# PLACE ATTACHMENT AMONG OLDER ADULTS LIVING IN NORTHERN REMOTE COMMUNITIES IN CANADA

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# ABSTRACT

Place attachment refers to the experience of emotional and cognitive ties to the physical environment. Among older adults, place attachment may be experienced and represented as a sense of insideness that consists of three dimensions: physical insideness, social insideness, and autobiographical insideness (Rowles, 1990). The study employed a qualitative research method to examine the dimensions of place attachment among older adults living on the Queen Charlotte Islands, a northern remote setting in British Columbia. Overall, aspects of the physical and social environment, rural lifestyle, and time in place are salient to the development and reinforcement of place-based ties. Findings from the study have relevance for health and housing policy for older rural populations in reducing potential trauma from relocation, planning and development of appropriate housing options and improving service delivery for new and long-term residents.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# CHAPTER ONE:
# INTRODUCTION

In the past thirty years, the study of human attachment to the physical

environment has captured the attention of humanistic geographers, gerontologists, and

environmental psychologists. Interest on the part of such diverse groups has resulted in

substantial empirical research, a number of theoretical frameworks, as well as, a lack of

consistency in defining different types of place attachment, its characteristics,

development and function (Manzo, 2003). Nonetheless, a fundamental commonality

shared by theoretical perspectives of place attachment is that human bonding to physical

place involves affective and cognitive processes that are place-specific (Hidalgo &

Hernadez, 2001). People become emotionally tied to a geographic setting. The bonding

of person to environment may occur at an individual, group or cultural level, and it may

be experienced as positive or negative affect (Hummon, 1992). There is a temporal

aspect to place attachment in that place affiliations are not static; rather they change in

accordance with changes in the people and places involved in the attachments. Low and

Altman (1992, p.8) describe place attachment as "an integrating concept that involves

patterns of: (1) *attachments* (affect, cognition, and practice); (2) *places* that vary in scale,

specificity, and tangibility; (3) *different actors* (individuals, groups, and cultures); (4)

*different social relationships* (individuals, groups, and cultures); and (4) *temporal aspects*

(linear, cyclical)".

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For a number of reasons place attachment is thought to be particularly significant to the elderly population. First, it may play a role in late life adaptation. As older adults engage in the process of life review, places that have been ascribed personal meaning help them link life course events together and integrate sense of self in old age (Rowles, 1983a). Second, place attachment aids in negotiating losses accrued in late life. For example, attachments enhance self-esteem and provide a sense of security and belonging (Brown & Perkins, 1992); thus, they help sustain positive self-identity with the loss of social status in old age. Third, attachment to place may provide older adults with opportunities to retain independence (Rubenstein & Parmelee, 1992). An elderly person who is deeply attached and familiar with an environment, such as a home, is not only more competent in that environment, but is also more determined to age in place and maintain autonomy.

Most gerontological studies of place attachment focus on ties to the home and community (O'Bryant, 1982; O'Bryant, 1987; Rowles, 1983a; Norris-Baker & Scheidt, 1994; Joseph & Chalmers, 1995; Norris-Baker & Scheidt, 1990; & Rubenstein, 1989). Other topics that have been explored include the role of place attachment in retirement migration, residential care settings, cultural identity and race (Sugihara & Evans, 2000; Gustafson, 2001; McHugh & Mings, 1996; McAuley & Usita, 1998; & McAuley, 1998). Although a proportion of this research has been conducted in rural environments, place attachment in late life has yet to be examined in a remote northern environment.

The study focussed on place attachment in a sample of older adults living on a remote island off the coast of British Columbia. Home to approximately 4,935 residents (Statistics Canada, 2001), the Queen Charlotte Islands, also known as Haida Gwaii, lie 80

kilometres west of the nearest mainland point in northwest British Columbia and 64 kilometres south of the Alaskan Panhandle (Dalzell, 1973). Over 150 islands are found in the 250 kilometre long archipelago. The name Haida Gwaii (Islands of the People) comes from the language of the indigenous peoples of this land base, the Haida nation.

The population of Haida Gwaii resides on the two largest islands: Graham Island in the north and Moresby Island in the south, with the majority of residents living on Graham Island. A 20-minute ferry crossing connects the two islands. Haida Gwaii consists of seven main communities: Old Massett (Haida land reserve), Masset, Port Clements, Tlell, Skidegate (Haida land reserve), and Queen Charlotte City on Graham Island, and Sandspit on Moresby Island. On Graham Island, there is one highway that spans the length of the island from north to south, covering a distance of 110 kilometres. Other than taxis and an airport shuttle bus, no public transportation exists.

An island setting presents a unique environment in which to examine place attachment and aging. Unlike any other setting, the geographic boundaries are strictly defined by the waters' edge. The distinction between one's place and the world beyond is heightened with the knowledge that the outside world lays across a vast expanse of water. While modern technology may overcome some of that distance, there remain common life experiences that are place-specific to a northern island environment.

Most notable, is the feeling of being remote. The Queen Charlottes' are a relatively small land base with little infrastructure. Unlike more populated islands, opportunities to leave are limited. Travel off-island, either by air or water is long and unpredictable in bad weather. During stormy winter months, ferry sailings are unreliable. Under good weather conditions the journey to Prince Rupert, the closest mainland

community to which there is regular ferry service covers 178 kilometres and takes six to seven hours, but can last much longer during bad weather. Off-island transit is often arduous and expensive. Airfare is costly, which limits regular travel off-island, particularly for residents living on fixed incomes.

Certain amenities are simply not available and islanders adapt to a lifestyle where they either live without, or wait for a trip off-island to obtain products and services. Since most of what is available on-island is shipped in by ferry, product delivery is affected by weather conditions and limited sailings, resulting in added time and uncertainty as to delivery. Due to freight expense, islanders are used to paying more for less. A lifestyle that is dependent on ferry transport contributes to a sense of "island time". In this environment, the pace of life is slower and expectations around service delivery are significantly lower than in urban settings.

As with other remote northern locations, the communities of Haida Gwaii are service-deprived. In certain areas, the population is geographically dispersed and telecommunication systems such as cellular phones are not available. All life threatening medical emergencies require medical evacuation via helicopter to either Prince Rupert or Vancouver. Lack of housing options, public transportation, and services, particularly extended care and support services, may have significant implications for the quality of life of frail elderly. Older islanders requiring complex care and without family close by are at risk of relocation off-island or being permanently admitted to one of the two local hospitals.

To age in place in the Queen Charlotte Islands is to choose a life that may be compromised by the limitations of a remote environment. Yet for many seniors, the

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choice is clear. In a recent survey of older adults living on Haida Gwaii, 112 out of 150 respondents aged 60 to 95 (74.7%), indicated they have no plans of moving (Husband, 2003). Of the 38 seniors who intend to move, only 15 of them plan to move off-island. Why do they choose to stay?

## Research Objectives

The purpose of the study was to explore the reasons older persons living in a remote northern environment choose to remain there and the role that place attachment plays in that decision. To determine the effect of place attachment on migration patterns was beyond the scope of the study. Rather, the research objectives were to identify the aspects of place experience that keep older persons in Haida Gwaii.

# CHAPTER TWO:
# LITERATURE REVIEW

In the process of place attachment, a given *space* becomes a *place* as individuals or a group of individuals ascribe meaning to the environment (Rubenstein & Parmelee, 1992). Space becomes a place in which humans develop relationships with one another and with the places themselves. A place may range in size, specificity and tangibility and human bonding to place may occur on an individual, collective or cultural level (Altman & Low, 1992). At the core of place relationships lies the home environment and from there, a succession of ever-expanding geographic units including community, region, and country (Thompson-Fullilove, 1996). Research on place attachment and aging has focussed on the home, the surrounding neighbourhood and community (McHugh & Mings, 1996).

## Attachment to Home

The home is thought to become an increasingly important place in late life. For the older person, "...home affords independence by defining a space that is controlled by and is uniquely the domain of the individual. Home is a space in which to pursue personal interests and also, as it is resonant with experiences and expectations, it is a vital facet of self-identity" (Kontos, 1998, p.179). With age-related declines in mobility, sensory perception and health, as well as reduced income and diminished social networks, the home sets the stage for much of life in old age (Klein-Altman, 1993). As

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the boundaries of the environment narrow, the home plays an increasingly significant role in determining the degree of autonomy, privacy, social interaction and sense of place that people have (Bylund, 1985).

O'Bryant (1982, 1983) has conducted extensive research on aging and psychological attachment to home. She identified four attachment-to-home factors that determine the subjective value of home for older adults.

## Factors contributing to attachment to home

The first attachment-to-home factor is the degree of *competence* and sense of security that arises from living in a well-traversed and familiar dwelling. O'Bryant (1983) found that older residents are very familiar with the physical dimensions of their homes. They are able to maintain mastery over their environment and thus experience a sense of competence even as they deal with age-related functional decline.

Rubenstein (1989) also found evidence that older adults experience a body-centered connection to their home environment. The link of bodily self to the home is a process whereby the physical self is finely tuned to the textures of its surroundings. As individuals carry out daily activities and routines, their physical selves are tuned in to the physical dimensions of home including the space, light, colour, rhythm, ambiance and sound. "Optimally, the body is entextured in appealing schemes that combine sensation, the comfort of familiarity of routine and their meanings, and some goal. The meaning of the schemes can vary widely, can have past or present-day connotations that can weave in and out of awareness, but in part is contained in the bodily experience" (Rubenstein, 1989, S51).

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The second attachment to home factor identified by O'Bryant, *traditional family orientation and memories*, represents the history and legacy of multiple generations and the subsequent reservoir of memories associated with a home. The setting of home may be particularly important for memories. Through continued contact with the setting, memories are easily rekindled allowing the individual to keep in touch with past events (Rubenstein, 1990). A home serves not only as a link between past and future generations, but may also be the one valuable asset to leave as an inheritance.

The third attachment factor is the *status of home ownership*. In North America, home ownership contributes to social status and affords independence and freedom from landlords. The higher standing in a community that comes from being a homeowner likely enhances the sense of belonging and improves place bonding. For older adults, home ownership is often their greatest asset and may reflect a lifetime of hard work and commitment. Home ownership also may be viewed as proof that older residents can still take care of themselves despite functional decline.

The fourth and final factor is the *cost versus comfort tradeoff*, whereby the elderly evaluate how comfortable they are in their surroundings in relation to how much those surroundings cost (O'Bryant, 1983). With long-term residence, a home becomes highly personalized and provides a sense of comfort that can override the financial burden of maintenance, repairs or a mortgage. The costs may seem reasonable in light of the sense of security, belonging and comfort that a home provides. Such benefits reinforce attachment and contribute to the decision to age in place.

*Marital Status*

Attachment to home also may be predicted by marital status. Being older and widowed in a rural community puts women at risk of poverty, loss of social identity, social isolation and substandard housing (Barnes & Bern-Klug, 1999). However, older widows may exhibit strong affective ties to home, which in turn fosters resilience in adaptation to widowhood. While financial barriers may be a major reason for residential inertia, attachment to home variables underlie positive housing attitudes and influence relocation decisions among elderly widowed women.

In a study measuring attachment to home among older widowed and older married women, O'Bryant and Nocera (1985) found that widows had significantly higher scores on the *traditional family orientation* factor, the *competence in familiar environment* factor, and *the status value of homeownership* factor. The researchers propose that widows become more attached to their homes following the deaths of their husbands. As a widow recovers from the loss of her spouse and she finds ways to maintain links to past marital and family experiences, the *traditional family orientation* factor takes on greater significance. Items on this factor on which widows indicated significantly higher ratings included: "If I had to leave my home, many of my fondest memories would go with it"; and "I like to relive the past by keeping lots of mementos." (O'Bryant & Nocera, 1985, p.409).

Higher scores on *competence in a familiar environment* may be explained as a result of adaptation to widowhood. Older women achieve newfound independence as they manage their homes alone and improve existing competencies (O'Bryant & Nocera, 1985). With regard to differences in *status of homeownership*, it appears that being a homeowner compensates for the loss of social status that occurs with widowhood.

Moreover, widows become the sole owners of property and therefore gain total control in all decisions and ventures related to homeownership.

### Age and Plans to Move

Earhart and Weber (1992) looked at mobility intentions among a sample of rural elderly and non-elderly. In urban samples, age is negatively related to the desire to move and the elderly as a group are less likely to relocate than other age groups (McHugh, Goher, & Reid, 1990). Findings from Earhart and Weber's research indicate a similar scenario for the rural elderly. Their findings showed a negative relationship between age and plans to move.

Housing attitudes were analyzed using O'Bryant's (1983) Attachment-to-Home scale, which includes the four variables previously discussed. Although it was predicted that elderly respondents would have higher attachment scores, *home ownership* was the only attachment variable to show a significant difference between the younger group (aged 20 to 54) and the older group (aged 55 to 84). While the mean attachment scores were high for both samples, the older participants were more likely to perceive housing tenure as a reflection of status (Earhart & Weber, 1992).

### Environmental stressors

Norris-Baker and Scheidt (1994) explored older adult's attachment to home in the context of environmental stress from the economic decline of small rural towns. In confronting life transitions, there is a need to preserve a sense of enduring place or continuity. Socio-historical changes, such as the economic decline of many rural communities, impact the lifecourse of the rural elderly and transform attachment to home across the life span.

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Interviews were conducted with elderly residents of four small communities in Kansas, which were similar in population size (100-250 residents) and remoteness, and which all faced economic hardship. Perceived environmental stressors included: limited housing options, involuntary relocation, poor housing quality, high maintenance costs combined with depreciation of property values, and in-migration of citizens of lower economic status (Norris-Baker& Scheidt, 1994). Evidence for attachment to home was recognized in themes of identity, personal competence and cost/comfort tradeoffs, thus lending support to O'Bryant's (1983) attachment to home variables. The continuity of family tradition through intergenerational farm transfers was also expressed as an attachment variable; however, many original homesteads were lost in natural disasters or had deteriorated due to economic stressors.

In all four Kansas towns, aging in place was a common experience. Attachment to place was illustrated by the residents' reluctance to move to a new location despite numerous environmental stressors. According to Norris-Baker and Scheidt (1994, p.193), "intensity of attachment to home and community is strengthened by length of residence, the high value placed on personal competence and independence, and lack of housing alternatives." It was noted that residents who chose to remain in an increasingly inhospitable environment exhibited strong commitment to place and an adaptive resiliency that reflected the values and lifestyles of their predecessors who settled the towns. The respondents demonstrated a personal obligation to deal with the impact of acute and chronic stressors. As Rowles (1998, p.116) observed, "their lives express a paradox between increasing vulnerability and increased responsibility".

Both indigenous elderly and return migrants exhibited deep attachment to home, yet the meaning of home varied from house, to land, to community. Indeed, it was common for respondents to be more attached to a piece of land than to the physical structure of a home (Norris-Baker & Scheidt, 1994). This may be explained in part by the agrarian culture of independent farmers and in part by the lack of permanent physical structures due to limited raw materials and major floods.

In summary, rural seniors become deeply attached to their homes, particularly in late life and with long-term residence (Rowles, 1993). Emotional bonding to home may be measured by plans to relocate, and mobility intentions are found to be negatively associated with age (Earhart & Weber, 1992). Attachment to home may be fostered by competence and independence in a familiar environment, traditional family orientation and memory, status of ownership and attainment, and tradeoffs of costs and comforts (O'Bryant, 1983). Attachment to home is a process rather than a state and may act as an adaptive function in late life transitions. For example, widows express stronger attachment to home than married women, possibly as a means of mitigating lost social attachments by shifting focus onto physical attachments. Rural seniors living in environmentally stressed towns tend to express deep attachment to home, which is played out by taking on increased responsibility and adapting to new situations.

## Attachment to Community

The social sciences have identified several types of communities: community as a place, community as relationships, and community as collective political power (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). Traditionally, community has been perceived as a physical place. It may be defined as a territorial settlement that functions as a shared geographical space

in which individuals carry out daily life activities (Proffitt, 1993). Thus, place-based communities are comprised of people's homes and collective neighbourhoods that are distinguished by geographical boundaries. Community may also exist as a symbolic entity, representing a shared identity among groups of individuals or a network of relationships whereby people share common values, interests, or goals (Hummon, 1986). An important feature of the symbolic community is a social network, which represents a system of relationships that generate mutual aid, neighbouring, security, belonging, and empowerment (Unger & Wandersman, 1985).

It may be argued that the influence of a single geographical community has diminished. With the advent of technological development and the subsequent change in organizations, communication, and transportation, the community now transcends geographical boundaries (Fernandez & Dillman, 1979). Nonetheless, the geographical community as an element of self-characterization and place attachment continues to have significant meaning in relation to residency and surrounding social ties. Neighbourhoods may contribute to community identity, and subsequently, sense of self, as they comprise symbolic locales with distinct cultural identities (Hummon, 1992).

Community, in the sense of place-based community, may be more important for some social groups, particularly the elderly. Attachment to community is thought to increase with age, particularly for seniors who are locally involved, and thus fulfill community roles (Cuba & Hummon, 1993).

As part of a larger survey of civic involvement, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) examined community attachment among 1,500 adults aged 18 to 85 with half of the sample being adults aged 50 and older (Guterbock & Fries, 1997).

The indicators of community attachment included satisfaction with place of residence, plans to remain in a local area within five years, interaction with neighbours, number of known neighbours, and level of community involvement. Findings indicated that community attachment was significantly higher for persons over 50 years of age (Guterbock & Fries, 1997). Older age predicted high attachment after controlling for home ownership, having children, and longer duration of residency. Interestingly, there was a slight drop in community attachment and neighbouring among those aged 75 and over. This may be associated with residential mobility in later life. For those remaining in their old neighbourhood, there may be a decline in the number of nearby friends or kin, and there may be less contact with neighbours as seniors become less active with age.

**Community attachment in rural areas**

In recent years, the economic downturn of many rural communities has contributed to a decline in rural infrastructure and availability of services (Rowles, 1998). Major reductions in the number and size of hospitals, pharmacies, schools, and both public and private transportation have resulted from faltering industries on which small towns are economically dependent (Bull & DeCroix Bane, 2001). The depletion of such services has profound implications for rural lifestyle and quality of life, particularly for older rural adults who require assistance and experience mobility problems. Rural seniors often are perceived as having an abundance of informal support that supposedly overcomes gaps in services (Krout, 1988). Yet vulnerable groups, including those living alone may be at considerable risk of having unmet needs (Coward, Lee, Dwyer, & Seccombe, 1993). Elderly in-migrants who are relatively new to rural towns are also

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susceptible because they lack strong ties to the communities and a social support network (Rowles, 1998).

Given the drawbacks of living in service-depleted communities, it is reasonable that older residents would perceive their place of residence as unfit to sustain aging in place. However, a case study of two service-depleted communities in rural New Zealand found that seniors perceive their towns as viable settings in which to grow old (Joseph & Chalmers, 1995). While the participants were not only aware but also dissatisfied with diminishing services, they expressed a fierce attachment to their communities, particularly the residents of the community that was more service-depleted. With regard to community sentiment, the researchers noted a tension between the participants' subjective evaluations, which were influenced by place attachment, and their objective assessments, which were marked by economic and social impacts. As a consequence of this tension, some residents reluctantly leave their communities while for others it will reinforce their determination to remain in place. For those remaining, the tension between future community suitability and place attachment appears to be resolved by a 'wait and see' attitude rather than making a conscious decision to stay (Joseph & Chalmers, 1995). Although seniors were realistic about the pressure to relocate in the advent of serious health declines, most of the participants could not imagine having to deal with this situation personally. This behaviour may be understood as a coping strategy to continue living in a service-depleted environment, especially when attachment is of significant intensity.

Norris-Baker and Scheidt (1990) explored the socio-economic impacts on place dependency and community attachment among older adults living in a small town in

midwest America. Because place affiliation is so intertwined with self-identity in old age, it is not unreasonable that environmental change, particularly change that is swift and uncontrollable will be detrimental to the psychological health of older residents (Howell, 1983). Rural elderly may be considered more at psychological risk since environmental features in rural communities are less generic, and consequently, are not easily replaced by alternative settings.

The research findings suggest that rural seniors sustain their community attachment in the face of environmental change in alternative ways. Some older residents may take on the role of culture bearer and local historian as a means of fostering community attachment. Others sustain emotional bonds through continued personalization and affection for environmental features even when such features become derelict or abandoned. Norris-Baker and Scheidt (1990) speculate that this process provides a tangible connection to self in both past and present context and also promotes psychological continuity. Their findings lend support to Rubenstein's (1989) continuum of attachment, in that older residents expressed varying intensity of attachment through accounting, personalization, extension and embodiment of environmental features. Lastly, place attachment may serve as a source of community pride. In this case, place attachment was nurtured from connection to old town structures that prompted reminiscence, through construction of historical markers, and through public events that celebrate cultural and historical roots.

In summary, many elderly, having lived in the same place for many years, become deeply rooted to their home and neighbourhood (Danermark & Ekstorm, 1990). Their surroundings are familiar and meaningful; and their social connections are strong.

Many older adults are satisfied with their homes and neighbourhoods, even when the physical attributes of a residence have deteriorated (Zimmer & Chappell, 1997). Older residents who age in place have had more time to adapt to their environments and to develop profound social and psychological attachments to their community. Older adults living in environmentally stressed communities exhibit strong place attachment, which may override the drawbacks of poor service delivery. Rural seniors nurture attachment to community by personalizing environmental features in the town. They also sustain place bonding by taking on the role of local historian or culture bearer and by engaging in community events.

## Conceptual Framework

In examining the dimensions of place attachment among northern rural seniors, the study is grounded in a conceptual framework that derives from the well-known Colton study conducted by Graham Rowles in the late 1970's and early 1980's (Rowles, 1980,1981,1983a, 1983b, 1983c). Rowles' research focused on aspects of attachment as experienced by older adults living in a small Appalachian community that had undergone severe economic decline and population out-migration since the Great Depression of the 1930's. Rowles (1983a) observed that older residents exhibit a sense of "insideness" whereby a notable distinction is made between the immediate community and the outside world.

From the Colton study, three key elements of insideness were identified, each of which reflect different aspects of place affiliation for older adults (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). The first element, physical insideness, is the familiarity of an environment that one develops with long-term residence in a particular setting. Older adults develop a

physical intimacy with the surrounding terrain and environmental features over a lifetime of traversing well-known routes in the home and community.

The second element, social insideness, arises from a sense of belonging, social integration, neighbourly support, and as a result of membership in a multigenerational social order. The elderly, having lived in one place for many years, develop what Rowles (1983a) refers to as "social credit". Older residents accrue social credit from years of contributing to the community and living as a respectable member of that community (Rowles, 1990). An older cohort then has successive generations on which to rely as they become more frail and less independent. Being socially inside in Colton, included informal membership to a "society of old", which is described as a subculture characterized by participation in a seniors' centre, an intricate telephone network, and sharing a distinct set of values and norms of behaviour (Rowles, 1983a).

Autobiographical insideness, the third component and the one most implicated in place attachment, reflects past and present affiliation to place; thus, it addresses the temporal dimension of place-based relationships. Over long-term residence an individual acquires layers of place-associated memories each of which may represent a significant event or time of life. Autobiographical insideness is the continuation of attachment to places that may no longer exist. By late life, individuals have experienced a vast array of incident places and committed them to memory whereby "place becomes a landscape of memories providing a sense of identity, and an ever present source of reinforcement for a biography interpreted from the retrospective vista of a life review" (Rowles, 1983b, p.114).

Several important features characterize autobiographical insideness. First, older residents generally do not have a conscious awareness of it and usually take it for granted. Second, while physical engagement in an environment promotes place attachment, the physical presence of a place is not necessary in sustaining attachment. Through cognitive processes, humans have the capacity to experience place vicariously without having to be physically present. Rowles (1983a) refers to this phenomenon as "geographical fantasy" as it involves the ability to project oneself into a past environment (reflective fantasy) as well as being able to vicariously experience a current place that is not geographically proximate (projective fantasy). The third aspect of autobiographical insideness is the mosaic of incident places, which as previously mentioned, illustrates lifecourse trajectories and is unique to each individual. The final feature is referred to as the "grand fiction", thus, reminding us that autobiographical insideness depicts place attachments that are self-created and not necessarily representational of true history (Rowles, 1993). Associations with past places may be coloured by subjective perception, which in turn may distort historical accounts, yet also serve as an adaptation to a beloved environment that has undergone dramatic social and economic change.

Older adults sustain their "grand fiction" in a number of ways. First, they may use personal possessions such as treasured photograph collections or furniture pieces to tap into different points of their lifecourse. Second, they may continue to participate in affiliated places as a way of triggering past events, although physically situating oneself in a place is not necessary for accessing what is stored in the consciousness. Third, reminiscing with peers of the same cohort who encountered similar experiences in a

shared environment helps perpetuate a collective "grand fiction" and in turn reinforces attachment to place (Rowles, 1983a).

Autobiographical insideness is an important element of place attachment because it links place with personal identity. It is an active and creative process whereby seniors choose places in the consciousness that instill a sense of self. Older adults also may re-create places using personal possessions that reflect past environments and that are intimately linked to self-identity. In creating a sense of self through autobiographical insideness, seniors remain connected to who they have been in the past and who they are in the present. They are also able to secure a sense of belonging in a changing environment and be reminded of past contributions they have made to that environment.

Rowles (1993) proposes that autobiographical insideness has an adaptive function in late life. As older adults go through a process of life review involving reminiscence and reflection on past events, they are conceptualizing their autobiography in order to make sense of their life and to integrate a sense of self. Since processing past events involves the remembrance of places in which they occurred, to be disconnected from such places either physically or mentally, is to lose a piece of one's identity. Thus, place attachment may have an important developmental role in the last stage of life.

In summary, older adults experience a sense of insideness that is comprised of three core components – physical insideness, social insideness, and autobiographical insideness – all of which foster attachment to place and endorse continuity of personal identity (Hummon, 1992). Each element of insideness is not mutually exclusive. Together, they are complementary dimensions of a central force that pervades place attachment. Intensity of attachment may vary, but generally will increase with length of

residence and degree of assimilation into the "society of old" (Rowles, 1990). Given the increased mobility of younger cohorts, attachment to a single setting may be less intense for the young elderly. The young-old are less likely to have lived in one place only and therefore have acquired a mosaic of incident places that are geographically dispersed. Rowles (1983a) contends that with upcoming generations, autobiographical insideness may take on an increasingly important role in place attachment. In this form, people-place-bonding may be experienced vicariously while an individual adjusts to a new home and community. The transferability of autobiographical insideness has significant implications for older adults who relocate into long term care settings. Institutionalized seniors, who are able to sustain a sense of insideness, and thus, a sense of self, should be less susceptible to relocation trauma.

**Place Attachment on Haida Gwaii**

The bulk of empirical studies concerned with place attachment among older adults have been conducted in urban settings in the USA. Place attachment has not yet been investigated in seniors living in a remote northern Canadian area except in cursory form. The researcher conducted a secondary analysis of an elders survey administered on the Queen Charlotte Islands in 2003. The survey was undertaken on behalf of the Queen Charlotte Heritage Housing Society and funded by the Real Estate Foundation of B.C. Information relating to demographic, housing and support service needs and preferences was obtained from a sample of 150 adults 60 years and older living in six of the seven communities on Haida Gwaii. Refer to Appendix A for the original questionnaire.

Place attachment was clearly indicated with 112 out of 147 respondents having no plans to move and only 12 of the 35 movers planning to move off island. Cross-

tabulations of the dependent variable, plans to move and selected socio-demographic

variables resulted in no statistically significant correlations. For details about

questionnaire development, administration, data analysis, and findings, refer to

Appendix B.

Secondary analysis of the Haida Gwaii seniors' survey and the subsequent lack of

findings provided a firm rationale for adopting a qualitative research method. This

approach allowed for an exploratory process whereby participants were able to express

their experience of place attachment within a relevant context. Specifically, the study

was grounded on Rowles' three dimensions of place attachment, which are salient themes

that were used as a basis to develop research questions to determine their relevance and

variation in other population groups residing in different geographic locations. Thus, the

study was designed to determine whether Rowles' dimensions of insideness apply to a

population of older adults living in a remote northern region of British Columbia.

Further, the study provided an opportunity to expand on these dimensions and also

identify new ones.

## Research Questions

Guiding questions were as follows:

(1) Do Rowles' dimensions of physical, social, and autobiographical insideness apply to the population of older adults on the Queen Charlotte Islands?

(2) What is the relative importance of landscape, community, home, and the social environment to place attachment?

(3) What are the processes by which this population becomes attached and how is attachment sustained?

(4) Are the attachments expressed as positive or negative affect?

## Definition of Key Terms

This study used a number of key terms. A *short-term resident* refers to an older adult who has been residing on Haida Gwaii for less than fifteen years, whereas a *long-term resident* refers to a person who has lived on the islands for fifteen years or more. Place attachment may be defined as the emotional bonding of an individual to a particular environment whereby the individual has emotional investment in a place and experiences negative affect when that place becomes inaccessible (Mesch & Manor, 1998). For the purpose of this study, respondents who do not plan to move from their homes (non-movers) were defined as attached to place while those planning to move (movers) were defined as unattached.

# CHAPTER THREE:
# METHOD

## Overview of the Research Design

The study of place attachment among northern elderly living on the Queen

Charlotte Islands involved qualitative interviews as a means of addressing the four

research questions. To support an exploratory process, the interview questions were

open-ended, thereby providing a means to expound upon Rowles' dimensions of

insideness as they pertain to this specific population and to provide an opportunity for

new and salient themes to emerge.

## Interviews

### Rationale

The study involved semi-structured interviews with sixteen older adults living on

the Queen Charlotte Islands. Qualitative methods allow for sensitivity in data gathering

in that the researcher can more easily detect nuances, such as affect and cognition around

phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, the choice of a qualitative method is better

suited to exploring and understanding the experience of place attachment than a

quantitative technique.

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was two-fold. First, they provided

a means for determining the relevance and salience of Rowles' dimensions of insideness

for a northern Canadian population and an opportunity to expand on any of Rowles' three

dimensions of place attachment. Second, the interviews presented an opportunity to identify variables other than those used from the survey data that may promote or sustain place attachment. For example, the survey does not measure social networks and community involvement, both of which are considered contributing factors to people-place bonding.

**Participants**

Interview participants were selected using purposeful sampling. This technique differs from random sampling, which relies on a large sample size to achieve statistical power in order to generalize findings to the larger population. In purposeful sampling, respondents are selected because they are best suited to provide rich information on key research issues (Quinn Paton, 1990). There is less emphasis on sample size and more attention to the appropriateness and adequacy of the study sample (Morse & Field, 1995).

The study sample was drawn from three of the non-Haida communities – Sandspit, Queen Charlotte City, and Tlell. Community selection was based on convenience with regard to the researcher's rapport with local seniors and travel time to participants' homes. A number of key informants identified from the survey were approached to generate lists of potential respondents in each of the non-Haida communities. Selection of participants was based on age (60 and over) and their reputation as conversationalists and their suitability to provide rich information on research questions. Also, it was necessary that respondents had participated in the seniors' survey.

A cover letter describing the nature of the research project was mailed out to potential participants (see Appendix C & D). A week later, they were contacted by

telephone, at which point they were provided with more detailed information about the interview. An interview time was arranged and interviews were conducted face-to-face in participants' homes. The interviews ranged from one and a half to two hours in duration. The interviews were taped and the researcher made written notes. A thank you letter that included a summary of the research results was mailed out two months later.

A total of sixteen participants were interviewed, nine males and seven females. The age of the participants ranged from 61 to 90 years old (average age 76.1 years). As seen in Table 1, twelve of the sixteen respondents claimed they were in good health; only one respondent (Helen) rated her health as poor. It was surprisingly difficult to recruit participants who fit the "short-term resident" criterion – lived on the islands under fifteen years. Only four participants were short-term residents; the remaining twelve had lived on Haida Gwaii for fifteen years or more.

As shown in Table 1, time lived on-island ranged from 2 to 83 years, while years lived in the same community ranged from 2 to 81 years. The average years lived on-island was 36.1, while the average years lived in one community was 30.7.

Table 1:    Socio-demographic Characteristics of Interview Participants (n=16)

| Participant Pseudonyms | Community of residence | Age | Gender | Marital Status | Health | Yrs on island | Yrs in Community |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fred | Tlell | 78 | Male | Widower | Good | 45 | 45 |
| Joe | Tlell | 71 | Male | Married | Good | 20 | 20 |
| Dorothy | QCC | 74 | Female | Divorced | Good | 26 | 26 |
| Jim | QCC | 76 | Male | Widower | Fair | 49 | 48 |
| Freida | QCC | 74 | Female | Widow | Good | 21 | 18 |
| Patty | QCC | 79 | Male | Divorced | Good | 75 | 75 |
| Ralph | QCC | 87 | Male | Common-law | Fair | 83 | 60 |
| Norma | QCC | 61 | Female | Common-law | Good | 15 | 11 |
| Bob | Sandspit | 82 | Male | Married | Good | 39 | 11 |
| Dolly | Sandspit | 90 | Female | Married | Fair | 39 | 11 |

| Participant Pseudonyms | Community of residence | Age | Gender | Marital Status | Health | Yrs on island | Yrs in Community |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| George | Tlell | 73 | Male | Married | Good | 67 | 67 |
| Eric | Tlell | 81 | Male | Married | Good | 81 | 81 |
| Paul | QCC | 61 | Male | Divorced | Good | 5 | 5 |
| Betty | QCC | 78 | Female | Widow | Good | 4 | 4 |
| Nachiko | QCC | 70 | Female | Widow | Good | 2 | 2 |
| Helen | QCC | 83 | Female | Widow | Poor | 7 | 7 |
| Average | | 76.1 | | | | 36.1 | 30.7 |

## Interview Guide

The interview guide was developed to ensure that all research questions would be covered and to allow for spontaneity in responses (Kaufman, 1994). The interview guide was pilot-tested on two adults, one female and one male, older than 60 from Queen Charlotte City. Upon feedback, minor revisions were made and questions around previous experience in rural settings were added (see Appendix E).

## Interview Questions

The interview guide consisted of five main parts: (1) general demographic information; (2) general attachment; (3) attachment to the physical environment; (4) attachment to the social environment, and (5) autobiographical insideness. The first section was formatted as a series of close-ended questions and provided a means to obtain general demographic information about the research sample. Categories included community of residence, age, gender, marital status, perceived health, length of residence in community, and length of residence on the Queen Charlotte Islands.

The second section, general attachment, aimed at drawing out attachment to place in a way that participants could express overall sentiment without being forced to consider specific aspects of place attachment, such as the physical and social

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environment. Participants were asked about a hypothetical move off-island. This prompted them to consider place-related feelings and to identify potential losses related to place. This section also provided a means to address the research question relating to place attachment as positive or negative affect. Much of the research on place-based sentiment has focussed on place as a source of security, comfort, and belonging, with little attention to negative or ambivalent place-based feelings and experiences (Manzo, 2003).

The remaining sections of the interview guide were designed to tap into Rowles' dimensions of physical, social and autobiographical insideness and determine whether they apply to older adults on the Queen Charlotte Islands. They also provided an opportunity to compare the relative importance to place attachment of landscape, community, home, and the social environment.

## Content Analysis

Content analysis is a qualitative method that involves coding and categorizing consistent patterns in the data (Quinn Patton, 1990). It is a creative process in which the researcher pulls out concepts from the data and examines them for variation in their properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Content analysis allows the researcher to apply scientific rigour while enabling the data to represent itself. In the current study, a logical deductive approach was applied whereby an existing conceptual framework – Rowles' dimensions of insideness – was influential in framing the research questions, shaping the data collection, and organizing a coding system. This approach helped simplify data interpretation and subsequently, developing constructs in that it

provided narrower parameters of potential meaning (Weston, Gandell, Beauchamp, McAlpine, Wiseman, & Beauchamp 2001).

**Coding**

Coding is the first step in content analysis and involves identifying significant words, phrases or paragraphs in a transcript and assigning a label to provide a contextual meaning of the content. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.101), "open coding is the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data". In preparation for open coding, each interview was transcribed verbatim from audiocassette tapes and notes were made in the margins. Preliminary codes were assigned and recorded in the margins of the transcripts and the adjacent text was underlined. Codes discovered in each transcript then were entered into a table containing four columns with the following information: (1) the interview question (pre-designed or spontaneous) relating to the code, (2) an excerpt from the text to support and illustrate the code, (3) the code, and (4) the name of the participant. The selection of salient codes was based upon evaluative clauses, direct statements, repetition, and discourse markers, which reflect connectivity and intensification (Luborsky, 1994).

It was important to record the interview question for a number of reasons. First, some of the questions were close-ended or partly close-ended and this column simplified the process of identifying consistencies or inconsistencies in the data. Second, the interview guide was designed in part to determine the relevance of Rowles' dimensions for a northern elderly population. Therefore, certain interview questions directly related to previously identified categories from Rowles' research. It should be noted that not all

codes related to a specific interview question and this column was left blank when concepts appeared spontaneously.

A number of codes and their relevant excerpts were highlighted in tables when they were deemed particularly significant. This helped in tracking them when the tables were entered into a final table. Excerpts that aptly defined or illustrated a key concept were highlighted as well as excerpts that were strikingly different. Any variation in the data was reviewed as a potential negative case analysis.

The coding process resulted in sixteen tables containing codes drawn from the transcripts of the sixteen participants. At this point, the tables were cross-referenced with the original transcripts to verify the codes and assess for variation in the data that may be considered discrepant findings and negative cases. Thus, verification checks were used to minimize the influence of the researcher's assumptions and biases and ensure the validity of the new constructs (Weston et al., 2001).

Once the verification checks were completed, codes from each case analysis were entered into new tables, bringing all the supporting excerpts together and making it easier to examine each code before grouping them into categories.

## Categories

Development of the categories was grounded in Rowles' dimensions of physical, social, and autobiographical insideness. As the main objective of the study was to determine the relevance of insideness to remote northern seniors, the categories were largely preconceived. However, the data generated negative cases that contradicted aspects of Rowles' construct. Therefore, the categories were re-created to reflect the expansion of their properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process

involved cross-checking between the data and the classification system to ascertain the meaningfulness and accuracy of assigning data to categories and organizing the categories. Once the process of category systems was complete, the categories were re-evaluated for significance to the research and prioritized "according to the salience, credibility, uniqueness, heuristic value, feasibility, special interests, and materiality of the classification schemes" (Quinn Patton, 1990, p.404).

This process resulted in four categories including the emergence of a new category that was deemed salient to place attachment among seniors living in a remote rural environment. These categories are (1) physical environment; (2) social environment; (3) lifestyle, and (4) time in place, and they are reported and discussed in the following section.

# CHAPTER FOUR:
# FINDINGS

## Overview

According to Rowles (1990), older adults experience place attachment as a feeling of "insideness". This phenomenon is marked by a distinction in the sense of connection an individual has for his or her immediate surroundings and more distant geographical settings. Emotional bonding to place involves an inside-outside continuum in which older adults assign personal meaning to proximate places compared with peripheral, outside places (Rowles, 1984). In place attachment, older adults experience insideness across three dimensions: physical, social, and autobiographical. A main objective of this study was to determine whether Rowles' dimensions of place attachment are relevant for an older population living in a remote northern environment.

Findings from the current study indicate support for his dimensions, though with some variations. In total, four categories were identified from the interview data, three of which resemble Rowles' dimensions of physical, social, and autobiographical insideness (see Table 2). The fourth category is lifestyle and is relevant to people-place bonding among Haida Gwaii seniors. The findings are described in the following sections.

**Table 2:  Summary of Categories**

| Categories | Physical Environment | Social Environment | Lifestyle | Time in Place |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Code 1 | Concept of home | Regular contact | Recreation | Place-based memories |
| Code 2 | Natural landscape | Community connectedness | Privacy | Reminiscing |
| Code 3 | Climate | Declining social networks | Self-determination | Population changes |
| Code 4 | Familiarity | Length of residence | | Landscape changes |

## Physical Environment

"I feel like I know the place. There's something about it that I connect with. Now that's the place, not the people, just the place in a general way. I have a good feeling here.It's the islands themselves, it's not just the people or anyone."-Bob, research participant

This category is composed of aspects of the physical environment that promote place attachment.  Respondents were asked to consider their relationship to the physical environment among a number of spatial levels – home, community, and the physical landscape.  Much of the data contributing to this category arose from questions regarding where participants spend most of their time, places they like to go, how these places make them feel, and why these places are important to them.  The general attachment section of the interview guide also produced findings relating to the physical environment.  The following codes have been used to describe and illustrate attachment to the physical environment: (1) concept of home; (2) natural landscape; (3) climate, and (4) familiarity.

## Concept of Home

From the data, home was conceptualized as a physical dwelling, the local community, and the islands at large. Of the geographical dimensions, home, as a physical dwelling was most prominent, perhaps because participants spend the majority of their time at home. Qualities attributed to home include comfort, independence, affordability, and heritage, thus lending support to O'Bryant's (1983) attachment variables.

Attachment to home was evident in the positive affect consistently expressed when participants described their relationship to home. Dorothy noted that she "loves her little home, her house." Jim claims that "home is the most important place in my life". The centrality of home in the lives of older adults and their preference to age in place has been well documented in the literature (Wagnild, 2001). The meanings and experiences of home are important contributors to self-identity (Moore, 2000).

Attachment to home was also reflected by strong tendencies towards residential inertia (Rowles, 1983c). Frieda mentioned that she "prefers to stay in this place instead of tackling something else". George claims that he doesn't go anywhere unless he has to. "I'm quite happy right here." Eric remarked, "I'm always anxious to get home."

In support of the survey findings, fifteen of the sixteen participants had no intention of moving at the time. The exception, Paul, was a short-term resident planning to move if he continued to feel socially isolated. Despite ties to residential place, island seniors repeatedly expressed a lack of concern over a hypothetical move off island. As Fred put it, "Oh, I think you just take things as they come. If I had to decide to go, I would go. I wouldn't go kicking and screaming." Participants tended to have a 'wait and see' attitude when queried about potential changes in health status. At the same time,

they noted that the lack of healthcare services in Queen Charlotte was a major barrier to continuing to live on the island. Such discrepancy lends support to Joseph and Chalmers (1995) observations of rural seniors' perceptions of community suitability in relation to place attachment. To some extent, place attachment plays a role in negotiating environmental deficits.

> "Well I've pretty well got things here as handy as... get them as convenient as I can get them. So I find it quite comfortable, being able to look after myself here. My greatest fear is not being able to look after myself. I'm not concerned about dying or anything like that, but I don't want to wind up in the hospital or in a nursing home or anything like that. I want to stay here until it's all over." Jim-interview respondent.

As mentioned above, home was conceptualized along a continuum of geographical dimensions, including the immediate community, outlying communities, and the island at large. Rowles (1983b) described a hierarchy of spaces whereby the older residents of Colton experienced more physical insideness with spaces that were geographically proximate and less insideness the more geographically distant they became. This concept was relevant to the Queen Charlotte seniors who tend to spend most of their time in their immediate community, yet feel connected to other island communities and generally feel "at home" on the islands. The following statements illustrate the extension of home to surrounding communities and geographical regions:

> "I enjoy all the communities on the islands."
> "And I guess because I lived in Masset I tend to think of the whole islands as home."
> "I feel connected to the whole area. I feel connected to the whole island."

Overall, respondents expressed less affiliation to their communities than to their homes; however, attachment was demonstrated by community satisfaction, sense of belonging, and pride in place. Community satisfaction is associated with place

attachment among older persons and has been found to be a predictor of residential

inertia (Hayward & Lazarowich, 2001). Ralph, who is 87 years old and lived on-island

for 83 years, in response to a question about plans to move, describes his satisfaction with

Queen Charlotte City and his sense of belonging among community members.

> "I say it's satisfactory; it kind of covers everything. The stores are here
> and the hospital is here and there's a dentist here…it makes me feel
> satisfied…Well, the convenience of the hospital half a block that way and
> the pharmacy. And that's something I use more and more as I age. And the
> post office, the store, everything down the other way. They're all so close
> and easy to find and easy to park at."

> "Because it's a wonderful feeling to walk along the road and wave at
> everybody and know who you're waving to. I find myself in the city
> waving at people going by because the vehicle looks familiar. I feel kind
> of foolish."

**Natural Landscape**

Research on place attachment among any age group rarely focuses on the natural

landscape. At best, the range of analysis extends to the neighbourhood or community

environment (Hidalgo & Hernadez, 2001). A review of the gerontological literature

revealed an absence of studies focussing on attachment to the natural landscape. While

Rowles' dimension of physical insideness encapsulates place-bonding with geographical

dimensions, it highlights the connection to the built rather than the natural environment.

The Queen Charlotte Islands are a region characterized by small communities

with little infrastructure, marked by vast distances and wilderness between locales. Haida

Gwaii has a reputation for its physical beauty and lack of development. Thus, it was

important to tap into place-based experience on this level. An interesting observation is

that much of the data supporting this construct came from the general attachment

questions of the interview guide. Specifically, question concerning qualities of place and quality of life produced evidence for attachment to the natural landscape.

Participants expressed connection to the natural landscape through use of such descriptors as clean air, natural beauty, proximity to the coastline, and a presence of wildlife when asked what were important qualities for wanting to live on the islands.

When asked why she wants to stay on the islands, Dorothy, a divorced 74-year-old woman living in Queen Charlotte City responded, "…our surroundings, which are as I say, paradise, I live in paradise. I can look out my window and think I am just the most fortunate person, you know just to live here and have this. I can say good morning to the eagles, go talk to the whales."

When prompted to identify qualities about the islands that keep him there, Eric, an 81-year-old male who has lived in the same community his entire life had the following to say:

> "Oh, I like the open air environment and all that. Good fresh air and not any pollution to speak of at all, that's one good thing. When you're in the city you notice the atmosphere is altogether different. There's more pollution and condensed areas and here you got open free areas."

The participants described natural landscape attachment in general terms, and also they identified specific places that they were fond of. Beaches on the east coast of Graham Island were often mentioned as well as less accessible beaches and inlets on Moresby Island. While island seniors may no longer visit well-loved beaches, they continue to experience a connection through reminiscing and photos. This process resembles what Rowles (1983a) referred to as projective fantasy, projecting oneself into an existing environment that is not geographically proximate.

Another important means of connecting to landscape without physical proximity is through visual experience. Many of the seniors have homes overlooking the waterfront, which affords them a view of Skidegate Inlet. The view consists of an undeveloped landscape composed of smaller islands, uninhabited forests, and distant mountains. Bob, an 82-year-old man living in Sandspit, describes his attachment to the natural landscape in these words:

> "There are few places that we would have the beautiful view that we have from here. We've been to a lot of places in the world, but here we've got a magnificent view. Over there is Graham Island and Slatechuck Mountains, the sun coming up in the winter mornings making the snow all red, nice pink, sunsets galore."

Interestingly, island seniors also express attachment to the landscape when driving the local highway. There is only one highway on Graham Island, which follows the east coast and affords an uninhibited view of coastal beaches and forest. The coastline is sparsely populated, the traffic is minimal, and on any given day it is possible to spot eagles, herons, deer, whales, and other wildlife while driving along the highway. One has the true sense of driving through nature. For older islanders, highway driving provides ongoing interaction with the landscape as age-related decline in physical functioning limits their accessibility to the natural landscape.

## Climate

Another category that emerged from the data that is closely related to the natural landscape is climate. This category was unexpected given that the Queen Charlotte Islands are marked by an abundance of precipitation. The annual average rainfall on Haida Gwaii is 100 cm with an average temperature of 18 degrees Celsius in the summer and 4 degrees Celsius in the winter (BC Adventures, 2005). To date, there has been a

lack of gerontological research focussing on the role of climate in sedentary place attachment, and instead, it has been examined mainly in the context of seasonal migration and place attachment (McHugh & Mings, 1996; Gustafson, 2001).

Data illustrating this category came from questions about attachment to the physical environment and also general questions about place attachment. Participants expressed a preference for the moderate climate on the islands and a general dislike for more extreme seasonal weather changes. The following comments illustrate the experience of climate in relation to place attachment:

> "Well that's why I live here; I like the weather. I like the mild weather here because on average we never get it cold you know like they do in the Interior."

> "I don't need all the snow and I don't need hot summers. I had those as a kid. And I spent years in the tropics. I don't need it anymore".

It is important to note that the older residents who are relatively new to the Queen Charlotte Islands felt they had adjusted to the climate and weather patterns; however, a few participants from the Interior feel nostalgic about the "real" winters they had experienced in previous communities.

## Familiarity

The fourth aspect of attachment to the physical environment is the participants' familiarity of a given space, particularly their homes, but also outdoor places. Rowles (1980) noted that the older residents of Colton had acquired what he refers to as "body awareness" of their physical surroundings. Over the years, the body is linked to the environment in a process that Rubenstein (1989) calls entexturing. This process transcends cognitive awareness and promotes physical insideness. Intimate familiarity of

space comes from years of navigating the same stairs, streets, and walkways and provides compensation for decrements in sensory perception and mobility, thereby prolonging functional independence (Rowles, 1983c). Jim, a 76-year-old widower in Queen Charlotte City captured the concept of body-centered experience of place and its role in maintaining autonomy in the following excerpt:

> "And it's a great relief to get home, feel your surroundings. Independence is what's really important. The more familiar the environment is, the easier it is. I built a good part of this house. I can wander around the house in the dark, find my way around."

Familiarity of place also had reference to outdoor spaces in nature. Patty, a 79-year-old divorced man in Queen Charlotte City reflected on his intimate knowledge of the surrounding landscape. "And I do know the area that's for sure. I know the area if I want to walk down to the river or something like that or drive down to the river."

Familiarity as a category thus lends support to Rowles' (1990) concept of physical insideness, which he describes as a product of length of residence in one location for many years. While history with place seems to be salient to the experience of physical insideness among Queen Charlotte seniors, the newer residents also expressed familiarity with place despite their length of residence. More importantly, however, familiarity contributes to island seniors' sense of comfort in navigating physical spaces and thus promotes functional independence.

In summary, older residents of Haida Gwaii are emotionally bonded to their physical environment. Aspects of the physical surroundings that directly contribute to their attachments include: (1) a concept of home, which ranges in size and scale from personal residence, to community, to the islands at large; (2) the natural landscape, which they connect with physically and vicariously through memory, mementos, and visual

experience; (3) the climate, and (4) familiarity of place. Attachments to the physical environment were expressed as positive feelings and participants' reported a sense of well-being, a sense of security, satisfaction, and pride in the beauty of their physical surroundings.

## Social Environment

"People are wonderful, people that I know. What I like here is the congeniality of people. I say this quite a bit. I think it's easier to meet people here. It would take longer to meet people somewhere else." - Ralph, research participant

While place attachment generally implies the affective bonds of people to their physical surroundings, it may also include attachments based upon social relationships within a given setting. Low and Altman (1992, p.7) describe places as " repositories and contexts within which interpersonal, community, and cultural relationships occur, and it is to those social relationships, not just to place qua place, to which people are attached". Indeed, the social ties which one experiences in a place may be equally or more significant than the affective bonds to the physical environment.

Among his study panel of elderly Colton residents, Rowles (1980) observed a high degree of social insideness, which he described as a component of place attachment arising from integration into an age-relevant and geographically proximate peer group. He noted there is a stable social milieu in which older residents have known one another for decades and therefore, have shared lifelong friendships and exchanged mutually reciprocated support. Older Colton residents were observed as belonging to a "society of the old" in which, after years of extending neighbourly acts of support and kindness and as longstanding members of their community, they become the beneficiaries of

instrumental support and care from the younger members of the community (Rowles, 1990). Being socially inside in Colton thus ensured a source of instrumental support and concern, which in turn sustained independence and promoted place attachment. In Colton, social insideness was reinforced by participating in community activities, namely attending church, and being part of an elaborate telephone network (Rowles, 1983c). Social insideness fostered a sense of belonging and reinforces social status.

Rowles' (1983a) panel of elderly Colton residents involved three years of intensive participant observation and ethnographic research, which included unstructured tape-recorded interviews, space/time activity diaries, cognitive mapping tasks and social support network measures. These techniques enabled him to identify a hierarchy of the geographical dimensions of his participants' social support networks and acquire detailed information about their telephone networks. While the current study did not attempt to replicate his research procedures, semi-structured questions regarding the size and quality of participants' social networks, as well as questions concerning community integration were used to elicit the role of social ties in place attachment in a geographically isolated community.

Questions pertaining to the social milieu generated a category that is somewhat dichotomous. Participants experience some degree of social insideness; yet at the same time, they may also experience social outsideness, a sense of being an outsider. This is particularly true for newer short-term residents. Newer residents expressed a sense of social belonging to the outer social circles of the community, yet they lacked social inclusion among more intimate social circles. Paradoxically, long-term residents feel socially inside their inner circles but more socially outside broader circles. Their social

experience is a result of age-related differences in social behaviour and population changes in transient communities. Thus, the components of this category reflect a tension in which social attachments are reinforced, but also impaired by age-related factors and length of residence.

The following codes are used to describe older islanders' experience of the social environment: (1) regular contact; (2) community connectedness; (3) declining social networks, and (4) length of residence.

## Regular Contact

All of the research participants have family and/or close friends living on the Queen Charlotte Islands. Three of the four newer residents have family members who are geographically proximate and they originally moved here to be closer to their adult children. While it was beyond the scope of the study to map out the social interaction within their networks, it is clear from the data that the participants have regular contact with their family, friends and neighbours.

The social support networks of older adults living in rural communities are typically a source of both social interaction and informal support. Social networks may fulfill a crucial role in providing instrumental and emotional support to seniors living in service-depleted rural communities (Wenger, 1990; Johansson, Thorslund, & Smedby, 1993; and Pearson Scott, 1998). The social networks of older residents on Haida Gwaii are characterized by regular interaction based upon friendship and informal help.

Dorothy is a 74-year-old divorcee who lives alone in Queen Charlotte City and is dealing with major health issues including lung cancer and arthritis. She loves her home and she enjoys living alone. Her ability to stay at home, however, is largely due to the

daily support she receives from her two adult daughters who live in the same town.

Dorothy is extremely attached to her daughters and claims they are the main reason for

wanting to live on the islands. At this point in Dorothy's illness, the daughters provide

instrumental support – "my daughters come here every day. They come along and make

my dinners". Dorothy is well connected to people of all ages in her community and

despite her limitations in mobility; she maintains social ties by having regular visitors

into her home. "Some of the close ones, I see them every few days. They'll drop in to

see how I'm doing and have a cup of tea. If they don't come by, I phone them up and

invite them over".

Frieda, a 74-year-old widowed female living in a suite in her daughter's

basement, is in better health, but she also receives an abundance of support from her adult

children.

> "Oh, my son talks to me every day because he's concerned. I keep in
> touch with the daughter across the water there quite a bit and my other
> daughter who lives upstairs, although now she's in Prince Rupert with my
> car, getting it serviced and doing her business."

Family members who live in close proximity are not the only source of support

for older islanders. Non-kin networks, including friends and neighbours are important

sources of social interaction and informal assistance to older rural adults (Glasgow,

2000). For example, Eric, an 81-year-old man who has lived in the same community his

entire life describes his relationship with another family of longstanding residence: "I've

known them all my life. They're kind of family in a way. We always do what we can for

each other."

**Community Connectedness**

Community connectedness may be described as having a large social network and familiarity with faces around town. After years of living in a small town, many older islanders have developed long-term friendships and through association, also know many of the local families and their various histories. For them, it is a typical experience to walk down the main street in Queen Charlotte City and wave at any number of passing drivers or pedestrians, and then head to the post office, grocery store, or pharmacy where they will be recognized by name. Even the newer residents expressed community connectedness reporting that they are easily recognized by other locals and share an active interest in social, political, and economic happenings of their community. Paul is a 61-year-old retired computer technician from the Kootenays. He has been living in Queen Charlotte City for only a few years. When he was asked about the qualities of the place that keep him here, he identified the significance of belonging to the community. "People recognize me on the street, that's important to me".

Another important aspect of community connectedness is the sense of security that older residents experience. In having mutual familiarity of local townspeople, seniors feel less vulnerable than if they lived in an urban setting. In knowing many of their fellow residents, they perceive increased safety from crime. Older participants reported they usually leave the doors of their homes unlocked, although not always, and it is extremely common to leave their car doors unlocked.

Their connection to the community also promotes a sense of security in that fellow residents look out for one another, particularly in the case of an accident or emergency. According to Glasgow (2000), rural seniors rely on neighbours as informal

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sources of support, particularly during emergencies. Jim, a 76-year-old widower who

often walks the streets of Queen Charlotte City using his cane had the following to say:

> "This town makes me feel safe. I know that if I fell down on the road and
> broke my hip or something, somebody would take me to the hospital.
> Where they might just run over me somewhere else you know?"

Many participants indicated that they had large social networks that included

intergenerational relationships. As Norma, a vibrant 61-year-old put it; "My husband and

I have friends in every community. We associate with people of all ages. The young

folks accept us. I never really think of it that much, but it probably doesn't happen

everywhere." She also noted "it's easier to meet people here. It would take longer to

meet people somewhere else". Dorothy expressed her sense of community in the

following words: "I feel accepted. You know that feeling. Even with people I know

casually. They're happy to see me and I'm happy to see them all the time". Norma and

Dorothy's comments, illustrate the experience of social insideness in a small town and

the resulting affective bonds to the social environment.

## Declining Social Network

While older islanders experience social insideness in their communities, for some,

their sense of social belonging has diminished over the years. The major reasons for a

decline in social networks are population changes in the community and age-related

changes that affect social interaction. Only long-term residents who participated in the

interviews described declines in social networks. Newer residents experienced social

outsideness in a different way, which will be described in the following section.

Population changes are related in part to the economy of the islands. The

economy on the Queen Charlotte Islands has traditionally been resource-based with

farming, fishing, and logging being the main industries over the last century. In recent years, local resource-based industries have been negatively impacted by poor management practices and the global economy, forcing island communities to switch their attention to more sustainable and stable industries such as eco-tourism. Major shifts in the economy and job market have resulted in a transient population, particularly among local government employees and professional educators. For seniors who are long-term residents, the number of unfamiliar faces on the street appears to be growing each year. Patty, who is 79 years old and has lived in Queen Charlotte City for 75 years, expressed his loss of community connectedness in the following words:

> "It's a different environment that I grew up in then is here now, you see?
> You walked down the street in the morning and you say hello to
> everybody because you knew them and it was different. Mind you, they
> had their cliques and so on, like they have here now. But it was more like
> you knew everybody else's business and they knew yours. But it's not
> that way now. I go up to the post office now and there be fifteen or twenty
> people there and I don't know one of them."

Eric, who is 81 years old and has always lived in one community, expressed a similar sentiment:

> "Some have come and some have gone, you know? Actually, around Tlell
> here, you go to the post office, there's a lot of people that go that I don't
> even know. I know the old timers and most people on Wiggins Road, but
> before I knew everyone."

Along with shifts in the local population, participants mentioned age-related changes as a reason for a loss of social connections. Members of their cohort have either passed away or moved away. Some participants mentioned friends who have involuntarily relocated off island for age-related health reasons. As George, a 73-year-

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old resident put it, members of his social network are "getting few and far between" and "it's not like it was before, but there's still some around nevertheless".

Participants mentioned specific health issues that pose challenges to maintaining social ties. Jim, who rates his health as "fair" and has difficulties with mobility due to arthritis and a hip replacement, described how his health affects his social life.

> "I don't feel comfortable making commitments for anything because I don't know how I'm going to feel tomorrow or next week. And that comes when your health is deteriorating, when you're aging. It seems especially true for arthritis. I don't have the energy to do much socializing anymore, but I can, it's available if I can use it. The thing that I like is I can do as much or as little as I like now at my time of life."

**Length of Residence**

The newer residents described a different experience of social outsideness. Overall, they expressed a sense of connection and attachment to their communities. After a short time, they were recognized by people around town and invited to participate in community events. While they expressed a connection to the social environment, there was a common experience of feeling left out of the inner social circles and getting left out on the social periphery. Thus, newer residents may be acquainted with many people in town; however, they do not share the older residents' experience of having deeper, more meaningful relationships that are geographically proximate. For example, three of the four short-term residents are older women who moved to the islands to be closer to their adult children. Betty, a 78-year-old widow who lives with her daughter and grandson described her efforts to make new friendships.

> "In a way it's been difficult to move here because as a retired person you have to push yourself, like me, I came here and joined the church. It isn't my church, but I joined it for the simple reason – how else were you going

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to put your feelers in? Because you can get stagnated. I see an awful lot of elderly women that have stagnated and it's too bad."

Nachiko, a 70-year-old widow who moved to Haida Gwaii two years ago expressed her experience as a social outsider in these words:

"It baffles me. I know there's tight social circles here but I don't know how it works. Do you have to be here twenty years or something? I feel like I'm on the periphery and it's not cliquey...they're not deliberate barriers, but natural barriers. If I knew what they are I'd be able to get around them".

A key to understanding social barriers is the importance given to shared histories. Even when newer residents are invited to social events, they remain outsiders in the conversation. Long-term residents share a common history filled with place-specific memories. Historical references often come up in conversation, making it difficult for newcomers to participate in the discussion since they do not share the same memories. Clearly, this was not the only factor inhibiting new residents from developing intimate friendships; however, it certainly created a barrier to achieving insider status.

In summary, older adults' experience of the social environment may be characterized as having community connectedness and regular contact with social networks that were sustainable, but not stable. Social networks may diminish in size in late life as a consequence of population shifts and age-related health changes. Attachment to the social environment may also be affected by length of residence. Length of residence is associated with residential stability and is considered a predictor of place attachment (Hayward & Lazarowich, 2001). Seniors, who had lived on the islands under fifteen years, may have had difficulty forming meaningful social bonds due to a lack of common history and shared memories.

## Lifestyle

> "It's more about what this place offers in terms of what you can do. It's a way to live" – Joe, research participant, in response to questions on what his favourite places on island mean to him.

Lifestyle is a manner of living that reflects the values, attitudes, and worldview of a person or group. Having a specific lifestyle implies a conscious or unconscious choice between one set of behaviours and some other sets of behaviours (Houghton & Mifflin, 2005). A review of the gerontological literature indicated an absence of empirical studies on the role of lifestyle in place attachment among the rural elderly. Where lifestyle has been explored, it has been mainly with regard to place attachment and post-retirement migration behaviour (McHugh & Mings, 1996; Gustafson, 2001).

Lifestyle was a dimension of place attachment that emerged as a new addition to Rowles' construct of place attachment. Although lifestyle is reflected within Rowles' constructs of physical, social, and autobiographical insideness, he does not isolate it as a category that reinforces or promotes place attachment. Instead, he identifies pace of life, rhythm and routine of consistent activity patterns and small scale of life as being "subsumed within an overarching construct, a sense of insideness that pervades the lifestyles of the Colton elderly" (Rowles, 1988, p.119).

It may be argued that lifestyle itself, does not promote a sense of insideness, nor are all aspects of lifestyle place-specific. A way of life, however, may be perceived as a product of one's environment that directly impacts one's attachment to that environment. Data from the current study clearly illustrate that certain aspects of lifestyle are place-specific, and had a direct effect on older islanders affective bonds to Haida Gwaii.

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The bulk of the evidence supporting lifestyle as a category was generated from the general attachment questions of the interview guide. In this section, respondents were asked why they want to stay on-island. They were prompted to list qualities about the place that are important to them, and to identify qualities of island life that they most value. The following codes emerged from the data and are used to depict lifestyle as a reinforcing mechanism of place attachment: (1) recreation; (2) privacy, and (3) self-determination.

**Recreation**

The Queen Charlotte Islands have an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities, some of which may be recognized more as part of the local lifestyle than mere leisure activities. Fishing and hunting are two examples of such activities. The Chinook salmon run begins in the Spring and carries on throughout the summer. In the early Fall, the Coho salmon return to the local rivers and creeks, and in the winter, fresh steelhead and trout are found in local waterways. Fishing around Haida Gwaii is world renown, despite the depletion of local salmon stocks from commercial fishing. There is also seasonal harvesting of shellfish, including clams, crabs, and scallops. Joe is 71 and lives in a house overlooking the Tlell River, which is famous for its Coho run as it draws multitudes of international fishermen each fall. He responded to a question about most valued qualities of his home with the following words:

> "I have a spotting scope set up and when the tide reaches a certain level out there, I check my scope. I grab my fly rod and usually I go down to the river and within an hour I'm back with a coho. Just like clockwork. So how many places can you find like that?"

Hunting is a popular pastime with the deer season being open through the fall, winter, and spring. The White-tailed deer was introduced to the islands in the 1800's and has no predators besides humans. Thus, the deer population has exploded over the last century, making hunting a relatively common method of acquiring a supply of winter meat. There also is a long season of various edible berries in the summer and wild mushrooms in the fall. Indeed, much of the outdoor recreation that takes place on the islands involves food gathering and for seniors who are no longer physically capable of harvesting activities, they are often involved in food preservation – drying, smoking, canning, and freezing local food.

Another recreational pastime that relates to sustenance is gardening. As a result of irregular shipments and freight expenses, fresh produce is expensive and difficult to come by. The relatively moderate climate on the islands creates a reasonable environment to grow fresh produce throughout the year thus making vegetable gardens a fairly common feature on local properties.

Recreational activities that were mentioned in the interviews that are not sustenance related include hiking, boating, paddling, and beach combing. Paul, for example, is a 61-year-old athletic divorcee. He moved to the islands from a life in the Kootenays in part, because he loves to kayak. For Paul, accessibility to the ocean is very important to his lifestyle, as he prefers to spend a lot of time on the water. "Anywhere on the water is important for paddling."

Beachcombing is a common form of recreation for island seniors. Older participants who are no longer able to navigate rocky beaches drive on some of the beaches that have vehicle access and beachcomb through the window. For years, Dolly

and her husband have beachcombed on their boat and also on land. She describes their experiences in the following words:

> "We had boats and we liked going out picking up life rings and glass balls and all these different things that were floating. Nowadays, most of the things we find have drifted ashore. It's excellent exercise, beautiful country, and you get good photo opportunities…If you stood up and looked over there you would see the jaw bone of a sperm whale and nowhere else could we have gotten that for decoration in our living room."

**Privacy**

Privacy emerged from the data as a preferred lifestyle choice and an aspect of the local environment that reinforces place attachment. Due to the low population density and the relative lack of development, properties and roads are relatively isolated. Other than logged areas, a vast part of the landscape remains in its natural state; thus it is typical to walk along a beach, forest trail, or road and not see another human.

Fred is a 71-year-old widower who lives in a small village mid-island and walks the beach across from his house daily. When asked about qualities of place that keep him in Tlell, he claims that "being in relative isolation" is a significant quality.

> "I think privacy is a very important thing to people. I can walk all the way down the beach or Beitush Road without meeting anyone."

Older residents living in Tlell also identified the importance of privacy around their homes. Tlell is the most rural of the island communities. Residents live on large, relatively isolated properties and the only local amenities are a post office, firehall, veterinarian clinic, feedstore, and coffee shop. For Joe, a 78-year-old retired RCMP officer, privacy from his neighbours is a valuable quality of life. "So I've got myself insulated with five acres. I don't have anybody bugging me."

**Self-determination**

This code describes an aspect of lifestyle that reflects autonomy, independence, and control within a place-based context. According to Keating (1991), rural Canadians have a longstanding history of valuing autonomy and independence. Most rural residents were self-employed as it was necessary for basic survival. Bob, an 82-year-old married male living in Sandspit gives the following response to a question regarding what initially drew him to the islands:

> "The ability to raise a family on our own terms. We like to meet people
> on our own terms and the same with the community and of course here,
> there are so many advantages in that respect. You have your own privacy,
> you have the ability to go about your business without, I wouldn't say
> without having to consider other people, but without having to worry
> about conflict."

Patty, who has been living in Queen Charlotte City for most of his 79 years, described the significance of self-determination as part of island life during the early 1900's and the Great Depression. Families had to be self-sufficient. Everyone grew a garden and had to be entrepreneurial about getting work. An attitude of self-determination has persisted through the decades.

> "It was self-supporting if you wanted to work. If you didn't want to work
> well tough beans, that's tough on you. We had a garden, we had two cows
> and we had our own milk and own butter and different things like that.
> And we traded back and forth, traded for fish or meat with vegetables or
> we traded meat for something else."

Patty and other older islanders feel that "being able to look after myself here" is an important reason for why they live here. He illustrates self-determination with the following comments:

> "You see, on the islands here you get pretty independent. You don't like
> somebody telling you what to do. You like to be able to think for

yourself. It's still a bit free here, its' still free...You're able to come and go when you like and do what you like and things like that, that's what lifestyle means to me."

Paul, who has been living on the islands for only five years, described self-determination and control in the context of community organization. When asked what his life would be like if he no longer lived on the islands, he identified self-determination in the following words:

"There's a minimum of organization here. That's important. If I wasn't living here, my life would be more structured and that would not be my first choice. I prefer to be less structured. Structured in the sense of having things like clubs and organized groups available as opposed to me having to create things to do."

## Time in Place

Time and change are important features of people-place bonding. They are particularly relevant to place attachment among an elderly population. Low and Altman (1992) propose that temporal aspects of place attachment may be cyclical or linear and therefore, involve past and present linkages. Past attachments may affect present circumstances of place bonding, as is the case for older adults who have relocated from community into residential care facilities (Rubinstein & Parmelee, 1992).

From his study of the Colton elderly, Rowles (1980) identified the phenomenon of what he termed "autobiographical insideness", which refers to the relationship of one's personal history and sense of self to time spent in a given place. Autobiographical insideness arises from a storehouse of memories that accrue from years lived in a given place. Older adults accumulate a series of remembered places that involve emotional affinity and that become undeniably connected to sense of self (Rowles, 1998). In Rowles' words, autobiographical insideness "is a mosaic of incident-places which

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together constitute a 'lived in' place conveying a sense of ongoing affinity and forming a repository of personal identity. It is difficult to comprehend fully the temporal texture of this commitment. One can merely describe some of its more overt manifestations" (Rowles, 1980, p.161). Thus, a place may come to symbolize an individual's identity or be seen as an extension of self.

Autobiographical insideness is reinforced in a number of ways. First, older adults use mementos and photographs to trigger memorable life events. Certain personal possessions, such as beloved pieces of furniture also serve as cues. Seniors may exhibit attachment to them to the point of being inseparable because the possessions come to be perceived as an extension of self (Rubenstein, 1989). Second, autobiographical insideness is maintained through ongoing time spent in a place, although physical presence in a place is not essential to the preservation of place-based insideness. Third, older adults sustain their place-based autobiographies through reminiscing with members of their cohort (Rowles, 1983a).

Autobiographical insideness has a number of adaptive functions in old age. First, environmental change is inevitable. In a rural environment, there are population shifts, changes to the built environment, and landscape transformations. Thus, connecting with one's roadmap of memories helps sustain a sense of belonging in a changing environment. Second, place-based history and memories preserve self-worth and social status, with incident places serving as bookmarks of past accomplishments. Third, autobiographical insideness fosters a sense of continuity in later life. Tapping into place-based memories provides a means of tracking life events, thereby linking past sense of self with current self-identity (Rowles, 1983a).

The current study produced general evidence for the experience of autobiographical insideness. Older long-term residents of the Queen Charlotte Islands have numerous place-based memories, which they reinforce through reminiscence, and which at some level contribute to their sense of self. Response to interview questions regarding autobiographical insideness also illustrated place-based changes that are specific to Haida Gwaii and relevant to older islanders' sense of physical and social insideness. The following codes were used to represent time-related features that may positively or negatively influence place attachment: (1) place-based memories; (2) reminiscing; (3) population changes, and (4) landscape changes.

**Place-based Memories**

"Some have come and some have gone, you know? Actually, around Tlell here, you go to the post office, there's a lot of people that go that I don't even know. I know the old timers and most people on Wiggins Road, but before I knew everyone."Fred, a 78-year-old widower who lives in Tlell, recounts his experiences with family and employment when he first moved to the islands forty-five years ago.

> "We came straight here, to this house. There was a little cabin sitting
> where that bush is there. It was a twelve by sixteen foot cabin and we had
> three children with us and they were seven, five, and three years of age.
> And the three-year-old had whooping cough I think and the funniest thing
> was I left to go up the road to our first and only neighbour, in fact it's the
> next house from here where my son and his wife live now. And I think I
> went up to borrow a kettle and when I got back I had already got a job,
> someone had called in when I was away and he came up to the little cabin
> door and my wife was trying to cope with three kids and all the stuff. And
> he said, 'Hey missus, does your husband want a job?' And my wife said,
> 'Well, I'll ask him when he comes back'. And so, the next morning I was
> working with Len Campbell loading a two tonne gravel truck by hand, you
> know a shovel hand.

George, who is 73 years old and also lives in Tlell, described a place-based memory of his past job as a creek guardian. His response came from a question about places on-island that he likes to visit.

> "…and of course the Tlell estuary. I was a creek guardian for a while for the Fisheries department so my route was what you call the Anvil trail now. I used to walk the Anvil trail, I used to walk more often the Tlell estuary. So I'd go down to the river mouth and come back up the beach and make a circuit, which in those days I could do in an hour."

Thus, George remains vicariously connected to a past occupation through ongoing contact with the physical landscape in which it took place.

Participants also recounted memories of diverse recreational past times, which for most of them are a thing of the past. Eric, who has lived his entire 81 years in Tlell has fond memories of his family spending time in the forest, which frames three sides of his property. He claims they were "forever walking through the bush, whether it was picking cones, or getting wood, or whatever". These days, Eric is too frail to walk in the forest, although he still enjoys his view of wilderness surroundings and the memories they hold. Norma and her husband used to go up to the north end of the island, to Masset every two weeks so that Norma could sing with the local choir. Dolly and her husband have boated around the islands for years. For a while, they lived in an isolated area called Puffin Cove, which is only accessible by boat or seaplane. In recounting their adventures in the wilderness, Dolly identified one particularly favourable memory.

> "The four of us chartered a helicopter and went to Cave Creek. Now that may be an expensive way to get your agates, but it was a fun thing to do."

Older islanders also have fond memories of community events on-island, some of which no longer exist. Community events included dances, music festivals, the annual fall fair, community fundraisers, and the closing of the local legion, which was a venue

for many dances and fundraising events. Jim, who lives in Queen Charlotte City, has fond memories of annual dances that no longer take place.

> "There would be homecoming dances for fishermen coming in from a trip. They would fish for the summer till October and when they came home, there'd be a celebration to welcome them home."

**Reminiscing**

The sharing of life stories involves selecting specific life experiences and narrating them in a way that retains and validates self-identity (Shenk, Davis, Peacock & Moore, 2002). Participants were asked if they reminisce about past experiences on-island and if they tend to be drawn to specific places or periods of time when they reflect back on their place-based experiences. Reminiscing is common among the participants, although it was not determined how often they engage in this process. Invoking place-based memories brings older adults a feeling of comfort and happiness, and good feelings about past places and acquaintances. The participants did not express a relationship between the process of reminiscing and its effect on sense of identity; however, as Rowles (1983a) noted, autobiographical insideness is generally taken for granted. The elderly do not necessarily have a conscious awareness of it.

Reminiscing tends to involve selecting the good memories over the bad times. Many of the long-term residents of Haida Gwaii have shared or similar memories, and therefore, tend to reminisce with their longstanding peers. This finding lends some support to Rowles (1998) description of a "society of old", which in Colton is a means for older residents to maintain a sense of community identity. On the Queen Charlotte Islands, reminiscing appears to be more important to older male residents than to older

females. Patty, a 79-year-old male divorcee, gave the following response to a question

on whether or not he reminisces about days gone by on the islands:

> "Sure you do, oh yeah. Ralph and I, we'll get together sometimes or one
> of us from the ol' days and we'll sit here and talk about the old times and
> what went on then and 'do you know so and so? Do you remember so and
> so and what he did?' And uh, 'do you remember the storm? Do you
> remember the amount of snow we had? Do you remember how cold it
> was?' and things like that."

Long-term residents of the islands rely on one another to help retain their life

stories when they themselves have trouble remembering life events. Eric, of Tlell, often

gets together with his long-time friend, George to reminisce.

> "Oh yeah, George and I talk about things. He asks me things about the
> past and I ask him things. He's got a great memory. We don't focus on
> any one particular thing, but I suppose we remember things from pre-
> hydro days in Tlell."

For newer residents, reminiscing is experienced differently. As mentioned,

seniors who have lived on the islands for less than five years may feel socially outside the

inner social circles. They do not share place-based life experiences; thus, they are not

able to reminisce with local age peers in the same manner as their long-term counterparts.

Three of the four short-term participants who were interviewed moved to the islands to be

closer to adult children, and it is their children with whom they tend to reminisce.

Otherwise, newer residents use the phone to call up long distance relatives and friends.

In this way, they sustain sense of self, while they renegotiate self-identity within their

new surroundings.

In summary, time-related factors that positively influence place attachment and

that were identified from the data include place-based memories and reminiscing. What

also emerged from the data were time-related factors that may have a compromising

effect on older islanders' sense of place, and thus, sense of identity. Time-related factors include population changes and landscape changes.

**Population Changes**

Older residents of Haida Gwaii observed a change in the numbers of people living on the islands as well as a change in the types of residents. The population of the Queen Charlotte Islands has been decreasing in recent years, likely as a result of a downturn of the economy and the subsequently high unemployment rates. In the last Canada Census, the total population on Haida Gwaii was 4,935, with an estimated 765 adults aged 55 and older (Statistics Canada, 2001). Long-term residents have noticed an overall increase in the population, with numbers declining in recent years, particularly in the forestry-based communities – Sandspit and Port Clements. Bob, who is a retired navy officer, has lived in the Charlottes' for 39 years and spent the last eleven of them in Sandspit. He discussed his observations of the Sandspit population in response to questions about historical island changes.

> "The airport has a lot fewer people in it. They have extra buildings that
> are empty. The logging camp has pretty well shut down. The town is
> roughly half the size it was at maximum [population]. The school has
> dropped almost from 200 to just about 50 right now, which is a big drop.
> There's more retired people coming in, the younger people have to go out
> to look for jobs to support their families."

Frieda, who moved down island from Masset to Queen Charlotte City eighteen years ago, has also noticed recent population changes in her community.

> "Here in QCC, I've noticed that we've downsized. Just a lot of people
> have moved out and nobody to replace them. It's like the government
> people have been downsized to a point. And this is very much a
> government town I would say, except for your local locals."

Long-term residents have also noticed a shift in the type of new residents moving in to island communities. Overall, they described recent in-migrants as having "urban attitudes" in that they are less approachable than local residents who have lived on-island for many years. The newer residents tend to be more transient, staying for a few years and then moving on to greener pastures. Dorothy, who moved to Queen Charlotte City in the late 1970's, has observed some of these changes in the type of residents living in her community.

> "There's been a shift in the type of people that live here. Coming from the city, I think a lot of them are not antisocial, but if it's not within their church or social group they don't seem to attempt to make friends. Where years ago, when I came here in '76, I walked down the street and everybody stopped and talked to me. I didn't know them from Adam. Now you don't see that as much. I still do though. I make everyone welcome. Try and make them feel it's friendly here."

Thus, population changes may have a negative impact on the social ties and community connectedness of older adults on Haida Gwaii. At the same time, however, residents like Dorothy adapt to these changes and indeed try to influence such changes by modelling rural attitudes and behaviour.

**Landscape Changes**

Over the last century, the landscape of the Queen Charlotte Islands has gone through a number of major environmental transformations. The biggest contribution to environmental change has been the deforestation of old growth stands. The rate of logging on Haida Gwaii intensified during World War II when spruce trees were used in the construction of Mosquito fighter planes (Dalzell, 1973). Later in the century, logging rates peaked during the 1960's to the mid-1980's as a result of technological advances in the forest industry and global demand for raw timber. The effects of over cutting and

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poor forest management practices, along with changes to the global timber trade, namely with the United States, has had a direct impact on the local forest industry.

Older adults who have lived on the islands since childhood have observed the increasing number of clearcuts and the severe fragmentation of old growth forests. Jim, who is a long-term resident of Queen Charlotte City, recalls the landscape from years ago:

> "You know, it was a different environment altogether. See that over there was not logged off and down here was not logged off. It was still timberland – timberland right to the water's edge."

The island landscape has become less rural to older islanders. Despite the small population size and a minimum of infrastructure, there is much greater accessibility to the islands and consequently, changes to the community landscapes. A few of the respondents remember an era when cattle roamed from Queen Charlotte City to 40 kilometres north of Tlell. One senior recalls the beaches being more isolated and being able to sunbathe nude knowing that no one would wander by.

Not all landscape changes were viewed in a negative light. Community development improved residents' standard of living and quality of life. Eric, of Tlell, described changes to highway transportation and the introduction of hydro to his community, which occurred as late as 1977.

> "Oh well, since from the old days there's been a lot of changes like in the transportation on the island and the roads and things, the whole road from Tlell to Charlotte was something like coming in our lane and there was a plank road to Port Clements and eventually that was done away with and they got more businesses and things like that and everything was improved in that way in the conditions. Better stores, more progress. The great thing that made a wonderful improvement was when we got hydro up the coast, that was a big improvement."

# CHAPTER 5
# DISCUSSION

The current study provided support for Rowles' dimensions of place attachment and expanded the dimensions to reflect specific aspects of the environment that tie seniors to a remote rural area. Older residents living on the Queen Charlotte Islands are bonded to physical, social, lifestyle, and time-related aspects of their immediate world. A research question that remains unanswered is which of these aspects is most salient to the process of people-place bonding in a rural context. For some elderly, a supportive social milieu is more reinforcing to place attachment than the local lifestyle or their physical surroundings. For newer residents, time-related aspects, such as reservoirs of place-based memories are less significant of place affiliation than for long-term residents. As Rowles' (1988) proposed, the dimensions of place attachment are interdependent and co-exist as a product and function of one another. The following section briefly reviews the categories that emerged from the data and examines the interdependency of the dimensions of place attachment as relevant to the Haida Gwaii elderly.

In answering the basic question of whether or not older islanders are attached to place, the main focus of the research was to uncover aspects of place that promote and sustain their attachments; essentially, to determine what is it about the place that keeps them there. In using Rowles' dimensions to guide and frame the interview questions, some of the aspects were pre-supposed. That is, some of the codes and categories were developed from a logical deductive approach. For example, codes such as regular social contact and community connectedness were derived from Rowles' (1983a) depiction of

the "Society of Old" and relate to his dimension of social insideness. Further, the code, familiarity, was based upon the concept of having a body awareness of the contextual landscape, which depicts Rowles' dimension of physical insideness.

At the same time, the data generated new contributions to our understanding of place attachment among a remote rural older population. For example, aspects of the dimensions, such as climate and natural landscape were emphasized as important features of the attachment process. Moreover, asking participants to discuss their relationships to place in a general way produced an additional dimension, lifestyle, which was recognized in Rowles' work, but was not isolated as a separate dimension.

Queen Charlotte seniors are attached to the physical environment on a number of levels. At the core, they express deep attachment to their homes. Their homes are a source of comfort and familiarity, which in turn fosters continued independence. At the next level, they express attachment to the built environment of their local towns. Affiliation is evident in their satisfaction with the centrality of stores and services in the communities.

The natural landscape was an anticipated source of attachment to physical place. The surrounding ocean, beaches, and forests evoked strong sentiments of place-based affiliation. Unexpectedly, the climate, which is interconnected to the natural landscape, was viewed as a reason to stay put on the islands.

Threading through these various levels of the physical environment is familiarity. This aspect relates to Rowles' notion of physical insideness, whereby seniors develop a body awareness of the configuration of their physical surroundings after years of traversing over the same walkways and paths (Rowles, 1993). Older islanders

experienced this aspect of physical insideness in their homes, communities, and in the natural landscape.

The physical environment is interconnected to the other dimensions of place attachment in a number of ways. It provides the setting or backdrop for the other dimensions. It creates the stage upon which actors carry out their daily social interactions and solidify social ties (Low & Altman, 1992). The environment allows for people to engage in place-based lifestyles, such as outdoor recreation. Finally, the physical environment functions as a roadmap within a lifelong accumulation of memories. For older adults, it provided context to past landmark events and thus, aids in accessing specific memories and formulating life narratives (Shenk, et al., 2002).

A second component of place attachment among older islanders is the social milieu. While attachments may be based upon the physical setting of a place, they are also formed on the meanings of and the experiences within a place, which often revolve around social interaction and relationships (Riley, 1992). Aspects that reinforce the social ties of island seniors are regular contact with family and friends and a sense of community connectedness. The social ambiance on Haida Gwaii is typical of small rural communities, in that residents recognize one another on a first-name basis and word-of-mouth is the quickest and most effective means of spreading or hearing about local news. Older adults experience a sense of belonging and acceptance. They feel safe in their communities and are assured of assistance from fellow residents in times of emergencies.

Overall, there was evidence that older islanders exchange reciprocal social and instrumental support, thus, providing support to Rowles' dimension of social insideness. Being socially inside a community comes from years of living in one community and

becoming attuned to patterns of social interaction that evolve from established social norms, expectations, and unspoken guidelines of a social space (Rowles', 1993).

Island seniors may experience social outsideness as a result of length of residence in the community. Rowles' (1983a) noted that the young-old residents, who had lived in Colton for a shorter length of time, did not express the same intensity of place attachment as their older, long-term resident counterparts. Likewise, seniors who are relative newcomers to the islands demonstrate fewer ties to the social environment than the long-term residents. For newer residents, it was relatively easy to become socially acquainted to residents on a casual level; however, it proved more difficult to develop social inclusion among the inner circles of island society.

Paradoxically, long-term residents have an opposite experience in social relations. Participants claimed they maintain social insideness among their inner circle of family and friends, whereas, they feel increasingly excluded among the broader social circles within the community. One reason is that age-related declines in health and subsequent mobility limitations, affect their ability to keep up with community events and other mechanisms of social interaction. Another reason is that population shifts and changes in the types of residents have an impact on the number of people they know and interact with. Therefore, time-related aspects of place may positively or negatively affect social insideness, which will in turn reinforce or weaken attachment to place.

Lifestyle emerged as an additional component of place attachment. It is significant that much of the evidence for this category was generated from a section of the interview guide that did not specifically allude to one of Rowles' dimensions of insideness. In the context of Haida Gwaii, lifestyle is a salient aspect of place

attachment. It is clearly a reason for island seniors to prefer to age in place. From the data, lifestyle may be described as resulting from interplaying aspects of the physical and social environments. In essence, a way to live one's life may be place-specific. For example, activities such as fishing and hunting require a specific type of physical setting (e.g. the northwest coast of British Columbia) and a specific set of human behaviours within that environment.

Besides recreation, living in relative isolation is another aspect of the island lifestyle. Again, privacy is relevant to a specific environment and how people experience that environment. An urban environment for example, is not characterized by long stretches of empty beaches and properties that are insulated by five acres of land.

Another aspect of lifestyle is self-determination. Older adults value self-determination regardless of where they live (Wagnild, 2001). On the Queen Charlotte Islands, life is relatively free of government structure and organization. All of the three villages from which the participants were recruited are unincorporated. Consequently, residents are unfamiliar with building codes, municipal bylaws, and general community structure. There are seven communities on the islands and one traffic light. There are a number of squatters living in the communities and people can camp on the beaches without being disturbed or charged money. Islanders can have campfires on beaches wherever they wish and it is common for locals to drive on some of the beaches to gather winter firewood or harvest shellfish.

From an urban perspective, island life may appear haphazard and lacking in social order. For a local resident, particularly old timers, the island way of life represents

freedom, control, and independence. It is a way of living by which seniors have learned to take care of themselves, and it is clearly a source of pride.

The final dimension of place attachment is what is referred to as "time in place". This category refers to time-related aspects of place attachment and provides some measure of support for Rowles' dimension of autobiographical insideness. Rowles (1983a) noted that length of time spent in a given space reinforces place attachment among older adults. On a more complex level, the accumulation of place-based memories from one's life course comes to represent a scrapbook of one's autobiography, thereby shaping and re-shaping sense of self through the years.

From the current data, time-related aspects may be viewed as positive or negative reinforcements of place attachment. For example, the accumulation of place-based memories and reminiscing with long-term peers promotes a sense of belonging and shared social identity. Time-related aspects that may detract from place attachment are changes to the external environment including population shifts and landscape changes. For example, increased numbers in the local population translates into more strange faces on the streets of Queen Charlotte City, and thus, a negative to sense of community connectedness. Changes to the natural landscape and built environment may impinge on lifestyle and disrupt physical insideness.

At the same time, changes to the external environment, such as highway improvements and growth of community resources may positively influence place attachment. Older islanders expressed their ability to adapt to new situations and they remain open to upcoming change.

In summary, the four aspects of place that are relevant to place attachment among seniors on the Queen Charlotte Islands include the physical environment, the social environment, lifestyle, and time in place. These aspects reinforce the emotional bonds that older adults have for place. As Rowles (1983a) noted, each aspect of place is subsumed within one another and are mutually reinforcing. The physical environment provides the backdrop within which the other aspects manifest themselves. The social environment arises from people sharing a rural lifestyle over time within a given place. Lifestyle results from the interaction of features of the social and physical environment within a place. Finally, the dimensions of place become more significant over time, thereby reinforcing place attachment.

Overall, the study provided support for Graham Rowles' dimensions of insideness, indicating that the framework is relevant to a northern elderly population. In response to the original research questions, there are a number of issues to review.

The first research question pertained to the application of physical, social, and autobiographical insideness to the population of older adults living in the Queen Charlotte Islands. While there was evidence for physical and social insideness, the relevance of autobiographical insideness was difficult to clarify. The experience of place-based memories and reminiscing are two aspects of autobiographical insideness that are applicable to Haida Gwaii seniors. The adaptive function of autobiographical insideness in late life and its role in self-identity, however, was not captured in the interviews. An interview question that provided some support for these aspects was around the importance of place in determining one's lifecourse events and in defining oneself. The lack of support for the role of this dimension is likely due to the major

difference in methodological approaches. As mentioned, Rowles' dimensions were established from extensive ethnographic research methods that included years of participant observation, socio-behavioural mapping and multiple unstructured interviews. Therefore, to uncover the true meaning of autobiographical insideness and its contribution to self-identity, a different study design that is longitudinal and incorporates ethnographic techniques would be implicated.

The second research question related to the relative importance of landscape, community, home, and the social environment to place attachment. While the findings confirmed the unique contribution of each aspect to place attachment, thereby establishing that each one is salient, the data did not clarify the significance of one over the other. An important discovery with regard to these levels is the role of the natural landscape in fostering place-based ties and the way in which frail older islanders maintain their connection through visual experiences, reminiscing, photos, and memorabilia.

It is likely that an island landscape has a major influence on the experience of insideness as it heightens the notion of "us and them". Beyond the perceived, conceptual notion of being inside or outside a place, living at the water's edge provides a constant reminder that a geographic barrier lies between one's immediate world and the world at large. An island landscape, therefore, contributes to an insular, protective experience of one's physical surroundings.

There are two important aspects of the natural landscape to consider. One is the role of landscape in place-based identity. For example, do Haida Gwaii seniors consider that being islanders sets them apart from non-islanders and defines who they are? Second, it would be extremely insightful to explore the relationship between attachment

to the natural landscape and spirituality among older adults. Findings from the current study indicate that landscape connections are intuitive and to some degree, an unconscious process.

The third research question was regarding the processes by which the elderly become attached to place and how the attachments are sustained. This question was addressed by the identification of the categories and their corresponding codes. They were developed according to the participants' descriptions of what keeps them on the islands. It may be argued that the aspects of place-based experience that were seen to promote place attachment are also the ones to reinforce and sustain attachments. For example, the aspect of privacy is an important reason for older islanders to prefer to age in place. Relative isolation was identified as a reason for originally moving to the islands, but also for continuing to want to live there.

Discerning lifestyle as a reinforcing mechanism of place attachment is an important insight into the aging-in-place phenomenon in remote northern communities. Lifestyle in the context of place attachment emerged as a new addition to the literature and is a topic that warrants further investigation. It would be useful to dedicate a research study entirely to lifestyle as a dimension. Lifestyle could be measured using a quantitative technique, such as measuring activities of daily living (ADL's) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADL's) along with the use of open-ended questions to uncover aspects such as slow pace of life and rural values.

The fourth research question focussed on the expression of place attachment as positive or negative affect. The data showed that the emotional experience of place among Haida Gwaii seniors was both positive and negative. Place-related feelings that

were contradictory were evident from responses to questions on the social environment and time in place. For example, older islanders expressed a sense of belonging within their social circles; however, they also expressed negative experiences of social exclusion due to their length of residence and age-related health factors. Moreover, certain temporal aspects of the environment have had a detrimental influence on place-based ties and resulted in negative emotional experiences. For example, over the years, the local population is comprised of more residents with urban attitudes, who are less approachable and less trusting of the local residents. This has resulted in seniors feeling socially excluded and has created a less positive perception of place. It would be beneficial to further explore the adaptive processes (i.e. autobiographical insideness) used by seniors to overcome shifts in place-based emotions.

## Implications of the Research

There are a number of broad implications that stem from the research. The first is with respect to the lack of empirically based gerontological studies on elderly populations living in remote areas of northern Canada. The second is the application of research findings to rural health policy with regard to community-based geriatric services. The third focus is its application to policy and programming of residential care facilities and assisted living.

There is a major dearth of research focussing on older adults living in remote rural areas in the north. To date, there are no known empirical studies of place attachment among remote older populations living in northern environments. The current study, therefore, offers several unique contributions to this area of interest, providing some insight into the physical, social, lifestyle, and time-related mechanisms of place

attachment among this population. Overall, the current research clarifies, broadens, and strengthens our conceptual interpretation of place attachment among older adults living in remote northern communities.

The findings reinforce aging-in-place directives in rural areas of British Columbia. With regard to community-based geriatric services, health care policy should focus on the provision of adequate and appropriate housing and support services. There is substantial evidence that housing problems are particularly acute in rural areas and that quality of housing occupied by rural elderly is significantly lower than that of their urban counterparts (Belden, 1992; Joseph & Fuller, 1991; Golant & La Greca, 1994). Substandard housing has negative repercussions for seniors' physical and mental health, independence, and ability to age in place. It may also disrupt place-affiliated bonding (Browns & Perkins, 1992), which in turn affects the psychological well-being of older residents (Evans, Kantrowitza, & Eshelman, 2002). Housing quality, therefore, is an integral component in addressing the physical and mental health needs of a remote rural elderly population.

In consideration of the natural landscape and its role in place attachment, seniors' housing that provides visual and physical access to landscape features is preferable. Home and yard maintenance is the greatest service need among elderly on Haida Gwaii (Husband, 2003). Qualifying seniors can access funding for home renovations and repairs available through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Seniors may also hire private contractors for home and yard maintenance. The creation of a local service directory that lists prices and contact information would help link seniors to private businesses.

Rural health policy should direct resources towards innovative programs that foster collaboration between formal support services and informal support networks. Media images and conventional stereotypes have contributed to a widely perceived notion that rural families are more self-reliant and more oriented towards family obligation and filial responsibility than urban families (Stoller, 1996). Another rural myth is that older rural adults are socially integrated in their communities and are well looked after by their fellow residents (Wenger, 2001). In reality, rural seniors are likely to have to depend more on informal sources than their urban counterparts, who have better access to formal services (Stoller & Lee, 1994). Older adults living in isolated communities with a population less than 2,500 tend to have decreased social support networks and perceive themselves to be in poor health (Johnson, 1996).

The negative consequences for socially isolated seniors living in service-depleted rural areas are numerous. Low levels of social support are directly related to increased stress and poor health (Johnson, 1998) and in the extreme, social isolation may put seniors at greater risk of depression, suicide, poor nutrition, decrease in immunological function, and abuse and neglect (Rubenstein, Lubben, & Mintzer, 1994). Older rural adults with friends and neighbours in their social networks receive important emotional and instrumental support that serves to promote ongoing independence and a sense of well-being (Wenger, 1990; Kivett, 1988).

Rural seniors will turn to formal support services when their needs exceed the capacity of their informal networks. To this end, rural health policy must target resources that reflect seniors' preference to age in place, particularly in light of the high propensity for younger Canadian cohorts to migrate to urban centres for capital investment (Moore

& Pacey, 2003) and the subsequent impact on existing social networks. Research indicates that informal assistance is not withdrawn when formal care services are introduced. Instead, formal care tends to supplement the support already being provided (Penning & Keating, 2000).

The final area in which the current study has implications is the application of place attachment to the physical design, policy and programming of residential care facilities and assisted living. Relocation in late life disrupts the aspects of place attachment that were identified in the findings. A few studies have looked at the relationship of place attachment and adjustment into care facilities. Cutchin, Owen, and Chang (2003) found that the greater the attachment to their community of residence, the less likely older adults would become attached to assisted living facilities. However, the negative correlation may be mediated by non-family social involvement and place valuation, thereby mitigating stress from transition and adaptation. Moreover, physical design features, such as shorter walking distance to neighbours, tend to increase social interaction and therefore promote place attachment among residents of continuing care retirement communities (Sugihara & Evans, 2000).

These applications are relevant for remote northern seniors. The physical and social environment promote place attachment and would be disrupted in the event of relocation into a facility. With regard to the Haida Gwaii population, lifestyle is a salient aspect of place attachment that must be considered in policy and programming. For example, self-determination as a reason for living in Haida Gwaii communities must be integrated into respective policies of facilities. Further, recreation as a feature of rural

lifestyle may be translated into facility programming that provides relevant activities. These applications will assist the process of post-relocation adjustment.

## Research Limitations

The findings of the study are limited by a number of methodological problems. The first issue is the sampling method of the Haida Gwaii survey that was used for secondary analysis. The survey utilized a non-random purposive sampling technique that was administered to 225 older residents living on the Queen Charlotte Islands. A total of 150 responses were achieved, resulting in a 67% response rate. Based on population numbers from the Canada Census (2001), 20% of the target population responded to the survey. However, the sample, being a convenience sample, is non-representative; and therefore, findings are not generalizable to other populations of older adults living in remote rural communities.

Statistical analyses of the survey data were limited because bivariate analyses of the variables did not yield any significant correlations. Thus, predictors of place attachment, such as age, marital status, homeownership, and length of residence were not verified by this set of data.

Findings from the semi-structured interviews were limited in a number of ways. First, a non-random purposive sampling technique was also applied to the qualitative research. This method has a relevant approach in that respondents are selected as a means of providing rich data rather than achieving statistically significant findings (Morse & Field, 1995). However, the final sample did not meet the target population. Only four of the sixteen participants were short-term residents, whereas the original target sample was to include an equal number of short and long-term residents.

Consequently, the short-term residents had less voice in the description of place-based experiences, which may have skewed findings to a long-term residents' perspective. Additionally, the study sample was drawn from three different communities, which differ in terms of remoteness, population size, landscape, and community-based economies. These contrasts increased heterogeneity among the sample, which may have diluted consistencies within the categories.

Second, internal validity of the semi-structured interviews may be affected by the use of non-standardized questions that were not measured for validity and reliability. This limitation, however, was mitigated in several ways. The interview guide was based upon what Quinn Patton (1990) refers to as sensitizing concepts, which are preconceived concepts that the researcher applies to the data. Sensitizing concepts provide the analyst with a frame of reference and direct the analyst as to what to look for in the data. This study used Rowles' dimensions of place attachment as sensitizing concepts to devise interview sections and questions and guide the identification of codes and categories. The interview guide then was pilot-tested on two older residents, outside of the interview sample. This added measure resulted in modifications to the original interview guide, thereby improving validity and reliability.

The process of content analysis was limited by the fact that only one researcher analyzed the data and the data analysis did not involve a computerized software program. As only one researcher analyzed the data, analytical triangulation (Quinn Patton, 1990) was not adopted for more rigorous examination.

A final limitation to the research findings was the cross-sectional design of the study. The experience of place attachment in remote northern communities was

examined at one point in time. A study that incorporates a longitudinal design would provide added insight into the development and reinforcement mechanisms of place attachment, particularly among short-term residents. It would also provide a means to examine changes for example in social networks and the impact of these on place attachment.

## Future Directions

This study explored the aspects of place that promote and reinforce place attachment among a group of older adults living in remote northern communities. Given the dearth of empirical studies in this research area, there are a number of possibilities for future exploration.

It would be useful to extend the study to other northern remote elderly populations, particularly those on the mainland, to determine generalizability of the findings. One important study sample would be elder members of a First Nations' group. Indigenous peoples tend to express strong affective ties to their homelands and indeed, their lands are inextricably entwined with their cultural and personal identities.

Lifestyle as an aspect of place attachment should be further pursued through empirical research. There is little known with regard to lifestyle and place attachment. In light of traumatic relocation effects into residential care facilities (Aneshensel, Pearlin, Levy-Storms, & Schuler, 2000), lifestyle is an important consideration in reinforcing new ties to place. Moreover, given the in-migration of younger elderly and the return migration of older cohorts to rural areas (Hayward & Lazarowich, 2001), studies involving lifestyle in the development of place attachment is a necessary focus.

## Conclusion

This study applied a qualitative research method to explore the dimensions of place attachment among a group of elderly living in remote island communities in northern British Columbia. The study adapted Rowles' (1983a) dimensions of physical, social, and autobiographical insideness that are salient to place-based experience among a rural group of elderly in the Appalachian mountains in the southern United States. The study provided support for Rowles' dimensions of insideness among a population of northern elderly, thereby reinforcing their function as a theoretical framework for understanding place attachment among older adults.

The research findings showed that the experience of insideness is relevant to northern seniors. Aspects of place that are relevant to place attachment among older adults living on the Queen Charlotte Islands include features of the physical environment, the social environment, lifestyle, and time in place. Each of the four aspects is interconnected and are mutually reinforcing. The resulting affective bonds foster a sense of belonging, security, well-being, and pride in place.

The findings broaden the dimensions of place attachment in a number of ways. First, an aspect of the physical environment that has received limited attention is the role of the natural landscape and the local climate. Older islanders express deep attachment to the surrounding landscape and maintain their connection to the outdoors through reminiscing and photos and they use visual access, particularly while driving the highway. They prefer a moderate climate and identify the mild weather as a reason for staying on-island.

Lifestyle is an important source of people-place bonding among Haida Gwaii seniors. The Queen Charlotte Islands is a unique geographical setting with a distinct population of islanders, which lends itself to a way of life that provides privacy, recreational opportunities, and self-determination. Older adults maintain affinity for their immediate surroundings through lifestyle.

It should be possible to apply the knowledge gained in this study to health and housing policy and planning and development of community-based housing options and support services as a means to reduce the trauma of relocation and other environmental stressors.

# APPENDIX A
# SENIORS' HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES QUESTIONNAIRE

## Seniors' Housing and Support Services Questionnaire

The Queen Charlotte Heritage Housing Society, on behalf of the Northern Health Authority, is administering this survey to identify existing and future housing and health service needs of all-island seniors. Your feedback is very important and will assist us in the development of appropriate and affordable housing and health services for seniors. Please be advised that your participation in this survey is voluntary and all information gathered is strictly confidential. Please **do not** put your name on this survey. A volunteer from your community will arrange to pick up your completed survey or you may return your survey by mail to:
Queen Charlotte Heritage Housing Society, Box 84, Queen Charlotte City, BC, V0T 1S0

### I Current Housing and Living Arrangements

1. Which community do you live in or near?
_____ (1) Sandspit
_____ (2) Queen Charlotte City/ Skidegate Landing
_____ (3) Skidegate
_____ (4) Miller Creek
_____ (5) Lawnhill
_____ (6) Tlell
_____(7) Port Clements
_____(8) Masset
_____ (9) Old Massett

2 (a) How many years have you lived on the Islands?
_____ Years

2 (b) How long have you lived in your community?

_____ (1)  0 to 5 years

_____ (2) 6 to 10 years

_____ (3) 11 to 20 years

_____ (4) over 21 years

3.  What type of home do you now live in?

_____ (1) Single-family detached house

_____ (2) Apartment building

_____ (3) Semi-attached duplex

_____ (4) Trailer/mobile home

_____ (5) Cabin

_____ (6) Seniors' housing (Heritage House/ Skidegate Heights)

_____ (7) Other (specify)  _____

4.  Do you own or rent the home you now live in or do you have other arrangements?

_____ (1) own property and dwelling

_____ (2) own dwelling and lease land

_____ (3) rent

_____ (4) strata title

_____ (5) other

5. If you are a renter, is your rent geared to income (Is your rent subsidized)?

_____(1) yes

_____(2) no

6. Who lives in your household? (Check all that apply)

_____(1) alone

_____ (2) spouse/partner

_____(3) son/daughter

_____(4) brother/sister/other relative

_____(5) friend/roommate

_____(6) other (please specify) _____

## II Transportation

7.  How do you get around most of the time?

_____ (1) drive yourself

_____ (2) rely on family/friends for rides

_____ (3) taxi

_____ (4) walk

_____ (5) other

8 (a) How often do you have difficulty getting <u>where</u> you want to go <u>when</u> you want to go?

_____ (1) never or rarely

_____ (2) occasionally

_____ (3) often

_____ (4) very often

8 (b) Why do you have difficulty?

_____(1) cannot afford to pay for rides

_____(2) do not  know who to ask for a ride

_____(3) do not like asking for a ride

_____(4) need assistance getting in and out of vehicle

_____(5) regular driver(s) not available

_____(6) other (specify) _____

_____(7) Not Applicable

9. What improvements in transportation would help seniors in your community get around?  (Check all that apply.)

_____(1) regular bus service on weekends

_____(2) regular bus service to town

_____(3) regular bus service around town

_____(4) Handi-dart bus (door-to-door transportation service for persons with physical/mental disabilities)

_____(5) other (specify) _____

## III Services and Need

10.  At present, do you have any problems performing or doing any of the following activities?

| Do you have any problem: | (1) No problem | (2) Minor problem | (3) Fairly serious problem | (4) Very serious problem |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A)  Seeing (even when wearing glasses)? | | | | |
| B)  Hearing (even with hearing aid)? | | | | |
| C)  Going up or down stairs? | | | | |
| D)  Getting out of bed/ chairs? | | | | |
| E)  Taking a bath or shower? | | | | |
| F)  Taking medicine? | | | | |
| G)  Doing chores around the house? | | | | |
| H)  Food preparation/eating/dentures? | | | | |
| I)  Shopping/running errands? | | | | |

11. If you experience difficulty performing any of these activities, whom do you most often rely on:

_____(1) family member for _____

_____(2) friend for _____

_____(3) neighbour for _____

_____(4) other for _____

_____(5) independent for _____

12. Which medical clinic do you most often visit?

____ (1) Masset clinic

____ (2) Queen Charlotte clinic

13. Do you use any of the following services available on-island? Would you use them if they were available in your community?

| Service Description | Using | Not using | Would use if available in my community | Would not use if available in my community |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A) Home Support Services | | | | |
| B) Adult Mental Health Services | | | | |
| C) Seniors' Lunch Program | | | | |
| D) Adult Day Program | | | | |
| E) Seniors' Centre | | | | |
| F) Emergency response system (i.e. Med-Alert/ Lifeline) | | | | |

14. The following is a list of services that may or may not be available in your community. Please identify whether you need the service, how often you would like to have this service available to you, and if you are willing to pay for such a service.

| SERVICE DESCRIPTION | NO NEED | NEED | DAILY | WEEKLY | WILL PAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A) Housekeeping (light to heavy) | | | | | |
| B) Meal preparation | | | | | |
| C) Grocery shopping/running errands | | | | | |
| D) Transportation | | | | | |

| SERVICE DESCRIPTION | NO NEED | NEED | DAILY | WEEKLY | WILL PAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| E) Personal care | | | | | |
| F) Social /exercise programs | | | | | |
| G) Organizing Medications | | | | | |
| H) Finances | | | | | |
| I) Home maintenance (i.e. yard work) | | | | | |

## V Future Housing Plans and Preferences

15. Do you have any plans to move from your present home?
_____(1) yes
_____(2) no ➡️ If no, skip to question 20

16. How soon do you expect to move?
\_\_\_ (1) within 1 year
\_\_\_ (2)1-2 years
\_\_\_ (3) 3-5 years
\_\_\_ (4) 6-9 years
\_\_\_ (5) 10 or more years

17. Why are you planning to move? (Check all applicable and rank by priority)
\_\_\_ (1) physical difficulty maintaining home/yard
\_\_\_ (2) home too large
\_\_\_ (3) design barriers (i.e. too many stairs in current home)
\_\_\_ (4) decline in health of self or spouse
\_\_\_ (5) death of spouse
\_\_\_ (6) insufficient local health care services
\_\_\_ (7) isolated from family and friends here
\_\_\_ (8) cost of living is too high here
\_\_\_ (9) problems with transportation
\_\_\_ (10) other (specify) _____

18. Where will you move?
\_\_\_ (1) same community
\_\_\_ (2) another community on-island
\_\_\_ (3) elsewhere in province or Canada (specify) _____
\_\_\_ (4) other (specify) _____

19. What type of accommodation will you be seeking?
\_\_\_ (1) single-family detached house
\_\_\_ (2) semi-detached, duplex, townhouse
\_\_\_ (3) apartment

_____ (4) trailer/mobile home
_____ (5) seniors' independent housing (i.e. self-contained apartments)
_____ (6) seniors' supportive housing (i.e. self-contained apart. w/hospitality and alarm service)
_____ (7) nursing home/extended care in hospital
_____ (8) other (specify) _____

➡ Everyone Answers:

20. If you found you could no longer maintain your home and **had** to move into **retirement housing** or a **care facility,** would you prefer to:
_____ (1) remain in the town/community you currently live in
_____ (2) remain on the Islands
_____ (3) move elsewhere (please specify) _____

21. Why would you choose to live in that particular location? (check all applicable and rank by priority)
_____ (1) proximity to relatives or friend
_____ (2) I am closely connected to my community
_____ (3) proximity to support services or hospital
_____ (4) other (specify) _____

22. If you prefer to remain in your community, where would you prefer your retirement housing or care facility to be located?
_____ (1) in the centre of town
_____ (2) in a residential part of town
_____ (3) other (specify) _____

23. Which features would you consider important if you were to move into a **Seniors' Housing Complex?**

| Housing Feature | Very Important | Important | Somewhat Important | Not At All Important |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A) Self-contained apartment suites with locking door and private laundry facilities | | | | |
| B) Common dining room where tenants have a hot meal served daily | | | | |

| Housing Feature | Very Important | Important | Somewhat Important | Not At All Important |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| C) Housekeeping provided regularly | | | | |
| D) 24-hr personal emergency response system | | | | |
| E) Home Support services provided in your private suite | | | | |
| F) Social activities, exercise classes, gardening | | | | |
| G) Adult day program located within the complex | | | | |

24. Would you rather live in a housing complex:
___ (1) for seniors only
___ (2) for seniors and middle-aged adults
___ (3) for people of all ages and capabilities
___ (4) for families and children

25. Would you prefer to live in a housing complex that allows pets?
___ (1) yes
___ (2) no

## V Demographic Information

26. What is your age?

_____years

27. Are you male or female?

___ (1) male
___ (2) female

28. What is your current marital status?

___ (1) single
___ (2) married/common-law
___ (3) widowed
___ (4) divorced/separated

29. How would you rate your health at the <u>present</u> time?

___ (1) excellent
___ (2) good
___ (3) fair
___ (4) poor
___ (5) very poor

30. What was the highest level of formal education you completed? (*Check only one*)

___ (1) no formal education
___ (2) elementary school only
___ (3) some high school
___ (4) high school graduation
___ (5) technical school
___ (6) university degree
___ (7) graduate or professional degree

31. Are you currently:

___ (1) employed full-time
___ (2) employed part-time
___ (3) unemployed
___ (4) retired
___ (5) semi-retired

## VI Housing Costs

**Home owners only:**

32. Last <u>year</u>, how much were your housing costs? (i.e. property taxes, house insurance, mortgage, utilities, maintenance and repairs)

___ (1) under $1,999
___ (2) $2000- $3000
___ (3) over $3000

**Renters only:**

32. In an average <u>month</u>, about how much do you pay in:
    1) rent?                                    $_____/mo.
    2) utilities (electricity, heat, water)?   $_____/*mo.*

**Both groups:**

33. Do you have any difficulty meeting your housing-related costs, that is, finding enough money to pay your utilities, taxes, maintenance, and mortgage or rent?
____ (1) yes
____ (2) no

34. What proportion of your total household income is spent for all your shelter costs (utilities, rent, mortgage, property taxes and maintenance)?
_____(1) less than 25%
_____(2) 25-29%
_____(3) 30-49%
_____(4) 50% or more

35. What was your household's total income last year?
____ (1) under $10,000.00
____ (2) $10,000 – $14,999
____ (3) $15,000 - $19,999
____ (4) $20,000 - $24,999
____ (5) $25,000 - $34,999
____ (6) $35,000 or more

**Thank you for your co-operation in filling out this questionnaire.**

# APPENDIX B
# SECONDARY ANALYSIS
# OF THE SENIORS' SURVEY

Secondary analysis of an island seniors' survey (n=150) was employed to determine whether older adults were attached to Haida Gwaii and to identify specific variables contributing to place attachment. The researcher utilized data she had collected from the Queen Charlotte Islands/Haida Gwaii Seniors' Survey conducted by the researcher in 2003.

*Questionnaire Development*

An extensive literature review was conducted to identify salient issues relevant to the housing and support service needs of rural seniors. A number of housing surveys conducted in rural B.C. and the Yukon were included in the literature review (MacDonald, 2000; Yukon Housing Corporation, 1999; Slocan Valley Seniors' Housing, 1998; Gutman & Hodge, 1990). The majority of the survey questions were developed using a standardized assessment tool from Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation (CMHC, 1995).

The questionnaire consisted of six sections: (1) demographic information; (2) housing costs; (3) current housing and living arrangements; (4) transportation; (5) services and need, and (6) future housing plans and preferences. In total, there were 35 questions, all of them in close-ended format. The questionnaire was pilot-tested using a

number of local seniors and revised by the researcher and a committee working under the Queen Charlotte Heritage Housing Society.

*Questionnaire Administration*

The survey was administered with the help of senior volunteers from each of the six participating communities. In an effort to recruit volunteers, the survey was presented to seniors' groups and adult day programs in each community. Senior volunteers compiled lists of residents 60 years and older and administered questionnaires as handouts, in-person, or over the telephone. Volunteers were given detailed instructions on questionnaire administration and were supplied with cover sheets explaining the survey. The survey coordinator maintained regular communication with the volunteers and re-visited communities for on-going collection of questionnaires. Participants requiring further information or needing to voice concerns, dealt directly with the coordinator.

A total of 225 questionnaires were distributed and 150 participants completed the survey, resulting in a 67% response rate. Of the estimated 765 seniors on the Queen Charlottes (Statistics Canada, 2001), at least 20% of the target population were represented.

*Secondary Data Analyses*

Questionnaire data were entered into a database using a statistical software program, SPSS 13.0. The study of place attachment among rural seniors utilized selected variables from the questionnaire including general demographic variables (see Table 3). Gender was included because females have been reported as being more attached to place than males in all age groups (Hidalgo & Hernadez, 2001). Education and social class

also are linked to place attachment (Fried, 2000) and were included in the analyses. Other variables available from the questionnaire that served as independent variables included housing tenure and length of residence (on the islands and in the community in which they currently reside).

**Dependent Variable**

Unwillingness to relocate as an indicator of place attachment is well documented in the literature (Rowles, 1983c; Fried, 2000; & Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Therefore, plans to move served as the dependent variable. Respondents were asked whether they had plans to move from their present home. The item was presented as a dichotomous response whereby participants answered "yes" or "no". Respondents who have plans to move (movers) were considered unattached while those who do not intend to move (non-movers) were considered attached to place. The dependent variable was cross-tabulated with the independent variables to establish if there were any significant correlations.

**Table 3:   Survey Variables**

**Survey Variables**

| Independent Variables | Dependent Variable |
| --- | --- |
| Age | Plans to move |
| Gender | |
| Marital status | |
| Perceived health | |
| Education | |
| Income | |
| Home ownership | |
| Length of residence on the islands | |
| Length of residence in the community | |

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**Socio-demographic Characteristics**

The selection of independent variables was grounded in the literature review and was used to establish support and consistency with previous studies on place attachment. Crosstabulations were conducted with each independent variable using SPSS 13.0 software. Results indicated no significant relationships among the variables. Therefore, follow-up analysis using multiple regression and logistic regression was not undertaken. Respondents' socio-demographic characteristics are summarized in Table 4.

The lack of statistically significant findings provided a basis for adopting a qualitative approach as a means of determining the mechanisms of place attachment among Haida Gwaii seniors. Moreover, a qualitative approach allowed for an exploratory process, thus presenting an opportunity to identify elements of place attachment that are relevant to a northern remote population.

**Table 4:    Socio-demographic Characteristics of Potential Movers and Non-Movers**

| Independent Variable | | Movers (n=35) | | Non-Movers (n=112) | | Total (n=147) | | P Values |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | n | % | n | % | n | % | |
| **Age** | | | | | | | | Tau C = 075, p<.298 |
| | 60-69 | 19 | 54.3 | 52 | 46.4 | 71 | 48.3 | |
| | 70-79 | 12 | 34.3 | 39 | 34.8 | 51 | 34.7 | |
| | 80-95 | 4 | 11.4 | 21 | 18.8 | 25 | 17.0 | |
| **Gender** | | | | | | | | Tau B = -.027, p<.740 |
| | Male | 17 | 48.6 | 58 | 51.8 | 75 | 51.0 | |
| | Female | 18 | 51.4 | 54 | 48.2 | 72 | 49.0 | |

| Independent Variable | | Movers (n=35) | | Non-Movers (n=112) | | Total (n=147) | | P Values |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Marital Status** | | | | | | | | Tau C = .005, p<.948 |
| | Single | 3 | 8.6 | 8 | 7.2 | 11 | 7.5 | |
| | Married | 20 | 57.1 | 64 | 57.7 | 84 | 57.5 | |
| | Widowed | 7 | 20.0 | 27 | 23.4 | 34 | 22.6 | |
| | Divorced | 5 | 14.3 | 13 | 11.7 | 18 | 12.3 | |
| **Perceived Health** | | | | | | | | Tau C= -.018, p<.783 |
| | Excellent/ good | 25 | 71.4 | 80 | 72.1 | 105 | 71.9 | |
| | Fair | 7 | 20.0 | 30 | 26.1 | 37 | 24.7 | |
| | Poor/ very poor | 3 | 8.6 | 2 | 1.8 | 5 | 3.4 | |
| **Education** | | | | | | | | Tau C= -.032, p<.669 |
| | Some education | 11 | 31.4 | 41 | 38.0 | 52 | 36.4 | |
| | High school | 17 | 48.6 | 48 | 40.7 | 65 | 42.6 | |
| | University | 7 | 20.0 | 23 | 21.3 | 30 | 21.0 | |
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | |
| **Income** | | | | | | | | Tau C = .163, p<.072 |
| | Under $20,000 | 10 | 38.5 | 22 | 30.1 | 32 | 32.3 | |
| | $20,000-$35,000 | 11 | 42.3 | 20 | 27.4 | 31 | 31.3 | |
| | Over $35,000 | 5 | 19.2 | 31 | 42.5 | 36 | 36.4 | |
| | Missing | 9 | 18.8 | 39 | 81.2 | 48 | 32.7 | |

| Independent Variable | | Movers (n=35) | | Non-Movers (n=112) | | Total (n=147) | | P Values |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Home Ownership** | | | | | | | | Tau B = -.029, p<.718 |
| | Renter | 6 | 17.1 | 22 | 19.8 | 28 | 19.2 | |
| | Homeowner | 29 | 82.9 | 89 | 80.2 | 118 | 80.8 | |
| | Missing | | | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 0.7 | |
| **Length of residence on Islands** | | | | | | | | Tau B = - .089, p<.262 |
| | 1-15yrs | 5 | 16.1 | 26 | 25.0 | 31 | 23.0 | |
| | Over 15yrs | 26 | 83.9 | 78 | 75.0 | 104 | 77.0 | |
| | Missing | 4 | 33.3 | 8 | 66.7 | 12 | 8.0 | |
| **Length of residence in community** | | | | | | | | Tau B = - .011, p<.894 |
| | Under 20 yr | 13 | 37.1 | 43 | 38.4 | 56 | 38.1 | |
| | Over 20 yrs | 22 | 62.9 | 69 | 61.6 | 91 | 61.9 | |

**Dependent Variable (Plans to Move)**

At the time of the survey, the vast majority of seniors on-island (75%) had no

plans to move from their homes. Among those intending to move, 25% planned to move

within one year, 22% planned to move within three to five years, and 31% planned to

move in ten or more years. Only twelve of the thirty-five movers planned to relocate off-

island

Survey respondents were asked to rank reasons for moving from a list of

variables. The most common reason for plans to move was difficulty maintaining the

home and yard. Decline in health of self or spouse and isolation from family and friends

were common reasons as well. Several planned moves coincided with retirement. A few seniors said they were moving because they want to build a home. Other reasons for moving included the high cost of living in Haida Gwaii and problems with transportation costs off-island, particularly for medical trips.

Most of the movers (37%) planned to move into a single-detached family house. Five of the thirty-five movers will be seeking accommodation in seniors' independent housing and ten more will be seeking tenancy in senior's supportive housing.

**Compulsory Move**

Survey participants were asked to identify where they would prefer to live if they could no longer maintain their home and had to move into retirement housing or a care facility. As this item referred to a hypothetical situation, it was not included in the bivariate analyses. The findings are useful, however, in that they provide insight into reasons why residents choose to stay on-island or move away.

With regard to a hypothetical compulsory move, over half of older islanders (57%) preferred to remain in their current community while 23% of seniors preferred to remain in the Queen Charlotte Islands. Only twenty-one seniors (14%) preferred to move elsewhere. The Kootenays, Okanagan, Vancouver Island, and Alberta were identified as places where islanders would relocate if they had to move into retirement housing.

Respondents were then asked why they would choose that particular location. Most seniors (35%) chose more than one of the following reasons: (1) proximity to relatives or friend; (2) closely connected to their community; and (3) proximity to support services or hospital. Of those elderly who made only one selection, the highest response (27%) was proximity to relatives or friends, followed by connection to community

(12%), and finally, proximity to support services or hospital (5%). Some respondents commented on why they would choose that particular location aside from the three listed options. Of those who would move off-island, reasons included: larger community, closer to medical specialist, warmer climate to improve health, and favourable weather. Of those seniors electing to stay on-island, reasons included: natural beauty, familiarity with area, lack of air pollution, closer to out-door recreation, quiet atmosphere, and independence.

### *Independent Variables*

#### Age

The age of the survey sample ranged from 60 to 95 years with the majority of respondents being 60 to 75 years of age. Participants were grouped into three categories for bivariate analysis: (1) young-old, 60-69 years; (2) old, 70-79 years; and (3) old-old, 80-95 years. Approximately half of the movers and half of the non-movers were aged 60-69 years.

#### Gender

There was a near equal division of male and female survey participants (76 males; 74 females). There were minimal differences between the male and female groups with regard to moving plans. 51.4% of females had plans to move compared to 48.6% of males.

**Marital Status**

Marital status was represented by four categories (1) single; (2) married or common-law; (3) widowed; and (4) divorced. Fifty-eight percent of the sample were married or lived as common-law. Among the movers, 57.1% were married or lived as common-law. The second largest group of movers was widowed participants (20%). The third largest group was divorced adults (14.3%) and finally single adults represented the smallest group of movers (8.6%).

**Self-perceived Health**

Survey participants were asked to rate their current level of health. Self-perceived health status ranged from excellent to good, fair, poor, and very poor. Categories were broken down into excellent/good, fair, and poor/very poor for bivariate analysis. Participants rating their health as excellent/good represented the largest group among the movers (71.4%) and non-movers (72.1%). Older islanders who rated their health as fair represented the second largest group among both movers (20.0%) and non-movers (2.1%). Finally, participants who claimed they were in poor health composed the smallest group among movers (8.6%) and non-movers (1.8%). Interestingly, there was an inverse relationship between self-perceived health and plans to move, with participants who rated themselves in poor health being less likely to stay on island.

**Education**

The education level of older islanders ranged from elementary or high school (34.0%) to university or graduate degree (20%). Twenty-five percent of seniors completed high school and another seventeen percent attended technical schools. Education level was broken down into three categories for bivariate analysis (1) some

education; (2) high school; and (3) post-secondary. Older islanders with a high school education represented the largest group among movers (48.6%) and non-movers (40.7%). Those adults who did not complete high school represented the second largest group among movers (31.4%) and non-movers (38.0%). The third largest group, post-secondary education comprised the smallest group among movers (20.0%) and non-movers (21.3%). Although not statistically significant, there was an inverse relationship between education and plans to move among respondents with only some education being more likely to stay on island.

**Household Income**

Participants were asked to report their annual household income. Of those responding (n=99), 32.3% reported an income of $20,000 or less per annum while 31.3 % had an income between $20,000 and $35,000. Those seniors with a household income of $35,000 or more comprised the largest response at 36.4%. The high number of elderly having higher income levels was likely due to the large number of respondents who were younger than 65 and still employed.

Participants with an income between $20,000 and $35,000 represented the largest group among the movers while older islanders within the highest income bracket represented the largest group among the non-movers. Seniors with the lowest income level represented the second largest group among both movers (38.5%) and non-movers (19.8%).

**Homeownership**

An overwhelming majority of seniors (80.8%) owned their own homes and property. Only twenty-eight (19.2%) of respondents were renters, six of which reported their rent was geared to income. Among the movers, 82.9% were homeowners and 17.1% were renters. Among the non-movers, 80.2% were homeowners and 19.8% were renters.

**Length of Residency (Islands)**

Length of residency among the elderly population on Haida Gwaii ranged from one year to 95 years with the average number of years on island being 33 years. Length of residency was broken down into two categories to maintain consistency with the qualitative data. Older islanders living in Haida Gwaii for over 15 years represented the largest group among movers (83.9%) and non-movers (75.0%) compared with newer residents living on island for less than 15 years and who represented 16.1% of movers and 25.0% of non-movers.

**Length of Residency (Community)**

To determine mobility patterns on-island, participants were asked to identify how long they have been living in their communities. A majority (61.9%) of the respondents have lived in the same community for 20 years and over compared with 38.9% who have lived in the same community for less than 20 years. Seniors living in the same island community for more than 20 years represented the largest group among movers (62.9%) and non-movers (61.%) whereas those in the same community less than 20 years represented 37.1% of the movers and 38.4% of the non-movers.

Interestingly, there was a strong significant relationship between the numbers of years lived on the islands and the number of years lived in the same community (Tau C = .496, p<.001), indicating that residents tend to be less mobile on-island, the more years they have been island residents. All respondents aged 75 to 95 have resided in the same community for over 21 years.

# APPENDIX C
# INTRODUCTION LETTER

June 25, 2004

QCI Seniors Research Project

Dear                              ,

I am an island resident of ten years and a graduate student of the gerontology program at Simon Fraser University. I am writing to invite you to participate in my project, which looks at the experience of place attachment among older adults living in remote areas of northern Canada. This is an important topic because emotional ties to place can contribute to physical and mental health and promote a strong sense of identity.

Your participation in this project will involve taking part in an interview with me. The interview is completely confidential, will last about 1 ½ hours, and can take place in the privacy of your own home or elsewhere if you prefer. The interview is not a survey. It is designed to allow you to describe in detail what this place means to you. I am interested in knowing why or why not the Islands are a good place to grow old and why seniors choose to live here. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not appear in any reports of the project. Results from your interview will be combined with other participants' feedback and will be included in my final research project as part of my graduation requirements for Simon Fraser University.

Very little is known about older adults living in remote northern communities. Your feedback in the interview will help fill this gap and also will help guide planning for housing and healthcare for seniors living in remote locations.

Your input is most appreciated. I will contact you by telephone to confirm your agreement to participate and to arrange an interview time at your convenience.

Sincerely,


Laurie Husband
Masters of Arts in Gerontology (candidate)
Simon Fraser University
P.O. Box 472
Queen Charlotte City, BC, V0T 1S0
(250) 559-8112

# APPENDIX D
# INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

This form indicates that you have agreed to participate in the study entitled "Place attachment among older adults living in remote northern communities". Your signature on this form will signify that you understand that the information you provide is confidential and your name will not appear on any written publications. You may choose to decline answering any questions you prefer not to answer and you may withdraw your participation from this project at any time.

Your signature will indicate that you understand the procedures to be used in this project – specifically, that it will involve participating in one interview conducted by Laurie Husband and that there are no personal risks to yourself. Also, it is understood that you may obtain a summary of the results of the research, upon its completion, by contacting Laurie Husband.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact Dr. Gloria Gutman who is Laurie Husband's academic advisor at Simon Fraser University or Dr. Andrew Wister who is the chair of the Gerontology Program at (604) 291-5062.


_____

Participant's Signature



_____

Participant's Name (please print)



_____

Witness



_____

Date

# APPENDIX E
## INTERVIEW GUIDE

# Interview Guide

## Part 1 – General Demographic Information

(1) Community of residence

(2) How old are you?

(3) Male/Female

(4) What is your current marital status?

(5) How would you rate your health? (1= Good; 2= Fair; 3= Poor)

(6) How many years have you lived on the islands?

(7) How long have you lived in your community?

## Part II – General Attachment

(1) What drew you to the Queen Charlotte Islands?

(2) What size of community did you last live in?

(3) Do you consider the islands to be remote?

(4) Do you have plans to move from your present home?

(5) Under what conditions would you decide to move in the future?

(6) If you are planning to move, how soon will you move?

(7) Where would you move?

(8) What would be your feelings if you decide to move from this home/community/island?

(9) When you think of this place how do you feel?

(10) Why do you want to stay here

        Probes: What keeps you here?

                What qualities about this place are important to you?

                What quality of life here do you value most?


**Part III – Attachment to the Physical Environment**

(1) What places here are important to you? – Home? Community? Physical landscape?

(2) Where do you spend most of your time?

(3) Is this where you prefer to be? – Why these places?

(4) Which places on the island do you like to go to?

(5) Why are those places important to you?

        Probes: How do they make you feel? What do they mean to you?

## Part IV – Attachment to the Social Environment

(1) Do you have family and friends here?

(2) How often do you see them or hear from them?

(3) Who else is in your social network?

(4) How would you describe the quality of relationship with people in this network?

(5) Do you feel a part of your community?

       Probes: Do you feel like you belong to this community?

(6) Have you ever felt like an outsider in your community?

(7) Is your social network a reason for deciding to stay here?

## Part V – Autobiographical Insideness

(1) What changes have you noticed about this place over the time you have lived here?

      Probes: Are there places on the island that you consider special that have changed over the years?

(2) Have the people of this place changed over the years?

(3) Do you have fond memories of places or events on-island that no longer exist?

(4) How important is this place in regard to who you are and what's happened

in your life?

Probes: Do you think that living here is a part of defining

who you are?

(5) What would your life be like if you no longer lived here?

(6) Do you reminisce about your days from your past on the island?

(7) Are there specific periods that you are drawn to when reminiscing?

(8) Are there specific places that you tend to focus on when reminiscing?

(9) Are there any downsides to living here? Any problems that prevent you

from feeling at home? – Or staying at home?

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