

We Have to Take Care of Everything That Belongs to Us

Naxaxalhts'í, Albert (Sonny) McHalsie

I would like to share some of the teachings and acquired knowledge about Halq'eméylem place names and their relationship to various important aspects of Stó:lō culture and history. I have worked at the Stó:lō Nation for the past nineteen years, both directly and collaboratively, researching such topics as Halq'eméylem place names, the mapping of fishing sites, and traditional use studies (historical, anthropological, archaeological, and genealogical). I do my best to recognize the contributions of both Coast Salish literature and oral history to my work. The academic world and the oral history process both share an important common principle: they contribute to knowledge by building upon what is known and remembering that learning is a life-long quest. I would like to share my perspective of our unique Stó:lō culture and history and its importance to the ultimate recognition of Stó:lō Aboriginal rights and title.

It is important that I provide some context on my own background as I believe it has contributed to my personal growth. My father was Nlaka'pamux, also known as the Thompson, and my mother was Stó:lō. My father was from Anderson Creek and my mother was from Chowethel. They both spoke their own languages and were exposed to their own cultures. Over the years, my father was quite involved with our spirituality. He knew what our culture was about. I know that he was kind of critical of things that weren't ours – for instance, the pow-wow. He was always involved with Indian doctors; whenever something was wrong in our family he turned to an Indian doctor. I remember that sort of exposure. His uncle was an Indian doctor, and my father did some Indian doctor work as well. How much training he had in that, I'm not sure. My mother spoke her language. She did a lot of talking in her language with my grandmother when my grandmother was around. But for the most part there wasn't too much exposure to our culture, and I think that was probably because my parents were a product of the residential school system. I think they both thought

that it would be better for us not to learn the culture because we were trying to learn Western society's education system. I know that, in the past, some elders said that they didn't want to teach people the traditional ways because they thought that would hold them back. So I kind of think that might have been the mindset that my parents had.

I had limited exposure to our traditional culture when I was younger, but enough to think about the importance of it and to try to understand some of it. I started my work back in 1985 with the Stó:lō and the Alliance of Tribal Councils, recording heritage sites, working place names, and fishing grounds as well as learning a little bit about the different Transformer rocks – all those different things. Prior to that I had no real knowledge of those things. Although, I remember my father once talking about the coyote rock when we were pulling into Lytton one time. I remember him saying, "There's a coyote rock around here." And that kind of stuck in my head. I didn't know what it was all about; it wasn't until later on when I was pulling into that town with our anthropologist, and he mentioned something about the same thing, that I thought, "Wow." I had remembered my dad saying something about a coyote rock at that location as well. I remember my father mentioning that – there's a coyote rock there. My mother never shared too much about our cultural history, although she was probably exposed to it. I mean she knew the language. It wasn't until later on, after she had passed on, that I found out from one of my elders, Selthelmethewq, a.k.a. Peter Dennis Peters, that my grandfather was quite knowledgeable about place names. One of my personal inspirations for learning was just knowing that my grandfather knew a lot about place names. I remember once interviewing the late Selthelmethewq, and he said, "Oh Sonny, I wish your grandfather was here right now." He said, "Your grandfather knew way more than ... I did." That was an inspiration to me, just knowing that those place names and that what I was learning about was something that he had known about.

Another inspiration was my grandfather Antoine on my dad's side. He died ten years before I was born. I heard a lot of stories about him being a grizzly bear hunter. I carry one of his names: Naxaxalhts'í. He was the one who was given the name McHalsie, he was the one who, as a young boy, was known as Pa'kups and as he got older he was known as Naxaxalhts'í and then he was known as Mashkest. When he was baptized he was given the name Antoine, and when the Indian agent came to the reserve to record his name he told him that he didn't have a surname and he said he wanted his two adult Indian names – Mashkest and Naxaxalhts'í – so that's when the Indian agent wrote down "McHalsie." So that's the origin of my last name. That's what Annie York told me. Annie York actually told me it was

Naxetsi, but it's only just been the last year now I've found out from my cousin Mamie Henry up in Lytton that it's actually Naxaxalhts'i – I was missing two sounds in there.

My dad told me a lot of different stories about Antoine and the fact that he was a non-drinker, and that's why I'm a non-drinker. I haven't been drinking for over nineteen years now, and prior to that I had quit drinking quite young. When I was twenty years old I quit drinking. That was a big inspiration for me as well. I used to travel through the Fraser Canyon when I drove or caught the school bus from Anderson Creek down to Hope, and I never realized the rich history that was there. I used to sleep on the bus. I took it for granted, looking at all the creeks. And I remember seeing the crosses. I remember seeing the cross at Q'alelikrel, Indian Reserve 20. And I never really thought too much about it, never even asked about it when I think about it now. It wasn't until later on when I started recording place names, I started taking out elders – including Tillie Gutierrez and Al Gutierrez, the late Agnes Kelly, the late Amelia Douglas, the late Rosaleen George – to help me on place names.

S'ólh Téméxw te ikw'élo: This Is Our Land

The linguist Brent Galloway had quite an extensive list of place names, which he documented through working with the elders back in the 1970s. I used his list as something to expand upon, and then worked along with other experts in various fields within our own Aboriginal Rights and Title Department. I worked with our historian, Keith Thor Carlson, and anthropologist Brian Thom. Of course they knew of different anthropologists who did studies here, so we were able to acquire some of those records as well. That includes Wayne Suttles' work with the Q'eyts'i, George Gibbs' 1858 boundary survey notes, Wilson Duff's fieldnotes, Norman Lerman's work with the elders, and Charles Hill-Tout's work. There are even some of the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission interviews, and we were able to take some place names off of that, such as those from Marian Smith's fieldnotes and Oliver Wells' interviews.

I took quite an interest in it and really began to learn what the places mean to the Sto:ló people. And it took quite a few years to try to learn this. One of the other teachings too that the elders tell us is that – and this is an elder who shared this with Stan Greene, one of our local artists – he said that our culture is still there, it's just that it is so strong, it's something that we can't take back all at once. We can take only a little bit of it back at a time. And each time we take a little bit of our culture back it makes us stronger so that we can take back more. And I think about that, and I think

about that in an academic sense as well, where, you know, in academia certain ideas, interpretations, and those sort of things, are put forward and are built upon by others. I think those are the same – those two things kind of run parallel to each other. I just kind of look at it differently.

One of the teachings of the elders is that we're always learning; we never quit learning from the day we're born to the day we die. It seems like that was one of the teachings in the past. You're told to do things. You're never told why. You're just told to do it. And that's because that's how we do it! And it isn't until later on that you start putting things together, you start realizing why. So there's a lot of things I've been able to put together like that over the years, in terms of studying the place names, and then at the same time as studying the place names, studying our culture.

In the early 1980s, we were interviewing a number of elders at Coqual-eetza. We had a video camera set up, and we had the late Agnes Kelly there and Tillie Gutierrez. That was the time when Tillie Gutierrez shared that one statement with us, and that statement means a lot to me now. It's actually a statement that we include in most of our maps and it's almost like our motto or one of the principles of our Aboriginal Rights and Title Department here at Sto:ló Nation. She said that when she was a little girl she remembered being up in Yale. She said that during the summer when she was fishing up there people would get together – the leaders would get together and start talking about the land question. She said every time they got together before they started their meeting, they all started off with one statement, and that was "*S'ólh Téméxw te ikw'élo. X'ólhmet te mekw'stam it kwel'at.*" And that basically means, "This is our land and we have to take care of everything that belongs to us." I thought that was a pretty neat statement. I knew it was a profound statement about something that was important to us. But I mean, even at that time I knew it meant something, although I didn't quite understand what. Now I have a better idea but, like I said, I'm still learning as well. But I have a better idea of what that means now. And to me now when I look at that statement, that statement *S'ólh Téméxw te ikw'élo* – "this is our land" – that's our statement of our Aboriginal right and title, the statement of our ownership. But then the second part, *X'ólhmet te mekw'stam it kwel'at* – "We have to take care of everything that belongs to us" – that's our obligation, to take care of what's out there.

What is that "everything"? What is everything to us? Through the place names then, just following various different places, where each place talks about different things that are out there in our land, in our world. *S'ólh Téméxw* means "this is our land" and it also means "our world"; *Téméxw* is the word for "world" or even for "dirt," it's the same word as well. So "land"

- *S'óllo Teméxw te ikw'élo* - "this is our land" or "this is our dirt" or "this is our world." These are the same. That was expressed by Tillie; she said, "this is our land" in the context that she was using at that time. So, what is out there? Through the place names we are able to see all the various uses that our people had for the land - right from the berry-picking spots on the tops of the mountains that had various names. Some examples come from Xoletsa, the frozen lakes up above Yale. I first heard about that from my mom. She talked about going up there to these lakes above Yale as a child, and she said that, you know, back then they weren't supposed to go up there, and she said that she remembered going up there with some of her friends and she said that one of the things they were taught was not to be making a lot of noise when they went to that place - that children weren't really allowed there and they had to be really quiet and respectful. And she said that she and a couple of her friends went up there and they made a bunch of noise and started whistling and hollering. All of a sudden, she said, the mist just kind of appeared on top of the water - and then that's when she took off. I've come across other references that talk about that - I know these don't talk about that particular place - but usually when that mist comes out, then that's supposed to be when the water babies are present in the water. Although none of the elders ever said, "There's water babies up there," they always talk about "there's something up there at Xoletsa." Some elders suggest that it's a *st'á'itqem*, what has been described by Brent Galloway as a "supernatural being."

I think that it might have been *s'á'mexw*, or water babies, the little people that live underwater. So Xoletsa is not only a berry-picking place but also a spiritual place. So there's a huge campground up there where many people from Agassiz all the way up to Lytton used to catch a train to Yale and go picking, go picking berries up there. Up in that area there's three different lakes at different levels. There's a lower type of berry that they would gather on their way up to the main camp. They would gather berries there and then they'd move up to the lakes and start picking berries on the lower lake, and then when the berries started ripening at the higher elevations they'd start moving up to the higher lake, the third higher lake. They'd have the camp set up and they'd stay up there for a couple of weeks. At the same time they would be hunting and they would also be eating the little marmots. Lawrence Hope, one of the elders from Yale, said that that was a delicacy to the old people. They always looked forward to going up there and doing that. So there's a lot of - you know there's a lot to learn, just talking about that one place, because you learn about whether or not there's water babies, you learn that it's a place where children weren't allowed.

Ralph George talks about how, as a kid, he remembers there were two trails. The adults had a trail that went right by that lower lake. And he said that when children were there they had another trail that went way around because children had to stay away from that lake. Children were being protected. And so, again, there's another teaching in that there's something about children that they have to stay away from that place, right? He talked about the camps - you know, the different families had their own place to camp. He remembered where his family camped and those sorts of things. There's all kinds of different things when you just talk about that one place, there's so many different aspects of Stó:lō culture and history that you can learn just from that one place. And that's just one of the berry-picking grounds.

Another example of berry-picking grounds is up behind Chowethel at Q'aw. *Q'aw* means "to howl" and that's that dog that was transformed into stone. I just recently learned that that was a place that was attached to the flood story. The only places I was aware of that had to do with the flood story were Popelehoys, Momet'cs, Siyeqw, Alwis Iheletel, and Kw'ekw'e'iqw - the Sumas Mountain. Those were all places that had to do with the flood story, and then just last week I was thumbing through the Wilson Duff fieldnotes and I found out that Q'aw and Sminkw, the mountain behind Jones Lake, they're also attached - they also have to do with the flood story, in that they were two mountains that were sticking up above the floodwaters. So now that provides another context for Q'aw - Q'aw is not only this howling dog that was transformed into stone but it is also situated in front of the berry-picking grounds.

I talked to the elders about that place. The late Bill Pat Charlie was talking about how he remembered, when he was a young boy, they used to go and clear the trail: they had a trail that zigzagged up that side of the mountain to the berry-picking grounds behind Q'aw. And he talked about how he and some of his cousins, when they were younger, had to go up and clear the trail and make sure it was clear of any deadfalls, any trees that fell over, anything like that. And halfway up there was a place where there was a camp. This was because, while young people would take three hours or so to climb up there, the elders would take two days. So you can imagine how old they would have been. And so the very old people still went up there even if it took them two days to go picking berries. They would still go up there to pick berries! It would take them one day to get to the first camping ground. Bill said that he and the late Gilbert Ewen and the late Jimmy Peters - all three of them from Chowethel - that it was part of their responsibility to make sure that there was firewood there, and they would

have the camp set up so that the elders could camp there. Then, after that, they would camp there and make their way up and just pick berries and spend a couple of weeks up there.

Another thing that Bill mentioned is that Q'aw has to do not only with the flood story but also with *Xexá:ls* (the Transformers), it being one of the places where a dog was transformed into stone. There's also another teaching concerning a place there, where, if they threw rocks over the edge, it was supposed to make it rain during times of drought. I haven't been able to find out the context of that. Bill and his two cousins, Jimmy and Gilbert, went up there and they were throwing rocks over the edge of Q'aw, trying to make it rain. So there's all these different things, these different places – Q'aw doesn't necessarily have to do with the berry-picking ground but it is right in front of it – there's this trail and all these different things that you can talk about for that particular place.

The late Agnes Kelly talked about how they used to go gathering berries up on the ridge behind Lorenzetto Creek – the headwaters of Lorenzetto Creek and the headwaters of Hunter Creek and Jones Lake. She said that her family would start at Skw'átets (or Peters Reserve) and go over that little mountain over to Jones Lake. At Jones Lake they would make their way right back to the very back ridge, and they would follow that ridge that separated those three watersheds and the Chilliwack watershed. They'd follow that ridge and gather berries and then make their way back up through Hunter Creek. Then they would come back home and that would take about two weeks. Not only were they going up there to pick berries, they'd also be picking wild vegetables. So not only would they have the berry baskets there where they were drying the berries but they would also have these strings zigzagging across the camp and over the fires and that, where they'd have different vegetables – root vegetables that they were drying – wild vegetables.

At the same time they would be hunting, so she talked about how they would stop for four days or so just to dry a mountain goat or a deer. Whenever they shot it, that's where they would set up a camp. A few of them would set up a camp there and build this little platform over the fire and smoke the meat, dry the meat. And they would also tan the hide and then they would use it to wrap up the meat once it had been cured. They would take this couple of hundred pounds of meat and dry it so it's a lot lighter. And then they would use the animal's own skin to make the pack, and they would use the tump line and then they would carry it back home. Only a couple of them would stay back and do that. The rest of them would carry on making their way to the berry patch, and, if they got another deer, well,

then, some of them would have to set up a camp and dry it or smoke it and then bring it back home.

That was done throughout the whole two weeks that they were up in the berry-picking grounds. At the same time the girls were taught how to make baskets. There were heavy-duty baskets – the coil baskets – but then there were also baskets that they would make with cedar bark. You can make them in an hour or two, and so the girls would be making a lot of those baskets in preparation for the berry-picking trips up the mountain.

Another place is just north of Hope. *Lexwyo:qwem* means “always rotten fish,” and it's a name that is found in two locations. So *Lexwyo:qwem* – “always rotten fish” – is down along the river at what's now known as American Bar. This place is so named because in the fall, after the salmon spawn, the carcasses would end up along the beach there, so that all you can smell is rotten fish. But there's a wind that carries that scent up the mountain, so there's a place up there that Frank Pat talks about as the garden spot. He was saying that when you go up there to pick berries you can smell the rotten fish up there. That's what the late Amelia Douglas was saying as well. And that's why they called that *Lexwyo:qwem*, because you could smell that rotten fish up there. That's the place where there's a lot of mountain goat. Frank Pat talks about a mountain right up there where the mountain goats have a trail to a steep, rocky area where they seek refuge from the hunter. Even though the hunters could still shoot them with bows and arrows, from their refuge the mountain goat would fall to a place where you wouldn't be able to get them. So they were pretty well safe in that one spot. The race was always to get to that one little spot before the mountain goat.

When you think of those three berry-picking spots there's a lot of culture, a lot of history, that you could learn just talking about those three places. You talk to different elders about each of those places, and each of them has a different experience or a different story. And we can learn from all of them. Those are just three examples; there are a lot of other berry-picking grounds. A number of elders talk about going up to the Coquihalla watershed and taking the train and going up to the different places. Everyone had their own place to go picking berries.

That's one example. There's all these different places to gather berries. And not only that, they are also the hunting grounds as well. And some other places I would find are fishing grounds. Most of them seem to be names that are of villages – I never really heard of any names of actual fishing rocks themselves. But there's usually a village in association with the fishing area. Up in Yale, for example, the most popular one would be

Iyem, that means “lucky place” or “strong place” and that’s according to Tillie Gutierrez and the late Agnes Kelly. The late Amelia Douglas also talked about that place. It got its names because it was a good place to catch lots of salmon. There are a lot of dry racks there as well. Quite a few families from Chowethel, and extended families from up and down between here and Chilliwack, went fishing and had dry racks set up there. And their place is also called Iyem. Tillie Gutierrez says it was where they used to catch the first salmon for the First Salmon Ceremony. And she says they picked that place because to get down to the fishing rock you had to walk through an arch, and if you’re familiar with – there are places where rocks get stuck in the holes and the current just makes these great big holes and pots. There’s one of those there, and I guess the river had washed through and so created an arch. They had to go through that arch and lower themselves down the rope to catch the first salmon. And she said that was there right up until the 1940s, and then when they put those fish ladders in there they blasted it trying to flatten the area.

Just from talking about Iyem, lucky place or strong place, you’re learning about the First Salmon Ceremony. So there are all these different things about the First Salmon Ceremony – so what is *that* all about? And so you start talking about the First Salmon Ceremony to people. Or even when you start letting them know about different records that talk about the First Salmon Ceremony, they start finding that there are other ceremonies as well. For example, the Chehalis people have the First Shoots Ceremony. And what is the First Salmon Ceremony about? You start looking into our traditions today. And you start trying to find elements of that First Salmon Ceremony and you realize that it was just about lost! And that it got to the point where only one aspect of the ceremony was being done and that aspect was sharing the salmon. Ten years ago or so, just prior to the revival of the First Salmon Ceremony, a lot of families would still just have people over for the First Salmon Ceremony. They would barbeque their salmon or whatever, and then they would just have a big do and share it with a lot of people. That was the only thing that they would do, and it wasn’t until ten years ago or so that we started finding out a little bit more about the First Salmon Ceremony. We heard about how the men were transformed into birds and how they hooked up with Beaver and Rat – some elders say Mouse – but they went down to the ocean where the salmon people are and captured the sockeye baby and brought the sockeye baby up. They threw the diapers in different places, like Coquitlam and Pitt River, the Harrison River, the Chilliwack River. Wherever they threw the diapers, that’s where there are a lot of salmon. Then they brought the sockeye baby all the way up to Yale, and the sockeye baby went in the pools up in Yale,

and that’s why the salmon return each year. And so because of that story, that’s why we have the First Salmon Ceremony – or that’s one of the reasons why we have the First Salmon Ceremony – and that’s because when we have the first salmon we have to return the fish to the water. It’s such a sacred thing that we’re not allowed to touch it with our hands, the fishers that catch the first salmon are not allowed to touch it with their hands. They used to use their forearms and there were supposed to be certain elders that were supposed to prepare it. They were supposed to have knowledge of prayers, to say prayers to the salmon people, thanking them for the salmon, paying respect for it. The major part of the ceremony was actually sharing; even if you just had one little morsel of the salmon, the important part was making sure that a lot of people shared in that salmon. Then the bones would be saved and returned to the river, and that would involve one of the chiefs, a spiritual person, an elder, and a youth; those four people needed to be involved when that was happening. A prayer was said to the salmon and to the river, and then the bones would be returned to the river.

A major portion of those different traditions was lost, and it’s only in the last ten years or so now that more families are doing their own First Salmon Ceremony and actually saving the bones, returning them to the river, and then saying a prayer to the salmon people and to the river. If you go to Iyem and see the fish ladders there, the elders will tell you there was destruction there. They destroyed the fishing rocks there, so you understand then that this happened all over the place as well, so then you learn about how the CPR and the CNR did great damage to heritage sites, to fishing grounds.

The other things, too, is that at Iyem there’s the Eayem memorial, there’s a monument. It’s a memorial to the Stó:lō people: they’ve got the sign right there. It says, “Eayem Memorial 1938 AD Erected by the Stallo Indians in memory of many hundreds of our forefathers buried here. This is one of six ancient cemeteries within our five mile Native fishing grounds which we inherited from our ancestors. R.I.P.” That memorial is set up at the cemetery there at IR 22, also known as Bell Crossing. It was set up by my great-grandfather Dennis S. Peters along with the help of Isaac James, who was his brother-in-law. And they set that up in 1938. I always wondered about its connection to the Great Fraser Midden Cairn, which was erected in the same year. I always wondered if my great-grandfather had seen that one and wanted to do that up there – I don’t know. It’s something that I’ve always wondered about because they were both erected in the same year, in 1938. When you look at that memorial what are the key messages? To me, my great-grandfather wanted to make sure that we remember the cemeteries that are up there. He wanted to make sure that we

remember the name of the place, the Eayem memorial. It was erected by the Stó:lō, so it is clear that the Stó:lō play an important part there. He wanted to make sure we remember our ancestors – “many hundreds of our forefathers buried here.” It is “one of six ancient cemeteries,” so that makes you go, “Where are the other five?” The other five would be the one right at Yale, or *Xwoxwela:lhp*; the one at *Xelhállh*; the ones at *Q’alelikrel*, *Aseláw*, *Íyem*; and the one at *Lewxw’okwám*. Those are the six. This is one of those six. These are located “within our five mile Native fishing grounds,” so that’s the other key message: we are not to forget about our fishing grounds, “which we inherited from our ancestors.”

There are a lot of teachings just in the wording of that memorial. It’s only last Saturday that we had a memorial for my cousin, the late Herman Peters, or *Siya:mia*. In preparation for that I wanted to find out a little more about his name because it comes from one of my ancestors. And it’s an important name because it’s a leader’s name. I had known that, over the years; I had seen references to it, but I had never really looked at them. I found out that *Siya:mia*, the very first *Siya:mia*, was from *Íyem*. That’s one thing I’ve learned as well – that it’s really important to have personal connections to places. And I didn’t really have a personal connection to *Íyem*; it’s a place where I don’t go fishing. I know my grandfather fished just upriver from *Íyem*, where Rita Pete fishes now. My grandfather fished there. And then I know that Dennis S. Peters erected that memorial, our great-grandfather erected that memorial. I often wondered, “Why did he do that?” I looked at the different teachings contained in the memorial itself but, at the same time, wondered what personal connection he had there. I often wondered that, so when I found out that *Siya:mia* – that’s Dennis S. Peters’ name as well, I think he was number three, *Siya:mia* number three. And then the original *Siya:mia* was right there from *Íyem* and actually lived in one of those pit houses there. So I thought, “Wow! So that’s the personal connection!” That’s probably the personal connection that he had to the place and he wanted to do something. That was his memorial. Not only was he taking care of his own personal connection to the place but he was also taking care of the Stó:lō, remembering our ancestors and the burial grounds and the fishing grounds.

Oral Histories

I think that it is really important to actually have a connection to place. Because you have to look at the oral history and how the oral history is shared: it’s called *Sywoxwé:liwám*. *Sywoxwé:liwám* are the stories about when *Xelá:lá*, the Transformers, travelled to our land to make the world right.

The three bear brothers and the bear sister, who were orphans, were Transformers. They were the children of Red-Headed Woodpecker and Black Bear. They travelled from the head of Harrison Lake down to the Fraser, up the river to the sunrise, through the sky to the sunset, and back upriver again.

You know they did all those different transformations. You know those *Sywoxwé:liwám* stories are important to us. But at the same time, those are like our stories of creation and it makes these places sacred. But not only that, we have what we call *sywé:liwél*. *Sywé:liwél* is our own family’s true news, or history. When I talk about different places where my family is located, that’s my *sywé:liwél*. When I talk about *Íyem* as a place name – that’s an important place, it’s a fishing place, it’s a fishing ground. But when I start talking about Dennis S. Peters setting up that memorial, I start talking about my grandfather fishing at that one place, and that’s my personal connection to the spot. I think that’s a really important part of it. I think that’s what’s missing today. I think the only people that have a really big connection up there is to the fishing grounds. Even when you look at the cemeteries up there, the cemetery at *Xelhállh*, the last person who was buried there was one of the Frasers back in the 1920s. I don’t think anyone else had been buried up there recently. That’s an important connection that has to happen up there.

Across from *Íyem*, though, is a place called *Aseláw*. The linguist Brent Galloway wasn’t able to get a meaning for it and quite a few elders I asked weren’t able to give a meaning. It wasn’t until the late Rosaleen George and Elizabeth Herrling really started thinking about it. They were saying the name, “*Aseláw ... Aseláw*.” Finally they were able to extract a meaning out of it, and they said that it had to do with to experience it, to feel it. It had something to do with that. There’s something about that place – you need to experience it, to feel it. That’s the only thing they could get out of it. They weren’t able to provide me with an actual literal translation, but they said it has something to do with to feel it or to experience it. It’s kind of a neat name. It makes you ask, “What’s there? What is it that you have to feel, what do you have to experience?” When you look at *Aseláw*, again it’s an important fishing ground right across the river from *Íyem*. There’s an old archival photograph of the place, and you can see all the dry racks that were there. It was made into a reserve – IR 21. It’s one of those reserves that were reduced – the original reserve was supposed to be 43 acres, I believe, and in the end, after the surveyor for the CNR insisted on a right of way, they made it smaller, so now it’s only 4.1 acres. That’s one part of it. You also find out about the pit houses. There is an important archaeological

site referred to by archaeologists as the Milliken site. Then you ask, “Who’s Milliken?” – August, or Auguste, Milliken was from Yale, and he wasn’t well respected by our elders because a lot of them considered him to be – let’s see if I can find a nice way to put this – an amateur archaeologist. Some might say a pot hunter. He was the one who knew about the site, and he told UBC archaeologist Charles Borden about it. And Borden went up there and made his excavations, along with Roy Carlson and others in 1959-61. Then it became a well-known archaeological site often referred to as the Milliken site (DjRt3). It’s over nine thousand years old. There are pit houses there. They went down over twenty feet to find the oldest carbon date. They were able to tie it to fishing through the cherry seeds that they found there. This enabled them to tie it to the fishing that took place there. If you look at the archival photograph you’re able to see all the dry racks there. You know the pit houses are there, then there’s a cemetery there as well. When I first went there back in 1985 there was a cross there that had a name on it. I recorded the name on it. It was trying to say *Sexvelten* but it said *Sexvelten*. It wasn’t until quite a few years later that I realized who that was. That’s my ancestor, my great-great-great-grandfather. His son, Captain Charlie, was originally from there. Captain Charlie’s my great-great-grandfather. He was from Aselaw, and he took his first wife from Sq’ewqéyl. His second wife was from Iwówes, or Union Bar, then he finally took a wife from Xwoywelá:lhp, or Yale – Mary Anne, after whom Mary Ann Creek in Yale is named. Then he had some children and moved down and took over the place in Ruby Creek. The people there at Spópetes had died from smallpox; there was nobody there. So he moved down there, and because he was down there that’s how that reserve became an Indian reserve and became tied to Yale. So that’s why the Yale band has that reserve down there – it’s because my great-great-grandfather moved down there with his children from Yale.

Captain Charlie’s name was *Sexvel* and his father’s name was *Sexveltel*, so when we were looking at that cross, that was his cross! I put that together a few years later. I had first seen it in 1985, and I knew Captain Charlie was from there. I remember talking to Ralph George, and he said the last time they went up there to try to clean the cemetery was 1967 or 1968. And they brought fence wire up there, and that roll of fence is still laying there. They were going to put a new fence up and they never did do it. So this past summer, the summer of 2004, my sons and I started clearing some of it, but we never quite finished and I tried looking for that cross – you know, nineteen years later – and I couldn’t find it. It’s got to be there somewhere – it’s probably buried. It was one of those iron crosses with a

single little name written on it, so it should still be there. It’s probably covered in leaves.

Ownership

That’s it about Aselaw. As I mentioned, there always has to be a personal connection to the place, so that’s my personal connection. I mean the whole story of how I got there raises other issues, other traditions, and other understandings that have to do with ownership of fishing grounds. I mean that could be talked about even at Iyem as well because I mentioned that my grandfather fished at one of the spots there; I mentioned that my great-great-great-grandfather Siyamia lived right there and had a fishing ground there. But also now at Aselaw, and through Captain Charlie (my great-great-grandfather) and through *bis* dad Sexveltel (my great-great-great-grandfather), I have access to *that* fishing ground. I mentioned earlier as well that my dad was from Boston Bar (Tuckkwiowhum) and my mom was from Chowethel. My mom married my dad and, through the Indian Act, became a member of the Boston Bar band. And so she became registered with the Boston Bar band as Nlaka’pamux. And we have a family fishing ground up there – my grandfather’s family dry rack site – we’re not allowed to fish there anymore as it is within the closed area. I have a wife down here who is from Shxw’ówhámél. My older children became registered members of Shxw’ówhámél, so we were registered Stó:lō. I was fishing up at Boston Bar and I realized, “Geez! When I pass on I’m not going to have a fishing ground for my children. My children need a fishing ground: they need some place where they can fish, where they’re not going to have any problems.” I was fine because I was a registered Boston Bar band member, so I didn’t have any problems. But I knew that they would have problems if they as Stó:lō people – registered Stó:lō people – were going to go up there to fish. I’d met some Nlaka’pamux people out on the river you know, even after I transferred, and they said, “Oh, I don’t know why you Stó:lō keep coming up here fishing; you don’t need to be up here.” I thought about that and I knew I had fishing grounds – had rights to certain fishing grounds in the Yale area. I began to consult with my elders, to inquire where I could fish. I went to see the late Peter Dennis Peters, and he told me about the one spot where Rita Pete fishes; he said that’s where my grandfather used to fish and that I had rights to that spot. Rita Pete’s mother was my grandfather’s first cousin, so Rita is my mom’s second cousin, so we are relatives. She was already fishing there. She already had her family there, you know, the dry rack and the cabin, and she was quite comfortable there, so I thought, “Well, I don’t know.” She already had a

lot of her family fishing there. And then, based on the 1905 fishing map, there was a place below Iyem, actually almost right across from Q'alektel, where Dennis S. Peters had a fishing ground. But somebody else was fishing there, one of my cousins from Chowethel. One of the Harris family was fishing there. "Well," I thought, "there's somebody already there, there's only one spot." Rita's got her own family so it's not too likely she's going to share the spot with me as well. I found out that Captain Charlie's spot was across the river and that the last time it was used was 1945 because the dry rack had been buried by a rockslide. The rock bluff there just kind of caved in two weeks after everybody packed up and went down to the hop yards. The rock caved in and buried the whole dry rack. It was never rebuilt, and that's when they moved across the river to Bell Crossing. Of course the freight train was still running, so people were still able to go up there and do *some* fishing.

My uncle Bobby used to go up there and fish, and my cousin Gino remembers going there and fishing. But there was no real long-term fishing – no camp set up. The only way up there was by the weigh freight train, but then it quit running in 1978. After that people didn't really have access to that spot except by boat. No one was up there fishing. But I found out that I had rights to that spot. I talked to Ralph George about it and the late Bill Pat Charlie, and the late Peter Dennis Peters: those were the three elders that I talked to. And all three of them mentioned the different places where I had rights to go fishing. There were already people fishing there, but there was nobody fishing at Aselaw. I knew that Ken Malloway had fished there; however, he prefers to fish from his boat. He likes to set his net and check it from the boat. And I guess the water there was too swift when he tried fishing. He said there was a really good spring hole but he wasn't really fishing there. So there wasn't anyone there. When I asked my elders, I said, "Well, can I go over there and take over that fishing spot?" All three of them agreed. I didn't see them all together – I asked them individually – and they all agreed. I remember the late Peter Dennis saying, "Yeah, by all means! You go there and get using that spot. It should be used. It needs to be taken care of." That was 1993. I went up there. I got myself a Zodiac boat and went up there and started fishing.

The ownership of fishing grounds brings about a whole lot of discussion. I talked to the elders about that. Fishing grounds are family owned, not individually owned. Just like an Indian name – it's owned by the family – the individual that has it doesn't own it. The family gives it to him and the family can take it away. So just like the fishing rock, I remember a controversy about my auntie Rita having the spot where my grandfather fished. And she said that my grand-uncle Oscar, who was my grandfather's brother,

had given it to her mother, who was Oscar's first cousin. You know when I talked to the late Peter Dennis Peters about it, because he understands fishing-ground ownership as family ownership, he couldn't comprehend that and neither could I. He said, "How can someone give away something that belongs to the whole family?" He meant how could Oscar give something away that belongs to the whole family, not just to one person. He can't. Ownership of fishing grounds is through family.

But then you wonder, why do people look at ownership as individual then? What happened there? And then I started to understand, well, back in the late 1800s the Fisheries Act was created and all these different laws were made that didn't allow our people to sell fish any more. They said that only saltwater fish could be sold and that it is illegal to sell anything caught in fresh water. So they took away our economy and, not only that, they wanted to start regulating our fishing. So they imposed the fishing permits on our people. What's on the fishing permit? It doesn't talk about the extended family or family ownership. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans didn't take into consideration the fact that we had our own rules and our own regulations about who has access to fishing grounds and who fishes where. We have our own protocols and our own laws. Instead, they imposed a fishing permit that had an individual's name on it. And it said that individual could fish from such and such place to such and such place. So it's almost as though it is wide open: you can fish anywhere in there. According to the government, you can fish anywhere in there. So right away they ignored our own laws and protocols of where to fish. It took the all-encompassing perspective of ownership of fishing grounds – our wide perspective of it – and narrowed it to an individual perspective. So that a lot of our fishers now, up in the canyon, look at their fishing spot as their own. I've heard some of them say, "It's mine and only mine." And, "No one else can fish here, not my brothers, not my sister, not my mom or my dad. This is *my* spot." I couldn't believe it when I heard one of the fishers say that. That's how some of the fishers think. So they have to change that again.

Not all the fishers think like that. You can still go up there and see that wherever there's a dry rack, usually there's a family that owns it there. And the person that's kind of in charge of it, that's what the late Rosaleen George describes as a *Sia:teleq*. The *Sia:teleq* was the person who was appointed by the family to take care of the fishing ground and the access to it, so he was kind of like the co-ordinator of the ground. He wasn't the owner because no individual could own it. But based on his knowledge of the extended family, his knowledge of the various fishing methods, his knowledge of the capacity of the dry rack, his knowledge of the capacity of the camp, of the

number of children that extended families had, of the numbers of fishing rocks that were accessible according to the varying levels of the river – with all of that in mind, he was able to co-ordinate. “I’ll tell you who can fish now. You should be fishing these rocks now, and this is the number of sticks that you have. And because you have this many children you should be making sure you have this much fish put away.” So he kind of co-ordinated all that. From Western society’s perspective, somebody who witnessed this would probably assume that he was the owner. But not really, he wasn’t really the owner. He was just the person who took care of the site. So looking at some of the contemporary dry rack sites, wherever there’s a dry rack and a cabin, I’m quite certain if you talk to the family there, no one is going to claim individual ownership. I’m sure it’s a family-owned site, and there may be one of the elders within that site who takes the role of *Sia:teleq*. An example is the Pettis site, Henry Pettis. I don’t think he’d claim the site as his; he’d say it’s his whole family’s, you know. He’s probably the one who is looked upon as the *Sia:teleq*. More likely, he has a younger person who’s learning to take care of those other duties as well. And look at Grand Chief Archie Charles’ camp as well. He has people from Seabird, Chowthel, Ruby Creek, Scowitz, and perhaps Shxw’ōwhámél. He’s got people, all kinds of different extended family members at his camp. And I’m sure that he would not say that he owns it. I’m sure he’d say it’s a family-owned site. I’m sure that if you’d ask members of his family and explained to them about the *Sia:teleq*, he’d play that role there. So wherever there’s a dry rack – dry rack sites with camps – people still look upon it as a place that’s owned by the family.

The other big change involved fishing methods. Historian Keith Thor Carlson talks about this. In the past when people went fishing, their perspective on their fishing ground was based in the land – the fishing rock, the dry rack, camp, and access trail. Back then you had to go down your trail into your camp. You had your dry rack right next to your camp, and then you had to go down to your rock to use your dip net to catch the fish and then bring it up to your dry rack. Every family looked at their sites like that. I’m sure that people who have dry racks still look at their sites like that: their camp is a big element of their fishing ground. The camp and the dry rack play a big part in this. But now, with the use of motor boats, people are using gill nets rather than dip nets. Dip nets were used to fish off the rocks: you fished in the rough waters so the fish couldn’t see you when you were dipping them out of the boiling water. Gill nets, however, are used in the eddies, where it doesn’t matter whether the fish see you or not. You just set your gill net inside the eddy, either on a pole or, if you’re setting it across the bay, on a pulley. Or if it’s a big enough bay you can tie

to the shore, which is called a shore line, and run your net out and have a big stone anchor or some other kind of anchor to hold it in the eddy. So that changed people’s perspective on their fishing grounds. So a lot of the fishers who fish by boats now, I’m sure that if you talk to them about what their fishing ground is, they’ll talk about their eddy. Because they don’t have a connection to the land part of it, except for wherever they tie their net to the shore. Unless they have a dry rack and a camp, then *that* particular place, you know, they’d have a connection there. But in most of the other places there’s no real connection.

So there was a big change in fishing methods, from dip nets to gill nets, and this had an effect on how you perceived your fishing ground. When you look at the 1905 fishing map you can see fishing rocks or fishing grounds that were recorded back then, and you go there now and you take a contemporary map of where people fish, and it makes you wonder. Why isn’t anybody fishing where these people were fishing? That’s because they were dip netting off a rock and there’s no eddy there to set a gill net, so no one fishes there. Or else you look on a 1905 map and you see places where nobody was fishing but people are fishing there today, and it’s because, well, there’s a nice big eddy there. We didn’t use gill nets back then, so nobody fished there. But today people fish there. This creates more problems in terms of fishing-ground ownership because it’s almost like a whole new fishery has been created – a whole new boat fishery.

Some fishing grounds may have been taken over by other fishers, like my uncle’s spot that he inherited from my great-grandfather (Chief Johnny Ohamil) there at Q’alelktel. My uncle used to fish there. He used to catch the weigh freight train up, and the weigh freight quit running, so for about seven years he was unable to access his fishing ground. He was finally able to arrange with one of the CNR railroad workers to get a ride up there, and he took my nephew with him. This is in 1984, after not being there since 1978. He got there and someone was fishing there. The protocol is that when the rightful owner gets to the fishing ground, if somebody else’s net is there you pull that net out, put it on the shore, leave their fish for them, and then you set your net. You’re the rightful owner and you start fishing again. It’s still okay for people to fish there. It would be good if they’d contact you and let you know they’re going to fish there, but still people are allowed to do that: much of our teaching focuses on sharing. But my uncle got there and somebody was fishing, and he was going to pull that person’s net out so he could set his net, and that person threatened him with physical violence. He said, “If you touch my net I’ll chuck you in the river.” So my uncle’s a pacifist guy, not a violent fellow. So he didn’t pull that guy’s net. He tried to set close to it but he couldn’t get a good set

there so he ended up just leaving, going back home, and he hasn't been up there since. That was twenty years ago.

Now there's the whole big issue out there about ownership of fishing grounds. I first came across it when I was recording fishing grounds. When we started making the forms to record who fished where, we actually included the category "ownership" because we wanted that to be a big part of the forms, that this is who owned the site! But later on we realized that there was so much conflict and controversy over who owned sites, and we as researchers were just not able to say, "This is ... and so and so is the owner." We didn't have the jurisdiction or the authority to say who was the owner, and so our legal advisors had recommended that we just record who the occupants were rather than who the owners were. So you'll notice on some of our fishing forms at the end there we changed the word "ownership" to "occupant" to say who was fishing there. Because one of the questions was "Who fished there before," you began to see that some people did know who was fishing there before. And we'd talk to other people and they'd say, "Oh, so and so was fishing there" and then you'd start finding out whether or not the family that's there has any right to be there.

Sometimes you'll find that families that are connected don't realize that they're connected; that's another thing that was lost – their genealogies. In the past we knew very well who our relatives were, up to our fifth cousins and even beyond that. Because first, second, and third cousins were almost considered to be like brothers and sisters because they shared the same grandparents. And it's the *Siat-telq* who will know who all our relatives were up and down the river so that we could gain access to different resources. I talked earlier about three important berry-picking grounds, Xoletsa and Lexwv:qweim and Q'aw. We talked about the berry-picking grounds behind Shxw:owhamél there. But I never mentioned the cranberries, like the cranberries down in Vancouver, the New Westminster area: all those places are places our people travelled through our extended family. It's through the extended family, knowing who your extended family is, that you could go down there, and you knew where your family could go picking berries. Qiqa:yt was the name of the south New Westminster/Surrey area. There's a large campground that extended from the Patullo Bridge all the way down to the Alex Fraser Bridge. The late Rosaleen George was saving there's a huge camping area there. She said everybody would camp in that area, sleep there overnight and, during the day, make their way up to the cranberry patches and pick cranberries. They'd stay down there for a couple of weeks doing that, so that's another important part about knowing your extended family because that allows you to get access

to different places. Through your extended family you could come down and get eulachon or clams.

You learn the *sqwelqweł* of a particular place, you start learning about your family history, you start learning about the importance of ownership, and you start learning about the different things that had negative effects on our own perspectives of our own laws and our own protocols. I know that there's fishing grounds up in the Fraser Canyon, but then you start moving downriver and start talking about other types of fish. But first, our people went up in the canyon to fish because that was the only place to dry the salmon. If you tried to dry salmon downriver, the dew that forms every night would get on your salmon and just cause them to go mouldy. Whereas you get up in the canyon and the mountainous rock absorbs the heat; it dissipates the heat at night and doesn't allow the dew to form. You don't have to worry about dew forming on the salmon. Plus you have the dry air that blows from the Interior because you're a lot closer to the Interior, so it's a little bit drier. And not only that, you also have the migrating salmon that have just spent the first 160 kilometres in the river, and they lose 11 to 12 percent of their body fat. The higher the fat content, the easier it is for the salmon to spoil. When we dry a sockeye the very thin stomach part of the salmon which is really rich in fat is usually cut out. If it doesn't get cut out, it gets a real strong taste to it after it has dried. That's if it does dry: most of the time the fatty part of the fish doesn't dry because it has too much oil in it. After the salmon lose 11 to 12 percent of their fat, it makes them just ideal for drying. And then you have the weather conditions as well. In addition it's a lot easier to catch the fish in the canyon than it is downriver, especially with dip nets and the *laxweł*, the fishing platforms.

My brother, the late Billy McHalsie, was one of the best fishers I knew. He and one of my cousins, Gilbert Dixon from Boston Bar, used to go dipping all the time. That was one of their favourite pastimes. One time my brother was able to catch 350 sockeye in one hour. Just incredible! In one dip he'd catch six sockeye. When they're running really well it's just a very efficient method of catching them. I think people are just starting to realize the efficiency of that. This past fall, I was up there fishing with my brother Lorn and we wanted to catch springs. Coho were running and also some late sockeye. We said "Yeah, it's awesome – just catch it – look at it." "Oh, it's a coho – let it go." "Oh, it's a spring – we'll keep it." And "Oh, it's too big of a spring – let's let that one go to the spawning grounds." Then when the sockeye was too red – "Oh, let's let that one go to the spawning grounds." So dipping is really an excellent way of selective fishing because you really don't do any harm to the fish, not like with the gill nets. That

stresses the fish out a lot. Once they get into your gill net and they sit there too long, that stresses them and then, even if you let them go, their survival rate is really low.

There are all these different things to talk about, just with dipping. You look at the fishing grounds – there are all these different teachings incorporated into that. Like the types of dipping, the structure, the platforms, the types of fish. Concerning the types of fish – in the summer there's just the sockeye and the spring. In the past, everyone dried the spring. But then with the commercial fishing, the older fishing of the chinook salmon or the spring salmon went out of style. So most people dry the sockeye, prefer the sockeye. But you talk to the elders, the elders go, "Hm! I remember my grandparents always drying the spring!" And that's the case with my grandfather as well. He fished across from Scuzzy Creek, up in the canyon. That's an area that is now closed: people aren't allowed to fish in there because it's too close to the Hell's Gate fish ladders. There's a thirteen-kilometre stretch of the river up there where the Nlaka'pamux people aren't allowed to fish anymore. But my grandfather had a dry rack in there, and all he dried was spring salmon. And my cousin Hicks, a.k.a. Edward Phillips, was telling me that he remembers my grandfather would dry enough salmon to fill four wagons. They would take the horse and wagon down to get these fish, all these dried fish. And he was saying there were four loads of dried fish, just all spring salmon, that he would bring back home. And he would dry that much because he used to trade with the Okanagan people. The Okanagan people had a horse trail; they used to come over on their horses. And they would bring all types of dried berries and a lot of their buckskin and elk skins. They'd have those gauntlet gloves with all kinds of beadwork or embroidery on them, and then they'd have these elk vests with beadwork and embroidery on them. They'd bring all kinds of different things over, including different types of food and berries, and then they would trade with my grandfather for his spring salmon.

So spring salmon was the important salmon in the past, but not today. Today most people dry the sockeye. In fact, a lot of people like to dry the Stuart sockeye, the very first ones – because they're quite rich and quite tasty. But then, when you start looking at that and say, "Spring and sockeye – why can't you dry coho and why can't you dry the pink and the chum?!" When they start running the weather isn't right any more; there's too much rain up there. In August the blowflies come out. The blowflies lay the maggots on the salmon, and the maggots burrow into the fish and then they spoil it. So a lot of people prefer to have their fish dried by the end of July because at the beginning of August is when the blowflies come out. By the end of August, when the pink salmon and the chum salmon and the

coho are running, the drying season's gone, it's over. You can't dry anymore. So *those* types of salmon then became the salmon that were used for smoking. We used more downriver than upriver because most of the salmon spawned in the lower parts of the river. In Chehalis and Chilliwack there were a lot of people who smoked salmon. There was a lot of smoking of the pink and the chum.

If you start looking at those types of salmon and start learning, you then find out that the sturgeon is another important fish. When you start talking about sturgeon you start finding out about more history. For instance, the late Agnes Kelly talked about the importance of the sturgeon to the people from Shxw'owhamél. She shared the story about how one of the men from the village, during the time of famine when everyone was hungry, was told by Chichelh Siya:m to go and stand by the edge of the river. He got down to the river and then Chichelh Siya:m – Chichelh Siya:m is the word for the Creator – told him to dive into the river. And so he dove into the river and he was transformed into the male sturgeon. And then, Agnes said, "He was transformed into that male sturgeon so that we could have food in the winter months because the other salmon aren't available in the winter. So we needed something in the winter to keep us fed." She went on to tell the story about how his wife missed him very much, and so Chichelh Siya:m told her to go stand by the water as well. So she went down there and she took some deer meat tied around her wrist. And she was standing on the edge of the river, and then her husband came in the form of a sturgeon and called her. So she dove into the water and she was transformed into the female sturgeon. The elders say the truth of that story is confirmed by the fact that when you cut the head off of a sturgeon, right behind the gills you see that brown piece of meat that almost looks like deer meat. They say that's there because that woman, she had deer meat tied around her wrist when she dove into the water and was transformed into a sturgeon.

Shxw'weli

The sturgeon isn't just regarded as food and a resource, it's like an ancestor. There's a connection there, and that connection is known as *shxw'weli*. *Shxw'weli* is what's referred to as the spirit or the life force, and everything has that spirit and everything's connected through that. I remember when I first saw the word. I first started this job in 1985, and I'd seen the word in the classified word list and I always remember it said: "Spirit' comma 'life force.'" I never quite understood it. I didn't really know what it was all about. It wasn't until Xa:ytem – the rock down there at Xa:ytem – was first talked about that I began to pay more attention. That's when our elder,

the late Aggie Victor, said, “The *shxwéłi* of those *shwám* — those three leaders that were transformed into stone there — “The *shxwéłi* of those men is still inside the rock.” So I didn’t — I still don’t understand that. What did they mean? The *shxwéłi*. It’s the spirit or life force that’s inside that rock. So I went to see the late Rosaleen George and I said, “What is a *shxwéłi*?” I’ve never forgotten her answer, and I always tell people because I think it’s probably the best way to explain it. She put her hand on her chest and she said, “*Shxwéłi* is inside us here.” And she put her hand in front of her and she said, “*Shxwéłi* is in your parents.” She raised her hand higher and said, “then your grandparents, your great-grandparents, it’s in your great-great-grandparents. It’s in the rocks, it’s in the trees, it’s in the grass, it’s in the ground. *Shxwéłi* is everywhere.” So I kind of understood that. And I’m still trying to put that together. What ties us? What ties us to the sturgeon? It’s the *shxwéłi*. The sturgeon has a *shxwéłi*, we have a *shxwéłi*. So we’re connected to that.

Then I remember the story by the late Bertha Peters, Mrs. Dave Peters from Seabird. She’s the one who shared the story about Xa:ytem. But she’s the one who also shared the story about Xepay. She said, “You know that a long time ago there was a very generous man who was always giving and always helping people. And they say that when he passed away he was transformed into the cedar tree. And because he was such a generous man, that’s why we get all the different things from the cedar tree.” So the trunk of the tree is used for canoes and for the pit houses and the longhouses and the paddles. And all kinds of different utensils are made out of the cedar. And the bark is used for clothing and for diapers and to make rope and twine. And then the roots are used for the baskets — the cedar baskets. And even the cedar boughs themselves are used for spiritual cleansing. In the Interior they use the sage and the sweetgrass for the smudging — well, around here it was the cedar that was used. You know, the burning cedar, the crackling of the cedar is what chased away bad spirits. So in the past they would use that crackling cedar to go into the corners of all the houses to chase away bad spirits that might have been bothering the people. Or else they would use that to smudge people to get rid of the bad spirits. Now today you’ll see people using cedar boughs. But in the past the cedar boughs were burned; they were used as a smudge rather than just brushing with the cedar.

We’re told that when we go out to use any part of the cedar — and there’s certain teachings there as well, as to when you go out and gather the bark, you’re allowed to peel bark on only one side of the tree so that the tree continues to live. When you go and you gather the cedar roots, there are four different main roots that come out. There’s only one root that we

take, and then we leave the other three alone. If you take the other ones you’re going to kill the cedar tree. There’s all those different teachings that are tied into that as well. But at the same time, we’re also taught to say a prayer to Xepay, the man. So the *shxwéłi* of that ancestor is inside each of the trees. So we’re not really praying to the tree, we’re praying to the *shxwéłi*, or the spirit, of that ancestor who was transformed into the tree. So again, the tree is not looked upon as just a resource, it’s looked upon as one of our ancestors and we need to pay respect to that ancestor so we have, again, the prayer that is said to Xepay, thanking him for all the different things that we get. So whenever we go gather bark, cedar boughs, roots — that prayer is said. It’s the prayer that is said to Xepay. So there’s that connection, the *shxwéłi*.

Look again at the elders saying that the *shxwéłi* of those three men were inside that rock. Then you’ve got to wonder, well, what about all the other rocks? So then again you start learning that every single rock where *Xwá:ás* had travelled through and transformed ancestors into different things, that all of those things has a *shxwéłi*. And because we have a *shxwéłi*, we’re connected to them. And it’s through that *shxwéłi* that we’re connected to them. When you look at Lhílheqey, the mother mountain, and her three daughters, Seyewot, Oyewot, and Xomo:th’iya: they were ancestors who were transformed into those mountains. The *shxwéłi* of those ancestors are inside those mountains and we’re connected to it; we need to take care of



PHOTO 3.1 Serpent Rock, a Transformer site in the Fraser River, north of Hope, BC

that place. You know up and down the valley, wherever one of our ancestors was transformed into a rock – the places – those are special places! You know, that need to be preserved. Because when *X̱ex̱á:ls* travelled through the land, making the world right, a lot of times not only was there the story about why they were turned into stone but there was also some other teaching involved: there was always some other teaching.

There were a lot of the places where Indian doctors were transformed into stone. Like Alhqa:yem, for instance, at the north end of Strawberry Island, that was an Indian doctor (see Photo 3.1). A woman who challenged *X̱ex̱á:ls* like a lot of the Indian doctors who challenged *X̱ex̱á:ls* felt that if she were able to defeat *X̱ex̱á:ls* she would become well known as the person who defeated these strong people who were travelling through the territory. So a lot of them would challenge *X̱ex̱á:ls*, and they would just end up losing. But because this Indian doctor's power came from the serpent, when she was transformed into stone, that's what she was transformed into – the large serpent Alhqa:yem. *Alhqa:yem* means "the serpent." So when you go there, you see this huge rock there, and you can actually see its coils – three layers of coils – it looks like a snake that's coiled up. You know, that's Alhqa:yem.

There are other places where *X̱ex̱á:ls* turned the ancestors into stone. Like the hunter Tëwit and Talh, his spear, the dog Sqwemay, and Q'oyits the elk (see Photo 3.2). There's a long story about that as well. That hunter was one of our ancestors, and his *sẖwep̱eḻi* is inside that rock. Anywhere where one of our ancestors is transformed into a mountain, there's that connection that we have, through our *sẖwep̱eḻi*, to that mountain, and we need to take care of it. Some places we may not know the story of the transformation – for instance with Lẖilheqey. With Seyewot, Oyewot, Xomoth'ya, and their dog Sqwemay, we know there's a story that's shared by Dan Milo about how they were transformed. But there are other places as well that have names and that are more than likely places of transformation, but we don't have specific stories for them. Like the one I can think of, I guess, is St'am'ya, from around Hope. From the downriver area looking up you can see a man lying sideways. You go up to Hope and look down at that same mountain, and you can see a woman lying on the side of the mountain. Downriver you can see the private parts of a man, upriver you can see the private parts of a woman. And St'am'ya means, "What are you?" The question is "What are you, man or woman?" Because from one angle it's a man, from the other it's a woman. And that's all we know about it; there's no story that talks about a man or a woman being transformed into that mountain or anything like that. To us there's got to be some kind of a story.



PHOTO 3.2 Tëwit the Hunter, a Transformer site located at Hill's Bar in the Fraser River, south of Yale, BC

And then you wonder, "Why isn't there a story?" This is probably the result of a huge smallpox epidemic in 1782, which wiped out at least 66 percent of our people – up to 90 percent of our people. In some cases it wiped out whole villages: every village was affected. Throughout the whole territory every village was affected, so a lot of our culture and history was lost there, and it's slowly rebounding from that. Back when Simon Fraser was going through in 1808, we were still rebounding from the 1782 smallpox epidemic. And then there was supposed to have been another one in 1806, just two years before he came through. His journal talks about the scars of the smallpox epidemic that he saw on the people. Then you start learning why it is that we don't have stories for some of these mountains that have names and that represent certain things. That's a big part of our story: that we lost much of our culture and history through smallpox. If you talk about smallpox, then you think about the government's assimilationist policies and the missionaries as well as the residential schools, which forced us to abandon many of our cultural practices.

I was just talking about some of those resource areas. We have that *sẖwep̱eḻi*. We already talked about *X̱ex̱á:ls*, the Transformers. Any place where *X̱ex̱á:ls* transformed, that place is important to us. Any of the animals or plants that were transformed, those are important resources to us. Each of the different villages – I gave the examples of Shxw'ōwhámél and Chowwethel for the late Agnes Kelly's story. Tillie tells the same story, and she says that the

people in Chowethel have the same story because her grandmother told it to her. Chowethel and Shxw'ǝwhámél both have the same ancestor, who was transformed into a sturgeon. Then you move downriver, and then you have the people from Chilliwack with the black bear with the white spot on its chest. And the beaver at Matsqui, and the dog at Kwantlen, and the plant that grows down at Musqueam: you know an ancestor was transformed there. So throughout the territory we have all these different resources that were at one time ancestors who were transformed so we could have those resources. So that establishes a relationship with the resource as well as a spiritual connection to our *shxwéłé*, to that ancestor who was transformed. So that brings us back, then, to Tillie Gutierrez's statement: *S'ólh Téméxw te ikw'ólo. Xóllmet te mekw'sram it kwélat* – "This is our land and we have to take care of everything that belongs to us." That's why. Those are all the things out there that were transformed, all our resources that we take care of because we are connected to them. We take care of our land because we're connected to the land. That connection to the land is brought about not only through the transformations of *Xéxw'á:š* but also through the fact that many of our people – we talked earlier about the Eavem memorial and the cemeteries – and then you start looking at the burial practices of our people. And then you start understanding how important it is for us to become part of where we came from again, like becoming part of the earth. Everything – we're connected to it.

S'ólh Téméxw

Look at the word *S'ólh Téméxw*. The last syllable in *Téméxw* is *méxw* – "to do with like the dirt." What do we call ourselves? We call ourselves *Xwélméxw*. Not only that, our neighbours, who are considered to be part of the Salish, have that as part of their word to describe themselves – Lillooet-Sl'at'ímx. It's a little bit different; there's an "mph" in the sound. And you have the *Nlaka'pamux*. And you have the *Secwepemc*. They all have that little *méxw* sound at the end if their names, just like we call ourselves *Xwélméxw*. Not only are we *Stó:lō*, the river people, but we're also *Xwélméxw*. And so we're connected to the dirt and to the world.

Our burial practices were very important. We had burial mounds and we had tree burials. When I talked about tree burials with the late Rosaleen George and Elizabeth Herring, they said there was a tree burial across from Frank Malloway's house, across from *Yeqwyeqwi:ws*. Rosaleen was saying that at that tree burial place, when they used to put the people up in the trees, it was usually the large maple trees that were used. And the branch had to be touching the ground when they put the people in there. The branch had to be touching the ground, that was an important part of it. It

had to be connected to the ground. And the one tree burial that was up in *Skw'átets*, Elizabeth Herring talked about that. There was a platform that extended across from one maple tree to another.

Researchers do not ordinarily include these kinds of connections in their work. For example, linguist Brent Galloway was talking about how he'd collect the name and the meaning of that name. And that was the full extent of his work. He wasn't interested in any other context that could be provided. For instance, Agnes Kelly – I was talking about how I'd missed out on doing that final day of work with Agnes Kelly – there are probably more specific details I could have gotten out of her. There's one rock with a story of a young maiden who was transformed into stone, and all Brent collected was the name and the meaning of that name, but he never asked, "Why was this young girl transformed into stone?" or anything like that. So there's no adequate context for this story. It's very limited. As for me, I'm interested in those sorts of things. And the other example is amateur ethnographer Oliver Wells. I just get so frustrated reading his transcripts because he was only interested in language. So every single time he writes in his book, "Oh, okay. That's very ... that's very nice! I'll come back and talk to you about that." Every time, you know the elder's just going to tell him something, wants to tell him something that's just *so important!* And then Wells cuts him off and says, "What's the word for this?" You know – "what's the word for this" or something. That's all he was collecting – the language. He didn't realize that what these elders were trying to do was to provide him with a context that would enable him to understand – it's not just about the language and the meaning of the words. Oliver Wells contributes a lot to our understanding if you read the transcripts, but it's just so limited. If he had been more interested in those stories and realized their importance, he would have said, "Yeah! Tell me that story!" or "Tell me the story in your language!" or something like that. But quite often, you go through those interviews, and you come to where he says, "Oh. That's a nice story, I'll come back to you." And, of course, he never does. All those stories are lost, and the elders, his informants, were ready to tell them to him. These were important stories that we'd have a lot of use for today, but they're lost.

Another example concerns former UBC anthropologist Wilson Duff. In his fieldnotes he's told a lot about *Xéxw'á:š*, the Transformers, and he's told place names that have to do with *Xéxw'á:š*. He puts the names, the meanings, in his fieldnotes. He talks about it in there, in the limited context within which he understood it. But if you get his publication – the book – you find that they're all left out! They're not in there. The best source is his notes. For whatever reason he filtered his notes. Like, I don't know whether

he just didn't understand the importance or the significance of *Yéxá:is* and the Transformer stories or what. Everyone has limitations; it all just depends on what they're asking about or what they're trying to understand.

I was talking earlier about our connection to the world, for example, about the roots of words like *Téméyem* and *Xnélmeyap* and how they're connected to the earth. How it's important that the trees in which our ancestors were buried had branches that were connected to the ground. There's a sense that I have that when we're buried we go back to the earth. There was a concern about some burial sites that were being washed away up in the Chilliwack River Valley. It seemed like that was okay. It was nature that was doing it, and I talked to Gwen Point about it and that was her feeling too: "Well, they're going back. They're just – the bones are getting washed away and they're going into the water and they're just going back to, you know, where they belong." It wasn't such a big deal. It would be different, I guess, if there was some sort of development that was going in there that caused the bones to be moved somewhere else. That would be totally different from just having nature wash it away. There's that sense of going back to the ground or going back to the earth and of becoming part of the earth again.

There are other examples of what is out there, of the things that we have to take care of. I talked a little bit about some of the places that have taught us things – like the berry-picking grounds – all the teachings associated with them. And some of the hunting areas. I talked a little bit about burial grounds, about fishing. But what are some of the other things that are out there? There are other things that are important.

When I first started this job as tribal cultural advisor, we went to see the elders because, at that time, the CNR was planning on double tracking. They were going to double track the whole length of the railroad track. They were going to put a second track in. And that second track was not only going to affect heritage sites and fishing grounds and habitat but also other places. It was going to affect sacred sites as well. We went to see the elders and asked them, "What is the most sacred site that needs to be protected that's next to the CNR tracks? Within the whole *Stó:lō* territory?" And at that time the elders said, "The little lake at Iwówes." Because, they said, that's where the *éxwéyáney* mask came from. And, as you know, the *éxwéyáney* is a very important part of our cultural tradition. It's something that was nearly lost; there was a big revival in the 1980s. I don't think we need to worry too much about losing it anymore. It came pretty close to being lost, I think. This is the late Amelia Douglas' version of the story. She told it in Halkomelem and she also told it in English. It's about this young boy from Iwówes, which means "something that doesn't want to

show itself." Iwówes is a village just north of Hope. Brent Galloway wasn't able to get the meaning of the place name, and I took Tillie up there. She and Al were both there, and she kept saying it over and over and then realized, "Oh! Iwówes! It means something that doesn't want to show itself." And so she thought, "Oh! It's the woman!" She just finished telling me about a woman who had been transformed to stone there. There's a woman lying on her tummy. And Amelia and Al said that if you go and roll that woman over on her back, she doesn't like that – she doesn't like to show herself. So after you leave, she rolls herself back over, back on her tummy. So she said, "Iwówes must have something to do with that. It must have something to do with that woman who was transformed into stone. She doesn't want to show herself." She said that when they were little kids they used to call it the "roll-over rock." She said, "The rock is still there." I've never gone looking for it. It should be there in Iwówes.

But the other interesting part of it, too, is that it's a village that's located behind an island. So Iwówes – something that doesn't want to show itself – I think might even have to do with the fact that the village doesn't want to show itself. If you're travelling up the river the village would be hidden by the island known as Lhilheltalets. So it might have something to do with that as well.

There was a young boy from this village of Iwówes. And you see how there's so much to talk about, just at Iwówes. There's that rock. There's the church that's there. You know, if you read some of the missionary records they talk about that village, they actually call it – they have their own way of saying it, but the name of that island was Lhilheltalets. And Lhilheltalets, the origin of *hlat* name, comes from the water in front of it. When you travel in your canoe, those waves hit the bow of your canoe and then you have the spray. The spray from the bow of your canoe – that's what Lhilheltalets is referring to. There are pit houses there, you can still see the old foundations of the church from there, and there's a dry rack there from the McNeil family from Seabird Island. They fish in that area because their extended family ancestry goes back to that place. Across the river there's a place called Wówes. Like there's Iwówes on this side and then across the river there's Wówes. And I always wondered, what was the connection? I remember Frank Pat talking about a woman who was transformed into stone on the other side of the river, just upriver from Iwówes, along the straight stretch. And he said that you could see her face, you could see her shoulder, you could see her fists – her fists were clenched – and she had them up just above her chest but just below her chin. Not crossed but just up like that. He said you could see her face – her head and shoulders – and see her arms up like that. And every year in high-water time the river would

knock her over. And when the water went down he said the elders used to go out there in their canoes with long poles and they'd stand her back up. He said that, after the elders passed away in the 1940s, nobody stood her up, so she hasn't been stood up since. And I remember that! So I was looking at Iwówes, and here's the woman transformed into stone there, lying on her tummy. And then Wówes has another woman who's in the water. And so I wondered, what's the connection, what joins the two? Why is there Iwówes and why is there Wówes? And then, when I took Elder Shirley Julian up there, we talked about that and I had a tour of the area. I told her I didn't know what the connection was, and she said, "Oh! Well, Iwówes and Wówes would be sisters." They're two sisters. One would be the older sister and one would be the younger sister. It's possible that they're sisters and that one was transformed into stone over here and one over there. The fact of the extra sound made one an older sister (Iwówes) and one a younger sister (Wówes). She was saying that's probably the connection: the two might have been sisters.

Sxwó:yxwéy

The late Amelia Douglas told me a story about that village where a young boy got sores all over his body. And he was being teased – these sores were very painful – but he was being teased by some of the boys in his village. And they were actually being mean to him, telling him, "Oh, you stink. You should go and kill yourself." So he went to Kawkawa Lake, or Q'awq'ewem, to kill himself. He went to this rock bluff on the north side of Kawkawa Lake. Some elders say that he jumped off, some say that he slipped. But either way, he fell into the water – he drifted down under water and landed on top of the roof of the longhouse of the underwater people. Or the water babies. In our language we call them *s'ó:mexw*. And they came out and asked him what was the matter, and he said he wanted to kill him-self because of these sores all over his body. Well, the underwater people were able to heal his sores.

When he got there he looked around and he noticed that the underwater people also had sores, and, especially, there was this baby who was constantly crying because it had sores on it as well. And he noticed that wherever they had sores there was spit. People from up top, like us, would spit in the water and it would drift down and lodge on their skin and create those sores. And those underwater people – water babies – couldn't see the spit. But he could see it, so he took a cedar bough and he scraped the spit off, and when he did that he was able to heal all those underwater people.

So Amelia said that he stayed there for about seven years. That is longer than our mourning process. Our mourning process lasts for four years,

after which we have our memorial ceremony. That's the end of our mourning process, which means that you let them go. You let them go to the other side, to join our ancestor spirits, they can't hold them back anymore. Because whenever we don't mourn or cry it's like we're holding them back – we need to mourn and cry to let them go.

The boy was gone for over seven years, so as far as his parents were concerned, he was long gone and dead. But one day he announced that he wanted to go back home, and the underwater people were very grateful to him for all he had done to heal them. So they told him that he could have whatever he wanted. And he remembered seeing this basket in the longhouse, and inside he had seen a mask and all the regalia that goes along with it. And he said that that's what he wanted. Because at that time, when he'd first seen it, they told him he couldn't have it. It's very sacred. It has songs and dances. He was told to leave it alone, and he left it alone. So when they told him he could have whatever he wanted, that's what he wanted. So they told him, "Well, you can have it but you can't take it by yourself. You have to have the help of your sister." And so that's why the mask today is owned by the women and danced by the men.

I was taught, since I was a little kid, that I wasn't to spit in the river. I wasn't allowed to spit in the creeks, and I wasn't allowed to spit in lakes. I didn't know why. Remember earlier on I talked about how sometimes we're told to do things but we're not told why, and then later on we find out why. We have to take care of the water babies, and if we spit in the water we're going to make them sick. You know the water babies take care of us and we take care of them. There's always this reciprocation. The young boy was told by those underwater people to go back home and to get his sister to make a basket. While she was making the basket they were getting ready to bring the mask. The night before he went back home his sister had a dream that he was coming home and she told her parents. Her parents got upset with her because, as far as they were concerned, their son was long gone and dead. She said, "No, I think my brother's coming home today." And sure enough, he did show up and he asked her to make the basket. So while she was making the basket the underwater people were trying to figure out how to bring this mask from the lake to that village, to that little lake next to the village. So they asked for the assistance of the animals.

The first animal dug a tunnel and came outside and just around the mountain. You can still see that cave up there on a rock bluff facing toward the river. So that was the first tunnel, and they missed the spot. The second animal was a bird. And the bird dug a tunnel. It came out just around the corner, just upriver of Iwówes. The name *Sgwélgwéghwéghwé* means "many

little tunnels.” That bird missed the spot as well, so the next one was Beaver. So Beaver dug a hole and came right out at the little lake right next to the village of Iwówes. The underwater people were able to go through that tunnel to bring the mask over. So the brother brought his sister to the little lake and cast her fishing line into the water, and he told her not to be scared of what happens next. When she felt a tug on the line, she lifted it very slowly, and it was one of the water babies who was wearing the mask. It was a small mask, the original mask, because it was a water baby wearing it. It came out and was facing away, and so the first thing you see is this quivering. And if you look at the top of the *xywó:ywéy* mask you see it has these long – nowadays they use wire but in the old days they used ironweed, so it just quivers. There’s wool, tufts of wool tied to it. The mask came out and then it turned toward them. And the late Agnes Kelly says that when that mask turned toward them like that, that moment was called *Spwó:si:yá* – like the word for “gift” is *spóles*. And *Spwó:si:yá*, that was when the moment when the mask became a gift to our people, as soon as they turned and faced the young boy and the young girl. That’s the name that’s carried by Al Gutierrez and his grandson – that name Swólsi:yá. So it turned and faced them. And then they taught the young man and his sister all the different songs and dances that go along with it. Songs and dances for birth ceremonies and puberty and namings and weddings and funerals. It’s like a cleansing or a blessing to prepare you for the next important phase of your life. Copies of that mask were made and moved downriver. One story talks about how it went down to Welqamex, Greenwood Island. It went down to Kw’ekw’é:qw, which is Kilgard, and from Kw’ekw’é:qw to Yeqwyeqwi:w, and from Yeqwyeqwi:w across to Sq’ewlets, and then down to Xwmeth-kwiyem. There are all these different versions of how the mask was moved and copies were made. Each time a woman had a child and the child married, another copy would be made. So that’s how it made its way downriver.

The *xywó:ywéy* is an important part of our culture. This was drilled into me by the late Peter Dennis Peters. I remember when my cousin Herman joined the winter dance, and I wanted to know what I could do for him because Herman was like an older brother to me when he lived with us up in Spuzzum. He worked for my dad on the railroad, and he treated me like a younger brother because I didn’t have any older brothers. When he joined the winter dance I wanted to know what I could do to help him. I wanted to support him. I knew that he was attending the winter dance quite a bit, quite regularly, and then he announced to his family that he wanted to join. So I went to see his dad, the late Peter Dennis Peters, and asked him about the winter dance. And I was really surprised at what he said, which was, “Well, the winter dance” – he used the word *Sywané* – “the *Sywané*’s

not really ours. That’s something that came from the coast and came up.” He said, “The way they do it came from the coast. In the old days we did it different. But the way they do it now, that’s coast.” He said, “But *xywó:ywéy*, that’s ours. That came from here, started here and went downriver.” He spoke like a lot of people you hear today, a lot of Sto:lo people. They don’t say the word *xywó:ywéy* properly. You know, you hear them say “squee-quay” or “squee-quec” or whatever. But he wouldn’t let me. I would say it the wrong way because I’d heard everybody else saying it that way! When he was telling me that story he kept making sure – like every time I had to say it, he’d make me say it three or four times to make sure I said it right. So he’d stop and he’d go, “*xywó:ywéy*” (said slowly in a long, drawn out tone). So I’d have to say it again. And I’d say it and still not quite get it. So he’d make me say it again. And again, until I finally said it right. So then he’d carry on talking about it again and then he’d get to a point where I’d have to say it again. He’d do the same thing with me – make sure I said it right. So I’m always correcting people now when I hear them saying it wrong. I tell them the proper way to say it.

That story is the connection for me to that *xywó:ywéy* because I come from there. I haven’t been able to make a specific genealogical connection to it other than that I know my great-grandfather, Dennis S. Peters – whom I talked about earlier, who did the Eayem memorial – he was related to people at Iwówes, to Chief Bernard there. In fact, he was willed a house at the village of Iwówes where the mask came from. Tillie and Alan remember that he was willed a house there, and so did Peter Dennis Peters. Peter Dennis Peters talks about Dennis S. Peters living at Iwówes in a house that – some old people had passed on and they said that they wanted Dennis S. Peters to have that house, so he lived there for a while. Tillie and Alan Gutierrez remember my great-grandfather living there. They said when they were kids they remember him living in one of the houses there. So that’s the only connection that I have right now but I don’t have – I don’t know who willed him that house. That’s the connection that we have. I feel a strong connection to *xywó:ywéy*, although I’m not able to give a direct lineage to it. That’s what’s required now. The families that want to become involved in *xywó:ywéy* have to have a direct connection to it.

Sywané is an important part of our culture and it’s very well protected. I know in the past there were people who took pictures of *xywó:ywéy*. Museums had collected *xywó:ywéy* masks as well and taken pictures of them. It’s only recently that there is a teaching – and I think it’s because of our overprotection of it – well, maybe not *overprotection*. I guess in *some* senses it might be overprotection, but to protect it we’re not allowed to take photographs of the *xywó:ywéy*, we’re not allowed to record the songs, and

we're not allowed to videotape it. And only certain people are allowed to see it. It's really closely guarded and protected, and you'll notice that, in our publications, we don't have any pictures of *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy*. Not in any of the three publications that we've done: *You Are Asked to Witness* and *I Am Stó:lō* and then the *Atlas*. The closest one we have is the picture of the little carving representing a *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy* at the Skowkale longhouse. Even that – even that was a little bit controversial when it came out – whether or not it should be there. But in the end, most people seemed not to mind it there, so now when you want to talk about *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy*, that's the only picture we can use to talk about it. It's still used today, whenever there are funerals, namings, puberty ceremonies – different things like that. It's a cleansing ceremony.

The other thing, though, I always like to talk about, is how when you look at that story or listen to that story and they talk about the sores on the body, Wilson Duff actually looked at it. But he didn't look at it as a story about smallpox, I mean based on the stories that *he* was told. He said that, based on the genealogy of Mrs. Bob Joe and the origin of the *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy*, he estimated that the *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy* must have originated in the 1780s. Now, if you look at 1782, that's when the very first smallpox epidemic happened. None of the elders has ever said that the sores on the young boy were smallpox. But I think it was smallpox. One of our other biggest teachings is that whenever there's something bad, there's always got to be something good. It's kind of a balance, you never really know. An encounter with a *st'á:lqem* could be bad – it could harm you. Or else you could get something good out of it, like the encounter with the water baby. You could learn something or you could die from it! My mother, when she saw little people, she was told by her grandfather, "Next time you see those little people you might die." It could be that tragic. But at the same time, you could also learn something from it.

I keep *that* in mind when I look at the story of the *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy*. I can imagine if those sores were smallpox, and the huge devastation that that had on our people – nine out of ten people dying – that something good had to come out of it. And when you ask elders today, depending on who you talk to, some elders will say, "Oh, the *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy* is only a couple hundred years old." Some elders will say, "No, the *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy* is thousands of years old." And so while you try to disprove or try to prove one of them, you really can't. You can look at the genealogies of some families and say, "Oh, yeah, that must be around 1780." But then what about the other ones who are saying it's thousands of years old? Well, they're partly correct as well because after the smallpox epidemic there were certain teachings

that needed to be retained, and elements of those teachings that were retained were inside the *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy* story. That's what's made it real, so that it could be believed and could become a sacred part of our culture and our tradition. So those old teachings are encompassed in there. To me, that's why I think that an elder who says it's thousands of years old is right because there are teachings within the story that are probably thousands of years old. Within this story that's only two hundred years old.

There are other stories about the *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy*. In the Musqueam story, their ancestor was Tel Swayel, or Skyborn, because he dropped from the sky. After he landed the *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy* dropped at his feet. In Stanley Park at Lumberman's Arch is the location of an old village called *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy*. The story there is about a man who went to fell a tree to make a canoe, and when the tree fell into the water it split open and the *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy* mask came out. People from Scowlitz and Chehalis talk about their ancestors coming down from the sky with a *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy* in their arms as well. Then there's another story from Burrard that a fisher was seining or dragging with his hooks in Burrard Inlet and he hooked a mask. You look at all the stories.

The late Rosaleen George told her dad's version of the story – there's a very similar *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy* story told at the mouth of the Harrison River, similar to the story told up at Kawakawa Lake, where the *ḡḡwó:ḡḡwéy* came out of the water. She's aware of all these stories. Plus she lived in Musqueam, she lived in Tsawwassen, she lived in Katzie, and is originally from Chehalis. She married into Chilliwack. So she's spent a lot of time in the whole Stó:lō area, and she was quite knowledgeable with the place names. She was instrumental with the documenting of place names because a lot of times she was able to provide context when all that was collected was the name.

Rosaleen George was especially helpful with the 1858 boundary survey names; even some of them didn't have their meanings recorded. I'd have to take the way they were written, their orthography, and try to come up with the best pronunciation I could. And it was just amazing that Rosaleen would remember the place! She'd say, "What was that again?" I'd say it to her and then she'd say what the proper name is! Just based on my stumbling with the proper pronunciation. Then she'd say, "Oh ... I know where that place is!" And then she'd be able to give some story about it from her grandparents. She would say, "My grandparents talked about that place. Where is it?" Then I'd have to look on the map, figure out where it is, and then she'd say, "Oh, that's where that was! Yeah, my grandparents used to go do this and go do that over there." She had all this knowledge of the whole territory just from her experience of living different places and the fact that she listened – listened to her elders. So I went to see *her* about the

ᑭᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ story, and she said, “Well, the *real* story is up there at Kawkawa Lake and Hope.” Even though she was aware of all these other stories, and even though she really wanted to make sure that we paid respect to these other stories and recognized that there were other origin stories, she was still able to differentiate between them and to say that the *real* story was up there at Kawkawa Lake. As far as I know today – I think there might be one person at Seabird – but for the most part there aren’t any upriver people who are involved with the ᑭᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ.

Again, the origin of the ᑭᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ is tied to the water babies. The water babies, or the underwater people, which we call ᑦᑦᑦᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ, are another important element in the ᑭᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ story. Just in the places that we find them. There’s one up at – they’re not only in Sucker’s Creek or Kawkawa Creek in Hope – Kawkawa Lake. I’ve also heard others talk about them at Minto Landing here in Chilliwack, Chilliwack Lake. And Rosaleen had mentioned a place down by Maple Ridge where there are water babies, and then there are supposed to be some down around the Musqueam area as well. The water babies, or ᑦᑦᑦᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ, are out there in the water. And you have to take care of them by not spitting in the water – that’s one of the teachings. There might be other teachings as well. That’s the only one I’m aware of right now, though – that we’re not allowed to spit in the water because it’ll create sores on them. And then they take care of us.

Protocol

The other way we take care of our ancestors occurs when we have our spiritual burnings, each spring and each fall. Families burn food and clothes for our ancestors. Fire is a big part of that, and it’s through the fire that the clothes and food are able to reach our ancestors’ spirits. There are all kinds of different teachings about that, which I put together after years of being told something and not knowing why and then, years later, finally realizing what it meant. We were told not to use cedar in the fire. When our family started doing the family burnings again and we had been doing it for a couple of years, Peter Dennis Peters would just donate money or something and never really came to the meetings. It was about two years after we were doing the burnings that I remember we had a meeting at his daughter Thelma’s house. And he just lived across the street, so he came over. He was really humble and he knew how to teach. He wasn’t forcing, wasn’t imposing, but he was doing it in a respectful way, and that’s the thing that really struck me so much, was how he did that. He didn’t come and say, “Okay this is what you guys better do, you’d better do this” or – he didn’t do that.

He came over and he said, “Oh, I noticed you guys are doing these burnings.” He said, “When you guys first started it I didn’t think you were going to stick with it, but it looks like you are so I thought I’d better come over and tell you a little bit of what I know about it.” He went on to say, “Well, first of all you have to have it in the morning. So that you always remember that it’s always done in the morning.” “When I was a young fellow,” he said, “It was always in the morning.” We were doing it in the afternoon. And there’s this flip kind of thing that happens within our family; I think it’s lazy people who don’t want to get up at four o’clock in the morning to make the fire who want to have it in the afternoon. And they say, “Well, we want our young people there. We can’t get our young people there so that’s why we want to do it in the afternoon because we want our young people there.” To me, it’s like they’re saying, “Not only are we lazy but we want our kids to be lazy too,” so they do it in the afternoon! It has to be in the morning. And then Peter Dennis Peters said, “When you make the fire you can’t use cedar in the fire. When the burning ceremony happens all the cedar has to be gone.” He said, “If you’re going to light the fire and you want to get the fire going with cedar, you light the fire two hours ahead of time to get the fire going and to make sure that all the cedar is gone. And *why*? Because the crackling of the cedar sends the spirits *away*.” He said, “You don’t want the spirits to be sent away, you want the spirits to come.”

Years before I’d heard about little Annie Chapman, who was a good friend of my father’s. She used to live with my dad up in Boston Bar, and we used to get bothered by lots of spirits. There used to be people coming up the stairs, and we’d hear babies crying outside, see the breadbox open and close, and the phone lift off the hook and come back down, and hear people walking right through our living room and go into one of the bedrooms. My dad even saw something lift my head up once when I was sleeping on the couch. He said the steps – he heard steps on the stairs – walked right up to the end of the couch and lifted my head and put it back down. There were all kinds of different things that we used to see and hear, so I guess she went – and I didn’t see it, my sister was there and saw it. She saw Annie, she went and got some cedar and got the frying pan off the stove and heated the frying pan up. She put the cedar in so that it was crackling and smoking and burning. She took that and went to each corner of each room in the house to chase away the bad spirits. I heard that and didn’t understand it: “Okay, I didn’t know what that was all about.” Then, over the course of the years, I saw all these other workers who would come to our house to try to get rid of bad spirits, and they would take cedar boughs

and they would – same thing, they would go to all the corners of the house with the cedar boughs. Or else, when they wanted to take bad spirits off of us, they would brush us off with cedar boughs. When we would leave a cemetery, they would always brush us off with cedar boughs. So I'd seen them doing that. So, again, here's a remnant of what used to be done. Like in the past, those cedar boughs would have been burning, you know, so it was a smudge rather than just a cedar brushing. So when Peter Dennis Peters talked about that, then I was able to put those two things together. "Oh! So that's what Annie was doing. She was chasing away the bad spirits." It was the crackling of the cedar that chased away the bad spirits. When we're having a burning we want the spirits to come, and so we can't have cedar in there.

There are a whole bunch of other protocols as well. Children aren't allowed to be at burnings. Women who are menstruating aren't allowed to prepare food. The way Peter Dennis Peters presented it made it just so much more meaningful. It was just done in such a respectful way – the way an elder would do it. And a respected elder. I mean, it wasn't just being imposed or forced on us or something. You know, just the way he did it, it just meant so much to me. So that's why today when we have our burnings, if I'm involved I do everything I can to make sure it's done in the morning and I do everything I can to make sure there's no cedar in the fire. A few years back we hired – we got this one burner. I won't mention names. We got a burner – we call them *Hibiyaqneqs* – to come do some work for us. And he had this other fellow who was a trainee, he was still learning how to conduct a burning. And everybody in Shxw'owhamel knew that no cedar was allowed in the fire. Not only did Peter Dennis Peters share that with me, but I talked to Ralph George, one of our elders in Shxw'owhamel, and he said the same thing: "Yup, no cedar in the fire and get that fire going early. Yup, in the morning." You know, he confirmed all that, so whenever we do our burning in Shxw'owhamel it's always in the morning – get the fire going early. One day, though, we made the mistake of leaving some cedar kindling. We're told that anything that we bring for the fire should all be burned, you shouldn't leave any of it there. So we brought wood, and it's for the burning and it all gets burned. We shouldn't bring too much wood or not enough. We had this cedar kindling there, and we shouldn't have – we should have used it all. It should have all gone in the fire and burned away. We left a couple of handfuls of kindling on the side. Everybody was sitting, the table was set, the food was all prepared and on the table. Just getting with it – the *Hibiyaqneqs* were just getting ready. Then all of a sudden the trainee grabbed the cedar kindling and threw it on the fire just minutes before we were going to put the food on it. You

should have seen everybody's face. Everybody's jaw dropped. My brother-in-law looked at me as if to ask, "What can we do?" But one of the other teachings is that, when we're at the burning, we have to be of good mind. It's our mind – it's our faith in the work that we're doing that makes the work happen. Right in that moment, we had to remember that.

So we had to be of good mind for the work to continue. We couldn't have any bad thoughts. We couldn't think bad thoughts about that young man who was doing this to us. But I knew I had to say something because after the burning was done we invited the *Hibiyaqneqs* over to help share a meal, and we share the same food that we prepared for our ancestors. After the meal, it's a time for people to get up and thank the *Hibiyaqneqs*, and if the *Hibiyaqneqs* had any messages that's when he shares them with us. That time I really had to share what I'd learned about burning, that whole thing about cedar not being in the fire. The young fellow, he was pretty frustrated because I was pointing the finger at him. I was trying to do it as nicely and as gently as I could. "I just have to tell you," I said, "that this is what Peter Dennis Peters told us, this is what Ralph George tells us, this is what we've been doing for years: we don't put cedar in the fire." I just had to share all these other teachings. And so, in the end, it turned out really well because the *Hibiyaqneqs* said, "Well, you know that one of our teachings is that things happen for a reason." And he said that if the trainee hadn't thrown that cedar in the fire I wouldn't have got up and told all these people all these different things that the elders had shared with me. He said, "You probably wouldn't have done that. But because you did it it's almost like the ancestors' spirits might have done that just so that you'd get up and share it." He said, "But now you've told everybody here what you were told." So I felt kind of good about it after that. Again, here's something bad that turns into something good.

Be of Good Mind

I had to learn that, about being of good mind, and just what exactly that meant from historian Keith Thor Carlson. I just shared that last story with him in November 2005, when I ended up going to a conference over in Saskatoon and they were asking questions about the researcher and the community member, how we met, what were the things that you did. And so it forced Keith and me to sit down and talk to each other about, well, how did research happen? Why do we have the relationship that we do? He's spiritual in his way, I'm spiritual in my way. I don't impose my spirituality on him, and he doesn't impose his spirituality on me. We share it. And I remember a few years back, a few years after he came around, he invited me to go to the Roman Catholic Easter mass. Just the way he did it was

awesome. He said, "You know, Sonny, you've been sharing your culture with me. You've taken me to the winter dance, you've taken me to *exno:ygwey*, and you know, other different things. I've witnessed burnings ... And so I just want to share some of my culture with you!" He said that he's going to Easter mass and he asked if I wanted to go along and watch and to see what they do. And he said he'd explain to me what they did. I said "Sure!" He wasn't trying to Christianize me, he was just sharing. So I went along.

An interesting part of the mass was where they shared, they had the bread and wine and that, and it's actually supposed to transform into the body and blood of Christ. When they were explaining that, Keith said, "Yes, the people that go up, when they participate in that ceremony they have the faith that that is actually happening." You can't see it, like you can't see it happening, but they have the faith that it's happening. He said, "Well, just like you guys, the *Stó:lō*, when you have your burnings and your food goes into the fire you have the faith that that food is being transformed and is feeding your ancestors and clothing your ancestors. So it's the same thing." So that's when I learned about the importance of faith and that part where, for years, the elders had said, "You've got to be of good mind and have a good heart." I didn't understand what they meant about being of good mind, and that's the faith part of it. We all have to have faith, and it's our faith in the work that the *Hilipipwels* is helping us with. They always say that, too, like they're not doing the work: they're just our hands and our feet. And they're taking our food, putting – like they're able to do that but it's actually our faith in the work that we're doing that does it. So it took a different perspective, I guess, to help me learn to view some of the things that we're doing, to understand the importance of faith.

We talked about the water babies, and closely associated with them is the *mimstiyexw*. The *mimstiyexw* – and again this kind of goes beyond *Stó:lō* boundaries and even beyond First Nations boundaries – because a few years back when we go out in the water, there are water babies there. We have to protect those water babies; we can't spit in the water. We have to protect the water – the water is something to me that's sacred, it's got to be protected. And then when we go out into the forest to go picking berries or to go hunting, there's got to be something else up there to protect us. And we have to take care of them as well. So the same way I talked earlier about when we have our burnings, we usually set a plate aside for the water babies, a plate of food. It's the same with the *mimstiyexw*, the Little People. When we have our burnings we're supposed to set aside a plate of raw food, of uncooked food. It's just left in raw form and then it's just brought

– it's left. Rather than being burned with the other food it's just left at the edge of the forest. It's left at the edge of the forest to feed the *mimstiyexw*, to take care of the *mimstiyexw*. The *mimstiyexw* are little people who mainly can be seen by younger children. Sometimes they can be deadly, and I mentioned earlier how my mother had seen some *mimstiyexw* when she was a young girl at Ruby Creek. She went up there with her grandfather and her brother, and her grandfather was getting drinking water, filling up the barrels with drinking water, and she and her brother walked up the creek. She heard somebody calling her name. She looked across and there were these little people across the creek, and they were calling her! And she was so intrigued by them that she just about crossed the creek. She said she wanted to cross the creek to go see them and just as she was about to do that she realized that if she tried crossing the creek the water was so swift that she probably would have drowned. She would have drowned in the creek. So she told her grandfather about it, and her grandfather told her, "Well, next time you see those little people there's a good chance that you're going to die."

There's a bad thing about it. But, on the other hand, there's a teaching as well. And the story that I remember the best about it was told by the late Rosaleen George, who was talking about how those *mimstiyexw*, those Little People, bring about good things. In one story she tells how these bones were found. And they had to be reburied. There was a reburial at a place in Sqwa. She said that she'd wake up at night and these Little People would be in her bedroom. They'd just come walking through the walls and just walk up to her and they'd poke her in the side and just grumble. And then they'd leave again. And she had a cousin in Chehalis and a cousin in Musqueam and these Little People were coming and doing the same thing to them – you know, bothering them – and she said there was something wrong. She said it wasn't long after that, when she was talking to her cousins about it, that she found out about these bones. And she realized that these bones were probably the Little People and that they needed to be taken care of. So she made arrangements for them to be buried at Sqwa. And she said after that they never bothered her anymore.

She tells this other story too, about how her grandson was always being mean to his little sister, doing mean things to her and that. And she said that this one day she was at her daughter's place. Her grandson was upstairs, and she was with her daughter and granddaughter downstairs. And she could hear her grandson playing upstairs, and then she could hear him talking to somebody. And she knew he was up there by himself, so she figured it had to be one of these *mimstiyexw* who was up there playing with him. She said that when you see children playing by themselves they're

actually playing with the *mimestiyeexw*. It seems like they're playing with somebody but there's nobody there. She heard her grandson crying. He came downstairs, and they asked him what was the matter. And he said, "Oh, that little man upstairs told me not to be mean to my little sister anymore." She said there's an example. Of course there's bad things: it could be dangerous to see a *mimestiyeexw*, it could cause somebody to die. But, on the other hand, there's still good things as well; there can be teachings too. And that was a teaching that was left with her grandson so that he could no longer be mean to his little sister.

When we go out to the forest to gather berries or to go hunting there are *mimestiyeexw* there. As long as we take care of them, they'll take care of us while we're out there. When I'm up there I see them. I know that they're there and I'm sure that there are a lot of other people too. It's understandable that the *mimestiyeexw* are an important part of the winter dance and that they're also an important part of the *xywá:ywney*. The *xywá:ywney* has to do with the masked dances, with the winter dances.

Spirit Power

Another one of our beliefs is that we all have spirit power – even today, even if some of our people don't follow the teachings to go up into the forest at puberty as in the past. In the past, once we reached puberty our grandparents would take us out into the forest to fast, to run, to bathe. There are certain teachings that the boys have to follow, certain teachings that the girls have to follow. The girls would have to do things with their hands so they would have fast hands to make baskets or to pick berries and things like that. And there were certain things that the boys had to do, you know, to become better hunters and better fishers. But the main reason these young people are out in the forest is to try to find their spirit power. What is their spirit power? It would be revealed to them as a vision or something would come to them and that would be their spirit power. That spirit power was something they had to keep to themselves; they weren't allowed to share it with other people. You couldn't tell people what your spirit power was or you'd lose it.

If something special happens to us, we're not allowed to tell it. Just like an encounter with a Sasquatch. That's why a lot of our people don't talk about that because we're taught that something special like that is something that we need to keep to ourselves. So you don't hear a lot of First Nations people sharing their stories about an encounter with a Sasquatch because we're taught that's a special thing, that's not to be talked about. If you talk too much about it, it loses its power. That's something I truly believe because when I do my place names tour and I get to Kawakawa Lake

– because of my own belief and my faith and my connections I have my own experiences that prove that these things are there. For instance, one time I was telling the *xywá:ywney* story about the young boy and how he was being teased by other boys who were telling him "Oh, you stink, why don't you go kill yourself?" Just as I was telling that part I connected with his spirit. I felt a connection and I was just sad – just almost – like I almost wasn't able to speak. I had to collect myself before I could carry on telling the story because I got really emotional, because I just connected to his spirit. Another time I was telling the story and I felt like I was losing something. I felt like I was losing something. And so I told the elders about that, and asked, "Should I be telling this story?" I even took family members out there who are connected to the *xywá:ywney* and said, "Is it okay if I tell the story?" I said, "This is what I ask – is it okay?" And they said, "Yeah, you have to tell the people what our relationship is because it's to do with the *xywá:ywney*, it's important." They said, "The stuff you can't talk about is some of the teachings that they have to follow, like the preparations they make for the dance and all those kinds of things." But I don't know anything about those sorts of things anyway. So I can't talk about it. I felt like I was losing something. It all depends on the tour group, too. Some groups, I feel really good about it, I just share it. But there are some groups that just make me feel that I'm losing something, like they're taking something away. So I told the elders that, and they said, "Well, you should tell the people that then." I remember that's what Rosaleen said. When I told her, she said, "Well, you should tell them. Tell them that that's how you feel. You know, that you feel that you're losing something when you tell them." So that's what I do, I tell them now. So after I finish telling them the story that's what I tell them. Then I tell them, you know, "Oh, I'm not feeling good today." If I'm not. But I don't tell them that. I just skip around it.

The winter dance is the expression of our spirit power. But it's an expression that's not supposed to be explicit enough so that you can figure it out. That's why a lot of people try guessing. They try to guess. They try to say, "Oh, I think someone's spirit power is this" or "Their dance represents this." In the longhouse it's like "what you have" – that's how they refer to it. You always hear them saying, "*What you have*, you have to take care of that. You've got to keep it to yourself. You're not supposed to tell everybody about what you have." Talking about your spirit power helps you with your life. I think it was one of our elders, Edmond Lorenzetto, talking about that, saying that if you wanted to be a carver you'd get the woodpecker spirit power. If you wanted to be a warrior you'd get the mosquito spirit power. And so it's that spirit power that helps you throughout your

life. So whenever you need help or feel you need something, then you can always turn to that spirit power to help you get through your life.

Rosaleen was saying that we've lost that. There are a lot of people who still go through the puberty ceremony, but there are some families that don't do that. And she said, "Even though they don't, they still get a spirit power!" It's the whole ceremony of going out there with your elders and going through that. It's so that it reveals itself to you and tells you what it is. But she said, "That doesn't mean you don't get one!" She said, "You still get one. It's just that you don't know what it is." And she was saying, and Tillie Gutierrez goes on to say, "That's why you're not allowed to point." You know, you go to the longhouse – you're not allowed to point to people. Because when *Xəg:ʔis* did their work and transformed people into stone, they pointed at them. That's what they did, they pointed at them and then they would be transformed. So, in the same way, some of us have power but we don't know how to control it because we haven't been taught to do that. We haven't gone out with our elders and we haven't had our spirit power exposed to us. And then we haven't been told, "This is how you're supposed to look after it." So people could actually point at somebody and cause them harm without knowing that they were doing it. That's another part – the importance of that spirit power that we're supposed to take care of. So the *miməstiyəwə* are an important part of our custom: the *miməstiyəwə* are out in the forest. That's why the forest is an important part of our initiation.

Stl'álegem

The last thing I want to talk about is the *stl'álegem*. Brent Galloway used to translate this term as "supernatural creatures." But from Western society's perspective, using that term robs it of its meaning because it would fit a lot of things. If you look at Brent's listing in the classified word list, he lists Sasquatch and Thunderbird as *stl'álegem*. He didn't have to deal with the elders like I did. I went to see Rosaleen and Elizabeth about *stl'álegem*, and then I got in trouble when I suggested that Sasquatch was *stl'álegem*. Boy, they both looked at me real sharp and said, "Sasquatch isn't *stl'álegem*!" And I said, "Oh, it isn't?" "No, it's not a *stl'álegem*. It's real! It's out there."

The same is true with the Thunderbird. A few years back, somebody called me from one of the universities and asked, "Do you know the Thunderbird – is it a raven or is it an eagle?" So I said, "Oh, I don't know. Ah, let me get back to you on that." I went over to see the elders, and I asked them, "What is the Thunderbird, is it a raven or an eagle?" It took a couple of days and then I got a reply from Shirley Julian, who had talked

with the elders from Stó:lō *Shxwéłi*, the language program. She left a message on my phone saying, "The Thunderbird is *shxwəwəwə:s*. *Shxwəwəwə:s* is not a raven. *Shxwəwəwə:s* is not an eagle. *Shxwəwəwə:s* is its *own* bird and it's *real*. It's still out there. It's just that the young people don't know it's there." Click. That was the message! Yeah, so later on we were doing that study on *stl'álegem*, and Sasquatch was listed as *stl'álegem*, "supernatural creature," and we got in trouble for even suggesting that it was *stl'álegem*. So Sasquatch and *shxwəwəwə:s* are not *stl'álegem*.

But what is *stl'álegem*? *Stl'álegem* is always associated with water. Some of the examples are up in Cultus Lake. There's *Hiqw'Apel*, the large maggot. In the past, it used to bathe on the edge of the hill by Smith Falls. People would approach it, and it would roll itself down into the water. I always wonder about the significance of the story about these two men from Leq'ámél who came over. They were training to be *shxw'lá:m*. That's another thing, because where there's a *stl'álegem* there will be a place where people who want to become *shxw'lá:m*, or Indian doctors, can go train. That's one of the things I got mixed up on: I thought they got their power from the *stl'álegem*. When I suggested that to the elders, again I got into trouble. They said, "No, *shxw'lá:m*s don't get their power from the *stl'álegem*!" I said, "Oh! Well, where do they get their power from?" They said, "They get their power from *being able to be there*. With the *stl'álegem*. Being able to be there and pay respect to the *stl'álegem*, you know, not interfering with it but being there. So wherever there's a *stl'álegem*, *shxw'lá:m*s would go to train and would interact with the *stl'álegem*, not get their power from the *stl'álegem* but from the fact that they're able to be there and to co-exist with it. They get their power from that."

I'd heard this story about these two men from Leq'ámél training to be Indian doctors. Maybe it was told by Bob Joe. It's in Oliver Wells. The two men went by canoe to Cultus Lake where that *stl'álegem* lives. The one man lowered the other by rope to go see what was down there. He felt a tug on the rope, so he pulled it up and all that was left of his friend was just a skeleton. You know, I often wonder, "What's the significance of that? Like what is that? Why did the *skeleton* come up?!" The story doesn't say why it came up with the skeleton, the story just ends there. They pulled him up. There was just the bones. All the flesh was gone. And so it wasn't until later on that I found out that the *stl'álegem* was a huge maggot. So the maggot eats all the flesh off the bones. Right there is where *Hiqw'Apel* is. And so it ate all the flesh off the bones.

That's one *stl'álegem*. Another *stl'álegem* is the glowing red eyes that you see at night. At Chehalis, Chiyó:m, Shxw'ówhámél. I was talking to someone who had seen it in Chowethel as well. There are probably other places

that I don't know about; these are just instances that I know personally. Lawrence Hope from Yale talks about another one. He says that there's a *stl'áleqem*, an underwater bear, that lives in the little pool next to Xelháłh, in front of the old village of Xelháłh. That pool or that eddy there. From there all the way up through Lady Franklin Rapids, right up to Q'alełktel, to the next set of rapids. That's its territory. The underwater bear lives in that area there. Other ones include the serpent at the top of Devil's Mountain, a large serpent. There's a story about a hunter who went hunting and he sat on a log on top of that mountain, and the log started to move and turned over. It was a large serpent, and he went back and told his people to stay away from that *stl'áleqem*. That's another reason, I see, that the *stl'áleqem* was used. There's a relationship that seems to be established between the local family and their family-owned site and a *stl'áleqem*. A *stl'áleqem* protects their family-owned site. It's a spiritual protection of that site. Other examples of this are found in the story I told of the hunter and Devil's Mountain. I was talking to my uncle, Bobby Peters, who's a hunter. He's a good hunter, and one of the many places he goes hunting is Devil's Mountain. It's a small little mountain just north of Hope there – across the river from Hope. He said you'd be amazed at the number of deer there. He said, "It's such a small mountain but there are lots of deer there. I don't know what it is that brings the deer there." And so when I mentioned the story, "Wow, there's lots of deer there." And so here's this hunter who goes hunting up there, comes back, and tells people, "Watch out for the *stl'áleqem* up there. Stay away from there." So people are told to stay away from there. So only that hunter can go there. Only he can go there to get the deer. Everybody else has to stay away because of the *stl'áleqem*. Then I remembered the other story, too, about – I think this is in Wilson Duff's fieldnotes again. It's a story from Chiyó:m Lake. They say that a woman from Chiyó:m took a husband from Vancouver Island. And this fellow came up and moved up to Chiyó:m. But he wasn't allowed to go to Chiyó:m Lake. Because the family would go up there, and they used to get trout from there, and they would get highbush cranberries and other types of resources that were readily available there. But he wasn't allowed to go there because they said that if he went there he would twist up and die. If you see a *stl'áleqem* you could twist up and die. There's a Halq'emeyem word for that, *xw'it:s*, which just means "to twist up and die." So here's the *stl'áleqem* again that plays a role, that protects the family's resource: nobody else can come there and see it. Just the family members that the *stl'áleqem* is familiar with are allowed to go there. If anybody else sees it, they'd twist up and die. So you can see that other role that the *stl'áleqem* plays. It kind of protects family-owned sites. But at the same time it's something that's

in the water that needs to be feared. When I think about the underwater bear up at Yale there, it's right between those two lower rapids, at the entrance of the canyon. At that first rapid and the second rapid, there's an underwater bear. It's "stay away from there. Don't go up this way." What's beyond that? Awesome fishing grounds where you can go drying salmon. That thing is right there at the entrance to keep people away; no one else is allowed in, and that *stl'áleqem* is going to get you if you go up there. Those things need to be taken care of as well, so wherever there's a site inhabited by *stl'áleqem* it has to be taken care of.

Somebody was asking me an interesting question the other day about *stl'áleqem* – whether, after a site has been developed, a *stl'áleqem* can still be there. We think the spirit of the *stl'áleqem* can still be there and that it should still be protected as though that *stl'áleqem* was there. There are places that I know of, for instance there at Cultus – that marina built right there. It's right in front of that marina where that *Higw'Apel* used to be. Elizabeth Herrling talks about a huge serpent that used to have a trail, used to actually cross the road there at Seabird, and its right behind Richard Louie's house there, right by the ball field. And she said it used to come out of the slough and go across. Its home was there. I think that she is referring to a *stl'ibgey* – the double-headed serpent. So the *stl'ibgey*, the double-headed serpent, its home is the whole river system from Hope down to the mouth. Any of the slough channels, the back slough channels, are supposed to be its trails. And that's why the trails kind of meander like that, because they say that's the *stl'ibgey* that makes those, makes the trails like that. It makes the slough that shape because that's its trail.

Important things have to be protected. They play different roles, with the Indian doctors, protecting family-owned sites. And overall they're protecting the dry rack areas of the canyon. I know at Sawmill Creek there's supposed to be another one in the first pool. In the very first pool there's these pictographs way up. Tillie Gutierrez said, "I've never seen anyone come out to look for it but at the same time I was worried about *stl'áleqem*." She said there's supposed to be a huge serpent inside that pool. But above the pool were pictographs. She kind of thinks that *stl'áleqem* is protecting those pictographs. She was told this by David Johnny, who was told by his father, Chief Johnny Ohamil, who is my great-grandfather.

Those are basically all the things that I think that are important when you say *S'ólh Téme'ew te ikw'elo. Xolhmet te mekw'atam* – "This is our land and we have to take care of everything that belongs to us." This includes anything that has to do with the *xw'áxw'iyá:m. Sqwelqnel*, or *xw'áxw'iyá:m*, meaning the creation stories about *Xéxá:s* and the transformations that they performed with regard to the resources in the mountains and the

rocks, and even the rivers – it includes the rivers as well. And then *squwélgwél* is our own family history about certain places. It concerns where we go to pick berries and where we go fishing. There's a connection that we have to these places through our *squwélgwél* – a connection with where our spirit powers are, with the *miméstiyeexw*, the water babies, the *st'áleqem*, the origin stories of the *xwé:yxwexw*, and all the different teachings associated with the winter dance. All those different things connect with the *shwéwéá*. The *shwéwéá* is the thing that connects us to everything. That's what I think needs to be protected, and those are the things that I've learned throughout the years of studying place names and trying to better understand what Stó:ló culture and history is all about. That's my interpretation of what it is. It's important to us, not only, I think – not just because it's our culture and our tradition but also because it's our Aboriginal right and title. It's something that's ours that can't be touched by anyone else. So when we say "Aboriginal right and title" – *S'óllo Témeexw te ikw'elo* – "this is our land" – *Xólhmet te mckw'itam* – "we have to take care of what is ours" – *wé* have to take care of it. Because nobody else can. We have to take care of it. It's ours. Those are our *miméstiyeexw*, our *st'áleqem*, our *xwé:yxwiyám*, our *squwélgwél*, our *s'ólmeexw*. All those things, those are all ours, and we have to take care of them because nobody else can take care of them but us. So to me, that's our Aboriginal right and title.

To Honour Our Ancestors We Become Visible Again

Raymond (Rocky) Wilson

Our ancestry is Hul'qumi'num and comes down from the Lamalchi people, a tribe with village sites on the east coast of Vancouver Island and on the lower Fraser River at Hwlitsum, also known as Canoe Pass. Our oral histories tell us that the way of life of the Lamalchi people, the way they survived, was based on what some call a "seasonal cycle," where the people gain their sustenance starting in the spring of the year at the mouth of the Fraser River. In the Lamalchi case, our people would fish for culachon, spring salmon, and those types of fish as well as pick berries and plants at Hwlitsum and further up the river.

As spring turned into summer, the main sustenance of our people would always be the sockeye salmon. The sockeye salmon was caught and preserved, and our people, because they would catch a lot of salmon for their year-round purposes, would sometimes not return to Lamalchi Bay but would stay year-round on the Fraser River. There were many large village sites all along the banks of the Fraser, a river properly named the "Ka-way-chin" prior to contact with the newcomers. As summer turned to fall and the fishing progressed, the later runs of salmon would come in – the coho salmon and the dog salmon. Some of the people would move back to Lamalchi Bay and finish out the yearly gathering of sustenance in and around their winter village. Our people would also hunt for various animals, including deer and elk. From the late fall until early spring, our people would engage in winter ceremonies, where they would potlatch with their fellow tribes and conduct winter dances and rituals and move around and visit other Coast Salish people. It is important to note that, besides the winter ceremonies and dances, the Coast Salish network would engage in tribal and intertribal marriages. It was customary for the spouses of our people to be chosen by their parents. Marriages were arranged to protect important ownership rights (which were spiritual in essence) and warrior alliances. The linguistic groups consist of Hul'qumi'num (spoken by the Cowichan,