

## Relationships: A Study of Memory, Change, and Identity at a Place Called I:yem

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### Abstract

The I:yem memorial, located four kilometres north of Yale British Columbia, represents the first time that the name Stó:lō was publicly used in print by the people of the Fraser River Valley and Canyon to describe themselves. This is significant as the nature of what it means to be, and who should be considered, Stó:lō continues to be contested today. Incorporating interviews with Stó:lō Elders and Community members, this study is an attempt to trace the themes of memory and changing understandings of place in an examination of the many aspects of I:yem and the implications of this place for Stó:lō identities.

### Introduction

*Eayem Memorial 1938 AD, Erected by the Stalo Indians. In memory of many hundreds of our forefathers buried here, this is one of our six ancient cemeteries within our five mile Native fishing grounds which we inherited from our ancestors. R.I.P.*

— Text on 1938 I:yem Memorial<sup>1</sup>

The words on the I:yem memorial, located four kilometres north of Yale, British Columbia in an area referred to as the “five mile canyon fishery,” represent the first time that the term Stó:lō was publicly used in print by the Aboriginal people of the Fraser River Valley and Canyon to describe themselves. This is significant as the nature of what it means to be, and who should be considered, Stó:lō<sup>2</sup> continues to be contested today.

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<sup>1</sup> The plaque has been missing from the I:yem memorial for several years. This text was taken from an older picture of the memorial. The use of older spellings of “Eayem” and “Stalo” are as inscribed on the memorial; throughout the rest of the paper these terms appear in the form standardized in *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* unless quoting directly from an earlier source. Picture of the I:yem memorial courtesy of Stó:lō Nation Archives (SNA).

<sup>2</sup> As ethnohistorian Keith Thor Carlson has noted, the term Stó:lō, meaning either “river” or “people of the river,” “sits better with some contemporary Aboriginal political and cultural leaders than others.” Most scholars agree that Stó:lō refers to a group of indigenous people of the Lower Fraser watershed in Southwestern British Columbia, living in more than two dozen Bands or First Nations. They share a similar culture, the Halq’emélem language, and social affiliations, while issues of political unity remain contested. In these political debates, some groups do not consider themselves to be Stó:lō, especially those whose territory is along the fringes of what is claimed as Stó:lō territory. The most notable of these disputes is between the Yale First Nation, whose territory is closest to the Fraser Canyon, on the one side and the Stó:lō Nation and Tribal Council on

Ideas of both change and continuity in Stó:lō relationships with, and understandings of, the Fraser Canyon are evident in this monument in the shape of a Christian cross with a bronze plaque that blends aspects of Roman Catholicism with an articulation of a distinct Stó:lō identity and assertion of rights.<sup>3</sup> Ethnohistorian Keith Thor Carlson concludes his recent article “Innovation, Tradition, Colonialism and Aboriginal Fishing Conflicts in the Lower Fraser Canyon” with a brief discussion of the I:yem Memorial proposing that it was principally created to honour the memory of the ancestors “whose remains had been re-interred after developments associated with the building of Canada’s two transcontinental railways”; it represented “a bold assertion of shared Stó:lō collective identity and a broad communal title to the canyon fishery”; and it “signified a recognition that the principal threat to Aboriginal fishing rights now came from non-native interest, and implicitly that internal disputes should be handled internally.”<sup>4</sup>

Building upon Carlson’s assessment of the significance of the monument in 1938, what follows is an exploration of some of the ways the Aboriginal people of the Fraser Canyon and Valley understand I:yem and its memorial today. This discussion is primarily based on oral interviews that I conducted during the joint University of Victoria/University of Saskatchewan Ethnohistory Field School in June 2007, but also incorporates earlier interviews from the Stó:lō Nation Archive’s Oral History Collection, court records, political agreements, and newspaper articles.<sup>5</sup>

I:yem, meaning “strong” or “lucky place,”<sup>6</sup> has changed in the seventy years since the memorial was erected there. Changes to the site were recently noted by Stó:lō elder Mabel Nichols who described the “white picket fence no longer white, two small grey

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the other over territory and who should be considered Stó:lō. Issues of terminology are further complicated by the use of the term in the names of contemporary political organizations the Stó:lō Nation and the Stó:lō Tribal Council. These organizations were formed in the 1970s and 1980s to negotiate land claims with the government. Therefore, in this paper the term Stó:lō will be used in its most general sense to refer to cultural similarity and shared history; specific political entities will be identified separately. See Carlson, “Introduction,” 2; Schaepe, “Stó:lō Identity and the Cultural Landscape of S’olh Téméxw,” 237.

<sup>3</sup> Albert (Sonny) McHalsie believes that the memorial is the first time the term Stó:lō was publicly displayed by the people themselves, with the exception of the *Dream Book of the Stó:lō Chief*. See McHalsie interview. See also Carlson, “The Power of Place, The Problem of Time.”

<sup>4</sup> p. 168.

<sup>5</sup> Despite efforts to meet with and interview members of the Yale First Nation, I was unable to talk with anyone who officially represented that community. Although I was able to have some informal conversations with community members, sent a letter of introduction to Chief Robert Hope of Yale, and attempted to meet him in person, I was informed that the Yale First Nation would not be able to consider my research request until their current treaty negotiations are complete. Notwithstanding this, every effort has been made to include the perspectives of members of the Yale First Nation using alternative sources.

<sup>6</sup> See Wilson Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians of the Fraser Valley British Columbia*, 30; Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, “Halq’emélem Place Names in Stó:lō Territory,” 142.

crosses with nothing written on them, and the larger one with the gaping spot where the plaque had been.”<sup>7</sup> A casual visitor might infer that the memorial has been forgotten; yet, I:yem surfaces every so often in a process of repatriation and reinterpretation. Understandings of the memorial are often shaped by people’s visions for their future and an ongoing assessment of the past.<sup>8</sup> This results in the mobilization of various meanings for the I:yem Memorial in different situations — some of which correspond while others seem to contradict one another. These contemporary interpretations of the memorial alternately emphasize either the need to re-establish and maintain personal connections to canyon places, or the memorial’s potential role in resolving an ongoing conflict over both territory and questions of identity between the Stó:lō Nation/Tribal Council on the one side and the Yale First Nation on the other.

Figure 1: The I:yem Memorial circa 1940



Photographed by David J. Martin  
(photo courtesy of Keith Thor Carlson)

Yet, political and personal relationships are never entirely separate, as is apparent in the continuing role of the I:yem Memorial as a focal point of Stó:lō identity. Although I:yem is no longer the strong or lucky place<sup>9</sup> that it once was, it remains significant to many

<sup>7</sup> Mabel Nichols, Personal Communication, October 6, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> This is essentially the idea of historical consciousness, by which I mean, “individual and collective understandings of the past, the cognitive and cultural factors that shape those understandings, as well as the relations of historical understandings to those of the present and future.” Sharon Macdonald and Katja Fausser, “Towards European Historical Consciousness” in *Approaches to European Historical Consciousness*, ed. S. Macdonald (Hamburg: Koerber Stiftung, 2000), p. 10, as quoted in Seixas, “Introduction,” 10.

<sup>9</sup> The use of the term place is deliberate, building on scholarship on “place making” such as Keith Basso’s *Wisdom Sits in Places*. The term “place” is dependent on the existence of a relationship between people and the landscape and in this way is different from the idea of “space.” Concepts of place are also typically linked with ideas of displacement, and are important in identity formation, but are often only noted when

Aboriginal people. This testifies to the strength of the relationships people have developed with I:yem, the lasting importance of the ancestors buried there, and the centrality of the five mile Native fishery to people's economic and social wellbeing. Dealing with both personal and political as well as individual and community experiences of place, this investigation incorporates a non-reductionist approach in its discussion of these themes and their roles in shaping current understandings of the Fraser Canyon in general and I:yem in particular. While emphasising that individual and community understandings of place cannot be completely separated from one another, this analysis begins with some individual interpretations of I:yem before turning to the collective relationships that both the Stó:lō and Yale have with each other and the canyon places they view as their own.

Figure 2: I:yem Memorial in 2008



Photo courtesy of Mabel Nichols

This discussion of I:yem draws upon several bodies of literature, including works specific to the Coast Salish and the Fraser Canyon, place making, memory studies, and a variety of anthropological and historical theorists. Beyond fitting into a rich regional and thematic historiography this paper contributes to existing discussions on collective affiliation, place making, and debates over issues of authority, while raising some new questions and issues. Sonny McHalsie, Bruce Miller, Keith Thor Carlson, David Schaepe, Wayne Suttles and Crisca Bierwert have noted the importance of place to the Coast

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disrupted. "Colonial interventions radically disrupt the representation of place by separating 'space' from 'place'." Furthermore, place is local, and where social relationships are located. See "Place," Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds. *Post Colonial Studies*, 177–79; Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*; Carlson, "The Power of Place."

Salish people, and the role of places in validating social and political status and determining personal and collective identities.<sup>10</sup>

However, beyond the knowledge and information that is located in the landscape and accessible to properly trained individuals, there is innate meaning in places where some people can be seen to belong. In this way much of the discourse over the canyon fishery has also been limited in that it is primarily about fish or economics rather than the significance of fishing as a means to maintain connections to canyon places. Furthermore, while several works acknowledge diversity within Coast Salish communities,<sup>11</sup> little has been done to specifically explore differences within and between these Aboriginal groups. While only focusing on the fractures in and between communities is not beneficial, being aware of them and the variety of interpretations of I:yem and its memorial is still important. By focusing on the relationships between people and their places and incorporating the theories of historical anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, historical philosopher R. G. Collingwood, historical consciousness, and the idea of multiple histories this discussion contributes to current conversations regarding Coast Salish collective identity and opens doors to rethinking the importance of place.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Schaepe, “Stó:lō Identity”; Carlson, “Innovation, Tradition, Colonialism and Aboriginal Fishing Conflicts in the Lower Fraser Canyon”; Carlson, “The Power of Place”; Miller, *The Problem of Justice*; McHalsie, “Halq’emélem Place Names”; Suttles, “The Persistence of Intervillage Ties”; McHalsie, “We Have to Take Care of Everything that Belongs to Us”; Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar, Living by the River*.

<sup>11</sup> The roles of social networks, villages, and families has been highlighted in Suttles, “The Persistence of Intervillage Ties”; Miller emphasizes a tendency for communities themselves to perpetuate the idea of a harmonious past while deemphasizing social conflict in the present in order to manage relationships with the outside world (*The Problem of Justice*, 13); Carlson notes current tensions regarding fishing within Stó:lō communities suggesting that there are two dimensions to them; conflicts between families and those between the Yale First Nation and the Stó:lō (“Innovation, Tradition, Colonialism and Aboriginal Fishing Conflicts in the Lower Fraser Canyon,” 145). In a different context Carlson explains that there are similarities/commonalities among this group of people in addition to differences, and chooses to focus on the former while acknowledging the latter (“Introduction,” 1–2).

<sup>12</sup> The general idea of focusing on relationships is a useful way to approach the application of Marshall Sahlins’ concept of change and continuity, and his push for scholarship to move away from dichotomies: Native versus newcomer, colonizer versus colonized and other dichotomies such as private and public or political and personal. More specifically this paper attempts to look at current Stó:lō relationships with I:yem, and their interpretations of these relationships, or their historical consciousness, drawing attention to connections between understandings of the past, present, and the future. Employing the concept of histories, and recognizing that there is not a single “Native voice” or even a single Stó:lō voice for that matter, this is an exploration of some of the specific relationships that people of the Fraser Canyon and Valley have had with I:yem. See Sahlins, *With Apologies to Thucydides*; Sahlins, “The Return of the Event, Again; With Reflections on the Beginnings of the Great Fijian War of 1843 to 1855 between the

In addition to scholarship relating to the Stó:lō and Coast Salish, this analysis seeks to contribute to a broader body of academic literature on place making,<sup>13</sup> demonstrating how places themselves may be inherently powerful rather than simply social constructs. Exploring the reciprocal relationships between people and their places is necessary, as individuals gain power and authority from belonging to certain places that they in turn use to maintain connections within the present and for the future. For the Stó:lō it is the relationship with the Fraser Canyon itself that is important. Whereas much of the recent scholarship regarding the impact of colonialism on Aboriginal people has centred on the ways their relationships with the landscape have been altered,<sup>14</sup> this study moves beyond how aspects of these relationships have changed to exploring how people have made efforts to protect and regain them.

### “In memory of...”

Issues of memory and forgetting became apparent in conversations I had with local Stó:lō people in June 2007. In a variety of settings, different people regularly emphasized the need to regain and preserve memories of the Fraser Canyon. In fact, since some Elders did not know the memorial by name, sometimes a fair amount of explaining was necessary before people understood which place I was interested in learning about. For example, when I asked Tillie Gutierrez and Archie Charles about the I:yem Memorial, both Stó:lō elders brought up a more recent monument of a salmon carved into a rock by some Stó:lō people to memorialize 23-year-old murder victim Melanie Carpenter whose body was found near I:yem in 1998. Their clear memory of the murdered girl was in stark contrast to those Aboriginal ancestors forgotten in the cemetery at I:yem.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Naxaxalhts’i (Sonny McHalsie),<sup>16</sup> the Director of the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre at Stó:lō Nation, suggested that I:yem was already being forgotten in 1938, and that the memorial, and more significantly the plaque, were created to preserve its memory and history.

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Kingdoms of Bau and Rewa,” 45, 81–82; Collingwood, *The Idea of History*; Seixas, *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*; Sider and Smith, “Introduction.”

<sup>13</sup> To date, a significant amount of scholarship has centred on the various relationships between memories and particular places. These studies demonstrate that places are important sites of memory, that memory lives as long as it serves a social role, and that it is possible for multiple and equally valid meanings to be attached to particular sites. See for example Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*; Santos-Grenaro, “Writing History into the Landscape”; Green and Green, “From Chronological to Spatio-Temporal Histories”; Meyers, “Ways of Placemaking”; Turkel, *The Archive of Place*; Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination*.

<sup>14</sup> See for example Harris, *Making Native Space*; Harmon “Coast Salish History”; Laforet and York, *Spuzzum*.

<sup>15</sup> “3,000 Mourn Slain BC Woman, Many at Carpenter Service Vow to Fight for Tougher Laws,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 4, 1998, A1; Gutierrez interview; Charles interview.

<sup>16</sup> Sonny McHalsie is the great-grandson of one of the memorial’s creators, Dennis S. Peters. McHalsie interview.

The community members that I spoke with frequently referred to the importance of the memorial's plaque. In the context of current inter-tribal political conflicts, it is the text that is of particular significance. Grand Chief, Judge (and current Lieutenant Governor of BC) Steven Point emphasized the political and economic significance of "rediscovering" the memorial through people's "own lens," as it provided important evidence for the Stó:lō in their ongoing disputes with the Yale First Nation over territory.<sup>17</sup> Further highlighting the importance of the text, self-described "fisher-lady" and Stó:lō elder, Rita Pete,<sup>18</sup> shared how upset she was when she discovered that the plaque had been stolen. It was the plaque, she explained, that provided the memorial with significance:

[W]hoever we bring up there, they wonder what it means. So we let them read it and then they go around reading the other ones. It [is] just important and now everybody knows that it's there and everybody wanted to know what it said. Now there's no plaque to read.<sup>19</sup>

Mrs. Pete's comments demonstrate how, in many ways, the plaque has become the memory of I:yem. Building on Sonny McHalsie's suggestion that I:yem was already being forgotten in 1938, and that the memorial (and more significantly the plaque) were created to preserve its memory and history, these statements provide glimpses of how people have begun to reclaim the memorial and with that to re-assert their rights and claims to territory. In this way the memorial, while providing evidence of past relationships with I:yem, serves as a reminder of the need for the Aboriginal people of the Fraser Valley and Canyon to forge their own connections with I:yem today.

### **"This is one of our six ancient cemeteries"**

According to Sonny McHalsie, the memorial's creators "didn't want us to forget about the burial grounds."<sup>20</sup> It seems that those who continue to fish in the canyon, and still have some connection or relationship with these places, have not forgotten about the cemeteries in the five-mile Native fishery. In fact, Rita Pete, who has been fishing at I:yem with her family for about sixty years, looks after the gravesite there.<sup>21</sup> Her family has been cleaning the cemetery at I:yem every year since they began fishing there, and before that they cared for a graveyard across the river at Aseláw where they had fished.<sup>22</sup> Thus, Rita Pete and her family have been continuing the practice of looking after the ancestors buried in the canyon with the significant exception that they do not know who any of the people are that are buried in the cemeteries. Rita Pete suggested that the

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<sup>17</sup> Point interview.

<sup>18</sup> Mrs Pete was born in 1935 and lives at Skam reserve. Her fishing spot is located at I:yem.

<sup>19</sup> Pete interview.

<sup>20</sup> McHalsie interview.

<sup>21</sup> Rita Pete is still fishing at 73. It was Mrs. Pete's mother, Lillian who had connections to I:yem. See Pete interview.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

ancestors were forgotten because they died so long ago, and that “nobody thinks of them or anything.”<sup>23</sup> Her connection with I:yem and the cemetery there is because it is next to her fishing spot rather than through connections to specific ancestors who are buried there.<sup>24</sup> Although those buried at I:yem (and their stories) have primarily been forgotten as individuals, they continue to be remembered as ancestors and treated with respect.

In addition to cleaning the cemetery, Rita Pete and her family have ritualistic burnings there for the ancestors,<sup>25</sup> through which they literally “feed the ancestors ‘cause they’ve been forgotten.” She explained:

The first year I had it up there I had Roger Andrews up there and he was telling me that there were old big boats and old wagons and even the Chinamen were there and a lot of the old ancestors that came for the food. That was something to hear. So I have it every year now. I was going to have it every other year but the people I got doing the job said you should do it every year.<sup>26</sup>

Mrs. Pete’s explanation of the results of the first burning she had at I:yem highlight some of the changes that occurred there, both in terms of how people relate to the space and who they were. The reference to the Chinese (who may have died while working on the railway in that area) suggests how with the creation of the railway and other events, different groups of people became connected to the changing landscape. Still, the presence of the old ancestors at the burning and at I:yem demonstrates that they continue to be a part of that place rather than being simply an aspect of its history to be either remembered or forgotten. The burning of food for the dead at I:yem is another way that respect is shown to the dead and beyond that a means for people to re-connect with their ancestors, their history, and their canyon places.

### **“Many hundreds of our forefathers”**

This concept of having a connection to particular places and those who used them in the past is often emphasised, as is the sense that it has been lost and needs to be regained. The need for meaningful connection between the Stó:lō and the Fraser Canyon is outlined by Sonny McHalsie:

When I talk about I:yem as a place name that’s an important place, it’s a fishing place, it’s a fishing ground. But when I start talking about Dennis S. Peters<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> However, due to the relationship between fishing spots and family connections it is likely Mrs. Pete has some connection albeit in a distant way to those buried at I:yem.

<sup>25</sup> At burnings, food is burned for the ancestors, and messages are received from them.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Stó:lō Political activist Dennis S. Peters was instrumental in erecting the I:yem memorial with his brother-in-law Chief Isaac James of Ruby Creek. Dennis S. Peters was Sonny McHalsie’s maternal great-grandfather. See McHalsie interview.



setting up the memorial I start talking about my grandfather fishing at that one place and that's my connection to the spot... That's the really important part of it. I think that is what's missing today... I think that the only people that have a really big connection up there is to the fishing rounds.<sup>28</sup>

Mr. McHalsie critiques the changing relationships between the Stó:lō and I:yem as it transformed from a village site to a place where people returned to be buried to sites where some people now fish.<sup>29</sup> His statement captures the sense that through returning to an idealized version of the past regaining relationships with particular places is possible. There is a sense that since 1938, Stó:lō attachments to the Fraser Canyon have been threatened and need to be re-asserted to preserve aspects of their relationships with canyon places that they identify as most important.

### **“Within our five mile Native fishing grounds”**

I:yem was a good place to catch salmon. According to Matilda (Tillie) Gutierrez whose grandparents fished at I:yem, “the reason why they all loved going up there is because the water is so rough and the fish is easy to catch because they used dip nets.”<sup>30</sup> She went on to explain, “I guess that's what it really means, the memorial of that place there I:yem, that fish was easy to get because the water is so rough.”<sup>31</sup> To Mrs. Gutierrez the significance of I:yem and the memorial connected to it is directly linked to her own experiences there.

I:yem, and the other fishing sites above Yale were an important component of the traditional fishing economy,<sup>32</sup> yet as described by Mrs. Gutierrez the value of the fishery went beyond economics. People's memories of fishing in the canyon demonstrate personal connections with places themselves and the people with whom they share them. In this way the meaning of places are varied, relating directly to the experiences of those who had relationships with them. To Tillie Gutierrez, I:yem is linked with memories of spending time drying fish with her grandmother and pulling in a big spring salmon when she was thirteen or fourteen years old (to the delight of people fishing across the river). There is a sense of community created by the people from nearby fishing spots. I:yem was where she met her husband Allan Gutierrez, who was also fishing there with his grandparents, and a place where they fished together when they were first married.<sup>33</sup> Mrs.

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<sup>28</sup> McHalsie, “We Have to Take Care,” 93.

<sup>29</sup> This reveals the merit of R. G. Collingwood's assertion that individuals who have knowledge of what has changed can evaluate the change itself (or the past in their present). Similar to Sahlins' advocacy of a dialectic relationship between continuity and change, Collingwood provides the important reminders that change is not necessarily an improvement and that there is potential for resistance to change. See Collingwood, 326.

<sup>30</sup> Gutierrez interview.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Gutierrez explained “I loved that area so much and today I still do — that’s why these place names stick right in my mind — all the heavenly places I grew up.”<sup>34</sup> Memories are intricately connected with personal meaning, experiences, and feelings. It is through these experiences and relationships that Mrs. Gutierrez remembers and interprets I:yem. In this way, the personal aspects of understandings of I:yem often result from familial and interpersonal relationships that were maintained there. Mrs. Gutierrez’s love of I:yem is partly derived from the place itself, but also from the time spent there with others.

I:yem is more than an “easy” place to catch fish, as fishing (and therefore I:yem) is associated with other elements of Stó:lō culture. Tillie Gutierrez explains that it was at I:yem that they<sup>35</sup> caught the salmon for the sacred First Salmon Ceremony, by lowering themselves down through a rocky arch that used to be there.<sup>36</sup> Sonny McHalsie believes that this is significant as through I:yem, and learning about that place, people have been able to re-learn elements about the First Salmon Ceremony that were nearly lost.<sup>37</sup> Along these lines, aspects of Stó:lō culture and history literally exist within certain places and the memories that they evoke. Memories and experiences are connected to places, and it is through returning to those places that they can be regained.

Mrs. Gutierrez emphasized how her family’s fishing area at I:yem was destroyed when the stone arch was blasted away “when they put those fish ladders in there.”<sup>38</sup> The construction of concrete fish ladders by the International Salmon Commission in response to river blockages in the late 1950s showcases what are at times conflicting interests between band control over reserves and family connections to particular fishing places. Notably, in 1961, Yale Chief Peter Emery was advised that the International Salmon Commission wished to use a portion of Yale Indian Reserve 22 to set up an air compressor in connection with the proposed removal of twenty feet of two rocky pinnacles — the arch previously referred to by Mrs. Gutierrez. Because I:yem is on reserve land, the Commission required permission from the Yale Band to access the territory. Although Chief Emery had originally “shown considerable concern over the possibility of their excellent fishing pool at this point being ruined,”<sup>39</sup> a Band Council resolution was passed giving the Commission free access to do their work.<sup>40</sup> As Tillie Gutierrez and her family were not members of the Yale Band they were not consulted regarding this matter, and as a result their fishing spot as they knew it was forever altered. Mrs. Gutierrez explained that I:yem

<sup>34</sup> *Regina vs. Dorothy Vanderpeet*, 17.

<sup>35</sup> It is clear that here Mrs. Gutierrez is referring to her family at least.

<sup>36</sup> Gutierrez interview; McHalsie interview; McHalsie, “We Have to Take Care,” 90.

<sup>37</sup> McHalsie, “We Have to Take Care,” 90.

<sup>38</sup> Matilda Gutierrez, as quoted in McHalsie “We have to Take Care,” 90.

<sup>39</sup> LAC, RG10 vol. 13300, file 167/31-5-41-11, To Mr. Lloyd A. Royal, Director International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission, New Westminster, B.C., from J.S. Dunn, Superintendent New Westminster Indian Agency, January 26, 1961, 153/31-5-33-22.

<sup>40</sup> LAC, RG10 vol. 13300, file 167/31-5-41-11, Band Council Resolution Yale Indian Band, New Westminster Indian Agency, March 27, 1961.

was a good fishing place for my grandfather until the railway and the highway came and they started blasting that place. Now there's nobody who can do any fishing there anymore, so actually the only thing we own is the site but no more fishing ground; it's all ruined.<sup>41</sup>

Specifically, this statement illustrates how Tillie Gutierrez viewed I:yem. To her, I:yem was specifically her grandparents' fishing spot rather than a broader area including other fishing sites — such as where Mrs. Pete continues to fish. More generally, she highlights how people of her generation view canyon places primarily as fishing grounds. To Mrs. Gutierrez, I:yem, as she knew it, was ruined by the destruction of their fishing spot. Accordingly, testifying before a judge in a fisheries case, she said, “there *used* to be a place there they called I:yem.”<sup>42</sup>

In stating that I:yem is no more, Mrs. Gutierrez raises interesting questions about place and memory, and how changes to places affect peoples' memories of, and connections to, them. The I:yem that Tillie Gutierrez loved no longer exists. Her connections to that place are now primarily through her memories. The memorial too serves as a reminder of the way that I:yem was; however, rather than existing only in memory it exists in space and time.

Relationships between the Stó:lō and their canyon fishing places have changed even while people continue to fish in the spots of their ancestors. In the early 1950s, Wilson Duff noted that the “time tested Aboriginal technology of dip nets and drying salmon in the canyon, though still in limited use” were “rapidly giving way to gill nets and home canning.”<sup>43</sup> No doubt such transformations in human activities were partially due to changes to the landscape itself, as well as government regulations and developments in transportation and technology. Rita Pete spoke of how she had seen the fishing fluctuate in the past sixty years and explained that “not that much of us dry fish these days.”<sup>44</sup> She attributed this to people passing away, and although she recognized that “some of the kids go up there yet,” she noted that, “some don't bother.”<sup>45</sup> Although it might be more efficient and economical to home can salmon, something is potentially lost when families do not gather together over the course of several weeks to wind dry salmon. The story telling, the sharing of memories, and the significance of I:yem are the sorts of things that technological progress can obscure.

<sup>41</sup> *Regina v. Dorothy Vanderpeet*, 17.

<sup>42</sup> Gutierrez interview (b), 30. Emphasis added.

<sup>43</sup> *The Upper Stalo Indians of Fraser Valley British Columbia*, 13. Some changes to technology relate to the ownership of fishing stations and confusion or disputes over certain places. Carlson has noted that where as a hundred years ago it was commonly understood that Stó:lō fishing spots were their fishing rocks next to the eddies, today it is the eddies that are considered to belong to particular fishers and their families. See Carlson, “History Wars,” 78.

<sup>44</sup> She explained that only fourteen families currently dry fish in the canyon. Pete interview.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

Individual fishing spots within the five mile fishery have, and continue to be, contested. Even the fishing site at I:yem used by memorial creator Dennis S. Peters was disputed.<sup>46</sup> Today Mrs. Pete fishes at that same spot. Although she explained how Dennis S. Peters' son Oscar Peters gave the site to her mother Lillian (and that she had later taken it over), she admitted that others had recently tried to claim the site. It seems that rather than open conflicts, people question someone else's right or authority to use a particular spot that they regard themselves having a superior claim to. For example, Sonny McHalsie has noted the controversy around his auntie Rita's<sup>47</sup> claims to the spot where his grandfather fished, clarifying, "they [Mrs. Pete's family] actually should be fishing across the river where I fish and I should be fishing where Rita fishes because my grandfather [Robert Peters] fished there."

Even in this controversy, the way in which Mrs. Pete and her family use the spot is significant, as McHalsie has noted "[the year I wanted to start fishing] she [Mrs. Pete] was already fishing there. She already had her family there, you know the dry rack, cabin, and she was quite comfortable."<sup>48</sup> Seen in this light, it is most important that the fishing spot remains a Stó:lō place where someone with a claim, albeit from some people's perspectives not necessarily the best claim, continues to fish and dry in a *proper* way. It is her earlier and ongoing use of the site that gives Mrs Pete authority to use the spot.

### Belonging to I:yem

From the Stó:lō perspective, people are regarded as *belonging to places* as much as *places belong to people*. Mrs Gutierrez explained that when some people<sup>49</sup> tried to claim the spot where her daughter continues to fish, "the spirit" protected her from being hurt because her daughter belonged to that area — the ancestors were there before her.<sup>50</sup> In this regard, the memorial at I:yem, by drawing attention to the ancestors buried in the Fraser Canyon, is a reminder of this connection between the Stó:lō and the canyon as well as their corresponding rights to fish there. The idea that certain people belong to the canyon emphasizes that for the Stó:lō meaning exists within these places and is not simply ascribed to them.

While some Stó:lō people are seen as belonging to certain places and their relationships with the Fraser Canyon can be viewed as protected, the places themselves have and continue to be threatened and changed. It is difficult for an outsider like myself to understand how Tillie Gutierrez's daughter's relationship with her canyon fishing place was preserved because she belonged to that place while I:yem itself (as Mrs. Gutierrez knew it) was destroyed by cement fish ladders in the early 1960s. Such changes are further evident in the vandalism that has occurred in the cemetery at I:yem that included

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<sup>46</sup> See Mrs. Vincent Peters, Marion Smith Fieldnotes, MS 268:4 (15) and 268: 4 (9).

<sup>47</sup> Mrs. Pete is McHalsie's mother's second cousin. See "We Have to Take Care," 95.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Mrs. Gutierrez did not specify whom.

<sup>50</sup> Gutierrez interview.

the theft of the memorial's plaque. Yet, while canyon places change the meaning that is inherent in them remains, as does the need for certain people and families to continue to return to them. In attempting to reconcile ideas of belonging with obvious changes to canyon places, it is suggested here that it is the relationship with the canyon itself that the Stó:lō view as the most important — demonstrating continuity in the midst of change.

Statements of belonging to the Fraser Canyon go beyond articulating an attachment there and can be seen as providing authority to particular claims to these places. It is because individuals and their families belong to their canyon places that they argue their claims are superior to those of others. By articulating this relationship, they actively maintain connections with their canyon places. Nonetheless, competing claims over these places remain, as do competing authorities. While places may own certain people and grant authority to their claims, legally and politically these same places are under the control of groups to which these individuals may not belong. This is most evident in the Yale Band's role in acceding to the creation of the fish ladders that destroyed Mrs. Gutierrez's family's fishing spot. Even though Mrs. Gutierrez's family belonged to I:yem, as a Yale Indian Reserve it was under the authority of the Yale Indian Band, to which she did not belong.

Authority derived from both belonging to particular places as well as that from legal and political means continues to be invoked in negotiating Aboriginal relationships with canyon places. Both the Yale and Stó:lō see themselves as belonging to the Fraser Canyon and are actively engaged in protecting their connections to certain places.

These themes of belonging and authority will be further explored as the focus of this analysis turns to the communal aspects of the relationships of the Yale and Stó:lō with I:yem and with each other, as well as their understandings of these relationships.

### **Re-discovering I:yem: I:yem as a Contested Place**

The memorial at I:yem continues to be significant today, as it is currently associated with a larger dispute between the Yale First Nation on the one hand and the Stó:lō Nation and Tribal Council on the other over fishing rights in the canyon. Since 1938 the legal climate for Aboriginal rights has changed, creating opportunities for land claims and the formation of Aboriginal political organizations to pursue them — including the different incarnations of the Stó:lō Nation, the Stó:lō Tribal Council, the Yale Band, and the Yale First Nation.<sup>51</sup> As Carlson explains, “occasionally colonialism creates a context where

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<sup>51</sup> Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal People and Politics*, 122. Stó:lō bands participated in the Chilliwack Area Council that began when the federal government transferred jurisdiction over their social assistance programme to the council in 1974. Significantly, in 1975 the “self-proclaimed Stó:lō Tribes of the Lower Fraser Watershed drafted and adopted the Stó:lō declaration,” which was essentially “a statement of Aboriginal title and rights to all land and resources within their collective tribal territory.” By the early 1980s the political tribal council Stó:lō Nation was formed. The Yale Band was a member of this tribal

Indigenous interests clash with one another, and within which both sides invoke history to justify innovative means to traditional ends.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, the dispute between the Stó:lō and the Yale First Nation is intertwined with their relationships with the federal and provincial governments and the history of colonial changes to the Fraser Canyon.

It is in such a context that the memorial has been “re-discovered,” taking on a new political and economic significance. According to Steven Point,

[The I:yem memorial] became politically significant at a time when [in the late 1980s and early 1990s] the Stó:lō were being asked to get a licence to fish up there [in the Fraser Canyon] from the Yale Band.<sup>53</sup> And the Yale Band was trying to get control of the fishery there and our chief was going “why should we get a licence from you when this is our fishery?” There was internal conflict there, and so the memorial became important just to show that the Stó:lō have been up there fishing for a millennium, for a long, long time.<sup>54</sup>

The potential for the memorial to help the Stó:lō regain important fishing grounds makes it potentially significant for the majority of Stó:lō people and potentially harmful to members of the Yale First Nation. Similarly, each group has distinct understandings of the canyon fishery.

The Stó:lō Nation/Stó:lō Tribal Council on the one side and the Yale First Nation on the other have been in court twice since 1992 over who should control access to and regulate the canyon fishery — and by implication who should be considered Stó:lō.<sup>55</sup> The Stó:lō

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council, until it withdrew its membership by a Band Council Resolution on June 6, 1983. This was not the only conflict within Stó:lō Nation, and in 1985 its member bands split to form two tribal councils — the Stó:lō Nation Canada and the Stó:lō Tribal Council. It is significant that following this split both political entities still considered themselves to be Stó:lō and would unite in the pursuit of common causes and goals. These organizations amalgamated in 1999 before fracturing again in 2005/2006. See Miller, *The Problem of Justice*, 125; Schaepe, “Stó:lō Identity,” 235; Affidavit of Robert Hope, *Chief Robert Hope v. Lower Fraser Fishing Authority and others*, 2; “Yale First Nation Paid Advertisement,” *Chilliwack Progress*, July 3, 1999.

<sup>52</sup> “Innovation,” 145.

<sup>53</sup> The people from Yale refer to themselves as the Yale First Nation because they view themselves as separate from the Stó:lō. The use of the term Yale Band here promotes the view that they remain a Stó:lō community.

<sup>54</sup> Point interview.

<sup>55</sup> This public conflict was sparked by the efforts of the downriver Stó:lō communities to negotiate an Aboriginal Fishing Strategy (AFS) and pilot sales agreements with the Department of Oceans and Fisheries. See *Chief Robert Hope vs. Lower Fraser Fishing Authority and others*, Reasons for Judgment of Mr. Justice K. C. MacKenzie, (BC Supreme Court Vancouver Registry, 17 July 1992); *Yale First Nation v. Her Majesty the Queen In Right of Canada et al.*, Reasons for Judgment of the Honourable Madam Justice Dorgan, (BC Supreme Court Victoria Registry, May 22, 2001), online, Reasons for Judgments Database, <http://www.courts.gov.bc.ca/jdb-txt/sc/01/07/2001bcsc0746.htm>.

groups emphasize that access to the canyon fishery was and is based upon customary family rights to particular fishing stations and that Yale First Nation is indeed a Stó:lō band. The Yale have argued that their chief and council has the right to control access to the canyon fishery and that members of other First Nations, including the Stó:lō, require their permission to use sites in the “Yale fishery.”<sup>56</sup>

As the Yale First Nation moves through the treaty process the implications for future relationships with the canyon fishery become apparent. Although the Yale First Nation reached an Agreement in Principle<sup>57</sup> on March 6, 2006 with the federal and provincial governments, they continue to have “overlapping claims in the Fraser Valley” with the Stó:lō.<sup>58</sup> Part of the “Yale Agreement in Principle” outlines that their government would determine who has rights to harvest fish in their territory under the final agreement. In addition to the allocation of these resources, the Yale First Nation would become responsible for setting out methods, timing, and location of fish harvesting, with the potential for commercial opportunities.<sup>59</sup> Beyond rights and access to the canyon fishery, this agreement would officially solidify the position of I:yem (as part of Yale Indian Reserve 22) as an area under the control of the Yale First Nation rather than the Stó:lō collectively. Such possibilities worry the Stó:lō downriver, as they threaten their access to the territory as well as the identity of places they view as historically Stó:lō. As Steven Point notes, “once they have a constitutional right to do that, it’s pretty tough to change.”<sup>60</sup>

These court cases and treaty negotiations contribute to how people are able to relate to the Fraser Canyon and demonstrate the role of law in shaping understandings of I:yem and its memorial. These decisions and negotiations continue to define Native places, and in some ways can be seen as a continuation of the mapping and remapping of Indian Reservations in BC that began in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, current negotiations affect how people relate to places and one another — especially in their assertions over to whom the canyon belongs and what types of rights Aboriginal people have to certain places. Recent court cases and land claims emphasize that the Fraser Canyon is partially a legal space that continues to be defined by processes that are never entirely within Aboriginal control. In this way, the current conflict raises broader issues about the role of

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<sup>56</sup> See *Chief Robert Hope, vs. Lower Fraser Fishing Authority and others*, Reasons for Judgment of Mr. Justice K. C. MacKenzie, 2; See also *Yale Indian Band vs. Aitchelitz Indian Band et al.*, Reasons for Order of Prothonotary John A Hargrave, (Federal Court Vancouver B.C., 24 June 1998), file # T-776-98, online, Federal Court Decisions Web Site, p. 3. [http://decisions.fct-cf.gc.ca/en/1998/t-776-98\\_4083/t-776-98.html](http://decisions.fct-cf.gc.ca/en/1998/t-776-98_4083/t-776-98.html)

<sup>57</sup> The Agreement in Principle is the fourth step in the six-step treaty process and is to reflect the guiding principles in negotiations between BC, Canada and the First Nation.

<sup>58</sup> BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, *Yale First Nation Agreement in Principal Brochure*, 3.

<sup>59</sup> Yale First Nation Treaty Negotiations Agreement in Principle, pp. 47, 50.

<sup>60</sup> Point interview.

<sup>61</sup> Cole Harris has noted the legal realities of the “arbitrary boundaries identified on the reserve maps.” (*Making Native Space*, 271.)

courts and the treaty process in determining who can form relations to particular places, and how they are able to do so.

The conflicts between the Yale First Nation and the Stó:lō Nation/Tribal Council relate not only to who should have rights to fish in the Fraser Canyon, but to who should be considered Stó:lō. As such, they are also about assertions of authority. Individuals' understandings of places are often conceptualized in comparison with others. Extant statements by Robert Hope and Steven Point are similar in how they describe their own communities compared to those of the other. Carlson has noted that in contemporary Indigenous conflicts, "a group will often assert that its claim to a particular resource is superior to another's because it is more 'traditional'."<sup>62</sup>

In this conflict between the Stó:lō and the Yale, in addition to invocations of tradition and history, the Aboriginal people of the Fraser Canyon and Valley tend to undermine their opponent's claims by dichotomizing the economic motives of the two sides. Both sides speak of what the other stands to gain from controlling the canyon and what their own group stands to lose. Some members of the Stó:lō First Nation have suggested that the Yale decided "they weren't Stó:lō anymore," when it became politically and economically prudent for them to do so.<sup>63</sup> Yet, when referring to their own claim, these Stó:lō spokespersons typically focus on the personal aspects of their connections to canyon places.<sup>64</sup> Chief Robert Hope of Yale provides a counter argument asserting that the people at Yale were only included in the Stó:lō group by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development as an "administrative convenience."<sup>65</sup> Ironically, Steven Point explained the government's placement of the canyon fishing reserves under the authority of the Yale Band was also a matter of "administrative convenience."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Carlson, "Toward an Indigenous Historiography," 139.

<sup>63</sup> According to Steven Point the fight between the Stó:lō and the people at Yale began when selling fish became legal. The Yale did not want the Stó:lō Nation to be controlling what they viewed as their industry, "that's why they aren't Stó:lō." Summary from Point interview.

<sup>64</sup> For example, Ken Malloway, a Stó:lō commercial fisherman, emphasized that the "dispute is not just about 'property,' in the European sense. It is about family, and personal identity; about the need for cultural survival. We are borrowing the land and the resources from the children who are yet unborn." See Ken Malloway, as quoted in Mark Falkenberg, "Family Feud: Stó:lō Say Fight Over Fishing Rights with Yale Band Comes Down to Respect for Traditional Fishing Patterns," *Chilliwack Progress*, April 17, 1998, p. 9.

<sup>65</sup> *The Chilliwack Progress*, March 17, 2006, as quoted in *Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee Local Media Excerpts to March 31st, 2006*, online, <http://www.fvrd.bc.ca/NR/rdonlyres/37719ADD-6E99-4634-BD00-B53E396C7D86/928/LocalMediaReporttoMarch3106.pdf>.

<sup>66</sup> Point interview. Issues of government mistakes in naming reserves are not new, as they were raised in the 1950s by Mr. and Mrs. Lorenzetto from Hope who explained to Wilson Duff that Xe'tet was put under the Yale band by mistake. The Lorenzettos explained that the "Commissioner going by didn't land there, and Liyik travelling with him, said he'd take care of their other places out of his kindness. Commissioner said he'd



Statements emphasizing the need for individuals and groups to have meaningful relationships with their places while denying others that same connection reveal that both the Stó:lō and Yale draw upon their personal connections with these places to add authority to their own claims.

While both sides emphasize their personal connections to canyon places and the role of these connections in their group identities, the clear economic benefits of the canyon fishery seem (to an outsider's eyes) glaring and contradictory. As such, they raise questions about my own assumptions in interpreting information that has been shared with me. Identities and cultures are inherently political and typically promote the interests of their members. Yet, whereas my own biases accept economic self-interest in the past from people vying for control over valuable canyon resources, the present claims that stand to benefit financially one Aboriginal group over another seem less palatable. Significantly the relationships of the Stó:lō and the Yale to their canyon places have been articulated and mobilized primarily in the more adversarial settings of the court room, treaty table, local media, and other political forums. This public dispute has been characterized by outsiders as Aboriginal groups “vying for control of the lucrative Canyon fishery in the courts and at the treaty table,”<sup>67</sup> or alternatively as only a “rivalry skirmish and contest between Indian bands over where they might catch their given allocation of salmon.”<sup>68</sup>

Such normative assessments tend to rationalize the conflict. They are also reductionist — narrowing the conflict to what people stand to gain economically.<sup>69</sup> It is important to avoid simple answers derived from outside cultural perspectives and to take the economic aspects of these relationships with place seriously. Consequently I must reconsider the testimony of those individuals and groups whose self-interest is easiest to critique, as well as the accounts of those, such as Mrs. Gutierrez, whose claims of personal connections are easy to accept uncritically. Just as Aboriginal commercial fishers may have more complex personal relationships with their fishing places, those who have emphasized the inherent meaning of the places may also economically benefit from the fish that they and their families catch there. While acknowledging the validity of economical aspects of relationship to places, questioning how representative an individual's testimony is of the Stó:lō or the Yale, their family, and their own personal perspective is necessary. This

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come back, but didn't so  $\chi\delta t\delta t$  stayed with Yale band, not foreseeing trouble at present.” See Mr. and Mrs. Lorenzetto, Duff, Unpublished Fieldnotes, Notebook #7.

<sup>67</sup> Robert Freeman, “Bands Feud Over Canyon Cleaning,” *Chilliwack Progress*, May 18, 1999.

<sup>68</sup> *Yale Indian Band v. Aitchelitz Indian Band et al.*, Reasons for Order of Prothonotary John A. Hargrave, 1998, 7.

<sup>69</sup> There is also a tendency for some scholars to be critical of Aboriginal groups that seem to prioritize more local band-based identities in the pursuit of economic advantages. For example, lawyer and historian Alexandra Harmon has explained “people of Native ancestry have related their histories in order to show that they meet government definitions of Indian, tribe or band and are therefore entitled to particular resources.” (“Coast Salish History,” 46–48). See also Miller, Tennant, and Harris.

conflict, that has at times been violent,<sup>70</sup> is not, however, simply about fish. It is also, and I argue more fundamentally, about maintaining important relationships to particular places, even when fishing elsewhere could be more convenient and just as profitable, given changes in technology. In this way, Aboriginal relationships with the Fraser Canyon are not only about fish or identities, but also about the continued meaning of the canyon itself, and the need of both the Yale and Stó:lō to maintain their connections with those places.

### Personal Aspects of I:yem

Even the broader political conflict cannot be separated from the personal aspects of place. This is especially evident in statements made by respected Yale elder Lawrence Hope regarding the canyon fishery — statements that are inherently political, yet fundamentally personal.<sup>71</sup> Like Tillie Gutierrez, Sonny McHalsie, and Rita Pete, Mr. Hope emphasizes his own personal connections with and experiences in the Fraser Canyon. He established his privileged voice and authority by asserting, “I think I am the only one that grew up in the canyon that is left. I am the only one that truly lived in the canyon, in the fishing ground that saw things.”<sup>72</sup> It is these experiences that legitimize his claims and add to his own status, even though he clearly is not the only person who grew up in the canyon. Furthermore, his childhood experiences of spending time in the canyon with his family inform his current understandings of these places.

It is interesting to explore Lawrence Hope’s description of the Stó:lō asking permission of the Chief at Yale to fish in the canyon. As Mr. Hope explains, in the past a person would not say “I want to come here to fish.”<sup>73</sup> Rather, he reminisces that:

When I was a young boy, I remember that before anyone went fishing they always dropped in to say hello and pay their respects to my grandfather.<sup>74</sup> This was a customary way of asking permission to fish in our territory. The arrival of guests into our territory for purposes of fishing was a cause of celebration, they

<sup>70</sup> For example, Ken Malloway has referred to violent confrontations between the Yale and Stó:lō over the fishery. He has also emphasized that, “our people [the Stó:lō] would die for those fishing spots, literally, our people would die for those fishing spots.” (Malloway interview, 10.)

<sup>71</sup> Lawrence Hope was born in the 1920s at Seabird Island. Although his grandfather George Hope had moved the family to Seabird from Yale to farm, the family seasonally returned to the canyon to fish. Lawrence Hope’s mother, Lena (nee Charlie) later took over the farm. Mr. Hope explained that the farm “wasn’t much of a success, so we more or less moved to Yale all the summer months. . .” Lawrence Hope is the father of Chief Robert Hope. (Hope interview, 4.)

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>73</sup> Affidavit of Lawrence Hope, *Yale Indian Band vs. Aitchelitz Indian Band et al.*, section [30].

<sup>74</sup> Mr. Hope is referring to his mother’s stepfather, who was Chief Jimmie Charlie. Jimmie Charlie was a brother-in-law to Dennis S. Peters and Isaac James.

would stay over night with the chief before going to the river and would visit us again on their departure. This happened on a yearly basis.<sup>75</sup>

Lawrence Hope's understandings of the canyon are shaped by his relationships with his family, especially his grandfather, and also by his interactions with those who fished there at the time. Although this statement outlines proper protocols between insiders and outsiders (suggesting that the territory belongs to those at Yale), it is essentially about relationships between people and the places they share. Mr. Hope's sentiment that such connections have been lost is evident in the simple statement, "but those days are gone."<sup>76</sup> Lawrence Hope's conceptions of the Fraser Canyon shaped by his relationships with those that he experienced it with are similar to Mrs. Gutierrez's memories of the I:yem of her childhood that cease to exist in the present. Furthermore, his interpretation complements that of Sonny McHalsie, as both stress a sense of loss, changes, and need to regain connections with places and between the people who share them. While articulating seemingly different political perspectives, Mr. Hope and Mr. McHalsie share concerns over their perspective communities' lost connections to the Fraser Canyon and seek to re-assert their attachments there.

### I:yem as a Yale Place

Building on Mr. Hope's personal understandings of the Fraser Canyon, I will now explore how the broader community at Yale relates to, and interprets, this place. In attempting to look at I:yem as a Yale place, it is necessary to take seriously and historicize the Yale's claim of not being Stó:lō. This exploration of the heretofore-unexamined experiences of those who stayed in the Fraser Canyon rather than migrating downriver in the late nineteenth century<sup>77</sup> suggests how they responded to changes to their places and came to view themselves as a distinct group of Aboriginal people of both Stó:lō and Nlaka'pamux heritage.<sup>78</sup> Newspaper articles, public statements, and earlier oral interviews with members of the Yale First Nation reveal that the Yale's interpretation of their history is fundamentally shaped by particular familial connections and experiences. Over time, the families at Yale have changed and by 1952, there were

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<sup>75</sup> Affidavit of Lawrence Hope, *Chief Robert Hope et al. vs. The Lower Fraser Fishing Authority and others*, (Vancouver registry, July 1992) file # c92-4333, p. 5; For similar statements see also "New Head of Fisheries Meets Canyon Band," *The Hope Standard*, July 13, 2000, p. 13; Affidavit of Lawrence Hope, *Yale Indian Band vs. Aitchelitz Indian Band et al.*, section [30].

<sup>75</sup> Affidavit of Lawrence Hope, *Yale Indian Band vs. Aitchelitz Indian Band et al.*, section [33].

<sup>76</sup> "New Head of Fisheries Meets Canyon Band."

<sup>77</sup> Carlson has extensively explored the role of large migrations from the Fraser Canyon in the formation and consolidation of a collective Stó:lō identity among those who moved to more arable lands further down river. See "The Power of Place"; "Toward an Indigenous Historiography"; "Stó:lō Migrations and Shifting Identities."

<sup>78</sup> See Hope interview; Yale First Nation Treaty Negotiations Agreement in Principle.

only three family groups that were a part of the Yale Band.<sup>79</sup> The majority of men who stayed in the canyon married upriver Nlaka'pamux women and their “families negotiated membership in both ‘communities’.”<sup>80</sup> Anthropologist Andrea Laforet has noted that in the 1970s, the Aboriginal people at Yale were of both Upper Stó:lō and Nlaka'pamux descent.<sup>81</sup> As familial connections and rights to certain places can be seen to centre a person’s own spatial orientation, changes to particular families over time would affect their members’ understandings of their places.

Such an upriver focus of the leaders and major families at Yale, which to an extent was natural for a border community, would have differed from how those who moved down river for agricultural opportunities related to the territory.<sup>82</sup> Over time identities shifted and ethnogenesis potentially occurred as the descendants of the Emerys, Charlies, and Hopes learned the Nlaka'pamux language and associated histories of their grandparents.<sup>83</sup> This is not to say, as has been claimed in court, that the Stó:lō do not have ancestral links to the Fraser Canyon and family rights to its fishery. Evidence from reserve commissions, oral history and the memorial itself notes that those who moved down river considered themselves to have retained their canyon fishing rights. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the disputes between the Yale and the Stó:lō are linked to their changing relationships with particular places, and that the formation and articulation of new identities can be seen as legitimate responses to such changes.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> LAC, RG10 vol. 7128, file 987/3-5, pt. 2, Letter to W. S. Arneil, Indian Commissioner for BC, from J. C. Letcher, Superintendent New Westminister Agency, BC, January 28, 1952, *Fraser District — Vancouver and New Westminister Agency — Elections of Chiefs and Councilors for the Various Bands in the Area*.

<sup>80</sup> Andrea Laforet and Annie York, *Spuzzum*, 137. Notably the families of Patrick Charlie and Maggie Emery negotiated memberships in Spuzzum and Yale. The Hope family currently prominent at Yale also has links to both communities. See Bjerky, “First Peoples of Yale and Spuzzum.”

<sup>81</sup> “Folk History in a Small Canadian Community,” 33.

<sup>82</sup> As early as 1945, Fred Ewen explained to one of Marian Smith’s students that the Talti’t or Yale People were a joining of the Halq’emélem and “Thompson people in the Stalo.” See Ewen and Smith Fieldnotes, 268:2:1 (13).

<sup>83</sup> The use of language and history in families of both Nlaka'pamux and Stó:lō heritage would likely influence understandings of place. There is a link between language and the names of particular places, and the knowledge of those places that can be derived from their names. In this way the prominence of the Nlaka'pamux language in these families is directly tied to understandings of places and their history. See, for example, Charlie interview, 22; Hope interview, 6–7.

<sup>84</sup> This discussion fits into a body of literature that rightly describes the Coast Salish as a “fluid, supratribal society.” However, some scholars seem to privilege Aboriginal identities and affiliations that grow to be more expansive over those that become narrower. Arguably, current interpretations of the Yale’s identity and understandings of place, while narrower than those of the Stó:lō, still fit into a context of fluidity and flux that involves both expansions and contractions. See Harmon, 47–48; See also Suttles; Miller; Carlson, “Toward an Indigenous Historiography.”

This exploration of Yale understandings of the canyon sheds light on some of their differences with the Stó:lō, especially the contested claim that the Stó:lō require the Yale Chief's permission to fish in the canyon. According to tribal historian Bob Joe, who in 1962 shared his memories of the creation of the I:yem Memorial with amateur ethnographer Oliver Wells, the memorial asserted the right of all of the Stó:lō people to fish in the five mile fishery above Yale. In contrast, he noted the different relationship that the Nlaka'pamux had with the area, as they needed to get permission before fishing there.<sup>85</sup> This explanation offers a possible reason as to why the current Chief and Council of the Yale Band, individuals with Nlaka'pamux heritage, believe that other groups, such as the Stó:lō, need permission to fish in the canyon. This is reflective of how their ancestors and families understood outsiders to relate to the fishery.

### **I:yem beyond the Courtroom**

It is important not to overemphasize the contest over being Stó:lō, and thereby limit present-day understandings of place to those terms. Carlson provides an important reminder that Native rights litigation is a “theatre in which identity and affiliation tend to be drawn in stark, often binary terms: plaintiffs and defendants, Indians and whites, supporters and opponents. . .”<sup>86</sup> Accordingly, in the abovementioned court cases and treaty negotiations a variety of understandings of the Fraser Canyon are often reduced to two perspectives — Yale versus Stó:lō. While these perspectives remain significant and often relate to individuals' understandings of the Fraser Canyon, they do not fully capture the complexity of the many relationships that the Aboriginal people of the Fraser Valley and Canyon had and continue to have with the canyon and I:yem. In addition to challenging each other, the perspectives of the Yale and Stó:lō are also interconnected, drawing on a common history, albeit at times different aspects and interpretations. In their relationships to place, members of both groups emphasize the role of government regulations and other colonial changes. They attempt to respond to perceived threats to their relationships and recreate personal attachments with the canyon.

Although there is a difference between such a general political significance, and the personal connections that Tillie Gutierrez, Rita Pete, Lawrence Hope, and Sonny McHalsie emphasized, these differing views (while not necessarily informed by one another) cannot be completely separated. Tillie Gutierrez, Rita Pete, and Archie Charles had little to say about the political conflict between the Yale First Nation and the Stó:lō, and Archie Charles, who fishes for food and not commercial sale, reported never having problems with the Yale Band.<sup>87</sup> Their connections to I:yem and the fishery were personal. To Tillie Gutierrez, I:yem was her grandparents' fishing spot. To Rita Pete I:yem is where her own fishing spot and dry rack are located as well as the graveyard that she is responsible for looking after. Then again, even those who emphasized more personal

<sup>85</sup> Bob Joe, “Bob Joe at Tzeachten February 8, 1962” in *Oliver Wells Interview Collection (1961–1968)*, transcript, SNA, 103.

<sup>86</sup> Carlson, “Innovation,” 145.

<sup>87</sup> Charles interview.

relationships with I:yem have also been involved in the more political aspects of things and vice versa. Mrs. Gutierrez testified in the Vanderpeet case that eventually went to the Supreme Court of Canada regarding Aboriginal rights to sell fish commercially.<sup>88</sup>

Archie Charles, who was the chief of Seabird Island for many years and served as one of the grand chiefs of the Stó:lō, was personally named in the court cases between the Yale and the Stó:lō over fishing in the Fraser Canyon. Even Mrs. Pete referred to some trouble with the Yale First Nation, noting that although her fishing spot at I:yem is not on reserve land, members of the Yale Band “came there measuring it.”<sup>89</sup> In contrast, Steven Point, whose interpretation of the I:yem Memorial was the most overtly political, conducted the sacred burning ceremony at I:yem for Mrs. Pete. Most notably Lawrence Hope’s testimony and affidavit while providing the foundation for the Yale First Nation’s claim, is especially personal. Finally, even though Sonny McHalsie recognizes the political significance of the memorial and its implications for Stó:lō identity and history, has conducted research for claims, and testified in court, I:yem is where his ancestors lived, fished, and where his great-grandfather built a memorial — by extension, this is a place where he belongs.

## Conclusion

When asked about the current significance of I:yem to the Stó:lō people, Mr. McHalsie explained that he was “not sure if to many people think about it, but that’s something that is going to come back eventually. You know, I really feel that we need more of an attachment to the area up there.”<sup>90</sup> The I:yem memorial no longer provides that primary attachment. Rather than preserving a physical connection for the Stó:lō people to their canyon places, the memorial is now largely an example of a past relationship and can be used as evidence in attempts by the Stó:lō to forge and maintain relationships with these canyon places in their present and for the future. In this way the meaning of the memorial — the need to establish, maintain, and define relationships with the canyon — remains while the memorial itself is often forgotten. I:yem is an important place for those who have connections to it and continue to fish there with their families. Those who have preserved their own connections to I:yem remain positive that their communities will regain their lost attachments to the place. Some of these visions for the future involve the seemingly forgotten memorial. For example, Mrs. Pete has explained that her son Richard wants to get another plaque for the monument.<sup>91</sup> Others like Mr. McHalsie continue to search for alternative means to assert their connections to the canyon for future

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<sup>88</sup> Mrs. Gutierrez provided testimony in 1989. The Stó:lō supported Dorothy Vanderpeet and brought the case all the way to the Supreme Court. Although the Supreme Court did not find in favour of Mrs. Vanderpeet in 1996, the case resulted in the court providing criteria for establishing Aboriginal rights.

<sup>89</sup> Pete interview.

<sup>90</sup> McHalsie interview.

<sup>91</sup> Pete interview.

generations. Regardless of what form these assertions take, what remains constant is the need of the Stó:lō and the Yale to continually make them.

Ideas of memory and connections to certain landscapes are intricately related to individual and group identities. I:yem is not only a place that is politically significant for the Stó:lō in their disputes with the Yale First Nation, it is also personally meaningful to many of the people who were interviewed for this project. It is this need for meaningful relationships with places that seems to link the personal with the political, the tangible and the intangible, and relationships between the dead, the living, and those yet unborn — demonstrating continuity in a place that has, and will continue, to change. I:yem is a Stó:lō place and a Yale place, but beyond that it is experienced and interpreted by particular individuals and families. Throughout this paper I have attempted to unveil the importance of place making and relationships in the way identities are constructed by exploring how a few Aboriginal people of the Fraser Canyon and Valley continue to understand the canyon in general and I:yem in particular and what aspects of those places they choose to preserve in their own present. The ways in which Sonny McHalsie, Tillie Gutierrez, Archie Charles, Rita Pete, Steven Point, and Lawrence Hope spoke of I:yem and the canyon demonstrate the importance of connections to places, memory, belonging, authority, ancestors, and fishing for both personal and political reasons. Meaning is never simply something that is ascribed to places — it also exists within them. This is especially true at I:yem, where people's ancestors are located and where they themselves belong. It is through the process of returning to these places that aspects of memory and identity are regained and new connections with the landscape created. Fundamentally, it is the Aboriginal people of the Fraser Canyon and Valley that have and will continue to set the parameters of what aspects of the canyon can change and what must be preserved, ultimately demonstrating the centrality of their many relationships with this place.

**Note:** Since this paper was accepted for publication, tensions have increased between the Stó:lō and Yale First Nations. In October 2008, some members of the Yale First Nation used a backhoe to push the I:yem Memorial into the Fraser Canyon. A group of Stó:lō people have placed a new stone plaque (with the same inscription as the 1938 original) into the ground where the memorial once stood. Currently, the Stó:lō want mischief charges laid against the Yale, and the Yale want trespassing charges laid against the Stó:lō.<sup>92</sup> While these recent events are in some ways unexpected, they fit with the arguments and conclusions that this paper has made about the continuing need for both the Stó:lō and the Yale to maintain and protect particular relationships with I:yem and the Fraser Canyon.

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<sup>92</sup> Robert Freeman, "Yale cemetery conflict — 'This is spiritual now'," *Chilliwack Progress*, November 10, 2008; Robert Matas, "Taking it to their graves: Two native bands at odds over land, fisheries, and burial ground of their ancestors," *Globe and Mail*, November 5, 2008.

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