Familial Cohesion and Colonial Atomization: Governance and Authority in a Coast Salish Community

Keith Thor Carlson

Scholarship on Aboriginal governance in Canada has tended to focus on individual communities and formal political processes to the exclusion of informal regional social networks. The author's own earlier research was itself compromised by a myopia that failed to adequately situate the Stó:lõ Coast Salish community of Shxw'õwhámél within its broader regional context. This article revisits the Shxw'õwhámél community's experiment in decolonizing its governance system a decade after the community replaced the Indian Act election and governance processes with a system modelled after its historical system of extended family government. Drawing on current interviews to identify both the strengths and shortcomings of the newly rejuvenated system, the author provides historical analysis of early colonial efforts to manipulate the pre-contact governing system to reveal the extent to which Canadian colonialism has not only worked to atomize familial networks, but also to undermine democracy in the process. The author concludes that indigenous political authority continues to be compromised by the colonial experience and points out that the legacy of 150 years of assimilationist policies has sometimes made it difficult for Aboriginal people themselves to separate the effects of colonialism from its causes as they struggle to re-assert self-governance.

Les études sur la gouvernance autochtone au Canada tendent à se concentrer sur des communautés individuelles et sur les processus politiques formels excluant ainsi les réseaux sociaux régionaux informels. Les recherches précédentes de l'auteur furent elles-mêmes compromises par une myopie qui a échoué à situer adéquatement la communauté stó:lõ, salish de la côte, de Shxw'õwhámél dans un contexte régional plus vaste. Cet article revisite l'essai de la communauté Shxw'õwhámél de décoloniser son système de gouvernance une décennie après avoir remplacée les processus d'élection et de gouvernance stipulés par la Loi sur les Indiens par un système modelé sur son système historique de gouvernement par la famille étendue. À partir d'entrevues déjà existantes qui identifient à la fois les forces et limites du système rajeuni, l'auteur fourni une analyse historique des premiers efforts coloniaux à manipuler ce système de

gouvernement et de révéler la mesure dans laquelle le colonialisme canadien a non seulement atomisé les réseaux familiaux, mais également porté atteinte à la démocratie dans le processus. L'auteur conclu que l'autorité politique autochtone continue d'être compromise par l'expérience coloniale et souligne que l'héritage de 150 années d'une politique d'assimilation rend parfois difficile pour les peuples autochtones de séparer les effets du colonialisme de ses causes dans leur lutte à réaffirmer leur autonomie gouvernementale.

My sister was a Siyá:m [family leader] and she moved out. She moved out of town for a long time and then we [my family] didn't have a voice in there [on council] so seeing as how I'd moved back here with my kids they nominated me, or voted me in.

<div align="right">– William Peters, 2006</div>

I'm from a small family now and everyone lives out, lives off the reserve …. It seemed to take me a while for me to be accepted as a Siyá:m … because I'd not lived on the reserve since 1958—back then I got taken away to a residential school and I haven't been on the reserve since then. So all my family's gone; like they all live in Lytton and down at Langley. For me it was more that I'm the oldest one, and the one that lives around here. Cause there's lots of them that lives out.

<div align="right">– Ron Pierre, 2006</div>

A Stó:lõ Coast Salish elder once told me a story about a Xwelitem[1] (non-Native) who approached a Stó:lõ fisherman standing by the Fraser River. "Catch anything?" the Xwelitem asked. "No. The fishing's no good today," the Stó:lõ fellow replied. Looking into the water, the Xwelitem could see that the river was teeming with sockeye salmon. "Really?" he replied, with a somewhat puzzled expression. "But I can see lots of salmon." "Sure," the Stó:lõ fellow responded, "but I'm after sturgeon."

 Over the past eighteen years as a Xwelitem conducting academic research with and for Coast Salish people and communities, I have fre-

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1 "Hungry person," literally to the point of starving.

quently found myself not seeing the forest for the trees—or the sturgeon for the salmon. In 1994, for example, I assisted the Stó:lõ First Nation of Shxw'õwhámél (near Hope, B.C.) as they devised and implemented a system to replace Indian Act elections with a model of governance based upon older Stó:lõ traditions and principles. The Stó:lõ Tribal Council chiefs (representing many of the two-dozen First Nations spread along the Fraser Valley) had hired me two years earlier to conduct research designed to demonstrate to their community members the drawbacks of the federal government-sponsored municipal-style election system. They also asked me to work with elders to provide a cultural context sufficient to enable Stó:lõ people to re-craft a governing system anchored in their own cultural traditions. Together, the Shxw'õwhámél community and I drafted a model for local governance that respected and reflected the centrality of extended family to Stó:lõ ways of thought and behaviour. The elected offices of chief and councilor were replaced by family-appointed siyá:ms (family leaders), and the infrequent and ad hoc chief and council meetings were replaced with regular meetings of a siyá:m council. Likewise, the siyá:ms drafted and adopted a new policy manual that emphasized transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness. The results on community health were apparent almost immediately. People reported that communication within and between families on the reserve improved and suspicions dropped markedly between those who had formerly been in positions of authority and members of families who had formerly been without political representation.

What neither I nor the Shxw'õwhámél community members fully appreciated, however, was the extent to which such improvements would be limited by the administrative, financial, and political isolation of each Stó:lõ reserve community from the others. More than a century of colonial efforts at assimilating Stó:lõ people had resulted in First Nations communities that were, in large part, products of colonial policies aimed at atomizing Indigenous societies and subverting Indigenous culture and governance. Reserve boundaries, policies regarding the distribution of federal financial resources, missionary-sponsored inter-denominational feuds, and the reification of band membership lists, along with other facets of colonial history, had worked to constrain the revived siy:ám council. In particular, these colonial legacies undermined the council's ability to meaningfully involve those members of Stó:lõ extended families whose members were not recognized under the Indian Act as members of the Shxw'õwhámél band.

This article has three goals: 1) to briefly outline the process through which the Shxw'õwhámél came to revive the siyá:m system in 1994; 2) to highlight certain concerns about the limitations of that system, as articulated by community members in 2006; and 3) to provide a detailed discussion of those historical government and missionary actions that served to isolate and curtail inter-village family relationships. The two former issues provided a context for the latter, which in turn is a direct response to requests by members of the Shxw'õwhámél community for information to help contextualize and explain the historical processes by which families living on one Stó:lõ reserve became disassociated and disconnected from relatives living on another. Put another way, this article's overall aim is to provide Shxw'õwhámél people with information that they can consider as they work to determine what has limited the effectiveness of their siyá:m system and what they might do to improve their efforts to reassert even greater self-governance responsibilities and authority. A fourth objective is to situate the Shxw'õwhámél experience within a larger context so that the implications of their story might be made of relevance to other First Nations who are likewise struggling to re-activate self-governance within the caldron of Canadian colonial society.

(Re)creating the Shxw'õwhámél Siyá:m System

In the early 1990s, when I first began my association with the Stó:lõ people, Sam Douglas and Clarence (Kat) Pennier were widely recognized as formidable Coast Salish leaders and highly successful politicians. Douglas had a reputation for being outspoken—some said bombastic—and was known for taking direct and immediate action to "get things done." Pennier, in contrast, was a man of few words who was recognized for his pensive approach to political and personal relations. Each was an elected chief who had won multiple back-to-back Indian Act elections in their home First Nations communities (Cheam and Scowlitz, respectively), and each was also an influential leader within the broader Stó:lõ Tribal Council (a Coast Salish governing body and service delivery organization representing half of the two-dozen First Nations along the lower Fraser River watershed). Neither of them necessarily stood to benefit directly from changes to the election system operating on their reserves, but both held a firm conviction that Indian Act elections were politically divisive and culturally coercive. Together, they wanted to see the Indian

Act election system replaced with a more traditional and culturally appropriate system of governance.

In 1992, Douglas and Pennier secured a mandate from the Stó:lõ Tribal Council chiefs to authorize a regional review of the Indian Act election system. The chiefs anticipated that the re-assertion and revival of an older, traditional system of governance would strengthen the integrity of both individual First Nations and the broader Stó:lõ collective. They also recognized that political tensions within the Stó:lõ inevitably meant that familial affiliations placed people in positions of having a vested interest in either keeping or replacing the Indian Act. As such, it was determined that an outsider should conduct the review.

When I was hired to conduct the study, Chief Douglas informed me that a hodge-podge of governing systems existed among the two dozen Stó:lõ First Nations. Most communities, like his own village of Cheam near Chilliwack, followed the Indian Act and elected their chief and councilors for two- or three-year terms on a "first-past-the-post" plurality basis, where the candidate with the most votes, but not necessarily a majority, wins. Others, while still overseen and regulated by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), formerly the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), had retained what the federal bureaucrats referred to as the "custom" system of governance. The expressions of customary governance varied widely among these closely related communities. Several Stó:lõ "custom bands" operated under a so-called "hereditary" system, whereby the position and title of chief was transferred to the chief's eldest child upon the chief's death or incapacitation. Another custom band interpreted heredity to mean a process whereby the chief identified a successor from among his or her broad extended family. At least one community had expressed a desire to combine a hereditary chieftainship with elected councilors, while in another a hereditary chief worked in cooperation with what were referred to as appointed hereditary councilors.

Even in these more "traditional" communities, Chief Douglas explained, one heard complaints from people who felt marginalized by either the selection process or the governing system (or both). Moreover, none of the hereditary/custom communities were, in Douglas' opinion, operating in a manner sufficiently consistent with older pre-contact traditions. He explained that contemporary expressions and understandings of "heredity" failed to adequately reflect the flexibility of pre-contact governance as he understood it, just as they failed to meet the needs of

contemporary political concerns. INAC's "custom" system was, therefore, a hybrid and adaptive response that both accommodated and reflected different Stó:lõ people's creative efforts to adapt to a variety of colonial pressures over time. But it was also a halfway measure that many regarded as inadequate.

It should not be surprising that differing definitions of what constituted older, more culturally sensitive and temporally accurate systems of governance existed within and among Stó:lõ communities. Living within close proximity to western Canada's largest urban centre, contemporary Stó:lõ people's ancestors had been appealing targets for those officials charged with implementing first British and then Canadian assimilation policies. Indeed, the very first conviction under the anti-potlatching provision of the Indian Act occurred in a Stó:lõ community.[2] Chief Douglas emphasized to me that the recently repatriated Canadian Constitution provided an opportunity to reverse this process. It was his opinion that the Stó:lõ right to self-governance was now entrenched in the Constitution Act of 1982, and that he and other chiefs were looking forward to engaging in negotiations with the federal and provincial governments through the new B.C. treaty process to define the expression and form that governance would take.[3]

While interviewing the various Stó:lõ chiefs, I learned that many shared Chief Douglas' concern over the way that the Indian Act election system and municipal-style governance system divided their communities and thwarted efforts at consensus-driven long-term planning. They expressed regret that many in their communities (including themselves on some occasions) knew little about the way that Stó:lõ society had been organized historically or the way that leadership had once been exercised. Not everyone, however, agreed with Douglas' critique. A minor-

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2 Forest LaViolette, *The Struggle for Survival: Indian Cultures and the Protestant Ethic in B.C.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 70.

3 Under pressure from Aboriginal leaders, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau hastily added a section to the 1982 Constitution Act that guaranteed Aboriginal people's "existing and treaty rights." Shortly thereafter, the Penner Commission released a report that recommended that Aboriginal rights be defined in such a way as to formally include the right to self-government. This report was never formally adopted, and subsequent efforts to clarify the existence and expression of Aboriginal self-governance were rejected after the defeat of the Meech Lake and the Charlottetown Accords. In 1993, however, Jean Chretien campaigned on a platform that argued that the Aboriginal right to self-governance was already protected as an existing right under section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982. Since Chretien's election victory, the federal government (including the Conservative government of Stephen Harper) has accepted the existence of an Aboriginal right to self-government, although no definition of what this means has been agreed to, outside of definitions entrenched for particular First Nations, such as the Nisga, through treaty negotiations.

ity of chiefs were satisfied with the election system and the governance provided by elected chiefs and councilors, and felt that it would be reckless and potentially undemocratic to try to revive an older family-based system of leadership that might emphasize heredity privilege, thereby reviving or exacerbating older class divisions. Clearly, in communities where cultural traditions had been the target of well over a century of concerted colonial efforts at assimilation, Aboriginal governance was a complicated and hotly debated matter.

During the course of my research, I interviewed thirty-four Stó:lõ elders, cultural experts, and politicians. Of this group, eleven invited me back for additional, prolonged discussions. In the end, I produced a discussion paper entitled "Government Attempts to Assimilate Stó:lõ People, and Traditional Stó:lõ Leadership." A few years later, an expanded version of this report appeared under the title "Early Nineteenth Century Stó:lõ Social Structures and Government Assimilation Policy," in a collection of essays published by the Stó:lõ Heritage Trust.[4]

Seemingly pleased with the results, in 1993 the chiefs asked me to organize a series of community workshops for individual Stó:lõ First Nations to share the findings and gauge responses. I typically began these meetings with a historical survey of British and Canadian assimilation policies towards Aboriginal people, followed by a discussion of early contact era Stó:lõ socio-political society as revealed through oral histories, ethnographies, and historical records. Throughout my talks, I emphasized the way that elders described pre-colonial Stó:lõ society as having been organized around networks of overlapping extended families, and how in the past leadership was primarily nested among those members of high status families who had demonstrated the greatest organizational skills and aptitude at dispute resolution—that is, among the high status people referred to as siyá:m. It was also clear that mentoring was a central feature of older Stó:lõ governance practices. Wesley Sam, an elder from the Soowahlie community, provided a particularly detailed oral history, explaining that when a child reached puberty, elders (typically women) worked to identify which ancestral spirit was working most closely with that child. Children who showed leadership skills and aptitude in dispute resolution were regarded as having been chosen by the ancestors. It was the obligation of the current living family and com-

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4 Keith Thor Carlson, "Early Nineteenth Century Stó:lõ Social Structures and Government Assimilation Policy," in Keith Thor Carlson ed., *You Are Asked to Witness: The Stó:lõ In Canada's Pacific Coast History* (Chilliwack: Stó:lõ Heritage Trust, 1997), 87–108.

munity leaders to nurture these traits by mentoring the chosen children throughout their adolescence. As the child matured, the extended family availed themselves of potlatch opportunities to transfer hereditary names and associated rights, privileges, and social obligations to the youth. Over time, particularly gifted and carefully mentored individuals found themselves increasingly turned to for leadership within the family. They possessed no institutionalized power to compel people to follow them, but their powers of persuasion and their reputations for good decision-making were considerable. The greatest family leaders, Wes Sam emphasized, acquired reputations for broader community, tribal, and even supra-tribal leadership.

For the second part of my workshop presentation, I provided a basic critique of the DIA municipal-style election system. I highlighted the tendency of the "first-past-the-post" model to reward those who were able to strategically take advantage of schisms within communities in order to win pluralities, and emphasized the implications of such a system in communities where people tended to vote along family lines. Where appropriate, I used specific historical examples from Stó:lõ communities to illustrate my points. Finally, I provided each community with a series of recommendations for escaping the most detrimental aspects of the Indian Act election system. These ranged from tinkering with the existing election process to the outright abandonment of that system and re-creation of an Indigenous system of local governance.

Response to the original report and the community talks was overwhelmingly positive. People were engaged by the topic, and most community members who attended the sessions provided feedback that corroborated and enriched the findings of the original research—namely, that the Indian Act elections were divisive, and that the system of governance sponsored under the Indian Act served to create jealousies and mistrust between families within communities. While a few people worried that their communities were too assimilated and accustomed to the Indian Act to move away from it, a majority of those who participated in the workshops indicated that they preferred to return to a more traditional form of family-based governance. Many, however, were reluctant to move too quickly, anticipating that INAC would not allow bands to unilaterally remove themselves from the Indian Act's electoral provisions. As such, most people stated that the best means of making the transition

would be to negotiate a culturally appropriate form of self-governance through the recently launched B.C. treaty process.[5]

Within months of the report's release, and while community talks were still taking place, a large potlatch-naming ceremony was organized by the Stó:lõ Tribal Council to bestow upon Chief Sam Douglas the title of grand chief and to confer upon him the ancestral name Hielama-cha. The honouring of Douglas, a well-known proponent of the return to a traditional governing system, sent a strong signal to Stó:lõ people throughout the territory. To drive the message home, on 21 October 1993, Douglas faxed a message to all Stó:lõ chiefs and councilors announcing that he was resigning as elected chief of Cheam (a position that he had held for more than twenty-five years) and calling on all other Stó:lõ chiefs to embrace a governance system based on a family-appointed siyá:m.[6] Few, however, were as bold as Douglas. Indeed, shortly following his resignation, Grand Chief Douglas himself decided that moving too quickly to a traditional system might prove excessively divisive for Stó:lõ communities. As such, he decided to nominate his younger brother Charles (Corky) Douglas—who was also known to support replacing the DIA system of governance with a traditional, family-based system—as candidate for chief in the next election.

In the initial wake of Sam Douglas' bold unilateral move to step down as elected chief, the will for political change among the Stó:lõ found expression primarily in administrative channels at the tribal council level rather than within the Ottawa-sponsored structures of individual Stó:lõ First Nations. The greatest, or at least most apparent, success manifested itself in the extended family-based structure adopted for the Stó:lõ Child and Family Services Agreement that the chiefs negotiated with federal and provincial authorities. Referred to as Xyolhemeylh (literally "those who take care of the young"), the Stó:lõ Child and Family Services offices drew explicitly from the leadership study and created a system of "hands-off" governance where respected family leaders from all member communities participated in developing and overseeing procedures for the placement of apprehended children and the delivery of "family-building" programming.

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5 In the early 1990s, there was a fair bit of optimism about the B.C. treaty process. More than a decade into negotiations, there is increased resentment among many Stó:lõ people that the federal and provincial governments actually only want to reify the municipal model. First Nations assertions of governance on their own terms has received a muted response from Ottawa and Victoria.

6 Faxed press release from Chief Sam Douglas to all Stó:lõ chiefs and councilors, 21 October 1993 (copy in author's possession).

Owing in large part to the excitement surrounding the Xyolhemeylh administrative governance, interest in traditional leadership and governance remained strong over the following months, even though few concrete steps were taken to implement it within individual bands. Then, on 11 March 1994, Chief Audrey Kelly of the Shxw'õwhámél First Nation received what she at first considered a puzzling letter from INAC. Chief Kelly had written INAC a week earlier, requesting that the federal government accept her council's nomination of an electoral officer to oversee the community's forthcoming scheduled band election. The manager of Band Governance and Revenues informed Chief Kelly that although her band had held elections in the past, they were not required to do so by INAC. Unlike many other First Nations who had formally adopted the Indian Act system (or had had it imposed upon them), Shxw'õwhámél was still registered as operating under the "custom" system. When Chief Kelly telephoned the INAC manager to ask for clarification, she was told, "It doesn't matter to us if you run a foot race or flip a coin, all we need to know in the end is the name of your Chief and the names of those on your council." INAC was not interested in how Shxw'õwhámél's community leaders were selected, only that the ministry be informed of the results afterwards.[7] Chief Kelly was quick to seize the opportunity.

Three days earlier, Chief Kelly had invited me to attend a band meeting scheduled for 14 March to present the findings of my research report. Now, with the news from INAC, Kelly was hopeful that the meeting would do more than simply facilitate a theoretical discussion on self-governance. Rather, she hoped that Shxw'õwhámél would enact it. At a public meeting, she explained the legal implications of the "custom" provisions of the Indian Act. She then announced that she would not accept a nomination for a third term as chief, and, in fact, that she would no longer participate in an electoral system that "pit family against family … in a winner take all scenario."[8] She then reminded people how, following the last election, two of those who had run against her and lost had subsequently refused to speak to her for more than a year. She further stated that over the past decade the community had been torn apart by accusations of financial mismanagement and embezzlement—charg-

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7 Anita Boscariol, the Acting Manger of Band Governances and Revenues, B.C. Region, to Chief and Council, Ohamil [Shxw'õwhámél] Indian Band, 11 March 1994 (file #E4218-587(BG)). Copy provided by Chief Kelly to author.

8 Notes taken by author at meeting.

es that she attributed more to family jealousies enhanced by the non-accountable and non-transparent nature of the Indian Act government system than to actual wrong doings. She then quoted Grand Chief Sam Douglas as saying that "the electoral system under the Indian Act breaks up the old family system more than anything else." Echoing Douglas, she called on people to "look at the destructiveness the system causes on our reserves at election time." Kelly ended her speech by calling on her community to reject the DIA election system and return to the family-based siyá:m system.

　　The Shxw'õwhámél community's response was enthusiastic, and over the next six weeks I was invited to facilitate eleven evening meetings where band members collectively strategized how they might organize themselves so that every extended family would have a siyá:m to represent them on council, and how the council might subsequently function. In the end, they agreed that there were eight family clusters living on the reserve and that each was entitled to a siyá:m representative. Each family was left to determine how it would appoint its siyá:m (some opted for family meetings with nominations and mini-elections, others were to be selected upon the basis of consensus, and others yet left the task of appointment to family elders). They decided that families had the right to replace their siya:m at any time, and that it would be up to the Siyá:m Council to select from among themselves a yewal siyá:m (roughly "leader of leaders"). Finally, it was decided that the council would operate on the principle of consensus rather than simple majority, except in such cases where consensus could not be achieved after three consecutive meetings.

The Situation Today

It has now been nearly sixteen years since Shxw'õwhámél decided to abandon the Indian Act system of elections and governance. Over that time, there have been several modifications to the way that the Siyá:m Council governs. Initially, because it was largely men who were selected to represent their families on the council, women from various families formed a parallel Women's Council, which met once every two weeks to discuss "issues of pressing concern to women and children."[9] The women explained that a Women's Council was needed because they feared that women's issues might not receive adequate attention from the predomi-

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9 Darlene Fraser and Lynda McHalsie, in conversation with author, 1994.

nantly male siyá:ms. The Women's Council was not set up in opposition to the Siyá:m Council, these women were quick to emphasize, but rather was designed to bring concerns to the siyá:m that might not receive adequate hearing in the individual siyá:m's pre-council family meetings. The creation of this council was politically significant, however, for on the surface it seemed to run counter to the family-centred structure that the community aspired to nurture in their formal band governance.

Clearly a statement of resistance to what in feminist critical theory might be regarded as the persistence of a centrist ideology of male dominance within the revived siyá:m council, the organizers of the Women's Council worked to ensure that all women in the settlement knew that they were invited to attend, speak, and participate at the Women's Council meetings.[10] The Women's Council provided a forum for a gender collective that cut across family lines rather than reinforce them. The Women's Council flourished for several months, and continued to operate for several years. By the early years of the twenty-first century, however, its meetings were sporadic and attendance sparse. Indeed, while one of the six women interviewed for this study in 2006 reported that a small number of women continued to meet, other women explained that, as far as they knew, the Women's Council had been disbanded. This confusion, and the apparent diminishment of this significant vehicle for female voices, should not, however, be confused with a decline in women's political activism. Rather, it appears to signal a confidence among women that, with the increased number of women who have been appointed by their families to sit on the formal Siyá:m Council, their issues are now being represented front and centre at the community's central political forum. As such, many women regarded the Women's Council as less necessary.

Another major change to the Siyá:m Council was the decision in 1995 to eliminate the position of yewal siyá:m. Under the original terms of reference, the various family representatives were charged with the responsibility of selecting from among themselves a yewal siyá:m to represent Shxw'õwhámél on the broader multi-First Nation umbrella organization known as the Stó:lõ Nation, as well as in community dealings with outside agencies. The Siyá:m Council originally selected Albert "Sonny" McHalsie for this position, but for reasons that have never been

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10 For a discussion of contemporary feminist theory's critique of centrist ideologies and centrist deployments of power, see Mary F. Rogers, "Contemporary Feminist Theory," in *Handbook of Social Theory*, eds. George Ritzer and Barry Smart (London: Sage Publications, 2001).

made entirely clear or public, and over which there remains controversy and ill feelings to this day, some of the siyá:m met (ostensibly as a subcommittee to discuss fishing issues) and spontaneously decided to remove McHalsie from his position on the basis of unsubstantiated rumors of wrong doing. Frustrated, McHalsie chose to neither accept their decision nor resign. Instead, he decided to wait until the accusations were brought forward against him at a full and properly convened Siyá:m Council meeting so that he could respond to any accusations. This, apparently, has never happened. According to McHalsie,

> A lot of community members out there [ask,] "Why, what happened to the Yewal Sí:yá:m? And why was [he] taken out?" And I think something has to be done to show that when they kicked me out they had no authority, no jurisdiction, and no reason to take me out. So I think that has to be addressed first before they ever go to another Yewal Siyá:m; and it's hard for me to step up and say "this is what you should do to the guy that you removed," because it was me.[11]

Left unresolved, the emotions surrounding the issue of the dismissed yewal siyá:m have been eating at the fabric of Shxw'õwhámél governance for more than a decade. In the interim, people have sought to make the best of the situation by having various siyá:m assume responsibilities for different "portfolios" or spheres of responsibility (e.g., education, treaty, fishing, housing). This, in turn, has resulted in political authority spread broadly across the community and among the several families. It has also helped foster a political climate aimed at consensus building. These positive and unplanned developments, however, have not completely compensated for what many people see as the downside of the situation. In September 2006, all but one of the Shxw'õwhámél residents interviewed for this project indicated that the position of yewal siyá:m should be revived. Most expressed concern that the absence of a yewal siyá:m not only rendered Shxw'õwhámél less effective than other Stó:lõ communities in articulating its concerns to outside groups and agencies, but that it had resulted in an internal political leadership vacuum. Comments similar to those raised by Ron Pierre are typical:

> We need direction. There's no one to oversee [things] and [so] then people don't know what they're supposed to do in the

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11 Sonny McHalsie, in conversation with Tim Peters, 19 September 2006.

office or whatever …. There's no one to … see to the adminis-tration, and no one to talk for all the Sí:yá:ms. That's what we haven't got now and I think we need one.[12]

The Overlooked Issue of Isolated Bands

Much of the academic literature on the history of band-level Aborigi-nal governance focuses on the Indian Act's electoral and governing sys-tems.[13] Most of the published discussion (mine included[14]) of the nega-tive impacts of these systems has focused on the harm done to Aboriginal settlements, and has raised the issue of factionalism within Aboriginal settlements.[15] Throughout the scholarship, communities (i.e., First Na-tions) are generally regarded as analogous to what the Indian Act refers to as Indian bands. Herein lies the dilemma facing Shxw'õwhámél as it seeks to fully operationalize and make meaningful its family-based siyá:m council system. It is not merely the substitution of the election system and governance process of the Indian Act that has handicapped Aborigi-nal governance and facilitated assimilation; it is also the reification of bands as autonomous political entities with an unhealthy co-dependency on INAC. This has undermined Aboriginal self-governance by re-fash-ioning Aboriginal people's understandings of community and by discon-necting people from their relatives living in other Indian bands.

What emerged most strikingly from the interviews conducted in 2006 was that the vast majority of Shxw'õwhámél people strongly felt

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12 Ron Pierre, in conversation with Tim Peters, 20 September 2006.

13 Wayne Daugherty and Dennis Madill, *Indian Government Under Indian Act Legislation, 1868–1951* (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Treaties and Historical Research Centre, Research Branch, 1980); Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992); James S. Frideres, *Native Peoples in Canada: Contemporary Conflicts*, 3rd ed. (Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1988); J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); J. Rick Ponting and Robert Gibbins, *Out of Irrelevance: A Socio-Political Introduction to Indian Affairs in Canada* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1980); Gerald F. Reid, *Kahnawà:ke: Factionalism, Traditionalism, and Nationalism in a Mohawk Community* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); John L. Tobias, "Protection, Civilization, Assimilation: An Outline of the History of Canada's Indian Policy," in *Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada*, J.R. Miller, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

14 Carlson, "Early Nineteenth Century Stó:lõ Social Structures and Government Assimilation Policy."

15 A consistent contrary voice is found in the writing of Thomas Flanagan, as most recently articulated in the volume of essays he co-edited with Terry Anderson and Bruce Benson, *Self Determination: The Other Path for Native Americans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

that the siyá:m system marked a significant improvement over the earlier DIA-style election process, and in particular that it had significantly reduced the feeling that certain individuals and families were marginalized from the political process. Nevertheless, people believed that the system of Indian bands associated with particular reserve land bases and associated membership lists crippled the functioning of traditional Stó:lõ extended-family governance. As Leona Kelly summed up,

> There are families [that] have nobody … so then there's like one person or three people. How are they covered? Do we go over there and tell them to be signed under so-and-so's [family] and make a choice? Or tell them to be a Siyá:m and come and make a representation at the table?[16]

Leona Kelly and others recognized that those living on reserves who are regarded as being from small families are, in fact, most often members of relatively large extended families who happen to be clustered primarily on different reserves. As such, their broader family's principal political energies are focused elsewhere.

> We need to find some better structure [that will] allow the people [from small families] to make decisions whether they're just one person or just a family of three or two. So taking a look at the ones that weren't filled in and are being left out [that's what's important now].[17]

The solution, however, is complicated. The DIA system of autonomous bands not only tends to marginalize those who live off-reserve, it also leaves people politically orphaned from their relatives elsewhere within the larger Stó:lõ territory. As such, colonialism has prevented those in positions of political authority from effectively co-ordinating resources and programming with family networks in mind. DIA-sponsored band autonomy, therefore, works to reinforce the idea most closely associated with political scientist Thomas Flanagan, namely that Aboriginal governance should be restricted to local authority or municipal-style status.[18] In response, Menno Boldt and J. Anthony Long pointed out that each

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16 Leona Kelly, in conversation with Tim Peters, 19 September 2006.

17 Ibid.

18 See, for example, Thomas Flanagan, "The Sovereignty and Nationhood of Canadian Indians: Comment on Boldt and Long," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 18 (1985).

band in Canada cannot constitute a nation because they are legal-political entities created by the Canadian government for administrative purposes.[19]

If broader Indigenous governance is to operate and flourish in a manner consistent with earlier familial and geographic expressions of social and political cohesion, it will be necessary to build greater capacity within the regional Stó:lõ umbrella political organizations, such as the Stó:lõ Tribal Council and Stó:lõ Nation, or the regional service delivery administrative programs, such as the Stó:lõ Child and Family Welfare Agency or the Stó:lõ Fisheries Agency. As Darlene Fraser pointed out in her appraisal of the Siyá:m Council's weakness more than a decade ago, "We are one reserve, not the whole Stó:lõ Tribal Council."[20]

Shxw'õwhámél residents have explained that in order for broader regional governance to occur in a way that respects the reality of family members living on different reserves, Stó:lõ people will require a clear understanding of the colonial processes that have undermined their Indigenous governance and reified the oppositional system of independent/autonomous Indian bands. These historical processes, while impacting all aspects of Stó:lõ society for more than five generations, are nevertheless often difficult for individuals to understand in their totality. Moreover, colonial impacts on Stó:lõ governance have often assumed subtle, inconspicuous forms. They have, for example, been tied to land development, resource extraction, spirituality, ritual, ceremony, and education, as well as the more obvious realm of band government. As such, research that peels back the layers of time to shed light on colonial events, processes, and personalities that have undermined extended family cohesion can serve to build a foundation of knowledge upon which people can begin to decolonize minds and communities. It is to these historical matters that I now turn.

Colonial Efforts to Isolate Stó:lõ Communities

It has been clearly demonstrated that colonial authorities had poor understandings of the Native people whom they sought to govern. Much of what they believed, and many of the policies that they implemented, were premised on stereotypical suppositions. The earliest colonial

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19 Menno Boldt and J. Anthony Long, "Reply to Flanagan's Comments: 'The Sovereignty and Nationhood of Canadian Indians: Comment on Boldt and Long,'" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 19:1 (March 1986).

20 Darlene Fraser, letter to editor of the *Hope Standard*, 6 July 1994.

agents in Stó:lõ territory worked under the assumption that Stó:lõ people were migratory, with only a loose connection to specific lands and resources, and whose village affiliations trumped the family connections that linked settlements and facilitated the movement of people between socially, economically, and spiritually anchored villages. Colonial-era efforts at "community development," therefore, were aimed at strengthening a particular expression of Aboriginal people's association within specific band-based communities, and, by extension, severing or weakening the broader family ties that bound together the roughly two-dozen regional Stó:lõ settlements.

Throughout the months leading up to and following the rushed establishment of the colony of British Columbia in November 1858, colonial correspondence was permeated with the issue of addressing Stó:lõ people's allegedly nomadic nature in order to recast their identity on a more European-style agriculturalist model. Writing to Governor James Douglas at the height of the 1858 racial tensions in the Fraser Canyon, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Edward B. Lytton, clarified that it was the British government's desire that "attention be given to the best means of diffusing the blessings of the Christian Religion and civilization among the natives."[21] To expedite the Stó:lõ people's "entrance into the pale of civilization,"[22] Lytton considered it necessary to eliminate those things in the Native character that made them different, particularly their assumed unsettled nature and propensity for movement. He proposed, therefore, a policy that would fix the lower Fraser Indigenous people "permanently in villages," thereby reducing their opportunity for coming into conflict with the new settler element, while simultaneously increasing the opportunity for positive social manipulation.[23]

If Native people's assumed migratory nature could be curbed, the reasoning went, it followed that Aboriginal society could be more easily controlled and shaped. Once remodelled, it would become compatible with commercial development interests. For both Douglas and Lytton, Indian identity was conceived of as a product of an unanchored relationship with geography, an outgrowth of an errant migratory existence. Governor Douglas embarked on a policy initiative predicated on the

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21 E.B. Lytton to Sir James Douglas, 31 July 1858, in *Papers Connected with the Indian Land Question, 1850–1875, 1877* (Victoria: Richard Wolfenden, Government Printer, 1877; reproduction, 1987; hereafter *Papers*), 12.

22 F.W. Chessen to E.B. Lytton, copy forwarded to Governor Douglas, 2 September 1858, in *Papers,* 12–13.

23 E.B. Lytton to Sir James Douglas, 30 December 1858, in *Papers*, 15.

assumption that Native people's "wandering" nature had placed them in a timeless and unchanging state of primitive existence. The key to thawing Aboriginal social identity, it was thought, lay in freezing their physical movements.

Although its manifestation and consequence were specific and local, the British Columbia plan was neither unique nor original. It was derived from a firmly established intellectual tradition, the origins of which in British thought could be traced back at least as far as the writings of the seventeenth-century philosopher John Locke, who divided the world's population into two groups, "civilized" and "natural." He regarded Aboriginal people as living in a disorganized savage state of nature, without the benefit of organized government. Aboriginal people's only property rights were to products of their own labour. To vast tracks of land, they had no rights for the simple reason that he considered them to not have invested their labour into the soil.[24] Participating in western-style agriculture was, therefore, regarded as symbolic of an Aboriginal people's decision to embark on the path to civilization, the benefits of which included property rights. But before savage people could become farmers, they first had to associate themselves permanently with a particular piece of land.

As Henry Reynolds has demonstrated for Australia, and Cole Harris for British Columbia and Canada, Locke's ideas about property, labour, and agriculture meant that "labour established its right without any need of consent."[25] Indeed, Barbara Arneil shows how Locke rejected conquest as a legitimate means of acquiring property rights. It was only through the investment of labour in the soil that settled and civilized Europeans could be justified in alienating land that Aboriginal people occupied but did not properly use.[26] Put another way, within the British colonial context, European agriculturalists had pre-emptive rights over Native hunters and gatherers. Accordingly, once westerners arrived and invested their labour into the land, they acquired property rights.

24 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), especially Chapter V, "On Property," 327–344.

25 R. Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002)*,* xxiii; Henry Reynolds, *The Law of the Land* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1987). For a discussion of how these ideas ultimately played themselves out on the Canadian prairies, see Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), especially 15–20, 79–84.

26 Barbara Arneil, *John Locke and America: The Defence of English Colonialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

It is not surprising, therefore, that Governor Douglas regarded Lytton's "simple plan" as "feasible" because in contrast to the dependency-spawning policies pursued by the Spanish in South America, and the costly and ineffective American system, it appeared "the only plan which promises to result in the moral elevation of Native Indian races; in rescuing them from degradation and protecting them from oppression and rapid decay." Douglas was convinced that the scheme would be successful so long as the newly settled Indian could be made as "comfortable and independent in regard to physical wants in his improved condition as he was *when a wandering denizen of the forest.*"[27] He quickly embarked on a strategy that he described as "*forming* settlements of natives."[28]

A key component of the British Columbia colonial reserve-creation process, and one that was to fracture the links between Aboriginal extended families in a profound and lasting manner, involved the creation of lists of people who "belonged" to particular settlements or reserves. By the end of the nineteenth century, these lists were known as band membership lists, and were governed by the Indian Act.[29]

The procedure for generating membership lists emerged out of the reserve-creation process. While Douglas had instructed surveyors to mark off reserves to dimensions specified by Aboriginal leaders, many of his subordinates, and certainly his successors, were concerned that the cited size of reserves was beyond Aboriginal "requirements." The means used to assess the adequacy of a reserve's size settled on a ratio of residents to acreage. Thus, by 1863 reserve surveys involved the collection of census data and, increasingly thereafter, information that could be used to assess a Native community's ability to "make adequate use of the land"—that is, information on livestock as well as occupation.[30] Governor Douglas himself was the first to raise the question of the people-to-land ratio. In April 1863, in response to Indigenous protests, the governor accused his own Land and Works Department of

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27 Sir James Douglas to E.B. Lytton, 14 March 1859, in *Papers*, 16. Emphasis added.

28 Ibid., 17. Emphasis added.

29 Membership lists became a formal part of the Department of Indian Affairs administrative procedures in 1951.

30 Joseph Trutch, a construction contractor, became chief commissioner of Land and Works in 1864. The question of whether natives "made adequate use of the land" became particularly synonymous with Trutch and his interpretation and application of Indian policy, as it was used by him repeatedly in his colonial correspondence and subsequently, while he was lieutenant governor of the province of British Columbia, with his superiors in Ottawa.

creating an Indian reserve at Coquitlam that was "insufficient" to meet the settlement's vegetable production requirements. Heretofore, surveyors had included only existing cultivated fields within the reserve boundaries, but, as historical geographer Cole Harris has documented, for Native settlements to be self-supporting, "adequate resources had to be secured for them. This implied fairly large reserves."[31] Henceforth, Douglas made clear that he wanted reserves to include sufficient lands to ensure agricultural-based self-sufficiency, and that if the Natives themselves did not request sufficient land for this purpose, then the officer concerned was to take it upon himself to set apart a larger area.[32] Under Douglas' system, Indians who remained committed to a collective life on the reserve (as opposed to becoming individual farmers by applying for fee-simple title to quarter-section farms) were not to expect to be able to access agricultural produce beyond their borders. That is, they were not to expect government handouts. As such, they required sufficient land to be agriculturally self-supporting.

Thus, to facilitate colonial land development schemes, it became imperative to determine how many Stó:lõ were associated with each Native settlement, and to formally and permanently associate certain Stó:lõ people with various settlements—that is, to create communities. Moreover, Native people's ability to relocate to the settlements of relatives and friends was curtailed not only by government discouragement, but also by the strain that such emigration placed on the receiving community's collective land resources as defined by government reserve boundaries. By the time that Ottawa assumed responsibility for Indian Affairs in 1871, the anonymous lists of people included in the colonial-era documents were being replaced by official census records that identified by name all the adult male members of each Stó:lõ reserve. Once a name was registered on the official reserve census, a person officially ceased to be a part of any other Indian community. This was especially true in the sense that such membership related to the distribution of government resources, the most important of which was reserve land, for by 1867 the colonial government had repealed its earlier policy of allowing Native people to pre-empt private land.

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31 Harris, *Making Native Space*, 33.
32 James Douglas to R.C. Moody, Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, 27 April 1863, in *Papers*, 26–27; William Young, Colonial Secretary, to R.C. Moody, Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, 11 May 1863, in *Papers*, 28.

The social effects of government membership lists on Aboriginal people were also significant. In addition to preventing Stó:lõ and other Native people from being able to freely relocate to the settlements of relatives, so as to take advantage of better economic opportunities, it meant that the extended family ties that had once facilitated the movement of people to access geographically diverse, hereditarily regulated properties were officially severed and replaced by "communal band lands." This new category of lands could be accessed and used only by officially recognized members of the local resident group. This had a particularly profound effect on the Stó:lõ. Discussing this point with anthropologist Marian Smith in 1945, Seabird Island band member Harry Joe decried the artificial divisions that the lists had created for Stó:lõ people:

> We can't go to Cheam now because we don't belong there. No forefathers [live] there. Can't go to Popkum. We can't go to Puchil [Yale], Hwiaukum, Iwawas [Iwówes near Hope], Iyem [I:yem above Yale], K'alsiln'p, Thla'mzx …. People say Vincent don't belong here [at Seabird Island], but his grandfather lived here at Kaltsialp when he was a young man. His grandfather on his mother's side was from Sq'ewlets and so he could go there if it was in the olden days.[33]

By the end of their interview, Harry Joe had provided Smith with a long list that detailed exactly "who could have gone where," had the membership lists not been imposed and had people remained free to relocate to where they had familial or ancestral ties.[34] Under the government's system of invented local band governments on specific tracts of reserve land, the cross-tribal social networks that had been so important to earlier generations were effectively outlawed so far as residency was concerned. From the perspective of colonial society, Indian people living on one reserve simply had no rights on another.

Although perhaps the most explicit, Mr. Joe was certainly not the first Stó:lõ to publicly express his dissatisfaction with the way that co-

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33 Harry Joe, interview by Marian Smith, Summer, 1945, in *Marian Smith Fieldnotes* (London: Royal Anthropological Institute, MS 268; microfilm copy in British Columbia Archives and Record Service, Victoria BC; hereafter *Smith Fieldnotes*), I: 4–5.

34 Ibid., 5–7. Ironically, while the government worked so hard throughout the 1860s to replace the Stó:lõ sense of collective family title with communal band title, within a generation Indian Affairs bureaucracy was devising new policies to break down band title and replace it with a system of private individual ownership.

lonial membership lists had linked Stó:lõ people to particular tracts of land. Stó:lõ first publicly raised concerns in the early 1870s. In 1874, twenty-five Stó:lõ chiefs, along with a number of their Aboriginal colleagues from coastal and interior communities, petitioned the federal government on a number of pressing concerns. Earlier historians, preoccupied with the "land question" have interpreted this document principally with reference to what it says about the inadequate sizes of reserves. They have overlooked the significance of social relationships to the text's authors.[35] The contents, when read with an eye to the consequences that the restriction of movement had for the Stó:lõ, suggest that the assigning of specific lands to particular groups of people and the inability of people to take advantage of traditional inter-community opportunities for relocation were at least as much a concern as the simple question of land quantum.

The 1874 document demonstrates that the Stó:lõ recognized that new circumstances had arisen that restricted their freedom of movement. "*We are not roaming-about people, as we used to be,*" a young female residential school alumna wrote on behalf of the Fraser River chiefs.[36] Her wording suggests that recent exposure to representatives of western society had enabled the Stó:lõ leadership to understand that European notions concerning the supposed non-settled nature of Native existence were being used to justify the denial of Aboriginal title to land and resources, and that their own prominent seasonal rounds had reinforced this view.

Because band membership had restricted their ability to relocate residences and their ability to seasonally visit an extensive and geographically diverse range of resource sites, the Stó:lõ demanded a more equitable and sustainable land-to-people ratio for their new reserve-based communities. In other words, it was restricted mobility that sub-

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35 Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774–1890*, 2nd ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 184; Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849–1989* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990), 53–54; H. Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 85–86.

36 Pierre Ayessik, Chief of Hope, and other Chiefs, petition to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 14 July 1874, in *Papers*, 136–38. Also in Keith Thor Carlson, with David Schaepe, Albert McHalsie, David Smith, Leanna Rhodes, and Collin Duffield, eds., *A Stó:lõ-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, and Chilliwack: Stó:lõ Heritage Trust, 2001), 173. Emphasis added. Of course, the reference to "as we used to be" does not imply that the Stó:lõ were nomadic, but rather that they had numerous seasonal settlement sites throughout their territory. Most of these sites were excluded from the reserve lands, and the Stó:lõ people in 1874 lived principally at their central winter villages.

sequently made the question of reserve size so important. With mobility curtailed, the Stó:lõ leadership did not simply ask for larger reserve land in 1874; rather, they demanded it in considerable detail and through thinly veiled threats of violence:

> Our hearts have been wounded by the arbitrary way the local government of British Columbia has dealt with us *in locating and dividing our reserves*. Ohamil [Shxw'õwhámél], ten miles below Hope, is allowed 488 acres of good land for the use of twenty families; at a rate of 24 acres per family; Popkum, eighteen miles below Hope, is allowed 369 acres of good land for the use of four families, at the rate of 90 acres per family; Cheam, twenty miles below Hope, is allotted 375 acres of bad, dry and mountainous land for the use of twenty-seven families, at the rate of thirteen acres per family; Yuk-yuk-y-oose, on Chilliwack River, with a population of seven families, is allowed 42 acres: 5 acres per family; Sumas, at the junction of Sumas River and Fraser, with a population of seventeen families, is allowed 43 acres of meadow for their hay, and 32 acres of dry land; Keatsy, numbering more than one hundred inhabitants, is allowed 108 acres of land. Langley and Hope have not yet got land secured to them, and white men are encroaching on them on all sides ….
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> We consider that 80 acres per family is absolutely necessary for our support, and the future welfare of our children. We declare that 20 or 30 acres of land per family will not give satisfaction, but will create ill feelings, irritation amongst our people and we cannot say what will be the consequence.[37]

Clearly, the Stó:lõ recognized the governmental forces working to undermine their regional affiliations and familial identities. They recognized, too, how such efforts undercut their ability to effectively govern themselves. Their efforts to resist such energies, however, were compromised by several factors, not the least of which was the success of the divisive policies. As reserves were created and band membership lists established (and off-reserve lands and resources simultaneously alienated), the logistics of co-ordinated responses to colonial initiatives be-

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37 Pierre Ayessick, *Papers*, 136–38.

came ever more difficult. Further complicating things for Stó:lõ leaders were such matters as a steadily declining population (a result not only of disease-induced high fatality rates, but of laws that rendered women who married non-Natives to lose both their own and their descendants' Indian status). As the Stó:lõ population shrank, each band found itself losing political capacity. Moreover, population decline served to rein-force in colonialist minds that Indigenous people were a vanishing race whose issues and concerns, whatever their merit, would disappear with-in a few short generations. Beyond these official government actions and attitudes, however, were other forces and initiatives that served to fracture traditional notions of community while striving to replace them with governing structures that better fit outsiders' notions of what was in Stó:lõ people's best interests. Key among these was the actions of the various Christian missionaries.

Church Contributions to Building and Fracturing Community

Government officials were not alone in shaping Stó:lõ communities and trying to re-craft Stó:lõ governance. For the Catholic Oblate mission-aries, conversion was predicated on escaping older pagan beliefs and practices, but also, and perhaps more importantly, on rejecting the less savoury elements of western society. In the early 1860s, the Stó:lõ were exposed to and drawn into many of the worst aspects of frontier society. Thus, as Father Fouquet explained, "We had to not only uproot their deep-rooted savage vices, but also to attack the new ones that came along with drunkenness."[38] With this view in mind, the Oblates under Bishop D'Herbomez set about creating a "model reduction"—that is, a series of archetypal Church-centred villages were established so that Stó:lõ could be separated from the debauched elements of European settler society while simultaneously remain isolated from the reactionary and corrosive influences of their traditional Indigenous culture.[39] "Reduction," in other words, was a Catholic euphemism for social laboratory.

Jesuit missionaries in Paraguay pioneered the reduction model in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. While the South American exper-iment ultimately failed, D'Herbomez and his successor, the flamboyant

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38 Fr. Leon Fouquet to Rev. Fr. Tempier, 8 June 1863, *Missions de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Typographie Hennuver et Fils, Rue du Boulevard 7, 1864; hereafter, *Missions*), 199–207.

39 Bishop D'Herbomez, quoted in Vincent J. McNally, *The Lord's Distant Vineyard: A History of the Oblates and the Catholic Community in British Columbia* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2000), 62.

Bishop Paul Durieu, were convinced of the system's potential. They determined that it was not that the philosophy behind the system that was flawed, but that the Jesuits had neglected to cultivate a sufficient degree of autonomy and self-governing authority among the Indigenous populace to allow them to continue to function after Paraguay's secular authorities had expelled the missionaries. In other words, the Jesuit reduction had systematically dissolved because of the vacuum of Indigenous leadership created by excessively paternalistic Jesuit policies of priestly control.[40] Under the Oblates, the British Columbia incarnation of the reduction model emphasized a significant degree of local Aboriginal self-governance, economic self-sufficiency, and autonomy from secular state interference, or, as the Oblates themselves described it, "an Indian state ruled by the Indians, for the Indians, with the Indians, under the directive authority of the bishop and the local priests as supervisors."[41]

Autonomy, however, was set against not only western newcomer society, but also other Indigenous communities, regardless of the social closeness between families within the settlements. As the Catholic priest and historian Vincent McNally pointed out, the "Durieu System," as the reduction system came to be known, aimed largely at creating a new category of Stó:lõ identity: the "good" Native Catholic. Ideally, the Oblates hoped to establish entirely new Indian communities on fertile agricultural lands away from the sites of older Native settlements. Until measures could be put in place to facilitate this, the short-term preoccupation was to recast existing Stó:lõ settlements on the reduction model through a two-fold process of internal and external isolation.

Recasting communities so as to isolate Native people from perceived external evils was the first and greatest priority in the Oblates' strategy for promoting "civilization." Despite the temptation that the Oblates undoubtedly felt to depict pre-missionary (but post-1858 gold rush) Aboriginal circumstances in the starkest and darkest of terms in order to accentuate any subsequent "improvements," the Oblate descriptions of a Stó:lõ society reeling under the effects of alcohol were actually quite accurate. Colonialism not only provided the alcohol, but also the circumstances that led to Aboriginal susceptibility.

40 McNally, *Distant Vineyard*, 58.

41 E. M. Bunoz, Vic. Apost., "Bishop Durieu's System," *Etudes Oblates: Revue Trimestrielle,* (Montreal: Maison Provinciale, 1942), 194. I agree with McNally that Bunoz's writing should be considered a primary source, as his descriptions of Stó:lõ society and the Durieu system are based upon his personal conversations with Durieu, and his own participation in trying to implement the Durieu system among the Coast Salish People.

According to Bishop D'Herbomez's report of May 1861, "the abuse of liquor among [the Stó:lõ] has caused terrible ravages. Nearly all the Chiefs have been victims of this corrosive destroyer of civilization. A great number of youngsters have disappeared due to this abuse."[42] While contemporary Stó:lõ people generally do not like to talk about this sad aspect of their history, there is general agreement that such descriptions are largely accurate.[43]

To assist the Stó:lõ in counteracting the whisky, the Oblates set about establishing "Temperance" or "Sobriety" Societies in every Stó:lõ community where they could identify sympathetic followers. Each Society, while under the supreme direction of the Church, was designed to operate autonomously for those months when no priest could be present.[44] Locally, the Temperance Societies were led by Church-appointed "watchmen," "captains," and "catechists." The gold rush, however, had caused the Stó:lõ to become suspicious of newcomers. Throughout their "first five or six months" of proselytizing, the Oblates lamented that the Stó:lõ "would not even approach the missionaries." But if judged by the writings of Father Chirouse, by the end of the first year, "everywhere, the Indians *en masse*, [had] enrolled under the Banner of Temperance …. With the Chiefs at the head, captains and watchmen were organized in every camp."[45]

The effects of alcohol reinforced for the Oblates the importance of boundary maintenance and provided a focus to their missionary activities. If the devil was at work among the Stó:lõ, his influence was perceived as emanating at least in equal parts from the non-Native whisky peddler and his alcohol as it was from the Stó:lõ shaman and his magic.

42 Bishop D'Herbomez, 30 May, *Missions 1862,* 1: 177.

43 Throughout the 1990s, as an invited speaker at a number of local Stó:lõ band-hosted "community healing" sessions, I was repeatedly told stories of the horrible effects of alcohol on past generations of Stó:lõ people. While most of the stories that people shared described alcohol and drug problems among more recent generations, some explicitly identified the problems of generational alcohol addiction as beginning with the whisky introduced during the 1858 gold rush. There has been no effort to formally collect oral accounts of the history of alcohol and alcoholism among the Stó:lõ. Nonetheless, these are rather common topics of conversation among Stó:lõ people gathered in semi-formal family settings. In addition, at least some such information was collected inadvertently by earlier ethnographers such as Oliver Wells and linguists such as Jimmie Harris while in the process of documenting folk tales or vocabulary. Wells even recorded a Stó:lõ "drinking song" entitled "Oh Chief, It Must Have Been Nice To Be Drunk and Have Whiskey," which appears to date from the early settlement era. See Dan Milo, interview by Oliver Wells, January 1962, SNA. Also, Oliver Wells, *The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbours*, ed. R. Maud and B. Galloway. (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987), 15.

44 E. M. Bunoz, "Bishop Durieu's System," 194, 199.

45 Fr. Chirouse, 16 July 1862, *Missions 1862*, 1: 156.

Indeed, for the Oblate observers, evil emanated from multiple sources. Boundaries were therefore needed both internally and externally. Internally, the watchmen and other Indigenous Church-appointed and -sanctioned officials were assigned the duty of directing local religious instruction, monitoring community activities, and reporting moral violations to the priest—a responsibility that many fulfilled with vigour. Within each settlement, at least two catechists were appointed to lead the community in religious instruction: a man to teach the boys and a woman to instruct the girls. On those Sundays when a priest could not be present,[46] the catechists were expected to lead the faithful in communal morning and evening prayer, recitation of the rosary, catechism classes, vespers, and the Stations of the Cross. When a priest was available, they acted as lay deacons who assisted with the Mass and ensured that people attended confession.[47]

Watchmen, as the name suggests, were the village's monitors—the eyes and ears of the Oblate fathers—and the de facto leaders of the powerful Temperance Societies. Late twentieth-century elders carried oral traditions that described watchmen of the mid-to-late nineteenth centuries as men who were both respected and feared. They "looked in on everything; kept tabs on people, and reported to the priest people who were doing bad things, like drinking or beating their wives and children."[48] Church records corroborate such descriptions. Under the Durieu system, watchmen reported to chiefs "not only on the important violations of important laws, but on family quarrels between husbands and wives, on neglect of children by parents, on the disobedience of children, on

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46 Oblates visited many Stó:lō communities only three or four times a year, and, indeed, as historian Dianne Newell has documented, after 1870 missionaries all along the B.C. coast often found it easier to conduct their proselytizing activities within the context of visiting industrial work sites, such as those associated with the commercial cannery industry. At the canneries, and later at the hop yards, missionaries essentially found the equivalent of large multi-tribal seasonal villages that relieved them of some of the necessity of making more frequent visits to smaller remote settlements. See Dianne Newell, *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law in Canada's Pacific Coast Fisheries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994)*,* 46. Methodist missionaries, lacking the numbers and institutional backing of the Catholics, appear to have been especially attentive to the opportunities that the canneries provided. See, for example, the logbooks for the Methodist **missionary vessel**, *Glad Tidings,* as it traveled up and down the B.C. coast in the 1880s. See Robert Clyde Scott, Add Mss 1299, Box 2/2. Scrapbook. Logbook entries for 16, 23, 24, 25, 28 July 1887 and 24 March 1887; Second logbook entries for June and July 1884, and July 1886, British Columbia Archives (BCA). I am grateful to Dianne Newell for directing me to the Scott manuscript.

47 Bunoz, "Bishop Durieu's System," 194–199. Also, McNally, *Distant Vineyard*, 130–131.

48 Edna Bobb, interview by author, Seabird Island, July 1992.

rowdyism of some men, etc., etc."[49] Of course, they also monitored the activities of the shaman and his clientele. As co-dependent agents of the Church, watchmen were the point men in establishing and maintaining a new set of internal social divisions.

"Indian Courts" were central features of the Durieu system and contributed directly, if inadvertently, to the fragmentation of Stó:lõ society into two new, identifiable groups. These tribunals concerned themselves primarily with issues of morality and sought to maintain a degree of boundary maintenance through the regulation of Temperance Society membership. All those who "converted" to temperance were required to make a "communal pledge" before being admitted as full society members. Upon becoming members, initiates received a "ticket" as an external sign or token of their commitment to Catholicism and "civilization." If charges were brought forth by a watchman and the local Indian tribunal found a member of the Temperance Society guilty of immoral conduct, the presiding chief and Oblate father confiscated the offender's ticket and expelled him from the new community.[50] As a result, throughout the latter decades of the nineteenth century the Oblates tried to inculcate within the Stó:lõ population the importance of being identified with the "good" Catholic Indian community, rather than with those who had retained their superstitious traditional culture and/or had been corrupted by the vices of western society.

While expelled former members of Temperance Societies could in theory regain their membership, it became increasingly clear to the Oblates and the Temperance Societies' Indigenous leaders that to allow what were considered incorrigible personalities to remain within the settlements risked enticing others to fall away. At Chehalis, where the Harrison and Chehalis Rivers meet, the Oblates strove to make the distinction between their definition of good and bad Indians something more tangible than mere boundaries of the mind. According to Father Edward MacGugein's 1886 annual report, some years earlier, "in order to separate the good from the bad," Bishop Durieu had physically "divided" the 127 inhabitants of Chehalis "into two camps." Those deemed "bad" (adherents to traditional spirituality, as well as those who drank) were essentially abandoned and rejected by the "good" temperate Catholic people who relocated a few hundred metres from the old settlement to live in new, western-style homes in immediate proximity to the new Catholic church.

49 Bunoz, "The Bishop Durieu System," 195.

50 McNally, *Distant Vineyard*, 64.

Significantly, while the two new adjacent settlements retained some-what distinct identities until the beginning of the twentieth century, when they again "merged," the Oblate visitor of 1886 could not help but ru-minate over the fact that the supposed black and white division between Durieu's good and bad Indians was actually rather blurred. "The major-ity of these self-called good Indians leave a lot to be desired. The good settlement has as yet many deplorable cases of drunks and superstition. The Chief is too inconsistent in his ideas and his conduct, and so carries the principal responsibility for this state of affairs."[51]

The divisions at Chehalis clearly never produced the results that the Oblates desired. Indeed, they had been nothing more than ad hoc adapta-tions of the Oblates' older and grander scheme of creating a genuinely new model reduction built not upon the foundations of an ancient es-tablished Indigenous settlement, but rather upon the virgin agricultural fields of Matsqui Prairie. There, directly across the river from St. Mary's mission, the Oblates aspired to build a community where, instead of struggling for conversion and against vices old and new, converted members of their Temperance Societies could live in isolation from cor-rupting influences and direct their energies toward achieving what the missionaries regarded as ever-higher expressions of civilization.

Ultimately, the rapid pace of non-Native settlement and the shift in colonial attitudes marked by Governor Douglas' retirement in the spring of 1864 prevented the Oblates from securing an adequate land base (and forced them to try experiments such as the Chehalis division).[52] The massive 9,600 acre Matsqui reserve demarcated by Sgt. McColl in May 1864 appears to have been intended precisely for this purpose by the co-operating Stó:lõ and Oblate leadership. Indeed, by the mid-1860s plans were well underway to substitute the upper-class Stó:lõ tradition of ar-ranged marriages with new Church-orchestrated matrimonial unions be-tween the male and female graduates of St. Mary's residential school.[53] Together, the leaders of the Temperance Societies and the Oblate clergy planned to turn Matsqui Prairie into the destination for the residential schools' brightest alumni. The Matsqui reduction would become a mod-

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51 Father Edward MacGugein, "Report for 1886, Fraser Districts," *Missions*, Vol. 25, 352.

52 The Oblates had much greater success in the more isolated communities of Sechelt on the Gibson's Peninsula and among the Squamish of North Vancouver. The Anglicans achieved even greater success with Metlakatla. See Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, Chapter 6.

53 Bunoz, "Bishop Durieu's System," 200–201. McNally, *Vineyard*, 132–133. Interestingly, such democratic matrimonial unions were also advocated by Stó:lõ prophets of the previous generation. See Wayne Suttles, *Coast Salish Essays* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987), 160–164..

el town surrounded by thousands of acres of cultivated fields, and, most importantly, separated and isolated from the uncivilized elements of Indigenous and western society.[54] These plans were thwarted, however, when, in 1868, Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works Joseph Trutch reduced the Stó:lõ reserve base at Matsqui to a mere eighty acres—an action that "caused great dissatisfaction" among the Indigenous population.[55]

As the era of colonial settlement progressed, one thing was becoming clear: state and Church authorities were collaborating to undermine the social and familial links between communities upon which the supra-tribal Stó:lõ identity was based. Under the combined systems of Department of Indian Affairs band governments and Oblate Reductions and Temperance Societies, settlements were intended to be autonomous from one another. Leadership was to be expressed through western-style institutions and conducted under the supervision of non-Native individuals rather than through the extended family connections that once bound together people of different settlements under variously ranked family and tribal leaders. As elder Patrick Charlie explained in 1950, in the nineteenth century the "priest came, and said each village [was] to boss themselves"[56] And for these autonomous colonial jurisdictions to function as tools of acculturation rather than as agents of resistance, the priests and Indian agents desired the creation of a new generation of Native leaders whose authority rested outside the hereditary institutions that had served Stó:lõ people for centuries, and were instead in some way beholden to, or at least associated with, the colonial institutions of state and Church.

Church Chiefs, Hereditary Leadership, and Denominational Schism

As the colonial era progressed and it became increasingly apparent that sufficient land would not be secured for even one single "new" Catholic

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54 In the summer of 1993, I attended a meeting of Matsqui elders and listened as two elderly women described what they remembered about the nineteenth-century OMI plans for Matsqui Prairie. This paragraph is derived from my memory of their observations. I did not record their conversation or make extensive notes, as I was there on other business and was only serendipitously privileged to hear their oral history.

55 Edward Mohun to Joseph Trutch, 3 December 1868, in *Papers*, 54. A few years later, two separate reserves were created on the Matsqui meadows, one of fifty acres and the other of eighty-two acres.

56 Patrick Charlie, interview by Wilson Duff, in Smith, *Fieldnotes*, 1: 47.

community, divisions of different sorts came to influence Stó:lõ senses of self within their existing settlements. Of increasing significance were inter-denominational conflicts among the emerging Stó:lõ Christian population. While the Oblates were the first missionaries to arrive on the scene, they did not have to wait long for competition. During the generation following, individuals drawn by the gold rush, Methodists, and to a lesser extent Anglicans all challenged Catholic hegemony in the Fraser Valley.[57]

Judging from their writings, both Protestant and Catholic missionaries preferred paganism to the heresy of conversion to the wrong form of Christianity—at least one could then be considered to have not yet made a choice, rather than having made the wrong choice. Commenting on the 1871 activities of a Methodist missionary at Chilliwack, the Oblate priest Charles Marchal proudly reported that the Wesleyan Rev. Thomas Crosby found himself "established in the centre of these [Catholic] villages unable to spread his work."[58] However, Marchal noted that according to his Catholic supporters, the Protestant cleric was attempting to intimidate Stó:lõ into becoming Methodists by preaching that those who rejected the Protestant faith in favour of the "Rome-ish" doctrine "would be chased from this land and transported along with the Catholic priest to an island in the ocean where there is no sweet water, no drink and no food of any kind; where he would soon die of misery."[59]

On the other hand, in his autobiography, *Among the An-ko-me-nums [Halkomelems],* Thomas Crosby painted the picture in reverse, stating that it was the Oblates who subjected Stó:lõ who had shown interest in Methodism to "the most bitter persecution." According to Crosby, at least one circulating version of the Oblate's "Catholic Ladder" mnemonic pictorial teaching device depicted Catholic Indians going to Heaven, while "Crosby and his friends went head first into the flames of hellfire."[60] Not to be outdone, the Methodists soon devised their own retaliatory "Protestant Ladders" that depicted the history of the world from

57 Christian missionaries competed with one another throughout the province, but by the twentieth century a tacit, if informal, agreement seems to have emerged whereby missionaries from one denomination concentrated their efforts in certain regions to the general exclusion of others. The Southwest Coast, Fraser Valley, and Okanagan were Catholic strongholds, although small Methodists enclaves remained, notably the Skowkale and Soowahlie reserves.

58 Reverend Father Charles Marchal to Reverend Father Durieu, 12 February 1871, in *Missions,* Vol. 12, 309.

59 Ibid.

60 Rev. Thomas Crosby, *Among the An-ko-me-nums [Halkomelems] or Flathead Tribes of the Pacific Coast* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1907), 189.

creation to the apocalypse through Reformation eyes. In the Methodist version, history ended with Protestants allowed access into heaven while the Pope himself tipped headlong into hell's torturous flames.[61]

Competition that divided the Stó:lõ into increasingly polarized camps remained a feature of missionary activity throughout the nineteenth century. In 1886, the Oblate priest Father Edward Peytavin described the inter-denominational rivalry at the Stó:lõ community of Skw'átets in terms reminiscent of the European-age of Counter-Reformation. Of a total population of only fifty-one people, thirty-six were Catholic, with the remainder Protestant. The man claiming ancient hereditary prerogatives of leadership was reportedly an Episcopalian Anglican, and the Methodist families allegedly "refused to recognize an Anglican Chief." [62] In response, the Methodist parson appointed a "Methodist Chief." However, according to the Oblate author, this action was unacceptable to the remaining Catholic population. And so, in order to "maintain peace and discipline among the Catholics," Peytavin "chose" a "Catechist or Zealator" for the Catholic majority. Once appointed, this individual was allegedly given by his "co-religionaries" the "title of Chief."

> There are now three [chiefs] in this little village. It is the Catholic who has the most subjects, the Methodist is in control of thirteen, and the Episcopalian has only his wife to govern. This situation causes much laughter among whites and Indians.

That it was not the priest but the Stó:lõ Catholics themselves who ultimately anointed the Catholic chief is significant, and goes a long way to illuminate the degree to which internal boundaries were created by Indigenous people along lines that were ostensibly controlled by outsiders—a process that has recently been the subject of growing academic enquiry.[63]

Significantly, the composition of the competing religious camps was at least occasionally subject to sudden shifts. Slightly upriver from Skw'átets, at the settlement of Shxw'õwhámél, Father Peyatvin reported

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61 See Carlson et al, eds., *A Stó:lõ-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, 154.

62 All quotes in this paragraph come from Eduard Peytavin to MacGuckin, "British Columbia: Letters of R.P. Ed. Peytavin to R.P. MacGuckin, New Westminster, 21 February 1887," *Missions*, 25: 238–251.

63 Historian Susan Neylan has recently documented how within Tsimshian communities competing families also used denominational rivalries to their advantage to the point of recruiting churches to their areas. See Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Protestant Missionization on the North Pacific Coast* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

that while fifty-one families were Catholic and only four or five Angli-
can (and not a single Methodist), a few years earlier the situation had
been drastically different, and the "three different parties were in a dis-
pute over pre-eminence, with the Catholics losing ground."[64]

Such swings in denominational allegiance suggest that conversions
were, at least in some instances, less profound than what any of the
missionaries cared to admit, and likely followed older patterns of peo-
ple allying themselves with the shaman who showed the greatest power
and ability. Indeed, they appear to have shared features with the dis-
putes documented by Kirk Dombrowski within contemporary Tlingit
culture in Alaska.[65] Occasionally, relatively disadvantaged members of
particular Aboriginal communities used Christianity as a way of reject-
ing distinctions, including traditional class divisions, that had served to
oppress them. That those nineteenth-century Stó:lõ who participated in
these inter-Christian affiliation struggles apparently took their denomi-
national identities seriously, despite their sometimes ephemeral nature,
suggests that they carried considerable Indigenous import, regardless
of whether they served as vehicles for other, older identity divisions
that non-Native observers failed to perceive. Whatever their nuances,
these divisions served to both create and reinforce divisions within and
between Stó:lõ settlements, just as they worked to re-craft the workings
of Stó:lõ governance.

Creating or Recognizing Chiefs?

Government and Church officials were each keen to exploit every op-
portunity for transforming the previously associated Native settlements
into autonomous political entities. The process of reserve reduction in
1868 provided ample opportunities, for not only did this abridge the
Indigenous land base, but, more importantly in terms of its effect on
Indigenous governance, it also resulted in small, disconnected islands of
Aboriginal space within a sea of white farmland.

Under the emerging colonial system, Indian chiefs, as spokesmen
and representatives of their settlements, became key figures through
whom government resources—not the least important of which were
reserve lands and agricultural implements—were distributed. Thus, ob-
taining and retaining government-sponsored symbols of chiefly author-

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64 Eduard Peytavin, "Report of 1886," in *Missions*, 25: 242.

65 Kirk Dombrowski, *Against Culture: Development, Politics and Religion in Indian Alaska*
  (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

ity quickly assumed practical as well as symbolic significance in Stó:lõ society. Understandably, therefore, we learn that in 1868 competing claimants had almost "come to blows" over the question of who was more legitimately entitled to have their name "inserted … in the duly authorized [reserve] map of the District as the *real* Chiefs."[66]

When J.B. Launders arrived in Chilliwack in October 1868 to begin anew the process of surveying Stó:lõ reserves (that is, reducing those created under Gov. Douglas' authority in 1864), he was directed by local white settlers to the house of Captain John Swalis, a recent convert to Methodism who piously rejected shamanism and strove to abolish its practice among his friends and family.[67] Together with Captain John, Launders walked the perimeter of the small, cultivated fields, houses, and cemetery sites, and in the process redrew the Soowahlie reserve map. In so doing, the two men effectively erased the original four-thousand-acre reserve and replaced it with one of just six hundred acres. Afterward, Captain John's name appeared on the resulting map as "Chief," and in Launder's report "Chief Captain John" was reportedly "satisfied" with the results of the reduction.[68]

If Captain John was satisfied with the smaller land base, other claimants to the title of community leader certainly were not. Launders' surveys effectively divided the Chilliwack tribe into nine small and distinct settlement-based political entities. The chiefs of three of these reserves, including Chief Captain John, were Methodists who, according to their detractors, did not trace their ancestry back to an immortal founding father from the legendary myth-age time. The following spring, on the occasion of the annual queen's birthday celebrations in New Westminster, those with counter-claims to leadership manoeuvred to displace Captain John and transform their hereditary status into government-recognized chieftainships. In their efforts to consolidate political power, the Catho-

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66 A. Browning to Officer Administering the Government, 6 July 1869, in *Papers*, 71.

67 Captain John, "The Story of the Conversion and subsequent experiences of Captain John as Narrated by Himself, March 30, 1898," Add. MSS. 1 Box 7 File 253 The Sardis Epworth League, Chilliwack Museum and Archives, Chilliwack BC. Additionally, in 1992 I was told by Captain John's grandson, Andy Commodore, that Captain John had at one time attempted to prevent winter spirit dancing from occurring on the Soowahlie reserve. When his own mother began dancing, Captain John physically attempted to stop her. However, when he touched his dancing mother he was struck and knocked back by the spirit, and he himself began to dance uncontrollably. From that point onward, Captain John remained opposed to spirit dancing, but never again attempted to directly intervene to stop others.

68 J. B. Launders to the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, Joseph Trutch, 18 December 1868, in *Papers*, 54–57. Also, J.B. Launders, "Survey Maps," copy on file at Stó:lõ Nation Archives (SNA), Chilliwack BC.

lic priests worked with those who identified themselves as the hereditary elite. It was at the priests' behest that a senior official in the Lands and Works Department took the maps away from Captain John and his fellow Methodist chiefs, and gave them to those men whom the Catholic priests identified as the true hereditary chiefs (although what process or criteria the priests used is unclear). Before the transfer, the official altered the maps so that they contained only the Catholic chiefs' names. As a concerned Wesleyan minister astutely observed, the Methodists, or "*real* Chiefs," found themselves "in the position of being, in the eyes of the Government, no Chiefs at all."[69]

The dispute did not fade quickly. The Methodists appealed the change and demanded that the "papers" containing the names of the originally listed chiefs be restored to their original possessors.[70] After considerable haranguing (at one point, the government agent accused Rev. A. Browning of interfering in government business and trying to "make chiefs"), the Lands and Works Department decided to produce a second set of maps that included the names of each of the various claimants, only with the Methodists apparently listed as "second" or sub-chiefs. Each new Native official was then provided a copy of the same.[71]

This compromise ultimately proved unsustainable. Aboriginal representatives from each camp reported to the government that white missionaries associated with their opponents' candidacy made threats that unless everyone supported their choice for chief, the government would reduce their reserve lands even further.[72] In response, at the two settlements where tensions were the greatest, the government conducted the first municipal-style democratic elections for Indian chief in British Columbia history. At Squiala, the adult male population "[s]elected their hereditary chief, (and not the [Methodist] one who had represented himself to … [the government agent] as chief) to receive the map by a majority of three, 9 to 6." At Soowahlie, twenty-four adult males voted in an election that rejected Captain John "by a majority of fourteen, 19 to 5."

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69 The Rev. Mr. Browning to the Officer Administering the Government, 6 July 1869, in *Papers,* 71.

70 Ibid. See also Captain Ball to Colonial Secretary, 4 December 1869, British Columbia Archives (BCA), GR 1372, File 397/1 B-1322.

71 Captain Ball to Colonial Secretary, 4 December 1869, British Columbia Archives and Records Services (BCA), GR 1372, File 397/1 B-1322. Also, Mr. Ball to the Colonial Secretary, 14 July 1869, in *Papers,* 72.

72 Ibid.

Despite the electoral endorsement for hereditary leadership, the government reversed this decision and recognized Captain John as chief. The reasons for this final switch are not explained in the government records, but sufficient context exists in other sources for us to glean insights into the officials' motives. Oral histories, for example, reveal that the financial fortunes and political careers of Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works Joseph Trutch and Captain John Swalis were intertwined. Three years earlier, before his appointment as chief commissioner, Trutch the businessman had awarded a lucrative sub-contract to Captain John for the construction of the Alexandra Bridge in the Fraser Canyon, and henceforth their political fortunes were somewhat entwined.[73] In addition, Captain John's chieftaincy was championed by twenty-eight non-Native Protestant settlers whose pre-emptions happened to fall within the original 1864 reserve boundaries (either in whole or in part) that Captain John had helped reduce. In late 1869, these settlers petitioned the government to reverse the election results and recognize Captain John as chief of Soowahlie and several other Methodist Natives as chiefs of neighbouring Indian reserves. To give their message added clout, Captain John's supporters warned that unless the government took quick and decisive action along these lines, "serious troubles will arise, involving, perhaps, the whites as well as the Indians."[74]

The threat of Indian military action always captured the colonial government's attention. Thus, despite subsequent clarification by the local government agent that Captain John and the other non-Catholic aspirants referred to in the settler's petition "were not the hereditary Chiefs of their tribes, and not the Indians to whom the majority of their respective tribes wish the maps to be given,"[75] the following year yet another set of maps was produced, inscribed with the names of "Captain John" and the other Methodist claimants to the title of chief.[76]

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73 I discuss the social and political ties linking Captain John and Joseph Trutch in more detail in Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Prss, 2010), 199–200.

74 V. Vedder and 27 others to His Excellency Anthony Musgrave, Governor of British Columbia, 30 November 1869, in *Papers,* 73.

75 H.M. Ball, S.M. to the Colonial Secretary, 15 December 1869, in *Papers,* 74.

76 Indicative of Captain John's ability to consolidate his power is the fact that ten years later, in 1880, he was still listed as chief in the new reserve map created by W.S. Jemmett. See Jemmett, *Fieldnote Book,* 31 July 1880, B.C. Surveyor General's Office, W26, Provincial Crown Lands Vault, Victoria, B.C.

Despite the actions of Captain John, the Methodist clergymen, and the Protestant settlers (and, indeed, despite what may well have been their long-term intentions), in most cases the government preferred to acknowledge leaders who were already recognized as such by their fellow Stó:lõ residents. Generally, this meant providing those men referred to as "hereditary" leaders with government recognition of their role as settlement spokesmen and advocates.[77] Over the following decades, the Methodists and Anglicans largely abandoned the Fraser Valley, and so, with the exception of Captain John's Soowahlie reserve, internal contests over leadership gradually ceased to assume denominational expressions. But even when this was not the case, the Catholic Temperance Societies' hierarchy of chiefs, watchmen, and captains tended to be able to accommodate government requirements without shifting authority too far from the Church's own chain of command. In such circumstances, determining where political agency lay more than a century after the fact is a difficult task.

In cases where the government and Catholic Church disagreed, certain compromises were made so as to avoid open conflicts. In the early years of the Durieu system, for example, many Stó:lõ reserves often had two or more chiefs: an "honourary" figurehead elected by the local populace and then appointed and recognized by the government; and one considered by the Church to be the "real" one (popularly referred to as "Church Chief"), appointed by the priest and who served at the Church's sufferance.[78]

By the last decades of the nineteenth century, most of the chiefs recognized by the Canadian state were also Catholic Church chiefs, but, more importantly, they were also men who were able to demonstrate blood ties to prominent hereditary leaders from the past.[79] In this context, there was often a general continuity in leadership with past generations, but the roles that leaders played within Stó:lõ society assumed new and important, if sometimes nebulous, expressions and significance. "Chiefs" were considered necessary by the government and the Church. Indeed, after British Columbia joined Canada in 1871, Stó:lõ

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77 For example, see correspondence between A.T. Bushby and B.W. Pearse that describes the confusion over government recognition of the Chehalis chief in 1870. See A.T. Bushby to B.W. Pearse, and Pearse to Bushby, in *Papers*, 83.

78 Bunoz, "The Durieu System," 196.

79 I am grateful to Sonny McHalsie, who reviewed many of the Church chiefs' genealogies with me and determined that several of them carried high-status names and were descendants and relatives of people claiming hereditary rights to leadership.

chiefs officially became part of the structure of both the Canadian government as defined by the nascent Indian Act,[80] and the Catholic Church as defined in the reduction model. Thus, in time, Stó:lõ chiefs came to serve the dual and often contradictory and awkward functions of being the primary DIA/Church officials on the reserve as well as the principal Indigenous spokesmen against the DIA and the Church—clashing roles that continue to compromise Native leaders to this day. Moreover, as chiefs under the Indian Act, they came to see themselves as leaders of autonomous communities disconnected from their relatives in adjacent settlements—a development that hinders the re-establishment of a meaningful revival of family-based leadership that recognizes the familial linkages that cut across bands and bind nations together.

Conclusion

Reviving a traditional form of governance, as the people of Shxw'õwhámél have found, is a difficult process. Not only do times change, but so do people's understandings of "traditional." And yet, despite more than one hundred and fifty years of colonial efforts to change them, the desire to build a future upon a solid foundation of cultural tradition remains strong among the Stó:lõ. Indeed, many argue that it is an important step in the decolonizing process. It is also a process that is well underway. As ethnohistorian Alletta Biersack reminds us, the fact that the historical outcome of colonialism and imperialism has not been the universal and complete destruction of Indigenous societies, but a world in which the "other" has found new ways to be different, reveals that colonized people are not without agency.[81]

Simultaneously reviving long eclipsed political power and political systems (not necessarily the same thing) is complicated. Striking a balance between the expectations and demands of the colonizer on the one hand, and the requirements of one's own cultural traditions and community expectations on the other, is no easy task for First Nations leaders. The federal and provincial governments have a vast arsenal of coercive legal, administrative, financial, and social resources that they can bring to bear on Indigenous people who seek to chart a course that deviates from the colonial agenda. The nineteenth-century Stó:lõ leaders who struggled against British and Canadian efforts to alienate their land and

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80 The Gradual Enfranchisement Act and the Assimilation Act were not combined into the single Indian Act until 1876.

81 Alletta Biersack, *Clio In Oceania* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press, 1991), 8.

resources, and against Church and state impositions of models of political and administrative authority, did so in ways that indicated adaptability and conservatism in roughly equal measure. Simply put, Indigenous people were not above pragmatically seeking compromise with representatives of newcomer society, but, as Captain John of Soowahlie discovered, being regarded by one's own community as having walked too far down the road of accommodation could lead to a loss of credibility.

The example of Captain John is a particularly illustrative one for contemporary First Nations leaders who likewise find their ability to speak and act as spokespeople and leaders of their community compromised by their relationship with the omnipresent Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. That First Nations leaders, in their capacity as chiefs under the Indian Act, are part of the administrative, financial, and legal structure that the Canadian government has established to curb, curtail, and reshape Indigenous society and governance is a major handicap and is at odds with their role as legitimate representatives of their communities against that same federal institution.

Likewise, just as Captain John discovered that his principal opposition came not from within his particular village, but from family leaders who resided on neighbouring reserves and considered John to be part of their shared Chilliwack tribal (and Stó:lõ national) collective, so too do contemporary Stó:lõ band/First Nation chiefs sometimes find themselves frustrated by the isolation that the Indian Act imposes between them and their relatives on neighbouring reserves. Too great an engagement with family and friends on nearby reserves can leave one open to charges of misplaced loyalties and priorities by political opponents residing on one's own reserve.

Clearly, Aboriginal people want to govern themselves, and the form that governance takes is important to them. Shxw'õwhámél, like other First Nations, has had systems of governance imposed by both Church and state authorities, and as often as not these imposed systems clashed rather than complemented one another. Such paternalistic interference leaves a bitter legacy. And yet, it is important to note that not all features of all these foreign systems have been opposed out of hand. There were aspects of these systems that people sometimes found worth keeping, or at least not worth rejecting. Some Stó:lõ elders in the early 1990s, for example, spoke of wishing that they could revive the Church-created position of watchmen in order to help cut down on community crime and domestic abuse. Similarly, many spoke during the consultation work-

shops in the early 1990s of how they appreciated, on at least one level, the Indian Act's affirmation of the electoral rights of the individual, once a radical proposition in a society characterized by stark social hierarchies and even slavery. Of course, such comments overlooked the fact that the watchmen were necessary because earlier Indigenous systems of community regulation had been undermined by both government interference and the social ills brought about by the cross-cultural contact experience itself, or that the Indian Act's system of "one-vote-for-one-person" overlooked the implicitly democratic principles of a society where decisions were largely based on consensus, people had the right to opt out of community activities, and the elite were expected to ensure the welfare of the non-elite. Likewise, some elders also lamented the demise of Catholic sentencing circles that accompanied the Temperance Society governance system. Presumably, the Indigenous sentencing circles recently initiated through Stó:lõ Nation justice programs in co-operation with the provincial justice system are helping fill that perceived need in an even more meaningful way. What the elders' comments reveal, however, is that Indigenous people are not averse to trying, and sometimes embracing, new systems to secure traditional values and restore Aboriginal social structures.

Over the past decade, Shxw'õwhámél has faced several challenges as they struggled to find a balance between the demands of cultural tradition and those associated with the forces of modernity (even within an increasingly post-modern world). Of primary concern for most people in the early months and years following the adoption of the revived Siy:ám Council was a desire to build structural capacity and political legitimacy, or at least a willingness to try. For Sonny McHalsie, the desire to see the overall experiment succeed motivated him to not risk undermining the progress made in establishing the Council by demanding his restoration as yewal siyá:m in light of what he asserts to have been false accusations and improper procedures surrounding his ouster from office. For others, like Darlene Fraser, who are less optimistic about the Siyá:m Council's prospects of uniting families and advancing Shxw'õwhámél's interests, the solution is better found in at least a temporary return to the straight-forward procedures of the Indian Act election and governance systems—an opinion she has voiced both during the course of interviews for this study and in letters written to the regional *Hope Standard* newspaper.[82]

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82 On 6 July 1994, in her letter to the editor of the *Hope Standard* newspaper, Darlene Fraser claimed that there were "too many chiefs and not enough Indians" under the siyá:m system.

Despite some setbacks, growing pains, and several unresolved issues, most people in Shxw'õwhámél appear pleased with the siyá:m system and the changes that it has brought about. In particular, several people cite the siyá:m system as contributing to a revitalization of family strength and cohesiveness. What is becoming apparent to people, however, is that reviving a governance system based on extended family linkages requires engaging family in its broadest and fullest sense, and that means transcending not only the physical boundaries of the local Indian reserve, but the mental and legal boundaries of the Indian Act's membership lists. State-sponsored and Church-designed colonial projects cast long shadows. The one hundred and fifty years that have passed since the first formal efforts to recreate Stó:lõ communities after a British model have not lessened the impact of the assimilationist project; indeed, they have simply made it more difficult to separate the effects of colonialism from its causes.

Acknowledgements

In her view, the Siyá:m Council suffered from two major flaws: it was difficult for families to agree on who was most respected (and therefore appointments of siyá:ms sometimes sparked divisions within families), and the Council operated too slowly, deliberating too long as siyá:ms strove for consensus. More recently, in September 2006, she renewed her opposition to the Siyá:m Council, claiming that under the family system there was "a lot more squabbling than we had before …. We thought there'd be more action in each community, but that didn't happen …. I myself, for my thoughts, I think it would be better [if we returned to the] Chief and Council." Interview by Tim Peters, 18 September 2006.