet long, one cord, two fifty ($2.50) a cord, those guys did" (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

Alfred recalls spending time on the territory with his grandfather during this period:

> [W]hen I was a kid too in 1943-42, people they were still using dog team. I use to go with *Keyom* from there, over the ice to Whitefish Lake, one day travel. Had dog team, I use to sit on the sleigh and that, I had a lot of fun doing it... I figured it was real good holiday. [Laughter]... I use to cry for him to go with him. My granny, 'bring him along he's crying for you.' *'A ndun liyap* [...Oh this mischievous child] *tadisni* [I'm tired of him]' [laughs] but still I use to go with him eh. I really enjoyed myself eh. That's where we take out trap, we bait it, I follow him all over the place (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

1950s and 60s

Small logging and sawmill operations were the major seasonal employer as hundreds sprouted up throughout the region during the 1950s and 60s. In Fort St. James, workers lived in Twenty Four Camp, named after the length of time it took to make home brew. Pierre recalled working during this period: "Well, during the [fifties] logging start all over... And we work all summer long in the Fort St. James area or sometimes I work in logging camps and stuff like that. And during my time we work winter and summer to raise our kids" (Pierre John:2 October 2008). In the 1960s the timber industry amalgamated, forming larger operations in areas such as Babine and Fort St James. These larger entities ran year round, eliminating the need for seasonal Indian labor (Hudson 1983:211). Thus, in the late 1960s people moved back to Portage and settled back into a pattern of subsistence based on hunting, fishing, and farming. Morris and Fondahl argue

[52] Steam ships were used by the mining company to transport supplies up the lake to the mine. The wood was used to power the steam engines.

that increased mechanization (requiring specialized training) during this period as well as the rise of labour unions (creating both minimum and set hours), squeezed *Dakelh* out of the operations (Morris and Fondahl 2002). Traditional subsistence carried on during this period albeit with some changes. As Justa put it: "...living in Portage... you had to live off the land. The only income that you had was mom and dad, or dad trapping. Mom making moose hides and slippers and stuff like that" (Justa Monk:24 October 2008). Almost every family in Tache, Portage, and *Yeko* had a garden, and people canned berries and jams for the winter. According to Justa fifteen or twenty families were living in portage while he was growing up.

> We had potatoes, I use to love cooking turnips in the fire, every time dad brought some I use to put it in the campfire, eh, and cook it. But we had dry char, dry whitefish, dry meat, blackberries and bear grease mixed, and bannock, that's about it. If you live, if you want... and the fish eggs, and if you eat blackberries and bear grease, you take a couple spoon of that and you're good for all day, you never get hungry, like you keep working and stuff until evening time. Sometimes when they catch char or whatever, they'll eat, cook it fresh and boil it in a campfire with potatoes and stuff. So, we had a lot of food, we were never hungry (Justa Monk:24 October 2008).

1970s

Hudson (1983) explains that during his research in the 1970s the area at *Yeko* was utilized by only a few extended family groups. During this period, the area could only be reached by aircraft or boat and "appeared to be lost in time, on the margin of Canadian society" (Hudson 1983:205). Hudson argues convincingly that for Yekooche in the 1970s "its marginality... is a result of capitalism" (p. 205). He explains that with a shift from mercantile to industrial capitalist uses of the Nechako Plateau, villages such as Portage lost their utility. This shift was because First Nations were primarily employed to transport supplies and work the once productive fisheries. During the 1970s a shift in

mode of production among *Dakelh* took place back to hunting, trapping, and fishing. Hudson explains that this was "a consequence of the reorganization of the timber industry in the region in the mid-1960s and the infusion of transfer payments. As one villager succinctly stated the process: 'I worked in the sawmills in Fort St. James in the 1960s. I came back to Portage when the sawmills shut down'" (Hudson 1983:205).

Hudson describes the village of Portage in the 1970s during his research:

> It contains about 85 people, living in fifteen houses, with a small store run by one of the villagers, a school, and a teacherage (built in 1976), a church (built in 1896), a priest's house, health clinic, several barns, numerous smokehouses, and a number of cattle and horses. In addition to Portage, several families maintain smaller camps with cabins and smokehouses at a number of locations in the immediate region.
>
> The villagers utilize the resources of several watersheds: the head of Stuart Lake, the head of Babine Lake and adjacent river valley, and the Cunningham Lake basin, which drains into Stuart Lake. In this area, the villagers fish for salmon, whitefish, and char: hunt for moose: raise hay and vegetables: and trap a variety of fur-bearing animals (Hudson:unpublished community document n.d.).

Horses and cows were kept by the people. Alfred Joseph recalled that originally they had 150 cows, and 54 head of horses in Portage. By 1972 that number was down to fifty cows and less than twenty horses (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008). Today only one horse remains, a lone reminder of a vanished lifestyle.

The root of change responsible for a shift away from farming according to Justa Monk, (who was chief during this period) was government assistance:

> The gardens disappeared in... Tl'azt'en Nation didn't see welfare cheques until 1975. Everybody else from there to '75, they were living off the land, they were still trapping, everything and stuff, '75 that's when the welfare cheques from federal government started coming around[53] and that's when slowly but surely the gardens in Tache start disappearing, and the gardens in Yekooche start disappearing and the cows in Tache and the cattles in Portage start disappearing. So, eventually the

[53] The year 1975 marked a change in government policy giving Bands more control over funding for programs and resources (this was the closest thing I was able to find in terms of verifying Justa Monks 1975 date.

> government programs really didn't help us any but damage us because everything was let go (Justa Monk:24 October 2008).

Present Day:

Today change has taken place in *Yeko*. There is a rough logging road into the area requiring a four-wheel drive vehicle, and farming is no longer practiced. Geographic isolation is still evident, however it is not nearly to the extent of the past. Over the last 100 years, *Yeko* has been a place for hunting and fishing and remains so to a few people. Today, *Yeko* suffers from depleted fish stocks,[54] and while it is not as productive as it was in the past, it is rich in history. The area may also rise in prominence again at least amongst the *Dakelh*:

> Forest is drying up and there'll be no more trees, there'll be completely no more sawmill, no more timber work anymore. And on the end, the final thing, I think, is... pension, welfare and family allowance—that's gonna stop one day when the hard times coming, where they gonna get the money [to] give welfare, pension and family allowance. The money come from the land... But if there's nothing coming from the land it'll be nothing left... to look after these things. (Pierre John:18 September 2008).

Pierre John warned me about the future saying, "*'Uda' yinka diyanduzdunizye' 'onnus ntsi' tileh* [It's going to be worse than when our ancestors were living] (Pierre John:18 September 2008) and William added, "They got to listen—open their ear—only way they're going to survive. If they don't know nothing, they'll starve before the dogs starve, that's what is going to happen (William Joseph:18 September 2008). The life and experiences of those who have gone before us, provides great wisdom learned through both triumphs and misfortune. It would be wise to heed their advice based on stories of the past:

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[54] I was told that many non aboriginal people have over-fished there over the years due to its reputation.

[W]hat you believe in, you gotta believe until you die. That's what you live on, sort of. You know, but if I didn't believe my grandpa and my parents, my uncles, my aunty, like I say, I wouldn't be here. I believe in what they tell me and I listen to them, that's why I'm here… that's why I live this long. This is true story (Pierre John:18 September 2008).

4.0 Making Sense Of My Experience Within This Research

Introduction

Making sense of this research has been a journey unto itself. This chapter attempts to look at the themes that arose throughout my work with the Elders. I have learned over the course of this research that the Elders operate within a holistic reality in which all concepts overlap and inter-relate. While the philosophical foundations over the divide between the spiritual and the natural are complex, and contentious, they exceed the bounds of the present discussion. Consciously I have chosen not to judge this dichotomy because clearly, this is their reality. Any attempt to do this would undermine the cultural and social legitimacy of this knowledge, as is an attempt to categorize the Elders' words topically. That said, several general themes emerged: Importance of Community, Learning Traditions, and Treaty. This chapter represents a crude attempt to answer how the Elders make sense of their knowledge and in turn provides an opportunity for me to examine my own experience. I will also contemplate theoretical implications and opportunities for further research emerging from my analysis.

Importance of Community

> [W]e depended on each other and we depended on the land and that was how we lived and survived—Justa Monk (Moran 38).

Each of the Elders discussed how close-knit the communities were in the past. This was in many ways necessary for survival through the sharing of resources between family groups and clans, which is no longer as it once was. People worked together, and those who controlled *keyoh* would bring others who had large families or no trapline of their own; to hunt and fish on their *keyoh*. People also spent much more time living from

one community to another, seasonally, to assist family members and share limited resources. Pierre John spent more time growing up in Portage, but was often in Tache: "Sometimes we live in Tache for a time when my dad is trapping with somebody in Tache or do hunting or fishing and stuff like that. My mom is from Tache [but] our home was in Portage" (Pierre John:2 October 2008). Intermarriage created strong bonds between the *Dakelh* and *Babine.* Pierre's grandmother was from Babine. He recalls, "actually about fifty percent of our people are from Babine. If they look back that far" (Pierre John:2 October 2008). Alfred Joseph remembers his parents trading frequently with people from Babine who came to *Yeko* or Portage with store bought goods and exchanged them for dry meat and dry fish (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008). The overall theme the Elders revealed was that no hard, fast, divisions between populations existed, and their people worked together and helped each other. Justa Monk illustrates how this was accomplished on a day-to-day basis:

> When I was a young boy in Portage it would have been unthinkable to steal or to destroy someone else's property. Often my dad would point to a neighbour's house and say, "Go over there and see if the house is okay. Make sure the windows are not broken." I would check everything as I had been told to do. People left their guns, their motors, everything in their boats, and we would be sent by our parents to look and make sure that everything was safe. We wouldn't touch or break anything. That was what was expected of the boys and girls in those days and that was what we did (Moran 1994:42).

Based on the linguist James Kari's discussion around the differences between *Babine-Wet'suwet'en* and the Carrier Language during the *Delgamuukw* court case (No. 0843 Smithers Registry February 6, 1989), I infer that *Yeko* was in some respects a linguistic and cultural melting pot between the *Dakelh* and *Babine* people. Kari contends both languages are distinct, but through intermarriage language learning occurred and they were mutually intelligible. This assessment is supported by the Elders who described

several instances of intermarriage between the neighbouring groups. Traditionally marriages were arranged by families (Helen Johnnie:3 Oct 2008). People moved between communities as a result of marriage, although permission had to be granted by the village leader [*Keyoh Whuduchun*] (Helen Johnnie Interview:3 Oct 2008). Strict rules governed community living. If someone took resources from another family's keyoh the rightful owners would confiscate whatever was stolen. The Elders say people who did not follow the community protocols would be chased out (Helen Johnnie:3 Oct 2008). Presently, the intelligibility of the languages is not at the level it was historically. As one Elder commented after discussing the Babine speaking a distinct language, "All we understand is *ma'* [yes in *Nadot'en*]" (William Joseph:2 Oct 2008).

'Uda Whuk'una Whuts'odul'eh: Traditional Learning

John Muir wrote, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe" (www.sierraclub.org). This in some way parallels the *Dakelh's* traditional philosophy. All life is interconnected. Justa Monk explains:

> [N]one of our people at *Yeko* at that time been to any kind of school but yet they knew how to handle the land, they knew how to respect the land because everything was created by the Creator and they knew that... All those culture related spiritual stuff was taught to us, well to me anyway. Today it's not there (Justa Monk:24 October 2008).

Learning traditions was important. They were directly tied to cultural practices and intertwined with the day-to-day activities of subsistence. Surviving off of the land required substantial learning, "just because you are Indian, you cannot run in the bush, you know (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

Alfred discussed how learning occurred on the land while maintaining the *Dakelh* language and culture:

> See, it was really learning procedure way of doing things. That story meant something, you know. You put it in safe and tell the stories in such a way that it burns into memory. See, that's the way they tell a story, they said it over, and over, and over again but you never tired of those kinds of stories. I never did. I always like to listen to those kinds of stories, even every night if we have to" (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

Justa explained how teaching was tied closely to subsistence:

> Children and grandchildren were always part of whatever was happening, and everyone, kids included, had snowshoes. The men made the frames and the women made what we call *babiche*, weaving for the snowshoes, made of the skins of cows or deer or moose. Those trips to the traplines were very important. The skins gave us money for supplies, but along with this, on those days in the wilderness, the children were given instruction in living off the land. They were lessons that young people like my brothers and sisters and I never forgot" (Moran 1994:36).

Listening and learning occurred out on the territory and was a continual process:

> Oh, when I was about ten year old, twelve year old. Then I start helping my grandfather and my father; go around with them in the bush. Sometimes if they have to go too far they have to pack us 'cause we play out—too small. But they go far enough where we could make it, teaching us how to do things there. We're out in the bush all the time (William Joseph:2 Oct 2008).

Alfred Joseph recalls going out at an even younger age:

> I used to ride with my grandmother up *Tache* River. My gran she paddle with dugout canoe she set rat traps up the river there, both sides. I used to collect those sand stones, all kinds of different shapes. Me, I didn't paddle, I just sat and keep 'um company, I guess. I used to pick those things whenever she's setting traps... You know, that's where I learn all them names eh, what she outline... I used to go with my grandfather on my mom's side, Keom, right from *Tache* to Whitefish Lake. We used to go with dog team... (Alfred Joseph:18 September 2008).

William Joseph recalls most of what he was taught was practical skills:

> They said lots about it but it's just they tell us how to hunt, trap and fish. Fish—how to gut it and... things like that, that's all the stories they give us—they teach us how to do it.... how to make nets in the bush—by willow bark. We peel it, it take us whole day to peel it and we make enough then we sit down and we sit down beside the shore then we start to take out the peeling then after we start to break it up and make it real narrow. And then we make net out of it and we set it out there and we catch one char with it. Then we catch one beaver with it, we set it in front of the beaver dam. That's how he tell us, later when you get stuck in the bush you'll know how to get your food. That's why he was teaching us that. Yea, they teach us everything—the name of the

> trees, grass, everything. That's how we grow up and that's how we know it now (William Joseph:2 Oct 2008).

The stories must be told and retold to ensure their survival. As humans, we go through our lives often with memories so short that we forget what we used to know. Retelling solidifies the past both in the mind of the teller as well as that of the listener. The Elders recognize that things must change. Henry Abel Joseph explains, "What my mom used to say is to not be trifle, to be sympathetic to everyone. She said that before she died and she said it many times" (Henry Abel Joseph:5 June 2008). The people want to be constructive and move forward. One of the ways of doing this is to learn their history, and get the younger generations out on the land. In this sense, the Elders will once again provide mentorship, solidarity, and cohesion to the community.

Concerns About Youth

One of the problems discussed in this thesis is that younger generations do not know their history. Many in Burns Lake, and Babine[55] don't know the history of Tl'azt'en and Yekooche using Nantl'at [Babine portage]. The Elders are not happy with both the lack of knowledge and direction with many of the youth. They are hoping to resolve this by taking the initiative, as they realize: "...we're going to have to be the ones to teach them, there's nobody else that's going to..." (Alfred Joseph:5 June 2008). In order to learn one must listen and pay close attention. William Joseph describes how this worked:

> When we're stuck in the bush, we know what to do but these young children just know how to smoke. Yea, we teach them but pretty slow though. They don't listen clear enough. Us, when our parents they used to start teaching us, talking to us, giving

[55] As well as Tl'azt'en and Yekooche.

> us good advice, we stay quiet. If we move our head they take out their belt out and they hit us on the head. They tell us we gonna live on this world that's why we're teaching you—don't move around and don't listen to anybody else, that's what they used to tell us. That's the way we been trained. That's why now I'm eighty-three years I stay in Yekooche. If I didn't listen I would have been gone long ago. (William Joseph:2 October 2008)

Beyond practical skills, place names, and boundaries, children learned legends and stories in the evenings as well as at potlatches (William Joseph:2 October 2008). The Elders believe this knowledge is very important and necessary to be passed on to future generations because it was and remains essential for their survival.

Treaty and the Land

> The issue is land—all the time, I don't care where I go, Elders talk to me about land. That's how much concern they have about the land and how it's being destroyed (Justa Monk:24 October 2008).

Treaty, land and the erosion of community, were sensitive topics throughout the course of my research. Almost every Elder I interviewed overtly talked about treaty, which to me shows the importance of it to them, but also the fact that it was a piece of the story they wanted told in some fashion. Clearly, this is a "hot button" issue between each of the neighbouring communities. In order to do this research, I stressed at each community meeting and to each of the Elders that my project was not about treaty or division. This project was described explicitly as a way to bring the communities together and celebrate a common heritage. Even still, each Elder talked with me about it. During my interview with William Joseph he discussed treaty at length. When told this research was only about Yeko and not about treaty and the land he responded:

> *'Et huwun za te,* [If it's about that only then] that's nothing but *ndune ntahuntidulh k'una ne'whut'en* [it seems like these people are going in the wrong direction] — *ne'whut'en et noh dusni tube huwaoodli* (William Joseph:2 October 2008).

As William sees it, one cannot talk about *Yeko* or any part of the territory without considering treaty. This view is holistic in that the Elders cannot separate the land from rights because those rights are tied intrinsically to the land. As Henry Abel Joseph pointed out:

> Dogun Cho, our church chief, he used to say many times "Don't ever let this raising vegetables and having chicken and cows, exercising where you're from [end]" and my dad too used to comment, he used to say "how do you say this is your land that you're gonna go to the treaty table when you don't prove it by using it?" (Henry Abel Joseph:5 June 2008)

Overlap

The notion of territorial overlap in regards to the treaty process occurs when neighbouring groups both claim title over the same area. Overlap is a contentious issue throughout British Columbia with people strongly divided.[56] One question that came out repeatedly during this research was: Do people know the land? Alfred explains:

> [O]n a count of this overlap business... you have to leave it. Leave it, it's no use to talk about things like trapping, if you never set a trap in your life. What's the sense of talking culture if you never were in a fish camp, for example, or set a net or gut a fish, stuff like that. That's why these things have to be accurate... you all know what I'm talking about. That's why I feel very uncomfortable for anybody in a treaty organization, treaty team, that say 'well this is my, our *keyoh* [traditional territory], my grandfather or somebody owns that place... (Alfred Joseph:5 June 2008).

On another occasion Alfred elaborated:

> We don't have no... dispute over traditional territories, *keyoh* and overlaps. Even I don't, even Pierre doesn't see it. You know what I mean? We use to go together in five bands sometimes six bands, we camp out here and there. The whole, you know, the whole Tache use to go there, 15 Mile Creek. We use to visit each other with boat, in my time. And nobody said anything about 'oh, this part is yours or that part is yours', nothing (Alfred Joseph:3 October 2008).

[56] This whole issue is fraught and caused by the provincial and federal governments' desire for discrete bounded territories, but this exceeds the bounds of this thesis.

One distinction (connected to both treaty and overlap), which seems to be blurred by younger generations is that marriage alliances brought access to land, but not title. During my interview with Justa Monk he shared an example that illustrates this right:

> [P]eople really have to be careful about what area they claim. They can't just claim everybody's area now-a-days 'cause long time ago they had respect for people's territory. Like I'm living in Burns Lake now and I don't go out hunting or fishing when I feel like it unless somebody from that area comes with me and they're all...I mean I got relatives over there and they're all saying, "Go out wherever you want to, you know, it's just as good as yours" even though my dad is from Old Fort but I still...dad always said "respect people's area, don't just barge in there and do what you like" so that's how I was taught (Justa Monk:24 October 2008).

Justa has a certain right through his father's side but still asks for permission.

Overlap is a larger issue. As William Joseph explains, "They say now, Tl'azt'en and Yekooche, if they want to get together it's nothing but how about Babine, Nadleh and Fort Fraser and all them guys, and Fort St. James, what do they gonna say? That's the big trouble with that overlap" (William Joseph:2 October 2008). The problem is through the modern treaty process, rigid lines are required by the province of British Columbia, to be drawn between communities. These lines are modern constructs that in some cases have no basis in historical reality. The Elders are very much aware of this situation and agree it needs to be addressed. William Joseph expressed many of the Elders' views when he said:

> [W]ell you see the way you're planning it now, you say the people they got to share their own territory. The people who stay in Yekooche land, they share theirs. The people staying Tache, they could share theirs, that's the way long time ago it used to be. But now we all get together with Tl'azt'en, Fort St. James, Pinche, Trembleur Lake, Babine, I don't know how that will work, that's what I'm saying. I don't know how that treaty will work. Maybe some will start quarrelling, shooting at one another, fighting; it's not going to be too good, that's what I'm saying. So we got to make sure sit down with everybody, altogether, and make one good paper. And then go forward with that (William Joseph:2 October 2008).

The Elders want to work together to solve the disputes.

In the Title and first chapter of his book, Ted Chamberlin (2004) quotes a Gitxan Elder, who asks some government officials: "If this is your land, where are your stories?" The Elder proceeded to tell a story in his language [Gitxan]. Chamberlain goes on to explain, "But what they understood was more important: how stories give meaning and value to the places we call home; how they bring us close to the world we live in by taking us into a world of words; how they hold us together and at the same time keep us apart. They also understood the importance of... language, especially to those who do not speak it" (Chamberlin 2004). Stories are what give meaning and value to the places we call home. They legitimize our place within our surroundings. Beverly John shared the following from a conversation with her brother, Grand Chief Ed John, after a recent visit:

> [T]he best way to exercise our rights as Indigenous people is to go back to the land and make sure we're using the land and our language and our culture as proof [that] yea, we are Indigenous, and yes we have these rights... this is our territory where we came from and this is our history (Beverly John:5 June 2008).

What both John and Chamberlain are illuminating is that Indigenous communities ties to the land run deep. I hope in some small way this thesis encourages the reader to dwell on such things, reminding them how very much Tl'azt'enne history is tied intrinsically to the land. As William Joseph put it, "'aw dustl'us oolhghus 'ait'oh [you cannot chew paper]" (William Joseph:18 September 2008). Money is by no means a replacement for their territory. By sharing a few of their stories, the Elders are affirming this is their land and their future as well. After a Keyoh Holders' meeting I was invited to attend, an Elder gave me a copy of the following quoted in a newsletter clipping from the 1970s:

> It would be so much easier just to fold our hands and not make this fight... to say I, one man, can do nothing. I grow afraid only when I see people thinking and acting like this. We all know the story about the man who sat beside the trail too long, and

> then it grew over and he could never find his way again. We can never forget what has happened, but we cannot go back nor can we just sit beside the trail (Opeteca Hanawayin Poundmaker 1842-1886).

As a non-Indigenous person, I believe that knowledge, education, and ultimately cooperation and open discourse, are necessary to challenge the paradigm of indigenous/non-indigenous relations. Freire argues that a critical consciousness of the cultural and historical roots of a people is the foundation for their cultural emancipation. Moreover, he asserts reformers must begin with the way in which a group communicates about its world (Freire 1970). In Freire's terminology, Indigenous peoples must name the world for themselves, and as Graham Hingangaroa Smith argues, "Indigenous peoples must set the agenda for change themselves" (Smith 2000:210). As a non-Indigenous person, I think it is important to show support and acknowledge the rights of those who were here first. Wider society needs to learn to take a back seat and walk behind or beside Indigenous people on the road ahead. We must stop trying to lead the way and pulling where we think they need to go. The Elders want the people to come together, and bear in mind, the land must be protected at all cost. As Simon put it: *Ndi yun k'ut 'ants'et* [This land for nothing] (stated during interview with Helen Johnnie:3 Oct 2008).

Further Study

One thing that has become obvious to me throughout this research is the degree to which history needs to be rewritten and corrected, most significantly at the Fort St. James Historic Park, where Father Morice is depended on highly as a source. The problem is that historical inaccuracies are taught to Tl'azt'en members, including the Elders, and they have been and continue to be passed down to subsequent generations. The history Morice presents is tidy and easy. Because of the nature of his motivations and his way of

thinking, I am inclined to believe that while his version of history is full of useful information, much of it does not tell the authentic story, or at the very least, the whole one. A First Nations perspective is clearly missing.

Additionally, genealogical work to document the ancestral ties between the various communities in the region would be of benefit. An in-depth history compiled of each of the communities (both written and oral) when combined with genealogical work could go a long way in settling disputes and educating the people.

Conclusion

I have tried to conceptualize this thesis in terms of a journey—a metaphor that brings us into the very heart of *Dakelh* life. At this juncture we must retrace our steps before proceeding. There came a moment in the course of this research where I came to realize everything was going to be ok, and I could finally enjoy myself. That moment came around the time I went out on the land with the Elders. Simon John and several others had spent the majority of the summer camped out at the lake. It was a magnificent spot with a gorgeous view of the territory. We had planned on taking the Elders around the area by boat as a way to help them reconnect to this place, and hopefully serve to remind them of the past. Unfortunately, the boat had some mechanical issues which forced us to spend the day at the camp. It was to be a blessing in disguise.

A moose had been shot that morning; I first saw its lifeless body on a tarp close to the lake. I am not a squeamish person, so while the partially butchered animal did not bother me, it did incite a sense of excitement as I thought of enjoying fresh game out on the land. I was put to work chopping vegetables as Simon began making a moose-meat stew. This was much in the way the Elders spoke of eating out there as children;

vegetables were grown in small gardens that were tended by the family, and stored in root cellars under cabins. Our vegetables came from Overweightea, the grocery store in town.

The Elders sat around the fire excitedly reminiscing about a place they all remembered, but few had visited recently. I heard a fury of *Dakelh* and saw hand gestures point here and there with plenty of laughter exchanged. Simon prepared the stew over the fire, and as we all sat and ate, the Elders began to speak of this place. I was enjoying myself; the Elders' words and our meal came together harmoniously, and that's when I realized this was, in essence, the ideal campfire, though it wasn't until sometime later I came to understand what that meant.

While the food hadn't come entirely from the land, it was prepared and enjoyed on the territory by grateful hearts. This campfire had taken many hands to arrange, much like my research. The fact that just about all those hands were there sitting around that fire was the more rare and important thing, as was the fact that the Elders were opening up themselves and their lives for me to record. As I listened to the stories, and to the Elders correcting each other and corroborating to accurately preserve their oral tradition, I realized for the first time that this was truth. While some might label these stories as tales or merely legend, I couldn't help but feel deep within me that they were authentic. Sitting around a fire on the territory in which this oral history was born gave it a life that is otherwise lost. I could reach down and dip my hands in the lake that sustained countless generations before us at that very location. I could see the mountains and the stream that were key elements to the stories of the past. I felt a power that flowed through the words that was ancient and deep. This work was important. To visit Merton again from chapter one, he writes: "We must be true inside, true to ourselves, before we can

know a truth that is outside us" (Merton 198). I have tried to be true to myself throughout this work, and hope it has enabled me to delve slightly below the surface. Sitting quietly and listening to the stories unfold around me, I was struck by the true cost of that knowledge; "the precise sacrifice of time and energy and life" that preserving it entailed (Pollan 2007:409). One of the Elders spoke of his ancestors carrying fire with them as they travelled. This is much like the Elders themselves, who are keepers of a vast library of living memory amassed over a lifetime. In this way, a campfire is a place to impart knowledge of the past to direct the future.

I want to journey back briefly to the themes I discussed in Chapter 2. To compare the transcendental nature of this adventure on the territory to sitting in a library reading a book, is to marvel at the multiplicity of a world that could produce two such different methods of accomplishing the same thing: *remembering the past.* The two stand at the far extreme ends of the spectrum of different ways we have to engage the world. It is easy to get caught up in the experience. I was tempted at first to label the oral history as a nearly perfect knowledge, the written record an equally perfect ignorance.[57] However, it is not that simple. In many cases, the oral record is incomplete or rapidly vanishing. In this case, the written record can be used to tease a more complete picture of the past and give more credence to the oral tradition.

While hearing the stories on the territory is not always possible, I think it is extremely valuable every once in a while being conscious of what it took to preserve it. To dwell on these things reminds us of the costs incurred in the two modes remembering. The cost of the oral traditional is substantial, but is acknowledged and paid for. Today's

[57] This thought came after spending two weeks reading historical documents that were highly charged and racially denigrating. I include it here in order to illustrate my thought process and hope it is clear in the following pages that I see written history as both highly valuable and important

Elders spent the time listening, remembering, and verifying with others. Willie Mattess remembers listening as a young child, "Long, long, some of those stories four evenings while they're talking, us, we go to sleep... long stories" (Willie Mattess:26 January 2009). The written word at first seems like a bargain but fails to cover its true cost, instead charging it to the future. While ink and paper preserve to some extent, they lose the power, context, and engagement of orality. Currently, the oral tradition is facing challenges in many communities. For countless generations, history was something that took place in the stable context of a family and a culture where the full consciousness of what was involved did not need to be explained. It was stored away in a set of rituals, habits and protocols and is the reason it survives. As Levi-Strauss suggests:

> I think there are some things we have lost, and we should try perhaps to regain them, because I am not sure that in the kind of world in which we are living and with the kind of scientific thinking we are bound to follow, we can regain these things exactly as if they had never been lost; but we can try to become aware of their existence and their importance (Levi-Strauss 277).

I documented this history at the request of the Elders with the hopes that it would assist in bringing back the oral tradition, and foster a curiosity amongst the youth to seek out the context of what has been recorded.

However we choose to remember, whether we preserve the past in our memories or on pieces of paper, there is value in both. The crucial thing is keeping the stories alive. As Simon John recalled:

> The first time I heard my dad talk about it, he always give me the same smart remark, 'You never asked that's how come I don't talk to you about these things.' People need to ask questions, they're right. Then they'll know what's on our mind (Simon John:Interview With Leona Shaw March 13 2008).

So often the Elders said they wished they asked more questions when they were younger. Paul Wright, a Begade Shuhtagot'ine Elder, said "to keep our culture alive is just like

saying thank you to our grandfathers..." (quoted in Kulchyski:13). I grew up not really having grandparents, so I am thankful to be a part of this work. I hope it will serve Tl'azt'en Nation and specifically the Elders and community members who have been so gracious with me. In many ways the story here is incomplete. Time and space do not allow me to include everything. As is the nature of working with Elders, so much more information came out in extensive discussions of their way of life and technology. This wealth of information will remain in the community to be used in the future. As Henry indicated:

> [T]he Elders that spoke to us before their words are still alive. They didn't tell us that because they were mad at us, they told us that because they loved us and they want to see the best for our children's future. And this is the way about going about doing it... we need [to] make a future for our children (Henry Abel Joseph:5 June 2008).

This is why this work has been done. It is Simon's and the Elders' hope that this project will teach in some respect their language, their culture, and their territory so that today's youth will one day pass it on to future generations. Leroy Little Bear stated, "The function of Aboriginal values and customs is to maintain the relationships that hold creation together. If creation manifests itself in terms of cyclical patterns and repetitions, then the maintenance and renewal of those patterns is all-important" (Little Bear 2000:81). In this sense this project goes beyond mere preservation and is more about cultural continuity. It is not about going back to a point frozen in time, but more about an approach or a way of thinking. It is about maintaining the ways of the Elders, and knowing who we are and where we come from. Pierre's grandfather knew the way without even a blaze. The Elders have left us with their words so that we may follow in their footsteps; indeed, as Pierre's grandfather used to tell him, "*yun gha nuts'udilh daja*" [we walk according to what we see on the ground] (Pierre John:2 October 2008).

Snachailya [I am thankful to you for what you have provided]

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Appendix 1: Interviews

(in chronological order)

Yekooche Information Session: 5 June 2008

Tl'azt'en Information Session: 26 June 2008

Elders' Camp: 18 September 2008

Chris Gall	Beverly John	Simon John
Margaret Duncan	Thomas Johnnie	Helen Johnnie
William Joseph	Celestine Thomas	John Jullian
Gloria Johnnie	Gordon John	Darcy Solonas
Ralph Joseph	Chris Joseph	Ceecee Shelke
Waylon Joseph	Hank Joseph	Margaret Joseph
Alfred Joseph	Terry Furlong	Lisa Joseph
Pierre John		

Pierre John: 2 October 2008

William Joseph: 2 October 2008

Alfred Joseph: 3 October 2008

Helen Johnnie: 3 October 2008

Sophie Monk: 3 October 2008

Justa Monk: 24 October 2008

Willie Mattess: 26 January 2009

Catherine Morris: 26 January 2009

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

Personal

What is your full name?

When were you born?

Where did you grow up?

Yeko

What do you know about the name of Yeko?

Are there stories about its history or origins?

Have these stories undergone any changes?

Was your family living in this area?

How did they come to live there?

Who decided your family would move?

Could you tell me some of the reasons your family had to move?

What stories have come down to you from your parents and grandparents about Yeko?

Life on the Territory

What is your earliest memory of Yeko?

What foods did you eat on a typical day?

In what ways did you survive off the land?

What transportation did you use?

What did you do for relaxation (storytelling, music etc.)?

What do you know about the story of Adam and Rosa?

What haven't we talked about that you'd like to talk about in the time we have left?