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Ts'msyen Revolution: The Poetics and Politics of Reclaiming

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TS'MSYEN REVOLUTION: THE POETICS AND POLITICS OF RECLAIMING

A Dissertation Presented

By

ROBIN R. R. GRAY (T'UU'TK)

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
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DEDICATION

To the Nine Allied Tribes and the people of Lax Kw'alaams—past, present and future.

In honor of my late grandmothers—through them my family has a place to stand in Waap Liyaa'mlaxha, Gisbutwada, Gitaxangiik. We reclaim to honor their lives.



My grandmother Norah Rita Gray,
nee Gulbrandsen, nee Wright
(1937 – 1977)



My great-grandmother Elizabeth
Dorothy Gulbrandsen, nee Wright,
nee Moody (1905 – 1983)

Finally, dedicated to one of my research partners and teachers from Lax Kw'alaams—the late Smooygit Xyuup, Wayne Ryan (1930-2013). His spirit of reclamation will live on.



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ABSTRACT

TS'MSYEN REVOLUTION: THE POETICS AND POLITICS OF RECLAIMING

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As a result of the settler colonial project in North America, Ts'msyen have been thrust into a state of reclamation. The purpose of this study was to examine the distinctiveness of what it means for Ts'msyen to reclaim given our particular history and experiences with settler colonialism. Utilizing the poetics and politics as a theoretical, methodological and practical framework, this dissertation synthesizes the motivations, possibilities and obstacles associated with Ts'msyen reclamation in the contemporary era. Further, as a contribution to the literature on decolonization, Indigenous nationhood, Indigenous subjectivity, Indigenous methodologies and repatriation of Indigenous cultural heritage, I report on two multi-sited, auto-ethnographic, and community-based research initiatives: (1) a repatriation case study focusing on the legal and ethical dimensions associated with reclaiming Ts'msyen songs from archives, and (2) a case study focusing on embodied sovereignty and heritage reclamation with an urban Ts'msyen dance group. To contextualize the information generated from my engagements with over 200 Ts'msyen, I also offer my own experiences as a Ts'msyen *hana'ax* (woman), and as a dancer and a singer. Primary data are derived from a series of listening gatherings, translation workshops and talking circles from the repatriation case study; and a Photovoice project,

talking circle and dance ethnography from the dance group study. Secondary data are derived from Ts'msyen lived social realities in the third space; academic literature; current affairs and archival research. Key findings show (a) the ways in which Ts'msyen laws and systems of property ownership are enacted when Ts'msyen sing and dance, (b) how an Indigenous research paradigm develops organically based on an ethos of relational accountability, (c) how Indigenous standpoints alter ethnographic form and disrupt objectified knowledge production, (d) and where to put the theories of decolonization into praxis in settler colonial contexts. Ultimately, this dissertation is representative of a Ts'msyen manifesto. It is a call for a renunciation of contemporary ethics, policies, laws, discourses and practices that continue the work of structured dispossession and Indigenous elimination, while it is also an active assertion of Ts'msyen nationhood, sovereignty, precedent, laws and ways of knowing, being and doing.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Understanding the Poetics and Politics of Reclaiming

As a result of the settler colonial project in North America, Indigenous peoples have been thrust into a state of reclamation. Like settler colonialism, reclamation is not an event. It is an ongoing process. Reclamation will continue to be a central concern for Indigenous peoples so long as settler states and systems exist in their current formations. Settler colonialism is based on “structured dispossession” (Coulthard 2014)—the disavowal of Indigenous *possession* beginning with territory and extended to resources, heritage, rights, presence and voice, for example. This creates a duality inherent to Indigenous reclamation efforts. Settler colonialism is a claim-making process—we are sovereign, you are not; we want what you have; what is yours should be ours; we know you better than you know yourselves; we know what is best for you. Settler states and settler subjects act as though they have a claim-by-conquest to who we are, where we are and what is ours, and Indigenous peoples continue to resist these false claims in thought and action. The grounded movement of resistance and resurgence that Indigenous peoples find themselves in, as a result of the settler colonial project in North America, can be characterized as the poetics and politics of reclaiming. For the purposes of this dissertation, the poetics and politics is presented as a conceptual framework to account for the interplay between the personal and the political; to create space for resistance within, against and beyond the settler colonial condition, and; to recognize the transformative power and potential of Indigenous resurgence for decolonization.

My interest in the topic of reclamation is highly personal and political because of my identity as a Ts'msyen and Mikisew Cree woman. Not only do I live with the socio-cultural effects of structured dispossession, I have also been racialized and legalized (Canon 2011) as Indian/Aboriginal by the Canadian settler state. Both Ts'msyen and Mikisew Cree have been hyper-dispossessed in a relatively short amount of time considering the fact that settler colonialism began over 500 years ago in the eastern and southern parts of the continent (Hill 2009). My mother's community, Lax Kw'alaams (Port Simpson), and my father's community, Fort Chipewyan, are remote communities only accessible by canoe, boat or plane, and, in the case of Fort Chip, a winter road when the weather permits. Our territories have been seized, segmented and reduced into Indian reserves, and private and public properties. They encompass resource rich lands—Ts'msyen territories are located in the northwestern region of present-day British Columbia, while Mikisew Cree territories are located in the northeastern areas of Alberta. Prior to Canadian confederation (July 1, 1867), our lands unwittingly became central sites for the fur trade to fund the lucrative ventures of European empires and burgeoning settler colonies. The Northwest Company set up fort and named my father's community Fort Chipewyan in 1788, and by 1821 the Hudson Bay Company secured dominance there. The Hudson Bay Company also gained a foothold in Ts'msyen territory, naming my mother's community Fort Simpson in 1834, which later became known as Port Simpson. In 1986, a discursive reclamation occurred when Ts'msyen officially re-named the site after its original place name *Lax Lgu'alaams* (Anglicized as Lax Kw'alaams), which means 'on where small roses,' roughly translating to 'place of wild roses.'

As the fur trade was well underway, Canada began to survey the natural gas, oil and gold resources in and around what is known as the Athabasca region for commercial and national interests. This prompted the Crown to enter into Treaty 8 negotiations with Mikisew Cree and surrounding First Nations in 1899. My great-great-grandfather, Chief Mikisew, was a signatory of Treaty 8 to assert our Cree sovereignty. Whereas my *moshum* (grandfather) viewed treaty negotiation as a way to impede settler encroachment, it unfortunately sped up the process. Since the signing of Treaty 8, Mikisew Cree territories have become ground zero for the settler-lucrative Tar Sands and gas pipeline industries. The extraction, separation, distribution and marketing practices involved in maximizing the profit potential of the Tar Sands have wrought havoc on our lands and waterways, ecosystems, bodies, communities and ways of life. Likewise, just as Canada sought treaty negotiation over *unceded* Mikisew Cree territories at the turn of the twentieth century, the provincial government is currently invested in negotiating land claims over *unceded* Ts'msyen territories through British Columbia's modern-day treaty process. Meanwhile, Ts'msyen lands and waterways are fast becoming ground zero for the settler-lucrative Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) industry, which requires a destructive process of hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") to extract natural gas reserves trapped inside shale rock to be liquefied for pipeline transportation. As of April 27, 2015, there are 19 export LNG project proposals in various stages of development throughout the province—eight of which lie squarely within Ts'msyen territory and pose a looming threat to Ts'msyen sovereignty. As Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014:15) notes, capitalism and colonialism are intimately connected in scope, and share similar goals in movement: "like capital, colonialism, as a structure of domination predicated on

dispossession, is not a “thing,” but rather the sum effect of the diversity of interlocking oppressive social relations that constitute it.” Territorial encroachment, the fur trade, treaty making, resource extraction and neo-liberalism are only part of a larger set of interlocking and oppressive social relations that seek to disrupt, dispossess and dislocate Indigenous lands and life. The ultimate goal of the settler colonial project is settler territoriality *and* Indigenous elimination by any means necessary (Coulthard 2007, 2009, 2014; Simpson 2011, 2014; Wolfe 1999, 2006).

As part of this network of settler colonial relations, the Indian Act of 1867 must be counted amongst the most repressive for it codified an ongoing legal attack on Indigenous politics and subjectivity in Canada. It is an archaic piece of federal legislation that has worked to assimilate Indigenous peoples into whitestream society, while also governing and restricting nearly all aspects of Indigenous life such as identity, band governance, land tenure systems, education and cultural practices. Furthermore, it represents the foundation from which Aboriginal affairs and politics in Canada have emerged. As Oneida scholar Martin J. Cannon (2011:91) demonstrates, “the Indian Act has been just as concerned with constructing the legal category ‘Indian’ as it has been on getting rid of Status Indians.” I have a status card so that I am recognized as an Indian in the eyes of the Canadian government, and, even though my brother and I are Mikisew Cree *and* Ts’msyen we are registered with my father in the Mikisew Cree First Nation. The provisions of the Indian Act do not account for the relationship between multi-nationalism and Indigeneity, so my parents were forced to choose which of their bands to register me with since I can only be an Indian in the singular sense according to the

settler state. Our mother is registered with the Lax Kw'alaams Band, which encompass members of nine of the fourteen hereditary Tribes of the Ts'msyen Nation.

My mother was not born with Indian Status, and therefore did not automatically possess membership in the Lax Kw'alaams Band. This connects directly to the lived social reality of my *dzi'is* (grandmother) who, as the story goes, gave her Indian status up for a few dollars sometime in the 1950s. No one really knows why she “sold” her status, but my family assumes that, under the social conditions of the time, her decision (or coercion?) was likely made to either feed her family, or to gain access to public spaces, particularly in racially segregated Prince Rupert where she lived most of her very short and traumatic life. Indigenous peoples lost Indian status for various other reasons, including going to university, enlisting in the military or through inter-racial marriage—but the Indian Act has been overwhelmingly weighted to disenfranchise women and their children, especially daughters (Palmater 2011). For example, women lost their Indian status if they married non-Indian men; yet when Indian men married non-Indian women, those women would gain status. This was not the reason for my *dzi'is* Norah's loss, but when she did lose her Indian status, so did my mother and her siblings by default. With the passage of Bill C-31 in 1985, which amended the Indian Act as an attempt to reverse targeted gender discrimination, my mother had the opportunity to reclaim her status, and pass it on to me, the daughter of a previously disenfranchised Indian woman. This distinction is important because even though we share the same parents, my younger brother was born *with* Indian status because he was considered the son of a Status man, whereas I was born *without* Indian status because I was considered the daughter of a non-Status Indian woman. While the amendments accompanying Bill C-31 have created a

legal avenue for women like my mother and myself to be legally recognized as Indians, it has not fulfilled the promise of reversing discrimination against Indian women and their children (Canon 2005, 2006, 2011; Lawrence 2003, 2004; Palmater 2011).

There were Indian residential schools in both of my communities. The Methodist-run Crosby Indian Residential School consisted of the Girls' (1879-1948) and Boys' (1890-1914) Homes in Lax Kw'alaams, while the Catholic-run Holy Angels Indian Residential School operated in Fort Chipewyan from 1874-1974. Indian residential schools existed pre-confederation on the North American continent, but with the Indian Act came provisions that made it compulsory for Indigenous children to attend them. The official aim of the Indian Residential School System (IRSS) was to “kill the Indian in the child” through a range of assimilation and repression tactics, which were funded by the government and administered by the church. The IRSS captured and confined Indigenous children, stymied Indigenous childhood development, ruptured family and community dynamics, suppressed overt cultural and spiritual practice, censored Indigenous language use, and enforced White socio-cultural and religious conversion, etc. [For a history of capturing Indigenous children through Indian residential schools and Indian boarding schools in North America, including the intergenerational effects, see the following authors/publications: Adams 1995; Archuleta, Child & Lomawaima 2000; Barman, Hebert & McCaskill 1986; Brasfield 2001; Castellano, Davis & Lahache 2000; Chrisjohn & Young 2006; Churchill 2004; Deloria, Jr. & Wildcat 2001, Fournier & Crey 1997; Grant 2004; Gray 2011; Hare & Barman 2006; Lomawaima 1994; Lomawaima & McCarty 2006; McKegney 2007; Partridge 2010; Quinn 2007; Reyhner & Eder 2004; Robertson 2006; Whattam 2003]. Too many Indigenous peoples, including my Ts'msyen

and Mikisew Cree living and deceased relatives, were forced to attend Indian residential schools—and on my father’s side, my generation is the first not to experience the *direct* trauma of it all. My family members have been sent to institutions located within and beyond our homelands, in unfamiliar spaces and places, and they have experienced physical, emotional, spiritual and mental abuse by White administrators, educators, nuns and priests. They never received an edifying or nurturing education. My 59-year-old father and nine out of ten of his siblings were mandated by the Indian Act to attend the Holy Angels Indian Residential School, which was located within our community. On my Ts’msyen side, my great uncle Liyaa’mlaxha, who is in his eighties and the *Smooygit* (Chief) of our House, grew up in Ts’msyen and Nisga’a territories and was taken to the United Church-run Alberni Residential School on Vancouver Island. When my dad’s sister, aunty Jean, gave her personal testimony at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada National Event in Edmonton in March 2014, she reported that, “out of 115 children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, 14 have a high school diploma, four of us have gone to post secondary and one has a graduate degree and soon to have a doctorate”—although I am counted in each of these markers, and although I have exhibited a sense of resiliency, I am still profoundly impacted with my families by the intergenerational effects and legacies of the Indian Residential School System.

The exploitative processes of (1) territorial encroachment accompanying the development of settler states, (2) settler initiated treaty making, (3) neoliberal markets such as the fur trade, Tar Sands and LNG industries, and (4) assimilationist strategies targeting women and children in the Indian Act, are glaring examples of some of the interlocking and oppressive social relations that constitute the settler colonial project in

my territories, and in other parts of Indigenous North America. According to critical historian Patrick Wolfe (1999, 2006), settler colonialism is a distinct form of colonization that relies on the elimination of Indigenous societies, and which has territoriality as its singular aim. In this scenario, “the colonizers come to stay—invasion is a structure, not an event” (Wolfe 1999:2). The very fact that Indigenous peoples refuse to disappear given the lengths in which settler states and subjects have gone in their attempts to eliminate us from our lands, and as culturally distinct peoples, marks the poetics and politics of reclaiming.

Indigenous reclamation is an ongoing response to the continued threat of structured dispossession vis-à-vis settler colonialism. The false claim making of settler states and settler subjects precondition Indigenous reclamation efforts historically and in the present. The institutions and actors of the settler colonial project have directly and indirectly benefited from false claims to and against Indigenous lands, waterways, resources, heritage and people, and this scenario forces our attention and resources on reclaiming that which has been taken, disrupted and/or dislocated—we seem forever caught up in reclaiming (presence in) homelands; territorial authority; governance; access and control; spiritual traditions; socio-cultural and economic practices; in/tangible cultural heritage; Ancestors/human remains; children and youth from Indian residential schools of the past; children and youth from the child welfare system of the present; lost family members dislocated from place and community; healthy coping mechanisms and inter-personal dynamics; cultural integrity; voice and visibility; rights and power. Thus, to understand the poetics and politics of reclaiming for Indigenous peoples is to

understand why we refuse to disappear, what it means to resist false claims, and what it takes to resurge within, against and beyond the settler colonial condition.

B. Situating the Research Foci

The poetics and politics of reclaiming is more than a conceptual framework, however. It also has methodological and practical significance. Where it concerns research and social relations, this framework not only accounts for the interplay between the personal and the political, it also creates space for productive critique and decolonizing modes of intervention, engagement, analysis, documentation and representation. As described in the opening section, forms of structured dispossession have similarly affected my communities. And while there is much to learn about the poetics and politics of reclaiming from Mikisew Cree, I have chosen to study the specificity of the Ts'msyen experience. It's more than a choice though. I have been compelled by responsibility because I am a Ts'msyen *hana 'ax* (woman), because I am an anthropologist and because the research found me. Furthermore, the Ts'msyen experience under structured dispossession is distinct, and so are our reclamation strategies. Ts'msyen are forced to also navigate a unique set of repressive social relations that have been generated vis-à-vis settler colonialism and the Indian Act, and which have targeted ours and other Feasting and Potlatching peoples on the northwest coast. I have been compelled to research the distinctiveness of what it means for Ts'msyen to reclaim given this scenario, what the processes of reclamation look like, and what we are up against in our quests. Utilizing the poetics and politics as a methodological and practical framework, I have worked collaboratively and actively with an inter-generational community of

Ts'msyen, primarily from Lax Kw'alaams, to explore the motivations, possibilities and obstacles associated with Ts'msyen reclamation in the contemporary era.

The resistance and resurgence strategies of Ts'msyen presented in this dissertation must be understood as the attempts of individuals, families and communities to navigate the pre and post confederation consequences of settler encroachment in our territories. It is also important to flag the extent of the Ts'msyen experience under settler colonialism roughly between the years 1850-1950. During this time period Ts'msyen experienced a form of hyper-dispossession that is quite remarkable. My research shows that overlapping and concurrent settler processes mentioned in the previous section are only part of the story of Ts'msyen dispossession, and they inform only part of the legacies that Ts'msyen must navigate as we work to resist, refuse, resurge and reclaim. Other examples include, (1) the directed attack on Ts'msyen ways of knowing, being and doing through the Potlatch Ban, (2) the rush to capture all forms of our in/tangible cultural heritage by a range of collectors, and (3) the development of anthropological research practices and expertise. These additional cases of Ts'msyen dispossession represent a unique set of settler colonial processes that have had devastating effects on our culture and communities, and which have limited our representational status in public domains. This particular matrix of settler colonial processes have censored, seized and commoditized our heritage and knowledge, they have shaped the way people come to 'know' Ts'msyen, and they have impacted the scope of Ts'msyen reclamation presented in this dissertation. I therefore isolate the general period 1850-1950 as noteworthy for a reading of Ts'msyen dispossession in the recent past, and as a consequence, the extent of and context for Ts'msyen reclamation in the present and future eras. From a critical, socio-historical

perspective, this period marks the settler-generated phenomenon that is the mass expropriation, appropriation, commoditization, documentation, categorization, circulation and display of all forms of in/tangible Ts'msyen cultural heritage—an odd mix of repulsion and desire that lingers under the colonial condition (Said 1978; Spivak 1988).

In the Ts'msyen way, to *luulgit* (Feast) means to pass on and assert matrilineal rights such as names, hereditary titles and other forms of property and systems of property ownership that are tied to our lands. Ts'msyen *luulgit* to embody in/tangible heritage; to sing, dance, drum and evoke the supernatural; to redistribute collectively accumulated wealth through gift-giving; to feed our guests/witnesses food from our territories and acquired through trade; to recount *Malsk* and *Adaawx* (to pass on oral histories); to use *Sm'algyax* (Ts'msyen language); to affirm and reaffirm socio-political relationships within and beyond our nation; to learn through enculturation; to honor new life; to historicize a pole raising; to celebrate a marriage, or; to mourn the passing of life, for example. Each one of these cosmological, spiritual, social, cultural, pedagogical, political, and economic traditions are integral to being Ts'msyen, and to belonging in the Ts'msyen way. Combined, they represent the most powerful convergence and articulation of Ts'msyen *Ayaawx* (law; precedent; ways of knowing being and doing).

When early fur traders and missionaries arrived in Ts'msyen territories, they viewed *luulgit* to be a threat to the settler colonial project. These early traders, converters and settlers consistently complained to the federal government that Indigenous Feasting and Potlatching systems were impeding the progress of settler colonialism and Indigenous assimilation in the region. These complaints supported the government's ideology and ultimately prompted Canada to amend the Indian Act to include a Potlatch

Ban. The Potlatch Ban (1884-1951) made it illegal for northwest coast Indigenous peoples to Feast or to Potlatch; assemble for major celebrations or political meetings; pursue legal representation in Canadian courts, or; possess and embody the in/tangible forms of cultural heritage that were required for nurturing our Indigenous identities so that we could fulfill our rights and responsibilities to our lands, laws and ways of knowing, being and doing. The repression of cultural practices, the imprisonment of people, and the confiscation of masks, regalia, coppers, bentwood boxes and ceremonial headdresses, for example, was the reality for Ts'msyen under the Potlatch Ban.

What is equally alarming is the fact that during this time, art markets, museum enterprises and anthropological research practices were steadily increasing in North America. The collection and construction of Indigenous objects as 'northwest coast art' can be traced to the mid-eighteenth century (Townsend-Gault, Kramer & Ki-ke-in 2013), and the northwest coast art market that grew part and parcel to the formation of a Canadian national identity can be traced to the period 1900-50 (Dawn 2013). Northwest coast art markets, and northwest coast 'artifacts' collected in museums, represent the colonial desire to appropriate what has become homogenized as northwest coast art into the cultural patrimony of settler states. According to historian Douglas Cole (1985), the "captured heritage" of northwest coast Indigenous peoples has featured prominently in the inter-related movements of art markets, museums and anthropology. Cole isolates the period 1875-1930 as the heyday of anthropological and personal collecting that resulted in the accumulation of massive northwest coast collections scattered in major North America museums such as the Smithsonian, the American Museum of Natural History, Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History, the Royal British Columbia Museum and

the Canadian Museum of Civilization, for example. All of these settler institutions are examples of early rivals who collaborated with collectors to salvage as much of our cultural heritage as they could before we were imagined to ‘disappear’; all of them inscribing value to our ‘objects’ for market purposes; all of them vying for positions of power in burgeoning settler polities, and; all of them containing the captured cultural heritage of Ts’msyen. This is merely a glimpse into how the art-museum-anthropology triad has created a network of markets, commodities and professionals based on the captured heritage of Ts’msyen, and this is only part of the reason why Ts’msyen view repatriation as an important aspect of Ts’msyen reclamation now and into the future.

The role of anthropology is particularly salient in the art-museum-anthropology triad. Anthropology has played a pivotal role in the settler colonial project, namely studying our captured heritage to construct and define difference along the lines of culture and race for public consumption and political intervention (Baker 2010). In this context then, Ts’msyen and other Indigenous cultural expressions become transformed for external interests into “objects of empire” (Fine-Dare 2002) to be stored in museums and archives, and which work to symbolize settler progression, market settler superiority, and promote Indigenous elimination. Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson (2014:95) reminds us that anthropology generated particular “techniques of knowing” in spaces targeted for colonial settlement because, “knowing and representing people within those places required more than military might; it required the methods and modalities of knowing—in particular, categorization, ethnological comparison, linguistic translation, and ethnography.” And as the late Lakota scholar Vine Deloria, Jr. (1969:81) has perhaps most forcefully demonstrated, “the fundamental thesis of the anthropologist is that people

are objects for observation, people are then considered objects for experimentation, for manipulation, and for eventual extinction.” Indeed, throughout the history of settler colonialism in North America, techniques of knowing have worked to render Ts’msyen and other Indigenous peoples marginal and submarginal—in and out of the way, objectified and knowable, visible and invisible (Deloria, Jr. 2004; Francis 1992).

In this dissertation, I present knowledge generated from two case studies of Ts’msyen reclamation through the lens of song and dance. These studies directly confront the inter-generational legacies of the Potlatch Ban, the development of art markets, museum enterprises and anthropological research practices. My research shows how Ts’msyen refuse to disappear, resist techniques of knowing and resurge against the phenomenon that is *Indigenous in/visibility*. Here defined, Indigenous in/visibility refers to the consequences of being rendered visible as static objects but invisible as active agents within and across settler societies. It is the negation of Indigenous peoples in order to justify the exploitation of Indigenous lands. In my thinking about the role of the Potlatch Ban, art markets, museums and anthropology, I am thinking about the function of discourse at the intersection between knowledge and power—the methods and modalities of externally controlled knowledge, the multi-vocal and multi-sensory representations that result, and the circulation of ideas, property and rights within and between public and private domains. The culmination of these processes results in our representational status as in/visible; divests Ts’msyen of rights to our heritage; invests outsiders with rights to our heritage, knowledge and associated knowledge products; directly impacts the lived socio-cultural realities of Ts’msyen, and consequently; the scope of the Ts’msyen reclamation efforts discussed herein.

Like Anishinaabe anthropologist Sonya Atalay (2012), I believe that collaborating in community-based research “with, by and for” Indigenous peoples is a decolonizing approach to anthropology—an ethical and legal approach that: (1) confronts the settler colonial problem, (2) responds to the unique needs, priorities and values of communities, (3) changes the nature of the historically one-sided research encounter, (4) builds relationships of accountability, and (5) deals with the politics of in/visibility. *About* Ts’msyen research is plentiful in the colonial archive of the west; *with, by and for* Ts’msyen research is not. Every aspect of this research—for the first time in the history of ‘Tsimshianist anthropology’—was conducted with, by and for Ts’msyen peoples from Lax Kw’alaams. The researcher, the research partners, the topic, the methods, the purpose, the analyses, the theorizing and the presentation of ideas were done completely in collaboration with Ts’msyen before, during and after the research process. This dissertation thus represents a decolonizing artifact of Ts’msyen reclamation that will help to rebuild an understanding of Ts’msyen from the inside, rather than perpetuate mythologies generated by external observers. Contrary to lingering anthropological thought, objectivity is a false dream of the social sciences. Our research demarginalizes the role of subjectivity in the research encounter representing a poetic and political intervention that creates space for Ts’msyen to investigate the issues that directly affect our lives, to do applied research, and to represent ourselves on our own terms.

C. Research that Matters

I was born and raised in unceded Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh (Coast Salish) territories in Vancouver, BC. I grew up in the city wondering how it was

that I had little access to my culture, whereas representations of my culture seemed to be everywhere. I lived with the socio-cultural effects of being made in/visible—spectacular because I was a ‘full-blooded real Indian,’ and disappointing because I was not the type of Indian society had in mind. Or was I? My younger brother and I were born to a teenage mother, who raised us in a mostly single-family home, and our father struggled with alcoholism while he lived with us in the early years. We were poor, on welfare, my parents didn’t complete high school, and they separated when I was six. Society thrives on the story of this type of Indian—it’s expected, it’s a shame, it’s why we need ‘help.’ But most people aren’t interested in the backstory, or knowing the incredible obstacles my family faced. Most people in society are not as interested in knowing that my father is an Indian Residential School Survivor, that he never abused us, that he was always in our lives, that he has been sober for nearly thirty years, that he is one of the best pool players in North America, or that he is a great father. People are not as interested in knowing that my mother was orphaned at the age of 13, that as a teenage mother she raised us selflessly, that she kept us safe from abuse, that she never struggled with substances in her entire life, that she went back to school, attained a Bachelor of Social Work, has recently written a national best-seller in Canada, or that she now owns three properties in and outside of her territories. These are not Canadian success stories of the Indian picking him or herself up by his or her ‘bootstraps’—these are stories of Indigenous resurgence within, against, and beyond a settler state like Canada. My parents have survived and thrived, they have maintained their Indigenous sovereignty and subjectivity, they have worked hard to model healthy lives and they have always been culturally and community oriented. They have passed this ethos onto my brother and I so that we could learn to live

as Ts'msyen and Mikisew Cree with integrity, and be strong enough to do the type of work that makes our people proud. This ethos has led me on a particular path in my life, always with, by and for my communities (child and youth care worker, recreation coordinator, community volunteer, activist, facilitator, researcher, writer, anthropologist), and this ethos has also led me to making well sure that this research matters to my people.

Because of my mother, I have been a member of the Lax Kxeen Ts'msyen Dance Group in Vancouver for nearly twenty years. Lax Kxeen represents an inter-generational community of families primarily from Lax Kw'alaams, and we can count over 100 people (20-50 participating members on average per year), from infants to Elders, who have belonged to our dancing and singing community. In 2008, two things happened to shape the research foci. The first was a community-initiated dialogue where we discussed our dance group's history, how we represented ourselves as Ts'msyen, how others represented us, and how we could be responsible to our village of Lax Kw'alaams. The second was a request of me by the leader of Lax Kxeen, Christine Martin (Ganhada, Waap Aldm lxah, Gitwilgyoots). She humbly asked, "*can you keep an eye out for our songs while you're out there doing your studies?*" In the context of our history as Ts'msyen, I realized that this was not a simple request. It was an enduring appeal loaded with motivation, possibility and obstacle.

In both cases, my positionality was viewed as a benefit to our people, to help tell our story and to facilitate something that mattered to us. These two prompts led me to figure out how I could be responsible on my educational journey, and how my access to new places, peoples, knowledge and resources could make a difference in our lives. For a few years thereafter, I continued to consult with my family, with Ts'msyen in Vancouver,

and with other Indigenous peoples about their experiences with pedagogical and legal forms of reclamation. I also took graduate seminars at UMass across the four fields of anthropology, Indigenous studies, critical heritage studies, educational studies and social theory. As I thought through the possibility of reclaiming our songs that Christine knew were “*out there somewhere*”—and as I thought about how repatriation would take form in intra- and inter- national contexts—I was informed by a student colleague in my department about a collection of Ts’msyen songs at Columbia University in New York City. The dance group had already agreed to help me explore pedagogical forms of reclamation through the lens of song and dance for my dissertation research, but with this newfound knowledge about our captured songs, an opportunity arose that put us in a position to actively approach a legal form of reclamation, with, by and for our people.

When I informed Christine about the collection of songs, she was extremely excited, and she encouraged me to do what I could to help, “*bring them back to our people.*” And when I informed the rest of the dance group about the songs, and about trying to get them back, they agreed that it would be good work for our communities. With this guidance, I began to implement a comprehensive community-based Indigenous research paradigm: (1) a repatriation case study with additional Ts’msyen throughout BC to assess the processes that accompany the reclamation of Ts’msyen songs from archives, and (2) a dance group case study with members of Lax Kxeen to explore embodied heritage reclamation. The research was auto-ethnographic and multi-sited, taking place in and outside of our homelands: (1) in Lax Kw’alaams, the contemporary village for nine of the fourteen Tribes of the Ts’msyen Nation, (2) in Prince Rupert, also Ts’msyen territory and the main urban locale, and (3) in Vancouver, where there is a large

population of the Ts'msyen diaspora. The entirety of the research process was approached as much as possible according to the cultural protocols of our people—Ts'msyen Ayaawx—to reflect a distinctive Indigenous research paradigm based on the precedent of Ts'msyen laws, and our ways of knowing, being and doing.

Finally, I have titled this dissertation “Ts'msyen Revolution” as a symbolic reference to the Ts'msyen peoples who resurge within, against and beyond the settler colonial condition to ensure that Ts'msyen Ayaawx persists. People like Christine Martin (Ganhada, Waap Aldm lxah, Gitwilgyoots) who have the gift of creating songs, form dancing and singing communities that help us to maintain and reclaim our Ts'msyen-ness when there are limited opportunities otherwise. There are Ts'msyen dance groups along the northwest coast in places like Lax Kw'alaams, Prince Rupert, Vancouver and Seattle. People like my brother Musii'n (Philip Gray, Gisbutwada, Waap Liyaa'mlxha, Gitaxangiik), who are working to nurture the integrity of the Ts'msyen formline and style, help to communicate our Adaawx through the pedagogical dimensions and spiritual expressions of Ts'msyen materiality. Carvers create important expressions of our culture so that we can dance and sing, tell our stories and assert our rights. People like Sagipaayk (Tom Dennis, Ganhada, Smooygit, Waap Sagipaayk, Gispaxlo'ots), who are language keepers, dedicate their lives to maintaining their fluency so that they can teach *Sm'algyax* to our people, especially our children and youth. Although our language is always at risk under structured dispossession, and although there are varying levels of linguistic fluency, our language survives, and so do we. People like Mn'gadn' wii hayetsk (Helen Campbell-Johnson, Sigyidmhana'a, Laxsgiik, Waap Gitxoon, Gispaxlo'ots) create grassroots collectives like Na gan ts'i'stk (Ancestors/Grandmothers Group) to assert

Ts'msyen sovereignty over our children. Because of the women of Na gan ts'i'stk, our children who have been captured in the child welfare system are finding their way back home to Lax Kw'alaams—to their people and to their culture¹. And women like Goold'm Nits'k/Wii Gandoox (Mona Alexcee, Sigyidmhana'a, Laxsgiik/Gisbutwada, Waap Laax/Waap Gamayaamx, Gitando), and her sister Betty (Sigyidmhana'a, Gisbutwada, Waap Gamayaamx, Gitando) had the courage to reclaim Feasting in Lax Kw'alaams after many years in abeyance due to pressures and threats associated with settler colonialism. Feasting has increased amongst the Ts'msyen, and Houses and Tribes are rising again, often because of the activism of our women. Everyday efforts such as these are often over-looked, and the everyday peoples who make up Ts'msyen culture and society are often made in/visible in the production of academic and popular knowledge about us. My intention in this work is to reframe Ts'msyen-ness in strength-based terms rather than in deficit-based terms, and to shed the veil of obscurity that plague representations of us.

D. Chapter Overview

In the next chapter, I briefly introduce the form and function of Ts'msyen culture, heritage and society by way of the people themselves—my Ts'msyen research partners. I have engaged over 200 Ts'msyen across the two case studies, and it is in chapter two where I begin to synthesize the range of identities, experiences, roles and responsibilities that converge in the poetics and politics of reclaiming. I do this so that I can recontextualize and give meaning to Ts'msyen modes of resurgence, relational accountability and cultural production. It is important to note that I do not offer a

¹ Watch a video of Na Gan ts'i'stk here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuZYLGF2qyM>.

literature review here because Ts'msyen are not the 'topic' of investigation; Ts'msyen reclamation under structured dispossession is. Instead, I offer a literature review in chapter three where I outline the theoretical and methodological basis for the interventions made in this work. In chapter three I explore the relationship between settler colonialism and anthropological knowledge production to signal the types of ethical and practical interventions that are warranted in the context of Ts'msyen reclamation today—namely disrupting objectified knowledge production, operationalizing Indigenous standpoints, putting decolonization into praxis and with, by and for research.

As we shall see, under the settler colonial legal system researchers arbitrarily gain rights to the knowledge that become documented in textual, aural or visual forms. Given the extent to which the knowledge of Indigenous peoples has been captured by researchers, and transformed into knowledge products, Ts'msyen must also navigate the colonizing properties of the “author/archive/copyright nexus” (Anderson 2013). This particular nexus poses an incredible obstacle in our quests to legally reclaim—through repatriation—intangible forms of our cultural heritage such as songs or oral histories, for example. Across chapters four and five, the poetics and politics of reclaiming through song and dance will be illuminated. Chapter four features the repatriation case study, and here I focus on the reclamation of a set of Ts'msyen songs from what is known in the colonial archive as the Laura Boulton Collection of Traditional and Liturgical Music at Columbia University. I detail the decolonizing processes that were necessary in order to “*breathe life*” into our songs and Adaawx, and I analyze the motivations, possibilities and obstacles that arise in the pursuit of a legal avenue for repatriation. Through a series of community-based listening gatherings, translation workshops and talking circles, my

research partners and I explored the development of a Ts'msyen-specific research paradigm 'on the ground'; relational accountability in the research process; ownership over knowledge and knowledge products, establishing provenance of in/tangible Ts'msyen cultural heritage, and; Ts'msyen Ayaawx as precedent for access and control. I offer ethnographic detail and transcribed quotes directly from my research partners in order to celebrate my people for their actions, knowledge, wisdom and expertise. I wrote this and the following chapter with the aim of disrupting the myth that researchers 'know' whereas subjects are to be 'known.'

Chapter five features the dance group case study, and here the many reasons for the activism discussed in the previous chapter are brought to the fore. I focus on the role of embodied heritage in the poetics and politics of reclaiming from an inter-generational perspective. I do not focus on the processes of reclamation so much as I do the experiences of group members maintaining and reclaiming their Ts'msyen-ness—our laws and ways of knowing, being and doing—in an urban setting. It is a complementary process that shows how issues such as repatriation, ownership, access and control are not abstract concepts within a Ts'msyen worldview; they are just conceived of and applied differently, and they have different power effects. I illuminate the role of in/tangible cultural heritage for Ts'msyen wellbeing, and how legal concepts such as sovereignty, rights and ownership are socially enacted when we sing and dance. Through a Photovoice project exploring what it means to be Ts'msyen, a talking circle asking why we joined Lax Kxeen, and an auto-ethnographic component that situates myself as a dancer and singer, this chapter visualizes pedagogy and power through the lens of song and dance. I

continue to quote my research partners directly and extensively, their words and photos also transcribed from audio recordings generated from of our work together.

Although my research partners and I analyze the poetics and politics of reclaiming in chapters four and five, I also offer a meta-analysis of process across both case studies in chapter six. I extend Chilkat teachings to help me account for my role in facilitating the first repatriation project with, by and for the people of Lax Kw'alaams, as well as the responsibility I have to weave the various sites of knowledge from the research in a culturally appropriate way. Primary findings, however, are analyzed based on the five theses of Indigenous resurgence and decolonization articulated by Glen Coulthard (2014:165-179) in his book, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*². Finally in chapter seven, I provide concluding thoughts about the poetics and politics of reclaiming by way of a summary of the motivations, possibilities and obstacles. I leave the reader with recommendations for *decolonization-as-social process*, or the society based transformations that are necessary in order to reconcile and reverse forms of structured dispossession against Indigenous peoples. What follows in this dissertation, then, can be characterized as a cultural study and an, “ethnography of refusal,” (Simpson 2014) with, by and for a people who have been hyper-dispossessed, hyper-researched and mis-represented. It can also be characterized as an artifact of the *Ts'msyen Revolution* that is ongoing and underway.

² The ideas presented by Coulthard are primarily influenced by Frantz Fanon's critique of colonial-based recognition and colonized subjectivity in his seminal post-colonial text *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952).

CHAPTER 2

FROM THE PEOPLE: ON BEING TS'MSYEN

A. Introduction

In this chapter, I briefly describe the form and function of Ts'msyen culture, heritage and society by way of the people themselves. I have worked collaboratively, at varying levels of engagement, with over 200 Ts'msyen during the course of my two-year, multi-sited and auto-ethnographic fieldwork. Not only do I trace my lineage to one of the Nine Allied Tribes, and to the Ts'msyen village of Lax Kw'alaams, so do nearly all of the people I have engaged. What follows is a summary of the diversity of my research partners; how we view our own culture, heritage and society, and; how we understand and embody the very traditions that have been disrupted, barred and trivialized under the settler colonial condition. I paint a brief picture of Ts'msyen-ness, from the vantage of Ts'msyen, to situate the people *actively* in the poetics and politics of reclaiming.

First, I provide a description of the Ts'msyen sovereignty structure so that I can move on to highlighting the role of women, and the socio-political significance of matriarchy and matrilineality in our society. I then discuss our historical experiences with dislocation—specifically how a distinct Ts'msyen diaspora has formed as a result of the settler colonial project. Next, I synthesize the range of identities, experiences, roles and responsibilities of my research partners in order to recontextualize and give meaning to Ts'msyen modes of resurgence, relational accountability and cultural production. Finally, I offer concluding thoughts on the *third space of Ts'msyen-ness* to underscore the poetics and politics of our lived social reality as in/visible subjects across settler societies.

B. Everyone Has a Place to Stand

As Ts'msyen, we all have somewhere to stand within our sovereignty structure. At the core of our society, there are three levels of social organization that are intimately connected to our lands and waterways, and that make us who we are as culturally distinct and sovereign peoples: (1) *Pdeex* (Clan/Crest), (2) *Waap* (House/House Group), and (3) *Galts'ap* (Tribe/Village). According to Ts'msyen Ayaawx (law; precedent; ways of knowing, being and doing), we trace our lineage through our mother's line to determine our Clan, House and Tribal identities. We all belong to the Clan of our mother, first and foremost. The Clans are represented as multiple House Groups that are organized among the fourteen Tribes of the Ts'msyen Nation, based on a complex system of matrilineal descent and inheritance. The four Pdeex are: *Laxsgiik* (Eagle), *Ganhada* (Raven), *Gisbutwada* (Blackfish) and *Laxgibuu* (Wolf). Clans can be thought of as the primary way in which we *identify* ourselves as Ts'msyen, whereas House Groups can be thought of as the legal avenue from which to *position* ourselves within our sovereignty structure.

Clans and House Groups are closely related—all members of an individual House belong to the same Clan. As the primary kinship unit, House Groups are more intimate in the sense that the members of each House are directly related through genealogy. Each House is identified according to the highest-ranking name that it possesses, and whoever wears that name assumes their leadership role as House Chief. Traditionally, men lead publically in their role as *Smgigyet* (Chiefs) whereas women lead in less visible, but equally important, ways in their role as *Sigyidmhana'a* (Matriarchs). Each Waap, with the leadership of their hereditary Chiefs and Matriarchs, holds stewardship over specific territories, as well as to accompanying hunting, trapping, seafood harvesting, plant, berry

and medicine gathering rights, for example. As our territories provide the resources that we need to live as Ts'msyen, we also have a responsibility to respectfully conserve them. In addition to territorial and resource rights, members of a House also inherit unique prerogatives to certain forms of property such as the Adaawx (oral histories), names, dances, songs and the *dzepk* (crest images) of the House, for example. We not only *inherit* forms of property from our past, we also actively *create* new forms of property for our future generations, and we publically announce it by placing them in our House's "box of treasures" at Feasts. In/tangible forms of cultural heritage created in this context are intended to communicate the history, wealth and positioning of the House within the Ts'msyen sovereignty structure. Indeed, Ts'msyen sovereignty and relationality are complex—in addition to sharing the same Clan, members of a House also belong to the same Tribe. This adds another layer of complexity to our sovereignty structure, and to understanding our systems of property ownership. To boot, there are multiple Houses within each Tribe, and therefore any number of Clans represented therein.

Just as House Groups have inherent rights over their territories and property, *Galts'ap* (Tribes) do as well. Whoever is the Chief of the highest-ranking House within a Tribe, assumes an additional leadership role as the Head Chief of that Tribal Group. At the Tribal level, however, the Head Chief's name is not the name of the Tribe itself. The Ancestors and the Adaawx identify the Tribes, and they connect us to our territories. There are fourteen Tribes among the Ts'msyen Nation politically located today in six village communities throughout BC. The *Gidasdzuu* (People of the Other Side) are located in present day Kitasoo; *Gitga'at* (People of the Cane) in Hartley Bay; *Gitxaala* (People of the Channel) in Kitkatla; *Gits'ilaasü* (People of the Canyon) in Kitselas, and;

Gits'mk'eelm (People of the Plateau) in Kitsumkalum. Lax Kw'alaams, however, is the present day political location for the Nine Allied Tribes, which include: *Gispaxlo'ots* (People of the Elderberry), *Gitgiis* (Fish Trap People), *Gitaxangiik* (People of the Hemlock) *Ginadooyks* (People of the Swift Water), *Gitzaxlal* (People by the Berry Shrubs), *Gitwilgyoots* (People Where is Kelp), *Gitando* (People of Over There), *Giluts'aaw* (People of the Inside) and *Gitlaan* (Canoe Stern People). An additional seventh Ts'msyen village community exists in *Maxlaxaala* (saltwater pass), in present day Metlakatla, BC, but as a community it does not represent the political location of any given Tribal authority or alliance of Tribal Groups (although they do trace their lineage to one of the Nine Allied Tribes—see Section D, this chapter).

It is also important to situate the role of *Galdmalgyax* (Spokesperson) within the Ts'msyen sovereignty structure. For each Chief there is an appointed Speaker who is identified as possessing proficiency in knowledge, oratory and diplomacy. When a man assumes the role of a Speaker, he also wears a speaker's name. House and Tribal spokesmen play a critical role in the maintenance of knowledge and political affairs within and between the House and Tribal Groups. Their role is to speak on behalf of their Chief and their House or Tribe. Similar to the role of a Chief, the way a Galdmalgyax speaks in public within and beyond our Nation reflects on the people who they represent and are responsible to. To summarize, the Chiefs, Matriarchs and Speakers assume critical roles, which work together for the benefit of their Houses, Tribes and Nation.

The Ayaawx has guided who we are as Ts'msyen—our ways of knowing, being and doing, in and outside of our territories. A poetic and political convergence of kinship structures, spirituality, law, in/tangible knowledge production, land stewardship, social

organization and systems of property ownership connect us to one another, and others, in processes of relational accountability. As noted in the introductory chapter, the Feasting system of Ts’msyen peoples—*luulgit*—is the most powerful and politically visible expression of our Ayaawx. Feasting unites the places, with the peoples, with the processes, and the property, of the past and present. Feasting is significant for asserting Ts’msyen sovereignty and rights, and unfortunately for us, the Potlatch Ban—and other systems of structured dispossession under settler colonialism—attacked our sovereignty on all fronts. Settler colonial processes severely affected our culture, heritage and society, outlawing and disrupting the most important aspects of our wellbeing, forcing our social organization into a state of abeyance. Despite the attacks, it is important to remember that Ts’msyen sovereignty predates the settler state, and it is thus inherent; it is also *active* because despite the efforts of missionaries and government agents to make our tribal system disappear, it has not. Furthermore, many Ts’msyen are steadfast in their responsibility to our Ayaawx—and for that, our Ayaawx persists. Our Ayaawx is strong enough in posterity and flexible enough in survival. Ts’msyen Ayaawx and the Ts’msyen sovereignty structure are multi-dimensional, and all levels of social organization have a purpose just as the people do. We each have a place to stand, and therefore a role to play within our society. As it was in the past, as it is in the present, and shall it be into the future, our identities as Ts’msyen are significant whether or not we assume a hereditary leadership position, wear a name, participate in our Feasting system and even if we don’t yet know where to position ourselves. We all belong, and we all have a place to stand despite what settlers ‘tell’ us.

C. Ts'msyen Hana'ax (Women)

Above all, to stand within the Ts'msyen sovereignty structure is a privilege afforded to us based on our connection to women throughout time. While we also have a place to stand through our lineal connection to Ts'msyen men, and while men assume critical leadership roles, Ts'msyen *hana'ax* (women) are the *backbone* of our culture—they not only give birth to our lives they also give birth to our rights. For instance, I come from a long line of Ts'msyen women going back at least five generations that I can corroborate through familial knowledge, community-based research and genealogical records. It is impressive that I directly descend from at least this many Ts'msyen women, but it is through my *mother* first and foremost that I know where I stand within our sovereignty structure. By tracing my lineage through my mother—and because of her mother, etc.—I know that I am *Gisbutwada*, *Gitaxangiik*, and that I assert my immediate rights as Ts'msyen through the House of *Liyaa'mlaxha*. If I ever have children, they will stand with me in our House and inherit the same identity, access, prerogatives and responsibilities. And this will be the case despite the sex of that child and whether I end up with a Ts'msyen man or not. *Ts'msyen hana'ax* are the backbone of Ts'msyen culture and society, and matrilineal descent is the bedrock of the Ts'msyen sovereignty structure. In the Ts'msyen way, without the women there is no real history.

Although men inherit leadership roles that are more visible, the socio-politically significance of women cannot be understated. Matriarchy and matrilineality are the foundation for our social organization and sovereignty structure. We trace our lineages through the women so that we know where to stand as Ts'msyen. In my own House, we are fortunate to have a community-driven leader in my *agwibiip* (great uncle) who was

identified to wear the name Liyaa'mlaxha so that he could assume his role as our Chief. Our matrilineal history affirms his right to belong to Waap Liyaa'mlaxha in the first place and matriarchy confirms his ability to lead. And without the children of women, a House does not grow according to our Ayaawx. Furthermore, Matriarchs stand beside our Chiefs to look out for the wellbeing of our House. My *no'o* 'Wiiksigoop and her eldest sister whom I also refer to as *no'o* (as the sister of my mother), are the Matriarchs of Waap Liyaa'mlaxha. In the Feast hall, one would witness men doing a lot of speaking—that is their role. What would be less visible however are the women who have worked tirelessly for months, oftentimes years, to do Feast work so that our Chiefs can carry out their responsibilities to host a Feast and speak politically on our behalf. This is not to undermine the ways in which our Chiefs take care of their House; rather, it is simply to signal the complexity of authority and responsibility in the Ts'msyen way.

Before, during and after this dissertation research, I have been fascinated by process—how community is nurtured, how we connect our peoples across time and space, how our culture survives and thrives and, quite simply, how things get done. At all entrance points of analysis, it almost always leads back to the women—not only in the matrilineal sense described thus far, but also at the grassroots level within and across our communities. In my lifetime, Ts'msyen have shared stories of transgression with me, I have learned about their personal and family histories, I have observed community-based activism and I have witnessed our people come together *Sag_ayt k'uluum goot* (of one heart). In the diversity of these instances, the role of women features centrally. They have worked selflessly to maintain and/or reclaim homelands, people, culture and community in honor of our Ancestors and for our future generations. For these reasons, I can

confidently say that matriarchy endures across time and space in Ts’msyen society, and it has been key to the Ts’msyen revolution that is less visible but certainly afoot.

D. The Ts’msyen Diaspora

We all have varying levels of knowledge and experiences, and varying levels of connection to our culture, homelands and community. Although we are scattered like seeds, our roots are all inherently connected back to our homelands. We must find and connect all our seeds so they can be nurtured to make themselves and our Nation even stronger. When that happens, imagine how strong our Nation will be. I believe that is where all the hope lies.

—‘Wiiksigoop (Sigyidmhana’a, Gisbutwada, Waap Liyaa’mlaxha, Gitaxangiik)

Settler colonialism in Ts’msyen territories has resulted in the movement of our people for various reasons. Using the Nine Allied Tribes as a point of reference, we can trace our historical experience with dislocation to the first wave of settler colonialism in Lax Kw’alaams. In the mid-nineteenth century, the fur trade, the Potlatch Ban, the Indian Residential School System, small pox epidemics and missionary pressures set the stage for our people to become “scattered like seeds.” In 1862, Anglican missionary William Duncan convinced approximately 60 of our people, mostly from the Gitlaan Tribe, to leave with him so that he could establish a new Christian village in what has become known as Metlakatla, BC. A couple hundred more Ts’msyen, also convinced by Christianity that a new religion might save them from the smallpox epidemics that were responsible for an increasing death toll in Lax Kw’alaams, joined the new community shortly thereafter. In 1881, Duncan led another departure—this time from Metlakatla, BC to Annett Island, in what has become known as Metlakatla, Alaska. Ts’msyen today refer to these two Ts’msyen village communities as Old Metlakatla and New Metlakatla, respectively. When Ts’msyen left with Duncan to Old Metlakatla and New Metlakatla

they agreed to give up their blankets and therefore their rights within our sovereignty structure. According to our Ayaawx, Ts'msyen in both places might be able to trace their lineages to one of the Nine Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams, but they do not have the legal authority to wear names or to assume hereditary titles until they go through the proper channels of protocol in Lax Kw'alaams to reclaim their place amongst the Nine Allied Tribes. There is a place for them, but our Elders and Tribal Leaders are clear about what needs to take place before they reintegrate into our sovereignty structure.

In addition to these two village communities there are four primary urban areas that have become central sites for the Ts'msyen diaspora. There are definitely Ts'msyen in other places, particular along the west coast of the continent, but there are *distinct* Ts'msyen communities in Prince Rupert, Terrace, Vancouver and Seattle, Washington. After the first wave of dislocation, settler colonialism continued to put pressures on Ts'msyen to leave their villages. People left to find work, to go to school and to gain access to new peoples and places. Today, the majority of Ts'msyen live outside of their village community—but they do not forget where they come from. The pace and demands of city life have made it difficult for urban Ts'msyen to maintain a presence in our homelands, and the historical movement of our people to Old Metlakatla, New Metlakatla, Prince Rupert, Terrace, Vancouver and Seattle has made it difficult for our people to maintain community. Faced with obstacle, urban Ts'msyen have figured out culturally appropriate ways to honor their identities and their lineal connection to homelands, and they have carved out spaces in cityscapes to assert their Ts'msyen-ness.

The creation of dancing and singing communities has been important to the maintenance and reclamation of Ts'msyen culture and heritage under structured

dispossession. Ts'msyen dance groups have existed for decades throughout the Ts'msyen diaspora—they have provided opportunities to assert our Ts'msyen-ness through the embodiment of our cultural heritage, and they have helped to connect our peoples and communities across time and space. Ts'msyen dance groups have been active across public and private domains to share our culture and heritage, and to purposefully express our ways of knowing, being and doing. The creation of dancing and singing communities has also resulted in our participation and collaboration in West Coast Nights at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, Hobiye (Nisga'a New Year), the All Native Basketball Tournament in Prince Rupert, the Salmon Homecoming Festival in Seattle and Celebration in Juneau, Alaska, for example. Although we have been “scattered like seeds,” people of the Ts'msyen diaspora have found each other, they create and nurture community, they reclaim through song and dance and they assert their Ts'msyen-ness.

E. Everyone Has a Role to Play

In order to understand Ts'msyen-ness—or the state of being Ts'msyen—*witnessing* is critical. Witnessing is a guiding cultural, socio-political and ethical principle for our people. From a Ts'msyen perspective, witnessing is intimately connected to *amuks'm* (listening) and it is also key to sovereignty business. Whether it is in the Feast hall; in meetings between House and Tribal groups; in spaces where we share our culture through song and dance; or even in the research process, witnessing is a privilege and a responsibility of the participant and observer. When one witness's the history, experiences and protocols of Ts'msyen, they have the responsibility to listen attentively, to remember, to communicate what transpires and, where necessary, act. In short, witnesses validate Ts'msyen knowledge, laws, history and experiences, and in the

spirit of relational accountability, they have a responsibility to handle information in a respectable manner. As a researcher I have honored my role as a witness to listen, remember and communicate what I have learned from Ts'msyen in a way that contributes to Ts'msyen modes of relational accountability, cultural production and resurgence.

The knowledge presented in this dissertation is derived from Ts'msyen peoples themselves. They are not my subjects; they are my teachers and research partners. The vast majority of the 200 plus Ts'msyen who I have directly engaged and learned from in this research process trace their lineage to one of the Nine Allied Tribes of the Ts'msyen Nation, and to the Ts'msyen village of Lax Kw'alaams. They represent the diversity of the Ts'msyen diaspora in terms of socio-economic reality and experience. They live in the village and in urban locales such as Prince Rupert and Vancouver, and they continue to move between these spaces to maintain their connections to territory, kinship and community. They are Hereditary Chiefs, Matriarchs and Speakers, children, youth, adults, Elders, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunties, uncles, cousins, grandmas and grandpas. They are language and cultural knowledge keepers, artists, carvers, weavers, singers, dancers, drummers, hunters, fisher-women and men. They are defenders of the land. My research partners are community leaders, teachers, activists, role models and ambassadors. They are food sovereignty practitioners, community fundraisers, authors, students, researchers and athletes. They are school administrators, child protection and childcare workers, restorative justice advocates, cannery workers and band council members. They are residential school survivors. They are also members of grassroots collectives who follow our Ayaawx, and who organize their own resources, to do culturally appropriate work with, by and for our communities—examples include the

Friendship House Elders Group, The Na gan ts'i'stk (Ancestors/Grandmothers) Group, the Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Authority, the Ts'msyen Guardians and Ts'msyen dance groups. They have multiple identities in addition to being Ts'msyen. They are historically, and presently, inter-connected with many Indigenous communities, especially our neighbors. Some have status cards, some do not; some are registered with the Lax Kw'alaams Band, some are not; some have Feasted, some have not; some are wearing their real names, some are not; some know their place within the Ts'msyen sovereignty structure, some do not; and many of us are somewhere in between, possessing varying levels of knowledge and connection.

I have experienced and witnessed before, during and after this research Ts'msyen making regalia for one another, gifting one another, teaching each other how to drum, sing and dance, and sharing their knowledge. I have witnessed people come out in large numbers for community-initiated dialogues. I am proud of how Ts'msyen show their support in the Ts'msyen way. For instance, in Lax Kw'alaams when a certain Clan, House or Tribe puts on a Feast, I have witnessed family's come together, and people lend a hand to show respect and responsibility to relationships. When a person is sick, or when a person passes on to the Spirit World (which happens often, unfortunately), our communities mobilize *in an instant* to provide cultural, financial, emotional, spiritual, and physical support; when there is a community fundraiser, people give the little money or resources that they have to support the cause, and; when they cannot afford to pitch in money or goods, they lend their skills and abilities. I have witnessed Ts'msyen women in particular unwaveringly reclaim, protect and care for other people's children to provide them stability, connection to family, community and culture, and to prevent them from

remaining or being taken into the child welfare system. These are examples of Ts'msyen modes of cultural production, relational accountability and resurgence today.

Ts'msyen are a humble and righteous people, and this is owed to our Ayaawx. Since time immemorial, we have persisted in and outside of our territories because of our profound spiritual connection to our lands and waterways. Our lands and waterways have taught us how to be Ts'msyen, and this land-based pedagogy is the foundation for who we are. It is our connections to place first and foremost that shape our identities, and that govern our relationships and responsibilities to human and non-human worlds. This is Ayaawx in the most elementary sense. Even if Ts'msyen are not born and raised in our territories, the knowledge derived from that land-based pedagogy persists across time and space in the bodies and memories of Ts'msyen peoples, and our Ayaawx teaches generations of Ts'msyen how to be Ts'msyen wherever they may be in the world. We are dynamic and resilient peoples who have strategically adapted to culture contact and change, and many of our people have dedicated their lives to role modeling the Ayaawx to successive generations of Ts'msyen. Contrary to the preliminary goal of the settler-state, the Ayaawx has not disappeared, and Ts'msyen refuse to be eliminated.

In the spirit of witnessing, relational accountability and transparency, I want to remind the reader that this dissertation was conceptualized according to the unique needs, priorities and values of Ts'msyen who are primarily from the Nine Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams. Therefore, this dissertation cannot represent the entirety of the Ts'msyen Nation. This means that the vast majority of the knowledge presented here comes from Ts'msyen who trace their tribal lineage to the Gispaxlo'ots, Gitaxangiik, Gitando, Gitgiis, Gitzaxlał, Giluts'aaw, Gitlaan, Gitwilgyoots and the Ginadooyks. It should be noted,

however, that there are limited people from the Giluts'aaw and the Gitlaan represented in this research. I offer my humble apologies to the Giluts'aaw and the Gitlaan—as well as to any other Tribal members whom I did not engage—if you do not feel connected to this research. I have worked carefully, according to the teachings I have received about our Ayaawx, to garner what I have learned from our people, and to communicate what we see as the motivations, possibilities and obstacles associated with Ts'msyen reclamation in the contemporary era. It is our hope that our collaborative work, which includes this dissertation, will have relevance to the Ts'msyen Nation as a whole, and that it will also resonate with other Indigenous peoples dealing with the settler colonial problem.

I'd also like to add that, as many as there are people that I have engaged there are many more whom I was not able to connect with. I could have engaged Ts'msyen who are homeless, those who have been adopted out, or more children and youth in the child welfare system, for example. Thus, I recognize my lack of engagement in the areas of personal experience aforementioned as a shortcoming because their perspectives and analyses could have added to the story of Ts'msyen reclamation, could have added perspective on our experiences with structured dispossession, and most importantly, could have led to connecting more of our peoples and communities with one another. I therefore also offer my humble apologies to any of our people who do not feel that their personal experiences with, or individual perspectives on, reclamation are represented in this dissertation. Our history with dislocation has made it difficult for us to maintain connection with all of our people who are “scattered like seeds,” yet many Ts'msyen have demonstrated that they are committed to reclaiming our people through community based activism and decolonizing intervention strategies—and for that, we should have

great hope for our Nation. The Ts'msyen diaspora is important to our sovereignty structure and to our contemporary reclamation efforts. Wherever Ts'msyen are in space and time, they belong, they have a place to stand and they have a role to play within and between our communities.

F. Conclusion: The Third Space of Ts'msyen-ness

Those of us who live, who 'make it,' passionately holding on to aspects of that 'downhome' life we do not intend to lose while simultaneously seeking new knowledge and experience, invent spaces of radical openness. Without such spaces we would not survive. Our living depends on our ability to conceptualize alternatives, often improvised. Theorizing about this experience aesthetically, critically is an agenda for radical cultural practice.

—bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (1990:129)

In this chapter, I have tried to synthesize what it means to be Ts'msyen from the perspectives and experiences of Ts'msyen themselves. The thing about representation, however, is that while we actively assert our subjectivity and sovereignty, our presence is muffled, and political authority negated, by externally controlled forms of knowledge. Under the settler colonial condition, Ts'msyen undergo a process of subjectification—we are constructed as 'Other' based on stereotypical discourse that is central to the exercise of colonial power (Bhabha 1994). For example, government agents, missionaries, collectors, curators, and researchers have all contributed to the construction of Ts'msyen as colonized subject. Our difference vis-à-vis settler society has been constructed through the notes of fur traders, Indian agents, missionaries, collectors and scientists; policies and laws designed to control the so-called 'Indian problem'; academic publications serving didactic and legal purposes; Ts'msyen 'artifacts' displayed in museums across the world, and; Ts'msyen knowledge stored as 'meta-data' in archives, for example. My research

partners and I have offered our standpoints as a means to resist and transgress dominant representations and false dichotomies that work to marginalize us in society.

It is important for the reader to also remember that representations of Ts'msyen culture, heritage and society are multi-sensory and multi-vocal. They are *multi-sensory* because they exist in audio, visual, oral, material, textual and embodied forms. They are also *multi-vocal* because we not only represent ourselves as Ts'msyen; many others have long been in the business of representing us in varied ways. These representations circulate within and between public and private domains to create what can be described as the *third space of Ts'msyen-ness*. The first space accounts for the ways in which we conceptualize our identities, and how we go about the business of being Ts'msyen in the world. The second space accounts for externally controlled forms of knowledge that shape the way society comes to 'know' us. And finally, the third space represents a convergence of the first and second spaces to reveal the complexity of our lived social reality under the settler colonial condition.

From the vantage of the third space then, the lived experiences of Ts'msyen provide entrance points from which to critically investigate the issue of Indigenous in/visibility. Furthermore, in consideration of the legal issues that arise in the poetics and politics of reclaiming, the third space also warrants a transgression of the laws that work to dispossess Ts'msyen of our inherent rights. It is a theoretical and practical space that, "refuses to accommodate itself to the political choices framed by the imperial binary: assimilation or secession, inside or outside, modern or traditional, and so on" (Bruyneel 2007:217). Centering the lived experience of Ts'msyen as the point of entry for analysis "is to find a way to explore the actualities of the everyday and discover how to express

them conceptually from within that experience, rather than depend on or deploy predetermined concepts and categories for explaining experience” (Nakata 2007:12).

The lasting note here is that one cannot begin to understand the complexity of Ts’msyen lived social reality, historically and in the present, until one grasps the relationship between knowledge and power.

CHAPTER 3

DECOLONIZING KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

A. Knowledge and Power

I want to begin this section by situating the history of colonial discourse on Ts'msyen. I will show how a Ts'msyen canon has emerged vis-à-vis the development of anthropological authority and expertise, and how for over a century Ts'msyen have become ethnographically knowable. Towards these ends, let us first consider that the institutionalization of American anthropology coincided with the scientific construction of Ts'msyen as subject and our resulting “ethnographic life” (Simpson 2014). For instance, in 1902 the American Anthropological Association was established, and this was also the year that Franz Boas—lauded as the ‘founding father’ of American anthropology (see Darnell 2000)—published *Tsimshian Texts* for the Smithsonian Institution. He also published the companion reader *Tsimshian Texts (New Series)* in 1912 for the American Ethnological Society. These two texts and Boas’ subsequent 1916 publication of *Tsimshian Mythology* are based on transcribed oral narratives that he received from Henry Tait, a Ts'msyen from Lax Kw'alaams who he hired as his Ts'msyen informant. Up until his death in 1914, Tait sent transcriptions to Boas for which he was remunerated on a per page basis. The earliest publications of Ts'msyen by Boas are representative of typical armchair anthropology—Boas paid Tait for fieldnotes that he received via mail, and then used Tait’s notes as his basis for theorizing cultural difference from afar.

Now let us consider the Canadian context. In 1917 Marius Barbeau—a key player in the development of Canadian anthropology (See Darnell 2000)—published a book

review of Tsimshian Mythology, and in it he cast doubt on the reliability of Boas' scholarship. Barbeau was an anthropologist for the National Museum of Canada, and he made his critique because, in 1914, he collaborated with William Beynon, his hired Ts'msyen informant and translator, for a three-month field season in Lax Kw'alaams. The work of Barbeau can be considered a form of localized armchair anthropology because certainly it was Beynon who did the labor of ethnographic fieldwork, while Barbeau acted as an on-site supervisor at best. It is interesting that, similar to the Boas-Tait relationship, Barbeau continued to employ Beynon from the time they met until he passed on in 1958. In consideration of the politics of knowledge production, however, I want to point the reader to a more relevant fact. While Boas' 1902, 1912 and 1916 publications constructed Ts'msyen as ethnological subject in the colonial archive, Barbeau's 1917 review of Boas' work set the standard for subsequent scholars to assert disciplinary expertise and authority through authentication methods, and according to western epistemes:

This research loop seeks to confirm an early... "cultural pattern" and has been assembled into a regulatory body of literature, a rigid *canon* of literature whose shape and content is defined according to the disciplinary taste and practice of its early, key contributors [emphasis in original] (Simpson 2014:70).

Nearly every publication since the setting of the Ts'msyen canon in 1902 stems from the knowledge generated from the fieldwork and fieldnotes of Tait and Beynon, but have almost exclusively been based on ideas and representations about Ts'msyen culture produced by Boas and Barbeau. Indeed, the Ts'msyen canon is narrowly reproductive—generations of anthropologists and ethnologists, since the time of Boas and Barbeau, have continued to salvage, document, analyze, compare, categorize, archive and represent

Ts'msyen culture, heritage and society in the fashion of their anthropological forefathers [See Appendix A for a non exhaustive reference bibliography of the Ts'msyen canon].

Although Henry Tait and William Beynon labored in their fieldwork to produce their fieldnotes, it was Boas and Barbeau who used that work to set the standard for documenting and analyzing Ts'msyen culture for public consumption. It was Boas and Barbeau who asserted their expertise to write about Ts'msyen because they had access to aspects of our culture as a result of their relationships to Tait and Beynon. It was thus Boas and Barbeau who also set the standard for the anthropologist-informant relationship in studies on Ts'msyen. Through their choices they suggested that Ts'msyen could become knowable through a few key individuals, and that an ideal Ts'msyen informant was a man who exhibited a level of assimilation, had cultural knowledge, was bilingual and literate and was preferably a “half-breed” (Beynon, and the handful of Ts'msyen who served as interlocutors to researchers during his time, were also ‘half’ White). In fact, William Beynon was thought to be such an ideal Indian that Barbeau eventually referred him to Boas, which began their ethnological relationship in 1937, and then Boas got into the habit of recommending Beynon as an informant to his own colleagues and students. Beynon worked with many, and he also recommended other Ts'msyen for interested researchers to approach. As we shall see in the repatriation case study that follows in chapter four, the relationship between Boas and Beynon led to a 1942 encounter between an ethnomusicologist named Laura Boulton and a couple of ideal Ts'msyen informants from Lax Kw'alaams known as Matthew Johnson and William Pierce. Anthropologists have long viewed Ts'msyen informants as critical points of entry for access to our culture before we were expected to disappear. And even though we did not disappear,

anthropologists continued to research and write about our culture, as if we had. Ts'msyen peoples are not present in the majority of the literature that comprises the Ts'msyen canon, nor are there focused critiques of the settler colonial problem.

Let me also remind the reader about the art-museum-anthropology triad discussed in chapter one and how it points to the fact that the Ts'msyen canon encompasses more than published literature. When people engage the corpus of objectified knowledge about Ts'msyen, they are not only confronting anthropological ideas and texts, they are also confronting what Douglas Cole (1985) aptly described as “captured heritage” that was illegally or unethically expropriated from their cultural contexts during the height of artifact collecting on the northwest coast. Let us think about how the captured heritage of Ts'msyen are visible in museums, and not so visible in places like archives, storage facilities and personal collections around the world. Whether visible or not, one can be sure that our masks, regalia, songs, languages, lineages, images, oral histories, totem poles, house fronts, canoes, baskets, rattles and tools, for example, are appropriated and circulated among those fixed spaces. The historical and ongoing appropriation of our in/tangible cultural heritage in textual, material, aural and visual forms work together to render Ts'msyen in/visible—society comes to ‘know’ us through our objects, and through academic publications, but still do not see us as a people with a living culture. These assumptions fit neatly within the settler colonial project—when we are in/visible, it helps to negate the existence of Indigenous peoples in order to justify the exploitation of Indigenous lands. Given these scenarios, one can begin to understand why Ts'msyen are not only concerned with reclaiming our captured heritage in all their forms, but also with disrupting dominant and stereotypical discourses that render us knowable and marginal.

Critical scholar Homi Bhabha (1994:95) has written that the stereotype is a key feature of colonial discourse; that it is a dominant and ambivalent mode of knowledge production,

... it is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed.

The stereotype is generative and paradoxical, representing an odd mix of repulsion and desire to forget and fix the so-called 'Indian problem' through the production, circulation and consumption of objectified knowledge. In North America, Indigenous peoples have long been considered ideal objects of colonial discourse—in and out of the way 'others' who could be defined by cultural difference, who could become knowable through western epistemes, and who needed to be known as internal threats to the settler order of things. Burgeoning settler polities had to satisfy, "...an ecclesiastical, metropolitan, and administrative readership" (Simpson 2014:95) that yearned to be exonerated of the violence of settler colonialism while justifying the ongoing exploitation of Indigenous peoples and lands. Here we can recall the contributions of critical theorist Michel Foucault's (1980) *power/knowledge* paradigm, which helps to reveal how power is made effective through the disciplining of knowledge, and the circulation of discourses maintained through social relations. To extend this point further from a critical race perspective, knowledge is made effective in the service of power in settler societies to regulate, categorize and normalize people against the standard of Whiteness, and to maintain White supremacy and possession (Brayboy 2006; Hill 2008; Moreton-Robinson 2006, 2008). In settler societies, objectified knowledge about Indigenous peoples results

in wide spread ignorance about our ongoing and inherent sovereignty, and denial about the violence and reality of White racist culture. Because discourses are given meaning through social practices, they often seem invisible. When discourses are invisible, or taken-for-granted, they are the most powerful, and this is precisely what makes them dominant. However, when dominant discourses and practices are recognized for their power potential—only possible through critique and action—they can be penetrated.

My aim in this opening section was to situate the role of knowledge and power in the making of Ts'msyen as in/visible subject in the colonial archive of the west. I have chosen to focus on the relationship between settler colonialism and anthropological knowledge production to provide the theoretical, methodological, ethical and practical bases for the interventions made in this dissertation. For the remainder of this chapter, I will briefly outline them. I will: (1) situate this work within the decolonizing anthropology project, (2) discuss the ongoing need for critical Indigenous standpoints, (3) show how to turn the theories of decolonization into praxis and, finally (4) return to the third space so that we can think through the issues and topics presented in the forthcoming case studies in ways that move beyond binary logics and stereotypical assumptions about Indigeneity—and in this case, Ts'msyen-ness itself.

B. Decolonizing Anthropology

The publication of *Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further Towards an Anthropology for Liberation* (Harrison 1991) continues to be an important resource for anthropological transformation in the contemporary era. The authors in this edited volume question the role of ethnography at the intersection between knowledge and power—how representations of otherness serve Eurocentric interests, and how they affect

the lived sociocultural realities of marginalized peoples. They argue for a reassessment of anthropology's role in neocolonial forms of domination, and they advocate for, "a path or paths to an anthropology designed to promote equality- and justice-inducing social transformation" (Harrison 1991:2). The integration of standpoints along race, class and gendered lines is critical to the types of social and disciplinary transformations that these authors had in mind. Harrison (2008:2) has written elsewhere that in order to rework the discipline, anthropological research "must be grounded in a critical anthropology of anthropology" as a means to rethink and reconstruct the historical positioning of the researcher and the researched. Accordingly, these types of canonical interventions mark the possibility for decolonizing anthropology, and for knowledge production in general.

Advocates for decolonization in anthropology and beyond have long argued for structural changes that address myriad forms of domination and inequality. People have advocated and fought for the retention of individuals in academia, the integration of particular standpoints *and* the conferral of rights along race, class and gendered lines. What I am about to say is not to undermine the importance of minority activism. Rather, it is a provocation for thinking about the differences between postcoloniality and decolonization, and how minority rights and experiences cannot be articulated on the same terms as Indigeneity. In the North American context we are living in a settler colonial state, where settlers come to stay in Indigenous lands that have been usurped but *not* surrendered. In our theorizing of decolonization, we must consider how the settler colonial reality comes to bear on the subject position of those who stay, and even how models of liberal pluralism have served to muffle and trivialize Indigenous sovereignty and inherent rights (Alfred 2011; Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2014). At what expense are

the rights of Canadian and American citizens claimed and gained? In what ways do the liberal rights that even minority peoples enjoy undermine Indigenous sovereignty? How decolonizing are theories and actions that do not actively seek to disrupt the ongoing project of structured dispossession in Indigenous North America? These are *fundamental* questions, indeed, but there are *preliminary* questions that everyone must begin with for the sake of decolonization in settler society:

What does it mean to acknowledge the Indigenous territory you're on? Are you coming to community, place-based relationships as a settler or as an Indigenous person? Additionally, how are you entering Indigenous homelands—as an invited guest, uninvited, trespasser, visitor, resident, immigrant, refugee etc.? How you situate yourself and your level of awareness about colonial occupations of Indigenous homelands brings new responsibilities to the forefront (Snelgrove, Dhamoon & Cornthassel 2014:4).

These are critical questions that advocates who dare to label their research and activism decolonizing must ask themselves—particularly in a settler colonial context like North America where the project of Indigenous elimination is always desired and incomplete.

The harsh reality is that settler states and institutions—especially *educational* institutions such as world fairs, universities, museums and archives—have profited from Indigenous dispossession. They were literally built upon the lands, bodies, knowledge and material culture of Indigenous peoples. Therefore, decolonization cannot be uncritically applied to gestures of inclusion, nor can they be appropriated and fixed onto pre-existing frameworks or discourses, even if they are critical, anti-racist, anti-sexist, or democratically oriented in scope (Lawrence & Dua 2011; Tuck & Yang 2012).

Decolonization is not a metaphor. When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future (Tuck & Yang 2012:3).

Unfortunately, much of the decolonization literature within anthropology and beyond tends to imply that settler-colonialism is a thing of the past; that it is primarily an Indigenous problem and not a settler problem, or; that if we integrate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, or recruit more Indigenous peoples as sort of a ‘paint by numbers’ solution, everything will be sorted out. These types of transformations do not adequately deal with the settler colonial problem, and it is precisely why out of any standpoint needed for decolonization, Indigenous standpoints are crucial.

Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) provides a critical Indigenous standpoint on the issue of knowledge and power in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. In it Smith (1999:58-9) demonstrates that, through anthropology and associated disciplines, “...the indigenous world has been *represented* to the West and it is through these disciplines that indigenous peoples often *research* for the fragments of ourselves which were taken, catalogued, studied and stored.” While anthropologists have become increasingly engaged with issues of power and inequality, anthropology is still caught up in appropriating our cultural heritage, intervening in our politics and in constructing and defining Indigeneity itself (Deloria 1969; Baker 2010; Simpson 2014). In many ways, anthropologists continue to depend on the bodies, knowledge, histories and material culture of Indigenous peoples as the domain of anthropology and as their sources of intellectual authority and expertise. Most concerning is that the subsequent constructions of Indigeneity are then circulated and reformulated through legal discourses in the body politic. Anthropological theories of and ideas about Indigeneity become integral forms of expert knowledge in ethical and legal decisions surrounding Indian policy, self-determination, treaty rights, land claims, federal

recognition, access and control, repatriation, and the preservation and management of heritage and heritage sites, for example [See Anaya 1996; Anderson 2009; Bell & Napoleon 2008; Bell & Paterson 2009; Borneman 1995; Cruikshank 1992; Greenbaum 1985; Hall 2010; Johnson 2003; Kosslak; Maurer 2003; Nicholas et al 2010; Richland 2007; Ridington 1992; Riles 2006; Rosen 1977; Zedeño, Austin & Stoffle 1997].

Decolonizing anthropology, from a critical Indigenous standpoint, requires that we also confront the critical issue of property in the processes of structured dispossession. Here, I am referring to property not in terms of land but in terms of knowledge, so that we can think through the role of the “author-function” in colonial archives (Stoler 2002; Anderson 2013). Following critical legal scholar Jane Anderson (2013:229), I am also concerned with,

...how the relationship between copyright law and authorship functions as a means for maintaining hierarchies of knowledge production by reducing Indigenous and non-European subjectivity and legitimating the (ongoing) appropriation of Indigenous cultural material by non-indigenous authors.

In the repatriation case study that follows in chapter four, the reader will see how the role of the “author/archive/copyright nexus” (Anderson 2013:230) comes to bear on the efforts of Ts’msyen to reclaim not human remains and cultural objects; but in this particular case, cultural knowledge and associated knowledge products from archives. As Smith (1999:104) notes, “the commodification of knowledge as intellectual property, of collective knowledge as public knowledge, and of knowledge as value-added takes the struggle into another set of cultural interpretations.” Archives are not only physical spaces or locations, but also sites of knowledge production that distribute and circulate authority, meaning and power in particular ways. Archives are rife with hidden backstories—stories of how anthropologists and all types of individuals automatically

usurp the rights of Indigenous peoples with the pressing of record, the stroke of a pen or the capturing of an image. With a blindness and willful ignorance to the extensive structural forms of dispossession that mark the tools of settler colonialism, intellectual hunter and gatherers enjoy their social capital as knowers, and they capitalize financially on other peoples knowledge because they are automatically granted legal rights to knowledge products through copyright law. From a critical Indigenous standpoint, there is an incredible amount of decolonizing work to do in anthropology—not only in terms of research practices and knowledge production but also for dealing with the property issue.

C. When ‘Subjects’ Strike Back

I am interested in the way that cultural analysis may look when difference is *not* the unit of analysis; when culture is disaggregated into a variety of narratives rather than one comprehensive, official story; when proximity to the territory that one is engaging in is as immediate as the self. What does this do to ethnographic form?

—Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus* (2014:97)

The principal intervention of this dissertation is that it actively presents a, “...move from the atrophied scene of a purist “canon” of knowledge into the space of what it necessarily excludes: the community and the people in question” (Simpson 2014:34). While there has been a level of participation from a few Ts’msyen in the history of anthropological research, they are typically referenced in passing, mentioned in the acknowledgement section or listed as footnotes in the literature. For over a century this has been the ethnographic form in studies on Ts’msyen—aspects of our cultural knowledge are present, but the people remain invisible. Disrupting this norm is an important aspect of decolonizing anthropological knowledge production, and for addressing the phenomenon of Indigenous in/visibility. In the last decade, Ts’msyen have

made canonical interventions through their educational achievements and publications—the fact that these Ts’msyen scholars exist in the academy at all is historic [See Askren 2009, 2011; Menzies 2004, 2010; Menzies & Butler 2007; Vickers 2008; Ryan 2014]. Although a Ts’msyen scholar also authors this dissertation, my research paradigm and interventions differ from theirs in particular ways. First, I am from Lax Kw’alaams, whereas the aforementioned scholars are either from Kitkatla, Old Metlakatla or New Metlakatla. Although we are all connected, each Ts’msyen village community has a unique story to tell. This research was in response to the distinctive history, experiences, needs, priorities and values of Ts’msyen from Lax Kw’alaams. Ours is the largest of the Ts’msyen village communities and it represents the political location for nine out of the fourteen tribes of the Ts’msyen Nation. Secondly, I have engaged over 200 Ts’msyen from Lax Kw’alaams in unprecedented ways—this work was multi-sited, auto-ethnographic, inter-generational, community-based and participatory, with, by and for our people. Our work has been decolonizing for many reasons, namely that our research actively locates authority in our hereditary sovereignty structure and in the people themselves. Finally, what culminates in this dissertation can be characterized as *ethnography of refusal*, “...a mode of sovereign authority over the presentation of ethnographic data and so does not present “everything.” This is for the express purpose of protecting the concerns of the community” (Simpson 2014:105). As an author, I have worked carefully not to follow the ethnographic form that dominates studies on Ts’msyen. The Ts’msyen standpoints that we offer are not uncritical descriptions of “experience as evidence” (Scott 1991); they are critical insights into the settler colonial problem and the power effects of objectified knowledge production.

Here I want to point the reader to Torres Strait Island scholar Martin Nakata's (1998, 2007, 2012) theorizing of an *Indigenous standpoint*. Indigenous standpoints are methods of enquiry that can help make more comprehensible the ways in which objectified knowledge production comes to bear on the lived social realities of Indigenous peoples (Nakata 2007). Theorizing knowledge from this position does not mean, "...moving from 'epistemic disobedience' of the Western to 'epistemic obedience' of the regenerated Indigenous"—that would only reify the very binaries that are critical to the exercise of colonial power (Nakata et al. 2012:129). Rather, critical Indigenous standpoints help to, "...better reveal the workings of knowledge and how understanding of Indigenous people is caught up and implicated in its work" (Nakata 2007:12). This is critical to understanding what an Indigenous standpoint does in terms of its interruptive capacity, for "in this form of practised analysis are myriad refusals, non-engagements, and ambivalent or conditional deferrals of and to colonial meaning" (Nakata et al 2012:125). Furthermore, as Mohawk Scholar Audra Simpson (2014:97) demonstrates, when Indigenous peoples speak for themselves, "'voice' goes hand in hand with sovereignty at the level of enunciation, at the level of method, and at the level of textualization." Knowing Ts'msyen and other Indigenous peoples in the colonial archive has led to all sorts of techniques of structured dispossession that aim to eliminate us from our lands, and as culturally distinct peoples. For the sake of decolonizing anthropology, the academy or even methodologies, there must be critical space for Ts'msyen to investigate the issues that directly affect our lives, to do applied research that deals with the settler colonial problem and to represent ourselves on our own terms.

D. Decolonization as Method

The two projects to ‘indigenize’ the academy and to indigenize research are symbiotic in nature and interdisciplinary in scope (See Archibald 2008; Brayboy 2005; Brown & Strega 2005; Cole 2002, 2004; Deloria, Jr. 1991; Denzin, Lincoln & Smith 2008; Hampton 1995; Kirkness & Barnhardt 1991; Kovach 2009, 2010; Lavallee 2009; Mihesuah 1998, 2005; Mihesuah & Wilson 2004; Million 2008, 2009; Simpson & Smith 2014; Smith 1999; Weber-Pillwax 2001, 2004; Wilson 2001, 2008). The increasing visibility of Indigenous peoples in academia, the gradual acceptance of Indigenous scholarship and ongoing modifications to ethical standards and policies has been accompanied by an expectation that Indigenous methodologies will be used in Indigenous research. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Smith 1999) was a timely intervention and it has become a standard historical, methodological and theoretical resource for research in Indigenous contexts. Smith not only works to reveal the intimate webs of meaning and power in settler societies, she also alerts us to the disturbing relationship between western imperialism, research and writing. Through Kaupapa Māori—or Māori-centered research—Smith demonstrates that Indigenous methodologies engender different questions, priorities, definitions of problems, methods of enquiry, modes of analysis and forms of participation in the research process.

Successive waves of Indigenous scholars have built upon and extended Smith’s work to further advocate for the development of Indigenous research paradigms rather than simply superimposing Indigenous perspectives onto Western research. As Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2001:176) has argued, “...Indigenous research needs to reflect Indigenous contexts and world views: that is, they must come from an Indigenous

paradigm rather than an Indigenous perspective.” Wilson (2008) has written elsewhere that Indigenous paradigms are premised on “relational accountability,” or the “relationality” of the researcher to not only knowledge and ideas, but also to human and non-human relatives, to places and spaces, to the cosmos, to processes and to histories. In this way, Indigenous research methodologies prioritize contexts, relationships and dynamism over the binary positivist scientific method which excludes so much data and, “...so limited are the possible answers that Western knowledge might be regarded as a mere classification system devoid of valid conclusions” (Deloria, Jr. 2004:19). In Indigenous contexts, a strict adherence to the rules of western research will likely reproduce stereotypical knowledge and do more harm than good for Indigenous peoples—the past few hundred years of western research practices on our communities has proven this (Deloria, Jr. 1969). Critical Indigenous scholars have successfully argued that Indigenous standpoints and Indigenous research paradigms help to subvert the colonizing properties retained in contemporary research. They show how theories and advocacy alone, although important, could never be adequate for decolonial goals. It is imperative that we put the theories of decolonization into praxis.

The late Lakota anthropologist Beatrice Medicine long advocated for Indigenous standpoints in anthropology, and for collaborative methodologies that have a positive impact on Indigenous peoples and communities. In her book of selected writings, *Learning to Be an Anthropologist & Remaining “Native”* (2001), she synthesizes the lessons learned from her prolific career. Her words are worth quoting in length here:

Often, it is implicit that our research “empowers” people. To me, empowering people—especially “people of colour”—means teaching and researching issues of race, class, gender and power relations in ways that can be understood and utilized by “target populations.” Moreover, as applied anthropologists, we should

do more participatory research and not use Native people as consultants but as co-directors of research projects. Thus, they can learn research techniques and initiate and implement their own “needs assessment” and application strategies to improve the quality of life in their own communities (Medicine 2001:329).

Indigenous research paradigms also benefit from applied methods that are community-generated and action-oriented. As Anishinaabe scholar Sonya Atalay (2012) has written, “research with, by and for” is a community-based, collaborative and participatory approach that changes the nature of the research encounter. Atalay approaches the issue of methodology from an archaeological perspective, but there are important lessons that all scholars can learn about how community-based participatory research (CBPR) projects develop on the ground. She (Atalay 2012:29) notes that, “in some cases, CBPR may not be appropriate or feasible. Yet the influence and importance that the collaborative concept has for contemporary practice is undeniable.” The central tenants of research with, by and for are discussed from Atalay’s own experiences conducting five community-based archaeological projects at home and abroad. The central tenants, as learned by Atalay, include: responding to the unique needs, priorities and values of the community in question, community collaboration in the research design, developing trust, building relationships, co-creating knowledge, power-sharing, showing reciprocity, researcher accountability, transparency, responsibility, humility and patience. In this important resource, Atalay provides a roadmap of sorts, not for others to mimic but for others to draw from in order to put decolonizing principles into research practice.

It’s easy to *talk* about decolonization—less so to ‘walk the talk.’ It requires long-term commitment, engagement and intervention to move beyond the settler colonial order of things. Let me now outline some key examples to indicate how I have acted in my role as a researcher in the two case studies that follow in chapters four and five. There are

three primary ways in which I have put the aforementioned theories and methodologies of decolonization into praxis—through (1) ethics (2) methods, and (3) authorship.

The ethics of my research are framed by the Indigenous research paradigm that I have employed in my quest for higher knowledge about the topic of Ts'msyen reclamation. As a Ts'msyen working with Ts'msyen peoples, in Ts'msyen contexts, I have approached the research process according to our unique cultural protocols. The most important ways that I have done this has been by locating political authority in the Ts'msyen sovereignty structure and in Ts'msyen people themselves. For example, it was important that I did not depend on the Indian Act band council in Lax Kw'alaams to make the repatriation case study happen. Instead, I collaborated with Ts'msyen people from the Nine Allied Tribes wherever they were, and in whatever capacity they lived their lives, to determine the best way forward for pursuing the reclamation of Ts'msyen songs. I worked within my existing relationships and networks, most evident in the dance group case study, and I developed many new relationships to Ts'msyen peoples, places and knowledge, most evident in the repatriation case study. I can confidently say that the fieldwork turned out the way that it did because I was patient to let the process grow organically; my primary purpose was to be of service to my peoples by sharing knowledge and offering possibilities. In the repatriation case study, I provided access to our captured songs, and a reason for our people to get together—whatever happened after that was done in consultation with our people who ultimately encouraged me to, “*keep on doing what you're doing*” to bring our songs home, and who also gave me permission to write about the processes of reclamation in this dissertation. In the dance group case study, I had ideas about what *could* happen in terms of methods and research questions,

but my ethics ensured that I continued to talk through the possibilities with members of Lax Kxeen to collectively determine our objectives and to assess the ways in which research methods can actually serve and protect their interests, instead of only serving and protecting my interests as a researcher. Researchers always have ethical decisions to make, and to be accountable to. Although I have obtained ethical approval from the University of Massachusetts Institutional Review Board, I view them as mostly protecting my rights as a researcher and the rights of the university. My research paradigm is only partly guided by those standards. Different forms of ethical standards exist everywhere at all levels of society, institutional or otherwise. I have learned to name ethics in a Ts'msyen context as *Ayaawx*—our laws; our protocols; our ways of knowing, being and doing; our relationships to knowledge, peoples, places and processes; our modes of interaction; our levels of responsibility; our expectations for accountability; and, under the settler colonial condition, the source for decolonization and resurgence.

The norm in “human subjects” research is for a researcher to self-identify a topic of interest, to then figure out how and through whom they can explore that topic, to deploy methods that are deemed most efficient for their own purposes, and to apply that knowledge in such a way as to postulate one's expertise. As an anthropologist, I have always been uncomfortable with the unequal, extractive and exploitative processes of western research, and alarmed by the ways in which researchers historically, and presently, run in and out of communities never to be seen again. In my mind, these contemporary realities only perpetuate a colonial ethos of non-relationality. To counteract this taken-for-granted effect, I have put decolonization into practice through methods of community engagement and through methods of collaborative research. Cree scholar

Margaret Kovach (2005:30) sums up nicely the relationship between research, method and engagement in Indigenous contexts:

...a sincere, authentic investment in the community; the ability to take time to visit with people from the community (whether or not they are research participants); the ability to be humble about the goals; and conversations at the start about who owns the research, its use and purpose (particularly if it is academic research).

Since the dissertation fieldwork began in October 2012, I have engaged over 200 Ts'msyen in three locations by being present and sociable in community, through consultation and outreach, through casual discussions, through spontaneous dialogue, by visiting with people and volunteering to lend a hand, and through conducting and witnessing Feast work, for example. Much of this will be revealed and discussed in the chapters to follow. I also show how methods of engagement inform the development and application of research methods. For example, in the repatriation case study I began with three listening gatherings, and ended up facilitating five in total, while it also led to a series of six translation workshops and two talking circles. In the dance group case study, I began with a dance ethnography, which resulted in a talking circle and a Photovoice project. In my experiences and observations, a collaborative enquiry through applied, participatory and inclusive research practices helps to decolonize knowledge production.

Earlier in this chapter I discussed the interruptive capacity of Indigenous standpoints and how it is a method that responds to the phenomenon of Indigenous in/visibility. I believe, however, that, in this dissertation, a single Ts'msyen standpoint would not have been sufficient for altering ethnographic form in ways that are to be considered decolonizing. The methods that we used helped to deal with this. Each method created collaborative and inclusive space for the Ts'msyen protocols of oratory,

amuks'm (listening) and witnessing, and as a result it also created critical space for the co-creation of knowledge—for Ts'msyen to collectively speak to and embody the topic of reclamation through storytelling, participatory dialogue, critical analysis, experiential observations and reflexivity. Because the methods were culturally appropriate and active, it was critical that in this dissertation I also presented the research teachings and my research partners in such a way. This means that the people are to be heard, respected and attributed for their experiences, knowledge, wisdom and expertise. As the author of our research story, I have carefully chosen the words for the contexts, concepts, theories and methodologies that help to synthesize, explain and properly reflect what has been individually and collectively expressed to me by the many Ts'msyen children, youth, adults and Elders who I have relationships with, and whom I have responsibilities to. So while my voice and the voices of Indigenous and other critical scholars have been highlighted thus far, it has only been to set the tone for what my research partners have had to say, which is given meaningful space in the following, and very lengthy, case studies. In chapters four and five, I share our story of reclamation by weaving the words of Ts'msyen together in ways that are both poetic and political, and to index Ts'msyen presence. Through this mode of authorship, the reader will be able to see why this level of accounting alters ethnographic form; why it goes hand in hand with Ts'msyen sovereignty; how an Indigenous research paradigm in a Ts'msyen context develops on the ground; why the methods we used were necessarily inter-related; and; what the processes of Ts'msyen reclamation looks like through the lens of song and dance.

The choices that I make as an author, however, are not only implicated at the level of text—it is also implicated in terms of property. In this chapter I have discussed the

ways in which the author/archive/copyright nexus works to dispossess Indigenous peoples of the rights to their collectively owned intellectual properties when they become transformed into knowledge products in the research encounter. It was essential that I was transparent with my research partners about this harsh reality—that I never left a new situation without explaining the implication of my role as a researcher and author. I promised the Ts’msyen who I engaged that I would never try to profit from their knowledge, that they are the rightful owners of their knowledge, and that I would like to cite people for any of their words that I include in the dissertation. I explained that I would approach the issue of property in our research according to the laws of the Ts’msyen—laws that teach us that an individual does not have the power to write words, or press the record button, and magically usurp people’s rights. People needed to be sure that I understood that, in the Ts’msyen way, with rights come responsibilities. Likewise, I needed to be sure that people understood that in the western property system—in which we are all caught up—copyright is automatically granted in authorship. To deal with this, I made a critical decision as an author to ensure that the people of Lax Kw’alaams directly benefit from any financial gain that I may enjoy from the publication of this dissertation or any parts of it that become turned into a future book manuscript. I consulted with my people and decided that I will create a Ts’msyen Revolution Fund in Lax Kw’alaams where 100% of the money generated from any future book sales will be donated. I envision it as a community resource to which our people can apply for financial support to aid grassroots cultural maintenance and reclamation efforts in the village. This is my way of actively resisting the colonial paradigm that renders one expert, author and beneficiary. My name is copy written on this dissertation, but I am

asserting that while I am responsible for most of the words, I do not own the knowledge. This dissertation represents the collective knowledge of my research partners, and I have synthesized our knowledge in ways that are relevant to who we are, where we are, where we come from and where we see ourselves going. The knowledge therefore belongs to all of us—and we have come together to share our knowledge for the benefit of the Nine Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams and the Ts'msyen Nation.

E. Breaking Through the Totality

In this chapter I have discussed the alarming ways in which western knowledge production has been used in the service of settler colonial power, and the ways in which knowledge about Ts'msyen and other Indigenous peoples has been caught up and implicated in that work. I have also flagged the colonizing properties retained in western research and western property frameworks. This has not been to advocate for a wholesale disavowal of research or of all things western—but rather a rejection of western-based theories, methods and laws that are based on totalizing binary constructs, and that work to dispossess Indigenous peoples of our lands, heritage and rights. It just so happens that western ways of knowing, being and doing framed the terms of the settler colonial project, shaped the production, circulation and consumption of objectified knowledge, and which have been put to work to achieve Indigenous dispossession in North America. Knowledge continues to be produced with the presumption of totality; as in the west is best, or as if rights, for example, as currently conceptualized and enforced, are absolute. In my analyses, whether it was/is the dispossession of our lands, heritage or rights, knowledge production is always at work. Ideas about human evolution, nature, nationhood, governance, family, subjectivity, property, law, religion, education, science

and rights, for example, were all constructed to manage settler power based on false dichotomies of Indigenous inferiority and settler superiority. And so it follows that western knowledge production is the root of the settler colonial problem in North America, and that decolonization must begin in knowledge spaces in order to maneuver its way through the multifarious networks of authority, meaning and control to the place where possibilities, alternatives and revolution exists. In this respect, it will be helpful for the reader to recall the third space so that we can think through the issues and topics presented in the forthcoming case studies in ways that move beyond binary logics and stereotypical assumptions about Indigeneity—and in this case, Ts'msyen-ness itself.

CHAPTER 4

RECLAIMING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

A. Searching for the Voices of Our Ancestors: Reclaiming Ts'msyen Songs

One day in November 2009, during my third semester of graduate studies, a colleague approached me with the question, “*you’re Ts’msyen, right?*” After confirming that she was correct, she proceeded to offer me a piece of information that I was not expecting. She had gained access to the meta-data for the Laura Boulton Collection of Traditional and Liturgical Music in the Center for Ethnomusicology at Columbia University. While reviewing the notes, she noticed that there were several files associated with Ts’msyen peoples from Port Simpson and Prince Rupert, British Columbia, Canada. When she told me this, it gave me chills—immediately I recalled that earlier request by Christine, the leader of the Lax Kxeen Ts’msyen Dance Group in Vancouver, who asked me to, “*keep an eye out for our songs while you’re out there doing your studies.*” I quickly replied to my colleague with excitement, “*my village is Port Simpson, but we call it Lax Kw’alaams, and Prince Rupert is Ts’msyen territory, too. Actually, the name of the dance group that I’m in, Lax Kxeen, describes the place where Prince Rupert is located!*”

Although my colleague provided me with contact information right away for the manager of the collection, it was two months before I initiated correspondence. I wanted to take advantage of my upcoming winter break in Vancouver so that I could consult in person with Christine, members of our dance group and my family about what to do next. I never planned on doing repatriation work in my graduate studies, but I came to be seen by my community as someone who could help to make this work happen. At the time, I wasn’t sure why—I didn’t have cultural expertise about old songs and I wasn’t even sure

how one goes about the business of repatriating our in/tangible cultural heritage. The more I talked with folks about the existence of the songs at Columbia, the more it was apparent that no one else really knew exactly what that process would look like as well. Yet everyone continued to express that repatriation was an important aspect of Ts'msyen reclamation in the contemporary era, particularly for Lax Kw'alaams. From these initial consultations, I agreed to do all that I could but I was honest about needing to do more research—sure I was familiar with the concept of repatriation, but by no means was I an expert, and my master's work at the time was dealing with the legacies of the Indian Residential School System (IRSS). I quickly realized however that most Indigenous communities who have experienced repatriation have had to learn about the socio-political and legal dynamics on the ground. Furthermore, there seemed to be a temporal correlation to make between the history of capturing Indigenous cultural heritage and the history of capturing Indigenous children in residential schools. I needed to know more.

I began email correspondence with Aaron Fox at Columbia University in January 2010, and he has been cooperative from the start. He asked the usual questions about authority in the community and about whom to consult to begin the repatriation process. He provided me with a copy of the meta-data for the Ts'msyen content [see Appendix B] so that I could act as an intermediary, but I did not yet receive access to the audio recordings because he had his own sorting out to do in their archive. It took another two and a half years before the repatriation case study would actually find its legs and become a central component of my PhD research. This is for a couple of reasons. I needed to (1) finish my master's degree, (2) continue to consult with Ts'msyen on the issue of authority and the role of songs in our society, (3) study and research the complexities of

Indigenous repatriation cases, and (4) figure out a research paradigm that could help me to assume my role as a facilitator in the process. It is important to note that, while this was all happening, my family was actively engaged in reclaiming cultural knowledge, presence in our village and our place within our sovereignty structure, by planning and preparing for our first House Feast in Lax Kw'alaams, for the House of Liyaa'mlaxha.

Between 2010 and 2012, I continued to consult my people about our songs, and during that time I would also forward the meta-data to folks to get their perspectives. People couldn't say much, because the meta-data didn't say much. Furthermore, when it came to the issue of authority, the meta-data didn't help there either. Because intangible forms of Ts'msyen cultural heritage are collectively owned in a general sense—with rights and responsibilities to crests, songs, dances, hereditary titles and names for example, possessing intra- and inter-dependent levels of individual, family, House, Tribe, Clan, community and nation-based ownership and responsibility—it quickly became clear that determining authority over Ts'msyen songs would take a great deal of collaborative and community-based research. It became even more pronounced that our people needed to hear the songs, and the more people that heard them the better so that we could figure things out. When I started to suggest the listening gathering format for providing community access, for getting people together and for researching hereditary ownership, Christine advised that if the meta-data listed the songs as being recorded in Lax Kw'alaams and Prince Rupert—which are Ts'msyen territories—then I should do the listening gatherings in those two places first, beginning with our village. Two years after the detection of the Ts'msyen content at Columbia, not only did I feel more confident with my growing 'tool kit' to carry out my role in facilitating the repatriation of

our songs with, by and for my peoples, but my family had also set a date for our House Feast in Lax Kw'alaams for October 13, 2012. It seemed serendipitous to work towards bringing the songs home during that time.

I resumed correspondence with Aaron in August 2012, urging him that I needed access to the sound recordings so that I could begin the repatriation process in Lax Kw'alaams. He responded positively to my sense of urgency, but he also wanted to be sure that he was giving me access to the correct files since there were accumulated inaccuracies and non-correspondence in the meta-data in relation to their audio files. Aaron offered to sponsor my visit to New York City so that we could work with the Laura Boulton Collection to collaboratively confirm the Ts'msyen content therein. From September 21-23, 2012 I stayed in NYC for these purposes. To both of our knowledges, it was the first time a Ts'msyen had accessed these recordings, and it was the first time that this particular collection of files, in this particular archive, had been given any attention. In fact, Aaron was uncertain how to distinguish between the northwest coast audio files associated with Haida, Ts'msyen and Gitksan, and so needed my ear to help make the distinction. Even though I did not have linguistic fluency in Sm'algyax, I knew enough words, sounds and tones, and I also had my instincts as a Ts'msyen, to at least give it a try. We began by listening to all the northwest coast audio files so that I could try to isolate the Ts'msyen content. When I thought I had the Ts'msyen content isolated, we then tried to determine if the track numbers aligned with the notes in the meta-data.

The Columbia meta-data listed 41 individual files labeled "Tsimshyan Indian." Out of these, 32 were attributed to "Matthew Johnson (Age 87)" and nine to "Pearce." But through the listening process, I was certain that only half of the meta-data had a

corresponding audio file; I was sure that at least 20 were missing. I was not able to confirm the exact files that were missing on the spot because I didn't have the linguistic expertise to translate them. I did suspect, however, that the missing files were associated with Matthew Johnson because, amongst the Ts'msyen content, I heard two distinct voices. Here the meta-data was useful—because Boulton associated nine individual files to “Pearce” in the meta-data, and because I heard nine continuous sound recordings that contained one of those distinct Ts'msyen voices, I deduced that they could be associated to “Pearce.” It is important to note here that although the meta-data provided a baseline from which to approach this particular research and analysis process in the colonial archive, it had some serious shortcomings. The meta-data was inadequate, with curious titles like “Indian Song” and scant descriptions like “Folk Song.” Instinctively I knew that the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files had suffered the same fate as most forms of captured Indigenous cultural heritage: the songs were collected, copyrighted, poorly documented, disseminated, archived and displayed, “...in a “vacuum” apart from the proper cultural setting” (Gii-dahl-guud-sliiaay 1995:194), and as a result, lacked sociocultural context including statements of history, lineage or hereditary rights to ownership. The notes that Laura Boulton made can be described as overly simplistic labels for classification given by someone who did not really understand the content.

In fact, Aaron informed me that even though the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) funded Boulton to record these two Ts'msyen men in 1942 as part of the “Peoples of Canada” collection, she collated and catalogued the meta-data for it twenty years later. I have also been advised, through Aaron's research into Boulton's activities, that she was not so much a researcher or an ethnomusicologist as she was a typical amateur collector

of her era, albeit one who sought professional and academic legitimacy for most of her life. Should my community or an interested researcher trust the information in the meta-data that accompany the songs, especially knowing this fact? How reliable can it be? On Aaron's advice, I consulted Boulton's book, *The Music Hunter: The Autobiography of a Career* (1969), to see if there was additional information or context to consider beyond the pithy descriptions that she does provide in the meta-data. I found that Boulton made fleeting references to Ts'msyen in "Chapter 25: The Queen Charlotte Islands and the Northwest Coast Indians" (1969:393-410). There were two things that I found from this book—*something* about "Pearce" but *nothing* about "Matthew Johnson." Boulton (1969:409) writes,

William Pierce was my best informant with the Tsimshian at Prince Rupert, an important coast village of British Columbia. He belonged to the Eagle clan by birth and the Blackfish clan by adoption. When he sang these clan songs for me he was eighty-four years old but still knew very many songs, which he sang well.

Boulton went on to conclude the chapter with a transcription of William Pierce sharing an *Adaawx* in English about how the halibut became dark on one side. I was able to corroborate that there were two files with this title that were attributed to "Pearce" in the meta-data—one recounted in *Sm'algayax* and the other in English. The book turned out to be useful with regard to figuring out who this "Pearce" person might be, but it also proved to be inadequate for many reasons; namely that there were no other references to William Pierce, nor a single reference to Matthew Johnson throughout her book.

Needless to say, the September 2012 visit to Columbia was an important first step in the repatriation process. It was critical that Aaron and I met face to face to discuss our particular standpoints on the matter of repatriation and to negotiate a partnership moving forward. As the manager of the collection, he certainly benefited from my engagement

with their archive because I was able to alert him to the possibility of missing files, making him aware to the likelihood that it was incomplete. I explained that even though we hadn't yet located those missing files, that it was critical that I bring the listening copies that we did locate back with me to Lax Kw'alaams, Prince Rupert and Vancouver the following month. I held firm that through a series of listening gatherings *in their appropriate cultural contexts*, I would likely receive the necessary guidance from my people about how to deal with the issue of authority, because I alone could not. People had waited long enough to hear the recordings and it was time to bring our songs home.

Aaron agreed that the repatriation of Indigenous cultural material could not happen without communities being active in the process, and without it happening in community-based settings. Yet he also felt restrained by the realities of intellectual property law as a representative of the university. At Columbia, Aaron had been developing a commitment to repatriation and he had prior experiences trying to unravel, comprehend and navigate the matrices of ownership and meaning in Indigenous repatriation cases. To him, the challenges were exacerbated by the fact that ethnomusicology archives had messed up in allowing Indigenous cultural property to circulate digitally without due diligence, thereby further complicating the issue of access and control for Indigenous communities. Aaron felt that he could "trust" me so he agreed to give me digital copies of the Ts'msyen files and others in the collection to begin the repatriation process, and to also see if I could find those missing files for his own record. But Aaron also had some cautionary advice for me. He suggested that I not randomly give copies of the Ts'msyen files away in case they ended up in the possession of a Ts'msyen young person who might share them incautiously via social media, or, even

worse, a non-Ts'msyen who would then decide to "remix" any of the songs in the collection for profit, for example. Aaron viewed the intellectual property as potentially threatened by circulation for two primary reasons: he did not want to breach culturally appropriate norms and he feared making an insensitive decision with someone else's intellectual property. To mitigate his fears, he suggested that Ts'msyen could email him for access, which he would gladly provide, or, conversely, he could set up a website with a secure password for Ts'msyen who wanted to access the files remotely and at their convenience. This inevitably led us into a good discussion about repatriation in Indigenous North America—the very term, meaning and purpose.

I was grateful that Aaron had been so cooperative and that he demonstrated a personal investment in what he describes as "community-partnered repatriation." I was also happy to hear that through his research he had come to understand that any assertion by Laura Boulton or Columbia University to the intellectual property rights of the Ts'msyen content would be indefensible. But even with signs from Aaron that our repatriation work could be positive, I still had to be clear about how I understood the relationship that we were about to embark on. This is because, historically, Indigenous peoples are told one thing at the beginning of processes such as these but then encounter tension and opposition from gatekeepers and institutions at later stages. I explained that I was approaching repatriation from a truly decolonizing perspective, so there was a big difference between the return of knowledge and the repatriation of rights. Indigenous repatriation ultimately means the return of rights so that the community in question finds resolve in dealing with the issue of control. The problem with most cases is that they are often described as successful repatriations, when in fact they have only dealt with the

issue of access on negotiated terms—in those instances institutions only provide copies, or if they give something back they often expect a reproduction, but they do not actually give up control of the property rights. What if my people, the appropriate authorities, decide that the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files should be taken out of circulation, I asked? How could we call our work decolonizing, or an act of restorative justice for that matter, if there is no room for my people to reclaim control over the rights to their captured knowledge and knowledge products, and according to our own laws? I explained that we had to be transparent about the fact that what he initially proposed as a solution was a process of return that would deal with the issue of access but not control. Therefore a process of return could not be considered repatriation even if we both understood the value of my community hearing them for what might be the first time in their lives. Through my community-based work, the songs would return to their places of origin, but the rights wouldn't. If we were going to embark on a community-partnered repatriation process based on an ethos of decolonization, it was critical that I communicated to my university partner that we would also need to strategize how to deal with the issue of control from the institutional side of things so that we are ready to deal with legal repatriation if that is what the community decides. In my mind, Indigenous peoples are not asking for rights from settler institutions; rather, we are requesting that institutions and individuals give up their bogusly held rights to ensure repatriation.

Here it is important to provide some background on Laura Boulton's antics. I will provide only a glimpse here to demonstrate how her actions impact the Ts'msyen content in the archive at Columbia, and how it will come to bear on the repatriation of this content moving forward. Boulton was funded by the NFB to record ethnic music for the

“Peoples of Canada” project, which led her to Ts’msyen territory and resulted in her research encounter with Matthew Johnson and William Pierce in 1942. Fast-forward twenty years. In 1962, when Boulton began her role as curator of her collection and the newly founded archives of what would become The Center for Ethnomusicology at Columbia, she also began the sale of her life’s collection that was recorded between 1930-1960 to the university. Boulton included the recorded Ts’msyen content from the NFB funded work in this sale. The contract between the Trustees of Columbia University and Laura Boulton regarding the self-named Laura Boulton Collection of Traditional and Exotic Music, and which is dated June 14, 1962, stipulated that beginning January 21, 1964, the collection, notes, rights, title and interest would be transferred to the university. The contract stipulated that Boulton would be paid \$5,000 “...on February 15 and August 15 of each year during your lifetime”—she died in 1980. Boulton thus made \$170, 000 over a 17 year time period from the sale of this collection (in which the Ts’msyen content is caught up), while she also enjoyed additional financial gain through lectures, record and book sales, and public speaking engagements as she promoted herself as “the music hunter.” To make matters more complicated, when Columbia sought the resources of the Library of Congress (LOC) to permanently archive the masters and make tape copies for institutional use at Columbia and for the collector, the original master recordings, on reels and discs, were deposited under contract at LOC, which agreed to produce three sets of listening copies—two sets went to Columbia and one set went to Boulton for her personal collection. When Boulton left Columbia in 1972 she ended up at Arizona University for a few years, taking her personal collection with her. Her personal collection was later bequeathed to Indiana University Bloomington—this after her death, and the dissolution

of her Foundation in 1981. The Laura Boulton Foundation, by the way, originally controlled the royalty rights to her commercial publications, which were also bequeathed to Indiana University Bloomington. Furthermore, as Aaron Fox (2013:524) has written,

Because Columbia University “owns” the publication rights to the Boulton Collection, researchers working with the catalogues of Indian University or the Library of Congress, or accessing the collection itself at any of its locations, must seek permission from the Columbia University Centre director in order to duplicate or even transcribe them for any purpose.

It is important that I leave the reader with this overview of the ways in which Ts’msyen songs contained within the Laura Boulton Collection have been given value and meaning *ex-situ*—out of the appropriate cultural contexts, and with no regard for the community and our laws. Now I will tell the story of how value and meaning of our songs and Adaawx are remade *in-situ* in Ts’msyen communities and by Ts’msyen people.

B. Bringing Our Songs Home: A Pedagogical Reclamation

Once I left Columbia with a copy of the Ts’msyen audio files, I was able to confirm that my predictions were correct—half of the files, all attributed to Matthew Johnson in the meta-data, were missing. I had only a couple of weeks before I would return to BC, so I began making phone calls from afar to consult with a few key individuals to get their thoughts about hosting listening gatherings in Lax Kw’alaams, Prince Rupert and Vancouver. First, I talked with my Elders—my great uncle Liyaa’mlaxha (Leonard Alexcee, Smooygit, Gisbutwada, Waap Liyaa’mlaxha, Gitaxangiik) and his wife, Goold’m Nits’k/Wii Gandoox (Mona Alexcee, Sigyidmhana’a, Laxsgiik/Gisbutwada, Waap Laax/Waap Gamayaamx, Gitando). They both agreed that I should try to have a listening gathering in Lax Kw’alaams while we were there doing Feast work, and they also reminded me that I would be introduced to many Elders and

Tribal leaders during our visit so I would have opportunities to talk with people, to make them aware and to get their advice. Because Liyaa'mlaxha and Goold'm Nits'k/Wii Gandoox were living in Prince Rupert at the time, and because they have been pillars of the community for decades, I also asked them what they thought about me hosting a listening gathering there. They advised me to consult George Sampson from Lax Kw'alaams who is also a pillar of the community, and who is the extremely committed coordinator of the Prince Rupert Friendship House Elders Group, to which my Elders are both longtime members of. Plus, I had met George and many of the Elders during an earlier visit when I volunteered for them during Prince Rupert's Annual Seafest.

I called George and we chatted. He thought the Elders would be interested to hear the songs, but they had a fully booked schedule for the next few weeks, so hosting a listening gathering was not going to be possible during my upcoming visit, but he said that we could try for the near future. My conversation with George was eye opening and affirming. He shared stories with me to offer advice for how to approach something like repatriation if we did not yet know to which entity they belonged within our sovereignty structure. He offered me important teachings about how to bring community together, how to prevent tension between peoples, and how to foster community mobilization towards a common goal. I continue to be grateful to George for trusting me with his wisdom and for both cautioning and encouraging me to take on the challenges of repatriation work. The next key person that I called was Christine Martin—the one who compelled me to keep an eye out for our songs for the purposes of repatriation in the first place. Coordinating the listening gathering for Vancouver was easier because it is the community that I grew up in, and Lax Kxeen is the dance group that I am an original and

long time member of. Christine was of course extremely excited to finally hear the songs after a long time coming. She offered to spread the word via social media and at our weekly dance practice, and she also offered to find the space and to provide food for our upcoming gathering. All I had to do was suggest a date and time while I made sure to keep her updated on my journey. With guidance from leaders among the Ts'msyen Nation, I set out to do my part to make sure that as many Ts'msyen as possible could help to reclaim the recordings according to a community based sensibility. We all agreed that it wasn't feasible to have a three-hour listening gathering with each person that I met, as this would take an exorbitant amount of time, and it wouldn't be conducive to community building—maybe it would connect me to individual Ts'msyen, but it wouldn't connect us to one another. The listening gathering format was clearly the way to go, and I was ready to do all that I could to ensure that as many Ts'msyen as possible could hear the songs.

I should mention that going to Lax Kw'alaams in October 2012 was the first time that I ever set foot in my village. I did not have pre-existing relationships there, and I wasn't sure that the people of Lax Kw'alaams even knew whom my immediate family was or that I was related to Liyaa'mlaxha for that matter. But hosting a Feast would be the first step to publicly identify my immediate family to the people in the village, and it would help to secure our place within the Ts'msyen sovereignty structure. Feasting is the highest form of protocol within our society, and my family's initiation into our matrilineal network of rights, privileges, roles and responsibilities was the highest honor for each of us. October 13, 2012 was the first time in nearly 75 years that the House of Liyaa'mlaxha—a Gisbutwada House in the Gitaxangiik—put up a Feast. Liyaa'mlaxha grew up in Nisga'a territory as a child, moved back to the village, and has since

maintained his presence there. But it was only in the last decade that my family realized our matrilineal relationship to him. My family did a lot of archival, genealogical and cultural research using both oral and written historical sources to come to the realization, but it was mainly due to the community-based efforts of my eldest aunty 'Limooks that we found our connection to our Smooygit in the first place. Liyaa'mlaxha often tells us with great humility, "*before I met you kids, I thought I was all alone in my House.*" And before we met him, we didn't yet know our place within our sovereignty structure. The reasons for this are numerous, and the effects have been felt inter-generationally.

Our Smooygit was eager to introduce us around Lax Kw'alaams so that folk could begin to understand where we *belonged* within our sovereignty structure. He introduced us to many people in the village amidst the business and labor taking place the days before our House Feast. During the many encounters we had, he would tell folks that I had access to songs that I wanted to share, and then he would ask me to tell them about my research goals. The temporal aspects of the recordings compelled people, and they wondered what type of knowledge we might uncover together. Furthermore, many were excited about the opportunities for reclamation through repatriation. I informed the people I met that I was happy to host a listening gathering if they thought it was a good idea, and everyone that I encountered showed interest in hearing the songs in that community-based format, and they encouraged me to try to get people together while I was in the village. Many people started to identify others who would likely be interested, and one of those people was Sagipaayk (Tom Dennis, Smooygit, Ganhada, Waap Sagipaayk, Gispaxlo'ots). On the advice of my Elders and others in the village, I consulted Sagipaayk about the songs and a potential listening gathering. Not only is he a

Ts'msyen culture and language expert, he is also a Tribal leader and an Elder in training. He was very interested to be a part of the process and he offered to provide the space for the listening gathering in his language classroom at the Coast Tsimshian Academy.

On the instruction of my Smooygit, Liyaa'mlaxha, I made an announcement at our House Feast about the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files, my intentions to host a listening gathering the following day, and my hope for community participation in my research. It was an emotionally charged time for my family. We were introduced to the community and I witnessed my mother, brother, aunty and two uncles have names put on them that have also been worn by our Ts'msyen Ancestors since time immemorial (with the exception of one of my two uncles who received a newly conceived name, now also belonging to Waap Liyaa'mlaxha). Furthermore, this trip represented my own personal repatriation to Lax Kw'alaams. Needless to say, I was overwhelmed with a sense of pride and belonging. After getting through my tearfully joyful speech about the honor of witnessing my family receive their real names in our village, and the pride of Feasting in the spirit of our Ancestors, the first official and public invitation to the people of Lax Kw'alaams to participate in the repatriation case study as partners was made.

On the morning of October 14, after only a couple hours of sleep from the business of Feasting the night before, I was also advised to make an announcement about the listening gathering on the primary mode of communication for all matters community in Lax Kw'alaams—the “mickey mouse,” as the people call it, or the CB radio. My aunty made the announcement for me, at my request, indicating, “*Robin, from Waap Liyaa'mlaxha, Gisbutwada, Gitaxangiik, invites all the people of Lax Kw'alaams to come and listen to the voices of our Ancestors, today, at the school.*” Within a few hours, I had

finished our House meeting, helped to clean up, packed up my computer and the audio recording equipment that was loaned to me by a linguistic anthropology professor in my department, re-checked the audio files and connections to make sure that everything was ready to go, and then rushed down to the school to find about six people waiting in the language classroom where Sagipaayk, who would become a primary research partner in this case study, teaches. A Laxgibuu woman from the Gitgiis came into the classroom shortly after I entered with a pineapple upside down cake offered to feed the people, while Sagipaayk was making coffee. I was humbled by the kindness of our people, especially since I didn't have much to offer because we had given away all of our resources in the re-distribution of wealth during our Feast ceremony the day before. I rushed around to greet and talk with the people who were there, and then turned my attention to set up the audio recorder and microphone. After five minutes with my head down nervously excited and rushing to prepare, I took a moment to look up and take it all in. To my surprise and enjoyment there were approximately 45 people sitting around the circle of tables and chairs that people had helped to set up, waiting to hear the songs for the first time and chatting amongst themselves about their daily lives.

Given the time constraints many of us faced to make the only ferry going back to Prince Rupert that day, we quickly got to the business at hand. I began by introducing myself and situating my positionality before providing information about the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files, and the context leading up to this very first listening gathering. I explained that I was interested in collaborating with my people to study the processes of reclaiming from the perspective of the Nine Allied Tribes, and that if they agreed to collaborate with me I would respectfully acknowledge everyone as my research

partners in the dissertation. The way that I introduced myself, and my level of transparency, were important features of our cultural protocols—it was a chance for people to achieve a sense of relationality with me, and me with them. After my introductions, I opened up the floor to the people so they could ask questions or make comments at their own pace. Louisa Smith (Kitamaat, Haisla Nation, Eagle Clan, House of G’psgolox, Nli’skusa Tribe), who is the wife of Aldm łxah (Murray Smith, Smooygit, Ganhada, Waap Aldm łxah, Gitwilgyoots)—her and her husband both respected Elders in the northwest and beyond—was the first to speak that day. She wanted to share the challenges her family and Nation had in repatriating what has become known as the G’psgolox totem pole from Sweden³. She emphasized that, “*it took a long time, a long process*” to do repatriation work. Most importantly, however, Aunty Louisa reinforced the necessity of approaching the legal repatriation of “*something that belongs to you*” according to our own sovereignty structure and laws to strengthen our resolve—or deferring authority to our hereditary Chiefs and Matriarchs as an act of sovereignty and as a decolonizing methodology. She also left us with helpful teachings before we began our own repatriation work with these songs. She said, “*when we hear something from the past, our emotions are stirred as well, and that’s fine that we acknowledge the Ancestors in that way.*” Everyone in the room seemed to be in agreement, listening astutely, making little eye contact, but nodding their heads gently as Ts’msyen do.

The next person to speak was Łuum (Howard Green, Smooygit, Ganhada, Waap Łuum, Gitgiis). He asked, “*Were those songs ever copyrighted by the recorder?*” The straightforward answer was yes, but this was understandably not an acceptable answer

³ Watch the National Film Board of Canada funded film “Totem: The Return of the G’psgolox Pole (Gil Cardinal, 2003, 70 min) here: https://www.nfb.ca/film/totem_the_return_of_the_gpsgolox_pole.

without the context; Luum and others wondered how Laura Boulton could “own” our songs in the first place, thrusting us into a serious conversation about the exploitative dimensions of intellectual property laws and human research practices. The people considered both domains to be too individualistic. For instance, prevailing intellectual property laws do not account for our sovereignty structure or our Ayaawx, and this was evident to people because the rights to ownership were somehow vested in the researcher—an individual who was not a part of or responsible to the community.

It was clear that community-based research ethics was highly valued to the people at the listening gathering. In fact, when Liyaa'mlaxha wanted to speak he asked,

Will the people in the village here get feedback from you as you travel your journey's trying to put stuff back? Keep them updated exactly how far you are? See, 'lotta times people come in here to do a study, and that's it, we don't hear from them anymore. So it would be great to keep these people updated. Okay?

I might be Ts'msyen, but this fact would not exempt me from the legacies of unethical research—for I was a researcher myself, and the community didn't quite know me yet. My Elder/Chief/uncle did not favor me in any way with his questioning and comments; rather, I saw his inquiry as his way of humbling me to the privilege of facilitating research with, by and for the people of Lax Kw'alaams. He was also setting the tone for my roles and responsibilities—with this research, within our community, and within our sovereignty structure (to my research partners, they are inextricably linked). Furthermore, whether the researcher is Ts'msyen or not, when one is conducting research in a Ts'msyen context it is expected that one will be respectful of and follow our cultural protocols. And because research is an inherently extractive process, a researcher who is ethical and transparent in their approach to the community, and not simply taking but

offering something that is in response to their unique needs, priorities and values, is particularly appreciated. This was made clear to me when a woman in attendance said,

Mostly all our Elders are passing on, eh? Like my mom, almost three months now she passed. And my mom knew some songs from way back and she was going to teach us. And now we only got one left now. And another thing, we were going to get into that, before our Feast that comes up next year. And, I'm so proud you're here. You're filling us in what's going on, all your knowledge. You bring it back to us, and bring us our protocol, letting us taking on the floor here. What you do, I appreciate. I like to hear everything what's going on, and everything like that. What's happening, what's happening to our chief's, what's happening to our songs, what's happening to our way of life, I like to know everything. And hear all the feedback, what's happening and everything. And especially with all the songs, eh? We need to find out what's going on and everything like that so we can learn... and go from there. Thank you.

People at the first listening gathering expressed appreciation for gaining access to the captured heritage of our peoples. Our Elders discussed how important it is to learn from our songs, wherever they may be, because they hold important teachings. The late Xyuup (Wayne Ryan, Smooygit, Laxsgiik, House of Xyuup, Gispaxlo'ots) stood up to make this point: *"We should dig them up and make the people listen to them. This is why I wanted a House where we could gather the Elders to pass on what we learn from our grandfathers."* SkyLaas (Jack White, Galdmalgyax, Laxsgiik, House of Laax, Gitando) was the final person to take on the floor. SkyLaas wanted to emphasize the urgency of passing on intergenerational knowledge that teaches us what it means to be Ts'msyen:

'Cause you see, the Elders here are not going to be here long. We need to express that to them, to the young people, of what they'll be faced with. And we need everything documented, on there (pointing), on the computer. Time and time I said that, but I don't know, it hasn't worked. But, I really like to see that day come, where we have something on the board that show our young kids just what they're getting into. 'Cause I always said the young kids are going to be leaders of the village some day...I grew up to be where I'm at today...a lot of us.

After these opening comments, Sagipaayk said, *"Wai wah. Amuks'm"* to call the peoples attention so that we could begin the process of listening to the Matthew Johnson/William

Pierce Files for the first time together. There was silence, Elders nodded in approval to Sagipaayk, and then he turned to me and nodded to signal that it was time to move on.

The methodology that I employed for the listening gathering was to first recite the meta-data as it is written in Laura Boulton's notes (date, locality, group, performer, title and description) before playing the corresponding audio file. Following Ts'msyen cultural protocols, I would then open up the floor for people to react, respond, reminisce, question, comment, examine or investigate at their own pace. I repeated this process for each recording, of which we had 21 to listen to. I asked the people gathered if this process was appropriate. They demonstrated their agreement with nods of assurance and vocal confirmation that this was acceptable to them. I informed the people that in this process, I was interested to find out if anyone knew the "performers" listed in the meta-data, if they had heard any of the songs or Adaawx before, if they knew what was being uttered in each recording and if they agreed with the titles and descriptions provided by Laura Boulton. I assured the people that I was mostly interested in the processes of reclaiming for Ts'msyen, so a lack of knowledge about the recordings themselves would not be an issue—we all have varying levels of knowledge to contribute. Through this case study, we could collaboratively explore the motivations, possibilities and obstacles associated with Ts'msyen reclamation in the contemporary era. Everyone appeared to be in agreement with the methodology so I went on to introduce the first recording.

As soon as I mentioned Matthew Johnson's name as the listed "performer" of the first song, many of the Elders started talking amongst themselves, and then a male Elder's voice uttered "*Lag.axni'tsk.*" To clarify I said, "*sound familiar, that name?*" Approximately ten people nodded, while Sagipaayk said, "*yeah, I recall him,*" and Xyuup

repeated, “*Lag.axni'tsk*,” to identify what was Matthew Johnson’s *real* name. I was excited that many of the Elders, and Elders-in-training, were able to confirm Matthew Johnson’s identity. I then asked if anyone knew what Tribe or House he belonged to, and they assured me that he was Gispaxlo’ots. Already, my people had added critical information to the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files that was not included in any of the meta-data in the Boulton Collection at Columbia. I finished describing the meta-data for the first song, and then we listened to it—the song itself just over three minutes long.

When the first song was finished, Xyuup identified where Matthew Johnson used to live in the village and who occupies that house or house plot now. On the advice of my research partners who insisted that I carry on for fear of my family and others missing the ferry, I continued to play the 20 remaining recordings that ranged from one to three and a half minutes each. I played all of the files associated with Matthew Johnson first, and all of the files associated with William Pierce second. Although the people identified Matthew Johnson immediately, nobody seemed to be able to identify William Pierce. Ironically, there is information about William Pierce but none about Matthew Johnson in Laura Boulton’s book, *The Music Hunter* (1969). It was clear from the listening gathering that a great deal of research would have to be conducted in order to confirm the identities and the lived histories of these two Ancestors. In consideration of, “the individualized manner in which authorship is claimed and assigned and celebrity granted to academics as isolated knowledge producers” (Nagar and Swarr 2010:1), a re-naming and re-framing of the Ts’msyen content in the so-called Boulton Collection would also be an important part of the reclamation efforts surrounding the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files.

C. Establishing Ownership

I ended the first section of this chapter with a brief discussion of the ways in which ownership rights to the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files according to a western system of property ownership has not been straightforward at all. In fact, the matrix of ownership, access, control and transfer is so confusing that neither Laura Boulton herself (if she were still alive), the National Film Board of Canada, Columbia University, the Library of Congress or Indiana University could make an ownership claim to the recordings with any integrity today. As Luum and others expressed at the beginning of our listening gathering dialogue, how could non-Ts'msyen individuals and non-Ts'msyen institutions have had the presumption to assume ownership rights to the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files in the first place, and without any responsibility to Ts'msyen peoples or communities? Ts'msyen concepts of property and systems of property ownership amongst the Nine Allied Tribes continue to be known and practiced within (and beyond) our territories today. For these reasons, Ts'msyen Ayaawx should have guided Boulton's research encounter, and it should always guide repatriation processes that concern the in/tangible cultural heritage of Ts'msyen peoples today:

Robin, just a suggestion...one of the things that we had to do at the very beginning of our repatriation process—and people call it the largest repatriated article in history [the G'psgolox totem pole from Sweden]. But one of the tasks that we had to do at the very beginning was to hash out the word ownership. Our ownership, and the museums ownership or whatever organization calls ownership, are two very different things. And ownership with the songs...you don't know yet who they belong to, which Tribe, which community. Make sure there's the ownership idea that it belongs to a specific family, or a specific Clan or a specific Tribe. And just because the lady tape-recorded these songs, doesn't mean she's the owner of those songs. And just because she sold and willed it to the universities, doesn't mean that it's theirs. That's their law. But you need to help educate them on your Ayaawx. (Louisa Smith, Kitamaat, Haisla Nation, Eagle Clan, G'psgolox House, Nli'skusa Tribe).

Indeed the greatest obstacle for legal repatriation is that we are confronted with a legal system that is not in sync with our Ayaawx. Everyone at the listening gathering agreed upon the goal of educating museums, institutions, governments and the broader public about Ts'msyen Ayaawx, and how it translates into contemporary repatriation claims.

Establishing ownership over Ts'msyen cultural heritage according to western property systems, and establishing ownership according to Ts'msyen Ayaawx will inevitably result in two different approaches and outcomes. For example, if following the western system one will likely only be concerned with determining who Matthew Johnson and William Pierce's direct descendants are in order to trace ownership. By following our Ayaawx, however, we begin with a different set of questions: where did these two men stand within the Ts'msyen sovereignty structure (Clan, House, Tribe); did they hold any hereditary leadership titles; what names were they wearing at the time of the recordings; what types of songs were they singing, or; what types of stories were they telling? As I have already mentioned, in/tangible forms of Ts'msyen cultural heritage are collectively owned in a general sense—rights encompass intra- and inter-dependent levels of individual, family, House, Tribe, Clan, community and nation-based ownership and responsibility. Let us now apply our laws to the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files as a case in point. It is possible that, as Laura Boulton stated, William Pierce sang “clan songs” for her (1969:409). If this were an accurate account of their cross-cultural encounter, and if William Pierce was Eagle by birth but Blackfish by adoption as she notes in the book (Boulton 1969:409), which clan songs was he singing—Eagle or Blackfish? This questioning is made even more complicated when we take into consideration Boulton's lack of ethnographic description in her meta-data and writing—

were they even “clan” songs in the first place? Maybe they were family songs, Tribal songs, House songs, or even community songs?

For repatriation purposes, Ts’msyen cautioned against uncritically ascribing legal ownership over the recordings to any given social entity within our sovereignty structure before doing the appropriate research. But for reclamation purposes, many advised me before and during the first listening gathering that it was appropriate to consider the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files as the collective history and cultural heritage of the people of Lax Kw’alaams, especially if the men recorded indeed belonged to one of the Nine Allied Tribes. Furthermore, we had to consider the time period in which Matthew Johnson and William Pierce were recorded (1942, during the second World War), and also take into account the particularly devastating effects of missionization (1857-1948), the Potlatch Ban (1884-1951), the Hudson Bay Company (1834-1856), the Indian Residential School System (1879-1948) and ethnographic salvaging (1850-1950) in Lax Kw’alaams during the course of Matthew Johnson (1855-1945) and William Pierce’s (1856-1948) lives. I was assured by my Ts’msyen that the collective motivations of the people of Lax Kw’alaams, and the possibilities for decolonization through the revival of ancestral knowledge in the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files, would surely outweigh any potential intra-community obstacles which might include debate about where they belong within our sovereignty structure.

But even with a community-based sensibility guiding the parameters of reclamation, return and repatriation in Lax Kw’alaams, my research partners remained aware and cautious to respect the various intra- and inter-dependent levels of ownership and responsibility that have guided the Ts’msyen socio-political system since time

immemorial. For example, just because we could identify Matthew Johnson as being Gispaxlo'ots, it would not be safe to assume that he was singing Gispaxlo'ots songs without the proper consultations and community-based research. They could have been family songs or songs that belonged to a specific House group, for instance. As Aldm lxah stated at the listening gathering, we have to be "*careful about who actually owns the songs before you say, 'I'm gonna sing a song'.*" Aldm lxah reaffirmed that issues of ownership *within* our community had to be dealt with *by* our community.

D. Challenging Mis-Representation through Repatriation

When other people or institutions claim ownership over our cultural heritage, we are typically confronted with issues of mis-representation. Conversations about just how much of "*our cultural heritage is out there*" and owned by individuals and institutions who are (1) not the rightful title holders, (2) not members of our community, or (3) who have little to no understanding about our ways of knowing, being and doing, intensified throughout the listening gathering. Throughout the gathering, my research partners identified places around North America where they knew the cultural heritage of the Nine Allied Tribes to be, and they did not limit their knowledge to songs. But they also understood that their knowledge was limited as to exactly where our entire captured cultural heritage is, and that more research was needed in this regard:

I just wanted to say that it's very interesting what we don't know about. Y' know, I'd like to make a suggestion here for young people, like you, that's interested in stuff like that. I think the band council should put some money aside and bring the stuff home. I know there's a lot out there. I know there's some in Victoria, they opened that museum there. And that's not the only place. It's a lot in the States, our artifacts. Like, this Matthew Johnson here, y' know, I wonder how many people like him sing those songs out of the Nine Tribes. Y' know, we don't know that until we hear somebody, a young person like you. You like stuff like that, y'

know, band council should make a big effort and get this stuff back. It's going to be very helpful to the community (SkyLaas, Jack White, Galdmalgyax, Laxsgiik, Waap Laax, Gitando).

The urgency of locating our cultural heritage and asserting rights to ownership was linked with issues of mis-representation. In this regard, one should also consider the inventory and categorizing practices of museums today:

First off, I found this very interesting here, to listen to the songs that have been sung in past, from the stories that still go on today. And, I find it very interesting because I'm tying back. A couple years ago we gone on a school trip, a field trip, to Ontario, and we visited Toronto, and then went to Ottawa. There in the archives in Ottawa, we saw all our artifacts that belong to Lax Kw'alaams. And as the story goes with these songs here, it's the same scenario, what Liyaa'mlaxha is talking about. There's a tie in with Nisga'a. There's a tie in with the Haida, and there's a tie in with the Gitksan. And the artifacts that we seen that belong to Lax Kw'alaams, come out of Lax Kw'alaams, but they still distinguish them as 'northwest coast art.' Because, there was still an intermingling going on with the Nisga'a; the relationship with the Haida, as we just heard, and; our relationship with the Gitksan. So, y' know, tying in with that, we hear a lot of histories, and how these all come together. And there was a lady there [in Ottawa] that was one of the guides that came in that day. She said, "you people need to go to Boston." I believe its Harvard University. They have a totem pole there that's carved; it comes from here, Lax Kw'alaams. And that pole is a welcoming pole. But it's still distinguished as 'northwest coast art.' But she knows through her research that it's Lax Kw'alaams. It belongs to the Gispaxlo'ots, I believe. Either the Gispaxlo'ots or the Gitzaxlał. I'm not sure and she's not sure. But she knows of the Nine Tribes. But I know we appreciate what you've brought here. For myself, I find this a very learning experience for the youth. I hear some of the things that come out here from our Elders and Tribal leaders—very interesting. So with that, with what you're doing, we hope it helps you because you've helped us come together a little bit in regards to where we are as a tribal system and what we need to do. So it kind of opens my eyes as to what we're going to be basically distinguishing what is ours, where we come from and, not to eliminate the relationship, but establishing, and letting the people know that there is a relationship with our neighbors. (Gamayaamx, Stan Dennis, Jr., Smooygit, Gisbutwada, Waap Gamayaamx, Gitando)

Repatriation requires not only locating our cultural heritage and asserting rights to ownership. A lot of it has to do with clarifying and correcting mis-representations in the colonial archive of the west. Throughout the course of this dissertation research, the

Ts'msyen people that I encountered identified forms of Ts'msyen cultural heritage in various museums around the world that were assigned the wrong provenance—like a Ts'msyen canoe being mislabeled as Heiltsuk, a Lax Kw'alaams welcoming pole being homogenized as Northwest Coast Art, or a Ts'msyen copper shield that is categorized as a ceremonial or ritual object but provides no information about who the shield belonged to at the time of expropriation. The multiple scenarios that were shared with me, beyond these three examples, demonstrate that many museums and archives have suspect acquisition and inventory practices when it comes to Ts'msyen cultural heritage. And the William Johnson/Matthew Pierce Files is another case in point.

Throughout the listening gathering, my research partners thought critically about the titles and descriptions of the recordings as listed in Laura Boulton's meta-data, and they interrogated whether or not they seemed appropriate in relation to what they were hearing. They wondered whether or not the titles and descriptions adequately represented the integrity of the Adaawx that these men were uttering through song and narrative. What we were listening to, I was assured, could not be adequately accounted for in tidy categories like 'title' and 'description':

And on there, that's history what they're talking about, you know—the culture. And I could feel it. I could. I feel really, really, happy that I'm here to listen, like life has come back after how many years? 60 years, 70 years ago, and all this right here, 2012, and I'm listening to it. And they're talking about their history. They're passing that on. (Aldm lxah, Murray Smith, Ganhada, House of Aldm lxah, Gitwilgyoots)

Determining the cultural histories and rights to ownership, including the lineages and lived histories of “performers” and “artists,” is the Ts'msyen concept of provenance—a concept that has been neglected by various gatekeepers in the processes of appropriation, interpretation, management and display. Determining cultural histories, lineages, lived

histories and rights to ownership *in their appropriate cultural contexts* also helps to reinscribe Ts'msyen notions of use-value, ultimately challenging the simplistic designations that continue to minimize Ts'msyen ways of knowing, being and doing today (“utilitarian” versus “sacred,” for example).

E. Everyone Has a Role to Play: Encouragement and Hope

Despite the many challenges that we face repatriating the various forms of our captured and confined cultural heritage, my research partners remained hopeful about the possibilities for reclamation in Lax Kw'alaams. The listening gathering proved to be symbolic to the people in attendance—humbling each of us to the notion that everyone has a role to play in the teaching and learning cycle of reclamation:

My name is Wii Haughtkm Skiik, come out of the House of Laax, Gitando Tribe, Eagle Clan. It's very interesting what you can hear in the songs. It wasn't very many words that I understood, but I can hear it. I can hear the power in the voices; in their singing...I think the Elders here know more about this stuff than I ever have. I feel so small because there's so much knowledge in here. I'm a residential school survivor and a lot of this stuff, I never heard it until I was up in my late 40s...I feel kind of intimidated, because I might say the wrong thing in front of all of our Elders here, and I don't want to make a mistake. But I would like to be able to sit with our Elders and listen to these tapes. We can find out a few more words here and there until we make sense of the whole thing...But I really want to learn more sitting with the Elders. Because I know that when you get a circle full of Elders there's more knowledge there than if you have one Elder sitting. Because when they start talking, they feed off of each other. Somebody says something, that Elder's gonna remember, “oh, I remember this now,” “I remember that.” I really look forward, and I hope we can get our Elders together so this continues with these songs, and I know there are other songs out there (Wii Haughtkm Skiik, Don McKay, Sr., Laxsgiik, Waap Laax, Gitando).

The role of Elders in the teaching/learning cycle of reclamation was made clear in the comments made by Wii Haughtkm Skiik. Their individual and collective knowledge, wisdom and expertise is highly respected and valued by Ts'msyen. Our Elders hold with

them important knowledge about our past and they provide important guidance for our future—particularly when it comes to our ways of knowing, being and doing. It was obvious throughout the listening gathering that everyone was humbled just to be in the presence of our Elders, listening to them, and that they didn't want to extract knowledge from them, or "pick their brains," as one of my research partners noted. Rather, they wanted to engage our Elders, privileged just to be in their presence when they start remembering together and sharing their teachings. They were encouraged and hopeful about the role that our Elders could play in our ongoing reclamation efforts, the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files included: "*I'm trying really hard to understand what they're saying in there but I didn't grasp a lot. But I'm glad that there are still some Elders around, people who know the history. I'm really happy to be sitting amongst them here*" (Aldm Ixah, Murray Smith, Ganhada, Waap Aldm Ixah, Gitwilgyoots).

As I witnessed the process of reclaiming these songs for the people, I learned that while Elders play a primary role they, respectfully, do not play the only role. At this first listening gathering, I witnessed Elders and young people come together *Sag_ayt k'uluum goot* (of one heart). Throughout the gathering, our Elders articulated explicitly and implicitly that the younger generations are the heirs to the collective knowledge, wisdom and expertise of our Ancestors and Elders, and that we, as the younger generations, also had something to contribute to our reclamation efforts. Folks articulated the inherent value of getting not only Elders together, but of getting Elders together *with* our children and youth, adults, residential school survivors, teachers, students, Tribal Leaders, band council representative, those of us who live outside of the village, Sm'algyax speakers and English speakers alike, and so on. As Sagipaayk noted in response to the 50 people at

the listening gathering that day who ranged in age from their teens to their eighties: “*I wasn’t expecting this many people in here. I thought, oh, I have 14 chairs, that’ll be enough. We had to go around [the school] to get chairs. So this is good.*” Getting an inter-generational collective of Ts’msyen in one room proved to us all that, even with our varying levels of cultural and linguistic knowledge, each of us, together, had a role to play in the teaching and learning cycle of Ts’msyen reclamation.

Sagipaayk—as the language teacher in the village, as a hereditary Chief and as an Elder-in-training—was taking notes throughout the listening gathering, isolating key Sm’algyax words in the songs and Adaawx. Before this repatriation case study found it’s legs, Sagipaayk was identified by many people who I consulted as a person who could play a key role in the reclamation of the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files. It was clear in the few days that I got to know him leading up to the listening gathering that he was willing to take on that role, with, by and for the people of Lax Kw’alaams. By the end of the first listening gathering, he was not only eager to take on his role, but encouraged by the possibilities for repatriation in the village:

I’m hoping this is just the beginning. I’m really hoping and praying that this is just the beginning. You can hear and feel the power in these songs. And I was really connected with that. Because, just sitting here, it felt like someone was pouring water on my head, as I was listening to these songs. So it’s really hitting me. So I’m really praying that this is just the beginning (Sagipaayk, Smooygit, Ganhada, Waap Sagipaayk, Gispaxlo’ots).

It also became clear that I had a role to play—not just as a researcher, but also as a Ts’msyen young person from Lax Kw’alaams. And even though my immediate family did not grow up in the village, or even in Ts’msyen territory for that matter, the community witnessed my actions throughout the course of a few days, and they began to recognize my desire to be with my people, to learn from my people and to be of service

to my people. As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, I did not have previous connections in Lax Kw'alaams and I wasn't sure that the people in the village even knew who my family was. It turned out that most of the people I met didn't—but some of them did! To hear one of the most prestigious and respected Tribal leaders and Elders ever to live in Lax Kw'alaams pronounce to the people at the end of the listening gathering that day, that he not only knew my family, which was validating to us, but that he was also encouraged by my actions and believed in the role that I could play helping to reclaim our captured cultural heritage, was the most humbling and precious gift to my family:

My name is Xyuup. Where the cannery is standing...that's where my name comes from. And we are sitting on Legeex's land. And we'd like to thank you. Gispaxlo'ots would like to thank you for what you're doing. This is what I've been bringing up when we have Tribal meetings—let's try and gather our artifacts and stories. There are lots out there! My cousin, when he retired in Fresno, California, he started travelling around, going to the museums, and he seen lots of Ts'msyen artifacts, and stories, I guess...papers.

Ladies and gentlemen, you see these people here, come from the Moody family that left years ago. It's something wonderful that I didn't expect to hear, from her. Lots of other people that move away from here, never even try to do what this woman's doing. It's wonderful. She remembers where she comes from. She's doing the work that we try to ask the Council to do—gather information about Ts'msyen history. That is wonderful. Keep on doing what you're doing. Thank you (The former Xyuup, Wayne Ryan, Laxsgiik, Waap Xyuup, Gispaxlo'ots).

When Xyuup stood up on behalf of his Tribe, the Gispaxlo'ots, to publically acknowledge my family, to encourage me to assume my role, and to express hope for the momentum we were building together for repatriation in Lax Kw'alaams, I knew that I would have to find ways to be further responsible to the people, taking every effort to ensure that community remains at the heart of our reclamation work together moving forward. Xyuup and others made revelatory statements about the fact that there is no designated authority to deal with repatriation within the Lax Kw'alaams band council,

and that repatriation had not yet occurred within the village. In many instances, tribal councils take the primary role in contemporary repatriation initiatives, which is okay. But when there is a lack of infrastructure in place—designated resources, designated roles—the work of repatriation rests with the people. We mobilize our resources, our skills and our knowledge for the benefit of each other, and for our future generations. This is true self-determination, resurgence and decolonization. Everyone has a role to play.

The first listening gathering of the repatriation case study was, by all standards, a huge success. By bringing the songs home after 70 years since they were recorded, a pedagogical repatriation had occurred. With the exception of an Adaawx about how the halibut became black on one side, and a Malsk about the last battle between the Haida and Ts'msyen at Lax Kw'alaams, it was discovered that no one at the first listening gathering had heard any of the songs before, nor was anybody aware of the existence of this collection of recordings or that they were at Columbia for that matter.

F. Gaining Momentum: Clarifying Research Priorities

At the close of the first listening gathering, a few women with words of encouragement, prayer, and gratitude approached me. Most of these women were too shy to speak out during our dialogue, but they wanted to let me know that they found our community-based reclamation work to be very interesting and rewarding. They welcomed me home as a community member, and they prayed that reclamation work would continue in the village. I wanted to talk with as many people as possible—to debrief and to get to know them better—but I was reminded that I would miss the ferry if I did not just pack up and start making the 25 minute drive down to Tuck Inlet. Before I

left, I shook as many hands and hugged as many people as possible to thank them once again for joining the circle. As we drove to the ferry, my mom and my aunty reflected on the listening gathering. They were both beaming with encouragement and hope. My Sigyidmhana'a assured me that based on what they witnessed, I had conducted myself in a good way in the village and with our people during my homecoming, that I did a good job at the listening gathering, and that this was good research—not just for my PhD.

While sitting in our rental car on the Lax Kw'alaams Ferry headed to Prince Rupert, Peter Alexcee (Gisbutwada, Waap Gamayaamx, Gitando) approached the side where I was sitting, tapping the window and trying to get my attention. I rolled the window down to chat and he began to say how much he enjoyed the listening gathering. He said that he was speaking about it with some of our Elders, also on the ferry, and they expressed regret not being able to join us earlier at the school. He said that Xbinhoon (Stan Dennis, Sr., Smooygit, Ganhada, Waap Xbinhoon, Gitzaxłal) and Nis Lee Moisk (Sadie Dennis, Sigyidmhana'a, Laxsgiik, Waap Laax, Gitando) really wanted to hear the songs, and wondered if there was a way for me to make that happen. So I jumped out of the car, and went to find Xbinhoon and Nis Lee Moisk to introduce myself. I provided them with information about what I was doing with my research and how the listening gathering went, and then I offered to come by their house in Prince Rupert the next day—my family and I had to catch an afternoon flight to Vancouver so we agreed that we'd see them in the morning so I could host a listening gathering with them before we left.

On October 15, 2012 in Prince Rupert, I hosted the second listening gathering with Smooygit Xbinhoon and Sigyidmhana'a Nis Lee Moisk. Both are active Elders in Prince Rupert and Lax Kw'alaams and they carry out their roles and responsibilities

within our sovereignty structure. My family and a few others from the first listening gathering were also in attendance. I continued to use the same methodology that I used in the first gathering, except this time I sat on the sofa nestled between both Xbinhoon and Nis Lee Moisk as I played each recording from my laptop, with the meta-data visible on the screen. Everyone else was sitting around on other furniture in a semi-circle, there to witness the process of our Elders hearing these songs for the first time. When it came to listen to the first audio recording and I mentioned Matthew Johnson's name, Xbinhoon indicated that he knew of him, but hadn't met him. I went on to play the first song. I explained that it was titled, "A'alos (Chief's Song)" and was described as a "Canoe Song, Sung When Going to Buy Skins." Before even hearing the song, Xbinhoon interrogated the description of the song in relation to our sociocultural history in Lax Kw'alaams:

Sung when going to buy skins? I know Hudson Bay used to be in Port Simpson there. But they [our people] sell skins there, when they go there, after their trapping. They come back from trapping; they sell. They don't go there to buy skins. I hear my grandfather's story, that when Hudson Bay—and it was like a total rip off for the First Nation people, the trappers; Especially the trappers. He said the gun was so high, and they used to stand it up on the wall, and they'd say, "This is how much skins you have to pile up to get that gun." That's what my grandfather said. So, it took him a long, long, time to get his skins, on account of the way they worked. "If you want that gun," they said, "this is how much furs you got to pile up, right to the end." And those guns there were this big—a musket. And, you know, they were pretty long. And that's how many skins—it must've taken about 100 skins to get one gun. So, imagine how much they made out of that one gun, eh, for all the skins they got. So my grandfather said, it took him all winter.

Like the listening gathering before, my research partners wasted no time adding critical context to the meta-data for the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files—context that helps to address the politics of interpretation. However, there was a key difference in process and outcome between the second gathering and the first. In this second listening gathering, my research partners were focused on giving the appropriate historical and

cultural contexts for the songs and Adaawx through focused linguistic translation. They listened attentively, asked each other questions about what they heard, and then translated from Sm'algyax to English for us. They isolated a single word or a series of words, they interpreted them and then they explained them to us. By the end of it everyone in the room felt as if we had witnessed the songs and Adaawx come alive.

We witnessed the poetics of interpretation in the interactions between our Elders and Tribal leaders—Xbinhoon, Nis Lee Moisk, Liyaa'mlaxha, and Goold'm Nits'k/Wii Gandoox—as they translated the songs and Adaawx for us to consider and learn from. Xbinhoon would end up taking the lead in their translation process, however. He is not only a Smooygit, but he is also a Galdmalgyax, he has linguistic fluency in the Lax Kw'alaams dialect of Sm'algyax, and as Goold'm Nits'k/Wii Gandoox advised, “*he's a very good interpreter*” with vast cultural and historical knowledge about our ways of knowing, being and doing. Xbinhoon had many teachings to share about the dialectic between the poetics of interpretation and the politics of mis-representation:

You know, you have to go over these songs so many times to understand it. It's going to take a long time to sit down and start writing it out. But the words—the Ts'msyen words—are really hard to write, you know. I hear it really good. But to write it, is totally different.

I followed with a question to clarify, “*So it can get easily lost in translation, eh, when it's all in English?*” Xbinhoon said, “*Yes, yes. So that's what happens to some of her writings [pointing to the meta-data on the computer screen]. Whoever wrote this, write out different titles, and when you hear the song it's different.*” Witnessing the momentum gained from our Elders' iterative process helped to clarify some of my research priorities to deal with issues of translation and interpretation in our work to come.

Part way through the second listening gathering, Gamayaamx arrived at his parents' house, and when he joined our dialogue he reinforced the need to address issues of translation and interpretation with the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files:

I just wanted to pass along that there were two people that approached me. For when you come back, the next time, when you have the Elders sitting there, ask somebody to interpret for those that don't understand the Sm'algyax version of the song, and the speaking's. So that's why some of the young children got up and left because nobody was telling them what was going on. They were just there (Gamayaamx, Smooygit, Gisbutwada, Waap Gamayaamx, Gitando).

Gamayaamx was right; there was no focused linguistic translation at the first gathering. He was also correct when he noted that many of our young people do not speak our language fluently and that engaging them in the reclamation process, through linguistic translation, would be important. But I also realized that the issue of linguistic competency is not just an issue that affects our youth. Language was an issue for many people at the first gathering, from Elders on down to those two young people that walked out that day.

Discussions in the second listening gathering also centered on the 'sovereignty in our songs,' or the ways in which our songs always connect back to our territories and our Ayaawx. For my research partners, reclaiming Ts'msyen songs is important for asserting our persistence in our territories:

You know I like listening to these to really understand. You have to listen to that real close. That really links to our history way back. And we need it, as you know. Our people needs it, the Ts'msyen people needs it, and our future generations need that to go forth. For the Ts'msyen has a huge territory. And a lot of these songs are connected, and they have to know. *Gumskiwa* come say, "oh, you don't know your history over here." Well, you listen to our songs; we have our songs from way, way back. They're there. See, like what is here, like these songs, will tell this person that we were here for so many thousands and thousands of years. And it's nice. It has a connection. All of what we do as Ts'msyen—Lax Kw'alaams people, our Nation—is that it always links back. But *gumskiwa* don't see it that way, see. They just try to push us aside. Said, "Well, you know, we'll take over this." So this has a link with how it always has everything to do with

what we do, what the Ts'msyen have done, all these years, always links back (Xbinhoon, Smooygit, Ganhada, Waap Xbinhoon, Gitzaxłaf).

The intimacy of the second listening gathering created the necessary analytical space for our experts—our Elders and Tribal leaders—to delve deeper into the themes that were discussed the day before, which led to our dialogue about interpretation, translation and the 'sovereignty in our songs.' These realities would help set the tone for the next series of listening gatherings, and it would eventually lead to the development of new methods, new questions and new relationships in the repatriation case study.

G. Connecting Ts'msyen Across Time and Space

My family and I left the second listening gathering in the same way that we did the first, rushing to catch some form of transportation. This time it was a plane back to Vancouver, where I would host the third listening gathering the following day. I reflected on the plane ride home, humbled by the gifts that I had received on my journey back to my homelands. My people are knowledgeable people and, as I learned from my research partners, we all have a role to play in the reclamation of the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files. The key to ensuring that everyone could play their role was to address issues of inclusion and to meet my people where they are. Not only was I committed to hosting as many listening gathering as I could with Ts'msyen communities in and outside of Ts'msyen territories, but I was also committed to letting the research process grow organically, always in response to the unique needs, priorities and values of my peoples.

On October 16, 2012, I hosted the third listening gathering with the Lax Kxeen Ts'msyen Dance Group, and other Ts'msyen, in Vancouver, BC, Canada. My cohost was Christine Martin, the leader of Lax Kxeen, as she volunteered to organize space for us at

the Children's Village—a community location in East Vancouver. Christine was also active in outreach for the third gathering, spreading the word about it through social media. Since I myself did not (and still do not) have a Facebook account, and because I had not been in the presence of my dance group for a few months since I had been away at school, I relied on Christine to help me communicate with the dance group about the repatriation case study while I was away. Christine was so generous that she even made fried bread, and rice with salmon and seaweed, for our listening gathering.

There were approximately 40 people at the third listening gathering, which included about 10 children and youth under the age of 12. With the exception of a few Ts'msyen from Gitxaala and Metlakatla, Alaska, a few Nisga'a, and a Kwakwaka'wakw, everyone in attendance was from Lax Kw'alaams because we each belonged to one of the Nine Allied Tribes. Our gathering was inter-generational as it had been the days before, but a key difference was the lack of Elders and Tribal leaders in attendance. Also, our reclamation work did not take place in Ts'msyen territories. I followed the same methodology as usual, but this time I took into consideration all that I had witnessed, and all the advice and guidance that I had received from our Elders and Tribal leaders.

To account for the varying levels of linguistic and cultural knowledge, and as a way to connect our peoples across time and space, I made an important addition to the methodology. This time around I was in a better position to respond to the comments and observations made about each recording. For instance, if there was a minute or two of silence after a recording was played, it would indicate to me that my research partners might not be sure how to interpret what they heard, or were too shy to say something perhaps. In that case, I would fill them in on what our people in Lax Kw'alaams and

Prince Rupert said about the recording, and on what seemed to be the consensus in terms of translation and interpretation thus far. In other cases, however, my research partners interpreted and translated the same ways that our Elders and Tribal leaders did, so I would simply reinforce what they already assessed. This process of keeping the first two listening gatherings in conversation with the third would help to ensure that the co-creation of knowledge would not be restricted to time or place.

Like the gatherings before, my research partners were excited to hear the songs and Adaawx and they felt a sense of responsibility to help reclaim them. After the first song was played, there was a resounding response: “*it’s so beautiful!*” For many, reclaiming the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files was like reclaiming our Ancestors. Christine elaborated on this: “*It’s amazing to hear. It’s almost like the Ancestors coming from way back—our Ancestors, right, these are our people. I feel like I have butterflies, it’s just overwhelming that it’s finally come back. It’s like having our Ancestors back.*”

Even though no one seemed to identify either Matthew Johnson or William Pierce, in hearing their voices my research partners felt connected to Ts’msyen people, places and processes of the past and present. My research partners at the third listening gathering, practically all young people⁴, isolated key Sm’algyax words, recognized key places of significance within Ts’msyen territory, recalled supernatural encounters recorded in our Adaawx, put context to our various cultural practices, and discussed the ways in which Ts’msyen from Lax Kw’alaams dance, sing and talk. Susan Lizotte (Laxsgiik), Joey Wesley (Gisbutwada), Christine Martin (Ganhada), Gerri-Lee Smith (Ganhada) and Mique’l Dangeli (Laxsgiik) were active in this process. For instance,

⁴ According to our Elders, we’re all “young people” until we are Elders ourselves.

conversations about linguistic tonation as it relates to our ways of knowing, being and doing were commonly expressed at the third listening gathering. Christine offered this observation after hearing a few songs:

I find it interesting that all of our songs are like the way we talk. If you think about Lax Kw'alaams, one thing that they always say is that we go to a pitch. Like, [saying a phrase to demonstrate the tone]. We're really pitchy, right? So I find it interesting that our songs are very pitchy. Which would make sense—we talk this way, of course we're going to sing this way. So when you listen to these songs, you can hear that pitch. And it's only distinct to our village that pitch. I find it really interesting, and it just makes sense.

By the end of the evening, after listening to almost every song, Christine's sister, Gerri-Lee, commented that the tones that Matthew Johnson and William Pierce used are the same tones that our people that come out of Lax Kw'alaams and Prince Rupert use today. Many people were in agreement, giggling at how they themselves sound the same way when they speak English and Sm'algyax, too.

Anthropologists often assume that Pan-Indianism is the norm in the urban setting and that us urban 'Indians' are not as 'authentic' as those who reside wherever anthropologists think that our cultures are 'supposed to be'—in static time/space backdrops like reservations, for example. This listening gathering, as well as the study with our dance group (see Chapter Five), demonstrated that superimposed, and bounded, geographies of authenticity closes off more information about culture, society and people, than it opens up. As one of the key findings taught us—everyone has a role to play in the maintenance and reclamation of Ts'msyen ways of knowing being and doing, and my research partners demonstrated that they will assume their roles wherever they may be, in and outside of Ts'msyen territories. In doing so, we will maintain our connections to Ts'msyen peoples, places and processes:

It's amazing what you're doing. Thank you for sharing that. Hearing them here, the Ancestors, speaking our language, and our songs that we never heard before. I'm learning our culture more. And, I think it's amazing work that you're doing, and that you're doing it for your people, and that you're just giving it your all. And you're going back to your community, going home this past weekend, witnessing, and then you're able to share your work, it's amazing work, thank you. (Gerri-Lee Smith, Haida/Ts'msyen, Ganhada)

The co-creation of knowledge across time and space is highly valued by my research partners for this very reason—it connects us not only to our people in our homelands but it also connects us to each other in the urban setting:

My heart is just bursting with this work you are doing. I know how hard it is. Like you said [about doing research on your own], it's like an island, it's so isolating out there. But I just think it's such good work. Thank you for letting me be a part of this—you invite your dance group, and what it means for us, the Git Hayetsk, for you to open up this opportunity for our group as well, and come together with the Lax Kxeen and hopefully bring healing and good energy in terms of coming together as a Ts'msyen community. This was a great opportunity. Thank you. (Mique'l Dangeli, Laxsgiik, Metlakatla, Alaska)

This would bring us to the close of the third listening gathering, but it would only be the beginning of a more comprehensive research paradigm in the repatriation case study. After engaging at least 100 people through this first phase of research, the motivations, possibilities, and obstacles associated with reclamation were quite clear. And although listening gatherings continue to be important in the efforts to reclaim the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files, they alone would not be enough in our ongoing repatriation work. There was still a lot of research, translation and interpretation to be done with the songs and Adaawx, with determining identities, lineages and cultural histories, with establishing rights and with asserting our Ts'msyen Ayaawx.

H. The Next Phase: Strengthening our Resolve for Legal Repatriation

It was only a few days after the third listening gathering and I was back to school in Massachusetts, hustling to finish my statements of field and to get ready for my oral comprehensive exam. On December 19th, 2012 I achieved candidacy and was All But Dissertation (ABD). By Christmas, I was back in British Columbia for good to continue with my multi-sited, auto-ethnographic research. However, I quickly became pulled into a community-based research initiative with, by and for the urban Aboriginal community in Vancouver—a community that I am also a part of. So, from January to April, 2013 I was consumed with work in my roles as a transcriber, a facilitator and the sole writer on the project, producing a final report for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada on behalf of the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council. I then took the month of May off to catch up with my family, including my Mikisew Cree kin in Alberta, and my extended kinship as well. That month, my long time friends—four sisters from the Heiltsuk Nation—adopted me as their sister during their family Potlatch hosted by hereditary Chief Frank Brown for the House of Dhadhiyasila in Waglisla (Bella Bella), BC. I initially thought that I would get back to Lax Kw’alaams in the spring of 2013, but when I determined that it was not feasible, I ended up waiting until the fall to return. It was not feasible to return in the spring or summer months mainly because our people were out hunting, gathering and harvesting traditional foods in our lands and waterways, and also because I was in mourning after my great auntie “Girly” on my Mikisew Cree side passed away at the beginning of June. From January 2013 onward, I was also applying for, and ended up being awarded, fellowships and grants, so by September I was in a stronger financial position to incur the costs of returning home regularly.

The second phase of my dissertation research began at the end of September 2013, when I finally returned with my mom and my aunty to Lax Kw'alaams. This return trip had four main purposes: (1) to reconnect, (2) to hand out CD's from our first listening gathering, (3) to witness a Gisbutwada House Feast for the Gitando, and (4) to confirm a plan for the repatriation case study. It had been 11 months since I was in the village, so it was long overdue. The many people we saw that weekend would say "*welcome back home,*" to assure us that there was a place for us in the community. We visited with people, attended a community fundraiser, offered our support to the Gitando, and played an important role in our Tribal system—witnessing important Tribal business at a Feast where nine names for the Gisbutwada and one for the Laxsgiik were moved.

Throughout that weekend in September, we did a lot of relationship building, and conversations about the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files continued. A key conversation took place between Sagipaayk and I when we discussed him taking on a role as my primary research partner in the repatriation case study. He was not only identified as an important person to collaborate with on this particular project, but he also continued to show incredible enthusiasm to lend his linguistic and cultural expertise. By the end of our trip, Sagipaayk and I decided that I should come home once a month to start a series of translation workshops. Based on what we witnessed and learned at the first listening gathering, and based on what I had witnessed and learned from the second and third, we considered this new methodology to be the next logical step to take in our community-based reclamation efforts. I would continue to outreach and hold more listening gatherings with Ts'msyen communities, but we would focus on dealing with the issue of linguistic translation in more depth—and it was important to do so in Lax Kw'alaams.

Sagipaayk volunteered his classroom as the primary location for our work to come, and he would also take the lead in terms of outreach and communication within the village.

I ended up sending Sagipaayk a copy of the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files and the meta-data in early October. If he was going to take a primary role in our work going forward, he was entitled to have a copy for his own records. About mid-October he sent me an email stating that he was going to start listening to the recordings more closely. A week before I arrived, I received another email from him stating that he had attempted to write down the words to some songs but that it was difficult so he was getting together with three Elders who he thought could help. I was amazed at how much work he was already doing to begin translating the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files, and I was so grateful for and inspired by his activism in our reclamation work.

The months of September and October 2013 were key for the development of the next phase of research and for building relationships with Ts'msyen peoples in Ts'msyen territories. That summer, my mother purchased our family home in Prince Rupert so on each trip I would stay in town for up to six days and then spend the weekend in the village. While in Prince Rupert, I would make it a point to be present in the community—to meet and reconnect with people as much as possible or just get out in town to see whom I might run into. For instance, I ended up spending quality time with Ts'maaymban (William White, Ganhada, Waap Lugiisgagyoo, Gitwilgyoots), who shared with me his extensive knowledge about our ways of knowing, being and doing, and who would end up agreeing to take me on as his student in the Ts'msyen style of Chilkat weaving. It has been my dream to learn in the process of creating this particular cultural expression that originates with the Ts'msyen, and Ts'maaymban is not only a

master weaver, but he is also responsible for reclaiming the tradition of Chilkat weaving for our people after a century in abeyance. While I was in my territory that October, Ts'maaymban taught me how to spin the warp for Chilkat weaving, and the process of spinning in the Ts'msyen style would prove to be an appropriate metaphor for this research (See Chapter Six). I also followed up with George Sampson who invited me to attend the Elders meeting at the Friendship House, and at that meeting I made an oral presentation about the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files and the repatriation case study. When asked, the Elders thought it was a good idea to host a listening gathering with them so I made a plan to do so on my next trip in November. I've learned that establishing relationships—in research or in life—is one thing; maintaining relationships is another. Building and maintaining relationships with Ts'msyen in Ts'msyen territories, was necessary for my own reclamation and for the next phase of the research process.

By the time I arrived in Lax Kw'alaams, Sagipaayk had written down the sounds and words to a few of the songs and Adaawx to offer us something tangible to work with in our upcoming translation workshops. The first two workshops took place on October 26th and 27th, 2013 with Łuum (Howard Green, Smooygit, Ganhada, Waap Łuum, Gitgiis), 'Limooks (Sandra Gray, Sigidmhana'a, Gisbutwada, Waap Liyaa'mlaxha, Gitaxangiik) Liyaa'mlaxha (Leonard Alexcee, Smooygit, Gisbutwada, Waap Liyaa'mlaxha) SkyLaas (Jack White, Galdmalgyax, Laxsgiik, Waap Laax, Gitando), the late Xyuup (Wayne Ryan, Smooygit, Laxsgiik, Waap Xyuup, Gispaxlo'ots), Sagipaayk (Tom Dennis, Smooygit, Ganhada, Waap Sagipaayk, Gispaxlo'ots) and Nisgulpoo/Łpndaam (Eric Green, Smooygit, Laxgibuu, Waap Nisgulpoo/Waap Mdiiks, Ginadooyks/Gitwilgyoots). By the time we finished our translation workshop series, two

additional people had joined us at different times—Ludzidziwst (Rod Henry, Galdmalgyax, Gisbutwada, Waap Liyaa'mlaxha, Gitaxangiik), and my mother 'Wiiksigoop (Lynda Gray, Sigyidmhana'a, Gisbutwada, Waap Liyaa'mlaxha, Gitaxangiik). With the exception of me, each of my research partners in the translation workshops was an Elder, Chief, Matriarch or Speaker. As it had been in the first phase of the research, the Tribes and Clans continued to work together to help reclaim the Mathew Johnson/William Pierce Files for the people of Lax Kw'alaams.

In the nineteenth century when the Nine Allied Tribes (Gispaxlo'ots, Gitaxangiik, Gitando, Gitgiis, Gitzaxlał, Giluts'aaw, Gitlaan, Gitwilgyoots and Ginadooyks) politically united, an agreement was made that each Tribe, Clan and House would retain their political and legal authority within the Ts'msyen sovereignty structure, including explicit territorial authority and rights and responsibilities to other forms of in/tangible property. But the Nine Allied Tribes also agreed to work together for the collective good of our peoples in response to the settler colonial project. This is exactly what was happening in our repatriation case study. Through our research, we have been collaboratively working towards the legal repatriation of the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files with, by and for the Nine Allied Tribes, and we have demonstrated through our collective action an obligation to find out as much as we can about the songs so that we can collectively ascribe the appropriate provenance, use-value and ownership of the song and Adaawx according to Ts'msyen Ayaawx.

The addition of the translation workshop series, as an extension of the listening gatherings, would also turn out to be an important method because: (1) workshops were more intimate, with ten or fewer people, which helped to create the necessary analytical

space for our Elders and Tribal leaders to interpret and translate at their own pace and, (2) through their translations and interpretations, we were strengthening our resolve for a potential legal repatriation. In total, I hosted six translation workshops between October 26, 2013 and January 19, 2014, with each workshop being held on a monthly basis in the language classroom at the Coast Tsimshian Academy in Lax Kw'alaams. During that time period I also hosted the fourth listening gathering with the Prince Rupert Friendship House Elders Group on November 28, 2013, with 20 Elder and young people—some of them not Ts'msyen—in attendance. While listening gatherings primarily addressed issues of access to the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files, translation workshops laid the groundwork to deal with the issue of control from multiple entrance points.

I. Control over Knowledge

At the very first translation workshop my research partners spoke in depth about the issue of control over knowledge in the research process. With oral consent, I audio recorded each workshop (as I did and would during all components of research) as a record of our activism, and to help us remember what we learned together in the process. I explained that I was not going to “run and tell” everything that was shared with me, nor was I going to try to profit from the audio recordings in any way. My assertion that I was not going to try to capitalize on their knowledge, and that control over their knowledge—the co-creation of knowledge—would be attributed appropriately, was critical to everyone in attendance. Liyaa'mlaxha spoke up to articulate this fact: *“now that you explain what's going to happen maybe we'll open up more. I will anyway. Some of us are holding back because we don't know what will be done with our information. You tell us and that makes us, at least me, open up more.”* Translation workshops, in particular, were

designed to garner knowledge about our cultural history, and as it should be with any research process ethical issues about control over knowledge acquired in the research encounter must always be approached according to the protocols and laws of the community, and rights to control knowledge must be ascribed accordingly. Scholar Craig Howe (2002:174-75) discusses this in the context of university-tribal collaborations,

It is a very potent experience for community members to revisit many of the important events presented in their tribal histories. In some instances, they are sharing their experience and stories with outsiders for the first time. And their stories are properly their intellectual property. They do not want to invest their time, effort and emotion if the process is not going to be done right or if the final product is not going to be good in their eyes...Therefore, the process is necessarily iterative, takes place over a period of time, and considerably decenters the traditional authority of the mainstream institution.

The responsibility of handling knowledge in the research encounter was made even more pronounced when one of our primary research partners, Xyuup, passed on to the Spirit World on December 17, 2013. He was not able to attend another translation workshop beyond our first one due to his health, but whenever he felt well enough, he was getting together with Sagipaayk and others in the village to offer his help in our translation and interpretation work. He was actively involved with helping to reclaim the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files right up until his passing, and his spirit of reclamation lives on in our research. Before and after his passing, anytime I mentioned to Ts'msyen that I was working with Xyuup they would always proclaim how lucky I was, and that he was a great leader for the Gispaxlo'ots and for the people of Lax Kw'alaams. As a researcher myself, I not only captured Xyuup's voice in the research process—I also captured his and our people's cultural history. Control over knowledge acquired in the research process in this instance meant that Xyuup's family would receive a copy of the work that he was involved in up until his passing, and they would have to grant me

permission to present his words and to write about him posthumously—I have secured this permission and have made sure to double check with the family as time progresses⁵. Whether one is a part of the community or not, research ethics are expected to reflect our unique cultural protocols and laws during and after the course of ones lifetime.

Researchers are in a unique position to make decisions about control over knowledge, and this is precisely because intellectual property laws ascribe protection over products of knowledge in the research encounter rather than to knowledge itself (Anderson 2005, 2009). This is why Laura Boulton was able to copyright, sell and bequeath the knowledge contained within her Ts’msyen recordings, and why various institutions have also been granted rights to the knowledge products through a matrix of property transfers. Indeed, with this legal matrix to contend with, the issue of control over Ts’msyen knowledge is exponentially pronounced. Furthermore, let us think about what researchers and institutions say versus what really happens behind the scenes. Various institutions acquired various forms of knowledge products associated with Boulton’s research encounter with Matthew Johnson and William Pierce. They did so to assume the role of archive and to presumably educate the public about Ts’msyen culture, society and people. But through the matrix of intellectual property transfers, and in the naming of the collection after the researcher, these institutions actually serve, and profit from, mis-educating the public about the authority and expertise of the researcher (the individual) as well as the authority and expertise of the public institution (the universal),

The archives and libraries privilege a position of authorship, which the archive not only upholds but also distributes more broadly as if also caught in its own ‘author-function’. For the archive is sustained within society, not only by what it

⁵ A special thank you to Xyuup’s wife/widow Kathy Ryan and their children.

produces but also through what networks of authority are relied upon (Anderson 2005:90).

It is the matrix of intellectual property transfers that poses the greatest obstacle for legal repatriation of the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files, especially given the pensiveness of the individualist and universalist tropes that continue to mis-represent and frame terms and rights to access and control our captured heritage. But if the contemporary era of repatriation is going to fulfill its restorative justice goals to my peoples, then researchers, archivists and institutions alike have important decisions to make about how to interpret and apply intellectual property frameworks to knowledge and knowledge products that our community decides should not be in circulation or owned by any social entity other than our peoples: “How, for example, are we to deal with problems of intellectual property and Indigenous rights of access, control and ownership of material if, quite simply, the institution does not know what it is that it holds?” (Anderson 2005:89-90). Throughout the repatriation case study, my research partners were demonstrating that past and current rights holders of the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files in fact do not know the significance of the knowledge that they have assumed control over. For repatriation purposes, how do we reconcile the fact that our community places the highest value in the knowledge (intangible), whereas past and current rights holders place the highest value in the knowledge product (tangible)?

The translation workshops, in particular, were key for exposing and challenging the legacies of poor collection, inventory, description, representation and distribution practices associated with the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files. In this way, our translation and interpretation work was both poetic and political illuminating the dialectic between knowledge and power. Without the individual and collective expertise of my

Ts'msyen research partners, the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files would remain obscure, as it had been for the last 70 years since Boulton captured their voices and 54 years since the recordings have been static in the colonial archive of Columbia. In true revolutionary form, it only took one and a half years from the time I discovered the existence of the recordings, which revealed that there was a considerable amount of missing files, to breathe life into the available songs and Adaawx again. The second phase of research provided fertile ground in this regard. By the second round of translation workshops (November 30 and December 1, 2013), Sagipaayk had written down the words and sounds to *all* of the songs and Adaawx. As we had before, we used his translations as a template, yet throughout our workshops he continued to ask us in general terms: do you hear what I hear, or what do you hear? I would play each recording one time through, each of us listening attentively around a circular table, then we'd pause for everyone to respond, reflect and analyze. After prolonged moments of silence, I might ask: what key words did you identify, what do they mean, what could they tell us about the song itself, what does it remind you of, and/or how do they relate to our ways of knowing, being and doing? I would make sure to re-play each recording, pausing at key points along the way, for linguistic and pedagogical clarification. In doing so, my research partners confirmed or made edits to Sagipaayk's translations, and added critical cultural context for us to consider for our interpretation work.

By the time our final round of translation workshops (January 18-19, 2014) was complete, my research partners had confirmed, adjusted or added to the knowledge that was uncovered since the first listening gathering. The co-creation of knowledge between Ts'msyen across time and space had proven absolutely necessary in order to help clarify

the mystery behind the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files. Furthermore, working with language experts and knowledge keepers from Lax Kw'alaams in the translation workshops proved to be necessary in order to breathe life into the songs and Adaawx. We found through our translation and interpretation work that the recordings said a lot about Ts'msyen peoples, places and processes—they told us about our collective history and about Matthew Johnson and William Pierce's histories. They contained teachings about significant places in Ts'msyen territory, and about significant cultural processes, such as mourning through song. We confirmed the lineages of Matthew Johnson and William Pierce, their ancestral names and the Tribes and Clans to which they belonged. We confirmed everything that was wrong about the meta-data by (1) distinguishing that songs that were labeled differently were actually duplicates of the same song, sung with slight variation, (2) identifying that songs labeled differently were actually a series of songs that are inter-related to a specific event and process (3) clarifying the title and descriptions of songs, and (4) providing important cultural context that could not have come from anywhere else but from Ts'msyen themselves, and especially our language experts.

After the translation workshop series was complete, we took a month off from our work, but I made sure to continue to engage Ts'msyen in our territories. I went to the All-Native Basketball Tournament (ANBT) in Prince Rupert where many of our peoples would be for the weeklong event in February. Conversations about reclamation in general, and our work with the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files more specifically, continued. While at ANBT, I met Mosgm Gyaax (Joanne Finlay, Sigyidmhana'a, Ganhada, Waap Lugiisgagyoo, Gitwilgyoots) who shared a recent dream that she had about reclaiming old Ts'msyen songs, and about what it was going to do for our people.

She recently told her brother Ts'maaymban about it who, in turn, told her about the work we were doing. When she met me, she expressed how it must be serendipity, and that she wanted to be a part of the process. We ended up forming an important partnership, and I agreed that I would return the following month to host a listening gathering in Prince Rupert. She offered to take the lead in outreach and communication, and she would also end up securing a location for our work through her networks. Through Mosgm Gyaax's activism, another important partnership in the repatriation case study was made. Not only would the fifth listening gathering continue to address the issue of access, it would also confirm what we had learned and uncovered in our reclamation work thus far.

On March 11, 2014 at Wap Sigatgyet, I hosted the fifth listening gathering in partnership with representatives from the Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Authority, and other interested Ts'msyen. There were 16 people in attendance, and with the combined level of expertise in the room—many responsible for the creation of the Sm'algyax Living Legacy Talking Dictionary—Ts'msyen continued to breathe life into the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files. The importance of the fifth listening gathering was that not all the Ts'msyen present were from Lax Kw'alaams, yet they confirmed much of what we had discovered in our previous listening gatherings and translation workshops. I would only confirm or add information where necessary, after people had a chance to react, as I did in every other scenario. The reactions to the issue of control over knowledge remained constant at the fifth listening gathering, often leading my research partners to question Boulton's titles and descriptions in relation to what they were hearing. For instance, during this gathering at Wap Sigatgyet, and after playing perhaps the tenth song, an unidentified woman asked, "*What was the title and description of the*

song again?” When I recited the meta-data, she responded, *“Is that it?”* And I replied, *“Yup, that’s all she wrote,”* and everyone started laughing, dumbfounded at how careless Boulton was in her handling of knowledge. It is for this particular reason why all of my research partners have expressed that the issue of control over knowledge and knowledge products should ultimately rest with Ts’msyen. This was not only articulated on ethical grounds, but on socio-cultural and political grounds—or according to our Ayaawx.

J. Ts’msyen Ayaawx as Precedent for Access and Control

In consultation with my research partners up until the end of the translation workshop series, we decided that it was critical to create the necessary space for us to explore Ts’msyen Ayaawx, as it would apply to something like repatriation. We decided to add the talking circle method that would not only keep the momentum going, but also help us to deal more explicitly with the issue of control according to our unique cultural protocols and laws. It was important for us to continue to work amongst the Nine Allied Tribes in this regard, so we organized a weekend of two community-based talking circles for March 8-9, 2014. At the first talking circle, there were 11 people and at the second, 16. The purpose of the talking circle format was to engage in a culturally relevant dialogue about our Ayaawx as it relates to the reclamation of our songs, masks, regalia, dances, etc., and what it means to repatriate the knowledge contained in our in/tangible cultural expressions. We discussed how to communicate our Ayaawx in non-Ts’msyen contexts, and particularly how Ayaawx applies to repatriation.

During the first talking circle, I began with the basic questions: Is repatriation important to you? If so, why, and if not, why not? All of my research partners articulated

that repatriation was of high importance, and they articulated it especially on socio-political grounds. As a Gisbutwada woman from the House of Gamayaamx in the Gitando expressed: *“It’s important because we have very little from the past to work with. For some reason, it all disappeared from this area—because collectors came.”* Sagipaayk agreed: *“You have to know what the past is about before you can go ahead. So, I think that’s one of the reasons why we have to get those things back.”* For Wii Haughtkm Skiik, repatriation of Ts’msyen songs is critical given the spiritual significance they continue to have. For example, our reclamation work was breathing life into the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files, but for him they were also *“breathing life back into our people.”* Everyone agreed. In a poetic dialogue between Wii Haughtkm Skiik and Sagipaayk, they expressed that when our songs, or any other forms of our cultural expressions, are static vis-à-vis their confinement, or *“when they are not being lived, they are like bones with no meat, no flesh,”* not alive. And it is our responsibility—those of us living today—to resurrect their spirits. That would bring harmony to our world, because that is a part of our Ayaawx: *“It’s our heritage and it does not belong to other people”* (Gisbutwada, House of Gamayaamx, Gitando). Mosgm Gyaax offered this teaching about the disconnect between Ts’msyen Ayaawx and the laws of whitestream society:

That’s why these songs are so important, because it connects the art, to the piece, to the dance, to the story. ‘Cause that’s what our dances are—they’re a reflection of who we are. When you see it on the dance floor, at a Feast, or in a Big House, that’s what that is. It’s, “this is who I am, this is a dance and a song that comes from my house, in my territory, and this is what it’s all about.” Like, when you’re Feasting you’re telling your oral history to people, so that’s a reflection of who you actually are. And that’s the legal part; that is ours. That is our Tribal system, and we own it. It doesn’t belong to anybody except the people who own those songs, and the people that own the art, the people that own the mask that goes with that certain song, etc. And some songs are so sacred they’re only brought out once every five, ten years, depending on the situation, right? So there are levels of spirituality within all of our stuff. Spirituality is part of who we are. Like our Nax

Nox songs, those are so sacred. It just hurts me to know that it's just sitting somewhere and I can't get access to that because somebody said, "well, we got a law about that." Well, what about our law that says you had no right to take it in the first place? Who gave you the right to take my song from us, and what gave you that right to do that? And they made a law that says I can't get it back unless I talk to you first? Or I have to negotiate with you? That's just wrong. Because it's not theirs, it's ours.

Throughout our dialogue, the issue of ownership was a topic of concern. How do we communicate and assert our Ayaawx in a legal repatriation case?

We're dancing a very fine line here, because we still have to deal with the non-Aboriginal world. Copyright isn't our language, but we still have to say this is our copyright. We have to adapt our old ways to the world we live in now. It's going to be a long process (Gisbutwada, House of Gamayaamx, Gitando).

The concept of adaptation was discussed in depth, which led to a clear distinction about the malleability (or not) of our Ayaawx for the present. It was very important, for especially our Elders and Tribal leaders, to clarify that we do not alter the Ayaawx—rather we only apply it to changing contexts, like the issue of copyright discussed above. SkyLaas drove this point home when he said, "*Ayaawx does not change...you cannot change it...it will never disappear,*" because, as others affirmed, it continues to inform our ways of knowing, being and doing, even amidst the chaos of neo-colonialism today. Our Tribal system is still in effect, and the Nine Allied Tribes exist for this very reason. So as Luum demonstrated, when we attempt to figure out lineages, rights and ownership, there will inevitably be tension and confusion, "*whenever you're trying to apply the white man's law instead of going by our own law.*" I was assured throughout our research that this tension and confusion would have occurred if we did not approach our reclamation work according to our Ayaawx, and it would inevitably occur if we do not enforce our Ayaawx in a future legal repatriation case. And although we have positive examples to look to from other Indigenous nations who have experienced repatriation—like the

Kwakwaka'wakw, Haida or Haisla—it was essential to my research partners that our repatriation efforts were not guided by any protocols or laws other than our own.

When we began to discuss what exactly our Ayaawx was, we agreed that the English language limits what we can say about it because it is connected to so many people, places, processes and phenomena: the supernatural, the Spirit World, animal and plant relatives, lands and waterways, social structure, Tribal system, Tribes, families, House Groups, Clans, territorial authority, property, stewardship, safeguarding, morals and values, conflict resolution, mourning, burial, rites of passage, names, ceremonies, Feasts, songs, dances, dancing, singing, masks, crests, regalia, Adaawx, Malsk, Sm'algyax, matriarchy, Matriarchs, lineage, Chiefs, Speakers, children, youth, adults, Elders, leaders, leadership, rights, roles, responsibilities, laws, politics, society, economy, culture, tradition, secret societies, designs, knowledge, hunting, gathering, trapping, fishing, harvesting, governance, belonging, social standing, relationships, protocols, marriages, births, coming of age, celebrations, healing, restorative justice, reclamation, praying, knowing, being, doing, surviving and thriving. Despite the challenge of translating our Ayaawx into the spoken and written English language, Ts'msyen scholar Patricia J. Vickers (2008:4-5) attempted to do so in her dissertation. She states,

The Ayaawx (Ts'msyen ancestral law) is rooted in spiritual principles connected to our Ancestors and provides guidelines for the future in everyday relationships. The Ayaawx is as old as human relationships with the environment, ...the social structure, authority, responsibility, and rites are all a part of the Ayaawx. The Adaawx (Ts'msyen sacred stories) give account of the origins of relationships with the supernatural world and the articulation of the principles of the Ayaawx. The principles of the Ayaawx are the backbone of feasts (potlatch) and conflict resolution. The principles of the Ayaawx are practical, a spiritual force awaiting a relationship with human beings.

There are many ways that we can describe Ts'msyen Ayaawx—it is not easily defined, but it absolutely defines us as Ts'msyen. It governs our relationship to everything and everyone. It is our precedent, law, policy and ethic, and it shapes our ways of knowing, being and doing. Ts'msyen Ayaawx is the reason for our in/tangible cultural expressions. Ayaawx is not prone to generalizations, however—we apply Ayaawx to various contexts to determine responsibility. In the case of repatriation, Ts'msyen are the only people who have the collective authority and expertise to affirm rights and ownership to in/tangible Ts'msyen cultural heritage. If we do not collectively affirm the appropriate rights to ownership, we disrespect our Ayaawx. For example, where it concerns the issue of ownership of the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files, Wii Haughtkm Skiik reiterated the way that Ayaawx has worked for ascribing provenance to each individual song and Adaawx that we were responsible for reclaiming: *“Our songs belong somewhere; some Tribe, House or family. And even though we don't know it now—where they all belong—we do know that they belong here.”* He was able to say that he knew the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files belonged in Lax Kw'alaams because, during the course of our repatriation case study, we were able to collectively confirm through the linguistic and cultural interpretation of our experts and authorities that, (1) both Matthew Johnson and William Pierce belonged to the Gispaxlo'ots, (2) both of them were Laxsgiik, and (3) the songs and Adaawx that they shared with Laura Boulton reflected their personal histories as much as they expressed our collective history as Ts'msyen from Lax Kw'alaams. Nobody—out of the 200 plus Ts'msyen whom I have engaged throughout the repatriation case study—ever assumed rights, or demanded the authority, to sing and dance the songs without knowing their history, and without

assigning the Ts'msyen version of provenance to them. This continued to be the case even if people were thirsty for that type of reclamation within their own families, Tribes and Houses. Mosgm Gyaax articulated this point:

I would love to be able to learn a Gitwilgyoots song and sing it loud and proud at a Feast. That's my dream, right? But, it would have to be our song. That's ownership. Gitwilgyoots owns this song, and it's used at this time, for this purpose. Like, I could never sing one of your songs—I'd be in big trouble if I did!

When it comes to the legal repatriation of the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files, my research partners asserted that our efforts must begin within our community so that we can continue our work to identify exactly where the rights belong within the Ts'msyen sovereignty structure, and according to our Ayaawx. This must be done by the Nine Allied Tribes and within the appropriate cultural contexts.

Through a series of community-based listening gatherings, translation workshops and talking circles, my research partners and I explored the development of a Ts'msyen-specific research paradigm on the ground; relational accountability in the research process; ownership over knowledge and knowledge products, and; establishing provenance of in/tangible Ts'msyen cultural heritage. The primary finding in the repatriation case study is that Ts'msyen Ayaawx is the only precedent for access and control of our in/tangible cultural heritage. With our varying levels of cultural and linguistic knowledge, we came together *Sag_ayt k'uluum goot* (of one heart) to: (1) ensure a pedagogical reclamation of the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files, (2) challenge the presumed legal authority of various institutions and individuals over our knowledge and knowledge products, and (3) figure out alternative pathways, outside of the western property structure, to legally repatriate our songs to the Nine Allied Tribes. In doing so, we were able to breathe life into the recordings, and our reclamation work was

also breathing life into us. Furthermore, we positioned ourselves to actively deal with the issues of access *and* control. We have chosen to represent our community-based activism in terms of process so that we could offer teachings and lessons learned about the colonizing properties retained in contemporary research and repatriation processes, and so that Ts'msyen and others can learn to navigate to that place where revolution exists. When it comes to the captured forms of in/tangible cultural heritage that Indigenous peoples are seeking to repatriate, their laws—not western laws—are precedent.

CHAPTER 5

EMBODIED HERITAGE RECLAMATION

A. Lax Kxeen Ts'msyen Dance Group

The Smogeh, which is also the Chief's Headdress, this song was given to the Masset People from the Port Simpson people. This song symbolized the peace that was made between Masset and Port Simpson to end all the wars that were taking place in the past. They were tired of fighting each other, and this song was appropriate for that occasion. It is also called a peace dance, where the Chief, when he danced, he would spread the eagle down that was placed in the basket on top of his head. And during the dance he would spread the eagle down, and this symbolized peace and good will. And it cemented the agreement that was made, which was a legal agreement. And all the witnesses there ensured that this was true, and held true.

—Guud San Glans, Robert Davidson, Masset, Haida Nation

The song discussed in the introductory quote was actually given back to the people of Lax Kw'alaams when, in 2002, members of the Lax Kxeen Ts'msyen Dance Group attended a Feast hosted by Robert's brother, Reg Davidson, in Masset, Haida Gwaii. During that Feast, the history of the Peace song was recited as it had been passed down in their village, and after singing and dancing it the song was symbolically placed in a cedar basket woven by Ts'maaymban. For Ts'msyen, it is important in some instances where the ownership of in/tangible forms of cultural property (songs, masks, names, talking sticks, etc.) are to be verified publically, that the spirit or essence of it be placed into something tangible. By enacting Ts'msyen cultural protocol in this manner, the people in attendance served as witnesses to Ts'msyen sovereignty, and they also validated the transfer. It is important to note, however, that this particular transaction would not have occurred if the knowledge about the song were still alive in Lax Kw'alaams. Our Haida brothers were responding to the politics of colonization on the northwest coast, as they understood that the loss of this knowledge was attributed to the

fact that Lax Kw'alaams was hit exceptionally hard by settler colonialism (see Chapter One). In this sense, returning the Peace song was also meant to help the people of Lax Kw'alaams to remember the history between the two village communities, and to reaffirm the historical peace agreement made between our Tribal leaders. Since the time of this return, members of the Lax Kxeen Ts'msyen Dance Group have met their responsibility to keep the history alive—we have learned to dance and sing the Peace song, and we continue to practice with the song to teach our younger generations. It is the oldest song from Lax Kw'alaams that our dance group sings and dances today.

This chapter details the research conducted with, by and for the Lax Kxeen Ts'msyen Dance Group in Coast Salish territory, Vancouver, BC, Canada. Our dance group was formed by Christine Martin to provide sociocultural maintenance and reclamation opportunities for urban Ts'msyen. My mother, brother and I represent some of the original members of the group—I was 17 years old when we came together in 1997. Lax Kxeen has always been made up of an intergenerational collective of Ts'msyen families who are primarily from Lax Kw'alaams. The founder and leader, Christine, has an innate ability to compose Ts'msyen songs. She is responsible for composing the majority of our songs to date. The few songs that Christine has not composed, we have been given permission to use as a community. Nearly 20 years later, we can count well over a hundred Ts'msyen that have been and/or continue to be members of our group, and we have a repertoire of songs that we collectively sing and dance to in both private (dance practice) and public (sharing our culture) domains. The songs that Lax Kxeen sings today are unique, but they are also like the old song discussed above, and like the songs from the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files in the

repatriation case study, because they continue to reflect our connection to Lax Kw'alaams, our individual and collective histories and our Ts'msyen ways of knowing, being and doing. And the same is true of our dances, regalia, rattles, masks, drums and other in/tangible cultural expressions that form part of the whole of each song. In the Ts'msyen way, a song is an expression of cultural knowledge, history and rights, which engenders an embodied relationship between sound, memory, materiality and movement. The bodies of Ts'msyen are conduits—sites of embodied knowledge where stories come alive, lineages honored, rights articulated, histories told and retold, and where the possibilities for maintenance and reclamation have proven to be the most promising.

During the course of my academic journey, I consistently returned to Vancouver for summer and winter breaks to maintain my community relationships, especially with the dance group. During one of my trips home in 2008, we replaced a weekly dance practice with a talking circle, which provided critical space for us to collectively reflect upon our identities as Ts'msyen. We talked about how far we had come since the dance group began, how we represented ourselves, how we could be responsible to Lax Kw'alaams, how we could honor our Ayaawx, and how we could maintain and reclaim in the urban setting, among other important things. People cared deeply about the topics of representation and reclamation, and about educating a broader public about who we are. Based on all that I had witnessed of people, I suggested that we could collaboratively explore those topics from the perspective of urban Ts'msyen at some point in my graduate career. When in 2010 I began to conceptualize the repatriation case study, I resumed the idea of collaborating with the dance group for my PhD research as a companion case. They agreed but suggested that the repatriation work was more urgent,

so I should focus on getting that work off the ground before returning to study with our group since they would also be a part of the repatriation case study anyways. Between February and August 2014, once the repatriation work was in full swing, the focused case study with the Lax Kxeen Ts'msyen Dance Group took place in Vancouver. In consultation with dance group members, we agreed on three primary methods of inquiry: (1) a talking circle, (2) a Photovoice project and, (3) a dance ethnography.

I hosted our talking circle on February 4, 2014, with 20 people in attendance. The questions guiding the talking circle were: why do we dance and sing, why are we in the dance group and, what does being in the dance group mean to you? The talking circle lasted exactly one hour. At the end of our talking circle, we also began our Photovoice project. We collectively determined our research question and then I handed out disposable cameras to those interested to participate. For Photovoice, people either took pictures with the disposable camera that I gave them, used their own digital cameras, or used photos from their own personal collections to help answer our community-defined research question: what does it mean to be Ts'msyen? On July 29, 2014, I hosted our Photovoice dialogue with seven people in attendance—although I also received photos from ten other members who could not attend that day. Sub-questions offered to help guide my research partners during the photo elicitation process included: what can we see, what can we not see, how does your picture relate to our lives as Ts'msyen peoples, are there any problems or strengths that your pictures bring up, and what have we done, or what can we do about it? The Photovoice dialogue lasted two hours.

As a researcher, I also view my experiences as a dancer and a singer in the group, as valuable data that can help give important context to the research topic (Banks 2007;

2010). I thus utilized dance ethnography as a method. “Being autoethnographic by nature, dance ethnography marks an epistemological and methodological shift with regard to how knowledge is constructed” (Banks 2007:13). My own body thus becomes a site of knowledge in this study, woven over, under and across the warp that is the research itself. My dance ethnography departs from Banks’, however, in that I extend the concept of autoethnography to the concept of lineal-ethnography. Auto, as a root word, is an expression of self, the individual, as in my body speaks for me. But lineal, as a root word, connotes interconnection and community, as in my body speaks for my Ancestors, family relations, ethnic affinity, hereditary rights and cultural laws. Ts’msyen dancing is not solely an individual choice or expression in this sense; it is mainly a responsibility. For Ts’msyen, as with other Indigenous peoples, “whether it is ceremonial or social in nature, native dance is an essential part of being—it may be wonderfully entertaining, but it is never regarded as entertainment” (West, Jr. 1992:x).

For example, out of all the clan dances to dance, I only dance Gisbutwada, because that is where I belong, that is my crest, and that is what I have the rights to, by lineage. As I represent the Gisbutwada in kinesthetic (body) and material (blanket, apron, mask) forms, I am evoking the spirit of my Gisbutwada Ancestor, communicating my lineage and where I belong within the Ts’msyen sovereignty structure [Figure 1].



Figure 1: The author dancing Gisbutwada, Hobiye 2014.

There are Gisbutwada in other Nations on the northwest coast, so the ways in which I communicate my Ts'msyen-ness—or the fact that I am a Ts'msyen Gisbutwada—is in the distinctiveness of my Gisbutwada dancing, the movement, and the style of the Gisbutwada designs in my regalia, including the Gisbutwada mask that I dance. Certain Ts'msyen songs call me to this responsibility. The features of dance ethnography in this chapter are offered only as context rather than as a primary method. This is because the voices of my research partners are privileged so that they can speak for themselves—their unique experiences, perspectives and expertise are important for navigating Ts'msyen reclamation. However, in certain places it is important, and my responsibility, to help in providing context to clarify the history of our group, and to provide further considerations based on my embodied knowledge as to why we sing and dance, why we are in the Lax

Kxeen Ts'msyen Dance Group, why the dance group is important to us, and how it plays a critical and vital role in helping us to maintain our Ts'msyen-ness in an urban setting.

B. Reclamation Through Song and Dance

On February 4th, 2014 I hosted our talking circle in the amenity room of one of the Luma Native Housing buildings in our community of East Vancouver. The leader of our dance group, Christine, was not able to join us at the last minute because she had a family emergency. Christine's absence, however, actually provided an opportunity for people to openly speak to her leadership role, without having Christine—who is very humble—try to steer the conversations away from her influence. While the majority of our dialogue centered on the importance of maintaining and reclaiming our Ts'msyen ways of knowing, being and doing through song and dance, my research partners wanted to begin our talking circle by acknowledging Christine for creating a vital Ts'msyen sphere of enculturation outside of Ts'msyen territories, and in a major urban setting like Vancouver. It is not only her gift of song that people recognize, appreciate and respect; it is also her inherent leadership ability:

Sue: I think my uncle had a really powerful observation—he said, “How is it that this dance group can get together, once a week, in the city, surrounded by concrete? How can they find themselves, and meet once a week to get in touch with each other, and share their culture, share their songs? How does something grow like that in the city?” And so, it seems like an odd thing, right? That, here in the city, we have songs? And we have songs because of Christine.

‘Wiiksigoop: And when you go and walk in [to dance practice], she might have seen you two hours earlier, but she just gets this, like, childhood happiness that she's seeing you. Like, she just knows how to make people feel so welcome [in the dance group]! And some of us don't talk to each other all the time—and I try to say hi to people so we can get to know each other more—but she knows everybody. There's something definitely very special about that woman.

Tom: You know, our grandmother was grooming Christine from a young age, to be doing what she is doing today. She groomed her from a young age.

Christine has leadership running through her veins—not only did her grandmother groom her from an early age, as her cousin Tom Smith (Laxsgiik) noted, but so did her parents. Her mother, the late Ethel “Pinky” Ryan, is responsible for helping to start West Coast Night at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society, where every Wednesday since 1998, except for the summer months when less people are around, northwest coast Nations have been getting together to share their cultures with one another. The activism on the part of Pinky and others have helped to transform the gymnasium at the Friendship Centre on Wednesday nights into an “urban Big House” so that the distinctive cultural expressions of multiple northwest coast peoples can be expressed and shared openly with proper support for cultural protocols and laws. Christine’s late father raised her as an activist, bringing her with him to band council meetings in Lax Kw’alaams and talking to her about political matters from a very young age—at five, she participated in her first public protest against racism in Prince Rupert. Furthermore, Christine’s maternal great-grandfather was William Beynon, who is acknowledged for his ethnographic contributions in the works of various celebrated anthropologists, most notably Marius Barbeau and Franz Boas. Many Ts’msyen today, as well as Nisga’a and Gitksan, consider the knowledge that William Beynon provided to anthropologists and linguists as important sources for their contemporary reclamation efforts. Christine’s ancestry has built an important foundation for her—she was raised according to our ways of knowing, being and doing in Lax Kw’alaams, and she applied the Ayaawx wherever life took her.

When I next asked why we dance and sing, my research partners in the talking circle expressed a great deal of pride in their Ts’msyen identities, immediately expressing

that they dance and sing, “to feel good about who we are and where we come from,” “to connect,” “to keep our culture alive,” “so it’s not forgotten,” “to learn and share,” “to honor our Ancestors,” “to represent our family and our House,” “to honor our kids,” “for community,” “for healing,” “for reclamation,” and “to pass it on to the younger generation.” Highlighting the poetics and politics of reclaiming through song and dance, Paulena kicked off our dialogue with a recollection of a familiar journey that many of us who grew up outside of Ts’msyen territories have had to take:

I think it’s also opportunity. I remember when my kids were little, I wanted them to be proud of whom they were; but I didn’t know who I was. So I sought out a dance group called The Traditional Mothers. And, it was Grandma Harris who got me really thinking about who I was, and she encouraged me to research my family. Because I was growing up told, “you’re Haida, you’re Haida, you’re Haida.” And when I went and asked these questions—Grandma Harris told me you gotta ask this, this, and this—so I went and asked these questions to different family members and found out, wow, I’m Ts’msyen! And then I was told, “no, no, no, no you’re Haida and Ts’msyen.” And then when I started looking at the bigger picture, like, I realized, no; we’re Ts’msyen and Haida, by our lineage, and who and where it comes from. I’m Ts’msyen and Haida. And, knowing that I needed to dance with my children, I couldn’t get them to go and dance unless I was part of it, for family—family healing, family traditions, family connections.

Sue, who grew up in our territories, acknowledged that the dynamics of reclaiming for Ts’msyen in Vancouver “are completely different than they were in Rupert or even in Lax Kw’alaams.” During Sue’s time working in the Lax Kw’alaams Band satellite office that used to be in the Vancouver, she met Ts’msyen who knew they were from Lax Kw’alaams, but much of their knowledge about their Ts’msyen identities stopped there:

Some of them don’t even know what clan they come from. Some of them don’t even know which family they come from—let alone which House they come from. Some of them are trying to connect with who they are, and their families. Because they are people who just grew up here, and never had opportunities to ever go up there and know what’s that like, and who their family is. You know, to come together in this dance group—even though they never walked on Ts’msyen territory—it means something. That it’s about belonging.

For many urban Ts'msyen, the existence of urban Ts'msyen dance groups has provided opportunities for our people to begin the journey of reclamation, and to assert their Ts'msyen-ness. They symbolize hope and opportunity. My mom elaborated on this:

I remember being in Seattle, and seeing a poster of Ts'msyen Hayuuk, and I just remember that feeling that came up in me. This was long before our dance group, and I was just kind of realizing that I was Ts'msyen; like that meant something different. And I just had to try to find them, to see them. And I was only there that day. I just had this surge of pride in, like, those are my people; that's where I belong; and they know what I need to know. So with this dance group, you know—and I've said this publically lots of times—what Christine has done with it, it has breathed life into me as a Ts'msyen person. Like [Paulena was] saying, it's woken something up in me. It's always just there; it was made for us.

The impulse to sing and dance in the Ts'msyen way is innate. Elder Sunni discussed this impulse in terms of her own reclamation, when she heard the box drum for the first time, decades ago: *“Oh my goodness! I just wanted to get up and dance! And I hadn't danced for such a long time, you know. It just does that, it makes you want to just move in our traditional ways.”* It is almost like having an epiphany about the way that knowledge works when cultural signifiers of Ts'msyen-ness—such as lineage, dance groups and cultural expressions like box drums—awaken the spirits of urban Ts'msyen, and compels many to further embrace and/or explore the distinctiveness of their Ts'msyen identities. One of the primary ways that my research partners do so is through song and dance, so the dance group, and Christine's leadership, has been vital in this regard.

C. The Social Life of Songs

There is an inherent sociality to our songs. This is not only because we sing songs in public, but also because composers have been known to grant permission for another individual, or group of individuals, to use a song under certain conditions. The conditions

of ownership means that granting permission is revocable—use it or lose it, so to speak. When someone is given permission to use a song, they have a responsibility (1) to learn and practice it, (2) to always verbally acknowledge who composed it, and (3) to explain where the rights to sing the song comes from. In this section, I will provide a few examples to demonstrate the social life of the songs that Lax Kxeen sings today. These examples will also highlight the terms of ownership to our songs in various contexts.

One of the songs that our dance group has permission to use is titled “Gooyu,” the words roughly translating to “where do we go from here.” In the early 1980s, a Ts’msyen woman named Doreen Robinson lived in Lax Kw’alaams while her husband, Bill, was a minister at the United Church. Being amongst our people, she began to notice that there was a lot of silence surrounding our cultural expressions in the village. Doreen felt a sense of responsibility to begin teaching the youth some of the songs and dances that she had the rights to, while also showing them how to make regalia, and encouraging them along the way to assert their identities as Ts’msyen from Lax Kw’alaams. Christine was one of those young people who learned from Doreen, and one of the songs that she was taught was “Gooyu.” Christine recounts how Doreen gave the people of Lax Kw’alaams permission to sing that song, and why our dance group can sing it today. In this case, Gooyu is a community song that people who are from Lax Kw’alaams have been given permission to use. Gooyu is important for many reasons. It contains valuable teachings, it is a reminder of our community’s relationship with Doreen, and it symbolizes the journey of reclamation for our people. The song is about survival, awakening, revitalization and resurgence. For example, the verses are the same but we start singing the first verse in a soft voice to symbolize the beginning stages of healing. Our voices gradually increase in

strength at each stage of the song, so that by the final verse our voices are resounding with undeniable power. This graduation in volume is purposefully incorporated into the song to symbolize the gaining of strength on the journey of reclamation. Lax Kxeen sings Gooyu today to pay tribute to our Ts'msyen sister for igniting the singing and dancing spirit in our people at a critical time in our history, and to honor her for the teachings in the song. The words are as relevant today for our people, as they were in the 1980s.

In public settings⁶, our dance group often sings Gooyu before our entrance song, and at the same time that we bless the floor with eagle down. We also use Gooyu as an honor song of sorts so that we can build up the spirits in our drummers, singers and dancers before we share our culture as distinctly Ts'msyen from Lax Kw'alaams. As we begin the first verse of Gooyu in the soft voice, eagle down is being blown from behind a screen, where our drummers, dancers and singers are lined up but invisible to the crowd. Christine is on the other side of the screen, her back to the audience where the crest on her blanket is visible, and therefore her lineage. We all wear our regalia for the same reason—to identify ourselves. As we continue to sing Gooyu with no drumming, the drummers are in two parallel, single file lines walking out from behind the screen following Christine's lead. Once all of the drummers are visible to the crowd, they face each other using the space in between their bodies as an entranceway. The next part of the song involves a woman who walks through the 'entranceway' and onto the floor to bless it with eagle down before we share our culture through dance. She then returns behind the screen, and this ends Gooyu. There is a brief moment of silence before we

⁶ See a video of the Lax Kxeen Ts'msyen Dance Group at the 2013 Nisga'a Ts'amiks Hobiye in Vancouver here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRfIofrtCM> and the 2014 Hobiye, where our Smgigyet and Sigyidmhana'a, and the composer of the entrance song, Don Wells, were present here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4OfDmmRZW34>.

begin the entrance song. When the entrance song begins, the dancers are introduced to the public. Like Gooyu, the entrance song helps to identify us to the world as distinctly Ts'msyen from Lax Kw'alaams. Silidix Midiik (Don Wells, Gisbutwada, Gitando) composed the "Four Clans Entrance" song. He gave both the dance group in the village and our dance group permission to use his song for cultural purposes. After Silidix Midiik witnessed us singing and dancing his entrance song at the 2014 Nisga'a Ts'amiks Hobiye in Vancouver, he stated publically that he felt the power and pride, and that he was pleased to see how his song came alive through our singers, drummers and dancers.

The entrance song is a sort of call and response between female and male voices. The first verse—which is repeated throughout the song—is sung without any drumming, and then the drumming begins with the second verse. The verse is sung a couple of more times, and then Christine introduces the first Clan: "*Gii Laxsgiik, Gii Laxsgiik, The Eagle Clan!*" The Laxsgiik mask dancers emerge from behind the screen, dancing their way onto the floor. The verse is sung a couple of times for the mask dancers, before the rest of the Laxsgiik enter. As this is happening, the drummers are synchronized in their movements, twisting their torsos from side to side, hitting the drum each time they shift, left to right, left to right. After a couple verses that allows enough time for the Laxsgiik to enter and exit, Christine signals the drummers to drum to a different, quicker drumbeat. They each make a circle in the air with their drums, the beat of their drums and their movements all in synch. They do this a few times as the Laxsgiik exit the floor. Once we begin singing the verses again, the drummers return to the original drum beat and choreography, and the process repeats itself until all four Clans—the Laxsgiik, Ganhada, Gisbutwada and Laxgibuu—have validated their lineages by entering and exiting in the

same fashion. There is much to the process, but as Sue noted in our talking circle for this case study, the final verse of our entrance song is particularly impactful:

You know there's something that really happens to our dance group when we do our entry and Christine yells out, "We are the Ts'msyen!" and everyone comes out. I don't know, there's just something so special about that part for our dance group, and for the audience. Because everybody, all the time, will cheer. And we feel the power, and the pride of that—those words.

Sue was alluding to the final verse in the entrance song where the drumming stops, and with her arm held high, holding an eagle feather fan, Christine yells out to the crowd:

"From the four Clans, we are the Ts'msyen!" By the time this statement is complete, the drumming and singing resumes and all the mask dancers re-enter the floor, dancing in between and around each other in a weaving fashion to symbolize how each part (Clan) makes up the whole (Nation). When the mask dancers finally exit the floor, the entrance song is complete. In a telephone conversation (August 24, 2014) with Christine about representing ourselves publicly, she elaborated on the importance of the entrance song for proclaiming ourselves as Ts'msyen from Lax Kw'alaams:

You notice we never introduce ourselves as, "we are the urban Ts'msyen"? People have asked me before why we don't. And we don't differentiate that because we identify ourselves in terms of our villages. The Ts'msyen are one of the biggest Nations, in terms of territory and spreading so far, so our community's are so distinct now. It's almost like we are our own Nations.

The dance group's embodiment with specific songs indicates to the world that us urban Ts'msyen do not forget where we come from. By singing Gooyu and the Four Clans Entrance song, for example, we are communicating the distinctiveness of our Ts'msyen identities from the Nine Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams. Being urban is only a distinction that we make in terms of lived experiences and access, but not in terms of culture. Culturally, we want to assert our identities as Ts'msyen from Lax Kw'alaams.

The two songs described above connect us to place. They teach us about our history through a land-based pedagogy, and they symbolize our journey of reclamation through song and dance. We are grateful to have permission to sing these songs today, and we are also grateful to have many new songs to sing that Christine has composed herself. One such song is the “Raven Song,” which she composed to honor her dad’s Ganhada lineage—him and his five brothers in particular. Christine grew up in the village hearing her dad and uncles tell stories, and recalls fondly how they were always very humorous, uplifting and charismatic people. There are teachings in their humor, and in this way, they always reminded Christine of the Trickster figure (Raven) in Ts’msyen Adaawx. Reciprocity is part of the story of the song as well because Christine gave permission to the Git Hoan Dancers in Seattle to sing her song. The social life of the songs and dances discussed in this section demonstrate how protocol is of utmost importance to Ts’msyen, wherever we may be in time and space. We share with one another to lift each other up, to strengthen community connections and to acknowledge our collective history. But the privilege of accepting permission to sing a song must always be treated as a privilege and a responsibility. This means acknowledging rights to ownership in a public setting—who composed it, who gave you permission to sing it, and what the song means. This applies to singing, dancing, talking or writing about it.

So in terms of the songs that Christine has composed, I have a responsibility to give context to the ownership of her songs. In 2008, at a Feast in Lax Kw’alaams hosted by one of her uncles, Aldm łxah (Murray Smith, Ganhada, Waap Aldm łxah, Gitwilgyoots), Christine legally placed all of the songs that she has composed, with the exception of one (see next section), into her uncle’s House. At the Feast, Christine placed

the spirit of her songs into a cedar chest belonging to the House of Aldm łxah. Therefore, her songs now belong in her uncle's House. However the complexity of our system of ownership when it comes to songs is that whoever composes the song maintains their ownership. In the case of Christine's songs being put into the House of Aldm łxah, Christine maintains her rights—she just found an appropriate home for her Ts'msyen songs to give them cultural integrity through Ts'msyen protocol. Coming from two matrilineal nations, Christine is Haida first and foremost because of her mother (who also happens to be Haida and Ts'msyen; but because Christine's maternal grandmother mother was Haida, Christine's mother, including Christine and her children, go by Haida laws first). If Christine had composed Haida songs, she would have put her songs into her mom's House; but they were Ts'msyen songs from Lax Kw'alaams. Christine's Ts'msyen lineage is deeply connected to her dad's brother Aldm łxah, so she put her songs into his House—a House in which she will soon legally belong to because her uncle has announced his intentions to legally adopt her at his next Feast in May 2015. The fact that Christine's songs now belong in the House of Aldm łxah does not change the fact that Git Hoan or Lax Kxeen has permission to sing the Raven song *because Christine has granted continued permission*. She has made sure to let all parties know so that we can adjust our oratory when we introduce the Raven Song to also acknowledge that it now belongs in the House of Aldm łxah—a Ganhada House in the Gitwilgyoots.

D. Growing up in the Dance Group

The one song that was not put into the House of Aldm łxah by Christine was the “Eagle Song.” Christine composed the song about ten years ago for a former member of

our dance group to commemorate the event of him carving a totem pole. His name, Gotsmith, is written into the song to remind us of the history. Christine gave permission to Gotsmith to use the song, but she maintains ownership. For many years, only the Lax Kxeen Ts'msyen Dance Group sang the "Eagle Song," but now that Gotsmith started his own group in Vancouver, the Git Hayetsk, they sing it as well. Since they have the privilege of singing this song, they have to acknowledge that Christine composed it and that Gotsmith was given permission to use it. This, of course, is another example of the social life of our songs, but I begin this section with a brief history of the "Eagle Song" to instead highlight what this song means for the young people growing up in our group.

As is protocol, Laxsgiik people dance the "Eagle Song" in the Lax Kxeen Ts'msyen Dance Group. However, this song also serves as a teaching tool for the children, whether they are Laxsgiik or not. As Elder Sunni noted during our talking circle, *"I know it feels so good to have children, the kids there. Especially in this dance group, there are so many! And they're just so accepted, and it's really, really, wonderful."* Our dance group is unique from other groups in that children have always represented a significant portion of our membership, and they are not restricted from participating in any way—our children are encouraged and supported to be drummers, singers, dancers and mask dancers. During the talking circle, no one could recall a time that our kids were ever shamed during the teaching/learning process in dance practice.

Sue elaborated on the importance of creating spaces of inclusion for our young ones:

We have to be so careful with their little spirits, because my grandson and I were a part of another dance group before, too, and the dance leader shamed him. And [my grandson] wouldn't come back again, you know? We have to be so careful to not hurt them or to shut that down in them. You know, we have to be very gentle with them.

Letting children who are not Laxsgiik participate in the “Eagle Song” is one such way that our dance group creates spaces of inclusion for our kids. Every year, we witness the power of this type of pedagogy for building up their body-confidence and for nurturing their cultural identities [Figure 2].



Figure 2: Lax Kxeen children, circa 2002.

During the talking circle dialogue, my research partners spoke in depth about the role of the “Eagle Song” in the teaching/learning process for our children. Elder Sunni recalled how Nathaniel—who is only five years old, and who was in attendance with his parents—is a current example of how the cultural teachings in the dance group manifest:

I mean that’s the age, you know? That’s the age where not that long ago, we started dancing then. And he just doesn’t want to stop. He just kept going and not coming off when everyone was dancing out. You were way out there! I mean it’s wonderful! And everybody wants to see that, you know, because we’re hungry. We’ve been hungry for a long time, and I know it’s healing dancing. I know it’s healing to our spirit. And we need to dance and get that back so that we can live as we are instead of whom they try to make us be.

Elder Sunni was referring to the 2014 Nisga'a Ts'amiks Hobiye in Vancouver when we were sharing our culture, and during the "Eagle Song" little Nathaniel was so enthusiastic to dance that we had to sing a few more verses of the song before he would exit the floor. Wiigibaaw gave context to Sunni's comments, recalling the moment before that song was introduced that day: *"his little heart was just broken when he didn't have an Eagle mask. Then my granddaughter gave it up for him,"* to which his sister, Sue, replied, *"Yeah, his little head was on the table just weeping."* Wiigibaaw was proud of that moment stating, *"With my granddaughter that did that, too, my family knows we must be doing something right—for her to say that to him."* Witnessing the kids in the group embrace their cultural teachings in both public and private domains gives us all a great sense of hopefulness, knowing that, as Wiiksigoop said, *"they're gonna grow up so much more confident with a sense of belonging, and knowing who they are."*

Growing up in the dance group has translated into to a new generation of young leaders who embrace their Ts'msyen-ness and pass on what they learn to other children, as well as adults, in the group. Wiigibaaw asked his daughter, Natasha, to tell us the story of how Nathaniel 'checked' her one time, on cultural terms:

Nathaniel, he's such a little leader already. He follows my dad all around. And I quit dancing after I quit [a previous group that I was in]. And I've always been a drummer. And, we were at mask practice one day and he was like, "dance with me." "Ok." So I was dancing for an hour and a half straight, and I was like oh my god, I need to go find somewhere to sit down. And then Nathaniel comes running up to me and taps me, "can I see your mask?" I was like, "sure!" And I showed him, and he was really happy. And then his attitude just completely changed. "Why didn't you tell me you mask danced, Natasha?!" "I'm a drummer, I forgot to." And he's like, "well, it's so beautiful! You need to dance more!" And I was like, "ok, Nathaniel, I will." He doesn't know it, but he's a leader already!

Natasha grew up in the dance group herself, from Nathaniel's age, and now she's a young woman. Natasha is not only a lead drummer, but she has most recently begun assuming

Christine's role during practice, leading our group through our songs and dances.

Christine recognizes her niece's gifts in this way, supporting her to further develop her leadership skills. And while many are related to Natasha, all of the kids in the group love her and look up to her. One can see, from the examples aforementioned, how the inter-generational learning cycle is alive and well in the Lax Kxeen Ts'msyen Dance Group.

Kids that are too shy to sing and dance, are always welcome to join us because exposure to community and culture is what engenders participation—and in their own time. Christine's brother, Robbie, elaborated on this during the talking circle:

We came a couple weeks ago just to come and hang out, and then she [pointing at his 7 year old daughter sitting next to him] jumped in right away and just...swoosh, swoosh, swoosh! My son wanted to sit back, I wanted to sit back, but she just jumped right in there, you know. And to see her sit here and pay attention is great. I definitely want them to know their Ts'msyen side 'cause they both came from Masset and their mom brought them here, but they don't know about their Ts'msyen side. And when I have my son on the side, I can still see him singing away there on the side. So that's building it up in him.

Natasha followed up on Robbie's important comment to further demonstrate how we have to have patience with our kids who are less confident to sing and dance in private or public domains:

I don't know what happens, but I remember I took Judgee out to go dance and she was holding my hand, really shy. She really loved it, but she was really shy. And then I asked if she wanted to dance again and she said no—and the next week she was out there going all by herself! And my nephew, I call my son, he's always sitting in the corner on his game, but then at Hobiye he came out to dance.

Saying that out loud was very emotional for Natasha, bringing tears to her eyes because she was overwhelmed with pride. Sue followed, saying, "*That's the magic of the group. Because her brother went out dancing, too.*" During the talking circle I provided people with papers and pens for them to draw or write if they didn't want to speak out loud. At the end of the day, I collected all the loose papers, and there was a comment written from

a Gisbutwada woman stating, “*my daughter said it makes her so happy to hear the cheering*” when we dance and sing in public. The other written comment was in a child’s hand writing, which stated on one side of the paper, “*We git love,*” and on the other side, “*From Canada is so moch to me.*” We have learned that we have to meet our young people where they are and let their participation grow organically. Because when we do, we support the development of confident, young Ts’msyen, who are proud of their cultural identities and who are eager to share that with people from other Nation’s such as Canada (as the young person in attendance distinguished in her comment about representation). In this way, one can think about the dance group as a private domain where we primarily *nurture* our cultural identities, whereas when we share our culture with others in the public domain, we are primarily *asserting* our identities.

E. Visualizing Pedagogy and Power

It was very important that I provided an opportunity for people to respond in oral and visual formats since these sensibilities are in sync with dancing and singing. Amongst the papers that I collected at the end of our talking circle was an impressive drawing by one of the children in our group. Although I did not follow up with the young person who made the drawing, it was clear that whoever it was—and I am certain it was one of two girls under the age of seven who were sitting attentively and engaged in the circle the entire time—was responding to the question that I asked at one point about *how* we sing and dance [Figure 3]:

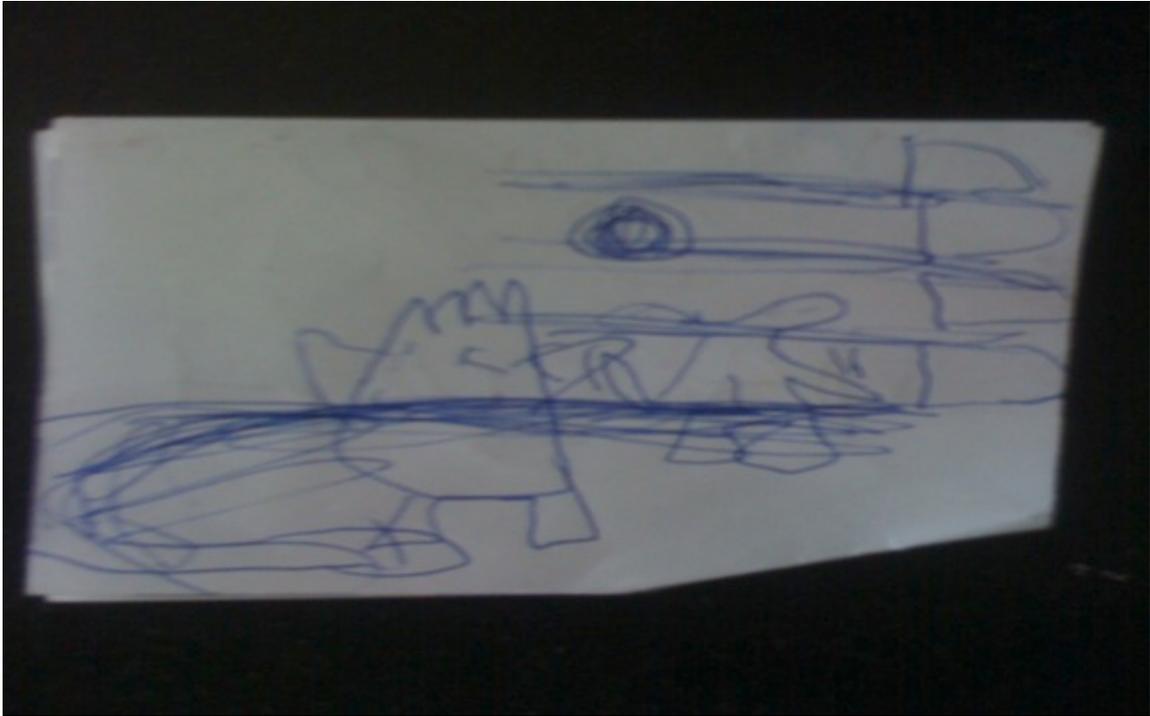


Figure 3: Child's drawing, Lax Kxeen Talking Circle 2014.

In this drawing, it appears that the child took the opportunity to explain in visual form how we present ourselves in the public, and that she used her experiences at Hobiye as a reference point. Hobiye in Vancouver is held at the PNE Forum, which has the capacity to accommodate up to 3,900 people. In the right section of the drawing, one can see four rows of lines that extend right from the middle of the page, each ending at a square—I believe that the lines represent rows of bleachers in the Forum where most of the people at Hobiye were permanently seated, while the squares represent the stairs in between each section of seating. The circular image that is positioned at the second row from the top of the paper, signals to me that the child was indeed referencing Hobiye because, throughout the two-day celebration, there was a large crescent moon that hung from the middle of the Forum's ceiling. Then there are the two figures—they are positioned in such a way as to show that they are on the floor, surrounded by the bleachers and by open space. The lines that extend from the bottom of the bleachers, over

and around the bodies of the two figures, I think represent the motion of our dancing, which is typically done in counter-clockwise fashion for entering and exiting purposes. Both figures are clearly drawn by the young person to depict movement. The lead dancer is drawn with embellishment on the head, perhaps to convey that this particular figure is a mask dancer who enters first. I come to this conclusion because the figure behind it does not have the same embellishment on the head, which indicates to me that it is not wearing a mask. Coincidentally, or not, this is exactly how we enter and exit when we introduce ourselves in a public setting during our entrance song. For these reasons, I believe that the drawing in Figure 3 is a visual representation of pedagogy and power by a young Ts'msyen person who wanted to express their embodied knowledge about how we dance.

The talking circle method was a familiar way to engage our inter-generational community in a discussion about Ts'msyen representation and identity. To further explore *what it means to be Ts'msyen* from a critical Ts'msyen standpoint, we made sure to also execute our first attempt at a Photovoice project to directly confront the looming issue of Ts'msyen in/visibility. As a qualitative research method, Photovoice has been employed by social scientists to address a range of social issues with, by and for under-represented communities (See for example: Castleden, Garvin & Huu-ay-aht First Nation 2008; Gray 2011; Harper 2009; Sanders et al 2009; Wang 1999, 2006; Wang & Burris 1997; Wang & Redwood-Jones 2001; Wang, Cash & Powers 2000; Wang, Yuan & Feng 1996; Wang et al. 1998, 2004). Photovoice supports community members to collectively define an issue or topic to explore in a creative way; identify a research question to guide a photo elicitation process; and enact a critical analysis of the photographs they contribute through dialogue. The community also decides what form they want to present

their photos and examinations beyond the dialogue session—for instance, in a Photovoice exhibit, a digital history project, power point presentations, the publication of articles or some other form of pedagogical material. Photovoice helps to engage a target audience to impact some form of policy. This research method takes its cue from the pedagogical contributions of Paulo Freire (1970) who argued that community members are the experts in their own lives, and that they can determine solutions at the intra-community level to support their individual and collective liberation from oppression. In line with an Indigenous research methodology, however, our project modified the Photovoice method to suit our Indigenous context—namely, allowing for flexibility in the research process; following the cultural protocols and timelines of the community; ensuring that there was an iterative process to allow for ongoing input and feedback; respecting the responsibility for power sharing and fostering trust; recognizing the rights of ownership for community participants, and; confronting the settler colonial problem (Castleden, Garvin & Huu-ay-aht First Nation 2008; Gray 2011). Our Photovoice project asked, what does it mean to be Ts’msyen given all that we have experienced under the settler colonial condition?

Jenna and her son Graydin were not able to attend the collaborative dialogue for our Photovoice project, but Jenna made sure to send me hers and her sons photos and their narratives as a contribution to our research. Together they offered intergenerational perspectives on what it means to be Ts’msyen through the lens of song and dance. In her email to me, Jenna sent Graydin’s photo [Figure 4] and she stated:

When I asked Graydin what it meant to be Ts’msyen he said, “Being Ts’msyen means being able to pick up a drum any time you want, and be able to sing our songs.”



Figure 4: Graydin's photo, Lax Kxeen Photovoice Project 2014.

The fact that Graydin participated in our project by collaborating with his mom to set up his photo, and to answer her question in such a way that demonstrates his hyper-awareness about the critical role that song and dance plays in the lives of Ts'msyen, is a beautiful thing. The subtlety of his answer to our community-based research question was a powerful statement about human rights in society, given the fact that Indigenous singing and dancing was outlawed in Canadian society in our recent history. In addition to Graydin's contribution, Jenna offered her photo [Figure 5] to emphasize how her own healing, and how the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge, is critical for Ts'msyen reclamation so future generations can also develop a strong cultural identity:



Figure 5: Jenna's photo, Lax Kxeen Photovoice Project 2014.

For me, being Ts'msyen means that I can honor my roots through my pride in my cultural identity, and be able to pass that on to my son so he can do the same when he has his own children.

We have great hope for the children in our dance group because the ones that have grown up with us have proven to become strong, successful and kind people who never forget where they come from. Vanessa, Christine's daughter, is one example. During our Photovoice dialogue, Vanessa, now 19 years old, shared a picture of her and her mom. Vanessa was only five years old and couldn't remember where the picture was taken, so

Christine clarified that it was at the Aboriginal Friendship Centre in Vancouver. Vanessa went on to explain her photo as it relates to our research question [Figure 6]:



Figure 6: Vanessa's photo, Lax Kxeen Photovoice Project 2014.

What that picture meant to me was ever since I was at a young age, you know, culture was always instilled in me—and my mom's right, it's just about who I am now. I can't imagine going on in my life with no culture at all. And what it means to me to be Ts'msyen is, you know, I'm always going to take that with me wherever I go in this crazy world. Things can get out of hand, but I'm always Ts'msyen, and that's always going to ground me in who I am. And I feel like, ever since a young age, it's always been like that. I can't imagine it being any different, and I feel like it's really cool to see that I'm not alone. There are other youth that are with me on that. There are other youth in dance groups doing the same thing. And even at home we have a youth leading a dance group! I thought that was really cool! So, I mean, being in this generation, I think it's really interesting to see how it's just normal for us now, right? It's just normal for us to go to dance practice together; it's normal for us to sing songs together when we're not at practice. You know, it's even normal for my best friend and me. We always talk about being in our culture, because that's pride, and that's, "I'm always going to carry that with me." And I just thought this is really significant because my mom handed that down to me, and I'm always going to take this wherever I go. Half way across the world, this will always remind me of where I come from. And I'm always going to say, "I'm Ts'msyen!" half way across the world.

Christine followed with a story about the event that Vanessa's photo captured. Christine said, "*In the background of that picture there are actual Ancestors that the Haida's were repatriating back home.*" I replied, "*Oh, that's what was happening there in that picture?*" and Christine responded:

Yeah, I think they took them back from New York at that time, and they [the Haida Ancestors] stayed over in Vancouver here. Vanessa must have been five in that picture. She was adamant that she wanted to say a speech, so I took her up there and she says, "I'd like to Welcome and thank the Haida's." I was like, [whispering in her ear] "Vanessa, you *are* Haida." Then Vanessa says, "I know! But I want to thank them, and welcome them! I said, "Well, okay then."

Those of us at the Photovoice dialogue thoroughly enjoyed this story and we thought it was particularly hilarious because, in our cultures, one never welcomes their own people to someone else's territory. Nonetheless, this story demonstrated how Vanessa might not have understood the complexities of cultural protocols at the tender age of five while growing up in the urban setting, but she certainly understood how to enact them! In another story about how Vanessa grew up vis-à-vis the dance group, Christine stated:

"And just on that, though, I don't know if you guys remember Ts'msyen Day, years ago?"

She was referring to one of the times that our dance group hosted Ts'msyen Days at the Friendship Centre in the early 2000s. When Christine started to tell this story, Vanessa immediately responded as if she had heard it a thousand times: "*Oh my god, every time!*"

We all started to giggle at Vanessa's reaction, anticipating Christine's response:

She was about the same age. She was walking beside me [at Ts'msyen Day], and I said, "Vanessa, I want you to (as part of the teachings) to sit beside me through the whole day and watch what I do" because that's how my parents taught me. So she had this little book that she had with her. It was like a little 'flip the page.' And throughout the day she was writing, frantically, all over it [imitating her little hands writing]. And at the end of the day, I said, "Can I take a look at what you wrote?" and she said, "Yup!" And so she gives me the book, and all you see is—scribbles! But it was like she was writing, right?! It was awesome!

Thanks to the dancing and singing community that my research partners have created, nurtured and participated in, growing up in the dance group has been like a cultural rite of passage for our young people—they have learned to fully embrace their Ts’msyen-ness. During the Photovoice dialogue, my research partners described Vanessa’s generation as “the renaissance” because theirs is the first in perhaps five generations that our people are growing up to express our cultural practices and laws in public, and without constant fear. It has taken an incredible amount of collective resistance, resilience, courage, leadership and persistence by previous generations for our people to maintain and reclaim our Ts’msyen-ness under the settler colonial condition today.

F. Sovereignty in the City

During the Photovoice dialogue, ‘Wiiksigoop offered the following photo and narrative to discuss one of the primary ways that members of our dance group, and other Ts’msyen, have asserted our Ts’msyen-ness in the urban setting [Figure 7]:



Figure 7: ‘Wiiksigoop’s photo, Lax Kxeen Photovoice Project 2014.

So, this is what it means to be Ts'msyen to me. It's of Ts'msyen Day. And then, especially this one, you don't see all the signs, but you can see the signs that everyone's carrying. I remember, like that place was just packed! And you could barely move! And, people, they just kept coming and coming, it was so amazing! And there were probably about 20 of those signs, hey? And, being a part of the dance group, I always say it feels like it breathed life into my kids and I as Ts'msyen peoples. It breathed life into us. But something like that, to just see all these Ts'msyen people, and come from everywhere, you know—up north and from down in Seattle, and everywhere—because they wanted to proclaim their Ts'msyen-ness, and they wanted to be with other Ts'msyen, and say this is who we are, and we need to be together, and our culture is important. That's why I just loved Ts'msyen Day, and I look forward to when we do it again.

There are many ways that Ts'msyen carve out space to express our sovereignty in the city. We are members of urban Ts'msyen dance groups, we participate in cultural events such as West Coast Night or Hobiye, and we organize our own public celebrations to honor our persistence as Ts'msyen peoples across time and space. These expressions of sovereignty are both highly poetic and political. Seven Ts'msyen Days later, over a 15 year time period, Ts'msyen dance groups have been coming together to demonstrate the strength of the Ts'msyen Nation, to share our songs and our dances with one another, to recite our histories, to reconnect, and to honor “Outstanding Ts'msyen” in child, youth, adult and Elder categories with community awards. Ts'msyen Day exists as a public expression of sovereignty in the sense that we will not be forgotten, nor will our connections to territory. As Deloria, Jr. and Lytle (1983:xii) noted in the 1980s, “Indians will be with us for the foreseeable future.” And although we do not exactly resemble the real and imagined pre-contact Ts'msyen societies, which have been restricted to static time/space backdrops in the writing of culture, we continue to be dynamic peoples. Even today, “given a choice between Indian society and non-Indian society, most Indians feel comfortable with their own institutions, lands and traditions” (Deloria, Jr. and Lytle

1983:xii). The dancing and singing communities that Ts'msyen have created in urban settings, along the northwest coast, are evidence of this.

The connection to our own institutions, lands and traditions is ever-present in the Lax Kxeen Ts'msyen Dance Group. Living as Ts'msyen, on Ts'msyen terms, is a delicate balance, but my research partners have proven that they will go above and beyond to enact a land-based pedagogy to maintain their sovereignty even outside of Ts'msyen territories, and despite the socioeconomic challenges of doing so. One of the primary ways that my research partners have done this is in their travels throughout the year to Lax Kw'alaams and Prince Rupert to stay connected to their families and territories, for example. Shawna Ann Tait, who was also unable to attend our Photovoice dialogue, made sure to send me her and her son's photos and narratives as a contribution to our research. They title their pictures: "Mother & Son Teaching Moment" [Figure 8 & Figure 9]:



Figure 8: Shawna and Kallen's photo, Lax Kxeen Photovoice Project 2014.

This photo of my son and I shows who I am as a mother wanting to teach my very own creation what it means to be Ts'msyen. What does it mean to be Ts'msyen? It means that we as community members living on-reserve and off-reserve need to want to learn to survive off our lands, to continue on with our culture and traditions, to continue to keep our spirits alive. This picture is a very powerful picture for me. My son and I have lived off reserve for many years now and we are very grateful for our ocean and family who always help us harvest our salmon for the winter months.



Figure 9: Shawna and Kallen's photo, Lax Kxeen Photovoice Project 2014.

The result of this expression of sovereignty and activism is that Shawna and Kallen get to nourish their bodies with Ts'msyen foods from our territories in order to sustain and assert their Ts'msyen-ness in the urban setting [Figure 9]. Every spring, members of our dance group, and other Ts'msyen like Shawna and Kallen, begin to travel home so that they can help their families with the harvesting and preservation of the seafood that comes from our waterways. Shawna wanted to emphasize the importance of salmon, but our people also rely on the harvesting of clams, abalone, crabs, prawns, halibut, seaweed, oolichan, herring eggs, and other important food sources throughout the spring and summer months. Surviving off of our lands and waterways has occurred since time

immemorial, so the persistence of Ts'msyen specific subsistence strategies, especially while living in the urban setting, is a powerful expression of food sovereignty.

Indigenous food sovereignty refers to the fact that access to traditional foods from Indigenous lands and waterways is inextricably linked with historic claims to hunting, fishing and gathering rights (Food Secure Canada 2014). This fact is consistent in and outside of our territories: "The larger Indigenous land struggles and food sovereignty issues are not mutually exclusive even when the struggle remains centered in an urban setting" (Food Secure Canada 2014:8). In Vancouver, Indigenous peoples face unique challenges accessing traditional foods (Elliott & Jayatilaka 2011; Elliott et al. 2012). Although traditional foods are often shared through family and extended kinship networks, urban peoples typically receive less when they live in the city due to distance or disconnection from their families and/or communities (Elliott et al. 2012). Food sovereignty is representative of a land-based pedagogy wherein opportunities to access traditional foods, as well as traditional teachings, in our territories, are vital. Given the issue of access for urban Ts'msyen in Vancouver, Shawna's efforts to ensure that her son embodies the teachings of food sovereignty is impressive. Shawna offered the following picture [Figure 10] and narrative to explain why she makes the efforts that she does:

Seeing your community through your own eyes: I've been one of the lucky ones who grew up in the community of Lax Kw'alaams. I take pride knowing that I am Ts'msyen and where I come from. It always brightens up my day knowing that I can still go home to the community where I was raised and that my son has the opportunity to run around, not have a care in the world and do kid things, play at the beach, fish with his baba, his uncles, his cousins. He gets to see the community how I seen it growing up and that I am very grateful for. He can continue to learn about where he comes from and grow up to be proud of being Ts'msyen as well.



Figure 10: Shawna's photo, Lax Kxeen Photovoice Project 2014.

As Shawna noted, she is “one of the lucky ones” who grew up in the village with an explicit land-based pedagogy. Living off the land and maintaining a presence in place is a powerful expression of sovereignty for her family and for other members of our dance group. Others did not grow up in Lax Kw’alaams, but in the main urban locale of Prince Rupert, which is also part of Ts’msyen territory. Those growing up in Prince Rupert have maintained their presence there since moving to Vancouver. Still others like my family have not grown up in Ts’msyen territory at all, instead living our whole lives in Vancouver. The reality for my family and others is that we have only recently begun to reclaim a presence in our homelands. For example, my mother went to university and then worked tirelessly when my brother and I became adults in order to save money to follow her dream of buying our family home in Prince Rupert this past year. This is another expression of sovereignty in the city, demonstrating the self-determination of

especially the women in Ts'msyen society who go above and beyond to maintain and reclaim for their families, and despite the socioeconomic challenges of doing so.

There is an important distinction to make about the way in which sovereignty operates according to a land-based pedagogy, in and outside of Ts'msyen territories. For example, when we host Ts'msyen Day in Vancouver, we are asserting our Ts'msyen-ness, which is an important expression of sovereignty, but the fact is that we are doing so in the territories of other Indigenous nations. We honor and respect this through protocol. The protocol is to ensure that an appropriate representative from one of the Coast Salish peoples is present to welcome us, and to give us permission to conduct sovereignty-based ceremonies and celebrations in their territory. As urban Ts'msyen in Vancouver, we are used to being welcomed by other nations and we take our responsibilities seriously as witnesses to their sovereignty. We are grateful to Coast Salish peoples for allowing us to live, work, learn and celebrate as Ts'msyen peoples in their lands.

In another example, when we attend the All-Native Basketball Tournament (ANBT) in Prince Rupert, we are attending a non-Ts'msyen event that is being held on Ts'msyen territories. More specifically, ANBT is held at the Civic Centre, and the river that runs behind it distinguishes the lands of the Gitgiis and Gitwilgyoots. Annually, over the past 55 years, First Nation villages and communities have taken over the city of Prince Rupert to compete in what is now the largest basketball tournament, Native or non-Native, in BC. My mother and I had our first experience, attending the 2014 ANBT. Each year, a dance group is chosen by the ANBT Committee to open up the weeklong event. The dance group shares their culture and then they sing and drum all of the teams into the gymnasium. However, before any of that begins, the Ts'msyen enact our laws to

bless the floor, welcome everyone in attendance and give permission for the event to occur on Ts'msyen lands. 'Wiiksigoop had this to say about our experience [Figure 11]:



Figure 11: 'Wiiksigoop's photo, Lax Kxeen Photovoice Project 2014.

So this picture is of when I was up at the All Native in Prince Rupert this year. This is when the Haida were performing after the Ts'msyen Elders, Smgigyet and Sigyidmhana'a were welcoming everybody. I was born in Prince Rupert and I'm from Lax Kw'alaams, but I lived here since I was 6 months old. So in all that time, I've never been around seeing our own people welcome people into our territory. Like, it's always been here and hearing other people. So to be sitting there and watching that was so amazing! And, you know, when I went home there was something, and then when Robin was doing her stuff in the village, or eating fish eyes, or whatever—like all these little significant things were significant, but this was huge! To be sitting there, and all these people, and all the noise they were making, I was just like, wow, that's amazing to be in my homeland, and to see my Elders welcoming people. Whereas I have never seen that in my life, right? And it was in another urban setting, you know, so it was quite awesome!

This particular expression of sovereignty at the ANBT was very meaningful to my mother because it took place in our territories, and in the city—something that neither of us had experienced in our lifetimes. After this picture and narrative were shared during our dialogue, Christine followed with an observation about the way in which sovereignty

was expressed in that particular setting. She was at the tournament as well, and she asked me, *“do you notice there is a place for everyone to stand? You can’t stand in front of the biggest chief.”* There are intricate levels of protocol when it comes to asserting Ts’msyen sovereignty. Whose lands are we on, what is your Tribe or House, what is your rank, have you Feasted, who is next in line, etc.—basically, where does one stand, and what are their rights. This is all considered within every context that our Tribal leaders find themselves in. For instance, during the protocol at the ANBT, the representative for the Gitgiis—the “biggest chief” present—led the procession, with the representative for the Gitwilgyoots following next, and then other Ts’msyen Tribal leaders behind them, all according to a series of important socio-cultural prerequisites. Christine witnessed our Smgigyet discussing these prerequisites before they entered the floor: *“I thought it was really interesting how they corrected each other. And not in a bad way, they just kind of said, this is how we go in, and this is why, and this is what we’re doing.”*

The ways in which Ts’msyen express our sovereignty through the dance group and the ways in which sovereignty is expressed at the ANBT came together in February of 2015 when we opened the tournament for the first time in its history. Christine advocated for and secured support from the Lax Kw’alaams band council to help fund our trip, and they ensured that our Tribal leaders from Lax Kw’alaams were present for the opening protocol. We were extremely proud to sing and dance alongside our Tribal leaders who welcomed visitors into our territories. Opening the tournament was also symbolic because the Ts’msyen place name for Prince Rupert is Lax Kxeen—our dance group’s namesake. For these reasons, our participation in the 2015 ANBT represented the most powerful expression of sovereignty in the city for our dance group to date.

G. The Politics of Reclaiming

Throughout this study, my research partners have identified both the challenges and the rewards of reclamation work from a critical Ts'msyen standpoint. As a cultural project, "our decision to reclaim our Indigenous knowledges can begin with a single moment, a thought, or a particular social challenge" (Wane 2013:94). For example, reclaiming a distinct Ts'msyen subjectivity is a priority because of our experiences with structured dispossession, but it has been particularly challenging for those who are under the age of 60; for those who have grown up outside of Ts'msyen territories; for those who have grown up in the child welfare system; for those who are residential school survivors; for those who live with the intergenerational legacies associated with the residential schools; for those whose parents died at a young age; and for those who have had limited community connections. The harsh reality for my research partners is that every one of them have experienced all, or a combination, of the aforementioned systemic obstacles when they first began the journey to reclaim their Ts'msyen-ness. This reality is compounded by the fact that the majority of us have multiple cultural identities beyond being Ts'msyen—individually, we also represent, and have responsibilities to, other First Nations such as the Haida, Haisla, Nisga'a, Gitksan, Kwakwaka'wakw, Heiltsuk, Dene and Mikisew Cree, for example. Ts'msyen not only have a long history of inter-tribal marriage, but we also have vast extended kinship networks established through the experiences of dislocation and urbanization, and through formal and informal cultural adoptions. Yet despite these realities, my research partners have both articulated and demonstrated that the rewards outweigh the challenges when it comes to maintaining and reclaiming a distinct Ts'msyen subjectivity for themselves, their families and our Nation.

During our dialogues, members of our dance group identified that the myriad systemic challenges that we have faced are primarily derived from the policies and laws of the *Indian Act* (1876), which sought to extinguish the distinctiveness of tribal sovereignty and to absorb us into a homogenizing paradigm of Indian-ness vis-à-vis the Canadian state. Because the state framed the relationship between Canada and various tribal Nations as a generic “Indian problem,” Canadian people and institutions dealt with us on these terms, and as a result peoples with distinct tribal identities were forced to also appropriate a generic Indigenous subjectivity in order to mediate the threats associated with the Indian Act and other discourses and technologies of settler colonialism. As Susan Dion and Angela Salamanca (2014:167) note, “Indigenous people construct identities within a social-political-historical context, the world acts on us, and we act on it.” This describes how Ts’msyen respond to the post-confederation pressures of maintaining the distinctiveness of our tribal identities, while at the same time relying on the sociopolitical solidarity that has emerged from our shared history as Indigenous peoples.

Quechua scholar Sandy Grande (2004) describes this as a poetic and political survivance strategy wherein Indigenous peoples are compelled to adopt a dual approach of “border patrolling” and “border crossing.” The fact that Indigenous subjectivity is under-theorized at this interface indicates to Grande (2004:118) that there is a “...dire need to develop a language that operates at the crossroads of unity and difference that defines this space in terms of political mobilization *and* cultural authenticity, expressing both the interdependence and distinctiveness as tribal peoples.” Such a language—or what Grande describes as the theories and praxis underscoring a “Red pedagogy”—

would challenge any attempt to construct Indigenous identity utilizing dominant theories of personhood, education or democracy. By determining that our research question guiding the Photovoice dialogue would be, “what does it mean to be Ts’msyen,” my research partners set themselves up to enact a focused Red pedagogy, to think of their identities beyond a legal or political definition constructed by the state, to engage in critical consciousness, and to name their experiences through acts of transgression (Grande 2004:4-5). In doing so, we created the necessary space to theorize Ts’msyen subjectivity in the context of decolonization:

While dominant scholarship might push aside methods such as autoethnography or traditional storytelling as not rigorous enough or as ‘identity politics’, the experiences of those who live out decolonization are integral to the integrity of the movement, grounding it to the material realities of the people whose lives bear the scars of colonialism and the long histories of resistance and triumph. There is a reason that many of the insurgent Indigenous movements around the globe have been sustained by poets, musicians, and artists (Sium and Ritskes 2013:III).

For example, my brother Musii’n has taken a personal journey to reclaim the integrity of our Ts’msyen ways of knowing, being and doing through a land-based pedagogy that he expresses through carving, design and materiality. During the Photovoice dialogue, Musii’n critically analyzed his journey as a Ts’msyen artist. His perspective was very important because carvers are highly regarded in our society, and they are critical actors of Ts’msyen resurgence. While adopting a generic Indigenous subjectivity is useful for the practical survival strategies of Indigenous peoples writ large, it has its limitations in terms of reclaiming and asserting Ts’msyen-ness. Musii’n offered the following photo [Figure 12] and narrative to elaborate on this:



Figure 12: Musii'n's photo, Lax Kxeen Photovoice Project 2014.

So this picture, it kind of encompasses me I think—I wouldn't quite say fully, but it encompasses so much of me doing Ts'msyen carving, and carrying it on. It's kind of just showing my hands, and the tools that I use, and the wood, and the design. So, it's so much of my day, so much of my life, and it's so much of what takes over in my brain space. It's kind of, yeah, showing what being Ts'msyen means to me. It's the carving. Because, like, I still love to dance and I still love to sing, I still love to study up on our culture and our stories and everything; but when it all comes down to it, it all boils down to me carving and doing our style. And it wasn't always that way. I had to go through a long process to really understand and appreciate our style of carving. I thought carving was just carving, and I used to do a melting pot of different styles from the northwest coast art back in the day, when I didn't really think it was that important to do what I, well, what's in my blood, as opposed to what's popular, what everyone else is doing, or what I see that looks cool. So I used to do this kind of a mix of styles, or try different styles here and there, because I didn't know how to do Ts'msyen style. So when I finally kind of started really taking that next step, and taking the leap to become a bit more brave to give it a shot—because it was so difficult—that's when I found myself to be the most proud of being Ts'msyen than I ever have. And I had a lot of great experiences with dancing and singing and carving and meeting a lot of people, but when I first started to do our style and really appreciate the difficulty and beauty behind our art, that's when I really, really, turned a corner in my life and understood what it's like to be, or at least proud to

be, Ts'msyen. So, after that, it kind of fueled a lot of study for myself on our culture and our protocols and our systems, and the more I studied the more it really felt like this was what I was meant to be; or at least just the way I am as a person, because I throw myself into my art so much that some times I kind of leave a lot of my family and friends behind, like I don't really see a lot of people because I'm too involved in my art. And when I further studied on what artists had to do, when I studied on carvers, and what their role is in the culture in our society, was, like, back in the day, they were almost like a secret society in a kind of way. They were the ones to do the carvings and the masks, and their names meant to be behind the screen, and it was they're always in the background, always kind of setting everything up, making sure all the dances went great and making sure that everything went good behind the scenes—just making the magic happen. That's what it always felt like I was. And just carrying on the art, as well, because there's not many of us, with the Ts'msyen from Lax Kw'alaams; there are not very many artists, or very many artists that do our style. And that's the thing that means most to me. I want to carry it on, and pass it on, hopefully.

The limitations of a generic Indigenous subjectivity are clear in Musii'n's narrative. In reclaiming his Ts'msyen-ness, Musii'n realized that his purpose was not to be just an artist, or an Indigenous artist for that matter; he was meant to be a Ts'msyen artist, taking responsibility for what's in his "blood," his ancestry. Given the centrality of in/tangible cultural heritage for the perpetuation of Ts'msyen cultural practices and cultural knowledge, my brother's shift has not only benefited him and our family, but also our dance group, our House, our Tribe, our village and our nation. As a Ts'msyen artist, Musii'n has helped to sustain a Ts'msyen-specific "insurgent Indigenous movement"—or a *Ts'msyen Revolution*—similar to how Christine has helped the movement with her gift of song composition. Musii'n has created in/tangible cultural expressions such as masks, designs, regalia, and funerary material, for example, for our family, for Smgigyet from the Nine Allied Tribes, for various members of our dance group, and for the dance group in our village. These cultural expressions have helped our Ts'msyen brothers and sisters to assert their Ts'msyen-ness through song and dance, through hereditary roles and through mourning processes, for example. Furthermore, The

relationship between carvers and composers is a historical relationship meant to benefit the people. For this reason alone, Musii'n and Christine are integral to the Ts'msyen revolution—and it is no wonder why both of them are well respected for their contributions throughout the Ts'msyen diaspora, and amongst the northwest coast region for that matter. I have been assured from my engagement in many communities throughout British Columbia that people recognize and appreciate Musii'n and Christine's innate and inherent aptitude for cultural expression, leadership, integrity, generosity and, most importantly, humility.

In fact, humility is the primary tenet because one cannot afford to be selfish, egotistical or “all-knowing” if one is truly invested in the ethos of decolonization. It is vital that one critically analyzes where one has come from, and therefore where their knowledge comes from. In this regard, it is important to note that Ts'msyen knowledge systems do not, and have not, only intersected with Western knowledge systems; long before the arrival of Europeans to our territories, our culture and society intersected with other Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. Thus, contrary to popular opinion, Ts'msyen do not rely on the colonial archive of the west in order to make sense of our past. That is but one piece of the colonial puzzle. Rather, Ts'msyen and other Indigenous peoples throughout the northwest mostly rely on their established relationships with one another when it comes to reclamation. During our Photovoice dialogue, Christine offered a picture [not included here] and the following narrative to further articulate how established relationships help us to navigate reclamation in the contemporary era.

So the picture that I chose is about [our friend who] invited our young people, younger guys, so they can hear part of their history by really trying to get them to be curious about their own history. And some of the songs he shared with us that day were Lax Kw'alaams songs, like, there were two of them, I believe, and he

sang them for us. And he danced the way that he was taught by this old fella that taught him all of this information. He said, “we learned how to dance those headdresses, and they came from Lax Kw’alaams.” And so he said that the headdress, and the ways that they dance—they keep their knees together and their ankles together—was all from Lax Kw’alaams. So I thought that was really interesting. He got me up and somebody else up to dance it so that I’m not just watching, I’m experiencing it for myself; the way he was taught. So I thought it was really interesting to learn all of that. And that this is very symbolic of what we kind of have to go through in the urban setting. Because you have Kwakwaka’wakw, you have Nisga’a, you have Ts’msyen, you have Haida, all in the one picture, and our culture has gone down to that for everybody; there’s a couple of leaders that have come up trying to get those songs back, but we all help each other out, right? And that’s how I felt about that day as we were all helping each other out. It’s not like one person had all this knowledge; we all kind of had little bits and pieces to add to it. And even the words, like, he was singing the words, and he said, oh Ts’msyen and Nisga’a are so close, we were trying to figure out what the wording was for it. So, that’s why I chose that one. And how does this picture relate to Ts’msyen people? I think in our urban context it relates because we’re all trying to help each other out and we’re all learning from each other and that’s where kind of the knowledge comes from—it’s, we all have a little bit. And the problems and strengths that this picture brings up is I think the difficulty is that not many of our people have all the knowledge like [he] has in his community, right? I’d love for someone, and hopefully that’s what this work is doing, is to say oh I have this song and I know that these are the words, and this is where it comes from, so I would love for us to be there one day, where we can recite it like that, be able to talk about the story and the history of that song, ‘cause I know it’s out there. So that’s kind of what we’re doing about it—is the dance group and teaching Vanessa’s generation age where it’s just a part of who they are. I know our generation, and probably your generation, it wasn’t just a part of who you are. Now in our next generation, this is just a part of who they are. It’s engrained in them from a young age.

The politics of reclamation require that Ts’msyen conduct an incredible amount of research to study the archaeology of knowledge grounded in a Ts’msyen socio-historic context—not only to discover what has been generated, but also what’s missing. This is precisely why my research partners have not relied on the colonial archive of the west in their studies; the corpus, as Nakata (2007:7) prefers to call it, is known by Ts’msyen to be a limiting, “body of knowledge, both historical and ongoing, that is produced by others “about us” across a range of intellectual, government and historical texts.” Yet my

research partners also acknowledge that adopting the cultural knowledge of other peoples is akin to adopting a generic Indigenous subjectivity—it only gets you so far. Hence why a baseline epistemology is critical for Ts'msyen as we attempt to navigate the politics of reclamation in the contemporary era. It is the only way to make sense of the multi-vocal and multi-sensory representations of Ts'msyen-ness that circulate within and between public and private domains.

CHAPTER 6

WEAVING SITES OF KNOWLEDGE

A. Chilkat Weaving: A Ts'msyen Research Paradigm

During the course of my dissertation research, I was humbled to experience my first teachings in the Ts'msyen style of Chilkat weaving from master weaver Ts'maaymban (William White, Ganhada, Waap Lugiisgagyo, Gitwilgyoots). It is important to note, however, that I was not afforded this privilege because of my role as a researcher. Ts'maaymban agreed to be my teacher because of my lineage, and because I expressed a sense of responsibility as a Ts'msyen *hana'ax* to help maintain and reclaim our ways of knowing, being and doing *with, by and for our people*. Chilkat weaving is not a hobby. It requires a long-term commitment, and it comes with particular responsibilities to our culture. For these reasons, we decided that I would not have enough time to immerse myself in his teachings until I finished my doctorate. Yet he was generous enough to begin sharing his extensive knowledge with me, and to propel me on my learning journey. In retrospect, Chilkat weaving is a culturally appropriate paradigm to help me account for the Ts'msyen-specific research that I experienced, and it was the only framework that made sense to help me analyze Ts'msyen reclamation-in-process.

Chilkat weaving originates with the Ts'msyen, but much of the knowledge and praxis of Chilkat went into abeyance during the height of settler colonialism in our territories. Ts'maaymban carries out an important role as a weaver within the Ts'msyen Nation. He is responsible for reclaiming and maintaining the Chilkat weaving tradition for our people. His journey to Chilkat weaving began over thirty years ago when he was first chosen by his aunty Betty Sampson to become her apprentice in basket weaving. His

teachings from her began while at their family's seaweed camp. He continued to weave baskets following his aunty Betty's teachings, until a series of *nax nox* (supernatural) encounters led him to follow his path to become a mostly self-taught Ts'msyen Chilkat weaver and teacher. Ts'maaymban is spiritually connected to Chilkat teachings and he has lived his life as a weaver following Ts'msyen Ayaawx—he understands that with his gifts and rights to the higher knowledge of Chilkat, there are also responsibilities.

I have learned from Ts'maaymban that Chilkat weaving is a time consuming labor of love. For example, a master weaver like himself will spend, at the very least, a year's worth of long workdays to produce a single Chilkat robe. Even a small pendant or a bag takes an exorbitant amount of time and attention for a Chilkat weaver to execute. Again, Chilkat weaving is not a hobby. When Ts'maaymban agreed to take me on as his next student, he introduced me to his current and only Ts'msyen apprentice, Pearl Innes. We talked about what it means to be a weaver, and why Chilkat weaving in the Ts'msyen way is important. In that conversation, Ts'maaymban and Pearl shared the respective dreams that they had which led them to weaving Chilkat full time, and both of them expressed a great deal of humility in knowing that Chilkat weaving was what they were meant to do—they were meant to study, to research, to nurture and build relationships, to teach, to communicate our Ayaawx through Ts'msyen materiality, to give back to Ts'msyen people, and to support cultural maintenance and reclamation efforts. They taught me that Chilkat weaving is a quest for higher knowledge, and it needs multiple processes to come together in a culturally appropriate way in order to achieve a desired outcome. As an expression of our Ayaawx and of our land-based pedagogy, Chilkat weaving is a statement of our sovereignty and of our history, and it communicates our

persistence as Ts'msyen peoples across time, space and contact. This is why Ts'maaymban wove a Chilkat robe for his Smooygit, why he has dressed people in regalia, why he is dedicated to being a teacher and why he publicly wove a Chilkat robe for the exhibit *My Ancestors Are Still Dancing* at the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology. Chilkat weavers are researchers, teachers and philosophers in our culture. A sense of purpose, and a series of in/tangible experiences and relationships, are what leads one to take on the responsibility to weave, and which guides the weaver throughout the processes of gaining, interpreting, communicating and teaching the specialized knowledge that characterizes its pedagogy and philosophy⁷.

Indeed, Chilkat weaving requires a specific type of knowledge. In my use of the Chilkat weaving paradigm, I am in no way attempting to make a direct comparison between Indigenous research and Chilkat weaving, nor am I advocating for others to use this paradigm for any varied reason. I discussed this with Ts'maaymban and Pearl to make sure that I would not wrongfully appropriate Chilkat teachings by making a symbolic comparison in terms of paradigm and process. Aware of how I have followed our cultural protocols, and of how this dissertation research has unfolded, both Ts'maaymban and Pearl agreed that the purpose and processes of Chilkat weaving in the Ts'msyen way, and of doing this type of research with, by and for Ts'msyen are similar in terms of paradigm. Indigenous research paradigms reflect an ethos of *relational accountability* to the cosmos, to knowledge, to peoples, processes and purpose, and they have four inter-related philosophical components: "the ontology and epistemology are based upon a process of relationships that form a mutual reality. The axiology and

⁷ See the film *Gwishalaayt: The Spirit Wraps Around You* (Barb Cranmer, 2002, 47 min).

methodology are based upon maintaining accountability to these relationships” (Wilson 2008:70-71). I was assured that Chilkat weaving is an Indigenous research paradigm and so was the community-based reclamation work presented in this dissertation. For example, a Ts’msyen weaver must acquire and interpret knowledge that comes from multiple directions, and then apply and communicate that knowledge responsibly so that the desired outcome reflects our Ts’msyen ways of knowing, being and doing. Integral components that reflect our Ts’msyen-ness have to come together in a meaningful way, through protocol, so that the intended purpose of Chilkat can be realized. As a Ts’msyen researcher in this context, I found myself having to go through a similar process in my quest for relational accountability and higher knowledge. I had the responsibility to gather, interpret, apply and communicate knowledge in a culturally appropriate way, and integral components had to come together in order to achieve a desired outcome.

The notion that integral components must come together in a meaningful way is clear to me in the following comparison between the paradigm of Chilkat weaving and the paradigm of Ts’msyen research that I experienced. For example, just as the ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology of this research were inseparable, the knowledge, the processes, the warp and the weft are inseparable in Chilkat weaving. They both might entail a series of separate embodied elements to achieve the desired outcome, but the elements in each case are inter-related in terms of purpose. As another example, when I had my first embodied lessons from Ts’maaymban, I first prepared the wool and cedar as he shared oral history teachings with me. I then thigh spun two pieces of wool with a single strand of cedar to achieve a tightly spliced, and thin piece of warp. I learned that this processes was *the Ts’msyen way*, and it therefore represented a Ts’msyen

specific ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. Through Chilkat weaving, a Ts'msyen research paradigm is employed in the gaining of specialized knowledge, in the preparation of the materials to spin the warp, and in learning how to weave the weft over, under and across the warp using a Ts'msyen specific formline and design. All of this is ultimately to communicate specialized knowledge based on Ts'msyen sensibilities. Likewise, in this dissertation research, I employed a Ts'msyen specific Indigenous research paradigm so that I could unite processes and sites of knowledge in a culturally appropriate way, work towards a desired outcome that reflects our Ayaawx, and communicate a meta-analysis of process according to Ts'msyen sensibilities.

B. Making Sense of Process

As I originally set out to write this meta-analysis of the poetics and politics of reclaiming from a critical Ts'msyen standpoint, I struggled to locate a single analytical framework that could help me make sense of all that I had witnessed and experienced in the research process, and in a culturally appropriate way. The Ts'msyen Chilkat weaving paradigm that I learned from my teacher Ts'maaymban and Pearl seemed to me the only way to make sense of Ts'msyen reclamation processes. It also made sense to me because it helps me to highlight the concepts of relational accountability (Wilson 2008) and research with, by and for Indigenous peoples (Atalay 2012) in a Ts'msyen context. Furthermore, Chilkat weaving is an appropriate metaphor when it comes to the task of weaving sites of knowledge from this community-based research in a holistic manner:

Rather than a multivocal model in which a cacophony of voices can emanate from numerous, unspecified locations, and focused in no specific direction, a model of “braiding knowledge” brings distinct forms of knowledge together. Research partners engage in situated weaving to create complex histories that are grounded in specific locations (Atalay 2012:207).

In this section, I will weave sites of knowledge from my engagement with Ts'msyen to show how a Ts'msyen research paradigm developed on the ground, how the methods I used properly reflected Ts'msyen ways of knowing, being and doing and how the principles of relational accountability have been key to Ts'msyen modes of resurgence.

During the course of this dissertation research, I have developed many new relationships and I have strengthened existing ones. I have surrendered any ego to let the research grow organically, always in response to community guidance at every step of the way. There was an iterative process embedded in each of the listening gatherings, translations workshops, talking circles and Photovoice methods that we employed across the two case studies so that my research partners were contributing to the analysis of data in motion. We prayed before our work, we opened the floor for oratory and protocol and we shared food with one another. We created a safe space for people to speak freely with the understanding that their knowledge would not be mis-used for profit, that they are the rightful owners of their knowledge, and that I have a responsibility to care for what they share with me in the research process. Much of the knowledge was derived not from inundating my people with questions, but by employing the Ts'msyen concept of *amuks'm* (listening), and by developing relationships, socializing and dialogue.

People opened up their homes to me—whereas I paid to stay at the Knotts Landing Bed and Breakfast owned by Eddie and Karen Knott during the first year of my stays in the village, I have since been given “my own” room at Doris Dennis (Ganhada, Waap Łuum, Gitgiis) and her husband Sagipaayk's house for whenever I am in Lax Kw'alaams. We have developed strong bonds through our familial connections and shared interests in reclamation. Sagipaayk, of course, became a primary actor in our

repatriation case study, but Doris has participated almost every step of the way as well, and her and I have a shared interest in helping our communities to heal from the legacies of the IRSS, and helping to reclaim our kids from the child welfare system. They always assure me that their door is always open to family. It is humbling to be considered family and I value our relationships. Many other people in the village were also very generous, kind and hospitable during my visits in Lax Kw'alaams. They fed me and they looked out for me whenever I was visiting. My people gave me many gifts, including friendship and extensive knowledge, but they also gave me tangible stuff for my personal enjoyment like our traditional foods. Since my homecoming to the village, I have developed an especially strong bond with one of Lax Kw'alaams most cherished Elders, Da gan gwadood (Rita Hayward, Laxgibuu, Waap Walsk, Gitgiis). She is very caring, she has taken on the role of foster parent numerous times in her life, and she has a long history of teaching and nurturing our children in the village schools and churches. She is also a pillar of the community who taught many people in Christine's generation how to sing and dance in the Ts'msyen way during a critical time of resurgence in Lax Kw'alaams. I cherish the relationship that Da gan gwadood and I share, and our bond keeps growing. During one of my visits to Lax Kw'alaams in the spring of 2014, Da gan gwadood gave me a bentwood box that was made by her late grandmother, Lucy Hayward (1878-1982). Her *dzi'is* made it in the late 1800s in the village. It was an astonishing and humbling transfer of rights that Da gan gwadood made to me, but it is important to note that she only did this because she has no living descendants or immediate relatives in Lax Kw'alaams. It was a gesture of trust that she had in our relationship—we consider each other family and we honor that distinction. I would never sell this bentwood box or put it

in a museum in order to profit from it. Instead. I will always care for this box and I will be responsible by keeping her family's history and heritage, and our relationship, alive.

As I engaged my people in the research process, I also made sure to give back as much as I could by sharing my knowledge and skills; using my own resources to get the work done; providing food whenever I asked to gather people; financially compensating my research partners throughout the translation workshop series for sharing their knowledge, and offering their invaluable expertise; and by showing my gratitude in practical ways like lending a hand to anybody that I meet, supporting fundraisers, or by making contributions to families who were in mourning. By building and maintaining relationships, keeping lines of communication open, acting respectfully, and handling knowledge ethically, I have often been assured by my research partners that they feel a sense of ownership in this process, and that they trust that the relationships that we have built, and the progress that we have made in response to our unique needs, priorities and values, will continue to benefit each of us and our communities into the future.

It was very important that I collaborated with representatives from the Four Clans, the Nine Allied Tribes and multiple House Groups. It was vital that our Chiefs, Matriarchs, Speakers and Elders were respected as our political and legal authorities. Likewise, it was important that I respectfully engaged the inter-generational communities of Ts'msyen that I worked with in and outside of our territories. It was necessary that I introduced my lineage whenever I met people so that they could determine where I stood within the Ts'msyen sovereignty structure, and so that they could achieve a sense of relational accountability with me. It was significant that I consistently communicated any hopes, goals, intentions or expectations that I had in the research process, even if it

seemed redundant at times. Furthermore, as I analyzed the processes associated with reclamation for my people, I made sure to discuss my thinking with them, and to provide the context for the scope of my thinking before asking if it coincided with what they had also observed and analyzed. I humbly asked a few key research partners at each of the three locations where this research took place to keep me accountable to the entirety of the research process—they make up my Community Advisory Committee, which is similar to the role that my PhD Dissertation Committee assumes. My Community Advisors are Sagipaayk (Tom Dennis, Ganhada, Smooygit, Waap Sagipaayk, Gispaxlo'ots) in Lax Kw'alaams; Joanne Finlay (Mosgm Gyaax, Sigidmhana'a, Ganhada, Waap Lugiisgagyoo, Gitwilgyoots) in Prince Rupert; and Christine Martin (Ganhada, Waap Aldm lxah, Gitwilgyoots), and my mother, 'Wiiksigoop (Lynda Gray, Sigidmhana'a, Gisbutwada, Waap Liyaa'mlaxha, Gitaxangiik), in Vancouver. Each of them have been involved in one or more aspects of this research, they are community-identified leaders who have agreed to read my works in progress, and they are people who are normally consulted on ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological related matters. My mother also helps me to keep me accountable to my family. However, they are not the only ones who have read my works or who I've discussed paradigm with. Whoever has been involved in the research process, and whoever has been referenced or directly quoted in this dissertation have also been consulted, and they have also had the opportunity to read chapter drafts as well.

Even when challenges abound such as the issue of youth engagement or sustaining community participation, my research partners and I have responded in encouraging ways. Awareness and engagement have always been our priorities in terms

of connecting our communities across time and space, gaining momentum in the research process and making sure that our people actually benefit from our work. For instance, in October 2014 I had the privilege of entering the sacred space of our high school students at the Coast Tsimshian Academy (CTA) in Lax Kw'alaams. The principles and the teachers at the school came to know who I was, and they became familiar with our repatriation case study through my consistent presence in the village, and through Sagipaayk who is the Sm'algyax teacher at the school. One day Sagipaayk called me to inform me that some of the teachers wanted to invite me to share my personal story with their students, and to talk about repatriating Ts'msyen cultural heritage. I immediately agreed because I have always been dedicated to supporting youth. Furthermore, it also seemed appropriate to accept the invitation given that we had not yet engaged enough young people in the repatriation case study. As I anticipated, I thoroughly valued my experience hanging out with our young people and supporting their teachers. Indigenous youth have taught me so much throughout my life, and the students at the Coast Tsimshian Academy were no exception.

I spent a whole day at the school helping to instruct a lesson plan with eighth, ninth and tenth graders based on our own repatriation case study, plus the four case studies of First Nations repatriation in the publication *Returning the Past: Repatriation of First Nation Cultural Property* which was published by the UBC Museum of Anthropology (Baird, Solanki and Askren: 2008). During our time together, some of the students uttered their Clan, Tribe or House affiliations, some of them asserted their Ts'msyen names, some of them shared their personal interests and goals, and some of them vocalized that repatriation was important to them. Towards the end of the second

day, a few of the young ladies caught my attention during their study period, and they called me over to them with excited looks on their face. They said, “*We want to sing some songs for you!*” I was humbled by that, and expressed to them that I was excited to hear their songs, but out of respect for their teachers they had to finish their work first. Their teachers responded positively, freeing up the remaining 20 minutes of classwork so that they could sing together. These young people sang three songs that my dance group also sings in Vancouver, so when they struggled to find someone to lead the drumming with the only drum they could find at the moment, I was glad to drum for them. We were instantly connected in that moment, because they realized that I knew their songs, too. It also represented another opportunity to discuss the history of our songs, and the important role of singing and dancing in our communities today. They sang our songs with enthusiasm and they encouraged every other young person in the room to join in, which they did. By the second song, teachers and students from other classrooms began flowing into the space where we were singing to witness and join in on the moment. It was a joyous experience for me to participate in and to witness. I am grateful to the students for that memory. Since that visit, I played with one of the students on the Lax Kw’alaams Ladies Basketball team at the 2015 All Native Basketball Tournament, and the female students who initiated and led the singing of our songs during that first visit, also sang and danced with me when our dance group in Vancouver, Lax Kxeen, led the sharing of Ts’msyen culture for the opening ceremonies. I often see many of the young people from my first visit when I return to Lax Kw’alaams or to Prince Rupert and I always make sure to acknowledge them, and try to talk with them, when I get the chance.

I also made a research poster that meets both academic and community goals, titled “Ts’msyen Ayaawx as Access and Control of Ts’msyen Cultural Heritage.” The poster was prepared for the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) Fall Gathering in November 2014 as one of my contributions to the international and inter-disciplinary project that has funded my dissertation research in the years 2013 and 2014. After the Fall Gathering—over the Christmas break of 2014—I sent the poster that I created to one of my primary research partners, Sagipaayk. He immediately put the poster up in the post office where most people in the community will have access to see it. The poster will also be displayed at various community locations in Lax Kw’alaams such as the community center, the high school and the health center. When I spoke with Sagipaayk after the poster had been up in the post office for a few days, he mentioned that some folks in the village asked him something to the effects of, “*hey, how come I didn’t know about this?*” He and I contemplated why people didn’t know what we were doing given the fact that we had been communicating to the village about our work over a two-year time period. This reality taught us that perhaps our previous attempts were not sufficient. But more importantly, it taught us that we could do something about it and reach more people with increased public awareness strategies. There’s only one post office, one high school, and one community center in the village, so it makes sense that we treat these places as important sites of engagement. For us, anticipating and responding to any challenges in the research process has always been mediated by an ethics of engagement, access to information and community mobilization.

Throughout the research process and beyond, I have worked with Ts’msyen to achieve higher knowledge and relational accountability. We employed a Ts’msyen-

specific research paradigm as we collaboratively explored the motivations, possibilities and obstacles associated with Ts'msyen reclamation in the contemporary era. Although our community-based activism is an example of an Indigenous research paradigm, and although I have employed familiar academic research methods, they were uniquely Ts'msyen because they were shaped by the cultural protocols and laws derived from our Ayaawx—our governing precedent and our ways of knowing, being and doing. One of the key findings from our work is that we do not alter the Ayaawx, we only apply it to changing contexts; or, in the words of Elder and Galdmalgyax, SkyLaas, "*Ayaawx does not change...you cannot change it...it will never disappear,*" it is the driving spirit that we inherit as Ts'msyen. And just like the Ayaawx will never disappear, neither will Ts'msyen. All of the examples of process described in this dissertation represent how an Indigenous research paradigm in a Ts'msyen context must be based on our Ayaawx in order for it to accurately reflect research that is with, by and for Ts'msyen. Likewise, the Ayaawx has guided our analyses to meaningfully respond to our unique needs, priorities and values. To return to the Chilkat analogy—just as the strands of the warp must be spliced together in a meaningful way to achieve a desired outcome that is Ts'msyen specific, the same was true for this research. Peoples, processes, relationships, knowledge and resources had to come together, and have to come together, to achieve our desired goals. The central goals of our community-based research and activism have been to: (1) assert our inherent sovereignty according to Ts'msyen sensibilities, (2) explore the contemporary landscape of reclamation, (3) unravel settler colonial techniques of structured dispossession, and (4) work towards the repatriation of the captured cultural heritage of the Nine Allied Tribes.

C. On Resurgence

In this dissertation, I focus primarily on analyzing and communicating what I have learned from my people from a strength-based perspective. This is because the majority of the research that has been produced about Indigenous life in general has been deficit-based, or “damage-centered,” often representing Indigenous peoples in pathologizing ways by focusing on what we don’t have, and why we need intervention or reparation as part of the liberal democratic project (Tuck 2009). Within a damage-centered research and representation framework, there is no theoretical or methodological space for Indigenous sovereignty, survivance or resurgence (Tuck 2009). For instance, Indigenous peoples are not typically respected, even at the level of text, never mind at the level of geo-politics, as possessing ‘true’ sovereignty. Indigenous sovereignty is very real, yet treated as an illusion, an after-thought, “merely gestured to—and in some instances vilified” (Simpson 2011:210). Indigenous sovereignty is,

...the sign that is attached to robust Indigeneities that move through reservations and urban locales, persistent and insistent “survivals” (descendants of treaty signatories, descendants of the historically recognized, as well as the unrecognized, in collective and individual form) that are nightmarish for the settler state, as they call up both the impermanence of state boundaries and the precarious claims to sovereignty enjoyed by liberal democracies (Simpson 2011:211).

In response to the specificity of Indigenous goals for decolonization (Tuck & Yang 2012), we need “...a framework that accounts for and forwards our sovereignty...” (Tuck 2009:423). It was thus important that I not only investigated the motivations and possibilities associated with Ts’msyen reclamation, but also the obstacles. If I had focused solely on the motivations and possibilities, I would have run the risk of romanticizing Ts’msyen experiences. Likewise, if I had focused solely on the obstacles, I

would have run the risk of narrowly analyzing or proposing solutions based on recognition-based models of liberal pluralism (Coulthard 2007, 2009, 2014; Simpson 2011, 2014; Tuck 2009). Examining the obstacles in relation to the motivations, and proposing solutions based on the possibilities, is critical. Utilizing decolonizing and culturally appropriate modes of analysis, I have tried to illuminate the specificity of the Ts'msyen experience within, against and beyond the settler colonial condition, and from strength based perspectives. This approach has also aided in my meta-analysis of Ts'msyen reclamation-in-process because it compels a focused critique of the challenges posed by the settler-colonial past, and it warrants the creation of alternatives to the settler-colonial present. The interrelated dance group and repatriation case studies have proven to be important sites from which to analyze the experiences of Ts'msyen who are attempting to deal with the settler colonial present based on an ethos of survivance (Vizenor 1994, 1998). What I have witnessed was not a quest to reclaim culture per se, but an ongoing process of maintaining what we have; resisting colonial dispossession in all its forms; and reclaiming all that has been illegally or unethically taken from us.

Based on my evaluations, many Ts'msyen (my research partners, including my family and Ts'msyen whom I have consulted outside of this research) have exhibited what Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014:159) describes as a “resurgent Indigenous politics” in many ways: “Indigenous resurgence is at its core a *prefigurative* politics—the methods of decolonization prefigure its aims” [original emphasis]. In the concluding chapter of his book, *Red Skin White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Coulthard (2014:165-179) offers “Five Theses on Indigenous Resurgence” based on lessons learned from the grassroots Idle No More Movement that began in

response to more recent unilateral decision making by the Canadian government over Indigenous lands and life. The five theses of Indigenous resurgence that Coulthard outlines in his book have proven to be useful analytical tools for thinking about the poetics and politics of reclaiming for Ts'msyen under the settler colonial condition today.

The first thesis, 'On the Necessity of Direct Action,' states that while there is a double standard applied to Indigenous peoples when they protest in ways that disrupt the economic flow of settler-society, it is necessary that Indigenous peoples continue to persist in order to defend our sovereignty and our lands from ongoing settler encroachment and exploitation. Coulthard suggests that Indigenous grassroots blockades represent a *negation* of settler society since they impact the capitalist economy by stymieing the flow of resources that are extracted from Indigenous lands, while they are also an *affirmation* because Indigenous presence and protest index an embodied enactment of Indigenous laws and obligations to defend Indigenous sovereignty. While Ts'msyen from Lax Kw'alaams have participated in Indigenous social movements beginning with the historic Native Brotherhood all the way through the American Indian Movement, Native Youth Movement, the Ts'msyen Guardians and the contemporary Idle No More Movement, as a collective we are not currently participating in direct action against the LNG industry in our territories, for example. The LNG industry and the provincial and federal governments continue to be in collusion to expropriate all of the natural resources from our territories by any means necessary, and to dilute our sovereign authority as Ts'msyen in the process. Thus, for the sake of Indigenous resurgence it will be important that Ts'msyen communities are willing to defend our lands and our sovereignty wherever and however necessary.

Ts'msyen from Lax Kw'alaams are in a perpetual state of neo-colonial entrapment because our lands, and especially our waterways, are now viewed as prime locations for shale fracking, liquefied natural gas processing, and gas pipeline transportation. It is important to note here that in May 2015, many of my research partners attended membership meetings in Lax Kw'alaams, Prince Rupert and Vancouver, and they took action to unanimously vote to reject the Petronas funded Pacific Northwest LNG project proposal that seeks to develop a terminal on Lelu Island. But even though we voted *ayn* (no) we must be wary of settler strategies for damage control that are masked as consultation processes. It is no surprise that the following month, on June 11, 2015, Pacific NorthWest LNG made a media announcement that they have resolved to move forward with a positive final investment decision subject to two conditions: approval by the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia and approval from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. Clearly, the “duty to consult” First Nations in Canada is not the same as “free, prior and informed consent” as imagined and articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples—the very article in The Declaration that Canada has consistently rejected. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the LNG industry has been attempting to strike economic deals with First Nations at the same time as the provincial government has been invested in settling modern-day treaties and land claims using recognition-based models for liberal pluralism. It is also no coincidence that the provincial and federal governments promote the LNG industry to our communities as a ‘gift’ to the poorest, northernmost Indigenous folk who need economic justice and opportunity to contribute to Canadian society. Those of us from the Nine Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams need to be ever vigilant of modern day

trinkets that appear to be economically beneficial, when in fact they are settler strategies designed to turn our territories into commodities, and to eliminate us from our lands as culturally distinct peoples. As Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred (2011:4) put it so aptly: “it seems that if we are to move beyond the charitable racism of current policies or paternalistic progressivism of liberal reconciliation models, justice must become a *duty* of, not a *gift* from, the Settler [original emphasis].” In the absence of this scenario, we must be willing to enact Ts’msyen modes of resurgence by taking direct action to defend our territories (lands and waterways), and to protect our Tribal sovereignty as Ts’msyen.

With his second thesis ‘Capitalism No More!’ Coulthard suggests that Indigenous alternatives to a settler colonial economy—including land-based cultural reclamation efforts, Indigenous political economic alternatives and cross-cultural alliance building—are practical decolonizing alternatives to the settler colonial project. Ts’msyen participate in both a capitalist economy and a traditional economy. What is important is that the Ts’msyen Feasting system persists in the face of direct colonial threat and imposition, and it continues to be the solution to our socio-economic and cultural liberation. During this research process my family participated in our political economy by Feasting, moving and wearing Ts’msyen names, practicing our laws and traditions, feeding people, and redistributing our wealth as an expression of our sovereignty (a concept contrary to the capitalist system). By no means are we the only ones honoring Ts’msyen resurgence. In fact, we have only begun. Since the lifting of the Potlatch Ban in 1955, there has been a steady increase in the amount of Ts’msyen are Feasting, and because of that Houses and Tribes are rising again. When Ts’msyen *luulgit*, we assert our sovereignty, enact an alternative economy, and strengthen our families and our connections to one another.

The third thesis, ‘Dispossession and Indigenous Sovereignty in the City,’ discusses the urban Indigenous experience given the fact that, in Canada, over half of the Indigenous population lives in cities⁸. Coulthard describes cityscapes as *urbs nullius* to describe the historical displacement of Indigenous presence from cities, and the gentrification of Indigenous presence from contemporary urban spaces. According to Coulthard (2014:176), “the efficacy of Indigenous resurgence hinges on its ability to address the interrelated systems of dispossession that shape Indigenous peoples’ experiences in both urban and land-based settings.” My research shows that many Ts’msyen in the diaspora have been active, especially in urban environments, to contribute to Ts’msyen resurgence. Cultural reclamation through urban Ts’msyen dance groups, connecting Ts’msyen communities across time and space through Ts’msyen Days celebrations, and collaborating with urban Ts’msyen in both case studies presented herein, are all contemporary examples of how many urban Ts’msyen have worked to maintain, reclaim and assert our Ts’msyen-ness as acts of resurgence and decolonization. The importance of each of these expressions of sovereignty in the city—particularly given the extent to which Ts’msyen have been dislocated from our territories—is that they have also helped many of us to make our way back to our homelands and peoples.

In the fourth thesis, ‘Gender Justice and Decolonization’ Coulthard takes responsibility as an Indigenous man to critically assess male participation in the violence against Indigenous women, whether literal, systemic or symbolic. A critical aspect of decolonization for our communities is the undoing of negative learned behaviors from settler patriarchy and the Indian Residential School System. Violence against Indigenous

⁸ To this point, view the segment “Indigenous in the City” (CBC, *8th Fire: Aboriginal Peoples, Canada & The Way Forward*, 2012, 45 min) here: <http://www.cbc.ca/8thfire//2011/11/indigenous-in-the-city.html>.

women equates defeat—as in being complicit with the settler colonial project. Coulthard reminds Indigenous men that resurgence has hardly been possible without the love, strength, intellect, wisdom, foresight, support, responsibility, leadership and activism of Indigenous women. Throughout my community-based research, I have witnessed Ts’msyen men honor our women, listen to what they say and heed their advice. There are many Ts’msyen women who are responsible for maintaining rights to harvesting territories and who also harvest and preserve our traditional foods to nourish our bodies and connect us to place. Ts’msyen women have led healing efforts to reclaim our children and to break the cycle of silence and shame. Ts’msyen women have worked tirelessly to ensure that our dancing and singing communities can thrive, that our expressions of Ts’msyen-ness honor our connections to our homelands, families, Tribes, Clans, Houses, and Ancestors, and the Ts’msyen diaspora remains united. Furthermore, without the women we would have no place within our sovereignty structure, so it is promising that so many Ts’msyen women have stepped up, at the grassroots level, to heal from the intergenerational effects of settler patriarchy and the Indian residential schools. My assessment aligns with Coulthard: there is no room for physical, mental, emotional or spiritual violence against women in the Ts’msyen revolution. Abuse is not our tradition.

Finally, in the fifth thesis, ‘Beyond the Nation State,’ Coulthard leaves a lasting thought about the colonizing properties and dispossessing qualities retained in contemporary recognition and reconciliation-based models of liberal pluralism (such as land claims, economic development initiatives, self-government agreements, public apologies, and other settler moves to innocence). He acknowledges, out of respect for Indigenous peoples activism of the past and present, that settler colonialism has lumped

our concerns in with citizen rights in the Canadian legal system, and so forces us to participate in the state's judicial-political order. Yet Coulthard (179) reminds us that,

What our present condition does demand, however, is that we begin to approach our engagements with the settler-state legal apparatus with a degree of critical self-reflection, skepticism, and caution that has to date been largely absent in our efforts...it also demands that we begin to shift our attention away from the largely rights-based/recognition orientation that has emerged as hegemonic over the last four decades.

This is perhaps the most promising aspect of our community-based research with, by and for Ts'msyen in the repatriation case study. We have worked collaboratively and carefully to apply our legal authority over the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files through the Ts'msyen sovereignty structure instead of relying on the laws of the settler state to assert or affirm our rights. This is critical if Ts'msyen are to challenge the claims made by settlers, the settler state and settler institutions over our knowledge and knowledge products, and if we are to move beyond recognition-based models of liberal pluralism described by Coulthard. Moving beyond the false options and claims of settler states requires transformative justice and decolonization, not just reconciliation.

The five theses of Indigenous resurgence, as articulated by Coulthard, are important entrance points for thinking about how to put the theories of decolonization into praxis in Indigenous North America. As Leanne Simpson (2008, 2011, 2014) has reminded and taught a new generation of Indigenous peoples: "*resurgence is our original instruction.*" When we allow the settler colonial condition to capture our minds, the only thing we know is how to survive—it is akin to being out in the middle of an ocean all by yourself with no vessel, no life support. Imagine the energy it takes just to keep your head above water, how taxing and exhausting that is. Indigenous resurgence is a decolonizing move to thrive—to reclaim the knowledge, skills and foresight to build a canoe that has

space for community, and to paddle through water with grace while travelling in unison to get to where we need to go. That is resurgence. That is what we mean by revolution.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

A. Motivations, Possibilities and Obstacles

Throughout this research, and the research process itself, Ts'msyen have demonstrated that they are motivated to reclaim for three primary and interconnected reasons: (1) healing (2) decolonization and (3) resurgence. I have witnessed my people contribute to each imperative in meaningful ways, and we have discussed the reasons for their efforts. In fact, across both case studies, the motivations for reclamation have been similarly articulated and enacted by my research partners. For example, the Lax Kxeen Ts'msyen Dance Group was formed, and people joined the group, to heal from the inter-generational effects of structured dispossession; to decolonize our minds, bodies and spirits; and to enact a Ts'msyen-specific mode of resurgence. The repatriation case study was conceptualized, and people joined the research process, to aid our collective healing efforts; to navigate the effects of structured dispossession; and to assert inherent rights and sovereignty over our captured and confined cultural heritage. When Ts'msyen reclaim through song and dance, they assert their Ts'msyen-ness—rising from the weight of a settler-colonial system that is responsible for making our cultural expressions illegal during the Potlatch Ban era, and that created the conditions for our heritage to be captured by those who were expecting us to disappear (first literally, and then culturally).

It is also clear that reclamation extends beyond song and dance as Ts'msyen navigate the multiple obstacles and effects of settler colonialism. My research partners are equally invested in reclaiming territory, family, place-ness, language, lineages, hereditary rights and heritage, as much as they are in reclaiming through song and dance.

Systems of Indigenous dispossession that accompany settler colonialism in North America include, but are not limited to: land appropriation, resource extraction, property alienation, the commodification of in/tangible cultural heritage, assimilation and prohibition laws and policies, the abduction of children in the former Indian Residential School System (IRSS), and now child welfare system, enfranchisement and disenfranchisement, gender and class discrimination, missionization, and urbanization. Dispossession is also accomplished at the discursive level in public discourse, and through pedagogy. In the educational system, history is taught in a way that erases Indigenous presence, and English language use is compulsory. And in the media, Indigenous politics are discussed in cultural terms or trivialized whenever Indigenous peoples protest and disrupt capitalist imperatives. If Ts'msyen were not systematically dispossessed of so many of the things that make us Ts'msyen, my Ts'msyen research partners would not be so heavily invested in reclaiming all that has been illegally or unethically taken from us. Furthermore, if Ts'msyen were not historically, and presently, hyper mis-represented by non-Ts'msyen within and across public and private domains, I would not be so heavily invested in reclaiming the power to represent Ts'msyen, with, by and for my people, in the colonial archive of the west.

We can see from both the repatriation and dance group case studies that the motivations and possibilities for Ts'msyen reclamation primarily revolve around roles and responsibilities. Surviving settler colonialism would not have been possible without Ts'msyen assuming certain roles and responsibilities, and without folk collaborating in their efforts to resist elimination. So it follows that reclamation in the contemporary era will require the same energy and purpose. For example, in the Ts'msyen way, when one

is recognized as a an Elder, Smooygit, Sigyidmhana'a or Galdmalgyax, when one is a carver, when one is a language keeper, when one assumes a hereditary name or belongs to a Clan, House, Tribe community or family, there are accompanying responsibilities to follow. There are responsibilities to follow our Ayaawx; to carry oneself in a good way; to be healthy, to treat everyone and everything with respect; to listen; to witness; to give back; to work for the benefit of our people; and to be accountable in our role. Roles and responsibilities in a Ts'msyen context are based on social, cultural, spiritual, legal, super- and supra-natural processes of relational accountability to the land; to the cosmos; to human and non-human relatives; to knowledge; and to community. Exploring the possibilities for reclamation ultimately leads us into the realm of subjectivity. The possibilities for reclamation begin with people being accountable and selfless enough to assume particular roles, and with our people uniting their efforts for a particular purpose.

Across both case studies, there are Ts'msyen who have taken on varied, but inter-related, roles that are critical to the overall Ts'msyen reclamation project. Christine has created an important site of enculturation in Vancouver, and there is an inter-generational collective of Ts'msyen who are responsible for nurturing the group through participation. Children and youth play an important role because, in their young age, they take on the responsibility to remember our songs and to practice embodying their Ts'msyen-ness in and outside of dance practice. We sing our songs in our language, wear our crests to show lineal connection, and we embody our culture, laws and in/tangible heritage in kinesthetic form. Sue has selflessly made countless pieces of regalia for her family and for others in our dance group because she has the gift of sewing and design, and because she takes on the responsibility to dress our people in the Ts'msyen way. In addition to the extensive

contributions that my brother has made to my own family, Musii'n has made designs for many people's regalia and he has carved masks for group members to dance. He has also created expressions to accompany mourning processes and other ceremonies of cultural significance. Musii'n demonstrates incredible integrity when it comes to Ts'msyen sensibilities, and one can see this in his communication of our Ayaawx and Adaawx, and in his execution of the Ts'msyen formline. Christine not only composes new songs for us, but she has also been the catalyst for the very first Ts'msyen repatriation efforts involving old Ts'msyen songs from Lax Kw'alaams. She has encouraged me to assume my role in our reclamation efforts—the repatriation case study as a case in point—so that I could lend my gift as a 'people person', and offer my skills as an anthropologist, researcher, facilitator and writer to help bring our songs home, and to help bring our people together *Sag_ayt k'uluum goot* (of one heart) towards a common goal.

There are many women within our dance group who have selflessly taken on the responsibility to assume guardianship of their family's children in order to provide them stability, to ensure that they maintain a sense of belonging with their kin and culture, and to prevent them from being apprehended by the child welfare system. In Lax Kw'alaams, Na gan ts'i'stk (Ancestors/Grandmothers Group) is made up entirely of women who volunteer their time and work strategically, based on our cultural protocols, to identify and reclaim our children and youth who are in-care throughout the province; to connect them to their families, community and culture; and to advocate for their wellbeing with delegated agencies. In Prince Rupert, Ts'msyen are active in the Friendship House Elders Group—a grassroots collective that I affectionately refer to as the hardest working group of Elders that I know. They volunteer their knowledge, skills and time year-round to

fundraise for a plethora of community-based events that directly benefit themselves and the communities that they work with, by and for. Throughout BC, there are young Ts'msyen activists affiliated with the Ts'msyen Guardians who share the same vision and purpose to reclaim authority over our territories, to advocate for our inherent rights and responsibilities, and to refuse the false gifts of the state.

My Smooygit Liyaa'mlaxha is an Indian Residential School Survivor. He reclaimed his matrilineal rights when he assumed his name and his hereditary title. When he met my Aunty 'Limooks for the first time, he reclaimed his matrilineal family, which put him in the long awaited position to build his House up (he was in his mid 70s at the time, now 84 years old). He was encouraged by the women in his family to stand his House up and to be an active Smooygit by Feasting, strengthening his name, moving names and conducting important House and Tribal business. He often says with great humility, *"before I met you kids, I thought I was all alone in my House."* He never thought that he would experience hosting his own Feast in his capacity as a holder of a Smooygit name. We assumed our roles to do the Feast work, and to learn as much as we could about our roles, responsibilities, history, rights and protocols. We accumulated wealth and distributed it to witnesses, and since hosting our second House Feast for Waap Liyaa'mlaxha on April 18, 2015 we have generated more interest amongst our family to participate in the process of reclaiming our lineage and matrilineal rights in honor of our grandmothers. In public and private oratory, Smooygit Aldm lxah often communicates a similar experience healing from the legacies of the Indian Residential School System (IRSS), reclaiming his hereditary title and name, and how assuming his role as Smooygit has instilled a different sense of purpose and responsibility in his life.

In Lax Kw'alaams, Sagipaayk lived a traditional life on the land, and because he was able to avoid being captured by Indian Agents and taken into residential school, he retained, and then made a commitment to maintain, fluency in Sm'algyax. He is responsible in his role as a Smooygit, and as the Sm'algyax language teacher in the village, and he has lent his linguistic proficiency to aid many efforts including teaching our language in the school and guiding our translation work in the repatriation case study. We can even go back to the late William Beynon—who happens to be the great grandfather of Christine—for he was responsible for using his linguistic proficiency, and for lending his skills as an ethnographer, researcher and writer to document knowledge that became the bedrock for linguistic and cultural studies on Ts'msyen writ large (which includes Ts'msyen, Gitksan and Nisga'a who share the same language, but who have developed variable dialects and communities over time and space). In Prince Rupert, the Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Authority is a collective of Ts'msyen who have dedicated their lives to linguistic maintenance and revitalization for the Ts'msyen Nation, and who are responsible for the creation of the preeminent Sm'algyax Living Legacy Talking Dictionary⁹. And in Lax Kw'alaams, the late Smooygit Xyuup (Wayne Ryan) as well as Smooygit Nisgulpoo/Łpndaam, Smooygit Łuum, and Galdmalgyax SkyLaas have played a critical role by selflessly and consistently offering their linguistic and cultural knowledge and expertise in the translation of the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files for the repatriation case study. They have demonstrated what it means to be Ts'msyen, and they have taught me how all of us can further embrace our roles and responsibilities to our people, communities and sovereignty structure.

⁹ See <http://web.unbc.ca/~smalgyax/> for more information.

It is also clear in this research that people who are not Ts'msyen have a role to play, and a responsibility to assume, where it concerns Ts'msyen reclamation. My colleague at UMass informed me about our songs at Columbia; my collaborator at Columbia has thought critically about what repatriation will require of individuals and institutions, and he has acted both respectfully and responsibly in his role as the manager of the collection; our Haida brothers and sisters from Masset reinforced our historical relationship, which has been built upon peace, by willingly repatriating our song to us based on protocol; our Indigenous brothers and sisters have shared their knowledge and experiences with us in consideration of our efforts to navigate the settler colonial problem, and; the teachers at the Coast Ts'msyen Academy saw it as their responsibility to create space in their classroom for me to engage them and their students in a dialogue about Ts'msyen cultural heritage, and to think critically about repatriation as a decolonizing process. People played a role in the processes of structured dispossession and people have a role to play in undoing and moving beyond the settler-colonial paradigm, whether they were directly implicated in the processes of dispossession or not.

When it comes to the poetics and politics of reclaiming in this research, the obstacles are primarily located at the intersection between: (1) knowledge and power and (2) access and control. Here we are immediately taken from the realm of subjectivity into the realm of philosophy since we are confronting the underlying assumptions of laws and policies, and discursive and material practices that underscore Indigenous dispossession, and that stymie Ts'msyen reclamation efforts. The paramount obstacle, and the most pervasive in the context of knowledge and power, is the phenomenon of Indigenous in/visibility. There is a long history in settler society of non-Ts'msyen researching,

representing and profiting from captured forms of our in/tangible cultural heritage. These settler colonial processes have been part and parcel to western canon setting; to anthropological knowledge production; and to the development and maintenance of art markets and the museum enterprise. Constructing Ts'msyen as knowable through these processes has rendered us visible as static objects, but invisible as active agents in society. The Ts'msyen canon is extensive due to contributions by non-Ts'msyen, yet Ts'msyen remain invisible within it. Furthermore, the works of anthropologists, self-proclaimed 'Tsimshianists' and other self-proclaimed northwest coast experts, sorely lack critical analyses of the settler colonial problem; of their own relationship to our knowledge; and they do not offer revolutionary solutions to the obstacles we face.

These realities set the tone for the interventions made in this dissertation at the intersection between knowledge and power—to deal with the settler colonial problem; to mark a canonical turn; to decolonize anthropology; to conduct research with, by and for Ts'msyen; and to incite the types of transformations that lead to a transgression of structured dispossession in all its forms. At the intersection between knowledge and power, one can appreciate the necessity for the Indigenous standpoints that I offer; for the scholarship from critical Indigenous thinkers that I engage, build upon and cite; for creating theoretical and methodological space so that Ts'msyen can speak for themselves, or; for the decisions that I have made in my power as a researcher to handle knowledge and knowledge products ethically, and according to Ts'msyen legal systems. Given the ways in which representations of Indigenous peoples and their heritage are implicated in the work of western knowledge production and the settler colonial project, shouldn't there be space for Indigenous peoples to conduct decolonizing research within the

academy (Sunseri 2007) that deals with the settler colonial problem; that demarginalizes Indigenous voice and presence; that elevates community-based research with, by and for Indigenous peoples; that challenges the status quo in data collection, analysis and presentation; and that decolonizes the very concept of ownership in the research process?

In the context of access and control, western conceptions and legal applications of property ownership present ongoing obstacles for repatriation as decolonization.

Repatriation refers to a process of returning home, and decolonization refers to a process aimed at changing the larger social structure and therefore the actions of institutions and individuals. Repatriation of Indigenous cultural heritage has taken many forms over the past thirty years—where there are laws, it has been legally enforced; where there are not, it has taken form through negotiations; and where an institution is open to dealing with access, but not control, it has occurred digitally or through reproduction. However, even if a case has been considered positive, Indigenous repatriation claims have been dealt with utilizing the same assumptions and logics about property, ownership and Indigeneity that created the conditions for Indigenous dispossession in the first place. This is a profound paradox that has yet to be dealt with in a meaningful way. In this situation, the goals of the Indigenous repatriation movement are ultimately undermined. There is no decolonizing or even transformative justice-based work in this scenario—only damage control by settler subjects, states and institutions in dealing with an emergent Indigenous rights regime. In essence, the Indigenous rights regime is treated by the masses as a contemporary manifestation of the settler induced “Indian problem.”

Decolonization is not a metaphor. If institutions and individuals are truly concerned with the issue of power and inequality in North America, and if they are truly

invested in the goals of repatriation, they must take the Indigenous experience with the settler colonial condition into serious account. Instead of focusing energy and resources on dealing with a constructed “Indian problem,” there is a necessity to focus on dealing with the real issue: the problem of settler colonialism. Collaborations with Indigenous communities has not necessarily been desired; rather, settler subjects, states and institutions have been compelled to think differently, and as a result relate differently, due to widespread Indigenous advocacy and activism. What many of these responses equate to is a widespread reaction to a perceived “Indian problem,” masked as social justice work. None of the advancements in Indigenous-settler relations have come without tension or debate by states and institutions, or by those who perceive their professional identities to be threatened by Indigenous claims for control. Based on my research, dealing with Indigenous claims to territories, human remains, sacred sites, artifacts, knowledge and knowledge products typically evokes a great deal of settler anxiety resulting in a focus on negotiation and then calling it collaboration. In this scenario, people and institutions are merely concerned with dealing with Indigenous claims while maintaining authority to control. Gestures of good will have been to collaborate and to provide access, but there remain incredible obstacles for Indigenous control, likely because Indigenous activism puts a spotlight on the hypocrisy of settler claim making. If gatekeepers and managers of collections cannot develop alternatives to the settler colonial paradigm when dealing with Indigenous claims for control, it signals the endorsement of Indigenous dispossession. This is the glaring message from the repatriation case study in this dissertation. The National Film Board of Canada, the Library of Congress, Columbia University and Indiana University will all have to think

critically and act responsibly in their roles if they are going to respond to my community's repatriation claim in a way that respects our Ts'msyen sovereignty, and that contributes to the decolonial turn.

There is a way out of the issues that cloud Indigenous repatriation efforts, and it begins with centering a decolonization-as-social-process framework whenever one is confronted with dealing with Indigenous claims for control. First, one must become comfortable being uncomfortable so that it is possible to realize, in a meaningful way, the principles of repatriation as a form of decolonization and transformative justice. This requires repudiating the salvage ideology that expropriated Indigenous cultural heritage, and moving beyond western conceptions and legal applications of property ownership. Second, one must conceptualize the issues associated with Indigenous cultural heritage at the cultural interface (Nakata 2007; Agrawal 1995a, 1995b, 2002, 2005; Anderson 2012) to move away from the binary position of Western vs. Indigenous and instead move to that space where we acknowledge that there is more than one way of knowing, being and doing in the world. Third, we must recognize the contributions of Indigenous peoples knowledge beyond interpretation, and utilize and enforce Indigenous customary laws in order to alter prevailing frameworks that continue the work of structured dispossession. Context matters considerably here. Finally, we must acknowledge that institutions, researchers and other gatekeepers of Indigenous cultural heritage are in positions of power to ensure repatriation, and that we all have a significant role to play in either respecting Indigenous sovereignty or perpetuating colonial norms and obstacles.

While many have made the call for a decolonizing anthropology, fewer have actually put the principles of decolonization into action. Theories are important because

they help us to make sense of social phenomena like colonization and racism, and they help us to conceptualize alternative solutions for going about the business of being human in the world. Yet, theories that are operationalized at the discursive level will never be enough. The imperative to decolonize methodologies in the social sciences extends beyond the parameters of research and ‘researcher.’ Decolonization, which requires interrogating colonial norms, restructuring relationships and turning discourse into action, is fundamentally about extending the ethics of a decolonizing methodology beyond traditional parameters to include ‘social actor,’ ‘everyday citizen,’ ‘public servant,’ and ‘gatekeeper’ as well. Settler colonialism is an intense social process that engenders both explicit and implicit forms of exploitation, discrimination and social inequality. This thesis suggests a pathway beyond it, and it ultimately begins and ends with the specificity of Indigenous contexts and experiences with settler colonialism so that the root of the issues that other minority peoples face, and current advocates of social justice are concerned with, are also understood and approached in ways that do not continue the work of Indigenous elimination and dispossession. Thus, Ts’msyen are not the only ones caught up in the poetics and politics of reclaiming—everyone in Indigenous North America is, whether one knows it or not. I know that there are a lot of good and well-intentioned people out there who want to improve relationships with Indigenous peoples, who want to learn more about our history and who want to address issues of social inequality. By offering critical Ts’msyen standpoints on the lingering issue of Indigenous in/visibility under the settler colonial condition, our hope is that the reader can see how we have all been caught up and implicated in the dirty work of settler colonialism, but that we can also activate decolonization-as-social-process paradigms to

improve relationships within and between communities in such a way that the enjoyment of one people's rights does not come at the expense of another's.

B. Afterword

I would like to leave the reader with two examples of how Ts'msyen reclamation processes described herein continue beyond my doctoral research. The first example involves the reclamation of our songs. After two and half years since the announcement of the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files to the people of Lax Kw'alaams, I have most recently found myself going through a process that almost exactly mirrors the first stages of the repatriation case study. Aaron invited me to make a presentation of my research at The Center for Ethnomusicology in early December 2012. It had also been two years since I alerted him to the missing files from the Ts'msyen content in their archive, so I urged Aaron to set aside some time for us to make a last ditch research attempt during my visit in New York. My community had waited long enough to hear the missing songs, and we needed to finally confirm my long-held suspicions. If they were indeed missing, then we needed to also figure out a way forward to locate them. Together with Aaron and his student Emily Clark, we confirmed that they were missing, and then collaboratively researched the online catalogue of the Laura Boulton Collection at Indiana University Bloomington. Emily was intrigued, as an archivist-in-training, by the research that my community was doing and she wanted to help in some way. She offered to go to Indiana University over Christmas break and, with my guidance, she could listen to the reels on-site to help Aaron's and my community's research. During Emily's visit there, she was able to confirm that Indiana's archive had reels containing what appeared to be a complete collection of the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files.

During this time, my family was in the latter stages of planning and preparing for our second House Feast for Waap Liyaa'mlaxha, and we also set the date for April 18, 2015 in Lax Kw'alaams. It seemed serendipitous once again to work towards hosting the first listening gathering with the Indiana files during that time. Aaron and I wrote a joint letter to the manager of the Archive of Traditional Music at Indiana requesting digitized listening copies so that my community could continue our repatriation work, and so that Aaron could fill the gaps in Columbia's archive. The manager of the collection responded positively, providing expedited digital copies of the sound recordings for community access. As it happened at the very beginning of the repatriation case study, I made the announcement about the missing files at our House Feast, and we had our first listening gathering the following day on April 19th at the Coast Tsimshian Academy. There were a total of 43 people present at the listening gathering, which included participation from many new Ts'msyen who were eager to help reclaim our songs. We have built upon the community-based momentum in our work, and we continue to be proactive in our efforts.

When I began the repatriation case study in Lax Kw'alaams in October 2012, three acts of reclamation occurred: (1) the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files returned home after 70 years of static, and scattered, confinement, (2) I set foot in my contemporary village for the first time in my 32 year lifetime, and (3) it was the first time that Waap Liyaa'mlaxha hosted a Feast in over 75 years. Since the beginning of our work, we have done an incredible amount of collaborative research to breathe life into our songs; I have returned to Lax Kw'alaams numerous times and now have a presence there; and my family has Feasted in our village twice—all of this in just two and half years. Reclamation today continues to be a poetic and political quest for our people, and

it has everything to do with being Ts'msyen on our own terms. Further, Ts'msyen modes of resurgence are decolonial moves to embody our heritage and to assert our laws and sovereignty according to Ts'msyen sensibilities. As an example from our second House Feast for Waap Liyaa'mlaxha, I'd like to leave the reader with a final thought.

During our Feast, my family conducted important sovereignty business. We strengthened names, moved names and we added cultural treasures to our House. My brother Musii'n created a bentwood box that now belongs to Waap Liyaa'mlaxha [see Figure 13], and it is meant to protect the spirit and ownership of the names, songs, crests, and other in/tangible forms of our cultural property that belong to our House. The bentwood box that Musii'n created *for Waap Liyaa'mlaxha* means that no single individual within our House owns the bentwood box or any of the cultural property that it holds and protects. In/tangible forms of cultural heritage that belong to our House are collectively owned in this sense. It is hard for me to imagine any of the songs that our House owns suffering the same fate as the Matthew Johnson/William Pierce Files, or the bentwood box that our House owns suffering the same fate as other forms of Ts'msyen cultural heritage captured in museums. My intention in this afterword was to leave the reader with a lasting thought about why repatriation is important to Ts'msyen and how ownership of our in/tangible cultural heritage works according to Ts'msyen Ayaawx.



Figure 13: Bentwood "Box of Treasures" belonging to Waap Liyaa'mlaxha 2015.

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

META-DATA: MATTHEW JOHNSON/WILLIAM PIERCE FILES

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Field	Number	Date	Locality	Group	Performer	Title	Description	Vocal	Instruments	Remarks	Reels	Wich	Year	Spoken by	Recorded by
497-1	495a	1942 June	Port Simpson British Columbia	Tsimshyan Indian	Matthew Johnson (Age 87)	A'Alaa (Chief's Song)	Canon Song. Song when going to buy skins	Solo	-	Speech in Tsimshyan prelude songs	13"				
	495b	"	"	"	"	Will Sing A'Alaa	Words preceding 495a - song	Speech	-						
	495c	"	"	"	"	A'Alaa for Chief	Funeral Song	Solo	-						

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Field	Number	Date	Locality	Group	Performer	Title	Description	Vocal	Instruments	Remarks	Reels	Wich	Year	Spoken by	Recorded by
497-4	494a	1942 June	Port Simpson British Columbia	Tsimshyan Indian	Matthew Johnson (Age 87)	Death Song for Chief	Funeral Song	Solo	-	Speech in Tsimshyan prelude songs	13"				
	494b	"	"	"	"	When Going to War	War Song	-	-						
	495a	"	"	"	"	Story about Walibot Catching	Story	Speech	-	(Imaginary conversation)					
	495b	"	"	"	"	Story about Chief's Fish	"	"	-						
	495c	"	"	"	"	Kawgeni	Peace Song	Solo	-	Speech in Tsimshyan prelude songs					
	495d	"	"	"	"	Old Wife Song	Wife Song	"	-						
	496a	"	"	"	"	Give a Feast (Preparing for Potlatch)	Potlatch Song	"	-						
	496b	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	Clapping						
	496c	"	"	"	"	Song for Second Year	"	"	"						
	497a	"	"	"	"	Chief's Dances Song	"	"	Clapping						

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	497b	"	"	"	"	Song for Putting Down Blankets	"	"	"						
	497c	"	"	"	"	Men Eater's Song	(Lan) Tribal Song	"	"						
	498a	"	"	"	"	Dog Eater's Song	"	"	"						
	498b	"	"	"	"	Lullaby	Lullaby	"	"						
	498c	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"						
497-1	497a	"	"	"	"	Dance Song for youths	Dance	"	"						
	499b	"	"	"	"	My Heart is Down	Eagle Clan	"	"						
	499c	"	"	"	"	Medicine Men's Song	Medicine Song	"	"						
	500	"	"	"	"	Laloon	"Happy Song"	"	"						
	501	"	"	"	"	Kalobul's Song	Complaint	"	"						
	502	"	"	"	"	Agmelaha	"	"	"						
	503	"	"	"	"	I'm an Old Man	Love Song	"	"						

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Field	Number	Date	Locality	Group	Performer	Title	Description	Vocal	Instruments	Remarks	Reels	Wich	Year	Spoken by	Recorded by
497-8	504	1942 June	Port Simpson British Columbia	Tsimshyan Indian	Matthew Johnson (Age 87)	It is Very Hard to Go Back Home	Narrative	Solo	-	Speech in Tsimshyan prelude songs	13"				
	505	"	"	"	"	You're Not Like a Dolly	"	"	"						
	506	"	"	"	"	Fish in the Stream	"Happy Song"	"	"						
	507	"	"	"	"	Final Song of Potlatch	Potlatch	"	"						

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