# Knowing the Land as Home and Alive: Re-centering Snuneymuxw's Relationship to Saysutshun in Co-management

**by**

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# Abstract

The overall goal of this thesis is to center ways Snuneymuxw First Nation (SFN) have known how to live collaboratively and collectively with their territory since time immemorial. This project looks specifically at the co-management of Saysutshun (Newcastle Island Provincial Marine Park) between SFN, BC Parks, and the City of Nanaimo. Co-management has been a strategy used by Indigenous peoples, including Snuneymuxw, to disrupt the power of the colonial state and reclaim aspects of self-determination. However, co-management structures often become another way the state maintains control over land and decision-making. Based in Indigenous methodologies described by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, anthropological policy and document analysis, and interviews Snuneymuxw, this thesis finds that there is a need to move beyond colonially-centered co-management and to re-centre Indigenous processes and institutions.



**Keywords**: Coast Salish, parks, co-management, national self-determination, land back, Indigenous research methods

*To a future transformed by Indigenous ways of relating to human and non-human relations.*

*To a future where Saysutshun and all of Snuneymuxw territories are engaged with as empowered beings, as networks of beings.*

*To all of those open to being transformed.*

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Thank you also to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for funding this project.

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# List of Acronyms

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|---|---|
| CMA | Co-management Agreement |
| PDG | Petroglyph Development Group |

# Glossary

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|---|---|
| **Co-management** | In a Western resource management understanding, this is a form of management that includes multiple parties, each with party holding varying forms of power depending on the structure and need of the parties and resource. The "co" may allude to co-operative, collaborative, or community-based forms of management, yet there is generally a party which holds significantly more power or authority over others. |
| **Co-management** | Although Snuneymuxw people do not often use this word except to discuss a specific colonial co-management relationship, Snuneymuxw First Nation have known forms of co-management relationships since time immemorial. It is very difficult to find language that would do justice to the ways the Ancestors and contemporary Snuneymuxw people have enacted their own forms of "co-management." The foundations of a Snuneymuxw co-management are found in respecting the power and agency of neighbouring nations, as well as non-human relations. Power is not held over others in Snuneymuxw co-management but is instead expressed by having the right and responsibilities to be in relationship with human and non-human relations. |
| **Nat'su'mat** | A Hul'q'umi'num' word (may be found with different spellings) that does not have a direct translation. It describes relationships where all parties – including the land and what would now be considered the metaphysical or spiritual realms – work together with one heart, one mind, and one spirit. |
| **Non-human relations** | Broadly refers to plants, non-human animals, elements, ancestors, and metaphysical beings. Such a term honours the agency of power of beings that are not human, as well as the interconnectedness and inter-dependence that is central to many Indigenous worldviews. I have chosen to use non-human *relations* over *beings* as a gesture towards the interconnectedness of relationships between beings. |

# Preface

In this thesis, I have wrapped up my dreams and hopes and love to place in this basket woven of language. This itself is an act of hope as I fear this basket will fail all I hold dear. I have tried to weave the language that seemed best around the warp and weft of my heart work. I have also tried to co-manage my own knowledges and positions within this work to the best of my ability, which has certainly been a lesson in the difficulties of enacting internal forms co-management. I recognise that, undoubtedly, I will have failed my love for the land and my obligations to Snuneymuxw because of the limitations of academia and the requirements of the thesis. However, this is but another step in the journey – not a beginning or ending of anything.

I would like to acknowledge that the knowledge shared with me by Snuneymuxw citizens is limited due to my position as an outsider, the sacredness of Saysutshun, and the privacy associated with particular knowledges or traditions. What is represented here is information that would have been or is currently used for community or general knowledge. I would not know any of it if not for a multitude of relationships that have had a profound impact not only on my research but on who I am as a person. I could not have done this work without the grace and trust of those who have guided and have been involved in this project, which has profoundly changed me and how I work. Through these relationships, I have been humbled, taught, and transformed. A primary teaching I have been gifted from time spent sitting with Coast Salish peoples is a primary obligation to the ongoing process of bettering oneself. This includes confronting the cognitive colonialism we have inherited and beginning to live in ways that are respectful and generous. Working to decolonise our worlds beginning with ourselves is a foundational part of healing and transformation. I feel I would not have been able to do this project without having experienced such a transformation in how I saw myself, the nation, the land, and the relationships between us that has roots in my experiences with Snuneymuxw's territory that is continuing to unfold.

In the course of my relationship with Snuneymuxw and Saysutshun, I have received many gifts – gifts that the land has given me, that Snuneymuxw have given me, but each

of these gifts is also a responsibility. When Joan Brown spoke to me of reciprocity, she asked how is that we – that I – give back? We cannot just take without offering of ourselves as well. The Cedar tree gave the Coast Salish world many of the gifts they would need from cradle to grave and beyond, which the people gave back in ways unique to their own gifts and relationships. When it came time to apply for a graduate degree, I knew that putting the resources of the academy and myself into the service of Snuneymuxw and the lands that have given me so much was a priority. I went into graduate studies with my heart ready – too ready for the academy. That is not the part of the body that academia was designed for. During my graduate coursework, my mind was pulled along through anthropological and resource management theories, as well as languages of sovereignty and self-determination that engaged thoughts, but rarely my heart. Even conversations with Snuneymuxw First Nation, in preparation of my research proposal were technical and logical – What do you need from this project? What can I do? What does this project look like for your capacities? These conversations are integral to a collaborative framework, but what do they have to do with *the heart* of the work? As Weber-Pillwax describes, the source and practice of a research project depends on the heart/mind of the researcher, and checking your heart is a critical element in the research process (in Wilson 2008, 60). I remember having a conversation with a citizen of the nation about the framing of my questions and crying afterwards about the ways that academic practices insidiously undermine the way *I know things should be done.* I realised that more than anything I was doing this work to have the space and time to know how to conduct myself in a good way to the land and nation, to be of service; however, this should have been learned in the community rather than in academia. I felt in that moment and many days since the rigour it would require for this project to be enacted within the framework that I wanted to learn and work in. Not the academic rigour one would expect from undertaking graduate research – not the critical literature reviews that extend the theories put forward primarily by white men but the work of keeping my heart and my accountability to teachings of Snuneymuxw at the forefront *despite* the expectations of the academy. I have chosen to weave around a framework of healing, transformation, and love. To do otherwise I feel would be disrespectful to what I have been taught and experienced through the spirit of Saysutshun and the energies that

have gone into this project. As Cole (2006) describes, we must be careful what framework we use as it is something we have to carry. He states that

"A framework
Is not just an architect/ural or /tectonic manifestation of a blueprint/ing
It is the enactment of a respectful relationship
With the rest of creation which shares this earth with us
A framework is never a noun never simply a metaphor
It cannot be captured thus as a part of speech a figuration
It is more than any words which attempt to denote it
A framework is a journeying with" (27).

To do this, I have tried to approach the work not as a researcher, but as a student - as I will be for some time as I learn how to listen and conduct myself in appropriate and good ways.

I don't consider anything present in this thesis to be "new" knowledge, which may be a disappointment or difficult to understand for some as that is a driver of academia. Instead, this work relies on and uplifts ways of knowing that have always existed for the Snuneymuxw people in their relationship to the territory, as well as the brilliance of decades of Indigenous thinkers. I consider it a great honour and gift to have the opportunity to bundle together these knowledges, to the best of my ability, for you to now read. I hope that it is a seed for you to grow with, just as this process has been for me.

# Coming to the Land

The ferry ride is important. That 7-minutes gets me in the head space I need, helps me leave the city busy-ness. On most days I am welcomed aboard by citizens of Snuneymuxw First Nation who work on the ferries, reminding visitors that Snuneymuxw are *still here*. I always try to sit at the back of the boat where the windows are lower and closer to the water so I can feel it on my skin.

The air is full of the call of the purple martens, who seasonally call small wooden boxes above the dock *home*. Their call is a short piercing hollowness that seems to go right through me. When I am on the dock, their call is a welcoming pierce to fully call me into this place. Where the dock is situated on the island, there is almost always a breeze that coming off the Salish Sea as it moves between the islands, joining the song of the martens in caressing my skin. The part of the island where the ferry leaves visitors is an open expanse of lawn, often burnt to golden brown by the summer sun and the constancy of the wind. In the summer this slope of land crisps under my feet, just as in the winter months it crunches – each step is a sound-feeling. At one time this may have been, probably was, a Garry Oak meadow that in the spring would have been a lush little ocean of blue cammas lilies, frothing in the breezes. The land here gently rises upwards from sea towards the pavilion, the colonial crown jewel of the park. But that is not what I am here for. I am here for the feeling that is much deeper than that – that is too hard to explain because it rests so deeply inside me, moves from the inside out.  It is not to be rushed towards – I might miss it – so I move slowly, methodically, humbly. Waiting for us to recognise each other in each other.

*I am here*.

I move counterclockwise because that is the direction I have been taught to move. The ocean meets the shore to the right. Some days a hush, hush of the water meeting the land gets whispered into me by the softness of the sea. Sometimes it wants to make sure I am listening and pushes into me. Under my feet is the same path that generations of Snuneymuxw Mustímuxw have walked, in their grief and healing and training.  So I step lightly – soft sole, soft soul – because I tread where someone else's ancestors are. As I step over the sandstone of the shore, I wonder how many of the stones have been alive, had been animals, transformed by X'eels. Then I remember they are still alive, all of them. I feel them as "I am here, you are here, we are here." Both of us always transforming. That is what I am here for today.

When I reach the forest, the quality of the shade is felt as more than dark, but a quiet cool against my skin and the smell of decomposition fills my nose mingled with the salt foam of the always nearby ocean. The bird song is different here, different in every part of the island. I walk northwards in the thickening dark of the older trees, where sunlight is filtered in through canopies high overhead. I know to be quiet here, knowing nothing I could say would add anything to this silence. To my left there is a long scar reaching high up the truck of a grandmother Cedar. I run my hand along the edge of the scar and give thanks to the tree, those who know how to live with a respectful heart, for the opportunity to learn.

I journey slowly, taking more than three hours, lingering in the places that make me feel. Lingering with watching, witnessing, waiting. Listening and learning. In the spot where the eastern trail dips down into a grove, a family of woodpeckers work together to bring to light a feast, chattering away in their celebration. I move with the island and feel lucky to be surrounded, to bear witness to the minutiae of economies happening around me. So many worlds bound up in this space.

I hope I am doing it right, respectfully. It's hard to know – I have stitched together pieces of teachings that are like gifts, but that are given sparsely. That's fine – I am not from here and they are not really meant to be my teachings. But I also don't have my own. So I just try my best to be open, to re-open, to make it a practice until it is a process. Until I am transformed and thinking differently isn't different anymore.

# Chapter 1.

# Introduction

It seems that with each decade, a new political discourse on relationships between Indigenous peoples and the settler-colonial state of Canada unfurls. In the current era of implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation, it may be tempting to think Canada has entered a new phase in its relationship with Indigenous peoples. The current political discourses that frame Indigenous-settler government relationships grow from the legacy of the 1969 White Paper, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in the 1990s, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the early 2000s. Colonial discourses and policies are further nested within nation-state narratives of "peace-making" and "helper" identities (Barrett 2018; Regan 2010; Jefferess 2009) and stolen Indigenous lands turned into "wilderness" and "resources" to be protected or used as the state agenda dictates (Guernsey 2008; Cronon 1996). If these narratives and strategies have changed it is because of Indigenous political resistance through the introduction of co-management frameworks in the 1970s, which the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples credits as interrupting unlimited Canadian authority to lands and resources (Pasternak and King 2019, 48, 640). Although there have been some successes or gains over the years for Indigenous communities through their resistance, the rights granted by the government "do not breath life back into fulsome Indigenous jurisdictions" (Pasternak and King 2019, 48). Ultimately, the current reality of Indigenous peoples shows that these attempts at "new" relationships with the Canadian state have failed to create the realisation of Indigenous national self-determination and sovereignty.

The central position of colonial ideals within forms of self-governance, land claims, or management agreements means that rights gained by Indigenous peoples through these mechanisms are often only those that the colonial governments do not see as a threat to the integrity of the state (Coulthard 2014; A. Simpson 2014; Alfred 1999). This collection of narratives, strategies, and practices of colonial governments in Canada have created a canon of ethnocentric and colonially-centered regimes that manage not only the lands, but

also the kinds of relationship that Indigenous peoples can have with their territories. Co-management, which I focus on in this thesis, is a balancing act – a part of the strategies of what are often two opposing sides. On one side is some aspect of the colonial state fighting to maintain jurisdiction, decision-making power, and any benefits that can be obtained from stolen Indigenous land. On the other side are Indigenous nations who have moved forward with a strategy that includes co-management as a way to assert their presence and relationship with their land on the path to national self-determination and improved economic conditions. Nadasdy (2003) explains that the principles and structures of co-management relationships are primarily those that force Indigenous peoples to mimic capitalist structures and goals of the presiding government jurisdiction, a system that further displaces traditional value systems, limits the types of outcomes or goals the Nation may have, and are often incompatible with core beliefs of the Nation (9). It is my view that if government truly desires renewed relationship between Indigenous peoples, the enactment of Indigenous cosmologies, institutions, and economies must be at the heart of these relationships.

To understand what colonially controlled institutions mean for a specific place and Indigenous nation, my thesis tells the story of Snuneymuxw First Nation and the co-management of the island known as Saysutshun[1] or Newcastle Island Provincial Marine Park in the harbour of Nanaimo, British Columbia. This co-management agreement is tri-partite between BC Parks, The City of Nanaimo, and Snuneymuxw First Nation that has been in place in 2003. It is currently stewarded on behalf of Snuneymuxw by the nation's wholly owned Petroglyph Development Group (PDG). As I will discuss in coming

[1] The whole of the island is called Saysutshun now, but it is not Coast Salish practice to name the entirety of an island or any landscape in this manner. At one time there was a village that was called Saysutshun near the bay turned backwards. In conversation with Elders, the importance and misunderstandings of place names is a common topic. A Snuneymuxw Elder that I spoke with in preparation for this project explained that you have to be careful about the names– that Snuneymuxw people got together in the 70s and 80s with the maps and talked about the various names they remember the old people using for certain places in the territory, with most remembering something totally different. This resulted in many embellishments to fill in the gaps we don't know. Jared Qwustenuxun Williams of Quw'ut'sun explains: "I have to start by acknowledging that naming whole islands, whole geographic regions, whole lakes, and whole rivers, is not a required practice in Hul'q'umi'num' territory. The intense desire for everything to be named is an introduced western concept. Saltspring, like most islands in the Salish sea was home to many tribes and from what I know had no unified name. Not that tribes disagreed about a name. But, that the island as a whole didn't have a name."

chapters, the co-management agreement was formalised as part of a 2013 Reconciliation Agreement between Snuneymuxw and the Province of British Columbia through which the nation sought to reclaim their rights to steward important parts of their territory. Snuneymuxw people can look to no other place in the world to find their origins, with their caregiving responsibility to the territory continuing to this day despite 150 years of colonisation, settlement, and industrialisation of their diverse landscapes and waterways. Snuneymuxw citizens have been working for the past century to transform and enliven relationships of power and governance in the context of land and imposed colonial government, which has included work at treaty negotiation tables, in court, and through cultural revitalization programs and assertions of self-determination. Their work has resulted in obtaining the co-management agreement for Saysutshun, but also efforts that have resulted in the recovery of other parts of the territory following the signing of the Reconciliation Agreement. The work of Snuneymuxw has further been seen through the 2017 settlement regarding the 79-acres of reserve land, which was stolen and settled despite being protected by the 1854 Douglas Treaty, which along with $49.1 million in financial compensation, makes it the largest specific-claim settlement in B.C. history. In 2020, another settlement included the return of 7,400 acres from the Crown including forestry and protected lands around Te'tuxutun (Mt. Benson) and Mt. McKay.

I have bundled together the knowledges shared with me in service to Snuneymuxw's legacy of repatriating land and self-determination as well to center their cosmologies and institutions within the co-management of Saysutshun. During the course of this project, Snuneymuxw citizens often expressed that the current co-management relationship cannot be the end point nor the only way forward in their self-determination with a significant and sacred point in their territory. Staff at PDG who take direction from Elders and the Chief and Council shared that goals for Saysutshun center around fully reclaiming their relationship and governance with the island. They view the island as a portal for internal cultural revitalisation. Their specific plan includes the return of longhouses to the landscape for use by artists, national events including ceremony, and meetings and working to ultimately repatriate the land out of the BC Parks system and to re-enliven Snuneymuxw governance and co-management. The full return of the land to Snuneymuxw will center Saysutshun as a homeplace and be a portal for broader economic

reconciliation, decolonisation, and self-determination throughout the territory. In the meantime, it is their plan to continue developing tourism in ways that are culturally relevant and ethical. This will provide much-needed employment for the Snuneymuxw peoples who wish to develop and share their knowledge held through the land. If goals and needs of Snuneymuxw are to be met, much work needs to be done to transform what is at the heart of the co-management agreement and those who enact it, particularly BC Parks agents. Snuneymuxw Elders and PDG staff expressed that to once again install and recognise Snuneymuxw as the rightful stewards of this specific part of their territory would serve as a portal for greater self-determination throughout the territory.

What Snuneymuxw people shared with me further allows me to see that my research is not only about co-management, but also concerns transformation and discourses of "Land Back" as understood by Snuneymuxw. This shapes my argument that if co-management relationships are to be tools for national self-determination, they must be rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and relating to specific territories. A shift in the heart of these relationships would honour the fact that Indigenous peoples have their own systems, ceremonies, and protocols of co-management within and between communities including with non-human relations. Though there are many Snuneymuxw institutions and ideologies that could be utilised to explain and enact co-management relationships, my participants identified transformation as a foundational part of their cosmology in terms of relationships to ancestors, the land, one's personal growth, and the future. They have taught me that this is not only a foundational part of Coast Salish cosmologies generally, but to Saysutshun specifically as the island is viewed by their Elders as a transformative portal for the community, the whole of their territory, their own national self-determination, and shared future. There are two layers or forms of transformation that I have woven into my thesis based in Snuneymuxw-specific understandings and the transformation experienced by the territory and ancestors in the oral histories of Xeel's the Transformer. I have expanded the understandings of transformation to include the need to move beyond the idea of Saysutshun as a "park" into the territory and homeplace of the Snuneymuxw people and the transformation of co-management from colonially controlled institution to a relationship that is based in Snuneymuxw ideologies, institutions, and knowledge about how to work together.

To achieve transformation in this co-management agreement specifically and settler-Indigenous relationships more broadly, the people on the frontlines of Indigenous rights movements are currently calling for a diversity of "Land Back" mechanisms. Understandings of "Land Back" have histories in Indigenous rights movements and ideas that grow from Indigenous legal philosophers such as Chief George Manuel (1974) that have continued today into the work of Audra Simpson (2014) and Aimee Craft (2021). According to Craft, Land Back is predominantly an act of unsettling the concept of land from property and power to actions that are rooted in care. She states that "Land Back is an opportunity for everyone to have a relationship with the land and the water…to heal our relationships and to heal ourselves" and allow us to work in frameworks of consent, gratitude, responsibility, and relationality (2021).

Although the actual return of land is paramount to many nations' understandings of self-determination, including Snuneymuxw, Land Back is not necessarily an eviction order. Snuneymuxw citizens have expressed desire to continue hosting visitors on Saysutshun when the land is properly returned to them – but it will be *their land* rather than public land and a conservation enclosure. Land Back is also the reclamation of Indigenous governance with the land. Examples of this are detailed by the Yellowhead Institute Red Paper on Land Back, which show deliberative assertions of Indigenous institutions that are intended to restore Indigenous land and life through Indigenous-centered environmental regulation and assessment, consultation processes, and permitting protocols (Pasternak and King 2019, 48-56). Sylvia Saysewahum McAdam explains this extensive idea of Land Back stating "'give it back' means to restore the livelihood, demonstrate respect for what is shared – the land – by making things right through compensation, restoration of freedom, dignity, and livelihood" (2015, 85). Frontline organisers in the Land Back movement further identify some of the steps required for Land Back beyond returning the land as dismantling white supremacist structures that remove Indigenous peoples from their lands in the first place, defunding structures that criminalise Indigenous land and water defenders, and operationalising real consent rather than relying on pre-determined consultation processes (NDN Collective, nd.).

From all of these considerations, my primary research goal is to show that Snuneymuxw peoples have always had understandings of "co-management" that existed long before Europeans came to the territory, which are currently suppressed by colonially controlled co-management relationships and agendas. However, Snuneymuxw have persisted in being in relationship to the territory and knowing who they are as a people. Through the lens of Snuneymuxw perspectives and experiences, I describe what their oral histories and knowledges say about co-management and how these challenge understandings and practices of co-management as it relates to Saysutshun at present. My research focus is undertaken to counter a tendency, particular in conservation narratives, to extract Indigenous ideologies and practices to build futures that continue to erase or marginalise Indigenous peoples (Muller, Hemming and Rigney, 2019). As former Snuneymuxw Chief Doug White explained while discussing Land Back, the futures that Snuneymuxw peoples are dreaming are those that love and care about future generations, with caring for our responsibilities to land being a key part of that future. Their objective is not a pre-contact world, which would perpetuate the myth that Indigenous principles and practices only exist in the past. Instead, Snuneymuxw ways of knowing and doing dream a shared world that grows not only from the knowledges passed down by the ancestors, but also from the contemporary world.

By considering the agency of the land, as well as the roles that pre-existing and persisting Indigenous knowledges can play in transforming Indigenous-settler relationships within co-management, my work with Snuneymuxw First Nation and their territory addresses a gap in co-management literature. It also contributes to gaps in the scale of co-management research, as Canadian studies of co-management predominantly focus on the national park level, but few at the provincial level. The BC Parks agency has expressed a commitment to strengthen its relationship with First Nations, with collaborative agreements playing an integral role in "this new relationship" (BC Ministry of the Environment 2008, 5-6), thus investigation at this scale is important to ensuring Indigenous institutions are cenetered in this work. Through my conversations with citizens of Snuneymuxw, alongside an academic literature review, it is a clear that there is a need to interrupt the current dialogue around co-management agreements and their potential to "reconcile" relationships.

In this thesis, I do not offer a blueprint or checklist for either the achievement of a reconstituted, Indigenous co-management relationship, nor how it should be put to use. Instead, my objective is to gesture toward a multiplicity of ways that the land and our relationships to it can be known, while looking specifically at a place and a nation that I am deeply obliged to.

Through the lens of Snuneymuxw perspectives and experiences, my project will describe Snuneymuxw First Nation's oral histories and knowledges that contribute to co-management and mechanisms of Land Back. What will be further investigated is the nature of the current co- between Snuneymuxw, BC Parks, and the City of Nanaimo and whether it is capable of meeting the needs and asserting the rights of Snuneymuxw.

### *Positioning Myself in Ideas and Methods*

According to Coast Salish practices of locating oneself in their own history and the territory on which they stand, it is necessary that I tell you about myself in order to connect the reader to my perspectives and research.

i do not undertake this work with a love of nature, wilderness, the wild. i do not want to explore or discover. imagine many quotation marks here.
teachings get whispered into this work.
i struggle to call this "my project," "my research" because it is full of the voices
who have been gifts, offered gifts
that I am binding into medicines of knowledge and knowledge of medicines.
they become a part of my practice,
they land in my body, *uy shqwaluwun*
not just research practice
but *practice*
until i breathe them in
as a continual unfurling commitment to recognise the kind of relationships that see
    the value in other life as a practice.
this is a practice that has been, is, and will be a shifting negotiation of beings
    that must be anchored in place. that become an anchor in me.
    not the yoke of colonialism, patriarchy, a vast field of anxieties in bloom that pull me down
        but a context of love and trust to pull me into.

so to come to this place, this practice
i have to be brave and humble enough to recognise myself
following protocols of identity i have come to know from coast salish peoples and to call my own ancestors into this space and my work:
my name is chantelle spicer. i am the fourth child of my mother hallie spicer, nee haddad-banks. her mother, virginia haddad is of jewish morocco, a first-generation settler of the united states. her father is harold banks, a third-generation farmer settler whose family is from austria. i am the first child of my father allyn spicer raised in berwick nova scotia, who was told his mother was mi'kmaq. he is untraceable in the records. he was adopted into the english settler family of maurice and mable spicer of berwick, nova scotia. this was a "founding family" of that region of nova scotia. the cemeteries there are thick with that name.
knowledge of much of my family and history has been severed by active and ongoing colonial violence on both
branches of my lineage.
I stitch together the parts of it that I know, honouring what is there, but also acknowledging that I might never know
the parts that are lost
and loving the parts of myself that call for their teachings all the same.
my body has never known and may never know land, teachings, practices, songs that my family
has carried for millennia
bound to the land through *kesalttimkewey*, a deep and magnetic love.[2]
maybe this *kesalttimkewey*, is what pulled me to this practice-place.
*every free body is falling toward every other.*
if there are memories in my blood, what should i remember?
*i wish it could tell me.*
i am not supposed to know who i am i because of the insidious, orchestrated, and internalised shame of colonial policy, of white supremacy, of anti-semitism.
i am only supposed to benefit from white-passing privilege
to live the "american dream" on stolen land in Canada.

i have no right to claim any land or any community because of this disconnection
but I do have a responsibility to learn and to act in solidarity.

[2] *kesalttimkewey* is the Mi'kmaq word gravity as interpreted by James Sakej Henderson in Melissa R. Nelson's *Critically Sovereign:* 248.

…despite these disruptions that dilute the ability to prove or assert,
my body
knows how to connect to the land and water,
seeks out a treaty of love, responsibility, and obligation to host nations and lands.
is willing to work
with presence and care.
knows that it is a stitched together landscape of teachings,
a slow, prayerful process.
until it becomes a map inside myself, carefully traced
towards shared liberation.

these are the threads that bind, that lead me
to and from.[3]

i admit i am human, that i am a student, that i do not know how to be yet.
that I struggle with identity politics, of feeling *enough*,
waiting to be filled, *hungry*
with small bites, *nourishing,*
and melt for love of this land.
knowing who i am is so much simpler when i am with the land.
it sees up my skirts into the secret-sacred places of me,
knows kin, sister, practitioner of slowness and care.

saying that i love this land
this is not an attempt to mythologize or romanticize relationships to land,
but an assertion of a strength and rigour
marginalised and devalued by oppressive structures.
and persists.
nor is it a way of knowing the world relegated to the past.
it is work that is alive in me, a living gift from many teachers
it is work that requires diligence, honesty, and kindness that must be remembered
with every step like stitch,
an intervention, a prayer,
a constant, tireless questioning of how to love more fully.
i have stitched together a wild garden of thought and ethics and being through
sitting, watching, listening,
practicing with elders and citizens of many nations
snuneymuxw and quw'utsun and musqueam and metis and and and
*so generously have i been gifted*

[3] I would like to acknowledge the language of Natalie Diaz, whose poetry inspired me to incorporate a language of stitching, a practice which is close to my heart.

this work is rooted in honour and obligation to their generosity
while i continue searching for my own family identity
for my own grounding, teachings.
while respecting this ground, these teachings.

simpson (2017) says living and working on another's territory is an agreement to act "in a peaceful and generative manner and with respect for the sovereignty, self-determination, and governance of the nation. it is an agreement to come to know the practices and laws and to conduct oneself in accordance with those laws.

> this does not affect your own identity as a person – you are still operating as that person on a territory in a way that continuously demonstrates respect (64)."

i roll these words around in my mind, body, on my tongue,
feeling the heft of their deep knowledge
that sits in my throat, knowing that I cannot fully articulate it because they are not my teachings,
but feel bound to how they are a part of me….practice…place…
me…practice…place.. stitching myself back together.

When I started this project, the primary questions asked by Snuneymuxw people were "Who are you? Who are you to do this research?" which I have also repeatedly asked myself throughout the process of writing this thesis– even before this was really a process. The act of locating oneself is not only important in research, but also in how one interacts with the territory and the Indigenous peoples who steward it. Though I am neither tied to the land or co-management agreement as a Snuneymuxw person, I do have a responsibility to conduct myself in appropriate and caring ways while on their lands and in this work. Therefore, it is important that I acknowledge my position as a white-passing, non-Snuneymuxw person, who benefits from a series of personal and professional privileges that rest upon the marginalization of Indigenous peoples. Despite working as collaboratively with Snuneymuxw peoples as possible, it must be emphasized that the work I do in accessing, "collecting," and analysing knowledges is limited by my outsider position to the nation and acculturation within Western academia. As an outsider, I can never understand the Snuneymuxw-specific experiences of colonialism on their nation, but I can work to fulfill a responsibility that I feel to work as a good relation towards their national self-determination. Given these considerations, this work and my use of Indigenous methodologies outside of my community is undertaken with great care. Such care is a

foundational part of this, as to undertake this work without care towards my own positionality and the goals of the research are to create yet another way that Indigenous peoples are colonised (Morales 2018, 147).

My relationship with Saysutshun began as a resident of Nanaimo. I had lived in Nanaimo for about four years before stepping onto the little harbour ferry and making the seven-minute ferry ride to the place that would become a central part of my life for many years to come. I still remember the feeling of getting off the boat for the first time, because each time I have returned it feels just as special. I returned to Saysutshun time after time until eventually I became employed by Snuneymuxw First Nation to lead ecological and historical walking tours of the island while I was completing my undergraduate degree in Forestry and Anthropology. In this work, I walked with visitors around the island, taking great care in explaining the significance of the land to Snuneymuxw and the extractive colonial history of the island. I also made sure that visitors knew that Snuneymuxw people were still here working with the land and that they and the land are healing from colonialism together. I recently shared with a citizen of the Snuneymuxw that part of the reason that I have been drawn to Saysutshun again and again is because this was the first place that I began to understand what spirituality and healing could mean. I told them that in learning about the history of the island, I often saw myself in the land – that there are layers of colonialism still present, but there is also a reclaiming and healing happening, the land growing over those wounds and blooming. They shared that this is the vision for Snuneymuxw too – that Saysutshun is a portal for transforming the grieving of the people into healing and that it always has been this.

### *Methodology and Methods*

The methods I called upon in this research exist in the family of Indigenous methodologies that focus research agendas on the decolonization politics of Indigenous peoples through processes of transformation, healing and mobilization (Smith 2012, 120). In her foundational work on Indigenous methodologies, Linda Tuhiwai Smith defines aspects of such methodologies that invite different ways of doing research than those presented by classical academia and anthropology (240-268). For this project with Saysutshun and Snuneymuxw, I have chosen to focus on the methods that utilise Smith's descriptions of

Indigenous methodologies that connect people with places and experiences, as the destruction or disruption of memory is a strategy of oppression. In line with Smith's methodologies of "Remembering," I lift up and center Snuneymuxw peoples' assertions of Saysutshun as their territory. This assertion and re-assertion persist in the face of despite decades of marginalisation through the land being a park and BC Parks policies (2012, 147). Smith also highlights the importance of re-enlivening Indigenous governance, which I have centered by describing transformation and ideologies of co-management learned from the people of Snuneymuxw as of part of the re-instating Indigenous principles of collectivity and governance to meet contemporary needs and goals (2012, 157). The practice of centering Snuneymuxw understandings of co-management and land further challenges imposed colonial governments and systems of management over lands and people that are oppressive. Smith also calls on methodologies and analysis that envision futures that rise above present-day situations (2021, 153). To enact this, my research question and purpose have been framed in ways that do not focusing solely on historical and ongoing oppressions, but instead focus on Snuneymuxw futurisms. The research agenda and the actions I took in meeting the goals of this research were ultimately guided by the needs of Snuneymuxw First Nation, determined through years of formal and informal conversation about this project with staff of Petroglyph Development Group, which stewards Saysutshun on behalf of Snuneymuxw and with citizens of the nation. They were also driven by my own love, experiences with, and sense of duty to Saysutshun.

During the course of this project, six Snuneymuxw citizens took time to help me understand their relationship to the territory, the co-management agreement surrounding Saysutshun, and the ways they know to move towards different futures. Other Snuneymuxw citizens who work with or around Saysutshun shared informally with me through casual conversation that has also made its way into this work. What is represented here is a spectrum of voices who know the territory, Saysutshun, and the goals of Snuneymuxw in varying ways, with many having given considerable thought to the politics of these relationships. Both Elders and young people shared in this project, which gives insight into the tensions and overlap between what Saysutshun and transformation have meant to Snuneymuxw in the past –to the ancestors–and what it means today.

Two participants – Ian Yaatqumtun Simpson and Eliot Kwulasultun White-Hill – work directly with Petroglyph Development Group (PDG), which stewards the co-management agreement of Saysutshun. Ian is the CEO of PDG and has a long relationship with Saysutshun, as his father was the first Snuneymuxw caretaker of the island during the negotiation of the co-management agreement in the mid-1990s. Ian moved to the island when he was 13-years old and spent his teenage years riding the bike trails of Saysutshun. Eliot is a Project Manager at PDG and a young Snuneymuxw artist dedicated to Snuneymuxw teachings and storytelling in a modern context. His personal website states that it is these stories "that address the ways our traditions and spirituality have survived through colonization and the strength and beauty of our world, our territory, and the beings who exist here" (White-Hill, nd). Blanketing the territory and the people in these stories and art is a part of "making the sacred visible" and ensuring the continuance of Snuneymuxw values and culture (White-Hill, nd).

Dave Bodaly is the current cultural tour guide and Snuneymuxw "ambassador" at Saysutshun, a position he has held for three years. Through his tours with Saysutshun and his artistic practice as a cedar weaver, he is committed to engaging in dialogue with settlers and visitors as an integral part of reconciliation. He is honoured to do the work of welcoming people to Saysutshun in his role and "invites visitors to be transformed by the stories and the island." Geraldine Tsatsassya Manson is a respected Elder of Snuneymuxw. She has done much in her life including serving on Snuneymuxw's Chief and Council, on the Board that was struck to enact the co-management of Saysutshun and has been a part of many archaeological projects through the Snuneymuxw territory. I was also lucky to receive guidance from Elder Gary Xulsi'malt Manson**,** who has many roles in the Snuneymuxw and Nanaimo communities including teaching Hul'q'umi'num' and advising Snuneymuxw governance. Joan Quwqumalwut Brown works with Snuneymuxw Chief and Council, serving as a primary point of guidance for those wishing to work with the nation. I also spoke with two BC Parks staff members who spoke about the role of co-management in the BC Parks system and how the agency relates to Indigenous nations

By the time I began my fieldwork, the world and British Columbia were gripped by COVID-19 pandemic. Standard anthropological practices of participatory observation

had to be set aside – there could be no sitting at Auntie's kitchen table for the day or participating in community activities. Given the limited amount of in-person contact that I could have, a significant portion of my work involved spending time with Saysutshun on my own, as well as coming to know the ways a park operates through policies, legislation, and contracts. Such an investigation into the bureaucratized relationships of government policies and how they become allow for glimpses into how they come to shape the experiences of Snuneymuxw in relating to their own landscape. As Marshall and Rossman (2006) and Dyck and Waldram (2014) point out, undertaking such qualitative policy analysis allows one to uncover complex relationships between policy and local knowledge or practice. My own analysis of the co-management agreements and provincial policy is supported by speaking to those who currently or historically worked most closely with the co-management agreement. This included engaging with employees of BC Parks, Petroglyph Development Group whose portfolio includes Saysutshun, as well as Elders whom the nation's Chief and Council and PDG staff seek out for guidance in stewarding the island and its future. These semi-structured or conversational interviews occurred in person when possible and safe, as well as through online platforms. Once provincial health guidelines permitted, I was able to participate in a number of guided cultural walking tours, led by Snuneymuxw citizen Dave Bodaly. These walks provided me on the ground perspectives of the relationships Snuneymuxw people have with Saysutshun.

However, before I could do any of this, I had to prepare. During the development of my research project, Snuneymuxw citizen Joan Brown offered me an important teaching. When I asked Joan what the focus of work with the island should be, she flipped the question and asked me to consider how it is that we honour the gifts the land offers – that what we need to be able to do is be humble and allow the land the space to breathe and offer us its knowledge. To honour Joan's teachings, I knew I had to prepare myself to learn and listen with a good heart in order to become ''teachable'' by those willing to speak with me. Given that Snuneymuxw peoples have been coming to Saysutshun since time immemorial to train and prepare their minds, hearts, spirits, and bodies for the challenges ahead, it made perfect sense to me to do my preparatory work with the land and water there. When I did not know what I was doing or if what I was doing was right, it would know and be there to teach. But I had to listen. Beginning in July 2020, I came to Saysutshun every

day for a week by myself with a heart, mind, and body in the process of *learning to learn.* Each of these visits was done with a ceremonial heart, as "ceremonies have the power to focus attention to a way of living awake in the world" (Kimmerer 2013, 36). Part of this process was engaging in the practice of sit-wait/watch/witness-listen (SWL) that had been instilled in me by many Quw'utsun' and Snuneymuxw Elders during my undergraduate studies. SWL for me is the embodiment of humble learning. Much of the time it requires you to come without even a question to shape what it is you are watching or waiting for and instead await what it is that you need to be taught in that moment.[4]

This involved a lot of preparing to SWL, which was preparation for the project – preparing to prepare.
So I walked and told the land who I was, what I was doing there. I sat and prayed and called deep for ancestors that I don't know and may never know. I prayed to have a good heart and mind. I focused on my breath and my gratitude for my body and this place.
And then I would settle in
Sit and sit and sit and
Watch the light move on the water, dapple sand around me as it moves through the trees
Watch oystercatchers in their flight like a game of how close they can fly to the water
Watch people paddle by in their kayaks and standup boards
Watch the tide move in and out, in and out in its own rhythms
Listen to the water as it reaches the shore
Listen to people chattering and laughing as they move by
Listen to the unique voices of birds in each part of the island I would settle into
Listen to the wind's voice translated through the tree leaves.[5]

I often took the ferry to Saysutshun on the first trip of the day and would return on one of the last trips. I walked the trails slowly and quietly listening for things that you can't hear in a rush or in conversation. During the course of my many walks with the island I understood that I was coming to the island not as a *place* for research to occur, but instead as a participant with much to teach me. Ingold (2004) and Basso (1996) identify the potential of addressing a landscape not as something that is walked upon, but instead as

[4] Fabian (in Goulet and Miller 2007) addresses this need to come open to fieldwork, stating: "Fieldwork is best done while we relax our inner controls, forget our purposes, let ourselves go … when we found ourselves, inadvertently beyond the boundaries of our initial research intentions and proposals" (1).

[5] I included watching visitors to Saysutshun in my SWL to increase my understanding of "access" and "use," how people were relating to the land (or not), and how their actions spoke to the societal understanding of the territory as a park. Also, it is a part of this project is to work relationally and this means including human relationships in my witnessing.

places that hold wisdom. Wright et al (2016) locate Bawaka country as their co-author when talking about their relationships to territory and research. In placing the country as their lead author, they honour how the land "enabled our learning, our meeting, the stories that guide us, the connections we discuss and has, indeed, brought us into being, as we are, and continue to co-become, today" (Bawaka Country, Wright, el al 2016, 456). It is in the spirit of honouring the agency and knowledge of the land that I came to Saysutshun throughout my fieldwork.

In those early days of this project, I spent my days slow walking with the land, praying, sitting, swimming, writing poems, being humble and open. In thinking about her own work in learning and writing from the land, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) describes the importance of providing a context in which "coming to know is done in a compassionate, loving reality" that creates an evolving Indigenous intelligence unique to nation or territory (152). As Flowers (2015), quoting Simpson (2015), explains this is not a love meant for consumption by settlers but a love that must be turned inwards toward Indigenous peoples, nations, and lands. In the context of my thesis, this means celebrating the loving futures Snuneymuxw want to create for their own people and lands, as well as hard-fought for care for myself in the process of undertaking this work in a colonial institution. As hooks (2000) further explains, in choosing the ethic of love one has the responsibility to act in relation to that love rather than focus energies on intellectualising oppressive structures (165).

Walking with Dave on the tours or by myself was a salient part of the methodology I practiced in this project. Moretti (2017) invites ethnographers to consider the potential of walking as a strategy for helping researchers understand social positions and identities in public spaces, which is an important aspect of my project with Saysutshun and co-management. Walking itineraries like those used by Moretti allow one to move beyond the "already there" by "open[ing] a performative space: a time and place for inhabitants to take on, bend, and respond to the many histories, questions, and meanings" that actively engage with the environment (96-7). My walks with Dave and time spent around workers at Saysutshun allowed me to see the ways that Snuneymuxw peoples are actively interrupting

the focus on colonial histories. They are actively involved in learning who they are as Snuneymuxw people and building relationships with this part of their territory.

I wanted to ensure that my methodology of being open and centering care extended beyond the field and were a part of my analysis and writing practices. Kovach does commit space to critiquing Western analysis for its way of sorting and decontextualizing knowledge ("data") that limits Indigenous inquiries (2009, 130, 132). In a recent online conversation with Indigenous graduate students, Kovach urged that in our analysis and writing that we "think Indigenous" – that this is imperative to ensuring our research does the job of advancing Indigenous theory in ways that are specific to places and nations. Based on this guidance, my analysis centers Snuneymuxw thought and teachings that have been shared with me. I have tried to make sure that perspectives are put into dialogue with others to create collective understandings of relationship to Saysutshun and understanding of what co-management is and can be. Much of what I garnered from my time with the island, as well as some conversations, are woven into ethnographic stories that occur between the chapters. These are presented with no analysis, instead utilising the ways I have learned from Elders and inviting the reader to take from them what is needed at that time in relation to the context they are presented in.

When it came to the task of writing, I would listen to audio recordings or read my transcripts or field notes and then prepare myself for each writing endeavour by meditating, praying, walking in the nearby ravine and listening to the water run joyfully over the rocks, or journaling–always listening for the good time to write or the call to write certain sections. This helps me ensure that what I bring forward and how I use the knowledges shared with me is woven together in respectful ways. Chief Janice Chepximiya Siyam' George of the Squamish Nation says that preparing the heart and mind for creation is integral to ensuring what you are working on will be equipped for its purpose. She says "you have to be in a really nice spiritual place, a clear place. You actually say a prayer, you clear your mind and you aren't feeling any stress or anger or anything, because whatever you're feeling you put into your weaving" and only then will what you are weaving together contain good feelings (Topper, George and Joseph 2015, 153). I have also tried to make sure that perspectives

are put into dialogue with others to create collective understandings of relationship to Saysutshun and understanding of what co-management is and can be.

Ultimately, what I sought to engage with in all aspects of this project was my love for the land and my obligations to Snuneymuxw who have been generous with their knowledges. These are methodologies that I can carry with me through life – something I consider one of my greatest takeaways from this project. I leave this project feeling as though I have not mastered anything and this a great strength of the work, as I believe that every experience should do something to prepare a person for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality. Like Neimanis (2017), I have come to Saysutshun and the Snuneymuxw people not to learn "more excellently," but instead to learn more carefully and responsibly (53).

Before detailing the nature of the current co-management agreement at Saysutshun, I focus on who the Snuneymuxw people are and what their pre-contact and contemporary knowledges say about the territory broadly as well as specifically Saysutshun, and co-management. In the third chapter, I weave together literatures of parks and co-management as well Snuneymuxw's perspectives and engagements with each of these topics. In the fourth chapter I investigate the case study of the Saysutshun co-management agreement between BC Parks, Snuneymuxw, and the City of Nanaimo, looking at the colonially centered governing documents and practices of this relationship. The fifth and final chapter describes the potential of centering Snuneymuxw knowledge and relationships with the territory to transform ideas and practices of how we relate to land as territory, home, and relative that extend our current understandings of co-management well beyond their current colonial constructs.

One of the Snuneymuxw ferry captains and I have the boat all to ourselves one day on a return trip, it being a hot and windy day towards the end of the season. I have encountered few people over the course of my walking, though that's not unusual – there are many paths to take. This captain and I have not had the occasion to speak very often, but I have been meaning to reach out to him.

As we start onto our course, I feel the ocean spray and the wind all around me now, mixed with the petrol smell of the little boat. He asks how the research is going.

"Slow, but good" I tell him. "It's good to spend these days with the island."

He guides the boat forward, not even looking at me. He could be talking to the air around him. "I lived on that island for a number of years you know."

"That must have been amazing."

He bypasses this simple offering with his own intention. "Have you ever noticed that there aren't many birds on the north part of the island?"

"No," I tell him, surprised. I have actually been trying to pay close attention to the bird song in different parts of the island, but maybe I have not been paying close attention to their absence.

"I used to walk around the island all the time. Noticed that. I asked Ellen about it. You know Auntie Ellen. She said not to spend much time there."

"Oh yeah," I ask/say.

"She said there's bad spirits there. That that was where we used to take the Haida war prisoners, We would throw them off the cliffs there, from those high cliffs. So be careful. Spirits linger in places."

With that, we are at the dock on the other side and he is jumping from the boat to tie up. "Have a good day now." He gives me a wave and welcomes the next passengers on board. I look back over to Saysutshun, towards this place-being that keeps being revealed to me in new ways.

# Chapter 2.

## "*We would all come together because we knew we were the Snuneymuxw*": Snuneymuxw and Saysutshun

### *Introduction to the Territory*

*"I know the land and the land knows me" – Joan Brown*

Snuneymuxw peoples are a Hul'q'umi'num' speaking nation of approximately 1,700 citizens. They are party to one of the few pre-Confederation treaties made in British Columbia – the 1854 Douglas Treaty. Their territory on east-central Vancouver Island is located in the heart of the Coast Salish world. The ethnographic record marks Neck Point as a Northern boundary and Boat Harbour as the Southern extent, while West to East, Snuneymuxw's territories extend from the Nanaimo River watershed to the Gulf Islands to the East (Bouchard 1992). Snuneymuxw also share non-exclusive territory including lands and waters along the Fraser River (Snuneymuxw First Nation, nd. e). Following the negotiation of the Douglas Treaty, four small parcels of reserve land was created along what is now the Nanaimo Harbour and the Nanaimo River. The reserves assigned to Snuneymuxw were and remain the smallest reserve areas per capita in British Columbia (SFN, nd a). Much of the traditional oceanside territory of Snuneymuxw, including primary village sites, is part of urban Nanaimo. Outside of the city limits, much of the territory has been affected by resource extraction, particularly forestry, and increasing suburbanisation.

Archaeological data indicates that Snuneymuxw or their ancestors have used their territories continuously for at least 4000 years (Bouchard 1992**)**. Snuneymuxw oral histories indicate that they have lived with this land since time immemorial, having descended from a marriage between the people of the mountain and the sea.[6] Joan explained that the territory is a living landscape, rich with area-specific gifts for

[6] The Origin of the Snuneymuxw People story can be found in Joan Brown's 2018 thesis, *Culture is Lived: Language Gives it Life,* pages 10-15.

Snuneymuxw as island people, mountain people, water people and sky people. For those Snuneymuxw people who work with the land in the old ways, each of these domains are visited frequently and in a variety of ways to receive teachings and enhance their own unique gifts. When Joan speaks of the land, her voice becomes soft, full of the love and respect she carries into those places. Her voice is one who experiences how the people and the land occupy each other.[7]

[7] Jeanette Armstrong has spoken of the dangers of trying to define or rely on words that don't capture the fulsome nature of relationships stating: "a person who has never walked under a tree in forests and heard breezes rustling through leaves as birds filled branches, filtering sunlight and rain, will never truly know a tree. To the person whose direct survival depends on trees, the tree has a deeper cultural meaning-steeped in an essence of gratitude toward the creation of the tree. Words have a covering of meaning derived from unique relationships to things, beyond the generally accepted descriptive sensory symbol…thus, even though I might translate tree into an English word, my cultural meaning remains intact as though spoken in my language while your cultural understanding of the word remains locked within the context of your culture. Unless you also speak my language or permit me to fully interpret my meaning the tree of which I speak remains a *tree* cloaked in my culture and language" (in Cole 2006, 195-96).

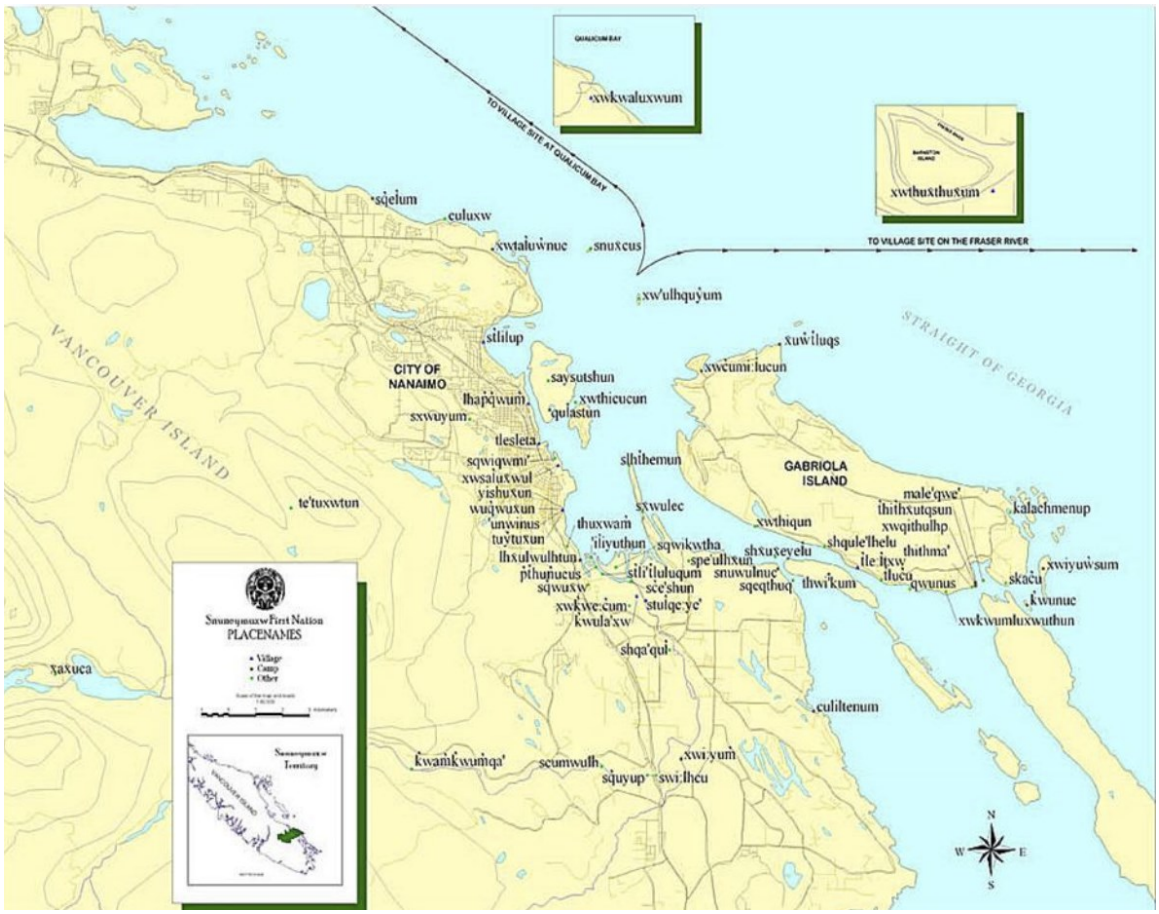


***Figure 1. 1993 Snuneymuxw traditional use map***
Territory of Snuneymuxw First Nation on Vancouver Island, BC according to a 1993 Snuneymuxw traditional use study. This is not the extent of the territory they knew, as a practice of seasonal rounds also brought them to know lands and water of the Fraser River. Map courtesy of Joan Brown.

One Elder that I spoke to in preparation for this work shared similar perspectives of working with the land and how it comes to shape you as a person. Throughout our visits, they would speak in long stretches in Hul'q'umi'num'. I can pick out some of the words – tumuxw, mustímuxw –but more than translating, I feel the language in my heart.[8] After a long stretch of speaking in Hul'q'umi'num', they say to me "you stand before your trail

[8] A note here on my use of the Hul'q'umi'num' language. I have relied on the 1997 Hul'q'umi'num' Words: An English-to- Hul'q'umi'num' and Hul'q'umi'num'-to-English Dictionary prepared by Donna B. Gerdts, The Chemainus First Nation, the Nanaimo First Nations, the Nanoose First Nation, and the First Nations Education Services, School District 68. I have used the Snuneymuxw dialect for words where there is an option indicated. I have not been able to use some of the key strokes of the dictionary. It should be noted that the Snuneymuxw Hul'q'umi'num' dialect is currently being modernized and a new keyboard, which is a project being led by Joan Brown at the time of this thesis submission.

and announce yourself to it. That you came to work with a good heart. You go to the mountains. And your Elders ask, 'do you see?' and what they mean is 'what do you see in yourself?'"

Snuneymuxw lived with Saysutshun as part of their seasonal rounds, though Geraldine and Dave explained that some mustímuxw lived here more permanently as is evidenced in the archaeological presence of at least two long houses. Earlier generations of Snuneymuxw people and their relationships with herring runs, clam beds, and medicines are also present in a multitude of ways including two large shell middens, the presence of Garry Oak meadows, petroglyphs, and a number of bark-stripped cedar trees around the island. Both Geraldine and Snuneymuxw cultural tour guide Dave Bodaly speak of significant sites of occupation around the southern part of the island, which would have included long houses. Geraldine states that "my old people that I was under told me that there was a long house or a place where a woman and a man stayed on that island. But after looking at it I said gosh, I wish we could do archaeological work over there to find that footing of that longhouse back in those days. No one talks about it, but you know it's there." Dave explains that this family would have been responsible for gathering resources specific or unique to the ecology of the island including the camas lily bulbs that were an integral part of the Snuneymuxw trade economy.

Prior to contact – what many in Snuneymuxw refer to as the time of the old people – Saysutshun was known as being a significant point in the territory that would be visited when receiving spiritual healing and undertaking mental, spiritual, and physical training. The name Saysutshun itself means 'training' and "refers to the special places where runners, canoe paddlers or warriors would bathe to cleanse themselves before a race or battle" (Newcastle Island, nd.). The Snuneymuxw history of the island best known by visitors is likely the training aspect, given this focus on park signage and other forms of interpretation, such as through Dave's cultural tours. However, what may be lost on visitors, and is very important to my research, is the nature of training. Eliot states that the training one would receive there is a part of the responsibility Snuneymuxw people have

***Figure 2. Cultural tours with Dave Bodaly***
On a cultural tour with Dave Bodaly near where Snuneymuxw peoples lived in pre-contact times. It is now the site of one of two Welcome Poles on the island.

to constantly better oneself – to learn and transform. "It's not going and jogging around the trails, like the sort of middle-class ideology around training. It's very much about spiritual training, training in the developing your spirit and your mind and your connection with your spirituality." Geraldine also took time with me to expand on the understanding of Saysutshun beyond a historical place of training through simply running, highlighting that it continues to serve as a contemporary touchstone for Snuneymuxw people to visit the ancestors of the land, who are always there. Geraldine learned through her old people that this is the place one would come when you need to gather the medicine to clean out your stomach, make you healthy, and get you fit for training.

Many Snuneymuxw peoples spoke of layered relationships to the territory and Saysutshun specifically. Eliot took great care in describing the overlapping layers of what Saysutshun means to Snuneymuxw and to him individually: as a part of the relationship that Snuneymuxw has with all of their territory as home and as a responsibility passed down by the ancestors; the specific relationship Snuneymuxw has with the island as a place of training and transformation; and the personal relationship he has with the island through employment. Joan described her experiences with the island when she was pulling canoe

and receiving many teachings associated with that work. She said that sometimes when they would be paddling in the area, their coach would want to talk with them or discipline them or remind them of a teaching and he would bring them to Saysutshun. The paddling team would pull up onto beaches that have always known Snuneymuxw canoes and they would walk and listen and be open. She takes quite a bit of time to share with me about the power of the island as a portal that makes it easier to really hear what the message is. She explains that "it's important that people understand…to think beyond that it's an 'island.' Its sacred yes, but also in terms of the level of growth and our understanding of ourselves and the territory, it's an extension of ourselves." There are many concepts caught up in Joan's sharing about her experience with the island through canoeing and visiting, but in this context, what is most important is the individual and collective experience of being transformed or invited to learn through walking with Saysutshun in the old ways.

Dave often shares with visitors on tours that the island has also been used as a place to come with your grief when a loved one passes on. Snuneymuxw people come to yu'thuy'thut – to fix up their heart, mind and body and let go of their tears, which involves coming to the island and walking counter-clockwise around the land.[9] This walk takes about three hours and when this work of walking was completed, the griever would be lightened from their grief and be able to continue carrying out their responsibilities. Eliot states that many people continue to come to the island and other parts of the territory in this way, stating "these teachings still exist in the land, these teachings exist in space and……and in the energy of the place you know…and they exist almost like independent of us and our experience and all the human bullshit that goes on. And that they're just waiting, they're just sleeping, waiting to wake up and be told again." What I have come to know in my time with Saysutshun and Snuneymuxw is that the island is rich with practices, teachings, and stories, which speak to the ongoing significance of Saysutshun to the people. What is offered like a gift through this land is, as Joan describes, "an opportunity to get to a higher level of knowledge and the only way you get that is to connect to these lands and

[9] This spelling is taken from signage at the entrance to Saysutshun.

knowing how to be in the presence of the sacred. There's a reason why we do what we do and if you follow this path you're going to get to that deeper level."

Joan, as well as Snuneymuxw oral histories (White, 2006), describe the Snuneymuxw territory including Saysutshun, as not only a place where relationships are enacted, but beings with their own values, rights, breath, and spirit to be in relationship with. She describes how the old people knew the land could not be governed over but only with. Geraldine also spoke of the agency of the land and how Snuneymuxw people work with the land, waters, and other non-human relations were relatives through nat'su'mat, a Hul'q'umi'num' word that describes relationships where all parties – including the land and what would now be considered the metaphysical or spiritual realms – work together with one heart, one mind, and one spirit. Seeing and relating to the land in this way recognises that the territory knows power and agency that was lived and understood by Snuneymuxw long before the colonial state, capitalism, and Western land management regimes. When talking about the knowledge his great grandmother Kwulasalwut carried, Eliot talked about her relationship with the territory being

> a different plane than the world that we exist in today. One of the things that the old people used to talk about was that we all just had one voice or one mind…like people wouldn't have to speak with words with one another, you'd just connect or that the air would carry your thoughts amongst each other…. and just like this sort of *collective* singularity of *being* wasn't just amongst us as human, it was also amongst us and the world around us and the energy of the world and that's so much of the training.

He goes on to state that the world and spirituality his great-grandmother lived in with the land is profoundly different than his experiences as a Snuneymuxw youth now. However, he also recognises that the power the land held for the ancestors and his great-grandmother still exists in the world "waiting to be woken up," as does the potential and duty to be humble, listen, and be transformed by it.

My point here is not to argue for or justify an agential landscape or place-being. Instead, it is to assert the way Snuneymuxw peoples expressed their relationship to a place of significant power in their territory. The legal and practical transformation of land from property or enclosure to a sovereign agent in the world embraces a living and powerful

world that has been intentionally silenced by the perspective of humans as the only agent that matter (Hathaway 2018, 38). Drawing on the invitation of Kohn (2013) as well as Snuneymuxw Elders, considering the agencies of Saysutshun in the co-management agreement is an invitation to immerse oneself into the kind of thinking that grows toward new possibilities. When describing the transformative potential of this thinking, Kohn explicitly asks researchers to draw their "ethnographic attention to that which lies beyond the human" to understand the lives, dynamics, and properties of the non-human (2013, 6). Indigenous literatures and teachings of land agency ask that this growing be in the direction of honouring our relationality within and between particular relationships between knowledge, thought, place, and being (Deloria and Wildcat 2001; Watts 2013; Rosiek, Snyder, and Pratt 2020).

When looking at Saysutshun through the lens of Snuneymuxw knowledge, what is present with us is an entity that holds a network of other lives and worlds – a deep and luxurious entanglement of agents carrying their own economies, desires, and powers. This includes many species of animals and plants as well as the spirits of Snuneymuxw ancestors, beings transformed by Xeel's, and the powerful energies of the land itself. As Kohn points out, learning how to pay careful attention to how we communicate to each of these different beings is important, for it demands that we resist the tendency to treat relationality as this unknowable complexity - which goes for human and non-human relations equally (2013, 18). Ingold (2000) propose a more relational approach to place that counters the idea that the land is merely a space to be occupied but is dwelled in or with (133). This relational process describes "the land and the living beings who inhabit it [as] caught up in the same ongoing processes" (139) with both experiencing their own and entwined changes. The authors who co-wrote with the land itself - Bawaka Country - describe the agency of the land as understood and respected through patterns and relationships that are grounded in respectful kinship (Bawaka Country, Wright, et al, 2016, 461). In my conversations with Snuneymuxw people about the agency of the land and their relationship to it, it was made clear to me that this is not a sentimental or romantic idea of listening to the land, but a part of their persistent and contemporary identity as peoples who know and have responsibility to their territory. Their relationship with the agency of Saysutshun is honoured in a variety of ways including coming to the land for healing and

guidance, contemporary spiritual cleansing practices, responsibly harvesting medicines, working jobs that foster relationships with the territory, pulling canoe, learning the language, and taking part in cultural events.

Besides speaking of the power of Saysutshun itself, citizens of Snuneymuxw also spoke of feeling the power of and connection to their ancestors through Saysutshun. One of the first tours I ever had with Dave, we walked along the eastern side of the island, taking care to move in the direction one is supposed to when working with the island. The day was sunny and, as always, the wind was strong, pulling the stories out of Dave and carrying them away at times. I asked Dave where his stories come from, meaning to ask where he had learned them. Instead, he gestured all around. He explained that "as a story-keeper I've the ability to carry all the stories and some of them might go to a certain location on the island, but sometimes a story comes back to me and clear, and I'll share that story accordingly." He motioned down at the ground beneath us. "This is the same path the ancestors walked, and they are still here…and in the stones."

Geraldine alluded to many Transformer stories that exist with Saysutshun, some of which are frequently told to visitors such as How the Raccoon got a White Coat, but also of her ancestors turned to stone. She says that one could go on a Xeel's path that would include to journeying to Saysutshun, Gabriola, Petroglyph Park, and Departure Bay. This is where the people have been turned to stone and are there to continue teach lessons and stories.[10] It is not only ancestors who live there as stones on the island though, but relatives like the wind. She explains that on the eastern side of the island are stones who are cousin to the north wind who lives on Gabriola.[11] She says the ancestors would go to him to calm the water to travel safely from Saysutshun to Gabriola and beyond. She says you used to be able to see his face in the stone, but he has now been broken and vandalised.

The stories of Xeel's continue to shape how Coast Salish peoples know themselves to be related to the land and their transformed ancestors. McHalsie (2007) explains from

[10] At one point she states that not all Xeel's transformation work was to teach a lesson though, she said that sometimes he had bad days and would "act like any grumpy old man."

[11] In the transcript, Auntie uses the name Hutlux or X'ulut for the north wind. The Hul'qiuminum dictionary calls the north wind stuywut, thatuc, and tuyt.

his Stó:lō perspective that those who Xeel's had transformed into rocks or different things continued to be acknowledged and treated as relatives and ancestors. Not only this but they continued to carry stories and teachings. He states that "up and down the valley, wherever one of our ancestors was transformed into a rock - the places - those are special places! You know, that need to be preserved. Because when Xexá:ls travelled through the land, making the world right, a lot of times not only was there the story about why they were turned to stone but there was also some other teaching involved" (105-6). Thom recognised this relationship to the transformed ancestor-stones in his work with Coast Salish peoples of Vancouver Island and describes how "spiritual and ancestral power can be transformative in nature. The rocks, mountain, forest or other places may be spirits or ancestors transformed to those places in mythical times or more recent experience…Such powerful ancestral figures become part of the social world with whom relations of reciprocity and respect are engaged" (21).

Through generations of visiting and persistent presence with an agential and related landscape, the Snuneymuxw people and the territory continue to shape one another in a variety of ways. The lands and waters of Snuneymuxw territories have generously fed and fostered a sense of respect and deep responsibility within Snuneymuxw Mustímuxw that is expressed through a unique governance structure, economy, and culture that persist today.

***Snuneymuxw Governance and Co-management***

I want to pay special attention here to practices or understandings of co-management as present in Snuneymuxw governance that contribute to their ability to move forward in their national self-determination. Prior to contact with Europeans, Snuneymuxw livelihood and governance structures were based out of five main villages. The largest of these were between what is now Departure Bay - Stl'ilep - and the mouth of the Millstone River known as Xwsaluxul. Eliot explains that decision-making came from a collective of the well-respected leaders of the territory – si'ém- who had many forms of wealth that included not just resources but also teachings. These leaders were viewed as hard workers and were trusted by the communities to act in a good way. Eliot has undertaken extensive research in his efforts to know who he is as a Snuneymuxw person and fulfilling his duty

to always be transforming and bettering himself. He has learned that when it came to governance, the Snuneymuxw peoples

> would all come together because we knew we were the Snuneymuxw, we knew we were one people - we all came together, we'd support one another, we were all related, we were very closely related all throughout the mid island. So when we think about leadership, it comes from the community. We had our different tribes that came together to amalgamate and become the Snuneymuxw people and essentially, we were all co-managing our territory together and we all would have had different spots and different places that were specific. One of the main examples I can think of is the Xwsaluqun people who were seen as the highest ranking and the wealthiest people, so they had the rights to the largest fishing weir that was the first, right at the mouth of the river here, right in the estuary. And that's an example of a specific territorial right that they had and then other families had their own weirs that were further down the river. They would go in the morning and take what they needed from the salmon and then they would open their weir up or they'd just say "anybody can go and use our weir, if you need food go and take what you need." And if people didn't offer their weir up, then people would start sending logs down the river. So, it's this network of inter-relation amongst us as a community and us as peoples and all of these checks and responsibilities, you know. Just to make sure that everything is working in a way that is cohesive and collaborative.

Joan describes the ways of living and governing the old people practiced as a form of co-management that is needed today. Rather than the limited and piecemeal forms of co-management used by the Canadian state today, she explains that working together through the land is required to move beyond the social suffering many Snuneymuxw people experience due to colonisation.

> The way the old people would put it, if we could think about the term co-management, the old people back in the day like thousands and thousands of years ago. They said if they didn't work together, they wouldn't have survived. Because the terrain was so hard. And today we say that again the terrain is harsh, but its man-made. It's the drugs, the alcohol, the family violence, the poverty. If we don't work together, none of us are going to survive and that survival is dependent on understanding how to live with the land. To start learning from the land and you know, the plants and medicines, the water, everything that's there, the whole entity, understanding it as a *gift* from the Creator, offering support, knowledge.

Statements such as those shared by Joan and Eliot speak directly to how Snuneymuxw people knew a form of co-management long before the coming of European settlers and

the imposition of colonial management regimes. Their governance knew how to manage the territory and all it offered in ways that were sustainable and respectful for their communities and for lands and waters.

However, my conversations with Eliot and Joan show that what is sought by the nation is not a re-creation of the past but knowing how to move forward in the contemporary context in a good way through philosophies like nat'su'mat. Speaking of traditional governance and how to move forward, Eliot referred directly to the writings of Manuel (1974) who stated that

> we do not need to recreate the exact forms by which our grandfathers lived their lives…we do need to create new forms that will allow future generations to inherit the values, the strengths, and the basic spiritual beliefs – the way of understanding the world – that is the fruit of 1000 generations' cultivation of North American soil by Indian people (4).

For many years, the governance that Snuneymuxw people knew was that imposed through the *Indian Act.* However, Snuneymuxw is dedicated to rebuilding their traditional system of governance rooted in values and principles known by their ancestors. As their website states, their values, self-determination, and sovereignty are being expressed through electing a Chief and Council based on their own customs and codes of law (SFN, nd. b). This determination to regenerate pieces of the old ways of governing speaks to the power of and need for governance and economic structures based on cooperative, collaborative, and collective ethics of care for each other and the land.

### *Caring Economy – Economy as Culture*

Similar to other Coast Salish nations, Snuneymuxw are a people who have lived with one foot in the ocean and the other in the temperate coastal forests, gathering abundance from both. They developed many gifts used in transforming their non-human relations into the clothes, housing, tools, and foods that sustained their lives. Cedar and salmon were – and continue to be – particularly salient aspects of Snuneymuxw culture and economy, though were far from the only part of the economy. Throughout the seasonal round, Snuneymuxw would harvest, preserve, and trade çumush (herring roe), lila' (salmonberry), and spe:nxw (camas lily bulbs) in the spring; various species of cod, stilukwulph (strawberries), and a

variety of shellfish species from the late spring to summer; and the beginning of salmon season arriving with the sthuqi' (sockeye) in the Fraser River in late summer. By mid-October, Snuneymuxw people would return from their rounds to fall villages along the Nanaimo River for the arrival of the kwaluxw (dog salmon). These beings, who were viewed not only as resources but as relatives, were an important part of trade and relationships with neighbours near and far.

In describing the nature of pre-contact Snuneymuxw principles of economy, Eliot states that "fundamentally our economic system was about giving and supporting the community." While the Snuneymuxw peoples were being robbed of their governance and economies embedded with these principles through colonisation and settlement, they worked to keep some principles safe. Littlefield (1995) identifies some of the principles and practices that persisted despite colonisation. She described that principles of economy were held particularly through Snuneymuxw women and their expressions of labour that continued to enact networks of kinship and community co-operation that ensured success for families even as many Snuneymuxw people were pushed into wage labour (Littlefield 1995, iii). Joan described that such economies were a way of life and were rooted in deep reciprocity and caring both with the relative-resource you are using as well as how you perpetuate that care throughout your community. Joan describes that you have to think about how you will take only what is needed, who you are going to share with, and the intention you will share with. Stó:lō scholar Dara Kelly (2021) explains that in traditional and contemporary Indigenous economies, it is not profit and financial growth that matters in and of itself. Instead, Indigenous definitions of wealth, economic freedom, and development are constituted by value creation that aligns with Indigenous worldviews and principles centered on relationship, reciprocity and interconnectedness.

Contemporarily, principles and values of the Snuneymuxw economy are held in the mission and mandates of Petroglyph Development Group (PDG). Rather than being committed solely to capital accumulation, PDG integrates Snuneymuxw values of respect, accountability, fiscal responsibility, relationship building, trust, and transparency (Snuneymuxw First nation, nd c). Snuneymuxw wealth and economy, like all Indigenous nations and communities, have always come from the land. It is the system, principles, and

values that such an economy exists in that makes the difference. My own experiences with staff at PDG show that how the community is cared for continues to be an important aspect of planning and economy that counter capitalism. For instance, Ian often spoke to the role of PDG to care for the community through employment opportunities, fostering the gifts-talents of community members, and ensuring that Snuneymuxw services were properly funded and empowered by PDG. My conversations with Snuneymuxw people like Ian and Joan made it clear that what is being fostered are forms of economy of care, generosity, and thoughtfulness that would be recognisable to their old people. Ian shared with me that rather than accumulating profit, PDG distributes their revenue to the nation's health centre, cultural initiatives such as language programs, and the potential to return significant parts of their territory to Snuneymuxw control through purchase. This makes running Saysutshun and other economic development projects profitably an important goal for Snuneymuxw, as they invest their revenues directly into community wellness. This places economy firmly within culture and culture revitalisation plans like those that could be implemented with Saysutshun.[12]

[12] Indigenous economic development companies and initiatives have been critiqued by some Indigenous peoples and academics (Newhouse, David R. 2001. "Resistance is Futile: Indigenous Peoples Meet the Borg of Capitalism.") as forms of "capitalism with a red face" that only serve perpetuate harms through a "moral commitment to the institutions of capitalism" (81).

Coulthard (2006, 2014) has levelled considerable criticism against Indigenous forms of economic development within a capitalist system, arguing that Indigenous values around the human responsibility to maintain reciprocal relationships with the land, and with each other are inevitably undermined by the stronger impetus toward material gains (108). Although capitalism has been one of the forces through which colonialism has harmed Indigenous lands and people, Champagne presents "tribal capitalism" as a way for Indigenous nations to try and find balance between "community and cultural protection and the enhancement of tribal sovereignty on one hand, and material gains on the other" in ways that are unique to their nationhood (Champagne cited in Begay Jr. et al., 2007. "Development, Governance, Culture: What Are They and What Do They Have to Do with Rebuilding Native Nations," 38). As Kelly (forthcoming 2021) points out that Indigenous aspirations including economic development must be seen "as autonomous and self-determining peoples, not solely as actors within the Canadian economy." For further discussion on Indigenous economic development see: Atleo, Clifford Gordon. 2015. "Aboriginal Capitalism: Is Resistance Futile or Fertile?" *The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development,* 9, no. 2: 41-51; Kelly, Dara. 2016. "Feed the People and You Will Never Go Hungry: Illuminating Coast Salish Economy of Affection." PhD Dissertation, University of Auckland; Manuel, George and Michael Posluns. 2018. *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

### *Snuneymuxw Culture and Cosmology*[13]

"At the foundation of our culture, which has arisen and developed in relation to our Territory, these principles and others - known as our Snawayalth or sacred teachings guide our continuing relationship to each other and to our Territory. Those who hold this ancient knowledge can explain the complex meaning of the Snawayalth (teachings) and help us understand today how to best make decisions about how we should interact with our Territory and each other." - (https://www.snuneymuxw.ca/nation/culture)

Describing all aspects of Snuneymuxw culture is not the intent of this section, and I will instead focus on Snuneymuxw cosmology as it has been explained to me, paying particular attention to transformation on a spectrum from the territory to individual to the nation. Ortner describes aspects of culture like transformations to be key symbols that are "good to think with" in that they allow members of that culture as well as outsiders to "understand interrelationships among phenomenon and are culturally valued" in that they formulate that specific culture's understandings of relations, actions, and expectations (1973, 1341). Through the lens of transformation as known and experienced by Snuneymuxw people, what I will make clear in the rest of my thesis is the power and potential of calling the ways of Snuneymuxw ancestors into the present and the transformative potential this offers for building Snuneymuxw futures.

Processes of transformation are integral to the way many Snuneymuxw construct and live their identities and relationship with the land. For example, when Eliot described his understanding of transformation to me while we visited on Saysutshun, he stated that

> transformation is *the* most sacred energy and it all around us. It's what brings us from second to second and from moment to moment. On a greater scale, [transformation] helps us change and grow as people. One of our most fundamental teachings is that you should always be working to better yourself. You should always be working to make yourself a better person…But that's just transformation. You're just trying to transform. Its all-encompassing. I think that transformation is the law of the universe basically in our way of knowing.

[13] Cosmology here is used in an ethnographic way to denote Indigenous worldviews that portray the components of the environment, including the sky, the land, the subterranean realm, waters, atmospheric processes, plants, animals as an integrated system energized and managed by the power of the spirit realm(s).

Like other Coast Salish people, Snuneymuxw know Xeel's the Transformer or Creator as a primary source of transformation. Xeel's travelled widely within the Coast Salish World, resulting in a canon of stories and interpretations of who he is according to each family or nation.[14] He is primarily known for his travels that occurred at the end of the time of the First Ancestors, in which he rewarded those who worked hard, were struggling, and were of good intent. He was also known for his punishments against those who were lazy, stingy, neglecting their families, lacking gratitude, doing wrong or had ill intent permanently. By transforming these individuals into stone, animals, plants, or the wind; thereby physically shaping the world, as well as relationships to land. Places where these transformations occurred continue to hold significant meaning and history for the Coast Salish people through the narratives associated with their transformed ancestors. As described through Brown's Snuneymuxw perspective (2016), encounters with Xeel's would also bring teachings of reciprocity, sharing, gratitude, humility and respectful relations with each other, animals, nature and the land, forming the basis of their Snuw'uyulh (28-29).

In the forward to *Legends and Teachings of Xeel's the Creator,* Jo-ann Q'um Q'um Xiiem Archibald relates Ellen Kwulasalwut White's knowledge of who Xeel's was as one who created 'a brand new something' from an interaction with new energy" (2006, 10). Eliot, who is Kwulaswut's great-grandson, describes Xeel's as the embodiment of transformation itself. Sitting together with Saysutshun and listening to the wind push the water against the shores of the island, Eliot explained to me that

> You experience Xeel's and you experience that transformation when your body meets new energies. And that new things come from this almost like a collision of energies and that that…that new thing that wasn't the same or wasn't there before, like that's transformation and that's the most sacred.

[14] See Ellen Rice White. 2006. Legends and Teachings of Xeel's, The Creator. Vancouver: UBC Pacific Educational Press; Chris Arnett ed. 2008., Two Houses Half-Buried in Sand: Oral Traditions of the Hul'qumi'numm Coast Salish of Kuper & Vancouver Island Vancouver: Talonbooks; Randy Bouchard & D. Kennedy.2006. Indian Myths & Legends from the North Pacific Coast of America: A Translation of Franz Boas' 1895 Edition of Indianische Sagen von der Nord-Pacifischen Kuste Amerikas. Vancouver: Talonbooks; Joan Brown. 2016. "Culture is Lived, Language Gives it Life." Thesis, University of Victoria; Brian Thom. 2005. "Coast Salish Senses of Place: Dwelling, Meaning, Power, Property and Territory in the Coast Salish World." PhD Diss., McGill University; Keith Thor Carlson. 2010. The Power of Place, the Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism. Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Cynthia Beiwert. 1999. Brushed by Cedar, Living by the River: Coast Salish Figures of Power. Tuscon: University of Arizona Press.

> And like when I just look at the way that we understand time and the way that we understand the way that the world is, its all just an evolution of state, its all just transformation. It isn't a linear beginning to end, beginning with creation, its…its something that's just always been that way and we're just one iteration in a cycle or like…I always look at it as one wave coming in upon the shore and then we recede back into the sea, but there's going to be more waves that come from that body.

Discussions with Snuneymuxw Elder Geraldine Tsatsassya Manson reveals a similar insight of Xeel's. Sitting with Auntie one morning, I asked her if transformations are still happening at Saysutshun, if Xeel's is still there doing the work of setting things right. She chuckled a bit in her knowledge that of course it was still occurring, explaining to me that Mink and Raven are still around,[15] plus Snuneymuxw people know who they are and carry the stories of Xeel's. The fact that the stories continue to be carried and told means Xeel's is still here.

In her thesis on Snuneymuxw language and culture, Joan Brown (2016) often refers her readers to the work of Ellen White and the many teaching carried by stories of Xeel's**.** Joan summarises that Transformer stories offer insight into how:

1. We understand ourselves and our world by focusing on relationships. We are all related.

2. The energy of the universe, found in the air, water and earth, encompasses all. We are all connected by this universal energy, and we can draw energy from these elements.

3. We must teach our children to be strong in their minds and to look after their bodies because they are sacred. Our children must learn to respect the sea life, animal life and Mother Earth. We must all look after one another in this world—fish, animals, and humans, everything seen and unseen. What we teach our children ensures that we will never lose the way of this world. The way you teach a child can be just as important as what you teach a child.

4. There is a time to seek the guidance of Xeel's, a time to listen to your inner-self, and a time to be connected to your surroundings. At certain

[15] During the time of many transformations, Xeel's created Mink and Raven who have been described as his companions and watchers. Some Coast Salish peoples describe Mink and a guardian spirits, while others identify Mink as a trickster similar to Raven.

times of our lives, it is important to be alone, to ask for help and then to listen.

5. If you believe that our own energy works with the energy of things that we can touch, both solid and liquid, you can ask these substances to transmit their energy and direct it towards helping. We can ask for help, we can ask for a situation to change, but it takes work and perseverance.

6. Spiritual knowledge takes years to master (20-30).

Joan's interpretation of the teachings of Xeel's points to Xeel's and transformed beings as opportunities and obligations Snuneymuxw people have to better themselves – to continue the process of transforming. What Geraldine, Joan and Eliot speak to is the work of transformation and creation as continuing to unfold, placing Transformer stories and transformational experiences solidly within contemporary Snuneymuxw experiences and places.

As Blackstock (2017) states incorporating transformation into Indigenous-settler relationships offers a pathway for transcending "either/or" narrative about traditional boundaries between art and science, Indigenous and Western, living and non-living, biotic and abiotic, salt water and fresh water, and sentient and inanimate" (40). Within this thesis, I draw on transformation as it has been explained to me to understand better the potential and limitations of co-management as it exists between Snuneymuxw, BC Parks and the City of Nanaimo, while also considering how we might be able to transcend current understandings of "co-management" itself. I have been taught to understand (or "define") transformation and transformation stories as an "important resource that Coast Salish people use to make sense of their roles and responsibilities in the world – to each other, to the land and to all living things" (Morales 2017, 152). Transformation offers an understanding of the living world beyond anthropocentrism, is a primary mechanism of change, and encourages one to be humble and learn. I have been taught that to embed the understanding of transformation and creating mechanisms for it to happen within co-management is an important part of Land Back for Snuneymuxw national self-determination and Saysutshun.

i spent the morning with the stones on saysutshun

wondering how many of them had once been alive, had been people, had been animals.
then i remembered that they are still alive, all of them

re-opening, re-opening

and i felt the stones under me, against my skin
felt them as
*i am here*
*you are here*
*we are here*
both of us always transforming

layers and tides of ideas
licking and lapping at me
trying to ease the unease academia makes.
reminding that things aren't always
tidy, cant always be structured and organised
have their own rhythms and systems.

the lapping and whispering of this place
a tender voice
wish, anguish, hush
but probably its hul'q'umi'num'
a whispering of
tumuxw, tumuxw, tumuxw
the celebration of the sea meeting the land

i feel myself sink into this place
where moments never left

this is where life has been and continues to be

the stones transformed by xeel's changed in an instant
reckoning of teaching right and wrong

but the changes I am experiencing
that many experience are more
like the geological changes the stones experience now

in slow transformation through their relationship with
water wind others

finding our potential to be
moment to moment
a constant creation

***Figure 3. Sandstone of Saysutshun***
Sandstone of Saysutshun, which would have been used as tools but also would have those among them who would be recognised as ancestors turned to stone by Xeel's.

# Chapter 3.

# The Landscape of Parks and Co-management Literatures

In this chapter, I provide a brief history of Saysutshun to provide context for my critiques of parks and co-management both generally and in the context of this specific case study. From this grounding, I will use academic literature and Snuneymuxw perspectives to describe how Western and colonially constructed parks affect Indigenous relationships to land. Once an understanding of how parks are used by colonial governments is established, I then describe how it is that co-management structures, particularly those engaged with by Indigenous peoples, have the power to either interrupt or perpetuate ideologies and practices in the institutions of parks.

### *A Brief History of Saysutshun*[16]

It is clear that Saysutshun has been and continues to be an important part of the territory, with Snuneymuxw going there for many purposes both historically and contemporarily. Elder Geraldine Tsatsassya Manson identified that centering these Snuneymuxw relationship to the island is foundational to the nation's self-determination on this part of their territory, saying that "the old people that carried the knowledge of that island spoke of it very highly. People don't see it as our island today because of all the layers that were placed on it and erased the history of our ancestors on the island and it's up to us to bring it back, to continually talk about the place names on that island, the burials that are on the island."[17]

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[16] Though this section addresses the history of Saysutshun, it should be noted that this section is not undertaken to create a chronological history of the island or the park,[16] but rather to give voice to citizens of Snuneymuxw and their relationship to the island. A fulsome settler-colonial history of Saysutshun can be found in Merilees, Bill. 1998. *Newcastle Island: A Place of Discovery.* Surrey*:* Heritage House.

[17] Although the importance of place names is outside of the scope of this thesis, they are of great importance to Snuneymuxw and continue to be a part of the work of Snuneymuxw in reasserting their relationship with the territory. The island known as Saysutshun carries many place names that describe particular relationships between the land and Snuneymuxw that are currently being brought to the foreground. To document and story all of the names Saysutshun carries would be its own dedicated project.

These layers that Geraldine spoke of began being placed on Saysutshun in the 1850s when the Hudson Bay Company was informed of the presence of coal in the territory, leading to the negotiation and signing of the 1854 Douglas Treaty. Mining began on Saysutshun in 1852 when colonial governor James Douglas ordered a shaft sunk on Newcastle Island.[18] Mining continued until 1938 when returns from coal mine ran out and more profitable coal seams were found in the territory. However, this was not the limit of colonial industry on the island. From the 1870s-1920s a sandstone quarry operated on the western side of the island, operating alongside a herring saltery.

During these periods of industry, Nanaimo's major employers– the Vancouver Coal Company and Western Fuel Company–used some parts of the island for worker's recreation including clearing an area for picnics and putting in swings for children (On This Spot, nd). When the mines and quarries were deemed no longer economically viable, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) acquired title over the island to develop it as a premier leisure and recreational site for the wealthy that was opened in June of 1931.[19] With the austerity measures of World War II impacting fuel and income, visitors to the island declined and the resort was officially closed in 1950. In 1955 CPR sold the island to the City of Nanaimo, who attempted to operate it as a municipal park. However, there was no funding for maintenance, leading to its sale to BC Parks in 1959. It was designated a Class A provincial park called Newcastle Island Provincial Marine Park in 1961.

An interim co-management agreement between BC Parks, Snuneymuxw, and the City of Nanaimo was originally acquired in 2003 as part of the Agreement in Principle, which was extended through various permit modifications until it was formally recognised as a part of the comprehensive Reconciliation Agreement that was finalised in 2012.[20] At

[18] Newcastle - the colonial name of the island is named after – refers to the famous mining town of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Northumberland, England.

[19] Some mining and quarrying activities continued through lease on northern and western parts of the island, which are more remote from the front country, despite CPR acquiring the island in 1931 to develop as a premier recreational site. The herring saltery continued until 1941 when all Japanese property was confiscated by the Canadian government and Japanese-Canadians were sent to the Interior of British Columbia to be placed in internment camps

[20] The Agreement in Principle (AIP) itself was between Snuneymuxw, the Province of British Columbia, and the Government of Canada.

that time, various parts of the territory were returned to Snuneymuxw governance and stewardship as part of this same Reconciliation Agreement. The co-management agreement of Saysutshun as a park is currently stewarded and enacted on behalf of the nation by Petroglyph Development Group.

### *The Role of Parks in Colonialism and Relationships with Saysutshun*

"The time for Newcastle has come and gone" –Dave Bodaly

As I showed in Chapter 2, Snuneymuxw people speak very strongly and with great love for the territory and Saysutshun specifically. The industrial actions, formal designation of the island first as municipal park, and then a provincial park complicates and impeded their ability to enact their relationships and responsibilities. Colonial institutions like parks Colonial institutions like parks serve an intentional role within settler-colonialism, with settlers and government having the power and ability to perpetuate and promote ideas colonial national heritage, nature or wilderness, and public access (Agrawal and Redford 2009; Binnema and Neimi 2006; Killan 1993). The framing of parks as beneficial – presumably to everyone, but in fact primarily to a white settler society - has allowed these landscapes to be "passively unjust," hiding power and politics behind the seemingly banal (Finnegan 2018, np).

A critical analysis of written and lived discourses about parks and conservation areas betray some understanding of how the average person is told to connect to the world around them by Western constructs of land. Stevens (1997) presents the prevailing western conservation model of "fortress" management practices of park lands that has created what he calls "the Yellowstone Legacy." In this model, land is constructed as a pristine wilderness to be discovered and explored, effectively removing humans and cultural activities from landscapes by recasting them as "visitors," which has deeply impacted Indigenous peoples. What is important to note here is that Saysutshun is not portrayed as a pristine wilderness but is instead celebrated for its role in Nanaimo settlement and industry. This is visible in signage, preservation of industrial sites, and the great efforts to preserve the Pavilion constructed by the Canadian Pacific Railway. Despite the acknowledgement of Saysutshun being shaped by humans, the ideology of parks results in human

relationships expressed through economic use being framed as historical artefacts that are preserved and conserved. An ideology of parks as land to be protected or conserved from people discounts the fact that these same lands have been managed and used by Indigenous people since time immemorial. Clifford Atleo Sr. (2001) explains that it "make[s] my environmentalist friends back home a little nervous [when I say] that I do not like parks. I do not like parks because they are intended to protect the land from people. What does that say about us? It says that we cannot manage the land to promote biodiversity while also meeting our needs – that, in effect, we cannot manage ourselves. We [Nuu-chah-nulth people] believe that people have a role to play in 'natural' places…Of course we can live in harmony with wild lands. Our ancestors did" (162).

Cronon (1995) has about written into this narrative of wilderness and protection as part of a colonial agenda, noting that as of the 18th century, common use of the term 'wilderness' was used to denote "desolate," "savage," and a "waste." In this re-conceptualisation of land as home or territory to land as commodity, Cronon argues that whatever value the land might have arises from the possibility that it might be used for human (read settler) purposes whether as a garden or a development (8-9). Landscapes that were deemed "sublime" precipitated the creation of national parks and the concept of "nature," with tourists encouraged to seek out these landscapes as "a spectacle to be looked at and enjoyed for its great beauty" (12). Thus, the land, emptied of Indigenous peoples became part of the national agenda for countries such as Canada, whether as a national park to be explored or frontier to be settled – a nature that was anything but natural (15-16). Ramutsindela (2004) further discusses how national parks represent "the state's authority over products of nature and to determine the rules by which those products could be accessed," presenting nature as pristine landscapes or wildernesses (79). Goeman (2019) points out that the separation of particularly Indigenous peoples from parks plays is direct role in the structure of settler colonialism "to create amnesia around geographies…. demands a temporal process of remembering a nostalgic past and places of pristine virgin land….[and] must imagine a homogenous, stable present space developed for the good of the majority" (114). As is often the case, when thinking of the good of the majority or the greater good in a colonial state, this can be read as meaning non-Indigenous people.

A diversity of parks, from municipal to internationally recognised biospehere regions have mandates for public access that denote the egalitarian concept of access for all. Instead, parks mirror the rest of society, leaving "a heterogeneous urban population to work out for itself who really is going to have the right to be there" (Massey 2005, 52). Within the context of provincial parks, Young refers to early designers of the BC Park system who "imagined a provincial park as an area for the protection of forests and fauna that simultaneously provided an appealing destination for tourists and new business opportunities… They assumed most people who would visit parks…would come from class backgrounds similar to their own [upper- and middle-class white settlers]" (2011, 20-21). These mythologies of wilderness, nature, and access has allowed parks as a social construct to be passively unjust, while continuing to marginalise Indigenous rights, presence, and relationships with lands. Within the context of the land as a sovereign agent previously stated, we can also see the erasure of the land's rights and agency through the domination of Western land management regimes. When speaking of Wood Buffalo National Park, Smith and Grandjambe echo what some Snuneymuxw peoples told me about the disrespect of the land as a park, stating that "the park was treated as a thing to be owned….it was not a self-determined, living, breathing Land the way we know it to be. With this mindset, it could be pieced away into different assets – for conservation, environment, commerce, or anything else…Parks was trying to protect the Land with the same mindset that caused the problem" (2020, 57).

Indigenous peoples have been leaders in decades long legal, political, and social movements to reclaim and restore their rights, as well as the agency and lives of their stolen territories. In response, governments have offered Indigenous nations some degree of power, control, and relationship over conservation areas. However, Stevens emphasizes that if the realisation of Indigenous rights in parks is to happen through these allowances of the government, such structures must remove conditions that continue "to violate rights; ignore Indigenous peoples' knowledge, institutions, aspirations, and concerns; and continue to prevent their full and effective participation in protected area government and management" (2014, 293). Similar themes emerge with the current narratives of "reconciliation" in parks in Canada, as pointed out by Finnegan (2018), who identifies the need for colonial governments to acknowledge state authority expressed through parks as

colonial institutions. The author states that the work of incorporating Indigenous knowledge into parks or other reconciliation efforts cannot be undertaken with the goal of "wash[ing] away guilt caused by the past with minimal cost. Instead, the author states that meaningful reconciliation requires both a willingness to acknowledge the privilege accumulated through settler colonialism and, perhaps more importantly, to relinquish that ill-gotten privilege and thereby advance Indigenous sovereignty, nationhood, and self-determination" (Finnegan 2018, 17). As noted by LaSalle, there is an ongoing power struggle for control over places and their meaning. This struggle for control over places– to literally "affect change in a physical space or figuratively, through representations—is likewise control over people, their views of themselves and how others view them, and their legitimacy as a people" (LaSalle 2014, 10). Despite various forms of colonial settlement and power, Snuneymuxw has been persistent in asserting relationship to Saysutshun ranging from ongoing visiting, continuing to host gatherings with the island, the current co-management relationship, and ongoing negotiation for the island to be returned to them.

The effects of the invisibilsation and marginalisation of Snuneymuxw knowledge, ideologies, and practices through BC Parks specifically and the ideology of a park more generally, is reflected in the responses of those who work closely with Saysutshun. In my conversations with Snuneymuxw citizens employed to work on the island, many bashfully admitted to not knowing many of their own stories besides those told to tourists or through signage. Others had a basic knowledge of only the colonial history of the island such as the coal mining and the picnic era, which are histories very visible through infrastructure on the landscape. Ian Simpson, who works with Saysutshun in his role as CEO of PDG, openly shared his perspectives regarding the opportunities and benefits of the land being returned but was unsure of how to talk about the Snuneymuxw histories and stories that provide foundations to move forward from.

> I need to do a better job in getting that knowledge. I don't think I was even…even growing up there I wasn't really aware of the significance of both the island to Snuneymuxw when I was just you know happily being an ignorant child and just enjoyed being there, but you know didn't really realise the significance of the island or entering into that agreement [with Parks].

Many young people from Snuneymuxw described significant barriers in accessing their own histories, cultures, and governance as a result of colonial education systems, disruption of family structures, and limitations on enacting appropriate relationships to their territory. Geraldine regularly turned my questions about Saysutshun to the experiences and potentials of those who work with Saysutshun. She explains that there is a need for those who work with the island to get properly trained, to understand the history of the island so they can carry it forward. To do this, they must "go through a transformation to be that wisdom, a holder of that. To pass it on." PDG is beginning to incorporate Snuneymuxw histories and teachings into worker's training, but they do not have full control of current worker training, which continues to prioritize BC Parks standards. Geraldine and Eliot spoke to this pressure on those who work with Saysutshun– making sure their uniforms are correct, going through checklists, serving guests according to the way Parks wants things done. Geraldine explains this isn't relevant to how they as Snuneymuxw people conduct themselves with the island. When she talked about the workers, Geraldine used the term "working with," which I interpret as representative of the island as a being and network of beings that the old people would recognise as having agency in this relationship – that the island is doing its work and Snuneymuxw people work with and alongside that energy.

Others expressed being able to dig deeper into their identity and what Saysutshun means to Snuneymuxw peoples through their work with the land while it is a park. Dave Bodaly has been working as a tour guide and Snuneymuxw ambassador for the island for four years. He explains that

> it has been a real honour to keep our culture *alive,* keep using our cultural words, our language when I can…it encourages me to research more of our words, I am going to continue finding those ways to share about how important this land was to our people prior to European contact and even today….so, it wasn't just in the past – its right now and in other areas.

Dave is able to carry what he learns into other parts of his life including his cedar weaving practice, which he shares with his communities and youth. He hopes that others who work with Saysutshun will be able to learn and carry their own teachings from the BC Parks jobs they are doing now.

Eliot describes Saysutshun's transformation from park to Snuneymuxw territory is the kind of significant, deep-rooted change that is needed now – not the addition of signage, which he describes as a go-to practice for BC Parks when including Indigenous histories. Already the Snuneymuxw ferry captains and Dave's cultural tours are beginning to do this work in their daily practices. This includes welcoming guests in their language – "Huy' skweyul!, Huy netulh! 'Huy kwunus 'i lumnamu!" ringing out around the docks– and PDG hosting special training programs for Snuneymuxw youth coming to work on the island that includes Snuneymuxw protocols and culture. Eliot states that opportunities to showcase these incremental practices in their work are important but knows there are many more transformations to come through Saysutshun. He emphasises it is "not even so much about showcasing to somebody it's about creating these opportunities to educate our own youth about who we are." Eliot has been able to reconnect with Saysutshun through his work with Petroglyph Development Group.

> Through my work I get to be over there all the time. I get to have a hand in forming the way we talk about the island, the way we share the knowledge and share the way we do the work with our guests over there and so that's really fortunate and its really sacred to me to be able to do that work…to be able to contribute some of what I know and some of what I've learned….because like, one of the things that we find so critical is that we make our teachings accessible to not just everybody, but particularly to our youth and young people from Snuneymuxw and young Coast Salish people and young Indigenous people here. Because I just think about how hard I've had to fight to learn about who we are.

As the Elders do, Eliot sees the role Saysutshun has to play in Snuneymuxw's culture internally, but also in sharing their presence with the non-Indigenous public who visit what is now the park. However, I feel it is important to consider that the land does not have to be a park for Snuneymuxw to know who they are or to be in relationship with it. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson explores this in her own work with Indigenous individuals who are actively involved in disrupting and refusing the idea of the land as property, an enclosure, or something to be conserved. These individuals are learning how to conduct themselves, be thoughtful, and how to intentionally be in webs of relationships as known in their nations and cultures. She acknowledges that although Indigenous peoples have been dispossessed of lands through many colonial institutions and structures – including parks – they have

not been dispossessed from their own self-determination to be in relation to the land (Simpson 2020).

In contrast, Eliot shared that he sees parks as portals to rebuilding relationships with the land for both their own people and visitors. Both Eliot and Dave even expressed some gratitude that Saysutshun had received park designation in 1955. Eliot had stated if not for this, Saysutshun may have been become another Nanaimo suburb, similar to nearby Gabriola or Protection islands.[21] PDG staff expressed that the park legislation and designation provides some important protections for the island such as regulations that prohibit visitors from harvesting plants or shellfish, littering or leaving the trail network, or taking stones from the beaches. Eliot also recognised the role parks play in deconstructing the divide between humans and the natural world, especially in an urban setting like Nanaimo. Eliot explains that for transformation to happen with Saysutshun or anywhere else on the territory that its critical to decolonise the way that we look at the land. He says that "the land is not this *other,* not this *thing* that's meant to be conquered. It's not…all of these resources that we're meant to plunder from it. And instead, it's just a part of our home, it's a part of where we live, it's a part of who we are. It's something we exist with serious responsibility to." He admits that building relationships with the land does not have to happen within the confines of a park but, but that having access to land that isn't urbanised or built up is integral to building these relationships with the territory – for it to have space to be itself as much as possible.[22]

Some Snuneymuxw citizens expressed that they were unsure of what being a park means for Saysutshun. Dave shared with me that he "wouldn't know if there's a strong meaning of being a park, whereas it was always a sacred area and from time immemorial. We can say at least 10,000 years we've known this as a place of healing and renewal of our spirit. So, I wouldn't think it becoming a park all of a sudden is going to enhance it or going to change it." Geraldine and Joan also expressed uncertainty about what the park designation can bring to the island or the nation, with both stating that it was dishonourable

[21] Eliot wondered during our discussions if it may be the powerful spiritual energy of the island that has guided it towards its relatively protected status today.

[22] Recognising that Saysutshun, along with all other parks have been managed spaces for many years.

to both the land and Snuneymuxw to call the island a park when it is their land, their history, and who they are as people.

### *Understanding Co-management as a Colonial Institution*

In his introduction to Irlbacher-Fox's book (2009), Dene National Chief Bill Erasmus wrote that if the oppression of Indigenous peoples is to end, the Canadian state must "strive to understand and work with Indigenous peoples on the basis of who they know they are, not on the basis of what Canada thinks Indigenous people might or ought to be" (xi). As is shown throughout Irlbacher-Fox's analysis of self-governance, the oppressive circumstances that Chief Erasmus speaks to here are not just poverty and systemic racism. Structures and organisations that exist through state initiatives meant to address Indigenous peoples supposed capacity deficits in terms of social wellness and building skills that promote integration into wider Canadian society also contribute. Irlbacher-Fox interprets this to mean that becoming more modern will allow for greater self-determination though more sophisticated [read: Canadian] governance (111). As we have seen from Canadian policy related to Indigenous peoples, initiatives like self-governance and co-management are often state-sponsored transformations of Indigenous peoples into assimilated Canadians who do not challenge legitimacy of the state.

The practice and the literature of co-management exist in a multitude of ways and across disciplines, making it difficult to define. Even what the "co" means is dependent on the person using the term. During the course of this project, Snuneymuxw citizens referred to these relationships as "co-operative" management, "community"- based management, and "collective" management, which draws on the understanding of community-empowered governance and decision-making described in Chapter 2. BC Parks staff often referred to co-management as "collaborative," which I interpreted to be more general and also serving to bracket where power resides in this relationship. The ways these terms are used provided me insight into how these parties see these relationships functioning and how may be power held and used.

Looking to the government, a number of Canadian jurisdictions have contributed towards defining co-management in recent years as they seek to use the relationship to

attain a variety of government objectives including environmental sustainability and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Canada's Oceans Strategy provides a lengthy definition of co-management as a governance model that brings together cooperative management, joint management, and collaborative management by stakeholders as interchangeable or synonymous terms:

> An institutional arrangement in which responsibility for resource management, conservation, and/or economic development is shared between governments and user groups; management systems in which users and other interests take an active part in designing, implementing, and enforcing management regulations; a sharing of decision making between government agencies and community-based stakeholders; management decisions (policy) based on shared information, on consultation with stakeholders, and on their participation: the integration of local-level and state-level systems; and/or institutional arrangements in which governments and other parties, such as Aboriginal entities, local community groups, or industry sectors enter into formal agreements specifying their respective rights, powers, and obligations with reference to, for example, environmental conservation and resource development (Fisheries and Oceans Canada 2002, 11).[23]

Similarly, the final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1997) states that "co-management has come to mean institutional arrangements whereby governments and Aboriginal entities…enter into formal agreements specifying their respective rights, powers and obligations with reference to the management and allocation of resources in a particular area of Crown lands and waters" (640). In these definitions, we see Indigenous nations and communities cast as "user groups," "stakeholders," and "entities" rather than as sovereign nations with specific right and relationships to territories and the land as "Crown land" rather than Indigenous territories.[24] Although the definition used in Canada's Ocean Strategy does acknowledge rights, powers, and obligations on the territories, it limits their existence only to environmental conservation and resource development. This is a primary critique of Tester and Irniq (2008), Nadasdy (2003), and Usher (2000), whose

[23] This definition is itself based on the definition reached at the 1998 National Round Table on Environment and the Economy.

[24] The Yellowhead Institute (2019) identifies this characterisation of Indigenous territory as Crown land as perpetuating the foundational myth of the Canadian state. It is built on the racist Doctrine of Discovery and the concept of *terra nulius* that functioned to steal lands from Indigenous peoples for the benefit of settlers.

studies of co-management show that Indigenous knowledges and relationships are often inappropriately and disrespectfully decontextualised within Western systems of management. By relegating Indigenous knowldges only to what is deemed relevant or useful to the managed resource, whole systems of knowledge and practice are marginalised. For these reasons, I regard the governmental definitions and use of co-management practices to be tools for providing the appearance of inclusion and consideration of Indigenous peoples and increase certainty of colonial projects, while leaving the foundational question of Indigenous sovereignty and rights to govern the territory untouched.

Within co-management studies, there is a vast literature dedicated to the guidelines and principles of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)[25] (see Table i). The IUCN defines the co-management of protected areas such as parks as "government-designated protected areas where decision making power, responsibility and accountability are shared between governmental agencies and other stakeholders, in particular the indigenous peoples and local and mobile communities that depend on that area culturally and/or for their livelihoods" (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004, 32). I find this to be an overly limiting and prescriptive definition of co-management on a number of fronts. This definition follows the trend of denigrating Indigenous nations whose territory is being managed as "stakeholders," as well as it being the sole jurisdiction of the government to designate what is to be protected.

The narratives of the IUCN literature have tended to focus on how important it is to recognise rights (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2012), while often neglecting the enactment of rights. This focus of recognising rights has been critiqued as another strategy of the state known as recognition politics. Coulthard (2009) states, rather than creating opportunities for co-existence based in mutual recognition, relying on "recognition" alone often "reproduce[s] the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that

[25] It should be noted that for all the literature created by and for the IUCN on Indigenous peoples and co-management that an Indigenous person was never appointed to the committees that created the IUCN guiding principles. Because of this, Indigenous peoples invited themselves to the 2003 World Congress on Parks and revolted against their marginalization which led to a reconsideration of the principles and values.

Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend" (3). Although some co-management relationships do offer more than recognition, when looking at the example of Saysutshun, there are those from Snuneymuxw who question if surface level recognition was not a primary driver of agreeing to co-management. For example, Geraldine remembers the announcement being celebrated, but had been wary herself that it was only symbolic – a tactic for the government to appease Snuneymuxw without having to make substantive changes. As Alfred points out, though symbols like these guidelines and principles are important, they cannot be confused with substantial change. Ultimately, when it is only terminology and protocol that change, leaving unjust power relationships and colonial attitudes untouched, "such 'reform' becomes nothing more than a politically-correct smokescreen obscuring the fact that no real progress is being made" (Alfred 1999, 27).

***Table 1. Co-management Principles of the IUCN***

| Principle 1 |
| --- |
| Indigenous and other traditional peoples have long associations with nature and a deep understanding of it. Often they have made significant contributions to the maintenance of many of the earth's most fragile ecosystems, through their traditional sustainable resource use practices and cultural -based respect for nature. Therefore, there should be no inherent conflict between the objectives of protected areas and the existence, within and around their borders, with Indigenous and other traditional peoples. Moreover, they should be recognised as equal partners in the development of conservation strategies. |
| Principle 2 |
| Agreements drawn up between conservation institutions, including protected area management agencies and Indigenous and other traditional peoples for the establishment and management of protected areas affecting their lands, territories, waters, coastal seas, and other resources should be based on full respect for the rights of Indigenous and other traditional peoples. |
| Principle 3 |
| The principles of decentralization, participation, transparency, and accountability should be taken into account in all matters pertaining to the mutual interests of protected areas and Indigenous and other traditional peoples. |
| Principle 4 |
| Indigenous and other traditional peoples should be able to share fully and equitably in the benefits associated with protected areas with due recognition to the rights of other legitimate stakeholders. |
| Principle 5 |
| The rights of Indigenous and other traditional peoples in connection with protected areas are often an international responsibility, since many of the lands, territories, waters, coastal seas, and other resources which they own or otherwise occupy or use cross national boundaries. |

Adapted from Borrini-Feyerabend et al.2004.

Rusnak (1997) notes that foundational changes would be required for true co-management, which "involves a change from a system of centralized authority and top-down decisions, to a system which integrates local and state level management in arrangements of shared authority, or at least shared decision-making" (2). When they consider the participation of Indigenous peoples in decision-making through co-management, Rusnak is ultimately skeptical whether the state is interested in re-distributing power and decision-making abilities. Here, the concern is that any decisions made by Indigenous peoples in these structures are passed onto government as recommendations only (21). Even from the pinnacle of co-management hope and potential, Rusnak defined and identified a true co-management as "an ideal management system which does not actually exist in practice but is aspired to and incrementally approached" (3). When considered from the vantage point of the 1990s, this incremental approach would have been useful and perhaps successful; however, Irlbacher-Fox (2009) recognise many of the same barriers and challenges identified by Rusnak showing little change has occurred in the efforts of colonial governments to attain a true co-management.

While there are divergent ideas about what conditions are needed for the successful devolution of management rights leading to such a true co-management between state and local users, scholars agree that institutional arrangements must include locally devised access and management rules (Baland and Platteau 1996). In her work on fisheries co-management, Pinkerton makes great strides towards identifying some key conditions that address power within co-management. In this work, she defines and evaluates a "complete co-management," which could be determined through investigating the specific criteria. A primary criterion is determining if government is an engaged partner and not a delegator. This would create a balance of power in which the government plays a mediating or supporting role that may provide technical support or protective legislation but is not the primary decision maker (Pinkerton 2003, 65-66). Another important aspect of co-management is whether rights and activities go beyond self-regulation to address management more broadly. Such a perspective allows managers think beyond limits or regulations around specific resource and consider relationships and management in a more holistic way (Pinkerton 2003, 67). She describes that broader management must include the possession of operational rights (such as data analysis) that would allow parties like

Indigenous communities to exercise higher-level collective choice rights with cooperative planning, research, education, and monitoring with other agencies and stakeholders occurring. Such access to data allows for meaningful higher-level decision-making (Pinkerton 2003, 68). Furthermore, there is some control held by the community to set terms and conditions. Though here Pinkerton speaks directly to set prices in fish sales as a case study, this condition is easily translatable to the ability of Snuneymuxw to define the terms and conditions of not only the relationships with BC parks and Nanaimo, but the activities that make up the daily relationship with Saysutshun. When considering Indigenous peoples as parties in co-management agreements, whether or not the foundation of that relationship rests on collective rights as opposed to individual rights is integral. Here Pinkerton describes that when we move beyond the idea of stakeholders or user groups and recognise co-management as collective action, "we are in a very different world" (73). Recalling that Snuneymuxw discuss "co-management" as collective or community-based management, the empowerment of collective rights is integral to their understanding of the relationship.

When considering the criteria of a complete co-management proposed by Pinkerton, it is arguable that a number of relationships, which we will see includes the agreement with Saysutshun, carry the name co-management yet they objectively do not satisfy any of the above conditions of sharing power. Spak (2005) investigated this in the Dene context regarding the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board. She concludes that rather than seeking to share or decentralize power over "resources" or to including Indigenous people in decision-making, state-sponsored co-management "remains based on Euro-Canadian scientific/bureaucratic knowledge and values" to perpetuate state interests (Spak 2005, 243). Such abuses of power or marginalisation of Indigenous peoples and knowledge within co-management has had detrimental impact on trust within these relationships and legitimacy of co-management, as I will show through conversation with Snuneymuxw in the next chapter. When applying the criteria of complete co-management toward a case study of the Boldt Decision (1974),[26] Pinkerton

[26] The Boldt Decision (1974) ruled that, under the terms of 1854-56 treaties, certain Indian groups had retained title to 50 percent of the western Washington State salmon resource. Following the decision,

argues that for the term co-management to remain useful in practice and as a goal, parties must overcome "the tendency to apply the term co-management to mere *operational* rights, an inappropriate watering down of a narrower, less powerful right" (2003, 62).

An important aspect of determining what a particular co-management agreement is or does is investigating *who* gets to define the terms of the agreement. Outside of governmental or academic discourse on defining co-management, it is important to note that many citizens of Snuneymuxw did not like the term co-management, finding it reductive of their ways of relating to and with the land in cooperative ways – with nat'su'mat. There are important points that can be drawn from Snuneymuxw people's hesitancy or disregard to use the term co-management. Many described the "co-management" agreement with BC Parks not as collaborative, collective, or co-operative, but instead as one that continues a top-down arrangement whereby the nation is told how to steward their lands. Joan Brown explained that she prefers not to use the term "co-management" as "it's not relevant in [our] way of being….what people in my mind really misunderstand is that relationship to the island and what guides and informs us is the cultural aspect of the mountain realm, the water, the sky, the island itself." What she is describing is outside of the understandings and practices of co-management the government recognises or uses, as well as those put forward by academics. Joan is describing a holistic relationship to multiple realms of beings-landscapes know by Snuneymuxw that does not fit neatly into Western management practices, ideologies of parks, contracts, and service agreements. In fact, Joan describes such governmentally centered agreements as disrespectful to her relationship with the land as a Snuneymuxw person, as well as to the land itself.

Others from Snuneymuxw expressed similar sentiments as well as critiques of decision-making power that did not reflect a collaborative or co-operative nature. I asked one Elder about how they felt about co-management with Saysutshun, they shook their head and we sat in a silence that felt heavy with disappointment. "We don't need any more of this," gesturing with their hands towards a relationship in which one is over the other.

there was backlash on behalf of non-Indigenous fishers who resisted the loss of their own fishing rights. This case dramatically changed how the Puget Sound fishery is managed and how rights are understood.

Geraldine Manson, who at one point had sat on the Park Board for Snuneymuxw and was a band Councilor at the time the co-management agreement was negotiated described this relationship as ruled by checklists and expectations for stewardship set out by BC Parks that had little do with Snuneymuxw's responsibilities to Saysutshun. Despite these perspectives, those who work most closely with BC Parks and Saysutshun did use the term co-management frequently in our discussions about Saysutshun.

When interviewing a BC Parks staff, I was given some insight into the goals and values of co-management form the agency's perspective. Staff spoke generally of co-management as well as the specific of Saysutshun agreement, often referring to building and strengthening relationships between BC Parks and Indigenous peoples as an aspect of co-management.[27] For BC Parks, the goal of each co-management agreement is unique to the park and the nation whose territory includes the park. The Indigenous Relations Advisor I spoke with described that at a high level, co-management agreements are part of the Province's reconciliation agenda, while also "facilitating greater involvement and input of the Nation in decisions that involve them." The Advisor explained that this can also improve the day-to-day relationships Indigenous nations have with BC Parks, as the co-management agreements "serve as an agreed upon approach as to how to collaborate on the management of the protected area in question, which increases certainty in process all around, and helps to manage expectations of what each party's role is." In thinking about this as a goal and in analysis of the governing documents of Saysutshun, it is important to remember that through BC Parks, as a colonial institution, the rules of the game are defined by colonial powers – what may be negotiated and in what language, limits the outcomes according to its own policies, and determines what collaboration means (see Irlbacher-Fox 2009, 60).

This points to a discrepancy in how it is that Snuneymuxw and BC Parks view "co-management," with the nation seeing it as re-enlivening a part of their governance and

[27] Co-management as a way to manage not only resources, but relationships has been studied by Goetze, Tara C. 2005. "Empowered Co-management: Toward Power-sharing and Indigenous Rights in Clayoquot Sound." *Anthropologica,* 47, no.2: 247-265 and Natcher, David C., Susan Davis, and Clifford G. Hickey. "Co-Management: Managing Relationships, Not Resources." *Human Organisation* 64, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 240-250.

relationship with an agential being as well as step towards greater self-determination. Whereas BC Parks sees co-management as a way to increase Indigenous involvement in the management of their territory. Although co-management had once been viewed as a way to interrupt colonial government authority (RCAP 1997, 640), it is clear from the ways that government use policies and practices like co-management that such inclusion is often an approach that "merely incorporate[es] Indigenous Peoples into existing settler-colonial structures instead of challenging those structures (Finnegan 2018, 2). As pointed out by Mulrennan and Scott (2005), it is the ambiguity of the term "co-management" and how it can be applied that has led settler governments to embrace it as a desirable end for Indigenous-settler relations, when "self-management may be a more efficient and just approach" (206).

Though there are some points where Snuneymuxw and BC Parks agree about the potential of co-management, particularly around its use as a tool for improving relationship, there are foundational difference in what co-management is and does (which I explore in the next chapter). Morrow and Hensel describe such a discrepancy as a "contested vocabulary wherein parties may use the same terminology but hold different understandings of what a word means and does. Discussing traditional harvesting rights and regulations in SW Alaska, the authors state that "ideological differences between the systems rarely surface in discussions [between parties], because the focus is on planning actions rather than understanding the varied justifications behind them…[with] legislators, resource managers, and enforcement agencies supply[ing] the vocabulary" (1992, 38). What often occurs around such contested vocabulary – in the case of Saysutshun "co-management" – is that its use creates a false sense of agreement. When using these terms, there may be times when there is overlap in understanding and no problems surface later, while at other times "misunderstandings follow once the agreement is in effect and each party privately speculates that the other is guilty of insincerity, betrayal, or simple disregard" (1992, 39).

In choosing the terms to use throughout my thesis, I tried to find a balance between all of these ideas and practices. I had several reservations about using the term co-management given the relationship that Snuneymuxw peoples have to it, as well as its

overuse in ways that dilute what truly collaborative management could mean. Rather than trying to resolve these tensions, my aim is to explore what might be opened up by conceptualising co-management as acting from a non-Western center. Ultimately, I drew heavily on the thinking of Heesoon Bai (2001) who explains that all words come with baggage and "this does not mean we should banish words, ideas, concepts, and thinking. It is just that they will be our guests, rather than our master: they are invited to play with us but not dictate and control us" (92). From this framework of language and my own hopes for something beyond, I have chosen to stick with the term co-management both for readability in this particular academic context and for those who may wish to use this work outside of the Snuneymuxw context. I also invite it as a guest into the next chapter for those who use the term to see the ways that it is failing at being collaborative, co-operative, or community oriented.

Dave Bodalay welcomes us, introducing himself as a Snuneymuxw person, honoured to be in the position of welcoming us to the territory, to Saysutshun. He thanks the visitors gathered for joining him on the tour, which will include a walk around the island's front country and provide us with stories about the plants, land, and the culture that holds this knowledge. He explains that Snuneymuxw people have been in relation to Saysutshun since time immemorial and have used this place to heal the spirit after the death of a loved one, as well as training for canoe pullers. "We would walk for three hours around the island until our spirit is ready to go back, ready to keep doing our work." He has shared with me in previous conversations that the trail past the salt marsh is the exact same as it has been, walked for thousands of years by the ancestors. The other trails may have swayed some but in many cases, you can walk the same path as the previous generations of Snuneymuxw peoples. He says again that he is glad we are all here doing the important work of learning our shared history in "this place we all call home."

"We'll go to the trees where the knowledge comes from," Dave says to the group as we start off.

We walk down the path dappled by the shifting light of the Douglas Fir canopy overhead. The wind is out of the West and carries the sounds of oystercatchers taking advantage of the low tide. There are six of us in the group, awkwardly keeping COVID-mandated distance from each other but also leaning in to hear Dave's voice as the wind carries that away too. The day is bright; the tourists are wearing shade hats and I can smell their sunscreen. We stop at the foot of a Douglas fir and Dave raises his arms in what looks like a welcome gesture to an old friend. He explains some of the uses of the Douglas fir, the pitch as a way to clear the throat and lungs, the pitch and bark as a fire starter. During the tour Dave shares the uses of the common plants of the front country - things that are safer to share as he is not putting plant communities at risk. Dave is very generous with his knowledge, has been very patient with me in my fumblings towards knowing Saysutshun. He has taught me that one must be careful what is shared as you don't know what teachings those who are listening may have or how they plan to use the knowledge. "It's good to have the knowledge," he says, "but also having the knowledge to be cautious with that."

In previous tours, after leaving this Douglas fir Dave has led groups onto a point of the land where you can just see Snake Island around the curve of Saysutshun and he shared stories there. Today we walk out into the high afternoon sun towards the totem pole to the East. Dave stands under the pole and explains the stories carved there, which include Killer Whale who was transformed from an Old Wolf who went into the water to be healed. This story is connected to nearby Gabriola Island but is held here in this pole

because the stories live everywhere. I like this about Dave's stories – they aren't always about Saysutshun but represent how the island, the people, and the spirits are connected of the rest of the territory.

I think at this point we will move on – the tours are about an hour long and there is a lot to cover – but Dave stays and looks out over the curve of the land. "Not so long ago, we would have been standing on the edge of a village here, of a family's home. There were families here who were charged with stewarding and had responsibilities for harvesting the special plants here. Like camas, which were a special trade plant all the way into the interior." We look South across what is now the lawn. "You can still see the shape of a place in the land." Dave motions the rolling of the land with his hands. Undulating. I try to imagine how hard life would have been for the family here with the ever-present wind through the channel. The carefulness required with no fresh water on the island. The love and respect for the land that penetrates your every action. There is power in this place – the strength of the wind is a part of the physical presence here, but there is also power you feel through yourself when you are open, when you are intentional.

Dave looks at the Transformer pole and looks out over the land with us. "The way we see things now isn't the way they have always been." We set off walking North again, the dry grass crunching under our feet. "If we go up to this little curve of the land, we can just see Snake Island and there's a good story there."

# Chapter 4.

## "*How can you 'co-manage' something that's as deep and rich as this?*": Co-management of Saysutshun

I have structured this chapter to clearly identify the goals of Snuneymuxw and the ways that the co-management agreement either allows for or limits these goals. This will be analysed based on my conversations and interviews with Snuneymuxw peoples – particularly Eliot and Ian as PDG staff – as well as analysis of the governing documents of Saysutshun. These documents include the *BC Park Act,* the 1995 Newcastle Island Master Plan, the 2008 co-management agreement (CMA), the Park Operator Agreement, and various Snuneymuxw business plans. Following Ahmed (2006), I will consider such texts as entities with the potential to "do things" depending on how they are taken up by various actors (105), which relates directly to the potential to transform and be transformed. Rather than reading only what the document says, such an analysis includes "following them around" to understand how they move or get stuck, who reads them, and if or how they come to life. When thinking of the texts in this way, it is important to note that who has the ability to enact aspects of governance or stewardship laid out in the documents is not equal. As pointed out by Irlbacher-Fox, Indigenous nations like Snuneymuxw enter into these negotiations and exist in relationships at a distinct disadvantage in terms of infrastructure and resources (2009, 60). To understand how the documents are or can be taken up, I had discussions with BC Parks staff and Snuneymuxw citizens who work closely with the co-management agreement.

### Snuneymuxw Goals in the Co-management With Saysutshun

My conversations and interviews with Snuneymuxw citizens provided some perspectives into the early days of the co-management agreement of Saysutshun. This arrangement had been negotiated by Snuneymuxw and the Province of British Columbia through the Reconciliation Agreement process, which was finalized in 2013, resulting in the return of three forestry blocks totalling 877.2 hectares around Mt. Benson and the co-management of Saysutshun. The co-management agreement (CMA) is not a public document.

Nonetheless, PDG permitted me to review it for this project. The agreement identifies some of the shared values and visions held by Snuneymuxw, BC Parks, and the City of Nanaimo in 2003 when the CMA was entered into. The CMA identifies that it is the wish of the parties "to work together collaboratively on the planning and management of the Park in a manner that respects and supports the interests" of all involved (Snuneymuxw First Nation 2008, 2). When I asked Snuneymuxw citizens about how and why their government signed the co-management agreement, they explained to me that the Elders and Chief and Council of the day had identified Saysutshun as an important portal for internal cultural resurgence, which included an opportunity for economic benefit for the people.[28] Eliot states that from the Elders' telling, the relationship was entered into because "there was an opportunity for us to manage the park and it's an opportunity for us to advance reconciliation and educate people about who we are. It's also an opportunity to create employment…and I think [employment] extends our community back onto the island where they had been displaced." Geraldine, who sat on the Council and the Park Board in the 1990s described the nation's Council of the day as adamant about getting the land back. Co-management between the City and BC Parks was viewed as a step in the process. She explained that many knew even then that Snuneymuxw was going to get the land back, but first they had to reassert their presence and identity with the island again.

Co-management as it exists now, has never been the ultimate goal for Snuneymuxw. Ian describes it functioning primarily as a stopgap measure to continue re-asserting Snuneymuxw presence until they get the island back from BC Parks. He states that Snuneymuxw has persisted in this co-management effort despite great financial cost to the nation and unfair relationships to ensure their presence is recognised and respected by BC Parks and visitors to the island as well as to reconnect Snuneymuxw citizens to such a significant place in the territory.

> I see it kind of as a stopgap measure in between us having that land expropriated 150 years ago to eventually coming back to us. The co-

[28] As described in Chapter 2, cultural resurgence and economy are not at odds with one another as goals. There are those – including those that I interviewed in this project – whose sense of economy is not capitalist, though it does exist in a capitalist system. Having culturally grounded economies is not at odds with cultural resurgence.

> management agreement as it stands now is, it is tough to deal with. You know it's very paternalistic, it's very prescriptive in what we can and cannot do. And it's challenging to run profitable, proper business over there and to do the things that our Elders would like to see out of the island. But being able to provide those opportunities to share our culture with the city and the greater population around here and everyone who comes from all over the world to visit the island. It's difficult for us to do any of that stuff because we can't really invest in any capital infrastructure. You know it's not feasible for us to do because we don't own the land.

From Ian's statement it's easy to see the tensions between having the benefits of having co-management agreement to mitigate the disruption of Snuneymuxw's relations with their territory, while also still trying address the limitations of such an agreement.

The Saysutshun Business Plan and staff at PDG state that the goals for Saysutshun are similar to those that led to the CMA back in the negotiations: that the island be utilised as a place of internal cultural revitalisation; to repatriate the land out of the BC Parks system; and to increase economic reconciliation potential through developing tourism in ways that are culturally relevant and ethical. The particular nuances of aboriginal tourism fall outside of the scope of this thesis; thus, I focus here on the goals of strengthening and reasserting relationships with Saysutshun and repatriation. These goals, in particular, speak to the primary question of my thesis, which is to consider the potential of co-management as a mechanism for greater national self-determination and Land Back.

### *Goal 1: Strengthening and reasserting relationships with Saysutshun*

Building and strengthening relationships are an important goal for all parties involved in the co-management of Saysutshun. As the Indigenous Relations Advisor noted, CMAs are not government-to-government relations under the BC *Park Act'*s language. This jurisdiction of the CMA places an Indigenous nation as "operators" or, as previously identified by definitions of the Ocean's Canada Strategy and RCAP, as "stakeholders." It should be noted that the CMA between Snuneymuxw and BC Parks does in fact recognise this agreement as a one between governments, which is at odds with the language in the *Act*. In practice, however, Snuneymuxw relationship to the land seems primarily enacted as stakeholders through the Park Operator Agreement rather than a governing power.

Regarding the enactment of Aboriginal rights in the BC *Park Act* (1996) section 4.2 gestures towards,[29] it should be noted that as a treaty nation and as decided in *White and Bob* (2013),[30] Snuneymuxw cannot be prohibited from enacting their rights to subsistence use even within the boundaries of a park where such activities would otherwise not be permitted. BC Parks staff alluded to this right being even more protected in public parks than other Crown lands, as most other Crown land will have encumbrances on it for extraction or grazing. There is no requirement for Snuneymuxw citizens to inform BC Parks of harvesting according to their rights; however, both the BC Parks Indigenous Relations Advisor and the Area Supervisor noted that such knowledge is helpful in managing the general public's perception of such activities. The Indigenous Relations Advisor stated that forewarning of Snuneymuxw undertaking such activities can help Parks prepare visitors and prevent any conflict. The Area Supervisor further explained that the optics of someone harvesting in parklands may lead to visitors thinking they are also able to harvest or may be angry about the harvest occurring in "public park" lands. Ultimately, Parks staff and policy recognises Snuneymuxw's right to harvest medicinal plants but encourage the nation to seek permission or at least alert Parks managers in advance.

Staff at Petroglyph Development Group shared that although harvesting rights may be protected and recognised by Parks, there are many barriers to enacting these rights. This includes the basic logistics of access via the ferry, but also access in terms of the relationship to harvesting locations on the island. Due to Snuneymuxw's historical and contemporary marginalisation from Saysutshun due to industry and the park status, many Snuneymuxw citizens who still carry the knowledge about medicine harvesting have been doing so elsewhere on the territory. Although Snuneymuxw presence is asserted daily through the presence of workers, being empowered to enact relationships through activities like medicinal plant harvesting would be yet another way that Snuneymuxw's relationship

[29] 4.2 (1)The minister may enter into an agreement with a first nation respecting the first nation

(a)carrying out activities necessary for the exercise of aboriginal rights on, and (b)having access for social, ceremonial and cultural purposes to.

[30] This case, argued by Thomas Berger, realised what the rights outlined in the 1854 Douglas Treaty meant for hunting and fishing rights for Snuneymuxw in the face of misuse by the Crown. https://www.snuneymuxw.ca/gallery/50th-anniversary-white-and-bob-litigation

to Saysutshun would be entrenched. Ian explains that it has only been recently that the nation has felt it would be permitted to harvest plants on the island – either through law or social expectation. Research of the Canadian Parks Council is consistent with this, reporting that despite the allowance of harvesting by Indigenous nations, many First Nations people feel alienated from conventional parks and have chosen not to pursue their traditional uses within these areas (Parks Canada 2008, np). PDG staff explained that there have been some informal internal conversations about supporting a program for those who wish to harvest from Saysutshun. There have also been discussions between BC Parks and PDG about the removal of trees for cultural purposes such as carving and canoe-making, but my own conversation with Parks personnel spoke to this needing to be undertaken with BC Parks risk assessment and conservation protocols. Such procedural limitations show that despite Park's mandate of ensuring access as part of a public trust and to further reconciliation with Indigenous peoples that access is only for some, only in certain ways, and on the terms of BC Parks.

The 1995 Newcastle Island Master Plan does identify a number of cultural objectives that would require Snuneymuxw's participation to be ethically and successfully implemented. These cultural plans include education related to Snuneymuxw-specific cultural and natural resources, increased signage about Snuneymuxw's relationship with the island, and the carving of two Welcome Poles. The Poles would welcome guests to the island and whose presence "will be ongoing, and part of the human history theme associated with Newcastle Island" (BC Parks 1995, 25). To some extent, these goals have been achieved through interpretative cultural tours given by Dave Bodaly and Celestine Aleck over the last 10 years, though there is desire to expand the capacity of these programs. According to interpretative signage that exists on Saysutshun near these now completed poles, carving and erection of the poles was undertaken when Nanaimo was awarded the title of Cultural Capital of Canada in 2008. As a part of this recognition, three "portals" to Snuneymuxw heritage were identified to showcase their artistic and cultural

legacy.[31] The Poles continue to be interpreted as intended through Dave's cultural tours and are the center of many events.

***Figure 4. Welcome Pole at Saysutshun***

In the co-management agreement that came shortly after the Master Plan, a Management Board was created to make space for such relationships and sharing to occur in more informal and supportive ways. It would be composed of six members, two from each party of Snuneymuxw, the City of Nanaimo, and the Province with the primary function of the Board being to "consider the interests" those involved on a variety of issues including planning and priorities, economic opportunities, and strategies to build the capacity of Snuneymuxw. There were three priorities identified to be dealt with by the

[31] Ironically, although the poles were made in the spirit of bringing forward Snuneymuxw art and presence and were carved by Snuneymuxw artist Noel Brown, they are done in North Coast style due to a legacy of the suppression of Coast Salish art. Eliot and I had a conversation while sitting with the Welcome Pole after one of our interview-conversation sessions. He explained that Coast Salish art styles and practices like Snuneymuxw's have been historically and contemporarily misrepresented and disrespected. They were seen as second-class styles compared to other Northwest Coast styles. He explains that it is only recently and with the dedicated work of Coast Salish artists that their style is once again flourishing and respected. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, ensuring that Snuneymuxw art practices and styles are once again present is a part of Snuneymuxw cultural resurgence, with Saysutshun being an important location to nourish this work.

Board: revenue opportunities; capital projects; and identification and management of significant Snuneymuxw sites. In terms of the achievements of this Board, it is my understanding that an inventory of Snuneymuxw places and sites has been undertaken, including archaeological work that Geraldine Manson had been involved in. Some aspects of this work are told in signage created and installed by Petroglyph Development Group near the park entrance in 2018. Although this and other progress has been made towards the goals and priorities of the Master Plan and Board, the efficacy of the Board is now in question as it has not met since 2010. Ian stated Snuneymuxw is currently trying to rekindle this Board structure to improve sharing between the parties and for new outlets to express Snuneymuxw interests and goals.

The Park Operator Agreement is the governing document that sits the closest to daily governance and stewardship relationships. The POA is not a public document and therefore I needed to request it from the nation for viewing. There is no digital version of the document, so I spent a warm and sunny afternoon sitting in the PDG lunchroom, with papers spread across a table carved in Kwakwaka'wakw style. I had a lovely time talking with Geraldine in the morning and we had groaned a bit over the idea of an afternoon spent with the binder. She laughed, explaining that when she was on Council and they would bring out the binder, she would have to shut her eyes and mentally remove herself from the conversation. She explained that its only words for Parks, not for the nation - that if it was for Snuneymuxw, the relationship would be held in a song or story.

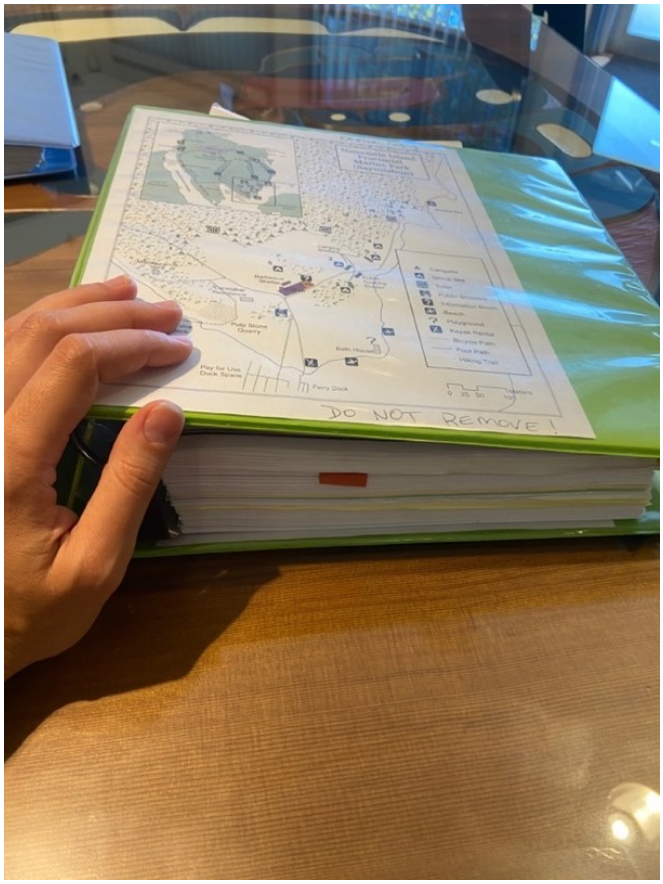


***Figure 5. Park Operator Agreement***

Eliot struggled to find the most recent version of the POA in a sea of other binders in the office. I couldn't help but think what management and relationship across the territory means when it seems to be governed primarily through binders. When he set it down in front of me, we shared a wry laugh about the almost mythical size of the binder. As I got settled into the work, I felt my skin uncomfortable against the synthetic material of the office chair and the suddenly stifling air. I felt indignant to be sitting here in front of this binder, thinking "*what can this possibly teach me about relationship to Saysutshun*?" But I tried to come before the documents the same way I do Saysutshun, open to learning whatever it is the binder can teach, including Trickster teachings.[32] I quickly became

[32] The concept of the Trickster is held within Indigenous communities around the world as a way to explain inconsistencies or reconstitute experiences. It is a force that is neither good nor evil, but of mischief. Within Coast Salish cosmologies, Trickster is often though not exclusively Raven who, in his selfishness, hunger and mischievousness, creates change in or teaches individuals and communities through the act of doing almost any task confidently incorrect. See: Amrine Goertz, Jolynn. 2018. *Chehalis Stories*. Lincoln: University

grateful for the window that looks out over the Nanaimo River estuary that my vision can touch on to stay grounded in the tedious work of reading the over 250 pages of bureaucratic language and regulations. As he left me with the binder, I recalled the conversation we had had about documents that govern Saysutshun and the relationships that come from them:

> It's just a policy…. you know a business relationship basically. Although I don't want to demean the relationship we have with BC Parks, because I think it is significant that this has come to us. There's a lot of parks where the nation isn't the manager even though the park might be in the core of a nation's territory or another significant place to the nation - equivalent to how Saysutshun is for us. But fundamentally, the management that we have over the island is specifically as defined and outlined by that agreement. And there, there are certain parts where we can go to BC Parks and say "hey we want to do this project, we have some ideas about shifting things to make it more towards the way we want to do the work" and *sometimes* they'll be really receptive to that and other times it'll be really bureaucratic… and so that's one of the ways we have to grapple with that relationship as it exists right now, because that's all we are is the park manager. We don't have a more significant stake really [according to BC Parks] when we get down to it and how the park is run.

When spending time with the Park Operator Agreement in particular, I could feel the ways that Snuneymuxw relationships and protocols with Saysutshun – and as hosts of the territory – could be smothered by the procedures of Parks. For example, Geraldine expressed that she has been dismayed by how Snuneymuxw workers are trained to enact their duties to the island, with all practices focusing only on BC Parks standards. She states that not long after the co-management agreement was formalised,

> we had to go over there one day with the Parks Board and [the manager of the park at the time] to walk the land. And they [BC Parks] had a form of responsibilities that comes with being on the island. What you can and what you can't do. And for the labourers that were over there, they were nit-picking of their duties, they weren't doing it to the satisfaction of the Parks. I recall telling [the park manager] that you know, this land is ours. It will always be ours. It will come back to us one day…. For *xwunítum* it's checklists. We need a new word to be able to talk about what protocol really means.

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of Nebraska Press; Archibald. Jo-ann. 2008. *"An Indigenous Storywork Methodology,"* in *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues, 371-385.*

In reference to the checklists she mentioned, Geraldine described BC Parks' focus on cleaning picnic tables, how many times garbage was to be emptied, what Snuneymuxw employee uniforms were to look like, and how they would relate to Park visitors as aspects of this "nit-picking." As Geraldine pointed out, the rigorous cleaning and maintenance regime held in the 2016/17 POA's 102 pages of maintenance Schedules that outline a list of maintenance tasks, regular and major cleaning, repair and preservation. Although ensuring visitor safety and care for the land is integral to both Snuneymuxw and BC Parks, Snuneymuxw ideas and responsibilities for care – especially related to the welcome poles, which are cultural and have specific protocols –are not mentioned. It is Geraldine's strong belief that once again enacting Snuneymuxw protocols of being with Saysutshun rather than BC Parks standards and practices, would then prepare workers to come before the island ready to be taught and transformed rather than *knowing* what is best. As O'Brien points out, it is in the "ordinariness" of park administration that Indigenous peoples become or continue to be alienated from their worldview and agency with the landscape in question. It is in these seemingly mundane or tedious aspects of management that Indigenous people become disheartened in colonial park structures (2019, 276).

Ian and Eliot spoke to care known by Parks primarily as upholding a status quo of the land as a park and the history as colonial. Ian stated that he had been surprised to return to Saysutshun after so many years away from the island to find it in exactly the state he remembered it from his childhood. When discussing care for Saysutshun within a Snuneymuxw context, Joan spoke directly and passionately to the difference between Parks practice and how the island has known care by the nation. She describes that the island will have hope when Saysutshun sees the Snuneymuxw are there, but worries about it:

> When your house is filled with strangers and nobody loving you, nobody taking care of you. Right? Just discarded. Taking 'til there's no more to give. There's no hope. But when we're present, it can just feel that love, that kindness, the caring. There's a reason for it... We're part of the island and have been for thousands of years.

This part of our conversation was quite emotional for both of us as together we felt the history of colonialism and the land, the weight of knowing Indigenous forms of care and being unable to practice it while the island is held by BC Parks. Despite the number of

maintenance requirements BC Parks has for Saysutshun, it will never compare to the care that Snuneymuxw people have carried through the ongoing disruption to governance and responsibility to Saysutshun.[33] Nor will protecting the status quo through rigorous standards of "maintenance" allow for transformative potential to be recognised by the land and the nation. Both Eliot and Ian were clear in recognising that the plans and actions of BC Parks were to not just conserve but *preserve* the land and its history exactly how it is. This is the antithesis of transformation by any definition, but especially the nuanced understanding of it known in Snuneymuxw cosmology.

The Indigenous Relations Advisor with BC Parks recognises that the POA is not an optimal tool for recognising and enacting cultural relationships, stating "park operator agreements, they're service contracts…so that's what they are. They don't reflect…. there's no back and forth – government is buying a service with the park operator agreement and so that language is very service-oriented." The Indigenous Relations Advisor suggested that perhaps tandem agreements could be used here, where "the park operator agreement is just one tool and then there's this separate tool that can do more – that can enable more of that cultural side." As Snuneymuxw peoples expressed, the island has been and continues to be a portal to their identity, culture, and practices; however, I fear that when looking to integrate what they determine to be culture into these agreements that Snuneymuxw's governance and self-determination will only continue to be marginalised. As I previously described, contextualizing Indigenous relationships only through the lens of a depoliticized understanding of "culture" is a way that governments – and in this case Parks – shy away from references to deeper Indigenous relationships including what they might interpret as "ownership." As Alfred (1999) explains, "just as we must respect and honour our songs, ceremonies, and dances, so too we must honour the institutions that in the past governed social and political relations among our people, because they are equally a part of the sacred core of our nations" (4). Re-membering[34] and

[33] During the course of my research and analysis, I found it unclear whether or how Snuneymuxw or PDG have tried to include their own understandings and perspective of care for Saysutshun in the POA. It is therefore just as unclear how it would be included in the POA, as is described in the next paragraph.

[34] The term re-membering used here describes recognising and living with Saysutshun as a part of Snuneymuxw territory and treating it as a relative. See: Fachin, Dina. 2009. "Inside the Image and the

reconnecting to Saysutshun as a portal for culture, identity, and protocols must include robust governance in these aspects of life Snuneymuxw life and future.

As a park, individual Snuneymuxw people are free to visit with the land and to the extent that they are comfortable, walk with the land in their grief and with an openness to learn and be transformed. However, here are significant differences between individuals from Snuneymuxw having the ability to be with the land and the potential for Snuneymuxw self-determination through this landscape. In the context of Snuneymuxw's self-determination, PDG staff are able to see this distinction most clearly, as they understand the limits that BC Parks and the related governing documents place on Snuneymuxw as a nation having the right to be in relationship to their territory through culturally centered governing that includes decision-making and economy, which Snuneymuxw believes that can only attain through repatriation.

### *Goal 2: Repatriation of Saysutshun and Land Back*

To understand the potential for Land Back, which includes true co-management and/or the repatriation of the island from BC Parks, it is important to consider how Parks views the land and Snuneymuxw relationship to it. The Master Plan identifies a primary goal of future planning to build collaborative relationships with local agencies and interest groups as an essential part of successful management. The document recognises that, "the First Nations will also play an important role in advising BC Parks on aboriginal issues, cultural features and special events such as totem carving, salmon barbecues and First Nations Day" (BC Parks 1995, 4). This passage demonstrates the thinking of Tester and Irniq (2008), who recognise traditions of colonial management that sequester Indigenous nation's roles in planning and management to cultural aspects and celebrations that do not directly challenge the colonial state and its goals. While I agree that the Master Plan seems to limit Snuneymuxw to symbolic or ceremonial roles, Snuneymuxw individuals described their

Word: the Re/membering of Indigenous Identities." *Ethnic Studies Review,* 32, no. 130-54; Grande, Sandy and Teresa L. McCarty. 2018. "Indigenous Elsewheres: Refusal and Re-membering in Education Research, Policy, and Praxis." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 31, no. 3: 165-67.

ongoing presence through celebration and ceremony as an integral part of their self-determination that should not be minimised.

An aspect of the Master Plan that showcases BC Parks understanding of Snuneymuxw's relationship to the land – and perhaps the claiming of park land more broadly – can be seen in the brief history of industry on the island. Here, Snuneymuxw relationship with the island is reduced to one sentence which states that: "Indian middens offer historic evidence of at least two Salish Indian village sites (of the Sne -nymo-Confederacy) which were deserted before the discovery of coal in the area in 1849" (BC Parks 1995, 4).[35] Such a statement is egregious by today's standards for a multitude of reasons not only in terminology but also how marginal Snuneymuxw's relationship is when compared to the way the colonial history is presented and the assertion that the island was deserted. When considering the ways in which Snuneymuxw citizens discussed their relationship with Saysutshun and the territory more broadly it is easy to see that no land would be abandoned, as it would be a deep loss to their identity as peoples. Within the context of parks, Finnegan (2018) states that many such protected areas are

1. Located on treaty-ceded land
2. Located on land taken by force by settler colonists,
3. Either prohibit outright or do not encourage Indigenous Peoples to engage in traditional activities on their traditional territories, and/or
4. Act to extend settler-colonial authority over a given area or resource (7).

Finnegan further states that "within each of these categories, parks have effectively displaced Indigenous Peoples and livelihoods from the land that the parks now protect" (2018, 7-8). By braiding together the literature about parks from the previous chapter and this specific case study of Saysutshun's governing documents, I interpret such BC Park's framing of the land as deserted as a foundational part of the narrative of *terra nulius* that

[35] This is similar to contemporary Master Plans, such as the Port Drive Waterfront Master Plan (2015) from the City of Nanaimo, which includes a few paragraphs about the historical context of Snuneymuxw and the need to hire Indigenous artists for a future mural. This Master Plan is a planning document on top of a significant Snuneymuxw village site.

has allowed parks to benefit from settler colonialism while limiting Indigenous nations from having sovereignty over their territories.

The Plan does acknowledge that "First Nations people have been using Newcastle Island since before the first European contact. BC Parks has limited information on the values of the features and resources in the area as they relate to First Nations' culture and heritage." (BC Parks 1995, 22). To overcome their limited knowledge, writers of the Plan declared a primary objective of developing on-going communication and working relationships with Snuneymuxw First Nation.

Legislatively, Snuneymuxw's goals of repatriating the land from the BC Parks system is held in section 8.5 of the *Park Act,* which reserves the land absolutely, with title retained by the government in perpetuity. Due to this specific point of the current legislation, Snuneymuxw's ultimate goal of repatriating the land from BC Parks does become complicated and would have to set a precedent in having lands removed from provincial park status in BC.[36] Section 8.5 may be a significant barrier to the goal. Despite this, Snuneymuxw did not identify the BC *Park Act* as a primary source of the limitations they experienced in trying to enact daily stewardship and relationship according to their values and needs.[37]

A key part of Land Back and co-management – and the transformative potential of these practices – is the right for Indigenous peoples to make decisions about their territory. As a BC Park, Snuneymuxw cannot set their own fees as they are consistent across the whole of the Parks system and at the discretion of the Minister and Area Managers.

[36] The Indigenous Relations Advisor states that parks have been removed from the BC Parks system, but it is rare. These are mainly Class C parks that are run by a board, which generally include BC parks staff. They stated that there was one instance where the *management* of a Class C park was transferred to the local First Nation, whose government made up the board, but I believe the land remained in the provincial system. Other times, parks are removed through treaty but only in cases where the requirements can't be met through other Crown land. What Snuneymuxw is currently working towards is a different circumstance than these precedents of removal.

[37] When talking to staff at PDG, the legislation that came up as most problematic was not the *Park Act* but rather the federal level *Indian Act.* From very early conversations with citizens of Snuneymuxw, many referred to the limitations of the *Indian Act* in terms of the ways it limits potential economic development, slow processes that drained the resources of Snuneymuxw over generations, lack of funding for governance, and the legacy of paternalism from its 19th-century roots.

Furthermore, my conversations with BC Parks staff indicated that project proposals such as the proposals Snuneymuxw have put forward of building of longhouses or the removal of trees for cultural purposes would be considered primarily through risk and impact assessments of parks, which marginalises how Snuneymuxw might see such work being assessed through their own lens on their own territory. The primacy of Parks decision-making is also held in the POA which denotes that for large-scale projects to services like the cultural tours, "the Province, *in its sole discretion*, may approve, request amendment to, or reject" proposals (emphasis added). This language of "in its sole discretion" is used multiple times throughout the document regarding decision-making authority and the duration of the agreement.

Ian clearly expressed not only being limited in terms of current practice and relationship through the co-management and Park Operator Agreements, but also by the precarity of the agreement. POA 2016/17 Article 20.3 clearly states that "notwithstanding any other terms of this Agreement, upon 180 days written notice to the Operator, the Province may, in its sole discretion and for any reason, terminate the Agreement." Furthermore, the POA states in an introductory paragraph that the standing nature of the agreement being renewed expires in 2026. Ian and Eliot expressed the frustration and fear they feel when they consider investing in cultural infrastructure or general development on the island. Ian states that the precarity has many impacts on how Snuneymuxw invests in Saysutshun for their own members and guest experience:

> Being able to provide those opportunities to build our culture and share our culture with the city and the greater population around here and everyone who comes from all over the world to visit the islands…. it's difficult for us to do any of that stuff because we can't really invest in any capital infrastructure. It's not feasible for us to do because we don't own the land…. it's hard with that termination section [of the POA] –the province can just stop this agreement with 180 days' notice. And that's just it.

PDG has focused primarily on the softer, more mobile, and inexpensive Snuneymuxw presences such as cultural tours, improving signage, and ensuring priority for the hiring of Snuneymuxw peoples because of the uncertainty they feel in the CMA,

Snuneymuxw have begun to assert their persistent presence in the POA and their own forward-looking governing documents. In the 206/17 and 2017/18 Park Operator Agreements, the relationship between Snuneymuxw and Saysutshun is recognised in a variety of ways. Many of these have been written by Snuneymuxw themselves, rather than a government agency having the power to define their relationship as was the case in the 1995 Master Plan. Such a passage occurs in section 3.5 Protective Factors (2017/18 POA) stating:

> Saysutshun-Newcastle holds a significant place in the Snuneymuxw territorial culture. Snuneymuxw culture is founded upon a deep connection to our land, waters, and all living things. The Creator has provided a sacred trust to Snuneymuxw in relation to Snuneymuxw territory.

Within the Snuneymuxw Business Plan for Saysutshun, the rights and authority of the nation are clearly identified. Snuneymuxw state they are "keepers of this sacred place" who invite all who visit to experience the history, culture, and tradition of Nanaimo and the Coast Salish region in new ways. The nation's love and responsibility to Saysutshun is further articulated through a statement in the Quality Control Plan within the Business Plan for the ferry service owned and operated by PDG:

> Newcastle Island is part of Snuneymuxw First Nation Traditional Territory. Newcastle Island or Saysutshun Island has always had a special place in the hearts of Snuneymuxw people. It has been used as a place of healing, of the mind, body, and spirit. Saysutshun has always been used as a training ground, as a place for gathering traditional medicine, and an area of harvesting the bounty of the sea. Since time immemorial Snuneymuxw people have respected this land. In this modern time this respect continues in many ways (Snuneymuxw First Nation, nd.c).

The fact that this statement begins with the declaration of the island as Snuneymuxw territory is significant, as this removes the dominant narrative of the land as a park and owned by the public. *This is Snuneymuxw territory.* Disruption to the colonial status as a park is further supported by the repeated use of the term "always" throughout the statement, culminating in the fact that "since time immemorial Snuneymuxw people have respected this land." Here territory takes its place not as a thing, but as a being invested with political, legal, cultural, and social relationship and responsibility rooted in respect. However, few have seen this document, it being a guiding document for Snuneymuxw if they are able to

repatriate the land from Parks. Ian explains that it is hard to justify this being a master plan for the nation at this time when it calls for significant investment into lands Snuneymuxw does not have title over.

### *The City of Nanaimo*

Thus far I have not discussed the City of Nanaimo (CoN) as the third party in this agreement much, due mainly to the fact that much of the management structure occurs through BC Parks' jurisdiction. However, to not talk about their role as a partner would be a disservice to the network of relationships that I am proposing exist in co-management, many of which are marginalised. In the early 2000s, Snuneymuxw and the CoN created the Reconciliation Protocol as part of their intentions to strengthen their relationship as neighbours. Ongoing discussion and evolving partnership resulted in a renewal of the Protocol Agreement in 2020, which includes pathways for building "understanding of each other including the Treaty of 1854, advancing reconciliation, and commitment to a shared vision for the Nanaimo region" (UBCM Pathways 2020, np). The CoN also financially supported the creation of the Saysutshun Business Plan, which recognises the connections between Saysutshun and downtown Nanaimo. A recent presentation to the Union of BC Municipalities gave some description of the values present in the relationship as well as some of their shared endeavours including partner service agreements on the Saysutshun (Newcastle Island) Ferry Service and developing a business plan "that envisions Indigenous and tourism product development on Newcastle Island" (2020, np). The statement explains that this shared work is undertaken with a commitment to collaborative government-to-government relationships in a "spirit of cooperation," good faith, and trust (UBCM 2020, np).

Though revitalisation of the Reconciliation Protocol extends well beyond Saysutshun, this recognition of government-to-government relationships is very different than that recognised by BC Parks. PDG Staff state this relationship with City of Nanaimo is currently more supportive of Snuneymuxw goals to develop certain aspects of Saysutshun than BC Parks. What this means is that the City stands back and supports Snuneymuxw and PDG in determining best ways forward to meet their own goals in these service agreements and in the co-management agreement with BC Parks. However, from

my conversations with Eliot about the nature of "consultation" with the City and the interest in the Saysutshun business plan, this relationship seems to be built upon the potential of shared financial benefit rather than deep recognition of sovereignty and rights. But every relationship needs a new place to grow from – and this at least has a focus on sharing.

### *Humbly Recognising the State of "Co-management" with Saysutshun*

While BC Parks staff and other Canadian jurisdictions may consider structures like co-management as playing a key role in improving relations with Indigenous peoples, co-management often amounts to a bureaucratic restructuring only (Irlbacher-Fox 2009, Nadasdy 2003). From my review of the co-management agreement between BC Parks, Snuneymuxw First Nation, and the City of Nanaimo, I have concluded that the legitimacy of these governing documents and processes as an avenue for reconciliation desired by the colonial government, let alone Snuneymuxw's goals of national self-determination are deeply challenged by the persistence of colonial ideology and practice (see Table 2 below).

***Table 2. Table of Snuneymuxw Goals in the Co-management of Saysutshun***

| **Snuneymuxw Goals** | **Met** | **Difficult to Determine** | **Not Met** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Strengthening relationships with co-management partners* | Relationships between the City of Nanaimo and Snuneymuxw have improved in some ways, such as support through the Saysutshun Business Plan development. | | Snuneymuxw people express overall distrust in their relationship with BC Parks. |
| *Strengthening and asserting relationships to Saysutshun* | Variable and layered: some individual relationships between mustímuxw and the island have strengthened. Snuneymuxw people are employed through the island every year. | Right to harvest are protected, though there is work to be done by all parties for this is be supported and accessible. | Ability to make high level decisions about development and future of Saysutshun including the construction of traditional long houses. |

| Snuneymuxw Goals | Met | Difficult to Determine | Not Met |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Signage has increased near the Park entrance.<br><br>Welcome poles carved and erected. Ongoing educational programming that teaches Snuneymuxw people and visitor about Snuneymuxw relationship to the island. | BC Parks recognising the island as Snuneymuxw territory rather than a park. | Daily activities of workers governed by BC Parks standards. |
| *Repatriating Saysutshun / Land Back* | | Economic benefit for Snuneymuxw people is variable under the current colonial governance. It should be noted that this was the first year ever that was profitable for Snuneymuxw and PDG. | The island is still run primarily through the colonial institutions of BC Parks and co-management.<br><br>Final decisions in POA are determined by BC Parks.<br><br>The co-management agreement does not reflect any aspect of Snuneymuxw understandings or practices of co-management. |

In Table 2, it is plain to see that the more palatable and less challenging forms of Snuneymuxw's relationships and culture such as signage and educational tours have been met to some degree, while decision-making and culturally located practices of co-management remain unmet. It is not only the goals that have been unheard or unmet so far that are concern, as Snuneymuxw citizens also spoke of what they see as the inability of BC and this colonially controlled co-management structure to meet these as they move forward. Stevens (2014) had drawn similar conclusion, finding trends within capitalist or colonial frameworks that, if they persist, will inhibit the potential of co-management to be

a true mechanism for Indigenous peoples to enact their rights in protected areas. Among the common failings of shared governance arrangements are:

- inadequate scope: participation limited to certain aspects of governance and management;
- inadequate authority: participation limited to consultation or advice
- arrangements that promote unequal power relationships, voice, and authority;
- arrangements that fail to recognize Indigenous peoples as rights holders
- processes of decision-making based on cultural and social conventions that disadvantage or marginalize Indigenous peoples; and
- processes of decision-making that ignore or denigrate Indigenous knowledge, values, and customary practices (Stevens 2014, 298-9).

Nadasdy (2003) and Irlbacher-Fox (2009) offer a similar critique of co-management as experienced by Indigenous communities in Canada. From his experiences of working with the Kluane First Nation, Nadasdy concludes that despite the Canadian governmental and industry narrative of empowering communities through decision-making and inclusion, co-management processes continue to disenfranchise Indigenous people, Similarly, Irlbacher-Fox interprets several existing forms of self-governance and co-management as harmful in that they "continue to marginalize Indigenous people's experiences to aspirations to the point that agreements reached do not represent a form of self-determination but rather another iteration of colonization and forced dependence" (2009, 5). Nadasdy (2003) points to a variety of ways that co-management fails Indigenous peoples including the imposition of bureaucratized structures required by Indigenous nations to engage in these processes (2) and structures put forward by the government that do not have the capacity or will to comprehensively include Indigenous knowledge in decision-making (10, 123). Irlbacher-Fox's analysis of self-governance can be extended into these foundational failing of co-management agreements to consider the way that decision-making, consultation, or negotiation are enacted through pre-determined by mandates of the state (2009, 64). Based on what Snuneymuxw peoples described, I interpret the co-management relationship they experience as similar to those described by these two authors – another imposed, bureaucratized structure that does not allow for Indigenous decision-making or governance

due to the fact that all decisions are pre-determined or are designed only to meet the goals of a colonial state. Given these limitations and discussion with citizens of Snuneymuxw who engage in the CMA and POA, this specific co-management agreement functions primarily to maintain Saysutshun as a park within a colonial understanding of such a landscape being a site of recreation and conversation.

Snuneymuxw people expressed deep care when speaking of their territory and respect for the ways their old people lived with the land. The way my participants spoke about "co-management" within Snuneymuxw governance also provided me perspective on the reasons why this was chosen as a strategy and the transformative potential it holds for Snuneymuxw's self-determination. My conversations with Joan Brown in particular and my reading of Blackstock's four steps of transformation (2017) highlight the importance of coming into work with the land – either in research or land management – is being humble and ready to be transformed. Blackstock describes the work of embracing humility in our practices as providing the space to release or redirect energy that is currently being used to protect and rationalize harmful structures like co-management (2017, 41).

As Morales (2017) put forward, we must ask what potential there is for transformation and what is it being transformed or if transformation can even happen within that structure. Snuneymuxw people describe it as their responsibility to assert their presence and governance with this part of the territory– to once again nourish true or complete "co-management" – nat'su'mat - that has already been lived by Snuneymuxw people. It is important to acknowledge that individual citizens expressed that they continue to experience transformations through their employment or regular visiting with the island. To me, this shows that the power of the island is still alive despite the layers of colonial influence and disruption. For the power and potential of transformation to be felt by the *nation* once again, it must be freed from the confines of current co-management structures.

Qa:nlhp Arbutus stretched in the warmth of the sun rising up over the nearby water. Something felt different today. They leaned out over the nearby rocks who were also enjoying the growing light of the new day.

*Ho ho. Do you feel that? That shifting?*

Tluću Rock looked around. Shrugged. *Maybe?* They nestled into their midden home, not ready to be fully awake yet. There was a long day ahead of careless feet, of being trod upon, of visitors who would take-erode-steal its bed of shells. Tluću has heard there are protections against this – the xwunítum have made some kind of rules, but other xwunítum don't listen. They don't know how to conduct themselves, don't seem to care to know how to conduct themselves. Tluću loves those shells. They are reminders of other times when people didn't visit but lived or came with respect and purpose. The mustímuxw didn't come lightly but walked lightly.

Some Xa'qun Martens came from the south. Qa:nlhp was happy to see them again. Xa'qun rarely left their territory on the island around the docks, though Qa:nlhp could hear their voices carried on south winds.

*They are coming! They have come!* The Xa'qun cries out. They swoop in along the shoreline. Qa:nlhp feels the exhilarating rush of their wings. They were not sure what Xa'qun meant, but it felt exciting.

There are indeed things happening today. A family is moving here. And not just any family. They are mustímuxw. The trees and tumuxw and birds watch the goings on quietly, curiously. The birds go and tell Ha'put Deer. The trees whisper the message through their networks deep underground. The mustímuxw have been coming, all this time, have never really left. But this is different. The tumuxw can feel the places where the post holes of the long houses have been itching. *Nuwu its you*

The boy was 12 or 13, maybe turning 13 or would turn 13. His father would be the first Snuneymuxw person to steward this land in a tree's age. Ćsey' Douglas Fir near the caretaker's house could remember when the mustímuxw had had to leave the island. Could feel the way they have been ignored since that time – by workers, by xwunítum, by those who think they know better, who make plans without asking the trees or the water. Ćsey' took what felt like their first deep breath in what felt like 100 years. Maybe it was.

*Nuwu its you*

The family moved their possessions from the boat into the house, back and forth. Boxes and boxes of things. When did the mustímuxw get so many things?! After a while, the boy broke away from the work, running across the expanse of lawn. The boy stood at the meeting place of the forest and the lawn. The trees and the tumuxw and the boy stood and held their breath together. Everything was still for a moment before the boy returned to his work helping the family. Even though it was the middle of the day, it felt like the dawn again.

The next day the forest, the lawn, the wind, and the boy meet again. Ćsey' had asked Spa:l Raven to come and see what would happen. Spa:l knew Xeel's when he used to travel here regularly. They wanted Spa:l's expert opinion on what was happening, what could happen. The boy had a bike with him. There is no hesitation at the meeting place of the lawn and the trees today - the boy is off on the trails without any hesitation. The low-lying plants wave in the wake of the boy's speed.

Spa:l chuckles, a crackly-gravelly sound deep in his throat.

*Does he not see us?* Ćsey' asks.

*Its been a long time* Spa:l says. *Things change.* Spa:l had seen many things change. And then change again. Moment to moment like a constantly unfolding creation.

Deeper into the woods now, the boy slows down a bit. There are young Douglas Firs here, standing straight up towards the sun. The light arcs through in a way that is pleasant – warm but not too warm. He is excited that his family has moved here – he gets to take the boat every day. He can't wait for the days when the wind blows strongly over the water and the boat has to carry him over waves. He is excited to ride his bike along these paths every day. What other kid gets to do that?!

The trail dips a bit and he is now in a totally different kind of forest. Qumuńulhp Maple gets to see the boy for the first time. They have heard about the boy. They sigh and the big leaves of the canopy tremble. Tumulhupsum Woodpecker taps out a coded message against the rotting trees. *Nuwu its you*

Xpey Cedar stands waiting for the boy in the northern part of the island. There are few Xpey left on the island who remember the time when mustímuxw came to them in their grief and need and ceremony. They have seen the forest fall around them, have watched as workers have desperately dug deep into the tumuxw in the places where mustímuxw have lived and worked in relation. *What are they looking fo*r? *They will never find it when*

*they work without a good heart.* All this time, Xpey had reached its arms out toward the pathway to brush along the mustímuxw as they walked by, ready to give what they have. They have been quietly doing this job for many years. Even offering their gifts to xwunítum, because it's good to be generous. The boy speeds past, feeling the Cedar whip across his face, but it doesn't hurt the way he expects it to.

*Huh* Xpey says.

That evening, the animals and the plants and the land gather to discuss.

*They don't see us* Ćsey' sighs. *I have been watching them around the house. I have been offering warm greetings……its like they don't even hear, can't understand. When I hear them talk to each other, I can't understand them either.*

*I feel it in them* says the tumuxw *that they have felt harm the way we have been harmed.*

*Life has been transformed for them,* says Spa:l *just as it has been here. It is going to keep transforming. We shouldn't be too worried. When I am on the big island, I can still hear some mustímuxw talking in the language. Fewer… but spoken all the same. And there are new learners all the time.*

Xpey takes a deep breath. Everyone around can feel and smell this breath and they soften. *We need the stories here. We need to wake them up from where they are sleeping. They will know what to do, how to communicate.*

The trees push their roots into the soil, gently nudging at the stories to wake them. The birds rise together in wing and voice, calling into all the corners of the air for the stories to wake up. All of the animals used their bodies and their voices, rubbing up against the stories to wake them up.

The stories stretch and yawn and blink. *Are they ready?*

X'pey, Ćsey', Spa:l, Qa:nlhp, and all the other beings tell the stories what they have been seeing, about their concerns of not being heard, not being seen. *Don't worry so much*, the stories say. *It's not about the words. It's about the hearts, it's about being open.*

*what matters is the things that exist in the realm of the thought-before-the-thought.*[38]

The stories and the tumuxw and the animals and the plants worked together and made a plan. The plan is medicine. But it wouldn't be fast-acting, and they knew they weren't the only ones – could not be the only ones - who would have to do the work. The humans - mustímuxw and xwunítum alike - would have to work and work together with the land. Things would never be the way they were, but something new could-would be built.

They whispered their plans into the winds, into the hearts of the people. Their plans are still unfolding now, all around us. The boy never learned to hear the stories and the land and the power in that place at that time. But now, in this time this place, he is beginning to hear.[39]

[38] Thank you to Eliot for your thoughtful and kind guidance on how to talk about the language and its connection to the ancestors and the land in this story. Deep respect to those who are teaching and learning Snuneymuxw's Hul'q'umi'num' – and all Indigenous languages everywhere. The same deep respect for those who are learning how to, as Eliot says "go deep into ourselves and find that place, no matter who we are, what we speak, or where we are coming from."

[39] This story came from conversations with Ian about his living with the island during his childhood as well as with Joan about the land being alive. I had discussions with Eliot White-Hill, Celestine Aleck, and Geraldine Manson about the ethics of an outsider – me - telling a story form the point of view of their territory. They provided much appreciated support and guidance for how to talk about and use this story in a way that was appropriate. I was told that this was a good story and to use *it in this thesi*s was good. Use outside of this thesis and how I have been taught by my participants would not be acceptable.

# Chapter 5.

# Saysutshun Futures that Know the Past: Co-management as Transformation

"Our hands live and work in the present, while pushing in the past. It is impossible for us not to do both.

Our hands make a future." – Beth Brant "A Gathering of Spirit"

"We need to begin to understand what it means to be truly relatives working together to save something that's so sacred. And that's how we think about things – we're family, we're related. Those are the teachings that are offered from that sacred place." – Joan Brown

Just as often as Snuneymuxw people expressed distrust and dissatisfaction in the current co-management relationship, they also talked about ways they know how to be in relationship to their territory without the influence and harm of the Canadian state. To once again enact the cooperative and collective governance and management known by Snuneymuxw people, place-specific knowledge and processes must be allowed to flourish at the heart of institutions like co-management, transforming them entirely. As I have stated many times throughout my thesis, the intention of Snuneymuxw is not to return to a pre-colonial world. Thomas Berger (1991), who was the lawyer for Snuneymuxw in *Bob and White v. R,* explains, that Indigenous people he has worked with desire "to find a secure place in the world we have forced upon them…treaties, reserves, and the *Indian Act* – these are all institutions Europeans have devised to manage Native people primarily for the convenience of dominant society. Now Native people want to develop institutions of their own fashioning, they are eager to see their cultures grow and change in the directions they have chosen for themselves" (155). As Weiss (2018) reminds us when asserting Haida futures, there is no single, unified 'Indigenous future' that can be placed the colonial forecast of disappearance and assimilation. Indigenous futures are a multitude and our ability "to generate new and ongoing temporalities is crucial to the work of settler colonial replacement" (Weiss 2018, 14). Although I have focused specifically on Snuneymuxw peoples and lands in my thesis, I cannot help but express my excitement about the

constellation of possible futures and worlds that exist in a world that knows Indigenous laws, traditions, and love.

What must be further recognised when talking about building Snuneymuxw futures that know the past is that Snuneymuxw peoples are working to overcome 150 years of oppressive systems that have intentionally disrupted relationships to land and self. This means that Snuneymuxw people have not been given the space to live their own lives and relationships to their territory, to flourish, in over a century. Therefore, they are still themselves learning/remembering how to do this interweaving of the Ancestor's world and the reality of today as a new future is built. As has been pointed out to me by Snuneymuxw Elders and many other citizens during the course of this project, Saysutshun is recognized a vital portal on the territory for supporting the work of reconnecting the people to who they are. I cannot fully represent the diversity of ways that Snuneymuxw people dream their futures, nor is an academic thesis a good place for them to live. That is not the place for them to be held, cared for, nourished, and enacted. In this final chapter, I share what felt ethical to place here.

### *Nat'su'mat / Co-management Futures Without Colonialism*

"There's no one answer, there's no one person because each of us have been given a piece of knowledge. That whole notion of we have to work together…and that's the brilliance of the ancestors to make sure that we work together." – Joan Brown

In Chapter 2, I described the pre-contact forms of co-management-centered governance that Snuneymuxw people have known and in Chapter 4 I analysed the current co-management agreement between BC Parks, Snuneymuxw, and the City of Nanaimo. When Snuneymuxw talk about how to move forward, there is a recognition that these lived relationships need to be interwoven into a whole new living relationship.[40] Eliot states that

[40] When using the term interweaving in this way, I am pulling from the steps of transformation put forward by Michael Blackstock. He describes interweaving as "creating a new form of knowledge through collaboration by interweaving useful threads from each way of knowing into a more robust way" (42). Blackstock, Michael D. 2017. "Interweaving Water: The Incremental Transformation of Sovereign Knowledge Into Collaborative Knowledge." In *downstream: reimagining water,* Edited by Dorothy Christian and Rita Wong, 39-50. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press.

he sees the future of co-management having much to learn from Snuneymuxw's traditional collaborative and community-cenetered governance.

> We had this network of inter-relation amongst us as a community and us as peoples…and ways to know that everyone and everything is working in a way that is cohesive and collaborative. And I think that is the way we have to look for the future with the government. We aren't going to get rid of each other. It's simply not a reality. It's not going to be one day we are going to have total dominance of the other, it's about how we walk together as peoples. We aren't going to get rid of everyone who live in Nanaimo. That's not going to happen, and we don't want that to happen. You know, we have relationships with people in the community, we have connections, we have lots of friends and allies here who we are very happy to have in our territory, but we need it to be recognised that this *our territory*. We need the management between us and the government here to be reflective of that - that this is our territory and that it's reflective of our tradition and our protocol and our way of doing things in our world. And so that it's not going to be disrespected and our territory isn't going to be exploited.

As Eliot and I sat with Saysutshun that day, talking of Snuneymuxw and Indigenous futurisms, what became clear to me is that even when the island is repatriated from the Parks system, Snuneymuxw will not stop "co-managing." It is the way that co-management happens that will change – that it will be transformed and will continue to transform through centering Snuneymuxw relationships and practices. Snuneymuxw people have always collectively "co-managed" the territory with a community that includes human and non-human relations based on their own principles. This suggests two important things: that the theories and practices of co-management must be expanded to include the needs of non-human entities. Such a turn toward an agency of the land is not called for to displace or dismiss the knowledge we have as humans, but instead calls for human agency to not participate in displacement or dismissal of such diverse agencies of our non-human relations. It also means that the way co-management relationships need to shift from colonial structures held in service agreements and contracts to relationships that honour Indigenous processes and ways of knowing the land. In the case of Saysutshun, this could mean a re-enlivening of the community board that was struck through the Reconciliation Agreement, holding the co-management protocols in song or story as Geraldine had suggested in Chapter 4, and re-centering Snuneymuxw decision-making processes described by Eliot and Joan in Chapter 2.

In 2019 PDG has posted signage on Saysutshun that speak to shared futures with the City of Nanaimo, guests are a part of their plan– but that this future and its relationships will exist in appropriate and culturally-located ways. Their vision seeks to educate those who come to Saysutshun through intergenerational traditional knowledge sharing for both Snuneymuxw and non-Snuneymuxw peoples, as well as to reinstate Snuneymuxw culture – including governance and economy – into this sacred part of the territory (see Figure ix). It is interesting to note that the role the island plays provincially – particularly within the BC Parks system – is absent on these posters, with the focus being on the specific locality of the island. I interpret this as reflective of Snuneymuxw's plan to repatriate the land from the Parks system, as well as the nature of the relationship Snuneymuxw has with the City of Nanaimo – which is generally supportive when it comes to Saysutshun - and that which it has with BC Parks – which is viewed as paternalistic and limiting.

Ian and Eliot, who work closely with the stewardship of Saysutshun through PDG were explicit about what some of the more immediate plans are for Saysutshun. This includes the reassertion of long houses that will serve as Snuneymuxw cultural and welcome centres, the expansion of camp sites for hosting guests, and a focus on Snuneymuxw arts. Both Ian and Eliot recognise a plethora of benefits for Snuneymuxw First Nation through these types of developments, but especially towards the goal of internal cultural resurgence. Speaking personally about this potential to know the culture through Saysutshun, Ian states that

> the opportunity over there of course is not only the economic, but I think the cultural…. being able to run a cultural centre over there. Something like that where we can provide space for our artists to learn and grow. And for our language to be taught and used. You know I'm certainly guilty of not knowing the language….and I think it would be really amazing as a Snuneymuxw person to be on the sea wall in Nanaimo and look across to Saysutshun and see a long house on the beach like you would have 100 years ago.


***Figure 6. Reconciliation Poster***

A poster which describes reconciliation regarding Saysutshun from Snuneymuxw perspectives. This poster was made by Eliot through his work with PDG.

For Eliot, this is about creating new opportunities for Snuneymuxw people, especially youth, to have a dream and be supported in that dream. He states that the future of Saysutshun and Snuneymuxw is more than "having this big plan of what's going to be here in the front country, what services we'll offer…we need the people to do the job. And we need the people to provide the services. So really instead of focusing on the *what* …it should be more about creating the opportunity and then whoever is going to be interested and able will have the space to do that and to realise their vision." As an artist himself,

Eliot expressed excitement over the opportunity to create and share his art through such an important and sacred part of the territory and for Snuneymuxw art to have a home. Dave further explains this need, stating that

> someday our people will know the importance and feel the importance of being part of that resurgence at and looking for opportunities like an artist space …to foster those and allow those to come forward. It is difficult being part of Snuneymuxw and not having a connection with all of the artists. You really have to have a connection to the artists in order to feel where they're coming from and build something together. As an artist myself, sometimes we're barely surviving. But the opportunity may come as we keep going and we're also hoping that within PDG that they can continue to reach to artists including myself.

As someone who has been involved in Saysutshun and BC Parks for some time, Elder Geraldine Manson recognises the persistence Snuneymuxw have shown in the co-management relationship and how all of this work, including that happening right now, is building different futures.

> Back then, in those days [when the co-management agreement first came into place] it was a deficit, you know we couldn't do it. But we pursued it. And now you can see the vibrance over there and still today they're looking at what else can be brought to this island to make it Snuneymuxw, Indigenous? And that's what Eliot and them are doing - looking at ways of portraying the history of that island. And I think you it'll come soon to show that *yes* its more, 100% Snuneymuxw rather than co-managed by the city and the parks people….to have the parks people and the city step aside and allow Snuneymuxw leadership to do everything, to make it their island.

Moving forward from current structures like the *Park Act* and existing co-management relationships in BC that cling to settler government primacy in land-management and title, it is important to think about what needs to occur for Indigenous self-determination to be enacted. Finnegan (2018) identifies parks as a necessary landscape to move beyond surface-level "reconciliation" processes and actually begin to dismantle oppressive structures that allow settlers to continue "to benefit from, enable, and perpetuate settler colonialism" (4). However, if dismantling is to happen, it must be Indigenous futures and goals that permeate the process (Finnegan 2018, 18). For the *Park Act* and its related processes to limit mechanisms of "Land Back," it is only functioning to perpetuate injustice

and occupation. As Finnegan goes on to say, if park agencies are not having conversations about transformative and Indigenous-centered change,

> then they are not reconciling with Indigenous Peoples. True reconciliation is not a feel-good effort to wash away guilt caused by the past with minimal cost. Instead, meaningful reconciliation requires both a willingness to acknowledge the privilege accumulated through settler colonialism and, perhaps more importantly, to relinquish that ill-gotten privilege and thereby advance Indigenous sovereignty, nationhood, and self-determination (2018, 17).

Snuneymuxw peoples identify this latter aspect of the work that Parks needs to undertake – relinquishing their privilege – as integral to increasing self-determination and making space for Snuneymuxw to enact their own "co-management" with the land.

This is in line with calls from Indigenous peoples and nations, as well as settler allies, across Canada who recognise parks of all jurisdictions as an avenue for Land Back (Jago 2020; Smith and Grandjambe 2020; Finnegan 2018). It was clearly re-iterated by many Snuneymuxw citizens that Saysutshun is not a park, but instead a special place in the territory, a living being with a power unto itself. Thus, in order to bring the island back into the Snuneymuxw world, it is necessary to shift the discourse away from words and practices that focus on it as a park. Snuneymuxw people have clearly stated that continuing to consider the land as a park is not helpful or is outrightly disrespectful to their own self-determination and the self-determination of the land. However, similar to establishing Indigenous economic systems under capitalism, there are complications involved in this repatriation as Canadian laws surrounding property and how Saysutshun would be held by the nation. Swain and Vowel (2020) point out that "there is no land ownership scheme that is not subject to Crown exploitation and control…. [or] even begin to approximate Indigenous land ownership traditions, so our governance and care for the land will always be constrained by the state, for as long as the state lasts" (21).

As there always has been, there are changes happening in legal, political, and social spaces that could be the roots of transformative change that lead to greater Indigenous self-determination. As they have for centuries, Indigenous peoples across Canada are collectivising, organising, and defending their lands, laws, and rights. Their actions have

resulted in a plethora of pathways for increased self-determination including the increased number of tribal parks and other Indigenous protection and conserved areas at all levels of jurisdiction, as well as legislation around the enactment of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in BC.[41] Within the realm of co-management specifically, there are precedents that can be drawn on such as the Nuu-chah-nulth political resistance and strategy that have resulted in an "empowered" co-management board structure with Clayoquot Sound that is consistent with Nuu-chah-nulth political traditions and values.[42] As Goetze (2005) points out, the structure of the Board and agreement the Nuu-chah-nulth fought for "is empowering in that it facilitates the exercise of power historically held by Aboriginal peoples in managing their resources as autonomous nations" with a focus on rights-in-practice (255).[43] It is not only through colonial law or structures that change happens. Indigenous peoples, including Snuneymuxw, are creating these changes in the everyday through relationships and practices that are occurring on small and grand scales. New futures are imagined and lived thorough relationships between Elders and youth, between peoples and the territory, in Indigenous people learning the skills and stories of their ancestors and embodying their nation-specific laws.

"Co-management" is more than how it is being lived right now. As Doug Kwulasultun White described when talking about Land Back, knowing how to live together is a foundational part of how we can all live in worlds that are safe, sustainable, and sustaining. Snuneymuxw knowledges carry many teachings or "best practices" of collaborative, community-oriented relationships that give us guidance on how to live in the world that honours the roles we all have to play in the work ahead. Some of these teachings include caring for the land rather than maintaining it, being willing to experiment and learn how to (re)build economies that are not exploitive, and enacting governance that seeks to work with rather than over. Specifically, Snuneymuxw's understanding of transformation

[41] In BC this is Bill 21-2019: *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.* Similar legislation is being moved at the federal level in proposed Bill C-15: *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

[42] Unlike the Saysutshun co-management agreement, the CMA with Nuu-chah-nulth peoples and Clayoquot came under extreme political duress around unfettered logging on their territory in the early 1990s.

[43] Rights-in-practice here used to differentiate between "recognised" rights as a legal category or theory and the tangible activities and power/responsibility Indigenous peoples enact with their territories.

allow us to see the need for us to come into all the work with the knowledge that the land we do this work with is a network of beings with their own agencies and sovereignties. Through Saysutshun and the territory, Snuneymuxw peoples have generously allowed me to engage with these beings and each other with a humble heart and mind willing to learn, which I now pass on to you.

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