TRIBAL CANOE JOURNEYS ON NORTH AMERICA'S NORTHWEST COAST: WELL-BEING, ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNIQUES, INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE AND CULTURAL RESURGENCE.

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the cultural and political significance of the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) among Indigenous communities of North America's Northwest Coast, focusing on the Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Kwakwaka'wakw. By examining contemporary practices surrounding canoe-making and participation in canoe journeys, the research investigates how canoes bridge ancestral knowledge and modern cultural resurgence, embodying Indigenous resistance against colonial legacies. Using a decolonial framework that integrated Critical Indigenous Theory, the study analyzes canoes' material and symbolic construction and their practical roles in Indigenous resurgence. Engaging directly with Indigenous knowledge holders and TCJ participants, ethnographic fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and multimedia documentation from the 2023 TCJ were used as methods, aiming for Indigenous perspectives to remain central to the analysis. A thematic analysis identified the themes of cultural revitalization and resurgence; intergenerational transmission of knowledge; personal transformation and healing; community, cultural integrity, and environment; leadership, empowerment and political and social activism. These themes emphasize TCJ's role in Indigenous cultural revitalization, enabling participants to reconnect with their ancestral knowledge and practices. It also contributes to personal and collective healing and creating transformative experiences. The research further analyzes the TCJ as a dynamic space of cultural hybridity, where tradition is maintained while embracing modern elements. The findings suggest that the TCJ is a celebration of Indigenous identity and an active form of resistance against colonial structures. This research contributes to understanding the TCJ as a living practice that defies static notions of culture and continues to promote Indigenous sovereignty, cultural identity, and political activism. Ultimately, it argues that canoes, both as

objects and metaphors, are central to the resurgence of Indigenous cultural practices and to ongoing decolonial movements.

Key-words: Canoe, Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ), Pacific Northwest Coast Indigenous Nations, Indigenous cultural resurgence, decolonial

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Glossary

TCJ – Tribal Canoe Journey

TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

ICH – Intangible Cultural Heritage

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the canoe pullers, knowledge keepers, and Indigenous communities who have fought tirelessly to preserve their cultural traditions and passed on their wisdom to future generations. May this work honour your resilience, strength, and commitment to Indigenous knowledge and ways of being.

It is also dedicated to my family, whose constant support has been my foundation, and to all those seeking to reconnect with their heritage and the natural world.

Introduction

This research examines the canoe(s) and the cultural experience of canoeing together on North America's Northwest coast and in the Salish Sea as an object and a practice within a process of Indigenous resistance and cultural resurgence movements. Focusing on techniques and reflections regarding the material and social construction and usage of the canoe within Indigenous knowledge systems, it explores contemporary approaches regarding the making of the canoe and the perspectives of canoe knowledge-holders on canoeing together on Canoe Journeys or Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ)[1]. From ancestral knowledge about the forest's elements, the selection of trees, the crafting of canoes, and the – often challenging – journey itself, numerous cultural opportunities arise to transmit and rebuild knowledge and emic meanings as well as to share and enjoy the voyage (Frandy & Cederström, 2017). The process of constructing canoes and participating in the TCJ provides cultural opportunities for the transmission, revitalization and maintenance of knowledge.

The Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) has been a critical cultural event since it started with the Paddle to Seattle in 1989, celebrating the rich maritime heritage of Indigenous communities along the Northwest Pacific coast. These annual gatherings reconnect participants to their ancestral pathways and practices for exchanging cultural knowledge and traditions. The journeys, marked by protocols and celebrations, have grown significantly, and they are currently a robust platform for cultural revitalization and intergenerational learning. As communities paddle through traditional routes, they reaffirm their connections to the land and each other, promoting a sense of identity and resistance against cultural decline. Each canoe journey is a reaffirmation of Indigenous

[1] I will use TCJ, Tribal Canoe Journeys, canoe journeys and journeys interchangeably.

sovereignty and an act of resistance embedded in the ceremonial exchange of songs, stories, and dances, crucial for sustaining the Indigenous nations involved.

Since its inception in 1993, the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) have been held annually, drawing Indigenous communities from the Northwest Pacific coast of North America, including Canada and the United States. This event serves as a platform for various Indigenous Nations as canoe families from diverse backgrounds embark on journeys to host communities. Notably, these canoe families have preserved their knowledge and traditions for generations, and TCJ offers them a unique opportunity to share their wisdom with other Indigenous communities (Beattie, 2017).

The Tribal Canoe Journeys events consist of multiple cultural festivities and exchanges over a period of several days. In addition to the physical journey of paddling on the water, participants engage in protocols that span several days. These protocols involve sharing songs, dances, stories, and teachings (All Nations Paddles Up; Beattie, 2017; Daehnke, 2019; Johansen, 2012; Paddle to Muckleshoot; Pulling Together Canoe Society). The gathering has significantly increased in participants throughout the years, attracting thousands of attendees to various host communities located along the Northwest Pacific coast (Beattie, 2017). The TCJ serves as a platform for Indigenous communities to unite through canoeing, celebrating, and transmitting their cultural heritage.

Figure 1

Northwest Coast map

The origins of Tribal Journeys are diverse and subject to debate (Beattie, 2017; Hundley, 2022; Johansen, 2012; Marshall, 2011). One event widely recognized as its direct precursor is the Paddle to Seattle in 1989, organized as part of the State of Washington's centennial celebrations. In July of that year, canoes, which have always held an important place for Indigenous Nations on the Northwest Coast, set out from the Hoh and La Push tribal communities in Washington, USA,

embarking on a voyage through the Salish Sea to Puget Sound in Canada. They were joined by canoes from the Heiltsuk, Lummi, Tulalip, and Suquamish nations, and together, they travelled to Seattle, where they presented a letter to the people of the State of Washington. This letter, endorsed by representatives from twenty-one tribal communities across the state, included the words of the esteemed Duwamish and Suquamish leader, Si'ahl (Seattle), who called upon the residents and government of the State of Washington to fulfill their responsibilities as caretakers of the earth (Daehnke, 2019; Krupat, 2011). This journey not only reaffirmed the cultural significance of traditional canoe travel but also served as a powerful statement of Indigenous resilience and stewardship. It laid the groundwork for what would become an annual event, now known as Tribal Journeys, where Indigenous Nations continue to celebrate their heritage, strengthen intertribal relations, and advocate for environmental responsibility. Through these gatherings, the values expressed in 1989 endure, promoting unity and cultural revitalization.

The Tribal Canoe Journeys

The present-day Canoe Journey serves as a powerful symbol of unity. For example, the Coast Salish unite to revive nationhood ruptured by settler colonial boundaries (Hundley, 2022). In this context, the Canoe Journey holds significant implications for understanding the identity development process within the settler colonialism framework. As an example, many of the Musqueam Nation members identify as "Coast Salish" (Hundley, 2022). Establishing a "third space" (Bhabha, 1994), participants in the Canoe Journey create a platform for affirming a political identity that challenges the existing power dynamics between non-Indigenous settlers and Indigenous people and fosters a sense of collective agency (Hundley, 2022). Through their shared participation in the Canoe Journey, Indigenous communities assert their presence, resilience, and aspirations for self-determination, ultimately redefining and reclaiming their cultural and political identities in the face of historical and ongoing colonial oppression.

Additionally, this research considers the evolving nature of TCJ as well as canoe-making in this region. The pullers no longer adhere strictly or exclusively to "traditional" practices such as celestial observations, natural signs, oral traditions, wayfinding techniques, sounds, waterway knowledge, and intuition but incorporate contemporary elements, including GPS and the aid of trucks following inland, support boat(s) and the costal guards, showcasing the journey's ability to adapt while retaining its cultural significance. This challenges the static notions of culture and demonstrates that cultural traditions can thrive and adapt to modern contexts. For example, academic and author Bruce Johansen (2012) writes that:

> […] During the past two decades, these canoe journeys have become a summertime staple for Native peoples as well as for thousands of non-Indians who follow the "pullers" in Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia […] The pullers are not purists. They may call

> for help from chase boats on the global positioning system (GPS); trucks follow them on shore with sleeping bags, food, and other supplies; and the US and Canadian coast guards offer help if needed. This is not your great-great-grandfather's canoe journey, but it is a revival of culture and, to some extent, Indigenous languages. As such, cultural revival through re-enactment of traditional practices has value. The canoe journeys (and the land-based events associated with them) might be compared with powwows in other areas [and in the northwest coast too]. These also evolve over time, blending traditions with new practices. No living culture is static. (p. 131-2)

Johansen (2012) highlights the evolving nature of the TCJ and its value in cultural revival and the preservation of Indigenous languages. The journeys adapt traditional practices to contemporary contexts by incorporating modern tools and support systems, ensuring the safety and inclusivity of participants while maintaining cultural significance. Therefore, the study also highlights the dynamic nature of the TCJ, which embraces tradition and innovation in preserving Indigenous culture and heritage.

Furthermore, the journeys facilitate the learning and use of Indigenous languages through songs, stories, and intergenerational coexistence, promoting cultural continuity.

Moreover, through listening to experiences of canoeing and exploring TCJ paddler's perspective, the research emphasized dimensions of cultural resurgence through local knowledge transmission, material, and cultural heritage. This was done by recognizing the canoe as a technical object and metaphorical methodology that plays a pivotal role in facilitating the experience of cultural resurgence (Frandy & Cederström, 2017; Johansen, 2012; Leroi-Gourhan, 1993). These cultural interactions occur from the canoe's production and are further enriched during its utilization, creating meaningful relationships and fostering a sense of connection and continuity

with cultural traditions and heritage (Frandy & Cederström, 2017). Thus, working with the canoe and the TCJ paddler's perspective provided an understanding of this living practice's cultural significance and transformative power It also provided insights into the landscape, the significance of territories, the art of navigation, and the overall well-being derived from the pleasure and leisure of paddling on the water with the canoe.

Beattie (2017) highlights a growing body of academic research on Tribal Canoe Journeys, suggesting that these journeys serve as a pathway to resurgence for Indigenous nations, such as the Heiltsuk, from Waglisla (Bella Bella) in the Central Coast region of British Columbia, with whom she worked with. Her research, utilizing participatory video and interviews with community members, found that TCJ promoted cultural resurgence, individual healing, reconnection to nature, and stronger relationships within and across Indigenous communities. However, she also points out several research gaps: the studies do not focus on Indigenous resurgence, they are limited in scope and duration, and there needs to be more community participation and engagement. These gaps indicate the need for further research about the journeys and what they represent to each nation that takes part in them. By acknowledging the gaps in existing research and emphasizing the importance of addressing these limitations, this study contributes to the understanding of Indigenous resurgence movements through the lens of Critical Indigenous Theory and decolonial perspectives.

This research explores the material and social construction of the canoe by Indigenous knowledge holders from the Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Kwakwaka'wakw nations, focusing on its use during the 2023 Tribal Canoe Journeys By examining the perspectives of the paddlers, this study reveals how the Tribal Canoe Journeys serve as a bridge between past and present, connecting Indigenous knowledge with contemporary cultural practices. The canoe, as

both a literal and metaphorical vessel, embodies this connection, preserving and propelling historical consciousness. By addressing the research gaps, the study seeks to understand the potential impacts of the TCJ and the cultural significance of the canoe, thereby expanding the existing knowledge on Indigenous resurgence. The insights gained from this research may contribute to a deeper understanding of the transformative potential and cultural importance of these journeys.

Tribal Canoe Journeys challenge settler colonialism, revitalize cultural practices, and assert Indigenous presence also by transcending international borders, understood here as colonial borders. Each year, a different location is chosen for the journey, regardless of whether it falls on the United States or the Canadian side of the Coast Salish Sea border[2]. Focusing on the 2023 journey, the Paddle to Muckleshoot, I interpret the journey as a microcosm to help me examine how these cultural artifacts facilitate travel across physical spaces and through time. The intention is to underscore how canoes - and the journeys they enable - are one of the central aspects of heritage and ancestral connection to communities. Essentially, the canoe journey exists as a living expression and element of these Coast Salish Nations' intangible cultural heritage, as outlined in the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Pawłowska-Mainville, 2023). Indigenous communities are historical societies with a strong

[2] Under Article III of the Jay Treaty (1794), Native Americans are granted the right to freely travel across the border between the United States and Canada (then a British territory). The treaty states:

> It is agreed that it shall at all times be free to His Majesty's subjects, and to the citizens of the United States, and also to the Indians dwelling on either side of the said boundary line, freely to pass and repass by land or inland navigation, into the respective territories and countries of the two parties, on the continent of America, (the country within the limits of the Hudson's Bay Company only excepted) and to navigate all the lakes, rivers, and waters thereof, and freely to carry on trade and commerce with each other.

Despite this legal guarantee, allegations of increased scrutiny of Indigenous individuals at the border have surfaced over time, as reported in the "Border Crossing Issues and the Jay Treaty Canada". (Parliament. Senate. Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Dyck, L. E., & Patterson, D. G. (2016). Border Crossing Issues and the Jay Treaty. Senate of Canada).

understanding of the past, often passed on through oral testimony, ceremonies and cultural activities. They view their experience of TCJ from a very long perspective, celebrating their attachment to specific territories and devoting a great deal of community time to the remembrance of ancestors and important events and processes (Johansen, 2012). The sense of rootedness in the past is highlighted by the attachment of stories, oral histories, and legends to traditional lands, sometimes even though the richness and texture of the different Indigenous languages, this rootedness plays a vital role in preserving the Indigenous understanding of history (Coates, 2004).

In this way, it can be argued that the entire thesis revolves around canoes as an object and the concepts they embody. Canoes enable journeys, shape the sense of place, forge alliances, elicit stories, and revive mythos, similar to Marcel Mauss's concept of the Total Social Fact (Mauss, 1990): a phenomenon that involves all aspects of society - economic, legal, political, religious, and moral dimensions, among others. The comparison is valid here due to the transversal nature of canoes, which used to permeate all aspects of life on the Northwest Coast, creating a canoe-oriented culture. Consequently, both the methodology and methods of this research are deeply canoe-oriented, reflecting the centrality of canoes in the region's social, cultural, and historical contexts.

Positionality

My name is Alexandre Dantas e Sousa. I was born on September 26th, 1981, during the last Brazilian military dictatorship, into a middle-class family in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil. I am a non-Indigenous graduate student navigating a community-based participatory research relationship with Indigenous partners in British Columbia, Canada, and Washington State, United States of America. In my country, I may be read as a privileged white man, which I believe I do, indeed, take benefit of and, somehow, exercise certain privileges, despite personal efforts to do differently in the radically unequal, stratified, racialized, elitist, masculinized, western-oriented society of Brazil. As a non-Anglophone immigrant in Canada, I find myself needing to understand and navigate a distinct privilege system in which I am a participant, primarily as an international student holding a temporary visa. This system presents an opportunity for me to align myself with and become an ally to other groups, actively preserving and revitalizing their culture.

Being born and raised in the country's capital, I have not interacted with Indigenous populations. I was probably first exposed to the theme in elementary school, during celebrations of Indigenous Peoples' Day, which in Brazil is celebrated on April 19th. I believe my first marking remembrance contact with Native peoples happened because I was the neighbour to Mario Juruna—the first Indigenous person to be a parliamentary in the Brazilian Congress—in the suburban neighbourhood where I lived throughout my infancy. Mr. Juruna was an important figure and was probably the first to call my diffuse attention and interest in Native peoples. Later in my life, after completing a Social Anthropology degree, I worked at the Department of Indigenous Health of the Ministry of Health of Brazil in a program called Innovative Actions, which, through dialogue with key figures of Indigenous societies, aimed at promoting initiatives to strengthen the participation of Indigenous peoples on public health services and assistance, according to their

cosmologies and their own understandings on health, healing, ritual, efficacy, symbolism, and more.

I share the experience of where I come from to position myself and what I can bring to this research, taking into consideration that an interesting point is to focus not only on the research but on the researcher's embodiment and their own positionality (Kovach et al., 2013). Entering a research relationship should include the researcher self-locating, showing respect for the place one comes from, and also for the place one is entering. Thus, it is possible to say I come from a confused and ambiguous place where identities are not fixed or clear. Being part of this society, I am a Brazilian citizen. However, my deeper ancestrality has long been neglected and white-washed throughout generations. My connection to my history, or my family's history, is a blur rather than a certainty. For now, I have left my country as a married man and father, a speaker of the national language, who enters this research relationship as a Latin-American immigrant speaking English as my third language.

Positioning myself in this research is also essential to understanding my interest in water vessels: I am a sailor with a passion for the waters, tides, wind and, of course, sailboats, canoes and pretty much any kind of vessel. Since childhood, sailing first with my father, then with friends, family, my daughter, and students (I have instructed sailing) have been moments of sharing experience and knowledge. When out in the water, one soon realizes that the relations one establishes in a vessel are more of cooperation than competition, mutual assistance, sharing and pleasure. This includes knowing the technical aspects of it and being able to intervene when necessary. As a sailor, upon arriving in Canada, I started noticing that canoes can be seen everywhere: at the Vancouver airport, in arts for tourists, in museums and, in Prince George and at UNBC: the canoe sitting by the stairs of Prince George's City Hall, the Lheidli T'enneh,-made

cottonwood dugout canoe at the University, the birchbark canoe that Professor Michel Bouchard (UNBC professor) and Michel Labelle made, the remarkable canoe-shaped ceiling of the "student street" at UNBC, a more than hundred-feet long wood, metal and glass structure.

When defining this research subject, the possibility of joining my passion with such an important artifact for First Nations and their cultural resurgence and resistance movements in Canada seemed appropriate, engaging, and relevant. The relevance of the canoe to First Nations cultures was also recognized by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, which "declared that the canoe was one of the Seven Wonders of Canada, identified through a nationwide media competition using both official judges and public participation" (Erickson, 2013, p.9). Seeing and learning about the importance of the canoe and the practice of canoeing, together with my own passion, I chose to research canoe and canoeing as part of Indigenous resistance and cultural revival movements. As I explore this theme, I bring forward the necessity transmitted to me to avoid negativist approaches when doing research together with Indigenous partners, where Indigenous peoples may be contemplated and represented as being vulnerable, and the stories that are most shared about them are the ones of pain and humiliation (Tuck & Yang, 2014).

As an immigrant and international graduate student collaborating with Indigenous partners in British Columbia, I approach this research with respect, humility, and a commitment to meaningful engagement. Drawing from my experiences in Indigenous health and my passion for water vessels, I aim to contribute to the discourse of Indigenous resurgence and resistance by centring local First Nations' protocols, amplifying their voices, and fostering mutual respect. This research journey offers an opportunity to celebrate Coast Slish, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Kwakwaka'wakw knowledge and wisdom, honouring the resilience and strength of Indigenous communities in the process.

The visibility and reverence of canoes across various facets of Canadian life and culture highlighted a unique opportunity for exploration and inquiry. As I embarked on this research journey, two critical questions emerged, focusing on the interplay between tradition and modernity, identity and resistance:

1. By examining the material and social construction of the canoe and its utilization within Coast Salish Sea First Nations knowledge systems, how do Canoe Journeys function as a process of movements of Indigenous resistance and resurgence within Northwest Coast nations?

2. How do the perspectives of paddlers and Indigenous knowledge holders participating in the 2023 edition of Tribal Canoe Journeys contribute to the intergenerational transmission and revitalization of Indigenous knowledge and enhance the understanding of places and landscapes?

All the phases of this research journey, which involved documentation research, including several videos, interviews, and actual travelling to take part in a TCJ and to meet a master carver, offered me an opportunity to celebrate Indigenous knowledge and wisdom, honouring the resilience and strength of Indigenous communities in the process. As one of my collaborators shared, “The journeys have been a critical piece to cultural revitalization for our people. It’s once more an engagement in the cultural revitalization of language, protocols, ancestral ways of travel, and how we interact with each other. That is something you cannot replicate inside of a classroom. It is a lived experience.” This deeply resonates with me and underscores the importance of this work. Embarking on this research journey has been both an academic endeavour and a personal discovery and understanding of the land where I now live, in the hope of being a partner toward reconciliation, once again stating my land acknowledgement: I respectfully acknowledge the

unceded ancestral lands of the Lheidli T’enneh, part of the Dakelh (Carrier) First Nation, on whose land I now live, work, play and raise my family.

Chapter one: Origins and Cultural Significance of Tribal Canoe Journeys

The origins of Tribal Journeys are diverse and subject to debate (Beattie, 2017; Hundley, 2022; Johansen, 2012; Marshall, 2011). One event widely recognized as its direct precursor is the Paddle to Seattle in 1989, organized as part of the State of Washington's centennial celebrations. In July of that year, canoes, which have always held an important place for Indigenous Nations on the northwest coast, set out from the Hoh and La Push tribal communities in Washington, embarking on a voyage through the Salish Sea to Puget Sound. They were joined by canoes from the Heiltsuk, Lummi, Tulalip, and Suquamish nations, and together, they travelled to Seattle, where they presented a letter to the people of the State of Washington. This letter, endorsed by representatives from twenty-one tribal communities across Washington State and British Columbia, included the words of the esteemed Duwamish and Suquamish leader, Si'ahl (Seattle), who called upon the residents and government of the State of Washington to fulfill their responsibilities as caretakers of the earth (Daehnke, 2019; Krupat, 2011).

Among the Coast Salish First Nations on the Canadian side of the border, the origins of the canoe journeys are attributed differently, tracing back to Expo '86 held in Vancouver, Canada, 1986. During this event, members of the Heiltsuk Nation constructed and navigated a traditional dugout canoe known as "glwa", "a glow" in Hailhzaqvl, the Heiltsuk language, from Bella Bella (Waglisla) to Vancouver. The construction and journey of the "glwa" canoe held significant importance for the Heiltsuk community, as it symbolized a cultural revival after more than a century (Beattie, 2017). This event marked the beginning of a renewed connection with their heritage and traditions for numerous members of the Heiltsuk Nation.

The transportation theme of Expo 86 served as inspiration for First Nations to reintroduce the canoe's cultural significance. The remarkable journey of the Heiltsuk dugout canoe, covering

nearly 400 nautical miles to attend the World Exposition, ignited a revived interest in ancestral mobility among tribes and nations of the Northwest Coast. While there was no initial intention to create a socio-political movement centred around the canoe, one emerged organically. Early organizers and participants of TCJ, such as those from the LooTaas community on the Washington State coast, recognized the potential of the canoe to address the acknowledged impact of the international border on their lives and possibly alleviate divisionary constraints. They recognized that TCJ could empower participants to reclaim their history and demand recognition in a region divided by the border. TCJ provides a transnational and transborder platform for exploring and reinforcing their ethnonational and regional identity. Through reconnecting with their First Nations or Tribal heritage, TCJ fosters a deeper cultural understanding and connection (Hundley, 2022).

The Paddle to Bella Bella in 1993, known as Qatuwas, in the Heiltsuk language, signifying "people gathered together in one place" (Daehnke, 2017, p. 68), adds another layer to the origins of the Canoe Journeys. Following the Paddle to Seattle in 1989, Frank Brown, a member of the Heiltsuk Nation, and his crew paddled from Waglisla again and issued a challenge to the Coast Salish nations to join them in the paddle to Bella Bella in four years. This challenge, combined with the success of the 1989 Centennial event, provoked a passion throughout the region. Many new carvers began crafting canoes for the 1993 journey, and some Nations made their first canoe explicitly for that event (Johansen, 2012).

In 1993, on the shores of Waglisla, a remarkable sight unfolded during the paddle to Bella Bella. Twenty-three canoes from various Northwest Coast communities converged, significantly increasing from the nine canoes that participated in the earlier Paddle to Seattle. The Makah Nation, residing in the westernmost region of Washington State, played a pivotal role in this event.

Drawing upon their expertise in canoe carving, which they had preserved for whale hunting, the Makah contributed to revitalizing these traditional practices. In a parallel revival, the Makah reintroduced their ancestral whale hunt, utilizing oceangoing canoes after a 70-year hiatus. Moreover, they re-established their original route by paddling to Bella Bella on the open sea, and not taking the conventional path through the Juan de Fuca Strait and northward along the Georgia Strait (Johansen, 2012).

The Qatuwas festival symbolized the rebirth of the Canoe Journey as an Indigenous led recurring event, setting it apart from previous occurrences such as the 1986 World's Fair and the 1989 Centennial Celebration, which were predominantly organized by non-Indigenous entities. Instead, Qatuwas was conceived and executed entirely by Indigenous communities (Hundley, 2017). Initially, the organizers of Qatuwas planned for the event to occur every four years, with the next journey scheduled for La Push on the Washington State Coast in 1997. However, between 1994 and 1996, there were youth paddles in Olympia, Washington, and around Puget Sound on the United States side of the border. As interest in the Canoe Journey grew during this period, it suggested that the event should be held annually (Hundley, 2019).

The Tribal Journeys' settings intertwined with the concept of protocol, encompasses a set of rules governing actions and ensuring appropriate conduct (Daehnke, 2017; Johansen, 2012). One significant protocol observed during Tribal Journeys involves seeking permission to come ashore. Upon reaching the shores of host communities, the canoes and their passengers must request permission from the community before disembarking. While there is no standardized procedure for this permission protocol, it typically involves several steps. Firstly, a representative from the canoe family identifies themselves, followed by a declaration of peaceful arrival. The canoe family then provides a report on the day's journey, emphasizing the fatigue and hunger

experienced by the members. They express their desire to share songs and dances with the host community and, finally, request permission to come ashore. A representative of the host community then acknowledges and welcomes the canoe family before granting them permission to disembark (Daehnke, 2017; Johansen, 2012).

Although the protocols observed during Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) are not tied to potlatch ceremonies, they are frequently likened to them as they incorporate traditional regalia and performances (Beattie, 2017). Before colonization, canoe families would recognize tribal sovereignty by requesting permission to land on the territories of neighbouring communities (Beattie, 2017). Therefore, a resurgence of the permission to come ashore is an act of decolonization as it occurs explicitly beyond the confines of the colonial nation-state. It emphasizes the profound significance of canoe culture and Indigenous territoriality, which strives to operate outside the framework established by the colonial state (Daehnke, 2017).

Protocols are crucial for reasserting tribal nationhood and sovereignty within the landscape. They bring about essential outcomes, including the renewal of Indigenous ceremonies, language, and knowledge and the acknowledgement of Indigenous occupation of the land. Additionally, these protocols contribute to restoring ancient highways that historically connected villages and fostered connections among Indigenous peoples (Daehnke, 2017). These performing protocols extend beyond a cultural aspect. They serve as a fundamental means of decolonization by challenging and subverting the dominant narratives and structures imposed by colonization (Daehnke, 2017). By engaging in and upholding these protocols, Indigenous communities reclaim agency over their cultural practices, knowledge systems, and ways of being, asserting their sovereignty and resilience in the face of historical and ongoing colonization. By enacting protocols, Indigenous peoples actively resist and dismantle colonial power dynamics, fostering a

sense of cultural revitalization, empowerment, and self-determination. Moreover, these protocols create spaces for the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous traditions, fostering a sense of belonging, cultural continuity, and connection to ancestral lands. In this way, practicing protocols becomes an essential mechanism for healing, reclaiming Indigenous identity, and promoting a decolonized future (Daehnke, 2017; Donovan et al, 2015; Hirch & Korn, 2012; Johansen, 2012; Johnson, et al., 2019).

As an example, for the Chinook people, protocols are inherently present, and it is the responsibility of humans – as opposed to nonhuman entities – to recognize and adhere to them. These protocols reflect a sense of human agency and accountability in upholding traditional practices and values within the Chinook community. Additionally, protocols can be regarded as a form of intangible heritage, serving as a conduit for facilitating meaningful interactions and exchanges between humans as well as between humans and nonhumans (Daehnke, 2017). By respecting and following these protocols, individuals demonstrate their commitment to upholding traditional customs, fostering harmonious relationships with both human and nonhuman entities, and maintaining a sense of cultural continuity and collective identity.

The protocols linked to the resurgence of Indigenous canoe practices are deeply rooted in the past, yet they hold significant relevance in the present as they prioritize cultivating enduring relationships and responsibilities. These protocols do not reflect a longing for the past or a mere re-enactment but rather constitute a pivotal element in an ongoing process of healing and decolonization (Daehnke, 2017). Moreover, it is noteworthy that the speakers often emphasize the importance of these protocols by incorporating their heritage languages into their appeals, underscoring the significance of linguistic and cultural revitalization (Beattie, 2017). By engaging in these protocols, Indigenous communities affirm their identity, reclaim their ancestral

knowledge, and challenge the historical injustices imposed by colonization, thus contributing to the broader movement of Indigenous resurgence and decolonization (Daehnke, 2017).

Usually, following disembarkment and the carrying of the canoe out of the water by its paddlers and helpers from the host community, everyone is fed. Subsequently, the protocols of Tribal Journeys extend into the evening. During this time, each community shares their songs and dances with the other communities present, particularly with the hosts. The community that has travelled the most significant distance from their home is typically given the first opportunity to perform, creating a meaningful exchange of songs and dances that serves as an act of reciprocity and a gesture of gratitude towards the host community for their provision of food and lodging to the guests (Beattie, 2017; Daehnke, 2017).

This exchange of songs and dances, similar to the request for permission to come ashore, can endure for several hours, extending late into the night and continuing for five or more days. The protocol concludes with the dances and songs of the host community, who follow the potlatch traditions by presenting additional gifts to their visitors (Daehnke, 2017). It is essential to emphasize that these protocols are not confined solely to the final landing and the ultimate host community; they are deeply ingrained in the customs, mandatory, and are observed each time a canoe arrives at any of the homelands of tribal communities during their multi-day voyage (Daehnke, 2017).

The Tribal Canoe Journey is not a competition or a race but rather a profound demonstration of physical exertion. It is a meaningful social gathering that fosters connections and interaction among communities and individuals within the same community (Johansen, 2012). One significant and integral component of TCJ gatherings is storytelling, which occurs throughout the journey and at the destination. Through sharing stories, songs, and dances, participants actively

preserve and transmit cultural heritage, educating Indigenous youth about their rich heritage and fostering cultural identity (Beattie, 2017).

Canoe culture also fosters intergenerational connections, with Elders often delighted to pass on the knowledge they feared would otherwise be lost. This knowledge transfer becomes especially significant for the younger generation, who gain a deeper understanding of their cultural heritage and develop crucial skills in teamwork and sobriety while participating in canoe journeys that represent their community (Johansen, 2012). Experts assert that transferring cultural knowledge from Elders to the youth is a critical component of Indigenous cultural revitalization (Beattie, 2017; Daehnke, 2019; Hundley, 2022; Johansen, 2012). Over countless generations, many Indigenous Elders have accumulated extensive cultural knowledge, carrying it forward from one generation to the next, thereby preserving and upholding their rich traditions Through the canoe journeys, these intergenerational connections are fortified, ensuring the continuity of Indigenous knowledge and fostering a sense of cultural pride and identity among the community's younger members (Beattie, 2017).

Another component of Tribal Journeys and the revival of canoe culture is their impact on healing within communities, particularly in addressing substance and alcohol abuse among both adults and youth (Daehnke, 2017). To combat these issues, paddlers commit to staying substance-free and sober during the canoe journeys. An interesting case, the Suquamish Tribe of Port Madison, Washington, has effectively incorporated Tribal Canoe Journeys into their "The Healing of the Canoe" treatment model, which was thoughtfully adapted to include alcohol and substance abuse programs developed in collaboration with medical professionals from the University of Washington (Johansen, 2012). This approach not only fosters personal well-being and recovery but also strengthens the connection between cultural practices and healing, underscoring the

crucial role that canoe journeys play in promoting holistic healing and addressing substance abuse within Indigenous communities.

The effectiveness of the Tribal Journeys program in addressing substance abuse among Indigenous communities largely stems from its intervention strategy, which is deeply rooted in tribal values and community engagement. As Daehnke (2017) observes:

> Involvement in canoe culture, however, has had a dramatic and positive impact, as numerous participants have returned from journeys clean and sober, leaving drugs and alcohol behind for good. The positive impact that Tribal Journeys and canoe resurgence has had in this area is not just a fortunate, yet unexpected, side effect. The leaders who were involved with canoe resurgence at the very beginning expected that the revitalization of canoe culture and following the protocols attached to it would provide a positive and tribally specific avenue to address problems associated with drug and alcohol abuse, especially among young people, and it was a primary reason for pushing for increased involvement with canoes. (p. 71)

Accordingly, past efforts to address drug and alcohol abuse among Indigenous people often fell short because they did not always account for the specific cultural contexts of each community (Daehnke, 2017). To counter this, some Indigenous youth programs now use the Canoe Journey as a teaching tool to help them navigate life's challenges while avoiding substance abuse. These programs blend cultural values and traditions with evidence-based practices and positive youth development, culminating in an Honoring Ceremony that recognizes each participant's unique abilities and accomplishments (Donovan et al., 2015). By integrating cultural teachings and instilling pride in Indigenous heritage, the Canoe Journey curriculum provides a meaningful

framework for fostering holistic well-being and resilience among Indigenous youth, significantly contributing to the prevention of substance abuse within their communities.

The Coast Salish: people, lands and waters

The Coast Salish people are a group of Salish-speaking, ethnically connected Indigenous people living on the Pacific Northwest Coast from the mouth of the Columbia River in Oregon to the Bute Inlet in British Columbia. Archaeological evidence indicates that Coast Salish regions have been inhabited since 9000 *BC*, and today, there are an estimated 56,000 Coast Salish peoples living in the US and Canada. Formally, they were (and still are) groups of hunter-gatherer-fishers who have a rich and complex society, residing in the Northwest Coast region of southwestern British Columbia and northwestern Washington state[3] (Angelbeck, 2016). Their ancestral lands are predominantly situated around the Salish Sea, although a few nations, including those on the western coast of the Olympic Peninsula, are also encompassed within this territory (Hundley, 2019). Notably, Bella Coola, the northernmost Coast Salish nation, has a unique territorial arrangement, for it is not contiguous with the rest of the Salish groups' territory, which can also contribute to political and ethnic distinctions, adding to the complexity and richness of their cultural heritage and providing a unique context for their traditions and practices.

The term "Coast Salish" carries a complex history and is not a term employed by the Salish people themselves (Miller, 2011). It was initially introduced by colonial figures, including anthropologists and linguists, who sought to study and document the diverse cultures and languages of the communities residing in the regions surrounding the Salish Sea (Hundley, 2019). The term emerged to categorize and understand the distinct Indigenous groups inhabiting the area.

However, it is crucial to recognize that the usage of "Coast Salish" is a product of external observation and classification rather than an Indigenous self-designation. By understanding the

[3] Some of the Coast Salish nations include: Cowichan, Musqueam, Squamish, Stó:lō, Tsawwassen, Tsleil-Waututh.

origins and context of this term, I can approach the understanding about these Indigenous communities with greater sensitivity and respect for their self-identifications, which is the endonym Séliš, the name of a nation situated in current Montana state, that happened to be the easternmost subgroup within the broader Salish linguistic family and, due to vicissitudes of colonial times, ended up being used to designate the whole family of languages. Thus, the name "Salish" became a unifying term to represent various Indigenous subgroups sharing Salishan linguistic and cultural ties, despite their geographical diversity within the Salish-speaking communities (Miller, 2011).

The Elliott Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Point Elliott, was a significant event in the history of the Indigenous nations of the Puget Sound region, marking a pivotal moment in their relationship with the United States government. Signed on January 22, 1855, the treaty involved several Coast Salish tribes, including the Duwamish, Suquamish, Snoqualmie, and others, who were the original stewards of the land, water, and resources in the Puget Sound area. These Indigenous nations were the protagonists in the complex negotiations, seeking to preserve their sovereignty, cultural practices, and connection to their ancestral lands while navigating the pressures and demands of an expanding settler population. The treaty resulted in the cession of vast territories to the United States in exchange for reserved lands, fishing rights, and other promises. However, the terms of the treaty and the subsequent actions taken by the U.S. government often led to significant challenges for these nations, including displacement and the erosion of traditional ways of life, as in the case of the "fish wars", a series of civil disobedience protests for the United States government to recognize Indigenous rights to fish. Despite these challenges, the Indigenous peoples of Puget Sound have continued to assert their rights and

maintain their cultural heritage, demonstrating resilience and leadership in the ongoing struggle for recognition and justice (Wilkinson, 2006).

Differently from Indigenous nations in the United States, First Nations in British Columbia generally did not cede their territory through treaties, although there were exceptions. British Governor James Douglas negotiated fourteen treaties with select Coast Salish nations on southern Vancouver Island, highlighting the unique situation in British Columbia, known as the "British Columbia anomaly" (Hundley, 2019). This historical context sheds light on the complex relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian government in British Columbia.

> The coastal groups were highly structured societies having clearly evident and permanent positions of political leadership. The interior groups were typically composed of small communities having little need for specialized politics. The general social and political differences between the coastal groups and the interior groups were thus fundamental, and many of the differences remain evident today. (Tennant, 1990, p 6)

The Coast Salish people used the region's abundant resources, such as clam beds, salmon-filled rivers, migratory birds, and cedar trees. These resources held immense cultural significance and served various purposes, occupying a central place in Coast Salish culture (Angelbeck, 2016). According to Thom (2005), the Coast Salish people actively engaged in spirit dancing and oral strength from the non-human beings that coexist with them on their land. Their connection to the land goes beyond the practical utilization of resources. It encompasses profound emotional bonds with their ancestral lands, shaping their social structure and way of life. The ancestral lands consist of diverse spaces, ranging from small and specific locations like boulders or bathing pools to larger areas such as mountainsides and territories. Each place carries significant cultural and personal meaning, pivotal in shaping individual and communal identities (Thom, 2005). This illustrates the

link between their sovereignty and the autonomy paddlers had, and still have, to move across territories, beyond colonial boundaries[4].

The intertwining of oral narratives of origin, spiritual forces, ancestors, and the physical environment lies at the core of Coast Salish life. Their communities serve as focal points for their beliefs and practices. These deeply rooted notions of place are intricately connected with the concepts of property and territoriality, forming the foundation of traditional Coast Salish economies and inter-community interactions (Thom, 2005). It is essential to recognize that the Coast Salish people's system of symbols encompasses the land as an integral component. Consequently, culture and terrain cannot be analyzed as separate entities, and their examination should not be treated in isolation (Thom, 2005).

Coast Salish individuals who identify themselves as such exhibit remarkable diversity in terms of language (such as Halkomelem, Lushootseed, and Nuu-chah-nulth), geography, and culture. Scholars such as Suttles & Maud (1987), Thom (2005), and Kennedy (2007) propose a perspective that perceives this diversity as a spectrum of cultural differentiation (Hundley, 2019). This viewpoint recognizes the existence of a social continuum within the Coast Salish region, fostered by intermarriage and cooperative economic and ceremonial activities among neighbouring tribes, regardless of their specific languages. contemporary times, highlighting the interconnectedness and shared history among the various Coast Salish communities and underscoring the importance of their cultural traditions and relationships (Hundley, 2019). By understanding the spectrum of cultural differentiation within the Coast Salish people, researchers can gain a deeper appreciation for the complexity and richness of their diverse identities.

[4] Chapter 5 is dedicated to analyzing and discussing each interview through thematic analysis. Therefore, I will address the points raised by collaborators regarding this literature overview in that specific section.

Practices using ethnonyms, referencing locations, and sharing powerful life narratives and oral stories are vital in affirming and strengthening personal and cultural identities. The Coast Salish people have maintained long-established social and economic connections despite being politically and geographically divided. For instance, there are currently twenty-four federally recognized tribes in Washington State that are part of the Coast Salish group. In contrast, others may be socially and economically intertwined with the group but lack federal recognition (Hundley, 2019).

Property ownership is intricately linked to specific descent groups within the Coast Salish communities, granting them access rights to particular resource sites, while residential groups manage other resource areas (Thom, 2005). This allocation of property rights and responsibilities reflects the Coast Salish communities' social organization and governance systems, showing the interplay between kinship ties, territorial connections, and resource management practices. The potlatch tradition further unifies the Coast Salish communities, providing them a distinct identity through ceremonial activities, gift exchanges, and shared cultural practices reinforcing their collective identity and sense of belonging (Angelbeck, 2016).

Coast Salish social organization has resisted centralization efforts, with a socio-political structure that is decentralized yet complex (Angelbeck, 2016). Councils, although not formal institutions, are used for decision-making and consensus-building across various levels, from households to regional assemblies (Angelbeck, 2016; Bierwert, 1999; Miller, 2011). Individual groups function autonomously but form coalitions and networks to address conflicts effectively. Coast Salish women are crucial in maintaining family ties and economic independence, demonstrating adaptability and resilience through their mobility as mariners and traders (Peck, 2022).

On the Canadian side of the border, through its provisions, the Indian Act (1876) established a framework that severely limited Indigenous individuals' mobility and freedom. Under this legislation, leaving one's designated residence area necessitated obtaining permission from an Indian Agent. This requirement restricted the autonomy and agency, subjecting Indigenous people to a system of control and surveillance. By enforcing such constraints, the Act's imposition of permission-based mobility regulations profoundly impacted the lives and rights of Indigenous individuals, hindering their ability to move freely, explore opportunities, and maintain connections with their cultural and ancestral lands. Today, the Indian Act doesn't restrict the free circulation of individuals like when it was first established in 1876. However, crossing the United States – Canada border is limited to immigration policies. Although there are notable cultural and political similarities, the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada are not identical to those of Native Americans in the United States. On the United States side of the border,

> With some exceptions, the colonial forces attacking Native peoples in Canada have not been military, but rather, have been institutional, through economic, religious, educational, legislative, and media systems. Not surprisingly, the colonial relationship between White and Native peoples is profoundly institutionalized and has grown more so with time. One of the indices of such systemic control is the extent to which Native peoples have been defined outside themselves, and, when they seek to change this definition, meet opposition in many forms. (LaRocque, 2011, p.68)

The Indian Act, while no longer restricting physical mobility, continues to impose significant constraints on Indigenous self-determination, particularly in matters of land claims and governance as the colonial framework of land dispossession remains a central issue in the struggle for Indigenous autonomy (Coulthard, 2014). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

has further highlighted that true reconciliation requires addressing these ongoing structures of colonial control, as meaningful self-determination must be exercised on Indigenous terms, free from state-imposed definitions of sovereignty (Coulthard, 2014).

Providing this historical overview from the literature is essential to give us the necessary grounding to understand the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) and the crafting of canoes as acts of resistance and maintenance of their history in the face of colonial intrusion. The revival and resurgence of these practices are apparent in the making of canoes, the gathering of communities, and the navigation of waterways. The landing and sharing of protocols, meals, dances, and stories inform the current TCJ, demonstrating how they are lived and organized across the northwestern Pacific.

By exploring these cultural practices and social structures, this research may contribute to understanding the TCJ and its role in cultural revitalization and resistance, recognizing the inherent limitations of ethnographic studies as snapshots in time, often reflecting colonial perspectives. Thus, while not the stated purpose of this study, it may challenge preconceived notions and offer a nuanced understanding of the ongoing presence and adaptation of these practices and organizational frameworks in Indigenous communities' present-day lived experiences and cultural resilience.

The Canoes

While canoe-type boats have existed all over the world, this research focuses solely on the canoe or boat that originated in the Americas. The significance of the "canoe" as a global phenomenon lies in its ability to facilitate navigation and foster connections across diverse communities. While its importance is deeply rooted in Indigenous cultures across Canada and the Americas, the importance and appreciation for canoeing extend beyond these populations. The experience of canoeing transcends boundaries, drawing people from various backgrounds who share a common passion for this traditional watercraft. It may serve as a unifying force, connecting individuals to the natural world, fostering cultural exchange, and fostering a sense of collective appreciation for the rich history and artistry of canoeing. The canoe's enduring and inclusive appeal highlights its relevance as an emblem of movement, connection, and shared human experiences with each other, with nature and with other communities.

The term "canoe," derived from the Arawak word "canoa," meaning boat, was first recorded by Christopher Columbus during his initial voyage to the Caribbean. It is important to distinguish canoes from rafts, constructed by assembling tree trunks for floating purposes. Initially, canoes were primarily used for dugout canoes, but over time, the English language adopted the term "canoe" to encompass all canoes, regardless of the materials used (Roberts & Shackleton, 1983). Customarily, canoes in Canada have been – and continue to be – crafted from logs, barks, and animal skins, with each Indigenous group employing their unique materials and techniques. The success of the canoe can be attributed not only to its navigability on North American waters but also to its portability for traversing rapids and trails and even serving as a shelter (Raffan, 2000).

> An all-encompassing definition must be a general one: a canoe is an open watercraft of hollow form, generally shaped at each end to improve its hydrodynamic qualities, and designed originally to be propelled by one or more occupants, facing forward and using paddles or push-poles. Three basic classes- the dugout, the bark craft, and the skin boat- were widely used in aboriginal North America. (Roberts & Shackleton, 1983, p. 2)

The canoe has served as a vital tool utilized by various Indigenous peoples and cultural traditions across what is now recognized as Canada (Erickson, 2008, 2013 & 2015; Johansen, 2012). Initially perceived as obsolete and on the verge of disappearing during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it has emerged as a prominent national symbol. Furthermore, the canoe has also been appropriated within the narrative of historical settler discourse, where Euro-Canadians have perceived paddling on rivers, particularly along routes believed to mirror settler perspectives of the fur trade or western expansion, as representative of the "discovery" and foundational origins of Canada (Erickson, 2008,2013 & 2015; Ritts et al., 2018). As Erickson (2015) states:

> In the celebration of heritage on the French River, we can see the creation of the origin of the nation in the features of the river itself. By privileging the experience of these features as a way of connecting with history, this narrative tends towards creating heritage through geography only. (p.322)

Regarding canoes, they hold great significance in Coast Salish territory, serving as a means of resistance and countering colonial legacies (Hundley, 2022). They display diverse styles and names across the Northwest Coast, but their essential role in daily life remains constant. For example, ocean-going canoes used in present-day Tribal Journeys could span up to 40 feet and accommodate around 25 pullers.

Smaller shovelnose canoes were designed to navigate the region's smaller streams. Throughout history, transportation has been a primary function of canoes. In the mid-nineteenth century, canoes were hired for transporting settlers and goods. However, their prominence diminished with the arrival of steamboats, which eventually faced a similar fate due to the introduction of railroads.

The canoe's significance is evident when examining the cosmologies and mythologies of the Salish, as Levi-Strauss (1971) describes:

> It follows from this whole body of remarks that the Salish canoe, carrying divinities, the foremost of whom are the sun and the moon, belongs, as any theme, to a horizontal axis which links the near and the far, and is convertible, as in the myths of tropical America, into a vertical axis linking the earth and the sky. (p. 454)

Scholars have significantly contributed to understanding the cultural significance and diverse implications of the canoe in shaping identities and promoting connections, establishing the canoe as a subject worthy of academic inquiry (Beattie, 2017; Big-Canoe & Richmond, 2014; Daehnke, 2019; Donovan et al., 2015; Erickson, 2008; Frandy & Cederström, 2017; Hirch & Korn, 2012; Hundley, 2022; Johansen, 2012, 2019; Johnson et al., 2019; Lévi-Strauss, 2011; Marshall, 2011; Mikraszewicz & Richmond, 2019; Nahanee et al., 2021; Raffan, 2000; Ritts et al., 2018; Ward et al., 2020).

Beattie (2017) investigates how Tribal Canoe Journeys on the Northwest Pacific Coast led to Indigenous resurgence. This study identifies five key impacts: reconnecting with nature, supporting personal healing and growth, establishing intergenerational and inter-national relationships, enabling cultural resurgence, and potentially driving political actions. The work emphasizes the importance of visioning, intergenerational knowledge transmission, language

revitalization, land-based practices, Indigenous legal traditions, and reestablishing inter-national relationships. According to this approach, Tribal Canoe Journeys significantly contribute to the resurgence and revitalization of Indigenous traditions and communities. On the other hand, Johansen's (2012) work focuses on the revival of canoe culture among Native nations along the western coast of British Columbia and Washington State. For this author, canoes symbolize resilience, identity, and a link to ancestral traditions (Johansen, 2012). The revival of canoe journeys and the construction of canoes serve as catalysts for cultural revitalization, healing, and intergenerational knowledge transmission. These practices foster social bonds, combat substance abuse, and reinforce protocols and traditions within Indigenous communities.

Daehnke (2019) examines the revitalization of canoe culture and the significance of protocols during Tribal Journeys as acts of decolonization. Protocols, rooted in a decolonized vision of heritage, foster Indigenous resilience and contribute to the healing of tribal communities.

Asserting tribal sovereignty, renewing ceremonies and knowledge, and combating substance abuse are central to reclaiming Indigenous identity and challenging colonial impositions. Highlighting the political dimension, Hundley (2022) explores the Canoe Journey as a powerful tool and symbol of unity for Indigenous communities, particularly the Coast Salish. Canoe Journeys revitalizes cultural practices, challenges settler colonialism, including the international border, and asserts Indigenous presence. Hundley underscores the importance of engaging with Indigenous epistemologies and historiographies to comprehensively analyze border impacts, advocating for a more inclusive understanding.

These scholars collectively illuminate the multifaceted nature of the canoe, encompassing its political significance, decolonization efforts, cultural revitalization, healing, and knowledge transmission. For example, Beattie (2017) highlights the canoe's role in cultural revitalization

through traditional practices, while Donovan et al. (2015) discusses its use in healing and substance abuse programs. Johansen (2012, 2019) examines the canoe's significance in decolonization efforts, and Big-Canoe & Richmond (2014) explore its importance in knowledge transmission within Indigenous communities. Their research enhances our understanding of the transformative power of the canoe and its profound role in fostering connections, resilience, and the resurgence of Indigenous communities.

According to James Raffan (2000), the creation of a canoe involves the natural process of bending two structures, and a fundamental principle for achieving optimal canoe efficiency is to respect the limitations of the natural materials from the environment in which it is constructed. Raffan states that by working within the natural bends allowed by the materials, functional canoe can be consistently produced (Raffan, 2000). This consideration, at first, seems to be directed to the birch-and-bark type of canoes, but since dugout canoes also count with a "widening" step on the course of its production, essential to the conforming of its final shape and navigability, this principle applies to dugouts too. Regarding dugouts, after a hole has been dug with the help of fire, instead of bending, the material—wood—must be stretched to be widened. Such a procedure consists of either filling the hole with water and then adding hot stones to it or flipping the canoe downwards close to the fire and its smoke.

Most canoes, such as the birchbark, dugout, and the Beothuk canoe, among others, are usually fashioned using locally sourced materials, which limited the vessel's shape, size, and thickness. Canoes were also skillfully adapted to suit different environments, with larger designs for navigating the open sea (as the Haida canoes) and lighter constructions for easier portages (as the Anishinaabe birchbark canoes). Interestingly, specific characteristics of these canoes have endured in the design and form of modern industrial canoes.

The versatility of canoes is intricately tied to the natural materials used in their construction, embodying the essence of the landscape and the intellectual traditions (Raffan, 2000). Indigenous peoples have spent millennia experimenting with and refining a wide range of watercraft tailored to their needs and available resources. Recognizing the value of canoes for exploration and the fur trade, the fur traders and voyageurs have embraced them and adapted designs to navigate the country's diverse regions, facing challenges such as rapids along the way (Raffan, 2000). Consequently, this process of innovation and adaptation gave rise to a remarkable array of watercraft, reflecting a "bewildering diversity" of canoes (Roberts & Shackleton, 1983, p. 2). Historically, canoes possessed a uniquely ecological nature; and in the event of breakage, they could be repaired using materials readily found in the surrounding environment, symbolizing the profound connection between people, land, and water, especially in regions where rivers merge with the ocean (Raffan, 2000).

Much like the abundance of natural materials that once shaped the diversity of canoe designs across Indigenous territories, North America's Northwest Coast was once rich in red cedar, a resource that played a crucial role in the construction of traditional canoes. However, red cedar has become scarce, reflecting broader environmental changes that impact cultural practices and the relationship between people and the landscape.

> Among the gifts of the coastal environment is the giant red cedar tree (Thuya Plicata). From this cedar, the coastal peoples made the world's largest dug-out canoes and also large plank houses. Canoes allowed full use of the coastal environment; otherwise, the sea and coastline could not have been harvested, and areas inaccessible by land could not have been settled. It was the canoes which allowed the exploitation of areas extensive enough to provision sedentary winter villages with populations of several thousand. […] The cedar

> houses enabled a large number of people, usually family groups, to live under one roof, and many people could thus live compactly together in the winter villages. […] Had the cedar tree not existed, the coastal peoples could not have created their complex and sophisticated civilizations. (Tennant, 1990, p.7)

In contemporary times, the canoe continues to serve as both a cultural symbol and a practical tool for many Indigenous communities, while also being embraced in modern recreational activities. Efforts to revitalize canoe-making and paddling traditions are seen as part of broader movements for cultural resurgence and environmental stewardship, reflecting the enduring relationship between Indigenous peoples, their territories, and waterways.

The process of canoe and paddle-making and the act of paddling have emerged as powerful symbols within Indigenous resurgence movements and resistance efforts aimed at reclaiming sovereignty. Numerous Indigenous-led initiatives worldwide are actively re-establishing the coastal canoe as a vessel embodying sovereignty and the responsible stewardship of territorial lands (Ritts, et al., 2018). In Canada, Indigenous communities have witnessed a remarkable resurgence in canoe journeys over the past four decades. Although canoes have never completely disappeared, these contemporary journeys serve as a powerful cultural revival, representing a yearning to reconnect with ancestral territories and values by blending traditional practices with modern culture and technology. Canoe journeys, both in Canada and the USA, also play a crucial role in language and cultural revitalization efforts, serving as vehicles for transmitting teachings and traditions (Mikraszewicz & Richmond, 2019). This revitalization is vividly reflected in the reformation of canoe families and the organization of various inter-national Canoe Journeys, fostering intergenerational learning and meaningful relationships between youth, Elders, and

knowledge holders. Notably, the Tribal Canoe Journeys is a prominent example, showcasing the profound impact of intergenerational learning on Indigenous communities (Nahanee, et al., 2021).

Moreover, the craft of canoe-making entails a profound connection and intimacy with the resulting vessel, which is distinct to the modern/industrial production processes, and necessitates an understanding of materials and a close relationship with the natural environment. Passamaquoddy birchbark canoe builder David Moses, cited by Frandy & Cederström (2017) aptly captures this sentiment, stating,

> I've known the canoe since it was still on the tree. I know the roots from the time they were in the ground. All the cedar that's in here. Felled all that, split it in the forest, carried it out on my shoulder... After you've gone through all that, you have a real intimate connection with the boat.... This isn't a fiberglass boat that you can buy all the parts for and lay it up in a couple of days. You've got to know the forest. You have to know the trees, and then you have to know the boat. (p.227)

These words highlight the depth of knowledge and experiential connection required to engage in canoe-making, contrasting it with the assembly-line production of modern boats. This insight emphasizes the unique significance of the craft, rooted in a profound understanding of the natural world and a personal investment in the entire process, from selecting the tree to the final construction of the canoe.

In Coast Salish culture, the significance of canoes extends beyond their physical construction. While humans contribute their craftsmanship to shape the final form of the canoe, its existence and life predate their involvement. Many canoe makers receive their skills through visions, in which trees communicate with them, highlighting the spiritual connection between canoes and the natural world. For these canoe-makers, canoes are not merely inanimate objects;

they are perceived as spiritual beings with souls, some of which may have a history spanning over a thousand years (Johansen, 2012). Extending to the present day, canoes are recognized as beings with agency and emotions. They can experience happiness, disappointment, and pain, emphasizing their animate qualities. Despite the independent existence of canoes and humans, a profound interdependence exists between them. A sense of kinship and reciprocal responsibilities bind their lives together, as both entities rely on each other to navigate the world meaningfully and appropriately (Daehnke, 2017). This understanding of canoes as living beings with spiritual significance and their entangled relationship with humans underscore the deep cultural and spiritual connections that Coast Salish people have with their environment (Barnett, 1955). It highlights their profound respect and reverence for the natural world, recognizing the interconnectedness of all living beings and their mutual reliance on one another (Daehnke, 2017; Johansen, 2012).

The process of canoe-making among the Coast Salish people was and is influenced by factors such as available materials, local environmental conditions, and distinct cultural traditions. Unlike some northern groups, the Salish primarily used half-cedar logs to construct their canoes (Barnett, 1955). This technique difference may have arisen from variations in resource availability and cultural practices. The entire process of preparing the canoe hull, including splitting, shaping, and excavation, took place at the location where the tree was felled. Specialized canoe makers often took advantage of favourable weather and fresh wood during the summer for efficient progress (Barnett, 1955). According to Barnett (1995), working in seclusion in the forest served multiple purposes beyond practical considerations, as it allowed individuals to receive mystical assistance and guidance through significant process phases. The canoe maker’s respectful treatment of the tree, considering it a living entity, was crucial, and so was the use of unique songs

during various stages of construction carried spiritual significance, and omitting them could result in irreparable damage to the canoe. As this author explains, dreams also played a significant role, with specific symbols associated with ensuring success in canoe-building and decoration. Canoe-making knowledge was closely guarded and passed down within families, leading to specialization within specific family lines (Barnett, 1955).

The actual construction process involved splitting the chosen tree, contouring the exterior of the half-log, and drilling small holes for references during excavation. No specific patterns or guidelines were necessarily followed, relying on tradition and the craftsman's skill. Techniques like steaming, oil or fish egg and charcoal application, and mats for wood protection were employed. Crosspieces served as seats in larger canoes, while paddlers typically knelt on mat pads. The canoe's interior was coated with black paint, and a red strip was added around the inner rim. The Salish canoes were crafted from a single piece, without separate bow and stern structures. Different variations existed within specific geographic regions, with additional types of canoes and paddle materials used for men and women (Barnett, 1955).

In conclusion, Tribal Canoe Journeys and the canoes themselves hold cultural and historical significance for the Coast Salish and other linguistic families of Indigenous communities of America's Northwest Coast. These journeys embody the revival of traditional practices and serve as a powerful means of reconnecting with ancestral lands and waters. The protocols surrounding canoe journeys are deeply rooted in respect, reciprocity, and acknowledging Indigenous sovereignty. Coast Salish communities have a rich tradition of canoe-making, with specific techniques and practices that reflect their unique cultural and environmental contexts. By preserving and revitalizing these traditions, the Coast Salish people continue strengthening their cultural heritage and fostering a deep connection to their ancestral roots.

Different types of canoes of the Northwest Coast.

Along the Northwest Coast, stretching from present-day northern California to Alaska, Indigenous communities have crafted and employed various types of canoes tailored to their environmental conditions and cultural traditions. Diverse in their construction, materials, and functions, these canoes embody the connection between Indigenous peoples and their waterways (Barnett, 1955; Bates, Hess, & Hilbert, 1994; Bierwert, 1999; Daehnke, 2017; Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014; Hundley, 2022; Johansen, 2012; Marshall, 2011; Miller, 1999; Miller, 2011; Osler, 2014; Raffan, 2000; Roberts & Shackleton, 1983; Suttles & Maud, 1987; Thom, 2005; Waterman & Coffin, 1920).

The Pacific Northwest's dynamic maritime landscapes—encompassing the vast open ocean, sheltered coastal inlets, winding rivers, and tranquil lakes—have given rise to distinct canoe designs. Some canoes were engineered for long-distance voyages and navigating the open sea, while others were optimized for river travel, fishing, warfare or ceremonial use. Among these, dugout canoes were particularly diverse, with their design, size, and structure varying depending on their intended purpose and the conditions in which they were used. Coastal dugouts were often larger and more buoyant, designed to withstand rough waters, whereas riverine canoes were smaller, flatter, and more maneuverable, suited for swift currents and shallow waters. This diversity in canoe design highlights the craftsmanship of Indigenous peoples and underscores the vital role canoes have played in facilitating trade, enabling transportation, and preserving cultural heritage across countless generations.

This diversity in canoe design is illustrated by the specialized ones created by specific Indigenous nations. For instance, the war canoe—a vessel that largely vanished after European contact—stood out for its specialized role in combat and protection. Characterized by a broad,

upward-curving gunwale that formed a protective shield, it allowed warriors to remain concealed while firing arrows through precisely carved openings along the sides (Roberts & Shackleton, 1983). A notable historical event highlighting the strategic use of these canoes is the mid-19th-century Battle at Maple Bay, in which an alliance of Coast Salish groups engaged in a maritime battle against the Kwakwaka'wakw Lekwiltok (Barnett, 1955; Roberts & Shackleton, 1983; Suttles & Maud, 1987; Angelbeck & McLay, 2011).

In contrast, the Bella Coola (Nuxalk) developed long, stable, spoon-shaped canoes tailored for navigating riverine environments, sturdy and suited to fast-moving currents and rapids, capable of transporting heavy loads, such as fish harvested during seasonal runs (Roberts & Shackleton, 1983). Meanwhile, the Salish canoe, renowned for its sleek, graceful design, was primarily used for inland waters and nearshore travel. Unlike ocean-going canoes, it sat low in the water, making it less suited for open-sea conditions. Its V-shaped bow and stern tapered into an elegant, elongated prow, curving downward toward the waterline with a nearly vertical cutwater (Barnett, 1955; Bates, Hess, & Hilbert, 1994; Roberts & Shackleton, 1983; Waterman & Coffin, 1920)

The diversity of canoe designs along the Northwest Coast reflects Indigenous nations' adaptability to their environments. Unlike the birchbark canoes used inland, Northwest Coast canoes were carved from single logs (preferably Red Cedar), making them highly durable and specialized for open waters, rivers, and coastal travel (Roberts & Shackleton, 1983). These designs varied by function, from the sleek Salish canoes suited for nearshore navigation to the large Nuu-chah-nulth ocean-going canoes used for whaling and trade (Raffan, 2000; Roberts & Shackleton, 1983). Their construction required deep environmental knowledge, reinforcing canoes' cultural, economic, and ceremonial significance throughout the region.

According to the scholars Bates, Hess, and Hilbert, who studied canoes in the Puget Sound, while upriver communities primarily relied on the shovelnose canoe, ideal for sheltered freshwater travel, downriver and saltwater communities developed a far greater range of canoe types suited to open water, tidal currents, and ocean navigation:

> …downriver and saltwater communities had the full variety of crafts, separate paddle styles for men or women, and a thorough knowledge of the winds and tides to allow them to travel under sail or tidal pull with less effort. (Roberts & Shackleton, 1983, p.108)

Among the Coast Salish, whose territories stretch over rivers, estuaries, and protected inland waters, canoes were primarily crafted for stability and maneuverability rather than deep-sea travel. The profound role of canoes in Coast Salish cultures is further evidenced by the Lushootseed language, which contains multiple terms distinguishing various types of canoes, including two generic terms—saxulu?, "for water travel," and q'ilbid, referring to canoes but now extended to modern vehicles (Bates, Hess, & Hilbert, 1994). Additionally

> The morpheme […] has an interesting range of meanings including 'vehicle, waterway, narrow passage, throat, body trunk, curved side' further confirming that a canoe was a living body (Roberts & Shackleton, 1983, p. 107).

Among Lushootseed-speaking nations, canoe design reflected functionality and cultural significance, as Miller (1999) explains, because of how they conceptualize physical and spiritual movement through water travel, with canoes serving as vessels for both practical mobility and shamanic journeys. Four primary canoe types—river shovelnose, hunting, freight, and racing canoes—were developed locally, while northern and Nootkan-style canoes were introduced through intertribal trade (Roberts & Shackleton, 1983). Each design served a distinct purpose. With its flat-ended, shovel-like shape, the river canoe allowed paddlers to stand while spearfishing,

making it well-suited for inland waterways (Waterman & Coffin, 1920). The hunting canoe, used exclusively by men, had raised, double-pointed ends that enhanced maneuverability for trolling and duck hunting. Meanwhile, the freight canoe, often associated with women, was essential for transporting families, supplies, and funerary remains. Its notched prow, resembling an open mouth, may have held ceremonial or symbolic meaning (Bates, Hess, & Hilbert, 1994; Roberts & Shackleton, 1983; Waterman & Coffin, 1920). It is also worth mentioning the dugout knockabout, which was made for kids to learn how to operate canoes on water from a young age, mentioned to me in interviews by four participants: “We had a canoe like that all the time When we were kids” (Carl Martin, personal communication, 2024).

Beyond the local canoe styles, the northern and the Nootkan (or Chinook) canoe were two additional designs. The northern or Alaskan canoe was large and double-ended, with its name possibly originating from the Stikine River region (Roberts & Shackleton, 1983). The Nootkan, or Chinook canoe, was distinctive for its elaborate animal-head prow, a feature linked to Nuu-chah-nulth whaling traditions, as discussed here (Roberts & Shackleton, 1983; Thom, 2005). The presence of these canoes along the Pacific Northcoast indicates trade networks and relationships among nations, which can also be seen in the terms used for them:

> Since Nootkan words form a large part of Chinook jargon, the Northwest trade language, the two names for this same canoe are the result of extensive trade contacts and its own seaworthiness between the west coast of Vancouver Island and the lower Columbia River. (Roberts & Shackleton, 1983, p.108)

Regarding the historical significance of the Salish Canoes, this is what Mark told me in his interview:

> the Salish canoe and the West Coast canoe predate the Haida-style canoes. It is an older technology. It's still the same technology, just older. The reason I know that is because Western Red Cedar has only been in this climate for 5,000 years and doesn't exist the farther north you go. They have spruce up there, not Cedar. They'll probably be a point of contention to the northern tribes me saying something like that, that our canoes are older because you can't really prove that It's just my personal opinion (Mark, personal communication, 2024).

These variations show that canoe technology was integrated into daily life, and each type was adapted to specific needs and cultural practices. Beyond their historical roles in sustenance, trade, and warfare, canoes hold cultural significance today through racing traditions, as the elongated and sleek racing canoe, holding a crew of eleven, is thought to have evolved from the ancient war canoe (Roberts & Shackleton, 1983). Today, canoe racing remains an important expression of cultural identity and intertribal relations, with major events hosted at various coastal communities across Washington and British Columbia (Roberts, 1975). These modern races move Indigenous canoe-building and maritime knowledge forward, highlighting the significance of canoes in contemporary cultural resurgence (Hundley, 2022; Roberts & Shackleton, 1983; Johansen, 2012).

As Castilles explains (Eells, 1985), Myron Eells began documenting Puget Sound Indigenous communities in 1875, recording observations of their daily lives, cultural practices, and technologies. His descriptions of canoes provide insight into their construction, function, and significance among Coast Salish nations. Eells identifies three primary types of canoes in everyday use and briefly mentions a fourth, less familiar design. The large Chinook canoe, primarily made by Indigenous communities in British Columbia, was widely used across Puget Sound for carrying

heavy loads and navigating rough seas. Eells remarks that its square stern was believed to enhance stability and safety in turbulent waters. This observation reinforces the idea that canoe builders tailored their designs to specific environmental challenges.

Eells also describes the shovel canoe, sometimes called the river canoe, which he notes was scarce by the late 19th century. Unlike other canoes, this design featured wide, flat ends instead of tapering to a point, making it stable in swift rivers. By contrast, fishing or small canoes were the most common and were constructed from a single piece of wood, often with a fir rim reinforcement similar to that found on Chinook canoes. These canoes were versatile for fishing, duck hunting, and short-distance travel on rivers and coastal waters. Eells recounts travelling thirty miles in such a canoe on Hood Canal, emphasizing that while these smaller vessels were well-suited for calm conditions, Indigenous paddlers exercised great caution in rough water.

Beyond identifying canoe types, Eells compares Indigenous canoes and settler-built boats. He notes that, by the turn of the twentieth century, while many Indigenous people had access to American-made boats, they had not widely replaced traditional canoes. Eells speculates that this is because canoes were lighter, faster, and more efficient for local travel. Unlike European rowboats, which required the user to sit facing backward, canoes allowed Indigenous paddlers to look forward, navigate obstacles, and maintain better vessel control. He also remarks that, despite the perceived ‘superiority’ of settler boats, Indigenous paddlers—having used canoes since infancy—experienced far fewer accidents on the water than White settlers did. This perspective addresses the practical advantages of canoes and challenges the colonial assumption that European technologies were inherently superior, and reflects the vast knowledge and craftsmanship associated with Indigenous peoples’ intangible cultural heritages.

Despite the ingenuity and adaptability of these canoe designs, colonization profoundly changed canoe-building practices of Indigenous nations along the Northwest Coast. In their interviews, the collaborators Mark and Robert explain that, by the late 19th century, settlers recognized the exceptional skill of Indigenous canoe makers and redirected their expertise into shipyards, shifting construction from dugout to strip canoes. Over time, the availability of large, suitable logs also declined, making the traditional practice of dugout canoe carving increasingly rare. Furthermore, as colonial expansion intensified, the need for ocean-going travel diminished, leading to a long period of dormancy in canoe culture that began in the early 1900s. It was not until 1989 that large-scale canoe journeys began to re-emerge. In their own words:

> The reason why we make strip canoes now is because, during the 19th century, around 1880, when we were being settled and Europeans were arriving, they saw how good the canoe builders were. So, they took them from making traditional dugouts, which you would get two canoes out of a log and they put them in shipyards where they would do slats and build their boats, and they were really good at that. At that transitional period, we went from dugouts to strips. Nowadays it's more efficient, with the machinery we can get out of one single log many canoes. It's hard to find a log big enough to make a big canoe like that (Mark, personal communication, 2024).

Collaborator Robert also explains about this:

> There's a long history of canoe and ocean-going travel dating back thousands of years. As the intrusion process increased in the Pacific Northwest, that practice became less and less. Our people saw a dormant period beginning in the early 1900s up until 1989 where we did not really see a lot of activity, especially in our bigger waters outside of our rivers (Robert, personal communication, 2024).

Colonialism profoundly altered the presence and usage of canoes in the Pacific Northwest by restricting Indigenous access to waterways and disrupting traditional transportation networks. As Harris (2002) explains, the imposition of reserves, restrictive land policies, and resource extraction economies systematically displaced Indigenous peoples from their traditional territories, severing connections to vital water routes. Prior to colonization, canoes were central to trade, diplomacy, warfare, and cultural exchange, allowing Indigenous nations to move freely across vast maritime and riverine landscapes. However, as Hundley (2022) highlights, colonial expansion not only displaced Indigenous nations from these waterways but also criminalized aspects of their mobility, restricting their ability to travel and maintain water-based territorial relationships. Additionally, the banning of Potlatch (from 1885 to 1951), the Indian Act in Canada (1876), and the Pass System restricted the free circulation of Indigenous peoples. Laws that constrained Indigenous fishing rights and access to large cedar trees made it increasingly difficult to sustain traditional canoe-building practices. The residential school system and forced assimilation policies further contributed to this decline by severing younger generations from the knowledge of canoe-making, navigation, and water-based cultural traditions. As a result, the widespread presence of canoes diminished, and by the early 20th century, long-distance ocean-going travel had nearly disappeared (Harris, 2002; Hundley, 2022; Wilkinson, 2006). As Robert explains:

> So, one of the things the challenge for us is our Indian reservation, as you were there, right, it's, it's up on that plateau where we were forced to live. And there are connections to the rivers and so forth, but a lot of people don't - unless they're a fisherman - don't have that connection to the saltwater. And so, for it has reestablished that connection. Where many of the tribes on canoe journeys have waterfront land bases. But we're one of the few that

does not. And so, it's changed that perspective of who we are as saltwater and ocean-going travellers that do that work (Robert, personal communication, 2024).

Another collaborator reflects on this theme regarding the Makah's case and adds a touch of a causality to the events of the past:

I don't like how they say that Tribal Journeys is a resurgence of our culture. It isn't. We have always been cultural, we've always been singing, we've always been dancing. Maybe not so many canoes. There was a big fire that burned a bunch of our canoes. They were housed under this dock and the dock burned and it burned all the canoes. And then the new boats came because that's what they would use for fishing. So, there were less canoes. There was still a few around, but not many (Lauri, personal communication, 2024).

Lastly, by early twentieth Century, diseases brought by European settlers had decimated Northwest Coast's Indigenous communities and many times the canoes served as transport for viruses and bacteria, as Roberts & Shackleton (1983) explain:

To conclude, itis a tragic irony that the canoe, which for thousands of years brought such prosperity, should become for them a vehicle of destruction, transporting the dread diseases of Europeans to every part of the coast. Like natives throughout the New World, they had no immunity or resistance to diseases from the Old, and smallpox introduced by the Spanish in the eighteenth century wiped out entire villages. Other plagues arrived with seamen and miners, and influenza swept through in 1830. When the worldwide influenza epidemic of 1918 reached them, the coast tribes were devastated. The canoe, particularly the trading craft, carried diseases to the smallest and most remote community (Roberts & Shackleton, 1983).

Chapter two: Coloniality, Indigenous resurgence through the canoe and the act of canoeing

When doing research with First Nations it is crucial to consider both historical legacies and ongoing oppressions European powers, through various means, including legislation, forced assimilation, and territorial dispossession, sought to control and assimilate Indigenous populations (Quijano, 2014). Specifically, in Canada, the Indian Act, established in 1876 and the residential school system, which operated from the late 19th century until the 1990s, aimed to assimilate and enfranchise Indigenous people, causing rupture in intergenerational knowledge transmission, beliefs, languages, and connections to the land. The implementation of reserves, the outlawing of cultural practices and languages, and the systemic removal of children from their families created by these policies exemplify the range of colonial strategies employed to dismantle Indigenous societies. These efforts aimed to disrupt pre-existing ties of people to their land and self-determination, which still impacts contemporary Indigenous contexts (Greenwood & Lindsay, 2019).

The term "cultural genocide" has been employed to describe the systematic efforts to erase Indigenous cultures through the residential school system, as highlighted by Senator Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). Sinclair (2015) vividly details this process:

> Removed from their families and home communities, seven generations of Aboriginal children were denied their identity through a systematic and concerted effort to extinguish their culture, language, and spirit. The schools were part of a larger effort by Canadian authorities to force Indigenous peoples to assimilate by the outlawing of sacred ceremonies and important traditions. It is clear that residential schools were a key component of a Canadian government policy of cultural genocide. (p. 8)

On the West Coast, one of the most overt acts of cultural suppression was the prohibition of the potlatch, a ceremonial practice integral to many Indigenous cultures on the Northwest Coast. The potlatch ban, implemented under the Indian Act from 1884 to 1951, sought to devitalize well and long-established Indigenous social, political, and economic systems, which were inextricably linked to these ceremonial exchanges. This prohibition was part of a broader strategy of displacement and control. Such geographical displacement was not merely about the control of land but also about severing the connections between Indigenous peoples and their ancestral lands, disrupting their ability to live according to their traditions and govern themselves (Harris, 2002).

Despite the invaluable efforts of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the legacy and tactics of colonialism have not disappeared; the attacks, land expropriation, and epistemic and cosmological racism and violence endure (Menzies, 2001). These tactics have evolved and are often disguised as national progress or modernization projects, particularly through infrastructure projects such as pipelines, mining, and environmental protection measures. For instance, the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline in Canada (Habib, 2023; Hermes, 2021; Martens, 2019; Razavi, 2023) exemplifies how Indigenous land is continually expropriated in the name of "progress," with Indigenous communities opposing such projects due to threats to their sovereignty and the environmental degradation of their lands (Coulthard, 2014).

Moreover, environmental protection measures often mask the violence of dispossession, restricting Indigenous peoples' access to their traditional lands under the guise of conservation. Modern colonialism also manifests through bureaucratic and legal processes, perpetuating the dispossession of Indigenous lands, with violence embedded in policy rather than direct physical force (Menzies, 2001). These initiatives, when they are not partnerships and revenue-sharing agreements and expropriate Indigenous lands without consent, can perpetuate a cycle of

dispossession and cultural erosion under the guise of development (LaRocque, 2011; Menzies, 2001). This modern mask of colonialism, presenting itself as benevolent or inevitable progress, challenges Indigenous communities to recognize and resist renewed forms of encroachment, revealing the enduring nature of colonial impacts from historical colonization to the present-day

Similarly, epistemic and cosmological racism is evident in land and resource management, where Western frameworks overshadow Indigenous knowledge systems, marginalizing Indigenous worldviews, especially in environmental policies that disregard Indigenous connections to the land (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005).

The imposition of colonial structures not only impacts Indigenous participation in resource development but also influences their self-perception and cultural identities. As LaRocque, a Métis scholar and literary critic, voices, “Colonization is not abstract; it is an experience” (LaRocque, 2011, p. 75) and living this ongoing experience impacts Indigenous peoples’ subjectivities, self-interpretation, and identities (Fanon, 2004).

This legacy of colonialism is not only felt in large-scale resource projects but also in the erasure or marginalization of traditional practices, such as canoe-making and use. Canoes, as vessels of both culture and transportation, represent the profound connection between Indigenous peoples and their lands and waterways. They are more than tools; they are deeply tied to Indigenous identity and knowledge systems. The persistence of colonial frameworks that prioritize resource extraction over Indigenous sovereignty echoes in these traditional practices, where the cultural and environmental importance of canoes is often overlooked or dismissed in favour of “progress.” Thus, the critique is not meant to subvert First Nations’ interest in participating in resource projects but to highlight how these projects, when driven by Western models of development, often fail to respect Indigenous knowledge, sovereignty, and identity. The canoe

serves as a powerful symbol of this tension, embodying the intertwined relationships between culture, land, and self-interpretation.

The persistent influence of coloniality demands the reassessment and transformation of existing societal systems to better the injustices and imbalances they sustain. Decolonial thinking proposes a reimagining of spaces within colonial frameworks and knowledge systems. It suggests adopting alternative epistemologies and practices that challenge and resist the overarching colonial logic (Sumida, 2020).

The concept of decolonization is important in Quijano and Wallerstein (2014) critical framework of colonial/modernity, which addresses how the conquest of the Americas, beginning in the late 15th century by Spanish, Portuguese, French, and British forces was instrumental in shaping the global capitalist system. These conquests involved the systematic exploitation of Indigenous peoples, lands, and resources, which laid the foundation for the modern economic order, colonial hierarchies, and power dynamics that persist today. This system entrenched ethnic, racial, and gender hierarchies that justified the exploitation of colonized territories and peoples, in an attempt to justify European dominance. The colonial/modernity system intends to perpetuate hierarchies and inequalities established during colonial times, affecting contemporary social, economic, and political spheres (Quijano, 2014; Sumida, 2020).

Integrating Bhabha's (1994) propositions into this research can broaden the understanding of the political and cultural implications of the journeys. It explores how Indigenous communities navigate and resist colonial legacies through decolonial practices within Canoe Journeys in the Salish Sea, offering a complementary perspective to the cultural dynamics observed in these Indigenous contexts. The author's concepts of hybridity, ambivalence, negotiation, and the Third Space permit an examination of the complex interactions and transformations of cultural traditions

under ongoing colonial influences, resilience and innovation of Indigenous cultures, highlighting how these communities maintain and adapt their traditions amidst postcolonial realities. Specifically, Bhabha's concept of hybridity can help is understand how Indigenous practices intersect with contemporary influences on these journeys, blending traditional navigation skills, canoe-building techniques, and ceremonial practices with modern materials, tools and methods. Such hybridity challenges the narrative of cultural homogenization, showing adaptability and illustrating the Indigenous communities' capacity to innovate while maintaining cultural identities. An Indigenous framework of hybridity is the "Two-Eyed Seeing" approach proposed by Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall (Bartlett et al., 2012), which encourages seeing the world through both Indigenous and Western perspectives, promoting balance and mutual respect. Within the context of the canoe journeys, Two-Eyed Seeing allows for a richer understanding of how these events serve as sites of cultural resurgence and innovation, integrating traditional knowledge while adapting to modern challenges.

Ambivalence, in turn, emerges as a complex component of these journeys, where participants experience and express mixed emotions stemming from their cultural pride and historical traumas associated with colonization. These journeys re-enact historical routes and narratives, emphasizing ongoing struggles between Indigenous resilience and the often-arduous legacies of colonial oppression, making them spaces for healing and confrontation with the past and intergenerational trauma. This dual perspective helps acknowledge the depth of participants' emotional and cultural complexities, providing a more nuanced view of their healing processes and resilience.

Finally, Bhabha's Third Space is particularly relevant. It represents an area of cultural engagement where new identities and practices can emerge, transcending traditional binaries of

the colonizer and colonized. In this sense, the canoe journeys are a physical and metaphorical space where participants can experience other forms of identity and community that are not solely defined by colonial histories but are forward-looking and incorporate elements of tradition and modernity. As a Third Space, the canoe embodies this concept by serving as a vessel for cultural transmission and transformation and, alongside the canoe journeys, facilitates the emergence of hybrid identities and practices that challenge and subvert dominant narratives, also aligning with the concept of "Two-Eyed Seeing". Bhabha (1994) writes that:

> …because it makes the surfaces of cinematic signification the grounds of political intervention, gives depth to the language of social criticism and extends the domain of 'politics' in a direction that will not be entirely dominated by the forces of economic or social control. Forms of popular rebellion and mobilization are often most subversive and transgressive when they are created through the identification with oppositional cultural practices. (p. 29)

Bhabha's strategies toward decolonization, therefore, attempt to transcend economic relations into integrated approaches that acknowledge the complex interplay of capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and the overarching influence of state power. Decolonization involves not just economic redistribution but also dismantling these interconnected systems of oppression to dismantle persistent colonial structures. In the context of Indigenous communities, decolonization involves reclaiming governance and cultural practices. As both a cultural and practical symbol, the canoe plays a central role in this process. Canoes reconnect Indigenous peoples with their ancestral lands and waters, countering the colonial exploitation of resources. Revitalizing canoe-making and journeying preserves tradition and acts as resistance against capitalist encroachment on Indigenous territories. Through these practices, Indigenous

communities assert sovereignty, maintain cultural continuity, and challenge colonial systems of control (Coulthard, 2014).

Bhabha's decolonial strategies illustrate the significance of the TCJ by transcending economic relations and resisting capitalist frameworks that prioritize profit over cultural preservation. The canoe journeys represent a form of decolonization that transforms Indigenous subjectivities, reclaiming identity and rejecting colonial narratives. While legal recognition of Indigenous rights offers opportunities, it also risks co-opting movements like the TCJ within colonial structures. The TCJ resists this by grounding itself in traditional practices, ensuring that these journeys remain a space for genuine self-determination and cultural continuity.

However, addressing the polysemy surrounding "decolonization" is important. Grande (2015) emphasizes that decolonization should not be reduced to a metaphor for general struggles against oppression. Instead, it involves a complex engagement with colonialism beyond reclaiming a pre-colonial past. Decolonization is not a definitive goal but an ongoing process: "Decolonization is thus a shifting configuration of strategies and actions, not an event, even as it is nonetheless eventful. Decolonization is a means without end. It is a creative response that necessarily exceeds legibility and reconciliation from the perspective of the conditions from which it arises". This perspective aligns with the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ), which embody ongoing acts of resistance and cultural revitalization. The TCJ show that decolonization is a continuous process, blending traditional practices with modern influences. Indigenous communities actively practice decolonization through these journeys, continuously adapting and reasserting their sovereignty.

Glen Coulthard (2014), a Dene scholar and political theorist, provides a critical framework for understanding Canada's coloniality and its response, Indigenous resistance. He argues that because after the transition to industrial capitalism,

> Canadian state-formation and colonial-capitalist development required first and foremost land, and only secondarily the surplus value afforded by cheap, Indigenous labour […] dispossession, not proletarianization, has been the dominant background structure shaping the character of the historical relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state. […] Just as importantly, I would also argue that dispossession continues to inform the dominant modes of Indigenous resistance and critique that this relationship has provoked. (p.51)

This ongoing dispossession, Coulthard argues, continues to shape Indigenous resistance and critique, as the struggle for land is central to Indigenous anti-colonialism. The author introduces the concept of "grounded normativity" to describe the "place-based foundation of Indigenous decolonial thought and practice" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 13). This concept includes various Indigenous practices and knowledge connected to the land, guiding and shaping ethical interactions with the world and human and nonhuman entities. Thus, resistance is not solely about reclaiming land in a material sense but also about the land as "a system of reciprocal relations and obligations" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 13), in which our interactions with each other and the natural world do not have to be based on domination or exploitation.

On the realm of subjectivity, Coulthard also critiques what he calls the "liberal politics of recognition," which he sees as serving colonial interests rather than genuinely addressing the needs of Indigenous peoples. Drawing on the work of Frantz Fanon, Coulthard explores how recognition in colonial contexts often operates in favour of the colonizer. Fanon (2004) argued that in colonial contexts, the terms of recognition are set by and benefit the colonizer, and over time, the colonized develop emotional and psychological attachments to these imposed forms of recognition. According to Coulthard, this attachment is crucial in maintaining colonialism's political and

economic structures, and his use of Fanon's theoretical approach emphasizes "the role played by recognition in the reproduction of settler-colonial forms of rule in a manner that still resonates today" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 12). He further reflects that "strategies that have sought independence via capitalist economic development have already facilitated the creation of an emergent Aboriginal bourgeoisie whose thirst for profit has come to outweigh their ancestral obligations to the land and to others" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 13). Coulthard argues that these strategies risk undermining traditional Indigenous cultural practices and social organization's egalitarian, nonauthoritarian, and sustainable characteristics. The pursuit of profit, when divorced from these ancestral responsibilities, threatens to erode the very foundations of Indigenous ways of life.

Coulthard also highlights how the legal approach to self-determination has created a class of Indigenous citizens whose rights and identities are increasingly defined concerning the colonial state rather than by the traditions and histories of their own nations. He echoes Fanon's belief that colonial power must be challenged at the objective and subjective) levels for fundamental transformation to occur and that changes in social structures alone do not guarantee changes in the subjectivities of the oppressed. For the author, this critique is relevant to the Aboriginal rights movement in Canada, in which discourse of recognition has often served to uphold colonial power and that true self-determination should aim to protect the core values of Indigenous nations, resisting the homogenizing forces of Western liberalism and free-market capitalism.

The Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) are not only cultural revivals but also acts of Indigenous resistance, embodying Coulthard's (2014) concept of grounded normativity—the ethical relationship between Indigenous peoples and their lands. Canoe-making and journeying reinforce connections to ancestral territories, resisting the colonial view of land as a resource for exploitation. The TCJ also challenges the liberal politics of recognition, bypassing colonial

systems by enacting Indigenous sovereignty on its own terms and fostering self-determination rooted in tradition rather than state-sanctioned frameworks.

Similarly, Mullins (2009) discusses how the physical movement and interaction with different landscapes can reshape group dynamics and deepen our understanding of place, identity, and connection. His observations suggest that engaging actively with varied environments can lead to a richer comprehension of place meanings, supporting the decolonial goal of transforming and enriching our interactions with the world. Such a decolonial approach aims at fostering social, economic, and political environments that are inclusive and equitable, emphasizing the voices and needs of those marginalized by colonial legacies.

Mullins' research demonstrates that canoeing, as more than just a recreational activity, engages participants intimately with the landscapes they traverse, forming a relationship between movement, skill, and environment that deepens place attachment and collective identity. Canoeing brings together stories of the land, creating "living stories of the landscape" (Mullins, 2009, p.239) shaped by the physical and social experiences of those moving through it. In this way, canoeing can be a decolonial practice in which Indigenous knowledge systems and embodied experiences emphasize connection, interdependence, and respect for the land.

This author further emphasizes that these interactions are not static but evolve as people develop skills while experiencing the landscape. Navigating diverse environments—such as rivers, lakes, and forests—creates meaningful connections to places that transcend the Western notion of landscapes as static scenarios—understanding the land as dynamic challenges colonial frameworks that often separate nature from culture. As canoeists become attuned to natural rhythms such as wind and water currents, the landscape itself shapes their movements and decisions, fostering a deeper connection and sense of interdependence (Mullins, 2009, p. 248). Canoe journeys promote

personal growth and group cohesion, nurturing relationships among participants and with the environment. These interactions support a decolonial ethos that resists commodification and exploitation, reinforcing sustainable and respectful engagement with the land.

Tribal Canoe Journeys as Indigenous Resurgence

As a response to the impacts colonialism has on current society, especially for Indigenous peoples, different resistances, negotiations, and revivals are taking place across Canada, resulting in various resurgence movements and projects. Indigenous resurgence movements undertaken by various First Nations aim to heal from and respond to centuries of colonialism. These movements seek to reclaim and revitalize interrupted traditions, reconnecting to their lands, languages, epistemologies, and cosmologies, envisioning and constructing future realities rooted in Indigenous stories, visions and desires (Green, 2004). As discussed by Greenwood and Lindsay (2019):

> Despite the violence of colonialism that forcibly removed Indigenous peoples from their lands, Indigenous peoples around the world have maintained connections to their lands, languages, and cultures, and are actively contributing to a resurgence of Indigenous knowledge that is passed through the generations. This knowledge is crucial to ongoing struggles as Indigenous peoples resist colonization of their lands and lives on many different fronts. (pp. 82-3)

These resurgence movements are characterized by grassroots and community-led efforts, embodying the principles of self-determination and cultural sovereignty (Corntassel, 2012; Elliott, 2018). Elliot (2018) identifies three critical axes of these movements as reactions to past atrocities but proactive steps toward a decolonized future defined by Indigenous peoples: (1) that colonialism in the Canadian context is an active structure of domination and fundamentally oriented towards the elimination of Indigenous societies rather than merely their subjugation; (2) that the prevailing normative-discursive environment powerfully reflects these underlying imperatives despite apparent shifts towards better addressing colonial injustice; and (3) that Indigenous peoples must

consequently seek to turn away from this hostile environment wherever possible and channel energies into independent programs of cultural, social, spiritual and physical rejuvenation. The annual Tribal Canoe Journeys along the Pacific Northwest Coast are striking examples of decolonization. These journeys, which have grown in participation since their revitalization in 1989, embody the principles of cultural sovereignty and self-determination. Through the practice of paddling and protocol, Indigenous communities reclaim waterways as vital cultural landscapes, reinforcing intergenerational teachings, language revitalization, and connection to ancestral territories. By focusing on traditional modes of travel and gathering, the Tribal Canoe Journeys serve as a powerful enactment of Elliott's third axis—turning away from colonial structures and instead investing in Indigenous-led cultural resurgence. The resurgence of these ceremonial and navigational practices, rooted in community collaboration and Indigenous governance, highlights a tangible expression of Indigenous peoples' movements toward a decolonized future.

Historically, the term "Indian" was used to describe the people who lived in the Americas before the arrival of Europeans. However, there were distinct peoples, each with unique cultures and traditions that colonial boundaries have since distorted. Recognition of this underscores the complexity of Indigenous identity, which is formed by shared memories and experiences rather than by the simplistic categories imposed by colonialism. Furthermore, Indigenous identities and nationhood are not static or monolithic but dynamic and marked by continuity and adaptation. Indigenous cultures, therefore, should not be romanticized as unchanged since pre-colonial times but recognized for their ability to evolve and adapt, acknowledging their cultural diversity. This adaptability and resistance to the necropolitical aspects of colonialism become evident in the TCJ.

The TCJ exemplifies how Indigenous peoples continue to evolve, resist colonial structures, and reclaim cultural practices. As communities come together through the TCJ, they navigate

waters that once facilitated trade and cultural exchange among coastal nations, symbolizing both the continuity of ancestral knowledge and the dynamic adaptation of these practices in modern times. The TCJ challenges colonialism by rejecting imposed identities and demonstrating that Indigenous cultures are living, resilient, and capable of shaping a future where Indigenous and non-Indigenous terms may reflect their historical implications (Coburn, 2015). Through this gathering, Indigenous nations reaffirm their sovereignty, express their shared and diverse identities, and resist the narratives of cultural stagnation that colonialism perpetuates.

To conclude, through the canoe and by canoeing together, Indigenous peoples also seek to reclaim Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems that have been marginalized or eroded by colonization and recognize and address historical injustices (Sumida, 2020). Centralizing the voices and experiences of Indigenous individuals engaged in culturally significant practices like canoeing allows an understanding of their realities, challenges, and aspirations, contesting the colonial narratives and power structures that have long dominated and subjugated Indigenous cultures (Elliott, 2018). This research, therefore, cultivates empathy and cultural sensitivity and highlights the physical, emotional, and spiritual enterprise that canoeing entails, underlining the community and identity bonds formed through such shared experiences (Beattie, 2017; Elliott, 2018). The Pulling Together Canoe Society[5] exemplifies this by promoting canoeing as a conduit to a past free from prejudice, symbolizing community, respect, and knowledge, and marking a critical component of Indigenous resurgence in British Columbia since 2001 (Pulling Together Canoe Society, 2022). These canoe journeys serve as vital acts within Indigenous resurgence movements, helping to reconnect communities with their traditions, re-establish sustainable

[5] A non-profit organization that foments canoeing the traditional highways of rivers, lakes, and coastal waters including TCJ.

economies, and foster solidarity: “In canoe journeys, the canoe almost leads its crew along, its own journey of ten thousand years or more an exemplar of unity and power, of daunting persistence, and spiritual transport” (Pulling Together Canoe Society, 2022). Thus, in canoe journeys, the canoe leads this decolonial object and practice that reconnects people and communities to centuries of persistence. Analyzing canoe journeys from multiple perspectives (paddlers, skippers, land crew, canoe carvers, experienced knowledge holders) stresses the significance of intergenerational knowledge transmission, reinforcing connections between elders, youth, and the land. This approach acknowledges the role of ancient practices and values in sustaining the resilience and strength of Indigenous communities amid historical traumas and contemporary challenges (Beattie, 2017; Daehnke, 2019; Hirch & Korn, 2012; Hundley, 2022; Johnson et al., 2019). Examining paddlers’ experiences may reveal their agency, resilience, and aspirations for cultural continuity, thereby supporting and advancing revitalization efforts.

Chapter three: Methodology

In indigenous research methods, story sharing is the culturally appropriate way to do so, so I would just be sharing my experience and the impact the canoe journeys had on me. It would come out more organically.
(Carol, personal communication, 2024)

The methodology of this study is uniquely characterized by its foundational element: the canoe. Drawing inspiration from Indigenous scholars who emphasize that each research inquiry demands its own methodology (Cajete, 2000; Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2005 & 2010; Memmi, 1974/2003; Wilson, 2008), the canoe, for me, emerged as this project's guiding metaphor methodological framework. Its significance, usage, imagery, and cultural importance steered the entire research process, underscoring the necessity to engage with paddlers, skippers, and carvers.

Since I began learning about the process of building a dugout canoe, I have also been learning how to navigate academic writing. The steps of canoe-making became a metaphor for writing this thesis, providing a vivid and relatable framework for understanding the research and writing process. This connection became clear when one of the collaborators of this research, Joe Martin, shared his perspective: "I make the canoe, and the canoe makes me as a canoe-maker." Similarly, as I write this thesis, the thesis is also shaping me and writing my history—transforming me into a student, researcher, and future knowledge holder.

The first step in canoe-making, selecting the tree, is equivalent to choosing a research topic. Both are foundational decisions that determine the strength and direction of the outcome. Preparing the log, which involves stripping the bark and shaping the wood into a rough form, parallels developing a research proposal—a process of refining an initial idea, conducting a preliminary literature review, and outlining research objectives and methodology. Hollowing out the log mirrors conducting a literature review: just as the wood is carefully removed to create space, the

research process involves delving deeply into existing literature, identifying gaps, and shaping a niche for new knowledge.

As the canoe begins to form, the hull's shaping is akin to designing the research methodology. Just as the canoe's hull must be symmetrical and functional – in case of dugouts, it must be widened with the use of fire - a research methodology must be structured and reliable to ensure a well-balanced study. Finishing the exterior corresponds to writing the thesis, as both require careful refinement—the canoe must be smoothed for performance and durability, just as the thesis must be clearly structured, well-supported, and logically organized.

The final steps of canoe-making further reflect the completion and dissemination of a thesis. Adding final details—such as seating and decorative elements—enhances the canoe's functionality and beauty, just as revising and editing the thesis improves clarity, coherence, and adherence to academic standards. Sealing and waterproofing the canoe ensures its durability and longevity, like defending and finalizing a thesis strengthening its credibility. Lastly, just as a canoe requires ongoing maintenance to remain in good condition, a completed thesis must be published and disseminated to contribute to the academic community and remain accessible to future scholars.

Beyond the mechanics of building and writing, the canoe is also a vessel of connection. Just as canoes bring people together—allowing communities to gather, travel, and share knowledge—this canoe that I embarked on through my research has drawn me closer to my collaborators and the land I am in. The relationships I have formed through this journey have shaped my understanding of the knowledge I seek to engage with, much like how paddlers must move in rhythm with one another and the water they traverse. Through this metaphor, the canoe is more than just a physical object—it is a way of thinking, learning, and growing. Just as a canoe

carries its paddler through changing waters, the thesis-writing process guides the researcher through the challenges of inquiry, reflection, and knowledge creation.

This centrality of the canoe informed the choice of collaborators and the direction of inquiry, shaping the thematic analysis of the data collected. By placing the canoe at the heart of the research, I aimed to embody its values of connectivity, journeying, and community, principles that are intrinsic to Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Similar to how archaeologists studying pottery shards are not only interested in the clay itself, but also in the people and cultures behind it, this research focuses on the canoe, with an emphasis on the people and behaviors that this iconic object inspires and fosters.

Colonial disruptions of political, social, and economic systems led to a loss of Indigenous knowledge and promoted racism, creating what is termed the "colonized mind" (Chilisa, 2012). Western research paradigms often neglect the impacts of imperialism, colonization, and globalization on knowledge construction, perpetuating colonial powers, underscoring the need to decolonize research practices to prevent deepening historical injustices (Chilisa, 2012). Recognizing this, this research is grounded in a decolonial perspective, challenging colonial patterns, concepts, and perspectives, while challenging the hegemony of a singular worldview advocating for a diverse plurality that elevates and amplifies other voices (Suess & de Souza Silva, 2019). Such an approach leads to research practices that respect Indigenous sovereignty by focusing on their voices and narratives. It also demands constant reflexivity regarding power dynamics and the researcher's positionality, ensuring that the research process does not replicate colonial structures of knowledge production.

In addition to the decolonial perspective, Indigenous Critical Theory provides a lens through which to approach the canoe as a metaphorical and methodological anchor. This

theoretical framework critically examines the effects of colonialism on Indigenous populations and their forms of resistance. It centres on Indigenous histories, knowledge systems, and cosmologies, ensuring research aligns with Indigenous interests and perspectives (Chilisa, 2012; Memmi, 1974/2003). Moreover, it highlights the importance of recognizing Indigenous cultures and histories' distinct temporality and meanings. It cautions, however, against approaching these cultures and practices statically or rigidly, rejecting a fundamentalistic perspective that views both the people and their cultural expressions as fixed in time and place (Coates, 2004; Green, 2004).

The canoe also serves as a metaphor for the journey of decolonization. Just as a canoe must navigate through various waters, decolonizing research must traverse complex terrains of historical trauma, cultural resilience, and contemporary challenges. This methodology facilitates a deeper connection to the subject matter and aligns with Indigenous Critical Theory by challenging colonial constructs and advocating for a plurality of voices and perspectives. In this way, the canoe-centric approach helps to deconstruct the dominant narratives imposed by Western paradigms and fosters a more inclusive and accurate representation of Indigenous knowledge and experiences.

Gregory Cajete (2000), a Tewa scholar, emphasizes the inseparable connection between humans and nature in Native science. Native philosophy integrates rational thought with interactions of the body, mind, soul, and spirit within nature, promoting a holistic approach where knowledge arises from these interactions. Key principles include diversity, optimization, cooperation, self-regulation, change, creativity, connectedness, and niche, forming a system valuing harmony with the environment. This involves direct experiences, careful observation, and focusing on meaning rather than prediction. Native science views causality as including synchronicity and energy transformation, intertwining spirituality with science, and seeing nature as imbued with spirit. Interpretations are context-based, using metaphoric stories and symbols,

with teaching methods employing high-context models to unify experience with meaning. This philosophy emphasizes engaging with nature for wisdom and understanding (Cajete, 2000).

Contributing to this holistic approach, the concept of animism, as understood within Indigenous frameworks, provides a lens through which to view human and "more-than-human" relationships. For instance, a nuanced understanding of animism among the Ojibwe people emphasizes relational ontology over the traditional Western interpretation of spirits inhabiting objects. This perspective views the world as filled with "persons," including other-than-human entities such as animals, plants, stones, and celestial bodies. Like humans, these entities possess agency, consciousness, and the capacity for social relationships. This worldview highlights the interconnectedness and mutual respect required in Ojibwe cosmology, where relationships with these other-than-human persons are fundamental. The concept of other-than-human persons highlights the Ojibwe perception of the natural world as a community of beings with whom they interact through specific behaviours, rituals, and protocols (Hallowell, 1964). Interactions with these entities involve asking permission before taking resources, offering thanks, and engaging in reciprocal relationships. This approach to animism is deeply rooted in behaviour and ethical relations, demonstrating a profound respect for the agency of natural phenomena and reinforcing the interconnectedness between humans and the environment (Hallowell, 1964).

Applying one Indigenous worldview to another requires acknowledging cultural differences while recognizing shared principles, such as relationality and respect for the natural world. While the Ojibwe emphasize relational ontology with other-than-human persons, similar concepts are found among Indigenous groups from the Pacific Northwest, including the Coast Salish. These groups also maintain ethical relationships with land and water through specific protocols during canoe journeys, reflecting respect for the agency of natural entities. Using the

Ojibwe framework as a comparative lens highlights these shared principles of interconnectedness across Indigenous cultures, enriching the understanding of Indigenous environmental ethics without imposing one worldview onto another (Hallowell, 1964).

This perspective challenges the rigid dichotomies prevalent in Western thought, such as the distinctions between subject and object or nature and culture. Instead, different Indigenous worldviews convert to an integrated and fluid understanding of existence, where all beings are part of a dynamic and interconnected system. This holistic perspective is not merely a set of beliefs but a comprehensive understanding of the world and one's place within it. It shapes experiences, interactions, and identity, emphasizing the importance of living in harmony with the environment and all its inhabitants (Hallowell, 1964). This understanding of animism translates into everyday actions and decisions that reflect Indigenous worldviews. Hunting practices, for example, involve communicating with animal spirits, seeking their consent, and performing rituals to honour the animal's life. Such practices are integral to maintaining the balance and reciprocity central to Native ethics, which highlights the depth and complexity of such worldviews, encouraging a more respectful and holistic approach to engaging with Indigenous cultures and their spiritual practices and ethical systems (Hallowell, 1964).

Similarly, another theoretical approach to the holistic aspect of Indigenous knowledge is Amerindian perspectivism, conceptualized by anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. This theory posits that different beings perceive themselves as humans and view their world from an anthropocentric perspective, contrasting sharply with the Western subject-object dichotomy that separates sentient beings from non-sentient things (Viveiros de Castro, 1998). In Amerindian cultures, relationality and interconnectedness are emphasized, where every entity, including animals, plants, and inanimate objects like rocks and rivers, possesses agency and personhood.

This holistic perspective aligns with Indigenous spiritualities, where the divine is seen as immanent within the world, such as the Salish Sea's landscapes, where ancestral spirits and the divine are integral to the natural world rather than existing beyond it (Thom, 2005).

While Amerindian perspectivism offers a framework for understanding relationality, it is crucial to ground this within the Coast Salish context. As will be discussed, interviews suggest that landscapes like the Salish Sea are inhabited by ancestral spirits and natural entities with agency, reflecting a deep connection between people and place. Rather than imposing outside perspectives, the interviews indicate that Coast Salish cosmologies emphasize the interconnectedness of all beings, both human and non-human, aligning with the cultural and spiritual worldview described by Thom (2005). This relational understanding of the natural world is central to Coast Salish identity and spirituality, as shown in their interactions with the land and water. Regarding the canoe and the Nuu-Chah-Nulth, Miller (1999) brings this interconnectedness to the making of the canoe itself:

> Ahousat canoe makers assured him that the animal-head-like bow was indeed a Wolf, although this was a "secret" known only among certain families. Throughout the Northwest, both wolves and orca killer whales were regarded as the same being, taking the shapes of the pack on land or a pod in the sea. Since both species are social carnivores, this astute equation enabled such a canoe to partake of the power of wolf + orca when in pursuit of whales. Interestingly, since Nuu-chah-nulth believe that whales have keen eye-sight, designs to give added power to a vessel were hidden under a black overpainting. (p. 109)

Integrating holistic perspectives rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing deepens our understanding of the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) as a metaphor for navigating complex intersections, where participants engage in integrated experiences that transcend physical

canoeing, embodying spiritual, cultural, and relational journeys, in an immanent connection to land, sea, spirits and ancestors in an interconnected view of existence (Viveiros de Castro, 1998). In TCJ, canoes are seen as partners in the journey, blurring the lines between subject and object. As well as the sea, as a collaborator mentioned:

> One year, I was working with a youth canoe, and one of my friends was in another canoe. I think it might have been the Samish canoe, but their canoe flipped, and our canoe flipped that day, and some stuff was lost, and everybody came together, we all helped out and did what we needed to. This friend, she said, "You know, we flipped. I lost this, this, and this. But I still have my life, and the ocean is going to take what she wants and give back what she doesn't want. And that's our lives. She gave that back (John, personal communication, 2024).

Just as a canoe must navigate through various waters, decolonizing research must traverse complex terrains of historical trauma, cultural resilience, and contemporary challenges. Therefore, this research adopts a canoe-centric methodology, engaging paddlers, skippers, and carvers through interviews and participant observation to honor Indigenous perspectives. By centering the canoe as both a cultural and methodological vessel, this approach fosters collaboration and upholds Indigenous protocols throughout the research process. The stories and lived experiences shared by collaborators guide the findings, ensuring that Indigenous voices are at the forefront of knowledge creation. Ethical considerations and reflexivity are carefully maintained to avoid replicating colonial knowledge structures, acknowledging the power dynamics at play and striving for a decolonized research framework. This methodology respects Indigenous worldviews, not only as subjects of the research but as active contributors and co-creators of knowledge.

Incorporating subjectivity into the research.

In this research, elements of experiential knowledge, storytelling, intuition, and dreams were incorporated by engaging directly with Indigenous collaborators through interviews and participant observation, assessing their relational and collective experiences. This approach legitimizes personal experiences and storytelling and lays emphasis on the importance of reciprocity in relationships (Kovach, 2005 & 2010).

Recognizing the essential role of subjective experiences in understanding historical and cultural narratives, this research embraces subjectivity in autobiographical discourse and oral history. Narratives construct and express subjectivity. Ignoring this distorts data and overlooks an essential aspect of humans: experience. Although immaterial (beyond control and measurement) and impregnated with individualism, subjectivity operates within the broader context of socially defined structures and discourses. Thus, social and historical research gains by including subjective experiences and developing methodologies to interpret them (Portelli, 1997). Texts, as both individual and social artifacts, including oral narratives and interviews, serve as a bridge between the individual and the social and reveal how personal expressions negotiate social realities through recognizable, socially shared "grammars," validating the relevance of subjective narratives in representing broader cultural and social phenomena (Portelli, 1997).

The Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) exemplify how subjective narratives emerge through collective cultural practices. As paddlers recount their experiences on the journey, they reflect personal and communal connections to land, water, and ancestral traditions. These individual stories, while deeply personal, embody shared cultural values and histories, illustrating how personal subjectivity contributes to the continuity and adaptation of Indigenous social realities.

Subjective narratives are integral to the transmission of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) as defined by the 2003 UNESCO Convention. ICH encompasses living traditions, expressions, knowledge, and skills passed down through generations, closely linked to the identities and worldviews of communities. The Convention emphasizes the role of individuals and communities in safeguarding ICH through everyday practices and oral traditions, which are often expressed through personal, subjective narratives (Pawlowska-Mainville, 2023). These narratives are not only vehicles for the transmission of cultural knowledge but also reflect the dynamic and evolving nature of ICH. By incorporating individual experiences, emotions, and perspectives, subjective narratives contribute to the vitality of cultural heritage, ensuring its relevance across generations. In this way, the personal stories that accompany traditional practices, whether through song, storytelling, or communal activities, serve as a bridge between the past and the present, enriching ICH with the lived experiences that shape its continuity and transformation.

In this way, interviewing collaborators for this research acknowledges that individual narratives reflect a broader horizon of shared possibilities. Oral histories and autobiographies extend beyond reconstructing average experiences to project imagined and potential events, revealing socially shared subjectivity crucial for understanding human experiences. By including these subjective perspectives, this research embraces the mosaic-like nature of reality, providing a richer portrayal of life than standardized Western social science grids (Portelli, 1997). Integrating these principles may help to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of Indigenous experiences.

Methods

To address the research questions, this study utilized a comprehensive research design: (1) selecting and evaluating secondary data sources, such as peer-reviewed literature and media (social, and audio-videos); (2) community-based observation in the TCJ Paddle to Muckleshoot in 2023; (3) analyzing the landing ceremony video to identify potential interview collaborators; and (4) conducting semi-structured interviews with seven people as the primary data source, focusing on the narratives and perspectives of paddlers, canoe knowledge holders, and other participants in line with decolonial and Indigenous Critical Theory approach, who are willing to share about the interests of the research project.

The selection of secondary data sources was guided by their relevance to understanding the role of the TCJ and canoeing within Indigenous resurgence movements. Sources were evaluated based on their alignment with the research's decolonial and Indigenous critical theoretical frameworks, prioritizing Indigenous stories about the TCJ. This process is on-going since 2020, providing essential context and perspectives into the final stages of this thesis.

My observations of the Tribal Canoe Journey (TCJ) Paddle to Muckleshoot in the summer of 2023 represented a pivotal step. My journey to Muckleshoot, WA, was an immersive experience. I observed the TCJ landing ceremony, met people and shared meals with the paddlers at the Muckleshoot Community Centre, as well as participated in the cultural protocols and festivities. Because I lacked Research Ethics Board (REB) approval at that time of the event, I abstained from conducting any interviews. However, I embraced the opportunity to participate, meet people and engage in activities. I also took notes, documenting the essence of this communal gathering where the public was welcome. This firsthand experience permitted me to meet people, connect with them, and tell them about my research. Some people who were interested agreed to be contacted

later. This immersive experience allowed for a deeper and more personal understanding of the dynamics and significance of the TCJ, rooting the research in lived experience. Even as a mere observer, I gained valuable insights that would later enrich the follow-up interviews, enabling questions grounded in this firsthand understanding.

Subsequently, I viewed the full video of the landing on the YouTube website to revisit and gain more knowledge of the experience. As explained above, during the landing protocol, canoe families sought permission to come ashore, sharing words, songs, dances, and other cultural expressions. Because of this, I was able to gather more information on the people and canoe families to contact, which was instrumental in identifying potential collaborators for the interviews. After receiving approval from the Research Ethics Board[6], I contacted collaborators through email, the "canoe family", or personal Facebook pages.

From the contacts gathered, I conducted semi-structured interviews, using the following questions as guidelines to elicit stories.

1. Could you tell me a little about yourself, including your name, nation, canoe family, place of residence or origin,
2. How and when you became involved with the TCJ?
3. What is your most vivid memory involving a canoe?
4. Why is canoeing with the TCJ important for you? Is it different than if you go on a boat? Are there differences between regular mainstream canoe practices and Salish

[6] File No: 6009221
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seafaring canoe tribal practices? What are the stories you have heard about the TCJ journey?

5. Could you share a story about your most powerful experience during the journey?

6. How has travelling together on the TCJ influenced your understanding of water, landscape, and territory?

7. Can you share your perspective on if and how the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) contribute to Indigenous resistance and cultural resurgence movements?

These questions were adapted to each interview flow, considering the collaborators' varied relationships with the canoe, including canoe carvers, land and support crew, journey organizers, and paddlers (skippers and regular paddlers). Most interviews were conducted online. A special effort was made to meet with Joe Martin and Carl Martin, two master carvers from Nuu-Chah-Nulth who invited me to visit them. Recognizing the importance of his work and wisdom—he has been awarded the BC Community Achievement Award (2012) and the BC Creative Achievement Awards for First Nations' Art (2013)—I visited Joe in the winter of 2024. Each collaborator had the choice to remain anonymous or be named, in alignment with the principles of respect, reciprocity, relevance, and responsibility, the 4Rs (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Collaborators who preferred anonymity were assigned aliases, and care was taken to obscure any identifiable information. Interviews were flexible, typically lasting about an hour, and were tailored to accommodate the needs and interests of the collaborators.

Figure 19

Territorial Distribution of Coast Salish Nations.

The strategy in these interviews was to create a space focused on the collaborators' stories and perspectives. This approach permitted me to capture the narratives emphasizing the value of

their experiences in line with the project objectives. I approached the interviews humbly, with an open mind, and actively listened to them.

Following each interview, we discussed the possibility of ongoing communication. I offered collaborators the transcripts of their interviews, aiming to encourage their involvement and insight so a collaborative dialogue could continue beyond our initial interaction. After a careful transcription, I engaged in transcreation (Meihy, 2005), attempting to honour the essence of each collaborators experiences through these three main steps: (1) transcription, where spoken words are documented verbatim; (2) textualization, which refines these transcripts by removing the interviewer's questions, correcting grammatical errors, and eliminating semantically weak phrases; and (3) transcreation, where the textualized content is transformed into a cohesive, expressive narrative. This process ensures that the final text represents the collaborators' storytelling style and experiences, incorporating non-verbal elements like gestures and silences to enhance clarity and emotional impact. The quality of the final text is confirmed through collaborator review and approval, ensuring their identification with the presented narratives (Meihy, 2005). By using transcreation, the research preserves their voices and experiences while adapting them to written language, making the narratives more vivid and impactful.

After transcreation, I applied thematic analysis, engaging with the data, searching for themes, reviewing them, and defining and naming them, each collaborator's theme is listed in the following chapter. This method acknowledges the researchers' role in identifying themes, so throughout the process, I attempted to ensure that the themes developed were rooted in the explicit content and latent ideas underlying their expressions. Following this, I performed the same process across the collective of interviews, searching for common themes to understand and integrate shared meanings and reinforcing the connections among the stories. The recurrent themes are

among all the collaborators in this research dealt with cultural revitalization and resurgence, Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge, Personal Transformation and Healing; Community, Cultural Integrity, Environment and Landscape Leadership, Empowerment and Political and Social Activism. All of these will be discussed in the findings and discussion chapter.

I navigated the stories shared with me with sensitivity and respect, recognizing the power dynamics in the research context and being mindful of the power dynamics between myself as a non-Indigenous researcher and Indigenous collaborators. Trying to address these imbalances, I adopted a collaborative and inclusive approach, seeking and valuing collaborators' input, guidance, and wisdom of collaborators. This included involving them in encouraging their feedback and review of transcripts on their narratives' themes and incorporating their suggestions. This strategy attempted to ensure their voices were heard and prioritized, aligning with the above-mentioned ethical commitment.

This methodological approach offered a path responsive to the nuanced complexities of the Tribal Canoe Journeys and the canoe. As knowledge and metaphorical methodological framework, the canoe facilitated an immersion into the lived experiences of those who engage with it, guiding the research towards a more contextualized understanding and highlighting the importance of listening to and learning from Indigenous voices about resurgence and resistance – and the canoe itself. By connecting theoretical principles around resurgence, decolonization, and the practice of canoeing with ethical research practices, my methodology emphasizes dialogue and respects the autonomy and agency of Indigenous collaborators.

Chapter four: Results, analysis, discussion.

I conducted seven interviews, two in loco and five online, scheduled according to the collaborators' preferred days, times, and online platforms. Seven interviews can provide rich, in-depth qualitative data, especially when the goal is to explore individual experiences and perspectives in detail. This number of collaborators allows for sufficient variation in responses while still being manageable for a Master's thesis, ensuring that the researcher can deeply analyze each interview. With seven collaborators, recurring themes and patterns are likely to emerge, which is a key indicator of data saturation in qualitative research. Additionally, a focused collaborator pool enables a more thorough exploration of specific research questions, which contributes to the credibility and depth of the findings.

Each session began with the Informed Consent and authorization to record the audio using voice recorders. During the interviews, collaborators were informed that I had some questions that I would like to ask but that I did not necessarily need to ask them. These various questions were tailored to the discussed topic and modified as I engaged with the collaborators, and all conversations started with: "tell me about yourself, your origins, and how it relates to canoes and to Canoes Journeys." The sessions concluded when the storytelling ended, with a final question about whether they wished to add anything further, agreeing that I would send the interview transcreation and the option for a follow-up conversation. The other two interviews were conducted on-site at the workshops of two master carvers. This setting allowed a deeper understanding of their perspectives on their craft within their natural environment, surrounded by their forest, materials, tools, machines, and artworks, including canoes, totems, masks and many other wooden art forms.

Table 1

Collaborator	Background Info	Notable Experiences
Robert	Member of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe. His people originate from the greater Seattle area to the Cascade Mountains and the Salish Sea. He has ancestral ties to canoe building and travel. Father of three paddlers, became involved in Canoe Journeys in 2003.	Became a Skipper by the end of his first journey and has been involved in TCJ for over 20 years, leading him to a position of tribal Culture Director. Discusses the critical role of Canoe Journeys in cultural revitalization, leadership development, and community building.
Carol	Member of the Quinault Indian Nation Indian Tribe. Reconnected with canoe culture around 2010 and has participated ever since.	Discusses the logistical and financial challenges of organizing TCJ. Emphasizes the cultural, spiritual, and healing benefits of participation and the role of canoe journeys in strengthening family and community bonds.
Lauri	Member of the Makah Tribe, her traditional name means "people that watch you dance." Has participated in canoe journeys since 1997. Mother of a vast family of paddlers.	Experienced profound emotional healing through canoe journeys after significant personal losses and emphasizes the cultural and spiritual significance of the journeys for her and her family. Reflects on the differences between past and present journeys, criticizing commercialization.
John	Member of the Qualicum First Nation. Ancestral name means "a place where you never go hungry". A skipper of the canoe family, Lives on Vancouver Island and is involved in canoe journeys since 2009-2010.	Describes how canoe journeys helped him recover from substance abuse and become a community leader. Discusses the challenges and rewards of being a skipper and the importance of cultural revitalization through canoeing.
Joe	Member of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations, experienced master carver with ancestral knowledge of canoe/totem pole/masks making.	Emphasizes the role of traditional canoe carving in cultural revitalization and intergenerational knowledge transmission and adhering to traditional protocols, such as harvesting wood in the fall and winter. Talks about teaching younger generations and the challenges involved. Has made numerous canoes for different communities along the coast.
Carl	Member of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations, experienced master carver with ancestral knowledge of canoe/totem pole/masks making.	Involved in the canoe-making process with his brother Joe, including a current project in their shop. Highlights the collaborative nature of their work and the importance of maintaining traditional methods. Discusses the practical aspects of canoe building, such as using

		specific tools and techniques for ensuring safety and durability.
Mark	Member of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, and cultural arts educator.	Teaches traditional arts, history, and language to the community. Involved in canoe building and cultural preservation, highlighting the importance of safety and traditional methods in canoe making. Works in a grant program with a team to build and teach traditional skills.

Table: Collaborator Overview

Analysis

In this section, I summarize each interview's themes, prefaced by a standout statement from each collaborator that left a significant impression on me and that encapsulates an essential aspect of their perspective in relation to aspects of the theoretical discussion presented[7]. The analysis is organized around each interview's main topic and themes. If a quote is from someone other than the specific collaborator, this will be explicitly noted. This format ensures that the reader can easily identify the participant's contributions while preserving the clarity of voices throughout the analysis. After presenting the individual analysis, I will synthesize the common themes that emerged across all interviews. By integrating these common themes, I aim to reinforce the connections among the stories and provide a cohesive understanding of the collective experiences of the collaborator. Everything in italics comes from the interviews.

Robert

> *It's something you cannot replicate inside of a classroom. It is a lived experience. I think it's just such an empowering experience process for us, personally, culturally, spiritually, and emotionally, because of what it does for our people in the sense of accomplishment, the sense of pride, and the work that goes into it.*

Robert, a respected leader and advocate from the Muckleshoot Tribe, offers his insights into the profound understanding of the cultural revitalization efforts surrounding the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ). Through his words, we encounter the importance he gives to the journeys and their vital role in reclaiming Indigenous identity, promoting connections between communities and reviving almost lost traditions. His narrative focuses on the complex interplay of history,

[7] The standout statement will be italicized and aligned to the right, emphasizing it. These quotes highlight the unique viewpoints of each collaborator while offering a thematic connection between the interviews and the broader framework of the research.

community, and resurgence as he articulates the deep emotional, cultural, and spiritual significance of the TCJ for the Coast Salish peoples, along with the challenges posed by the colonial disruption of these practices and the enduring strength and adaptability of his community.

The first theme in Robert's story is cultural revitalization and resurgence. For him, the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) had a pivotal role in the cultural revitalization of Coast Salish communities. He discusses how canoes are important in Indigenous life, with ocean travel being a core element of cultural expression and survival. However, settler-colonial structures led to a decline in these practices, and canoeing became dormant due to colonization and external pressures: "There is a long history of canoe and ocean-going travel dating back thousands of years. As the intrusion process increased in the Pacific Northwest, that practice became less and less." For him, the revival of canoeing in 1989 with the Paddle to Seattle represents the reawakening of this cultural practice and the reclamation of sovereignty and identity. With the journeys, these practices have been reclaimed. They are now central to the cultural and communal life of the Coast Salish peoples, marking TCJ as a transformative process of cultural resurgence. The revival of these traditions represents a significant cultural reclamation, contributing to their identity and self-determination.

By navigating larger waters and reconnecting to ancestral practices, the TCJ has become a pillar of Indigenous resurgence. Robert further elaborates on the transformative impact of the TCJ in reigniting practices, especially among younger generations who had no direct experience with these traditions prior to their revival. He emphasizes the event's exponential growth and ability to promote tribal reconnection, stating: "Now it's a very, very large event. Hosting the event is a massive undertaking, but we've seen a significant reconnection of our Coast Salish Tribes and how we interact."

This reconnection is more than a cultural revival; it is also a reclamation of social and political relationships among Coast Salish tribes, reinforcing governance systems and protocols. Hosting and participating in the TCJ requires engaging in protocols and further embedding cultural sovereignty within the daily practices of these communities.

Robert's observations point out how the journeys brought back the art of canoe-making and travelling and vital cultural elements such as language, ceremonial practices and clothing, dancing and singing. This resurgence is framed as a holistic and transformative experience, with Robert emphasizing that participation in the TCJ is not merely about recreating a tradition but engaging in "active history"—a lived, experiential practice that cannot be replicated in classrooms. The intensive physical, cultural, and spiritual preparation required ingrains a profound sense of accomplishment and pride, illustrating these journeys' personal and communal impacts. This reflection captures the immersive nature of the TCJ, where participants engage with their heritage on multiple levels—physically through canoeing, spiritually through rituals and offerings, and culturally through the revitalization of traditions: "Personally, for me, participation in the Journeys is a centering. For us and our peoples, and those who participate in this way of life culturally, the Journeys are an engagement in active history for our people. It's once more an engagement in cultural revitalization of language, protocols, ancestral ways of travel and how we interact with each other". For him, these journeys serve as a form of resistance to colonial impositions that sought to erase these practices, reinforcing the idea that cultural practices like canoeing are integral to both personal identity and the collective resilience of Indigenous communities.

Intergenerational transmission of knowledge is another central theme in Robert's reflections: the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) are crucial in passing down cultural traditions to younger generations. Canoeing, for him, is not just a physical practice but a medium through which

cultural values, leadership, and community resilience are embodied. Robert talks with pride about his children's involvement in these journeys, emphasizing how they have grown up immersed in the practice from an early age, reflecting the connection between family and tradition, as next-generation engagement is what will ensure their preservation. This reflects the concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), in which individuals and communities maintain and transmit living traditions. By continuing to pass down these practices through family and community, the TCJ helps ensure that these cultural expressions remain vital and relevant across generations, preserving the physical act of canoeing and its cultural and spiritual knowledge.

It also shows the significance of the TCJ as an educational platform where younger people learn through experience, taking on leadership roles while being guided by elders. Robert describes how the younger generation took traditions further and contributed to evolving cultural expressions, which indicates the adaptability of these traditions and the dynamicity of Indigenous cultures: "Our younger generation has taken up another type of canoe journeys, that is called jam sessions, where they get together and sing and dance..." Cultural practices continue to grow and adapt within the community, reflecting contemporary Indigenous experiences. Cultural transmission is not static but dynamic, as the younger generation brings new energy into these practices with cultural expressions that resonate with the present while connected to the past.

Leadership is another significant aspect of this intergenerational process. Robert notes that those who grew up with the TCJ are now taking on leadership roles: "I'm so excited to see people that I knew as children are now in leadership roles." This sense of continuity between generations ensures that cultural leadership is passed down in a way that remains connected to community values, respect for elders, and a commitment to maintaining cultural integrity. Thus, the TCJ

strengthens the ties between tradition and modernity, allowing younger leaders to take on responsibilities while grounded in their ancestors' teachings.

Moreover, Robert reflects on how the physical practices of canoe-making have also adapted to modern circumstances. He describes the challenges imposed by the scarcity of traditional materials, such as old-growth cedar, and how the community has responded with new canoe construction methods: "About 20 years ago, our carvers created a hybrid model where you create strip canoes... They can produce more canoes out of a single tree." This blend of tradition and innovation once again shows the community's creativity and dynamicity in the attempt to ensure that canoe-making continues even with environmental limitations. Through canoeing and canoe-making, his community exemplifies how cultural practices can evolve without losing their core significance by adapting to new techniques while honouring traditional craftsmanship.

In recounting his journey, Robert shares how his TCJ participation has shaped his own leadership within the Muckleshoot Canoe Family. Starting in 2003 as a participant, he quickly took on the role of a skipper, guiding canoes and assuming responsibilities that led to him becoming the Culture Director for his people. This personal narrative reflects how roles within the TCJ can evolve into formal leadership positions, bridging the cultural and professional realms through a deep connection to their history:

> I think it also creates leaders within our community because they feel much so much more grounded, more well-rounded in who they are as Native people, and living in a contemporary lifestyle, but being able to access their history and their culture and ancestral ways of being in a way that wasn't previously available.

For Robert, the TCJ has been a cultural practice and a pathway to formal leadership, demonstrating the impact of these journeys on both individual and community development.

Robert then emphasizes the significance of the bonds formed through and on the TCJ, describing how the cooperative nature of these journeys brings a sense of closeness and unity: "the bonds you create in a journey, having that cooperation process, you really get close, out in the water, depending on each other." These interpersonal relationships, formed through the shared experience of navigating the water, are essential for sustaining cultural practices and ensuring their transmission to future generations.

Challenges and empowerment are central to Robert's reflections about the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ). He emphasizes the physical, logistical, and financial difficulties that both participants and host communities face. He sees these challenges, however, as obstacles but also opportunities for empowerment, particularly for the youth and community leaders, who find pride and strength in overcoming them. He points to the need for solidarity among nations, particularly in ensuring that those with fewer financial resources can still participate and host. This reflects the interconnectedness of Coast Salish communities, with wealthier nations stepping in to assist smaller or economically struggling ones, thus trying to keep the TCJ inclusive and accessible. For him, this collaboration is essential for sustaining the journeys as a shared cultural experience and an organizational effort.

Robert acknowledges that hosting the TCJ is a massive undertaking, requiring extensive economic and logistical resources. He expresses concern about how the rising costs of participation and hosting may lead to smaller, more traditional events, as the scale of the event can be prohibitive for many communities: "One of the challenges for Indigenous communities now is that we have very limited possibilities of who can host that Travel Canoe Journey. If they don't have the

economic resources, it's very, very challenging!" In this statement, he not only addresses the financial aspect but also the logistical concerns, from providing sanitary facilities to ensuring the safety of participants. This balancing act between tradition and modern practicality becomes a powerful source of empowerment as communities rise to meet these challenges while staying true to their cultural values.

At the same time, Robert reflects on the internal challenges within the community, particularly in terms of cultural preservation and economic stability. He highlights initiatives to support carvers, ensuring they can focus on their craft while having a stable livelihood, which can be challenging for younger people to engage while struggling financially. This underscores the role of economic empowerment in maintaining cultural practices and underlines the need for sustainable models that allow these traditions to continue.

The challenge of physical distance from the water adds another layer to the empowerment narrative. The demarcation of reservations forced the Muckleshoot and other nations away from their traditional waterways, cutting them from their vital connection to the water. Robert explains how their current location on a plateau created a physical and symbolic distance from the saltwater, which is historically central to their identity as ocean-going travelers. However, through the TCJ, this connection has been reestablished: "For us, the journeys have reestablished that connection and changed that perspective of who we are as saltwater and ocean-going travelers." Though full of challenges, this reconnection has reinforced their sense of identity and place within the broader Coast Salish cultural landscape.

Ultimately, Robert's reflections emphasize the profound cultural and spiritual significance of overcoming these challenges because, for him, empowerment lies not only in the physical act of participating in the TCJ but also in the community's commitment and adaptability in navigating

economic and cultural obstacles. The TCJ, therefore, is a symbol of survival, material and cultural resistance, and empowerment for Indigenous communities reclaiming their heritage and their place in a world shaped by colonial dislocation. This transmission of cultural knowledge and the deep sense of community involved in the TCJ aligns with the principles of ICH, where living traditions like canoe-making are preserved and continuously adapted and reshaped by the experiences of each generation. By attempting to overcome these challenges collectively, the community aims for the journeys to remain a vital living practice, marked by its historical significance and the evolving contributions of its people.

Robert's considerations on the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) also explore the environmental and spiritual connections embedded in these experiences. He explains how participating in the journeys offers a perspective that reshapes participants' relationship with ancestral lands and waters, noting how the experience of seeing the landscape from the water fundamentally alters the relationship with the environment:

> Once I started participating in the canoe journey, it shaped my perspective on our homeland because I'm now seeing it from the water perspective. As a sailor, you see it much differently than if you're just travelling on the highways, travelling on the land. Seeing it from the water perspective reshaped my whole thinking of this place, this truly amazing place on Earth. I don't know if I've been a world traveller, but I've been around and it really is an amazing place because of how beautiful it is, and you also get the chance to get out of the noise and out of the pollution. You have that connection to the water, which really reshapes your lens.

This profound experience, moving through ancestral waters, brings people out of the pollution and noise of modern life and connects them to nature and their homelands. Canoeing and

being on the water revives and reinforces a holistic connection between humans, their environment, and the spiritual world, embodying the principles of interdependence central to several Indigenous knowledge systems in which land and water are active, and the environment is not separate from culture but an integral part of it. This resonates with Robert's perspective that seeing the land from a different point deepens the understanding of place and belonging, of the relationship between the people and their environment.

Beyond the environmental aspect, Robert underscores the shared experiences of colonialism and the spiritual and cultural connections across Indigenous water travelers, not only within the Coast Salish but globally. "What we do, and how we travel, the stories are so similar to our relatives in Hawaii and in New Zealand, especially that shared story of colonialism and how we survive." The journeys connect Indigenous communities across borders and reflect a shared strength in the face of colonial disruption. This unity becomes a lived expression of resistance, reinforcing collective identity and shared cultural memory across the Pacific.

Robert also reflects on the role of the TCJ in broader political and social activism. The skills, unity, and networks learned within the journeys go beyond cultural revitalization, often becoming motivations for political action, such as using canoes in protests against environmental destruction or in solidarity with other global Indigenous movements. These acts of activism highlight how the collective strength built through cultural practices like the TCJ is integral to advocating for social justice and environmental sovereignty. This resonates with broader Indigenous movements worldwide, where traditional practices, ceremonies, and rituals have become powerful forms of resistance to colonial oppression and environmental harm, as in my country. Indigenous groups continue to reclaim their cultural heritage as a means of identity and a platform for political resistance and resilience. By bringing together the environmental, spiritual,

and activist dimensions of the TCJ, Robert's reflections show how canoeing is a symbol of cultural resurgence and a tool for social and political struggle.

Carol

> *Also, about identity, I would say I had always been searching, and I didn't know what I was searching for. And what I like to share with people is that being on a canoe journey, travelling the ancestral highway, I felt connected to the land, the water, and the animals. I felt connected to the ancestors. I like to share with people that the culture, teachings, and traditions of canoe journey fed my spirit. And it helped me heal. I get emotional talking about it; it has such an impact on my life.*

Carol's reflections echo the profound themes of cultural revitalization, healing, and community interconnectedness that have emerged through the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ). For her, besides the embodied experience of canoeing together, the journeys are profound cultural and personal experiences that rekindle her identity and deepen her connection to her heritage. The canoe journeys provided a platform for personal and collective healing through individual and community growth.

As Carol recounts her initial involvement in the journeys, she describes how it became a turning point in her life, reshaping her sense of belonging:

> I'll start by talking about how it happened, reconnecting with canoe culture, because, you know, it's a part of our DNA, our blood memory, our ancestral ties and lineage. But officially, […] I met someone at the school who talked about their canoe family and making giveaway gifts. I just offered to help with the gifts, so they invited me to the canoe family meeting. And that night, the […] leader of the canoe family, asked me to pull in their canoe with them.

This passage encapsulates the openness and welcoming nature of the canoe family, a recurrent theme in Carol's narrative. Her description of being immediately embraced into the community demonstrates the strength of shared cultural practices and how these journeys include and reconnect, not only with others but also with herself.

For Carol, being enrolled in the Quinault Indian Nation and having grown up in Renton (outside of Seattle), Washington, the sense of identity these experiences evoke is intrinsically linked to her engagement in these journeys. She explains how travelling with several canoe families, beginning with the Muckleshoot, has enriched her understanding of her heritage and strengthened her sense of belonging: "The canoe journeys strengthened my sense of identity and community." This reinforces the cultural revival aspect of the TCJ, which suggests rekindling cultural practices, reshaping personal identity, and building inter-community bonds across nations.

Carol also emphasizes the role of family within these practices. Her children's participation illustrates the importance of intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Her youngest child, who embarked on a canoe journey at just three weeks old, embodies this, reinforcing how canoe journeys are family-centred cultural events that pass knowledge across generations. Carol's understanding of the canoe family as "one heart, one mind, one spirit" also reflects Indigenous kinship systems where cultural practices can be tied to family and community bonds.

Despite growing up outside her reservation, she shares childhood memories of feeling connected to the land and waterways. Floating down rivers as a child, she instinctively felt the presence of villages without being told: "In my mind, in my spirit, I could feel villages without anyone telling me. But on that first canoe journey, that came back." The journeys gave meaning to these memories, affirming to her that her connection to the land had always been part of her.

Through this reflection, Carol illustrates the spiritual and ancestral connections the canoe journeys promote. For her, paddling together was a profound experience of spiritual and ancestral healing. Moving through the same waters as her ancestors evokes a connection that transcends time. Carol recounts the transformative experience of her first canoe journey, describing how it shifted her perspective from a more scientific, Western mindset to one grounded in spiritual practice: "Before my first canoe journey, I was more scientific, I used more my Western mind. That first night, I prayed for the people, for the canoe, for the strength to be able to make the trip from one reservation to the next. The next day, I felt a strength that I had never felt before." This spiritual awakening brought her closer to her ancestors and taught her to honour and nurture her connection with both the physical and spiritual worlds.

For Carol, the connection to her heritage through TCJ was intellectual, emotional and spiritual. She recalls a mystical moment during one of her canoe journeys where she heard ancestral songs, reinforcing her spiritual connection to her people's land and history:

> We were pulling on the southern tip, near the southern tip of this Island, and I heard a song. I looked around and I'm like, "who's singing?" I hear like jingles that I never heard before... But I was looking around, and nobody else could hear this song.

This experience connected her to the land's ancestral spirits, where past and present, land and spirit, can come together in transformative ways. She Continues about the mysterious songs she heard:

> The next day we were pulling past that same point and one of my companions, who works in the archeological field, asked if anyone heard the song. I was pretty shy; I never speak up. But when he asked if anyone heard the song, someone remembered me hearing it the day before and told him that. He said that there was an archeological site there, there was

> a landslide and there were objects found, possibly remains and other things that were found but I can't remember everything. So those are the kind of special things that happened for me on canoe journey.

More than vessels, canoes carry stories, songs, and experiences passed down through generations. This experience speaks to the power of these journeys in reclaiming Indigenous heritage and ensuring its survival through lived, embodied practices that bridge past and present.

The impact of canoe journeys on language and cultural revitalization is also relevant in Carol's story. Participation in these journeys inspired her to engage more deeply with her cultural roots, from learning languages like Quinault and Lushootseed to taking up traditional crafts such as cedar weaving and paddle making. "From that canoe journey, I think it just planted the seed to learn even more..." This exemplifies the broader educational and cultural skill development benefits of the journeys, contributing to revitalizing Indigenous knowledge systems. She adds,

> I even started my first cedar paddle, which I haven't finished yet. But really it just opened this world up to the culture and I've never looked back, it is now in my day-to-day life, I work teaching or helping urban natives to reconnect, helping urban natives with ailments through traditional medicine. It really changed my life.

This highlights the profound and lasting impact that participation in Tribal Canoe Journeys and being part of canoe families has had on her life, deeply intertwining cultural practices with her daily experiences and professional work.

Carol also discusses the practical challenges of organizing and participating in these journeys, particularly for smaller nations, considering the significant financial and logistical hurdles, such as feeding thousands of people during week-long celebrations and securing time off

work for participants, so having an understanding and supportive workplace is fundamental, which is not always the case:

> Another challenge I think community faces is having people in their jobs be understanding to the importance of the ceremony. I'm very fortunate, because I work in the tribal organization and there are some tribes that offer cultural leave. But I know people from the community that aren't able to take the time off for canoe journeys, which is a challenge.

She recognizes and reflects on the broader systemic obstacles many Indigenous communities and individuals face in maintaining their cultural practices in the face of modern work demands and economic constraints.

Health and wellness are additional dimensions that Carol emphasizes as benefits of the journeys for participants and crew that experience a renewed sense of health and well-being through their involvement: "the reconnection, meeting others, connecting with other tribes, other people, the learning opportunities!" For her, journeys are spaces for holistic healing, wellness promotion, and community building, stressing the wide-reaching impact that the TCJ has on individual and collective well-being.

Carol shares her thoughts about the future of the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ). With hopes for greater engagement, she envisions a future where their significance is more widely understood and respected, not only within Indigenous circles but also by the broader public. Public education is vital for this and can enable wider audiences to appreciate and support the values and traditions embedded in the TCJ. Through consistent participation since 2011, Carol remains committed to the journeys' ongoing cultural and educational significance.

In considering the future, Carol also touches on cultural sovereignty's challenges, a crucial yet complex topic that demands thoughtful and informed discussions. She acknowledges the

intricacies involved in balancing sovereignty with external influences and expectations. She considers it important to approach these discussions carefully, ensuring that the nuances of sovereignty are addressed in ways that protect the cultural integrity of Indigenous practices, including the canoe journeys. For Carol, these conversations are about legal or political sovereignty and ensuring that the cultural and spiritual essence of the journeys—and their traditions—are preserved and honoured.

The need for careful dialogue echoes broader themes in the TCJ, where cultural revival, intergenerational knowledge transmission, and community-building intertwine with the practical realities of maintaining sovereignty over Indigenous cultural practices in a modern, interconnected world. As Carol emphasizes, safeguarding the journeys' future requires not only participation but also a shared understanding of their significance.

John

> *The canoe lives in my yard, and I take care of it! It's on this trailer for most of the year. This past year was one of the longest times that went out for in two years. I didn't know how to drive a trailer, and my uncle told me "This is what you do. This is what you do" and he really just taught me this just very quickly, and I love driving that new trailer anywhere now. The canoe has always taught me, it's taught me a lot of knowledge tasks, and everything it's given me. I've gained a ton of knowledge from skipping the canoe because it's not just skipping the canoe. There's just so much to it. I'm in charge of the crew, setting practices, this past Journey, for example, we just went for it with no training! That was it, just go!*

John, a canoe skipper from the Qualicum Nation on Vancouver Island, shares his personal transformation process through the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ). Becoming a part of a canoe family ultimately helped him heal from addiction and reconnect with his Indigenous identity. His story touches on the themes of the healing power of the journeys, the responsibility he feels as a

leader, and the broader impact of these cultural practices on personal growth and community resilience.

John starts his story by sharing how the journeys were essential in his recovery from substance abuse, especially for giving him a renewed sense of purpose and a healthier path forward, which illustrates the journeys' role in individual healing and personal development through cultural revitalization. He recalls his initial reluctance and eventual embrace of the challenge and responsibility of skippering a canoe, highlighting its transformative effect on him, becoming a turning point in his life: "I didn't know how to skip a canoe, and I told them I didn't want to. But then I went out and immediately fell in love with that whole challenge..."

For John, the canoe journeys provided him with a constructive role in his community, allowing him to channel his energy into something positive and meaningful, and were a pivotal factor in turning him away from heavy drug and alcohol use. His journey from addiction to becoming a community leader exemplifies how cultural practices such as the TCJ can promote personal healing, leadership and resilience by rooting them in their land, waterways, songs and protocols: "It really gave me that purpose that I was looking for and needed, as well as becoming more of a role model for the community."

John's leadership role extends beyond skippering a canoe; it also includes being a role model and promoting a drug- and alcohol-free lifestyle within his community. Through his consistent participation in the journeys, John has become a reference in his community, only missing one journey since he began. His transformation through the TCJ reflects the broader empowerment these journeys can offer, reinforcing the idea that cultural revitalization has tangible, life-altering impacts on individuals.

John's story underscores the impact of canoe journeys on reviving and strengthening cultural identity as he describes his shift from feeling ashamed of his Indigenous identity to embracing and celebrating it. Through paddling, he began reconnecting with his roots, further deepened by snowboarding activities connecting him to the land. As John travels with his family, he reflects on the ancestral landscapes, often imagining how these places might have looked pre-contact: "Whenever we go somewhere, we are always wondering how it looked like pre-contact or back when there were tribes over there." This sense of curiosity and reverence for the land underscores the importance of re-engaging with Indigenous landscapes to restore cultural pride and identity.

Moreover, John highlights the social and communal significance of the canoe journeys; they are more than cultural events; they are foundational to building and reinforcing community and family bonds. The journeys provide a space where individuals personally grow while witnessing the transformation of others within the community, especially children who evolve into leaders. John notes that children who once accompanied their parents are now taking charge, leading the community in singing, drumming, or even skippering the canoe: "kids, you see your friends with these babies and then you see them years later and these kids are taking charge and either singing or drumming or skipping the canoe or paddling. It's really just a way of life". The journeys serve as a living practice where knowledge, values, and leadership are passed down, reinforcing the collective identity and strength of the community. Through these practices, the canoe journeys embody the transmission of intangible cultural heritage, ensuring that cultural connection can be sustained across generations.

John's reflections highlight the practical navigational skills and the interaction with the environment required for safe and successful travel within the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ). Since

he began as a skipper for his nation's canoe, he quickly developed a fascination with the complexities of navigation, learning to read water and weather conditions, manage timing, and coordinate the crew in response to various environmental challenges. His experience navigating the seasonal winds and tides of the Qualicum territory—a name that itself reflects the relationship between the land, the winds, and the salmon runs—illustrates this intricate connection between the natural world and Indigenous cultural practices and knowledge. "Our territory is very windy, we don't have a lot of shelter or anything […] You really have to work with the wind and the tide, as well as marine traffic."

This statement emphasizes the critical role of Indigenous knowledge, such as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), in navigating the land and waters, where understanding seasonal patterns is vital. John's attentiveness to environmental conditions reflects how deeply interwoven these cultural practices are with the ecological landscape, a dynamic rooted in centuries of Indigenous wisdom. The challenges of dealing with unpredictable natural elements and navigating freighter ships, which take vast distances to stop, showcase the resilience and adaptability of Indigenous communities as they harmonize ancient knowledge with contemporary realities.

John's engagement with the environmental factors of wind, tide, and marine traffic demonstrates not just a technical skill but a lived embodiment of ICH. His ability to adapt to shifting conditions is rooted in the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, passed down through stories, practices, and experiences over time. "You really got to time everything perfectly," he notes, stressing the importance of collaboration and respect for the forces of nature. These journeys serve as a reconnection to the land, where participants must learn and respect the teachings embedded in the environment.

The challenges John faces are also a reminder of the ongoing cultural revival embedded in the canoe journeys. Every paddle is a testament to the resilience of Indigenous peoples, who continue to practice and adapt their traditional knowledge in a modern context. This embodiment of TEK within the framework of the TCJ is a reflection of the cultural resurgence discussed in the thesis. It reinforces how Indigenous communities are actively maintaining and evolving their relationships with the land and water, as part of both personal healing and collective cultural revival. The journeys are not only about navigation but about reinvigorating the cultural ties that connect communities to their ancestral territories and Indigenous identities, highlighting how these practices serve as both cultural and ecological education for future generations.

John's reflection on the logistical challenges of the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) provides insights into the complexities of organizing such a significant cultural event. Managing a crew, ensuring safety, and navigating tricky waters adds layers of commitment that extend beyond the physical act of paddling. His initial reluctance to take on the role of skipper and his inexperience reflect the personal challenges that often accompany leadership roles in cultural practices. Yet, over time, his experiences have taught him the importance of focus and preparedness. "We've learned our lesson by not being distracted. We have a goal, and our goal is to get from Victoria to Port Angeles, for example, and we need to go now!" His words highlight the balance between immediate practical concerns and the broader cultural significance of the journeys. The logistical challenges faced by skippers and participants reflect a deeper connection to the responsibilities carried by Indigenous leaders, where the safety and success of the journey are intertwined with the preservation and transmission of cultural knowledge.

Finally, John talks about the broader socio-political context, discussing the effects of colonization on his community and the ongoing challenges related to identity and recognition by

the government. He reflects on the historical context and changes to the landscape and communities due to colonization: “Because of colonialism and how they wanted to eradicate Indigenous people you can really see how it’s affected my community.” Colonialism’s lasting impacts on Indigenous communities are deeply felt, particularly through the erasure and disruption of identity and legal recognition. The imposition of colonial systems, such as the Indian Act in Canada, sought not only to displace Indigenous peoples from their lands but also to undermine their cultural and social structures. The loss of status for Indigenous individuals, especially through policies like enforced blood quantum or discriminatory inheritance laws, has fractured many communities. As a result, there are countless Indigenous youth and descendants who, due to the colonial definition of “status,” are excluded from formal recognition by the government despite their strong cultural and familial ties.

This exclusion can create a sense of disconnection for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals in mixed-heritage families, further complicating the process of cultural revitalization and community building. It is a reminder of how colonial policies continue to marginalize and divide Indigenous peoples, affecting not only their political and legal rights but also their identity and sense of belonging. Yet, in spite of these challenges, many communities are working to reclaim their identity, strengthen cultural ties, and challenge the restrictive frameworks imposed by colonial systems, ensuring that cultural continuity and resurgence remain central to their futures.

Mark

> *Even before canoe journeys, tribal peoples like to get together and party. That goes back to having potlatches and stick games before our religions were outlawed. It’s always been something, not just a coastal thing, but all across the continent thing. Like our trade routes were vast and it’s always been something that we’ve done and we’ve done it before canoe journey. Stick games, there’s*

> *always been stick games. There are powwows, we've always had powwows. We always find a way to keep that community, that sense of who we are alive and we share it. I think Canoe Journey has kind of awoken people to our traditions and our history in this area*.

Mark, a Muckleshoot tribal member, shares his journey of rediscovering and preserving Indigenous art forms, particularly through his involvement with canoe-making and Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ). Growing up surrounded by nature and the cultural practices of his people, Mark's connection to his heritage was deepened through his work in archaeology and anthropology, where he encountered thousands of years of continuous Indigenous history. His dedication to cultural preservation shines through as he discusses his role in revitalizing canoe-building techniques, teaching traditional crafts, and engaging with his community. Mark's narrative reflects how cultural practices, like canoe building, carry more than paddlers and are a means of resistance, revitalization, and community building. His insights offer a glimpse into the enduring power of Indigenous knowledge systems and their role in cultural continuity and resurgence.

Mark's reflections underscore the critical role that cultural revitalization and education play in preserving Indigenous traditions, particularly through hands-on engagement with traditional arts, history, and language. As a cultural arts educator for the tribe organizations alongside three other people, he views his work as essential in safeguarding the knowledge of his ancestors, ensuring that the younger generations continue to be connected to their heritage and carry it forward. Regarding the transmission of knowledge, he emphasizes that "Tyson got to study under our last living canoe maker, traditional canoe maker and they did two or three traditional shovelnose canoes that were used on our waterways."

Besides the scarcity of Western red Cedar, Mark refers to another challenge on making dugout canoes: "Making one of those dugouts, there's a lot more that goes into how it's made and

how it's steamed open. You've got to understand how to do that and do it right for the canoe to turn out the way it's supposed to." He then adds: "Whereas strips, like Will was telling you, you can get a lot more material out of one log to make. So, with one log, you could probably get 20 canoes out of, versus two dugouts, if you turn it into strips and you have the right form."

Regarding the shift in techniques for canoe building, Mark says:

> The reason why we make strip canoes now is because, during the 19th century around 1880, when we're being settled and Europeans were arriving, they saw how good the canoe builders were. So, they took them from making traditional dugouts, which you would get two canoes out of a log and they put them in shipyards where they would do slats and build their boats, and they were really good at that. At that transitional period, we went from dugouts to strips. Nowadays it's more efficient, with the machinery we can get out of one single log many canoes. It's hard to find a log big enough to make a big canoe like that. […] and canoes were, and still are, the easiest way to get around in the Salish Sea and the surrounding tributaries and rivers.

This shift in technique, driven by both environmental changes and settler influence, reflects the adaptation to resource scarcity and the need for more efficient production. However, despite these changes in construction methods, canoes have always played a central role in navigating the Pacific Northwest's challenging geography: "The canoes permitted ready communication among the villages composing a tribal group, and they enabled travel and trade up and down the entire coast" (Aboriginal Peoples and Aboriginal Claims, p7). In Mark's narrative, there is a focus on the enduring importance of canoes for travel, trade, and connection, especially in the Salish Sea and surrounding rivers, speaking to the deep cultural and practical significance of these vessels across generations.

Mark's dedication to cultural education goes beyond teaching skills; it is about fostering a sense of pride and resilience in the face of historical erasure. His role as an educator becomes a form of resistance against colonialism, as it revives nearly forgotten practices and strengthens the cultural identity of his community: "My job is to teach our community about our traditional arts and art form, our traditional ways of life before colonization, our history, our language."

Mark highlights the transformation of this shop from a storage barn into a fully functional cultural education centre supported by grants, showing the importance of financial support for cultural projects, both to preserve traditions and provide economic benefits to the community: "That's how we've been slowly building the shop up and, and telling our story through visual arts more. Not only that but getting paid to do it and bringing money back into the tribe." Through these initiatives, Mark can simultaneously preserve cultural heritage and contribute to his Nation's economic growth, reflecting the intersection of cultural and economic revival.

The space he has helped to create created in the community, an open-door shop where traditional skills like carving, fishing, hunting, and meat processing can be learned, emphasizes accessibility. The shop is a learning environment, a hub for cultural and social connection, embodying the collective nature of Indigenous knowledge transmission: We just teach traditional ways of life and things people want to learn, they can come here and learn. In this place, but not only there, Mark fosters community solidarity by bringing people to engage with their culture while passing down skills that have sustained their people for generations, emphasizing the importance of spaces for cultural education.

Central to this cultural revitalization is canoe-making, a powerful symbol of reclaiming Indigenous identity and resisting erasure. Mark's narrative reveals how passing down canoe-carving techniques has maintained a family's unique tradition. This intergenerational transmission

is central to the survival of the craft, with each generation ensuring that skills are not forgotten. By teaching these methods, Mark and his community resist the cultural erasure imposed by colonization.

Mark's commitment to cultural preservation led him to explore his people's history beyond what he learned in school. His passion for understanding the true history of the Puget Sound region and its Indigenous peoples led to a personal awakening that influenced his work and led him to a path in pursuit of knowledge. This motivated him to visit museums and study traditional arts and practices in depth, leading him to his current role as a cultural bearer and educator.

The diversity of Indigenous histories and practices is central to Mark's understanding of his role. He acknowledges the uniqueness of each nation's traditions while highlighting the shared heritage that unites them, especially through canoe carving. This recognition of diversity within unity is key to cultural continuity, as each community's unique knowledge contributes to the larger Indigenous resurgence. "Even though they can look different, the actual science behind them and how the traditional dugouts were made is very, very similar," Mark observes, reinforcing the interconnectedness of Indigenous cultural practices across the region.

For Mark, these practices have always been part of his everyday life, as he grew up fishing, hunting, and using canoes as a primary means of navigating the Salish Sea and its tributaries. His reflections underscore the importance of these practices in maintaining a connection to the land and waters, grounding his identity in the cultural knowledge passed down through generations: "It's just part of the way of life. A part of growing up around here is being on the water, growing up fishing, hunting, and canoes."

His role as a cultural arts educator is fulfilling, allowing him to connect with his roots, preserve cultural practices, and pass on this knowledge to future generations. This work is both a

personal passion and a professional commitment, reflecting his connection to his cultural identity and heritage: “I worked in preservation, which is archeology and anthropology, about 20 years ago. Just working in that and going out on dig sites and seeing 10,000-year-old sites where you can see continuous use of that area”. He describes his professional and intellectual path towards figuring out “not the story that we’re taught in school, but actually the real history of the area”, which he declares to have awakened his spirit. Mark is also intrinsically part of the intergenerational transmission of knowledge since his role involves passing down what he has learned to younger generations, ensuring the continuation of these cultural traditions. He emphasizes the importance of this intergenerational learning within the community, particularly through the practice of canoe carving and other traditional arts.

Mark’s dedication to preserving vanishing materials like old-growth cedar further exemplifies his attempt to ensure future generations can experience the same connection to their cultural heritage. His efforts to balance tradition with sustainability highlight the ongoing adaptation of cultural practices to contemporary challenges, ensuring that the wisdom of the past remains alive and relevant for the future: “Part of what we do here is try to preserve that for our future generations so they get to experience what it’s like to work with that. So, we try to expand our materials and what we work with to go beyond just traditional. In that way, we can preserve some of that for our future.”

Mark’s journey illustrates how cultural revival is not only about preserving the past but also about creating a sustainable future. By blending traditional knowledge with modern approaches to resource management, Mark ensures that the cultural practices he teaches remain a living, evolving part of his community’s heritage, promoting an ongoing resurgence of Indigenous identity. In that sense, he also talks about the adaptation of traditional canoe construction

techniques to modern circumstances, merging tradition with innovation to ensure that cultural practices evolve without losing their integrity. He explains the historical and practical reasons for the shift from dugout canoes to strip canoes. During the late 19th century, European settlers recognized the craftsmanship of Indigenous canoe builders and employed them in shipyards to build boats using slats rather than traditional dugouts: “They took them from making traditional dugouts [...] and they were really good at that.”

This shift was also driven by the scarcity of large logs suitable for traditional dugouts, particularly old-growth Western Red Cedar. Mark explains that “it’s hard to find a log big enough to make a big canoe like that,” pointing to the environmental challenges that have made strip canoes a more viable option. The use of modern materials and techniques, such as composite nails and specific nail guns, has streamlined the process, making it faster while still honouring traditional designs: “We’re able to get that many canoes done in that short of a time frame because it would probably take two months just to make one of those if we were waiting for the glue to dry.” Despite these challenges, the community’s commitment to cultural preservation and empowerment is evident. Mark underscores the importance of ensuring that canoes are safe and well-made, as they play a crucial role in community events and cultural practices.

Mark further describes the process of troubleshooting and refining their methods as they built the canoes, showing the continuous learning involved in maintaining this craft in a modern context. His team worked through challenges, adjusting techniques to ensure the canoes retained their traditional form while adapting to the realities of modern materials and tools. By blending passed-down knowledge with modern techniques, Mark and his team ensure that the practice of canoe building remains relevant and sustainable to preserve cultural heritage and make it accessible to future generations. The challenges of sourcing the materials they used to work with,

like old-growth Western Red Cedar, highlight the intersection between cultural heritage and environmental sustainability. According to Mark, the scarcity of such resources due to deforestation and overharvesting threatens the continuity of traditional practices like dugout canoe carving.

The process of adapting traditional canoe-making to modern materials and techniques is a clear example of how intangible cultural heritage (ICH) evolves while staying true to its roots. Canoe-building is not just a physical craft; it carries with it generations of stories, skills, and cultural values that are passed down within communities. The shift from using old-growth Western Red Cedar to modern methods like strip canoe techniques reflects how ICH is dynamic and resilient, responding to environmental challenges and changing resources while still preserving the cultural essence of the practice. Moreover, Mark brings millennium ancestral to fuse with Western scientific knowledge in his research about canoe carving: “I’ve spoken with an ex-naval engineer, and he broke it down to the science and the numbers. […] he really got into the specifics of why they work the way they work and how much knowledge is actually in those canoes that were made.” He concludes, “They’re a beautiful, beautiful thing, especially when they’re done right. When they’re made right.”

Mark emphasizes the role of participating in canoe journeys in developing leadership skills and strong community bonds, creating connections among participants within communities and between different Indigenous groups, which is essential for sustaining cultural practices. The journeys also serve as a way to build connections and integrate communities separated by colonial intrusion, reinforcing the idea of shared cultural heritage and collective identity. Mark connects the canoe journeys to a potlatch, a traditional system of wealth sharing and community building: “It’s potlatch, you’re supposed to share your wealth [...] And that is essentially what the canoe

journeys is: it is a big potlatch." Through this cultural exchange, participants not only strengthen existing bonds but also create new ones, forming an extended community that transcends individual nations and reinforces the continuity of cultural practices. Set to launch during the Paddle to Muckleshoot, Mark and his team built five strip canoes in just two months, intended to be given as gifts: "and they were for the Tribes that were on the same treaty as us. From the five canoes, one was given to Nisqually, one to the man who first taught our first cane family how to skipper, two others to other Tribes and the fifth one was given to our youth".

He describes how the knowledge of canoe-making was passed down to him:

> The first canoe journey that we were a part of was the 1989 Paddle to Seattle. Cubby Starr was Tyson's teacher, and his father was Doc Starr. So, in 1989, Doc Starr taught his son Cubby how to carve a canoe. And Cubby kept that tradition alive by teaching Tyson, my cousin, how to carve. And Tyson carved a canoe, then Tyson showed me how to carve a canoe.

From this transmission, that happened in his family but also in others in similar ways, he concludes: "That thanks to their efforts their style of canoe still exists and will be passed down and not forgotten. So, I can understand that being a form of resistance. It's not something that was just in the past. It's something that's still happening today".

Mark's personal journey in canoe carving and participation in the journeys has allowed him to meet and learn from many respected figures in the Indigenous community. The sense of accomplishment and pride that comes from participating in the journeys also helps individuals gain a deeper connection to their heritage, empowering them to become versatile and engaged leaders. This leadership development is essential for ensuring the survival and growth of cultural traditions, as it nurtures the next generation of cultural stewards.

Despite the significant achievements in cultural preservation, Mark highlights several challenges faced by his community, such as economic constraints, limited access to traditional materials, and the technical difficulties of canoe construction. However, the community continues to innovate and adapt to ensure the sustainability of its cultural heritage. Mark also reiterates the importance of potlatch as a model for collective support, advocating for wealthier nations to assist those with fewer resources. This inclusive approach helps ensure that all communities, regardless of economic standing, can participate in the canoe journeys: "I would like to really be able to see all the groups come together to support smaller tribes [...] so that each of them can have that experience." This call for solidarity stresses the role of canoe journeys in community building, where mutual support and collective empowerment are central.

Joe, Carl and Clayoquot Sound

> *When Europeans arrived here, certainly we were illiterate; we could not read some things, we were not able to read any of that stuff. But so were the Europeans when they arrived here. They were also illiterate when they saw our totem poles. The totem poles that used to sit in the front of every house. There used to be at least four in the front of every house because of your (1) father and your (2) mother, your (3) grandfather and (4) grandmother. That's how it was. Because every one of them came with teachings.*

In early February 2024, I travelled from Prince George to Clayoquot Sound, on the west coast of Vancouver Island, within the traditional territory of the Nuu-chah-nulth people, to engage with Joe Martin, a master carver known for his dedication to preserving indigenous carving traditions and environmental advocacy, and with his brother Carl, also a master carver. After initial communications through Facebook and phone, Joe invited me to discuss the cultural significance

of his work. I spent a night in Vancouver, then caught an early ferry to Tofino, arriving in the area by early afternoon.

Joe Martin has been at the forefront of environmental activism in Tofino for over three decades, staunchly opposing industrial logging initiatives that threaten the ecological integrity of Clayoquot Sound (Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014). His advocacy is deeply intertwined with his craft, as the preservation of old-growth forests is crucial not only for the environment but also for the continuation of traditional carving practices. Living in Tofino, surrounded by the landscapes he has fought to protect, Joe embodies a profound connection between his art and his activism. His traditional name, Tutakwisnapšiƛ, meaning "the lightning in the sky," symbolizes the intensity and impact of his work:

> My traditional name is Tutakwisnapšiƛ, and I'm Tla-o-qui-aht. I come from the house of Ewos. Ewos is the name of our house. And the chief of our house is named Nuukmiis. And Nuukmiis is his name. When Indigenous peoples, at least on Nuu-chah-nulth, when we were talking about things, it is important to say them twice, so you remember it, so you hear it. You hear it twice. Nuukmiis is the name of our chief. And Nuukmiis is his name. That's why I'll say it like that. And it was the way that people would share information a long time ago. They would always say things twice. When they were speaking of something important, they would say it twice. Not just once, but twice.

Just as lightning strikes with force and precision, Joe's advocacy for the preservation of old-growth forests hits hard, underscoring the urgency of safeguarding the land for future generations. His work exemplifies how ICH not only preserves traditions but also becomes a form of resistance and empowerment, using the knowledge of the past to advocate for the future.

Having provided a historical overview of the Coast Salish, it is equally important to offer a similar perspective on the Nuu-chah-nulth to set the context for the following three collaborators of this research, that are of Nuu-chah-nulth origin, a distinct language group belonging to the Wakashan language family. In the following section, I will describe their environment and cultural traits, following the approach used in my discussion of the Coast Salish in Chapter 1.

After the last Ice Age, approximately 10,000 to 12,000 years ago, the retreat of glaciers in Clayoquot Sound initiated significant ecological transformations and ushered in new possibilities for human habitation. As the ice receded, it exposed fertile landmasses and created diverse biomes that supported a variety of life forms. The newly formed landscapes, characterized by rich coastal estuaries and dense forests, attracted early human settlers. These first inhabitants, believed to have migrated via the Beringia land bridge, followed the Coastal Migration Route, a path enriched by abundant marine and terrestrial. This route likely included not only overland treks but also maritime pathways along the emerging, ice-free coastlines, allowing for the establishment of vibrant communities that harnessed the bounty of the region (Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014).

The village of Opitsat, which can be seen from Tofino Harbour, exemplifies the long-term human presence in Clayoquot Sound, having been continuously inhabited for at least 2,000 years, with archaeological and oral histories suggesting a human presence that may extend back as far as 4,200 years (Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014), or according to what Joe mentioned as we were riding his truck to see the canoe he wanted to show me, "*a ten thousand-year village*". Before European contact, the Indigenous population of what is now known as British Columbia was estimated to number up to 250,000, with about 15,000 people living along the west coast of Vancouver Island. These communities relied on their natural resources sustainably, particularly the red cedar, which was indispensable for building canoes, houses, and crafting other vital items. This deep-rooted

relationship with red cedar not only reflects sophisticated ecological management but also a profound connection to the land, which provided for their cultural and physical survival (Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014).

The local weather station reports that temperatures remain above freezing on average 364 days a year. This temperate climate supports a lush, moisture-rich environment that enhances the region's scenic beauty, drawing visitors from around the world. This climate also supports a rich biodiversity, fostering both marine and terrestrial ecosystems that continue to thrive. The area's ability to attract tourists throughout the year has contributed to its economic vitality and has helped raise awareness of its unique ecological and cultural history (Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014).

The intricate tapestry of cultural history, ecological diversity, and geological formation makes the region more than just a tourist destination—it stands as a living museum of natural history and human resilience. The region's landscape reflects the powerful and dynamic geological forces that have shaped it over millions of years, from ancient volcanic activity to the rhythmic cycles of glaciation and erosion (Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014). This terrain is imbued with the rich cultural heritage of the indigenous communities who have called it home for millennia. However,

> Tofino is inside our tribal park inside of Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Park and it's our land... They have taken over and removed much of the resources and disrupted the whole economy of this place by the way they act and taking and taking and taking and that has really changed this place drastically.

In this quote, Joe reflects a profound sense of loss and disruption in the Tla-o-qui-aht community's relationship with their traditional lands and adds: "*There used to be only three lights here"*, talking about his lifetime and the changes that have happened to his environment. He describes how external actors have taken over, exploited resources, and disrupted the local

economy, drastically altering the community's way of life and addressed the broader colonial legacy of resource extraction on Indigenous lands, where the emphasis on economic gain has often overridden the rights and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples. He continues: "There used to be all kinds of fish in the ocean here. But now we don't have hardly any, and the reason is because of those rotten fish farms. I hate those things".

The exploitation not only impacts the land but also disrupts the cultural and social fabric of these communities. In response to such disruptions, Indigenous resurgence movements, including the revival of Tribal Canoe Journeys, are critical acts of reclaiming identity, cultural heritage, and sovereignty. The resurgence—or maintenance—of canoeing traditions, particularly through initiatives like the Tribal Canoe Journeys, strengthens intergenerational knowledge transmission, fostering the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. In this sense, canoe journeys are a powerful embodiment of Indigenous resilience, symbolizing the connection to land, water, and ancestors. Through these practices, Indigenous communities not only assert their rights to protect their lands but also engage in cultural revitalization—or perpetuation— reaffirming their identity and strengthening their social bonds. The resurgence of these traditions represents a broader movement of Indigenous governance over land and cultural landscapes, where ICH becomes central to restoring ecological and cultural balance.

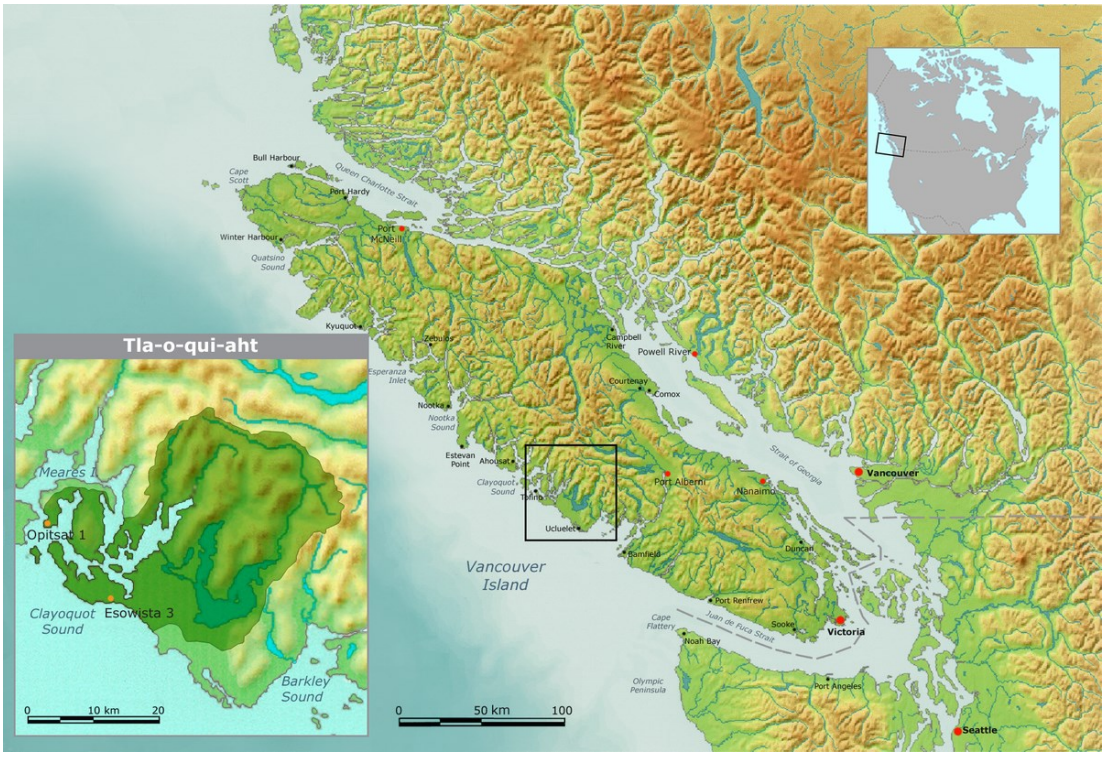
Three Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations—the Hesquiaht, Ahousaht, and Tla-o-qui-aht—hold ancestral territories within Clayoquot Sound, extending from the Hesquiat Peninsula to the Kennedy River and Long Beach (Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014). Historically, these lands were managed by various groups and their hereditary chiefs, or Ha'wiih. The Nuu-chah-nulth tribes, were officially recognized in 1978, signifying their shared linguistic and cultural connection to the region stretching from Cape Cook to Jordan River, on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The

Nuu-chah-nulth historically thrived in the rich natural environment of Vancouver Island's western coast, harnessing the abundance of cedar and salmon to sustain a dense population. As Joe told me: "Sustainability is not enough for us. Our paradigm is made of abundance. Abundance of resources and lives".

Traditionally, the Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht would relocate to summer fishing villages in the spring, synchronizing their movements with the seasonal cycles of salmon that formed the backbone of their diet and culture. These migrations allowed them to follow the fish, harvesting and preserving vast quantities to sustain themselves through the winter months. This cyclical journey was more than practical—it fostered communal ties, ensuring that each member played a role in safeguarding the tribe's well-being (Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014).

Figure 24

Map of Vancouver Island Showing Tla-O-Qui-Aht.



For the Nuu-chah-nulth, whale hunting also held a profound cultural significance. Elaborate rituals and specialized techniques underscored the spiritual and communal importance of the hunt (Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014). The preparations often involved ceremonial cleansing, fasting, and prayers to ensure a successful outcome. The whale was considered a symbol of ancestral power, and a successful hunt was a testament to the tribe's harmony with nature. When I asked Joe how canoe-making connects him to his ancestors and heritage, he shared:

> The Nuu-chah-nulth canoe was one of the best ones. And so, you know, one of the things that our people did do with them was in a 36-foot canoe, maybe 10 or 11 or 12-meter canoe, they would have eight men and go out and hunt whales with those things. So, you know, that's a testament to where people would go offshore, about 15, 20 miles offshore for hunting whales.

He then concluded that having that connection and being a part of the teachings give him a sense of pride: "So, yeah, that makes me proud because we have those teachings from that kind of a thing".

Besides whales, salmon fishing marked a season of intense fishing and communal activity. This period was crucial for preparing the tribes for the less abundant winter months. The Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht maintained a profound understanding of the local ecosystems, enabling them to manage their food sources effectively. By employing practices such as selective harvesting and rotation, they ensured the salmon population remained robust, preserving the community's well-being and continuity. Their sustainable strategies contributed to the resilience of local salmon populations over centuries, allowing the fish to thrive alongside their cultural practices (Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014). This aligns with something Joe shared with me, which I later I learned was one of his mottos: "one of the teachings in our totem poles is that Mother Nature will provide for our

needs, but not our greed. So, and that's why the people have had these laws that were adhered to". For Joe, these teaching "that have been passed on through many generations", guide how his people should interact with the land, not as mere inhabitants but as an integral part of it.

Western economic pressures have introduced significant changes to the Nuu-chah-nulth way of life. The arrival of canned meats and other goods initially met with laughter, eventually signaled a shift in the community's self-sufficiency and relationship with traditional foods. Over time, this led to a paradigm shift where resources were seen more for their economic value than their cultural or spiritual significance, deeply impacting the community's values and lifestyle (Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014).

The TCJ therefore articulates both a means of transportation and a symbolic reconnection to the ancestral waterways and harvesting practices. Much like the rituals surrounding whale hunting, the canoe journeys are imbued with spiritual and communal significance, including protocols of welcome, song, and storytelling at each stop. These gatherings foster relationships among different nations, and emphasize a shared connection to land, water, and cultural identity. For the Tla-o-qui-aht, these journeys are a form of cultural resurgence, allowing them to pass on traditional knowledge and reaffirm their ties to their heritage, which is crucial amid ongoing environmental and economic pressures.

Storytelling and oratory played vital roles in preserving the history and laws of the Nuu-chah-nulth people. These traditions were particularly alive during winter when communities gathered for potlatches—ceremonial feasts where wealth was redistributed and social statuses affirmed. Despite colonial efforts to suppress these gatherings, they remained a central aspect of cultural and social life, demonstrating resilience and continuity.

This is evident specifically around logging and salmon aquaculture, both of which have led to significant disputes. The 1993 “War in the Woods” in Clayoquot Sound marked a significant point of conflict over unsustainable logging practices, culminating in large-scale protests supported by both Nuu-chah-nulth communities and environmental NGOs. In 1993, Clayoquot Sound became the epicenter of a significant environmental showdown known as the “War in the Woods.” This conflict was triggered by large-scale industrial logging plans that threatened the ancient old-growth forests, vital to both ecological balance and the cultural heritage of the Nuu-chah-nulth people. Environmental activists and members of the Nuu-chah-nulth tribes united in an unprecedented series of protests that drew national and international attention. The resistance led to temporary moratoriums and, eventually, more sustainable logging practices in the region (Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014). Beyond the immediate environmental concerns, the Nuu-chah-nulth utilized the protests as a stage to assert their rights and perspectives on land management. This period marked a significant escalation in their legal and advocacy efforts, highlighting a deep-rooted resistance to centuries of colonial exploitation.

Emerging from this conflict, Joe, his relatives and other members of the community built a shack at the beach where they obstructed the disembarkment of workers from the logging company MacMillan Bloedel, and started carving canoes there (Friends of Clayoquot Sound; Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014; MacMillan Bloedel Ltd. v. Simpson, [1995] 4 S.C.R. 725; Wood, 2022). This canoe shack symbolizes the cultural resurgence of the Nuu-chah-nulth, and it is where the ancient art of canoe building is not just preserved but celebrated as a cornerstone of identity and autonomy. The shack serves as a communal hub where elders pass down knowledge to younger generations, ensuring that the skills and spiritual connections associated with canoe craft endure.

It stands as a testament to the community's resilience, linking the fight for environmental justice with the broader struggle for cultural survival and renewal.

Although the collaboration between the tribes and environmental NGOs ultimately forged a stronger voice for indigenous stewardship in public and political arenas, the cooperation between Nuu-chah-nulth communities and environmental NGOs has not been without tension. Accusations of neocolonial attitudes by NGOs and short-lived alliances highlight the complexities of these relationships, which have at times undermined the sovereignty and wishes of the Nuu-chah-nulth people (Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014). These challenges underscore the delicate balance required in environmental advocacy and indigenous rights protection.

One of the responses to these challenges include the declaration of Meares Island as a Tribal Park in 1984, which marked a significant move towards reestablishing traditional management practices. The declaration of Meares Island as a Tribal Park in 1984 marked a significant move towards reestablishing traditional management practices. This, along with other conservation efforts, demonstrates the Nuu-chah-nulth's commitment to preserving their cultural heritage and environmental ethics in the face of ongoing economic and environmental pressures (Horsfield & Kennedy, 2014). The Ahousaht et al. v. Canada case, which may redefine fishing rights and resource access, also reflects the community's legal efforts to secure sustainable economic practices while maintaining their traditional livelihoods (Ahousaht Indian Band and Nation v. Canada, 2009 BCSC 1494).

As we further explore the life and contributions of Joe Martin, it becomes clear that his work transcends simple craftsmanship. Through his voice, we gain insight into the profound interconnectedness of cultural identity, environmental stewardship, and community resilience. Martin's reflections, drawn from a recent interview, reveal the depth of his engagement with

traditional practices and their relevance in contemporary contexts. His narratives weave a rich tapestry of Nuu-chah-nulth history and wisdom, highlighting the ongoing struggle to maintain cultural integrity in the face of modern challenges.

Joe emphasizes the vital role that traditional canoe carving plays in cultural revitalization and how this craft is about building canoes but mostly about cultivating connections with his ancestors' practices to ensure these traditions are passed down and preserved. He mentions how these activities were taught and have continued throughout generations, challenging the notion that these practices had died out:

> I have here a northern-style canoe and it is not the way we make our canoes... My daughters have canoes, and I've made many canoes on the coast for many different communities. […] We get called a lot to go and help people to carve a canoe and sometimes we have even carved canoes for communities.

Joe Martin's canoe-making exemplifies the continuity of cultural knowledge and the reassertion of sovereignty through traditional practices. His canoes are symbols of resistance, cultural survival, and the future of Indigenous sovereignty, as he actively passes down this knowledge, as Wood (2022) notes about him:

> His canoes also speak to a future of reclamation and sovereignty. A canoe he carved for the Makah Nation was used for whale hunting. A canoe he carved for the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation was used in a demonstration against Fisheries and Oceans Canada. He gifted a canoe to his two adult children, and they used it to lead cultural eco-tours for years. One small canoe he made is for children to play in on the beach. All these canoes are carrying knowledge forward along the coast, he says.

The spread of his canoes illustrates how Martin's work connects generations, mobilizing knowledge for cultural preservation and active resistance and economic empowerment. By creating canoes for whaling, protests, eco-tourism, and play, Martin contributes to the continuity of Indigenous knowledge in contemporary contexts through each of his canoes. For him, these activities were taught and have continued throughout generations, challenging the notion that these practices had died out. In fact, a significant theme in Joe's narrative is the importance of intergenerational knowledge transmission. He learned canoe-making from his father, which goes back many generations in his family, showing the importance of intergenerational participation in maintaining cultural continuity. This is how he explains his father's methodology, as Carl laughs at the memory brought up by his brother: "My father was a canoe builder, and he didn't leave me a choice – "Get ready, we're going". That's how I learned".

Joe's work reflects the delicate balance between adaptation and modernization in traditional canoe-making. While modern tools like electric drills have replaced stone, bone, and fire, Joe remains committed to retaining the spirit of the original craft. This adaptability allows him to keep the old methods alive while ensuring that Indigenous practices can evolve and integrate into contemporary life without losing their essence. When asked how he thinks canoes were built without the aid of the electric tools he uses today, he answered: "I think that in the former days, our people would make a canoe almost as fast as we can do that today. And the reason for that was because they had the best wood that they needed to do this job with. And then today, we don't have the best wood anymore".

For him, the best wood isn't just Red Cedar, but specifically "clear, straight grain red cedar". When it comes to making the holes needed to gauge the thickness of the canoe, Joe explains: "And before we had electric drill, you'd use a bow drill, and then drill holes like that, but

today we have electric drills". Both Joe and Carl emphasize a crucial step in the craft: "The bottom is two inches, the side is one inch, and the top is one and a quarter, one and a half. (…) it (the canoe) could never be too thick or too thin".

Leadership and community building are central to his craft; as a master carver, Joe and Carl not only carve canoes but also teach others, passing down the cultural significance behind each step of the process. Canoe-making thus becomes a communal act, fostering relationships and preserving traditional knowledge. He emphasizes that while it's a lot of work, the most satisfying aspect is sharing this craft with others, ensuring its survival. Nonetheless, Joe reflects: "We don't have many people who have been from the beginning to the end. Very, very few people at all who have done that. So, we can't really gauge out to see. I don't know what it's going to be like when I die. I don't know.

Challenges and empowerment play a significant role in this process. Joe faces increasing difficulty in sourcing good-quality red cedar, once abundant but now scarce. Modern techniques like using glue to repair cracks have become necessary. Additionally, teaching younger generations presents logistical and financial hurdles, as modern life often leaves little time or resources for apprentices to fully immerse themselves in the craft. Despite these challenges, Joe believes that community support and innovative approaches to practice and teaching can help overcome these obstacles, ensuring the continuation of this valuable tradition.

At the core of Joe's work is an environmental and spiritual connection. The process of canoe-making is not merely technical but deeply rooted in respect for the land and spiritual practices. Guided by traditional knowledge, Joe approaches the harvesting of materials with reverence for nature's cycles. This spiritual connection is embedded in every aspect of the craft, as he often offers tobacco or a prayer to the Great Spirit before taking materials, seeking permission

and expressing gratitude: “Sometimes I make a tobacco offering or something that says thank you to the great spirit so I may have permission to do this or not. And it’s the one that’s permission from the great spirit. And, yeah, I feel good about doing that”. His work embodies a deep respect for both the environment and his cultural heritage, merging the material and the spiritual in a holistic craft that navigates both the modern and traditional worlds.

In Joe’s canoe-making, selecting the right tree follows protocols that emphasize a deep respect for nature and spiritual guidance, blending knowledge he inherited and personal experience, as well as rituals that honour the environment and the creatures inhabiting it:

> the process of selecting a tree that was something that our people have had a long time ago because they were always in the forest. So, they would know where all the good trees are. […] They just knew. But these days, I have to go look for them. But I also know where there are good trees for a canoe. I’ve been looking for many years, so I do know.

His respect for the forest’s ecosystem is evident in his rule of only harvesting when no birds are nesting in the area and choosing only healthy, living trees. These steps show that canoe-making is as much about respecting the natural world as it is about crafting the canoe itself.

> And that has to be when there are no birds in the area, no birds of any kind, because if there are birds in the forest, they may be nesting already or building a nest and we’re not allowed to disrupt them. Then you have to look to the top to see if it’s alive. If the top is dead, then it’s probably hollow in the middle and you don’t really want to use that tree. It cannot be dead. It’s got to be alive.

Moreover, Joe is very aware of the socio-political implications of his craft, discussing the historical injustices and current challenges his community faces, particularly regarding land rights and environmental degradation: “They bought other things from us but not the land. The land is

still ours". This profound respect for tradition permeates Joe's story as he details the traditional laws governing canoe-making and his community's social and ethical norms about regulation and deeply connected to the spiritual and cultural well-being of the community.

Joe Martin's work in canoe carving beautifully encapsulates the artistry and technique inherent in traditional craftsmanship. He emphasizes the nuanced process of selecting the right trees, adhering to the traditional times for cutting wood to avoid disturbing nesting birds, and using specific techniques passed down through generations: "It's a lot of work to do one canoe but very satisfying. If we can teach people, that's what we'd like to do". His knowledge of materials, particularly red cedar with its durability and straight grain, reveals a deep understanding of both material knowledge and environmental integration. By harmonizing with natural cycles and practicing environmental stewardship, Joe highlights the interconnectedness of cultural practices and ecological sustainability, showing that the craft of canoe carving is not just about artistry but also about caring for the environment.

The spiritual and cultural significance of canoes runs through Joe's narrative. Each canoe is not just a vessel for transportation but a symbol of cultural identity, carrying the history, traditions, and ancestral knowledge of the Nuu-chah-nulth people. Canoes connect the community to the natural world, with deep spiritual dimensions tied to the land and sea. This sacred connection between people and their canoes has evolved over thousands of years, making the Nuu-chah-nulth canoe one of the finest, embodying centuries of accumulated wisdom.

In many ways, canoe carving embodies intangible cultural heritage (ICH), representing a living tradition passed through generations. It is a practice that reinforces Indigenous values, spiritual beliefs, and environmental stewardship. Canoe carving is not just a technical skill but a medium for Indigenous resurgence, allowing communities to reclaim and revitalize their cultural

practices in a modern world. By teaching others, Joe and other carvers ensure that these traditions are not only preserved but also adapted for contemporary Indigenous identities, reasserting sovereignty and cultural resilience in the face of ongoing external pressures.

However, challenges in preserving traditional skills persist. Joe and other master carvers face modern pressures as younger generations struggle to find the time, resources, and focus to engage with these traditional practices. Financial and logistical barriers often prevent full immersion in learning these skills, raising concerns about the future of canoe carving: “The biggest challenges in canoe making is teaching younger people how to do it because of the life we live now we have to pay them”. Overcoming these challenges requires community support and innovative approaches to education, such as revitalizing apprenticeship programs and integrating traditional skills into modern contexts. Ultimately, canoe carving plays a vital role in community identity and resilience. The communal effort of carving a canoe reinforces bonds, teaches valuable skills, and maintains a collective sense of purpose. The finished canoe becomes a powerful symbol of the community’s connection to its history, land, and each other. In this way, canoe carving is more than a craft—it is a living tradition that strengthens the cultural identity and unity of the Nuu-chah-nulth people, embodying both ICH and the spirit of Indigenous resurgence.

Lauri

> *A journey ring is a brass ring that you get in a ceremony, and you put it on a necklace. For every Tribal Canoe Journey you’re on, you get one bead. So, in the middle of that brass ring, I put that coin to symbolize that moment, sitting there, that exact moment when I felt that my life was going to change forever. I even have a tattoo with that star, life from birth to the end. I should have added the ladders.*

Lauri starts recounting her involvement in the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) through her story of loss and healing: the journeys became a pivotal part of her emotional and spiritual recovery after the profound personal losses she endured, including the death of her husband and brother. For her, the journey offered a reconnection with her culture and an avenue for personal healing. Her initial involvement, motivated by her role as a social worker, soon shifted to a personal journey of transformation.

She shares how the powerful experience of seeing her children paddling as their ancestors did, profoundly moved her: "When I saw my children coming in on the canoe, it was an overwhelming feeling to see my children paddling in the ways of our ancestors." This moment illustrates the personal and cultural reconnection she experienced and how participating in the TCJ bridged the gap between personal healing and the resurgence of Indigenous cultural practices.

The impact of this moment and the subsequent emotional journey was a turning point in Lauri's life, marked by a transformative experience during one of the canoe journeys. She recounts the spiritual awakening she felt on a serene night by the ocean, where the combination of natural beauty and cultural singing created a sacred atmosphere: "I could see the stars, hear the frogs singing, see the fish swimming in the water, and the water was phosphorescent, so you could see some glow in the water." In this serene moment, Lauri describes how she felt a sense of belonging and realized that the canoe journeys would be a crucial part of her life moving forward. This connection between Indigenous cultural practices and personal transformation indicates the healing power of the TCJ and how they facilitate spiritual and emotional recovery.

Lauri's story also highlights the importance of family and community support in her healing process. A touching memory of her younger son further illuminates her emotional journey. He offered her comfort and hope during her darkest times, telling her that he would "get her that

wishing star," which symbolized his desire to see her happy again. His encouragement and her subsequent involvement in the TCJ gave her the strength to begin her healing process and solidified her belief that the journeys were the key to overcoming her grief. This experience with her son exemplifies Lauri's narrative's interconnectedness of family, healing, and cultural resurgence, for through the TCJ, she found a path to reconnect with her heritage and heal from her losses.

Lauri's reflections on the role of the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) in ensuring cultural continuity show the journeys' significance in the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, skills, and values. In addition to connecting participants to their ancestral practices, the journeys serve as a platform for passing down cultural traditions to future generations. In her perspective, journeys become more than events; they become a living tradition and a form of cultural education. In this sense, the TCJ embodies the concept of ICH, as these journeys encompass living practices transmitted through paddling together, songs, regalia, dances, protocols, and gifts, shaping the identities and worldviews of participants across generations.

Lauri's story of bringing a troubled teenager from her work in social services to the canoe journeys speaks to the transformative power of these cultural practices. She recognized that immersing him in the journey could offer healing and growth, much like it had done for her and her children. It was an experience of the cultural knowledge feeling alive, constantly being revived and reinvigorated by younger generations.

Lauri's consistent participation in the TCJ since 1997 reveals her commitment to cultural continuity. Through her involvement as a ground crew member and later seeing her children and grandchildren take on leadership roles during the journeys, she saw familial bonds and community identities being formed. The participation of her children and grandchildren represents the

successful transmission of cultural practices constantly evolving and informed by present challenges and transformation.

Her family's involvement is extensive, with several generations participating in canoe journeys: "My granddaughter is now skippering my canoe and I was in the canoe with her." This intergenerational participation in canoe journeys exemplifies how these practices ensure cultural sustainability and resilience, even in the face of past and present colonial challenges. By participating in these journeys, Lauri and her family are part of a chain that links them to their heritage and beyond, ensuring that it continues to thrive as a living, dynamic tradition for future generations.

For her, the journeys encourage personal growth and community leadership skills, individual empowerment, and strengthening of community ties. Her own experience of personal growth through her son's and a friend's support reflects how canoe journeys help individuals find their footing within the community and develop leadership skills grounded in cultural values: "It was basically my son, who was maybe three at the time, basically telling me I needed to, I needed to come back from that darkness I was in. Then my friend showed me there was something that could help me. And so, I did it. From every year on, I went on Tribal Canoe Journeys."

Extending her reflections on cultural continuity, Lauri further illustrates her connection to her ancestral lands and spirituality through the role that the landscapes and communities she visits during the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) play in shaping her identity, connecting her with the land, ancestors, and the people she meets along the way. Lauri recounts a particular visit to a small village and illustrates this: "I told them that hosting us in their teeny tiny village may have changed my life... now I come here with my own canoe, with my children." This moment indicates how the

journeys have influenced her life and the lives of her children and grandchildren, with long-lasting impact across generations.

Her gesture of creating and offering a cedar wreath to the community that hosted her reflects her gratitude and reciprocity, and the simple yet powerful act of acknowledging the village's hospitality years later signifies the importance of maintaining relationships with people and the land itself. Thus, Canoe journeys are more than traveling through waters; they are also about making spiritual connections with the places visited, which, for Lauri, provided healing and shaped her family's future. Her words express that these experiences are not isolated but part of a continuous thread of connection that links past, present, and future generations.

The symbolic exchange with an elder, who recognized Lauri years later, further illustrates this: "I remember when you came here... this is a 1998 toonie, but I remember you were here in 97." The elder gave her that toonie, which became a "journey ring," representing a tangible link between Lauri's past experiences and the present, reminding her of the bonds formed during the journeys. While seemingly mundane, the toonie carries immense personal and cultural significance, symbolizing the shared memories, the gratitude, and the continuation of the relationships formed during the canoe journeys.

Lauri reflects critically on the evolution of the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ), noting a shift from the intimate, spiritually grounded experiences of the past to what she views as a more commercialized and structured event. Her reflections capture the tension between maintaining these journeys' cultural and spiritual essence and the challenges their expansion poses in contemporary contexts. She recalls the early days of the TCJ, where the focus was more on personal and communal connections, highlighting an experience where she brought a troubled teenager on a journey and witnessed its transformative impact: "On the last day... he said 'after

going through this experience, this is the very first time I believe in myself." This moment reflects the therapeutic and empowering nature of the simpler early journeys, which offered participants a safe space for emotional and spiritual healing that allowed personal growth, cultural reconnection, and an unfiltered engagement with Indigenous practices.

As Lauri recounts the logistical and financial challenges that have emerged as the journeys grew, she expresses concern about losing cultural depth. She recalls how the early journeys were focused on small, intimate groups where the community provided direct support. The shift from a more organic, community-driven experience to an event marked by formal protocols and commercialization accentuates her critique. For Lauri, the increasing size and complexity of the TCJ have diluted the authenticity that once characterized them.

Lauri's critique is not simply nostalgic but grounded in a concern for the cultural and spiritual integrity of the TCJ. She reflects on how the earlier journeys were free from the influence of vendors and modern conveniences, such as "big fancy showers," which have become commonplace today. The personal connections once at the heart of the journeys, where village members would open their homes to travelers for food and support, have been overshadowed by more formalized hospitality and commercial enterprises: all this that is commercialized: "The Tribal Canoe Journeys were very, very different. There was not all this protocol and all this that is commercialized now". In her view, this commercialization has created a distance from the journeys' original intent, prioritizing cultural transmission, healing, and community building over spectacle and political maneuvering. Lauri encapsulates this sentiment when she states: "There's too much politics, too much showboating, like: 'look at me." This sentiment critiques how the journeys, in their current form, may be losing their grounding in Indigenous values.

Lauri's experience speaks to the tension between adaptation and preservation, a recurring theme in Indigenous cultural resurgence. While expanding the journeys has brought more visibility and participation, it has also introduced challenges that risk diluting the spiritual and communal essence of the practice. Ultimately, Lauri's reflections emphasize the need for balance between growth and the original intentions and adaption to contemporary realities while preserving the spiritual and cultural heart of the journeys.

Discussion & Recurrent themes

The fluidity of our traditions, not the rigidity of colonialism.
(Coulthard, 2014, p.56)

By opening the discussion with this quote, I emphasize that the recurring themes from the interviews—cultural revitalization and resurgence; intergenerational transmission of knowledge; personal transformation and healing; community, cultural integrity, and environment; leadership, empowerment and political and social activism—are rooted in this capacity for adaptation and transformation. The Tribal Canoe Journeys embody this fluidity, as they represent a revival of ancestral practices and an evolution in response to modern circumstances. These journeys are not static reenactments of the past; rather, they are dynamic, living traditions that accommodate change while maintaining cultural continuity. The quote also resonates with the overarching argument of this thesis: that Indigenous resurgence, as exemplified by the canoe journeys, thrives not by adhering to rigid colonial expectations of what constitutes "authentic" tradition but by reclaiming the right to shape and adapt traditions in ways that serve current and future generations. This distinction between fluidity and rigidity is key to understanding the significance of the Tribal Canoe Journeys in the Pacific Northwest and the broader project of Indigenous resurgence.

This section explores the recurrent themes identified through the interviews and integrates them with the existing literature. Unlike the previous analysis, which focused on individual narratives, this discussion centers on the themes that emerged consistently across all interviews. The focus is on the cultural, spiritual, and communal impacts of the Tribal Canoe Journeys, highlighting their significance in cultural revitalization, community cohesion, and personal transformation. By drawing connections between these themes and the literature discussed in the

first part of this thesis, we can better understand the multifaceted role of the canoe and canoe journeys in the Pacific Northwest.

Cultural Revitalization and Resurgence

Ongoing colonial experiences continue to impact Indigenous peoples' identities and self-interpretations. Despite efforts to erase Indigenous cultures, knowledge systems, beliefs, languages, and connections to the land, Indigenous cultures have survived and are experiencing a resurgence. This resilience was poignantly expressed during the landing of the Paddle to Muckleshoot, when a canoeist declared when asking permission to land, "We are here today and our culture is alive and well." The Tribal Canoe Journeys play a pivotal role in cultural revitalization for Indigenous peoples, particularly among the Coast Salish and Nuu-chah-nulth communities. The Paddle to Seattle in 1989 marked a significant resurgence, symbolizing a revival of cultural practices and rekindling heritage (Daehnke, 2019; Krupat, 2011). These journeys, alongside Indigenous canoe-making, embody the broader resurgence movement, emphasizing cultural practices and ceremonies as fundamental to decolonization efforts. As highlighted in the interviews, the Tribal Canoe Journeys resemble a contemporary potlatch, with their protocols, such as seeking permission to come ashore and sharing songs and dances, gift-making and distribution, and communal gatherings. These elements reaffirm social status, validate privileges, promote cultural revitalization, empowerment, self-determination, and intergenerational transmission of traditions (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Daehnke, 2017).

> It's potlatch, you're supposed to share your wealth and I was honoured to be a part of it. Potlatch is a way to build connections and integrate tribes together and make those bonds, and create those new families. And that is essentially what the canoe journeys is: it is a big potlatch. (Mark, personal communication, 2024)

The interviews highlighted how these journeys have rekindled dormant cultural practices, positioning them at the centre of contemporary Indigenous identity. The collaborators view the canoe journeys as a means to reconnect with their ancestral traditions, fostering a renewed sense of pride and community cohesion. This resurgence is deeply tied to the land and traditional practices (Simpson, 2011). By taking participants along ancestral waterways, the canoe journeys provide a lived experience that reinforces connections to the land and cultural heritage, aligning with collaborators' descriptions of transformative personal and communal experiences that contribute to a sense of identity and pride. These practices offer a tangible link to pre-colonial ways of life and a form of resistance against ongoing colonial impacts (Coulthard, 2014), as we can see in the following quotes:

> I would say participating in the Canoe Journeys has recreated a very specific cultural community within our Coast Salish Nations, because some of the members may have gathered for spiritual practices ancestrally, but that number was very small. And now, it has turned that smaller number into a really, really large engaged cultural number. (Robert, personal communication. 2024)

> For people who are out in the water, it brings together, and we became closer […] What we do, and how we travel, the stories are so similar to our relatives in Hawaii and in New Zealand, especially that shared stories of colonialism and how we survive, how we approach travelling on the water, and what that means to our peoples. You see the shared histories, and I think that's been such a significant piece for us: we get to express that now, it's not just a theory or something in a book, it's something that is lived lifeway, a pathway for us. (Robert, personal communication. 2024)

> When I pulled in, asked permission to come ashore, I told them a shortened story of what happened there, and told them that hosting us in their teeny tiny village may have changed my life. I said, "and now I come here with my own canoe, with my children. I carry all my children with me, because of that one night that you hosted me, it's affected my life and now my children's life and it's going to affect my grandchildren's lives". (Carol, personal communication. 2024)

The canoe journeys are also a powerful example of intangible cultural heritage, where the transmission of knowledge, skills, and traditions happens through lived experience. By engaging in these journeys, participants actively preserve and revitalize traditional canoe-making, navigation, and protocols, ensuring that these practices remain alive for future generations. This embodiment of ICH not only strengthens cultural continuity but also serves as a form of cultural empowerment, reinforcing Indigenous identities in the face of diminishing cultural practices, languages, and knowledges.

The Coast Salish people's use of their coastal environment held immense cultural significance, and their connection to the land encompasses emotional bonds with their ancestral territories, shaping their social structure and way of life (Angelbeck, 2016; Thom, 2005). This highlights the integration of culture and terrain, which cannot be analyzed in isolation (Thom, 2005). Interviews with collaborators further illustrated this deep connection, as many described how the canoe journeys allowed them to physically and spiritually reconnect with these culturally significant landscapes, reinforcing their sense of identity and community. Indeed, by participating in Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ), Indigenous communities assert their presence and reclaim their rights to their traditional territories. The journeys serve as a form of resistance against colonial

narratives that have historically marginalized Indigenous peoples and their lands. Through these voyages, participants symbolically and physically reassert their sovereignty and cultural identity, as stressed in the interviews that illustrate the importance of these journeys in maintaining a connection to their ancestral lands.

Indigenous resurgence involves reclaiming and renewing cultural practices, knowledge systems, and connections to ancestral lands. It includes the revival of traditional ceremonies, languages, and ways of life, serving as a form of resistance against colonial impacts. The canoe journeys and canoes embody this resurgence by providing a lived experience reinforcing cultural heritage, identity, and community cohesion. They challenge the narrative of Indigenous cultures as static or vanishing, serving as a living expression of Indigenous sovereignty and resilience, as Joe mentions:

> The carving is from our fathers. The culture that needed to do this here, because our people have grown up in this part of the world for many, many, many years, hundreds of years, it's just a part of the cultural teachings here. I think that all across the, perhaps if you want to call it that, the indigenous world that of how those things got started, the teachings that have been passed on through many generations.
>
> […] Canoes and canoe-making are important to me because of our culture and our connections to nature. It is part of our culture, because when we look at it, it gave us access to all of these resources and certainly access to travel many miles from here, not only in this place where people did travel.

Decolonization necessitates more than symbolic recognition of Indigenous cultures; it requires the return of Indigenous lands and a fundamental restructuring of power dynamics (Tuck

& Yang, 2012). By reconnecting people with their ancestral waterways, the canoe journeys embody this principle of decolonization through active engagement with the land.

Moreover, the resurgence of canoe journeys aligns with the broader movement of Indigenous cultural revitalization observed globally. Engaging in traditional activities has significant psychological and social benefits, helping to heal historical trauma and foster community solidarity (Hirch & Korn, 2012). The interviews support this, highlighting the journeys as both cultural and healing practices, providing participants with a sense of purpose and belonging. The canoe journeys exemplify the role of intangible cultural heritage in fostering intergenerational transmission amidst the pressures of globalization. As younger generations participate in these traditional activities, they learn cultural knowledge directly from elders and experienced community members, ensuring the survival of practices that might otherwise be lost in an increasingly homogenized world. This process not only strengthens cultural continuity but also empowers communities to resist the erasure of their identities. By passing down traditions within the context of global change, the journeys promote resilience and pride, creating a living link between past and present. Lauri, for example, explains her motivation for continuing the journeys, emphasizing her desire to help others find the same healing and empowerment she experienced:

> For me, I keep participating in canoe journeys; I keep doing it in hopes that it helps other people the way it helped me. I feel like if I can help one other person, save them from whatever it is, maybe a deep depression like me, or alcohol or drugs or, you know, whatever it is, I just feel like it's an opportunity! I tell my children and my grandchildren that someday there's not going to be electricity, there's not going to be gas for cars, and you're not going to have computers, so you're going to have to go back to the way of life of our

ancestors. So, you have to learn! Even if we don't do these things, you must know how! It's important. (Lauri, personal communication, 2024)

Other collaborators also stressed the challenges in maintaining the cultural integrity of these practices amid modern influences and commercialization, in a process of hybridity blending traditional knowledge with modern tools and methods (Bhabha's, 1994). Collaborators expressed concerns about the evolving nature of the canoe journeys, noting a shift from intimate, spiritually profound experiences to more commercialized events. This tension between maintaining tradition and adapting to contemporary contexts underscores the complexity of cultural resurgence in the modern world. In Coulthard's words, decolonization needs to happen "on our own terms, without the sanction, permission or engagement of the state, western theory or the opinions of Canadians" (Coulthard, 2014, p.154).

Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge

The Tribal Canoe Journeys provide a vital platform for intergenerational learning and the transmission of cultural knowledge. The construction and journey of the "glwa" canoe by the Heiltsuk community during Expo '86 highlight the importance of these journeys in revitalizing traditional practices and passing them down to younger generations (Hundley, 2022; Johansen, 2012). Canoe builders exemplify this intergenerational transmission through their dedication to teaching traditional canoe-making techniques and building canoes for their communities, continuing a family legacy that spans generations. Canoe-making is not just about creating a vessel but about connecting with ancestors and preserving cultural heritage.

The canoe journeys embody decolonization through active engagement with the land by reconnecting people with their ancestral waterways. This intergenerational transmission of knowledge ensures cultural continuity and resilience amid historical traumas and contemporary

challenges (Beattie, 2017; Daehnke, 2019; Hirch & Korn, 2012; Hundley, 2022; Johnson et al., 2019). The resurgence of canoe culture fosters meaningful relationships between youth, Elders, and knowledge holders, ensuring the continuity of Indigenous knowledge and cultural pride (Beattie, 2017). Collaborators emphasized the importance of involving younger generations in these journeys, allowing them to learn from Elders and engage in cultural practices. This aligns with Kimmerer (2013), who highlights the significance of passing down traditional ecological knowledge to ensure cultural continuity and resilience.

Coast Salish women were crucial in maintaining family ties and economic independence through mobility and canoeing skills, navigating waterways for trade, cultivation, and social connections. This adaptability and knowledge were passed down through generations. The interviews with women highlighted how they continue this tradition by being instrumental in intergenerational teaching around the canoe, ensuring the continuity of cultural practices, as Lauri's experience with a youth she had as a client:

> When I was working in social services, I had a very unruly teenager who was one of my clients, and I thought that travel journeys would be good for him. […] So, I brought him. […] Then I introduced the client to all of them and I followed them by ground crew […] when we stopped somewhere, there would be either elders telling stories at dinnertime, or we would make bow and arrows for the kids and they practiced doing that. There was one stop where they played a traditional gambling game […] And it was very healing, very powerful and very spiritual. […] . On the last day, […] everybody was singing and everybody was having a good time and dancing. The boy, who was probably 15, very teenage-ish, came and sat down next to me and asked to talk to me. I said yes and asked if he wanted to go outside, because it was very loud in there. He said: "no, I want to stay

right here". That's what we did, we just sat there talking and he said he wanted to thank me for making him go.

Tribal Canoe Journeys are a dynamic educational setting where intergenerational transmission is encouraged and celebrated, reinforcing the connection between generations through shared cultural experiences (Beattie, 2017). These narratives illustrate how the Tribal Canoe Journeys serve as a living classroom, where cultural knowledge is transmitted and adapted in a holistic educational experience encompassing ecological knowledge and skills. Participants engage in canoe building, navigation, and traditional fishing methods, all intimately tied to their environment. This hands-on learning promotes a deep understanding of their landscape and its resources, ensuring that this knowledge is passed down through generations.

Creating new cultural expressions, such as songs and dances, during journeys underscores Indigenous cultures' adaptive and evolving nature as a Third Space for cultural transmission and transformation with practices that merge historical traditions with contemporary influences, fostering the emergence of hybrid identities. This adaptability is crucial for cultural survival, allowing communities to navigate contemporary challenges while maintaining their core values and traditions (Elliott, 2018; Erickson, 2008; Marshall, 2011). The interviews illustrated that younger participants learn traditional practices and contribute to the cultural landscape by creating new traditions that resonate with their experiences. For Robert, seeing younger generations take creating new spaces and practices is exciting:

> Our younger generation has taken up another type of canoe journeys, that are called jam sessions, where they get together and sing and dance. Especially in the wintertime, almost every weekend somebody is advertising that they're having one of those. So, it has created a larger ocean-going canoe society with well over a hundred canoes that are a part of it,

> and also these subgroups that come from it. I'm especially excited about seeing the younger generation take that up on their own and are doing that themselves, creating a safe space, a drug and alcohol-free space monthly, if not on a weekly basis, for them to get together and express their culture. And they are creating new songs, they are creating new dances, they're just creating different ways of being. (Robert, personal communication, 2024)

This innovation process within tradition is vital for cultural resilience since cultural practices must evolve to remain relevant amid ongoing colonial pressures. It aligns with Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity, showcasing the ability of these communities to blend old and new elements to maintain their cultural identity and sovereignty.

There are also challenges in teaching these traditional skills to younger generations in the modern context, mainly due to contemporary capitalism's demands, especially for those more likely to live in poverty. Despite these challenges, there is a strong commitment to preserving these skills and integrating modern tools while retaining the essence of the traditional craft. Joe talks about these challenges and also the effort communities need to do to keep teaching traditional skills:

> The biggest challenges in canoe making is teaching younger people how to do it, that is usually the biggest challenge. Today, because of the life we live now, we have to pay them. Because most people cannot just go out there and just drop everything and just go out there and do it. They don't make money doing it. This has really changed how our culture is, because in the former days, we didn't need money. We just needed to eat, catch fish, and whatever we needed to eat, we'd catch and eat it. But today, we have to go to the store and buy food. Younger people also have to do that. Something we will do with them is to raise funds so they can come and participate.

Personal Transformation and Healing

The Canoe Journey (TCJ) is crucial for understanding identity development and healing from intergenerational trauma within the context of settler colonialism. Paddlers create a political identity that challenges existing power dynamics and fosters collective agency, redefining and reclaiming cultural and political identities (Hundley, 2022). This process of identity reclamation addresses the profound psychological impact of colonization, often termed the "colonized mind," by fostering a reclamation of Indigenous identity and knowledge. The recognition and critique of Western research paradigms that neglect the effects of imperialism, colonization, and globalization on knowledge construction further reinforce the importance of TCJ in personal and communal healing (Chilisa, 2012; Memmi, 1974/2003).

The physical and emotional challenges of the TCJ encourage connections and interactions both within and among communities, emphasizing the importance of teamwork, sobriety, and cultural heritage, which plays a crucial role in promoting personal and communal healing and resilience (Johansen, 2012). The Indigenous holistic approach integrates body, mind, soul, and spirit within nature, supporting personal transformation by promoting harmony with the environment and fostering deep relationships with the natural world, integral to the TCJ experience as participants engage in a journey that is spiritual, cultural, and relational (Cajete, 2000; Viveiros de Castro, 1998). As Carol illustrates in this statement: "When they say canoe family, it really is a family, you're pulling together one heart, one mind, one spirit. The canoe teaches you. You just have this connection through that" (Carol, personal communication, 2024).

Paddling through ancestral waters also has a spiritual dimension. Collaborators describe a profound connection to the land, water, and ancestors. This spiritual bond is often reinforced by the rituals and ceremonies performed during the journeys, honouring the spirits of the land and

water, such as initiation rites that respect natural cycles and spiritual entities that inhabit their territory, early morning prayers in the forest, and ceremonial aspects of mask carving. These practices are symbolic and seen as essential interactions with the spiritual entities that inhabit their world, as we can see in the words of the collaborators:

> We know our culture is healing, being on the canoe, feeling connected to your family, your ancestors. It's like travelling in the same waters that they travelled, something that they had been doing for thousands of years. […] The reconnection, meeting others, connecting with other tribes, other people, the learning opportunities! From our protocol, the singing and dancing, these are all opportunities for our tribes. (Carol, personal communication, 2024)

> Another way that it got me involved was by keeping me out of drugs and alcohol. As a recovering addict from heavy cocaine use and alcohol use, it really gave me that purpose that I was looking for and needed, as well as becoming more of a role model for the community and surrounding communities, so it really helped me get on a good path and not look back. (John, personal communication, 2024)

The Suquamish Tribe of Port Madison, Washington, USA, offers an example as they incorporate Tribal Canoe Journeys into their "Healing of the Canoe" treatment model, addressing drug and alcohol abuse by blending cultural practices with medical consultation (Johansen, 2012). Participants often return from journeys clean and sober, underscoring the positive impact of revitalizing canoe culture (Daehnke, 2017). This holistic approach shows canoe journeys' significant role in fostering healing and resilience, contributing to decolonization by reclaiming Indigenous identity and challenging colonial power dynamics, challenging Western dichotomies

and supporting healing through deep environmental connections (Daehnke, 2017; Hallowell, 1964).

The therapeutic effects of the canoe journeys on paddlers were a recurrent theme in the interviews. Many described the journeys as a source of profound emotional and spiritual healing, particularly in the context of personal losses and struggles, as taking part on the journeys integrate body, mind, soul, and spirit within nature, creating a holistic relationship between participants and their environment and embodying principles of Indigenous knowledge (Cajete, 2000). This integration is evident as collaborators describe a profound spiritual connection to the land and their ancestors during the TCJ, emphasizing nature imbued with spirit and the interconnectedness of all beings, as Carol illustrates:

> And it [the TCJs] was very healing, very powerful and very spiritual. Truly, everything that happened was just very emotional for me. And it is still. […] It was dark out and the stars were so bright! It was a beautiful summer night, and I walked out of the building where they were singing to where I could see the ocean and the water. And it was just, really, a moment in time that changed my life forever. I could hear them singing in the back [..] It was just so beautiful and so magical that I knew that this was the life that I wanted to follow. I was always very cultural in everything before, but this was something different. (Lauri, personal communication, 2024)

The interviews highlight the relational and interconnected experience of the journey, with canoes and natural elements viewed as partners. This perspective facilitates personal and communal healing by providing a space for participants to process grief and trauma through communal and spiritual activities, as healing in Indigenous contexts often involves reconnecting

with cultural roots and engaging in communal practices that can promote mental health and well-being (Duran & Duran, 1995; Gone, 2013).

Community, Cultural Integrity, and Environment

The Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) has been a pivotal cultural event celebrating Indigenous maritime heritage along the Northwest Pacific coast, reconnecting participants to ancestral pathways and practices, and exchanging cultural knowledge and traditions through protocols and celebrations. As seen in the interviews, embarking on a canoe journey, building canoes together and teaching both to younger generations can be platforms for Indigenous communities to unite, celebrate, and transmit their cultural heritage and promote cultural and community integration or even creation, as Robert emphasizes: "It has been very important for the last few generations and the bonds you create in a journey, having that cooperation process, you really get close, out in the water, depending on each other."

Traveling by canoe allows participants to trace the routes their ancestors once took through historical routes, following in the paddle strokes of generations past, they reaffirm connections to the land and each other, deepening their emotional and spiritual bond to the land. The journey fosters a greater awareness and respect for the natural environment as participants learn to read the tides, currents, and weather patterns, gaining a practical understanding of the interconnectedness of natural elements. A heightened environmental awareness by seeing the landscape from the water reshapes his perception of their homeland, while encouraging stewardship and sustainable practices that honour their ancestors' ways of life:

> You have that connection to the water, which really reshapes your lens. Many of the tribes on the canoe journeys, they have waterfront land bases, but we're one of the few that does not. One of the challenges for us is our Indian reservation is up on that plateau where we

> were forced to live and there are connections to the rivers, but a lot of people don't have that connection to the saltwater - unless they're a fisherman. For us, the journeys have reestablished that connection and changed that perspective of who we are as saltwater and ocean-going travelers that do that work. (Robert, personal communication, 2024)

> Growing up outside of my reservation, my family would float down the Cedar River. It runs along Renton. In my mind, in my spirit, I could feel villages without anyone telling me. But on that first canoe journey, that came back. Those things I experienced as a child, feeling that connection, feeling that these places are special. (Carol, personal communication, 2024)

As they are not a competition but a social gathering promoting internal and external connections, a sense of collective agency, storytelling, and sharing songs and dances throughout the journey and at the destination, they can provide a "third space" for constructing political identities that challenge existing power dynamics and foster collective agency. (Hundley, 2022; Johansen, 2012).

As an essential part of Indigenous resurgence processes, they are crucial to the Indigenous community and cultural integrity. However, collaborators critically discussed the evolution of the canoe journeys, particularly the shift towards commercialization. While the growth of these events has increased visibility and participation, it has also introduced challenges related to maintaining cultural and spiritual integrity. This tension between traditional practices and contemporary adaptations is a common theme in Indigenous cultural revitalization efforts (Johnson, et al, 2019). The interviews reflected concerns that the commercialization of the journeys might dilute their

spiritual and cultural depth. This critique resonates with Lauri's reflection on the current TCJ and the risk of commodification:

> Nowadays, the Tribal Canoe Journeys have evolved, and I'm not a fan of how it's evolved. Myself, personally, I feel like we're losing. Before, Travel Journeys had only the pullers in the canoe, and the people on the ground crew. It was only those people for each tribe, there were no vendors, no big fancy showers, and any of that. You would get to a village, and some people would have a green sign on the door that meant you were welcome to come there and do your laundry or shower. So, in the beginning, there wasn't all that fancy stuff, you would try to go find someone in the village, sometimes they would come to our camp and tell us to come their house, that they would feed us and help wash our clothes. It was more personal than it is now. (Carol, personal communication, 2024)

Maintaining the authenticity of these practices requires careful navigation of modern influences, ensuring that the core values and traditions are preserved, as the interviews emphasize. The holistic approach mentioned above ties culture and community deeply to their environment, viewing canoes as spiritual beings connected to the social and natural world. Collaborators emphasized the spiritual significance of travelling along ancestral waterways, fostering a profound connection to the land and water integral to Indigenous identity and spirituality (Daehnke, 2017; Johansen, 2012). The journeys offer a unique perspective on the landscape, fostering reverence and stewardship for the environment.

Respecting natural laws and cycles in canoe-making is fundamental to Indigenous ecological knowledge and cultural practices. Interviews highlight the necessity of aligning with natural cycles, such as not disturbing birds' nests during their crafting, not taking resources from

specific areas for designated periods, and engaging with the land and its entities in a respectful and balanced relationship, as Joe explains:

> Learning about the protocols of harvesting the resources in our forests was a very important thing that was left by my grandfather and my father, and that was to cut wood only in the fall and the wintertime. I learned not to cut trees down, because of the birds that may be nesting in the forest in the spring or the summertime, we were not allowed to disrupt them. That was one of the biggest things that our people did have, was the teachings of those things, which were very important. And if you did cut trees in the spring or in the summertime, then there would be a very bad omen for you and your family. It would not be very good, so we practiced that.

Leadership, Empowerment and Political and Social Activism

Participation in the canoe journeys encourages leadership and empowerment within Indigenous communities. These journeys provide opportunities for individuals to develop leadership skills, take on responsibilities, and contribute to the well-being of their communities. The interviews highlighted that leadership within the context of the canoe journeys is not only about guiding the canoe but also about embodying and promoting cultural values. This holistic approach to leadership, which integrates cultural knowledge and community service, is essential for the resilience and sustainability of Indigenous communities and aligns with the broader literature on Indigenous leadership, which emphasizes the role of cultural practices in nurturing leaders who are grounded in their cultural identity and values (Cornell, 2007). For Robert and John, that is an important teaching:

> I'm so excited to see people that I knew as children are now in leadership roles. They grew up in the canoe society, they always have that base, I can see it in them, how they interact

> with people, how they respect their elders. We've lost that in some places (Robert, personal communication, 2024).
>
> It has created a tight bond with a lot of people and it's great because you see these people grow and change over time, and even more with kids, you see your friends with these babies and then you see them years later and these kids are taking charge and either singing or drumming or skipping the canoe or paddling. It's really just a way of life (John, personal communication, 2024)

The role of the canoe journeys in broader political and social activism was also discussed. Collaborators noted that the skills, unity, and networks developed through these journeys support various activist causes, including environmental conservation and Indigenous rights. This aspect of the journeys reflects the broader role of cultural practices in fostering social and political engagement (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). The journeys serve as a platform for raising awareness about Indigenous issues and mobilizing support for causes that affect Indigenous communities. Particularly, these community-led movements aim to heal from and counteract centuries of colonialism, although not necessarily addressing them: the interviews indicate they are more interested in internal healing and interconnectedness, affirming Indigenous self-determination and redefining relationships to restore connections with the environment and community (Coburn, 2015).

The ability of these journeys to unite and empower communities underscores their significance beyond cultural revitalization. However, collaborators frequently mentioned the logistical and financial challenges of organizing and participating in the canoe journeys. These challenges include securing funding, managing large groups, and ensuring the safety and well-

being of participants. Financial and logistical support is critical for continuing these journeys, especially for smaller communities with limited resources, as Robert reflects:

> It's a sheer number of people that are coming, so you need to think about it: "Can we afford restroom facilities? Can we have it sanitary if we have this many people come into our community? Can we feed all those people? Can we keep them safe, safe from outside people?" And all those other things that are responsibilities of the host. We're fortunate because of our proximity to the highway and for economic resources, we were able to do it. But it is limiting because it is very, very cost-prohibitive now. Some groups are saying: "Hey, maybe we should do something smaller, go back to a more, so-called, traditional way of doing it".

With adaptability and resilience, the interviews highlight that Indigenous communities continuously face the challenge of overcoming obstacles. Collaborators discussed various strategies for addressing these challenges, including community support, innovative practices, and collaborations across Nations, as Robert says:

> I would like to really be able to see all the groups come together to support smaller tribes or tribes that maybe don't have the economic resources to do this work, so that each of them can have that experience. I would really like to see that happen! Those that have more developed and evolved economic income right now can do this and can do this work and support them […] so we can spread the wealth around and enable them to also be part of it. (Robert, personal communication, 2024

This adaptability is a testament to the strength and resourcefulness of Indigenous peoples in preserving and revitalizing their cultural practices. preserving and revitalizing their cultural

practices. As Joe notes, the richness of the land before European arrival allowed communities to balance survival with cultural activities:

> That's a lot of things, the cultural teachings of the land, and how it was so rich here when the Europeans first arrived here. This land was so rich, our people only had to work for three or four days a week to survive here, just to gather food. And the rest of the time was for arts and culture, building homes or new canoes. They often had many canoes in the front of every house. They probably had four or six canoes in the front of every house. Just different sizes of canoes for different purposes, that's why they had them, it was essential.

Chapter five: Conclusion

Especially for our people in the Pacific Northwest, I think it has legitimatized and empowered our people. Ancestrally, we were always a very strong people, warrior societies that gathered together and did this important work, but through colonization and urbanization, we lost so much of that. So, I really think it serves as a model for that work and creating the next generation of leaders.
(Robert, personal communication, 2024)

This thesis explored the visibility and reverence of canoes in Canadian life and culture, examining their role in Indigenous-led movements of cultural/political resistance. Through two key questions, it investigated how the material and social construction of the canoe and the perspectives of paddlers and Indigenous knowledge holders contribute to the broader processes of cultural revitalization (or perpetuation), intergenerational knowledge transmission, and an enhanced understanding of landscapes.

The findings demonstrate that the Tribal Canoe Journeys are not merely cultural events but active, dynamic processes of resistance and resurgence. These journeys enable Indigenous communities to reaffirm their connection to the land, revitalize ancestral knowledge, and transmit cultural practices across generations. The blending of traditional canoe-making techniques with modern tools illustrates the adaptability of Indigenous peoples, reinforcing their resilience in the face of ongoing colonial pressures. By navigating both physical and cultural landscapes, the participants reclaim sovereignty over their identity and heritage, and they experience a profound reconnection with their identity, often healing from colonial intergenerational trauma.

Moreover, the discussions in this thesis have explored the multifaceted roles that the TCJ plays within these Indigenous communities, serving as both a spiritual practice and a form of political activism. The inherent hybridity within these journeys—blending traditional knowledge

systems with modern tools—reveals the resilience and adaptability of Indigenous cultures. While this might create tensions between cultural integrity and modernization, it also demonstrates the capacity of Indigenous peoples to navigate contemporary challenges while preserving their core values.

The themes that have emerged across the interviews (cultural revitalization and resurgence; intergenerational transmission of knowledge; personal transformation and healing; community, cultural integrity, and environment; leadership, empowerment and political and social activism) and literature underline the significance of the canoe as a metaphorical and literal vessel of cultural resurgence. It not only transports individuals across waters but also carries forward their histories, languages, and communal memories. TCJ challenges the static views of Indigenous culture often propagated by colonial discourses, proving that cultural practices are dynamic, evolving, and integrally linked to the land and community. The themes also contribute to the broader discourse on Indigenous resurgence by providing a lived example of how cultural practices serve not just as acts of heritage preservation but as active forms of resistance and political empowerment. The journeys serve as a metaphorical and literal return to the land, providing a platform for political activism, social cohesion, and healing. The canoe is a potent symbol of Indigenous agency and resistance.

While this study has provided valuable insights into the significance of TCJ, future research could expand on different canoe journeys across various Indigenous nations, offering a comparative perspective, engaging in critically reevaluating, reconstructing, and redeploying Indigenous cultural forms as radical alternatives to colonial domination. Decolonization may demand that collective efforts shift away from transforming colonial structures and focus on fostering Indigenous resurgence on their own terms, without seeking permission or validation from

the state, Western theory, or settler society. As Simpson (2011) and other scholars (Beattie, 2017; Coburn, 2015; Elliott, 2018; Frandy & Cederström, 2017; Johansen, 2012; Sumida, 2020) emphasize, resurgence does not mean returning to the past but re-creating the past's flourishing cultural and political systems to support the well-being of contemporary Indigenous peoples. This thesis has illustrated that "[t]he fluidity of our traditions, not the rigidity of colonialism" (Coulthard, 2014, p.56), is what sustains Indigenous resilience and growth. The Tribal Canoe Journeys demonstrate that Indigenous cultural practices have much to offer in establishing relationships based on reciprocity and respectful coexistence.

In conclusion, it is important to recognize that the insights offered by this research are horizons of possible discourses on this subject. They do not merely corroborate the theoretical frameworks laid out in the earlier discussions; rather, they expand and challenge these ideas. The ongoing practices of the Tribal Canoe Journeys invite us to consider broader, more fluid interpretations of Indigenous identity, community resilience, and cultural revival, enriching our understanding and opening up new avenues for continued exploration and reflection.

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Figures

Figure 2

Paddler Displaying Mask During Landing Ceremony, Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023.

Figure 3

Canoes At Alki Beach, Seattle, After Lading Ceremony, Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023

Figure 4

Canoes Arriving for the Landing Ceremony at Alki Beach, Seattle. Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023.

Figure 5

Protocol Performance. Paddle to Muckleshoot, 2023.

Figure 6

Protocols Audience. Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023.

Figure 7

Protocols Audience Wearing a Cedar Tree Bark Hat. Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023.

Figure 8

Protocols Drumming and the Master of Ceremony. Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023

Figure 9

2023 Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023 Agenda.

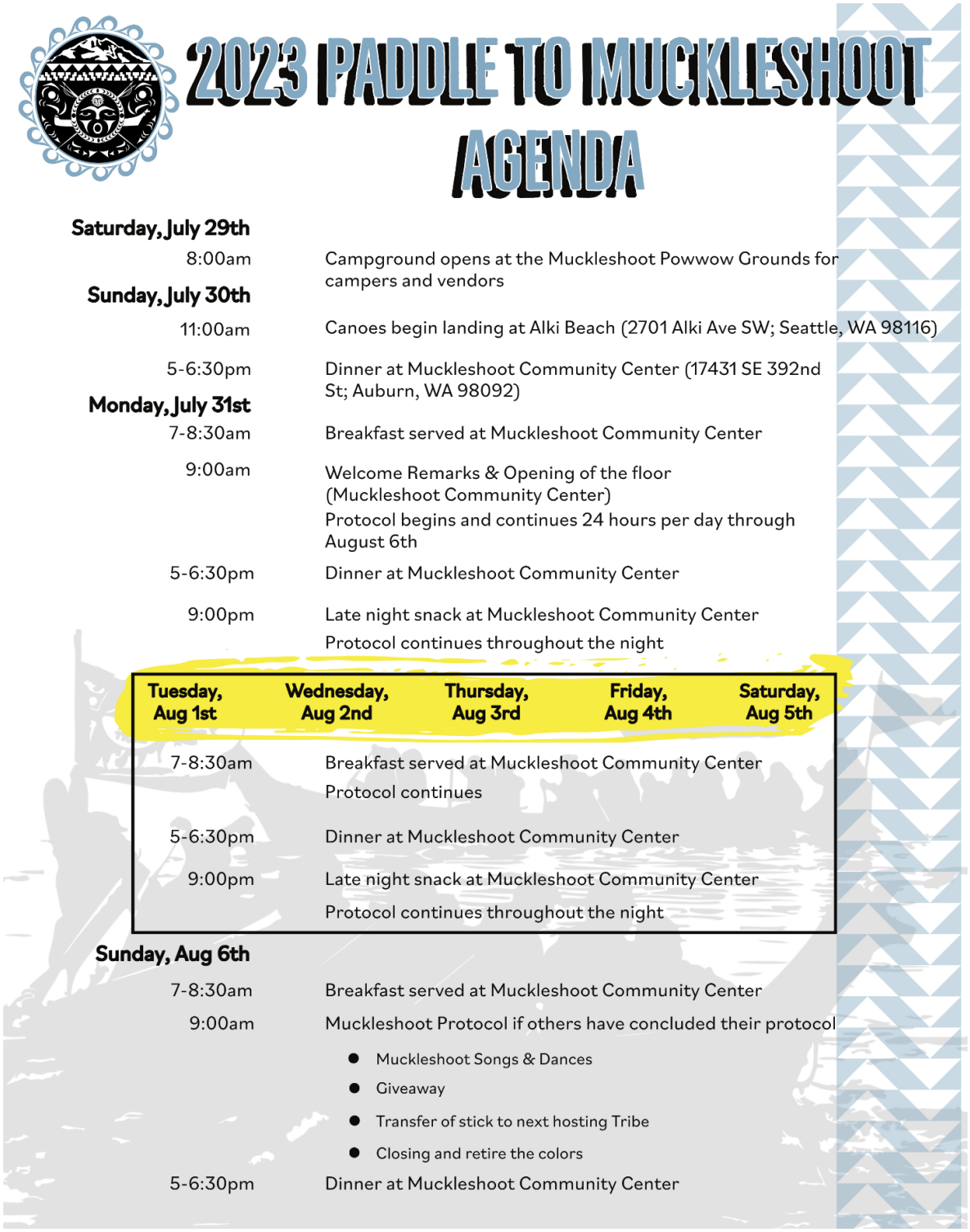

Figure 10

Paddlers Fraternizing After Landing at Alki Beach, Seattle. Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023.

Figure 11.

Muckleshoot Tribal Members During the Protocols of Landing at Alki Beach, Seattle. Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023.

Figure 12

Man Crafting Hats With Cedar Tree Bark During the Protocols. Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023.

Figure 13

Muckleshoot Tribal Members During the Landing Protocols at Alki Beach, Seattle. Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023.

Figure 14

Canoes Sitting on Alki Beach After Landing. Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023.

Figure 15

Example Of Canoe Used on TCJ And Its Road Trailer. Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023.

Figure 16

Canoe With a Mast and Sail for Catching a Tailwind. Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023.

Figure 17

Examples of Strip Canoes Sitting on Alki Beach After Landing. Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023.

Figure 18

Canoe Approaching for Landing Protocol at Alki Beach After Landing. Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023.

Figure 20

Cultural Education Shop at Muckleshoot Tribal Reserve

Note: with the canoes that were made to be gifted during the Paddle to Muckleshoot 2023

Figure 21

Back View of the Cultural Education Shop at Muckleshoot Tribal Reserve.

Figure 22

Tree Logs Used for Carving Activities in the Backyard of the Cultural Education Shop at Muckleshoot Tribal Reserve.

Figure 23

Display at the Entrance of the Community Centre at the Muckleshoot Tribal Reserve.

Figure 25

Joe and His Relatives Carve a Canoe in 1984 Acts of Resistance.

Figure 26

Vending Tents Outside Muckleshoot Community Centre During the Paddle to Muckleshoot, 2023.

Figure 27

Master Carver Joe Martin and me At Carl Martin's Shop.

Annex

Below is a comprehensive list of the Tribal Journey years along with their corresponding locations:

1986 – Vancouver World's Fair

1989 – "Paddle to Seattle"

1993 – Qatuwas, Waglisla (Bella Bella), B.C.

1994 – Youth Paddle, Olympia, WA

1995/1996 – Full Circle Youth Paddle (throughout Puget Sound)

1997 – La Push, WA

1998 – Puyallup, WA

1999 – Ahousaht, B.C.

2000 – Songhees, B.C. and Pendleton, OR

2001 – Squamish, B.C.

2002 – Taholah, WA

2003 – Tulalip, WA

2004 – Chemainus, B.C.

2005 – Elwha, WA

2006 – Muckleshoot, WA

2007 – Lummi, WA

2008 – Cowichan, B.C.2009 – Suquamish, WA

2010 – Makah, WA

2011 – Swinomish, WA

2012 – Squaxin Island, WA

2013 – Taholah, WA

2014 – Qatuwas II, Waglisla, B.C.

2015 – Multiple regional 'youth' journeys

2016 – Nisqually, WA

2017 – Wei Wai Kai, We Wai Kum, B.C.

2018 – Puyallup, WA

2019 – Lummi, WA

2020/2021/2022 – Cancelled COVID-19

2023 – Muckleshoot, WA (scheduled).

Script for Participant Recruitment

I am a First Nations Studies master's candidate at UNBC, conducting a qualitative research project that aims to examine the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) and the experiences of canoe-knowledge holders and paddlers who participate in these journeys along the coast of the Salish Sea. The focus is on understanding TCJ as a process of Indigenous resistance and cultural resurgence, exploring how they contribute to the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous knowledge, revitalization efforts, and shaping participants' understanding of places and landscapes.

As we discussed during the Paddle to Muckleshoot, I am currently seeking participants who have taken part in TCJ and are willing to share their experiences. Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. The interview is expected to last approximately one hour and can be conducted in person or through a Zoom/Microsoft Teams or telephone call, depending on your preference. All information shared during the interview will be treated as confidential, and your privacy will be respected throughout the study.

If you are interested in participating or know someone who might be, please spread the word and reach out to me. Your involvement in this research will significantly contribute to our understanding of the cultural significance and impact of TCJ within Indigenous communities.

Thank you for considering participation in this study. Your contribution is invaluable!

Best regards,

Research team

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Global and International Studies International Studies Graduate Program (FISSSH)

Purpose of Research

This research project is part of my Master's degree and will contribute to the thesis, which will be evaluated by the supervisor and committee and may be published in the future. The study aims to examine the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) and explore the experiences of canoe-knowledge holders and paddlers participating in these journeys along the coast of the Salish Sea. It focuses on the broader significance of canoes within the systems of Coast Salish nations, as understood by Indigenous knowledge holders, and explores the perspective of paddlers in the Tribal Canoe Journeys, specifically the 2023 "Paddle do Muckleshoot" event.

Commitment Required, Potential Risks and Benefits Involved in Participation

Participating in this research is voluntary; you can decline any part that may be uncomfortable. If you want to withdraw from the study, we will respect that and remove your information. You can choose the interview location, which will last approximately one hour. Whether in person or through online platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams, we will ask about your experiences with the Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ). You can share as much or as little as it makes you comfortable discussing.

You can also be an ongoing collaborator in the research, with the opportunity to review drafts and provide feedback to maintain a collaborative process. Rest assured that all the information will be treated with strict confidentiality and handled according to ethical guidelines to protect privacy.

Participating in this study is low-risk, and your well-being is our top priority. We understand the sensitivity of discussing personal experiences, and if you require additional psychological support, we will provide resources to assist you. Your involvement in this research will contribute to filling a knowledge gap and enhancing our understanding of the cultural significance and impact of Tribal Canoe Journeys (TCJ) within Indigenous communities along the coast of the Salish Sea. Thank you for considering being a part of this important study.

Confidentiality

The interviews will be recorded and written down for this research. Only the leading researcher and supervisor will have access to these recordings. They will be kept secure for up to two years after the project ends and then deleted. If you want, you can listen to your own interview but not others. To keep things private, if you want, we will give you a different name to use in the report. We will also ensure that no personal information is included in the report. This is to keep your identity confidential, and no one can figure out who you are based on what you say.

Results

The results of this study will be analyzed and used in my thesis. They might also be published in books or academic journals in the future. The findings could be shared with the local community as well. I will make sure to keep everything confidential and protect your privacy, meaning that when we report the results or present the findings, we will keep who participated in the study.