

**An ethnographic study of perceptions of and ideas about mystery hominoids**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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University of Alberta

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## **Abstract**

The thesis explores perceptions of and ideas about mystery hominoids, and focuses more specifically on the western Canadian category named ‘sasquatch’ or ‘bigfoot’. Over the last several decades, there has appeared a limited though quite varied literature on sasquatch and other mystery hominoids by anthropologists, biologists, and other academics, in addition to a large amount of amateur cryptozoological writing. Recently, several scientists have taken a more focused interest in possible physical basis for images of mystery hominoids. To date, however, no cultural anthropologist has conducted an ethnographic study of people who hold definite views on the sasquatch, either among local communities or in the community of science. In addition to reviewing literature on the sasquatch written mostly by professional scientists, I fill this gap with an ethnographic study that records and discusses views on this phenomenon of mystery hominoids held by two groups of informants. One comprises academics, all but one a natural scientist and mostly employed (or formerly employed) by post-secondary institutions in Alberta and elsewhere in western Canada and the northwestern United States. The other group is made up of local and mostly rural people in Alberta, including people who claim personal experience of the sasquatch or are familiar with others that do. The importance of the thesis lies in its aim of clarifying what sort of figure people conceive the sasquatch to be (for example, something purely imaginary, or something empirical that reflects experience of a real animal; and something more like a human as opposed to a kind of animal, especially some kind of ape); and, related to these conceptions, why some people, both local people and scientists, are convinced or unconvinced of its phenomenal existence.

## **Preface**

This thesis is an original work by Amira Arshad. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, “An ethnographic study of beliefs in and ideas about mystery hominoids.” Study ID Pro00063501, 01 April 2016.

## **Acknowledgments:**

I would like to acknowledge everyone who has supported me in my academic accomplishments. A special thank you to the individuals that have welcomed me and generously provided their assistance and valuable insight towards my research. I also owe a special thanks to the Department of Anthropology for their guidance throughout the graduate program. I am especially grateful to my supervisor, Gregory Forth, for his guidance and this special opportunity for collaboration while at the University of Alberta. I have gained valuable insight, and I am truly grateful for all his kindness and efforts.

I also extend my gratitude to the other members of my examining committee, John Acorn and Joseph Hill, as well as my examining Chair, Ruth Gruhn. I am truly appreciative to all of them for taking their time to provide me with helpful advice, and all their assistance towards my studies.

I am most thankful to my family who have been by my side and supported me with love and understanding. I am deeply indebted to you for all your unwavering support that has helped me reach this level of success. I am most thankful to my daughter, who has supported me with great understanding, and has given me all the inspiration every step of the way.

## Table of contents

<i>Abstract</i>	ii
<i>Preface</i>	iii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	iv
<i>List of Figures and Plates</i>	vii
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Theoretical and methodological aspects	5
(a) Anthropology of religion	5
(b) Ethnozoology	16
(c) Sociology of science	22
<b>Chapter 2: ‘Sasquatch concept’: history, methods, and popular conceptions of ‘sasquatch’</b>	<b>31</b>
2.1 Historical overview of the ‘sasquatch concept’	31
2.2 Methods	43
2.3 What is the popular conception of sasquatch?	46
2.4 Why is there a ‘popular belief’ in sasquatch, and what is the source of the idea?	53
2.5 Summary and Conclusions	67
<b>Chapter 3: Searching for the existence of sasquatch</b>	<b>71</b>
3.1 Is physical evidence for the existence of sasquatch as a distinct species sufficient to encourage more natural scientists to carry out research, including trying to find a specimen?	71
3.2 If so, why are so few people looking? Are scientists deterred by the (social) organization of science, including policies of funding agencies and peer review (for example, university policies regarding academic advancement)?	82
3.3 Summary and Conclusions	88
<b>Chapter 4: Sasquatch as a natural species: reviewing the ‘evidence’ through local accounts, and theories of scientists that claim its existence</b>	<b>92</b>
4.1 Review of ‘evidence’ and value of existing information on sasquatch	92
4.2 How do accounts of sasquatch given by local people who claim to have observed it match the theories of scientists who claim to have evidence of its existence as a natural species (e.g. Meldrum, Bindernagel)? Is there a significant difference? Do	

local accounts of sasquatch by non-scientists encourage or deter research by natural scientists? 97

**4.3 Summary and Conclusions** 107

**Chapter 5: Sasquatch sightings: regional and practical applications** 110

**5.1** Do sasquatch sightings, e.g., in Alberta, cluster by region, and if so, what would explain the differences? 110

**5.2** If belief in the existence of sasquatch is not sufficiently supported by physical evidence, what is the motivation driving believers, especially in Alberta? 128

**5.3 Summary and Conclusions** 139

**Chapter 6: Hominoids and wildmen around the world, and sasquatch and other cryptids in popular culture** 142

**6.1** Hominoids and wildmen around the world, and the ‘bushy’ hominin tree 143

**6.2** Proving that mystery hominoids do not exist, or are purely fictional 153

**6.3** Popular culture 165

**6.4 Summary and Conclusions** 188

**Chapter 7: Conclusion** 191

*List of references* 202

*Appendix* 218

## List of Figures and Plates

### Figures

1 [Map] Twelve mystery hominoid encounter sites.	30
2. Sketch of an encounter with a ‘dark human-like figure’ that was ‘as big as the trees’.	218
3. Sketch of the clearing from which the human-like creature emerged near a campsite.	219
4. Sketch of an encounter with a juvenile mystery hominoid with flared fur.	220
5. Sketch of a map and location of the ‘juvenile sasquatch’ in a rural setting.	221
6. Comic drawing of the ‘Lair of the sasquatch’ - page 1.	222
7. Comic drawing of the ‘Lair of the sasquatch’ - page 2.	223

### Plates

1. Sasquatch mask.	224
2. Scientific sample and Yukon Wildlife Export Permit listing ‘Sasquatch hair?’	225
3. ‘Bigfoot track’ cast.	226
4. Reputed ‘sasquatch footprint’ 18-inches long in moss.	227
5. Tepee structure.	228
6. ‘The cathedral’ structure.	229
7. Popular culture artefacts of sasquatch; for example, clothing items.	230
8. Mystery hominoids appear on food labels; for example, cereal boxes.	231
9. Other sasquatch artefacts include, for example, lunch boxes.	232
10. A mystery hominoid and an aquatic cryptid in a local magazine (Vue Weekly 2017).	233
11. Kokanee beer sasquatch sign.	234
12. Sasquatch sign purchased in a tourist shop in Jasper, Alberta, with a sasquatch doll from the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics.	235

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### 1.1 Introduction

The thesis concerns perceptions of and ideas about mystery hominoids, and focuses more specifically on the western Canadian category named ‘sasquatch’ or ‘bigfoot’. Since the publication of landmark volumes by Napier (1972) and Halpin and Ames, eds. (1980), there has appeared a limited though quite varied literature on sasquatch and other mystery hominoids by anthropologists, biologists, and other academics (e.g. Daegling 2004; Forth 2007, 2008; Lett 1997; Loxton and Prothero 2013; Regal 2011)—not to mention a large amount of cryptozoological writing in more popular books (e.g. Green 1978, Prihoda 2014), on the internet and, in other media, produced mainly by amateurs.

In addition, several scientists have recently taken a more focused interest in a possible physical basis for images of mystery hominoids (Forth 2012a), as shown by ongoing DNA analysis conducted by Bryan Sykes (2015) of reputed remains associated with the ‘sasquatch’, the Himalayan ‘yeti’, and an historical figure named Zana (a very large hairy individual who lived in the Caucasus in the nineteenth century). Further examples include the work of physical anthropologist Jeff Meldrum (2006) and field biologist John Bindernagel (2010), who has argued that sasquatch should be recognized as a new species, a view that has been endorsed by Jane Goodall (the well-known primatologist, who for some time has supported the idea that creatures like the Himalayan ‘yeti’ are real species).

Other biologists and zoologists have made the ethological argument against, and discounted the idea of sasquatch (Napier 1972; Daegling 2004; Oren 2001). Physical anthropologist David Daegling has maintained that the accuracy of sasquatch accounts in bigfoot



research has been mostly problematic (e.g., due to hoaxing, fabrication and ‘innocent’ misinterpretation) (Daegling 2004: 64). In support of the *ethological* argument, scientists have highlighted the negative biological environment and made the:

1) *ecological argument*, for example, a roots and berries/fish subsistence (Meldrum 2006: 188; 191)—is that sufficient for an ape-like creature? According to Daegling, there are ‘sound theoretical reasons’ as to why bigfoot as a ‘zoological being’ cannot be found; Daegling has maintained that a ‘scientific theory of Bigfoot’ requires that ‘all populations of alleged beasts obey all known laws of genetics, evolution, ecology, and physics;’ and as a (testable) hypothesis, the reason is simple: ‘Bigfoot is explicable entirely by human agency’ (Daegling 2004:64).

Primatologist and palaeoanthropologist John Napier has highlighted the adverse ecological conditions facing the sasquatch. Napier has suggested that the ‘pure logistics of food-supply’ as ‘impoverished’ in the coniferous mountain forests of the Pacific Northwest, for example, ‘even in the summer let alone winter’, are ‘principal stumbling blocks’ to its acceptance (Napier 1972: 83-84; 168).

Palaeontologist Richard Cerutti has also suggested that descriptions attributed to the ‘legendary sasquatch or bigfoot’ in the US Pacific Northwest and Canada are more consistent with a remnant ground sloth, for example, than some ‘undescribed’ or unclassified great ape (Oren 2001: 4).

2) *bio-geographical argument*, that there have never been any apes in the New World, and south of the U.S. there are only New World Monkeys (with their prehensile tails, etc.) from Central America on down to South America. Anthropologists Marjorie Halpin and Michael Ames, in the book *Manlike monsters on trial* (1980), stated that scientifically, the Canadian ape-

like creature ‘sasquatch’ (known as with ‘Bigfoot’ in the United States, ‘Yeti’ in the Himalayas, ‘Alma’ or ‘Almasti’ of Russia) does not ‘officially’ exist, as no carcass has been ‘collected’ or found, nor is it recognized as ‘real’ by zoologists (Halpin and Ames 1980: xiii).

Key questions such as ‘What is real?’ And ‘What is Science?’ were also raised at a scientific conference, ‘Anthropology of the unknown: Sasquatch and similar phenomena,’ at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in May 1978. The conference, organized by Halpin, was partly in response to American anthropologist and cryptozoologist Grover Krantz’s work; and the question repeatedly asked at the conference was, ‘Might they [sasquatch] also be creatures of nature, actual living beings?’ (Halpin and Ames, eds. 1980: xiii; 302).

Daegling has argued bigfoot’s existence as ‘implausible’; taking into account Krantz’s taxonomy which categorizes ‘Bigfoot’ as a ‘great ape’, Daegling has stated,

‘all great apes occupy tropical habitats today (and it is the rare primate species—ourselves and a few monkeys—that live beyond subtropical regions). A great ape living in a seasonal temperate climate is at best unexpected; after all, as the great ape’s closest relative, we did not venture far out of the warm climes until we had had fire and shelter firmly established in our behavioral repertoire. A gorilla would starve among the conifers of the Cascades if the snows of winter didn’t freeze it first; surely Bigfoot, with its greater caloric requirements, would do the same. *Gigantopithecus*, by all indications a tropically adapted form, would have had to survive the long trek over the Bering land bridge over countless generations. Under this line of reasoning, Bigfoot is implausible’ (Daegling 2004: 16).

To date, no cultural anthropologist has conducted an ethnographic study of people who hold definite views on the sasquatch, either among local communities or in the community of science. To fill this gap, this thesis combines (1) a literary study of positions on mystery hominoids held by natural scientists, supplemented by interviews with biologists and biological

anthropologists, and (2) ethnographic research, working with local, mostly rural people in Alberta, including people who claim personal experience of the sasquatch or are familiar with others that do. More specific topics include: (a) popular conceptions of sasquatch, and whether it is human, a non-human animal, or something else; and also how far the image might challenge mainstream conceptions of the human-animal boundary (Corbey and Lanjouw 2013a); (b) factors promoting or maintaining popular ideas about and ‘belief’ in sasquatch; e.g., the role of local reports of sightings and media (including internet) coverage of these, as well as other factors motivating popular interest, including environmental concerns (linked with conceptions of sasquatch as a species that is under threat from habitat loss), opposition to tourist development in wilderness areas, distrust of mainstream science, and conspiracy theories; and (c) views among natural scientists concerning problems with studying sasquatch as an empirical creature, relating, e.g., to the question of whether the (social) organization of science, including the politics of academic advancement, deters scientists from this sort of research.

The study is further developed and results are analysed within a framework of folk zoology (e.g., Forth 2008) and the sociology/anthropology of science (e.g., Atran 1990). At the same time, the research is largely exploratory; and questions remain as to whether any existing theoretical framework adequately accommodates the topic of mystery hominoids. For example, Halpin (1980), referring to academic disciplines appropriate for such a study, argued that because it remains unclear whether ideas about sasquatch are based on known or undiscovered animals or reflect a purely imaginary image, a major problem in understanding the phenomenon is that it falls between the cracks of established disciplines.

The significance of the thesis research lies in its aim of clarifying what sort of figure sasquatch is (e.g., something purely imaginary or something reflecting some kind of experience);

and accordingly why some people, both locals and scientists, are convinced of its phenomenal existence.

## 1.2 Theoretical and methodological aspects

A series of readings into both topical literature and works concerning theory and related methodology in folk zoology and social/cultural anthropology generally show that there are possible theoretical frameworks for the study of mystery hominoids or mystery animals in general, and point to the sorts of field and analytical methods that may be appropriate to such a study. These include: (a) the anthropology of religion, touching on symbolic anthropology; (b) ethnozoology (folk zoology); and (c) the sociology of science.

### (a) Anthropology of religion

On the matter of spirituality, when exploring the ways in which mystery hominoids/sasquatch are comparable to spiritual beings, including people's attitudes to sasquatch, the question arises whether they can be understood as religious phenomena. Mystery hominoids, considered to be extinct or nearly extinct, have received limited attention from anthropologists and scholars, who have implicitly or explicitly treated 'wildmen' as spirits, or supernatural beings (Forth 2012b: 203). However, mystery hominoids are in numerous respects very different from spirits. According to Forth, they differ ontologically from 'spirits,' in that "wildmen and spirits are typically represented in ways that reveal fundamental differences of nature or perceived 'essence'"; furthermore, Forth states that 'however empirically unlikely they may seem as representations of existing or recently existing creatures, powers attributed to 'wildmen' are mostly natural (or physical) rather than supernatural' (Forth 2012b: 203).

According to cognitive anthropologists, whenever people have spoken of spirits, for example, gods, ghosts and demons, these have been subject to counterintuitive representations, which breach basic ‘ontological categories’ (Forth 2012b: 203). Forth elaborates that ‘on the one hand, spiritual beings are conceived to be like humans; they are thought to possess human intelligence, feelings, and motives. On the other, spirits are ‘superhuman’, indeed ‘supernatural’, being capable of performing acts (such as becoming invisible or walking through solid objects) of which humans are quite incapable’ (Forth 2012b: 203).

When it comes to what function ‘imaginary beings’ have in the lives of people who credit these as being real (the spiritual being interpretation), *Minds and Gods* author, Todd Tremlin, has turned to a scientific explanation of religious beliefs and ideas. Drawing on ‘cognitive foundations’ of religion, Tremlin explains,

‘Religious ideas are everywhere... because the class of concepts they encompass are near-perfect examples of culturally successful representations. The gods, devils, ancestors, and angels that anchor religious systems display all the qualities of concepts that are attention grabbing, memorable and highly portable. At the same time, these concepts are not simply striking: just as important to the durability of such ideas is the fact that they align with regular features of cognitive organization; that is they come ‘naturally’ to minds like ours’ (Tremlin 2006: 161).

In keeping with oral tradition, successful and attention-grabbing representations of ‘hairy giants’ that were passed on through oral histories of Native Americans and local settlers in the region, for example, in the Pacific Northwest, have also extended the credibility to sasquatch and have secured it with ‘tracks’ that are ‘far outside the adult human range in size’, adding to ‘Bigfoot’s scientific legitimacy’; the oral histories have maintained that footprints of these ‘hairy

giants' exist in the Pacific Northwest and across the world in the Himalayas (Daegling 2004: 34-35).

From the perspectives of the anthropology of religion and symbolic anthropology, 'sasquatch' may be perceived as somewhat like a spirit, because there is no proof that it has ever actually been seen. On the other hand, it is not spiritual because it is not credited with any supernatural power. According to Forth, spirits are usually 'interpreted anthropologically as reflecting interaction with ordinary human beings, but this necessarily assumes a cognitive transformation that radically transcends empirical human attributes' (Forth 2012a: 13-14).

French-American anthropologist Scott Atran has argued that unlike second-order scientific speculations, 'second-order symbolic cognitions never become fully assimilated to basic knowledge', and they 'retain an element of mystery not just for outsiders but also, though differently, for the believers themselves' (Atran 1990: 219). Atran has stated that, in cognitive terms, this feature means that religious beliefs are always held 'meta-representationally'; and, in sociological terms, they are 'displayed, taught, discussed and re-interpreted as doctrines, dogmas or sacred texts'; basically, given that the 'religious beliefs do not lend themselves to any kind of clear and final comprehension allows their learning, their teaching and their exegeses to go on forever' (Atran 1990: 219).

Atran has extended this explanation to 'mythico-religious beliefs' which are also connected to 'common-sense knowledge,' although they are usually inconsistent with 'common-sense knowledge, but [they do not do so] at random: rather, they dramatically contradict basic common-sense assumptions', for example, by including beliefs about 'invisible' creatures and

creatures which can ‘transform’ themselves at will or who can ‘perceive events that are distant in time or space’ (Atran 1990: 219). According to Atran,

‘This flatly contradicts factual, common-sense assumptions about physical, biological and psychological phenomena. Such dramatic contradictions contribute to making mythico-religious beliefs particularly attention-arresting and memorable. As a result, these beliefs are more likely to be retained and transmitted in a human group than random departures from common sense, and thus to become part of the group’s culture’ (Atran 1990: 219).

On the effect of ‘mythico-religious beliefs’ and the function of ‘symbolism’, Atran has noted that:

“...mythico-religious beliefs...are rooted in basic beliefs, albeit in a ‘dialectical’ way. Thus, within a given religious text or tradition, one might ‘predict that the likelihood of a transformation from one thing into another should decrease as the distance . . . between the [common-sense ontological] categories of these two things increases’ (Kelly and Keil 1985). For instance, the metamorphosis of humans into animals and animals into plants may be more common than that of humans or animals into artifacts. To the extent such violations of category distinctions shake basic notions of ontology they are attention-arresting, hence memorable. [...]

Symbolism...seeks to draw people ever deeper into unfathomable mysteries by pointedly outraging everyday experience. ... Science, however, attempts to augment, rather than bypass, the rational processing of empirical reality. Ultimately, symbolic and scientific treatments of second-order speculations about the empirical world tend to be diametrically opposed” (Atran 1990: 219-220).

On types of analytical methods appropriate for the study of mystery hominoids, in terms of methods, all kinds of anthropology contain a set of assumptions. Closer evaluation of these assumptions is needed, in order to discover how they are justified or not justified. In the case of the anthropology of religion, mystery hominoids are, for instance, considered imaginary beings; and are treated by anthropologists like gods or other folkloric figures.

In the book of essays, *Anthropology and cryptozoology*, social anthropologist Samantha Hurn has taken a relativistic approach to cryptozoology building on the view that a ‘supernatural creature,’ for example, flying dragons, could not exist for some group of people, and the aim of anthropologists is therefore to explain why they are thought really to exist. In her essay, ‘Land of beasts and dragons,’ Hurn notes the ‘precedent for cryptids’ playing a symbolic role in the ‘complex relationships between Wales and England’ in the UK, between ‘internal colony’ (Hechter 1977) and sovereign power: St. George, the patron saint of England, is credited with slaying a dragon, and the Welsh flag portrays the iconic Welsh dragon (*y draig*) which represents the power of past Welsh tribes and the pride and resilience of the present-day people of Wales (Hurn ed 2017b: 204). Drawing on the concept of cryptids existing in the ‘liminal zone’ in academia, Hurn has stated,

‘Dragons, or their ‘known’ palaeontological equivalents, no longer roam the Welsh valleys and hillsides, yet something of *y draig*’s enigmatic ability to mobilise and fortify the nation is retained, or rather reinvented, in contemporary myths surrounding ABC [Alien, or Anomalous, Big Cats—or British big cats, also known as phantom cats and mystery cats] sightings. When viewed in such a light, the ‘reality’ of big cats is arguably less important than their role as trope or archetypal figure in a politically charged narrative concerning the place of marginalized rural communities in a globalized world’ (Hurn ed 2017b: 204).

As opposed to prioritising ‘science’ as the ‘arbiter of truth and the ultimate product of human social development’, Hurn remarks that the “value of so-called ‘ indigenous ontologies ’ which do not necessarily lend themselves to scientific interpretation and analysis, present ‘alternative ways of being in, engaging with and understanding the world’ (Hurn ed 2017a: 7).

In another approach to cryptozoology, Gregory Forth has suggested that we, as anthropologists, need to do both: that is, not only aim to explain why cryptids [or mystery



hominoids such as sasquatch] exist (for certain people), but also to explore how the local image may correspond to an actual animal; and whether the cryptid can be accounted for by an actual creature that is present in the environment. In Forth's 2017 essay, 'Cryptids, classification and categories of cats,' Forth uses local reports and folk zoologists' accounts concerning categories of 'ethno-cryptids', both historical and recent, to highlight another type of 'cryptid,' a mystery wild cat or felid reported by people on the eastern Indonesian island of Flores.

According to Forth, this cat, named *ngo ngoe* (a sub-class of 'wild cats,' *meo witu*), which is reported mostly by hunters who claimed to have killed such animals or caught them in snares, has yet to be identified scientifically but, is recognized by the local Nage people of Flores as a kind different from both domestic cats, *Felis catus* and feral cats. Forth also notes that according to international zoologists (e.g., Monk et al. 1997), *F. catus* is the only felid found on Flores; and, therefore, the existence of a 'third kind, the aforementioned *ngo ngoe* [distinguished in local Nage accounts]' contradicts the view of international zoologists (Forth 2017: 35).

On international and western scientists recognizing the importance of folk descriptions and knowledge, as well as documenting and analysing cryptid categories, Forth elaborates,

'Even if it could be shown that all Florenese cats were *Felis catus*, the existence of *ngo ngoe* as a distinctly named category does not in any way discredit local observation and classification of felids. All evidence suggests that Nage cat classification is solidly grounded in experience and that Nage are quite accurately observing and describing real animals albeit, in one case, of a variety which, according to their own evaluation, is nowadays rarely encountered. [...] their nomenclature reveals what ethnobiologists have called 'overdifferentiation' (Berlin 1973: 268). Yet the taxonomic 'error' with which some Nage might thereby be charged is entirely comparable to the assignment, by western naturalists and international zoologists, of specimens or populations of single felid species to different species [...]. As clear an example as any of such western or international zoological 'error' is... the assignment of what were probably no more than Timorese feral cats to the now discredited taxon *Felis megalotis*. If, on the other hand,

*ngo ngoe* does denote something other than a feral cat and it is the international zoologists who are wrong and Nage folk zoologists who are right– the most likely candidate would ... be the leopard cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*). [...] The evidence of Nage folk zoological discourse is obviously not sufficient to confirm the leopard cat's occurrence on Flores. However, Nage descriptions are compelling, and do indeed suggest, at least as a hypothetical possibility, the presence on the island of a felid species other than *Felis catus*' (Forth 2017: 48).

Forth emphasizes that over the last century, throughout Flores, local reports have consistently preceded documentation of giant lizards (that is, Komodo dragons), by international zoologists; therefore, Forth asks, why can the local people in Flores not be right about leopard cats as well? Forth also maintains that 'Florenese folk mammalogy should provide justification for further zoological investigation in the field. Too often reports by non-western observers of creatures unrecognised by international zoology have been dismissed as unfounded and attributed to beliefs in imaginary or supernatural beings' (Forth 2017: 49).

Noting that the people of Flores acknowledge the ontological distinction between 'natural' and 'supernatural' beings, Forth draws on the 'principle of Occam's razor' and the significance of testing and exploring the 'empirical validity' of folk taxonomies. Forth states,

'The *ngo ngoe* clearly falls into what, for Florenese, is the 'natural' category, just as do local representations of Komodo dragons. The fact that the hominoid figures I have labeled 'wildmen' do so as well (Forth 2012a) possibly complicates the issue, but it by no means nullifies the distinction.

Rather than a reference to a 'mythical' creature subserving some indeterminable symbolic or narrative function, the Nage category *ngo ngoe* is a product of a classification of animal kinds grounded in experience of empirical species. The referent is either large feral cats of a certain appearance or an unrecorded felid species; any other interpretation, and particularly one which construes the reference as a supernatural or imaginary being, not only goes against both ethnographic and zoological evidence but fails to observe the principle of Occam's razor. Whether they ultimately refer to hitherto undocumented species or to specimens of known species erroneously construed as a

different kind, cryptid categories like *ngo ngoe* provide anthropologists with a special challenge. But they also provide a special opportunity, a privileged context in which to explore and test the empirical validity of folk taxonomies. And insofar as they do not prove to be invalid, they can be significant for international zoology as well' (Forth 2017: 49).

In terms of common anthropological assumptions, cognitive anthropologist Pascal Boyer argues that:

“One of the factors that hamper a proper description of cognitive diversity is what may be called *theologistic bias* in cultural anthropology. This consists in the assumption that the religious representations of a given group, ‘culture,’ or ‘society’ constitute an integrated and consistent set of abstract principles. To say that they are integrated implies that the representation found in various discourse registers or contexts are in fact connected and constitute an overall system. To say that they are consistent implies that the system in question contains no unintended contradiction. The ‘theologistic’ bias leads to anthropological descriptions, in which religious beliefs are presented as consisting of shared, context-free general statements, such as ‘the spirits dwell in the rivers’, ‘the ancestors are invisible’, and so on” (Boyer 1994: 40).

Boyer further establishes five main reasons why such descriptions are misleading, including that ‘many religious representation do not consist of general principles, but of memories of singular episodes’; and “individual variations and skepticism concerning the basic tenets of a religion are generally taken as some kind of unimportant ‘noise’ in religious representations” (Boyer 1994: 40-41). Boyer further explains that, ‘cultural representations...are constrained by actual cognitive processes, not by abstract considerations of theological consistency or optimal rationality’ (Boyer 1994: 169).

Regarding the concept of how sasquatch or bigfoot arose, a historical review into what people, especially academics, have said about sasquatch can be conducted not just by looking at the literature on sasquatch and related creatures that has come out over the last 70 years or so, since WWII, but also by considering how some views have changed on differences between humans and non-human animals. Philosopher and anthropologist Raymond Corbey has shown how racism has frequently been argued on the basis of speciesist assumptions, especially in the ‘humanist post-World War II United Nations discourse on human rights’. In the biological and anthropological thinking of the period, Corbey traced these speciesist assumptions to various roots, ‘from European metaphysics, middle-class cultural attitudes, and eventually, evolution’ (Corbey and Lanjouw, eds. 2013a: 5). The subsequent ‘Great Ape Project’, which claimed moral respectability for all great apes—that is to say, the ‘Great Ape Project’ of 1993, which proclaimed an extension of the rights of human apes to non-human apes only—ran into a similar problem (Corbey 2013b: 67).

Corbey has also noted the (‘implicit’, ‘silent’, ‘taken-for-granted’) exclusion of the status of non-human species in contemporary moral, as well as legal and political, philosophy and discourse; instead, prevailing discussions (on topics of, for example, ‘multiculturalism’ or cultural ‘others’) by recent philosophers (e.g. Charles Taylor, Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth) have been ‘operat[ing] in the social contract wake’ of, for example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Basically, Corbey argues that more serious consideration should be given to ‘ritual recognition’ and ‘ritual articulation’ of the status of non-human species, from an anthropological perspective as well as through the neo-Durkheimian tradition of research on categorization and ritual (Corbey 2013b: 72-73).

As it pertains to semantics, according to philosopher David Livingstone Smith, ‘the epistemic authority of science does not extend to judgments about what creatures are human because ‘human’ is a folk category, not a scientific one’ (Smith 2013: 41). Smith remarks that ‘[c]lassifying an organism as a specimen of *Homo sapiens* carries no such moral weight, because scientific taxonomies do not in themselves have normative implications. They only acquire such implications when folk taxonomies are superimposed on them’ (Smith 2013:42). Basically, the ‘gerrymandered’ folk category of ‘human’ and the biological [scientific] category *Homo sapiens* are an ‘imperfect fit’ with moral implications because attributing ‘humanity’ to a creature carries ‘immense moral weight’, and denying it to a creature would diminish its ‘moral status’ (Smith 2013: 41-42).

On the ‘relative worth’ of non-human animals (versus creatures classified as ‘human beings’), Smith touches on the work of the German Enlightenment philosopher, Immanuel Kant:

“As Kant famously articulated the principle in 1798, human beings are ‘altogether different in rank and dignity from things, such as irrational animals, with which one may deal and dispose at one’s discretion’ (Kant, 1974, p. 9). He assured his readers seven years later in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* that non-human animals ‘have only a relative worth, as means, and are therefore called things’ in contrast to creatures classified as human beings, who are ends in themselves (Kant 1993: p. 30)” (Smith 2013: 42).

From a cognitive ethological view, biologist Marc Bekoff has stated that the emotional and moral lives of ‘amazing and magnificent beings’ or non-human animals—targeted as ‘lowly’ animals—are worthy of moral concern and of being valued. While highlighting the statement by Charles Darwin (1987 [1838]), that ‘Man in his arrogance thinks of himself a great work, worth the interposition of a deity. [Yet it is] more humble and, I believe, true to consider him created

from animals' (Charles Darwin, 1871; cf. Rachels 1990: 1, 226, 236), Bekoff (2013:15) argues for the importance of animals deserving better lives. According to Bekoff, despite 'lingering and rapidly declining skepticism,' in 2012, a group of neuroscientists gathered at the University of Cambridge to sign the 'Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness,' a declaration document intended on recognizing animals as 'truly conscious,' and to help 'radically' improve' animal welfare (Bekoff 2013: 15).

Zoologist and psychologist Annette Lanjouw, whose work has involved African ape conservation in Central Africa since 1985, has stated that since the early twenty-first century, a 'fundamental shift has taken place in understanding in one significant respect: the vital importance of biodiversity conservation for human survival' (Lanjouw 2013: 198). When it comes to 'charismatic mega-fauna', for example, the great apes (as well as elephants, canids, felids, cetaceans), Lanjouw has pointed out that some taxa more than others are more able to draw attention due to their emotional appeal and relatedness to humans (Lanjouw 2013: 200-201). The great apes living in the world's tropical forests, which are the areas richest in biodiversity, are 'umbrella species' (or 'keystone species') that have the ability to attract attention for critical tropical ecosystems (Lanjouw 2013: 201).

Drawing on a sasquatch logo created by Ben Crane for the Rocky Mountain House and Area brochure with the caption, 'Welcome to our backyard: Please enjoy it and respect it,' (The Mountainer: 2015/16), 'sasquatch' may also serve as a barometer of environmental quality. Anthropologist Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence has provided some insight into another scenario, dealing with bears, but also pertaining to environmental quality and natural integrity. Lawrence has stated that for ecologists, the bear is considered 'to be a "barometer of environmental quality, because it cannot survive where man has upset the ecosystem and thus it [the bear] represents the

harmony of the wilderness world' (Lawrence 1982: 251). Concerning another kind of connection between humans and non-human animals, there has also been an unofficial Mormon belief that 'Bigfoot' descends from Cain (Reeve and Wagenen, eds. 2011: 12); this belief is unusual because, according to the Bible, Cain is supposed to be one ancestor of all mankind; another ancestor (i.e., the son of Adam and Eve) was Seth. Abel, Cain's brother whom Cain murdered, is not described as having any children. So linking Bigfoot with Cain might suggest that Mormons consider 'sasquatch' more human-like than animal-like.

(b) Ethnozoology

Ethnozoology concerns or takes as its starting point an 'intuitive "general purpose" zoological knowledge' (Forth 2008: 5), and there are certain animal categories and representations in zoology to consider when it comes to the urban [Western] framework. According to Forth, 'wildman' categories, often represented as including creatures that are extinct or becoming extinct, have raised questions for the study of classification, including ethnozoological classification, due to the question of what kind of entity, category, or thing—empirical or non-empirical—are (or were) hairy hominoids? (Forth 2012b: 203). In the first chapter of his 1958 book, Heuvelmans describes zoologists as skeptics:

'Most zoologists are skeptical about the possibilities of discovering new species of large animals, and some of them do not, with legitimate scientific skepticism, keep an open mind until the species is proven to exist, but categorically deny that it can possibly do so until they have been forcibly proved wrong. Their obstinacy is based on three possibilities: the world has now been completely explored; no new animals have been discovered for a long time—at least not since the okapi; and many of the animals alleged to exist are fossil species and therefore long extinct. All three propositions are fallacies, as I hope to show in the first three chapters of this book' (Heuvelmans 1958: 25).

Forth breaks down animal categories as subject to two sorts of representation:

1. Ethnozoology [folk zoology]: Defined as a comparative investigation of human-animal relations incorporating local or indigenous taxonomy and classification, economy and ecology, and ritual, myth, and other symbolic forms. ‘Where this pertains to classification, its product is an ethnotaxonomy’ (Forth 2008: 5).
2. Cognitive anthropology: “[Cognitive anthropology] is symbolic knowledge, prospectively contributing to a ‘symbolic classification’ (Forth 2004: 63) and comprising counter-intuitive mythical and religious ideas specially learned and often deliberately transmitted in the course of enculturation (Atran 1990: 219). Accordingly, people can have a detailed empirical knowledge of an animal kind and still ascribe it all sorts of fantastic qualities.” (Forth 2008: 5).

Other key terms include:

*Ethnozoological approach*, which involves ‘viewing the representations, heuristically, as possible components of local environments (or historical environments) and considering categories of unattested hominoids as part of a general scheme of folk zoological (or, in some cases, folk palaeontological) knowledge’ (Forth 2008: 5).

*Folk biology*, which is the “local or ‘vernacular’ knowledge of animals and plants.” (Forth 2012a: 13), and *Folkbiology* (with the two words deliberately compounded), which includes ‘some of the principal features of the common-sense background to natural history, focusing on how people the world over ordinarily classify locally perceived living kinds’ (Atran 1990: 5).



*Ethnobiology* is a broad term that also includes plants. According to Atran, ethnobiology is a ‘branch of cognitive anthropology concerned with studying the ways members of a culture apprehend and utilize the local flora and fauna. A significant contrast comes to light both in regard to the ordinary categorization of artifacts and the extraordinary scientific classification of living things’ (Atran 1990: 5).

*Ethnobiologists* are ‘anthropologists whose specialty it is to explore, analyse, and explain indigenous biological knowledge.... Their research...involves a detailed investigation of local fauna and flora, in some instances including the collection and preservation of specimens, not only for use in questioning on indigenous nomenclature, classification, and the like, but for the purposes of scientific identification’ (Forth 2012a: 13). As Forth also points out, in contrast to ethnobiologists thus defined, sociocultural anthropologists “usually have no such advantage, and even informants’ unequivocal claims that, for example, only the feathers of a bird locally known as X can be used in a certain ceremony, can leave an author with a practically insuperable problem of translation and often a glaringly incomplete analysis (i.e., ‘The so-and-so state that the feathers effect the transfer of the souls of recently deceased persons to the afterworld, and that these can only come from the X bird, which I was unable to identify’)” (Forth 2012a: 13).

*Cryptozoology* is the ‘study of animals not recognized by scientific zoology’ (Forth 2008: 4). Basically, cryptozoology is the study of animals whose existence is uncertain, or the study of an animal that crops up in odd places (e.g., mountain lions in Florida) (Eberhart 2002: 154; Forth 2017: 32). Literally, cryptozoology is ‘the science of hidden animals’ (Regal 2012: 22). Also

touching on cryptozoology, and also referring to mountain lions, Napier notes how the ‘American Puma or mountain lion is widespread from British Columbia to Patagonia in quite large numbers. Yet it is so elusive that few people have seen it in the wild, and fewer still have been able to photograph it. Nevertheless, in spite of its retiring habits, the mountain lion is well-known to science’ (Napier 1972: see 171) and so in this sense is not a ‘cryptid’.

*Hominoid* refers ‘simply to any humanlike being. Although the term can be applied to anthropoid apes, it is not meant to include attested non-human primates. At the same time, the label does not imply any prejudgement as to whether possible empirical referents are human or not human. ‘Hominoid’ is not to be confused with ‘hominid’ or ‘hominin’, terms with quite precise meanings in scientific taxonomy, both denoting zoological categories that include the species *Homo sapiens*’ (Forth 2008: 3). On the preferred use of the word ‘hominin’ in recent work, Forth states, ‘I follow newer taxonomic usage and employ ‘hominin’ to refer to anatomically modern humans, extinct species (or ‘chrono-species’) of the genus *Homo* and the extinct genera *Australopithecus* and *Paranthropus*. In an older usage, this grouping was called ‘hominids’, a usage I avoid partly because of its similarity to ‘hominoid’ (Forth 2008: 3).

Explaining his use of the phrase ‘hairy hominoids’, Forth goes on to state: ‘As a qualifier of ‘hominoid’, the adjective ‘hairy’ is crucial. The local categories that form my subjects typically comprise creatures described as hairy-bodied. Since the focus of [Forth’s book] is moreover on hominoids regarded as *smaller* than local humans, there would in many cases be little to distinguish them, physically at least, from the host of generally glabrous fairies, dwarfs, and other diminutive figures typically attributed with supernatural powers that populate folk

cosmologies the world over. Occasionally, I discuss creatures otherwise resembling hairy hominoids which are not hirsute, or are not unequivocally so. I treat these, however, only where relevant to my overall comparative purpose' (Forth 2008: 3).

Referring to his own work, Forth also discusses issues meriting empirical investigation of categories of hominoids:

'I had the opportunity to initiate comparative research into categories of hominoids recognized by various cultures, using Southeast Asian exemplars as my focus. The main outcome has been a recent book (Forth 2008). One incentive for pursuing the topic was the fact that such figures have largely been ignored by anthropologists. Wildmen have received somewhat more attention from historians and folklorists, who have mostly been concerned with the European variety while making occasional comparative reference to yeti and sasquatch. But like anthropologists, they typically assume that the categories refer to entirely imaginary beings, as indeed do most natural scientists, the large majority of whom do not consider the reputed existence of such creatures as an issue meriting any sort of empirical investigation' (Forth 2012b: 201).

Forth explains how a very different approach characterizes cryptozoology, the 'science of hidden animals':

'Cryptozoologists—many of whom are trained zoologists with other research agendas besides cryptozoology—start from the position that reports of creatures which appear not to fit known species, rather than being the products of fantasy may reflect species that have yet to be 'discovered', documented, and thus recognized by modern science. However, cryptozoology too often displays a western bias, and also what might be called a 'visual' bias, relying largely on the accounts of putative observations by Europeans or Euro-Americans. Accordingly, cryptozoologists have paid little attention to categories and representations of non-western peoples, and being mostly focused on what are reported as contemporary or recent sightings of 'crypto-species', they have insufficiently considered how the categories figure in the oral traditions and folk zoological knowledge of local people, especially as these could inform interaction and relations between humans and some empirical creatures, including creatures that have since disappeared from a given region. Of course, in one sense, they can hardly be blamed for this, in view

of the scant attention given to such categories by ethnographers and cultural anthropologists' (Forth 2012b: 201).

In terms of conclusive identification of 'sasquatch', using [or finding] 'DNA' and 'physical evidence' presents some challenges to physical anthropology, especially without a 'sasquatch' body, or 'type specimen'. Concerning DNA analysis, methods and samples have been highly criticized; for example, a human geneticist at University of Oxford, Bryan Sykes, reviewed and disagreed with the web-based 'De Novo' manuscript (put out by veterinarian Melba Ketchum, involved in a 'Sasquatch Genome Project') that described 'a series of DNA tests performed on various tissue samples attributed to the North American sasquatch' (Sykes 2016: 157-158). Sykes pointed out that the 'nuclear DNA sequencing is not as one might expect from a good human sample. In my opinion the much more likely reason is that these are highly degraded and contaminated samples, despite the author's reason to argue otherwise' (Sykes 2016: 159).

In a news piece titled, 'Sorry sasquatch fans- it's bison hair (CBC News 2005)', a hair sample found near a sasquatch sighting in Yukon turned out to be the material from a bison, not the legendary bigfoot. In the article, a wildlife geneticist at University of Alberta, David Coltman, stated that, 'It also bore little similarity to other groups of mammals such as primates or carnivores'. The article went on to say that, 'The hair sample gained worldwide media attention after a group of Teslin residents said they found it after sighting a sasquatch, or bigfoot, near the community earlier this month. Witnesses claimed to have spotted a large, furry, humanlike creature late one night that left behind broken tree branches, a large footprint, and the hair clump. ... [According to Coltman], [n]ot only was the hair from a bison, it was from a long dead animal. ... the DNA was highly degraded and of very low quality, and was either exposed for a long

period of time to moisture and sunlight, or came from a hide that had been tanned' (CBC News 2005).

In a publication in *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*, Coltman also explains:

'There are several possible explanations for these results. First, as suggested from molecular analysis of hair from a suspected Yeti, the Sasquatch might be a highly elusive ungulate that exhibits surprising morphological convergence with primates. Alternately, the hair might have originated from a real bison and be unrelated to the Sasquatch. Parsimony would favor the second interpretation, in which case, the identity and taxonomy of this enigmatic and elusive creature remains a mystery' (Coltman and Davis 2006: 60-61).

(c) Sociology of science

There are certain considerations when it comes to the acceptance of the whole idea of 'sasquatch'—and of those who regard sasquatch to be a natural species and have set out to investigate it.

Regarding the status of legendary hominoids such as the *ebu gogo* of Flores Island, Forth has noted that they are certainly not spirits as they do not possess supernatural powers; and, 'by the same token, they are very different from mystically powerful creatures like the cock-headed serpent [the creature the Nage refer to as *manu ke'o* is a serpent with the head of a cock that is credited with the ability to fly, supported by a further claim that the large serpent also has wings]' (Forth 2012a: 14). It should be mentioned that the *ebu gogo* have been described as extinct, unlike sasquatch, which may be 'directly encountered' in the local environment. In the case of 'sasquatch', the difficulty is that no sasquatch body has been found; and without a specimen, 'sasquatch' cannot be securely documented by scientists.

Forth has stated that while legendary hominoids reported on Flores, Indonesia, are similarly represented as ‘natural rather than supernatural beings, they are further described as rare, elusive, and inhabiting places difficult to access’ (Forth 2012a: 14). Forth has argued that while the skeptic might find this rarity and inaccessibility all very convenient, the solution may lie in another direction, which ‘involves hypothetically identifying Florense hominoids that may no longer be present in the local environment, but which might have been present sufficiently recently to be retained as a largely accurate representation of something empirical’. Here Forth is partly referring to *Homo floresiensis*, a hominin whose possible extinction date is inferred only from palaeontological evidence pertaining to a single site—the discovery site in western Flores (Forth 2012a: 14).

On the credibility of the hominoid images discovered in ethnographic fieldwork, Forth states:

‘From the ethnographic side, further investigation and analysis over the last three years potentially resolve certain problems posed by features of indigenous representations of hominoids—including their lacking any sort of technology and certain dietary habits—which do not clearly match the archaeological evidence for *Homo floresiensis* and might otherwise reduce the credibility of the images. For example, seeming fanciful references to Florense hominoids stealing and consuming wood charcoal, in connection with their reputed further consumption of potentially toxic foodstuffs, are rendered more believable, even realistic, by reference to comparable practices by modern primates and humans (Forth 2011a)’ (Forth 2012a: 15).

On the understanding of other lines of anthropological enquiry regarding hominoid images, Forth explains that an identification of a putative relic described as a hominoid skull as part of the cranium of a macaque, for example, an identification which ‘suggests fakery as a component of local claims about recently surviving hominoids, ...does not bode well for further

study. ... Nevertheless, the determination does at least point to another line of anthropological enquiry in understanding the images, and one which retains an empirical focus and does not entail their complete reduction to immaterial spirits or imaginary beings. If people are passing off monkey bones as hominoid remains, then rather than proving that hominoids are nothing more than macaques, the deception conforms to the commonly expressed local conviction that, especially in their facial appearance, the hominoids resemble monkeys' (Forth 2012a: 16).

According to Forth, the interpretation of Florenese images [such as of hairy hominoids or wildmen in eastern Indonesia – Forth 2008: 8] as 'reflecting past encounters between human and equally empirical creatures has inspired little interest among sociocultural anthropologists' with the entire topic having been largely ignored perhaps because 'most anthropologists would dismiss the images as essentially fictional representations of creatures that exist only in the "social imagination" of Florenese villages and which are therefore to be explained as cultural constructs relating to (thus far unidentified) social processes, values, or relationships' (Forth 2012a: 16).

On finding physical remains and excavation, Forth emphasizes an important point for the sociocultural anthropologist to remember. Writing about a burial mound in East Manggarai region of western Flores, which is claimed to contain the remains of hominoid creatures locally known as *ngiung* (Forth 2011), he remarks:

'...excavation may yet reveal some concrete basis for the local legend and, even if the evidence indicates that nothing was ever buried there, the result should illuminate aspects of hominoid representations that can further determine their character. As a sociocultural anthropologist, my primary concern is after all not physical remains but cultural images, and evidence relevant to this kind of interest can take many forms' (Forth 2012a: 16).

Forth further explains his concern with species not recognized by international science when he states that: ‘the most parsimonious explanation of Florenese hominoid images is local experience, historical or recent, of a population of so far unidentified creatures corresponding closely to the local descriptions. In large part, this interpretation, and the sort of further research it projects, might be called “cryptozoological,” that is, concerned with the investigation of species not recognized by international science. For this reason alone, some will immediately consider it suspect’ (Forth 2012a: 16). Forth further explains that the kind of research collaboration outlined above ‘represents a rare opportunity for substantial cooperation among anthropological sub-disciplines that can build on theoretical and methodological knowledge contributed by practitioners of several sorts of anthropology’, including cultural and biological anthropology (Forth 2012a: 16).

Concerning views on why some things such as mystery hominoids do not get investigated, Daegling has suggested that since 1958, with the growing popularity of sasquatch in the media, the accuracy of accounts in bigfoot research have been questionable, due to misinterpretation or hoaxers (Daegling 2004: 33). For example, as science historian Brian Regal has noted, scientists thought Grover Krantz was ‘mistaken’ when it came to his ‘detailed microscopic anatomy’ of tracks and ‘dermal ridges’ that he claimed were evidence of sasquatch existence. Furthermore, Krantz’ primary suppliers of casts, Ivan Marx and Paul Freeman, stood accused of hoaxing prints (Regal: 137-138). Daegling did however consider a creature nicknamed ‘Jacko,’—‘hairy beast’ that could fit the description of a ‘sasquatch [‘jacko’ was a term used to refer to monkeys or apes at that time]’, and which was captured in 1884 near Yale, British Columbia—to be a real creature, perhaps a ‘wayward chimpanzee’ that escaped P.T. Barnum’s Circus (Daegling 2004: 66-67). However, it should be noted that Yale was a rugged



frontier and newly formed township in 1884; and at this time there were no circuses (or zoos) in British Columbia (Forth 2008: 212).

In *Describing Species*, the geophysicist and commissioner for the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN), Judith E. Winston, has outlined the description of species, ultimately falling under the ‘rules of zoological (ICZN) [or botanical (ICBN)] nomenclature’:

‘A species becomes known in the scientific sense when a Latin binomial, a name consisting of two parts (a genus term and a species term), and a description are published in the scientific literature [...]’ (Winston 1999: 9).

As part of taxonomic procedure, ‘types’ in taxonomy (‘taxonomy’ being a subdivision of ‘systematics’) ‘make naming organisms stable by tying a published name to an actual specimen’ (Winston 1999: 104). Of a number of kinds of ‘type materials’ that are recognized, one example is a ‘holotype’. According to Winston, a ‘holotype’ is defined as ‘a single specimen used by an author, either the only specimen he found or one of several, but the only one designated as a type. When people talk about the type, they are referring to this single specimen’ (Winston 1999: 104).

Referring to large marine animals and marine inhabitants that may be ‘unknown’, Winston has stated,

‘Even in well-studied marine areas such as the seas around the British Isles, that have had scientific attention since Linnaeus’s day, new species are still being discovered. A plot of the number of new marine species described per year between 1757 and 1992 showed that curves for a number of small-bodied groups (e.g., polychaetes, copepods, and nematodes) still haven’t leveled off, indicating that a large number of species still remain to be described (Costello et al. 1996). At the same time, many large marine animals (such as the Mediterranean monk seal, the coelacanth, and the Hong Kong pink dolphin) are

approaching the brink of extinction. We tend to think that unknown species must be microscopic in size or cryptic in habitat, but this is not necessarily true' (Winston 1999: 5-6).

In terms of find new species of primates, Winston also remarks,

'We might also expect that we would at least know all of our closest relatives, the primates, by now, yet in 1990 a new species of primate, the black-faced lion tamarin, was discovered in a densely populated area near São Paulo, Brazil (Lorini and Persson 1990). As one primatologist put it, this was "almost like finding a major new species in the suburbs of Los Angeles" (R. Mittermeier, quoted in Anonymous 1990:20)." (Winston 1999: 7).

When it comes to 'sasquatch', according to Meldrum, even with footage of the Patterson-Gimlin film—a short film shot in 1967, in Northern California, of an unidentified subject which the filmmakers said was a 'bigfoot'—there is no conclusive evidence, due to the absence of a body:

"The Patterson-Gimlin film did not bring a speedy resolution to the mystery of the sasquatch... In fact, it made very little lasting impact on the scientific experts of the day, in the absence of a body or some bones. The years that followed yielded no conclusive physical evidence, no type specimen [or holotype] required by hard science, and sasquatch remained stuck in the company of assorted legendary 'monsters' and sundry occult subjects" (Meldrum 2006: 21).

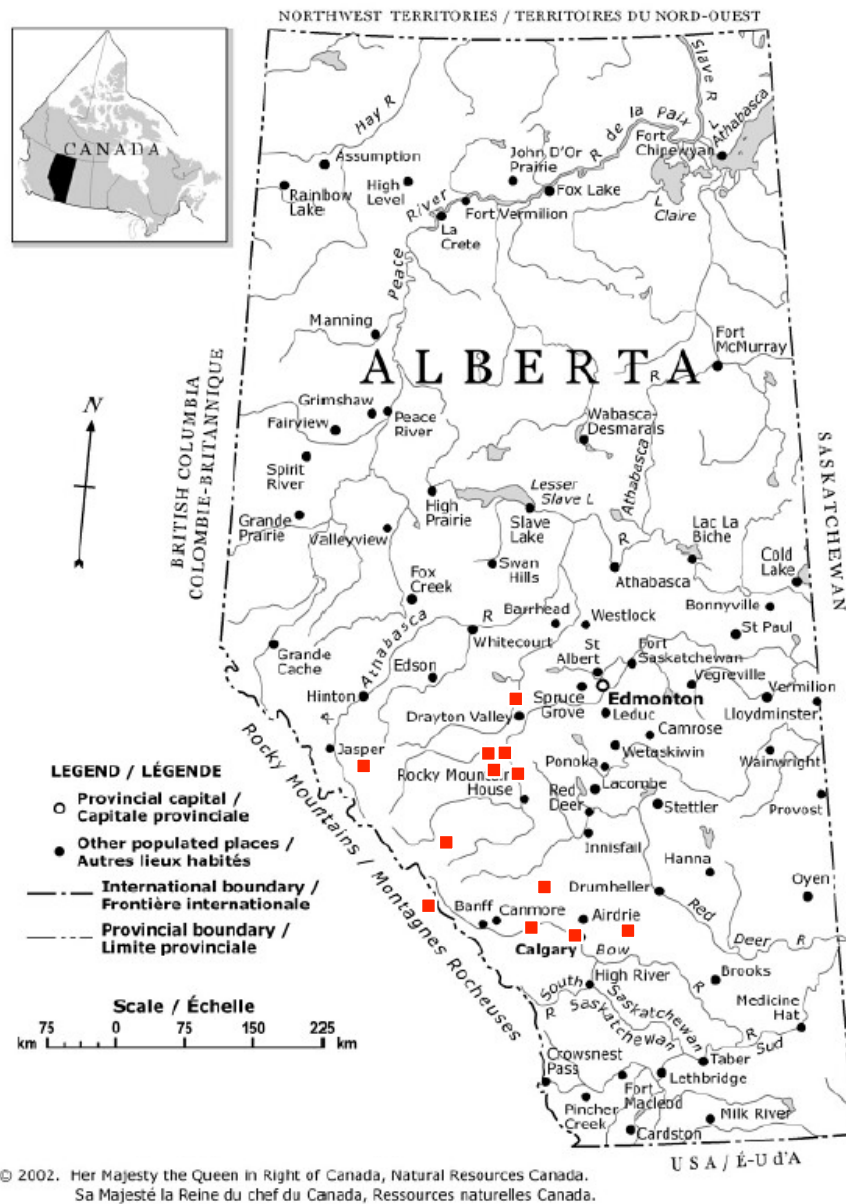
In the field of biological-physical anthropology and palaeontology, slim scientific evidence (of mystery hominoids) has come from investigations by Krantz, Sykes, and Meldrum, for example, or by way of *Gigantopithecus*, whose discovery was based on only a couple of teeth (Heuvelmans 1958: 151-152). *Homo floresiensis*, a presumably extinct species of hominin discovered in 2013 and scientifically documented in 2014, has a type specimen in the remains of

a single individual dubbed LBI. There is however a question of whether the local image of *ebu gogo* (the small Indonesian ‘wildman’ figure as conveyed especially in legends) might reflect *Homo floresiensis*. (Forth 2008: 7). Comparisons have been made between ‘sasquatch’ and *Gigantopithecus blacki* [viewed as a type specimen for sasquatch] (Meldrum 2006: 101). An important difference, of course, is that *Homo floresiensis* and the image named *ebu gogo* are found on the same relatively small island, whereas *Gigantopithecus* evidence all comes from Asia, and sasquatch is a North American image.

A final note concerning the nature of science relates to the idea of ‘proof’. As Austrian philosopher Karl Popper reminds us ‘...our knowledge can only be finite while our ignorance must necessarily be infinite’ (Popper 2002: 38). Popper has argued that we can never prove things by searching for positive instances; rather, we can only disprove a proposition, and all this requires is finding a single negative instance. For example, the proposition ‘sasquatches do not exist’ could be disproven by finding a single sasquatch. What this argument suggests, therefore, is that rather than ‘proof’, the key concept is probability; specifically, how probable is the existence of sasquatch as an existing natural species.

The following chapters will explore general ideas, opinions, and experience of both academic and local informants, as well as what people generally know about the topic of sasquatch. **Chapter two** explores the ‘sasquatch concept;’ how it arose, how it is treated, as well as some challenges to it; this methodological question is also linked with field ‘methods’. The chapter further delves into popular conceptions of sasquatch revealed during ethnographic fieldwork among research informants. **Chapter three** discusses what people think about searching for the existence of sasquatch and ‘physical evidence’. **Chapter four** examines local accounts of sasquatch as well as theories proposed by scientists. **Chapter five** explores the

regional and practical applications of sasquatch sightings (see Figure 1) including the motivation (e.g., environmental concerns, distrust of mainstream science) possibly underlying the concept of sasquatch. **Chapter six** reviews hominoids and wildmen around the world, as well as the place of sasquatch and other cryptids in popular culture; and **Chapter seven** presents conclusions.



■ Estimated site of mystery hominoid encounter(s) per informant(s)

Figure 1. Twelve mystery hominoid encounter sites

Source: Figure 1 (map created by Amira Arshad)

## Chapter 2: ‘Sasquatch concept’: history, methods and popular conceptions of ‘sasquatch’

### 2.1 Historical overview of the ‘sasquatch concept’

The sasquatch is an ape- or hominid-like creature that is said to exist primarily in different regions of North America, though sometimes also in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia and South America (Loxton and Prothero 2013:71). Sightings of things possibly corresponding to the image of sasquatch, also known as ‘bigfoot,’ have been reported since the 1800s in regions such as the Pacific Northwest, northern California, and across an expanse eastwards through to the Rockies and Oregon (Lett 1997: 72; Meldrum 2006: 181, 191). Although no known fossils of sasquatch have been found, a number of anthropologists, for example American anthropologist Grover Krantz, have sought to legitimize the sasquatch as a legitimate field of inquiry. Krantz’s theory is that sasquatch descended from *Gigantopithecus*, an Asian fossil primate (Regal 2011: 9).

Mainstream scientific thinking (in which researchers agree to existing scientific theories, not departing significantly from orthodox theories) has held that these ‘man-like monsters’ do not exist. Some scientists (i.e., natural scientists and physical/biological anthropologists) and other academics, however, have been motivated to pursue sasquatch nonetheless. In fact, certain scientists have put their careers on the line and have been criticized for associating with amateurs, including those with popular views of sasquatch. One popular author, ‘Eric Norman’ (one of many pseudonyms of writer Brad Steiger), however, stated in his book *Abominable snowman* ([Norman] 1969: 22), that scientists were out of touch and needed to move out from behind their laboratories and textbooks to take a ‘penetrating’ look at ‘man-like monsters’ (Regal 2011:4).

The sasquatch is generally described as a ‘hairy’ ape-human hominoid, two to three metres tall, bipedal, with unusually large foot tracks measuring up to approximately forty centimetres long (Forth 2008: 207). The sasquatch is further purported to be a very large solitary ‘wild man,’ generally active at night, that inhabits temperate environments such as Canada’s British Columbian or the American Pacific Northwestern forests (Meldrum 2006: 187-88).

‘Sasquatch’ (derived from the Halkomelem word, *sásq’ets*, meaning ‘wild men’), also known as Bigfoot in North America, and other hairy wildmen such as Yeti and Almasti, have generally been depicted as ‘unattractive’ and ‘smelly;’ and not particularly sexually appealing, although the Yeti and the Almasty ‘wild woman’, Zana, have occasionally been described as having intercourse with humans and having had offspring (Forth 2008: 268, Regal 2011: 8, and Press 2013). Regarding their hairiness, it may be worth noting that, according to symbolic anthropological theories of this quality, wild man hair and their hairy bodies could be interpreted as socially excessive and negatively sanctioned, as thus as socially disapproved symbols of wildness and lack of social orderliness or control (Forth 2008: 262).

‘Jacko’, an actually smaller but still robust hairy wild man mentioned in Chapter 1, was among the earliest sightings of a creature called ‘half-man and half-beast’. In 1884, newspapers reported the individual they came to call ‘Jacko’, found lying near railway tracks in British Columbia’s Fraser Canyon. It is important to note that ‘sasquatch’ was not a term in use at the time, and that Jacko was dubbed a ‘young sasquatch’ only much later on. More than this, the image and representation of ‘sasquatch’ (or mystery hominoid) had not yet developed; thus the reputed observers could not refer what they said they saw to any familiar category. It was described in the report (*Daily Colonist*, Victoria, British Columbia, 4th July, 1884) as something like a ‘gorilla’, but also as ‘half man and half beast’. According to the report, Jacko was an

essentially speechless creature who could only ‘half-bark or half-growl’ (Forth 2008: 211). However, in 1869, thus before ‘Jacko’, an American hunter reported seeing a ‘gorilla or wildman’, which ‘whistled and played with burning sticks from a hunter’s fire’, about 32 kilometres south of Grayson, California (Green 1973: 5). Similar to Jacko, this ‘disproportionately broad,’ dark (brown and cinnamon-haired) hairy hominoid was about the same size and height, having been about 1.5 metres tall (Forth 2008: 213); ‘Jacko’ was described as 1.4 metres tall, thus not much smaller. Interestingly, therefore, in neither case does the smaller ‘wild man’ measure up to the image of the gigantic sasquatch that is usually reported today.

To date, sightings of sasquatch have remained a mystery. According to physical anthropologist David Daegling, the accounts of sasquatch, or ‘Bigfoot’, have been exhaustive—for example, with regard to their frequency in popular culture (film, TV, advertising, literature), reports of supposed sightings, and use in tourism campaigns—and have grown in media popularity since 1958. Daegling pointed out not only that accounts of sasquatch have been on the rise since 1958 but that the accuracy of these accounts has been quite problematic due to hoaxing, fabrication, and ‘innocent’ misinterpretation (Daegling 2004: 33). Daegling did, however, consider the ‘juvenile sasquatch,’ Jacko, to be a real creature, but as noted earlier dismissed it, possibly as a wayward chimpanzee or gorilla that escaped from P.T. Barnum’s Circus (Daegling 2004: 66-67). What happened to this creature is unknown. Speculation has included ‘Jacko’ dying at sea since he would first have to be taken to the BC coast, as the Canadian Pacific railway running east was still in progress in 1884; or being acquired by PT Barnum and ending up as a sideshow attraction (Forth 2008: 212).

Another mystery surrounding sasquatch is its North American habitat, where no known fossils of higher primates have been found (Bindernagel 2010: xi). According to American



anthropologist James Lett, if non-human hominoids were to be found living in the Pacific Northwest, then our anthropological understanding of primate evolution is inadequate; indeed extraordinarily incomplete, and questionable (Lett 1997: 68). However, physical anthropologist Jeff Meldrum has argued that, although Old World (African, Asian, European) habitats show some marked seasonality in food availability, rainfall, and temperature, these features do not mean that the more pronounced variations in western North American temperate forests would not suit apes, or sasquatch. Meldrum maintained that to assume apes rely on a uniform and constant habitat is an oversimplified view and ignores fossil records, which have largely indicated the evolutionary history of apes in temperate and subtropical forests in Eurasia (Meldrum 2006: 188).

Regarding diet, several accounts (by ‘eye witnesses,’ according to Meldrum) have indicated that sasquatch is an omnivore feeding on everything from roots and berries to deer and elk. Field biologist Bindernagel added that the sasquatch could also potentially feed on shellfish, marine worms, terrestrial invertebrates, and other forms of animal protein around the west coast and southern Oregon beaches (Meldrum 2006: 188-191).

In keeping with oral tradition, previous oral histories, passed on by indigenous peoples and the local settlers in the region, have provided some credibility to sasquatch. For example, Native American oral histories (and oral histories by others, including local Himalayans) have maintained that footprints of these ‘hairy giants’ exist in the Pacific Northwest, and across the world in the Himalayas (Daegling 2004: 35). The ‘Yeti’ of the Himalayas is a creature parallel to sasquatch, whose recovered footprints accord with the legend of the ‘Abominable Snowman’. According to French journalist and writer, Jean Marquès-Rivière, in *L’Inde Secrète et sa Magie* (1937), one account of the abominable snowman was given by a Nepalese ‘Indian pilgrim’ who

witnessed a group of giant, naked, hairy-bodied men that were neither monkeys or bears, with sad and frightful half-gorilla half-man faces that beat on tom-toms and stood erect like human beings (Heuvelmans 1958: 133). This is a near-perfect example of a culturally successful representation as it has stood the test of time. On the downside, however, little faith was placed in folk witness statements such as these, which were dismissed by ‘naturalists’ as ludicrous (Heuvelmans 1958: 18). Defending such accounts, Bernard Heuvelmans explained that perhaps the story is slightly ‘embroidered’ and ‘poeticized’ in the oriental tradition of narrative; but, he argued, this possibility does not mean that it is a complete invention (Heuvelmans 1958: 133).

Interest in the ‘ludicrous’ wild man waned and was not taken up by anthropologists for several years, until the 1980s (Forth 2008: x). Anthropologists such as Marjorie Halpin and Michael Ames rekindled an interest in sasquatch; and emphasized that the real nature of sasquatch was unknown even to its experts, as scholarship on the ‘monstrous’ could not be confined within any one academic discipline. In *Manlike monsters on trial*, several authors with various disciplinary backgrounds provided their individual views (Halpin and Ames, eds. 1980: xiv).

In more recent news, human geneticist Brian Sykes used ‘hard evidence’ of ‘Yeti’ hair; and subjected the hair to sophisticated DNA testing, a methodology considered credible by most scientists today. Sykes has found that the hair samples matched those from an ancient polar bear (BBC News 2013; Sykes et al 2014: 3). These results from ‘Yeti’ hair samples are surprising and unexpected, adding weight to the ‘mistaken bear’ theory mentioned by Halpin and Ames, eds. (1980: 93). The opposite view, taken by others, holds that we must bear in mind the ‘bear in mind’. English professor Michael Taft has proposed that a great problem for other researchers might be a reverse situation, which is that when a witness is confronted with an anomalous

creature, the witness might perceive it as a similar, recognizable animal; and simple statements such as ‘I saw a bear in the woods today’ might conceal an actual sasquatch encounter, or at least an encounter with something other than a bear. Taft explains that further work could, in time, overcome ‘barriers of belief, perception, and reportage’ (Taft 1980: 93).

Sykes investigated another scenario, lending credence to the mystery of another sasquatch, the former Soviet Union’s own Bigfoot, the ‘Almasty’—specifically a ‘wild woman’ named Zana. Zana has been categorized as an indigenous ‘pre-hominid’ who was captured in the Abkhazia forests by Georgian peasants and sold into slavery in the mid-nineteenth century (Press 2013; Forth 2008: 200). She has been described as a very powerful, tall, big-toothed, big-bosomed ‘female sasquatch’ with a strong-build and reddish-black hair covering her dark-skinned body (Forth 2008: 200 and Regal 2011: 148-149). By examining DNA from the tooth of Zana’s son, Khwit, Khwit’s skull features, and saliva from Zana’s six living descendants, Sykes boldly theorized that Zana was not Caucasian at all but genetically 100% sub-Saharan African who may have derived from a pre-modern human group that migrated out of Africa perhaps tens of thousands of years ago. Sykes theory about Zana’s origins parallels what many researchers have been saying about the origin of the sasquatch itself (Press 2013; Sykes 2016: 278), insofar as the description of Zana as a wild creature that is ‘part-human and part-animal’ (Sykes 2016: 296), has similarly been applied to sasquatch.

Without a sasquatch body or bones, which is to say a type specimen, using or finding DNA and physical evidence poses challenges to the scientific community in terms of conclusive identification. As mentioned in the last chapter, a holotype—the first individual or part of an individual of a newly discovered species (which could also be a newly discovered genus, and so on)—could be a whole living animal or a whole skeleton for example; or, as in the case of

*Gigantopithecus*, it could be based just a number of teeth or a portion of a skull. It is an important general question what zoologists can and will accept as a 'type specimen' (or holotype) that counts as sufficient evidence for a new species; DNA from hair, for instance, is probably not enough.

Using 'trace evidence', or finding evidence such as 'footprints', or 'hair' or 'scat', can also be a labour-intensive process (Meldrum 2006: 261). 'Exhaustive comparisons' with known standards would be required; and trace evidence, such as foot imprints, which are 'merely suggestive of the presence of sasquatch' would not be enough (Meldrum 2006: 261). Because scatology uses visual identification, supporting clues are needed, as with tracks; and even expert trackers such as Jim Halfpenny suggest that an omnivore bear's diet could be mistaken for a sasquatch diet (Meldrum 2006: 267). Other studies of scat have included examination of endoparasites, chemistry, and microscopic examination, in which the results have surprised scientists because the scat sample does not resemble any known North American animal, or is simply not human (Meldrum 2006: 269). As for DNA sampling, anthropologist Vaughn Bryant emphasized the process as simply being much too expensive and time-consuming (Meldrum 2006: 269).

Using the process of trichinology to examine a sample of alleged 'sasquatch hair' produces indeterminate results, insofar as the hair sometimes cannot be attributed to any known North American mammal (Meldrum 2006: 262). Comparisons to zoologist Henner Fahrenbach's collection of over a dozen hair samples from unknown animals provided no solid results when compared to the two samples of dark reddish-brown/black and light reddish-brown hair from two putative sasquatches that were observed within twenty minutes of each other (Meldrum 2006: 263, 264). Radioimmunoassay performed on 'sasquatch' hair determined the samples to be

‘probably human’ (thus not sasquatch), and mitochondrial DNA research on the ‘sasquatch’ hair found that the shafts contained no traceable DNA (Meldrum 2006: 264).

Hoaxing has also played a part in the lack of seriousness towards investigations of sasquatch. For example, tainted hair evidence found on mitochondrial DNA analysis has shown the samples to be either contaminated by humans, possibly human, or synthetic mono-filament Dynel fibres used for fur, wigs, and stuffing furniture (Meldrum 2006: 267). The ‘wig hair,’ passed off as ‘sasquatch’ hair retrieved from a tree sapling raised suspicions of hoaxing, and sasquatch activity in this context needed to be reexamined (Meldrum 2006: 267). According to Halpin and Ames, looking closer at the motivations behind the sasquatch debate, one side has focused on the debunking of sasquatch sightings, while the other side maintains their credibility. Some possible motivations interpreted as underlying fraudulent reports have included the desire to demonstrate the gullibility of the public, and a deep desire for notoriety (Halpin and Ames 1980: 31).

Despite believers being ridiculed, and scientists jeopardizing their careers, prominent scientists such as British biologist Richard Dawkins have suggested that someone should start searching for living specimens of *Homo floresiensis* (Forth 2008: xii). *Homo floresiensis* may be considered the source of the small type specimen for the small Indonesian ‘wildman’ figure, *ebu gogo*, which has been given the English nickname ‘the hobbit’ (Forth 2008: 7). Moreover, parallels have been made between sasquatch and *Gigantopithecus blacki*, considered as a type specimen for sasquatch (Meldrum 2006:101). But again, it should be noted how, unlike *Homo floresiensis* and *ebu gogo*, *Gigantopithecus blacki* and sasquatch belong to different continents.

*Gigantopithecus blacki* has been interpreted as a large ape from China that became extinct during the Middle Pleistocene era (Forth 2008: 305). A reason provided for the lack of hard evidence like sasquatch bones and teeth in the Northwestern forested ‘sasquatch territory,’ is the acidic nature of the soil chemistry (Meldrum 2006: 261). Considering *Gigantopithecus*’ increased bone size and thick tooth enamel, it is conceivable that *Gigantopithecus* would have been able to exploit and forage northern latitude seasonal forests and cope with cooler climates far better than other apes from the tropics (Meldrum 2006: 93). However, Grover Krantz, who prominently pursued legitimizing the study of sasquatch as a valid field of study, was criticized and ridiculed by his colleagues for being overly obsessed with building intellectual, theoretical, and physical support for the theory that sasquatch descended from the ape, *Gigantopithecus* (Regal 2011: 9).

The pursuit of illicit topics put pressure on scholars such as Krantz, who risked their professional reputation because they did not adhere to the necessary limitations of science (Halpin and Ames, eds. 1980: 303). According to Lett, in the scientific approach to knowledge, the burden of proof for a claim that has been characterized as ‘paranormal’ rests on the claimant (Lett 1997: 75), and it was up to Krantz to prove that sasquatch did indeed exist. The term ‘paranormal’, however, properly refers to things that are contrary to known natural law, for example, ghosts, ESP, etc.; and the point about sasquatch, at least according to some representations, is that they sound like a fully natural species. On the other hand, there is an inherent skepticism in normal science that provides efficiency to research agendas by ignoring anomalies and mistrusting circumstantial evidence (Ames 1980: 303).

Emerging from the UBC 1978 scientific sasquatch conference (or ‘Monster Conference’, as it came to be known), were questions about the role of evidence and the nature of the

scientific method; for example, How are we to deal with anomalous creatures? And what are the proper relations between the scientific community and those amateurs, like the sasquatch investigators, who toil on the frontiers of knowledge? In this regard, Ames stated,

‘One useful point made [at the conference] was the need to appreciate the necessary limitations of science: its inherent skepticism, its conservative attitude towards evidence, its concentration on the known and knowable, and its dealing with probabilities rather than certainties. [...]

To turn one perspective into the other, either by expanding the limits of science or by limiting the freedom of amateurs, would destroy the potentially creative contradictions that exist between the two. The urge to probe beyond the realm of established knowledge and certainty, to explore the anomalous and unknown worlds, and to criticize the scientific establishment for its self-interested motivation is no less important than the practice of science itself. At the same time, however, it is important to reaffirm the value of a scientific establishment that is conservative about the rule for evidence, respects its own theories, and pursues its own intellectual interests rather than those of outsiders. Both perspectives are needed, each doing what it alone can do best, though each should be continuously exposed to the other, with their contradictions expressed through creative criticism. The professionals and the amateurs can help to keep one another honest’ (Ames 1980: 302-303).

Maintaining these contradictions between the opposing perspectives of sasquatch critics and believers (both professional scientists and non-scientists) allows both sides to explore unknown worlds beyond our established knowledge and certainty (Ames 1980: 303). When the Dutch geologist Ralph von Koenigswald walked the streets of Hong Kong in 1934, he stopped along the way in a Chinese apothecary’s shop. There he found a jar full of all sorts of teeth; and when he put his hand in and picked up a handful, he was amazed to find a third lower molar that was at least two times the size of an adult male gorilla’s (Heuvelmans 1958: 151-152). This was the third lower molar of *Gigantopithecus*, and with its considerable size came considerable debate about the existence of a ‘man-beast’ resembling sasquatch. In relation to Krantz’s theory,

this incident suggests that the question of the sasquatch's existence, as a particular physical animal and as a possible natural species, derives largely and directly from this accidental discovery.

How images have been built up or deconstructed will have affected how people understand sasquatch. Wild men such as sasquatch may have been treated as allegorical, to criticize 'civilization,' 'sanity,' or 'orthodoxy' (Forth 2008: 260-261). At the same time, sasquatch existence may be unappealing to non-scientists because sasquatch has sometimes been alluded to as a 'missing link' (Bindernagel 2010: 225). The historical resistance to an ape-man may also reflect negative associations of apes, as in African and Asian literature; and the frequency with which apes were chosen as human caricatures in satirical writing (Bindernagel 2010: 225). Skeptics may have also considered sasquatch as falling under the 'wild man myth' as based on actual human beings, such as bandits and ascetics living in the wilderness (Loxton and Prothero 2013: 76-77).

According to Bindernagel, folk perspectives on the existence of the sasquatch are quite well known through the oral histories of Aboriginal people, and these oral histories existed long before their sasquatch accounts were documented in the 1800s and early 1900s (Bindernagel 2010: 166). The interpreted reports by non-Aboriginal settlers and pioneers have challenged cultural anthropologists because the Aboriginal accounts of 'human-shaped, hair-covered giants' or wild men were regularly interpreted, for example, by anthropologist Thomas F. McIlwraith, as legends or myths, and without any biological basis (Bindernagel 2010: 167). In this connection, anthropologist Wayne Suttles collected, compared, and reviewed a vast amount of cultural anthropological literature about sasquatch; and concluded that 'westerners,' have 'dumped' sasquatch into the 'supernatural' or 'mythical' category, because westerners operate with



dichotomies such as real/mythical or natural/supernatural, and that this categorization has had certain consequences. The problem, Suttles explains, is that most of the creatures believed to exist by Lower Fraser people have been ‘matched’ with animals known to Europeans (scientifically trained or not); and are, therefore, been considered to exist in the ‘real’ world (Bindernagel 2010: 166), whereas sasquatch has not been so matched.

According to Bindernagel, ‘A consequence of the anthropological thinking described by Suttles is that papers in which sasquatches are interpreted as a metaphor or symbol, for example of starvation, fear, or other forms of hardship, now compromise a large proportion of the published information about the sasquatch in anthropological literature’ (Bindernagel 2010: 167). However, despite the orthodox ‘supernatural’ interpretation of sasquatch as an imaginary being serving as a symbol of people’s perception of the wilderness, there are the occasional exceptions dealing with few published Aboriginal accounts; for example, in the work of Canadian ethnologist T. F. McIlwraith, who provided detailed descriptions of indigenous hominoidal images.

McIlwraith’s account of relatively small ape-like creatures, which the Bella Coola (or Nuxalk Indians) referred to as ‘boqs’, is exceptionally naturalistic:

‘This beast somewhat resembles a man, its hands especially and the region around the eyes being distinctly human. It walk on its hind legs, in a stooping posture, its long arms swinging below the knees; in height it is rather less than the average man. The entire body, except the face, is covered with long hair, the growth being most profuse on the chest which is large, corresponding to the great strength of the animal’ (McIlwraith 1992: 60; cited in Forth 2008: 208).

Referring to the article ‘Certain beliefs of the Bella Coola Indians concerning animals’ (McIlwraith 1927: 17-27), Bindernagel has added that McIlwraith’s reports of the *Boqs*, ‘hairy,

human-shaped creatures’ described by ‘Nuxalk people of the north coast of British Columbia early in the twentieth century’, the “tendency for anthropologists such as McIlwraith to categorize the subject of such reports as ‘supernatural animals,’ as described by Suttles, is not surprising;” [...] However, McIlwraith report is ‘remarkably consistent with Sasquatch reports submitted by non-Aboriginal[s]’ in other parts of North America decades prior to (and subsequent to) the time of his anthropological research (Bindernagel 2010: 168).

## 2.2 Methods

This study includes two main components. One is a review of published sources (e.g., Bindernagel 2010; Daegling 2004; Forth 2007, 2008, 2012; Green 1978; Halpin and Ames, eds. 1980; Heuvelmans 1958; Lett 1997; Loxton and Prothero 2013; Meldrum 2006; Napier 1978; Regal 2011) and information on the internet, including ongoing media reports on internet sites and in the press concerning sasquatch and other mystery hominoids, and on other mystery animals generally. The other is an ethnographic study. In preparation for the second component (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 20-40; 200-229), through initially speaking with an apparently well-connected sasquatch enthusiast and by way of snowball sampling (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 34), a network of possible informants was identified.

The ethnographic research consisted of two groups of informants/interviewees (a total of twenty participants): ten were academics/scientists (e.g., ‘professional scientists,’ which would include both academics and others trained in natural sciences such as physics, chemistry, and biology) supplemented by biological anthropologists and an English professor); and ten were locals (e.g., non-scientists), that is, mostly rural people resident in Alberta, Western Canada, or

North America, including people who claimed personal experience of the sasquatch or are familiar with others who claim such experience. Of the twenty informants across both groups, fifteen were male and five were female. In age they ranged from people in their 30s to people in their 80s. Seventeen informants were from Alberta, one was from British Columbia, and two were from the US. Of the ten professional scientists, seven were male and three were female. Of the ten non-scientist informants, ages ranged from between the 30-odd to 60-odd. Six lived in rural areas, while four lived in non-rural areas. Education levels ranged from incomplete high school to incomplete university; and their occupations included company manager (in high-tech firms, transportation and trucking, or another business), small business owner (transportation-raw materials, retail-beverage, conservation-wildlife), tourism (fishing and wildlife tours), and service providers (agents/personal/secretarial/real estate/cosmetology/health care). All informants, in both groups, are identified with the letters 'A' and 'L' and with numbers: 'A' (e.g. A01) refers to 'Academic/professional scientist' and 'L' (e.g. L01) refers to 'Local/non-scientist'.

Interviews were conducted in person where possible, otherwise by phone or email. During the summer and fall of 2016, I also traveled within Alberta, from Edmonton to Calgary to Rocky Mountain House, to conduct my field research and meet informants.

The names and identities of individual participants are not mentioned anywhere in the thesis; however, due to the small sample size it is possible that total anonymity cannot be achieved. I let participants know that joining the project was fully voluntary and that they could decline from answering any questions or withdraw up to the point of completion of the project study (the end of December 2017), as outlined in an informed consent/information letter provided without repercussion. The research data are kept in a secure place, under lock and key,

and in password protected computer files. The study included any adult willing to contribute to the study. No one was excluded on the basis of age (except minors), gender, educational level, ethnic identity, or any other criteria.

The interviews took the form of an open-ended discussions, with no fixed or pre-set questions but only a list of topics, as is common in ethnographic research. In accordance with ethnographic methodology, questioning was generally non-directive (unstructured); that is, it incorporated general themes, the expression of which was shaped by the informant's initial responses.

As a social cultural anthropologist, I was met with challenges during my ethnographic fieldwork, particularly when I expressed my interest in interviewing biologists and those familiar with Western Canadian fauna about sasquatch—even though I made clear that prospective interviewees need not be especially familiar with or hold definite views on sasquatch. Though I stated I would not take up much time, an academic biologist I sought to interview would not participate, stating little interest in the topic. I received similar responses from the directors (both academics) of natural history museum and science programs, who also declined to be interviewed.

Both scientific interest as well as general problems raised by local reports of mystery hominoids suggested more specific topics (for example, investigating perspectives or positions on research into the existence of mystery hominoids held by scientists of various backgrounds). These specific research topics prospectively included: 1) discussing what academic discipline(s) are most appropriate for the study of sasquatch; 2) investigating opinions about this sort of research held by members of local communities familiar with categories like 'sasquatch' as

popularly represented; and 3) the ethnographic study involving the local people of Alberta who claim to have seen things that they identify as ‘sasquatch’ and others who know such people and may believe their stories. The data from this research are analysed within a framework of folk zoology and the sociology/anthropology of science. Again, this fieldwork entailed an open-ended discussion with no fixed or pre-set questions but rather a list of topics. However, related to these research topics were a number of key questions, which I asked in order to gather some insight into peoples’ opinions and experiences.

### 2.3 What is the popular conception of sasquatch?

#### **Views of local informants**

While questioning non-scientists on the popular conceptions of sasquatch, some informants described an encounter they had with a mystery hominoid, or stated they knew of someone else who did. Terms varied; for example, the names ‘sasquatch’ and ‘bigfoot’ were used interchangeably, while in other cases no term in particular was mentioned, but rather a characterization or description was provided of a mystery hominoid (or something resembling this) (See Figures 2 to 4). While local informants acknowledged that most people do not think ‘sasquatch’ exists, some stated that their personal encounters were with a ‘sasquatch’ (the term used in some cases), described by some as ‘definitely [an] animal, not human.’ (L14, L20).

An ‘uncomfortable feeling in the woods’ and ‘irrational fear’ were sentiments sometimes mentioned by local informants when describing an encounter with what they believed to be a ‘mystery hominoid’ (L11, L12). For example, one informant stated, ‘I don’t need to be hit on the head with it. I know I saw something that doesn’t exist in science’ (L11). During an encounter

with a ‘flesh and blood creature that hasn’t been discovered yet,’ what some said they initially thought was ‘human’, local informants subsequently described as ‘a bipedal hominid or hominoid’ or a ‘very intelligent ape (L15, L19), especially one exhibiting ‘exaggerated’ movements; for example, ‘hand movements, the way the head turned, then body, and strides 20 feet (6.1 metres) apart before disappearing into the bush’ (L11).

Local knowledge on the subject, ‘bigfoot’ or ‘sasquatch,’ with these terms sometimes being used interchangeably, placed the mystery hominoid between ape and human. Some compared ‘bigfoot’ to ‘primitive man,’ while adding ‘but prehistoric man was never big like bigfoot’ (L18, L13). Local knowledge on sasquatch, or mystery hominoids, came from various sources. In the early 1970s, some local people spent a few days in the ‘bush’ looking for sasquatch near Rocky Mountain House because of rumoured ‘bigfoot’ sightings in the Rocky Mountain House region; bigfoot sightings were also known to have occurred in the ‘eastern slopes of the mountain in Idaho, Washington, Oregon’, though ‘no fossil forms’ were found (L18). The first time people had heard of ‘bigfoot’ sometimes related to reading materials, for example, back in the 1970a from a ‘wee little pamphlet’ with a black and white silhouette of ‘bigfoot’ on the cover printed in Montana (L18). Popular culture, watching ‘monster movies’, ‘cartoons’ of the of the Yeti (considered the ‘bedroom door into the Himalayas’); for example, and the Patterson-Gimlin film also played a part motivating people to look for ‘sasquatch’ in such areas as Rocky Mountain House (L18).

Another conception of ‘bigfoot’ involved a personal encounter with a ‘shadowy bigfoot creature’ initially thought to be a ‘myth’, or perhaps a ‘black bear’, but whose behavior ‘was not of a bear;’ the experience was described as ‘paranormal’ with a ‘shadowy creature’ which ‘howled’ and appeared as ‘a ghost, initially seen with two legs,’ who also communicated

‘telepathically’ with the informant (L12). Other local informants who considered ‘sasquatch’ as being in the ‘ape-camp’ vacillated towards ‘primitive human’ with more personal encounters, and over time became convinced that *Gigantopithecus* was the ‘go-to theory’ because ‘*Gigantopithecus*, the extinct ape that lived in Southeast Asia, has the most basis in reality’ (L13).

Other local informants who had had no personal ‘sasquatch’ encounter referred to pictures of ‘sasquatch’ which looked like a ‘wild animal,’ or heard of other people’s encounters (confided privately among or to locals), or saw TV or other media accounts; and in turn considered ‘sasquatch’ to be an ‘ape’ or ‘new species of primate’. By contrast, others who sought an encounter with ‘sasquatch’ or ‘bigfoot’, for example, during a ‘fly-fishing excursion in the bush’, stated that there is ‘no empirical evidence’ that ‘sasquatch’ or ‘bigfoot’ (also described as ‘kissing cousins’) exists; and that it was ‘a thing of curiosity. It is kind of like free beer; you go looking for it and find out there is nothing there’ (L16, L18). Sharing personal experiences during the 1970s, and popular conceptions of ‘bigfoot’ that led the same local informant on a sasquatch seeking-excursion in the Rocky Mountain House area, the informant explained that news media sparked by the Patterson-Gimlin film coincided at the time with people claiming that they might have seen a mystery hominoid described as ‘bigfoot...over 7 foot tall with size 20 shoes. And hairy’ (L18).

Another informant who also watched the Patterson-Gimlin film had a first ‘sasquatch’ encounter in the 1970s during a horseback riding trip in west-central Alberta. Initially in disbelief at what was possibly somebody in a costume, the informant stated there was no question now that the encounter involved a ‘sasquatch’, which was ‘some kind an animal (not a human being)’. He/she further mentioned having seen the ‘muscle in her leg’ with every step.

The 'sasquatch' appeared to walk in and out of trees along the edge of a 'cutline' ('treeline') as it came up onto a clearing. On the north side of the clearing, the informant stated that 'as I was holding the rifle on it, with my finger on the trigger locked and loaded, it was just disbelief...that this was really happening.... We started carrying this .30/30 Winchester just because there were a pretty good number of bears around, and I was very proficient with it [the rifle]' (L20). On describing the sasquatch as female, the informant remarked, '...her breasts were evident. And the thing that really struck me while I was looking through the gun sight [used to align the gun with an eye on the target] at her was the rolling of the muscle in her leg with each step she took while telling myself this had to be someone in a costume' (L20). The informant stated, 'I could have easily shot the one [sasquatch] that I saw. [But] At this stage in my life I would have regretted that greatly,' and did not end up shooting at this 'sasquatch' even though there was 'no question it was real, but there was just disbelief on my part' (L20).

Another informant provided an indigenous perspective; and described a 'sasquatch' during an encounter, as having been ape-like with 'long arms, short legs, big body, head crouched over, and with brownish-grey hair'. However, there were other variants; thus the same informant added that in a second encounter he/she had experience, the hair colour of a swiftly moving 'young adult' sasquatch was a 'bay horse colour' or reddish-brown mixed with grey (L17).

### **Views of professional scientists**

Other conceptions were reviewed in interviews with academics. In the view of academic informants with a definite interest in the topic of 'sasquatch' or 'bigfoot', one person, who said



he/she was in touch with the 'Bigfoot community', noted that popular perceptions vary among 'amateurs investigating, attending conferences,' with some saying it is a 'type of human' while others followed an 'ape-hypothesis' in which *Gigantopithecus* had been the 'sort of null hypothesis for a potential type of human' (A09). The informant further stated, 'My position as an anthropologist...[is that] it [bigfoot] is an animal. It shows no close affinity to humanity,' (A09); while another informant, a wildlife biologist, described 'sasquatch' as a 'North American mammal' and 'primate' 'because it [primate] includes apes and humans' (A06). In this case, the use of the term 'primate' was preferred over 'ape', because suggesting 'sasquatch' was an 'ape' became 'divisive in the investigating community', whereas 'sasquatch' was 'not the brute sort of creature that people think of when you say "ape"' (A06). This informant suggested that, rather than getting 'bogged down' about the question of whether sasquatch is 'an ape or a human', the sciences should take 'a bit of courage' and become more open and involved in 'sasquatch research' because, he/she remarked, 'To me the mystery is no longer does the sasquatch exist? The mystery is why [aren't] some sciences involved in sasquatch research?' (A06).

Other academic informants who were not deterred from looking for sasquatch claimed that physical evidence, or lack of, was key, and factored into the explanation of the popular concept of sasquatch. One academic stated that the anthropological view on the popular conception of sasquatch was that sasquatch was believed to be a descendant of *Gigantopithecus*, an early hominin or hominid from Asia/China. Other anthropological interpretations of sasquatch, explained the informant, included the Tibetan concept of Yeti or abominable snowman; and a representation of spiritual beings in the forests of First Nations people, in the Canadian west and probably western North America (A01, A04). The Patterson-Gimlin film 'sighting' also provided a basis for popular belief of sasquatch, though one informant explained,

‘I haven’t encountered anyone who thinks they are real,’ due to limited evidence of a live creature (A01). As there is a very limited territory that hasn’t been explored, where could ‘sasquatch’ or a mystery hominoid hide? Other academics suggested that sasquatch doesn’t exist or is a myth (A02, A10); was a blend of spiritual being and human and primate (or half-human/half-ape); was a missing link that scientists had failed to locate and document (A07, A08), or was simply a spiritual being (A02). A ‘hairy man-like creature’ in western North America, British Columbia, Washington, and the Rocky mountains also factored into some description (A02, A04); as did a solitary, hairy, deep woods sort of hominid (or related to humans somehow) and not something spiritual (A07).

Most academic informants themselves believed that it was a myth, yet also spoke of tangible elements in popular belief. For example, one academic informant (who spent several years living with traditional Cree families listening to ‘winter stories’ in northern Saskatchewan) mentioned how, from an indigenous perspective, sasquatch is a tangible part of their spirit world, ‘absolutely real’; and is converted to or mixed in with ‘myth’ (A10). For instance, in a Cree dialect, ‘Wethigah’ [sic] was the animal, person, or legend that was referred to during the Winter or in early Spring when there was still ice on the lake or snow on the ground. As this creature was spoken of only in the Wintertime, while in a cabin or trapping camp, the informant explained that one would never hear the story, for example, at fish camp in the Summertime (A10). However, in the informant’s view, from having spent life in the forest and mountains, ‘If there was a creature living in the mountains of the boreal, someone would have shot one, caught one. We’d have physical evidence. As a hominid, as a creature, there is just no evidence for it’ (A10). Regarding the experience of ‘Wethigah’ as ‘real’ and ‘tangible’ (a view attributed to the indigenous ‘spirit world’ generally), the informant provided an example of an experience of a

Cree individual who was ‘spooked by an owl’: in this case, the informant explained that the individual may have ‘in the mind converted it [the owl experience] to a ‘Wethigah’,’ adding that such an experience was ‘absolutely real’ in the Indigenous [Cree] spirit world. Other popular conceptions include the view that ‘Wethigah’ was not something that was seen; but instead something that had a bad smell, threw things at people, and could be heard breaking bush. There was no call, tracks, hair, scat nor any droppings from the ‘Wethigah’; and ‘[sled] dogs did not smell anything’, though the ‘Wethigah’ Winter stories, which were in the ‘same ballpark’ as the Algonquin Wendigo, ‘were as real as a moose or a bear’ (A10).

Another biologist stated that, according to the popular concept, sasquatch was not a space alien, but a creature much like ourselves that predated our time here. Suggesting a flippant or insouciant view on the concept of ‘sasquatch’ or ‘bigfoot’, the informant remarked:

‘If they don’t exist, we should invent them! And the reason why we should invent them is because they fill a beautiful niche of the mysterious hairy creature much like us that is a part of our collective psyche, much like the popularity of the *Tolkien Trilogy*, you know, *The Lord of the Rings*, which derives, I think, from deep in the collective sort of mythology about dwarves and elves—though his [Tolkien’s] concept of elves is a sort of robust kind of creature—and Orcs and so on. And it is just part of the pantheon of humanoids that we’ve carried with us in our collective sort of cultural consciousness. And it may actually have some basis in ancient memories of encounters with creatures that are almost us, but not quite, which we know for a fact occurred some 45,000 years ago, and we have evidence for their continued existence for some time after that. So who knows! I don’t know? That then implies that these myths would have been maintained for

tens of thousands of years in a fairly recognizable form. But I think they serve other functions than that. They help us to focus on the question of who we are. ‘ (A03)

#### 2.4 Why is there a ‘popular belief’ in sasquatch and what is the source of the idea?

##### **Views of local informants**

Local informants provided their own ‘sasquatch’ encounter among reasons for ‘popular belief’ in sasquatch, along with the role of local reports of local sightings. One informant described a personal mystery hominoid encounter in the Calgary region, explaining that while driving she/he had encountered a mystery hominoid during ‘playtime’ (See Figure 3 to 4). The informant assumed that ‘he [the mystery hominoid] must live nearby somewhere’, and described a feeling of ‘shock’ as well as feeling ‘honoured’ to have seen a juvenile male. He/she described the creature as having body fur in a bell-shape as the fur flared at the bottom, and his arms and legs blended in with his body (or ‘good camouflage’). The informant further described the creature as having huge eyes; and as appearing ‘afraid of me’, was ‘seeming frightened’, although it was in full view (and was not trying to hide) (L14). The informant believed that the mystery hominoid strayed from a den nearby.

Information informants provided on reported sightings also included the idea that there were three different kinds (or categories) of sasquatch, and different kinds of mystery hominoid regions:

[1] The ‘Patterson-Gimlin film sasquatch’ was considered the ‘mild gal’ (aka ‘boogers’ in the southern US); these were the ‘big ones,’ quiet, mild, very curious, ‘the ones that watch you’, and

are ‘not that harmful’. These mystery hominoid encounters were reported in the southern U.S., western U.S., and in Ontario, Alberta, and western Canada (presumably including British Columbia). One local informant stated that, while he/she was looking for mushrooms in the Drayton Valley region (where sasquatch is a popular topic when you bring it up), he/she assumed it was this type of ‘P-G film’ sasquatch that was responsible for building a ‘tepee-ish structure’ and that made grunts and growl sounds, and which threw large rocks at the informant while he/she stood beside a beaver pond. The ‘tepee-ish structures’ were described as being made of bent trees in ‘crib formation’; and although the informant stated that while in middle of forest he/she could ‘hear something [‘sasquatch’] around you’, he/she ‘never [felt] threatened’.

[2] ‘Wendigo’ [or windigo] was ‘a demon spirit, vicious one, mean one, not a pleasant one, rare;’ ‘the big guy’ was encountered in the southern US and in Ontario.

[3] ‘Dogman’ was the ‘ugly one, funny-looking faced one’, and was also found in the southern U.S. and in Ontario.

Other locals gave specifics about the different types of ‘evidence’ that existed and that contributed to the popular belief in sasquatch, while also acknowledging that no body or skeleton had been found. Examples of ‘evidence’ included ‘footprints’ and ‘hair samples’. Certain behaviours were also attributed to ‘sasquatch’. And some local informants mentioned reading about sasquatch sounds, howling or chatter; the creature’s strength and habit of throwing boulders; its smell; and its ability to ‘paralyze prey’ via ‘infrasound’ that could make a person sick to the point of ‘collapsing’ or ‘losing a sense of time’. The last quality was also reason given as a reason sasquatch images did not appear on camera (L12, L13).

An informant with an indigenous background stated that people in the [Cree] community stayed some distance away from the sasquatch, though they believed sasquatch was ‘harmless’. The informant stated that sasquatch only posed a threat if provoked or cornered, and further remarked ‘I always say if [sasquatches] were dangerous..., they would be terrorizing us’ (L17). By the same token, another informant, conveying a personal view, stated that Indigenous people regarded seeing a sasquatch as meaning that one will be ‘lucky in life’ (L12). One informant mentioned learning about sasquatches through an Indigenous Elder, who carved sasquatch masks in Nass Valley, B.C. The elder told the informant that sasquatch existed for centuries and had ‘human-like abilities’ (L12). When it came to personal encounters with ‘sasquatch,’ another informant stated that science does not have all the answers and that people who have had experiences with mystery hominoids generally do not talk about them, whereas those who do talk about ‘sasquatch’ do so because they know about mystery hominoids [only] through popular sources such as TV (e.g., the ‘Finding Bigfoot’ show) or guidebooks (L11, L13).

In the experience of informants, popular belief in sasquatch was mostly met with skepticism from others and even ‘hurt some friendships’; one informant remarked how most friends ‘think I am nuts’ (L13). According to this informant, who claimed numerous sasquatch/bigfoot sighting experiences, in the literature on Canada’s ‘exotic land’ and through sightings reported to the Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization (also known as the BFRO, ‘an electronic database of reports of sightings and footprints submitted by witnesses from all walks of life’ (Meldrum 2006: 18)), for instance, many believe that sasquatch is ‘more than just a myth’. The BFRO flags sightings and hosts sasquatch expeditions headed by BFRO ‘investigators’ and an ‘active sasquatcher’. Guidebooks and brochures, for example by Jeff

Meldrum (2016a and 2016b), on how to attract a sasquatch are put out, as are audio CDs such as the Sierra Sounds CD (by Ron Morehead 2012) of Californian bigfoot sounds from the 1970s. According to a local informant, while engaged in BFRO expeditions there have been several popular ideas that have circulated about sasquatch, for example, that it is a six foot tall ape that people think died but is still around, has glowing eyes, and has UFO connections. Locals at the BFRO 'base camp' have also claimed hearing sasquatch engaged in 'Samurai chatter' because the 'chatter' sounded like old Japanese Samurai movies. In a local informant's case, the audio from one of the BFRO expeditions recorded an 'answer back to one of our howls'; and the BFRO group community had an audio specialist, a 'crypto-linguist' whose background included deciphering Navy codes, who did a 'spectrography' of a 'sasquatch howl' (L13).

The same informant stated that according to reports of local sightings collected by the BFRO, various terms and ways of classifying sasquatch were used, including: aboriginal classification, sasquatch as spiritual, a 'spirit bear', and Kermode, Kodiak, or white bear. Other terms included 'Oh-mah', 'wild man of the woods', 'big brother' (cannibalism); and some viewed the mystery hominoid as having a good luck or evil presence (indicating, for example, that one would die within week of seeing a sasquatch). Some reports included hearing of an experience of an aboriginal witness, for instance, where 'the woods erupted and five or six shapes stood up'. In this case, the BFRO would not accept this incident as 'CLASS A' because the 'witness' would not use the word 'sasquatch'. He/she would not do so because he/she said there is 'no name for it' or "[I] can't call it 'sasquatch' because science says 'sasquatch does not exist ('but it was hairy, two legs, 6 feet tall')". In the latter case, the claimed sighting would be categorized as CLASS B (L13). Basically, in the classification used in BFRO reports, CLASS A requires the use of the term 'sasquatch' or 'bigfoot', whereas CLASS B lacks the term(s) but the

description is nevertheless clear enough to ‘identify’ an encounter with a reputed mystery hominoid.

Other local informants provided a rationale for sasquatch by noting that, while in popular belief people may not believe in sasquatch, people always like a mystery. ‘There is always a place for ‘monsters’ in our culture,’ said a local informant; and people think it is a ‘tabloid-type’ thing like Loch Ness Monster or Ogopogo (L19). Other informants explained that local perception varies from complete disbelief to complete belief; and that most people are reluctant to tell of their experiences because they don’t want to be thought of as ‘crazy’, as some people think of the idea of sasquatch is ‘funny’. One informant gave the term describing such people as ‘Scoftic [sic - informant spelling]’, which he/she defined as someone who goes beyond skepticism, thinking that ‘these things can’t be real! It’s impossible!’ (L19). Another popular belief mentioned by a local informant is that people do not want to tell the truth or want attention, and that there is a ‘predisposition based on stories’.

Other locals have admitted to looking for ‘bigfoot’ or a mystery hominoid in Alberta ‘over 7 foot tall with size 20 shoes, and hairy’, with a light heart. During a summer excursion at fishing streams, a local informant kept an eye out for tracks and hair, but never came across any evidence. The informant confessed to ‘not [being] serious or passionate to find one [bigfoot]’; he/she also remarked that since it was summertime, and ‘comfortable,’ there ‘would have been tracks in the mud [if there were a sasquatch]’; and that the source of the sasquatch idea was ‘imaginary’ like ‘Santa Claus’ (L18). The informant admitted to not being familiar with Aboriginal images, and said he/she placed emphasis on ‘empirical evidence’.



On the question of whether reputed sightings precede or follow knowledge of or belief in the sasquatch by individual observers, a view provided by another local informant was that there was a predisposition based on stories, and these stories may be attention-grabbing and fictional (for example, about the Yeti). The informant also added that ‘people get into bush, wilderness... a lot of people don’t know what they are looking at... they see a moose take off through the trees and it is big and black, so it has to be a sasquatch. But in my mind that doesn’t account for everything at all. ...’ (L20).

### **Views of professional scientists**

Academic informants offered other perspectives. When it came to popular Cree views, one academic informant remarked, ‘...people—my friends and neighbours—I think they think these things [Wethigah] started out as maybe people a long time ago, and had transformed into these legends, into these things’. The same informant stated that ‘Wethigah’ (akin to ‘sasquatch’) stories only came up in the Wintertime (‘Wethigah were not Summertime things’) and were told by people who had suffered. Generalizing, the informant further stated that ‘Wethigah’ stories were told by people who had suffered and were reminded of how one that was ‘abused so much, that you become one of those creatures’ (A10). The informant believed that, by way of this theoretical framework, these Wethigah stories were what prompted a [Cree] person to become ‘so scared of being around an abused person’ because ‘that person could do something crazy, and if things got bad enough, they became these Wethigahs’ (A10). Accordingly, abused people were then avoided or ‘ostracized’ and the ‘Wethigah’ stories served as a lesson to tell people, ‘don’t get near abused people....don’t get abused yourself’ (A10). Basically, the stories were ‘to show

how bad things can get’, so one must ‘try to get out of situations where abuse was happening’ (A10).

Elaborating on the categorization of stories, the informant stated, ‘There are some stories that you could tell at fish camp or trapping camp in the Springtime, fish camp in the Summertime, and some stories that were only Winter stories’. For example, stories about *wiskicâk* in Cree (or the Grey Jay) were spoken of only in Wintertime. Here it should be noted that the ‘whiskey jack’, also known as the Grey Jay, is a real bird and not an imaginary being.

According to the informant, experiencing the ‘Wethigah’ in indigenous society reflected the existence of social problems and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The informant provided a personal interpretation, that ‘Wethigahs’ were a sort of framework to deal with, for example, famine, spousal abuse, or being abused by priests; i.e., being ‘scared of those crazy people’ was fitted into this ‘myth’, and were put into their world so they could understand and deal with such issues. On how ‘Wethigah’ acts as a mechanism in society, the informant explained, ‘back in the ’80s/’90s, [Indigenous] people had survived some pretty rough times... went through the residential school system. There was a lot of racism still. ... were poor, poor, poor people. ...had no money for skidoos. Fur prices were terrible. ...were all back to dogsleds. ...were hunting beavers not for the fur, but for the meat! ...were starving on rabbits. These were poor people. When you are on the fringe of society like that, I think you need mechanisms to cope with some of the people that snap’ (A10).

Being ‘scared of cannibalism’ somehow became mixed with and converted to the ‘myth’ told as part of ‘Winter stories’ (A10). The ‘Wethigah’, which the informant referred to as a ‘myth’, were ‘horrible Winter creatures’ which were powerful (strong enough to throw ‘beaver logs’) and smelled bad, and which existed in the ‘land of small trees’ (a phrase describing open

muskeg with some trees, on the edge of the Tundra, that is not heavily forested), so that stories of ‘those things’ (as [the Wethigah] was referred to in English) were a seasonal phenomenon.

During the winter, the informant explained, ‘sometimes we totally run out of food and we’d just be eating rabbits and whitefish and stuff, and these stories would come out’ (A10).

The same informant went on to say that ‘as a scientist I have no trouble with people telling me they saw a sasquatch. And I go, cool! Your brain saw a black bear and interpreted it as a sasquatch because you are thinking of these things. But as a scientist who spent years and years, months at a time, in the forests [during] the summer and winter and have seen every rare animal in northern and western Canada and have seen the tracks and stuff, there is just no evidence for these hominins’ (A10). The informant explained that the popular belief in sasquatch and the source of the idea were such things as a bear track in the mud that had slid and looked like a long foot print, or a bear on standing on hind legs, or perhaps even a moose on its hind legs trying to get at some ‘tasty willows buds’; basically, fog, poor light, and things hidden by trees will be reinterpreted as something else, the informant suggested. Newspaper reports, for example of ‘someone seeing a sasquatch in Rocky Mountain House’ (the informant stated that ‘seeing a sasquatch’ was because ‘the brain reinterprets stuff’), in turn resulted in ‘a little spate of reportings’ of local sighting of a mystery hominoid/sasquatch. (A09)

Notably, some academics suggested that the popular belief in sasquatch was connected to a worldwide phenomenon such as unknown ‘themes’ in deep dark forest; aboriginal beliefs that ‘non-aboriginal people have doubts about’; e.g., wendigo (A01, A10). The popular belief was also linked to spiritual belief (not religious per se, but linked to spirituality), with one scientist informant stating that what is at the core of the popular belief in sasquatch is spirituality.

Claiming that it is human to want to believe and that we do not know everything about the world,

another informant suggested that the popular view provided an ‘earth view’ of spirituality that surrounds force and nature, and the sense that we don’t control the world is the ‘same kind of beliefs that we can’t influence climate change because the world is this entity that monitors and takes care of itself and holds all these mysteries’ (A02). When it came to Aboriginal beliefs, another academic informant recalled that stories and mythology, for example as told by the Tsuu T’ina, served the purpose of providing a mechanism for coherence of their culture, adding that ‘we have our own stories too’. In other words, he/she claimed, the belief in sasquatch was an important touchstone for their own separateness as a people, their sense of integrity as a cultural worthy group. The informant remarked, ‘...to pooh-pooh sasquatches was to reject a culture, a different way of thinking, an alternate way of thinking’ (A03).

Another explanation given for the popular conception of sasquatch, viewed as a great hairy ape-like creature between a ‘gorilla’ and us ‘with great big feet!’ (with one informant adding how several casts provide a foundation for something which otherwise would be a much more ‘amorphous’ feature), was that it serves the very useful purpose, ‘as does all of cryptozoology,’ of preserving a ‘sense of mystery-ness’, and that ‘you don’t know everything’. While pointing out that to other scientists this view represented ‘killjoyness’ and having ‘no humour or fun’, the informant also stated, ‘I happily will admit that it is entirely within logical possibility that sasquatches may have at some point existed. I find it extraordinarily improbable that they exist now given all the surveillance technology we have available to us, and the fuzziness and the dubiousness of the supposed sightings of sasquatches. But, that’s really not the point. I think they [sasquatches] are a symbol of the mysteries of the larger world out there—that we don’t know everything’ (A03).

The role of local sightings, referred to in a paper in *Journal of Biogeography* regarding bigfoot sightings in North America, was provided as an example of a source that listed the habitat and hotspots where bigfoot was sighted. Mentioning a map included in the article, the informant cited this distribution as showing how sasquatch sightings overlapped perfectly with the distribution of black bears. Basically, stated the informant, ‘the quality of the data that goes into the model determines what the outcome is’ (A02). According to another scientist, sasquatch beliefs derived from ‘tenuous physical reality’; for example, tufts of fur and footprints that could be interpreted as huge mystery hominoids, and that are approximately the weight of a bear (A03).

Another example provided by a scientist was the ‘Teslin [Yukon] sasquatch story’, upon which DNA work was done in Alberta on dark fur that had been found. The story came out in July 2005 during a time when other terrible news (for example, in London) was happening in the world, and stories a bit off the grid and unusual such as the ‘Teslin sasquatch story’ had a lot of scope for becoming more popular and compelling. An explanation provided for stories such as these coming out was that when ‘horrible things [are] happening, people want to look at something else for a few minutes’, especially during a ‘scary’, anxious time.

The late medieval European ‘wildman’ (Forth 2008) was yet another example given in regard to sasquatch and as a source of belief in mystery hominoids, which incidentally was also compared to with the ‘wildmen’ in *The Lord of the Rings*. The informant qualified this statement, however, by noting that the ‘wildman’ in *The Lord of the Rings* was ‘definitely human’, and added that these things ‘draw on our collective unconscious consciousness’ (A03).

According to another informant, strange experiences in the wild, a need for explanations for these things, and borrowing from Indigenous mythology were sources for the idea of

‘sasquatch’ (A04). ‘Green Man’ mythology believed to have been developed independently in separate ancient cultures; and in Aboriginal arts such as sasquatch masks (with whistling lips and long hair) made by people of BC, depicted the ‘wildman of the forest’ (A02, A05). Also, according to another informant, a historical and cultural basis for sasquatch was provided by early sightings, for example, the ‘first white man sighting’ by David Thompson, the British-Canadian surveyor, map-maker, and fur-trader for the North West Company, who recorded the ‘first tracks found right here in Alberta in Jasper National Park’ (tracks with a small nail at the end of each toe resembling a bear; A05). These tracks, two informants noted, have since been interpreted as having been made by a sasquatch in the Jasper area (A04, A05).

According to an ornithologist informant, ‘Bigfoot’ formed part of campfire stories and ‘curiosity sounds’ such as ‘wind chimes’ (also sounds of ‘Humpback whales’); he/she also mentioned the idea that food put out also ‘attracted’ sasquatch. Validation by friends and people whom a person truly respects, also ‘firmed beliefs’ in sasquatch, when stories of ‘sightings’ were shared among acquaintances or with ‘experts’, people who could explain unusual possibilities (such as a mystery hominoid). (A05). One informant explained that back in the ‘early days’, these experts included people such as ‘doctors’, ‘ministers’ and ‘barbers’, in contrast to nowadays when people would go to someone such as a ‘bartender’, because ‘they never say anything that challenges the customer, they have heard it all!’ (A05). ‘Places’ also influenced ‘popular belief’ of mystery hominoids; for example, previously sighted encounters and ‘validity’ ‘belonged to’ the Rocky Mountains or Waterton Lakes National park. Prime habitat included parks, places outside of parks on slopes of hills, and places with lots of vegetation. Television programs and movies, for example, *Harry and the Hendersons*—considered a ‘good movie

because sasquatch was treated kindly, not like a monster’—was another source of the idea of sasquatch (A05).

When the academic informants were asked about sasquatch sightings and whether they precede or follow knowledge or belief by an individual, various interpretations were given. A biologist, holding a view on the existence of ‘sasquatch’ and the research required to establish this, stated, ‘...if our scientific colleagues had been studying the sasquatch as they should have been for years by now, they would know elements of behaviour and be able to provide informed comment to these hunters and campers who are saying, ”I was out at this lake and there was this smell, and there were these stone-throwing things...? I don’t know what it was!” Right away there are two aspects that are saying probably there was a sasquatch in the area. But, those connections in my experience are not yet being made’ (A06).

Connections to research on Aboriginal images of sasquatch were also mentioned, including Marjorie Halpin’s study of a mask from the Nass River on the BC coast. Halpin, who was the Director of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia’s Museum of Anthropology, noted ‘ape-like’ features on the mask. However, the informant suggested that maybe the Aboriginal carvers did not refer to the ‘mystery hominoid’ [or sasquatch] or consider it an ape, but instead carved the image in masks (for some other reason) and later simply described it with reference to apes. There were also some reports on behaviour where the ‘sasquatch’ was described beating its chest to imitate the sound of a partridge or a grouse to lure children out of a village. According to the informant, part of aboriginal reports is what may have been an embellishment; it was storytelling; but chest-beating did come up from time to time (A06).

The classic Dzunuḱwa mask of the coastal Kwakwaka'wakw people portrayed deep-set eyes and whistling or deep pursed lips, a feature that was meant to indicate a loud vocalization. On the coast of Alert Bay, it was also noted that there was divisiveness in the Aboriginal community on the idea of sasquatch. An academic informant, researching in the Aboriginal town of Alert Bay, stated, "...the people in the town, they are mainly fishermen and they go on the mainland hunting and fishing from their island here on the coast. ... I was up there quite a bit trying to record these vocalizations. It's quite interesting because in the aboriginal community itself, people are divided. Some are saying, 'Whoa, that's really something. It's gotta be a sick dog. Dzunuḱwa is just a spiritual thing. It can't really be there'" (A06). The informant suggested that the sasquatch was being lost from 'the Dzunuḱwa culture and in aboriginal people themselves', as discussion was divisive whenever there was talk of sasquatch existing.

Another mask mentioned by the same informant, the 'sasq'ets' ('sasquatch' in the Sts'ailes/Salish language) mask, was stored in the Vancouver Museum for several years. It was later returned to the Chehalis group, now the 'Sts'ailes Band', who lived along Harrison River (in the area of Harrison Hot Springs, B.C.). The mask had gone missing about 75 years earlier. In 1929, the Chehalis, i.e., the Sts'ailes First Nation, were recorded living near Harrison Hot Springs, by a school teacher; and the mask depicted a 'very ape-like face, the wide lips, the wide thin mouth' (A06).

On whether knowledge preceded or followed 'sasquatch' sightings, another informant, a physical anthropologist, stated that historical accounts were more interesting when there are no preconceptions, because there would be factors dissuading individuals from relating such an encounter. The informant relayed a discussion he/she had had with an 'avid hunter' and experienced outdoorsman who 'thought his encounter [was] with a bear... ...[the] bear stood up,



walked away on hind legs, turned, looked at him, flat face, no snout' (A09). The academic informant asserted that the hunter could not accept that the encounter involved anything outside of a generally acceptable frame of reference. The informant added that when it came to Native American tradition, some people were too quick to dismiss sasquatch or bigfoot as mythical.

Basically, indigenous representations of attested species were imbued with anthropomorphic characteristics or took on personality traits in order to moralize some principle or to embody or edify some fable-like accounting of a story—but this purpose did not mean that the underlying species was unfamiliar or without a biological basis. Referring to Gregory Forth's example of *ebu gogo* (Forth 2008: 39-42), the same informant stated that *ebu gogo* appeared to be empirical, and had a different quality from other, strictly mythological figures; that is, as Forth suggested, the folk figure of *ebu gogo*, as described by the Nage people of Flores, may in fact have a basis in *Homo floresiensis*. 'Wildman' myths were prevalent in Southeast Asia, but the 'relative naturalism' (Forth 2008: 42) found in folktales such as those concerning *ebu gogo* and similar creatures, for example, the Orang Pendek of Sumatra (Forth 2008: 117), according to Forth, may have been cultural memories rooted in fact (Forth 2008:178)—i.e., *H. floresiensis* may be evidence for the actual existence of *ebu gogo*.

When it comes to personal experiences and hearing about sasquatch, one academic informant, a natural scientist, mentioned hearing about large human footprints as a child, but was unaware of sasquatch being connected with any aboriginal group. (A07) Another informant, a physical anthropologist, had heard of sasquatch later in life when an adult, and as a professor became more aware of 'sasquatch' after having received the occasional call from the public about a sasquatch. Having since read about sasquatch in popular media, the informant suggested that what is being taken for 'sasquatch' could be "in our part of the world...people mistaking a

bear that is walking upright for an ape. Hominoid. Or it is a hoax.” Also, the informant added, in the same way that there are similarities to creation myths around the world, there may be similarities between Yeti and sasquatch, and ‘other hairy monsters’ out there—perhaps in the mythology of people around world, people wanted to believe in a creature that was half-human and half-animal (A08). For example, in Borneo and Sumatra, people thought of the orangutan as being half-human, with ‘Orangutan’ being derived from a Malay word that in English means ‘man of the forest’ (A08). The informant further explained that people attributed human abilities to orangutans which were not fully grown nor top ranking males (versus fully grown orangutans that grow big cheek phalanges), because their faces can look fairly human; they are hairless and they walk around upright on the ground, and this feature could be the source for how a myth might arise about them (A08).

## 2.5 Summary and Conclusions:

Building on the overview history of the sasquatch ‘concept’ that corresponds to an image of the creature as a ‘hairy’ ape or human or something else, in term of methods appropriate for the study of mystery hominoids for symbolic and other kinds of anthropology, I questioned informants about what sort of thing ‘sasquatch’ represents. Is it an animal (and if so, what kind of animal, and how closely is it related to humans), or is it human or a spirit, or ‘something else’? I took notes on views in anthropology versus zoology; and observed how these are different as well as how they are related, with reference to what Geoffrey Lloyd (2011) has called the trichotomy of ‘animal’, ‘human’, and ‘spirit’.

Noting Ivan Sanderson's 1968 article in the *Argosy* magazine, some people see sasquatch as human and others see it in another way. In the article, "First photos of bigfoot, California's legendary 'Abominable Snowman'", Sanderson points out that:

"while we referred to this in the title as 'Abominable Snowman' for purposes of quick identification, the Bigfoot or Sasquatch, zoologically, has nothing to do with the Himalayan Abominable Snowman known for centuries in Asia and first brought to the attention of the western world in 1921. Our lady [Sanderson refers to 'Mrs. Bigfoot' seen in the Patterson-Gimlin film] is a form of primitive, full-furred human. The Yeti, or Abominable Snowman of the Himalayas is some sort of giant, rock-climbing ape, in my opinion, and that of Professor Carleton S. Coon. [Coon was an anthropologist who interpreted the yeti as an undiscovered ape/non-human primate]. The Yeti footprints found have an opposed big toe, almost like a hand. The Bigfoot has an unopposed toe, such as is seen only on human-type creatures" (Sanderson 1968: 28).

In the *Argosy* article, sasquatch is described as (a sort of) 'human', whereas the Yeti is described as some kind of 'ape'. For my fieldwork, this was an important question to ask anyone who had ideas about sasquatch, whether they think it is 'ape' or 'human' (or possibly something else). For example, Bigfoot researcher and author of *Sasquatch: the apes among us* (1978), and also sometime Mayor of Harrison Hot Springs, John Green regarded the creature as an ape.

In reference to the Patterson-Gimlin film, John Napier, once director of Primate Biology Program, Smithsonian Institute, commented, "...I observed nothing that, on scientific grounds, would point to a hoax,' thus suggesting it is either human or animal. Napier further points out, citing Sanderson's reference to 'Mrs. Bigfoot,' that in spite of the contrary evidence of heavy, pendulous breasts, Napier's impression of the subject was that it was male, especially with the 'creature's bodily proportions appearing within normal limits for a man, and the presence of a crest,' which Napier reminded occurs in male non-human primates such as the gorilla and the orangutan but not in females (Sanderson 1968: 28). Connecting 'monsters' with fossil evidence,

Napier stated: 'Yeti is a man-like beast, while those from America suggest that the Sasquatch is a beast-like man'. He continues by further suggesting four candidates of Bigfoot ancestry: *Gigantopithecus* and *Paranthropus* (antecedents for the Himalayan Bigfoot) and *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis* ('custom-built suspects for the American variety')" (Napier 1973: 174).

Similar to Napier, Green referred to sasquatch as 'an ape that lives in North America and that walks upright like a man' (Green 1978: 13). Green stated that researchers are engaging in 'wishful thinking' and produce nothing more to build a case for the status of sasquatch as human except for sasquatches walking upright and having a foot similar in shape. Humans, Green emphasizes, are the product of:

'millions of years of dependence on their wits. Naked, they require clothing, fire and shelter for warmth. Sasquatches, like other mammals, have all the insulation their environment requires. Physically weak and without natural weapons, men in a primitive state depend on objects to defend themselves and throw. Too big to need to defend themselves, strong enough to tear their prey to pieces, sasquatches make no significant use of objects. Too slow to run away, too small to stand and fight, men had to be able to organize and communicate to become a successful species. Sasquatches have never faced such challenges' (Green 1978: 382).

Green elaborates that each 'species' in its own way is:

'an outstanding success, established all over the world and able to survive in most climates and conditions, but they have grown very far apart. The one that succeeded physically took the typical animal route and remained a normal animal. The mental giant became something quite different. That is the only evolutionary script that makes sense, and if the two species are viewed as products of divine creation the answer remains the same. In a separation of man and other animals, everything known about them proclaims that the sasquatch are not and never have been human' (Green 1978: 382).

Opening the door on the exploration of 'sasquatch', its concept and more, I close with

Ames' remarks:

'The few scientific analyses of "physical evidence" presented [at the UBC conference] were considerably more sophisticated than the data on which they were based. There is always a danger, Richard Preston observed on one occasion, that we may overwhelm little known phenomena by our elaborate methodologies and interpretations. And indeed, this may very well be the destiny of the lonely sasquatch, to be perpetually obscured by those who try hardest to discover it. Anthropologists are more at ease dealing with the realm of beliefs, with the cultural rather than the natural existence of anomalous creatures. Marjorie Halpin noted in her introduction how Durkheim has taught us that beliefs would not persist over so wide an area and through so deep a period of time without them serving some existential purpose' (Ames 1980: 303-304).

### **Chapter 3: Searching for the existence of sasquatch**

Investigative positions and perspectives on research into the existence of mystery hominoids held by natural scientists of various backgrounds, including biological/physical anthropologists, and views by local informants, were gathered during ethnographic fieldwork. General questions asked included: 1) Is physical evidence for the existence of sasquatch as a distinct species sufficient to encourage more natural scientists (e.g., field biologists) to carry out research, including trying to find a specimen; 2) If so, why are so few people looking; and 3) Are scientists deterred by the (social) organization of science, including policies of funding agencies and peer review (for example, university policies regarding academic advancement). All three questions relate to the ‘culture’ of science and other issues relevant to the Anthropology and Sociology of Science.

3.1 Is physical evidence for the existence of sasquatch as a distinct species sufficient to encourage more natural scientists to carry out research, including trying to find a specimen?

#### **Views of local informants**

In answering this question, locals in Alberta presented their various perspectives on ‘physical evidence’ and their views on what determinants might be sufficient to encourage conducting more research by scientists (e.g., field biologists), including to trying to find a specimen.

Local non-scientist informants stated that examples of physical evidence included footprints and hair samples, as well as artwork and cultural artefacts; for example, carved masks which depicted ‘sasquatch’. The rationale given was that if footprints, hair, and items were used

in the past to substantiate evidence of other animals before they were scientifically known, then they could similarly be used as ‘evidence’ of present existence of sasquatch and mystery hominoids. Local peoples’ personal encounters with a ‘sasquatch’, along with reported sightings of mystery hominoids by others, convinced local informants of ‘sasquatch’ existence.

Non-scientists also noted that ‘sasquatch’ research by some scientists, for example, wildlife biologist John Bindernagel and physical anthropologist and anatomist Jeff Meldrum, also encouraged interest in the topic. Meldrum’s research into primate foot anatomy and his comprehensive review of footprint casts and tracks, according to locals, corroborated their claims that large-sized tracks found, for example, along riverbanks and roadways in Alberta were those of ‘bigfoot’ or ‘sasquatch’ (L11, L12, L13, L15, 19). Local informants indicated that such scientists (e.g., Meldrum; Bindernagel) not only supported their views on sasquatch, but also reassured them that they were not ‘crazy’. On the importance of not being dismissed, one informant stated, ‘you can’t just write it off as a guy with some wooden track stompers walking around trying to hoax people’ (L19).

Local informants discounted ‘hoaxes’ or fabricated footprints by certain individuals, and pointed to ‘evidence’ supported by the literature; for example, by Meldrum’s analysis of ‘bigfoot’ footprints identifying a distinctive ‘line in the middle of the footprint’ (L15, L19). Meldrum specifically stressed that sasquatch footprints lacked differential pressure beneath heel and ball, as in an arched human foot; were rather uniform in depth; and exhibited a more ape-like mid-foot flexibility, also referred to as a ‘midtarsal break’ (Meldrum 2006: 224, 171). Informants also highlighted bipedal traits and sasquatch or other mystery hominoids walking upright (L15, L20). In his book, *Sasquatch: legend meets science*, Meldrum remarked, ‘the sasquatch footprint is not merely an enlarged facsimile of a human footprint, but appears to represent a uniquely

adapted primate foot associated with a distinctive mode of bipedalism, one that may well have evolved independently although roughly in parallel to hominid bipedalism' (Meldrum 2006: 224).

Informants also made comparisons between bigfoot and Neanderthals' 'large'-sized footprints, with claims made that both Neanderthal and bigfoot footprints were one and 'the same thing', discovered alongside roads, rivers, and bushes. One local informant stated, 'The Neanderthal footprint is a bigfoot footprint. The one picture I have, what I thought was a footprint, it is in moss and was going up a small embankment. It is about 18 inches long. It has got the perfect break right in the middle. You had to get down to really look at it in the toes but the photograph I have got, it is a footprint, and you can see the break where the moss had been lifted, and to me it was a bit of a wow factor. ... That was out in the bush west of Drayton Valley' (L15). The informant also calculated that an 18-inch footprint represented an 'eight- to nine-foot "*booger* [sasquatch]"

Tracks from the 1967 Patterson-Gimlin [P-G] film also provided details of footprint 'evidence' which, according to locals, 'deserved to [be] looked at more closely by science' (L19, L15). According to one informant, 'the line of tracks' or 'track wave' indicated that every footprint of the sasquatch within the film was slightly different and uniquely contoured to its environment; for instance, when toes flexed or gripped unique surfaces differently when stepping on a rock or stick (L19).

The 'sheer number of eyewitness reports' made by 'credible people', for example, policemen, park rangers, and doctors, also suggested to some people that sasquatch deserved a lot more attention from the science community. Again, despite hoaxing of 'evidence', which the



informants provided as a reason why science was so hesitant to look at the subject, the [sasquatch] footprints (e.g., tracks from the Patterson-Gimlin film) were ‘credible’, argued informants (L15, L19); and not the same as the hoaxed ‘wooden footprints’ that produced identical prints ‘pretty much non-stop...like a cookie cutter’ (L19).

Previously engaged in ‘forensics’ work as a ‘human tracker’ during Search and Rescue missions, one local informant explained how human footprints were considered ‘evidence’ and were taken more seriously, compared with ‘bigfoot’ footprints. Elaborating on the point, this person stated:

‘My job was to find footprints, to find evidence of somebody moving from A to B. A footprint is evidence to me. Sometimes it is faked, like bigfoot prints can be faked, but footprints can be easy to figure out if it is real or fake. And it is evidence. I can go to court with a picture..., this photograph of a footprint left by a child, and no one will disagree with me. But [when] you have 20,000 footprints of bigfoot and people [say], “Yes, everything exists...”—that would be in court, that [human footprints] would be real—“...except for bigfoot because bigfoot doesn’t exist”—you kind of throw your hands up. I mean, what do I have to do?’ (L15).

People stated that the community of science was deterred from ‘figuring out the phenomenon’ of mystery hominoids, interpreting ‘bipedal’ traits as characteristic of humans only, despite the fact that, as one local stated, ‘multiple bipedal apes have existed since the dawn of time. And just to say that humans are the only bipedal on our planet now is just ridiculous. It hasn’t stopped and you go all over the world and find these stories’.

Informants also mention how travellers around the world had heard about the existence of bipedal mystery hominoids. For example, one local informant stated that while he/she was traveling to South America and sailing by boat and canoe down the Amazon (between northern Peru and the Brazilian border), the informant learned about ‘stone man’ (also called ‘stone skin’ and the ‘forest people’) while spending time with ‘tribes’ people and ‘shamans’. The resilience of ‘stone man’ was apparent, the informant stated, ‘when you shoot him with an arrow it sort of bounces off him... He is seven to eight feet tall, walks on two legs, hairy, same [as ‘sasquatch’]... [and was] not violent’ (L15). Another example provided was the Orang Pendek [Indonesian for ‘short person’ (Forth 2008: 134) and eyewitness accounts, ‘photographs’ taken, and footprint ‘evidence’, which were believed to support the local lore that a ‘real species [of such a mystery hominoid]’ existed (L19).

Drawing on additional accounts from around the globe, other names and images of mystery hominoids were presented by informants. Another ‘bigfoot’ example was ‘Oyster man’ in the Queen Charlottes [now Haida Gwaii (‘Islands of the Haida people’)]. An informant told how he/she was asked to visit the coast by ‘the tribe on the northern tip of the Queen Charlottes,’ via a ‘Letter of Introduction,’ and was invited for dinner by a native elder in the middle of winter. Drawing on the interpretation of ‘Oyster man,’ represented as ‘bigfoot’ at ‘pow-wow/potlatch ceremonies’, the informant remarked, ‘[‘Oyster man’] is depicted with spines coming out of his face. He eats urchins and the spines of urchins...[...]. That was basically a bigfoot ceremony thanking him and such’ (L15).

Other forms of ‘evidence’ mentioned by informants were artwork and Aboriginal images of something like a mystery hominoid. Informants presented Bindernagel’s ethnographic research, including descriptions of native carved ‘ape-like’ modeled masks from the Nass Valley

in British Columbia; and carved masks found along coasts depicting ‘O’ shape whistling, which informants considered a typical characteristic of ‘bigfoot’ (L11, L15). During childhood, an informant confirmed being a ‘firm believer’ in sasquatch; and, while ‘enjoying nature’ in summers and spending time in ‘the bush,’ being told by parents, ‘Don’t whistle in the dark,’ ‘Never whistle in the dark’. The informant described threats that lurked in bushes, which included animals such as bear and wolves, and ‘bigfoot’—described by the informant as one of his/her parents’ ‘biggest fears’ (L15). ‘Bigfoot’ was not a term used at the time by the informant or the informant’s family during childhood excursions; instead, other phrases were used—for example, ‘bushman,’ ‘hairy man’, or simply just ‘them’.

Informants drew on literature, popular culture (e.g., media, TV, literature, and so on) and experiences of others, which led to their realization later in life, that the ‘bushman,’ for example, which they had experienced in childhood was probably a ‘sasquatch’ encounter. Informants stated that they experienced an “‘Oh!’, an epiphany and ‘Oh my God’ moment” (L15) while watching or reading about, for example, the Patterson-Gimlin film; sasquatch literature; other literature and myths about the Yeren in China (L11, L13); the research by BFRO investigators or ‘squatchers’ (L12); the *Finding Bigfoot* (2011) (L11, L15) show’s ‘episode right out by Bragg Creek’ (L12); the show *Destination Truth* (2007) (L13), hosted by Josh Gates who claimed ‘to have gotten a Yeti hair from Asia that he brought back to North America. They analysed it and it was primate but it didn’t match any known primate’; and the *Project Go and See* (2016) (L11, L15), developed by a ‘gentleman in Utah’ (L18) who was fascinated by and who explored bigfoot phenomenon—and ‘the structures, the systems, the [‘navigational’ or ‘ceremonial] signposts’ (e.g., broken sticks shaped like tepees or ‘trees all stacked up’). Also mentioned were: ‘amazing encounters’ by people; stories from the ‘oil patch’ where environmental concerns over

forests that were heavily logged, oil exploration, and building of roads hardly left any ‘permanent spots’ for the ‘privacy of these creatures’ (L13, L15, L19).

A local informant who had a mystery hominoid encounter during childhood between the ages of 10 and 14 years old, stated that, although the ‘evidence’ to substantiate any ‘sasquatch’ research appeared ‘fairly subjective,’ he/she might still be interested in going back to the location ‘to see what I could find out’, ‘out of curiosity’ (L20). Drawing on childhood memories of the area and the sasquatch encounter, the informant described the location and reflected on how it appeared to have changed over time. Reflecting on the place of the encounter (a place where one could go back to see what one could ‘find out,’ ‘out of curiosity [and perhaps where physical evidence may have existed?]’), the informant stated, ‘...there is a road in, going from Ricinus [Alberta] into the Peppers Lake area. You go around Corkscrew Mountain, and just southwest of Corkscrew Mountain, and you look back along the Clearwater; and there is this large meadow with a big black patch in front of it, and it is a natural salt lake and it attracts game for many miles around, they come and utilize them [the surroundings]... [...] at that time there weren’t any roads. Back then you would have had to cross the Clearwater River and then go down, I believe, I looked at *Google Earth*...I was surprised at the number of logging roads or oil service roads that are now back into that area of the country but didn’t exist during the time period that we are speaking of, at all’ (L20).

### **Views of professional scientists**

In answer to the first question, professional scientists in Alberta presented their perspectives of ‘physical evidence’ and their views into what determinants are sufficient to encourage

conducting more research by scientists (e.g., field biologists), including trying to find a specimen.

Some academic informants suggested that scientists, for example, biologists, had looked for ‘sasquatch’ evidence by means of hair traps, barbed wire, and cameras which were triggered by rare animals like Jaguar (in southern Arizona), and by investigating footprints which could not be explained by other means and occasional sounds late at night of unknown origin; but added that these methods had resulted in ‘no sasquatch’ (A01, A03). Some informants explained that looking for ‘sasquatch’ was neither time productive nor compelling, because they were unaware of any convincing physical evidence for sasquatch that existed; basically, there was no reason to go and look for this creature because the ‘evidence’ was ‘effectively zero’ (A02, A10).

Scientists were also deterred from carrying out any ‘sasquatch’ research as no funding agency would cover it—although one might be able to ‘crowd fund’ it. One informant explained how ‘sasquatch’ research appeared to be in the ‘crypto-science realm’, and was tainted by hoaxes and ‘charlatans’ making money off ‘this purported genome sequence of sasquatch’ in the US (A02).

A genetic wildlife scientist remarked that, in order to dedicate professional time in carrying out such research, the ‘evidence’ would have to be ‘pretty compelling to reach in that direction’, pertaining to ‘sasquatch’ research and the ‘crypto-scientific realm’ (A02). According to academic informants, a publication in a high profile science journal on DNA analysis of ‘sasquatch hair’ (later found to be bison hair) was an exceptional case within the profession (A02, A10); a reason given for the publication of the article in the scientific journal *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* (originally published in Cambridge, UK), was that it was ‘tongue-in-

cheek’ and intended to perhaps be published on the first of April ‘because it’s British and British love their April Fools jokes’ (A02). The informant mentioned that another article published around the same time was a paper about artiodactyls and primates by a Belgian phylogenetic scientist (Milinkovitch *et al.* 2004); this tongue-in-cheek paper discusses the phylogenetic position of the ‘yeti’ or ‘Abominable Snowman,’ which was also remarkably and correctly identified, according to Milinkovitch, by Captain Haddock when Haddock yelled at the yeti, ‘You odd-toed ungulate!’ (2004: 3). Captain Haddock was a fictional character in the comic series *The Adventures of Tintin*, by Belgian cartoonist Hergé, which included the twentieth volume, *Tintin in Tibet* (1960), in which the characters (Captain Haddock, Tintin, Chang, and Snowy) encounter the mysterious yeti along the way while crossing the Himalayas to the plateau of Tibet.

Drawing on local accounts, which may provide a ‘sasquatch connection,’ one informant, a natural scientist, expressed the importance of a story from the 1870s about the ‘Lost Lemon Mine’ in Southern Alberta. The informant recalled hearing of the story as a child; it concerned sasquatches that may have guarded the Lost Lemon Mine, situated in the area of Coleman and the Crowsnest Pass. The informant recalled that, ‘The story is that somebody ..., some guy goes in [the Lost Lemon Mine], finds nuggets of gold... maybe [in] the Crowsnest Pass, brings out nuggets of gold and it’s mysterious, won’t tell anybody, goes back in again but is found murdered. Some of the stories I’ve heard have to do with him being murdered by whatever, and some of them say sasquatches murdered him’ (A03). The informant also suggested that since the story, told in the 1960s and 1970s, was fairly fresh in peoples’ memories—it would have only been 60 or 70 years after the Yukon gold rush—this idea that ‘you can strike it rich in those there hills’ would have been fresh in people’s collective community consciousness (A03). While the

informant/natural scientist remarked, 'I would dearly like there to be sasquatches,' he/she also indicated that physical evidence for the existence of sasquatch as a distinct species was 'pretty tenuous' (A03).

Other academic informants who felt there was sufficient evidence to encourage more scientists to carry out more research stressed that physical evidence of sasquatch did exist. The physical evidence, an academic informant and wildlife biologist explained, was a matter of 'misplaced evidence' that was probably 'buried in drawers' among other things, for example, those excavated from 'Indian mounds,' and 'just the barren things that are sitting around' (A05). The informant also elaborated on a characteristic of anthropology, whereby 'everything has its own little niche,' also known as 'category accessibility;' the informant explained that this was true for most scientists, that 'everything fits somewhere,' and in the case of mystery hominoid evidence, the 'phenomenon that there isn't a category for [sasquatch]' resulted in sasquatch 'evidence' being moved aside with miscellaneous things, and usually ended up among things in basements (A05).

Informants mentioned a 'number of hairs' that 'did not fit any known DNA' as another example of physical [sasquatch] evidence (A05, A09). Drawing on the research of a zoologist and microscopist named Dr. W. Henner Fahrenbach, an informant stated that by means of Fahrenbach's contacts with various people who claimed [sasquatch] sightings or footprint finds, Fahrenbach was able to apply his expertise in microscopy to analysing the hair samples the contacts provided. The informant, also a physical anthropologist, continued, 'Invariably, they arrived at a conclusion that the [results] were indeterminate. That was the only rational conclusion they could draw, because hair is analysed and identified based on a comparison with an established standard, a known sample of a given species. If there is no standard out there in

collections of sasquatch hair, then they couldn't find anything to match it to' (A09).

Distinguishing features of the hair ('not fur' (A09)) were 'primate-like characteristics' that 'didn't match any known species out there (hair of 'indeterminate identity' were found, for example, in central Idaho and from Damnation Creek in northern California)', which could not be attributed to a known mammal, and with the accumulation of a dozen to a dozen and a half 'independent samples', Fahrenbach had developed what he called his 'Gold Standard' for 'a typical sasquatch hair' (A09).

When it came to views about the existence of mystery hominoids and whether physical evidence results were conclusive or indeterminate, a naturalist informant, speaking about the yeti for example, emphasized that:

'...[With] the yeti phenomenon, the best samples we had were the two yeti scalps and also a hand. And eventually the hand turned out to be one of the Langur monkeys, but the scalps ended up to be the back of a wild goat in the Himalayas called a 'serow'. Once the hair was analysed, so there it was. It wasn't the main proof that we had, but that doesn't make it not be possible. It just means that piece of evidence didn't uphold' (A05).

According to a wildlife biologist informant, tracks were another form of physical evidence that deserved recognition by scientists when it came to sasquatch. The informant explained that while carrying out wildlife surveys, scientists see and hear birds, as well as see mammal tracks. When coming across bear tracks, the informant stated, 'We see bear tracks and we tick off 'bear' on our form; there are bears here, there are the tracks. No sighting required' (A06). Another issue was the making of casts and making photographs of casts [that could be attributed to a mystery hominoid] (A09). Some scientists explained that Albertan and British



Columbian campers, for example, and hunters while outdoors, would have difficulty making a cast of a track, or would forget to take photographs. They are also unaware of ‘how important that evidence is, scientifically’, because ‘that message hasn’t yet gone out’ (A06). It is worth mentioning here that there have been brochures and booklets published by scientists and bigfoot researchers to guide people in the public and other aficionados on how to make a cast or locate a mystery hominoid (e.g., ‘sasquatch’ and wildmen of the world’ field guide brochures by Meldrum, 2016).

3.2 If so, why are so few people looking? Are scientists deterred by the (social) organization of science, including policies of funding agencies and peer review (for example, university policies regarding academic advancement)?

### **Views of local informants**

In terms of the social organization of science, locals provided possible reasons that deterred scientists from looking for evidence of sasquatch. One informant stated that some scientists, for example, the late American anthropologist Grover Krantz, were ‘passed up for multiple jobs...or academic advancement;’ therefore, ‘a lot of scientists would be very hesitant to involve themselves with it by any means. ...[and] in turn they end up ignoring the possible evidence out there’ (L19). Basically, it was not that there wasn’t any ‘sasquatch’ evidence for scientists to look at, but that ‘science won’t look at it because of the taboo nature of this subject’ (L19). The informant stated that the subject of sasquatch was ‘taboo’ with many scientists, and compared it with ‘that cultural belief in the boogie man or monsters’. He/she added that sasquatch had been ‘made a mockery [of]’ in most of popular culture; and along with the numerous hoaxes involving

sasquatch or bigfoot, the subject had become a ‘laughing stock’ that ‘just can’t be taken seriously’ (L19).

Making a similar point, another local informant remarked that ‘...when you see that much evidence, and you are a budding biologist, why wouldn’t you want to go make your mark and try to get grants for researching this. But, the research money is not out there for it. So, I think that is where the stall is’ (L13). Drawing on literature by Bindernagel (2010 and 1998), the informant recounted that according to Bindernagel’s ‘de facto discovery’ hypothesis, sasquatch had already been discovered but science had ‘not accepted the discovery’ yet; basically, it was the ‘politics of science’ that ‘held back this discovery process from proceeding the way it should’ (L13). In his book, *The Discovery of Sasquatch*, Bindernagel stated:

‘A major reason for rejection in the peer review process may have been the status of the sasquatch as an ‘undiscovered’ mammal. If this is the case, then the time may have come to claim its discovery: to alter its status from that of a de facto discovery—one which has served a handful of scientists well in their examination of sasquatch evidence for several decades—to that of a discovered mammal’ (Bindernagel 2010: 129).

One informant explained that an important step had taken place in science with regard to sasquatch footprints, which had been assigned its ‘own taxonomy’ in a ‘peer-reviewed paper’ by Jeff Meldrum (L13). In a paper published in the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science bulletin, *Cenozoic Vertebrate Tracks and Traces*, Meldrum presents the ichnotaxon diagnosing the footprints attributed to sasquatch as *Anthropoidipes ameriborealis* (‘North American ape foot’) (Meldrum 2007: 225). An ichnotaxon is a taxon based on the fossilized

work of an organism (for fossils, the ‘type’ of an animal or colony can include the fossilized organism, its parts, or a natural impression, mold, or cast); since 1931, ICZN rules have changed and according to current codes, ‘scientific names and type specimens can no longer be created for the work of an animal’ (i.e., an *ichnofossil* or a trace fossil) (Winston 1999: 178).

### **Views of professional scientists**

In answering the questions of why are so few people looking and whether scientists are deterred by the (social) organization of science, including policies of funding agencies and peer review (for example, university policies regarding academic advancement), academic informants also provided their views on people looking for a specimen or body of a sasquatch, including scientists. A natural scientist informant stated that ‘half of the working class camping in the woods’, rather than natural scientists, formed the majority of people looking for and ‘keeping their eye out just in case there [was] a sasquatch’ (A03). Addressing why a natural scientist would not be looking for a sasquatch, the informant added:

‘I’m a natural scientist. I am exactly the kind that should be looking. Well, I’m going to give you a nuanced answer because it is far too easy to say, ‘Because I don’t think it’s there’. I’m going to say that I don’t know with absolute certainty anything, but science is a matter of you have to make a cost-benefit analysis and the probability of me going out and finding something is so extraordinarily low that I can pretty well guarantee that I will waste my time. I’m finding new species all the time, new things to Alberta, new things to science; and yes, you can go to places where you are more likely to find them that are poorly explored, but much of that is serendipity. Much of that is that you just run cross it’ (A03).

The informant had discovered a couple of new species of insects that were new to science, but the ‘big stuff’ was pretty much ‘picked over’ and finding a sasquatch was unlikely. However, the informant continued, ‘I think we should preserve this little sense of uncertainty, this little sense as a scientist that we don’t know everything’ (A03).

Another academic stated that with the ‘decades’ that had passed, those people who were interested and searching for sasquatch were no longer seeing any credibility to sasquatch, as no specimen had been found (A04). A primatologist informant made a similar point when he/she stated:

‘Let’s take North America, in the world we live in today. If such creatures existed, then we would have stumbled across them more often and we already would have physical evidence. There just aren’t vast tracts of land that haven’t been explored that, where they could be existing, that a population of them could exist just does not seem credible’ (A08).

Other scientist informants noted that sasquatch hoaxes that were perpetrated or ‘even just a mistake’ generally deterred scientists, along with the possibility of putting one’s career in jeopardy. When it came to the cultural influences, from a scientist’s perspective, one informant explained:

‘I am the first to say that there are cultural influences on scientists and what scientist do, what they believe in, but I feel that if ... and it might hurt your reputation if people knew that you were going to invest time and energy and money in looking for sasquatch. That might possibly hurt your reputation. But I feel that if a scientist or someone else actually

came up with credible evidence, that they produced a sample—it wouldn't have to be an entire sasquatch but [if] they produced hair or a tissue sample—and it was tested by geneticists and they said well this is not a species that we know, you could get that published. I think there is a certain deterrence by not wanting people to think you are a crank, but there isn't such a deterrence that there would be a cover up if there were actually evidence' (A08).

The claim of existence of sasquatch gave scientists pause, and informants stated that the community of scientists would find it difficult to provide funding to look for sasquatch or other cryptids (A06, A07). Not only was even the subject of looking for a sasquatch, mystery hominoid or cryptid 'scientifically taboo'; but also 'the discovery claim' itself was considered 'so preposterous, ... that it is not worth consideration,' and a scientist undertaking the endeavor would be laughed at (A06, A07).

An example of such a case, mentioned by a palaeontologist informant, was the research [on a cryptid] carried out by an invertebrate zoologist, Edward (Lloyd) Bousfield. Bousfield, also a chief zoologist at the Canadian Museum of Nature, published a book entitled *Cadborosaurus: Survivor of the Deep* (LeBlond and Bousfield 1995) [with Paul LeBlond, the director of Earth and Ocean Sciences, University of British Columbia] about the cryptid *Cadborosaurus*, also nicknamed 'Caddy,' an alleged sea serpent living on the Pacific Coast of North America. Describing the perception of Bousfield's research by other scientists in the field, the informant remarked:

‘...that animal [*Cadborosaurus*] is not in existence in my mind. ... A whole book was written about it, a scientist who wanted to call this a new species. He based it on photographs. The person that did it was Bousfield. If he had actually taken that forward and asked for funding, he would have been laughed at’ (A07).

Describing scientists as being unwilling to scrutinize and consider the ‘available’ evidence, a wildlife biologist informant remarked that perhaps at some point ‘historians of science’ would ‘call them out...[...]’; considering the available sasquatch evidence and helping members of the public was key because the public expected and deserved more (A06). The informant continued:

‘They expect we, who had the benefit of some kind of education and university, [...] have this professional, to me even a moral obligation to use that education to help them! [...] I get a lot of calls, and someone said, ‘I’m going to call you the ‘sasquatch shrink’!’ because it was just comforting that person, and I said, ‘No, no. It’s fine! What you saw is fine. You can’t dine out on it yet, but down the road that’s going to be a really good wildlife observation that you can talk about, but not yet!’ At the moment they’re being ridiculed. This is so wrong! It’s not science but it’s scientists’ (A06).

Another scientist informant, a physical anthropologist, argued that there could be a place for ‘fringe-type’ subjects in the ‘paradigm’. to accommodate the notion of a relict hominoid, whereas before there was not. For example, the Russian biologist Georgii Gause’s (1932) ‘competitive exclusion principle’, developed in the 1930s, was based on the notion that ‘no two species can occupy the same niche because one will do it better than the other and drive the other

to extinction' (A09). This concept, according to the informant, countered biologist and writer Ivan Sanderson's proposal, published in his book *Abominable Snowmen: Legend come to life* (1961), which suggested that 'there were relicts living on almost every continent that were holdovers from sub-humans and apes and other proto-pygmies' (A09). Basically, on the question of 'Are other hominins alive today?', the informant stated that,

'...there is some acknowledgement that there could be a space in this paradigm to accommodate the notion of relict hominoid whereas before there wasn't. ... If there is no framework, if there is no niche to stick a concept other than... no matter how compelling, short of a body, how compelling the evidence might be about the question, the question won't get serious consideration' (A09).

Finally, the same informant noted that there was also an award, the Tim Dinsdale Award, which recognizes individuals who risk their reputation and careers to professionally explore 'fringe-type subjects' [Tim Dinsdale was famous as a seeker of the Loch Ness Monster (Loxton and Prothero 2013: 151)] (A09).

### 3.3 Summary and Conclusions:

Various local perspectives uncovered by the research as it pertains to 'physical evidence' include mention of such various things as hair samples and footprints, on the one hand, and cultural artefacts (See Plates 3 and Plates 7 to 12), e.g., carved masks depicting sasquatch, on the other. Locals also mentioned their own personal experiences, photographs, and the Patterson-Gimlin film of a bipedal mystery hominoid in North America. Bigfoot tracks investigated by physical

anthropologists have encouraged amateur investigators and local informants to read into the scientific literature, in order to corroborate their own encounters or to report them to organizations. Local informants have also taken it upon themselves to head bigfoot expeditions or man websites that collect reports on sasquatch sightings.

Locations often cited of common sightings have also supported claims, and hair samples collected on barbed wire, as in the case of one unnamed informant; or footprint tracks collected by amateurs that may be botched, have encouraged a professional scientist to provide a how-to manual on the procedures of collecting tracks. Problematic collection of evidence has often been cited as the reason for loss of evidence. Once collected, however, the next debate is whether such evidence of tracks, for instance, is acceptable by the scientific community. Therein lies the next issue in the profession that sometimes deters scientists to go looking. Drawing on Bindernagel's 'de facto discovery' hypothesis, locals also stated that the lack of 'sasquatch' evidence was not an issue; and that sasquatch 'evidence' existed for scientists to examine. However, according to local informants, scientists were deterred from examining the evidence because sasquatch was a scientifically 'taboo' subject, and was made a mockery of in popular culture.

Photographs that have often been inspected, and comparisons with other photographs, taken by riversides in moss (See Plate 4), for example, have been examined by amateur informants who cite details of foot anatomy and refer to key sources of this material, such as Green, Meldrum, Bindernagel, or the Patterson-Gimlin film. Personal experience deriving from work in particular professions has also been represented as expertise on the part of an informant who works in search and rescue missions involving tracking human movements. Here, the informant cited 'evidence of a human' leaving trails of footprints, serving as evidence in courts of a human; and asked why not the same for sasquatch and sasquatch footprints.



Bipedalism is a common theme in the ‘physical evidence’ mentioned by local informants; that is, reports informants are familiar with of a humanlike ape or a mystery hominoid walking on two hairy legs—as in indigenous accounts, informants had heard of eight feet tall Stonemen or ‘short persons’ like the Orang Pendek. Non-scientists accept local lore as evidence for ‘real species’ as they also do reputed eyewitness accounts of hominoids represented in a way corresponding to this lore.

On the other hand, professional scientists, engaged in different work of their own, sometimes stated that they were unaware of convincing or compelling evidence; they also cited this as a deterrent to carrying out ‘sasquatch’ research. Some suggested such research is crypto-science, associated with charlatans, and that funding for such research can only be obtained outside of the academy. One informant also mentioned tongue-in-cheek DNA research published in scientific journals around April Fool’s Day—but noted that such publication is exceptional. According to one scientist informant, reference to sasquatch in stories, like the Lost Lemon Mine story, could keep the idea of sasquatch fresh in people’s minds, whereas the opinion among professional scientists is that evidence for sasquatch as a distinct species is tenuous.

Another suggestion by scientific informants was that misplaced and uncategorized ‘evidence’ for sasquatch may be in the drawers of museums, and would take a lot of effort to find. Also mentioned as possible evidence are hair samples that no one has been able to identify or match with a known species of animal. Locals and those professional scientists making claims supporting sasquatch existence have pointed out that this type of work has been undertaken by a zoologist who, through analysis of ‘independent’ hair samples, has been described as developing the sasquatch hair ‘gold standard status’.

Though the possibility of mockery and hoaxing were mentioned as factors deterring scientists from carrying out ‘sasquatch’ research, it was suggested that local people have proved their tenacity by persisting in their interest, and by undertaking the work to find sasquatch on their own accord. A sticking point, made by one wildlife biologist, is the importance of the scientific community providing informed comment to the non-scientists (e.g., hunters, campers) in connection with their reports of reputed sightings with something like mystery hominoids. Basically, the possibility of the existence of sasquatch gives pause, and may encourage scientists to rethink the status of cryptids as ‘scientific taboo’; and even to risk their own careers and reputation, something that could pay off—for example, by becoming a recipient of the Tim Dinsdale Memorial Award, awarded to professionals who risk their reputations and careers in exploring fringe subjects.

## **Chapter 4: Sasquatch as a natural species: reviewing the ‘evidence’ through local accounts and theories of scientists that claim its existence**

One question addressed in this chapter is whether or not information can be extracted from a review of existing sasquatch ‘evidence’ to provide ‘proof’ to support current ideas about the existence or non-existence of sasquatch; in other words, what is the value of existing information on sasquatch? Also raised in this connection was the possibility of non-scientists, e.g., citizen scientists, being involved in (future) research on sasquatch. Other questions include: 1) How do accounts of sasquatch given by local people who claim to have observed it match the theories of scientists who claim to have evidence of its existence as a natural species (e.g., Meldrum, Bindernagel), and whether there is there a significant difference; and 2) Do local accounts of sasquatch by non-scientists encourage or deter research by natural scientists.

### **4.1 Review of ‘evidence’ and value of existing information on sasquatch**

#### **Views of local informants**

On the question of whether information can be extracted through the review of sasquatch ‘evidence’ to provide ‘proof’ to back up current ideas about the existence or non-existence of sasquatch, some local non-scientists stated that they ‘didn’t care’ about proving sasquatch; but nevertheless provided their reports in an effort to support sasquatch ‘scientific evidence’, so that scientists may review, for example, any tracks that appeared as ‘very compelling evidence’ (L11; L13). Informants stated that the ‘evidence’ could be useful to scientists when it came to tracking sasquatch migratory patterns during the winter, as well as providing useful information about the creature’s environment (L11). But one explained that this was ‘not [intended as] proof’ but

simply a means of ‘support’, to review any ‘evidence’ of sasquatch existence or non-existence (L13). Locals took it upon themselves to contact scientists (e.g., geneticists, physical anthropologists, biologists) to examine DNA that may be available from a kill site, and tracks or footprints, for example.

Informants also stated while seeking examination of ‘evidence’ by contacting scientists, they received mixed impressions. For example, one informant explained that, ‘He [a geneticist] thought we were a little bit nutty’ but ‘worked on some DNA evidence for us’ (L13). In most cases, persuading research scientists to ‘find something that supports a new species’ that would add ‘a feather in your cap’ was difficult, especially since testing the evidence such as DNA was an expensive undertaking (L13). Basically, the intent of local informants asking for examination of ‘evidence’ by ‘credible’ scientists was, in the words of one informant, to gain ‘peace and closure’ and ‘go on my merry way’ by putting to rest that a sample tested was from ‘a bear or a deer or a person in a suit’; informants provided an example of the credibility an American ‘sasquatch’ researcher whose ‘biased studies’ and DNA test results [showing ‘..maternally...almost a *Homo* line’ and ‘...paternally...something completely unknown’] needed vetting (L13; L15). Noting the difficulty with understanding scientific analysis in the testing of ‘evidence,’ local informants who sought to explain ‘sasquatch’ encounters said backing by ‘credible’ scientists and research into the mystery hominoid was important to them (L13).

In certain cases, informants stated, when it came to the ‘sasquatch’ topic in the scientific community, some scientists were ‘walking on eggshells’, mentioning how ‘university academics called for the ‘ouster’ of’ professors and scientists researching the sasquatch topic; and were called ‘out to lunch’ for considering tracks as ‘very compelling evidence’, because footprints as

evidence was considered ‘quackery’ by certain members of the science community (L13, L15). Another informant explained that the only ‘proof’ would be to capture ‘live or dead’ sasquatches, and that a film and tracks were not sufficient. The informant continued by saying that, although the informant’s personal ‘sasquatch’ encounter resolved for the informant that sasquatch existed, he/she was glad about not having shot at it—even though the thought of shooting one, just to prove that sasquatches do exist had crossed the informant’s mind. However, the informant added, ‘...to resolve it [‘proof’ of the existence of sasquatch] for the masses or for science, [...] it is going to take a body’ (L20). Here it should be noted that Grover Krantz made exactly the same claim (Regal 161-164).

### **The views of professional scientists**

As to whether or not information can be extracted through the review of sasquatch ‘evidence’ to provide ‘proof’ to back up current ideas about the existence or non-existence of sasquatch, professional scientists and academics provided other perspectives. According to an anthropologist/anatomy professor, he/she considered the available ‘evidence’ valid; and stated that it warranted at least pursuing the question, even if that evidence involved only anecdotal suggestions that sasquatch may exist, or trace or indeterminate physical evidence such as hair and scat (A09). Another anthropologist, however, thought that the ‘few stories of people who actually ran into them in the woods’ had the same sort of credibility as someone claiming to have sighted a UFO or an alien (A01). A geneticist informant stressed how a habitat map with sightings of sasquatch could be constructed using information ‘in clever ways’ and by means of conventional tools of science (A02). However, to understand where the ‘sasquatch sightings’ originate, the informant pointed out how one needed to consider that, in one case, the map of

sasquatch sightings very closely overlapped the map of black bear sightings. He/she went on to state that the 'sasquatch' habitat map suggested 'sasquatch' habitats, whereas the same habitats were also places where black bears were very common and grizzly bears were quite rare, so that a great many of those 'sasquatch' sightings were probably black bears (A02).

Another scientist informant with an expertise in systematics, remarked, 'You can look at it as a simple Bayesian statistical exercise where there have been multiple cycles of attempts to find evidence and... I think that we have pretty well plateaued at the "Nope, they're not here," just because the footprints...there haven't been a whole lot of footprints lately' (A03). The informant recollected the areas where sasquatches were previously believed to be were in the Big Horn Dam area past Drayton Valley. The informant, explaining how reports had shifted from one area to the next, stated 'There was talk of sasquatches there [in the Big Horn Dam area] when they were building the dam. And I think that is the last time anybody seriously thought, "maybe there might be sasquatches." Now it is mostly centered around the mountains in Washington state. I don't think a whole lot of people are reporting it, that I know of, reporting of sasquatches, even in British Columbia, and people have moved on a little bit' (A03).

A naturalist informant, an ornithologist, suggested that the 'hard evidence' (e.g., bones, teeth) that was needed to prove sasquatch's existence may have 'drifted', or have been thrown away, or perhaps lost. Drawing on 'mummies' as an example, the informant explained that physical mummies had been examined, x-rayed, had ribs counted, and were eventually lost or thrown away. Citing the case of a mummy 'stolen from a museum in Casper, Wyoming,' the informant stated:

‘[The mummy] was just sort of sitting there with everything else in the [San] Pedro mountains. [...] things like that that aren’t valued, those kind of specimens just kind of drift [...] because no one wants to make claim of them and that’s part of the difficulty. This whole phenomenon is something people don’t want to make claim of, especially if you are in a position where you’ve got something to lose’ (A05).

Pertaining to the validity of sasquatch ‘evidence’ by non-scientists, one biologist informant’s initial reaction to reports such as ‘stone throwing’ was that it was a ‘kind of an aberration’. Therefore, the informant let the report go. But when other similar reports were made of ‘stone throwing’ by sasquatches, the informant began to question whether there was a connection with the sasquatch. The informant stated that the problems that occurred with the ‘evidence’ employed by several ‘amateur investigators’ (non-scientists) had to do with the fact that these non-scientists were doing the job for scientists. Non-scientists, the informant stated, tended to jump to conclusions, as they did during ‘bigfoot expeditions’, about “*Every* broken branch, *every* depression in the soil, *every* strange sound in the night. And I say, ‘Oh, shucks!’ *Every* bent branch” (A06). Programs such as *Finding Bigfoot* (2011) ‘put people off’, including those who connected the sasquatch with *everything* in the area that was being connected to sasquatch. The informant, a biologist, emphasized, ‘I, who accept the sasquatch, become the skeptic when I am out with an amateur investigator who is showing me a bent branch,’ which the informant considered a naturally bent branch, but the amateur investigator took to indicate a sasquatch that went through the area (A06). Basically, scientific skills were needed to discern the ‘evidence’ and what the ‘evidence’ was of exactly—that is, perhaps it was evidence of a windstorm (rather than sasquatch).

In terms of discerning the evidence, other scientific informants stated that the ‘sasquatch’ evidence put forward, for example, photographs or video tapes and footprints (including photographs of footprints), did not constitute ‘good enough’ evidence or ‘clearly good proof’. The photographs observed were fuzzy and ‘could be anything’, so they were not ‘good enough [sasquatch] evidence’. Also, it was pointed out, the footprints were not necessarily of a ‘huge giant human footprint’; and there were other ways of getting ‘apparent footprints’ in the ground. For example, they could reflect mud crack shrinkage or a distortion of a different animal’s foot, so that they could be explained in other ways. Hair was considered ‘not credible’ evidence (A07; A08). Another informant stated: ‘Scientifically, there is no evidence. Sociologically and anthropologically it is a fascinating legend, but that is the arena it would fit into. It is a fascinating sociological phenomenon, not a biological phenomenon’ (A10).

4.2 How do accounts of sasquatch given by local people who claim to have observed it match the theories of scientists who claim to have evidence of its existence as a natural species (e.g. Meldrum, Bindernagel)? Is there a significant difference? Do local accounts of sasquatch by non-scientists encourage or deter research by natural scientists?

### **Views of local informants**

Non-scientists addressed these questions in several ways. Some local informants thought that most of the ‘ground-breaking stuff’ was being done by independent researchers, and was ‘pretty well aligned’ with science. But in certain cases the difference between local accounts and theories of scientists had caused some locals to become skeptical of ‘modern academia’; for example, after Brian Sykes did his DNA studies on a number of different samples (L13; L11).



Sykes and colleagues had published a paper in a biological sciences journal, *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* (2014), on the ‘Genetic analysis of hair samples attributed to yeti, bigfoot and other anomalous primates,’ which showed that two Himalayan ‘Yeti’ hair samples, from Ladakh, India, and the Kingdom of Bhutan, matched or ‘had their closest genetic affinity’ with a Palaeolithic polar bear (Sykes et al. 2014: 1-3). Informants gave their various impressions on what they believed to be a proportion of ‘disinformation’ being circulated by ‘the government’ and ‘scientists’ to protect their financial or other vested interests; for example, in the oil, mineral, and forestry sectors. Agencies, it was claimed, focus on such ‘outlier’ sasquatch eyewitness reports (e.g., crackpot stories reporting eye glow and telepathy), and these ‘probably deter the research’ (L11, L13). For example, when people talked about ‘eye glow,’ ‘telepathy’ and a ‘very, almost supernatural sense of dread to the point that they lose control of their bowels, as well as stat[ing] they felt paralyzed by this creature,’ such reports did not align well with scientific theories [e.g., *Gigantopithecus blacki*, as per Krantz (1984)]. In fact, these stories went against the theories formed by ‘facts related by the witnesses [that] easily support the theories (e.g., of Krantz, Bindernagel, Meldrum)...that the rest of us subscribe to...’ (L13).

In some cases informants mentioned, for example, having a ‘paranormal’ experience during a sasquatch encounter. Some also spoke of ‘infrasound’ as a means of sasquatch communication, (L13, L12, L16). Drawing on the ‘paranormal’ experience, an informant described being ‘stalked’ and ‘kind of scared’ of ‘a bigfoot,’ which during the time of the experience was akin to encountering ‘King Kong,’ a single individual that was the only one of its kind. Another informant suggested that ‘infrasound’ employed by sasquatch was a form of ‘evidence’; presented as ‘something other than science’, it was a new means, in its inception to ‘uncover evidence’. Referring to larger predators and sea mammals, the informant stated that

tigers, alligators and elephants used infrasound to communicate; and dolphins could project some kind of sound that could stun fish. Similarly, sasquatch had the ability to ‘maybe stun or paralyze or create a sense of dread in its... , not its prey, but in something it can use as a threat’ (L13).

Citing indigenous accounts, informants also represented sasquatch as a lone creature which, along with its habitat, required privacy from, for example, the science community and non-scientific sasquatch researchers (L16, L17, L11). As a means of protecting the environment, one informant stated that the Cree Smallboy Camp sits in an area of cultural importance where people had had encounters with sasquatches; these encounters were like having a ‘big brother’ bond and as such the species need protecting. The informant added that ‘it would be best if science and outsiders left them well enough alone’ (L19).

### **The views of professional scientists**

Professional scientists and academics provided other responses to the question of how local accounts matched theories of scientists claiming evidence of sasquatch existence. Some academic informants stated that the relationship was quite circular, because the scientists who claimed to have evidence were taking it from the experience of people who had seen something. An anthropologist stated that scientists who were encouraged to find out what a ‘sasquatch’ sighting or encounter was were confronted with something similar to when ‘people who have seen UFOs and publicize the fact that scientists are eager to try to determine what it was that the person saw,’ adding that, if they find something, then, in most cases, ‘of course, it is a natural phenomenon’ (A01). Academic informants also thought that natural scientists who went to ‘hotspots’ where people had sightings were encouraged by local accounts, and therefore there was bound to be some ‘circularity’ and relationship between the two (A01, A02).

Academic informants also suggested that scientists who were encouraged to engage in sasquatch research also accepted that, in the local accounts claiming the existence of sasquatch, there was a ‘good story’, as well as a ‘good caution for all of us’ to tread carefully and recognize that ‘we may not be the only thing out there’ (A03). Drawing on the perceptions [and symbolism] of sasquatch, the informant further stated:

‘These are different ways of seeing, different ways of knowing. At some point it doesn’t really matter if it’s a sasquatch or not. There are, you know, mysterious things in the hinterland that you’ve got to be careful of’ (A03).

The same informant added that ‘relatively explicit sasquatch-focused’ research inadvertently replaced an ‘environmental consciousness’ which paralleled the thought or idea that ‘we are not the only creature worthy of living out there, and there’s lots of mysterious stuff that we need to take into account’ (A03). Ultimately, it came down to ‘reality’ and how ‘reality’ is to be defined. Drawing on the notion of different forms of ‘reality’ and science built on the basis of ‘evidence,’ the informant stated:

‘If you define something as *real*, then it will be real in its consequences. We constantly define things as real that you can't detect with scientific instruments. Ideas, mystical beliefs, religious beliefs, and so on are all absolutely real to people. Theories in economics are real to some people and complete nonsense to others, and unsupported by the evidence. But they are real because people believe they are real and they act as if they are real, and that makes them real in their consequences. So, in that sense, sasquatches are absolutely real. Our scientific world is built up on the basis of evidence. We often

lose track of the fact that the ‘scientific’ (i.e., repeatable and measurable) world itself is still a model of the world. It may be a very precise, a very measurable, a very repeatable model; but it’s still a model of the world’ (A03).

Taking into account the different ‘languages’ of different groups of people and of the different sciences, the informant, a ‘through and through scientist,’ explained how he/she had learned the language of different sciences, which are not perfectly overlapping with each other.

The informant added;

‘There are areas that are better taken for granted as givens by subsets within science. The medical researchers have, I think, fundamentally different mental models that they use to structure their observations and their universe than do physicists, than do chemists. And, yes, there’s enough overlap, so there’s a core of sort of the common; but if you ask somebody to define “What is the scientific method?” you’ll get a lot of different answers—starting with the [Introduction to Biological Diversity course] answer, which is ‘It’s all about hypothesis testing’, and I immediately have a difference there. [...]

‘Hypothesis-testing’ already implies a deductive process; and it ignores the whole inductive, reasoning process that leads up to it, the gathering of evidence, that you don’t have like a compartmentalized-end model to try to explain in a process-oriented, causative kind of way’ (A03).

Academic informants who claimed that ‘evidence’ of ‘sasquatch’ as a natural species existed, agreed that locals (non-scientists) supported each other in the possible existence of sasquatch, and that it was only the scientific community that was divided. One informant stated

that most scientists did not pay attention to what local people ‘thought or believed’, and were more interested in being shown the ‘proof’. The importance of the ‘anatomy of the encounter’ was also what piqued the interest of this informant, rather than what the locals ‘believed’; and he/she would ask local people questions such as ‘Where were you? What did you see? What were the circumstances? What did it do? Did it speak to you? If so, what did it say? How big? What did it look like? What were you doing? What time of day? All the details, so you put together the anatomy of the event, that’s what interests me’ (A05). When asked if local accounts of sasquatch by non-scientists encourage or deter research by natural scientists, the informant maintained that they could do both. They were encouraged by ‘credible people,’ the informant stated, whose accounts could lead to looking for worthwhile ‘patterns’ (e.g., distribution patterns of sightings).

Another scientist informant, a biologist encouraged to research ‘sasquatch’ who participated in conferences, in the US for example, described being approached by non-scientists who were seeking scientific participation and encouragement. The informant supported the work of ‘amateur investigators’ who were ‘getting very good now at documenting it, they are taking photographs and they are casting tracks, they are really getting quite good, very good, very dedicated’ (A06). The informant also claimed that ‘amateur investigators’ were doing 99% of the work for scientists, for example, for Meldrum and Bindernagel, who were the ‘go-to’ people to send [sasquatch] ‘stuff’ to. False leads often occurred, but the point was, according to this informant, that non-scientists welcomed participation by a scientist; they wanted a scientific assessment from a scientist, so that they could get a response to “‘here is what I have seen. Do you think this is evidence of sasquatches in this area and should I keep studying in this area?’” (A06). At times, however, the informant stated, ‘I make an expensive trip some place and I

remember one of the guys said, “Oh, if you come here and sit in my living room and see the videos I got, you’ll fall out of your chair. They are so good!” Well, they were shadows’ (A06). Comparing such incidents to ‘pareidolia’ (the tendency to perceive a specific, often meaningful image in a random or ambiguous visual pattern), the informant remarked:

‘...people...they look at the moon and they say, “Oh! There’s the man in the moon!” ...there’s a face in a moon? It’s when people sort of almost manufacture; they see some shapes and they make it into something. There’s a lot of that with some, well, I shouldn’t even call them investigators because, well, they’ll go out and just do a lot of random filming with a camcorder. Then they’ll go home, put it on their computer TV screen, and say, “Oh, look! There’s a sasquatch right there! I walked right by it! ... But when I was panning, there it was in the bushes looking at me.” Well, maybe there is a remote chance of that, but almost always it is just shapes!’ (A06).

The informant added that scientists themselves sometimes mistook what appeared to be a sasquatch, in slides for example; and were deemed either as ‘ahead of the curve’ or ‘delusional’. He/she elaborated:

‘...I don’t think I am delusional and I’m trying to help other people come around to the point. No, no, you’re not delusional either. What you described to me is perfectly logical from what I know about the sasquatch! You had a pretty good look at it. You got the physical features, the anatomical features down. But there are other people and they so want everything to be bigfoot and they do delude themselves’ (A06).

Other scientist informants maintained that it was essential for ‘trained scientists,’ for example, Bousfield (1995), a marine biologist, to be deterred from believing in something like lake monsters (specifically, *Cadborosaurus*, a.k.a. ‘Caddy’). The informant added, ‘What would deter me from believing in something like that is my knowledge of evolution and natural history. So, knowing what sort of animals go extinct, in this case I know it is not sasquatch, but in this case it was supposed to an extinct marine reptile. They’ve been extinct for 75 million years. The chances that one survived, that he [Bousfield] saw it, just aren’t. There is just no chance, it’s miniscule, low, that I just wouldn’t believe it’ (A07).

With regard to local accounts encouraging or deterring research by natural scientists, another informant, a primatologist, stated that it was likely scientists would be encouraged by local accounts to conduct research in South America. Though the informant was unaware of any sasquatch reports in South America, he/she stated that there were still some quite remote areas in Brazil along the Amazon, where primatologists, field biologists, and conservationists had gone out and interviewed local people and perhaps showed them photographs. The informant explained that locals would be asked ‘Have you seen this type of monkey? Have you seen that type of monkey? Is there a different type of monkey?’; and the local people might respond, for example, ‘Oh yeah, there is a different one. There is one that has white on top of its head and a black tip to its tail’ (A08). Following up, the scientists would then start looking, sometimes they would go back to museum collections, where they have on occasion found that animal, and so there was a new species of monkey that had not yet been documented by scientists but local people knew about it (A08). An example was then given of new species found in South America and Madagascar; e.g., by Russell Mittermeier (president of Conservation International and pioneer researcher in looking for new primate species) (Mittermeier 1990). The informant went

on to describe how there were several new species discovered in the past few decades in Brazil (for example, *Cebus kaapori*, *Leontopithecus caissara* and *Caliithrix mauesi*) and some new lemurs in Madagascar (*Propithecus tattersalli*, *Hapalemur aureus*). Examples of other new species provided by the informant were included in the family Callitrichidae. The informant added, ‘There have been one or two, or maybe even three, species found in the last two to three decades; maybe where it is because local people have tipped off the scientists to go and look for this animal [monkey]. So we are not talking sasquatch or great apes’ (A08).

Another informant, a physical anthropologist, examined ‘sasquatch’ or ‘bigfoot’ descriptions and accounts by non-scientists, and stated that in local descriptions the lack of embellishment and remarkable consistency was ‘quite interesting and compelling’. One example that came to mind was the depictions in the ‘accurately dramatized’ movie *Harry and the Hendersons*, ‘when the lead, the father, makes a sketch of Harry for his dad to display in his sporting goods store. And the dad said, well, you know, you have drawn a big giant teddy bear! He said, I want a monster! And so, he went ahead on his own and drew big long fangs and claws dripping with blood’ (A09). The informant was taken by how most of the ‘encounters’ and ‘descriptions’ were ‘remarkably consistent, and devoid of the trappings of the movie monsters that people are all too familiar with’ (A09). Noting similarities with depictions in Native American art and oral traditions, the same informant added:

‘One of the distinctions in the Native art is the grimacing face with the squared-off teeth, totally lacking any projecting canine. That would seem to be just a rather subtle detail, but it is interesting that those forms that have the deep jaws and heavy teeth that are associated with *Gigantopithecus* and the robust *Australopithecine*, or any other species that might have that same kind of chewing adaptation, have reduced their canines so that



they can use these thick, enlarged thickly enameled teeth as grinding machines. If you have a large, projecting canine, then your bite is pretty much restricted to just the gape and close. You don't have that side-to-side grinding, what we call the phase two inclusion in the grinding, which is necessary with the diet of these animals with heavily enameled teeth. So, is that just a coincidence that Native depictions as well as eyewitness accounts almost universally are devoid of any mention of projecting eye teeth, projecting canines'?

(A09)

Other significant depictions of the sasquatch foot in native art and petroglyphs, according to the informant, concerned how these seemed to be distinguished from depictions of human footprints, which, he/she stated, '...are often depicted quite anatomically accurately with a distinctive ball and an arch and the narrow heel. Then you get these other footprints that have no sign of claws, but they have a broad proportioned foot sometimes even showing the mid-tarsal pressure ridge that I have drawn a lot of attention to, which would appear occasionally in the footprints depending on circumstances. Those anatomical details to me suggest that they are depicting something that they have actually seen in nature, not just imagined in some way'

(A09).

When it came to the question of whether local's accounts had any effect on scientists' research in regard to depictions, the informant stated that this effect happened to a degree, and that there were a limited number of scientists who were openly and actively writing, publishing, or speaking on this subject. The informant was also involved in editing an online journal, and stated,

‘...between my efforts and those of the editorial board, who are almost all bona fide PhDs or professionals with appropriate qualifications, when we send things out for review, I try to recruit people who are open-minded and who would be willing to write a review or provide a commentary, although they would not provide a primary submission. In so doing, sort of cast the net a little further to involve or incorporate the contributions of other scientists and give them a venue to interact, dialogue, with this kind of data. But for most, it is not an option. I mean, I had issues, my predecessor Grover Krantz had issues with promotions and tenure and so forth, and the cost to our professional careers through involvement; and there are many people out there who just are not willing to take those risks’ (A09).

#### 4.3 Summary and Conclusions

In terms of validity or proof of sasquatch, non-scientists drawing on personal sasquatch encounters commonly stated that the knowing was just based on the fact that their experiences were corroborated by others who have had similar experiences. The local communities that bring together sasquatch aficionados appear to be quite strong. Moreover, non-scientists who have thoroughly read available sources online or in books on the subject of sasquatch put out by professional scientists, for example, Jeff Meldrum, have described their reasons for reporting and putting on record their own encounters, as, for example, to assist science; and to gain peace and closure. Claiming that biased studies have been produced by misleading scientists, non-professionals want to assist those credible scientists risking their reputations and walking on eggshells while researching the topic. ‘Proof’ or not, being called a quack or nutty has reduced to one thing – the desire to find a body, to put the matter to rest – a catalyst for the search for proof.

On the other hand, some scientists remarked upon how the very methods of conducting science, in various realms of science (e.g., genetics, biology, systematics), have suggested other explanations of things identified as sasquatch. Maps of sasquatch sightings, for example, match quite closely maps of black bear sightings. An informant expert in systematics points out that even in the simple Bayesian statistical exercise of multiple cyclical attempts to find evidence, the number of sasquatch footprints, such as in the Big Horn Dam area, have plateaued. Professional scientists also suggested that when amateur investigators engage in their own type of presumptive exercises, taking every broken branch or impression in the soil as evidence of a sasquatch, the scientific community at large generally becomes put off. But discerning evidence, collected while searching for what is ‘good enough’ evidence or clear proof, has resulted in other interpretations or explanations, which are much less fascinating—for example, when it is shown that what was thought to be a sasquatch footprint could simply be mud crack shrinkage.

At the same time, a report that has fascinated both scientists and non-scientists alike is Brian Sykes’s DNA studies on a number of different hair samples solicited from individual and museum collections, in which genetic analysis of the hair samples attributed to a Yeti, bigfoot or other anomalous primate indicated a Palaeolithic polar bear. Outlier reports describing eye glow and telepathy have looked for support in arbitrary or ad hoc explanations, for example, concerning infrasound; most notably, parallels have been drawn with other larger animals and dolphins, which a local informant described as having the ability to stun their prey. In terms of explaining the elusiveness of the creature, this explanation would fit in rather well with most informants’, as well as indigenous descriptions of the sasquatch’s privacy requirements. With each of those concerned, arguments maintaining theories by professional scientists claiming they have evidence of a sasquatch as a natural species, and the claims of sasquatch sightings or

encounters by non-scientists have overall been circular; that is to say, the reputed sasquatch evidence of scientists has been taken from non-scientists' experiences, which have basically encouraged research by those scientists (who have based their theories on those claims and accounts by non-scientists).

## **Chapter 5: Sasquatch sightings: regional and practical applications**

The questions to be addressed in this chapter are: 1) Do sasquatch sightings, e.g., in Alberta, cluster by region; and if so, how can differences be explained; and 2) If belief in the existence of sasquatch is not sufficiently supported by physical evidence, what is the motivation driving believers, especially in Alberta. In regard to the second question, specific possibilities I investigate include: environmental concerns (the idea that the sasquatch, as a rare animal, is threatened with extinction through habitat loss), opposition to tourist development in wilderness areas, distrust of mainstream science, and conspiracy theories. For example, if there really were an animal to which ‘sasquatch’ refers, it would arguably need protection, in which respect this project and similar research could inform and thus contribute to efforts to protect it. Also, if the referent were a known animal, then indications that this was the case could reveal information on a species that has previously been overlooked or discounted—e.g., in regard to its range, proximity to other species (including humans), numbers, and so on. Other issues that have not received much attention are humour and ridicule, especially making fun of people who ‘believe’ in sasquatch; and, as befits a study in social anthropology, the social and psychological functions of ridicule and treating things in a humorous way.

5.1 Do sasquatch sightings, e.g., in Alberta, cluster by region; and if so what would explain the differences?

### **Views of local informants**

When it came to ‘sasquatch’ sightings and regions, local non-scientist informants provided the following views:

ACCOUNT 1 (L11):

‘I think in order for there to be a sighting, you have to have people. I don’t think there is any restriction that they have. What I’m saying, if there is a cluster it is only because people have a high accessibility to that which really is increasing with the amount of resource exploration’.

This informant claimed several encounters with sasquatch, including in the following places: (1) the Waiporou area; (2) the North Ram River and the South Ram River (in the early to mid-1990s while fishing); and (3) Brown Creek, of which the Chungo River is an offshoot; this is north of Nordegg on the Forestry Trunk Road (also in the early to mid-1990s while fishing).

‘So, I was on Chungo Creek, this would be right up, straight up from the Forestry Trunk Road, right on the boarder of the White Goat Wilderness area, which is part of the, I think, Athabasca drainage or South Saskatchewan drainage. ... When I was in that area [areas (2) and (3)], I was actually in there for five weeks fishing. I was working for [an oil company] on a contract and I actually had an entire summer off’.

In terms of the actual sightings [in areas (2) and (3)]:

‘it was pretty mundane, actually. I didn’t see anything. I was actually by my campfire one night, literally, right behind my truck; and the sun was just starting to go behind the mountains. It was getting dark. Like, people always talk about the smell associated with it. I’ve never smelt anything. So, I was sitting [by] my campfire and I was going over a topographical map because I was trying to find a tributary to the one river that I was on. I used to take a mountain bike with me because you can't take 4-wheel drives into these wilderness areas. It has to be on foot or bike or something like that. So, I was cycling up the trail checking out these creeks. There was one particular night that I went up. Well, that day I went up... see, I have a theory about this. I think that, and I’ve had this happen with grizzly bears to me twice. I think that they follow your scent back, the more you go

out and explore, they will track you back; so every time you go out, you have the potential of bringing something back to your site. They're curious...something new in their area. You've got to understand, they know their area more than we know our neighbours'.

'So, I'd come back from checking out a fairly tight canyon tributary one afternoon. I was sitting by the campfire; I'd just finished dinner. The sun was just going down, and all I remember is I got a really strong feeling to get in my truck. I ended up going to sleep. Nothing physical happened that I can remember. But, yeah, I just did not feel safe outside. It is the same feeling I got...[at Waiporous]. I correlate those two feelings as being identical. This time I didn't see anything. Nothing. Didn't hear anything, didn't smell anything, I didn't see anything'.

'You've got to remember, at that time I didn't believe in them. (This was before the Waiporous sighting). This would have been the early 1990s. It was mid-August; was cool nights but high teens to 20s [degrees Celsius] in the days. This is [a] remote [area]. Quite literally, the August long weekend, I saw one other person and they were in an old, old jeep. Other than that, for 36 days I didn't see anything. Oil exploration has sprung up hugely since then. Honestly, I haven't been back in that area for probably it's got to be 20 years' (L11).

#### ACCOUNT 2 (L13):

'Yes. It tends to be less common in flat areas. Saskatchewan has very few sightings. Manitoba has a fair number of sightings, but it tends to be more in the wetland area. And in Saskatchewan you don't get as many, and in Alberta you don't get as many until you reach the foothills again. In Alberta and western Canada, there seems to be, well, not on the coast, the coast is down on sea level; but in Alberta at least most of the sightings are at higher elevations. It is usually the foothills or the mountains'.

'There is a book called *Rainforest sasquatch* and it examines the correlation between rainfall, precipitation and sightings. We see the same thing here in Alberta that when you overlay maps of higher precipitation, to areas with the sightings, then tend to correlate' (L13).

The book referred to by the informant was written by J. Robert Alley (2003), a professor of Anatomy and Physiology.

ACCOUNT 3 (L15):

‘The clustering, well, I think that there are [both sasquatches that are] transients and territorials, so you have groups that live in that area. They have a great food supply, water supply. They need lots of water. I found that if you look into things, they need tons and tons of water. A big species like that, it needs water, good food; but water is a key point for finding them. Where I was at, there were two big creeks, big ponds, swamps, lot of water. Battle Lake – a large swamp and a large lake. Everywhere I have seen them or been close to them, where [we] were, west of Carstairs, are large water courses. They follow them [water]; they use them as methods of walking, and corridors; and they need to drink’.

‘The clusters you see are probably the territorial groups or transition areas where the ... the one in Salmo, BC, where we were told there was sort of a walkway for the animals and bigfoot, the gal who owned the café, the coffee shop we would go to, she said to us that her youngest son, when he was born, to go to sleep she would take the baby for a drive. She went up the Sheep Creek road [a little south of Salmo, BC] and she said, ‘I don’t know what I saw,’ but it was either a bigfoot or a man in a very hairy suit walking down the road. And when she came upon it [the bigfoot], it ran up into the mountains. Yeah. So, it is [near] water courses. The sightings are in these areas because these are transition areas or that is where is their specific, their territorial area’.

‘Sheep Creek is the one in Salmo, BC and just east of Salmo, a little tiny bit south of Salmo and then it runs right up deep into the mountains and [our Gold claim?] is 15 miles up the creek. You can go on Google Earth and see. It is Sheep Creek, BC. You can zoom in. Our gold creek is there, and transitions [into] a couple creeks that run into it; and our spot was right in the middle of that. Valleys come in and kind of intersect. You got numerous grizzly bears, black bears. Myself, I was chased by a black bear so we brought shotguns with bear bangers inside the shotguns to scare them away. I am a no-death guy.



I don't like shooting or killing. If it comes down to me and him, I will shoot but I try not to hurt anything so the shotgun is mostly to scare the heck out of the bear'.

'But, yeah, that was just another area. And the locals there too... we went up there for years. [...] And the locals there, it becomes... it is just part of your life. They [sasquatches] are there, and you kind of laugh at it and people say they don't exist... well, go talk to some of the locals. They [locals] will open up to you and they will [say], "Yeah. They [sasquatches] are there". They [the locals] will tell you stories of odd happenings. The Sheep Creek [encounter] would have been 2006-2009... because we would go up there. It was a way to get the heck out of the city. And it is deep, very remote country itself too'.

'... Salmo is just a small village, basically; and up where the gold creek is, it is very hard, very high rugged mountains. Beautiful country. The gold panning, it wasn't for the gold, it was just an excuse to get the heck out of town. Probably only got a few ounces of gold out of that creek; but the amazing part was just to get out, get away from the world and just sit back and enjoy the nature as it is supposed to be. One of the areas that we never understood what we were seeing, the locals they had no problem relaying stories and telling us probably you had a run in with a booger, a bigfoot, a sasquatch, buqua [sic]' (L15)

'Buqua' suggests the native, Kwakiutl word, usually transcribed, e.g., as 'bakwas', meaning 'woodman' (Suttles 1980: 248-249). There also seems to be a relation between 'booger' and English 'bogy' as in bogeyman – 'bogy' meaning an evil or mischievous spirit; or a cause of fear or alarm – see *Oxford dictionary of current English*, 2001).

ACCOUNT 4 (L17):

'Yes, I believe that [sasquatches prefer certain areas] because they know where they are protected. That is why I say they are bright. They are intelligent. They know where to go where nobody will bother them. That one area where I described that area where I used to

live [...] it is [in] that area [that they feel protected]. They have had sightings and they have heard of it, all my life and probably before that too. It is always that same area where we are not allowed to go into’.

‘[...] My dad told me never to go back there, you know, that place [...] the game trails where the branches were knocked off 5 feet high. [...] Yeah. Nobody ever goes over there. [Elders, also aware of sasquatch, try pass on information about sasquatch to younger ones]. For example, when I tried to move my trailer on to a certain area on the reserve, I was told, Nope!’ , that I couldn’t put my trailer there—[...] they all said “no, you can’t put your trailer there.” They explained to me that there is something [there] ... there are things that live in that area and that is bigfoot/sasquatch. ... You don’t even bother them because even when you go there, it is creepy. It is just something about that area. It is strange and you know that there is something there. [If people bothered the sasquatches] they [people] would get chased. Those are the stories of that area. They get chased. Obviously, they get away [the people outrun the sasquatch]. They [sasquatches] are harmless’ (L17).

#### ACCOUNT 5 (L18):

‘Well, let’s go back to the ’70s. We had less exploration, we had less logging in these slopes, Rocky Mountain House in that area, between Edson and Canmore; you know, the Forestry Trunk Road area. The only wild area in there was the Indian reservation there by Rocky Mountain House [...] The rest of it was all very little activity going on. Now it has all been mostly logged and it is definitely hunted and it is definitely 4-wheel drive-d, you know; there are people all over the place. Some people have blinders on. They are only there for what they were there for. They don’t pay attention to what’s going on’.

‘But we have other predators in there. We have wolves and if there was anything like a bigfoot, I imagine he would be another item in their food chain [wolves would eat sasquatch]...and or vice versa. We don’t know if this thing is a vegetarian, but if he is a vegetarian I don’t know how much grass he would have to eat or how he could digest bark. Moose digest willows and all deer. But when you are in an area of spruce, it is tough to digest spruce’.

[Regarding environmental concerns] ‘Well I can say that we should be paying attention to the environment, period. It is a ... I have a real issue with growing population and encroachment on wild places’ (L18).

ACCOUNT 6 (L19):

‘Somewhat, like about 5 years ago I had some reports come in and they were from up around Lac La Biche [hamlet 220 km north of Edmonton on the southern shore of Lac La Biche] and Lakeland Provincial Park [east of Lac La Biche]. Over probably Spring, Summer, Fall, I had probably five reports come in all from that area; and in my opinion I think it was probably a lone creature or maybe a small family of these creatures that were responsible for all these reports. That would have been about 2009. Lac La Biche, Lakeland Provincial Park is near Lac La Biche; that was an area where all of a sudden... I never had any sighting come in from there for any reports and then all of a sudden, boom! I had 4 or 5 [reports]. ...’ (L19). [The informant also confirmed that he/she had an earlier encounter, where he/she heard ‘wood knocks’ and ‘reply knocks’ around September 2015].

‘There are definitely certain geographical areas that see a lot more reports, like Highway 11 basically from Rocky Mountain House to Nordegg; there have been quite a few reports on that highway. Like the whole Nordegg area, Lake Abraham, that area has had a lot of reports too. And where I had my thing [own encounter] happen, that would be north of there. That would be ...like people say in the Nordegg area but Nordegg is still an hour and a half drive away ... north of Nordegg or south of Edson, Hinton area. ...’.

‘... Another place that things come from and actually I had a report come in from, and I went [and] checked out, was a place called Brown Creek and that is north of Nordegg on the Forestry Trunk Road. That one I had a report come in from and [an] oil field worker who was working driving down the road. There is a small 9-campsite ring there and this report came in that this fellow right before the campsite, about a kilometre before he got to the campsite, had one cross the road in front of him. But it just happened about two weeks before he filed this report with us. [We] went out there ...in June of 2013 because the fellow [oil field worker] saw it in May [of 2013] and he reported it shortly after May long weekend. [Victoria Day was on Monday, May 20th, 2013]. And I got out ...in June [2013] I believe it was; and so [we] went out there and stayed the night at this [Brown Creek] campground and looked around, looked for prints and listened... and then it

started raining quite a bit that night. There was nobody else in the campsite, campground. So we were sitting under some tarps around the fire and it was raining like cats and dogs! It was so loud on the tarp you could hardly talk to each other’.

‘... It was probably midnight and out of nowhere a rock comes flying underneath the tarp and hit my metal camp table and then flew over by my tent. Nobody else is in the campsite. I have no way to explain how that happened, so my brother said, ‘Oh my goodness! Is that a rock?’ And I said, ‘Yah’. He grabbed his spotlight and kind of flashed over where he thought it had come from, and we didn’t see anything; so we put our coats on and kind of had a walk around. We didn’t find anything or see anything. I can’t explain it but again another one of those strange occurrences that ... That one though, I definitely did feel fear. [When the rock hit the camp table] it went Pingggg! [made a ringing sound]. If it would have hit my tent I probably wouldn’t have even heard it because the rain was so loud on the tarp above. But the fact that it hit that metal camp table, which was right beside me, that is why I heard it and why I saw it. ... [the rock] it wasn’t too big. It was pretty small maybe an inch or two in diameter...But again, just another unexplained occurrence! I can’t explain it but...’ (L19).

#### ACCOUNT 7 (L20):

‘The sightings that I am aware of, and I don’t follow it, but the sightings that I am aware of all come out of what I would correlate to the same area where you look at it; and sure there are a few assumptions in there that they would need to, for food sources and that kind of thing, they would need to ... where they would be in the Spring and Summer would be different than where they would be in the Wintertime. So, it makes a lot of sense to me in terms of that area and transitional from the higher country, where there is lots of food during the Spring and Summer; and kind of the same way that the elk migrate from those areas and come down in altitude during the Wintertime to where there is food and forage available’.

‘...Actually, when I think about it, the Summer/early Fall, like when I saw the one [had the first sasquatch encounter], it probably would have been the first or second week of September. And when [we] were up in that area it was the first week of September because elk season opened up two days after, and it opened up the end of the first week of September, so again, it would have been the first week of September 10 years later or 12 years later [during a second sasquatch encounter] that when I saw the tracks and

[another person with the informant] saw the big black thing that scared the Jesus out of him to the point that he didn't just want to not hunt in that area, that he wanted to get the heck out of Dodge and completely break camp and leave the area' (L20).

### **Views of professional scientists**

With respect to 'sasquatch' sightings and regions, e.g., in Alberta, scientists and academic informants provided other views:

ACCOUNT 8 (A02):

A sighting that had been reported in wooded areas:

'The sightings are very brief, and from one region or another it is impossible to run after the thing and see what it was'. [Regarding a sighting in the Brazeau Dam area, for example] 'it [the mystery hominoid] was across the river, so by the time you got a boat and paddled across, whatever it was would be off, a hundred miles away...' (A02).

This geneticist informant, taking an interest in a report study that was once lent to him/her by a 'sasquatch' aficionado, stated:

'he could actually point to the map as to where they all were. There was a map in this report that he had. He had sort of circled the places that he thought they were in because these were places where he had lived in the mountains—heavily wooded areas, high elevation; it tends to be inaccessible areas or places that border on treed areas, in particular' (A02).

ACCOUNT 9 (A03):

'They definitely hang out in the mountains and in deep dark woods, and it makes good sense; and, of course, there's the bias of things making good sense. You remember things

that make good sense. It makes for a good story'. [Drawing on the characterization of sasquatch as a solitary creature, the informant stated that sasquatches would] 'hang out in the mountains where there is not a whole lot of people, and it's plausible that they can hide there. ... I don't think northern Alberta, although there are deep woods and there is not a whole of people there; but northern Alberta, the trees are pretty small. And besides a sasquatch would, and I'm of course speculating, a sasquatch would sink into the bogs pretty well' (A03).

#### ACCOUNT 10 (A04):

An academic informant mentioned the sightings that took place on the west coast in BC and in Washington in the US. The informant also referred to that 'that famous film,' that was shot in northern California, and recalled the footage from the 'Roger Patterson film' (Patterson and Gimlin 1967). Recalling stories coming from Alberta, the informant stated:

'When we moved to Jasper I heard stories from some people there that they had had strange experiences and encounters, which was really exciting to me and scary, too. At the time I was about fifteen years old; and I thought: maybe all these things live in the mountain here where I live? That would be amazing!' (A04).

The informant related one account told by an electrical linesman:

'There was one story in particular; this guy that I knew who worked for the electrical company and he was a linesman, so if a power line... he would have to drive up on these mountain roads to fix it. One night he said he was parked somewhere on a mountain road near Jasper, and he was sitting in his truck filling out the paperwork or whatever; and all of a sudden, he had his window rolled down, and there was this breathing right by the door of his truck and he turns and there was this big, dark shape and it went 'ggRrrrrrh!' and ran off, and he was convinced it was a sasquatch. Afterwards I thought, it was probably a bear... he was convinced he had seen a sasquatch, and it had been right by the door of his truck. So, stories like that, I just thought, felt were wonderful. [...] He believed it or at least he wanted me to believe it' (A04).

ACCOUNT 11 (A05):

According to this informant, other 'hotspot' areas where 'sasquatch' sightings were reported were in far western Alberta, for example, in the area of Rocky Mountain House and Nordegg.

Driving along roads and talking to other locals in Alberta, this naturalist informant explained:

'I used to drive to the mountains, especially down from Rocky Mountain House and then go west there, and then go through Nordegg and then you continue up leading up into the mountain parks. But before you reach the mountain parks, there is a long stretch of areas, wilderness areas off the side and access place for horses and a simple strip for many miles; and that strip is one of the hottest spots for sightings anywhere in Alberta' (A05).

Referring back to the 1970s, the informant mentioned someone producing a 'cluster thing [map]' of where sightings most often occurred. Although the validity of some claims may have been questionable, the informant noted the significance of recording the data:

'I once did a cluster thing of where sightings most often occurred, [...] in Calgary. There is not a lot of validity when somebody claims it is not on the map; and the general procedure for scientists is for them to just be able to collect them and then look for patterns, even though there will be false items within there' (A05).

'Wanted sasquatch/bigfoot' posters and rewards for shooting them', the informant stated, were also common during the 1970s, but such 'posters' and calls for 'rewards' to shoot a 'sasquatch' had dwindled since.

He/she further recalled, '...a lot of the people, when I came there were, and this was in the 70s, there were 'Wanted' posters (You never see a 'Wanted' today), rewards for shooting them. And as you drove along the highway there from Nordegg, which is a continuation west of Rocky Mountain House, into the mountains, right when you hit the mountains there, there's a pretty hot spot as are other places all the way up going north from there, and north of Hinton, these are spots' (A05).

Particular environments for ‘sasquatch’, hotspots had certain features, according to this informant:

‘...they’re [the spots]—mostly because they are subject to warmer weathers from the west coast—they’re natural places. There’s rich vegetation and a lot more water comes out. We’re in a rain shadow here mostly in the Rocky Mountains, but when you get into those places there’s a lot of British Columbia vegetation. Biologically, that would be the most likely place to be. But that’s where you start to see [and] notice of them, people talking about them. And people equated going into the mountains, it’s going into ‘sasquatch country’. Here they call it ‘bigfoot’, but [in] British Columbia term ‘sasquatch’ overflowed at that time’ (A05).

Focusing upon the regional differences indicated by ‘sasquatch’ sighting reports, this scientist informant, who is also a Parks and Wildlife consultant, provided examples from Alberta:

‘The differences seem very logical to me. [...]...most of them are associated with the mountains. There are always exceptions to that. There are anomaly points where we cross the Prairies; there might be some, but it’s not going to be the rule. And so they cluster especially around Waterton Lakes/Glacier National Park so that they’re in down in the mountain corner. It’s just a very promising site and some spots north of there’ (A05).

Banff National Park was getting ‘too crowded’ by people for ‘sasquatches’, the informant stated. He/she went on to say,

‘And so the next as you move north, as I say west of Rocky Mountain House, west of Nordegg, there’s a road that goes all the way up there into the park. [...] It’s called something [unsure of exact name] Saskatchewan Crossing, that’s a section of the park. That area Saskatchewan Crossing right over through Nordegg is kind of a hot spot. Some of the shows I’ve been seeing on television, where someone is out looking for sasquatch, and I recognize the places; it’s around Nordegg. They’re accessible and he’s out there



and everything you hear, they say, oh there was one over here three sasquatches that night, and I'm like, well, Nah, I don't think so' (A05).

Continuing north in Alberta, the informant explained,

'And then North, as you go North and around the Hinton area and all the way up there, the Ram River region, it's a nice wild area and there is lots of food. What's really keen when you are getting up toward Jasper and up into further north, Grande Cache and High Level, is that there are passes through the mountains there. The birds use them. The Arctic birds move through those passes and go to the Pacific Ocean. Where are all these Arctic nesting Loons and everything that are up there? How come we don't see them here? That's because they start down and then they head right out there at High Level' (A05).

Still referring to the passes that Arctic nesting Loons used (and still use), and railway areas, the informant further stated,

'Where they [the loons] still are. Yeah. Sasquatch would have been hit by a train, you know, so there's... But, and the other clue is where some of the other animals that need wild places and vegetation, and there's a lot of west coast vegetation in these places which is a clue in Alberta. So even the Swan Hills is a place that has promise for this. When you're up there, you're practically up in the Caribou Mountains; you're not very high up, which is north of Swan Hills right on the border. That's a nice high rich area, rich wolf populations, anything that kind of has rich other kinds of wildlife populations always seems to me, but that's where the native people... and I place a lot of value on traditional knowledge... and so they talk about these things and those seem to be the hot spots. I mean I don't expect to see a sasquatch when I'm taking out the garbage here [in Edmonton], but if I were up in Grande Cache and any of those other places, I might' (A05).

While engaged in 'bird studies' in the High Level area during the springtime, the informant (an ornithologist) stated,

‘...they [birds] just come through those passes, sometimes they come over, and they haven’t touched ground. They have been flying since the Pacific Ocean. But they come through there. What also comes through there is the warm weather, the warm conditions. So, each one of those areas are associated with passes, some are associated with railroad tracks; and everything that went through those same zones, because the railroads took the easy paths, so those are where the highlights are. It’s not across the Boreal in general. You’d think that, ‘Aww, gee, the Boreal forest must be a door all the way into..., well, it doesn’t seem to be’ (A05).

ACCOUNT 12 (A06):

Considering the distribution of sasquatch—and what is needed for a sasquatch report or sighting—a wildlife biologist explained:

‘I once did a lot of work on distribution and the problem is for a sasquatch report or sighting you need two things: you need the sasquatch and you need a human to see it; and you need a human who is going to report that sighting. There tend to be sightings, certainly part of northern Alberta and parts of the west coast of British Columbia; I think there are good sasquatch areas, but they are just living quietly by themselves and nobody has seen them’ (A06).

Logging areas were also areas of local ‘sasquatch’ sighting accounts. The informant stated:

‘Then you’ve got areas where people see them, so you get a lot of reports along logging roads, and maybe along rivers where people are fishing. Certainly we know that water seems to be a pretty good common denominator for sasquatch habitat, lakes, rivers, streams, swamps; but then there is this thing about humans to observe them. So I think there’s a bias’ (A06).

Some sightings in BC were also mentioned. The informant further stated:

‘About the clusters, we talk about hot spots like Harrison Hot Springs over there, and there are a couple of other places on the island [Vancouver Island]. ... I don’t know about hotspots. There are some areas. You get two or three sightings in an area...’ (A06).

ACCOUNT 13 (A07):

Another scientist informant, a palaeontologist, said he/she had never heard of sasquatches in Alberta. The informant elaborated:

‘I never heard of Albertan sasquatches when I was growing up. It was always British Columbia; then there was the yeti, I guess, in the Himalayas; and is there, was there another one? Bigfoot/sasquatch same thing...I always thought that the sightings were always sort of in forested mountain areas. There are obviously forested mountain areas in Alberta, but I never thought of Alberta as a sasquatch locality’ (A07).

ACCOUNT 14 (A08)

A primatologist informant added that sasquatch sightings may have been attributed to a ‘diseased bear’, and any sightings that were reported tended to be in mountainous areas. The primatologist explained,

‘I think it tends to be in remote areas of the mountains, for example; and that is why I think it is possible—[...]—that people are seeing bears upright. If there is anything strange about [a] bear, maybe it has got a disease that causes it to lose part of its hair, then they might confuse it’ (A08).

ACCOUNT 15 (A09):

Drawing on ecological differences to explain ‘sasquatch’ sightings or reports, a physical anthropologist informant stated:

‘Well, for me, the differences are ecological. This is a ‘wild man of the woods’ and so where the credible reports come, where there is a corroborative footprint record, and I always take encounter reports with a large grain of salt because even in the case of some individuals who claim that they are experienced outdoors people or they are avid hunters, as compared to someone who is a wildlife biologist or a game warden or who makes their career in the woods, to me those observations are much more reliable. And they [wildlife biologists, etc.] are more reluctant sometimes in their sharing of those, and that used to say more about I think the veracity of the subject matter than currently’ (A09).

On the credibility of trace evidence, the informant explained,

‘...the point is I place much more credibility on trace evidence than I do on the visual encounters, unless they are very exceptional. These fleeting glimpses of a shadow or figure, or the report of bigfoot activity based on yelps or bumps in the night, wood knocks or those types of things, I have seen too many examples; and the same goes for footprints. I need to see the footprints. I can't rely on the amateur investigator to differentiate credible data from their suppositions’ (A09).

Describing credible occurrences in ‘sasquatch’ habitat, the informant stated:

‘The credible things occur where there is sufficient rainfall and forest cover that produces the type of habitat that a large omnivorous primate could live in’.

On Alberta sightings, compared to sightings in the US, the informant stated,

‘...when you get to the [...] leeward side [of the Rockies] and starting on the Great Plains, there are not credible reports of bigfoot in the Kansas wheat fields, and I am sure not in Alberta prairie; but [when] you get up into the mountains on the western side there, and that habitat that would supports the omnivorous primate and there is sufficient coverage to remain secretive and elusive and so on’ (A09).

Concerning sasquatch sightings being reported from every state in the U.S., this scientist informant explained,

‘...when you look across the United States, I get aggravated when some of these documentaries talk about bigfoot being reported from every state in the Union, well, if that were the case... and, well, that is the distinction. Reported, yes, but there is evidence of bigfoot from every state in the Union, and even within particular states like in my state of Idaho, we don’t have reports of bigfoot in southern Idaho, which is sagebrush steppe. But when you get up half central Idaho, up into the mountains where there is 16 or 18 inches of precipitation a year, then you get a habitat that is productive sufficiently that can support these large animals and give them some sufficient cover and so forth. Same can be said for other regions of the United States and Canada’ (A09).

Possibilities, in terms of ecology (rather than based on reported sightings) of an ‘across the globe’ and a ‘universal’ ecological environment for sasquatch sightings were proposed by the same informant. He/she explained:

‘...it is an ecological basis; and that is where, if it were indeed universal, and in fact relict hominoids were reported from every climate and every environment across the globe, then it would be easier to simply attribute it to some archetype of the human psyche, some subliminal connection or subconscious connection to the wilderness, a longing to be at one with nature type of a thing. And you can see where the wildman icon of say medieval Europe may have evolved into some of that with the notion of the Green Man and so forth, which probably had their origins in the more traditional wildman which was a hair-covered humanoid. In those cases you can see where the myth has overtaken perhaps the reality. But even when you look at the contemporary reports of relict hominoids around the world, they come from areas where there is forest, where there is coverage. One of the things that struck me is, this is another example of that that I have used this so many times in presentations; I have collected examples of good footprint evidence, good footprint specimens from around the Asian continent’ (A09).

During a flight, while reading a magazine about tigers, the informant became aware of comparisons between the range of the tiger and its corresponding 'refugia' and the range of a 'sasquatch-like creature', as indicated by footprints. The informant elaborated:

'One time I was in an airplane reading a magazine article about the peril status of the Asian tiger. It had a graphic that just caught my attention because it showed the historical range of the tiger across Asia; and then the current range, which was a fragment of the historical range, and fragmented and split up into refugia [locations of an isolated or relict population of a once more widespread species]. What was interesting was that in each of those refugia is where I had examples, not each and everyone, but each example of footprints that I had of a sasquatch-like creature that I am sure that what we have here is the same as what they have in China, same as what they have in eastern Siberia down in China and up under the Himalayas and around the ranges skirting the Mongolian highlands and so on. But where I have those footprints they each corresponded to one of these refugia of the Asian tiger'.

'Now, it is not that there is a connection with the tiger. There is just a correlation with common habitat requirements which are basically wet forests. Now to me that is far beyond coincidence that the best evidence, the most compelling trace evidence that substantiates the allegation that there is some form of a relict hominoid corresponds to that ecological pattern, and isn't just something that is universal or randomly dispersed across the landscape' (A09).

ACCOUNT 16 (A10):

Drawing together 'sasquatch' sighting clusters and black bear abundance, a fish and wildlife scientist informant remarked:

'Places where people see these sasquatch are on where people and black bears tend to meet. And bears can look very strange. They can stand up in odd ways; and if you are thinking 'sasquatch' and you see a bear reaching up to eat some cranberries from a tree, your brain can interpret that as a hominid pretty quick' (A10).

Other types of ‘sasquatch’ terrain mentioned by this informant were open areas (e.g., marshes, muskeg); but he/she added, sighting accounts were rarer in open areas. Forested areas were more commonly reported as ‘sasquatch’ sites. Expanding on ‘distance’ [from ‘sasquatch’], the scientist informant explained,

‘Open marshes, muskegs. So there seems to be distance so it is not a bear at 10 metres. It is a bear at 150 metres partially screened by something. You don’t see them [sasquatches] in farmland. You don’t see them in dense forest; you’d be too close. [...] These reports that I see in the paper are, you know, someone hiking along a mountain ridge and looking down in the valley and seeing one of these things. Sure’ (A10).

## 5.2 If belief in the existence of sasquatch is not sufficiently supported by physical evidence, what is the motivation driving believers, especially in Alberta?

Possibilities investigated under this heading include: environmental concerns (the idea that the sasquatch, as a rare animal, is threatened with extinction through habitat loss), opposition to tourist development in wilderness areas, distrust of mainstream science, and conspiracy theories.

Something else also briefly discussed is humour and ridicule, especially ridicule and making fun of people who ‘believe’ in sasquatch; and since this thesis is a study in social anthropology, it is appropriate to review especially the social and psychological functions of ridicule, and treating things as humorous.

### **Views of local informants**

In response to the question of motivation for ‘belief’ in sasquatch in the absence of sufficient physical evidence, especially in Alberta, some local informants stated that sasquatches preferred

to assemble near ‘camps’; for example, a 1960s ‘First Nations camp, which consisted of ‘tepees,’ and later came to be known to certain people as ‘The Mountain of the Hairy Man’. In opposition to tourist development, informants also stated their reservations about building hotels and parking lots that paved and destroyed ‘special places’ of sasquatch and ‘encroached on wild places’—‘development nodes’ along highways also ‘broke habitat’ and caused ‘habitat fragmentation’. Preservation of these special places was important because it meant preservation of the [sasquatch] ‘species’ and its ‘location [habitation sites]’ (L16, L18).

Sasquatch signage and an illustration of ‘sasquatch’ by Alberta Sustainable Development, in a Rocky Mountain House/Clearwater tourist magazine (The Mountaineer 2015/2016), also served as symbolic reminders to campers, for example, to properly dispose of trash, ‘respect the land’ and ‘pay attention to the environment’. Indigenous views were also presented with emphasis on preserving the balance of nature and not ‘exposing’ sasquatch, i.e., ‘keep[ing] them safe’ (L16, L17, L18).

Local informants also stated their concerns about ‘growing [human] populations’ encroaching on ‘wild places’; ‘favourite places’; for example, a [sasquatch] ‘sanctuary’; were places to which sasquatches or ‘hairy man’ regularly returned; and the importance of ‘keeping them [sasquatches] safe’ was stressed (L16, L17, L18).

Another local informant explained that a ‘sasquatch’ encounter ‘convinced’ him/her of ‘sasquatch existence [Here, he/she preferred ‘conviction’ over ‘belief’, suggesting that words were important]. The informant explained, ‘if I hadn’t seen it I would be scoffing at it, but once I have seen it I can’t deny it. I don’t know if I can speak for the people that haven’t seen one; what drives them. I think that they’re the people I know that haven’t seen one but are still ‘believers’,



and most of us don't like the term 'believers' because we would say that we are convinced of the existence but ... [regarding terms other than 'believers'] maybe an 'accepter'? I have tried to come up with other words too, but I always try to use the word(s), 'I am 'convinced' of its existence rather than saying I 'believe' in its existence. So, 'convinced', to me, sort of connotes that there is evidence to have done the convincing; they argued for it. You can't be convinced of something without something arguing for that conviction' (L11).

Bigfoot Field Research Organization (BFRO 1995) expeditions that took place and that brought together people of various backgrounds interested in the topic of sasquatch, were also mentioned in this connection. As one local informant explained,

'We knew there had been sightings in the general area. We just chose a campground for our first expedition. We thought it was going to be really hit and miss. We followed the advice of the BFRO of how you call out for the few nights prior to the expedition so that you are sort of like casting to attract them to the area. And every year since, we have had very interesting activities at the expeditions since then' (L13).

Another informant highlighted the social benefits of being part of a group, 'camaraderie,' and friendships exploring for 'evidence' of 'sasquatch'. One informant stated,

'I think that socially if I was in Alberta and there were a group of people that wanted to explore or research and see if they could find evidence of and maybe with an eye to proving the existence of [sasquatch], I would be interested in doing that because of my experience plus what I bring to the table in terms of my knowledge of the outdoors and being able to rule out what isn't a sasquatch, what is explainable by all of the other animals that are there. But I think anytime you have a common interest with people, from a social benefit to those that are very divided being able to prove or substantiate something that is not proven; i.e., social benefit to be being part of a group and the camaraderie, the friendship and everything else with a goal of experiencing something that most don't, achieving something. I can think of many reasons that people would get

involved in that without their having anything but anecdotal information and stories along with some casts of footprints' (L20).

Regarding conspiracy theories arguing that forest industries, oil companies, and government, for example, were hiding something because some 'believers' worried about sasquatch 'habitat destruction', one local informant stated:

'The kind of conspiracy theory that forestry or oil companies or even the government itself is hiding some sort of evidence or is not coming forward with what they have actually received. That is a fairly wide free spread belief I would say. And then as far as habitat destruction ... I think that is very ...that is definitely, you know, I hate to say that these creatures need protection because we haven't been able to prove that they exist yet even. So, to say that these creatures need protection I think is not really true, you know. If these creatures are real, they have existed just fine by themselves in my opinion, so I don't think they really need any protection. But against that is another widespread belief that their habitat is being destroyed, they are rare, they are probably endangered, so I guess in the same sense you can almost see it as a symbol for Greenpeace or something like that in a sense. ... for Greenpeace or for people who...it is not so much sasquatch as much as it is saving the environment ... and it becomes a symbol of that too [a symbol not necessarily for sasquatch but generally for any wilderness preservation]' (L19).

Some laws making it 'illegal to shoot a sasquatch' in the US, for example, were also compared to views advocating protecting areas for 'sasquatch'; for example, in Washington and Texas. Thus another local informant stated:

'Few states here [in the US] have passed laws making it illegal to shoot a sasquatch. [...] ... in terms of protecting areas or that kind of thing for... The logical side, the unproven hominid of some kind... Politicians make the laws. Politicians do get behind something like that without there being some kind of an event where somebody was accidentally shot by someone believing that they were a sasquatch. Something like that I can see having the groundwork for politicians to get behind and passing that, but I would think that the lack of credibility would be a pretty serious dissuader to most politicians that I know' (L20).

Regarding mockery, local informants experienced ‘mocking’ and ‘being laughed at’. For example, one informant explained,

‘I pretty much can not get through the story [of a sasquatch encounter] because he [the informant’s friend] starts laughing and mocking so badly that I can't get through to him. It used to be just sort of a joke, but it got to the point that it started really bugging me. [...] He knows I have struggled to accept things from our religion over the years. He has been in a camp that has criticized me for my skepticism of religion, and yet at the same time they think I am somehow gullible when it comes to believing in sasquatch. So, I find that ironic. ... That [the gullibility factor] is what bothers me. That is what has driven me to keep trying to find answers. I want to exonerate myself, my reputation, because I hate that people think that I am gullible or delusional’ (L13).

Informants said they were dissuaded from telling people about their personal sasquatch encounters. For example, one stated,

‘It is easy for people who haven’t seen or experienced to ridicule those who may have, assuming they range from people who have actually seen something to people who believe they have actually seen something. Obviously it [telling people about encounters with sasquatch] is a dissuader, evidenced by the fact that I have told very few people. [...] The field that I work within and the world that I live in, saying that you saw a sasquatch would not really be constructively positive. So I think it is a dissuader. I think most people would question the intelligence and/or integrity of a lot of people that would make that representation’ (L20).

### **Views of professional scientists**

Professional scientists and academics offered other views on motivation, the part played by conspiracy theories, and related matters in regard to ‘belief’ in the existence of sasquatch.

According to some informants, ‘conspiracy theories’ and a ‘combination of things’ contributed to the motivation driving ‘sasquatch believers’, or ‘sasquatch accepters’. For example, a geneticist stated:

‘I do think conspiracy theories contribute... People really embrace conspiracy theories, some people do; so it is almost as if the lack of mainstream evidence further, I would say, attenuates their own belief because they are convinced that if there isn’t evidence that has been shown, there must be evidence that must be hidden. Kind of like the UFO thing, I think; some people will actually, you know, will go in that direction’.

The informant continued:

‘My guess is that there are a combination of things there, part of [them] being some people are probably motivated by, it’s somehow aligned with their environmental fears and concerns. For some people, it is going to be motivated by some kind of spiritual or metaphysical belief that the world holds secrets and the secrets are in our backyard; and here is a compelling secret, and here is a compelling story. There are areas we haven’t touched yet and we should probably keep them safe, and the man in the forest protects them. As well as I think the conspiracy theory thing, I think that actually motivates people almost entirely. I suggest or I believe there is probably a good correlation between believing in sasquatch and believing that we are regularly visited by aliens, for the same kind of conspiracy theory’ (A02).

Another professional scientist stated,

‘For some of them (‘the population who have the desire for there to be sort of cool things out there’), if they want to have a God-substitute they will go for UFOs, but this is not a God-substitute; it’s a...there is still mystery in the universe and there are other forms of life out there so there is sort of the desire for that’ (A03).

An English professor and author thought that part of the motivation was a rejection of western science. For example, he/she stated:

‘There are people who... they don’t trust mainstream media, they don’t trust mainstream science or authority figures or whatever; so I think this sort of feeds right into that. Somebody can claim, ‘I have this special knowledge that other people don’t have. I know something that people don’t know’. I think that is a really powerful thing for some people’ (A04).

A biologist informant’s motivation, as a ‘person who accepts the evidence as sufficient or at least sufficient for further study’, stated:

‘There is a wonderful scale of credibility from E.O. Wilson (1998) at Harvard, who says, as evidence builds upon evidence, we go up from finding a discovery claim from interesting to suggestive to compelling and, finally, conclusive, [to] what he says finally, obvious—I don’t think it’ll be obvious, but anyway... I always wonder where are various people on this scale. I find the evidence compelling, if not conclusive’ (A06).

Referring to the question of why there are commonalities in beliefs around the world , a primatologist informant replied:

‘There seems like there are some commonalities, ... some things that humans need. Maybe we need it... maybe we need to believe in a creature that is part-human and part-animal. There is also the Tarzan belief that there have been children that have been raised in the wild by animals, and that is not just in one culture that occurs. I don’t know the answer because I haven’t studied myths. I don’t know why people believe things for which there is no evidence. I never thought about this; but I would guess that maybe people, not everyone, but the same person who can believe an anthropomorphic god, a personified god, when there is no evidence for that, could also believe in mythical animals in the world. Unicorns’ (A08).

An ornithologist who attended the 1970s sasquatch conference organized by Marjorie Halpin (Halpin and Ames, ed. 1980) at UBC stated:

‘...there were several main arguments came out of the conference, but it also defined an important question about them [sasquatches or mystery hominoids]: Here was something that was new, something that in my position was... remains.. is something that we have a responsibility for. I take that argument of birds which nest only in Canada. Many of them do come from the tropics, the neo-tropics; there are about eight or nine that are only in Canada’.

‘My position is that we have a responsibility for these, and I think that is the case here, that we have a responsibility that if we could give this the validation. ...., now the timber industry would be scared to death that this [sasquatch] could be found! Some say that, well, they may have found it; and one was killed along a highway by one of the logging trucks and there was money paid to a driver to not say anything, and get the carcass in. Now, there has been more than one of those claims and that’s very possible, because can you imagine the implications to the logging industry if all of a sudden you validated you had an animal that needed large spaces of wild areas? I think in reality they [sasquatches] have been living with us for some time; but I think you'd still need places that are wild and old-growth forests which logging companies don’t even acknowledge the value of, because one reason is that those are warmer’ (A05).

Referring to another case, the same informant stated that in Alberta or western Canada, for instance,

‘the moose go into [...] where there is the old growth trees that, you know, have been around for two hundred years, so for at least, for five hundred..., it’s warmer in there. Animals just go into these places because it helps them get through the winter. They are also part of the ecosystem of the forest. There are a lot of species that are only in old growth and nowhere else. I’m a big advocate for protecting old growth. But the implication to loggers, if one of these were killed, is that all of a sudden there would be a move for a sasquatch national park, there would sasquatch wilderness, and there would, and there should, frankly. That’s exactly what should happen, but they wouldn’t want that to happen’ (A05).

The informant added:

‘It [sasquatch] would be similar to a grizzly bear in its biological demands and it’s vegetarian, you know; and it might eat fish. It probably is very similar to the bio-demands of a grizzly bear. But we are not protecting grizzly bears either. They are declining left and right for the same reasons. We shoot them wherever we.... They wander on a rancher’s place, and he [the rancher] says ‘Oh, they’re looking at my sheep, bang!’ and they’re dead, and they do that. The numbers now are that there are less than five hundred in all of Alberta. That shouldn’t be the case so..., and plus they have a hunting season on grizzly bears. So, it’s similar demands. In fact, a sasquatch isn’t an old [forest]-growth species, but it’s a species that needs places where it can conduct a life and have families just like grizzlies do and wander... we don’t know anything about how far they wander, what kind of a range they have. ... They have been pretty good at staying out of people’s way. But still, their environment just shrinks every year... because when you think of the things they would eat like berries, they eat a lot of berries, but that doesn’t happen until late in the summer. So, they are out there eating berries and eating berries. Well, you don’t find berries in old growth forests. You know, you find them in young growth. So the demands of where these things need [to go in their environment], for things like that; some of them are probably eating salmon in salmon streams and places. I wouldn’t at all be surprised, but they are probably doing it at night, whereas the bears don’t care. The bears are out where you can photograph them’ (A05).

Another informant wondered what would happen to the forest industry if physical ‘evidence’ of a sasquatch was ever to confirm the ‘existence of sasquatch’. The informant reflected,

‘I often wondered if that would happen. Grover Krantz talked about this. [Regarding] environmental concerns like the forest industry... when someone says, ‘When we see what the spotted owl did to the forest industry in Washington, no one wants to talk about the possibility of the sasquatch or bigfoot existing in the forest because that would really shut things down. I don’t see that as a factor. Mind you, loggers are so macho they are reluctant to talk about a lot of things’ (A06).

On environmental concerns and tourism, the same informant stated,

‘It’s almost like there is some kind of agenda. . . . I advise people, watch out for conspiracy theories. I get this especially with the Americans because they’re down on their government. There are these reports. . . , someone has shot a sasquatch maybe on a military operation; and immediately the black vans, no, the white vans arrived with the men in black coats and the cadaver was whisked away. Well, that may or may not have happened, but it sounds like ‘suppression’ of evidence. That’s another word I avoid. I’m not saying the evidence is suppressed; it’s resisted, and scientific resistance is well acknowledged. If you say it’s being suppressed, then that sounds like conspiracy; and I try to avoid that’ (A06).

Speaking both about wilderness protection and the possibility of ridicule, another scientist informant stated:

‘No one’s ever used, rarely to my knowledge, the sasquatch as an argument for wilderness because people would laugh at the [wildlife/science agency/association/institution] or me if I were to stand there and up and say this wilderness should protected because of the possibility that it has sasquatches in it. I would love to be able to say that; but if I do, the credibility of my argument and myself would be diminished’ (A05).

The informant qualified this comment by stating:

‘But I would be arguing for wilderness on the basis of the grizzly bear and the big-horned sheep and everything else, the wolves; and there’s a lot of other arguments. Everything in., the best areas are you know, . . . in the best ecological areas exist pockets of life. Pockets! And it’s like when you go from one good pocket to another pocket. It happens in the desert that way, and it happens up here. So when you get a pocket of a place where you’ve got like everything, like in Waterton Lakes, and it’s all squeezed in to a small space—the mountains aren’t spread out like they are up in Jasper—they’re all compressed together so you can access it all easily and everything is in there. And yeah, it’s wild enough that everything like wolverines and other things would have room. So, they are in pockets. [...] And it’s the same with the plants. There is good plant distribution. There is good diversity wherever biodiversity exists. It’s the same in the



oceans. So we go from pocket to pocket, and a good pocket of wildlife is probably a good pocket for the sasquatch' (A05).

Referring to 'humour' connected with the 'tall tale', an English professor remarked:

'It probably ties in with the long tradition of the tall tale in North America, especially western North America. The tall tale is a way I think that early European settlers had of dealing with a world that was unfamiliar to them, and was dangerous and difficult to make a living out of, and so on. So you would take the aspects of that world and turn it into humour, to make people laugh or to make them gasp in disbelief or whatever; and I think sasquatch fits right in with that kind of trying to make stories out of the place. Interesting, fun, scary stories out of the place that you are, and I think that is probably part of where it comes from. My sense of things is that then, over the decades, is that the sasquatch has then become like a joke figure. There have been movies and comic books, I think there have been even beer commercials featuring sasquatch, so it has that whole other life as a kind of icon of wilderness. That's probably partly what it is—the sasquatch can stand in or be an icon or symbol of wilderness, of wildness, all of those things' (A04).

On the idea that scientists are not looking into the question of bigfoot, another informant stated:

'I was reviewing a documentary that a very well intentioned young producer was putting together, and he had taped an interview with a prominent [sasquatch] investigator. [The sasquatch investigator] was making the point, and rightly so, that scientists had essentially turned their back on them; and that always puts me in an awkward position, because I consider myself within science. I am not a bigfoot enthusiast. I am scientist looking at the question of bigfoot. So when someone like [the sasquatch investigator] says that no scientists are taking this seriously; well, that always rubs me a little bit the wrong way' (A09).

The same informant, looking at the question of ‘bigfoot’, also mentioned experiencing ‘dismissive comments’ [or ‘attack’] by ‘independent researchers’ and ‘ideological skeptics’ who were ‘pooh-poohing the footprint evidence [without citing the scientist’s own work],’ and ‘chalking it up to pseudoscience’ instead of science. (A09)

### 5.3 Summary and Conclusions

In observing the regions of sasquatch or mystery hominoid sightings mentioned by local informants, common areas within Alberta are shown in the map in Figure 1. The informants identified the Rocky House region and offshoots from the colloquially-named Forestry Trunk Road. Identified from fishing excursions, 4-wheel driving in area, or traveling on foot or by bike, the areas described are associated with other large mammals such as the grizzly bear; and all are wilderness areas. Alluding to unsafe feelings and back-checking while sitting by a campfire, for example, the strong feeling that something ‘creepy’ or ‘fearful’ was out there, was a reoccurring theme. The background, also sketched in detail—beautiful surroundings, creeks and places of curiosity—all meld in one. Generally, nothing physical happened – the encounter was at a distance – and for distance to in fact occur, the places had to be wide and expansive.

A looming threat to such places included oil companies that were springing up in many places and threatened the openness of the land. Sightings were less common in flat areas such the plains of Saskatchewan, though the wetlands in Manitoba were described as having a few sightings. The Alberta foothills extending into British Columbian high elevation areas were most prominent for sightings. Food supply went hand in hand with corridors alongside waterways, such as those west of Carstairs and near Battle Lake in Alberta, as well as Sheep Creek (dubbed

‘gold creek’ presumably for its proximity to historic gold mines in the area) near Salmo, British Columbia.

Temporal ranges of sightings during the mid-1990s in the North Ram River or near Nordegg corresponded with sightings along the Forest Trunk Road in the 1970s, a time when ‘Wanted’ posters were put up offering rewards for shooting a sasquatch. An ornithologist who detailed corridors of Arctic nesting Loons (in the Hinton, Ram River, Grande Cache and High Level regions) in intricate detail, stated that shooting a sasquatch would not occur today—nor would sasquatch be able to easily cross the passes that the Arctic nesting Loons use, due to railways in the area – where sasquatch was likely to be hit by a train if attempting to cross the train tracks.

In terms of distribution, ‘hot spots’, such as Harrison Hot Springs in British Columbia, a major tourist attraction for sasquatch aficionados, were regarded as a type of ‘refugia’ for a thriving sasquatch population, relatively speaking—as we know, sasquatch populations are not at all thriving—but it is considered a ‘hot spot’ nevertheless. In terms of refugia, parallels were drawn, by a physical anthropologist, with other animals such as the Asian tiger, whose habitat and footprints in eastern Siberia and among the Himalayas were claimed to correspond with footprints of Asian sasquatch-like creatures. Common ecological patterns with relict populations of once more wide-spread species, in such cases as the Asian tiger, were also said to be a common habitat of sasquatches. Basically, the point made emphasized that bigfoot or sasquatch was not just randomly dispersed across the landscape.

Similarities between scientists and non-scientist informants included the view that reported sasquatch sightings were commonly in forested areas and near water sources. A

difference between the two groups was that the reported sightings, according to scientists, matched a real creature such as bear. Motivation factors driving ‘believers’, according to scientists, were for example, the idea that the world holds secrets in our backyard. However, for local informants, motivation was linked to their claimed sightings. Finally, ‘sanctuaries’ for sasquatch and protection of the environment were symbolically linked for local informants.

During my fieldwork, a Rocky Mountain House and Clearwater tourist magazine I picked up in the area illustrated a sasquatch with the caption (and ‘Sasquatch’s message’): ‘Welcome to our backyard: please enjoy and respect it’; and the message campaign invited visitors ‘to enjoy the great outdoors, but to use respect and to take care of the natural spaces—so they can be preserved for generations’.

These views were comparable to those of a local Indigenous informant who maintained an emphasis on preserving the balance of nature. This idea also corresponds with anthropologist Elizabeth Lawrence’s example of ‘wildlife sanctuaries’ at the very heart of the ‘cattlemen’s domestic empire’; where the ‘wildlife sanctuary’ is seen as untamed domain, and where ‘battles rage at the borders where tame meets wild,’ between the menacing ‘Department of the Interior’ and livestock industry – or where a special relationship in such ‘sanctuaries’ occurs between Plains Indians and their horses, people who feel the ‘special power in the wild, for which they have great respect and awe’ (Lawrence 1982: 261; 263-265).

## **Chapter 6: Hominoids and wildmen around the world, and sasquatch and other cryptids in popular culture**

The questions to be addressed in this chapter focus on the fact that, over the last decade or two, palaeoanthropological research has revealed hominins existing contemporaneously with *Homo sapiens* (and Neanderthals). The best known cases are *Homo floresiensis* (in Indonesia) and the Denisova hominins in central Asia. These discoveries have made the hominin family tree appear much more 'bushy' and multilinear than previously. Therefore, I asked informants, mostly professional scientists, whether this development has affected people's views of the likely survival of non-sapiens hominins into historic times, a possibility that could form a basis for images like sasquatch—and also yeti, etc.

The other point I raise concerns the inability of scientists to prove the existence of sasquatch, or to dismiss it as easily as some other ideas (e.g., ghosts, fairies at the bottom of the garden, and perhaps space aliens)—owing to naturalistic representations of the creature that suggest it is just another zoological species. Therefore, a question I asked informants, both scientists/academics and non-scientists, was if there was anything that could prove that mystery hominoids do not exist, or that they are purely fictional?

The latter part of the chapter explores sasquatch (and associated mystery hominoids or cryptids) in popular culture. For example, I enquire about term(s) informants use for the phenomenon, especially sasquatch (are there other names known or in use?); what they have read (or heard through media); and what people understand 'sasquatch' or 'bigfoot' to be referring to and whether they consider these the same things? I also discuss any other views local people might have on other 'mystery creatures'; for example, lake or sea monsters.

## 6.1 Hominoids and wildmen around the world, and the ‘bushy’ hominin tree

In North America, sightings of things corresponding to the hairy hominoid image of the sasquatch or ‘bigfoot’ have been reported since the 1800s in places such as the Pacific Northwest, northern California, and across an expanse from the east through to the Rockies and Oregon (Lett 1997: 72; Meldrum 2006: 189, 191). Other mystery hominoids are also said to exist outside of North America; e.g., in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia (where it is known as Yowie), and South America (Loxton and Prothero 2013: 71).

On palaeoanthropological research which has revealed hominins existing contemporaneously with *Homo sapiens* (and Neanderthals), contributing to a ‘bushy’ and more, multilinear hominin family tree, as stated above, I questioned whether this development has affected people's views of the likely survival of non-sapiens hominins into historic times, and whether this possibility might have formed the basis for sasquatch images.

### **Views of local informants**

A few non-scientists (locals and amateur researchers) expressed specific views.

ACCOUNT 1 (L13):

One local informant, also a sasquatch report investigator for the Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization (BFRO), stated:

‘Exactly. Sure, yeah. Middle Earth. ...in the community you have, if you look at the non-scientists, you still have nerds like me who really like science, and so this is very exciting for me and helps inform our impressions of what we are running in to; and gives us hope that maybe there is some scientific basis for what we have been encountering. I know an anthropologist [that] gets very excited about all these discoveries. And there are other people just that it is above their pay grade, they don’t want to pay attention to it. I don’t think that for the general public it [i.e., the palaeontological research (above) directly] informs their sightings, but I think the people that already believe in it get excited about it because it might give us more credibility and more support. I would think if you are a biologist or budding anthropologist, that this should make you feel a little less weirded out by the notion and you would be more willing to investigate it’ (L13).

#### ACCOUNT 2 (L19):

Another local informant, an aficionado involved in organizing a local community sasquatch website, remarked,

‘Right. It is not just a missing link. It doesn’t go from one animal to one animal. There are multiple *Homo* species at the same time that have been happening... [...]

...I keep track of all of stuff online involving bigfoot, sasquatch ideas, and what not. And definitely *Homo floresiensis*; that was a big I guess what would you call it...it was kind of a boom for sasquatch researchers in the fact that something like that could have existed as little as 4,000 or 5,000 years ago; this could definitely promote the idea that there are other *Homo* species around such as sasquatch, bigfoot, yeti. Some people even think it might be a relict population of Neanderthal, stuff like that.

So I would say those discoveries definitely spur on sasquatch researchers or enthusiasts and help with their views of this creature and how it might possibly still exist. Obviously there is that whole group of scientists, enthusiasts, and researchers who think this might just be a relict population of *Gigantopithecus*. ...I have put quite a lot of time in ’ (L19).

ACCOUNT 3 (L15):

A local informant, who stated having a few reputed sasquatch sightings in Canada (with three in Alberta), remarked,

‘Yes. You have more human species and human life, bipedal species anyway, ... you have more of those coming out every year almost. I look at those as like...right there! Look. (laughs) Maybe Neanderthal, he didn’t disappear, maybe he just walked away from us, you know, farther away. Farther away. Maybe... I can't pronounce that one [attempts ‘Deversh...’]..the Russian one found in the cave, wasn’t it? ... You look at that, it just walked away from us. *Homo sapiens* is quite a violent little guy. We like killing things. Why would you want to be around us? For your survival you have a semi-intelligent or fairly highly intelligent ape or creature; why would we want to be around you? You’re destructive, there’s lots of you, we just ran away. They go into the margins where we don’t go. Bigfoot, it lives in places that we don’t go’ (L15).

ACCOUNT 4 (L20):

A non-scientist informant, who works in business, reported an encounter with sasquatch,

‘I think my short answer would be yes. [...]...if there was an animal of moderate intelligence that didn’t want to be found or seen, it wouldn’t be that difficult; and be able to sustain itself in areas that had lots of food and accessibility for food. But I am also ... I guess you look at the images and the carvings and that kind of thing by the Native Indians and the very great and very original, those images and what I saw, I have an advantage in that I saw what I saw so it makes in easy for me to look at things and say, yah, it makes sense but only because I have seen what I have seen.

People that haven’t experienced that are going on faith or buy into the credibility of others; those are individual choices and decisions that we all make, based on our strengths and our weaknesses. [...]... I think that the proving of, in the recent past in terms of a matter of decades, of the other hominids that actually do exist, you know, that they are missed; and the stories that were told among elders and passed on in other countries, I think that lends itself to possibility. So, yes, I think that is a valid point.’ (L20).



## The views of professional scientists

Professional scientist informants also offered views on the question:

ACCOUNT 5 (A02):

A geneticist, referring to how a bifurcated bushy tree feeds into sasquatch beliefs, stated,

‘Not only is that tree bushy, but it’s not completely bifurcated. There are connections across those groups. And, that...those things are true,..., and I’m sure that helps feed into these beliefs, that helps support these beliefs.

...The other thing is that occasionally we do find species that haven’t been described by man, and that sort of, some people use that as, well, the hubris of science to say that we know everything when we don’t. So every time we find something out that’s new, it highlights what all know as practicing science, that of course, we don’t know everything. We haven’t even described half of the species on earth. So there are plenty of things that are indescribable; or as soon as you say that or if you acknowledge that, it gives people, feeds those beliefs, recognition of some of those facts. So, I think it does, and it probably feeds the same centre of the brain that likes conspiracy theory because this is a place where you can support a belief, [...], you don’t need evidence to support the belief. The lack of evidence is good enough that I can find a place for it, that it can exist without being conflicted by evidence’ (A02).

ACCOUNT 6 (A03):

Bringing to light the latest news on *H. floresiensis*, a biologist informant added,

[re *H. floresiensis*]...but the latest evidence as of about two weeks ago is that Flores man did not overlap. [laughs and claps] I’m disappointed! ... [re Denisova hominins]... Oh well, I don’t know if I have Denisovan genes in me but I definitely, according to the evidence, have 3.1 percent Neanderthal in me...at 40,000 years ago a little bit of

miscegenation, or whatever judgmental term you wish to apply, I think, you know, a little outbreeding will get a few good genes in there' (A03).

In terms of making the hominin family bushy and multilinear, the same informant stated:

'Yes, and [*Homo*] *naledi* man in South Africa in the last year, a whole new hominid species has been discovered and well supported, a whole cave of them, which is amazing in terms of evidence and apparently the potential to overlap with others... I can't remember the dates of those bones...I can't remember...' (A03).

On how people's views of the likely survival of non-sapiens hominins into historical times have been affected, a possibility which could form the basis for images of sasquatch or yeti, the informant went on to remark:

'I am not detecting a whole lot of connections being made between that. I think our image of who we are and where we came from is expanding, and our attitudes towards diversity—cultural, genetic, linguistic, etc. diversity—has changed just in the last generation; and these real anthropologically verifiable bones and so on are contributing to that and the DNA evidence as well. But there are all the political factors in Canada; for example, we'd better get used to the idea that we're not a European transplant nation. We may have sort of been that for a little while but it's changing over time. So, do we have... I am not hearing that much of a connection except for Flores man and the delightfully named, and much people worrying about it, the hobbits' (A03).

ACCOUNT 7 (A05):

An ornithologist, a former consultant and senior advisor on conservation of parks and wildlife, provided his view in support of sasquatch, stating:

'... I think that's all true. I used to argue the fact that we draw a lot of conclusions about even the origins of humans, and we got now...down to coexistence for 4 million years

now with humans with other primates and as those earliest forms? [...] [...] It used to be 3.5, but I think it is up to 4 now... To me a lot of things that may segregate *Homo*'s... well, ourselves, in the lines of ourselves back to *erectus* and beyond... I think it means to me that there has been more time for the partitioning of these things, dividing us up in a big macro way so we can see all these things all the way up into the Russian belt of mountains and saying, that yeah, that makes sense that the passage would come here and in which case it would come right down the west coast! ... so that's logical and there's been time to make it, but most of the things that affect other life forms around here are very short. We're going back... to a million years, just partitioning. Glaciers have divided up and have accounted for most of these things. How old is our boreal forest? Not very old! The components are old because they go back a long way; but the way they have been assembled after this last post-glacier period, and in relation to other places, is very recent' (A05).

On sasquatch as a fairly recent partitioning, the same informant continued:

'So really what it would amount to is the reality of what we are dealing with sasquatch is probably a fairly recent partitioning, but it has a roots that go back a long time; and that avoidance behavior, for example, how they would avoid the other more aggressive forms, I think especially ones which had tools, where the vegetarian lines that just ate leaves probably had to stay out of their way or they'd have been killed. And I think that some of those deep avoidance postures go back a long way. Now, how do you avoid other things? Are there other sensory perceptions that may be in play? How do you know when you have an enemy out there? How does so many of the things that we know when animals hunt, how do you know which animal to pick if you're a predator and you're trying to pick an antelope? Is it really just that you observe that one is limping or not? I don't think so. I think often times you're picking up on something about the whole mental construct and projection of that animal that says this one is ready to take. And, how do I choose, how do I know that? Well, I think they may do that in other ways' (A05).

Drawing on the notion that sasquatch has higher sensory perceptions, and on sasquatch's avoidance of people, the ornithologist informant expressed:

'But I think, to me the sasquatch has been avoiding people for a long time and is pretty good at it. And it may be utilizing higher sensory perceptions than other animals do. I mean, we've studied that in dolphins. We've studied things in dogs, horses—if it's so in

horses, what must it be in zebras? It's all the way along the line. How would it be in a sasquatch that's out there and has no shortage of food? It has everything it needs and the numbers; as a conservation scientist, I worry about numbers. How many of them are there? Are there corridors between them that connect them? These are the ways we should be thinking, and the frustration is that I can't even sit down and do that. That's the kind of thing I would have done for the federal government. .... [if they] had come [and said] what do we need to do? And I would say, well, I'd say, we've got pockets of distribution here and we've got to have corridors between these. I mean, we're doing that for Jaguar now, you know, to be able to figure out how they can move. It's been an important initiative to set up corridors and wild places where we would have it' (A05).

Alongside other animals categorized as 'charismatic megafauna' (a term also employed by Lanjouw [2013], mentioned in my first chapter), the same informant, a former advisor on wildlife and parks conservation, has suggested the category be applied to sasquatch as well.

He/she explained:

'But we need a really highly charismatic animal to work with. You know. Jaguar. You couldn't do that with some small things? Who gives a damn? But a sasquatch is a charismatic megafauna. CHARISMATIC MEGAFUNA. It's a big fauna that has flair and charisma about it. Now, I can sell something that is charismatic megafauna because there are people who care about that. I've been caught in situations where I had to develop how do we protect the Happy Spider in Hawaii? Who cares about it? Well, let's make it the Happy Spider, the symbol of Hawaii. There've been children's books written about it. Now we have them! You know, it's true. It's a true spider! It's a magnificent looking colourful thing. So the happy-faced spider, which I know and visit every chance I can, has become the symbol for environmental education. It's only doing that because it's got this happy smile. I mean that belongs to a... it's a relative of the black widow family, which we don't celebrate.

And a sasquatch is a charismatic megafauna. You can sell that! And that's important to me because you can convince people because you've got something that's wow! I suspect that anybody who has an industry in forestry and products, it's the last thing they would want... I mean, it'd be the last thing [about which] you'd ever want to say "guess what we have now? We've just found a dead sasquatch on the road or a sick one and here it

is!” Are you kidding me? That would never surface. That would just be buried because the implications would be profound’ (A05)!

ACCOUNT 8 (A06):

Another informant, a wildlife biologist supporting sasquatch, provided his views on tracks and *Gigantopithecus*. He/she stated:

‘What I did learn over the years is that, and I didn’t know this, what a lot of scientists will not scrutinize, let’s say we have this track evidence for the sasquatch, they don’t want to discuss something unless we present a theoretical basis for the existence for that mammal here. Like I used to say, I don’t know how it got here, I don’t know where it comes from, all I know is that it is here and it’s leaving tracks, and it is being observed. Then I had to say, No, that’s not good enough. Scientists they want ... so we came up with, and a lot of people have, the *Gigantopithecus*, saying, okay, there was this giant ape in Asia that could well have crossed into North America on the Bering Land Bridge and persisted; or a close relative of it has persisted. So, there, there is at least a possible theoretical basis for consideration. I kind of like it because it is an ape. I happen to sort of favour the ape-hypothesis over the human-hypothesis even though that is sort of an artificial distinction now.

‘The other problem with amateur investigators is that they don’t get very far into that area, so you get them saying, “Oh, no. This is obviously paranormal. There is obviously shape-shifting going on here because here was this one track and no more; so it changed, it went into another dimension.” And you say, oh my goodness, whoa, let’s stop right there. But there are a lot of people at these conferences... and again, it’s because they haven’t received informed opinion from relevant scientists. Anything goes! Anything goes’ (A06).

ACCOUNT 9 (A07):

On the image of sasquatch, a palaeontologist informant remarked:

‘I guess for me the image of sasquatch is very hairy, like furred [laughs]. That’s not very hominoid, hominin-like; sort of more like a gorilla. Could there be others? Sure’ (A07).

ACCOUNT 10 (A08):

Concerning the field of hominin evolution and recent discoveries, a primatologist and anthropologist stated:

‘Yeah, I think that could be the case; but it would probably be an unusual person who with... that was educated about what was going on in the field of hominin evolution and recent discoveries in the field who would also be a believer in sasquatch. I think that would be a fairly unusual combination in one person.

Without being too disparaging, I think that most of the people who believe in a sasquatch-like creature would not have a great deal of scientific education. They would not have a lot of education in terms of recent discoveries in human evolution and fossils’ (A08).

ACCOUNT 11 (A09):

On anticipating the next discovery of relict hominoids and a ‘shifting paradigm’ in the discipline of anthropology and the sciences, a physical anthropologist stated:

‘I have yet to see a dramatic shift. As I said, I have been working and working to draw attention to what I see as a shifting paradigm; and to promote the proposition that, hey, we as anthropologists should be looking at this. In fact, we should be anticipating the next discovery of these kinds of relict hominoids, but so far it is like turning the Titanic [laughs], you can turn rudder but it is going to be quite a bit of time before the ship starts to actually veer away from, not that we are recurring into an iceberg, but just to change course’ (A09).

‘It takes time and sometimes I think it takes the passing, as [Thomas] Kuhn said, in [Structure of] Scientific Revolution, sometimes you have to wait for the entire generation to pass before the next one is willing to recognize, acknowledge the accommodation of a notion that when contrary to a long standing paradigm [see Kuhn ‘paradigm shift’ (Kuhn 1970: 151)]... And I think that is where we are at! I mean, that is how to see the history in this unfolding in retrospect’.

With regard to American physicist, historian, and philosopher of science, Thomas Kuhn, in his work *The structure of scientific revolution*, Kuhn added: “Max Planck, surveying his own career in his Scientific Autobiography, sadly remarked that ‘a new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it’” (Kuhn 1970: 151)

On embarking on sasquatch investigations and opening discussion (and establishing commonality), the same informant stated:

‘It is still a matter of the people feeling secure enough to embark on such an investigation or such an open discussion. I know from behind the scenes, [...], through my duties as an editor and through my own collaboration and consultation with expertise pertinent with various aspects of my projects; I mean, I have given presentations to [a marine/wildlife/science educational institution].

We visited [a number of] offices. In every instance we were received very cordially. In one instance there was a very friendly skeptic. He said, you know, I am skeptical but come in and convince me!’ ... He was actually more impressed by [...].knowledge of Native American lore and culture [...] (A09).

On a physical anthropologist at work – on ‘the clearest tracks I have ever seen’, and following up on a sasquatch sighting account (collecting the ‘[scat] evidence’), the same informant stated:

“[‘Sasquatch’ researchers]...had investigated a report of a disturbance at some seasonal cabin; a prowler or something had been peeking in the window. When they came out in the morning, there were 16-inch footprints in the dirt and dust. Where they could track it, it came down out of the woods and it was peeking in the kitchen windows when it is

dinnertime, when they were cooking. Then it had wandered around and then disappeared back into the woods. One of the residents had accused the other of pulling a prank to try to scare him away. Anyway, this guy, absolute diehard skeptic, he said he ‘never believed anything I heard or read about bigfoot, but I am thinking something different now! Those are the clearest tracks I have seen. [...]’”.

‘[A scientist] went and investigated, and he collected some samples. There was a scat sample. You have to be on top of scat within about 8 hours in order to get any DNA because it just doesn’t survive exposure and bacterial action... and, unfortunately, one of the resident’s dogs had apparently urinated on it so it was contaminated, and that is all the investigator who did the initial DNA analysis got was dog DNA from the urine. I mean the footprints were unmistakable. [...]’

‘Now that ranger carries a little casting kit with plaster and such on his ATV; next time I will be ready and I will make a plaster cast’ [Note: in A09’s bigfoot field guide it states ~10 hours for scat DNA] (A09).

## 6.2 Proving that mystery hominoids do not exist, or are purely fictional

Concerning whether anything could prove that mystery hominoids do not exist, or prove they are purely fictional, non-scientist informants offered the following:

### **Views of local informants**

ACCOUNT 12 (L12):

‘There is no body. No evidence of a skeleton. Does that disprove it? No. I don’t know. There are twenty different species that are found in a year that we haven’t discovered. It’s just people [...] There is no body; they don’t believe. How do you know it exists, then? They think I am crazy and stuff, sometimes. It is just like it has to be something you see to believe. It’s weird. Most people, if you don’t see it, how are they going to believe it?’



Or, if it doesn't happen to you, then you are not going to believe it until you see evidence of it' (L12).

ACCOUNT 13 (L13):

'I don't think you can ever disprove ... you can not prove something doesn't exist. They try to attack each individual piece of evidence, like the *Patterson-Gimlin film* (1967) gets attacked all the time. I don't think it has ever been debunked at all. It has really stood up very well. My own encounter, skeptics have tried to undermine..., no, not undermine... I have tried to ask them to attack it, to try to help me find another alternative theory to what happened that other day; but I think you can undermine a bunch of individual pieces of evidence but when you get 10,000 people in North America having had sightings, unless they are all delusional or lying, I don't see how you ever... I don't think you can ever be ... to the frustration of skeptics the phenomenon will never go away and some of them feel ...

Listen. Somebody is claiming to have the costume from the *Patterson-Gimlin film*. It is all hoax. It's done. Please let it drop now. Well, guess what? His costume doesn't match... so, it stays alive. So, I don't know how you ever ... they don't know how to kill it, and we don't seem to know how to prove it so ... [laughs] it is going to stay in limbo forever' (L13).

ACCOUNT 14 (L19):

'I don't think there is anything that could definitely disprove it. There are always going to be those people who think that these creatures exist, especially if reports keep coming in, if people keep seeing things. One thing that could maybe knock a lot of the wind out of the sails of these researchers and stuff [is]... A lot of them really believe in the *Patterson-Gimlin film*. That is almost a cornerstone, a benchmark of their belief; and I think that if that was ever 100 percent efficiently proven to be fake, as a hoax, that would probably affect quite a few people. A lot of people would then, I think, start questioning some of their beliefs... That film alone is such an important piece of the evidence for researchers and enthusiasts because it has never been proven to be fake. It has never been proven to be real either, but there have been a lot of studies done on it [the film.] And some people believe they have proven that it is real or in fact fake, but it has never been conclusive...

But, I think that that film alone, if it were ever proven to be fake, probably a lot of researchers and enthusiasts might second-guess themselves and maybe quit doing what they are doing. Not so much proven to be real, but if it was proven to be fake [they might quit what they are doing]. Yes, I think that would affect a lot of people. But then again I don't think it would be 100 percent... I don't think that everybody would be 'Oh, okay, these creatures are hoaxed or fakes...' I think there are still enough people out there that have either (a) had an encounter or (b) talked to somebody that has. Even if that film was proven to be fake, it wouldn't matter to them. They still would believe it [because of the sightings]...if you look at North America alone there are thousands upon thousands of sightings' (L19).

ACCOUNT 15 (L20):

'I don't think you can prove a negative. You can't prove it does not exist. Well, you could; but it would take the eradication of all of the forest in North America and just stuff that... But I would love to see the application of technology today. We have the satellites and that kind of thing. I would love for somebody to actually get the time for... to do infrared scans over Alberta and BC. And be able to pick out, if there are hominids there, to be able to pick it out through heat signature and we have the technology. We definitely have the definition, the ability to zoom in to be able to define that there is a 8-foot human-like person 40 miles from the nearest road or 100 miles from the nearest road [...]

But it seems to be doing just great. But allocation of those resources for that kind of research, I just don't see it happening. But to be able to prove without a body, I just don't see it. The technology today, [...] photograph[y]. That stuff that they are able to do is phenomenal; and casts of tracks, even with nuances like broken bones or injuries and that kind of thing, that is, with the internet today it is pretty easy, I would think it would be fairly easy to be able to, to create the ability, to make tracks with those nuances to them to add additional credibility. It wouldn't be that tough at all if somebody was looking to do that, and I am sure that there are cases of people doing exactly that. There is plenty of mischief' (L20).

ACCOUNT 16 (L18):

'...I would like to see them exist just because why not? There is a why and a why not answer. I like the romance of finding something new within a society of know-it-all's. We didn't know it all. ... I have learned a whole lot since I have been on the river guiding. I have learned a whole lot about entomology. Bugs in the river. The natural

history of the area around my river—the trees, the birds, the flowers, the grasses, the insects—there is always a learning curve. ‘I didn’t know that existed’ is a continuous everyday kind of feeling. ... Yeah. Scientists ... I love the[m]!. ... I mean, for the longest time finding a dinosaur bone ... that whole thing has only come into existence only in the last 300 years where people really study what happens 60 million years ago. But they did find evidence of dinosaurs.

So to find evidence of a bigfoot is going to be profound if they ever do. Won't generate any oil money though. .... Like I say, my fishing and hunting community...I've got friends who have climbed the tops of mountains on a weekly basis, hike in bush, go out and do all that, [and] they have been around. They go around. And with all the people that are doing that; it would interesting if somebody actually really found evidence of the showable, repeatable evidence; [that] would be nice. There is so much traffic and exploration out there, it is surprising that it has not been found either way. I suppose if a guy walked in the bush for 40 years everyday and did not see his shadow, would he believe he had a shadow?' (L18).

ACCOUNT 17 (L19):

‘They resurfaced the video on the Internet, they are on Facebook a little while ago; and brought back fond memories. It has been on *Discovery Channel* cable on how the first video was possibly a hoax. But then, everybody loves Chewbacca! [laughs] Chewbacca from *Star Wars* (1977)—Chewbacca came from somewhere, and I think he would have been bigfoot. [...]... I think Chewbacca is definitely bigfoot image’ (L19).

### **Views of professional scientists**

Some professional scientists and academic informants also responded to the second question (6.2).

ACCOUNT 18 (A01):

An anthropologist and archaeologist informant simply stated:

‘If the creature doesn’t exist, how can you prove it doesn’t exist?’ (A01).

ACCOUNT 19 (A02):

A geneticist remarked:

‘You also can’t disprove God. ... Well, I can’t see how you could conclusively disprove something like that. You know, unless, ... I just don’t see it. I mean, all technology we have has failed to detect it, but that doesn’t prove that it doesn’t exist; so I guess to me it seems illogical to say something doesn’t exist. We have come really close, but not quite [bursts out laughing]’ (A02).

ACCOUNT 20 (A03):

Referring to inductive science, the black swan, and ‘the classic philosophical problem’, a biologist explained:

‘Is there anything that could definitively disprove them? ... because, of course, I’m much more rooted in inductive science; and until you find that black swan, you can’t say whether they exist or not. That’s the classic philosophical problem. I think it is plausible but it’s extraordinarily unlikely because the plausibility is bolstered by what we now quite confidently know existed tens or thousands of years ago. And so when there is kind of a confluence between mythology and science, even if the timing is off, then you should keep in the back of your mind the possibility.

But I’ve spent a lot of time driving up roads and hiking in Alberta wilderness and BC and so on. I’ve never seen any sign of any sasquatches so based on that, en-en [no]. Never even talked to anybody that said they were there, although they heard somebody that heard somebody that heard somebody... But. Yeah’ (A03).

ACCOUNT 21 (A04):

An English professor and author suggested:

‘Yeah, a skeleton --something like that would be good. I’m not a scientist so I don’t understand how these things really proceed’ (A04).

ACCOUNT 22 (A05):

When it comes to ghosts, mystery hominoids as fictional, the sounds of sasquatch, the Cold Lake monster, and the now rare order of fish, the Coelacanth, the following remarks were made by a professional scientist informant, an ornithologist, who stated:

‘You can never prove that something doesn’t exist. You can either prove that it does or it falls short of that, but you can never prove that something doesn’t exist. A negative’ (A05).

Speaking of ghosts, the informant added:

‘They dismiss that, too. They can dismiss that. I don’t know why? Why is it that? You know, that’s the same kind of thing. A lot more people see ghosts [versus the sasquatch, which is represented naturalistically]’ (A05).

Referring to mystery hominoids as fictional, he/she further added:

‘Well, to prove that they don’t exist? See, that’s the problem, they can’t. You can prove that there are reports that are faulty, and I do that all the time. I’m not a very joyful person because I am the scientist that comes in there, who would actually love it to be; yet I’ve been in that position more than once because I’m the one that has to say that I’m really sorry here, but what you think you had really wasn’t it. Or I haven’t heard enough to convince myself that that’s what you’ve got’.

‘... I remember one night when we came back from that sasquatch thing over in Mount St. Helen’s one night; and they all came in from the campfire and said they’d been out camping for two or three nights, which is often what we’d do. We’d camp in the forest and come back a certain night. And they said, whoa! We didn’t see them but I heard them all around our campfire. And the other would say, Yeah! And I heard them, too! That same night! They were whistling to each other. And this was the team I’m with, you

know. They were going [A05 makes a quiet whistling sound]. And the other one whispered a little different [A05 makes another whistling sound]. And then another one [A05 makes louder whistling sound between teeth]...different octave. They were whistling around and every night around our campfire; they were following us! And the other one said, yeah, they were following us from one site to the other!'

'And they looked at me and I said, 'That sound is the whistle of the Varied Thrush'. They have them in the mountains. They have them across there. And I said it does that single note, the Varied Thrush. And that's what you were hearing. I heard them every night too. But, you see, it's so easy to have [or create] the proof [e.g. a Varied Thrush whistle as sasquatch sound]. Their story, if I hadn't had been there, would have been yes, we had them around our campfire the whole night. We met them but we couldn't see them in the dark' (A05).

And on the sounds of sasquatch:

'I've got recordings of that kind of thing, and recorded things from people who had recorded them. And one guy was particularly faking shit. He had stuff of primates in zoos he was using, and he came up with a whole bunch of educational material too he was selling. This guy was a crook, and stupid; and I had to lay it out. I said this is crap. And I couldn't tell what kind of animal he was recording but he was trying to get in on it, just like anybody who thinks there is something that they can get in on, and there's money to be made, so they generate those...there's always somebody doing that' (A05).

Returning to the question of whether there is anything that could prove mystery

hominoids do not exist or are purely fictional, the same informant continued:

'Not really. Sometimes there have been accusations that something was... something that was then proven to be something else, and that's the best way in which you can disprove these things. But then there are things like this where there may be things living in the swamps of South America, long-necked things—they always talked about dinosaurs. I said, dinosaurs [laughs], you know, 65 million years, I said, dinosaurs? You know. What we have are new mammals, things like that that may have occupied things. We have about 12 or 15 lakes with lake monsters reported across Canada, some of which are still

going on on the studies [still being studied]. It's not illogical to me because we had so much glacial melting here. There are a whole pile of lakes. And there are! Winnipeg. Lake Winnipeg. Manitoba, all the way across the big lakes. Almost all of them have some kind of reports. I think Cold Lake has some; Cold Lake Monster.

We have native beliefs in these. I was called up twice to investigate two lakes that the native people were afraid to go near because they felt they had a lake monster; and so they wouldn't go into the lake, and they needed to go to the lake to bathe and swim and wash their clothes and all sorts of things. And so we did a whole thing of trying to figure things out.... There are some of these lakes that may have something like that.

The one that borders Vermont is a hot one right now, but it's a small form. I spoke to someone recently who watched something lift up out of the water. There's nothing there that could do that [...]. So I think that we have things that are still lingering; and those kinds of cryptozoology things, they are the ones that give rise to the...well, 'we found this'. You know, we found a Coelacanth fish down in this part of the world and off South Africa which we thought had been gone for since the Devonian [laughs]; so, but now we have them! Well, that happens.

But that doesn't apply to primates very much, I think. Primates, we deal with things that can move through territories. They can travel. They may not have been here when North America was settled. They may have come over from Russia since, through a circumpolar kind of route. A lot of things did. Almost all of our big animals came that way. They all crossed the Bering Strait; and moose, all that stuff, came here that way. And so there were things that separated things for a long time.

Now that seas are getting lower, there may be other possibilities. It was the same with so many species from South America who came up here... So, changes can happen in a short period of time. It doesn't have to go back 4 million years. In fact it's unlikely that it has. But there's radiations that are occurring, and that is really [what] we call them. Species that are coming up, a lot of things that we have here; and the group that I worked with a lot is the wood warblers, and they radiated 25 million years ago off the base of the Yucatan peninsula. And they came in to North and South America, and they just occupied every niche there was! You know, all across the Boreal and all across the southern parts of South America. It's a classic radiation!" (A05).

Regarding whether sasquatch could have come through the Bering Strait, the ornithologist stated:

‘Some things did. Big animals did, you know. We know there are things that maybe crossed that we don’t think they do, but you know we’d never see any trace of Sabre-Toothed [Tigers] and some things that should have been here from there. They were first found down in Brazil, actually, but.... Not Sabre... what I mean is the... [...] something else was found to be there. We might. We might find one.

Our problem here is that the glacials just wiped everything clean, and so when you look at... do we have any caves we can look at first? No. We have damn few of them. Few things that are in the mountains, but there are caves like that found in Colorado and Wyoming down in the ground that the glaciers didn’t wipe off. And so we get pockets of things here. Here, if you want to look for fossils, you go to the dump. You pick up a little piece and here it is. Somebody did that the other day, I forget what it was.... Yeah, it was really exciting because we found that much of it [fingers show amount]. It’s a terrible place to look for any traces. We just don’t have good traces places [laughs]’ (A05)!

ACCOUNT 23 (A06):

Addressing the question of whether one can prove sasquatch does not exist, a wildlife biologist responded:

‘John Green used to talk about this. We’ve had this problem with hoaxing, and scientists love the idea of a hoax. They basically say, ‘A-ha, there we have it! All these years all those fake tracks were hoaxed; and all these guys are saying they made the costume in the Patterson film, when the guy comes forward and says, ‘yeah, I was the guy who wore it’. A-ha! Case closed! Case solved’.

Well, no, and this is what John Green said, ‘Gee, if only one of these can't be disproved as a hoax or an error or an observation, we still have a problem that needs to be addressed. The hoax-hypothesis is... the evidence brought forward is very, very weak! I’ve gone in to it in the second book: those carved, wooden feet are really poor, but it is such a welcome solution. It doesn’t require any sort of examination, but they should be examined... So, yeah. That’s right. You can't disprove that it exists. You can just say, I haven’t seen one, or I'm not convinced by the evidence. If scientists had scrutinized the evidence and said, ‘Thank you very much; I don’t find it convincing,’ well, I would say,



‘Thank you for your time. I really appreciate that’. But the thing is, they’re not doing that. They are not creating opportunities for [me] or maybe you down the road to come to a conference to say, ‘I’d like to illustrate some evidence that we use for a basis for our research. It’s not conclusive, but we find it sufficiently compelling to carry on’. That’s really all I’m asking at this point’ (A06).

ACCOUNT 24 (A07):

Addressing whether one can prove sasquatch does exist, a palaeontologist stated:

‘Well, I guess if you found one. I guess part of that, too, because if you speak of *Homo floresiensis* and you mentioned another group, [Denisova hominins in central Asia] they’re living? They’re extinct. Yeah. So, I’m thinking with living groups, I would expect if there are some living groups we have not found, they are going to be in areas that are a few people. Pretty remote areas so I don’t think Canada is one of those areas’ (A07).

ACCOUNT 25 (A08):

According to a primatologist and anthropologist,

‘That [whether you can prove that sasquatch and the like do not exist] is a good question. No, I don’t see anything that could disprove it. The only thing that could disprove it is the lack of proof, just the lack of evidence. I just feel that by now we would have had good evidence if they existed. And it is not because I don’t want them to exist. It would be fascinating if they did exist. But we have to have evidence that a large number of, not just one person who claims to have found it, that it has been verified by a number of other people... I suppose it would have to be verified by scientists [versus other people, i.e., local people]’ (A08).

ACCOUNT 26 (A10):

Addressing the same question, a wildlife and fisheries scientist stated,

‘We can't disprove anything! No. No. Science, if someone comes up to me and says I saw one of these things and he has its scat. I will go, awesome, let's test the DNA and if it comes out as Denisovan, I will go, that is so cool! But, until someone does that, we have to say there is no credible evidence up to this point. Of course we will keep looking. As a good science, we will always keep looking; but up to now, there is no credible, reputable peer-reviewed evidence. Doesn't mean they don't exist. But the probability is getting slimmer every time we come up with new techniques of DNA analysis, especially.

Camera traps; oh my goodness! The national park is so full of camera traps these days, and because I am such an experienced ...,folks will bring me and I will go what is this! I will look at this picture and I'll, okay, it is... two recent pictures have come out that are just animals that everybody is going, we have no idea. And I actually went and tracked one, and it was a grizzly bear whose skin had been torn, probably from a fight with another grizzly bear; and the flap of its skin had come down and it looked like he had a long tail. And the camera picture showed a big hairy animal with a long tail. It was just positioned right, and it was just a blurry photograph with some willows in the way.

But yeah, we went out and saw it; and it was a torn-up grizzly bear. So thousands and thousands and thousands of photographs on trails in the last ten years through Jasper and Banff, and we have never seen a [sasquatch]' (A10).

ACCOUNT 27 (A09):

Drawing on the Carl Sagan's (1980) adage that 'Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence', a physical anthropologist informant commented:

‘The adage that is always thrown in one's face, from American astronomer, Carl Sagan, the more extraordinary the proposition, the more extraordinary the evidence has to be, or the proof has to be. [Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.] And so the minimum requirement, and obviously has always been by convention, a type specimen. So, short of a type specimen, I don't think there will ever be acknowledgement, no matter how compelling the footprint. [...]' (A09).

Citing the title of Gregory Forth's article 'Are legendary hominoids worth looking for?'

(Forth 2012a), the same informant stated that:

'...The evidence warrants that we at least pursue the question; and here is the context of why we should expect that in fact there are these creatures out there as is suggested by the anecdotal and the trace and even the physical, the indeterminate physical evidence like hair and scat and so forth' (A09).

The informant continued:

'... it is very difficult, if not impossible, to prove a negative. To prove that something doesn't exist is... you have to just take a default position and say that the inability of anyone to provide conclusive evidence is itself proof that it doesn't exist; and that is just not reasonable, that it is not justified from a philosophical or an empirical point of view. The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, especially when you consider the nature of the beast, of the creature, its rarity, its solitary behavior, its nocturnal, generalized diet, far-ranging... I mean, it is not surprising that we don't have bones, that we haven't ... I don't think anyone ever will capture one. I think someone may shoot one, and a semi-truck may hit one and kill it on the roadside; but I think those are unlikely scenarios. I think it is more likely that some spelunker will crawl out of a cave dragging a giant mandible with him or a femur or something; that would be the more likely scenario in my mind, but I just don't see a quick solution to this other than to build upon the evidence we have at hand ' (A09).

On next steps and technology, the same physical anthropologist informant explained taking steps to increase chances of finding a mystery hominoid [or 'a very rare, solitary, far-ranging, nocturnal creature'.] by way of a 20-foot helium-filled drone-blimp. He/she stated:

'I think we are trying to take search to the next step with current technologies. [...] a 20-foot helium drone, helium-filled blimp, that we are equipping with the customized, thermal imaging camera systems and wireless transmission, and so forth, so that we can fly this thing over the forest and survey for warm bodies; and increase our chances of finding a very rare, solitary, far-ranging, nocturnal creature. But the old tried and true of putting out game cameras and tromping trails and driving roads at night, I mean I don't think that is going to get us that much closer. It will just add questionable anecdotal experiences and maybe some additional footprint evidence but...' (A09).

### 6.3 Popular culture

Popular culture has also played a part in the mystery hominid phenomenon, mostly by way of terms, images, literature and media (See Figure 6 to 7 and Plates 7 to 12). These sources, referred to by both professional scientists or academics and non-scientist local people, are discussed below. Non-scientist informants provided a list of terms, and cited literature and other sources that described mystery hominoids and from where they had acquired knowledge about them, as in the following accounts:

#### **Views of local informants**

##### ACCOUNT 28 (L11):

‘I figured to myself, again the rational side of me speaking out, that if something like this does exist, the people who would know the most about this would be natives, the native Americans. So, that was where I took a lot of the information. I’m not trying to put a name to this. I’m trying to understand what exactly I saw; and really, being an outdoorsman, it kind of did put a damper on me going back out into the woods. When you realize that there is something out there that no one else recognizes, or science doesn’t recognize, well, you start to question it. I mean, number one, we are talking about something that is huge! That’s why I always go to the natives. The first thing the natives will tell you is that this thing is intelligent. It is a master of the woods. That’s how they refer to it’ (L11).

##### ACCOUNT 29 (L12):

‘I know bigfoot from school. It wasn’t really sasquatch. I never really researched it that much. Some kids did, I guess. I call it bigfoot because it sounds ... I don’t really like sasquatch—I know it is the Canadian version. Bigfoot is American’.

'I just thought of it as being one of the seven wonders of the world kind of thing, you know, like King Kong. That's what I thought bigfoot is, is King Kong. Maybe from the beer Kokanee commercials; that's why it is such a joke to me, because they refer to the sasquatch as the Kokanee beer thief. I had no idea that this [sasquatch] even existed'.

'I think he's bigfoot. Initially, I put it on Facebook that I'd seen it, 'What do you know, no other than bigfoot'. It's just one. Bigfoot. No. There actually are bigfoots. There is not just one. That is how I know of bigfoot as being just one' (L12).

ACCOUNT 30 (L13):

'There's 'hairy man,' 'man of the wild,' 'yeti,' 'sasquatch,' 'bigfoot,' 'yeren,' 'skunk ape,' 'stink ape,' 'Oh-mah'; there is probably 60 different terms for it' (L13).

ACCOUNT 31 (L14):

'No. I am open to it (sasquatch), though; and I certainly believe in it now' (L14).

ACCOUNT 32 (L15):

"I use two terms: *baqua* [L15 spelled out the name] and 'boogers'. It [*baqua*] is a coastal native term, west coast. I don't really use the term 'bigfoot'. I use 'boogers'. [Regarding the west coast tribe that uses *baqua*] That is quite a small tribe; I can not pronounce their name. ...it is a very long name. They live just south of Alaska in the BC area; and it is called '*baqua*[s – is pronounced at the end]', and it is sort of their term for 'boogers,' 'mountain hairy people'" (L15).

ACCOUNT 33 (L17):

[Regarding which term is used] 'Probably both of them (sasquatch' and other terms like 'bigfoot'). I am not fluent in my language [Cree]...so...' (L17).

ACCOUNT 34 (L18):

‘No other [terms]. [Just] Sasquatch and bigfoot, I figure they are kissing cousins’ (L18).

ACCOUNT 35 (L19):

‘There are a lot of Native American terms for it; different words for it that all kind of translate to “the wildman of the woods” or the “hairy man” or “big brother.” There are a lot of Native American terms like the “*duunukwa (dsonoqua)*” [“Wild Woman of the Woods” – Kwakiutl tribe] and “*bukwas*” [“Hairy Man” – Lummi tribe]... On pages 273-275 there is a list of “Traditional Native American/First Nations” Names for Bigfoot” in *Giants, Cannibals and Monsters: Bigfoot in Native Culture* (2008) by Kathy Moskowitz Strain’.

‘[Regarding the term: “big brother”] It was probably in a book I read, this book by Kathy Moskowitz Strain and .... I can't remember if she has a PhD in Anthropology, but she works down in California; and she put out a book called *Giants, Cannibals and Monsters*. It is basically a look at every Native American belief in sasquatch all over the whole continent. I think that is where I read a lot of different ones there. .... It is an excellent book actually. ... It's a great book!’ (L19).

ACCOUNT 36 (L18):

‘I don't know if I got that book. I just know it is red and it has got a silhouette of bigfoot on it. Might have to google it. I haven't looked at it for years. [This book and the Patterson-Gimlin film is the first literature exposure L18 had of Bigfoot on the news]. Probably *ITV [News]* at the time [was where I saw it]... [L18 does Google search] “books on bigfoot”.’

‘[Internet search result:] “The All-Time 50 Best Bigfoot Books: 1961-2014”; “The top 20” or “The top 50”, “The all time 50 best bigfoot books”... [L18 continues to do search...] That is the image from the video. [L18 mentions an image from Dmitri Bayanov's *America's Bigfoot Fact or Fiction* (1997) described as a green-coloured book]. That was the picture they had on the movie. Here is another one with the same image. Fifty-year-old memories are sure hard to pull up’ (L18).

#### ACCOUNT 37 (L19):

‘... He [Thomas Steenburg] is kind of thought of as the original investigator. He did a lot of work here in the 1980s, early 1990s; and he put out some books... He has a book called *The Sasquatch in Alberta* (1990) and two other books as well. That book, *The Sasquatch in Alberta*, is quite hard to find, though. ... He even had a very famous Albertan encounter that happened down in Waterton [Lakes] National Park that he investigated. It was one that the people that had this encounter; they even reported it to the park ranger and everything. That is an excellent report, I would say. It is a report that a lot of people are familiar with (L19).

Professional scientists and academic informants also provided a list of terms for North American hominoids, and discussed literature and other sources that depict mystery hominoids. The individual accounts are as follows:

#### **Views of professional scientists**

#### ACCOUNT 38 (A01):

The informant mentioned the following terms: ‘Wildmen of the Woods’; *Gigantopithecus*; hominin or hominid; Yeti (distinguished by a big divergent toe); Cryptozoology; *wendigo*; *Eremotherium* (‘giant ground sloth’; Argentina; dermal ossicles -small bones under fur in skin).

The informant also mentioned how [...] Alan Bryan (*Argosy* magazine 1968) and Vladimir Markotić (1984), were both interested in sasquatch in 1970s— as friends they corresponded... Alan Bryan also visited Jeff Meldrum (2006), and had discussions with John Napier (1977) on the Patterson-Gimlin film.

On the Patterson-Gimlin Film (1968):

‘British physical anthropologist, John Napier, [...] who studied the film, and tried to determine whether or not the figure walking along was human or not; and [...] it was indecisive because, you know, it was just about five seconds...’.

On if heard of any sightings in BC/Alberta:

‘...sightings in BC and even in Alberta; there was somebody out there in Brazeau River Dam, who saw something; swore it wasn’t a bear—and things like that—and footprints ...’

On advertisements featuring sasquatch:

‘quite a bit of interest in it in 1970s. And one things you don’t see now, is the ads for Kokanee beers which are produced in BC and Kokanee waters [...] these ads have to do with the escapades of a sasquatch and a forest ranger, and how the sasquatch is making a fool out of him since he was a fool in the first place’.

[...]

‘It [the advertisement] was just half-baked silly foolish forest ranger in his cabin and the sasquatch raiding him [of beer]’

‘there is one of these warning [road] signs like you’ll see for deer jumping on the road or of a moose or whatever; and here it is, it’s a sasquatch walking along holding a case of kokanee beer; and the sign says, “Caution Sasquatch crossing”,...” [According to the informant, the signs quickly disappeared off roads...].’

Another example of objects disappearing on the roadside:



‘they used to have these things in BC called garbage gobblers, and they look like sort of a caterpillar or up standing caterpillar; and they had them in every rest stop and road pullout, and you were supposed to throw your litter in the garbage gobbler. Well, in a few years, every one of those disappeared. *Every* one! [...] they are in people’s garages or in their attics. They dare put them in their backyards. They were kind of cute. That is what people thought. ... It was kind of interesting the way things like that disappear’.

On an expedition to search for ‘wild creatures of the forest’:

‘...in South America, somebody launched a small expedition to see if there were any giant ground sloths surviving in the jungle. ... I excavated them in a Brazilian cave [...]; the bones are as big as a mammoth or a mastodon or an elephant, or there are smaller ones, too; and they became extinct at the end of the Pleistocene in South America. So, people have wondered whether somewhere off in the Brazilian jungle, there might have survived a giant ground sloth [(see Oren (2001)]. ... I suppose Brazilian Indian tribes; there are stories of wild big old ugly wild creatures of the forest, which you have to determine whether they are real or not. The whole business of wildman stories are an interesting topic in themselves’ (A01).

ACCOUNT 39 (A02):

“[The British Green Man] is a mythology about a man in the forest. It’s almost a spirit entity of the forest, which is, I think, an old Celtic idea. And it’s just another example of the kind of thing I think sasquatch is, which is the man of the forest... A hominid that inhabits a natural environment, that’s mysterious and potentially powerful. ‘Nesse’ [is another term].”

On scientific ‘tongue-in-cheek’ papers published on mystery hominoids:

The informant DNA tested a hair sample, and published an article with a colleague in a journal, *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* (2006). The informant stated, ‘...when sequenced, it came up as a [wood] bison, ...it 100% matched what bison DNA looks like, using a small fragment of mitochondrial DNA’.

‘[A phylogeneticist also] published a paper on yeti’ (Milinkovitch *et al.* 2004) [a tongue-in-cheek piece like the informant himself published].

On the Patterson film:

‘...it’s fake .. I mean, the guy admitted it was fake. And this had a huge influence, and people still believe it. Even though...They won’t even believe that it’s a fake when they say it is a fake. So beliefs are strong things’.

The informant went on to discuss popular images and culture:

‘[Someone] operates a bigfoot museum, and [he] wrote to me a number of times after the story came out – I actually sent to him a chunk of hair and the original of that permit, remember that permit I showed you which [someone] sent with the sample, which I think he did as a joke, it [the wildlife permit] said ‘sasquatch hair?’ ... He is somewhere around New England. I think Mobbs? Or New Hampshire or somewhere? He wrote to me a few times; and I think he even traveled to Edmonton at one point, and gave a talk or somewhere or something. He runs his own bigfoot museum. He was so interested in this story; and he asked me if I could, you know, ...and I said, here you go, I will give you the original of this [permit] and a piece of this [bison hair sample]; and I think he’s got it in his museum’.

Regarding the Wildlife Export Permit:

‘It’s a typical provincial wildlife export permit. If you send any kind of scientific specimen, or let’s say you go to shoot a bear in BC (and) you want to bring a bear back to Alberta, you have to have a permit. It’s the same permit. He didn’t know what to put [on] it [the permit], so he put ‘sasquatch hair?’, and I thought it was really funny. ‘Number of packages? [A02 reads question on permit]’ One. He did all this tongue-in-cheek, and just sent it’.

‘... I think it is a standard issue export permit. If you went to the Yukon, shot a sheep and brought the horns back, you would have to fill out one of these to bring it back to Alberta. It’s the same thing. Or if you were to send me.... I think he listed the same... See! [A02 showing me permit], so there is the list of all the species. So if you had shot a black bear this is what you would use to bring the piece of black bear back, your steaks or your hide

or whatever; this is typically for hunters. He would also send me the same form to send me a hundred samples of a species I'd be working on; for example sheep, we'd use the same form. He's retired now. He is a wildlife biologist with the Churchill government in the Yukon, now retired. The reason this whole thing happened is because I saw him on TV! I just spent the week before; he had sent me material for a student project so I knew him' (A02).

Regarding, media, TV, the popularity of the sasquatch image in Canada, and 'growing up with sasquatch', the same informant commented:

'...Just for the record, I am not an anthropologist, you know. It's interesting because it happened to me, if you like. I don't have any particular beliefs about bigfoot. I didn't have any preconceived notions; but it became very interesting, maybe because of the media coverage. I was just amazed that so many people were that interested in it. In some ways it's not going away. If anything, there are probably more people believe in it [sasquatch] now more than ever; that's my guess'.

'...Because it's popularized. It's been popular for a long time. It was popular when I was a kid. I remember when I was a kid, they'd be shows about finding the bigfoot. It's a compelling idea for a kid; and just like any kid who grows up in Canada, you know, it's kind of something you are aware of. Just like Nesse is something everyone is aware of or other myths like that. And there is something, I don't want to say human or spiritual or whatever it is, or metaphysical; but there is some compelling thing in it and that must be why it so universal, that myth of the man in the woods. It's just so common in so many cultures, to have something like that, that we are predisposed to be attracted to or to want to believe it; but I don't know what it is'.

'And probably popular culture is, with the television shows and these other things now, and probably hoaxers and social media, it's easy to find attraction with these things; so if you do believe, it's really easy to find a bunch of other people who do. [bangs on table] Because you just go on social media, you'll find them. They're there'.

‘Twenty years ago you had to write letters, read a book, or go to a meeting. Today you just, I just put it on Twitter and you’ll get people who will hit it, right. Or you put it out anywhere and it’ll be...it’s one thing to go from television or radio, and now it’s social media. *Anybody* can participate, and these people can all talk to each other and have a presence and reinforce each others’ beliefs or reinforce conspiracy theories’.

‘...So in some ways the way *that* society is networked has probably given these ideas a fertile ground in which to flourish and a place where people can anchor that belief’.

‘... It’s coincidence that as a kid, like every other kid that I think in Canada that lives near a tree and you hear about bigfoot; and you think, when you’re a kid, it scares you a little bit or, you know, it’s interesting. And I actually think, pursuit of this is completely independent of my experience. [...] All kids know about it! Everybody does! You go to a classroom, dinosaurs and bigfoot, everybody knows about it! They love that stuff! It’s really compelling! And this again comes back to that whole thing about why is that some people hold this so tight? Why is it such a popular belief? Why is it such...even when I was a kid there was Scooby Doo episodes about bigfoot. Bigfoot has been around all my life and it’s funny how it grabs people’.

The informant continued:

‘... Kinda like Dinosaurs also. Dinosaurs grab people in a similar way. Lots of dragon myths, right. Dragon myths and dinosaurs and those things are another story, I guess; because it’s not a forest thing. I do think there is something almost organic about this ‘bigfoot’, ‘Green Man’, ‘man of the forest’ idea.... Yeah, it’s used to serve Kokanee beer too (laughs). Yeah, it’s quite compelling’ (A02).

ACCOUNT 40 (A03):

The informant, a professional scientist, spoke of interest in the subject and various influences.

On cryptozoology and terms, he/she said:

‘I have been interested in cryptozoology and sasquatches since I was this big [very young]. [...] There’s ‘bigfoot,’ the other local variant [‘sasquatch’] that you would hear most frequently here. But I would think that sasquatches have something to do with ‘Yetis’ and I would think that sasquatches have something to do with...well, of course, the speculation is ‘*Homo erectus*’; but that is an attempt to make it very scientifically grounded. ‘Abominable snowman’ and ‘yeti’ are the two Himalayan origin ones. But, ‘big hairy humanoids’?...nothing comes to mind other than ‘bigfoot’ and the Himalayan variant.

On the Tolkien concept of elves as a robust creature:

‘the popularity of the *Tolkien Trilogy*, [...], *The Lord of the Rings* (1968), which derives, I think, from the deep in the collective sort of mythology about dwarves and elves-- though his [Tolkien’s] concept of elves is a sort of robust kind of creature—and Orcs and so on. [...] The ‘wildman’ was definitely human in *Lord of the Rings*, which I thought did a marvelous job of drawing all that together and sort of drawing on our collective unconscious consciousness’.

Further on the ‘wildman’, and keeping up with scientific literature [also popular in the news]:

‘wildman’ was also part of it’ [referring to Gregory Forth’s *Images of a wildman in Southeast Asia* (2008)].

The informant also mentioned keeping up with the latest on *Homo floresiensis* in Indonesia, Denisova hominins in Asia [as mentioned earlier in the chapters]; and *Homo naledi* in South Africa. The informant was also familiar with the press on the ‘sasquatch’ fur, from Teslin, Yukon, that was DNA tested and resulted in bison.

On a God-substitute or not, and UFOs, the informant stated:

‘For some of them if they really want to have a God-substitute they will go for UFOs, but this is not a God-substitute; it’s a... there is still mystery in the universe and there are other forms of life out there so there, is sort of a desire for that’.

On the informant’s sense of Indigenous connections:

‘Tsuu T’ina it is called now. It was called Sarcee. I lived right next to it, went to school with a number of people from the reserves, and had plenty of opportunity to chat with them when I was in my teens’...I do know they were very interested in sasquatches. Even then I had the sense that a belief in sasquatches was an important touchstone of their own separateness as a people, their own sort of sense of integrity and as a cultural...as a worthy cultural group. It’s sort of like to pooh-pooh sasquatches was to reject a culture, a different way of thinking, an alternate way of thinking’ (A03).

The same informant recalled a story of the ‘Lost Lemon Mine’ near Coleman, Alberta, circa ‘(second-half of) the 1800s’:

‘You ever hear about the Lost Lemon Mine? Southern Alberta; this was an extremely important thing that was extraordinarily important. The story is that somebody...I think there might even be a sasquatch connection...some guy goes in, finds nuggets of gold somewhere in Kananaskis area or something like that...maybe the Crow’snest Pass, brings out nuggets of gold; and it’s mysterious, won’t tell anybody, goes back in again but is found murdered. Some of the stories I’ve heard have to do with him being murdered by whatever, and some of them say sasquatches murdered him’ (A03).

There are also book versions about the curse of the Lost Lemon Mine; for example, the *The Lost Lemon Mine: The greatest mystery of the Canadian Rockies* (Riley et al – Frontiers book no. 4). Though source does not mention ‘sasquatch’, this snippet is mentioned on page 9:

‘The night of their arrival, Williams’s son-in-law died in a mysterious manner, another manifestation, according to the Indians, of the wrath of the Wahcondah. To this day the Stoney become grim, tight-lipped and fearful, the moment the Lemon Mine is mentioned. (Riley, Primrose and Dempsey: 9) Ron Steward also makes reference to ‘the wrath of the Wah-con-dah’ in his book *The mystery of the Lost Lemon Mine* (Steward 1993: 54). I have been unable to find what the name Wahcondah refers to.

ACCOUNT 41 (A04):

Referring to ‘bigfoot’ and ‘sasquatch, another scientist informant mentioned a story he/she had heard:

‘that one description of this thing that went ‘gruhhhH!’ in the window. And then, I just remember about a couple of other people talking about hearing this loud roaring scream which they had never heard before and which they couldn’t associate with any other creature; so they thought it might have been a sasquatch, at night, this horrifying roaring screaming sound. So that’s about the only other detail I remember. I don’t recall anybody actually telling me that they had actually physically seen the thing other than just this one guy seeing this dark shape out of his window’ (A04).

Regarding the Patterson film, the informant continued:

‘I remember seeing still images from it, but I think it wasn’t until years later that I actually got to see footage, because back in those days there was no internet; there was no way for people to share these videos unless you saw them in a documentary or something. So I don’t remember actually getting to see the actual moving film footage until years later; and then I remember watching it and looking at it over and over again, trying to decide if that was actually somebody in a monkey suit or what it was; and just not being able to tell and come to any kind of decision about it’ (A04).

The informant also mentioned a historical account by David Thompson:

‘... There is another historical story, which you already know of, but David Thompson (1994 [1881]), the cartographer, when he was coming through the Jasper area he was crossing through what’s called Athabasca Pass which is south of the town of Jasper, a few miles. And this was the pass that then became a fur-trading route over the mountains—Athabasca Pass’.

‘But, in his original journal, when he talks about going up over this pass in Winter, he talks about seeing tracks, and he talks about his native porters and helpers telling him about some kind of creature. I don’t know if the word sasquatch is used? He just notes it in passing that ‘my native guides told me about this creature and I saw these tracks’; and I think he just kind of leaves it at that’ (A04).

Concerning popular images and culture, the informant gave the following:

‘I was so fascinated by this and so interested in this that I started writing a comic book about searching for sasquatches when I was probably 11 or 12 years old. [...] I think that just shows you how interested I was in this (See Figure 6 to 7). This would have been back in the 70s, which I think was kind of a heyday for interest in sasquatches; that’s my sense of it, when it really started to get a lot of public attention’

‘I never finished [writing the comic] but it was about... there was this old hunter guy telling about this story to people about how he had been hiking in the woods somewhere in BC and his encounter with the sasquatch. But I never got very far for whatever reason, but I drew pictures and had a few panels anyway about this story. It had come from reading this book. [The informant later mentioned a book published by John Green called *The Year of the Sasquatch* (1970)].

[The informant also recalled:] ‘[...] René Dahinden. [...] His name is pretty well known as a sasquatch expert, so to speak’ (A04).



The informant continued:

‘...I remember there was a TV show at that time called the *Six Million Dollar Man* with Lee Majors, and there was a two-part-er episode in which he encountered these aliens in the Pacific Northwest woods who had a sasquatch that was their protector, their guardian. I think they were hiding in the woods. They had crash landed or something so they had—  
  
and the sasquatch was not native to our planet, if I remember correctly—it was an alien species or something they had brought with them to sort of guard their hideout, and so I remember Steve Austin, the *Six Million Dollar Man*, fighting this thing. So they tied UFOs together with sasquatches in this two-part episode’.

‘...[...] that *Six Million Dollar Man* episode [...] was a wonderful putting-together of these two cryptic ideas of the UFO and the sasquatch, finding a way to connect the two of them’ (A04).

The following are references to episodes of sasquatch in the TV program, *The Six Million Dollar Man*: The Secret of Bigfoot (TV Episode PART 1 aired 01 February 1976 and PART 2 aired 04 February 1976. Sasquatch is played by André the Giant. Sasquatch was also played by Ted Cassidy in *The Six Million Dollar Man* (TV Episode PART 1 aired 19 Sept 1976) and *The Bionic Woman* (TV Episode PART 2 aired 22 Sept 1976).

After having spoken about *The Six Million Dollar man*, the informant also referred to ideas in *Tintin* comic’s books, (e.g, *Tintin in the Congo* (1931), *Tintin in Tibet* (1960)):

‘... Tintin and [the character] Captain Haddock, and so it’s the white guy who preserves and discovers the truth, where[as] all the native people are too superstitious and scared to keep going. So there is that kind of a racist storyline, which was pretty common in those days’

The informant added:

‘...[...] there is still a trace of that [racism] in our feeling that there are native myths about the sasquatch, but that they’re just stories. [The informant added sarcastically] It’s up to science to decide whether it is really true in a factual kind of scientific way. So, there is still that divide; that idea that it is either factually true or it’s just a made-up story’ (A04).

In regard to the Tintin stories, as they relate to the political environment and historical events, it is worth noting that Hergé’s *Tintin in Tibet* was published in the late 50s after the Japanese invasion of China, during the Second Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45). The book’s character Cheng (whose plane crashes in the Himalayas near Kathmandu, and this crash is reported in the news, whereupon Tintin travels to Tibet to rescue him) is actually based on Hergé’s friend Zhang Chongren (also Chong-jen), an artist/sculptor he lost touch with after the second Sino-Japanese war (McCarthy 2006: 47-48). The yeti also appears in the book, based on the author’s consultations with Bernard Heuvelmanns (Thompson 1991: 173), generally acknowledged as the ‘father of cryptozoology’ and the inventor of the term.

ACCOUNT 41 (A05):

Referring to popular images of sasquatch, in particular a sasquatch toy and a sasquatch mask (See Plate 1), another scientist informant remarked:

‘I do [consider sasquatch a hominid]. It looks like a hominid to me. [Looking at a small sasquatch toy] It’s a toy; but I don’t know what validity, but it’s pretty close [to the representation of sasquatch]. (...) It is a good one. It’s a toy. It came in a little box. [Written on the toy was the text ‘Shadowbox bigfoot’.] You can probably find one on

Amazon, which would be neat. You know there are others, but I always kind of liked this one because it came in a little box which had a picture of a forest behind it’.

[Regarding sasquatch masks] ‘...native people of British Columbia where they have masks of them. [...] there’s a “Wildman of the Forest” [mask][...]; that is a sasquatch symbol, and it’s a native mask’ (A05).

He continued:

‘It is so unusual to be able to do this [i.e., ‘not hide our sasquatch background’]. Before then, there wasn’t a nucleus. Where would you go? You’d have to go here, you’d have to go there. It’s spread out. But now,...when John Green was writing his books about sasquatch over there in Harrison Hot Springs, a lot of people just laughed at him. It was interesting, but still people laughed at him. They thought he was a cooc[oo], and he was anything but. He was intelligent and bright. The few times I met him, he’s a very impressive person, [or] he was’.

‘But now, the community evolved to say we shouldn’t be trying to hide our sasquatch background. No. Instead, let’s feature it. That’s what every successful place does. And now they do, and that’s what’s interesting because now they’ve got Sasquatch Provincial Park, they’ve got... I don’t know how many...stores. I want to go over and see it myself. I really do because none of it was there in the years past when I visited there. Nice place!’

‘... By the way, the museum in Jasper has a full-sized sasquatch. It’s part of its exhibit on the animals of Jasper’ (A05).

ACCOUNT 42 (A06):

Speaking of terms used for sasquatch, another informant stated:

‘With a lot of the aboriginal people on the coast it’s *bukwus* or *zunoqua*, otherwise *sasquatch*. This is the other problem, in the States, it’s always *bigfoot* and that’s a

nickname in itself! It's pretty hard to take something seriously with a nickname, bigfoot. (laughs) I'm really down on that. A lot of Americans have switched over to sasquatch, trying to make it a little more serious.

'...Certainly in the historical accounts, it was *wildman*. People would see a 'wildman'. Sometimes, it was basically a wild human, a human escaped from a mental institution or something; but you go through some of those old historical accounts, and gee whiz, there definitely were sasquatches. I've got a section in the second book on historic accounts. Some of them are really pretty good, especially when they come from the 1870s; stuff like that' (A06).

ACCOUNT 43 (A08):

Regarding literature and how he/she became familiar with the subject of sasquatch, another informant remarked:

'...At some point or another, I am sure I have read, not just in the popular media but, I would call them almost pseudoscientific, but there have been a few papers and I have seen those. But since I first encountered this idea, as an adult and as a trained scientist, I have never given it any credence. Right? And, I try not to be rude to members of the public; but to cut right to the chase to get the bottom in my mind, it is one of two things:

(1) In our part of the world it is people mistaking a bear that is walking upright for an ape. Hominoid. Or (2) it is a hoax. And, I'm not sure why, but there do seem to be people that perpetuate a hoax. Right? They go to elaborate lengths to create the footprints and the fuzzy photos and the fuzzy videos'.

With reference to publications the informant had come across regarding sasquatch and types of physical evidence, the informant added:

'Well. What I know about types of physical evidence are footprints and fuzzy photos, fuzzy videos; and I think at some point someone claimed to have hair and they were going to do DNA testing, but I don't think that proved to be ...you know, it proved to be some other kind of animal' (A08).

ACCOUNT 44 (A09):

Regarding names for sasquatch, another informant stated:

‘That’s an interesting perspective too. For example, this really illustrated the point for me. One of the colleagues that I work with is a wildlife biologist [...] was attending a wildlife conference up in Montana and met a fellow who was Hopi and was one of the...[...] he said, ‘Oh yeah, of course the Hopi have traditions about the ancient ones and those who came before’.

‘...The ancient ones usually refer to the Anasazi (ancient Hopi, formerly called Anasazi); the ones that were there before them. There was a race of giant, hairy people that occupied the area even before them. [...] invited [the wildlife biologist] to come down. [The informant and the wildlife biologist] went down there one time; and sure enough, he struck up a conversation with a waitress and the manager of this little café. They were saying, oh, he wanted to talk to this gentlemen about bigfoot in the area. He goes, oh, bigfoot. Bigfoot is just something in the tabloids. We don’t have bigfoot around here. And there was a pause and he says, but we have Nemo’.

‘...What? (...biologist asks), what’s Nemo? He [the manager] says, it is this giant, hairy ape-like creature that lives up on the mountain. It comes down and sometimes it steals calves from the cattlemen, and they won’t take their cattle up on the mountain. These big oversized footprints are found over there down in the dust down in the sagebrush down in the foot of the mountains’.

‘...And so it was just interesting that there they had insulated themselves so... Their phenomenon had nothing to do with the highly publicized and tabloid nature of bigfoot that had been promulgated in the press, but they had their own resident cultural traditions about this monstrous thing [that] fit the bill; but no one was connecting the dots. No one was making a correlation between their creature called Nemo and sasquatch or bigfoot. I found that fascinating; how there would be this independence. I frequently find when I go to an area to work, you run into people who don’t publicize their accounts, they are not listed on any internet sites or anything like that; but for them it is just part of the landscape... They have always known that they are out there. That is an interesting part of this whole phenomenon. That is why your work is very interesting because it gets overlooked. It just does not... whether... if you want to even be so crass as to say it doesn’t even matter whether sasquatch exists or not, there is no question that the phenomenon of the concept of a wildman is part of western Americana and even wider; but definitely if you look in here, and that is inescapable. There is no question that people

have that notion that such things exist out there, kind of like leprechauns in Ireland. I mean they are just as real as you can you can imagine, I guess' (A09).

Regarding literature and familiarity with the subject, the informant added:

'... [A] book I am working on. It is a book on looking at the question of sasquatch and other relict hominoids around the world, and placing sasquatch in a much broader context; i.e., theoretical framework of relict population of species of a very bushy hominoid tree that have persisted along side us, just as has been the case throughout prehistory of the human family. It's getting close!'

Regarding what rekindled the informant's interest in sasquatch, he/she mentioned:

'... a couple of events: ...One of those took me to northern California to evaluate a piece of video footage which has since come to be known as the *Redwoods Video* or the *Playmate Video* because the host of the documentary who bumped into this supposed creature was a past playboy playmate and was hosting [acting as] the guest host of this show. So, it was a little unfortunate the connection, but people got a lot of mileage out of the tongue-in-cheek references to it. Nevertheless, it turned out to be a very interesting little piece of video that they had captured; and that piqued my curiosity because I went in to it as a student of comparative primate anatomy, and locomotor anatomy in particular. I thought this would be an easy little exercise to poke holes in and just hone my investigative skills. The closer I looked, I couldn't find a zipper, the proverbial zipper; and the details that did emerge were more and more intriguing'.

'...That led to then some interaction with a little book that I was asked to write a review of, called *Bigfoot of the Blues* (by Vance Orchard, 1993) in the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon in south-eastern Washington. To make a long story short, through that I met some people who took me, one of them took me out. I witnessed a long line of 15 ½ inch footprints that were extremely fresh, extremely clear, left nothing to the imagination. I mean, it either was bigfoot or it was a very, very cleverly executed hoax. The more I examined this... my research focus is in the evolution of hominid bipedalism, particularly the adaptations of the lower extremity and the foot. And, I have been preoccupied with trace fossil evidence of hominid bipedalism, footprints and so forth; and so have examined not only the fossil specimens in laboratory settings, I have examined the footprints of chimps and gorillas and other primates; and so I wasn't coming at this as a novice at all. These tracks were extremely compelling as I scrutinized them, and as we recreated the scene of what had transpired based on these items there'.

'Anyway, it kind of set me back because all through my years, especially as I had matured, I had been rather skeptical. This was all a fascinating story. It was exciting as a young person and all, but then so much time had elapsed without any resolution to the question. That persistent mystery seemed to kind of condemn it to languish in that category and not reach any resolution. And so, I was quite skeptical about this; but as I

examined these tracks, the question was, how could this individual who has shown these to me, how could he have possibly done this, or anyone else for that matter? It was an impressive set of circumstances in which it was an exceptional experience for my first real exposure to footprint evidence in the field’.

‘At the time I cast seven representative footprints to show the differences in dynamics and foot performance and posture and so forth, correlated with the nature of the step and the substrate conditions and so on. Now I have over 300 footprint casts in my laboratory that I have assembled, and from that has emerged a very clear model of the underlying architecture and distinctions of the sasquatch foot as compared to that of a bipedal human. It is not only an elegant model but it is a very appropriate model for the differences in size and motion bipedalism and terrain that these creatures reportedly reside in. So, it has been an interesting journey. That was in 1996 [referring to the first set of prints the informant came across, in the Blue Mountains]’ (A09).

The informant also addressed the question of possible connections between Bigfoot and Mormonism:

‘Actually, I published a monograph subsequent to that [the Lehi publication – Lehi is a predominantly Mormon town in Utah (Reeve and Wagenen, eds. 2011: 110)]. There was a publication in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* (1992-) that was co-authored with a colleague here in the department; and then we went on to write a monograph with that same title, addressing the question of the historicity of the *Book of Mormon* (Smith, trans. 2011) based on current DNA studies’.

‘... There is one historical account that always crops up in connection with bigfoot. There was a pioneer missionary by the name of David (Wyman) Patten. He was actually a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles at one time; and he, in his journals, describes an encounter with a hairy visage that was apparently quite tall who suddenly he realized was walking alongside him. He was astride a mule, and returning, I think, from New York to Ohio; and, in any case, he claims that he had a conversation and asked this person who he was. The person went on to identify himself as Cain, who had been cursed to wander the face of the earth and seeking the destruction of human souls, at which point David raised his arm to the square [a sacred act in Mormonism] and rebuked him in the name of Christ and sent him on his’.

‘That was a very obscure journal entry but it caught the attention of the members of the church hierarchy back in the last century. I guess it was just kind of an in-house almost apocryphal notion, [...] there was a letter that had been written by his son, I think, who witnessed David’s return home shortly after this encounter; and his recounting of it and the effect it seemed to have had on him [...] But never any connection made; of course in those days they didn’t know what bigfoot was, but one of the apostles, Spencer W. Kimball, who went on to be a president of the church wrote an extremely influential book, widely read book, called *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969) to illustrate nature; he was describing Cain, the murderer who had killed his brother Abel and had made a pact with the devil, so to speak. And he said, an interesting anecdote that may shed some light

on Cain, here is this...and he recounted that paragraph with no commentary, no further discussion of it. There have been several in-depth papers written, one published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (1966), the journal, and the other in *BYU Studies* (1959) (*Brigham Young University journal related to Mormon Studies*)’.

‘Basically, at the time of course, it never was suggested that this being really did exist still and was wandering through the woods covered with hair; and nor was the initial description of a humanoid figure covered with hair. It was a hairy individual, which in those days could mean someone with long, unkempt head hair and beard, and scruffy looking. But the thing was too, I always find amusing, was he said he [they] walked along side one another with a space of like 2 ½ miles. Well, if you think about the pace of a horse or a person walking, or mule, walking, he would have had to have been carrying a conversation for about 45 minutes! We have these two lines of the conversation related to us. What was going on if this was an accurate account of [something that] really happened, a real incident, then what happened for those 45 minutes is what I am curious about?’

‘Anyway, in my mind, it has nothing to do with bigfoot. I mean, we have examples of bigfoot footprints that indicate a population of animals, and I am quite convinced they are that. They are not human in the sense of some form of *Homo sapiens* or a very closely related species of the genus *Homo*. They are either a large ape cousin to the gorilla, or a very early offshoot of the bipedal hominin radiation like *Paranthropus* or an *Australopithecus* that has persisted up to the present. But there is no sign of intelligence beyond that of a chimp or gorilla. There is no sign of material culture. There is no sign of a complex social structure. No sign of language. No sign of tool use except opportunistic brandishing of sticks and stones or what have you. I mean, all the other claims to the contrary are so baseless and so outlandish’.

‘[...] I mean, that is the kind of thing you have to come up against. Anyway, I am quite confident that the story of David Patten and his encounter with Cain has nothing to do with bigfoot at all’ (A09).

Regarding artefacts such bigfoot field guides, the scientist informant went on to state:

‘...One of the motivations behind that [creating the informant’s field guide] was this notion of the citizen scientist, since there are no, or very few, primatologists who are out in the field in North America looking for evidence; into that void steps the amateur investigator, the weekend warrior; and then I become something of a lightning rod for the things for which they think they have found. But it is a challenge sometimes when even the most mundane protocols like placing a standardized scale in your photographs are overlooked. It becomes rather frustrating. So, this, in part, was I think an effort to provide a how-to manual for the collection of evidence in a more standardized way, and way in which things like hair in paper envelopes instead of ziplock bags where condensation will stimulate bacterial or fungal growth and eliminate the opportunity for doing DNA analysis if it is deemed warranted’.



‘Like that, how to make a plaster cast successfully, to preserve the detail and make it most beneficial. In that vein it has been received very well, and the idea of these citizen scientists carrying this field guide out in the field and refreshing their memory on how they are supposed to [laughs] identify stuff and distinguish stuff. That’s one of the challenges that we face, I think, because there is such a plethora of chaff that the kernel gets overlooked; and it is all too easy for the skeptics, not those who are just skeptical from an intellectual perspective but skeptical from an ideological fanaticism that they then point to all of the vacuous data that gets reported that clutters the internet and social media, and they find justification through that venue dismissing everything on it frantically’ (A09).

#### ACCOUNT 45 (A10):

Speaking of the figure named *Wethigah* and its link with sasquatch, another informant stated:

‘In the dialect that my friends and colleagues spoke, it is a dialect of Cree called... I grew up thinking that it is Woodland Cree, and they would refer to this animal or this person, legend, as ‘*Wethigah*’ ... I refer to it [sasquatch] as *Wethigah*, too, in my mind’ (A10).

‘The [Wintertime] story [not of the informant, but told, for example, in trapping camps] I seem to get was that if you are being abused, say a husband is abusing a spouse or something terrible happened, [for example], sometimes we totally run out of food and we’d just be eating rabbits and whitefish and stuff; and these stories would come out. And if you got really abused, you would go a little crazy and would have to live outside of the camp, outside of the village. And then the abused person would turn in to these horrible Winter creatures. It was a really weird culture in that if you did hear about spousal abuse, the husbands getting drunk and beating their wife, they were not so much scared of the husband; they are scared of their wife going crazy, leaving the camp, and becoming one of these creatures’ (A10).

The informant reflected on *Wethigah* in relation to social problems:

‘I still have a lot of respect for my friends’ beliefs system. I don’t mock them. I just find it fascinating that they have taken this... in my mind I say it is a social problem. This is how they act. This is how they treat, if you will, PTSD, Post-Traumatic Stress syndrome [Disorder]. Someone has gone through a famine. Someone has gone through spousal abuse. Someone had gone through the priests abusing them. And they go crazy. And they are scared of those crazy people. This is my interpretation: this myth, to fit it, to put it in their world so they can understand it. And I have no problem with that. If we don’t understand something, I don’t mind saying I don’t know; but a lot of people are not keen on that and they want to put it in some sort of framework; and I think that is what these *Wethigahs* were, a framework to deal with’.

Regarding other features, besides the smell and the power, connected it to sasquatch, the informant went on:

‘...So, the one experience I had was I was at the camp one night... it was February, ... well, it was dark all the time, and we are all pretty poor. We were in a dog team. We had no skidoos. And the man of the adjacent family came in, and he was so clearly agitated and excited. He couldn’t speak English to me and I could only catch a part of what he was saying, so his wife was translating for me. Everybody was really excited, and he had heard one of these things as he was snowshoeing back to camp in the dark, and he was so scared! He fired all his cartridges shot in to the bush to scare this thing. And we are really poor. We did not have extra cartridges to waste’.

‘...Everybody just got really spooked because this guy’s name was [...] a very experienced trapper and woodsman; spent his whole life in the forest. When I saw him he was just pale-faced. He looked like a white man, and he was terrified. The next day I was scared too, but I took my dogs down there. There were not tracks in the snow. We are expert trackers. We could track anything. There was nothing there and I was told, oh yeah, these things don’t leave tracks... He was so spooked that he shot all his ammunition. We had to go find more ammunition because he had used all his cartridges up. This was a problem. That was about the Winter of ’82. ... The nearest village would have been in Pelican Narrows in Saskatchewan, and we were about 50 kilometres southeast of Pelican just on the trap... I haven’t talked to him for years, but at that time he was already in his late 50s - 60s so probably not’ (A10).

On how the informant became familiar with sasquatch, he/she stated:

‘I haven’t read much on the Woodland Cree, but when I was working with the Dene people both in Déljine in Great Bear and the folks up in Old Crow in the Yukon I read a couple of books by Richard Nelson. One was *Hunters of the Northern Forests: Designs for Survival among Alaskan Kutchin*; and that describes a couple of winters that he spent with Koyukon people in Alaska. I was just fascinated of his stories; how similar they were to experiences living with the Cree people’.

‘And then he wrote a second book. (So [the first book] *Hunters of the Northern Forest* is that this really happened when I was hunting with the Koyukon people.) The second book is called *Make Prayers to the Raven* (1983), and that looked more at the spiritual side than the legends side of those people. They were Dene people, and the specific tribe was called the Koyukon. Richard Nelson is an anthropologist. I think he is out of the University of Washington these days. Yeah, Washington State I think. Must be nearly retired’ (A10).

#### 6.4 Summary and Conclusions

In questioning views on palaeoanthropological research over the last decade on hominins contemporaneous with *Homo sapiens* (and Neanderthals), like the *Homo floresiensis* in Indonesia and Denisova hominins in Central Asia, professional scientists had interesting views on the hominin family tree appearing ‘bushy’ and multilinear. In terms of whether this possibility has affected people’s views on the likely survival of non-sapiens hominins into historic times, which could form a basis for images like sasquatch and the yeti, some definitely agreed that it had done so, stating that not only was the tree bushy but it was also not completely bifurcated [i.e., there was no clear distinction between *Homo sapiens* on the one hand, and all non-sapiens hominins on the other]---and that this possibility would feed into the beliefs about sasquatch. The problem for scientists is a lack of ‘good’ evidence for the mystery hominoid existing in North America. Keeping up with the latest news on *Homo floresiensis*, and other developments, the realization is that our image of who we are and where we came from is expanding, as are our attitudes towards diversity.

A professional scientist with supporting views of sasquatch has pointed out that the ‘partitioning’ (or recently diverged lineage) is seen all the way up into the mountainous Russian belt. He/she also takes the position that sasquatch probably represents a fairly recent partitioning, but with roots that go back for an extended period of time—and he/she links this with the creature’s ‘avoidance behavior and postures’ and keen ‘sensory perceptions’. As a ‘charismatic megafauna’, if it were to be categorized as such, the sasquatch environment would therefore need protecting. The *Gigantopithecus* theory, that the animal could have crossed the Land Bridge into North America from Asia, still persists, according to one wildlife biologist. Highlighting Thomas

S. Kuhn's (1970) concept of 'paradigm shift' (in *Structures of Scientific Revolutions*), a physical anthropologist has proposed that more attention be given by anthropologists, in anticipation of the possible discovery of or search for these sorts of relict hominoids.

Non-scientists, some of whom reported sasquatch sightings, generally agreed that the more recent scientific studies have affected, or lent credibility to, the idea of the existence of sasquatch—or survival of non-sapient hominins into historic or recent times.

With reference to naturalistic representations of sasquatch, and whether anything could prove that mystery hominoids do not exist, most non-scientists were quick to point out that having no body or other evidence of a sasquatch, for example, does not prove that it does not exist. However, as another non-scientist pointed out, when it came down to the sasquatch phenomenon and views for and against the existence of sasquatch, skeptics would not know how to kill the idea while sasquatch supporters would not know how to prove it, so that the argument for and against sasquatch was going to stay in limbo forever.

In terms of popular culture, terms and interpretations were numerous. Non-scientists had familiarized themselves with indigenous names and meanings; for example, *dsonoqua* and *bukwas*, which one informant, drawing on the literature, said means something like 'wildman of the woods' or 'hairy man'. In contrast, *dsonoqua* is the female version, meaning 'wild woman of the woods'. The resources cited by non-scientists were quite extensive; and included local literature by an early investigator of 'sasquatch' in Alberta (Thomas Steenburg 1990) as well as 'fact-or-fiction' books on America's Bigfoot (e.g., a book by Dmitri Bayanov 1997). Images on book covers with bigfoot silhouettes also conjured up memories from long ago; and informants recalled memorable events, such as the Patterson-Gimlin film's first media exposure, which

became literally big in bigfoot news. From media and beer commercials, terms such as the ‘Kokanee beer thief’ (a term referred to by a non-scientist informant in his/her thirties) have become intertwined with sasquatch for over 25 years, and sasquatch still remains a critical trademark for effective branding by businesses.

Academics and professional scientists made similar reference to sasquatch in the media—for example, besides advertisements for beer, television programs (such as *Six Million Dollar Man*), artifacts, including, signage (e.g., ‘caution’ sasquatch crossing), and brochures (e.g., sasquatch tracking field pamphlets). Also mentioned were parallel images such as the ‘yeti’, or figures from books read in childhood or more recently, such as *Tintin in Tibet* (1960) by Hergé or *Lord of the Rings* (1968) by J. R. R. Tolkien. One academic informant, who lived in Jasper, Alberta, as a teen, was inspired to write his/her own comic book in the 1970s, with a storyline about searching for sasquatches. The informant stated she/he has been fascinated by the topic ever since, and how the storyline and the fascination appear just as prevalent among people today.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

As stated in the Introduction (chapter 1), the significance of this research lies primarily in clarifying what sort of figure sasquatch is—for example, something entirely imaginary, or reflecting some kind of experience—and accordingly why some people, both locals (non-scientists) and scientists (academics), are convinced of its phenomenal existence. While some non-scientists claim to have encountered sasquatch, referring to a ‘whole body’ rather than what are taken to be tracks or hair, none of the scientists have done so. It is also apparent that the scientists/academics were more skeptical regarding the existence of sasquatch than non-scientists. Several themes emerged from the results of field research, described in the previous five chapters; and drawing on interviews with the two sorts of informants.

In questioning popular concepts of sasquatch (or ‘bigfoot’, since the terms were used interchangeably), local knowledge of the subject tended to reflect a view of the mystery hominoid as something between ape and human. Various sources, for example, pamphlets with black and white silhouettes of bigfoot back in the 1970s, as well as rumoured sightings near Rocky Mountain House, also encouraged bigfoot searches by some local informants in forested areas. Other general conceptions were formed based on Indigenous beliefs. For example, a local informant explained that sasquatch formed both a spiritual as well as tangible part of Cree belief; the informant added that sasquatch as a ‘real’ creature needed its own privacy and to remain undetected. The conception of sasquatch or bigfoot has also been influenced by historical images from around the world, including the Tibetan concept of Yeti.

Along with the 1967 Patterson-Gimlin film, professional scientist informants highlighted other prominent events during the 1970s, particularly the University of British Columbia’s

sasquatch conference (organized by Marjorie Halpin). A scientist informant and attendee of the conference noted how debates ran high; and, in some cases, with such fervency during the exchange of information between scientists and bigfoot hunters, that physical fights broke out in the hallway of the department—a consequence that would likely have discouraged other scientists from getting involved. Another popular conception dating to about the same period was that sasquatch or bigfoot had descended from *Gigantopithecus*.

Most scientist informants, skeptical of the existence of sasquatch, maintained that the distribution of recent ‘sasquatch’ sightings coincidentally correlated with a ‘real’ creature, for example, a black bear. Scientist informants also related that sasquatch, conceived as mysterious, hairy, and six to seven feet tall, was situated in the Canadian west (the Rockies, e.g., in Jasper, Alberta, as well as British Columbia). According to an academic informant, Jasper was also a location that had inspired creativity and vivid imaginations in his/her youth (e.g. writing comic strips about sasquatch), as well as the location of the historical account (of finding the first tracks described by native porters) recorded by the cartographer David Thompson.

Non-scientist informants (and a few scientists) who had participated in sasquatch expeditions organized, for example, by the BFRO, reported that within their expedition groups, the ‘go-to theory’ was usually *Gigantopithecus*, thereby recalling the theories of Grover Krantz. Professional scientists in support of sasquatch existence have also described sasquatch in various ways—for example, as a hominid (notably different than a pongid, with the opposable toe that Eric Shipton had photographed), to an ape-like creature (with broad-proportioned feet and no claws), to an unclassified North American mammal.

Sasquatch sightings discussed by non-scientist informants dated from the 1970s to the current decade. All local informants reported sightings in Alberta (reports of encounters had also extended to British Columbia and Ontario). These informants recalled their encounters mostly in forested areas, along back roads (e.g., the Forestry Trunk Road), and near water sources, while engaged in outdoor pursuits (e.g., camping, hiking, fishing, canoeing, 4x4 wheeling). One informant recalled sighting a sasquatch in broad daylight walking in and out of a treeline; and stated that, as 'she' was walking upright along the Clearwater river, there was muscle movement in her leg with each step. Daylight encounters also occurred in urban areas; for example, an informant driving in the suburbs described how he/she had interrupting the playtime of a juvenile that was bell-shaped, with flared fur that blended 'his' arms and legs with his body. Informants also reported the colour of fur as ranging from white with silver patches, light tan, and bay-horse reddish brown. Various experiences described during mystery hominoid encounters by local informants included the feeling of being watched, fear, feeling peculiar, fearing for one's life, and going unnoticed. The local informants described sasquatch sounds; for example, growls, and gibberish language. Non-scientist informants also described the build of sasquatch during their encounters as seven-feet tall and wide as a garage door; and in terms of strength, the sasquatch was described as having the ability to throw boulders as well as twist off trees branches to build, for example, twenty-five feet tall tepee structures (See Plates 4 and 5). A few non-scientist informants stated that they turned to the internet and online searches to affirm or help reconstruct what they had experienced; thus in some cases, the idea of a sasquatch encounter had been formulated well after the experience.

Most scientist academic informants stated that there was no convincing physical evidence of the existence of sasquatch, and that the sightings maybe a result of misidentification or



hoaxes. This same group of informants explained that in terms of evolution, sasquatch was not possible; and that if there were any such thing as sasquatch, scientists would have known about (and confirmed) them. The credibility of other scientists researching other cryptids, for example, Cadborosaurus, were also called into question; the general consensus was that if scientists were to consider working in the ‘cryptozoological realm’, then they had better be working on something ‘pretty compelling’. Neither hair from barbed-wired fences nor cameras (of the sort sometimes capturing rare Jaguars) had resulted in any evidence of sasquatch. When it came to sasquatch, most academic informants maintained that the evidence was not only tenuous but also deterred scientists from carrying out research towards finding a specimen.

Opposing scientist informants suggested that valid sasquatch evidence exists, and is ‘misplaced evidence’; for example, ‘big bones’ that have been buried in drawers are a matter of ‘category accessibility’. Another scientist informant pointed to collections of tracks and the microscopy of hair samples from Fahrehbach’s findings, known as the ‘Gold Standard’ collection, as a form of physical evidence indicating the existence of sasquatch.

According to non-scientist informants, ‘physical evidence’ included, for example, hair samples, footprints, and cultural artifacts such as carved masks (e.g., from Nass Valley, British Columbia) depicting sasquatch. Local informants had also reviewed photographs and familiarized themselves with the well-known Patterson-Gimlin film from 1967. Non-scientist informants observed rich physical details (e.g., muscles movements) in the Patterson-Gimlin film; and compared these features with reported sightings, including their own mystery hominoid. Also, local informants related, for example, that while the Sumatran *Orang Pendek* had not been captured, its scat, footprints, and DNA existed as physical evidence along with eyewitness accounts.

Scientist informants sometimes attributed acceptance of sasquatch partly to ignorance of science and scientific method, and perhaps a general lack of education. For example, one scientist referred to ‘half of the working class’ casually keeping an eye out for sasquatch (during camping holidays); this statement suggests a social class bias, and thus a definite social factor affecting (in this informant’s view) the social distribution of scientific knowledge. Alternatively, scientists have suggested that the reasons for the prevalence of ‘sasquatch’ belief among local societies is related to social trauma; for example, PTSD in Indigenous communities—or perhaps to serve as a distraction from tragic world events in news reports that have coincided with a sasquatch story; for example, in the Yukon (of a ‘sasquatch’ hair sample that turned out to be bison after DNA testing).

In contrast, another scientist informant argued that there could be a space (a framework or niche to stick a concept into) in this ‘paradigm’ to accommodate the notion of a relict hominoid, whereas before there was not (e.g., Georgii Gause’s competitive exclusion principle, which counters Ivan Sanderson’s proposal that relict hominoids could exist on every continent). Drawing on the question of whether other hominins are alive today (a similar question would be *Are legendary hominoids worth looking for?* Forth’s 2012 publication title), the informant suggested that if there is no framework or niche in which to place a concept, no matter how compelling (short of a [sasquatch] body) the evidence might be, the question will not get serious consideration.

Concerning the few natural scientists looking for sasquatch, local informants pointed to Bindernagel’s ‘de facto discovery’ proposal, which basically suggests that sasquatch has already been discovered but science has not accepted the discovery yet. Non-scientist informants also addressed scientists being deterred from looking for (and researching) sasquatch, an attitude

which they thought was based on the politics of science (which could include sasquatch research as a scientific taboo and the loss of academic credentials), and different belief systems between scientists and locals. Local informants drew on their own sasquatch encounters that for them served as ‘proof’ of sasquatch existence.

In terms of extracting information through review of sasquatch evidence to provide ‘proof’ supporting current ideas about the existence of sasquatch, professional scientist informants suggested that sasquatch is a fascinating sociological phenomenon but not a biological one. ‘Sasquatch’ footprints, for example, could instead be evidence of mud shrinkage. Contrary arguments by scientist informants included the adage: extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence; for example, the need for a type specimen to gain scientific acknowledgment. On the other hand, it was noted that the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, and also suggested that some evidence (e.g., anecdotal or trace evidence and indeterminate physical evidence; e.g., hair, scat) should warrant that we at least pursue the question of sasquatch, especially taking into account the nature of the ‘beast’ (e.g., its rarity, its solitary behavior, that it is nocturnal, has a generalized diet, and that it is far-ranging). Next steps that were suggested by a scientist informant included the building a 20-foot helium balloon that would fly over the forest and use infra-red detectors to survey warm bodies.

Regarding local accounts that have matched theories of scientists who claim the existence of sasquatch (for example, Meldrum and Bindernagel), professional scientist informants stated that there is bound to be some circularity in the relationship between the two, because such scientists go to hotspots where people have had sightings. Local informants stated that most of the ground-breaking work is being done by independent researchers. Non-scientists also said that

they have become skeptical of certain scientists (e.g., geneticists) because of the ‘unknown intention’ of modern science and ‘disinformation’ that is being floated around.

Scientist informants in turn stated that the lack of evidence recognized by the mainstream has tended to confirm non-scientists’ beliefs that if there is not any evidence revealed, then there must be evidence that is hidden. Basically, conspiracy theories embraced by people have further contributed to and coincided with local environmental fears and concerns (e.g., ‘sasquatch sanctuaries’ need protecting from tourism and development; an icon or a ‘charismatic species’ representation was needed to symbolize the a need to ‘respect the land’ or ‘pay attention to the environment’). Other motivational factors mentioned by scientists that are driving sasquatch ‘believers’ in Alberta (in regard to sasquatch not being sufficiently supported by physical evidence) include metaphysical and spiritual beliefs about the world—especially the idea that the world holds secrets and that these secrets are in our backyard. Intersecting with all of these ideas is *Homo floresiensis*. An opposed view by one scientist, who has accepted sasquatch evidence as sufficient for further study, is that evidence is being ignored or suppressed; he/she maintained the ‘discovery claim’ on the premise that evidence builds on evidence.

Regions of sasquatch sightings have generally been areas with reports by local informants. In asking scientist and academic informants the same question, these same informants have associated reputed sasquatch sightings with forested areas as well as places in high mountainous regions. Scientists stated that certain areas in northern Alberta, which have small trees and where a ‘sasquatch’ would sink into a bog, would not suit the creatures. Better environments for the reputed sasquatch would be wooded areas such as the Brazeau Dam and Jasper, as well as Nordegg to the west of Rocky Mountain House; British Columbia (due to lots of forest cover); and the area north of Hinton. ‘Hot spots’ in Alberta generally consisted of

stretches of these areas (e.g., wildlife ‘corridors’ or ‘refugia’) just before reaching mountain parks. In contrast, Boreal areas in Alberta would not be ideal.

Other themes found in the responses of both scientists and non-scientists included possible change over time in scientists’ views of whether or not sasquatch existed; and what effect the discovery of non-sapiens hominin fossils may have had in this regard, especially as these have indicated a more ‘bushy’ hominin family tree and chronological overlap of some hominin species with *Homo sapiens*. In this connection, I also noticed that some local informants, thus non-scientists or amateurs, seem to be influenced not just by literature (and lore) that focuses specifically on sasquatch but also, directly or indirectly, by scientific reports; for example, those dealing with changing views on hominin evolution and newly discovered hominins such as *Homo floresiensis* and Denisovans. Some non-scientists have interpreted such scientific reports as providing a basis for the image of the sasquatch, as lending credibility to their claims about sasquatch existence, and even as confirming their sighting reports. The naturalistic representation of sasquatch images, considered as gaining additional support from the discovery with *Homo floresiensis* and Denisovans, has also promoted the view, advanced by Jeff Meldrum, that anthropologists should take on the task of actively searching for relict hominoids in anticipation of finding sasquatch or bigfoot.

In noting that scientists cannot disprove the existence of sasquatch nor dismiss it so easily—owing to naturalistic representations of the creature as just another zoological species, as reflected in accounts by some informants as well as in the literature reviewed in the first chapter (on the anthropology of religion and symbolism, folk zoology, and the anthropology and sociology of science)—in terms of whether there is anything that could prove that mystery hominoids do not exist and are purely fictional, both groups of informants basically gave the

same answer: if a creature does not exist, how can you prove it does not exist? i.e., one cannot prove something does not exist. One informant added that as a scientist rooted in inductive methodology, until one finds the black swan, one cannot say whether [sasquatches] exist or not—that is the classical philosophical problem.

The question arises: How to move forward? While recognizing that folk zoological categories can be as undefined as our discipline (of anthropology, social anthropology, or biology), from informed comment and the questions it raises, however philosophical, it is clear that analyzing and comparing information of various kinds and from various sources as well as promoting discussion between identified groups (scientists and non-scientists) are worthwhile endeavours; for only in this way can gaps in disciplines (anthropology, biology) be filled and significant things that have previously been overlooked be discovered. However small the discoveries may seem, they can be important in significantly informing and expanding disciplines, including by exploring undescribed or unassigned categories that we may come upon in the process.

In terms of the gaps that need to be addressed and questions that need to be asked, in regard to the concept of ‘proof’, Popper’s philosophy can be applied to cryptid categories as well as any other. According to Popper, the proof proposition is essentially enveloped by the null-hypothesis, on the principle that positive evidence cannot conclusively affirm whether something is true or not. In other words, there may not be strong evidence to support a hypothesis; yet we still cannot conclusively reject it (by boldly exposing the hypothesis to the severest criticism), so that the validity of knowledge is tied to the probability of falsification; and if a hypothesis can stand the trial by fire, then we can confirm its validity.

## Going further

In conclusion, the ambiguity of sasquatch, a reputed creature bordering on the ‘human-animal’ divide, has posed and continues to pose challenges for cultural and biological anthropology. In the cultural field, research may be extended by questioning people who claim personal experience of sasquatch as well as people who do not. What may be identified as a third category of informants could also be added; namely, people who communicate about sasquatch on the internet/online comments. In addition, more insight could be gained by participating in groups and communities; that is, by engaging in participant observation combined with directive and non-directive questioning in social context.

An important question that we should continue to ask ourselves as anthropologists is what are the ‘presumptions of empirical unreality (Forth 2008: xi),’ that we should be aware of? In terms of the sasquatch, this approach means investigating assumptions, held by people of all kinds, concerning what can exist empirically and what cannot. Through the present research, and by putting in a series of questions to different sorts of informants, I have attempted to address whether it is clearly defined what sort of a creature sasquatch is or is supposed to be. Related to this investigation is the further question of whether different mystery hominoids, for example, sasquatch and yeti, are a single kind of thing or different kinds. The context—for example, the environmental context, historical context, biological or taxonomic context—of the species is important, to help define what sort of creature the sasquatch (and any other mystery hominoid) is. In some instances, further comparisons may be made among implicit biological and cultural anthropological problems and current sasquatch theories.

Drawing on another important point, when it comes to challenges to anthropology, and the types of research that scholars are less reluctant to undertake, the kind of research collaboration outlined above and the further research it projects (which might be interpreted to fall in the 'cryptozoological' realm) represent 'a rare opportunity for substantial cooperation among anthropological sub-disciplines [and with other disciplines] that can build on theoretical and methodological knowledge contributed by practitioners of several sorts of anthropology' (Forth 2012a: 16). At the same time, it might be concluded from such an enquiry that whether sasquatch is an undiscovered species or something else entirely is not so much a scientific question as a philosophical one.



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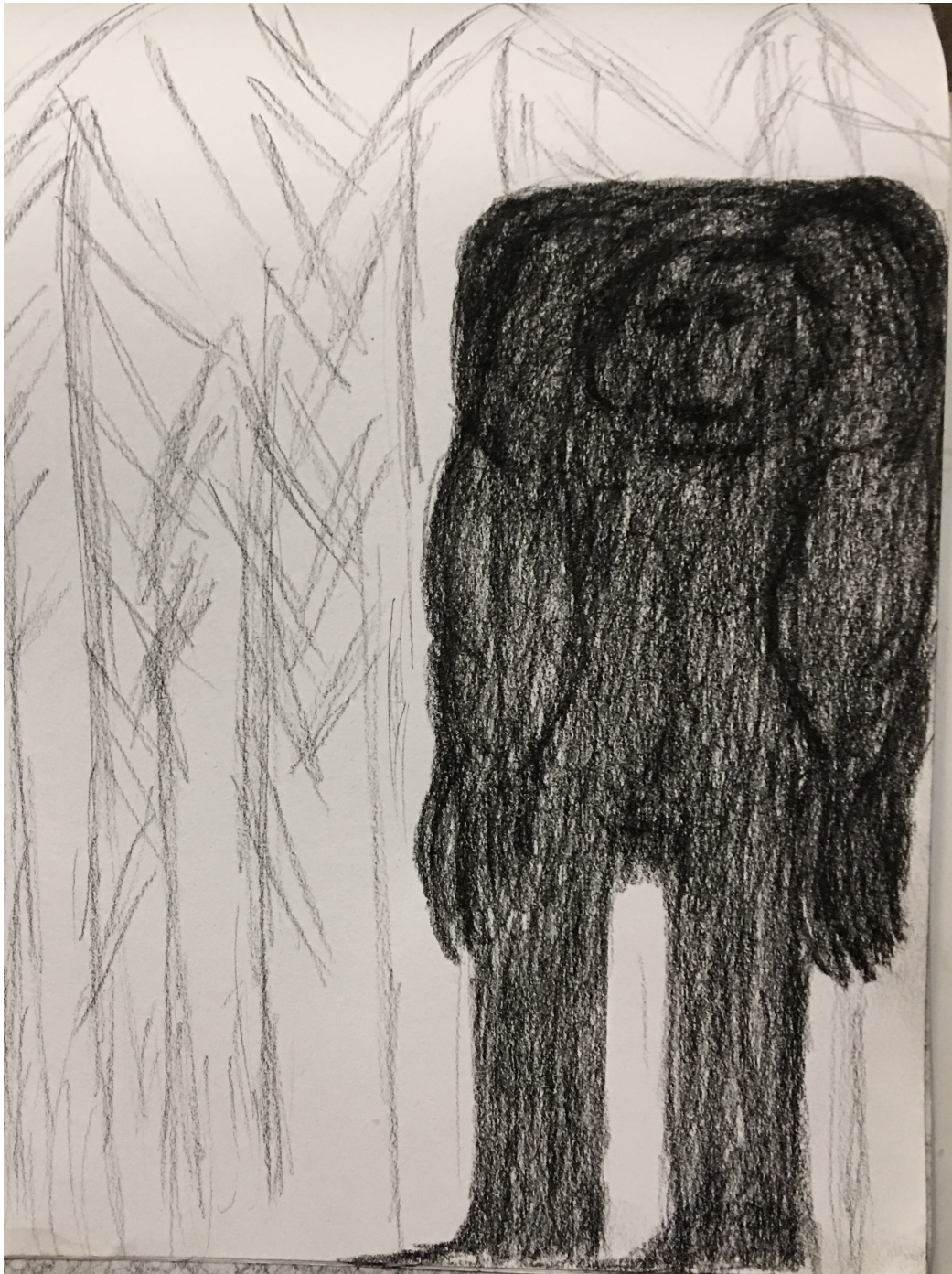
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## Appendix

### Figures and Plates



*Figure 2.* Sketch of an encounter with a ‘dark human-like figure’ that was ‘as big as the trees.’

Source: L12.



*Figure 3.* Sketch of the clearing from which the human-like creature emerged near a campsite.

Source: L12.



*Figure 4.* Sketch of an encounter with a juvenile mystery hominoid with flared fur.

Source: Anon.

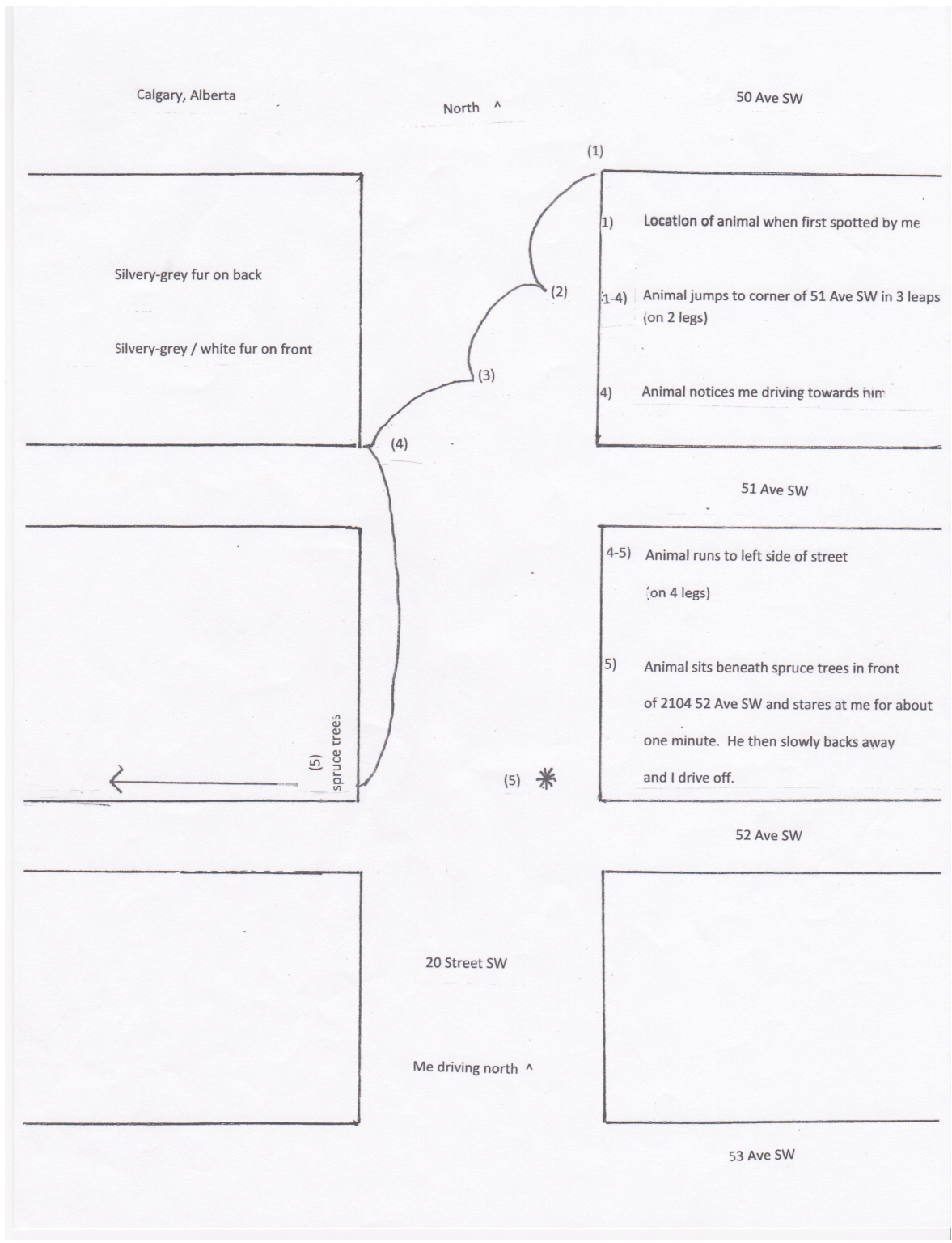


Figure 5. Sketch of a map and location of the 'juvenile sasquatch' in a rural setting.

Source: Anon.



Figure 6. Comic drawing of the 'Lair of the sasquatch' - page 1.

Source: A04.

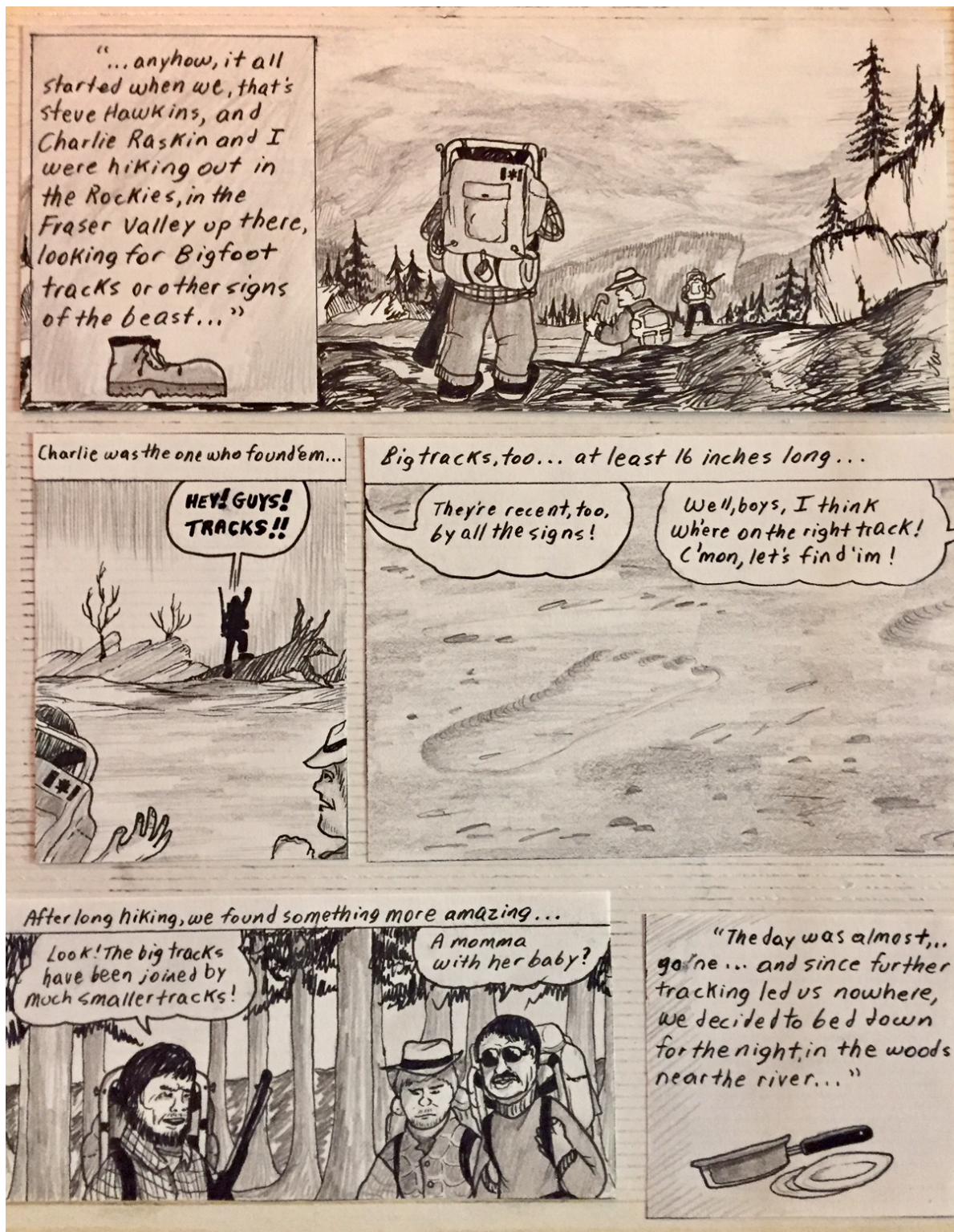


Figure 7. Comic drawing of the 'Lair of the sasquatch' - page 2.

Source: A04.



*Plate 1: Sasquatch mask.*

Source: Photo by Amira Arshad.

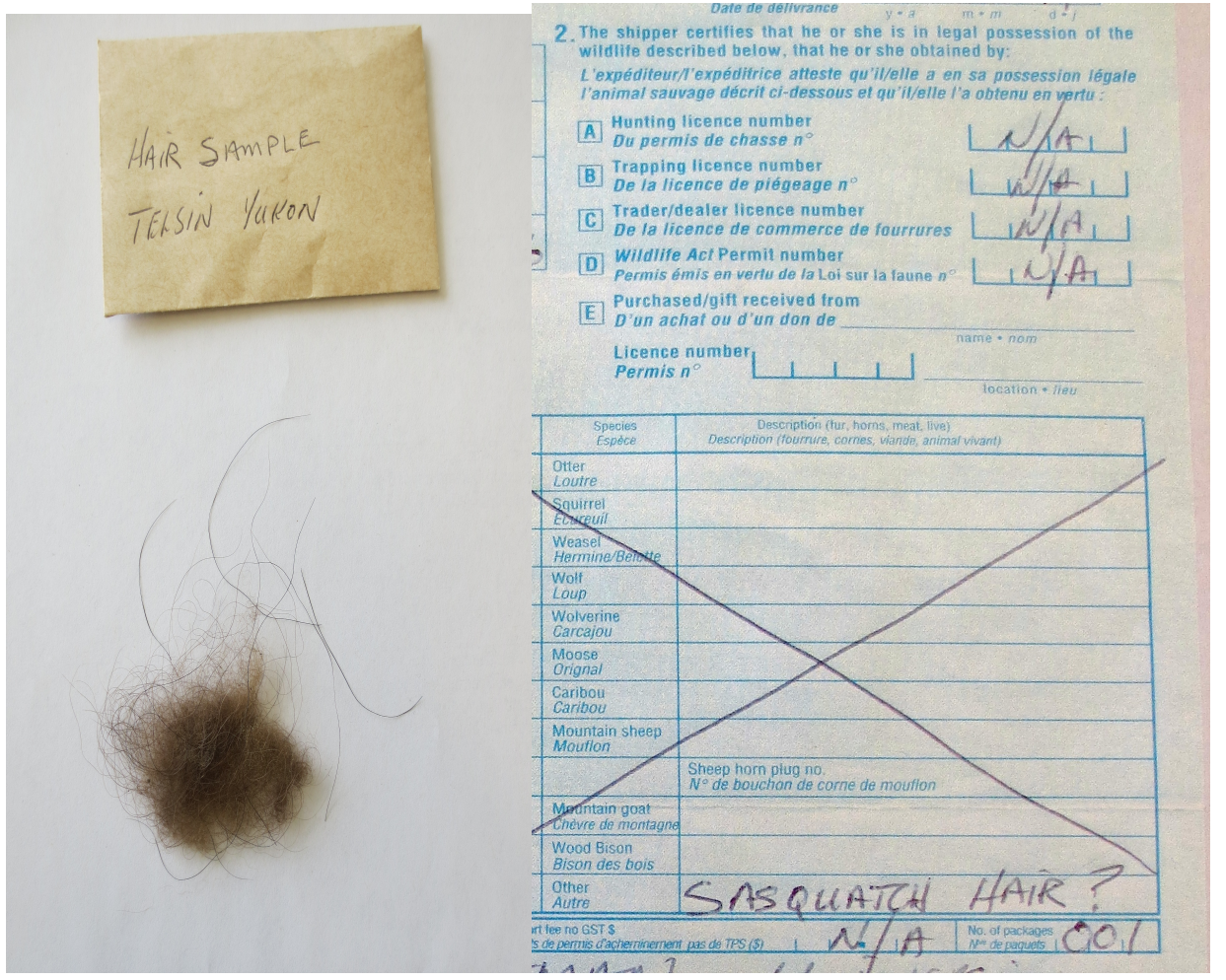


Plate 2: Scientific sample and Yukon Wildlife Export Permit listing 'Sasquatch hair?'

Source: Photo by Amira Arshad.





*Plate 3: 'Bigfoot track' cast.*

Source: Photo by Amira Arshad.



*Plate 4: Reputed 'sasquatch footprint' 18-inches long in moss.*

Source: Anon.



*Plate 5.* Tepee structure.

Source. Anon.



*Plate 6.* ‘The cathedral’ structure.

Source: Anon.



*Plate 7.* Popular culture artefacts of sasquatch; for example, clothing items.

Source: Photo by Amira Arshad.



Plate 8. Mystery hominoids appear on food labels; for example, cereal boxes.

Source: Photo by Amira Arshad.



*Plate 9: Other sasquatch artefacts include, for example, lunch boxes.*

Source: Photo by Amira Arshad.



*Plate 10. A mystery hominoid and an aquatic cryptid in a local magazine (Vue Weekly 2017).*





1011. Kokanee beer sasquatch sign.

Source: Purchased at a garage sale in Edmonton by a former member of the Department of Anthropology, University of Alberta.



Plate 12. Sasquatch sign purchased in a tourist shop in Jasper, Alberta, with a sasquatch doll from the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics.

Source: Photo by Amira Arshad.