

# **Creating a Taste of Place: Cowichan Valley Wineries**

by

**Brent A. Hammer**

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Department of Anthropology  
University of Alberta

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## **Abstract**

The documentation of other places and other peoples, in an attempt to understand the human condition, has been of interest to anthropology since its beginnings as an academic discipline. Experiencing the food and drink of these places and peoples became important components for not only enjoying the fieldwork experience, but part of the process of constructing the 'exotic other' for early anthropologists. The connection of a particular practice with a particular place and a particular group of people remains an intriguing topic for many contemporary anthropologists today. A 2007 Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's report on the *Canadian Wine Industry* that revealed yearly increases in domestic production, consumption, and export. They also reported that over the past 25 years Canadian winemakers have increased their production of high-quality wines. These increases suggest that people were becoming more engaged with Canadian wine and wine culture. Deroy, a contemporary philosopher of the senses, suggests that wine gives people the sense that they are participating in a deeply rooted culture. But how deep can this culture be when the wine and the people involved only have a 25 year history in a particular place to draw on? This is the case for the wine producers of Cowichan Valley. These 3 factors, the growth of the Canadian wine industry and peoples' engagement with it, Deroy's assertion that wine gives people the sense that they are participating in a deeply rooted culture, and Trubek's suggestion that a centuries old tradition with place and practice is not required to create a taste of place, serve as the guiding framework for my doctoral research as I explore the interrelationships between a particular practice, producing wine, within a particular place, Cowichan Valley, and by a particular group of people, the wine producers who live there.

## **Preface**

This thesis is an original work by Brent A. Hammer. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Creating a Taste of Place: Cowichan Valley Wineries", No. Pro00016460, November 22, 2011. No part of this thesis has been previously published.

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At the University of Alberta, my supervisor, Dr. Helen Vallianatos, has supported me throughout both my MA and PhD and I am honored to have been her first graduate student. I thank you for your guidance, patience, and the research and learning opportunities. My words alone will never be able to express the depth of gratitude I have for your contributions to this incredible journey. I would like to thank Dr. Mark Nuttall and Dr. Candace Nykiforuk from my supervisory committee, not only for their knowledge but for the wisdom they both graciously shared with me. Your support, encouragement, and comments have been greatly appreciated. You challenged me to make this dissertation better and in doing so helped me become a better researcher and instructor. I would also like to thank defense examiner Dr. Joseph Hill for his insightful comments, suggestions, and detailed editing of this dissertation. I know this work reads much better because of your contributions. I am grateful to Dr. Amy Trubek for serving as my external examiner and for her research and writing providing much of the inspiration for

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction: exploring the taste of place**

The documentation of other places and other peoples, in an attempt to understand the human condition, has been of interest to anthropology since its beginnings as an academic discipline. Experiencing the food and drink of these places and peoples became important components for not only enjoying the fieldwork experience (Douglas 1987), but part of the process of constructing the 'exotic other' for early anthropologists (Said 1978). Amy Trubek (2008, 1995) asserts that the connection of a particular practice with a particular place and a particular group of people remains an intriguing topic for many contemporary anthropologists today. This assertion serves as the guiding framework for my doctoral research as I explore the interrelationships between a particular practice, producing wine, within a particular place, Cowichan Valley, and by a particular group of people, the wine producers who live there.

#### **Thesis Statement**

For my doctoral research I investigate how wine producers of Cowichan Valley, in British Columbia, Canada (Map 1.1) create a 'taste of place' (Trubek 2005) to promote their products, places, and identities. Trubek (2008) proposes that 'taste' not only represents the physiological sensation of eating or drinking a product (Bartoshuk and Duffy 2005), but includes all the human senses, as well as the full cognitive and cultural realm elicited by the product to the extent one is capable of experiencing it. I follow Trubek in my use of 'place' to refer to the physical elements of geography, geology, climate, and weather. Then, and more importantly, I build upon her assertion that 'place' includes the people, their customs, traditions, and their ancestral heritage within a physical and temporal space.

It is important to clarify that for my research, I include wine under the general category of 'food'. Wine is classified as an agricultural product in Canada (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2007) as it is in most countries of the world (Coleman 2008). Wine, historically, has been a consumable product ingested by humans for the perceived purposes of inducing

pleasure, satisfying nutritional needs, and maintaining or improving health (Johnson 2005). De Garine (2001) suggests that drink should be studied with food practices because of the close



**Map 1.1 Cowichan Valley Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. Source: <https://www.google.ca/search?q=cowichan+valley+bc+canada+map> (accessed October 9, 2014).**

relationship they have to each other. More importantly, wine, from an anthropological perspective, fits Eugene Anderson's (2005) assertion that food satisfies many human needs beyond simple nutrition: food is used by people to communicate, literally and metaphorically, about the world around them and to understand their place within that world. Or to be more succinct, as Black and Ulin (2013) suggest in their edited volume, *Wine and Culture*, wine is food and as such may provide physical, mental, and spiritual sustenance.

Viticulture, the practice of growing grapes, and viniculture, the practice of turning grapes into wine, share a tradition rooted in the ancient peoples and places of the Old World (Johnson 2005; McGovern 2003). Modern wine cultures are historically linked to Ancient Greece, Ancient Egypt, Ancient China, the Roman Empire, the Medieval Middle East, and Europe. This link suggests that viticulture and viniculture are directly related to the traditions

and customs of a people ancestrally rooted in specific geographic places. A deep connection between people, the land, and place has been recognized in the anthropological literature as a strong marker of cultural identity (Agnew and Duncan 1989; Appadurai 1996; Trubek 2008).

Wine and wine making have a long history woven into the cultural fabric of much of human civilization.<sup>1</sup> From the Greek *symposia*, a ritual centered around the sharing of wine and knowledge, to references in popular literature, "Wine is one of the most civilized things in the world" (Hemingway 1964). Wine and its use have historically been and continue to be charged with philosophical thought, sacramental meaning, healing powers, and a life of its own (Johnson 2005). Deroy (2007), a contemporary philosopher of the senses, suggests that wine gives people the sense that they are participating in a deeply rooted culture. But how deep can this culture be when the wine and the people involved only have a 25 year history in a particular place to draw on? This is the case for the wine producers of Cowichan Valley (CV).

The first *Vitis Vinefera* (native Old World grapes) in CV were planted around 25 to 30 years ago to test the suitability for commercial production. This experiment between the British Columbia government and a local farmer has evolved into a vibrant wine industry that now consists of approximately fifteen wineries<sup>2</sup> in the region (Appendix A). This recent success of the local wine industry economically impacts the region in employment, agriculture, and culinary, cultural, and agri-tourism (Tourism Cowichan 2010). People are often overlooked in economic studies (Anderson et al. 2007; Guy 2004). Labeling the activities of the wine producers in CV as simply 'tourism driven' risks diminishing their daily experiences as they attempt to plant literal (grape vines) and metaphorical (identity) roots. As Demossier (2010) suggests, wine production and consumption cannot be separated from the wider cultural context in which it takes place, and reveals how recent social, economic, and political forces may influence wine's role in shaping identity. My research, employing an ethnographic approach, seeks to investigate how

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the history of wine see Hugh Johnson's *The Story of Wine* (2005).

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, this number has grown from 10 since I first began researching this topic and region in the fall of 2009.

the lived experiences of the wine producers of CV create a taste of place, by constructing meaning through their products, practices, and the place they live.

Geography and the physical environment of CV influence the grape varieties that producers presently grow and thus shape the literal tastes of the wine (Ring 2013; Vaudour 2002), but how do the social relationships that people have shape the cultural knowledge of the metaphoric taste? Trubek (2008) elaborates on this question by extrapolating the French concept of *terroir* (from the Latin root word meaning earth) into a broader concept to suggest that a centuries old tradition of *terroir* is not required for people to construct meaning about their relationships with food and wine that shapes their collective and individual identities. This is a key point for situating my research questions on the wine producers of Cowichan Valley:

- What does the wine say about this place and these people?
- What does this place and what do these people say about the wine?
- What 'culture' do people experience when they engage with the wines of Cowichan Valley?
- What are the literal and metaphorical roots of that culture?

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (2007) report on the *Canadian Wine Industry* reveals yearly increases in both domestic production and consumption. They also report that over the past 25 years Canadian vintners (winemakers) have increased their production of high-quality wines. Clearly, people in Canada are becoming more engaged with wine culture (Bramble et al. 2007). This engagement not only includes the purchase and consumption but the imagined experiences of place (Lovell 1998; McCone, Morris, and Kiely 1995) through smells, tastes, and cultural knowledge embodied in the wine. It is important to understand the implications this may have for people and communities from a holistic anthropological perspective. Issues such as land use, conversion of existing agricultural land to vineyards, population growth, tourism, and an aging demographic all shape understandings of 'place' and 'place making' (Appadurai 1988a; Feld and Basso 1996; Friedman 1994). An examination of the wineries and the wine producers of CV presents the opportunity to understand how new senses of 'taste' and 'place'

may be created for the local community but also how this 'taste of place' may be used to communicate the cultural knowledge of that place to others.

I situate my research around a central question based on Deroy's suggestion: What does the wine say (literally and metaphorically) about the people (producers and consumers) and the place of Cowichan Valley? My research will further develop the ideas of taste of place, taste experience, terroir, place and identity that I have put forth in my previous research (Hammer 2011a, 2011b, 2010) by contributing to an understanding of how and why the wineries of CV shape a sense of place for themselves and others (consumers, tourists, community members). I am interested in how grape growers and winemakers understand interrelationships between their beliefs, practices, and physical environment, and in so doing, make meaning in their lives. I will examine how these beliefs and practices are used to create and promote their product, practices, and place in which they live. Individual stories provide motivations for participating in the wine industry that may transcend the simple economics of increased tourism and illustrate how place making reflects powerful sociological and geographical symbolic aspects of people's identity (Feagan 2007; Guy 2004; Trubek 2008).

Mary Douglas (1987) and Igor de Garine (2001), in their respective edited volumes on drink, both suggest that previous anthropological literature concerning alcoholic beverages has tended to focus on the negative personal and social aspects of this cultural phenomenon such as drunkenness and abusive behavior. What is missing from the literature are studies that illustrate the potential positive elements of alcoholic beverages that reflect a perceived healthy (Tronsco, Garcia-Parilla and Martinex-Ortega 2001) and normal part of peoples' everyday lived experiences that contributes to their cultural identity (Black and Ulin 2013). My research addresses this gap and provides insight into how practices, places, and people come together to create new personal, regional, and cultural identity. My aim is to make a theoretical contribution in the field of cultural anthropology and provide an ethnographic account that informs the subfield of cultural foodways (the production, distribution, and consumption of food [Anderson

2005:2]) with a focus on place making and cultural identity. This research highlights a current and important shift in anthropology, to turn the anthropological lens on ourselves, to focus on contemporary issues within one's own society and country, to reflect that we may be considered exotic to some 'other'.

### **Thesis Overview**

This dissertation is developed into nine principle sections. Chapter 2 discusses fieldwork, detailing my research description and methods. I describe methodological perspectives, field site, sampling, data collection practices, analytic techniques, ethical considerations, research limitations, and reflexivity. Chapter 3 reviews literature, focusing on the historical and theoretical perspectives that provide the framework for my research approach. In the first section of this chapter, I review some of the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Mary Douglas, Pierre Bourdieu, Claude Fischler, and others, in order to situate my research and establish a foundation to build on some of their ideas.

The second section of Chapter 3 examines the role of 'Place and Identity' in the social science literature with an emphasis on contemporary contexts from some of the works by John Agnew and James Duncan, Arjun Appadarai, Jonathan Friedman, Stephen Feld and Keith Basso, and others, including the role of tourism in place making. The third section of Chapter 3 provides important background on 'Drinking Culture', with an emphasis on wine, from a historical perspective to its role in contemporary Canadian society. The final section introduces the notion of authenticity and some of the relevance it may have for my research questions. My research is focused on an understanding of the interrelationships between these three components 'Food, Drink, and Identity', 'Place and Identity', and 'Wine Culture' within the specific physical and social environments of Cowichan Valley (CV).

Chapter 4 provides context about the early formations of place, people, and practice that serve as a foundation for shaping contemporary CV. Chapters 5 and 6 present the CV wineries and producers who participated in my study, using some of their stories and words to

acknowledge their everyday life experiences about what they do and what it might mean to them. Chapter 7 examines some of the issues around politics and organizations from both macro and micro-level perspectives and how these issues may shape individual winery identity and a collective identity for the region. In Chapter 8, I explore the relationship with food and local festivals and the cultural and experiential knowledge that may be communicated through it.

Chapter 9 concludes my dissertation by readdressing my research objective and questions, summarizing observations, and relating theoretical perspectives with relevant literature. My aim is to let participants' words and narratives speak to their place and practices and how they construct meaning for what they do and where they do it. I reflect on my research approach and how my fieldwork experiences were shaped by engaging with the food, drink, and people of my field site. I discuss implications of my research to my participants and to CV. I highlight my contributions to the discipline of anthropology and more specifically to the growing interest of wine in cultural studies around place and identity. I conclude by offering insights to the role of wine culture in shaping individual, regional, and national identity and propose future avenues for continued research.

## Chapter 2

### Fieldwork: research project description and methods

In this chapter I describe my research project and methods, including: field site, research timeline and preliminary fieldwork, sampling, data collection, analysis, reflexivity, ethical considerations, and limitations of my research. I include some theoretical foundation as rationale for my research practices.

One of the principal objectives of this dissertation is to capture the lived experiences of the people involved in growing wine grapes and producing wine in Cowichan Valley (CV), British Columbia. Towards this end, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in CV. Ethnographic fieldwork, or ethnography, is a hallmark research technique in cultural anthropology. It refers to an "integration of both first hand empirical investigation and the theoretical and comparative interpretation of social organization and culture" (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 1). Ethnography is an in-depth examination of the culture of a people or community. It emphasizes the importance of particularizing a cultural phenomenon before attempting to generalize about it (Robben and Sluka 2007). My research focused on a particular geographic region, CV, where 15 wineries are engaged in a relatively new (approximately 25 years) practice growing grapes and producing wine for commercial distribution and consumption.

One of the strengths of contemporary ethnographic fieldwork is the assumption that expertise resides in others, that local populations are the experts on their own sociocultural environment (Hahn and Inhorn 2009, 7-16). This assumption guides my research project in that I understand the wine producers of CV to have more expertise about their products, practices, and their physical and social place than I do. An ethnographic approach provides flexibility in conducting a detailed investigation of a particular society, or segment of that society, while encompassing a holistic approach to the lived experiences of the participants and to the research interests (Robben and Sluka 2007). This follows Demossier's (2010) position that even though my research focused on the wine producers of CV, I must consider the wider cultural context,

the community as a whole and its relationship to the outside world, in order to understand how local and recent social, economic, and political forces may influence the winery's and wine's role in shaping personal, regional, and cultural identity.

Ethnographic research promotes an expository model of writing with thick description in the style of anthropologist Clifford Geertz. I believe this style is appropriate to my research project and allows me to build upon Geertz's suggestion that "cultural anthropology is mostly engaged in trying to determine what this people or that takes to be the point of what they are doing" (1973, 4). Geertz's suggestion is built upon a concept of experience where social and cultural processes are situated in the movement of significant symbols that "impose meaning upon experience" (1973, 45). I rephrase Geertz's suggestion to read "Why do the wine producers of Cowichan Valley produce wine and what does that place and that practice mean to them?"

### **Field Site**

Cowichan Valley (CV) is the common name used by local residents and visitors to refer to the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) located on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. The CVRD is a regional government designation by the province of British Columbia. The CVRD covers a land area of 3473.12 km<sup>2</sup> towards the southern portion of Vancouver Island and spans the width of the Island from the Pacific Ocean on the west coast to the Stuart Channel on the east coast. The CVRD has a population of 76,929<sup>3</sup> and encompasses the communities of Duncan, Coble Hill, Chemainus, Crofton, Ladysmith, Mill Bay, Maple Bay, Shawnigan Lake, Cowichan Bay, and Cowichan Lake. The regional district offices are located in the City of Duncan, population 4932<sup>4</sup>, which serves as the economic and cultural hub of the region. All of these communities, except for Cowichan Lake, are located on the eastern side of the region,

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<sup>3</sup> Population figure from Statistics Canada 2006 Census information posted on Economic Development Cowichan website <http://www.cvrld.bc.ca/index.aspx?NID=588> (accessed January 17, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Population figure from Statistics Canada 2011 Census <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-cma-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CMA&GC=937> (accessed September 25, 2014).

alongside the Trans Canada Highway that runs from the south near the provincial capital city of Victoria to the northern tip of Vancouver Island (Map 2.1).



**Map 2.1 CV Region British Columbia, Canada.** Source: tourismcowichan.com (accessed October 9, 2014).

Due to the physical environment (geography, geology and climate), this is where approximately 90% of the population of CV resides and the bulk of agricultural activities, including the vineyards and wineries, are located. For the purposes of my project, this is the area of the larger CVRD that I refer to as CV, my field site, throughout my research. This eastern portion of the region, influenced by the geographic location and physical environment, experiences a transitional climate between Mediterranean and maritime conditions characterized by warm, dry, bright summers and mild, moist winters. These features, as my research illustrates, are influential in creating a 'taste of place' for the wineries of CV.

The forestry sector remains a major contributor to the region's economy. Agriculture is also a very large part of the Cowichan Region's economy with approximately one-quarter of Vancouver Island's productive farmland located in the region. The developing tourism sector is a growing economic and lifestyle influence in the region. In 2009, Economic Development

Cowichan (EDC) worked with the Cowichan Bay community to form Cittaslow Cowichan with the efforts resulting in Cowichan Bay becoming the first Cittaslow (Slow City) community in North America. Cittaslow is an organization originating in Italy in 1999 and growing out of the Slow Food Movement<sup>5</sup> Its goals include improving the quality of life in towns by slowing down the overall pace, especially in a community's use of spaces and the flow of life and traffic through them. The goals of Cittaslow are an example of how communities shape an identity about their place that they feel is representative of the people and the practices there. This also highlights the important connection of food and wine that I will explore. In 2009, the EDC also initiated a "Made in Cowichan" marketing program to promote locally grown and produced products. A "Made in Cowichan" sticker (Figure 2.1) may be placed directly on the product or packaging to inform consumers it is a local product.<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 2.1 Made In Cowichan Sticker.** Source: Economic Development Cowichan.  
<http://www.cvrld.bc.ca/index.aspx?NID=1224> (accessed October 9, 2014).

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cittaslow.org/> (accessed January 24, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cvrld.bc.ca/index.aspx?NID=588> (accessed January 17, 2012).

## Preliminary Fieldwork

I carried out research in CV for a total of six months over a period of four years. The close proximity of my field site to my home residence<sup>7</sup> made frequent site visits and preliminary fieldwork possible and manageable (see Figure 2.2 for my Research Procedures Timeline).

| <b>Research Procedures Timeline</b> |           |   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|---|
| May                                 | 2010      | Preliminary Fieldwork: Explore location, gather local written material  |
| September                           | 2010      | Preliminary Fieldwork: Explore location, attend wine and culinary festival, establish contact with potential gatekeepers                            |
| April                               | 2011      | Preliminary Fieldwork: Explore location, gather local written material, explore accommodation options   |
| November                            | 2011      | Confirm feasibility of project with Supervisor and obtain ethics approval from the University of Alberta  |
| March                               | 2012      | Preliminary fieldwork: Explore location and accommodation options   |
| May                                 | 2012      | Present Dissertation Prospectus and receive Committee approval<br>Contact prospective participants (wineries) notifying them of my research project |
| June-August                         | 2012      | Main field season: Begin interview transcriptions in the field, conduct archival research in Duncan   |
| September                           | 2012      | Field visit: Attend wine and culinary festival and conduct follow-up interviews   |
| October-April                       | 2012-2013 | Out of field: transcription of interviews and field notes, analysis of research material ongoing  |
| January                             | 2013      | Ethics renewal from University of Alberta   |
| May                                 | 2013      | Present on preliminary research data at CASCA conference<br>Field visit: Conduct a second interview with one participant, visit others              |
| July                                | 2013      | Field visit: Attend Wine Island Growers' Association conference and visit participants at wineries  |
| September                           | 2013      | Field visit: Attend wine and culinary festival and visit participants at wineries   |
| May                                 | 2014      | Field visit: Attend Wine Island Growers' Association conference and visit participants at wineries  |

**Figure 2.2. Research Procedure Timelines**

Preliminary fieldwork began in May 2010 with a visit to CV to ascertain its feasibility as a field site for conducting a research project there. I acquainted myself with the physical landscape, visited many of the communities, and located the wineries in the region. I obtained maps and tourist brochures and information that provided locations and summary background

<sup>7</sup> My home residence and the University of Alberta are located in Edmonton, Alberta. Alberta is the province located just east of British Columbia.

to the wineries and other sociocultural features of CV that may be significant to the research (i.e. museums, historical sites, etc.). I located and visited the CV Museum and Archives in Duncan, operated by the Cowichan Valley Historical Society. The Archives contained early historical documents and stories about the origins and settling of CV and its various communities, including the First Nations people living in the region. Within the Archives, I located a separate file folder of newspaper articles and clippings relating directly to the wine industry and its people in CV. This served as an excellent source on people, events, and stories involved in the development of the wine industry in CV.

I returned in September 2010 to attend the 6th annual Cowichan Wine and Culinary Festival. This festival is the preeminent event of the season for wine and food producers to showcase their products and I believe, by extension, their individual and regional identities. While the initial interest and focus of this event was to promote these products and activities to the local residents and communities, the growing success of the event is beginning to attract attention and visitors from all over Vancouver Island and indeed from around the world.<sup>8</sup>

During this preliminary period I initiated contact with three potential 'gatekeepers'. Gatekeepers are individuals who have access to key sources, such as places and people, or "avenues of opportunity" (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 27). One was a chef from Victoria who directly accesses food products from CV, and a second was his wife who used to work as a wine representative on Vancouver Island. She did not, however, represent wines produced on Vancouver Island. One of the reasons she no longer worked as a wine representative was because of the decrease in the volume of wines (from other parts of the world) being imported to the Island with the corresponding increase in the purchase and consumption of wines produced on Vancouver island, primarily from CV. This shift was supported by my third gatekeeper, a long time independent Victoria restaurateur. His longevity and success has been attributed to his

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<sup>8</sup> From the Cowichan Valley Wine & Culinary Festival website <http://wines.cowichan.net/index.htm> (accessed January 23, 2012).

emphasis on locally grown and produced products from the Island. In recent years he has changed his wine menu to emphasize those produced on Vancouver Island in order to reflect and promote a local, regional identity.

I revisited Victoria in March 2012 to confirm the support of the gatekeepers and to reorient myself in CV. While in CV I scouted out potential locations for myself to live while conducting fieldwork, such as campgrounds, apartment rentals, and motels. I presented my Dissertation Prospectus to my supervisor and committee members in May 2012 and received approval from the Department of Anthropology and ethical clearance from the University of Alberta to commence with my fieldwork.

### **Sampling**

I recruited participants<sup>9</sup> from six wineries (Averill Creek Vineyards, Cherry Point Estate Wines, Deol Estate Winery, Enrico Winery<sup>10</sup>, Godfrey-Brownell Vineyards, and Unsworth Vineyards) located in Cowichan Valley (CV) and one independent wine tour operator (Verjus Wine Tours) from Victoria. This exceeded my minimum target of recruiting participants from three wineries and represented 40% of all wineries in CV. For the purposes of my research I define wineries as those producing wine on-site from *Vitis Vinifera* grapes or *Vinifera* hybrids. Therefore, I excluded two properties commonly listed under "Winery" for the CV from my study.<sup>11</sup> One property exclusively produces fruit wine other than from *Vinifera* grapes and the second property is a cidery. I also excluded vineyards that grow *Vinifera* grapes but do not produce their own wine from those grapes for commercial purposes. The initial contact for the wine tour operator was obtained from their business card displayed at one of my winery participants.

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<sup>9</sup> All of these listed participants gave permission through informed consent, discussed under Ethical Considerations on pages 22-23, to allow their winery/business and personal names to be published.

<sup>10</sup> Enrico Winery and Unsworth Vineyards employed the same winemaker; therefore in Ch.'s 5 and 6 I present only five CV wine producers 'stories' as it was within the context of Unsworth Vineyards that the winemaker mostly spoke.

<sup>11</sup> See *British Columbia Winery Touring Guide 2013*.

Purposive sampling (Bernard 2011, 144-147), while not attempting to be representative of all wineries, was employed in order to portray a range of interview subjects' characteristics and perspectives, such as: an older founding winery that was part of the initial planting of grapes for wine production; a winery that represents an 'Old World' ethnic heritage through either early or recent immigration; a new winery that has only been in production for a few years. A representation of participants within and between wineries (proprietors, wine makers, winery and vineyard workers, and family members, etc.) was sought to further the range of perspectives. I initiated preliminary contact with all wineries in the region (Appendix A) through email in May of 2012. I followed-up initial contact with a focused approach (phone calls, in-person visits) to those wineries that had responded to my emails or those wineries that fit my prescribed categories based on background research through their websites, promotional documentation such as Tourism Cowichan, and earlier preliminary field site visits.

### **Data Collection**

Primary data collection for my research was carried out in Cowichan Valley (CV) between June and September of 2012 with return field site visits in May, July, and September of 2013. I alternated my field site residence between three different locations during the primary field season. I camped in a tent at Bamberton Provincial Campground on two separate occasions. This campground is located at the southernmost region of CV, near the community of Mill Bay, and therefore the closest to the provincial capital of Victoria. On two other separate occasions I lived in a motel in the community of Cowichan Bay which is one of the primary tourist locations (see above under 'Field Site', re Cittaslow) located in the central zone of CV and 15 minutes from the City of Duncan, the commercial hub of the valley. I also resided with my brother and his family in the city of Nanaimo, which is located just north of the northern boundary of CV, during two different periods of the main field season.

Alternating my residence between these three different locations within my field site allowed me to explore and experience the various wineries and communities located throughout

the region. The diversity and distinctiveness of each winery and community was conveyed to me early on in my research when one of the tasting room workers at a winery located in the southern region of CV emphasized that, "I think you will find that not only are all the wineries quite different in CV but that each different community also has its own unique identity that they are quite proud and protective of." Staying with my brother and his family also helped to mitigate some of the mild anxiety or loneliness I was experiencing from being away from my home and spouse for an extended period of time. This illustrates that even though I was conducting research in my own country, speaking my native language, and in a cultural milieu that I was familiar with, a researcher must contend with the mental and physical challenges of being out of their normal element, similar to a form of culture shock (Lavenda and Schultz 2012).

I conducted a total of 15 interviews with my research participants, ranging from one to three interviews per participant. The average interview length was one hour with a range from twenty eight minutes to one hour and thirty five minutes. All of the interviews were conducted at the participants' respective wineries with the exception of four: three that were recorded at coffee shops (one in Duncan, one in Cobble Hill, the other in Victoria) and one interview recorded in the winery proprietor's vehicle as I travelled around the valley with him while he performed errands. The formal interviews were supplemented with frequent visits to the participants' wineries to casually chat and observe them performing their daily activities.

Semi-structured interviews were employed to allow the participants to tell the stories that were important to them while enabling the interviewer to direct the research questions (Atkinson 1998). Semi-structured interviews contain both closed-ended and open-ended questions and are particularly useful for determining patterns of knowledge and beliefs because they are asked of multiple participants (Hahn and Inhorn 2009, 22). Collecting narratives and documenting stories has been used as a conventional fieldwork method in anthropology since the discipline began (Cruikshank 1990). Typically however, the investigator controlled the

research with little collaboration from the subject, and the accounts were often used as supplementary material towards a larger interest. The emergence of interviews focusing on the lived experiences of people reflects an interest in symbolism and text where the focus is placed on the words and meanings individuals use to make sense of their lives. This storytelling approach seemed best suited to my research interests and theoretical framework discussed in the first chapter. Storytelling, as Cruickshank (1990) suggests, is an excellent medium for expressing values, beliefs, and philosophies of an individual. Values are an important component of stories because they are often closely associated with the local priorities of the participants (Hahn and Inhorn 2009). Getting at these local priorities, shaped by the local physical and social environment, was an objective of my research because of their role in creating a local or regional identity for the wines and the wine producers of CV.

Collecting stories, as a method of conducting fieldwork, focuses on how the participant sees him or herself in their sociocultural milieu and how their individual life interacts with the larger society. Tierney and Dilley (2002) refer to this style of interview as the hallmark of social science research with a renewed contemporary usefulness to researchers and audience. They suggest that it follows the structural principles of scientific inquiry while allowing for qualitative interpretation and moral questioning. I believe this element of moral questioning to be relevant to my investigation of how and why the wine producers of CV create meaning for their lives and how this may be reflected in their wines. The use of probes, verbal and nonverbal, were employed to encourage participants to be retrospective and introspective in the construction of their stories (Bernard 1994; Hahn and Inhorn 2009).

However, collecting stories must also serve research objectives (Hammersly and Atkinson 2007). So a typical response to the “Tell me your story” may be the question “Well, what do you want to know?” This reflects the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the researcher and the participant, and makes clear, despite the truthfulness and honesty implied by a first person narrative, that the interview is indeed part of a research process. This is a research

process where, Hammersly and Atkinson (2007) point out, there is no such thing as pure data, free from the potential bias of the interviewer or researcher. Nor is the research process about the pursuit of truth. Factuality, as Linde (1993) argues, is not the concern of a narrative style interview, nor is it the concern of my research question. I was interested in how the wine producers of CV perceive their daily practices and lived experiences and the meanings they associate with those practices and experiences.

Participant observation is another hallmark of social science fieldwork pioneered by anthropologists that allows for researcher involvement and detachment (Robben and Sluka 2007). It is an approach to the collection of information by the researcher living and participating in the economic and social lives of the chosen study site for an extended period of time. It is important that the researcher be accepted by the community that he or she is studying. My goal was to live in CV, participating in and experiencing the everyday lives of my study setting and the participants who live there. Some examples of my participant observation include: taste testing wine from tanks as the winemaker pumped wine to different containers; helping a vineyard worker clear brush from around a vineyard; and traveling with a winery proprietor as he performed regular weekly errands around the region. One of the goals of participant observation is to create trust, openness, and rapport among the community under study. It was hoped that my participation in the lived experiences of the community and its members reduced any negative effects that my presence may otherwise have on their everyday activities.

Some of the "everyday activities" that I regularly engaged in and that allowed me to gain a sense of the broader community included: doing my laundry at a commercial Laundromat located in a Duncan strip mall; having morning coffee at independent coffee shops, either in the heart of downtown Duncan, Cowichan Bay, or in the Mill Bay Shopping Center; getting my hair cut at a local barbershop in downtown Duncan; attending a Saturday morning farmers' market; shopping at various grocery stores and eating at restaurants throughout CV; using the Duncan

and Mill Bay Public Libraries; and attending the Duncan Days Parade and some of the summer entertainment events. Participating in these everyday activities allowed me to experience different communities of the region and talk to people representing various sectors of the economy outside of the wine industry. Barber shops, Laundromats, and coffee shops are ideal places to have casual conversations, to eavesdrop, and pick up local gossip that contribute to the flavor of the people and the places. This enabled me to compare what the wine producers were saying in their interviews with how others in the region perceived their practices and contributions to CV.

Hammersley and Atkinson suggest that there are distinct advantages in combining participant observation with interviews; “the data from each can be used to illuminate the other” (2007, 102). In my research project the interview process was enhanced by also observing the participants' practices in the vineyard, the winery, or the tasting room. Observing the face to face interactions they had with customers (consumers of their literal and symbolic products) illuminated the beliefs, customs, and practices in their stories. These interactions with consumers are a way for the wine producers to validate their understanding of the identity of their products and, as an extension, of their personal and regional identity. My observations were voice recorded, when possible, and supplemented with written field notes. Field notes are a traditional method for documenting observation and information that the voice recorder is not able to record (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). This was done to ensure that my reflections and thoughts from the interview, and ideas for future interviews, remained fresh and relevant.

All interviews, with participant consent, were digitally voice recorded to enable detailed exploration of the complex relationships between beliefs, practices, habits and the local environments. Voice recorded interviews allow for greater accuracy and precision in the collection, transcription, translation, and analysis of data (Hahn and Inhorn 2009). Field notes were digitally voice recorded after each interview to provide context and explanation to the information, as well as to highlight future inquiries. This reflects that ethnographic fieldwork is

a dynamic process and that data collection can inform and shape future methodological procedures.

I took photographs of vineyard landscapes, buildings, equipment, products, and marketing venues to supplement documentation of past and current viticultural and vinicultural practices that may illuminate participant's stories. Photographs can support the participant's text and represent thematic interpretations important to the discussion of the research project. Photographs are generally considered an objective form of conveying information, an image as a physical record of something. However, as Grady (2004) suggests, the image may represent a complex subjective process that requires careful interpretation. Such images may be an important component in the construction of an identity for the wine producers' products and by extension their personal and regional identities associated with those products. A digital camera allowed me to upload the photographs to a computer file and securely store them.

Fieldwork also included ethnohistorical research to develop a 'sense' of the local environment. I sought out historical texts, archival documents and contemporary literature to provide information or context to the people and place of CV. I looked for insights into the development of the wine practices and wine industry for the region. This proved to be an unexpected and fruitful source of data as I discovered a file folder of newspaper articles and clippings relating directly to the wine industry and its people while exploring the Cowichan Valley Museum and Archives in Duncan which is operated by the volunteer based Cowichan Valley Historical Society. This was a standard manila file folder filled with photocopies of largely chronologically organized yet random newspaper clippings of articles, photographs, and advertisements, all relating to the wine industry. When I inquired into how this file folder came to be and who was responsible for it, the volunteer staff replied that they did not know; it was just something that someone started a long time ago and the current volunteers just keeping adding to it.

Archival information, such as newspaper articles and clippings, may provide significant early documentation and insight to people, places, and practices which at the time may have an unknown history or relevance. Some of the advantages of archival research are that it is inexpensive to conduct and generally nonreactive, as Bernard suggests "people can't change their behavior after the fact" (2011, 334). I got the sense when looking through the thick and comprehensive folder that the voluntary citizens of the Cowichan Historical Society were simply collecting regular documentation of another everyday happening in their communities without any foresight that what they were doing would be representative of an industry developing over the next 25 years. At the same time, this archival information served as an example of expectations and the future for the people, places, and practices represented within each newspaper clipping.

### **Analysis**

I agree with Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) assertion that analyzing social phenomena through ethnographic fieldwork is fraught with tensions and that these tensions are part of the research process. Recalling Geertz's quote in my introduction, "cultural anthropology is mostly engaged in trying to determine what this people or that takes to be the point of what they are doing" (1973, 4), there is an inherent analytic component to the anthropologist's role. Despite a researcher's attempt to accurately describe the perspectives of the people being studied, there is simultaneously an emphasis on developing analytic understanding of those perspectives. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) refer to this as the difference between the ethnographer trying to make the strange familiar or the familiar strange.

I believe in a balanced approach that attempts to guide the reader while allowing them to form their own analysis within the theoretical framework provided. Therefore, it is important the ethnographer let the voices of the participants come through as clearly as possible, to tell their own stories (Rubin and Rubin 1995), or as Stoller and Olkes (2007[1989]) suggest, to create an aura of authenticity for the storyteller. Despite the deductive analytic tone to my

introductory thesis statement and research questions it was important that I let the data "speak." So I conducted inductive analysis as well.

All voice recorded interviews and field notes were uploaded to a computer and transcribed into word documents. While computers and computer software are important tools in analysis, it is important that the researcher remain personally engaged with the data (Hahn and Inhorn 2009). To address this concern I began to transcribe some of the participant interviews while I was in the field. Material collected and produced during ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, transcripts, field notes, and participant observation notes, were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis to identify common themes and codes (Rubin and Rubin 1995) situated around people, place, wine, and identity formation. Rubin and Rubin (1995) describe coding as the process of grouping the participants' responses into categories that represent similar ideas, concepts and themes.

Initial analysis and coding was primarily deductive with broad categories including: politics; economics; organizations; people; places; and marketing. Analysis then shifted to more interpretative and inductive thematic coding with identifiers such as: food; romance; quality; competitions and awards; tasting events and festivals; terroir; microclimates; and viticulture and enology. Once the main themes were identified, the overall descriptions of the data were synthesized with current literature to look for support or contradictions in concepts and interpretations. This will be covered in greater detail in Ch.'s 7 and 8.

## **Reflexivity**

It is imperative the researcher address his/her own potential biases towards the project and to reconsider these throughout the research process. Rather than viewing reflexivity as a potential problem, I prefer to see it as an integral part of the research process, similar to the tensions described by Hammersley and Atkinson above. Reflexivity, as defined by Robben, is "the conscious self-examination of the ethnographer's interpretive presuppositions" (2007, 443). Being reflexive is to understand that the researcher is part of the realm to which they are

investigating; the researcher is part of the research process, part of the participant's subjective experience of telling their story. This research includes my subjective experiences as well.

I have been a wine culture enthusiast for over 25 years in which time I have accumulated knowledge, both experiential and academic, concerning wine. Although not fluent, I am familiar with the language particular to wine culture (see Bachelder 1990; Johnson 2005). I have visited Vancouver Island for pleasure on numerous occasions, including Cowichan Valley (CV). Most importantly, I have literally and metaphorically experienced some of the wines produced by the winemakers of CV. However, rather than attempting to deny or subvert these experiences by feigning scientific objectivity implied by wearing the mythical white lab coat, I believe they should be acknowledged from the beginning so that they may enrich the research process and produce what Sherry Ortner describes as "robust anthropology" (2005, 46). I agree with Ortner's notion that subjectivity, including that of the researcher, is a major part of human existence and that by studying the particular experience of individual people, we are not only able to learn something about that individual, community and ourselves but also about the larger world of which they are a part of.

Despite my familiarity and subjective experiences I am not a wine producer, I have never worked in a vineyard or winery, and I do not live in CV. I entered my field site acknowledging the privileges and responsibility of an outside researcher. My research on the wine producers of CV explores whether geographic and social diversity creates a regional identity that may be used to promote a product and the culture of that region. Towards that end I have attempted to ground my research in the participants' voice whenever possible.

In discussing reflexivity, it is important to address the audience: whom are you writing this dissertation for, whom are you conducting this research for, and who is funding this research? My research project is not directly funded by any outside agencies. This may be perceived as positive as it did not bind me to any explicit or implicit encumbrances or regulations that restricted my research.

My immediate audience is my program supervisor and committee members as this dissertation is part of a program supervised by the Department of Anthropology at the University of Alberta. This program operates under the policies and regulations of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and within the framework and governance of the University of Alberta. This governance is largely dictated by the social contract (largely unwritten) that exists between the University, a sanctioning democracy and the citizens of the democracy (Fallis 2007). An initial audience of one theoretically becomes an audience of 34 million<sup>12</sup>. Although I may wonder who will read my work, this enormous audience figure seems appropriate when I consider McCall's proposition that anthropology "belongs to and is possessed by no one... Anthropology, like any intellectual discourse, is a public, unowned ideological and especially intellectual space" (1999, 75).

Although participants did not officially grade me with a pass or fail, it is important to acknowledge them as part of the audience towards which this research project was directed. This project was a way for them to have their stories heard, a way to validate what it is they do and who they are. I owed them the same level of courtesy, trust, and human decency that I expected from them. I had the responsibility to conduct myself under the guiding anthropological principal to do no harm to your research participants. One of my objectives is to share their stories with a larger audience through the publication of this dissertation as a free on-line resource and through the publication of separate journal and magazine articles. I will also present on their stories through course instruction, guest lectures and conference presentations. I have made arrangements to present at the 2016 Wine Island Grower's Association conference which is held annually in CV.

All the participants who consented to be interviewed for this project indicated they were interested in receiving information concerning publications and presentations generated by my research. In May of 2013 I presented some of my early research findings at the Canadian

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<sup>12</sup> Figure from Canada's population clock, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/edu/clock>, (accessed 11:52, January 10, 2012).

Anthropology Society's annual conference held in Victoria, British Columbia. I notified all consenting participants about my presentation prior to the conference and two participants requested copies of the slides used in my presentation, to which I complied and invited feedback from them.

### **Ethical Considerations**

An ethics application for this project was drafted and submitted to the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Board (REB) through the Human Ethics Research Online (HERO) system. My ethics application consisted of a project summary outlining the thesis statement, description of potential study participants, a copy of the participant consent form, and a description of methodology to be employed. The ethics application addressed the guiding principles listed under the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants, GFC Policy Manual, Section 66. These principals are: respect for human dignity; respect for free and informed consent; respect for vulnerable persons; respect for privacy and confidentiality; respect for justice and inclusiveness; balancing harms; and maximizing benefits. My ethics application for this research project was approved on November 23, 2011 (U of A: Pro00016460) and has been annually renewed until November 2016.

All participants in the interview process received a copy of the research consent form. This form includes summary descriptions of the study, the purpose of the study, study procedures, potential risk and benefits, confidentiality, remuneration and compensation, future use of data, and contact information for my Program Supervisor at the University of Alberta. I made every effort to ensure privacy and confidentiality when my research participants, who had given informed consent, spoke of other people who had not given informed consent to have their names used. This was done with the use of pseudonyms or by altering identifying characteristics. I verbally emphasized that participants had the right to terminate their involvement in the research at any time without consequences to themselves. I stressed that any information provided, with their consent, may be used in future presentations, discussions, class

instructions, publications, research, and for my PhD dissertation. All of my participants who signed the informed consent granted permission, and indeed requested to be mentioned, to allow their winery, business, and personal names to be used in the above mentioned mediums.

### **Limitations**

An important aspect of determining a methodological course of action for any research project involves addressing limitations and foreshadowing potential problems (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 21). One of the first challenges facing a researcher in the field, that may limit the scope of their investigation, is finding participants willing to be interviewed and audio recorded. What if none of the wine producers of Cowichan Valley (CV) were willing to talk to me? Fortunately, this was not a concern for me as I found all of the people that I spoke to at the wineries very willing to speak with me about the wine industry in the CV and their role within it. I attributed this willingness to talk (and be voice recorded) to their passion and beliefs about what they do and where they live and do it. I only had one winery proprietor, of the seven that I formally approached to participate, decline a voice recorded interview due to her time constraints. We did however, have frequent conversations over the course of my primary field season. This highlights the importance of participant observation, living in the community and gaining the trust of the people you are interested in interviewing.

A potential danger of participant observation is that a participant may simply 'perform' for the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). The participant knows they are being observed and alters their behavior to accommodate the researcher as another audience member. Their behavior may be different from their daily practices. One method of minimizing this 'performance' effect is usually through long term and repeated observations. Another method to employ in order to avoid a lack of participants is to find a 'gatekeeper', a person or persons who may provide direct access to potential participants (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). None of the three prospective gatekeepers that I had initially sought out were required as I had no

difficulty gaining access and finding willing participants for my research. Regardless, as the researcher, I was continually aware that my presence may shape the observation or data.

Another possible limitation I needed to be aware of was what Ager (1980) refers to as the 'ethnographer's dilemma'. This dilemma purports that as a study progresses the participant becomes less informative because they assume the researcher knows what they know, and the researcher becomes less analytic as they unconsciously make the same background assumptions of the participant. One of the ways to address this 'dilemma' is to incorporate reflexivity into the research project as previously mentioned. Another effective way is to shift the emphasis away from the structure and explanation of the life story method by making inferences about the meaning the narrator gives his/her story.

A contrasting limitation to the ethnographer's dilemma is the privileging of the researcher's subjectivity in a way that may prevent him or her from hearing the participant's story (Finlay 2006). My previous knowledge and experience with wine and wine culture, including my personal wine preferences, must not take precedence over the lived experiences of my research participants. Despite my knowledge I am not an expert on wine, wine production, or CV. And despite sharing a common language, English, and a cultural societal context, Canadian, I was an outsider conducting research in order to learn about their practices and how they make sense of their world.

It is important to remember that my research is focused on a particular practice within a particular region and the data is limited to understanding this particular cultural milieu. My research is not meant to generalize that this is how all wine producers practice wine making everywhere and that they represent the same beliefs and meanings for everyone. However, an understanding of the practices, meanings, beliefs - the lived experiences of my participants will allow for comparative analysis with other people and regions concerning place making, food and drink, and cultural identity. In the next chapter I explore some of the literature in order to provide a theoretical framework for my dissertation.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Theoretical and Literature Setting**

In this chapter I discuss the theoretical context that informed my research along with some of the concepts and issues that shape this dissertation. In doing this, I outline a framework for exploring how place, people, and practice interact to create a taste of place and cultural identity for the wine producers of Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island in the province of British Columbia, Canada.

The topics discussed, 'Place and Identity', 'Food, Drink, and Identity', and 'Wine Culture' are not meant to represent mutually exclusive concepts but rather to reflect an interrelated or intersubjective process (Jackson 1998) of how people make sense of their physical and social worlds. I follow with a separate discussion on placelessness and how it relates to these three topics. I conclude this chapter with a section on questions of authenticity and how they relate to my research.

#### **Place and Identity**

The significance of place to the creation of identity, whether it be individual, group, societal, or cultural, has long been recognized as a way to make and mark meaning in the world (Agnew and Duncan 1989; Appadurai 1996; Friedman 2002[1994]; Ingold 1996).

Anthropological interest in place and identity has been studied to reflect contestation, conflict, and displacement of people (Feld and Basso 2009[1996]; Howard Ross 2009; Lovell 1998). The post-industrial modern era saw the rise of the nation-state as the primary aspect of identity unifying individuals with regional, ethnic and cultural differences (Feagan 2007). A sense of place, like the concept of tradition, was believed to represent something nostalgic, old-fashioned, irrelevant, static, and frozen in time. The process of globalization was seen as creating a world of increasing placelessness where the significance of individual peoples' lives within a specific place was reduced or considered to be of negligible relevance to the new global order.

The work of Agnew and Duncan (1989) revitalized the importance of place as a concept in the social sciences. They redefine place as the structuring or mediating context for social relations, and suggest that place, as a spatial concept, could not exist without people having a strong identity connection to a geographic location. Geographers and other social scientists began to notice that people were not letting go of their community or regional place and the identities that they associated with that place (Appadurai 1996; Feagan 2007; Friedman 2002[1994]; Inda and Rosaldo 2002).

Appadurai (1996) suggests that globalization has produced an increase in regionalism. The increase in speed and movement across his five 'scapes' (ethnoscape, technoscape, finanscape, mediascapes, and ideoscapes) associated with the perceived rise and spread of globalizing cultural forces has encouraged scholars to refocus on the practices of people producing regional and local identities across space and time. Regionalism and regional identity was an attempt to counter the growing disconnect produced by the unstable 'scapes' relationships of globalization. Feagan (2007) sees this re-emergence of regional place - understood as an expression of identity, as representing a growing awareness and resistance to the deterritorialization brought on by global change. While geographic place has always been an important element in the wine industry, from government regulations and as sources of tax revenue (Coleman 2008), my research highlights its role in creating a new social identity for the wine producers of Cowichan Valley (CV).

What is place? Contemporary academic perspectives acknowledge that place and its related subsets of location, locality and local are all problematic terms (Casey 1996; Feenstra 2002; Feld and Basso 2009[1996]; Lovell 1998). Casey (1996:26-27), using a phenomenological approach, suggests that places are not something physical, but rather should be viewed as events where something happens. This supports Trubek's (2008) description of place, which I build upon, to refer to the physical elements of geography, geology, climate, weather and includes the

people, their customs, traditions, and their ancestral heritage within a physical and temporal space. Place is multidimensional and culturally constructed.

How does this notion of place as culturally constructed fit with the wine industries' (producers and consumers) growing interest and emphasis on microclimates (Vaudour 2002; Van Leeuwen and Seguin 2006) within a specific geographic region? I agree with Casey's (1996) assertion that it is the essence of place to be regional. Casey, referencing Aristotle, suggests it is this essence that gives the regional place power. An important point that Casey makes, and one that I use to support my research perspective, is that the role of place figures prominently in the discourse and life of contemporary Western peoples, such as the wine producers of CV.

The fact that globalization and modernization have increased interest and awareness in regionalism and regional identity is important for wine producers and the wine industry. One of the objectives of my research project has been to identify what the markers of regionalism are for the wine producers of CV. I explore the features and characteristics that they associate with their place when there is very little viniculture and viticulture history or tradition to support those characteristics. What claims of authenticity can they make about their place when the vines have only been planted there for 25 years? Are there issues of contestation, conflict, and displacement of people represented there? The recent and continued growth of the wine industry may present contested issues of land conversion from other agricultural use, as well as increased traffic in rural communities brought on by increased tourism, for some residents.

Place and the relationship it has to wine is an important component in the examination of the wine producers of CV and how they create a taste of place. I believe this is similar to Friedman's observations of the Ainu of Japan's production of their regional foods and goods for their festivals that cater to tourists: "Their aim is not simply to sell commodities but to present their identity as they conceive it, in order to have it recognized by the larger world. They experience their products as extensions of themselves" (2002, 242).

Is the wine produced in CV an extension of the physical and social environment and therefore an extension of the people themselves? An affirmative answer would follow Feld and Basso's assertion that "as people fashion places, so too do they fashion themselves" (2009[1996], 8).

To address how the wine producers of CV fashion their place, I build upon Lovell's (1998) suggestion that people create perceived ideals or feelings of belonging, through a sense of experience with that place. This experience includes all the human senses - sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste - as well as the full cognitive and cultural realm elicited by the experience. Lovell states that "belonging itself serves to provide collective identity and a sense of cohesion and cultural commensality" (1998, 4). She suggests that territory, locality, and belonging are produced through human interaction with nature and that the relationships between nature and culture produce "realms of experience" (1998, 9). This echoes Lévi-Strauss's (1996) argument that through conscious interaction, people attempt to transform nature into culture to produce meaning in their lives. My research explores whether this conscious interaction exists for the wine producers of CV.

The vines and the grapes are the raw material of nature that producers interact with to transform into wine. The question is, what features of this place, CV, do they draw on to create an identity for their region, their wines, and themselves? Do they draw on an ethnic or ancestral heritage from another place? Since the exploration of new worlds and the colonialist expansion began, people have often sought to reproduce places in the image of where they have come from (Gieryn 2000). Given the recent history of the development of the wine industry in this region, is there evidence of this reproduction in CV?

It is important to clarify that, despite references to the dualistic notions of nature versus culture or man (and woman) transforming nature into culture already presented, I do not take a strict constructivist approach to my thesis or the participants' stories. To say that place is culturally constructed is to acknowledge a principle tenet of cultural anthropology that culture is

a dynamic and fluid concept. I agree with Asselin's proposition that while a constructivist "approach is useful in recognising the influences social and cultural factors have in how the environment is encountered and conceived" (2013, 45) there is always the danger of simplifying peoples relationships to places as one dimensional and unidirectional as they make meaning in their lives.

For example, while some scholars might stress that a vineyard, as a place, represents a purely constructed landscape or environment, this perspective fails to account for the tremendous variation in factors such as soil composition, water and wind drainage, elevation, aspect to light orientation, number of available heat units, etc. (Van Leeuwen and Seguin 2006) that comprise "constructing" a vineyard. Nor does it consider climate changes and seasonal and yearly weather patterns, all important elements for the wine producer (Vaudour 2002). Wine producers in CV, similar to other farmers engaging with an agricultural product and a food commodity<sup>13</sup>, do not view their world as man versus nature but rather as a complex interaction of working with what nature gives you. This type of interactive relationship is expressed eloquently by the noted contemporary British anthropologist Tim Ingold: "We inhabit our environments, we live in places, we are a part of it and it becomes part of us" (2011, 95).

Ingold (1993, 1996, 2000, 2011) is a scholar whose approach to people and their relationship to places and environments seeks to deemphasize the simplistic nature/culture duality of a constructivist perspective. He adds *taskscape*s (1993) to Appadurai's (1996) list of 'scapes' to emphasize the practices of people in producing regional and local identities across space and time. Ingold builds upon Lave and Wenger's (1991) ideas of situated learning and communities of practice. Community of practice is a broad theoretical approach used by many disciplines (Omid and Kislov 2104) which purports that people make meanings about places and

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<sup>13</sup> Viticulture, the growing of viniferous grapes is considered an agricultural practice and the grapes grown as an agricultural product. The wine produced by these grapes is regulated by Agriculture and Agri-Foods Canada. <http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/industry-markets-and-trade/statistics-and-market-information/by-product-sector/processed-food-and-beverages/the-canadian-wine-industry> (accessed August 22, 2013).

their lives through the knowledge and relationships they establish with respect to their practices within a particular social landscape. Ingold (2000) suggests that people do not construct places so much as they dwell within them, that before people can build, manipulate, or construct an environment they must first engage with it. Dwelling in and engaging with an environment involves learning as a process of growth and development. Ingold refers to this process as *enskilment*, the capacity to acquire and develop skills and knowledge within a particular environment or community. In reframing peoples relationship with places and environments, Ingold highlights the importance of privileging the experiences of the people who are engaging with that place and environment, suggesting that "knowledge is grounded in experience" (2000, 11).

Grasseni (2007) builds upon Ingold's concept of *enskilment* by emphasizing that the capacity for skill and knowledge are acquired within certain cultures and places. Although her research focuses specifically on vision as the method for acquiring skill and knowledge, she does acknowledge that seeing is only one way of developing skill and knowledge and that it is part of a complete sensorial experience. What is of particular interest to my research is her suggestion that this *enskilment* is a form of tacit knowledge that is not always visible to observers. Grasseni suggests this skill and knowledge development is socially performed within collectives of communities and histories, similar to what Lave and Wenger (1991) call communities of practice. Grasseni (2009) further describes the capacity to acquire skill and develop knowledge within communities of practice as apprenticeship. Then it is through apprenticeship that people shape an ecology of belonging to a particular social and physical environment. This echoes Lovell's (1998) ideas, described earlier, that belonging to a collective activity or practice provides a sense of a collective identity for those participating in that activity or practice.

Grasseni (2007) provides an example of learning and knowing -apprenticeship- from her research on dairy cattle farmers in the Northern Italian Alps. Here she observes people "watching" in their environment and that this watching is part of their apprenticeship of

acquiring skill and knowledge in the practice of dairy farming. It is situated learning (Lave and Wenger 1991). Grasenni suggests this apprenticeship shapes an ecology of belonging which entails a worldview, a telling of a moral tale. Again, Grasenni stresses that all apprenticeships are multi-sensorial and acknowledges that the farmers also rely on "gut feeling decisions"<sup>14</sup> to learn their task or craft.

Pálsson (1994) provides another example of how enskilment, recognizing the relationship between knowledge and practice, is multi-sensorial and attends to the whole person within a social and physical environment. Pálsson, relating his research on Icelandic fisherman, suggests that "enskilment in *fishing* is not a matter of formal schooling and the internalization of stock knowledge; rather it is achieved through active engagement with the environment" (916). Pálsson also draws on Lave and Wenger's (1991) ideas of situated learning and communities of practice by suggesting that to be a successful fisherman or skipper of the boat one must "attend to the task at hand" (901) while also acquiring skill and knowledge from the "larger community of practice to which they belong" (911).

Pálsson (1994) and Grasenni (2007) both suggest that through apprenticeship, acquiring skills and knowledge by experiencing and engaging in a particular social and physical environment, collective and professional identities are shaped. These ideas are relevant to my research as winemaking for the CV producers is also not a simple matter of formal schooling; it requires them to engage with their particular social and physical environments, their communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) to be successful and to establish a sense of belonging, a sense of place.

The work and ideas of Casey (1996), Ingold (1993, 1996, 2000, 2011), Lovell (1998), and Trubek (2008) all emphasize the notion of place in the human social world is about much more

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<sup>14</sup> Christine Grasenni. *Skilled Visions: Ecologies of Belonging and Sensorial Apprenticeship*. 11th International Conference on Neuroesthetics, Seeing/Knowing. September 6 & 7, 2014. University of California, Berkley. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hgnANBpcGQ> (accessed April 1, 2016)

than geographically prescribed boundaries and physical environments. Firstly, the essence of place is situated in regional and local environments; to culturally construct a place you must first engage with and embody it; it is important to develop a sense of belonging with that place; and place making includes the ethnic heritage and culture experiences and knowledge that people bring to that place.

The work and ideas of Grasenni (2007), Lave and Wenger (1991), and Pálsson (1994) highlight the importance of enskilment, apprenticeship and community of practice to developing a sense of belonging and a sense of place. Place making as a means to understanding the world and one's role in it is a dynamic and fluid process. These are salient concepts to consider as I explore how the wine producers create a sense of place and identity for their products and themselves when they only have a 25 year (or less) history of engaging with the place of CV. How do ideas of engaging with nature shape their ideas about place?

Appadurai (1988b) suggests that when we place the anthropological object of study closer to nature, we risk exoticising the "Other". This is important in considering the implications of place and identity for tourism. Crouch (2000), within the context of tourism, describes places as having atmosphere created by the practices of people at the local, regional level of everyday life. Places that are encountered through a particular practice, such as producing and consuming wine, may then become part of peoples' memory and cultural knowledge; as Crouch suggests, "places are embodied by the way people use and value them" (2000, 71). It is through these memories and cultural knowledge, triggered by a practice or product, that people are able to recall places and their experiences with that place. This is similar to Lovell's position that places are produced through human interaction with a physical environment to produce realms of experience. I argue that this is part of the process of the wine producers in CV as they create a taste of place based on these realms of experiences.

The realms of experience around wine and food can be strong expressions of a region and culture used to differentiate a destination in a global tourism market (Hashimoto and Telfer

1999; Mitchell, Charters and Albrecht 2012). Although the economics of tourism is not a primary focus of my project, wine production and consumption cannot be separated from the wider cultural context in which it takes place. As Demossier (2010) suggests, recent social, economic, and political forces may influence wine's role in shaping identity. Symon (2005) points out that tourism for small wineries, such as those in CV, may be a part of their core business. The question is, do the wine producers of CV see their wines as embodiments and representations of their place and practices, and then by extension, of themselves?

### **Food, Drink and Identity**

Food, drink, and identity, as a field of study and practice, has received increasing attention in anthropology in recent years (e.g. Counihan and Van Esterik 2008; Demossier 2010; James 2005; Paxson 2010; Trubek 2005, 2008). Anthropological studies have shown that food and drink have deeper meanings for people than just providing nutrients to the body. The roots of anthropological studies in cultural food meanings are found in the works of Lévi-Strauss (1969) and Mary Douglas (1966), whom some consider the father and mother of contemporary food studies (Ambrozas 2008; Anderson 2005). In various ways, these two scholars illustrate the connection between food and drink, cultural meanings, cultural differences, and identity.

Lévi-Strauss (1969) theorizes that the cooking process transformed nature into culture, that the function of cooking was to allow people to think about their identity and their place within the cultural realm. Cooking is not only a way to change the flavor or digestibility of food and reduce or neutralize potential toxins, it is a way for people to understand their world. He sees the conventions of particular societies that determine relationships around food and as sharing universal patterns and structures. Lévi-Strauss sees food as an especially appropriate mediator of these relationships because when we engage with food we establish a direct identity between ourselves, as culture, and our food, as nature (Leach 1970).

The question of whether wine is a product of nature or a product of culture remains at the center of discourse on wine production and the wine industry as a whole (Aspler 2006;

Demossier 2010; Van Leeuwen and Seguin 2006). Grapes, as the product of the vine and soil, and therefore of nature, if left to themselves will naturally ferment and produce a juice containing ethanol, a form of alcohol (Johnson 2005). However, I suggest that the making of wine through human intervention during the fermentation process represents a conscious activity by people to transform nature into culture (Lévi-Strauss 1969; Scruton 2009). The process of producing wine is a way for wine producers to make meaning in their lives and directly establish identity for themselves. They connect and interact with nature, the soil, the vine, the grape and transform them into wine. Wine, as a product made for consumption, can then become a powerful symbol and metaphor for embodying and expressing nature and culture, and by extension the identity of the wine producer and the region, to themselves and the world outside of themselves.

Lévi-Strauss is largely considered a structuralist with a focus on uncovering human cultural universals around contrasts and binary opposites (McGee and Warms 2008). The tendency to over-focus on static binary assumptions has been challenged by contemporary academics (Ingold 2011). By presuming the universal, the anthropologist risks missing the subtle nuances and meaningful insights of the subjective experience (Jackson 1998; Ortner 2005; Stoller and Olkes 2005[1990]). Lévi-Strauss did realize that each culture is a product of its own history and its adaptation to their environment. This is important when considering the wine producers of Cowichan Valley (CV). The production of wine, as a process to transform nature into culture, is shaped by the history of the people and the place, and their adaptation to that specific physical and social environment. While the transformative process may be universal, the resulting product - wine, represents literal and symbolic ways to express different identities and create 'a taste of place' that may be used to communicate the cultural knowledge (real or imagined) of that place to others.

Douglas (1966), like Lévi-Strauss, is interested in discovering universals in symbolism. She suggests that the most potent symbols are found in mundane things or ordinary activities.

Food, because all humans require it to survive and because everyone eats and drinks, may be considered one of those mundane everyday things, and cooking food may be considered an ordinary activity in the pursuit of consuming it. Douglas sees the act of performing food preparation as a material and social transformation involving the knowledge and skills of the people. Douglas examines how people gave meanings to reality and how this reality was expressed by their cultural symbols. An example of this is her analysis of the English formal dinner where she found the order of the meal: an appetizer, soup, salad, entrée, dessert, was symbolic of a structure that people used to make meaning in their lives. Douglas (1972) extrapolated this idea to suggest that an individual's whole food system may be structured like a story.

Douglas (1987) is also significant for calling upon anthropology to take up the study of alcoholic drink and its use as a primary research objective. Douglas proposes that historically, anthropologists were always curious about alcohol consumption and recorded it, but it was never a major focus of their primary research. She suggests that anthropologists, unlike other researchers, did not view alcohol and alcohol related practices in the society they were studying as problematic or representing pathology and therefore they did not give it serious academic analysis. Douglas (1987), in her introduction to the edited volume, *Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology*, proposes that anthropologists focus on alcohol and consumption as a medium for constructing social worlds and as a product used to perform the task of ritual, all with an economic consequence to society.

De Garine (2001) updates Douglas's position with his emphasis on alcohol and its consumption related to positive activities within a community, and stresses the importance of cultural variability to the anthropological perspective. De Garine provides an excellent overview of drinking liquids in general and offers up a workable framework for examining why humans drink. He describes the drinking of liquids as a primary human need (greater than that of

eating), performing a biological function which goes beyond nutrition and is related to adapting to environmental conditions and energy expenditure.

De Garine (2001) emphasizes that each culture may have its own drinking behavior, often reflecting markers of social and economic status. He then shifts his focus specifically to alcoholic beverages and states that they have historically been studied from a negative viewpoint (alcoholism, associations with crime and family abuse). Conversely, he also suggests that drinking alcohol may be associated with positive activities and events, such as drinking with meals or at festive events. In my research on wine production and the wine producers of CV, I am interested in what, if any, and how practices may illustrate or demonstrate a positive everyday activity and experience that is representative of the wine and wine producer's identity in CV. Alternatively, I must be open to the possibility of negativity around potentially harmful practices.

I situate my research within Douglas's ideas from the perspective of producers of CV wineries, rather than from consumers. I see the production of wine, similar to Douglas's description of performing food preparation, as a material and social transformation of the knowledge and skills of the people producing the wine. The wine, and the process of making it, becomes a cultural symbol representing a way to make meaning in their lives and express their identity. Producing wine, as a transformative process in making meaning in the wine producers' everyday lives, represents powerful symbolic determinants of their identity and of the place where they live.

The work of Lévi-Strauss and Douglas, despite being overly focused on the formal structural elements, illustrates the powerful relationship between food, drink, and identity. They both demonstrate that it is not only the food or beverage itself but the process of preparing, producing (as part of enskilment [Ingold 1993; Grasenni 2007]), and consuming it that people use to make meaning in their lives. I am interested to see if and how the process of making wine helps the wine producers of CV understand their world and make meaning in their lives.

Pierre Bourdieu's sociological work, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984), is important to the theoretical foundation of my research for introducing a subjective perspective on the structure of symbols. Bourdieu suggests that aesthetic taste, as in the appreciation for consuming certain foods and beverages, is a means to mark and maintain social boundaries between and within different class structures. Bourdieu's theories reflect the idea that power and control in decision making is a vital component of marking and maintaining one's identity. He focuses on class structure, especially in French society, to suggest that taste could be used to mark your position within that society and therefore become a way to identify yourself. His classic example is an analysis of the eating practices and food choices of the working class and the bourgeoisie. Bourdieu uses the phrase 'taste of luxury', which included purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables, and a preference for tasty, health giving foods, to represent the aesthetics of pleasure associated with the freedom of choice that went along with being a member of the elite. Conversely, the working class was concerned with basic survival and focused on foods that were cheap and nutritional, what Bourdieu coined the 'taste of necessity'. One of the weaknesses of Bourdieu's theory of taste as an expression of cultural capital is that individuals', societies', and whole cultures' food taste preferences and food practices can change over time (Warde 1997; Wright et al. 2001). A focus on social class may cause the researcher to miss out on other things that are happening around taste. Korsmeyer (1999) argues that there is a role for explicit social and cultural learning about taste and emphasizes the importance of acknowledging that traditions and cultures are dynamic and fluid concepts with agentive properties. While Bourdieu's theories have been criticized for being 'frenchcentric' and ignoring gender differences, they do contribute to the French ideology that serves as Trubek's (2008, 2005) foundation for the concept of terroir and identity formation that I expand upon in my thesis.

Bourdieu (1984), unlike Douglas and Lévi-Strauss, chooses not to focus on searching for universal symbols, but rather emphasizes a subjective perspective on the structure of symbols.

He suggests that people have agency, albeit within their sociocultural framework (*habitus*) that would include their worldview or cosmology, which enables them to make choices that will influence their behavior. Bourdieu's work on taste and food is useful to my thesis for illustrating the importance of the practices, the people and the places involved. It also illustrates the link between language and the use of metaphors to create a shared meaning for people. Bourdieu acknowledges that when examining peoples' eating practices and food choices it is important to consider all other elements of their lifestyle.

Claude Fischler, in *Food, self and identity* (1988), suggests that food is central to individual identity formation. He builds on the work of Lévi-Strauss and Douglas to describe this complex relationship between food and identity as having two dimensions. The first dimension is the biological approach, where food, eating, and drinking performs a nutritional function, linked to the cultural perspective whereby food or food practices perform a symbolic function. The second dimension links the individual to the collective or the psychological to the social. Fischler acknowledges that this notion of identity formation is problematic due to the 'omnivore's paradox' which he describes as humans' fear of the unknown with their need for variety and novelty in their food choices.

Fischler (2011,1988) believes that the modern eater has become a 'mere consumer' and that an increasing proportion of the population consumes food whose production, history, and origins they know nothing about. This creates a social distance, combined with the physical distance, from the production of food which results in a food without identity. Fischler updates this idea by suggesting that eating has become another form of individual private consumption and that people today are losing this fundamental dimension of everyday nourishment, a dimension that Fischler describes as, "a cultural attachment to commensality" (2011, 530). He reiterates the classic Greek example of how the consumption of wine involved a direct relationship between humans and gods to suggest that commensality is essential for producing bonding, similar to Lovell's (1998) belonging and Crouch's (2000) embodiment, discussed in the

previous section, as an important component for promoting identity either through practice, product or place. The lack of this commensality, belonging, and embodiment would then contribute to a sense of placelessness or a state of having no connection or cultural and experiential knowledge of that practice, product, or place necessary for identity formation.

Is this distance, lack of connection and lack of identity the same for the contemporary wine producer and drinker? Recalling Deroy's (2007) suggestion that wine gives people the sense that they are participating in a deeply rooted culture, I contend that it is not the same. Wine has historically and symbolically been associated with specific places and people (Johnson 2005). It is one of the few consumer products that is most likely organized into sections by country of origin in the stores. This identification by locality has long been a way to differentiate wines for consumers (Coleman 2008). It reinforces the perception, despite any literal taste differences, that the wines from one country are symbolically or metaphorically different from the wines of another country. All of these differences have been important for wine producers to emphasize the distinctiveness of their products, practices, and locations, over others.

Amy Trubek (2008) explores this distinctiveness through the concept of terroir and the taste experience in her book *The Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey Into Terroir*. The notion of taste experience is a key component in my examination of wine producers in CV as it relates to the concept of experiential knowledge that Trubek discusses in her book. She emphasizes the importance of experiential knowledge in the concept of *goût de terroir* or 'taste of place'. Trubek, a cultural anthropologist, professionally trained chef, and local food activist, became fascinated by what peoples' discussions about taste and terroir revealed about what mattered in their community and how they informed their everyday choices. Trubek builds on the French understanding of terroir, which is derived from the Latin root meaning earth. She proposes that the word has many meanings, even for the French, and is often associated with a person's history with a particular place or described as their roots.

Trubek critiques Bourdieu's perspective of taste, taking the identity formation of having "good taste" by flipping the words and the metaphorical meaning to represent "tastes good" (2008, 8). 'Taste' for Trubek, includes more than the physiological sensation of eating and drinking; it encompasses all the human senses as well as the full cognitive and cultural realm elicited by the product to the extent one is capable of experiencing it. 'Place' indicates all the physical characteristics of geography and the scientific elements of geology, climate, and weather. More importantly, 'place' includes the people, their customs and traditions, and their ancestral heritage within a physical and spiritual space. Trubek's research into different food products from different regions around the United States illustrates that a centuries old tradition of terroir is not required for people to construct meaning about their relationships with food and place that shapes their collective or individual identity. I situate my research around this notion, as the wine producers of CV only have a 25 year relationship (less for recent producers) with the terroir of the region. My research explores how these wine producers construct meaning around their relationships with wine and place that shapes their collective and individual identities.

Johnston and Baumann (2010) explore the discourse on contemporary collective and individual identities of consumers in North American in their book *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape*. Although my research focuses on producers rather than consumers, Johnson and Baumann's work is useful to illustrate a growing attempt to democratize foods and foodways that historically were perceived as the sole purview of the elite and reflected a traditional notion of snobbery. This is a pattern that closely mirrors that of wine and wine production (Bernstein 1982; Johnson 2005). Johnston and Baumann discuss tensions created by this growing trend to democratize food, as increasing awareness of and accessibility to, with the consumption of these foods as a way to mark social class and distinguish oneself from others, as originally proposed by Bourdieu (1984) and others. However, the process of democratizing something, making it more available and popular with the masses, serves to

reduce its distinctiveness. Johnston and Baumann's analysis into gourmet foodscapes and social status supports Bourdieu's position that distinction itself is socially and culturally produced and not immune to invention or reinvention. Distinctiveness for a product is lost when claimed as a social marker by the masses.

This apparent paradox between distinctiveness and mass acceptance as a marker of social identity is at the crux of the contemporary wines where the industry has evolved into two discrete industries: commercial wine and fine wine (Swinburn 2013). I am interested to see if this relationship, or tension, exists for the producers of CV. Are they trying to democratize their wines by making them more accessible to a wider audience? How does social class and the notion of distinction shape a sense of identity and meaning for them and their wines? The role of the consumer is important to the producers as they must sell a certain amount of product to be economically viable, but perhaps more so because consumer preferences and behaviors are a way for the producers to validate their practices and beliefs (Douglas and Isherwood 1980; Warde 1997).

The intersubjective relationships between food, drink, and identity are complex, yet offer an important site for anthropological investigation into larger sociocultural issues. Black and Ulin (2013) have taken up the task set out by Douglas (1987) and de Garine (2001) with their recently published *Wine and Culture: Vineyard to Glass*. This edited volume presents a collection of essays focusing on the production and consumption of wine and their relationships in a variety of social and cultural contexts. The social scientists represented in this book place alcohol, specifically wine, at the center of serious investigation and fieldwork.

Of particular relevance to my dissertation is the first section of the book, titled "Rethinking *Terroir*." In Ch. 1, Daynes (2013) focuses on the production of wine, similar to my focus on the wine producers. She supports Trubek's idea that terroir is best understood through physical and cultural environments, suggesting that a bottle of wine is an expression of a place and time and is impossible to reproduce. Daynes highlights the role of people to the process of

making wine, emphasizing that in small vineyards, the vineyard managers and wine makers can be much more involved in the production process.

This theoretical literature suggests that how people interact with food and drink, how it is produced, prepared, displayed, or consumed, is a powerful way to construct meaning and identity. I believe this has direct relevance to my examination of the wine producers of CV. Their attempts to provide knowledge and connection of a place to customers creates an identity for the wine products. This process may then serve as a way for the wine producers to make meaning in their lives, and use this meaning to mark their identity to the outside world and create a local wine culture. A potential danger I am diligently aware of is falling into the post-modern trap of simply stating that everything, including contemporary wine culture, is a social construct. Doing this risks diminishing the real life experiences of my research participants.

### **Wine Cultures**

It has been suggested that the story of wine is a human story beginning with its worship as a supernatural being (Johnson 2005). Wine and its use in ritual has a long history that is woven into the cultural fabric of much of human civilization. The oldest pips (small hard seeds of fruit) from cultivated vines, indicating direct human intervention with nature, were found in Georgia and radiocarbon dated to 7000-5000 BC. Johnson suggests this supports evidence for the earliest viticulture where humans were developing the skill of selecting and nurturing vines to improve the quality and quantity of the fruit. Although it was most likely the effect of the alcohol that first caught the attention of our ancestors, it did not take long for wine to become charged with symbolic meaning. The oldest record (around 3000 BC) that wine was held in special regard or veneration are some perfectly preserved vine cuttings found in the museum of Tbilisi, Georgia. They are believed to represent accoutrements of a burial, as a symbol of worth with the vine cuttings being carried over into the world of the dead where they could be replanted in order to give pleasure once again (Johnson 2005).

The Egyptians were the first to record and celebrate the details of their winemaking process around 2000 to 5000 years ago (Johnson 2005). Excavations from the tomb of King Tutankhamen (d. 1352 BC.) have uncovered wine jars that display a rudimentary form of wine labels with enough detail to meet some present day countries' existing wine label laws (Laska 1977). Some of the jars were inscribed with the year of vintage, the year of King Tut's rule, the name of his winemaker, and the region of King Tut's domain where the wine was from. Place of origin was recognized as a significant feature worthy of being noted on the wine jar. This suggests young King Tut controlled different wine regions and that either himself or possibly the winemaker desired to identify which wines came from where. This may also suggest the possible acknowledgement of different taste characteristics associated with different regions, and an understanding of terroir or that place matters (Trubek 2008, 2005). The information on the clay jars suggests the importance of placing the winemaker's name on the container to signify the contribution of the human hand to crafting the wine. This is sometimes referred to as the myth of the winemaker in contemporary wine cultures concerning the ongoing debate of the roles of nature and culture in the transformation of grapes into wine. Yet Trubek (2008) notes this role of the human contribution is an important feature of terroir and one I believe is important to the wine producers of Cowichan Valley (CV). I discussed this idea of the myth of the winemaker with many of my research participants and will address their responses in a later chapter.

Wine, along with olive oil, became powerful stimulants to trade in the Mediterranean region around 500 BC (Johnson 2005). More than just a simple commodity of economic exchange, wine, because of its pleasure inducing properties, was instrumental in the exchange of ideas at the time. The exchange of wine and ideas from different places became incorporated into and reason to hold festivities and special occasions, some with religious significance. The Greeks worshipped wine and the wine God Dionysus, believing that when you drank wine you had God inside of you taking away all your cares.

Wine had become so ingrained into the everyday life of the time that when the Greeks expanded into Italy they brought vines with them (Johnson 2005). Grape growing and wine production had become a profitable form of agriculture and trade. What is interesting, and significant for my research, is that the wine producers and drinkers could distinguish differences between the wines traded between Italy and Greece; they were able to discern quality differences and flavor profiles that distinguished the taste of a place. Wine, as a trade commodity and a stimulant for exchanging ideas between different people and places, would accompany the spread of Christianity and colonial expansion into the 20th century.

This spread of Christianity, colonial expansion, and immigration, all contributed to the origins of wine production and resulting commercial wine industry in Canada (Aspler 2006; Rowe 1970). Tony Aspler, a leading authority on Canadian wines and the wine industry, has suggested that the "history of the grape is closely bound with the history of Canada" (1999, 5). Despite early references to local vines, such as Leif Ericsson's proclamation of discovering *Vinland* in 1001 A.D., to stories of Jacques Cartier finding wild grape vines growing along the St Lawrence in 1535, the wine industry in Canada did not begin to establish literal and metaphorical roots until the 19th century in Ontario (Aspler 1999; Rowe 1970).

In British Columbia's Okanagan Valley, Canada's second major commercial wine production area, it was in the 1860's that Father Charles Pandowsky, a Catholic priest, planted a vineyard to supply his Oblate mission and the settlers with wine (Aspler 2006). It was not until the 1930s that the wine industry took shape in Canada's most westerly province, largely the result of Prohibition and the Depression almost destroying the Ontario wineries (Aspler 1999). The first vine plantings to test the commercial viability of wine production in CV occurred in 1983 (Vielvoye and Warner 1992).

Two major political and social events were to spur on a burgeoning interest in wine production in Canada in the late 1980s and early 1990s: the signing of the Canada/USA Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 1988 and the establishment of the Vintners Quality Alliance (VQA)

standard for Canadian wines (Aspler 1999, 2006). The FTA, together with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, meant Canada had to abandon protection it offered its wine industry. While many producers felt threatened by these agreements, many responded by reaffirming their belief in their capacity to produce premium wines. To adjust to these new trade rules and to better assure competitive wines in the marketplace, Ontario and British Columbia growers with the support of the federal and provincial governments undertook a major program to establish new vineyards and plant them with the finest *Vitis Vinifera* grape varieties that suited their particular environment.

This is the situation that gave rise to the wine industry in CV which I further address in Ch. 4, and reinforces Demossier's (2010) suggestion that recent social, economic, and political forces may influence wine's role in shaping identity. Demossier identifies the wine producer "as the mediator in the expression of terroir" (2010, 685), representing a shift from the geographical significance of place, to the important role of people in the concept of terroir. My research seeks to continue this story by exploring how the wine producers interact with their physical and social environments to 'create a taste of place' through their products and practices that reflect powerful sociological and geographical symbolic aspects of their identity. This identity may then be used to communicate the cultural knowledge (real or imagined) of that place to others.

Batcheldor (1990) suggests that there is a naturalness and a purity to the beverage that connects us to our ancestors, the earth and ourselves. MacLean's statement that "When we share good wine with friends, we also share what makes us human: sensual pleasure, conversation, and connection" (2006, 195) stresses the concept of our cultural attachment to commensality (Fischler 2011). In considering wine as a human story it is important to understand the concept of cultural context, that particular stories need be considered within a historical context of time, space and place; there is no one human story. Yet, I believe the story of wine has universal appeal. Wine is produced in 63 countries on six of the seven continents (Coleman 2008). And while I agree with Trubek's (1995) assertion that the ubiquitous nature of food in the

contemporary human experience has rendered it an ordinary and commonplace experience (at least within a North American context) I argue that wine and its production, despite its growing appeal and consumption by a larger global demographic<sup>15</sup>, retains a powerful connection to literal and metaphorical roots for many of the producers in CV. The growth and recognition in Vancouver Island and CV as a wine producing region of some significance is evident by two recent publications, *BC Coastal Wine Tour Guide* (Schreiner 2011) and *Island Wineries of British Columbia* (Hynes 2011).

### **Placelessness**

The idea of placelessness has been briefly mentioned above but warrants further discussion as to how it relates to my thesis. Under the section of 'Place and Identity' placelessness was introduced in a macro-level context as a possible consequence of the process of globalization where the significance of peoples' lives within a specific place was reduced or considered to be of negligible relevance to the new global order (Appadurai 1996). This placelessness may be the result of civil wars and the displacement of large groups of people, or the shifting or total elimination of politically prescribed boundaries where questions of national identity are raised. If, as Casey (1996) suggests, the essence of place is regional and local, it may be useful to consider the essence of placelessness in terms of regional and local as well.

An example of this may be the case of the refugee who was forced to flee his home and native country due to war and political turmoil. The refugee may not have a sense of belonging (Lovell 1998) to where he/she now lives. They would not yet have had the time or opportunity to engage with their new environment (Ingold 2000, 2011), and their new surrounding may not embody any cultural meaning to them (Crouch 2000). Their ethnic heritage and cultural traditions (Trubek 2008) may not only be irrelevant to where they now live but they may also be

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<sup>15</sup> Recent newspaper articles include stories such as "India's wineries seek to change the tastes of millions" (The Globe and Mail, December 23, 2011) and "Fraudsters target China's rich wine snobs" (Edmonton Journal, January 3, 2011).

problematic to their continued safety and survival in this new place. All of these factors may contribute to a sense of placelessness, that you are out of place.

Placelessness was mentioned in the section 'Food, Drink, and Identity' in reference to the distance and lack of connection many contemporary eaters experience with the foods and beverages they consume and to where those products were produced. The lack of this relationship of knowing where your food is from and any knowledge of who produces it and how it is produced would then contribute to a sense of placelessness, or a state of having no connection, nor cultural and experiential knowledge, of that practice, product, or place necessary for identity formation (Trubek 2008, 2005). The product itself could then also be described as representing placelessness: where it is from has no contextual or cultural knowledge relevant to its consumption. This may be the case for many mass produced foods of the industrial food chain (Belasco 1999; Trubek 2005, 2008). They represent no particular place.

This placelessness may also contribute to a lack of commensality, of sharing and experiencing with others that Fischler (2011) describes as a cultural attachment that humans have to a fundamental dimension of everyday physiological and spiritual nourishment. While drinking alcohol has been described as both an individual act and a social fact (Turmo 2001), in most societies the consumption of alcoholic beverages is part of a social event or communal gathering (de Garine 2001; Wilson 2005) and to drink alone is considered anti-social and representative of deviant or medically pathological behavior (Paradis, Demers and Picard 2010).

Wine, as a consumable product, has a long history of being a pleasant beverage, a safe alternative to contaminated drinking water, a compliment to food and celebratory events, and a way to connect with the Gods (Johnson 2005). But wine also has an almost equally long history as a political and economic commodity (Coleman 2008; Pellechia 2006; Simpson 2011). Therefore, it is only reasonable to acknowledge that wine, as a commodity, is not immune to the forces of a consumer driven society and the elements of the industrial food chain. In this sense it

would be possible to produce a wine that is representative of placelessness. In fact there are many wines that are designed and produced in laboratories specifically with the intent to appeal to a mass market by honing in on the human palate and olfactory system's insatiable desire for sweet and fruity flavors and aromas (Parr, White and Heatherbell 2003; Vaudour 2002). These wines are often described by wine sommeliers, journalists, scholars, and experts as being placeless, as not representing any geographical place or environment (McCoy 2005). They could be from anywhere and made by anybody. A good example of this is the story of Yellow Tail Shiraz (Ulin 2013; Vesethin 2008), a story that many of my research participants were aware of as Yellow Tail Shiraz has been one of the most popular and top selling wines in British Columbia, the province of my field site, for many years.<sup>16</sup> Charges from wine experts of a generic, chemically enhanced wine, thought to represent placelessness, bring up questions of authenticity around place, people, and practice in my exploration of the wine producers of CV, a subject I will now turn to.

### **Questions of Authenticity**

Scholarly discourse and consumer behavior regarding questions of authenticity "possess a surprising social resonance at this moment in history" (Fillitz and Saris 2013). Notions of authenticity imply a relationship to history, traditions, and specific places. For example, products of a given locality, or products of terroir (Trubek 2008; Warneir 2013), result in a unique product that cannot be produced anywhere else and can therefore be classified as authentic. The product may be defined by its region of origin, the materials or ingredients used in its production, the production process, or by the local people involved. Often inherent in this notion of authenticity are perceived connections to an ideology encompassing ideas of old fashioned, historical, or traditional (Trubek 2008).

Despite recent interest in this notion of authenticity, Fillitz and Saris (2013) point out that anthropology has long had a professional interest and connection to authenticity.

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<sup>16</sup> In fact Yellow Tail Shiraz has been one of the largest selling wines in all of North America.

Experiencing the 'other' and parts of their material culture has been recognized as contributing to the early development of anthropology as an academic field of study (Said 1978). Early traveler tales and expeditions often included descriptions of the geography and its connections to the landscape, climate, ways of life, and artistic expressions as a means to explain and justify differences between themselves and the people they encountered. This notion of rendering the strange familiar and the familiar strange placed the researcher in a position of, as Warnier suggests "a certificate of authenticity" (2013, 79). Authenticity became a condition of social differentiation between us and them, or what is referred to as "othering" (Mursic 2013, 55).

Appadurai (1996) and his writings on globalization are central to the contemporary culture of authenticity. He suggests that the modern movement of people, products, and ideas of the late 20th century has fostered a quest for authenticity at three different levels, global, national, and local, and that globalization has in fact produced an increase in regionalism and interest in local identity. During this period, issues of identity became especially problematic as people sought out their roots to discover where they had come from. McCone, Morris, and Kiely (1995) argue that the contemporary fascination with the past and things authentic is a product of this late 20th century phenomenon. This re-emergence of regional place, as an expression of identity, represents a growing awareness and resistance to the deterritorialization brought on by global change. Bendix (1997) has described the contemporary quest for authenticity as "a longing for the modern and the anti-modern at the same time" (Fillitz and Saris 2013, 15).

This desire for new things or experiences that somehow represent connections to historical and traditional places, processes, and people as a way to make meaning and symbolize social status has created the "paradox of authenticity" (Fillitz and Saris 2013; Warnier 2013). Warnier (2013) challenged the notion of authenticity by asking how a product can be authentic when it is a commodity of a global capitalist market system. As something becomes recognized as authentic, it also becomes more accessible for appropriation, modification, and consumption by others, therefore reducing its authenticity. The original symbolic act of authentic

consumption as a means of social differentiation then may become a symbol of homogeneity.

McCone, Morris, and Kiely (1995), in their book *Scotland the Brand*, go so far as to suggest that in the pursuit of authenticity there is the danger of creating a past that never really existed. They describe such iconic products as the Scottish tartans and Scotch whiskey as products of commercialized culture manipulated and controlled by modern institutions like the national government and departments of heritage rather than as genuine products of history or tradition. They argue that authenticity is conferred by the presentation and interpretation of the object and not the object itself. One example they offer that is of interest to my research is to suggest that the wine tasting experience is more important than the actual wine. This reflects the idea that authenticity is not a quality that exists in products, places, or people but rather views authenticity as a cultural construct (Warnier 2013).

Bigenho (2002) distinguishes different forms when considering questions of authenticity. Bigenho, an anthropologist and musician, describes experiential authenticity as exiting in the whole sensory experience and one that is often shared with others. Cultural-historical authenticity stems from the way an object or experience is represented in relation to a historical or cultural history of the object or experience. This form makes a claim to a connection with traditions or origins deemed relevant to the object or experiences and power is derived from this claim. Lastly, unique authenticity is directly associated with the individual(s) who created the object or experience, their ideas, beliefs, and innovative practices that may have gone into the personal production of the object or experience. Although Bigenho's different forms of authenticity are based on her research with different forms of art and peoples' experiences with them, I believe these distinctions are useful to my exploration of CV wine producers. As Xavier from Cherry Point Estate Wines (one of my research participants) explained to me "If you give two artists two brushes and the same paints, they will produce different art, same with wine. I have the same grapes but the wines are totally different. I mean winemaking is really art." Here, Xavier reveals some of his personal beliefs about the practice of

making wine which may speak to a sense of unique authenticity, that his wine represents the unique authenticity of his winemaker in the personal production of Cherry Point wines.

Are these notions of authenticity or this "paradox of authenticity" relevant to my research on the wine producers of Cowichan Valley (CV)? As wine producers of limited quantities of product in an emerging wine region with little history or tradition behind the practice, they presently have little national or global identity or exposure. In fact, as I explore in this dissertation, it may be suggested that they even have very little regional or local identity to contribute to a sense of authenticity. Do these factors, contrarily, then make their products and practices authentic? Is there any value to the concept of authenticity in the everyday lives of the wine producers in CV, or as Mursic suggests, should authenticity be abolished as "a notion good for absolutely nothing" (2013, 58)? I will keep these questions, and the theoretical framework I have outlined, in mind as I introduce the places, people, and practices in the following chapters, and begin to examine how these elements intersect to create a sense of identity or taste of place for the wine producers of CV.

## Chapter 4

### **Place, People, and Practice: Early Formations in Cowichan Valley**

Wineries are an appropriate entity for exploring a taste of place in Cowichan Valley (CV). Wineries can be perceived as physical places, consisting of buildings, vineyards, and fields located at specific geographic locations on a map (see Map 5.1). At the same time they represent people: proprietors, winemakers, and others who live and work at vineyards whom I refer to as wine producers throughout this dissertation. Wineries are also representative, literally and symbolically, of a practice, the transformation of *Vitis Vinifera* grapes into wine.

While it is true that the wineries, as an entity representing all three components of place, people, and practice, only have a 25 - to 30 - year history in CV, it is important to acknowledge that as individual components, each has historical and/or sociocultural context that at a macrolevel provides context to the shaping of the individual winery's identity. Before exploring the intersection of place, people, and practice, I discuss how each component's historical and/or sociocultural context is relevant to creating a taste of place for the CV wineries.

#### **The Place: Cowichan Valley**

As introduced in Ch. 2 under field site description, Cowichan Valley (CV) is a real and an imagined place within the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. It is real because, as Ingold (2000) proposes, people dwell there and it is a place where realms of experience (Lovell 1998) occur for those people. Yet the CV, as characterized in my research, is also an imagined place (Anderson 2006) because it does not have any defined or ascribed political or geographic boundaries that recognize it as a wine producing region.

As part of Vancouver Island, the geologic history of CV consists of 375 million years of development by volcanic eruptions and plate tectonics (Yorath and Nasmith 1995). At 450 kilometers (km) long and an average width of 70 km, Vancouver Island is the largest island located on the west coast of North America. Through the millions of years of volcanism,

sediment accumulation, mountain building, glaciation, and erosion, CV has evolved to become one of the most fertile, nutrient rich farmland regions on Vancouver Island. Many soils in the valley that are of the Qualicum type, gravelly loam sand textured, are particularly well suited to wine production because of their drainage properties. These soil types are not generally suitable for more traditional agricultural products such as vegetable and grain crops (Vielvoye and Warner 1992).

Located on the eastern side of the large mountain ranges that dissect the length of the Island and situated near the 49th parallel, CV has a mild Mediterranean style climate with some of the warmest median temperatures in Canada (Arnold 2011). Cowichan Valley's geographic location, coupled with its geological makeup, presents the opportunity for a wine industry to exist here. However, despite the long warm summer days and short cool nights, CV wineries and vineyards are still located at the northern extreme of global *Vitis Vinifera* grape production with a shorter, cooler growing season than more southerly locations. For example, a standard rule of thumb in viticulture is that it takes approximately 100 days after flowering for grapes to ripen. In the CV, the standard required is between 120 to 150 days for grapes to fully ripen on the vine (Arnold 2011). This means that only certain *vinifera* varieties in particular microclimates will successfully grow here and be able to produce the drinkable quality table wines required for commercial production. As I explore later, this not only affects the literal taste of the wines that help create the wineries identities but possibly their symbolic identity as well.

### **The People: The First Inhabitants**

While the 100 Euro-Canadian settlers who arrived in Cowichan Bay aboard the H.M.S. Hecate in 1862 (Dougan 1973) would forever alter the landscape of Cowichan Valley (CV), it was First Nations' people who were first attracted to the region's generous, mild climate and its abundant food resources. Cowichan First Nations' presence, representing the traditional *Hul'qumi'num* peoples, is dated to approximately 5000 years ago and they represent the largest single First Nations community in British Columbia (Marshall 1999). The Cowichan Tribes have

been and continue to be involved in shaping the identity of the CV as an emerging wine producing region over the past 25 years. The term Cowichan is an anglicized version of their native word *Quwustson* which translates into "warm land" (Marshall 1999, 7). The literal use of "Cowichan" and its symbolic reference to "warm land" are part of creating an emerging and distinctive identity around the wineries for many of the wine producers of CV.

One example of the Cowichan Tribes early involvement in shaping the wine industry that reflected their First Nations' cultural identity was when they played host to the inaugural Vancouver Island Wine Festival in 1999 (Stanfield 1999). This event, held at their Cowichan Native Village, was an evening gala where guests enjoyed a traditional Coast Salish feast before an awards presentations. It is also well documented in the region and the local wine industry that individual Cowichan Tribe members have been picking and selling blackberries to many of the area wineries to make a port-style dessert wine for a number of years (Ring 2011, Schreiner 2011, Wilson 2004). The significance of this involvement is highlighted by the current owner's comment, "... the berries come - children bring them, children from the First Nations, everybody brings them at the end of summer. Very nice ripe, wild berries and we buy them, one, two, three pounds at a time from the people that bring them. It is a tradition." (Xavier, Cherry Point). While the blackberry port style wines are not made from *vinifera* grapes and were therefore not a focal point of my research, these products, and by extension the contributions of some of the Cowichan Tribe members, were and continue to be important to the success of many CV wineries. At a wine release event held at Cherry Point winery that I was invited to attend during my primary field site visit, one of the original owners of Cherry Point suggested that she and her husband would not have been able to purchase their retirement property in Florida if not for the success of their Cowichan Blackberry Dessert Wine. It was also suggested to me by one of my study participants<sup>17</sup>, that in the late 1990's Cherry Point may have sold 5000 cases of this dessert

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<sup>17</sup> In conversation with David Godfrey of Godfrey Brownell Vineyards, one of my research participants. September 12, 2013.

wine alone, a very large quantity of one style of wine for any of the producers of CV. The success of Cherry Point's Cowichan Blackberry Dessert Wine continues today as the current owner of the winery informed me that it was selected as one of the gifts, representative of local culture, to be given away to dignitaries at the 2010 Winter Olympics held in Vancouver, British Columbia.<sup>18</sup>

Possibly the most significant contribution of the Cowichan First Nations to the CV wine culture and emerging wine industry occurred in April of 2004 when they, through their Khowutzun Development Corporation (KDC), purchased Cherry Point Vineyards from the original owners. The acquisition of the winery was made to promote economic diversification for the Band and to provide some direct employment opportunities to Band members (Martens 2004). The move into the wine business was also seen as a way for the KDC to generate future growth for the industry on Vancouver Island that would have the potential to increase economic opportunity and sustainability for all Cowichan Tribe members. This longer-term objective was emphasized by one of the KDC's project coordinators when he stated: "KDC is hoping Cherry Point will serve up a future for Cowichan Tribe members. We looked at the fact that it is not just going to create wages, it is going to create careers." (Wilson 2004, B1-B2).

However, the KDC's decision to purchase a winery and become wine producers themselves may also be viewed as an opportunity to increase the Band's exposure and promote a positive economic and cultural identity to their own community and to a wider audience, including wine consumers. The Band's Chief and KDC executives made no secret that they were inspired by and hoping to model their plan and subsequent success on the Osoyoos Indian Band's Nk'Mip Winery in the Okanagan Valley of central British Columbia. In a previously published article<sup>19</sup>, I argued that the Osoyoos Indian Band successfully used their culture, past and present, and cultural identity to create and promote a product: wine. At the same time, they

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<sup>18</sup> In conversation with Xavier Bonilla of Cherry Point, one of my research participants. June 8, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> For a review of the Osoyoos Indian Band and Nk'Mip Winery story, see Hammer 2011b. Nk'Mip: Creating a Taste of Place. *Totem: The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology* Vol. 19(1):92-108.

have used that product to promote their culture and cultural identity to others. This illustrates de Garine's (2001) position that studies of alcohol may be representative of positive ideas and behaviors for many people and communities in how they make meaning in their lives and how they use a product and information to promote a cultural identity to others.

An example of promoting this identity to others occurred in August of 2009 when the Director of Marketing and Product Development for Aboriginal Tourism BC arranged for writers and photographers from Europe and the United States to visit Cherry Point Vineyards and the Quw'utsun Cultural and Conference Centre which were both owned and operated by Cowichan Tribes (Bainas 2009). The tour was part of an initiative to show local markets and the world that Aboriginal tourism, specifically in this case the Cowichan Tribes and Cherry Point Winery and Vineyards, can offer exciting and new holiday options. The intent was to build the awareness of the Aboriginal cultural tourism product using the winery and the wine to get more people interested in learning about and sharing the Cowichan Tribes' experiences, such as those on display at the Quw'utsun Cultural and Conference Centre.

The KDC anticipated spending \$900,000 over the first three years on capital improvements at the winery (Wilson 2004). These would include developing a catering facility, a new patio, a new access road, and upgrading the pavilion building. A new sign and logo was created for Cherry Point Vineyards that included a symbolic image representing the Cowichan First Nations Tribes (Image 4.1). A new brochure was produced using the same logo. The front of the brochure also prominently featured a photograph of three Cowichan Tribe members wearing new winery shirts with the same distinctive logo on them.

The back of the brochure highlighted some historic information and emphasized key marketing points, such as "Home of the World Famous Cowichan Blackberry Port" along with special events, such as "Traditional First Nation Salmon Bakes." The cultural symbols, images, and messages of the new signage and brochure illustrate the Cowichan Tribes' attempt to



**Image 4.1** A new sign for Cherry Point Vineyards after Cowichan Tribes purchased the winery and vineyards with a First Nation's round symbol in the middle. Author's photo.

use and promote their identity along with the marketing of their wines, similar to the model used by the Osoyoos Indian Band (Hammer 2011b). Despite these actions and well intentioned plans for economic diversification and long term employment and career development for its members, the Cowichan Tribes' ownership of Cherry Point Winery and Vineyard ended in 2009 with the sale to its current owners.

I explore this period, from 2004 to 2009, because this five year time span was a significant and important part of the CV wine industry's short history and the Cowichan Tribes contribution integral to the emerging identity of the wines and the region. I was interested to see if I could find out more about their years of ownership, what it meant to them as a community and to their members. I was also curious to find out why they sold the winery at that time. Early on in my main field site visit, I stopped in to the Cowichan Tribes' Band office and introduced myself and explained my research project to the receptionist. I suggested that I believed that their five year ownership of Cherry Point Winery was an important part in the development of the wine industry here in the CV and was hoping to find out more about it.

I was directed to the Lands Department behind the main administrative building to speak to an individual there. A staff member informed me that they did not really know much about that period of the Cherry Point Winery ownership as they (the Band administrators) were only involved in the land transaction with the real estate company. A separate company had been formed to run the winery and that company no longer existed and it was suggested that that information most likely sits on a shelf somewhere and they did not know where that could be. They essentially stated that the people involved with that company are long gone, that there is no information available, and that the Cowichan Tribes actually had very little to do with the operation of the winery as they were only the funding and processing agent for this separate company.

Curious about this lack of information concerning an event that I had originally considered significant and important to the Cowichan Tribes and their members, their possible cultural identity, and to the local wine industry, I persisted in asking a few more questions of the staff member from the Lands Department. While they agreed with me that the event should be considered worthy of significance to the CV wine industry, it was reiterated that there was not much to tell. They did however, suggest a couple of times during our conversation that the whole venture did not go well. It was mentioned that there were politics involved and that it was not a good experience for the Band. Although the nature of political issues involved was not elaborated on, it was implied that internal Band politics affected the venture, illustrating the importance of considering political issues in the construction of wine and wine culture (Demossier 2010; Farmer 2013). It was also suggested that there may have been water issues; that at times there was not enough water for the vineyard and that wells had to be dug on the property which also posed problems. On a positive note, they did mention the significance of the blackberries and the Cowichan Tribe children picking and selling them to the Cherry Point Winery, a practice that continues to this day. Somewhat discouraged by the lack of information

available, I thanked the staff member for their time and as I left the Band offices considered my options for pursuing this avenue of my research.

The following month, I decided to try a visit directly to the Khowutzun Development Corporation offices which were located within the Quw'utsun Cultural and Conference Centre. I again introduced myself and my intentions with my research project to the administrative person who greeted me at the front door. They quickly admitted knowing nothing about that period or the history behind the transaction of the winery despite it being a fairly recent large scale economic project for this very development branch of the Cowichan Tribes. It was suggested I speak directly with the current Chief of the Cowichan Tribes as he was also the Chief at the time of the original purchase of Cherry Point Winery in 2004. I was directed back to the main Band administrative offices where I was instructed to see the Chief's personal administrative assistant. After introducing myself and my project, the administrative assistant expressed some interest and agreed that the five year period of Cherry Point Winery ownership was a substantial time period in the Cowichan Valley's wine industry development.

The administrative assistant then informed me that the Chief was on leave for the month and would not be available. It was suggested that I draft a list of questions and things that I was interested in and email them directly to the Chief and to cc them on the email so they could follow up on my inquiry. This is a practice I was familiar with from my research with the Osoyoos Indian Band and Nk 'Mip Winery (Hammer 2011b) where I had to follow a similar procedure. Unfortunately, unlike my experience with the Osoyoos Indian Band, I never heard back from the Cowichan Tribe's Chief or the administrative assistant despite my personal visits to the Band offices and email inquiries. At this point I decided not to pursue this avenue of research although I still believe that First Nations people of CV have contributed and continue to contribute to the 'taste of place' and the cultural identity of the local wine industry there. This will be illustrated in the next chapter when I discuss the wineries and people that participated in my study.

This lack of direct information also illustrates the importance of seeking out local archival documentation, such as the file folder of newspaper articles and clippings related directly to the wine industry and its people in CV, that I found at the Cowichan Valley Museum and Archives in Duncan. These documents enabled me to partially reconstruct some of the Cowichan Tribes involvement and contributions to the emerging wine industry where firsthand accounts and records were unavailable to me.

### **The Practice: Wine Production Beginnings**

Dennis Zanatta could be affectionately referred to as the 'Godfather' of the Cowichan Valley (CV) wine industry (Rusland 2008). 'Godfather' is used here with respect and reverence for a man considered a pioneer who willingly gave of his time, energy, knowledge, and land, to help establish the CV as a commercial wine growing region. David Godfrey, one of my study participants and neighbor to the Zanatta winery and vineyards confirmed this status, "Dennis was always willing to share information and to help you out if he could." Zanatta, an Italian-born farmer's son, came to Canada in 1950 and later purchased a dairy farm near Duncan in the CV in 1958 (Schreiner 2011). Although Zanatta was in the stone and tile business, the dairy farm had an existing orchard on it which indicated to him that wine grapes may also grow there. Having grown up in northern Italy and accustomed to many families having their own plots of grapes to make wine, Zanatta planted some grape vines for his own use. After obtaining a degree in plant science from the University of British Columbia, one of Zanatta's daughters went to Northern Italy to study winemaking with a relative in the local wine industry there (Hynes 2011). This highlights a direct link to the centuries old wine making traditions of the 'Old World', that Deroy (2007) suggests some people experience when they engage with wine and wine culture. It also illustrates a connection to the Zanatta ancestral family roots of producing a particular style of wine, floral and fruity whites along with sparkling wines that represents their Italian winemaking and cultural heritage. This follows Gieryn's (2000) notion that people may model new places in the images of where they came from. As Trubek (2008) suggests, the

relationships to traditional family practices and ancestral ethnic heritage are part of considering 'place' when creating a new identity for the vineyard, winery, and the types of wines they are known for now producing and excelling at in the CV. Vigneti Zanatta<sup>20</sup> was to become the first commercial vineyard (established in 1989) and winery using *Vinifera* grapes in CV, bottling and selling their first vintage in 1992 (Schreiner 2011).

Vigneti Zanatta would also go on to become the first farm-gate winery on Vancouver Island (Gidney 1992) and one of the first wineries in all of the province of British Columbia to have a coveted 'J' license which is a permit that allowed Vigneti Zanatta to sell wine by the glass when accompanied by food sold in their own restaurant located in the same building as their tasting room (Price 1998). These accomplishments were recognized early on by the emerging wine industry in the CV when the Zanattas were honored with a special pioneering award for founding the wine-making industry in the Valley at the inaugural Vancouver Island Wine Festival held in September of 1999 (Stanfield 1999). These events are significant for illustrating Vigneti Zanatta's role in the early development of the CV wine industry and Zanatta's Italian heritage that continues today. This also represents how places (CV as a wine production region) are created where events happen (Casey 1996) and that these events shape a community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). They also highlight the importance of considering the sociocultural context in which they occurred. As Demossier (2010) suggests, recent social, economic, and political forces may influence wine's role in shaping identity. The farm-gate and 'J' license were authorized and regulated by the BC provincial government but it was earlier political interests and government initiatives that were to encourage Zanatta with his personal wine experimentation and support the development of a commercial wine industry in CV.

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<sup>20</sup> Vigneti Zanatta was not one of my research participants as they did not respond to my requests to participate but their role is paramount in shaping the Cowichan Valley wine industry.

## 1. The Duncan Project

In 1981, John Vielvoye, the BC provincial Ministry of Agriculture's grape specialist from Kelowna, was receiving numerous inquiries about the possibility of establishing vineyards on Vancouver Island (Schreiner 2011). During that same year, Vielvoye was part of a BC Land Commission exploratory mission to Cowichan Valley (CV) concerning the suitability of growing grapes in that region. Vielvoye and the Commission members found themselves at the Zanatta property where after some discussion, Zanatta offered up his property as a test site for commercial *Vinifera* grape production under the supervision of the BC Ministry of Agriculture. This was the origin of *The Duncan Project* (Vielvoye and Warner 1992). The purpose of the project was to determine if *Vinifera* grapes could be successfully grown in the cool coastal climate of the CV to produce commercial quality wines. In 1983, 31 varieties of grapes were planted to begin the experimental process.

The project proceeded through trial and error, winter frost damage, the ripping out and replanting of vines until 1989 when the ministry decided to stop funding and supporting the grape trials (Schreiner 2011). In their summary report of the project, Vielvoye and Warner suggest that "The Duncan Project was not long enough or funded at a level which would permit the assessment of wines produced from mature vines" (1992, 18). The authors provided 12 comments addressing issues such as soil types, irrigation requirements, climate data, pruning practices, varieties planted, and tasting panels. Their most interesting statement relevant to my research is that "Assessing the suitability of a region for production of commercial quantities of desirable wine or fresh market grapes normally requires 20 to 30 years" (1992, 18). This statement is significant because the timeframe proposed by Vielvoye and Warner brings us to the present time of my research and dissertation (1983 to 2013, which is 30 years) and might suggest that the current grape growers and wine producers of CV have had enough time to figure out what varieties grow best under what soil and climate conditions. However, the authors continue on in their report by speculating that even after this time period there would most

likely remain "many questions regarding variety selection, cropping levels, training systems to use, and wine styles possible" (1992, 18).

My research suggests that these questions and levels of experimentation continue on today as the wine producers strive to create a 'taste of place' for the CV wineries. This suggests that The Duncan Project served as ground zero for establishing a community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991) for wine production, as a social and physical place for learning to begin. It highlights that the process of enskilment and apprenticeship (Grasenni 2007; Ingold 1993, 2000; Pállson 1994), the growth and development of skill and knowledge by engaging with your social and physical environment, may take a long time in order to be successful and create a collective identity.

Yet, before the first CV wineries bottled and sold their first vintage, there were other major political and social events that were to spur a burgeoning interest in wine production in CV and, indeed, all of Canada. I present these events as they play a significant role in shaping the development of the CV wine industry and the literal and symbolic identities of the wineries and their wine producers.

## II. North American Free Trade Agreement and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

In the 1980s, the BC wine industry largely consisted of a small number of Okanagan-based grape growers and wineries that as Arnold describes, formed an "uneasy partnership ... protected from outside competition by a wall of preferential pricing mechanisms" (2011, 4). During the same time period, the Canadian government was committed to gradually phasing out discriminatory trade practices with its largest trading partner, the United States (US). In 1988, the Canadian and US governments ratified the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and signed the agreement the following year (naftanow.org 2012). NAFTA, along with Canada's participation in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (now the World Trade Organization [gatt.org 2013]) meant Canada had to abandon the protection it offered its wine industry. While some producers felt threatened by these agreements, many responded by

reaffirming their belief in their capacity to produce premium wines (Aspler 2006, 1999). To adjust to these new trade rules and to better assure competitive wines in the marketplace, Ontario and British Columbia growers, with the support of the federal and provincial governments undertook a major program to establish new vineyards and plant them with the finest grape varieties that suited their particular environment.

The challenge for the BC wine industry at the time was that they did not make very good wine (speaks to literal taste) and the fear was that without government protection or support, financial ruin was imminent for the wine producers of the Okanagan valley (Arnold 2011). As previously mentioned above under "The Place", Canada in general is considered to lay at the northern climatic extreme for growing and ripening grapes and because of the possibility of numerous days of below freezing temperature in an Okanagan winter, only the hardiest grape varieties were used by the wine producers at that time period. Those varieties, while being hardy, did not produce the high quality dry table wines required to compete with the newly arriving, NAFTA affected, low cost wine imports from the US and other wine producing countries from around the world. To address this challenge, Arnold states "The solution was the Grape and Wine Sector Adjustment Program. Twenty-eight million dollars was allocated to helping growers replant their vineyards with high quality *Vinifera* vines" (2011, 4). Improved quality was now a focus for the BC wine producers and in an attempt to implement and regulate this direction, while still providing the industry some government protection, the BC wine producers decided to create their own Vintners Quality Alliance program in 1990 similar to the one that had been established by the Ontario wine industry (bcvqa.ca 2013).

### III. British Columbia Vintners Quality Alliance BCVQA

The BCVQA program (as was the Ontario system) is modeled after the French *Appellation d' Origine Contrôlée* (AOC) established in 1935 and Italy's *Denominazione di origine controllata* instituted in 1963. The BCVQA program is an appellation of origin system designed to guarantee that any wine bearing the designation is produced from 100% BC grown

grapes and that the wine meets minimum quality requirements (Schreiner 2011). The program was industry operated, by a handful of Okanagan producers, until 2005 when the BC provincial government took over responsibility for administering the program under the banner of the British Columbia Wine Authority (BCWA). The BCWA describes its program criteria:

Wines which are free from specified faults and meeting the other requirements and technical specifications set out in the Regulation are then permitted to utilize the BC VQA appellation on their labels. This also permits them to use certain other regulated terms, including certain geographical indicators. (bcvqa.ca 2013)

The wording in this description is vague with the underlying tone of a bureaucratic government document, "specified faults," "other requirements," "set out in the Regulation." These phrases are ambiguous and open to interpretation by those in control (government bureaucrats) who may be removed from and uninformed as to the diversity of the wine industry in the entire province. The phrase "including certain geographical indicators" on its own does little to help establish the importance of "place" to the different wine regions, such as CV.

Despite the fact that the BCVQA and Ontario VQA programs have been modified to meet their own Canadian contexts, their association with the French AOC and the Italian DOC systems provides a connection to the 'Old World', to real or imagined ancestral traditions and practices of a people rooted in specific places. The permission to use "certain geographical indicators" from the quote above relates to Trubek's (2008, 2005) concept of terroir that I have introduced and explore in my research. At a surface level it refers to products of a given locality. Presently the BCWA recognizes five regions in the province: Okanagan Valley; Similkameen Valley; Fraser Valley; Vancouver Island; Gulf Islands (bcvqa.ca 2013). It is worth noting that CV is not a BCWA recognized appellation of origin; the wineries located there fall within the Vancouver Island official regional designation.

While the appellation of origin designations BCVQA, AOC, and DOC clearly serve political mandates such as government standards, regulatory, and taxation issues (Coleman 2008; Demossier 2010; Farmer 2013), their relationship to the concept of terroir or 'taste of

place' goes much deeper than that (Hammer 2011a, 2011b; Trubek 2005, 2008). It is the idea that products of a specific locality or place, such as wine, possess distinctive taste characteristics that produce or communicate a taste experience. Again, taste not only represents the physiological sensation of eating or drinking a product, but includes all the human senses, as well as the full cognitive and cultural realm elicited by the product to the extent one is capable of experiencing it. This taste experience may then be communicated to others as representing a specific place, like CV. Place not only refers to the physical elements of the environment, such as the geography, geology, climate, and weather, it includes the people, their customs, traditions, and their ancestral heritage within a physical and temporal space.

This discussion of the early elements of place, people, and practice provides some historical and sociocultural context to the situation that gave rise to the wine industry in CV. Clearly there were many political factors that shaped the early development of the wine industry in CV, as Appadurai suggests, the politics of place can play an important role in shaping the significance of wine to a specific place, and how wine may even represent "a social life shaped by politics" (1986, 3).

Interestingly, my research revealed that most of the wine producers of CV, not just the ones who participated in my study, prefer to have as little to do with government regulatory bodies such as the BC Wine Institute (BCWI) and BCWA as possible. At the time of my primary field site research, none of my study participants participated in the BCVQA program despite its government regulations asserting a "minimum" level of quality and a "guarantee" that the wine is produced from 100% BC grown grapes. Their decision not to participate in the BCVQA program, as a particular community of practice and situated learning (Lave and Wenger 1991), has direct economic repercussions as it means the CV wine producers are not permitted to sell their wines through the BC government regulated and owned liquor stores and the BCVQA specialty wine shops. More importantly, their decision has repercussions for developing a collective identity for CV wines and the region: for creating a taste of place. Lack of exposure in

the BC government regulated and owned liquor stores means they are missing the opportunity to create awareness for their BC produced products.

The BCVQA specialty wine shops were a government and industry initiative and are regulated and marketed through the BCWI. The CV wine producers' decision also means they are unable to participate in any BCVQA marketing programs which are designed to promote the wines throughout BC, Canada, and around the world. The BCVQA specialty wine shops have made the letters "BCVQA" on a wine bottle a symbol perceived by wine consumers as representing a "quality" product and a product representing a specific place, the province of British Columbia. These specialty wine shops only sell BC wines and only BC wines with the BCVQA designation. By not participating in the BCVQA, the CV wine producers risk the implication that their wines do not meet provincially regulated quality standards. They are unable to take advantage of what this collective and professional membership identity has to offer.

So there would appear to be distinct advantages for the CV wine producers to participate in the BCVQA program; it would provide a direct province wide outlet for their products and access to a provincial, national, and international marketing presence to promote their wines. When I asked my study participants why they did not participate in the BCVQA program, the overwhelming response was along the lines of "Why would I, there is no value to me belonging." Further probing revealed that many of my study participants had belonged to the program in the past but were no longer participating. Their reasons ranged from being too expensive and not being able to afford membership; too much bureaucratic paperwork required; the program was Okanagan-centric; to not having enough product to sell through the government stores. These reasons all relate to the fact that most of CV wine producers are small by industry standards, they have limited acreage under cultivation and therefore limited production to sell, and they sell most of their wine through the "cellar door" or directly to visitors at their winery. All of my participants acknowledged that this is their most profitable avenue for selling their wines.

In addition to the economic benefits from selling their wine directly to consumers at their winery, my study participants also all agreed that direct winery visits were also the best way to engage with people and create the most desirable taste experience for their visitors and themselves. It was the best place to talk about their wines, their vineyard, their practices, and themselves. This speaks to Crouch's (2000) notion that experiences and atmosphere, in the context of tourism, are best created by the practices of people at the local, regional level of everyday life. I believe this represents a strong regional, local ideology that belonging to the BCVQA program or other provincial government organizations not only was unhelpful but was detrimental. This would support Feagan's (2007) findings that local producers' attachment to their regional place is a stronger marker of identity and a statement of resistance to government intervention and outside influences. The CV wine producers even felt that using the BCWI appellation of 'Vancouver Island' did not adequately convey the characteristics of their wines, their place, and their practices.

Throughout my research, the field site visits and the writing process, I often had the sense that my study participants continued to see themselves as pioneers, whether they were recent arrivals to the CV and the wine industry or they were one of the original founding wineries of the region. This sense of independence, exploring, expressing their individuality, wanting to get away from the crowds and challenges of urban cosmopolitan living (avoiding as much government bureaucracy as possible), and being closer to nature, may all be considered generalized characterizations for many people who seek to live on and create an island lifestyle. But it also seemed accurate for describing my study participants. They were passionate about working with nature and continually experimenting and to discover what worked best where and under what conditions, in order to produce something they felt was special, something that represented their specific place, their specific practices, and represented who they were. It seems Vielvoye and Warner (1992) were correct in summarizing their *Duncan Project* report when they suggested that even after 20 to 30 years of development, experimentation with grape

varieties, viticulture practices and micro-climates would most likely continue in CV. My research suggests this is the case for the wine producers as they strive to tell their story through their wines, to establish their own community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991) and sense of belonging around a collective identity (Lovell 1998).

I continue this story by exploring how the wine producers interact with their physical and social environments to 'create a taste of place' through their products and practices that reflect powerful sociological and geographical symbolic aspects of their identity. This identity may then be used to communicate the cultural knowledge (real or imagined) of that place to others. In the next two chapters I introduce the CV wineries and wine producers who participated in my study and investigate how place, people, and practice come together to create their wine and in turn shape how their individual identity may contribute to a collective identity for CV.

## Chapter 5

### **Cowichan Valley Wineries and Wine Producers: Cherry Point Estate Wines and Godfrey-Brownell Vineyards**

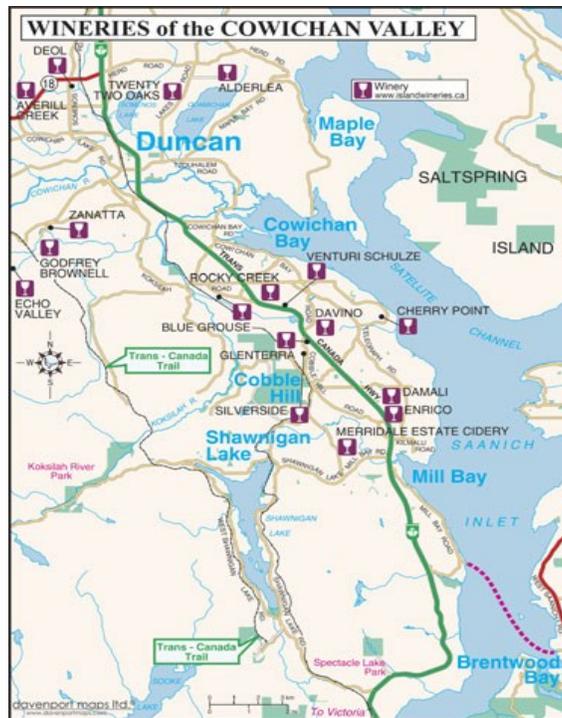
Who are some of these wine producers of Cowichan Valley (CV)? The backgrounds and personalities of these proprietors, vineyard managers, winemakers, and staff are as diverse as the wines they produce. In the next two chapters I employ an ethnographic approach to present my research data and focus on the participants' stories and experiences of what they do and how they make meaning in their lives. In this chapter I introduce two of the oldest CV wineries who represent the first and second wave of growth in the CV wine industry. In Ch. 6, I continue with three more wineries and their wine producers. I present their stories in chronological order beginning with the oldest serving winery and continue with progressively newer establishments, up to the latest addition to CV at the time of my fieldwork. I open this chapter with Cherry Point Estate Wines, my first research participant representing one of the pioneering vineyards and wineries of the region. I follow with Godfrey-Brownell Vineyards, who represents the second phase of wine producers to establish themselves in the region.

#### **Cherry Point Estate Wines**

##### 1. The Original Owners

Cherry Point Vineyards was established in 1990 by the original owners, Wayne and Helena Ulrich (Schreiner 2011). They were the fourth commercial vineyard to commence operations, opening their winery in 1994, and therefore represent one of the founding Cowichan Valley (CV) wineries from my participant sample. Wayne Ulrich was inspired to grow grapes and produce wine by *The Duncan Project* (Ch. 4), the BC government's experimental *Vitis Vinifera* planting trials and by the subsequent report conducted by Vielvoye and Warner (1992). This, despite the fact that the Ulrichs had never grown a grape or made a wine before. Ulrich, an Agriculture Canada lending officer, was familiar with the Island's agricultural history and the farming regions of CV (as a broad community of practice), and became attracted to the vineyard

lifestyle through his visits to his clients (Schreiner 2011). Armed with the information and knowledge gained from the test grape growing reports (as situated learning) and the enthusiasm building in the region towards commercial wine production (Dedyna 1993), Ulrich retired from his government position and purchased 12 acres of land in Cobble Hill (Map 5.1). Cobble Hill is one of the many municipalities or districts that make up the CV region.



**Map 5.1 Wineries of Cowichan Valley.** Source: Davenport Map Ltd.<sup>21</sup>

The Ulrichs choose the name for their operation, Cherry Point Vineyards, from the road that runs directly in front of the property. Built in the late 1870's and early 1880's, the name Cherry Point Road was not generally applied until a settler discovered bitter cherry trees flourishing on his property in the early 1900's. The Cowichan First Nations people had been using the bark of this cherry tree for attaching feathers to their arrows and for decorating their mats and basketwork (Dougan 1973). The name Cherry Point Vineyards makes a connection to the place where it is located, the landscape and environment around it, and the historical

<sup>21</sup> <http://vancouverisland.com/plan-your-trip/maps-of-bc/wineries-cowichan-valley/> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

activities and practices of the Cowichan people in that place. It could therefore be considered an attempt to claim cultural-historical authenticity (Bigenho 2002) based on homage and respect to an earlier idyllic place and an indigenous people interacting with the landscape.

The land that Ulrich selected to plant his vines on was originally a mink farm situated on a gravelly glacier deposit which he believed was suitable for growing *Vinifera* grapes. Despite its idyllic setting, located off Cherry Point Road, a desirable location in the rolling hills around Cobble Hill and just up from the Island's east coast water's edge also named Cherry Point, this illustrates how the vineyards in the CV are recent constructed landscapes (Image 5.1).



**Image 5.1 Cherry Point vineyards sloping towards the Strait of Georgia. Author's photo.**

Ulrich had to clear the land of trees and rocks before he could plant his first vines. This follows Casey's (1996) idea that physical environments become places where and when events happen there. The lengthy and arduous process of clearing rocks from the land to make a suitable vineyard is conveyed by a featured story in a local newspaper (Price 1997) which contrasts the differences of planting a new vineyard, where none had been before, to the long established vineyards of France. The story reports of a viticulture exchange student from France who was apprenticing at Cherry Point for one year. The student's parents had a vineyard near Reims, located in prestigious Champagne, a region of France with centuries old winemaking

traditions. One of his first jobs at Cherry Point was to help pick rocks out in the vineyard, even though the Ulrichs had begun this process seven years earlier. In France, the land has been worked for generations and "the vineyards have been cleared for so long that picking rocks is not on the list of spring chores" (Price 1997, A7). This illustrates that despite symbolic connections to centuries old practices and traditions rooted in the old world, if the CV wine producers want to create a 'taste of place' for their products and themselves, they still have to start at the beginning, as winemaking pioneers, working with what they have in terms of the land and the physical landscape. This reworking of the landscape illustrates Casey's (1996) idea that places are not just something physical, but rather they are shaped by the events that happen there, such as the planting of a vineyard where none existed before.

The efforts of Cherry Point Vineyards and CV as an emerging wine region were also becoming recognized beyond the local people and area when they received three gold medals at the prestigious All-Canada Wine Championship that same year (Maroc 2000). The four founding wineries, Vigneti Zanatta, Blue Grouse, Venturi-Schulze, and Cherry Point had laid the ground work for what was, by January 2001, being described as an established industry as evident by this headline in a local newspaper: "Valley wine industry growing" (Stanfield 2001). The article reports that another six wineries had appeared in the CV area and will be producing approximately 22,000 cases of wine per year, worth an estimated \$2 million dollars, resulting in increased employment opportunities, restaurant support and "local pride" (Stanfield 2001, 11). The phrase "local pride" represents the strong regional and local support that was already characteristic of the Vancouver Island and CV lifestyle when Roger Dosman, one of the six later wine producers to begin vineyard plantings, was quoted as saying "When you buy local wines approximately 75 percent of the money will stay in the valley to be re-spent" (Dennis 1999, 19). This emphasis on local supports Casey's (1996) and Turbek (2008) assertions that it is the essence of place to be regional.

Increased recognition and accolades continued for Cherry Point Vineyards and the Ulrichs when they received the Business of the Year award from the South Cowichan Chamber of Commerce in 2002 and a lifetime achievement award from the BC Institute of Agrologists in 2003 (Costa 2003). Ulrich attributed Cherry Point's success to his operation's positive, community-minded attitude in stating "We're happy dealing with people and we like presenting our wine to the public. It's great getting feedback about your wine" (Rusland 2002, 3). This focus on and commitment to supporting community and promoting local business and events is a feature I would find ten years later when I interviewed the present owners of Cherry Point for my research in the summer of 2012.

The Ulrichs' passion for their 'place', Cherry Point Vineyards, and their 'practice', growing *Vinifera* grapes and producing wine, and their commitment to the 'people' of CV was again evident when it came time to slow down from the daily grind and hard work and plan their retirement in 2004 by selling the vineyard. As discussed in Ch. 4, the Ulrichs sold Cherry Point Vineyards to the Cowichan Tribes and their Khowutzun Development Corporation (KDC). However, the Ulrichs revealed that the KDC offer to purchase their vineyard came at the same time that they were considering an offer from Chinese investors (Rusland 2004). Keeping their operation in local hands was preferable to the Ulrichs who wanted to see their current staff keep their jobs. They viewed the sale to the Cowichan Tribes as a tremendous opportunity to continue to develop the local wine industry in CV and provide employment and future development to the local people. Interestingly, although the vineyard was never publicly offered for sale, there was another party who had been taken with Cherry Point as a special place and producer of quality wines and was interested in purchasing it.

## II. The Current Owners

Xavier (one of my research participants) and Maria Bonilla, the current owners of Cherry Point, were successful business owners in West Vancouver when the Ulrichs were considering selling the vineyard and winery in 2003-2004. With a background in agricultural economics,

Xavier had been looking for agricultural opportunities for his next business venture. Having first visited Cherry Point Vineyards around 2002 and experienced the 'place' and the wines, Xavier was attracted to the features that the vineyard offered, a large piece of land with room for growth, established vines, and an established reputation in the region for the quality of their products. Xavier was interested in purchasing the property to get into the wine business. However, the Bonillas were unable to arrange the purchase at the time but maintained their interest during the Cowichan Tribes' tenure. When the Cowichan Tribes decided to sell in 2009, the timing was right and the Bonillas fulfilled their goal of purchasing Cherry Point Vineyards (Hynes 2011; Schreiner 2011).

### III. Place

Xavier was born in Columbia where he served as an agricultural economist for three presidents (Schreiner 2011). His family ancestry is from Spain and Portugal. He obtained a Master's degree from Oregon and a PhD from Wisconsin in agricultural economics and ran a large dairy farm in the Andes before relocating to Canada in 1990. Along with his extensive training and experience in agriculture and farming, Xavier had also developed a passion for wine. When I asked him if his agricultural economics background served him well in running a vineyard and winery he responded:

Yes, the sensitivity to the land, my background is in the land and agriculture all my life. On wine, I have been studying wine, visiting wineries and tasting wine all over the world for the past 30 years. Every time I travel, I always travel in wine related things.

This quote reveals Xavier's strong connection to land and passion for wine. Xavier first visited Cherry Point Vineyards as a tourist visiting from South America before he immigrated to Canada with his family. He recalls being drawn to Cherry Point from this first visit and that it held a special place in his heart from the beginning. After he moved to British Columbia, Xavier described looking for winery opportunities in the Okanagan but not finding what he was looking for, "There was a uniqueness to Cherry Point that I never found in other farms" (Baines 2010,

9). When I asked Xavier what it was about Cherry Point that struck him when he first visited this place, he replied:

All - the farm, the soil, the inclination, and the size. The fellow who started this, one of the first wineries, he was an agriculture extension officer with the province for 25 years. So he knew all the land in the province. He knew all the pig farms and dairy farms, chicken farms, and all the farms. His dream was to get a winery going so he had all the plots on the Island to choose from. And the guy was a scientist so he chose with some criteria. So I figured somebody is laying out the work for me, because a winery takes a long time to start from zero. No, you buy something which is going and then you improve it and apply all your theories which is what I did here.

This passage reveals Xavier's connection to Cherry Point as a place, from the first time he visited and felt something special. It was not just the location of being in CV on Vancouver Island. It was this land, as influenced by his own agricultural background, "the soil, the inclination." It was the opportunity to dwell in this specific place (Ingold 2000) but also the opportunity to engage with the place and experience it in a way that was meaningful (Lovell 1998) to Xavier, to grow grapes and produce wine that reflected this place, who he was, and his practices.

His comments also suggest that his economics education and previous business experience played a key role in determining his decision to purchase Cherry Point in 2009. "I am here three years but I have 25 years of information in the land and that you don't improvise." This quote illustrates that although the region is relatively new in wine industry terms, there is a history to be aware of, "25 years of information in the land," and to build upon, and you need to take it seriously. Xavier is referring to the fact that the land - the soil composition (Arnold 2011; Van Leeuwen and Seguin 2006), inclination and orientation to the sun, and the air flow from the ocean (Schreiner 2011) -will impact what vines will grow well at that place. He does not have to start from scratch, he can build upon the work of the previous owner and wine producer. So there is some meaningful history and identity to this place, as Trubek suggests, "place matters" (2005, 260). Xavier wanted to continue with that history while communicating his own ideas, stories, and practices in the taste of his wines. This follows Feld and Basso's (2009[1996])

position that as people create, recreate, and shape places, they also have the opportunity to create, recreate, and shape themselves.

One of the first goals Xavier had after purchasing the vineyard and winery from Cowichan Tribes was to return Cherry Point to being a family run endeavor. Xavier explains:

When it was owned by the [KDC], it was more of a corporate approach. It had set hours of operation: it opened in the morning and closed in the evening. Now it's a family-owned operation and we're here 24 hours a day, my wife and I. Our two children are at the University of British Columbia, but they also come to help on the bottling line and to help in many aspect of the farm now.

(Hynes 2011, 40)

While this sentiment might reflect an attempt to return to some of the original ideals of the founding owners, family owned and operated, community focused (Bainas 2010; Hynes 2011) it was also evident that Xavier was not simply trying to recapture and capitalize on a nostalgic past. Xavier officially changed the name from the original Cherry Point Vineyards to Cherry Point Estate Wines when he made the purchase and was in the process of changing his wine bottle labels to reflect this new identity. When I inquired as to why he felt the need to change the name and the labels, Xavier replied that "I wanted the community to know, to have a clear message that this is a new Cherry Point." While changing to a completely new name would have sent a clearer message to the community that this was a new place, Xavier wanted to build on the reputation and some of the traditions previously established while maintaining the connection to the community and present a new identity for his vineyard and wines.

The name change to Cherry Point Estate Wines is significant to the concept of creating a taste of place for the CV wineries. The term "Estate" on the wine bottle labels is used as a recognized industry claim that 100% of the grapes used in that wine were grown on the winery premises (bcwinelaw.ca). This represents an ideological and practical change for CV as a small production and emerging wine region, as it was common practice to import grapes from other vineyards on the Island and from other regions, even including from outside the country, to produce, bottle, and sell wines under your own winery label. This is often done for economic

reasons: the imported grapes may be cheaper to purchase than it is to produce your own grapes; you may have limited production of your own and require the imported grapes to bottle enough wine to sell and be economically viable as a winery; and starting up a vineyard and winery is an expensive process and usually requires a minimum of three years before your own vines are able to produce grapes suitable to make wine; therefore you need to import grapes to generate income while you wait for your vines to develop. Wineries also may import grapes from outside the region because they are looking for certain varieties or flavor profiles that their own vines are unable to produce due to the environmental factors of location and climate. This speaks to the literal taste of the wines that CV producers are able to make. These may be flavor profiles that are popular with some wine consumers.

All of these reasons for importing grapes may be considered legitimate by some producers and it was a common practice during the early years of development in Cowichan Valley, including at Cherry Point Vineyards. It continues to be practiced by a few wineries today. Xavier, however, explains his decision to stop this practice and change the winery name.

First I stopped buying grapes, it is a common practice and there is nothing wrong with it, to bring grapes from other places, even from the US. I stopped, I'm limited by the grapes from my farm. I control that way the quality. I don't have too much volume but I control my wines, so I'm limited to the grapes that the farm produces. I didn't want small subtle changes. I wanted a drastic change to be clear that it is new wines.

Xavier's decision to change the name from Cherry Point Vineyards to Cherry Point Estate Wines coupled with his desire to control the quality of his wines and be "limited by the grapes that the farm produces" is reflective of the concept of terroir (Trubek 2008). By using the term "Estate," Xavier wants people to know that 100% of the grapes used in the wines produced under his brand name are grown on his property. This is part of giving his wines an association to a specific place, not just a region but to his vineyard, to his soil, that can then be communicated to wine consumers and other people as he tells visitors in his tasting room, "the grape does not make the wine, it's the earth." Wines made from imported grapes would not be reflective of

Cherry Point; wines made from grapes imported from other regions would not be reflective of CV; in a sense wines produced from imported grapes would be placeless. This is similar to Appadurai's (1996) notion of placelessness that Trubek (2008) builds upon. These wines would have less physical or cultural connection to Cherry Point or CV.

Simply catering to popular consumer flavor profiles may produce saleable wines but as Xavier suggests, they are wines that do not represent the characteristics of a specific place. Xavier elaborates on this specificity of place, or terroir, by pointing out that the same grape varietal grown on different areas of his vineyard produce different flavor characteristics:

The terroir, yes. Even here in the farm I have two sections of the farm with pinot noir - before, if you come from the school where the grape makes wine then you just take all the pinot noir and make wine. I don't come from that school. So the pinot noir from one side of the farm, I turn into a wine and the pinot noir from the other side of the farm, which is a different type of land, I make another pinot noir, and the two wines, same grape, are totally different wines. Even though they are the same grape.

In short, Xavier is explaining how the same grape varietal, pinot noir, planted in different parts of the vineyard can produce a different tasting pinot noir wine because the soil composition is different, and the exposure to the sun and the breeze from the ocean is different. This is an example of a microclimate within the same vineyard which speaks to the notion of terroir (Trubek 2005, 2008; Vaudour 2002), that specific places may imbue distinguishable flavors that make the wine taste different, even wine produced using the same grape varietal, by the same winemaker from the same vineyard.

#### IV. Practice

Xavier's discussion in the passage above is also notable for the recognition of practice as an important component of terroir. This supports Trubek's (2005, 2008) position, and one that I build on, that terroir is not just about place; it is also about the practices that may go on in that place that influence and shape identity formation. Xavier continues to acknowledge the important of practice and the role of the human hand (in this case his hand and that of his winemaker) by explaining that:

There are lots of different grape varieties that grow. Some grow better in particular sections of the farm than others. So we are always fine tuning, making sure you match grapes with the land, and that's really an ongoing process because there is a lot of trial and error. There is always a margin for error.

When I confirmed with Xavier that part of the changes he implemented when he purchased Cherry Point was to experiment more with the different parcels of land and the varieties, he responded:

Yes, and more so than that - blends, good wine making is the art of blending. I have noticed not a lot of blending in North America as it is in Europe and I have come up with some beautiful wines just by blending the grapes that were here. I come from a European tradition where you blend.

Here, Xavier makes a direct connection to Europe, considered the Old World in wine making traditions and compares it to North American or New World practices of focusing on a particular variety. It is well documented that the post-WWII success of wine becoming an accepted alcoholic beverage alternative for American citizens was the practice of labeling each bottle with the common variety name in big letters, such as "Chardonnay", "Merlot", "Pinot Noir", and "Cabernet Sauvignon" (Coleman 2008; Johnson 2005; Resnick 2008). North American wine consumers were confused by the European labels that featured the *Appellation d' Origine Contrôlée* (AOC) with the unpronounceable names of French Chateaus and *Denominazione di origine controllata* (DOC) of Italy's wine growing regions, where blending of grapes from those regions was common practice to produce good, drinkable table wine and the grape varieties were not even listed on the label. For the American wine consumer, it was not important where the grapes were from; they were okay with the placelessness of their wines. This is counter to Xavier's earlier comment about his different pinot noir grapes from different sections of the vineyard producing different flavor profiles and not simply labeling them altogether as one pinot noir wine. This also highlights Xavier's European heritage and influence to his grape growing and wine making ideology while making connections to a different place and time: "My wines have a lot of inspiration in Spain" and "one of my wines is very old fashioned." Xavier is referring to an Old World custom, one not routinely practiced in North

America (as part of the New World grape growing and wine making) until quite recently (Johnson 2005; Schreiner 2011) of blending grape varieties to make the best wine possible regardless of grape recognition by the consumer.

To further illustrate his point, Xavier went back to a high shelf directly behind his tasting room counter that had a row of different wine bottles prominently featured with wine competition ribbons and medals on them and picked up a specific bottle of red wine and brought it back over to where I was standing.

Look at the blend in this pinot noir, it is castell with agria and pinot noir [all different grape varieties] and you see mixed vintages, 2007 and 2009. This for example, I will never do again because I am not going to have any more 2007 pinot noir. So every year you are always tasting new ones, new ones to make a beautiful wine every time and never two wines the same. When you go to a winery and the wines are the same, year after year, and it happens in the big ones (wineries) then you know - the wines are not really made by a wine maker, they are made by chemists. Every year my wines are different. And then before and during harvesting, the important thing is to start thinking how you are going to blend because there is never a perfect grape. They all have good and bad aspects; then they can complement each other to make a beautiful wine.

Castell and agria (see Appendix B) are two of the little known grape varieties that grow well in the climate of CV, both with little name recognition that would be featured prominently on a wine bottle label. Xavier also references another Old World custom of blending the juice of different grapes from different years. Both of these factors, blending many and unfamiliar grape varieties, and blending from different years, make it more challenging to communicate a taste of place to wine consumers. Xavier appeared to welcome this challenge and saw it as part of the overall taste experience that he was communicating with his wines and to his visitors to his winery.

Xavier's comments illustrate the recognition that place is more than just physical landscape or geography; it is also about the climate and weather of that place as articulated by Trubek (2005, 2008). These different elements of place interact with and shape the practice of producing wine. Xavier discusses these and other factors and their impact in making his wine different every year while trying to dispel some misconceptions about making wine.

Every year is different, the weather, the temperature, everything. Even the insects, the pests; we get more wasps, or less wasps, botrytis<sup>22</sup>, humidity. Another important thing is there are a lot of misconceptions in wine. The sun does not make good wine; there is a lot of sun in the Amazon. It's dry air [that makes good wine]. This Cowichan Valley is humid, hot and cold and cold and wet and raining but when the summer comes we have beautiful dry air and that's what makes beautiful wine. During the wet season it does not matter because the plants are dormant; the plant does not know what is going on but when they wake up like now [early June], it's dry air that starts coming in and it's dry air that makes beautiful wines. Some years we don't have the dry air and the wine is bad.

Throughout our interviews and my many visits to Cherry Point, Xavier appeared very cognizant of the roles of place and practice in shaping his wines, providing the characteristics that were important to him and gave his vineyard, winery, and wines an identity that he was both passionate about and proud of. But perhaps what struck me most were his comments that related to the third component of creating a taste of place and to the concept of terroir and the one that I identify in my introduction as possibly the most important, is the people, their customs, traditions, and their ancestral heritage within a physical and temporal space. I have already mentioned some of the characteristics of Xavier that reflect his identity and their possible role in shaping the identity of his winery and wines: his Spanish and Portuguese family ancestry; being born and living in South America until emigrating to Canada in 1990; his academic training and experience in agricultural practices; his Old World sensibility and ideology about making wine, "that's what I learned from old guys in Spain." I will now discuss a few of the other people that help to shape the wines and identity of Cherry Point as Xavier encouraged me to talk to anyone on the farm, including his family members, to obtain different perspectives.

## V. People

Xavier brings in agricultural students from France to help in the vineyard and winery during the busy season of June to October, "I have a commitment with two universities in Europe; they send me students and they come to practice and learn a lot and we learn a lot from

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<sup>22</sup> Botrytis is a fungus that attacks grape skins. In unfavorable conditions where it rains too much it rots the grapes and can run an entire year's crop (Schreiner 2011).

them." International agriculture exchange programs are common in the wine industry, including the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) where students work on farms and vineyards in exchange for their room and board. These student workers are referred to as "woofers" and use the program to gain agricultural experience but also as a way to travel and learn new languages and obtain new cultural experiences in different parts of the world. Xavier's comment, while making another direct connection to Europe, illustrates his preference for arranging his own students rather than using a program such as WWOOF. This enables him to have more control over the students that come to work with him at Cherry Point, selecting agricultural graduate students, "It is part of their studies, they are more committed and focused" and avoiding those that simply want to travel and party "I know many kids that come and their parents spend fortunes in English courses and they don't learn anything." Xavier prefers a more family approach because he believes it is important to what he is trying to do, that the people working with him all make important contributions to his farm and his wines. His statement that "we learn a lot from them" suggests a reciprocity in sharing that goes beyond simply having free labor in exchange for a room and some food. Xavier continues to illustrate this, "They stay with us and we share the house. We cook together at night, we go to the movies, we go to the restaurants; they are members of the family."

Xavier elaborates on the people of Cherry Point and how they help shape the winery and the wines, in both a literal and metaphoric sense, as well as reflect his personal and professional ideology.

Everybody is totally different, funny weird characters at Cherry Point; there is no two people alike. This kid from France, totally different from the other. Jim<sup>23</sup>, you will see, he is an expert in Shakespeare. Johnny<sup>24</sup>, he is autistic, you will see working in the fields. You know Johnny, he is the First Nations' guy? He's been here 15 years. Sometimes I don't see Johnny for two weeks. He's lost in his universe, he's just working, working, he knows what to do. He loves the plants - 15 years, nonstop, nonstop but he loves the plants.

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<sup>23</sup> Pseudonym

<sup>24</sup> Pseudonym

I ask Xavier if he doesn't see Johnny for days or weeks, how does he know that Johnny has been there working? Is it that if you see the work has been done and that is what is important?

I see his bicycle is there, so he is there. I trust him and the worst thing that could happen to Johnny is losing my trust. That is one of his precious assets, you know. I trust him so that established the commitment. Trust established a totally different relationship and that's what happens at Cherry Point.

Xavier continues to describe some of the characters around Cherry Point and how their personalities, interests and passions contribute to the character and expression of the vineyard, winery and the wines.

Everyone is a - one is a chef in a medieval society; they dress like medieval and they have jousting and fighting with swords and they make beautiful medieval cooking, he is an amazing character. The girl who serves in the bistro - is on a national sports team. Everyone is an amazing character and I don't pick them, it just evolved that way you know. I think Cherry Point has a Cherry Point Magic to it and everybody is part of that family magic and that ends up in the final product. I don't know how but it ends there.

The final product and how it ends there would largely be the responsibility of the winemaker and while I was researching Cherry Point I had the opportunity to interview Xavier's winemaker. Xavier and Cherry Point were the only winery to employ a fulltime professionally trained viticulturalist at the time of my research. Dean was from Australia where he received a diploma in horticulture and then a graduate degree in viticulture from the University of Western Australia. His practical experience is from a wine region near Perth called Swan Valley, beginning with grape growing then crossing over to the winemaking side. Dean married a Canadian woman that he met in Australia and after they had children decided to move to Canada. Dean spent three years in the Okanagan wine region of British Columbia before moving to CV and to work at Cherry Point, where he has been for the past three years.

Dean's heritage and wine making experience would appear to contrast with Xavier's European background and Old World sensibilities around winemaking, especially blending, "A lot of winemaking in Canada comes from an English (New World) tradition, Australia and New Zealand and they don't blend." When I Xavier about this apparent contrast and possible conflict

(Old World versus New World) he was able to quickly articulate the synchronicity of their working relationship:

Yes, that is where he [Dean] was trained but at Cherry Point he was confronted with a different situation and he is an intelligent guy and he was able to adapt to it. I am on top of my palette, requiring, inquiring, stretching and stretching to the maximum and he picked that up and understood that. He is very good at it.

In this passage, Xavier suggests that Dean is very good at adapting to this different place that requires different practices, learning new skills and knowledge that match this particular physical and social environment (Grasenni 2007; Ingold 1993, 2000; Lave and Wenger 1991). Being from a different geographical part of the wine producing world and having trained and worked in the industry there, presented the opportunity to ask Dean if he subscribed to the notion of terroir. "I do, I was reading a definition of terroir today and it's like the land but it's a combination of things, climate, soil, wine making practice. I definitely believe climatically there's a huge variation globally for wines." I probed Dean's response by asking if there was a way to describe the terroir of the Cherry Point Vineyard. His reply echoed some of Xavier's earlier comments to me about how the same grape varietal can produce different flavor profiles from different parts of the vineyard:

It is a little bit awkward because there are so many divisions within the vineyard itself. There's a lot of different soil types within the property here, it greatly varies from one spot to the next. Very rocky soil at the top, very clayey down at the bottom, lots of nuances in between. Then we've got a big range of varieties here, so that's another factor that changes it.

Having expressed a multifaceted view of the concept of terroir that reflects many of the elements (place, physical environment features, climate, and practice) that Trubek (2008, 2005) outlined, I was curious to know what Dean thought about terroir as something that wine consumers, even in CV, were becoming familiar with and responding to in their wine purchase and consumption practices. His reply confirmed his understanding that terroir is more than just the land and that the consumer may not fully understand what it represents.

I think people think it's just the land more but I think that is a little incorrect. I think it's a combination of the soil, obviously the climate but also the varieties you

use in the area and the wine making influences. So I think it is a package because you are not going to get the best out of the soil or the climate if you are not doing your vineyard management or the winemaking the right way; you're not going to let the terroir express itself.

Dean's response highlights the process of growing a grape (vineyard management), then transforming it (winemaking) into wine that is quite a different product than what it starts out as. I asked him, as both the vineyard manager and the winemaker, if he thought of them as two separate processes:

It's a pretty easy transition because if you follow it through and understand both sides of it you certainly see the benefits of what you're doing to help the plant grow, your management in the vineyard and the result it's going to give you. Obviously the fruit that you're creating - the better you can get that starting point - that's basically the starting point for your wine production, they are so very closely linked. So getting the right result of that fruit goes as a big first step to helping make a quality wine. They definitely go hand-in-hand; they're a natural transition to me.

This natural transition that Dean spoke of, growing good grapes to produce good wine, highlights the relationship between vineyard management and winemaking, and since he is responsible for both at Cherry Point I was curious to ask Dean how he described himself or his role when people asked him what he did. While not directly answering my question, Dean provided insight to the role of people, and his role, in the process which speaks to the third component of creating a taste of place for the CV wineries.

I think you have certain tools at your disposal that can make life easier - to put it the simplest way, no two people will make the same wine even if you follow the step by step thing because your personality ends up getting translated a little bit to it just by the way you might process or the way you end up doing things. The little variables will end up changing the final product. So I think it's impossible for a little bit of your personality not to get stamped on it. I mean there are people who are very analytical and go very much by the numbers and I think that translates into the wine. But a lot of times you go with your gut and everyone is making sensory evaluations in their perception of what the wine is, so it is different from person to person. I don't subscribe to that idea that you're [the winemaker] a chemist putting pieces together. I have a more romantic view of that; like I think a bit of heart and soul goes into it as much as chemistry.

Dean's comments "go with your gut" and "heart and soul" are similar to Grasenni's "gut feeling decisions" of her description of learning among dairy cattle farmers in the Northern Italian Alps

(Ch. 3) and illustrates that learning and skill development is not always formal; it is multi-sensorial and it is often not visible. Making wine, like learning, occurs within specific environments.

Dean's mention of the word romance piqued my already high level of interest. Much of the literature on wine and wine production, because it has been around for thousands of years, almost since agriculture began, is steeped in romance and mythology (Demossier 2010; Johnson 2005). This opened the door for me to ask Dean about the myth of the winemaker, this notion that the winemaker has magical powers, that they can transform the simple grape into a beverage of imminent pleasure, a representation of power and status, or as Johnson (2005, 29) suggests, a drink of the Gods. Dean was both pragmatic and humorous with his response:

I think that is a perception from outside the industry rather than within it, because it is a lot of hard work and in farming, there is always so much at risk - the weather. I believe I am passionate about it and I love it but it's work and it's hard work. So I think you get those people who retire and "Oh, I'll have a nice vineyard" and they get in and holy shit there's a lot of work here and it doesn't just grow itself. The customer likes the romance and they definitely like the story, so I believe it is in my best interests to believe that or I wouldn't have a job [laughs].

In pursuing the discussion about romance and the myth of the winemaker, I asked Dean what he thought about some wineries and wine producers that actually put the name of their winemaker on the bottle to add some kind of cachet or credibility to the wine and the myth. He responded:

I mean there is a thing with winemakers and egos [laughs]. What's the difference between God and a winemaker? [I replied that I did not know] God doesn't think he's a winemaker [laughs]. Anyway, I think it kind of lends itself to that authenticity of the product and obviously if you've got someone that's a high profile winemaker, having their signature on there is something. But I mean, really, the average person, I don't think knows their way around winemaking fields so I think it's this thing if this guy puts his name on it, it must be a good thing. People think that translates into it must be good. Yeah, it definitely promotes the marketing, I mean we try to make the best wine we can, if it gets an award, great.

Dean's comments in these two passages highlight the different perspectives that can exist between consumers - romance, and wine producers - hard work; two concepts that are often considered at opposite ends the spectrum. Dean associates authenticity here with the marketing

of the wine to consumers, that somehow seeing a winemaker's name on the bottle brings the consumer closer to the person as well as the product of a certain place and practice. This is similar to McCone, Morris and Kiely's (1995) notion of "branding" a product, authorizing it as authentic by creating a "myth" about the person (or people) who made something, simply by putting the person's name on the product even if the consumer has no knowledge of that person. The winemaker's name on the bottle may create a mythologized relationship between the consumer, the winemaker, and the product. In contrast, Dean believes his focus as a vineyard manager and winemaker is on producing a quality product, letting it speak for itself. This perspective illustrates Bigenho's (2002) notion of unique authenticity, that it is the personality and individual practices of the producer which is most important.

Dean does acknowledge the subjective nature of quality when drinking wines, "There's only really two kinds, there's wine you like and wine you don't like and it's as simple as that." Dean clarified his position by suggesting the objective is to try to get consumers to at least try your wine once and that if you have a quality product, or if it's to their liking, you may get their repeat business. Dean's emphasis on hard work was driven home to me when I asked him what makes a good winemaker and he simply replied "perseverance."

#### VI. Creating Wine and a Taste of Place

Dean's experiences at Cherry Point illustrate that his previous training and knowledge development, as a form of enskilment and apprenticeship (Grasenni 2007), from Western Australia may not be directly applicable to his new physical (CV geography and climate) and social (Xavier's taste palate and consumer expectations) environment. In Lave and Wenger's (1991) terms, CV would represent a new community of practice where Dean has to engage with this community and learn what may work best given these new sets of conditions and variables.

Cherry Point and Xavier's approach to creating wine is literally and symbolically summed up by the term "blending". His preference and practice for literally blending the grape varieties that he grows, to produce what he considers the best possible wine, also reflects the

symbolic blending of Old World sensibilities. This is expressed in his own ancestral heritage, "My wines have a lot of inspiration in Spain," "that's what I learned from old guys in Spain" and for the ancient wine traditions of Europe, "one of my wines is very old fashioned." Here Xavier draws on ethnic traditions from other places (Gieryn 2000) but stops short of claiming to reproduce those places. These Old World sensibilities are blended with the realities of his vineyard and winery located in the New World with only a 25 year history of growing grapes and producing wine. This is a place where the physical environment and conditions restrict the type of grape varieties that he is able to grow, and thus the style of wines that he is able to produce, with flavor profiles that are much different than those most wine consumers would associate with New World wines. Xavier understands this "taste" difference and states that he is not trying to (re)produce Old World wines. He wants to produce wines that are representative of Cherry Point and Cowichan Valley (CV), working with what he has, including his personality:

I just bring my way of doing things and I don't know if it follows any Old World or New World, it's just my idiosyncrasies and my way of doing things. My criteria is good wine and if I have to break the conventional wisdom, I don't care. My attitude is reflected in my wines whether you want it or not.

This statement by Xavier supports his earlier comments that all the people, "the characters," who work at Cherry Point contribute to the character and expression of the vineyard, winery and the identity of the wines. This identity created in the wines is then used by Xavier to promote and develop a larger social and cultural identity to the community of CV and beyond.

The farm is very open to the community. We support all the community events, all the charities, all the fundraisers with our wines. Wine is a very important - it goes back to medieval times - component in the development of a region. Wine adds a lot to a community. Wine brings better cuisine, tourism and the whole community changes with wine. We always go to the wine festivals because that is part of the development of the region. That gold medal I won, I consider not won by Cherry Point but won by Cowichan Valley, by the Island. Now the Island is in the spotlight of the world.

Xavier suggests that wine and wineries can be an important part in helping to develop communities and regions and then how that identity may be communicated to others. The award is a marker of regional identity (Casey 1996) for CV. It is interesting to note how Xavier

again invokes a connection to the past, "medieval times" in the creation of an identity for a place and practice where the people living there only have 25 years of tradition to work with. In hindsight, it is now not surprising to me that Xavier and Cherry Point were the first to respond to my initial email, the first to agree to participate in my study and welcome me to his place and share some of his story, that "Cherry Point magic." Xavier conveys a sense of passion that is represented in the place, practice, and people of Cherry Point Estate Wines.

### **Godfrey-Brownell Vineyards**

David Godfrey<sup>25</sup>, the proprietor of Godfrey-Brownell Vineyards, has been characterized as a complex, eccentric, entrepreneurial thespian by the respected wine writer and BC wine industry expert, John Schreiner (2011). Having first encountered David when I visited his property in 2008 during a vacation to the Island, and then again in 2010 when conducting a pre-research site visit during the Cowichan Wine and Culinary Festival, I would agree to this colorful characterization of him. I believe most people who have the opportunity to encounter David pouring wine samples behind his outdoor tasting bar or delivering tasty tapas plates to visitors seated at an eclectic mix of tables and chairs in his outdoor patio would also find the term "character" an apt description. David gives the perception of someone who enjoys what he is doing and this enjoyment is heightened when he has the opportunity to share his enthusiasm and knowledge with others.

When I began my site fieldwork in 2012, I thought David, as part of the second phase of Cowichan Valley (CV) vineyard and winery development, would make an excellent participant for my research. I was keen to absorb and document his perceptions and stories on the history and growth of the CV wine region and his experiences in establishing Godfrey-Brownell Vineyard. Unfortunately, despite his willingness to chat casually, David was somewhat reluctant

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<sup>25</sup> Sadly, David Godfrey passed away June 21, 2015 after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in April. He was 76. I received an email notice from Xavier Bonilla of Cherry Point through WIGA in July. David was a true character of CV, described as a man of "words and wine" by Katherine Dedyne of the Victoria Times Colonist newspaper in her feature obituary story of David (<http://www.timescolonist.com/entertainment/obituary-david-godfrey-was-man-of-words-and-wine-1.1983823>) (accessed November 20, 2015).

to consent to participate at first. I sensed part of this reluctance was due to the fact that he was very busy with lots of things on the go and he thought that his participation would involve too much of his valuable time. David largely ran a one person show most of the time, as proprietor, winemaker, tasting room pourer, food preparer and server, and the creative thinker behind the whole operation. But I also sensed some of David's reluctance to be voice recorded was precisely due to the fact that he had "good" or colorful and insightful stories to tell about the people, places, and practices in the CV wine region and did not want to incriminate himself or risk offending anyone. I assured David that I would not include anything in my dissertation that might do so. I believe David, being an accomplished academic and having gone through the dissertation process himself, empathized with my plight of conducting research and finally relented. It was after my third visit that he consented to be interviewed and voice recorded but only on the condition that I pick him up at the Duncan bus station early the next morning and take him out for a coffee. David primarily lives in Victoria and commutes regularly up to his vineyard in CV. Perhaps my perseverance demonstrated to David that I was serious about my research and we started to build a level of comfort and trust with each other.

### 1. Place

David purchased the property that now includes Godfrey-Brownell Vineyard in 1998 and began planting grape vines the following year. One of the first interesting points that David made to me, after I had introduced my research topic to him, was that technically Godfrey-Brownell Vineyards was not in Cowichan Valley (CV) but in Koksilah Valley. David emphasized that it was the Koksilah River (Map 5.1) that shaped the valley where he was located and not the more prominent Cowichan River, whose name is more recognized and used to communicate the overall region as a place - Cowichan Valley. Although the two valleys largely share the same soil types (see Ch. 4), David believed that Godfrey-Brownell did experience a different climate (including the all important weather patterns for vineyards) from CV. He believed that he had a more consistent water source from the Koksilah River that fed underground aquifers on his

land. There was much less development in the Koksilah Valley, due to part of this valley being designated the Koksilah River Ancient Forest Reserve, so there was less stress on this river from people and activity compared to the Cowichan River. The surrounding forest also provided a wind break and the valley shape protected Godfrey-Brownell from severe temperature changes and storm bursts that could be damaging to the vines and the grapes.

This distinction between the Koksilah Valley and CV speaks to the significance and specificity of place that David understands and uses to distinguish his vineyard from others. No other wine producer, even his neighbor Vigneti Zanatta, made reference to the Koksilah Valley as part of their place. This emphasis on being in a different place is illustrated on his wine tasting list from the 2006 Cowichan Wine and Culinary Festival (Figure 5.1). The letters "GK", representing Glenora Koksilah, are noted beside the prices for all but one of his wines listed for tasting at the festival. Osoyoos, the only other community listed is in the Okanagan Valley in the interior of British Columbia. Glenora is the name of the municipal community where Godfrey-

2nd Annual Wine & Culinary Festival 

**TASTING WINES**  
All wine prices include 6% GST and 10% PST.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>WHITES (tasting)</b>   |  |
| Pinot Grigio 2005   | \$15 GK/eb                             |
| Chardonnay 2004   | \$20 GK/eb                             |
| French Oak Chardonnay 2003  | \$22 GK/eb                             |
| <b>REDS (tasting)</b>   |  |
| Beau Geste 2004 375 ml  | \$12 GK/eb Gamay Noir                  |
| William Maltman Double Red 02/03  | \$20 GK/eb 80% Foch/20% Gamay          |
| Scarlatti Sisters 2002  | \$25 GK                                |
| <b>Reserves &amp; Forthcoming</b>   |  |
| <b>REDS RESERVE</b>   |  |
| Marechal Foch 2002 First Harvest  | RESERVE \$50 GK/eb                     |
| Pinot Noir Sparkling 2003   | RESERVE \$40 GK/eb                     |
| Pinot Noir 2002   | \$25 GK/eb                             |
| Pinot Noir 2003   | RESERVE \$30 GK/eb                     |
| Merlot 2003   | RESERVE \$35/Osoyoos                   |
| <b>SOLERA Forthcoming</b>   |  |
| Winston (375 ml)  | \$28 GK/eb                             |
| <b>WHITES Forthcoming</b>   |  |
| Bacchus 2005 (500 ml) 2005  | \$20 GK/eb                             |
| Colette 2005  | \$15 GK/eb                             |
| Pinot Gris 2005   | \$15 GK/eb                             |
|   | *GK Glenora Koksilah *eb Estate Bottle |
| Godfrey Brownell Vineyards 4911 Marshall Road, V9L 6T3<br>info@gbvineyards.com 1-250-715-0504 |  |

**Figure 5.1 Godfrey-Brownell 2006 wine tasting list.**

Brownell Vineyards is located which adds to the specificity of place for his wines. Koksilah was the name of a village settlement of one of the seven tribes that comprise the Cowichan First Nation's people (Henry 1999).

The Koksilah Valley was a rich economic resource for the Cowichan peoples with berry patches, a fishing station, and a hunting ground. The area remains rich today with farms, dairies, and wineries enjoying the region's generous climate. By choosing to refer to his location as in the Koksilah Valley rather than in CV, David makes a connection to a historical local place and to the indigenous people, acknowledging the Koksilah Tribe as distinct from other tribes in the Cowichan region, who first inhabited and nurtured the resources of that place, much like he does today. The locality and distinctiveness of this place, Godfrey-Brownell Vineyards located in the Koksilah Valley as opposed to CV, may be used to communicate the distinctiveness of his wines as representative of that place. The message is his wines are different because they are from this place suggesting that "place matters" (Trubek 2005, 260).

Another characteristic of place that holds meaning for David is in the name of his vineyard and wines, Godfrey-Brownell. When looking for land to purchase in the CV area and searching the vineyard title, David discovered that the property had once been owned and homesteaded by a long-forgotten relative, Amos Aaron Brownell, in 1886. David identifies the relative: "He was my grandmother's second cousin" (Schreiner 2011, 94). This family connection to place, even though it was as much coincidence as anything, inspired David to incorporate the ancestral Brownell name with his last name when selecting a name for the property: "So we felt we had to put the Brownell in the winery name" (Schreiner 2011, 94). David appears to be proud to share his 'family connection to this place' story, as I frequently overheard him tell visitors about it. I recalled from my first visit to Godfrey-Brownell in 2008 that David had even made a wine and named it after this relative and included an old black and white photo image of him on the label to pay homage to this connection to place and people of the past.

The property itself may be considered a "character" reflective of its proprietor David, unconventional and intriguing at the same time. There are no buildings or vineyards visible from the main road that runs past Godfrey-Brownell. This is a road he shares with Vigneti Zanatta Winery and Vineyards where their tasting room, a restaurant, some wine processing buildings and the vineyards are clearly visible for the viewer to see as they pass on the road, open and inviting to potential customers. In contrast, visitors to Godfrey-Brownell must be adventurous to seek out what may lay beyond the road. The experience, upon partaking this journey to explore this unknown place, is vividly described by wine writer John Schreiner:

The road into the Godfrey-Brownell tasting room includes two gates, a single track through forest (watch out for an oncoming vehicle), and a bumpy drive past undisciplined vineyards. It has the feel of visiting a Kentucky moonshiner. Don't be surprised to find a bluegrass band on the patio at this entertaining, if eccentric, winery. (2011, 64)

I can personally attest to the accuracy of this description. On my first visit in 2008, I was unsure where the road that led to the tasting room was. The narrow road is a combination of packed dirt, a bit of gravel, with long grass that brushes the underside of your car - the kind of road you would expect to see meandering through a farmer's (or moonshiner's) field. If you do encounter a vehicle coming from the other direction it is difficult to find a suitable spot to pull over to allow them to pass. Upon reaching the end of the long and winding road you may be greeted by two scraggly looking but friendly dogs. Their appearance fits that of the fields and vineyards passed on the drive, a bit unkept or scraggly looking, or as Schreiner suggested "undisciplined" (2011, 64). The house, with an outdoor tasting bar and large patio area situated under the shade of a large tree, presents a rustic, yet warm and inviting feeling (Image 5.2). And, as Schreiner suggested, there is a raised stage for performers to entertain visitors.



Image 5.2 Patio area at Godfrey-Brownell Vineyard. Author's photo.

The "undisciplined" appearance of the vines in the vineyard, mentioned by Schreiner, is something that visitors other than myself have noticed. During one of my visits with David, a couple arrived at the outdoor bar and began tasting wines beside me. The gentleman asked David what he had planted out in the fields (pointing directly behind the patio area) because they looked terrible and there were hardly any viable vines growing. David explained that was his experimental section where he planted eight different varieties and nothing had turned out. This explanation is representative of how David sees himself in this particular place. When I asked David what he called himself when meeting people, he replied, "I look at myself as an experimental farmer ... in the larger picture I am more interested in the land and wine is something that you can be profitable at to pay for the land."

This primary interest in the land led David to join The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC) in 2004<sup>26</sup>, setting aside 30 acres of his property for conservation and to protect plant and animal habitat for the benefit of his business, the community, and the environment. The TLC program recognizes the important role farmers play in managing land and helps to support good land stewardship. By providing recognition, incentives, and assistance, TLC helps farmers protect, enhance and restore natural systems. The Godfrey-Brownell property is home

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<sup>26</sup> <http://blog.conservancy.bc.ca/2010/09/raising-a-glass-for-conservation/> (accessed September 17, 2014).

to a salmon bearing stream and supports a diversity of local flora and fauna. David promotes his partnership with TLC and what he believes it represents about his place with a sign posted below his Godfrey-Brownell Vineyard sign located beside the main road (Image 5.3).



**Image 5.3 Godfrey-Brownell Vineyard road sign with the TLC sign below. Note the grass, bushes, and trees illustrating the natural setting. Author's photo.**

This strong connection to preserving the land is also reflected in the practices David believes in and employs which contributes to the taste and identity of Godfrey-Brownell Vineyard and his wines.

## II. Practice

The TLC sign may be perceived as an attempt to appeal to consumers who view vineyards as a form of natural and healthy use of the land. While there are studies and land use activists who decry the overuse of pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, water, and consumption of available tracts of fertile agricultural land associated with the wine industry (Baughman et al. 2000), recent research suggests that the wine industry in North America is in fact ahead of most agricultural food producing industries when it comes to implementing successful environmental

and sustainability practices (Pullman, Maloni and Dillard 2010; Silverman, Marshall and Cordano 2005). In this sense the TLC is a community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991) that David subscribes to. His knowledge and beliefs are situated within their discourse.

The unkempt, rundown perception of the property is part of David's philosophy of land stewardship and agricultural practices. His objective of keeping the land sustainable means he employs practices that help prevent soil erosion, conserve energy, and aid in protecting ecosystems. David does not use herbicides or pesticides. What appears to be an "undisciplined" vineyard filled with weeds between the rows is actually a key technique of planting diverse green manures such as clovers, vetches, Italian rye grass, and oats.<sup>27</sup> David highlights some of this philosophy that reflects his vineyard and wine making practices as well as some of his character in this passage:

I'm starting to kind of change the name to Godfrey-Brownell Vineyard and Farms. I'm starting to grow more things and what's different about me - I don't think anybody knows anything about growing grapes [laughs]. So I've gone for this sort of belief that wow, there is a lot to learn out there, to the realization that everybody is just doing what their grandfather or great-grandfather did. Nobody is really thinking about it and it's indicative - UBC (University of British Columbia) has a big research center right, but they're not really - they're researching the genetics or they're researching the aromas of wine or small things but they're not really looking at 'what is this plant, what does it do, how does it grow, and how do we grow it and improve the way we grow it.' So it seems to me the next 100 to 150 years will be a real revolution and a lot of research and experimentation may get done in places like Cowichan Valley which is the boundary where you can actually grow grapes effectively and efficiently.

In the last sentence of this passage David is referring to the fact that CV wineries and vineyards are located at the northern extreme of global *Vinifera* grape production with a shorter, cooler growing season than more southerly locations. David also suggests because the CV is a young emerging wine region it is not yet restricted by a recognized identity, such as specializing in one particular varietal or winemaking style, and can continue to serve as a region of experimentation and research. This illustrates Ingold's (2011, 2000) idea that creating an identity around place is shaped by practice, the complex interaction of working with what nature gives you in that

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<sup>27</sup> <http://blog.conservancy.bc.ca/2010/09/raising-a-glass-for-conservation/> (accessed September 17, 2014).

particular environment while recognizing the fluidity of both place and practice ("how do we ... improve the way we grow it"). This passage also highlights David's creative thinking and desire to do things differently and possibly better than the traditional practices. He continues to elaborate on his position of trying different ideas and challenging standard vineyard practices:

But I'm also interested in perma-culture and the way we grow grapes is part of the way we grow everything else and everything's pretty screwed up right now. Most farmers are mono-culturalists and dependent on big corporations for inputs. The only real kind of innovation is the kind of biodynamic movements in vineyards. But even in biodynamic vineyards they plant everything in straight rows on trellises, wire trellises, and they grow the grapes of the region, right.

The biodynamic approach views the vineyard as an ecological whole with other flora and fauna of the region existing together interdependently (Isle 2008). To David, a vineyard is much more than grapes growing on evenly spaced rows of vines. Biodynamic practices also propose that farming should be attuned with the spiritual forces of the cosmos such as planting and harvesting to the phases of the moon or the positions of the planets. David does not use the label biodynamic to describe his vineyard practices. He tends to avoid the use of any labels to categorize what Godfrey-Brownell is and what he does (sometimes David even does not use, literally, labels on his bottles; something I will illustrate and discuss in Ch. 7).

David's sustainable practices and focus on preserving the land serve to heighten his attachment to Godfrey-Brownell Vineyards, to this place while appealing to potential visitors who also share those pro-environmental values (Halpenny 2010). An example of David's desire to challenge traditional practices, such as planting vines in a straight row, attaching them to trellises and then continually pruning them down, is his "Foch" tree that he has planted at the front corner of the house on the property. A large bushy tree originally planted as a single vine stock, it now resembles many other trees except this one has large clusters of grapes growing under the dense green foliage. You can barely see the grape clusters until the leaves are lifted out of the way. Upon seeing this tree up close for the first time, I recalled a comment from another winemaker in the CV who stated that "David can grow anything." It really was

impressive to see. The tree has grown so large that David has had to build a structure to support it. David is very proud of his "Foch" tree and makes a point of showing and describing it to visitors when he gets the opportunity. The second time he showed it to me he was excited to announce that the grape clusters produced 40 bottles of Cabernet Foch wine last year.

Cabernet Foch is classified as a hybrid or crossed grape varietal created by Swiss grape breeder Valentin Blattner (Ring 2013). Blattner hybrids or "Blattners" is a common term heard throughout CV as they represent a genetically crossed species that were created in response to the challenges of growing the well known traditional *Vinifera* red grapes, such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, in cool-weather climates with seasonal temperature extremes, and to counter common diseases. Some industry experts and local wine producers see the Blattners as a key part of establishing a wine identity for the CV. For David, the grape was an opportunity to grow it in a different way, on a tree rather than on low vines attached to a trellis, and to produce a wine from an experimental grape that is new to the region. David describes the wine as "complex" which is also an appropriate term to describe David himself.

### III. People

David is a former English professor and retired Chairperson from the Creative Writing Department of a well known university. He has won prestigious national awards for fiction and owned a publishing company (Schreiner 2011). David's creativity, literary background, and artistic interests are evident with some of his wine names, Beau Geste<sup>28</sup> and Scarlatti Sisters<sup>29</sup>, as illustrated on his 2006 festival wine tasting list (Figure 5.1). The names are a way for David to derive pleasure and give meaning to what he is doing, making wine, and to sharing that pleasure and meaning with others by creating a new experience in tasting the wine, regardless of whether you have read about/heard about the Scarlatti Sisters.

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<sup>28</sup> Beau Geste is a 1924 adventure novel by P. C. Wren. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beau\\_Geste](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beau_Geste) (accessed September 19, 2014).

<sup>29</sup> The Scarlatti Sisters were the singing sisters of famed Italian composer Alessandro Scarlatti from the 17th C. <http://www.answers.com/topic/scarlatti-pietro-alessandro-gaspare>. (accessed September 19, 2014).

As previously mentioned, David, due in part to the size of his vineyard and winery operation, is very active in performing many of the necessary tasks involved in the operation. He regularly uses the WWOOF program to bring people in for the busy season of June through to October which encompasses pruning the vines and harvesting of the grapes. These people, referred to as "woofers", also help out in the kitchen preparing food, serving customers on the patio, and pouring wine tastings for the summer visitors. While hiring woofers is an economical way to obtain seasonal labor, I got the distinct sense that for David it was also a way for him to continue to experience different places, people, and practices without having to leave his own place. Woofers often travel to not only gain agricultural experiences in organic practices but to learn new languages and experience different cultures. David appeared to be willing to share his knowledge, experiences, and vineyard practices as much as he wanted to share in their experiences as well. This sharing of experiences serves as the foundation for what David is trying to do at Godfrey-Brownell.

#### IV. Creating Wine and a Taste of Place

David is both worldly and well travelled. During my visits, he shared many wine stories about France, Italy, Argentina, Australia, and California. Many of these places served as pleasurable holiday experiences but also as sources of knowledge and personal relationships for David: "I had a lot of friends in France that were winemakers, that's how I learned a lot. Three of them sent their kids over to [work] with me"; "I have some friends in Bordeaux, they've been growing grapes for three generations"; "I have a vineyard friend in the south of France, wonderful family. His daughter came to intern with me." All of these stories contain the elements of connecting to: place - Bordeaux, France; practice - winemakers, growing grapes for three generations; and people - friends, kids, daughter.

The stories also speak to David's enskilment (Ingold 1993; Grasenni 2007) or knowledge acquisition from many different communities. He has learned what he knows and practices from many different places and people. David makes it clear that he believes there is not a collective

knowledge base from which to learn about growing grapes and making wine in CV and that this makes a collective identity difficult to communicate to others.

When I asked David what he wanted visitors to his tasting room to take away, he replied "Well, I guess - recently I sold seven Foch plants on the weekend. What I really want to do is get people, local people involved in growing grapes. The most general thing I'm trying to do is give them a good experience that they enjoy." This quote illustrates Bigenho's description of an experiential authenticity, where it is the entire sensory experience, including the sharing of knowledge with others, that David hopes to convey with his place and his wines. In this quote, David also reiterates his belief in the Blattner hybrid, of his "Foch tree", to make a distinctive wine of the region. And by selling just a few plants, David is sharing his belief in doing things differently, challenging normal practices; that you can grow grapes on a single tree rather than on a neatly planted row of pruned vines. David also emphasizes "local people." His customer base is built upon the residents of CV and the surrounding regions: Victoria and Nanaimo. At the time of my field work, Godfrey-Brownell wines were not available in any wine or liquor store, nor in any restaurant. These wines are only available to those who visit the farm.

David acknowledges the economic (it is costly) and political (avoiding government bureaucracy) reasons involved in his decision not to pursue those channels for distributing his wines, but it also speaks to his philosophy of doing things his own way, avoiding standardization, and making it work for himself. These are characteristics that he believes are representative of the region and the people who live in CV. David wants Godfrey-Brownell Vineyard and his wines to be different, and to experience that difference you need to visit his premises. David summed up this approach best when he stated: "I guess one of my beliefs is the world is much more interesting if it's diversified."

### **CV Wineries and Wine Producers: Individual Identities**

This chapter, through the stories about the wineries and from the narratives of my participants, illustrates elements that speak to place, practice and people which shape a taste of

place for these particular wine producers. Both Xavier of Cherry Point and David of Godfrey-Brownell embrace the brief history of their places to create and communicate their individual vineyard and winery identities. Xavier does so by acknowledging and building upon the original owners' (as one of the original and first phase of wineries in CV) philosophy and practices of family focus and community commitment. Yet Xavier also invokes a strong sense of his ancestral history (from Spain and Portugal) and connection to what he refers to as Old World sensibilities in shaping his place: "My wines have a lot of inspiration in Spain"; "one of my wines is very old fashioned"; "that's what I learned from old guys in Spain."

David also discovers an ancestral connection to a little-known distant relative who homesteaded on what is now his vineyard property back in 1886. So despite the CV only having a 25 year history as a wine producing region, David is able to invoke a 125 year connection to his place and the people who were here before him. David also uses the specificity of place and its importance to shaping an identity by distinguishing the difference between being located in the Koksilah Valley and not the CV.

However, for both Xavier and David there is much more involved in creating and shaping an identity for their vineyards, wineries, and products than just place. It is also about the practices and people of those places. It is the intersubjective relationship between those three components that for Xavier, creates that "Cherry Point Magic." For David, it is his passion and creativity for challenging the status quo, working with the land to sustain it rather than exploit it, growing grapes on a tree rather than on a neat and straight trellised row of vines, and sharing his stories with all who come to visit. David may not have had the most pleasant of all the CV wines that I sampled but he certainly had the most interesting stories.

In the next chapter I present three more of my study participants in their chronological order of vineyard and winery establishment. Their stories and personal narratives provide an authoritative voice towards how place, practice, and people shape their individual identities and

how these may then create a collective identity that may be communicated to others to represent a taste of place for CV.

## Chapter 6

### **Cowichan Valley Wineries and Wine Producers: Deol Estate Winery, Averill Creek Vineyards, and Unsworth Vineyards.**

In this chapter, I present three more of my study participants and some of their stories that speak to how place, practice, and people intersect to shape their wines and a taste of place. As in Ch. 5, I present them in chronological order of when the vineyards and wineries were established to illustrate some of the growth, changes, and challenges that the people, region, and wine industry have experienced in Cowichan Valley (CV). I begin with the Deol Estate Winery, followed by Averill Creek Vineyards, and conclude with Unsworth Vineyards as the most recently established winery in CV at the time of my field research.

#### **Deol Estate Winery**

The Deol Estate Winery (Image 6.1) presents an interesting variation of an immigrant family coming to Canada in search of a better way of life for themselves and their children. The Deol family is from the Punjab region of India and immigrated to Canada and the Cowichan Valley (CV) in 1970s. It is an interesting variation in that India is not, at least from contemporary Western perspectives (Johnson 2005), a place commonly associated with a wine producing history or wine culture in the same order as Old World Europe. However, the use of wine for medicinal purposes has been reported in Indian medical texts as early as the sixth century BC and wine was supplied to the Sultan Babur, founder of the Mogul Empire in sixteenth century India (Johnson 2005).



**Image 6.1 Deol Estate Winery road sign. Author's photo.**

The Deol family belong to a Sikh Punjabi caste known as *Jat* which literally translates to farmer. Again, from a general contemporary Western perspective, Sikhism is understood to prohibit the use of alcohol, including wine, as an intoxicant or for pleasurable consumption (Johnson 2005). These two factors, immigrants from a non-historical wine producing region and belonging to a group who are not associated with alcohol consumption, makes the fact that they own and operate a vineyard and winery in CV an oddity to the local community and to visitors to the region. The Deols' challenge is to make their vineyard, wines and their roles as wine producers in the CV known and accepted as part of the wine industry and the community. This is similar to Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) description of the ethnographer's role of trying to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange. The Deols want to create an identity around their realities that recognizes that they are part of this place and not out of place. While their role as wine producers in CV may seem strange to some, they want to create awareness and acceptance to make it familiar, all the while creating an identity and producing wine that still makes them distinctive, or strange, and not familiar, as in similar to other producers in CV. By creating an identity for their vineyard and their wines, they may then contribute to the collective identity of CV as a wine producing region.

The Deol family came to the CV region because there already was an established Sikh community there (Dougan 1973; Jagpal 1994) and they had family friends there. Early Sikh immigrants became entrepreneurs in the forest and lumber industry as early as the 1930s in CV (Henry 1999; Jagpal 1994). It was the forest and lumber industry that first provided for the Deol family, as granddaughter Jennifer related that "Finding work here for immigrants was easy which is actually why they (her grandparents, father and uncle) came here." Not finding the forest industry work to their liking, Jennifer continued "It was just something that they weren't comfortable with, they did it cause they had to, to sustain themselves." The Deol family moved to the Okanagan Valley in the interior of British Columbia in 1982 and purchased farm land to establish Deol Orchards, growing and selling apples, peaches, and cherries. It was in the Okanagan that the two sons, Jennifer's father and her uncle, worked in many of the region's vineyards and wineries and learned about growing grapes and making wine.

When the intense heat and sun of the Southern Okanagan became a health issue for the grandfather (Schreiner 2011), he returned to the more temperate CV and purchased a 32 acre former dairy farm in 1999 and began converting it to a vineyard. His two sons remained in the Okanagan, until 2004 for one son and 2009 for the other, before they finally sold the orchard and moved to the CV property, along with their own children. The Deol family currently consists of three generations living together in the same home: the grandparents, their two sons, and members of their families. This is a common practice for many immigrant families, including theirs from India, as Jennifer states "We've always lived as a joint family."

Unfortunately, the two sons who are now responsible for operating the vineyard and winery did not want to be interviewed and voice recorded due to language concerns. Although they both understand and speak English, their heavy accents made them self-conscious. They were also both a bit shy and reserved, yet friendly to me. The youngest brother, who was tasked with the winemaking, enjoyed chatting and sharing his perspectives on CV as an emerging wine region of some distinction. I was fortunate to catch one of the granddaughters, who was home

from university to spend time with her family, when I was at the winery for a visit. Jennifer, was considered a spokesperson for the family and consented to be interviewed and voice recorded for my study with the full support of her father and uncle. I also conducted three voice recorded interviews with Katrina, a non-family member, who was their wine tasting room and marketing manager. The two brothers granted her permission to participate in my study on behalf of the winery.

### 1. Place

The Deol Estate Winery is located in North Cowichan, just on the northern edge of the growing city of Duncan, and south of the busy highway to Cowichan Lake and west of the TransCanada highway (Map 5.1). The property is very close to major commercial development as Jennifer noted "There is a Walmart five minutes from our winery which I find so bizarre." This location provides easy access and possibly increased traffic to the winery simply due to the number of vehicles that travel these busy highways, but it reinforces how a vineyard and winery in CV can be recent constructions on the landscape (Ingold 1996). The close proximity to large-scale commercial development next to the main arterial route up and down Vancouver Island also makes the property worth a lot of money to potential future developers.

Deol Estate Winery is the only winery in CV located so close to high commercial and residential density. Because of their location on what is considered the valley floor, and their distance from the cooling effects of the water on the east coast, their vineyards can get extremely hot during the prime growing summer months. While this is good for ripening the grapes, the intense heat - they regularly record temperatures of over 30 degrees Celsius in the vineyard - can also expose the grapes to "burning" or ripening too quickly, before they have had the opportunity to mature at the proper rate. This can produce grapes with little flavor and result in wines with unwanted and excessive levels of alcohol. On the other hand, their location low on the valley floor means they typically have a cooler spring start to the growing season. This can delay the budding process of grapes, thus shortening their growing season. As well, the low

valley floor level means they are susceptible to early fall frosts when the rapid drop in temperatures can wipe out their entire crop of grapes for the season. This illustrates how the physical environment, including location, the climate, and weather fluctuations can affect the literal taste of their wines. The youngest brother, reflecting on the challenges of this particular place, his vineyards, suggested "It is hard to grow grapes here. It is not as easy as the Okanagan" (Schreiner 2011, 50-51). This quote illustrates how enskilment (Ingold 1993; Grasennis 2007) needs to be situated within a particular place or environment.

Another feature that shapes their place and makes a connection to the history of CV is the conversion of the previous dairy farm's 100-year-old farmhouse into their tasting room. The rustic old farmhouse features an outdoor patio deck overlooking the vineyards (Image 6.2) and provides an ideal spot for enjoying a glass of Deol wine on a warm sunny day.



**Image 6.2 The Deol Estate Winery's tasting room in a restored 100 year old farmhouse. Author's photo.**

The old farmhouse reflects the unpretentious, unsophisticated, and hard-working nature of the Deol family. It also represents character and a charm that is lacking in many of the newer CV wineries that have brand new contemporary tasting rooms (such as those of Averill Creek and Unsworth Vineyards to follow in this chapter). The use of this 100 year farmhouse illustrates

that there is some history in the CV to draw on and shape the Deol Estate Winery's identity and the broader identity of the CV, as expressed by Katrina: "This house has a lot of history, it's from 1890, people should know that. People should be stopping by and saying 'Wow, this place has been here since 1890 and when you have a history associated with a place, people are interested in that and they'll come out." The old farm house and its history also serves to ground the Deol family in this place and gives meaning to their family and their story.

## II. Practice

The Deol Estate Winery property was a dairy farm when purchased in 1999. It was a place where cows grazed and hay was grown to feed the cows. The family recognized the downturn in dairy farming and conventional agriculture at that time period and the increasing demand for local grapes to produce island wine, as established by the pioneering first generation wine producers. Jennifer recalled as a young girl helping to clear the land that year and plant the vines in 2000 while also speaking to the importance of family that is part of their heritage, "There are pictures of me planting these vines so it's always been a family business ... so it's like we should incorporate that into our story, that we came here, we developed this land, we made it something different in this area, as a family." This is illustrative of Feld and Basso's (2009[1996]) assertion that as people create, recreate, and shape places, they also create, recreate, and shape themselves.

In 2004, the first grape harvest was sold to other CV wineries to make 100% island produced wine. This practice of growing grapes and selling all of them to other wineries continued until 2007 when the family, lead by the grandfather's youngest son, decided to produce and bottle their own wine made from 100% estate grown grapes. The son had, based on his earlier experience working in the developing Okanagan wine industry, recognized the growing consumer demand and winery trend of emphasizing the term "Estate" to promote the fact that 100% of the grapes used in a bottle of wine with that term on it, were grown on the winery's property. This emphasis on grapes grown in a specific locality and then using that

information to connect the wine to a specific place, such as a region or an individual winery, was a relatively new practice to the CV. The use of the term "Estate" on their signage and wine labels was a clear change in practice to communicate to consumers that they were among the newer generation of CV wineries fully dedicated to wines containing only grapes that are 100% grown on the Deol vineyards. This is similar to Xavier at Cherry Point (Ch. 5) who, although he kept the principal name, replaced "Vineyards" with "Estate Wines" to mark place and communicate a change to the local people that his wines were also produced exclusively from his local grapes. As Ingold (1996) and Lovell (1998) suggest, this connection to local, even as a recent creation, is a powerful way to create a sense of belonging to a place and a way to make meaning in one's life.

The Deols' intent was to suggest that their wines were distinctive of their terroir; their particular physical environment, including geographic location, the soil, aspect to the sun, and the climate and weather patterns in their specific place. This makes the family's decision to produce and bottle their own wines and put their family name on them all the more precarious and risky. Their name and reputation was now on the wine bottle and, in a sense, on the line as their physical location, environment, and practices shaped the literal and symbolic taste of their products.

When I asked Jennifer why her family chose to use the family's last name as the name of the Winery and to put it on the wine bottle labels, she replied:

They were actually contemplating to name it - cause Averill Creek runs through our property, that was what they wanted to name it ... but then they discovered that our neighbors are called Averill Creek (see next section, this chapter). So there were various names that they played with but back in India, back even in Oliver (their previous Okanagan location) our farms were called Deol Orchards; even in India that was what our land was called. So they were like, why not carry on with that; it's a name that stands out too. It's not associated with a particular geographic region, so it catches people off guard, like there must be some sort of story behind this or this must mean something, right. It's our surname but that's kind of what our business has always been. Yeah sure our business has changed from produce to winemaking but we run it as family, we've always run it as family and that basically sums up our business mentality in one simple name.

Jennifer's quote reveals the family name connection to previous places they have lived and owned farms: the Okanagan and India, her grandparents' homeland. By using the family name again, Deol Estate Winery represents a family tradition and a nostalgic connection to a different time and place (Gieryn 2000). Back in India, the grandfather ran his own farm with crops including grain, corn, cotton, sugar cane, and rice, supplemented by livestock. The family also collected the property taxes in their village for the government and when the grandfather wasn't busy with these tasks, he taught school (Schreiner 2011). I learned that the grandfather remains a wealthy landowner in India and occasionally sells parcels of land there if they require money for their CV property. This history and Jennifer's quote suggests the Deol family has a tradition of successful farming, working hard, and being proud of their family name; that it represents a story, their story now connected to this place. They are currently the only CV winery to use their family name to identify their winery and wines.

### III. People

The members of the Deol family are important to the identity of Deol Estate Winery, their wines, and their place within the CV wine industry and the larger community. There are three generations of family members who live and work together on the property. The grandfather, despite being retired and advancing years in age, continues to systematically walk the vineyard rows early in the morning, tending over the vines and grapes. This reflects his lifelong practice of being a committed and successful farmer. And, as Katrina informed me, he is not adverse to criticizing his two sons if he feels their pruning efforts are not up to his standards.

The two sons are responsible for managing the daily operations of the vineyard and the winery. The youngest son is listed as the winemaker, although he frequently enlists the assistance of another winemaker from a different winery in the CV (Schreiner 2011) because he does not enjoy the process and believes he lacks the required skills, experience and palate to perform it successfully. The family had hoped that Jennifer would study enology (winemaking) at university and return to the family operation to become the lead winemaker but her interests

changed. The grandmother and one daughter in-law tend to the extended family household needs as well as to a large garden located between their home and the 100 year old tasting room farmhouse. The three remaining grandchildren also help out in the vineyards and with special tasting events on occasion.

Another key person, who was the face and voice contributing to the identity of the Deol Estate Winery during my research project, was Katrina. She was the marketing and tasting room manager and, with the permission of the two brothers, my main participant representing the winery for my project. Originally from a small rural community in northern Alberta, Katrina moved as a youth along with her mother and younger brother, to the west coast of British Columbia in search of a better life as the Deol family 30 years earlier,. Katrina studied graphic design and illustration before coming to work for the Deols in 2011 and spoke of being drawn into CV as a physical and social place. She was taken by the local history represented in old buildings and the "beautiful" landscapes and hoped to paint many of them. This connection to a place, to which she was a recent arrival, illustrates that people do not need a long tradition of family history or ethnic heritage attached to a place in order to identify with it (Trubek 2008).

This idea follows Lovell's (1998) suggestion that people can create perceived ideals or feeling of belonging about a place through a sense of experience with that place, as Katrina states, "I am in love with it now (CV). I don't think I would go anywhere else or do anything else." It is through human interactions with physical environments where realms of experiences are produced (Lovell 1998, 9). This notion was illustrated when I asked Katrina how she would describe her responsibilities at the winery and she replied that her goal was to get people to "Come down here, experience the winery, experience the wine and maybe take a little bit of that experience home in a bottle."

#### IV. Creating Wine and a Taste of Place

Katrina 's experience illustrates the literal and symbolic connections she believes are representative of the Deol Estate Winery wines and their winery. When I asked Katrina to

elaborate on what this message was that may be communicated to others through the wines and this place, and that she hoped could be taken home in the bottle, she replied, "That people know it is family owned and operated and that we are not wine snobs, that we are genuine." Katrina's statement refers to a common perspective confirmed by certain historical accounts (Guy 2004; Johnson 2005) that wine is a luxury item and its consumption represents high social status within a cultural group (Bourdieu 1984). Katrina's claim that "we are not wine snobs" suggests that the Deols and the Deol Estate Winery do not associate who they are and what they do as representing a luxury item whose production is intended to mark high social status for others. Related to this idea is the phrase "wine snobbery" which refers to the practice of having accurate and extensive knowledge about wine but more importantly, the bravado to express your this knowledge along with your opinions to others, as a form of one-upmanship (Bernstein 1982).

Katrina's phrase "we are genuine" can be interpreted as a claim to authenticity for who the Deol's are (and Katrina herself) and their wines. This would fit with Bigenho's (2002) description of unique authenticity. It is not a claim to a connection with any documented cultural or historical origins but rather a claim to authenticity meant to represent the individual and family values and traditions of those who grew the grapes and produced the wine, and bottled it with their own name on the label. Katrina continued on to explain that, at Deol Estate Winery, she and the family created an unpretentious physical and social environment around the 100-year-old farm house tasting room to produce a new experience for visitors which encourages them to draw upon their personal wine experiences and compare them to the wines that they are being served. Here the claim of being genuine can be interpreted as transforming Bigenho's (2002) experiential authenticity, where the entire sensory experience is meant to be shared between the Deols, Katrina, and the people visiting the vineyard and tasting their wines.

I asked Katrina if she felt that the actual taste of the wines was reflective of the Deol family, their ethnic Punjabi ancestry and cultural traditions. She responded enthusiastically, "I would say so. You know what, tasting the wine, it is really spicy, there is a lot of exotic flavors,

such as cloves. You know it's been described as the rosé going well with curry and things like that. But yeah, I think that kind of flavor and even the colors on the logo and bottle (Image 6.3) really depicts their culture."



**Image 6.3 Deol logo and wine bottle. Author's photo.**

Katrina's comments about the colors on the logo and wine bottle depicting the Deol's culture are interesting because they are also representative of another culture, the Cowichan First Nation, as described on the Deol Estate Winery website. The logo was inspired by local Cowichan First Nations' art and produced by a local CV artist. The Deol website describes the logo thus:

The salmon, a fish that is known for its dependability and renewal, swim upstream every year to spawn and provide a food source for the local people and wildlife. The salmon fight upstream to get to their destination year after year. In comparison, the Deol Family are made of working blood and work hard and diligently to produce the best quality grapes and wines year after year for the people of British Columbia!<sup>30</sup>

In this description we see the symbolic comparison of the struggle of the salmon as they "fight upstream" to the image of the Deol family as hard-working farmers, both providing

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<sup>30</sup> [http://www.deolestatewinery.com/gallery/wine\\_art/](http://www.deolestatewinery.com/gallery/wine_art/) (accessed November 13, 2014).

"dependability" and "quality" to the local environment. Another example of the Deol family combining elements of their ancestral heritage and culture with their wine production practices in CV is illustrated by the serving of traditional Indian cuisine such as pakoras and butter chicken to visitors to the winery during the annual Wine and Culinary Festival. The grandmother and daughter in-law may occasionally be seen bringing over the handmade pakoras from their home located beside the tasting room and wearing the traditional women's clothing representative of their homeland.

It is the combination of these many elements: acknowledging the local CV history represented by the 100-year-old farmhouse; associating with the customs and practices of the Cowichan First Nations reflected in their wine labels; the continuing of family traditions and practices brought within them from India; their commitment and passion towards family and producing the best quality grapes that they can; and the challenges of the physical environment affecting their vineyard, which all contribute to the Deol Estate Winery creating a taste of place that expresses their wines and who they are, adding literal and symbolic flavor and diversity to the CV wine industry and the local community.

### **Averill Creek Vineyards**

Averill Creek Vineyards represents a new phase of growth in the development of the wine industry in the region and the shaping of a Cowichan Valley (CV) identity. Andy Johnston, the vineyard and winery proprietor, and a consenting participant to my research project, came to CV and purchased land in 2001 with a specific business plan for how he wanted to grow quality grapes and produce premium wines that were representative of the region, of this place. He told me: "I think the future of the wine industry here has to be based on growing our own grapes and creating our own identity." This quote illustrates an important marker of regionalism (Casey 1996) that Andy recognizes for the CV wine producers.

Andy, a retired physician from Alberta and co-founder of one of the first primary-care walk in centres in Canada (Schreiner 2011), was born and raised in Wales, and proudly states

that "I am a farmer by origin." While in his 20's, Andy became interested in wine as a sensory experience: the tastes, the smells, the feel of it in the mouth but also the descriptive language used to communicate and understand that sensory experience (Bartoshuk and Duffy 2005; Brillat-Savarin 2005[1825]). He continued this interest and knowledge development until he became a wine educator in the late 1970s and early 80s. Andy recognized that medicine would not be his career all his life and explored the possibilities of becoming a vineyard and winery owner as his exit strategy from medicine. This represents a return to his origins as a farmer and his connections to the land: "The quality of wine is in the vineyard, not in the winery."

As Andy was phasing out of medicine, he began spending three to four months of the year travelling and working in vineyards and wineries around the world to develop a knowledge base and gain practical experience, "Everything I learned was a new experience." It was through these experiences, his apprenticeship of skill and knowledge development (Grasenni 2007) that Andy recognized the potential of CV as a place that could produce premium wines with a focus on pinot noir as a grape that could shape the identity of his winery and CV as a wine producing region of distinction.

### 1. Place

I asked Andy what led him to choose CV as the place to purchase land and develop a vineyard and winery (Image 6.4).



Image 6.4 Averill Creek Vineyard road sign. Author's photo.

His response reveals some of the knowledge and expertise that he has developed, through a process of enskilment (Ingold 1993; Grasenni 2007) as well as his commitment and passion to his plan and goal of producing premium wine in CV:

I came to the area on several occasions and went to the various wineries that were here at the time and tasted their products and some of them had real potential. So then I looked at the heat units available to me and the heat units in most years are fine, particularly for the varieties I wanted to grow. Then you are looking at soil types, aspect, elevation, distance from water, all these factors. A lot of the best wines in the world are made in marginal areas for that particular grape variety. The more you stress the grapes the harder they work at producing the appropriate flavors. An example of that would be in Burgundy where they only ripen pinot noir about three years out of ten. So vintage variations are very important and show you what hard work in your vineyard does for the quality of the wine and it all comes back to vineyard, vineyard, and vineyard. You've got to get your viticulture right, you've got to be in the right place with the right grape to achieve magic things. We've already proved that with pinot noir here in CV.

Andy supports his approach through citing Burgundy, France, considered a prominent place in the history and traditions associated with the wines and practices of Old World Europe (Demossier 2010; Guy 2004; Johnson 2005). Andy, aided by his travels and experiences, expresses similarities between the climate of Burgundy and CV and the potential for CV to become a region of distinction identified by quality pinot noir wines produced here. Andy believes that the cool weather climate (in wine industry terms) of CV is perfect for producing a cool weather pinot noir, similar to the climatic conditions that he experienced when working at wineries in New Zealand. For Andy, CV was the right place.

The location of Averill Creek Vineyard is particularly noteworthy for CV because it is situated on the side of a mountain, Mt. Prevost, located in North Cowichan just north of the town of Duncan. It is also located near the Deol Estate Winery (see Map 5.1) which is conversely, situated on the valley floor as described in the previous section. Andy believes his location is an excellent place for a vineyard, especially for pinot noir. Before purchasing and clearing the land of unmarketable timber and scrub brush, Andy did his homework, stating empathically "This is all about planning, find out what you need to achieve what you want to achieve." He reviewed 20 years of heat units in the area to make sure that, on average, he was going to receive enough on

his vineyard. He had soil analyses done to determine that it would be suitable for the varieties he was interested in planting, especially pinot noir. The aspect, or position of the vineyard in relation to the sun, was considered to be very good, with a south-east to south-west orientation that could provide sunshine from seven o'clock in the morning until eight-thirty at night during the important summer months, providing long hours of sunshine; being located on the slope of a mountain helped give the vineyard this unobstructed aspect. Andy believes that the elevation of his vineyard on the side of the mountain was to his advantage. If the vineyard is situated at too high an elevation, the air can be too cool and if situated too low you run into frost problems similar to the problems expressed in the previous section on the Deol Estate Winery. Andy believes so strongly that he is in the right place that he features an image of Mt. Newton on the front of his wine bottle labels (see Ch. 7, Image 7.3). The image was designed by his nephew from a vantage point in nearby Cowichan Bay looking east towards the location of Averill Creek Vineyards.

This attention to the physical environment speaks to Andy's awareness and understanding of the importance of microclimates in growing quality grapes to produce premium wines (Vaudour 2002; Van Leeuwen and Seguin 2006) and to his commitment to having a plan to take advantage of that microclimate. For example, Andy describes how you could be sitting in the sunshine on the patio at Averill Creek Vineyard and watch a rain shower coming down the valley towards you and as soon as it got to the CV it would turn right or left and not hit his property, "It's really classic; this is a microclimate. I'm not here because I didn't know that, I'm here because I did." This recognition of the distinctiveness of place or terroir (Paxson 2010; Ring 2013; Trubek 2005, 2008) can then be used to communicate distinctiveness of wines and create an identity for the wines, the vineyard, and CV. This expression of distinctiveness communicating an identity for CV was captured by local reporter Aaron Bichard during Averill Creek's grand opening in the spring of 2006 when Andy emphasized "We are being very particular about growing the grapes right here on the Island and producing a genuine

Cowichan Valley Wine, you can taste the flavour from the earth. It is fruity, very true and distinctive" (2006).

The name, Averill Creek Vineyards, which Andy selected for his property, also represents a direct connection to the physical properties of the environment; there actually is a creek named Averill Creek located on the mountain that runs through the vineyard property. This provides an association to a specific feature that many people in the region would recognize as a geographic and physical feature and therefore contribute to the identity of Averill Creek Vineyard. For example, if they have heard of the creek and know where it is located they can associate that information with the place of Averill Creek Vineyards. It provides a sense of existing history and nature to the Vineyard, a recent and manmade feature of the landscape.

## II. Practice

For Andy, the practice of growing grapes and producing wine is shaped by his depth and diversity of knowledge and practical experiences. Guided by his detailed planning and passion to making premium wines, Andy is committed to creating a recognizable identity for his wines and the CV:

Do your homework, find out where you need to be to achieve what you want to achieve. Don't just go out and say "This is a nice plot of land, isn't it beautiful, yes I'll plant a vineyard.' You are doomed to failure. Vines, yeah you'll grow grapes; you'll make wine but you won't make great wine. You'll make ordinary wine and there is far too much ordinary wine in the world. So for me, I didn't want to make ordinary wine, I wanted to make the best wine that we can make. This site is a phenomenal site.

In this passage Andy emphasizes the importance of matching place to practice, engaging with your experiences in a specific environment as a way to learn (Ingold 2000) and that he believes his vineyard location is the right site for him to make the styles and quality of wines that he wants. This follows Ingold's suggestion that "people do not plant plants but rather establish conditions for their growth and development" (11).

Another factor, along with his planning, commitment and passion, that enabled Andy to get started in the direction of his choosing was that he had his own independent funding (Hynes

2011). Andy believes this is crucial to his plans and gives him an advantage over other wine producers in CV who may have to implement changes and improvements to their vineyard or winery incrementally as they go. For example, at 30 acres, Averill Creek Vineyard was the largest vineyard in CV and after eight years of production (at the time of my research), had grown to 5000 cases of wine for sale, also the largest quantity of all CV producers.

This large production, along with Andy's desire to produce premium wines representative of CV, is made possible by the state of the art gravity-fed winery that Andy had built on Mt. Prevost. A gravity-fed winery incorporates different building levels devoted to different functions during the production process. This allows the wine to flow down from one stage, at one level, to the next without the need for pumps. Pumping, Andy believes (as well as many others in the wine industry), increases the chances of negatively affecting the wine, "When you pump wine you damage it." The gravity flow method allows for gentle handling of delicate varietals, such as pinot noir, which helps to retain their subtle characteristics. Wines arrive in the barrel room, never having been pumped and producing what Andy describes as a more "natural product."

Andy expands on this notion of a more natural product, demonstrated both through his philosophy and practices, by stating:

My thesis is always that winemaking is in the vineyard not in the winery; so when you come here you are tasting what my grapes will give you, what's in that wine. And the simpler that winemaking technique, the more terroir you're actually going to taste. So that's why we keep, particularly our summer wines, the winemaking techniques are very simple. I mean there is no intervention from us: stainless steel, yeast, cold fermentation, cold stabilize, filter, bottle, end of story.

The word "story", that Andy uses in the above passage to conclude his description of the winery process, serves as an apt metaphor for what is captured in the bottle that goes beyond the liquid. When I inquired of Andy which, if any, wines from his fellow winemakers in CV he liked to drink, he listed off four other local wineries. These four wineries all represented the older, more established producers that Andy believed consistently produced "nice wines." This illustrates

that it does take some time to establish your vineyard, to let the vines mature in order to produce higher quality fruit but also that it takes practice and experience, *enskilment* (Ingold 1993; Grasenni 2007), on the part of the producers to find out which grape varieties perform best in their particular location or microclimate. Andy also emphasized that wines may be different from year to year, that the vintage, or year the grapes were grown, is very important and that each year you may find individual wines from any of the different wineries that may make a "great wine." Andy elaborates on the "story" metaphor by explaining that "I've got a wine cellar with a range of wines from all over the valley. I'm going to buy them every year because I want to keep a library of what people are producing."

I found Andy's use of the word "library" to describe his wine cellar collection intriguing and insightful to who he is and the practices he believes in. A library, as defined by Merriam-Webster's on-line dictionary, is "a place where books, magazines, and other materials (such as videos and musical recordings) are available for people to use or borrow."<sup>31</sup> A library is often referred to as a repository of information and knowledge. In Andy's reference the "other material" in his library would be bottles of wine from CV wineries. Then it is these bottles of wine that contain information and knowledge, both literal and symbolic. Andy can use them literally, by opening them up and drinking them which will provide sensory information allowing him to determine if he likes the wine and thinks it is any good. The labels on the bottles provide literal information such as the winery name, varietal(s) used to make the wine, alcohol content, quantity produced, etc. The information on the bottle label may also be symbolic. The vintage year printed on the bottle may allow Andy to recall the weather that season and whether it was good or bad for grape growing which affects the quality and flavor of the wine. There may be information about how and why the winemaker chose to make the wine that year, reflecting certain practices, traditions, or family history. Unopened or empty, the wine in Andy's cellar, or "library" serve as symbolic records providing information and knowledge about the identity of

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/library> (accessed November 28, 2014).

the wines, the wineries, and CV. Andy's use of the phrase "I want to keep a library of what *people* are producing" illustrates the important role that people play in creating a taste of place (Trubek 2008).

### III. People

This connection of people to practice was influential to Andy in selecting the name Averill Creek to represent his wines, winery and vineyard that reinforces an awareness to place, as he explained:

[Averill was] an English family from the Cotswold's from Broadway in England. He came here in the late 19th century between 1875 and 1900 and he homesteaded this mountain and developed a big dairy farm here. So this became Averill Creek. In fact, there are quite a few Averill's now in Canada who have been back to see us.

This passage illustrates how Andy and the wine producers in CV are able to draw on existing history of a place, regardless of how short or its direct relatedness to wine production, to create an identity reflective of their current place and practices that then may be communicated to others. This reinforces how when considering place as a marker of identity that it is important to consider the role of people and their practices and traditions associated with that place (Paxson 2010; Trubek 2008). Andy, like the Averills before him, has farming roots connected to the United Kingdom and is reshaping the physical and social environment to meet his current wants and needs, invoking a sense of nostalgia, a connection to the past, used to create a current identity.

Andy then revealed one more reason why Averill Creek Vineyards was a good name choice to create awareness and a recognizable identity for his products and place: Averill starts with the letter "A" which places him first or second (after Alderlea winery) in stores that use alphabetical ordering to display CV wines on the shelves. It would also put him near the top of wine industry listings and marketing publications such as association directories, brochures and

maps. This would be very important for reaching and communicating information to the tourist industry.<sup>32</sup> This is all part of Andy's business model and strategic planning.

Andy represented a newcomer to CV and the wine industry when he began his operations in 2001 but a newcomer with a solid business model, methodical planning, and his own funding. He recognized potential for CV to become a region capable of producing premium wines distinctive and reflective of the physical and social environment. He also came in with a commitment and passion to aggressively promote what he believed in, as he describes himself, "I'm a bit of a bull in a china shop, so I've pissed off a few people but that's life." Getting a sense that this approach may have upset the existing status quo in the region, I asked Andy when he first came here if the CV wine industry was receptive to new people coming in. His response reveals some of the characteristics of the people of CV, the wine producers there, and of himself:

Oh totally, very much so. There are core people in this area who are the wine producers and they were very receptive. Most of the folks, I would say, respect what I do and the way I do it. People are so individualistic and the attraction of a place like this is to the individual, right. The producers, they're very quirky. They have their own ideas about how things should be done or shouldn't be done. And I'm no different. You're going to get the eccentrics, you're going to get the personalities and that is delightful.

This passage from Andy suggests that the individualistic nature of wine producers and their eccentricities make a collective identity for CV wines and the region challenging to create and to communicate. However, unlike some of the early wine producers who may have come to CV to experience a sense of the idyllic island living (see Henry 1999), escaping the hectic life of the larger urban centers on the mainland (see Haynes 2013 and Schreiner 2011), Andy came to the Island with a specific business plan. While some of the older, established wineries may be content to be small producers supplying the local population and a few visitors or tourists coming up from Victoria (Schreiner 2011), they were also somewhat resistant to change and

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<sup>32</sup> For example see *Explore Cowichan* 2014, published by Tourism Cowichan and Wineaccess's Canadian Wine Annual 2012.

growth in the region. Conversely, Andy was committed to growth and drawing attention to CV and its ability to produce premium wines representative of place, practice, and people.

#### IV. Creating Wine and a Taste of Place

Part of Andy's plan to draw attention to CV and build recognition for premium wine production was to increase his capacity to the point where he could export wine off of Vancouver Island and out of British Columbia. To my knowledge, based on experience and research, Averill Creek Vineyard wines are the only CV produced wines available for purchase in Alberta liquor stores and specialty wine shops. Andy is pro-development in the CV wine industry, acknowledging the need for more wine producers and growers, stating "There is room for more growth" which he feels would be good for him and the CV region. This growth would help create awareness and a recognizable identity for their individual places and the larger place of CV. It would in a sense help to build a community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). Andy acknowledges that part of the problem at this point is that most of the wineries are producing relatively small quantities of wine and selling virtually all of it on Vancouver Island. This makes it difficult to create any kind of awareness and collective identity off of the island and to a broader audience, both tourists and wine consumers.

Andy's commitment to growth, producing premium wines, and to increasing awareness for his winery and the entire region is evident through his support of, and active participation in, local organizations devoted to these objectives. The Wine Islands Vintner's Association<sup>33</sup> (WIVA) is a regional organization with the goal of promoting and marketing the provincially and industry recognized Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands designated wine producing region. The Wine Islands Grower's Association<sup>34</sup> (WIGA) is another regional organization that focuses on the agricultural side of growing grapes and wine production. Due to the growth and development in CV, resulting in the largest concentration of wineries (15 at the time of my

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.tourismvictoria.com/listings/Wine-Islands-Vintners-Association/34848/http://>. (accessed December 19, 2014).

<sup>34</sup> <http://wiga.ca/> (accessed December 19, 2014).

research) and vineyards, CV has become the de facto focal point for the entire Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands official designation. This growth in CV, and the desire to focus on their specific region and create an identity representative of this place, prompted a handful of the CV wineries to band together to set up their own ad hoc organization known as [wines.cowichan.net](http://wines.cowichan.net)<sup>35</sup> in 2012. In support of this local movement Andy stated, "The key to Vancouver Island is Cowichan Valley by far. We have the best microclimate."

Andy, along with his wife and partner, were and are active executive members in all of these three organizations at one point or another since they began their operation in 2001. Andy was also the advisory committee representative for the Vancouver Wine Island and Gulf Islands region with the British Columbia Wine Authority<sup>36</sup> (BCWA) at the time of our interviews. These associations and groups will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter under the politics and organizations section. Andy and Averill Creek Vineyard's commitment and support of these organizations and increasing focus specifically on CV illustrates how place, practice, and people can come together to create a recognizable identity that can be communicated to others.

When I asked Andy if he felt this message, an identity for CV wines, was being recognized and communicated by the local people of CV, he replied:

Oh hugely so. They are very proud of the wine industry and they are very proud to bring their friends and families here (Averill Creek Vineyard) to visit. I mean a lot of people who come here are local people with other sundry folks in tow, 'I want to show you this, oh this is fantastic, this is great wine.' And it is and it's nice for them to be proud of them.

Andy's previous business success, as a co-founder of one of the first primary-care walk in centres in Canada (Schreiner 2011), his detailed business model for his winery and vineyard operation, and his commitment and passion for producing premium wines reflective of CV, could be said to serve as inspiration for the latest generation of wineries and vineyards in the region, such as Unsworth Vineyards discussed in the next section.

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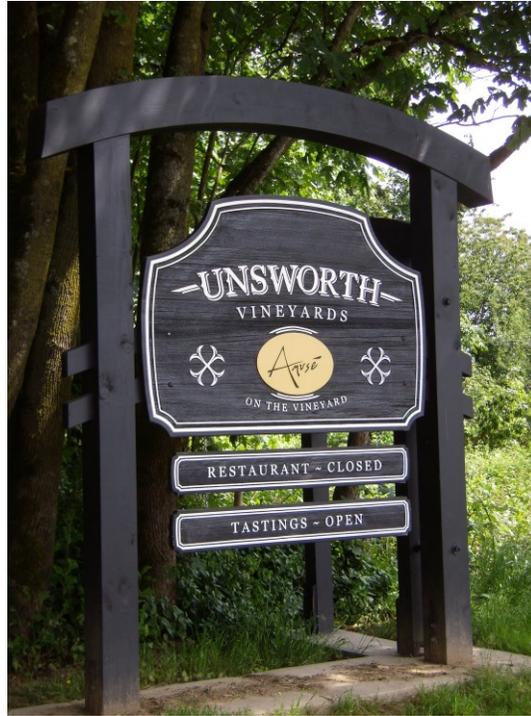
<sup>35</sup> <http://wines.cowichan.net/userfiles/file/WineBrochureweb.pdf> (accessed December 19, 2014).

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.bcvqa.ca/> (accessed December 19, 2014).

## **Unsworth Vineyards**

Unsworth Vineyards, established in 2011, is the most recent winery to open in Cowichan Valley (CV) and was only in their second year of operation at the time of my primary fieldwork in 2012. They represent a new variation on wine producers to CV: owners who had earned their wealth and business experience in another industry and admittedly had no experience in the wine business but were passionate wine lovers with personal connections to Vancouver Island and CV (Hynes 2013). Unsworth Vineyards owners Tim and Colleen Turyk founded Bella Coola Fisheries Ltd., one of the largest fish processors in British Columbia, in 1978. When retirement from the fishing industry approached, the Turyks embraced the opportunity to return to Vancouver Island where they both had grown up and met each other before moving to the mainland to pursue their fish processing business. To compensate for their lack of experience in the wine industry, Turyk consulted with Andy Johnston of Averill Creek Vineyards, another successful businessman (as discussed in the previous section) who recently moved to Vancouver Island and had begun a winery operation and vineyard in CV. The Turyk's purchased a 32 acre parcel of land that had two acres of four year old vineyards planted and a small winery building and established Unsworth Vineyards (Image 6.5).

Having purchased the property, the Turyks still had to address their lack of experience in the wine industry in order to get Unsworth Vineyards operational. To accomplish this, they hired local winemaker Daniel Cosman, who came to CV in 2006 to work in the wine industry, and his wife Sarah Cosman, a professionally trained chef and a winemaker in her own right, to serve as the winery's general manger. Daniel and Sarah both consented to participate and be interviewed for my research.



**Image 6.5 Unsworth Vineyards road sign. Author's photo.**

## I. Place

Unsworth Vineyards is located in the rolling hills west of the community of Mill Bay and a few kilometers east of Shawinigan Lake, a popular island lake for tourists and summer home owners. This location is significant because the Turyks owned a summer home in Shawinigan Lake and were very familiar and comfortable with the area (Hynes 2013). Tim Turyk had visited the lake many times as a youth because that is where his mother grew up. His mother's maiden name was Unsworth which the Turyks chose to represent their new business venture and their wines because the name represented a connection to family, to the past and this area, this place in CV, and thus some nostalgia as a sense of cultural-historical authenticity (Bigenho 2002) for them. Their children had attended Brentwood College which was located in the community of nearby Mill Bay and just a few minutes east of the Unsworth vineyards and winery.

The purchase of the property to create Unsworth Vineyards represented a return to a place to reestablish family roots while creating the opportunity to establish new literal roots, the

vines planted, and figurative or symbolic roots in the wines that they hoped would reflect their family and this place in CV. The previous owner of the property ran it as a hobby vineyard but the Turyks were looking to make something more of it, to turn it into an actual business operation.

Unsworth Vineyards was also the southernmost winery in CV which meant it was closest to the provincial capital city of Victoria and would often be the first stop for visitors venturing out to the CV wine region, including the all important tour companies that brought limousines, vans or bus loads of potential customers. Part of the Unsworth Vineyards' plan to capitalize on these potential visitors was to build a new and modern wine tasting building, surrounded by an attractive outdoor patio and landscaping (Image 6.6). It was also important to construct a large parking lot that would accommodate the tour companies' vans and buses, making this a preferred destination as part of their regular wine tour itineraries.

This new and contemporary-looking building accompanied by newly planted vegetation and constructed water pond contrasts sharply with the 100 year old farm house (Image 6.2) used by Deol Estate Winery for their tasting room. The Unsworth Vineyards building and surrounding landscaping represents a different and more aggressive approach to building their winery image and developing their customer base. While the Deol's 100 year old farmhouse may symbolize the family farm tradition and the hardworking farmer, I sensed the Unsworth tasting room and gardens symbolized new money targeting a younger and more urban wine consumer. My sense was later confirmed by Sarah, the winery general manager. To balance out this newness and contemporary approach, Unsworth Vineyards renovated and remodeled a 100 year old farmhouse on the property into an upscale, fine dining restaurant and convinced a local restaurateur and award winning chef to relocate his existing restaurant from Shawnigan Lake to the Unsworth property. This enabled them to make a connection to the past history of this

particular place (the 100 year old farmhouse restaurant is prominently featured in marketing material) to create a sense of authenticity<sup>37</sup> to visitors, now identified as Unsworth Vineyards.



**Image 6.6 Unsworth Tasting room and landscaping. Author's photo.**

The Unsworth business model follows that of Averill Creek Vineyards in attempting to create a recognizable identity for CV as a destination region producing premium wines for a market beyond the local customers. This approach was summed up by Sarah, who stated that, "We planted additional acreage of vines in the vineyard, built the tasting room, and brought the restaurant on-site. We made this more of a destination stop than just a tasting room." This focus on planning and a sound business acumen, based on the Turyks' previous business venture, is also illustrated in their vineyard and winery practices discussed in the next section.

## II. Practice

Daniel<sup>38</sup>, the winemaker hired by the owners, expressed this business first ideology of Unsworth Vineyards during our first interview when discussing the promotion of Cowichan Valley (CV), as a place representing an identifiable wine region, when he stated that, "We don't exist for the pleasures of the tourism industry; we're not here so they can have a good time;

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<sup>37</sup> See <http://www.unsworthvineyards.com/restaurant/> (accessed January 9, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> Daniel was also the winemaker for Enrico Winery.

we're here because we are a business." Daniel, with a background in farming and agriculture but not specifically viticulture, recognizes that the a sound business model for producing premium wine begins in the vineyard:

Wines are made in the field. A perfect fruit almost makes itself into wine. A great winemaker shines in a terrible year when the fruit is less than desirable but a poor winemaker can make pretty good wine in a great year. So the knowledge of viticulture, is in my opinion more important than the knowledge on the winemaking side of things. A good winemaker is only as good as the grapes coming in.

This quote from Daniel illustrates the importance of matching knowledge with a specific environment or place (Ingold 1996, 2000). Daniel's recognition of producing good fruit first in order to produce good wine highlights the transformative process involved moving from viticulture to viniculture or enology, as the science of making wine. This illustrates the importance of the relationship between the vineyard manager and winemaker, if they are not the same individual, and how they need to work closely together to achieve the best results. Daniel speaks to these two different roles and components and how the significance of the practice and some of the challenges are rooted in this transformative process:

The strange thing about the agriculture side of a vineyard is you are not growing fruit for the fruit's sake and if this was an apple orchard we would go out there and want the biggest brightest red apple because it is appearance as well as flavor that sells most fruit-bearing trees and vines, whereas we are not growing fruit that is aimed at human consumption. We are growing fruit because we want to achieve something else and does that differ, absolutely. Very much so. A vineyard manager is a farmer, winemakers are food processors.

Daniel's description of this transformative process is reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss' (1969) theory that a product of nature, in this case a grape, when transformed into an entirely different product, wine, obtains a new and powerful meaning: as in nature transformed into culture. And similar to Lévi-Strauss' analysis, Daniel emphasizes the importance of the process. Daniel's distinction between a vineyard manager as a "farmer" and a winemaker as a "food processor" draws on the interrelationships of place, practice, and people, as suggested in Trubek's (2005, 2008) concept of terroir. Place, in this case CV, affects your practice, your skills and knowledge

about the grape varieties that you plant and that will successfully grow in this environment and climate, and then hopefully produce premium wines that consumers will like. This illustrates a challenge for CV producers as people's experiences of wine that they bring with them, even the local people, may not match what CV is able to produce. For example, Daniel suggests that they are in a region where "Most of the time, red wines should not have been made", yet the reality of the wine market is that 50% of consumers coming into the Unsworth Vineyard tasting room (and others) say "Well, I only drink red wine."

Daniel is referring to CV's physical location and Mediterranean type climate which does not regularly receive enough heat units or a long enough growing season to produce the grape varieties that consumers expect in fruit-forward and juicy-tasting red wines that currently dominate much of the global wine industry (Demossier 2010; McCoy 2005; Resnick 2008). This climate variability, Daniel suggests, means CV often produces bitter, green, unripe grapes that usually result in very acidic wines that are not appealing for most consumers. Sometimes the "farmer" has little control over the quality of the grapes in bad-weather years, which then increases the importance of the role of the "food processor." As Daniel states, "In a bad (grape) year, my workload (as the winemaker) doubles or triples."

The challenges of CV as a physical place, its northerly location with typically cool and damp climate by wine industry standards (Aspler 2006; Schreiner 2011), stresses the importance of trying to match the right practice (situated learning [Lave and Wenger 1991]), to these conditions in order to successfully create an identity for Unsworth Vineyards and the CV as a wine region. Towards this end, Unsworth benefits from the 25 year history of experimentation in the region where upwards of 100 different grape varieties have been trialed by the different vineyards. Daniel describes this as both an enjoyable creative process - "As farmers we can do as we please" - but also as a detriment to the regional identity of CV by suggesting "Local producers need to stop trying to reinvent the wheel." When I ask Daniel to explain what he means by this comment he replies:

Twenty years later we still have 30 to 40 varieties planted on the island. I'm not suggesting that we go the route of the over-bureaucratized and controlling French system where you can't breathe without a certificate from the subcommittee of the subcommittee of the high administrative body, etcetera, but perhaps we should be considering narrowing down some of the varieties that are approved of, either officially or unofficially.

Daniel emphasizes that his meaning behind his "stop trying to reinvent the wheel" comment refers to an underlying assumption that all producers in CV are starting at the same level.

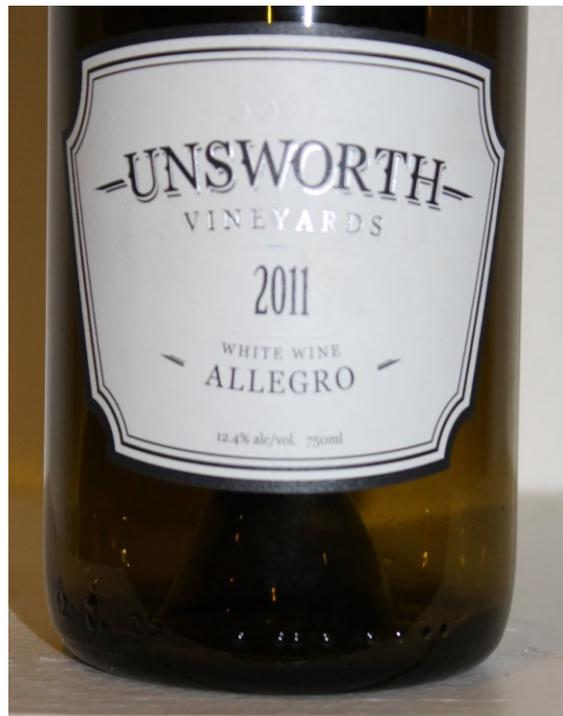
Clearly he says they are not; there are varying levels of knowledge, expertise, and experiences between them. This suggests that a defined community of practice does not yet exist for the wine producers of CV. Daniel suggests that because wine production in CV is still a small industry consisting of individuals from varied backgrounds or family operations who cannot afford to hire experts to help them, growers and producers are left to their own devices to learn independently of each other. They are often starting at the beginning, trying to reinvent the wheel rather than making a better wheel. This, coupled with the relative isolation CV experiences from being located on Vancouver Island and far away from wine industry suppliers and expertise, makes it difficult for the local wine industry to move forward in any type of unified way in creating a distinctive and collective identity for the wines of the region.

Conversely, Daniel also references the highly regulated AOC system that has evolved in France and that Demossier (2010) and Guy (2004) document as instrumental in shaping the identity of French wines and France as a wine-producing region. This is a system that Daniel would like to see CV avoid as he believes bureaucratic rigid structures restricts the creativity that the wine producers seek in transforming their grapes into something else.

However, romantic ideals of France and Old World wine traditions do play into Unsworth's practice when it comes to product branding and marketing. Sarah, Unsworth's general manager, stated that appealing to Old World romance was very important to them when they started operations. They chose cork for their wine closures over screw top caps because of the romance associated with the history and tradition of cork (Bachelder 1990; Johnson 2005).

For their label design they wanted something more traditional (Image 6.7) not something that may be trendy and could fade away quickly. Sarah laughed as she elaborated:

We were told to stay away from all the critters (referring to the many contemporary wines that use animals on their wine labels). There is critter wine out there and some of it is really fantastic but at the same time also maybe a bit forgettable, so it did come into play in developing our tasting room as well. We really wanted something that was long lasting, had longevity, made an impression in people`s minds that was romantic, a little more upscale. So yeah, I definitely think there is some connection there with Old World, with developing our wine at Unsworth.



**Image 6.7 Unsworth Wine Bottle Label, a more elegant and traditional label design. Author's photo.**

The above passage illustrates the role of practice, outside of the vineyard, to help create an identity for Unsworth Vineyard wines. Sarah describes the deliberate marketing objective of trying to evoke romance and tradition in their new products by connecting with Old World wine traditions of using corks and "classic" style labels on their bottles. The intention with this connection of a new product, Unsworth wines, is to give this brand credibility and a sense of authenticity (Fillitz and Saris 2013) to make it relatable to consumers with some cultural knowledge and tasting experience around wines. Sarah's role at Unsworth Vineyards is clearly

different than Daniel's but they both play a part in shaping the identity of Unsworth wines and the vineyard, and by extension CV.

### III. People

Daniel's commitment to and drive in what he does, as a wine grower and winemaker in CV, became evident to me during our first interview when we met over lunch and were 45 minutes into our conversation when I finally suggested that I should probably stop and let him eat his untouched lunch and he replied:

That's okay, these are subjects that are very near and dear to my heart. I am not an owner, my pride isn't tied up in the success in any one winery (Daniel at the time was also the winemaker for Enrico Winery). I've worked in more wineries than most people and have installed many vineyards. I have perhaps more of a bird's eye view than a lot of people. It [this topic] occupies a lot of my time.

Daniel's statement that these topics (terroir, estate wineries, environmental sustainability, place and identity) occupy a lot of his time, also reflects his knowledge and analytic pragmatism that shape his perspectives. This is evident in his referral to winemakers as "food processors" and his personal dislike for the notion of the myth of the winemaker and questions of authenticity. Daniel suggests, with a chuckle, that it is difficult to proclaim local authenticity to your wines when you use French barrels, German stainless steel, American pressure tanks, an Italian forklift, and vines that were bred in Switzerland and Oregon.

Daniel does admit to enjoying the artistic side of wine production, being an artisan similar to the small scale cheese maker, but balances that with saying "as soon as you cross some arbitrary line and get into the world of big business, then you are just a food processor." So Daniel, having moved past the original novelty of making wines, focuses on making a technically sound wine through what he describes as "reductive analysis. I'm far more critical now, including of my own wines. I think when I came here I was a pretty terrible winemaker." Daniel is largely a self taught winemaker, having no formal education or training in enology (the science of making wine). Nor has he had a formal apprenticeship with any other winemaker to

acquire knowledge to develop his skill. Again, for Daniel a community of practice with situated learning (Lave and Wenger 1991) does not really exist for the wine producers in CV.

Daniel acknowledges that it is possible to make a technically superior wine that is undrinkable. Through this perspective, Daniel is suggesting that once you get past the scientific analysis of eliminating faults and achieving chemical balance in the wine, the experience becomes largely subjective. The subjective experience is where Sarah, the general manager and Daniel's wife, offers a counterbalance and some romance to Daniel's preference for the more analytic scientific approach to wine.

Sarah was the only individual representing wine production in my study who was actually born and raised on Vancouver Island. She also attended culinary school on the island and became a professionally trained chef. After growing tired of working the nights, weekends and holidays that were customary in the food industry, Sarah took a summer job working in the vineyards at Enrico winery. Upon recognizing Sarah's hard work and commitment in the vineyard, the owners of Enrico encouraged her to return the following year and they also offered to pay for her to go study at Okanagan College of Viticulture and Enology. Sarah received her certification, first in viticulture because that was her focus at the time at Enrico, and became vineyard manager before completing her enology studies. It was during her first vintage at Enrico where she met Daniel, who mentored her through the whole process. Here we see the combination of formal learning and Sarah's apprenticeship in a specific environment contributing to her enskilment (Grasenni 2007).

Sarah continues to explain, "That's where we met and then of course we married after that which is very romantic (laughs) and then we had our first child." Interestingly, this comment came very early in our conversation, long before I had brought up the notion of romance and romantic images associated with the wine industry and wine culture. It offers insight into Sarah's perspective that differs from Daniel's regarding their respective roles at Unsworth Vineyards.

When I asked Sarah what she thought of the science of wine versus the role of nature discussion and her position on the continuum, she replied:

That's funny, when I was doing my first year of winemaking I had a hard time. I was struggling between artistic winemaking and scientific winemaking and Daniel is more scientific than I am. He makes wines that have no faults, they're wonderful but I'm more on the artistic style. So I found it very difficult in my first year of winemaking because of the difference between the artistic and scientific winemaking but we still make great wine and I think Daniel and I are a unique combination because we are so varied and I love to hear what he has to say about a new bottle of wine that we open and have never tried it before. He can say 'It was probably this brix (amount of sugar in the wine) and it's this alcohol, maybe this happened, there is a bit of residual sugar, this happened.' And I can say 'Oh this probably had a really fantastic summer and I can taste these flavors.' That's a really nice combination we have. We are fortunate to both come from different directions and meet together in the middle.

Sarah's last statement appears to be an apt metaphor for their personal lives as well as for their respective roles and contributions to shaping an identity for Unsworth Vineyards and CV as a wine producing region. They represent a younger generation with a respect for the traditions of the past coupled with the beliefs and desire to create something new; to establish their own identity and new traditions for themselves and for the wines that they help produce. The people of Unsworth want to continue to practice the creative freedom that comes with working in a place that yet does not have a recognizable identity in the wine industry.

#### IV. Creating Wine and a Taste of Place

One possible way, Daniel suggests, to address the desire to maintain creative freedom in Cowichan Valley (CV) while narrowing down the varietal experimentation is to focus on the Blattner hybrids. Daniel has been involved in the Blattner project (see Ch. 5) in CV and the Gulf Islands (Ring 2011; Schreiner 2011) for the past six years and is a proponent of the possibilities that these hybrid varieties bring. Because of their disease resistance and hardiness, they require no or negligible spraying, compared to traditional *Vinifera*, to protect them against botrytis and powdery mildew brought on by CV's damp and cool climate. This fits nicely with Daniel's environmental and sustainable tendencies, "I want to avoid fungicides." The challenges for

Daniel and the region are the taste profiles these hybrid varieties produce and their acceptance by wine consumers. Daniel expresses the potential for the Blattner hybrids to contribute to the making of a distinct wine identity for Unsworth Vineyards and the region, and the potential drawbacks to proceeding in this direction:

On the island (Vancouver Island) we have more of the Blattner varieties than anywhere else in North America. Some of them are producing really incredible wines. Some of them are on the cusp of being almost too strange to appeal to the masses but with blending we can take care of that. I'm okay with putting a little bit of pinot noir to cabernet libre to subdue the vegetativeness, give it a little bit more cherry (flavor). There is the perception that anything that is a hybrid is somehow lesser. But we will get better at growing these varieties and get better at making them and our tastes will change.

With names like Cabernet Foch and Cabernet Libre for the reds, Epicure and Petite Milo (Appendix B) for the whites, the Blattner varieties are far from recognizable grapes to most wine producers, let alone wine consumers. As Daniel suggests in his quote above, it is most likely the Blattner varieties will be blended with other grapes and given proprietary names, such as he did with Unsworth's first release of a red wine called Symphony, a blend of merlot (a highly recognizable variety with a long viticultural history) and cabernet libre (a highly unrecognizable variety without a long viticultural history) .

Wine industry expert and writer John Schreiner (2011) has even gone so far as to suggest that if the Blattner varieties are embraced by CV producers and develop a consumer following they have the potential to differentiate CV wineries from those of British Columbia's more established and recognized interior regions of the Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys. Valentin Blattner himself stated to the grape growers of CV during a 2005 visit to Vancouver Island that "Every region has to have a variety which is the signature of that region" (Schreiner 2011, 25). Whether the Blattner varieties help this happen or not for CV, it will involve a process of educating consumers and the people at Unsworth Vineyards appear committed to that process. As Daniel suggests in his quote above, peoples' tastes can change and he hopes the identity of CV wines and the region remain fluid. No pun intended.

## **Place, Practice, and People**

One of the principal objectives of my research in determining how the wine producers of Cowichan Valley (CV) create a 'taste of place' (Trubek 2005, 2008) and in turn promote their products, places, and identities, was to capture some of the lived experiences of the people involved in growing grapes and producing wine in CV. In the past two chapters I presented some of their stories collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observation. I used their own words to convey what is important to them and how they make sense of their lives and what they do. Collecting and sharing participant narratives is an excellent medium for expressing values, beliefs, and philosophies of an individual (Cruikshank 1990). It is important to remember that the truthfulness of their stories or words is not the focus; factuality was not a concern to my use of this approach (Linde 1993). These individual stories are an important component of shaping a collective identity around places and practices because they are often associated with the local priorities of the participants (Hahn and Inhorn 2009).

As illustrated in Ch.'s 5 and 6, the places, practices, and people of Cherry Point Estate Wines, Godfrey-Brownell Vineyards, Deol Estate Winery, Averill Creek Vineyards, and Unsworth Vineyards are diverse and similar at the same time: from Xavier's 'Old World' sensibilities of terroir and the role of all his people contributing to the 'taste' of his wines; to David's desire to preserve the land while challenging traditional practices of viticulture; to the Deol family's ethnic heritage and pride in their hardworking farming history; to Andy's strategic planning and commitment to make the best pinot noir possible; to Daniel and Sarah's representation of and awareness to a growing demographic of younger wine consumers concerned about the environment and sustainable farming practices. The similarity comes from each of their desires to create a new and enjoyable experience for the people who visit their respective wineries, vineyards and tasting rooms, that their people, practices, and beliefs create a distinctive place unto themselves, independent from the other wineries in CV.

While this diversity may be experienced through the wide range of grape varieties planted and used to make wines at the various wineries and communicated through the differing taste profiles and bottle packaging, it also presents a challenge for CV as a region to create a unified identity to promote to a larger audience beyond their local customers and local priorities. The next chapter explores the role of regional and local politics and various organizations in shaping the 'taste of place' for CV. I will use wine bottles and labels to illustrate how these roles and their effects may be communicated, literally and symbolically, to represent individual and collective identities for CV wine producers.

## Chapter 7

### **Politics, Organizations and Labels: Shaping Identity in the Cowichan Valley Wine Industry**

In this chapter, I explore some of the political players (i.e. people and organizations), structures and policies that affect Cowichan Valley (CV) wine producers in their practices and beliefs. These structures in turn shape the individual and collective identities for their products, their places, and themselves. As Demossier (2010) and Black and Ulin (2013) suggest, wine production cannot be separated from the wider cultural context in which it takes place. Political forces may influence wine's role in shaping identity and thus what Trubek (2005, 2008) refers to as 'taste of place'. While 'taste' may be considered a personal subjective experience, objective assessment standards concerning quality and authenticity are frequently politicized in popular discourse (Black and Ulin 2013) and therefore "used for bureaucratic classification and authentication" (Jung 2013:163). Coleman (2008) and Farmer (2013) elaborate on the role of politics in the wine industry by highlighting the ways governments influence the wines people drink such as controlling bottle label content. Regulated requirements on wine bottle labels can legitimize claims for exclusive access and privilege in both local and global market places. Therefore, it is important to consider political factors and organizations within the specific context of CV, located on Vancouver Island (VI) in the province of British Columbia (BC).

Andy Johnson of Averill Creek Vineyards provided an example of the connection to politics and wine and the 'taste of place' when I asked him about his early experiences and impressions with Canadian wines as he responded "As anybody would be tasting Canadian wines from the early years, the 1970s, '80s, '90s, they were appallingly bad for many reasons, most of them political." He is making a clear connection between politics and the literal taste of the wines. Andy was referring to the period before the macro-level political factors and government involvement, introduced in Ch. 4, which stimulated the Canadian wine industry in general, and more specifically the industry in CV and the province of BC. These factors include:

the ratification between the Canadian and US governments of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1988; Canada's participation in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (now the World Trade Organization); and the British Columbia Vintners Quality Alliance (BCVQA) program established through the British Columbia Wine Authority (BCWA). Prior to this time period, the Canadian and regional governments promoted and regulated protectionist policies in support of Canadian produced wines (Aspler 2006). These policies also restricted the availability and consumption of imported wines from more established wine producing countries by imposing higher taxes on them. The result was that although these policies may have helped get the young Canadian wine industry off the ground, Canadian producers did not have to worry about competing on quality or the taste of their wines with more established and higher quality imported wines.

I begin this chapter with a macro-level federal example of political regulation shaping collective identity before further exploring the relationships CV wine producers have with the various BC provincial government departments, the BCWA, and the regional organizations the Wine Islands Vintners Association (WIVA), the Wine Islands Growers Association (WIGA), and [wines.cowichan.net](http://wines.cowichan.net). I discuss how these relationships shape their individual winery identities and their products and whether or not they collectively contribute to shaping a 'taste of place' for CV. Images of wine bottle labels from CV producers, along with other marketing material, are used to illustrate these relationships.

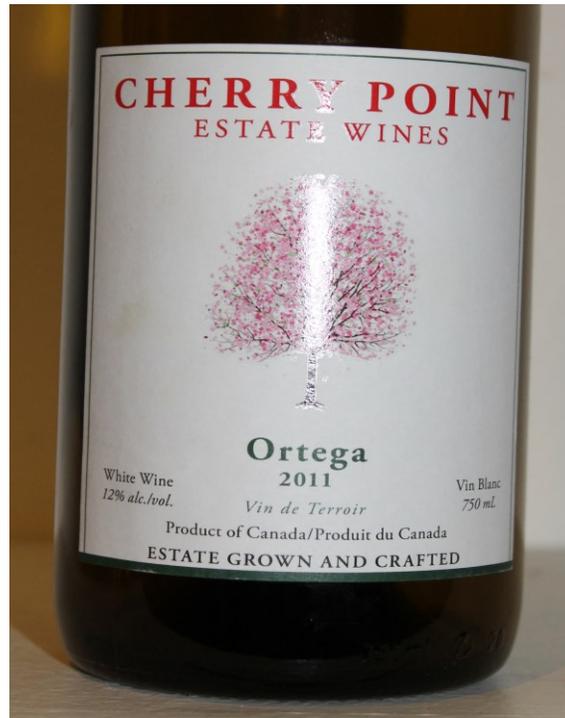
### **Federal "Country of Origin" Regulation**

The most obvious large scale government policy contributing to a broad representation of identity for legally selling wine in Canada, and to a global market, is the federally regulated "Country of Origin"<sup>39</sup> designation. The regulation stipulates that a clear indication of the country of origin is required on all standardized wine products, that this declaration must be shown in

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/labelling/food-labelling-for-industry/alcohol/eng/1392909001375/1392909133296?chap=7#s20c7> (accessed April 17, 2015).

English and French and it must appear on the principal display panel, as is shown on the Cherry Point Estate Wines label of its 2011 Ortega wine (Image 7.1).



**Image 7.1 Cherry Point Estate Wines 2011 Ortega front wine label. States country of origin in both English and French, "Product of Canada/Produit du Canada." Author's photo.**

While this "Country of Origin" regulation largely serves the federal government in matters of import/export tariffs and alcoholic beverage taxation (Coleman 2008), the intent is also to protect and inform the consumer that the wine product that they are purchasing is in fact a product of that stated country, a product of a place. As stated by the regulations, a wine may claim to be wine of a country if:

1. the wine is made from at least 75 percent of the juice of grapes grown in that country and it is fermented, processed, blended and finished in that country, or
2. in the case of wines blended in that country, at least 75 percent of the finished wine is fermented and processed in that country from the juice of grapes grown in that country.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/labelling/food-labelling-for-industry/alcohol/eng/1392909001375/1392909133296?chap=7#s20c7> (accessed April 17, 2015).

This regulation serves to ensure that the consumer feels confident they are purchasing a wine product that is largely grown (at least 75%) and produced in Canada. In the literal sense, the "Product of Canada/Produit du Canada" designation provides a government regulated declaration of authenticity to the product similar to McCone and colleagues' (1995) example of Scotch with Scotland. This is what Farmer (2013) refers to as the legal construction of wine. However, this construction and limited interpretation of authenticity is void in personal and subjective experience, that which is related to an inner core of the self (Taylor 1999), for the wine consumer *and* the wine producer. It is lacking what Bigenho (2002) describes as unique and/or experiential authenticity.

Coleman (2008) suggests that identification by locality has long been a way to differentiate wines for consumers. While the wines are linked to a place, Canada, it is a large geographic region comprised of diverse environments with a multi-ethnic heritage and history, and a broad socio-cultural landscape. So despite a political "Country of Origin" regulation, the wines of Canada do not meet two fundamental criteria suggested by Farmer (2013) in her examination of the French *Appellation D'Origin Contrôlée* (AOC) on which the Canadian system is based. Firstly, there is little recognition of a tradition of practice linking wine with Canada known outside of the country, as well as limited recognition within the country (Aspler 2006). Secondly, while the Canadian wine industry has grown significantly over the past two decades (see Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2007) and national and international recognition has improved, there remains a lack of a time-honored tradition reinforced by the passing of time. Canada's wines lack a history linking people and practice to place. Following Bigenho's (2002) classification, they lack cultural-historical authenticity.

Since the Age of Exploration, beginning in the 15th century through the period of Modernity into the 20th century, authentic objects and ideas of authenticity became commodities and conditions of social differentiation between geographic regions and groups of people and their ways of life (Mursic 2013). Commodities, such as cultural artifacts and artwork,

become transformed into authentic objects because they are “bound to a particular socio-cultural context ... defined by its region of origin, material used for production, the production process and the local actors involved in it” (Fillitz & Saris 2013, 11).

A growing fascination with diversity remains central to the contemporary culture of authenticity. As Fillitz and Saris note in *Debating Authenticity*, “Authenticity possesses a surprising social resonance at this moment in history” (2013, 1). The main difference today in the contemporary search for authenticity is that along with the desire to appropriate and consume objects representative of different societies or cultures (food, drink and clothing being three of the most ubiquitous) and old traditions (such as connections to ancestry and forms of spirituality), many people are searching for, as Fillitz and Saris suggest, “true expressions of emotions and ideas” (2013, 9). Authenticity represents a search for deep human connections as a way for people to find meaning in their lives (Sjorslev 2013).

An interesting example of diversity of experiences being linked with notions of authenticity may be illustrated with a wine, bottle, and label for Godfrey-Brownell (Image 7.2).



**Image 7. 2 Wine bottle and label from Godfrey-Brownell which does not meet Federal Government 'Country of Origin' requirements. Author's photo.**

The label on this bottle of wine does not feature the required "Product of Canada/Produit du Canada" designation to authenticate its country of origin. In fact it has no information on it indicating a place of any kind. It does not have regional identification such as Cowichan Valley nor the winery's name, Godfrey-Brownell. There is no back label. The front label is a simple peel and stick label that has no apparent relation to a place or to wine. In a political sense this wine would be considered placeless. The information provided is not bilingual, has no mention of alcohol content or volume size. All of this information is legally required of wines produced in Canada and intended for commercial distribution. This wine could not be legally sold in any store regardless of whether it was a BC government regulated and owned liquor store or an independent outlet anywhere.

The figure on the label could be a mythical creature resembling a unicorn but with two goat-like horns. The word "foch" is hand written above the label with a gold ink marker and represents the grape varietal, a hybrid, used in making the wine. Perhaps the figure is also meant to represent a hybrid creature. The numbers "2003" are hand written below the label and indicate the year of the grape vintage. Despite its apparent placelessness, how might this bottle of wine and label contribute to a taste of place for CV? David made it clear to me that he had long since given up selling his wines to retail outlets of any kind, "Why would I sell my wines to stores and lose 30% off the top when I can sell them here and keep all of the money." This quote reinforces previously discussed information that many of CV wineries are small producers and sell most of their product at their wineries or through to their local customers as they want and need to maximize their returns. Using inexpensive generic labels and hand writing some basic information on the bottle would be a way for David to save money but it also suggests his dislike for government bureaucracy and political intervention with his practices. Recall Schreiner's (2011) comment about expecting to find a "moonshiner" at the end of the road into Godfrey-Brownell. This bottle and label suggest the wine is homemade and illegal to sell.

However, I suggest this bottle and label is a way for David to create a taste of place for his wines that contributes to a collective CV identity. Because the wine was not available at any stores, a consumer would have had to have visited the place of Godfrey-Brownell or had some direct connect with someone who had. This speaks to the role of cultural knowledge available when engaging with a place and the broader taste experience (Trubek 2008). Similar to Bigenho's description of experiential authenticity, if one has engaged with shared knowledge about the wine it becomes part of the connection to a place and may create an identity for the wine products. And as I discussed in Ch. 5, David enjoys sharing his knowledge, stories, and wines with visitors to his place which provides context to the experience. This taste experience, as a taste of place, may then be evoked when looking at the bottle and label. However, if a consumer has no shared cultural knowledge about the wine or Godfrey-Brownell, this specific wine, bottle, and label would be placeless and would be unable to convey a taste of place.

Wines produced in Canada and simply labeled "Product of Canada/Produit du Canada" are generally not perceived as conveying this culturally symbolic sense of authenticity or connection to a specific place, people or historical tradition (Aspler 1999, 2006; Schreiner 2011). Canada, as a wine-producing nation, is still relatively young in the global marketplace and has not yet established a collective identity that could be said to be representative of such a large and varied geographic area, with a diverse multi-cultural ethnic population. It requires time, expertise, and a host of other variables to develop a product recognizable as distinctive of a place and representative of an industry-wide accepted level of quality (Aspler 1999, 2006; Johnson 2010; Trubek 2005, 2008). Recall Andy's comment on the quality of Canada's early wines, "they were appallingly bad." The wine producers of CV are aware of this and recognize that having "Product of Canada/Produit du Canada" on their labels does little for shaping the identity of their wineries or their wines. For this they look to more regional and local political organizations and associations which are discussed in the following section.

## **British Columbia Provincial Government**

The relationship development between Cowichan Valley's (CV) wine industry and the British Columbia (BC) provincial government was strongly intertwined from the very beginning. The Duncan Project (see Ch. 4) was a direct political initiative from the Ministry of Agriculture to test the commercial viability of growing *Vitis Vinifera* grapes in CV. Without this government-supported initiative there may not have been commercial wine industry there today. The inter- and intra-relationships between various government ministries, departments and branches played and continue to play a role in shaping what the wine producers can do and how they can do it. Government regulations and policies serve to shape the identities of the wineries, their products, and CV as a wine industry region. These regulations and policies may be of various scale and impact but all have the potential to affect the CV wine industry in important ways.

An example of a large-scale change occurred when the BC Agricultural Land Commission and the BC Liquor Control and Licensing Branch, operating within the Ministry of Justice, approved a new regulation in 1998 allowing the wineries to open what they termed "winery lounges" in order to sell wine by the glass when accompanied by light food on their premises. This was a streamlined modification to the original "J" license regulation approved in 1995 (Price 1998), discussed in Ch. 4, which required a rigorous application process and often took years to complete. Now a "J" license was automatic when permission was granted to operate a winery. Existing CV wineries quickly began to take advantage of this new regulation by constructing new winery outbuildings in order to sell their wines by the glass and offer food to customers, thus increasing the opportunity to create awareness of their products and provide a longer and more involved taste experience to their visitors. New wineries opening up operations could incorporate larger tasting rooms to their initial construction plans in order to provide this service to visitors. This was a key feature acknowledged by many of my participants to

developing an identity for their wineries and their products. Sarah from Unsworth Vineyards explains:

We are getting a really good response to our location, our setting; everybody seems to remark on our landscaping which is very new for us here. The tasting room building [see Image 6.6] - we have put a lot of effort into creating a beautiful building that is as essential as we can make it. Stone, wood and marble, all natural elements and I think people really like to see that.

This highlights the importance of the "farm gate" or "cellar door"<sup>41</sup> experience to the wine producers of CV, attracting visitors directly to their vineyard and winery to sample and purchase their products. As Beverland (1998) suggests in his study of wine tourism in New Zealand<sup>42</sup>, this provides an opportunity for customers to try new and unknown products at little or no cost. It is also a way for the small wineries of CV to build brand loyalty, and increase their profit margins, as this is their principle distribution outlet. Sarah's comment "Stone, wood and marble, all natural elements and I think people really like to see that" also suggests a connection to some of the elements in the contemporary search for authenticity proposed by Fillitz and Saris (2013). She told me: "We made this more of a destination stop than just a tasting room."

Another example of political influence comes from a different government department, the Ministry of Transportation. On the surface, this example may appear to be small scale as far as government investment and resources but it was recognized as providing a significant boost to CV wine producers and to the collective identity of the area as a wine producing region. In the summer of 2004, 'Wine Route' signs were installed along the Trans-Canada Highway (Map 5.1) to assist in directing visitors to CV wineries. CV wine producers viewed this action as a welcomed and positive government program to assist in their individual development as well as to help with creating a collective identity for the region as suggested by this headline from a local

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<sup>41</sup> These are terms used in literature (Aspler 2006; Beverland 1998; Schreiner 2011) as well as by my participants.

<sup>42</sup> New Zealand shares a similar story to Cowichan Valley as a recent emerging wine region where people, practice and place come together to create identities for their products, their producers, and their specific regions. See Beverland, Mike. 1998. Wine Tourism in New Zealand - Maybe the Industry Got it Right. *International Journal of Wine Marketing*, Vol. 10 (2):22-33.

newspaper: "Signs of Growth: Valley wineries get promotion boost with new highway signage" (Hourihan 2004). David Godfrey, owner of Godfrey-Brownell Vineyards and one of my participants, stated in Hourihan's (2004) article that with many of the CV "wineries located in rural areas often well off the highway, good signage is a necessity for the fledgling industry. We probably lose 20 per cent of our visitors when people can't find us." Cherry Point Vineyards was also anticipating an increase in visitors, believing the signs were going to make it much easier for visitors to find their place.

The signs were a joint cost sharing project between the provincial government and the Wine Island Vintners Association. Despite the costs incurred by the wine producers, they considered it a great investment with one participant telling Hourihan (2004) "Honestly it's the best thing for the industry" because as well as keeping visitors from getting lost, the signs created a unified look for the local CV wine industry as the signs were standardized with only the winery's name and distance to their location different. However, the installation of 'Wine Route' signage has not always been without its controversy. During our May 2013 interview, Sarah from Unsworth Vineyards reported that CV wineries had received email notices from the Ministry of Transportation (MOT) informing them that the 'Wine Route' signs were going to be removed this summer because CV wineries were not members of the British Columbia Wine Institute (BCWI) unlike their Okanagan counterparts. The BCWI is a volunteer member trade association<sup>43</sup> operating under the regulations and oversight of the British Columbia Wine Authority (BCWA) which in-turn is an independent regulatory authority to which the Province of BC has delegated responsibility for enforcing the Province's Wines of Marked Quality Regulation (BCVQA) program.

Sarah informed me that she believed there was a new individual leading the MOT department who wanted to make a quick impression and leave her mark by making the removal of the 'Wine Route' signs in CV part of her new mandate. Sarah confirmed to the individual that

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<sup>43</sup> [http://www.winebc.org/about\\_bcwi/](http://www.winebc.org/about_bcwi/) (accessed March 20, 2015).

they (and most of the wineries on VI) were not members of the BCWI because there was no benefit to them. Membership involved a standard fee plus another fee based on the tonnage of grapes harvested yearly at your vineyard. CV wine producers believed that all these funds were directed to programs benefiting the Okanagan wineries. The fees were simply too significant for the small CV producers, many of them still "mom and pop operations" (Daniel, Unsworth Vineyards), when they perceived little benefit in return. Sarah then reported that after a few months of tense back and forth emails with the MOT that the matter had been resolved, with the assistance of Andy Johnson from Averill Creek as the BCWA representative for VI, and the signs were left alone. Loss of the 'Wine Route' signs would have had direct impact on the viability of business for each winery but it also would have negatively affected the collective identity of the CV as a wine producing region, as illustrated by this example from Jennifer of Deol Estate Winery:

A lot of people say "We were just driving by on the highway and we didn't even realize there was a winery here until they saw the signs and we just thought we would drop in and take a look." And that's usually how people - just like by surprise - they don't realize that there are so many wineries [in CV].

This small-scale (in terms of government resources) action of removing the 'Wine Route' signs because CV wineries were not members of a politically sanctioned organization (BCWI) could have potential large-scale impacts for the wineries in terms of visibility, viability, and collective identity as a region. This example illustrates that government policies and regulations may not always serve the interests of smaller producers and may generate tension and conflict between them (Coleman 2008) and within the provincial wine industry. Although the CV wine producers expressed general disdain (more fees, more paperwork, little tangible benefit) for government involvement in their business affairs, it does suggest an awareness of a shared sense of collective identity as a group. Even if it is about the non-acknowledgment and non-participation

with government programs. This potential tension and conflict is further explored in the next section.

### **British Columbia Wine Authority**

Andy, of Averill Creek Vineyards, was an adamant promoter of producing premium wines and believed that Cowichan Valley (CV) was capable of becoming a wine producing region of distinction. Andy described himself as "a bull in a china shop" who has "pissed off a few people" but he was also astutely aware of the role and importance of politics to his practice of growing grapes and making wine, and how they may shape a collective identity for all the producers in CV. At the time of my primary fieldwork, Andy was the Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands regional committee member on the British Columbia Wine Authority (BCWA) advisory board. As mentioned in Ch. 4, Vancouver Island (VI) and Gulf Islands are two of the five official BCWA recognized appellations of origin in the province of British Columbia (BC) and that may be placed on authorized wine producers' bottle labels.

The role and influence of politics and government regulations came up quickly during my first interview with Andy when I asked him if the current 15 wineries were beginning to come together to create a collective identity for CV. His response and our exchange illustrated some of the tension and complexities that CV wine producers experience.

A: Not everyone has espoused that concept yet.

B: Because a lot of people won't even mention it on their labels that they are CV or anything like that?

A: There are political reasons for that.

B: Oh, there are political reasons for what you can put on your label?

A: Umhum.

B: But I understand that very few wineries in the region are part of the BCVQA program, right?

A: Yes.

B: Which is quite political as well?

A: Totally political, don't get into it.

B: Don't get into it? Because at one time there was this notion that you had to be VQA to be marketable or to create your brand?

A: No, I don't have time to explain that to you at the moment. All I can tell you is that the British Columbia Wine Authority which runs the VQA program was set up by the provincial government about five or six years ago now, to take over from the industry itself who were very incestuous in running the VQA program; VQA is actually just a trade name and it was invented by the Ontario wine producers. It was adopted by BC; it is now called BCVQA and it is administered by the British Columbia Wine Authority.

B: So you can't just say you are in CV on your labels?

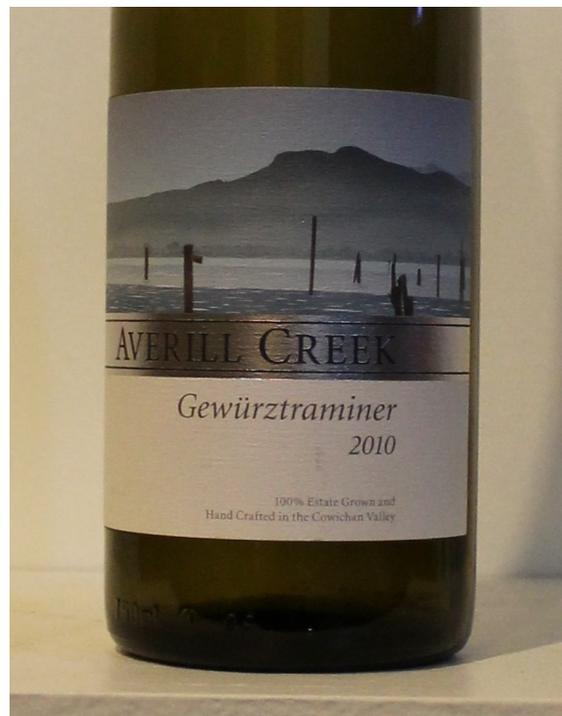
A: Not officially, no.

B: Not officially?

A: No, you can't belong to the BCWA and the VQA and put CV on your front label; no you can't. Which is why I don't have my wines listed as VQA.

B: Right, so do you put Cowichan on your labels?

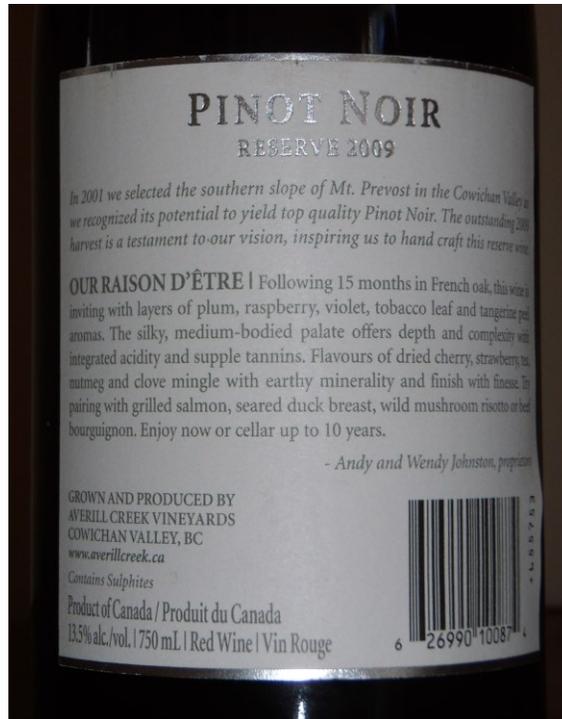
A: Umhum, proudly produced in the Cowichan Valley on the front label (Image 7.3).



**Image 7.3 Averill Creek Vineyards front wine label which states at the bottom "Hand Crafted in the Cowichan Valley" Author's photo.**

This exchange between Andy and myself revealed Andy's dislike for politics and government bureaucracy, "don't get into it" and his displeasure for talking about it, "I don't have time to explain." It also suggested a glimpse of Andy's self characterization as "a bull in a china shop" who is not too concerned that he has "pissed off a few people" when he stated that the industry was "very incestuous in running the VQA program" until the BC government stepped in to administer the program. Andy was referring to the origins and power of the BCVQA program coming from the Okanagan Valley wine growers and producers where the BC wine industry was first established as a commercial *Vinifera* wine production region in the province (Aspler 2006). Andy believed, along with all the other wine producers who participated in my study, that this Okanagan-centric organization demonstrated little awareness, let alone acknowledgement, that quality *Vinifera* grapes could be grown on VI and that the region's winemakers were capable of producing premium wines for the marketplace. This perception illustrates Appadurai's (1996) idea that political programs and bureaucratic classifications, while legitimizing claims for national authenticity and market entitlement, may also produce hegemonic order and power positions for some regions while limiting the privileges and cultural awareness of more marginal regions: the Okanagan wine producers versus CV producers. This perception was reflected in Andy's statement "I still get asked frequently, 'You are on Vancouver Island, where did you get your grapes from?' So to be an estate producer, proudly to be an estate producer in the Cowichan Valley is still something that the world has not yet come to terms with."

Andy told the story (one that was later substantiated by another of one of my study participants who repeated it without me prompting them) of being informed by a BCWA representative that he could not use his labels with the phrase "Hand crafted in the Cowichan Valley" (Image 7.4) on the front of his wine bottles. Instead, he was told, he must have the government regulated standard "Made in Canada/Produit du Canada" on the front label. He simply said "No problem" and turned his bottle around to the back and said "this" is my front label. (Image 7.4)



**Image 7.4 Averill Creek Vineyards back label to reveal the Federal Government requirement stipulating "Product of Canada/Produit du Canada" which is supposed to be on the front of the wine bottle. Author's photo.**

All of the CV wine producers that I spoke with supported this notion that the Okanagan grape growers and wine producers considered them as poor country cousins at best, paying little attention to their products or their needs as members of the same industry. The CV producers felt that the BCVQA program and even membership in the BCWA provided little or no benefit to them. The costs of membership, fees, time and energy in filling out required government forms and reports outweighed any potential value to the small volume producers and the family operations in CV, "we don't have the resources, we are boutique wineries" (Sarah, Unsworth Vineyards). And to participate in the BCVQA program, CV producers would have to send their wine samples to the government operated tasting facility located in the Okanagan to see if they met the standards for "quality" to receive BCVQA designation. These standards of "quality", the CV producers argued, were also Okanagan centric and did not allow for the different terroir

presented by the CV region, a cool Mediterranean climate quite different than the often intense summer heat of the Okanagan region (Aspler 2006, Schreiner 2011).

Again it is important to state that my use of the term *terroir* here refers to the interrelationships of place, practice, and people developed in Trubek's (2008, 2005) work. Cowichan Valley's a different environment and climate contrast to that of the hot and arid Okanagan Valley of the interior of BC. The CV is a lot cooler and wetter which has led the Okanagan wine producers to believe that the region was incapable of producing the ripe *Vinifera* grapes needed to produce premium table wines. What this challenging physical environment has meant for the growers and producers of CV is that they have had to adjust their practices and their skill level to, as Daniel from Unsworth Vineyards states, "deal with excessive acid" of frequently unripe grapes produced by a cooler and wetter region. This is something Daniel believed CV producers were starting to understand and learn to work with. Daniel shared Andy's perspective that the BCVQA program represented biased politics while articulating some of the different practices in working with CV-grown grapes when I asked him why CV wineries do not participate in the BCVQA system:

That's really straightforward. The VQA system is a corrupt and usurious system designed and largely controlled by Vincor and now Constellation<sup>44</sup> in an attempt to control the market. The judging system isn't transparent and it's often actually false. For example, you can send a wine in and every wine is faulted, does it have botrytis disease, does it have acetic acid, excessive SO<sub>2</sub>, they can say sorry it doesn't meet our VQA standard and they deny you access. But if you take that same bottle of wine and send it to an independent lab they would take in, and I've done this myself, I'm not just – this isn't hearsay, it's from experience. You can send that wine off for analysis, it can have zero or negligible amounts of the things that the subjective appointed body says it has. So on top of that, that it is a corrupt and usurious system, it's Okanagan centric and if you sell your wines through the VQA stores you don't get paid for it until they sell it, so it is on spec [speculation]. Who needs that? They take 30% off the top in order for the privilege to not get paid. Your interests are not their interests. It's better for us to continue to establish healthy relationships directly with our consumers through the tasting room or the private liquor stores, licensees, the restaurants and others. We make

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<sup>44</sup> Vincor and Constellation are two large international corporations focused on the wine and spirits industries. Constellation acquired Vincor in 2006 (Aspler 2006).

wines that are incredibly fruity and also stunningly acidic, which we can control in the winery but if we go too far with our acid control our wines lose their freshness, their fruitiness, their acidity, and they are less well received I think. The winemakers on the island have a very different approach to wine making than the Okanagan winemakers do. I think we've got a vastly superior understanding of acids, balance and acidity than they do because we live and breathe acid and I think it makes some wines better in many cases.

This lengthy and reflective passage from Daniel supported the general consensus from my research participants that membership in the BCWA and the BCVQA program had little appeal and represented very little value for them at this time: "You probably won't find hardly any Cowichan wines in government liquor stores; it's just too expensive" (Sarah, Unsworth Vineyards), referring to the membership and testing costs as well as losing 30% of potential revenue to the government supported BCVQA program. Daniel stated that CV wine producers' efforts and money were better served by focusing on their local area and consumers: "It's better for us to continue to establish healthy relationships directly with our consumers." This focus on the local market represented the reality that all the current CV producers were small by volume and were able to sell most of their wines directly to visitors from their tasting rooms (or farm gates) or to the local restaurants and independent wine retailers in the region. This follows the theoretical approach that suggests the essence of creating and expressing an identity is regional and local (Appadurai 1996; Ingold 1993, 2000; Lovell 1998; Trubek 2008).

The above passage also illustrates an example of situated learning (Lave and Wenger 1991). Daniel believes the CV producers have a different skill and knowledge set than the wine producers of the Okanagan, one better matched to their specific environmental conditions of CV: "I think we've got a vastly superior understanding of acids, balance and acidity than they do because we live and breathe acid." This follows Ingold (1993) and Grasenni's (2007) theories that enskilment is acquired by engaging directly with your physical and social environments.

Many of the CV producers sold out yearly at their wineries and they did not have the capacity or capability to produce more wine if they wanted to. They may be restricted by

vineyard plantings, the size of production and storage facilities, or the amount of labour that they have available or can afford. In their view, membership in larger and broader reaching provincial organizations and government regulated programs would not help them sell more wine. The BCWA and the BCVQA program were simply not seen as currently beneficial or representative of CV and Vancouver Island wines by CV producers.

All of the CV wine producers that I spoke with acknowledged that they make the most money through the wines that they sold directly from their tasting rooms, as Andy, from Averill Creek Vineyards stated, "I only make money when people come here. I mean I am on tight margins as it is, an extra buck a bottle makes all the difference to me." Sarah, from Unsworth Vineyards, echoed Andy's comments, "You want to sell as much out of your farm gate as you can." These statements support the research by Beverland (1998) on the importance of "farm gate" or "cellar door" experiences for small producers. Promoting their wines locally also fit with a strong local food and agricultural movement on VI (Pegg 2013, Townsin 2010). The relationship to CV wine producers and food in creating a taste of place is explored in the next chapter.

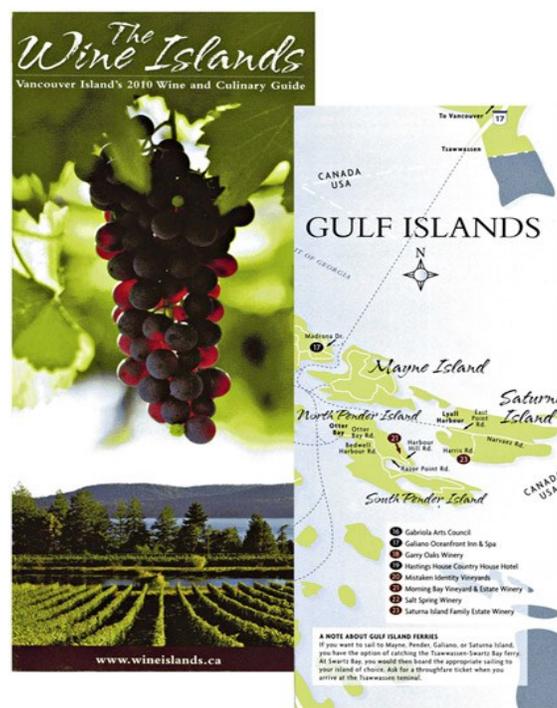
There are a variety of factors centered around the interrelationships of place, practice and people, such as CV producers choosing not to spend their money, time and energy on provincial programs that strongly favored the Okanagan region. My participants believed they could create their own individual and local identities without the perceived government bureaucracy and "do okay and that that was a good thing" (Sarah, Unsworth Vineyards). The BCWA and the BCWI had little appeal for CV wine producers as they preferred to channel their resources for creating individual winery identities through regional organizations, such as the Wine Islands Vintners Association, the Wine Islands Growers Association, and [wines.cowichan.net](http://wines.cowichan.net). And as Sarah suggested "We've been running fine [without the BCWA and BCWI] so ..."

## **Wine Islands Vintners Association**

The Wine Islands Vintners Association (WIVA) is a member-based, non-profit organization that promotes Vancouver Island (VI) and Gulf Island wineries. At the time of my primary fieldwork it was an organization run by a voluntary board of members made up of VI and Gulf Islands vineyard and winery representatives. The primary focus of WIVA was on marketing the member wineries in the entire VI and Gulf Islands region through BC Tourism publications and on-line computer resources and links. Due to the fact that CV wineries, numbering 15, made up the largest percentage of wineries in the broad region, there was a more significant focus of WIVA in their area. As Andy told me, "The key to Vancouver Islands is Cowichan Valley by far." He thus suggests that developing a collective identity for the wine producers of CV would also improve the visibility and recognition of VI as a region of some distinction.

Sarah (Unsworth Vineyards) was a current executive board member of WIVA at the time of my interviews with her. She was responsible for the association's social media, Facebook page, Twitter account, and the website. The internet and social media have become increasingly important for developing a collective identity for the region. At the time of my fieldwork, all of my participants had their own websites and some were exploring the idea of developing individual Facebook and Twitter accounts to promote their business and products. This direct and immediate connection with wine drinkers and 'followers' was illustrated by Sarah in her discussion on Unsworth's use of Twitter, "Everybody that we sell our wine to, we follow on Twitter so if they post anything about us, like salmon on the barbecue, great, pair it with Unsworth Vineyards Pinot Gris, kind of thing." This use of technology and social media can reinforce an established connection (customers who have already purchased Unsworth wine) to the producer-consumer taste experience. It also highlights the important relationship wine has to food in shaping a sense of identity and taste of place for the wine producers of CV (Demossier 2010; Guy 2004; Trubek 2008). This relationship will be explored in Ch. 8.

Sarah found that most of the wineries in CV were supportive of WIVA and were members in the Association. All of my research participants were members of WIVA at the time of their interviews. The yearly \$150 membership provided each member a spot on the WIVA website which allowed them to have their individual events post and updated. Membership included a listing in the Wine Islands Brochure (Figure 7.1) which was coordinated by the WIVA Board but published by Tourism Vancouver Island, and the opportunity to participate in the annual spring wine tasting held at the Empress Hotel in Victoria.



**Figure 7.1** The Wine Islands annual brochure coordinated by WIVA. Source: shortcreative.com (accessed March 20, 2015).

This tasting, organized by WIVA, was focused on 'place' in the sense that it featured only wines produced in the VI and Gulf Islands recognized appellations, although participants did not need to belong to BCWA or BCWI which officially sanctioned the use of those appellations on bottle labels. Participants were only required to be active members of WIVA. Victoria is the

capital city of BC and an international destination for millions of tourists each year<sup>45</sup>, many of them seeking excursions or reasons to explore the island. CV is only a 45 minute scenic drive from Victoria. Dava, the owner and operator of Verjus Wine Tours and a participant in my study, reported that CV had become a popular day wine tour destination, often from the many cruise ships that visited Victoria during the year.

The WIVA-organized spring wine tasting event in Victoria was also very important for creating awareness and generating interest for the local residents of Victoria and its many surrounding communities. All of my research participants agreed that there were many residents in Victoria (and in Nanaimo, another major city located north of CV) who were unaware that there was a wine region of some significance (15 wineries and other vineyards) so close to them in CV (Dava, Verjus Wine Tours). This reinforces the idea expressed by CV producers that their primary focus was on developing local awareness and a local customer base (within a 100km radius [Hammer, 2010]). WIVA was also working with the local restaurant industry to get them to promote locally produced wines with their locally produced menu items, "Even offering them something as simple as a table topper sign that says 'Yes we support local wines'" (Sarah, Unsworth Vineyards). This emphasis on 'local' supports Lovell's (1998) position on its importance for establishing a sense of belonging and identity for the CV wine producers and their products. People create perceived ideals or feelings of belonging through a sense of experience with that place. By CV wineries offering these table toppers, they are providing a connection between themselves and the local restaurants, who in turn are making a connection between themselves and their consumers. These connections all serve to establish a relationship of experience between the people, the place, and the practices involved.

WIVA was responsible for developing and hosting local events, such as the Wine Islands Passport Program and the Cowichan Valley Wine and Culinary Festival held every fall. The

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<sup>45</sup> The city of Victoria official website states they receive 3 million visitors annually. <http://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/community/about.html> (accessed March 27, 2015).

Passport Program involved printing and distributing 10,000 'Passports' to all WIVA participant members to pass out to visitors at their individual wineries. The objective was for visitors to collect "stamps" (an ink stamp on their passport) when they visited a winery for a tasting, with the intent of encouraging them to visit as many wineries as possible throughout the summer and fall. Once the fall season was over, visitors were to mail in their stamped passports for a chance to win prizes. In the spring of 2013, I asked Sarah if WIVA was going to do the Passport Program again this season and she replied "No, we scrapped that." When I inquired why, she stated that of the 10,000 passports printed, they only received 40 back through the mail and the voluntary WIVA board (three members at this time) concluded that it was not worth the substantial effort required of their time and energy. This illustrates some of the challenges faced by individual wineries and volunteers working together, even through a small scale regional membership organization such as WIVA. Promoting their individual wineries, which would potentially develop a collective identity that could create awareness of CV as a wine producing region, requires hard time-consuming work by committed volunteers and the results may produce a limited return.

It was also during this interview in spring of 2013 that Sarah expressed one of the biggest challenges to developing a shared collective identity to promote CV as a relatively young and emerging wine region: cooperation, getting a small number of wineries (15) to agree on common goals and agree to work together to achieve those goals. Sarah informed me that she and the other two volunteer WIVA Board members were stepping down, "We are done. So we are hoping other people step up and if not then WIVA will be dissolved which is sad; it's been a long time but what are you going to do with no volunteers, right?" This challenge was echoed by David, the proprietor of Godfrey-Brownell Vineyards and one of the earliest wine producers in CV, as well as one of the early executive volunteers and promoters of WIVA, when he suggested that even with the small number of wine producers in CV (ranging from 6 when he first became involved to the 15 at the time of my fieldwork), their diversity and strength of personalities (see Ch. 5 and

6) made it impossible to get them all to agree on anything. As of the 2014 summer season WIVA was no longer a formal organization, and its marketing functions have been taken over by Tourism Vancouver Island.<sup>46</sup> One local organization that appeared to have more success at bringing CV wine producers together towards a common cause was the Wine Islands Growers Association discussed in the next section.

### **Wine Islands Growers Association**

The Wine Islands Growers Association (WIGA) is a regional incorporated non-profit society that is open to winery and vineyard operators as well as industry suppliers in the Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands appellations.<sup>47</sup> Unlike WIVA, which was focused on marketing and promotion, WIGA's mission was to educate, support and promote viticulture and enology through the applied practical aspects of growing grapes and making wine. As with WIVA, members of WIGA did not have to belong to either BCWA or BCWI, and it was also operated by a volunteer board from its general membership. Xavier from Cherry Point Estate Wines provided a comprehensive description of what WIGA did and their role in shaping a collective identity for CV while also sharing some of his specific vineyard practices:

Yes the Growers Association is very nice and we meet about the problems of growing the vines and the pests and the botrytis but we also talk about equipment, what is the right type of equipment. Some people plow between the rows, I don't plow, I just mulch it, and then you exchange the information about the advantages and disadvantages of doing this and doing that; they come and see what I'm doing and I go and see what they are doing. It is a nice association and annually we have a big dinner and discuss - we bring in important people from abroad, enologists, to conferences to discuss specific aspects which is very nice.

In 2013 and 2014, I attended the annual WIGA conference that Xavier spoke about and can attest to the information sharing and mutual interests that brought many of the regions' vineyard managers and winemakers together. There was a genuine sense of camaraderie and the pursuit of a common goal that I had not experienced before in CV. This suggests that WIGA represented a community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991) that was more meaningful for CV

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.wineislands.ca/> (accessed May 15, 2015).

<sup>47</sup> <http://wiga.ca/> (accessed May 15, 2015).

wine producers. A community where knowledge was more freely shared, where enskilment (Grasenni 2007; Pálsson 1994) was supported by common links to physical and social environments. The practical aspects of wanting to grow healthy vines that produced the best fruit in order to make the best wine was a topic that appeared to unify the membership. This reinforces the notion that many of my participants spoke of themselves as farmers more than wine producers, with a greater acceptance among the WIGA membership that individuality of identity and practices is encouraged. This follows the understanding that each vineyard and winery, while sharing some common factors such as regional climate patterns and pest infiltration, may also have individual micro-level differences due to their social and physical environments which can vary considerably even from their next door neighbor. This diversity was not only accepted but desired by winemakers in order to distinguish their products from others in the region. Unlike WIVA, where consensus was often considered beneficial to promoting a common identity and product to a consumer public, the members of WIGA were more comfortable discussing issues they considered relevant to their practices rather than the concerns of deciding how best to market a festival for the benefit of all participants.

This sentiment was conveyed by Dean, the vineyard manager and winemaker for Xavier at Cherry Point, when I asked him about his involvement in some of the local industry organizations:

I don't mind being involved with [WIGA] at all. They have conferences, they have good speakers, a lot of good technical information. I prefer not to be involved with the marketing dynamics because that's - but I really believe that you make the wine good and then the marketing will take care of itself. So you make a good product, eventually everyone's going to come in. I prefer to be focusing on the general aspects of the vineyard and the winery. The marketing - and I'm not saying the marketing is not important, but that you get the other two right is a priority to me and then that third nearly takes care of itself. I think if you make a quality product then that's the best marketing you can have.

Dean's comments highlight some of the different challenges facing CV wine producers in creating a unified identity that may then be communicated to the broader public. These challenges are centered around the three step process involved: growing vines to produce grapes

(viticulture), making wine from those grapes (viniculture or enology), and getting those wines to consumers to purchase and drink (marketing). The recent growth and strengthening of WIGA membership<sup>48</sup> mirrored the struggles and decline of WIVA, as discussed in the previous section. The trend for CV wine producers to focus on learning more about how to grow healthier vines and grapes and make better quality wines, and then sharing that information with other CV wine producers, represented a collective effort to increase the visibility of the CV region. It also illustrates their desire to improve enskilment, the process of skill and knowledge development within their particular environments (Grasenni 2007; Pálsson 1994) in order to improve their practices and ultimately their products. As Dean's comments suggest, the best way to promote CV as a wine-producing region was to improve the quality of the product.

The wine producers' focus on viticulture and enology, as opposed to marketing, supports Ingold's (1993, 1996, 2000, 2011) and Lovell's (1998) theories that people create a sense of place through their human interactions with nature and that belonging to WIGA provided a more meaningful collective identity and sense of cohesion. This focus was preferable to membership in WIVA where the interactions were quite different than working with soil, vines, and grapes. In WIVA, collective identity and group cohesion were more difficult to achieve for the CV wine producers. Daniel, the vineyard manager and winemaker for Unsworth Vineyards, was on the Board of Directors for WIGA during the time of our interviews. He acknowledged the importance of both WIGA's and WIVA's contributions in the past while shedding light on the challenges they face as a small group of wine producers and organizational volunteers trying to promote their wineries, products and a collective identity for the benefit of all:

I think the colossal effort that the people who have been involved in those two organizations in the last ten years is monumental. I think the results of these efforts are mixed. There is only so much a voluntary organization can accomplish and we can't also underestimate the ability of farmers to be cliquy, exclusive, combative, uncooperative, and of course that is the stuff that eats into an industry. Any sort of collective organization, the priorities of some are not the priorities of others. I think a lot of effort which would have been positive has been spent on

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<sup>48</sup> <http://wiga.ca/> (accessed May 22, 2015).

infighting. In theory, WIGA is trying to make better grape growers and WIVA is trying to get better exposure for Vancouver Island wines, both inadequately and yet both have done a few really great things.

Daniels's comments hinted at the individual personalities often involved in the wine industry and echo Andy's (Averill Creek) and David's (Godfrey-Brownell) sentiments that it is difficult to get the different CV wine producers to agree on anything, other than they all think their own wine is fantastic. The challenges and differences between WIGA's focus on growing grapes and making wine, with WIVA's focus on marketing wineries and their products became evident when I asked all of my participants if they thought CV wine producers would be better served by one organization, a merging of WIGA and WIVA? Sarah, from Unsworth Vineyards and a board member of WIVA at the time, summed up all my participants' sentiments when she stated, "Yeah, that will never be a union that comes together." Sarah's statement reflects the challenges of trying to bring together and represent a diverse group of people with strong opinions about growing grapes, making wine, and how best to market it within the diverse geographic region of all of Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands. Daniel continued his discussion by offering a suggestion on how to promote a collective identity for the wine producers of CV:

So far WIVA has been an entire Island organization. Perhaps it's time for a Cowichan Valley-only marketing organization and it's already happened. There is a second committee now which focuses exclusively on the Cowichan Valley and possibly within its first year of existence, is already matching the success of WIVA.

This organization that focused exclusively on CV was [wines.cowichan.net](http://wines.cowichan.net).

### **wines.cowichan.net**

The [wines.cowichan.net](http://wines.cowichan.net) website address represented a Cooperative made up of members from various Cowichan Valley (CV) wineries who agreed to band together. They organize and promote the 2012 Cowichan Wine and Culinary Festival and produce a Cowichan Wine Loop brochure (Figures 7.2 and 7.3) to distribute at their respective locations and at the Duncan Visitor and Tourism Center.

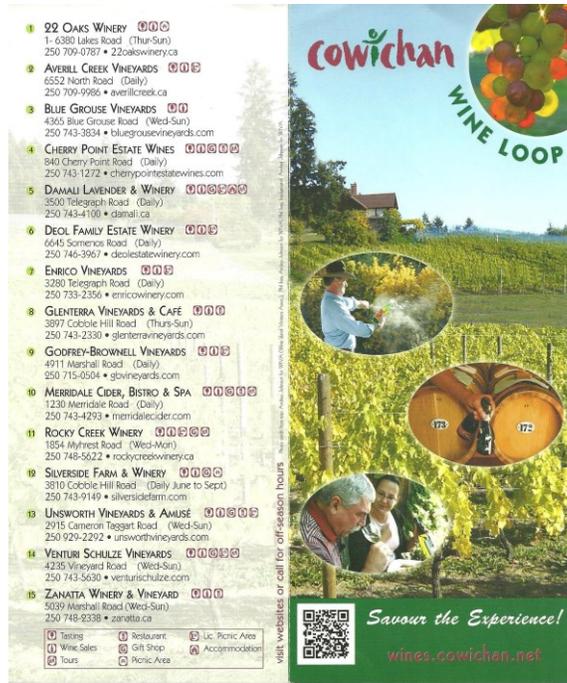


Figure 7.2. Front and back of the Cowichan Wine Loop brochure produced by the Cooperative.  
Source: wines.cowichan.net

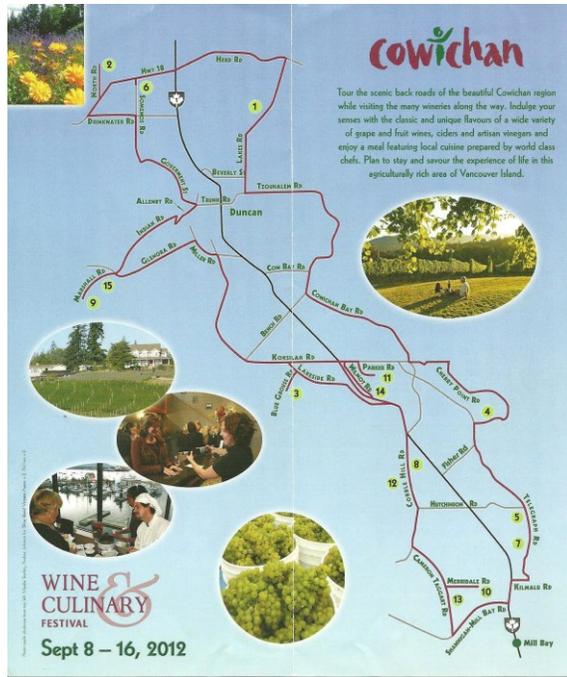


Figure 7.3 Inside of the Cowichan Wine Loop brochure produced by the Cooperative. Source: wines.cowichan.net

Membership in the Cooperative was voluntary and was not governed by an elected board but was simply spearheaded by a handful of motivated volunteer individuals from a few of the participating wineries. The purpose of the Cooperative was to focus exclusively on wineries and vineyards in CV as opposed to the larger, more dispersed region of Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands which was used by both WIVA and WIGA to determine group membership. The Cooperative had 15 participants in 2012, their first year of operation (Figure 7.2). Merridale Cider, Bistro & Spa and Silverside Farm and Winery were not included in my project sample as they do not produce wine from *vinifera* grapes. This meant that 13 of the 15 wineries or vineyards in my project sample agreed to participate in the Cooperative which is a very high collective participation rate (87%). There were three membership packages depending on the level of participation each winery wanted to commit to.

However, in spring of 2013 when I interviewed Sarah again, she informed me that participation for the upcoming Cowichan Wine and Culinary Festival had dropped from 15 to 11. General feedback from the Cooperative's wrap up meeting indicated that a few of the 2012 participating wineries experienced lower visitor turnout than previous years and were not pleased with their financial investment and the Cooperative's efforts. This was not the case for all participating wineries as Sarah reported that Unsworth Vineyards experienced tremendous visitor turnout each of the three main Festival days. She added: "I know a few of the wineries were very, very successful, just by word of mouth." Sarah suggested that some of Unsworth's success may have resulted from the extra marketing they did over and above that offered by the Cooperative packages for the Festival, emphasizing that it was important to offer something special to visitors in order to bring them to your winery. Sarah offered an explanation of why some of the participating wineries may not have experienced a strong turnout during the Festival:

Some of the wineries were just open. Maybe they were doing complimentary tastings which is great because it does draw people but at the same time there is

nothing extra to draw attention to your winery. It is important to have organized events, the little extras; everything counts.

The message from Sarah was clear, the more you put into the Festival beyond simply participating with the Cooperative's wines.cowichan.net packages, the better chance you have of having a positive experience and higher visitor numbers. This also illustrates the significance of events to place making and creating collective identities (Casey 1996) which will be discussed in the next chapter.

### **The Politics of Place, Practice, and People in CV**

Wine is an increasingly popular beverage both globally (Black and Ulin 2013) and in Canada (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2007). Wine, as a commodity, is often considered a marker of social status or index of refined taste (Bourdieu 1984; Silverstein 2006) while entangled within power relationships and the "identity politics of place" (Jung 2013:163). A brief discussion around the difference between political entity and political identity is worth noting here. An entity is a group that may be defined as such by outsiders based on objective criteria (O' Toole 2013), such as government policies and agencies, or regional organizations tasked with industry administration and oversight. These entities may lack a subjective perception of themselves as a distinct group or they may lack motivation or resources to collectively maintain such objective distinctions. This appears to be the case for CV wine producers who do not participate in the BCWA or BCWI, which would allow them to claim a collective identity and a sense of authenticity by promoting themselves as members of the officially sanctioned and marketed BCVQA program, the Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands recognized appellations of origin in the province of British Columbia (BC). All of these objective criteria may be placed on authorized wine producers' bottle labels to suggest a collective entity. The CV wine producers clearly expressed, at the time of my research, that they did not see the value in subscribing to these types of politically recognized entities and these entities did not contribute to a collective

group identity, or taste of place, that they believed was representative of their place, their products or who they were as people.

In contrast, an identity involves a group moving towards a subjective perception and self ascription of itself as a distinct group (O' Toole 2013). These groups may remain social and pre-political in that they do not possess a strong desire, or have the necessary resources, to maintain such distinctions, either individually or collectively. This is a challenge for the CV wine producers as they do have a strong desire to create an individual identity for their products and their wineries but it is a desire that, almost by its subjective perception and self-ascription, is at odds with creating a social identity that may be communicated to others. That is, by wanting to make wines that are distinctive, representative of their wineries as places and people, and therefore different from those other CV wine producers, it is difficult to recognize a sense of collective identity for themselves and even more so to convey to others (people who do not live in CV).

Organizations often attempt to solidify their membership within a common endeavor. While making wine is the common endeavor for all the CV wine producers, they remain resistant to the ideologies and practices of many of these organizations. The CV wine producers portray themselves as more anti-political than pre-political, choosing to not only shun provincial government and affiliated organizations but also to struggle at the local level to work together to create an awareness of a shared sense of collective identity. As Andy from Averill Creek told me when I asked him if the current 15 wine producers were beginning to come together to create a collective identity for CV, he replied "Not everyone has espoused that concept yet." This speaks to one of the main research questions: how do CV wine producers create a collective identity for their products, places, and themselves? Or, how do they create a 'taste of place' that represents a collective identity that may then be communicated to others? While my participants conveyed a strong sense of wanting to create an identity for their individual wineries and wines (see Ch. 5

and 6), this examination of politics and organizations that are part of the social cultural milieu of CV reveals that a collective identity is somewhat more contested.

As an emerging industry, embracing provincial government agencies and regulations along with the other provincially sanctioned organizations (BCWA and BCWI) would provide the CV wine producers some means to belong to a recognized collective entity or community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). A small example, discussed earlier, would be the cost sharing program of the government-provided 'Wine Route' signs along the Trans-Canada Highway. Yet, their resolve to avoid government involvement does not diminish their desire to create distinct products they believe are representative of their terroir. At the time of my fieldwork, the CV wine producers believed the route to achieve this was to focus their resources on local roots: their connections to their places (even as microclimates); connections with local people and communities; connections to the local food and activities of those people and communities. It is these relationships and connections to a sense of belonging and attachment to a locality (Lovell 1998) that the CV wine producers related to. This was illustrated by the growth and work of the local WIGA organization and its members whose subjective ascriptions as farmers engaged with soils and plants, as mom and pop operations putting their sweat and heart and soul into their products, speaks to the notion of creating a taste of place. These connections to local food, people, communities and their local activities will be explored further in the next chapter.

## Chapter 8

### Food and Festivals in ... "the Napa of the North"<sup>49</sup>?

The "Napa of the North" in this chapter title refers to the idea that one way to create awareness for your region, your place, or an identity for what you do there, is to make an association to another place. This would be a place that is recognizable and understood by a segment of the population to convey some information concerning what it is that place is known for, such as "the famous Napa Valley of California" (Gidney 2003). Crouch (2000) refers to this place association and information as "embodied lay geographies" (63) where an understanding of people's lives, their identities, and even their myths are made. The inclusion of the term "lay" would suggest that Couch believes the information is so well known that it is accessible to a broad cross section of a population, and not just to those with special involvement or interests in the particular activity. The phrase "Napa of the North," in the context of this chapter title, is used to suggest comparisons between Cowichan Valley (CV) in British Columbia, Canada with Napa Valley (NV) in California, United States.

I begin this chapter by exploring this "Napa of the North" association in terms of place, people, practice, and identities. Although there are similarities in geology, immigrant settlement, and agricultural development between NV and CV, I suggest the association has little or no real value or significance to the CV wine producers (the focus of my research). I show how the association and comparison is in fact counterproductive to the concepts and the process of terroir, localism, and place making involved in the creation of a taste of place (Trubek 2005, 2008). I then examine the roles of food and festivals in CV in shaping the producers' own place, identities, practices, and the creation of their own taste of place. I use images of CV wine bottle labels to support the notion that place making is much more than just products (Crouch 2000; Trubek 2008); it is about the people, what they do there, and how they create a sense of

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<sup>49</sup> The phrase comes from a feature magazine article where the comparison between Cowichan Valley and Napa Valley is suggested. See Webb, Kathi. 1995. "The Spirit of the Region" *Westworld*, Fall edition.

belonging (Casey 1996; Ingold 2000, 2011; Lovell 1998).

### **The Napa of the North?**

Napa Valley (NV) is a wine producing region in North Central California and lies approximately 1500 kilometers south<sup>50</sup> of Cowichan Valley (CV). NV and CV are similar in geographic north-south orientation, area size and shape. NV is approximately 45 kilometres long while CV is approximately 30 kilometres long and both regions are only a few kilometres wide. However, NV is situated between mountain ranges on the west and east side (a true valley<sup>51</sup>) while CV, located on an island, has only a mountain range to the west with the ocean waters of the Strait of Georgia (Map 2.1) shaping its east coast and separating it from mainland Canada. NV is a political, economic, and culturally recognized and regulated wine producing region, an American Viticultural Area (AVA), with distinguishable geographic features and boundaries (Johnson 2005). CV is not a recognized appellation area; it is part of the larger more diverse Vancouver Island-Gulf Islands political-economic wine producing designation. And, I would argue that CV is not yet a culturally recognized wine producing region on any scale that would make it comparable to NV.

Although they share a geologic history of tectonic plate action and volcanic activity due to both being situated near the San Andreas Fault of the west coast of North America and therefore share similar soil deposits (Arnold 2011; Johnson 2005), NV lies at N 38' latitude compared to N 48' for CV<sup>52</sup>. The latitude of CV places it at the northern most range of what is considered acceptable *Vitis Vinifera* growing regions on the planet of between N 50' and N 30' and S 30' and S 50'. CV's latitude puts it in similar range of the Rhineland region of Germany, famous for its crisp and aromatic white wines (Schreiner 2011; Aspler 2006). Conversely, NV

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<sup>50</sup><https://www.bing.com/search?q=distance+between+cowichan+valley+and+napa+valley&qs=n&form=QBRE&pq=distance+between+cowichan+valley+and+napa+valley&sc=0-41&sp=-1&sk=&cvid=c8a3b50e9285471bb33a15c0c60b5e1e> (accessed October 16, 2015).

<sup>51</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/valley> (accessed October 16, 2015).

<sup>52</sup><https://www.bing.com/search?q=longitude%20and%20latitude%20of%20napa%20valley&form=EDGEHP&qs=PF&cvid=b04e18f870c94bad836616dd3041d9b9&pq=longitude%20and%20latitude%20of%20napa%20valley>. (accessed October 16, 2015).

located 10' closer to the equator, has a higher average temperature, a much lower risk of experiencing frost (which can be devastating to the plants [Schreiner 2011]), and less seasonal fluctuation of potentially damaging weather patterns. NV enjoys a dry Mediterranean climate which provides consistency from year to year. These features are known to generally produce a wide range of red grapes recognized for having a fuller-bodied and more fruit-forward wine (Johnson 2006; MacLean 2006). CV experiences a more transitional climate between Mediterranean and Maritime conditions characterized by warm, dry, bright summers and mild, moist winters, conditions suited for lighter bodied and more acidic wines with greater yearly variances. These different geographic and geologic features produce different climatic effects for each region, meaning that CV could not possibly grow grapes and produce wines that would be similar or comparable to NV.

NV began to emerge as a commercial wine (of *Vitis Vinifera* grapes) producing region in the 1850s (Johnson 2006) and by 1889 had more than 140 wineries in operation<sup>53</sup>. Today there are approximately 525 wineries in NV. The CV did not experience its first experimental *Vitis Vinifera* commercial plantings until the 1980s (Schreiner 2011; Vielvoye and Warner 1992) and at the time of my primary field work there were 15 wineries in operation. The emergence of CV as a wine region is still open to debate and should be considered an ongoing process. However, the first significant recognition of the region occurred in 1995 with a publication titled *The Spirit of the Region* (Webb 1995) in which the author used the phrase "Vancouver Island's Napa Valley of the North." Taking this date as a sign of emergence in CV would mark a period of 145 years after the emergence of NV and it would represent 4 wineries in CV and 140 in NV. Today, there are 525 wineries in NV compared to 15 in CV. When considering the time periods and the scale of production and operations, it is difficult to see any valid reason to make a comparison or association of the CV with NV in this context.

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<sup>53</sup> [http://www.napavintners.com/napa\\_valley/history.asp](http://www.napavintners.com/napa_valley/history.asp) (accessed October 16, 2015).

One context where there is some similarity between the two regions is in the people who propelled the emergence of the wine industry in both NV and CV. The development of NV as a viable wine producing region is credited to German immigrants in the 1850s, many who were grape growers and wine producers in Rhineland (Johnson 2005). As discussed in Ch. 4, it was an Italian immigrant, Dennis Zanatta, who began growing grapes on his CV property in the late 1970s because he recognized similarities in the land and climate with his childhood memories of growing up surrounded by vineyards in Treviso, in Northern Italy (Schreiner 2011). The second licensed farm gate winery to open in CV was Blouse Grouse Estate Winery under the operation of Hans Kiltz, a German-born veterinarian who still had family in the wine business back in Germany, with his preference for crisp and fruity white grape varieties similar to his native homeland (Schreiner 2011). The third licensed farm gate winery to open in CV was Venturi-Schulze Vineyards by Italian immigrant Giordano Venturi (Schreiner 2011; Venturi 2013) who focused on producing the food-friendly light-red wines reminiscent of his childhood upbringing.

Like the immigrant settlers to NV, these three individuals saw the opportunity to create something from their heritage and ancestral place, representing some of the traditions and customs of 'Old World' Europe, infusing a sense of nostalgia (Gieryn 2000; Ulin 2013), while also creating something new and different in their adopted places, a sense of authenticity (Fillitz and Saris 2013). And like the immigrant settlers of NV, the pioneers of CV wine industry began by replacing previously productive agricultural, dairy, and cattle grazing land with *Vitis Vinifera* grapes in a new process of transforming the physical and social environments. So while NV and CV do not share many geographic, climatic, or physical environmental features, nor scale of production and operation that would warrant any claims of comparison or association of places or products, they do share similarities in the people who pioneered the regions and the practices of grape growing and wine making. This illustrates the importance of what people do in a given region when considering creating a taste of place (Crouch 2000; Ingold 2000), working to establish a sense of belonging to where they are locally (Lovell 1998) to create an identity around

their places, products, practices, and themselves that may then be communicated to others (Trubek 2008). In this sense, it may be thought that CV and NV share a similar history of development that could be used to compare the two regions but this was not a view shared by CV wine producers or one used by them to promote themselves or CV as a wine producing region of distinction.

In fact it was Dennis Zanatta's daughter, Loretta, current winemaker and proprietor of Vigneti Zanatta, who suggested in an interview discussing CV as a wine producing region, "I don't think it will be like the Napa Valley" (Dedyna 1993). This suggests, and is supported by interviews with my research participants, that the wine producers of CV saw little or no value in promoting their region or products in comparison to NV. Yet the association and comparison remains in the public discourse as I found regular use of the phrase "the Napa Valley of the North" in the Cowichan Valley Museum and Archives news documents from 1993, '95, 2002, '03, '06, '10, and 2011. The frequent occurrence of the phrase may speak more to the role of potential "Tastemakers" in the form of local reporters and wine journalists whose job and goal may be to provide information by intervening and guiding the "lay" person to experience the taste of a product and place (Trubek 2008) without the phrase having much relevance for CV wine producers themselves. Their goal is not to be an Island equivalent to NV but for their wineries and CV region to become its own unique and evolving entity. Perhaps the reference to CV as "the Napa Valley of the North" is more relevant when considered within the context of food and lifestyle and their association with wine. In the next section I explore the role of food in shaping a taste of place for the CV wine producers.

## **Food**

Food has long been considered a marker of cultural identity and place (Counihan and Van Esterik 2008; James 2005; Levi-Strauss 1996; Trubek 2005, 2008). Claude Fischler, in *Food, self and identity* (1988), suggests that food and identity is a complex relationship that involves two dimensions. The first is that food follows a biological approach where the

nutritional function is then linked to a cultural perspective that is central to individual identity formation. In the second dimension, individual identity is linked to a collective or social identity. Fischler (2011, 1988) suggests that an increasing proportion of the population consumes food whose production, history, and origins they know nothing about. This creates social distance, as well as physical distance, from the production of food which in turn results in a food without identity, without a connection to a place, practice, or people. The use of the phrase "the Napa of the North" with food grown and produced in Cowichan Valley (CV) may be seen as a way to reduce that social distance and provide consumers with a relatable connection or point of reference.

The association of the phrase "the Napa of the North" and its possible connection to food in CV is illustrated by a feature article in the travel section of *The Globe and Mail* newspaper with the caption "The 'Napa of the North'" (Biro 2006) below a photograph of a CV chef, who is a local and slow food advocate kneeling in a garden of fresh vegetables. But it is the secondary caption that provides a more detailed connection: "Vancouver Island's Cowichan Valley, with an ideal climate that is attracting artisan food producers, has become one of Canada's hottest culinary destinations." It is this connection to food that is of great interest to the wine producers of CV as all of my research participants recognized the importance of associating their products with food from both a practical business aspect and to promote local products together. Andy, from Averill Creek, acknowledged: "This is becoming a food destination. You have a Dungenous crab (from the Island's ocean waters) and a bottle of our Pinot Gris." A philosophical view, designed to encourage a deeper relationship to food (and people) and then resonating with a practical reality of selling more wine, was provided with passion and conviction by Xavier of Cherry Point: "A dinner without wine is not a dinner." This reflects the idea that wine is an important component to the meal similar to de Garine's (2001) and Douglas's (1987, 1966) assertions that alcohol consumption should be viewed within the context of peoples everyday lives, and that it provides structure and meaning to those engaging

with it.

All of my participants agreed that connecting with food, particularly local CV food, was an integral part of the experiences that they were offering through their wines. The importance of this connection may be illustrated by the change in name and shift in focus of the first annual *Wine Festival* sponsored by the Wine Islands Vintner's Association (WIVA) in 1999 (Dennis 1999) to the inaugural Cowichan Wine and Culinary Festival in 2005 (Rusland 2005). This first endeavor of combining CV wine producers with food producers saw five wineries represented, six local chefs, and eleven local food growers and producers. I explore how festivals function in the creation of a taste of place for the CV wine producers in the next section.

Another feature of the region that illustrates this connection to food, people, place, and identity, with a particular underlying ideology, is the recognition in 2009 of Cowichan Bay as the first CittaSlow community in North America (Knox 2011). CittaSlow translates to Slow City and is an organization originating from the Slow Food Movement of Italy in 1999.<sup>54</sup> Its goals include improving the quality of life in towns by slowing down the overall pace, especially in a community's use of spaces and the flow of life and traffic through them. Hillary Abbot, owner of Hillary's Cheese, acknowledged the importance of the underlying CittaSlow ideology to food and wine in the CV region when speaking with a Victoria newspaper columnist (Knox 2011):

With that [CittaSlow designation] came a degree of sophistication. People who like well-crafted wine like well-crafted food. People are learning that good stuff comes from just around the corner. Customers are demanding local, organic alternatives. We like to think that we're a culinary destination.

While Hillary's words "a degree of sophistication" suggests a Bourdieusian (1984) taste of luxury centered on social class and distinction, I would caution against the tendency to over focus on socio-economic status as a significant marker of identity for my participants and what they do. The goals of Cittaslow are an example of how communities shape an identity about their place that they feel is representative of the people and the practices there.

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.cittaslow.org/> (accessed January 24, 2012).

Notions of improving quality, a slower pace of life, and enjoying what the local place has to offer, are all features that the CV wine producers who participated in my study expressed. Partnering with the local food industry to increase awareness for CV as a culinary destination would also help them create an identity for their wines and the region as a collective wine producing region of distinction.

The growing awareness of CV as a recognized culinary destination of quality local and organically produced food products was viewed as a natural pairing and a great opportunity for the wine producers to increase the visibility of their own products as part of creating a taste of place. This represented an attempt to move beyond their individual identities to promote a collective identity, as suggested by the second dimension of Fischler's (1998) model, which would hopefully benefit all concerned parties. This local food movement had been around for some time on Vancouver Island (VI) but was finding renewed interest thanks in part to the growth in the number of wineries in CV. In 1995 the provincial government and CV producers collaborated on a "Buy local - buy BC" program on VI (Thompson 1995). The program aimed to increase awareness about the value of a strong local agricultural community in building a self sustaining community. Even though there were only four wineries at this time, the BC Ministry of Tourism dubbed CV as the new BC wine region. Now with CV buoyed by 15 wineries, Andy mentions the Cittaslow movement in Cowichan Bay (discussed in Ch. 2) and suggests that people want the local restaurants, farms, markets, and wineries to support their expected experience (see Johnston and Baumann 2011).

CV now features local dairies, one renowned for its buffalo mozzarella cheese, bakeries that mill their own grains, farms that produce organic meats, a pasta company, and an abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables. CV also has access to a tremendous variety of fresh fish caught within the waters surrounding VI. As Andy himself boasts about this relationship between CV food and wine, "It ain't going to get any better!" Sarah, from Unsworth Vineyards reinforces this position: "Buying local is a phrase used by most people

almost daily right now" and one that she hears repeated more frequently with regards to CV wines as well.

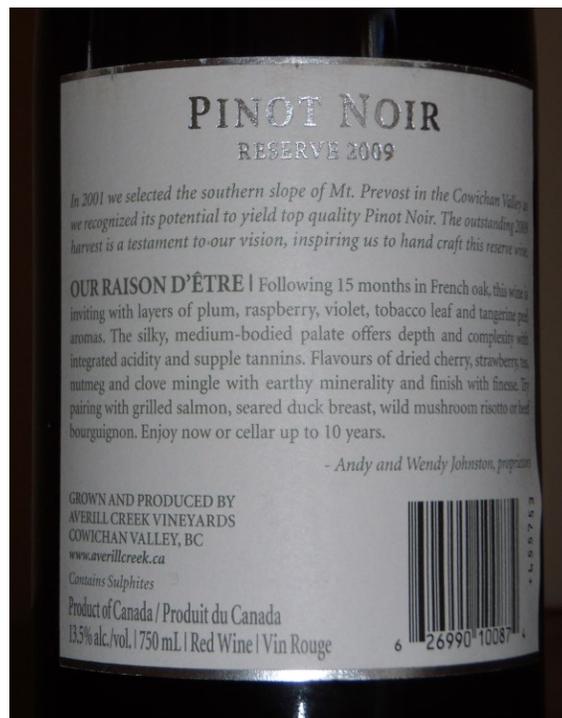
Part of the growing interest in the local food movement and CV as a culinary destination may be seen in the increased use of the concept of terroir being applied to locally grown food products and even entire menus. As Sarah informed me when we were discussing terroir:

The restaurant right here [located on the Unworth Vineyard property] uses it probably more than we do for their menu. Everything they are creating is local, everything is organic and very, very fresh. So their menu changes every day and that's how they are promoting themselves as terroir-focused, farm-fresh, friendly menu, at a vineyard of course.

The use of the concept of terroir to promote characteristics of place, people, and practice in a growing range of foods and food products has risen as both a marketing tool and as a way to create a sense of place for you and your products (Demossier 2010; Hammer 2011a; Paxson 2010; Trubek 2005, 2008). Whether it is cheese, beef, or wine, the intent is to imbue your product with a sense of place. Place includes the soil, the nutrients and minerals of the physical landscape, shaped by the geographic and environmental climatic characteristics. This is guided by the practices of the people involved, possibly influenced by their beliefs, traditions, and ancestral heritage. The goal is to distinguish one product from another by allowing it to communicate cultural information that may be experienced by other people when they engage with that product, even before they taste it.

To promote and enhance the connection to food and terroir, many of the CV wine producers have adopted the common practice of providing tasting notes on their wine labels (Johnson 2005; Resnick 2008) that attempt to convey flavors associated with certain foods to the taste of their wines. This may be represented by specific foods or by minerals that are associated with producing those flavors (Vaudour 2002; Van Leeuwen and Seguin 2006). The back label of Averill Creek's 2009 Pinot Noir (a red wine) lists plum, raspberry, and tangerine as

aromas that may be perceptible to the consumer (Image 8.1). It is important to acknowledge that most of our sense of taste comes from aromas and an individual's sense of smell (Bartoshuk and Duffy 2005; Parr, White and Heatherbell 2003). The text on the label continues to suggest flavors of dried cherry, strawberry, nutmeg, and clove are present. This label also references "earthy minerality" in an attempt to invoke the concept of terroir, that you can actually taste the minerals from the soil, through the grapes and into the wine. It has become increasingly popular for wine producers to provide food pairings and suggestions on the back label of their wine bottles, such as "try pairing with grilled salmon, wild duck breast, wild mushroom risotto and beef bourguignon." These are all food products that may be obtained in CV.



**Image 8.1 Averill Creek 2009 Pinot Noir back label with tasting notes, food associations and suggested food pairing. Author's photo.**

Another example of this connection to food and food pairing suggestions is represented by a bottle of Rocky Creek's 2011 Pinot Gris (a white wine). This CV winery utilizes an alternative approach to gluing wine labels on the front and back of their bottles, instead having

logos, text and images screen-printed and heat fired directly onto the bottles<sup>55</sup>. On the back of this bottle, Rocky Creek takes this new labeling process to a novel level in an attempt to distinguish themselves as different and unique by offering food pairing suggestions with images of food rather than only text (Image 8.2)



**Image 8.2 Rocky Creek 2011 Pinot Gris illustrating suggested food pairings by using images of food rather than text only. Author's photo.**

To the right of the tasting notes are three images under the heading of "Suggested Food Pairings." The first image is of two different pieces of sushi (as identified by the word "Sushi" placed underneath the image), followed by an image of a prawn (accompanied by the words "Spicy Prawns"), and then an image of a chicken drumstick (accompanied by the words "Fried Chicken"). Granted, it may be very difficult to recognize the images without the accompanying text, this bottle illustrates the connection this CV wine producer is attempting to make with food

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<sup>55</sup> From conversation with Lief Miltenberger of Hired Guns Creative at the Wine Islands Grower's Association conference in Duncan, B.C. in July of 2013. His company, based in Nanaimo, B.C. offers this process to the local wine industry.

to heighten the wine experience, by providing a visual representation, from both a literal taste and cultural information perspective. It is also an attempt to create a different and disguisable identity from the other CV producers as Rocky Creek are the only ones using food images on their bottles.

A third example of a wine label used to make a connection to food and the sharing of food with other people is illustrated by Cherry Points 2011 Ortega (Image 8.3)



**Image 8.3 Cherry Point 2011 Ortega. Author's photo.**

On the back label of this bottle, the tasting notes describe the wine as having "elegant peach and apricot aromas" and that the taste "finishes with hints of nutmeg and soft orange touches."

The food pairing suggestions state "This wine pairs well with seafood tapas, blue cheese, oysters, and friendly conversation" Here we have a connection to Xavier's ethnicity and ancestral heritage. Encarta Dictionary defines tapas as "Spanish snacks: small snacks that are often served as an appetizer along with alcoholic drinks, originally in Spain."<sup>56</sup> Xavier is of Spanish decent

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<sup>56</sup> Encarta Dictionary, Microsoft Word on-line reference tool (accessed November 10, 2015).

(see Ch. 5) and proudly serves his homemade paella (another dish associated with Spain) during the annual Wine and Culinary Festival at his winery. Oysters are a local product found along the shores of Cowichan Bay and local blue cheese is produced by Hilary's Cheese (Hynes 2013), located on Cherry Point Road and a neighbor to Xavier at Cherry Point Estate Wines.

The phrase "along with alcoholic drinks" provides an explicit literal connection to the appropriateness of drinking this wine with the food suggestions. But what may be most significant to the wine tasting experience communicated by the cultural information and representative of Xavier's personal identity (he of the line quoted earlier, "A dinner without wine is not a dinner") is the statement that "This wine pairs well with ... friendly conversation" (Image 8.3). The association here is that the wine goes well with food and both are best enjoyed by sharing with other people. This is representative of the experience described by Fischler (2011) as social and cultural commensality where people at the same place share food and conversation. Xavier is suggesting, following Fischler, that this is a way to bond people around a common experience. This coming together of food and wine and people to share an individual and a collective experience, and the notion of commensality, was at the heart of all my participants' narratives.

The Deol family of Deol Estate Winery (see Ch. 6) is originally from the Punjab region of India and immigrated to Canada and CV in the 1970s. It has been their custom to serve traditional Indian cuisine such as pakoras and butter chicken to visitors to the winery during the annual Wine and Culinary Festival. The grandmother and daughter-in-law would bring handmade pakoras from their home located beside the tasting room, wearing traditional Punjabi clothing. The sharing of their wine and food with visitors during the festival was a way to promote their version of commensality while also creating an identity for their wine products.

Another example of the importance of food to CV wine producers and the creation of individual identity for their wines and wineries and a collective identity for CV as a region of distinction for food and wine comes from Giordano Venturi of Venturi-Schulz Vineyards.

Venturi wrote and self published a book titled *The Pleasures of Continuity: A Subjective View on Food and Wine Tradition and Other Nourishment* (2012). The title of the book is somewhat self-explanatory as Venturi describes himself as always being passionate about food and wine. The book, the photos, and recipes inside all invoke a sense of nostalgia (Gieryn 2000; Black and Ulin 2013). His book, along with his wines, may be seen as an attempt to recreate a connection to his past and subjective life experiences.

Yet the book is also a testament to the wine industry pioneers in CV who began planting vineyards in an unlikely and unproved region with many challenges. The book illustrates how many of the CV producers draw on their ancestral heritage and their personal experiences and relationship to their past and the wines and foods of Old World Europe. While a nostalgic connection is present, there is little doubt that these pioneers were consciously creating something new. These were new products in a new place that spoke of a new identity for their wines and themselves. The challenge remains to create a collective identity that then may be communicated to others, to build a history or wine culture where none existed before. Another key feature in creating this identity, or a sense (taste )of place for CV wine producers is their relationships with local festivals.

## **Festivals**

Festivals can be significant events in a region or place because they present the opportunity for members of a specific community or industry, such as wine producers, to come together as a group to celebrate their individual achievements with others and to promote themselves as separate entities (wineries) but also to create awareness of a shared sense of collective identity (a wine region) (Beverland 1998; Dodds 1995). As Casey (1996) suggests, places are where events happen. This idea was conveyed by Sarah of Unsworth Vineyard in discussing the 2012 Cowichan Wine and Culinary Festival when she stated, "It is the only event for the Cowichan wineries that brings people out to all of the wineries collectively." However, this notion of all CV wine producers participating in this festival and sharing in the ideology and

practice of promoting a shared sense of collective identity needs to be explored further. As Sarah continued discussing the 2012 festival and CV winery participation rates, "We could have had 17 but we only had 11."<sup>57</sup> This challenge of building a collective identity among the CV wine producers was reinforced by Andy of Averill Creek when I asked him if the CV wine producers were starting to unite and share the same kind of view that they needed to come together to create an identity about CV and their wines and he replied, "Not everybody has espoused that concept yet." To explore this challenge of sharing and promoting a collective identity, I examine the history of festivals involving the wine producers in CV.

The first festival or collective gathering of note to promote the fledgling CV wine industry was simply called "Cowichan Valley Wine Tasting" and began in 1991 when there were only four wineries in the region: Cherry Point, Blue Grouse, Vigneti Zanatta and Venturi-Schulze. As the name of the event suggests, there was no attempt at this time to consciously partner with the local food producers and industry and promote a collective identity around wine and food. By the time of the 7th annual Cowichan Valley Wine Tasting event there were still only the four original wineries but Venturi-Schulze did not participate that year (Rusland 1996).

The first significant change to the original tasting event occurred in September of 1999 with the inaugural "Annual Wine Festival." The word "Festival" is now part of the title and implies a more substantive event than just a "Tasting" (Beverland 1998). It was sponsored by the Vancouver Island Vintners' Association (VIVA, an early version of WIVA discussed in Ch. 6), an organization designed to promote the needs and interests of a collective group. The collaboration with VIVA is significant because it marks the organization's commitment to promote Vancouver Island-grown grapes in their wines over wines that were made with imported grapes from off the island. This is an important feature of terroir and creating a taste

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<sup>57</sup> In this total of 17, Sarah is including the winery that only produces fruit wine, not wine from *Vitis Vinifera* grapes, and the local ciderery, both of whom were members of the Wine Islands Vintner's Association and participate alongside the 15 CV wineries that I counted in my study. When the two non-*Vitis Vinifera* grape producers are removed from the number of 11, as they both did participate, this would leave a total of 9 out of 15 of the CV wine producers who participated in the 2012 festival.

of place, that the product must be reflective of the specific region or place and of the people and their practices (Paxson 2011; Trubek 2005, 2008).

Participating wine producers in this festival partnered with local restaurants to offer a series of Winemakers' Dinners in a conscious effort to pair their wines with food and create an economic boost for CV (Dennis 1999). The optimism surrounding the event went well beyond the general promotion of the small and fledgling CV wine industry as illustrated by the words of Paul Douville, a Duncan City Administrator, "People are already phoning from Vancouver about the festival and while they are here they will rediscover the whole Valley. This is going to turn into a huge business over the years not just for the wine and hospitality industry but for everybody in the valley" (Dennis 1999). Douville's comments are reflective of Beverland's (1998) and Symon's (2005) research that suggests wine tourism should be part of a multifaceted approach to provide economic benefit to not only the wine and hospitality industries but to the entire surrounding area.

This optimism for the local wine and food industry and the overall local economy appeared to be warranted when examining the promotional material for the 3rd annual event in 2001, now called "Islands Festival of Wines" (Dedyna 2001). The addition of "Islands" to the festival name reinforces the organizers' goal of promoting locally produced wines over imported wines. Organizers were also planning a grape stomping event in an effort to evoke nostalgia (Gieryn 2000) and a sense of authenticity (Fillitz and Saris 2013) for Festival participants and visitors. Stomping the grapes by foot was a traditional cultural-historical practice used before technological innovation replaced the activity (Johnson 2005). In 2001, five of the six operating CV wineries participated, with Venturi-Schulz again choosing not to participate. The reason provided was because the festival coincided with their harvest.

Another significant feature in the advance promotional material for the 2001 Festival was the inclusion of a detailed information page listing the grape varietals grown on the island and used to produce CV wines (Appendix B). This illustrates an important process for CV wine

producers to inform and educate consumers and local community members about what grape varieties they are able to successfully grow in order to produce commercially viable wines. These grape varieties are representative of those best suited to the geography, geology, and climatic conditions specific to VI and CV (Schreiner 2011), as part of the terroir. The Festival becomes a venue and forum to communicate literal taste information (in the types of grapes grown and wine produced) and cultural information about the many elements in creating a taste of place.

This information process is vital to CV wine producers because most of the grape varieties that they grow and use to make their wines are not familiar to most North American wine drinkers (Ring 2013). With names difficult to pronounce like Auxerrois, Bacchus, Ortega, Schonburger, Siegerrebe for white wine grapes, and Marachal Foch, Agria, Cayuga, and Zweigelt for red grapes, many of the wines produced in CV are unfamiliar to consumers in both name and taste. This provides a special challenge for wine producers attempting to create an identity for their products, wineries, and region: getting consumers to recognize that they are not only a wine producing region but their wines may be very different from wines they have previously experienced. This is illustrated by comments from Katrina of Deol Estate Winery, "Visitors (to the tasting room) draw upon personal experiences and compare their past experiences to what we are serving." In many cases what the CV wine producers are serving is a wine and a wine tasting experience that many visitors have not experienced before. The festivals provide an opportunity to expose and educate visitors and wine consumers to the tastes and taste experiences of CV.

The next major change to the Festival occurred in 2005 when the name was rebranded to the Cowichan Wine & Culinary Festival (Rusland 2005). This change represents the evolution of the Festival to become more and more place based and locally focused, again supporting the concept of terroir (Paxson 2010; Trubek 2005, 2008; Ulin 2013). The new name reinforces the importance of CV as the preeminent region now driving the wine industry on Vancouver and the Gulf Islands, as Andy of Averill Creek stated, "The key to Vancouver Island is Cowichan Valley

by far." The name also represents the conscious decision by festival organizers to partner more directly with the local food industry in order to develop a collective identity that may help the CV region develop into a food and wine destination for travelers. This collaboration is illustrated by a news headline reviewing the 2nd Annual Cowichan Wine and Culinary Festival, "For the love of food and drink: Festival-goers flock to sample best of the Valley" (Bainas 2006).

It is interesting to note that at this festival there were only four out of a possible nine CV wineries participating. Although the specific circumstances for this low participation rate (less than 50%) are uncertain, it may speak to the challenges of a small number of producers sharing a common view about their industry and how they do things, let alone promoting a collective group identity through a local festival. This lack of a common view was echoed by Andy (Averill Creek) seven years later when I asked him about these challenges, "People are so individualistic and the attraction of a place like this is to the individual, right? Producers are very quirky eccentrics, they have their own ideas." Having their own ideas, being focused on their own places and practices, may then make it difficult to work together towards a collective identity for the region. In this sense a collective identity is being contested, similar to the individual wineries' views and relationships with government regulations and politics discussed in the previous chapter.

The year 2012 marked another milestone in the evolution of the Cowichan Wine and Culinary Festival. This was the first year that the local CV wine producers took over organizing the event themselves through their own new Cowichan Cooperative organization known as [wines.cowichan.net](http://wines.cowichan.net) (see Ch. 7). Previously the festival had largely been organized by Cowichan Tourism Association, Duncan Cowichan Chamber of Commerce, and Tourism Victoria with members of WIVA volunteering their services on organizing committees. Sarah from Unsworth Vineyards, and a participating member of the Cooperative, stated that "The wineries have taken it back because it did just start as a wine festival." She continued to explain that by 2011, many of the CV wineries felt the festival was starting to spread too thin. There were over 41

participants, comprised mostly of culinary businesses, art and craft studios, and that there was "just too much to do." So the idea for the 2012 Festival was to condense it down to the participating wine locations and invite culinary and arts and craft participants to set up at the participating wineries, "it seemed like a great idea." Andy, from Averill Creek, supported this idea when I asked him if he thought it best that the festival was driven by the wineries now, "Yeah I do in terms of the way it needs to be centric towards the wineries and then we bring everyone else on board to foster the whole image."

Another significant change was to expand the festival to 10 days so that it would encompass two weekends instead of one. While this expanded schedule may reflect optimism by some Cooperative members, it proved a challenge for many participants. The fall season (September-October) is already a busy season for the wine producers, as illustrated by the previous example of Venturi-Schulz choosing not to participate in earlier festivals because they coincided with their harvest. For many CV wine producers, it was not practical from a cost, time, or personnel perspective to plan, organize, and host multi-day activities over a 10 day period. It was often enough for most of them to organize special activities over just the Saturday and Sunday of the final weekend. It is important to remember that many CV wineries were still mom and pop or family operations with minimal full time staff and limited budgets to hire extra people for special events, even for the recognized premier event of their calendar year.

The significance of the festival as one of the most important times and events of the year for some of the CV wine producers is highlighted by Sarah's comments that despite September typically being a busy time at the tasting room for them, the final Saturday of the 2012 Festival provided "Really great exposure. It was and will probably continue to be our busiest day of the year for us." Katrina (Deol Estate Winery)echoed this sentiment, "It's pretty much our biggest event of the year." This success reported by Sarah and Katrina is contrasted with comments from Andy at Averill Creek when he had a couple come to his winery during the first weekend of the festival and ask "We thought there was a wine festival on?" This question was in response to

the apparent lack of any visible activity at the winery, or in the region, that would have signified a wine and culinary festival was taking place. Andy admitted that he had to reply that yes, the Festival was on but that all of the major activities and special events were on the last weekend. Sarah, echoing the concerns of hosting a 10-day festival, told me that "I would be fine if the committee decided to shorten it to just the few festival days."

What seemed like a good idea, from CV wine producers perspective, unfortunately did not work out. By 2014, after two years of being organized by the Cowichan Cooperative and nine years using the same name, the Cowichan Wine and Culinary Festival was no longer. It was renamed and rebranded as Savour Cowichan Festival. The word "wine" is no longer part of the festival name and CV wine producers have appeared to have lost ground back to the culinary side. The official description on the event website, once again organized by Tourism Cowichan, states that the "Savour Cowichan Festival, is a local foodie love-in that celebrates the Valley's vast cornucopia of locally grown and produced food and drink" (tourismcowichan.com 2015). While the phrase "locally grown and produced" is still important to CV wine producers, their product appears to have been replaced by the generic term "drink."

### **The Food and Festivals of Place, Practice, and People in CV**

The many incarnations and changes to the local Cowichan Valley (CV) wine and culinary food festivals are representative of what CV wine producers still struggle with today in creating an identity for themselves and the region, even after almost 30 years in the making. Despite an agreement among all of my research participants about the importance of tourism in bringing visitors to their winery to taste and experience their products, there was no consensus on whether they believed the Festival (in its many versions) benefited them individually and therefore merited the costs and efforts of participating. So while the growth of CV wine producers had risen to 15 during my fieldwork (using the same criteria as 2012, there are

currently 14 wineries<sup>58</sup>) it remains a small critical mass when trying to create a collective identity or be recognized as an entity by an outside group.

While they all share in the passion for what they are doing, there are differences of opinion and tensions surrounding the issue of whether tourism significantly benefits some CV wine producers. There are a few CV wine producers who feel that tourists are a nuisance to them and contribute nothing to their business. As Daniel, the winemaker at Unsworth Vineyards and Enrico Winery stated, "We don't exist for the pleasures of the tourism industry, we're here because we are a business." CV producers who espoused this view were typically some of the older wineries who report having established customers and channels (restaurants, wholesalers) for selling their wine and did not really have any product left over to sell directly to visitors anyways. These wineries were less likely to participate or actively engage in the regional festivals and other local promotional events.

As my research has shown, the backgrounds and personalities of CV wine producers are as diverse as the wines they produce. Beverland has described grape growers and winemakers as "predominantly product focused" (1998 , 25) and I would agree that this assessment fits with my research participants. This relates to why some of them are slow or reluctant to commit resources to festivals and local organizations. Their focus on their vineyards and cellar door or tasting room sales is a logical rationale for ignoring the potential benefits of increased tourist activity that festivals and culinary partnerships may provide. While Beverland offers that there is some research (Dodd 1995) suggesting that a focus on cellar door sales may not have a substantial effect on increasing sales, all of my participants believed that it was at the winery, in the tasting room, where they could offer the visitor an experience that went beyond simply tasting the wine, "We are selling the experience as much as we are selling the wine" (Daniel, Unsworth Vineyards). This point of view was echoed by Xavier from Cherry Point when I asked him why he thought visitors came to his winery:

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<sup>58</sup> <http://www.tourismcowichan.com/wine-culinary/wineries/> (accessed November 12, 2015).

They come for many reasons but - we don't sell wine. We're offering an experience. When people walk out of here they walk out with a totally different conception of what wine is than when they came in, as to the origins of wines, including how to taste wine, or having a dinner with wine. I don't care if they don't buy wine, I'm not interested. I just want to offer them a different wine experience and to go out of here with a different attitude towards wine. So I think they come out of here with a beautiful educational experience.

Building relationships and partnering with local restaurants and food producers has proven to be a positive step for CV wine producers to help create an identity for their products, their wineries, and to an extent the region itself. Regional food movements emphasizing locally grown or produced food products, using organic or sustainable methods, have become a fixture in CV that link place, practice, and people (Hynes 2013; Pegg 2013). Proponents and practitioners of this movement and ideology (restaurants, independent liquor stores, etc.) are also starting to embrace the local CV wines as part of this experience, recognizing the importance of the relationship between them. If a customer comes into their restaurant to experience some locally grown or produced food they are also much more likely now to be intrigued by a locally produced wine to accompany their meal. During my primary fieldwork season of 2012 I observed that there were many local restaurants now offering CV wines on their wine lists and offering food pairing suggestion with their meals, despite the higher costs of local versus imported wines. When I was doing preliminary site visits in 2010, it was a rare experience to see any CV wine available at local restaurants.

The local liquor stores and wine shops were also now offering a wide selection of wines from many of the CV wineries. These local wines were frequently featured in the stores with prominent display space near the front of the stores and having visible signage promoting them. Again, CV wines were rarely available in BCLB (the provincially controlled liquor stores) because CV wine producers were not members of the BCWA and BCWI and did not participate in their BCVQA programs due to costs and different philosophies. These different perspectives and philosophies are reflected in the wines that they produce and their individual identities. Ring has compared CV wines to the winemakers themselves and described them as

"experimental and temperamental .... As befits the independent and creative spirit of the islands" (2013, 142).

Can an individual identity be the basis of creating a collective identity when that individual identity is based on differences from others rather than similarities? My fieldwork observations and interviews with my research participants suggest that is the obstacle CV wine producers face: wanting to establish and promote a collective identity that would serve their individual needs, being a viable and sustainable business, while allowing them to produce something that they are passionate about and that they believe is representative of their place, their practices, and who they are as people. All my research participants acknowledge the subjective nature of the wine tasting experience and that is why they would prefer it when visitors come to them at their winery, to share in this experience together or, as Fischler (2011) would suggest, to experience a sense of commensality that is rooted in who we are as human beings.

It is fitting that wine is the vehicle for exploring the concept of creating an identity because both are best understood as a fluid process rather than an end product (pun intended). While notions of a collective identity for CV as a wine producing region of distinction remain contested around support for a regional festival and through diverse political and organizational beliefs and practices, there remains evidence in my participants' individual stories and narratives that do contribute to the intersubjective experiences of place, practice, and people proposed for creating a taste of place. In the final chapter I revisit my research questions in order to address these components and how they give meaning to CV wine producers and how they communicate that meaning to others.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusion: "We don't sell wine"<sup>59</sup>

In this dissertation I have explored the relationships between a particular practice (producing wine), within a particular place (Cowichan Valley [CV]), and by a particular group of people (the wine producers who live there). Inspired by Trubek's (2005, 2008) concept of 'taste of place' and guided by Deroy's (2007) philosophical suggestion that wine gives people the sense that they are participating in a deeply rooted culture, I asked the question: How do the wine producers of CV create a taste of place when wine production and the people involved only have a 25 year history in this particular place to draw on? I investigated this question, and those listed below, through an ethnographic approach in an attempt to understand the lived experiences of the wine producers of CV and how they construct meaning through their products, practices, and the places where they dwell:

- What does the wine say about this place and these people?
- What does this place and what do these people say about the wine?
- What 'culture' do people experience when they engage with the wines of Cowichan Valley?
- What are the literal and metaphorical roots of that culture?

### Tastemakers

The term tastemakers, as referring to CV wine producers, can have both literal and metaphoric meaning. As wine producers, they literally do make the taste of the wine. Wine, as a product, is meant to have a literal taste in the mouth. However, engaging with wine in the mouth and then swallowing it is only part of the taste process. Recalling the definition from the introduction, 'taste' not only represents the physiological sensation of eating or drinking a product but includes all the human senses, as well as the full cognitive and cultural realm elicited by the product to the extent one is capable of experiencing it. So while the wine may literally taste sweet, bitter, or sour, it may also taste of "flavors of dried cherry, strawberry, nutmeg, and clove" (tasting notes from a wine bottle label, Ch. 8). Taste references may include

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<sup>59</sup> This is a quote from Xavier of Cherry Point discussed in Ch. 8.

descriptors such as "earthy minerality" in an attempt to invoke the concept of terroir and to associate the product with a specific place.

My research findings support Trubek's notion that terroir represents much more than just tasting of the earth. Terroir is an expression of a place, practice, and people. In this dissertation I argue that taste is about an experience; it is the cultural realm, to the extent that one is capable of experiencing it, which is most relevant. For the wine producers of CV, as metaphorical tastemakers, wine is also about producing a taste experience for those people that visit their wineries and consume their products. It is the overall taste experience that represents the CV wine producers, their practices, customs, traditions, and their ancestral heritage within a physical and temporal space. It is through their wine and the cultural knowledge conveyed through the overall taste experience that they are able to invoke a sense of place. It is not just about the wine - "We don't sell wine" - they are selling a taste experience. This is how they create a taste of place. In the next three sections I summarize the three main components in creating a taste of place for the CV wine producers.

### Place

Cowichan Valley (CV) is both a real and an imagined place. It is a real place as part of the government recognized Cowichan Valley Regional District (Map 2.1). It is an imagined place in the sense that it represents a recognized place where a young and emerging wine producing region exists. Legally the wine, through its front bottle label, cannot say anything about this place. The words Cowichan Valley are not permitted on the front label of any provincially authorized wine. To the government liquor regulators, CV does not exist as a place. My findings illustrate how CV as a place can be contested for the wine producers (see Ch. 7, Image 7.3).

CV may be considered real in that it is where wine producers have constructed their vineyards and wineries (Map 5.1), they exist as real places. As a real place, as part of a landscape within a specific environment, CV includes the physical elements of geography, geology, climate, and weather, which do affect the literal taste of the wines. Because of this, the place might say

the wines are crisp, light bodied, or more acidic, as in "We live and breathe acid here" (Daniel, Unsworth Vineyards). CV, as a wine producing region with only a 25 year history and continued experimentation, might say the wines are young, referring to the relatively youthful age of the vines that produce the grapes used to make the wine. CV as a place might also say the wines are an excellent match with the plentiful seafood found here. It is the broader taste experience, including cultural knowledge, which makes the wines distinctive to this place.

Supporting the theoretical perspective that the essence of place is regional and local, the CV wine producers in my study were all aware of the significance of microclimates within CV and within their own vineyards - the notion that the slightest change in place can produce differences in the grapes. While this emphasis on the specificity of place adds to the distinctiveness of each of their wines and to the individual identities of their wineries, an expressed desire of all my study participants, it also makes the promotion of a collective identity challenging for CV. One common shift in practice by many of my study participants was to promote that they are 'Estate' wineries, indicating that they only produce wines from grapes grown in their own vineyards, their place. Yet this may have a negative impact in creating a collective identity when the CV wineries are small, exporting little if any of their wines off the island and selling most of them right at their wineries or in CV. Promoting 'Estate' wines is a start towards creating a taste of place; however, the cultural knowledge about CV as a wine producing region is limited and not broadly shared, making it difficult to communicate that knowledge to others. Not many people, even Canadian wine consumers, know where CV is and what it is that CV wine producers do there. This illustrates that embodied sensory experiences and cultural knowledge involved in place making may benefit from the passing of time. For the CV wine producers, 25 years has not been long enough to develop a collective taste of place.

### Practice

My findings support and build upon the body of place and identity literature that strongly relate place to what people do in those places, what I refer to as practices. People make

meaning about the places where they live by what they do there and how they engage with their physical and social environment. This is especially true for the wine producers of CV whose focus on their vineyards and the microclimates within them contributes to the identities of their specific wineries and their wines. The overarching common practice between all of my study participants in the creation of a taste of place centers on the practice of producing wine. In this they are all tastemakers, in the metaphorical sense, even if they are not directly making the wine themselves. They are contributing to a taste experience. As Xavier (Cherry Point) suggests, "Everybody is part of that family magic and that ends up in the final product. I don't know how but it ends there." It is about creating a sense of belonging.

Beyond this common level of practice, my findings suggest that CV producers engage with the specificities of their physical environments, their vineyards. This is where the process of skill acquisition and knowledge development is most important, in a case of situated learning. This enskilment includes the ability to change your practices and knowledge to reflect the yearly variations in climatic and weather patterns. My findings also suggest that skill development and knowledge acquisition is very individualistic to the CV producers and their particular places; it is also about engaging with the social environment. Because of this, there is no real unified community of practice where information is freely shared with the intent of developing standardized practices and products. From the beginning with the Duncan Project, the practice of growing grapes and making wine has revolved around experimentation and that experimentation continues today. For the CV wine producers, it is about the distinctiveness of their products, their practices, and who they are. No two sets of products, practices, and people are alike. Here again, through practice, a collective identity towards creating a taste of place may be contested. Their objective is to make different wine because they are different people choosing to use different practices.

## People

This lack of information sharing between tastemakers about their practices and products may speak to CV producers' insecurities about their skills and the quality of their wines, but it also certainly speaks to the individualistic nature of producing wine, and the egos and characters of the people involved. Recall this passage from Andy (Averill Creek):

People are so individualistic and the attraction of a place like this is to the individual, right. The producers, they're very quirky. They have their own ideas about how things should be done or shouldn't be done. And I'm no different. You're going to get the eccentrics, you're going to get the personalities and that is delightful.

This passage highlights the most important component for creating a taste experience and a taste of place: the people. The CV wine producers are the most important component because they not only produce the wine but they are the producers and the conveyors of the cultural knowledge about their places, practices, and the people, including themselves.

Throughout this dissertation I have attempted to convey a sense of who CV wine producers are - their quiriness, their eccentricities, their personalities - and I would agree with Andy that they were indeed delightful, even if not all their wines were: from Andy's self description as a "bull in a china shop," to Xavier's capturing "Cherry Point magic" in a bottle; from the Deol family continuing their Punjabi farming ancestry by putting their family name on the bottle, to David Godfrey practicing outside the box by growing his "Foch tree;" from Sarah at Unsworth who believes in the romance associated with wine culture by stating: "That's where (working together at Enrico Winery) we (Daniel) met and then of course we married after that which is very romantic and then we had our first child" to Daniel's more analytic, non-romantic perspective of the winemaker as nothing more than a food processor. The taste experiences that my study participants create and share are as diverse as the wines they produce.

When considering the question of what form of 'culture' people experience when they engage with the wines of CV, any response is contingent on the cultural knowledge one has about the wine, the place, the practices, and the people. Viticulture and viniculture can carry the

weight of history, evoking a sense of timelessness and as Trubek (2005) suggests, an essential connection to mother earth. Yet, in having only a 25 year history of grape production in CV, the cultural knowledge may be limited, since the culture, like the vines, are not yet deeply rooted. For CV wine producers, creating a taste of place is about the relationships between and within all of these components and then sharing those relationships as taste experiences with others. They do draw on and build upon that 25 years of history, beginning with what was learned from the Duncan Project. They continue to experiment with grape varieties and practices or as Daniel suggests, “trying to reinvent the wheel” in order to find what works best for them in their specific micro-climates and to find what they feel is the best expression of those places and of themselves. With this lack of a long running history of wine production in CV, the producers draw on their own life experiences to create a taste of place: their love of literature (David, Godfrey-Brownell); their passion for farming (Daniel, Unsworth); their ancestry - “I learned a lot from those old Spanish guys” (Xavier, Cherry Point); their knowledge about and connection to ‘Old World’ wine culture (Andy, Averill Creek); their ethnic identity (the Deol family from India, Deol Winery); and their formal training and knowledge from institutional learning (Sarah, Unsworth). A few of my participants do invoke a sense of nostalgia, not in the sense of an imagined past nor as a conscious promotional attempt to recreate a national identity but in the sense of conveying their own experiences, creating something authentic that is representative of who they are in this place and in this time through their own practices.

This study illustrates how the CV producers and their wines have been and continue to be shaped by politics and organizations: from federal government trade practices (NAFTA and GATT) and regulated product labeling, to their local volunteer associations (WIVA and WIGA), both of which are embedded within political structures and ideologies. My findings suggest that the CV wine producers' identity, both derived from their individual wineries and as a collective identity for the region, is also shaped by their contestation of these political structures and ideologies. All of my study participants enjoyed the individualistic nature of their practices and

places. They enjoyed the ability to express those practices and places, and themselves, without formal structures and regulations restricting them. Because CV is small and new as a wine producing region they are able to accomplish this. It is their differences and the diversity, in their wines and in who they are, that best expresses a taste of place for CV wine producers. This may change if CV continues to grow as a wine producing region, as the economics of their practices shift, or as the people change when someone wants to achieve a larger scale of production and exportation. It may also change as the physical environment and climate change, such as through prolonged warming or cooling patterns. As the wines change and evolve so too will the identity of CV and so will the taste experiences that contribute to a taste of place.

Issues of temporality, shifting perceptions of time in relation to the past, present, and future will continue to shape the CV wine producers, their wines, practices, and places. For example, on a recent visit to CV in July of 2016, I found that Xavier from Cherry Point has bottled a wine with the information of "Old Vines" prominently displayed on the front label. This suggests that Xavier believes enough time has passed, or a history has developed, to invoke a connection to deep roots, both literally and metaphorically, and that this information may be used to communicate that sense of temporality to others.

This study illustrates how it takes time to develop a culture and a history around wine production which then may be used to invoke a sense of place, practice, and people, all coming together to create a taste experience. This suggests that creating and developing a collective identity around a specific industry, products, or experiences does not happen instantaneously and certainly not solely through government implemented programs. It takes time to create a taste of place. The key to this process is cultural knowledge that may be communicated to others around these three components. That is why the CV wine producers, who were participants in my study, want people, visitors, wine consumers to come to their wineries to share in a taste experience. For the CV wine producers, the essence of place is local; it is where they engage with their physical and social environments on many different levels; it is where they learn skills and

develop knowledge which they use to produce wine and taste experiences. Yes, they want you to drink their wine but they also want you to experience their place, their practices, and who they are. The wine on its own may be a pleasant drink (or not) but it is also capable of communicating a taste of place. To experience a taste of place one must, like the CV wine producers, engage with it on a broad sensory level which includes all the cultural knowledge that one is capable of understanding. This cultural knowledge is situated within specific places, practices, and people.

### **The Ethnographic Project**

Cultural anthropologists, like CV wine producers, frequently employ labels in an attempt to create awareness and inform others about what it is they do or what they are talking about. The use of labels may be a simple way of categorizing, summarizing, or communicating general knowledge. For example, labeling a cultural experience as authentic, while piquing our curiosity, provides little context or content about the lived experience of those involved in producing the experience, as well as those experiencing the product or event. As Bigenho (2002) suggests, there are different types of authenticity and they are both fluid and dynamic. The idea of genuine authenticity, originated by the CV wine producers, may generate experiential authenticity which in term, over time and by sharing, may then produce cultural-historical authenticity.

Similarly, when CV wine producers place “Product of Canada” on the front of their bottle label (a government legislated requirement if they want to legally be able to sell their wines) it provides little cultural knowledge about the wine, where it is from, or who made it. Canada is a large country with an expansive, diverse population, and itself does not yet have a significant wine culture history. The ethnographic project, combining fieldwork with theoretical and comparative research, involves the in-depth examination of the culture of a people or community. It emphasizes the importance of particularizing a cultural phenomenon. My research and dissertation investigates how the lived experiences of the wine producers of CV

create a taste of place, through their products, practices, and the place they live. To adapt a popular metaphor used to describe the ethnographic project, rather than ‘walk in the shoes of those you study’ I attempted to ‘drink the wines of those I studied.’

Throughout this dissertation I have provided many quotes and longer passages from my interviews and experiences with my study participants. This was done, not with the intent of portraying truth about who they are and what they do, but to give authority to their voices and their stories about their own lived experiences. Giving authoritative voice to your research participants, by letting them speak, is a way for them to validate what they do, why and where they do it.

Experiencing a taste of place, like tasting the wine, may be a subjective experience, but that does not mean that we cannot learn something about the people who made it, the practices they used to make it, and the places where they live and do this, nor does it mean that we cannot learn something about ourselves, as individuals, groups, or a society. Stories and storytelling remain essential to an ethnographic project and to cultural anthropology in general. Stories make us aware of places, practices and people. Stories inform us, they challenge us, and they inspire us to engage in new experiences. The CV wine producers’ stories, like their wines, are meant to be shared with others.

### Contributions

This dissertation contributes to the discipline of anthropology by sharing my story about the lived experiences of a group of people, wine producers, who perform a certain practice, produce wine, within a very specific place, Cowichan Valley (CV). This provides an ethnographic understanding of some of the CV wine producers who participated in my study. The content of this dissertation, when considered together, illustrates that stories remain central to the ethnographic project of understanding how people live and make meaning in their lives.

My research contributes to the discourse on place theory by exploring the inter- and intra-relationships of place, practice, and people to create a taste of place that may then be

communicated to others. The emphasis on local, engaging with specific physical and social environments and acquiring situated knowledge and skill within those environments, are imperative for CV wine producers in making their wine and creating an identity for themselves. Markers of place may seem simple, such as 'Wine Route' signs along the road, indicating to the passerby that they are in a wine producing region. Yet the sign alone provides little context or content contributing to a taste experience or collective identity for that place. To obtain this you must engage with that place by turning off the main road, driving to that winery, interact with the people and attempt to understand what it is they do there, and last but not least, you must experience the wine with all your senses. Even if you do not literally drink the wine you are still capable of sharing in the cultural knowledge around it. In this sense, markers of place are multi-local and multi-vocal for CV wine producers. The different places may have different meanings for each of them. This, as my study illustrates, makes it more challenging to create a collective identity for this place, for CV as a wine producing region of some distinction, which may then be communicated to others.

Following Douglas's (1987) and de Garine's (2001) suggestion, this dissertation contributes to the new and growing body of anthropological literature that explores wine as a central component of culture making and the human condition. I take up their position of relating alcohol and its consumption to positive activities within a community, stressing the importance of cultural variability to the anthropological perspective. As Xavier (Cherry Point) stated, "Wineries make a community better." By this comment he meant that the growing interest in wines and wineries in CV was supported by growth in the local food industries. Local restaurants were now featuring CV wines on their menus, often paired with locally produced and sourced food. Community events such as wine and food festivals bring out both local people and visitors to experience and celebrate the CV region. Wine, like food, may be a powerful marker of individual, group, community, or cultural identity. This may also be an identity contested by those involved in producing it.

As stated in the introduction, over the past two decades Canada has experienced yearly increases in both domestic production and consumption of wine. Research also reports that over the past 25 years Canadian vintners (winemakers) have increased their production of high-quality wines. Clearly, people in Canada are becoming more engaged with wine culture. This engagement not only includes the purchase and consumption but the imagined experiences of place through smells, tastes, and cultural knowledge embodied in the wine. Wine columns and stories now appear regularly in many local newspapers across the country and as blogs on the internet. Wine-focused bars and bistros have opened in many Canadian communities, both large and small, including in Duncan. Wine has become a popular drink of choice for younger generations. All of this speaks to a growing Canadian wine culture. While we may never have a 'taste of place' that speaks to a general Canadian wine identity, it is important to understand the implications this growth may have for local people and communities from a holistic anthropological perspective. Issues such as land use, conversion of existing agricultural land to vineyards, population growth, tourism, and an aging demographic all shape understandings of 'place' and 'place making' and are increasingly part of this growing wine culture.

This dissertation contributes to the practice of turning the anthropological lens upon ourselves, to study places, practices, and people within our own contemporary society and culture. I am a Canadian-born citizen studying wine producers in Canada. However, my study participants are a diverse multi-vocal group, representing traditions and ancestry from places such as India, Spain, Columbia, Wales, and Australia. Yet, they are also the wine producers of CV, the tastemakers of Canadian wines. The ethnic diversity of the CV wine producers could be compared to the ethnic diversity of the Canadian population.

Like the differences between 'Old World' and 'New World,' Canadian wines, like Canada itself, are comparatively young. They do not yet embody much cultural knowledge on a global scale. It takes time for relationships to develop between place, practices, people, and the passing of time in order to establish an identity that is 'rooted' enough to have social resonance and

meaning that may then be communicated to others. This process happens at a local level, where people engage in their physical and social environments, acquiring skill and developing knowledge within those places. For the CV wine producers, creating a taste of place is about *their* places, practices, and people, and a taste experience they want to share with others which transcends the simple consumption of their wine. They do believe the taste experience provides physical, mental, and spiritual sustenance.

Further research on the topic of creating a taste of place for the CV wine producers is required. Since my primary fieldwork season of 2012, two wineries have closed, another was sold to new owners, and one new winery opened. This illustrates the dynamic nature of a new and emerging industry in CV. And, as reported in Ch. 8, the primary festival for promoting CV wineries and producers has continued to change, making it challenging to develop a collective identity for the region.

Future research would explore notions of temporality: particularly how CV producers invoke notions of time that transcend past, present and future to emplace themselves, their vineyards and wines. Arguably old vines and wines have value in creating a taste of distinction for this product and in turn, a taste of place. Furthering this research in CV would provide anthropologists the opportunity for comparative analysis with other wine producing regions, such as the Okanagan Valley. Shifts in temporality may reveal associations with history, romance, an idyllic past, and notions of authenticity that may speak to creating a taste of place.

The role of other ‘tastemakers,’ those that contribute to a taste experience without actually producing wine, would contribute to the discourse on place and identity formation as well as to the growing body of literature on Canadian wine culture. By sharing their stories in this dissertation, I too in a sense become a tastemaker, contributing to a taste of place for the wine producers of Cowichan Valley.

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## **Appendix A**

### **List of Cowichan Valley Wineries<sup>6061</sup>**

1. Alderlea Vineyards <http://www.alderlea.com/index.htm>
2. Averill Creek Vineyard <http://www.averillcreek.ca>
3. Blue Grouse Vineyards <http://www.bluegrousevineyards.com>
4. Cherry Point Estate Vineyards <http://www.cherrypointvineyards.com/>
5. Damali Lavender Farm Winery <http://www.damali.ca>
6. Divino Estate Winery <http://www.divinowine.ca/>
7. Deol Estate Winery <http://www.deolestatewinery.com>
8. Enrico Winery & Vineyards <http://www.enricowinery.com/>
9. Glenterra Vineyard <http://www.glenterravineyards.com>
10. Godfrey-Brownell <http://www.gbvineyards.com>
11. Rocky Creek Winery <http://www.rockycreekwinery.ca>
12. Twenty Two Oaks Winery <http://www.22oakswinery.ca/>
13. Unsworth Vineyards <http://www.unsworthvineyards.com>
14. Venturi-Schulze Vineyards <http://www.venturischulze.com>
15. Vigneti Zanatta Winery <http://www.zanatta.ca>

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<sup>60</sup> The term 'Wineries' here indicates they all produce and sell wine under their own name.

<sup>61</sup> List as of my primary field site season of 2012.

## **Appendix B**

### **Dominant Cowichan Valley Grape Varieties<sup>62</sup>**

#### White Grapes

Auxerrois (OX-er-wha)  
Bacchus (BAK-us)  
Cayuga (kay-OO-guh)  
Gewürztraminer (geh-VERTZ-tram-in-er)  
Madeleine Sylvaner (MAH-eh-layne sil-VAN-ner)  
Müller-Thurgau (MOO-ler TER-gow)  
Ortega (or-TAY-guh)  
Pinos Gris (PEE-noh-GREE)  
Schonburger (SHOWN-ber-ger)  
Siegerrbe (Zieg-ar-RAY-beh)

#### Red Grapes

Agria (AG-ree-ah)  
Black Muscat  
Leon Millot (LAY-owhn MEE-yoh)  
Marachel Foch (MAY-ray-shal FOHSH)  
Pinot Noir (PEE-noh- NWAHR)  
Zweigelt (ZVI-gelt)

#### Blattner Hybrids

Epicure-white  
Petite Milo-white  
Cabernet Foch-red  
Cabernet Libre-red

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<sup>62</sup> Source: Treve Ring. 2013. In *Island Wineries of British Columbia: Updated and Expanded*. Gary Hynes ed. Pp. 141-149. Victoria: Touchwood.